

ART

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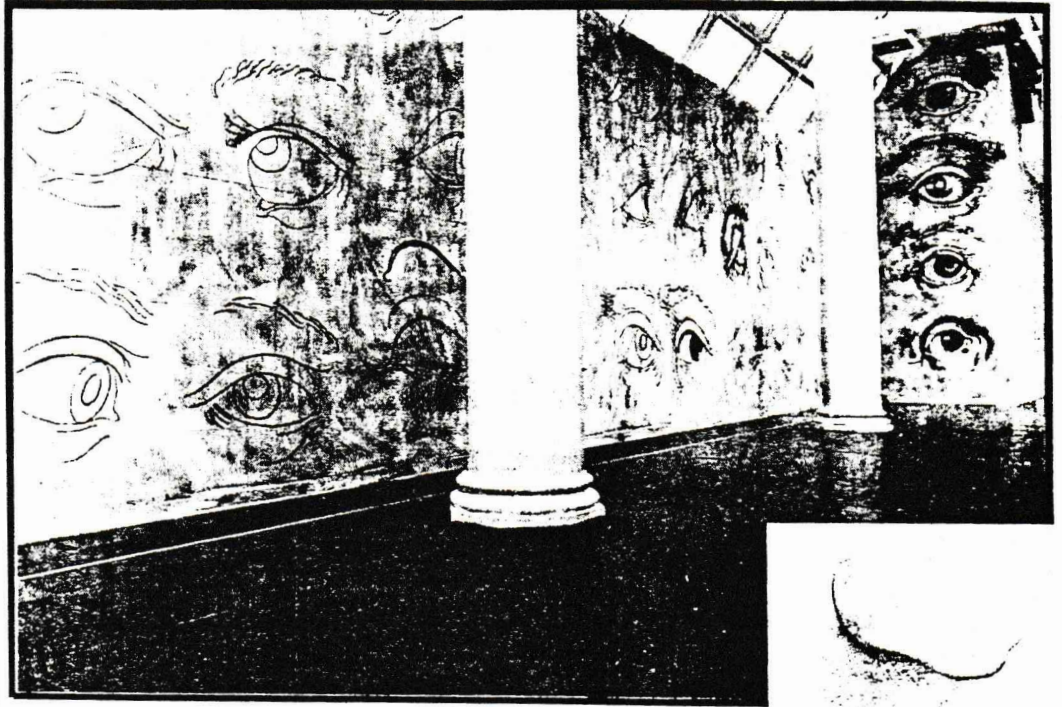
Tit for Tat at the Whitney

BY ELIZABETH HESS

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT: WOMEN'S VIDEO IN THE '80s. Whitney Museum of American Art, 945 Madison Avenue, through March 20.

Someone at the Whitney has a conscience. To make up for David Salle's vapid depictions of female assholes, assistant curator Lucinda Furlong has put together a retrospective of women's video from the '80s. This militant collection will attract feminists of all persuasions into the museum. Just make sure you avoid the fourth floor.

Joan Braderman is the Gilda Radner of Paper Tiger Television, a group that produced a series of educational tapes deconstructing print media and our perverse attractions to tabloid trash. These are the kind of tapes that turn learning into a pleasure. Braderman's target is the *National Enquirer*, which, she confesses, she eagerly devours each week on the way to her shrink. Her one-woman, lunatic performance in *Joan Braderman Reads the National Enquirer* brilliantly undermines the enquiring reporters who demonstrate "Why Natalie Didn't Drown." "It's not truthful," explains the wise and wacky



INSTALLATION ART 305A

The class will learn how artists can move beyond their usual mediums by planning and creating work to be seen within a particular area at a particular time. We will see that success in this field entails more than the addition of art to a room, even if that work is said to be "site specific." Any style can be employed in an installation, including the most contemporary gleanings from the oldest of sources. Securing spaces, avoiding problems with friendly curators, and simultaneously directing many assistants will be discussed. Term paper topic: "How installation art, at its best, enables the space it incorporates to be thoroughly reimagined." First class trip: Pat Steir's *Self-Portrait* at the New Museum, 583 Broadway, sometime before April 12, when it closes. (Da Vinci's anatomical drawings are on reserve at the library.)

—Jeff Weinstein



professor, her face surrounded in a cartoon squiggle that moves all over the screen, "but it's accurate."

More serious, yet equally compelling, is Vanalyne Green's *Trick or Drink*, an autobiographical tape that describes growing up with alcoholic parents in a house that reeked of whisky and vomit. This portrait of family pathology de-

scribes the dark side of middle-class life, but Green's sense of humor continually plays off her depression, allowing us to be voyeurs without feeling like social workers.

Several traditional documentaries cover issues that include violence against lesbians and the sexual abuse of children. The most effective is *Women of Steel* by Mon Valley media, an economic argument for affirmative action in the steel industry. The tape focuses on five women, each the sole breadwinner in their crowded households, who battled their way into the trade only to eventually get laid off. Dorothy Bolden, the founder of the National Domestic Workers union is the center of *The Maids*, a tape that documents the entry of blacks into domestic service. Unfortunately, director Muriel Jackson never quite manages to breathe life into the numerous statistics and historical stills that fill her screen. Regardless, the tape is a natural for those in the Whitney's Upper East Side audience who have never heard of Formula 409.

Irangate helps to put Jenny Holzer's *Sign on a Truck* into perspective. During the 1984 elections, she set up a large monitor and camera on the street and offered pedestrians the opportunity to cast their votes on the air; a yuppie waves his fat wallet as evidence of his allegiance

to Reagan, while a pro-Mondale/Ferraro black woman on welfare would like to see Ron put in her place. One Reaganite admits: "I don't know how senile he is yet. Now we all know."

Shu Lea Cheang's *The Trial of Tilted Arc* is a straightforward recapitulation of the Richard Serra hearings in lower Manhattan. A range of spokespeople, including such arbiters of taste as Joan Mondale, debate the responsibility of public art to its public and question the rippling effect of censorship. There's a cast of stars who testify, including Leon Golub who thinks it would be a shame to take the sculpture down now that people enjoy hating it so much. The artists, no surprise, all want *Tilted Arc* to stay, but those making arguments for its demise are also persuasive—with the exception of one person who says it attracts rats.

The subject of censorship is much more real in Margia Kramer's *Freedom of Information Tape 1: Jean Seberg*, which shows how the actress became the unlikely target of the FBI's Counterintelligence Program as a result of their enormous stupidity. Kramer intelligently combine newspaper headlines, home movies, FBI documents, and scenes from Godard's *Breathless* to create three versions of Seberg's life: one on film, one according to Hoover, and one in reality. The last was short-lived.



Vanalyne Green: *Trick or Drink* (still from videotape, 1984)

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