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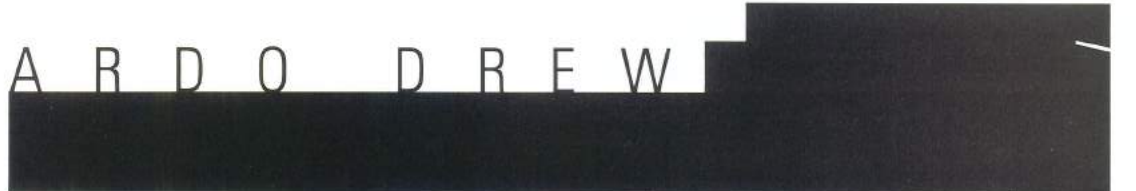
E S S A Y by Christian Leigh

**THE DAY AFTER TODAY:**

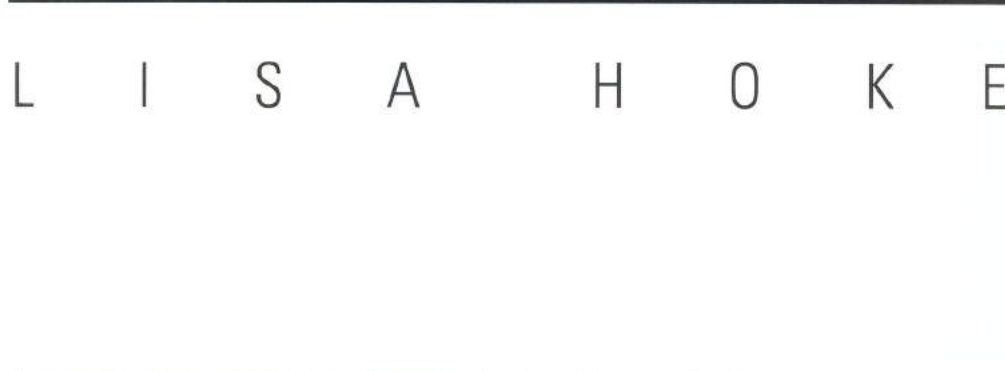
'If I Only Knew Now What I Know Now'

Surveying The Remains Of The Day

L E O N A R D O D R E W



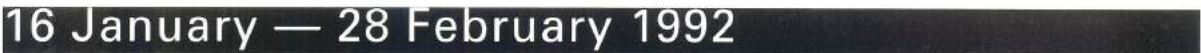
L I S A H O K E



B R A D K A H L H A M E R



16 January — 28 February 1992



Thread Waxing Space 476 Broadway New York

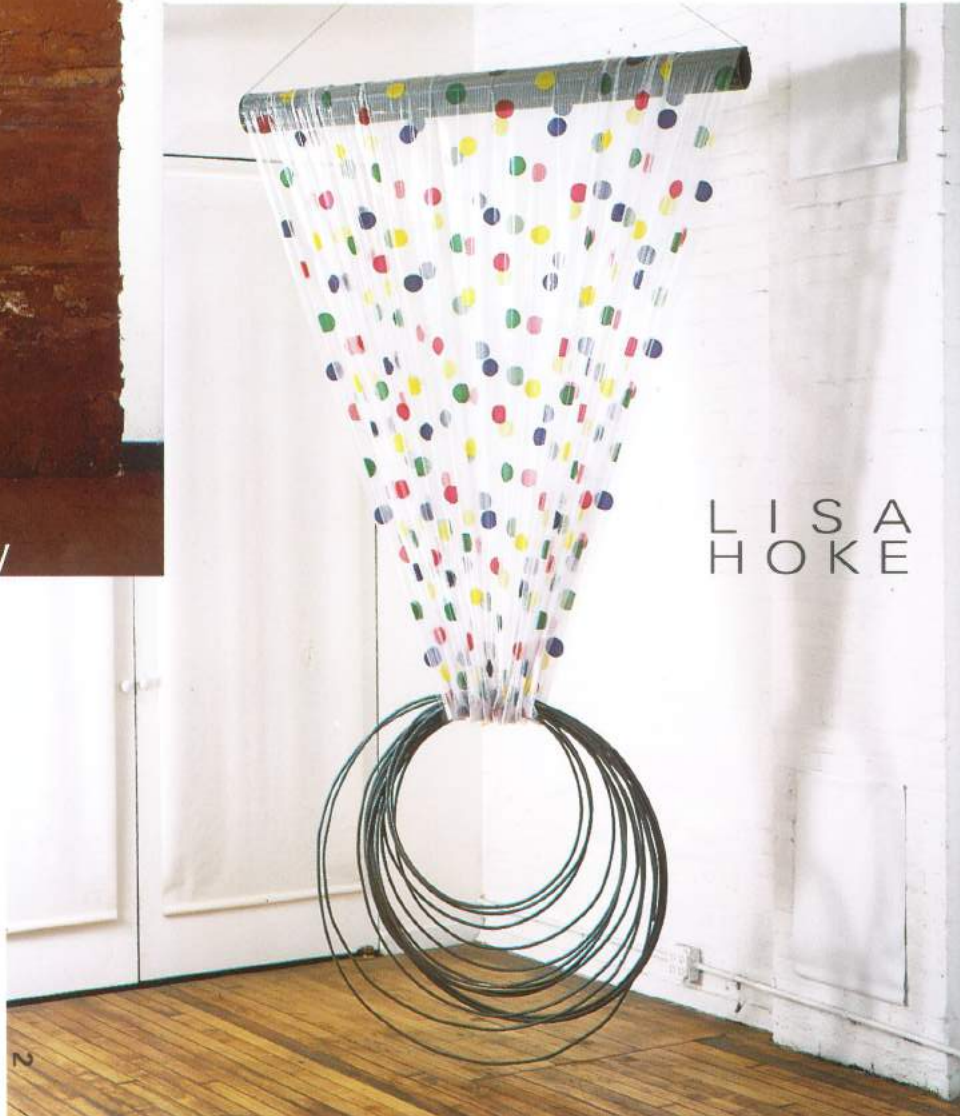




LEONARDO DREW



BRAD KAHILHAMER



LISA HOKE

THE DAY AFTER TODAY:  
 'If I Only Knew Now What I Know Now';  
 Surveying The Remains Of The Day

"You never fuck me, and I always  
 have to drive."  
 Kelly Lynch complaining to Matt Dillon  
 in Gus Van Zandt's *Drugstore Cowboy*

A Quandary: Post-Modernism, I have repeatedly been told of late, no longer exists; it has died. I'm really not sure I know what that means, and I certainly can't imagine what could replace it, but what comes to mind is a green tinted photograph by Annette Lemieux of masses of deserted tires on a junk heap. This Lemieux work bespeaks a sad note of refrain for progress; the wheel discarded and left for dead. A Question: If Post-Modernism has passed away, will Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown be permitted to collect unemployment benefits ? ? ? ?

America, everybody's favorite *enfant terrible* Jean Luc Godard has been heard to say, is like a vast highway locked in a state of never ending bumper to bumper traffic, spiraling around and around into eternity. A labyrinth of concrete, tar, chrome, steel, dirt, glass, fumes, and rust. Jorge Luis Borges as interpreted by William Burroughs and performed aloud by John Cage. But what happens next; the day after today? As a construct, and by way of an appropriation, I would like to ponder Post-Modernism as that same resonant, recurrent highway. Recently, and possibly because I have just seen Godard's *Weekend*, *Tout Va Bien*, and *A Letter To Jane* once again, and all in the same week, I have come to imagine that the end of that highway might look a little bit like the end of America, from where I sit. Imagine that highway without a single car on its roads. In other words, I see the new preoccupation with the death of Post-Modernism as a sublimation; a repressed projecting utterance of the end of the American ideal as we have come to know it, as subliminally spoken by the psyche. It's the ventriloquist sitting on his dummy's knee, both parties wondering where, when, and how the relationship went wrong.



To be sure now, and to qualify this text as not just another rhetorical brick in the wall, I am not referring to theoretical or cerebral Endgames here. No death of originality dribble. No last paintings. Nowhere on the premises is a semiotician to be found. I will not allow myself to use the word "aggregate," nor "diegesis." I would actually like to look at this art and to think about it, not just to write about it and commit it to language. In fact, it has always struck me as rather odd that most of the rhetoric surrounding simulation and appropriation is built on limitation. Ironically, by chance, perhaps even sarcastically, it seems to me that many of the artists most closely aligned with these ideas within the culture industries in American art making practice—artists such as Peter Halley, Jeff Koons, Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, Christian Eckart, Cindy Sherman, Mark Tansey, Haim Steinbach, Robert Yarber, and Philip Taaffe, among others—are truly making art that is new (though perhaps not "novel") out of preexisting information. By embracing form as a given and then re-empowering content vis-a-vis intention, these artists have been among the most intellectually creative of our time, though you wouldn't know it from reading an issue of *October*. For all of its supposed cynicism and morbidity, much of this art, like the Pop art and NeoExpressionism that preceded it on the covers of art magazines and on friendly and none too friendly walls, happens to be the most aesthetic and sensual in recent memory. In fact, NeoGeo (as it was once called) helped to deliver Philip Taaffe, the maker of the most beautiful and obsessively sublime paintings of the last decade, to our doorstep. As Taaffe went from literal appropriation to abstracted appropriation right before our eyes, it was suddenly possible to see the true inner workings of the conceptual creative process of the time; from art to idea back to art again. Regeneration reigns supreme.

What I am interested in here is looking at the way in which recent social occurrences within American politics, life, and culture, have drastically altered the formal apparatus of the art object along with the conceptual foundations of it, thus being diametrically opposed to the way in which past social disintegrations failed to substantially effect the formal qualities of either Pop or appropriation, though quite obviously, content was irrecoverably charged and reshaped. I would like to look at that recent rupture, and to note it, accordingly.

<b>Leonardo</b>				<b>Drew</b>
#8,				1988
Rope	and	mixed		media
106"	x	108"	x	23"







Where as Pop art and appropriation similarly reflected a change in contemporary attitudes and social mores built on what must have been overwhelming feelings of displacement, disillusionment, and isolation, they were still, always, finally, overtly optimistic. It is possible to say that both movements were tied to periods of either victorious glee or economic boom. Though Pop was about dealing with life in America after the prosperous and idealistic fifties, and appropriation could be said to be about a nostalgia (literally translated as a pathological longing for home) for those days, I believe that both can be seen as celebratory. Just the bullish character of the eighties art glut seemed like cause to rejoice and sing aloud. (Of course one can look to Minimalism and Conceptual art sometime earlier as alternatively rupturous, though to my mind they do not apply in like to the degenerative aspects of what I have called "scatter art." The former is still overtly material (see Robert Ryman or Donald Judd), while the latter (see Lawrence Weiner or Sol Lewitt) privileges language so as to partake of yet another formalism.)

In American art of the moment (and we all know America [though not necessarily its artists] does manufacture art by the moment), one can see a rapid and singular disintegration; a simultaneous erosion of form and content. This is not to imply a pejorative connotation. The issue is not raised qualitatively, but rather as a marker of things transformed. What is altered appears to be from the foundation; the psychological impetus for making work as well as the expectations that go along with it, in our post- prosperous, nearly defunct society, seems to have undergone a perhaps irrecoverable dissent away from objecthood toward an all- overness that can be said to be disruptive. While an artist like Andy Warhol could certainly be viewed as a maker of society-critical works, just the notion that a painting or sculpture might be able to do this constructively is arrogant at best, not to mention highly optimistic. Nowadays, in the work of artists such as Felix Gonzales Torres, Thom Merrick, David Hammons, Matthew Barney, Jessica Stockholder, Kevin Carter, Ben Kinmont, Mark Dion, and Michael Jenkins, we are seeing a voiced protest in the form of the layers being stripped away to reveal, finally: closure. Socially, what is being communicated is an overt reluctance to place faith in the power of dead objects to transform lives, completely on their own,

**Leonardo**

#15,

Wire

121" x

and

71" x

**Drew**

1991

canvas

11.5"







though this need not imply that art does not have any power at all. Quite the opposite. What is being searched for is a new language or a variety of languages with which to express new hopes and ideals. In fact, one might say this new quest gives art a grand powerfulness. By posing the question of how to continue, the content and reach of art is stretched considerably. Note that this was the case with painting in the late eighties as well, and look how rich the rewards of that quest were.

Concerning then the three artists in this exhibition—Leonardo Drew, Lisa Hoke, and Brad Kahlhamer—this radical principle is presented as social and aesthetic concern, though the means by which each artist communicates this is wholly autonomous. What can be seen in the three is a reciprocal attitude toward the object. While it is in the intention of each of these artists to dismantle the primary structures of sculpture as we have come to know it, there is at the same time a substantial interest in preserving the integrity of the object, as if it might not be possible to detect the subversion if the form were not somehow recognizable, albeit somewhere out there in the distance. The baby and the bathwater preserved. What interests me as well is the never ending, ongoing quality of this work. Each and every time a work is installed it may be substantially, perhaps irrecoverably, altered, as if the goal is an eventual ideal state. Depending on any number of factors including wear and tear, site, context, and mobility, each installation of the same work can take on a new and utter life of its own. This suggests powerfully the transformative, regenerative nature of this work. What is displayed is a structureless, recurring, moss-like growing; a metaphorically nomadic will to power, particularly and peculiarly evident here.

I first saw Leonardo Drew's work in the exhibition "Outside The Clock: Beyond Good & Elvis," curated by Robert Longo at the Scott Hanson Gallery in the Summer of 1989. It was an exhibition of extreme fluctuation—good art here, awful art there, something powerful over there, something ridiculous over here—but what was immediately clear was the power of Drew's work within the group. And this was by no means an easy group to dominate, if only by virtue of the enunciation of excess, youth, and variation. (Other artists who stood out in the

<b>Lisa</b>		<b>Hoke</b>
Manifold	Destiny,	1990
Pipe,	mufflers,	plastic, wire
9' x 5' x 2'	(dimensions variable)	







show included Kevin Carter, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Rick Franklin, and Aki Fujiyoshi.) As if crocheted over a lifetime, Drew's objects are a collection of resurgent, resonant debris—animal parts, skins, cords, twigs, leaves, wood chips and splinters; what may have been markers of a deposed, otherworldly body. Things coming back to haunt us. Memories we have no recollection of having experienced. As objects they are like a cross between a Baroque tapestry and a collection of Medieval weapons and shields. Similarly, they might have been death quilts or the sewn together remains of an undefined, unknown animal of either the distant future or the distant past. What is present is an essential otherness associated with Art; an otherness that draws out subjectivity, and takes it to task. It suggests an act of completion attained by merging other with self; a creative, empowering act of s p e c t a t o r s h i p .

Drew's work has a physical quality that generatively suggests life, death, and transfiguration, all at once. It has all the moribund presence Robert Morris seems be going for in his most recent works, told in an economy of means that is always admirable and never even hinted at by Morris. I knew immediately when I first saw this work that I had never seen anything quite like it before, and that I was not accustomed to getting this much rich intensity from contemporary art. It's more the stuff of Breughel and Goya. (Though I have had the occasional similar experience with Warhol and Ryman.) At the time, I sent many people over the gallery to look at the work, and the reaction was always identical. Viewers were overwhelmed, but just didn't know how to process it all through their conceptual heads. The reactions this warm work propagates tends to be so much more contradictory than the cool art of that moment had taught us to expect, that Drew's work must have come off as frightening, perhaps even harrowing—unsolvable. Now, some three years later, it is apparent he had a jump on us. His work looks and feels altogether timely, yet it retains the freshness that sets it apart from the rest. Of the earth, of the body, and of the mind, Drew gives us a hyperhybrid that knows no boundaries beyond subjectivity.

Lisa Hoke's work is more whimsical than Drew's. It has the quality of being lighthearted while contemplating disaster. Balance is Hoke's

**Lisa Hoke**  
Lucky Charms, 1991  
Chain, pipe, side window shields  
10' x 8' x 5" (dimensions variable)







issue; balance and imbalance, of course. Earlier works were perhaps more formal in attitude and tone, or by Hoke's own description—macho. There it a quality to them that aligns them with the first generation American Minimalism of Richard Serra and his ilk—art that may or may not continue to stand, art that may or may not harm you. It is the threatening quality of the work that Hoke's newer sculptures retain, while foregoing some of the more formalist elements. While earlier works were made of cast iron and steel wire and other such brawny materials, newer works are created from shower curtains, flimsy rubber, tin cans, and the occasional found object, as is the case with a particularly successful work made up of a string of car windshields and lead pipes.

To her credit, while casting off a parodic air of one-upsmanship, Hoke has not entirely abandoned the frightening quality of her earlier work. The best part of all is that now you are not only aware of the threatening nature of the sculpture, you are simultaneously keyed in to the hysterical underside; the role of the viewer is focused upon, making the entire experience somehow more complex and extraordinary. (This is true with Serra as well.) Finally, the quality that most interests me in Hoke's work is the suspenseful and beguiling nature of self-danger contained within. Works combining soft materials and harsher ones suggest not only their own materiality and existence in the world, but at the same time their own possible eventual end. In each piece, Hoke has loaded the object not only with its own life force, but at once with an enunciated possibility for demise; in fact, suicide. Torn or shorn, broken or bruised, pierced or cut, fallen or tripped, these works seem to be counting their blessings.

Brad Kahlhamer takes yet another route on a similar road. He is an artist who manages to invent and reinvent the wheel time and time again. What you get is work that is at once grand and shy—belligerent yet self-deprecating. While his crushed and contorted rubber tire sculptures remind one of John Chamberlain's similar assaults on automobiles, Kahlhamer's work is more like the opposite of Chamberlain's. What is most captivating about Chamberlain's sculpture is its suggestion of destruction; an aggressive, even hostile project born of mass consumption and agitated psychological

<b>Brad</b>			<b>Kahlhamer</b>
Untitled,			1991
Rubber	and		metal
38"	x	84"	x 32"







P i a t e s  
on page 2

**Leonardo** **Drew**  
#14, 1991  
Ground rust  
103" x 83" x .25"

**Lisa** **Hoke**  
Malaprop, 1990  
Steel, shower curtain, pipe, wire  
9' x 5' x 6" (dimensions variable)

**Brad** **Kahlhamer**  
Untitled, 1991  
Rubber and metal  
24" x 24" x 5.5"

response. Kahlhamer, on the other hand, is giving life to discarded objects that no longer have the use for which they are made. That his object is most often either the refracted wheel—the tire, or a reasonable facsimile there of—gives them a resonance that is comprehensive. Like the Lemieux photograph, Kahlhamer’s objects suggest a graveyard; markers for inanimate objects of progress put down; an icon to more optimistic days, long gone. Like Robert Longo’s recent perversions of the American Flag model, continuously rendered in black, Kahlhamer’s sculpture retains a power based on its model; origin as memory, while at the same time, transcending banalities based on familiarity by contextualizing the objects within an art historical (perhaps, in this instance, specific to sculpture) context. While recalling at once Chamberlain, Stella, and Rauschenberg, Kahlhamer is successful at disempowering the master’s touch school of sculptural activity. In doing so, he manages to define himself a c c o r d i n g l y .

What is at the heart of these artists’s works is a concentration on redefinition of not only what we have come to respect as the parameters of contemporary sculpture, but at the same time what we have come to expect of the spectator’s role within the process of looking at art For Leonardo Drew, Lisa Hoke, and Brad Kahlhamer the experience is crucial on both ends. They see the process as being complementary: from artist to viewer and from viewer to artist; an Eternally Recurrent pantomime. What is expected is very large, with ramifications that go well beyond the generic boundaries of art as entertainment that the eighties was so good at. From a social point of view, this new art is telling us that no one gets off easy anymore. The formalist myth of being on the receiving end of art must now, finally be torn away. What will be exchanged in its place is a subjective portrait of the responsive/responsible self. What happens thereafter is on our own conscience.

O p p o s i t e

**Brad** **Kahlhamer**  
Untitled, 1991  
Rubber and metal







**Lisa Hoke**

Born in Virginia, 1952

Studied at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (B.A. 1974)

Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond (B.F.A., 1978)

Florida State University, Tallahassee (1979-1980)

Lives in New York

**One-artist exhibitions:**

1 9 8 8

Rosa Esman Gallery, New York

1 9 8 9

Vaughan & Vaughan Gallery, Minneapolis

**Selected group exhibitions:**

1 9 8 5

The New Museum, New York  
"On View," Curated by Ned Rifkin

1 9 8 6

Artists Space, New York  
"Six Sculptors," Curated by Valerie Smith

1 9 8 7

Rosa Esman Gallery, New York  
"Materials and Transformations"  
Curated by Frederieke Taylor

1 9 8 8

Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield  
"Innovations in Sculpture, 1985-1988"

John Davis Gallery, New York  
"Unpainted Metal/Wall Sculpture"

Saxon-Lee Gallery, Los Angeles  
"From the Back Room"

1 9 8 9

Germans Van Eck Gallery, New York  
"Terry Adkins, Carol Hepper & Lisa Hoke"

Blum Helman Gallery, New York  
"Group Sculpture"

1 9 9 0

Whitney Museum of American Art  
Equitable Center Branch, New York  
"Contingent Realms"

New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans  
"Awards in the Visual Arts 9" (traveled)

Hunter College Art Gallery, New York  
"Formulation & Representation:  
Recent Abstract Sculpture"

1 9 9 1

The Art Museum at Florida  
International University, Miami  
"American Art Today: New Directions"

Roland Gibson Gallery, S.U.N.Y. at Potsdam  
"Animation and Ornamentation"  
Curated by Stephen Westfall

**Leonardo Drew**

Born in Tallahassee, Florida, 1961

Studied at Cooper Union, New York (B.F.A., 1985)

Lives in New York

**One-artist exhibitions:**

1 9 8 1

Public Library, Bridgeport, New York

1 9 8 3

Unique Gallery, Westport, Connecticut

**Selected group exhibitions:**

1 9 8 5

Houghton Gallery, Cooper Union, New York

1 9 8 9

Scott Hanson Gallery, New York  
"Outside the Clock"  
Curated by Robert Longo

Ken Keleba Gallery, "Pillar to Post"

1 9 9 1

The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York  
"From the Studio,  
Artists in Residence 1990-91"

**Brad Kahlhamer**

Born in Tucson, Arizona, 1956

Studied at The University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh (B.F.A., 1980)

Lives in New York

**One-artist exhibitions:**

1 9 8 8

MS Gallery, Hartford, Connecticut

1 9 9 1

Georgetown University Gallery  
Washington, D. C.

**Selected group exhibitions:**

1 9 9 0

Arton Gallery, Stockholm

C r e d i t s

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Erik Landsberg,

pgs 13 & 15 —

James Dee

Exhibition organized by

Timothy Nye