



Above: Richard Notkin, installation view of “Passages,” 1999. Background: *The Gift*, ceramic, 9 x 7 ft.; foreground: *Legacy*, ceramic, dimensions variable. Right: Detail of *Legacy*.

ment since 1981.

Notkin—with his strong ties to the finish-fetish and Super Object movements in ceramic art—has always practiced a meticulous, even obsessive, craftsmanship. At the same time, he has passionately engaged social and political issues in his work, often with a mordant wit; witness such earlier titles as *Demons of the Intellect* (*Professing to be Wise, They Became Fools*) and *Pyramidal Skull Teapot: Military Intelligence I, Yixing Series*.

Less witty than previous works, *Legacy* and *The Gift* offer unambiguous political commentary—as Notkin says, they are about “lessons heard but not heeded”—but before their meanings can seem overdetermined, the viewer encounters the individual tiles of *The Gift* (with their precisely delineated details) and the multi-



plicity of individuated ears (formed from 27 different molds in 50 different stoneware clays and sandblasted, tumbled, or polished to resemble timeworn river rocks). By thus expending great care on every fragment, Notkin has invested his latest sculptures with compassion, anguish, and hope. These are spiritual works. Like the paintings of Rothko, they call out for silence and for contemplation.

—Rick Newby

New York “Children of Berlin”

P.S.1

“Children of Berlin,” curated by Alanna Heiss and Klaus Biesenbach, featured works by Berlin artists, architects, designers of film and theater works and gave glimpses into their club culture. The earlier model for this show, the 1998 Berlin Biennale, in harmony with the cacophonous construction sites, shambled architecture, and historically loaded topography of Berlin, offered an energetic contextuality that was absent at P.S.1.

At the P.S.1 exhibition, the contextual paucity was only one Waterloo. Many of the artworks were unremarkable, technically malfunctioning, or unlabeled, with authorship for some works remaining a mystery to viewers. A week of parties, films, club functions, and rituals on the Hudson were available and fun if you could or would attend them all.

Rising to the top at P.S.1 were the works by Christoph Schlingensiefel, an artist-performer, activist, filmmaker, and political candidate. *Sinking Germany* (1998–99), the second of a three-part series, consisted of an installation with pup tents, fencing, Wagner’s score from the *Ring*, and video projections—all describing Schlingensiefel’s complicated relationship with his homeland. On opening day at P.S.1, the artist dressed in Jewish orthodox clothes and sported long curly sideburns, registering his accusations and grief. But the haunting Fassbinder-like

films represented his best works.

Roland Brus, an artist and director and activist, is originally from East Berlin. His work, *Sheltered II* (1999), consisted of a room of objects, notes, and other personal detritus organized by prisoners who had been confined at Tegel-Alexanderplatz. Brus was the founder for the project Aufbruch (Uprising), which evolved from his work with the

power, and hierarchy. His group, Kunst und Knast (Art and Prison), boasts a prisoners' theater with 20 inmates from eight nations.

John Bock, a young performance-installation artist who startled viewers at both the Biennale and at the Anton Kern gallery in New York last year, was mis-sited here in the dramatic, theater-like arena at P.S.1. *MolkeMeMindVehikel* (1998), a performative installation

subliminal content of her work in the Berlin Biennale, *Passage 11 Zug*. That piece showed a moving train appearing to leave the station, but before the last car disappeared from the screen, the train stopped and moved backward—as if history were endlessly repeating.

Daniel Pflumm's *Neu* continued his play on the influence of trademarks or corporate logos. He sees

the first after P.S.1's alliance with the Museum of Modern Art, raises interesting questions about the new directions that the space may be taking.

—Carolee Thea

“Unique Forms of Continuity in Space”

The Museum of Modern Art The exhibition “Unique Forms of Continuity in Space,” part of the



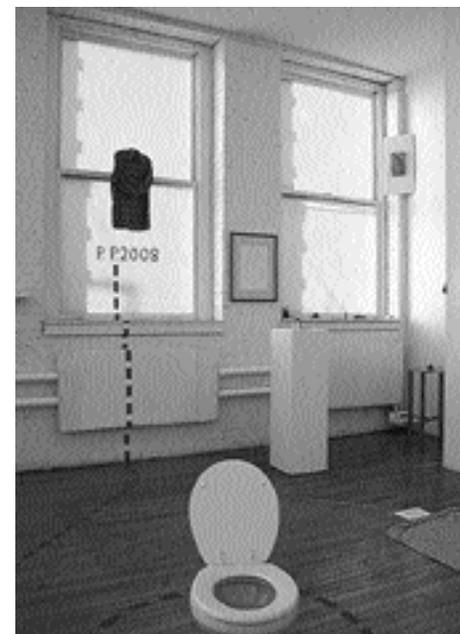
Above: Christoph Schlingensiefel, *Sinking Germany*, 1998–99. Second part of a three-part performance series, installation with tents, fence, and video projections. Right: Roland Brus, *Sheltered II*, 1999. Prisoners' articles, installation view.

homeless. Homelessness is a metaphor with which the newly unified Easterners could identify, since it describes the dysfunction of society precipitated by reunification. During premieres and other celebrations, the homeless were jailed so as not to be or to appear threatening. (Obviously, the authorities had absorbed the lesson of Pabst's film *The Three Penny Opera*.) Brus put on plays with the prisoners and became involved with life at the prison: surveillance, punishment, control,

event, consisted of a series of colored tents in a semicircle around a white Fiat Panda filled with potatoes. Bock's sites are not objects in themselves but function as the interactive residue of a performance, and this piece was undermined by a too sculpturally objectified presentation. At the Biennale, Bock's *LiquidatsAura Aromaport Folio* was so enigmatic and stimulating a work it demanded both mental and physical participation during and after his sequestered performance. Bock's work is a complex, existential post-Dada performance whose aftermath echoes in its trashy residue.

Heike Baranowsky's double-screen video *Parallax*, a two-laser disc projection, presented running images of landscape and woods but lacked the mesmerizing and

these reductionist messengers of information as part of our visual culture. Pflumm's early work, not seen here, inspired the art/music crossover which underlies Berlin club culture. Olafur Eliasson's *Untitled*, a swinging electric fan, like many of the films and videos here, didn't function most of the time. Rineke Dijkstra's C-print *Tiergarten Berlin* and Thomas Demand's *Hedge and Office* did not disappoint, but Anatolij Shuralev's *Berlin* did. The cooperative Honey-Suckle Company's *Neu West End* was a confusing hoax, while Bert Neumann's *Balkan Room* had a momentary effect but was not memorable. Finally, it was a pretty frustrating job to identify the six or seven slide projections by various artists or architects installed all together in the same room. This exhibition,



“modernstarts: PEOPLE” show at the Museum of Modern Art, was a component of a general overview of the period 1880 through 1920, when the articles of modernity were becoming known to an ever-increasing audience. “Unique Forms,” devoted to figurative sculpture, played with a number of sculpture's attributes, as developed by curator John Elderfield, who writes in his brief catalogue essay that “the change from figurative sculptures that are mainly perceived as figures to those that are mainly perceived as sculptures occurred in the period between 1880 and 1920.” Chief among the distinguishing characteristics of this new figural sculpture is size, which Elderfield understands to be a “function” of several meanings: representation, whereby proximity