

PIETER SCHOOLWERTH

October 19 - November 24, 1996

The Greene Naftali Gallery will present three projects by Pieter Schoolwerth: "Thee 83 Altered States ov Americka" (1995-96), "Seven Daze" (1992) and "Thee Space Between" (1991). The exhibition opens Saturday, October 19th and continues through November 24th. Pieter Schoolwerth is a graduate of Cal Arts and has shown in New York at the Threadwaxing Space, The Clock Tower Gallery and was also part of a performance series at the Alterknit Theater curated by Alex Bagg. His work will be included in the upcoming traveling exhibition, *Gothic*, curated by Christoph Grunenberg at the ICA, Boston and the Portland Art Museum. The artist lives and works in Brooklyn.

Schoolwerth has created an installation built to invoke a Gothic cathedral while utilizing the aesthetics of 60's psychedelic design, medieval illuminated manuscripts, heavy metal, and soft-core porn in his collaged paintings, colored pencil drawings, audio books, and sewn sculpture. The central project in the exhibition and the most recent is "Thee 83 Altered States ov Americka" which consists of ten large scale colored pencil drawings and 13 candelabra installed in a hallway traversing the gallery. This project is based on a rigorous analytical system in which the artist manipulates language, or our arbitrary designations for naming (in this case states), to create his own set of altered states which present the possibilities of fantasy lands which may be available and accessible outside of conventional structures. These "altered" states are presented as both literal territories and metaphoric places as represented in the 12 chapters depicted in the 10 drawings. Each of the drawings weaves imagery which exploits and celebrates TV culture, Catholicism, the U.S. government, advertising, the internet and virtual reality. The themes represented as altered realities or altered states of consciousness include a "state" of intoxication, New York City, Middle American Suburbia, British Goth Rock, Pop Culture and unbridled sexual ecstasy. The desire for expression is controlled by an oppressive and obsessive visuality which mirrors the artist's attempts to create a place outside of language and at the same time parallels his enslavement to it.

"My work functions in the space between things, between genders, between man and monster, between species, between alphabets"

Pieter Schoolwerth, Openings, ARTFORUM, 1/95

The projects entitled "Seven Daze" and "Thee Space Between" are composed of photographs and pencil on paper collaged onto canvas and audio books. These earlier projects form the cornerstone of Schoolwerth's project and present his engagement with language in it's most reduced form. The artist performs simple manipulations on the alphabet based on a pre-established set of rules. By turning letters upside down, backward and overlapping them, he weaves a narrative which quickly collapses into a bizarre fantasy played out visually in the photographs and drawings. Snail bunnies cavort with a clover walrus which kills a moon dog licking a lollipop. The audio books recite in sound his story through a garbled and awkward voice which is as difficult and determined as it is fantastic. The visual aspects of these projects again draw heavily from the "anti-aesthetic" of rock culture and the overtly saccharine quality of a child's candy land. The representation of an attempt to escape from language - the most dominant and universal rule system governing thought and behavior - through language itself is torturous and complicated.

The Greene Naftali Gallery is located at 526 West 26th Street between 10th and 11th Avenues. The gallery is open to the public Wednesday through Saturday from 10-6 and on Sunday from 12-6. For additional information and photography please call or fax the gallery.