

JOHN BALDESSARI, FIRE, MONEY, WATER, SEX, 1984.
B+W PHOTOGRAPHS, OIL TINT, 96.5 x 122 CM.

balance and the balance of power of a society. Baldessari shakes up the familiar social logic and presents a photographic world that confronts the unsuspecting spectator with a world, made intimate without criticism, of glitter and welfare for everybody. The work of John Baldessari unveils in this way the foundations of our society.

Luk Lambrecht

SPAIN

MARK DAGLEY

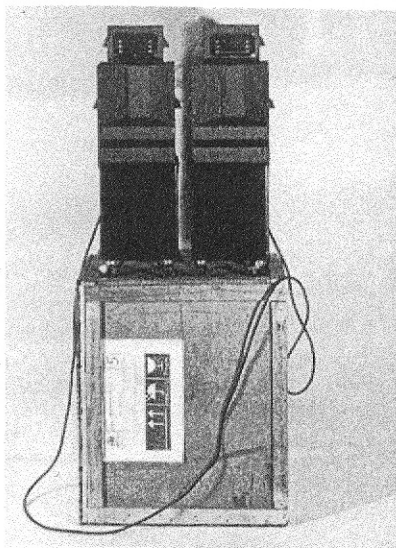
MAR ESTRADA, MADRID

The good thing about the Madrid art galleries is that each year they suffer a different illness. This season's fever for internationalism is one of the most benign, and in the end, may perhaps be considered as a symptom of progress. After long seasons where nobody dared show the work of a foreign artist—they weren't even known—we have now reached a point where it's impossible to visit the exhibition of a local artist, not for love nor for money. It is not a particularly serious epidemic, and except for a few isolated cases of purely artificial operations, founded on the easiest and most commonplace hit parade of best-sellers, as was the Condo-Barcelo-Schnabel set-up in the Soledad Lorenzo, the accomplished effort compensates for the created expectations. And thus, the gallery season-starters, like at Fucares, Montenegro, Moriarty or Juana de Aizpuru.

Mar Estrada is a gallery that, in the same way as the Marga Paz, the 57, or the Máquina Espanola, was created with an uncomplicated internationalist disposition, although more faltering in its program than the previous mentioned spaces. After an exaggeratedly careful exhibition of Ceccobelli to open the gallery, this second exhibition presents, with an undisputable and almost shocking professionalism for this country, recent works by Mark Dagley under the common epigraph of "descriptions of sameness."

They are works that fall backward—and his resort to the relapse is correct, with a freshness that Gertrude Stein would envy: "They frame

nothing . . . the painting as frame as painting," onto his most well-known formulas, within neo-geo, and in the explicit inheritance of the post-minimal and shaped canvas traditions. Impeccably brilliant surfaces of smooth hues, strongly decorative, that at the same time pretend to speculate with the intention of radicalizing, referring to the calculated ambiguity that they demonstrate as objects, as *specific objects*, to quote, in this case, the entirely necessary Judd.



MARK DAGLEY, CLOSED SOUND SYSTEM, 1988.
MIXED MEDIA, 89.5 x 65.5 x 25 CM.

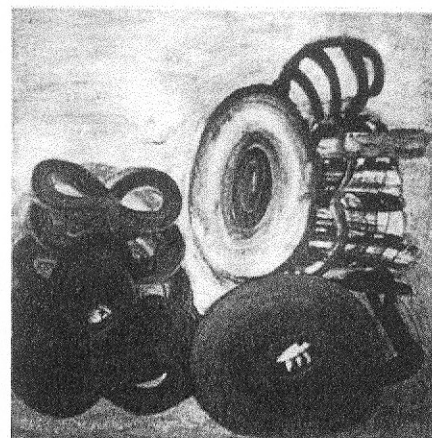
His distancing from the wall and at the same time his treatment of the surfaces take them further away from mere painting and bring them closer to the territory of sculpture. But Dagley does not simply stop there: his loudspeakers—that evoke Kienholz this time—add the restless uneasiness that his perverse approach to reality produces, from pure form, from the emptying of all content and function. In these, "Closed Circuit Sound Systems," as in the paintings, the only thing that is heard is the exquisite and ambiguous silence that the laboratories of the postminimal experimentation of New York '80s art have been broadcasting, somewhere between a mute hostility, an evident general incomprehension, and an easy, but doubtlessly deserved success.

Jose Luis Brea

(Translated from Spanish by Christina Ward)

CHARO PRADAS CIENTO, BARCELONA

Charo Pradas's painting, between painting's development in the '80s and the obsessive interest in so-called young art, is one of the most peculiar oeuvres in recent Spanish art. Despite her not very long career, the singularity of her proposal has characterized her since her beginnings: a sort of particular, figurative art, very little related to the now despised, '80s neo-figuration which, in a quiet, specific way deals with the material surface



CHARO PRADAS, SERPIENTE, 1988.
MIXED MEDIA ON CANVAS, 200 x 200 CM.

of the picture based on the use of color as suggestion and hint.

Her two most characteristic features in the works on paper and the paintings are: a singular repertoire with an animalist source—sarcastically and ironically indeed—and an atmosphere where the images seem to acquire a strange life of their own. Pradas's images are mysterious rather than defined. Her iconography comes from the realm of animals, but their presence is treated and valued according to their iconic and motif character, which are often the virtual center of the picture. It seems doubtful that the recovery of motif, value, and sense of the image is directly related to the times, for the recovery of painting and its sources throughout the '80s. However, with Pradas we have a strong valuation on the images which come from a peculiar *weltanschauung*, and from a particular point of view of things and painting itself; and this special value liberates them from any external reference.

When we analyze what Pradas presents as the central subject of her pictures, there are always a few emblematic elements. They are often related to a kind of circle-eye-sun image as a polyvalent zone. Such a nucleus serves the artist to organize her work and at the same time to show a "convex" view of reality. There are other elements implicated in this reality which offer simultaneous, different views in the same work. All of these elements have their basis in an atmosphere which seems to be a part of both two and three dimensions, but these elements are never excessively explicit.

This exhibition shows the way the artist can produce a painting of a very particular status through the treatment of images and the use of color based on transparencies, hints, and suggestions of the hidden.

Pradas's work has always been difficult to classify. As a part of the common arena, of tendencies in recent Western art, Pradas places her work in a rich no man's land. And this particular quality involves some very rare values today: that painting—representational or not—is not a meaning but a passage; that essence must prevail over technique; and finally, that those who seek find.

Manel Clot

(Translated from Catalan by Rafael Montagud)