

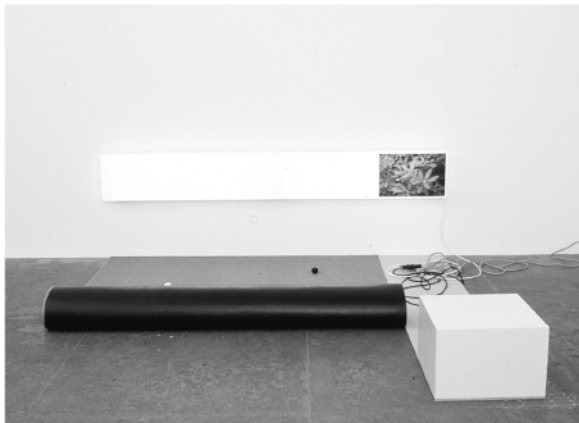
NEW YORK

### DIKE BLAIR

FEATURE INC.

Dike Blair has always been a careful observer of scenes. His paintings of hotel lobbies, full ashtrays, car interiors, and glistening glasses of champagne amount to a compendium of luxury-class still life. His installations tend to capture less rarefied atmospheres: In one early-'90s project, he transformed a gallery space into a corporate waiting room, focusing on the familiar bland decor (mauve carpeting, metal chairs, Muzak) that is meant to elicit a sense of comfort. The artist is also a writer and has been associated with the Paris-based fashion/culture magazine *Purple* since its inception. A couple of years ago the French publication was featured in an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou whose subject was ostensibly the exploration of dreams, but like *Purple* itself, the show was really about ambience, the beauty of atmosphere. Blair's work is rooted in just that sensibility.

The artist's first solo effort in New York for several years included two floor installations and a selection of delicate gouaches, sensitive re-creations of photographs he has taken (all works 2001). Some of the paintings depicted the deep green leaves and blossoms of flowering plants: hydrangeas, peonies, poppies. Grayer in tone but no less romantic were views of the sky mediated by windows streaked with rain or diffusing the sun to a pale yellow glow. The connective force between these two groups of works was light—illusory, filtered, electric. On the wall, as part of the sculptures, were mounted light boxes that illuminated photographs of similar scenes: leaves, a landscape. As is typical, the installations also included pieces of carpeting, one partially rolled up to reveal its spongy padding and the floor beneath, juxtaposed with an unrolled section of a different color or length. Situated around these were rectangular forms resembling low modular furniture open at one end, their hollow interiors lit from within by fluorescent tubes. A tangled mass of colored extension cords connected these lit elements to a wall outlet.



Dike Blair, *some of*, 2001.  
mixed media, 33 x 100 x 97 1/2". Installation view.

In his sculptures Blair relies on the technique of ikebana, the Japanese method of object arrangement in which each element is carefully placed to achieve the perfect balance of the whole. His floor installations buzz with an internal energy and function as tight, carefully conceived set pieces: the rug here, the light coming in this way, perhaps a rubber ball or two resting in perfect Zenlike randomness on the carpet, a picture placed just so. Depending on the viewer's vantage, different effects are delivered, but the works always retain a sense of harmonious integration. As much as they parallel interior or architectural zones, they also assert themselves as pictures, specifically landscapes: carpet as grass, light box as sky, vertical form as figure. Through Blair's sculptural shorthand, the pictorial compositions are schematically and minimally generated. They thrill in their efficiency.

—Meghan Dailey