

ARTFORUM

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ALAN SARET: THE CLOCKTOWER

by Susan Heinemann

It is this translation of personal whimsy into a publicly accessible art that informs Alan Saret's work. His recent show at The Clocktower included proposals for the construction of fabric houses which would realize his romantic dreams of "planetary and universal Eden." The playfulness of Saret's illustrations allows one to participate in his fancies, although too often his overly simplistic idealism degenerates into a cute mysticism. Less exclusively eccentric, and thus to my mind more interesting, are Saret's scribbled color pencil drawings. These works seem to underline the nature of drawing as repetitive gestural marks on a sheet of paper. No preconceived images are formed by the intuitive notations. Nor is there any dogmatic assertion of the artist's willfulness, for the marks cover only a small area of the total paper surface. The effect is rather of notes, suggestions for the viewer's own fantasies. Again in the large crumpled chicken wire sculpture on display, the indeterminacy of the form implies animism and thus triggers the viewer's imagination. The weightless appearance of chicken wire stresses the insubstantiality of the object, which seems to float instead of rest on the floor. In fact, the whole seems in a state of flux, an image constantly becoming, never clearly present. The visibly gestural nature of the facture makes one want to actually mold the form, to structure it in some way. The other pieces are less effective—one is chicken wire sprayed green and bent into a rippling pattern, the other mesh folded around itself. Both seem too consciously manipulated, too definite as objects, to allow for the viewer's creative participation. Saret is best when he lets the chaos of intuitive structuring invite the viewer to order it.