

VISION & CONSCIENCE

University Art Gallery

October 3-26, 1984

How does one differentiate between public and private acts, between gestures that are political and those that are strictly personal? Certainly voting is a political act, but what about switching channels when Salvadoran refugees stare out from the screen, or silently disdaining a woman's opinions, or acting as if the janitor were invisible? Or, what even of a man's decision to wear a colorful silk shirt, or leaving one's living room empty except for a few large pillows, or eating only fruits and vegetables? We believe that all of these acts are political. For, as they express one's own preferences, they also shape the lives of others. In that sense, they alter the very course of history.

And what of art? Lately, the art market, art magazines and the *New York Times* have decided that there is, on the one hand, political art, and on the other, all the rest of the art that is made. Loosely speaking, "political" for these analysts designates any art which has overt political content. This assumption, which dichotomizes art production, is wrong-headed on two counts. First of all, it homogenizes all artistic political responses. The spectrum from Left to Right vanishes; nuances dissolve. The work is simply "political." And secondly, all gestures which appear to be merely private are relegated to a never-never land of ineffectuality. The personal quest for poetry, freedom, adventure, the artist's invitation to the spectator to journey in the senses, in the imagination—these are banished to the realm of self-indulgence and frivolity. Are the journeys of the heart and mind *necessarily* less radical, less subversive, than a demonstration against American intervention in Central America? Or are they not perhaps just alternate arenas in which to struggle for freedom?

All of the work in this show is political. All of it would change the world if it could. On one level, the paintings, photographs, and installations are the dreams of the privileged, of artists; on another, they are the injunctions of ordinary men and women to act. The one thing they have in common is a passionate hunger for freedom and human dignity.

Eunice Lipton



Untitled, 1984. Mixed media on paper. 92 x 102 inches.

ISMAEL FRIGERIO

Ismael Frigerio was born in 1955 in Santiago, Chile, and now lives in New York City. He attended the School of Fine Arts, University of Chile, Santiago (BFA 1980), and taught art at the University of Chile and the Contemporary Art Institute, Santiago from 1979-81. His work has been exhibited extensively in Chile and more recently in the U.S. He is currently working on a project that he describes as a re-thinking of Chilean history.

ALFREDO JAAR

Alfredo Jaar was born in 1956 in Santiago, Chile, and now lives in New York City where he works as a freelance architect and graphic designer. He attended the School of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Chile, Santiago (BA 1981) and studied filmmaking at the American Center, Santiago, 1978-79. He has received grants from Artists Space, NY; Pacific Foundation, International Fellowship, Santiago; and Air France, International Fellowship, Santiago. His work has been exhibited at numerous institutions in Chile and more recently in the U.S. He is currently engaged in a project about political societies and the pursuit of happiness.

THE POWER OF WORDS



They sing. They hurt. They teach. They sanctify. They were man's first, immeasurable feat of magic. They liberated us from ignorance and our barbarous past. For without these marvelous scribbles which build letters into words, words into sentences, sentences into systems and science and creeds, man would be forever confined to the self-isolated prison of the cuttlefish or the chimpanzee.

We live by words: LOVE, TRUTH, GOD. We fight for words: FREEDOM, COUNTRY, FAME. We die for words: LIBERTY, GLORY, HONOR. They bestow the priceless gift of articulacy on our minds and hearts—from "Mama" to "infinity." And those who truly shape our destiny, the giants who teach us, inspire us, lead us to deeds of immortality are those who use words with clarity, grandeur and passion: Socrates, Jesus, Luther, Lincoln, Churchill. Americans, caught between affluence and anxiety, may give thanks for the endless riches in the kingdom of print.



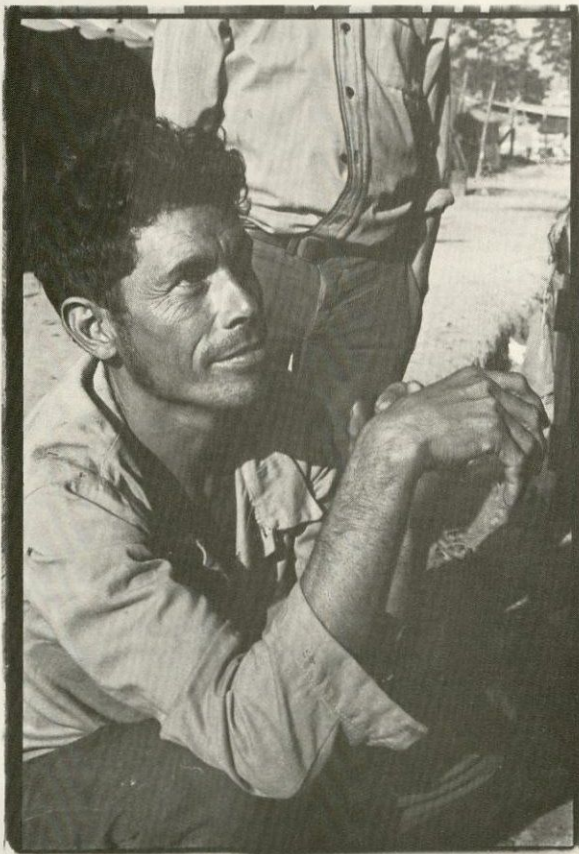
(Top) *Technicolor Passion Flower*, 1984. Oil on canvas. 48 x 144 inches.
 (Bottom) *Evening Tree*, 1983. Oil on canvas. 60 x 180 inches.

PAT STEIR

Pat Steir was born in 1940 in Newark, New Jersey, and currently divides her time between New York City and Amsterdam. She attended Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY (BFA 1961). After working as an art director for Harper & Row from 1965-69, she taught at the California Institute of the Arts from 1973-75. She received a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in 1974 and a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation grant in 1982. She has exhibited her work extensively in the U.S. and abroad. She is now working on a piece titled, "The Brueghel Series," in which she analyzes a still life painting by Brueghel.

STEVE CAGAN

Born in 1943, Steve Cagan lives in Cleveland, Ohio, where he is a freelance documentary photographer. He attended the City College of New York (BA 1965, English language and literature) and Indiana University (MA 1967, American history). He received grants from the Ohio Arts Council in 1983 and 1984, and a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship in 1983. His work has been exhibited in union halls and art galleries in the U.S. and Europe. He is currently working on two projects: one concerns daily life in Estelí, Nicaragua; the other is about factory closings in Ohio.



The Salvadorans in the camps in Honduras neither want nor need our pity. What they do need is our understanding of their situation. That understanding will lead us to defend their rights as refugees, and to demand an end to the destructive, anti-human and anti-democratic policies of our government in Central America.

From the series: *"How sad my people seems"* Salvadoran refugees in Honduras. August, 1982. Photographs, 11 x 14 inches.

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Curators:

Nancy Gonchar
Eunice Lipton

Sponsored by the University Art Gallery, the Department of Art and Art History, the Dean of Arts and Sciences and Harpur College, and the Foundation of the State University of New York at Binghamton.

University Art Gallery

State University of New York at Binghamton
Binghamton, New York 13901

Gallery hours:

weekdays: 9-4:30
weekends: 1-4:30

University Art Gallery Staff

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