

Ripley

Nineteen seventy nine: Beyond the Fragments. *The women's movement is contesting not simply at the level of programmes and constitutions, which is why we could never find adequate words to meet the aggressive question from men in left groups in the early days: 'Well, what is it that you want?' The dispute is about an idiom of politics ...*

Nineteen seventy nine: her 'first major exhibition in Europe'. Knotting and looping its way across front and back of the catalogue's cover is Untitled (Rope Piece) which, disappointingly, was not in the show at this, its first venue. Krauss's essay inside talks mostly about Contingent, which wasn't in the show either. Lots was, though, including a good portion of the things appearing in the studio shot of sculptures made between 1965-66, and the seminal (why not?) cube with the tubes. Unminimal. And then there were the two works which, between them, took up the right hand wall of the gallery. More tubes, this time long, straight and fragile, and next to them her absurd loop. She was already not around, like Robert was not around and Gordon was not around. But the tubes, it's said, are about her height. That must be true enough, you think, because you've seen the photograph of her standing in front of Expanded Expansion and the top of her head just about bisects the ten foot upright behind her. Put one on the floor and keep it vertical, resting a finger lightly on its upper rim and it comes up roughly to your shoulder. She's here and not here.

Take them out of the crate and unwrap them, one by one. Be careful. Washed hands and white cotton gloves. Disney mice and debutantes. Did she wear gloves? Probably not the first time. They were hers after all, so she could handle them any way she liked. They are delicate: strong but brittle, not so old yet, so a honey gold. There's nothing to fix, you just place – one then another until you've got all fifty of them leaning against the wall. *Repetition is very prevalent in your work. Why do you repeat a form over and over? Because it exaggerates. If something is meaningful, maybe it's more meaningful said ten times. It's not just an aesthetic choice. If something is absurd, it's much more greatly exaggerated, absurd, if it's repeated.* Leaning ties the floor to the wall but it's not Dan's priapic 'diagonal of personal ecstasy', it's not Richard's plumbing, it's not John's surfer/alien planks, good enough to eat though they are. *It is my main concern to go beyond what I know and what I can know.* Don't regiment them. Keep them adjacent but not touching. Some should stand pretty close to the wall, but others ought to lean from a little further away so that they rest at a lower angle. There's no pattern to this arrangement, it should appear casual - not random exactly or chaotic, but definitely relaxed. It's got to look just right, but it mustn't look planned. Think with your eyes and with your white-gloved hands. Mean it but don't let anyone get the idea

that it has been meant. *As a thing, an object, it accedes to its non-logical self. It is something. It is nothing.*

They're the same and not the same – same height, same diameter, same thin fibreglass, but made not moulded and not manufactured so all different. Minimal and not minimal: *nice parallel lines - make me sick*. She didn't make them, someone else did that for her using the cardboard tubes that you find in the centre of bolts of cloth as the formers. But she placed them before you. Did she wear gloves? She held them, then you held them, the distance between you just one thickness of brushed cotton. These washed, gloved hands had earlier placed the bricks, one with a blue spot that they couldn't clean off after the ink was thrown. One hundred and twenty in two layers of sixty each ten stretchers by six headers. VIII. *I feel emotionally connected to his work. It does something to my insides*. Yes. Any way you look at it. Nineteen seventy nine. Summer's bad (sad) girls, Gaynor's will to survive, Carter's The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography. What is it that you want?

The wrapped frame is surprisingly light for its size. Lifting it is a pleasure. The conscientiously wound binding covers padding protecting its rigid skeleton. It sits comfortably in the hands even as its slight flexion seems to make it spring upwards when you straighten your legs to lift. Then there's the sheen of the gloss paint covering it all, shading pale to dark, top left to bottom right. *More absurdity*. She is right, it is very, very finely done. And the metal loop, which is also bound – with wire this time. Bent, but don't bend it. It bolts easily into the bandaged frame, scooping out and corralling a big dollop of space in front of the framed emptiness. It, too, sweeps top left to bottom right, echoing the graded grey and stroking the floor on its journey. When it's all put together and up on the wall – the work of minutes - you can only stand at a distance, outside, looking in. But in order to assemble it you have to be inside that space which is a space like no other space you have ever entered. Nineteen seventy nine. The exhibition opened at the Whitechapel Art Gallery on May 3. There was an election the same day. Margaret Thatcher was elected. What is it that you want? *I remember I wanted to get to non art, non connotive, non anthropomorphic, non geometric, non nothing, everything, but of another kind, vision, sort. from a total other reference point.*

Michael Archer