

ARTNEWS
April, 2002

NEW YORK REVIEWS

"Off the Grid"

Lehmann Maupin

By Alfred MacAdam

The governing conceit of "Off the Grid" derives from electric power: those "on the grid" depend on the commercial generation and distribution of power; those "off the grid" produce their own energy. While the idea may not bear too much scrutiny, it is convenient to consider the 17 artists in this imaginative, highly charged show of works on paper as independent producers of electricity because their contributions were often either eccentric or preliminary stages in artistic production.

Among the eccentric pieces were three collages by Tony Oursler—a refreshing change from his overworked "talking heads." All include real earphones, have the words "Between the Ears" in their titles, and transform into visual metaphors something we see every day: people wearing earphones as they walk through urban cacophony and think private thoughts.

More consistent with their familiar work, and just as powerful, were Adriana Varejao's *Ambiente Virtual-Grafite* and Ashley Bickerton's two pencil drawings *Plan for Catalog #1* and *Plan for Logo Piece*—all preliminary drawings for larger projects. Similarly, Teresita Fernandez's three collages from her "Ice/Architecture" series achieve in paper the effect of frozen, melted, and refrozen liquid.

Ugo Rondinone's *No. 260 DREIZEHNTERJANUARZWEITAUSENDUNDZWEI* is a beast of other dimensions. A huge ink drawing of a forested landscape, it takes the idea of the drawing to the level of hyperbole, while, in a different key, evoking Goya's huge "cartoons."

But it was Casey Cook's acrylic on paper *Or Else* that dominated. A diptych that could stand on its own or be transformed into a large painting, this trompe l'oeil piece seemed painted directly on the wall. Its illusionary folds create space where none exists. While this work "greeted" the viewer upon entering the gallery, it also defined the ingenuity of these 17 independent energy producers.