

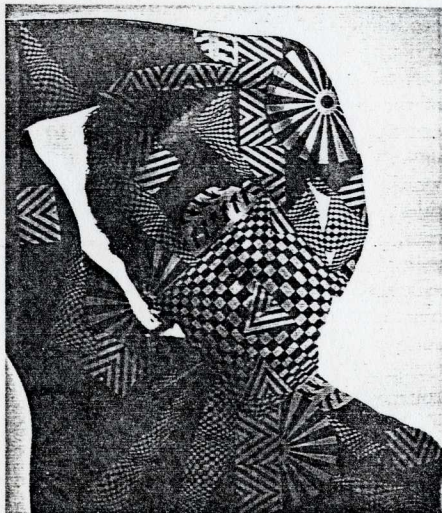
like all the works, seems to be a guess at the incalculable, a rejuvenation of the uncanny. Especially does the partially raised surface in these, and other, works throw the already off relationships further off. Hsu gives us a brilliantly calculated disequilibrium of materials, shapes, textures, and colours – a potent sense of mismatch, of abstractly relating the unrelatable. It is a great unbalancing, cleverly erotic, act.

Donald Kuspit

Ellen Carey at Art City

Ellen Carey's photographs participate in an essentially painterly dialogue between representational imagery and decorative pattern. In these large-format (20" x 24") unique contact prints made on special equipment at Polaroid's facilities in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Carey has used double exposures to superimpose head-and-shoulders portraits on repetitive, abstract, often geometrical designs (created through photographed drawing and collage).

The heads are both male and female (the female head being that of the artist herself) but the subject's gender is always deemphasized, rendered ambiguous. Likewise, other signifiers of personality and individuality are effaced so that the subjects read simply as prototypically human. The patterns, on the other hand, are endowed with quite specific qualities; it is these that determine the "feel" of each photograph. What is dramatized here is the face-off, so to speak, between a realist mode of representation and an abstract one, but also that between a humanist appeal to the possibility of direct human contact and recognition (typically, the subject in these photographs looks directly into the camera, his or her eyes meeting the viewers' as though to invite communication), and a disillusioned apprehension of the instrumentalized social mediations that are mapped out geometri-



Ellen Carey *Untitled* 1985
Polaroid

cally and which may be experienced as confinement (the patterns seem to put the faces "behind bars") or even the dissolution of the individual ego.

Yet to understand the photographs in this way, taking the head as the positive pole in a duality whose negative pole is the geometrical pattern, does not exhaust the interpretive possibilities they offer. It is equally possible to see the patterns, with their implicit references to mandalas and the like, as expressing metaphysical or spiritual aspiration, the face with its controlling gaze as essentially aggressive. In this regard, it is interesting that when the viewer stands at a certain distance from the photographs, the heads clearly dominate, although never without being obscured by interference from the patterns; but as one approaches to examine the picture more closely, the pattern takes on greater prominence, making the head less recognizable. In a quite literal way, one's interpretation is conditioned by the standpoint taken.

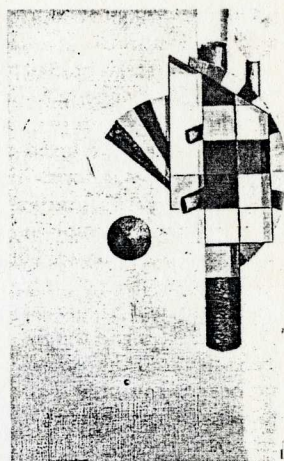
Carey's work has been linked to the neo-geometrical tendency which has been so widely publicized in the last year, but what distinguishes it from the ironic purism of Halley and Taaffe is the dialectical drama with which Carey's oppositions are charged.

Barry Schwabsky

Will Mentor at Wolff

Neo-surrealism as a trend has already begun to fade, and its most fashionable figure, Peter Schuyff, has already switched allegiances to the more correct geometrical mode without skipping a beat. Will Mentor's recent show exemplifies the disarray of the neo-surrealist position as much as Schuyff's recent work, but not by abandoning it. His earlier work presented well-turned visual conundrums whose illusionism constantly contradicted itself without ever unravelling. These paintings walked a very fine line between emphasizing their formal or their poetic implications (not to mention that between opportunism and sincerity) – a glamorous pictorial high-wire act that generated enough genuine intensity to distract us from the possibility that to have emphasized either the formal or poetic dimension of the work might have revealed that neither aspect was sufficiently various, original, or profound.

Mentor's new small paintings (all 12" x 12") and works on paper show that he, at least, remained unsuspected by the stylishness of his own construct. In an odd way, the irreconcilable parts of the earlier paintings functioned formally as a sort of mutual support system; the pictures were carefully engineered to use the fact that every negative space asserted itself also as a positive space, and every figure gradually transformed itself into a ground, to lock the composi-



Will Mentor *Lenin Could Conscience* 1986

tions into tight systems of new paintings, by contrast, in a much looser way. Ge definite distinction (which be before) between the de the objects that occur wi spatial paradoxes arise contradictory ways in w require us to read the spac though the various objects: incommensurable univers being able to locate any bo them. Irony is no lor self-reinforcing system; ins the pathos of breakdown a ly of isolation. This pathos the fact that the anthropom that contributed so much t the earlier work have been removed from the new p them a deserted air. Y implications of disillusio paintings are more vario than anything Mentor has there is a much wider rang the imagery now, from the pipes of nineteenth-centur



Joe Glasco *Untitled* 1986
Acrylic and collage on canvas