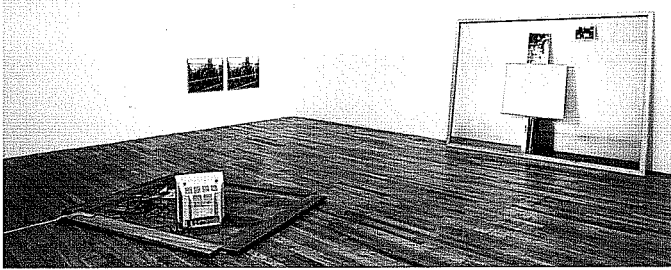


Leslie Hewitt BY LORI SALMON

Artists Space, New York NY January 18 - March 24, 2007



Leslie Hewitt's "Replica of a Lost Original" is like a sonnet written in elegiac couplets, endlessly rhyming ephemera suspended in time. Installed in Artists Space's project room, Hewitt's first New York solo weighs and strips away mediated ideals of "political and social agency," including their relationship to subjective claims of genuine flux and change.

In *Make It Plain (2 of 5)* (2006), a life-size, ash-wood-framed photograph leans against the wall revealing a methodically arranged assembly of snapshots, books, a box, and copper penny, all replicating striking views. While the imagery tends to appear nostalgic given the attire and warm smiles of their bygone protagonists, the books evoke a sense of stagnant periodicity, signified by Hewitt's erasure of the author's name in one titled *Black Protest*, leaving you to draw your own conclusions. The other keepsakes to be found there all

hauntingly testify to past and present revolutionary social values.

The same personal/political theme reverberates in *Back Up* (2005), a diptych of identical photographs of a coat rack with dangling hangers, bare of any coats or jackets, standing in front of a panel of children learning their ABCs. On closer inspection, however, the glass frame of one is broken while the other sits pristine in its casing, both together yet eternally apart. Also on view is *How To Read A Moving Black Image* (2007), a collaborative piece with writer Rose Olu Ronke Ojo. Comprising newsprint mounted by pins directly to the wall like a note stuck on a refrigerator door, one reference alludes to a snapshot of a "chubby-cheeked ten-year-old in an orange and green polka dot dress with matching hair barrettes," while elsewhere keynotes are made on an item called "How to Consume a Black Moving Image," bluntly describing a sprinter depicted in a popular beverage ad as having almost Olympian prowess and nobility. What the piece lays bare is an uncontroversial, almost matter-of-fact overcompensation of both innocence and strength, in which the titration of race gets distilled down to an intoxicating beverage. Yet however one responds to these accounts of simple humanity, a bitter aftertaste of vicariance binds to every phrase of joy.

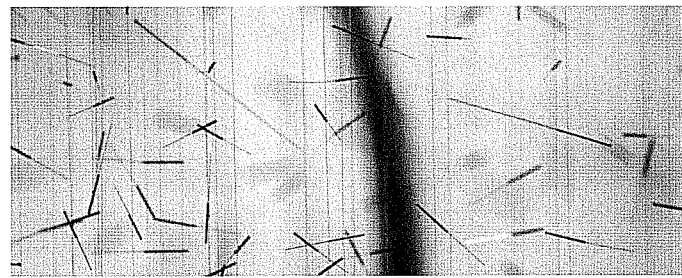
Leslie Hewitt's photographic/poetic rhyming vernacular undoubtedly has unsettling ramifications. Still, the hint of strangeness that always adheres to the quotidian is a sure guide to the misrepresentation at the heart of ideality.

"White Noise" BY JOHN DEVINE

Art League Houston, TX November 10, 2006 · January 5, 2007

"White Noise," an installation at Art League Houston by four Norwegian artists—Lise Bjørne, Janine Magelssen, Øyvind Jørgensen, and Nils Olav Bøe—combined visual art, movement, and sound to evoke a post-Kantian mood of disquieting experience. Bjørne's *twentytwothousandeighthundredandsixtyseven* (all work 2006), a complex curtain made of acupuncture needles knotted along floor-to-ceiling strands of fishing line, hooked the viewer right at the doorway. Once you negotiated this intimidating apparition, you were faced with Magelssen's equally ghostly geometric wall sculptures composed of chalk and glue built up on Plexiglas, and Bjørne's spectral photographs of breath-blown ash. Gradually, if the gallery was quiet, you became aware of a modulating musical drone, Bøe's *White Noise II*, emanating from headphones resting atop a low bench-like box. On a taller box nearby lay a book by Bjørne titled *Breathe*. As you continued to get your bearings, you caught sight of a monitor (in the vestibule past the needle curtain) showing a video of a slim man, dressed all in white, moving through the space you were standing in, interacting with these inexplicable objects to the accompaniment, fading in and out, of Bøe's sound piece.

In its Houston manifestation (it has since been staged in at least one venue in the artists' native country), "White Noise" was an austere seductive installation. Magelssen's sculptures (somewhat tellingly described, in the project statement from the website, as simply objects) are carefully built up and sanded down in a repetitive process that suggests meditation, while their geometric forms (square, circle, lines, angles) seem to push forward and recede at the same time—your eyes just can't decide. Bjørne's human-scale photographs, which are sometimes made by shouting or screaming to disperse the ash before exposing the paper to light, still manage to project a



stoic quietude. Her curtain of acupuncture needles shimmered in the gallery's lights as it responded to motion around it, as well as carving out pockets of space that you somehow wanted to get into but which excluded you (significantly all the needles were used, each carrying an intimate history which, conceivably, pointed contact could transmit). Bøe's sound piece managed to be both suggestive of industrial settings and yet oddly soothing, cold and vaguely threatening, though hypnotic, while Jørgensen, a former student of both Japanese Butoh and the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, brought a touch of Beckett to his stranger-in-a-strange-land choreography, as if his *Everyman* wanted something from the art but was not sure what.

That a viewer may find artworks, or the installation they comprise, initially unyielding but ultimately seductive is no paradox. Seduction entails resistance, some act of persuasion, which in this case seeks to affirm process against the negative play of appearances. There were only neutral tones in the show, no color to satisfy the eye, the curtain of needles impeded free access to the space; the sound had no melody, no harmonics, just pitch and pulse; and the dance, repetitive by nature and in its video display, offered severe abstraction rather than the diversions of narrative. In this ascetic installation, the pleasure lay in contemplating Magelssen's patient sanding, the traces of Bjørne's existential performances, Bøe's modulations in time, and Jørgensen's innocent yearnings.

(TOP) LESLIE HEWITT, REPLICA OF A LOST ORIGINAL, 2006, INSTALLATION VIEW, ARTISTS SPACE, NEW YORK. PHOTO: BILL OLCOTT.
(BOTTOM) LISE BJØRNE, INSTALLATION DETAIL, "WHITE NOISE," ART LEAGUE HOUSTON.