

Art in Review

- Sex, condiments and esthetics ■ Portraits
- Low-lying sculptures ■ Wire and yarn, minimally ■ A new eye on work by Koreans.

Paul McCarthy

Museum of Modern Art
11 West 53d Street
Manhattan
Through July 18

The Los Angeles artist Paul McCarthy has been making his iconoclastic presence felt on the New York gallery scene for several years now. A multi-media artist with a deep attraction to foodstuffs who works in video, performance, sculpture and installation, he's known for conjuring raunchy mixtures of sex, scatology, condiments and esthetics that satirize both the art world and society as a whole. His latest bout of exhibitionism, a video-installation piece in the Projects gallery at the Museum of Modern Art, gives his talent its best New York showing yet.

In "Painter," Mr. McCarthy plays

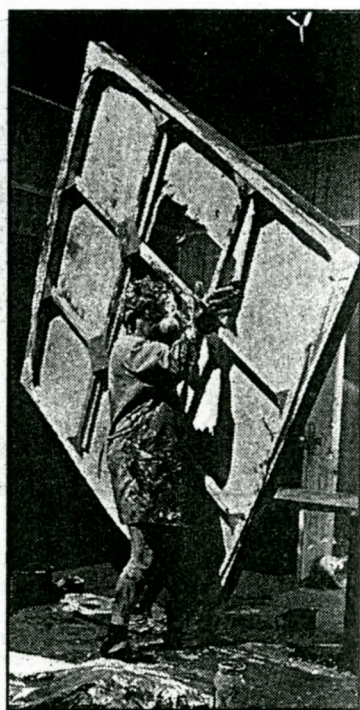
the most romanticized of all artists, grossly exaggerated but with the ring of truth. His costume includes a hospital gown, enormous rubber hands and ears, and a bulbous nose that bobs up and down during tantrums. His props are out-sized paintbrushes and rollers, and tubes of paint as big as occupied body bags. Whimpering, grunting, crooning to himself in a high-pitched voice ("De KOOOOning" is a frequent refrain), Mr. McCarthy ladles paint, mayonnaise and ketchup into bowls, talks to his colors, and attacks several canvases. The results, generic 80's-style Expressionistic canvases, hang on the fake-wood walls of the grungy installation surrounding the monitor, which was also the set on which the performance was taped.

The main fun is simply watching Mr. McCarthy improvise, ricocheting through space and tossing color

around to the accompaniment of his own stream-of-consciousness patter and sound effects. He plays up the onanistic, infantile side of masculine creativity while lampooning sundry artistic myths, including van Gogh's ear, the Austrian Actionists and Bruce Nauman's early home-alone videotapes. And he lays a heavy hand on sexual politics, lugging his paint tubes around as if they were dead bodies; reducing his irritated art dealer to a scolding mother, and perhaps defining a new category, "male feminist pig." The dealer owes him "a lot of money," as he points out more than once, whirling and ranting his way to a first-class tantrum in the tape's most hilarious scene.

Unfortunately, Mr. McCarthy's performance needed either more script or more editing. After a while, you may start wondering when the paintings will be done, measuring their progress against the finished ones nearby; and the closing scene of the tape seems gratuitously juvenile. Still, despite its lapses, "Painter" gives the clearest, most engaging view of the obsessive, uninhibited persona that is the basis of Mr. McCarthy's reputation.

ROBERTA SMITH



Damon McCarthy

A detail of Paul McCarthy's video installation at the Modern.

Art Showcase



Pleasures of Rural Life

Domestic Scenes and Animals in Academic Art

June 27-September 23

Dahesh Museum

Also of Note

Critics' choices of some other Manhattan art shows:

BRYAN HUNT, Gagosian Gallery, 136 Wooster Street, between Houston and Prince Streets, SoHo (through July 14). Bryan Hunt has suddenly decided to go for Baroque, twisting his trademark bronze waterfalls into contorted shapes and modeling them with ridges and furrows like drapery folds. The results lack the inhuman elegance of his earlier work, but don't quite attain the Rodinesque muscularity he seems to be aiming for (Pepe Karmel).

STEVEN SANTANIELLO, Amos Eno Gallery, 594 Broadway, near Houston Street, SoHo (through Wednesday). An impressive debut from a young artist who, like many of his peers, is combining performance art, video and sculpture. Here, a series of outfits and accouterments involving cameras record the artist's movement through space and conjure

farflung precedents that include Gary Hill, Matthew Barney and Michael Snow (Roberta Smith).

DAVID ROW, Andre Emmerich, 41 East 57th Street (through July 30). The overlapping ellipses and gridded bands of Mr. Row's paintings recall the meticulous projective geometry of his teacher, Al Held. His raw, scraped surfaces and deliberately off-key colors (quite unlike Mr. Held's) are seductive, but don't quite overcome the prim tidiness of his compositions (Karmel).

"SCAPES: LAND OR SEA," Joan T. Washburn, 20 West 57th Street (through July 28). Abstractions by such veterans as Alfred Leslie, James Brooks and Bill Jensen evoke barn doors or underwater vegetation, while Myron Stout is represented by some very uncharacteristic landscape drawings from the 1950's. Two painterly, biomorphic compositions by a newcomer, Pegan Brooke, hold their own in this distinguished company (Karmel).