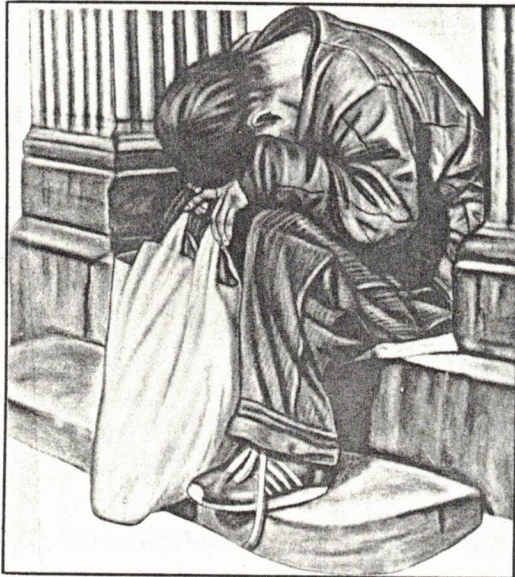


arts

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Grace Graupe-Pillard, *Man on Steps*, 1985. Pastel on canvas mounted on wall, 60 x 60". Courtesy Hal Bromm Gallery.

The "City Streets" group show displays many different technical approaches to the problem of capturing the mood of street life today, but all the work shares a common emotion: fear, anxiety, even paranoia. The evidence of paranoia in art can be objectively diagnosed; its sign is a redundancy of effect, which creates a closed, obvious, and safe meaning. ("Obvious" is not used pejoratively here since "obvious" is a virtue in the '80s.)

Rick Prol has nailed together wood torn from fences to frame painted cartoons of cats and other alley creatures, drawn in a jagged and slashing style that makes it clear that they merely animate the salvage. A less 1980s artist might have let the salvage be, without animation, but since at least the 1982 recession it has been necessary to reduce the threat implicit in jagged scrap to animated figures. In this Prol joins Francesco Clemente, among others.

Valery Gerlovkin deals with paranoia in a more official capac-

ity. *Moscow River* walls up the river in hammered-together brickface overcast in painted totalitarian poster eyes staring right through the brick bond pattern. Grace Graupe-Pillard's *Man on Steps* has its roots in the empathy between the artist's feel for canvas and the rags of street people. By cutting a pattern of social concern over her material sympathy, Graupe-Pillard imprints the image with an almost Social Realist closeness, but only as it helps to distance a deeper fear prompted by her material sympathy.

Paul Smith's *Wall* (1984) is another image of fear. He could not feel safe with a fish-eye lens picture of a rubble lot, but had to sharpen that vague fear into a clear-cut one, easily controlled, by mounting the picture on a large cone. The distortion of the cone animates that of the lens, creating a sharper kind of anxiety. Mark Golderman's picture of Chicago streets brings down the scale of a side of a Chicago Loop building to human size by contrasting it with a blood stain.

All these works, technically so different, share the same shape of paranoia, a glancing, skittish angularity. The emergence of this shape is a clear sign that the days when the street was a benign workshop heaped with found objects for modern art are over: artists on city streets have become fearful and anxious. (Hal Bromm, *September 3-29*)

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