

ARTFORUM

DECEMBER 1971

ROBERT DURAN

By Robert Pincus-Witten

These lines form a postscript to my more extensive remarks concerning ROBERT DURAN's work, made earlier this year. (*Artforum*, March, 1971.)

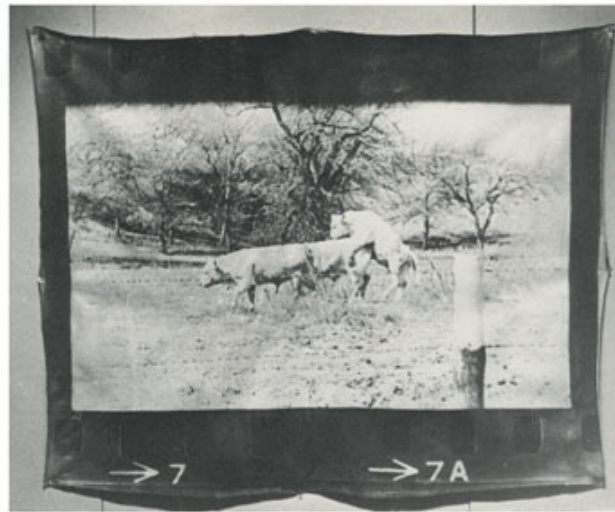
The problem which Duran continues to attack in his paintings (or is plagued by) is one of figure and ground. Since the application of thin color in near-arbitrary displacement, tended to render the figure-ground relationship ambiguous, Duran has emphasized several pictorial devices of great subtlety to confirm frontality and planarity. Allowing the initial level of color to dry he isolates quasi-floral configurations in the center of the canvas, identifying in this way the central splotches as shape, thereby centristically anchoring the surface. Superficially the new works bear a resemblance to Warhol's flower prints, but as I suggested previously, Duran is prompted by an awareness of primitive sources expressed as decoration. This relationship continues in the bandanna-like framing elements of the square which, while assisting in the expression of the diaphanous overlaps as surface, also reinforces the idea of the decorative and the primitive textile.

ond year) made to young artists on the advice of a committee of the Guggenheim curators. Since all of the artists in the present exhibition were born in the decade of the 1940s and many are just out of art school, the likelihood of their striking new notes — granting the modernist idiom that they choose to work in to begin with — is unlikely. They begin where all contemporary artists of interest begin, in the inherited syntax of the immediately preceding vanguard. This includes, for example, color abstraction, post-Minimalism, and reductivist modes. To these well-occupied options the ten young artists in question — Power Boothe, Ron Cooper, Billy Bryant Copley, Mary Corse, Guy Dill, Andrew Gerndt, Harriet Korman, Dona Nelson, Michael Singer, and George Trakas — range from a perfunctorily academic examination, especially among the painters, to suggestions of unique individuality.

Naturally on such occasions, if this review is ever to prove interesting, its interest will only become apparent in the future when the reputations of the artists in question will have been made or spent: five years — possible apogee, ten years — possible neglect, twenty years — possible resuscitation. Frankly, my immediate overall impression was that the exhibition was weak and student-like.

Andrew Gerndt strikes me as a noteworthy talent if only for the intractable obsessiveness of his monochromism, which postulates as well an infinity of smaller lateral squares. And Mary Corse has understood, in a way all too Jo Baer-like, that the real problem of modernist painting is not at the location of the center but in what to do with the corners. George Trakas is an arresting sculptor although I find his aggressiveness somewhat decorative. Oddly, the *Last Whole Earth Catalog* feel of his carpentered assemblages seems very much in the debt of Rauschenberg's combine paintings of the late 1950s. But my reservations pale in the face of his obvious ambitiousness. Michael Singer is intriguing although his attachments to Andre, Serra, and Morris, come too quickly to mind.

My preferred work is an untitled wooden series by Guy Dill, in which seventeen units were supported lat-



Robert Wade, *Gettin' it Near Cedar Hill*, photographic emulsion on canvas, 4' x 6', 1971. Kornblee Gallery.

erally by ropes binding them to the wall. Unlike Singer, with whom Dill's work shares affiliation, Dill has avoided the balancing-act-fundamentalism of Serra, while retaining a refreshed vision of the potentials of Brancusi whose lessons were also essential in the development of Serra and Andre.

These lines form a postscript to my more extensive remarks concerning ROBERT DURAN's work, made

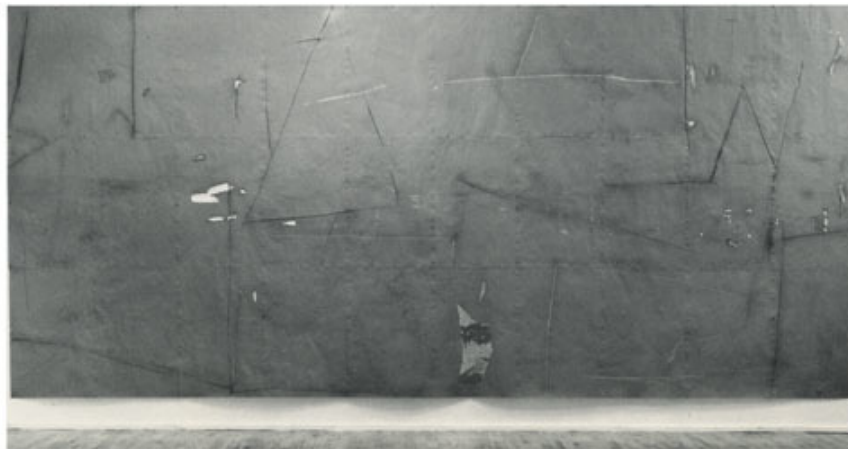
earlier this year. (*Artforum*, March, 1971.)

The problem which Duran continues to attack in his paintings (or is plagued by) is one of figure and ground. Since the application of thin color in near-arbitrary displacement tended to render the figure-ground relationship ambiguous, Duran has emphasized several pictorial devices of great subtlety to confirm frontality and planarity. Allowing the initial

level of color to dry he isolates quasi-floral configurations in the center of the canvas, identifying in this way the central splotches as shape, thereby centrically anchoring the surface. Superficially the new works bear a resemblance to Warhol's flower prints, but as I suggested previously, Duran is prompted by an awareness of primitive sources expressed as decoration. This relationship continues in the bandannalike framing elements of the square which, while assisting in the expression of the diaphanous overlaps as surface, also reinforces the idea of the decorative and the primitive textile.

PETER PLAGENS, a West Coast-based contributing editor of *Artforum*, knows a lot, especially that he is going to be taken to task for his large craypas pastel and acrylic paintings. Not only because they border dangerously on being beautiful for beauty's sake, but also because he cannot fail to be aware that this kind of asseverated painterliness is at this moment in contemporary art an almost untenable position. Plagens is, in part, a victim of the very artistic consciousness of which he has been a vital reformer.

Plagens' color is apt to be highly grayed, thinned out in broad, chalky fields. In a Whistlerian way he ardently paints around lost and found spots, snipped shapes and



Peter Plagens, *Cf(3)A*, 1971, m/m, 10' x 21'8", 1971. Reese Palley Gallery.