

in visual art). Hence the theoretical underpinnings of the wild formal morphing of both painted imagery and sculptural shapes in Levine's most recent work: the Medusa-like pose of the multi-headed and -limbed *The Writings on the Wall* (1996-99); the pregnant pause of a more frontal and totemic *What Goes Around Comes Around* (1997); or the sideways glance of a seemingly in-motion *Luck of the Draw* (1998).

Given such agility, it is surely no accident that most of Levine's titles suggest states of becoming (those already mentioned, as well as *Budding Prospects*, 1998; *A Distinct Possibility*, 1998-99; and *Things are Looking Up*, 1997). Taking in her work, I am reminded of something Weimar theorist Siegfried Kracauer said in 1927, that "like abstractness, the mass ornament is ambivalent."

Terry R. Myers

Vera Möller

Smith + Stoneley, Brisbane

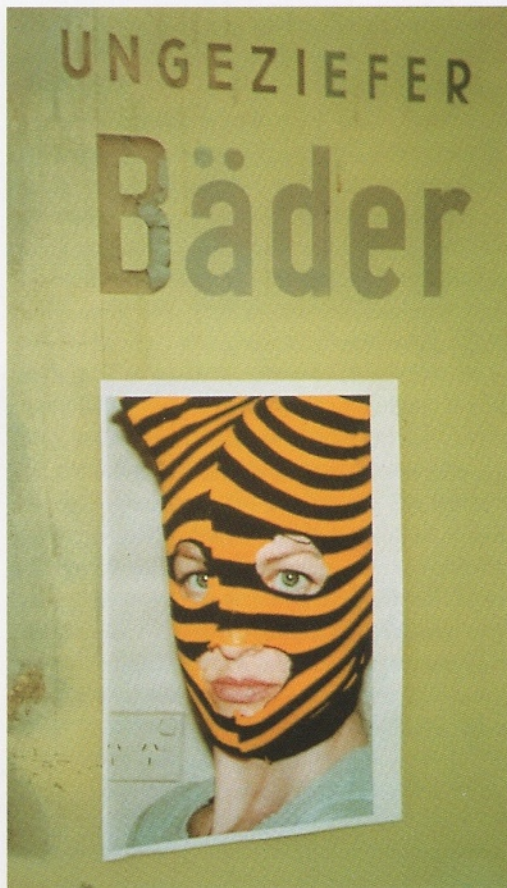
March 12 - 31, 1999

How ironic that camouflage, a means of concealment, has become its opposite, targeting the sitting duck. Witness the stunning outcome of America's billion-dollar Stealth program, featuring an aircraft with an unmistakable recognition factor which can be "popped out of the sky" with pre-"smart" weaponry. The same strategic thinking was responsible for the grand fashion blunder of our time: "Desert Storm" battle gear, modeled by that big duck, General Norman Schwarzkopf. Pre-techno-war military gear was meant to have a high recognition factor, and was understandably co-opted by balaclava-wearing terrorists. Fashion and camouflage should strike terror.

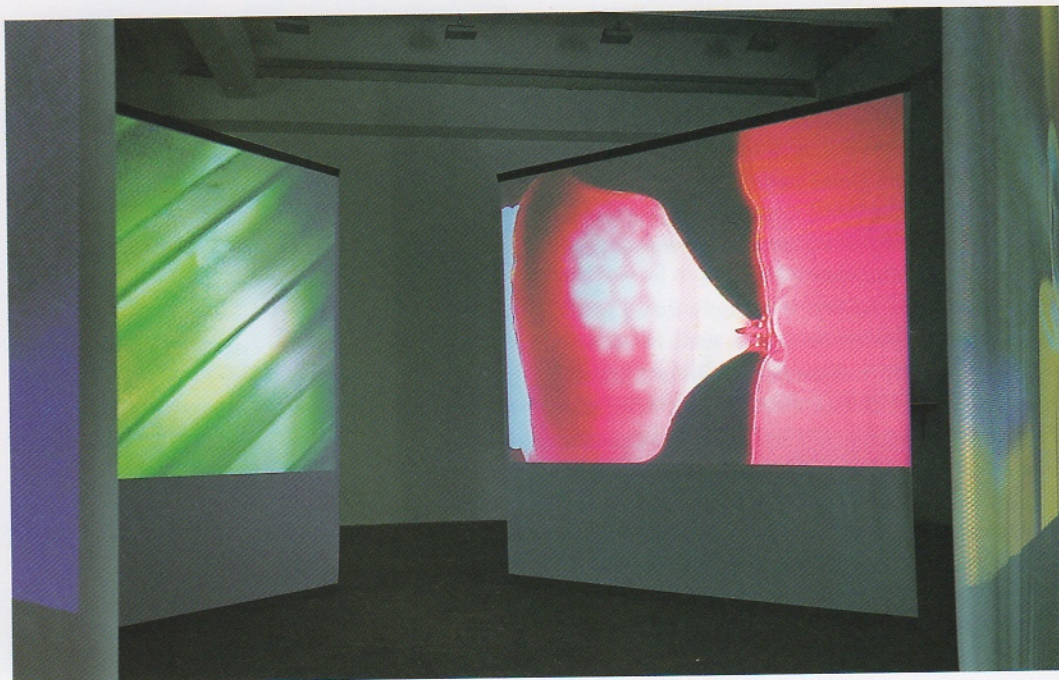
These undercurrents are not lost on Vera Möller. In her exhibition, "The Jungle Out There," she has vigorously applied the black-and-yellow-stripe motif (of a "new species") to excursions into fashion crimes and the celebration of questionable behavior. Her machine-knit constructions, titled *The Mad Nellies* and *The Lotties* (both 1998), are over-body-sized canopy enclosures hung from above. Apertures suggest openings for arms and

face, but in practical terms, this is anti-clothing which, if anything, evokes a hybrid of Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures and Daniel Buren's obsessive striping. What could be more unfashionable than soft minimalism?

A group of ink and watercolor sketches, *The Pipilotties* (1998) offers variations on the same motif as applied to shoes, handbags, leggings, sweaters, hats, etc. Single-minded, fashionable illustrations perhaps, but like the best children's books, sly in their cultural sophistication. There are also postcards and wanted posters. In the latter, Möller is photographed in full flash mode, clad above the shoulders in a stripe-motif pair of bicycle-shorts-cum-balaclava, with holes cut for eyes and mouth. The dangling leg openings give her the appearance of an alien space tiger. Documented in Berlin below a sign which reads "Ungeziefer Bäder" (literally "vermin-infected"), the image stokes memories of the Baader Meinhof gang. In New York, the same image—this time doubled—is wedged between



VERA MÖLLER, *PEST*, 1998.
ILFOCHROME.



PHYLLIS BALDINO,
"NANO-CADABRA,"
INSTALLATION VIEW.

posters for the Roseland and Apollo theaters, Möller now looking rather more like a demented masked wrestler.

Möller does "come out," photographed wearing the butthead gear on a Tokyo street. Bundled in a dark overcoat and looking straight at the camera, her camouflage effect is complete, a stylish transgression. Möller has just passed a Ducky Duck restaurant: in the mid-ground is a woman wearing a *kaze* mask, meant to keep cold germs from spreading; in the background is a poster for the movie, *Men In Black* (MIBs are meant to keep aliens from spreading).

This burlesque moment boils over with urban irony. More than motif-mania, Möller has touched the open nerve of emblematic recognition—the more we work at belonging, the more extreme the means and difference. Ritualistic and tribalistic affectations are common to gangs, the face- and body-painting of sports club zealots, body-piercing enthusiasts, and subculture costume makeovers (the look of death). And why not? It's a jungle out there.

Ihor Holubizky

Phyllis Baldino

Tate, New York

February 11 - March 6, 1999

It is too little noted that historically, artists' wildest fictional premises have often become self-fulfilling prophecies. For example, Masaccio's depictions of pictorial space inspired cosmology, Seurat's pointillist techniques facilitated mechanical reproduction, Popova's dimensionless renderings of co-existing dimensions anticipated cyberspace, Chesley Bonestell's 1940s extrapolations of moonscapes fashioned astronaut suits, and William Gibson's novels hastened the appeal of cyborgs inhabiting a computer-linked planet. Whether science consciously learns from art, though, is disputable. Both begin with imaginative theories, but while science waits out technological advances to test its hypotheses, or changes views to fund its testing, art sails blithely into uncharted waters.

Phyllis Baldino's exhibition "Nano-cadabra" builds on the desire to visualize ineffable concepts, to give form to a world that is virtually nonexistent. While the Museum of Jurassic Technology's 1993 exhibition, "Nanotechnology" required a leap of faith (on that occasion, one peered through microscopes to observe barely visible etched chips, whose