

-ART-**ON EXHIBIT****Yoder's World, Free Speech, and the Old School****Robert Yoder: abfall**

Howard House, 256-6399

Through May 23. There is a perverse sort of worry about an artist whose work you love, that they'll never progress. I've experienced some of that anxiety about Robert Yoder's work, especially his cut-up-and-reassembled road signs. They seem as fresh as ever--still complex, baffling unreadable objects that retain the properties of a sign, however degraded--but I had lately been wondering what was next for him.

Now I know, and it seems I should have known. Yoder's new work locates his sensibility firmly in the coded quality of his work, so it's more than simply altered found objects. Now there are unreadable messages made of tiny colorful chips cut from magazines, out of LEGO, out of tape, and, best of all, out of a big old *ars poetica* that takes up a whole wall of the gallery: articles, images torn from magazines, notes, headlines, a street person's spare-change sign. Some of the images already look uncannily Yoderesque--as a minimalist white-cube house with a few blocks of furniture--but all of it swims in the realm of double meaning, ambivalence, and context that forms the basis of the artist's visual language.

I love a simple illusion-of-three-dimensions square collaged together from magazine images, in which the shading of the original image works *against* the illusion. And in the biggest of the LEGO assemblages, there's a place where you see the LEGO pieces slightly pulling apart under the weight of the construction--a crazy little human moment. The work is both new and inevitable: anything can be altered according to the artist's rules, and if the materials resist, it becomes part of the art. As it turns out, it's Yoder's world--we just live in it. EMILY HALL

Diana Falchuk: The Utility Pole Project

Post Alley Sculpture Garden, 1413 Post Alley

Through May 26. There's a word for our tendency to see things in other things--the donkey in the clouds, the Madonna in the tortilla--and I've forgotten what it is, but it's at work in Diana Falchuk's *Utility Pole Project*. The artist has collaged three faces, on three pieces of retired Seattle telephone poles, out of scraps of old posters and pried-out staples (a fourth telephone pole has a more free-for-all collage). The best is the face of *The Wizard of Oz's* Dorothy--the eyes set deep in wells of typography, the faceted face with certain words still prominent. What works is how the image both does and doesn't belong to the telephone pole, how it recedes into the background until you see it. The bright, aggressive Superman is fun to look at, but lacks this mystery, this inevitable feeling.

Linking? Use This [URL!](#)**DIANA FALCHUK** Dorothy, far from home.**Recently in Art:****Baja to Vancouver**

West Coast Confidential (05/15/03)

By Emily Hall

The Miniverse

All Undone by LeDray's Tiny Objects (05/01/03)

By Emily Hall

Adult Language

Out of the Mouths of Children (04/24/03)

By Emily Hall

[More...](#)

As I understand it, Falchuk intends to take this process out into the city at large, and that seems like exactly the right thing to do. Finding her work on poles set aside for the purpose makes the work too precious--it should be out there taking its chances with the drift and flow of everyday postering, being covered, uncovered, showing up somewhere else. The accidents of street life give the work added meaning--like the work of the graffiti gang Beware of the Walls--so that the prospect, and the act, of finding the art where you least expect it is as interesting as the art itself. It's also more interesting than one of the political interpretations Falchuk proposes: the power and necessity of free speech, constrained by the poster ban and celebrated at the end of it. I think that the act of discovering the image in among the refuse is allusive enough to cover those bases without putting such a fine rhetorical point on it. Finally noticing what you've taken for granted often makes you more protective of it. EMILY HALL

Yes Yes Y'all

Experience Music Project, 770-2700

Through Sept 7. These are not the best photos. They were taken by amateurs. In some, the lighting is wrong; others are out of focus, or don't center their subjects. These are accidental images that were not supposed to leave the plastic sleeves of family photo albums. As objects, photographs are ordinary in every way except when they happen to capture something that turned out to be extraordinary: in this case the twilight of the first phase of hip-hop, from roughly 1979 to 1981.

These amateur photos, which are blown up to poster size for the exhibit *Yes Yes Y'all*, are not about the inception of hip-hop, but the moment at which hip-hop moved from the Bronx to Manhattan, went from ghetto to national recognition: the moment Debbie Harry took an interest in hip-hop and made her own rap song; the moment the Sugarhill Gang released and sold over a million copies of "Rapper's Delight," and Kurtis Blow went gold with "The Breaks." This is not the birth of hip-hop, but the birth of hip-hop capitalism.

Most of the photos in this exhibit were taken by Charlie Ahearn, who is to this period what Carl Van Vechten was to the Harlem Renaissance (1918-1929). Van Vechten was a white intellectual who took portraits of black writers, musicians, actors, and artists in his studio (or what I suspect was his studio); his portraits now define the very look of that era. Charlie Ahearn, a white director who made the first important hip-hop film, *Wild Style* (1982), went into the projects, the parties, and the clubs, and took snapshots which now define the very look and energy of this period.

The only problem with the exhibit, inspired by a marvelous hip-hop history book of the same name, is that it's not enough. One wants to see several rooms dedicated to the recovered fliers, clothes, disco equipment, and images from a time when young rappers "ate b-boys for lunch." CHARLES MUDEDE