



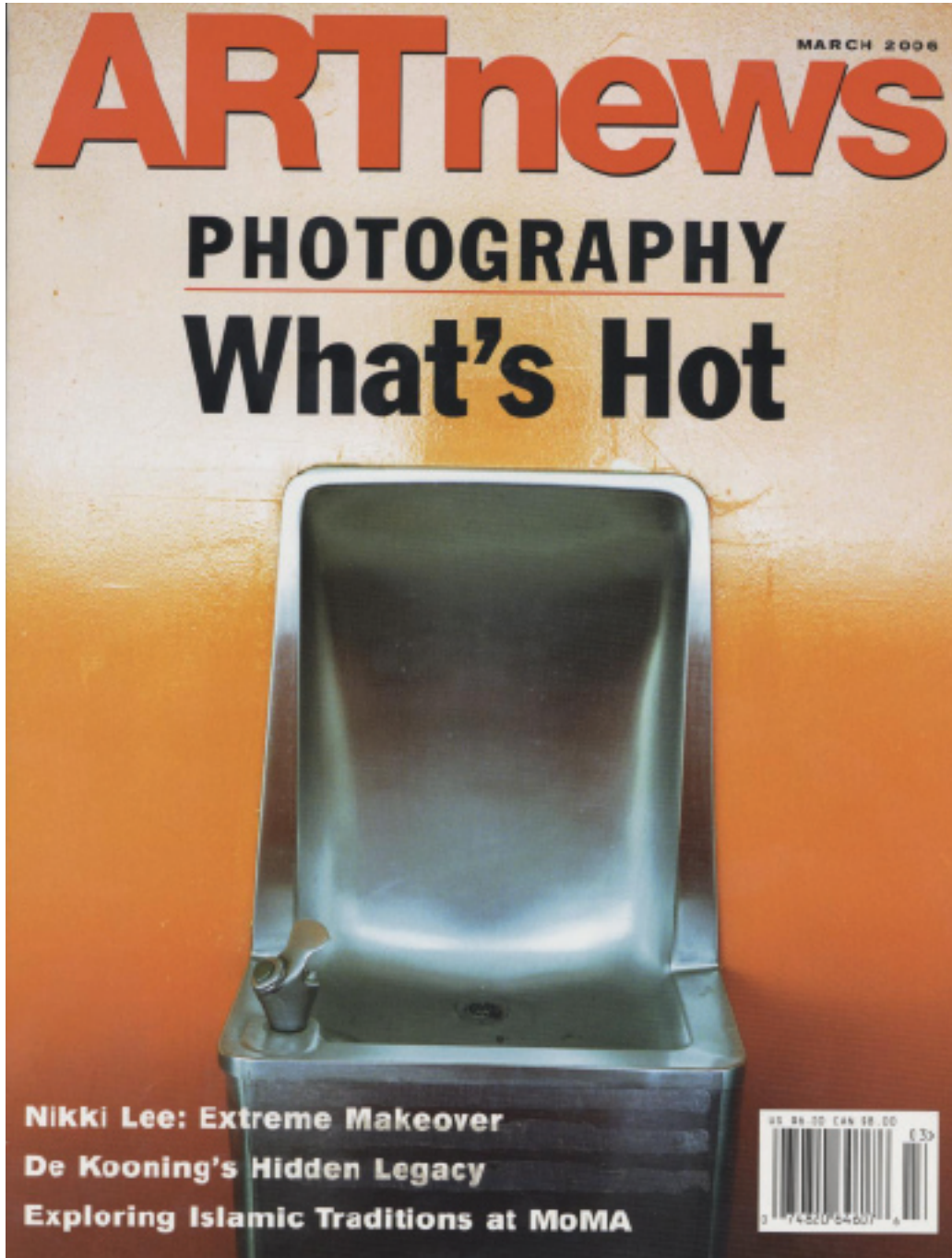
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had a performative aspect. So, in her first film, *The Music of Regret* (2005-6), it seems a natural leap for these characters to start dancing and singing their hearts out about the roles they must shoulder. Two acts of the film were shown here, alongside a 7-by-20-foot photograph from 1991 of Simmons's "walking objects" making a curtain call.

In the first of the two acts, "The Audition," the encumbered legs are instructed by a director's voice off-camera to parade one by one onstage to perform and be judged. The harlequin seduces with a tango, the insane spins under the weight of her domesticity; the book crawls along the floor in a stereotypical modern dance. Once the beautiful birthday cake with her ballet legs comes out, the part is cast—before the pocket watch, pecking nervously from the wings, even has an opportunity to audition. Costafalco, she performs a virtuoso dance on a dark stage to what might have been, *Penny and sal*, if not exactly ironic, the vignette rings true as a parable about women being put through the paces in their lives.

Men have their share of regret, too, as expressed in the pitch-perfect "The Green Tie." Two identical puppets of bald middle-aged men in suits sing a melancholic ballad to unfinished household projects. Deadpan lines sung in duet, such as "We had so much to do / with hammer, nails, and glue," take on a real poignancy, and the old friends collapse in a tearful embrace at the end, at once mired in and transcending the confines of proscribed routines. *The Music of Regret*, which will premiere in full at the Museum of Modern Art in May, shows that film offers new and exciting possibilities for Simmons. —*Hilorie M. Shevitz*

**Mary Ellen Mark**

**Tacey Richardson and Marianne Rosky**  
Shown for the first time since 1981, Mary Ellen Mark's photographs of Indian hostels were riveting. Unfolding against a backdrop of riotous color, lives that one might expect to be unremarkable

grim and tragic seem also shown to be full of warmth and ordinary humanity. When the photographs were taken in 1978-79, Mark had already been visiting Falkland Road, a red-light district in Bombay, for ten years. It took that long to gain the prostitutes' and madams' smiles playfully into the camera's lens, just one manifestation of the unexpected beauty suffusing every print in this unforgettable exhibition. —*J. Barbara Kelly*



Mary Ellen Mark, *Polka on her bed with a crushed rose*, 1979, Clichéchrome, 10" x 20". Marianne Rosky

trust, but the results were certainly worth the wait. Some of the pictures show the wire-fronted "cages" opening onto the street, where women and transvestites are on display like goods in a shop window or animals in a zoo. Others were taken in the tiny cabbies behind the cages and on the floors above them. Here the prostitutes, dressed in gaudy clothing, live and ply their trade in brightly painted rooms decorated with patterned bedspreads and curtains. The visual impact of these photographs is extraordinary: in *Polka on her bed with a crushed rose*, for example, a young girl wearing gold jewelry, a lime-green ribbon in her hair, and fuchsia lipstick reclines on a pink-and-green bedspread against a bright blue wall.

The prostitutes are seen crying, playing with children and pets, washing, applying makeup, joking and working inside the claustrophobic rooms where they spend almost all their time. In *Mani* with a customer, Mani lies under a mat in a red-and-white shirt and gazes away from the camera. Her seemingly passive indifference is the exception, however, as most of the women are full of life. In *Girl with a potential customer and girl with a baby*, a woman in black shirt and shorts has her arm around a man reclining on a bed. Leaning over him, she

**Sigmar Polke**

This group of incandescent black-and-white photographs by Sigmar Polke was taken between 1969 and 1974. A lively essay written by Mariette Althaus, Polke's girlfriend at the time and the subject of most of the pictures, accompanied the exhibition, providing a rare perspective on creation from the artist's point of view.

Althaus is seen nude on a blanket in the grass, covered with leaves, eyes closed, arms ecstatically raised. Her androgynous short curls and flattened breasts bring to mind a Grecian wood nymph crossed with a Renaissance youth. In close-ups, her features are dappled by wintery streaks of light and shadows from leaves. Indoors, she leans back in a chair and waves a bundle of banknotes; she proceeds from Polke's first major sale. In another image, Polke and Althaus playfully bump foreheads in the Louvre as the camera looks up between them. Flanked by two shots of



Sigmar Polke, *Milch* ("Größe-Kohle" Milch) 1972, gelatin silver print on Agfa-Gesacolor Double Projection, 8 1/2" x 11 1/4". Nathan

Egyptian sculptures, the image was printed three times on one sheet, the reiterated moment contrasted with normal time. Other photographs show the couple's circle of friends, including a remarkable quartet of pictures featuring the artists Gilbert and George cavorting in a room, their blurred bodies seeming as if they were about to dissolve. And a wonderful portrait of the artist (snapped by Gerhard Nieber) captures Polke standing with camera sprawled, illuminated by a ray of light.



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Printed on thin, absorbent paper, these unique prints seem to emerge from almost molten fields of silver while remaining as ephemeral as newsprint. Random streaks and scratches, prints that show the perforated edges of the negative, and double exposures are evidence of Polke's involvement with accidental process and active metamorphosis. These antique-looking snapshots radiate spontaneity, evoking photography's beginnings as they revive a romance of 50 years ago.

—**Elisabeth Kley**

**Rebecca Warren**

**Matthew Marks**

In her recent exhibition "Pas de Deux"—the title refers to a dance choreographed for two performers—Rebecca Warren



Rebecca Warren, *In the Last Days I Think of You*, 2005, unfired clay and pink, 21" x 21 1/2" x 10".  
Matthew Marks.

paired her trademark lumpy sculptures with airy vitrines, playing roughness against refinement and weight against buoyancy.

Warren says her work is inspired in part by Degas's paintings of ballerinas, but the frenetic texture and aggressive sexuality of her figurative sculptures were more reminiscent of de Kooning. Made from unfired clay and showing the artist's fingerprints, these dense, patched-together works (all 2005) sported multiple breasts and phallicus and exaggerated, almost cartoonlike limbs and facial features. With invertebrate ears, feet, and toes and its elongated nose, Clark resembled leghood from the "Archie" comics. Another piece, *Colette*, was a woman with a huge

vulva and buttocks—practically a Hottentot Venus—standing in contrapposto, gazing upward. In the *Last Days I Think of You*, a single mass of protruding breasts, nipples, petal-like folds, and phallicus, resembled a caricature of a librarian in profile, her hair teased into a ridiculous curly 'do.

But most intriguing were Warren's intimate vitrines, which contain found objects such as bark, twigs, Styrofoam balls, wood shavings, and bits of clay scattered around partly obscured neon lights. In one, a red post-porn nestled within folded, unfired clay seemed more explicit than any body part. The feeling

of such understated works as *In the Boys* was that of a dressing room strewn with personal effects cast off in a moment of passion; their quiet criticism provided a fine accompaniment to the intensity of the sexy, swaggering sculptures that dominated the room.

—**Rachel Swersky**

**Mark Bradford**

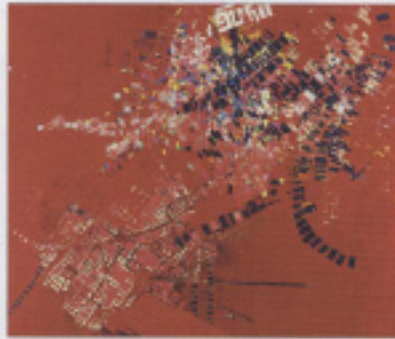
**Sirkka Jettinen**

Mark Bradford began his career making art with materials pilfered from his job at his mother's South-Central Los Angeles beauty salon, using bobby pins, small squares of tissue paper, and washes of hair dye to make abstract interpretations of the buzzing culture around him. But partly because of the inherent fragility of Bradford's materials, these earlier pieces almost seemed too delicate to convey the textures of an inner-city neighborhood.

In his recent work, Bradford hit his stride. This show featured seven abstract collages and a video installation. The collages, in particular, glowed and vibrated with the chaos and intensity of urban life. Composed of layered strips and squares of paper, sometimes covered in paint, these enormous works—several of them measuring more than 11 by 15 feet—have a distinctly urban monumentality and the geometric patterning of a city street map.

*Black Views* (2005) in fact, incorporates clippings of real street maps, their

branching lines adding to the density of the already jam-packed surface. But Bradford's work does not just suggest the city as seen from above; it also recreates



Mark Bradford, *U.S.A. (2005) Service Area*, 2005, mixed-media collage, 32" x 40", Sirkka Jettinen.

the ritual experience of standing in its streets. In *Los Angeles* (2004), squares of bright yellow beam from between squares of black like lit apartment windows at night. Bradford sanded some of the squares of black paper until they were dull and yellowing and the images on them could no longer be made out. Scattered across the surface of the piece, they resembled constellations of distant lights. As he has in the past, Bradford incorporated scraps of found posters into some of the works, their faded text partially obscured, as if glimpsed through a maze of buildings.

A video, *Nagawa* (2005), which showed a transvestite sashaying down a street, added another dimension to the show, which Bradford titled "Grace and Measure," after a line in a poem by Baudelaire. It's an apt homage to a writer who recorded his own wanderings through the city so poetically.

—**Merrill Mendelsohn**

**'Russia 2: Bad News from Russia'**

**White Box, The Annex, Magsam Projects Annex, and Ethan Cohen Fine Arts**

For those whose curiosity was piqued by "Russia!," the Guggenheim's recent seven-century overview, this trio of gallery shows presented a broader picture of current artistic activity in Russia. The

