

cite. Despite an ostensible commitment to a vision of "risk" and "toughness," Diao's dexterous art manages only to flatter the viewer with its grooviness. These five paintings are easy to look at, which is another way of saying that they are slick.

Robert Whitman (Bykert, downtown): "Dumping" is the theme of this show. Whitman has dumped 2,000 pounds of old clothes around a column in the gallery. Lots of the clothes are wrinkled. Most are men's jackets and trousers, although female apparel contributes support and variation to the massive heap.

Whitman has also unloaded, topsy-turvy, numerous pieces of old furniture in a corner of the gallery. These desks and tables possess a transcendent cheapness that evokes anonymous lives and deathless banalities. They have plastic slipcovers, Naugahide upholstery, and their finishes are faded and scratched. Some of the pieces have been "antiqued." They have all the charm of daytime TV (tightly rolled curlers, rug shampoo and a half-finished six-pack of Bud).

The most interesting phenomenon in the show is a double bed, neatly made and turned down, on top of whose bedspread Whitman has dumped a large, very dark pile of dirt. Fascinating and repulsive, the bed thus defiled is horrible as the butt of scatological mischief. As a symbol of conjugal and parental piety, the bed is duly fouled, reminding us of the source of dreams in forbidden instincts. Finally, the sullied white sheets with their weight of humor work as a memento mori, as an emblem of the big sleep.

It is thus somewhat disconcerting to turn to six lead-pencil and graphite drawings, each presenting a double image on both sides of the paper. They are interesting and tricky studies of form, but they do not belong in this show, which is concerned with the suggestive, sardonic, and disorienting properties of dirtiness and desuetude. Overly literary and insufficiently visual, Whitman's work still has a genuine weirdness that deserves respect.

Harry Leigh (O.K. Harris): Leigh meticulously nails and screws pre-cut hardwood strips together. Each resulting piece resembles nothing so much as a bare stretcher for a painting.

All six pieces are rectangular; in four of them, a lower side and bottom edge curves away from the wall, like a rectangular kite. In several constructions,

Leigh inserted red bricks in niches toward the tops of the wooden sides. Placed in nearly symmetrical relation to each other, the slight irregularity of the bricks' position, combined with the unique handling of each side of the constructions, brings about a frequent sense of surprise. The dense weightedness of the bricks plays off against the delicacy and lightness of the wooden strips, and in other relations between rectangularity and curvature the bricks have a part. Each construction encloses a wide space of white gallery wall. It is tempting, too, to see in these works a serious preoccupation with edges, surfaces and the conventions of framing. But a likelier, and more satisfying view takes them as delicate, understated and unpretentious inventions.

● ELIZABETH FRANK PERLMUTTER

VD Exhibit (Museum of the City of New York): Because venereal disease is one of New York's problems, with about 450,000 cases expected this year, the museum has devised an educational multimedia show aimed at teen-agers. Designed by Joseph Wetzel Associates, it conveys a lot of textbook information visually, with a minimum of words. It is adroitly arranged, without any embarrassed smirks, as a trip through a carnival fun house—with a free blood test at the exit.

Instead of a distorting hall of mirrors reflecting horrific images of the viewer, the exhibit offers zigzag corridors, with roadblocks, traffic signs and blinking lights indicating when trouble lies ahead and which routes lead to safety. Unclothed, genderless manikins soberly line the fenced "highway," which begins in a red gallery (the Problem), continues to yellow (Prevention) and finally arrives at green (Safety). This medical maze, a kind of "Everything youngsters want to know about VD but are afraid to ask," effectively provides most of the answers on three slide projectors that give historical background and detailed pictures of the disease.

These photographed close-ups, in color, are accompanied by a repetitive voice-over: "I didn't know what to look for... you can't trust anyone... I never thought it could happen to me..." One manikin holds a condom; another has a douche bag. And always there are watchful traffic signs with eye-catching block lettering, in English and Spanish, offering advice on clean sex habits. Periodically, a classroom bell

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