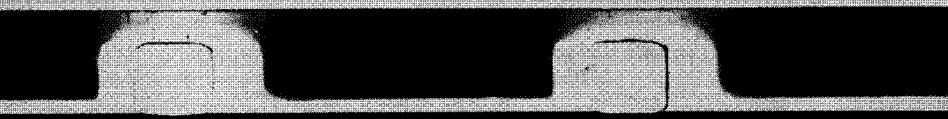




image/duration

installations of the moving image

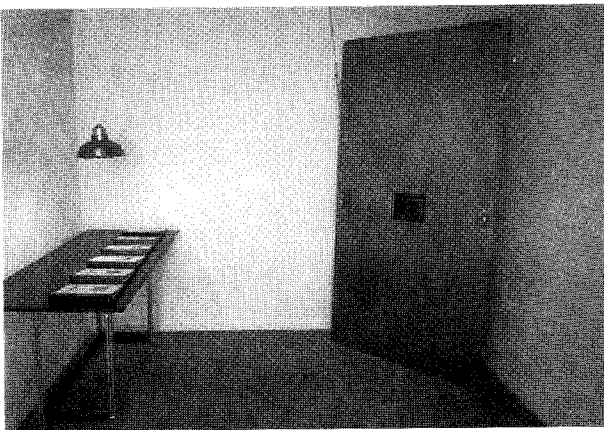


curated and edited by Tim Dallett

The relationship of moving image media to contexts of gallery display parallels the connection between two-dimensional image production and its traditional contexts of presentation. Thus, rather than interpret the moving image as the inscription of luminous phenomena by the mechanization of vision, it seems possible to investigate the image, and its potential for development as media installation work, along two different lines: first, as examination of certain technologies and conventions pertaining to mark-based representations; and second as negotiation of spatial and social contexts for image-production and display.

Accordingly, the curatorial project **Representechnics** defined an artistic territory relating to representational practices and techniques. This project was intended as an investigation of basic ideas of mediation in relation to images produced by traditional representational techniques such as drawing and indexical photography, and an inquiry into transformations of these image-making practices through digital media.

15



Representechnics, which included projects by Marc Behiels, Germaine Koh and Donna Nield, was exhibited at Gallery 101 from May 16 to June 21, 1996.

The aim of the project on a theoretical level was to reconsider successive technologies of representation, including drawing, photography and computer generation, as apparatuses which mediate their users' activities as creative agents. The practical objective of the exhibition was to assemble and present examples of contemporary art practice which addressed and extended this framework through a variety of engagements with image technologies, representational techniques and socio-spatial settings.

This curatorial approach is based on changing the site where mediation is seen to operate. By emphasizing the nexus of

practices and techniques involved in image-making rather than the spectator's reception or production of image-meanings, a reconceptualization of artistic production as a dialectic of representational technique and intentionality emerges as a perspective which can address fabrication and its cultural contexts as mechanisms of mediation in their own right.

Such an inquiry into the relationship between intentionality, and craft and technique engages not only with the familiar theme of the shifts in the meaning and cultural role of representational drawing occasioned by the advent of photography, but also with the equally far-reaching implications of digital image manipulation for indexical (or, more generally, analog) representational practices—of which gelatin silver photography is one of the most typical and characteristic procedures.



Witness, a project by Germaine Koh

20 The digital, as a principle of image construction, processing and editing, has enormous, and by now widely discussed, implications for the traditional status of indexical photography as a mechanism of 'truthful' visual replication. As an analog system which necessarily transforms—through an optical-chemical infrastructure of significant cultural determination—relationships of light and darkness, arrangements of objects, materials, spaces and activities into visible, reproducible images, the photographic process was until recently accorded a quasi-judicial authority as a guarantor of visual fact.

Ironically, the evidentiary status accorded the photograph is paralleled by the proscription of the camera apparatus itself from courtrooms. This proscription, motivated by various factors, but ultimately undergirded by a belief in the veracity of the photograph itself, revives, necessitates, and authorizes, in the key site of judicial authority, the practice of hand-drawn representations. The courtroom sketch is, notes Germaine Koh, "a form that distills a number of representa-

tional anxieties". As a replacement for the photograph or television broadcast, the sketch acts as a prophylaxis for a social body negotiating an unwelcome withdrawal of the photographic image. In its substitution for indexical technologies of representation, the courtroom sketch is a nexus of social and cultural investments. While the hand-drawn representation may appear less 'objective', and thus seemingly more mediated, selective or tendentious than the photograph, its deployment in newspaper coverage reveals both to be equally labile forms.

The printed newspaper is the ground for a complexly conditioned interaction of images, captions and descriptions. The vectors of this interaction are occasionally forced to the surface by particular types of coverage, particularly those which construct criminality. The criminal prosecution, symbolizing a settling of accounts, is an event central to the negotiation of a public image of justice, an image which alternates problematically between the spectacular and the pathetic. The juxtaposition of these constructed images of justice with the de-mediatized space of judicial activity itself foregrounds techniques which permit the transfer of information from one sphere to another.

Beginning with a close analysis of the conventions of the courtroom sketch as photographic surrogate, Koh undertook a process of insertion and displacement. Insinuating herself into the role of the courtroom artist, she performed a series of meticulous recordings. Yet paradoxically, these visual transcriptions were not of the familiar 'drama' of the courtroom, but rather of its margins, its banalities, its disregarded moments. The gap between the sketch and the remainder

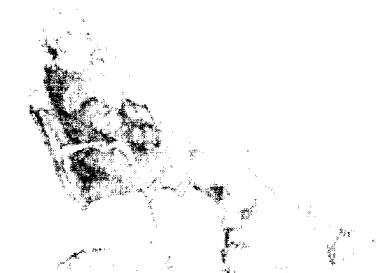
of the scene from which it is excised provokes a displacement—an oblique re-enactment of a representational mode.

This strategy of substituting an ambiguous replica for a traditional icon is further developed by the artist in the presentation of the drawings in the gallery space. Reproduced on newsprint, in booklets bearing the traces of digital editing technique, Koh's images were juxtaposed with photocopies of newspapers featuring sensationalized coverage of the same court cases 'witnessed' by the artist.

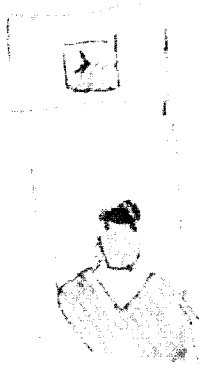
officials who sit by entrances



19 April 1996
courtroom 31



12 April 1996
courtroom 36



accused entering
Rubens Henderson trial
9 February 1996



juror leaving
Marks and Farrell trial
25 February 1996

police officers
courtroom 36



16 February 1996



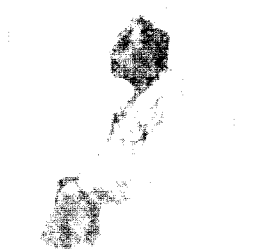
1 March 1996



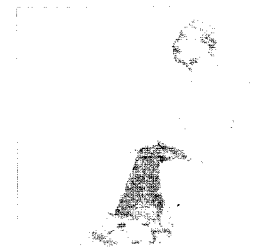
12 April 1996



court clerk picking fingernails
15 March 1996, courtroom 7



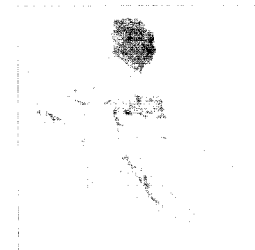
8 March 1996, courtroom 6



28 December 1995, courtroom 6



23 February 1996, courtroom 7



1 March 1996, courtroom 36