

ARTnews

2000

Rob Wynne

HOLLY SOLOMON

Rob Wynne scored a direct hit with this tripartite, mixed-media show. At the gallery's entrance was a striking rug in black, pink, and yellow, covered with woven text. It begins with a coherent sentence—"I walk every day in search of you"—but from there, indecipherable letterlike shapes gathered as "words" continue the story. The rug's message, it turns out, is not in the words but in the object itself: a rug is woven textile, derived from the Latin verb "texere" (to weave), which also provides the source for text, words. Words become things when their letters are transformed into objects.

Wynne rendered this literal in another room where he installed the word "invisible," spelled out in blown-glass letters, over a bank of sand. The words can also decompose into nonsense, as on the rug—an idea Wynne ominously represents in gigantic glazed ceramic houseflies installed throughout the gallery.

But words are usually metaphors for things, in the same way artistic representations of objects are not the objects themselves. Wynne played on this in his show's second phase, consisting of ink-jet-on-canvas paintings taken from photographs of Meissen porcelain figures of dubious sexual identity. These he defaced with inscriptions ("I Want You") that constitute ironic commentaries on the artificiality of Rococo art and the idea of artwork as possession. Wynne questions the validity of making art in our artificial age even as he yields to its temptations.

The third phase consisted of sewn drawings—translucent surfaces behind which is a chaos of threads that appear on the surface as strange truisms—"I saw myself see myself"; "I'm not saying what I understand." These mock-epigrams reveal all of Wynne's conceits: language as an artificial system of signs that makes order out of chaos; the ambiguous gesture that makes art or attempts communication; and the void that opens between what we read and what we see.

—Alfred MacAdam



Rob Wynne, *Fly*,
1999, glazed
ceramic,
16½" x 11" x 4½".
Holly Solomon.