

COUCHING MEANING

ROB WYNNE

HOLLY SOLOMON GALLERY



Rob Wynne From *Sleepwalking*, Installation View C 1996

Rob Wynne's "Sleepwalking" is based on the suggestions of a double life and the fluctuation between waking and sleeping memories found in a state of reverie. Wynne goes back to the nineteenth century idea of a special mood room to create an installation for tender feeling by way of Andy Warhol. Cows, wallpaper, frame and picture spin out decoratively-couched meanings into a crescendo of emotional resolution.

This kind of over-the-top nearly-installational chamber, often orientalist or naturalist, was favored by George Sand, Delacroix, Robert de la Montesquiou and others. Wynne's world is held together by butterflies, signifying transience and beauty. The front gallery is wallpapered in black butterflies, which (as in previous installations — Wynne once wallpapered Elga Wimmer's space with snakes) set the room spinning and the heart fluttering.

As black tiger swallowtails romp, somber memento mori pictures, framed by inspirational and intuitive commentaries (such as, quoting Frank O'Hara, "I am lonely for myself"), concentrate the mind on the fact of death in life. Then Wynne orchestrates a color moment, not unlike the split-second when

Dorothy opens her drab Kansas door upon Oz. Near the opening of the second chamber he sets a blown-glass sculpture of his own feet as the Ruby Slippers, granting entry.

The second chamber is a color burst of pink wallpaper printed with a libretto image of Bellini's "La Sonnambula" herself, while framed in bright reds are large elegant silkscreens, this time drenched in eros. Axioms ("Tell me who you love, I'll tell you who you are") buzz here with provocation, and with bees.

Finally, in the third room, Wynne wallpaperes up the stately Latin names of butterflies (again finding the majestic and thrilling in the mundane). Jacket-patches in the form of the tiger swallowtail and prints of butterflies pinned on linen are offered up as votives for an idea of artmaking modeled after the fleeting, transitory, yet wildly extravagant artmaking of the natural world — all for love and often involving quick death.

Thus the brief moment of art — mixing memento mori and remember-me's of loved ones — is finally compared to the butterfly again: beautiful, but too transitory. So much so that one questions the logic of life.

ROBERT MAHONEY