

# SHOUT OUTS



11/4/99 - 12/12/99

## SHOUT OUTS

NINA BOVASSO  
LUCA BUVOLI  
DIANA COOPER  
JAMES DE LA VEGA  
MATT MARELLO  
SEAN MELLYN  
ARNALDO MORALES  
NURIT NEWMAN  
DAVID SCHER

## INTRODUCTION

Stretching across the gallery, into the foyer, and spilling on to the outdoor plaza, SHOUT OUTS presents recent work in a variety of media by nine New York-based artists: Nina Bovasso, Luca Buvoli, Diana Cooper, James de la Vega, Matt Mareello, Sean Mellyn, Nurit Newman, Arnaldo Morales, and David Scher. Inspired by a street term conveying admiration and respect, the exhibition title SHOUT OUTS celebrates the energy encountered in these works.

SHOUT OUTS was conceived as a non-thematic exhibition, nonetheless, connections abound among the works, including an affinity for everyday materials, subject matter drawn from childhood recollections or personality traits, a distinctly subversive point of view, and a well-honed sense of humor. Each however, stands on its own; each work and artist a SHOUT OUT.

Kimberly Davenport

Director



DELA VEGA







## NINA BOVASSO

Born: 1966, New York, New York

1992, BFA, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, California

1999, MFA, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

*Red Tango*, 1999 is a headlong entry into Nina Bovasso's kaleidoscopic universe, where drawing alludes to painting, and visa versa. Like it's namesake, *Red Tango* is a complex, stylized choreography of shapes that jut out, bulge, and float. It is a diptych formed by large, irregularly edged sheets of paper pushpinned together on the wall. One small area of continuity, a black line outlined in blue near the bottom of the seam, curving across both sheets, forms a subtle hinge: a dark brown branch with freckled bark slants down from above and is met by a big, red flame whose curving tips recall custom car detailing, shooting up from the bottom. Rounded shapes buoy, bounce and cluster around the work's spine; semi-diaphanous spheres are covered with watery droplets. There are large, blue, dotted blobs, and single dots — blue, pink, and yellow ones — some are flattened while others project out, resembling nipples. Oftentimes, petals like those you might doodle while on the phone blossom from their tips. Ovals are in orbits around jelly bean-colored planets, tiny stacks of ink-drawn bricks fill in crevices, and slight alterations transform bulbous cloud-like structures into tiny pink brains. It is an original, eccentric vision, an abstract work with oblique references to the natural world, as well as a doodle that flourished and grew.



*Red Tango*, 1999, acrylic on paper, 114" x 102"

## LUCA BUVOLI

Born: 1963, Brescia, Italy

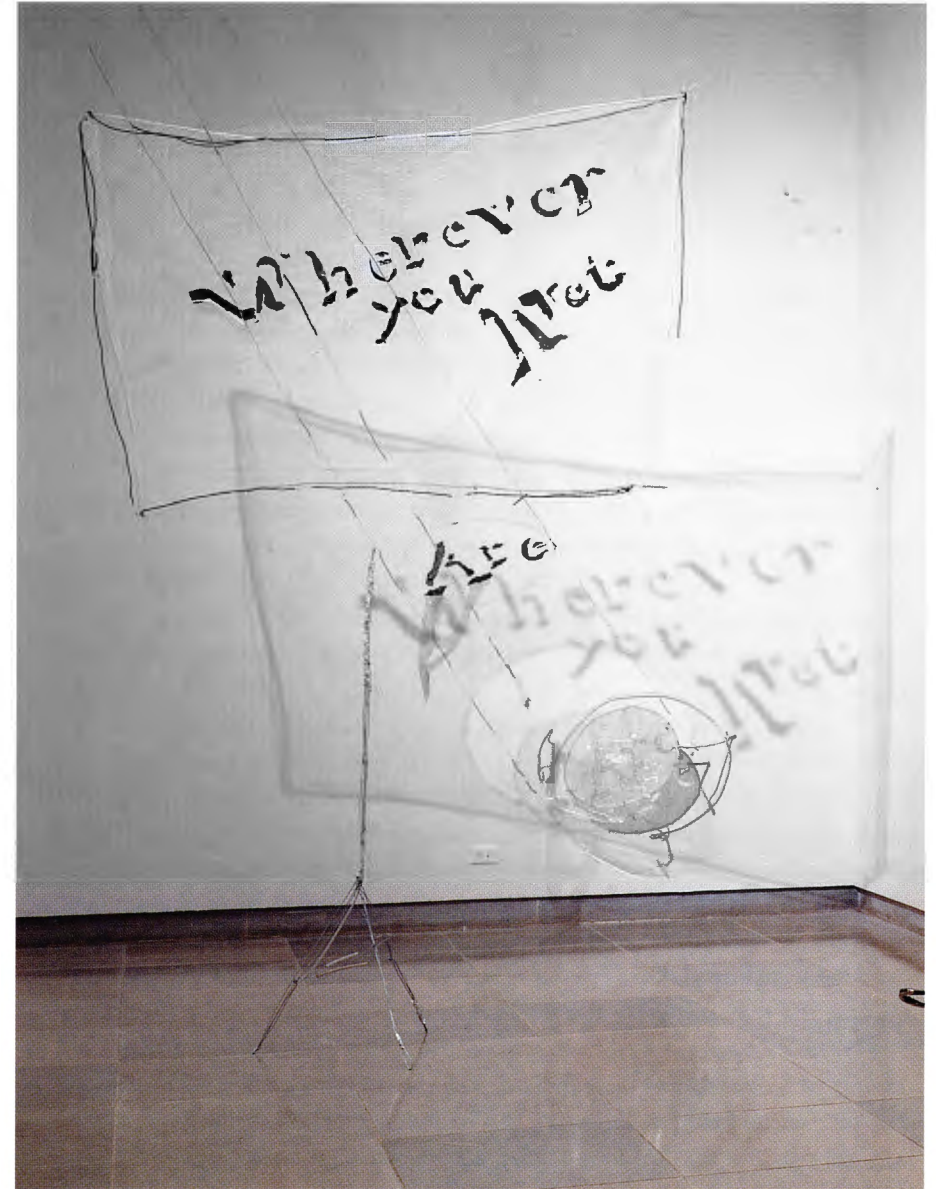
1985, BFA, Academy of Fine Arts, Venice, Italy

1989, MA, State University of New York, Albany, New York

1991, MFA, School of Visual Arts, New York, New York

*Coming Soon Marquee*, 1998 and *Wherever You Are Not Movie Screen*, 1997 are from Buvoli's *Not-a-Superhero* series, which includes other sculptural works, comic and flip-books, collages, drawings, videos and films. Growing up in Italy, Buvoli found solace in the imaginary exploits of American comic book champions, and dreamed that he, too, would find his true identity as a Superhero. The gap between this fantasy and reality, and the parallel rift in the adult world between the hoped-for ideal and the real Self, became the space where *Not-a-Superhero* was given existence. Though shy and full of doubt, Buvoli's protagonist and alter-ego defends the virtue of his introverted nature, and doggedly asserts his role and place in the world.

Buvoli's works are characterized by a self-conscious artlessness. Spindly bits of wire, sheer fabric, transparent colored film, ink-spattered paper, and hand-lettering in his own rickety script, mirror *Not-a-Superhero's* resolute vulnerability, as well as his affinity for those in need of his help — the cast-off, disregarded, and exposed members of society. The throw-away status of these components, and the seeming fragility of the sculptures themselves are important elements in Buvoli's work. They convey the sense of an indomitable presence that, despite extraordinary hardship, will emerge triumphant. The delicate appearance of Buvoli's sculptures is likewise deceiving as they command a great deal of space. *Wherever You Are Not Movie Screen* sits out 9 feet from the corner in which it is sited, and stretches across two walls. From a point on the gallery's 16-foot high ceiling, strands of wire, mimicking the beams of light from a movie projector, extend down and pass through the makeshift screen. A high wattage theatrical light illuminates the letters, fashioned from plastic garbage bags, pipe cleaners, and electrical wire, and the "movie," a shadow poem of the work's enigmatic title, appears.



*Wherever You Are Not Movie Screen*, 1997, mixed media, 113" x 108" x 108"



## DIANA COOPER

Born: 1964, Greenwich, Connecticut

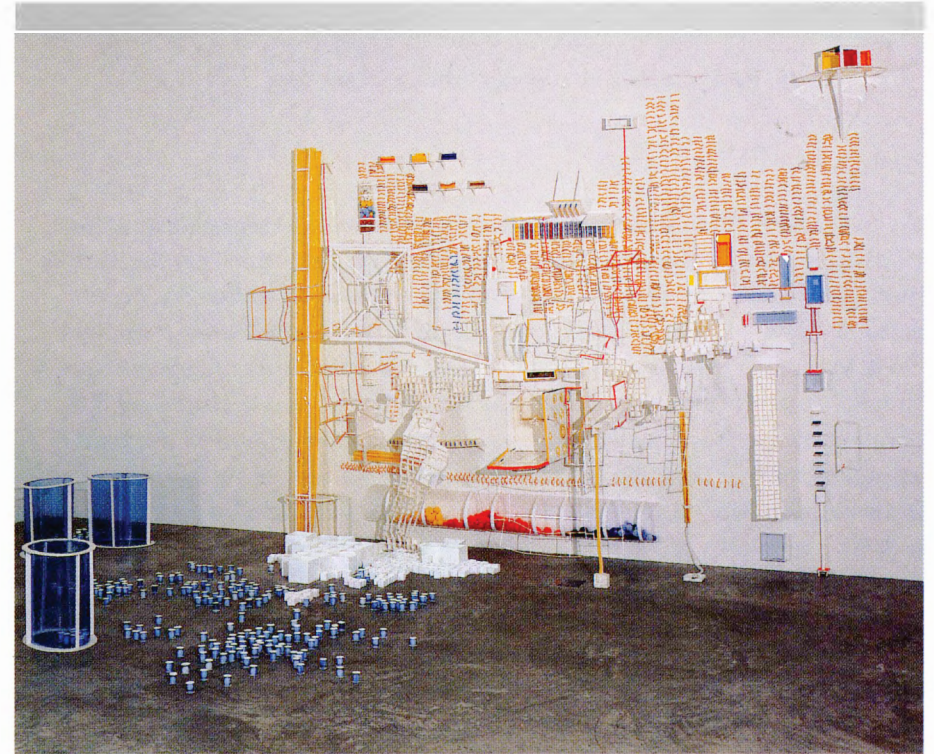
1986, BA, Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts

1990, Certificate of Fine Arts, New York Studio School, New York

1997, MFA, Hunter College, New York, New York

Diana Cooper brings together painting, doodling, cartoon-world technology and a pack rat's supply of pipe cleaners, pom-poms, felt and aluminum foil, to create monumental three-dimensional works she describes as "installational paintings." Cooper's pieces are studies in controlled chaos, characterized as much by their planned design as by their lively eruptions. They grow from canvasses covered with flat marks — obsessive, percolating spirals, frenetic scribbles and reproducing cells — that seem to generate the tubes, cages and antennae that crawl from them, across the wall and onto the floor. Escaping the confines of rectangular canvasses, tentacles emerge to form ordered geometric systems that resemble complex underground pipe structures or tangles of computer circuits.

The hundreds of pieces composing *The Dispenser*, 1999 are arduously ordered according to a delicate science. While the third dimension claims supremacy, the uncontrolled, process-driven nature of doodling maintains a distinct presence. Materials stapled or pinned to the wall metamorphose into wandering lines and animated shapes that negotiate the border between abstract and referential. Pipe cleaner ridges become endless rows of small handles, while a honeycomb string of cardboard cubes tumbles into space to form a miniature escalator bridging the gap between the wall and the floor below. Half a cardboard box seems to create a doll-sized room complete with a custom-made drawing of a chandelier looming from the imaginary ceiling. Cooper's work sets up a dialogue between the irrational and the rational, the marginal and the heroic, thus taking a compelling stance between absurdity and perfectionism.



*The Dispenser*, 1999, mixed media, 111" x 192" x 117"



## JAMES DE LA VEGA

Born: 1972, New York, New York

1994, BFA, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

James de la Vega creates public works of art throughout his east Harlem neighborhood. He is well known and respected for his painted murals, as well as temporary chalk and tape drawings of Puerto Rican cultural icons, religious figures, and portraits of his own family members. De la Vega also travels with his partner and photographer Christine Camilo to fulfill commissions, yet he remains grounded in, and nurtured by his community. He views his work as an important interruption to the hard-edged routine of daily life there. In his words, "The success of this project is my relationship with people on the street. If that wasn't a part of it, it wouldn't be worth doing."

De la Vega's transformation of the gallery plaza includes a trail of chalk-drawn rats with pink tails and piercing red eyes emerging from the surrounding hedges to climb the stairs leading up to the gallery. Rats often appear in his work as a symbol of "the rat race;" here, their presence underlines the contrast between the cloistered, pristine nature of the campus and the outside world, particularly the urban streets from which de la Vega's work emanates. Nearby, the green-taped statement *In moments of peace, be aware of danger*, a variation on de la Vega's usually optimistic aphorisms, reminds viewers not to take for granted the luxury of this unsuspecting quietude. The plaza's focal point is an 18-foot tall tape drawing of de la Vega's mother, whose strong, chiseled features appear frequently in his repertoire. Outlined in black and highlighted with red, yellow and blue tape, her eyes closed and face tilted upwards, she cradles a bird in her cupped hands. Her red nail polish is echoed in the red shading around the bird, and forms a visual bond between the two, one promising to endure even if the woman were to take the next step hinted at by the statement at her feet — *Be Free My Son, Be Free!* — and thrust the bird skyward.



Detail, Works by James de la Vega, 1999, colored tape and chalk

## MATT MARELLO

Born: 1960, Reading, Pennsylvania

1990, BFA, University of the Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

In *Sitcoms*, 1998 Matt Mareello looks at the gaping divide that exists between popular and high culture in America. Mareello grew up as a member of what he calls "the first generation of Americans to be fed a steady stream of TV and TV bi-products from birth." When he entered college at seventeen, he found his childhood friends Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock replaced by Descartes and Hegel, Proust and Machievelli. *Sitcoms* endeavors to merge these two disparate worlds. Dressed in the guise of famous philosophers, Mareello inserts himself into the action of 1960s sitcoms, elevating the philosophers to a level of star status on a par with their cultural influence. To further emphasize their mainstream presence, mock *TV Guides* whose covers feature portraits of the philosophers and their TV co-stars are strewn around a simulated middle-America living room.

Far from a seamless blending of old and new, Mareello's videos are testimony more to a lack of communication than to a joining together of foreign worlds. The conversation between René Descartes and Skipper of *Gilligan's Island*, for instance, is humorous because, despite the logical flow of the dialogue, it is obviously feigned. This point is reinforced by the low-tech methods of insertion Mareello uses to bring the two worlds together, an effect he describes as "a sort of cheesy homemade look that wallows in its own laborious low-techness." Inspired by the early Renaissance painting practice of inserting patrons into biblical scenes, Mareello's work pokes fun at the past while questioning the legacy American culture will pass on to future generations.



*Sitcoms*, 1998, video and mixed media installation



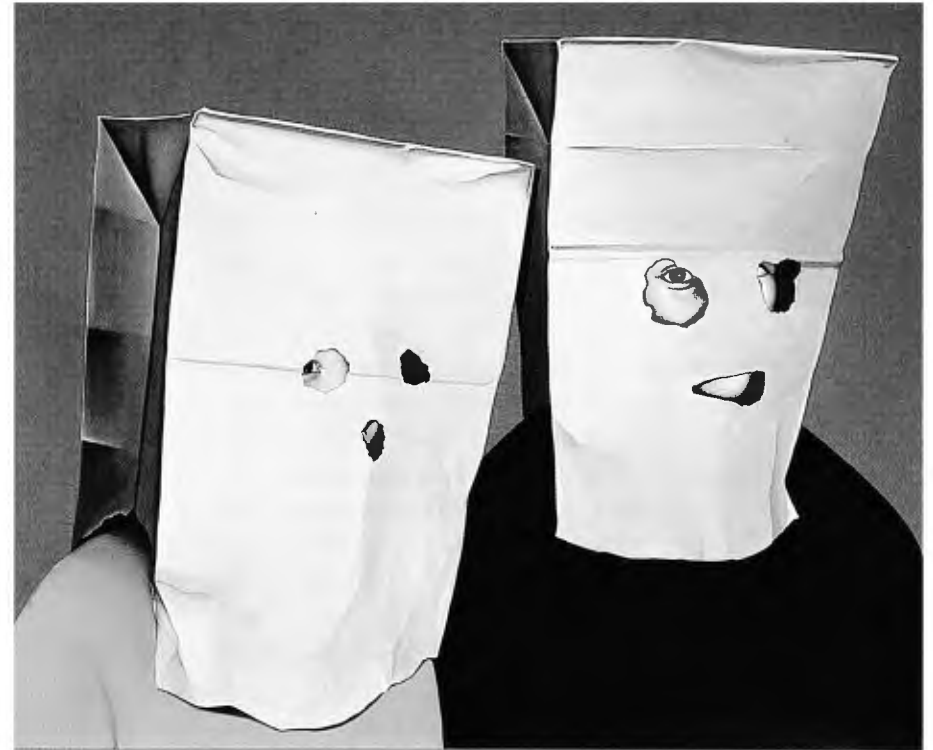
## SEAN MELLYN

Born: 1965, Providence, Rhode Island

1987, BFA, Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, New York

Sean Mellyn's gouache and graphite drawings of children recall the impersonal, uniform poses of traditional school pictures, but he has added a curious twist. In works such as *Outsiders*, 1999 Mellyn dissolves the final piece of individuality by covering the children's heads with paper bags. All that remains is an ambiguous gaze from cut out eye-holes, a toothy grin, or possibly, a grimace. The detailed rendering of the bags, of tiny wrinkles and ragged edges of the hastily torn openings, stands in marked contrast to the flat, anonymous character of the bodies.

In *Outsiders*, two masked figures are grouped together in an uneasy unity. Although physically proximate, they make no acknowledgment of one another; both stare outward with arms flat to their sides. Only the title, functioning like a caption, offers a vague explanation for the alliance. It, like the bags themselves, is a mark of ostracization, and calls to mind concepts of anonymity, hiding, protection and shame. The children are nameless, ageless and genderless. Though the composition is straightforward, we are left to imagine the scenario: are we glimpsing the innocence and simplicity of homemade fun, or something more sinister?



*Outsiders*, 1999, gouache and ink on paper, 35" x 30"

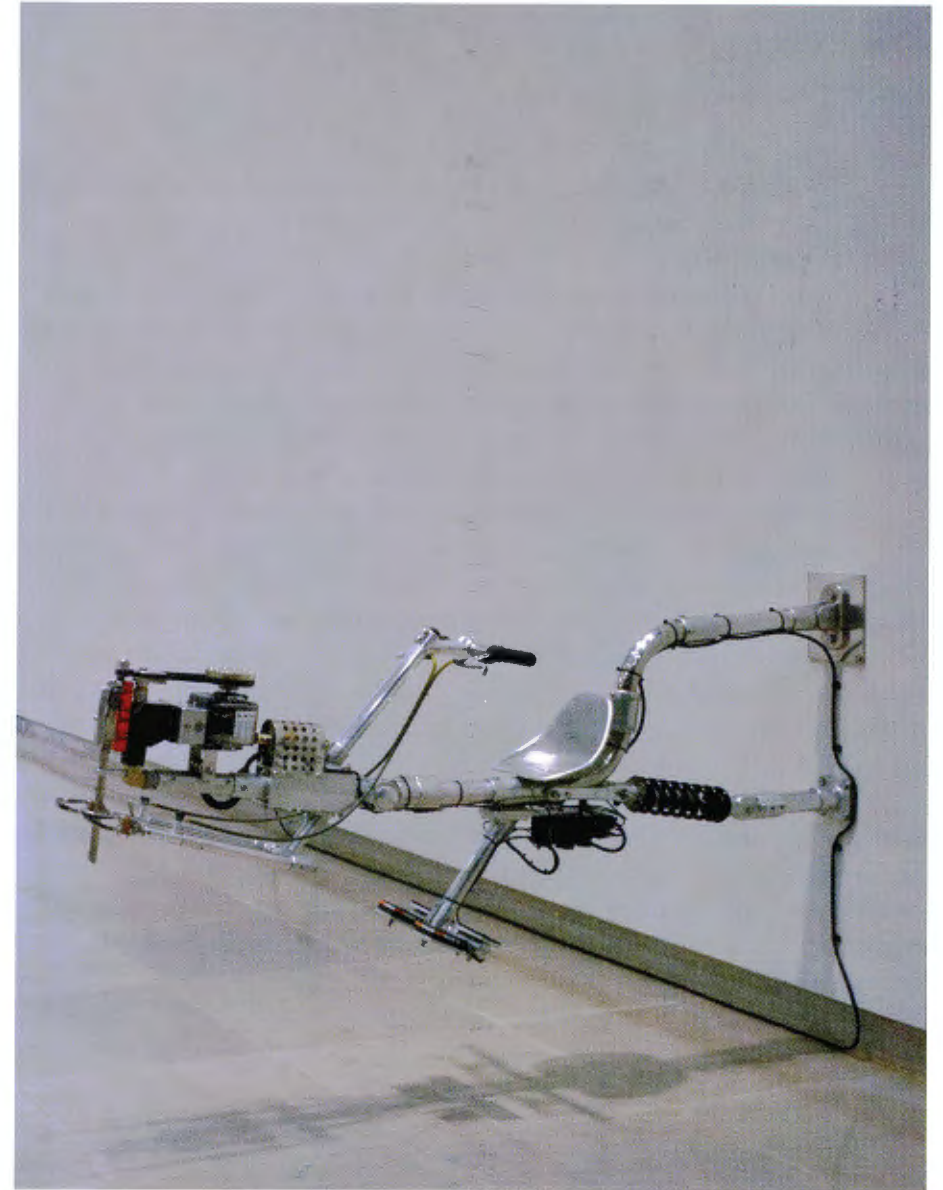
## ARNALDO MORALES

Born: 1967, Ponce, Puerto Rico

1996, BFA, School of Visual Arts at The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Arnaldo Morales explores the close relationship between invention and destruction. Inspired by the vast advances in twentieth-century technology, as well as his memories of growing up near an industrial wasteland in Puerto Rico, his work reflects his fascination with modern industrial history. Morales' *electroobjetos*, highly polished and authoritative-looking mechanical sculptures created from readily-available materials, are alluring despite being daunting. Their beauty seduces viewers, who are enticed to interact with them, giving no thought to the consequences of pulling triggers, or entering unknown spaces. Some of Morales' works are designed to play on commonly held anxieties about technology, emitting loud noises, or unexpectedly lurching out, violating the assumed safety of the viewing space.

Crafted from bicycle parts, a child's seat, prosthetic claws and a sharp blade, *PE No 98*, 1998 is a futuristic version of the coin-operated children's rides seen on grocery store walkways. Protruding from the wall, the work resembles a giant stainless steel praying mantis that awaits the command of a child-size driver. Once in the controller's seat, the child is empowered to move the machine's insect-like claws with a squeeze of the handlebar grips. Pressing the left pedal the child can cause the front portion of the machine to jump forward unexpectedly, then retreat while issuing a noise reminiscent of a high powered staple gun. By pressing the right pedal the child sets a belt loop spinning, causing a razor-sharp, serrated knife blade at the front to move up and down like the needle on a sewing machine. The danger in *PE No 98* is actually indirect and controlled, even if the gestures are menacing and their results startling. Morales draws our attention to the seductive allure of violence in entertainment, and the delicate line between it, and benign play.



*PE, No. 98*, 1998, industrial materials, 2 1/2' x 6' x 1 1/2'



## NURIT NEWMAN

Born: 1966, New York, New York

1984, BFA, New York University, New York, New York .

1993, MFA, The State University of New Jersey, New Brunswick,  
New Jersey

Nurit Newman's video installation, *Out of this World*, 1998 deals hilariously with the frustration of what is called co-dependence, when one's good feelings about oneself depend on being liked by, or receiving approval from another. Five monitors simultaneously display different segments in which Newman, dressed in a tight-fitting, sleeveless beige sheath with matching stockings and shoes, and a shoulder length black wig, plays a character loosely modeled on the 1970s sitcom persona, *That Girl*. In various scenarios we see her on her knees on a red carpet, spinning in circles, surrounded by what appears to be infinitely expanding circles of tiny wax chairs; in another she counts them, two by two. On the third monitor she bangs her head on the floor incessantly; on the fourth she slams her purse against the wall and seconds later jumps up and down on it. On the fifth monitor, facing us close up, she lies on the floor and shoves an entire cake into her mouth.

The viewer is the object of Newman's attention, and is positioned alternately as unwilling guest, sympathizer and voyeur. As we identify with her character's frustration, we are simultaneously seduced and repulsed by her, and feel suffocated by her attempts at manipulation. However, as we recognize, within the safety zone of art, some all-too-familiar self-destructive behaviors, we laugh with her.



*Out of this World* (detail), 1998, five channel video installation





## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Nina Bovasso	<p><i>Red Tango, 1999</i> Acrylic on paper 114" x 102" Courtesy of the artist</p>	<p>Sean Mellyn <i>Outsiders, 1999</i> Gouache and ink on paper 35" x 30" Courtesy of the artist and Anna Kustera Gallery, New York</p>
Luca Buvoli	<p><i>Movie Display Case with Movie Poster for Wherever You Are Not, 1999</i> Mixed media including: glass/wood case, ink on paper, drinking straws, wire, pipe cleaners, and cloth 35 1/4" x 27 1/2" Courtesy of the artist and John Weber Gallery, New York</p>	<p><i>Fifteen Minutes of Shame, 1998</i> Gouache &amp; graphite on paper 17 3/4" x 14 1/4" Collection of Elizabeth Hayt, New York</p>
	<p><i>Coming Soon Marquee, 1998</i> Mixed media including: wire, cloth, pipe cleaners, Plexiglas, foil, and candy wrappers 85" x 120" x 4" Courtesy of the artist and John Weber Gallery, New York</p>	<p><i>Man of the Hour, 1998</i> Gouache &amp; graphite on paper 18 1/4" x 14" Collection of Elizabeth Hayt, New York</p>
	<p><i>Wherever You Are Not Movie Screen, 1997</i> Mixed media including: aluminum tripod, wire, Plexiglas, pipe cleaners, fabric, aluminum foil and garbage bags 113" x 108" x 108" Courtesy of the artist and John Weber Gallery, New York</p>	<p><i>Swami, 1998</i> Gouache &amp; graphite on paper 13 3/4" x 13" Courtesy of the artist and Anna Kustera Gallery, New York</p>
Diana Cooper	<p><i>The Dispenser, 1999</i> Paper, Fome-cor, acetate, pom-poms, pipe cleaners, felt, acrylic, and plastic tubes 111" x 192" x 117" Courtesy of the artist and Postmasters, New York</p>	<p><i>Fat Tuesday (Mardi Gras in black and white) 1998</i> Mixed media on paper (3 dimensional) 14 3/4" x 13 3/4" x 1 1/2" Courtesy of the artist and Anna Kustera Gallery, New York</p>
Diana Cooper	<p><i>The Black One, 1997</i> Felt tip marker, acrylic, felt, aluminum tape, pipe cleaners, pom-poms, and acetate on canvas and wall 113" x 100" x 7 1/2" Courtesy of the artist and Postmasters, New York</p>	<p>Arnaldo Morales <i>Selector M2 No 94, 1999</i> Industrial materials 16'(length) x 2'(diameter) Courtesy of the artist and De Chiara/Stewart Gallery, New York</p>
James de la Vega	<p><i>Works by James de la Vega, 1999</i> Colored tape and chalk Courtesy of the artist</p>	<p>Arnaldo Morales <i>PE, No. 98, 1998</i> Industrial materials 2 1/2' x 6' x 1 1/2' Courtesy of the artist and De Chiara/Stewart Gallery, New York</p>
Matt Mareello	<p><i>Sitcoms, 1998</i> Video and mixed media installation including: console TV, couch, recliner, coffee table, artificial plants, end tables, lamps, Coke bottles, ashtray, and cigarette butts Courtesy of the artist and Bill Maynes Gallery, New York</p>	<p>Nurit Newman <i>Out of this World, 1998</i> Five channel video installation Courtesy of the artist and Silverstein Gallery, New York</p>
		<p>David Scher <i>It seems to me that if you want to build things in the air it were better castles than houses of cards, 1989-1999</i> Mixed media including: graphite, watercolor, ink, paper, wire, mirror, ceramic boulder, chewing gum, sock, photographs, balloon, paperback book, and newspaper clippings 16' x 11' Courtesy of the artist and Jack Tilton Gallery, New York</p>
		<p><i>Display of ten notebooks by David Scher</i> Courtesy of the artist and Jack Tilton Gallery, New York</p>

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Cover image taken from *SHOUT OUTS* announcement designed by David Scher

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