

rative element is subsumed in a symphony of color. German Expressionism is represented by Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's *Two Pink Nudes by the Moritzburg Lake* (1909–20), in which spiky strokes of green and yellow grass surround two very pink stout nudes with hot orange foot soles.

Sure, there's a lot of color here, especially red. But not enough to establish a strong link among the works and artists. To have done this properly would have required taking into account Titian, Seurat, and Rothko—among countless others. Given the possibilities, the Royal Academy's decision to brand the brushiest of this bunch "masters," based on a less than spectacular overall selection, is puzzling. —Pernilla Holmes



Wassily Kandinsky, *Angel of the Last Judgment*, 1911, oil on cardboard, 27 1/2" x 19". Royal Academy.

## Vincent Corpet

DANIEL TEMPLON

Paris

For the past several years, French painter Vincent Corpet has been making trippy, vibrantly colored canvases that superimpose fragmented images of human beings, objects, and animals. In the recent series shown here, he continued the same idea, intermingling butterflies, fish, pears, elephants, people, and ducks. But these paintings were almost monochromatic, dominated by a deep, bluish black, a dirty white, or varying shades of reddish brown. The show was a tour de force by a rigorous artist unafraid of taking risks, and offered up an exquisite reminder that painting is far from dead.

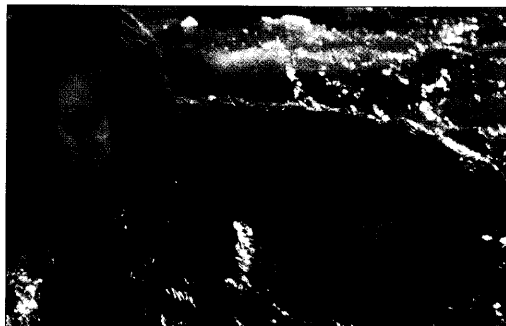
Disturbing and complex, in somber tones these montages tend to become rich, erotic, and a bit sinister. Corpet's manner of drawing often evokes Goya's etchings or even the works of Francis Bacon. This is especially true of the horrified-looking human faces that poke out from several of these mesmerizing compositions. One organic shape conceals myriad others. The paintings also have a Surrealist quality to them: Corpet's process is similar to automatic writing. He spontaneously builds one layer on top of another, finding connections among distinctly unlike forms.

Above all, these works reveal Corpet as one of the most talented painters in France today. In certain works, the painter leaves the raw linen of his canvases visible. He creates an interplay between the layering of paint and images, sometimes rubbing into the paint or scraping a lighter line out of a dark shape. While masterfully exploiting traditional techniques, Corpet presents unsettling images that are utterly contemporary.

—Laurie Hurwitz-Attias



Vincent Corpet, *3054 P*, 2002, oil on canvas, 63 3/4" x 49 1/2". Daniel Templon.



Eija-Liisa Ahtila, *Consolation Service*, 1999, 35-mm film still, dimensions variable. Kunsthalle Zurich.

## Eija-Liisa Ahtila

KUNSTHALLE ZÜRICH

Zurich

In the video works of Eija-Liisa Ahtila, the artist's native Finland is never distant. Their emotional topography is almost arctic, marked by the famous Finnish reserve. Insanity is a recurrent theme, in part because many of her videos are based upon conversations with recovering psychotics. Ahtila's moody masterpieces accentuate the harried thinking by a process of editing that mixes rapid cutting with long, languorous shots.

Despite their spartan style, these are not actually cold works, because Ahtila draws out the maelstroms that rage behind the stark facades of her creamy-skinned heroines. The teenage girl at the nexus of *Today* (1997) simply tosses a ball against a wall as she describes the husk of a man her father has become after a road tragedy. Yet in her stern eyes and erect posture we can see an electric intensity.

Two works were spotlighted with full-scale projection spaces. In *The Wind* (2002), a female shut-in describes her life bluntly and perceptively, while trashing her apartment at an unhurried pace. *Consolation Service* (1999) centers on a couple as their relationship splinters apart. At one point, their therapist asks them to communicate nonverbally. Both begin barking at each other like dogs. The patients in the waiting room file into the session and quietly sit against the wall, seemingly invisible to the couple. Their presence does not shift the dynamics of the scene, but it is clear that no matter can ever be truly private.

Ahtila's narratives often completely break with reality, usually at the end of a piece. Yet by then the viewer is so engaged that these sudden slips go down smoothly. In that sense, Ahtila achieves something that David Lynch can only attempt, creating a closely parallel dimension onscreen that is distinctly bizarre yet still rings true. —Marc Spiegler

## Robert Ryman

THOMAS AMMANN

Zurich

Robert Ryman chose the 22 paintings for this exhibition, all made between 1960 and 1994. Many were being shown for the first time. Color, texture, light, and space were splendidly at play in both large and small pieces, many of them attached directly to the wall. The exhibition

provided a rare opportunity to become more intimately acquainted with the variety of color sensations and emotional intensity that inform Ryman's understated oeuvre.

With contained strength, *Untitled* (ca. 1965–66) quietly confronts the viewer. Six wide white horizontal

continued on page 176