

formance conceived for the 1972 Venice Biennale, *Souvenir of the Second Resolution of Immortality*, in which he invited a young Venetian boy with Down's syndrome to sit in front of three objects, cryptically identified by the artist as an invisible cube, a ball in the instant before it bounces back, and a stone whose molecules were about to be casually moved.

In another work, *The Immortal, the Invisible, and the Site* (1989), a black chair with pointed legs was stuck up high in the corner of the ceiling at the National Gallery. This was probably the best vantage point to view the absurdity and inventiveness of an extraordinary artist who explored a world of alchemy, illusion, and death.

—Jonathan Turner

Françoise Gilot

GALERIE PILTZER

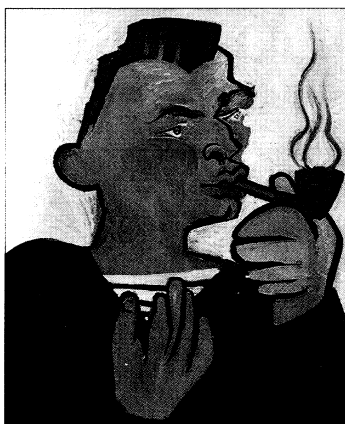
Paris

Painter Françoise Gilot was Picasso's companion for more than a decade. Included in this show were some 60 of her monotypes, paintings, and drawings from 1940 to 1955 (Gilot met Picasso in 1943 and left him in 1954), plus dozens of rare family photographs. This exhibition revealed Gilot—whose work during this period often chronicled her life with Picasso—as an important artist.

Two allegorical still lifes opened and closed the show. *The Hawk* (1943), a depiction of a stuffed bird, alludes to wartime oppression and introduces the artist's longtime obsession with the theme of predators. *Still Life with Scissors* (1954–55), pairing a bouquet with an aggressive-looking pair of shears, reflects rupture in the relationship between Gilot and Picasso. Her geometric forms, sharply defined contours, and vivid colors were clearly influenced by Picasso and Matisse.

The exhibition's most potent images were the portrait drawings of herself, Picasso, and their two children, Paloma and Claude. The stern, masklike *Pablo's Face, Yellow Background* (1944), Gilot's first drawing of Picasso, depicts him with a merciless, steely-eyed gaze.

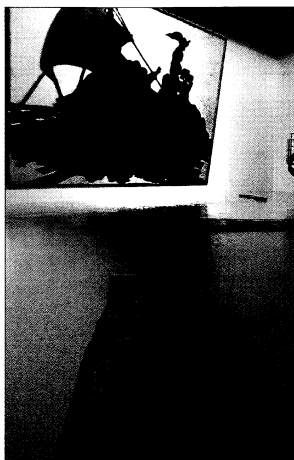
Gilot's otherwise lyrical paintings of domestic scenes often belie something complex, even sinister. *Children in the Kitchen* (1950), in which two infants transform the kitchen table into a playhouse, has an underlying tension: the toddlers seem oddly serious, self-absorbed, and determined. Despite the image of a child's arms wrapped around his mother in *Maternity, Françoise and Claude* (1953), the work, depicted in rough strokes of fiery color, exudes turmoil. In another painting, Paloma plays with matches while Claude inscribes the word "Liberté"



Françoise Gilot,
*Portrait of E.
Pignon, 1952, oil on
wood,
26" x 21½".
Galerie Piltzer.*



Thomas Ruff, *Poster
VI, 1999, C-Print
mounted on acrylic
glass, 102" x 96".
Mai 36.*



Francisco Bugallo,
*Image and Likeness,
1999, installation
view. Museo de Arte
Contemporáneo de
Caracas Sofía Imber.*

on a chalkboard, possibly expressing Gilot's growing sense of entrapment, which led to her violent breakup with Picasso in 1954. At her best, Gilot captured the complexities of her interior state.

—Laurie Attias

Thomas Ruff

MAI 36

Zurich

Thomas Ruff's newest vein of work may cause consternation among those who have pigeonholed him as a cool-minded technician. Long famous for his spartan portraits of everyday folk, the Düsseldorf photographer has begun a series of photomontages that satirize public figures. Where his previous work embodied dispassion, the photomontages have a deliberately raucous aesthetic. Two held pride of place in this show. In one, the Jesse "James" Helms gang rides off in tanks after sacking a museum, while bombers finish off the job. In the other, a beaming Tony Blair head sits atop a preening, muscle-bound body with a Queen Elizabeth tattoo on its biceps, set against a background of phrases and consumer items that mock the "New Britain" mind-set.

Ruff's work calls to mind another German political photomontagist—John Heartfield. Best known for his searing anti-Nazi work, Heartfield still counts among the titans of the art form (even in an age when software such as Photoshop has made it incomparably simpler). Heartfield, though, was responding to an indisputably evil enemy, while Ruff must make do with more slippery figures like Helmut Kohl.

Even his lampooning of Helms somehow seems to have too much firepower for the job.

The show's other work extended Ruff's decade-old "Portraits" series. The subjects stare into the camera with a certain loss of affect. Some are beautiful, others less so. All framed in the same way, the images resemble identification photos. With their hallmarks of camera verité—revealing the stubble and moles, split ends, and incipient pimples—they lie between the impossibly pretty and deliberately ugly images with which the advertising world currently bombards us. Glossy but not glamorous, Ruff's photos resonate in a way that his photomontages do not.

—Marc Spiegler

Francisco Bugallo

MUSEO DE ARTE CONTEMPORÁNEO DE
CARACAS SOFÍA IMBER

Caracas

Over the last ten years, Francisco Bugallo has reproduced works by Uccello, Mantegna, and Raphael, among others. But reproduced is the wrong word. What Bugallo does, and does so well, to magical effect, is paint a faithful likeness of a famous painting and then strip part of its surface with solvents and