

Art in America

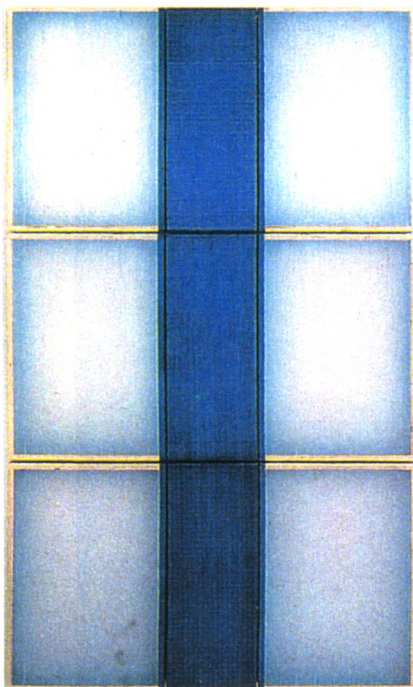
JULY 1994

Heather Hutchison at Nohra Haime

Heather Hutchison's paintings are made of wax on Plexiglas panels which are mounted on birch stretchers. The wax is sometimes used au naturel; at other times, Hutchison tints it with pigment. The 3½-inch depth of the stretchers makes them function as reverse shadow boxes of a sort. Hutchison paints the inside edges of her stretchers with dark colors which are faintly visible through the wax. The sense of color masked and yet transmitted by the overlying wax layer is the source of the exhibition's title: "Translucid Passages."

Hutchison generally uses her boxes as modules to form larger units, from triptychs to 9- or 12-part paintings. They may at first glance remind the viewer of the works of Minimalists such as Donald Judd. But Hutchison's medium is inherently sloppy, with the wax dripping beyond the painting's surface and onto the outside edges of the stretcher. Caulking of nail holes is undisguised, and the knotholes of the stretcher's wood peek through the Plexiglas.

Within her reductive format, Hutchison achieves much varia-



Heather Hutchison: *Nine High*, 1993, mixed mediums, 91 by 54½ by 3½ inches; at Nohra Haime.

tion. The uniform brushstrokes are horizontal in some works, vertical in others. Occasionally she paints a layer of brushstrokes running in one direction and then adds another layer on top of it with those strokes running perpendicular to the first. Given the translucence of the wax, the first layer remains visible, creating a ghostly grid. In some works the artist subverts the grid by painting passages in a swirling pattern.

Such passages are confined to the central units of Hutchison's paintings, as are the areas of surface color. Hers is not an all-over esthetic, but one that seeks the center. While some of her titles refer to structural characteristics—*Nine High*, or *Division I*, for example—others such as *Resurrection* or *For All the People Who Have Died* attest to religious or metaphysical concerns. —Reagan Upshaw

ARTnews

“Invitational '97”

KNOEDLER

Revising a tradition instituted over 50 years ago, the gallery selected four artists outside its usual high-profile stable for this exhibition. The concept's original success, made by the inclusion of then-underknowns Robert Henri, Childe Hassam, George Bellows, and Albert Pinkham Ryder, would be difficult to repeat. Indeed, while there were competent works here by Heather Hutchison, Mary Judge, and John Evans, Deborah Aschheim's installation *Spore/Virus* was the sole attention-grabber.

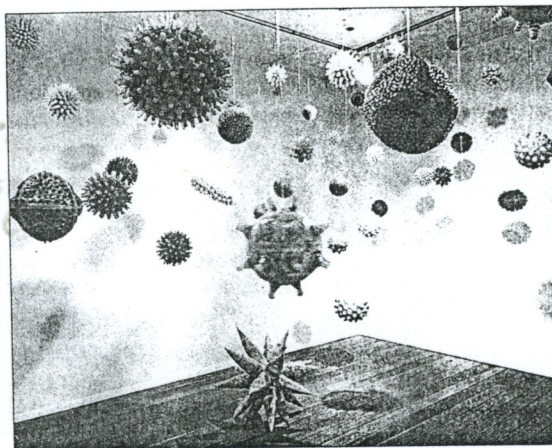
You do not simply look at Aschheim's installation, you are enveloped by it. As lights dim, spheres dangling from the ceiling and navigating the floor turn fluorescent, glowing like stars from different distances in the night sky. As light slowly returns, the forms' tentacled surfaces, created with rubber nipples and shellac, beckon to be handled, seducing wickedly like sharp coral waving in the sea.

The other artists also work with highly personal vocabularies. Evans makes well-designed diaristic collages that include dates of entry, stamps, labels, tickets, old-fashioned postcards, and advertisements. A much-needed touch of quirkiness is achieved by his signature duck bills that often line the page's edge.

Judge's concentric drawings, which she creates by perforating and then beating

paper with a sack of powdered pigment, bring to mind fingerprints, Rorschach tests, and cross-sections of tree trunks. The most successful forms, though, are the curlicues, whose more sculptural aspects suggest the human figure.

Hutchison has chosen a Plexiglas box frame, pigment, and beeswax to impart feelings of transcendence. Her minimalistic compositions and vivid hues create a soothing, uplifting space. Of particular appeal was *Turn Away*, a brew of Rothko, Kelly, and Fontana, which here, despite its title, welcomed viewers from across the room. DEIDRE STEIN GREBEN



Deborah Aschheim, *Spore/Virus*, 1997,
installation view.
Knoedler.