

HARRELL FLETCHER
EVERYDAY SUNSHINE



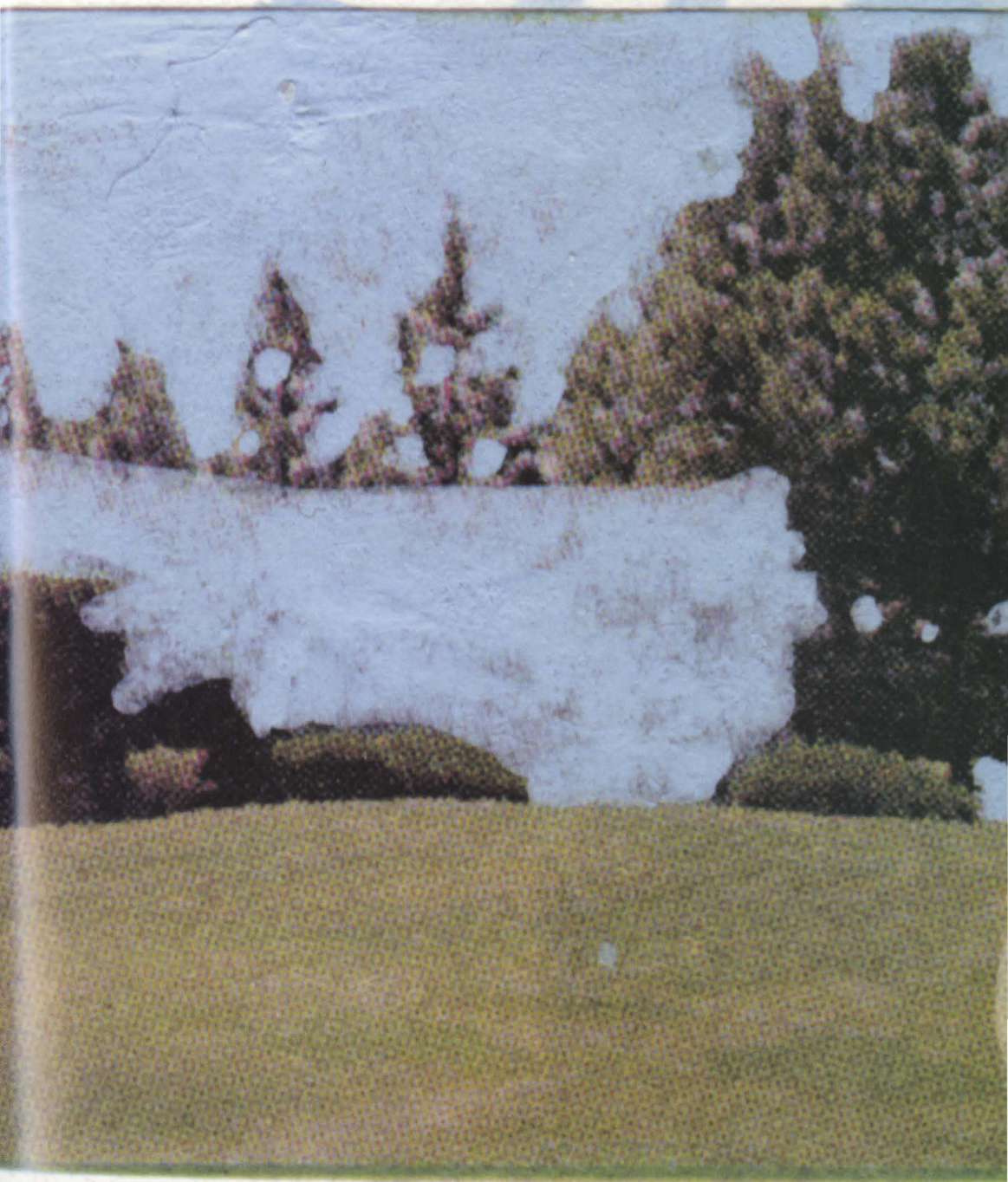


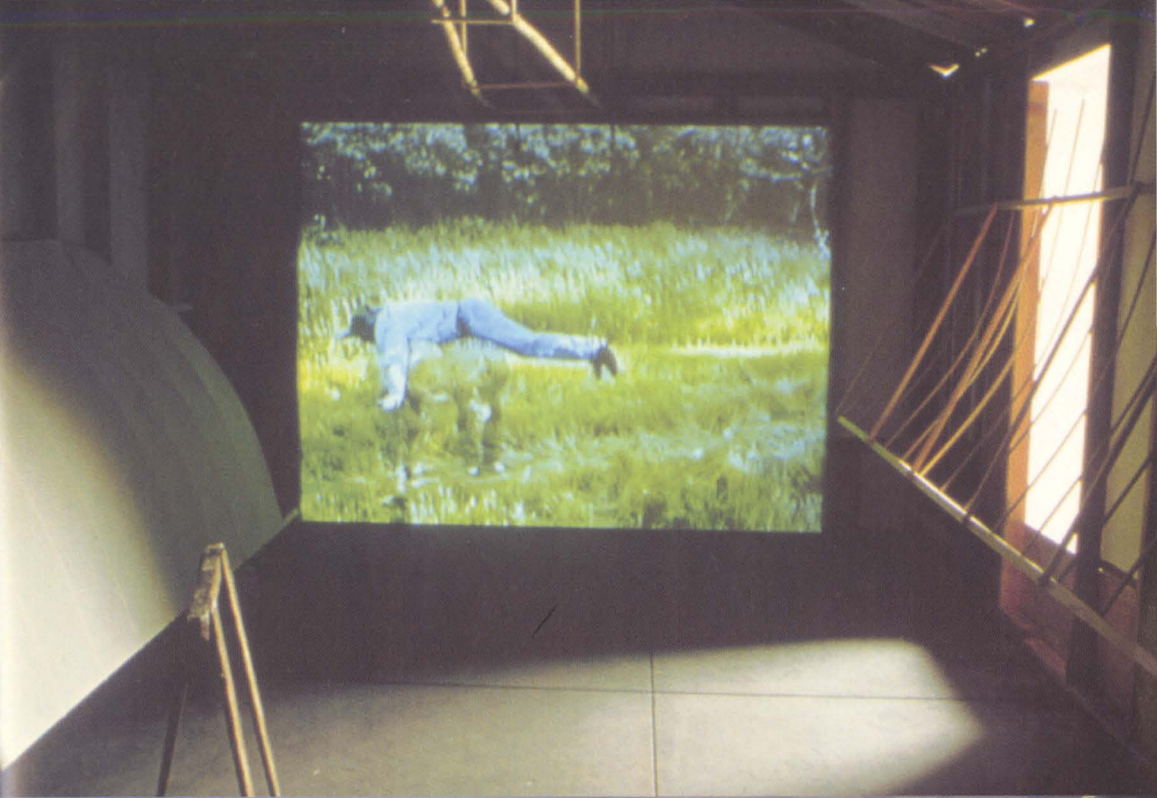


REAL-ESTATE ADS WITH LIQUID PAPER COVERING UP THE HOUSES
AND STREETS. SORT OF MY ATTEMPT AT FINDING LANDSCAPES OR
ACTUALLY JUST LAND. I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO LIVE ON A PIECE
OF LAND, BUT WHERE? IT WOULD BE NICE IF IT WERE NEAR A CITY.









The Boy Mechanic Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, 1999

Exhibition based on the life and interests of Mark Thompson. Pieces include a portable plywood duck pond, a full-scale section of a zepplin made from ironing board material, portable plywood trees, a video projection of a live beehive inside of a tent made of wax, a rowboat cut into three sections, and a video projection of Mark flying. Collaboration with Mark Thompson and Jon Rubin.



Sunday

Miranda July

It was a rough day. We were fighting in the car. I lost my temper and grabbed his chin and accidentally scratched him with my fingernails. I was so completely horrified when I saw the blood running down his cheek that I, of course, had to scratch my own face. This was just the kind of behavior that we were trying to avoid. We cleaned off the blood with paper towels in the bathroom next to his studio. I said I was going for a walk and he said, "You should bring this book, and some fig newtons. Do you want to wear my baseball hat for the sun?" I took off into the Marin Headlands. There were hills and an ocean and brush. I passed children on a school field trip, walking in a line. The teacher would point out deer tracks and each child would call out "deer tracks on the left" to the child behind them. They weren't even children really; they were just very sarcastic people. The book was called *Rich and Poor*; it was of photographs by his friend Jim Goldberg. I sat on a hill and looked at the pictures of rich and poor people and ate the fig newtons. I looked across the hills and saw his studio building. I had the distinct feeling that he could see me on the hill. I walked back to the studio and sat down on the couch.

"Did you like the book?"

"Yeah, it was really good. Did you get any work done?"

"No, not really. Can I show you some other things?"

"OK."

First he shows me a book that belonged to his mom: *Childrens' Drawings as Diagnostic Aids*. His mom tests children to see if they are ready for first grade. When he was a little boy he would come home from school very frustrated and upset. His mom would make him a little plate of cheese and crackers to eat and he would sit and draw for two hours. This is what he did to recover from the day of school. His mom told him that if the other children were mean to him he should tell them that he had "tender feelings." He reads out loud from the book: "Figure 57: Drawing of family by a thirteen-year-old girl. Hostile toward family, prone to physical aggression, unwilling to bathe."

Next he opens a book of Lee Friedlander's photos of his wife Maria. "Look at this one, isn't that provocative?" Maria is sitting in her underwear and Lee's shadow is falling over her. We flip through the book and watch Maria age. First she is younger than us, then she looks foreign and

pregnant, then she is a sexy mom, then she is a knowing, rugged muse, then suddenly she is a middle-aged woman with the same benign haircut as my mom. We silently absorb this, time rushes around our ears. "Have you seen this book?" It's William Christenberry's *Southern Photographs*. He points to a tiny picture of a calendar. "This is William Christenberry's grandfather's calendar. He got it free from a bank or something and he wrote down all the different important things that had happened in his lifetime, and then he kept on going, using it as a diary. See, on this square, it says 'old barn pulled down, first whippoorwill's singing of the season.' And here, on the next day, it says 'Robert commits suicide.' That was his son who had just come back from war." The writing ends with the grandfather's own death in someone else's handwriting.

This makes me feel emotional and I grab his hand and then the phone rings. It is a man from the City of Portland. I look at pictures of the South and listen to him try to explain why he wants to install lights along the trolley line for his public art project.

"Yes, but the landscape is already so cluttered, all the important cultural landmarks are already there—you know, like maybe an interesting stain on a building, or a branch on a tree. The motion-sensitive lights would just highlight these things when you walk by."

He gets off the phone, looking depressed.

"What did he say?"

"He said it was absolutely impossible."

"Well, who's he? Does he even matter?"

"No."

He sits back down and I tell him about my inner life. I am trying to explain the way that my mind works and why we are so different and he is drawing a picture of me while I talk.

"I'm listening, I really am. This helps me listen," he says.

"Let me see that." He hands it to me and I say,

"Where are the tears? You should make me crying."

"But you're not crying."

"But I feel very sad. I don't think the sadness is coming across."

"You draw them."

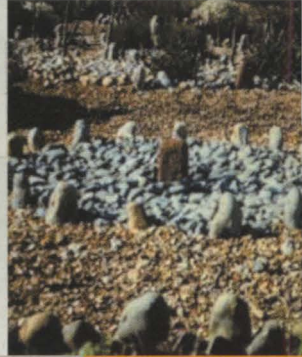
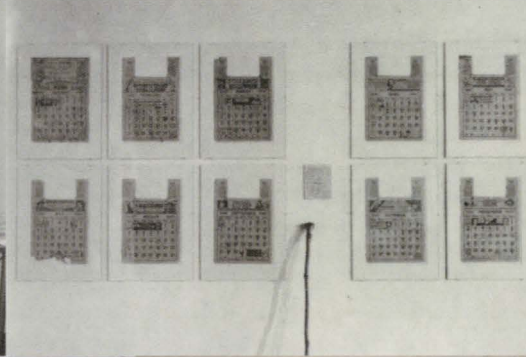
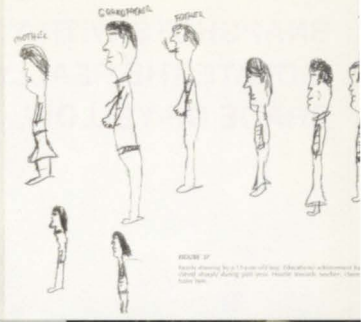
"OK. This is the only way I know how, like a woman crying in a comic book—see, like Lois Lane."

"That's really good. Don't you think it's good?"

"I guess."



WE LOOK LIKE ORDINARY PEOPLE!



Miranda crying
 Jim Goldberg, *Frich and Poor*
 Drawing of family
 Lee Friedlander, *Maria*
 William Christenberry, *Calendar*
 Derek Jarman, *Garden*
 Elizabeth Bishop, *Painting Party*

The next book is of photos of Derek Jarman's garden. We agree that the book is a little boring but that the idea of a famous filmmaker pouring his energy into his garden is redemptive. We feel hopeful about life. And the feeling continues when he shows me a book of paintings by the poet Elizabeth Bishop. We talk about the idea that maybe we could be happy. What could we do to be happy? Two ideas are: plant a garden and start painting. We are sure that other ideas will come to us in time. He pulls out a stack of found photographs and I look through them. Each one is more beautiful and unlikely than the next. I realize that I am thinking that he took all of these photos. Even the old ones from the '20s, even the black family snapshots. My scratched cheek is pulsing

like ET's heart and I feel like I'm dying. He didn't take the photos, but he is the one showing them to me. Like almost everything else in the world, I never would have noticed them if he hadn't pointed to them. This is the thing that he does best: he points out the things that already belonged to you. The stain, the branch, the way you draw. Do you love his art? Only if you love your town, your neighbor, yourself through his eyes. And he sees lovingly, gently, with a special attention to tender places and things that need repair.

It could be so easy. The day is ending and we gather up the fig newtons and my purse and his taxes and we put everything in the car and drive away.

SNAPSHOTS WITH YELLOW LIQUID PAPER. SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO ISOLATE THE REALLY GOOD PART OF A PICTURE. ALSO I LIKE THAT SHADE OF YELLOW.



