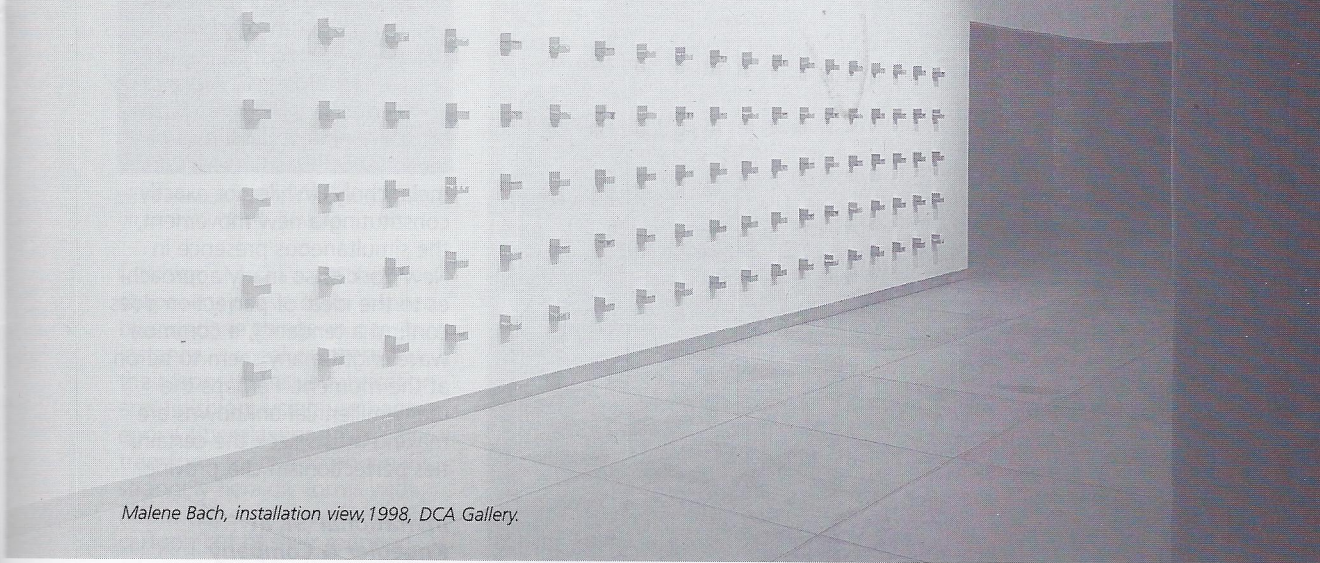


Perfection

by April Kingsley



Malene Bach, installation view, 1998, DCA Gallery.

Perfection is immensely satisfying. A perfect thing is complete, flawless, exact, absolute. In life, perfection defies achievement, but in art it can be welcome, and in craft, it is often prerequisite. There have been times when other values dominated art, values such as expression and spontaneity, and we have been in a prolonged period when that was the case, but there are signs that change is in the air. Artists such as Paul McCarthy now poke elaborate fun at the handmade look which has characterized most of the modern movements since Impressionism and had its apogee at mid-century in

Abstract Expressionism. In the present moment of no-movements and no consensus about an end-of-the-century state of mind (aside from a true and expanding Internationalism), artists feel free to make art any way they like. And art that aspires to a state of perfection in its making seems to have a goal sought more and more frequently. In the last Whitney Biennial, 10 of the 29 artists making their work by hand produced technically perfect work: Michael Ashkin, Vija Celmins, Shahzia Sikander, Matthew Ritchie, Lari Pittman, Kara Walker, Bryan Crockett, Charles Long and Stereolab, Edward Ruscha

and Jennifer Pastor.

Among the with it galleries in New York where you can expect to find some work by artists seeking perfection are Littlejohn Contemporary, Elga Wimmer (San Nam Lee), Deitch Projects (Shahzia Sikander), Bonakdar Jancou (Charles Long), Jack Shainman (Ross Rudell, Aziz & Cucher), Cristinerose, Nancy Margolis, DCA, Elizabeth Harris, Heller, Feigen Contemporary, American Primitive, and Donahue/Sosinski. But surprises continually pop up, as happened in this season's opening show at Knoedler & Company; in luminous works by Heather Hutchinson, Martha Benzing and Penelope