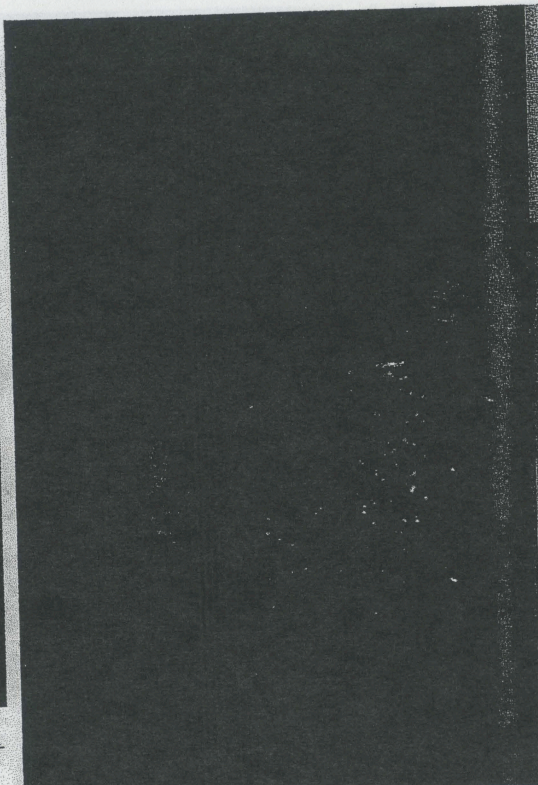


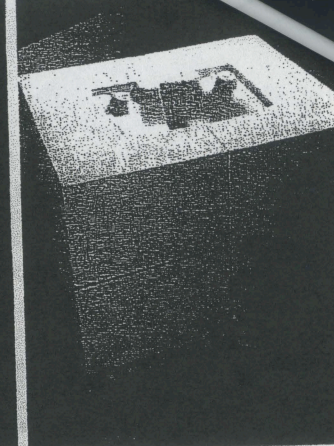
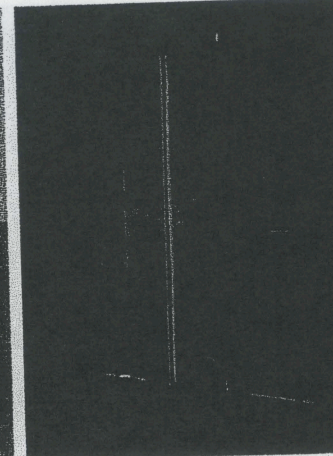
Left: Matthew Barney, *Repressia (detail)*, 1991, wrestling mat, pyrex, cast petroleum jelly and wax Olympic curl bar, socks, sternal retractor, skeet, salt water pearl, and petroleum jelly silicon gel pectoral form, 168 x 216 x 150." Collection Norman and Norah Stone, San Francisco. Courtesy Thea Westreich, Art Advisory Services, New York



Right: Chris Ofili, *Painting with shit on it*, 1993, mixed media, 72 x 48." Courtesy The British Council



Left: Yoshitomo Nara, *Cup Kids*, 1995, fiberglass, resin, wood, and lacquer paint, 36 x 36 x 36." Collection of Ruth and Jake Bloom
Center: Diana Thater, *Oo Fifi, Five Days in Monet's Garden, part 2*, 1992, video installation, dimensions variable. Courtesy David Zwirner, NY
Right: Rachel Whiteread, *Untitled (Square Sink)*, 1990, plaster, 42 x 40 x 34"



Public Offerings MOCA at the Geffen Contemporary

by Clayton Campbell

What a difference a decade makes. *Public Offerings* presents the initial breakthrough works from the late '80s and early '90s by 25 young artists. As we now know, some have fulfilled their

promise, others don't warrant museum attention; the jury being out on the majority of these brief careers. The exhibition premise is that the artists (primarily from LA, Japan, Germany, and England) are products of a contemporary art academy system that formed each artist's work and regional identity. Included are Janine Antoni, Matthew Barney, Thomas Demand, Renee Green, Michael Grey, Damien Hirst, Gary Hume, Toba Khedoori, Sharon Lockhart, Sarah Lucas, Steve McQueen,

Takashi Murakami, Yoshitomo Nara, Chris Ofili, Laura Owens, Tsuyoshi Ozawa, Jorge Pardo, Manfred Pernice, Jason Rhoades, Yutaka Sone, Diana Thater, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Rachel Whiteread, and Jane and Louise Wilson.

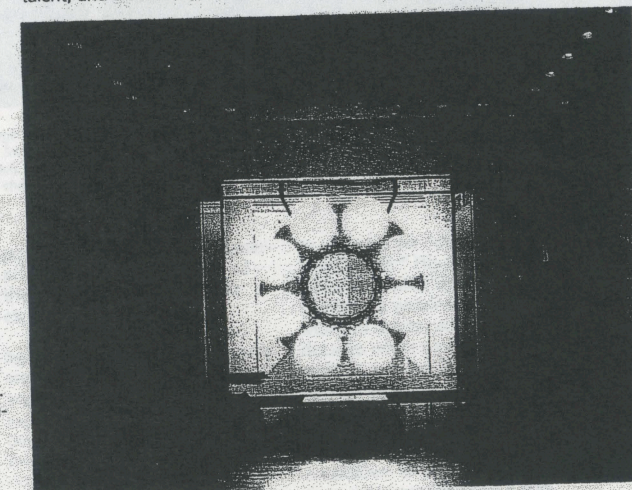
It seems obvious that artists would benefit from an education and the career networks formed by the troika of art schools/galleries/museums, aided and abetted by the art press. *Public Offerings* seems to say, "Woe to those not in this powerful net-

work" and raises issues of class and access. Most artists I know would comment that it is now virtually impossible to even be considered for shows in top galleries and museums without beginning in one of the major art schools. These schools have become a feeder system, producing not only the artists but the gallerists, curators, and writers who are entering the art business in huge numbers and calling the shots. A big question is, does this produce an environment conducive to making dynamic and culturally connected art, or does the MFA path channel students into narrowing scope and intelligence?

The works offered in the exhibit ask questions about what has substance and staying power. They illuminate the pressures individual curators succumbed to in the past decade by getting caught up with the ephemeral value of finding the next edgy thing. MOCA has the guts to put these institutional questions out

there in a subtle critique of contemporary curatorial practice. Artists starting out with risk, talent, and a sense of humor,

have the strongest work in *Public Offerings*. Others fall into a twilight world of short shelf life, picked up and promoted before



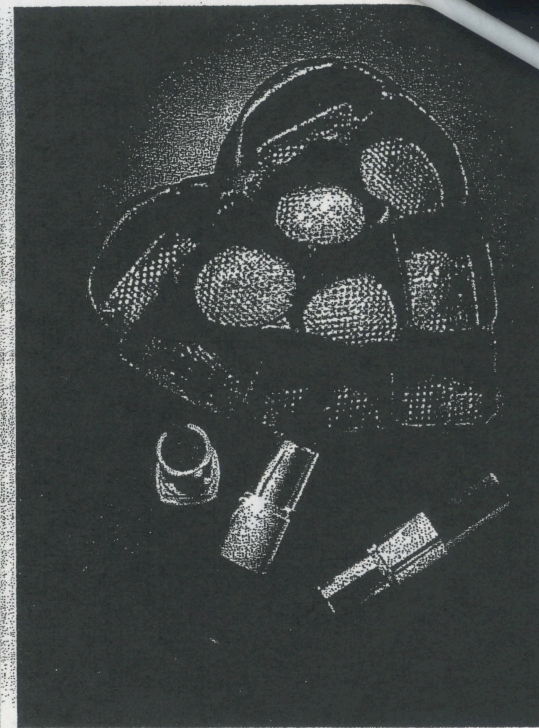
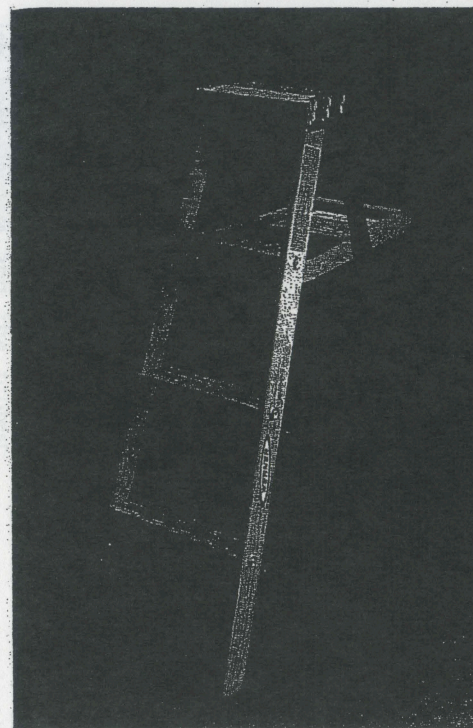
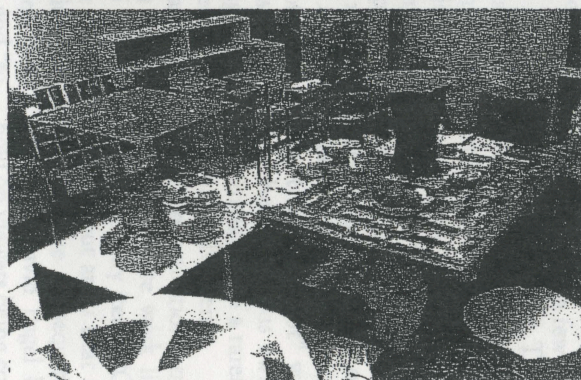
Takashi Murakami, *Sea Breeze*, 1992, steel, stainless steel, shutters, mercury lamps, wheels, fans, and flashing lamp, 138 x 189 x 98"

they were ready, yet still cluttering up international art shows like yesterday's designer shoes. As for the rest, it is too early to tell, as their work has not yet taken shape.

Matthew Barney's work is a stand out whose *Cremaster* films have brought him well-deserved international status. *Transexualis*, 1991, combines elements of performance, installation, and sculpture. It marks the process of synthesis that characterizes much of the kitchen sink approach to art making of the '90s. One might call this approach the sublime legacy of Duchamp. On the other hand, Jason Rhoades, almost equally well-known as Barney, presents *Swedish Erotica and Fiero Parts*, 1994. This installation could be seen as the logical nadir of appropriation, and the emergence of an easygoing American slacker sensibility. Both artists remain influential to legions of art students, and represent polarities on the same playing field of the '90s.

Yoshitomo Nara's brilliant *Cup Kids*, 1995, heralds the faux magical naïveté sensibility of Japanese artists. The Japanese have inverted post-war East-West interaction, invading Western art shows like Toyota has invaded the Western car market. And the inversion works. Janine Antoni's *Gnaw* is an apt icon for the obsession with body and material

Top right: Renée Green, *Import/Export Runk Office*, 1992-93, dimensions variable. Courtesy The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, gift of Gabi and Wilhelm Schümann
Center: Steve McQueen, *Bear*, 1993, 16 mm film. Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York
Below: Jason Rhoades, *Swedish Erotica and Fiero Parts*, 1994, mixed media, dimensions variable



Left: Jorge Pardo, *Ladder*, 1989, fir wood, bubinga wood, socks, redwood, veneered particleboard, dark Creosote bolts, and Danish oil, 45 x 14 x 19." Collection of Eileen and Peter Norton, Santa Monica
Right: Janine Antoni, *Gnaw* (Lipstick Display detail), 1992, phenylethylamines, 27 heart-shaped packages made from chewed chocolate cube, 130 lipsticks made with pigment, beeswax, and chewed lard removed from lard cube, 19 x 5 x 80." The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. John Hay Whitney Bequest Fund, 2000

things many young women currently pursue, and is indebted to the performance work of women artists from previous decades. Renee Green's personal museum strategy, *Import/Export Funk Office*, is a weather vane for the plethora of artists now reactively subverting the gallery and museum as an exhibition strategy. The Wilson's *Normapaths*, 1995, debuts their precocious humor, disarming and engaging even the most hard-boiled museum goer. The arena of video art begins to

push aside artists' more ephemeral live performances in favor of the repetitive and quantifiable experience of media. The conversations going on inside the contemporary academy are viewed as a bit inbred by the artists themselves. They are looking for grit and experience beyond what the academic confines of institutions offer. There is no public in the institutional experience, which may exist only for its own sake. Michael Joaquin Grey pronounced *Public Offerings*

to really be the "death of the avant-garde." His declaration, while somewhat melodramatic, points to a weariness in this show, to artists caught between decades when something was really happening. Although it's difficult to admit, we may end up looking back on the late '80s and the '90s as Robert Hughes does, as a time of necessary cultural breakdown of art and its institutions that foreshadowed a reinvigorated arts discourse in the next generations.