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Wednesday, March 16, 2005

## Nitsch connections

Post by libby

We're all madly channeling the '60s and '70s at the moment, in the art world as well as in fashion. So it makes sense that the name **Hermann Nitsch**, with his performance/orgies and sex games of that era, is this week's comeback kid. His name keeps cropping up now that [Slought Foundation](#) brought him to our attention--see my complaint [here](#) and Roberta's *Philadelphia Weekly* interview with curator Osvaldo Romberg [here](#).

Nitsch's name came up twice at the scope New York art fair (see our post [here](#)). Maybe it's nothing more than having been put on notice, but suddenly we notice him everywhere. But I'd swear a sting of spooky music kept playing each time I saw "Nitsch."

The first sighting was pretty humdrum--a gallery in Berlin, [Volker & Freunde](#), has Nitsch orgies showing this month.



**Acconci's "Trademarks"** (left, photos of *Acconci's Trademarks* performance).

The second sighting was pretty weird--or then again maybe not. Artists **Hilary Harp** and **Suzie Silver** mentioned in an artist's statement their admiration for Nitsch's *Orgies-Mysteries Theater* and **Vito**

"Nitsch!!!" I exclaimed upon looking at the statement, while standing in the [Bucheon Gallery](#) display. Turns out, there was Harp, sitting on the edge of the bed. She heard me.

Harp and Silver's pieces are tiny, tiny video performance pieces. The little screens are embedded in layers of 2-D, jungly woods, bringing to mind shadow boxes and a proscenium stage with flats and wings encircling the bottom as well as the top and sides (right and two images below, "The



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*Happiest Day" by Harp and Silver).*



The performances, partly because of scale, partly because of the peepshow and kinescope references, partly because of the bosky settings, real and fake, partly because of the playfulness in the direction, partly because of the costumes, are less about "shamanistic catharsis" (the artists' words in describing

Nitsch and Acconci) and more about the male and female gaze and female sexuality and just having fun. These pieces are fearlessly loopy.

So back to Nitsch. We had a little Nitsch conversation with Harp, in which we passed along no judgment on Nitsch but did exchange information.

It turns out Harp had seen only stills of Nitsch's work. So we told her she should immediately come to Philadelphia to see Nitsch at Slought. I wonder if she'll still admire him.



I was reading Roberta's [post](#) this morning, and I noticed the **Nicole Eisenman** image with the nude classical figures in the woods. But Eisenman's figures are static and Apollonian compared to the wild happenings all these other artists are mining. Nonetheless, the image reminded me directly of the Harp and Silver work, and made me think these thoughts about the past returning and getting a new life and meaning when the time is right.

*Posted by libby at 9:00 PM*

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