

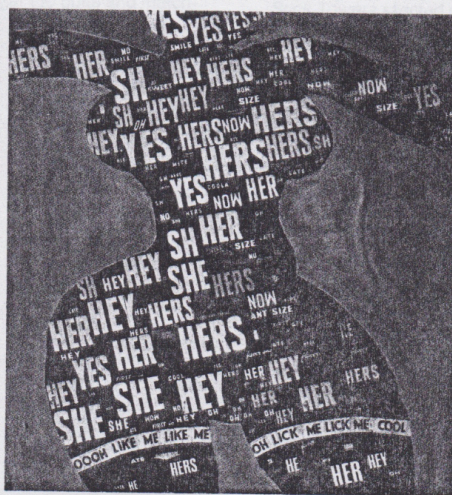
Art in America

June/July 2006

Al Hansen at Andrea Rosen

The focus of this lively survey, Al Hansen (1927-1995), was one of the early celebrants of performance art, Happenings and Fluxus, and is best known for his collage tributes to a mostly featureless, large-breasted Venus created from the wrappers of Hershey chocolate bars and adorned with words and expressions excised and recombined from those wrappings, beginning with HE, SHE and HER. Among the brown and silver works included here, the 17-inch-square *Yes She He* (ca. 1962) takes the form of a sensuous, rolling landscape that suggests a recumbent nude. The swirling, tilted, concrete poetry of "SHE" spoons with the congruent, ascending rise of the repeated "HE" surrounded by "YES," an ecstatic iteration recalling the breathless soliloquy Joyce wrote for Molly Bloom.

Reductive female forms abound. Roughly 2 feet on a side, the dancing figure of *Calliope Venus . . . Like Me Momma* (1968) characteristically lacks a head, forearms and lower legs. She occupies a ground of silver paint and at mid-thigh is adorned with the repeated phrase "LICK ME." In the 11-by-8-inch *Coco Was a Little Poco Loco about Cacao and Men* (1968), the obsessively observed figure, complete with head, appears in silver foil on a field of chocolate-brown wrappers. She cocks her hips and utters the provocative incantation, "OH, OOH NOW LICK CLIT." Continuing the device a decade later, Hansen's heraldic 32-inch-square *Afrique*, a color photocopy collage on white-painted wood diagonally patterned with the repeated "HER" and "SHE," features a silhouette of Africa and Madagascar at its center. Nearly 10 years later he doubled the lively image of a dancing girl in *The Inflato Sisters Danced Till Dawn* (1986) in Hershey wrappers on silver foil.



Al Hansen: *Calliope Venus . . . Like Me Momma*, 1968, Hershey wrappers and silver paint on plywood, 27½ by 25¼ inches; at Andrea Rosen.

Hansen continued to scavenge for discarded things that held his interest, including cigarette papers, cigarette butts and matchsticks. His Venus appears in lapidary collages assembled from the remains of cigarette butts, such as the 13-by-10-inch *Forestville Venus, Los Angeles* (1994), named for the location printed on the torn end of a packing box and displayed in a shadow-box frame. An untitled tondo of 15 inches across (1985) offered a spin on the butt-end theme, the headless Venus splayed horizontally across a blue-painted disk of wood. Shown in Lucite boxes

were the graceful Hokusai-like *Match Stick Wave* (before 1985) and the elegant four-sided *Match Stick Towers* erected on a base of the same material. The exhibition also included two examples of "Intermedia Poems" composed from disparate lines of newspaper headlines, among them the injunction to "Send in the clones."

The exhibition surveyed Hansen's work from 1962 to 1995, and preceded by days a group exhibition at Pavel Zoubok Gallery that included Hansen in the context of the work of Ray Johnson, May Wilson, Buster Cleveland and John Evans.

—Edward Leffingwell

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