

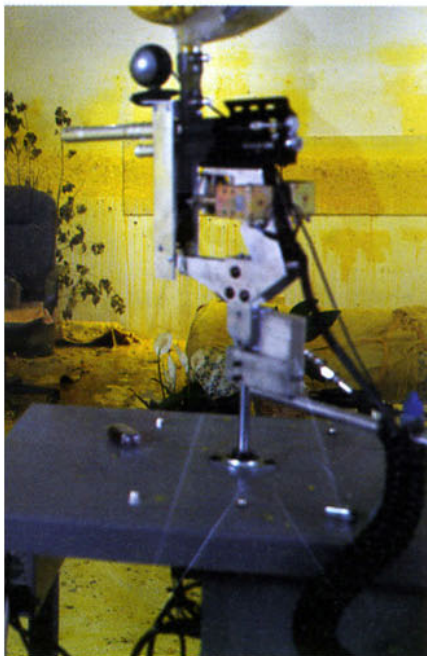
experimentation that occurred in the wake of World War II.

Old favorites like Tanaka Atsuko's *Electric Dress* (1956/86) and Shiraga Kazuo's (Gutai) mudslinging (*Challenging Mud*, 1955) provided an entrée to lesser-known projects such as Akasegawa Genpei's counterfeit yen notes and the 1970 sound, light, and fog extravaganza of E.A.T.'s Pepsi Pavilion. The curators found clever ways to honor the spirit of now vintage works: visitors could insert fingers into re-creations of Ay-O's tactile boxes (*Finger Box*, 1964) to enjoy surprise haptic encounters, or stand by a telephone that had been strategically placed in the gallery, awaiting a random call from Yoko Ono.

A time line inscribed across one wall was a welcome tool. From it we learned, for example, that Hi Red Center cleaned city streets nine years before Mierle Laderman Ukeles did. The time line and the show revealed that alliances tended to emerge organically out of transnational collaborations, forcing a destabilization of any single geographic center and providing a much-needed reminder that Western artists weren't the first to do everything. —NATILEE HARREN

**CHICAGO**  
**WAFAA BILAL**  
FLATFILE GALLERIES

Twenty-four hours a day for 31 days, Wafaa Bilal lived in the windowless backroom of Flatfile Galleries in Chicago.



VIEW, FLATFILE GALLERIES, CHICAGO. PHOTO: ALICIA IES, CHICAGO.

A bed, coffee table, and computer were the sum total of his furnishings, and above it all loomed a gun loaded with yellow paintballs and hooked up to a webcam. Anyone with an Internet connection could log on to the project site, scan the artist's living space, aim, and shoot.

And shoot they did. Online participants fired 60,000 paintballs over the course of the month, mostly aimed at the Iraqi-born artist. Others monopolized the gun and deliberately pointed it out of range, forming a spontaneous online community that did what it could to keep Bilal safe from "bullets" traveling 300 feet per second. The gun tore up the room's Sheetrock walls, covered everything with a crust of "Support the Troops" yellow splatter, and echoed with a deafening crack that woke Bilal at night. He crouched constantly to avoid getting hit, amid surroundings that metamorphosed into an oddly painterly space, a three-dimensional AbEx canvas expressing not heroic gestures but, rather, cowardly actions done to someone.

And that someone—Wafaa Bilal—was and is very real. *Domestic Tension* successfully combined '70s-era endurance-based performance art with references to contemporary virtual warfare—as practiced by video gamers, paintball players, and, importantly, the US military. By putting the gun into the viewer's hands and broadcasting its immediate and cumulative effects, Bilal created a situation in which the results of violent actions committed through technological distance were made clearer and closer. —LORI WAXMAN

**SAN FRANCISCO**  
**WOLFGANG PAALEN**  
FREY NORRIS GALLERY

It is most often Arshile Gorky who is named as the vital link between the modernism of "Old Europe" and the New World venture of Abstract Expressionism. But Wolfgang Paalen (1905-1959) proved no less crucial to the ebb and flow between these realms. In both his extensive theoretical writings and his painterly output, the Austrian-born Paalen forged important rapports between the avant-gardes of the early part of the 20th century—including the last Parisian gasp of Surrealism—and their subsequent reincarnations in North and South America. A show

of 19 paintings and two drawings at Frey Norris Gallery offered a gratifying overview of this elusive and versatile painter's contributions to midcentury modernism. The arresting *Ciel de Pieuvre* (Octopus Sky, 1938) exemplifies Paalen's signature "automatic" technique of *fumage*, in which he passed a burning



WOLFGANG PAALEN, *UNTITLED (FUMAGE-ENCRAGE)*, 1938. WATERCOLOR, GOUACHE, INK, AND CANDLE SMOKE ON CARDBOARD, 24 1/2 X 13 IN. COURTESY FREY NORRIS GALLERY, SAN FRANCISCO.

candle over the surface of the canvas, and then used his brush to elaborate on the imagery latent in fugitive traces of ash and wax. Other *fumages* from the late 1930s and early 1940s further attest to the mounting tension in his oeuvre between biomorphic figuration and increasingly autonomous forms. The early 1950s witnessed Paalen's return to a more impastoed abstraction in the vein of Klee and Kandinsky, but *Lenclume* (The Anvil, 1952), with its looming dimensions and passages of improvised coloration on unprimed canvas, clearly responds to contemporary innovations by New York School Abstract Expressionists, on whom Paalen's earlier work had already exerted a notable influence. The show goes some distance toward enforcing Paalen's important contribution to American art; one hopes this is only the beginning of a complete recuperation of the artist, whose work has more or less faded into oblivion. —ARA H. MERJIAN