

the connective power of melancholy.

Deller's wall painting serves to remind an older, probably more jaded audience of this power of connection. It is a reminder to not let anything pass — be it melancholy or rock bands or shared history — which may serve to bring people closer together. It is the community-generating force of Deller's work that makes it powerful, be it as sophisticated and arch as his Orgreave project, as absurd as the Acid Brass concerts, or just the cheeky "remember those days?" of *I ♥ Melancholy*.

Karl Erickson

CHICAGO

ALISON RUTTAN

MONIQUE MELOCHE

Pornography is now more mainstream than ever. From the multitude of web sites to increasingly casual references in mass media and in everyday conversation, porn's plain brown wrapper seems to be slipping off. For some years Alison Ruttan has used pornography as a primary source material, making it simultaneously more and less visible, and her latest show offers animation, digital prints, and even wall-paper derived from XXX-rated videos.

Nancy is a monitor-based animated video featuring an obese porn actress whose bodily details have been heavily blurred until, at the end of the 30-second loop, she briefly and bizarrely reveals the face of the classic comic strip character. The fleshy figure repeatedly embraces and then straddles an abstract white blob (Sluggo?), which squirms and shapeshifts to a soundtrack of ambient electronic stomach noises. As her partner has been rendered incorporeal, the possibilities of this interaction now extend beyond the assumed mechanical foreplay.

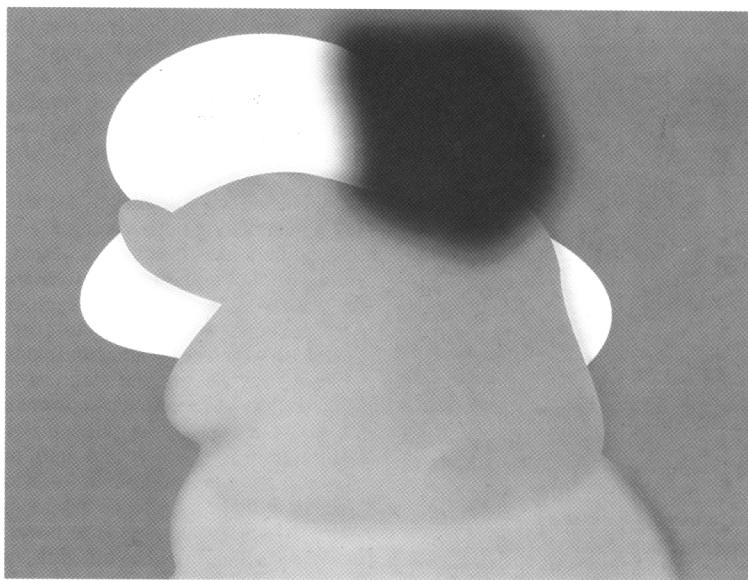
On view in the main gallery is *Chromophilia*, a double video projection of symmetrical monochrome shapes, resembling Rorschach ink-blot, clearly doing the nasty. The figures, as flat as the actors' dialogue might have been, easily recall Matisse's dancers. Also referring to ballet is the somewhat altered and thoroughly overassertive "Nutcracker Suite" soundtrack, to which the couples blissfully bounce. Ruttan's animation strategy of digitally drawing over purloined footage allows the obscuring of particulars while leaving the original rhythmic motion intact, provoking giggles as viewers immediately recognize the source. Knowing that the Fauvists' use of color was once considered vulgar, here Ruttan uses the same saturated hues to neutralize vulgarity.

Unlike many of her contemporaries who employ porn essentially at face value for shock or erotic effect, Ruttan withholds the money shot. She seems to be intent on discovering what makes pornography problematic by distilling it, altering the active ingredients, and reconfiguring the inert. Without overtly addressing the changing relationship between smut and society, the work suggests that while porn may be considered obscene, sexy, dangerous, surreal, or merely insipid, it is the clear recognition of ourselves in it that makes it so.

Jeff Carter



JEREMY DELLER, *I ♥ Melancholy*, 2000. Wall painting, dimension variable.



ALISON RUTTAN, *Nancy*, 2001. Video still from digitally-created animations.