

scruffy lad navigating a jumble of modernist paintings hung on dark gray walls, the whole scene rendered in a style that merges R. Crumb, William Wiley, and Paul Klee.

As with Morley's past exhibitions, the show revealed the pleasure and provocation to be found in the work of an artist who confounds our expectations of painting less through riffs and one-liners than through daring to explore how a sensibility might navigate outward expressions that are variously abstract, iconic, and narrative. The only clear weakness was inconsistency: Morley is just better at, or at least more devoted to, his exploration of the abstract and the iconic than the figurative and narrative, and likewise, he is more adept at embroidery and painting on glass than he is at straight oil on canvas. If Morley really wants to confound expectations, he needs to avoid what has become a habit of hamstringing or neglecting the more conventional aspects of his practice.

-Christopher Miles

## Ian Rosen

MAK CENTER

In the penultimate lecture of his course on "The Neutral," Roland Barthes considers "anxiety," which he is quick to differentiate from "fright." ("There is something about anxiety," Barthes writes, pace Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "that protects its subject against fright and so against fright neurosis.") He relates the example of a white mouse, dropped into "a circular empty space, without nooks, without markers: it feels exposed, vulnerable to predators; and above all anxiety: the conflictual situation (d. *double bind*) ... divided between the need to eat and the need for flight." The mouse displays, or seems to display, emotional reactions ("surprisingly, compulsive grooming gestures"). Barthes's take is tempting to read as an allegory for the creative process, for art: Thrown into the blank space of anything goes, the artist is torn between survival ("the need to eat") and imagination ("the need for flight"). Exactly Proustian, Barthes implicates his own practice in his urge to interpret the mouse's plight. He concludes, anxiously (?): "Enigma: how to interpret these gestures? But perhaps, and that's the reason why I raise the issue: we might be totally, utterly wrong, so much are we prisoner of both our anthropomorphism and of language (it's the same thing): perhaps it hasn't anything to do with grooming (d. often, I've been told, birdsong, a song of suffering and of anger)."

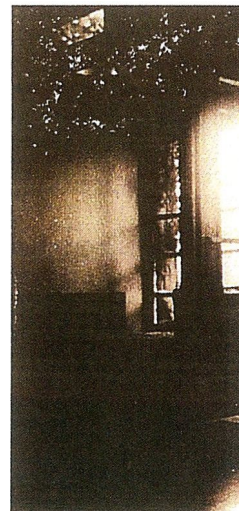
The only visual marker of Ian Rosen's current project is a moody photograph of an interior threshold of Rudolf Schindler's Kings Road House, once home to both the Schindler and the Neutra families and their experiments in living, now the site of the institution, as Rosen's press release states, "pleased to announce its cooperation in the presentation of an exhibition." The shot is undated, the photographer unknown. What you are now reading instantiates Rosen's "art" as much as anything that occurred at 835 North Kings Road. *Cooperation-between* Rosen and someone at the MAK Center, between you and me-remains the key term of Rosen's endeavor. Part of his generosity consists in the possibility that I could be wrong (in my interpretations, assumptions, and grooming) and/or the chance that if I don't care at all and dismiss him, I'm jettisoning some basic component-the cooperative fun-of art.

Rosen strives for a neutrality available only, perhaps, to the imaginary. Eschewing not just the more accessibly dematerialized antics of Tino Sehgal and Jonathan Monk and the romanticized nothingness of Ceal Floyer and Jodie Tuerlinckx, but also the disciplinarian tradition of Joseph Kosuth and *Art & Language*, Rosen quests after something so indisputably real that a) in responding to his project any resulting

anxiety may be just a reality check that you're still breathing and b) after said check, you may wish to ask, Why does he care whether or not what he's opening to discussion is called art?

I don't know. But noting that this show occurred after a related interaction in Vienna with Haus Wittgenstein and his participation in the bicoastal show "Grupe," curated by Darren Bader, for which he negotiated certain formalities-the exhibition checklist read, "Ian Rosen II A work may be made available" (with accompanying verbal instructions to gallerists that they could provide interested visitors with his "contact info for possible further discussion")-marking his own contribution within the modes of the group exhibition, I would think Rosen would attenuate his relations to stern talker Ian Valerius, elusive walker Stanley Broun and embrace, inversely, the eccentricity of Lee Lozano. (Of her infamous *Dropout Pie*, she wrote that it was "the *hardest* work I have ever done.") Hence, even philosophically, between "nothing" and "something" not be a Green Zone.

-Br"



## Michele Q'Marah, Tim Jackson and David Jones

SISTER GALLERY

In their video *Faustus's Children*, 2006, Michele O'Marah, Tim Jackson and David Jones draw from a variety of sources, including Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope*, 1948, *Whispering Corridors*, 1990, and John Guare's play *Six Degrees of Separation*, 1990, to create a tense supernatural thriller. Their primary inspiration, however, is Donna Tartt's bestselling novel *A Secret History*, in which a group of classics students murder one of their peers at a New England college.

Like O'Marah's earlier video *Valley Girl*, 2002, *Faustus's Children* is concerned with the appropriation of familiar stories, and its screenplay is original, much of its language has been lifted from *Faustus's Children* was shot entirely in O'Marah's Los Angeles studio, mostly handmade set, which includes a papier-mache forest interior of a country cabin, was displayed in the main gallery space, which echoes a luxurious vacation home, featuring papier-mache ducks, a brick fireplace with a fake fire, orange plaid wallpaper made of cut paper, and a ceiling ingeniously crafted by the artist. The color scheme is psychedelically purple and orange walls and a lime green satin brocade combine to evoke the creepy decor of the Overlook Hotel in Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980). The eerie sound track by Kelly Marie Martin, which also features songs by Nina Simone and Fairport Convention, accompanies the characters' descent into evil and eternal life while they drink themselves into oblivion.

The opening scene shows four men strangling their victim in the forest. As he dies, a mysterious light hovers above