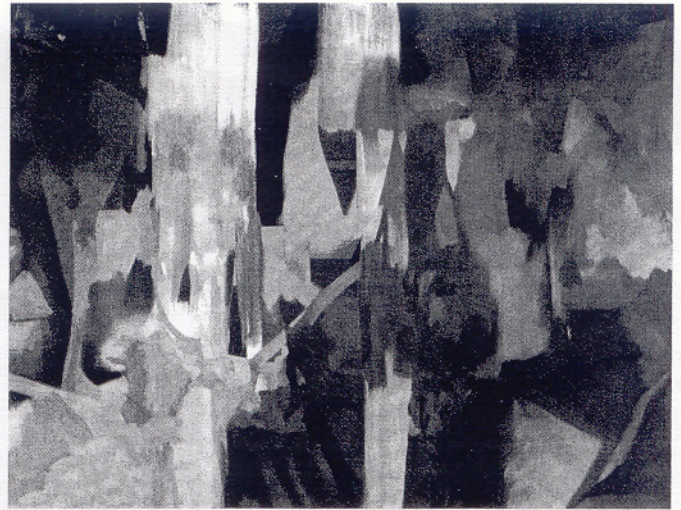


Stephen J. Kaltenbach, *Slantstep 2*, 1969, molded fiberglass and rubber, 15 x 14 x 16".



Stan Kaplan, *Painting with Pink and Blue*, 2005, oil on canvas, 66 x 87".

autobiographical bent. Though the faces mature, the locations change, and the light shifts, this is work by an artist candidly picturing environments that are particular to his life. The sequence of the exhibition is chronological, though there tends to be thematic unity in the artist's particular focus at any given moment, and self-portraits appear with more regularity at the beginning and end of the show. The first, formative works are moody interiors and self-portraits in bathroom and bedroom mirrors that reflect the painter's perennially bearded face. In more recent images, like *RB on De Haro Street*, 2004, a charcoal night interior, Bechtle looks forward with earnestness. It's a darker vision, yet one communicated with the same clarity that distinguished this retrospective as a whole.

—Glen Helfand

## LOS ANGELES

### STEPHEN J. KALTENBACH ANOTHER YEAR IN LA

*Recording Conceptual Art*, Alexander Alberro's 2001 edition of Patricia Norvell's fascinating 1969 audio interviews, helps recall the mellow Other to Conceptual art's frequently stern diagrammatics: Dennis Oppenheim's sunburns, Robert Barry's belief in telepathy and the invisible, and Stephen J. Kaltenbach's experiments with astrology, ESP, and weed. Norvell taped Kaltenbach talking about smoking pot for the first time: "I could remove myself from my ego a little bit and see myself and my work more clearly." A year later, in a lengthy interview for *Artforum*, Kaltenbach located the moment's art in relation to the

munchies: "For conceptual work, the taste buds are mostly in the mind."

From *Couch Painting*, 1969, of the proto-Jim Shaw-ish "Lord & Taylor" series, to "room construction" plans and more recent projects, this forty-year minisurvey operated as if another of the artist's notorious time capsules were finally opened. *Canvas Drapery Arrangement*, 1967, a neutral "canvas to be arranged differently every day," was spread again like an abandoned picnic blanket from a *dejeuner sur l'herbe*, with photos documenting its various historical situations. In interviews, Kaltenbach has emphasized the "drapery" aspect of the piece—fabric's relation to artists' models or a still life's ground—rather than its timely but uninterrogated beige commentary on readymade painting in relation to sculpture. Initially Kaltenbach himself would arrange the drape; then, in good Conceptualist fashion, he made diagrams of different folding and placement possibilities for others to carry out with any piece of fabric. By the time it appeared in the remarkable Robert Morris-curated warehouse show "Nine at Leo Castelli" in 1968, he had "reversed" the process, "providing the shape of the material" but no diagrams for its arrangement, relinquishing almost all artistic control.

Relinquishment is key to understanding Kaltenbach's work and its dissolution, even disappearance: "You are really limited in what you can do by what you are. The thing that I have been looking for was how to get around that. One possibility is giving the work to other people to do." His series of ads, run anonymously in *Artforum* from November 1968 through December 1969, began to explore such strategies of circumvention. Most encouraged unverifi-

able, even suspect actions (BECOME A LEGEND; TELL A LIE); the last ad ended with a complete sentence, dissolving the boundaries of identity: YOU ARE ME.

*Time*, 1968, extends Kaltenbach's predilection for remaking, restaging, or repositioning others' works in a context of his own choice or devising. Combining two pieces of string with a sliding metal washer, he fashioned a makeshift clock and attributed it to Lee Lozano. His funky yellow fiberglass *Slantstep 2*, 1969, began as a Bill Wiley junk-shop find given to Bruce Nauman, who remade versions of it before Richard Serra "stole" the "original"; Kaltenbach then "borrowed" the stool to show the industrial designer Bill Plumb, his advisor in producing the "Kaltenbach" edition of it for Tanglewood Press. His procedures only became more self-questioning and suggestive: anonymous cast-bronze street plaques and stamped-ink lips on subway posters. He asked his students to "carry out my streetworks for me by doing anything they wanted to do in a specified area."

Kaltenbach's work haunts current art procedures: Where Tino Sehgal stridently authorizes and controls "his" immateriality by relying on institutional imprimatur to publicize and textually materialize his investment in signatory ego, notoriety, and recognition, Kaltenbach has always been more interested in circulating ideas—literally—on the free market, unsigned. Before so-called Appropriation, he investigated the exchange value and social hierarchies of artistic influence and propriety.

One of Kaltenbach's most recent works, *The End* (Xulon Press, 2004), is a novel about the rapture at the end of the world. An edition of one hundred was

stamped with a STEPHEN J. KALTENBACH inkpads signature that is itself canceled by another, superimposed: CECI N'EST PAS UNE AUTEUR. The bio on back of the book discloses, "He has been a Christian since 1979." I have trouble not reading it all as an allegory for the art world's machinations and as reason to reconsider the influence of the underacknowledged and left behind. In the lingo of his heyday: *heavy*.

—Bruce Hainley