Optical devices and apocalyptic beasts

VISIONARY APPARATUS:

MICHAEL SNOW & JEAN GEUER
At the Hayden Gallery, through December 21
THINGS ARE SOMETIMES WHAT THEY SEEM: LOCAL SCULPTORS/ FOUND MATERIALS
At the Reference Gallery, through December 28

Both galleries are located in the Wiesner Building (K12), MIT.

By MICHAEL BOS

Two distinctions come to mind in connection with "Visionary Apparatus," the current two-artist show at the Hayden Gallery. The first is that between perception and vision. The second is that between technology and art.

The works on display are devices meant to extend sight or to make us aware of its limitations. The underlying assumptions are that extended perception becomes visionary, and that visionary technology qualifies as art. One could argue abstractly about either, but it is wise to let the show make its own case.

The central item of the exhibition (and, I understand, its curatorial starting point) is Michael Snow's "De La," a video installation with an ingeniously constructed rotating camera coupled to four monitors. As the apparatus revolved and turned, its electronic eyes swept out complicated trajectories, which we catch on two projectors. With its rotating tables and superimposed movements it is a kind of high-tech carrot.

This installation is complemented by Jean Geuër's "Gita," a glass construction created in connection with "Visionary Apparatus," and situated in the window of the First Hall.

Snow's other works in this show address various issues of perception. "Monocular Abyss" and "Zone" play with limitations of vision, whether through natural or artificially produced tunnel like distortions. "Triities-Trinities-Trivats (Walitz)" is a set of three holograms, novelties in the representation of perceptual data.

As for Geuër's other works, they reflect his professional activity as an instrument designer and draughtsman at a geological institute. In the installation "Al Atrama," set in an early lil room, a laser projects a line on a wall, the position of which is influenced by long-wavelength fluctuations in the floor, such as those produced by the entrance of a spectator. "Earthquake is a display of the seismic history of North America.

In varying degrees all these objects are interesting, amusing, or instructive, and it thus seems somewhat petty to argue their placement here. But it is hard to escape the thought that the labs of MIT are replete with apparatus like these, apparatus continuously making similar points in similar ways. While it is nice to see such devices singled out for their visionary value, it ultimately goes to say that what is art and what it is not is a matter of vision as well.

The Thelonious Monk Winter Jazz Festival is currently under way, suggesting that issues of connection between technology and art and what it's not is a matter of vision as well. The Thelonious Monk Winter Jazz Festival is currently under way, suggesting that issues of connection between technology and art and what it's not is a matter of vision as well.

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Abrahim Rizik's photographs are the wildest of the bunch, the one true to that most amusing trend among found-materialists: the Surrealist practice of co-opting apparently unrelated objects in puzzling but suggestive ways. There is a refrigerator-cum-moving-boat with a fan in its bottom. To add to the effect things move or shake every now and then. The work of Pia Massie is more elusive, more interesting also. Her pieces are moody compositions with barely tangible figural connotations — highly associative poems in which widely disparate textures, shapes and colors produce subtle emotional effects.

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Jeremy Irons as a Jesuit priest

(Continued from page 6)

world. De Niro is abject, hopeless, and sullen, declaring "there is not penance hard enough for me." But Father Gabriel accepts him, allowing him to select his own penance before descending Jesuit robes. His conversion is masterfully handled, and even under the trancelike robes of a Jesuit his fire continues to smolder.

Many supporting roles were filled by 35 Waisana from four communities in Colombia. Although the two principal naves, a Guaraní who became a Jesuit and the village chief, were played by ringers, the Wounaan filled the rest of the parts. They are natural performers, and lend a good deal of authenticity to the film. Thirteen-year-old Berceto Moya, whose character befriends Mendoza in the film, deserves special mention.

Towering symbolically above the action are the Iguazú Falls, which protect the Guaraní from the ravishes of European influence. The Falls serve as a potent image of life and death. They acquire their mystical value in the first scene, a metatextual seizure in which a boat is strapped to a cruxifix and tossed over the edge, to be found by the Europeans below.

It is a message from the beyond. Once Father Gabriel breaches the Falls, he enters an anamnesis world, populated by the Guarani, by sloths, and by other remarkable creatures. The cameras make the natural world explode in vivid light. An eden green land. It is a garden which does not need to be cultivated, a world which is ripe now for the taking. Neverthe-

less, the Guarani are charmed by music, and build a mission which produces violins. But their points are made, and we are left wondering whether a moral victory may not, after all, be achieved.

But Gabriel and his followers would think not.

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