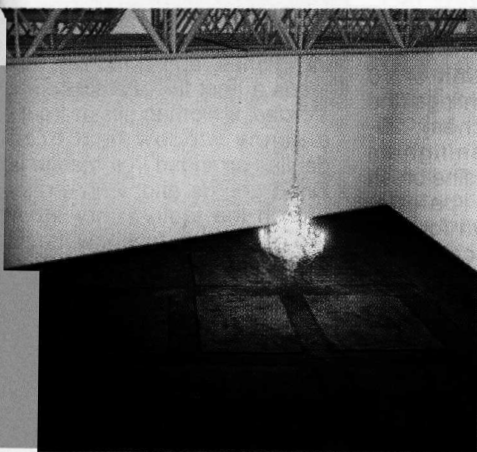


Although the geometric layout and subdued hues of the ashes brought Minimalism to mind, the structure was actually a rendition of an 1839 map of a Moravian settlement in Salem, N.C. (now Winston-Salem). With the tamped-down ash mounds representing buildings and the pathways standing for streets, viewers were given a topographical vista of one of America's vanished religious utopias. The Moravians were a Central European sect inspired by the theologian Jan Huss, whose challenge to Catholic orthodoxy (for which he was burned at the stake in 1415) anticipated the Protestant Reformation by a hundred years. Forced to flee their homeland during subsequent religious conflicts, the Moravians scattered, with some members eventually reaching America and settling in Pennsylvania and North Carolina.



Joshua Neustein: Installation view of *Light on the Ashes*, 1996; at SECCA.

Neustein's elemental, obviously symbolic, materials fit together wonderfully. The lowered chandelier, made of Bohemian crystal that subtly alluded to the Moravians' origins, was at once gorgeous and intrusive. With its Old World overtones, it implicitly urged one to consider how this experience in North Carolina, and European migration in general, must have severely affected not only the displaced new arrivals but the native peoples who had previously inhabited the region. Beneath the chandelier, the ashes became unmistakably funereal and forcefully suggested how, in North Carolina as elsewhere, a new culture was built on the destruction of an old one.

By recalling the Moravians, Neustein raised issues of cultural and religious strife, persecution and freedom—especially fraught territory for an artist who has often addressed 20th-century Jewish experience. Despite such charged subjects, Neustein avoided heavy-handedness. Instead, the work came across as evocative and open-ended, subject to multiple interpretations. It was refreshing to find work of this caliber in a museum located so far from the recognized power centers of the art world.

—Gregory Volk

## AUSTIN

### Hills Snyder at the Austin Museum of Art

Hills Snyder's work is deceptively simple. His crisp Plexiglas forms, mounted on the wall like pictures but with the presence of sculpture, are so precisely crafted that they almost appear manufactured. Cut from sheets of opaque or mirrored plastic, the shiny, richly colored shapes are screwed to shallow plywood supports or directly to the wall. Because they are derived from hand-drawn patterns, their silhouettes are noticeably irregular, sometimes even wiggly, in defiance of that apocryphal proof of artistic skill: the ability to draw

a perfect circle. Snyder's exhibition, which included 15 Plexiglas pieces and four drawings, was thus aptly titled "Hand Not Hand."

The works are also both representational and not. Abstracted from readymade images, they seem more or less familiar. *Exit* (1996), a black rabbit pictured in profile and installed so as to appear to be bounding toward the door of the museum, is more immediately identifiable than *Bugs* (1996), an irregular oval surmounted by two attenuated rabbit ears, also made out of black Plexiglas but lacking any further detail. Snyder's titles are always central to the meanings of his works, as *Bugs*—installed alongside a pencil drawing of the

same shape titled *Bugs or Elmer* (1993)—reveals.

*Pyg* (1996), a 7-foot-tall blue silhouette of Frankenstein's monster, is based on a classic movie still of Boris Karloff in that role. The clunky shoes and too-short sleeves provide clues to the figure's identity, although the trademark head and neck have been replaced by a droopy, pickle-shaped ellipse of mirrored green Plexiglas. A square aperture is cut into the center of the head area and subsequently through the gallery wall to reveal a padding of pink fiberglass insulation. Short for Pygmalion, the title makes an expansive reference to the transformative power of art.

Snyder's exhibition included several works based on the '60s peace sign and the '70s smiley face. These are icons of their respective eras whose divergent origins—one in anti-establishment protest and the other in mass-marketed complacency—have been neutralized by the campy symbolism of our times. Snyder splits their holistic circular forms in half so as to interrogate the integrity of the image. *Slip* (1996), the left side of a mirrored purple peace sign, is installed in a corner and spotlighted so that an elongated, ghostly reflection is thrown on the adjacent wall to complete the image. A bright red smiley face, about 3 feet in diameter, is vertically divided into two sections, abutting a slit in the gallery wall that contains an 8-foot-long green fluorescent lamp. Judging by these brilliant and banal works, there is more than a little wistfulness in Snyder's backward glance at the present.

—Frances Colpitt

## DALLAS

### Carlos Jurado at Photographs Do Not Bend

Carlos Jurado built his first pinhole camera in 1973. The first pictures he took in his painting studio and home in Mexico City drew on sources that continue to inform his work—the papier-mâché skeletons used in *Day of*



Carlos Jurado: *Small Seated Skeleton*, 1996, photograph 8 by 5 1/4 inches; at Photographs Do Not Bend.

the Dead celebrations, female nudes, self portraits and still lifes. From his studio roof he shot cityscapes and sunsets.

But if his subject matter has remained consistent for 20 years, Jurado has never ceased his playful investigation of his medium's possibilities. Seldom working with materials more durable than cardboard and masking tape, he has built pinhole cameras designed to take telephoto images, stereoscopic images, multiple exposures and autochromes. He has made a painstaking pinhole motion picture, and his latest camera

Hills Snyder: Installation view of *Yes and No*, 1996; at the Austin Museum of Art.



Colpitt, Frances. "Hills Snyder at the Austin Museum of Art." *Art in America* 85, no. 2 (February 1997):

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