

# Flash Art

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## REVIEWS

### ADRIAN PIPER

ELIZABETH DEE - NEW YORK



Adrian Piper's work is rife with subversive political commentary. However, underlying racial issues, feminism and anti-militaristic messages there dwells a profound, personal yet universal narrative. For example, without the foreknowledge that the little girl pictured in the three triptychs, *Decide Who You Are* (1992), is a childhood photo of Anita Hill (Hill publicly alleged sexual harassment by Clarence Thomas, the second African American nominated for the US Supreme Court), the works are still quite poignant on several other levels indicated in textual interplay between the panels. In another image from the same series one may not notice that there is only one token black man in a photograph of generic white

businessmen. There is significance to who that group of men is and what they represent, but it can also be read as a dated everyman's statement, ruining the unraveling of postwar faux utopia and the passage of time.

You may draw various conclusions when viewing the half-dozen, freestanding black-and-white cut outs of groups of people enlarged to approximately life size. The word "Forget" is printed in a newspaper-style font across each. It might be seen as general remorse for human frailty and lost dreams; in fact these groupings relate to specific incidents in the struggle for civil rights and the willful blindness of society at large. Piper's inferences are colored by the viewer's own baggage. She doesn't exactly tell us what to think, but she certainly leaves a blazing trail of breadcrumbs.

This aspect of audience interpretation/participation is integral to Piper's work. *Vote/Emote* (1990) involves four voting cubicles; each contains an inflammatory photograph and a notebook wherein we are invited to write our reactions to a provocative question. There were numerous other intriguing individual works including videos, scatter art,

re-contextualized photographs and text-based pieces all intermingled so effectively that the entire exhibition appeared to be a single installation work.

*Christopher Hart Chambers*



Above: ADRIAN PIPER, *Vote/Emote*, 1990. Mixed-media installation: 4 wooden cubicles each with wooden shelf, 4 windows each with silk-screened lightboxes, 4 notebooks placed on each wooden shelf, and each with pen and pre-printed paper, 213 x 418 x 124 cm. Left: ADRIAN PIPER, *Decide Who You Are #11: Remains*, 1992. Photo-text collage, 3 panels: 185 x 109 cm; 156 x 173 cm; 185 x 109 cm. Courtesy the artist and Elizabeth Dee, New York.