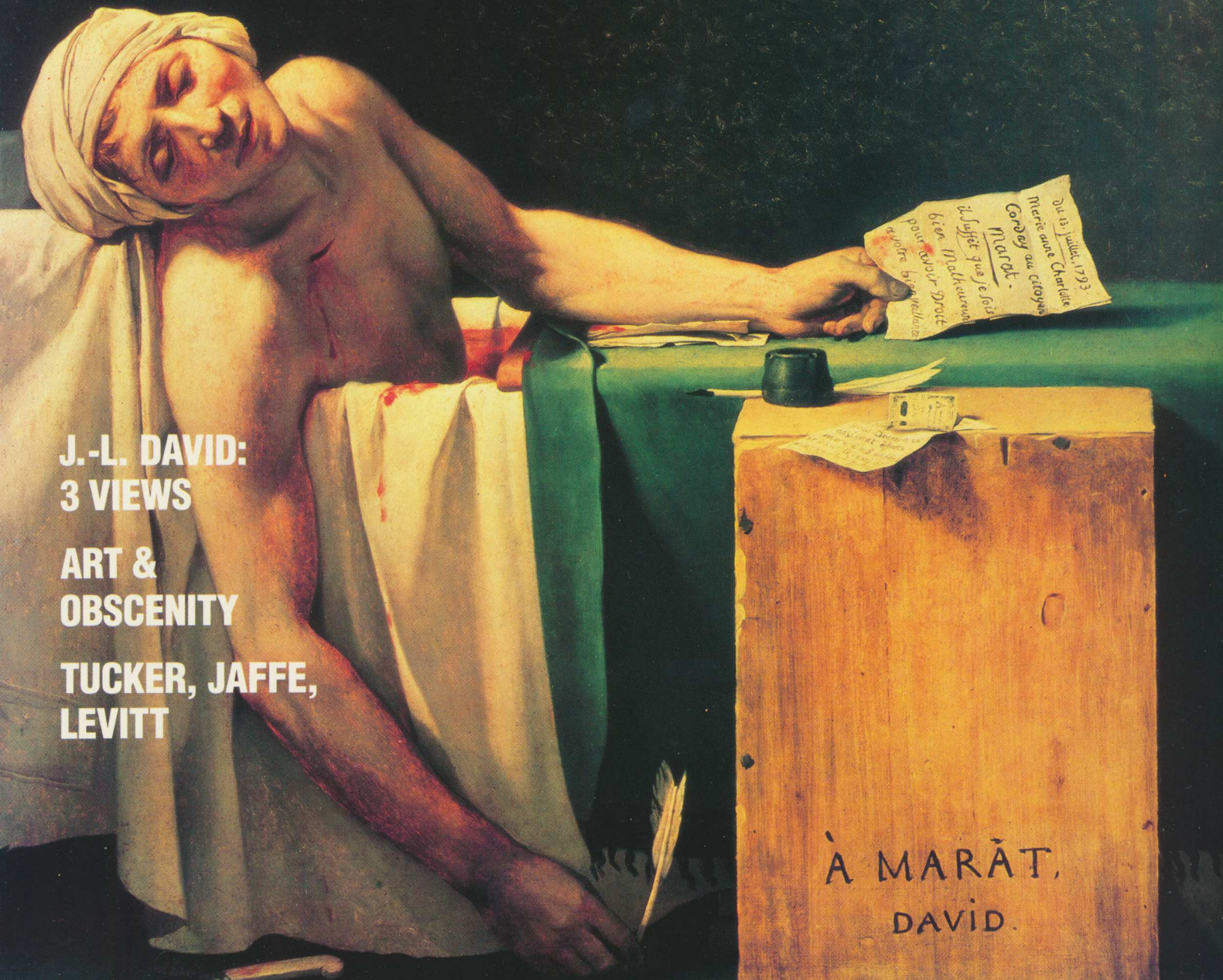


# Art in America

May 1990 \$4.75



**J.-L. DAVID:  
3 VIEWS**

**ART &  
OBSCENITY**

**TUCKER, JAFFE,  
LEVITT**

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DAVID.

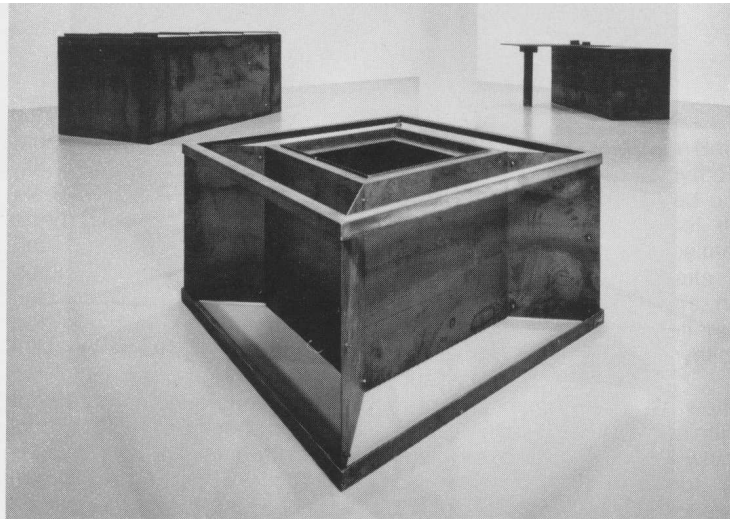
of it, or, more simply, between assertion and passion.

*Pompeiana* (1989, 122 by 212 inches) is one such work. It is broken into three wide panels—each with curved tops and highly defined margins—that contain various formally self-conscious scenes. To the left, a woodlike ground of clay red is quite literally embossed with deeper red, vertical rectangles. A strip of lead-jacketed wood runs vertically down the center, squares off to the right and gives rise to a leaded wood curlicue—elegantly sassy—on the “platform” thus created. The center panel contains a vertically oriented oval—a reflectionless mirror?—touched with mottled abstract markings of umber, brown and rust. At its center stands yet another leaded wood vertical, rising from the bottom of the oval to near the top; the top itself is graced by a short, horizontal lead T-bar upon which is balanced—more sly trompe-l’oeil here—a painted black ball. The right-most panel is a handsome variation on the first two: a pair of long lead verticals are topped by a short horizontal cross-bar, creating a lyrically austere table-form that is burnt sienna between its two thin “legs,” which flank an even thinner stripe of green paint running up the center. A wisp of a black vertical floats above. In the end, *Pompeiana* succeeds both by its air of interior architecture gone massively public and by the gleam of its Neo-Cubist formats gone epic.

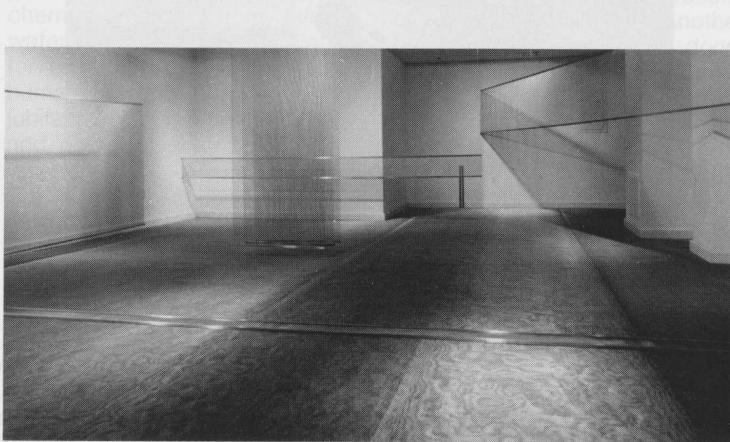
The art-historical sources Campanelli’s work draws upon extend beyond Cubism and Minimalism. *Torre* (1989, 74 by 112 inches) is, in its weird architectonics and night-green tonalities, something of a homage to early de Chirico. Yet Campanelli doesn’t wax poetic over de Chirico’s nocturnal lyricism: *Torre* features a kind of wall-shelf arrangement of vertical and horizontal lead bars against a big, quasi-hourglass, cream-toned form that takes up most of the painting. Shadows the shelf might make against the cream ground come real and painted; the painted black ball from *Pompeiana* reappears in an upper “cupboard”—an enigmatic reminder of contemporary wholeness.

Campanelli is an artist of formidable grace and strength. His gravely luxuriant new canvases create, and inhabit, a new, indoor scape of light and shadow.

—Gerrit Henry



Susana Solano: Installation view of exhibition with *Stanca #2, 1989*, in foreground; at Donald Young.



Beth Galston: View of installation “Structure/Nonstructure,” 1989, mixed mediums, 7 by 18 by 38 feet; at LeSaffre Wilstein.

## BOSTON

### Beth Galston at LeSaffre Wilstein

“Structure/Nonstructure,” shown in LeSaffre Wilstein’s basement room, was the most object-oriented work yet from this artist, whose scrim set pieces and installations have graced a number of dance and multimedia presentations. Galston works with minimal, even liminal, effects, and her previous installations have relied to a greater degree than most on the viewer’s subjective apprehension. Not only is one’s physical position integral to the experience of her work, but the individuality of perception is also at play. In her “Black on Black,” shown at MIT in 1988, Galston used black scrim columns and panels hung in a dimly lit black chamber to demonstrate her great sensitivity to space and light. As one stepped in through the curtained entrance, the space itself seemed to alter remarkably as one’s pupils gradually adjusted to the darkness.

“Structure/Nonstructure,” too, was presented in dimmed, curtained light, but since the installation was largely fabricated from aluminum framing strips and wire window screening, it had more physical presence than Galston’s earlier work. The well-defined boundaries of the polished, reflective frames set off the less easily perceptible textures of the screening—an allusion, perhaps, to the elusive nature of art. The transient moiré patterns that resulted from viewing screen through screen and the multiple shadows engendered by Galston’s lighting helped set in motion the interplay of structure and nonstructure.

Galston had fun with the gallery setting, her frame-and-wire pieces slyly miming the idea of paintings hung in an exhibition. Seen in this context, her materials proved strangely graceful. Yet watching the ever-changing moiré patterns, one was inevitably reminded of the way that works of art come to real existence only in the eyes of the beholder. Underscoring this notion was Galston’s modification

of the gray-carpeted gallery floor: completely covered with two layers of wire screen, it too, produced shifting moiré patterns with every step the viewer took. The installation served as a good example of this artist’s sense of the possibilities that lie in the simple interaction of light and minimal elements in a human space.

—Thomas Frick

## WASHINGTON, D.C.

### Cheryl Laemmle at the National Museum of Women in the Arts

Cheryl Laemmle’s paintings—large, squarish oils between eight and ten feet high—have Surrealist predecessors: de Chirico’s still lifes, Frida Kahlo’s self-portraits, Magritte’s trompe l’oeil landscapes. She blends these influences into a brightly colored and painterly conflation which is powerful in its own right. Dreams and memory are starting points for works concerned with the balance between human and animal worlds.

Curator Helaine Posner chose works from 1981 to 1989. Though associate curator Susan Fisher Sterling’s catalogue essay diligently traces Laemmle’s art-historical sources, I propose an alternative reading: her paintings are generalized narratives dealing with imaginary, externally constructed selves rather than exact autobiographical correspondences, as well as with the cruelty of the predatory natural world and the indeterminate nature of sexuality and gender.

Laemmle’s early paintings, like *Big Fox with Angel* (1982), are startling tableaux of inverted scale wherein animals are made big and threatening while people are made tiny and mute. Repeatedly, the monkey’s or fox’s tail suggests a phallic weapon between the animal’s legs. A benign landscape setting averts immediate terror, but a gloomy, ominous character prevails. Bird decoys (a signature convention) reinforce the artificial, constructed nature of the paintings, giving them an abrupt iconic character absent from traditional animal paintings.

By the mid-1980s, Laemmle’s paintings had become convincing symbols for states of mind: fear, sorrow, desire. In these works, featureless birds, wooden animals and people populate a Surrealist territory where trees are turned into decoys and de-