



Birgit Jensen, *Home*, 1983.  
200 x 148 cm. Photo Bo Ljungblom, Milan.

conceptual and psychological complexity to Jensen's larger canvasses (the drawings, or monotypes, however, seem to be more a repertory of shape, color and image, blatantly abstract and isolated, a personal as well as universal testimony). There is an intrinsic force linked to each image and if the form and color achieve a kind of autonomy, then this force grows stronger through the process of examination.

Jensen concentrates on pattern, often using the rhomboidal, checker motif which, based on primary color, interweaves imagery and archetypal form in a way which teases the memory (the diamond, the joker, etc.). Temporal reality is negated and essential contrasts manifest themselves through this technique. The color, too, eradicates any imagery not immediately relevant to the basic, playful quality of the work. Jensen is now working in a strongly symbolist manner. The gamble here is between color and symbol—but the odds are not of the kind which necessitate an outright winner.

Marco Meneguzzo

## SABINA MIRRI

A.A.M./Rome

As part of the series entitled, "Nell'arte: i nuovi linguaggi," the A.A.M. Cooperative showed Sabina Mirri's most recent works, with intelligent timeliness. Mirri, who began with a much more intense, personal inquiry, on this occasion turned the continued exploration of her own individual, mythical and symbological concerns to profit. Indeed, what until very recently seemed merely to express an acute awareness of the "libidinal burden" of such disturbing personal preoccupations as androgyny, bodily self-identification, or the unconscious claim of immortality, has now been changed into something more "positive," something that, far from appearing as a hypocritical message of vitalistic inspiration, aspires through the clear tension of a new stylistic composure to a primordial form of exemplification, to an elementary level of sociality which makes it perhaps absurd to speak of sacred atmosphere. In the two large female figures whose facial features reveal a sort of archaicism, classicism, and evolutionistic futurology vaguely



Sabina Mirri, *Portrait of Francesca Romana*, 1983.  
Pastel on canvas, 180 x 180 cm.

reminiscent of the Novecento group, Mirri confronts the possibility for the postindustrial and postideological subject to rebuild some sort of relation with nature, beginning with a demystified, idiopathic maturation of deep-psychic themes devoid of contrived, commonplace, neo-romantic references. These two strange viragoes, who hold three symbolic pieces of fruit in their laps, could be considered the tutelary goddesses of the character represented in a third painting: a sort of heroine without distinguishing attributes, shown as she climbs her own magic mountain in a nocturne animated by fantastic flashes of light. Nature is inside of us, but in order to take hold of it we must strike the proper balance between the components of metaphysics and biology that determine our essence as men and women.

Paolo Balmas

## NINO LONGOBARDI

Galleria Il Ponte/Rome

In an excellent exhibition of recent works, Nino Longobardi used pictorial means to superheat and eroticize the incorporeal surface of a newspaper image, a borrowed phantasm with the impersonal realism of a snapshot which he



Nino Longobardi, *Untitled*, 1983.  
Pastel on canvas, 180 x 180 cm.

reduced to a few essential figures against a shapeless void. The rapidly drawn nude figures embodied a pulsating energy, a tangible heat that the artist cooled down just enough by his use of monochrome.

Longobardi does not simply lift his images from the stereotypes of mass communications or from the repertory of myth, classroom, or museum. What one sees when he sketches out his figures, when he projects, repeats or superimposes his images and inscribes his phantasms in the thickness of the paint, is the result of two kinds of automatism. One consists in withdrawing the image from the realm of the artist's everyday life in order to transpose it with detachment to the two-dimensionality of the picture. The other arises from the inner impulses involved in the act of reinterpreting the image, which is always sustained by a spontaneous harshness, by a sensibility that makes it quick and light. By virtue of this double automatism, the image takes on unmistakable tonality and self-propulsion. The final result partly conceals the cold, premeditated aspect of the formative process, simulating instead a "spontaneous freshness" of painting. The apparent paradox is that of a hot, telluric material quality that is cooled and negated by the transparency of the threadlike figures; or of an impulsive quality that is gestural and sanguine, but restrained and controlled by the slow process of proceeding across the reliefs and depressions of a resistant material. Here, corporeality and transparency, the speed of the mark and the speed of defining the image, incessant temporality and the specular *fascinum* of the immobile, meet in a singular and unprecedented point of balance.

Enrico Cocceioni

## GERMANY

### ANSELM KIEFER

Paul Maenz/Cologne.

This exhibition (which was planned for November, but took place only in January) raised high expectations. Anselm Kiefer is not just anyone; he ranks as one of the most important German painters, and he has been much criticized on account of his handling of "Teutonic" subjects. The censure which went as far as judging his "Heroischen Sinnbilder" to be fascist prejudice, is, however, no longer applicable today.

The works in this exhibition are termed "sinnträchtig" (aspiring to sense). Formalism has caught up with Kiefer. *Deutschlands Geistesleben* (1973), which was a subversion of Valhalla, showed a wooden arch, bearing the names of the principal, romantic mythical heroes. This arch structure is also to be seen in the present exhibition. Like the other pictures, these gain their import, significance and power from the pictorial composition and heavy painting (the paint lies thick, dark and tarry, mingled with straw, cardboard and scraps of paper) and not least from the large dimensions of the canvas which commands a certain hold over the viewer. *Die Treppe* (The Staircase) is 330x185 cm. and is one of the smallest paintings in the show.

These works are imperiously painted, and the exhibition laid out in a peremptory fashion that excites hopes. The immediate impression is one of brooking no contradiction; however, on closer inspection, not much remains but the better and better craftsmanship of a good painter; the sense of his "sense pictures" has gone astray. Two grey-black, stonish paintings with the inscriptions