

'Cool Art' Proves Hottest Show In Aldrich's View of the Now

Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield. Through March 17. Open Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from 2 to 5 p.m. Admission 50 cents.

Any Aldrich museum show is an art event not to be missed.

If, over the past three years, none of these shows had been missed, there would be no complaints today from local art mode interpretations. For in its brief history (since October 1964) the Aldrich museum has dedicated itself to the contemporary scene (not trend-setting, but very much "with it") the views of the 1960s what the artists are thinking, what the modern collectors are collecting (John Powers, Susan Morse Hillis), what downtown art is taking. And consistently, with four exhibits a year, the installations and techniques of presentation have been superb.

Some shows, by their very nature, were entertaining and gaudy (John Power's Pop Art) or noisy (Howard Jones' kinetics) or bizarre (Lucas Samaras boxes studded with pins). There were some singular works that were offensive to some (Richard Lindner's vulgar men and women). But we should consider ourselves lucky to have in our midst an "up-to-the-minute" museum that brings to us "up-to-the-minute" art, or "instantaneous art exposure" for the instantaneous culture we are living in.

Certainly, the Aldrich museum has created an awareness of the new, small, specialist galleries in Manhattan — Bykert, Dwan, Fishbach, A. M. Sachs, Royal Marks, Park Place — which otherwise would be overlooked. For the Connecticut resident in "town" for a day of art, must by circumstances, be limited to the over-crowded arenas of the MOMA, the Whitney, or Guggenheim.

THE NEW "COOL" art now being shown in Ridgefield is, to date, the museum's finest exhibition. It is serious and silent. Contrary to its implication, it is also warm and very compelling. And the air around it is clear of the dogmatism so inherent in similar MOMA and Jewish museum shows. Ironically, it is the Aldrich's first show that has not been flawless in display, but the monolithic character of some of the "new art" does not accommodate itself to interior space limits.

The "cool" theme turned out to be a "hot" issue to handle. Just how does one classify the new postivist esthetics? "Cool" seemed to be the logical answer for the most logistic of art phases. Without offense to the artists (who deplore the categories they get trapped into) "cool" amalgamated all the terms — ABC, primary, reductive, minimal, structural, systematic, boring — into a conceptual art built around the minimalist phenomenon. To further divert from a definitiveness of terms, the show was dedicated to a myth — the Ad Reinhardt myth.

Ellsworth Kelly (he doesn't like the label) is back on Aldrich walls, again with his well-known "Kelly green" and "Kelly blue." It is simply a smaller Kelly non-composition that consists of one symmetrical form precisely outlined on a flat background of one color.

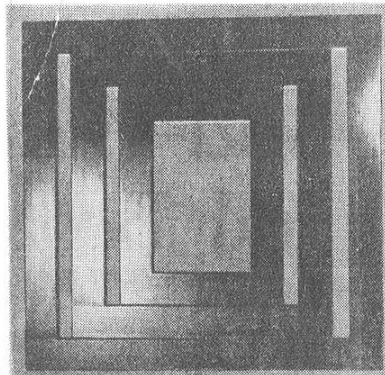
Robert Mangold (31 years old) has been lumped into the "silent" category (monotonal and boring), though his large (72 x 72") "One-fourth manila circle Area" is anything but boring. It is a divided masonite panel sprayed with two pale closely valued colors (the yellows of wheat). The result produces near monotonal atmospheric effects, but most important is the dividing line and shape of the panel which makes his contained monotonal space operate within a structural framework.

THE MOST dynamic painting is a large (88 x 126") square color spectrum that appears as two separate canvases. Half the canvas (frames within frames, or stripes placed into squares) is scaled down in tones of black, grays and white, while the other half is screamingly vivid in fluorescent acrylic colors. Based on

the impersonal grammar of constructivism, it nonetheless stands out as one of the most personal works—from the very personal perimeter-master Frank Stella. (The "new art" professes anonymity, yet most of the artists in the "cool" show come through very personal.) Thirty-two year old Stella is the newest acknowledged leader of the postivist esthetics group.

The most audacious understatement in painting is Patricia Johansen's unsized canvas the size of the wall on which it is hung (102 x 180"). It takes a discerning eye to catch the difference (the wall and the canvas). The sole execution in pigment is a line — half in red, half in green — which dissects the canvas horizontally. One of the few titled works, it is called "Hollow Junction."

SCULPTURE, as a single-standing solitary form, or three-dimensional object to be viewed from a pedestal, is practically non-existent. Only one piece — Clement Meadmore's dark, low-lying monolithic unit — comes close to functioning as sculpture. Robert Smithson's great white piece — sometimes referred to



EXCITING DISCOVERY — To Sunday Post art critic Martha B. Scott, German-born Ursula Meyer is the exciting new discovery of the year. The construction of this series of frames (or modules) is a flexible system with an arrangement potential. The viewer is led to see or feel what he wants to see — to some, the final square is a framed picture (or picture that should be there). It is a striking contrast in black (the frames) and white (the spaces coming from a white wall). Called "Homage to 'Tiny Alice,'" the work is a highlight in the "Cool Art" show at the Aldrich museum in Ridgefield.

as a monument of the Ice Age — appears as a solitary sculpture, but it isn't. It is made up of painted white hexagonal modules (welded together) that graduate and increase in size in such a way that we see positional shifts and changes before our eyes. In the sculptural sense of which our eyes and minds have been attuned, there is none to be found in this exhibit — just units and modules. Meadmore and Smithson and all the other 33

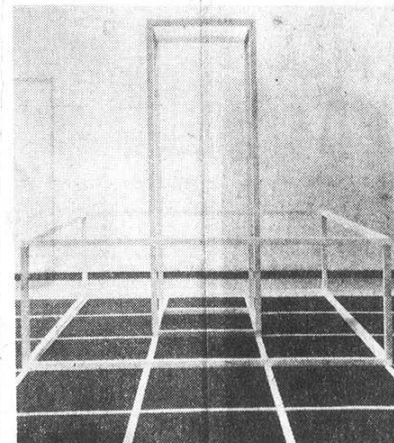
artists (who aren't painters) are structure makers. The objects they make (not create) or have fabricated perform no function — they're somewhere between mind and matter.

The structure makers are involved with industrial materials — stainless steel, Plexiglas, cold rolled steel, baked enamel on aluminum, armorply, Formica, Polystyrene. So deeply involved are they that they remove themselves from the actual execution of their work.

THUS the automatism of the artist's hand does not interfere with the rationalism of the ready-made or manufactured units. There is no work or craftsmanship coming from any of these artist's hands. What does come from them is the arrangement and placing of the units and it is this diversity that sets each artist apart.

Some work is segmented like Donald Judd's. His row of four stainless steel and Plexiglas boxes are components that are non-relational to each other but are related to the work as a whole. Particularly handsome are his boxes for this show. They have left the floor for the wall. Michael Steiner's 20 narrow sand-blasted aluminum strips hang from ceiling to floor all in a row, though it becomes a series — a series that ultimately is the whole work.

IT IS HARD to believe that less than two years ago some of these structure makers



REJECTS THE UNNECESSARY — Sol LeWitt (a hardcore rejectionist of the unnecessary) created this large floor-piece — a formalized concept of infinity within a skeletal form. His plans are always worked out according to rigid mathematical principles. The work of baked enamel on aluminum is in the Aldrich museum show.

ers seemed radical (hardcore rejectionists like Judd, Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre). Today Judd's metal boxes, all in a row, are no more shocking than an Albers square. Carl Andre and his firebricks lin-

He still does no more than order them (the pieces of slate) and places them.
Walter de Maria and his L-shaped chrome shafts are in the present exhibit a sleek piece of polished elegance.

THE EXCITING new discovery of the year has been the work of German-born Ursula Meyer. For this reviewer the works of Meyer and Lyman Kipp are the two most exciting (contained, of course) discoveries of the whole "cool" show. Ursula Meyer's simple strong unit of three painted black frames creates an illusion of receding through planes onto a glaringly bright white square. Depth and emptiness are made more intense by a spotlighted shadow.

Lyman Kipp's primary (two yellows, two blues, one red) blocks (painted steel) are deceptively large and simple and delightful (though we are not supposed to feel any emotions in this show) Kipp's unit has been given the first floor gallery, which it deserves. For it starts the "cool" show off to a warm start and ends on a warm finish.
—MARTHA B. SCOTT

STUDENTS STOP AT JAIL

EAST ST. LOUIS, Ill. (AP) — Police say a school bus driver found his passengers so rowdy that instead of taking them home from school he drove them to the police station. The youths were questioned about their behavior and then released.