

NEIL GOLDBERG

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**VISUAL ARTS**

by FFWD WRITER

Captivating concepts.

Neil Goldberg exhibition charms

>>PREVIEW

ROOM TONE

Runs until August 4

Neil Goldberg

Stride Gallery Conceptual art, an art movement that originated in the United States in the mid-'60s, has been described by artist Sol LeWitt as an art form in which "the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work." With this style, not only is the importance of discerning the artist's touch in the work drastically reduced, but the esthetic quality and the material concerns of the final product also become irrelevant. Even though conceptual art has a strong presence in the international contemporary art scene today, only a few individuals can undoubtedly be labeled as conceptual artists. This is due to the fact that art-making has become a much more personal affair and artists are less inclined to follow trends and movements. One such artist is Neil Goldberg, a New York artist whose exhibition Room Tone is currently on display at Stride Gallery. Goldberg's creations "always start with a conceptual kernel," but unlike pure conceptual artists, he is still very much concerned with the formal aspects of his video, photography and installation art. The artist feels that works of art with strong esthetic quality make them more accessible to the viewer, and makes it easier for the latter to get interested and involved in the piece. The five works included in Room Tone definitely rise to the challenge of captivating the viewer with their simplicity and charm. Goldberg's artistic interest lies in capturing fleeting gestures and making the viewer aware of the intricate and beautiful nature of these moments that we often encounter repeatedly on a daily basis, such as the act of breathing, thinking, reacting, moving or just being. The occasional reaction to a lilac bush from passersby wandering through the Brooklyn Botanic Garden is the focus in Goldberg's video Ten Minutes with X02180-A. (All of the artist's titles act as clues to the moment that is being filmed, and this particular one references the length of the video loop and the number that is given by the garden to that particular type of lilac.) At first, nothing of interest seems to be happening other than people out of focus walking by this lilac bush blowing in the light breeze on a beautiful, sunny day. However, just when the viewer starts to lose interest, an elderly woman stops right in front of the camera, unaware of its existence, to smell the flowers being filmed. With a sigh and a smile of content, she continues out of the frame and on her merry way. The varied and sporadic reactions from strangers towards the same plant are amusing to watch and become a reminder of our differences in taste. On the wall to the left of the Ten Minutes video projection is another video projection. This one is more polished than the former as it was edited and considerably slowed down, giving the work a dreamlike yet sombre quality. It is a sequence of facial close-ups on pensive strangers who are unaware that they are being observed. They seem to be in deep thought and tormented by a hard decision as they look down, squint their eyes and stiffen their lips. Even though the viewer might imagine that the subjects are going through some very delicate situations, they are simply choosing what to eat, as the title of the work Salad Bar attests. This dichotomy between what is really happening and what the viewer might perceive to be happening is an unintentional characteristic found in many works by Goldberg. Goldberg's work has recently been exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and has since become part of its remarkable collection. Starting August 18, the artist's most personal work included in the show at Stride, My Father Breathing Into a Mirror, will be shown in a solo exhibition at The Jewish Museum in New York alongside two newer videos that were created around the same concept of love and loss.