

# ARTS

## MAGAZINE

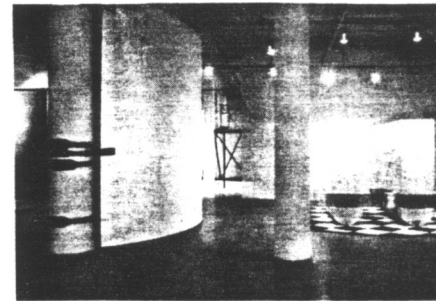
### NEW YORK IN REVIEW

SEPTEMBER 1991

Terry R. Myers

The way I see it, most of today's significant work is being made by women (not to suggest, however, that the obstructions built into the [art] system have even begun to disappear), usually in a sculptural mode that explores the conceptual subtleties of its physical encapsulation. The circumstance can no longer be repudiated, deflected, or disparaged, and in this column I have a great deal of solid material with which to support such a claim. For example, the shrewd tactics that determine the charting of the intervening space of **Western Agenda**, a group exhibition at Artists Space (March 14–May 4) curated by Connie Butler, enable the show to deliver two important messages explicitly: 1) American monuments and the (male) history in which they participate are typically perverse, misguided, and manipulated; and 2) while many emerging artists are increasingly persuasive in their self-conscious critiques of the biased power championed in such memorials, the most effective work of this kind is being made by women sculptors.

A return to the Russian Constructivist ideal (which, of course, never made it very far beyond models, or corner relief sculptures), David Schafer's own *Western Agenda* is an appropriate opening to the exhibition—with its large scale and dramatic skeletal structure, it initially masquerades as unapproachable, possibly venerable. However, as viewers ascend its ladder and put themselves on display, the scaffolding yields itself to the potential for a different kind of (social) spectacle. Activating the usually passive position of the spectator, turning him or her from observer to observable, the program of Schafer's usable construction invades the larger room of the show, where the relationships between audiences and objects oscillate without resolution or the establishment of a clear hierarchy.



*Western Agenda*, Installation view, 1991, including, from left to right, work by Page Houser, Rita McBride, David Schafer, John Montl. Courtesy Artists Space. Photo: Peter McClennan.