

ESSAY

by Colin Gardner

"If the doors of perception
were cleansed everything
would appear as it is, infinite."

William Blake

PAULA CRAWFORD, CHRISTOPHER
FRENCH, CHIP RICHARDSON AND
ROBIN ROSE AT NUMARK
GALLERY.

Perhaps the most significant legacy of so-called "post-studio" practice of the past thirty years is that painting has long ceased to be regarded as an exclusively visual medium, appealing to a predominantly ocularcentric discourse. The lessons of minimalism, conceptualism and recent body-based approaches to perceptual experience have forced us to relocate painting less as a catalyst for Enlightenment notions of the beautiful and the sublime than as an interactive site, a meeting place of several, often antinomous esthetic trajectories. A painting can now be simultaneously viewed as a purely retinal experience, defying the logic of rational discourse; an agglomeration of semiotic codes that can be read as well as seen; a three-dimensional material object occupying a shifting, perceptual space-time; as well as a tactile, phenomenological experience appealing as much to the haptic, productive capabilities of the body as to the limited parameters of vision per se.

A common denominator linking the otherwise dissimilar artists discussed here is their shared acknowledgement of painting's potential as an evanescent multiplicity. In all four cases, conceptual, retinal, linguistic and haptic concerns are

