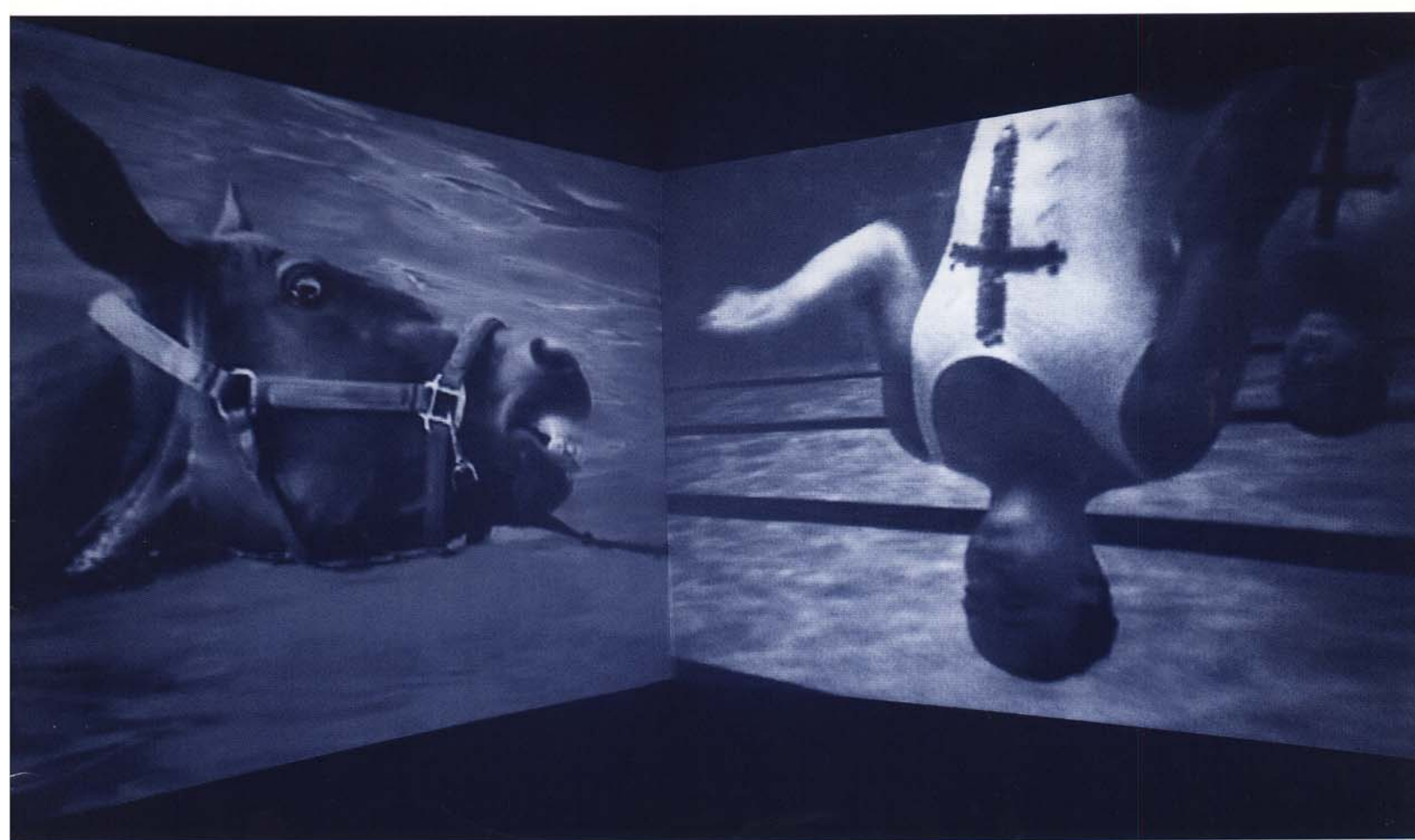


John Michael Kohler Arts Center

J M K A C



January February

1999



Caroline and Karen Playing Horsey
by Janet Biggs
(1996; video still from *Girls and Horses*).
Courtesy of Anna Kustera Gallery, New York,
and the artist.
Photo: Erma Estwick

Girls and Horses by Janet Biggs (1996; video installation; dimensions variable).
Courtesy of Anna Kustera Gallery, New York, and the artist.
Photo: Erma Estwick

JANET BIGGS: UP DOWNS

February 7 - March 28

Childhood fantasies and fears loom large in New York artist Janet Biggs' work. Her 1993 installation, "Crib," included a baby's crib on stilts surrounded by a protective ring of stuffed toy horses and color photographs of night lights, all of which triggered memories of childhood insecurities and powerlessness. For another work, she stuffed and stitched hooded baby rompers to create a child's sense of the world, comforting and frightening at the same time. Nevertheless, Biggs' interest in the psychology of children is not an end in itself but, rather, serves as a way to examine imagination and creativity on the level of the unconscious.

Biggs' preoccupation with childhood and adolescence—particularly of girls—was also the impetus for her video installations, shown together for the first time in the exhibition, **UP DOWNS**, at JMKAC. The exhibition title refers to formal and thematic connections between the two installations. **Girls and Horses** examines the attraction of little girls for horses and the attendant issues of power, sexuality, and autonomy. This infatuation can take many forms—from playing horsey to collecting everything equine to riding or owning horses. The horse, a symbol of beauty, power, freedom, and magic, can even become an object of fantasy, such as the proverbial white horse of the knight in shining armor. **Girls and Horses** includes video monitors, still photography, and wall-sized video projections, creating an active viewing environment which allows complete immersion in Biggs'

vision. The television monitors show little girls playing horsey with their parents while video projections of a nine-year-old girl on a huge white horse travel around the gallery. Adjacent to the darkened gallery space, a large-format color photograph shows another child in her bedroom surrounded by every conceivable article of horse paraphernalia.

A second video installation, **Water Training**, also thematizes aspects of female adolescence, juxtaposing images of a horse treading water and groups of young girls engaged in synchronized swimming. One projection shows the horse's head above water—eyes glaring and nostrils flaring—while the girls' paddling legs under water are projected on the opposite wall. Inevitably, thematic connections are drawn between the relentless battle of horse and girls to stay afloat, resulting in a comparison between the rigorous training of race horses and of young female athletes.

Both installations are rooted in a solid understanding of psychoanalytic film theory. In **Girls and Horses**, Biggs explores the formation of desire and fantasy through narrative and thematic structures. In focusing on synchronized swimming, **Water Training** makes deliberate reference to 1950s Hollywood cinema, thus engaging an important body of feminist writing on visual pleasure and identification.

Through January 10



Below the Surface! In Midair
by Amie McNeel and Kaiti Slater
(1998, multimedia installation).
Photo: Doug Green

BELOW THE SURFACE IN MIDAIR

an installation by Amie
McNeel and Kaiti Slater

Don't miss the opportunity to experience and imagine simultaneously the connection between tangible existence and the unseen forces of the universe in McNeel/Slater's installation. The sweeping movement of motorized tornado-like shapes draws the viewer toward an examination of his/her own experience of this and other spaces.

EXHIBITION FUNDING

Current exhibitions are supported in part by a grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board with funds from the State of Wisconsin as well as by vital corporate, foundation, and individual contributions. In addition, a portion of the Arts Center's general operating funds for this fiscal year as been provided through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a federal agency that offers general operating support to the nation's arts centers, museums, and libraries.