



## THE OLD BACK-AND FORTH

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In the long run, there is much to be said for the manufacture of culture. Artists and critics have a job just like everybody else, and I feel that an important part of mine is the checking of my own eye. If I want to write about something off the beaten path, then I feel obligated to go and look at the new Cindy Shermans, or the new Rick Prols, or the new de Koonings. If after this I still want to write on the lesser-known figure, then I know it was more than a whim which prompted me to do so. After all, since the art world isn't a *demimonde* anymore so much as an industry in the clearcut sense that Detroit and Hollywood have their industries, there are by necessity a lot of smoke screens to navigate through. Take, for example, the interesting case of the recent work by Sandro Chia which showed at Castelli in late 1984. Almost everyone could pride themselves on having noticed that these were truly minor paintings; that, if not exactly the poisoned baubles of art-world hype, they were at least the undeniable evidence of an artist's work degenerating through overproduction.

One year later, the same gallery has an exhibition by Jiri Georg Dokoupil, whose new work deliberately takes on the look of an artist degenerating through overproduction, or even the look of poisoned baubles. In the (slightly) younger artist's case, this may be interpreted both as a larger observation about career demands taking precedence over creative vitality and as a specific one, about the suitability of this kind of speculation as the subject of art (as opposed to, say, criticism). In a similar vein, we have the careers of Rick Prol, who thinks we know that he doesn't know what he's doing, but he knows that we know that he knows. Then there is Donald Baechler, who thinks we don't know that he knows what he's doing, but he knows that we know that he doesn't know. Which of these positions can be referred to as "bad faith"?