



Jeffrey Scher: *Untitled*, 1992, for the film *Milk of Amnesia*, gouache and collage on paper, 4 by 6 inches; at Maya Stendhal.

Jeffrey Scher at Maya Stendhal

Animators traditionally advance their claim to viewers' attention by hand and one frame at a time, employing a kind of copy stand to project and enlarge sequences of movie frames onto a surface so that they can be traced, then filmed again. Today the animated film is most often the product of digital software. Not so in the work of Jeffrey Scher, who considers himself a painter working in motion, and whose 16mm short films are admired by festival audiences and collected by the Guggenheim Museum and the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Expanding that audience, this exhibition consisted of the projection of a number of short films, accompanied by 23 complex suites of drawings presented in grids pinned to the gallery walls.

Scher is inspired by Léger's short abstract film, *Le Ballet Mécanique* (1924), a key work of avant-garde cinema composed of some 300 fragmented, kaleidoscopic images of common objects, events and people, including Kiki of Montparnasse. Scher bases his films and drawings on found footage and collage, scripting and shooting additional passages necessary to their generally nonnarrative arc. Among the many drawings included here are sequences for the six-minute *Milk of Amnesia* (1992), an homage to Léger, with a peppy, cocktail-generation soundtrack of Latin American songs accompanied by bandleader; the staccato rhythms are harmonious with the flow of his film. In one repeated sequence made from 96 gouache drawings, Scher samples an image of Kiki, frame by frame, with her eyes

closed, head turning from side to side. *Garden of Regrets* (1994) includes footage his grandfather took in Cannes years ago as a woman in a bathing costume walked toward his camera. Almost subliminal in effect, occasional frames are drawn in the manner of Dufy and Léger. There are two sequences of multiple drawings of cows from the same film, as well as 20 drawings of a pile of cooked chickens from *Lost and Found* (2004) that are also briefly here and then gone.

Like the animated films of William Kentridge, the closest Scher's get to the digital processes that dominate the creation of the animated film today is their transfer to the more accessible formats of videotape or DVD. In a recent foray into commissioned film portraits, he serially limns a handsome young woman gazing at the camera in the manner of the filmed portraits of Warhol's "Screen Test," enlivening the static style by composing the portrait one stroboscopic frame at a time, each composed of a single drawing that recalls the pastel portraits of Billy Sullivan. The effect is ravishing. Apropos of their appeal, Scher recalls the advice of the late filmmaker Warren Sonbert: "No shot should ever overstay its welcome. Every shot should leave you wanting more."

—Edward Leffingwell

Tom Burckhardt at Tibor de Nagy

Several works in Tom Burckhardt's second solo at Tibor de Nagy evoke our era of Superfund sites, mercury emissions, water pollution and other crimes against the environment. In *Haz Mat Shan II* (2003), for example, figures in industrial protective outfits