



Elaine Reichek: *Temple of Heaven*, 1982, mixed mediums, 36 by 82 inches; at Concord.

Elaine Reichek at Concord

A former student of Ad Reinhardt, Elaine Reichek uses a feminine craft, knitting, to analyze the visual and symbolic languages of architecture in a form of post-Conceptual art. When she began to use knitting as an analytical tool four years ago, it supplied a bridge between the concrete and the abstract, the personal and the public, the intimate and the grand; it also permitted her to introduce explicit content into her system-oriented art.

In her earlier work in this vein, Reichek matched an already knitted garment such as a baby's bonnet with an example of vernacular architecture that resembled it. Now, she starts with a well-known building and designs a piece of clothing in its shape—an actual hat, say, set under glass on the left, a hand-tinted, black and white photograph of the building on the right, and in-between a two-color drawing detailing the structure of both.

Superficially, such work resembles Joseph Kosuth's "still lifes" which juxtaposed an actual object, a life-sized photograph of it, and its dictionary definition—but where Kosuth explored difference within sameness, Reichek explores the similarities between different things. In effect, she practices what philosopher Gilbert Ryle calls "category mistake"—"The presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another."

The result is a humorous irreverence reminiscent of much post-modern architecture. For exam-

ple, Reichek may place a photo of the White House with a baby bonnet, or an image of the World Trade Towers with a pair of hot pink pants. In a way, she also conceptualizes Claes Oldenburg's strategy of turning banal objects like baseball bats into oversize monuments.

But Reichek's pairing of famous buildings and everyday clothing is not only debunking. Her work also questions how we read structure, how we detect similar forms in very dissimilar objects. Rooted in the conventions of Conceptual art, Reichek is also heir to both the feminist art of the early '70s that focused on crafts and the humorous art of the late '70s based on visual puns. In fusing these genres, she has forged a new way of looking at the world.

—Ann-Sargent Wooster