

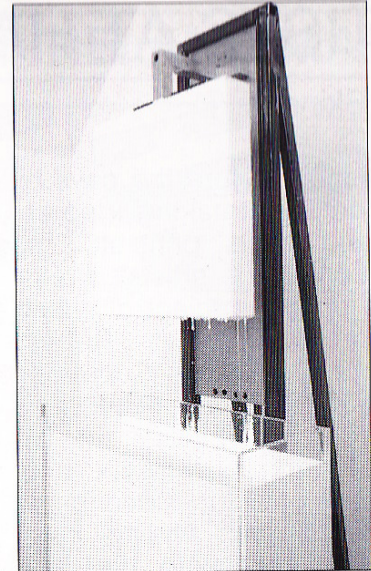
NATASHA KIDD

Ana Sarginson

There seemed at first something chapel-like about **Houldsworth Fine Art** when I went to view Natasha Kidd's three Painting Machines that are part of her exhibition *Microswitch*. In this revamped Cork Street gallery space the machines seemed like altars; not Christian, but altars used for sacrificial ceremony. With their hard lines forged in steel and the relentlessness of each as they plunge their own white canvas into its vat of white paint and then raise it to drip, these hydraulic machines made the canvases seem like victims. But, instead of being laid bare, these victims are being built up. Layer after thin layer of paint adheres to the canvas and over time, a long time, since these canvases will be repeatedly plunged throughout the six weeks of this show, a dermis is created with its own unique features. Bumps and ridges and drips from the bottom and side edges that

form as the paint turns glutinous become over time the painting's characteristics. This then is the visualisation of creation. A public display intent on involving the spectator with the making process.

It was this desire to expose the making of painting and minimise her physical involvement that led Kidd to evolve her first painting machine whilst studying at the Slade. Kidd's priming of the canvas and her mix of white emulsion, along with the timing of the machine's dips, will play some part in the creation process, but essentially the picture is on its own. Each canvas, bound so securely to its maker, is a specimen, left to chance. Even when the process is complete and the canvas dry, its provenance will be undeniable because each bears a 'birth' scar where it has been separated from its machine. Labelled with a serial number and number of days and



dips of their creation, the paintings are left to forge their own identity. They have a sculptural beauty. Some have clusters of coral-like formations, delicate as a breath, down their edges, others have twirls and twists like decorative stalactites and others the lacy quality of white sea shells. Products of machines, these paintings unexpectedly remind us of the fragility of our own earth's surface ●