

The New York Times

**Claude Wampler**  
**'Painting, the Movie'**

*Postmasters*  
459 West 19th Street  
Chelsea  
Through Oct. 7

The performance artist Claude Wampler — who has studied dance, opera and Japanese Butoh and may be best known in the art world for having shared a bed with a motorcycle for four days during the 1997 Gramercy Art Fair — turns *Postmasters* into cinematic theater for this exhibition.

The show's images are inspired by 20 seconds of Arika Kurosawa's 1954 epic film "Throne of Blood," which was based on "Macbeth." A handful of small sculptural forms in cases — a cut-off ear, a bloody knife

— suggest (not very convincingly)

the film's ritualistic violence. They flash out of sight as the viewer comes near.

By contrast, as one approaches what looks like a big blank sheet of plastic on the wall, an image of a doll-like woman in elaborate robes — Kurosawa's *Lady Macbeth* — mechanically advances and retreats to the sound of thunder. Though the scene resembles a film projection, the "screen" is actually a window into an adjoining gallery where Ms. Wampler is performing the same Noh-like routine all day, every day during the run of the show.

It's hard to say exactly what makes the performance gripping. Certainly Ms. Wampler's physical presence and her eerie visual exoticism have much to do with it. So does the ambiguously voyeuristic distance created by what may or may not be a one-way screen. In any case she is one of a handful of young artists, many of them women, who are exploring the erotic tension of live theater in art these days, and she is one of the least predictable and most inventive of the bunch.

HOLLAND COTTER