

# Flash Art

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## ZURICH

**CURTIS MITCHELL**  
**MARG JANCOU**

Even if this is Curtis Mitchell's first one-person show in Europe, the New York artist shouldn't register as a wholly unknown name. Early last year, his open air furniture installation in New York City's Petrosino Park was almost totally destroyed by vandals, causing a stir throughout the art world.

In Zurich, Mitchell is showing a loose collection of objects—paintings, rugs, and photographs—that have all been subjected to two basic and no less banal binary mechanisms: destruction or collapse on the one hand, and reconstruction or repair on the other. We're invited, for example, to look at a ragged carpet that the American artist has patched with a kind of plaster paste; or crumpled photos used as "brickwork" in a wall; or a painting damaged by fire "sewn up" with rubber thread. Mitchell has attempted to employ his materials for simple and lethargic acts of do-it-yourself, consciously refusing to charge them with aesthetic, political, or psychological implications. But while an idea such as this could never be wholly successful, one continues to wonder if the attempt should have been more radical—allowing the object to function as an "expression of lack of will" or as an indication of an object-oriented apathy. There's an obvious reference to one of the strategies of late modernist literature: the disappearance of the author.

Mitchell's objects (or non-objects) can be read as a criticism of all subject-oriented discourse in art in the deconstructivist mode. Yet it could just as well be, more simply and concretely, that the works boil down to purely optical manifestations of the most conspicuous cycles of all forms of existence: the principle that sees them fall apart, reconstitute themselves, and then fall apart again.

**Daniel Kurjakovic**

*(Translated from German by Henry Martin)*



CURTIS MITCHELL, INSTALLATION VIEW, 1992.