

May 19, 2006

## Art in Review; Breathe Deep NYC No Charge

By **ROBERTA SMITH**

Gordon Matta-Clark and Richard P. Rubinstein  
Sara Tecchia Roma New York  
529 West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through May 27

To glimpse the Post-Minimalist sculptor Gordon Matta-Clark, best known for sawing up buildings, in his youth, and to experience once more the grainy look of early video, take in Richard P. Rubinstein's "Breathe Deep NYC No Charge." Made in September 1972, it shows Matta-Clark and a band of friends pushing a cart he constructed through Times Square and the financial district, amid a small crowd and much kibitzing. It was Matta-Clark's "Clean Air Machine," carrying canisters of "clean air" that the public was invited to consume through an oxygen mask, free of charge. A surprising number of people sat down on the cart's canvas chairs and did just that, sometimes with open skepticism, sometimes with the serious intent of novice wine tasters.

The result resembles a low-key spontaneous Happening, or perhaps an early instance of what is sometimes called relational aesthetics or service art as later practiced by artists like Rirkrit Tiravanija and Pierre Huyghe. But the strong sense of a bygone New York -- blurry, gray and ready for anything -- relates Mr. Rubinstein's video to street photography as much as to cutting-edge art.

Among Matta-Clark's several assistants is Ed Baynard, looking positively pre-Raphaelite. His blue-on-blue Blakean watercolors -- large images of skies, seas and suns -- hang in the gallery's front space. It was Mr. Baynard who remembered the videotaping of the Clean Air Machine and asked Mr. Rubinstein to retrieve the tape from storage and edit it for this exhibition. **ROBERTA SMITH**