

Flash Art

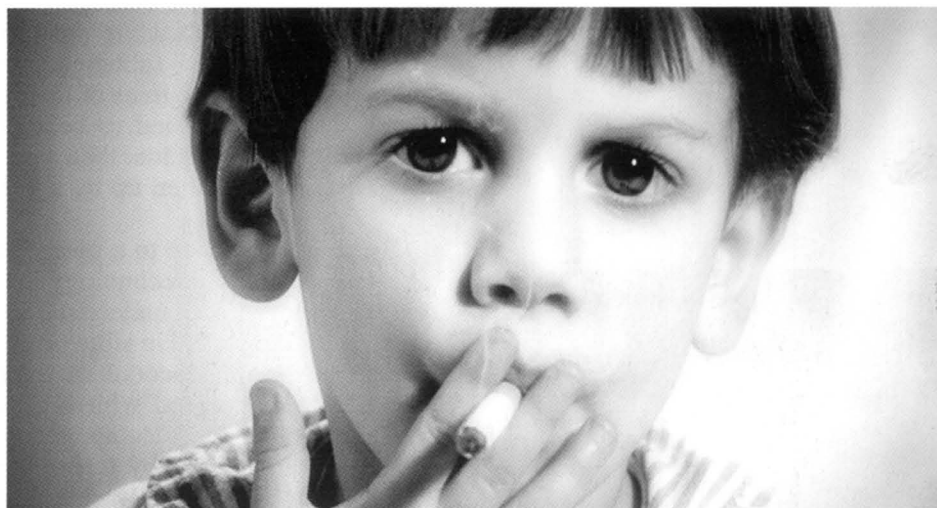
MARIA MARSHALL

TEAM

Walk in the front door of the darkened gallery and down the ramp to the movie. A nineteen second film loop (supposedly the length of time that the average viewer spends looking at an artwork in a gallery) is being projected continuously on one wall of the space from a projector suspended from the ceiling. The image is about eight by twenty feet. On screen a two year old boy wearing pyjamas in a white room is looking right at us and delicately blowing a lung full of cigarette smoke our way. His motions are slightly slowed down so they appear very smooth and pleasantly calming, even hypnotic. His action of puffing on the butt is repeated artificially in sequences of three: long view, mid shot, close up. This passes three times until the entire screen fills with smoke, completely obscuring the tot in a heavenly haze on the fourth go round. Is this the child's future? To become engulfed in the use of an addictive substance and die, because of the influence of captivating packaging?

The marketing of toxins to children in the guise of a cool cartoon character, i.e. Joe Camel, has created heated political debate. Our perception of reality is called into question by the use of advanced film making techniques. In fact, upon closer inspection we can discern that the whole thing is staged. The little boy's lips have been subtly highlighted by browning out the interior of his mouth so that no teeth are visible. The smoke rings appear at a point in space just in front of his luscious mouth. The hedonistic portrayal of this angelically sensual child alludes to child abuse on several levels. The seductive qualities of this controversial work contrast jarringly with its disquieting subject matter.

Christopher Chambers



MARIA MARSHALL, film still from "When I Grow Up I Want To Be A Cooker;"