

HAPPY BIRTHDAY AT MKG127

The inaugural exhibition at Michael Klein's new gallery on Ossington Avenue is a group show fittingly called Happy Birthday. On Aug. 1, it gives way to a second group show, titled Friendly Greeting.

Happy Birthday is mostly smart and fresh and charming. Some of it is also sort of silly and conceptually overfamiliar (like Anitra Hamilton's $\frac{1}{2}$ Miler - 2640 feet of continuous grey acrylic corking, and Laura Kikauka's plaque-like roadside-souvenir-shop paintings, wherein winsome animals have blinking electric eyes).

It won't be possible here to mention all the meritorious work in the show (there are a dozen artists and a collective - Instant Coffee - represented here), but there are some standout works that serve as key to the exhibition's tone.

Chief among those is Toronto-based architect-artist An Te Liu's *Pattern Language: Levittown (white)* - a demonically cunning, environmentally scaled graphic work that takes aerial views of the rows of tract houses making up America's first numbingly tedious post-Second World War suburb, Levittown, N.Y., and, by folding them in on themselves like a Rorschach test, reworks their pattern into an optically maddening wallpaper. The other unforgettable contribution to Happy Birthday is a small pile of faux books by Roula Partheniou. Having purchased a number of tiny, pre-

stretched canvases, Partheniou then proceeded to paint them so they would look as much as possible like the books she decided to imitate (in this case, books about space and astronomy: *Stars*, *The Nature of the Universe*, *The Bridge to Infinity* and so on). There are precedents for this (namely Jasper Johns's bronzed and repainted beer cans), but Partheniou's "books" are so damned cute, they're irresistible.