

# LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

514 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10001 Tel. 212 941 0012 Fax. 212 929 3265  
info@lennonweinberg.com www.lennonweinberg.com

## Tony Berlant

Amy, Michaël. "Tony Berlant at Lennon, Weinberg", *Art in America*, October 2003.

# Art in America

October 2003

### Tony Berlant at Lennon, Weinberg

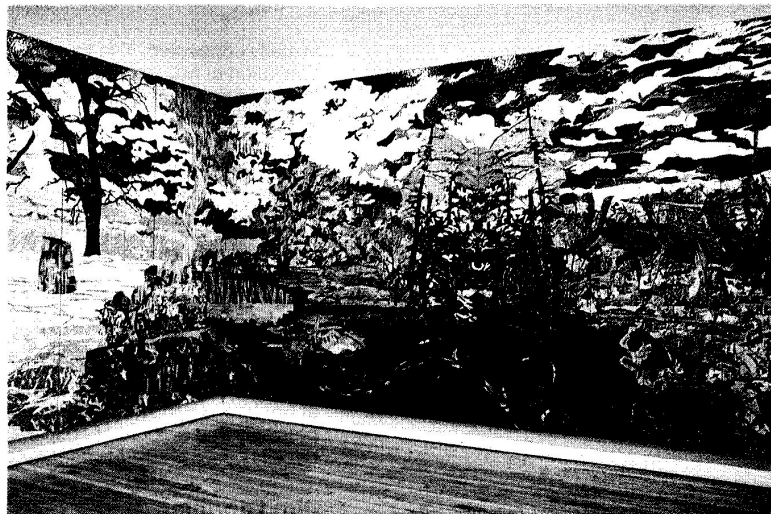
In the early 1960s, Tony Berlant came across a pile of metal advertising signs that, as he was looking for materials to work with, he cut up and nailed to boards. He thereby found his own idiosyncratic method of pictorial composition, which he has been fine-tuning ever since.

Today, industrially painted sheets of metal are delivered to him by a select number of factories specializing in the production of colorful lunch boxes and trash cans decorated with figurative motifs or abstract patterns. Berlant is intrigued by the vocabulary of form, hue and tone of these slick, ready-made surfaces. He exploits his materials to striking effect in large abstract or figurative compositions in which the original appearance of the constituent parts can barely be distinguished. Berlant delights in the way a new contour line and context can disguise the meaning of an image. He also cherishes surfaces that are "corrupted," as a result of, say, a printing error, abrasion or oxidation, since these accidents offer gateways toward the unknown.

*What You See is Who You Are* (2002) is a huge, horizontal 20-panel metal collage on wood (9½ by 55 feet) commissioned by the Target Corporation for its headquarters in Minneapolis. This panoramic landscape simultaneously evokes the seasons of the year and times of day. Like a Chinese scroll painting, the work is intended to be read from right to left. We begin with a bright mosaic that signals spring; then we encounter the blistering heat of summer at midday with wildflowers growing around a fallen tree trunk. In the next section, the lush foliage rising above pools of deep blue suggests the warm glow of fall. We then enter a wintry landscape, with leafless trees splashed with color silhouetted against a snow-dappled ground and a sliver of blue sky. Moving

from day to night, the final panels depict brightly colored vegetation rising against a field of black. The mostly curvilinear, cutout forms fittingly recall camouflage patterns—this artist plays a game of hide-and-seek—while the sudden transitions in bright color are reminiscent of the *décollages* of Jacques de la Villeglé.

In *Savannah* (2003), a feline creature with a coat of gray, black and white lies on top of a bed of dried foliage and grass. Here we see three-dimensional figurative forms and illusionistic space that easily revert to mostly flat, ornamental abstraction. Berlant makes images that transform themselves before the eye.  
—Michaël Amy



Tony Berlant: *What You See is Who You Are* (detail), 2002, metal collage on wood, 9½ by 55 feet; at Lennon, Weinberg.