



JEFFREY VALLANCE: NOW MORE THAN EVER

by Ezrha Jean Black

Jeffrey Vallance was already something of a legend when I first became acquainted with his work – an ‘interventionist’ style of conceptual art in which the performance became a kind of deconstructed cultural inquiry. My first impression came by way of captioned illustrations with accompanying narrative (appearing in the *L.A. Weekly*), a kind of anthropological scrapbook replete with schematic drawings of quasi-iconic images, national insignia, commercial artifacts, transit documents and correspondence with government bureaucrats. Not long thereafter, Vallance revisited the subject of a prior and more local cultural inquiry, touching on the side-by-side domestication of pets and predators – specifically, what may be the world’s most famous domesticated – and slaughtered – hen, **Blinky**, whose exhumation was documented in a show at the Rosamund Felsen Gallery. Having crossed many lines over the successive decades, Vallance has returned to the quasi-iconic by way of the most essential, cryptic and automatic mark-making; in effect (as **Doug Harvey** might have it) ‘erasing’ virtual lines between the historically enshrined and presently reimagined, archaeological residue and speculative projection, truth and legend. Vallance’s current show at **Edward Cella** is both an exhibition of these new works, born out of a mark-making Vallance characterizes (in homage to Blinky?) as “chicken scratches,” and a quasi-retrospective celebration of his entire body of work (a massive stack of flat files containing an enormous archive of his drawings is the centerpiece of the main gallery). His engagement with the myths and actualities of many of the world’s leading political figures is also celebrated – ‘with tentacles extended.’ ‘Do we really need to see this show?’ you might ask. *Now more than ever.*