

ARTTALK

The New Art Hysteria

When Susan Haggood called artist Ward Shelley and described the concept of the show she was curating, he responded that he had just the piece for her: a maze he made with Douglas Paulson, composed of towering cardboard boxes whose labels and organization mirror the contents of the brain. *Archive* (2004) joins works like Sean Landers's diaristic text paintings and Dave McKenzie's *Self-Help Hyperventilation Bag* (2002) in "Slightly Unbalanced," an exhibition devoted to anxieties and obsessions. The show is on view at the Chicago Cultural Center through April 13.

The popular image of the insane artist doesn't quite apply here, maintains Haggood, the exhibitions director of Independent Curators International. From Harry Dodge and Stanya Kahn's video about nonstop talkers to Beth Campbell's scrawled maps of missed opportunities, "a lot of contemporary artists are addressing the human condition rather than an aberrant illness," she points out.

Many of the works blur the boundary between normal neuroses and more-serious disorders, from Cary Leibowitz's paintings with self-flagellating phrases to Tony Oursler's agoraphobic video projection *Don't*

Look at Me (1994), in which a voice implores viewers to avert their eyes. It echoes the 1968 sound piece by Bruce Nauman, *Get Out of My Mind, Get Out of This Room* (also included in the show), which, instead of inviting viewers into the artist's head, attempts to drive them away.

—Carly Berwick



Untitled (Perfectionist), 2002, a photograph by Sarah Hobbs.



Cary Leibowitz's "Sad Pie Graphs" and paintings with self-flagellating phrases, all 1990–91, are in a show about anxiety and obsession at the Chicago Cultural Center.