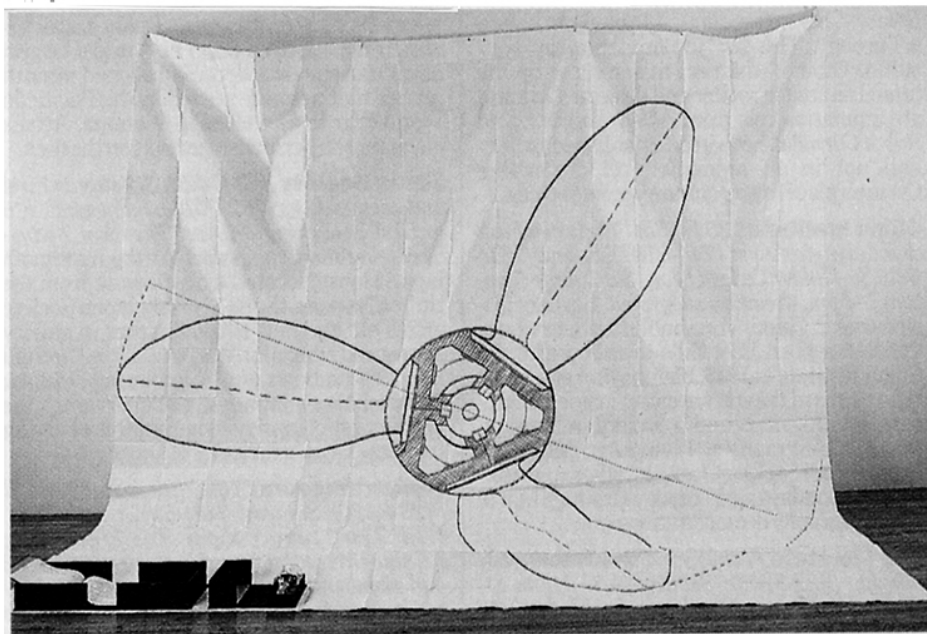


Time Out New York

February 28–March 6, 1996

Art



Paul Ramirez Jonas, *Remember the Maine*, 1995.

Paul Ramirez Jonas
Postmasters, through Mar 9
(see Soho).

Paul Ramirez Jonas is one of the few artists who attempts to deal with white male history on its own terms. The art world's overriding preoccupation with issues of gender and race has by and large ignored the continuing melodrama of the "great white," yet most history remains the purview of this creature and his technology.

Jonas displays a life-size, 15-foot drawing of the ship's propeller of the USS *Maine*, the sinking of which was the catalyst for the Spanish-American War of 1898. *Remember the Maine*—the piece's title—was also the battle cry of that conflict: William Randolph Hearst (a.k.a. Citizen Kane) used it to whip up the nation's jingoistic fever, reportedly boasting, "You provide the story, I'll pro-

vide the war." Like the Gulf War of five years ago, the *Maine* marked a watershed in the history of media manipulation. Jonas's reconstructive drawing unfolds from the wall as if to reopen the investigation into how and why the battleship sunk (no one really knows). Here, he renders the *Maine*'s second sinking—this time, by history.

Jonas also presents several bottles mounted on shelves, with tin whirligigs shaped as quaint motifs from 19th-century design (a log cabin, a shield) sealed inside. These signifiers are then sent spinning, science-fair style, by a light from outside the vacuum. More whirligigs repeat on the floor, this time spun by air escaping from attached balloons. Jonas's cleverness in materializing this metaphor of historical loss is, quite simply, breathtaking—pun very much intended.—*Robert Mahoney*