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## **Road Trip | British art invades gallery**

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Carl Fudge's paintings and prints from the last 11 years have been inspired by a range of sources, including contemporary Japanese animé. John Coplans, the founding editor of *Artforum* magazine and a longtime curator, created a photo series with mostly up-close images of his own body (but not his face) over 20 years as he aged.

Coplans died in 2000; Fudge lives on. Both were Brits who formed their careers in .

Both also have their work on display starting today in Carl Solway Gallery at 424 Findlay St. Fudge will be at today's opening reception from 5 to 8:30 p.m. The exhibit runs through Aug. 13. For more information, call (513) 621-0069 or visit [www.solwaygallery.com](http://www.solwaygallery.com).

— *Elizabeth Kramer, The Courier-Journal*

**reviews:** new york

## Carl Fudge

**Ronald Feldman Fine Arts**

It's always fun to jump into Carl Fudge's digital constructions and deconstructions and see how they demonstrate and intercept perception. It's also fascinating to discover his art-historical allusions, which allow him to keep the past and present in continuous play.

The two-tone, mostly black-and-white images in this show, "Dazzle," partook of modernist esthetics—of Constructivism, Cubism, vorticism, Futurism—while at the same time offering a kind of social realism, if not Socialist Realism. The total image and its components share the foreground, creating the big picture.

The show's central idea derives from "dazzle camouflage"—a pattern of chopped-up geometries designed to baffle the enemy during World War I. And Fudge shows how it works in his images, such as one of a docked steamship. The fractured depictions do indeed engage and impede perception.

Lucio Fontana used no-tech to cut into space and deconstruct emptiness; David Bomberg broke form down into geometric fragments analogous to typography; and Andy Warhol mastered the art of camouflage in flat, nondimensional-seeming space. Now Fudge has come up with his own style and vision, which reflect optimism, a sense of potential, and a fascination with the manufactured world of industry.

He evokes the fabric and wallpaper designs of the '50s, as well as Native American patterning, in works like *Plate Layers 2* (2010), while the narrative geometry in *Yaw* (2010), a stunning horizontal sequence of fractured geometric shapes, alludes to the British satirical romance *Flatland* (the title of another Fudge work).

What Fudge offers is a pixelated boogie-woogie, with social, political, esthetic, and art-historical underpinnings on the one hand, and a serious consider-

ation of the nature of modernity on the other. Where vorticism, Futurism, and Cubism tried to show motion and evolution, Fudge looks ahead to a new reality and indicates how much beauty can be found in the products of technological sophistication.

—**Barbara A. MacAdam**



Carl Fudge, *Plate Layers 2*, 2010,  
unique screenprint collage on mulberry paper, 58 1/4" x 59 1/2".  
Ronald Feldman Fine Arts.

## ARTFORUM

### Carl Fudge

RONALD FELDMAN FINE ARTS  
31 Mercer Street  
February 20–April 3

Carl Fudge's latest series of works takes as its touchstone the prints of Edward Wadsworth, a prominent member of the British Vorticists, who used the hard-edged geometries of machinery, technology, and war as inspiration for an aggressive, avant-garde style meant to catapult England into the twentieth century. Wadsworth's art incorporated docked steamships painted in what was termed dazzle camouflage—sharp, geometric contrasts meant to baffle enemy range finding during World War I.

Alternating between large-scale screenprint collages and smaller woodcuts, Fudge has stripped Wadsworth's prints to a more reductive palette (black paired with a single other color, often white) and schematized the original imagery using computers. A few works—such as *Aground*, 2010—remain quite faithful to their originals. Even as the print doubles and distends imagery from Wadsworth's *Liverpool Shipping*, 1918, it retains a recognizably representational scene, complete with stylized dockworkers. Other works, like the mesmerizing *Transom*, 2010, distill imagery to a tighter economy of abstracted shapes. Some of the least representational prints hew to an underlying grid in a partially ordered tessellation of shapes, while others betray a more chaotically fractured field of forms.



Carl Fudge, *Transom*, 2010, screenprint collage on mulberry paper, 42 1/2 x 30 1/4".

Unlike many of his peers (Vitaly Komar, for example, similarly represented by this gallery), Fudge appeals to the (ideologically suspect) art of a notable modernist not, it seems, to rework or ironize political resonances or the failed project of avant-garde utopias. Rather, these prints constitute a decidedly formal venture. The "dazzle" of Fudge's work blithely appears to sidestep the insidious origins of the term's original application in World War I. That possible ingenuousness aside, the crisp, formal sophistication of these prints and woodcuts mitigates the murkiness of their (art-)historical engagement. The delicate *kozo* and mulberry paper of the larger works offers a striking contrast to the rough-and-tumble imagery printed on them. Does that contrast rescue Fudge's conceit, lifting it above the historical fray to which it might otherwise be held accountable? The prints' formal sophistication raises such questions as much as it skirts them.

— Ara H. Merjian

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Carl Fudge: Dazzle at Ronald Feldman Gallery  
By David Brody

February 20-April 3, 2010  
31 Mercer Street, south of Grand Street, Soho  
New York City, 212-226-3232



Carl Fudge, *Yaw*, 2010. Unique screenprint collage on mulberry paper, 29-1/2 x 99-1/2 inches. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Gallery. cover, *APRIL* 2010: *Disruption*, 2009. Unique screenprint collage on kozo paper, 78 1/2 x 58 5/8 inches

Carl Fudge has always taken a printmaker's approach to painting, deploying silkscreen (usually on canvas) with such combinatory verve that the image sources – themselves generally prints of some kind – get shuffled into synthetic insectoid life forms and ornamental festoons, or pulverized into pixels through a liquid diamond lens. Though Fudge's superflat constructions implicate the digital, and though he does process his sources on the computer, the work remains handmade in its layerings (both digital and analog) with the door to improvisation left ajar.

But only slightly. Fudge's sources, recognizable chunks of which he is at pains to keep in the room, tend toward factory-slick conceptual vectors. Image grabs from old Manga porn – Japanese erotic prints that exemplify the double meaning of "graphic" – later led to a neutered, digital-age version – cutie-pie Anime girls and their robot cousins – as if Fudge wanted to challenge Takashi Murakami on his own turf. In his last show at Feldman, Fudge reckoned with Warholism directly (and the silkscreen monkey on his back) by taking aim at the late Rorschach and Camouflage paintings – paradoxically revealing works by Warhol that were closer to his liquid nitrogen heart than anything in his oeuvre since Elvis and flowers.

If Fudge's invocations of recombinative, product-oriented serialism could seem like posturings in the realm of the obvious, albeit often-enough sparkling ones, his new subject matter is refreshingly far off the radar – and closer to home. In Fudge's current show of unique silkscreen collages on paper grids, this native Londoner (living in New York) sets his sights on a species of naval camouflage known as "Dazzle Painting," which amounts to a neglected episode of British Modernism writ very, very large.

During World War One, jaggy, high-contrast shapes were found to frustrate the split-lens focus devices of enemy periscopes, by which range was calculated. This side effect of avant-garde stylistics worked as *reverse* camouflage, as first the British, then other world navies slathered their ships with gargantuan black and white abstractions that couldn't be easily parsed. It is worth remembering that utility was part of abstraction's birthright in the revolutionary alignments that then



prevailed; the exuberance of the designs merits an account of the influence, or not, of national schools of abstraction on naval ministries.

Be that as it may, Dazzle is most associated with the whirling sawblade planes of Vorticism, perhaps Britain's last avant-garde art movement until Pop. (A brief cul-de-sac, Vorticism was decimated by the Great War that launched the ships.) Edward Wadsworth, a full-fledged associate of Wyndham Lewis and the BLAST crowd, is often falsely credited as Dazzle's inventor, and it is primarily a single black and white woodcut of his that Fudge samples, dissects, and disrupts. This 1918 print known as *Liverpool Shipping* happens to be a Vorticist afterimage, since by then Wadsworth had returned to a patriotic realism analogous to the work of Louis Lozowick or Charles Sheeler – but with a Stuart Davis twist, consisting in choice of subject: Dazzle-painted ships in drydock looming over crews of artist-workers with broom-sized brushes. By subsuming the high-contrast disorientations of gigantic Dazzle hulls within his own chopping graphic rhythms, Wadsworth took a workmanlike, rear-guard position on Modernism that a contemporary British artist might well regard with a mixture of proprietary nostalgia and fond contempt.



Carl Fudge, *Plate Layers 1*, 2010. Unique screenprint collage on mulberry paper, 58-1/4 x 59 inches. Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Gallery

This, at any rate, is one way to read Fudge's Frankenstein reconstruction of Wadsworth's already tricky textures. In grids of screen-printed Japanese paper, he plays with the scalpel edges between sheets, especially in two red versus black arrays called *Plate Layers 1* and *Plate Layers 2*. The process is hard to decipher: Were the sheets printed separately, then configured after the fact? Or were the hard cuts and slices that happen to land exactly on seams pre-loaded into the tiled master plan, itself a vivisectioning grid? We see bits of mirror image and rotated pattern being passed between the pair of works, as if the same alphabet of silkscreens might have been used exactly twice, but the dense, single layer of complications flattens into a recognition test we cannot pass.

From work to work, Fudge zooms in and out on Wadsworth – and thus Modernism, war, and misdirection. Sometimes Fudge seems to be searching for hidden sweet spots in the harmonics of recognition. At others, he is like a U-boat gunner getting a fix on his quarry: *Transition* is structured literally as a target. Works like the *Plate Layers*, *Aground*, *Jerseymore* and *Disruption*, on the other hand, connect Fudge to a contemporary investigation of printmaking as integral to a deep, complex,

handmade serialism, as in superb current shows by James Siena and Thomas Nozkowski (at Pace Prints and Senior and Shopmaker, respectively). In any case, one hopes that Fudge is not through with Wadsworth and Dazzle. Fudge has found himself a house of mirrors subject worthy of his impressive, transgenic talent.



## REVIEWS



*Homecoming* installation image at Johnson County Community College Gallery of Art: (on left) Carl Fudge, *Revolver*, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 48"x 40", (on right) Carl Fudge, *Orange Overflow*, 2004, Acrylic on canvas, 82 x 72", courtesy of Ronald Feldman Gallery, New York, NY



*Homecoming* installation image at Johnson County Community College Gallery of Art: Eric Sall, *Border Patrol*, 2006, oil on canvas, 66" x 80", courtesy of the artist and ATM Gallery, New York, NY

## Homecoming

Alex Schubert

### Homecoming

Johnson County Community College Gallery of Art and the Epsten Gallery at Village Shalom  
Overland Park, Kansas  
November 5, 2006 – January 28, 2007

*Homecoming*, has two points to make: one is that artists from the Kansas City area, who have left town for New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Richmond or Rome have had success abroad; the other, and this is more of an undercurrent, is that the Nerman Museum is coming.

For those of you who don't know — and it seems like everyone does — Johnson County Community College's Gallery of Art, a paltry 3,000-square-foot room, will soon become the Nerman Museum, a 38,000-square-foot building with a permanent collection we have been hearing about for years. It is a big deal, and according to everyone, it is going to get a lot of attention for the local art scene in 2007. Before this happens, the JCCC Gallery of Art is taking its last stand; *Homecoming* is an ambitious final show, a joint venture between JCCC and the nearby Epsten Gallery at Village Shalom, and a showcase of the artists and works in the Nerman's collection.

The JCCC half of the show has work from Brain Fahlstrom, Carl Fudge, Rashawn Griffin, Amy Myers, Eric Sall and Andrzej Zielinski. Zielinski, who went to school at JCCC in 1999 before getting his BFA at the Art Institute of Chicago and his MFA from Yale, gets the front spot this time, with two small pieces that hang just beside the doorway, under the show's vinyl lettering. *Laptop with Shadow* (2006), an oil painting on wood panel, finds Zielinski combining a folk art aesthetic with modern imagery. Though the paint handling and bizarre shapes suggest outsider art, careful details — a USB port, for example — reveal the artist's familiarity with his subject and reinforce this knowing commentary. *Laptop with Carrying Hole* (2006), the other small piece, is also on a wooden panel, but this time it is more heavily worked; a deep cut through the center of the painting represents the titular "Carrying Hole." Both works are well handled, with bright, commercial color schemes and an irrepressible brushstroke.

Just across the room, on a movable wall and beside the front desk, are two larger pieces by Zielinski. *Orange ATM* (2005) shows a melting automated teller machine, so far gone that it is hard to recognize as anything but pure abstraction. The neighboring *Green ATM* (2005) has the most convincing special effect of Zielinski's oeuvre: a deep pink rectangle recedes in one-point perspective, setting off the thickly impasto-ed keyboard beside it. *Green ATM* is one of the best works in the show and, not surprisingly, comes straight from the Nerman Museum's collection.

Around the corner, another artist collected by the Nerman Museum, Carl Fudge, is showing recent work. Fudge, who went to the Kansas City Art Institute for a year in 1987 and now teaches at Columbia University in New York, was included in local gallerist Jan Wiener's recent *Pace Prints*, NYC show. He has more prints on





Benjamin Butler, *Fifty Five Trees at Sunset*, 2006, oil on canvas, 72 x 120", collection Johnson County Community College/Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art



Andrzej Zieliński, *Green ATM*, 2005, oil on canvas, 68 x 60", collection Johnson County Community College/Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art, gift of Morti and Tony Oppenheimer and the Oppenheimer Brothers Foundation

display in the *Homecoming* show: three serigraphs that trade color schemes, alternating metallic green, pink, orange, and fuchsia. The prints, called *Composition X*, *Composition Y* and *Composition Z* (all from 2005), use Fudge's signature mode of computer-aided abstraction, camouflaging Japanese source material and coming up with three nice-looking pictures.

Fudge's *Revolver* (2006) features an image that has been completely ripped apart in Adobe Illustrator, transformed into floating islands and awkward forms and reassembled in masked and roller-ed acrylic paint. This may or may not be based on the Beatles album cover, but there are three profiles in it, and one of them looks suspiciously like Ringo's.

Surely one of the biggest draws to this show are new works by Eric Sall, the Kansas City Art Institute alumni and wunderkind who was awarded the Charlotte Street grant two years after he received his BFA degree, and he later received the Joan Mitchell Foundation grant

while still getting his master's in Richmond, Virginia, where he currently lives. Sall's three canvases bubble with an encyclopedic knowledge of paint; techniques are jumbled on top of one another, as wet-on-wet meets dry brushing and all manner of other painterly applications. His very compelling and effective gimmick is that he places these abstractions in an illusionistic space: a pile of brightly colored paint is always tempered by a horizon or a shadow. *Border Patrol* (2006), for example, places a tangled mass of awnings and splashes into a windowpane, overlooking what looks like a cityscape of brushed out purples and twinkling yellows.

The Epsten Gallery, a more intimate space than JCCC, might have gotten the short end of the stick. The largest work in the exhibition, Benjamin Butler's *Fiftyfive Trees at Sunset* (2006), is on loan from the Nerman Museum. Epsten Gallery did get a few nice pieces, however, including all of Christopher Lucas' work and, in particular, Scott Anderson's *Bapto* (2005).

A small-ish oil painting that you only notice on your way out the door, *Bapto* is amazing. Anderson, who received his BFA at Kansas State, Mahattan, Kansas, and now lives in Chicago, overwhelms the competition with a snapshot of what might be a secret underground headquarters or the ultimate game room. Using delicately rendered, disparate images and confusing shifts in scale, Anderson keeps you guessing: Is that an air hockey table or an ice rink? I thought that was a rubber snake, but it's bleeding ...

In July, 2005, the Gallery of Art's New View unveiled the work-in-progress Oppenheimer Collection for the Nerman Museum in a beautiful exhibition with works from major painters like Dana Schultz, Jules de Balincourt and Kehinde Wiley alongside Kansas City artists James Brinsfield, Eric Sall and Warren Rosser. Though *Homecoming* might be considered a *New View* sequel, it is just as exciting and, even more than its predecessor, seems to hint at the potential the Nerman Museum will have for invigorating local artists. •



## Carl Fudge at Ronald Feldman

Kaleidoscopic complexity has for many years characterized the work of London-born, Brooklyn-based Carl Fudge, so that his new, dramatically simpler canvases require some adjustment on the viewer's part. Obfuscating but not completely disguising his source material—often images from Japanese prints and modern anime—through the slice and splice of digital manipulation, Fudge's formerly brittle, faceted fields of reticulate outline and flat, local color celebrated entropy, dissolution and the fragmentation of the image. The process yielded something grand, if seemingly fleeting, a snapshot of a metastasizing visual culture: frenzied, proliferating.

So it is a reasonable and interesting next step for him to pick up on the camouflage and faux-Rorschach motifs of Warhol's most abstract work, as he does in this exhibition, titled "Camouflaged." Black silkscreened silhouettes on white or vibrant red-orange grounds make up the "Camouflage" series. Each work is acrylic on canvas, around 4 feet tall and titled *Projective*. The series also recalls, in its apparent proliferation, its machine-made quality and bilateral symmetry, the late-1980s heraldic "Drawings" of Allan McCollum. Excepting the squawking ducklings that emerge from *Projective* 122, these paintings only suggest the presence of hidden imagery; they are static, more shout than shimmer. Hung among them was *Level 4* (6 feet square, 2005), in bald black and white but recalling the graphical complexity and sense of flux of the artist's earlier work.

Also on view were seven 82-by-72-inch canvases from the "Overflow" series, which is based on an image from *shunga*, the erotic subgenre of ukiyo-e, distorted beyond recognition. The same black-on-white scaffolding appears in each: a rippling, vaguely waterfall-like schema of lines ranging from thick and blunt to thin and brittle. A single-color river descends through the center of the design and pools at the lower right. Repeating the same structure with different colors is a familiar method

for Fudge, as it was for Warhol. In these brawny, comparatively blunt canvases, the linear structure and especially the colors are radically simplified; in *Overflow Yellow* (2004), for example, the industrial color and stouter lines of the central, dominant section thrust the passage into the foreground, suggesting an entirely different conception of pictorial space than the earlier works. However, the impact of these canvases is lessened considerably by the visual tedium of their fundamental similarity, like items in a showroom.

Early in his career, Fudge hit on a good idea and ran with it, fashioning a distinctive, focused body of work straddling not only digital and comics-derived art and, of course, Pop, but also seriality and Pattern and Decoration. It is too soon to tell how his new direction will build upon this early success. But if he shakes off the assembly-line conceit that casts a chill over these new works, he will remain worth watching.

—Stephen Maine



Carl Fudge: *Overflow Yellow*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 82 by 72 inches; at Ronald Feldman.



# How Far Can You Go?

With male nudes in full display, pornography a common source material, and explicit imagery the norm in galleries and museums, sex in art has become fun, disturbing, raunchy—even cerebral

BY LINDA YABLONSKY

RIGHT: In Carroll Dunham's *Untitled*, 2003, the phallus plays its usual prominent role.



Jean-François Moriceau and Petra Mrzyk's flirtatious drawing *Untitled*, 2002-3, will be in "Erotic Drawing," at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum in May.

COURTESY THE ARTISTS AND MARCUS RITTER, NEW YORK

WHICH ARE SEXIER—IMAGES OR IDEAS? That question is central to *Art—A Sex Book* (Thames & Hudson), a recently published compendium of provocative images put together by filmmaker and artist John Waters in collaboration with Bruce Hainley, a writer and independent curator (see Books, page 102). "Contemporary art is sex," Waters says at the outset. "Making art is a sexy occupation," Hainley agrees, though the

authors let ideas dominate their conversation. If some of their illustrations border on the pornographic, Waters and Hainley make it plain that they consider eroticism to be subject matter in recent art and not necessarily its content.

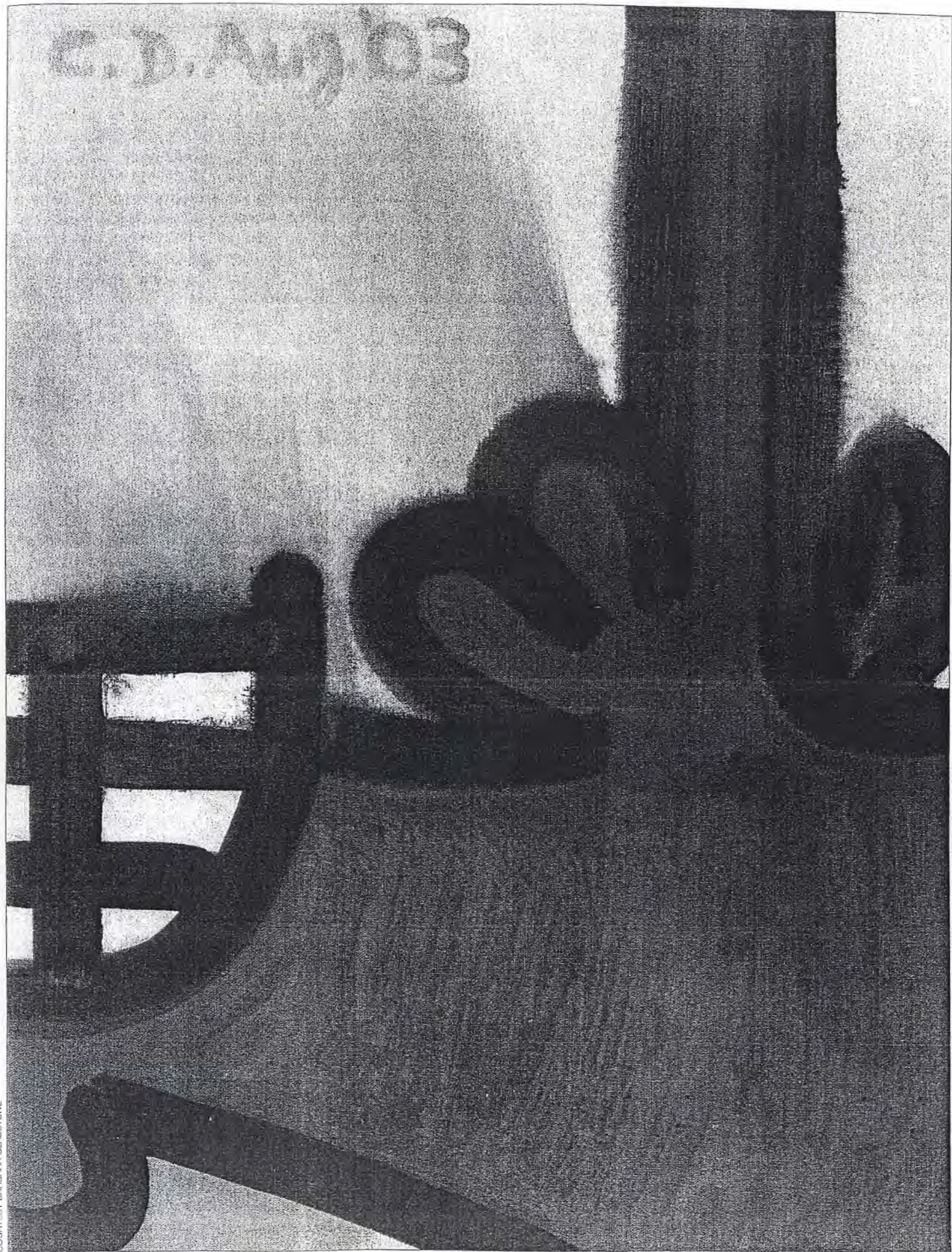
With the Internet and cable TV making pornography widely available on an anytime-of-day basis, it was probably inevitable that artists would find their own ways to channel it into their work and that galleries would show the results. Consider the New York exhibition season just past, most notable not for nudity, which now sells tickets only on Broadway, but for the number of phalluses in plain view.

At Lehmann Maupin, for example, German fashion photographer Juergen Teller showed a number of large-format

family pictures in which he appeared completely and unattractively starkers. Giving an appreciative nod to Surrealist sex games, independent curator Bob Nickas designed a ribald group exhibition for Team Gallery as a "frisky" riposte to the politics of George W. Bush. (It included, along with romantic images by such transgressive heroes as Jack Smith and Larry Clark, Michael Meads's photographic triptych of a man taking his pleasure with a pumpkin.) And the most commanding image in Adam Fuss's show at Cheim & Read was his photograph of a full-length male nude, seen in profile, with his manhood in full salute.

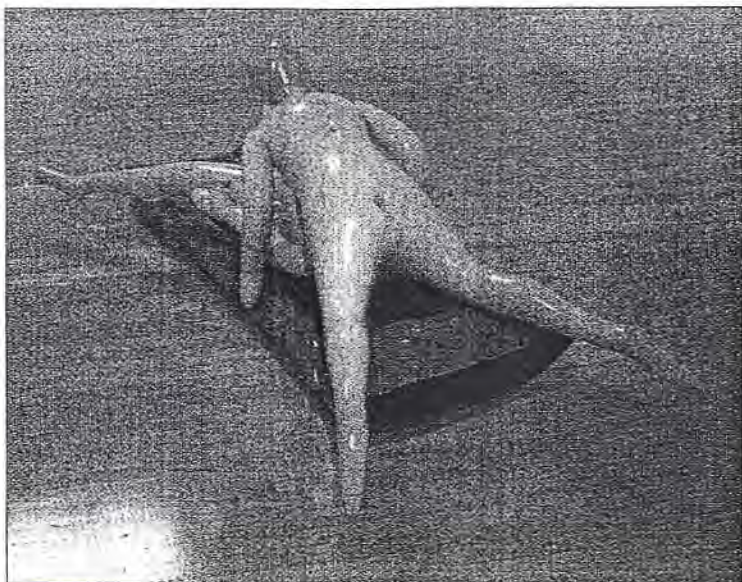
Linda Yablonsky is the author of the novel *The Story of Junk* and a contributing editor of ARTnews.





COURTESY BARBARA GLADSTONE





**Jake and Dinos**  
Chapman's *Death*,  
2003, a bronze  
cast of inflatable  
sex dolls in action,  
stole headlines.

At Artemis•Greenberg Van Doren, photographer Katy Grannan included two male nudes in her recent group of color portraits, one featuring a very prominent erection, while the other implied an invitation to excite one. In one of Eric Fischl's staged photographs at Mary Boone, an oblique narrative of a middle-aged couple at home, alone, the woman stays under wraps; the man lets it all hang out. And this month, in "From Sweet to Steamy: The Erotic Art of Joe Brainard," the Tibor de Nagy Gallery pointedly gets down to cases as well. But the female nude ruled the roost.

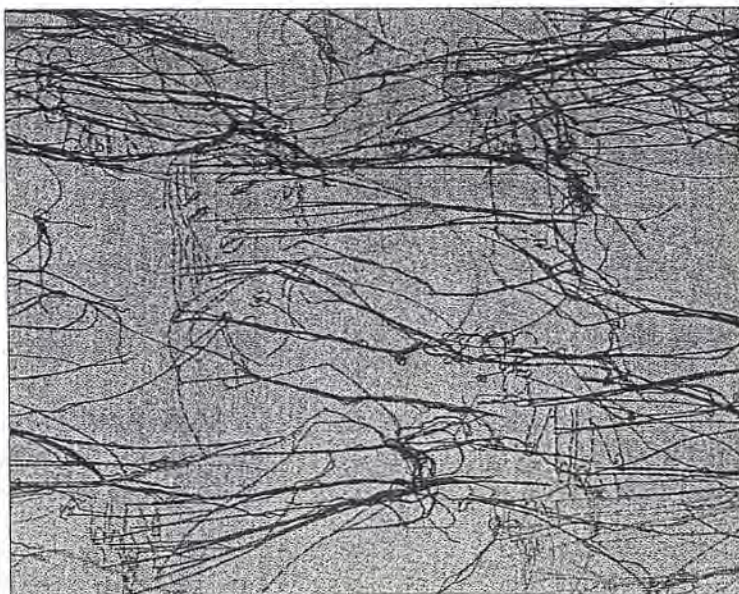
It's not that we haven't seen kinky images in contemporary art before. We have, and plenty of them, from those of Robert Mapplethorpe clowning with a bullwhip in his anus to John O'Reilly's sex-with-Jesus photocollages to Sally Mann's sensual portraits of her children, Amy Adler's nothing-to-hide "centerfold" self-portraits, and Kara Walker's sexually driven master-slave silhouettes. But there does seem to have been a shift in emphasis in recent years, particularly in regard to hard-core male sexuality.

Was not *My Lonesome Cowboy* (1998), a monumental, sperm-tossing, fiberglass sculpture by Takashi Murakami, a rejoinder to Paul McCarthy's *Spaghetti Man* (1995), with its long, fleshy garden hose of a penis? Donald Moffett's classically, almost clinically, detailed drawings of male genitals might once have been filed

under "homoerotica."

But that was before. Today Moffett's drawings appear at New York's Marianne Boesky Gallery; Cologne's Jablonka Galerie has Andy Warhol's "Sex Parts and Torso" on view (through the 31st of this month); and the French postcardlike pictures that newcomer Ion Birch supplied for "The Young Penis," his show at Brooklyn's Bellwether Gallery last year, read merely as diaristic, front-of-the-house amusement.

Until recently, says Carroll Dunham, in whose paintings the penis has been a recurring motif for years, "male sexuality has been one of the least represented things in our culture—except in pornography. Historically, painters were men getting women to take off their clothes to paint them. But I see a phallus as part of who I am, and I have a right to make it



**Johanna's Grid**  
(detail), 1999, by  
Egyptian artist  
Ghada Amer,  
mixes sexuality  
with spirituality.

as an image. Why weren't they interested in their own bodies?"

He is clearly not the only one asking. A year ago, Vince Aletti, the *Village Voice* art editor who is also a photography collector, curator, and critic, organized a show of nudes, male and female, for Robert Mann Gallery. "I was determined to deal with total nudity," Aletti says, "and I remember a number of men being put off by it." On the other hand, he recalled, so many women told him how glad they were to see penises on the wall that he is considering a "penis show" now.

"Male nudity upsets people," says Harry Philbrick, director of the Aldrich



**In Eric Fischl's**  
*Krefeld Project*,  
*Living Room*,  
*Scene #1*, 2003,  
it's the man who is  
emotionally bare.

Contemporary Art Museum, in Ridgefield, Connecticut, who selected the Birch pieces for "Erotic Drawing," the exhibition reopening the Aldrich in May. "This show will directly address that issue," he says. It will also travel to DiverseWorks in Houston and will give equal time to both sexes.

In his classic 1983 study, *The Sexuality of Christ in Renaissance Art and in Modern Oblivion*, art historian Leo Steinberg demonstrated that from the 13th to the 16th century, the genitals of the newly humanized Christ figure were fair game for Western artists who were as devoted to realism as to their faith. As Klaus Kertess, adjunct curator of contemporary art at Omaha's Joslyn Art Museum, explains, "Except for Michelangelo's *David*, or art in India or Pompeii, if you saw a penis, it was almost always of a dead warrior. It was not erect. In the Renaissance, you had little Christ children with hard-ons, but you almost never saw a male nude after that."

Not until now. Some believe feminism did the trick. "I think women really took back the night in their freedom to use



# 'I see a phallus as part of who I am,' says painter Carroll Dunham, 'and I have a right to make it as an image'

their own bodies," says Richard Flood, director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis. "Sarah Lucas is doing truly confrontational stuff," he says, "and I'm thrilled that a woman is turning it back against the male viewer. When she really hits it, it's epic."

But pitfalls remain for women who take on sexually charged material. "One of the most annoying reviews I ever had was from a woman who accused me of pandering to the male viewer," says Cecily Brown, who moved to New York from London in 1994 and has consistently elicited images of sexually omnivorous figures, male and female, from expressionist storms of paint. "Depicting sex is a chance to depict something everyday and something extraordinary at the same time," she says. "It has to do with the question of how you paint flesh and get figures to move across a canvas, but I am also interested in how far you can go without it becoming porn."

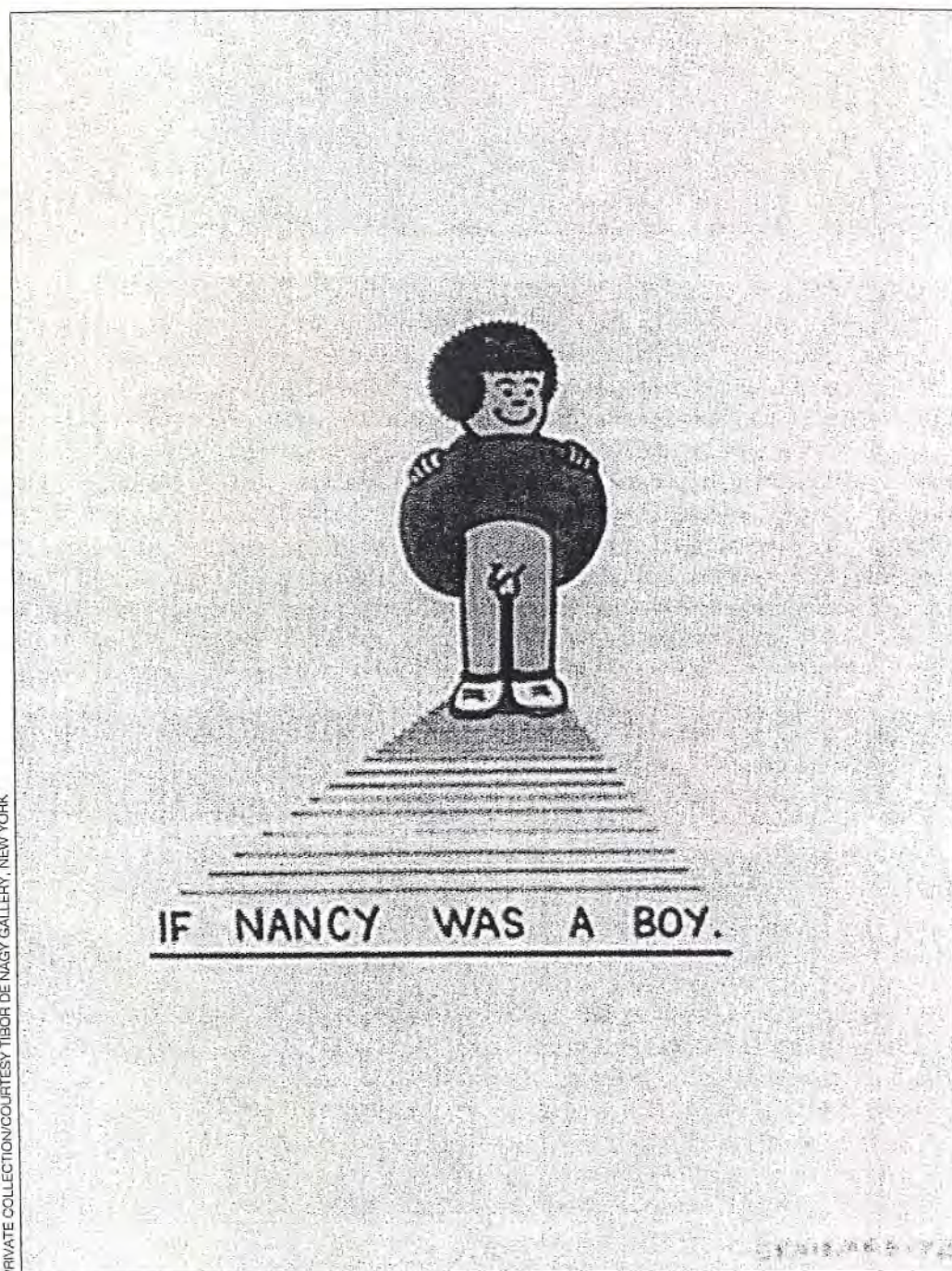
Marilyn Minter knows only too well how explicit imagery can overwhelm a work of art. In 1989 she exhibited suggestive paintings of vegetables as "Food Porn," and it led her into more hard-core imagery. "I was so naïve," she says. "I wanted to use images from porn magazines that were compelling, but I went too far. I thought of myself as capturing these images from a degraded past, making them mine. But my friends would come and berate me. I had anonymous phone calls and threatening letters. 'Nobody has politically correct fantasies,' I said. But after that, I lost my confidence. And I didn't make anything interesting for a long while."

Ealan Wingate, director of the Gagosian Gallery in Chelsea, points out, "When an artist turns to printed imagery from pornographic sources, you have to look not at the sources but at the art that is created. The sources are just part of the palette. They are not the entire subject."

Artists have covered a lot of ground since Vito Acconci videotaped the monologue he performed in a New York gallery while masturbating under a gangplank (*Seedbed*, 1972), Carolee Schneemann read from a folded paper she drew from her vagina (*Interior Scroll*, 1975), and Lynda Benglis caused a rancorous split among the editors of *Artforum*, in

1974, by publishing an ad in which she appeared nude and gripping a comically large dildo.

Aletti offers another perspective. "There isn't enough real raunchiness in art," he says. He speaks with enthusiasm about the



A new generation will be able to see the Benglis ad this spring, when Robin Kahn's group exhibition "Get Off: The Art of Stimulation" introduces the work of about a dozen contemporary artists, including Tom Otterness, Jane Dickson, and Karim Rashid, to New York's Museum of Sex and brings along Kirby Gookin's archive of historical ephemera. "The thing about sex is that it's not all naughty and dark," says Kahn. "You can do a show about intimacy, and it can also be uplifting."

**Joe Brainard's hilarious gouache *If Nancy Was a Boy*, 1972, is on view at Tibor de Nagy Gallery.**

computer-manipulated images that German artist Thomas Ruff downloaded from pornographic Web sites and exhibited in 2000 as *Nudes*. "I like that it's real and that Ruff hasn't entirely masked his sources," Aletti explains. "He went for the

PRIVATE COLLECTION/COURTESY TIBOR DE NAGY GALLERY, NEW YORK



# Unlike even the most disturbing art, pornography characteristically lacks emotional content and succeeds by promoting only one idea

nastiness, but I think he is trying to explore something that's out there and find a way to bring it back to us."

Jake and Dinos Chapman are no slouches when it comes to nasty. The brothers made headlines last October, when the Tate Britain opened its 2003 Turner Prize exhibition. It included the Chapmans' *Death*, a bronze cast of two inflatable sex dolls caught in the act of fellatio. According to the *Guardian*, many first-day visitors ignored it, though one elderly woman was heard to exclaim, "Oh, dear!"

Some works of art, like Titian's *Venus of Urbino* and Courbet's *Origin of the World*, never lose their ability to arouse, repel, or provoke debate. Cindy Sherman's "Sex Pictures" of degraded mannequins from 1992 and Lisa Yuskavage's paintings of masturbating Kewpies from 1995 rank high among contemporary works that still rattle, and Jeff Koons sparked lasting controversy with his 1991 exhibition "Made in Heaven," a group of

violent video installations with equal measures of self-loathing and satire, as in *Bossy Burger* (1991), in which the artist is a chef in an Alfred E. Neuman mask who goes berserk on the set of a TV cooking show. In *The Garden* (1992), his animatronic, father-and-son puppets have unceasing sex with objects in nature.

"New art is always shocking," says Lisa Phillips, director of the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York and cocurator of a McCarthy retrospective in 2000, "because you don't know what you're looking at. And that is the case with Paul McCarthy. If you had to say something was shocking about his work, it would not be the sex or the violence. It would be the threshold between sanity and insanity. It's about boundaries being permeated and transgressed. It makes people nervous when there aren't any boundaries."

The previously unpublished photographs that Jeff Burton contributed to the Waters and Hainley book are a case

about sexy because thinking is sexy."

Waters concurs. "The fact that Richard Prince and Jeff Burton have used porn elements to make you look at porn in a different way makes the works art to me. There is never any irony in porn. People don't want it. Even artists don't want it."

But for portrait photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, who shows with Mary Boone, the sex industry is a whole new frontier. "I was looking for a group that would be interesting to shoot nude," says Greenfield-Sanders of the work he is currently completing for an exhibition and book. He decided on porn stars. Following the example of Goya's naked and clothed Majas, the photographer's 30 subjects, men and women of different generations, posed both in their street clothes and nude, in the same position for each. "It's complicated," he admits. "There are only a finite number of positions that a body can assume. I asked one porn star what her best angle was and she said, 'With my ankles over my head.'"



**Carl Fudge**  
transforms an  
1814 erotic print by  
Hokusai (above  
left) in *Cliff*, 2003  
(above right).

kitschy silk-screen-on-canvas photographs and related objects that lifted the veil on his sex life with his then-wife, the Italian porn star who goes by the name La Ciccolina. But perhaps no work by a contemporary artist has retained the startling power of Mapplethorpe's "X Portfolio," published in 1978. Though treated with the artist's signature classicism, its compositions depict men in leather and chains acting out sexual activities that were then more familiar to the backrooms of after-hours bars than in the provinces of art.

McCarthy underscores his visceral and



in point. Like the casually allusive pictures in his 2001 book, *Dreamland*, Burton shot these, from his knees, on porno-movie sets in Hollywood and gave the compositions the detail of a classic *nature morte*. "One of the jobs of an artist is to be careful where to draw lines," Burton says. "Boundaries are made for the artist to test."

Kiki Seror, a New York artist who was featured in both SITE Santa Fe and the International Center of Photography Triennial last year, has produced a series of lightbox images and digital animations that transform typewritten conversations and photographs from Internet sex rooms into work resembling a lipstick-pink cross between a negligee, a tattoo, and human goo. Says Hainley, "I don't believe there is an easy distinction between art and porn in all cases. But," he adds, "I find everything I think

Unlike even the most disturbing art, pornography characteristically lacks emotional content and succeeds by promoting only one idea. Still, the distinction may best be left in the eye of the beholder. As Philbrick says, "You know it when you see it."

Take the untitled 1964 work by Richard Artschwager that appears in *Art—A Sex Book*. Painted on the bristly Celotex that is his signature material, it shows the back of a scantily clad woman who is seated on a man's lap and looking over her shoulder at the viewer. The only part of the man that is visible is the part that is penetrating the woman.

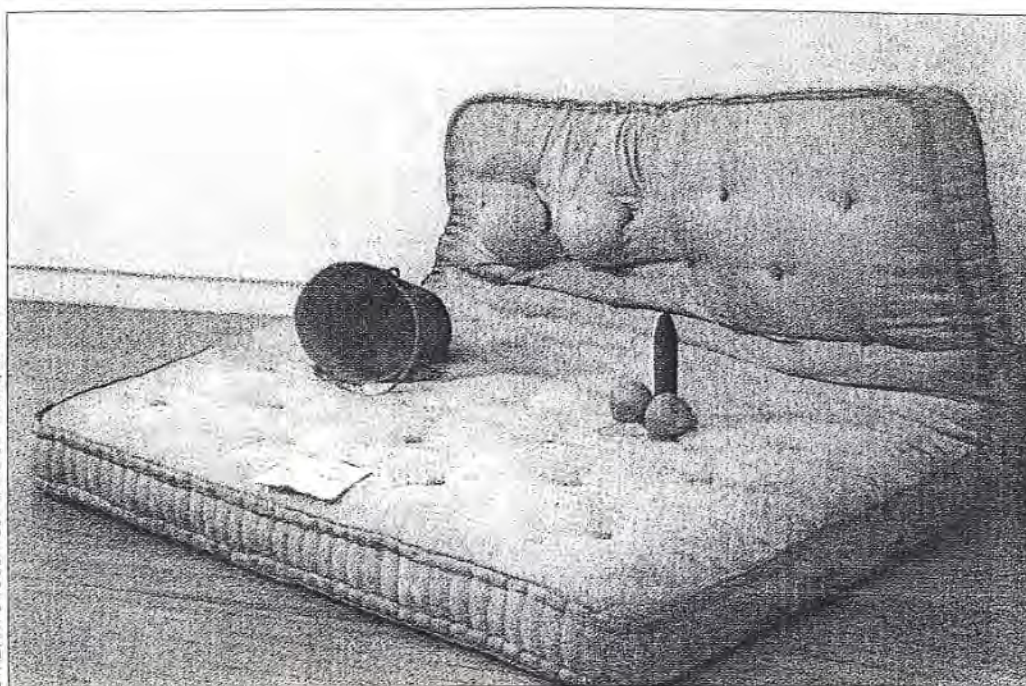
"I wanted to do an explicit painting as if it were a portrait," says the 80-year-old Artschwager, and stay "two steps ahead of the sheriff." At the time, he says, "I was trying to make the painting as formal as possible, forgetting that it was



porn and painting it as if it weren't. But I did it to contribute something that wasn't there before, either in sexy pictures or portrait painting. Originality is at a premium, so what is there left to do?" Artschwager concludes.

"I feel that we have a situation now where people are free to express themselves any way they want, without it being shocking or revolutionary," says New York art dealer Jeffrey Deitch, who has sponsored a number of provocative exhibitions, such as that of Russian performance artist Oleg Kulik, who lived in a cage at Deitch Projects, naked, for three weeks, in 1997, as a savage, barking dog. "It's not that I look for transgressive work," Deitch insists. "What I look for is the expansion of the definition of what art is and what art can be. Sometimes it involves sexual imagery."

Ghada Amer, an Egyptian painter whom Deitch represents, embroiders stretched canvases and large linen boxes with images of sexually active women. "In 1988," she says, "I saw a magazine for veiled women and how to make your own clothes, and that is when I started to use sewing as my medium. I was doing women at work, and at home, but I was



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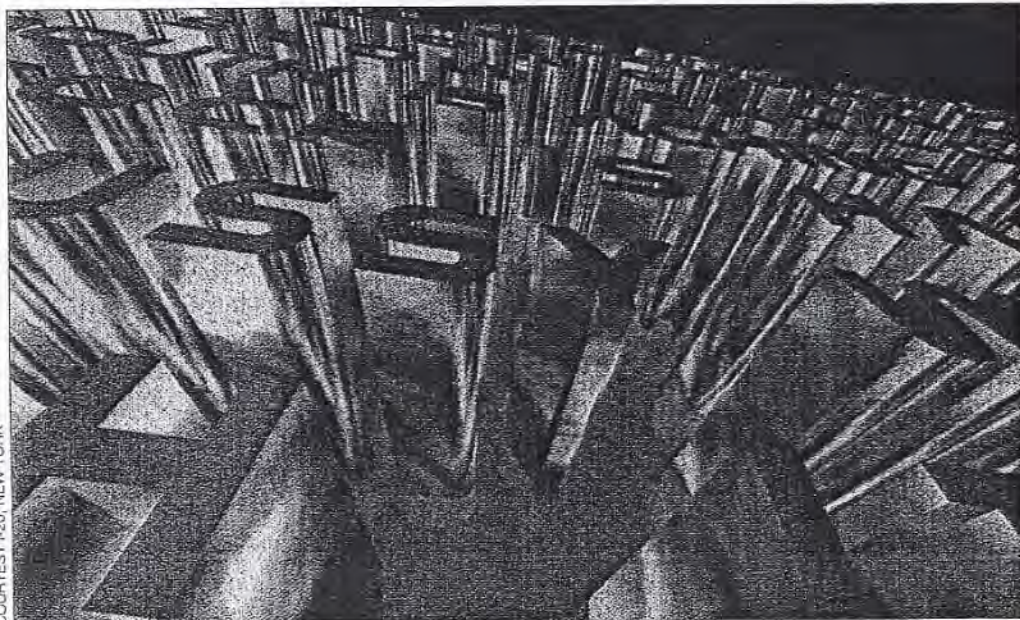
sewn onto canvas and pale linen cubes. "It's a book of poetry that is also a medical text," she says. "It teaches you how to get pleasure. It says that to be a better Muslim, you need to be a better human being, and to do that, you need to be a better sexual being. Because I come from a repressive culture, its mix of sexuality with spirituality is extremely self-healing." While Amer is hardly alone in

**Sarah Lucas keeps wit in her provocative works, as in *Au Naturel*, 1994.**

displayed as art," he says, "and I try to play with that—keep the sexual imagery hidden in plain sight. There's a sense of mischief involved with doing something private in public."

Something of the same impulse prompted Reagan Louie to photograph prostitutes at work in China, Japan, Thailand, Southeast Asia, and Korea and to collect them in a book, *Orientalia: Sex in Asia*; until last month, many of the photographs were on exhibit at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where controversy among, first, the staff and then, the public, generated enough remarks, some inflammatory, to fill at least four comment books. For photography curator Sandra Phillips, such debate goes with the territory. "We've had Nan Goldin," she says. "We've got Diane Arbus now. And we have an 1870 photo from China by William Saunders in the permanent collection, an image of an unbound foot that quite frankly is the most obscene picture we have on view."

Louie chose the Asian sex industry for his subject because, he says, "it was more visual and theatrical than everyday life. But," he adds, "the job of the artist is to look at everything. We can't turn away. To me, that may be the most important function of the artist—to discover, to make life more complicated, to describe the living, breathing specificity of human life. Where else in the culture can one do that?"



COURTESY I-20, NEW YORK

**Kiki Seror's digital animation-with-sound DVD *Fly-By Mission 2000: Invisible Invaders*, 2000.**

bored with this. I wanted an image that would be totally surprising with the medium, so I used pornography."

She is referring to an eleventh-century erotic text called *The Encyclopedia of Pleasure*, passages from which she has

turning to pornography for source material, she may be the first to suggest that the bodies pictured in porn magazines have become the artist's life models of today. "The images are totally unrealistic," Amer says. "But so erotic."

Carl Fudge also relies on historical material—erotic Japanese prints of the 17th and 18th centuries—but he so completely transforms them into densely patterned, abstract paintings that his sources are undetectable. "The pornography I use was originally kept private rather than





*Robert Kushner: Eskimo Chador, 1974, acrylic on cut fabric, 74 by 129 inches. Works this spread in "NYPD" at Shoshana Wayne Gallery, Santa Monica.*

*Robert Zakanitch: Cotton Seed, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 84 by 98 inches.*





## REPORT FROM SANTA MONICA II

### Tracking Patterns

*A recent septet of Pattern and Decoration exhibitions at Bergamot Station prompts a reconsideration of that once burgeoning but lately little discussed movement.*

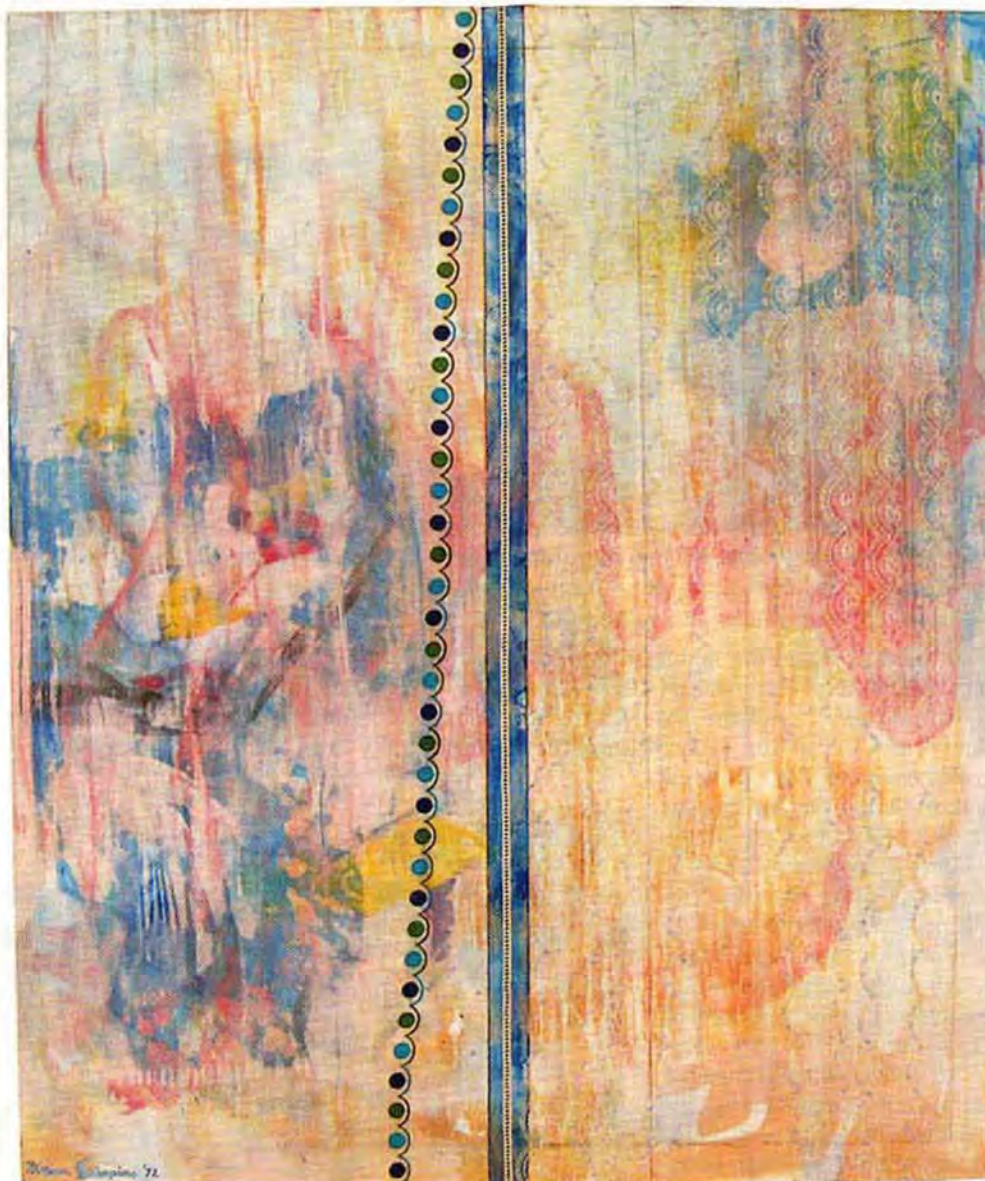
BY CHRISTOPHER MILES

The 1970s trend toward incorporating pattern, decorative motifs and the often undervalued materials they inhabit—lace, fabric, wallpaper, carpet, etc.—into the production and discourse of art involved a tangle of interests and influences. In part a response to the cool reductivism of Minimalism, the lingering of formalist purism, the dry severity of much conceptualism, and the dominance of masculine and Eurocentric tendencies in art, the trend offered a viable approach for artists with feminist and multiethnic concerns. It also appealed to artists who wanted to toy with the boundaries of high and low without depending on the already standardized media-based modes of Pop, to engage in semiotic play and cultural critique while enjoying the more sensual aspects of art or to reinvent formalism along more personal, idiosyncratic lines.

In California, a movement was pioneered by artists like Miriam Schapiro, who became interested in forms and practices commonly identified as feminine or “women’s work” while teaching at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) beginning in the late ’60s. Along with artists Sherry Brody, Karen LeCoq, Mira Schor, Faith Wilding and Nancy Youdelman, Schapiro began experimenting with pattern, decoration, and crafts-based materials and processes during her involvement with the feminist art programs at Fresno State College and CalArts in Valencia and with the Womanhouse project in Los Angeles.

At the turn of the ’70s, UCSD served as the meeting ground for visiting instructor Amy Goldin and then-students Kim MacConnel and Robert Kushner. Goldin was an eccentric formalist critic whose fondness for materials as diverse as Matisse paintings and Caucasian rugs informed writings that figured in the emerging pluralist/multiculturalist climate (while also echoing Clive Bell’s enthusiasm for compositions found in a variety of cultures). She inspired MacConnel and Kushner to embark on studio practices that embraced ornament, fashion, fabric and interior décor.

In mid-’70s New York, where interest in the decorative was inspired in part by the abundance of fabrics and notions found in downtown commercial and ethnic neighborhoods, often abandoned in the lofts being claimed by artists, and where incorporating the ornamental constituted a truly provocative stance, these impulses jelled into the Pattern and Decoration movement (P&D) following a series of informal meetings and panels whose participants included Goldin, Kushner, Schapiro, critic Peter Frank and artists Martin Bressler, Rosalind Hodgkin, Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, Tony Robbin, Mario Yrisarry and Robert Zakanitch.



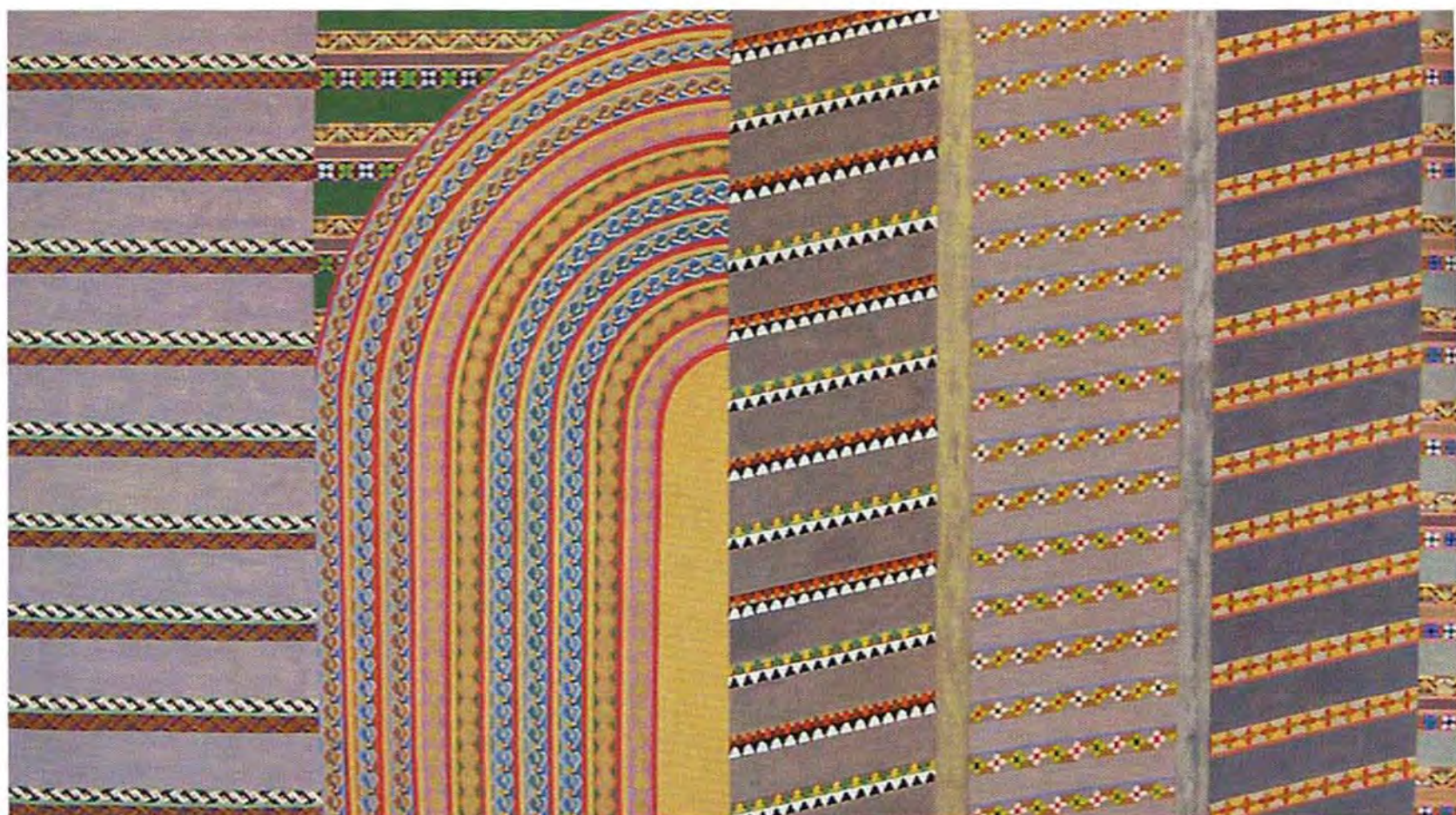
Miriam Schapiro: *Curtains*, 1972, acrylic and fabric on canvas, 60 by 50 inches.

Early P&D was propelled by its own raw energy and promoted by a handful of supporters. George Sugarman, a contemporary of the Minimalists who daringly embraced ornament and idiosyncrasy as elements of his practice, became an inspirational figure. A group of artists organized the first large P&D exhibition, “Ten Approaches to the Decorative,” in 1976 at Allesandra Gallery, and Holly Solomon Gallery, which opened in SoHo in 1975, became a hub for P&D shows, counting Kushner, MacConnel, Jaudon and Zakanitch on its early roster. Jaudon and Kozloff published a key

article on modernist antagonism toward ornament in the feminist journal *Heresies*, and writers including Goldin, Carrie Rickey, John Perreault, April Kingsley and artist Jeff Perrone provided key exposure, advocacy and critical framing in the art press. Institutions and the wider marketplace took note.

But while Pattern and Decoration continues to be variously carried on, quoted, mutated and co-opted, its status as a significant breakthrough movement faded in the ’80s as its novelty waned and other tendencies in painting, many of them





Joyce Kozloff: *Striped Cathedral*, 1977, oil and acrylic on canvas, two panels, 6 by 15 feet overall. Works this spread in "NYPD" at Shoshana Wayne Gallery.

indebted to P&D, seized the limelight. Serious, nuanced accounts of Pattern and Decoration remain exceptional,<sup>1</sup> and the recent rush to historicize the art of the late 20th century generally reduces P&D to brief mention, while the '70s are framed in terms of Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, Conceptualism, performance and feminist practice, the last of which is considered largely in terms of performance, installation and activism. Painting, meanwhile, is presented as if, after some kind of hiatus during the '70s (precisely when P&D enlivened and expanded the practice), it returned in the '80s under the assorted rubrics of appropriationism, graffiti, Neo-Expressionism, Neo-Geo and New Image.

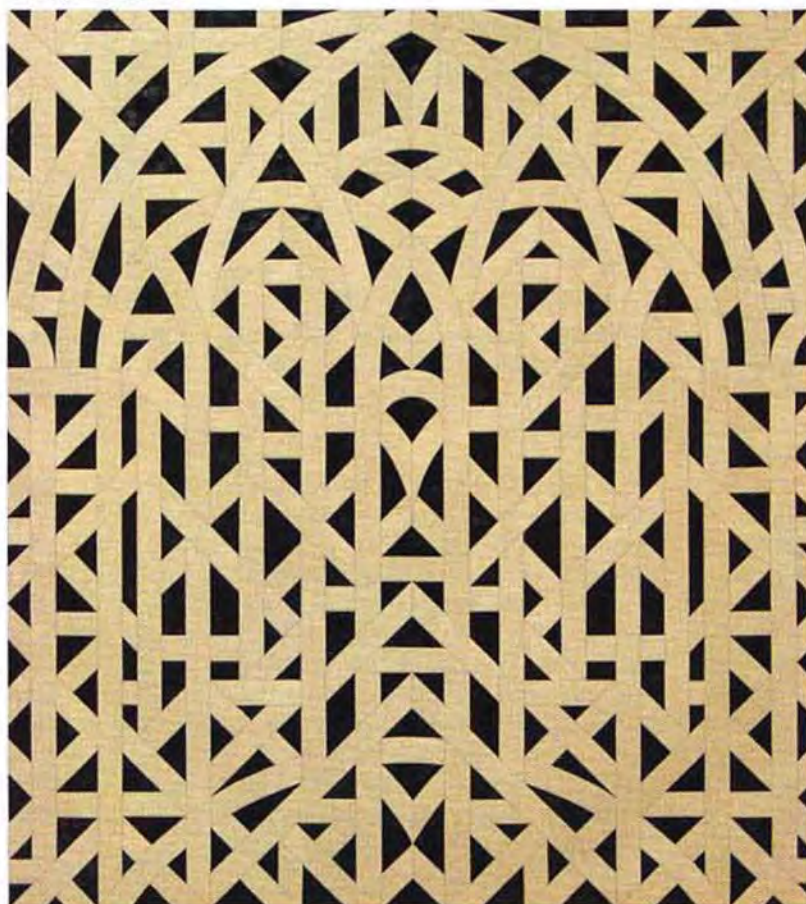
**R**ecently, at Santa Monica's Bergamot Station arts complex, seven P&D-related exhibitions—the principal three curated by Michael Duncan, an *A.i.A.* corresponding editor—endeavored to remind viewers of the importance of Pattern and Decoration. Spanning four decades of work by artists who were card-carrying P&D participants, plus some peripheral and tangential players, some who engaged in similar or related but ultimately unconnected activities and some positioned as inheritors of the P&D legacy, the

seven shows offered the usual suspects but also were revealing in their curious omissions and odd inclusions. The situation presented an opportunity to reconsider P&D as a movement, a

method and a powerful force in the development of late 20th-century art.

The centerpiece of this event, "Parrot Talk: A Retrospective of Works by Kim MacConnel," curated by Duncan at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, included over 40 pieces from 1972 to 2003 that documented an ever-evolving and frequently experimental studio practice [see p. 70]. Though MacConnel's name is among those synonymous with P&D—and the exhibition clearly shored up such categorization—many of the works in the show also suggested links to other categories, from Pop to graffiti art, Neo-Expressionism and 1980s investigations of appropriation, the deployment of simultaneous and juxtaposed imagery and the critique of representation. As much as the show revealed MacConnel to be kin to Schapiro or Kozloff, it also invited comparisons to artists such as Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Mike Kelley and David Salle. To mention any of these figures (especially Kelley, who has been accused of hijacking feminist practice, and Salle, who has been viewed as a participant in an antifeminist backlash) in a discussion of P&D is perhaps to tread on thin ice. But such associations are telling, and while none of the aforementioned figures was

Valerie Jaudon: *Mineral Wells*, 1980, oil on canvas, 120 by 108 inches.







**It was in New York that Pattern and Decoration assumed its most coherent form and found itself most deeply embroiled in the polemics of painting and cultural politics.**

the “feminine” and “women’s work” with modernist principles. Works by Jaudon, Kozloff, Kushner and MacConnel evidenced the group’s enthusiasm for lines and motifs from non-Western and ethnic architecture, décor, fabric and clothing, while Cynthia Carlson’s ornamented gestural brushwork and Zakanitch’s grid-based floral pattern painting revealed the movement’s propensity to play off and embellish upon the codes and underpinnings of high modernism. Works by Tina Girouard and George Woodman accounted for P&D forays into performance and photography, while the ongoing influence of East Coast P&D was signaled by a handful of more recent works, including a pattern-based abstract painting by Carl Fudge, drawings in ink on cotton sheets by Polly Apfelbaum, and wallpaper pieces by Virgil Marti and Rob Wynne. Marti also had a wallpaper installation in the project room at the Santa Monica Museum.

“LAPD” included among its 46 works by 32 individuals only a handful by artists who were more or less directly connected to P&D; among them were MacConnel, Jean Lowe, Carole Caroompas and Merion Estes, a former student of George Woodman. Both Caroompas and Estes were represented by earlier as well as more recent works, providing an opportunity to witness how P&D concerns have continued to inform their studio practices over time. That other artists like Tom Wudl and Constance Mallinson, whose more recent works reflect their previous experiments with patterning and ornamentation, were represented only by earlier works, however engaging, was disappointing.

**T**he bigger and more provocative story in “LAPD” was found in the lengths to which Duncan went to open up the P&D tent to artists whose work may have prefigured or paralleled the movement, as well as to artists who, perhaps inspired by the kind of permission the movement granted, have become agents of a latter-day decorative impulse. Here, Duncan chose rewarding examples: Linda Besemer’s slick, grid-based compositions with sheets of pure paint that are draped like remnants of plaid and striped fabric; David Grant’s sculptures, which strip pattern and decoration from the stretcher bars of painting and return them to the task of covering sensual, bodily form; Renée Petropoulos’s plays on the cultural and political coding of decorative motifs in panel



*Carl Fudge: Spray 4, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 34 inches square. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Art, New York.*

paintings arrayed with small flags; Patrick Hogan’s rhythmic, intensely physical abstract paintings, often made with rope and shredded fabric; Dinh Q. Le’s shimmering, anxious tapestries woven from strips of varied photographic source material; and Takako Yamaguchi’s unabashedly decorative and culturally complex paintings, which mingle patterns, motifs and stylistic riffs in a manner that conflates East and West, traditional and modern, high and low.

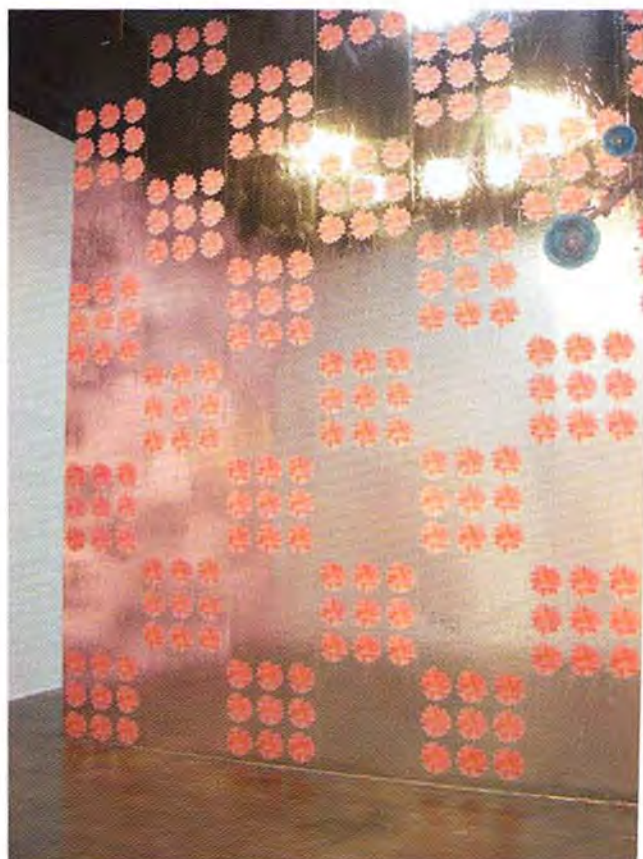
Duncan pushed the boundaries even further with the inclusion of Karl Benjamin, who typically



*Thomas Lanigan Schmidt: Memories of Luv, 1973, mixed mediums, foil, staples, 24 by 17½ by 9 inches.*

included, they might well figure into the expanded consideration of P&D invited by the Bergamot exhibitions.

Across the parking lot from the museum, Duncan curated two large group shows: “NYPD: New York Pattern & Decoration” at Shoshana Wayne Gallery and “LAPD: Los Angeles Pattern & Decoration” at Rosamund Felsen Gallery. Comprising 35 works by 16 artists, “NYPD” focused primarily on key P&D practitioners. Schapiro’s *Curtains* (1972), with its lace and embroidery overlaid atop fluid Color Field painting, perfectly exemplified the moment when Schapiro arrived at a new painting vocabulary that boldly fused the forms, materials and processes of



*Virgil Marti: Lotus Wall, 2003, wallpaper installation, screenprint on Mylar and digital decals, 16 by 20 feet.*





Tom Wudl: *Untitled*, ca. 1973, acrylic, gold and silver leaf on rice paper with tissue, 281 by 58 inches. Works this spread, unless otherwise noted, in "LAPD" at Rosamund Felsen Gallery, Santa Monica.

**P&D appealed to artists who wanted to toy with the boundaries of high and low, to engage in semiotic play while enjoying art's sensuality or to reinvent formalism along more personal lines.**



Carole Caroompas: *Mystical Unions: Fool's Mate*, 1982-83, mixed mediums on fold-out wood panel, 37 by 30 inches closed.

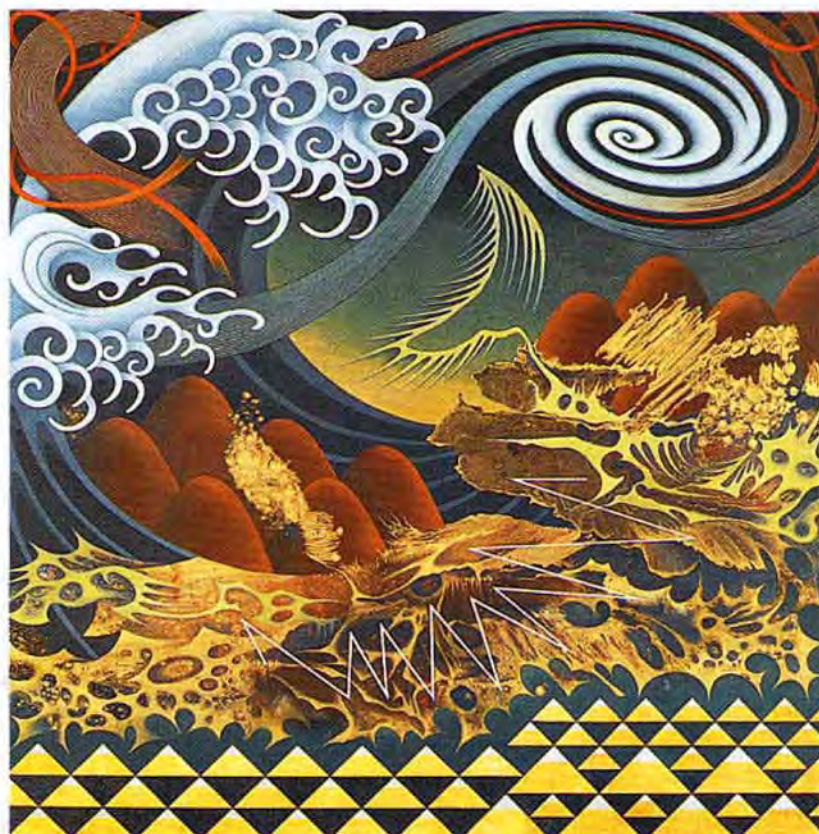
is understood within the context of hard-edge abstraction, and Grant Mudford, a photographer whose investigations of found pattern and repetition would seem to make more sense in the context of formalist photography. These offbeat choices reflected an application of the P&D designation that was far more freewheeling than the relative conservatism with which Duncan populated "NYPD." Such looseness was echoed in the decision by the Frank Lloyd Gallery to exhibit ceramic works by Betty Woodman, whose work at times is highly decorative, and who has enjoyed contact with some P&D movement members but was never directly involved herself; in Patricia Faure's exhibition of Zakanitch's recent sentimental paintings of dogs, which seem well removed from the work that once put the artist at the center of the P&D crowd; and in the Richard Heller Gallery presentation of works by Carla Arocha and Michelle Grabner, who convert shapes and symbols found in a variety of nondecorative cultural sources into decorative abstract patterns.

Of the seven exhibitions, Duncan's "NYPD" was most tied to the particulars of the movement and its original period, which would seem to make sense, for it was in New York that P&D assumed its most coherent form and found itself most deeply embroiled in the polemics of painting and cultural politics. The other Bergamot shows forged ahead with works through the present day and allowed for some related considerations. Duncan's MacConnel exhibition positioned the artist with respect to art issues well beyond P&D, while "LAPD," culled from the scene with which Duncan, who lives in Los Angeles, is intimately involved, saw Pattern and Decoration most broadly interpreted and promiscuously explored. Viewed together, the exhibitions seemed to imply that their own great differences merely echoed the diversity of practice that P&D had welcomed in the first place.



Adrian Saxe: *Untitled Théière (Caroline)*, 1985, porcelain, 12 1/2 by 8 1/4 by 3 inches.

Takako Yamaguchi: *Connoisseur of Chaos*, 2000, oil, metal leaf on paper, 52 1/2 inches square.



**P**romiscuity, of course, can be contagious, and the Bergamot exhibitions prompted me to imagine additional artists who could have been brought into the mix. They ranged broadly from Kelley and Salle to the likes of Lari Pittman, Lydia Dona, Chris Ofili and Ghada Amer, among many others. My point in naming them is not some kind of one-upsmanship or to take issue with specific curatorial choices in these shows. Rather, it seems necessary to go beyond the territory staked out in Duncan's important but nonetheless initial survey.

There are risks to taking a broader view of the P&D movement. The urge to expand the field is precisely what critic/curator John





Betty Woodman: *Ceramic Pictures of Korean Paintings (detail)*, 2001, glazed earthenware, epoxy resin, lacquer, paint, canvas, 120 by 270 by 12 inches; at Frank Lloyd Gallery, Santa Monica.

Perreault resisted when he organized "Pattern Painting" at P.S. 1 in 1977. Perreault kept the focus narrow for good reason: to define a movement that was new, distinct, nonsexist and non-hierarchical, and to avoid co-option by association. Perreault declined to include laterally connected artists of stature. Writing in the *Village Voice* at the time, April Kingsley suggested that Perreault's tenacity combined with the alternative spirit of P.S. 1 had made for an exhibition that centered on the core movement, consisted of work by nearly two-thirds women artists and one-third unknown artists, and avoided market and institutional pressure to legitimize the group with more established artists.<sup>2</sup> Jeff Perrone observed at the time that other, more inclusive surveys addressing the "decorative impulse" were perhaps beneficial for revealing the trend to be "a wide-ranging phenomenon" that was "open" rather than "closed," but such efforts also risked diluting P&D and its specific implications.<sup>3</sup>

By now, however, the more generously encompassing consideration undertaken in the seven exhibitions at Bergamot Station can account for P&D as a specific articulation of a broader phenomenon in a way that neither waters down the movement nor denies its uniqueness. Moreover, P&D can be understood as part of a bridge that connects decorative, figurative, symbolic and appropriative

impulses across decades and generations. Pattern and Decoration might then be seen not as the exception or counter to dominant high modernism, but as the expression of an enduring decorative and appropriative impulse, and an essential if underacknowledged impetus behind the '80s resurgence of painting and the pluralist freedom that has defined art since. □

Constance Mallinson: *Untitled (detail)*, 1981, oil on canvas, 100 by 80 inches.



1. Helpful overviews of P&D are found in Norma Broude, "The Pattern and Decoration Movement," *The Power of Feminist Art*, Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard, eds., New York, Harry N. Abrams, 1994, pp. 208-25; Corinne Robins, *The Pluralist Era: American Art, 1968-1981*, New York, Harper & Row, 1984, pp. 131-54; Daniel Wheeler, *Art Since Mid-Century: 1945 to the Present*, New York and Paris, Vendome Press and Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, 1991, pp. 283-89; and Irving Sandler, *Art of the Postmodern Era: From the Late 1960s to the Early 1990s*, New York, HarperCollins, 1996, pp. 141-63.
2. April Kingsley, "Opulent Optimism," *Village Voice*, Nov. 28, 1977, cited in Broude, pp. 212-13.
3. Jeff Perrone, "The Decorative Impulse," *Artforum*, November 1979, pp. 80-81.



Patrick Hogan: *Untitled (R-18)*, 1984, rope and acrylic on wood, 72 by 48 inches.

"Parrot Talk: A Retrospective of Works by Kim MacConnel" appeared at the Santa Monica Museum of Art [Sept. 13-Nov. 15, 2003]. Concurrently on view in the Bergamot Station complex were "NYPD: New York Pattern & Decoration" at Shoshana Wayne Gallery [Sept. 6-Oct. 4, 2003], "LAPD: Los Angeles Pattern & Decoration" at Rosamund Felsen Gallery [Sept. 6-Oct. 4, 2003], "Betty Woodman" at Frank Lloyd Gallery [Sept. 6-Oct. 11, 2003], "Robert Zakanitch: Aggressive Goodness II" at Patricia Faure Gallery [Sept. 13-Oct. 18, 2003], and "Carla Arocha: Drawing Installation and Drawings" and "Michelle Grabner: New Paintings & Sculpture" at Richard Heller Gallery [Sept. 13-Oct. 11, 2003]. In conjunction with the seven-show event, Virgil Marti's installation *Grow Room* was mounted at the Santa Monica Museum of Art [Sept. 13-Nov. 15, 2003].

Author: Christopher Miles is an assistant professor of art theory and criticism at California State University, Long Beach.



April 22, 2001

ART/ARCHITECTURE; Industry And Art: A Long Embrace



Digital impulses: Carl Fudge's "Rhapsody Spray 1" in "BitStreams." (Whitney Museum of American Art)

By VICKI GOLDBERG

ARTISTS are engines of invention. Like children who make toys and games from pots and pans, Popsicle sticks and bottle tops, artists reconfigure unlikely materials for unexpected purposes. Today they rearrange industrial goods and convert technologies to aesthetic ends, and the technological aspect is becoming a contemporary specialty.

In the early 20th century, art raised industrial materials to the status of a cause. In the 1960's, technology itself became the cause. There was a sense that technological developments had been virulently destructive -- two world wars, industrial pollution -- and that art might be able to redirect these harmful energies. In the second half of the decade, 10 major American museums put on exhibitions on the theme of art and technology, and in 1967, Billy Kluver and Robert Rauschenberg founded E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology).

Artistic appropriation of technology and collaboration with it have flourished ever since. By the 1990's, as electronic information technologies spread across the consumer market, the art-technology nexus was institutionalized. Several centers sprang up for its display and study, including the Zentrum fur Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe in Germany, the InterCommunication Center in Tokyo, the M.I.T. Media Lab's Center for Future Arts in Cambridge, Mass., Arizona State University's Institute for Study in the Arts in Tempe and Zeum in San Francisco. Museums realized they must pay attention, and exhibitions proliferated. Right now the Whitney Museum of American Art is showing "BitStreams" and "Data Dynamics," exhibitions based on the notion that many artists are using digitization as a new means of conceptualizing and creating art. The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art has on view "010101: Art in Technological Times," an exhibition of 35 artists, architects and designers who examine the omnipresence of technology in contemporary life.

All around us technology is changing far too fast for general understanding to keep up; it's way out ahead of culture. Everyone knows something big is happening on that front, a lot of people have acquired the gadgets that mark its progress, but very few people have a clear idea of what it all means, or what it portends.

Long before digitization, artists decided it was vital to reflect their own times. They have accepted the new technologies faster than much of the public and, after some fumbling, adapted them more cannily. Technology is shedding many of the traditional limitations imposed by stationary media and materials like stone and canvas, by the size of the negative or by the tensile strength of metal. There is no fantasy that cannot exist in



photographs, no torque that cannot be achieved in metal, no boundaries on the size of the audience, no constraints on the use of sound and motion and mixed media.

The intersection of art and technology is not new, yet the context and history of this interchange have largely been ignored, though it extends back hundreds, even thousands of years. For most of that time the arts exerted a strong influence on technological and scientific invention and discovery; it is only recently that the arts have depended quite so heavily on technology to lead the way.

As to art influencing science, the art historian Erwin Panofsky wrote that the discovery, five centuries ago, of perspective drawing and the drawing of three-dimensional objects to scale was as important to the development of the descriptive sciences before Galileo as the telescope and microscope were afterward. Another historian has suggested that Galileo realized that the moon was mountainous, though it was thought to be smooth, because he had been trained in perspective drawing and recognized that the splotches he saw through a telescope were shadows cast by solid objects.

Cyril Stanley Smith, a metallurgist who wrote extensively on the background and origin of scientific and technological processes, was convinced that art and aesthetics had provided much of the major inspiration for technology for millennia. In many Middle Eastern excavations, fire-hardened clay figurines, the first ceramics, predate the fired pots. Practical metallurgy began with necklace beads and hammered ornaments and progressed, after a long interval, to knives and other weapons. Glass was found when attempts were made to heighten the attractiveness of beads made of other materials.

All optical devices have common ancestors in the ancient processes for polishing mirrors and cutting facets on gems for greater shine. The technique of rolling H-shaped came, or channels, for stained glass windows long predated the rolling of steel rails and I-beams. Printing, too, came out of art and decoration. In the Far East, it began with rubbing, proceeded to woodblock prints and then to movable type.

According to Smith, even mass production in its elementary stages was devised not for the production of utilitarian objects but of decorative ones. In the early 18th century, the French scientist R. A. F. de Reaumur explained how to make cast iron malleable in order to give cheap cast-iron work the elegant finish of expensive wrought-iron door knockers and locks.

Smith's list goes on and on, suggesting by its very copiousness that the aesthetic impulse is so vital an element of the human constitution that it prompts, and pre-empts, a good deal of our ingenuity. Of course, throughout history artists have borrowed from utilitarian technologies when something came along that served their purposes. This slowed down for awhile in the 19th century, when distrust of the dark satanic mills made artists reluctant to have anything to do with them. Then, in the early 20th century, calls went out to celebrate the machine age.

By then, life was already beginning to be saturated with fast-changing technologies: telegraphy, rapid printing, photography, electricity, railroads, cars, telephones and soon radios, airplanes and television altered existence even in underdeveloped countries. Artists quickly started helping themselves to industrial products and processes. They never stopped.

But this time art and artists were no longer leading the way for technology and science but were almost exclusively on the receiving rather than the giving end. Naum Gabo used plastics, which had been reserved for valve parts and billiard balls, in sculpture. Julio Gonzalez borrowed iron and David Smith borrowed steel from architects and engineers. Morris Louis used acrylics, developed by the auto industry.

Dan Flavin adapted neon from outdoor advertising; Bruce Nauman lifted holography from scientists; Jenny Holzer made art from light-emitting diodes, generally used in numeric displays and running news announcements -- and so on, up to digitization and the science-driven information industries. Artists have even,



in a fortuitous stroke that is surely not entirely coincidental, borrowed a philosophical stance from science, which proposed the principles of uncertainty, possibility and ambiguity long before the postmodernist philosophers did.

There are some exceptions to this one-way current. A few recent technologies have borrowed from art as earlier ones did. Once computer visualization became possible in the 1960's, artists were largely responsible for preparing the way for virtual reality. Chip manufacturers have adapted graphic printmaking techniques for imprinting circuits on microchips. And although science fiction writers like Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov neither invented the technologies nor produced prototypes, they foretold many of the breakthroughs technology came up with in the latter half of the 20th century.

Hoping to detect such foresight at an early stage, a few technology companies and laboratories, including the Interval Research Corporation and the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center, have recently financed artists in residence, gambling on the unfettered powers of aesthetic imagination. Still, the great discoveries and inventions of engineers, mechanics, laboratories and industrial research over the last century or so -- from automobiles to airplanes to nuclear fission, from penicillin to robots to transistors, computers, molecular biology and M.R.I.'s -- had little or nothing to do with aesthetic intentions.

Perhaps by the time technology stopped depending on art to prepare its way, the utilitarian principles of the industrial revolution had so permeated society that aesthetics fell into second place. Perhaps mass culture and the profit motive have not only set other goals but made the costs so high it is scarcely worthwhile to put highly specialized minds to work on mere appurtenances of pleasure. (Although the big entertainment companies have done so: Disney, for instance, has hired two of the leading American authorities on artificial intelligence to help enhance the illusions in its theme parks.) It is even conceivable that basic aesthetic needs have been met and that whatever comes next is luxury, or frivolity.

Or perhaps by about 1900 the two cultures had already grown so far apart that they could no longer communicate as they once did. Back in the Renaissance, artists thought it necessary to master Euclid and other schools of scientific thought. In the early 19th century in England, the word "artist" still generally meant the same as "artisan," and since "science" meant any body of knowledge, the word "scientist" as we know it was only beginning to come into use. What we now think of as scientists and artists interacted in a single culture and spoke each other's language. Not many artists today can speak the languages of molecular biology or quantum physics, nor is it likely that many scientists or engineers can talk fluently of conceptual art or Neo-Geo.

But even artists can do a little tech talk. If technology began to exert a wide influence on life and art only near the beginning of the 20th century, by the end of that century it had become the very fabric of life for millions, artists included. The invention curve in technology has been exceptionally steep, and the acceptance curve for it has followed suit. People latch on to new technologies not just faster but more eagerly than ever before. Today's technologies are simply facts of life; people complain about them as they do about other unavoidable aspects of existence, like the weather.

Artists are playing around with the gadgets and processes just like the rest of us, because they make some things easier and do new tricks -- and because we have all inherited from the second half of the 19th century a need to feel that we are modern. That feeling, that up-to dateness, still bestows some sense of significance, scarce enough in our time.

Maybe, now that there doesn't seem to be an avant-garde in art any more, the avant-garde has been relocated to the realm of engineers, information scientists, molecular biologists and astronomers. Maybe artists are borrowing their toys in the hope, which they share with the rest of us, of wresting meaning and some kind of order from the arcane chaos of technological life.





Carl Fudge: *Untitled J3.5 x 5*, 1996, enamel on panel, 42 by 60 inches; at Lauren Wittels.

### Carl Fudge at Lauren Wittels

Among the disconcerting aspects of the pattern abstraction that began appearing in the mid-'70s was its defiant preference for decorative values over psychological or philosophical content. Carl Fudge's enamel paintings, silkscreened onto gessoed wood panels, take the pattern idea to a new extreme, and with much larger ambitions as to content. He begins with a reproduction of an erotic Ukiyo-e print, cuts it up into fragments too small to convey narrative information, recasts those fragments in axially symmetric "inkblots," and silkscreens the resulting grid-based pattern onto the picture plane. Each work is based on a black-against-white printing of this pattern, over which one or more versions of it in color may be superimposed. The large-format *Puce*, for example, has been given two silkscreened layers of color—orange and mustard—atop the underlying black. At a distance, you almost think you're seeing a textile, but the hard sheen of the enamel subverts that impression. And there are other oppositions at work here as well, many of them inherent in Fudge's painting process: representation and narrative are set against abstraction; color against black-and-white; the illusion of soft fabric against the reality of wood and enamel; the misleadingly gestural-looking effect of the enamel paint (famously Pollock's medium) against the closely controlled plotting of the silkscreened pattern.

The show included one series, "The Young Pines," consisting of six 20-by-15-inch panels, each with a different color scheme. The black silkscreened pattern is more aerated in these works, which seem positively buoyant compared to the larger paintings. *The Young Pines, J5* uses (in addition to black) yellow and red enamel; you'd only need to change the black to blue for the work to read as a nod to Johns's "crosshatch" paintings, which play flatness against depth in a similar way. Whoever designs patterned Formica for suburban kitchens might draw inspiration from this series, too, since it belongs to a Pop tradition—think of the Warhol flower paintings—that made provocative art out of vernacular, often kitsch, imagery and color. On the other hand, a work like *Hysterical Dissemination* is deadly serious, the largest and most disturbing painting in the show. Here the pattern becomes a dense lacework of the primary colors plus black—so closely laid down that the white background is thoroughly obscured. The result is an impassive and implacable wall of seething energy, derived (its now indecipherable figural origins suggest) from the repressed, dark side of eroticism.

—Alfred Corn