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**ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Imaging Arts and Sciences  
In Candidacy for the Degree of  
**MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

**PATTERN IN PAINTING:  
Interviews with Artists  
of the Pattern and Decoration Movement of the Seventies:  
Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner,  
Miriam Schapiro, and Robert Zakanitch**

By  
Barbara Ann Elsenheimer  
May 2003

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Date: March 13, 2003

## THESIS PROPOSAL

My art making began when I first designed fabric and wallpaper, created weavings on looms, and made tie-dyes and batiks. Over the years, one common thread runs throughout my work, which is my sense of design and pattern. Whether working realistically or abstractly, my love for pattern keeps surfacing. As I paint, I create surface design using a repetition of shape, line, color and texture. I use pattern to formalize and hold my art together, as well as to embellish it in a decorative mode. Sometimes it comes in free-formed swirls or as stamped or stenciled images, sometimes as many repeated lines or imprinted textures; sometimes you have to look to find it, but always it is there. Even when I deliberately try to eliminate it from my visual vocabulary, patterns emerge. For my thesis, I intend to investigate reasons and intentions for the development of pattern in my artwork. I will also reference several major artists who pioneered the Pattern and Decoration movement, which had its start in the 1970s. I will explore ways that pattern can be used to achieve successful results for the contemporary painter.

The Pattern and Decoration movement (referred to as P&D) of the seventies has been of interest to me. The P&D style utilized repeated nonobjective shapes as well as recognizable imagery. Over the past centuries, pattern and the decorative arts were often given an inferior position outside the realm of fine art. Yet decorative and patterned compositions have been at the heart of many artistic traditions. P&D became the first group of artists who tried to bring together popular and elitist art. It also drew strength from popular and domestic art forms such as sewing and quilting that have historically been associated with women. An in-depth look at the artists involved in this movement will be pursued. The theories behind P&D will be explored, and conclusions will be made as to how and why this movement surfaced briefly and what impact it had.

In today's art world, the place that is given for the Pattern and Decorative movement will be investigated. I will research its political and cultural implications and the associations it has with 'high art'. A study will be done on successful contemporary artists who consider pattern a most important element of their work.

What do I have in common with the P&D painters of the seventies, and how does my work connect with what is going on in the art world today? Comparison and contrast often promote analysis that is necessary in order for growth to occur. What am I doing with pattern that draws me to study and write about it? Bringing this subdued creative 'energy' to the surface and exploring it is what I propose to do for my thesis study. Harnessing this principle of design so that it works for me in a successful way is my goal, and the theme of this paper.



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# **PATTERN IN PAINTING:**

**Interviews with Artists  
of the Pattern and Decoration Movement of the Seventies:  
Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner,  
Miriam Schapiro, and Robert Zakanitch**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**



1. Henri Matisse, *Sorrrows of the King*, gouache on paper, cut and pasted, on canvas, 292 cm. x 396 cm., 1952, Musee National d'Art Moderne, Paris.

"I found myself or my artistic personality  
by looking over my earlier works.  
They rarely deceive.  
There I found something  
that was always the same and  
which at first glance  
I thought to be monotonous repetition.  
It was the mark of my personality,  
which appeared the same no matter  
what different states of mind  
I happened to have passed through."<sup>1</sup>

**Henri Matisse**

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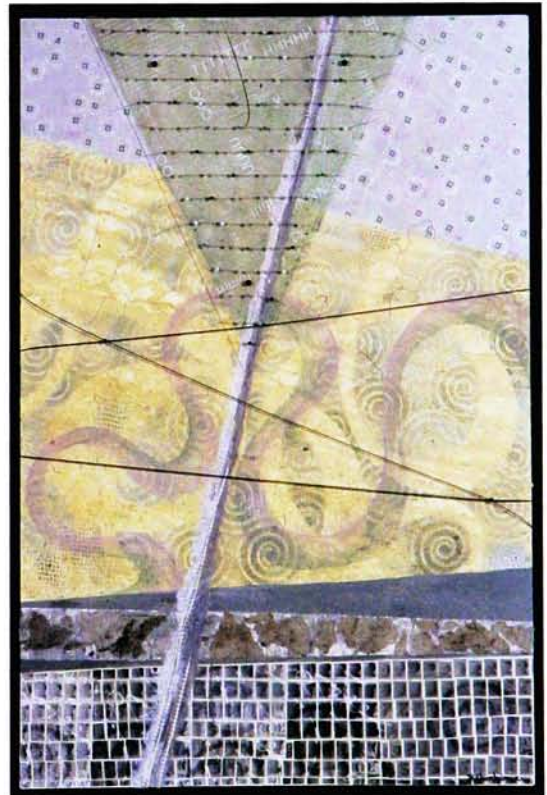
<sup>1</sup>. Genevieve Morgan, ed. *Matisse: The Artist Speaks* (San Francisco: Collins Publishers San Francisco, 1996), 23.

## INTRODUCTION

My art making began for me when I first designed fabric and wallpaper, when I created weavings on looms, and made tie-dyes and batiks. Over the years one common thread runs throughout my work. What keeps recurring, whether with fiber or clay, in photography, with paint or digital imagery, is my sense of design that emphasizes pattern. Whether working realistically or abstractly, my love for pattern keeps surfacing. As I paint, I create surface design using a repetition of shape, line, color and texture. I use pattern to formalize and hold my art together, as well as to embellish it in a decorative mode. Sometimes it comes in free-formed swirls or as stamped or stenciled images, sometimes as many repeated lines or imprinted textures; sometimes you have to look to find it, but always it is there. Even when I deliberately try to eliminate it from my visual vocabulary, patterns emerge.



2. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #10*, *Crevice*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 48 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.



3. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #8*, *Landscape*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 48 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.



## WHAT IS PATTERN?

The essence of pattern is repetition. Repetition underlies all of the arts, on every level. For many, repetition is all that pattern is. You see a spot, a line, a shape, or an image repeated several times and call it pattern. Amy Goldin, the late art historian and critic, talks about pattern as something much more than this. To her, the crucial element of pattern is the constancy of the interval between motifs. She explains that if you take a single shape and place it irregularly all over a piece of paper, you are not necessarily creating a pattern. There have to be enough repetitions of the space between the shapes to establish a unit that could then be called a pattern. A design based upon a motif repeated at constant intervals could then be a more thorough definition for pattern.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental underlying structure of a pattern is the grid. Most any pattern can be reduced to some sort of grid. Much of the early twentieth century modernism used the grid as a basic structural principle. Some of the first artists to use the grid were Malevich, Arp, and Mondrian.<sup>3</sup> A grid tends to shift the focus from spatial depth to surface, line and form. Amy Goldin suggests that whereas compositions breed involvement, intimacy and references to self, grids generate a greater emotional distance. We tend to scan the patterned piece in order to establish its relationship to the physical world. This is a characteristic response to any patterned or gridded surface. Composition, on the other hand, has focal areas which get our attention and then lead us into the painting.<sup>4</sup>

Pattern uses many of the elements of art. We see linear pattern when we look above at telephone wires, when we look below, while on a chair lift, at ski marks in the snow. Beautiful color patterns flourish in flower gardens. Shadows on walls and ceilings and sunlit rocks display patterns in varying values. Looking down at marching bands

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<sup>2</sup> Lene Burkard, and Karsten Ohrt, ed. *Patterns: Between Object and Arabesque* (Odense: Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, 2001), 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 20-24.

from the bleachers we recognize patterns of various shapes. Tree trunks with their wonderful textured bark make us aware of the patterns that are unique to each.

Patterns can be precisely planned or randomly unplanned. Planned patterns involve careful consideration of the placement of shapes or lines, values, colors and textures, so that a cohesive design is achieved. Selection of materials, sensitive use of space or interval, and repetition of elements can add interesting variety. One finds consistent design with movement or rhythm in planned pattern. Basketry, weaving, stitchery, stonework, tile work, and mosaics can have wonderful patterns of this nature. Random patterning, on the other hand, on the surface appears to be done by chance or without purpose. It looks accidental and spontaneous. Random patterning can be more expressive and visually more exciting. There is an energy in this. The space, or the interval between the motif can vary greatly. Action painters capitalize on the power of freely applied paint that can create strikingly random patterns.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Joseph A. Gatto, Albert W. Porter, and Jack Selleck, *Exploring Visual Design*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Worcester: Davis Publications, Inc, 1987), 206.



## THE HUMAN NEED FOR PATTERN

I had the privilege of visiting the well-known quilter Caryl Bryer Fallert. Her work was in an exhibition titled *Painting in Thread and Cloth*, at Roberts Wesleyan College in the fall of 2001. Her use of color and pattern has intrigued me and influenced my paintings. As she spoke about her work and her original way of creating pattern, she mentioned this: "Now that they can wire up brains, studies have shown that pattern is the first thing infants respond to, and it's something that universally we all respond to. When we see a row of something, and then one thing that is different, we say it sticks out like a sore thumb, because what we like is regular repetition of pattern."<sup>6</sup>



4. Caryl Bryer Fallert, *Midnight Fantasy #1*, hand dyed and painted, machine pieced, and quilted materials: 100% cotton fabric, 48 x 48, 1999, private collection, Chicago.

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<sup>6</sup> Caryl Bryer Fallert, Interview with the author, 28 October 2001.

There is indeed a human need for and use of pattern. It suggests an order and direction larger than any single artisan or person; it is collective, not individual. There is an organization in pattern that is comforting. An imposition of order suggests regularity. As humans, we are on an earth that has a regular night and day, regular seasons, even regular leap years. Our time is ordered with a calendar. We have given order to a world which could otherwise look disordered. We all have daily, weekly, monthly, and even yearly rituals that are sometimes called traditions that are very important to us. Pattern finds its most compelling form in religion. The Catholics repeat the rosary; the Benedictine Monks chant. Repetition of prayer is important to many. A mantra, a sacred formula, is often repeated by Hindus to invoke a connection with the spiritual.

In The Sense of Order, E. H. Gombrich points out that, "We certainly know that the brain can and does generate visual patterns of great complexity, though we rarely see them except in abnormal states...dazzling and sometimes beautiful configurations which can interfere with our vision during attacks of (migraines) and are a frequent effect of hallucinatory drugs...It has been suggested that such flickering visions are always potentially available, but normally suppressed by the activities of conscious perception." Possibly this inherent recognition (of pattern) is what generates the incredible patterns that have been created in the fine and decorative arts, as well as in architecture. Or perhaps it is the patterns that we see and create that underlie these complex visual experiences.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Akiko Busch, *An Exhibition of Decorated Surface* (New York: The American Crafts Museum, 1982), 4.

## THESIS OBJECTIVE

I am a painter and an artist who loves the decorative and enjoys beautiful things, not just in art but in the world. There is a group of artists that I could relate to that have similar values in this respect, and that I have found very interesting: they are the artists that founded the Pattern and Decoration movement of the seventies. In my research, I became aware that five of the foremost people from this movement are still working as artists today and living in the New York City area. I wanted to get to know these artists better so I personally interviewed each of them. These friendly, gracious people were very welcoming and generously opened up their art and their lives to me. I was given information, opinions and personal reflections regarding the P&D movement. Each artist told how his or her art has evolved to this day. They are Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner, Miriam Schapiro, and Robert Zakanitch.

## **II. THE PATTERN AND DECORATION MOVEMENT**



## OVERVIEW

In the early 70s, there was a group of artists that were influenced by Henri Matisse, whose works were characterized by the use of many diverse and different kinds of pattern and ornamentation. They did not just paint; some worked with performance, others created collages of a variety of sorts, and several worked on installations and public commissions. These artists addressed their love of the decorative and took a stand for it. This group became known as the Pattern and Decoration movement.

All of these people were already fully formed as artists when they first met. Each had been showing and working in a style of his/her own. They belonged to various generations, ranging in age from the middle twenties to the middle fifties, and one of the most interesting points was the high proportion of women.<sup>8</sup> They started meeting regularly in 1974 to discuss the concepts of using pattern, alternative materials, and decorative sources as new resources for painting. All were committed to creating an intellectually pluralistic, artistic statement. They set out to challenge Minimalism, Conceptual art, and heroic abstraction. Each came with concerns about the decorative. Art that was visually pleasurable was then still considered to be heretical, superficial, or middlebrow. It endangered the theoretical and intellectual values that determined the privileged aesthetic position of modernist high art. They abandoned conceptualism and complex iconographic content. Where Conceptual art derived its liberty from non-execution, these artists had discovered a primeval pleasure in actually doing things.<sup>9</sup>

Most of the artists in the Pattern and Decoration movement had been inspired by their travels to countries in the Middle East, as well as to Mexico, India, Turkey, and Afghanistan. They appropriated and adopted stylized shapes and forms from architecture, rugs, pottery and other crafts. Their color combinations were derived from inspiration from centuries-old ornamentation. Some of these artists also drew strength from popular and domestic art forms such as sewing and quilting that have historically

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<sup>8</sup> Harold Szeemann, *Decorative Art Today: A Selective Summary of the Contents* (Du: The Art Magazine, June, 1979), n.p.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

been associated with women. The P&D style utilized repeated nonobjective shapes inherent in decorative motifs, many of which were derived not only from third world crafts but also from domestic wallpapers, fabric, and the likes. Recognizable imagery was also found in several of the artists' visual vocabularies, in the forms of figures, flowers, and plants. Their work often looked lighthearted and visually exciting to the eye.

The first group exhibition of their work, "Ten Approaches to the Decorative," curated by Jane Kaufman for Alessandra gallery, was held in 1976. The ten artists included were Valerie Jaudon, Jane Kaufman, Joyce Kozloff, Tony Robbin, Miriam Schapiro, Arlene Slavin, George Sugarman, John Torreano, Robert Zakanitch, and Barbara Zucker.<sup>10</sup> According to Jeff Perrone, the most disturbing part of this exhibition was the word *decoration*. To him and many others, it was something of a shock for these artists to use it deliberately to characterize their art. At the time, the term *decorative* was considered an insult in the realms of 'high' art. It implied superficiality, and the absence of a train of thought. It was often associated with terms such as 'women's handicrafts' and 'commercial art.'<sup>11</sup> In addition, the works did not at all resemble one another! In fact, one would wonder what they had in common. The only thing that Perrone noticed, though, was that the artists all worked in a definite anti-Minimalist style.<sup>12</sup>

To look at the movement itself, one has to look at the time and the historical record of the exhibitions. It was a grouping of artists meeting regularly and then exhibiting their work together. The questions have always been how and why it ended and what influence it has had on the art world. The following interviews address this and give us insight on its influence. Harald Szeemann, in his summary of the article, "Decorative Art Today," in *Du, The Art Magazine*, in June of 1979, summed up this movement when he stated, "The change in artistic mentality is so visible, powerful, and

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<sup>10</sup> Valerie Jaudon, *Pattern and Decoration, the Movement, the Group Exhibitions 1974-1985* (New York: Jaudon Archives, 2002), n.p.

<sup>11</sup> *Du: The Art Magazine*, n.p.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Perrone, *Approaching the Decorative* (*Art Forum*, December, 1976), 26.

attractive that it is bound to bring art to a new public by way of a new generation of artists who regard their works as homage to all the thousands of ornament-creators over the centuries, or alternatively as a contribution to the liberation of women and by consequence a contribution to contemporary life.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Szeemann, n.p.



## PERSONAL INTERVIEWS WITH EACH ARTIST

### ROBERT KUSHNER

Robert Kushner grew up in southern California where he was born in 1949. His father was a real-estate broker and furrier. His mother, an art teacher and a painter, influenced him artistically. Also influential was his grandmother who taught him to crochet, a housekeeper who taught him to weave on a table loom, and two aunts who were artists. He learned early on that there were many methods and materials available to create art with, not just those traditionally used in making fine art.

Kushner attended college at the University of California at San Diego where he met several life-long acquaintances and friends. One was Paul Brach, Miriam Schapiro's husband. Amy Goldin was an instructor of his, and later art critic who played a major role in his art. A fellow classmate and friend who became part of the P&D movement along with Schapiro was Kim MacConnel. Together they opposed the prevailing negative attitude of the time toward the decorative. Their intent was to counteract the cultural distrust of beauty, joy, and sensuality.<sup>14</sup>

Kushner's artistic career began in the early seventies. After college he moved to Boston for a short period of time and then to New York City. He worked part time doing various odd jobs to support his art. This was a time when many of the most dynamic young artists were ignoring formal boundaries and extending the definitions of what was accepted as art. Collages, installations and costumes were his first works. They were spontaneous, humorous and lighthearted. He also gained recognition with his performances, which included humor, some exhibitionism, and a theatrical drama. Along with that, he created fabric paintings, works on paper, and did painting and sculpture. He did not use stretchers, frames and traditional materials of the time. His work was colorful and forthright, often structured by his use of symmetry and repetition.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Alexandra Anderson-Spivy, *Robert Kushner: Gardens of Earthly Delight* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1997), 2.

<sup>15</sup> Kathan Brown, *Ink, Paper, Metal, and Wood: Painters and Sculptors at Crown Point Press* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996), 80.

Decoration was taboo in avant-garde art in the seventies, which was a good reason that Kushner decided to use it in all he did.

In 1974, he traveled to Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey. This trip changed his attitude dramatically. "I was making decoration because you weren't supposed to," he said. "Then, on this trip, seeing incredible works of genius, really masterworks, which exist in almost any Muslim city, I really became aware of how intelligent and uplifting decoration can be."<sup>16</sup> At about this time he started meeting with the other artists who were interested in some of the same things as he was. Together, they would soon form the Pattern and Decoration movement.



5. Robert Kushner, *French Tart*, acrylic on cotton, 97 x127.25, 1978, Whitney Museum of American Art, gift of Anonymous Donors.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 82.



Kushner has lived in New York City and has created a distinguished body of work over the last three decades. He shows nationally and internationally. Since 1975, drawing has been a main emphasis in his work, with ornament and decoration, the foundations. His art has a strength and vitality that come from his intent "to please the eye and thereby satisfy the human soul."<sup>17</sup> Holland Cotter said this of his recent work, "In his work one might consider these random elements: humor (bold but nonaggressive, self-accepting); an unorthodox formalism (derived in equal parts from academic training and sweatshop routine, folk craft, and haute couture); a taste for the color and jostle of street life raised to the level of passion; and a cosmopolitan breadth of vision that leaves much other contemporary work looking stiff and parochial."<sup>18</sup>



6. Robert Kushner, *Indian Summer: Homage to Bonnard*, acrylic, oil, gold leaf, silver leaf, glitter on canvas, 180 cm. x 540 cm., 2000, courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York.

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<sup>17</sup> Anderson-Spivy, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 10.

**Interview with Robert Kushner at Linwood Gardens outside of Pavilion, N.Y. where he had just finished putting on a workshop.  
Saturday, June 8, 2002 5 P.M.**



7. Robert Kushner teaching a workshop at Linwood Gardens, 2002, York, photograph by author.

## ROBERT KUSHNER

BE *Sometimes it seems that P&D was used as a platform for women, but many of the main painters in the movement were men. How do you feel, or did you feel, being associated to a feminist movement or didn't it bother you at all?*

RK Well, it was not a feminist movement. I think for me and other men, such as Kim MacConnel, there was also an agenda calling attention to decorative art from other cultures. It was of particular interest to identify decorative traditions that men participated in such as eighteenth-century textile design, such as the weavers in Central Asia, so that I did not feel that it was exclusively a gender related issue as some of the women did. It was a case of calling attention to things that I found beautiful and interesting and of a very high level of sophistication, no matter who did it. What I was more interested in was how people from third world countries



were treated as inferior artists rather than how only women doing women's crafts were treated as inferior.

BE *The P&D movement attempted to breach the gap between 'high art' and 'low art.' When I was recently on an art trip in New York there was on occasion reference to high art. Would you define these and their interaction today?*

RK It is very blurred today. At that time it was a different kind of issue. High art is usually what is easel painting, you know, painting and sculpture, things that you would at that time have seen written up in magazines, things that were shown in the galleries. At that time there were no serious galleries showing folk art for example, and there were no galleries showing quilts. At that time, meaning the very early seventies. So high art was what was taught in art schools, low art was everything else that we were looking at that we found interesting such as quilts, such as embroidery, women's work, carpets, decoration, body decoration from other cultures, on and on. These were considered inferior in that kind of very snooty art world way of looking at things. So high art--art school, low art--everything else.

BE *A quote from you in 2001 in the brochure from the show 'Too Much Joy' interested me. " We were the last movement to go into art with no expectation to be rich. After us it all changed. We didn't change it, the dynamics of the art market changed. I fully believe we were the last movement that was idealistic."<sup>19</sup> Can you elaborate on this?*

RK I feel for me, I wanted to make art that was the best art I could make, that would surprise people, that would raise new questions, that would be appropriate to the time, but I was not a careerist. I feel like I never really tried to do things simply for the sake of promoting my career. After us, the next group of artists that emerged had all been trained in the art schools that really taught you how to manage your career. Many of those people entered art for very high reasons. Many of them entered art, however, to become celebrities and to just get a lot of attention for themselves rather than trying to make the best work they could make. I think there is a difference. I feel like that's a cynical approach to art making as opposed to an idealistic one, which is that you make art to change the world. It's that old fashioned thing where you know you have a vision of the world. You are trying to make art that both reflects your vision and affects how people see their world. That's what I mean by idealism.

BE *Do you still hold the same view that you did back in the seventies and eighties about the relationship between art and decoration? Decoration was the main element of the work of art and beauty the main inspiration for P&D.*

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<sup>19</sup> Jimena Acosta, Robert Blackson, Amaya de Miquel, and Kelly Taxter, *Too Much Joy: Re-visiting the Pattern and Decoration Movement* (Annandale on Hudson: Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, 2001), n.p. (exhibition catalog).

RK I think it is a different issue now. I think the times are different. I think people are looking at a much broader range of things. You know, for example, major museums, right now the Metropolitan Museum, have as their hit show of the spring the *Renaissance Tapestries*, which are essentially a decorative tradition. There is no argument. The argument is very different today. I think decoration can do things that so called high art can't. I think it can satisfy your eye and your mind in a different way, and I think it is valuable and worth taking seriously for that reason. I think there are still very different intentions between making decoration and making art. The decorator wants to please the viewer's eye and engage the mind simultaneously. But pleasing the eye, I think, is primary. That is a greater impulse for a decorator. Decorator, meaning any kind of decorator, I'm not talking about an interior decorator, I'm talking about someone who identifies the issue as trying to make a beautiful work of decorative art. Whether it's decorating a vase, or making a painting that is about decoration. I think that they still have a different genesis, a different sense of beginning.



8. Robert Kushner, *Panel 3*, oil, glitter, gold leaf on aluminum, 43.5 x 85, 2002, collection of the artist.

BE *In the Pattern Catalogue*, you talked about how you drew ineptly for a while, one reason being that it showed you were not a 'dusty academician'. Also you said that you tried to uphold to this: "Anything worth doing is worth doing badly."<sup>20</sup> Can you talk about that a little?

<sup>20</sup> Lene Burkard, and Karsten Ohrt, ed. *Patterns: Between Object and Arabesque* ( Odense: Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, 2001), 71.



RK I think I no longer see it that way. I think I needed that to break out, to find my own way of drawing. Looking back, I have always been interested in a kind of an energetic approach to drawing, energy and a little bit awkwardness. I think my work still is like that except now I try to do it as well as possible because I'm looking at a different set of Masters. I am looking at certain traditions of Chinese Literati painting, and Japanese art that interests me in particular. It is done with incredible finesse and subtlety and within that, still maintaining the possibility of a kind of surprising awkwardness. That's what I am more interested in now.



9. Robert Kushner, *Untitled*, screen, no details given, 2002, collection of the artist.

BE *And how about the grid? You mentioned that you don't hold to that too much.*

RK I have never been interested in the grid. I think even by seventy-four I was trying to devise a decorative statement that was independent of the grid. That is why Matisse is so interesting, that is why Japanese art is so interesting to me, because you can find the grid, but it is very different from really strict repeats upon an interval.

BE *What is your present attitude towards the P&D movement? Did you ever not try to be a part of it? Do you still consider yourself a P&D painter, or is your name attached to a movement different than this?*



RK I feel like I have always been making decoration. I think at different times my interests have gone in other directions; but I always feel like I have instinctively, and as a result of my instinct consciously, tried to return my work to a decorative context. I'm thinking particularly of some figure drawings that I was doing in the eighties that were moving into a sort of melodramatic, or dramatic kind of operatic frame of mind. I would do things to continually return them into the realm of the decorative and try to refer to decorative and figurative traditions.

BE *I noticed that you had the repeat in some of your figures, things like that.*

RK Yes, or mirrors, and things like that. Even though I was interested in drawing the figures as accurately as possible, I tried to fit it into a context that to me made sense decoratively. The work I am doing now, I think is as decorative as ever. I am working on a series of paintings with gold leaf backgrounds and lots and lots of small flowers painted on them in a kind of systematic way. They start at the edges and slowly move toward the middle or sometimes they are randomly distributed over the surface. I feel like it's a very decorative look, a consciously decorative look. I feel like I want these paintings to look as though they were from the ceiling of an abandoned temple or building, and they functioned there and then were removed. That's a very decorative intention.

BE *Do you still work with DC Moore Gallery?*

RK Yes.

BE *Do you have a group now that you get together with from this movement?*

RK In terms of the decorative group, I am still very closely in touch with Joyce Kozloff. Last year, when we worked on the essay, I was seeing a lot of Valerie Jaudon. I continue to see Brad Davis more as a social friend rather than exchanging artistic ideas, whereas Joyce and I talk about art. I am not really in touch with Miriam Schapiro and Bob Zakanitch, or Kim MacConnel. That was a long time ago that we were meeting, over twenty-five years ago. It just seems that in some ways we have all taken those ideas and gone in other directions. The people that I sit down and talk art with are a different group now.

BE *You are making a living on your art now, and have for a while?*

RK Yes I am and have been, and I am very lucky. It's a combination of sales through galleries and public commissions. It's not like I am making huge amounts of money but I am supporting my family so that's enough.

BE *Is there anything controversial about what you are doing now?*

- RK I don't think so. I think I am taken seriously, as a serious artist working in a style that is out of date. I think that's the way it's seen. This was a movement that was controversial in its day. It's way out of date but it's interesting to people that I am still working and innovating in that style.
- BE *I noticed that you have written articles for Art in America. Have you done this all your life?*
- RK I have been writing articles off and on for between eight and ten years now. I am going to take a break from that. Occasionally I write my own statements about my work and essays for some friends or for others who ask.
- BE *Amy Goldin formulated three qualifications in order for a piece to be decorative.*  
*1. flatness                      2. expansiveness                      3. subordination of subject matter.*
- RK That's my thing. When you talk to others they won't agree with that. I was basically her student and she was my mentor. She was important to those other people but not in the same way.
- BE *Anything else?*
- RK I think there are a lot of people that are interested in what we were doing and were fascinated in why it isn't better known as a movement. I think that the interest that some people have in particular, is in trying to figure out how it was so influential and yet, how it got cut out of the history books, and why.<sup>21</sup>



10. Robert Kushner, *Brown Mirror*, oil, silver leaf, glitter on board, 36 x 36, 2002, collection of the artist.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Kushner, interview by author, tape recording, York, N.Y., 8 June 2002.



## JOYCE KOZLOFF

Joyce Kozloff was born in Somerville, New Jersey in 1942. She received her B.F.A. at Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1964, and her M.F.A. at Columbia University in New York City, New York in 1967. Her first solo exhibition was in 1970 at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery. She showed a series of large, thinly washed acrylic paintings. She has since lived in New York City, and has had a successful career as an artist.

Kozloff's imagery has evolved from the rich history of art, as well as from cartographic sources. Her early experiments took their inspiration from Greek temples bathed in Mediterranean light.<sup>22</sup> When she discovered, in the early seventies, that the term 'decorative' had negative sexist connotations, she decided to ignore the establishment, follow her feminist inclinations, and make her art as decorative as she could. In 1973 she went to Mexico, which had great influence on her work. Her continuing choice of decorative patterns as the exclusive source for her paintings was prompted partly by the desire to break down the boundaries between high art and craft. She has always consciously incorporated feminist and social issues in her work.

In 1975 she and a small number of artists who had been working independently with decorative patterns got together to exchange thoughts and decided that they were a group and that they had an idea, which they called pattern painting. For the next two years they met regularly and discussed the question, 'What is decoration?' Her well-known pattern paintings of this time derive from the decorative traditions of non-Western cultures.

In 1977 she moved from the canvas to installations, which better satisfied her, and from there went into public art. She turned from specific feminist causes to more general social issues; the meaning and direction of public art as communication, mass transportation, city life, the beautification of the urban environment, and the place of

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<sup>22</sup> Patricia Johnston, *Joyce Kozloff: Visionary Ornament* (Boston: Boston University Arts and Publications, 1985), 1.

aesthetics in people's lives.<sup>23</sup> These public projects interpreted the visual history and styles of regional cultural artifacts in shimmering mosaic and hand-painted tile and more recently have been executed in glass.

Kozloff's work for over 10 years now has been all about maps. In the following interview, she speaks of this extensively and gives us an idea of how she thinks and works. This artist has consistently argued for the validity and beauty of decoration, and her images have always related to concrete visual experience. "At its best, decoration is the coming together of painting, sculpture, architecture and the applied arts."<sup>24</sup>



11. Joyce Kozloff, *The Spanish Were Here*, watercolor, etchings, lithography, and collage on paper and wood, 28 x 78, 1995, collection of Monica and Richard Segal.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Rene Paul Barilleaux, *Valerie Jaudon* (Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 1996), 10.

**Interview with Joyce Kozloff at her 4<sup>th</sup> floor home and studio on Wooster Street, New York City, N.Y. as her work 'Targets' was being delivered.  
Wednesday, June 26, 2002 10:00 A.M.**



12. Joyce Kozloff in front of a current piece in her studio, 2002, New York, photograph by author.

The following are excerpts from a fun and interesting conversation with this artist. My friend Wanda Dean was with me and took part also.

**JOYCE KOZLOFF**

**BE** *I have a few questions for you.*

**JK** Yes, and I have a few catalogues to show you also. You are an artist yourself?

**BE** *Yes, I am a painter and working on my M.F.A. I have picked pattern to research since it is something that is always in my work. This has turned out to be very interesting, for I had never studied you 'Pattern People.'*

**JK** Now, have you done some research so that you know a little bit about us?



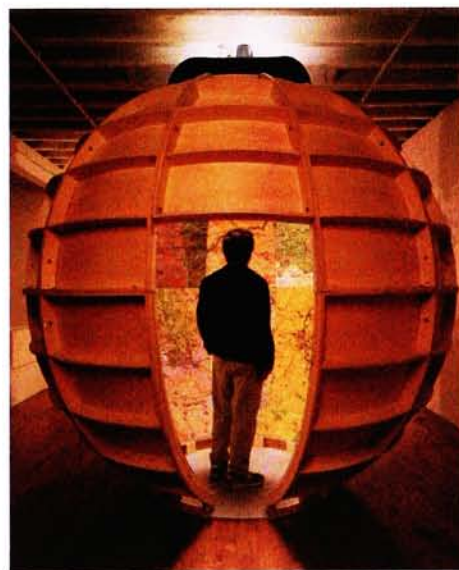
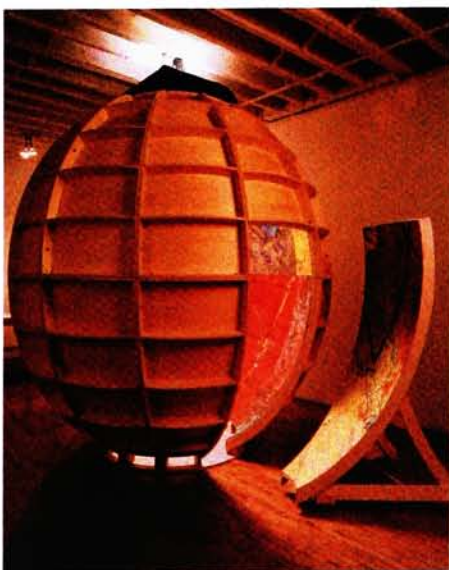
- BE *Yes, I have read about you all. Kushner and Schapiro have a book and so do you. I have also read about your recent exhibitions and where you show. So let's just start. How did you become involved in the movement?*
- JK Mimi Schapiro invited me to a meeting at Bob Zakanitch's loft, and I went. I found the conversation really exciting, liked the people and ideas. I was thrilled to find others thinking about some of the same things that were on my mind--like the art of other cultures, having a maximalist aesthetic, etc.
- BE *What did this movement mean to you? Your personal interpretations and feelings...*
- JK It was supportive in the sharing of ideas; hence one did not feel alone. Being young and anti-establishment, I loved the outrageousness of our claims and positions.
- BE *Do you feel P&D impacted the art world?*
- JK Yes, for a few years we were highly visible and controversial. There was a lot of critical writing, both pro and con. There were many group shows. We had a host of imitators too, and not only in New York.
- BE *After the Pattern and Decorative movement, you all split up. Tell me about the people and the group and how you have evolved.*
- JK One is always evolving. There was a moment when we got together and talked about our ideas, when they were very related. We were all very young at the time, in our twenties. I continue to see many of them. Several of us moved into public art: Valerie Jaudon and Ned Smythe, also others occasionally. For me, public art was a natural extension of ornamentation. I went from painting on canvas to decorating the walls in gallery installations, and then public spaces were a natural next step.



13. Joyce Kozloff, *Longing*, 1977, (right), and *Mad Russian Blanket*, 1977, flanked by *Pilasters*, 1977, installation for the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial, 1979.

My subject matter over the last thirty years has been a pulling together of motifs and imagery and ideas from many different cultures and layering and juxtaposing them, hoping to produce a new kind of content by displacing this material and recontextualizing it. That was how I incorporated patterns and decorative motifs into my paintings and later into my ceramic tile and fabric installations. Many, many artists have used maps for centuries. In public art, one always starts out with diagrams from the architect's office, which are essentially maps. I would start working onto and into them, to develop the ideas for the public art projects. Around 1990, it occurred to me that this might be an interesting vehicle in my studio work as well--to put my content into a preexisting structure that has another kind of content itself. And I have worked with a lot of different kinds of mapping as a result.

I can show you some recent work. This piece that they are moving right now is called *Targets*. You walk into it. It is a globe and it is nine feet high, nine feet across with twenty-four curved sections. I was at the American Academy in Rome and had the piece fabricated by an Italian architect and his wife, who live right down the hill. I hired them to engineer and build it for me. On the inside, I painted aerial maps of all the places in the world that the United States has bombed since World War II. Each section is a different color palette. It is acrylic on canvas, glued down inside. When two people standing inside the globe talk to each other, there is an echo. The outside is beautifully finished wood. It is open at the top. This piece has been traveling for a year and a half, and is just coming back. It is going to be in a show at Wesleyan College in Connecticut next January. I have to store it someplace eventually. At the Academy I made small globes, too which are at my gallery.



14. Joyce Kozloff, *Targets*, acrylic on canvas with wood frame, 108 diameter, 2000, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York.

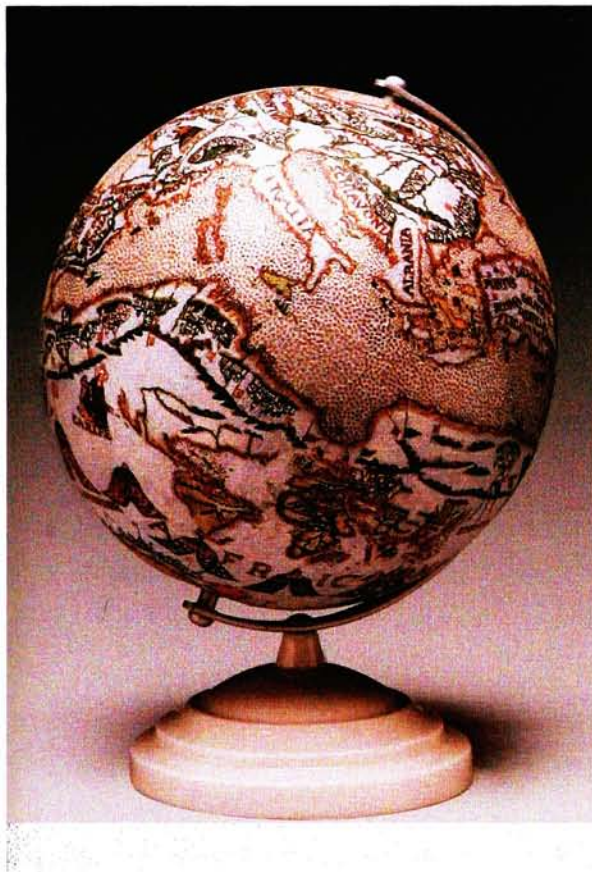


BE *Where is your gallery?*

JK DC Moore Gallery.

BE *Oh yes, we are going there.*

JK Ask them to see the frescos and globes. I did these in the latter nineties. I took Rand McNally globes, covered them with plaster and painted them in watercolor. I also did about seventy-five small frescoes, each one eight by ten inches, on wood panels. Some are vertical and some are horizontal. This entire series is called *Knowledge*. Each is based on an old map, which is inaccurate. The color is largely mine, though the imagery is appropriated from antique maps, which are wrong to our eyes but represented the available knowledge of their time. They are colorful and decorative in their way too, but suggest the arbitrariness of any belief system.



15. Joyce Kozloff, *Knowledge #77*, gesso, watercolor, and acrylic on cardboard, with porcelain base, 9.25 diameter, 1999, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery.



16. Joyce Kozloff, *Knowledge #32, The Holy Land*, 1584, fresco, 8 x 10, 1998, courtesy of DC Moore.

WD *How many hours a day do you work? Do you work every day?*

JK I work whenever I can.

BE *Have you always been an artist and not had other jobs?*

JK No, I've done a lot of teaching all over the country. I have done visiting artist gigs, and a lot of public art commissions, which are really how I make my living.

BE *Tile work?*

JK Not so much any more. I work more in glass and marble mosaic. I haven't done any ceramic tile work in awhile, though I might again.

BE *Tell me about your public commissions.*

JK I started working in public art in 1979. Those projects just took over my life, and they still do when I am absorbed in them. I have tried to spend more time on my private work in the last decade. Each project takes at least a year. I approach them in terms of the site and its cultural history. I have done about fourteen commissions altogether. I installed the last one in Japan a year ago. It is a floor in a Cultural Center in Kurayoshi, Japan, a building designed by Cesar Pelli. It is partly marble mosaic, and partly sandblasted marble. It's twenty-seven feet across and is based on many scattered antique maps of that region of Japan. They asked



me to include the amoebic shape of Lake Tougo on all the map fragments, which almost created a recurring pattern. I have usually worked with Italian mosaicists, but that time, I worked with a Japanese artisan (who fortunately had been trained in Italy, as I was, so we were able to communicate). I collaborate with the mosaicists on the mixing of the colors, but the craft, the cutting of the tiny pieces of marble or glass, is their job.

BE *You have a public installation like this in our National Airport, don't you?*

JK I do, at National Airport in Washington. It is a circular piece that has four quadrants, each a map of the Chesapeake Bay area based on old maps from the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The first diagram is of Native American settlements, then British towns, and finally by the nineteenth century, we can recognize the current District of Columbia and surrounding counties.

BE *You have one in Buffalo, right?*

JK I do, an elevated transit station, between the hospital and the cemetery. It's a big piece, a combination of glass, mosaic and ceramic tile. It is now almost twenty years old. I understand that the wall was badly engineered and the artwork is cracked but they don't have funding to put in a new wall.

WD *Seems like I read something that they are going to change that station.*

JK Well, there goes my art work.

WD *Well, this is something that I read about a year ago in the paper and maybe nothing has been done about it. You'd know.*

JK Not necessarily.

BE *You did one in Philadelphia also.*

JK Yes, both of these were early works. Later, I painted a very large ceramic tile piece, *The Movies: Fantasies and Spectacles*, in the Seventh and Flower subway station in Los Angeles. I worked on that for years. I developed motifs and themes from the various genres of cinema. It was a long station, and the episodes read like continuous filmstrips. There were certain themes that emerged which I did not think should be in public places because they were too provocative, so I saved those ideas for private pieces like this table right here in my studio. One of those themes, which you see here, was racial stereotypes in Hollywood films.

WD *You did this when?*



JK In the middle nineties. I often created the really big ceramic projects in factories, not here at home. If I ever do one of those again, I would certainly execute it somewhere else. I did have a big Skutt kiln, a slab roller, and other ceramic equipment. It was like a cottage industry. I had assistants working with me here. I have since given my kiln and supplies to the Hunter College ceramics department.

BE *What about this piece here on the wall in process?*

JK *Spheres of Influence* is a globe as if it were flattened against the wall. It has twelve sections like an orange, each a shaped canvas, and altogether is sixteen feet long and eight feet high. Its imagery is based on an archaeological atlas of the Greco-Roman world, but I have overlaid information from US government tactical pilotage charts, signals and directions for military and civilian pilots. It crosses the most densely populated parts of that empire; the countries around the Mediterranean, areas heavily contested and colonized, both then and now.



17. Joyce Kozloff, work in progress at her studio, 2002, New York, photograph by author.

WD *Are you a history buff also?*

JK No. When I was at the American Academy in Rome for a year, the historian who orchestrated the effort that became this atlas, Richard Talbert, was leading an NEH cartography workshop for a couple of weeks. We had some conversations and I later bought the book. Ninety scholars around the globe gathered the information to create this first modern atlas of the ancient world. A lot of the names are still recognizable to us.

BE *So are you indeed still into maps?*

JK Oh, yes, if you go into Renaissance palaces, in the libraries there are always two immense globes, the terrestrial globe and the celestial globe. The first is of the land and the second of the heavens. That was the idea for my next piece, to create a partner for *Spheres of Influence*. *Dark and Light Continents*, this work in progress, is its companion. It is based on a satellite photograph of the earth at night, overlaid with information from antique star charts. These two pieces are going to dominate my next show.

BE *Do you want to say anything about appropriation?*

JK All of my work is appropriated. That's why, for me, the work is only as good as its sources. I appropriate very literally. I grid it up and copy as carefully as I can. The layers and juxtapositions are not always planned in advance, all ideas come to me as I am working, as I am quite intuitive. I add and change until it feels right.

BE *How about the grid, the basis of the pattern?*

JK I grid my source and draw it onto whatever surface I am employing. I am not working in all-over patterns and haven't for awhile, so I am not referring to that use of a grid. The art part for me is the way I bring together different ideas and different sources. I operate on a kind of prayer that there will be a transformation in the process. The various, often unexpected parts can be seen together in a different way and people will think about them differently. Sources might change in scale, in materials, and in their combinations. I am a very tight artist; compared to a looser artist like Bob Kushner, for instance.

I did a book on erotic art in the late eighties, *Patterns of Desire*, which was published in 1990. This is a fusion of pornography and ornament, 'pornament'. I appropriated from a wild array of sources. Throughout the book, I placed the full watercolor on the right page, and on the left, a detail from it. The actual sizes of the originals were twenty-two by twenty-two inches, reduced to one-half scale in the book. This watercolor from the book, which is hanging in our living room, was also my first map, *Riding Roughshod through the Heavens*. The Mongolian couples are having intercourse on horseback. They are galloping through a famous celestial map of the heavens by Albrecht Durer.



I can give you a preview of the new book that I am working on fifteen years later. The first was about sex; this one is about war. I had a nine-week residency in Italy last September. While there, I made two dozen very detailed pencil drawings, maps of the sites of historic battles. I call them *Boys Art* because I have always been fascinated with the way little boys draw battles--my brothers did, my son did. I have been obsessively collaging into them, particularly reduced down Xeroxed copies of details from my son's childhood military drawings. Additionally, I am adding related images from old master paintings, contemporary children's books, Japanese animation, etc. This one includes both warriors from Indian miniatures and drawings of weapons from the sketchbooks of Leonardo daVinci. I have taken from Tin Tin and Babar, as well as the works of outsider artist Henry Darger, photocopied, cut up, and spliced into the war plans. Old European maps often had stereotypical representations of the inhabitants of exotic lands on other continents in their margins: I have appropriated those figures as well. It's a book about war and the formation of masculinity, with sources and references from all over the world and across time. With *Patterns of Desire*, I knew what I was putting together right from the beginning. But this series has been a gradual process, and they may get another layer before I am done. The more I add, the more they make sense to me.

WD *Every single one of these little pieces you have to cut out to put in your work?*

JK Cutting them isn't hard, it is gluing them, but gluing them drives me crazy because you don't want to get any glue on the paper.

WD *What kind of glue do you use?*

JK I use jade glue, a white archival glue that is water based. Everything I do is water based actually, whether it is the frescoes, or the ceramics, or the paintings. I like transparency. I did not work on canvas at all for twenty years, from 1977-1997. For the last five years, I have gone back to working the way I did when I was a student, using all and any types of acrylics, very thinned out, washy, and transparent. All my studies for my public projects over those twenty years were in watercolor, which allowed me to layer and modify as I went along.

BE *Do you use a magnifying glass when you work?*

JK I wear special glasses for working which are closer than reading lenses. They are called refraction lenses. I just got them this year and do not use them for any other purpose. They have been very helpful in creating the microscopic drawings in *Boys Art*.

BE *These works are something. They are delightful.*

WD *They are great!*



JK It is something that I consider serious. Girls don't do these drawings. I needed to draw them myself to try and understand the impulse. And because I'm mining my own son's childhood, it has been strangely touching as well.

BE Do you still consider yourself a P&D painter or is your name attached to something different today?

JK The large piece I'm currently working on in my studio, *Dark and Light Continents* is very decorative. It now has iridescent stars from the stationery store across the nocturnal world. Decoration is part of my vocabulary, although I don't use it to the same degree in all my art. I am restless, and my work changes over time, hopefully grows. Nothing is ever lost: I am still a feminist artist, still a decorative artist, still a public artist, and now a cartographic artist as well. Because I'm so concerned about the state of the world right now, as our government prepares to initiate World War III, I'm trying to form a language in which to address those life and death issues.<sup>25</sup>



18. Joyce Kozloff, work in progress at her studio, photograph by author, 2002, New York.

<sup>25</sup> Joyce Kozloff, interview by author, tape recording, New York, N. Y., 26 June 2002.

## ROBERT RAHWAY ZAKANITCH

Robert Rahway Zakanitch was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey, in 1935. He was brought up in a family with two older brothers. Weekends and summers were often spent with his grandparents and aunt. They influenced him with their colors and patterns of Czechoslovakian embroidery and crocheting, which continue to interest him today.<sup>26</sup> After high school he took a job at a coffee factory driving a forklift and before long decided to go to college. He attended Newark School of Fine Arts for commercial art, which he found "excruciating, exhilarating, and life changing."<sup>27</sup> His first advertising job was in New York City in 1956, where he worked for eight months. The next two years were spent in the army at Fort Knox where he worked as a graphic designer. After that, he moved back to New York City and worked full time at a large advertising agency. Several years later he quit and, at the age of twenty-eight, became a full time painter. For a while, to make ends meet, he took odd jobs doing paste-ups and mechanicals.

Zakanitch started out working as an Abstract Expressionist, and eventually experimented in Surrealism, and then Minimalism. Considered a formalist painter at the time, he abided by Greenbergian concepts, which dominated the art world of that day. His first big break was in 1967 when he got a piece into the Whitney Annual. From there, others became interested in his work and he began to exhibit regularly.

In the early 1970s, his art began to change. He questioned everything that he put on canvas. "I didn't start out to paint decorative paintings. I started by trying to break out of formalism, and got into something that was called pattern."<sup>28</sup> He had been working in gridded abstractions, and then began adding floral motifs to them. Other patterns and referential images were incorporated in his art as he experimented. He became one of the leading members of the Pattern and Decoration movement.

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<sup>26</sup> Janet Kardon, *Robert S. Zakanitch* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1981), 4.

<sup>27</sup> Mary Davis MacNaughton, *Larger than Life: Robert Rahway Zakanitch's Big Bungalow Suite* (Los Angeles: Perpetua Press, 1997), 14.

<sup>28</sup> Kardon, 39.

Zakanitch has been exhibiting in New York since 1965. Nationally he has had many solo exhibitions as well as numerous group shows. Internationally he has also shown both in one-man shows as well as in many group exhibitions. He has emerged as one of the most convincing painters in the decorative mode of painting today.

In this interview, Zakanitch talks about his art as doing its part to change the world by transforming the viewer's perceptions of his or her surroundings, and thus rejuvenating his/her relationship to the world in which each lives.<sup>29</sup> He relays a personal report of the beginning of the Pattern and Decoration movement, of ornamentation, decoration, and other taboos. "We changed the rules," he stated. "We are now in a pluralistic decade, with all different kinds of work accepted. The reason for this," he points out, "was the P&D movement. We had a great impact on the last twenty-five years of the last century!"<sup>30</sup>



19. Robert Zakanitch, *Aggressive Goodness Series: Westie*, acrylic on canvas, 54 x 84, 2002, collection of the artist.

<sup>29</sup> David Pagel, *Robert Rahway Zakanitch: The Curio Series* (Philadelphia: Locks Art Publications, 1999), 7.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Zakanitch, artist. Interview with the author. 27 June 2002.



**Interview with Robert Rahway Zakanitch at his home and studio in Brooklyn, N.Y.  
Thursday, June 27, 2002 11:00 A. M.**

We started out by conversing about an interview that I happened upon while online between Mr. Zakanitch and Paul Cummings. Mr. Zakanitch was surprised that it was even online and addressed this in the following statements. My friend Wanda Dean was with me.

**ROBERT ZAKANITCH**

RZ Do you know that this is the second time this has come up in the last two weeks? Arthur Danto is a wonderful art historian who has a second book out and there is an essay on my work in there. I just received it. He called and I talked with him and he said, "you know, I was just reading this interview on you." I said, "Oh no, the one I was trying to get them to can." They wrote me about it, and I have never seen it. It would be very interesting to see it because I was a formalist painter then. I hadn't gotten into pattern yet. I was a classic, a very formalist painter. I was having shows at the Reese Palley and had an article in Time Magazine called "A Bold Newcomer," written by Robert Hughes. I was a part of that whole formalist scene, that 'less is more' idea. So when this interview came about I remember thinking that I didn't really have anything to say, I was just doing these paintings that I thought were wonderful at the time. As the interview went on, I decided to talk about my psychological make-up. I started to get very personal about it and then I thought, I don't think I want this interview to be on tape and then it was too late and it was all done. He never sent it to me to read. It was just taken and given to the archives in Washington D. C. A short time ago I got a letter from them saying that to keep this file active they needed my permission. I wrote the next day, "I don't think I really want these to be in your archives and I would really like to be reinterviewed because my idea of art work is totally different now than it was then. I am really considering having those replaced." I got a letter back completely ignoring that letter and said almost the same thing that they wrote before. I didn't want to get into it, you know, and I was about to write them back and tell them to take it out of the archives. I am not even sure if I wrote that letter, that is how long ago it was. The best interview on me was done for a catalogue of the *Big Bungalow Suites*.

BE *That was one of your later works. I saw it online.*

RZ The last big show I had in New York City was of the *Big Bungalow Suite*. It consisted of five paintings; actually they only showed four because of the space. These pieces are all thirty feet long by eleven feet high and each is one unit. The canvas is not stretched on stretchers because of the logistics. If they were on panels, they would have to break down into five folding pieces so that after every show, they'd have to be taken off. It would have been a nightmare to do that. I worked on a scaffold for five years. I had to put up walls in my studio to work.





20. Robert Zakanitch in his studio with *Big Bungalow Suite V*, acrylic on canvas, 11' x 30', 1994, photograph by author, 2002, Brooklyn. Wanda Dean is on the left.

After the show here in New York, they started to travel around the country at museum shows, and the only way to do that was to roll, and put them on a tube. To be hung, they had to be rolled onto the walls, and stapled directly off the roll. Then once on the wall you could adjust them. I liked the raw edges because it allowed the audience to get a sense of the artist's studio, to see the rough edges and the paint and how things like this were done. My work has always been about process. I've always loved for you to see the process, to see the errors, to see the mistakes. This is all about art making. I'm drifting away on this, now where are we going?

BE *To the Pattern and Decorative Movement, where...*

RZ Oh right, I still continue to paint that way. First of all, we received such negative publicity because the movement attacked formalism at its peak. It was a head on confrontation with the idea that saying less is more and no other way is interesting. Less is more is a bore and more is more!

BE *That's when you people came about and got together.*



RZ You know how all of that came about? I bet everyone has a different story about it. Here's the way it actually happened.

BE *Ok, good. We didn't talk about it a lot with Joyce.*

RZ No, because she wasn't in on the initial thing. I was working in New York and I was going through this change. My work was changing out of formalism and out of the color-field thing. The first big show was in SoHo, near Fanelli's bar, actually, in the building that is now the Mercer Hotel. Three years later I left and showed right across the street above Fanelli's bar in a gallery called Cunningham Ward which was Betty Cunningham, who was wonderful. She is now working for the Robert Miller Gallery. My work had changed because I started using imagery that was referring to flowers and things; they were still flat and formal in their concept. This was imagery that referred outside of the painting, which was an anachronism at the time because pure formalist painting had to be totally abstract. Greenbergian rules absolutely controlled the art world in the seventies. I think back and I wonder how it had ever gotten into such a dictatorial situation.



21. Robert Zakanitch, *Garden Party*, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72, 1977, collection of Fred Mueller.



After that show, I left New York and I went to teach out in California just to get out of the city because my work was changing and I didn't know what I was doing, I really didn't. Everything had been written down by Greenberg, and we all were always following his rules. Now my work was getting off the wall; I was doing things that you were not supposed to do. Everything had to look untouched by human hands, and words like romantic and sentimental were absolutely taboo. To me these were important aspects for us as human beings. There was this kind of thing happening in the art world where, when you went to a gallery you had to be an intellectual connoisseur of art history, or a historian, or a teacher of philosophy to understand what was going on. I just thought, "That's not what art is. Art is about relating to the audience, relating to the public, bringing them in. It's about uplifting everyone's life so that when you see art you feel like you are walking into the Sistine Chapel; you are not the same when you walk out." I have always thought that that is what art is about.

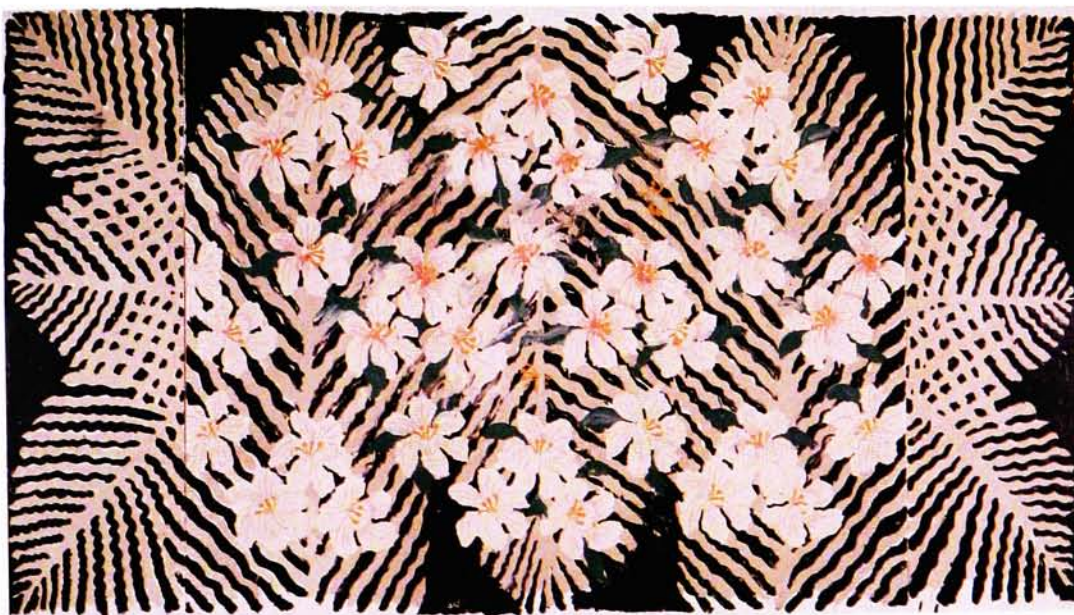
This idea actually came from my grandmother. My grandparents were from the farms in Czechoslovakia so when they came here they did things like lots of embroidery, lots of decoration, and lots of ornamentation. We were from the working class area in Rahway, New Jersey. We were not wealthy so where we lived it was rather bleak. It was by the oil tanks. You know the refineries you go through on the turnpike? Well, that is where I was raised. So this kind of ornamentation was enriching our everyday lives. It made it kind of nice to be around with that kind of attitude. They would paint the kitchen every two or three years. They would do the top one color and the bottom one color and then they would do a stencil in between. I said, "Why do you do that?" And my grandmother said, "Because it is beautiful!" And to this day, that is the statement that I make, for that is what the essence of what making art is.

When all of that started to come into play in my work, I realized it was in opposition to all of the scholastic, academic intellectualism that was in the art world. I was very confused. How do I confront this? How do I get this into my work? So I went to California and taught there for three semesters at University of California at San Diego. I knew Mimi (Miriam Schapiro) was out there and Paul Brach, her husband, whom I have known from the city. They were the directors of California Arts, which was outside of Los Angeles. Paul knew I was down there and called me. He asked me to come up and give a lecture. I said, "Paul, I couldn't possibly give a lecture because I don't know what I am doing and I wouldn't know what to talk about." And he said, "Oh, that's a great lecture!" "For you it's a great lecture but not for me because I am the one who has to give it." I replied. Well, I did go up and I did have a good time. I don't know what the students got out of it. I ended up having to stay there the entire day because after the talk I crit all of them. That was actually fun.

WD *It was probably a learning experience for you too in a way, wasn't it? To do the lecture and reconfirm your beliefs?*



RZ Or to reconfirm the fact that I didn't quite know what I was doing. Everything that one could talk about was helpful at the time. I didn't realize it was. But I knew my work was moving into patterns. I was doing these abstract patterns. That was what was so confusing. I kept doing these marks and things and they kept going into these patterns and I thought, "This is really strange, I can't stop it." Then I started to do these floral kinds of things. I had a body of work and I had a show at Betty Cunningham's Gallery. The reviews were so sad. Artists came in who I thought were friends and said, "You call these paintings?" I had no answer. All I could say was, "Yes, I do." But I had no words to back them up. I was walking around at my opening with a bottle of scotch in my arms. I wasn't drinking it but I had it there for support.



22. Robert Zakanitch, *Savannah Nights*, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 144, 1979, collection of Morton G. Neumann Family.

While I was in California I talked to Mimi. "You know, there is something going on Mimi, something going on with pattern, I am seeing it." I had visited Tony Robbin's studio just before I went to California, and he was doing wonderful pattern pieces. Joyce was involved also. I spent the afternoon with Mimi talking. We decided to get together when we both got back to New York and call whoever we thought we wanted. We would all get together and just talk. There was something going on and we had to talk about it!

So that is exactly what happened. We had spoken in September and then in January of 1975 we were both back to the city. We had a meeting at my studio, which was at eighteen Warren Street, down by city hall in Manhattan. I had a



studio there for nineteen years. It's one below Chamber Street, at City Hall Park. It's now called Tribeca. So we had this meeting and it was absolutely wonderful. It was eye opening. Bob Kushner was there, Joyce Kozloff, Mimi Schapiro, and Tony Robbin. We wanted Kim MacConnel there but he was on the coast and couldn't come. Amy Goldin, who was the art critic, came. You know she died about a year later. It's too bad for she had a vocabulary for decoration and had good input. She had been very interested in pattern for years before that. We didn't want any critics. We wanted just artists, to keep it very quiet. When she found out we were meeting she said that she just had to come for she had been thinking about this for years. She was a very good friend of Kushner. She came and it was great. I don't know if George Sugarman was there but I don't think so. That was the beginning of it; that was the first meeting. The next month Joyce was getting calls, I was getting calls, and Mimi was getting calls from people that had heard about the meeting and wanted to have another one. So we had another one a month later. Valerie Jaudon was there, Brad Davis and the rest of us. And that's how it was.

BE *You took a different approach than the women. They were more into the Feminist end of it.*

RZ Feminism did come into the fire. Mimi's thing was, "I have no history in art. I have to create my own history because it all belongs to men." I kind of agreed with her but it certainly wasn't true for me. The thing about the movement was that it was the first time that there was this working together of men and women. For example, for a man to be doing these 'considered' very kind of feminine ideas and designs was very tricky because abstract expressionism was very honcho work. We were coming out of this old era where if anything was considered sweet in the work, as a man, you got rid of it, because it was considered extraneous and feminine, and therefore irrelevant. That was a big issue that I had to work through, because I knew that those things were in me, that gentility, that sweetness. It's in all of us really. All of these issues were coming up in this work. It was no longer just about doing a painting, but there were all of these psychological things that had to be said, and all of these taboos. Freudianism came into it, as well as Karen Horney's ideas. All of that analytical stuff came into play. Who are you as a man? Can you be a man and still have these sweet tendencies? That was scary for a lot of people to get involved in. The boundaries between masculine and feminine were being blurred. That was the real confrontation and that was when Feminism was really coming into its own again. But all of us did get together and I think it had a lot to do with coloring this whole movement. For me it started opening up areas that I have always loved and I have always thought the most incredible visual things to look at.

WD *So it was there all the time.*

RZ It was all there from my infant days and my childhood. It suddenly started to come rushing out. My first show at Holly Solomon exploded everything. Bob



Kushner and Kim MacConnel had been showing there before and they were doing these fabrics that were really beautiful. I never considered them painting but I loved the attitude in the work. When I came in as an older artist showing at Holly Solomon, I had an absolutely real painting show with this kind of information in it. I felt that it was only through painting that something was going to really change in the art world. And they didn't. You see, that was what was interesting when we all got together. We all had the same attitude about the end of formalism; the end of modernism as we knew it. We weren't interested in all of that abstraction; we weren't interested in minimalism or in formalism. Conceptual artists were running around saying painting was dead. To the conceptualist it was because they by and large were all formalist painters at one point. As you know, formalism in essence is the purity of materials concept, where everything must relate to the materials. So conceptualism comes in and says, "Well, we don't want materials, we just want the idea, what could be purer than that?" So that's bringing formalism to the end. That's why they were saying painting was dead, and to them it was. But for us it wasn't. None of us agreed on how to do it. I wanted to paint. Mimi wanted to paint but she began to do collages with fabric and all women's work. She'll tell you all about that. Joyce went into ceramics. Kushner began to start painting figures on his fabrics, and MacConnel was still doing those hanging things, and I liked them. I thought they were very original, very fresh, and they were very reminiscent of the forties and fifties. So that was the first time. It was out and it just kind of went from there.

BE *What evolved next?*

RZ The evolution. It died out in the newspaper. The critics didn't want it there in the first place.

BE *The movement didn't die out did it? You were all still doing art.*

RZ After four or five years the movement itself disappeared, especially in the states. What is interesting to me is that it took off when it went international, when it hit Europe. It was from a man, called Marcel Liatowitsch, who had this little gallery in Basel, Switzerland. He came over because he had read about this movement. He met all of us and took our work. We had shows in his gallery and it all just went from there. Bruno Bischofsberger, from Zurich, got involved. So did Holly Solomon. Six months after Holly's show, Robert Miller opened his gallery and I went with him. I wanted to go back uptown because everything had come down to SoHo. He is now in Chelsea. I showed with Miller for eight years and then I left in eighty-eight. I continued to do patterned work because I felt that the more I did it the more I realized I was just scratching the surface. It was still there. There was so much more to find out.

The tradition of ornamentation, to me, is much older and even grander than the tradition of mainstream painting that started with the Renaissance. Ornamentation is as natural as breathing; it's so pure. So I just continued to do it

and I have continued to do it since. That's why, in 1990, after a show at Sidney Janis Gallery, I wanted to do a gigantic body of work that was about ornamentation because I still thought it spectacular. There wasn't anything around that I saw that I was particularly interested in other than rehashing formalism, rehashing minimalism, and I was really not interested in that. We had in the eighties the neo-German Expressionists, and the neo-Italianists, but I had Rauschenberg and DeKooning who were my original influences, since I was a little older than all of them.

I thought for me, to be doing this 'neo' work was going backwards. I still loved ornamentation, despite the fact that it was now considered passé, or whatever it was considered. But it didn't seem to matter because it was the only thing I found real beauty in. They were the words that started coming back into focus, words like beauty, which I always was concerned with, and words like sentimentality, which I always thought very important to us as human beings. We cannot exist without either of these two things in our lives. My work was continuing that way, and at that time I started the five giant thirty-foot paintings that took me five years to do.

BE *The Bungalow Suites.*

RZ *The Big Bungalow Suites.* For the last two years they have been traveling around the country to whatever museum could hold them for they are really huge. And only two museums have been able to put all five of them up at the same time. They are here now.



23. Robert Zakanitch, progression of *Big Bungalow Suite I*, acrylic on canvas, 1990-1991, courtesy of Locks Gallery, Philadelphia.

BE *You make your living off your paintings then, or do you do other things?*

RZ Yes, I do. I don't teach. Not that I don't want to, I love teaching, and the opportunities I have had I always liked. I basically have just taught as a visiting artist in many places. I have fortunately been able to live off my work. Sometimes I make a lot of money and sometimes I make no money at all for long periods of time.



BE *How long have you lived here in Brooklyn?*

RZ I have had this studio for fifteen years. I just started living in it for the last three. This used to be part of the studio. The big part is on the other side. I used to do the smaller works here.

My work started changing again five or six years ago. I started doing pieces about adornments. The show was called *Adornments*, for things that you would buy, jewelry things at flea markets and garage sales. I would do these big paintings of them; I was changing the scale. They are fairly large. They are based on pins that you would buy. The attitude is one of adornment and well-being.



24. Robert Zakanitch, *Plaza*, acrylic on canvas, 43 x 64, 1998, part of the Curio Series, courtesy of Locks Gallery, Philadelphia.

In 1975, I decided that I no longer wanted any dehumanization in my work. That itself was a real departure. The role of the artist has completely changed because of our technology. Ordinarily the artist has always been considered to be a reflector of society. Because of technology, which reflects society so much better and quickly and instantly, the artist is freed of being a reflector and should now take on the role of being the director. For me, that is planting seeds of healing and caring. You really have a responsibility once you begin to say I am directing where I think it should go. It is critical to growth and creativity. Artists don't



seem to realize that. Artists think about being in this state of avant-garde, which I think is passé. The avant-garde is always about destroying everything around it. You can't do that. Nothing comes out of nothing. It all comes from somewhere, and you have to give credence to these influences that you have. My feeling is you don't destroy what existed. You take from it. You redo it and you come up with something totally different. You acknowledge that, and you take it with you.

Every time I gave a talk I said that I learned so much from formalism. I couldn't do my paintings without formalism, even though I've stopped doing it in the pure sense. It taught me about the beauty of materials, and the sensuality of the objects I am working with, and how a painting is very much an object unto itself, it has a life unto itself.

BE *Your 'Adornments' are fairly recent. This was the period right after 'The Big Bungalow Suites,' then, right?*

RZ You know, it was, right after *The Big Bungalow Suites*. I wanted to do smaller paintings, but I wanted to use the same big scale. It was about scale.

Artists are always saying, "Oh the audience, they don't get it and I don't care. I'm not painting for the audience." I want my audience to get it. I want my shows to be that way. I don't want people to scratch their head and say, "I don't get it, what is this?" It is a big square black thing that's all lead and you say, "What are you doing this for?" I want you to get something. Art is really about touching the human spirit and changing you. I think it is essential, and especially now, after 9/11. After that time I had this amazing rush of creativity. You don't stop creativity. It is the thing that is going to keep us going. I started doing these paintings about lace. Now, more than ever, it is important for any creative person to create, grow, and build, not destroy. Add to that this whole thing about nurturing and humanness and healing, which I just mentioned. I always felt that work can be about healing. Art is a very powerful tool. It can affect you psychologically even more than visually. It is about, in essence, who we are in a very important way, and the fact that the spirit of our being is somehow involved in this creativity. It's not about destruction, it's about growing.

That's another thing about the work. Joyce may have mentioned this. As artists, we had only two alternatives. Painters certainly, as in subject matter. It was representationalism, beginning with the Renaissance, and all the way up until we got to the French Revolution. The whole point was to make something as representative as you could possibly make it. After that, the mind changed, and things began to start being about the painting itself, about the surface. This began with Delacroix. Compare a Delacroix to an Ingres, for example. You see the rawness where Delacroix starts to become involved with the paint and the surface. After the revolution, painting then starts becoming about people, no longer just royalty. People in the fields and in the woods and this leads to French Impressionism, and the beginning of reductive painting, you know, less is more,

there is no longer that detail, detail, detail. When you get into Impressionism, it is really less, just about paint, paint, paint. Then you go into the turn of the century and into Picasso, who was greatly influenced by Toulouse Lautrec, which was less and less. And then Kandinsky, which was less and less. Then we get to the ultimate in the twentieth century, which was Jackson Pollock, which was no image at all, which was splash, splash, splash. Paint for paint's sake. So the only two alternatives were representationalism and abstraction.

As an artist, neither of them interested me any longer. It was like trying to find another color. Where do you go from there? That's when ornamentation started coming into the work. Here was something that has been around longer than either of those, and no one has done anything with it, only to decorate one's house, which is where the word decoration comes in. But to use that information as legitimate subject matter for painting was a whole other issue and that's what really interested me. That's why the work is filled with irony. I was using all the things I had learned from abstract expressionism and formalism like how to make a painting and what a piece of art is. Then, to alter the subject matter and bring in this taboo subject matter of decoration, which is a dirty word, actually to bring it into the work and make paintings out of it! That was a major thing and I thought, "Ah, I have found the third alternative."

BE *You have certainly given me some good information.*

RZ I am glad you are writing something about us. There is not a lot of information on this. It is not like formalism. It is not like neo-expressionism. It's not like all of those people in the eighties, such as Julian Schnabel. There were tons written on all of them. There were too many taboos with the Pattern and Decoration movement, just like we were talking about. It made a very serious dent, however, more than any of the critics wanted to admit. It really put an end to formalism; it just stopped it and we are still not coming out of it. What happened right after this was, everyone, all the painters that I knew suddenly began to reexamine themselves and say, "What is it that I really like?" You could see that the work that they started painting was very different from what they were originally doing, which was formalist painting. Now we had a pluralistic decade with all of this different kind of work coming in. And the reason is that all the rules had changed. We changed them.

BE *You probably had more impact that you'll ever know.*

RZ I think we had a great impact on the last twenty-five years of the last century because the whole twentieth century to me was the destruction of beauty. And the last twenty-five years has been about bringing it back. I was on two panels about beauty. One was called, "What ever happened to beauty?" There have been many more. Dave Hickey, who is one of the wonderful great contemporary



critics today, when asked what he thought was going to be the most important issue in the nineties, said, " Beauty."<sup>31</sup>



25. Robert Zakanitch, *Aggressive Goodness Series: Pug*, 2002, collection of the artist, photograph by the author.

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Zakanitch, interview by author, tape recording, Brooklyn, N.Y., 27 June 2002.



## MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

Miriam Schapiro was born in 1923 in Toronto, Canada. She grew up in New York City where her father was an industrial designer. Being an artist, he often took his daughter to museums and galleries and acted as her mentor. While in high school, she took art classes at the Museum of Modern Art and WPA. In 1944, Schapiro attended University of Iowa, where she met her husband and life-long companion, Paul Brach. They eventually came back to New York City where they have lived most of their lives. They both were involved in the 1950s art scene. She worked in the style of gestural abstraction, and by 1959, they both had gallery representation.

In the sixties, Schapiro's work moved to a more controlled and hard-edged look. Some of these geometric abstractions were based on computer assisted images that altered her drawings into a variety of points of view. Other works were self-exploratory pieces using metaphoric imagery about her life and her struggles as a woman.

Schapiro was a founder, with Judy Chicago, of the Feminist Art Program at the California Institute of the Arts in the early 1970s. *Womanhouse*, a full-scale feminist environment created in an abandoned house in Hollywood, was a part of this. She has since collaborated with other women in creating art that is an homage to the woman. One of her missions is to elevate women's handiwork to a level of high art. As her husband states in his essay about her, "By using the marginalized images of women's culture, Mimi rescues them from invisibility. Certainly she, herself, had moved beyond 'domestic slavery' but she has no wish to distance herself from women's shared past."<sup>32</sup> Another mission of hers is to focus attention on women artists of the past. Through her *femmagés* (feminist-oriented collages of paint and fabric) she has done this.

Schapiro helped to launch the Pattern and Decoration movement of the 1970s. Her patterning impulse became Miriam's way of embellishing a wide range of themes. These topics all had a strong formal presence as well as associations with women's

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<sup>32</sup> Tucson Museum of Art. 1998. *Miriam Schapiro: Works on Paper, A Thirty Year Retrospective* (Tucson: City Press, 1998), 10.

physical and interior lives. They were usually flat shapes such as dress and costume shapes, handkerchiefs, aprons, hearts, houses and fans.<sup>33</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s, theatrical pieces including puppets and dancing dominated much of her work, as always, with layers of meaning in them. Her autobiographical figural compositions were the vehicles of imagery she used to get her point across. Her more recent work opens up to the evocation of a pan-tribal climate of myths.<sup>34</sup>

Today, Schapiro resides with her husband at their home in East Hampton, New York. She is represented by the Steinbaum Krauss gallery in New York City. In this interview, we learn about Miriam and her art and a little more as to why she occupies the important and richly deserved position she has achieved in the world of art today.<sup>35</sup>



26. Miriam Schapiro, in her studio in front of one of her works of art, East Hampton, photograph by author.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>35</sup> Tucson Museum of Art, 5.



**Interview with Miriam Schapiro at her home and studio in East Hampton, N.Y.  
Monday, August 26, 2002 4 P.M.**

Miriam had had a busy few weeks. She had been working with a show at Guild Hall in East Hampton entitled, "Personal and Political: The Woman's Art Movement, 1969-1975." I was able to see the show and hear a lecture by Joyce Kozloff on Sunday, August 25. After a busy weekend, Miriam generously gave me an hour of her time. We sat in her study as we chatted. Later we toured the rooms in which she worked. I was able to see her library, the wonderful fabrics, supplies and collections of handkerchiefs, aprons, and dolls as well as her paintings.

**MIRIAM SCHAPIRO**

BE *What did you think of Joyce's talk yesterday?*

MS Joyce, Max and I talked about it this morning at breakfast and I think she has developed herself as an artist of great social identity. Feminists in the early years wanted a better world for women artists. Now that several decades have passed, the emphasis for some women artists has moved from imaging their personal history to a larger sphere of interest in the world.

Joyce has always been an avid traveler. Her involvement with women in the United States was augmented by meeting and seeing the lives of women in Europe, Asia, New Zealand, South America, etc. One of my favorite works of hers was shown during her talk; a map where all the streets were named after women. It was her observation that more than not, streets in cities were named only after men.

She has worked with imaginary maps for a number of years now. Her social consciousness has been embedded in these maps. These works are different from her earlier work. I think the ways in which change comes over artists is an interesting topic. One's subject changes as well as the structure, color and materials of the work.

It is like moving out of the box at different points in your life. That certainly happened to me. The painting in the Guild Hall exhibition shows my shift from 'hard edge' painting to the future of my art.

BE *Which one is that?*

MS *Lady Gengi's Maze.*

There is a garden at the bottom of the painting, which is empty of flowers. This is a symbolic statement in 1974, which told that the work I had been making, called 'hard edge' by art writers, no longer interested me. However, if the garden is empty what will take its place? I wanted to make a more sensuous art filled with



wilder color and fabric and paper on canvas. This was my basis for Pattern and Decoration, a new art form, an answer to minimalism and conceptualism.

There are three rugs flying above the empty garden. They speak of the new materials. One is made of painting only, the next is fabric and the third, which has a hole in it, is made of paper. Looking through the hole one can see the grey stairwell. I asked myself, "Where am I going?"

The grey door above the stairwell is closed so I have no idea where I will be. *Lady Gengi's Maze* shows where I left off and where I was headed.



27. Miriam Schapiro, *Lady Gengi's Maze*, acrylic and fabric collage on canvas, 72 x 80, 1972, courtesy of the artist.



BE *Where were you headed?*

MS I was headed towards making a place in my art for expressing my feminist wish to incorporate the work of untutored women with my own knowledge of making paintings. The art world at this point had no place for this kind of fusion. A large canvas like *Wonderland*, for example was made after a trip to Sidney, Australia. There I visited antique shops and found needlework: tablecloths, fabrics, pot holders, knitted gloves etc. Some of these pieces were glued onto *Wonderland*, which already had sweeping patterns behind a small runner placed in the center of the work with embroidered works saying, "Welcome to Our Home." Australian knitted aprons glued to the surface of the canvas danced over all over this painting. It is in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum.



28. Miriam Schapiro, *Wonderland*, acrylic and fabric collage on canvas, 90 x 144, 1983, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

I have a large collection of potholders, handkerchiefs, some quilts, and pillowslips with tatting on the edges. I have just purchased an apple pie made of fabric and similar domestic objects, which show up from time to time in flea markets. I collect all this needlework in part because they remind me of my grandmother seated in her special chair crocheting the edges of a pillowslip. She in turn watched her mother embellish some piece of cloth with her hands, which expressed her need to make art. It was the same impetus as mine--to make something beautiful. Also I love the history of needlework and want the work of my ancestors embedded in my own art.

BE *Are you still interested in this form of femmage today?*

MS It shows up in my art today without my planning.

BE *You are aware of it at least which is good.*

MS Speaking of intuition, one of my works in the Guild Hall show, *Personal and Political*, which is an exhibition of the art of feminist artists in the seventies, is called *Ox*. It is an abstract symbolic work; an early vaginal piece. The curator placed an explanation with the statement next to the art. It says, "And Ms. Schapiro says she was unaware of what she was doing." I laughed when I read this next to my work. There are taboos in the art world. One of them being that nothing should be said which makes the artist seem out of control. Yet I feel otherwise. My intuitions, my dreams, all are me. My hands are motivated by my imagination. It's like a mysterious doodling you make while you talk on the telephone, when you darken small abstract images or put feathers on them. You don't consciously know what you are doing. Joyce talked about that in her lecture. She spoke of her imagination, which makes stuff upside down and right side up and so forth.



29. Miriam Schapiro, *Ox*, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 108, 1967, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego.

BE *She talked about her use of appropriation and how she so blatantly appropriated. Yet the results are what count.*

MS She is speaking of something we artists are familiar with, that art comes from art.



BE *There was a lot in my readings about your connection with the P&D movement and that you were one of the initiators. You were in California and then in New York City. Do you care to say anything about those beginning meetings? How everyone's agendas were all so different? Could you elaborate?*

MS Much has already been said. For me it was a time of sharing information with my colleagues, men and women. We were all excited about our need for making art, using a variety of ideas connected to the rhythm of pattern and color. My *Anatomy of a Kimono* was made then and this 50 feet painting was a real tribute to the idea of talking back to the Conceptualists and Minimalists who were not interested in the richness and sensuality of color and form, which we felt could bring art to a new level of beauty.



30. Miriam Schapiro, *Anatomy of a Kimono*, acrylic and fabric on canvas, ten panels, 6'8" x 52'2.5", 1976, collection of Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich.

BE *Who is we?*

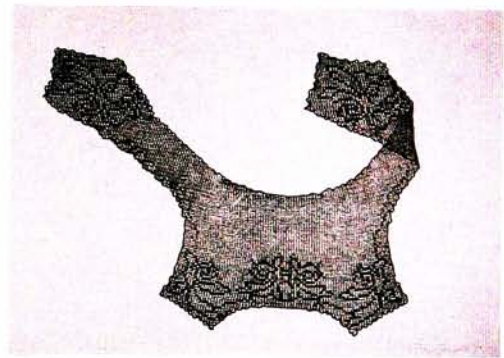
MS The Pattern and Decoration artists, some of whom are mentioned a great deal like Bob Zakanitch, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner, Valerie Jaudon and myself.

There were a number of shows that others and we were in. I went to Belgium where in a Kunsthaller I was amazed at how important this work was. It was large enough to hold my *Anatomy of a Kimono* and Bob Zakanitch's huge paintings as well as works by other artists.

The Europeans, always interested in what American artists are doing, were strongly influenced by this new movement, more so than American dealers and museums. In many ways we are a philistine country that is not as aesthetically motivated as the Europeans are.

BE *Talk about needlework and doilies.*

MS Doilies are abundant in my collections. My well-known series of prints called *Anonymous was a Woman* displays eight antimacassars. Macassar was a company who produced oil for men's hair and antimacassar was a phrase women called their doilies. They did not want their overstuffed chairs and couches ruined with the oil from men's heads so they covered their chairs with doilies, thus the word, antimacassar. This series is a high point in my philosophy about women's desire for beauty.



31. Miriam Schapiro, *Anonymous Was a Woman*, suite of ten etchings, each 18 x 24, 1977, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

The making of the series deserves telling. In Corvallis, Oregon, at the State University I met with a number of former printmakers called back to the print shop of the University by an ad in the local newspaper advertising my visit and my wish to have assistance in creating a project. I got my crew and will always remember the woman who proudly announced she was ninety years old. I arrived in Corvallis with a suitcase of antimacassars. In my first meeting I showed them the needlework I had brought and explained my philosophy. I wanted each one to pick out a doily and make a print on a standard sized sheet of paper. I would show them where to place it on the sheet and what color ink to use. The doily was itself lowered on a copper plate covered with soft ground and quickly but gently removed from the plate, which was then put in a tray of acid and the piece was etched. That was all there was to it.



To my delight the work was done beautifully and the series was a great success. One set can be seen in the National Gallery in Washington, D. C.

BE *Tell me about the work you are doing now with dolls.*

MS My grandfather, Aaron Cohn, invented the first movable doll's eye in America. Two of his sons went into the doll business. My grandfather's business was first called *The Ideal Toy and Novelty Company*. Many years later it was called *Ideal*, and finally sold to *Mattel*. I grew up listening to my relatives talk about dolls. My cupboards are filled with at least fifty dolls that I have collected over the years. I am not interested in contemporary commercial dolls. I prefer the old ones I find in flea markets all over America when I am out doing my lectures. I can imagine a child's grandfather whittling one and grandma dressing it. I like the dolls to be old, worn and stained, and then I can see the humanity of the piece. It allows me to remember that some child loved it. I am making images that have digital dolls glued onto the painted canvas.



32. Miriam Schapiro, in her living room in front of a recent piece, 2002, East Hampton, photograph by author.

BE *What other subjects have you used in your work?*

MS I have done paintings with figures, with theaters, my early works of the seventies were called *Shrines*. I also designed books for children, made sculpture, prints, in other words, whatever I have been asked to do, as well a non-commissioned art.

BE Thank you very much for all. You certainly have informed me of so much.<sup>36</sup>



33. Miriam Schapiro in collaboration with Sherry Brody, *Doll House*, from "Womanhouse," mixed media construction, 84 x 40 x 41, 1972, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

<sup>36</sup> Miriam Schapiro, interview by author, tape recording, East Hampton, N.Y., 26 August 2002.



## VALERIE JAUDON

Valerie Jaudon was born at Greenville, Mississippi, in 1945. She studied at Mississippi University for Women in Columbus, Mississippi; Memphis Academy of Art in Tennessee; University of the Americas in Mexico City, Mexico; and St. Martin's School of Art in London, England. She has lived and worked in New York City and East Hampton since the 1970's.

One of her first exhibitions was with artist-designer Sonia Delaunay in 1975. Frank Stella was a big influence on her art; she used his work as a springboard in which to expand her ideas. She shared with him his fascination with architecture and the large vocabulary of form it encompasses. Also, they both had an admiration for the decorative traditions of Islam and for Celtic illumination, with their inventive, intricate, interlace designs.<sup>37</sup> Her work has also been linked to two other contemporary geometric abstractionists, Ad Reinhardt and Agnes Martin.

From 1973 until 1985, she titled her paintings after places in her native Mississippi. In the late seventies and early eighties she painted lightly woven structures, symmetrical and deceptively simple yet very complex. Compositions of the late eighties played off grids suggested by elongated bars with full circles instead of arches, free-floating arcs instead of interlocking curves. By the mid- to late nineties, Jaudon had eliminated the grid altogether and moved to more diverse shapes and bands of color.

"My art wants to explore everything at once--complexity, repetition, reference, beauty, disjunction, symmetry, and sensuousness." Jaudon told Rene Paul Barilleaux, the chief curator at the Mississippi Museum of Art.<sup>38</sup> "The whole idea is to change the viewer's mind," she has said, and to that end she feels she needs to get the viewer's attention. The visual idiom she chooses to use is the argot of geometric abstraction; but she often uses that idiom in a sense against itself, turning it around to use as her own. To

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<sup>37</sup> Rene Paul Barilleaux, *Valerie Jaudon* ( Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 1996), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Flinn Young, "Understanding Valerie Jaudon's Evolving Art," *Number 36: an Independent Quarterly of the Visual Arts*, Spring 1999.

command the critics' and the viewing public's recognition of her work as an authentic art form, her strategy is to deploy the dominant, that is, masculinist "conventions, codes, values and hierarchies" while subtly and mischievously "shifting them around."<sup>39</sup> In other words, she wished to dislocate something, maybe by sharply magnifying or flaunting it, through the use of excessive repetition that would send a subtly disturbing message, possibly moving beyond established bounds, or outside rational control.<sup>40</sup>

Valerie has executed a series of permanent public and architectural works. Among the first was the design of security fences for the New York subway station at Lexington Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. She has since executed floors, gardens and wall murals in ceramic tile and oil on canvas, stained glass windows, and courtyard paving in granite and brick.

Jaudon is a highly visible artist, with works in numerous private and public collections. She has had many solo exhibitions as well as almost two hundred group shows, both nationally and internationally.



34. Valerie Jaudon, *Long Division*, fence, painted steel, 12' x 60', MTA Lexington Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street subway station, collection of the New York City Transit Authority, New York.

<sup>39</sup> Barilleaux, *Valerie Jaudon*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 20.



**Interview with Valerie Jaudon outside of Guild Hall in East Hampton, N.Y.  
Sunday, August 25, 2002 12:30 P.M.**

On the morning of August 25, at 11 A.M., Joyce Kozloff had a lecture concerning her work that was in the show at Guild Hall in East Hampton. I saw the show and went to the talk. Afterwards, I met with Valerie.



35. Valerie Jaudon, photo by Amos Chan, courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson.

VALERIE JAUDON

BE *About the P&D movement...*

VJ There were over fifty P&D group shows from 1976 until about 1980 which received a lot of well-documented attention. A re-creation of any of those exhibitions would not be out of the ordinary today, but at the time they seemed visually complex and theatrical, and in general challenged the art world. After the first several artist-generated group shows in 1976 and 1977, the artists themselves did not actually meet again as a larger group to talk about art. During this period the artists involved had one person exhibitions in the U.S and Europe, as well as other and diverging interests. With the exception of a few of the earlier group shows, most of the P&D exhibitions were organized by a variety of art critics, curators, or dealers, without necessarily consulting the artists. You might ask, how could such innocent and colorful artwork, paintings, fabrics, sculptures, furniture, etc. be disturbing, when any artist's work taken individually was not particularly shocking in the least?

P&D can be seen as taking steps beyond post-minimalism, which was primarily sculpture, and addressing painting in a theatrical way. Painting at that time was the territory of modernist aesthetics. P&D as a movement managed to highlight, oppose or contest every unquestionable principle and goal of Modernism, which included:

- \*A separation of the disciplines, each discipline does what each does best: painting, sculpture etc.

- \*A mandate that the work of art function solely to define itself: a proper

painting referred only to its materials and process.

\*Flatness of the picture plane as a goal: not draped canvas and fabric, collage.

\*Painting reduced to the essence of painting itself: pure painting, materials and process.

\*A conviction that the work of art was purely visual, and viewers had purely visual responses: in other words, aesthetic experiences devoid of language or thought.

These characteristics of modernist art were guarantees of a traditional high culture, clearly distinguished from the categories of popular culture, crafts and utilitarian arts, folk art, and the art of non-western civilizations. Each could be judged within its own criteria.

BE *How did the people respond to the movement?*

VJ P&D insisted on a wide-ranging response to the work, and the artists wanted their work to be 'read' slowly over a period of time by viewers. The viewer could enjoy thinking about his own complex and unresolved, or open-ended, multiple response to the work without worrying about a single proper response. So these exhibitions, on one hand were very popular. There was a huge demand for things. It got a lot of publicity. But in many ways, it was quite horrifying to those concerned about pluralism.

BE *Everyone was showing individually as well as with the group?*

VJ Yes. Most of the artists had a one person exhibition every year or so, and art work exhibiting this decorative attitude seemed to be everywhere.

BE *The P&D movement attempted to bridge the gap between high art and low art, did it not?*

VJ Not *bridge* a gap exactly. P&D asked some tough questions about the limits of art itself. Individual artists did this in their own work in a variety of ways, but the group exhibitions made the questions much more intense and urgent for the viewers. The emphasis on the exhibition as a whole and the differences between each work became the primary focus. This was a case of power-in-numbers, so to speak, where the collective work of the artists constituted a performance of sorts, making it apparent that there were many other ways to make art, and that modernist painting criteria was no longer sufficient or credible.

BE *How do you define high art and low art and what do you see happening with the interaction of the two in today's art world?*

VJ For the most part, these terms are out of use today. In the seventies



there was still a distinctive line between art, craft, the art of other cultures, architecture, design, fashion, illustration, advertisements, photography, film, and video to name a few. Today the distinctions have been embraced and erased by the commodity form in general. Art, today, as always, is dependent upon cultural institutions, museums etc., for its identity as art, and is only separated from anything designated as low art by these institutions. The 1970s were a particular time in art when Modernism was still dominant and these terms had a particular urgency. Today many people are content instead to say that art as a separate category is dead.

BE *Pluralism?*

VJ Yes, P&D was a pluralist explosion. There was a definite internal coherence to each of the artist's work at the time. But a group exhibition is not a one person exhibition, and when all of these dissimilar artists were put together in a single context the focus changed with each situation and exhibition. The differences between the works became the focus. There were a multiplicity of differences between the artists, and it was this multiplicity that made a difficult and somewhat exotic unity. This, of course, was the point and could be disturbing to some people. And the artists meant for it to be challenging. We liked showing with each other because it left everything open-ended.

BE *You basically have been talking about the early shows you had together. Some of you have shown more recently together, haven't you?*

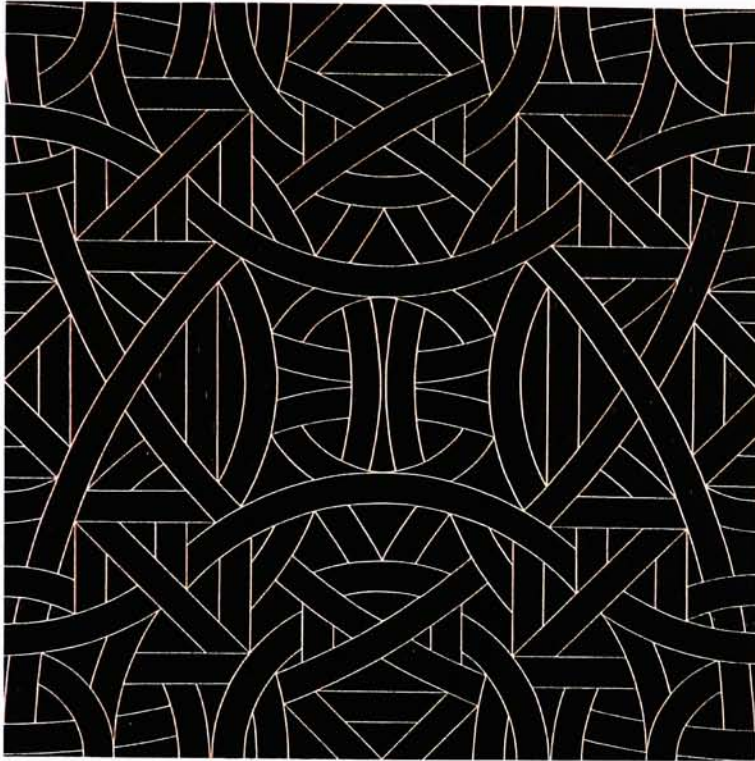
VJ It's rare, but occasionally a few of us have been put in the same shows by curators since the seventies.

BE *In Bob's book he lists several reasons in his opinion of why this movement stayed behind. He has a nice list. You would probably agree with him. One reason he mentioned was that Amy Goldin passed away. She gave a lot of positive publicity to your group.*

VJ As for publicity, Amy died before P&D got off the ground, and she didn't have much time to write about it. Amy was a great friend, a lively and challenging companion and very nurturing. She spent a lot of time in our studios, and she would try to help us figure out the larger picture. She wanted to write an art history book which would be the history of art but from all cultures, not just major western art.

BE *In this light do you feel this movement has had an influence on the art world?*

VJ Sure. It is more the norm now.



36. Valerie Jaudon, *Big Biloxi*, oil on canvas, 80 x 80, 1979, collection of Michael and Juliet Rubenstein.

You can look at P&D two ways really. One way is to see it as an historical movement in a certain context and time as I have mentioned, but another way is to see it as an expansive attitude or way of approaching art. There are hundreds of people who were doing this kind of work now as well as then. It was almost the next step in the way things were evolving in post modernism. It was the logical way to go, to completely open up everything.

BE *That is interesting.*

VJ So for me, it was a period of exhibitions. And the exhibitions were the main thing. These were the things that really spoke. It was not a question of the talent of individual artists or being influenced by each other or anything like that. We had respect for each other and liked different aspects of what people were doing even though we weren't doing it. We felt it would be a good thing to be seen alongside each other. It was like a performance or theater piece.

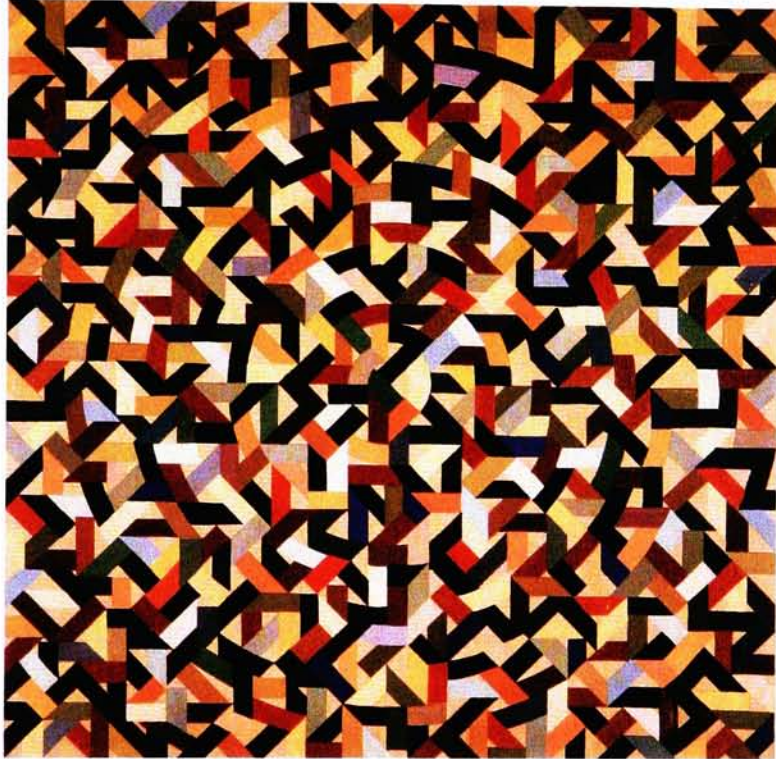
BE *So really, everyone's agendas were different. The movement as a whole did not have even one political agenda, or any agenda that was similar.*



VJ No, it did not. We were all quite different.

BE *The grid has been a term associated with pattern. Do you use the grid in your work?*

VJ My work started out by overlaying three different grids on top of each other, and picking out similar but always different shapes.



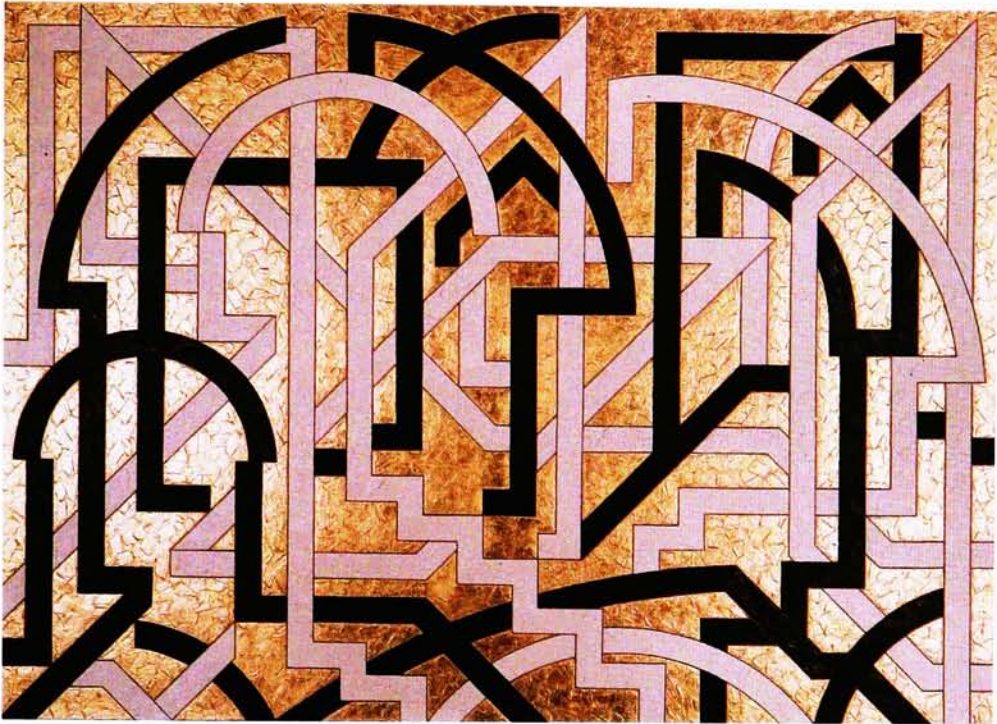
37. Valerie Jaudon, *Toomsuba*, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72, 1973, collection of the artist. This piece was in the show "Personal and Political: The Women's Art Movement, 1969-1975," in Guild Hall 2002, as referred to in this writing.

BE *I love your work. The piece you have at Guild Hall is the first I have seen in person. I didn't know the paint was so thick though.*

VJ Well, I haven't done any since then. I had to switch from acrylics to oil paint because the company I was buying acrylics from started making them thinner. So now I use oil paints.

BE *Politics?*

VJ If you think about it, making art and exhibiting it is a social activity, and any social activity is ultimately a political act.



38. Valerie Jaudon, *Egremont*, gold leaf and oil on canvas, 83 x 115, 1985, courtesy of Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

- BE *What do you feel about the relationship of content and beauty in an art piece?*
- VJ Are you referring to the notion that beauty requires one type of response and ideas are another order of experience? Beauty, as a philosophical concept, in aesthetics, is a criterion for permitting judgments about how a work ought to be made and whether it can please or not. It is also an experience, something one senses. What a work says, refers to, or represents would fall into a more rational linguistic category. P&D as a group phenomenon actually worked against the traditional concept of beauty and aesthetics.
- BE *What did you think about Joyce's response today when someone in the audience said that beauty got in the way of the work?*
- VJ Joyce wants you to 'read' or scan the work and think about it as well. All of us do.
- BE *Has it bothered you that your name has been associated with a movement that was not popular?*



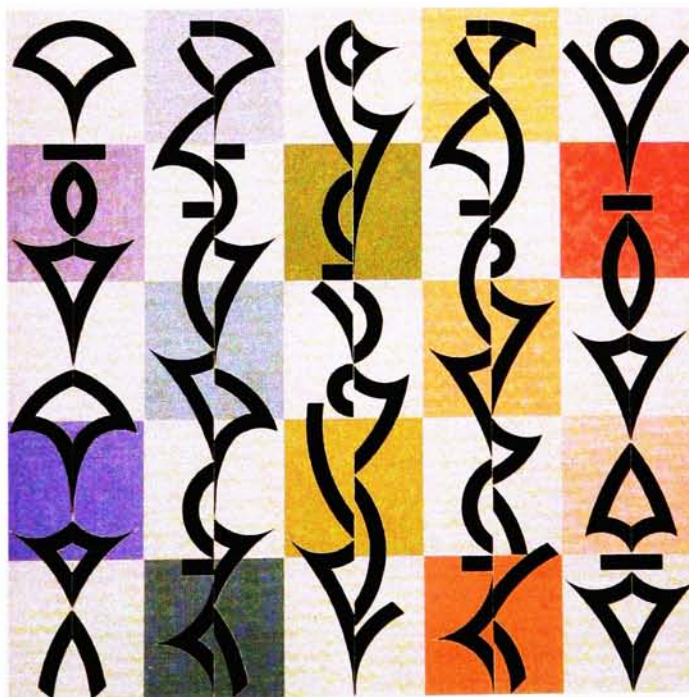
VJ I'm proud of it.

BE *Do you consider yourself a P&D painter, or is your name attached to a movement different than this?*

VJ P&D and the group exhibitions existed in the context of a particular time, which no longer exists. The larger issue for me has always been questioning abstraction, painting, and aesthetics. I am not sure what a new P&D movement would be, although there are many artists doing work now that would have made them great P&D artists.

BE *What is your present attitude toward the P&D movement? Did you ever not try to be a part of it?*

VJ I really enjoyed those early meetings and the group shows and the fact that people remember them. But there is no P&D movement now. For that you need to have exhibitions. But the impulse is still there among young artists. What is interesting is that the questions raised by those exhibitions have not been resolved, because they were large philosophical questions about art, and many artists are engaged with similar questions today, including me.



39. Valerie Jaudon, *Social Contract*, oil on canvas, 94 x 94, 1992, courtesy of Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

BE *Do you make your living off your art at this point?*

VJ Yes.

BE *What is success in the art world to you?*

VJ Exhibiting the work. One of my favorite exhibitions recently was called *Warped: Painting and the Feminine*. It took place in Angel Row Gallery in Nottingham, England in January-March of 2001. Three women from England and three from the United States including myself, were basically involved in work that had some of the same problems at the time that P&D did. For a year we communicated by email, trying to figure out what it was we were doing in almost the same manner that the P&D people did except we had e-mail. We e-mailed statements and discussions for a year, and then we had an exhibition and then it was all over.

BE *How did you get in contact with these people?*

VJ Maggie Alyffe was a student and a painter when I first met her five years earlier in New York. She was working on her dissertation, and a lot of theoretical things, which they do in England. This was one of the first big shows that she organized.



40. Valerie Jaudon, *Magnificent Obsession*, oil and alkyd on canvas, 180 cm. x 180 cm., 1999. This piece was in the exhibit "Warped: Painting and the Feminine," held at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, 2001.



BE *How did she discover you?*

VJ I think she had read an article by Shirley Kaneda about the 'feminine' and art and wanted to meet the artists. I became friends with her and gave her help with her studies and things like that. Five years later she came back and said, "Let's all get together, communicate by e-mail and then edit the discussion and we'll all have a show." That's how artists do it. It's kind of never-ending.

BE *But no more Holly Solomon Gallery.*

VJ Holly Solomon died this year.

BE *Was that good for you? I mean, you had gallery support with her.*

VJ She was very supportive, and I was fortunate to have such a great start with her. I was with Holly in Soho for about seven years until 1982, and I was with the Sidney Janis Gallery on 57th Street for eighteen years. They just closed, after fifty years. Now I am with the Von Lintel Gallery in Chelsea.

BE *Today, where are you going with your work?*

VJ The work keeps developing and I am working on a new group of paintings. I have done a number of public projects in the last 15 years, and basically I am very busy.

BE *Do you live off your art?*

VJ Yes.

BE *You have a family?*

VJ Yes. I also teach at Hunter College. They have a graduate program which is quite large. I have done that for about a dozen years. I have completed a number of public projects and I exhibit regularly. In 1990 I helped curate an exhibition with the Sidney Janis Gallery called *Conceptual Abstraction* with abstract painters.

BE *You have worked with architects and have been very much influenced by them, with your public projects and all, right?*

VJ Yes. My public projects are architectural but painterly. I enjoy working with architects.

BE *Anything else you want to tell me?*

VJ I think that is it.<sup>41</sup>



41. Valerie Jaudon, *Blue Pools Courtyard*, garden, pool and bench design, plantings, bluestone, brick, tile, cast iron, 70' x 80', 1993, Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama.

<sup>41</sup>Valerie Jaudon, interview by author, tape recording, East Hampton, N.Y., 25 August 2002.



## LIST OF MEETINGS, PANELS AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS 1974-1985

The following information is from Valerie Jaudon's archives.

1974

### Meetings and Panels

- November: At Yrissary's loft on Third and Twenty-third street to prepare for a "Pattern" panel in February 1975

Group Exhibitions: None

1975

### Meetings and Panels

- February 7: "The Pattern in Painting" at Artists Talk on Art, 66 Green Street. Moderator: Peter Frank
- September 10: A general "Pattern" meeting at Zakanitch's loft on Warren Street

Group Exhibitions: None

1976

### Meetings and Panels

- April 9: A "Pattern" meeting at Schapiro's or Kozloff's loft.
- September 30: "Decorative Painting" panel, Artists Talk on Art, Green Street.
- October 2: Meeting at Schapiro's loft on W. Broadway
- December 12: Meeting at Kozloff's loft on Wooster. (This was a large group. A lot of slides were shown. This is the last informal meeting of the larger group organized by the artists. The artists meet after this only for panels, or openings in small groups)

### Group Exhibitions

- Alessandra Gallery, 489 Broome Street, New York, New York. *Ten Approaches to the Decorative*

1977

### Meetings and Panels

- February 12: College Art Association, Los Angeles: Moderator: Amy Goldin
- Summer: Beginning of weekly meetings of editorial board of Heresies "Women's Traditional Arts Issue."

### Group Exhibitions

- P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island City, New York. *Pattern Painting at P.S.1*
- American Foundation for the Arts, Miami, Florida. *Patterning & Decoration*
- Galerie Alexandra Monett, Brussels, Belgium. *Patterning and Decoration*
- Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. *Pattern, Grid, and System Art*
- Sarah Lawrence College, *Painting 75-76-77*

1978

Meetings and Panels: None (?)Group Exhibitions

- The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio. *Arabesque*. Gladstone/Villani Gallery, New York. *Pattern on Paper*
- Sewell Art Gallery, Rice University, Houston, Texas. *Pattern and Decoration*
- Douglas College Art Gallery, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. *Decorative Art: Recent Work*

1979

Meetings and Panels

- January 26: *Interior and Exterior Decoration*, Artists Talk on Art. Moderator: Robert Jensen.
- February 2: *Sources of Patterning and Decoration*, Artists talk on Art. Moderator: Carrie Rickey

Group Exhibitions

- Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio. *Pattern Plus*
- Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, Belgium. *Patterning Painting*
- Mayor Gallery, London, England. *Patterning and Decoration on Paper*
- Galerie Liatowitsch, Basel, Switzerland. *Pattern*
- American Center, Paris, France. *Pattern Painting*
- Galerie Habermann, Cologne, Germany. *Patterning and Decoration*
- Galerie Krinzinger, Innsbruck, Austria. *Pattern Painting/Decoration Art*
- Andre Zarre Gallery, New York City. *Persistent Patterns*
- Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. *The Decorative Impulse*
- Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia. *Material Pleasures: The Fabric Workshop*
- Albright-Knox, Buffalo, New York. *Pattern*

1980

Meetings and Panels

- April 11: Round table, *Pattern and Decoration*, organized by the Neuman Family, at the Kalina/Jaudon loft, 139 Bowery.

Group Exhibitions

- Mannheimer Kunstverein, Mannheim, Germany. *Dekor*
- Greenberg Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri. *Dekor*
- Neue Galerie, Sammlung-Ludwig, Aachen, Germany. *Less Nouveaux Fauves-Die Neuen Wilden*
- Merwin Gallery, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, Indiana. *New York Pattern Show*
- The Alternative Museum, New York, New York. *Islamic Allusions*
- San Francisco Art Institute, California. *Decoration*
- The National Gallery, Washington, D.C. *The Morton Newman Family Collection*
- Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy. *Open 80*



- Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy. *Drawings: the Pluralist Decade*

1981

Meetings and Panels: None

Group Exhibitions

- McIntosh/Drysdale Gallery, Washington, D. C. *The Decorative Image*
- Ohio University, Lancaster, Ohio. *The Pattern Principle*
- Squibb Gallery, Princeton, New Jersey. *Aspects of Post Modernism: Decorative and Narrative Art*
- South Hill Parks Centre, Bracknell, Berkshire, England. *Pattern Painting*
- Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, New York. *New Directions*

1982

Meetings and Group Panels: None

Group Exhibitions

- Neuberger Museum, State University of New York at Purchase, New York. *The Spirit of Orientalism*

1983

Meetings and Panels: None

Group Exhibitions

- Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Michigan. *New Image/Pattern and Decoration*
- Hudson River Museum, Yonkers, New York. *Ornamentalism*
- Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. *New Decorative Art*
- Loch Haven Art Center, Orlando, Florida. *New Decorative works from the collection of Norma and William Roth*

1984

Meetings and Panels: None

Group Exhibitions

- Bette Stoller Gallery, New York, New York. *Arabeque: Grand Gestures in Painting, Sculpture, and Decorative Arts*
- Pam Adler Gallery, New York, New York. *The Decorative Continues*

1985

Meetings and Panels: None

Group Exhibitions

- Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek, Denmark. *Homo Decorans*<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Valerie Jaudon, "Pattern and decoration, the movement, the group exhibitions, 1974-1985", TD, 2002, Valerie Jaudon, New York City.

### **III. MY WORK**



## THE CONNECTION

One thing that I have in common with the artists of the Pattern and Decoration movement is our admiration for Henri Matisse, one of the greatest and most influential painters of the twentieth century. Matisse was born in the small textile town of Le Cateau-Cambresis in northeastern France in 1869. Weaving was the occupation of his



42. Matisse, *Ivy in Flower*, colored paper and pencil, 112 x 112, 1963. 68 FA/Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts Collection/ Gift of the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation/ photograph, 1992 Dallas Museum of Art, All rights reserved, Collins Publishers San Francisco, 1996.

father's family, and Matisse was born in a simple tiny cottage with a large loom in the corner. His mother's family was from a long line of tanners, furriers, glove-makers,

leather-dressers and skin-merchants. Matisse claimed he got his color sense from her, who did porcelain painting.<sup>43</sup> Although their son never wanted a career in textiles or furs, these early influences would later be seen in Henri's work. Matisse was deep into a study of Oriental rugs and Byzantine mosaics when it dawned on him that he could translate these patterns of color into paintings. He used strange, exotic patterned carpets, fabrics and wallpaper as important motifs. He openly professed the value of the beautiful and the decorative. It was the color pattern, not the image, that most concerned him. His focus was on the art of design.<sup>44</sup>

I relate with the artists of the P&D movement for several other reasons also. I share with several in this group the enjoyment of the beauty and craftsmanship of textiles of the third world. Architecture of the medieval times, as well as that of the Byzantine era, and the intricate Islam designs as in the Alhambra have always caught my attention, as with these artists. The way Kozloff and Jaudon employ their architectural sense of design, and how they are drawn to the beauty of architectural structures intrigues me. Schapiro has a love of American women's crafts of the home, as I do. Zakanitch does what he does because it is beautiful. I can relate to that. Kushner's serious commitment to the art of drawing and his love of florals are things that I hold close to my heart. Examining how each of these artists thinks and works has been inspiration for me.

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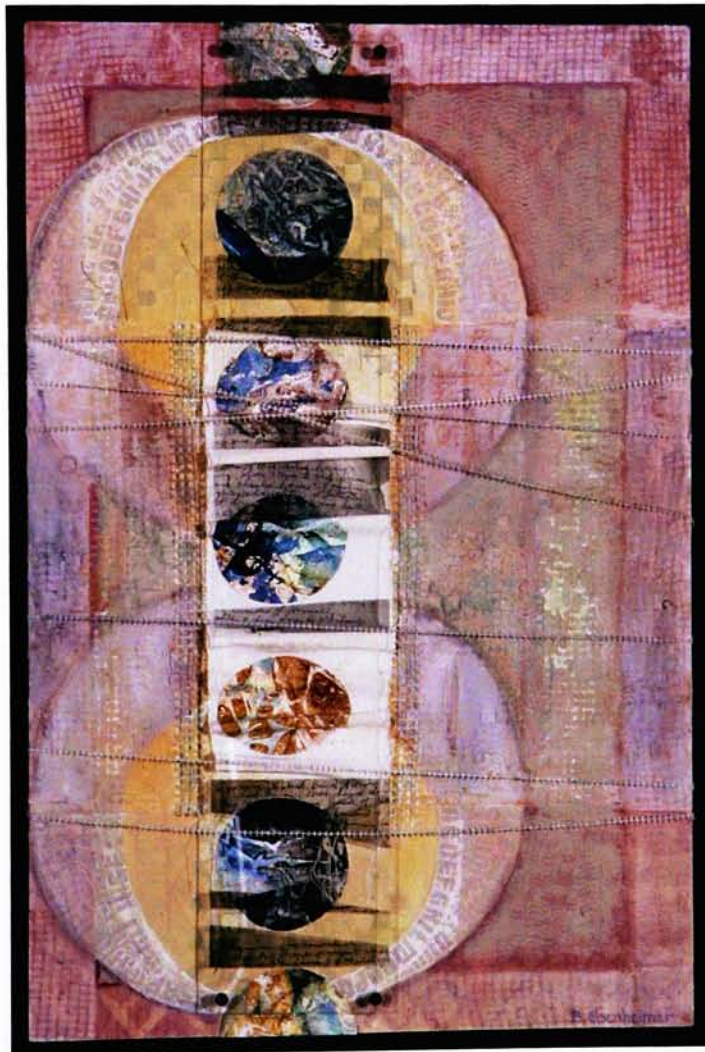
<sup>43</sup> Malcolm Vaughan, *Henri Matisse: The Brilliant Designer*, in Reader's Digest Family Treasury of Great Painters and Great Paintings. (Pleasantville: The Reader's Digest Association, 1965), 28.

<sup>44</sup> Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Early Years, 1869-1908* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1999), 3-15.



## MY PAINTING

My work references many things simultaneously—relationships, patterns around us, documents, text, music notes, graphs and maps. I start out by layering varieties of overall patterns to create a somewhat spatial surface. Then I slowly break up the pieces. Pattern helps to unify an object or area. It provides visual enrichment and enjoyment and gives me ideas about what to do next.



43. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #1, Dream*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 31 x 21, 2002, collection of the artist.

The paintings that I have produced for my thesis show exhibit a quality of layering that, when studied, could suggest to the viewer that there is more there than meets the eye. Each piece starts out as an experiment, one that could change. With this attitude I could feel like I could make a mistake and that freed me up. Found pieces of metal, cloth, wood, and plastic, along with digital imagery, text, music, and other means of verbal communication are woven together to create a composition that suggests to me memories or happenings. I then work the subject into a complex visual composition, sometimes playful, energized with collage and often times decorative patterns. Other times I get a grid-like surface going in which to work. The organizing principle underlying my work seems to always be pattern.

I derive my imagery from a culmination of life experiences. Art history with its incredible array of visuals, observations from nature, man-made objects, urban architecture, and feelings and emotions all evoke different imageries that come out in my work.

Having come from a background rich in art history, I refer to the great masters when I need inspiration. An art teacher that I had in public school gave me all of her visual resources when I received my first job as an art instructor. For years and years she had collected articles and pictures of art and artists from Time, Post, and Life magazines as well as others. I often refer to these when in need of rejuvenating my creative energies and deciding on my imagery. Artists that I have recently been inspired by are Sam Francis and Robert Natkin. Sam Francis has a light, airy and almost decorative use of his splashes of color. The rhythms that he gets with his hard-edges are worked over in interesting ways. Robert Natkin, with his large paintings, has encouraged me to look beyond immediate textures and search for and use materials in a way that I normally would not use them. He seems to draw upon the potentialities of decoration itself in what to me is an exciting and innovative way.





44. Robert Natkin, *Pride's Fall*, acrylic on canvas, 37.5 x 31, 1984, Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer Ltd., New York.



45. Sam Francis, *Untitled No. 12*, acrylic on canvas, 108 x 151, 1973, courtesy of The Sam Francis Estate, California.

As I observe nature, I tune myself into the details that are so abundantly present but so often missed. I live in a rural area where I am surrounded by nature and wonderful scenery. As I walk, drive down the road, or just look out a window, I notice the marks, textures and patterns around me. I use the circle in much of my work, which I attribute to these experiences. In a series that I did called 'Autumn Walks,' the circle was a mystifying shape that may have alluded to the moon, another planet, or just a mystery 'out there.' In my 'Centered Series,' I played off of the idea of ourselves being 'centered.' In my thesis series, I use the circle, not as much an identifiable image, but as a stabilizing compositional element.



46. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #9, Triad*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 48 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.



I am attracted to small, junk-like man-made objects that may denote a hint of a memory for me, or that just visually excite me. This usually has to do with pattern, texture, reflection, and sometimes color and shape. I collect these things and have them ready to incorporate into a piece at any given time.

Urban architecture serves just as much a source of inspiration for my imagery as do the others. I had a show once of my photographs, which were all sections of skyscrapers that showed how the windows lined up. I reversed some of the prints to create a symmetrical effect. They were sensitive to pattern and grid structure. A perceptive, well-known artist of ceramics, Val Cushing, saw this exhibit and, without knowing who I was or what my past artistic endeavors had been, commented that my photographs looked like weavings. So it has gone with the rest of the art I have done. I seem to naturally interweave the elements into a whole to form the piece that I do, no matter what the media or no matter if the imagery be architecture or scenery.

As with all artists, feelings and emotions come into play in my work. Self-expression is the essence of creativity and I reach for what is within as I work. I have close family ties, and much imagery deals with memories and family relations.



47. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #6, Sky*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 24 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.

## MY TECHNIQUE

All of the paintings are all done on luan, a lightweight plywood. They are gessoed and sanded several times to get a smooth and soft feeling surface. First I sketch. Thumbnail sketching loosens me up and gives me a sense of control. The compositions in this series were derived from several former paintings. I then enlarge the most successful of the thumbnails with basic compositional lines. I make it work to scale and then lightly sketch it on the surface of the wood. Next I start painting by putting down layers of paint that often denote a pattern of some sort on the surface. I do not concentrate on going from dark to light or visa versa but instead on close colors, warm on cool or cool on warm, or just colors that I feel that need to be together. I use water-based

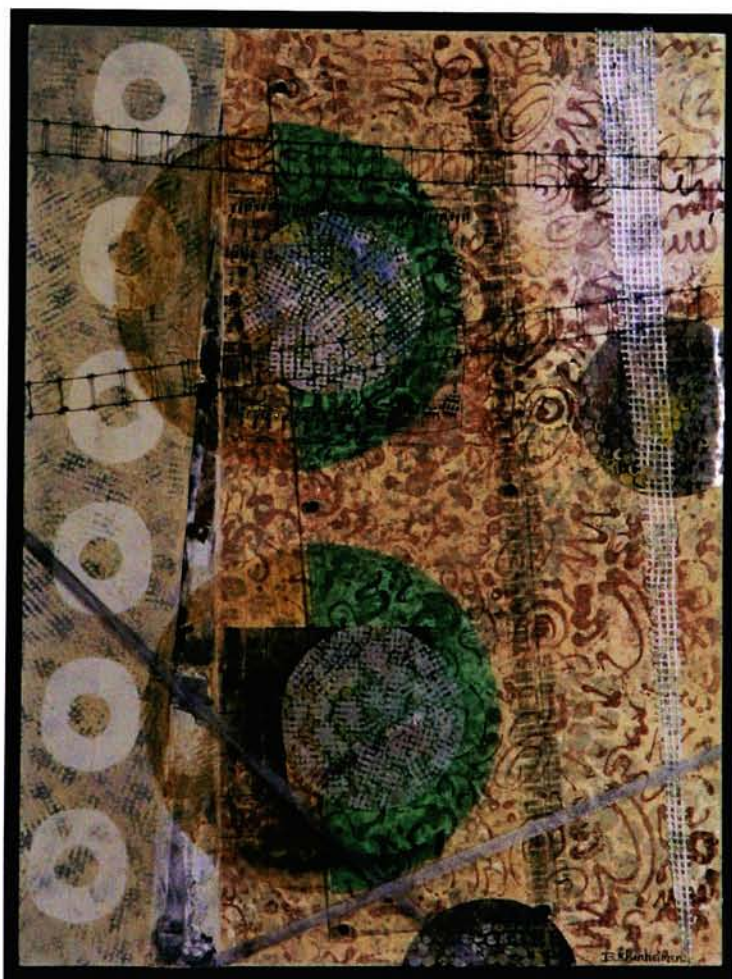


48. Barbara Eisenheimer, *Pattern Series #4, Earth*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.



media, mostly Golden acrylics and glazes, along with varieties of their textured polymers. I have learned that after each layer, or after a new addition of any kind, to leave it alone for a while and take a look later. This is what has been hard for me but I feel is important to my work's success. In the past, when I needed to change something because it was not right, I used to go at it in an extreme manner and overhaul color and composition all at once. I now realize that sometimes the tiniest nuance of a change is all that is needed instead of a complete revision.

At some point I disrupt the pattern with a line or a shape that I planned in my sketching. The rhythm is broken. The asymmetrical adds interest, possibly even unrest. Then I have another whole set of problems to work with to bring it around to completion.



49. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #3, Clouds*, mixed media and Plexiglas on Iuan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.

I use text, numbers and letters and music notes in the form of digital imagery, Xeroxed transparencies and actual objects. Often the text comes from something that has meaning to me. Some are excerpts from poems that my grandmother created. Some of the text pieces are the actual handwriting of a close relative or friend. Some are from old advertisements, which I am drawn to, others are from the Bible. The text itself is not meant to be read for the meaning of the painting, but there is always a reason that that particular text is used. Sometimes I look specifically for text that is the right size and the right style for the piece. I look at the overall visual effect that it will give, not just the meaning behind it. I do the same with the musical notes. Old maps, out-dated advertisements from old magazines, graphs and documents that arouse my interest and intuition are often collaged in.



50. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #2, Envelope*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.



I collect materials that I want to work with that seem to go together with the theme. The objects in my work all have some meaning to me. Old jewelry pieces and cut paper from craftwork are often from my deceased mother-in-law, things that I could not bear to part with, knowing that I would have just the right use for them someday. Other things are from collections of my mother and aunts. Pieces of rust, coins, buttons, and other unique metal items that I have picked up on my walks find new homes. I am attracted to the 'old,' the 'antique,' and the beauty in a piece of memorabilia.



51. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #7, Memories*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.



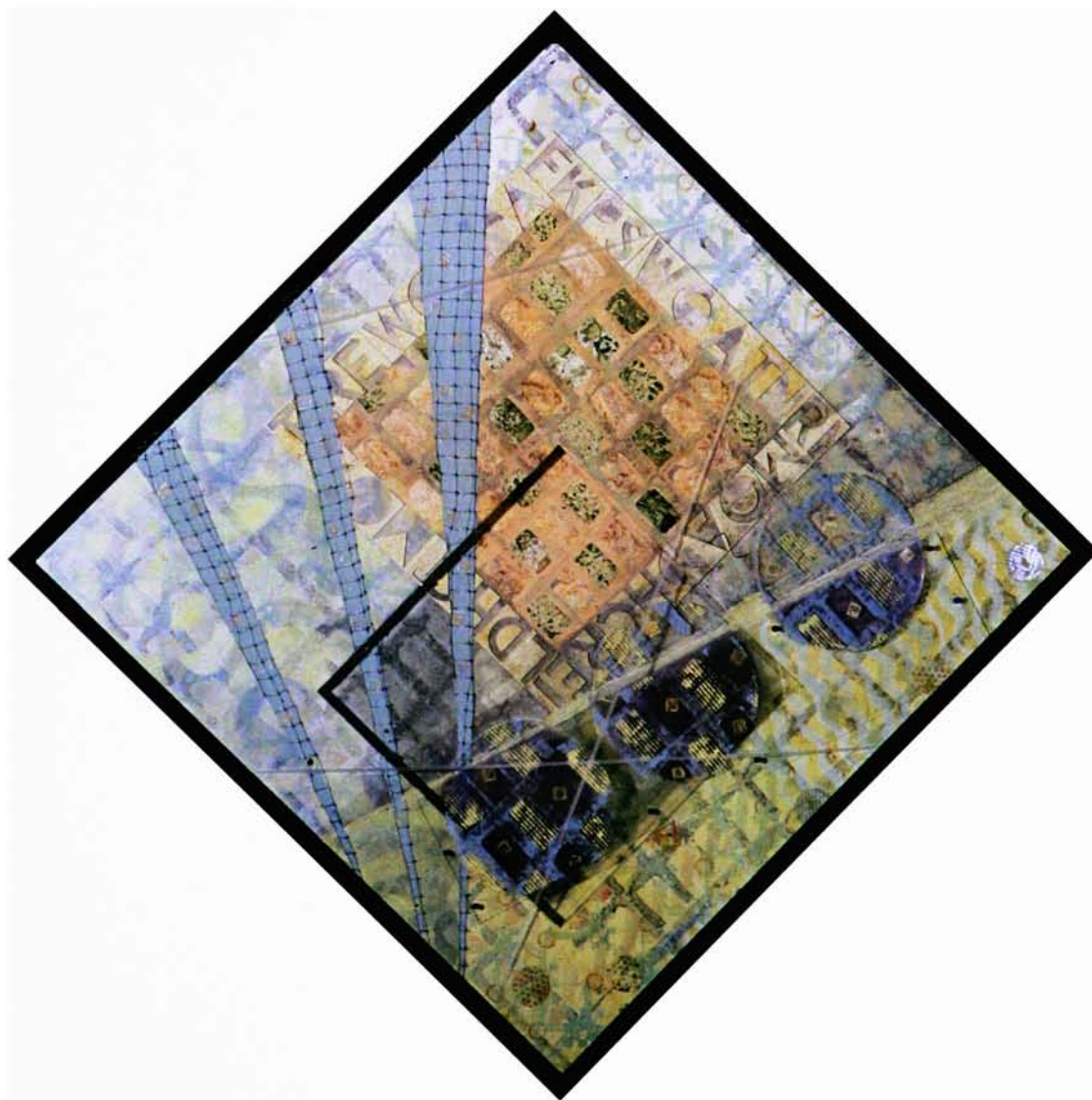
52. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #5, Celestial*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.

Each piece has Plexiglas or plastic pieces connected to it that are lifted out anywhere from one-half to one inch. One can look through these layers. They add a spatial effect and denote a mood of 'hide-and-seek' or 'peek-a-boo.'

The wires and strings that are placed across the pieces hold them together visually. I treat them as lines and try to make them an integral and necessary part of each piece.



I enjoy working on several pieces at once, for then I can more objectively reflect on the former work while working on another. As I paint and then stand back and observe what is happening, I see the importance of constantly reevaluating the painting.



53. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #11, Rays*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 68 x 68, displayed diagonally, 2002, collection of the artist.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**



## SUMMARY

Getting to know and talk with these five artists of the Pattern and Decoration movement has been a pleasure. I have become acquainted in a bit of a way with the life and the work of each of these artists. After listening to them for many hours as I transcribed the tapes of our interviews, I feel like I know them as friends. Having met each one personally, I have special memories that will always stay with me; a smile, a laugh, the way one stood or moved, how one walked or talked, or what one wore. More than great artists, these five; Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, Bob Kushner, Miriam Schapiro, and Robert Zakanitch are friendly, cordial, and accommodating people that I have had the privilege of getting to know. That has made my endeavors worthwhile.

The artwork of these people has inspired many over the years, including myself. Today, there is a renewed focus on themes related to decoration, grids, pattern, and ornament.<sup>44</sup> Seeing and hearing about each artist's successes in the art world has been encouraging. I have received joy and stimulation in studying each one's work and understanding his/her reasons for doing it. I have learned from their persistence and their love of what they do.

Taking a close look at each of these artists has caused me to evaluate my art and my life. Certainly I will think differently when I get back into art making, for I have learned a great deal in this last year. Knowing that there are others who feel as I do about art gives me a sense of affirmation and commonality. By studying and analyzing the reasons behind my painting and that of others, I hope to be a better painter. Having been a mother, housewife and teacher has been great but now I am ready to move on to do what my instincts (and other people) have all along been prompting me to do, and that is to make art and do something with it. Thank you, Valerie, Joyce, Bob, Miriam, and Robert for what you have done for me.

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<sup>44</sup> Lene Burkard, and Karsten Ohrt, ed. *Patterns: Between Object and Arabesque* (Odense: Kunsthallen Brandts Klædefabrik, 2001), 2.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

*Dimensions are in inches unless otherwise specified; height precedes width*

1. Henri Matisse, *Sorrows of the King*, gouache on paper, cut and pasted, on canvas, 292 cm. x 396 cm., 1952, Musee National d'Art Moderne, Paris, taken from a postcard.
2. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #10, Crevice*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 48 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.
3. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #8, Landscape*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 48 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.
4. Caryl Bryer Fallert, *Midnight Fantasy #1*, hand dyed and painted, machine pieced, and quilted materials: 100% cotton fabric, 48 x 48, 1999, private collection, Chicago, taken from Fallert, Caryl Bryer, *Midnight Fantasy #1*. 1999. *The Bryerpatch Studio: Art Quilts by Caryl Bryer Fallert*. Ed. Caryl Bryer Fallert. Jan. 2003. Bryerpatch Studio. 29 Jan. 2003< <http://www.bryerpatch.com>>.
5. Robert Kushner, *French Tart*, acrylic on cotton, 97 x 127.25, 1978, Whitney Museum of American Art, gift of anonymous donors, taken from Anderson-Spivy, Alexandra. 1997. *Robert Kushner: Gardens of Earthly Delight*. New York: Hudson Hills Press, 89.
6. Robert Kushner, *Indian Summer: Homage to Bonnard*, acrylic, oil, gold leaf, silver leaf, glitter on canvas, 180 cm. x 540 cm., 2000, courtesy of the artist and DC Moore Gallery, New York, taken from Burkard, Lene and Karsten Ohrt, ed. 2001. *Patterns: Between Object and Arabesque*. Odense: Kunsthallen Brandts Klaedefabrik, 74.
7. Robert Kushner teaching a workshop at Linwood Gardens, 2002, York, photograph by author.
8. Robert Kushner, *Panel 3*, oil, glitter, gold leaf on aluminum, 43.5 x 85, 2002, collection of the artist, taken via e-mail.
9. Robert Kushner, *Untitled*, screen, no details given, 2002, collection of the artist, taken via e-mail.
10. Robert Kushner, *Brown Mirror*, oil, silver leaf, glitter on board, 36 x 36, 2002, collection of the artist, taken via e-mail.
11. Joyce Kozloff, *The Spanish Were Here*, watercolor, etchings, lithography, and collage on paper and wood, 28 x 78, 1995, collection of Monica and Richard Segal, taken from Roth, Moira, 1998. *Crossed Purposes: Joyce and Max Kozloff*. New Castle: Commercial Printing Company, 22.



12. Joyce Kozloff in front of a current piece in her studio, 2002, New York, photograph by author.
13. Joyce Kozloff, *Longing*, 1977, (right), and *Mad Russian Blanket*, 1977, flanked by *Pilasters*, 1977, installation for the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial, 1979, taken from Johnston, Patricia. 1985. *Joyce Kozloff: Visionary Ornament*. Boston: Boston University Arts and Publications, 22.
14. Joyce Kozloff, *Targets*, acrylic on canvas with wood frame, 108 diameter, 2000, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, New York, taken from Heartney, Eleanor. 2001. *Targets*. New York: Museum Press, Inc., n.p.
15. Joyce Kozloff, *Knowledge #77*, gesso, watercolor, and acrylic on cardboard, with porcelain base, 9.25 diameter, 1999, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, taken from Heartney, Eleanor. 2001. *Targets*. New York: Museum Press, Inc., n.p.
16. Joyce Kozloff, *Knowledge #32, The Holy Land, 1584*, fresco, 8 x 10, 1998, courtesy of DC Moore Gallery, taken from *Artnet*. 2003. Artnet Worldwide Corporation. 29 Jan. 2003 <<http://www.artnet.com/dcmoore.html>>.
17. Joyce Kozloff, work in progress at her studio, 2002, New York, photograph by author.
18. Joyce Kozloff, work in progress at her studio, 2002, New York, photograph by author.
19. Robert Zakanitch, *Aggressive Goodness Series: Westie*, acrylic on canvas, 54 x 84, 2002, collection of the artist, New York, photograph by author.
20. Robert Zakanitch in his studio with *Big Bungalow Suite V*, acrylic on canvas, 11' x 30', 1994, photograph by author, 2002, Brooklyn. Wanda Dean is on the left.
21. Robert Zakanitch, *Garden Party*, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72, 1977, collection of Fred Mueller, taken from Institute of Contemporary Art. 1981. *Robert S. Zakanitch*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 13.
22. Robert Zakanitch, *Savannah Nights*, acrylic on canvas, 84 x 144, 1979, collection of Morton G. Neumann Family, taken from Institute of Contemporary Art. 1981. *Robert S. Zakanitch*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 37.
23. Robert Zakanitch, progression of *Big Bungalow Suite I*, acrylic on canvas, 1990-1991, courtesy of Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, taken from Mac Naughton, Mary Davis. 1997. *Larger than Life: Robert Rahway Zakanitch's Big Bungalow Suite*. Los Angeles: Perpetua Press, 15.

24. Robert Zakanitch, *Plaza*, acrylic on canvas, 43 x 64, 1998, part of the Curio Series, courtesy of Locks Gallery, Philadelphia, taken from Locks Gallery. 1999. *Robert Rahway Zakanitch, the Curio Series*. Philadelphia: Locks Art Publications, n.p..
25. Robert Zakanitch, *Aggressive Goodness Series: Pug*, 54 x 84, 2002, collection of the artist, New York, photograph by author.
26. Miriam Schapiro, in her studio, in front of one of her works of art, 2002, East Hampton, photograph by author.
27. Miriam Schapiro, *Lady Gengi's Maze*, acrylic and fabric collage on canvas, 72 x 80, 1972, courtesy of the artist, taken from Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. 1999. *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*. New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 73.
28. Miriam Schapiro, *Wonderland*, acrylic and fabric collage on canvas, 90 x 144, 1983, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., taken from Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. 1999. *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*. New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 96.
29. Miriam Schapiro, *Ox*, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 108, 1967, Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, taken from Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. 1999. *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*. New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 63.
30. Miriam Schapiro, *Anatomy of a Kimono*, acrylic and fabric on canvas, ten panels, 6'8" x 52'2.5", 1976, collection of Bruno Bischofberger, Zurich, taken from Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. 1999. *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*. New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 84.
31. Miriam Schapiro, *Anonymous Was a Woman*, suite of ten etchings, each 18 x 24, 1977, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., taken from Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. 1999. *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*. New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 92.
32. Miriam Schapiro, in her living room, in front of a recent piece, 2002, East Hampton, photograph by author.
33. Miriam Schapiro in collaboration with Sherry Brody, *Doll House*, from "Womanhouse," mixed media construction, 84 x 40 x 41, 1972, National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., taken from taken from Gouma-Peterson, Thalia. 1999. *Miriam Schapiro: Shaping the Fragments of Art and Life*. New York: Harry N. Adams, Inc., 68.
34. Valerie Jaudon, *Long Division*, fence, painted steel, 12' x 60', MTA Lexington Avenue and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street subway station, collection of the New York City Transit



- Authority, New York, taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 37.
35. Valerie Jaudon, photograph taken by Amos Chan, courtesy of Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 73.
  36. Valerie Jaudon, *Big Biloxi*, oil on canvas, 80 x 80, 1979, collection of Michael and Juliet Rubenstein, taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 53.
  37. Valerie Jaudon, *Toomsaba*, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 72, 1973, collection of the artist. This piece was in the exhibit "Personal and Political: The Women's Art Movement, 1969-1975," held at Guild Hall, East Hampton, 2002, taken from taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 49.
  38. Valerie Jaudon, *Egremont*, gold leaf and oil on canvas, 83 x 115, 1985, courtesy of Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 59.
  39. Valerie Jaudon, *Social Contract*, oil on canvas, 94 x 94, 1992, courtesy of Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 69.
  40. Valerie Jaudon, *Magnificent Obsession*, oil and alkyd on canvas, 180 cm. x 180 cm., 1999. This piece was in the exhibit "Warped: Painting and the Feminine," held at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, 2001, taken from Ayliffe, Maggie and Terry Myers. 2001. *Warped: Painting and the Feminine*. Nottingham: Angel Row Gallery, 30.
  41. Valerie Jaudon, *Blue Pools Courtyard*, garden, pool and bench design, plantings, bluestone, brick, tile, cast iron, 70' x 80', 1993, Birmingham Museum of Art, Alabama, taken from Barilleaux, Rene Paul. 1996. *Valerie Jaudon*. Jackson: Mississippi Museum of Art, 41.
  42. Henri Matisse, *Ivy in Flower*, colored paper and pencil, 112 x 112, 1963.68, Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts Collection/ Gift of the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation/ photograph, 1992 Dallas Museum of Art, all rights reserved, Collins Publishers San Francisco, 1996, taken from Morgan, Genevieve, ed. 1996. *Matisse: The Artist Speaks*. San Francisco: Collins Publishers San Francisco, 88.
  43. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #1, Dream*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 31 x 21, 2002, collection of the artist.
  44. Robert Natkin, *Pride's Fall*, acrylic on canvas, 37.5 x 31, 1984, Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer Ltd., New York, taken from Gimpel & Weitzenhoffer Ltd. 1984.

*Robert Natkin: Recent Paintings from Hitchcock Series.* New York: The Meriden Gravure Company, 21.

45. Sam Francis, *Untitled No. 12*, acrylic on canvas, 108 x 151, 1973, courtesy of The Sam Francis Estate, California, taken from Lyotard, Jean-Francois. 1993. *Sam Francis: Lesson of Darkness like the paintings of a blind man.* Venice: The Lapis Press, 116.
46. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #9, Triad*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 48 x 32, 2002, collection of the artist.
47. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #6, Sky*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.
48. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #4, Earth*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.
49. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #3, Clouds*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.
50. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #2, Envelope*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.
51. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #7, Memories*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.
52. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #5, Celestial*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 32 x 24, 2002, collection of the artist.
53. Barbara Elsenheimer, *Pattern Series #11, Rays*, mixed media and Plexiglas on luan, 68 x 68, displayed diagonally, 2002, collection of the artist.



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