

Mind Fields

February 9 ~ March 25, 2001



Terry Adkins
Batya & Ben AmHaAretz
Mike Bidlo
Bruce Conner
Kathy Goodell
Judith Hudson
Mary Judge
John Morris
Alan Scarritt
Karen Shaw

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY FINE ARTS GALLERY

MIND FIELDS

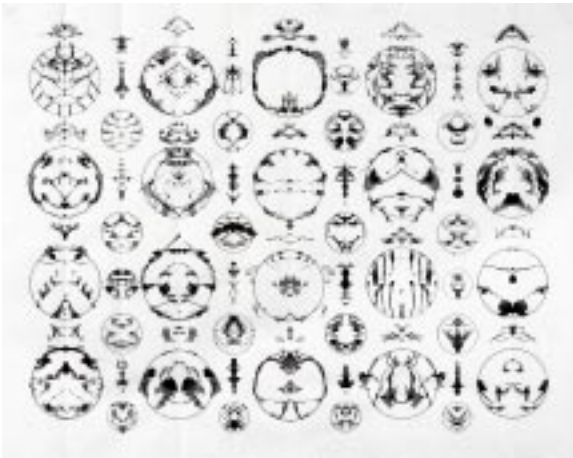
In the words of the ancient alchemists: *Naturalissimum et perfectissimum opus est generare tale quale ipsum est* (“The most natural and perfect work is to generate its like”). Mirror images and inkblot imagery involve an intersection of two worlds that correspond but are inverted. All the artists in “Mind Fields” mine this territory in a direct search for soul or meaning, though with distinctly different motivations, manners, and methods.

Terry Adkins, Batya and Ben AmHaAretz, Mike Bidlo, Bruce Conner, Kathy Goodell, Judith Hudson, Mary Judge, John Morris, Alan Scarritt, and Karen Shaw seem compelled in their work by the center, where existence and human understanding seem to merge (or separate). Mirroring provokes revelation of what lies beyond the field of vision, employing a tension between accidental and deliberate, known and unknown. Mystery and the inexplicable are part of each artist’s work.

As early as the 15th century, Leonardo da Vinci and Botticelli understood the effect of formless stimuli on the imagination. In 1857, Justinus Kerner published his inkblot pictures (a technique with which he had experimented for decades), believing he had discovered a process that would bring him closer to the spirit world. Since 1921, Kerner’s invention has been applied in psychotherapy, in the altered form of the “Rorschach test,” invented by Herman Rorschach for the purpose of revealing the unconscious of patients. Though Rorschach’s theoretical approach has little relevance to the artists in this exhibition; there is a parallel to their intent of delving into the unconscious, through accident and contemplation.

For Bruce Conner, “The inkblot is an ancient thing. When Narcissus looked into the water and saw his own reflection it was in essence Nature’s inkblot.” Both concentrated and expansive, his inkblot drawings are like an arcane ancient language attempting to unleash the secrets of the universe, or the knowledge lying dormant within each of us. By manipulating classic scarab-like blots and a welter of symmetrical doppelgangers (produced with a mirroring ink process), Conner manages to mesmerize through the intricacies and complexities of relationship. He is a master of fine-tuning visual accidents, “exploiting mistakes as positive values.”

Karen Shaw uses found objects and their inherence to interface with the evocative nature of inkblots: “The series of piano-roll drawings consist of actual piano rolls (paper scored with holes and slashes that somehow allow a mechanical player piano to play the selection) and the translations of the sound. These mysterious marks reminiscent of braille intrigue me. I have always been interested in the various visual forms that language takes. As I ink the piano roll I place a roll of paper underneath so when the ink spreads through the holes and cuts, it creates marks on the paper underneath. I consider this the translation of the sound made visible”. Clever, enigmatic, and humorous, her works also exude a lyrical beauty.



Bruce Conner, 1991

INKBLOT DRAWING

Pen and ink on Strathmore paper, 23 1/4" x 29"

Collection of Sarah-Ann and Werner H. Kramarsky

Mike Bidlo uses the ready-made as a springboard; Duchamp’s urinal becomes Bidlo’s “Fountain Drawings.” In black and white, he draws and occasionally paints the fountain, on various ordinary papers, including telephone book pages. Inked, folded, and reopened, each of the 3,000 pieces in the series has a dual nature; the image is mirrored as Bidlo mirrors Duchamp. Diversity and chance accompany the ritual of replication and repetition through which Bidlo makes sacred altars to 20th-century art. Like a series of roadside shrines, the “Fountain Drawings” create a powerful mystical environment.



Karen Shaw, 1999
Blue Moon (detail)
 ink on rice paper, 17ft. x 11 inches

Alan Scarritt uses mirror images in almost every imaginable manner—intellectual, aural, visual. His interest in inkblots began in the mid-1970s, when he was making symmetrical installations in sound and plaster, “miming the bilateral hemispherical separation in human brains (and anatomy).” Early photograms in the “Liquid Lens” series generated unconscious imagery by recording two gestures in water, one spiral, the other circular. Photographic works of the 1980s and ’90s, such as those in this exhibition, are frequently paired with inkblots done in a variety of liquid media. “The frisson created by the photographic, sculptural, and painterly anatomical juxtaposition is the center of my focus.” This involvement spans three decades, a beautifully labyrinthine evolution of thought and process, using mirroring as a metaphor for artistic process, as well as the process of life and death.

Batya and Ben AmHaAretz apply the concept of *hidur mitzvah*—the beautification of a commandment—to the creation of a decorated scroll of *The Five Books of Moses*, using esoteric symbols and patterns to illuminate religious principles of the Torah. “Ordinary existence for most of us is predicated upon symmetry, the symbols into which we are so submerged and so integrated that perhaps we don’t always notice the ‘secret code of life.’” On first viewing the AmHaAretz’s work one perceives an amazingly complex circuitry of lines, shapes, and colors, which,

upon further meditation, appear to relate to electro-magnetic systems in the body (emphasized through mirror-images and inkblotting). These systems in turn change as they are affected by the body heat of the viewer, making him or her a direct part of the piece.

Terry Adkins, uses symmetry and mirror-images to create structure or interference patterns, adding layers of meaning to the found object, or “found situation” (as in his sculptural situations). Humble materials are elevated to a higher plane of energy. The series of drawings exhibited in *Mind Fields*, for instance, “attempts to illuminate the splendor of Dante’s *Paradiso*. Using actual pages from an 1867 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow translation as support, the elliptical silhouettes which are superimposed on the text are symbolic of the cosmic and metaphysical character and structural symmetry of the *Paradiso* itself.” Paying homage to what exists, Adkins is loyal to factual and symbolic roots, ennobled through context and relationships.



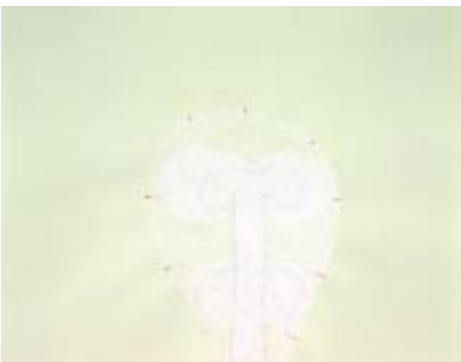
Mike Bidlo
 #1886 from the series:
The Fountain Drawings, 1993-97
 mixed media on paper, 8 1/2” x 7”
 Courtesy of Tony Shafrazi Gallery

The work of John Morris contemplates universal systems and their commonality. Recurring motifs, intricate patterns, merge, converge, and penetrate each other. Biology, transcendental architecture, and computer circuitry are among the diverse systems brought into harmony and synchronicity, mark by mark, circle by circle, in a ritual of hand-made structuring, exquisitely sensitive. In Morris’s words: “My drawings explore repetition, variation, and change. Each new work draws on an intuitive memory of earlier, pieces, as if part of an evolving musical composition. Patterns repeat across and between works to create unexpected harmonies. These subtle interactions are difficult to plan and suggest the intricate symmetries of human and ecological systems.”



Alan Scarritt, 1985
Reclining Spine/Dream Lake Island
 ink on paper, 34 1/2" x 33 1/2"
 Collection of Sarah-Ann and Werner H. Kramarsky

Mary Judge's work seems to grow from its core, producing a ripple effect of concentric growth patterns based on mirror images and symmetry. They pulsate and resonate like a visual force field. Her current work began when, while attempting to make a schematic plan for a ceramic piece, Judge happened upon the technique of *spolvero*: "In my powdered pigment drawings, the working method follows the Renaissance model. Folding a piece of transparent paper in quarters, I create a line drawing, perforate it, open it, and place it in contact with the paper surface. This layered surface is then beaten with a sack of powdered pigment." She describes the resulting structures as "pure forms" which emerge and create their own cosmography.



John Morris, 2000
Drawing for Azim Premji
 ink and acrylic on paper, 10" x 13"
 Courtesy of D'Amelio Terras Gallery

Judith Hudson's work plays with mirror image in a musical sense, plucking, warping and synchronizing bands of color into juicy metaphors, linking, in her own words, "sex and logic, form and happenstance." "When you cut open a fruit the symmetry reveals both timelessness and decay, vulnerability and order. I am interested in extracting these contrapuntal aspects of nature and interpreting them into a visual mantra." The flexing of the bands, like a 'cats cradle' pulls you in and releases you.

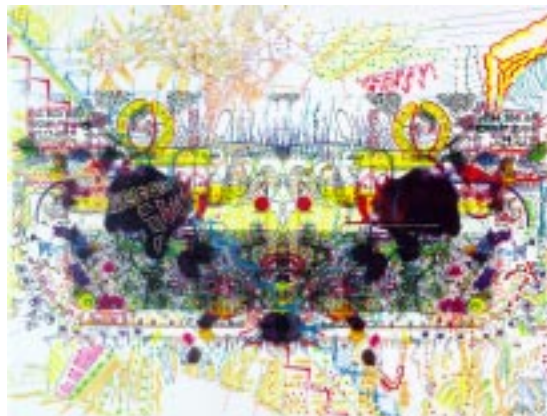


Kathy Goodell, 1999
Intra-doppler 7
 photo-collage on film and paper
 23" x 19"

My own works on paper address how relationships and associations are formed, barely held together through magnetism and the random geometry of chaos. My drawings were, at first, studies for sculpture (the inkblot process a method of finding new structures). But I quickly became obsessed with the process itself, its dance between chance and control. My current works on paper, while structured by mirror image, are complex, transparent layers of collage and drawing. They chase what is implied, what lies beneath the surface, the agitation or attraction of two opposing forces. I don't want the image to be still. Repeating configurations in movement or flux are, to me, ecstatic images, implying that nothing dies, just changes form.

Kathy Goodell

We would like to express our appreciation to Sarah-Ann and Werner H. Kramarsky, Curt Marcus Gallery, D'Amelio Terras Gallery and Tony Shafrazi Gallery.



Batya & Ben AmHaAretz, 2000
Landing the Envelope
interactive mixed media
22" x 36" x 12"



Judith Hudson, 1999
O.J.
watercolor on paper
22" x 30"



Mary Judge, 1997
Untitled Spolvero Drawing
Concentric Shapes Series
powdered pigment on paper, 7" x 5"

Terry Adkins
Paradiso
gold ink on Dante's "Paradiso"
chiné collet, 15" x 18"

