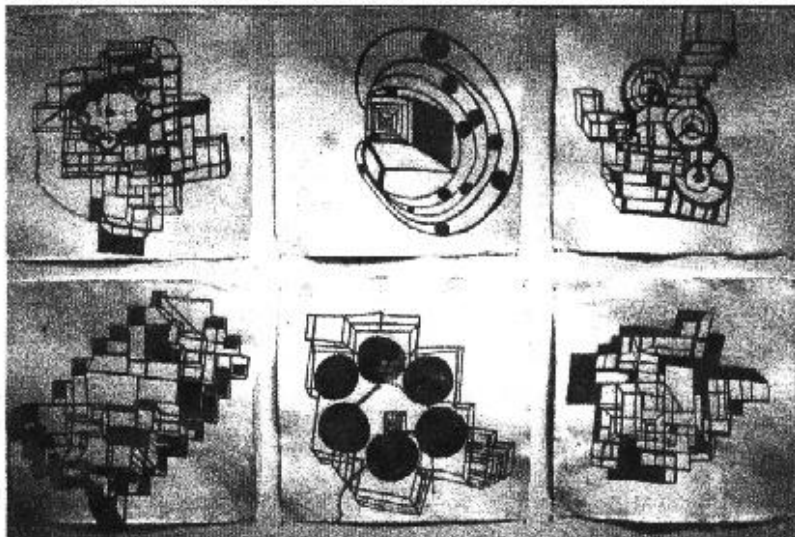


## ACCUMULATIONS

SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY, KENT, 44242 330/672-7853



IN "ACCUMULATIONS" curator Martin Ball brought together 13 American artists, many of them New Yorkers, whose Postmodern drawing styles swoop fearlessly in and out of all manner of graphic possibilities. Improvisational and informal, the works on display were often pure, ardent jazz, pulling thematic material from sources as different as scientific diagrams, adolescent fractal doodling, and the deep strata of pop culture.

Nina Bovasso has become known for works on paper built from blots and splashes, dots and dashes. Her intersecting layers of colorful motifs can be reminiscent of the transautomatism of Austrian painter Friedensreich Hundertwasser, or they can seem more like psychedelic daydreams. *Pedal to the Metal*, for instance, is a flat-out extravaganza punctuated by shocking Day-glo orbs and duh-type flowers à la 1960s pop designer Vera. Ohioan Enid Williams, whose work in "Accumulations" included a 12 by-eight foot work on paper titled *Limbo*, samples a similar color range (the rainbow) but composes her work from hundreds of small, overlapping circles of acrylic paint that are a little like Life Savers or the contents of a button drawer. Running in thickness from opaque to transparent, the circles' random disposition flows and coagulates, playing games with spatial perception.

Also indebted to pop culture and history but in a more squishy way are the flashe and acrylic works of Paul Henry Ramirez. Who knew, before looking at his *Untitled (Layered Squeeze Series)*, that a scum-green, lava-lamp blob could connect in such provocative ways with the dripping fringe of a lavender swathe? In "Accumulations," a moment of funky graphic intimacy was often the crux of a given piece, the intersection of its linear or textural elements creating a sharp sense of strain. In that vein, David Dupuis's excursions were the most succinct. His six small drawings show carefully rendered but mysterious objects hovering above a terrain of undulating brown lines. Surrealist in tone, these works sketch an artificial universe, a paper world where the events of drawing develop into isolated, obsessive objects.

Less dramatic but comparably complex and introspective were collage drawings by Los Angeles artist Michelle Fierro. Compiling her works loosely from marks and odd tidbits, Fierro moves between anxiety and poignant awareness of a "scavenged reality," as she puts it—contemplation in her drawings is a mix of thread and paint chips, as if thought molecules had drifted onto the paper like dust on a lens.

Four delicate works executed in pencil, wax, crayon, and ballpoint pen by John Morris push even further toward a potent near-invisibility. Biomorph and reminiscent of scientific illustrations, these seem tentatively

to record the fossilized imprints of insects, or the outlines of transparent animiculae at the water's edge.

But for the most part, the spontaneous and the visible had pride of place in "Accumulations." Joanne Greenbaum's bright, quick gouache improvisations often consist of boxes impatiently interlocking in manic grids, while blotted circles and concentric arcs also appear. Perhaps because of their raw directness, Greenbaum's awkward, intriguing drawings are especially like procedural "accumulations," allowing the work to make its own way as the artist coaxes and comes to trust specific manifestations of line. Diana Cooper's magic marker *Was Anyone Looking* combines a related, informal approach to basically schematic imagery. Her large, loose diagram has a connect-the-dots ambience, moving toward sculpture or grade-school project as attached rectangles of paper push precariously out from the picture plane. More painterly but no less off-beat was Peter Wayne Lewis's large work whose nine sections form an over-sized window opening onto paint that soaks hotly into paper. Brown, squiggly passages recall lower intestines, others clearly depict oversized hierarchies in childlike drawings that dally with the mutual resistance of crayon and ink, while Mark Fox makes moody, figurative, and quasi-narrative pictures in layered grisaille, sometimes exploring the mythic connotations of coiling, serpent-like forms.

In this exhibit of the quixotic and subjective, James Siena's small ink drawings may have come closest to actual doodling. His escape-proof designs trap the eye in smaller and smaller boxes, or fill the page with tattoo-like, scalloped formations. And Iowan Will Mentor confronted the dualism of our visual culture most abruptly, placing an abstract collage made from fragments of digital prints, pencil squiggles, and dollops of paint directly across from a video of colorful grid-like variations. Here, as everywhere, the viewer was caught between the untidy realities of physical existence and an impeccable, untouchable virtual world. The point was made that making art in general—and connecting with some authentic sense of being—is like trying to scratch an itch while wearing a space suit. When you figure out how to do it, it's very satisfying indeed.

*Douglas Max Utter is an artist and writer based in Cleveland.*

### JOANNE GREENBAUM

*Untitled, 2000, from "Accumulations." Gouache on paper (group of six), 22" x 22" each.*