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S.CAPORAEI

M.DIAMOND

J.GOUREVITCH

S.HORVATH

E.KOZAK

J.ROBINS

ESSAY BY

CARTER RATCLIFF

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Suzanne Caporael

Martha Diamond

Jacqueline Gourevitch

Sharon Horvath

Ellen Kozak

Joyce Robins

July 26 - August 21, 2017

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SITE/SIGHT BY CARTER RATCLIFF

“I am a camera with its shutter open, quite passive, recording, not thinking. Recording the man shaving at the window opposite and the woman in the kimono washing her hair. Some day, all this will have to be developed, carefully printed, fixed.”

Christopher Isherwood, *A Berlin Diary*, 1930

Of course, Christopher Isherwood was nothing like a camera. His Berlin stories turn on images, insights, and speculations that no photographic process could ever record. Yet the novelist’s claim to impersonate a camera is not entirely unpersuasive, for it appeals to our faith that certain images do manage to deliver indubitable truths about the external world. During the Renaissance, this faith endowed systems of perspective with auras of absolute objectivity. Not long after the invention of the camera, critics praised Gustave Courbet for employing a “scientific method of observation.” Faced with the works of Cubists, Expressionists, and other avant-garde painters, praise had to find new ground. These artists, it was now said, distorted familiar appearances to reveal unfamiliar truths about their subjects. And transcendent truths were glimpsed, at least by some, in the forms Piet Mondrian built from the elements of Euclidean geometry.

For centuries, our culture has linked art with truth. The painters in this exhibition have kicked this stubborn habit, which is not to say that truth is of no concern to them. They acknowledge it at every turn, and yet their primary focus is on nuances of perception and feeling that resist formulation in verifiable statements, verbal or visual. Casting their lot with experience in its lavish multiplicity, they make paintings that evoke the look of things in a spirit of freedom that carries us beyond appearances to meanings.

Suzanne Caporael’s *Rugby, North Dakota* offers a bird’s-eye view of its three shapes. With its strong horizontals, *Every autumn beyond counting* presents a view of its interlocking planes from ground level. *Saratoga, Wyoming* is more ambiguous, inviting us to see its complexities not only from on high but also from the side, as in an architectural elevation. To view this painting in full is to feel one’s point of view sailing through a grand arc. Vision is

liberated and, with it, the imagination. We begin to intuit a local logic in the visual echoes that fill Caporael’s paintings.

Situating the beige, black, and orange forms of *Rugby, North Dakota* with exquisite precision, she gives them a family resemblance strong enough to generate a strong sense of order. Because each of these shapes is subtly distinct, one wonders if their different positions have subjected them in differing degrees to the push and pull of some individuating force—gravity, perhaps. Or perhaps they are having something like a magnetic effect on one another. In any case, Caporael does not isolate her imagery in a purely pictorial realm. The forms in her paintings originate in her observation of objects, intervals, and qualities of light in the world we all inhabit. And they owe their placement on the canvas to her feeling for such invisible factors as gravity and time.

A certain phrase lies in wait for **Martha Diamond**: gestural abstractionist. Though the phrase is well-worn, there is no avoiding it. For Diamond applies her paints in streaks and smears that allow us to trace, with gratifying certainty, the gestures of her brush. Ergo, she is a gestural abstractionist. The label applies and yet it is not a perfect fit, for it brings with it assumptions that leave Diamond’s art only partially illuminated.

The first of these assumptions is that gestural painting is expressionist painting. One lays on paint to convey one’s feeling. As it happens, Diamond’s imagery is rife with strong signs of strong emotions, but that is not enough to say. It acknowledges the exuberance, even joy, of her brush strokes but doesn’t touch on the images she creates. What are they about? Because Diamond is, after all, an abstract painter, there are no definitive answers to this question. However, if we look past the vivid intricacy of her brushwork to their overall patterns, we may be reminded of certain things—tall buildings, stands of trees. And we will sense that, in making a mark with thick pigment, she is tracing the trajectory of a glance. With her painterly gestures, Diamond merges the energies of vision with those of a body fully alert to its surroundings.

Some of **Jacqueline Gourevitch's** paintings are high-keyed throughout. Others mingle light and dark in complex configurations that churn[s?] with implicit motion. Treating paint as a fluid, almost airy medium, she brings clouds to mind with every canvas. And this allusion to cloud-filled skies persists even as others emerge. For these are paintings rich with interpretive possibility. And rich, too, in their quiet—it's tempting to say, silent—materiality. As pigments seep into the grain of canvas, tones modulate. Hues blend. So subtle are the workings of Gourevitch's hand that her paintings sometimes look, from up close, as if they had resulted from natural processes.

Stepping back, we see how deliberately the artist places each field of color within the frame. We see, in other words, how thoroughly intention permeates these images. And we may well wonder which of their meanings she intended and which are our inventions. I see in Gourevitch's darker paintings not only clouds but foliage filled with light. I see bits of limestone emerging from loamy soil, though that reading may be too static, for the slowly pulsating energy of these images that could, at a microscopic scale, belong to cellular life—not that she represents any of these subjects. An abstractionist, she gives us the occasion to imagine all of them and more.

In **Sharon Horvath's** paintings, line inspires line, curve begets curve—though it should be noted that talk of this kind is metaphorical. Formal elements do not have reproductive powers. Nonetheless, the sinuous energy of Horvath's imagery comes close to persuading us that they do. And, to extend the metaphor of pictorial form as biological form endowed with consciousness, her curving lines seem to show an awareness of their affinity for one another. Knitting themselves into densely linear passages, they coalesce as shapes that prompt, first off, a realist interpretation. These paintings depict free-form lacework or crochet. To which one might reply: Really? For these paintings conjure up so much more.

Their golden forms float on creamy fields flecked here and there with patches of aquamarine, though the background of *Peaceable (For Edward Hicks 2)* is mostly aquamarine, suggesting that we see it as water in lagoons far more convoluted than any to be found in Venice. These paintings are maps. Yet some of their forms are too persuasively

tendrill-like to permit the cartographic interpretation to stand in the way of all others. With tendrils and vines that could just as well be strands of cellular matter, Horvath gives her imagery elasticity of scale. And she frees it from her preliminary observations. Hovering in the borderland between representation and abstraction, she finds her abiding subject: the energy inherent in line itself.

Ellen Kozak paints fields of color, though it would be just as accurate to say that she covers each of her canvases with minutely flickering textures that put colors in unexpected juxtapositions. Potentially unlimited, these textures are only incidentally contained by the rectangular surfaces where they appear. Kozak invokes the infinite, and so it makes sense that *Chronicle* is predominantly sky-blue. The sky, after all, opens onto boundless space. What, then, are we to make of the thin and luminous streaks of green that reach from the left-hand to the right-hand edge of *Chronicle*? And what of the ghostly haze of purple that merges here and there with blue? Or is it lavender? With *Chronicle*, Kozak shows us much more than the sky.

Some of her paintings suggest wood grain or polished rock. Others recall the alluvial grain left in the earth by receding water and still others summon up water itself, as it flows in sun-struck currents—like those of the Hudson River, which runs past the painter's studio. From this constantly shifting theme she generates images that register the interplay of light and water, reflection and recollection. In Kozak's art, no barrier separates memory from the immediacies of seeing. With static images that imply endless motion, she helps us see the numberless possibilities residing within the bounds of an intensely focused gaze.

Of all the works in this exhibition, those of **Joyce Robins** are the most like sculptures. Made of clay, they are objects as much as they are images. We needn't handle these objects to know that they are weighty—and thus have the heft to bring into play the traditional distinction between the pictorial and the sculptural. Yet this distinction obscures several points that are not only obvious but also crucial to Robins's art: objects can be the sites of images; moreover, an object can itself be an image.

CURATOR'S NOTE

The paintings in this exhibition are rooted in direct observation and are influenced by each artist's perceptual practice and long-cultivated process of close study. Falling along a continuum between abstraction and representation they evoke a strong sense of place in the everyday world. Although we may not recognize the specific motif inferred (landscape, night sky, city, etc.) the authority of perception is tangible.

Sites, subjects, and methods of observation are critical to each artist's visual language: planted fields, elevations seen from an airplane window, gradations of color in a sky reflected on a watery plane, shapes glanced at through apertures between buildings, or the puzzle of shapes in a tapestry-like world are some of the inspirations for the paintings shown here. Often the focus is upon a fragment of a larger subject or on an aspect removed from its larger context, adding an interesting ambiguity to the work.

Suzanne Caporael, Martha Diamond, Sharon Horvath, Jacqueline Gourevitch, Ellen Kozak, and Joyce Robbins are painters in whose work abstraction conveys the resonance of close observation and place.

-Ellen Kozak

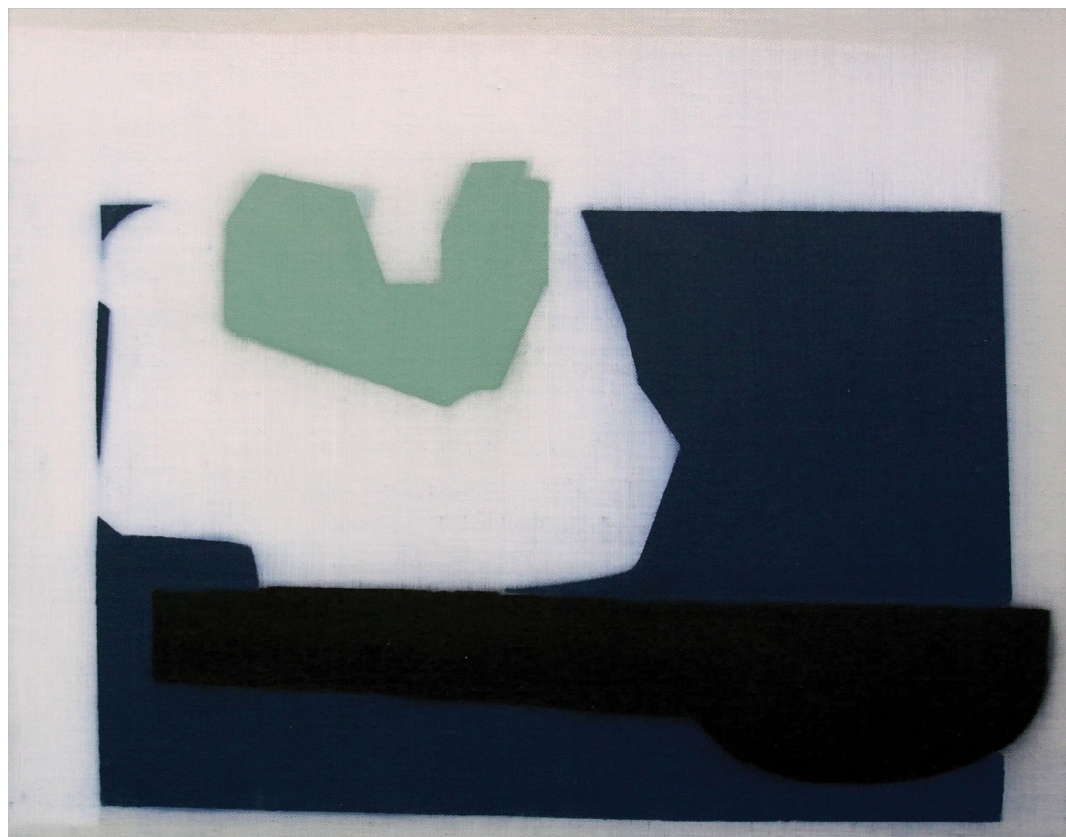
The roughly squared-away slab of clay the artist calls *Green Rectangle* rests on a horizontal surface. Yet a contemplative look at this object releases it, at least partially, from this physical fact. Caught up in the modulations of the rectangle's green glaze, vision endows matter with weightlessness and a virtual translucency. The gridded perforations begin to emit light as well as simply transmitting it. Metaphor has begun to insinuate itself, not in denial of palpable truth but in conjunction with it. Shaping, piercing, incising, painting, and spattering her clay, Robbins makes it into a vessel of memory and allusion. Most vessels are enclosures. Hers are wide open and, whether we see them as images or as objects or as both at once, contain as much as imagination can find in them.

To return to Christopher Isherwood for a moment: the idea—or the illusion—of photographic accuracy presupposes strict detachment. Standing at a distance, one achieves objectivity. The painters included in *Site/Sight* stand in the heart of things, immersing themselves in the worlds that appear, vitally transformed, in their works. Their imagery is subjective, not objective, though this dichotomy is too neat. If an artist could attain absolute subjectivity, the rest of us would be shut out. By contrast, the work in this exhibition acknowledges us. We are invited to respond, and there is an escape from subjectivity, even a kind of objectivity, in the profusion of sharable meanings that we find in their art.

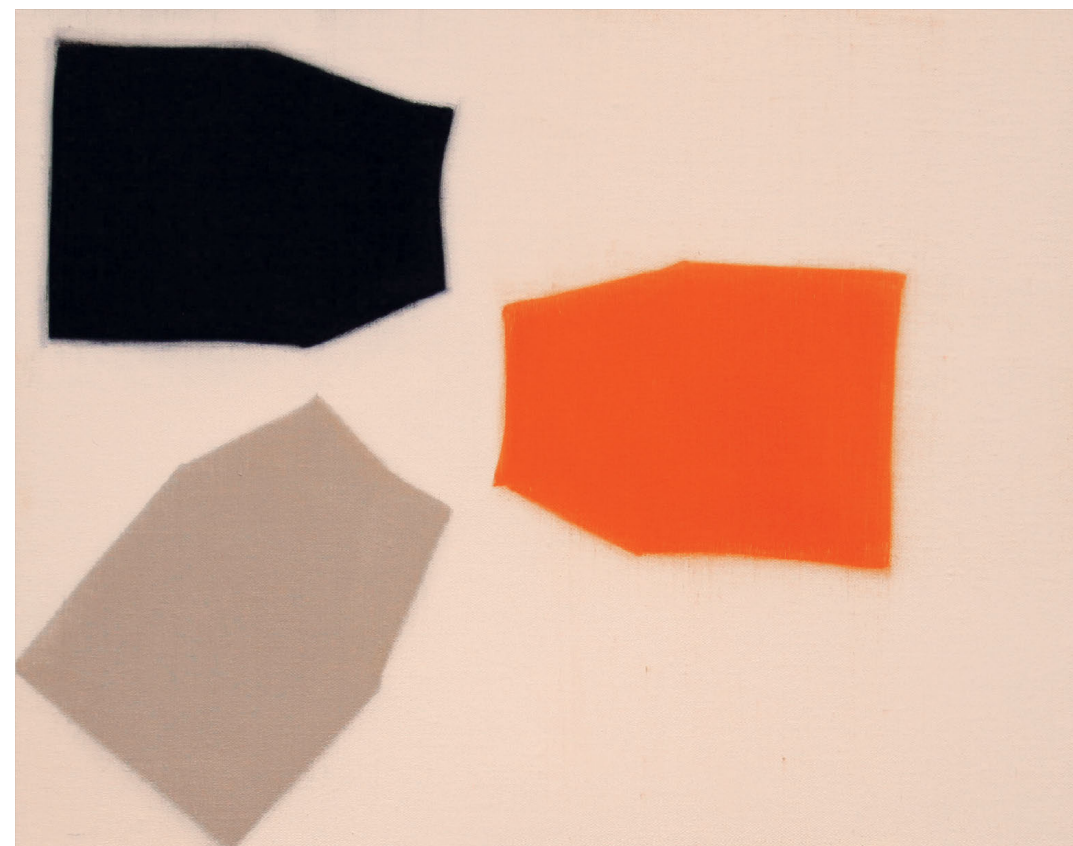
SUZANNE CAPORAE



712 (Every autumn beyond counting), 2016, 30 x 22 inches; oil on linen



564 (*Saratoga, Wyoming*), 2007, 22 x 28 inches; oil on linen



603 (*Rugby, ND*), 2009, 28 x 22 inches; oil on linen

MARTHA DIAMOND



The Bowery, 2003, 56 x 40 inches; oil on linen

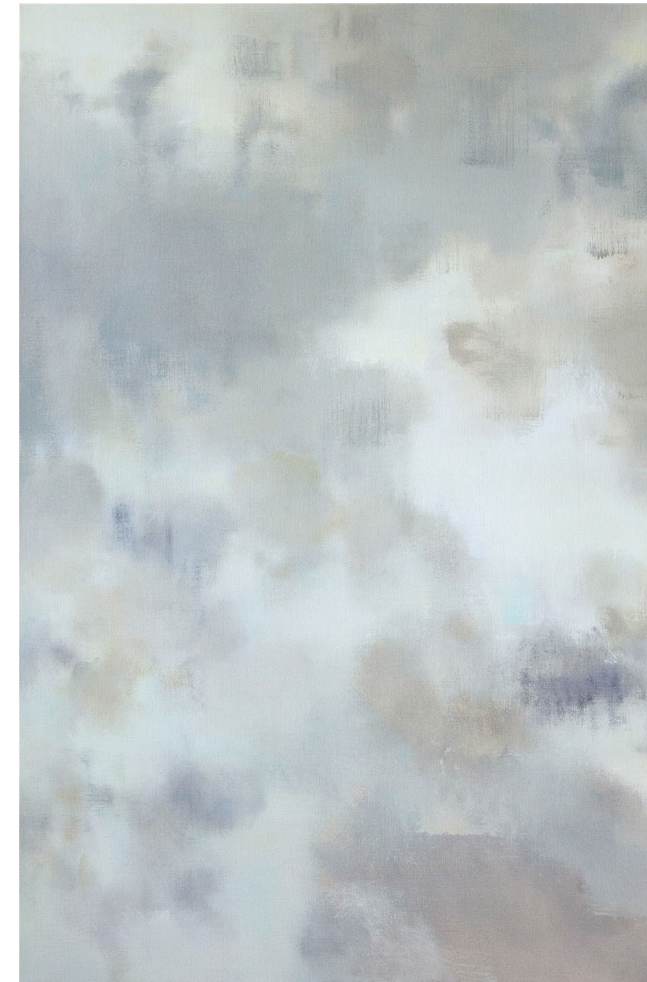


Companion, 2007-09, 16 x 8 inches; oil on Masonite



6 Lines, 2008, 16 x 8 inches; oil on Masonite

JACQUELINE GOUREVITCH



Cloud Painting #245, 2015, 48 x 32 inches; oil on linen

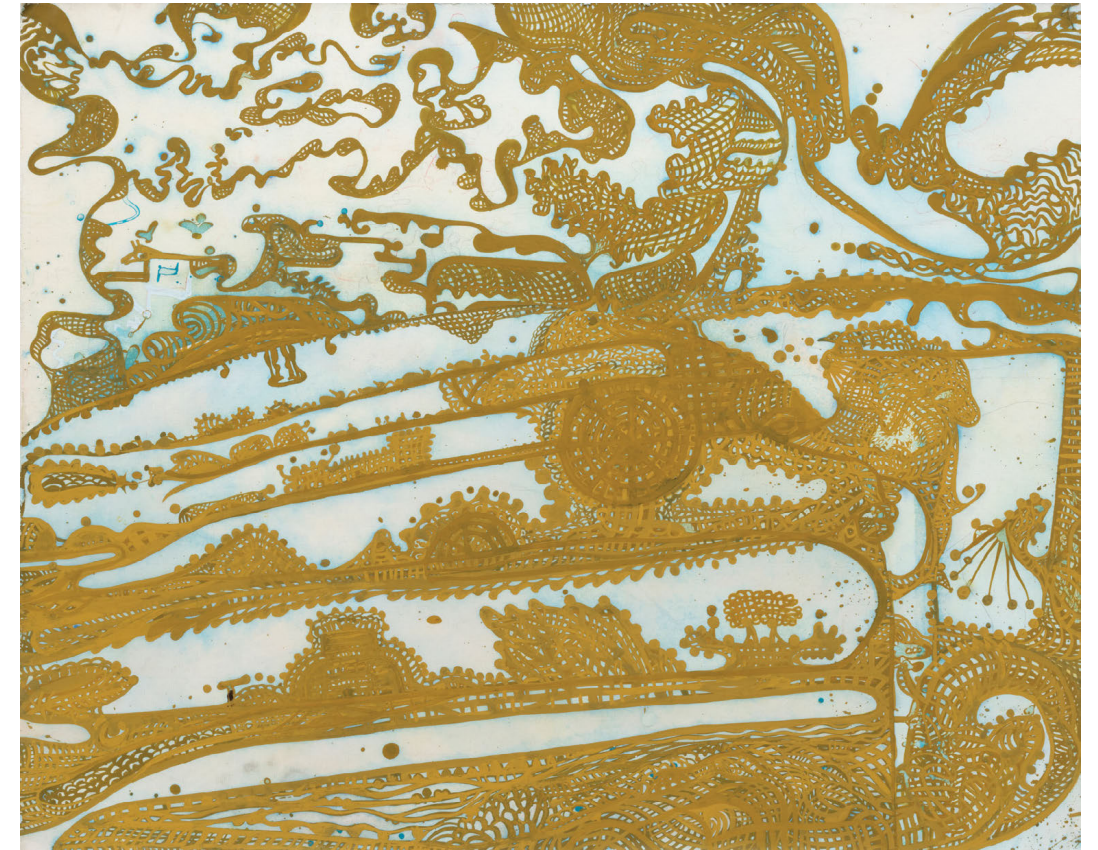


Cloud Painting #226, 2008, 28 x 20 inches; oil on canvas

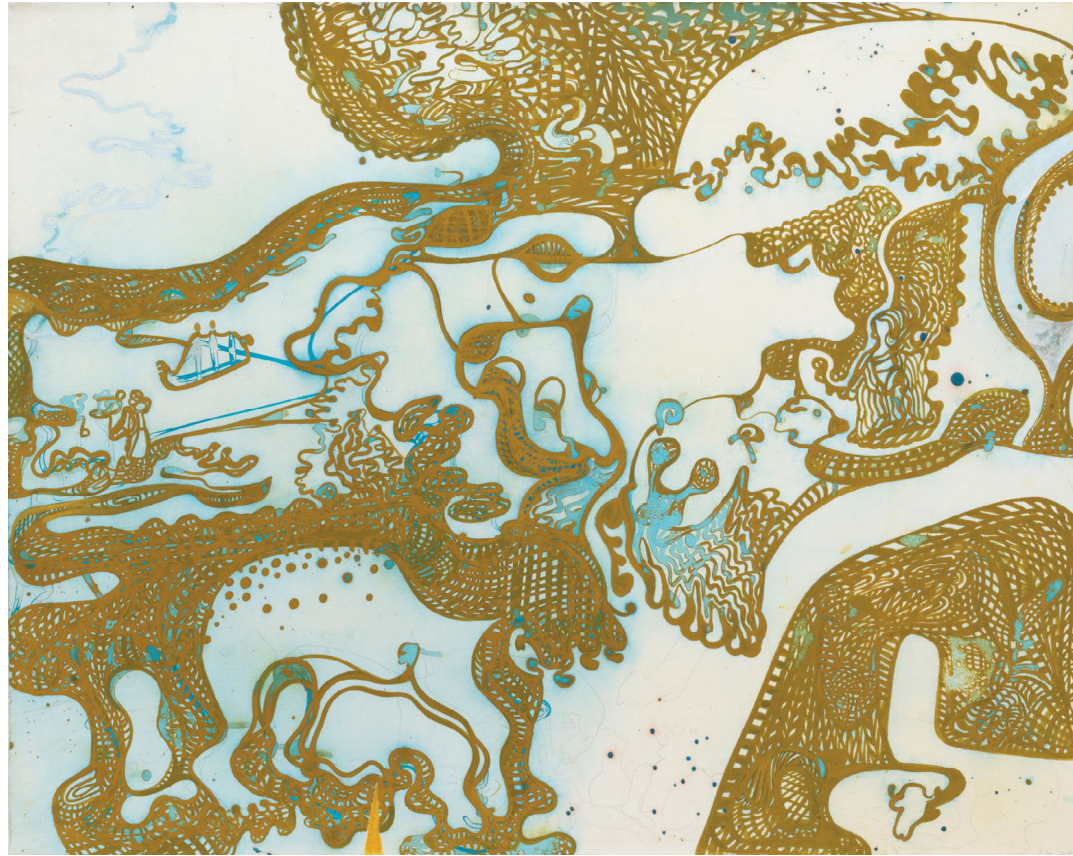


Cloud Painting #227, 2008, 28 x 20 inches; oil on canvas

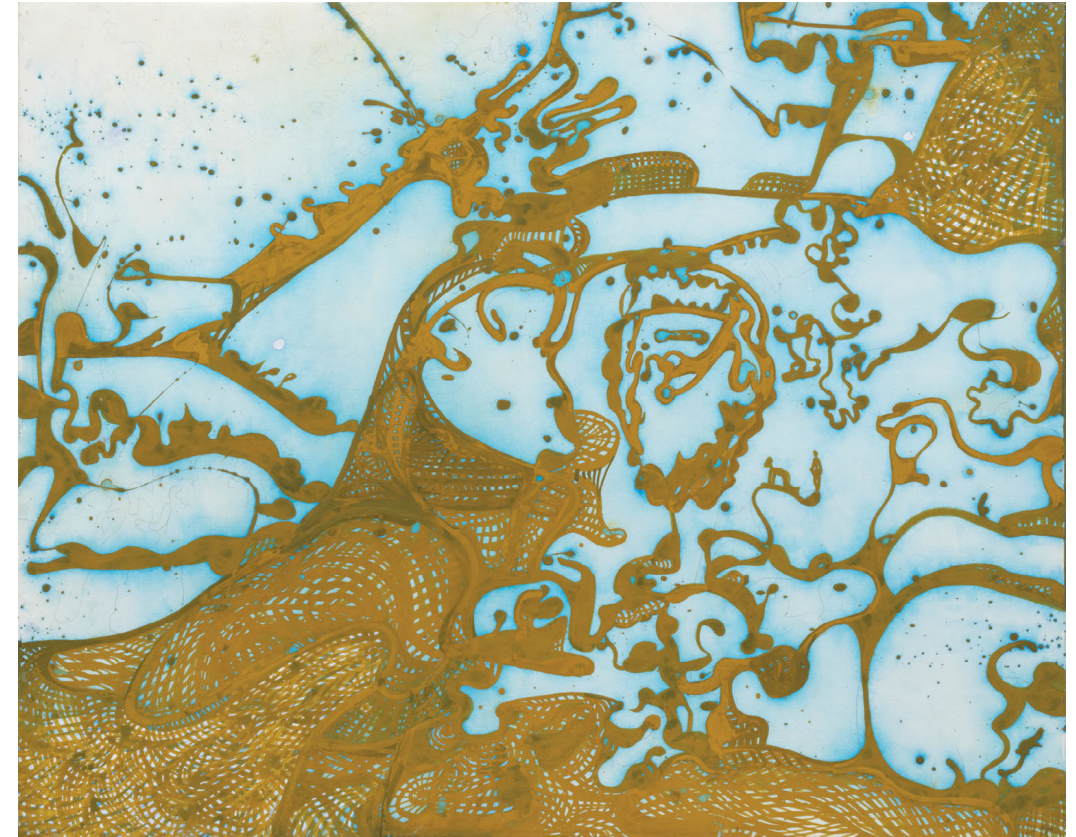
SHARON HORVATH



Hicks Wicker, 2008, 24 x 30 inches; pigment, polymer, ink on paper mounted on canvas

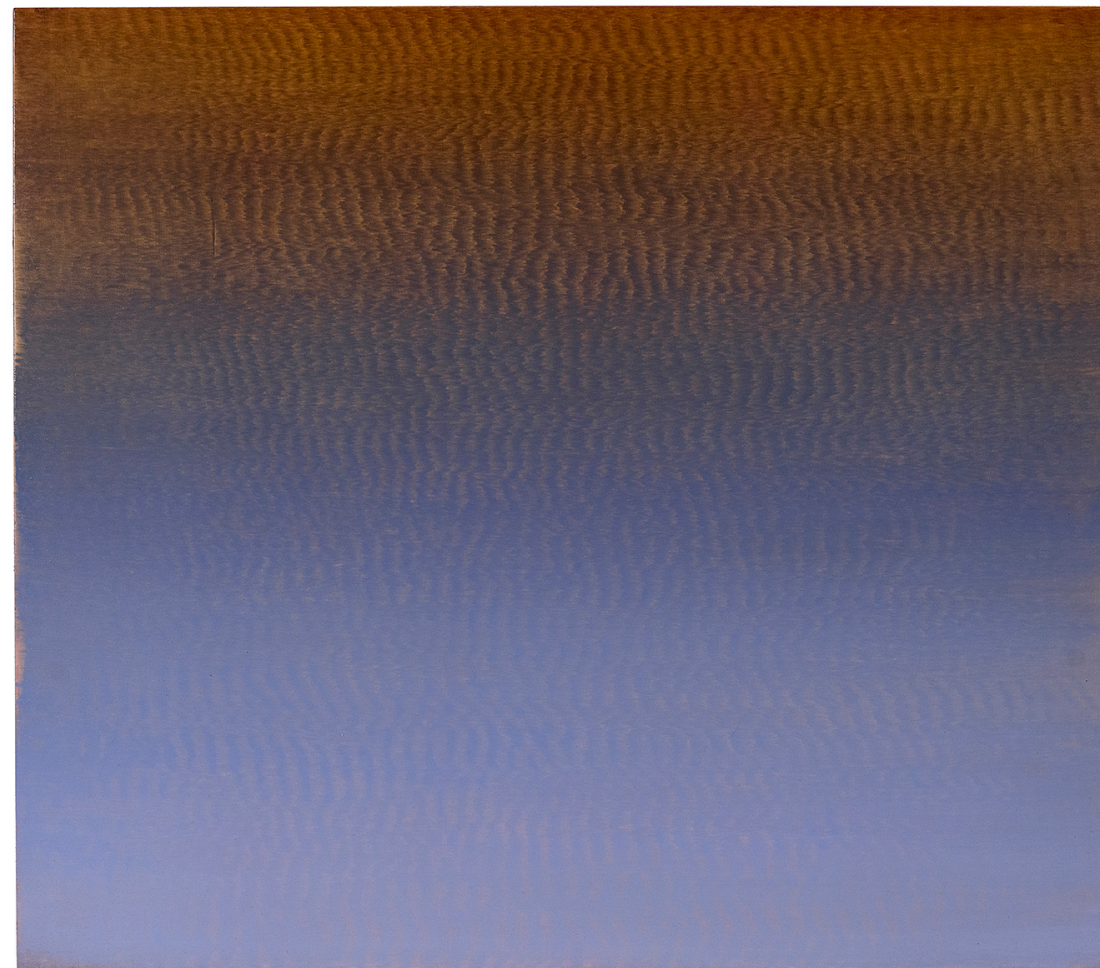


Peaceable (For Edward Hicks), 2008, 24 x 30 inches; pigment, polymer, ink on paper

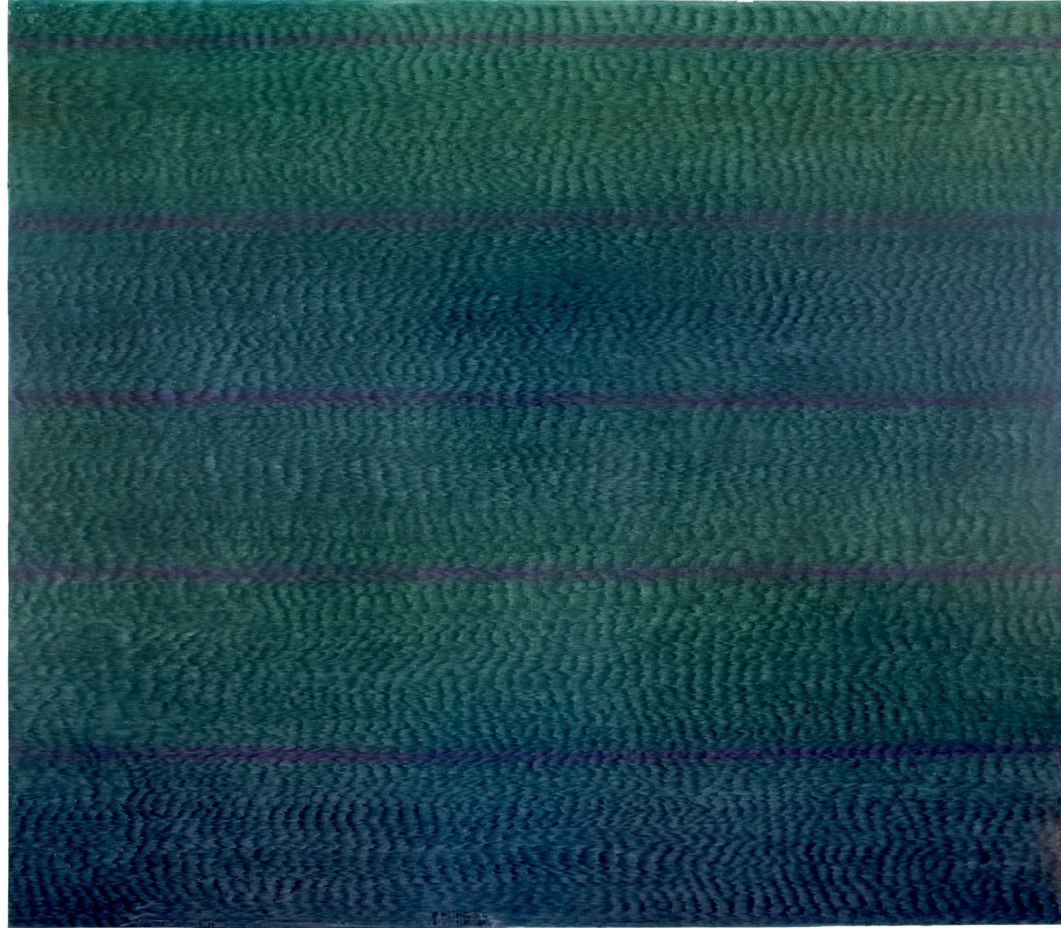


Peaceable (For Edward Hicks 2), 2008, 24 x 30 inches; pigment, polymer, ink on paper

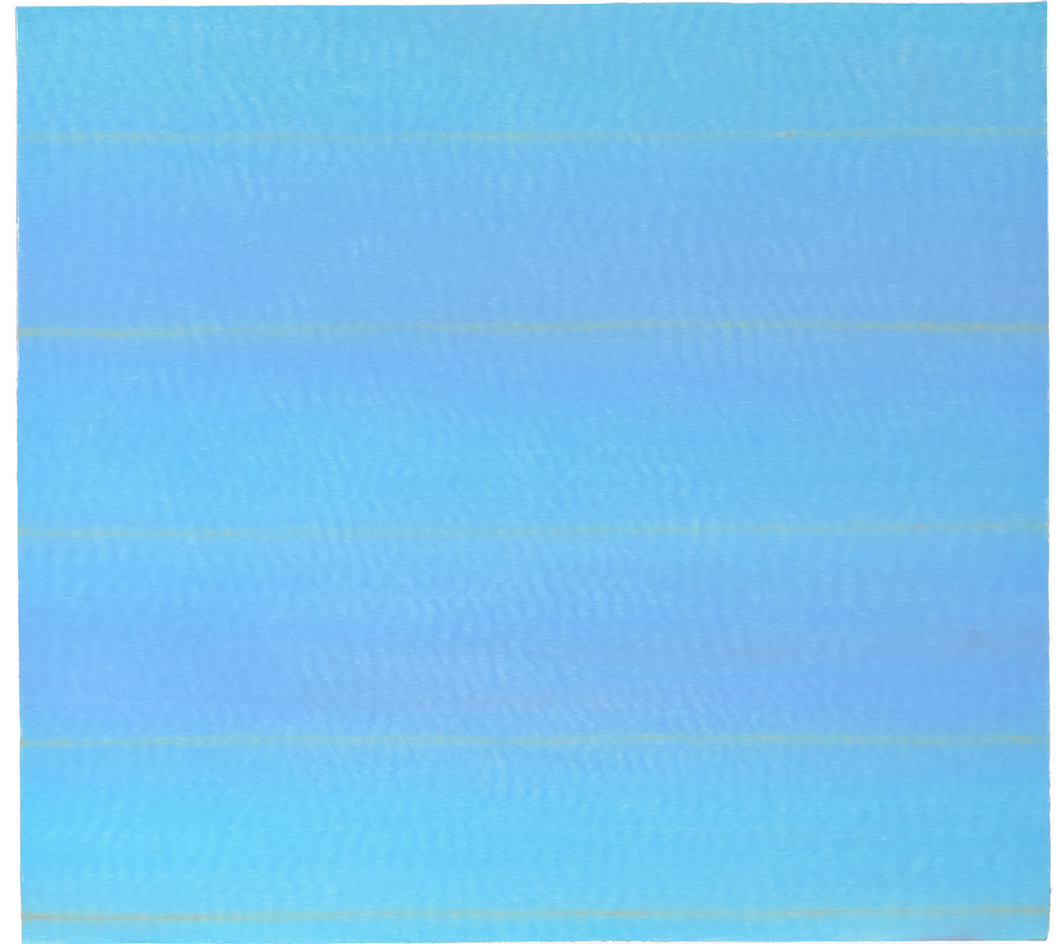
ELLEN KOZAK



Sky Throne, 2016, 24.5 x 28 inches; oil on panel



Painter's Log, 2016, 26.75 x 30.5 inches; oil on panel



Chronicle, 2016, 25.5 x 28 inches; oil on panel

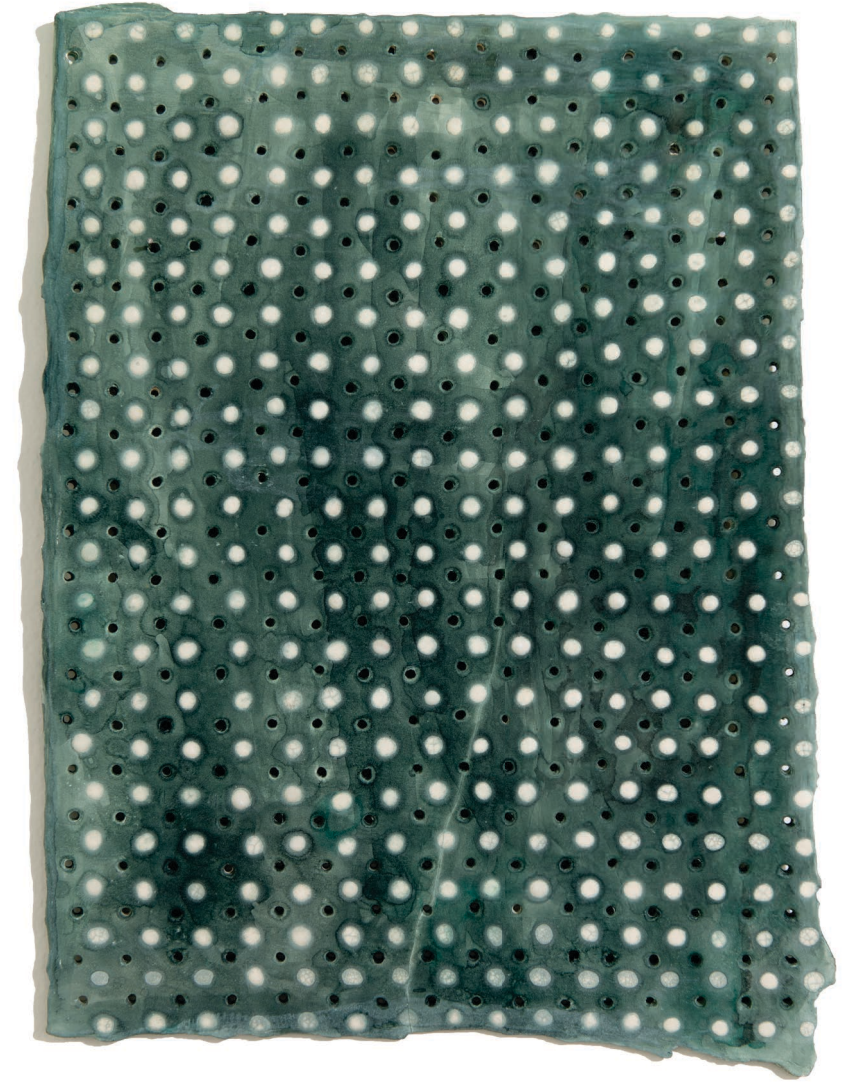
JOYCE ROBINS



Nine Square, 2014, 12 inches diameter; clay, glaze, paint



Red Blue Oval, 2005, 12 x 8 x 5 inches; clay, glaze, paint



Green Rectangle, 2002, 11 x 8 inches; clay, glaze, paint

SUZANNE CAPORAEEL

Suzanne Caporaël was born in Brooklyn, NY in 1949. Her work derives from close observation of the natural world and the attempts—scientific and cultural—to define and control it. Observation coupled with research has resulted in groups of paintings related to trees, chemical elements, water, ice, time, and place memory.

As noted by Ken Johnson:

Caporaël's paintings are a curious mix of the aesthetic and the conceptual...the paintings are sensuous and lyrical as well as rigorously formal.

The artist earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. She had her first show at thirty-five, when then Director Paul Schimmel debuted her work at the Newport Harbor Art Museum (now the Orange County Museum of Art). She was awarded a National Endowment grant in painting in 1986, and has been a visiting professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara and the San Francisco Art Institute. In 2009 she was a guest artist-in-residence at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. The artist's prints are published in collaboration with Tandem Press, Madison, WI.

Her work is represented in many major museum collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, among others.

Suzanne Caporaël lives and works in Lakeville, CT with her husband, novelist Bruce Murkoff.

MARTHA DIAMOND

Martha Diamond was born and raised in New York City. She received her BA from Carleton College in Minnesota in 1964 and spent the following year in Paris. She returned to New York to receive an MA from New York University in 1969. She has been based in New York ever since. She has had solo shows at the Brooke Alexander Gallery, the Robert Miller Gallery and the Alexandre Gallery in New York, at the New York Studio School, the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, and the Portland Museum of Art in Maine.

She has participated in group shows at such places as the American Academy of Arts and Letters (which honored her with an Academy Award in 2001), the American Center in Paris, the Brooklyn Museum, the Detroit Institute of Fine Arts, Harvard

University, the Kuznetsky Most Exhibition Hall in Moscow, the Mary Ryan Gallery and the Sidney Janis Gallery in New York, the University of Chicago, and the Whitney Museum of American Art (which included her in its 1989 Biennial).

Her work is in the permanent collections of many institutions, including Colby College Museum, the Australian National Gallery, the Brooklyn Museum, the Fogg Museum at Harvard, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the North Carolina Museum of Art, the Staatliche Museum in Berlin, and the Whitney Museum. She has taught at The Cooper Union, at Harvard, and at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture.

As noted by Roberta Smith:

Ms. Diamond's whole approach to painting is deceptively simple, full of hidden skills and decisions that only gradually reveal themselves, along with a good deal of humor and very little pretention.

As noted by Jonathan Goodman:

Diamond's paintings reflect the knowledge that abstraction and representation can effect a forceful merger in pictures that communicate both presence and legible form.

JACQUELINE GOUREVITCH

Jacqueline Gourevitch began exhibiting in the 1950s while studying at the University of Chicago and the Art Institute of Chicago. Her on-going series of Cloud Paintings was started in the mid 1960s.

About her Cloud Paintings she has said:

The experience of sky, of watching clouds on the move and light changing, is a universal experience. I like feeling accountable. Clouds are reliably unpredictable, useful training for daily life not only in times like these. They continue to surprise and trigger wonder. I'm also interested in conveying the silence in which intense observation takes place.

Gourevitch has had over thirty solo shows here and abroad. Her paintings are in the collections of the Wadsworth Athenaeum, the Menil Collection, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of the City of New York, the Morgan Library and Museum, and the Asheville Art Museum, among others. She has had grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Connecticut Commission for the Arts, the Florsheim Foundation, and a 1% for Art in Public Spaces commission. In 2004 the American Academy of Arts and Letters awarded her its Academy Award and in 2011 she was elected a member of the National

Academy. Over the years she has taught at Wesleyan University, at the University of California Berkeley, and The Cooper Union.

Gourevitch lives and works in New York City.

SHARON HORVATH

Sharon Horvath grew up in Cleveland, Ohio and moved to NYC when she was seventeen. She has lived abroad in Rome and Amsterdam and received a Fulbright Fellowship to India in 2013. She lives and works in Queens,

She received her BFA from The Cooper Union, and her MFA from Tyler School of Art and has exhibited in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Provincetown, and internationally.

Horvath's awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Rome Prize, the Anonymous Was a Woman Award, the American Academy of Arts and Letters award for painting, two Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grants, a prize for painting from the National Academy Museum, a Mid-Atlantic NEA Regional Fellowship, and an Elizabeth Foundation grant for painting. Other recognitions include the faculty prize for Outstanding Commitment as a Teacher and a Mentor from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Horvath is a Professor of Art in

Painting and Drawing at Purchase College, SUNY and was inducted into the National Academy Museum and School in 2016. Her work is included in private and public collections including the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Maier Museum and the National Academy Museum.

About her *Edward Hicks Series* Horvath writes:

At the time of painting this series, I was mesmerized by Edward Hicks's (1780-1849) paintings of the Peaceable Kingdom. With their powerful evocation of pre-lapsarian innocence, the imagery deeply resonated with my memories of growing up in Ohio in the 1960s and somehow gave me a way to re-enter that world. To go there, I used simple materials: yellow ochre, yellow oxide, paper, brushes and cobalt blue ink. I let his structural elements remain but elaborated on the appearance of surfaces, uncovering the warp and weft of a tapestry-like world.

ELLEN KOZAK

Ellen Kozak was born in New York City. She studied at the Massachusetts College of Art (BFA) and MIT, Center for Advanced Visual Studies (BSVisS), where she continued as a fellow. Between 1982 and 1984 she lived and worked in Japan, with an artist's grant from the JVC Corporation, returning to NYC in 1985.

As a painter and video artist, her work brings together concepts and crafts from both media. Close observation is the cornerstone of her practice, which includes novel ways of using bodies of water as lenses and synthesizers. By subverting expected characteristics of each medium she creates paradoxical disjunctions, an approach that unifies her bodies of work.

In Dore Ashton's foreword to the artist's limited edition "Orpheus, Eurydice, Hermes: Notations on a Landscape", Ashton writes:

Kozak, with long experience of the landscape of the Hudson River Valley, trained herself to be, as Rilke said, only eye.

Kozak's solo exhibitions include the Osaka Contemporary Art Center, the Katonah Museum of Art, the Hudson River Museum of Art, the Elizabeth Harris and Katarina Rich Perlow Galleries in NYC, the Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, and Cross

Contemporary Art in Saugerties, NY. She has participated in group shows at the Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art, ODETTA Gallery in Brooklyn, the Albany Museum of History and Art, the Hyde Collection, the American Center in Paris, and La nuit de l'instant 2017 in Marseille. Permanent Collections in which her work is included are the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Hudson River Museum, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and the Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Art Museum among others.

Kozak has taught at U. Mass., Princeton and at Pratt Institute. She lives in New York City and New Baltimore, New York and is a founding member of Riverkeeper's Leadership Council.

JOYCE ROBINS

Joyce Robins was born in Greenville, South Carolina. She studied at the Yale Summer School of Art, The Cooper Union (BFA) and The City University of New York (BSLA).

She has had twenty-four one-person shows of her work, most recently in New York at 33 Orchard Gallery, Theodore: Art, the Jane Hartsook Gallery, the John Davis Gallery in Hudson, NY, and the Schoolhouse

Center, Provincetown, MA. In addition her work has been seen in many group shows including, in New York, at MoMA PS1, the Brooklyn Museum, American Academy of Arts and Letters, Canada, RH Gallery, Edward Thorp Gallery, Pierogi Gallery, and Lennon Weinberg Gallery. Other group shows include the Rubicon Gallery (Dublin) and the Gasworks (London). In July 2010 she exhibited her work at the Biennale de Vallauris in Vallauris, France.

Robins was a recipient of a New York State Creative Artists Public Service Grant for Sculpture. She was a visiting artist at the Watershed Center for Ceramic Arts and at the Acadia Summer Art Program.

About her sculpture Robins says:

My sculpture is made of clay, glaze, and

paint. I am searching in the area between volumetric sculpture and flat painting—and so currently my work is deeply involved in low relief.

Hanging on the wall, a sheet of fired clay appears to twist and bulge. It is perforated and cut so that light penetrates the sculpture and creates points of brightness and skeins of shadow on the wall. The ceramic is both painted and glazed so that its colors sink into, as well as reflect out from, the surface of the piece.

Robins lives and works in the Hudson Valley of New York State.

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Carter Ratcliff is a poet, novelist, and art critic. He is a contributing editor of *Art in America*. Essay Copyright © 2017 by Carter Ratcliff.

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