

57. RANDY WILLIAMS. *L'Art Abstract*. 1977

CONTEXTURES

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Just Above Midtown, Inc., New York

CONTEXTURES



16. DAVID HAMMONS, *Black Boy's Window*, (Detail), 1968



17. DAVID HAMMONS. *Black Boy's Window*. 1968

Developments in abstraction over the past seven years have invariably reflected further investigation of Dada, particularly Duchamp, and Surrealist references and/or premises and philosophies of styles developed since the mid 1940s. Thus the process, materials, artist and art object interchangeably become the prominent elements of content and intent.

Abstraction, since Abstract Expressionism, has consistently been involved in the isolation, reduction and illumination of the physical, perceptual and metaphysical properties which constitute reality. The nature of these pursuits has been primarily focused on finding and exposing these properties as they exist naturally and inherently within the confines of the art object. In doing so, the art becomes self-definitive ceasing to rely on or refer to external phenomena for definition. By isolating and separating its physical, perceptual and metaphysical properties, reducing its effect on and relation to external phenomena and maintaining its definition within the art object's confines, art is placed in a restricted context; its definition and, thus, reality are marginal.

In a radical departure from this method, process and approach to art, a notable development has been occurring since the early 1970s based not on direct derivative associations nor on a synthesis of the past. Termed Contextures, the artists involved in this movement, after determining and clarifying the inherent properties of art, go outside its margin in order to incorporate it within the context of external phenomena. It is through this process of clarifying and incorporating the contents of the margin that they define the context meaning and relationship between art and reality. Characteristically, the marginal elements will maintain their nature and integrity throughout this incorporation and, thus, define their specific selves. Simultaneously their contextural meaning will be exposed.

While common factors exist between the works of the artists involved, the nature of its development appears happenstance and can be noted on the East and West coasts, particularly in New York and Los Angeles. The artists work independently resulting in individually designed objectives. Relationships and similarities among them only become apparent through the cross-examination of these objectives, materials, process and ultimate visualization of their works.

Prominent factors which both distinguish and connect their works are primarily the role and position of art to

reality, the role and position of the artist, and the process and the use of "remains" as the material in which the art objects are made.

Through an approach akin to modal logic,³⁹ the Contexturalists work from a method in which reality is perceived in two possible conditions: one, that it is reality; or two, that it is not reality. Through modality these statements of fact are considered merely as possibilities which may or may not be probable or actual. Rather than fixed, actual or certain, these statements become transient and only find clarity and definition through the contextural and transitive process used by these artists. In this sense, the artist acts as a medium in which the properties and conditions of reality are synthesized. Through this synthesis, the context whole of a given reality is presented.

The Contexturalists work primarily from their personal perceptions and accumulative experiences with internal and external phenomena. The artists' interest in the viewer and broader public becomes subordinate to their objective to define themselves, and to determine their own relative and context positions to reality.

The transitive process used by the Contexturalists consists of four elements: content, context, concept and definition. By maintaining the integrity of the individual properties an equation is established between them in which the properties of the first element are equal to the properties in each of the second, third and fourth elements. The characteristics of these properties will not be transformed or altered. The manner in which they are perceived during each elemental state tends to imply transformation. This implication, however, results from taking the actual marginal properties and placing them into context, thereby altering their perceptual meaning but not their physical characteristics.

As opposed to reduction and isolation the Contexturalists work from an additive method placing the content properties into context meaning. They go outside of the margin to complete the definition that exists within the art. Each individual property maintains its own distinction which, when incorporated in context, not only defines itself but also the environment in which it inhabits.

The use of "remains" as material is common throughout the works of these artists. The extent to which remains are used, however, varies. At times they are the dominant material and constitute the art object (Hammons) or they are incorporated with other objects and materials, often

ready-mades and discards, in order to formulate the nature and characteristics of the art object (Williams). The types of remains which are used ranges from clothes dryer lint, smoke (fumage), sand and hair, to wax, grease, paper dots from hole punched paper and wood.

By definition, remains constitute the matter or substance left over from a primary action. Unlike a discard, which had a function or purpose that ceased to perform, or a ready-made which has an intended purpose and function which it still performs, the remain has no particular purpose or function, or a definition clarifying its intent. The nature and conditions of its existence are ephemeral. The properties of ready-mades and discards are stable. They are not flexible or meant to be transient.

Duchamp's *The Fountain* (a ready-made) when taken from its natural environment and placed into an art environment, physically retains its perceptual meaning. Conversely, it can be taken from the art environment and placed back into its natural environment without changing any of the properties which constitute its initial definition and reality. Its self-contained physical, perceptual and metaphysical properties will not alter in its presentation in either environment. However, the process of isolation and reduction, as well as its placement out of context in order to alter the manner in which it will be perceived, will completely transform its original intent, definition and function. The urinal, outside of its natural environ, ceases to be the urinal that exists within its own and natural reality. In an art context it is unable to perform its initial and primary function, intent, purpose or definition.

The transient properties of remains, however, allows them to be utilized within the transitive process of the Contextualist without transformation, distortion or alteration in meaning. David Hammons' hair, when taken from its initial environment and incorporated within context, maintains its properties (physical, perceptual and metaphysical), and continues to perform its function. The hair, regardless of the environment and context in which it is placed, will maintain all its initial elements and properties. The external perception of the hair will not change. The context in which it is perceived may alter its meaning as opposed to the Dadaist process of isolation and alteration of the ready-made or discard which changes its physical, perceptual and metaphysical definition and reality. The meaning and reality of the remain will stay constant throughout its context incorporation.

An acknowledged element and consciousness shared by many of these artists has been music and dance. A spiritual quality, as well, is apparent in their works as they seek to involve, through context, the essence of reality. The works do not become symbols of the real or spiritual continuums, however, but rather become the transit in which these two elements co-exist. The nature of their work provokes sensory, psychological and visual perceptions.

Contextual elements have been apparent in the works of David Hammons: since the 1960s when he began exploring contemporary printing processes and abstracted figural forms. During this time he extensively experimented with various printing techniques involving and incorporating body imprints. Extracting all but the fundamental components of traditional printmaking and expanding on contemporary methods, he developed a body printing technique which directly utilizes the body as the printing plate. His process involves three stages as he works from the negative to the positive image. Oiling the areas of the body to be printed, he then presses them onto a surface. Through sifting powdered pigment, obtained from decomposed sticks of chalk (remains), these imprints are exposed.

Unlike methods commonly associated with body printing where the body marks a plate which is then used to transfer this marking onto a surface (Johns, Marisol, George Segal) or where the body is inked or painted, pulled, draped and rolled across a surface (Yves Klein) causing additional visual effects which distort the integrity of the actual impression of the body's surface, Hammons' method produces exact, accurate and undistorted impressions. His body prints maintain the integrity of the plate's surface producing imprinted replicas of body structure and texture.

Hammons' earliest body prints integrate social and political symbolism with distorted figural forms and textural compositions. Paradox, which he achieves through integrating commentary and satire into visual vignettes of seemingly contradictory imagery, becomes a significant element in the works created between 1967 and 1972. Initially these vignettes incorporated ready-mades and discards. Hammons, as well, translated the body print onto a silkscreen which was then used to transfer the imprint onto the final surface.

In *Black Boy's Window*, 1968 (fig. 17), Hammons incorporated the body print within an actual window frame and panes. Transferring the initial imprint to silkscreen he dis-

assembled the window, printing each pane separately. After the printing process had been completed he reassembled the window, panes and shade which could then be left up or pulled down by the viewer.

Hammons creates visual as well as structural tension within his compositions. Through the sequential placement of the six panes, the vertical perspective is accentuated by the central placement of the figure. By eliminating the arms, suggesting their presence only by the placement of hand prints on each side of the figure's head, the vertical pull becomes more prominent only to be contradicted by a decorative horizontal dissection. The embryonic stages of his technique is apparent as undefined textural areas inhibit the individual and distinct structural areas of the figure's imprint. Balance is achieved, however, by the emotive qualities of his images. A barred foreground and the elimination of the arms and lower torso of the body further accentuates the imprisonment of the figure.

Hammons has consistently worked with symbols. During this period the American flag is a recurrent theme; as the border and frame for *In Justice Case*, 1970 to the body wrap for the female in *America the Beautiful*, 1968. Textural effects become more prominent as the hair and torso areas take on definable qualities.

Between 1969 and 1971, textural effects dominate the works. The symbol is removed and his considerations for space move from the geometric division of the picture plane to visual delineations which occur through textural transitions and juxtapositions. Hammons also relinquishes almost all allegiance to a literal presentation of the body's structure.

In *Close Your Eyes and See Black*, 1970 (fig. 18) Hammons distorts the structure of the body making the parts compact and seemingly self-contained within the torso area of the figure. By controlling the amount and application of the powdered pigment, texture becomes a decisive element in defining the movement which occurs within the figure's confines.

During 1971 Hammons moved from paradox toward contextual definition. Focusing on social, political and symbolic connotations of actual objects, he began a series of works incorporating the spade shape which led him to a series of three-dimensional works using actual spades or shovels. Derogatory social connotations of the symbol are dispelled as the spade (cut, tied and chained) becomes a fetish-like apparition endowed with dramatic and spiritual

overtones as in *Laughing Magic*, 1973 (fig. 19).

Intrigued by the various possibilities of presenting the spade, Hammons developed a series of spade mysteries. Process works evolved involving the spade or its shape in a series of social and psychological dramas. From being killed by an automobile to being destroyed by its own image, these works return to paradox as they refer to racial, social and economical conditions.

Concurrently, Hammons continued his abstraction of the body prints. Employing aspects of his earlier assemblages, he superimposes the textural quality of the imprint onto the textural surfaces of collage material. In this series of works, areas of imprint are restricted to defining the interiors of the collage fragments. The spade shape is adjusted to a pyramidal form which is used as a decorative motif sequentially distributed throughout the background plane.

The body form was completely abstracted by the latter part of 1974. Eliminating collage, he restricted his surface to imprints defined by repetitive shapes and textures which he acquired from various types of cloth and found objects. To achieve this abstraction he alters his technique: first he oils and prints the shape which will define the external boundaries of the form; then he presses into and abstracts from this layer of pigment with body parts and found objects in order to define and abstract the internal areas (*Ragged Spirits*, 1974) (fig. 20).

Both stimulated by a growing interest in the work of Duchamp, as well as his concern that the creative process not be dictated by "need of money," and as a result of his use of found spades, Hammons moved away from a reliance on art materials. His objectives were constantly proclaimed as he sought to make art that "... no one will buy... outrageous art... it will make people think, think about themselves and what that means. You can't sell this... they won't buy this... old dirty bags, grease, bones, hair... it's about us, it's about me... it isn't negative... we should look at these images and see how positive they are, how strong, how powerful... our hair is positive... it's powerful, look what it can do. There's nothing negative about our images, it all depends on who is seeing it and we've been depending on someone else's sight... We need to look again and decide."¹⁰

Hammons' Bag Series consisting of found brown shopping bags, organic and manufactured grease, hair, rib bones and glitter emerged in 1975. Working from the



18. DAVID HAMMONS. *Close Your Eyes and See Black*. 1970



20. DAVID HAMMONS. *Ragged Spirits*. 1974

natural folds and crevices of the bags he developed the line and form compositions of these works. Attaching bag to bag, Hammons is able to construct horizontal and vertical movement by gradually changing the placement of one bag onto another. In *Untitled, 1976-77* (fig. 21), a wing-like form is projected on both sides of the vertical hair band which acts as the central axis. Resembling an open fan, the movement and direction of these undulating forms are emphasized by the paper's folds creased in a manner which allows them to jut from the surface creating a shadowy depth. Hammons stains the surface of the paper using thick and thin grease. Once the initial layer of grease is applied he rubs it into and out of the paper's surface creating stain variations. This accomplished, Hammons changes the type of grease. Again, rubbing into and out of the paper he is able to vary the staining effect and alter the surface complexion. Additional layers of grease are applied in order to provide textural build-up and variation. These areas are generally utilized to emphasize or de-emphasize the contrast between the light, dark and shadowed areas. Color is introduced by attaching glitter to the outer edges of the fans. Maintaining his pyramidal and triangular forms, these color areas assist in accentuating the movement of the outer edges and provide contrasts to the subtle stain patterns and coloration of the bags.

In many of these bags Hammons attaches the remains of barbecue rib bones. Glitter was sprinkled upon these uncleaned and naturally decaying attachments, and they were then tied to the outer edges of the bags in order to accentuate horizontal or vertical movement.

Intrigued by the effects of hair when incorporated within the Bag Series, Hammons began his Hair Series in 1976. His first work incorporated hair threaded wires with a Yoruba mask which was suspended from the ceiling and adorned with a gown of plastic. The hair-wire acted as a floor environment which enclosed the fetish. In subsequent works the hair was attached to found objects (*Murray's Can, 1976*) or placed behind glass in frames. These framed works primarily focused on the textural properties and compositional potentials of hair. Sifting coarse hair through a strainer, Hammons created a background of fine bits which were superimposed with curly locks and delineated with straight strands. These confined hair works were then freed, strung on rubber bands and stretched to scales of ten feet in length. Attaching and stretching rubber band to rubber band, Hammons developed wall drawings

of lyrical and staccato movement. Jutting up, jutting down, dissecting horizontal and vertical planes, these seemingly suspended balls of hair perceptually intrigue and deceive as they allude to ephemeral motion while statically contained.

Through further investigation of the properties of hair, Hammons found that the sifted hair, when placed in a mold, could provide its own support. A series of hair pyramids was developed. Each individual and unified pyramid is imbued with its own distinctive textural and tonal qualities as in *Untitled, 1976* (fig. 22). Placing these pyramids on the floor, Hammons arranges them in a combination of open and closed patterns. An interest in pattern continues in the hair works as he uses the sifted hair as stuffings for holes in found metal and screens. These works generally consist of six to ten quilt-like components, and are often reminiscent of the geometric compositions found in African textile designs. Later, Hammons combines the hair threaded wires and screens with large forms of unsifted bodies of hair and barbershop debris, achieving a contrast between the patterned, linear and the undistinguishable.

In 1977, Hammons returns to the hair threaded wires, but now frees them from any attachments and allows their form and interaction to determine their line, movement and compositional structure. No longer confined, they create environments of lyrical, staccato and, at times, seemingly sporadic energy. In *Untitled, 1977* (fig. 23) each individual wire maintains its own perceptible characteristics and distinctions. In groups, they physically narrate their environment in a manner which often taunts the viewer into acknowledgement and interaction. This physicality is enhanced further by their organic, tactile and sensuous nature.

Untitled, 1977 (fig. 24) breaks from all restraint, distributing energy across the wall as the wires appear to grow, crawl and multiply while continuing the elusive and perceptual deception noted in the Rubber Band Series.

In *Untitled, 1977* Hammons physically confines the hair-wires between the intersection of two walls. Almost in defiance of this restraint, the wires disseminate an energetic activity through their bending, pulling and interweaving creating a nervous tension and agitation. In this work, Hammons returns to his concern for the triangular-pyramidal form which he emphasizes by enclosing the right angles with hair wires.

Working with space, Hammons has maintained his concern for creating environmental and atmospheric conditions which provoke, engulf and contain the viewer. The nature of these works repel and intrigue, include and exclude participation from the viewer. The nature of this participation is based purely on the viewer's perspective and willingness to be included within the contextual composition and presence of the work.

Hammons continues his use of images, symbols and materials responding to a variety of attitudes and conceptions, often contradictory, which he then incorporates into his interweavings of the physical, perceptual and metaphysical properties of the internal reality of the art object and the external reality of experience. This contextual process allows him to assert and define his relative position to art and reality.

Hammons' interest in the viewer has been one wherein the conditions of their reaction and response is predicated on an environment in which contradiction and his contextual 'truth' coexist. With no assistance, the viewer is left to decipher the distinctions.

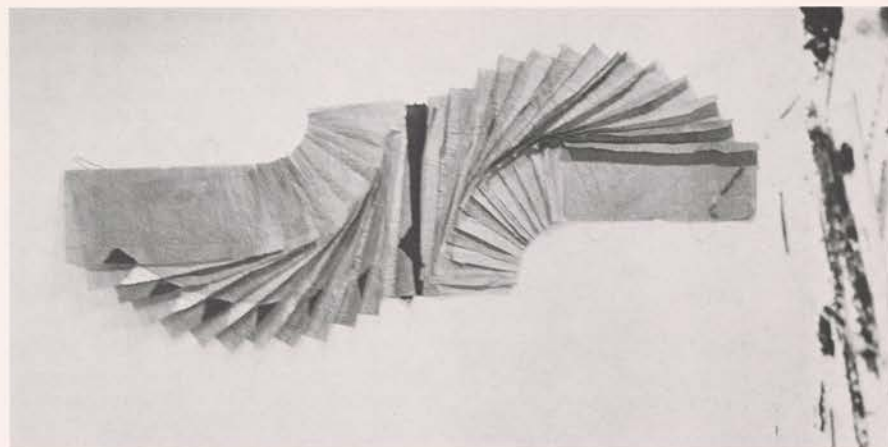
Hammons' placement of the art on the ceiling in order to make "people look up,"¹¹ thus jolting their natural and usual position and relationship to the art object, occurred to him in the early 1970s which he conceptualized in *Gray Skies Over Harlem, 1977* (pl. 9). This environmental piece incorporates objects and materials from egg shells to tea bags and roaches with colored wire and hair. He alters the position and perspective of the viewer by placing the work on the ceiling subordinating the viewer to the object. This archeological-like icon continues to exude nervous and sporadic energy, dissecting the meaning and content of each object, collectively providing contrasts, conflicts and similarities through which his definitions and reality are proclaimed.

Tension, environment, architecture, atmosphere and emotion are prominent elements in the anthropomorphic structures of Senga Nengudi.¹² Working with nylon mesh and sand, she twists, pulls, intertwines and sags her material into sensuous and sensual emotive formations.

Nengudi's work during the latter part of the 1960s and early 1970s consisted of water-filled vinyl forms. Folded and twisted these self-contained transparent and physically limp structures were pushed into long, thin rectangular shapes. By adding color to the water (which was heat-sealed into the vinyl), Nengudi was able to juxtapose color



19. DAVID HAMMONS. *Laughing Magic*. 1973



21. DAVID HAMMONS. *Untitled*. 1976

and form into layers of visually penetrable mass. Tension and flexibility were obtained through the varying distribution of water throughout the plastic, holding it in place by the folds and twist of the material and the weight of the water. These skin-like folded forms were often draped over ropes and twisted into figural distortions.

From the early to mid 1970s Nengudi experimented extensively with a variety of materials in order to decipher the qualities and properties which would be necessary to achieve maximum flexibility and elasticity. During this time Nengudi developed a series of works with rope and flag material. By tying these outdoors, the wind became an additional element in the works. Therefore, varied and unexpected undulating waves and movements occur as the air current interacts with the pliable forms, imposing a natural dimension into the work.

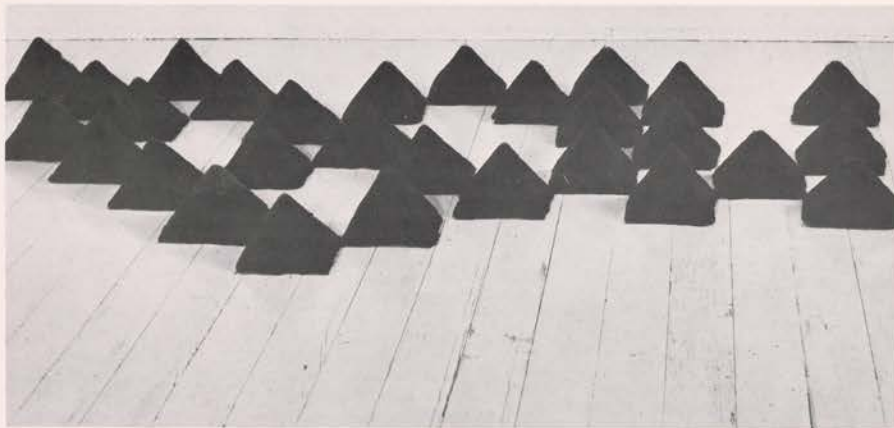
Nengudi had begun working with nylon in 1975 and in 1976 her nylon mesh and sand works emerged. One of her primary concerns has been the immediate impact of emotional, rather than intellectual, experience. With a background in dance, she seemingly choreographs the object's movement by the tense and abstracted interweavings of

emotional, intellectual and social or human experience. Lyrical movement is embodied within the stretched and pulled linear extensions and appendages of the object's central axis.

Her initial works were self-contained, and the nylon stretch and extension were minimal. Distortion of the nylon's naturally limp condition was achieved through tying and knotting. In general, these works rely on the incorporation of ready-mades and discards as the foundation from which they will protrude, surround or extend.

In *Inside/Outside—Winter, 1977* (fig. 25), rubber, foam and sand act as determinants for the object's form. By placing the nylon mesh over horseshoe-shaped foam both covered with rubber tubing, and creating surface and textural interplays of contrasts from the cool, smooth and slick surface of the rubber to the grainy, warm and sensuous surface of the nylon, she is able to achieve subtle to sharp color and textural variations. Patterned stockings are exposed and emphasized as their stretch by the sand illuminates the threading.

The works increase their organic and sensual feel by stretching and knotting which allows the sand to fill in-



22. DAVID HAMMONS. *Untitled*, 1976

dividual pockets. Suggesting human organs these sand-filled pockets awaken and provoke the viewer's tactile sense since he/she is encouraged to poke and to squeeze, assisting the slow oozing of the sand from the nylon's pores.

While maintaining her incorporation of found objects and debris, Nengudi releases the nylon from its dependence on a foundation of support in *Chant—Winter, 1977* (fig. 26). The nylon becomes self-supporting. Stretching the waistband by one foot, Nengudi allows the nylon to define its form from its own natural folds and stretch. The waistband and pelvis extension act as the central axis. Tension is reduced and limited to the knotting of two nylons in what might constitute the focal point of the work in the upper center. Contrast is achieved through a fetish-like neckpiece which extends from the suspended waistband, and forms a horizontal dissection immediately below the knotted focal point. The rips, runs and tears are naturally exposed enhancing the subtle textural qualities of this piece. In contradiction, the piece exists in a relaxed suspension with the tension created through the stretched waistband support and central knot.

Nengudi works in a figural motif which is abstracted be-

yond specific visual references, but achieved through gesture, movement and an imagery indicative of body parts and structures. "I am working with nylon mesh because it relates to the elasticity of the human body. From tender, tight beginnings to sagging and . . . The body can only stand so much push and pull until it gives way, never to resume its original shape. After giving birth to my own son, I thought of black wet nurses suckling child after child—their own as well as those of others—until their breasts rested upon their knees, their energies drained . . . My works are abstracted reflections of used bodies, visual images that serve my aesthetic decisions as well as my ideas."¹¹

The tension and the strain, the sagging and the pull become prominent elements in *R.S.V.P. XIII, March, 1977* (fig. 27). Reintroducing sand, Nengudi extends the nylon seemingly beyond its physical endurance by attaching it to the ceiling and wall from three points. This triangular formation acts as the boundary in which the central axis is developed. Incorporating sand into the dangling mesh the vertical pull is further accentuated. Tension exists within

the stretched and attached elements as well as in those which hang loosely from the axis. Color, hue and textural variations persist as Nengudi continues to vary the type of nylon which is incorporated within the piece. The sagging pockets begin to taunt the viewer's sensibility since they resemble breasts or testicles which have been stretched to a state of anguish. The environmental and atmospheric nature of this piece engulfs the viewer, challenging response and participation while seducing the viewer through its tactile and sensual qualities.

Nengudi relaxes the tension in *Swing Low, Spring, 1977* (fig. 28). Maintaining the triangular-pyramidal form she lessens the stretch of the nylon allowing areas to droop. In an almost suspended animated pull, the nylon is supported from the ceiling. A foreground horizontal band is created through two perpendicular nylon strips which are perceptually stabilized by a lower horizontal fold and two sagging pockets of sand. The slight curvature from the two strips and the triangular pointed "head" alludes to a lyrical and almost demonic display of mischief.

In *Insides Out, 1977* (fig. 29) a tight-knotted tense disturbance is created through the utilization of the limited spatial area between the boundaries in a series of repetitive knots. Again, applying a discard as the hanging support—for the piece, she concentrates the areas with varying pockets of sand and knots which tangle and squeeze. The dominating vertical emphasis stresses the tight and discomforted confinements since each contained element appears to struggle for unentanglement.

In *I, 1977* (fig. 30 & 31) Nengudi returns to her overall use of environmental space. The nylon and sand pockets act as testicles and breasts, stretched, pulled, suspended and rested expanding their tension from a repetitive series of attachments to the surrounding walls. The sensual, sensuous and tactile elements prevail as the atmosphere surrounds the viewer in a provocative seduction of his/her senses. Nengudi's concern for architecture becomes illuminated as the work defines arcs, corners and crevices accentuated by its confines.

Environmental divisions of space and form are apparent in *Internal I and II* (fig. 32 & 33). Extending the stretch and increasing the number of attachments to the wall, a lyrical and suspended form is achieved. Eliminating the sand, this work is purely defined by the stretch and pull of the nylon against the wall.

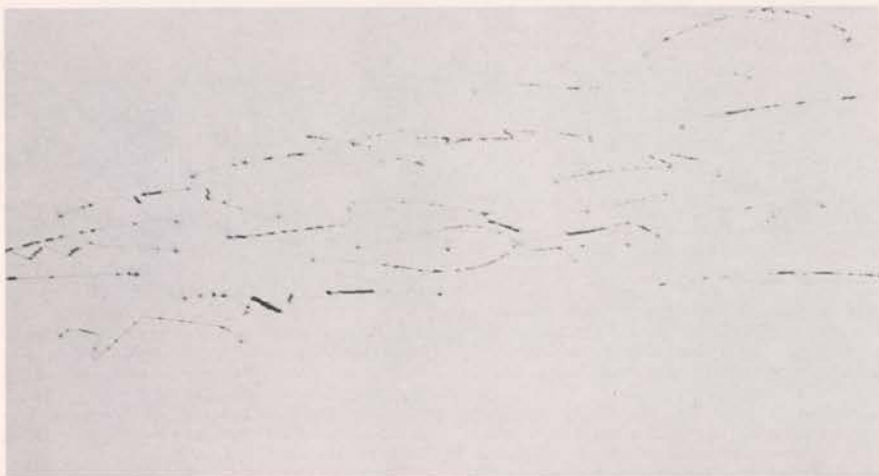
Symbolic imagery is implied more through the character



23. DAVID HAMMONS. *Untitled*, 1977

and formation of form than through the nature of the materials and the incorporation of objects which have socio-sexual-political connotations in her context. Unlike Hammons, however, her iconography is more subdued, avoiding or subjugating the intellectual in order to evoke emotion and experience into concrete and prominent elements of definition and reality.

A bifurcation of natural and technological phenomena occurs in the works of Susan Fitzsimmons through her use of lucite and organic material in three-dimensional wall reliefs and sculptures. By equalizing the intellectual, scientific, and personal observation and interpretation she contextualizes the elements of natural and man-made substances into co-equal physical states which share a commonality in their evolutionary process, and metaphysical conditions in modern society. Placing scientific and technological procedure into context with organic and natural phenomena, she creates a subtle yet poignant commentary on man's alienation to his/her natural and material environs. Her works address this alienation by combining the inherent properties existing within both realms into compatible and coexisting conditions, distinctively and collectively exposing the spiritual and material essence of modern existence. This exposure is rendered transparent as the process and properties of both realms are intertwined into methodical and stochastic relationships which allude to the past and present, and provide concrete indications of the future. Thus a mental methodology coincides with



24. DAVID HAMMONS. *Untitled*. 1977

the contextual transitive process by conducting the predictability of the future through the existence of past and present facts. "If you are able to observe carefully, like an old lover noticing some new trait that was overlooked because of the dulling effects of habituation then it will grant you the chance to see things you haven't seen before. It will freeze transparent relationships in time and space."¹⁴

Fitzsimmons' works become models and systems which she examines intellectually. Gathering information, she synthesizes the properties and characteristics of this information into untransformed states of factual data.

In 1975 Fitzsimmons developed a hypothesis and formula, "New Arrangements Through Creative Work,"¹⁵ in which a number of lucite works were developed from a process delineated into categories A through H. Using the method of modeling she was able to "... identify principle energy flow pathways . . ."¹⁶ existing from the initial concept and energy source (artist) through to the final art object (The Surviving Information Series). Her method allowed for control and happenstance where random and ar-

bitrary choice and systematic choice integrate to form the final object. While adhering to established technological formulas for producing lucite, Fitzsimmons altered and rearranged these processes which led to technical and manufacturing innovations with the material.

Fitzsimmons feels that the process of making lucite is similar to the process of photosynthesis. Lucite is unpredictable as are systems of nature. The material provides the necessary characteristics to represent a model, and lends itself to visual descriptions and exposure of the process. The natural substances of lucite also provide the connections between natural and material phenomena since the petrochemical component is derived from organic molecules. With the technical photosynthesizing of the material providing the original energy input, the evolutionary element and energy source are apparent when joined with an organic base.

During 1975 and 1976, Fitzsimmons used geometric cubes and prisms to provide her with her technical renderings. The transparency is treated with and without color as



25. SENGA NENGUDI. *Inside/Outside*. 1977

texture and structure dominate the factual information of each work. By varying the process she is able to translate lucite into hazes created by deviating from traditional milling techniques which constitute the depth and level of transparent visibility. Her approach to color is similar to painting since it creates color fields of varying hue intensities. Often the variation and distinction will fuse within the prisms to create a solid color as in *All These Colors Make Brown*, 1976.

After technical experimentation with the material Fitzsimmons moved to her biform works incorporating manufactured and natural materials. Basing a series of works on the four seasons of the year, she analyzed the characteristics and properties of water occurring in all four conditions. Her selection of natural materials, particularly wood, becomes a process of both intent and happenstance. Initially her "imagination knows and recognizes."³⁷ A dialogue occurs between the wood and her concept in which the wood tells her what to do and she then dictates what the wood will do. After selection, the "plastic surgery" begins. Controlling the flow-formation of the lucite, unfinished, rough, smooth and sustained liquid are contained within transparent confines. The process is one of struggle, control and chance as she manipulates the process and method of forming the lucite and joining the wood.

In *Water—Summer*, 1977 (fig. 34) the lucite is held between two vertical wood bands and introduced to a variety of natural debris and remains. The textural flow of the lucite is unrestricted resembling the flow of water; waves, streams, vibrations. In *Water—Fall*, 1977 (fig. 35) the natural conditions of the wood interact with reds and browns contained within the lucite. Her use of joints to hold the structure upright is introduced in these works. Balanced, the works stand independently without need of nailing or cementing the parts into place.

In *Stick-Caught Cube*, 1977 (fig. 36) the dichotomy between technology and organic reverberates as the lucite's surface is rendered smooth. The internal area of the lucite is allowed to flow in textural formations which directly relate to the surface of the sustaining wood. The effects of the prism are continued as the reflection and juxtaposition of the suspended wood-stick and lucite create varying reflections depending on the perspectives from which it is viewed.

A conscious examination occurs as the viewer is confronted with the dichotomy of his environ enabling

him/her to dissect and decipher his/her relative position to the natural and material phenomenon. More importantly, man's alienation to his environment is challenged as the properties between the two become interrelated providing a balance in future meaning and significance.

"My work is not about sculpture using a certain material, it is about the process of change described in my model. It is peripherally related to taking technologies that confront us, and better using them as tools for communication."³⁸

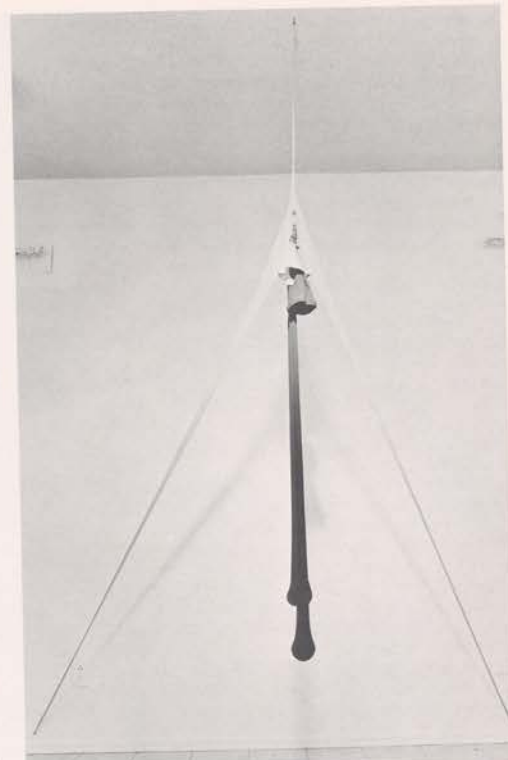
The biform works of Gini Hamilton consist primarily of hard and soft, pliable and restraining, and repelling and absorbing relationships between materials. Her objects are composed of various types of cloth, steel and threads which are used to bind the soft and hard substances into three-dimensional units, creating structural and compositional devices that accentuate or subdue their natural characteristics. Thus, through pulling, stuffing, knotting and binding she obtains a restrained and sustained suspension of the cloth perceptually contradicting its naturally pliable and limp qualities. Cotton, lace and string take on visual characteristics resembling the weight, solidity and depth of traditional sculptural material. These cloth-bound forms are generally attached to the upper portion of a steel band. The nature of their attachment and binding allude to a dimension of weight, accentuated by leaning the steel on a supporting wall. The physical properties of steel are subdued as the cloth forms appear too heavy for the steel to support on its own. While the natural properties and qualities of these materials have not been altered the perceptual reversal which occurs jars any preconceptions of soft and hard, strong and weak into a reconsideration of physical facts and information. It is through the context in which these materials have been combined that this perceptual reversal of their properties and qualities occurs. Their clarification and definition, as well, are physically and essentially reversed by their contextual interrelations.

Underlying sexual connotations are apparent as the materials relate to stereotypical masculine and feminine traits. While tied, bound and knotted these soft, rounded and sensuous "cloth-females" push, force and pertrude through tensions and confinement taking on strong and dominant masculine characteristics.

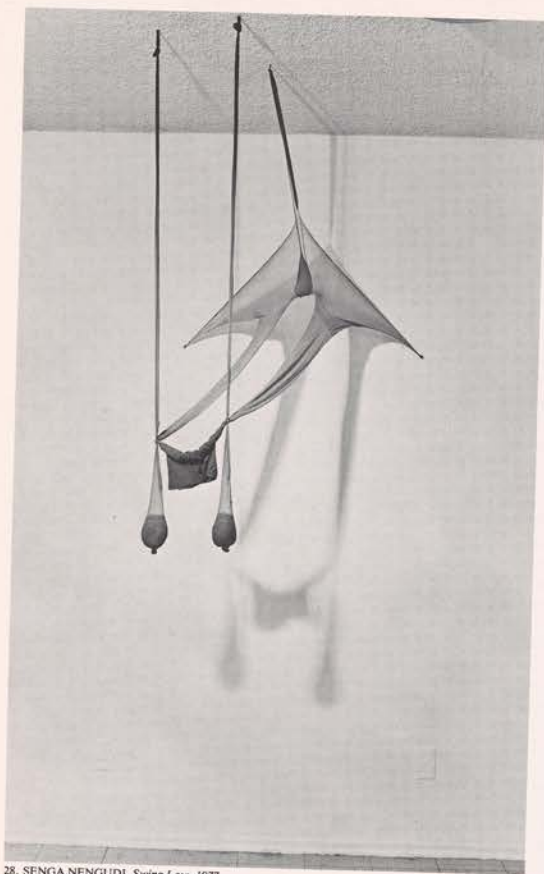
The wall and floor act as foundations or supports for Hamilton's works. Her utilization of pull, stretch, stuffing and knotting is similar to that of Nengudi although Hamil-



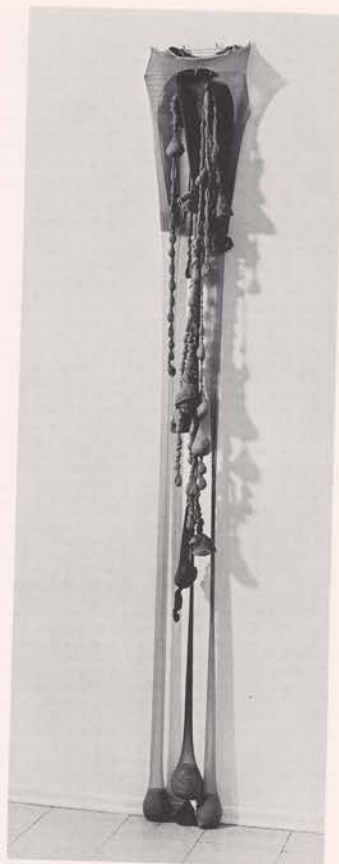
26. SENGA NENGUDI. *Chant*, 1977



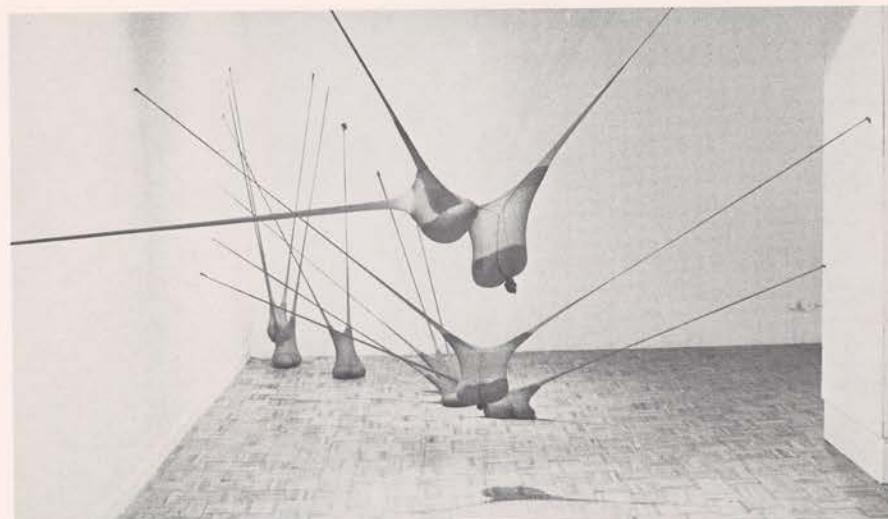
27. SENGA NENGUDI. *R.S. V.P. XIII*, 1977



28. SENGANGUDI. *Swing Low*. 1977



29. SENGANGUDI. *Insides Out*. 1977



30. SENGANGUDI. I. 1977

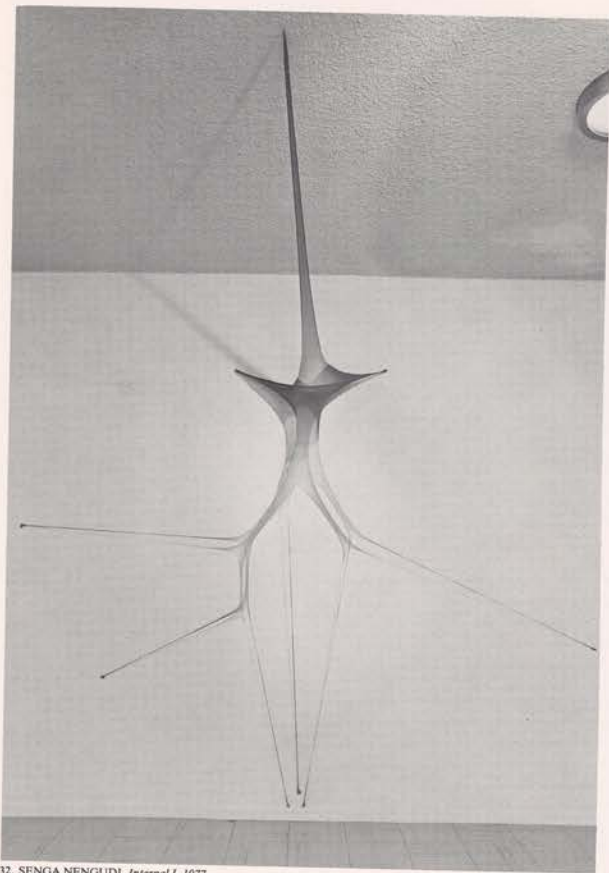
ton restricts the space utilized. The wall and floor are not incorporated, as with Nengudi, into the structural composition of the works. While tension and release achieve a greater prominence and dominance in Nengudi's works due to the elasticity of the nylon mesh, Hamilton is able to condense and maintain a similar effect through larger and more isolated tied and knotted bags, and by increasing and emphasizing the amount and size of the threaded areas. The result is a more static, less fluid, structure in which tightly stuffed textural cloth provide the focal interest.

Discards and remains, which she constantly collects, constitute the material in Hamilton's works. *Love Letter*, 1977 (fig. 37) combines paper, muslin, painted canvas, string and metal into a horizontal wall hanging of varying textural surfaces constituting four layers or levels. As in most of her wall hangings, the metal is placed on top of the material and is primarily used as contradictory accents to the malleable structure and shapes. Here the circular metal

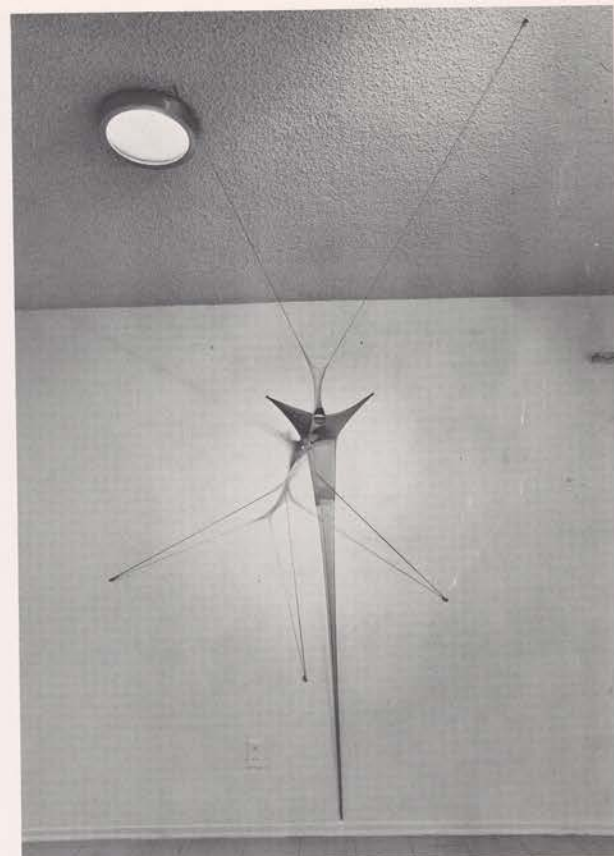
disc are placed below five corresponding drawn "X"es. Their smooth and rusted surface acts as a textural device reinforcing the woven canvas, the ground for the smooth textured and stuffed muslin. Emphasizing the horizontal pull, the muslin is stretched, tied and bound by string that is attached to the corners of tattered uneven parallel boundaries. The layering and juxtaposition of textures and stuffed and knotted muslin allude to a certain mysticism and secrecy, intriguing and disconcerting as the inner privacy of her world is concealed.

In *Option: Continuance*, 1977 (fig. 38) Hamilton's juxtaposition of materials and structural placement becomes less intimate as visual interest is virtually restricted to balance and counter-balance, form and non-form.

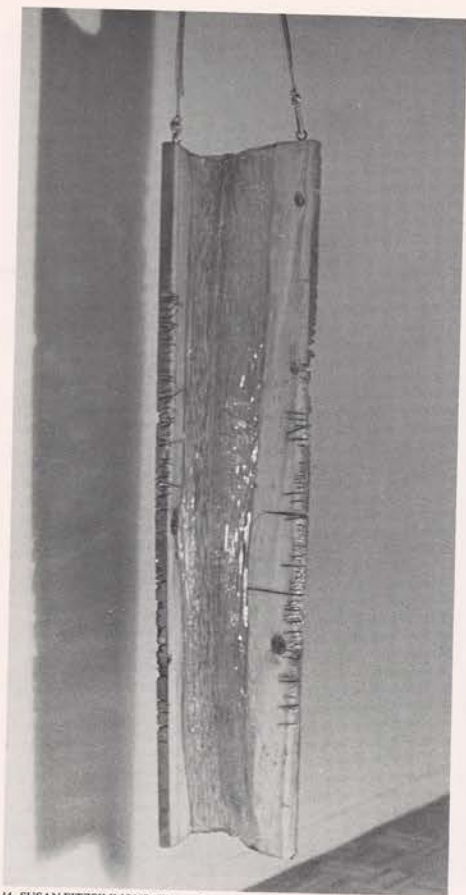
Hamilton's recent works are reminiscent of totems. A vertical narrative of images is created by varying the types of cloth and materials which are wrapped around thin rods of steel and bound by plastic cord. In these works the cord



32. SENGA NENGUDI. *Internal I*. 1977



33. SENGA NENGUDI. *Internal II*. 1977



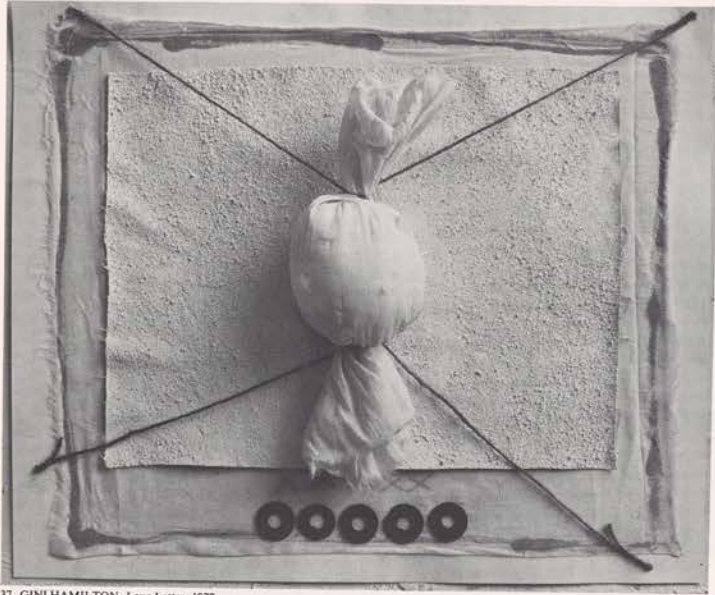
34. SUSAN FITZSIMMONS. *Water—Summer*. 1977.



35. SUSAN FITZSIMMONS. *Water—Fall*. 1977.



36. SUSAN FITZSIMMONS. *Stick-Caught Cube*. 1977.



37. GINI HAMILTON. *Love Letter*. 1977



38. GINI HAMILTON. *Option: Continuance*. 1977

acts as the support for the steel as it wraps around the material and the rod separating the images into sections. The cord is then stretched and nailed onto the wall, positioning the rod in a diagonal slant. The works appear intimate, as the lace acts as the dominant textural element concealing and exposing bits and pieces of information to the viewer.

"My art comes out of me . . . my knowledge about myself is more complete . . . I have a link with my history . . . my feminism."³⁹

A personal, almost solipsistic searching is contained within the contextual iconography of Wendy Ward Ehlers. Creating visual serials, Ehlers' works act as two- and three-dimensional diaries which contain her cumulative experiences, observations and interpretations of her external and inner self. Her primary materials are remains which she collects from her day-to-day activities and from nature.

Awakened by the need to "own something"⁴⁰, in 1972 Ehlers began to collect various types of discards from rags and bones to rusty nails. Ownership declared, she concerned herself with identifying them and making them important. A series of works emerged made from her collected items. They were encased, labeled and designated as belonging to the "Ehlers Collection." Immediately she began to concern herself with ownership of space. Environments developed which acted as markings or areas of space which she possessed. In 1974, Ehlers began to use clothes dryer lint as the primary material in her works. Encased in plexi-glass boxes, these clumped and enmeshed bodies of untransformed material act as autobiographical portraits and narratives which are, at times, documented through notations signifying the day, week and month in which each row or square was collected from the wash.

In *Traces, 1974/75* (pl. 10) Ehlers pushes the lint through slats of wood. With the natural grain of the wood, exposed and patined, the texture and color nuances of the lint provide a gestural and tactile surface. The wood slats act as a barred restraint in which the lint struggles and pulls through for breath and exposure.

The lint is fully exposed in *Three Inches Equals One Week of Laundry, 1974* (fig. 39), twenty-one plexi-boxed squares of lint. Textural and color subtleties make up the surface field as the lint is pushed and squeezed within the confines of the plexi container. The intent was to provide documentation of the artist's history as her concept of scale was based on cumulative small images placed in a

subliminal grid, and rendered collectively as a single unit.

In 1974, Ehlers began to place cereal on the lint surface. Individual pieces of cereal from "Lucky Charms" to "Alphabits" were ordered by a grid system in the foreground of the picture plane. The color of the cereal acted as an accent to the color-hazed background, affecting textural divisions and interplays.

As a result of her observation of people viewing art in museums and galleries, Ehlers became interested in placing the art work in unexpected areas. From these observations she concluded that people immediately go to the labels rather than the art object itself. In an attempt to seemingly disturb this ritual, she created a 150 foot floor piece of lint contained in wood crates rendering it like the lint one finds around a baseboard.

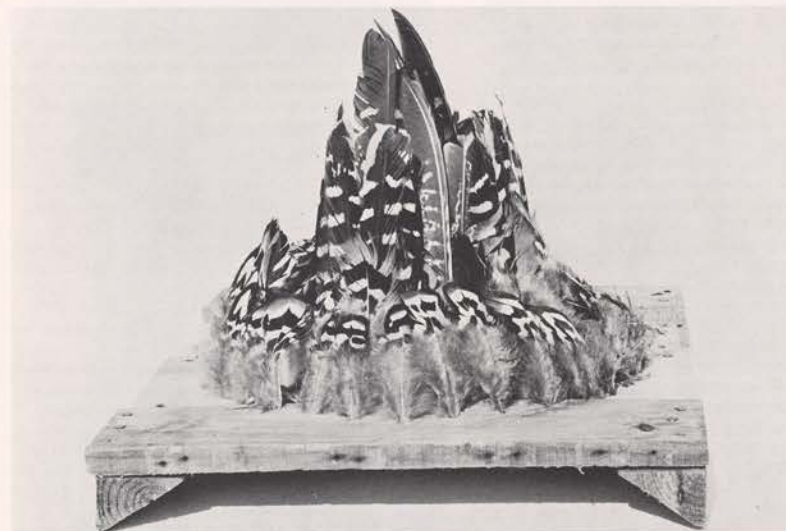
In 1975, Ehlers began her series of feather works. Primarily using pheasant feathers she placed them behind wood slats or allowed them to stand free on wooden bases. *Feather Floor Piece, 1977* (fig. 40) shows an apparent allegiance to the natural design and movement contained within the feathers since she built an almost pyramidal form which projects from a wooden base. The tactile quality of her works continues, as the color and the slick and fuzzy texture of the feathers entice the senses.

During this time a series of works with twigs emerged. Bound together and free standing or placed on the wall as individual and interrelating notations, they seem to lyrically define space in isolation and or in collective groups. At times they appear as hieroglyphs; at other times they appear to be fetishes or unidentifiable utilitarian objects. Maintaining the order of the lint works, these twigs are placed in an almost sequenced pattern, often to be read vertically as if a tabloid or scroll.

An irony is suggested in Ehlers' works. An almost satirical suggestion is combined with apparent internal and mental searching for clarified and ultimately proclaimed definitions of her relative position to external and internal contexts. Her process is intuitive, a feeling and sense rather than a formulated or intellectual method or idea. Her works are about "myths of myths,"⁴¹ her own culture, her own narrative. She uses remains and natural material since they possess another life prior to their incorporation into her works. Ehlers forms and constructs her works from the physical, perceptual and metaphysical properties of these materials as well as from the elements which constitute her own reality and life cycle.



39. WENDY EHLERS. *Three Inches Equals One Week Of Laundry, 1974*



40. WENDY EHLERS. *Feather Floor Piece, 1977*

Betye Saar's work is intuitive, mystical, personal, intimate, ritualistic, referential, private and collective. Made from remains and found items, they too possessed another life, belonged to someone else and contained a past and a present history which she formulated into an accumulative consciousness and memory through context.

Prior to 1969, Saar worked in design and graphics. Her early prints incorporated symbols of the occult from astrology to phrenology. It was in 1969-1970 that she found an old "leaded" window onto which she glued her prints and framed them. This method catalyzed her interest in three-dimensional concepts resulting in a series of window works. Termed "Hoodoo" she continued to incorporate the symbols of the occult providing a mystical background to the windows. The use of windows symbolically provides the viewer the ability to perceive on varying levels of consciousness.

The next series of works she termed "Mojo." Primarily wall hangings, they consist of mystical symbols incorporated with natural objects ranging from pods and driftwood to feathers, shells, bones and leather. These hangings act as protective charms, with Saar drawing contemporary parallels between her art and the mystical artifacts of non-western societies.

Saar is concerned with the metaphysical, referential and spiritual qualities embodied within the natural, organic and man-made objects she recycles. Primarily, she focuses on objects which are purely for display and those which have an essential power. Working intuitively, she collects these items over a period of time. As she puts them together the theme for each work evolves. A search for a title is intrinsically involved in her process as it literally translates the ritualistic meaning of the works to the viewer. Ritual is a major component in her process in which she becomes the transit from which the art object evolves. "... the medium and energy or the force which is the cumulative consciousness goes through me and produces all the work I leave behind."⁴²

After sifting through and selecting the objects which will be used in a composition, she puts them all in and then begins to extract them in order to clarify space and balance. Her spaces are intentional providing psychological intrusions in which the viewer is invited to participate in finding the underlying meanings of the work. The viewer's participation is as personal and intimate as the objects themselves since images and artifacts provide a referential guide as

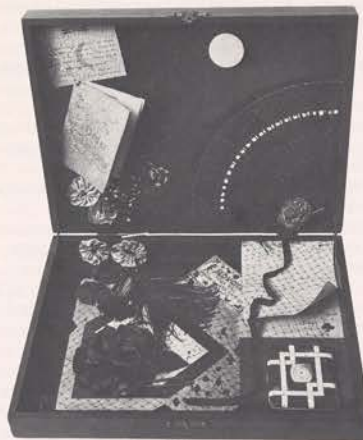
well as a departure point in which the viewer can insert his/her own personal experiences and observations, memories and consciousness. The works act as universal and personal data allowing for general and specific interpretations and responses.

Saar is concerned with inducing all five of the senses as she incorporates touch, smell, taste, sound and visual elements within the works. Suggestions of natural elements are apparent as images signifying air, fire, water and earth are intertwined throughout the compositions.

By 1973, influenced by socio-political activities, her works became political and nostalgic. Utilizing black imagery, the objects become "symbols of the past to communicate the realities of the present and the uncertainties of the future."⁴³ The Aunt Jemima series evolved. Utilizing this stereotypical image, Saar places Aunt Jemima in context with the essence and intricate external and internal psyche and conditions in which the image exists. "In the beginning General Mills selected a black woman to play Aunt Jemima and she went around saying, 'I's in town, honey.' But she is also representative of all the black women who worked as mammies or house servants. They covered their hair that way and wore that kind of apron. She was a woman who could cook, who was full of love, a family person. The characterization was negative in that the black woman could only be seen as an Aunt Jemima or else she was seen as a hooker, a piece of property . . . to be used whenever (he) felt like it . . . I take the figure that classifies all black women and make her into one of the leaders of the revolution—although she is a pretty strong character anyway."⁴⁴

As a result of her images of pickaninnies, Black Sambos and Aunt Jemima, Saar became interested in history and tradition. Folk altars resulted which display the contextual progression of human existence. In *Last Dance, 1975* (fig. 41) figural imagery is replaced by intimate and private souvenirs and artifacts. This multi-object textural work sorts and assembles relics from time and experience. The viewer is seduced into a psychological world of beings and spirits provoking a curiosity for understanding and restructuring the individuals privately exposed within the box. This immediate curiosity is turned into personal remembrances, times, places, love, dance, the individual and intimate wanderings of the viewer's mind, releasing hidden or misplaced time and experiences.

Saar's recent works are larger in scale creating structures



41. BETYE SAAR. *Last Dance, 1975*



42. BETYE SAAR. *Ohne Hast, Ohne Rast, 1976*

resembling shrines or thrones in which the physical and spiritual realms interact. Fetish-stools (*Indigo Mercy, 1975*) or totems, (*Spirit Catcher, 1976-77*) combine the materials of display and power into private and collective pasts.⁴⁵

The private is accentuated in the torn and tattered photograph of *Ohne Hast, Ohne Rast, 1976* (fig. 42). Contained within a wooden frame, it portrays people known and unknown in a psychological displacement with objects and symbols of past and present times. The gloves deceive the viewer since they infer that someone is looking in from the outside or from behind as the photograph becomes a face of encased memories.

Rites and rituals, the past and present, the private yet universal form the content of Betye Saar's works providing context meanings to the disassembled often discarded or neglected essence of human existence.

Rites and rituals embody the essence of Houston Conwill's works. In a more literal translation of African concepts into contemporary experiences than occurs in the works of Hammons or Saar, Conwill creates two-dimensional works which act as foils for ritual performances that involve the artist as griot (storyteller) and the viewer as initiated members of his rites.

Casting and pulling roplex and latex from molds, he sews these forms together as "leaves in a book with all its pages exposed simultaneously."⁴⁶ He terms these forms petrigraphs because they resemble "petrified animal skins."⁴⁷ These leathery-skinned plaques are then embossed with patterns, insect forms, symbols and lines which act as hieroglyphic narratives of stories, tales and myths referring to past and present human experiences. Unlike Fitzsimmons, who exposes and integrates the states of natural and technological phenomena, Conwill alludes to organic material through an illusionistic surface produced by a variety of paint application and technique in order to produce earth-like hues and textures which suggest organic exposure to natural elements.

Initially Conwill worked in a Gilliam-like paint-wash and canvas folding technique. Since 1974, however, his works have evolved into spiritual and ritualistic commentaries on modern conditions. His theory and method are based on energy and power sources which result from age and continued use. He terms his works Juju a "generic name for African magic and power practices"⁴⁸ since his beliefs are based on energy rather than matter as the true

nature of things. The nature of things can be controlled by man, as the energy can be controlled through ritual.⁴⁹ The reuse and age of the object determine the level of power that it will contain.

These petrigraphs act as memory aids during the ritual. Each contains informational systems of primal icons resulting in a story or tale; a map of human activity and environmental textures.⁵⁰

Recurrent images on the petrigraphs are the roach, fish and alligator. A gut bucket (symbolizing the food remains given slaves and the base level of emotion or experience), a goblet and a ceremonial stool are three-dimensional objects in which the petrigraphs' narratives and ritual performance are incorporated (pl. 11).

Conwill gives meanings to his imagery as the roach signifies plague or bad times; the fish, the sign of life; and the alligator, the messenger. The ritual acts as a cleansing pro-



43. HOUSTON CONWILL. *Edison Tale* (Detail), 1976

cess in which the artist is joined by ancestors to celebrate survival and life.⁵¹ The texture of the work reminds one of body scarifications. In *Edison Tale* (fig. 43) the surface of the petrigraph takes on landscape qualities as identifiable objects and personal notations provide the content narrative of the work.

Music is a prominent element in these ritual-works. Initially using spirituals and the blues, Conwill incorporates music in order to "bombard the ears with sounds . . ."⁵² thus activating additional sensory participation. He often uses saw dust to induce the sense of smell.

Since 1976 Conwill has incorporated a metallic quality with a more vivid palette. In addition he has included traditional African music in his rituals which increases the emotional purging of the participants and provides an even more direct and literal connection with African traditions.

While Conwill's art theoretically concerns the conjuring of energy, powers and spirits through contemporary iconography and ritual, it perceptually considers the distinct and similar properties inherent to both modern and ancient technology and primal existence. Contextually, Conwill provides definition and redefinition, leading the viewer into the surrealistic notations of human thought through maps, formulas and images of the real and spiritual realms of human existence.

Secrets, magic, mysticism, intimacies and myths intricately compose the iconography of Donna Byars. Primarily utilizing organic remains and natural phenomena as the material and substance of her art, Byars creates two- and three-dimensional floor and wall works which expose, contain and conceal the emotive and psychological interplays of fetish-like apparitions.

Referred to as ". . . an archeologist of our own culture, studying its waste, rather than an anthropologist of others, miming their rituals,"⁵³ Byars works intuitively, collecting, sorting and assembling these urban findings into abstract vignettes which seemingly depict the metaphysical history and present conditions of modern society.

Her apparitions are evasive, whether placed in boxes, behind bars, stretched on walls or free-standing. They appear to tease from behind their frontal structure. A movement flees to a corner; a shadow or a whisper peeks from a crevice or superimposes itself between the folds and textures of the material. Although her imagery is often contained, it defies static conditions, vibrating and shimmering as if possessed by spirits which choose to speak, or re-

main silent as they taunt the viewer with ephemeral reflections of the results of past and present existence.

Many of her image-objects display a history of neglect. The isolation and happenstance of their conditions are afforded a platform in her contextual application. The viewer is provoked to participate in these recollections as he/she remembers the time, place and experience shared and associated with these images' messages.

The textural and decayed qualities of the objects' surfaces account for their tactile seduction. Splintered, worn wood, hair, skeletons and feathers are some of the organic substances which suggest the previous physical life of these works. While small and contained they dominate the environment with their spiritual and dramatic overtones that seemingly penetrate the atmosphere.

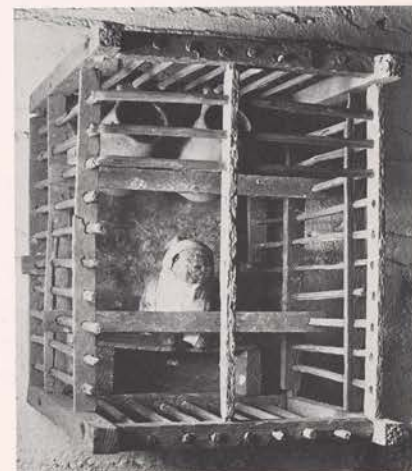
The content of these works is often predicated on subconscious stimuli. *Oracle Stone's Grove*, 1977 (fig. 44) developed from a dream about an old woman who, speaking in vapors, spewed forth eternal truths. During these confessions the woman began to slip from her chair. Rescued from slipping into the ground, the woman turned to stone, no longer able to speak.⁵⁴ After this dream, Byars accidentally came upon two large stones found near a construction sight. Having just read an article on the Delphic Oracle and having attended a lecture on mythology, Byars incorporated all of these elements, both cryptic and self-existent, resulting in this three-dimensional setting. The stone laden rocking chair sits as an altar among the live foliage of trees. The stones, although partially destroyed, retain their maximum force and appear to have an inner life as they sit proudly atop the rocking chair. Wind and/or other natural forces allow the rocker to move back and forth without human interference or initiation thus providing the element of unexpected movement which adds to the feelings of spiritual lurkings within.

Aged and worn effects are prominent in *Rabbit Pen—A Reclamation*, 1976 (fig. 45). A cage acts as a jail cell for a tiny, defenseless rabbit whose spirit seems to preclude the construction. Not only a captive of the box, the rabbit is swathed in bandages. Two clay pots hang precariously over the rabbit's head heightening the eerie and vague feeling of discomfort. Despite these encumbrances, the tiny eyes of the rabbit peer dolefully toward the viewer as if some kind of inner life has taken over his inanimate body.

The perceptual effects of caging or enclosure tend to induce the viewer inward rather than repelling or rejecting



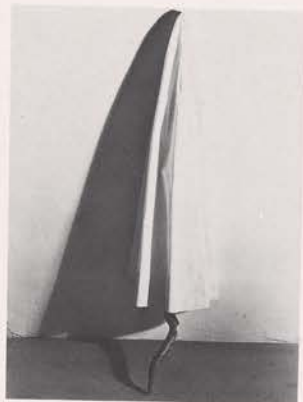
44. DONNA BYARS. *Oracle Stone's Grove*, 1977



45. DONNA BYARS. *Rabbit Pen—A Reclamation*, 1976



46. DONNA BYARS. *Vested Relic*. 1977



47. DONNA BYARS. *The Secret*. 1977

participation. These enclosures are constructed in such a manner that curiosity forces the viewer to inspect or peer into the hidden action or mysteries. By binding the cage in *Vested Relic*, 1977 (fig. 46) the objects contained within become more intriguing as the prevailing shadows only highlight certain portions of the enclosed objects creating drama from within.

Byars reduces the number of objects which comprise *The Secret*, 1977 (fig. 47) providing the viewer with a limited iconography to interpret. This piece, as the title implies, appears to react against the revelation of the inner self.

The Secret is graceful and sinuously delicate. The cloth, an antique muslin petticoat draped over a carved stick, does not succeed in inhibiting the suggestion of activity and energy which appear to be occurring underneath. One's interest and curiosity is heightened by the enclosure created by this fabric as the viewer is almost dared to peek underneath, or to pull the cloth away altogether. The viewer is left to surmise, therefore, what the petticoat covers. The use of a woman's undergarment and the phallic suggestion of the curved support hint at something sexual and provocative.

The past becomes present in Byars' context as the viewer is forced from passivity, dared to forget and challenged to remember.

Numbers and arrows provide the referential linkage between order and disorder, and content and thematic elements in the personal iconography of Howardena Pindell.

Sharing the other Contextualists concern for energy, mysticism, automatism and ritualistic process, Pindell, after the mid 1960s, moved from figurative renderings influenced by deKooning. Interested in points (dots or spots) as substance, Pindell began to work with ellipses in dot patterning exploring field and illusionary space by 1968. Reminiscent of Poons, Pindell's canvases were influenced by the imagery of microscopic chemical systems and bonds. Like an amoeba in water, her biomorphic forms float in space on the canvases' surface. Uniformly placed dots and brush strokes on the canvas provided the atmospheric conditions of her optical fields, comprised of color and form.

Pindell began her collection and use of remains in works dating from 1969. Initially she selected the one-quarter inch point in the making of her templates. These templates consisted of the one-quarter inch dot uniformly achieved by punching holes into paper. After, color was sprayed

through the holes forming the dot imagery. The one-quarter inch punchings were saved and used in works dating from 1973. The dot imagery of her early 1970s canvases covered the entire surface providing a variety of visual effects resulting from movement, light and form. Her use of a grid or underlying system is apparent yet contradicted by de-emphasizing the geometric, rendering the grid in an almost imperceptible state and accentuating the lack of order and the appearance of automatism through irregular shaped, unstretched canvases.

By 1973 a nonchromatic palette was used in the drawings made from the template remains, thereby making color incidental to the perceptual effects which occurred through form, structure and composition. Numbering the dots sequentially she initially used a grid-like ground as the structural format for the works. The numbered dots are placed in rows, adhering to the grid formation. This sequence, however, is ignored as they are placed numerically at random. *Untitled #4*, 1973 (fig. 48) adheres to this format as the dots provide distinct yet similar contrasting characteristics.

Pindell's use of numbers evolved from her interest in ancient and modern writing. She felt number notations provided drawing-like qualities as well as a symbolism of modern language and culture. The numbers were employed to distinguish the dots as well as provide a reference for distance, size, mass, quantity and identification.

The second phase of her dot-numbered works also occurred in 1973. Scattering the dots across a surface of graph paper or three-dimensional grids she constructed from thread placed on top of a foundation board, she increased the random appearance of the dots accentuating the contrast between order and disorder. Using a spray adhesive, the dots connect in space forming three-dimensional structures. They hang, fall and intersect creating depth and a spatial vastness which occupies the total surface of the picture plane. The order and disorder of these works at times become synonymous. Essentially, while the individual numerical displacement and random positioning of the dots can be perceived as disorder, the overall effects provide a unified structure reinforced by identical dot size, and by the grid and surface density which creates a solid, undivided ordered effect. In these works Pindell incorporates powdered-like substances which enhance their tactile quality.

Pindell considers this process of order and disorder one

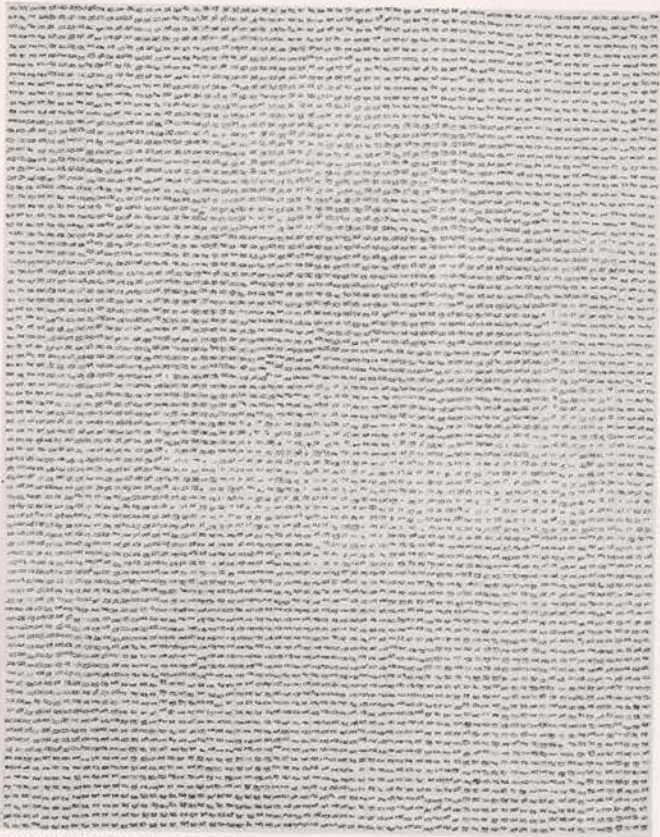
of rearrangement, taking facts and information and rearranging the sequence in which they will be perceived. In her Letter Series this rearrangement and removal process are clearly apparent. Taking old letters, she cut, rearranged and combined their parts altering their original intent and individual context, as well as making the personal impersonal by their random and visible display.

By 1974, Pindell returned to the color palette. Removing the numbers from the dots, color now acts as the distinguishing characteristic. She maintained her overall use of space with no fixed focal point. Density and movement were increased through the opaque surface. Contradictions were continued as the overall effect of the work immediately implied static as well as active interweavings. The forms seem to float, yet are sustained. They appear heavy and weightless, continuous yet disjointed.

In 1975 Pindell began her use of arrows in her non-chromatic drawings to aid in distinguishing and determining speed, distance, action and position. She began to make her own paper in order to achieve a translucency in quality which was not possible in the 100% rag paper she previously had used. Translucent in nature, her paper provided spatial expansion as the numbered dots and arrows float in space through the front, middle and back layers of the paper.

During this period she altered her color drawing process. Essentially the drawings have been produced through her removal and rearranging method. She began first with a series of two-dimensional drawings made with acrylics, gouache, water-color and oil pastels. These drawings were then folded and punched. The resulting dots were gathered together and added to other dots which collectively make the final drawing.

Recently Pindell has increased the number of structural elements which inhabit the picture plane. She incorporates not only the dots but also hair, board slats, color pigment, the material from which the dots are punched and other remains which she places randomly on and throughout two-dimensional drawings and three-dimensional grids. The three-dimensional grid is more dominant since it acts as a structural linkage between the architectonic formations created by the protruding boards and dots as in *Untitled #88*, 1977 (fig. 49). In this work the surface areas become more dense since the sculptural qualities seem to challenge the restrictions of the plexi-glass boundaries. Arrested movement and sustained rhythms abound as the drawing



48. HOWARDENA PINDELL. *Untitled #4, 1973*

appears to be frozen in time, possibly capable of expansion and release without notification.

In *Untitled #83* (pl. 12) a tension and depth are qualified by the intermingled interrelating forms. Sparkles have been included as they seemingly "wink," tease and provoke underlying optical surprises, catching and throwing light from within the art object's confines. This depth, these sparkles, the order and implied disorder provide the mysteries and secrets in Pindell's world. The optical activity which occurs forces the viewer to look, re-examine and reassess as he/she tries to ascertain the total imagery and physical properties of the work. Questioning and uncertainty become common visual effects. The work appears almost ephemeral in its visual presentation as the forms play within and without an assortment of remains.

Pindell's recent canvases employ this same quality of surprise and secret. An equal visual suspense is created as the color dots bleed into textural non- and monochromatic fields. She continues her assortment of remain materials to build on the textural quality and visual characteristics of the works. Her concern for the quality of materials becomes more pronounced as she arranges and rearranges their potential effects when placed beside, between and in juxtaposition to one another.

During 1977 the grid of the canvas has become the canvas itself. Making patchwork quilts from square-cut canvases she continues to obliterate the perceptual dominance of the grid by the build-up of paint and textural devices on its surfaces.

Since 1975 Pindell has developed a series of works, *Video Drawings*. Continuing her concern for order and disorder she randomly draws her arrow and number system on a piece of acetate which is then adhered to a video screen. Turning on the video and choosing the stations and programs at random, she shoots thirty-five millimeter photographs through the transparent acetate surface. By crumpling the acetate or moving the camera when shooting, she is able to vary the resulting effects of motion, vibration and distortion.

In *Video Drawing: Swimming Series, 1976*, (fig. 50) the juxtaposition of arrows and numbers increases the blurred moving appearance of the background, providing visual maps and interpretation to the form and future movement of the calves, ankles and feet. Order and disorder are rampant as focal points are suggested and dispelled.

Pindell's concern for diagramming thought, relative



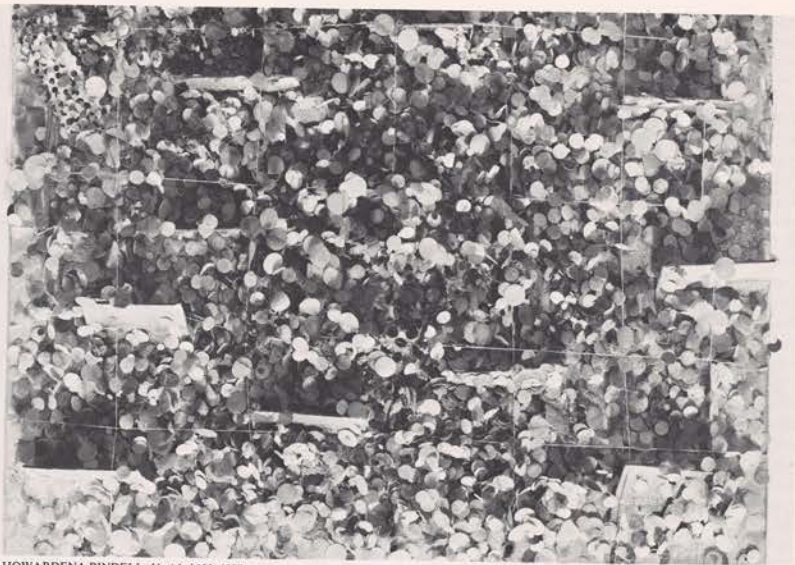
50. HOWARDENA PINDELL. *Video Drawing: Swimming Series, 1976*

positions, order and disorder and the mystical and ritual suggests an infectious obsession. One is able to examine the individual elements constituting a contextual whole in order to discern his/her potential ability to notably understand and affect the conditions in which he/she exists.

Self-communication, -understanding, -pleasing and -exploration form the solipsist and esoteric attitude of Banerjee. Exploring the nature of ancient, non-western and modern phenomena, Banerjee involves himself with the context meanings and understandings of man's interrelationships with self and environs. He focuses this attention directly on self as he constantly analyzes his relative position to external stimuli and conditions.

Banerjee is concerned with nature; the basic and most fundamental conditions of existence. By examining the properties of nature, he perceives its contradictions, its disorder, incident, happenstance, its control, order and habit. Primarily utilizing organic materials, he creates two- and three-dimensional works whose imagery is based on the visual translation of the states and conditions of natural phenomena.

During the 1960s Banerjee's canvases were influenced by Abstract Expressionist process and imagery (fig. 51). Overall gesture and color were achieved as suggestive geometric



49. HOWARDENA PINDELL. *Untitled 888*. 1977

forms floated through an atmospheric ground of accidental drips, strokes and splattered color. By 1968 origami (which becomes a recurrent element in his compositions) was placed on the canvas surface. Based on geometric shapes, origami replaced the floating color forms since the overall use of canvas was reduced, and solid background color areas emerged (fig. 52). Canvas texture is achieved through the build-up of materials which are painted onto the canvas providing three-dimensional effects. These surface protrusions act as devices for depth, irregularly jutting on and off of the canvas surface. Grids and diagonals are drawn on the foreground acting as indicators defining and clarifying space and direction. By the early 1970s the division and distinctions between fore- and backgrounds were clarified. Origami and mixed-media surfaces began to dominate the focal point. Certain expressionistic and color-field elements were maintained utilized generally to provide a

spontaneous contradiction to the methodical spatial delineations occurring on the foreground.

In 1972 the canvases return to an overall use of space and surface. This time, however, the imagery is dominated by mixed-media and origami collage painted and attached to the surface. Gestural color marks and brush strokes are superimposed by broken and continuous diagonal lines reinforced by horizontal origami folds. In these canvases Banerjee begins to explore his use of fumage.¹¹ Staining the surface with smoke-forms created by gestural movements, he controls the dense and wide bands which surround the central imagery. Reducing this imagery to a single form, generally a triangular or rectangle origami structure, the visual interest focuses on the textures which exist in the picture frame. Primarily the spatial divisions were delineated through these textures; the canvas painted solid and smooth; the origami, either of newsprint, paper,

or cloth; and the fumage. The various textures provide a tactile quality to the work since the viewer is enticed by the dense and massive seduction of the smoke, intrigued by the intricacies of the fold and printed matter of the origami and repelled by the cool flat surfaced background.

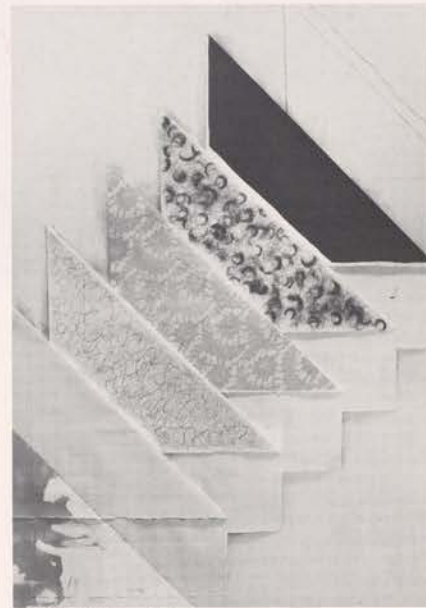
Initially, Banerjee's use of fumage lacked the control necessary to achieve varying degrees of intensities, hues or texture. By 1974 after extensive investigation of the types of smoke and their resulting visual effects when applied as stain to the canvas, Banerjee was able to create what appeared to be a minimal painted surface that was contradicted by subtle changes in the stained areas. An oil stain which he applied in earlier canvases became more promi-

nent acting as the illusionary shadow or depth of the surface.

Fumage, origami-collage, oil stain, lead, colored pencils and house paints are Banerjee's primary materials. His fumage-stain technique is intricate and immediate as the natural properties of the smoke require automatic application. Initially, Banerjee composes his imagery mentally. Placing the canvas on the floor and exposing it to natural light he then marks off the shaped areas on the canvas that result from the shadows occurring from the sun's penetration through the window. He paints a solid ground of color on the canvas. Placing the canvas in various positions he begins his fumage staining. Varying the types of smoke, a



51. BANERJEE. *Characterscape*. 1965



52. BANERJEE. *Diagonal Origami*

diversity of textures, hues and densities are achieved.

By 1975 Banerjee returns to an overall use of space as origami, drawings, paint and fumage dominate the picture plane. Now the fumage was free to intermingle with the other objects and materials. Floating in and out, behind and in front, its textural and tonal qualities provide added tactile effects.

In the canvases of 1976 (pl. 13) the origami floats, seemingly in isolation, on the picture plane. His application of materials assist in this illusionistic effect as he heightens visual contradictions through composition and form.

Banerjee's works on paper employ origami-collage, fumage and drawing (fig. 53). Working from the shadows cast by plants and their structure he creates lyrical, loose structural images which are met with geometric lines and folds. The exactness of the geometric and grid system is contradicted by the fumage and origami forms. A call and answer dialogue is established between the images. Banerjee, to emphasize the contradictions and cohabitation of order and disorder, exposes the accident and continues his use of spontaneous-like motion as his calligraphic notations consciously jerk out of focus from exacting grid structures. The balance altered, his images become unpredictable, teasing and taunting, challenging any attempts to classify or confine them.

"... (A) true work of art is a mirror of an artists' soul. The pain, agony, the joy, the feelings, in general life's metamorphosis in search of newness, pedagogic and cognitive thoughts... All these are my inner echoes, foundation and it transmits to my inner soul and creative intellect, and it inspires me tremendously to work wisely."⁵⁴

The private world of Noah Jemison is provocative, humorous, playful, sensuous, sensitive, tactile, sexual, serious, isolated, communal, physical and spiritual. It is the context nature in which these elements are combined that provides the viewer with an intimate and autobiographical sketch of the artist's mental, emotional and metaphysical being. Concerned with the physical, psychological and emotive qualities of forms, Jemison appears to conjure perfect relationships among these properties through an automatic and unconscious process meeting in a mental and physical ritual of naked exposure. This convention of metaphysical and physical properties results in anthropomorphic forms which seemingly possess a variety of spiritual attributes and sensibilities.

Initially, Jemison's works during the 1960s were Social

Realist commentaries on social and political ideologies and conditions. In the early 1970s he began to abstract his work, producing shaped hard-edged and minimal canvases in which he employed his first use of the encaustic technique. By altering the traditional approach to this process, Jemison bleached his wax to insure pure color, eliminating any chance of imperfection in his intended palette. He apprenticed himself to the technique completely learning its idiosyncrasies. Structured and methodical, Jemison approached these canvases as technical studies. Method and structure were the primary objectives as he analyzed and dissected spatial and linear relationship in order to control the necessary elements to achieve an intended perceptual response. Muted colors dominated his palette during this time since geometric form, line and color became the primary content of the surfaces.

As his technical control over the encaustic medium and structural imagery became secured, Jemison began a series of watercolors. Contradicting the visual properties of the canvas, these watercolors consisted of free-flowing unrestricted abstracted figures placed often in distorted yet referential settings. While the realistic presentation of form had been discarded, the rendering of these figures still implies a loose association with external subject matter and stimuli. As these watercolors evolved, the forms became freer. Association with subject matter or an external stimuli were eliminated. The settings were further broken down by abstraction into atmospheric notations which implied a floor and ceiling hierarchy in which the figures performed. The works maintained their narrative quality. This was achieved through the gestural form and movement of the figures in space rather than content based on recognizable subject matter or implied realistic settings.

By the mid 1970s, having perfected his technique and control of the encaustic method, Jemison opened up his canvases. No longer restricted to geometric content, loose and expansive forms evolved. Large biomorphic beings dominated the entire picture frame, defined by interwoven areas or sections of color. *Pandora's Box* was one of the first canvases executed in this manner. Using bleached bee's wax and powdered pigment Jemison stained the entire surface of his unprimed canvas with color. Delineations of forms were achieved through linear gestures of broad solid colors which lay on top of the enmeshed atmospheric field of free-flowing encaustic mixtures. In *Flower Eaters*, Jemison began to expose unprimed canvas areas



54. NOAH JEMISON. *Walking Through the Universe (Happy as a Pig in Shit)* 1977

around the canvas' border. A huge biomorphic form is created through this free-flow application of wax. Its internal structure was achieved by repeating the delineations created with large white gestural strokes of gesso.

Fascinated by the positive and negative spatial interplay suggested in *Flower Eaters*, Jemison executes *There's A Bone in the Biscuit*. Seemingly child-like forms float between large areas of exposed canvas defining space and movement.

The forms in Jemison's watercolors during this period become anthropomorphic. Removing all traces of a background setting, they float in large areas of exposed paper. Each form is rendered in a gestural action as if talking, walking, dancing, laughing or meditating. The technical devices he achieved in the earlier canvases is apparent as he is able to masterfully control the internal flow of pigment

while defining the external boundaries of the form with color lines. The contained fusion of color acts as an emotive element which teams with the gestural positioning of the figure to expose the characters of the form. Anthropomorphic forms begin to inhabit the surface as the play of positive and negative is continually emphasized.

Jemison's process is completely automatic. He does not begin with concept or an idea. The free-flow of the wax-pigment into the canvas surface provides the initial shape that the forms will eventually take. Unlike the spontaneity of the Abstract Expressionists, Jemison's automatism differs in attitude and intent. His primary concern is not the exposure of process or spontaneous expression, but rather a ritual in which he participates in order to go within himself and remove the conscious mind to get to the essence of what the imagery is going to convey. To him spontaneity is

like "... dealing with life and not knowing what's going to happen in the next minute: in the painting." Music becomes the transportation which takes him out of himself, allowing him to be a medium for external physical and spiritual forces.

Jemison and his art become one in this process. He is completely consumed by the materials and forms which are automatically exposed during the process. He becomes the viewer, only aware of the interaction of forms and content after the execution has been completed. "The work is so close to me that it's frightening . . . I discover things that I like, tidbits and gossip about myself from my art."¹⁴

The unconscious mind and being of Noah Jemison become more radically exposed in his works done during 1977. An almost total release from external conditions and human protocol have been dissolved as the works become grotesque, beautiful, funny and completely independent, dictating their nature, content and essence. These radically exposed anthropomorphics exude spiritual messages and knowledge as they float in unison or in isolation throughout the space. They peek, they taunt, they speak with their gestures becoming animated, as if Jemison has captured spirits in space and time that want momentary exposure.

In *Walking Through the Universe (Happy as a Pig in Shit)*, 1977 (fig. 54) Jemison returns to an overall use of the canvas. A transparent pig outlined by white gesso is superimposed on an expressionistic background, and made prominent by its unprimed canvas interior. Jemison begins to expand the elements defining the visual content by sewing shaped canvases together. The seams act as separations between the planes with illusion and depth further enhanced by the relative positioning of the forms to the seam. Thus, the pig appears to be walking from one dimension to another as the colored and non-chromatic canvases meet.

In *The Mythological Allegory of the Real Chumpy-Doo*, 1977 (pl. 14) these seams become more apparent as colored and nonchromatic canvases are joined to divide this triptych into multiplanar levels. In addition to seams, Jemison expands on the frame. It no longer acts as the finished border but becomes a sculptural component in contrast to, yet enhancing the two-dimensions of the canvas. In this painting the tiers on the frame are varied sequentially from one frame of the triptych to the other.

In *Divorce*, 1977 (pl. 15) Jemison returns to floating

forms on unprimed canvas space. His imagery becomes melancholy as the distortions and interactions of the forms define their relative positions and relationship in an isolated and alienated atmosphere.

Jemison considers his art work hedonistic made for his own understanding and inner needs. "It's selfish, a vehicle for me to express (and define) myself . . . My art and I have become one . . . The forms are common, however, thus allowing the work to be used as a bouncing ball for all that view."¹⁵

Large acrylic canvases, ranging in size from four to ten feet, dominate the early works of Randy Williams from the late 1960s to the early 1970s. Incorporating formal elements of Hard-edge and Op, Williams focused on color spectrums defined by pastel horizontal bands. His primary concern during this period was the use of color in relational formats which evoke emotive and optical effects. These formats were prescribed by a catalog of predetermined formulas devised from a series of investigations exploring the effects of various combinations of color range, intensity and hue. These combinations then translated into formulas which became the basis for the compositional structure of each work.

Generally restricting his palette to variations of pink, yellow, green and blue, Williams extracts all but the elemental properties of color, achieving minimal or reductive results which focus exclusively on line and color interactions. The reductive quality is further enhanced by his flat application of paint, eliminating any textural or expressionistic suggestion. By varying the line or direction and width of each band, an illusionary fore- and background are achieved. Contrasting and seemingly spontaneous band assortments emerge from his combination of repetitive and non-repetitive color band. Thus, the band arrangement is not numerically sequenced nor are the size, length or width consistent throughout the total work.

Color and color arrangement become an essential component of his optical effects. The properties of each individual color when combined and placed side by side with the properties of another create an illusion of change and difference. Essentially, the same color intensity and hue, when placed in the context of another intensity and hue, will vary in optical effect depending on the color placement.

Color and color placement is further utilized to evoke emotive effects. While maintaining the same color, hue

and intensity, repeating it throughout the canvas, Williams is able to provoke a variety of sensory perceptions by his relational formats. These effects indicate and imply a variance in color which only exists perceptually.

In addition to the concern for line and color relationships, movement becomes a prominent element in these works. Through implied and actual variations in line and color, the integration of thin lines between color bands accentuate illusionistic movement. These thin lined bands are often of a color different from the bands they connect. However, the incidental nature of their application, as well as the overall effect of their placement between wider bands, deemphasize their distinctions, making them almost imperceptible. As a result of the combinations of line, color and accents, a symmetrical force is achieved, exposed through the relational patterns established by similar and contrasting elements.

During this period, Williams worked on a series of drawings which combined the skeletal structure of the human figure with geometric line drawings placed in the fore- and background areas. Employing a similar system of symmetry and use of subtle devices noted in the paintings, Williams focused on form similarities between the triangles, squares, circles and rectangles occurring in the skeletal and line drawings. Color is used merely as an accent in the first drawings. As these works developed he began to incorporate subway maps and watercolor bands. The lined shape becomes solid form and the subway maps become the connector between repetitive shapes.

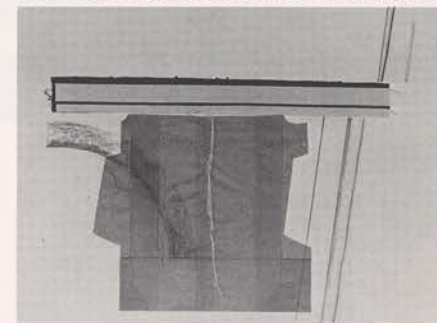
The drawn lines become the connecting factor between the shapes in each form rather than color. The skeleton is distorted through elongated poses and its space is restricted by lines placed on the immediate outer edges of the figure. Williams, then adding Color Aid paper and cutting into the surface paper, juxtaposed white with color backings. The Color Aid is used also as geometric collage accents on the surface.

The technical and exacting aspects of these drawings are assisted by his usage of a compass. This allowed the hard-edge quality of the paintings to be translated to the drawings. Dissections of the skeletal form led to further abstraction where the drawn line and collage became more prominent. His use of maps was extended to include the use of discarded pages from books and paper debris.

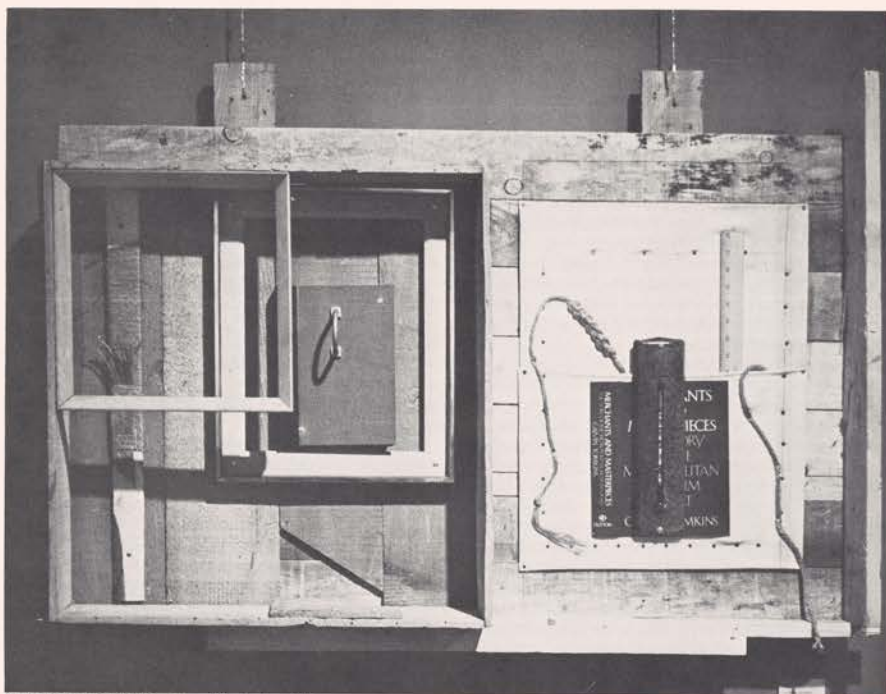
Williams' use of discards and debris in these drawings which date through 1975 predict his transition into Con-

textural Art. Fascinated with the book concept, he began his first book series, but continued his investigation of form and color interactions. Utilizing standard drawing books, he cut geometric forms into the pages. A number of white on white, form on form works resulted. Retaining this format, he began adding color paper. Initially attaching the color to the pages within the confines of the book, he allowed them to extend beyond the original pages, causing a shaped and irregular frame or defining boundary. These works became expansive in size ranging from four-by-four inches to four-by-five feet. Cutting and assembling color and construction paper on the pages, exacting geometric lines continuously occur. Through the usage of color paper, Williams continued his investigation of color interactions and transitions. In these works, pastel is replaced by vivid, warm earth colors. Blank books were substituted for printed books. Limiting the amount of color paper, this series of books concentrated more subtly on the relations between line and form since he utilized the print size and design as a guide to cut and formulate geometric shapes.

Moving from the horizontal bands and pastel palettes of earlier canvases, Williams, between 1975 and 1976, worked on a series which he termed "Music." Using music as the catalyst for these works, he began to visually construct the melodic and textural elements of jazz and classical music. Unlike the works of Dowell which primarily focus on the compositional structure of sound, Williams concentrates



55. RANDY WILLIAMS. *Untitled October #1, 1977*



56. RANDY WILLIAMS. *Merchants and Masterpieces*. 1977

on its impressions. No longer utilizing an illusionistic foreground and background, he defined a separation between the two, juxtaposing lyrical and hard-edge forms on a solid background. Initially, the foreground and background planes of these works were developed with the same color but were contrasted by changing the register. As these works developed, three layers came into existence—a front, middle and back—defined, again, by changing the register of the color. The top layer forms engulf all but the corners and sides of the surface areas. By flatly applying the paint and building it up, Williams suggests a continuation of his cut-out method of extraction. The negative and positive become superimposed as the foreground and background become intermingled, almost contradicting what appears to be an apparent division of planes. The integrity of each interconnected form is maintained through his thin line device of the implied and actual connecting parts. In *Study for Music IV*, 1976, Williams begins to expand his palette. Utilizing four colors, and for the first time employing a dark ground, the forms become more distinct. Accents are not only line but color markings which divert visual attention away from any implied focal point. *Blues People*, 1976, marked Williams' return to subtle variances in hue changes while adding an interplay between contrasting colors. These contrasts are restricted to interconnecting lines which dissect the background and middle layers. The background is no longer solid, but rather is built from almost undistinguishable color changes. Since late 1976, Williams has completely eliminated pastels, limiting his palette to investigations of color differentiations through subtle tonal interplays. Reductive to the point of implying minimalism Williams again relies on accents in order to challenge these subtleties with bold and contrasting line areas. While synthesizing the elements of his earlier works, he accentuates the overt, balancing it with the subtle. He developed layer upon layer of shape and form, extracting and adding color as a means of delineating the areas. His transitions are quiet. A green rectangle will suddenly surprise the viewer then disappear into an orange line and dark surrounding background. A square will suddenly be transformed into a curve without the slightest indication, leading the viewer further and further into layers of visual activity.

His drawings have developed into works on paper consisting of shapes and forms made from debris and remains. He continues his concern for the geometric utilizing found paper bags, burlap, string and watercolor. Williams

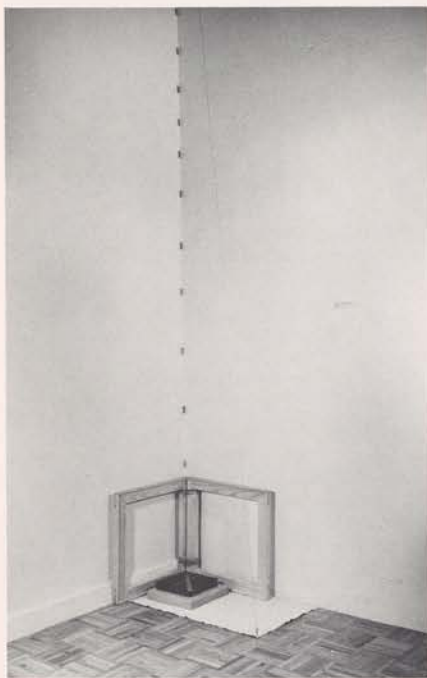
works from the natural folds of the bag to define and dissect shapes and forms. Maintaining the repetitive element, he provides alternate modes of perception of simple shapes. The circle is perceived from its positive and negative properties. The rectangle is intersected by triangles, repeated, distorted, altered and perceptually transformed.

Presently Williams' works on paper fuse lyrical and architectural line into textural compositions. By increasing the amount of the remains material, a tactile quality is achieved which subtly plays on the separation and distinction of protruding and receding planes. In *Untitled, October #1*, 1977, (fig. 55) Williams focuses on a central vertical axis (string) which is perceptually strengthened by the off-center line markings which lie under and above the dissecting horizontal band. The graphite texture echoes the natural texture of the bag providing contrast to the flat paper ground, and accentuating the textured canvas strip. The balance of horizontal and vertical is achieved through repetition of the horizontal by the top fold of the bag. Perceptually, the work would appear perfectly in balance but through seemingly accidental strands of thread protruding from the edge of the canvas strip as well as the isolated graphite diagonal marking to the lower right side of the picture plane, Williams deliberately upsets this balance allowing accident and happenstance to exist.

Williams' book series since 1976 is his most obvious involvements in Contextualism. No longer a progression subordinate to his two-dimensional illusionistic explorations into form and space, these three-dimensional structures embody pages and covers of contextual relationships and definitions.

In *Merchants and Masterpieces*, 1977 (fig. 56) strong compositional elements are balanced by contextual content and meaning. The history of art is assessed as the book's contents are bound shut, and the relationships between the significant and the frivolous are displayed. The process of creation is illuminated by the used paint brush, rope and the measuring stick. All acting as compositional reinforcements to the interplay of horizontal and vertical pulls, they exude a significance that overpowers the suppressed contents of the book. The act and the process are escalated as documentation is subjugated to a subordinate position.

In *L'Art Abstrait*, 1977 (fig. 57) Williams pits irony and wit against an artistic commentary which alludes to abstraction in a mocking yet supportive way. Incorporating



58, RANDY WILLIAMS. *Homage to the Edge of a Corner*. 1977

lottery tickets, hooks, cloth and wood, this open-faced construction intricately contains a Dadaist reaction to art as it assesses abstraction and the seeming impasse which is occurring. "This particular art object—at once ferocious, elegant, mocking and beautiful—has something very precious about it."⁶⁰ Its visual definition, while seemingly reactionary, provides inroads allowing further expansion, exploration and investigation of abstract development.

Williams breaks from contained constructions in *Homage to the Edge of a Corner*, 1977 (fig. 58) incorporating space and environment as components within the total composition. A jarring tactile sensation is created by the vertical corner row of razor blades. The corner is accentuated further by the open frames which intersect at right angles forming a structural interplay between the triangle and square. These are repeated by the video cover and its wooden stand in which a ruler is placed covered by exposed razor blades. This sits on a carpet of cloth which is used again as a square and triangular hybrid achieved by extending a thin fishing wire from its corner to the ceiling at the section where ceiling and wall intersect. Corners and illusions of corners are constantly repeated.

In *Twenty-Three Years of Black Art*, 1977 (pl. 16) Williams produces a direct and poignant statement in which a more obvious and blatant display of contextual meaning and definition takes precedence over his subtle devices. The catalog, *Two Hundred Years Of Black American Art*, is pressed and concealed behind a metal black shoe-shine stand. A washboard occupies the upper portion of the covering for the John Coltrane album it conceals. Textural effects of the washboard's surface are balanced by a wood-textured overcasing at the bottom. The bolts used to compress and conceal add an additional feel of weight to this structure as the contradictions are exposed through contextual definition; reality declared, illusions dispelled.

AFRO-AMERICAN ARTISTS WORKING IN THE ABSTRACT CONTINUUM

BOWLING, Frank
 BROWN, Marvin
 CLARK, Ed
 CONWILL, Houston
 DOWELL, John
 EDWARDS, Mel
 EVERSLEY, Fred
 GILLIAM, Sam
 HAMMONS, David
 HUGHES, Manual
 JACKSON, Suzanne
 JEMISON, Noah
 LITTLE, James
 LOVING, Al
 NENGUDI, Senga
 PINDELL, Howardena
 PIPER, Adrian
 SAAR, Betye
 SAUNDERS, Raymond
 SUTTON, Sharon
 THOMAS, Alma
 WILLIAMS, Randy
 WILLIAMS, William T.