ALIGNING with BEAUTY

Exhibition catalogue: *Aligning With Beauty* - Copyright © Varley Art Gallery of Markham, 2008

Guest Exhibition Curator: Julie Oakes

Published in conjunction with the exhibition "Aligning with Beauty, organised by the VarleyArt Gallery of Markham, Ontario. The exhibition opens in Markham November 23rd, 2008, and continues to January 11, 2009.

Cover: Detail of *Sync 2004*, by Jim Ruxton and Camille Turner

Rich Fog Micro Publishing, printed in Toronto, 2008
Layout and Design, Julie Oakes & Richard Fogarty

ISBN: 978-1-926605-03-6

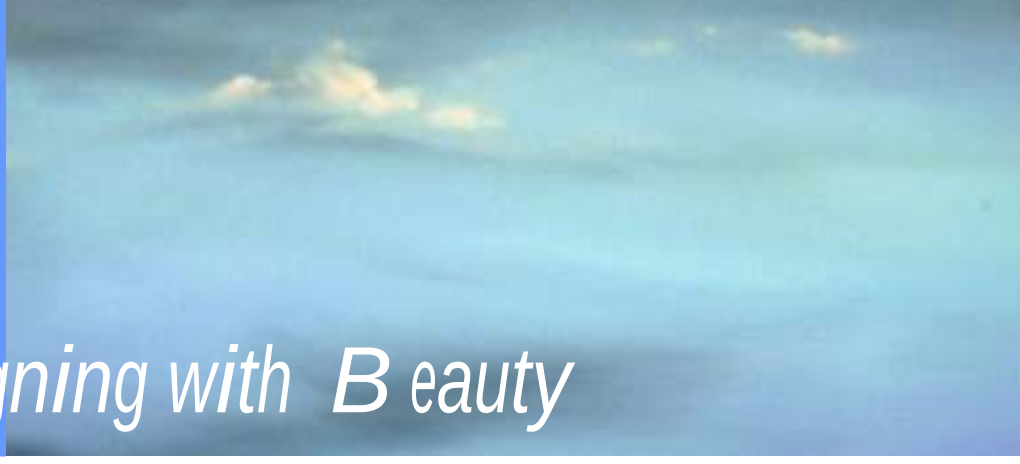
Varley Art Gallery of Markham
216 Main Street, Unionville, ON
www.varleyartgallery.ca

ALIGNING with BEAUTY

VARLEY ART GALLERY OF MARKHAM

RICH FOG

Micro Publishing
Toronto Canada



A ligning with B eauty

Beauty Benefits

Beauty has been said to reside in the eye of the beholder. The expression resonates for were one to ask the general population for a definition of 'beauty' the answer would vary depending on cultural preferences, historical orientation, morals, philosophical systems - even gender could slant the definition. But across all of these variants there is likely to be an agreement that beauty embodies some elements that could be deemed universal. A selection of beauty's attributes that have been verbalised in treatises, essays, manifestos, sermons and teachings could include an alliance with the ideal, an innate positivist aura, an elevated hierarchical position or a compatibility with adjectives synonymous with 'good' - an equally personal concept, also dependant on a series of variables.

A root attribute is that beauty is a human concept. It cannot exist without cognisance. Roger Fry alerts us to the difference between man and animal pointing to the human having an elevated capacity to be aware of beauty and to acknowledge something as beautiful. He places the awareness of beauty in contrast to perceptions of the senses that awake “instinctive reactions to sensible objects”[1]. An animal, for instance, recognises the presence of food through a number of sense reactions (hearing, smelling, seeing) that lead to the responses necessary to bring about the satisfaction of hunger. It is a logical consequence of the perception. Man has another layer to the meanings he places upon his experiences. Fry calls this “the possibility of a double life; one the actual life, the other the imaginative life.”[2] It is man's awareness of his place in

[1] Roger Fry, *In Expression and the Primitive,* from Vision and Design, Meridian Books, 1956
[2] Roger Fry, *In Expression and the Primitive,* from Vision and Design, Meridian Books, 1956

the larger picture, a picture that has no boundaries, and his being able to imagine the infinite - that allows for the concept of beauty.

An association with the ideal has been harkened as an attribute of beauty. Plato, however, whose ideal state was one in which man must create conditions in which to meet his ultimate potential, banned Fine Arts as being too illogical for the criteria of order that would be necessary in a workable utopia. An argument to his exclusion would be to reference the correlation between beauty and law. Law is based on precedents set through societies to create a balance that allows for the ultimate benefit of human kind. We speak of 'fairness' within the justice system; a fair trial is one that balances. Because beauty is also fairness, it levels extremes and brings balance to the fore. Beauty is truly noble for it is symmetrical, provoking the cause and the effect, in varying degrees, of harmonious resonance.

Art is often aligned with beauty before beauty is aligned with art. The primary dictionary definition of art as “the quality, production, expression or realm of that which is beautiful”[3] acknowledges the basis of beauty as the foundation of art. This was a concept widely held in Classical art and continued through the Western world's history of art up until the breakdown in the common narrative that reflected the morals and religious orientation of the patrons of art. There came a time when the common thread in Fine Arts could not be so clearly defined. With the advent of individualism that was a bi-product of modernity, the coupling of art and beauty was often at odds. Evidence of the lack of a cohesive framework - the bones of beauty - on which to flesh out art was most vehemently expressed in critical commentaries originating from the Paris Salons of the eighteen and nineteen hundreds. An obdurate debate as to whether art was in line with current concepts of beauty occupied critiques as concept of the 'other' started to creep into the picture.

The consideration of a foreign aesthetic brought a mixture of opinions as to what constituted beauty in a world that was colonising and veering towards a more global awareness.

[3] The Random House College Dictionary, revised edition, 1988

The increase in information brought with it confusion. Les Belles Demoiselles by Picasso is an example. The painting, now accepted as a pivotal work of art, was vilified when first exhibited under the premise that it was 'ugly' rather than “an expression … of that which is beautiful”.

Critics of the time asserted that the subject matter was scarred (women in a bordello), that abstraction did not allow for the necessary show of a painter's technical acumen and that the insight (inspired by primitive African masks) was not a sufficiently familiar springboard from which to launch the leap of faith needed to appreciate the work.

There were many holes being poked in the dyke that had long been shored up by the concept of beauty. Freedom of expression and means came pulsing through the art stream to drown poor Beauty, allocating her to a lesser position, one that should not be assumed on an equal plane with the more important aspects of art such as statement-oriented work (political, social, intellectual) or the assertion of individuality. Beauty was placed in a subservient, feminine position and became rather unpopular by the time that the First World War had shaken the notion of that ideal world that Plato had once alluded to.

From the messy strains of the modern dilemma, however, there was born a new concept of purity based on paring down confusion in order to consciously return to simplicity and the utopian dream. Charles Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) and Amedee Ozenfant put together a treatise simply titled *Purism* that called for a return to principles of classical order. The concept included art rather than delegating it as an exception from the ideal. “The goal of art is not simple pleasure rather it partakes of the nature of happiness.”[4] Beauty, balance and order regained a foothold.

It is interesting that such a positive idea as beauty has a difficult time remaining in favour; that in times of extreme violence or eras that could be gender-coded as masculine (such as periods when war, political struggle or extreme capitalist competition are overbearing), Beauty looses her bearing. For example, abstract expressionism and the accompanying, primarily

[4] Charles Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) and Amedee Ozenfant, *Purism,* from R. L Herbert's *Modern Artists on Art* in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood's *Art in Theory, 1900-1990*,Blackwell Publishers Inc, 1996.

masculine, New York bravado were hard on Beauty. She was too soft, too pink and pretty, to endure the heavy backhand of consummate hip-ness.

What else could follow on the heels of the passionate and energetic commitment of Modernism than Postmodernism where a balancing of the individual agenda allowed for the consideration of the more subtle and less demonstrative. As the gaze became more fractured and less adamant, tolerance opened to consider inclusion. Beauty was once again admitted into the critical criteria.

In 1969, Theodor Adorno in *Aesthetic Theory* wrote. "It is self-evident that nothing is self-evident in art any more; not its inner life, not its relation to the world, not even its right to exist."[5] Arthur Danto found this sufficiently provoking to begin his acclaimed book, *The Abuse of Beauty*, with these lines. Danto championed beauty. He called for acknowledgment of the Emperor's New Clothes syndrome claiming that much of that which was claimed as Art was indeed a sorry raiment, unfit for the noble halls and institutions that it was meant to occupy. *The Abuse of Beauty* is not a self-righteous or sacrosanct text but the words of an advocate who got the ball rolling. David Hickey, in *The Invincible Dragon: Four Essays on Beauty* presented a street smart, savvy update of the philosophical concept and consequences of beauty and the art world gave a sigh of relief. The chase after elusive Beauty was once again in vogue, and although still floating elusively - as is Beauty's wont - beyond the grasp of absolute possession; nonetheless Beauty was once again holding court in the stately realms with dignity in tact.

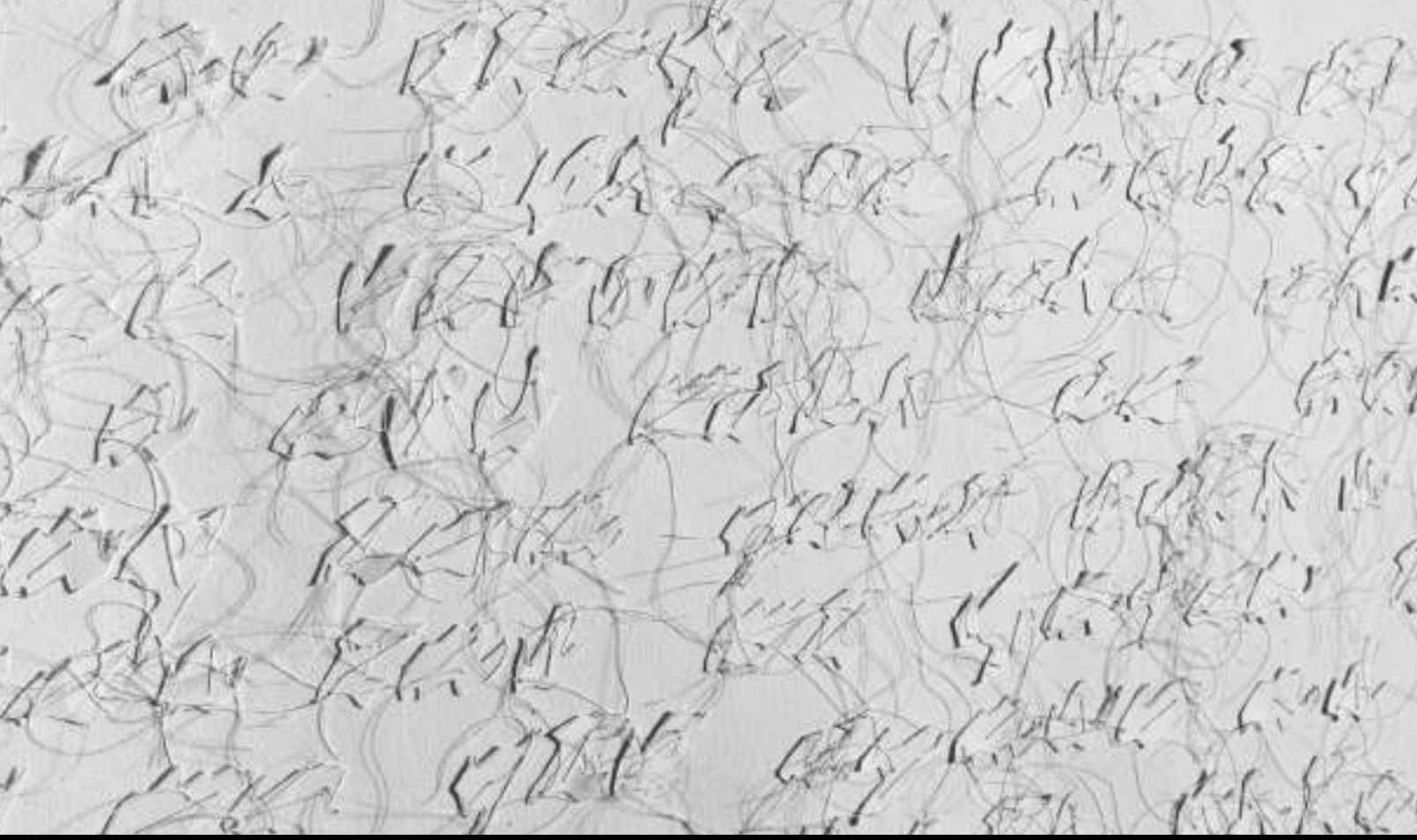
Beauty resides in illumination even when it holds an element of mystery for it is aligned with clarity and well being. Yet, there is also an element withheld, one that creates desire as when the initial taste of richness wets the appetite to know more. Beauty can be overbearing. She can occupy thoughts excessively, command attention when concentration should be more practically geared and force her hand when attention wavers. But she is not so fickle as to call for attention without reward. Beauty is also generous. Beauty crosses borders and knows no

[5] Arthur Danto, *The Abuse of Beauty,* Open Court Publishing, 2003 quoting Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004

barriers for beauty is a common denominator that underlines every race, creed and culture. The face of Beauty may differ but the response to beauty is always the same - an inhalation of breath as beauty is drawn in and imparts identification with the sensation.

By bringing to the fore art objects selected for this component - the beauty factor - a rite of identification is enacted on the highest of aesthetic planes. A common acknowledgement of beauty creates channels for communication and lifts the veil of 'otherness.' *Aligning with Beauty* is an exhibition in which beauty is embodied in art, where beauty is both the subject and the object, when beauty allows us to partake in “the nature of happiness” and the vivification of 'stunning' is such an overriding sensation - we swoon.

Julie Oakes, Guest Curator



CULTURED BEAUTY

Beauty that has come through the process of civilisation, and hence been honed through the evolution of aesthetic and sociological criteria, falls under the classification of 'cultured beauty'. More a product of man than nature, we look at language, rituals, architecture and abstraction.

CARIN COVIN

Historically, the first scripts grew out of patterns, simplified shapes that roughly depicted things from the physical world. They were scratched into mud or sand with twigs, gouged into wood and wall or chiseled from stone. They contained messages. Carin Covin's mark-making implies messages for although the marks read as shapes - the origin of the shapes seem to be letters. On light paper, sewn with white filmy thread or cut away like lace; the shapes bear significance so that the profiles of the 'letters' resemble inscriptions that seem to be derived from familiar yet foreign scripts. The placement of the origin of this muffled talk is impossible without a dictionary to guide translation. There is, however, a sacred-tome-intonation or secret-spell-aura, as if these are magic words that could be a key to understanding that have been strategically placed before our neophyte vision to decipher.

The removal of the letter-like shapes, cut from the paper with precision, pasted on new strips, or sewn on character by character, furthers the impression of a ritualistic handling of the material. Clearly, it was a painstaking task, a labor of love, to make these pieces, like the names of lovers carved as a public announcement of private passion on a tree or park bench.

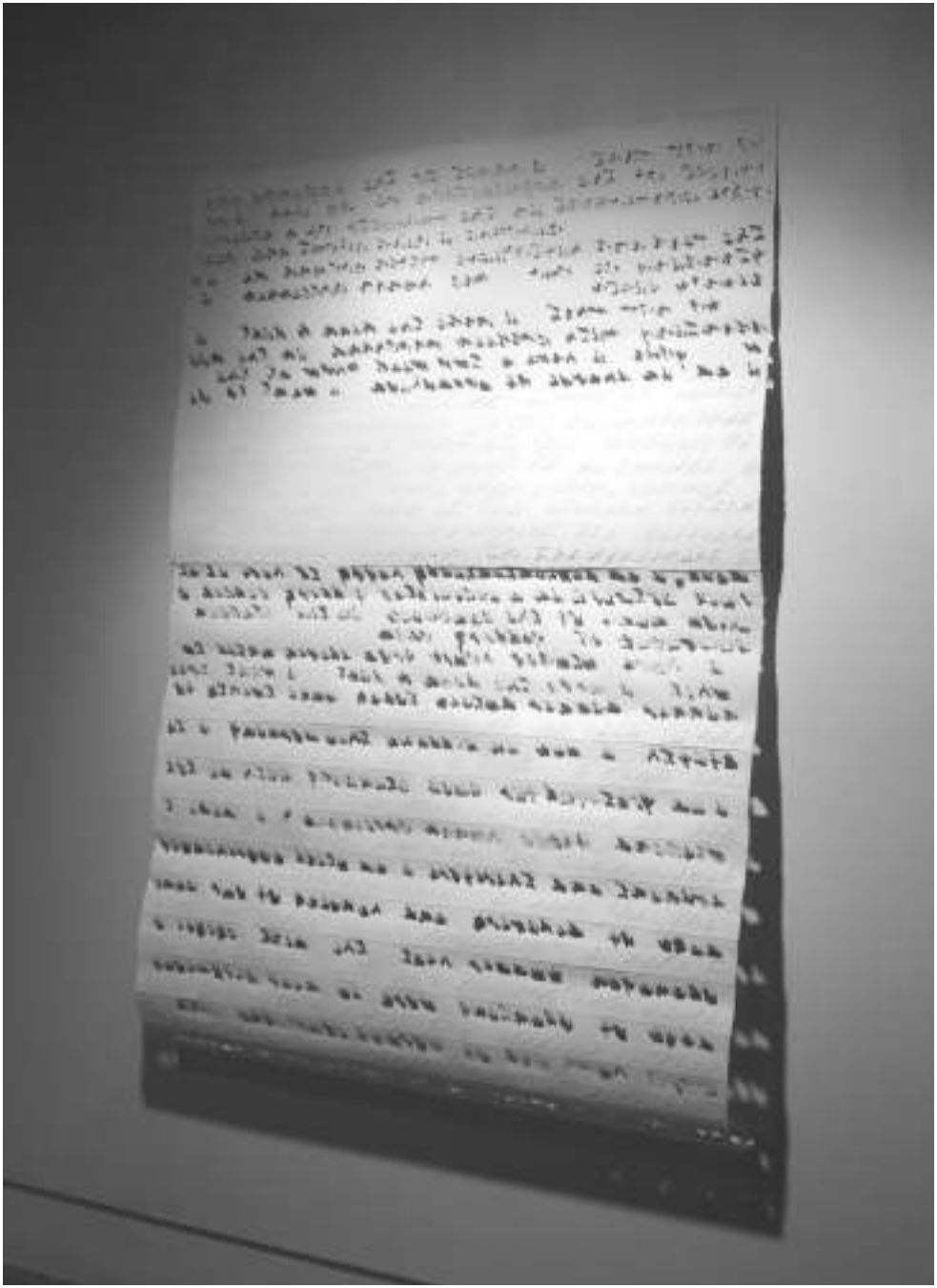
Covin's letters are like birds flying in straight lines. They create shadows. Light shines around and upon them. Their dimensions are delicate as if they could come loose and drop to earth if they weren't stitched into place.

Word Heard - 2005, detail (previous page) Installation of *Word Spoken* and *Word Remembered (*above), hand-cut paper, thread, collage

These pieces have a wondrous effect with ceremonious associations; weddings, Far Eastern death rituals, Catholic convocations, christenings, and then there are the natural associations; snow flakes, crystals, spider webs, moths, doves. The dove is very present for there seems to be a peaceful missive delivered within these beautiful pages.

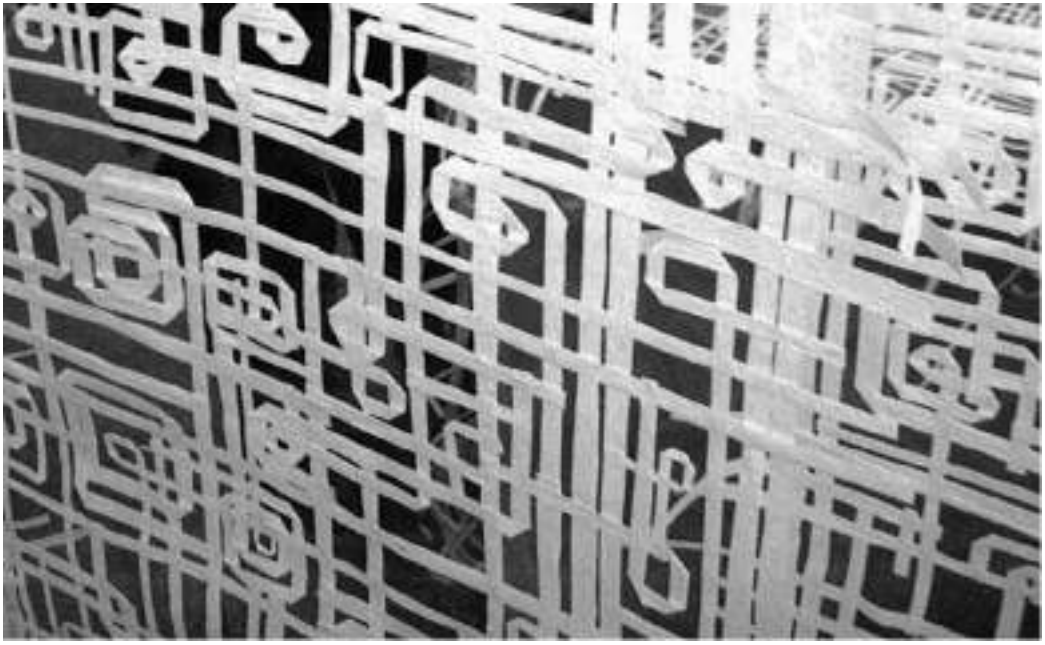
Carin Covin's pieces are flights of flocking, feathery whispers. They bring words to mind and the love of beauty to heart.

Word Heard - 2005, detail hand-cut paper collage



Word Spoken 2005, hand-cut paper collage

ANGIOLA CHURCHILL



White has a positive dynamic. So does 'big'. The evidence of extreme and precise labour is a cause for admiration and so is the embodiment of originality. The coupling of grandeur and delicacy causes amazement and a fairytale rush of pleasure.

That the pieces are made by a woman, Angiola Churchill, and express a female sensibility seems obvious. The work is substantial and comes from a long and arduous art practice, a feminine trek in an area inhabited by more muscled beings. The twisted paper work set her apart from the bold and colourful abstract expressionists of her time. Churchill brought a womanly craft up and out for women have traditionally been the weavers, knitters, lace and macramé makers of yore. Their hands are ever busy with the practical duties of providing. Their natural inclination has been to beautify the necessities with decoration that invoked worlds beyond the confines of the utilitarian.

There is an aspect of righteousness in these works as if there were an echo of mantras, holy chants, magic intonations or the slipping of beads on a rosary where the tactile counting keeps track of the prayers. The relationship between the manual task of making these pieces, the folding and twisting of paper, to the large space that they eventually occupy is similar to the use of the maze as a meditation tool or the mandala as a collection point for universal forces. By mentally entering the mandala and moving toward its center, one is guided through the cosmic

Winter Labyrinth, detail

processes of disintegration and reintegration. There are also technological overtones with computer circuit boards or microcosmic and macrocosmic imaging systems coming to mind. Churchill's pristine gardens, intricate mazes and spidery webs engage our fancy and like dream catchers send us on positive paths of thought.

Labyrinth occupies the space with a presence akin to that of an elegant beauty.

Winter Labyrinth 2007, paper on plexi-glass frame

ORTANSA MORARU

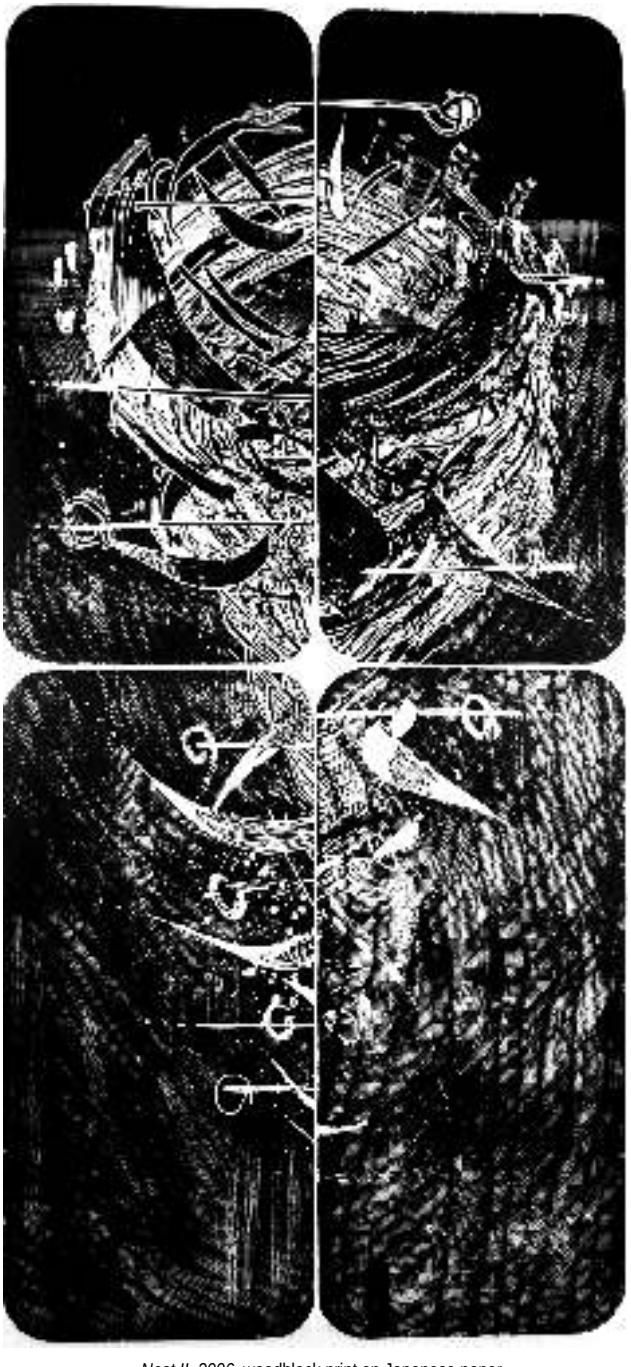
Nest 2006 detail

Ortansa Moraru's woodblock prints are striking, complicated linear messages. She has successfully utilised the traditional play between stark black line, printed from wood left raised when the area around it has been gouged away, and snowy white paper. The tones between the black and white rely on lines - fine to thick and constructed in reverse as a form of gestural cross-hatching. They reveal the mental dexterity required to build the areas. Moraru's tangled layering, alongside the deep lushness of perfect inky black, presents us with a dynamic field of tension and relief.

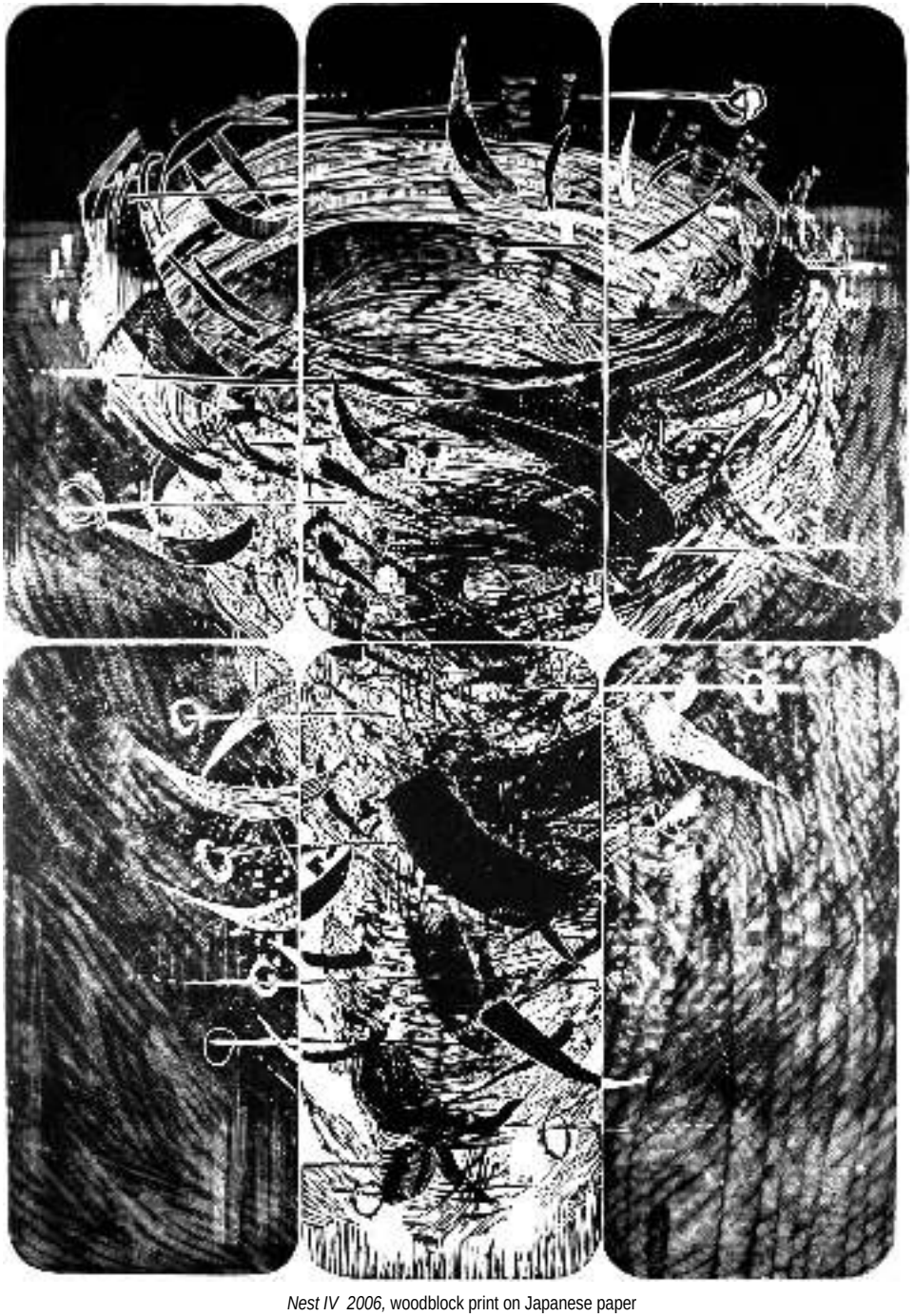
It is concept that differentiates the human perception from that of animals and the idea of freedom is an example of our cultural legacy. Ortansa Moraru's descriptive spaces are not worlds of complete freedom, but tangled and embroidered flights of fancy that imply existences other than those from which we have learned to escape. We are confronted by a maze-like frequency of turns and barriers that interrupt our expectations with a jag in an unexpected direction. It is much like the process of carving into wood, the technique that produces the wood block prints. Consider the grain. When a cut is being made and a perfect curve is unfolding, if the cut hits the grain which is the intrinsic 'path' of the wood, its life lines and indications of history; the wandering line trips and shifts to another pathway.

There is a subterranean feeling to the imagery as if another consciousness is at work. It is similar to building a nest when the grasses and branches are woven into place by an intelligence that is unaware of mathematics and engineering yet understands how to build the nest from the inside of it's bird being. The nest building gene is a part of the bird's make-up.

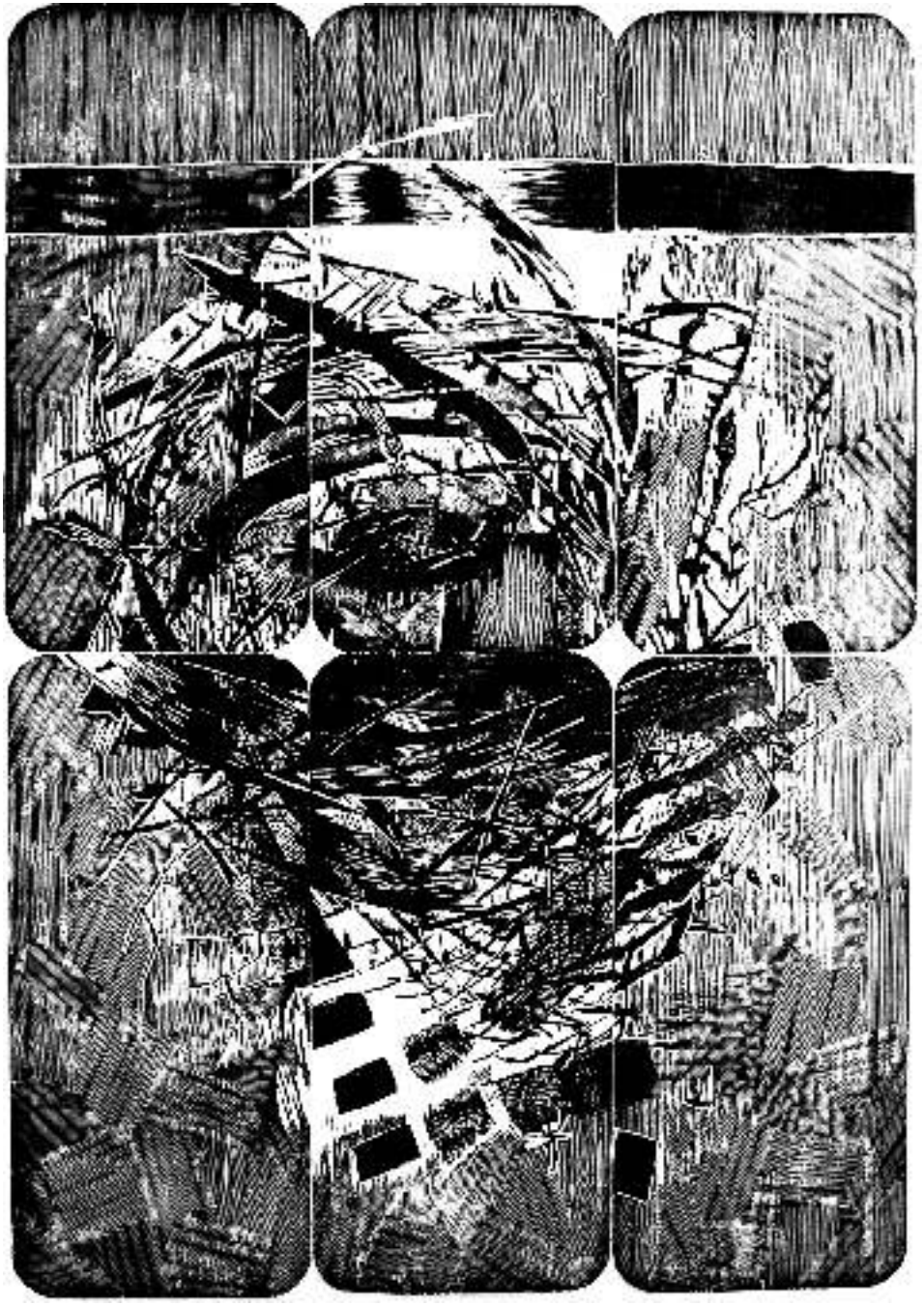
So it is with Ortansa Moraru's detailed woodcuts. They map an inner dimension that translates into marks familiar yet unique with a sophisticated realisation of mental process.



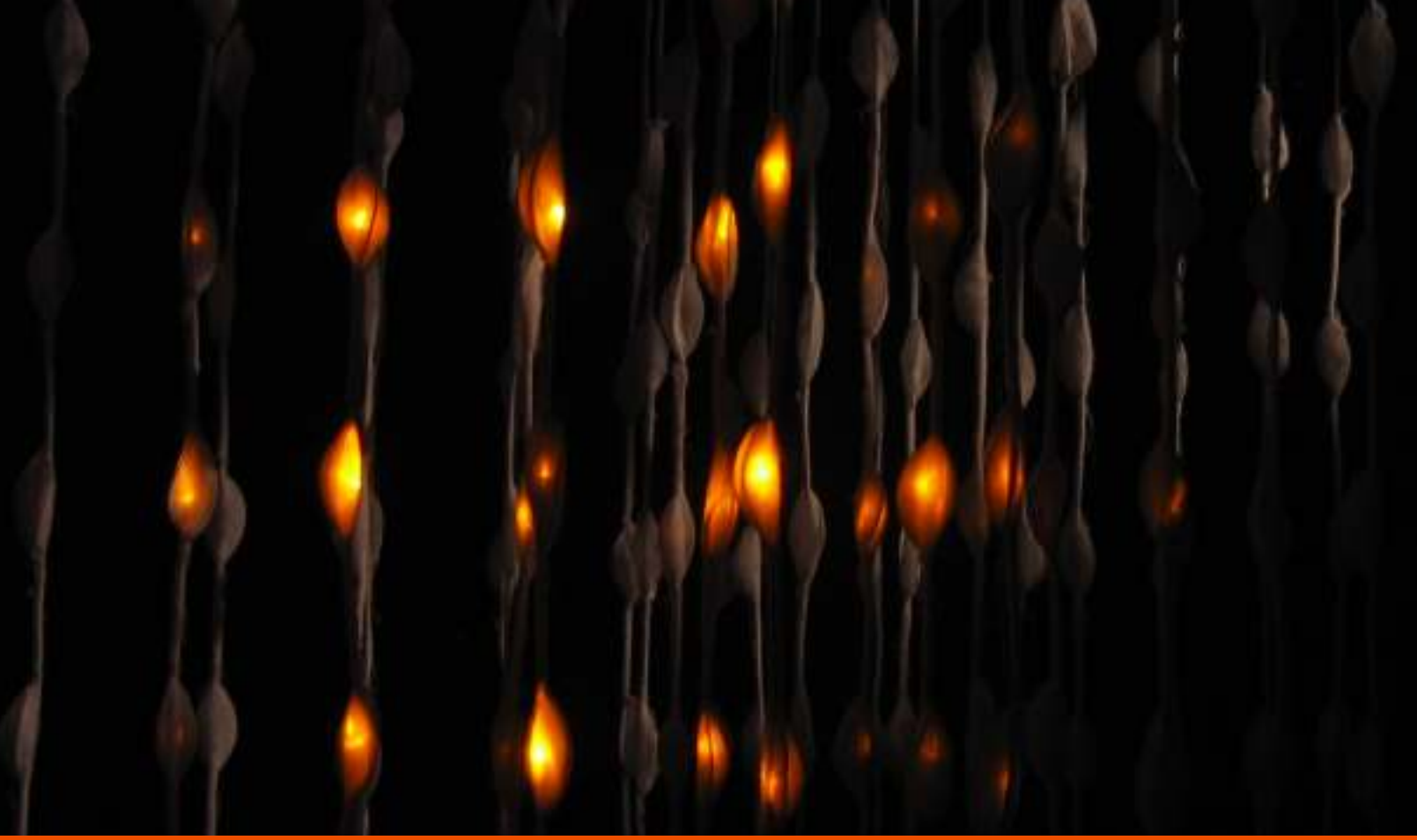
Nest II 2006, woodblock print on Japanese paper



Nest IV 2006, woodblock print on Japanese paper



Nest V 2006, woodblock print on Japanese paper



MAGIC

Slight of hand astonishes as the manufacturing of a beautiful experience soars beyond our immediate ken. The wonder of science and the far-reaching accomplishments of technology with seamless transitions between invention and actuality produce a form of beauty akin to the sublime - beyond practical understanding but comprehended in magnificence, nonetheless, as beautiful.

JIM RUXTON
CAMILLE TURNER

Technology comes with a cool handle. First, there is the awe inspired by the expertise - cool! Secondly, technology is usually associated with logic and practicality where method and result leaves little room for the emotions. The collaborative team of artists, Jim Ruxton and Camille Turner keep the hip side of 'cool' in the equation and substitute a warm and responsive second in their creation of an interactive light installation appropriately titled *Sync.*

It is unusual to speak of a technological piece as possessing a personality where the gesture of the maker comes into play but it is the human feelings that Ruxton and Turner awaken as one enters the aura of *Sync* that are memorable rather than the response to expertise and process. The construction of the pods (by Camille Turner) of white fabric with small hairs of thread and a fuzziness of surface is a pleasant prospect, even when not activated. As a shade bridging the gap between the light source and the viewer, it acts as a friendly skin, unobtrusive with a soft diffusive quality that is pleasing. Our body as a sensing device responds to the output of the piece, and just as we are responsive to other people or the forces of nature, so we receive the stimulus.

Like the creation of a child, the process is fascinating and mysterious, but the character and

(detail) *Sync 2004,* fabric and electronics

physicality of the offspring is the spark that ignites our interest. Just as the parentage of a child brings about it's characteristics, so with this piece the individual interests, abilities and knowledge of the makers exert an influence on the outcome of the progeny. Turner, also known as Miss Canadiana is no stranger to the beauty beat as her performance work questions cultural concepts of feminine beauty through the construct of The Beauty Pageant. Ruxton brought the expertise of a Masters in engineering to the fore, and then tempered it with an arts education when he came to the conclusion that his engineering potential was not sufficient to encompass his scope. 'Bored' is a word that ceased to surface once the glamour of fine arts was overlaid on his inspirations. His projects have built-in energising components be they as specific as material that changes with human interaction or as subtle as *Sync* where the light waves stimulate the response of awe and wonder. The collaboration is successful, the birth acknowledged as a perfect combination of the best of both partners.

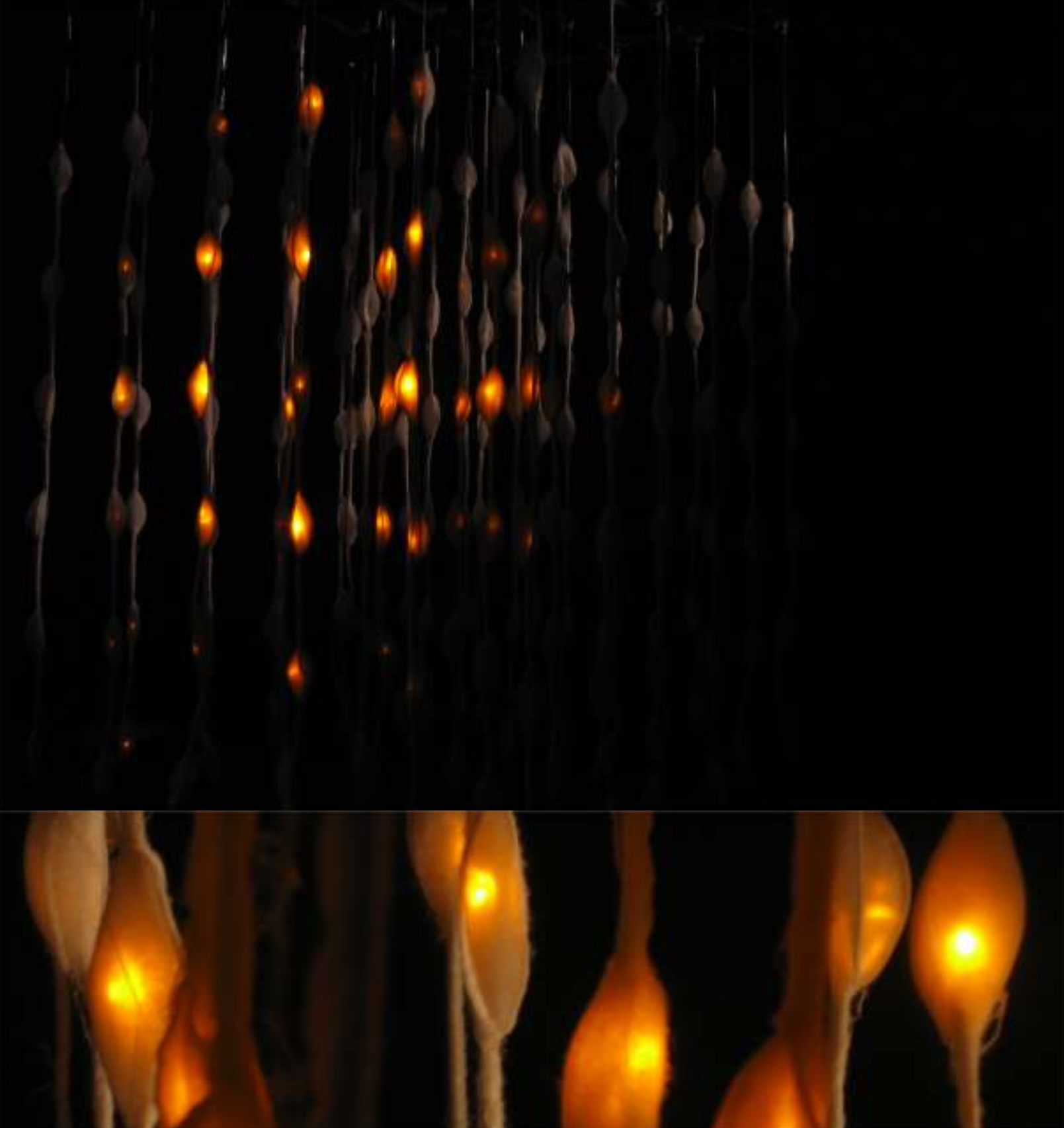
The nuts and bolts are as impressive as the workings of the engine and worthy of contemplation for the secondary journey of problem solving, stimulated through the description of the workings, furthers the consideration of man's miraculous force of invention. The following explanation by Ruxton and Turner compliments the appreciation.

"The name of the piece is inspired by the book *Sync*, written by mathematician Stephen Strogatz. In this book he investigates nature's miraculous synchronization process. The installation reflects the forces of nature using light as a medium. It consists of a six foot square, three dimensional matrix of lights (216 lights with each light one foot from it's nearest neighbour) which have been embedded in fabric pods.

The intensity of each of the lights reflects calculations of a numerical model which is being executed in real time in a computer connected to the installation. The installation images forces being injected into a three dimensional cube of masses suspended in a viscous fluid and separated by springs. Random generators in the computer allow a force vector to be injected into the cube of masses with varying forces, at varying positions and in varying X,Y,Z directions. The computer also continuously varies the properties of the fluid in which the masses are suspended. As these forces are injected into the computer model, the three dimensional cube of lights reflects the forces felt by each mass in the computer. The result is a sensuous display of how forces transfer through various systems in nature."

The aura is both actual as the lights give off energy that projects into the atmosphere and sensational as the arousal of wonder overtakes the desire to know the engineering of the piece. Before system or process comes to mind, feeling cuts in and the dance partner is indeed heralded as exotic. The illusion is in tune with the choreographed twinkling patterns as movement is implied when the visual connections dance and promote delight.

(details) *Sync 2004,* fabric and electronics



ALL THAT GLITTERS

"Lucy in the sky with diamonds", "like a diamond in the sky", or "diamonds are a girl's best friend" are popular well-worn phrases. Glitter and gems have powerful associations and are a gentle reminder of our desire to possess, a desire that can overtake reason and stew in the head with smouldering insistence. The wonder of the physical phenomenology of facets of light, reflected, refracted or projected, has long been acknowledged as a source of beauty.

JOHN NOESTHEDEN

The sparkling surface overwhelms the conceptual base and so it is with any great work of art. The phenomenal object, the work of art, although it may have been born of grand concepts, rests in the enduring physicality that provokes awe.

The initial source of inspiration and configuration for The Mirror Pieces is one minuscule section of The Milky Way as portrayed by the Hubble Space Telescope. Because the photo technologies and information are in constant flux, the work questions the reliability of scientific knowledge.

Noestheden's work, abstract at first reading, is actually representational. In the artist's words, "The black rectangle will depict one small section of the Milky Way… it will be as densely packed as possible…during their application each silver crystal will touch two other crystals until the space is filled…unpredictable, irregular black gaps will be secondary results of this process."

The result is an abstract wonder, a phenomenally beautiful object, perhaps as wondrous as the night sky.

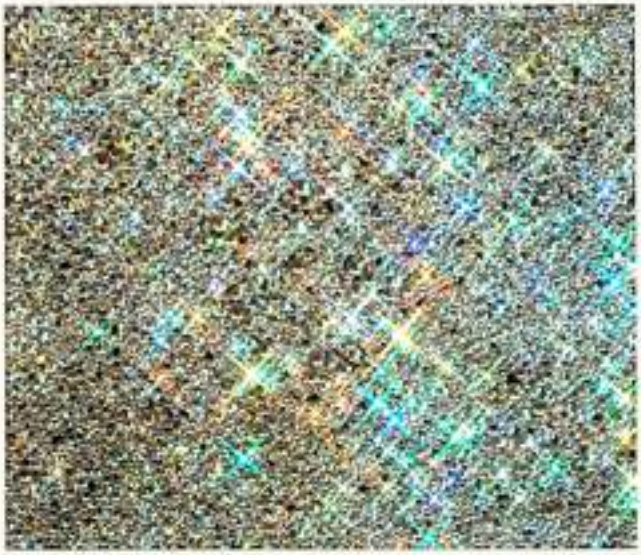
John's hand, in service to his conceptual master plan, also raises admiration for the making of these sparkling drawings is almost beyond comprehension. Such exactitude! The art of pasting the tiny crystals onto the paper and the painstaking task that must have been, provokes awe. But the most incredible aspect of Noestheden's work is the leap that he made from concept into material and the resulting work of art.

It is necessary, like standing under the canopy of stars, to experience the work first-hand, for as the viewer moves around, the tiny diamond-like crystals sparkle and bounce off the retina as if they were receiving an electrical pulse. It is the phenomenology of binocular vision, a resultant visual illusion as one eye sees, then the next follows, just as the light from space is often old light from an extinguished source.

Noestheden explains "The work becomes an investigation of visualization and seeing itself. While standing directly in front of Milky Way Mirror pieces, the dense cluster of silver crystals will slowly begin to reveal aspects of the viewer's own image."

(detail) *Untitled 2008,* silver crystals, glue, paper

(right) *Mirror One 2008,* silver crystals, glue, paper



Mirror Two 2008, silver crystals, glue, paper

Mirror Three 2008, silver crystals, glue, paper

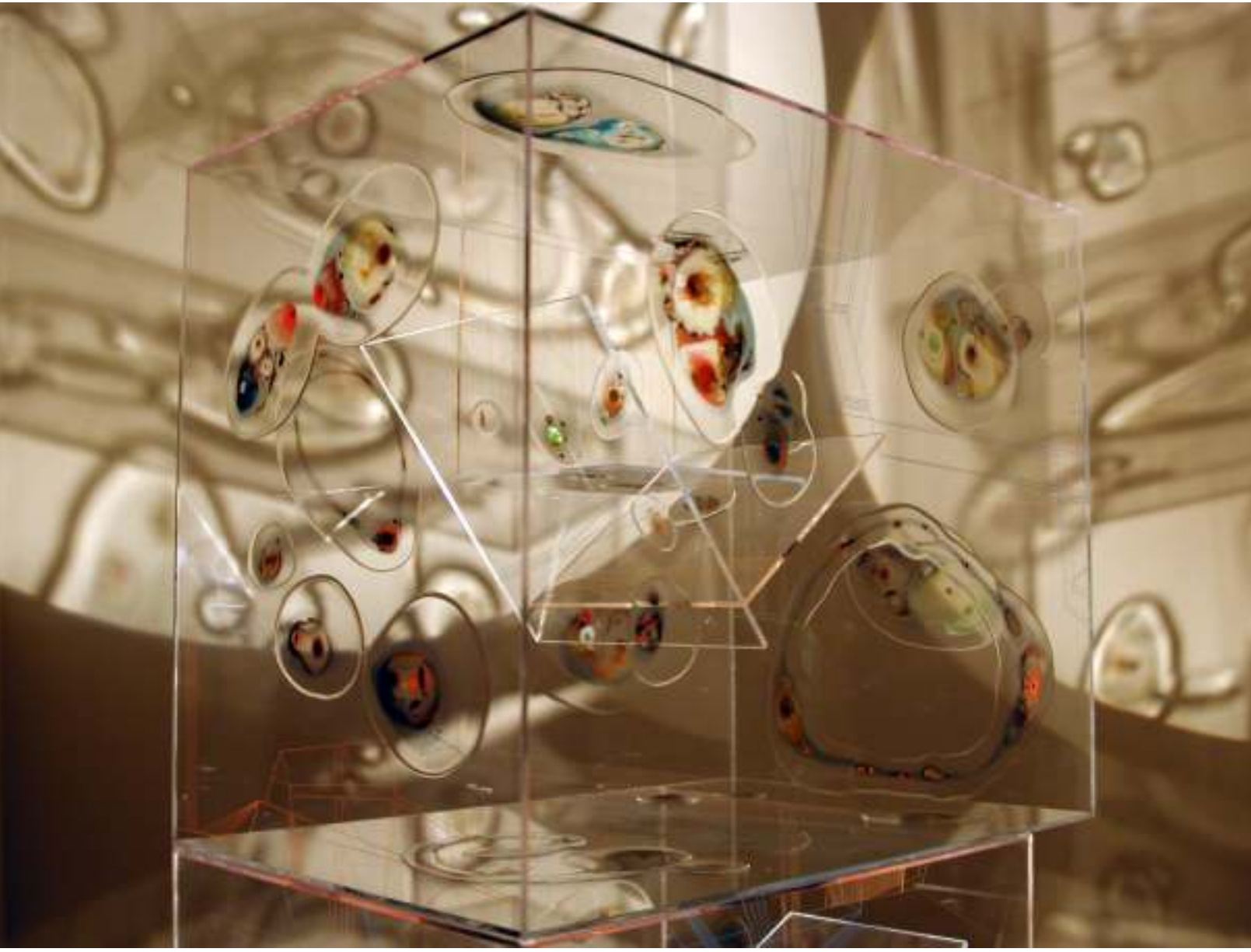
KHALED MANSUR

A projector is most commonly associated within the utilitarian realm, the mere means for translating image, illuminated by light, onto a screen. Sculpture exists as a three dimensional form in space and even if there is a component of light that increases the aura of the piece, the physical boundaries are definable. When the projector becomes the sculpture and the combination of the sculpture and the image becomes the art piece in total - something phenomenal has happened. This sculpture is in fact a very complex lens rather than being a means to an end. It is a portion of a phenomenal object.

Interior design, the craft arts, and architecture combine the useful with fine arts and operate in a similar manner to serve their purposes. In doing so, they lift beyond being solely practical to being useful to another aspect of the human psyche and that is fulfilling the aesthetic need.

The Eastman Kodak Museum in Rochester, New York has on display cameras and projectors. The industrial design is appreciated. But take away the function, and the object, as sculpture, does not readily stand up. The lens, *Modular Existence*, created by Khaled Mansur with painting by Rui Pimenti, is beautiful whether it functions as a projector or not. Turn the projecting lamp off and the piece is still illuminated. It is virtually illuminated and illuminating whenever it is in the light for the surfaces of the pieces of plexiglass are reflective as well as refractive. They bounce back the light of the environment and also change the light that passes through the panels.

The paint, reminiscent of slides under a microscope reveal amoebic forms that bring to mind cellular and biological systems. The magnification once projected onto the walls produces a greater comprehension of the forms, one which is likened to the revelations seen through a microscope but the understanding is exclusive much like the lay person's mystification at the world of Science. Along with the mystification comes delight, amazement and a willingness to enter the grand illusion without a safety net. This is a playful piece with a slight sugaring of psychedelic light shows and lava lamps. If only the utilitarian component could more often be so beautiful!



Modular Existence 2008, plexi-glass, wood, paint, light

Modular Existence 2008, plexi-glass, wood, paint, light

Modular Existence 2008, plexi-glass, wood, paint, light

JOHN TORREANO

Gems have powerful associations with their exotic names - emerald, ruby, amethyst, sapphire, topaz, and the queens being diamonds - conjuring visions of wealth and grandeur.

Torreano has chosen a subject that has an infinite number of variables to explore - an inner and outer definition of space, color, reflection, transparency and opaqueness. Monetary association aside, a gem is, with austere physical complexity, challenging subject matter. It is the ultimate still life with the cuts and facets, the fashioning of light, the embodiment of miraculous substance. The gem comes with vast encumbrance of historical presence that creates inherent expectations in its power.

Setting his giant replicas of the real in pillars, they mesmerize with the authority of a

Chrome Twist 1998 to 2004, acrylic, glass gems, silicone glue and enamel on wood

magician's wand or the baton at the front of a parade. The phallic staff, always a symbol of authority, holds status, reigning in candy colored raiment and circus-like sensationalism. Torreano exercises the art of play with grandeur.

Torreano's gem obsession has not hypnotized his objectivity. He presents the gems with distance. He grants space and attention to each giant gem surrogate with a conscious displaying of his collection so that each jewel is presented not so much as an embellishment on a wand but as separate sources of transformative energy that add up to a fresh seductive allure providing fertile ground for new longings. The response is a fervent reminder of the Gollum theory. 'My precious' was the term of endearment that the lop-eared creature gave to the object that had captured his desire but Torreano's work is less about lust and more about attraction. It is the pleasurable 'come hither' of a good time, a romp, the excitement of beauty when it is light and welcoming, accessible and decorative, gorgeously put together and great to be around.

Little Clown 1998, acrylic, glass gems, silicone glue and enamel on wood

Baton Rouge 1998, acrylic, glass gems, silicone glue and enamel on wood

Baton Rouge (detail)

THE BEAUTY OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

Turning to aspects of landscape that have been historically used as metaphors for beauty within spiritual conceptualisations of aesthetics, the heavenly canopy and the verdurous earth inspire artistic expression. The metaphor is present as well in the mirroring wonder of our own human form.

DONNA KRIEKLE

A blue sky invokes happiness. The associations are numerous - summer, health, freedom, flight, heaven. Many religions place the afterlife in the sky - the afterlife that is a reward.

The sky is air. It provides the nourishment for our respiratory system and hence the rhythmic renewal of life. The installation *Breathing Room* by Donna Kriekle references the breath with titles, *Oxygen, Hydrogen, Nitrogen, Inspiration, Expiration.* Inspiration is the drawing of breath into the lungs. Expiration is the letting go of the energy in order to empty the lungs in preparation for the next breath. Meditation techniques make use of the breath as a means of centering the psyche and ameliorating chaos, stress, and confusion that are inherent in the human condition. The business of the mind is slowed down to realize a more harmonious existence by concentrating on the inspiration and expiration of the breath - divine simplicity. Pranic healing utilizing the breath has long been a method employed in Ayurvedic medicine and western medicine has selectively adopted the time proven practices as the relevance of alternative medicine has come into fashion. Breathing techniques are used to get on top of the pains of childbirth. Trauma therapy utilizes a concentration on the breath as a tranquillizes - "Take a deep breath..."

The atmosphere that surrounds the earth making it habitable for human life is the sky. It protects from the sun, is the source of moisture and in all ways is crucial to the survival of our eco system. There is a deep resonance from the subconscious in response to this significant source of beneficent being and thus the sky, especially when it is blue with the loveliness of soft clouds signifying a balance, is a prescient sign for the responsive earth and her inhabitants.

The holistic, good-day, sky is a positive message of renewal, refreshment and rejuvenation. Kriekle's sky paintings go beyond this natural phenomena as they translate into the cultural arena. With an impeccable painting technique that opens a window onto the fresh relief of a gentle breeze, Kriekle's sky paintings are as energising as they are beautiful.

(detail) Sky 2008, oil on canvas (above) *Breathing Room 2008,* installation of 8 canvases, oil on canvas, variable dimension

(above) *Time 2008*, oil on canvas

(below) *Source 2008*, oil on canvas

(next page) *Sky 2008*, oil on canvas, detail

Runner 2004, living moss, thread burlap installation at the Fish Tank Gallery, New York, NY

CHRISTIAN BERNARD SINGER

Man has exerted his dominion over the earth, carving out roads, digging, shaping and reinventing paradise in his own image. Too often the interception is abrasive and the earth suffers from the manipulations. Not so with Christian Bernard Singer's thoughtful relationship with nature.

A little patch of earth at its best - lush, green, soft, light, pliable, transportable, easily sustainable - moss! Singer uses the preordained harmony that is endemic to nature in this lush vegetation to speak in whispers, communicating messages so gentle that they are heard visually, seen audibly, tasted through the fingers and smelled through the eyes. The world of Christian Bernard Singer is overwhelmingly poetic.

The crisp definition of architectonic space is broken by a visual mirage, a displacement of the unfamiliar upon the objective reality of the polished wood floor of the gallery changing the expected into the inspired. It is a form of culture shock, an objectification of sensibilities so that the subjective overtakes reasoning and the sensation becomes the prime means of understanding. Singer's installations are like other countries, foreign lands. Things are not as they have been. There are unaccustomed translations of ordinary juxtapositions. It is a 'trippy' feeling much akin to traveling. The installation brings about heightened awareness of place. It is delightful, not jarring, a pleasant surprise akin to eco-tourism.

The outside has flowed into the inside. The transition between the dwelling and the environment, the interior and the exterior has been accomplished. Christian Bernard Singer helps us out in our Northern clime and forces the issue by bringing the mossy side into the gallery. The relief of the intrusion is as rich as a patina on copper and as refreshing as a walk up a magic viridian staircase in a midsummer night's dream.

(below) *Initiation Spring 2003,* detail, living moss

(next page) detail, living moss

DIANE FEUGHT

The phenomena of human beauty has been the subject of many works of art and it is from this tradition that Diane Feught's paintings spring and re-establish sincerity in a footing of feminine beauty.

Beauty is appreciated when beauty is admired and without the gaze, beauty is nonexistent. The gaze has been addressed by philosophers as a personal form of possessing beauty with the eye laying claim, then banking it in the memory and bringing the beautiful one out for contemplation at will. But the memory can fade and the shine of beauty become tarnished as recollection fails to locate the place where the object of desire was stored or the shine of perfection loses its brilliance to more pressing images.

The mirrored gaze is an introspective philosophical construct where the inspection and consideration of self allows for psychological insight and also self deception. It is a gaze returned by the giver where the viewer and viewed, as one, give birth to a new realization. It is a creation born of love. The mirroring of human beauty has been personified in Narcissus, the self love that becomes blinding. The mirrored gaze also has a cloudy aspect that reflects not a revelation but obfuscation of truth. Vanitas paintings that contain a mirror in the same frame as a skull bring to mind the fleeting prospects of beauty severely laid down as a reminder of the benefits of objectivity and the downfalls of excessive pride in appearance. The mirror is the balance, the justice, between the gaze and the one who is gazing.

Imagery from the Renaissance depicts The Annunciation as a lily given to Mary as a symbol of fertilization. An angel presents the white flower, a symbol of femininity and purity and in doing so the signification is prepared and can continue to the next phase - that of creation. And so in Diane Feught's painting, the gaze is mirrored to birth a new beauty. Her *Annunciation* has an emancipated frankness in the gaze of the dark haired woman staring straight into the eye of her double.

Beauty as *Adoration* or as a *Gift* sets the object of beauty on a privileged pedestal. Adoration is a potent form of worship and a gift, a present, is a special object given with amicability.

Women have been said to love beautiful things as well as embodying beauty themselves. Diane Feught has allotted an aristocratic dignity to each of her pieces. She makes beauty with a style of depiction that leaves the old masters behind for she makes paintings that accentuate notions of beauty through her skill and elevated taste.

Annunciation 2008, acrylic on canvas

Adoration 2008, acrylic on canvas

The Gift 2008, acrylic on canvas

ENERGIZING COLOUR

Beauty can reside in an immediate impression such as a sensate response to the glory of color. The sensation brings past associations into play wherever the individual mind has lodged a similar field of color and texture. Then there is the tangential potential derived from the immediate visual and the associations that they create so that color becomes a launching pad for particular experiences embedded in the viewer's consciousness, enabling appreciation to spring into being.

HEIDI THOMPSON

There is a move from sentience to cognizance that depends on the breadth of the imagination. Heidi Thompson's color field paintings provide flights that gel into an understanding of the absolute physicality of the particular art object. It seems a weighty description of the link between the perception of one of these pieces and the knowledge that can be gleaned from them, but this *is* how they work.

The immediate impression is a sensate response - to the glory of the color that in turn produces the sensation on viewing the art piece. The contemplation of the sensation brings past associations into play - the patinas of old Tuscan walls, astronomical photographs, mineral deposits, the dried up bottom of an evaporated fountain, mold, lichens, a rusty, barnacled prow of a recently retrieved shipwreck - wherever the individual mind has lodged a similar field of color and texture. Then there is the tangential potential derived from the immediate visual; new visions like the figures and worlds that we imagine in the clouds, a bonfire or a peeling patch of debris. The response is individual and Heidi Thompson has granted the room to move in a number of associative directions. The color field becomes a stimulus for the particular experiences, embedded in the viewer's consciousness, to spring into being.

Using the piece as an object for meditation, and paring the sensation down to the energy that is flowing into the eyes and being then transmitted to the brain, brings about a distinctly human frame of mind. Because there is no subject other than the materials that make up the phenomenal object that is the piece of art, there is room to enter into a symbiotic relationship with the artwork. This pure seeing, because of human cognizance, causes an emotion in reaction to the sheer beauty, or maybe dread at the subliminal mystery inherent in being or it could be a pleasurable shock at the glory of perceiving such a vision. This is the strength and appeal of pure abstraction.

Pure abstraction is a physical presence that often catches our attention (the patina, wall or rust, for instance) and yet it doesn't fade into disinterest over time. The wonder continues and the piece pulses a new version of the vision with each encounter.

(before) *Yellow Flame 2008* detail acrylic on canvas

(above) several details, acrylic on paper

Yellow Flame, 2008, acrylic on canvas

Orange Patina, 2008, acrylic on canvas

Yellow Orange Field 2008, acrylic on canvas

Dream of Fields, 48 units, hand painted washi and wood

LORRAINE PRITCHARD

The patterned fields of the prairies where Lorraine Pritchard grew up (Manitoba) left an indelible impression. The neatly folded paper pieces of *Dream of Fields* bring to mind the stripes of the newly ploughed furrows and seed beds and refer to the internal landscape as well as the external. The integrity of the washi (hand-made Japanese paper) matches the natural associations.

Pritchard's work pays service to the mind through spiritual orientations. Overlaid upon the piece is the strong impression of a sophisticated culture. Referencing the Japanese, the wrapped paper shapes, neatly arranged in rows are similar to shiki futons covered by a kakebutons and then topped with an oversized soba gara makura pillow. That they are placed close to the ground on small raised wooden platforms furthers the reference and the neat arrangement of small 'beds' displayed on the natural wood floor carries the visual metaphor through to maturity. The patterns on the washi are drawn, painted or mono-printed by Pritchard leaving an evidence of her personal mark.

Pritchard's piece forms a floor quilt and with serene configuration elevates the purity of form, color, pattern and texture into a meditative context.

Dream of Fields, detail hand painted washi and wood

Dream of Fields detail hand painted washi and wood

Act One…View to Hide 2003, intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾

JOHANN FEUGHT

Feught presents a spiritual landscape or mind map consisting of glimpses of ethereal other-worldliness that create the vertical momentum of mental ascension. The closest comparison, from architecture, would be the vaulted ceilings with stained glass windows of the Renaissance.

The architectural reference suggests a grander site than our frontier-land contemporary metropolis. There is romance and longing harkening back to a time and place where buildings served the dual purpose of shelter and edification. The portals depicted in Johann Feught's work have stately proportions, classical references that translate into other disciplines. *Act One*, *Act Two*, *Act Three* and *Act Four* suggest theatrical scenarios. A stage is implied as the foot of the portico drops outside of the area that would be the proscenium and crosses into the implied space of the viewer like a cultivated invitation to join the beautiful realm of saturated color. The work is abstract but suggestive. The suggestion is clarified in the title and yet the symbolism is universal and really needs no explanation for the aura has been created. In *Neptune's View*, the atmosphere is marine, in *Lover's View*, it is a combination of petals and thorns, time-worn metaphors of love that are renewed by Feught's psychedelic palette.

The pieces are impeccably built and in the crafting of space bear witness to all that makes Johann Feught's work a sophisticated experience. The construction is faultless. There is not a crack in the fabrication. All is perfect, and hence the reception of the sensual is gracious.

As the spires and spines of architectonic lines veer heaven-wards, the saturated colors in Johann Feught's work sing with a celestial harmony. These are lofty pieces that speak of great things within the humble confines of a piece of paper. Even the blacks are melodious, deep bassoon depths of black, lamp black, sooty deposits of burning fire, as black and deep as a velvet night.

The European structures that comprise the subject are haunting and the over-all effect is beautiful with the poignancy of human emotional vulnerability adding to the wonder of existence.

Act Two…Neptune's View 2003, intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾

Act Three…Lover's View 2003, intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾

Act Four…View to The Flame 2003, intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾

BIOGRAPHIES

Julie Oakes, Guest Curator

Oakes has been the curator for Headbones Gallery since it first opened in British Columbia in 1998 during which time she has written critical published commentaries for over two hundred artists. She has a Masters Degree in Visual Arts from New York University and a Masters Degree in Social and Political Science from The New School for Social Research in New York. She has written for various periodicals including D'arte International, Canon and Riverside Quarterly. With a dual career as an artist and writer, Oakes has shown extensively, most recently presenting *The Buddha Composed* at The Varley Gallery of Markham. Her work is in major collections such as The Glenbow Museum, The Norman MacKenzie Art Gallery, The Mendel Gallery, The Vernon Performing Arts Center, SaskTel Corporation, Canada Council Art Bank, The Kenderdine Gallery and UBCO.

THE ARTISTS

Angiola Churchill

Professor Emeritus and founder of New York University's Venice Masters Program, Angiola Churchill's floor to ceiling paper installations twist the preconceptions of paper as sheet, as plane, as two dimensional surface and instead create a labyrinth of sculptural space.

She has exhibited her paper installations in such gracious spaces as Casa Ludovico, Ferra, Italy; Palazzo Reale, Naples, Italy; Museo di Palazzo Fortuni, Venice, Italy; Keplco Plaza Gallery, Seoul, Korea; Crecloo Art Gallery, New York; Museo de Arte Y Diseno Contemporano, San Jose, Costa Rica and the New York Institute of Technology. She has participated in major Biennales and countless group shows around the world.

Carin Covin

Carin Covin is a British Columbian artist whose signature is extreme patterning and obsessively crafted art pieces. Poetry and song as it veers to the purity of abstraction are

presented as simple white formats with ceremonious associations.

Covin, currently working with The Art Gallery of Kelowna, has had solo exhibitions at The Alternator Gallery, Kelowna; The Langholm Cultural Center, Langholm, BC; Grand Forks Art Gallery, Grand Forks, BC; and The Vernon Public Art Gallery in Vernon, BC. She received The Helen Pitt Award and The President's Choice Award and has recently completed an MFA at UBCO in British Columbia.

Diane Feught

It is difficult not to use the word 'beauty' in conjunction with Diane Feught's paintings. The fair distribution of attributes creates a sense of divine proportion. There is symmetry between the exoticism of the subject matter and the formal elements of the piece, substantiated by a remarkably adept execution.

Coming from a background in graphic design, Feught's excellence has been acknowledged with ACE GOLD Awards of Excellence in Illustration, Poster Design and Product Design as well as the Alberta Book Cover Award and The Gold Award for Best Software Design Canada for the Axion 3D World Atlas. Having recently exhibited in Barmstedt, Germany on the invitation of The Canadian Consulate, she is turning more of her time over to painting. Her work is in the collections of The Alberta Art Foundation, The Edmonton Opera, Grant McEwan College, Peter Hemmingway Architects and Government House of Alberta.

Johann Feught

As the spires and spines of architectonic lines veer heaven-wards, the saturated colors in Johann Feught's work sing with a celestial harmony and the over-all effect is beautiful with the poignancy of human emotional vulnerability adding to the wonder of existence.

With an active teaching schedule as a Professor with UBCO in British Columbia, Johann Feught has pioneered printmaking techniques that have elevated the art to include toxic

free inks and studio environments. He has exhbitied extensively in Germany with Pentiment Gallery, Hamburg and Marschtor Zwinger Gallery in Buxtenhude, In Canada, he has had solo exhibitions at The AGSO, BC; Jack Singer Hall, Calgary; Prior Editions, Vancouver; Barton Leier Gallery, Victoria; Ring House Gallery, Edmonton and Nickel Arts Museum in Calgary. The collections where his work resides are many including Alberta Arts Foundation, Kitchener/Waterloo Gallery,The Royal Bank of Canada, Carthy Foundation, Calgary Center for the Performing Arts and Universities of Seattle, Alberta, Calgary, British Columbia and Waterloo.

Donna Kriekle

Kriekle lives and works on the prairies, the land of the big skies. Skies, with no orientation to land mass, provoke the clarity and peace of gazing upwards on a fresh summer day. Kriekle's flawless technique completes the illusion and the pristine vista is more uplifting than representational, yielding an unfettered pleasure in the observance of nature made more perfect than in reality.

Kriekle has had solo shows across Canada including Nancy Poole's Studio, Toronto; Douglas Udell Gallery, Vancouver; and The MacKenzie Art Gallery, The Dunlop Art Gallery and the Susan Whitney Gallery in Regina. She has executed several commissions including work for The Royal Saskatchewan Museum, The University of Toronto, The Saskatchewan Writer's Guild and the Regina Court House. Kriekle is also a recognised film maker with titles *Im pulse*, *Hearts on Fire* and *1 in 9 - The Odds of Breast Cancer* that appeared in the exhibition *Survivors in Search of a Voice*.

Khaled Mansur

Mansur, born in Bangladesh, received a BFA from the University of Texas. Before moving to Toronto, he lived in New York City where he founded a company that fabricated display

units for such prestigious institutions as The Whitney Museum of American Art.

His art work is in The Rockefeller Foundation, The Stone-Kettering Cancer Center, Alliance Capial Investment and Kboom Culture and Design in New York City where he has had exhibitions with Biblios Art Gallery, The Williamsburg Historical Society, Herr Gallery Soho and The Leblanc Organization Gallery. He resides in Toronto where his plexiglass sculptures and wall installations have opened to new dimensions of light.

Mansur's light boxes appear with seemingly divine luminosity. They evoke the rarefied atmospheres of other, more perfect, planets where airy opalescent vistas reveal spacey flying apparatuses, hovering and gliding.

Ortansa Moraru

Moraru's wood block prints on Japanese paper map an inner dimension that translates into marks familiar yet unique and decidedly wondrous.

Moraru has an MFA from The Western University of Timisoara in Romania. Her area of expertise is printmaking; lithography, chromolithography, intaglio, xylography, linocut, mezzotint, drypoint and monotype. She has been accepted as a member of The Canadian Society of Artists, The Romanian Artists Society and The Dante Alighieri Cultural Society. She is a master printmaker having won awards for her works in Italy and Romania. Her exhibition history in Europe is extensive and includes the Home/Acasa Project sponsored by the The Art Council England, The Fifth International Small Engraving Biennale and Acqui Internazionale dell' Incisione in Italy, the Fifth Kiwa Exhibition in Japan and many more impressive inclusions. She and her husband are now living in Canada where she has shown at The Hummingbird Centre, Praxis Gallery and the SCA Show at the Heliconian Club, amongst others.

John Noestheden

Born in Amsterdam in 1945, Noestheden moved to Canada in 1951. His BFA is from The University of Windsor and he has a Masters of Fine Arts from Tulane University in New Orleans. Noestheden has completed three major sculpture commissions; The Cineplex Odeon dependant sculptural panel in Houston Texas, an outdoor sculpture for The Asper Jewish Community Center in Winnipeg and the most recent piece is a 128 unit, number, code, equation and text piece in the New Lab Building at the University of Regina. Noestheden has generated public performances works with PI (the square root of two) and historical representations of the universe as motivation. He has just returned from Germany where he was part of The Banner Project done in collaboration with Shuvinai Ashoona. This piece was a feature installation at Nuit Blanche, Toronto, 2008.

For *Aligning with Beauty,* Noestheden will be presenting works made by gluing thousands of silver crystals to paper that represent the night sky with it's plethora of stars. The crystals on the white paper sparkle with an overwhelming intensity that is enlivened by halogen light. By using the mathematical principle of infinite combinations, he arranges the tiny crystals into constellations.

Lorraine Pritchard

Working with Japanese hand made paper, the folded sculptures are both delicate and awe inspiring. Nuances of universal spiritual practices are brought forward.

Pritchard studied at Ontario College of Art in Toronto and followed with studies of Asian Art at York University. The philosophy of eastern aesthetics inspired her and clarified her direction with solid roots in the Bahá'í Faith informing her works that include drawings on Washi (handmade Japanese paper), acrylic paintings on canvas and wood, and assemblages formed from found and constructed objects.

More recently, she has been collaborating with musicians, choreographers and writers

in a search for expanding her visual language. Collections such as Le Droit (Ottawa), Loto Quebec, Europe's Best (Montreal) and others include her paintings. Her work has been exhibited in Canada, France, Belgium, Holland and Japan (including a solo exhibition at the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo).

Christian Bernard Singer

Born in France in 1962, Christian Bernard Singer was raised in New York City where he began as a company dancer with Laura Foreman's Composers and Choreographers Theatre. He now lives and works in Toronto where his artistic practice encompasses both indoor and outdoor installations.

Bernard Singer's moss installations have graced the exhibition spaces of The Canadian Clay and Glass Museum, where he has had two solo exhibitions; The Turner Gallery in New York, The Surrey Art Gallery in Surrey, BC; The Ontario Crafts Council and The Norman Mackenzie Art Gallery in Regina.

Heidi Thompson

Thompson attended the Kunstgewerbeschule in Zurich where she received a diploma in photography after which she apprenticed with Oskar Koller in Nürnberg. She was accepted into the Akademie der Bildene Künste, Nürnberg followed by the Hungarian University of Fine Art in Budapest where she studied painting. In 1995 she published *Recapitulation, A Journey*, an art book with paintings by Sveva Caetani. With a life long dual discipline in photography and painting, she relates to the practice of Vipasana meditation for her insights.

John Torreano

Torreano, a New York artist, has an impressive exhibition record with inclusion in shows at The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City; The Corcoran Museum, Washington, DC; Arlington Museum of Art, Texas; La Foret Museum, Tokyo, Japan; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California; and solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, NYC; The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington DC; The Norton Gallery of Art, Palm Beach, Florid; The Grand Rapids Art Museum and The Indianapolis Museum of Art. It is an honour to present his gem pieces in Aligning with Beauty.

John Torreano's large bejewelled paintings on board or gem encrusted pillars have been his signature imagery. He uses fabricated facsimiles of gems, and incorporates them into lush color fields, where the painting also suggests stellar fields.

LIST OF WORKS

1. Carin Covin: *Word Heard - 2005*, detail hand-cut paper collage
2. Carin Covin: *Word Heard 2005* 182 x 113cm (72 x 44.5 in) hand-cut paper collage
3. Carin Covin *Word Spoken 2005* 182 x 113cm (72 x 44.5 in) hand-cut paper collage
4. Angiola Churchill, 2007 Winter Labyrinth, 208 x 121 x 152 cm (82 x 48 x 60 in) paper on plexi-glass frame
5. Ortansa Moraru *Nest 2006* detail, woodblock print on Japanese paper
6. Ortansa Moraru *Nest II 2006* 120 x 75 cm (47.2 x 29.5 in) woodblock print on Japanese paper
7. Ortansa Moraru *Nest IV 2006* 120 x 90 cm (47.2 x 35.4 in) woodblock print on Japanese paper
8. Ortansa Moraru *Nest V 2006* 120 x 90 (47.2 x 35.4 in) cm woodblock print on Japanese paper
9. Camille Turner and Jim Ruxton *Sync 2004* (72 inches square) fabric and electronics
10. John Noestheden *Untitled 2008* detail silver crystals, glue, paper
11. John Noestheden *Mirror One 2008* silver crystals, glue, paper
12. John Noestheden *Mirror Two 2008* silver crystals, glue, paper
13. John Noestheden *Mirror Three 2008* silver crystals, glue, paper
14. Khaled Mansur Modular Existence *2008* 152cm x 102cm x 71cm (60 x 40 x 28 in) plexi-glass, wood, paint, light
15. John Torreano *Chrome Twist 1998 to 2004* 243cm x 30 x 16 cm (96 x 12 x 6.5 in) acrylic, glass gems, silicone glue and enamel on wood
16. John Torreano *Little Clown 1998* 121 x 15 x 9 cm (48 x 6 x 3.5) in acrylic, glass gems, silicone glue and enamel on wood
17. John Torreano *Baton Rouge 1998* 122 x 15 x 9 cm (48 x 6 x 3.5) in acrylic, glass gems, silicone glue and enamel on wood
18. Donna Kriekle *Sky 2008* detail oil on canvas
19. Donna Kriekle *Breathing Room 2008* installation of 8 canvases, oil on canvas, variable dimension
20. Donna Kriekle *Time 2008* 91 x 122 cm (36 x 48in) oil on canvas
21. Donna Kriekle *Source 2008* 91 x 122 cm (36x 48in) oil on canvas
22. Donna Kriekle *Sky 2008* detail oil on canvas
23. Christian Bernard Singer *Runner 2004* living moss, thread burlap installation at the Fish Tank Gallery, NY, NY
24. Christian Bernard Singer *Initiation Spring 2003* detail, living moss
25. Christian Bernard Singer detail of living moss
27. Diane Feught *The Annunciation 2008 122 cm x 61cm (48 x 24 in) acrylic on canvas*
26. Diane Feught *The Adoration 2008 76cm x 61cm (30 x 24 in) acrylic on canvas*
28. Diane Feught *The Gift 2008* 61 cm x 102 cm, (24 x 40 in) acrylic on canvas
29. Heidi Thompson *Yellow Flame 2008* detail acrylic on canvas
30. Heidi Thompson *Yellow Flame 2008* 152x 122cm (60" x 48") acrylic on canvas
31. Heidi Thompson *Orange Patina 2008* 152x 122cm (60" x 48") acrylic on canvas
32. Heidi Thompson *Yellow Orange Field 2008* 152 x122 cm (60" x 48") acrylic on canvas
33. Lorraine Pritchard *Dream of Fields 2002*, 48 units @ 12 x18 with 3 inches in between in a grid is 229 x 320cm (90 x 126 inches) hand painted washi and wood
34. Lorraine Pritchard *Dream of Fields 2002*, *detail* hand painted washi and wood
35. Lorraine Pritchard *Dream of Fields 2002*, detail hand painted washi and wood
36. Johann Feught *Act One…View to Hide 2003* 117 x 76 cm (46 x 30 in) intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾
37. Johann Feught *Act Two…Neptune's View 2003* 117 x 76 cm (46 x 30 in) intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾
38. Johann Feught *Act Three…Lover's View 2003* 117 x 76 cm (46 x 30 in) intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾
39. Johann Feught *Act Four…View to The Flame* 2003 117 x 76 cm (46 x 30 in) intaglio-type and colograph, Ed ¾

RICH FOG

Micro Publishing
Toronto Canada