

POETIC LICENSE

- ATW COMMUNICATIONS
- FRANCES CHARTERIS
- ALBERT CHONG
- LEONARDO DREW
- RUSSELL FORREST ETTER

- MARGARET MILLER
- SANA MUSASAMA
- JOYCE SCOTT
- FRANCIS SPROUT

November 9 – December 15, 1990

**University Art Gallery
Staller Center for the Arts
State University of New York at Stony Brook**

POETIC LICENSE

Poetic License is a selection of works by artists from New York, Long Island, Phoenix, San Diego, and Baltimore who are not affiliated with New York City galleries. Their work has been largely unavailable to the general public chiefly as a result of the overwhelming pressure of market driven interests that foster and nurture fleeting trends. So-called "multi-cultural" exhibitions such as the recent Decade Show at the New Museum for Contemporary Art, have been looked upon with suspicion because they attempted to challenge established norms. "Multi-cultural" may be defined as representing diverse cultural points of view that do not necessarily make a western cultural locus the central focal point. Multi-cultural artists reflect a confluence of heritages and influences exploring their differences and similarities.

The artists I have selected have been quietly pursuing their goals and unique visions despite their frequent omission from the artworld drama. Since our last University Art Gallery exhibition, Fantastic Voyages, favored painting, I tried to select work that explored non-painting approaches and that investigated non-trendy idioms. Joyce Scott's use of intricate densely-worked beadwork to create small sculptural odysseys and Russell Forrest Etter's collage/assemblages both convey a sense of quiet, intense poetry. Scott's and Etter's work reflect an intimate involvement with their materials as well as a solemn, patient privacy necessary for focused concentration.

Leonardo Drew's accumulations of disparate materials to create a matrix of textural sculptural forms is akin to the process of the empowerment of African sculpture. This process is a traditional part of a spiritual practice of imbuing the work with a magical force to give it strength as well as power.

Margaret Miller's approach has its spiritual formal roots in both western and non-western traditions with its focus on the healing power of the circle.

Issues of spirituality are the antithesis of current art world trends. Recent controversies surrounding censorship have forced a dialogue in various arts communities concerning that which is taboo and that which threatens the entrenched religious practices in "mainstream" beliefs.

Albert Chong's work reflects the long-established spiritual tradition in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, and Native American pations of venerating one's elders and ancestors. Mainstream American culture, on the other hand, tends to glorify youth and instill shame by offering an avalanche of products to arrest the natural aging process.

Sana Musasama and Frances Charteris explore aspects of spirituality through their careful use of organic forms with a reverence for the creative processes in the immediacy of clay and photography. Francis Sprout's painting idiom explores the immediacy of the painting process on a large scale, utilizing the geometry, repetition of patterns, and spirituality of Islamic art. Their works seem to reflect a form of meditation as part of the process. ATW Communications' work fuses political beliefs with the advertising medium, but instead of selling something, it touches us with a political reality that requires an action, prodding us to form an opinion or take an ethical stance.

There is a feeling of deeply felt commitment to the creative process in these works, a commitment that transcends trends and fashion or pressure from outside forces to encourage the artist to pander to or mimic trends. These artists are independent spirits who will continue to create no matter how high fashion rises and falls and buzz words are created to give the emperor new clothes.

Howardena Pindell
Guest Curator

ATW COMMUNICATIONS



Angel of God, 1985
Duratrans composite, 72 x 51"
Lent by the artist

As we all know, the mass media has a tremendous impact on the way we see the world around us. The media can be thought of as a consciousness industry that includes entertainment, advertising, and the news. The work of ATW Communications draws on the graphic resources employed in this industry, including a number of installations that masquerade as commercial billboards on subway station platforms. With words and images, they subvert the formal codings of advertising as they address themselves to the events, large or small, that shape our lives, with points of view that one does not hear articulated within mainstream opinion. They acquire a discordant power in the context of venues where people are accustomed to viewing messages of a socially integrated and economically prosperous America—the pervasive myth that is used to support most marketing agendas.

Credits

Photography and copy: Michael Lebron
Photo-composition and retouching: Studio MacBeth
Photo-composition and Duratrans: K & L Labs
Typesetting: The Ace Group

FRANCES CHARTERIS



Chinwe, 1990
Black and white photograph, 30 x 30"
Lent by the artist

I photograph to find questions, to see what I don't perceive with my daily eye but can discover in the perusal and presentation of the afterimage. I attempt to locate the parameters of a place, an event, an interaction—be it a walk in the English countryside that suddenly discloses trees burdened with carcasses of slaughtered animals considered vermin, or the subtle plays of power enjoyed during the intimate ritual of portraiture: who controls whom? What is being controlled? I currently tap into this energy between observer and observed by using a 4x5 Polaroid film that yields both a print and a negative immediately, which allows for a collaborative process. We work together toward presenting the direct and uncompromising gaze that is the spell of portraiture found in Benin heads, murals at Pompeii, in the anonymous 19th century daguerrotypes and in the (unnamed) face in an old family album. Each gaze is a precise expression of identity.

I initially used fabrics as backdrops in portrait sets, then began to cross-fertilize their imagery, mingling Caucasian, African, and Balinese textiles and Xeroxes applied together on scrim. They came to have an independent life of their own as wall pieces. I am now working on merging the two processes—photography and decoupage—so they may co-exist in the same space.

ALBERT CHONG



We Are the Jamaicans, Descendents of Slaves, 1990
Silver gelatin print, 30 x 40"
Lent by the artist

I am presently in the process of making thirteen chairs into what I call thrones. Each throne is dedicated to a different ancestor and when all thirteen thrones are completed, the ancestors will be seated at a table for the offering, a traditional Jamaican Sunday dinner, rice and peas and chicken. When the chairs are transformed into thrones they are photographed and seem to be more powerful as photographs than as the actual objects. Sunday dinner for my ancestors is the subject of the second of a series of installations based on religious and personal themes. The still-life photographic genre has intrigued me since the mid-eighties as it offered the most flexibility in developing a very personal visual language and iconography. By using objects and an intuitive ability that borders on shamanism, I am able to make images about myself and my family. My father, who died recently, has become enshrined in my pictures.

Making pictures can be like making magic.

LEONARDO DREW



#10, 1989
Mixed media, 168 x 42 x 14"
Lent by the artist
Photo credit: © 1989 Wayne Roland

RUSSELL FORREST ETTER



I Love Berlin, 1990
Assemblage, 34 x 21 x 5"
Lent by the artist

These collage/constructions are representative of my work of the past several years. They are fabricated of pine, plywood or masonite, and balsa. Surfaces are coated with gesso before collaging is begun. Papers employed include oriental rice papers, book and wrapping papers, wallpapers, tickets, tags, stamps, stencils and labels. Objects of wood, glass, and metal are also incorporated. The finished works feature, within varying structural formats, 19th century Japanese block prints and 20th century European posters, postcards, and photographs. Materials have been gathered first-hand in Greece, Italy, France, Germany, and found in the environs of Manhattan, Jones Beach, and upstate New York.

Credits

"I Love Berlin" poster:
Printed by Carl Kühn & Söhne, Germany, 10/2/77.
Published by Verkehrsamt Berlin.

Postcards:

From a series entitled "Die vier Elemente, Leben und Licht,"
by Swiss artist Ingeborg Lüscher, © 1980.

Italian posters (upside down on background):
Printed by Tipografia Fiorentini, Roma, 1979.

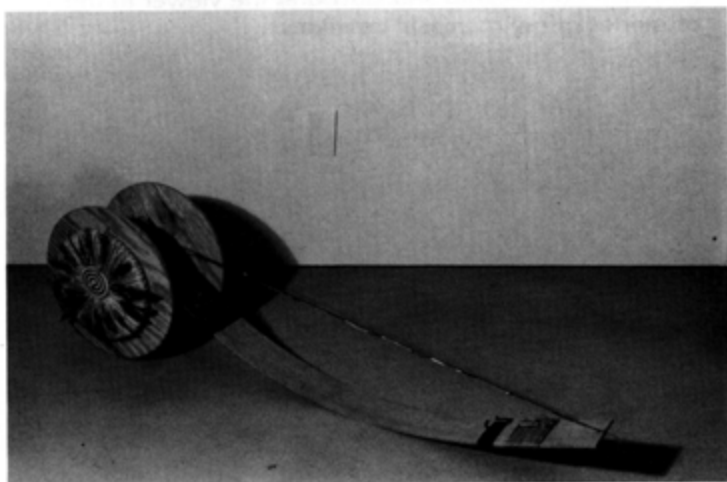
Wooden clock frame:

Made by Ansonia Clock Manufacture, New York, USA,
circa 1900.

Photo credit:

© 1990 D. James Dee

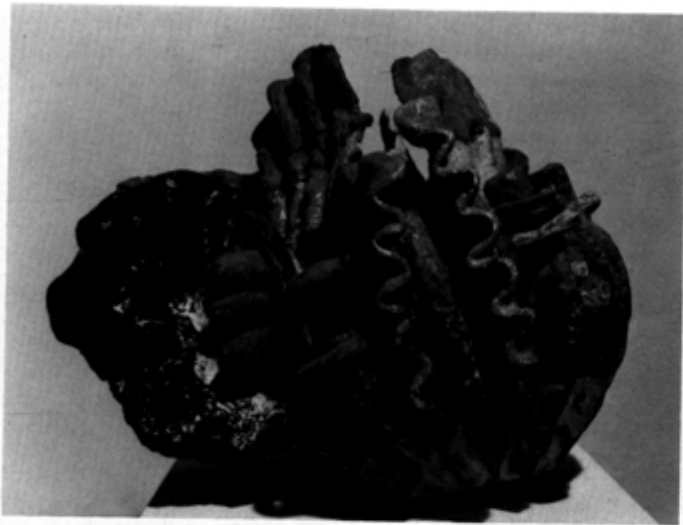
MARGARET MILLER



Featherwheel, 1990
Mixed media, 16 x 50 x 12"
Lent by the artist

This installation is of an imaginary ceremony containing objects that will bring a new and individual spirit to each soul. The circle which is found somewhere in each segment has been chosen, for it has neither a beginning nor an end, and it reflects eternal continuity of life. That which we see and that which is unseen refer to the great circle, the unknowable world.

SANA MUSASAMA



Garden Series: Bud, 1987
Glazed ceramic, 20 x 20 x 16"
Lent by the artist

My work is always about an experience that triggers an emotion, sometimes a place and time. I then submerge myself with information that enhances and nurtures these feelings. When I feel an additional heartbeat, I begin to build.

JOYCE SCOTT



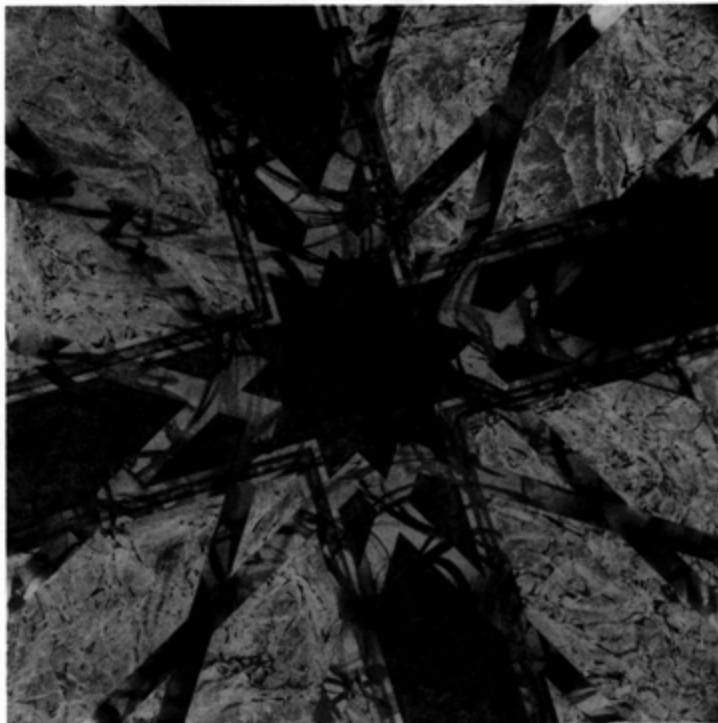
The Devination, 1987
Photo credit: © 1987 John Dean
(Not in exhibition)

Writing about what I do is easy because what I do is what I am. No, I'm not a 200-pound brown-beaded mass, although that's a thought. I'm a compilation of everything I've ever experienced, directed by an inner sensor and loads of skill and charm. Calm down, Joyce.

My ideas emanate from the need to go beyond my mortal boundaries. I want to coyly initiate a tête-à-tête and then Bam!—grab and surround the viewer in the mysteries of my maniacal creations.



FRANCIS SPROUT



Santa Rita, 1974
Acrylic on mixed media, 108 x 108"
Lent by the artist

My current work has evolved from a series of influences. In the late 1960s I painted in the abstract figurative tradition to which I was introduced while enrolled in the art program at the University of Arizona. In 1971, during graduate study at the University of California, San Diego, I encountered Moslem decorative tile patterns in the context of an art history course. The geometric configuration, repetitive order, and meditative qualities evident in these linear motifs then became the basis for large scale color-field paintings throughout the early 1970s.

I generally make a series of drawings and collage designs before beginning to paint. These are preliminary studies that suggest the composition arrangement and possible color. However, the particular image and technique often evolves during the course of the work.

Mineral additives such as sand, glass beads, pulverized metal, or metallic chips are also attached to the surface or blended into the paint for their light refractive qualities. The texture and color of this luminous material is also selected to enhance or extend the range of hues in a particular painting. Additionally, the transparent and opaque properties of the acrylic paint combined with the light refraction of the metallic and glass materials cause these images to change with the ambient light source, time of day, or environment.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My gratitude is also extended to ATW Communications, Frances Charteris, Albert Chong, Leonardo Drew, Russell Forrest Etter, Michael Lebron, Margaret Miller, Joyce Scott, Sana Musasama, and Francis Sprout for sharing their work with the Stony Brook community. I would also like to thank Mr. A.C. Hudgins who has graciously lent a sculpture by Joyce Scott to this exhibition.

Thanks also to Susan Hansen and Gina Felicetti for their assistance in designing the catalogue; Pete Pantaleo and Ron Kellen for installation assistance; and members of the Staller Center for the Arts staff: Stephanie Cash, Gina Felicetti, Edward Matthews, and Elena Patel, Gallery Assistants; Susan Hansen and Akela Reason, Gallery Interns; Patrick Kelly, Technical Director, Liz Stein, Assistant Technical Director, and the Technical Crew of the Staller Center; and Mary Balduf, Gallery Secretary.

Rhonda Cooper
Director



PREVIOUS EXHIBITIONS AT THE ART GALLERY

- | | | | |
|------|--|------|---|
| 1975 | FACULTY EXHIBITION | 1989 | THE M.F.A. SHOW '89
ROBERT KUSHNER: SILENT OPERAS
HERMAN CHERRY: PAINTINGS 1984-1989
HAITIAN ART: THE GRAHAM COLLECTION
FIBER EXPLORATIONS: NEW WORK IN FIBER ART |
| 1976 | MICHELLE STUART
RECENT DRAWINGS (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITION)
SALVATORE ROMANO | 1990 | THE M.F.A. SHOW 1990
PRINTS BY PRINTMAKERS
KIT-YIN SNYDER: ENRICO IV
FANTASTIC VOYAGES |
| 1977 | MEL PEKARSKY
JUDITH BERNSTEIN
HERBERT BAYER (AN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF ARTS EXHIBITION) | | |
| 1978 | LEON GOLUB
JANET FISH
ROSEMARY MAYER
THE SISTER CHAPEL | | |
| 1979 | SHIRLEY GORELICK
ALAN SONFIST
HOWARDENA PINDELL
ROY LICHTENSTEIN | | |
| 1980 | BENNY ANDREWS
ALEX KATZ
EIGHT FROM NEW YORK
ARTISTS FROM QUEENS
OTTO PIENE
STONY BROOK 11, THE STUDIO FACULTY | | |
| 1981 | ALICE NEEL
55 MERCER: 10 SCULPTORS
JOHN LITTLE
IRA JOEL HABER
LEON POLK SMITH | | |
| 1982 | FOUR SCULPTORS
CECIL ABISH
JACK YOUNGERMAN
ALAN SHIELDS
THE STONY BROOK ALUMNI INVITATIONAL
ANN McCOY | | |
| 1983 | THE WAR SHOW
CERAMIC DIRECTIONS: A CONTEMPORARY OVERVIEW
CINDY SHERMAN
THE FACULTY SHOW | | |
| 1984 | BERNARD APTEKAR: ART AND POLITICS
ERIC STALLER: LIGHT YEARS
NORMAN BLUHM: SEVEN FROM THE SEVENTIES
EDWARD COUNTEY 1921-1984
CARL ANDRE: SCULPTURE | | |
| 1985 | LEWIS HINE IN EUROPE: 1918-1918
FRANCESC TORRES: PATHS OF GLORY
HOMAGE TO BOLOTOWSKY: 1935-1981
FREEDOM WITHIN: PAINTINGS BY JUAN SANCHEZ/INSTALLATION BY ALFREDO JAAR
ABSTRACT PAINTINGS REDEFINED | | |
| 1986 | KLEEGER: METAL SCULPTURE
TOBY BUONACURIO: SELECTED WORKS
YANG YAN-PING AND ZENG SHAN-QING
EIGHT URBAN PAINTERS: CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS OF THE EAST VILLAGE
TV: THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
WOMEN ARTISTS OF THE SURREALIST MOVEMENT | | |
| 1987 | HANS BREDER: ARCHETYPAL DIAGRAMS
MICHAEL SINGER: RITUAL SERIES RETELLINGS
JUDITH DOLNICK/ROBERT NATKIN
MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE: THE HUMANITARIAN VISION
MEL ALEXENBERG: COMPUTER ANGELS
STEINA AND WOODY VASULKA: THE WEST | | |
| 1988 | THE FACULTY SHOW '88
ROBERT WHITE: SELECTED WORKS 1947-1988
LEE KRASNER: PAINTINGS 1956-1984
EDGAR BUONACURIO: PERMUTATION AND EVOLUTION 1974-1988
JOAN SNYDER COLLECTS JOAN SNYDER | | |