

# PAT HAMMERMAN



June 6 – July 29, 1995

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



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Despite their undeniable modernity, the paintings of Pat Hammerman seem to evoke a tantalizing look back into humanity's ancient past. Not unlike an archeologist, Hammerman digs through layers of paint and material in her exploration of the properties of paint, surface texture, and spatial relationships. The sense of accidental discovery is evident in Tamil, with its markings in red and light yellow ochre arranged in vertical columns along with multiple blue concentric arcs that smudge into the background. Random splashes of iridescent white seem to fall as if by accident, illuminating the surface where the background coloration is more somber and earthlike.

Less random and more map-like in its organization is Multani. The background coloration is blue, with script-like elements, mostly in pinks and fleshtones, that are larger and boldly flowing. Reminiscent of Matisse's paper cutouts, these elements cover the surface in a more abstract arrangement. Black star-burst shapes floating in conjunction with marine-like forms are moored in place by large, strategically-placed areas of partially obscured grids that are like glimpses through a semi-opaque window. These grids provide a visual and psychological focal point that draws the viewer's eye away from the aquatic mass.

In her earlier work, Hammerman's use of the grid grounded her canvases and gave them a sense of order even when she mixed in bits of fabric, glitter, and feathers to add texture and color. The works presented in this exhibition move away from a reliance on a total grid, although they often retain parallel arrangements of short lines that create a pattern of text-like columns and paragraphs. In Yezidi, these columns of squares and rectangles seem to dance over the textured surface, elements repeating in irregular intervals like the cadence of a poetic text or musical score. The mottled background adds a feeling of age, as if this mysterious text is a remnant of history written long ago.

In Sibo, the linear networks are predominately curvier, with swirls and arcs that outnumber the squares and rectangles to give the painting a lyrical, flowing feeling that looks more like a series of handwritten jottings than a secret code. The use of several shades of blue for these forms, placed over a background of warm pinks and reds, further suggests the use of handwritten ink. Although the script cannot be read, it appears vaguely Middle Eastern. The arabesques and the density of juxtaposed forms, reminiscent of gardens in Persian paintings, reinforce this impression.

In Baltic, Hammerman reverses the colors, with bright, cherry-red markings over a background of modulated blues. Here the overall direction of the script is horizontal, with concentric circles and simplified anthropomorphic

forms predominating. This combination of human-like forms, celestial blue tones, and concentric circles suggests the continuity of existence and leads the viewer to contemplate the essential nature of life, death, and eternity.

Other paintings from 1995 reflect Hammerman's interest in the overall treatment of the canvas, also a major concern of the Abstract Expressionists. In Teluga, a mixed media oil painting, Hammerman uses a curvilinear scribble along with small red squares, rectangles, and dots on a sumptuous mauve background. The relationship between foreground and background, between abstract forms and script, here seems so expertly merged that the viewer intuitively understands the artist's interest in process and texture as well as meaning. The colors and textures are sensual and soothing, the deckle-like edge reassuring and feminine. The markings seem less accidental and more assertive and self-assured. This seems true of the even more playful Minahasa as well. The background is subtle, an interplay of pale pinks and blues that sets the stage for the exuberance of the orange and yellow, blue and purple arches. This bright, buoyant style offers a dramatic contrast to Hammerman's subtle and somber pieces.

Raised and educated in New York, Pat Hammerman is an avid traveler and collector of African Art. Her experience with other cultures informs the choices she makes in her work and infuses her canvases with poetic and dynamic elements that invite the viewer's interpretation.

Rhonda Cooper





Minahasa, 1995

Photo credit: ©1995 Sean Martin



## EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Dimensions are given in inches, height preceding depth.  
All works were lent courtesy of the artist.

1. **Aymara**, 1995  
Handmade paper and mixed media, 18 X 24"
2. **Baltic**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 64 X 72"
3. **Dagri**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 72 X 97"
4. **Elamitic**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 72 X 84"
5. **Caoshu**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 X 72"
6. **Minahasa**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 X 72"
7. **Multani**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 62 X 72"
8. **Notrig**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 X 72"
9. **Oriya**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 62 X 72"
10. **Oscan**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 62 X 72"
11. **Sibo**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 72 X 60 "
12. **Tawgi**, 1995  
Handmade paper and mixed media, 18 X 24"
13. **Thuluth**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 62 X 70"
14. **Telugu**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 72 X 60"
15. **Tamil**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 60 X 79"
16. **Yezidi**, 1995  
Mixed media on canvas, 72 X 60"
17. Artist's book: **Andalusian**, 1995
18. Artist's book: **Bihari**, 1995
19. Artist's book: **Diwani**, 1995
20. Artist's book: **Farsi**, 1995
21. Artist's book: **Kufic**, 1995

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Thomasine Bradford, 1995 M.A. recipient in Art History and Art Criticism, for her research assistance.

Special thanks are also extended to Brenda Hanegan, Heejung Kim, Pete Pantaleo, and Pat Pickett, for installation assistance; and to members of the Staller Center for the Arts staff: Thomasine Bradford and Christopher Youngs, Curatorial Assistants; Elena Humphreys, Peter Kaufman, Vera Phillip, and Michelle Zeng, Gallery Assistants; Patrick Kelly, Production Manager, Liz Silver, Technical Director, and the Technical Crew, Staller Center for the Arts, for exhibition lighting; and Mary Balduf, Gallery Secretary.

Most of all, I wish to thank Pat Hammerman for sharing her work with the Stony Brook community.

Rhonda Cooper  
Director

Cover photo: **Telugu**, 1995

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