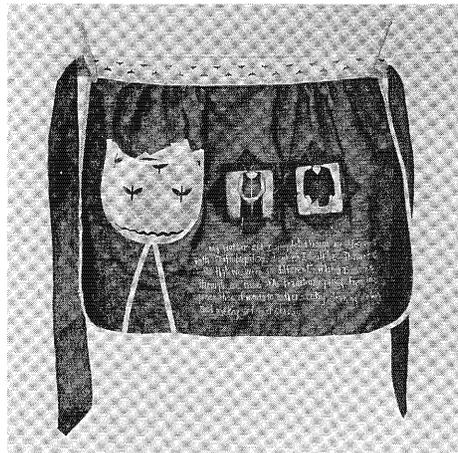


# HOME WORK:

The domestic environment  
reflected in work  
by contemporary women artists

Syracuse University Art Galleries



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The domestic environment  
reflected in work  
by contemporary women artists

Syracuse University Art Galleries

National Women's Hall of Fame  
Seneca Falls, NY  
May 10-September 10, 1981  
Reception May 10, 1-4 P.M.

Joe & Emily Lowe Art Gallery  
Syracuse University  
September 27-November 1, 1981  
Reception September 27, 3-5 P.M.

## Curator's Statement

In the last ten years, a large and growing body of work by women has appeared which contains images, materials, or processes (activities or techniques) that are associated with the domestic environment. This is the visual reflection of an examination of women's roles and experiences in this culture that has been taking place within the feminist movement. Until very recently these experiences have been absent from mainstream art. In the past, creative work that was done in the home (and which was therefore usually by women) was ignored or put down as "craft". Since women and their experiences were not considered important, any work that was reflective of the home, the place where "women's work" was done, was considered unimportant or minor.

Today, women are responding to the home as a powerful source for their artmaking. In doing so, they are reclaiming and affirming women's lives and daily experiences as important and interesting. Others, through their art, critique these culturally imposed roles.

Obviously household images have been and are used by male artists. But, when we look at how they are used, when we look at what the concerns are, and what the particular statement or feeling of the piece is, they usually appear quite different than work by women. For instance, it is interesting to note that most Pop artists (and certainly the most popular of them) were men, and while they chose the commonplace object as their subject matter the work generally was about the media and marketing of these objects. They were presented in a detached way, objects in the world at large rather than in the privacy of the home. It is as if the home was pillaged to make a statement about culture out there as opposed to the home which was not considered to be part of the culture. As Lucy Lippard points out, if the first Pop artists had been women, chances are that Pop Art as a movement would probably never have gotten off the ground or out of the closet since it would have been dismissed as too personal, or merely genre.

When we begin to examine the work being done today by women that deals with the domestic environment, we begin to see several recurring approaches to the subject matter. As Lippard writes, women "...seem to be taking off from, rather than getting off on, the implications of floors, brooms, and dirty laundry."

The main way that domestic imagery appears is in a renewed interest in the still life, a form that can be simultaneously personal, intimate, and political. Women have been redefining the traditional still life in a number of ways. Instead of the classical arrangement of fruit and wine bottle (usually arranged in a studio) we are presented with the reality of what surrounds women in their daily lives—sinks full of dirty dishes, unmade beds, laundry, appliances to be used or polished, food cooked and put up in canning jars, or cellophane wrapped from the grocery store. Sometimes these still lifes are presented neatly put away on shelves or in drawers, but usually the objects take over, multiply, as if to say a woman's work is never done. The images fill the canvas as the chores fill the day. The artist's perspective, and therefore our perspective as we view the work, is directly over the sink looking down, the edge of the canvas framing and limiting our range of vision, or objects viewed from the floor as if we were down there scrubbing away. Even what would seem to be traditional drapery studies have the added content of unmade beds, folded clothes, and dirty laundry.

Other still lifes are like visual scrapbooks, with fragments of women's lives coming together. These are often autobiographical and intimate in nature, including grandmother's china or needlework, a photograph, textiles, favorite jewelry, other special momentos or objects from collections. They are arranged like knick knacks on a coffee table or altars on a dresser top. Many women are collectors, and their collections seem to find their way into their art.

Sometimes, but rarely, women are actually pictured within the domestic scene. More often we, the viewer, are left to project ourselves into this private world. When women are depicted they are usually alone having a quiet cup of coffee, isolated, or perhaps looking out a window. Always a private world is alluded to—sometimes hope, escape, transformation, or connection.

Perhaps it is women's use of the grid that most implies connections and ties. Women have used the grid as a means of organizing and controlling their art much in the same way that lists organize their lives. When combined with marking, the grid is transformed from its reference to weaving to design, decoration, and patterning.

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Design by Bettina Papoulas and Eileen Strauss  
of the Fashion Institute of Technology's, THE AGENCY  
Printed by Gould's Pumps

Cover Photograph by Max Hilaire

Even the materials that women use to make their art often reflect activities that normally take place in the home. In addition to traditional art materials such as paint, pencil, chalk, and clay, women are using such materials as cloth, thread, sequins, beads, ribbons, ric-rac and yarn which refer to women's traditional needle arts. Or, they are utilizing lint, shopping lists, newspaper and magazine clippings, coupons, kitchen shelving paper, patterns, tiles, linoleum, wall paper, aprons, napkins, food itself, and all sorts of left overs, odds and ends, and hand-me downs. Indeed it seems that their ability to make use of everything extends to their art.

Both materials and techniques have been used with a consciousness that contributes to the meaning of the works. For instance the tools used to do cooking and housework are often used to apply paint or manipulate other materials used in the art. Activities that are associated with women's work are utilized in a creative way. Gardening, ironing, cleaning, nesting, sewing, weaving, knitting, quilting, crocheting, interior decorating, cooking, keeping family histories, polishing, china painting, and cake decorating, used as techniques, are all ways of giving

reference to domestic roles. Creative possibilities are expanded. Repetitive acts reflect the tediousness or take on a new dignity.

All three of these—images, materials and processes—are combined in various ways by each woman. While there is a common denominator of shared experience as women in this society, the work is as varied as each individual woman and her experiences and feelings. While the work takes on different forms, there is a literal as well as metaphorical and political level.

All the work in this exhibition has been chosen from slides by artists who are on file at the Visual Arts Referral Service at CAPS. As such they represent a sampling of an even larger body of work existing by women dealing with these issues. Finally we are seeing art that reflects the reality of our lives as women. Domestic imagery and references are one way that this reality is given form.

Harmony Hammond

Two valuable precedents to this exhibition are:

"Household Images In Art",  
Lucy Lippard,  
Ms. Magazine, March 1973

"Out of the House"  
catalogue introduction  
for exhibition of the same name  
January 1978, Whitney Museum of American Art  
Downtown Branch.

## National Women's Hall of Fame

The plans for what is now the National Women's Hall of Fame began in 1968 when a group of women from the Seneca Falls area met at a founders tea to discuss establishing an organization designed to honor American women. Up until that time, no such institution existed. The Hall became and remains the only organization whose purpose is to honor in perpetuity those women, citizens of the United States of America, whose contributions to the arts, athletics, business, education, government, humanities, philanthropy and science, have been of the greatest value for the development of their country.

At a time when the endeavor to recognize the rights of American women continues to influence the lives and personal histories of so many individuals, the National Women's Hall of Fame is a stable and enduring resource. Ever since its founding twelve years ago, the Hall has been a consistent and insightful interpreter of the historical significance of its Honorees, Seneca Falls, and the early Women's Rights Movement.

In its role as the only national organization to honor American women of achievement, the Hall provides vital information about the lives and accomplishments of its 27 Honorees, women ranging from Emily Dickinson to Mary Cassatt; from Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Margaret Mead. Through the Hall's permanent display as well as its traveling exhibit, these women's triumphs become public history. More important, their lives and the retelling of their histories provide young women with the information and models they'll need to map out non-traditional careers. All young women have the potential to succeed, but not all of them are aware of the extensive range of women's achievements.

During this time of social change, the Hall is dedicated to providing all of us with access to information concerning the attainments of the individual honorees as well as past and current issues in the history of American women. In addition to maintaining permanent biographical displays about the Honorees, the Hall devotes a gallery area to special exhibits, which change every few months, and focus on the interpretation of some aspect of women's lives.

The Hall is especially pleased to have the opportunity to display "Home Work" as its 1981 summer exhibit. This exhibit, created especially for the Hall by artist/curator Harmony Hammond, was organized around the theme of the domestic environment. The domestic issues and imagery as reflected in the work of these individual women artists are vital and current. Yet, some of the issues surrounding women's experience in the home are not new to the seventies and eighties or even to the twentieth century.

In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton was spurred to organize the First Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls largely because of her own domestic situation and that of other women. In her words, "I now fully understood the practical difficulties most women had to contend with in the isolated household.... The general discontent I felt with woman's portion as wife, mother, housekeeper, physician, and spiritual guide, the chaotic conditions into which everything fell without her constant supervision, and the wearied, anxious look of the majority of women impressed me with a strong feeling that some active measures should be taken to remedy the wrongs of society in general, and of women in particular."

If Elizabeth Cady Stanton were here with us today, she would undoubtedly be pleased with this creative outpouring of domestic imagery that has been brought together here in this special exhibit by Harmony Hammond and Creative Artists Public Service Program (CAPS). On behalf of the Officers and the Board of Directors of the National Women's Hall of Fame, I want to thank Ms. Hammond, Isabelle Fernandez, Executive Director, CAPS, Ellen Weider, Director, Visual Arts Referral Service, & Lisa Peters, VARS assistant, for creating and organizing this exhibit, and all the artists who have shared their work with us. We also want to thank Fashion Institute of Technology for designing the exhibit catalog and poster, and Goulds Pumps, Inc., Seneca Falls, New York, for printing the poster and catalog.

Carol N. Stallone  
Executive Director

## The Origins of this Exhibition...

The Creative Artists Public Service Program, CAPS, is a non-profit organization funded by the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. CAPS awards fellowships in painting, sculpture, graphics, photography, multi-media, choreography, video, film, fiction, poetry, playwriting and music composition to professional artists who are residents of New York State. The Visual Arts Referral Service (VARS), a part of the CAPS program, is a slide and information registry. VARS contains slides and biographical material on visual artists who have been fellowship recipients, and others who have been recommended for inclusion by the panelists during the application review procedure. VARS can be used by any organization or individual wishing to purchase, exhibit, or commission an artist's work. VARS also coordinates an exhibition program and mounts

shows in exhibition spaces throughout New York State. Artists from the file are chosen by guest curators to participate in different theme exhibitions.

The staff of the Visual Arts Referral Service and the CAPS Program are happy to have this opportunity to collaborate with the Women's Hall of Fame. We welcome your comments about this exhibition, and your suggestions for those to come.

Ellen Weider

Director  
Visual Arts Referral Service

Syracuse University Art Galleries

## ARTISTS

IDA APPLEBROOG

LINDA BASTIAN

CYNTHIA CARLSON

DONNA DENNIS

SARAH DRANEY

LENORE GOLDBERG

RUTH GRAY

HARMONY HAMMOND

JANE KAUFMAN

JOYCE KOZLOFF

PAT LASCH

MARION LERNER LEVINE

KAREN LIGHTNER

DIANE MARSH

KATHLEEN MIGLIORE NEWTON

PATSY NORVELL

ELAINE REICHEK

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

LAURA SCHECTER

DEE SHAPIRO

LORETTA MENCHEL SHAPIRO

HARRIET SHORR

KATHERINE SOKOLNIKOFF

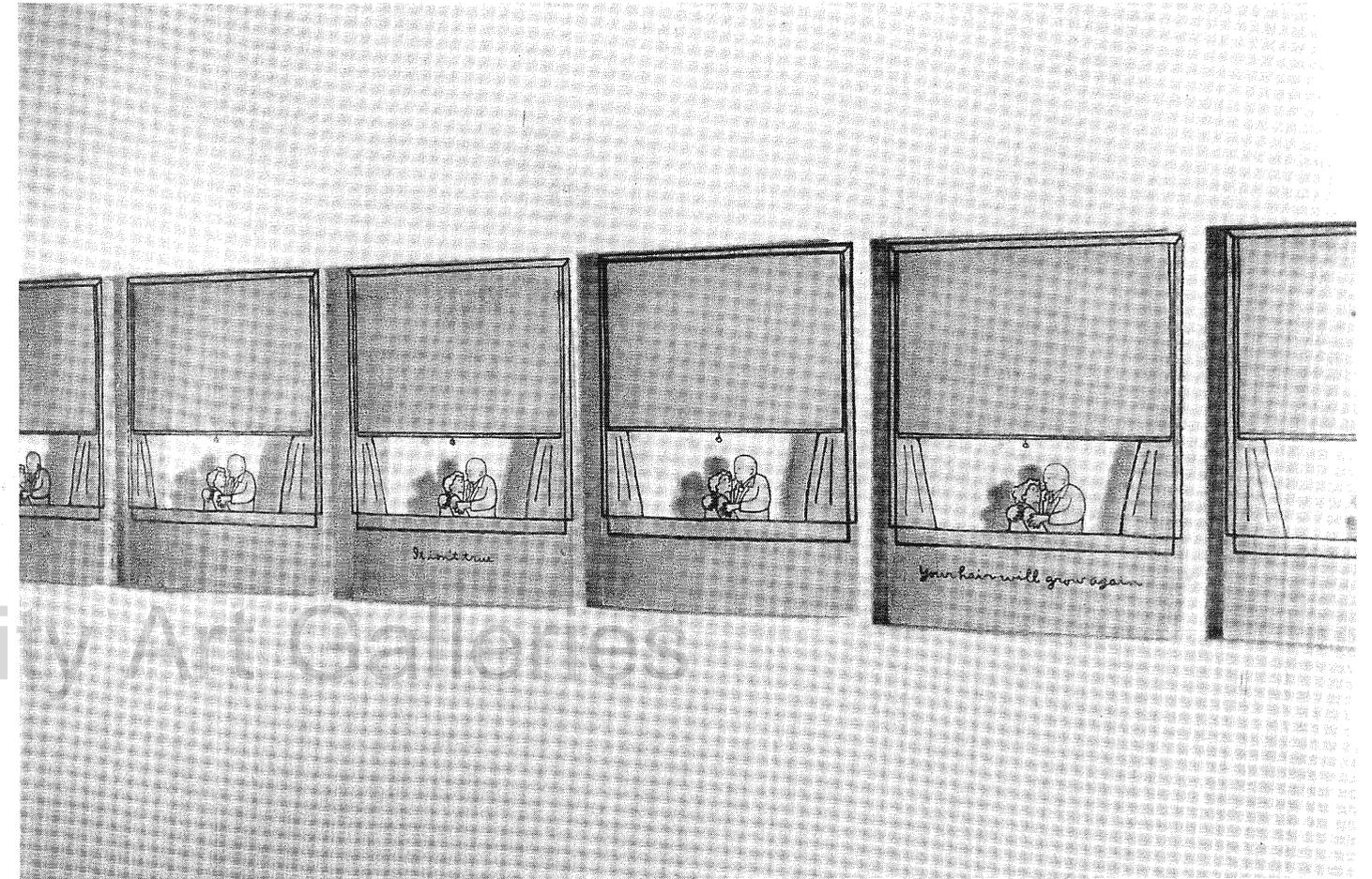
JOYCE STILLMAN-MYERS

PAULA TAVINS

MIMI WEISBORD

MELANIE WYGONIK

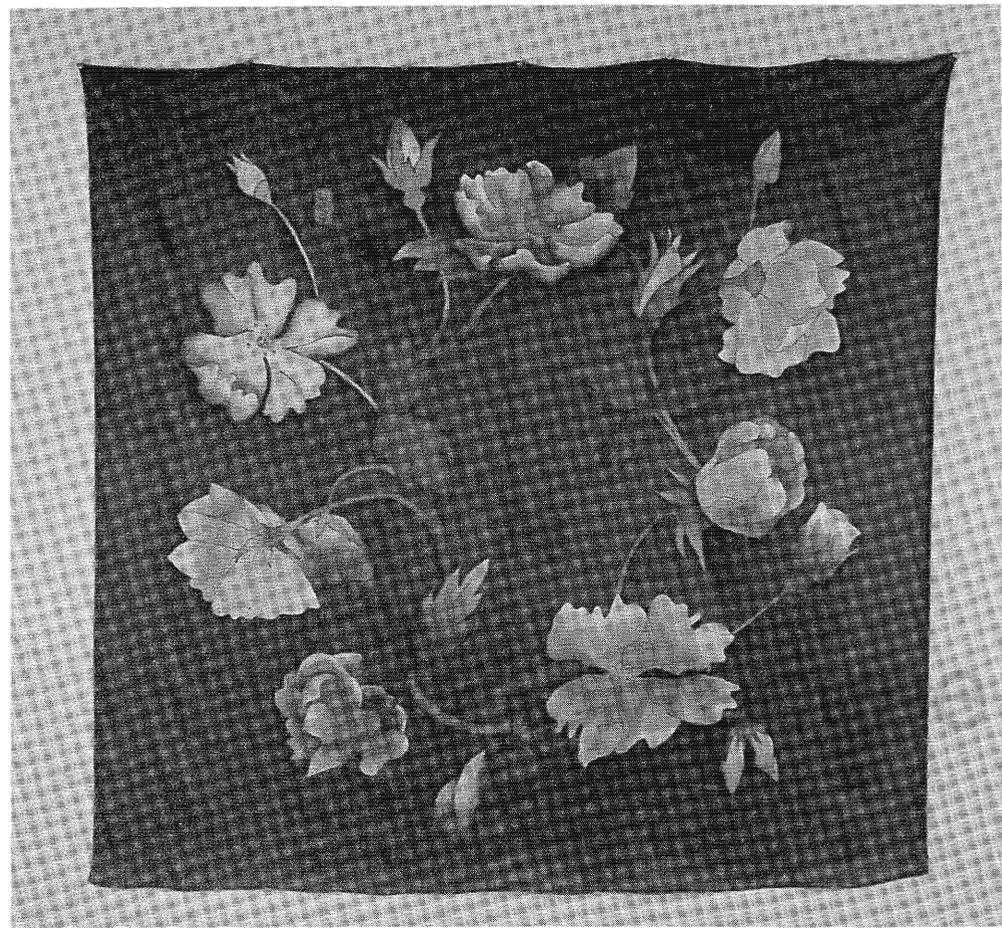
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IDA APPLEBROOG

"It Isn't True"

rhoplex and ink on vellum  
Courtesy of Ronald Feldman/Downtown  
1979  
60" x 12" x 1"



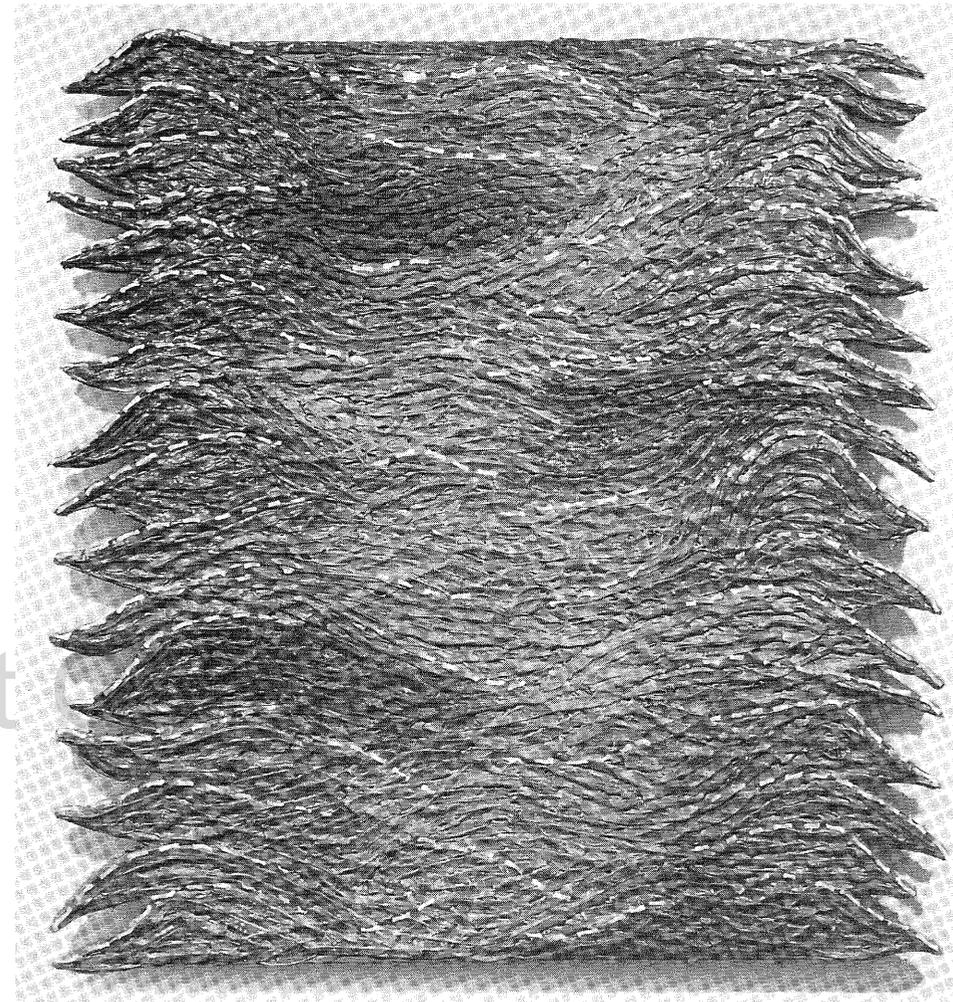
Brad White

LINDA BASTIAN

"Garland"

hand painted silk  
1981  
75" x 60"

University Art

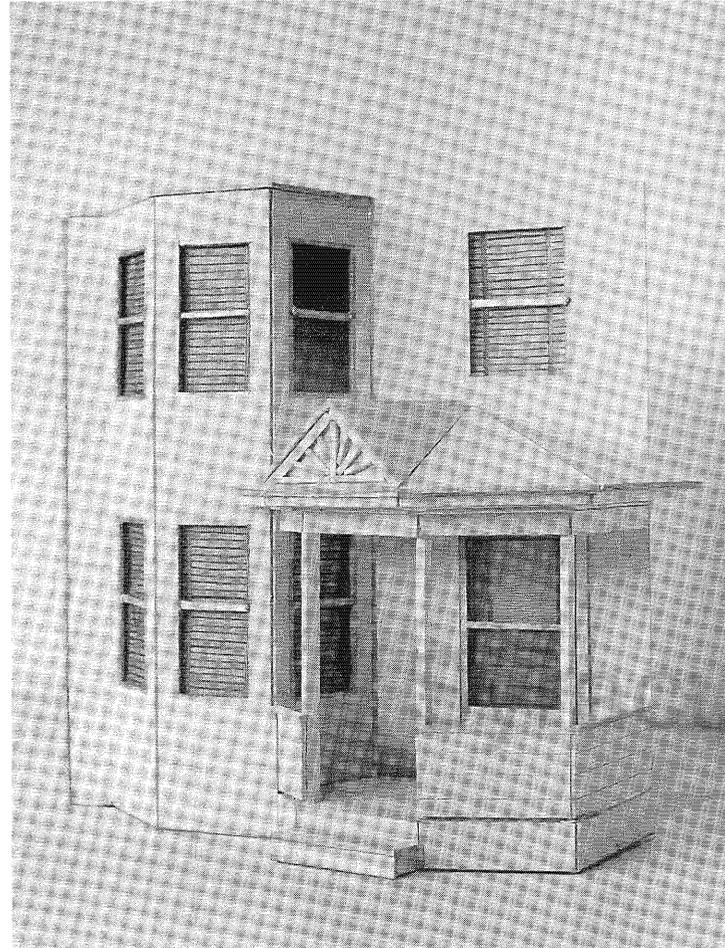


Bruce C. Jones

CYNTHIA CARLSON

"Rusty Trifle"

acrylic and canvas on wood  
1975  
47½" x 45"

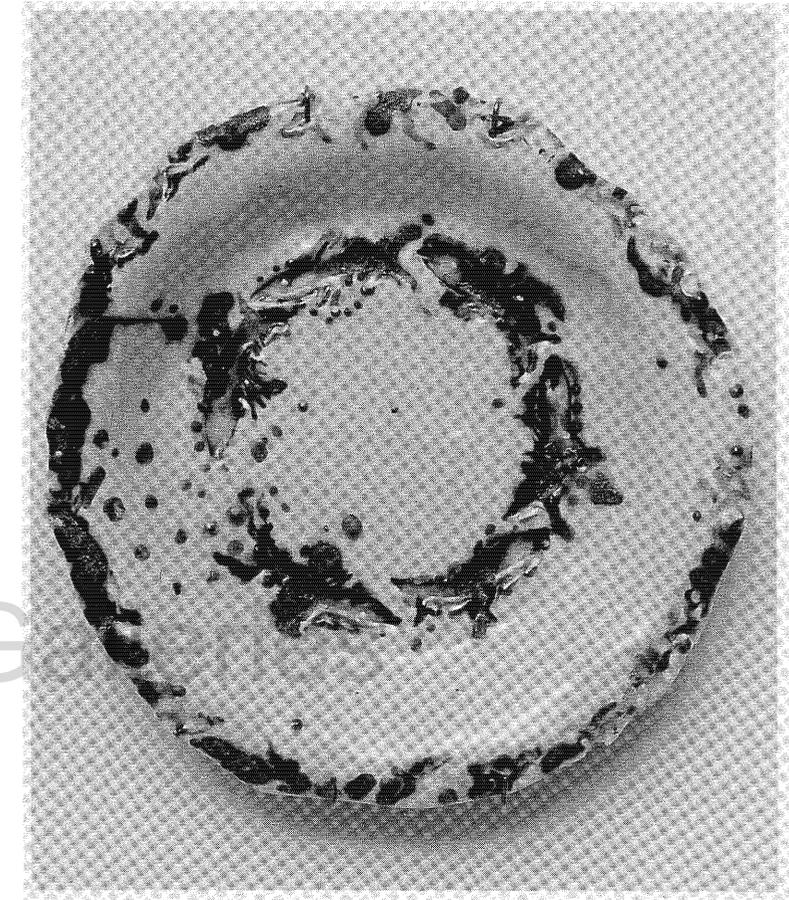


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**DONNA DENNIS**

maquette for "Two Stories with Porch"

1977  
8¾" x 8¾" x 6½"

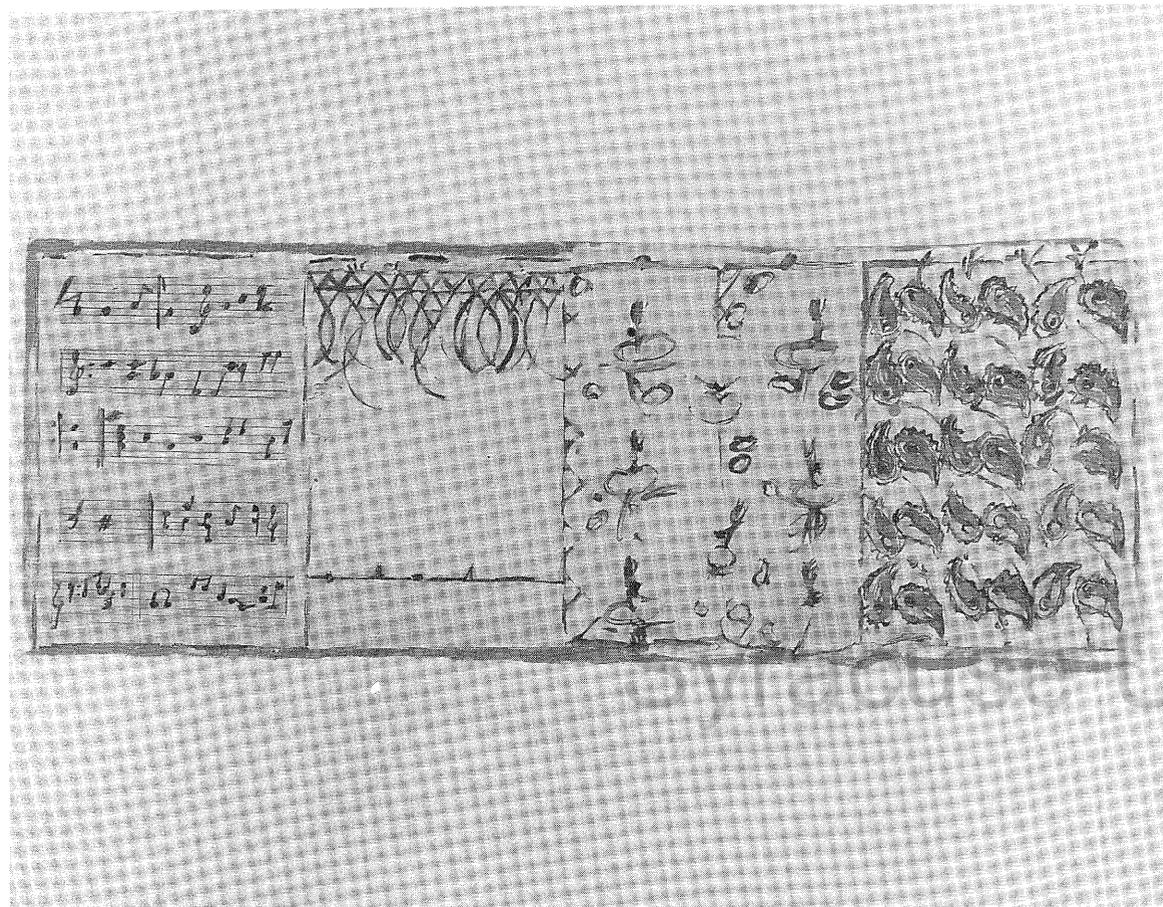


D. James Dec

**SARAH DRANEY**

"Fish Dish"

porcelain  
1980  
8" diameter



LENORE GOLDBERG

Untitled

wax, thread, oil paint on paper  
1980  
1 x 3'



RUTH GRAY

"Beach Cottage"

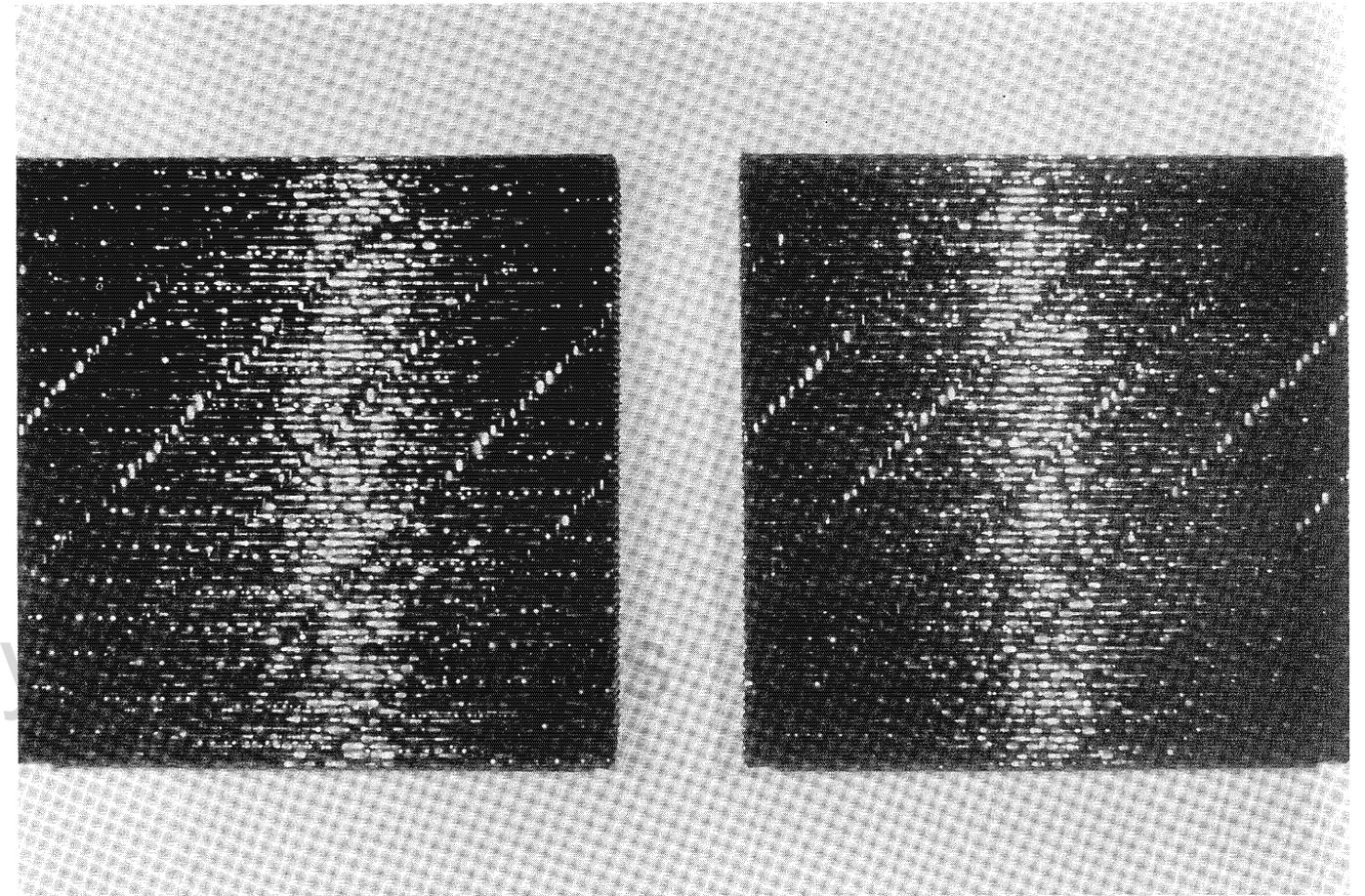
oil on canvas  
1976-77  
48" x 72"



HARMONY HAMMOND

"Bag VII"

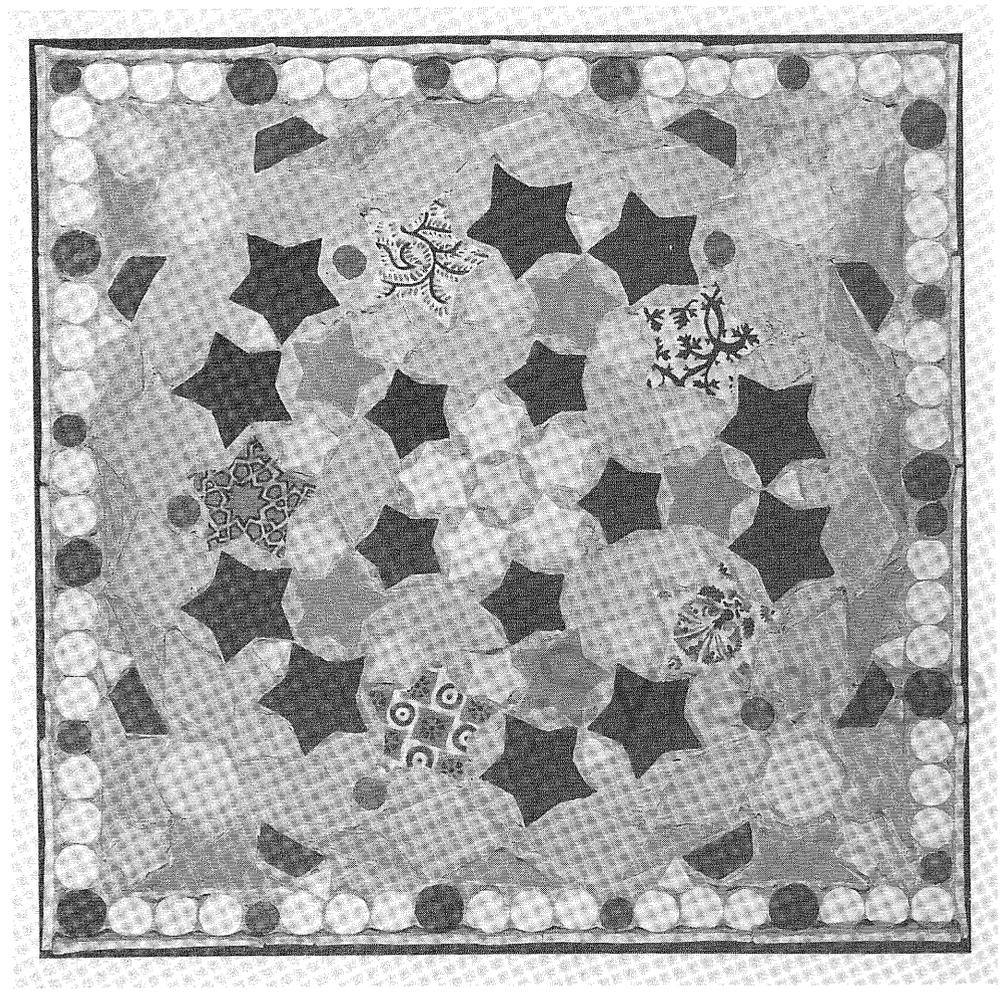
acrylic and cloth  
Courtesy of Lerner-Heller Gallery  
1971  
54" x 22"



JANE KAUFMAN

"Untitled" (pair)

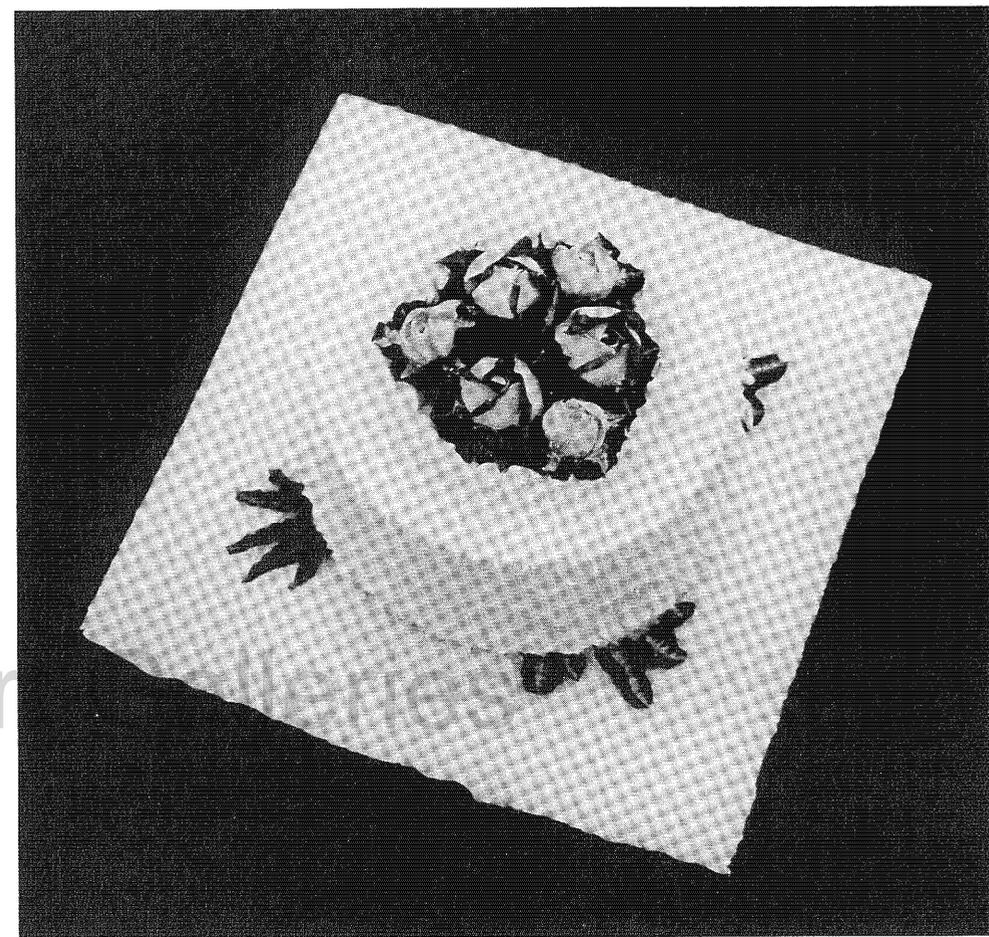
bugle-beads on velvet  
1978  
17½" x 17½" x 4" (each)



JOYCE KOZLOFF

Untitled

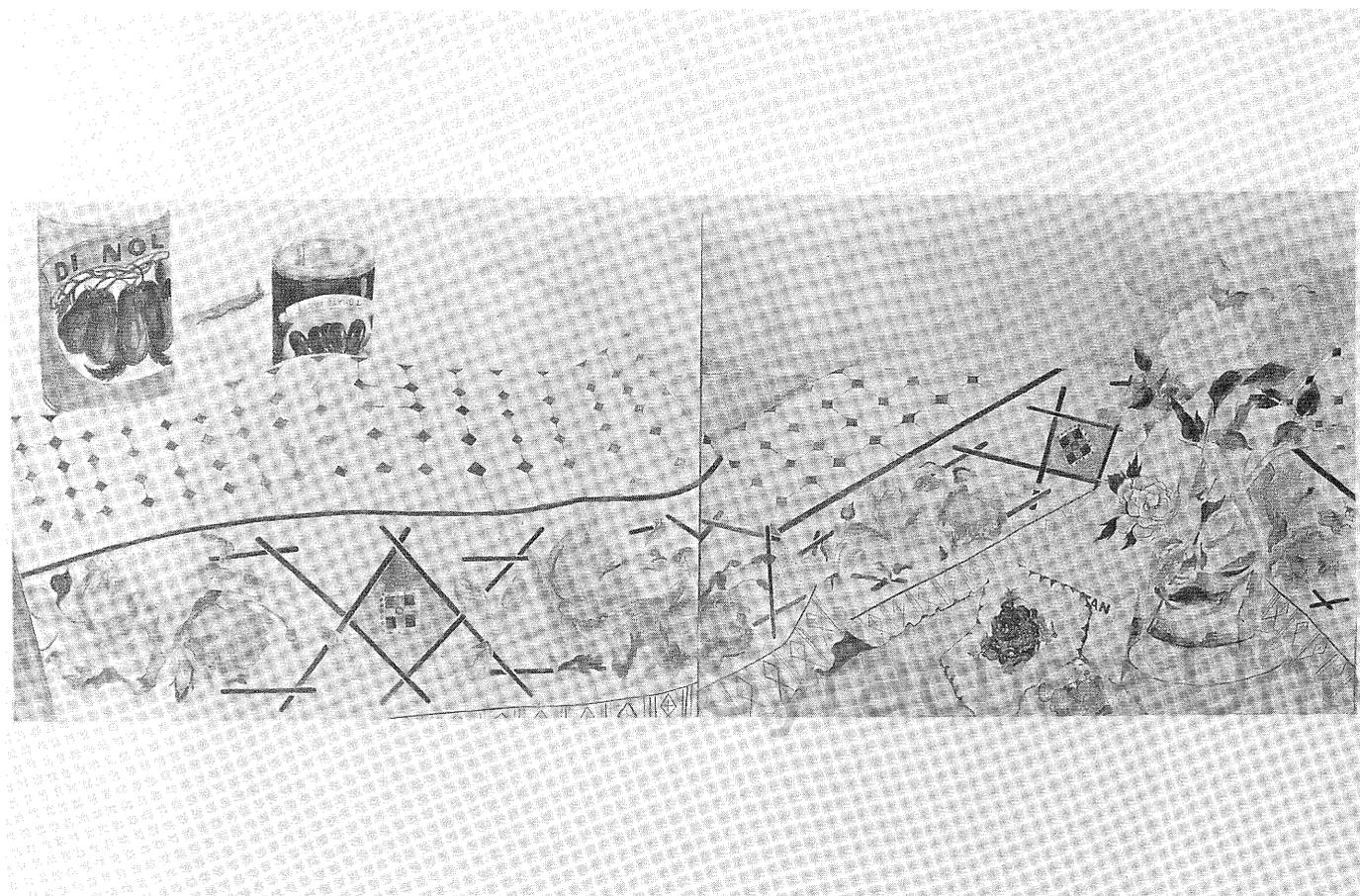
ceramic tile, plywood, grout  
Courtesy of Barbara Gladstone Gallery  
1980  
24" x 24"



PAT LASCH

"White cake Sculpture"

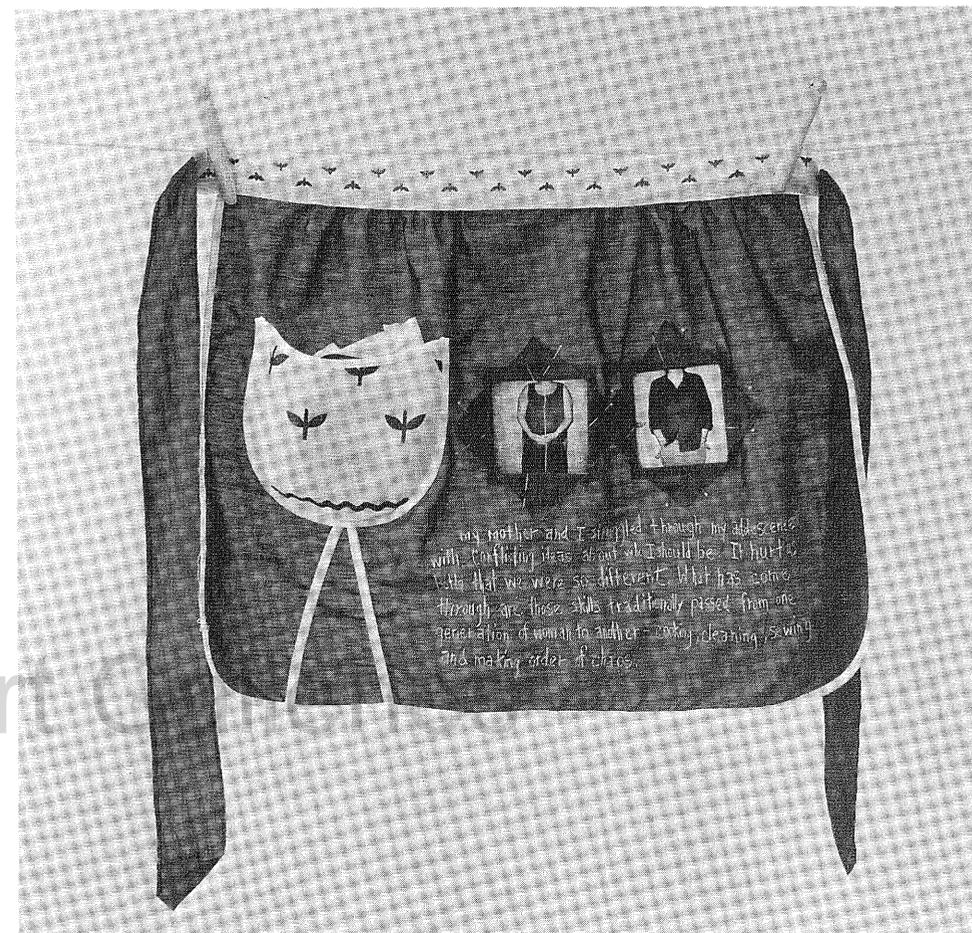
wood with paint and paper  
1980  
6" x 6" x 6"



MARION LERNER LEVINE

"The Flowered Border" (diptych)

watercolor  
1977  
18" x 48"



KAREN LIGHTNER

"Apron Piece"

apron, SX-70, embroidered text  
1980  
17" x 23"

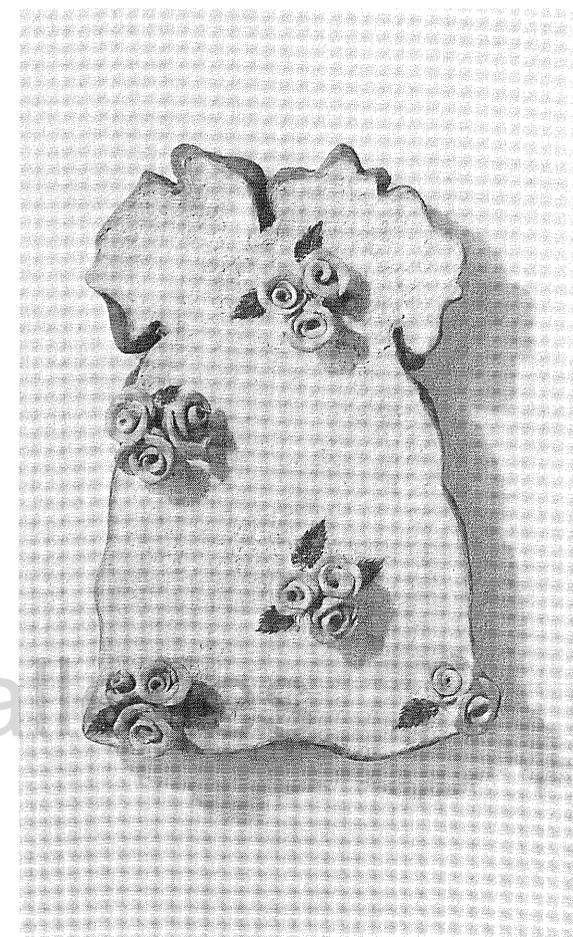


DIANE MARSH

"Red/Green"

oil on canvas  
1979  
48" x 60"

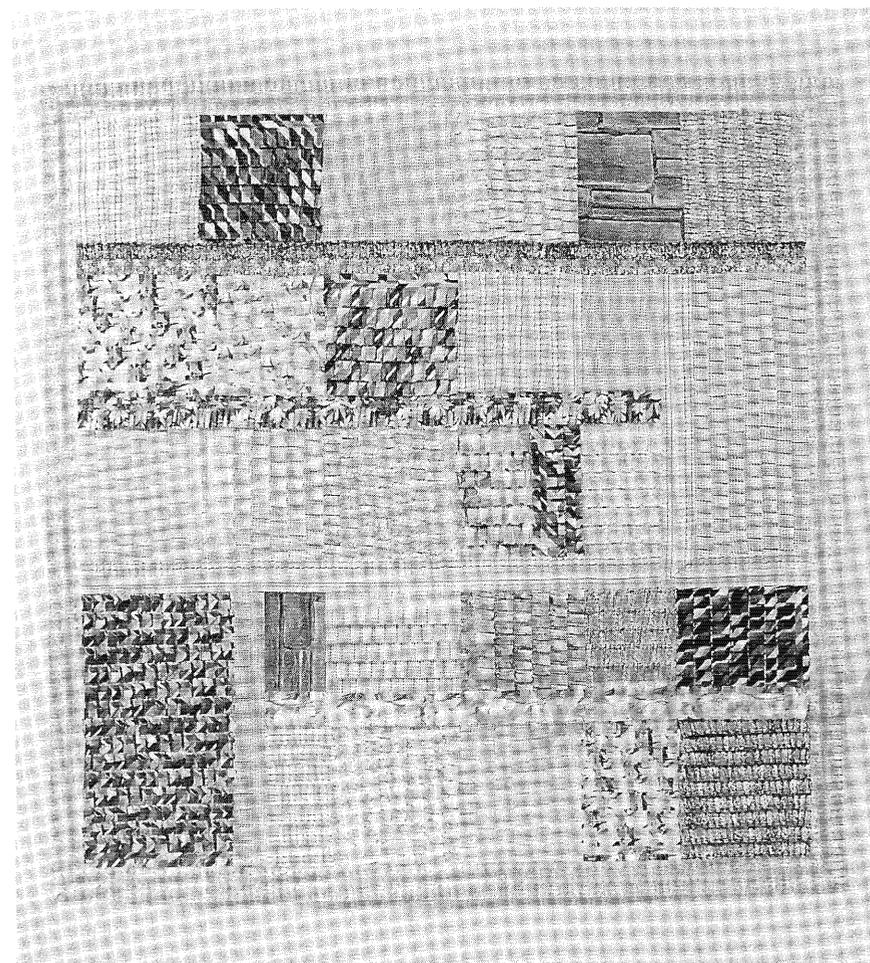
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KATHLEEN MIGLIORE NEWTON

"Bread and Roses: A Portrait of  
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn"

ceramic painted with acrylic  
Courtesy of Carol Ruane  
1978  
5" x 7"



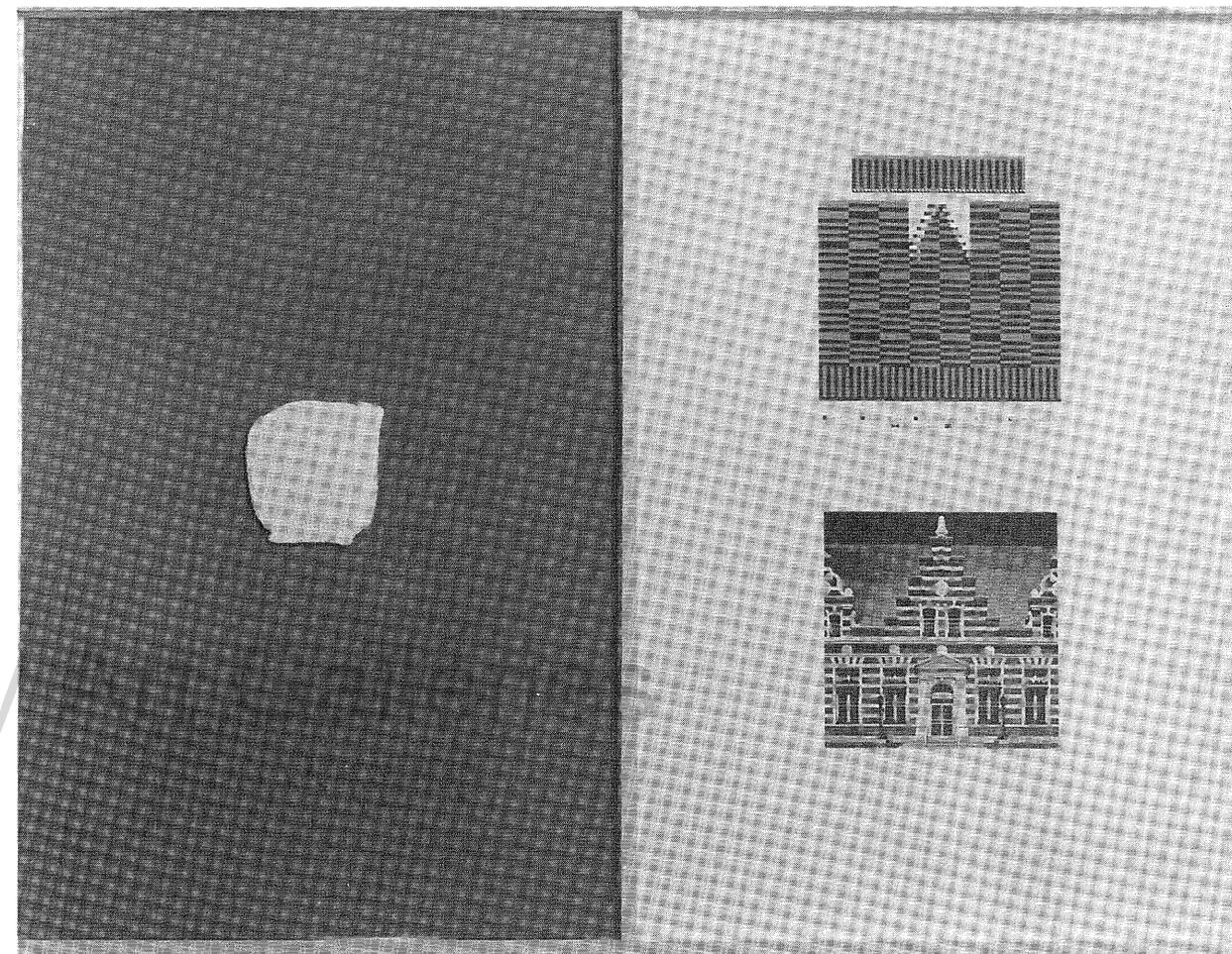
PATSY NORVELL

"Vinyl Shelving Quilt"

vinyl shelving ruffle, paper, glue

1972

40½" x 41"



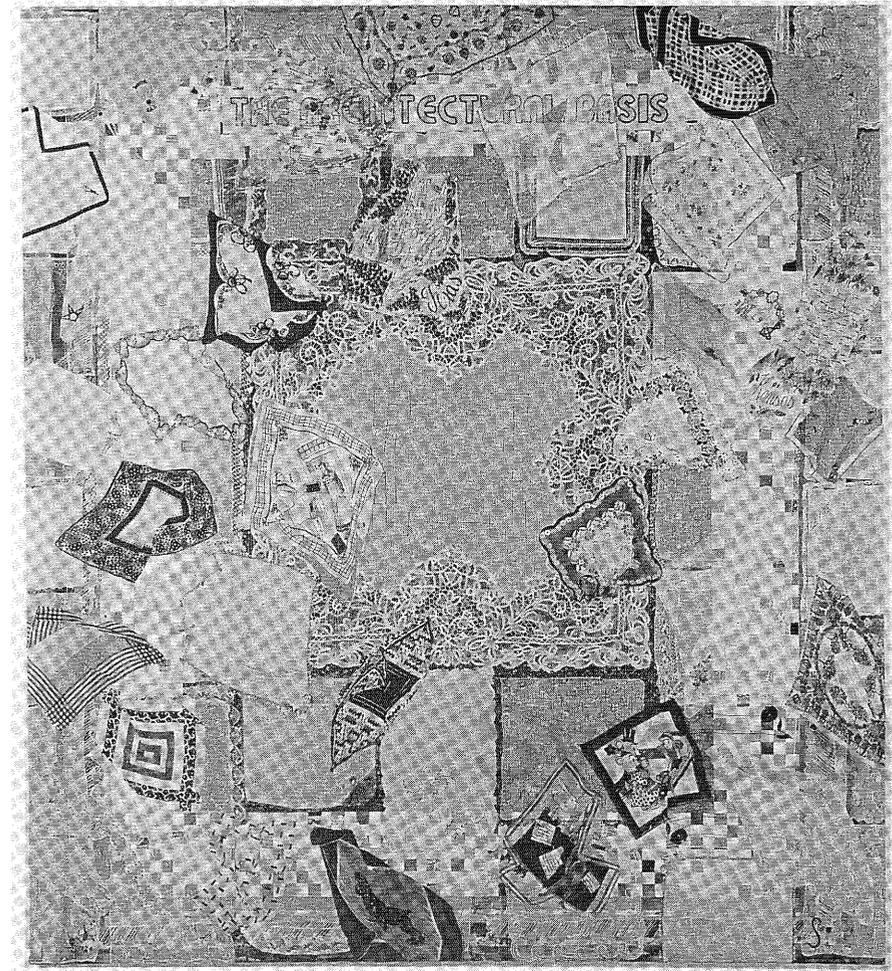
ELAINE REICHEK

"White Bonnet"

yarn, paper, photo and book

1979

42" x 55"



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MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

"The Architectural Basis"

fabric and acrylic  
1976  
80" x 72"

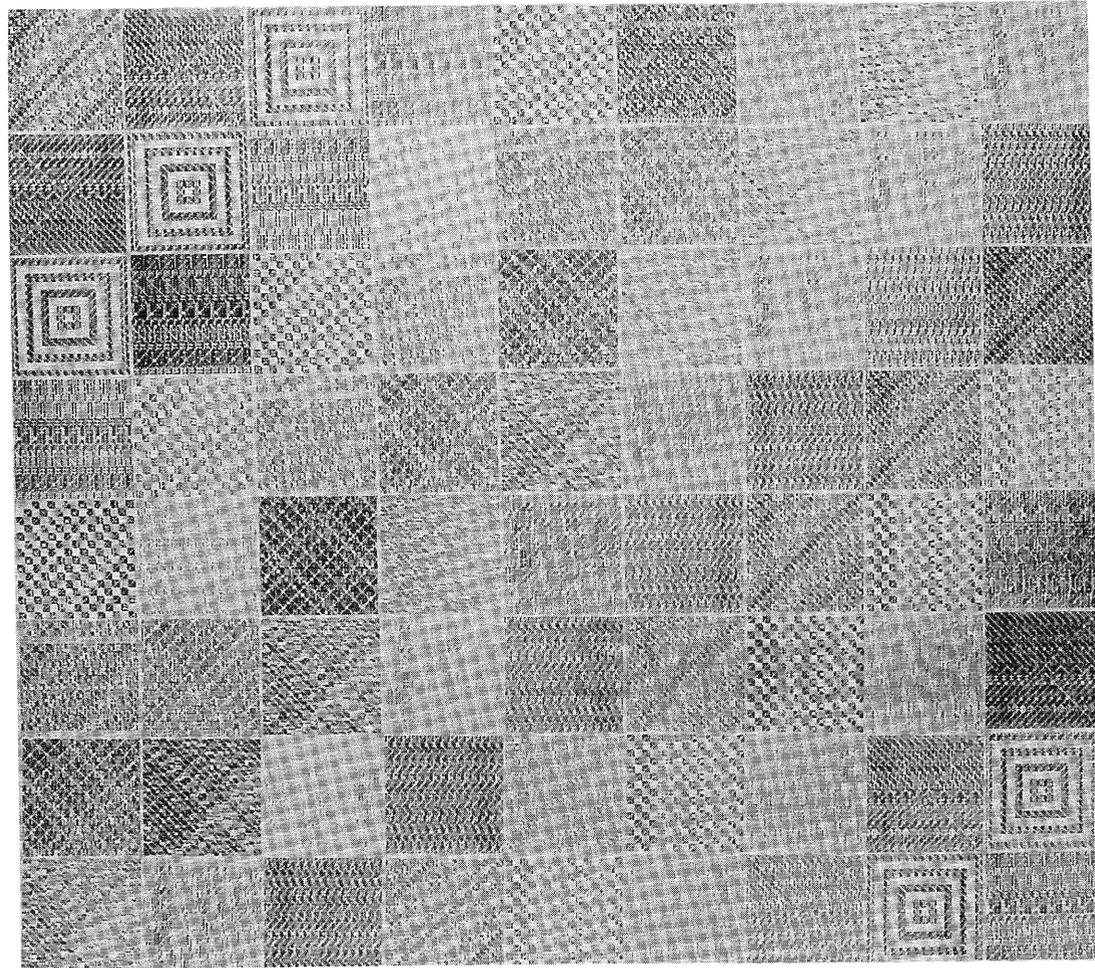


eva-inkert

LAURA SCHECHTER

"Still Life by the Night Window"

pencil on paper  
Courtesy of Forum Gallery, NYC  
1976  
6 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ "



DEE SHAPIRO

"Paper Quilt"

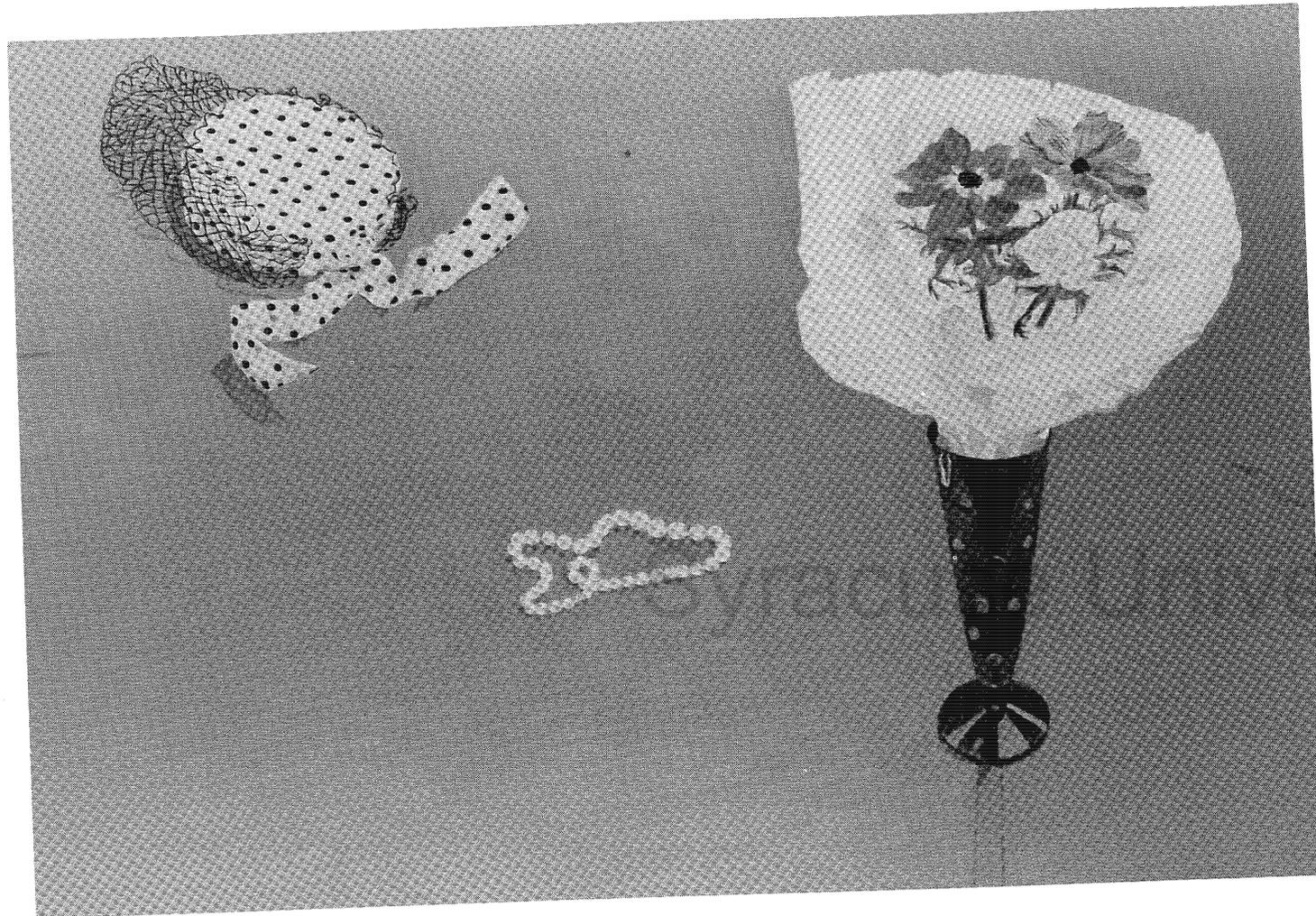
xerox on paper  
1978  
8 x 8'



LORETTA MENCHEL SHAPIRO

"Brandied Fruits"

oil on canvas  
1976  
3 x 3'



HARRIET SHORR

"Primary Polka"

oil on canvas  
1980  
60" x 90"



KATHERINE SOKOLNIKOFF

"Rose House"

low fire white clay  
1979  
13" x 11" x 14"



**JOYCE STILLMAN-MYERS**

"Pinwheels"

oil on canvas

Courtesy of Louis K. Meisel Gallery, NYC

1976

50" x 75"



**PAULA TAVINS**

"Great Eagle"

magna on canvas

1972

52" x 49"



D. James Dee

**MIMI WEISBORD**

"Flower Wallpaper Fragment"

gouache on paper  
 Courtesy of Getler/Pall Gallery  
 1979  
 38" x 50"



**MELANIE WYGONIK**

"Just Desserts"

Ballpoint pen and watercolor on paper  
 1980  
 22" x 30"