

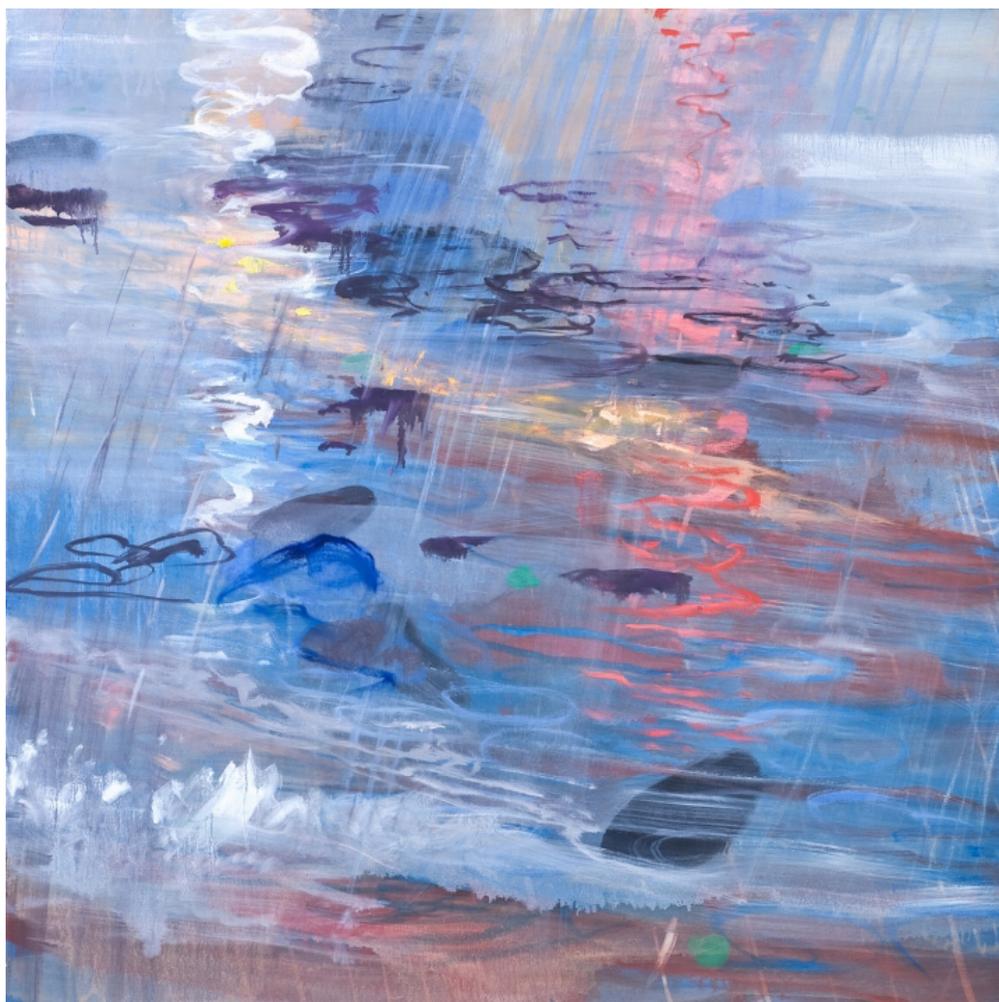
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## HYPERALLERGIC

### The Last Testament of Michael Mazur

At the end of his life, Mazur wanted to evoke his passage into chaos, to compose his farewell.  
by JOHN YAU November 10, 2018



Recently, I showed the film *Fifi Howls from Happiness* (2013) by Mitra Farahani to my undergraduate class. The film is about the last days of Bahman Mohassess (1931 – 2010), an Iranian artist living in Rome in a hotel room that he seldom leaves. At one point, he tells an anecdote about the day Pablo Picasso died, followed by one about Salvador Dali lying on his deathbed, and sitting up and cursing a priest who has come to visit him. We see him laughing heartily after recounting each story. How to stage your departure as you shuck off your mortal

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coil was a subject that fascinated Mohassess, who knew his own end was fast approaching. Fahrani believes Mohassess wanted the film to be made, knowing it would document his death, and that it would be his final performance-cum-work-of-art.

A few days later, I went to see the exhibition *Michael: Late Work, Rain and Flowers* at Ryan Lee (October 25–December 22, 2018). The exhibition included five paintings, three of which were done the year he died, and in the small back gallery, 13 pen-and-ink drawings selected from the more than 100 Mazur did in the summer of 2009, when he had lost much of his mobility. Drawn on modest-sized sheets of paper, depicting cut flowers as well as plants and ferns growing in the artist's backyard, they are dated between June 15 and August 17, 2009, the day before he died. Having looked at the entire set of drawings some years ago, I hope that someday they will be published together as a book, as they are a moving chronicle of a man who, facing the end of his life, spent each day saying hello and good-bye.

One drawing, titled “Hospital Bouquet #2, 7/03/09” (2009), is focused on a fulsome rose surrounded by leaves and buds; located just below the center of the sheet, it is the largest element in the picture. Another, smaller rose is seen above and behind it to the left. Although we know the distance between them is short, an inch or two at most, it feels impassable; each rose is held in place by the leaves and stems Mazur draws around them, as well as by the short abstract marks, hints of things, he makes between the two flowers.

Did he envision himself and his wife Gail, a poet, in this drawing, as he was intently looking at the bouquet sitting on the hospital table beside him? There is no symbolism, only his observation of the forms and edges. The lines describing the rose are firmer than those evoking the contours of the leaves on the bouquet's outer edges. Mazur could have drawn the entire bouquet and the container they were placed in, but he did not.

This is the work of a consummate draftsman whose painterly intelligence was always probing, no matter what the circumstances were. In his last days, Mazur — who had been working from observation for many years — began drawing flowers, no doubt remembering that in the last six months of his life, Edouard Manet devoted himself to painting the bouquets of flowers that his friends brought to his Paris apartment.

I am certain that he also thought of Pierre-Joseph Redouté, the painter and botanist, whose watercolors earned him the appellation, the “Raphael of flowers.” Mazur, who lived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and taught at Harvard, certainly knew of the Glass Flowers: The Ware Collection of Blaschka Glass Models of Plants housed in the Harvard Museum of Natural History, a destination point for many.

Like Manet — but working with pen and ink to draw a firm but delicate contour line — Mazur pared away everything he thought was unnecessary. What he wanted to get at, and did — was the ephemeral embodiment of beauty, fragility, and delicacy one encounters in a flower. However, unlike Manet, whose late flower paintings are nuanced profusions of color, Mazur eschewed color in favor of line, marks that he could not change or alter. That's what it is breathtaking about these drawings. Each one is the result of Mazur's belief that it was all or nothing, and that he had to be attuned to the plant.

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Mazur's response was a line that was tender, sinuous, fluid, erotic, and incomplete. He could — when he felt it necessary — draw a cluster of contours, conveying the multiplicity of a flower that has just passed its moment of fullness and is entering its decline. And, in the same drawing, "Untitled 8. 17. 09" (done the day before he died), he drew the stems whose petals had fallen. Sometimes a petal's contour stops in midair, as if there was no need to make a complete, enclosing line. Stoicism and love informs each line he made.

Walking back out into the main room, where the five paintings hung, proved almost too much for me. I had met Michael and Gail shortly after I graduated from college in 1972. Years later, I met them again in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and spent time in Mazur's studio there. He was prolific artist, energetic in his own work and generous to other artists and poets. After seeing the exhibition, *Degas Monotypes*, at the Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University (April 25, 1968–June 14, 1968), he became instrumental in the revival of the painterly monotype. At the beginning of this century, *Michael Mazur: A Print Retrospective* toured the US, with stops at the Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, Jane Voorhees Zimmerli Museum at Rutgers University, and the Minneapolis Institute of Art.

Although Mazur was best known for his prints, the paintings that he did in the last years of his life ought to stir us to reconsider whatever preemptory conclusion the art establishment might have reached. In these paintings and in the "Rain" series that I had written about in *The Brooklyn Rail* (April 2010), the subject is water falling into water, temporary forms becoming formless. The sight of rain falling into water was one that Mazur knew well, as his house in Provincetown faced the bay, just a few steps down from his deck.

In contrast to the closely observed pen-and-ink drawings of flowers and plants, or of the sunflowers in his back yard, the paintings come from memory and imagination as well as from his years of making art. It seems that at the end of his life, he wanted to evoke his passage into chaos, to compose his farewell as well as greet what was coming toward him. There are ellipses, snaking vertical lines, swaths of scumbling, veils, and smudges, solidly painted shapes, and thin, watery drips. They suggest close-up views of Claude Monet's ponds, but in the middle of a torrential rainstorm; everything is dissolving before your eyes.

And yet, instead of letting go, or turning away, Mazur chronicled his disappearance from the world while staying true to his belief that painting and art would sustain him to the end. These paintings have nothing to do with being fashionable and everything to do with life and death. What comes through is Mazur's openness to making a painting that pushed his supple touch closer to annihilation.

*Michael: Late Work, Rain and Flowers continues at at Ryan Lee Gallery (515 West 26th Street, Chelsea, Manhattan) through December 22, 2018.*

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## THE COMMON

### *Series of Thought*

By Betsey Garand

November 3, 2017



Michael Mazur, Pond Edge II, 1997-1998. Color etching and aquatint (32 1/8" x 39 1/2"). Collection of Mead Art Museum; gift of George Shinn (Class of 1945).

Three weeks ago, I had an intimate and frenzied encounter with a wild bobcat as it was chasing my chickens. We locked eyes for a moment, and I quickly glanced down at its large, impressive paws. Tawny, speckled fur contrasted starkly with razor-sharp black claws. It ran off to the edge of the woods, first stopping to glance back at me before disappearing into the thicket. I began to think of a series of intaglio prints that would capture the essence of this feral fury.

I always work in series. It's how I develop and investigate ideas: a journey with the departure recognized but the destination unknown. My work begins with observations and research of petroglyphs, natural forms, flora, and fauna. I travel through the woods, deserts, and mountains to view them, including California's Palomar Mountain and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and, more locally, the water's edge at Embden and Machias in Maine. Recently, I've been looking at the birchbark pieces of the Passamaquoddy artist Tomah Joseph and the serigraph prints of Maud Morgan and Ray Parker. Often, I'll have a seed of thought—working with notions of resonance, balance, and continuum—that grows and develops as I move from piece to piece.

I am an intuitive mark-maker. In printmaking, I prefer not to do preliminary studies but instead to work directly on plates and blocks to keep the work fresh and alive. It's only when I see certain shapes, colors, and lines together that I can start visually problem-solving. Biomorph

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forms merge with calligraphic lines; some shapes appear animal-like, while others reference utilitarian tools. In the *Hark*, *Cadence*, and *Continuum* series, space is both flat and dimensional; elements are both imagined and seen, still and moving. The prints are a combination of various techniques, including monotype, cognate, lift-ground aquatint, and pochôir. The colors are layered and often transparent, muted but with accents of vibrancy. I'm frequently asked, "How do you know when a work is finished?" If nothing can be added or taken away and the work has a life that seems unique, I keep it. I push images to the edge of the creative cliff; they have the most power when they hover close to the edge. A quote by T. S. Eliot is on my studio wall: "*Genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood.*"

I was introduced to Michael Mazur's work as an undergraduate and was immediately taken by his draftsmanship. Fluid, free, and masterful lines navigate the contours of nude figures and the emotive content of his prints. Mazur's mentors Baskin, Gabo, and Peterdi resonate in his work, as does the German artist Kathë Kollwitz. At times his mark-making is aggressive and agitated, as in the intaglio prints of the *Closed Ward* series of the early 1960s. This series of prints and drawings was initially inspired by a "deeply unsettling" incident that took place while Mazur was an Amherst College student and a member of a singing group entertaining residents at the Veterans' Administration Hospital in Northampton, Massachusetts. Mazur carried the memory of this traumatic experience for years. He then produced an extremely powerful body of work speaking to issues of psychological angst and physical and emotional confinement. This series is as impactful as Goya's *Disasters of War*.

In the mid-1980s, Mazur read *The Chinese Garden*, by Maggie Keswick, and "had an epiphany" that inspired him to make a trip to China in 1987. *After a Chinese Scroll* was inspired by the 13th-to-14th-century Yuan Dynasty scroll painting by Zhao Meng-fu as well as Mazur's deep, abiding respect for traditional Chinese gardens and landscapes. This print uses four matrixes—one wood relief and three copper aquatint plates—creating an atmospheric glimpse of the landscape with an expansive spatial depth. The calligraphic linear elements have the "touch" of the brush so often used in Chinese painting. There is a fluidity of movement in the gestural mark-making that references the dynamic strokes in the *Closed Ward* series, but these images have an element of "air" and sense of "growth."

*Pond Edge II* is a portrait of Wakeby Lake, near the Mazur family home on Cape Cod. There is an inner glow to this print resultant from layering four copper intaglio plates while leaving some of the paper uninked. The shift in movement as one's eye navigates the lakescape is guided by a broad spectrum of tonalities and hues. The two intaglio prints from *L'Inferno Dante of The Transformation of Agnello de' Brunelleschi* encapsulate Mazur's inventive combination of elements. In *XXVii*, the patterned "head" resembles the shapes of lilies in *Pond Edge II*, and the eye is barely visible. In *XXViii*, the serpent is completely wrapped around the protruding eye of Agnello, a torturous and insightful interpretation. Is this perhaps a layered reference to one's "inner eye"? Michael Mazur's many bodies of work represent series of ideas explored with undeniable passion and persistent experimentation that pushes the limits of creative self. I relate to his lifelong devotion to printmaking—the scraping, carving, scribing, etching, wiping, and, finally, printing—and I am inspired by knowing that each viewing of his work will reveal something yet unseen.

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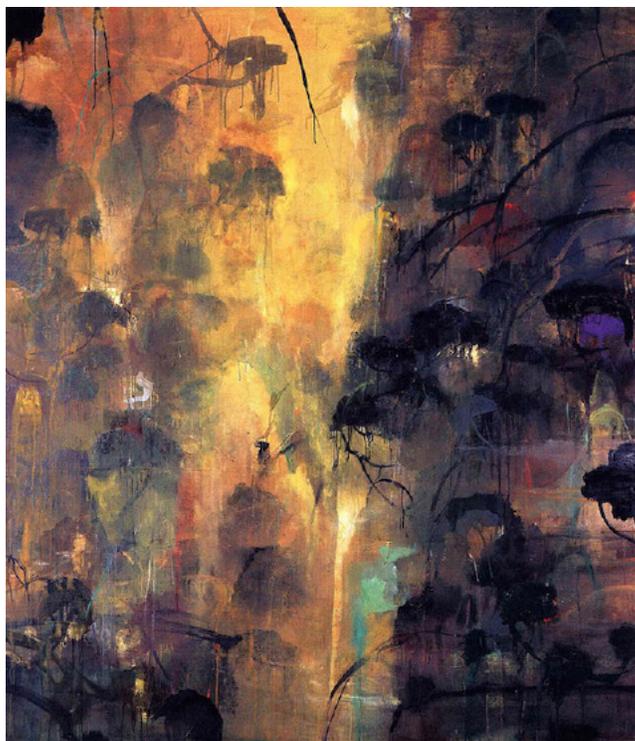
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## HYPERALLERGIC

ESSAYS • WEEKEND

### Some Follow-up Thoughts on Michael Mazur (1935–2009)

by John Yau on December 14, 2014



Michael Mazur, "After Chao Meng-fu" (1995) (all images courtesy Ryan Lee, New York)

In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Looking East: Brice Marden, Michael Mazur, Pat Steir* at the Boston University Art Gallery (January 18–February 24, 2002), John Stromberg opens his essay, "Michael Mazur: A Delicate Balance" with this sentence: "Michael Mazur's path to his recent paintings based on Chinese art has been less than linear." Couldn't this observation have also been made about Marden and Steir? Although Stromberg's use of the qualifying "less than" suggests that he believes that Mazur's trajectory is more difficult to characterize than that of the other two artists, which it is, one also detects a trace of the writer's unease.

I wonder if this unease is because Mazur was, to use another

loaded term, inconsistent. My reason for using this term is derived from something that Clement Greenberg wrote in "Manet in Philadelphia" (*Artforum*, January 1967):

[Edouard] Manet's case makes it quite clear that consistency is not an artistic virtue in itself. It did not keep him, any more than his prodigious skill with the brush did, from creating great works of art that are not tours de force and have nothing to do with virtuosity. Nevertheless, his inconsistency does seem to offer an obstacle to many people. They find it difficult to get his art into clear focus. It's their own fault, of course, rather than Manet's. One looks at one picture at a time, one looks at single works, not a whole oeuvre. Or rather, one should.

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However, it is the opening sentence of the very next paragraph where I part ways with Greenberg:

Manet's inconsistency can be attributed more to his plight as the first modernist painter than to his temperament.

In her indispensable book, *Manet Manette* (Yale University Press, 2002), Carol M. Armstrong points out that Greenberg "had to assimilate his inconsistent Manet to the terms of heroic modernism..." Certainly, one senses that he was uncomfortable with the possibility that Manet's inconsistency had more to do with his temperament than with his being the first modernist painter, which may explain why he goes to such lengths to separate him from the Impressionists. As Armstrong points out, Greenberg proposes that Manet "was not even the forebear of Impressionism ..."

I agree with Greenberg when he asserts that the viewer should look at single works, which, in the case of Michael Mazur, adds up to quite a lot. As a painter, he worked with brushes, airbrushes, spray paint and stencils, in both acrylic and oil. He painted studio paintings as well as from nature. He depicted bland suburban streets and dramatic staged scenes. At different periods in his life, he was a sculptor, a social documentarian, a narrative painter, a literary artist, a realist working from observation and an abstract artist inspired by Chinese art. He liked to work in series, but there are plenty of one-offs. He could have become slick or jokey, like Jim Dine (also born in 1935), but he never did. As I have written elsewhere, he started out as a printmaker, and became a painter.

Another reason Mazur's work is impossible to characterize is because, throughout his life, whatever medium he was using, he maintained a practice of ceaseless activity. What rescues his work is his "prodigious skill," as Greenberg said of Manet, in a wide range of mediums, from etching and drawing to monotypes and painting. I think he realized that his skill could become a trap if he developed a style, and so he kept working (and experimenting), trying out different approaches, techniques, materials, and subject matter until something grabbed his attention, challenged him.

Looking at the paintings that he did in the early '70s, close-up views of paint tubes lying on a mesh-like surface, it is also apparent that, for Mazur, abstraction and realism were neither separate nor incompatible. I think the porous border between seemingly distinct modes of perception, regarding what is abstract and what is representational, preoccupied Mazur throughout his life as much as anything could, including his humanist concerns. He wasn't looking for solutions as much as ways to frame the permeable boundaries supposedly separating one mode from the other.

According to Stromberg, "When he left school in 1961, Greenbergian formalism had what Mazur perceived to be a stranglehold on American art." More than thirty years later, in an interview conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Mazur made this statement about his time as a student of Leonard Baskin and of his own relationship to the art of early 1960s, Minimalism and Pop Art:

Leonard [Baskin] was on the younger side of that older generation. He wasn't on the

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young side of the new generation. He railed against abstraction and contemporary American modernism. With Baskin, I had a reactionary situation. Had to deal with the fact I was being trained as a figurative artist, subtly. I was happy with what I was learning, and never had great longings to become part of that newer generation. In a way, I was *retardaire* but not anxious about it. I had to find my own way through all this, and that is the subject of my life's work.



*Michael Mazur, "Lake III" (1996)*

Mazur's sense that he had to find his own way through the history of art, and that this process of looking and learning from other art was the subject of his work seems to me to be key. At the same time, as both space and content were being squeezed out of art by Frank Stella and others, Mazur recognized that he was going at art from a very different position, as he makes clear to Brown in the interview:

I was happy with the choice of dealing with content, not the form of the art. Basically, content drove my engine, but the form always interested me, in terms of its relationship to the

content. In one way or another, the influences of form-makers—I think that's the best way of talking about them, not as abstract or figurative—form-making, the facture of making paintings or drawings or prints, that has interested me and had its influence on me throughout all the work.

Within this ongoing argument about the relationship between content and form, Mazur says something to Brown that I think gives us a glimpse into his thinking:

My graphic qualities were noted, but the problems of what a painting means and how it becomes made in the growth of the process are different from drawing and printmaking problems. I've said to students who were really interested in drawing, when they paint they are going to have to give up some of the controls they've learned in graphic media. It takes a long time to learn how to let a medium evolve out of its own substance.

Although Mazur is too modest to come right out and say it, what I sense in this statement is his ambition to do it all: painting; drawing; printmaking. A contemporary master of etching, lithography and monotype (the unique painterly print, which is closest to painting, and which allows the artist to improvise), Mazur also had to learn to let go of being in control. As an artist who had mastered line and contour and all the techniques of etching, Mazur had to undo his own training, what could have become habits of thinking and doing, in order to move on.

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If we accept Mazur's sense — and I see no reason why we shouldn't believe him — that his life's work is a record of his engagement with art in all of its forms, from the Renaissance to the contemporary to the nonwestern, and the questions art raises, then we should look at his paintings as being confirmations of his passions and education, of what he was driven to take on.

Although Mazur tells Brown that he was trained as a figurative artist and that he was content driven, it is clear from the paintings he did throughout the 70s, that the relationship between form and content, as well as between figuration and abstraction, were foremost in his mind. In that sense, Mazur might have regarded Minimalism and Pop Art as solutions, ways of choosing one over the other, which would not have appealed to him.

While the Painterly Realism of Fairfield Porter appealed to Mazur, and he told Brown how much he admired Porter's art criticism, he was both a highly trained, incredibly gifted graphic artist committed both to mark-making and to making socially conscious art, as evidenced by his prints based on working in a mental hospital.

The stained, peeling walls, standing partly in sunlight and partly in shadow, of the stone enclosures housing the apes depicted in the series, *Stoneham Zoo* (1976-79), attest to the artist's commitment to mark-making. In these walls, Mazur saw a decrepit two-dimensional surface that would dissolve the distinction between the representational and the abstract, where he could register the interplay of sunlight and shadows and whatever else he saw. Instead of accepting the relationship between abstraction and representational art as hierarchical, or recognizing them as an either/or decision, could he embrace both at the same time, and successfully challenge the efficacy of this categorization? In this way, Mazur is a radical painter.

During the first half of the 70s, Mazur did a number of very good paintings, but it is in the *Stoneham Zoo* (1976 – 79) that he exceeded everything he did previously. It is his first major breakthrough in painting, in which he synthesizes divergent, seemingly incompatible strains, such as social documentation, abstraction and figuration, without privileging one over the other. Nearly forty years after Mazur started the series, the subject of captivity remains timely and, in an unsettling sense, timeless.

It is also evident that Mazur did many remarkable observational paintings during the 1980s, which culminate in a second breakthrough. At the same time, as I suggested earlier, Mazur seems to do things in reverse or go about them the wrong way. For example, throughout his career Mazur



*Michael Mazur, "Gail's Island III" (1998)*

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didn't eliminate the brushstroke — what Greenberg deridingly called “the Tenth Street touch,” and which Andy Warhol's use of silkscreen is supposed to have made obsolete. Additionally, even when he was inspired by Chinese art, notably by a trip he made to China in 1987, and became more gestural and intuitive in his application of paint, he did not accept one of the longstanding, underlying assumptions of New York-based abstraction, dating back at least to Frank Stella, which was the widely accepted belief that abstract painting could be both objective and immediately accessible.

Moreover, in contrast to Marden and Steir, you cannot trace Mazur's “Chinese” paintings back to Abstract Expressionism, particularly Jackson Pollock or, for that matter, Franz Kline. Nor, for the sake of argument, can you trace them back to the geometric side of Abstract Expressionism, Barnett Newman or Ad Reinhardt. It seems to me that in Mazur's case, the breakthroughs come about when he finds a way to undo his graphic mastery, when he, as he stated to Brown, “learn[s] how to let a medium evolve out of its own substance.” As an observational painter, Mazur was one of the very best, as his *Stoneham Zoo* (1976 – 79) make evident. Eschewing style, he refused to repeat himself or continue in this vein. That, I would say, is what makes Mazur seem inconsistent. But, as with Manet, Mazur's inconsistency is inextricable from his pictorial ambition.

For Mazur, his trip to China in 1987 prompted him to reevaluate his entire approach to subject matter, mark-making and composition. As Stromberg points out, after returning from China, “Mazur began to experiment with printing and painting on silk.” Stromberg goes on to say that:

Inspired now by a variety of Chinese painting and calligraphy, Mazur allows his brush to linger or accelerate in response to his own intuited gestures – themselves responses to the subjects. His brushwork no longer answers to the dictates of replication, but rather to the momentary imperatives of his mark-making. As well, he allowed the media – the paint and silk – to have a hand in the process. The pigments stain beyond the path of his brush as the liquid is absorbed by the dry silk. Mazur can only control this so far and these works denote a turning point in his personal philosophy on creation.

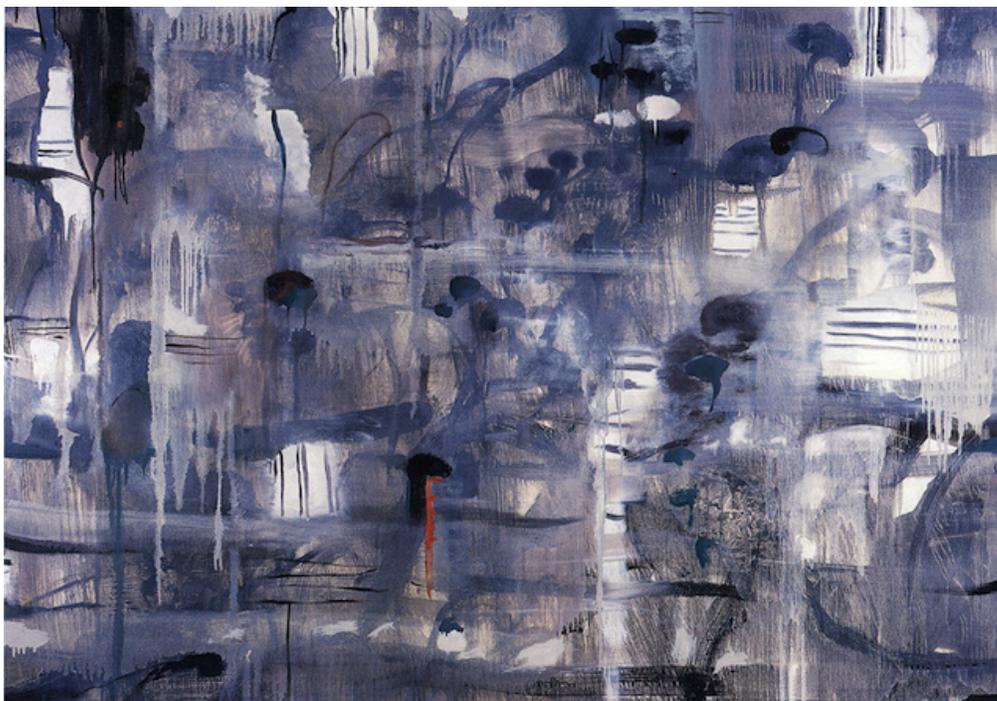
In *Stoneham Zoo* (1976-79), we see Mazur's brushwork answering to “the dictates of replication.” Everywhere in these paintings we see evidence of the artist's sensitivity to changing light, surfaces, form, materiality and space. Clearly, these paintings place him among the best realist painters of his generation. A decade later, in 1989, Mazur remains sensitive and open to these perceptual states, but in a completely different way that continues to change and develop right up his death in 2009.

There is something extraordinary about this change because, in order to effect it, Mazur had give up a lot of what he knew and mastered, and, perhaps more importantly, he had to surrender control. Literally and metaphorically speaking, he had to start over and reinvent himself. The space becomes ambiguous. Where the blotchy walls we see in the zoo paintings approach abstraction, the forms in paintings such as “*Dragon's Rockery*” (1997-98) and “*Gail's Island III*” (1998) seem to be melting into non-objectivity. The liquidity we see in these works is unlike anything that Mazur has done before in painting.

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As Stromberg points out, Mazur researched both specific Chinese paintings and studied Chinese aesthetics. As with the Stoneham Zoo, he studied his subject closely in an attempt to become a western painter steeped in Chinese art. The closest parallel I can think of is Guiseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), an Italian Jesuit lay brother who became a painter in the court of the Chinese emperor, and whose paintings of horses are a unique synthesis of European feeling and Chinese methods.



*Michael Mazur, "Dragons Rockery" (1997-98)*

It seems to me that by 1994, in paintings such as those titled "After Chao Men Fu," the transformation is complete. In subsequent paintings, "Dragon's Rockery" (1997-98) and "Gail's Island III" (1998), for example, it is amply evident just how far Mazur has traveled to reinvent his idiom. The paint coalesces into indefinite forms as well as it flows and drips down the surface. Mazur depicts a domain that is both solid and watery, forming and dissolving. Along with changing his approach to painting, inspired in part by his years of working in monotype, Mazur embraced a key philosophical aspect of Chinese aesthetics. The classical Chinese artist's primary goal is to be true to the essence of reality, which might be understood as the inner forces of things, rather than with outward appearances. This required that the artist be alert to the fact that reality is constantly undergoing change, birth and destruction. The only constant is change.

Between 1979 and 1987, the year he went to China, Mazur moved from states of confinement to states of constant change, from pitch perfect replication to improvisation and visual uncertainty. In the "Rain" paintings, which constitute the last body of paintings Mazur completed before his death, he focuses on a subject we associate with replenishment and rebirth. This is what I wrote about them in *The Brooklyn Rail* (April, 2010):

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In these paintings, there is no place to stand. We are just above the water, and, like the rain, we are falling into it, and dissolving. The ripples we make may last, as they do in the paintings, or they may dissipate and vanish. We have no way of knowing how the world will remember us. The paintings don't point to a far shore—they don't offer security or comfort. They don't promise to reveal the next image or place. We are out in the rain, and there is nothing to protect us. We are here, the paintings show us, and this is what we have—oil paint and water, a bad mix.



*Michael Mazur, "Night Rain 2" (2009)*

To face the possibility of adding up to nothing near the end of one's life takes courage and honesty. It means that you know that painting can't save you, that nothing can, and that you didn't become a painter because you thought it would. This is what makes painters so necessary to our lives—the best ones keep looking long after most of us turn away. They see what we all know to be true, and they don't back away from it or avert their eyes. I think that the act of seeing clearly is what frightens most people, why so many want to say that painting is obsolete, that it died. They want to believe that they know how the story will turn out. Michael Mazur knew this wasn't true, and he kept painting and looking. That's something that we should all aspire to.

If we focus only on these two very different kinds of paintings, Stoneham Zoo (1976-1979) and the varied body of work Mazur did after returning from China (which leaves out many other remarkable works, starting in the 1970s), I think it is clear what a remarkable and challenging journey he undertook as an artist. Rilke's impossible injunction comes to mind: "You must change your life." Mazur is one of the few artists I can think of who did just that.

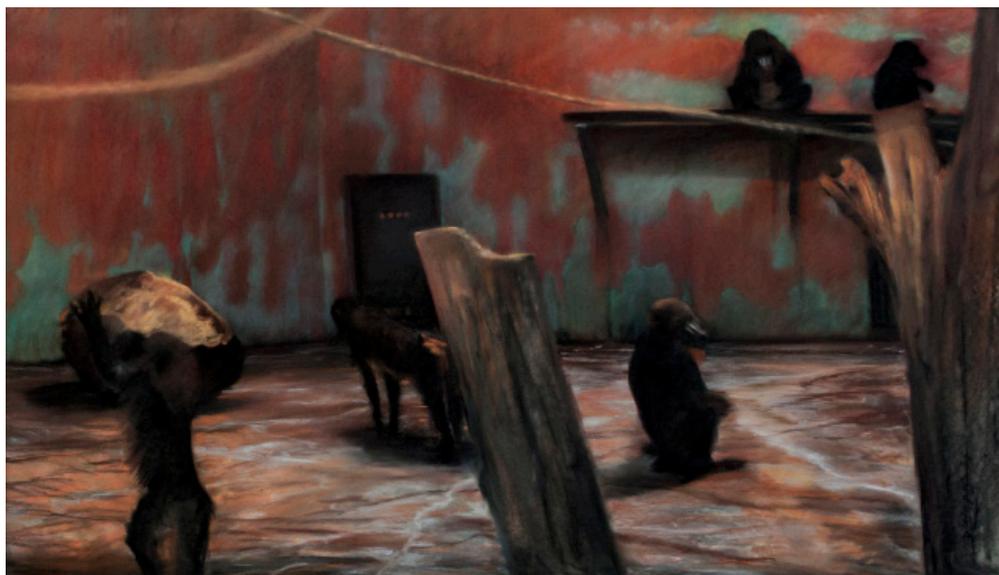
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## NEW YORK ARTS

Michael Mazur: Stoneham Zoo (1976-1979) at the Ryan Lee Gallery, closing November 15, 2014

by Michael Miller, November 13, 2014



Michael Mazur: Stoneham Zoo (1976-1979)

Ryan Lee Gallery

515 West 26th Street

New York, New York

October 16 – November 15, 2014

There are only two days left to view an important exhibition of oils and pastels by Michael Mazur (1935-2009) at the Ryan Lee Gallery. In 1976 Mazur, at a time when he was forty-one and his career was reaching a substantial level, found himself drawn to Stoneham Zoo, which was in a rather derelict state at the time, if I remember correctly, and decided to create a series of works in the monkey cages there. It reminded him of work he had done in mental hospitals as a student and teacher, both offering art therapy and drawing the patients, which he saw more as inmates, people in captivity. As he developed this theme in his work, he began to draw more from memory. Around 1976 and in recent years he had been working concentratedly both with narrative scenes and with landscape. He approached the monkey cages with these three pursuits in mind. As he said in the In his 1993 interview for the Archives of American Art, "Then I decided to do some work on the monkey cages at Stoneham Zoo, which were very depressed and reminded me of the mental hospital. Telling the story of captured animals became important." The project continued until 1979. He then showed the resulting series at the Robert Miller

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Gallery in New York, which he had just joined. They have not been shown since. The Stoneham Zoo paintings are crucial in Mazur's career, because they are the immediate precursors and really part of some of his greatest work, those inspired by the Jonestown Massacre and The Incident at Walden Pond, now in the Pennsylvania Academy of Art.

In the gallery you will find several large oils and two large pastels, as well as one small oil of an individual monkey. The point of view is set well back, as if Mazur were painting the creatures' habitat in the jungle, but instead of lush tropical vegetation they are surrounded by filthy institutional walls and dead branches. The primates, reduced in scale by their distance, disappear into the gloom of their captivity as if they were in fog. Our eyes are often led away from the monkeys and their faces by random details—unidentifiable objects which attracted the artist's attention by their texture, shape, or some glistening highlight. Mazur's sophisticated palette, in which primary colors are as absent as straight lines in prehistoric cave painting, creates this heavy atmosphere of captivity, the degraded environment, and even, in an ennobled way, the ghastly fetor which permeates even well-maintained monkey cages. The monkeys themselves seem barely alive, deprived of even the most basic drives by the scientific habit and educational ritual of their human cousins. This may seem all too depressing to tempt anyone into crossing the High Line, but in fact it is not at all. Michael Mazur was above all an artist, and he developed the ability and moral energy to bring his audience into the world of art, where they can be uplifted by color, space, and form.



Michael Mazur was a native New Yorker who made Cambridge his home. He was attracted into and educated in art as a young child by a talented nanny. After finishing at Horace Mann School, where Henry Geldzahler and Edward Koren were among his classmates, he made his first move to New England to attend Amherst College. There he was able to study with Leonard Baskin,

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immersing him early on in printmaking, the medium for which he is perhaps best known, but which was only a part of a career which included sculpture and installations along with the media represented by this show. He constantly perfected his mastery of many techniques and progressed still further into experimentation. He spent a year in Italy, taking a year off from Amherst, as well as the Yale Summer School at Norfolk, Connecticut, going on to study for an B.F.A. at Yale. Here he was trained by Josef Albers and others, above all the printmaker Gabor Peterdi. He also assisted the sculptor Naum Gabo in making a set of etchings.

Mazur's early introduction to printmaking and his success in it inspired his respect for drawing and stimulated a perfectionistic bent that led him to master pastel and painting with the kind of virtuosity that extends far back into the tradition of printmaking, but which reached a



particularly high level in the second half of the twentieth century. In the world of prints artists, teachers, curators, and collectors tend to become obsessed with the technical aspects of the processes, and there is many a print that was made simply to show that a particular feat could be done. This produces an aesthetic which can either be fruitful for the artist's imagination or it can be sterile. Partly to enrich his creativity as a printmaker and partly to escape from its obsessiveness, Mazur turned to the other media, which he had already studied at Yale. He also realized that the printmakers who had left the most significant mark on the history of art were grounded in painting and sculpture, like Dürer, Mantegna, Goya, Degas, and Picasso. One result of this confluence of different streams in his creative life, inspired by his visits to a Degas exhibition at the Fogg art Museum at Harvard, was his supreme mastery of the monotype, a process that uses printing plates and ink to produce unique works—a medium superficially like painting, but in fact entirely different, since the painter can make changes by adding layers of paint, and the monotypist can only move the ink around on the plate.

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Another aspect of his encyclopedic interests in art was literary. His first artistic work for a public began in high school, with his illustrations for the Horace Mann literary magazine. Leonard Baskin was largely and illustrator. When Mazur visited Italy he took pains to learn Italian well and read the Divine Comedy in the original. His wife Gail developed into an important poet, who published her first collection, *Nightfire*, in 1978, when her husband was in the midst of the Stoneham Zoo project. Through her and his own predilections, he was knit into the rich literary world that revolved around Cambridge and Provincetown, where the Mazurs became leaders at the Fine Arts Work Center. The best known product of this was Mazur's set of illustrations to Robert Pinsky's translation of Dante's *Inferno*.

Mazur was also a teacher, at first from economic necessity, at RISD, Brandeis, and other schools, but later less, after he made the conscious decision to support himself and his family from the sale of his work. He continued to teach on a less burdensome schedule after that, particularly at Harvard. This began in 1977, again at the same moment in his career as Stoneham Zoo. Later in his career he became especially committed to improving art education in schools and to improve the economic situation of the artist. This involved activism and advocacy, as well as much committee work.

During the sixties his progressive beliefs flourished in the anti-war movement and other organized forms of activism. He was a co-founder of Artists against Racism and War, and he collaborated on the installation piece, *The American Way*, which attracted much attention in Boston and traveled extensively elsewhere.

Michael Mazur was an outstanding example of the highest values in the stream of eurocentric, mostly representational art which developed just before American pop culture took hold of the art world centered around New York. Few artists, even in this group, were as literate as he, not only in the history of art, but in literature. His self-nourishment from the works he sought out in museums and galleries, sophisticated enough to steer clear of imitation, enriched his work immensely and influenced the tone of the visual arts as made and shown in Boston. His committee work has left its mark on public and private support for artists in Massachusetts and the United States at large, whether or not present practices would come up to his standards. The Stoneham Zoo series not only represents his impressive technical prowess as an artist, but his command of mood and atmosphere in telling a morally significant story—a story which is intended to influence our beliefs and behavior—as well as his deep social commitment.

Mazur exhibited in New York from his Yale days onwards. It is more than fitting that Mary Ryan give the New Yorkers of 2014 a hard look at his core work.

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**BROOKLYN RAIL**  
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

## MICHAEL MAZUR (1935-2009)

by John Yau

The first poetry reading I gave after graduating from Bard College in 1972 was because of Gail Mazur. Although she didn't know my poetry or me, she graciously invited me to give a reading at the Blacksmith House in Cambridge, Mass. It must have been in 1973 or '74, as Gail founded the series in 1973 and ran it for many years. I remember being very anxious about making the most of this opportunity.

Gail had paired me with another young poet, David Cloutier, who various people told me had published poems in national magazines and even had a chapbook out, or was about to have one out. He was Edwin Honig's best student. Some of the poems that David read were based on what he said were Eskimo or shaman songs. For not altogether the right reason, before I read my poems, I said that while I looked like an Eskimo, I wasn't going to read any Eskimo poems.

I still remember Honig lecturing me after the reading about what an insensitive jerk I was, and that it was clear to him that I wasn't going anywhere, and then storming off. Gail, however, never criticized me. She never acted as if I behaved badly, which no doubt I did. It was that generosity that I will always remember, because it helped me to find my own way into this world.

I don't remember when I first met Michael, but I remember hearing about him, most likely from Bill Corbett. I moved to New York from Cambridge in 1975, and I don't think that I met him before then, though I must have. And so I first got to know Michael through his work. This is as it should be.

I began looking at Michael's work in the late 70s, going to his shows at Robert Miller, Barbara Mathes, Joe Fawbush, and finally Mary Ryan. But it wasn't until I started teaching at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown in the summer of 2001 that I got to know him. He would have lunch with me and Eve at least once during the summer at Clem and Ursie's, which is no longer there, and I would also go to his studio. The first time I went, he pointed out a large wood sculpture by Paul Bowen that was on the outside wall of his studio, and told me a little about him. Later, Eve and I went to Paul's studio, and we bought a small drawing. This was who Michael was—generous and caring. In his studio, we would talk about his work, about art, about where he grew up, the artists he knew and those he studied with. I particularly remember Michael talking enthusiastically about particular aspects of the work of Edwin Dickinson and Ralph Blakelock while we were standing in his dining room in Cambridge, surrounded by art.

Michael loved art and artists—and that passion and enthusiasm spread throughout every conversation that we ever had. He looked at lots of art, and wasn't afraid of it, and what others did. There are very few artists who can sit inside themselves and not feel threatened or envious. Among the artists he invited up to Provincetown to make monotypes to help the Fine Arts Work Center raise money were Yvonne Jacquette and Sylvia Plimack-Mangold. In a subsequent project, which was a spin-off of what he started, Mary Heilmann and Rudy Burckhardt did lithographs. Michael and I talked about what a terrific painter Rudy was, and how most people knew his photographs, but not his touching, highly detailed paintings.



Michael Mazur, *Night Rain* (2008). Oil on canvas. 20" x 20". Image courtesy The Estate of Michael Mazur and Mary Ryan Gallery, NYC.

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## Mazur's passion

By Jan Gardner

Globe Correspondent / November 29, 2009



An illustration by Michael Mazur from "I'll Tell What I Saw: Images from Dante's 'Divine Comedy.'"

Michael Mazur was a painter and printmaker whose life was entwined with the literary world.

His paintings graced the covers of poetry books by his wife, Gail Mazur, and he contributed works to Agni and Ploughshares literary journals.

Mazur's fascination with the works of Dante Alighieri dated back to his college days when he lived in Dante's native city of Florence and read "The Divine Comedy" in Italian. He considered illustrating Dante's "Inferno" for his senior thesis at Amherst College, but his adviser thought the project too ambitious.

Mazur, who lived in Cambridge and Provincetown, collaborated on a number of Dante projects with poet and translator Robert Pinsky, starting with "Inferno."

Before Mazur died this summer at the age of 73, he had created a fourth series of images inspired by Dante, this one for "I'll Tell What I Saw: Select Translations and Illustrations from 'The Divine Comedy'" published this month by Sarabande.

In the introduction, Pinsky pays tribute to his collaborator: "Entering Dante's creation entirely, not standing outside it, nor in a modern world apart from it, enables Mazur to imagine the poetry's images with a tremendous, radical freshness, stemming from a lifelong passion."

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## The New York Times

### Michael Mazur, Artist of Realism and Abstraction, Dies at 73

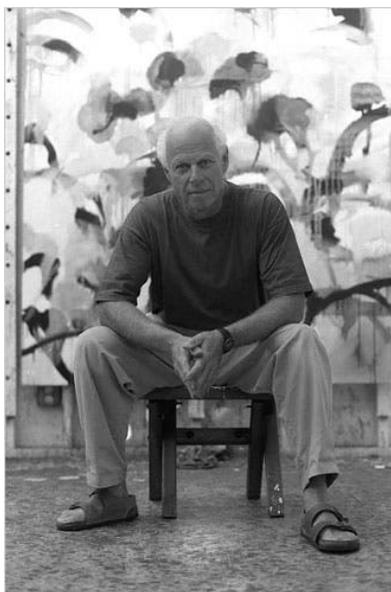
By William Grimes | August 29, 2009

Michael Mazur, a relentlessly inventive printmaker, painter and sculptor whose work encompassed social documentation, narrative and landscape while moving back and forth between figuration and abstraction, died on Aug. 18 in Cambridge, Mass. He was 73 and lived in Cambridge and Provincetown, Mass.

The cause was congestive heart failure, said Mary Ryan, his New York dealer.

Mr. Mazur first came to public notice in the early 1960s with two series of etchings and lithographs depicting inmates in a mental asylum in Howard, R.I. The series, “Closed Ward” and “Locked Ward,” rendered with the hand of a master draftsman, showed human beings in unbearable torment.

These lost souls, John Canaday wrote in *The New York Times*, “have the terrible anonymity of individuals who cannot be reached, whose ugly physical presence is only the symptom of a tragic spiritual isolation.”



*Mr. Mazur in 1995. Credit: Bill Greene/Boston Globe*

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Mr. Mazur's restless artistic temperament led him to explore a variety of styles and media, shuttling between realism and abstraction. He produced narrative paintings like "Incident at Walden Pond," a triptych from the late 1970s depicting the aftermath of a rape, and, beginning in the 1990s, abstract landscapes based on his own vascular system and on Chinese landscapes of the 12th to 15th centuries.

After seeing an exhibition of Degas monotypes at the Fogg Museum in 1968, he began exploring that medium, most notably in the monumental Wakeby landscapes of 1983, depicting Wakeby Lake on Cape Cod, and in a series of illustrations for Robert Pinsky's translation of Dante's "Inferno," published in 1994.

"It's hard to characterize him because he was always trying new things," said Clifford S. Ackley, the chairman of prints, drawings and photographs at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. "He did not fall into the trap of repeating himself the way so many older artists do. In the last week of his life he was doing pen-and-ink drawings of flowers and gardens."

Michael Burton Mazur grew up on the Upper East Side of Manhattan and attended the Horace Mann School in the Bronx, where he belonged to an art club whose members included the future curator Henry Geldzahler and the future New Yorker cartoonist Ed Koren.

While attending Amherst College he studied with the printmaker and sculptor Leonard Baskin, who was teaching at Smith College. After taking a year off to study in Italy, where his lifelong fascination with Dante began, he received a bachelor's degree in 1957 and went on to earn bachelor's and master's degrees in fine art from the Yale School of Art and Architecture.



*"The Simoniacs," one of a series of etchings titled "The Inferno of Dante," by Michael Mazur. He worked in a range of styles and media.*

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While at Yale he married Gail Beckwith, a poet known by her married name. She survives him, as do their two children, Dan, of Cambridge, and Kathe, of Los Angeles, and two grandchildren.

Mr. Mazur taught at the Rhode Island School of Design and Brandeis University from 1961 to 1975 while exhibiting frequently in New York and Boston.

In 2000 a traveling retrospective of his prints opened at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The catalog, "The Prints of Michael Mazur With a Catalogue Raisonné, 1956-1999," was published that year. "I'll Tell What I Saw," a selection of excerpts from Dante's "Divine Comedy" illustrated by Mr. Mazur, is to be published by Sarabande Books in November.

Although deadly serious as an artist, Mr. Mazur had a sly wit. In 1984 he wrote an article for the Op-Ed page of The New York Times proposing a W.P.A.-style project under which artists could decorate nuclear warheads, just as Renaissance artists embellished armor and weapons.

"It is not hard to imagine the vivid colors, bas reliefs, even graffiti, that would make spectacles of beauty of those dull cones," he wrote. In time, he suggested, the warheads would find their way into private collections and museums, thereby ending the possibility that they might be deployed.

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April 30, 2009

## Art

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### Mary Ryan Gallery

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**Michael Mazur**, "Rain." Abstract and lively landscapes result from the artist's observations of precipitation. Thu 30 - June 13.

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## The Boston Globe

### A Successful Experimenter

Cate McQuaid  
May 18, 2006



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## Michael Mazur shelves his brushstroke, but his rapturous tones remain

By Cato McQuaid

LAST CORRESPONDENT

Art lovers, particularly those with a passion for a specific artist's work, can be a fickle crowd. We impatiently wait for the next body of work, in which we hope to see some new evolution, some new clarity, some new risk taken. But if that next body of work looks nothing like anything our artist has done before, we may balk.

Michael Mazur, one of the finest painters in the Boston area, has taken such a leap in his new show at the Barbara Krakow Gallery. He's an artist known for his gestural energy, for brushwork that shows both delicacy and bravado. But he has also always been a restless experimenter, diving into different techniques (especially as a printmaker) with gusto.

A couple of years ago, Mazur had heart surgery. He couldn't paint in his hospital bed, so he took to doodling little linear abstractions.

"He wanted to get away from his signature brushstroke," gallery director Andrew Witkin reports. If that sounds close to Jackson Pollock abandoning the drip, it is.

Mazur turned to stencils, cutouts of abstract designs. He made collages with them, which became studies for largely spray-painted works. (The mere thought of Mazur with spray paint will gall some.) The exhibit follows his process from collage to canvas. It's interesting to chart the development of a single piece, but the large-scale, fully realized paintings are the works here that really grab you by the shirt collar.

The artist has not left his rapturous tones behind. Dreamy blues and heated reds provide the backdrops for abstract forms made from layered stencils, spray-painted onto the canvas. "Illumination I (Nocturn)" has at its center one stencil, applied twice, once upside down. The form could be that of a praying mantis attempting to swallow a pearl. Fleshy flowers — the top one yellow, the bottom one blue — curl around pale orbs. Their stems curl like clef notes. Occasionally, subtle brushstrokes activate the shifting blue background.

I'm not balking. These are beautiful works; Mazur is probably temperamentally incapable of making a jarring, ugly painting. The abstract forms might refer to organisms; the one in "Illumination II (Inte-

**Michael Mazur**  
At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,  
10 Newbury St., through June 7.  
617-262-4490, www.barbarakrakowgallery.com

**David Moore: Pulse**  
At: Kidder Smith Gallery, 131 Newbury St.,  
through May 27. 617-424-6900,  
www.kiddersmithgallery.com

**Peter Brooke: Ice Storms, Vernal Pools and Other Natural Phenomena**  
At: Gallery NAGA, 67 Newbury St., through May 27. 617-267-0060, www.gallerynaga.com

rior)" looks like a heart. But this group of paintings feels like the first leg of a larger journey, as if he's still so buoyed by the new, refreshing scenery, he hasn't quite found a gait for the long haul.

Knowing where the artist has come from, it's hard to look at these new paintings and simply rest in them. They raise the question: Where is he going?

### Significant shift

Another respected Boston painter cuts loose at Kidder Smith gallery. David Moore was last seen more than three years ago at

Gallery NAGA, where he showed paintings covered obsessively with colorful vertical stripes. Every now and then, a single stripe would veer out of line, like a sleepy Marine breaking ranks.

Imagine that the taut lines in his earlier pieces were stretched rubber bands. Now they've all snapped and flail wildly this way and that. The shift is not as huge as Mazur's — Moore is, after all, still working mostly with lines — but it's significant. The result is delightfully crazy and makes complete sense.

Moore, who is also a musician, explores rhythm and layering in his paintings. Here he's like a classical pianist who has suddenly taken up improvisation. Sometimes, as in "Pulse I," the work can get too dense and show-offy, but when he leaves breathing room, the paintings exult in their rolling, flying lines.

"Pulse III," for instance, has twirling ribbons of periwinkle and black at the surface, vaulting over tight knots of reedy white, spiced with occasional traces of pale green over a gray ground. The layers read like bass line, melody, and harmony, dancing with one another and then veering playfully away.

### Imagined landscapes

After Mazur and Moore, the work of Vermont painter Peter Brooke at Gallery NAGA feels old and reliable. Yet there's nothing stale about Brooke's imagined landscapes. Brooke paints in browns, greens, and grays, adding the gloss of linseed oil, applying multiple glazes so his scenes seem as if they're rising from mists.

He creates landscapes reductively, using a brush to erase and scratch out, making pale trees. The technique, which Brooke executes in stunning detail, offers scenes that are ghostly and still.

"Vernal Pool" glows in shades of auburn, gold, and green. Whitish spines of tree trunks and branches shimmer. The sky seems to bruise overhead; subtle shifts in tone could indicate mountains in the distance or auras surrounding the trees.

"Disiecta Membra" (the title is Latin for "scattered fragments") also shows a limpid pond, which is surrounded by trees like an altar circled by worshippers. Here a single white streak down the center, a tree trunk and its reflection, when coupled with the implied horizon line, make a subtle grid or cruciform. Brooke's paintings quietly evoke our own mysticism in the face of nature.



David Moore explores rhythm and layering in "Pulse XXIV" (left), "Pulse II," and other works.

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## The New York Times

### Michael Mazur

Grace Glueck

March 27, 2004

New York Times-Friday 3/27/04

#### Michael Mazur

*Mary Ryan Gallery  
24 West 57th Street, Manhattan  
Through April 3*

For one who started out under the spell of the gloomy graphic artist and sculptor Leonard Baskin, Michael Mazur has come a distance. Primarily known as a printmaker, he is also a draftsman, sculptor and painter. For many years his work was in the representational camp, but in the early 1990's he turned to an ebullient kind of abstraction from nature, initially inspired by a trip to China and a long look at Chinese landscape and garden paintings.

The canvases and works on paper here seem to have progressed beyond the Chinese influence to a looser, more open handling of paint and space. They evolved during a stay in Santa Monica last year, where impressions of water and California light further influenced his nature-based work. The resulting exuberant canvases are less structured, their sunnier colors and freer linear forms floating in a limitless expanse.

Sometimes the work, mostly in smaller formats, looks too slack, taking on the aspect of happy, child-like doodling. For me the approach works best in larger paintings like "Of Shore and Air," in which a dense mass of fiery red blazes in the center of a blue-white empyrean. The fiery form drifts upward to a reddish-yellow cloud, while loops, partial circles and other linear formations in many colors swim around it, celebrating a perfect day.

GRACE GLUECK

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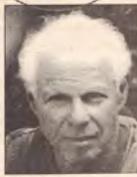
## The Barnstable Patriot

### 5 Minutes with...Michael Mazur

May 11, 2000



### 5 Minutes with...



#### MICHAEL MAZUR

He started out as a singer – traveling the country as part of Harvard’s triple quartet, 12 men who sang “slightly atonal harmonies” as they warbled standards of the day. It’s a side of him, Michael Mazur admits, that “few people know about.” That’s because for the past four decades, critics have been singing praises about Mazur’s prints and paintings. A 40-year retrospective of his work – including recent works and works done by other artists as part of the Mazur-directed *The New Provincetown Print Project* – is wrapping its stay at Boston’s Museum of Fine Arts. (Travelers can also catch exhibitions at the Barbara Krakow Gallery in Boston and the Castelvecchio in Verona, Italy.) We caught up with Mazur, who lives and works in Provincetown, at his home in Cambridge. Here, he chats about putting it all together.

*How does it feel to be honored with such a major retrospective? Lucille Ball once told me such tribute equals an obituary.*

[Laughs] This retrospective didn’t happen overnight. It was originally going to be done at the Brooklyn [New York] Museum about eight years ago, but was postponed because of on-going construction. The Boston exhibition has been in the works for about five years, so I can hardly be surprised about it. I was more concerned with whether the older works would still hold up. The people who don’t lie to me – and those who do – said they do hold up, and I feel good about them as well. [Pauses] This is a tremendous tribute to me, and when it finally opened, I knew I could think, “Well, I deserve this,” and not get too surprised. Wrong. There was a tremendous surge of pride.

*You often talk about the collaborative process as a “we” thing.*

When I walk into my studio, I have no idea what I am going to create. But I can have an initial idea about the kind of work I’d like to create and try and get it done. In order to change and develop, artists need to work with elements of surprise – this is something we cannot willfully do; change comes upon us in unsuspecting ways. Spontaneity is a reaction to a situation; a good comic will say something extraordinary, then admit that he had no idea he was going to say it. I create circumstances in which I can succeed imagining what can be done. That’s the dialogue. It’s not like I talk to the canvas.

*When do you know a work “is done”?*

I don’t heave works too many times since I tend to rework paintings a lot. The different ghosts enrich the final work. Close to the end of a painting, I begin to feel anxiety – an intense pitch so strong I can actually feel it. It’s a “flattening out” thing, perhaps similar to the same flattening out a person feels as he or she is dying. This doesn’t mean things are going badly; it just means the edge I have been striving for is going away, and that the painting is ready for a life of its own. At this point, I can leave it alone and try and find closure or, as DeKooning once said, I can abandon the work.

*You first made a name for yourself with the series you did in a Rhode Island mental ward. Why not revisit, to see life through the eyes of a wiser, older man?*

[Long pause] You got me there. I have no answer for that. I am 65 – that kind of work is for younger persons whose lives are ahead of them. The natural, incredible sadness of life doesn’t get to you early on, but as you get older, you know people, or have friends and family, in mental wards. It’s tough going back. I guess I am no longer curious about life there. And my guess is that the world in which I was once interested hasn’t changed much.

*How easy is it to create in Provincetown?*

Most of the time because everyone is an artist and everyone knows the rules

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## The Boston Globe

### Seamless 'Perl'; Mazur's fine lines

Cate McQuaid

May 6, 1999

#### Seamless 'Perl'; Mazur's fine lines

##### ■ GALLERIES

Continued from Page D1

power of the wages, and spread them on the floor of the performance space, along with bowls steeped with pearls. The installation, as shown here in digital prints, and the resulting evening gown, is beautiful and humbling.

The installation on view, "A Dress," comprises a white gown with a flowing skirt mounted on a dressmaker's dummy. The skirt, anchored to the floor by black boots, houses a computer. During this piece's first installation in 1995, the artist traveled and e-mailed every day to "A Dress," and the printouts of the letters hang from the interior of the skirt, each pinned to a black leaf polka-dotting the outside of the fabric.

Frank's dresses become a metaphor for the self and a costume for society. They reference oppression, but also tender undercurrents of the soul and a person's need to thrive and connect.

...

Michael Mazur may be best known for his paintings and prints, but he knows that the origins of his work lie in drawing. "A line is both itself and the edge of everything else," he says in a statement accompanying a small show of his drawings at the Horn Gallery at Babson College. What better place to begin?

The show spans the artist's drawings from 1961 to 1997. The earliest, "Kathe as a Baby," is studies in sepia ink of the sleeping infant. The delicate lines convey the heft and slumber of the baby. To draw something is to truly see it, and to make a line is to caress. You can see Mazur's love for the baby.

"Copper Beech" (1985), a charcoal piece, shows the upper section of a massive trunk where the branches begin to split and stretch



Michael Mazur's charcoal on paper, "Branching," 1993.

away from the tree like children. Take a deep breath and fall into this beech's embrace; it feels at once giant and maternal, majestic and utterly ordinary, and there's something soothing about that. "Recurved Lily" (1982), charcoal studies of the graceful petals of a lily slowly unfurling, tease and seduce.

Over the years the drawings become deeper, more layered, and more abstract. Two are from the "Branching" series, which Mazur showed at the DeCordova last year. In them, he creates space with lines that open into shadows and frenetic fibers that dance along the surface.

Mazur's exhibit is a small one, but it doesn't take much. This artist shows us how it's done.

...

The Bromfield Gallery joins the legions of area venues celebrating the Cyberarts Festival with a group show of work that ranges from art on a computer monitor to mixed-media pieces you never would have guessed had anything to do with a computer.

REGINA FRANK:  
MOTHER OF PERL  
At: Clifford-Smith Gallery, 450 Harrison  
Ave., through May 15

MICHAEL MAZUR: SELECTED  
DRAWINGS, 1961-1997  
At: The Horn Gallery at Babson College,  
Forest Street, Wellesley, through May 21

SOUL OF THE MACHINE:  
EXPLORATIONS IN  
DIGITAL MEDIA  
At: Bromfield Art Gallery, 560 Harrison  
Ave., through May 22

Blyth Hazen's "Selections From the Algebra Drawings" appeals because it's interactive. The viewer can touch a computer monitor, and a drawing will begin to trace itself automatically. The random element of the drawings makes their aesthetic value chancy. Sachiko Beck's untitled digital images burst from the paper in brilliant, edgy colors. Jennifer Hicks paints over digital images of drawings she scanned, but you can't see them beneath the paint. So what's the point?

The computer as artist's tool has come a long way. This show speaks to its versatility.

Jocelyn Scheirer belongs to the first category. In "Elements," she charts the physical manifestation of certain emotions and funnels them through an algorithm to create an evolving visual manifestation of the psyche. It's such a cool idea that what it looks like almost doesn't matter (so it goes with some conceptual art), but the bright, bubbling images could be a picture of cells reproducing.

In her Iris print, "Ghost Town Stairwell," Naomi Ribner layers images and visual textures like lacy veils. Nearby hangs Adam Sherman's "Double Black," fuzzy white diamonds glowing from two black lengths of silk, a myopic view of a grid of stars.

Carmin Karasic's Iris prints are gold-toned rivers of imagery bubbling around a figure with closed eyes. "Genetic Coderush" features a DNA helix and shadowy skeletons; "Coderush Logic" shows the head coming through an engineering diagram. It's like the codes of existence through which the flesh of ideas, art, and understanding push.

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## Dante's Inferno: Prints by Michael Mazur

September 1994

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# THE CALIFORNIA PRINTMAKER

THE QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF THE CALIFORNIA SOCIETY OF PRINTMAKERS

ISSUE NO. 3, SEPTEMBER 1994

### *Dante's Inferno: Prints by Michael Mazur*

University Art Museum through December 11, 1994

For a new translation of Dante's *Inferno*, published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux and due to be released in August 1994, noted painter, printmaker, and draftsman Michael Mazur created thirty-eight striking black-and-white monotypes that are on view in the UAM/PFA Theatre Gallery this fall. The images—from eerily serene to clinically demonic—evoke the mood of each canto of Dante's famous work, rather than illustrating any particular scene.

*The University Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive is located at 2626 Bancroft Way, Berkeley, (510) 642-0808.*

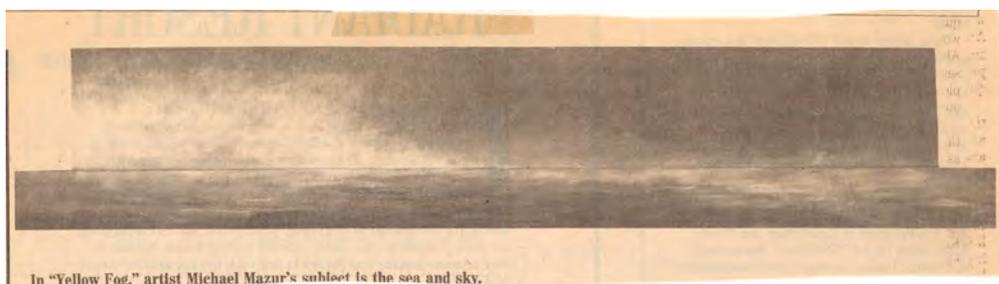
September 1994

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## The Boston Globe

Amid high technology, artists seek the elemental  
Nancy Stapen



In "Yellow Fog," artist Michael Mazur's subject is the sea and sky.

### Galleries

## Amid high technology, artists seek the elemental

By Nancy Stapen  
SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

Despite the ubiquitousness of high technology in contemporary society, artists remain fascinated by the four elements — earth, air, fire and water. These fundamental constituents of the universe materialize in highly divergent forms in several shows at Boston's galleries.

Veteran Boston painter Michael Mazur's inspiration has always come from nature, be it landscape or figure. In this new series of paintings at the Barbara Krakow Gallery, Mazur's subject is the sea, a fitting match for an artist who has consistently explored the expressive possibilities of atmosphere.

In recent years Mazur began painting on silk, producing long horizontal works, often composed of two contiguous panels with images of Oriental florals. Although that series lacked the vigorous grace we associate with Mazur's best works, in the new paintings of sea and sky — which follow a similar horizontal two-panel format, this time on canvas or wood — Mazur seems to have found a more

GALLERIES, Page 66

### ■ GALLERIES

Continued from Page 65  
authentic niche.

The relationship of sea to sky is underscored by the repeated configuration of one horizontal panel layered on top of another, with the space between delineating a horizon line. It is a relationship of two forces at once separate and merged. Complementary blue and yellow hues both jar and embrace each other; yellow passages represent both sea spray and sun-tinged clouds, and the sky's blue colors the sea.

Mazur's paint handling is subtle but expressive. He steers the paint in multiple directions, effecting a formal equivalent for dissolving water and diaphanous air. The ocean's mists partner vaporous slides filled with translucent clouds. References to Turner, as well as the Japanese master Hokusai, abound. Mazur is also resurrecting the 19th-century American landscape tradition, especially the muted seascapes of Martin Johnson Heade and the dissolving passages of light and shade of George Innes. But mostly Mazur is painting from the inside out. With their panoramic vistas of empty space, these paintings inspire a mood of unfettered contemplation.

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## ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

### Barbara Krakow Gallery/Boston

### Michael Mazur: New Work

Marc Mannheimer

May 1987

## MASSACHUSETTS

Barbara Krakow Gallery/Boston  
Michael Mazur: New Work

The self-portrait as a genre has existed, we can assume, for as long as artists have been working. The variations on this theme are many. Michael Mazur's new work consists of ten new pieces: five large paintings and five pastel/collage works. All are self-portraits.

Mazur's draftsmanship is beyond reproach. His ability to capture lucid elements of himself or whatever he trains his eye on have been demonstrated in his past series. Here we have multiple, layered images of the artist's face broken up through a clever use of spatial distortions.

In *Self-Portrait #1* (o/c, 1986-87, 96 x 72"), these structural and thematic components are displayed in a stark, confrontational manner. The format involves two rectangular canvases joined horizontally. There is extensive, underpainted foundation work that builds the total picture to an eerie three-dimensional finish. This work is comprised of three obvious facial images with a possible fourth lurking as a ghost over the frontalmost plane of the canvas. In the lower right corner, a torso, possibly holding a palette, seems to assess the work as well as the viewer. To further add to the "self" aspects of the piece, a fingerprint whorl emerges to the right of the central, most realistic face. The primary colors used are deep magentas, black shading, and flesh tones.

At the top of the canvas, there are three vertical bars of muted yellows, roughly dividing the canvas into equal parts. These bars function as visual support that holds the massed images of Mazur's face, similar to stretcher bars or easel supports. Directly in front of these, beginning about 9" below, are the primary images. If you look at this work as a formal application of technique, Larry Rivers can come to mind, as could Robert Motherwell in an abstract sense. But what Mazur is doing here is not only physically layering and breaking up space. He is revealing himself in a new

hard to get past the obvious success of his draftsmanship. On spending further time with them in actuality and in thought, the full impact of his ability to orchestrate these pieces revealed itself.

The pastels are minimal and drawn over parts of Mazur's prints (lithographs?). *Self-Portrait With Night Swimmer*, pastel over collaged prints, is a particularly mystical work. It is drawn in blacks with some sand and white. This is a very poetic piece. The moon is lurking above the split faces that seem to melt into specters that hover to the left of the main head.

All the pieces in the show use this cut-away technique. The images appear like windows opening within themselves; they split, shift, and peel layers off the gloss of Mazur's reality. The artist is showing himself and the viewer his humanness and his mortality. He has searched and scraped within.

—Marc Mannheimer



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## The Boston Globe

### Michael Mazur: The Painterly Printmaker

Christine Temin

January 8, 1987

8 CALENDAR, THE BOSTON GLOBE, JANUARY 8, 1987

# Michael Mazur: The Painterly Printmaker

By Christine Temin

**A**s Michael Mazur describes it, American printmaking was, until fairly recently, a separate, cloistered part of the art world with its own membership, hierarchy and circuit of shows. All that changed with the print renaissance of the past 15 years which saw the growing importance of the painterly print – the monotype – and an increased interest of painters in printmaking.

“Wakeby Night,” a complex landscape by Mazur, one of Boston’s most prominent artists, is included in the current show at the Museum of Fine Arts, “’70’s into ’80’s: Printmaking Now” which runs through Feb. 8.

Like many artists nowadays, Mazur likes to mix printmaking techniques to create layers of imagery. Many of his prints are haunted by pale ghosts of images which press their way through other, later layers to reach the surface of the paper. The “Wakeby” print, which combines color lithograph, woodcut and monotype, is one of a series that occupied Mazur for three years.

The impetus for him was an MIT commission for a pair of 6 x 12 foot monotypes which now grace a dormitory at 500 Memorial Drive in Cambridge. (The area where the prints hang is open to the public.) Like many painters, printmakers have become increasingly interested in working big; the intimacy which used to be a hallmark of prints is being challenged by a bold, almost architectural, scale.

Mazur’s interest in printmaking predates the print renaissance. His 1958 senior thesis at Amherst College was a book about Salome, with text by Flaubert, Mallarme and Wilde, and illustrations by Mazur. “I was so pretentious to do this!” he exclaimed the other day, leafing through the book in his Cambridge living room. Yet the book’s delicate woodcuts and engravings hold their own, and reveal a painterly lushness that still marks his work.

The book sold out quickly – 34 copies at \$30 apiece. “That’s the history of my life; I get into projects that aren’t financially viable,” laughs Mazur.

Some of those projects include organizing an ambitious traveling show and silent auction in 1983 that earned \$600,000 for the anti-nuclear cause, and contributing major works to two auctions for the AIDS Action Committee.

Mazur’s interest in art began when he was a child in Manhattan. His family’s housekeeper took art classes; to practice, she would set up still lifes and she and Mazur, who was 8 at the time, would draw them together.

“But no one ever thought of earning a living as an artist in those days,” Mazur recalls. “So I took architecture courses, but all I ever did in them was design murals.” Eventually, Mazur became happily resigned to a destiny as an artist.

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After studying art at Yale graduate school, he taught students in order to support himself.

"My 40th birthday present to myself was quitting teaching," he recalls and for the past 11 years he has earned his living from his art.

He divides his working time between two studios. In back of his roomy Victorian house in Cambridge is a converted carriage house where he makes prints; a few blocks away is a big warehouse space where he works on large paintings, including a series of self-portraits to be shown in the Barbara Krakow Gallery in February.

Mazur has worked in prints throughout his career but began painting relatively late. He says the world of prints and the world of paintings used to be as neatly separated as his two studios. There were print galleries and there were painting galleries, and that was that. Printmakers had their own circuit of exhibitions. Art schools and universities had separate print departments. Most printmakers didn't paint, and most painters didn't make prints.

"The Abstract Expressionists didn't like prints," says Mazur. "They thought prints couldn't capture the gesture that was crucial to their paintings."

A couple of decades ago, those separate worlds began to merge. The painting market became so strong it created a need for a secondary market. Painters began making prints, and now-famous print workshops like the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles and Tatyana Grosman's Universal Limited Art Editions on Long Island sprang up to give them technical help.

Most artists collaborate with a professional printer in making their prints; Mazur doesn't think there is necessarily anything wrong with this method: "After all, 90 percent of large Rubens paintings were painted by other people."

Collaboration is increasingly necessary with the increasing complexity of techniques. Mazur contrasts the simplicity of prints by Calder with the multi-process images popular nowadays. Mazur, who received extensive training in printmaking, prints almost everything himself. But, in the case of some young artists where their dealers push them into printmaking because prints sell well, the printer, Mazur says, "is responsible for 99 percent of the look of the print."

With recent popularity of prints, their prices have soared. "This country has had a strange history of merchandising prints," Mazur says. "We're a materialistic society. Prints are at the lower end of the price scale, they haven't had the cachet of preciousness. But now prices of Japanese 18th-century woodcuts are \$30,000 to \$40,000: And they used to wrap fish in them!"

"In the U.S., a price can stir more interest than an image. Some people who haven't been able to sell prints at low prices have raised the prices dramatically: Then the work sells."

Mazur credits Museum of Fine Arts print curator Clifford Ackley with recognizing the new interest of painters in printmaking early on. In a 1960s MFA exhibition Ackley showed prints by some of the best-known Pop painters. The look of prints has altered dramatically since then, Mazur says.

In the '60s show there were 36 silkscreens and no unique prints. In the current show more than 20 percent of the works are unique, and there are only two silkscreens. The crisp lines of the silkscreen technique now seem commercial and connected to advertising imagery. Monotype, the "painterly print" made by painting on glass or metal and transferring the painting onto a sheet of paper, is on the ascendancy.

Mazur describes his own dramatic conversion to monotype, the result of an important show of Degas monotypes at the Fogg Art Museum in 1968. Like other artists, he was bowled over by the "incredible freedom" of the Degas works. "Yet it took 10 years for monotypes to be accepted. Print societies wouldn't take them in shows; they weren't 'real' prints. Dealers who rejected them then were begging for them a few years later."

Mazur makes hundreds of prints, and some of his new self-portraits are paintings done over old prints, a layered technique which gives the works "an archaeological quality." There is a practical point to the prints' inclusion, too: "I used to throw away lots of prints, until I learned that once you put something in the trash, you have no more control over it."

He learned that lesson the hard way during the hippie era when he found that some young people had fished his prints out of his garbage and were hawking them in Harvard Square for \$1 each. □

*Christine Temin is a member of The Globe staff.*



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Printmaker Michael Mazur sits before a series of self-portraits, some of which are paintings done over old prints to give them 'an archaeological quality'

month, from October to May. Membership is \$50; proceeds from larger donations go toward print acquisitions for the Department.

Members of the group have hands-on contact with the Department's enormous collection, and enjoy discussions with MFA curators and outside experts. For information on the Club, call the Department, at 267-9300.

Barbara Shapiro of the MFA's Department of Prints, Drawings and Photographs offers other reading suggestions for the guide: Hyatt Mayor's "Prints and People"; William Ivins' "How Prints Look"; and Gabor Peterdi's "Printmaking." And Shapiro points out that one of the most economical ways to acquire reading material on prints is the gallery guides available at the entrances of the MFA's print shows. These are a modest 25 cents each; the illustrated guides are devoted to a wide range of printmaking topics.

There are several interesting print exhibitions around this month, too. A show of prints by 20th-century master Milton Avery opens at the Alpha Gallery, 121 Newbury St., Boston, on Saturday, and runs through Feb. 4.

Globe staff photo/Suzanne Kreiter



Globe staff photo/Suzanne Kreiter

There are several interesting print exhibitions around this month, too. A show of prints by 20th-century master Milton Avery opens at the Alpha Gallery, 121 Newbury St., Boston, on Saturday, and runs through Feb. 4.

Robert Motherwell exhibits lithographs and collages Jan. 15-Feb. 28 at the Boston Athenaeum, 10½ Beacon St.

Jean Arp shows monographs at the Newtonville Library, 345 Walnut St., through Jan. 28.

Etchings and lithographs by William Majors are at the Harris Brown Gallery, 476 Columbus Ave., Boston, through Feb. 7. A highly regarded printmaker and painter, Majors was one of a group of black artists who, in 1963, founded the Spiral Group, which examined the role of black artists in the culture at large.

Intaglio prints and figurative paintings by Peik Larsen, who teaches printmaking at Harvard, are at the Chapel Gallery, 60 Highland St., West Newton, Sunday through Feb. 1.

Etchings and watercolors from English artists Joseph Winkelman, Philip Greenwood and Winifred Pickard are at Wenniger Graphics, 174 Newbury St., Boston, through Feb. 14.

And, finally, the 14th annual Boston Printmakers Members' Show, offering examples of virtually all print techniques, is at the Art Complex Museum in Duxbury through Jan. 18. □

- C. T.

## Learning More About Prints

The technology of printmaking and the complex history of the art fascinate many viewers. But there are a number of resources available to those who want to delve into the subject.

A caveat from Museum of Fine Arts curator Clifford Ackley: Don't get so bogged down in the technology of a print that you overlook the image itself, which ought to be paramount.

Ackley has written a concise but lucid essay, "Observations on a Decade" in the catalog of the MFA's current show, "70s into '80s: Printmaking Now." The catalog also contains fine black

and white photographs.

Museum of Modern Art print expert Riva Castleman's 1985 book "American Impressions: Prints Since Pollock" is an intelligent survey of the subject, taking the viewer from Abstract Expressionism and Pop through the print experiments of Jasper Johns and Frank Stella up to contemporary artists working in prints - Susan Rothenberg and Julian Schnabel.

For serious students of prints, the MFA's Department of Prints, Drawings and Photographs runs an active Print and Drawing Club, which meets roughly twice a

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## art matters

### Michael Mazur

Judith Heep  
March 1986



Michael Mazur's, "Copper Beech V"

undulating porcelain series by Barry Cranmer, mixed media drawings reminiscent of the spontaneity and speed of the machine by Olga Bunta Moore, a tinted plaster bust radiating humor, tension, and life by Zenos Frudakis, and works by Fred Danziger, John Giannotti, William Hoffman, Eugene Daub, and Scott Small.

Deborah Fairfield

Michael Mazur  
Spruance Art Center  
Beaver College  
Feb. 5-28

On February 5, in a rare encounter with students and members of the community, Michael Mazur, nationally known painter and printmaker, spoke about his work and the problems he faces as an artist. The lecture was followed by an opening reception for an exhibition of Mazur's powerful and energetic monotypes, drawings and paintings.

Mazur spoke about the "variousness" of his work. He said, "The art world is generally happier with more single-minded people. In contrast to the majority of artists who prefer an easily understood and identifiable image, my art is restless. I move beyond current work to work that is more of a challenge."

Mazur's work ranges from his sixties prints of the mentally ill, like "Closed Ward #12," to animals in zoos, narratives of men running through woods and along rivers, and finally, his series of landscapes. But this list of subjects reveals little about Mazur's personal style. Despite the "variousness" and "restlessness" he refers to, there is a spontaneous, expressive and anthropomorphizing force animating his work. Further, what sets Mazur apart from many of today's "expressionists" is a dedication to craftsmanship and an unyielding search for the best combination of media to realize his ideas.

#### March '86 — Art Matters

Sources for Mazur's work are seen in Munch's expression of the dark side of life and in Degas' and Gauguin's monotypes. Mazur says, "Nature doesn't care. Crimes and events occur in the most bucolic circumstances."

This dualism is aptly expressed in the 6'x12' triptych, "Wakeby Day," a monotype completed in 1983. In a worm's eye peaceful view of nature we see beautifully colored, animated flowers, alongside a pond. A dark rectangle showing nature at night is inset on a tilt, reminding us of the illusion of art (it is a picture within a picture), as well as of the light and dark sides of nature.

"Copper Beech," 1985, is a 120"x48" charcoal drawing of a backyard tree. Once more, the ordinary in nature is transformed by Mazur into an organic and expressive image that moves beyond the literal.

"The Fall," 1985-85, a triptych in acrylic and mixed media, is literally a "fall" painting of trees surrounding a woodpile. But the enlivened woodpile seems to be on fire: the reds, oranges and acid yellow-greens of autumn creep out from the center panel to between the dark menacing branches of the large trees on either side. These tree branches reach out as if they would engulf anything that approaches them. This "Fall" is anything but a November calendar picture. It suggests the fall of man, death, the apocalypse, yet it is only an ordinary woodpile and trees.

Judith Heep

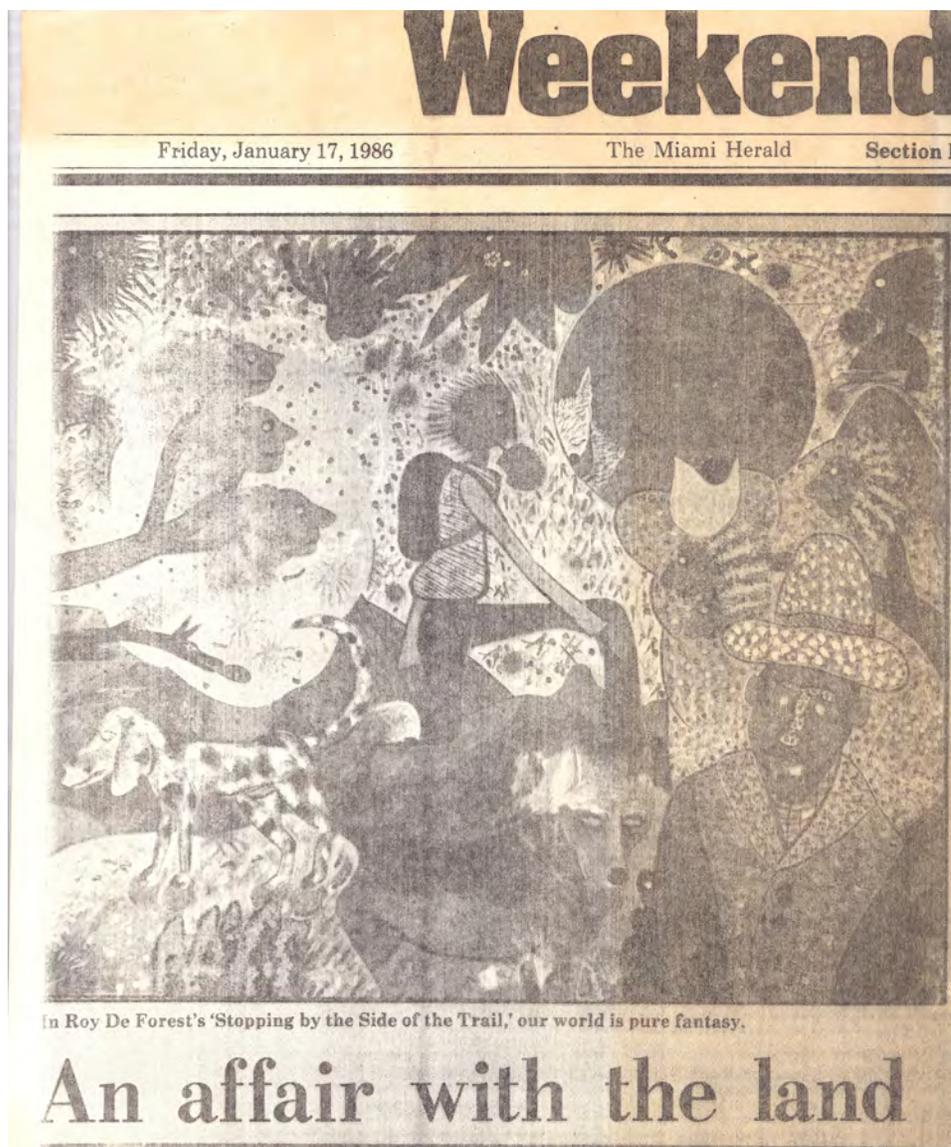
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## The Miami Herald

### An affair with the land

Helen L. Cohen  
January 17, 1986



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## An affair with the land

by HELEN L. KOHEN  
*Art Critic*

**T**he American attachment to the land — a fact of geography — has determined our history, shaped our philosophy and launched our fantasies.

Today especially, when we are largely in urban people, attitudes about the landscape have been recast in dreams, poetry and paint. It is that aura of a netherworld that the viewer will find so compelling about the show opening this evening at the Art Museum of Florida International University.

The second annual exhibition curated by the museum to be mounted under the title *American Art Today*, this one showcases 34 images of *The Figure in the Landscape* by 27 artists, including Alex Katz, Eric Fischl, Juan Gonzalez and Alice Neel. Neither all sylvan, nor all hostile, the

### Art Review

**AMERICAN ART TODAY:** Opens tonight at the Art Museum of Florida International University following a lecture by art historian Dore Ashton at 8 p.m. in AT 100, FIU, Tamiami Campus. Call 554-2890.

landscapes depicted make real or symbolic references to places outside of, and away from, workaday experience. One wants to get lost in some; some make you feel lost. It depends upon how the figures interact with their surroundings, or what plot is set out by a narrative. Storytelling is a factor in the works of the youngest artists.

The traditionally pleasant and inviting landscapes of Fairfield Porter provide the

baseline for the genre in this exhibition. A virtual poet with light, Porter was also one of those rare artists who could infuse the empty spaces in his paintings with the same significance assigned the pictorial elements. His formalist presence reverberates elsewhere in the show, most eloquently in the carefully graded compositions of Louisa Matthiasdottir or James Weeks, but also in the scene of a suburban sandlot ball game by Philip Geiger. If Winslow Homer and Edward Hopper seem to be the natural ancestors to these, there is another group of painters here that are clearly heirs to action painting.

The rhythms of light alternating with paint and color that dance through the works of Neil Welliver, Janet Fish, Jane Freilicher and Nell Blaine owe their stylistic vigor to the heroic age of American ab-

Please turn to ART / 10D

## Land! Canvas! Reaction!

ART / from 1D

stract painting. The four artists also share a bucolic vision of a comforting landscape.

In contrast, the natural world is depicted as an isolating place in the paintings of Joan Brown, David Park and Nathan Oliveira. It is a desolate platform in Martha Erlebacher's *Modern Times*, a stand of dry earth that supports a disproportionate nude with bowed legs and the stance of Venus. It is an endless beach seething with heat in Graham Nickson's *Bather with Reflector*, and a frigid environment in David Bate's *Kingfisher*. In Roy De Forest's world, our world is pure fantasy, and in *Pastorale*, David Humphrey disposes of it completely, replacing a landscape with a rocky promontory set afloat in a void.

Despite how that sounds, Humphrey's place, where lovers hug, is not scary. Neither is Michael Lu-

cero's *Lunar Life*, the show's tour de force and its only "landscape in a figure." Lucero's piece is a huge head in clay, lying down and painted over with a moonscape of caverns and caves, fires and brimstone.

To deliver true fright there is Michael Mazur's *Incident at Walden Pond*, a three-part image that converges on a disaster, unseen to the viewer, occurring a wink's width from the shores of the quintessential American rural paradise. Here's a painting that seems to toll the end of a dream, a work that reinforces our sober, urban mentality until we are sure we no longer believe in the promises of our Waldens. Mazur's is a most affecting painting. Yet, amid the alternate statements that are heard in this exhibition, his becomes just one voice. The majority here still seem to say that a day in the country is worth longing after.

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## ARTNEWS

### The Medium Isn't the Message

Ronny Cohen  
October 1985

PRINTS & PHOTOGRAPHS



COURTESY JOHN WEBER GALLERY

*Barbara Kasten's photographs, such as Construct XXIX, 1984, trace their ancestry to the geometric abstraction of the Constructivists and especially to Bauhaus photographer László Moholy-Nagy.*

## New Light on Color

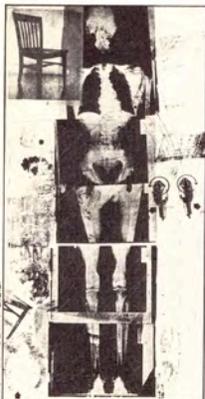
A frank celebration of the beautiful, the artful manipulation of subjects, fantasy and elegance are the hallmarks of much new color photography *By Susan Weiley*

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When the image is what matters,  
printmakers ignore the old rules against  
mixing mediums and techniques

## The Medium Isn't the Message

by Ronny Cohen



*Booster, Robert Rauschenberg's 72-by-36-inch landmark print of 1967, combines lithography and silkscreen.*

"IT'S VERY AMERICAN AND CONSISTENT with what's going on," says printer and publisher Kenneth Tyler of Tyler Graphics Ltd. about the vogue now for combo prints—prints made by combining two or more printing techniques. "Recently I've seen more examples by younger artists who seem to be trying, in effect, to get away from standard uniform editions," observes Robert Rainwater, keeper of prints at the New York Public Library. Since the late 1960s, when they became a mainstream development in printmaking,

combo prints have reflected the contemporary graphic sensibility—the desire of artists, printers and publishers to break new ground and expand the limits of prints and printmaking.

Even the earliest combination prints, which are several centuries old and were made by mixing various intaglio techniques such as etching, engraving and drypoint, can be considered progressive. Certainly this is true of what is probably the most famous example, Rembrandt's so-called *Hundred Guilder Print*, which he completed around the middle of the 1640s. This tour-de-force work combining etching and drypoint indicates that even the greatest of the old masters felt the need to go beyond what

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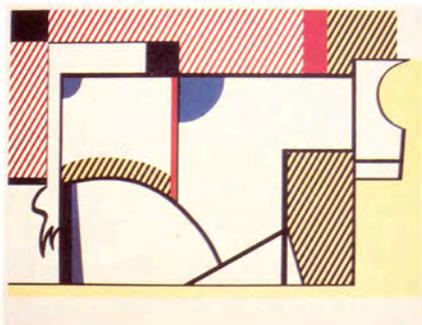
*Martha Diamond began her **Battery Park City**, 1985, as a lithograph and then added silkscreen and etching.*

had been done before—using a new technical approach not so much as an end in itself but as a way of heightening the expressive value of the printed image. This remains a major concern for contemporary artists creating combo prints.

Yet between the time of Rembrandt and, say, Robert Rauschenberg, a contemporary master of the combo print, there seems to have been little interest in mixing print techniques. As the print field expanded in the modern period with the invention of various lithographic, and later screenprinting, processes, the combination of other techniques besides intaglio in a single sheet should have been the next, easy step in the history of Western printmaking. But profound shifts in taste and in thinking about prints and printmaking apparently had to take place first. Even the rise of the artist-printmaker in the late 19th and early 20th

centuries had only peripheral impact on the development of the combo print. Despite instances of true technical invention in the prints of Degas, Gauguin and Munch, and the bravura technique found in the works of Toulouse-Lautrec, Ensor, the German

*To emphasize depth in his **Bull IV**, 1973, Roy Lichtenstein mixed linocut with lithography and silkscreen.*



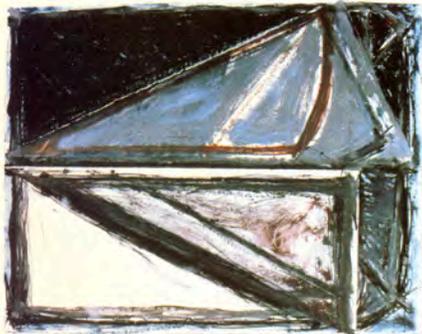
COURTESY GEMINI G.E.L.

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Expressionists, Rouault and Picasso, artists did not seem particularly interested in crossing the barriers that separated the different print mediums. Rule-bound ways of working, typical of the European tradition, encouraged even the most daring and visionary artists to focus on a single medium for a single sheet or at most to investigate kindred techniques. "A printer was a specialist in only one kind of printing," explains Riva Castleman, director of the Department of Prints and Illustrated Books at the Museum of Modern Art. "An intaglio printer never would touch lithography, for example." And that situation lingered on, influencing the general course of American fine-art printmaking into the 1960s.

At the start, the artist-oriented presses and workshops that sprang up in America in the late '50s and early '60s reflected what Castleman has called the "European distaste for combining things." Each press and workshop specialized. Lithography was the chosen domain of ULAE (Universal Limited Art Editions), established by Tatyana Grosman in 1957 in West Islip, Long Island, and the Tamarind Lithography Workshop, founded by June Wayne in Los Angeles in 1959. Etching was the main activity at the Crown Point Press of Oakland, California, founded by Kathan Brown in 1962. Printer and publisher Garner Tullis recalls that when he started his first press, Experimental Impressions, in Philadelphia in 1962, the atmosphere for printmaking was "rigid." Steven Andersen, now of Vermillion Editions in Minneapolis, remembers: "When I started printing in the mid-'60s, the notion of mixing mediums was forbidden."



COURTESY PETERGRINE PRESS

ABOVE *Untitled*, 1985, a monprint by Andrea Rosenberg, consists of a lithograph base and collage.

RIGHT Each section of Jennifer Bartlett's *Graceland Manston*, 1978-79, was printed in a different medium.

OPPOSITE Steven Sorman takes a hands-on approach to create such collage prints as *Forgetting and Forgetting*, 1985, which required hand-coloring.

Still, there were stirrings of change. They had been stimulated, in part, by the revolutionary, clear-the-slate sensibility of Abstract Expressionism, which inspired such radical younger artists as Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns and paved the way for Pop art and Minimalism. Suddenly, nothing was sacred. Artists were quick to challenge previously accepted methods, materials and ideas and to reevaluate the very nature of their chosen medium. The experimental spirit characteristic of American art of the period took firm root in certain quarters of the printmaking world; nowhere did it flourish in grander style than at the Gemini workshop in Los Angeles.

ESTABLISHED IN 1965 AS GEMINI LTD. BY Kenneth Tyler, who had been technical director at Tamarind, the workshop was rechristened Gemini G.E.L. in 1966, when partners Sidney Felsen and Stanley Grinstein joined it and started publishing activities. With the publication in 1967 of Robert Rauschenberg's *Booster*, which combined lithography and silkscreen, Gemini stood at the forefront of new developments in combo prints.

"It was a first for us," Tyler says. Although *Booster* was supposed to have been a lithograph—the biggest hand-pulled lithograph to date—it finally needed to be silkscreened. "The problem," says Tyler, "was printing an opaque grid on top of black. You can't print white or color over black with lithography. Lithography is not opaque, it's semi-opaque. The only medium that gives you opacity is silkscreen." Felsen remembers another reason: "The size and shape of the image involved made it necessary to go to screenprinting." The print was sent out to be silkscreened by Jeffrey Wasserman. And the final product, which measures 72 by 36 inches, is both a landmark big print and a landmark combo print. Its silkscreen section, a red grid—really a celestial chart—sits majestically over the lower two thirds of the composition, animating the surface, bringing the complex multilayered image to life.

Shortly after *Booster* was printed, Wasserman joined Gemini. A screenprinting shop was added in 1971 and published a number of lithography and silkscreen prints by Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein and others. Gemini, under Tyler's direction, acquired a reputation for combo prints. "I always wanted to put all the mediums together," Tyler explains, "and felt it was an absolute necessity to do so." He has been able to do just that at his own press, which he established in 1973 in Bedford, New



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COURTESY TYLER GRAPHICS LTD.

bossing were applied to achieve lush, painterly prints. Mixing mediums in prints seems a natural extension of Rauschenberg's interest in combining things—think of his early combine paintings. That his enthusiasm for combo prints and, specifically, for mixing lithography and silkscreen has yet to falter is demonstrated by a recent edition, *Sling Shot Lit.* In this series, each print comes framed in a special light-box assemblage. Ron McPherson recalls that scale again played a role in determining the decision to use silkscreen. "When you get to a certain size," he says, "you can't print by hand-litho. Instead of saying to Rauschenberg you can't have it, we used silkscreen for the larger images, measuring 54 by 75 inches."

For Roy Lichtenstein, who started working at Gemini in 1968, combo prints are an integral part of his printmaking. About his early examples, the artist recently said: "I recall I just intended to do lithography, but certain things were simpler to do in silkscreen. With *Peace Through Chemistry* [1970], I used silkscreen for the black lines. Litho lines weren't dense enough, and I wanted the black to be a little heavier."

According to Lichtenstein, he mixes mediums because "the complexity of the images demands it." Through the years he has found that the complexity of his prints, including the combo prints, follows the growing complexity of his other work. In the "Bull Profile" series of 1973, he mixed linocut with lithography and silkscreen. Linocut heightens the illusionistic sensations of depth, of linear vibrations and planar movements in and out of the surface—qualities that make these prints so dynamic. Lichtenstein's recent prints also reveal his increasing involvement with various mediums. "In the early years, I often did the dots in my prints with photo-lithos and photo-silkscreens. I've been steadily getting more into doing things by hand."

One of the things he clearly delights in doing by hand is woodcut. "When you cut a silkscreen it's so simple to make a flawless line," Lichtenstein explains. "You can try to make it as perfect in woodcut, but it's harder to do. I like that quality in woodcut." Woodcut is one of the mediums mixed along with silkscreen and lithography in the "Paint-

York, after leaving Gemini. In addition to making available every imaginable print medium and technique, Tyler Graphics offers its own papermaking operation.

After Tyler's departure, Gemini continued to grow. In 1977-78 it added etching and in 1980 woodblock. Gemini works with outside consultants like former Gemini printer Ron McPherson and is ready to go to great lengths to do, as Felsen says, "anything the artist wants to do." He added: "Combination prints have been developed and encouraged in our shops to help artists achieve certain results." And these results have been impressive and exciting.

During the early '70s Rauschenberg continued to explore combinations of lithography and silkscreen. He used both mediums along with collage in *Cardbirds* (1970-71), a flamboyant hand-assembled edition featuring sculptural cardboard sections. He alternately split and paired the mediums in *Horsefeathers* (1973), a bold mixed-media series and variant edition in which additional techniques like pochoir (a stencil process for making color prints), collage and em-



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COURTESY JOHN NICHOLS PRINTMAKERS AND PUBLISHERS



**ABOVE** *In Waiting: Christina, 1984, Michael Shanoski uses silkscreen to achieve opacity and lithography to create transparent effects.*

**RIGHT** *T. L. Solien used a deep etching technique for his 1982 lithograph and screenprint **The Three Sailors**.*



COURTESY VERMILION EDITIONS LTD

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Artist Alan Shields  
and printer Rodney  
Konopaki proof a  
piece from Shields'  
recent "Circle" series  
at the Tyler Graphics  
workshop.



COURTESY TYLER GRAPHICS LTD

ings" series (1983-84) and the new "Landscapes" series—two of the artist's most ambitious printing projects to date. In the "Landscapes," in which references are made to the German Expressionists, van Gogh and other artists, the imagery consists of different brushstrokes. Brushstrokes are a favorite motif for Lichtenstein. In these prints he contrasts what he calls real or natural brushstrokes, done in lithography and in silkscreen, with cartoon brushstrokes, done in woodcut.

Both the "Paintings" and the "Landscapes" were very complicated to print. In the "Paintings," one of the main difficulties was collaging on the foil used to form the frames that surround some of the images. As Ron McPherson tells it, "Roy had a very specific look in mind. And we went through everything to get it. None of the presses in the workshop could handle the amount of pressure necessary to collage on 40 or 50 inches of foil." The solution was "to go out into industry and find a suitable process there." The problem with the "Landscapes" was the proofing. "There were so many colors," McPherson says. For Sidney Felsen, this project was indicative of the "extreme care, beyond the normal demands of time and concentration," that can be required to get the correct registration—the precise alignment of the colors—in combo prints.

**A**T TYLER GRAPHICS ONE WAY OF GETTING better control over mixed-media printing is to use handmade paper, which is produced at Tyler's own paper mill. "Paper is custom made for the print the artist is working on," explains Ken Tyler. "It's a great advantage. In the past, you had to wait for paper, try it and proof it." Now Tyler can test a batch of paper and readily change its weight to better sustain the pressure of the presses, or vary the surface to best show off the distinctive marks of the different print mediums. Another way of sharpening control is to laser-cut woodblocks, a technique adapted by Tyler

*Ronny Cohen is a critic and art historian living in New York.*

from industry. According to him, the laser "is very clean in its cut and accurate, able to reflect a line drawing with none of the distortions you get by hand." Results, as evidenced by recent combo prints by Frank Stella and Alan Shields, are art objects with amazingly high visual energy and strong visceral presence.

At Tyler, not only does the paper have to suit the printing but the printing has to accommodate the paper. This is the case with Alan Shields' prints from his new "Raggedy Circumnavigation" series. Shields, who has worked at Tyler since 1975, is, as Tyler says, "almost exclusively a mixed-media printer." He has done just about everything that can be done both in and to paper, from etching, lithography, silkscreen, block printing and stenciling to stitching, collaging and laminating. A veteran paper maker as well, he is extremely sensitive to the ways paper takes to printing. For example, in the course of working on his new series, Shields has found that doing block printing with a hydraulic etching press allowed him "to press down directly on the paper rather than rolling it through." And this makes a difference. "It produces less stress on the paper and an impression that's a lot more textural," he says.

**S**UBTLITIES OF THIS KIND HELP DETERMINE the success of a combo print. So does the kind of teamwork involved. No one engaged in the activity works alone. For Shields, teamwork is a "vital and interesting part of it." Calling himself "a theatrical artist in a funny kind of way," he explains: "Being there is an essential ingredient for me. I tend to try a lot of different things and like to do true collaborations with individual printers and papermakers."

Collaboration was an important element in one of the most celebrated mixed-media prints of the '70s, Jennifer Bartlett's *Graceland Mansion* (1978-79), copublished by Brooke Alexander and the Paula Cooper Gallery. Using the painting of the same title "as a solid point of departure,"

OCTOBER 1985/79

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Bartlett investigates in this five-part print ways of seeing essentially the same image—a house against a field cut by a horizon line. As in the painting, both the angle at which the house is seen and the style in which the total image is rendered change from part to part. Each part of the piece was executed in a different medium and printed by a different printmaker. Hiroshi Kawanishi did the silkscreen section, Maurice Sanchez the lithography, Chip Elwell the woodcut and Prawat Laucharoen the drypoint and the aquatint.

Bartlett describes the experience of working with a variety of printmakers as “a crash course in printmaking. Each one had his own technique and approach. We had a meeting, and all of the printers had been given the same color chart to work from.” The intention, she says, was to allow each print medium to retain “its own natural quality.” But the colors, as Elwell explains, “had to be the same throughout,” a difficult problem here because “you don’t get the same blue with silkscreen as with aquatint.” Problems ranged from resolving the registration in the drypoint—the paper kept stretching—to keeping the lithographic plates from breaking. But the main task—to print a balanced and integrated image that would be true to the distinctive character of each of the five mediums—required collaboration among the printers themselves. That is the aspect Elwell liked best. “For me, it was nice to work around other printers. We’re usually not around one another, and printers can talk with one another in a way you can’t talk with artists or publishers.”

Sidney Felsen says that combo prints bring the people in his different shops “all together working on a project with common problems and tend to stimulate the spirit of competition and exchange of ideas among the groups.” And he stresses that combos “are not about just using processes that are available.” A similar sentiment is held by Bill Goldston of ULAE. He says: “The studio has never been involved in technical things but in esthetic considerations. We’re not selling technique. We are interested in giving artists the opportunity to express ideas in printing mediums.”

ULAE has published a number of outstanding combo prints, notably Jasper Johns’ *Scent* (1975), a lithograph, linocut and woodcut; various Rauschenberg prints, such as *Bazaar*, that mix photogravure and offset printing; and Susan Rothenberg’s *Between the Eyes* (1983-84), a woodcut, lithograph and collage combination with hand addition that won first prize in this year’s Modern Graphic Biennial, a prestigious juried competition held in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia. The Rothenberg print presents a strikingly poetic image that is related to her recent paintings about Mondrian. It started out, Rothenberg says, as “a very black lithograph and went through many different stages.” She wanted “a different feeling” in one of the key motifs—“a ghost image”—and decided on woodcut to get it. Printed onto the litho, the woodcut figure hovers on the surface of the print like a spectral presence, the textural pattern of its torso emanating a psychic glow. As Goldston says, “*Between the Eyes* worked its way into being a combination.” His approach to an artist working in the studio is: “Whatever they feel like doing, you do.” Apparently neither he nor Rothenberg anticipated the stunning results they got.

A practical approach to both printmaking in general and combo prints in particular is expressed by Judith Solodkin, director of Solo Press in New York. “I’ve always done

what had to be done,” she explains. “As a printer you have to use your wits, to figure out what’s applicable. You have so many choices, to limit yourself seems foolish.” From his vantage point, veteran artist-printmaker Michael Mazur more or less agrees. Talking about his own approach to prints, he says: “I feel as I go along that I’m always pushing it to get to where I want. I’m not going to be a purist and hold back because of some rule. I think it’s silly.” Not surprisingly, Solodkin and Mazur worked very well together to produce Mazur’s *Wakeby Night* (1984). A lithograph with a woodcut inset, the print incorporates much monoprinting as well as some transfers and overlaps of imagery—what Mazur calls “playing around with the printing process.” “Judith and I leave things open when working,” he explains. “So much of that print had to do with responding to how the printing worked out.” Mazur, who describes himself as constantly “picking up things in the shop,” recalls that this was the way he got the idea for doing a woodcut inset and thereby turning the work into a complex combination print.

**A**READY RECEPTIVITY IF NOT DOWNRIGHT enthusiasm for different print techniques is found among many younger artists doing combo prints. Steven Sorman of Minnesota takes a direct, hands-on approach. “My work is generally collage oriented,” he says. “It gives me the opportunity to see 30 or 40 possibilities before choosing one.” *Forgetting and Forgetting* (1985), a line cut, etching collage with gold leaf and hand coloring from the recent group he did at Tyler, reveals the rich surfaces Sorman achieves with his method. “I try to be real pragmatic. If I need a certain kind of opacity, I switch in midstream to another medium.”

T. L. Solien, also of Minnesota, has done combo prints at Vermillion Editions Ltd., at Landfall Press in Chicago and at Tyler. He describes himself as “completely open” to different print mediums. Solien recalls that he didn’t like printmaking in school. “I couldn’t keep the paper clean,” he says. A few years ago, he was approached by Andersen to do some prints at Vermillion Editions. Seeing prints that Andersen had made with Harmony Hammond using “a deep etching technique” convinced Solien to make prints because he saw that it was possible to get the thick, impasto-like surfaces that characterize his paintings. Andersen’s suggestions about which mediums to use worked out to the artist’s satisfaction especially in *The Three Sailors* (1982), a lithograph and screenprint with some deep etching. “Since then, I devised my own way to use a number of techniques,” Solien says, and he believes it is the responsibility of the artist not only to have an “idea of the imagery” but also “to have an understanding of how it’s possible to get the results.” At the same time, he likes the experience of collaboration and continues to learn from master printers.

New York painter Martha Diamond, who has been making prints for about ten years, describes her approach as “workmanlike.” “You get an idea for the image, an idea for a medium, and do it,” she explains. Working with Andersen at Vermillion Editions, she completed *Battery Park City*, her first combo print, a few months ago. Diamond originally went out to Vermillion to do an etching, and she had some images and the scale in mind. There she talked with Andersen about what she wanted and listened to “his ideas about what prints could be like for me.” She found

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she changed her usual way of working and started a lithograph to which she added silkscreen and etching. "It was a real collaboration," she says.

At John Nichols Printmaker and Publisher in New York and Peregrine Press in Dallas, two establishments that attract and encourage younger artists, combo prints are more the rule than the exception. A veteran printer who began his career "with screenwork pieces for Warhol," John Nichols "set up to do lithography and screenprinting in 1980." He thinks screenprinting has changed. "In the '60s and early '70s there was one way to do it—big flats or halftones and some color. It was used in a very simple or direct way. Now we're not making slick things, perhaps because of the impact of Neo-Expressionism, which has placed a lot more emphasis on the hand." This last point may also account, in part, for the increasing popularity of combo prints. Just a quick look around Nichols' shop at some recent prints by New York painters Jim De Woody and Jim Richmond and Philadelphia artist Michael Shanoski shows how popular the hands-on, personal approach has become in creating today's mixed-media prints.

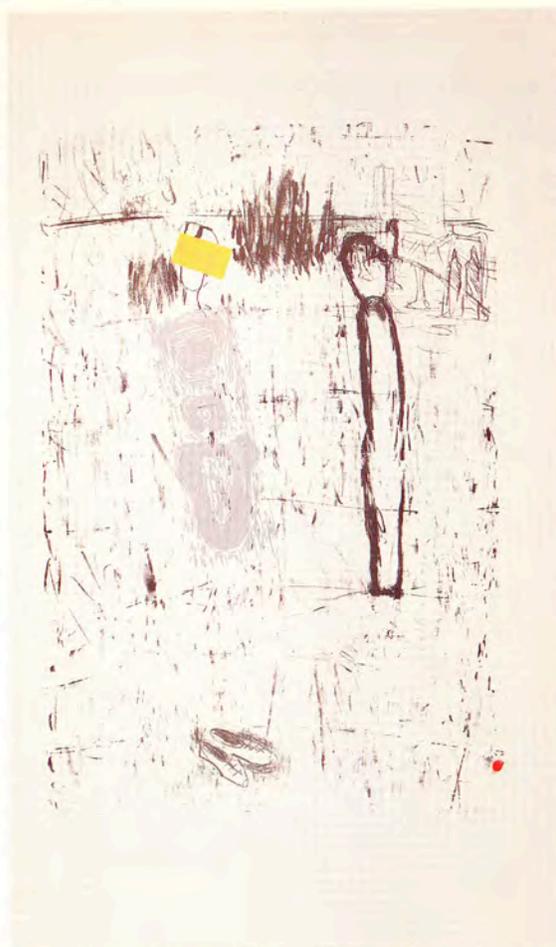
Printer Mike Hart, who set up Peregrine Press in 1981, also finds himself doing more combo prints lately. "We're working with artists whose work dictates certain qualities that one medium can't provide." Lithography, silkscreen and various intaglio techniques are all available at Peregrine. Of the artists who have worked at the press on combo prints, Texans Eric Avery and Andrea Rosenberg and New York-based painter Peter Julian are especially promising.

Jo Hart, who handles the publishing end at Peregrine, finds that mixed-media prints strongly attract both corporate and private collectors. "It's really a tactile thing," she says, explaining that many of these prints are just "visually more exciting" than single-medium ones. In this respect, too, combo prints have special appeal for the graphic sensibility of the '80s, which is very much pictorial and involved, above all else, with the appreciation of dynamic, gutsy imagery.

"The American market was open right from the beginning," reflects Ken Tyler about our willingness to accept combo prints. "I found the Europeans more reluctant to accept them in the '60s and '70s," he says, explaining that in the '80s this situation has changed because of the strong renewal of interest in printmaking in several countries, particularly Italy and Germany. On the subject of cost, probably the most controversial aspect of mixed-media prints, he points to *Booster*, priced at \$1,000 on its release, as an early

benchmark. But Tyler is quick to add that *Booster* was "an unusual print"; combo prints are not necessarily so expensive. Of their marketability Felsen says that "in certain instances" they "are more interesting and thus more desirable." The artist's market, however, is still probably the most important pricing factor.

As for determining the esthetic quality of these prints, most pros in the field would agree with a remark made by Judith Goldman, adviser on prints at the Whitney Museum of American Art: "So long as they are good, I don't care how they are made." The best combo prints, in other words, are the ones that can make you forget what they are but not what they are about—exciting artistic expression. ■



To achieve the ghostlike imagery of *Between the Eyes*, 1983-84, Susan Rothenberg created a woodcut figure, which was then printed onto the lithograph.

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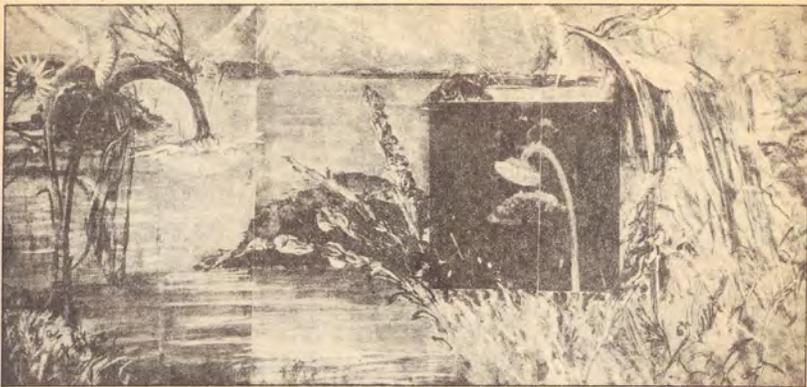
## The Boston Globe

### Mazur monotypes a breakthrough

Robert Taylor

March 20, 1983

THE BOSTON GLOBE SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 1983



"Wakeby Day" from the giant monotypes by Michael Mazur, now at Hayden Gallery, MIT. GLOBE PHOTO BY JOE RUNCIE

## Mazur monotypes a breakthrough

**REVIEW | ART**

**WAKEBY DAY / WAKEBY NIGHT,** monotypes and charcoal studies by Michael Mazur. Hayden Gallery, MIT, through April 24  
By Robert Taylor  
Globe Staff

Monotype, a painting on a flat surface such as glass or metal that is transferred by pressure to a paper sheet, is usually considered a minor medium. To observe the medium literally blossoming under a major artist into a major vehicle of visual expression — as monotype does in Michael Mazur's astonishing new exhibition at MIT's Hayden Gallery — is an occurrence of rare and joyous surprise.

For Mazur has accomplished nothing less than an expressive breakthrough — in its own terms as persuasive a demonstration of a medium's neglected possibilities as the paper cut-outs of Matisse's old age. Of course De-gas' monotypes set standards at the end of the 19th century, and the impact of the great Degas monotype exhibition a decade and a half ago at the Fogg, arranged by Eugenia Parry Janis, still reverberates on the Boston art scene. De-gas, however, practiced an idiomatic "gaslight Impressionism" as Janis puts it. Having fallen beneath the spell of



Michael Mazur at work on a giant monotype.

84 X 52 inches, required the artist's colleague, printer Bob Townsend, to rebuild and extend his press bed to accommodate the giant sheets.

If magnitude alone comprised the salient aspect of the images, however, they would mean no more than asterisks in "The Guinness Book of Records"; still it should be acknowledged that the monumental size of the monotypes is an aspect of their power, the interactions of great and small in the structure of landscape. As Katy Kline's lucid catalogue essay indicates, the sheer physical problem of stretching the arm and evaluating a mark in relation to its

ture and does so by emphasizing the surface plane and by overlapping two of the panels. On a level of visual perception and its philosophical overtones, the inset sunflower, gladioli and watery vistas of the islands in the lake are contiguous with the "real" view, just as a depicted canvas in a Magritte picture paradoxically matches the landscape depicted upon the canvas. On a level of meditative lyricism, the pictures-within-a-picture imply the process of memory, for within the day scene exists a closeup of the drooping sunflower by night, freckled by phosphorescent luminosity, the islands impalpable beneath the moon, while among the night scene

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Mazur's pair of triptych monotypes, commissioned by MIT for a new dormitory at 500 Memorial drive, are the largest monotypes ever created. The measurements of the work alone, a jumbo



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But Mazur has overcome the difficulties with deceptive tranquility. "Wakeby Day / Wakeby Night" presents the contrasts of a body of water – Wakeby Lake, an island-flecked panorama on Cape Cod where Mazur and his family spend the summer – viewed through the rhythmic foreground of the flowers of a garden. In art historical terms there is another level suggested, that of Monet's "Waterlilies," though the figure-ground relations are entirely different, the sense of space and the concept, which in Mazur involves the streaks and overprinted "ghosts" for which the medium is celebrated. Nevertheless, the Monet waterlilies, despite their ambiguous space, share with the Mazur a feeling for the vegetative qualities of a domestic landscape that is paradoxically rank and untamed.

The thematic links of the images suggest the panels are "about" the cyclic patterns of time. In Mazur's monotypes, though, time must have a stop; Each of the images contains an insert, a geometric square that functions on at least three levels. On a formal level, the square calls attention to the fact this is a picture rather than a mimicry of na-

ture and does so by emphasizing the surface plane and by overlapping two of the panels. On a level of visual perception and its philosophical overtones, the inset sunflower, gladioli and watery vistas of the islands in the lake are contiguous with the "real" view, just as a depicted canvas in a Magritte picture paradoxically matches the landscape depicted upon the canvas. On a level of meditative lyricism, the pictures-within-a-picture imply the process of memory, for within the day scene exists a closeup of the drooping sunflower by night, freckled by phosphorescent luminosity, the islands impalpable beneath the moon; while among the night scene flares a recollection of the lake by day, pale-gold, with the blossom of a sunflower – which has its roots in night earth – bumping against a small island, full of cast shadows and strong contrasts of light.

The textural opulence of the images derives in part from the happy accident that monotype encourages, variations of tone and value that owe their origins to pictorial incident. A roller trailing spatters of ink over glass and metal can pick up part of a form and deposit it somewhere else. Monotypes are in a sense like fugues in music. Theme and variation, inversion and expansion, the resolution of several lines that change meaning in the process of undergoing restatement.

Yet this process, too, is analogous to memory. Our minds do not work like interior monologues, however useful the interior monologue may prove to Hamlet or Molly Bloom; the interior monologue is linear, conditioned by the needs of the printed word. Rather, our minds work in the manner of palimpsests, those sheets of vellum that were employed for medieval messages. After a person received a message on a sheet of expensive vellum, it was erased and a return message was inscribed. In time, the sheet was covered by fragments of previous communications, layers of meaning, dense hints and clouds of witness. A palimpsest has "ghosts," after-images, and in it, deposited by the roller of consciousness, echoes of event and emotion all the more plausible for not being final.

This is not to say that Mazur's panels are unstructured. They are meticulously planned. The contrasts of curving stalk and spiky diagonal flowerets, of petals that are huge and horizons that are indeterminate, of swift abbreviations of value and long-breathed passages of azure and shimmering yellow, all these endow the Wakeby panels with a magical intensity, evanescent as a summer day or night. The giant monotype in the process discloses another aspect of itself, an expansiveness Degas could not have known but, one suspects, of which he might have approved.

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## The New York Times

### Pictures on Paper

Alan Fern

December 14, 1980

December 14, 1980/The New York Times Book Review

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### GRAPHICS/by Alan Fern

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## Pictures On Paper

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#### THE PAINTERLY PRINT

*Monotypes From the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century.*  
Foreword by Philippe de Montebello and Jan Fontein.  
Illustrated. 261 pp. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art/Rizzoli International Publications. \$37.50.

"The Painterly Print" is one of the finest of the recent exhibition catalogues. It deals with an area of printmaking hitherto almost ignored, yet one that produced works of exceptional freshness and vitality: the monotype, an image transferred to a sheet of paper from a surface carrying wet paint or ink. The artist can work the ink until he is satisfied with his forms, but he must work quickly so the ink does not dry. After the first impression is taken, a second may be pulled, but it is likely to be a pale reminder of the first print. A third impression is usually impossible unless the artist draws again on the plate with fresh ink, inevitably altering the image. Thus the process received its name from its ability to produce just one impression without degradation.

The process has great potential for free, vigorous expression, since speed and decisiveness are of the essence. As the authors of "The Painterly Print" demonstrate, one of the sources of the monotype is in the expressive manipulation of ink on the surface of an etching plate in the process of printing, a technique realized in the 16th century by the Dutch artists Hercules Segers and Rembrandt Van Rijn.

The book opens with a historical chapter by Sue Welsh Reed describing the origins of the monotype and dealing with the work of the first recognized master of the medium, Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione. Essays follow on the place of the monotype in the work of 18th-century etchers (by Eugenia Parry Janis); on painter-printmakers such as Degas, Pissaro and Gauguin (by Barbara Stern Shapiro); on American artists working in Europe and at home (by David W. Kiehl); on present-day monotype artists (by Colta Ives); and on an artist's technique (by Michael Mazur). Written with precision and clarity, these essays are supplemented by 48 text illustrations. The remainder of the book is devoted to full-page reproductions of the 106 monotypes selected for the exhibition, each abundantly annotated.

The works of Degas included in "The Painterly Print" are compelling in their freedom of drawing, subtleties of modeling and warmth of color. Also included are prints by Mr. Mazur, Nathan Oliveira, Jasper Johns, Jim Dine, Matt Phillips (who had been working almost alone as a monotype artist since the late 1950's) and others that can survive comparison with the works of Castiglione, Degas and Prendergast. To mention only two other examples, William Merritt Chase's sober and masterly work and Charles Abel

Continued on Page 31

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### Graphics

Continued from Page 12

Corwin's brilliant portrait of Whistler will be unfamiliar to most readers and richly merit rediscovery. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Boston Museum of Fine Art and the authors deserve high praise for this handsome and informative survey of work unaccountably kept in the background of the visual arts.

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#### AMERICAN PRINTS AND PRINTMAKERS

By Una E. Johnson.  
Illustrated. 265 pp. New York: Doubleday & Co. \$24.95.

In the same number of pages as "The Painterly Print," Una E. Johnson has set herself a more difficult task. American printmaking since 1900 has involved a multitude of different styles, attitudes, affiliations and directions. Yet whatever else has been accomplished in this century, printmaking has become firmly established; hardly a painter or sculptor today has not made at least a few prints, and no museum or collector can ignore the graphic arts in America.

Miss Johnson addresses this complex situation in "American Prints and Printmakers" by writing primarily about the artists themselves, only occasionally explaining the circumstances in which they have worked. She is uniquely qualified to do this. In a long career as curator of prints and drawings at the Brooklyn Museum she has been a significant force in the world of American prints. She has known and worked with most of the major artists, curators and dealers of the past 40 years, and she has organized many of the most useful exhibitions of American printmaking to be seen in this country.

Obviously, no single artist can receive extended treatment in a book this brief. Miss Johnson's book is a sort of biographical dictionary, arranged topically, not alphabetically, and as such it will be exceptionally useful to collectors, dealers, curators or anyone wanting to find the basic facts about an artist. There is a reasonably extensive bibliography, but since works about specific artists are listed under the author's name—not the artist's

name—it is more difficult to use than it might have been.

Miss Johnson is at her best in the book's slightly more ample passages. Her section on Louise Nevelson's prints is a model of brilliant compression and insight. Her thoughtful treatment of the history and impact of print workshops in America is original and informed. Unfortunately, some of her other paragraphs are too condensed or perfunctory; nonetheless, the reader will find much that is unfamiliar in the book, especially with regard to women printmakers in America and lesser-known artists of the 1920's and 30's.

What makes her book only a qualified success is her frequent reference to works for which no reproductions are provided. The serious reader will need to have access to other books, or to large print collections, to get the full benefit of her learning. Nor is Miss Johnson well served by the designer of the book; grouping the color plates together is economical, no doubt, but forces the illustrations of an artist's work to be located far from the relevant text, on unnumbered pages. The comparatively reasonable price of the book is achieved at considerable inconvenience to the reader. The reproductions are insensitively scaled; in some cases prints of very different size are reproduced near one another in the same dimensions. These distortions and infelicities are far less dignified and attractive than "The Painterly Print" and less beguiling to the reader. Nonetheless, this is a volume that sets a direction for much future work (as Miss Johnson suggests in her preface) and brings together a wealth of information in convenient form.

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THE BOSTON  
**PHOENIX**

## Mazur and Men's Eyes

Jean Bergantini Grillo

June 13, 1970



Michael Mazur and his optical extravaganza.

Photo: Phoenix: Jeff Albertson

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## Mazur and Men's Eyes

By Jean Bergantini Grillo

About the first dictum I learned as a psychology student was that what we observe is never in exact correspondence with the physical situation. No matter what we see, some aspects are omitted, some added, some distorted, with each eye misperceiving differently.

A classic example was the Ames "distorted room experiment." Dr. Ames constructed an interior of a room which an observer looks at monocularly through a peep-hole in one wall. In actual fact, the floor, ceiling and the end wall of the room are sloped, and not at right angles to the other walls. If a child stands in the nearer, down-slanted corner and a man in the farther, up slanted-corner, the observer sees the child as larger than the man and thinks he is seeing them standing at opposite sides of a level room.

Dr. Ames' room came to mind as I stood in the center of six canvas panels linked together as an open hexagon. It was one of the optical extravaganzas created by Michael Mazur, a young (35), well-known Boston artist whose one-man show, "The Studio and Other Works 1969-70," opened June 9 at the Institute of Contemporary Art.

As I stood surrounded by Mazur's various views (perceptions) of a studio painted on the panels, a room partly in-focus, here in two dimensions, there in three, in scale, out of scale, I asked him if he knew of Ames' experiment. "As a matter of fact," he said, "I'm very interested in him; much of this work is based on his books. I want to move people into an optical experience."

The remark had been tossed out with no recognition anticipated, but it had been apparent that Mazur was attempting to show the viewer the many different ways one perceives. I had scheduled the interview with him as soon as I had seen the handsome

ICA announcement containing a series of intriguing photographs. The significance and incredible labor and technique of Mazur's work was obvious and enticing.

Mazur described his paintings as "para-photographic", in that he uses an airbrush but draws free hand; no camera is ever used. The reality of the image is phenomenal, but the visions he arrives at could never be accomplished with only an artificial lens.

"I'm interested in perceptual optics," he told me, "ever since my 'Asylum' series, I've been intrigued with visual aberrations, how monocular and binocular vision distorts. There's a lot of ambiguity here (in these paintings); these works are designed to disorient."

As we talked within the main work's center, Mazur, a small man with greying hair and the kind of eyes best described as Paul Newman blue, would shift my field of vision to show me how the canvas "moved". Standing in one spot, certain patches appeared real, correct; in another spot, they became convoluted, warped, cock-eyed.

"I call them events," Mazur said. "People take looking at things for granted. They don't realize how magical their perception is. I can look at corners and discover new things. I have a strange interest in edges. I'm asking for similar participation by my viewers. These works are meant to be an experience, emotional, exciting."

Mazur uses his studio in every work; obviously it is his main focal point, his environmental center. I asked about its relation to the viewer.

"A studio is a particular kind of place," he said, "in these works there is an emptiness that a viewer should think about. I wanted the work to be contemplative."

The more we looked at the work, the more discoveries I would make

such as how filled with light the room was, the light appearing both hazy and sharp with an occasional grey rainbow appearance.

He kept emphasizing to me that the works were not to be taken as design-problems. "I'm not a minimalist," he said, "these works are meant to be much more than a one-glance experience. They're not meant to hang on a wall but are set up so that a person comes into them with a certain set of (visual) anticipations which all of a sudden shift. I exaggerate lines to heighten focal points and a person begins to see many different things. I'm taking the theories of perception, such as Ames', and getting them back to humans, to show people how their perceptions work."

Mazur sat himself down on the cement floor and I joined him there. As we sat contemplating the works, I began to cheat a little, my thoughts traveling over his grisly, powerful drawings of mental wards done in the early sixties. I thought, too, of the many people he had studied with, Peterdi, Rico Lebrun, Joseph Albers, Bernard Chaet, Baskin—a whopping mixed-bag of styles, techniques, and mediums. From such a diverse field, I wondered if any one particular artist had greater influence on him.

"I'm just me," Mazur answered. "I'm concerned with having a sense of being a human being. Although I've studied with them, this work is just a thing of my own."

I mentioned that one or two people had lamented to me about Mazur's dropping his drawing and going into graphics, the not-so-subtle suggestion of pandering to current trends lacing their comments.

"I'm not interested in what I've accomplished," Mazur replied, but he seemed concerned about my remark and went into a short defense.

"Some artists take the newest things and do them to capture publicity," he said. "I'm not interested in selling. If I change, it's because I'm investigating; but, actually, most of my works do keep going back to the same things.

These latest paintings are natural, completely logical outgrowths of things I did in the past. You can see my background in aqua tints in them. How each perception is like a different state, but all put together. I can erase too, and change them just like a print."

His professional posturings aside, however, Mazur wants to be seen, if not bought. "I'm moving to New York," he said. I grimaced in horror. "No matter what happens on the Coast, or in Chicago, or even Boston," he lectured, "your work is going to be seen by the largest audience only in New York City."

Lack of acclaim hasn't been a problem for Mazur, however. He told me he has been selected for this year's Venice Biennale (the Academy Award of art, enjoying equally notorious ranges in quality).

"I didn't even know about being selected. A friend called this week and told me," Mazur began to chuckle. "He called to ask me if I would boycott the Biennale in protest of the war. A group of artists called the Provisional Cultural Government had made the suggestion at the Loeb Center in New York. I told him sure, I'd join the boycott... so you could say I was in the Biennale for about three minutes."

Mazur's blase attitude about boycotting such an honor is indicative to me more of his all-consuming involvement with his work than any heavy political ideology. He took great care to sketch his current project out in my notepad. It involves bringing his open hexagon full circle, the viewer entering through a door-like opening. The canvas panels will curve up from the floor and all rectilinear planes will be broken, the entire effect being geared toward optic freak-out.

"These works are kind of a compulsion," he had told me earlier, "a madness." Maybe so. But Mazur's method is so esquisite, I will happily, eagerly participate in it, boning up on my Gestalt and higher-order variables in perception along the way.

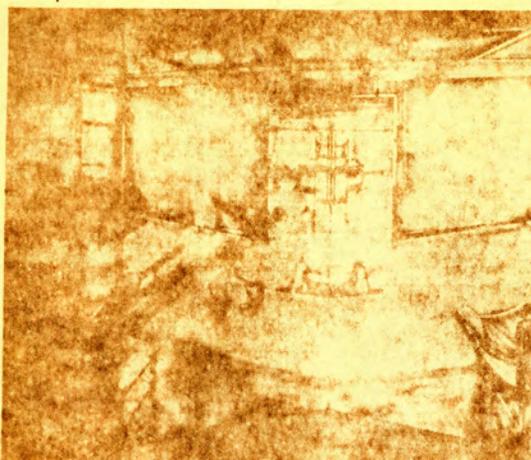
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## The New York Times

### Art: Michael Mazur Shifts Direction

John Canaday



AIRBRUSH WORK: "Study" by Michael Mazur, is at the Finch College Museum of Art.

### Art: Michael Mazur Shifts Direction

By JOHN CANADAY  
The Michael Mazur who some years back proved that he is a first-rate printmaker in traditional techniques is difficult to associate with the work of a new exhibition at the Finch College Museum of Art, 63 East 85th Street, not because of any deterioration but because of a drastic shift in medium and direction. The man who was a master of the stylus is now a master of the airbrush and is the only artist I can think of, unless you want to include advertising art and its bastard offspring, pop, in whose hands the airbrush is anything but a degrading convenience.

Mr. Mazur's airbrush drawings or paintings resemble soft-focus photographs by a master equipped with a camera with a selective lens freed from the physical laws that determine degrees of focus in logical progressions. The exhibition is a double-header called "Two Aspects of Illusion," and in his half Mr. Mazur creates some miniature rooms on jointed panels in which it is easy to become confused between his projections of commonplace realities such as windows, floors and furniture and his displacements, some of which resemble mirrored reflections. Artists over the centuries have entertained themselves and their patrons by creating illusions of space, opening

is right in line with the tradition, the difference being that he is working at a time when the camera has accustomed us to deadly accurate images of objective reality even while the techniques of cubism and related systems have accustomed us to forms shattered in space and time. Mr. Mazur's illusionism is original and rather good demonstration that these seemingly mutually exclusive ways of vision can be harmonized.

NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 1960

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## The New York Times

Far, far out on Broadway  
John Canaday  
July 12, 1964

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, JULY 12, 1964. ART X 19

### FAR, FAR OUT ON BROADWAY

Or, Concerning Some Geographically Removed Art Exhibitions

By JOHN CANADAY

THE American Numismatic Society, the Museum of the American Indian, the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Hispanic Society of America, an oddly related quartet, are joined like Chinese acrobats in a classical building on Broadway between 15th and 15th Streets. From 27th Street you can get there on a 7th Avenue bus, number 4 or 5, in about 10 minutes, which is approximately the flying time to Bolivia if you have a tail wind.

Just who thought of putting this culture center on the island is a mystery that would probably yield to research. But no explanation would affect the notion that pervades the place. It seems neither to agree the intellectual light nor to be pressed upon by the surrounding deteriorating residential section. It is simply there, in a mutually non-affected relationship like a scene imbedded in matter foreign to it.

This is a shame, since the Hispanic Society's permanent exhibition is excellent and the American Academy of Arts and Letters has a respectable program of changing exhibitions. The best of these, including the current one, survive the suffocating blanket of caution that always seems to leave this institution one leg behind what is going on and stuck with past deflections that have not worn well. But such problems are typical of leadership.

Spain is New York.

Last Sunday a handful of people were circulating in the Hispanic Society's exhibition rooms and in the art gallery of the Academy. (The other two institutions were closed and could be reported on later.) Few of the visitors seemed to be regular museum goers, and the guards in the Hispanic Society were having trouble with people who wanted to touch everything. The response was minimal enough, since there are beautiful things there, from ancient sculpture and artifacts on up through the 15th century—see Don Goya. A few fragments of Renaissance sculpture, some other people of the same period, some Renaissance tombs and architectural concepts, a number of Baroque and a

beautiful group of small El Greco.

An entire room is wasted on a series of big Rococo murals that look like festa advertisements. Another room holds a mixed bag of posters, illustrated magazines, photographs, Goya etchings, hand-drawn and box and pieces of memorabilia that wind up as a disconnected documentary on the bullfight. Elsewhere, a collection of door knockers, door rings, locks and keys is as beautiful as anything in the museum, although it may not sound so. There are quantities of hardware and iron. Installed in an imitation of a haunted court, the empty collection reminds you of a provincial museum where knickknacks are mixed with unexpected treasures that

you would send your friends out of their way to see in Spain. And probably more New Yorkers go to Spain every year than get out as far as Broadway and 15th in five.

The Academy's current exhibition, closing Aug. 30, consists of 15 distinctive one-man shows and a single painting by Hans Hofmann. Mr. Hofmann is a newly elected member; so are Louis I. Kahn and Richard J. Neutra in architecture, Chaim Gross and Theodore Roszak in sculpture, and Eugene Bernin (along with Mr. Hofmann) in painting. Ben Shahn, recipient of this year's Gold Medal for Graphic Art, also has an exhibition wall.

But the most interesting show, since the work is less familiar, are those of the recipients of grants conferred "in recognition of work of distinction and to enable (the recipients) to continue their endeavors." Grants went this year to Sara Sherman and Bernard Perls, already well known as painters, to Charles Wills and Robert Krasser in sculpture, and to Edward J. Hill, Thomas H. Cornell and Michael Masur in graphic arts. Gregory Gillespie, with 12 tiny oils whose subjects he crossed with nightgowns, received the Bickart and Hirsch Rosenthal award as "a younger painter of distinction who has not yet been accorded due recognition" and Harry Wons received the Brunner award for "a significant contribution to architecture as an art."

Top Man

Of these, my personal prize goes to Mr. Cornell for his set of 18 etched portraits of men conspicuous in the philosophy and action of the French Revolution, and Michael Masur for his 14 etchings, lithographs and drawings of the inmates of closed wards for the insane.

Their biographical sheets show that both men were born in 1917, that both received undergraduate degrees at Amherst College, and that both then went on to the Yale School of Art and Architecture. For whatever their coincidences may mean, both are first-class technicians (Mr. Cornell with an almost miniature definition, Mr. Masur with a broader, more shading etcher) and are already represented in major collections. Hence they are not exactly fresh discoveries. But they are exceptional for the seriousness and the solid depth of their prints at a time when the reluctance in printmaking, a very real phenomenon in this country, can reduce even a strong talent into apocryphal or ingenuously favored novelties that may delight and fascinate, but do so only as brilliant performances.

Control

Mr. Cornell's portraits of 18th-century Frenchmen are character analyses by the oldest convention of interpretive portraiture—emphasis by selection and exaggeration. Here and there this emphasis is pushed close to the point of caricature or caricature, but Mr. Cornell always stays

within bounds. The best of the portraits are memorable in their combination of the definition of an individual's features, the interpretation of that individual's character as history has judged it, and the situation of that character into a type—the idealist, the fanatic, the abstract theorist, the erratic opportunist, and on down the list.

Mr. Masur's psychics are also recognizable as to type, but they have the terrible accuracy of individuals who cannot be reduced, whose ugly physical presence is only the symptom of a tragic spiritual isolation. Meticulous, sensational, sentimentally or more clinical objectively are the most dangerous of the hazards that an artist must court in such a subject.

Mr. Masur skirts them all, his visually beautiful prints and drawings of the insane are sensitive through their relative human perception—an odd juxtaposition at this moment, when so many artists are seeking so industriously to reveal modernities within the contemporary.

TRAGIC WORLD—Michael Masur's "Closed Ward No. 13" is included in the group of 15 one-man shows, representing award winners and new members, now installed in art galleries of American Academy of Arts and Letters.

PHILOSOPHER—Thomas H. Cornell's "Hofmann" is one of award-winning series of etched portraits.

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## The Boston Globe

### New Talents Show In Hub Galleries

Edgar J. Driscoll Jr.

January 19, 1964

