

ARTS INTERNATIONAL

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By Carter Ratcliff

Bob Duran (Susan Caldwell) continues to stain his canvases in configurations that suggest elevated views of patterned topography. The elements of his patterns have been elongated so that they often stretch from nearly the upper to nearly the lower edges of a painting. This introduces faint figurative suggestions of some sort. It's impossible for vertical forms to avoid doing that. Duran appears to realize this, for the effect is very well-handled. It is an effect, obviously, which creates a tension with the more emphatic suggestion of a spread-out map. The tension is subtle, perhaps because it is mediated by newly softened colors—beiges, faded greens, blues and reds. Verticality enforces the surface in one way—"topographical" readings enforce it in another. Not so paradoxically, the triteness of modernist "flatness" is thus avoided: the literal surface is undercut as well as enforced from two directions. This sets the pictorial surfaces of Duran's flat forms free to be seen in a variety of ways. Various aspects of "surfaceness" are perceived from moment to moment, and sometimes simultaneously in neighboring forms. This is a matter of perceptions which don't admit of being described, nor are they available in photographs: Duran's command of color, texture and scale is lost in any but immediate experience. This is not necessarily a criterion of excellence. Duran distinguishes himself by leading one to suspect that it is.

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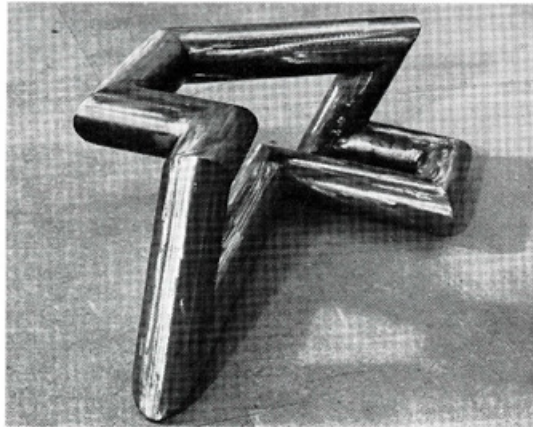
GOLFINOPOULOS

liam T. Wiley and Alan Shields. My favorite piece is a large stretch of canvas like a circus banner, which bears the words "el hielo" (the ice). Its warm, stained-in colors comment with varying degrees of friendliness on color-field painting, New York graffiti artists, lyrical abstraction, abstract expressionism, and any artwork of the last six or seven years which employs words. His tropical reworkings of maps of the polar regions are somewhat along the same lines. The cold is invigorating, Ferrer suggests, with the implied suggestions that some—the retilian?—will not be invigorated. Ferrer is not kind, but he is not unkind. Harsh but fair: reptiles are given their due. In some of his imagery, they are even given a chance to change their stripes or their body temperature.

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The Susan Caldwell Gallery is showing a selection of Clark Murray's tubular sculpture. Murray starts with a number of "issues" already resolved—that is, resolved for him, hence resolved for the viewer so long as his attention is taken up by Murray's work. This sculptor assumes that nothing is to be gained anymore by insisting that sculpture must be taken off the pedestal. He simply works as if there were no question of a pedestal: his forms are ways of "accounting" for the actuality of a thing's resting on the ground. In addition, Murray, like Ronald Bladen, is outstanding for simply accepting the fact that industrial materials have had possibilities for the "fine arts" for decades. It's somewhat shocking to realize that a number of contemporary sculptors are still seriously "investigating" these "issues".

At any rate, Murray could be connected with traditions of "drawing-in-space", but his lines—his straight metal tubes—have an unusual scale: they occupy much more of the sculpturally "drawn" image than is common in Picasso, Gonzales or David Smith. Sculptural "draughtsmanship" here takes on an oddly impacted quality, which—thanks to the delicacy with which forms angle into each other—turns into an oddly lightened quality: Murray's jaggedly tangled objects lead one around them until their material actuality, their physical heaviness, gives way to the actualities of a give-and-take between his decisions and the viewer's expectations. One sees only to see certain aggressively present elements "disappear" as a result of a minute change in the direction of one's



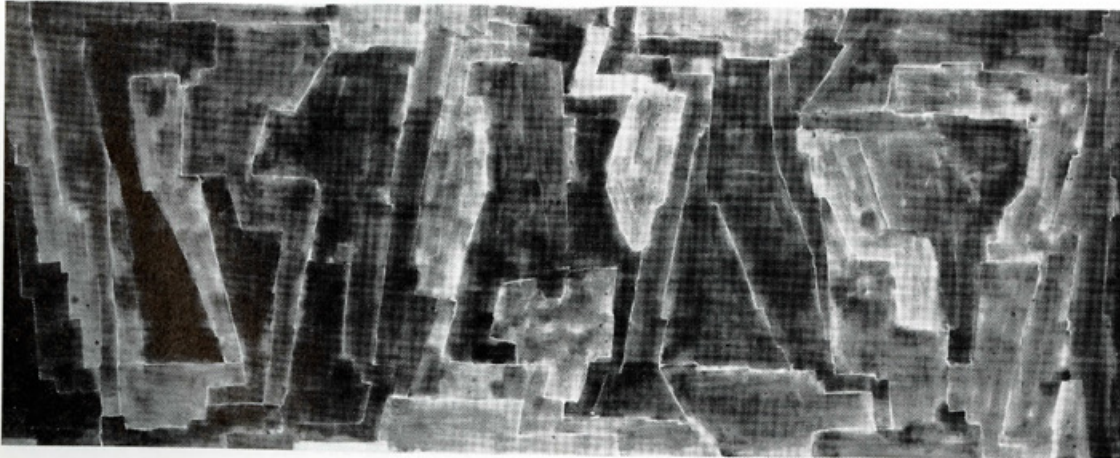
Clark Murray. *Untitled*, 1975. Steel, 18" x 46" x 36". Susan Caldwell Gallery

view. One sees elements that have no literal function, no job of bearing weight, reveal themselves as essential in bearing the "weight" of a piece's argument about space and its specificity when fully experienced. One sees matter saturated by an individual's intentions.

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Bob Duran. *Duke Ellington*, 1974. Acrylic on canvas, 6' x 15'. Susan Caldwell Gallery



Hantai. *Untitled*, 1974. Acrylic on canvas, 71½ × 74½". Pierre Matisse Gallery

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The Matisse Gallery is showing new paintings by Simon Hantai. Process is important here, not as "content" but simply as a way to indicate how these paintings look. The evidence of Hantai's process indicates that at some point he crumples his linen or paper and applies bright primaries and secondaries. When the material is smoothed out, there is a strong suggestion of sharp, craggy mountains viewed from above. A reversal has occurred. "Peaks" are colored and "valleys" are white in these paintings—just the opposite of what one would see from an airplane. The use of such "non-geological" colors as orange and red prevents this topographical reading from being overly dominant. Other suggestions are made, not the least of which is that the colored shapes produced by Hantai's semi-accidental method are interesting in themselves.

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Babe Shapiro is showing stripe paintings at the Sachs Gallery. The earliest is from almost ten years ago, the latest from last year. There is always one color—a blue, a gray, a beige—on each canvas. The stripes bear tonal gradations of this color from white to near-black in every case. In addition, the stripes are patterned to create a schematized version of traditional modeling. One sees a hexagonal pattern receding into depths as darker tonalities appear toward its center; or one sees regularly interwoven zig-zags made from tubular forms; or three vertical tubes are set side-by-side; or the illusionary tubes form a grid . . . There is interest in the fact that Shapiro's tonal gradations are not as regular as his patterns of line. There are always slight tonal variations which hint at a light source unaccounted for by the overall explicitness of the artist's imagery.

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Roy Lichtenstein (Castelli downtown) continues to work in series. His current show includes works from the "Entablature" series as well as from his "Modernist Classics" series. The modernist pursuit of what are laughingly called "ideas" or "concepts" has made serial painting a standby since Monet's time: "ideas" generate (and are generated by) serial approaches to experience so it was inevitable, perhaps, that modernist painting would share this source and effect of "ideational clarity".

Lichtenstein re-did Monet's "Rouen Cathedral" paintings, using benday dots, nearly ten years ago. Last year, he showed a four-part "Artist's Studio" series which reworked Matisse's approach to this theme. These four paintings are very large—when seen together they surrounded the viewer with something like an environment, the walls of a Lich-

Babe Shapiro. *Swallow the Call Note*, 1973. Acrylic on canvas, 96" × 54". A. M. Sachs Gallery

