



The Cultural Landscape 12: Special Edition

K.B. Dixon's cultural-portrait series continues with a "special edition" featuring trailblazing women artists Lucinda Parker, Judy Cooke, Phyllis Yes, Sherrie Wolf, and Laura Ross-Paul.

NOVEMBER 26, 2023 | K.B. DIXON

CULTURAL LANDSCAPE, CULTURE, PHOTOGRAPHY, VISUAL ART

Text and Photographs by K.B. DIXON

As with the portraits in the previous installments of this series, I have focused on the talented, dedicated, and creative people who have made significant contributions to the art, character, and culture of this city and state. In this "Special Edition" installment, however, I have narrowed the field of view to focus on a particular group of trailblazing women artists. These women have enjoyed long and storied careers in the visual arts. They have been mentors to and role-models for a new generation of female artists.

Though I have narrowed the field of view, my aspirations have remained the same: to document the contemporary cultural landscape and to produce a decent photograph—a photograph that acknowledges the medium's allegiance to reality and that preserves for myself and others a unique and honest sense of the subject.

JUDY COOKE



Cooke has been exploring abstract imagery and the structure of painting for more than 45 years. Recognized for her compositions that often reveal a harmonious combination of geometric and natural shapes, Cooke has focused her attention most frequently on the mysterious space between two and three dimensions. She majored in printmaking at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. She received her B.F.A. at Tufts University and an M.A.T. at Reed College.

She has exhibited extensively, including a retrospective at the Art Gym at Marylhurst University, and exhibitions at Portland Art Museum and Tacoma Art Museum. A founding member of the Blackfish Gallery and a Professor Emeritus at Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA), she has been the recipient of numerous prestigious grants, including the Flintridge Foundation Award for Visual Art, Regional Arts and Culture Council Visual Artist Fellowship Grant, Oregon Arts Commission Individual Artist Fellowship in Painting, and the National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artist Fellowship.

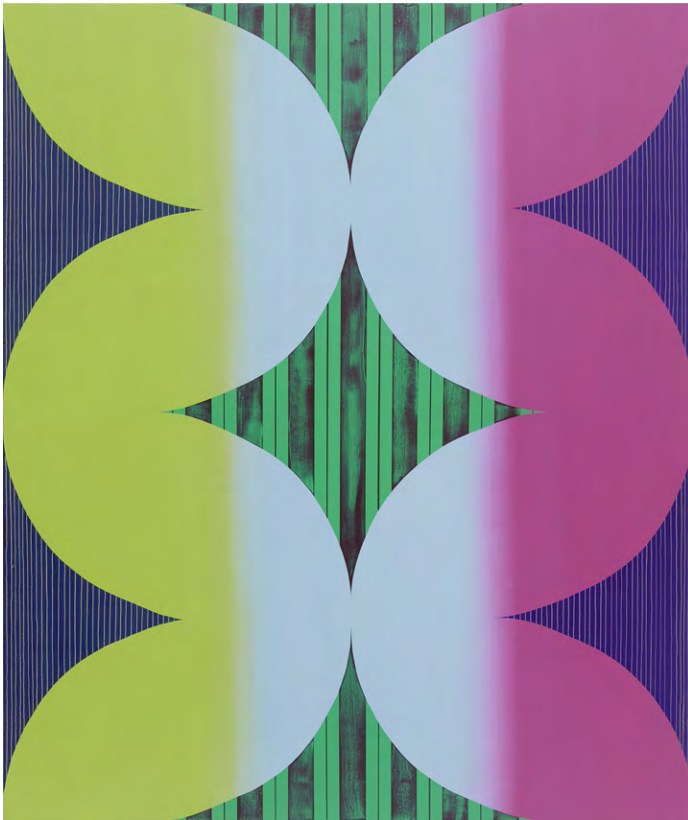
Her work is included in the collections of the Portland Art Museum, Tacoma Art Museum, School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and Boise Art Museum, among many others. She is [represented by the Elizabeth Leach Gallery](#) in Portland.

32 Artists on View at the American Academy of Arts and Letters

[H hyperallergic.com/487901/2019-invitational-exhibition-visual-arts-american-academy-arts-letters](https://hyperallergic.com/487901/2019-invitational-exhibition-visual-arts-american-academy-arts-letters)

American Academy of Arts and Letters, Hyperallergic, Olivia McEwan, Sarah E. Bond, Nyasha Junior, Valentina Di Liscia, Valentina Di Liscia, Ela Bittencourt

March 6,
2019



Shirley Kaneda, *Lucid Confusion*, (2018)

The American Academy of Arts and Letters presents their 2019 Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts featuring works by 32 contemporary artists. Exhibiting artists were chosen from over 130 nominees submitted by the members of the Academy, a prestigious honorary society of architects, artists, composers, and writers. Recipients of the Academy's 2019 Art Awards will be selected from this exhibition.

Through the Academy's purchase program, paintings, works on paper, and sculpture are eligible for purchase and placement in museum collections nationwide through the Hassam, Speicher, Betts, and Symons Funds and the Academy's general endowment. Since the purchase program's founding in 1946, through the legacy of Childe Hassam, more than twelve hundred works have been purchased and donated to museums throughout the country.

Exhibition artists include, Judith Bernstein, Rick Briggs, Peter Brown, James O. Clark, **Judy Cooke**, Charlotte De Larminat, Francesca Dimattio, John Duff, Inka Essenhigh, Hermine Ford, Aaron Fowler, Kathleen Gilje, Margaret Grimes, Peter Hutchinson, Patrick Jacobs, Shirley Kaneda, Alain Kirili, Doron Langberg, Eva Lewitt, Jenny Lynn McNutt, Paul Mogensen, Portia Munson, Rose Nestler, John Outterbridge, Jess Perlitz, Nathaniel Robinson, Michael Singer, Mark Steinmetz, Swoon, Stephen Westfall, Trevor Winkfield, Alexi Worth.

Invitational Exhibition of Visual Arts is on view at the American Academy of Arts and Letters historic Audubon Terrace (Broadway between 155 and 156 Streets) from Thursday, March 7 through Sunday, April 7, 2019, 1 – 4 pm.

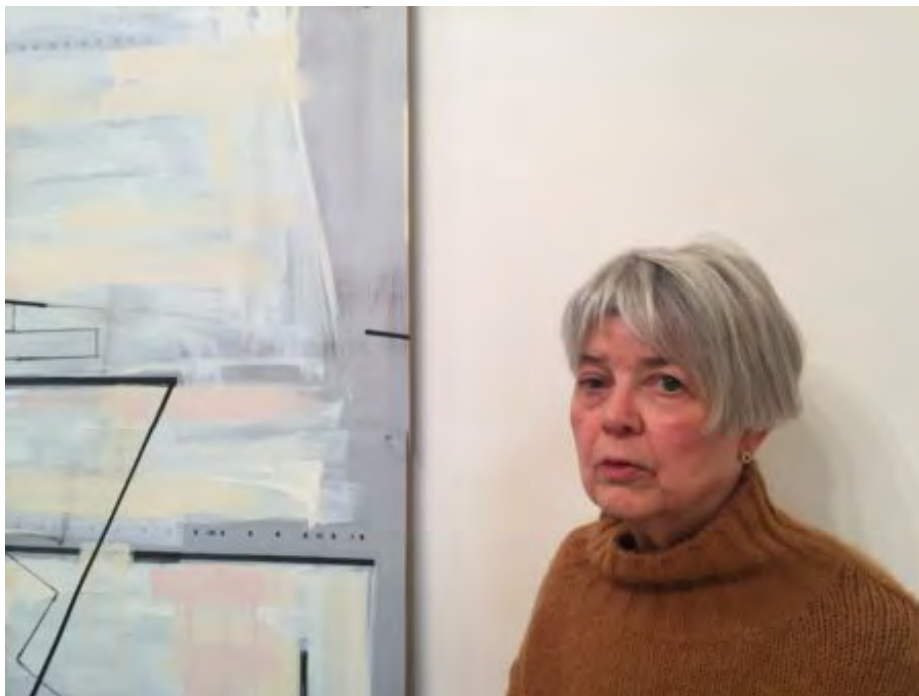
For more information, visit artsandletters.org/2019-invitational-exhibition-of-visual-arts/

Judy Cooke: The birth of an artist

 orartswatch.org/judy-cooke-the-birth-of-an-artist

Paul Sutinen

Since her first exhibitions here 45 years ago, Judy Cooke has been a leading artist in the realm of “painting” in Portland, though paint is just one aspect of her materials palette. All of her works in the current exhibition *Conversation: Aluminum, Oil, Rubber* at the [Elizabeth Leach Gallery](#) were completed this year. However, the range of sizes, formats, materials and motifs—ten inches to eight feet, polygon, square, skinny rectangle, found sheet metal, wood panels, rubber sheeting, tape, oil paint, line drawing, brushy painting—samples her interests over the length of her career.



Portland artist Judy Cooke

Cooke had a retrospective exhibition at [The Art Gym in 2002](#), *Judy Cooke: Celebration After the Fact: a retrospective, 1973-2001* (the catalog essay is by Bruce Guenther), and she has also been the recipient of numerous prestigious grants, including the second [Bonnie Bronson Fellowship Award](#) in 1993.

The exhibition at the Elizabeth Leach Gallery continues through October 27. She will be speaking about her work at the gallery on Saturday, October 13, at 11 am.

When did you decide that you wanted to be an artist?

Probably when I was about eight.

Interesting. Some people have that very early thought. Did you know what an artist was when you were eight?

No. When I was six, I had a fabulous first grade teacher. The art part of that first grade was always the best part. It was kind of unusual. This was in Bay City, Michigan, a small school. There were two very large blackboards in the room. Every week she would let two kids go up and paint on those blackboards, with chalk or whatever—something you could remove. The whole class got to do this. At the end of the week they'd vote on whether one of those pictures could stay up. It was a fairly big blackboard. So that was where I had a chance to see something on a very large-scale. And I always drew when I was a kid—tended to be large shapes. The crayons that everybody used were very thick. At school they tended to use these big materials.

The black and the blackboard are still in your work.

Somewhere, yes. I think I tended to work more abstractly, at an early age, than concrete observation. I mean really paying attention to space and three-dimensionality.

Did you study art in high school?

Yeah, I did, and that was wonderful. That was at Cambridge School of Weston [in Massachusetts]. It was a private school and I dropped back a year so I has two years there.

How did you decided to go there?

My sister was living in Massachusetts. I was the youngest of four. I was going to a very large high school. It was one of the only co-ed boarding schools at this time.

They had a good art program?

They had an art studio, a whole building on that campus. I was a boarder, so on the weekends I could just go up there and work. It was like having a studio.



Judy Cooke, "Pink", 2018, oil, aluminum, 14" x 10" x 1.5"

You're getting into a routine already.

Yeah. The campus was beautiful, a lot of trees. New England rock walls, which I'd never seen in Michigan—that really affected me. For a long time I was doing lots of drawings of rock walls—just in shapes. I thought that was really an amazing thing.

Then you went to a combined program at Tufts and the Boston Museum school. When you decided to go to art school were you aspiring to be a painter?

I didn't have any discipline in mind. I was one of those students who was very up-and-down. I did very well in literature, terrible in math. That sort of dragged on me for a long time. There are a lot of requirements all the way through school. So, the idea of art school didn't initially involve some of the structures that I kind of had a lot of problems with. The Boston Museum at that time—in the first year you had art history [that] was based on what was in

the Boston Museum. We were sent off to draw from specific things. There would be a slide lecture on pivotal things that they thought we should know. So, you're drawing and you're looking.

If you have to draw you really have to look at it.

You really have to pay attention. The drawing program at the school was three hours a day, with an optional Saturday. You'd be there on Saturday. You'd want to be there. I think if you hit a place like that as a teen and a lot of people there are much older—there were a lot of vets there, the G.I. Bill—and I didn't have any sense of their backgrounds. There were also New Yorkers who moved out of New York and came to Boston, applied because tuition was really cheap or want a change from New York.

There was competition.

Yeah, a lot, it was very competitive. And there were a lot of grants. That was one of the things that drew me to the school. I noticed the Boston Museum school had a lot of grants for women. I looked into the school's history, and the school started out as a finishing school for women in that area.

Yeah, so what did you do there in the end?

I was a printmaker. I had a year of sculpture and thought about going into that. But sculpture was a very buttoned-down structure. It was all from the figure. My first encounter with sculpture at the school was in a first-year design class, and I thought that was what sculpture was going to be—we were moving from one material to another, using clay or using wire—and I thought that's what was really involved. When I went into second year and had a class in it, I realized that was really going to be working more from the figure. Printmaking offered much more opportunity for just exploration—drawing in another way. It wasn't as pinned down.

You were in school in the heyday of abstract expressionism. Was that influencing your studies there?

No. This is Boston. It's not New York.

But there are art magazines.

A lot of art magazines. The discussion that I recall was around Hans Hofmann and that very small book *Search for the Real*, and this whole idea of push-pull [a concept related to the structuring of abstract painting]. I was in the printmaking department. This was being discussed in the painting department, and there wasn't a lot of overlap between those departments, much less than what you'd expect now.



Judy Cooke, "Spill/Time", 2018, oil, aluminum, wax, 10" x 10" x 2"

Did you take painting classes?

I took one painting class. That was based on still life; there was a portrait or self-portrait that we did.

Beginning painting, so you're going through standard problems.

Exactly. And what was happening in printmaking was you were basically allowed to set your own agenda. For example, if you had to do a wood block they would pass out these papers that suggested some sort of idea and nobody paid attention to them. They had their own ideas. The school was really a trade school. Art schools used to be learning about mechanics. They had to catch up with the university. Then you start getting BFA's.

It sounds like it was a very conservative kind of place.

Oh, it was. I got there 1959-1960. Around that time there had been a [Willem] de Kooning painting exhibit at the school, which I heard about probably two years later, getting to know some painters at the school. They were still talking about it. That was the first time I heard his name.

By then end of your time at the school what kind of art were you doing?

I moved into etching [but] I ended up doing a thesis—for a grant which I got for traveling in Europe for a year—with silkscreen [a stencil printing method]. It taught me a great deal about color—not really having known much about color. Because, again, I wasn't in a painting class, so that came very late. I had a color class, but that's barely touching it.

Silkscreen was pretty radical for “art” printmaking at that time.

It was just a commercial endeavor. We did some very strange things, mixed different glue solutions and stuff, see what happened, and overprint. It had a kind of looseness to it. I didn't continue it. I realized the whole process of touch was really important to me. If you go from etching to silkscreen, you're removed from the surface more. With etching you're touching something.

Were these figurative silkscreens or...?

No, they were really abstract.

So you were getting way out there.

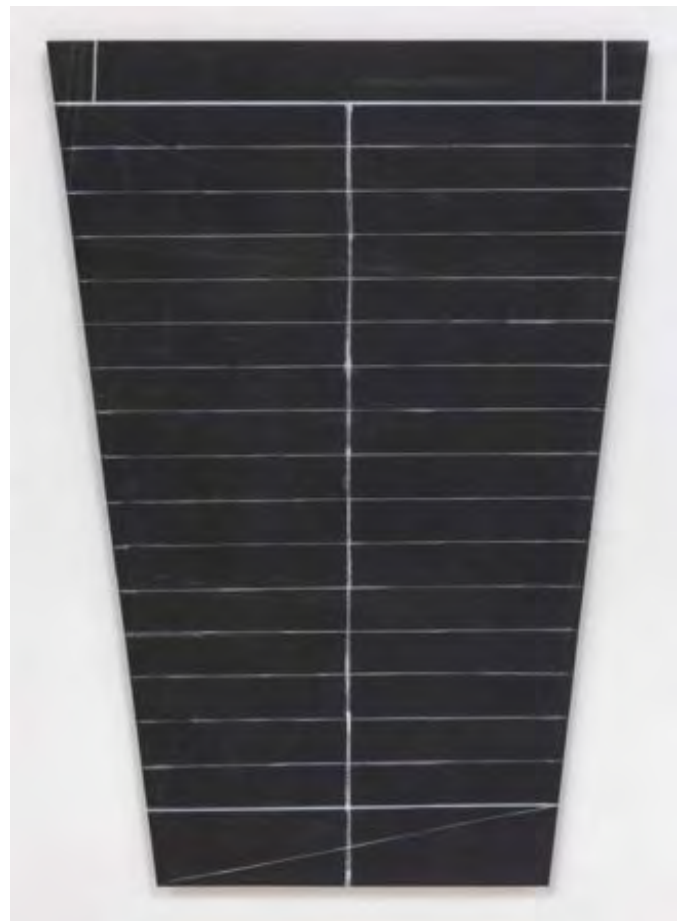
I guess so.

What did you do in Europe for a year?

Bob [Hanson, 1936-2011, also a prominent Portland painter] and I got married at the end of the post-grad year. We took an entire year. Went to countries that were relatively cheap. We spent more time in Spain because at that point it was much cheaper than Italy. We got to Paris, the Louvre, just overwhelming. When we were in Italy—we spent about a month—we tracked down all the Piero della Francescas that we could.

Was drawing something that you were good at?

Drawing was empowering. It was really important to be good at it, or try at it. It had a lot to do with space, ways of attacking the space, seeing the whole space and negative/positive space. I was probably much rougher on proportion. It



was a very serious endeavor to me, but it took a while. By the time I got out, I was much more confident about handling the figure.

Judy Cooke, Drawing, 2018, oil, rubber, crayon, 37" x 26.25" x 1"

At some point you started doing something that wasn't printmaking anymore. The first work of yours I remember seeing was made from tarps at the 24th Avenue Gallery in 1975.

Bob got a job at what was then the Museum [Art] School [now Pacific Northwest College of Art]. We moved from Boston. That was 1968. We got out here, and he was fine because he had a job. I had to drop back from substitute teaching to waitressing because there wasn't any work. I still had a lot of time to do work. So I decided that I wanted to do some very large-scale drawing, but then I immediately thought that if you do large-scale drawing, how are you going to install it?

That's the problem with paperwork.

Yes, and particularly at that time. You weren't seeing a lot of people just pinning up a large piece of paper. So, I ended up at Schnitzer's marine surplus and found all these very thick canvas tarps selling for 50 cents apiece. They were canvas. I didn't know quite what I was going to be doing with them. Some of them had drawings in ballpoint from sailors because they were sailors' bunk beds, and sometimes felt marker markings, numbers that had been screen printed. There was always a lot of debris. They were beat up. They had grommets all around the edges because they were installed on a ship. So I just cut some of the grommets off. I wasn't much with sewing so I ended up stapling them together. I'd staple them on one side, flip the tarp over and nail them down with a hammer. They held together. They were always about the same length, which I remember was about six [-foot] two [inches] or something—they had to fit some guy. So I could put as many of them together as I wanted. I was just using charcoal line drawing.

Found materials gave you a place to begin.

My impression of Portland after leaving Boston was that it was an amazingly clean city. There were old buildings that are now long gone, but basically it was clean. I kept looking around for more debris stuff. I got into a habit of walking a lot and looking down at the pavement and picking up collage, just scraps of paper, things I put together with masking tape and cardboard, also pieces of color, things that have color in them.

Nowadays there's digital art, video art...

In this day and age I'm still really a paper person. The work isn't always on paper, but sketchbooks are paper. The phone's great. I use it in the studio a lot to go through the process of something that's changing. That's helpful. If you keep those pictures sometimes

of course the result is totally different from the beginning.



Judy Cooke, Notebook page, 2003

Keeping notebooks is very important for you.

My sketchbooks go back to 1965 because we were taught to use sketchbooks when I was in school. [For each page] I'll date it, the process, any painting that I'm working on. I'll know the colors that I was using, I'll put those colors on a piece of paper and glue them in, or make a swipe of paint. I'll write down the manufacturer, what kind of paint it was, who made it. I'll have it as a kind of sample of what I was using. That's actually how I develop my color vocabulary. You're trying to find your own palette. I've been collecting pulp paper from the New York Times, just where there's a section of just a color, the blue page, green page, or chartreuse, cutting it out. I realized that you've got a sample already made for you and you can match that color. Sometimes you'll be looking for a green or looking for a blue, and you can go back to the notebooks.

Making these notes you are not only finding your palette, you're making sure you don't lose it.

Oh yes, and it's really helpful. I had a painting that was sold. It got some kind of water damage, but they knew they could repair it. They gave me a date and I found what materials I was using for that painting. It's a good habit.

Do you think of yourself as a painter?

I don't know. I thought about some of those categories. The work is kind of under "painting." I don't know whether that could really be pinned on me. I kind of think of painters—when I'm thinking about painting and I'm looking at history—there's a lot more feeling for that material itself.

Paint?

Yeah, paint. I got a lot of experimenting with that, but I never really worked with thick paint—just hasn't ever been something that's had much interest for me. Maybe that's a reflection on printmaking.

You do let much of your material assert its physicality.

I really like physical stuff.



Interior Margins at the lumber room

Exhibition closes Monday, Jan 30.



This weekend is your last chance to immerse yourself in the lumber room's exhibition, Interior Margins, featuring an intergenerational group of some of the Northwest's most skilled women artists. Originally conceived during an eight-hour dinner party consisting of some of the artists, Lumber Room founder Sarah Miller Meigs, and Reed College Cooley Gallery curator Stephanie Snyder (one of our 50 Most Influential Portlanders), this is arguably the most thoughtful exhibition of the region's art in a very long time.

The abstract work filling the lumber rooms beautiful loft space is uniformly strong and evocative, though sweeping in its range. There's the seeming weightlessness of Victoria Haven's spare *Oracle* photographs of geometric sculptures made by linking nail heads with rubber bands,

where the pure white wall disappears in the photos, leaving only the crisp black lines of the bands and nails and the blurred black lines of their shadows as they seem to float and fold in on themselves. Then across the room is the deceptive denseness of Blair Saxon-Hill's installation of burlap that has been coated in dry plaster and concrete and then draped on a wooden block leaning against the wall. Titled *What that Entails, and What Comes After*, the varying shades of gray and softly sifted concrete powder clinging to the burlap give it the appearance of the hides of office buildings that have been skinned, tanned, hung, and scraped by some stalker of skyscrapers. There's the brightness of Judy Cook's *Chord 1* and *Chord 2*, like the abstraction of a crossword puzzle, to the darkness of Kristan Kennedy's *E.G.S.O.E.Y.S.*, where ink and gesso on linen pull you in and coat you like the swirling iridescence of an oil slick.

At last week's talk, a couple of the artists, who have also been volunteering to staff the exhibition, described watching the art transform over the course of the day as the light streaming through the Lumber Room's grand windows changed. We only wish we had a day to sit and watch quietly.

For more about Portland arts events, visit [PoMo's Arts & Entertainment Calendar](#), stream content with an [RSS feed](#), or sign up for our weekly [On The Town Newsletter](#)!



Judy Cooke, "Animal," 2011

Continuing through January 30, 2012

Around the dinner table one evening in Spring 2010 something creative was on the burner. Eleven female artists sat for supper conversation with Reed College's Cooley Gallery curator Stephanie Snyder and Lumber Room founder Sarah Miller Meigs. These inter-generational women found an intersection through the power of the belly, opening up in discussion of painting, studio practice and family. Emerging in its wake is a powerful exhibition that suggests with paper (and other assorted surfaces) that Northwest women are operating in full force as well as defying any implied gender-specificity. **"Interior Margins"** only hints at traditional gestures associated with women's work. Instead these ladies have otherwise replaced puffy quilting, floral patterns and politico-feminisms with raw imagination and materials.

There are really two shows here. Perhaps this split has been partly influenced by the physicality of the venue. An elegant private loft cum contemporary exhibition space, The Lumber Room features two levels, several rooms and high ceilings of warm honey-colored beams. The dual

perspectives offer deep-rooted organics and the morphing primordial body (Kristan Kennedy, Blair Saxon-Hill, Nell Warren) versus ordered systems dispensing complex sacred mathematics (Linda Hutchins, Victoria Haven), symbology (Léonie Guyer) and fractured neo-geometries (Judy Cooke).

Two artists maneuver the in-between of these parenthetical aesthetics: Heather Watkins and Michelle Ross. Watkin's "Surfacing" (2008-11) groups black on black ink drawings, like fetal pods, emerging right at the very edges of the paper's border. The installation zig-zags over three adjacent walls in a grid that references the room, punctuated by the asymmetry of one absent corner, the white of the wall itself - perhaps an offering of hope or a nod to the tension of work-in-progress. Two of Ross' assemblages appear in the main room and one in the lower lobby, and they add the most immediate color to the space with the simple swatch of peek-a-boo pink organza combined with the pop of roughly brushed clementine over a black and white digital print. "A Shallow Metronome" is a nuanced drama that keeps the eye moving to and from a crudely deconstructed fabric remnant. In the entry the artist doesn't shy from curious stains, frays and other imperfections in "The Mannerist," a totemic work that puts us face-to-face with a femme fatale the morning after her raucous night of passion.

Sculptural forms add volume throughout the main space. New work by Saxon-Hill is a daring departure and shows off a promising young artist. From a painter who formerly made lovely small-scale landscapes comes a chunky, clunky pair of works that revel in the bold, sooty, lumpy visceralities of industrialized life. "What that Entails and What Comes After" seems on one end to be an homage to Joseph Beuys, sans a blatant riddle. The engaging work in powdery gray, like a cloak hiding something adrift in the cosmos, is assuredly the show's most poker-faced. In bare contrast are the racy lines of colorful sand embedded through acrylic cubes and tubes by Midori Hirose. Making reference to but unlike Sol Lewitt's "Incomplete Cubes: from the mid 1970's," "SQFT" acts as an open cage, an armature of camouflage dipping back into the day-glo fluorescence of the 1980's, when artists like Stephen Sprouse and Keith Haring reigned. But here by bracketing space the artist doesn't abandon the fine line for the sake of pomp.

Finally, Kennedy's "E.G.S.O.E.Y.S." hangs amid the near visible, elegant shapes of Lynne Woods Turner, writhing from a deep internal space. The thickly layered blackened gesso atop raw canvas recalls early Julian Schnabel. The twist in this five foot six inch tall work is a retrofitting akin to what appears to be a shroud-like breastplate taken from the outside in. In ghostly absentia the work is a comment on painting itself, lost layers of ideas, forever faded from the interior margins.

[Lumber Room](#)



Léonie Guyer, Constellation (no. 1–7), 2010 (detail).
Permanent installation, lumber room.

Interior Margins at lumber room, Portland

Judy Cooke, Léonie Guyer, Victoria Haven, Midori Hirose, Linda Hutchins, Kristan Kennedy, Michelle Ross, Blair Saxon-Hill, Lynne Woods Turner, Nell Warren, and Heather Watkins

November 12, 2011–January 30, 2012

lumber room

419 NW 9th

Portland, Oregon 97209

Viewing hours:

11AM–6PM, Thursday through Saturday

Interior Margins was born around a dinner table in May of 2010, when eight women artists gathered to converse about painting and abstraction with lumber room founder Sarah Miller Meigs and Reed College curator Stephanie Snyder, within the lumber room's inaugural installation by San Francisco artist Léonie Guyer. The ideas discussed that evening catalyzed the desire for a further exhibition, one bringing together the work of an intergenerational group of Northwest women artists who are transforming the diverse legacies and practices of abstraction for a new era.

In Pacific North America, the fertile tendrils of a functional, symbolic, and spiritual abstraction have existed for millennia in First Nations and Native American art and culture, exerting a profound influence on the aesthetic sensibilities of the western United States. The ceiling of San Francisco's Mission Dolores, founded in 1776, was (and is to this day) painted with a magnificent abstract Ohlone Indian design; the spectral, zigzagging bands are reminiscent of Bay Area psychedelic abstraction, and the work of contemporary California artists such as Laurie Reid, Sarah Cain, Ruth Laskey and Chris Johanson.

The art of indigenous cultures exerted a profound life-long influence on the Northwest's first great abstractionists Morris Graves and Mark Tobey. As the post-war period unfolded, Northwest artists and poets journeyed west to Japan and the Pacific Islands to study other metaphysical forms of abstraction through calligraphy, textiles, and eastern philosophy, or through the celestial properties of glass. East Coast artists such as Agnes Martin and Georgia O'Keefe sought the earth-bound spirituality and stark expansiveness of the west as a gestational environment in which to envision and practice new forms of abstraction.

Painterly abstraction in the Northwest, and the west in general (not terribly unlike the first great European abstract movements catalyzed by El Lissitzky and Kazimir Malevich) was born out of a desire to liberate self-consciousness from representation—to create a new vision of the self within a shifting, expansive field of interiority—a free radical, unfettered from machine logic and religious norms.

As art historian Briony Fer has elucidated, abstraction—as an evolution of modernist methodologies—must be continually contested; abstraction necessitates a continual revolution of perspective and material exploration. There is no one abstraction, but we intuit, as sure as day, the pull towards an unapparent logic of interiority, a fantasy of knowledge that abstraction's “unspoken desires and anxieties” summon from within.

The eleven artists in Interior Margins, North Pacific American artists by birth or relocation—and all by investment—enact the female body and the work of art toward abstraction's interior visions, swelling forms that appear pressurized to the body's proportions and the surfaces and fabrics that both adorn and reflect its symbolic potential, its mannerisms, while the Northwest's wet, forested clime continues to assert its aqueous pull within the practices of Northwest abstractionists.

Interior Margins is curated by Stephanie Snyder, John and Anne Hauberg Curator and Director, Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery, Reed College, in collaboration with lumber room founder Sarah Miller Meigs.

ARTFORUM

Judy Cooke

ELIZABETH LEACH GALLERY
417 N.W. 9th Avenue
June 3–August 14

Northwest artist Judy Cooke's most recent sculptural paintings on smooth, grained wood evince a peripatetic expressionism that emanates, in part, from their eccentric shapes, maplike imagery, and translucent, often streaming washes of oil in a palette of light, tertiary hues.

The works on view reflect Cooke's practice of responding to found objects and illustrations, as well as her recollections of urban wanderings through architectural spaces in Europe and North Africa. In *Back Room in Paris* (all works cited, 2010), for example, the artist revisits the delight of navigating a labyrinth of shops near the city's Porte de Clignancourt station. And in *Playground*, she constructs a joyfully disordered arena of geometric turns that suggest Constructivist principles liberated from dogmatism.

While working on these recent paintings, Cooke created *Untitled*, a long, horizontal photograph depicting a sequence of found objects from the artist's studio. The articles include a butterfly, a half-circle of worn sandpaper, an illustration of parallel lines, and a tender 1865 portrait of Arthur Rimbaud at his first communion. Each piece speaks to Cooke's interests and travels. Though this photograph was not hung in the exhibition (it is posted on the gallery's website), it offers invaluable insight into Cooke's process—outlines and abstractions of the depicted objects appear throughout the paintings, drawn with pencil and black oil in the artist's purposeful hand. Cooke's agile, calligraphic drawing catalyzes the exhibition into a vision of place that is both measured and literary, suggesting Proustian spaces of encounter, folded into memory through the act of painting.

— Stephanie Snyder



Judy Cooke, *Back Room in Paris*, 2010, oil and pencil on wood, 36 x 23".



'Interior Margins,' featuring regional women artists working in abstraction

Published: Wednesday, November 30, 2011, 5:16 PM Updated: Thursday, December 01, 2011, 9:41 AM



By **John Motley, Special to The Oregonian**



[View full size](#)

Dan Kvitka

Gallery view of the work in "Interior Margins," a group show featuring regional women artists.

As evidenced by "Interior Margins" -- the Lumber Room's group exhibition of 11 women artists from Portland, Seattle and San Francisco -- abstraction in the Pacific Northwest is exceptionally vital.

That such a thriving tradition exists here, however, is not without precedent. In a curatorial statement accompanying the show, Stephanie Snyder, director and curator at Reed College's Cooley Gallery, cites Native American and First Nations art, painters of the Northwest School such as Morris Graves and Mark Tobey, and the ethereal atmosphere of the region's landscapes as important forebears to this preoccupation.

Interestingly, those antecedents converge around notions of spirituality and transcendent

expression, asserting that abstraction, to borrow from the show's title, endeavors to render the "interior" visible, if, ultimately, no less mysterious. It was surprising, then, to see how few of the artists here appear to engage abstraction from this perspective, opting instead to deploy its visual language of formal and material rule-breaking for more purely aesthetic and intellectual ends.

Of the work that does embody a sense of spiritual longing, a constellation of site-specific wall paintings by San Francisco-based artist Léonie Guyer, permanently installed in 2010 when she was the Lumber Room's inaugural artist-in-residence, injects a dose of mysticism into the exhibition. These small rune-like figures of concentrated color appear throughout the space, as if keyhole passages to another world or characters of some long-forgotten alphabet. Their intensely intimate scale and repetitive forms are echoed in the work of Portlander Lynne Woods Turner, who, in a suite of diminutive works on paper, charts the outside effects of slight deviations in geometric form and coloring. There's a similar air of contemplative absorption, bordering on automatism, in Heather Watkins'

Review:
"Interior Margins"

Where: Lumber Room, 419 N.W. Ninth Ave.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., Thursday through Saturday

Closes: Jan. 30

series "Surfacing," in which the Portland artist dripped fluid bands of black ink on black paper, creating lines that appear or disappear depending on where you stand.

Admission: free
Website:
lumberroom.com

But the majority of artists in "Interior Margins" -- especially work by Portlanders Kristan Kennedy, Blair Saxon-Hill, Michelle Ross and Midori Hirose -- use abstraction's formal and material play for more grounded purposes. The pair of orbs that float in the center of Kennedy's "E.G.S.O.E.Y.S." appear to have been formed by the accreted overflow of a pair of paint cans set atop the linen surface, like incidental spills on a studio drop cloth. In Saxon-Hill's "What That Entails and What Comes After," the idea of painting seems to be abstracted as sculpture: a large white rectangle leans against a wall, like an untouched canvas, supporting a piece of cloth stretched tightly across its front and another draped limply over one corner, all spattered indelicately with burls of concrete.

Ross explores similar ideas in her new paintings, which incorporate swatches of fabric into her compositions, as stand-ins for blocks of painted color, which unravel from the picture plane into space. As the exhibition's sole sculptor, Hirose offers a pair of Sol LeWitt-inspired cubes, which adopt the stark geometries of Minimalism, only to undermine their purity with fantastically psychedelic patterns of painted sand encased in transparent acrylic armatures.

While the artists in "Interior Margins" span multiple generations and tremendously divergent points of entry into the abstract tradition, the show succeeds in arguing for a specifically regional interest in abstraction, identifying cross-currents of thought that gird the visions of such a disparate group. There's a tremendously satisfying dialogue among the selected work, such as the triangulation of Saxon-Hill, Ross and Kennedy's paintings, which, in their own ways, all incorporate draped fabric. This curatorial rhythm allows, for instance, the playful painted panels of Judy Cooke and Hirose's more puckish conceptualism to conceivably sprout from the same family tree.

Certainly, the impact of region on artistic trends has diminished in an increasingly globalized world, but "Interior Margins" demonstrates just how critical a role setting has played in the story of Pacific Northwest abstraction.

-- **John Motley**

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Grant Masters

Grants mean paint, food for Michael Brophy and a four-month stay in Paris for Judy Cooke

By PAUL DUCHENE
The Tribune

The adjective "starving" is practically redundant when applied to artists.

It probably entered the language about the time early man (or woman) decided to paint a cave wall instead of going out and killing or foraging for dinner.

As a result, a Regional Arts & Culture Council award of \$20,000 can significantly

change the life of a winner, at least for a while. This year's

recipients are no exception.

Chosen from 29 entries by two panels of judges, landscape artist Michael Brophy, 43, and abstract painter Judy Cooke, 63, both of Portland, have different plans for the money.

"I'll buy paint, studio supplies, food and get my car fixed so I can go out," the cheery Brophy says in his North Portland studio.

"I've been doing this for 20 years" and received awards before, he adds, "but this is quite an honor."

Cooke plans to travel with her winnings. "My husband



RAC's other visual art award this year went to painter Judy Cooke, whose abstract pieces include a work in progress (left) and a finished piece, "Alexandria" (right).

TRIBUNE PHOTO: KYLE GREEN

and I plan to live in Paris for four months," she says simply.

Pamela Morris is the assistant curator of prints and drawings at the Gilkey Center for Graphic Arts at the

Portland Art Museum. She was

one of the judges.

The award is the biggest regional award an artist can score, she explains:

"It's only given out every four years in the visual arts field, so it's really a special

honor. The artists are judged by panels of peers — artists and historians like myself — and have to be established in their field for 10 years to be

See GRANTS / Page 2

Grants: Peer review adds meaning to award

From page 1

considered."

Photographer Terry Toedemeier won a grant in 2000 from the Portland-based RACC and vividly remembers what it meant to him. "It was pretty amazing. To have peer reviews really knocks on your forehead," he says.

Toedemeier was able to take a leave of absence to follow a pet project studying coastal headlands between Newport and Astoria during minus tides — those few days a year when geological formations are exposed by the sea. "I shot 1,000 4-by-5 negatives in three or four months," he says with satisfaction.

Actor Keith Seales also won a RACC grant in 2002 and traveled in the south of France researching three one-act plays, which will be read in February at CoHo Theatre.

"It was more money than I've ever had in the bank at one time, and it lasted me 14 or 15 months," he says. "I thought the best way to show my appreciation was to make a difference. I paid myself to stay home and write, then I spent three weeks traveling in Langudoc and Carcassonne and came back with these historical plays."



JUDY COOKE

Born: 1940, Bay City, Mich.
 Art education: Bachelor's degree, Tulus University; master's degree, Reed College
 Exhibitions: The Art Gym, Marylhurst University; Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland; The Oregon Biennial, Portland Art Museum; Linda Hodges Gallery, Seattle; Fassbender Gallery, Chicago.
 How much?: "Anywhere from \$1,000 to \$10,000-\$15,000 tops."

Abstract art, says Judy Cooke, is "not just a decorative means for something hanging on the wall; for me it's more than that." Cooke teaches at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in Portland's Pearl District.

TRIBUNE PHOTO: KYIE GREEN

Paintings loom large

Brophy's home is a 1903 grocery store on North Going Street between North Vancouver and North Williams avenues — a neighborhood that's being rediscovered. That wasn't the case when he bought his place more than a dozen years ago. "The banks weren't even lending money here then," he says, laughing.

He points to a picture of the building as Risley's Cash Grocery, taken in the 1930s, and explains that his studio in the old shop was hastily converted into an apartment after the Vauport flood of 1948 left thousands homeless. "I converted it back: there was a lot of stuff to clear out but none of it was structural," he says. Now he works in a 20-by-25-foot cavern with walls dotted with photographs of paintings he has completed — his own history and inspiration. A radio rumbles in the background, and his two mellow cats, Una and Dante, strike furry poses.

Brophy's landscapes are large, 6 feet by 6 feet or bigger, and often are subjects to warm an environmentalist's heart. While he also paints pristine Northwest landscapes, he's much more interested in what happens when man messes them up.

"I'm not against logging," he says. "When I started painting, I was taken back to be thought of as an environmental painter. I never thought I'd be taken for doing agitprop or polemic. I think logging's fine if it's done responsibly. As far as the images I've done, I'm in a double mind: It's destruction,

but it's also grand and sublime in certain ways."

Brophy photographs subjects he wants to paint, or does pencil sketches. He turns initial studies into small gouaches — opaque watercolors on paper — or large oil paintings on canvases that are often luminously bright. He likes to work in large format.

"I find a big painting more intimate because it fills my field of vision, whereas a small thing is more a mental idea," he says.

"I find a big painting more intimate because it fills my field of vision, whereas a small thing is more a mental idea."

—Michael Brophy

Brophy grew up in Portland and first became aware of the drastic effect of logging when he drove to his parents' home on the coast.

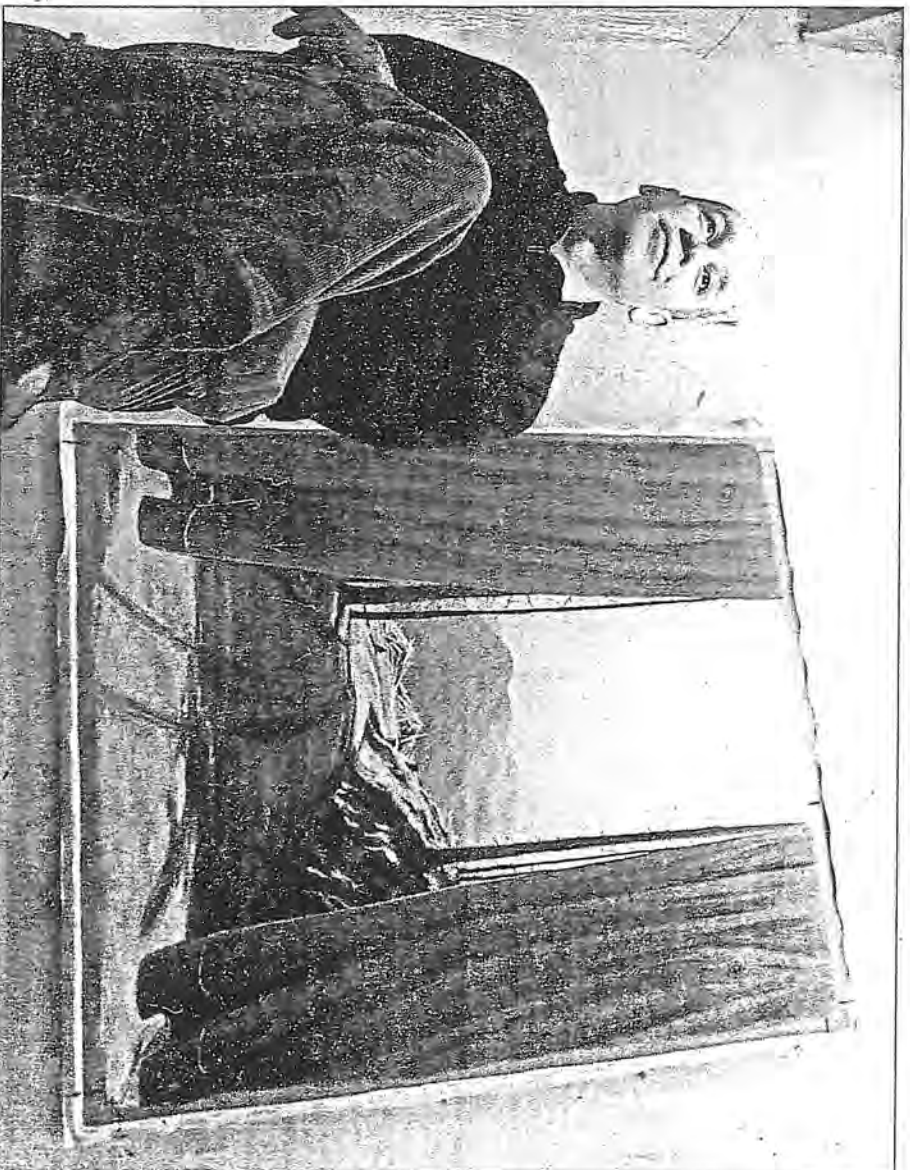
"There was this little spur between Highway 26 and Manzanita. Over eight to 10 years, I watched them taking the forest down and the clear cut turned from background into foreground," he says.

His work is known around the Northwest, but he's hoping to expand his field. To that end, he has work in a traveling exhibition, Baja to Vancouver, that's going from Vancouver, British Columbia, to Tijuana, Mexico.

There are 33 artists in the show. I'm thinking I'll join it in San Diego in January. It'll be nice and warm at the beach," he says.

Travels are inspiration

Judy Cooke visited Egypt two years ago and explains



TRIBUTE PHOTO: THOMAS PATTERSON
Michael Brophy prefers to work in a large format; his landscape portraits can measure 6 feet by 6 feet or more. His environmentally themed works convey destruction, "but it's also grand and sublime in certain ways," he says.

how the artifacts she found in the Cairo museum influenced her work.

"Art history was my foundation. The forms I used when I got out of school in Boston in 1965 were derived from Egyptian objects — the Museum of Fine Arts has a good Egyptian collection. We were visiting tombs on the Nile, but the museum is so large there are rooms tourists

MICHAEL BROPHY
Born: 1960, Portland
Art education: Bachelor's degrees, Pacific Northwest College of Art
Exhibitions: Laura Russø Gallery, Portland; Linda Hodges Gallery, Seattle
How much?: "Paper pieces are \$600 to \$800; a very large oil on canvas is \$10,000 to \$12,000."

don't pay attention to. You can find early artifacts and drawings sometimes done by the people working in the tombs.

There are sketches, broken shards of tile. I always look at those things for shape and color."

Cooke started in printmaking, taking hours of representational drawing classes that she now teaches at the Pacific Northwest College of Art in

Portland's Pearl District.

"If you're investigating a figure, there are routes for abstraction. For me, it's always an exploration of form, but when you drop any kind of shape into an irregular shape it becomes a problematic situation," Cooke says.

Cooke says she doesn't have preconceived ideas about how people should view her work.

"The way people respond to abstractions is personal," she says. "It's not just a decorative means for something hanging on the wall; for me it's more than that. Painting, to me, is about process. You paint; you paint out and repaint. I don't have an expectation or a specific idea."

Contact Paul Duchene at pduchene@portlandtribune.com.

SUBMERGED
IN THE
SUBLIME

Paula Overbay at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA, and the Spokane (WA) Art School; Judy Cooke at Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland; Barbara Sheidler Bartholomew at Butters Contemporary Artwork, Portland

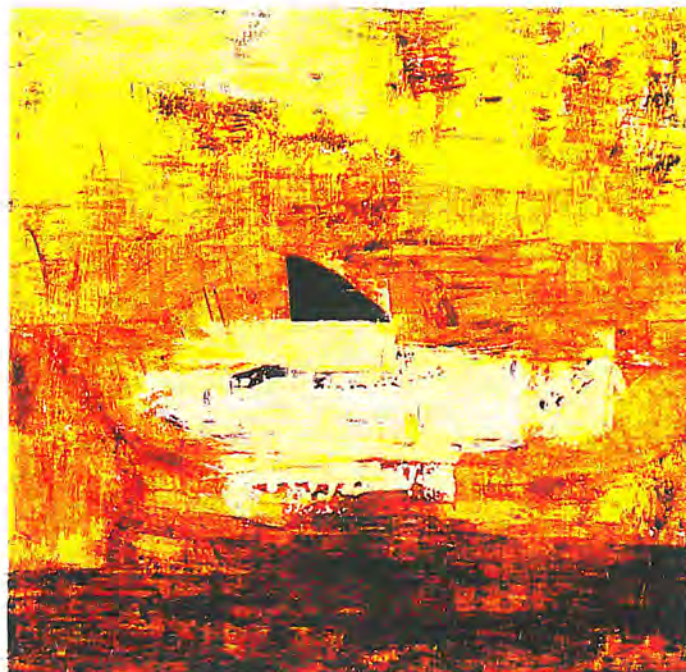
by Kate Bonansinga

Abstract painting has the potential to reveal the artist's inner world while at the same time referring to images and objects from the world around us. It activates the sensitive viewer's intellect and imagination, conjuring up memories, associations, questions. It can be simultaneously appealing and challenging, sublime and very earthly, very present. Recent bodies of work by Paula Overbay, Judy Cooke and Barbara Sheidler Bartholomew, mid-career Portland painters committed to abstraction, display these qualities to varying degrees.

Many parallels can be drawn between the three artists' past experiences and their current processes. Overbay and Cooke were trained as printmakers, and have come to be fascinated with layered surfaces and the power of simple forms. Cooke and Sheidler Bartholomew both explore black, white and yellow and the combinations of these hues. Overbay and Sheidler Bartholomew both claim to be interested in the edges of painted images and how they might be softened to create one expanse of expression. Despite such similarities in interests and intents, each of these artists creates distinctive and individual work.

Paula Overbay's exhibited a mix of new and older work in both Spokane and Stockton. The latter show included *Sail* from 1993, which exemplifies the artist's use of muted tones to capture the dark side of existence. Comparing such recent paintings to those created in 1991 during the artist's residency at the MacDowell Colony, it becomes obvious that Overbay struggled with and finally mastered the creation of a mysterious and intense surface. In both the 1991 and the 1992-93 bodies of work the artist brushed on up to eight layers of oil paint mixed with wax to achieve the earthy yet luminous colors reminiscent of those we imagine to be reflected from the terrain of the moon.

A simple, dark geometric image hovers near the center of all of the canvases. In most of the earlier paintings, the illusorily-pitted field seems merely to surround the image, to offer an environment or simply a backdrop for its shadowy existence. Overbay worked from the image outward, using it as a sort of anchor for the composition. On the other hand, the image in *Sail* is created by — is directly a product of — the surrounding moonscape. It is airier than its predecessors, neither as dark nor as dominant. Its edges are not as well-defined. It integrates with the painting's compelling surface (which seems lighter and more radiant than in previous paintings), which it seems to indent only slightly. In *Slope*, another work from 1993, the image seems to float somewhere above the canvas, casting a shadow on it. The image seems to be straying farther away from, and becoming less important to, the painting. Perhaps it will disappear entirely



Judy Cooke, *Marooned*, 1992, Oil and wax on wood, 24 x 26 x 2 inch

in Overbay's future work.

In mastering the painted surface, Overbay has captured an undefinable something from way down deep. The images and implied textures are peculiar enough to be non-referential. There is nothing quite like them in the history of art or in present-day life, which is what gives them so much resonance and staying power. The paintings can be thought of as explorations of the human mind and soul. Harold Rosenberg's comment about Mark Rothko's canvases being "passionate rediscoveries of a state of being rather than detached affirmations of an objective truth" might be applied as aptly to Overbay's work as it was to Rothko's. In 1991 Overbay wrote of a time four years earlier: "I had a sense then, but no words yet, that I wished to get under our psyche, beneath the surface of our thinking to grasp the other side of our characters. There was a suppression of thought going on, our better qualities hidden from view." She seems to be digging deeper and deeper and, in the process, has temporarily paused in the glowing, open space depicted in her current canvases.

Like Overbay, **Judy Cooke** is exploring the relationship between geometric form and a layered, painterly surface. But whereas Overbay is attempting to portray the subconscious, Cooke mentions more concrete things — boats and stretched, horizontal figures — as inspirational to her work. The latter is captured in the long black, white and red

paintings, like *Hull* and *One*, that dominated her spring exhibition in Portland. If Overbay's capturing of the sublime can be likened to that of Rothko's, Cooke's horizontal canvases might be compared to Barnett Newman's "zip" turned sideways.

Exceptional as the horizontal pieces are, it is *Marooned*, with its reference to boats and travel (or inability to travel) and its sensitive balance of form and textured mixture of yellow, black and white, that will undoubtedly serve as a taking-off point for Cooke's next series of work. The small black shark-fin-shaped object "marooned" at its center has been resurrected as a shaped piece of wood on which Cooke plans to paint. Because this form extends three inches from the wall, it will be almost sculptural.

This is just the most recent example of Cooke's willingness to experiment with processes and unusually-shaped surfaces in various media. As previously mentioned, she began as a printmaker (putting those skills to use at the lower edge of *Marooned*, where she dragged ink over punctured paper), and in her previous body of work she painted more complex forms on copper. The tones in the copper pieces are somber, similar to Overbay's, and the handling of the paint seems static, even tame. By contrast, in her recent paintings, Cooke applied predominantly black, white and either yellow or red in painterly layers, some of which were eventually scraped or sanded away, giving a strong and sensuous sense of history and process to the work.

Cooke not only reveals the history of each of her own recent paintings, but incorporates in them the history of other painting. She has rigorously studied the early Renaissance Italian masters, and now seems to be intrigued with the liberation of expressionism, of moving paint around a surface. This results in a kind of abstracted expressionism that none of the abstract expressionists achieved. Whereas Overbay works at the roots of abstraction, her study of the intricacies of human nature taking her deeper into the bowels of the earth, Cooke is somewhere in its new growth, continuously branching out in her exploration of pared-down abstract form.

Barbara Sheidler Bartholomew recently wrote that her work is about "taking ever-increasing risks, staying on the edge, intuiting, moving into the unknown...so that the art is artless and grows out of the subconscious." Whereas Overbay and Cooke return to their unfinished work time and time again to scrape away and layer paint, Sheidler Bartholomew never returns to a canvas after the few hours of focused attention required to complete it. Her paintings have an ephemeral, spontaneous quality that relates to her interest in life's continuous change.

The one hundred 7-by-7 1/2 inch unframed acrylic gold leaf and graphite works on paper comprising the series "The Still Deeper Secret of the Secret" capture this state of flux through their lack of preciousness, their impermanence. These are private pieces executed during moments of personal reflection that encourage the same from the viewer. In Sheidler Bartholomew's last Portland exhibition the series was hung in three horizontal rows which extended like an Asian hand scroll – an appropriate cultural reference, considering the calligraphic nature of the work.



The edges of the images within the works are soft and somewhat indistinct, and the areas between the compositions fluctuate as the placement of the paintings in the series is determined by the space in which they are shown. The paintings are sold individually, and as they leave the series the dynamic between all the others is altered and therefore recharged. Sheidler Bartholomew likens this to the way people and their relationships change according to the situation. So, in a certain sense, she has dissolved the strict boundaries between images and between objects, a goal towards which Overbay seems also to be striving.

If a state of constant change maintains in Sheidler Bartholomew's intimate paintings it is lost in her larger, framed canvases. They seem self-important, in contradiction to the artist's intent. The titles of the paintings, such as *Crystallized spirit within the cave of energy* and *I alone am drifting*, are quotes from literature, many from ancient Chinese Taoist texts. Sheidler Bartholomew is commendably well-versed in Taoism and other philosophies, so it is surprising that she has inappropriately affixed the words of great thinkers to paintings that they never experienced. Several-word-long titles intellectualize a painting process and product that is supposedly intuitive, spontaneous and beyond the intellect.

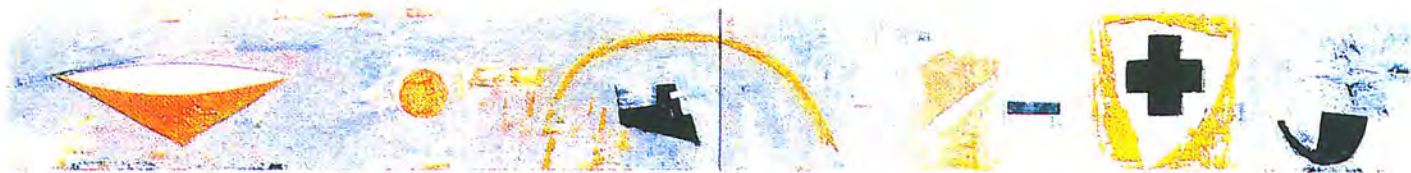
But with those energetic small works Sheidler Bartholomew has captured something important. In them she has investigated the infinite possibilities of black, white and gold, the palette with which Judy Cooke is just beginning to experiment. In Sheidler Bartholomew's loose painterly marks we catch a glimpse of the invisible, unidentifiable stuff that makes life enigmatic and wonderful. What more can an abstractionist ask for? Indeed, although Overbay, Cooke and Sheidler Bartholomew are each creating work of great originality and distinction, they all seem to be moving toward a common destination. Perhaps that destination is personal truth. ■

Kate Bonansinga is Director and Curator of the Hoffman Gallery at the Oregon School of Arts and Crafts, where she also teaches the history of art and craft.

Paula Overbay, *Sail*, 1993, Oil and wax on canvas, 20 x 30 inches

DEPARTMENTS OF THE INTERIOR

Judy Cooke, Esther Podemski and Julia Stoll in Portland



by Debbie Barry

Judy Cooke and Esther Podemski at Elizabeth Leach Gallery; Julia Stoll at Blackfish Gallery

Pacific Northwest art is often characterized by inner meanings and unspoken nuances. Some attribute this need to express rather than to represent to the region's constant pulse of nature, a pulse reflected in luminescent gray skies, forested hills, natural springs, rivers, abundant plantlife. Every season is charged with a sense of underlying, unifying vitality, and it is not unusual to find artists' compositions reduced to simple abstracts manifesting a mood or inner response. Remote from more populous cities, the Northwest gives way to a sense of separateness that seems to encourage the citation of contemplative works.

This tendency is evident in recent paintings and prints by Northwest artists Judy Cooke, Esther Podemski and Julia Stoll. All three are concerned with evoking subtle inflections through their works. Each draws from within for inspiration, using abstract forms and expressive gestures to convey internal response.

Judy Cooke, an Oregon artist, is best known for her large abstract landscapes in brilliant color fields broken by small marks and symbols. Over the years she has worked in various mediums, always exploring different effects through scale and materials. While she is particularly concerned with form and texture, content is usually based on her travels, political responses and cultural observations. Cooke is essentially a journalist, "reporting" through a formal structure detached from impulse and distanced from perceived reality.

The work in Cooke's recent exhibi-

tion uses woodblocks as a surface for abstract paintings and as a support for images painted on sheets of copper. Because her work is so impeccably clean, it is easy to overlook its subjective undercurrents. Cooke begins with several quick sketches to determine shape and scale. Her background as a printmaker often emerges in the way she manipulates shapes and form on the canvas. Within a confined focus and color range, subject matter is reduced to essentials.

Cooke began this series by painting on resin-coated blocks of wood which eventually became units for long, horizontal pieces. One, *Language*, is constructed from two 32-inch units. The work depicts black symbols shadowed by yellow forms emerging from a gray atmospheric haze. From left to right, symbols appear: a wide yellow bowl; a sphere; a small black boat enclosed by a yellow arc; a slash of gray encircled by a golden orb; a shield marked by black cross; and a black pipe. The piece implies connections and reads like a narrative. The eye travels from the wide-open bowl to the small, hard-edged little pipe. Abstract and impersonal, form is the vehicle for Cooke's expression. *Language* infers information, "reading" like pieces of a sentence coming together. Cooke says that the long, narrow block conveys a calm, grounded effect that, in her words, "echoes nature."

Cooke's copper pieces reflect the essence of her quest, hovering between pure form and abstract shape. Thin, lightweight sheets of copper are nailed to wooden stretcher bars

Judy Cooke
Language, 1990
Oil on wood
7-1/4 x 64 inches

supported by solid wooden blocks. The copper is scored to create a ground for pigment and layered with an acrylic medium. Over this she paints in oil, creating abstractly suggestive images. In *Laying Low*, the surface has been smoothed with oil, resulting in a leaching that helps form the predominant blackened image. The result is a long pod-like shape, suggesting a boat, with an arc swinging over it. Closer inspection reveals that the image has been collaged over with very thin strips of copper attached with tiny tacks. Cooke claims her pieces are spontaneous and haphazard, but this is difficult to believe, given the care and technical precision always evident in her works.

Esther Podemski, still known and exhibited here as a Northwest expressionist, moved to New York several years ago. Podemski says she still draws from nature, but now interprets the landscape differently. Abstraction now predominates, and her paintings have become more intense, more expressionist, and certainly charged with more tension and emotion. She seems committed to using natural forms to reflect a state of mind. She thus references early American abstractionists from the Stieglitz circle such as Arthur Dove.

Podemski's paintings are more about the psyche than about detached observation. Each work is powered by an emotional response or temperament lying into a universal landscape through color harmonies and painterly gestures. Podemski is a dramatist, creating dynamics of intense, if abstracted, emotion. Despite the single forms in her painting, high color contrasts and swirling compositions convey a complex interior tension.

In *Painter's Eye* the emphasis is on an abstracted natural form re-seen



Esther Podemski
Painter's Eye, 1990
 Oil on canvas
 26 x 24 x 3 inches
 Photo: Lisa Kahane

through Podemski's mind's eye. The painting is dominated by a cobalt-blue egglike form wrapped by a halo of yellow and floating in a pale blue haze. A black outline overlaps form and surrounding space. The blue form seems to struggle to emerge from the luminous yellow atmosphere converging around its edges. Podemski says that real forms are defined by scale and weight, but in rendering a feeling, the difference between the inside and outside of a form is defined in how the two components interact in the same space.

Julia Stoll lives in rural Washington, by a lake which she acknowledges as a source of inspiration. Normally a painter, she digressed from her



Julia Stoll
Pink Dancer, 1989
Monoprint, 7-1/2 x 5-3/4 inches
on 20 x 15-inch paper

brush. In this manner Stoll seeks to recreate a specific experience through abstracted qualities, and thus evoke an internalized consciousness of those sensations.

Pink Dancer achieves this with vigorous spikes and swirls and lighthearted forms. In the center is a soft, mauve, barely figurative form unfolding and moving amidst dots of red and gestures of pink, gray and violet. Stoll has created a whole *Pink Dancer* series, each one altered slightly in tone and form just as dance movement shifts from one step to

the next. Her experiences, like electrical current, run through her into the final printed composition. Stoll is not detached from her observations, nor is she responding from an inner well of emotion. Her works represent a time- and motion-based feeling, like that of a fleeting spirit.

medium last year to do a series of monoprints and monotypes. Unlike those of Cooke and Podemski, Stoll's prints are about spirit, a higher self, not limited to psychological responses. Her painter's familiarity with color and gesture carry over into her prints.

Stoll recalls movement and place through cut-out abstract forms, contrasts in scale and transitions in color. Her background in painting provided the impetus for her unorthodox approach to printmaking, in which she mixes lithography inks on plates and prints on toned paper using an etching press. Stoll floats small-scale prints on larger pages of paper in order to convey an intangible lightness. Images are built from firm cut-out shapes situated in crucial relation to the outer rectangular edge. These cut-out shapes mesh into open atmospheric transitions created with the

Cooke, Podemski and Stoll all employ abstract images on flat surfaces to venture into the realm of unspoken, subconscious sentiment. Journalist, dramatist and choreographer, each searches to investigate and reflect space between surface reality and inner being. Given their emphasis on atmosphere, their colors filtered through hazy painterly blends, their cryptic symbols, explosive color, and gentle nuances of movement, they all seem towed by the same undercurrent, linked to nature and spirit. ■

*Debby Barry is a
Portland-based arts writer.*

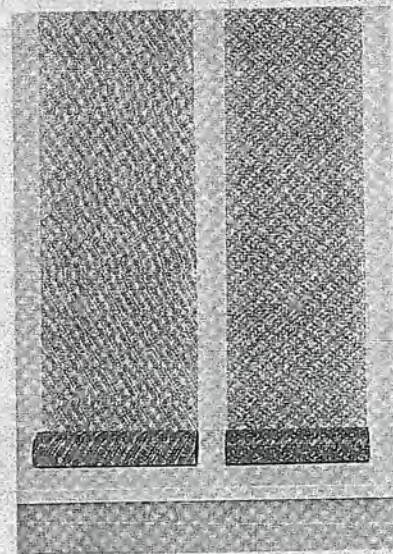
displacement under (horizontal) Rhythmic Source
Top of Act



MICHAEL BROPHY, untitled source drawing, ink on paper



TOM PROCHASKA, Darwin Collects Samples, 2000, ink on paper



LINDA HUTCHINS, Reiteration (detail), 2003, typewriting on tracing paper

DRAWING TO LOOK, TO FOCUS, TO PLAN. TO REMEMBER. DRAWING AS ACT, AS FICTION, AS FACT.

Notes on drawing(s):

HENK PANDER has flat files full of large, exquisite ink drawings of disaster. Some become paintings. MICHAEL BROPHY has an ordinary cardboard box marked "source drawings." It contains hundreds of little pieces of paper with sketches of tree slumps, bark on trees, window frames, and messy little studies of other artists' compositions. JUDY COOKE has a notebook after notebook filled with odd shapes. MARLENE BAUER has a folder of 8-1/2 x 11 sheets of paper with little floating outlines. She says she can't make her paintings without them.



MARLENE BAUER, untitled source drawing, ink on paper

GEORGE JOHANSON draws like he paints, people moving, light pooling. TOM PROCHASKA and MARTHA PFANSCHMIDT draw like printmakers. PAUL SUTINEN draws like he thinks - straight ahead with a twist.

D.E. MAY keeps reminding us that geometry is serenely inescapable.

MEL KATZ, son of a tailor, uses drawings like pattern pieces, and as templates for sculpture. LEE KELLY, once a painter and now a sculptor, makes drawings that harbor sculptures and paintings. STEPHANIE ROBISON's drawings and sculptures dance around each other, first one leading then the other. Floating somewhere between abstraction and figuration, LUCINDA PARKER's big drawings (some on their way to becoming huge paintings) are tangling with life and form.

MICHAEL BOWLEY is poking at the relationship of object to image and image to image.

MARGARET SHIRLEY marks time with line beside line;

MARIA INOCENCIO with spirals of hair;

MARIE WATT with alabaster dust;

LINDA HUTCHINS with typed reiterations,

and drawings on her palm pilot.

ROBERT DOZONO's life drawings are life-size and messy. TY ENNIS's people are tiny, meticulous, and busy doing strange things. CHRISTINE BOURDETTE is filling her studio with a small mute populace, and drawing frenetically.

KRIS HARGIS drew his own face again. So did ROBERT HANSON - and mixed fact and fiction. LAURA ROSS-PAUL, RICK BARTOW and STEPHEN O'DONNELL drew themselves, others, and their alter egos. Way back when, JAY BACKSTRAND drew Joe Hill and Joseph Beuys.

Not so long ago: JOE MACCA corresponded with art stars and baseball legends. RYAN BOYLE created imaginary worlds that rambled down the wall. BONNIE BRONSON explored the overlapping territories of temple and headdress. STEPHANIE DOYLE drew humble abstractions, and KRISTAN KENNEDY circled blobs and drips and exported them. PAT BOAS and DAVID ECKARD kept laboring over painstaking mutations; and somewhere in the funny papers, DANIEL DUFORD's injured superhero kept blundering. Meanwhile, DANA LYNN LOUIS was drawing the byways of blood and breath, and DEBORAH HORRELL was crafting a lexicon of shape, form, and hidden flows.

Then as now, DENNIS CUNNINGHAM's pastels are both a caution and a lament, and TAD SAVINAR's drawings - before and after the fact - are what remain.

Before the show begins, BRAD ADKINS will walk in a circle for days, re-enacting Michael Bowley's 1979 *Walking in a Circle Until a Mark is Made*.

And last we heard, MELODY OWEN was drawing on leaves.

-TMH

THE ART GYM is a program of the Art Department of Marylhurst University, and is also made possible in part by grants from the Regional Arts & Culture Council, Oregon Arts Commission, and National Endowment for the Arts; and the support of Friends of The Gym, private businesses, and individuals.

The Art Gym is located on the third floor of the B.P. John Admin. Bldg. on the Marylhurst campus, just south of Lake Oswego on Highway 43.

Telephone: 503.699.6243

Web site: www.marylhurst.edu

Email: artgym@marylhurst.edu

Gallery hours are from Noon-4PM, Tuesday-Sunday. Admission is free.



Oregon

Judy Cooke at The Art Gym

Judy Cooke's distinctive paintings have long attracted the art public in the Northwest, and with the recent retrospective of selected work from 1973 to 2001 at Marylhurst University's Art Gym, it was easy to see why. An unwavering vision that has been the basis for exploration, innovation, and continuous honing since the beginning of her career was easy to follow in this extensive survey. In addition to illuminating her own aesthetic and philosophical underpinnings, it demonstrated the variety and potential for individual adaptation still existing within the bounds of abstraction.

The earliest work, of the 1970s, reflects Cooke's academic training (at Boston's School of the Museum of Fine Arts) in printmaking and drawing. Executed on worn canvas tarps sewn or stapled or taped together to make a huge surface, they became a stage for arm-driven charcoal lines and shapes that were sometimes enhanced by thin paint or collaged elements. Graphically compelling, the scale, subtle coloring and unusual materiality evident in *Corridor* set the course for issues of physicality and scale relationships that remain the hallmark of her art.

After deciding to concentrate on painting, Cooke attached thin sheets of copper, tin or aluminum to wood, upon which she developed a vocabulary of shapes and marks placed over surfaces that had been painted, scraped, rubbed and sanded. She also turned from the natural colorations of the weathered canvas tarps to a full range of colors. However, a dominant graphic quality

continued in black flat shapes, lines and markings that constituted imagery. In the late 1980s she eliminated the metal coverings and worked directly on wood panels which she had cut to specific, unusual, even erratic, shapes. Some paintings, like the long, narrow *Harbor*, are indicative of the artist's experimentation in extending a line. In other approaches to line, they're scratched through the paint, or are visible in the edges of a piece structured from horizontally stacked wood panels.

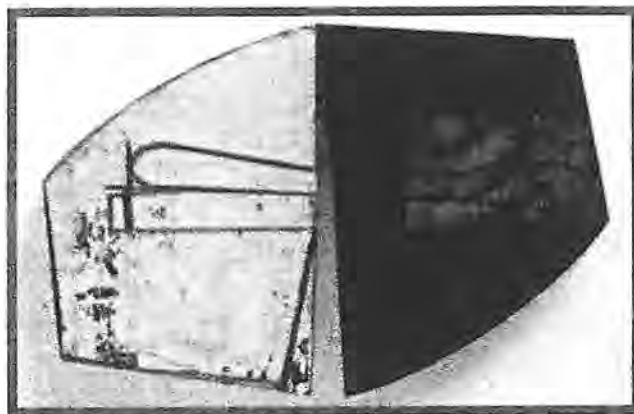
Always insisting upon the painting as a physical object in a dialogue with the space it occupies, she creates works that are sculpture as much as they are supports for painting. An example, *Wing* begins with a split, two-inch thick piece of wood, one side shaped with a curved top edge, a diagonal bottom edge and straight sides, and the other, the same but upside down. One side is predominantly white; the other, black, each side having lines describing an empty space over the scumbled and scraped surface. Cooke's surfaces are the result of working over and through layers of oil paint, wax, alkyd, varnish and resin.

The importance of making her process visible rests in its function as a record and a reference to the act of creation, along with a sense of history. Her background includes a rigorous study of Italian proto-Renaissance paintings as well as the American progenitors of Abstract Expressionism. Whether intended or not, her work also recalls Donald Judd, whose paintings early in his career morphed into discrete objects, ultimately resulting in red and black reliefs that soon left the wall to become the Minimalist sculptures of his much better known later work.

Although abstract, involving both geometric and organic elements, Cooke's images are taken from observations in nature or in her quotidian life that are absorbed into her memory bank, later to emerge in a painting, perhaps recognizable, more often abstracted. They're rarely literal because she seeks imagery that transcends time and place. The dry

surfaces come from her observation of old walls and buildings in New England and Europe; colors may be inspired by early European paintings, and images represent visible fragments of her thoughts. The fact that she's a voracious reader and frequent traveler adds significantly to her repertoire of image resources. She keeps a sketchbook at hand, and the many that have been filled over the years are a valuable resource and reminder.

A small gallery in a corner of The Art Gym contained wall-mounted cases displaying these open sketchbooks. The pages not only affirmed inspirations for her imagery but also her expert draftsmanship. In their entirety, the sketchbooks are a diary that chronicles her



Judy Cooke, *Wing*, 2001, oil, alkyd on wood, 11-1/4" x 17" x 2", at The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, Portland.

artistic life. But they also include extraneous notes, reminders, clippings, telephone numbers and other ephemera that reveal the details, the trivia, the many facets of living memories which sink into the subconsciousness. In Cooke's art it all plays into the offbeat formulations of her paintings. The displacements she employs cause a revision of one's expectations, as do images that suggest rather than describe. Despite an insistence on materiality, there is content beyond the formal aspects of this work: It's about the phenomena of seeing and sensing.

—Lois Allan

Judy Cooke: *Celebration After the Fact—A Retrospective 1973-2001* closed October 24 at The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, Portland.

Lois Allan is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.



Judy Cooke, *Harbor*, 1990, rubber, oil, wood, 14" x 96" x 1-1/2", at The Art Gym, Marylhurst University, Portland.

ELIZABETH LEACH GALLERY

417 NW 9th
Portland, Oregon 97209
503.224.0521
503.224.0844 fax
www.elizabethleach.com

Judy Cooke: Tarps 1973-76



Judy Cooke, *Sienna Curve* (1973), charcoal on canvas tarp [Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR, Sept 5-28]

ELIZABETH LEACH GALLERY, PORTLAND, OR Sept 5-28 – The Elizabeth Leach Gallery features an exhibition of work that Pacific Northwest painter Judy Cooke produced in the mid-seventies and has never exhibited.

Tarps 1973-76 are made of weathered pieces of canvas that have been assembled to create large scale fabric collages. These have the feeling of a highly contemporary, non-functional minimalist quilt. Each tarp contains a network of charcoal drawings that are as much about geometry as they are about gesture. For Cooke these works were essentially about the freedom of large materials, letting the walls define the edges of each piece, rather than works that had to be put under glass. "The tarps had an informality, and there was something casual about the working process. They felt like blackboards to me. Because they were large and on fabric, it was like coming in the back door on painting."

They resemble pages of an artist's or draftsman's sketchbook, blown up to the scale of a banner. The rivet holes edging each piece of canvas also gives the work a tactile element that is almost sculptural, formally making these pieces seem very finished, although they are unstretched.

Cooke's work has gone through many evolutions, and experiments since the creation of *Tarps 1973-76*. The Marylhurst Art Gym will open a retrospective of Cooke's work in an exhibit titled *Celebration After the Fact: A Retrospective, 1973-2001* (Sept 22-Oct 24.) Spanning three decades, Cooke's retrospective, will include works from the *Tarps* series, oils on canvas from the same period, and her current multi-part oil and alkyd works on wood.

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SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2002

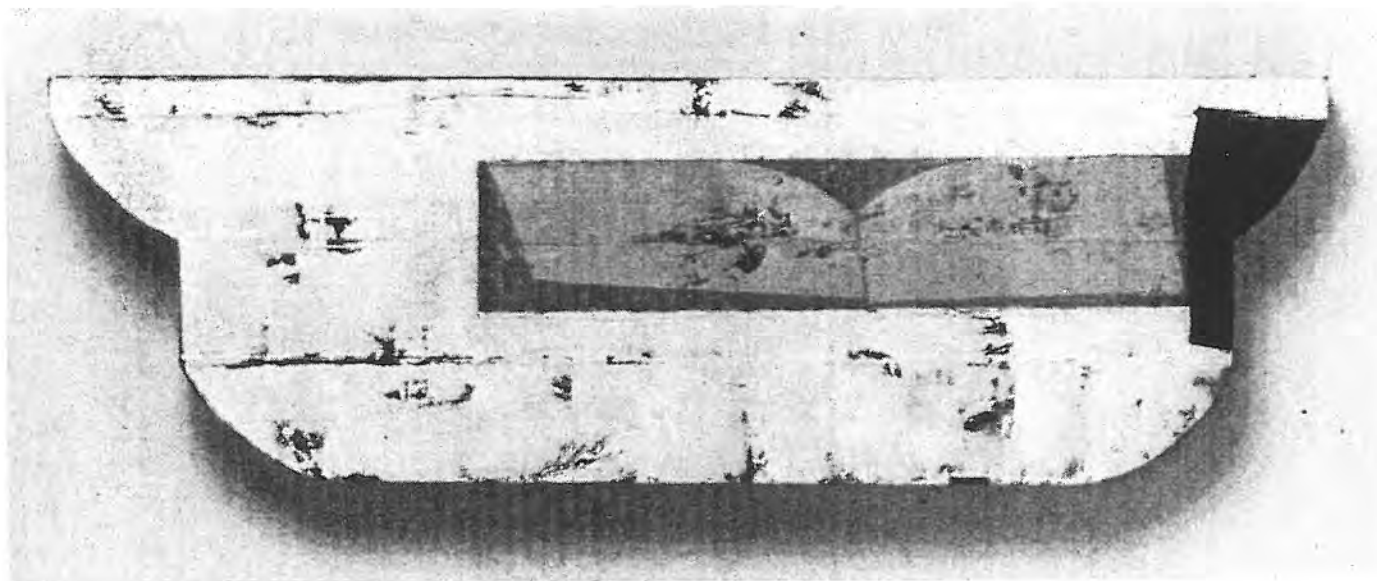
COURTESY OF PREVIEW GRAPHICS

JudyCooke
celebration after the fact:
a retrospective
1973-2001

PREVIEW RECEPTION: SUN., SEPT. 22, 3 - 5 PM

GALLERY TALK: THURS., OCT. 3, NOON

EXHIBITION: SEPT. 23 - OCT. 24, 2002



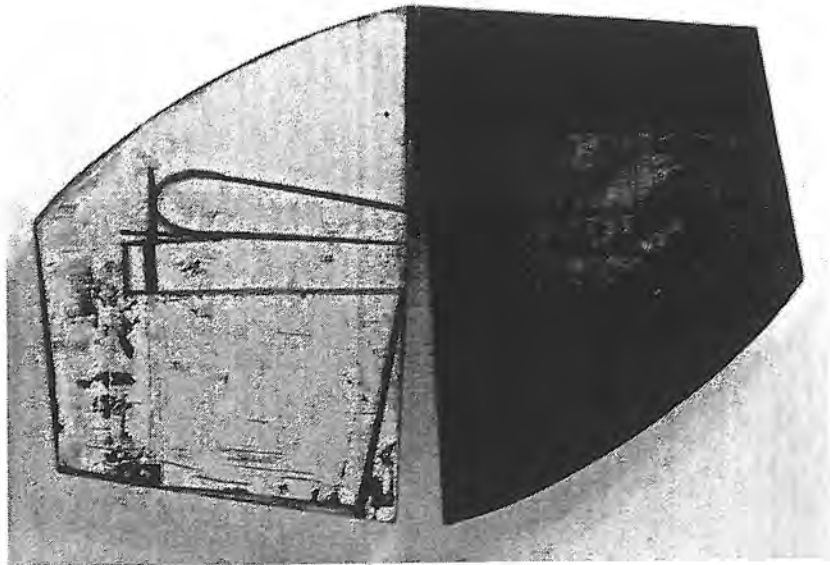
Hawthorne's Book, 1994, 10x31x2, Collection of Oregon Health Sciences University

CONTINUING ON CAMPUS:
SCULPTURE BY M.J. ANDERSON AND PAUL SUTINEN

MARYLHURST UNIVERSITY

THE ART GYM

SUN., SEPT. 22, 3 – 5 PM
OCT. 3, NOON
OCT. 24, 2002



Wing, 2001, 11.25x17x2, Collection of Carol Smith-Larson

Gallery Talk with Judy Cooke Noon, Thurs., Oct. 3

Join us in the gallery for conversation with artist Judy Cooke at noon, Thurs., Oct. 3. One of the region's most accomplished abstract painters, Cooke will lead viewers through her retrospective exhibition and respond to questions. All are welcome and admission is free.

When Judy Cooke arrived in Portland, Oregon in 1968, she had recently completed the B.F.A. at Tufts University and an Honors Diploma in Printmaking from the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. In 1970, she completed the Master of Arts in Teaching at Reed College. Although trained primarily in printmaking and drawing, Cooke soon began to reinvent herself as a painter.

In her early works she experimented with drawing and collage on unstretched canvas tarps. In the '70s and '80s, Cooke also painted with oil on stretched canvas. Since the late 1980s, perhaps due to her printmaking background, Cooke has gravitated toward harder surfaces. She has experimented with sheets of metal (copper and aluminum) mounted on wood, and most recently has worked primarily with oil and alkyd on wood. Cooke's formal vocabulary combines interests in materials (including paint), shape and structure, and has remained resolutely and inventively abstract.

Judy Cooke continues to live in Portland. Since 1986, she has taught painting at the Pacific Northwest College of Art.

