

ENGINEERS' NOTEBOOKS THE GEOMETRY OF COLOR

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I live on Grey-brown Podzolic soil near the base of the Appalachians. The technology of firearms turned forest into farmland, but now it is seeded with broken tractor parts and the bones of our indigenous disappeared. I look for traces of the Monongahela People in the wild plants they might have used, in kinds of trees they might have loved, in the wings of the Great Horned Owl I buried in the orchard.

The apple trees in the orchard are old ones, of no commercial value. Snow Apple, Catshead, Blue Pearmain—the appeal of antique names whets urges to identify. Bred by chance, the same as us, and subject to rain concerning which the term 'post-industrial' does not apply, they suffer from the abnormally warm winter days the past few years have offered. In spring their blossoms blow and fall like brushstrokes in my notebooks, disappearing into soil whose gridding is guarded by underpaid clerks in the county courthouse. In spring my brushstrokes mimic the need to keep on no matter what. My paints are ochre and terre verte, clays still fragrant as earth. My paints are zinc and manganese, minerals required for health. My paints are cobalt, cadmium, lead—poison in large doses. My paints are the grasses surrounding my home, and the leaf mold and the rain.

The colored geometry of cells and light imprisons as it releases. The colored geometry of light and thought releases as it imprisons. There are other intelligent creatures with vision keener than ours, but none is as sensitive as we to nuances of color. In the unity that exists between retinas and brain, to see is to interpret. The process is poorly understood. It is conditioned by culture. I wait for the sciences of our physical being to tell me what I cannot know directly and for the sciences of society to provide the overview that links us to our past and to our future.

Paintbrushes are ancient tools, as are eyes, fingers, and neurons. Finding new uses for reliable tools is part of the artist's job.

Editor's Note: *The Geometry of Color* (Fig. 4), is an ongoing installation of horticulture, naturally occurring materials and paint that is limited only by the boundaries of the 49-acre farm in Fayette County, Pennsylvania, on which Mary Jean Kenton lives and works. The farm contains woods and meadow, an old stone quarry and a creek. Kenton studied catalogs and ordered hundreds of cultivars of daylilies and irises with regard to their shape and colors. She planted them in an integrated fashion with the already existing wild orange daylilies, old apple trees, pear trees, weeds and wild berries.

Most environmental installations are planned from a sculptural point of view, but, since Kenton is a painter, *The Geometry of Color* was planned in a 'painterly' manner. Plantings were set out with regard to color in ways that are related to Kenton's *Engineers' Notebooks*—notebooks containing graphed pages that have been filled with thousands of painted marks. She works on *The Geometry of Color* and the *Engineers' Notebooks* together and feels that the works are related and complementary.

THE MUSIC FOR SUDDEN CHANGES

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Sudden Changes is a new work for five dancers by choreographer Liss Fain for the *Liss Fain Dance Company*. It premiered at the New Performance Gallery in San Francisco in May 1991. Fain commissioned me to produce an original score for the work.

Sudden Changes consists of (in her words) a series of episodes that originate in real-life events, evolving from her interest in reactions to environmental loss and diminishment. The movement idiom originates in descriptions of animal behavior and environments and the effects of land develop-

ment on the species. The parallel of loss in human experiences is the perception of and adjustment to altered boundaries.

In order to fully support the depth and range of the emotional and psychological content of the work, I felt a live musical performance appropriate. It also seemed like a good opportunity to put into practice a new live performance system with which I had been experimenting. In this work, my solo instrumental performance is enlarged (by a sophisticated computer-music system) to orchestral levels of musical expression. The system is designed to allow a wide variety of configurations of musical textures, rhythms, recorded sounds, signal processing, accompaniment, etc., to be called up at will by a performer. However, none of the actual musical material is determined in advance. Everything is derived during the performance from the notes and gestures of that performance. Polyphonic accompaniment can be based strictly or loosely on the harmonic, dynamic and rhythmic structure of the performed material.

In the *Sudden Changes* performance, I performed on a soprano saxophone equipped with a pickup and an IVL pitch-to-Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) converter.

The system included a NeXT computer, Lexicon signal processors and Yamaha synthesizers. The NeXT computer controlled the configuration of the system, processed musical mate-

Fig. 4. Mary Jean Kenton, *With a Sealed System Which is Kept to Lower*, stone quarry, latex, stinging nettles, 1988–1989. This work is a detail from an ongoing installation of horticulture, naturally occurring materials and paint. (Photo: Jim Rosenberg)





Fig. 5. Aviva Rahmani, detail of *The Medicine Wheel Garden* with rocks in the distance, 1991. This environmental work on Vinalhaven Island, off the coast of Maine, is part of the *Ghost Nets* project.

GHOST NETS: THE MEDICINE WHEEL GARDEN

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We enter the medicine wheel to find our places on the wheel of life and our relationship with all of life, to find hidden reservoirs of gentle strength within ourselves and find new ways of walking in harmony on the earth.

—Grandfather Thunder
Cloud,
Elder of the Cherokee Nation

rial, generated real-time melodic accompaniment, played back digitally recorded sounds and performed additional sound synthesis. It also displayed a graphic cue sheet and provided timing cues for me during the performance.

SEMINAL CHRONO-SCHEMA: AN ELECTRO-KINETIC WORK FOR COMPUTER SCREEN AND PRINTOUT

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This work in progress, *Seminal Chrono-Schema*, is a compilation of the artists, artworks and art events that have shaped the course of art from the middle ages to the present. By marking seminal moments within the larger continuum and by separately identifying artist, artwork and content/intent, we hope to present this information from a unique perspective and to provide a personal view of art history.

Intended to display the data in literal as well as graphic formats, *Seminal Chrono-Schema* will exist both as an electronic database and a limited-edition artwork, while at the same time functioning on two distinct levels: (1) The compiled information, or database, is the basis for a schematic/analytic view of Western art, which will appear as a summary or tabulation. (2) This tabulation, in turn, becomes the structure for a strictly visual presentation of the sorted data—a kinetic image to be viewed, not read.

In its electronic state, the work will begin with tabulation and, as it scrolls across the screen, will change from a literal to a graphic form. The compiled data will become a 'visual score', the arrangement or composition being determined by the text of the tabulation. The 'hardcopy' edition, comprised of more than 100 color index cards, with a computer disk for on-screen viewing of the work, will be bound into a hand-crafted limited-edition artwork.

My work has consistently documented social questions and the recovery process since the mid-1960s. *Ghost Nets* (1991–2000) is about the trap of the familiar. The name of the project derives from the invisible monofilament fishing gill nets that get lost in the ocean, strip-mining all sea life. The first 3 years of this work address the problem of exhausting ocean resources.

The Medicine Wheel is a Native American ceremony of teaching and blessing, the purpose of which is to heal the earth and all who enter the ceremony. Because earth care is symbiotic with the sea, the air and human survival, building a Medicine Wheel Garden (Phase 1 of the *Ghost Nets* project) is about restoring healing energy to people and land.

Construction of the Garden (Fig. 5) is on a site that includes a promontory of manmade land that extends from a remote island off Maine. I purchased this parcel of land in 1990, in common with a local lobstering family, part of the economically threatened fishing culture of the island. The partnership involves an overlapping work area (for commercial lobstering, social gathering, artmaking), my modest home and a sawmill in which I am producing seascape paintings in homage to the ocean.

Preparation of the Medicine Wheel Garden began with rebuilding the soil and reintroducing primarily indigenous trees and shrubs (such as Pin Oak, Norway Maple, Chinese Chestnut and Siberian Elm), interspersed with local granite boulders. In a series of ceremonies, the sacred rocks were gathered under the