

# DON DUDLEY

Don Dudley (b. 1930, Los Angeles, CA) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions including MoMA P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center (1982) and New Museum of Contemporary Art (1984) in New York. Dudley's first solo presentation was at New Gallery in Houston, Texas in 1958. Subsequent solo shows were held at La Jolla Museum of Art, La Jolla, CA (1959); I Gallery, La Jolla, CA (1961 & 1964); John Doyle Gallery, Paris, France (1975); Galerie Alfred Schmela, Düsseldorf, Germany (1976); Galerie Farideh Cadot, Paris, France (1977 & 1981); Art, Design & Architecture Museum, UC Santa Barbara, CA (1979); Pam Adler Gallery, New York, NY (1982 & 1985); I-20 Gallery, New York, NY (2011); Mendes Wood, Sao Paulo, Brazil (2011); Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne, Germany (2013), and Magenta Plains, New York, NY (2017; 2019). Select group exhibitions include *Contemporary American Painting* at the Whitney Museum of American Art (1972); *Double Take* at New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1978); *Corners* at Vera List Art Center at MIT, Boston (1979); *Activated Walls* at the Queens Museum of Art, New York (1984); and *Between Two Worlds: Art of California* at San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2018). Additionally, his work has been exhibited internationally at institutions in Belgium, Iran, and Denmark. Dudley lives and works in New York, NY and Kerhonkson, NY

April 11, 2019

# ARTnews

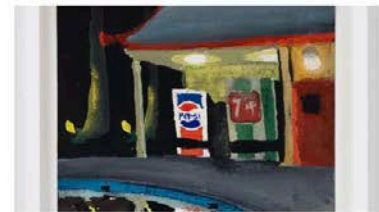
## Dallas Art Museum Adds Eight Works to Collection with Dallas Art Fair Acquisition Fund

BY ANNIE ARMSTRONG

As part of a \$150,000 acquisition program coinciding with this week's **Dallas Art Fair**, the **Dallas Art Museum** added eight artworks to its collection by artists showing at the fair. The selected works are by Sheila Hicks, Don Dudley, Arcmanoro Niles, Samuel Levi Jones, Nobutaka Aozaki, Emmanuel Van der Auwera, Maja Ruznic, and Dike Blair.

Dallas Museum director Agustín Arteaga said in a release, "We are delighted to continue our long-standing partnership with the Dallas Art Fair, whose generous fund has allowed the DMA to support promising, dynamic contemporary artists at the forefront of the field."

The Dallas Art Fair Foundation Acquisition Program has provided the museum with \$450,000 in funds over the past four years. Last year, works by Sanford Biggers, Brie Ruais, Tony Lewis, and Geraldo de Barros were added to the DMA's collection.



Dike Blair, *Untitled*, 1986.  
COURTESY THE ARTIST/KARMA GALLERY

*The Brooklyn Rail*

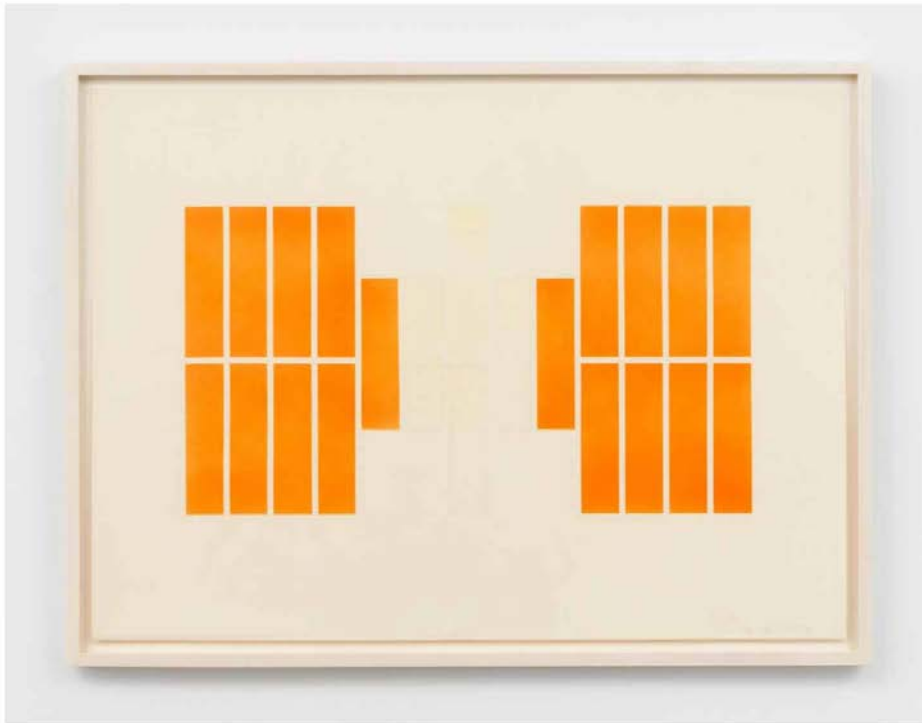
March 28, 2019



ARTSEEN

## Don Dudley: *Early Work*

by Melinda Lang

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Don Dudley, *Untitled*, 1974. Airbrush ink on paper, 23 x 29 inches. Courtesy Magenta Plains.

Artists in New York and in L.A. are often understood through strategies related to their uniquely different environments. From the 1960s and into the '70s, as the story goes, artists on opposite coasts engaged with new mediums, shifted paradigms, and radically expanded a seemingly exhausted painting tradition. Despite artists' shared interests in abstraction at this time, the East Coast became associated with discrete, literal objects of the everyday while their West Coast counterparts fixated on light-responsive and illusionary surfaces. Finding inspiration in both places, Don Dudley integrated tendencies from L.A. Finish Fetish art and New York Minimalism, with his own inventive material sensibilities and formal interests, creating austere yet ethereal paintings that elude geographical groupings. Dudley, whose work was rediscovered only in recent years, left California for New York at the end of the

ON VIEW

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February 22 - March 31, 2019  
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'60s, joining other West Coast transplants including fellow painters Mary Heilmann and David Reed. An exhibition at Magenta Plains presents Dudley's early New York work—his modular paintings and drawings from the 1970s—a series that reveals the artist's remarkably conceptual approach to painting.

The period around 1970 to 1973 proved to be an auspicious start to the artist's New York career. In this short span, Dudley settled into the Tribeca loft that he still occupies today and began working as an art handler at the Whitney Museum of American Art, where he won over the curator Marcia Tucker. Along with her colleagues, Tucker invited Dudley to participate in the Whitney's 1972 Painting Annual—an exhibition designed to focus more on lesser known artists than its previous iterations. Dudley had worked in California for many years—first in San Diego, and then in L.A., where he taught a young Jack Goldstein at the Chouinard Art Institute (now California Institute of the Arts), but he had not received much critical support for his work. For Tucker, the Whitney's mandate to find under-recognized talent, presumably like Dudley, was in her words, "a breadth of fresh air that propelled us forward in search of the challenging, the unknown, and the unexpected."<sup>1</sup> Dudley contributed one of his first multi-piece works to the Annual—a sequence of angled panels that extended reticently from the wall into the gallery, representing a three-dimensional direction that he ultimately did not take while signaling his new body of modular paintings. It was also around this point that he met Anne Truitt whose columns of harmonious and contrasting hues must have had an energizing effect on him. By then, he was exploring bolder color arrangements through varying configurations of narrow panels.

The artist's current exhibition features three of his slick modular paintings, shown alongside a small group of more effusive drawings, inviting viewers to consider the compositional connections between them. Consisting of roughly four foot tall aluminum panels separated by a small two inch spacing, each painting explores a different spatial dynamic on the wall, ranging from a single row to vertically stacked and offset motifs. Eliminating signs of the artist's hand, Dudley covered their surfaces in uninflected layers of sprayed industrial lacquer.



Installation view: *Don Dudley: Early Work*, Magenta Plains, New York, 2019. Courtesy Magenta Plains.

Emphatic hues like chrome yellow and vermillion orange, positioned next to black, white, and pearlescent panels, produce an arresting opticality—a pulsating visual sensation that alters our perception of the work's internal patterns and interstitial spaces. The effect is not unlike Josef Albers's color interactions or Donald Judd's multi-colored late works. In his modular paintings, Dudley dispenses with the soft, rainbow-stripe palette of his '60s works, opting for a punchier chromatic experience while retaining a subtle dimensionality. After the Whitney Annual, Dudley began bending his panels so that the top and bottom edges fold back, creating a sense of buoyancy that counterbalances his high-keyed colors and opaque surfaces.

A dedicated draughtsman, Dudley first experimented with modularity in his works on paper through bands of hazy, prismatic colors. Meticulously airbrushed onto the sheet, the rich and delicate gradations are strikingly evocative of natural atmospheric tonal shifts—an emotive, illusionistic note distinct from the rigid coloring of his paintings. For instance, *Two Reds, Blue and Black* (1972) depicts a grid of iridescent, candy-colored rows while *Cam I* (1973), a series of alternating blacks and browns, is bookended by dreamy gradients of lavender. In drawings like *Untitled* (1974), Dudley pushes the perceptual limits of an orange hue until it becomes nearly invisible at the center, revealing a faint cruciform motif that is echoed in an evanescent white and silver altar-like painting nearby.

Dudley recorded countless variations on his modular paintings through his drawings, continually testing and proposing new compositional arrangements, often for works that were never realized. Embracing their expansive possibilities, Dudley has approached his drawings as a kind of catalog for potential configurations—a key to future realizations of the work. The modular panels in this exhibition were made in 1974, but it was not until 2011 that he presented the series again—this time, re-shuffling the existing panels based on a different set of permutations from his drawings. Dudley has again arranged the panels in this show using the drawings as a guide. Consequently, the gallery has assigned two dates to the modular paintings: 1974/2019, referring to the earlier fabrication year and its current realization in the exhibition (this does not take into account the date of a possible corresponding drawing). Cataloging questions aside, Dudley's process evinces an immensely flexible system in which his drawings operate as instructions for a nearly endless cycle of compositional groupings—linking his work to the conceptual practices of artists like Sol LeWitt or contemporary painter Cheyney Thompson, known for his formulaic works. Dudley's drawings continued to be critical to the realization of his paintings, particularly as he later came to rely on paper alone to develop his site-specific and now nonextant installations. The interdependence of Dudley's modular paintings and drawings, made in his early years in New York, underscore his radically fluid and singular mode of abstract painting.

#### Notes

1. Tucker, Marsha. *A Short Life of Trouble* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 95.

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#### CONTRIBUTOR

##### Melinda Lang

Melinda Lang is a curatorial assistant at the Whitney Museum of American Art. She has previously held curatorial positions at the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

artnet

April 19, 2018

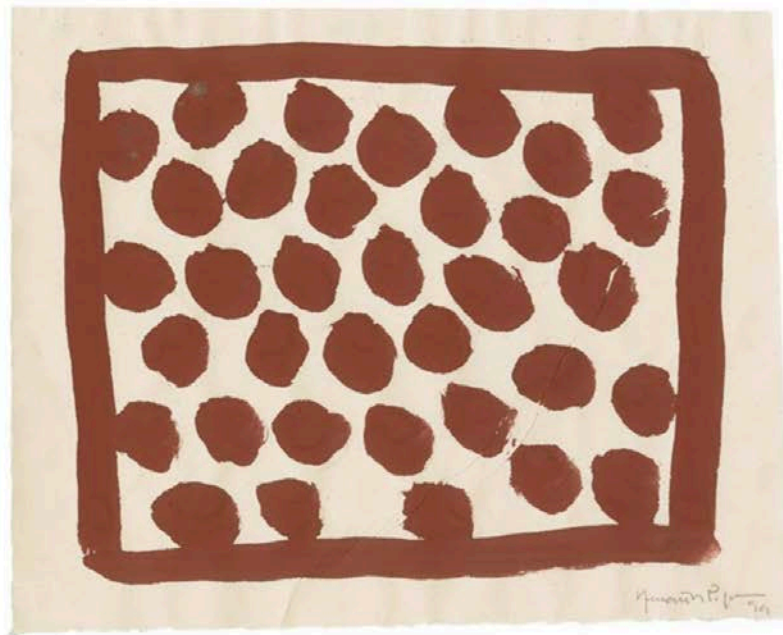
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## Art Guides

## Must-See Art Guide: Cologne

This week's guide features Pierre Soulages, David Reed, Alicia Viebrock, and more.

Tatiana Berg, April 19, 2018



Joan Hernández Pijuan, *Sense títol 180* (1999). Courtesy of Galerie Boissérée, J. & W. Boissérée GmbH.

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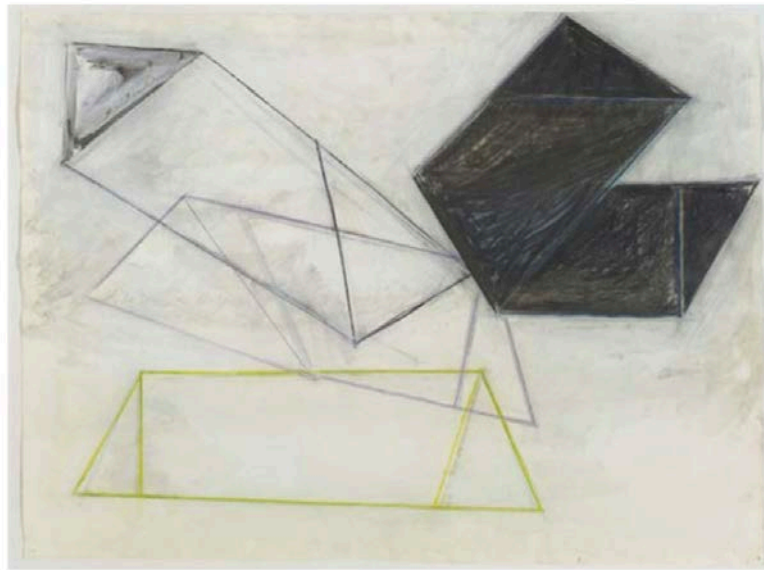
Are you traveling to [Art Cologne 2018](#)? The oldest fair of its kind, Art Cologne has long served as an important gathering of Modern and contemporary art dealers. This year, the event expects to attract over 200 blue-chip and emerging galleries, presenting an important selection of works from the 20th and 21st centuries.

Which is all well and good, but what else is going on in Cologne this week? The answer, you'll be unsurprised to learn, is a bunch of great gallery shows you won't want to miss while you're in town.

You could start at [Galerie Boissérée](#), where you can currently see the lyrical work of Joan Hernández Pijuan. The late Spanish artist brought a unique painterly touch to his 19 drawings, and it's a rare opportunity to see so many of his works in person at once, so make sure you don't miss it before the show closes on April 28. Then, you could head to [Galerie Julian Sander](#) to see powerful black-and-white photographs by Sean Hemmerle. Taken in the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 2000s, the series serves as a sobering reminder of the United States' recent past. Another show that

should be on your radar is [Pierre Soulages](#) at [Galerie Karsten Greve](#), which represents the 98-year-old painter's first solo exhibition at his Cologne gallery. Take some time to appreciate his unique approach to his medium, where he builds complex, dimensional surfaces in simple monochrome palettes.

Find artnet's full list of picks below to see what else is on view at the moment, and have a great Art Cologne week!



Don Dudley, *Untitled* (1984–1985). Courtesy of Galerie Thomas Zander.

**Exhibition:** "[DON DUDLEY: Activated Walls and Recent Works](#)"

**When:** February 24–May 19, 2018

**Where:** [Galerie Thomas Zander](#), Schönhauser Straße 8, Cologne, Germany

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March 15, 2018

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# 'Activated Wall and Recent Works' by Don Dudley and Peter Alexander at Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

BY BLOUIN ARTINFO | MARCH 15, 2018



"Untitled," 1983 by Don Dudley , From the series: 15 studies for Project 18, Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen, Pastel, oil stick and japan varnish on paper, 36.3 x 77.8 inch / 92 x 197,5 cm at Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne

(© Don Dudley, courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne)

## RELATED

### VENUES

Thomas Zander

### ARTISTS

Peter Alexander

Galerie Thomas Zander is hosting "Activated Wall and Recent Works," an exhibition of new works: wall pieces and large-scale drawings, by American artists Don Dudley and [Peter Alexander](#).

Throughout his artistic career, Dudley has experimented with compositions in space in different geometric shapes and minimalist art forms combining practices of the East and West coast of America. This exhibition showcases Dudley's new wall pieces created between 2014-2017, which are collages of different shapes made of commercial, industrial construction materials like painted plywood, corrugated steel and glass. These three-



dimensional works explore the boundaries between painting and sculpture, creating an opportunity for the viewers to experience a dynamic interaction between forces at play. The planes and elements overlap, intersect, and fold across each other reflecting interplay of movement and balance and effects of three-dimensionality through overlapping triangles, steps, and angles in the background of blurred canvas mimicking the city. The transitory installations, made in oil and pastel colors and about two meters in width, represent Dudley's abstract geometric drawings of the time are on view for the first time.

The gallery also hosts the first exhibition of bright urethane objects by Peter Alexander, who was associated with the Light and Space movement which imparted an innovative and distinctly West Coast approach to art. He was trained as an architect and expanded his creativity into painting, drawing and sculpture. His sculptures are created using a special technique for casting resin. The quality of resin to retain transparency even after solidification fascinated the artist. The semi-transparent bar pieces, cubes, wedges and columns reflect both the purity and artificiality of the light and colors of California. Alexander's work has been shown in exhibitions around the world and he received a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1980, and more recently, the California Art Award in 2014. His work is collected by museums such as Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art among others.

*"Activated Wall and Recent Works" is being presented from February 24, 2018 through May 19, 2018 at Galerie Thomas zander, Schönhauser Str. 8, 50968 Köln, Germany.*

*For details, visit: <http://www.blouinartinfo.com/galleryguide/thomas-zander/overview>*

*Click on the slideshow to have a sneak peek of the artist's work.*

*Hamptons Art Hub*

September 12, 2017



EXHIBITIONS NEW YORK CITY

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## NYC Gallery Scene – Highlights Through September 17, 2017

September 12, 2017 • by Genevieve Kotz • EXHIBITIONS, NEW YORK CITY

New York City art galleries continue to welcome the new art season with a vibrant slate of shows. This week, our picks of New York gallery shows feature urban and landscape photography, feminist ceramics, large-scale abstract paintings, steel sculptures and more. Also on our list are retrospectives showcasing contemporary artists and exhibitions examining the lasting effects of art movements.

Continue reading to discover what's new and noteworthy in New York City art galleries opening this week in Chelsea, Uptown, Downtown and Brooklyn through September 17, 2017.

### Magenta Plains: “Don Dudley”

September 17 through October 30, 2017

Opening Reception: Sunday, September 17 from 6 to 8 p.m.

Magenta Plains will present “Don Dudley,” an exhibition of work by the artist.

Don Dudley is a minimalist painter whose work remains relevant due to striking optical effects and an unfinished exploration of object, surface and color. Based in New York but originally from Los Angeles, Don Dudley and his work represent an art historical dialogue between the minimalist practices of the East and West Coasts in the 60's and 70's.

Magenta Plains is located at 94 Allen Street New York, NY 10002. [www.magentaplains.com](http://www.magentaplains.com).

Click [here](#) for exhibition details.



*“L” by Don Dudley, 2017. Acrylic on birch plywood. 70.25 x 48 inches. Courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.*

*Blouin Artinfo*

July 2013

**COLOGNE****GALERIE THOMAS ZANDER**DON DUDLEY: "MODULAR  
SPACES"

● This arguably overdue European exhibition of Dudley's minimalist works included small watercolors, larger acrylic works, and installations made of parallel lines of tiles fixed to the wall, and was a triumph by any standard. Born in Los Angeles in 1930, Dudley is best known for his affiliation with the Finish Fetish movement of the 1960s. His monochrome works and color field paintings—handsome and rigorous responses to artists such as Jackson Pollock, Kenneth Noland, Robert Motherwell, and Frank Stella—remain perfectionist emblems of the era. In the early days of the exhibition several pieces by the artist, who also works with industrial construction materials such as aluminum and homasote, had already been reserved by European collectors and institutions, at prices from €50,000 to €95,000 (\$64,000 to \$122,000), while a large European foundation purchased a wall installation.

*Skysnare II, L.A., 1966–67. Acrylic lacquer on aluminum, 84 x 21 in.*

*Art in America*

March 18, 2011

# Art in America

REVIEWS MAR. 18, 2011

## Don Dudley

NEW YORK,  
at I-20

by Sarah Schmerler



This exhibition marked Don Dudley's first solo outing since 1985, and an impressive array of catalogues from the (now 80-year-old) artist's past exhibitions was fanned out on the gallery's desk. They largely documented group shows, from 1972 to 1989, in which Dudley appeared along with some of his better-known contemporaries—Richard Artschwager, Jennifer Bartlett, Anthony Caro.

The catalogues were yellowing, but the works on the wall—eight ambitious, Minimalist-inspired geometric pieces and six abstract Finish Fetish paintings on gently curved aluminum panels—felt fresh, optically powerful and utterly relevant. They made a case for the direct, optical pleasure that simple, well-wrought, color-based works (completely lacking in backward-looking irony or heavy-handed conceptualism) hold for contemporary viewers, no matter the work's provenance or the artist's age. Put another way: more octogenarian artists ought to grace Chelsea's walls.

Pieces ranged from 1966 to 1979, with one 1974 series reconfigured for I-20.

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Throughout his career, Dudley has chosen his materials and methods judiciously, achieving complex effects through impressively simple means. The Finish Fetish works, the earliest in the show, have a decidedly West Coast feel (indeed, the artist lived in California in the 1960s when he made them). Matte, pale colors have been applied in slow, subtle gradations, which seem to blend and change in relation to your point of view and the gallery's ambient, natural light. (According to gallery literature, Dudley used Murano automotive enamel that, when sprayed onto surfaces, bonds at a 45-degree angle, "allowing for maximum light refraction.") *Lavender Prism* (1966–67), for instance, is a 7-by-13/4-foot tapered rectangle of the titular color. At its center, rainbow hues (red/orange, yellow/white, blue/purple) appear in thin bands.

The rigid geometries, repeating patterns and bold, opaque colors of "Untitled (aluminum module)," 1974/2010, a series of thin-gauge aluminum panels (each 463/4 by 12 inches and crafted by Dudley after his move to New York City in the early 1970s), contrast with the "eye-of-the-beholder" vibe of the Finish Fetish works. In one piece, two deep maroon modules are stacked vertically and flanked by a bright white module on either side. Another consists of 18 panels in cooler hues of pale blue, dark blue and gray. All the panels in this series are interchangeable; they can be (and have been) configured to respond to a particular space.

Best, however, are the installations Dudley made in the late 1970s using 2-by-8-inch pieces of Homasote (fiberboard made of recycled paper) slathered with a single, solid color of acrylic paint. He assembles them like "bricks" to create large shapes on the wall. The 20-foot-wide *Red Corner* (1979) contains 23 red rows that span one of the gallery's corners to form an irregular octagon. *Green Triangle* (1978) is an 8-foot-high pyramid shape in pale green. Not a single pencil line was in evidence on the wall behind either of these painstaking installations. The payoff: form and color that seem to float of their own accord.

*East of Borneo*

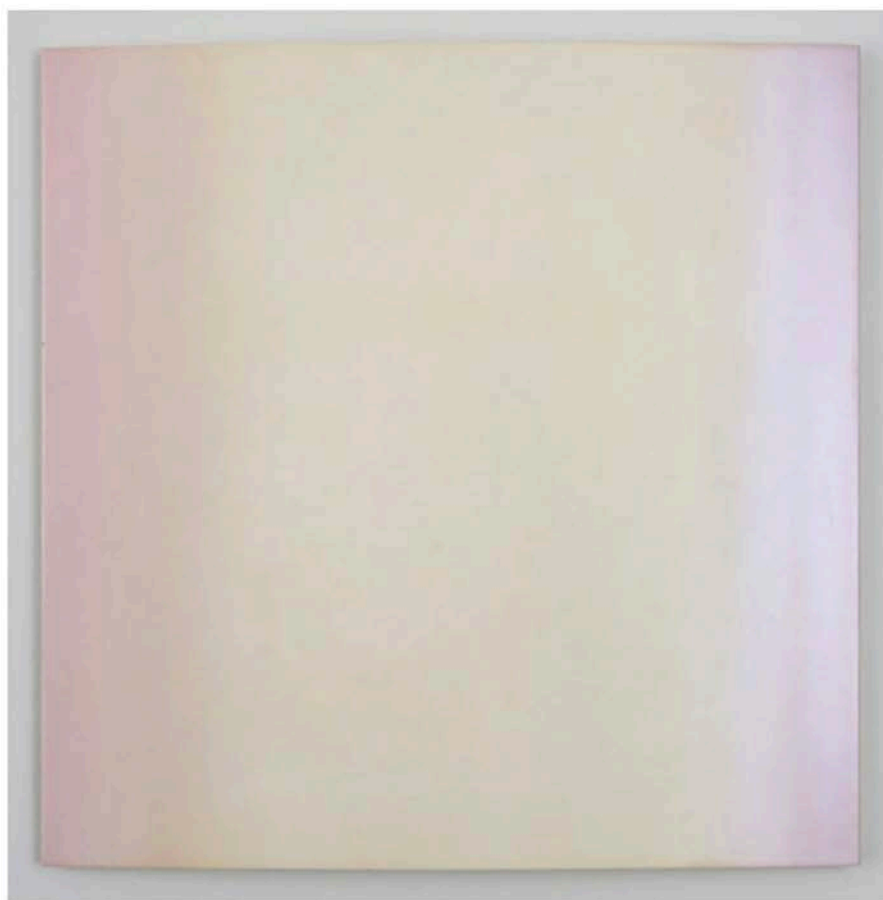
January 26, 2011

# east of borneo

January 26, 2011

## **Lost Opportunities: The Early Work of Don Dudley**

by Saul Ostrow



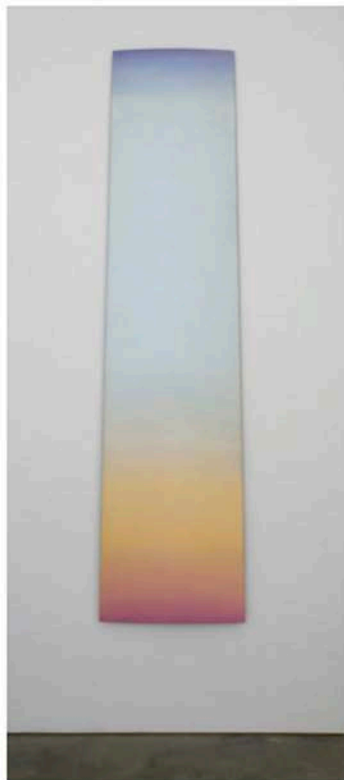
Don Dudley, *Murano II*, 1967. Acrylic lacquer on aluminum, 22.5 x 22.5 in. Photos: Cary Whittier. All images courtesy of the artist and I-20 Gallery, New York.

Last spring I went to a dinner in New York at the loft of the artist Don Dudley. In the seventies he made some great Minimalist works that literalized flatness as structure as well as surface, and he exhibited a modular piece at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 1972. By the eighties he was exploring the space between painting, sculpture, and design by producing object-like works that embodied a sense of imminent functionality. A selection of Dudley's work from 1966-79 is currently on view at I-20 gallery in New York, his first solo show in 25 years. I'm not sure how, but the conversation that night drifted around to the subject of Dudley's having come east in 1968 from LA. This was perhaps a strange time for a young artist to leave, just at the moment

when Southern California was emerging with an art world identity of its own.

There was a new sensibility developing, an attitude that was characterized as “cool,” and broadcast an in-your-face hedonism at odds with the darker stance affected in New York. On the East Coast, artists inhabited abandoned manufacturing spaces and tended to identify with the workers in the old iron and steel industries of the rust belt. In Los Angeles, by contrast, artists were more aligned with small, specialized contractors in the aerospace, automobile, and furniture-building industries. They were experimenting with new materials and finishes—plastics and resins, molded wood, aerosol paints—to make work that examined the phenomena of space and light, the forms of an car-dependent mass culture. These artists ranged from Larry Bell to Robert Irwin, Peter Alexander to Craig Kauffman, Billy Al Bengston to Ed Ruscha. Many of them showed with the resurgent Ferus Gallery, by this time no longer a beat collective but an ambitious commercial enterprise. **1** These diverse artists were united by the principles of color, materiality, precise craftsmanship, and intellectual rigor. In the midsixties Dudley was a young artist trying to break into this scene, finding it more closed than he would expect.

After spending a year and a half in Mexico, Dudley and his wife and children had returned to San Diego in 1959, where Dudley found a job working at the nearby La Jolla Art Museum. He exhibited his work around La Jolla, but in 1964 they decided to move back to LA (his birthplace). He continued to make artwork but couldn't get anybody to take much interest in it, so he decided he needed a new start in a new city. He loaded up a station wagon with everything that would fit and put the balance of his work from 1958 to 1966 into storage. His intention was to give New York a year and then come back if things didn't work out. Well, things did work out—as evidenced by the shows he quickly got. The problem was that he couldn't afford to continue to store his work in Los Angeles or to have it shipped, so he had a friend document the pieces and then destroy them, following the example of his fellow San Diego-to-Los Angeles outsider, John Baldessari. **2**



Don Dudley, *Skysnare*, 1966-67.  
Acrylic lacquer on aluminum, 84 x 21  
in.

Knowing this story, my fellow dinner guests and I were all interested in finding out what kind of work the young Don Dudley had been making in his brief Los Angeles stint. So, Don went into the storage area in his apartment and pulled out a glassine-wrapped work from the period, one of the pieces he had fit into his station wagon all those years before. What emerged from the packing material appeared to be a monochrome spray painting on a rectilinear metal support, whose surface was slightly convex. It was pristine, and looked as if it could have been made yesterday. Most significantly, the piece did not carry a sense of déjà vu—it was not familiar at all. What Don had done in his own unique way was synthesize LA's sixties aesthetic and intellectual concerns into a single plane of color. If Dudley's painting had any affinities, it was to Robert Irwin's dot paintings, and his disks from 1966–69, or David Novros's fiberglass modular paintings, and the cast-resin sculptures of Peter Alexander. **3**

The story does not end here, though. Dudley was planning to hang some of these works in his loft on the occasion of his eightieth birthday party. After some further discussion I offered to host the party and exhibition at my house. The resulting installation included ten works, all of which are on aluminum that is very slightly convex and is supported from behind by a thin wood structure.

The works are modest in size, ranging from squares (22 by 22 inches) to tall (84-inch) verticals whose rectilinear forms slightly taper from 22 inches at the bottom to 19 inches at the top. The vertical edges of all the works are very thin, so rather than protruding they hug the wall. In this manner Dudley counters the thickening of the stretcher bar that began with Jasper Johns and Frank Stella as a means of emphasizing painting's objecthood, and which Tony Delap was using at that time to illusionistic ends.

Dudley's works appear at first to be monochromes, but they really aren't. The colors range from a decoratively appealing palette of whites, to saturated yellows and violet and blue metallic (metal flack-looking) pigments. Liminal shifts of color and tone produce noticeably different spatial and perceptual effects. In part this is because Dudley used industrial lacquers with a Murano antireflective coating, whose application in differing directions catches the light in a distinct manner. The destabilizing effect of the paint, the shape, and the convex surface emphasize the integral relationship between each painting's physical size, materiality, composition, and form.



Don Dudley, *Sky Prism*, 1966-67. Acrylic lacquer on aluminum, 21 x 21 in.

The slightly bowed surface causes shifts in color, or appears to. In some cases, such as in *Sky Prism*, or the vertical *Violet Prism*, a spectral effect (or halation: a bright patch of light) has been painted into them. In *Murano I, II, and III*, the color shifts respectively take place at the edges or inversely down the center. These effects at first look as if they are a result of reflection or refraction due to the slight bowing of the work's surface, rather than Dudley's intentional intervention into the literal nature of the work. The one exception to this formula is *Skysnare*, a lyric, multicolor, almost Rothkoesque vertical work whose soft-edge transitions from orange, to yellow, to white to blue from bottom to top push the work in a direction where object, optical



effect, and color transitions do not come together as an integrated transcendent whole.

Given Dudley's pared-down vocabulary and ostensible anti-illusionism or literalist approach, we might think of him as a formalist. Yet his works articulate a very different type of formalism from the one being practiced on the East Coast at the time. These works' particular qualities move beyond the reductive definition of painting as object and process that was being advanced by Brice Marden and Robert Ryman, and instead encourage a more phenomenological or analytical understanding of painting (both the act and the thing) as being a complex assemblage of material characteristics and optical effects. Yet they are more physical and material than works by Robert Irwin.

The exciting thing about this group of works, beyond their aesthetic effect, is that they are a reminder of the multifaceted issues concerning color, surface, and materiality that stem from Minimalism's (and art concrete's) concern with the ambiguous nature of painting's objecthood. In turn, from these works one gets the sense of an important course within Minimalism as well as abstract painting that has gone unacknowledged and unexplored. This is not to imply that Dudley didn't follow the right path, given that the specific objects, which all deal with oblique observation of the seventies, are equally rich—and if things were reversed I would probably be bemoaning the fact that Dudley had followed the course indicated by these paintings, rather than the one he did.

The New York Times

January 6, 2011

# The New York Times

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ART & DESIGN | ART IN REVIEW

## Don Dudley

By KEN JOHNSON JAN. 6, 2011

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*I-20 Gallery*

*557 West 23rd Street*

*Chelsea*

*Through Feb. 19*

The exceptionally handsome arrangements of sleek, monochrome panels in [this show](#) might be taken for the works of a canny young Neo-Minimalist. Turns out, Mr. Dudley, 80, was an active player in the turn to hedonistic simplicity in painting in the late 1960s and early '70s, first as a [Finish Fetishist](#) on the West Coast and then, after moving to New York in the early '70s, in the Mondrian to Brice Marden mode. Mr. Dudley was in the Whitney Museum of American Art's 1972 Annual, devoted to contemporary American painting.

The basic components of the works in the I-20 exhibition — Mr. Dudley's first solo since 1985 — were created in the late '60s and early '70s. Each of two murals, made by nailing short lengths of painted Homasote to the wall, creates a field of parallel lines: an octagon in satiny red folded into a corner and a metallic green pyramid. They have the optical punch of Frank Stella's early paintings.

The main attractions are grid-based configurations (here newly organized) of narrow, vertical metal panels, each about 4 by 1 feet, and bent back at the top and bottom edges so they float slightly off the walls. Panels organized in a nine-over-nine block are flawlessly spray-painted shades of silvery blue.

Another piece — consisting of two deep-purple panels centered one above the other and flanked by cream-colored ones, and four more ochre panels outermost — has the structure of an altarpiece. As if made for a Euclidean mystery cult, it is classically modern and modernistically timeless.

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A version of this brief appears in print on January 7, 2011, on Page C28 of the New York edition with the headline: Don Dudley. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

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January 2011

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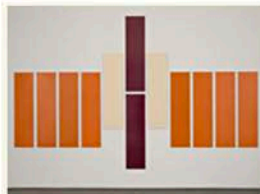
Don Dudley at I-20, installation view with *Red Corner*, 1969, left



Don Dudley  
*Untitled (Aluminum Module)*  
1974/2010  
I-20



Don Dudley  
*Green Triangle*  
1968  
I-20



Don Dudley  
*Untitled (Aluminum Module)*  
1974/2010  
I-20



Chris Dorland, Don Dudley and Shirley Irons at I-20  
Photo by Patrick McMullan

I was walking across West 23rd Street on Saturday night and ran into Roberta Smith and Jerry Saltz. "I thought you were snowbound," exclaimed Roberta, and I explained that I had whisked into town for the (delayed) opening reception for 80-year-old Finish Fetish artist Don Dudley. "We didn't know about it," Roberta responded and soon the two critics were conversing animatedly with the tall, majestic Mr. Dudley.

A few months ago, artist **Chris Dorland**, a tagger and Finish Fetish artist himself, went for dinner at the loft of one of his former professors at SUNY Purchase, painter **Shirley Irons**. While they were discussing Dorland's wall commission, recently unveiled at Lincoln Center, Shirley's husband, Don Dudley, who has been a professional furniture maker for 30 years, announced, "You know I was a painter, too." He took Dorland into his storage space and began to unwrap pieces that he had not taken out since the 1960s. Chris Dorland told me, "Even his wife was unaware of their existence."

Dorland was astounded at a subtle body of work, done on aluminum panels, which the Los Angeles-born Dudley had exhibited in Germany in the 1960s. Dorland immediately phoned one of his mentors, curator Simon Watson, who soon arrived at the Dudley loft and realized he had stumbled on a treasure trove of minimalist masterpieces. Watson takes up the story, "I immediately made a list of five Chelsea galleries and considered the pros and cons of showing Dudley's 1960s work at each of them. I selected I-20 gallery, because the gorgeous afternoon winter light coming off the Hudson gave this classic California work the right illumination."

A rave review from Ken Johnson followed in the *New York Times*. For someone who has shunned the limelight, Don Dudley enjoyed his star turn immensely last Saturday night. Even more astounding than the actual show was a suite of Dudley drawings, which I-20 Gallery director Jonathan LeVoi unveiled in the back room for artist **Meghan Boody**, camera ace Patrick McMullan, Rochester dealer Tippi Watson and half a dozen collectors.

Consisting of rows of vertical rectangles on deep, sensuous paper, each of the ten drawings is a distinct and different examination of color progression: some of them primaries, some meditations on darkness, others a delicate mix of sublime whites and lavenders. The conscientious craft of these pieces takes your breath away like a fine wine and, though they echo **Ellsworth Kelly** and **John McCracken**, the Dudley drawings stand, as a visual experience, completely on their own.

I mentioned to Don Dudley that the statuesque presentations of color reminded me of works by **Robert Moskowitz** and **Anne Truitt**. He was pleased. "Anne Truitt and I traded drawings in 1972. She understood the affinity of our work." The Dudley discovery is the kind of optimal adventure that many of us in the art world live for. It is especially pleasing that such a dignified and sparkling gentleman is its beneficiary.

**CHARLIE FINCH** is co-author of *Most Art Sucks: Five Years of Coagula* (Smart Art Press).

*Artforum*

January 1980

**ARTFORUM****“Corners”**

HAYDEN GALLERY, M.I.T.

The artists included in the “Corners” exhibition come to the theme from such widely disparate starting points that any explicit overview of the issue is made almost impossible. Although all the works in the show (with the exception of one or two) have at least some vague connection to either an inside or outside corner, only two or three of the artists extend our ability to comprehend the concept of “corner” fully.

Several objects do focus our attention toward the intersection of two wall planes. Richard Artschwager’s *Corner 11*, 1964–1979, is a marvelous, quirky object that might as well be a cheap formica-grained stereo speaker as a sculpture. Its slightly tacky geometry and surface and the height at which it is displayed in its own corner (about 4 feet) suggests a homey domestication of the architectural angle. Bryan Hunt’s *Lure 1*, 1978, does not so much hang in a corner as appear to have landed there, dartlike. Again placement height is crucial here, as the metallic form hovers above our heads. There is something lightly humorous about its delicate pinion point, something slightly ominous about its tentative anchoring. The blimplike form draws our interest to that corner point even as it casts an irregular set of shadows that parenthetically embrace the line of intersection. In these and other corner objects, the meeting of the walls seems less a factor for the audience to consider than the specific qualities of the objects themselves and their displayed height.

While these and other works like James Ford’s *Stanza No. 11* and Don Dudley’s untitled optical striations do indeed use corners as their support, others, like John Avery Newman’s *Vexed and Tired*, create their own corners. But these all deal with the corner as an architectural detail lending structure and, in some cases, visual interest to the artists’ own creations.

Corners can be either starting places or results, but in this exhibition most of the works use them only as points of departure. Where are the actual corners constructed by Aycock, Ferrara et al.? What about the visual echoing set up by a corner (only Jennifer Bartlett’s piece, *Pieces Dark Star*, imitates the reflectivity of a right angle). Artists for whom the corner is an integral part of their thinking are missing entirely—not only those who build architectonic corners but Flavin and his lights, Morris with his mirrors, Stella with his sculptured canvases and especially Serra with his thrown lead corner pieces. This is not just nit-picking, for exclusions like these seem to question the validity of mounting such a small theme show.

Only one artist at the Hayden, Patrick Ireland, addresses the corner in a dynamic, multiple consideration. The gaily drawn cord illusions of *A Corner for Tatlin and Fred Astaire* never actually touch the corner. They don’t need to for the viewer is attracted to the tension,

stretching, lassitude and interruptions that occur in cord and shadow between the two walls. In many ways these are perfect adjectives for the ways in which a corner works perceptually. His other work in the exhibition, *Rope Drawing #53, 1979*, deals with the viewer's position as it shifts around a corner, again creating multiple junctures in line, color, shape and cast shadows. Ireland thinks about "corner" here in an expansive way, full of both wit and erudition.

Whether in architecture, sculpture or planar design, corners occur at stopping points, interruptions in a constant directional flow. Unfortunately, the "Corners" exhibition did not concentrate on artists whose work is umbilically attached to the corner as a concept but chose instead to show artists who are predominantly interested in the corner as a physical armature.

—Ronald J. Onorato

tered the manipulation of his layered and "darned" surfaces as well as the use of ancient colors—dusty whites, pasty whites, terra cottas resembling old meat and stanch blood—Kerns has introduced a starkness born out of a sharp contrast between black and white. Black, when set down with such intensity and contained in such sharply bounded form as it is here, has a rigidity which refers to a modernist approach which Kerns has imposed upon his own painting style. For the most part, that feeling of ancientness which we've come to associate with his work is undermined.

In *Hecate*, he makes a futile attempt to diffuse the overly top-heavy black area through alternating shiny and dull. The back and forth shift from surface involvement to imposed form is jolting and difficult to accept visually. A more tentative, less opaque interposition of black proves more successful: in the piece entitled *Hard Scrabble*, an incision made in the black region "bleeds" out a thin, fluid white. An area of black in an untitled one works because of an underlying presence here, a subtle pinkness which resounds in the rest of the paintings.

Whether the slight shift in Kerns' formal involvements is a challenge or a distraction, the result is that some of the intense agitation and violence usually contained in his work is diminished. A somewhat tentative approach to the new inclusions comes through those canvases whose widths have been painted black. "To deal with the plane's thickness, or to ignore it" is the right question for the artist to ask, but before proceeding, a decisive statement that the painting is being handled as an object must be made. Kerns' paintings are clearly not objects. His meter remains where it has always been—on the almost skinlike surfaces of his canvases, built-up, eroded, mended and scarred, relics of time.

—JUDITH LOPES CARDOZO

## Cambridge, Mass.

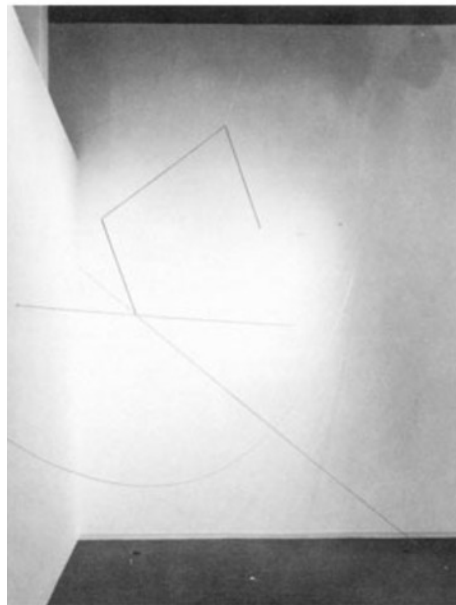
"Corners," Hayden Gallery, M.I.T.:

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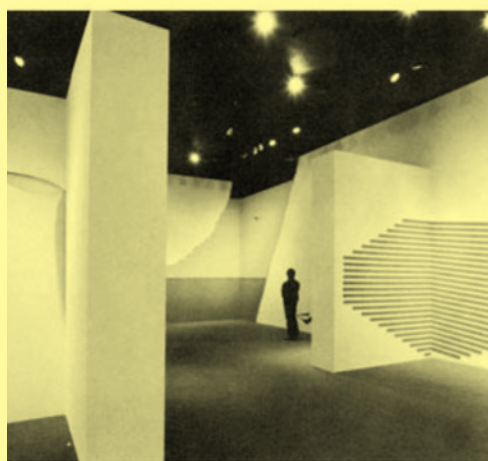
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Ireland, *Rope Drawing #54, A Corner For Tatlin and Fred Astaire*, string and liquidex, 10 x 96"



74 M.I.T., "Corners" exhibition, 1979, installation view.

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—RONALD J. ONORATO

## Dallas

VERNON FISHER, Delahanty Gallery:

VERNON FISHER's combinations of literary texts and neo-photo-realist paintings question some of the expectations with which we approach narrative content. The artist cuts his texts directly into highly worked images of media personalities, parking lots, nondescript automobiles and scenes from his native Texas landscape; the integrated text deliberately challenges the clarity and sanctity of recognizable subjects. In one sense, the fusion of verbal and visual implies a continuation of esthetic concerns deriving from Cubist collage. Here, however, the issue is not manipulation of planes, but manipulation of content, which poses a threat to rational analysis.

Because the artist's stories—combining autobiographical references and contemplative anecdotes—present characters who engage in meaningful actions without a sense of emotive conviction, these characters gnaw away at one's psychological need for consistency and cognizable meaning. In *The Tropics*, for example, Fisher depicts the rear end of a car parked in the midst of a mysterious array of lights that dance impressionistically over a seemingly mundane parking lot. The visual image is offset by the text which introduces Sheila, a drunken dancer, who attempts to convey the story of her life—"moving dreamily through instances of forfeiture and regret as if she were talking to someone else." The story concludes with the author and his companion Dave leaving the bar, with the latter "running toward a cemetery in order to remember his future." While the relationship of text and image is only marginally logical, together they charge the banal with significance. Moreover, the artist's characters become convincing manifestations of dreams, fantasies or irrational impulses.

In *Dolphins*, one of the most complex

*Artforum*

January 1979

**ARTFORUM****Don Dudley**

PAM ADLER GALLERY

Working with modular 2-by-8-inch forms of homosote blocks, Don Dudley performs variations on simple, sparse configurations. Nailing the blocks to the gallery wall, he carefully orders their arrangement in several kinds of patterns. Arranged lengthwise, the blocks line up in long panels; in two instances, they are arranged symmetrically in pyramidal formations, narrowing from top to bottom. Color is monochrome, in variations of gray tones brushed lightly onto the surface, or in pale silvery greens and plum. Perfect order combined with understated color reinforces the total lack of movement or change within them.

The formula for each piece seems evident—if anything is hidden, it fails to create an impression or atmosphere. One wall of the gallery to each piece gives plenty of room for various angles of viewing; very little occurs from a different vantage point, except for the one corner piece which seems to vary in length as you approach it from either wall. In pale plum color, a single centered nail pins each module of board to the wall. Seventeen equal-length stripes ascend the wall, made of three sections of board lined up next to each other. The top five stripes narrow to an arrow-point at the very top; again, a single nail pierces the board and keeps it in place. The arrangement is cool, balanced and precise, but unfortunately dead in terms of internal movement. Very little shadow is present; the glare of the gallery lights obliterates any subtle color shifts that may be present.

This piece is a prototype for the other pieces in this particular show. One other pyramid arrangement spans another wall, a simple column featuring T-formation blocks fits a third, and two columns arranged at slight angles to each other finishes the last wall.

Dudley's former work was in a similar vein, but much less austere, dealing out more information yet losing none of the impact of a fresh clean line. More gesture-oriented, these pieces used long lengths of painted metal or board, arranged in linear configurations to denote spatial placements around and within their confines. Color, less restricted than in the more recent works, varied within each line, often repeating several times at intervals within the total form. Just as spare as these latter pieces, they made, nevertheless, a more emphatic statement. The lines they drew were bolder, the colors more brash; yet they suffered no loss of delicacy.

In the transformation from the earlier works to the latest, the urgency and strength of the gesture was replaced by the reticent placement of those single nails in the center of each board section. The emphasis shifted from internal/external boundary to a more solid overall form, with all the interest internally placed on those careful nails. The new pieces sport attractive surfaces; their refinement is polished and well controlled, but a needless amount of energy has

been lost in the process of further reducing the elements to a more pristine statement.

As Dudley's work continues to grow some of its former energy may return. A hint of further spatial involvement is given in one drawing—red, yellows, black and gray stripes alternately couple on either side of a center (corner) line. But one pair of lines ignores the central seam, and veers off into space in front of the corner. The spatial ambiguity is startling after the emphasis on total symmetry and predictable arrangement of all the other pieces. Taking a risk in placement as well as implication, this study forms a connection between former works and present ones. If it also predicts a future of experimentation, it indicates fresh involvement with the spatial, gestural concerns so missed in Dudley's latest pieces.

—*Deborah Perlberg*

occur in glimpses of the far side through the piece itself; opposing structural patterns are revealed only to disappear when confronted on the other side.

Mayer's accompanying lithographs (one to each sculpture) reveal a more brusque, irregular form than the actual pieces, sagging against gravity while the real wood resists such forces. Consequently, they present a more lively-looking group than the actual sculptures—rough, irregular, blunt. Yet despite their regularity, their obvious repetitive construction, their similarities to previous pieces, Mayer's sculptures are satisfying in themselves, the work of a classical sculptor who deals in the minute refinements of structured space.

With a hand reminiscent of old Dutch masters, CLAIRE MOORE sketches visual diaries of places she has been, and records multitudes of facts about each place. The results are an intimate diary, a journal compounded of fact and impression. With changes in mood reflected in the energy of each line, her narrative drawings contain an essence of personality that is particular, specific, and simultaneously ageless and archetypal. A product of 22 years of drawing and labeling, these "Interiors, Exteriors" have the freshness of newer works by younger artists who have just discovered the fascination of words and word-art. Moore refers to her labeling as "words conveying bits of information I would like to remember but which for the most part cannot be drawn." Yet it is doubtful that this sensitive artist could not draw just about anything she wanted to, whether it be as mundane as a clothes hanger or as ephemeral as a fit of depression. Changing her content to match a fleeting emotional atmosphere, her drawings are perfect proof of this ability.

Drawings from the McDowell Colony group are expansive, airy—her characteristic scrawl relaxes into potential energy. Placed to represent swaths of grass or protruding roots, her ink lines create an overall pattern of scratches, dense lines spread out over a wide area. Few words intrude upon the landscapes, but these are, as usual, factual labels of place and direction. Somehow, an air of general happiness pervades each drawing, as if the artist is glad to point the way to the dining hall or choose a particular grassy knoll for relaxing. In contrast, her interiors, views of half-finished skyscrapers and dingy Chicago courtyards, are permeated with something plaintive, as if repre-

senting a condition of life somehow accepted with a humorously critical eye.

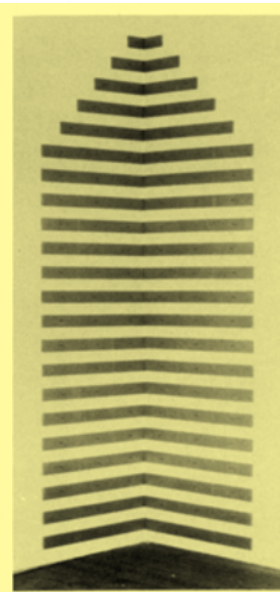
A mad confusion of details, listing doorknobs, shower fixtures, broken lamps and stuck doors, overlays each scene. Blending unobtrusively into the interior detail, the words act as description as well as content. Rather than disturbing the accuracy of her realistic drawing, they seem to imply a universality of the human condition of living in hotel rooms. The carefully observed furnishings deserve to be callously labeled; they are the epitome of the impersonal, in the exact state of decay that makes them immediately familiar and easy to disregard.

Murky, bleak washes of one dominant color set the tone in each drawing. An intricate mesh of ink lines blends the wash and line detail into a moody monochrome, uniting word and image in a dense overall informality. Buildings in green and pink streaks convey a polluted urban atmosphere; notations of "storm clouds overhead," details of "construction abandoned 5 years ago," the postscript adding "windows don't open, ever" add up to an almost total picture of human alienation amidst urban renewal, and civilized progress.

With varying views, off-center compositions of sides of office buildings, or intimate portraits (the edge of a table placed carefully beside a plastic-covered chair seat) these small drawings accomplish what the overblown photo-realist canvas cannot—a microcosm of minutely observed detail that implies a universe of identical scenes. Clearly, mechanical perfection is not necessary; what is necessary is the achingly human hand that is swayed by situation. Moore unites work and image so masterfully it would seem unnatural to separate them again.

Captioned art has usually been used with flippancy, comic or satirical as the case would be—Moore's captions are intense epigrams. A way to confront each changing environment, they record, comment, and ultimately dismiss the importance of every observed item—the whole as the sum of its parts.

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Don Dudley, *Untitled Corner Piece*, 1978, acrylic lacquer on homosote, 96 x 36"

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### Los Angeles

ALEXIS SMITH, Rosamund Felsen Gallery; LADDIE JOHN DILL, California Institute of Technology and James Corcoran Gallery;