THE
ADDITIVE
PROCESS

RUTH MIGDAL
DAN MILLS
ALICE SHADDLE
GAIL SKUDERA
CAMERON ZEBRUN
THE ADDITIVE PROCESS

APRIL 19 - MAY 25, 1983
HYDE PARK ART CENTER, CHICAGO

INTRODUCTION

The title "The Additive Process" is based on the traditional distinction— in sculptural works of art— between objects produced by subtractive techniques such as carving away material from a block and additive techniques where the final form is arrived at through a conglomeration of materials. All the works in this show have been produced primarily through the addition of pieces of various materials to each other. The particular juxtaposition of materials and the methods of addition lend each of the works its expressive character. Peculiar to the additive process is the necessity of creating a unity of feeling despite a variety of materials. In subtractive techniques, e.g. stone carving, a certain unity is achieved simply because the material is the same throughout the work. In the additive process, the artist must force the contrasting formal elements of each piece of material— its shape, color, texture, etc.— to work toward his or her expressive intent.

Although the distinction between the additive and subtractive techniques is seen most clearly in works designed to be experienced fully in the round, we may apply the distinction to works produced in low relief as well. Many of the works in this show exist on the border line between the provinces of the truly three-dimensional and the two-dimensional. They are works which hang on the wall and are understood for their qualities as objects existing in space, not as attempts, as in illusionistic painting, to present the appearance of a three-dimensional reality on a planar surface. They gain their expressive character, as do other objects, from the formal qualities of the materials from which they are made.

Spontaneity and directness are qualities frequently associated with the additive process. The stone carver must work carefully and plan in advance, for once the stone is chipped away it can never be replaced. This leads to a certain constraint when such subtractive techniques are employed; the artist must define his or her form in advance and impose it on the material. In the case of the additive process, the artist is free to add, remove, then add pieces again and again until the proper form is achieved. Furthermore, since the physical boundaries are not predetermined as in subtractive techniques, the work produced through the additive process is free to change and grow in a more organic fashion. The direct nature of adding one piece of material to another allows the artist to work with less of a preconceived form allowing changes in attitude toward the final form as it grows with the addition of each new piece.

In the sculptures by Ruth Migdal, we see the additive process used to produce abstracted representations of the female figure. Earlier in her career, Ms. Migdal devoted herself more exclusively to abstract expressionist painting. The
sensibility of the painter can be seen in her sculptural works, and it is the particular mode of the additive process used by her which makes the translation of the painter's "gesture" into three-dimensional works possible. Her figures are built up of fragments or "gestures" of clay. Each piece is added to others which have already been assembled, much like the addition of brush-strokes to the painter's canvas. If a new piece is added and does not achieve the desired effect, it can simply be removed and reshaped or replaced by another piece. Her studio reflects this method. Bins of discarded fragments lie waiting for future inspection, the particular shape of a discarded fragment perhaps serving as the beginning a new work, or happily fitting into another work already in progress. Her method lends her sculptures the feeling of forms shaped by the forces of nature.

The sculpture by Migdal reflects two of the concerns taken up by Cubist sculptors at the beginning of this century - fragmentation of the subject and the opening of the sculptural form to admit the surrounding atmosphere so that voids in the sculpture have as important an impact as solid material. Her human figures look as though their surfaces were fragmented and reassembled so that the elements lie at somewhat different angles from their original position. The shell-like fragments seem to hover about the core of the human figure producing the aura of that form. Each viewer must assemble the pieces psychologically in order to reach an understanding of the entire sculpture. There is the suggestion of a substantial human form and the possibility of the exterior space being admitted into the figure, exposing its interior, at the same time. More poetically, perhaps, her sculptures combine the empirical observation of exterior form with the subjective interpretation of the human interior. They are symbolic representations of the duality of human existence, encompassing both the conscious and the subconscious, the exterior and the interior.

Dan Mills' constructions demonstrate a different approach to the additive process. The inspiration for the works in this show comes from the observation of rural architecture, from structures which the artist has seen but which have an ambiguous function. In his fully threedimensional works there is the suggestion, because of the relation of their scale to that of the observer, that one might enter the structure. This stresses their character as enclosures, objects which have both an outer facade and a protective inside. It is as though the artist has created these structures to serve an unidentified utilitarian purpose. Much of the meaning for the observer comes from imagining possible uses for the enclosures. They are mysterious structures, both sculptural and architectural.

The additive process used here is the straightforward technique of the rural carpenter who builds directly with the materials at hand and not always with the help of a blueprint or predetermined specifications. One is reminded of wooden structures often seen in the countryside where a short term necessity leads to an ingenious construction with a short-lived and to the outsider, mysterious, purpose. Such structures are also frequently produced in an artist's studio for the temporary support of a canvas or sculpture, or as a jig in the production of parts for some carpentry project. That they are produced for a purpose is obvious, but that purpose is soon forgotten. It is the mystery surrounding these structures which forms their expressive character.

Old wooden slats, lath for supporting plaster, and discarded window frames are the common building materials from which Mills' sculptures are built. The materials are often scavenged from the site of a
building's demolition or renovation. The worn and used qualities of the shapes and colors of the pieces are allowed to work on the observer, inspiring the associations that accompany them - thoughts about their former function and the history that led up to their being discarded. Mills imposed his own color qualities on the materials in a way which avoids the denial of their inherent colors. The paint which he uses is made up of transparent or translucent pigments suspended in an acrylic medium and is applied in multiple layers. This allows him to give the facades of his structures a unified surface; their color quality is the sum of the translucent paint color and the original color of the material seen through the paint.

Collage is the additive technique used most often in the works by Alice Shaddle to convey a "feeling of organic form and movement." Her low reliefs are created through the combination of "thousands" of bits of paper, sometimes fragments of wallpaper or other patterned papers, sometimes papers to which she has added the color. Once again a comparison to the process of painting is appropriate, for Shaddle works quickly, adding pieces much as the painter may rapidly build an image of many strokes of color. She also demands the freedom allowed by the process to change the direction her intent is taking as the work grows piece by piece. Here also, at certain stages, pieces may be removed and replaced by others to achieve the proper end result.

As one looks at a work such as Moth Pages, reproduced in this booklet, one becomes aware of more and more activity. At first one perceives an overall texture and buzzing movement. As one examines the work more carefully, however, the close valued markings and bits of paper set at angles projecting from the surface become more defined and the shapes of leaves and insects are seen clearly. It is much like the experience of walking through the forest and seeing the mat of fallen leaves and detritus which makes up the forest floor. At first it seems inactive and uniform, but with some investigation or the turning of a leaf or stone, a multitude of natural forms and intense activity are revealed.

Her works express much the same feeling as various natural settings in which we see a piling up of forms and shapes, colors and textures - the forest floor with its mat of leaves and twigs; the piles of multicolored gravel found in riverbeds or on the shores of large bodies of water. These settings allow objects of various shapes and colors to exist side by side without any apparent discrepancy. This is no doubt because the objects which have been placed together have been brought there slowly and carefully by a combination of natural forces. In Shaddle's works we see the same "rightness" of the combination of parts. There is no doubt that it is the concept and the hand of the artist which has combined the forms in this case, but the colors, shapes, and textures coexist with the same ease as they do in the natural settings mentioned.

Woven surfaces and painted surfaces are combined in the works by Gail Skudera. The cloth, with its patterns and colors, is woven by the artist and then pieces are applied to the surface of the painted canvas so that they protrude at varying angles. Unity of these disparate materials and surfaces is achieved through a variety of means. The cloth's structure and pattern are determined by the system and grid on which it is woven. The surface of the canvas is given the same feeling through the grid pattern painted on it. Both are brought together through the obvious fastening of the triangular pieces of cloth to the canvas, and the not so obvious effect of light casting shadows of the protruding shapes of cloth onto the painted surface. The combination of the painted shapes and the shapes of the cast
shadows is so convincing that the viewer will often question from which source a given shape arises. This process of questioning is a vital element of the work's expressive intent.

Despite this unity, there is a certain sense of tension built up in these works by the juxtaposition of handwoven cloth, accompanied by all of its associations with function and tradition, with the strictly geometrical grids painted on the canvases. Skudera has used the qualities of a plastic polymer resin to lessen this tension. Her cloth has been coated with this material, making it more rigid, enhancing its qualities for relief purposes and reducing the associations with function. She is able to let the woven material reveal some of its traditional functional qualities while placing it within the context of painting as fine art.

The artist suggests that these works may be considered as "aerial" views of a setting onto which the cloth elements have fallen or are falling. If one looks at the canvases from a distance, one senses the feeling of movement which results from the juxtapositions of shapes and the broken continuity of line. On closer viewing the sense of movement is lessened and the hard structure of the shapes, both two-dimensional and three-dimensional, predominates. Again we are confronted with the necessity to question what is actually seen. This activity dominates our understanding of the work.

Cameron Zebrun finds inspiration for his relief constructions in the design of American folk crafts. Frequently he combines the direct building processes of carpentry with the geometric designs of traditional quilts. The artist sees this combination as symbolic of the traditional family structure and the traditional crafts associated with male and female roles. Again, as in Mill's sculptures, these works have an ambiguous quality but imply usefulness; they have a "pragmatic" feeling to them. Much of their expression is derived from the functional associations one has with the materials which are added together to produce the final form. One associates the clean simplicity of much American folk design with the straightforward construction and geometry of these reliefs.

Tension between the illusion of three dimensions and the object quality of the construction is great in Zebrun's work. The strict geometrical shapes which sit on the wooden surfaces, sometimes painted, sometimes the result of applied pieces of cloth, can be read as either object or illusion. Often the painted shapes appear as fragments of a larger design, as though extracted from an advertisement painted on the side of a wooden building. At other times the shapes, both painted and cloth, appear to be parts of a mysterious diagram. Diagonal lines are an indirect reference to spatial characteristics. For example, as the artist has commented, they may evoke a sense of the "way sunlight comes through a window and falls on the wall."

One senses the structure and design of rural architecture once again, the sturdy construction of a barn or the repetitive nature of a picket fence. The quality of the underlying wooden structure is never completely hidden: one always perceives the texture and grain of the material (in certain instances parts are left unpainted). It is the sturdiness of construction and the straightforward nature of the shapes, combined with the mystery of their purpose, that creates the expression which these works communicate to the viewer.
RUTH AIZUSS MIGDAL

Born 1932

EDUCATION
M.F.A., University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana
B.A.E., School of the Art Institute of Chicago

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
1978, Veridian Gallery, New York, One Person Exhibit.
1978, Evanston Art Center, Weighardt Gallery, One Person Exhibit
1975, Pamplemousse Gallery, Chicago, Two Person Exhibit.
1974, Michael Wyman Gallery, Chicago, One Person Exhibit.

PUBLICATIONS
Arts Magazine, Nov. 1978, Review.

To explore the Goddess in all women throughout the medium of clay.
To celebrate the joy of our gesture of movement in space.
To see and wonder as the journey proceeds.

Goddess Unfolding, 1983, Ruth Migdal, 33 x 23 x 16 inches, High fired clay, Epoxy, Oxides.
DAN MILLS

Born 1956

EDUCATION

M.F.A., Northern Illinois University, Dekalb, IL 1981

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

1983, ARC Gallery Rawspace, 2 person installation, Chicago, IL
1982, Rockford Arts and Science Center, 2 person installation, Rockford, IL
1981, University of Notre Dame, 2 person exhibit, Notre Dame, IN
1981, Albany College of Pharmacy, Albany, NY
1981, Northern Illinois University Festival of the Arts, Installation of four outdoor sculptures, Dekalb, IL
1981, MoMing Dance and Arts Center, 2 person exhibit, Chicago, IL
1980, Cooperstown Art Association, Cooperstown, NY

"Everything comes alive when contradictions accumulate."
Gaston Bachelard

Pselter 1, 1983, Dan Mills, 94 x 48 x 19 1/2 inches, Wood, Acrylics
ALICE SHADDOLE

EDUCATION
M.F.A., School of the Art Institute of Chicago
1972
B.F.A., School of the Art Institute of Chicago,
1954
Oberlin College
University of Chicago Extension

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
1980, Art Institute of Chicago, Prize Winners
Revisited
1980, Indiana University Northwest, One Woman
Exhibition
1980, Artemisia Gallery, One Woman Exhibition
1979, Artemisia Gallery, One Woman Exhibition
1978, Artemisia Gallery, One Woman Exhibition
1978, Two Illinois Center, One Woman Exhibition
1976, Indianapolis Museum of Art, National
Invitation

PUBLICATIONS:
Art in America, July-August 1979, Review with
Reproduction.
Art in America, Sept-Oct. 1978, Review with
Reproduction.
Artforum, Summer Issue 1978, Review with
Reproduction.

The juxtaposition of textured patterns and
multiple borders layered from "ten thousand"
pieces of paper is the visual game of my collages.
They may at one time resemble cloth or at
another, drawings from old pictures or another,
reliefs formed out of the ground itself.

Moth Pages, 1983, Alice Shaddle, 22 x 22 1/2 inches,
Paper, Watercolor, Colored pencil.
GAIL SKUDERA

Born 1952

EDUCATION
M.F.A., Northern Illinois University,
Dekalb, IL 1981
B.F.A., Northern Illinois University,
Dekalb, IL 1975
Montclair State College, Upper
Montclair, NJ 1970-73

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
1983, Museum of the Hudson
Highlands, Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY
1983, ARC Gallery Rawspace, 2 person
installation, Chicago, IL
1982, Rockford Arts and Science Center,
2 person installation, Rockford, IL
1982, Columbia College Dance Center,
One person Show, Chicago, IL
1981, MoMing Dance and Arts Center, 2
person exhibit, Chicago, IL
1981, Illinois State Museum, Juried
Exhibition, Purchase Award,
Springfield, IL

PUBLICATIONS:
Fiberarts, IX, Nov./Dec. 1982, "Gail
Skudera: Textile Paintings"
by Janet Koplos.

These relief paintings are an expression
of the relationship between material
form and a systematically derived
environment.

D.T. Landing-Black, 1983, Gail Skudera, 29 3/4 x 20 1/2 inches,
Cloth, Acrylics, Canvas.
Born 1955

EDUCATION
M.F.A., Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1980
B.F.A., Cleveland Institute of Art, 1978

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
1983, Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Bergman Gallery, "Emerging", group show, Chicago, IL
1981, Betsy Rosenfield Gallery, Summer Group Show, Chicago, IL
1981, Northwestern University, North Shore Art League 4th Annual Print Exhibition, Evanston, IL
1981, Contemporary Art Workshop, 2 person show, Chicago, IL
1979, Brooklyn Museum, 21st National Print Exhibition, Brooklyn, NY

This group of works represents an interest in rural architecture and traditional American crafts. It is important that the work remain ambiguous enough for the viewer to complete the suggestion.

The Compass, 1982, Cameron Zebrun, 35 5/8 x 24 x 3 1/4 inches, Mixed-media.