

DETECTOR

comprised of

MAP PAINTING COLLAGES FROM 1996-2002

and

TWO SCULPTURES

and

AN INSTALLATION, AND A VIDEO

by

DAN MILLS

Author of "Collages on Records,"

"Woodcuts on Collage and Ghine Collé," &c., &c.

to which is added the essay

"Please Cross Out the Correct Response"

by

JEFF ABELL, B.A. M.M.

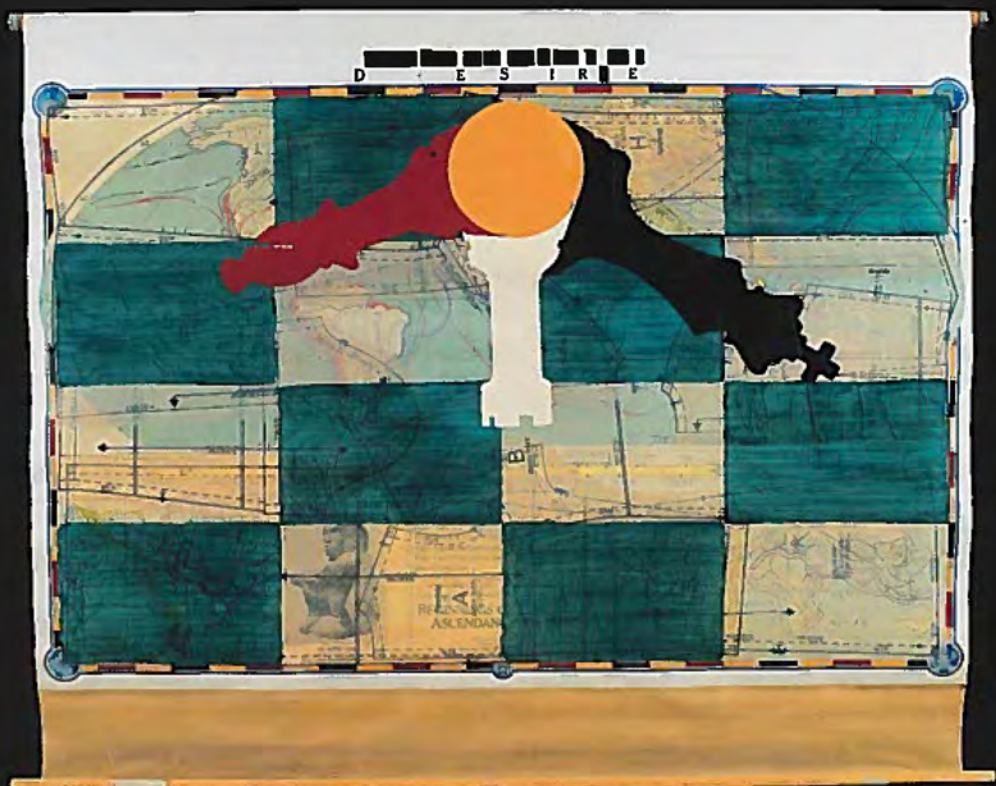
Performance Artist, Critic, Composer, &c., &c.

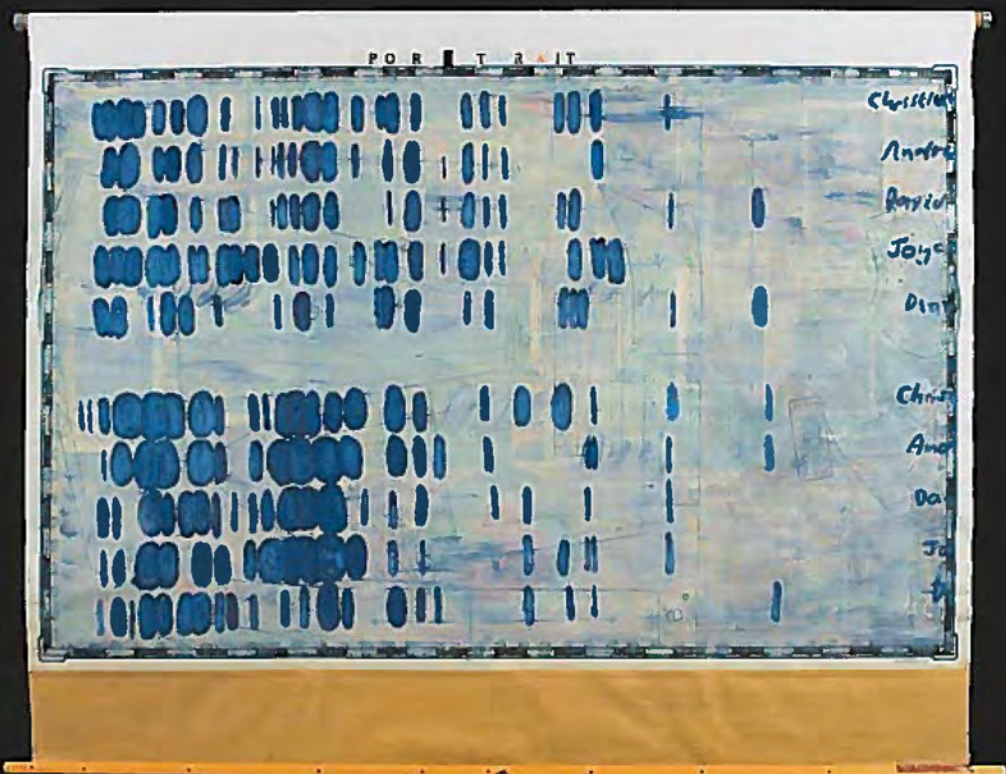
*"Bright and glorious are revelations about history,
contemporary occurrences, and human foibles"*

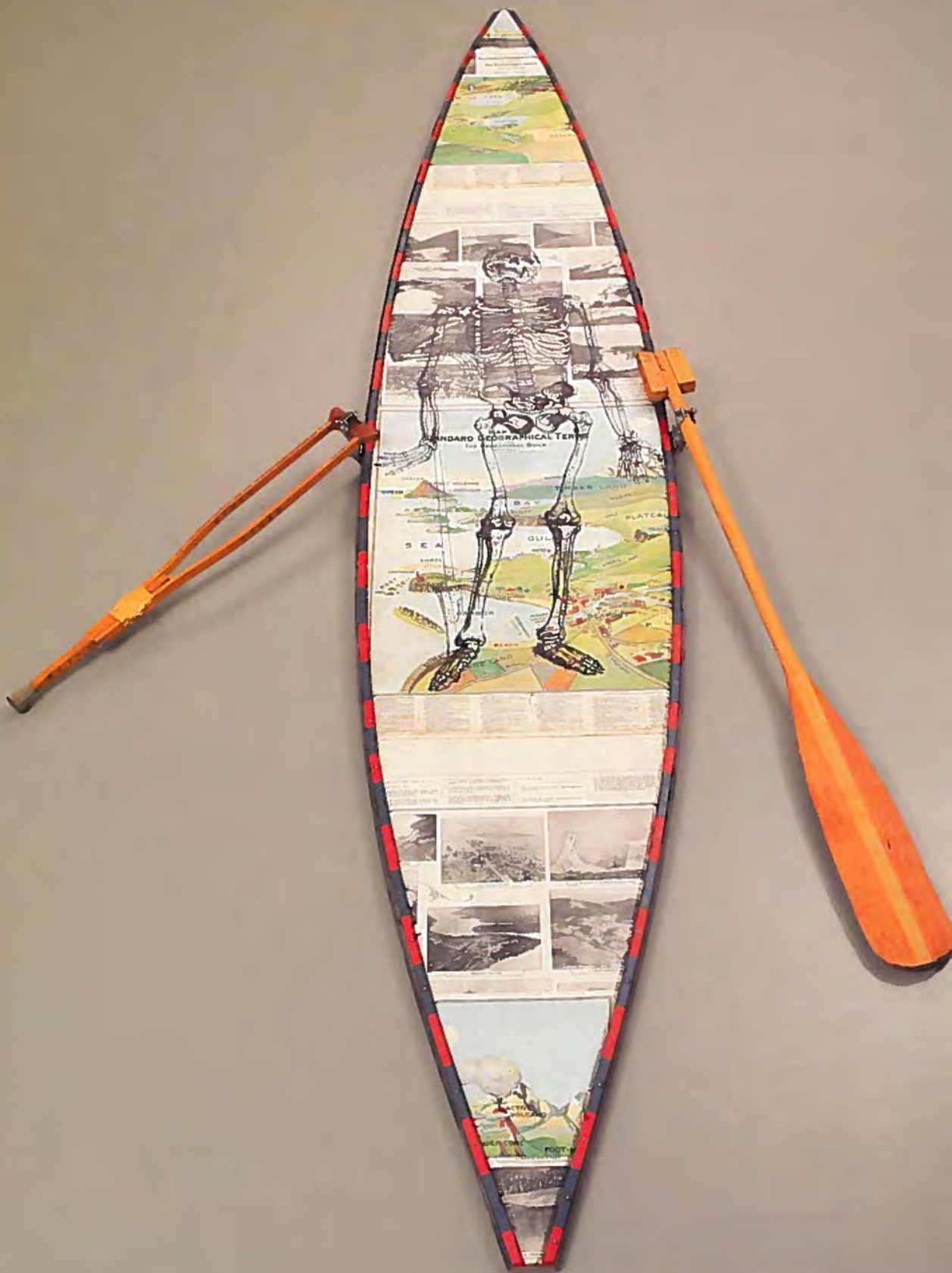
CHICAGO

**PRESENTED BY NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
ART MUSEUM GALLERY IN CHICAGO**

APRIL 26 - JUNE 1, 2002







Human/Nature, 1971, 1998-2002



EXERPT FROM

Past Imperfect

(A compilation collected from American history books, and children's readers from 1845-1956)

[patriarchal/authoritative voice]

"It has not been without reason," says Rollin, "that History has always been considered as the light of ages, the depository of events, the faithful evidence of truth, the source of prudence and good counsel, and the rule of conduct and good manners."

[neutral/disinterested voice]

It seems to us a queer custom, but the boy's people were queer, and their homes were queer, and nearly everything about them would seem queer and strange—to us.

[patriarchal/authoritative]

But when Suzie grows up, she wants to be an Indian. Not a quiet, well-behaved Indian either. She wants to be a whooping, painted, war-dancing Indian with beads and feathers and tomahawks!

[happy child's voice]

We may now turn our attention to the Neanderthalers. ...for without much question, the Neanderthalers were far enough along the path of human development to steal and fight...

[patriarchal/authoritative]

The Koran contains the speeches, sayings, and advice of Mohammed, all of which were written by his followers, for he wrote nothing.

[neutral/disinterested]

We can, in fact, only retain him as we do the buffalo, so long as he complies with the statutes. But the red brother is on his way to join the cave-bear, the three-toed horse, and the ichtyosaurus in the great fossil realm of the historic past.

[happy child]

Yippee! Yippee! Wahoo! Here come the cowboys! Would you like to be a cowboy, too?

[neutral/disinterested]

One reason so much of Africa is under the control of Europeans is that most of the groups of native people are very backward, and they have never learned to make the best use of the lands of which they live. Therefore, when white men from Europe came to Africa and began to develop the farm lands and grazing lands and to open mines and build railroads, it was natural that they should become the rulers of the native peoples.

andME



andME: from the MYdua Collection

Please Cross Out the Correct Response

CLIO: LORDS WHAT IS HISTORY? NOT MUCH: YESTERDAY'S BLANK PAGE HAPHAZARDLY COLORED IN. PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCH ON MAN'S LONG FAILURE, MY CRAYONS OF CREDULITY & DOUBT CROSS OUT, CROSS OUT THE PAINFUL TRUTH.

So Clio, the muse of history, summarizes her role in James Merrill's long poem *The Changing Light at Sandover*. Yet what resonates most strongly in these lines are the frustrations of childhood, when we struggled to master the tools of expression, yearning for the control that would permit us to expertly stay within the lines. Every artist engages with a similar struggle with history, with the precedents of style and technique and ideology that make up the evolving language of art. Style might be thought of as how much any individual manages to color in, or cross out, art history.

The recent body of work by Dan Mills, in which the artist has used maps and charts evocative of the schoolroom as the foundation for his own artistic messages, seems particularly engaged with this balancing act with history. Mills also evokes the secret childhood urge to put one's own images on the classroom wall, to add graffiti to the maps and charts, to cease to take the passive role in education. But unlike Clio, his crayons never quite manage to completely cross out the painful truths of the originals.

A desire to re-work the past, and to give new context to the discarded, has been a long-standing strategy for Dan Mills. In the 1980s, he constructed pieces out of discarded building materials, particularly old wall lathing. From these were fashioned new works, more 3-D than the average painting, which resembled buildings, and meant to be hung on the wall. Ironically, people living in newly gentrified homes were purchasing works to hang on their walls that were possibly made of the lathe boards that had been in their walls. By the 1990s, however, Mills had turned almost completely to collage, sensing that his own connections to art history lay in the works of artists who mix and overlay existing images.

Mills has long shown a sly gift for puns, double entendres, and other verbal games, and his work of the last six years is riddled with such word games. Much of this stems from language already present in the charts and maps he uses. "European Commerce" says the chart, and Mills has altered the title at top to read "I Get Mine, See?" but titles the work *I Get Yours*, which is, of course, the point in imperialism. If the viewer looks closely at the dress-patterns that have been added, additional words enter the fray: "yoke," "collar," "belt," "cuff," suddenly cease to be the parts of a shirt, and become a strategy for world domination and political aggression.

If charts and maps are all about ways of visualizing things too big to see, Mills has also been drawn in recent work to various ways of visualizing the very small. *andME*, from the *MYdna Collection*, is an installation using old mannequins, wearing shirts patterned with DNA. At a time when advertising wants us to believe that the most ubiquitous items are the most personal, clothing painted with the owner's DNA patterns is probably something we'll soon be seeing at Lord & Taylor.

The worlds of history and politics and the personal realms of childhood meet in the installation *Myopia/Crib* and the video/sound work derived from it, *Past Imperfect (a compilation collected from American history books and children's readers from 1845-1956)*. Arguably the funniest and edgiest of Mills's recent work, these are pieces that articulate blame and implicate people, as Adrian Piper once said of her own work. A large white mannequin of a baby (a Freudian baby, all consuming need without discretion) is at the center of a playroom of stereotypes, while children's blocks spell out the lessons being learned: MY, TAKE, USER.

For all its wit and humor, these genuinely naughty works evoke the darker side of culture, when unquestioned assumptions of racial or economic superiority are evoked under the cover of objective education. But no map is truly objective: each is merely a projection, one person's attempt to visualize the unseeable, one child's attempt to draw in the lines that will govern a life. Luckily, Dan Mills still has his crayons.

JEFF ABELL
March 2002

EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

1. *andME*, from the *MYdna Collection*, 2001 - 2002, dressmaker forms, neon, shirts, acrylic, dimensions variable
2. *Past Imperfect (a compilation collected from American history books, and children's readers from 1845-1956)*, 2001-2002, digital video, 10:30 minutes
3. *Abstract Painting*, 2000-2002, acrylic and collage on roll-down map, 47" x 67" x 1"
4. *Human/Nature*, 1971, 1998-2002, acrylic on mixed media construction, 154" x 92" x 5"
5. *Myopia/Crib*, 2001, mixed media installation, 22" x circa 108" diameter
6. *Composition*, 1999-00, acrylic and collage on map, 51" x 67" x 1"
7. *Legend*, 2000, acrylic and collage on map, 33" x 47" x 1"
8. *Beacon*, 1998, acrylic and collage on map, 51" x 65" x 2"
9. *Marginalia*, 1998, acrylic and collage on map, 52" x 66" x 2"
10. *I Get Yours*, 1997-98, acrylic and collage on map, 51" x 67" x 2"
11. *(Native) American Story Quilt -- A Patchwork Comforter*, 1996-97, acrylic and collage on map, 67" x 47" x 3"

DAN MILLS

BIOGRAPHY

- 1956 Born, Waterloo, NY
 1978 BFA, Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, NY.
 1981 MFA, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL.
 1981-94 Lived and worked in Chicago, IL; curated Art Collection, First Chicago, 1984-94.
 1994-01 Lived and worked in Potsdam, NY; directed Gibson Gallery, SUNY Potsdam.
 2001- Lives and works in Lewisburg, PA; directs the Samek Art Gallery, Bucknell University.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2002 *Viewpoints: Selected Monoprints and Collages, Printworks Gallery Chicago.*
Detector, NIU Art Museum Gallery in Chicago, IL.
Embellishments and Subversions, Ben Shahn Galleries, William Paterson University; Wayne, NJ.
 1998 *Revisions*, 76 Varick Gallery, New York, NY.
 1997 *In formation: the Collages and Constructions*, Ewing Gallery, University of Tennessee, Knoxville.
 1994 *Ephemera*, Deson-Saunders Gallery, Chicago.
 1991 *Deson-Saunders Gallery, Chicago.*
 1989 *Urban Building Facades, Figures & Markers*, Millikin University, Decatur, IL.
Urban Building Facades, Sybil Lanney Gallery, Chicago.
 1986 *Relief Sculptures*, Prairie State College, Chicago Heights, IL.
 1984 Illinois Center, Chicago.
 1981 MoMing Gallery, Chicago.

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2002 *Objects of Desire*, Studio 18 Gallery, New York, NY.
Collage/Assemblage/Montage, Pennsylvania School of Art & Design, Lancaster, PA.
 2001 *Small Treasures*, Faisbender Gallery, Chicago, IL.
Invitational Exhibition of Upstate New York Artists, Tyler Art Gallery, SUNY Oswego, NY.
 2000 *Superimpositions: Mixed Media Works by Dan Mills, Gail Skudera, Randy Williams*, Auburn University, AL.
The Art Is In The Mail(ing), For Ray Johnson, Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, OH.
20: Woodcuts by International Artists, Holland Tunnel, Paroika, Paros, Greece.
Exquisite Corpse, Printworks Gallery, Chicago, IL.
 1999 *Slight of Hand: an exhibition of painters' woodblock prints*, 76 Varick Gallery, New York, NY.
Slight of Hand: an exhibition of painters' woodblock prints, Studio 38, Utrecht, Netherlands.
Morir Soñando, 76 Varick Gallery, New York, NY.
 1998 *30th Anniversary Alumni Invitational Exhibition*, Bevier Gallery, Rochester Institute of Technology, NY.
un Coup de Dés, 76 Varick Gallery, New York, NY.
1998 Everson Biennial, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY. Curator: Bill Arning.
Gutwirth, Layne, Leshold, Mills: Art by SUNY Potsdam Faculty, Gibson Gallery, SUNY Potsdam, NY.
 1997-98 *Vivid, Resting Place*, Alaska State Museum, Juneau AK.
57th Exhibition of Central New York Artists, Munson-Williams-Proctor Museum of Art, Utica, NY.
 1996 *Utilitarianism*, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, NY.
The 1996 Everson Biennial, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, NY. Curator: Thomas Piché, Jr.
NIU Collected, NIU Art Museum, Northern Illinois University, Chicago.
 1994 *Art on the Map*, Chicago Cultural Center. Curator: Gregory Knight.
 1993 *Influx*, University of Illinois at Chicago. Curator: Karen Inceck.
The Republic Reconsidered, University of Illinois at Chicago.

- Material: Dan Mills, Gary Passanese, Tom Stancliffe, Deson-Saunders Gallery, Chicago.*
 1992 *Ars Nova Judges Show*, Northern Illinois University Art Museum, DeKalb. Curator: Jack Olson.
 1991 *A Chicago Sampler: Recent Work by 22 Artists*, Kansas State University, Manhattan.
 1990 *Altered States*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago.
 1987 *The Object Transformed: David Karpf, Dan Mills, Elizabeth Newman*, Minneapolis College of Art and Design. Curator: Julie Yanson.
Sculpture - Structures on the Wall, N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago.
Chicago Inner View, Esther Saks Gallery, Chicago.
 1986-87 *Extended Boundaries*, Chicago Cultural Center. Curator: Deven Golden.
 1986, 83 *Randolph Street Gallery Outdoor Installations Exhibition*, Chicago.
 1986 *Dan Mills, Gail Skudera*, SUNY Brockport, NY.
 1985 *Unscena*, ARC Gallery, Chicago. Curators: Deven Golden and Sue Taylor.
 1982-84 *Barnstorming*, ARC Gallery Rawspace, Chicago (travelled).
 1983 *One, One, One + One*, Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington.
The Additive Process, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago.
 1981 *Coverage/Transact*, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN.

EXHIBITION PUBLICATIONS

- 2001 *Ethereophote*, Nancy, *Embellishments and Subversions*, William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ; repro.
 2000 *Pascale, Mark, Exquisite Corpse*, Printworks Gallery, Chicago, color repro.
 1999 *McDowell, Tim, Sleight of Hand*, Connecticut College, New London.
 1998 *Arning, Bill, 1998 Everson Biennial*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse; repro.
Gutwirth, Layne, Leshold, Mills: Art by SUNY Potsdam Faculty, SUNY Potsdam, NY; color repro.
 1997 *57th Exhibition of Central New York Artists*, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, NY; repro.
 1996 *Piché, Thomas, Jr., The 1996 Everson Biennial*, Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse; repro.
Meyer, Jerry, NIU Collected, NIU Art Museum, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb; color repro.
 1994 *Knight, Gregory K., Art on the Map*, Chicago Cultural Center, IL; color repro.
 1990 *Bulka, Michael, Altered States*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL; repro.
 1989 *Sherlock, Maureen, Urban Building Facades*, accordion-fold book; repro.
 1987 *Yanson, Julie, The Object Transformed*, The Minneapolis College of Art & Design, MN; repro.
 1983 *Hutchison, Robert, The Additive Process, The Additive Process*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; repro.
Burleigh, Robert, Rawspace 1981, '82, '83, Rawspace/ARC Gallery, Chicago, IL; repro.

PUBLIC, CORPORATE COLLECTIONS

- Bank One, Chicago; Lillian H. Florsheim Foundation, Chicago; The John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Chicago; McDonald's Corporation, Chicago; Millikin University, Decatur, IL; Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL; Phelan, Pope & John, Chicago; State University of New York College at Potsdam; University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

- 1999 S.O.S. Grant, New York Foundation for the Arts, New York; NY.
 1999 Research & Creative Endeavors Grant, Sponsored Programs, SUNY Potsdam, NY.
 1989 Special Assistance Grant, Illinois Arts Council, Chicago.
 1989 Purchase Award, Millikin University, Decatur, IL.



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FRONT AND BACK COVER:

Composition, 1999-2000 (detail)