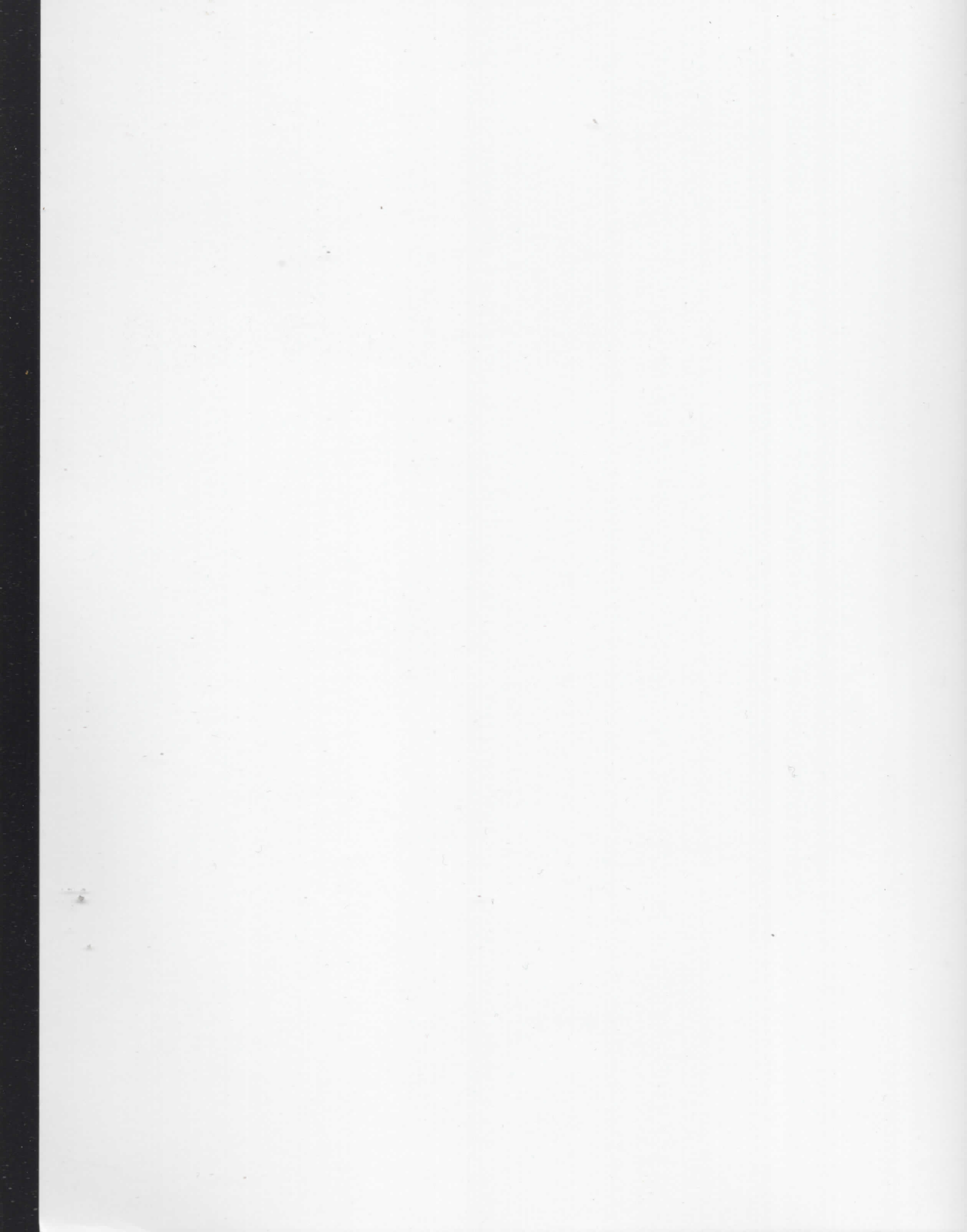


RICHARD CALLNER

Selected Works: 1957-1988



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OCTOBER 25 - NOVEMBER 21, 1988

WALTERS ART GALLERY

CLEVELAND, OHIO

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

FOREWORD

In Academia there is from time to time one of those rare enterprises which capture the imagination of everyone who becomes engaged in bringing it to fruition. The Richard Callner exhibition is a splendid example of such enterprises. Its quality evokes everyone's best effort.

Mr. Callner, the artist, brings to painting the rich sensibilities of a creator who has mastered the techniques passed on by *his* masters and who has translated the essence of mythological lore into a glorious presentation of form and color pervaded by Mediterranean light.

Callner, the teacher, inspires. A student once said to him, "I want more, and I want it NOW." He gives it to them. They all "wish they could paint like that." We who experience his paintings, in the present disquietude that pervades the art world, are exceedingly nourished by his view that "optimism in painting is all right."

Nancy Liddle
Director
University Art Gallery

CURATOR'S
STATEMENT

To be a student of Richard Callner is a constant learning experience. To know him as friend is warm and wonderful; to be his colleague, a privilege too few in academia experience; to know him as an artist gives a sense of wonder and delight. To curate an exhibition of his work, an honor indeed.

Callner's wit is always poetic, never laborious, and he translates it effortlessly to his work. He is unafraid to use the boldest of perspective, aberration or foreshortening in order to present his inventive thoughts. A bewitching resultant image, alive with swinging rhythm, pattern and line is intoxicating, luring the viewer ever closer to seemingly innocent environments.

Callner is acutely aware of all that has gone on before him, and when it suits his purpose, Modernist ideas are at his disposal. His love affair with the act of *seeing* empowers him with an arsenal of pictorial visual devices: sumptuous color, symbolic references, an Orientalist-inspired passion for design and arrangement, carefully controlled composition. He issues seductive invitations to the viewer, yet we may never feel comfortable enough to touch.

The organization of this exhibition was certainly a labor of love and joy for all involved, and many persons deserve recognition. Chief among them is Joanne Lue, the gallery secretary, who typed all catalog and text copy, assisted with copy editing and handled all those little details that no one else remembered. Zheng Hu, the exhibit's designer, and gallery assistant Joseph Valentino are responsible for the marvelous installation and presentation of the work; Nancy Liddle, the gallery director, was a constant source of supportive attention to all phases of the project. The enormous interest in the exhibition resulted in a welcome pattern of cooperation and support from all levels at the University. Both the Office of the President and the College of Humanities and Fine Arts supported the production of the exhibition catalog. Two University agencies awarded grants to the project: The Faculty Research Award Program (FRAP) and University Auxiliary Services (UAS).

Various members of the Fine Arts Department lent their time and expertise in support of their colleague, particularly Phyllis Galembo. Lenders to the exhibition, cited elsewhere in the catalog checklist, enthusiastically loaned from their collections, and we express our gratitude. Gary Gold and Neil McGreevy did a superb job on the catalog photographs and Mara Fulmer of the Educational Communications Center Graphics Unit is responsible for the outstanding catalog design.

We are especially indebted to David Castillejo who generously allowed his interview with the artist, from a forthcoming publication, to be included in the catalog contents. His thoughtful introductory essay, along with statements by Warrington Colescott, Antonio Fernández-Puertas, and Ken Johnson, contribute significantly to the historical importance of this publication, and we thank them.

Marijo Dougherty

CONSTITUTION
STATEMENT

Phyllis Galembo, *Portrait of the Artist in His Studio*, 1988, silver print, 8 x 7 1/2 inches



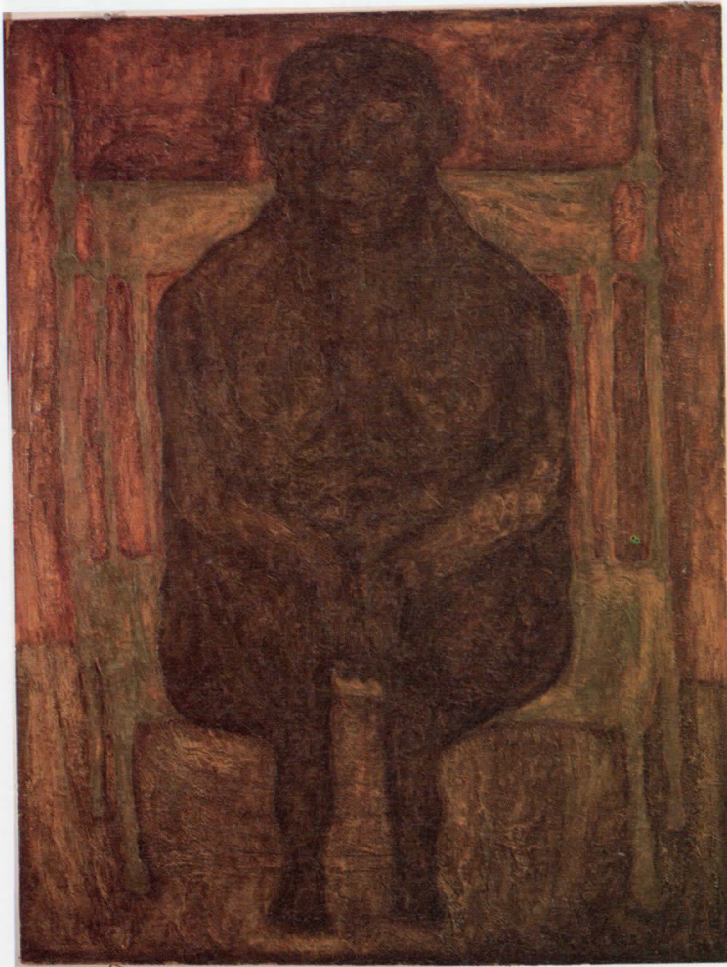
INTRODUCTION

Richard Callner is a major mythologist among North American painters. His principle theme is the relationship of woman and man to each other, and he explores these intimate events through an invented mythical imagery of human, animal and vegetable forms.

His work covers three main periods. An early group which is based on gross human figures (*Fat Man*, 1957, below) and animals expresses our incompetence in handling our own animal instincts. The colors here are dark, and the works contain the bitterness, social comment and tragic frustration of one who lived childhood during the Depression and served in the military during the Second World War. A second period explodes into passion and wild color depicting the mythical figure of Lilith and her multiple transformations (*Lilith Metamorphosis*, 1973, at right). A later cool and almost aesthetic period is built on outer and inner landscape and still lifes, combined in distorted perspective (*Shaker Creek/Latham*, 1988, page 10).

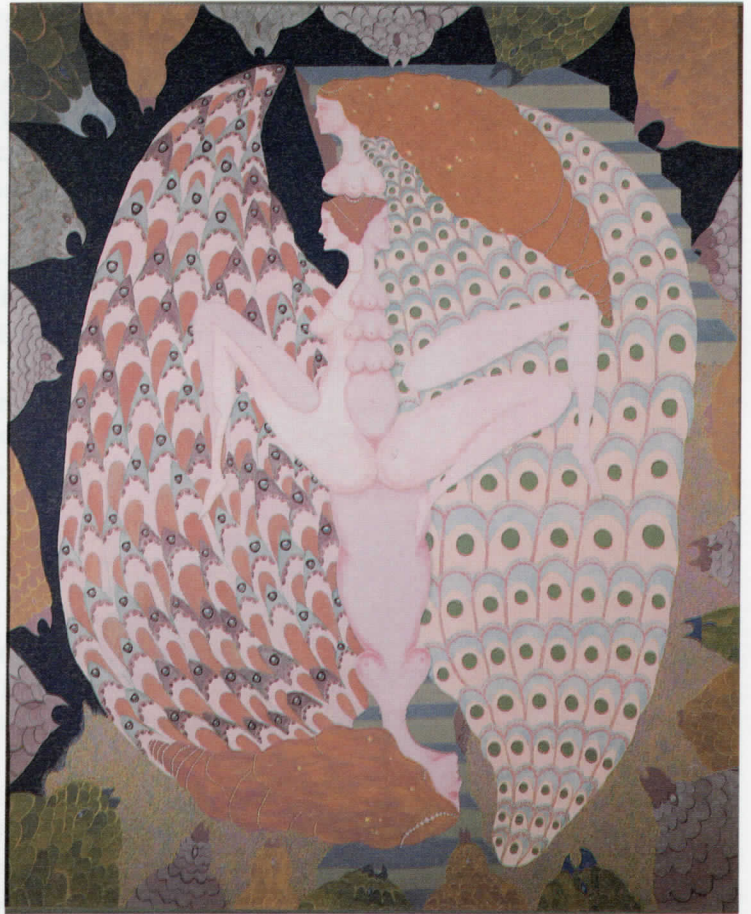
When Richard Callner was a student, almost every artist was doing abstract work and American galleries sold little else. But under the influence of the Chicago "monster school", he broke away from abstraction (around 1958) and began to paint the human figure in the first of a series of mythological subjects. Among them the gross ungainly bodies of Adam and Eve, adults imprisoned together in a single womb and Lazarus, in a winding sheet but with a hint of re-birth. Such material fitted an artist who also knew of millions being massacred by the cruelty of man in Europe and Asia. Yet humor was present, even in this early bitterness, and a strength of statement alludes to future powerful statements.

I first saw Richard Callner's work at Cambridge (England) in 1959. I don't think then, I fully understood what he was up to. I now realize, of course, that he was quietly challenging the viewer by showing the defective relationship between an intellectual and his body, as well as the timidities of society.



Fat Man, 1957, oil on masonite, 48 x 36 inches.

It wasn't until I stayed for about a week (in the early summer of 1960) with Richard and his family at Villefranche on the French Riviera, that I first sensed the presence of an extraordinary personality. His work then was still sombre and imprisoned. He has subsequently explained to me that it took him several years to transfer the Mediterranean light and color that surrounded him to his palette. Again in 1963 we met in the U.S. and were working together at Olivet College (Michigan) where I grew to understand his work much better. A group of us, all creative minds, would convene regularly at Richard and Carolyn's home, and we influenced each other profoundly. Each was treated by the others as a master in his own field: Richard was the painter, Leo Hendrick, the literary scholar and verbal mind; George Baziotopoulos, the conductor and violinist; myself, the playwright. It was at Olivet that Callner's work finally exploded into luminous light and where he first discovered the Lilith figure which was to occupy his imagery for years to come.



Lilith was the magical, apocryphal figure who had arrived in Eden as Adam's first wife, and had then abandoned him to the insipid and obedient Eve. Lilith made her appearance slowly in Callner's work. At first the colors began to lighten, then the event itself happened in a fundamental and fairly small painting, where he first showed a winged woman entering the garden of Eden to join with Adam. The next work was a Birth of Venus painting (*Birth Cycle*, 1970, page 25) and then followed an outburst of color, movement and feminine activity that was to flood Callner's mythological cosmos for years to come. His imagery is quite clear. We watch Lilith transforming herself into various mythological forms and shapes which melt into each other (*Homage to Toyen*, 1975, page 27). She appears as the many-breasted Artemis of Ephesus, (page 30) as Venus rising out of the sea, as Europa with the bull (*Europa*, 1966, page 20), as Leda with the swan. The stars, pearls, blood and seed descending from above are contrasted with receptive waves.

Lilith Metamorphosis, 1973,
oil on linen,
48 1/4 x 40 inches.

The male figure appears as a winged Adam, as Zeus, and as a bull. But the principal male image is the bird. This image makes its first appearance in the dark birds of an early engraving. Callner names the birds swans, doves or angels, who pursue Lilith even after she has abandoned the Garden of Eden (*Three Birds in Search of Lilith*, 1980, page 29). Some of his richest iconography comes from a fusing of images, in a manner unique to Callner: Europa and the bull are fused into a single being, so are Leda and the swan. Venus and the many breasted Artemis become a single image, and the breasted glory of the bird's down sometimes becomes equivalent to the many breasts of Artemis. Though the event is single, the image is compound. It is a victory of experience over imagery.

Even Lilith herself is shown in dismembered sections, and with duplicate limbs (*Parade to Heaven or Hell*, 1973, page 26) But then a new phase is observed: Lilith produces many heads and transformations, creates the tree in the garden of Eden, and mirrors her own body as in *Lilith Mirror*, 1968 (page 21). The imagery now becomes more cosmic and melts into tapestry effects.

The eye recognizes that a change is occurring. Movement and dance are giving way to monumentality and cosmic grandeur. We watch Lilith fading away, wrestling herself free of Adam, and escaping up the staircase as in the tapestry, *Lilith Staircase*. She vanishes from the scene leaving the birds and angels of God looking desperately for her.

As the Lilith figure fades into tapestry pattern, and vegetation, Callner's own work takes a complete turn and changes direction. What occurs next is merely a transformation of what has been. Feminine experience has passed through energy, transmutations and tears, which were shown in Lilith's multiple forms. Now we are left with her invisible spirit, her essence in a highly charged and seemingly empty space.

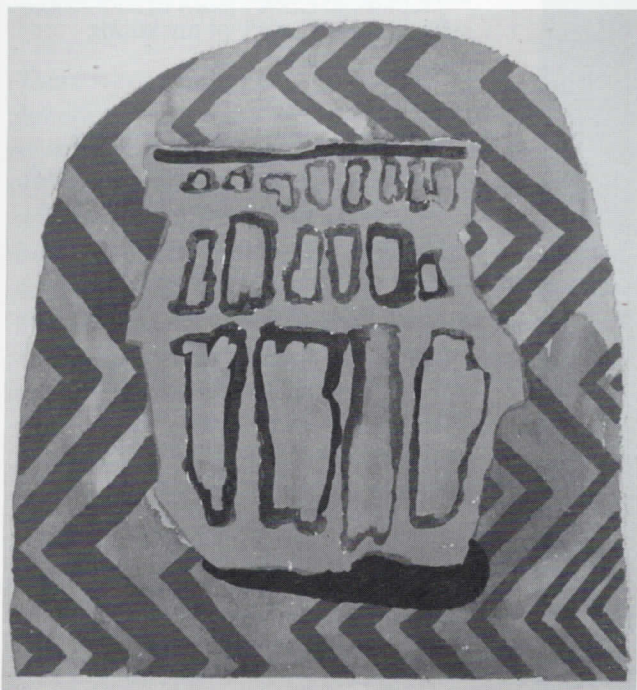
With the disappearance of Lilith, human and animal imagery vanishes. Callner starts afresh using an already highly charged space. The iconography is now simplified: exterior landscapes of hills and mountains; magical rooms; and still lifes with flowers or fruit. He now begins to combine internal with external spaces, and it becomes clear that he is depicting the internal dream world with external reality. Lilith has apparently physically abandoned the magical world of man, yet now both the internal and the external world are vibrating with her essence.

Callner's next group of works break new ground. Impressed by the ploughed fields of Yugoslavia and the rows of olive trees on Spanish hills, Callner, following Van Gogh's use of multiple perspective, begins to build external scenes with many horizon lines. The eye comes to read the complex arrangement with perfect naturalness (see cover image).

Callner transforms interior space in a similar way, using the tapestry effects of his Lilith paintings on walls and floors to create Japanese-style rooms. He then combines his interior and exterior spaces to produce a psychic union between internal and external reality (*Separate Images/Spain*, 1987 (page 14).

In the works that follow, Callner crosses the wall between real space and mythology, mixing them into each other by means of multiple perspectives and distortions. He works in thematic batches, and in his latest group he re-introduces the figure in his newly created and complex space (*Portrait of K, II*, page 19).

I feel this exhibition will identify the dimensions of this exceptional artist. Paintings with complex iconography are statements about life — they are not a mere invention of pictures. To know Richard Callner's own life and experience helps us to explore each work as a single window, looking into the artist's large universe of invented thoughts. Each owner of a Callner painting possesses but a single fragment of this huge mosaic.



David Castillejo

Above:
Constructionist Jar, 1986
watercolor and gouache
study, $8\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$ inches

At left:
Zig-Zag Cloth, 1986,
watercolor and gouache
study, $7\frac{7}{8} \times 8\frac{1}{2}$ inches..

Richard Callner's Birthing Chamber

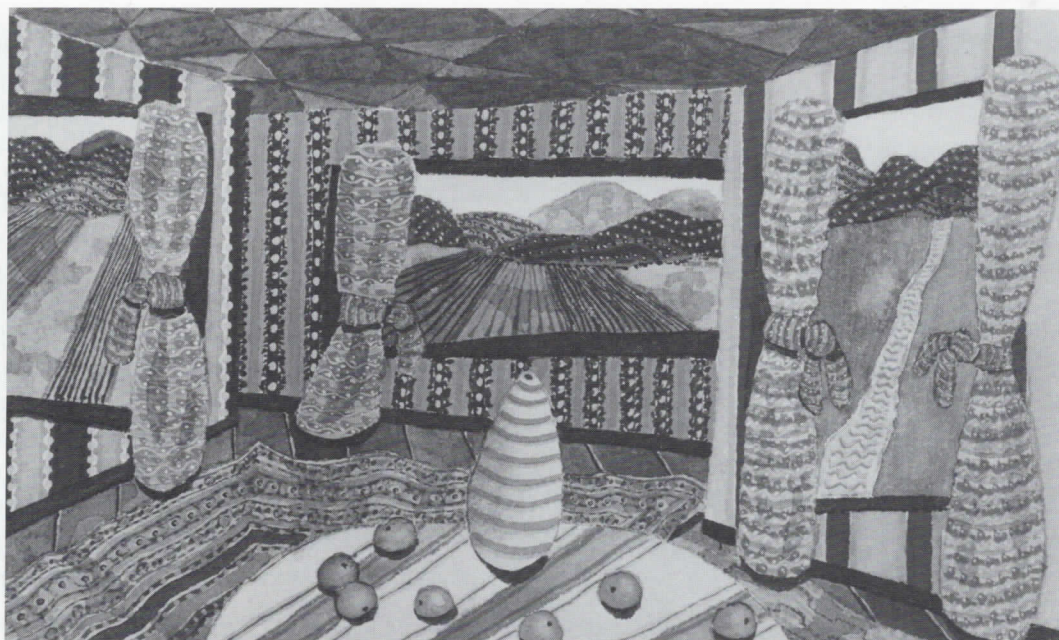
Richard Callner traffics in a quality that you don't see much of in the mainstream modern tradition: I mean opulence, the dazzling richness of an extravagantly decorated surface. (I'm thinking in particular of the pictures from the 1980s involving vases and rugs in strange, empty rooms, but it is evident throughout his *oeuvre*.) It's not that alone, however, that accounts for the fascination that his work engenders in the viewer; the opulence in his paintings is not there only for its own sake as a raw opticality like that of the more properly modernistic works of Frank Stella, for example. The opulence of Callner's work is in the service of a mystery. It's that combination — opulence and mystery — wherein lies the un-modernistic eccentricity of his art. More than with any post-Picasso/Matisse modernist, it allies him with Beardsley, Klimt and other decadent *fin de siècle* dreamers; with 17th century Persian and Indian miniaturists; with Christians manuscript illuminators of Medieval times; with Egyptian tomb decorators. It places him in a tradition in which optical splendor is felt as a psychological metaphor for the awesome wealth of the imagination, the magical other world (into which Alladin, for one, descended), the dreamy unconscious.

To be sure, you don't think of metaphor at first. The moist immediate experience of one of those vase and rug pictures is a mindlessly pleasurable absorption in the sumptuous profusion of minutely detailed patterning. You get right up close to the work and you pour over it, visually wallowing in the luxurious accumulations of little spots, circles, lozenges, stripes, zig-zags, etc., and you savor the delightful candy store varieties and mixtures of color. The effect is sensually stimulating yet soothingly hypnotic.

While you're looking, you also think about the paintings as crafted objects. Here again Callner seems the non-modernist outsider. This is no art of Angst-ridden expressive gesture nor of cerebrally calculated form. It seems rather the patient product of many simple procedures, like embroidery. You can see every move he makes, every brush stroke, every dot, dash and wash; you could almost count the number of additions it took to yield the final sum of a given painting. You feel the unremitting devotion to this endlessly additive repetition. You can imagine the artist

in monkish solitude alone in his studio hours on end lost in his craft. *You imagine a state of grace.*

The paintings are, of course, pictures as well. Painted vases, empty mostly, stand on tables that are draped with patterned fabric. These stand in bizarrely skewed rooms, rooms that Renaissance



perspective forgot. You can see other rooms receding this way and that with patterned rugs draped everywhere, on walls and floors, obscuring whatever underlying rational structure there might be. It's a slightly scary, funhouse architecture. What is this place? Clearly meant for no human habitation, it concedes nothing to the needs of ordinary mortals — there are no chairs, no magazines, nothing to eat, no television, no human debris. It seems a sacred place, a sanctuary set aside for spiritual matters, an exotic chapel, or, with its urns containing ashes of the dead, a mausoleum. There is an eerie silence, though it may not seem so at first, so riotous are the colors and patterns, so comically cartoony the rendering of objects. On the surface there's humor and manic activity, but underlying that, there's this mystic stillness. It's not a gloomy, mournful ambiance, though. There's a quality of waiting, an expectancy. Those womb-ish vessels, fertilized with the remains of the dead, they're pregnant now, gestating dreams and visions in Callner's birthing chamber of the imagination.

Ken Johnson
Art Critic

View of Shaker Creek, 1988,
watercolor and gouache,
7 x 11 ³/₄ inches.

ARTIST'S BIOGRAPHY

*Excerpts
from the
artist's
conversations
with
David
Castillejo.*

Q: *Can you tell us about your childhood and early training?*

A: I was born on the 18th of May 1927. My grandparents were both *emigres*. Their families came from in Lithuania in the late 1800s.

At four years of age I completed a drawing-portrait of my cousin which was apparently an excellent likeness. My *family* marvelled — but that was it. From eight to eleven, we lived in Chicago during the depression years. My mother would bag a lunch and take me on Saturdays through the museums: The Chicago Art Institute, the Museum of Natural History and others. I was drawn to the Art Institute, especially by a Van Gogh. It was called *Sunny Midi, Arles*, now known as *The Garden of the Poets*. I visited it constantly because it seemed so beautiful. At the Natural History (Field) Museum I saw images of bushmen and other so-called primitive cultures.

Later I took Saturday drawing classes at the Art Institute. I felt at home and knew that I was doing the right thing. Those Chicago days were times of great happiness, especially Saturdays away from public school. I drew at various museums in the morning. One day I wandered into a rehearsal of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a museum auditorium. They let me stay so I began to make a habit of it. I usually sat at the back of the hall, but one day I was sitting far forward when I opened my bag to eat my lunch. The conductor, Dr. Stock, turned around at the podium and said "You don't have to leave, but just go to the back of the hall to eat". He had clearly known I was turning up almost every Saturday.

There was very little art taught in Chicago public schools. I can only remember working on one chalk mural about *Horatius at the Bridge*. I dropped out of high school at 17, joined the Navy and was mainly in and around Guam in the Mariana group of islands. After leaving the Navy in 1946, I studied art at the University of Wisconsin from 1946-48 and 1949-51. One of my teachers was Warrington Colescott, who became a life-long friend. He encouraged me to try anything and everything in making my art. I was primarily doing sculpture. Our training was very intense by today's standards. I worked and was trained in sculpture, printmaking, drawing, painting, ceramics, jewelry making and the history of techniques in art. My own work was in an abstract expressionist direction. I felt that some of the sculpture images were especially strong. Even as undergraduate students we became so self-confident that we were entering and being accepted into competitive national art exhibitions.

(David Castillejo is a playwright and friend of the artist, who currently divides his time between Madrid, Spain and London, England.)

Q: *How did you get to Paris?*

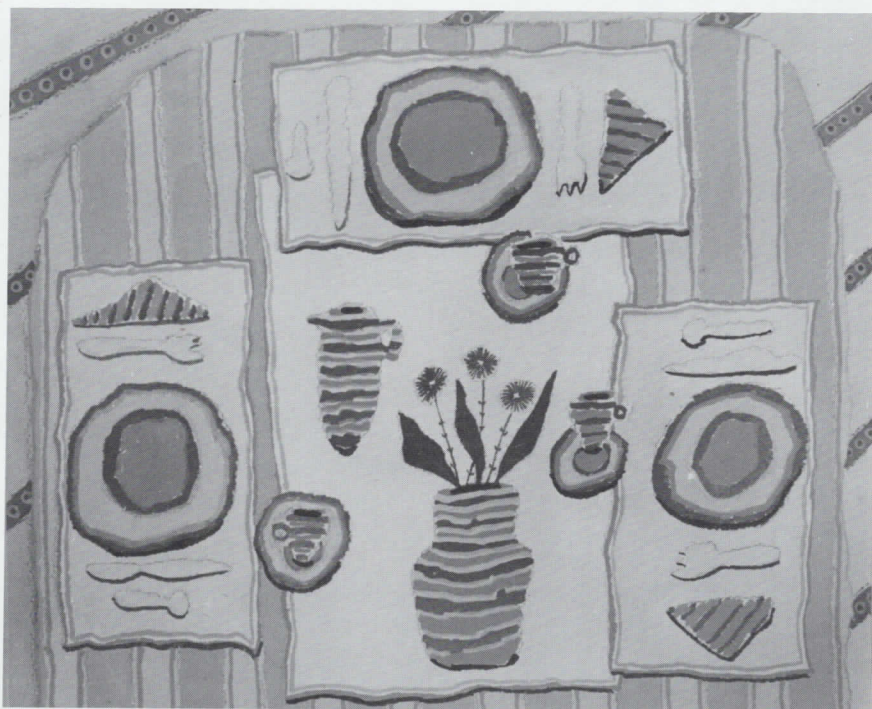
A: Hugh Townley, now an nationally known sculptor, stopped me one day in the hall and said "Let's go study in Paris next September". I said *fine*. We did it through the G.I. Bill and the U.S. Government paid for us to study abroad. Townley worked with Ossip Zadkine, I studied at the Academie Julian with Prof. Jerome and had criticisms from Leger, Zadkine, and Ferdinand L'hote. Other art students there included Shinkichi Tajiri and Kenneth Noland. I mostly worked in drawing and did some painting and printmaking. At the Gallerie Dragon I met Victor Browner and other surrealists, and visited the studio of the Czech surrealist painter Toyen. We lived — some 8 students — in a huge house in the suburb of Clamard, which we shared with three Dutch writers. We joined the Cocteau Surrealist Film Club, and I was gradually introduced to a way of living that values art as an integral part of life and history. The day to day values of art were at that time more important to me to understand than the art I was producing myself. I visited England and had 'high' tea with Jacob Epstein who was very warm and generous. I felt I was in the presence of a very great mind. It was a thrill to help him move some of his sculpture around. A week or so later I had 'regular' tea with Henry Moore after hitch-hiking up to Much Haddam, and he let me go through his books of sketches while he visited the dentist.

Q: *When did you meet Carolyn?*

A: I returned from Paris in 1949 to the University of Wisconsin, and met my future wife at a food cooperative. Carolyn's background is that of first generation American of Japanese ancestry. The subtle influence of her gentle parents who resided with us for a number of years fascinated me and continues even after their death.

From Chicago
to Paris
1927-1949

*Table for Three, 1987,
watercolor and gouache
study, 10¹/₄ x 12 inches.*



Q: *And your work at this period?*

A: I started to work in a surrealist manner, with very strong images, many gross animal forms, highly textured and fairly intense colors. In the summer of 1950 I went to New York City to study at the Art Students' League with Wil Barnet and Byron Browne. I studied drawing with Barnet and it was O.K., but Byron Browne was a great teacher for me. My paintings were still abstract. Browne became a friend as well as a teacher. He was a major influence at that time. I was using complex abstraction and learned about textured surfaces. I was also learning to understand discipline .

I did my graduate work at Columbia University, working primarily in ceramic sculpture, and became an assistant to the ceramicist John Cook. I did some painting as well as studying Asian politics and philosophy with Tewksbury. I began working in lithography for the first time. I married Carolyn in 1952. During 1952-59 I taught at Purdue University in Indiana, and both of our children, David and Joanna, were born there. At Purdue my adult artistic life really began.

Q: *What was your technique for these dark heavy textures?*

A: I developed an understanding of textured glazed painting in some later abstract designs I did under the influence of Klein and Pollock and in the 'beastie' images. The best initial surface for this glaze technique is to paint layers of lead white over the sanded surface of a sheet of untempered masonite. After the ground has dried, a

drawing is painted with under-painting white, mixed with fine sand or marble dust to give strength.



Meal,
1957, oil on masonite,
36 x 48 inches.

Q: What were the main artistic movements of the time?

A: The contemporary art movements that were surrounding me from 1945 and that I can identify clearly were Abstract Expressionism, the Chicago Monster School, West Coast Figurative, Concrete Poets, Happenings, Funk Art, Bad Art, Neo-expressionism, Neo-constructivists, Pluralism, Performance Art, Environmental Art, Contemporary Realism. At Purdue, my work was "at the edge" of the *Chicago Monster School*, as one critic described it.

Q: Who are the main artists that have influenced you?

A: Influences from the past include Vermeer, for his complete visual thoughts, the beauty of his painterly touch, idea and composition. Bosch, for his daring and willingness to paint all of his thought, a courageous painter.

Breughel, for his wit plus the same daring as Bosch. Velazquez who proves that technique alone can make great art. Byron Browne, a daring teacher, who was willing to be a friend as well as a teacher. Leger: crudeness can and does work in art. Richard Lindner proves that if you are a good artist and keep working, eventually you will become recognized by someone. Among my contemporaries are Ted Halkin, in my mind the best, or one of the best, American artists, willing and able to make any art work. Phillip Gustin proves that innovative and absurd imagery *can* be successful. Roger Anliker, I admire for his precise work, and David Castillejo, who is a demanding as well as supportive person and long time friend.



Portrait of K., II, 1988,
watercolor and gouache,
30 x 23 inches.

New York
to Indiana
1950-1959

PURDUE UNIVERSITY, INDIANA. 1952-59

Q: *Can you tell us about the work you did at Purdue, its imagery and techniques?*

A: I taught at Purdue during 1952-59. I met and taught with Ted Halkin, a Chicago artist and member of the so-called *Chicago Monster School*. I found his work and thinking sympathetic to my own abstract work, in both intent and feeling. Gross figures began to emerge more and more in my work, in human and in animal form. Dark browns dominated the imagery. The figures were fat adults, with weak hands and feet, showing a power that was somehow incomplete. Their nudity made them vulnerable and weak, yet their ominous strength was waiting to be defined (*Fat Man*, 1957, page 6). I used the themes of Adam and Eve, Saint John the Baptist, Romulus and Remus, Lazarus, etc. It was a social, political and personal statement

of imprisonment. Viewing them in retrospect, they included dealings with the post-war depression and its frustration, of control and power, of being able to condemn, threaten and predict potential failure of people's ambitions. A form of absolute truth. *Ted showed me I could execute an idea when the imagery belonged only to me.*



Europa, 1966, oil on linen,
25 1/2 x 39 1/4 inches.

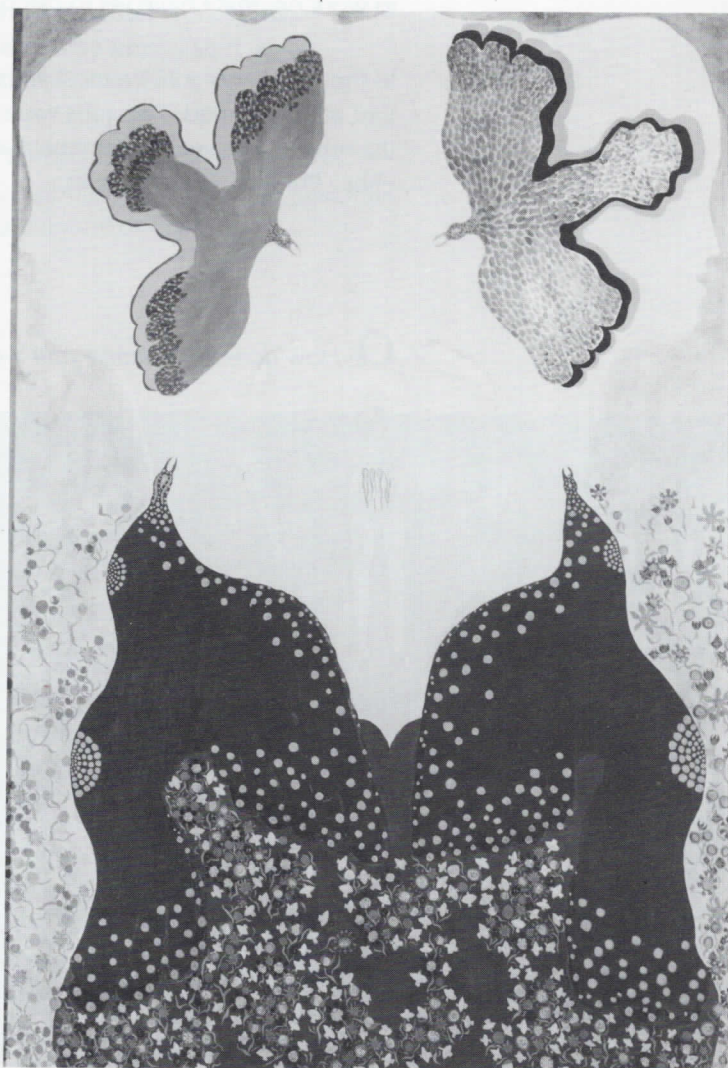
CAMBRIDGE and VILLEFRANCHE-SUR-MER. 1959-60

Q: *When did you leave Purdue?*

A: We went to England around July 1959, after I was awarded a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in painting. I was surprised and quietly pleased not only to receive it, but especially of having been asked to apply. We took the children, David and Joanna, with us for six months in Cambridge and seven in the South of France. At Cambridge, we met Jasper Rose who introduced us to the University community and his own King's College, and then to Christopher Cornford, former dean of the Royal College of Art, who introduced us to David Castillejo. Meeting these people led to long term friendships and important collaborations. Jasper Rose, at that time a Fellow at King's College, and Cornford were important to me in showing how British intellectuals deal with the visual arts. Castillejo went further in understanding what I was accomplishing and would soon feel compelled to accomplish.

In the middle of a freezing December, I decided to move to the South of France for 1960. Cornford and I drove south to Villefranche-Sur-Mer, and he found an apartment for us. It was a fine trip. He then left for England, and Carolyn flew down with the children. Castillejo joined us for a time and we began a long-range working relationship. My parents also visited us, which was a great joy, and we took a brief trip with them to Italy. This was their first contact with Western Europe.

John Simon
Guggenheim
Fellowship,
England and
France
1959-1969



Lilith Mirror, 1968,
oil on linen,
37 1/2 x 26 1/4 inches

Michigan to
Philadelphia
1960-1965

OLIVET, MICHIGAN. 1960-64

Q: *How would you describe your life in Olivet?*

A: In 1960, when we moved from France to Olivet. I met Leo Hendrick, the professor of English, at the college, and for four years he challenged any thought that was not verbal. David Castillejo and George Baziotopoulos and other artists and writers such as W.D. Snodgrass, Stamos, Hugh Townley, Ted Halkin, and dozens of others were brought in for art festivals. We recognized each other's area of expertise and developed a series of artistic projects and adventures that are ongoing. At first my work continued as before, but the presence of fellow artists, teachers and students, created an intense artistic environment of shared energies, and I discovered a fascinating myth to me, the myth of Lilith. I created an image of her before I heard her mythological name. She was an amazing creature: beautiful, intelligent, strong, and open to continuous change and adventure. I began using the colors of the south of France, and the complex imagery gave me so much material to work on, that I have yet to catch up.

In the summer of 1964 almost all of our friends left Olivet, so we decided to move East and I resigned. Two jobs were available: one at Kent State University in Ohio, the other a one-year replacement at Temple University's Tyler School of Art. We chose Philadelphia and Tyler.

THE LILITH MYTH

Q: *How does this change your work?*

A: With the arrival of the Lilith image the color increases, plus the awareness that optimism in painting is all right. These are more sensual images and more complex. At times political, as in the painting *Blind Leading the Blind*. I learned that beauty as well as tragic thought can be celebrated, that you can work if you experience the pleasures of children, family, friends, and yet understand isolation.

Q: *Can you explain the Lilith myth to us, since it was to occupy the theme of your work for the next few years?*

A: I am not sure where I first discovered Lilith, but I created an image while at Olivet and later found that the image was Lilith. She had the feminine strength, beauty, intelligence and wit that I admire. Over the years I have formulated a story about her: Lilith was an angel looking upon the Earth that God had just created. She asked God what He was doing and He said He had just created the Garden of Eden and was about to create Man from a scattering of the dust of creation. Lilith asked God what He was going to call him. God said "Adam". Lilith said "That's not very imaginative, but he is sort of cute". God said "Now he wants company and there is still some of the dust with the essence of life left". He asked if the angel Lilith would

fly down and become Adam's wife. Lilith said "Why not?" Adam was very pleased. But some time afterwards Adam began to order Lilith about. He said "Fix dinner, Lilith, wash out my fig leaf, etc.". Lilith said that "we are equal", that she came from the same dust as he. She grew wings, her hair grew long and she became covered with jewels and flew away. Adam complained to God that he wanted her back, that he was lonely again. So God sent three angels in bird form to find her. They pursued but could not find her (*Three Birds in Search of Lilith*, 1980, page 29). Lilith formed many alliances, and among them one with the Devil. She was thought to be a demones but others thought that because of this, her "begats" were the inventors and the artists, while those of Eve were the ordinary people.

Q: *But your mythology appears in such a complex transformation of images.*

A: I group mythological and Biblical characters and situations together, often joining two or more into a single image. For example, *Lilith Creating the Garden of Eden*, 1966 (page 30) is based on the mythological Artemis of Ephesus, and the various *Animal Forms* are founded on Biblical myths. In another work Lilith becomes the serpent. Why? Because I see them as the same image, so it makes sense to unite two visually sympathetic ideas and forms.

Other images I frequently used were the Minotaur, *Europa*, 1966 (page 20), Leda (Lilith) and the Swan, Lilith as Pandora, and Venus. A phrase, a sound or an image can stimulate a visual situation that I translate into a painting or drawing.



Seven Dreams of Lilith, 1969,
oil on linen, 59 x 78 inches.

EARLY PHILADELPHIA. 1964-1965

Q: *Was there a great change in your work when you moved to Philadelphia?*

A: No, we moved to Temple University in the autumn of 1964. My work went ahead rapidly, working with the Lilith theme. But I still used the images and forms of the "gross" paintings and prints of the 1950s. However, a number of more optimistic and brighter-colored Lilith paintings emerged. *Lilith was becoming stronger.*

Rome, Italy
Tyler School
of Art
1965-1970

ROME, ITALY. 1965-70

Q. *Tell me about your Rome period. How did Rome affect your works?*

A: In December, 1965, I was sent to establish Temple's Tyler School of Art program in Rome. I worked with Roger Anliker, Warrington Colescott, Rudy Staffel, David Castillejo and others. In addition to my duties as Director of the program, I completed some works that were very important for me, and they were exhibited in Italy, Germany and England. Paintings of special significance were *Lilith Giving Birth to the Garden of Eden (Birth Cycle, 1970, at right)*, *Seven Dreams of Lilith, 1969 (page 23)* and *Lilith Mirror, 1968 (page 21)*. Strong color and new skills in painting and printmaking began to emerge, in both my glaze painting and lithographs. I also did some small sculptures of Lilith which were cast in bronze.

I was able to travel extensively in Europe. Seeing the Van Eycks' *Ghent Altarpiece* proved a technical turning point in my oil painting. Another influence was that our school became the center of activity for artists and musicians which was especially stimulating. We shared various scheduled events with the American, French and British Academies, the Rhode Island School of Design Program, and the German Academy, as well as others. The artistic ambience was felt by all of us. Visits by friends like Ray Benson were supportive, and he began purchasing some of my best work. David Castillejo also bought a major painting *Seven Dreams of Lilith*--later he exchanged it for the painting *Birth of Lilith*.

Under this influence, Lilith and mythological subjects in my work reached their peak.

LATE PHILADELPHIA. 1979-75

Rome to
Philadelphia,
Tyler School
of Art
1970-1975

Q: *Did you come back to the same teaching position at Temple?*

A: Yes, as Professor of Painting and Drawing at the Tyler School of Art. We returned to the United States in 1970, and I had a Retrospective exhibition where I exhibited approximately 120 works, including an important work called *The Three Graces (on a Mound of Pearls)*. I also began at this time, perhaps as a result of my years in Europe, to use apprentices. Over the years, I have had about 20, some going on to become quite established artists and artisans.

Q: *Can you identify what you call your "late Philadelphia period" by artistic changes in your art?*

A: During 1970-75, Lilith images continued, with similar parallel images created in both watercolors and oils. I met a scholar and poet, who translated the Kabbala, which included stories of Lilith. I also explored creating the Lilith image in tapestry form through a friend, Leora Stuart, who arranged a visit to the Mambush Studio in Israel. We did three tapestries over a 5 year period under the supervision of Ichi Mambush.

My brother Jerry and his wife Ruth did a film of the first of the tapestries being made, which I have made available for showing during the course of this exhibit. All of the Mambush tapestries have been exhibited in Israel, the Jewish Museum (New York City) and in the Palm Springs Museum (California).



Birth Cycle, 1970,
oil on canvas,
42 x 48 inches.

Philadelphia to
Albany,
University
at Albany
1975 to present

ALBANY, NEW YORK. 1975 TO PRESENT

Q: *Why did you leave Philadelphia?*

A: Tyler (School of Art) was becoming, I felt, too large and consequently too divisive. There was an opening at Albany for the chairman position in the Fine Arts Department, and my long-time friend Dennis Byng, now my faculty colleague, suggested I apply. I did and was offered the job. It was too good to pass up. So, in the autumn of 1975, I moved to my present position as Professor of Painting and Drawing. I served as chairman for six years. Establishing an M.F.A. degree program was one of my priorities and it was first established in 1983. At present I chair the Fine Arts Graduate Program Committee.

Q: *At Albany your work seems to make a complete turn about, away from Lilith and the living figure, to an exploration of external and internal spaces.*

A: That's true, but the living presence is implied in these spaces, as though the figure has just left or is about to arrive. In 1975, I began to work in gouache and watercolor as well as lithography again. I started using extremely complex images of Lilith on paper, some as large as 50 x 60 inches.

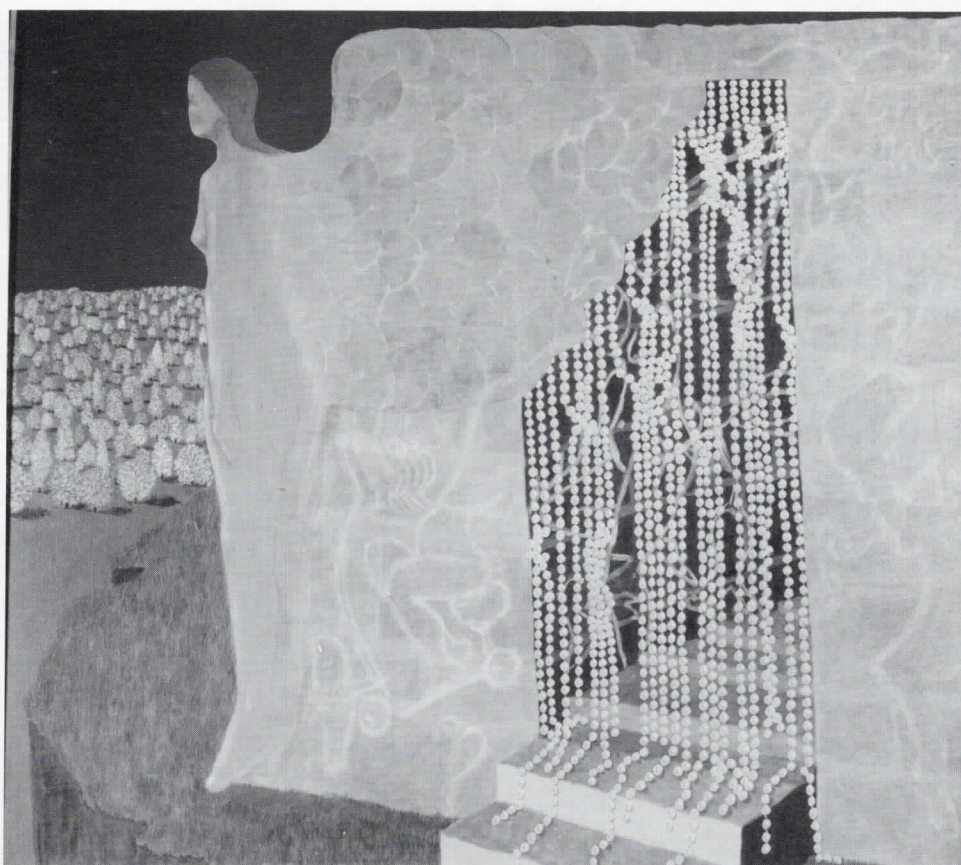


Parade to Heaven or Hell, 1973,
oil on linen, 44 x 40 1/4 inches.

Q: Tell us about the illustrating you did while at Albany.

A: I worked with a number of artists and poets and illustrated their work, including a story *One Day of Happiness* by Isaac Bashevis Singer. We made a limited hand-made edition of the book thanks to the help of a colleague Phyllis Galembo, who introduced me to Steve Miller, proprietor of the Red Ozier Press. A copy of the book was purchased by the University at Albany Library and is included in the exhibit.

Illustrating poetry and prose became a new challenge, probably because I am a frustrated poet. I have yet to illustrate my own poetry. The hand-made book made with Singer was the most exciting project so far. I had to develop a way to translate from word language to visual language. First I looked for images found in the poem or prose. Then eliminating all else, using the word images, I tried to group some together or use a single image for others. The most important thing to do is to tie the image so closely together to the words that it only makes sense when the image lives with the words. The image may stand alone, but it is at its *best* when joined with the prose or poetry.



Homage to Toyen,
1975, oil on linen,
45 x 50 1/2 inches.

Q: *What about printmaking? You have, throughout your career, always made prints and drawings.*

A: I have done a number of individual prints for themselves, ideas that for me seem to live best in print form. If a visual idea comes into an artist's awareness, I feel there is an obligation to make it exist. If one thinks of an image, the artist must see it before he can really accept or reject it. This way of thinking is one reason to also use and relish drawing. It permits one to see a complete idea, in a complete way, as quickly as possible.

Q: *What effect did your travels have on your work?*

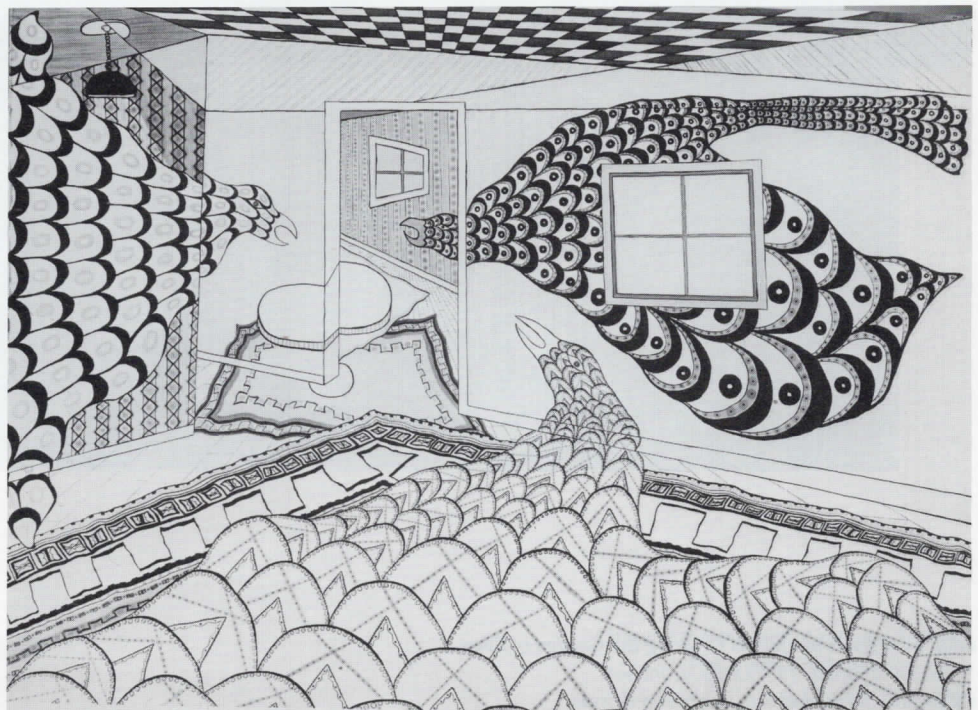
A: It was Ray Benson (now Adjunct Professor at Middlebury College in Vermont), who, when he was with the U.S.I.A. (United States Information Agency), provided USIS (overseas program) sponsorship for a number of artistic projects that introduced me to Yugoslavia and Russia. I felt the Russian influence of the Constructivists. Dialogue with new friends in Yugoslavia, especially the art critic/historian Vera Horvat-Pantarvic also influenced my thinking. David Castillejo and Antonio Fernández-Puertas introduced me to Spanish landscape. I also believe that the decorative qualities I found in my Middle and Far East travels have led me to transpose this quality to my watercolor and gouache paintings as in *Oriental Interior with Nineteen Bottles*, 1981 (page 31). Also a complex and contradictory perspective gives, I hope, a slightly disturbed sense to the compositions. Although figureless, as stated earlier, I try to infer that someone (Lilith?) has either just left, or will just enter the room. This is primarily achieved by the uneven edges of the carpets on the floor and wall tapestries. Many of them still contain the images of Lilith. The dark ordered fields of Yugoslavia that lie between Novi Sad and Belgrade gave birth to the first series of landscapes. The olive orchards near Granada, another series. The hills surrounding Madrid and the red Spanish mountains, led to such works as *Red Hills I*, 1987 (page 43). The yellow fields of rape in England also enter the work. Later I combined elements of all of them in still another group much as I combined various myths in my earlier work (*Yellow Fields II*, 1987 page 46). These abstractions made me recall, and understand better, Van Gogh's landscape drawings. He is the master of penetrating perspective. He uses horizontal receding fields each with its own perspective. His inventive mind seemed driven, taking the viewer with him deeply into space, pausing here and there, to describe the space further. Taking this from him, but not copying him, I have tried to show the abstraction, or essence, of an intense penetrating illusion. Where Van Gogh chose the *incidence* of direct reality and narrative clarity, I am more interested in how *color patterns* serve with similar intent.

The interiors are also dealing with irrational spatial systems as in *Separate Images/Spain*, 1987 (page 14). Everything is so wrong that it makes everything seem right. Nothing seems to fit — a window could be a painting or a mirror. There are perspective reversals and windows showing different kinds of day or night. Nothing is the same, so all of the images are the same.

The still lifes, on their own, are reminiscent of some of my undergraduate paintings. The color systems are as important as are the contradictory spaces. I found that one cannot "invent" a flower. Every flower I conceive seems to grow somewhere in the world. I just don't know its name. Philip Gustin's late paintings gave me an idea for flat, absurd pots, in an equally flat, absurd decorative room (*C. Vase*, 1988, page 47). There is also input from the Constructivists (and my several trips to the Soviet Union have influenced me here) but I am just starting these, and I have only completed about three dozen watercolors and gouaches.

Q: *What do you see as the next direction for your work?*

A: I still work in my favorite mediums of watercolor, gouache and oil. In my most recent work I have been trying to combine my three concerns of landscape, interior and still life. A ghost image using the figure has begun to appear. I have executed a few in watercolor but I am not yet clear how to deal with it. My new images are changing, a result of my having to adapt to having Parkinson's Disease. It is interesting work, with new limitations and new challenges. I am now introducing strange, but familiar, vases, still lifes, and interiors, also the figure. It's an exciting new period for me to explore. There is still much to accomplish.



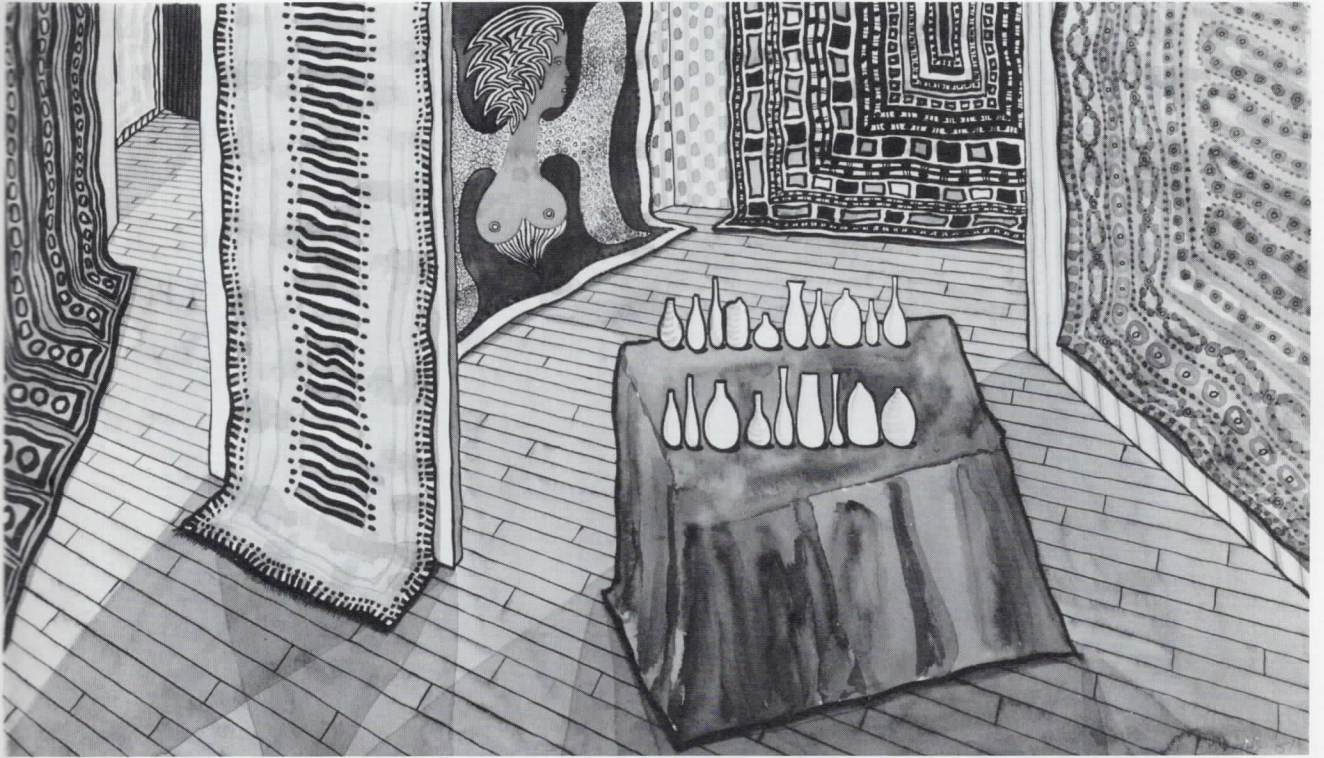
***Three Birds in Search
of Lilith*, 1980,
Sumi ink on paper,
33 ³/₈ x 45 ¹/₂ inches.**

RICHARD CALLNER

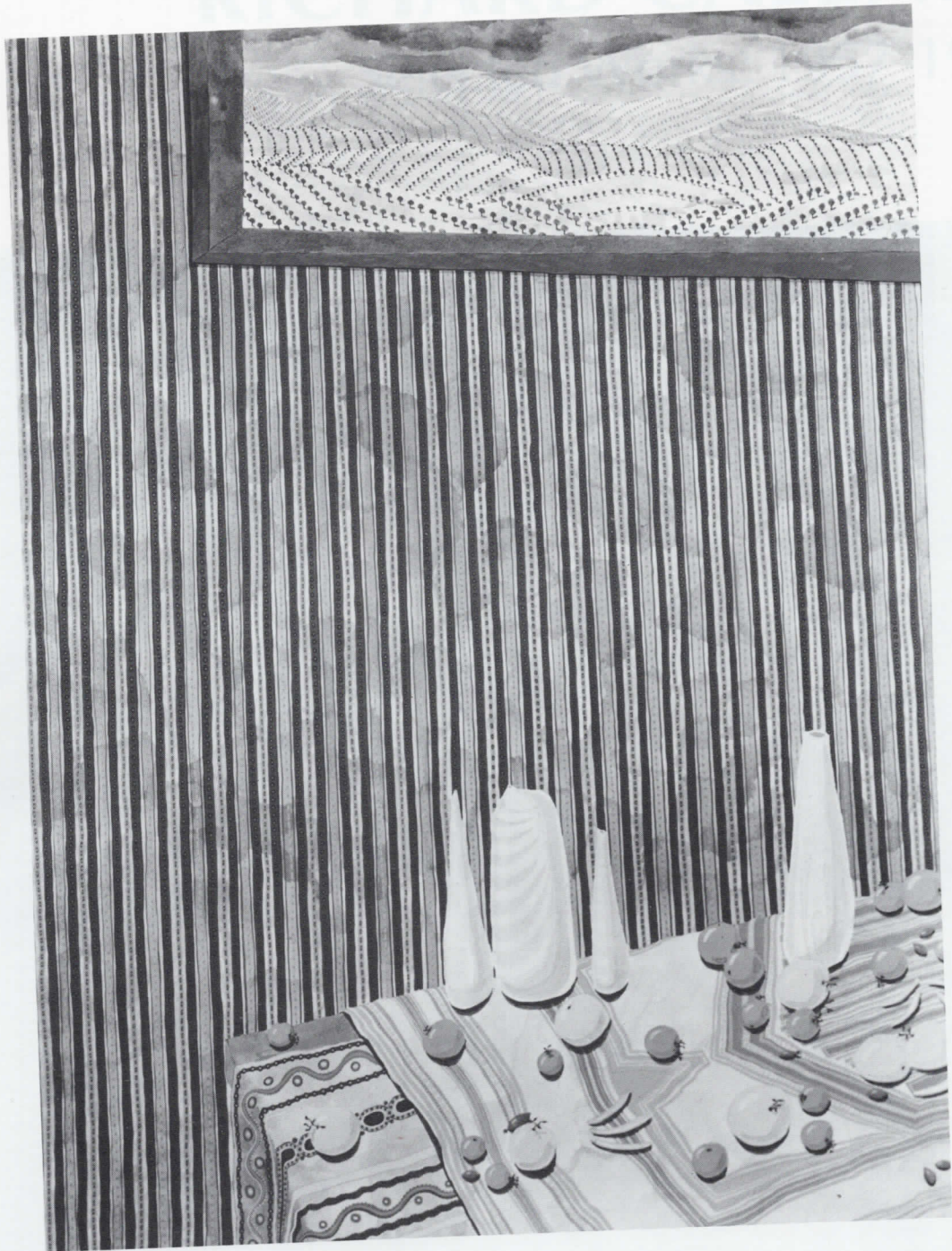
Selected Works: 1957-1988



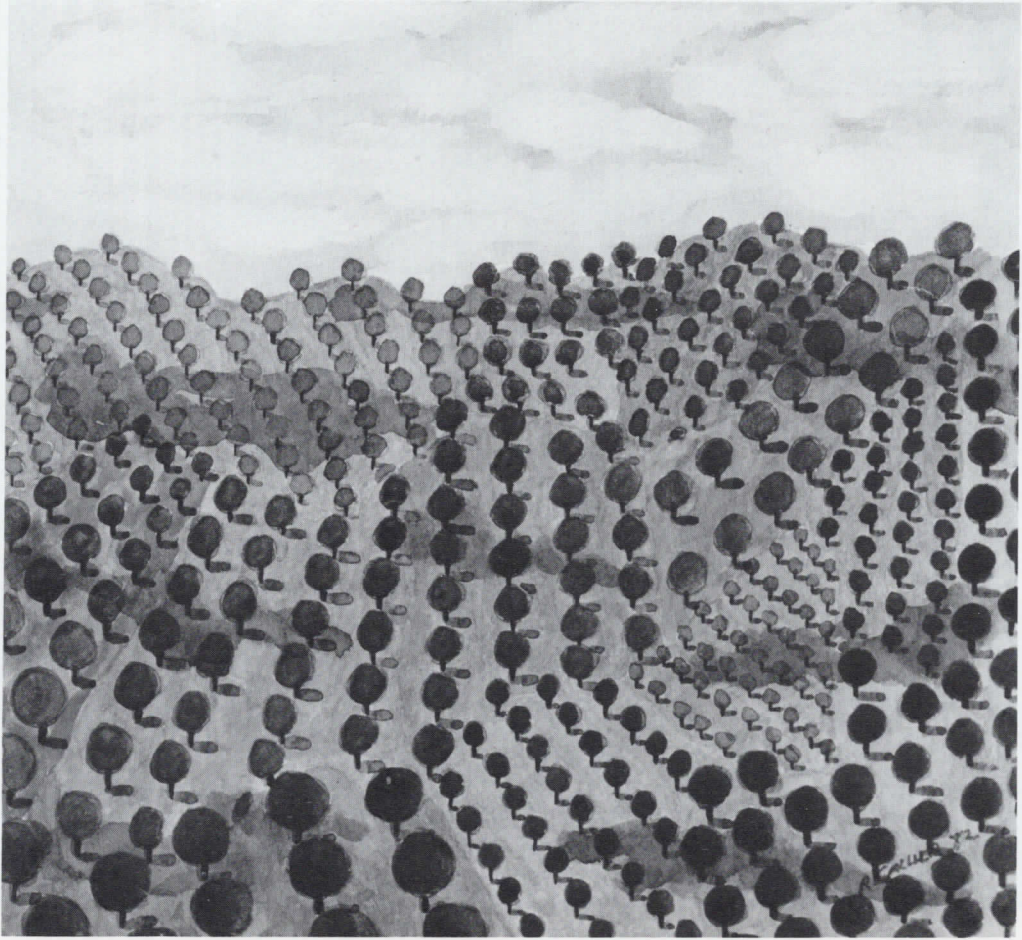
Lilith as Artemis of Ephesus Creating the Garden of Eden,
1966, oil on linen, 39 1/2 x 39 1/2 inches.
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Benson



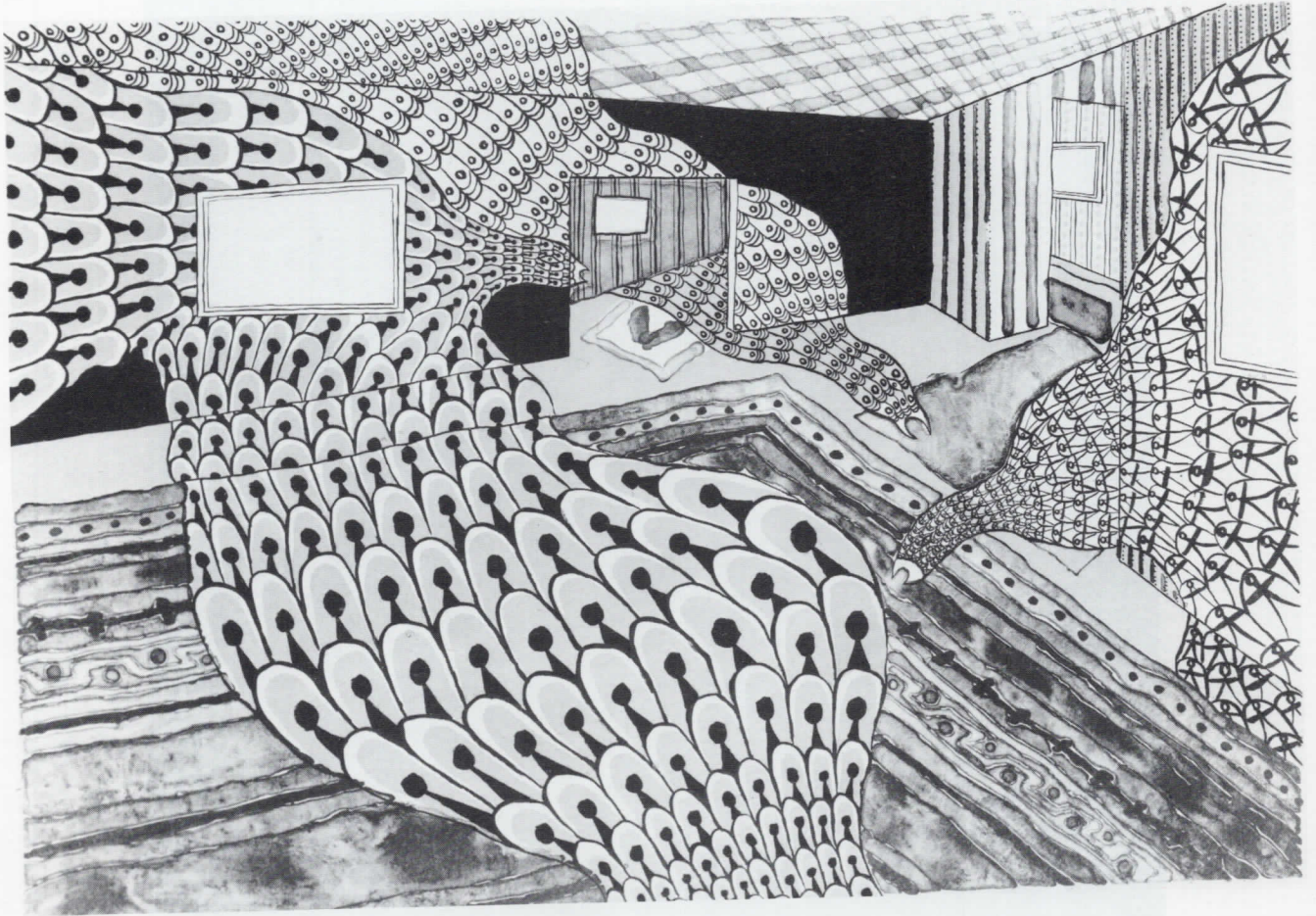
Oriental Interior with Nineteen Bottles,
1981, sumi ink/wash drawing,
13 x 22³/₈ inches.



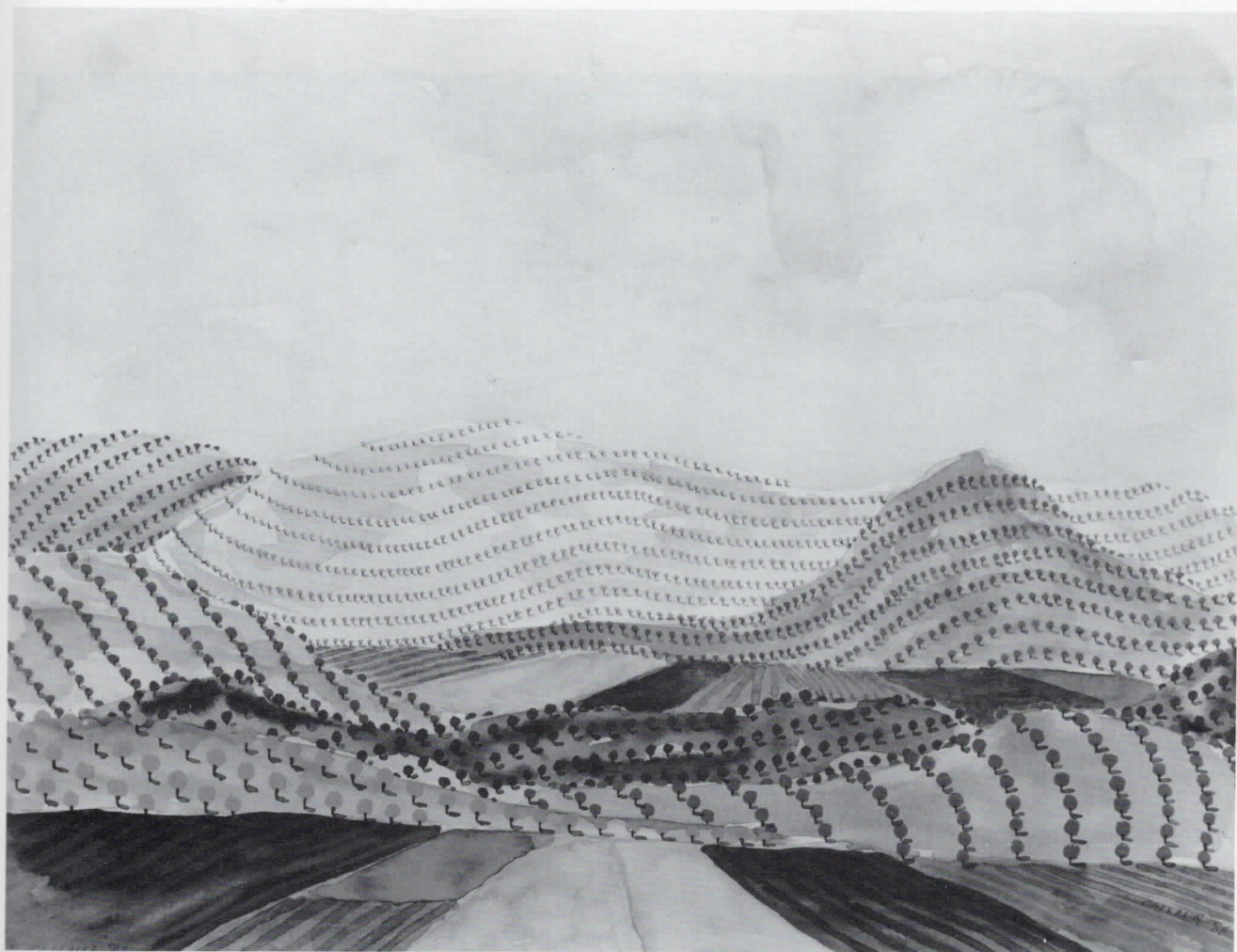
Landscape with Still Life, 1982,
watercolor and gouache, 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 40



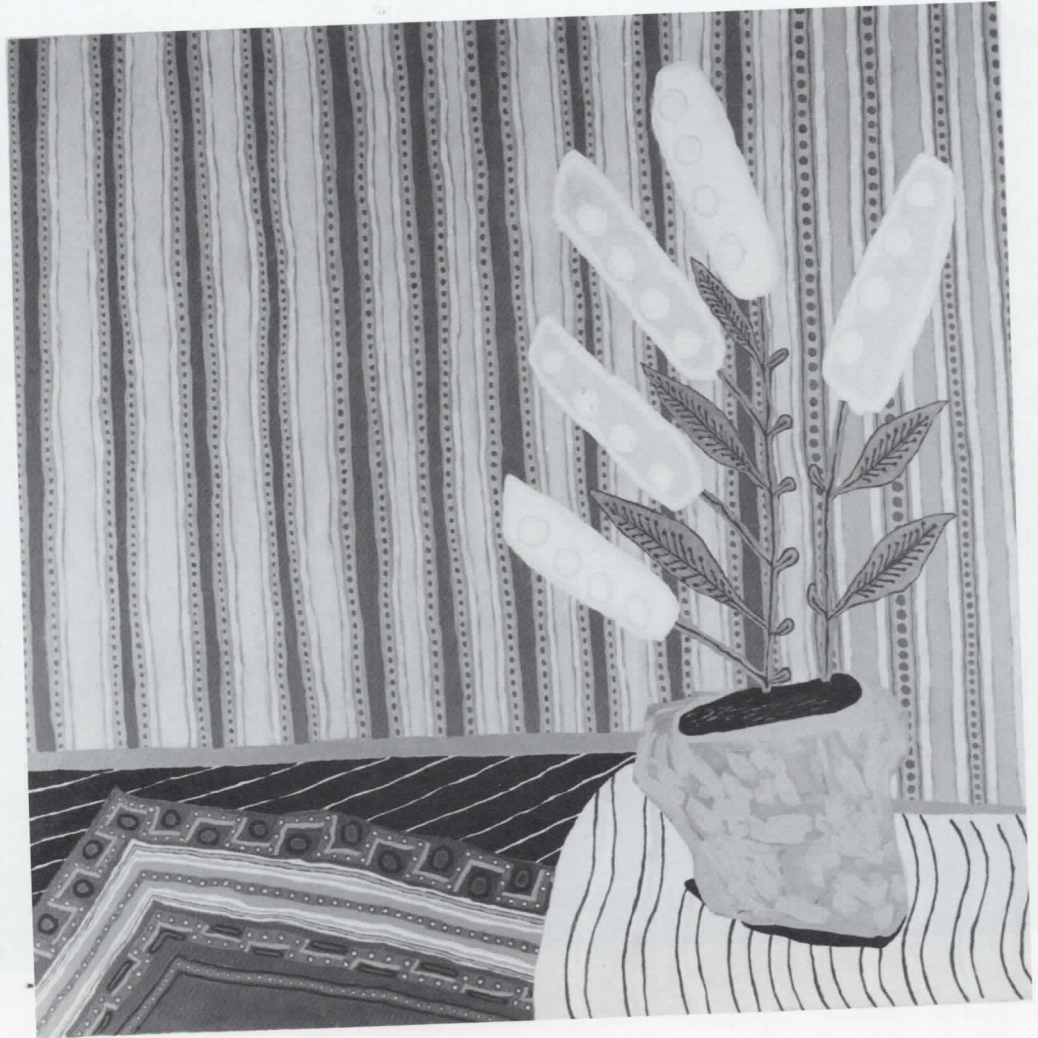
Spanish Landscape near Granada,
1982, watercolor and gouache,
10 ¹/₄ x 11 inches.



Lilith Pursuit, 1983,
lithograph, 2/20,
20 ¹/₄ x 29 ¹/₂ inches.



Granada to Cordoba, 1986,
watercolor and gouache study,
9 1/2 x 12 1/2 inches.



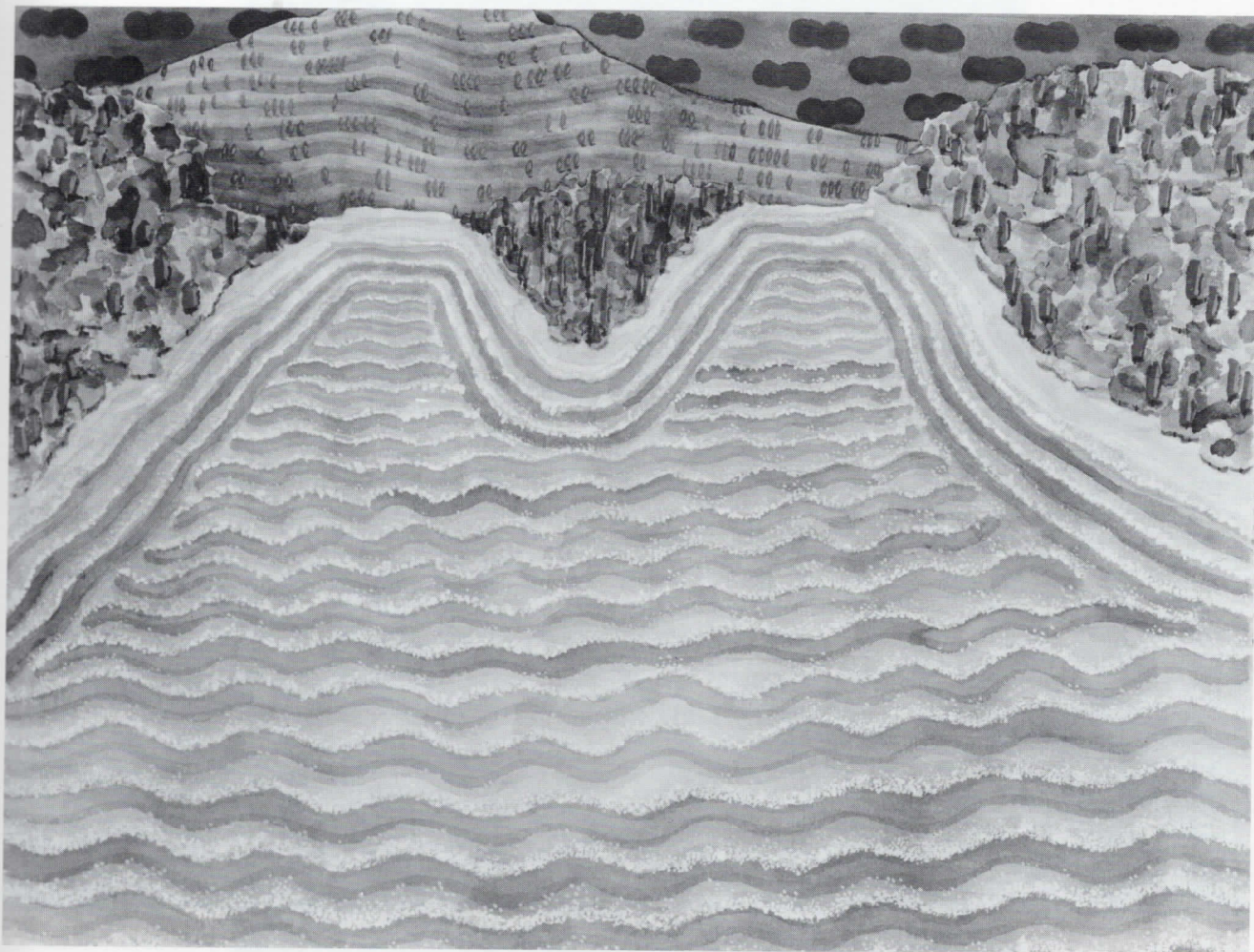
Blue Vase, 1987, oil on linen, 40 x 40 inches.



Green Fields in Japan, 1987,
watercolor and gouache, 23 x 30 inches.



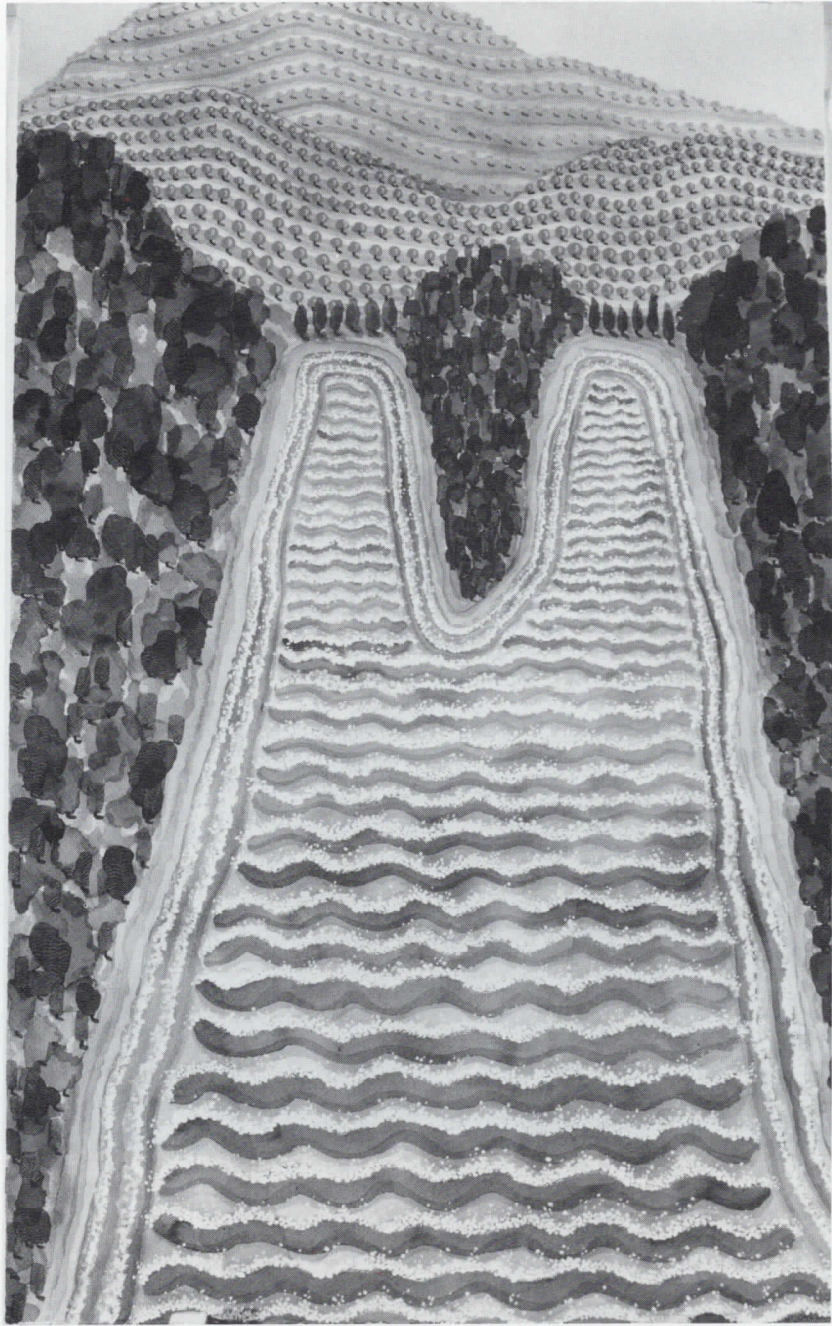
Hudson River I, 1987,
watercolor and gouache, 22³/₄ x 30



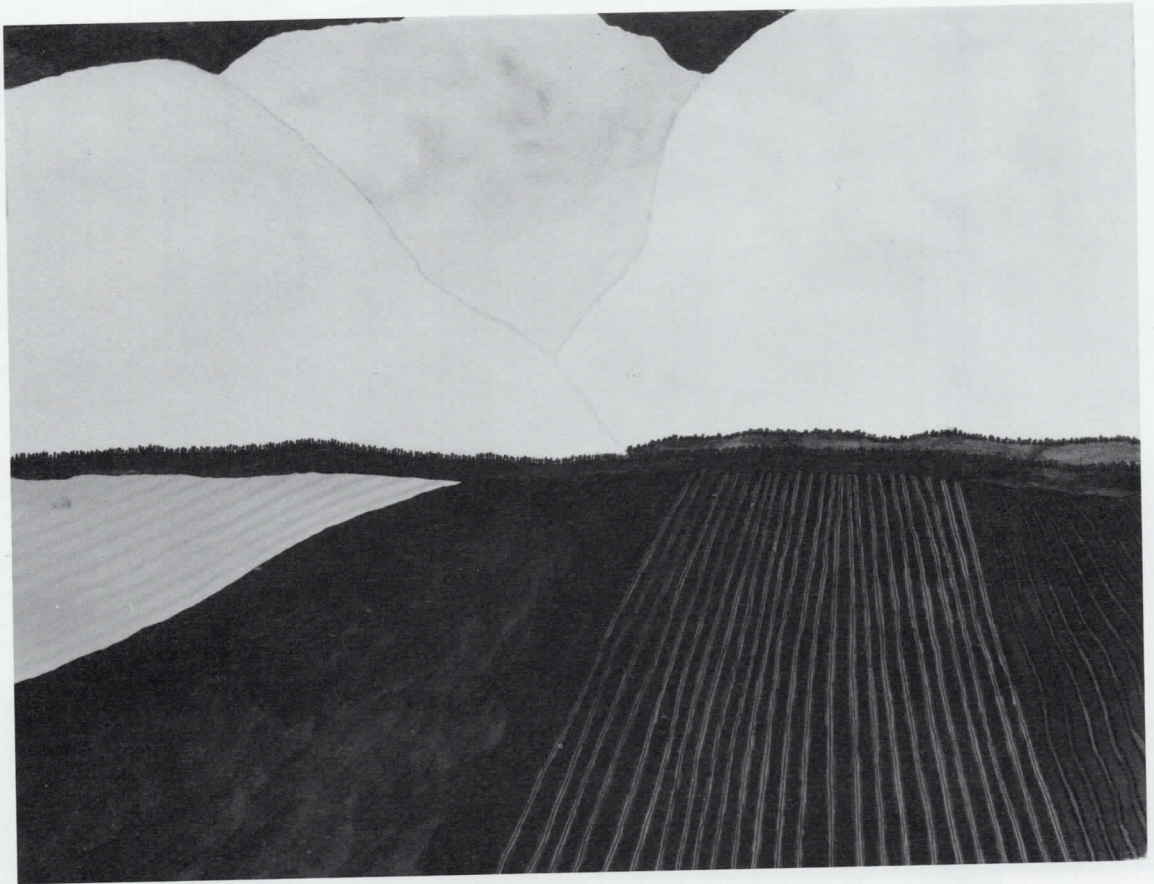
Hudson River Evening, 1887,
watercolor and gouache, 22 3/4 x 30



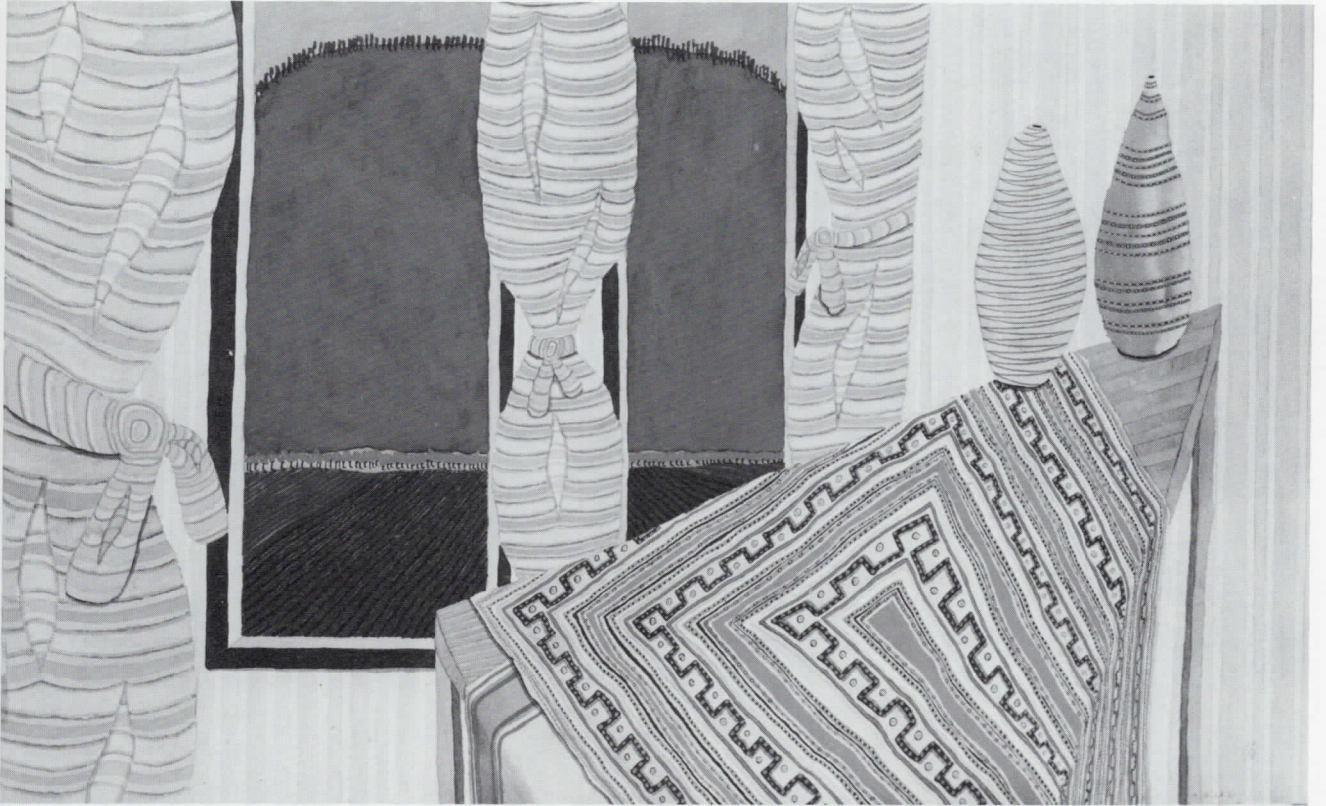
Hudson River North of Catskill, 1987,
watercolor and gouache, 29⁵/₈ x 42 inches.



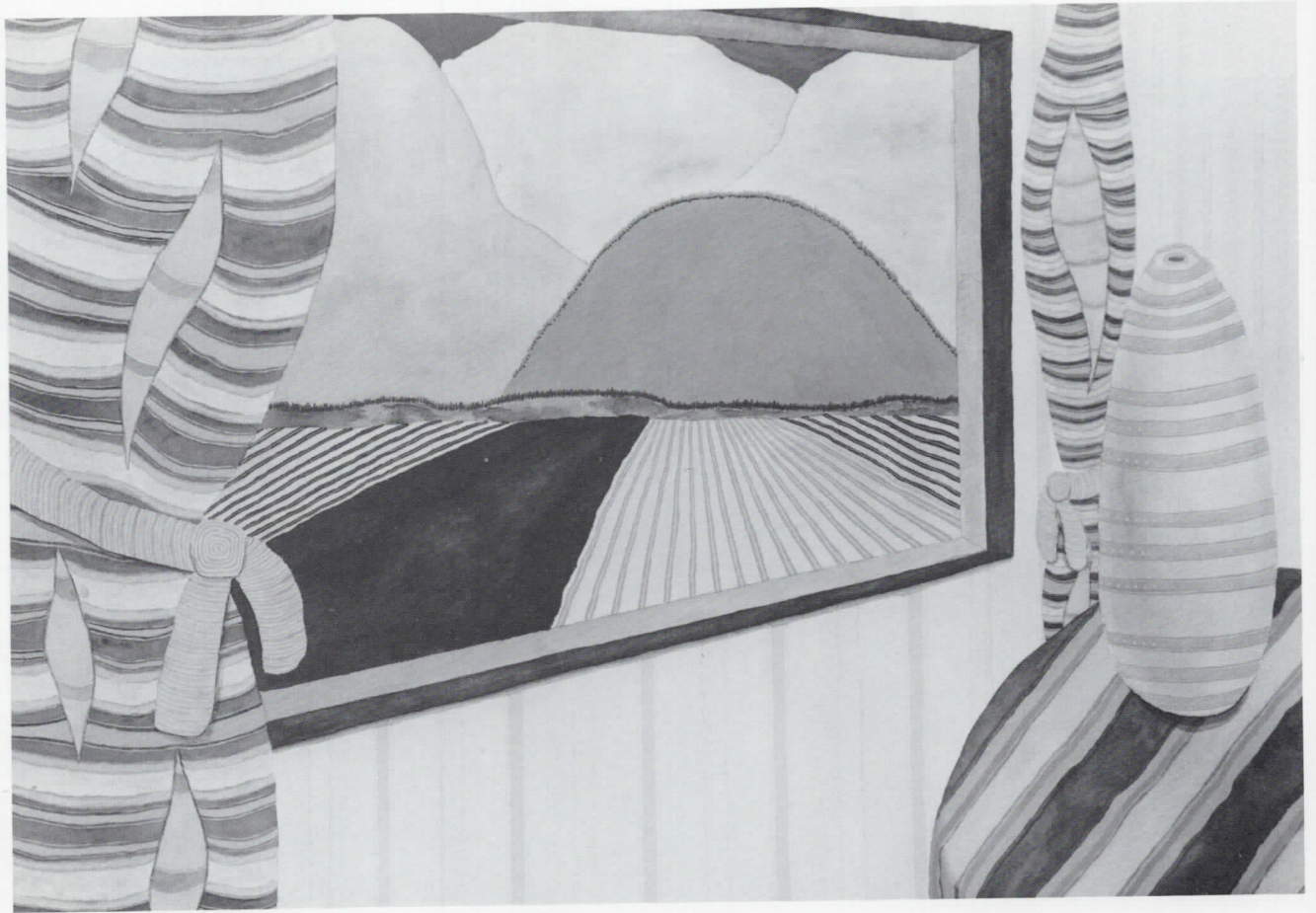
Hudson River, View from the 'Old Friend',
1987, watercolor and gouache, 40 ³/₄ x 25 ³/₈ inches.



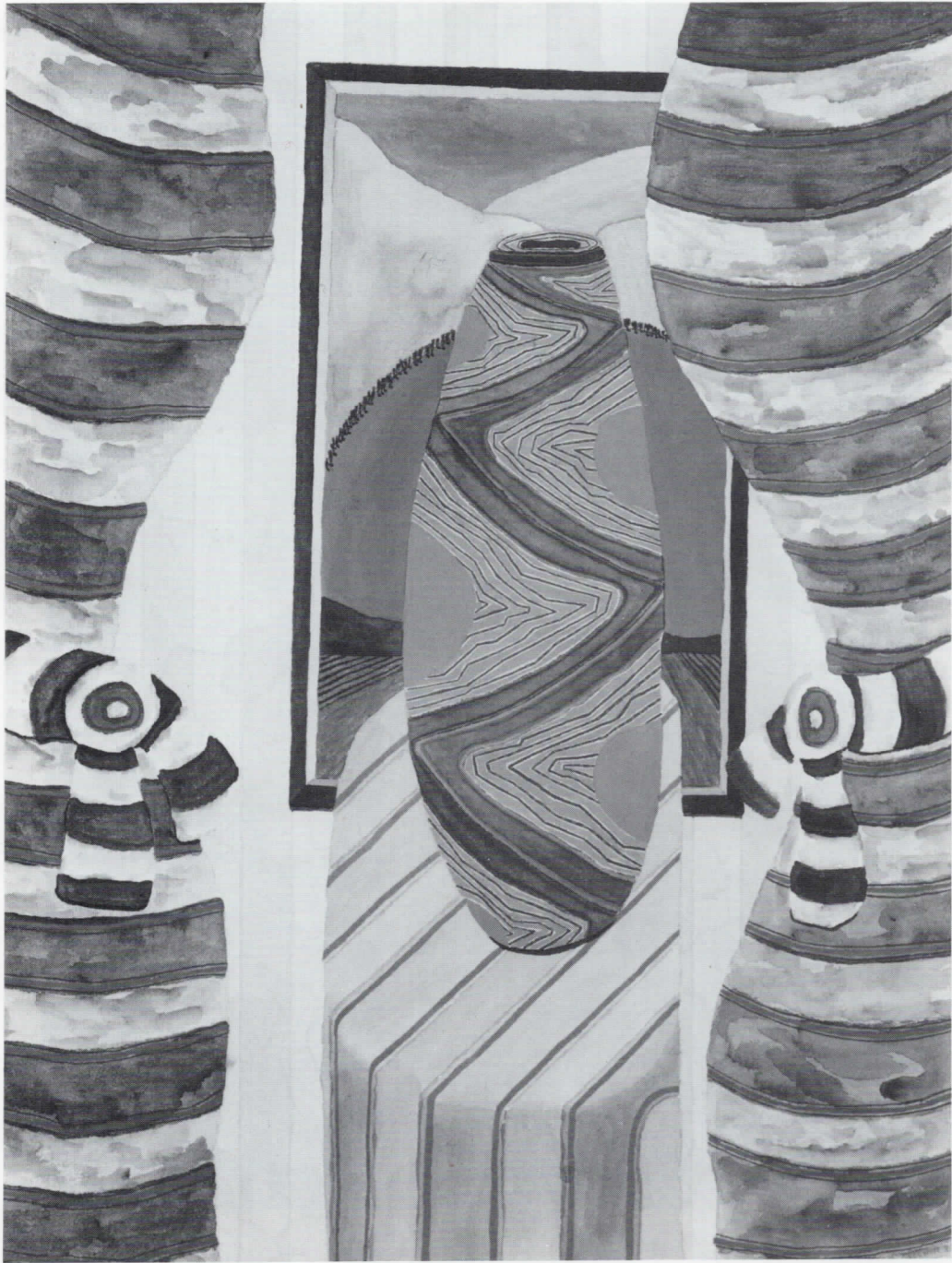
Landscape with Blue Field,
1987, watercolor and gouache,
23 x 30 inches.



Red Hills I, 1987, watercolor and gouache,
25 ³/₈ x 40 ¹/₂ inches.



Red Hills II, 1987, watercolor and gouache,
29 1/2 x 42 inches.



Red Hills III, 1987, watercolor and gouache,
30 x 23 inches.



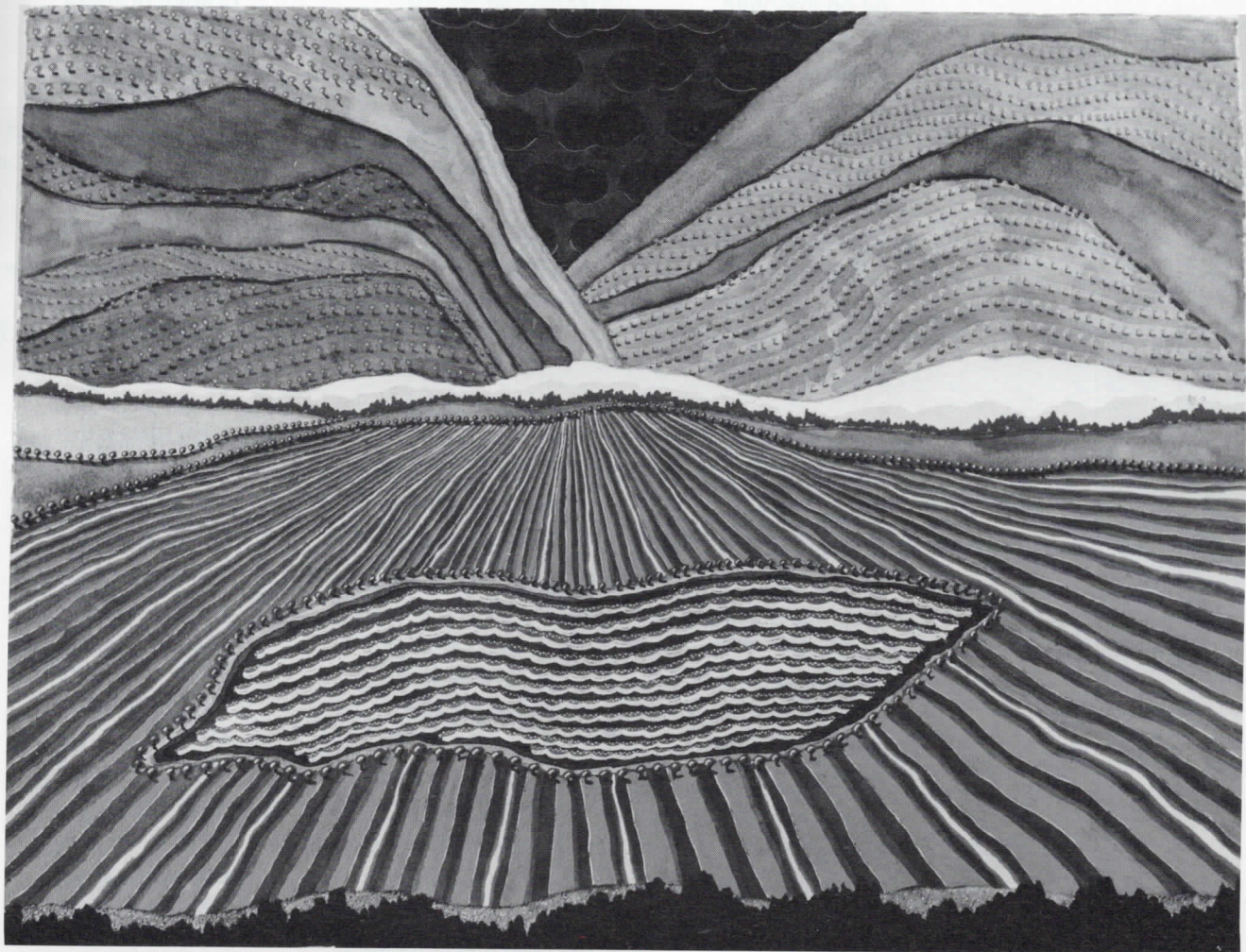
First Vase, 1988,
watercolor and gouache, 30 x 23 inches.



Figure with View of Landscape, 1988,
watercolor and gouache study,
10 ¹/₂ x 7 ¹/₂ inches.



Portrait of K. I., 1988
watercolor and gouache
13 x 9 1/2 inches



Spanish Lake, 1988,
watercolor and gouache on Arches paper,
23 x 30 inches.

EXHIBITION
CHECKLIST

47. *Lilith Pursuit*
1983
lithograph 2/20
20 ¹/₄ x 29 ¹/₂
Anonymous Loan
48. *Still Life with Four Tables*
1983
watercolor and gouache
30 ¹/₂ x 40
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Maurer
49. *An American Flag*
1984
watercolor and gouache
18 x 24
Anonymous Loan
50. *Interior with Six Vases*
1984
watercolor and gouache
40 ¹/₂ x 25 ¹/₂
51. *Spanish Hills*
1985
watercolor and gouache
29 ¹/₄ x 42
52. *Spanish Hills III*
1985
watercolor and gouache
23 x 30
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Bruno E. Amyot
53. *Spanish Hills IV*
1985
watercolor and gouache
23 x 30
54. *Spanish Landscape with Flowers*
1985
oil on linen
40 ¹/₈ x 48 ¹/₄
55. *Still Life with Small Blue Flowers*
1985
watercolor and gouache
42 x 29 ¹/₂
56. *Interior*
1986
watercolor and gouache
29 ¹/₂ x 42
Collection of Dr. and Mrs. Martin Feingold
57. *Red Fields in Spain*
1986
watercolor and gouache
34 ¹/₂ x 49
58. *Spanish Hills*
1986
oil on linen
40 ¹/₈ x 36 ¹/₈
59. *Yellow Fields in Spain*
1986
watercolor and gouache
23 x 29 ¹/₂
60. *Blue Vase*
1987
oil on linen
40 x 40 ¹/₄
61. *Green Fields in Japan*
1987
watercolor and gouache
23 x 30
62. *Hudson River Evening*
1987
watercolor and gouache
23 x 30
63. *Hudson River Interior*
1987
watercolor and gouache
30 x 23
64. *Hudson River North of Catskill*
1987
watercolor and gouache
29 ¹/₂ x 42
65. *Hudson River, View from the "Old Friend"*
1987
watercolor and gouache
40 ³/₄ x 25 ³/₈
66. *Landscape X*
1987
watercolor and gouache
23 x 24
67. *Landscape with Blue Field*
1987
watercolor and gouache
23 x 30
68. *Red Hills I*
1987
watercolor and gouache
25 ³/₈ x 40 ¹/₂

69. *Red Hills II*
1987
watercolor and gouache
29 ¹/₄ x 42
70. *Red Hills III*
1987
watercolor and gouache
30 x 23
71. *Separate Images/Spain*
1987
watercolor and gouache
29 ¹/₂ x 42
72. *Still Life with Landscape*
1987
watercolor and gouache
40 ¹/₈ x 30 ³/₄
73. *Yellow Fields II*
1987
watercolor and gouache
15 x 11
74. *C. Vase*
1988
watercolor and gouache
30 x 23
75. *First Vase*
1988
watercolor and gouache on Arches
30 x 23
76. *Orange and Yellow Cloth*
1988
oil on linen
50 ¹/₈ x 38
77. *Portrait of K., I*
1988
watercolor and gouache
13 x 9 ¹/₂
78. *Portrait of K., II*
1988
watercolor and gouache
30 x 23
79. *Red Fields in Spain*
1988
watercolor and gouache
25 x 40 ¹/₂
80. *Red Fields, East of Madrid*
1988
watercolor and gouache
29 ¹/₂ x 42
81. *Round Wallpaper*
1988
watercolor and gouache on Arches
23 x 30
82. *Shaker Creek/Latham, New York*
1988
watercolor and gouache on Arches
30 x 23
83. *Spanish Lake*
1988
watercolor and gouache on Arches
23 x 30

All photographs taken by Gary Gold, except for photos on pages 30, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 44, 45, 49, 50 which were taken by Neil McGreevy.

A selection of prints and small watercolor/gouache studies (1985-88) completes the exhibition.

Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude and deep appreciation to all of those whose support and hard work made this exhibition possible. The University gallery staff was its usual diligent self and I would like to acknowledge the support of its director, Nancy Liddle; the hard work of Zheng Hu and Joseph Valentino, who did the installation; the dedication of Joanne Lue who typed all materials and catalog copy. My thanks to Dawn Clements, who has been a very special studio assistant and to Gary Gold, and Neil McGreevy who took the exceptional catalog photos.

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Most especially I would like to express my thanks to Marijo Dougherty, who curated the exhibition with sensitivity and enthusiasm.

Richard Callner
1988

