

3 ARTISTS : RECENT WORKS : BIG APPLE

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Bryan Burkey
John Franklin
Julia Kidd

August 21 - September 30, 1990

Douglas F. Cooley Memorial Art Gallery
Reed College, Portland, Oregon

Wrapped Revelries

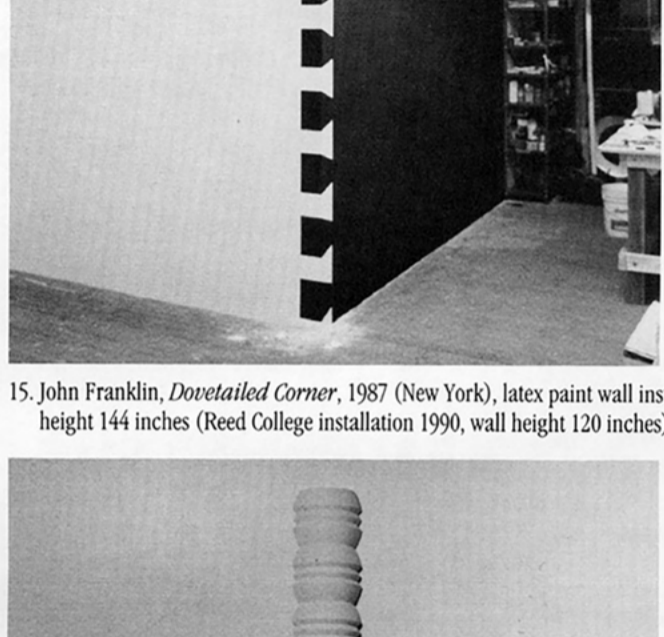
Humor is an important aspect of John Franklin's work, along with a dead-serious respect for formal values and craftsmanship. The basic idea for *Dovetailed Corner* (Cat. no. 15) came from furniture-making, which Franklin learned as an undergraduate while studying botany at the University of New Hampshire. It was partly this experience with building that led him out of science and into art. All of Franklin's pieces seen here are iconoclastic in the sense that they defy placement in any one traditional category of art, thereby inspiring thought on the nature of art. *Dovetailed Corner* is painted on a flat surface, but it is not a painting. It exists in three-dimensional space, but it is not a sculpture. It can be thought of as an installation piece, but it is also a functional part of the gallery architecture, serving as a divider between Franklin's and Burkey's spaces.

The idea for *Dovetailed Corner* and its initial application occurred in 1987, on a wall of Franklin's studio. The second variation on the theme was embodied during the same year, when it was installed at Loughelton Gallery in Soho. Although the work has existed so far mainly as an idea, whose physical form goes in and out of existence, it is not a purely conceptual piece. The formal effect is important, and since the form depends on its supporting structure, the work changes each time it is installed. The fact that the dovetail is not real adds a playful element to the piece. It is a painted illusion of the joining of two separate parts, which the artist sees as a symbolic union of opposites, black and white.

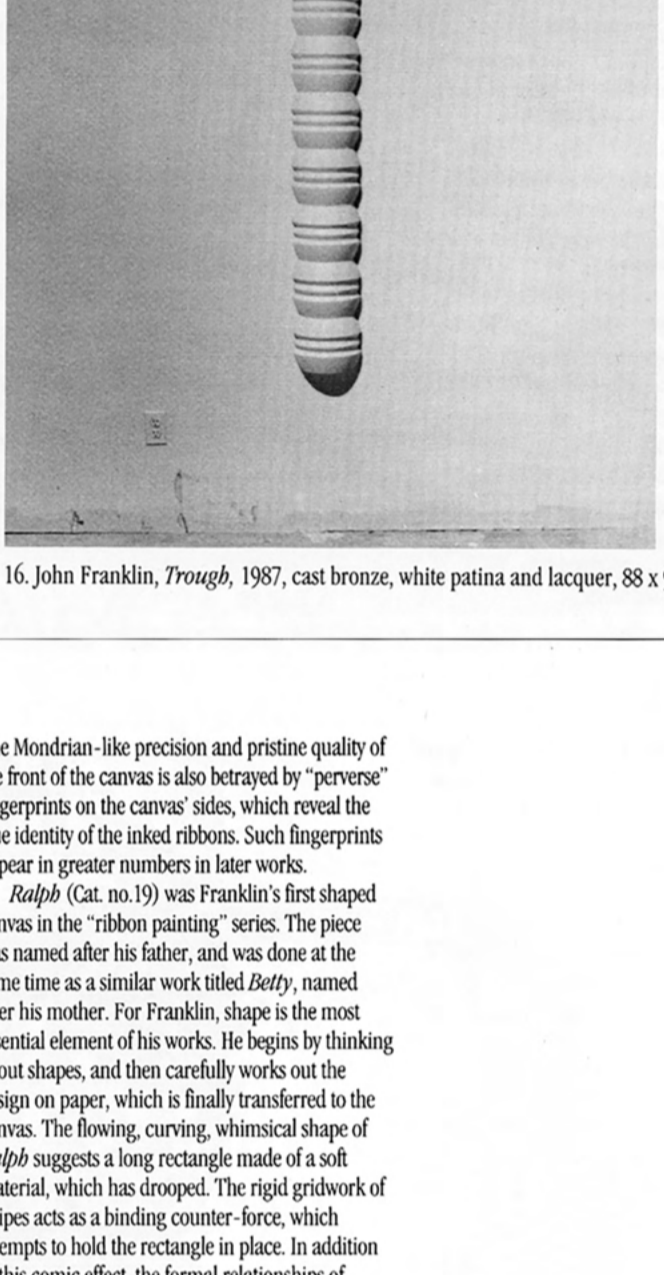
Dovetailed Corner is also about repetition. In actuality, all of the segments are the same, like evenly spaced beads. As the viewer's eye travels up and down the corner, however, these cadences lengthen and shorten due to distortions of perspective. This effect increases the closer the viewer gets to the work.

Trough (Cat. no. 16) is a hybrid piece lying somewhere between sculpture and architecture. Like *Dovetailed Corner*, its form is based on repeated segments, but rather than mechanical repetitions, it is more like deep breathing or chanting, which create rhythms that add up to more than the sum of the parts. This piece began as a bowl. While Franklin was turning it on a lathe, it broke. He still liked the shape, so he put it back together and made a sand mold of it, which he then cast in twelve sections joined together as one bronze form.

In each of Franklin's works there is a "twist." Here, it is the multiplication of the preciseness of the bronze, an age-old material for sculpture, made by covering the surface with a white patina that causes it to look like cheap plaster. In part, this was done to emphasize the form over the material. The vertical shape looks like a column, but it is incomplete and



15. John Franklin, *Dovetailed Corner*, 1987 (New York), latex paint wall installation, height 144 inches (Reed College installation 1990, wall height 120 inches)



16. John Franklin, *Trough*, 1987, cast bronze, white patina and lacquer, 88 x 9 x 4 1/2 inches

appears to be half in and half out of the wall. It is also baseless and functionless, like a ghost column hovering in mid-air. The title, *Trough*, is a note to the bronze-casting process, in which the mold, over which the artist labors for long hours, is the negative of the final piece. For most of the time Franklin was working on it, *Trough* looked like a trough.

The other four works by Franklin in the current exhibition are part of a series of "ribbon paintings," which is one of the projects he is working on currently. Franklin considers himself to be neither a painter nor a sculptor, and "object-maker." The "ribbon paintings" are read in terms of two-dimensional design because of their concern with composition and illusionistic space, but in fact they are wrapped objects. Franklin first began wrapping objects about ten years ago, when he made a sculpture which hung from the ceiling and was entwined willy-nilly with black and red typewriter ribbon that fell in a pile on the floor. From typewriter ribbon, he advanced to various inked cotton ribbons of the type used in time-clocks, cash registers, and other business machines. He also wraps other kinds of objects with different materials.

Franklin's first "ribbon painting" was done in 1985. It alluded to the American flag and was a horizontal, rectangular canvas bound vertically with red and blue inked ribbons. White vertical stripes were made by leaving spaces in the gessoed canvas. Franklin sees the act of stretching canvas over stretcher bars as being like covering a skeleton with skin, and the ribbons become "clothing" or ornament.

Boogie Woogie John St. (Cat. no. 18) was Franklin's first wrapped painting in which the ribbons were wound diagonally. In this piece, he also allowed himself the freedom of using painted colors and putting a greater number of differently colored ribbons together than he had done before. By crossing colored stripes and filling in rectangles, it was inevitable that this work would recall the paintings of Mondrian. Franklin chose to do this not as an "appropriation," a term which has come to have cynical connotations lately, but in tribute to a master whose work has much to teach about space and form. Franklin acknowledges this debt through his title, but he does so ironically in the John Street, where his studio is located, unlike Broadway in the 1940s, is a funny, little street in an industrial section of Brooklyn.

Franklin also "begs to differ" with Mondrian's extremely purist approach. Among the differences are Franklin's inclusion of pedestrian materials, the manufactured ribbons in place of hand-painted stripes, his overlapping of stripes, and his rotation of the stripes in relation to the square of the canvas, which crops the peripheral rectangles, as if they were part of a larger work.

The Mondrian-like precision and pristine quality of the front of the canvas is also betrayed by "perverse" fingerprints on the canvas' sides, which reveal the true identity of the inked ribbons. Such fingerprints appear in greater numbers in later works.

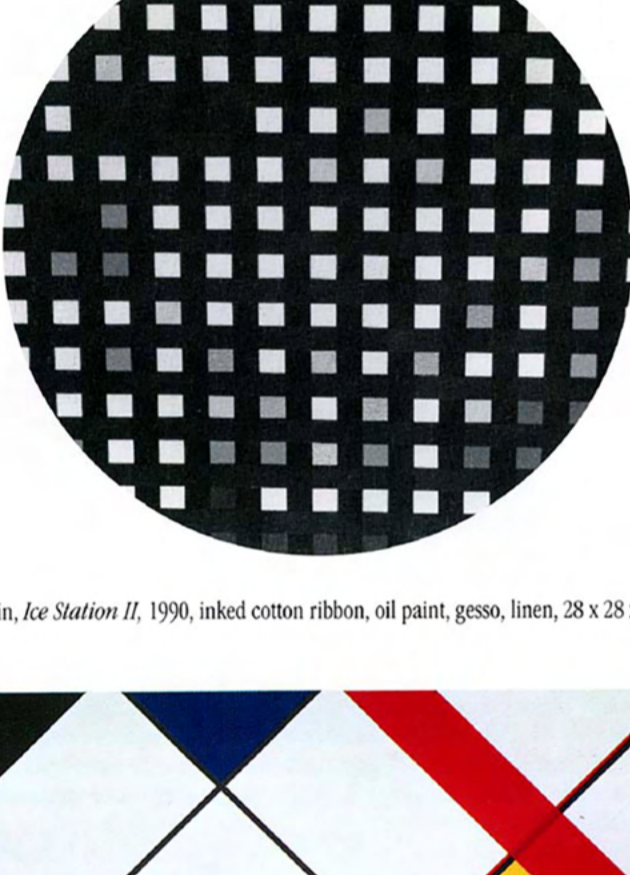
Ralph (Cat. no. 19) was Franklin's first shaped canvas in the "ribbon painting" series. The piece was named after his father, and was done at the same time as a similar work titled *Betty*, named after his mother. For Franklin, shape is the most essential element of his works. He begins by thinking about shapes, and then carefully transfers the design on paper, which is finally transferred to the canvas. The flowing, curving, whimsical shape of *Ralph* suggests a large rectangle made of a soft material, which has drooped. The rigid gridwork of stripes acts as a binding counter-force, which attempts to hold the rectangle in place. In addition to this comic effect, the formal relationships of verticals and horizontals interrupted by curves are highly sophisticated.

The objectness of *Ice Station II* (Cat. no. 17) is emphasized by an optical illusion created by the angles of the ribbons on the sides of the round canvas, which make it appear to be concave. At the same time, the seemingly abstract design refers to a landscape, where the artist, in a state of meditation, imagined he would like to be. It is an unspooled arc setting, and each of the colored squares is associated with specific things. For instance, three yellow squares at the upper right denote the sun, which for Franklin is a symbol of the source of all the energy on the planet. A cormorant, a fish-eating bird, is represented in flight by three black squares placed horizontally in a row at the upper left. A number of blue squares at the bottom connote water. A red square at the bottom edge is associated with the warm blood of a fish swimming under ice, which is regarded as a sign of life. Four green vertical squares at the center right stand both for a tree and for growth in general. The circular canvas is the shape of the earth, with the ribbons referring to longitude and latitude, while the circle symbolizes unity, harmony, and completeness.

The diptych *Lemon Cactus-Grape Cactus* (Cat. no. 20) also has its source in nature, but in this case it is a real cactus, which Franklin slept next to on a camping trip in the Joshua Tree National Monument in California. He was attracted to the shape of the top segment of the cactus and photographed it. The end result seen here is closer to the original than might be expected. The contour of the cactus shape was carefully traced from a photograph to the canvas. The diagonally crossed ribbons reproduce the crucial-toned colors of the cactus' spikes. Although the dual-pattern colors are derived from Life Saver lavers and fruit, they also refer to the lighter and darker spots across the cactus' surface.

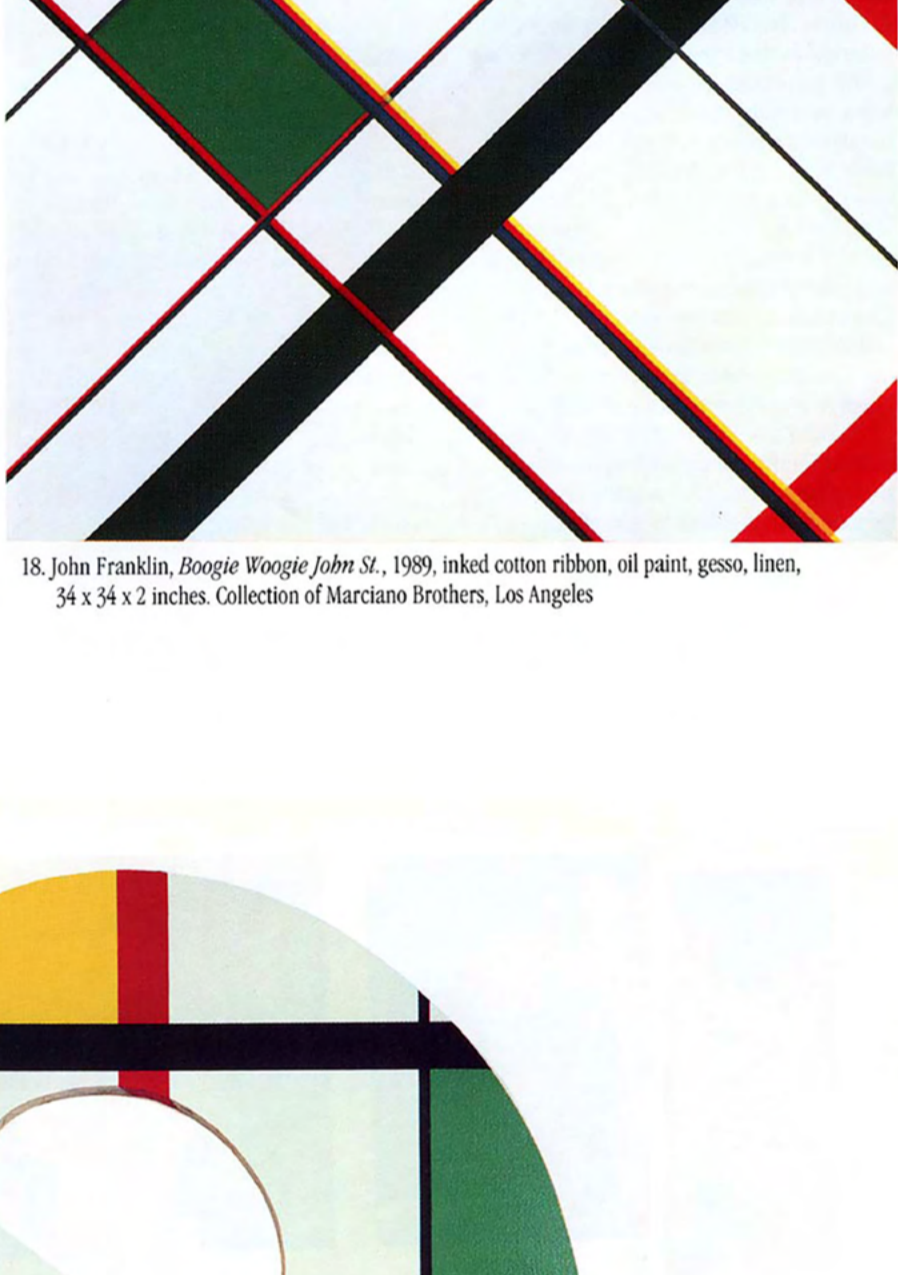
Beyond representing a cactus, the basic shape of *Lemon Cactus-Grape Cactus* calls to mind many other associations, such as a kidney bean, a pear, a penis, a drop of water, large and small bubbles merged, two joined umbels, and so on. The undulating contours are full of motion, as if containing something fluid in a state of transition, while the close-knit ribbons seem to bind the shape in, preventing its mutation. On the surface, they form an interlocking pattern, like wickerwork, but popping in and out across the canvas, like flashing lights or synoptated notes. Together, the two halves of the diptych mirror each other, and both the colors and the shapes are complementary, suggesting the negative and the positive, or yin and yang.

Throughout Franklin's work, there is an underlying quality which is "musical." The rhythms of both contours and internal relationships can almost be heard as well as seen. But the music emitted from these colors and shapes is far from lyrical. It is full of the raucousness of boisterous merrymaking and the overtones of wrapped revelries.

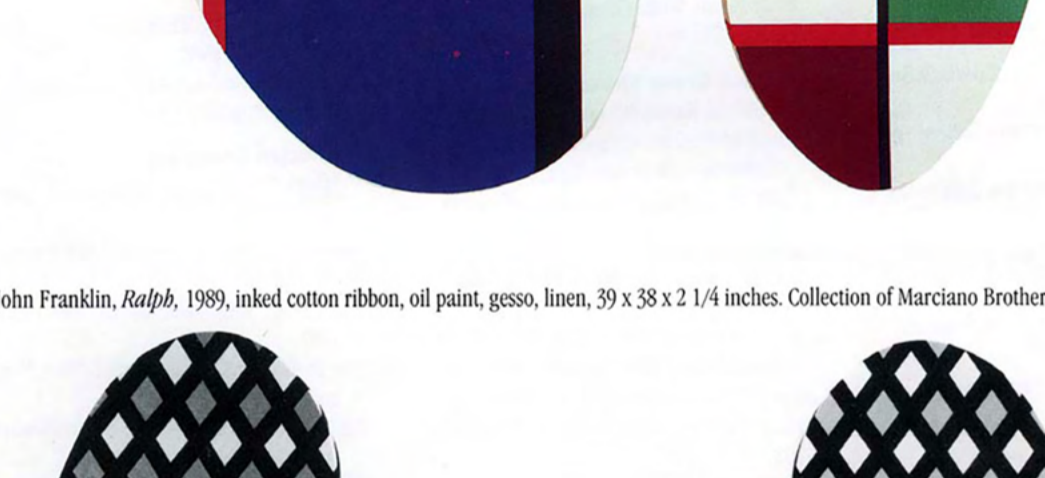


17. John Franklin, *Ice Station II*, 1990, inked cotton ribbon, oil paint, gesso, linen, 28 x 28 x 2 inches

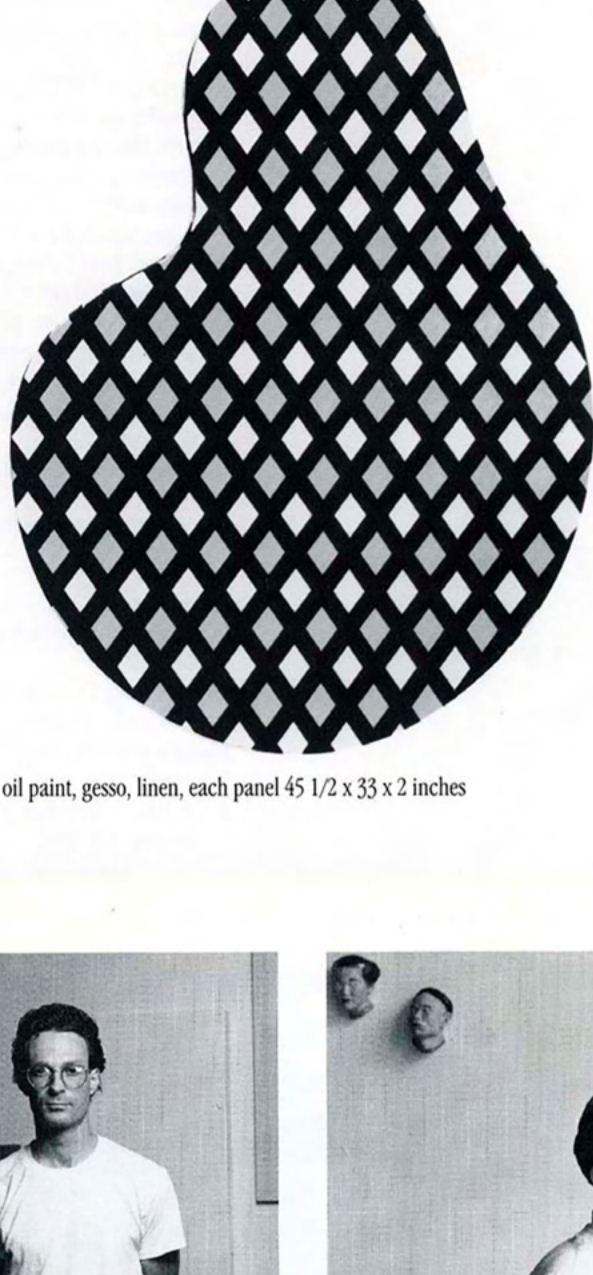
Jan Cavanaugh
Visiting Curator
Reed College



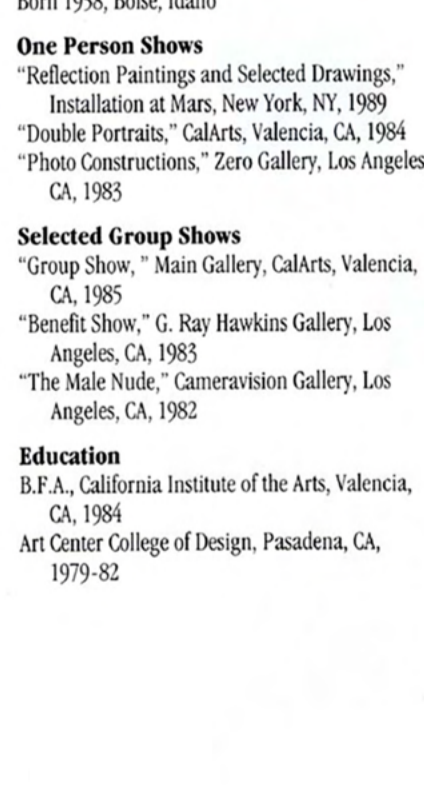
18. John Franklin, *Boogie Woogie John St.*, 1989, inked cotton ribbon, oil paint, gesso, linen, 54 x 54 x 2 inches. Collection of Marciano Brothers, Los Angeles



19. John Franklin, *Ralph*, 1989, inked cotton ribbon, oil paint, gesso, linen, 39 x 38 x 2 1/4 inches. Collection of Marciano Brothers, Los Angeles



20. John Franklin, *Lemon Cactus-Grape Cactus*, 1990, inked cotton ribbon, oil paint, gesso, linen, each panel 45 1/2 x 33 x 2 inches

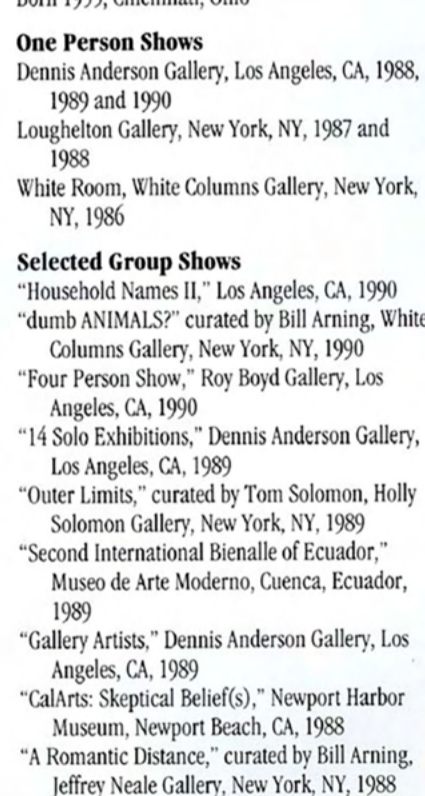


BRYAN BURKEY
Born 1958, Boise, Idaho

One Person Shows
"Reflection Paintings and Selected Drawings," Installation at Mars, New York, NY, 1989
"Double Portraits," G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1983
"The Male Nude," Cameravision Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1983

Selected Group Shows
"Group Show," Main Gallery, CalArts, Valencia, CA, 1985
"Benefit Show," G. Ray Hawkins Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1983
"The Male Nude," Cameravision Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1982

Education
B.F.A., California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA, 1984
Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, CA, 1979-82



JOHN FRANKLIN
Born 1955, Cincinnati, Ohio

One Person Shows
Dennis Anderson Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1988, 1989 and 1990
Loughelton Gallery, New York, NY, 1987 and 1988
White Room, White Columns Gallery, New York, NY, 1986

Selected Group Shows
"Household Names II," Los Angeles, CA, 1990
"dumb ANIMALS" curated by Bill Arning, White Columns Gallery, New York, NY, 1990
"Four Person Show," Roy Boyd Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1990
"14 Solo Exhibitions," Dennis Anderson Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1989
"Outer Limits," curated by Tom Solomon, Holly Solomon Gallery, New York, NY, 1989
"Second International Biennale of Ecuador," Museo de Arte Moderno, Quenca, Ecuador, 1989
"Gallery Artists," Dennis Anderson Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1989
"CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s)," Newport Harbor Museum, Newport Beach, CA, 1988
"A Romantic Distance," curated by Bill Arning, Jeffrey Neale Gallery, New York, NY, 1988
"Sculpture," Bard College, Annandale, NY, 1987
"CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s)," The Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL, 1987
"The Glittering Prize," curated by Bill Arning, Stux Gallery, New York, NY, 1987
"Fabricated, Not Found," Loughelton Gallery, New York, NY, 1986
"Retroactive," Hallwalls Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1986
"Update," White Columns Gallery, New York, NY, 1986

Education
M.F.A., California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA, 1982-84
Johnson Atelier Technical Institute of Sculpture, Princeton, NJ, 1979-81
Froedakis Academy of Art, Philadelphia, 1979-80
Parsons School of Art, Philadelphia, NY, 1978
B.S. in Botany, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, 1978



JULIA KIDD
Born 1959, North Hollywood, California

One Person Shows
"Home is Where Your House Is," Genovese Gallery, Boston, MA, 1989
"New Work," Anne Plumb Gallery, New York, NY, 1988
"Great Friends," White Columns Gallery, New York, NY, 1986
"Pary Games," Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, 1984

Selected Group Shows
"Thick/Thin," Fahy/Klein Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1989
"Contention," New Langton Arts, San Francisco, CA, 1988
"Paint/Film," Bess Cutler Gallery, New York, NY, 1987
"The Double Bind," Loughelton Gallery, New York, NY, 1987
"CalArts: Skeptical Belief(s)," The Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL, 1987
"The Fairytale Politics, Desire and Everyday Life," Artists Space, New York, NY, 1986
"The Readymade Painted," Bard College, Annandale, NY, 1986
"T.V. Generation," L.A.C.E. Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, 1986
"Opposing Forces," Hallwalls Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1984

Education
M.F.A., California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, CA, 1984
Whitney Museum Independent Study Program, New York, NY, 1983
Grants and Awards
New York State Foundation for the Arts, Painting Scholarship, 1988-89
Lew and Edie Wasserman Scholarship, 1984

