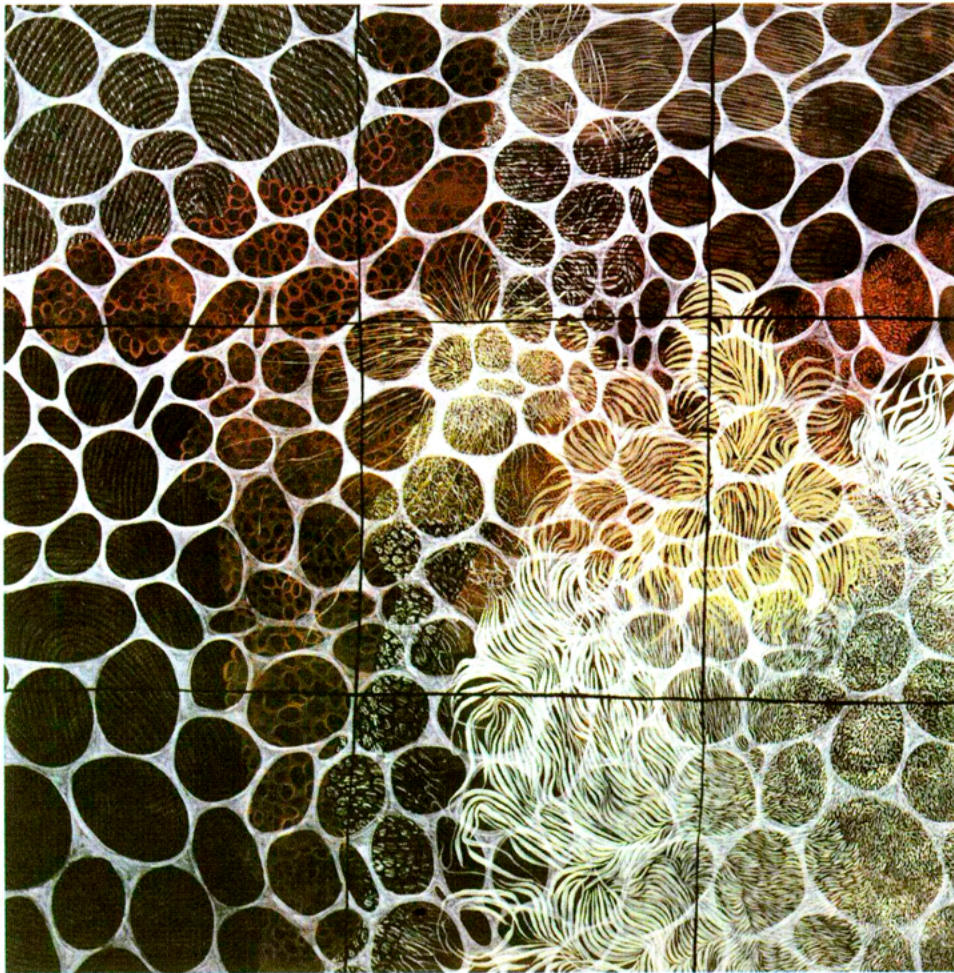


Creighton Michael



Mesh (1999), 60 x 60", oil on canvas, 1999

Visual Matrix

ELMHURST ART MUSEUM

May 2 - June 4, 2000

The Transcendentalism of Creighton Michael

For Creighton Michael, nature and action are inseparable forces that reveal the fundamental oneness of all creation. This accomplished artist's conceptual and formal stretching of Modernism's abstract vocabulary in intuitive response to his environment can be viewed as a visual synthesis of the literary Transcendentalism of American poets and essayists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Just as Emerson and Thoreau saw man's insightful relationship to the natural world as crucial to locating profound truths of existence, so too has Michael's art been focused on penetrating the mysteries of the ineffable presences of our physical world.

His romantic, yet cool, images are driven by physical and intellectual approaches to abstraction that provide an elastic matrix capable of shaping engagement to fit multiple parameters. Personal experience as a tool for unlocking life's meanings manifests itself decisively in Michael's work through the process of drawing. It is the resonance of his nuanced gestures that place him in the company of contemporaries, such as painter Brice Marden, for whom mark, abstraction, and nature provide the lexicon for formally economic, but spiritually complex meditations and discoveries.

Drawing - specifically contour line - is the element that has united both sculpture and painting throughout Michael's career. Line possesses a purity that emanates from being the most direct conduit of the artist's thoughts, as well as the most immediate record of his physical movement. Capable of abstraction or delineation, line is particularly powerful in its ability to enlist the viewer in the process of completing the creative act. Utilizing this unique quality, Michael's spare, linear works blend self-imposed structures with the improvisation of automatic writing. The resulting contours, masses, and spaces become not static, isolated entities but interconnected elements whose relationships evolve with our changing perceptions, compelling us to become the enablers of our own experience.

Unifying Michael's seemingly contradictory compositional approaches, exemplified by the lean *Split* and *Quad* drawing series and the densely woven *Mesh* and *Notation* painting series, is an astute understanding of the energy that exists in the internal and external volumes of living forms. In these sensuous works of varying temperatures, the artist interprets volume as something we can experience optically and tactually. The luminous warmth of the shellacked surfaces and concave, graphite arcs in his *Split* and *Quad* drawings envelop the viewer in abstract, translucent skins that appear to expand and contract with the changing light. In contrast, the swirling, prickly patterns of white brushstroke hatchings that emerge from the dark oil grounds of the *Notation* paintings become a fluid, abstract topography of impenetrable density. Painted by Michael from different vantage points in the studio as he rotates his canvases 360 degrees, the palpable all-over fields of sinuous marks in the *Notation* series are imbued with deceptive spatial undulations. Simultaneously matter and fleeting apparitions, these shimmering veins and ribbons of movement continually elude our physical and mental grasp in their darting, shifting rhythms.

The Abstract Expressionist painter Arshile Gorky when asked once what interested him about the landscape he was painting remarked that it was not the trees themselves, but the space between the trees. This understated, yet profound, comment underscores the essence of Creighton Michael's oeuvre. Peering into recesses of the natural world he does not choose to record what is seen only by the eye. Rather, he elects to provide the conditions for each of us to make uniquely visible that which can only be realized through our immersion in places where what can be felt can not always be touched.

John Brunetti

John Brunetti is a Chicago-based critic and the Illinois Editor of *dialogue*.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Stitch: Works by Creighton Michael (1976-1999), Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, PA (catalogue), scheduled 2001

Visual Matrix: Paintings/Drawings (1997-1999), Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL (catalogue essay by John Brunetti), 2000

Intuitive Drawing: Sculpture/Drawings (1985-1999), Kim Foster Gallery, NYC (exhibition essay by Ann Landi), 1999

Current Painting, Robischon Gallery, Denver, CO (catalogue essay by Jonathan Goodman), 1999

Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA, 1999

Galerie Trois Points, Montreal, CA, 1999

Creighton Michael: Paintings (1995-1998), The Queens Museum of Art at Bulova Corporate Center, Queens, NY, 1998

Markings: Works by Creighton Michael (1985-1997), Birke Art Gallery, Marshall University, Huntington, WV, 1998

Kim Foster Gallery, NYC, 1997, 1996

Line Play: Sculpture/Drawings 1991-1996, Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College, Haverford, PA, 1997

Robischon Gallery, Denver, CO, 1997, 1994, 1992, 1990

Creighton Michael: Marks and Metaphor/Drawings 1990-1995, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN (catalogue), 1996

Creighton Michael: Landscape, Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, NY (catalogue essay by Cynthia Nadelman), 1994

New Sculpture and Drawings, Littlejohn Contemporary Gallery, NYC (exhibition essay by Eleanor Heartney), 1992

Drawing/Sculpture, San Antonio Art Institute, San Antonio, TX, 1992

Creighton Michael: Constructions 1990, Ruth Siegel Gallery, NYC, (catalogue essay by Nancy Princenthal), 1991

Pence Gallery, Santa Monica, CA, 1990, 1988

Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 1990

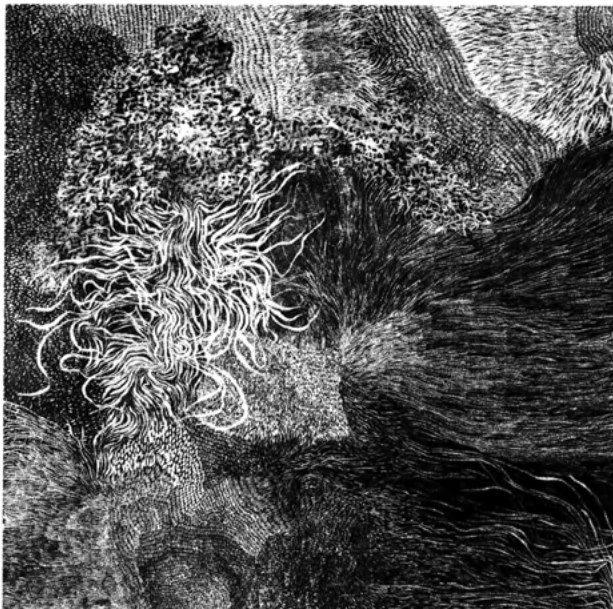
LedisFlam Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, 1989

Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY, 1988

David Beitzel Gallery, NYC, 1988

Art at the Edge: Creighton Michael, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA (catalogue essay by Susan Krane), 1987

Craig Cornelius Gallery, NYC, 1987, 1985



Notation (1998), 60 x 60", oil on canvas, 1998

Distinctions

Panelist - CAA (Studio Art), Toronto, CA, 1998

Panelist - NYFA (Sculpture), 1993

New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship (Sculpture), 1987

Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, 1985

Edward Albee Foundation Fellowship, 1985

Selected Collections

American Express

A T & T

Edward Albee

David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University

The Brooklyn Museum

Denver Art Museum

High Museum of Art

Vera List

Werner Kramarsky

Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art

Neuberger Museum of Art

New York University

Prudential

Progressive Corporation

R. I. S. D. Museum of Art

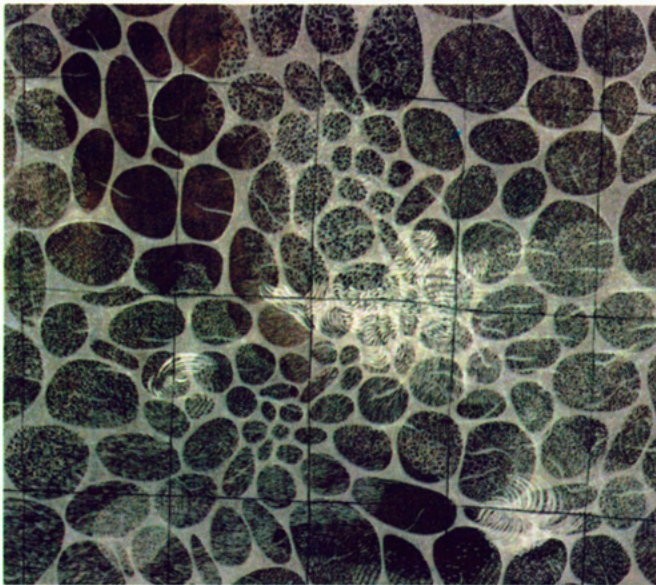
Prof. Pieter Sanders (Holland)

Vanderbilt University

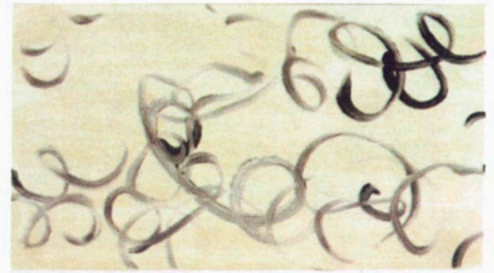
Weatherspoon Art Gallery, UNC Greensboro

List of Works

1. Pull (1197), 1997, 29 x 23", mixed media on paper, Courtesy of the artist
2. Pull (3199), 1999, 29 x 23", mixed media on paper, Courtesy of the artist and Kim Foster Gallery
3. Quad (897), 1997, 49 x 39", mixed media on paper, Collection: Werner Kramarsky
4. Quad (1197), 1997, 49 x 39", mixed media on paper, Private Collection
5. Notation (498), 1998, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Robert Kidd Gallery
6. Notation (698), 1998, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Collection: American Express
7. Notation (798), 1998, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Robischon Gallery
8. Notation (998), 1998, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Robischon Gallery



Mesh (599), 60 x 60", oil on canvas, 1999



Split (599), 29 x 23", mixed media on paper, 1999

9. Mesh (599), 1999, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Robischon Gallery
10. Mesh (699), 1999, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist and Robischon Gallery
11. Mesh (899), 1999, 45 x 45", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist
12. Mesh (999), 1999, 60 x 60", oil on canvas, Courtesy of the artist
13. Split (599), 1999, 29 x 23", mixed media on paper, Collection: Peggy Hoffman
14. Split (1499), 1999, 29 x 23", mixed media on paper, Courtesy of the artist
15. Split (3199) 1999, 29 x 23", mixed media on paper, Courtesy of the artist



ELMHURST
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D. Neil Bremer, Executive Director

P.O. Box 23
150 Cottage Hill Avenue
Elmhurst, IL 60126
(630) 834-0202

<http://www.elmhurstartmuseum.org>