



INTERSECTION

works by Creighton Michael

Front Cover: *Vestige 299*, 1999, oil on canvas, 60x60 inches

MARK MAKING

My work has emerged from exploring the process, the structure and the product of activities related to drawing. I have created a visual language which, while being applicable in either two or three-dimensional formats, preserves the immediacy and intimacy of drawing. This achievement has enabled me to directly channel my ideas from inception to manifestation through the actions of my hands. The imagery existing in my work is the cumulative result of a repetitive marking process. This differs from repetitive mark making in that the repetitive process allows for the mutation or evolution of the mark's appearance. These alterations in the mark's form are perceived as the changing structure of a mark seen in three-dimensional space whether fixed or in motion.

Creighton Michael, 2006

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

It is one of the high points of my career to be able to host this exhibition of Creighton Michael's extraordinary work. I first became acquainted with the artist and his work almost thirty years ago prior to his exodus to New York. When I encountered his work again I was curious to see if there were threads of the past in his present work. In fact it was immediately apparent that he has continued to develop his ideas and his skill, moving in new directions, but still referencing primary elements of the past.

At first it seems that Creighton Michael is both a painter and a sculptor, which of course he is, but the common element connecting his work is drawing. His fascination with line and mark is a touchstone which unites the two and three dimensional work. His paintings contain complex layers which provide glimpses of deep shadows and an intriguing darkness underneath the surface – all elements designed to move the viewer from the aesthetic to the intellectual to ultimately a strong emotional engagement with the work. Mysterious or foreboding or passionate? You decide.

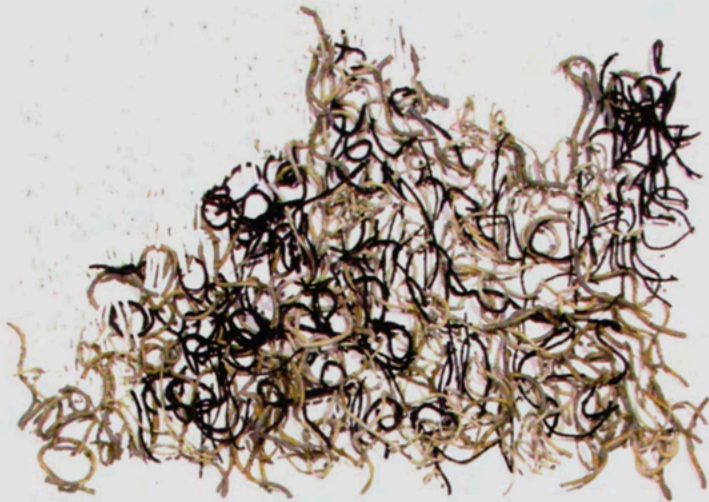
The precision of execution combined with the organic movement of forms and color hint at strong emotion contained within, but always present to those who take the time to look. His strong three-dimensional forms continue his intellectual and spiritual exploration of time, space and infinity. They are serene, disciplined, and at first glance, quiet. Further investigation shows humor, strength and a determined point of view. We are very lucky to have this broad range of work so that we might fully understand the artist's creative ability and proficiency with various media, and to be able to fully engage in the visual dialogue.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and Staff of the Arts Center, I would like to thank the artist for the many months of work and planning he has devoted to this project. His master artist classes have sparked the creative potential of artists from our area and beyond. He has unselfishly given his time to participate in community activities and provide connections to other artists and professionals around the world to help us achieve our vision for the future. I would also like to thank Creighton's wife, arts professional Leslie Cecil, for sharing her home and her expertise with us throughout this process, but, most especially, for her generous loan of key pieces for this exhibition. I would also like to thank our sponsors, the St. Petersburg Times, the City of St. Petersburg, the Pinellas County Arts Council, and the State of Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, as well as our generous season benefactor, the Bank of America Foundation. I would also like to thank Amanda Cooper, Curator of Exhibitions, for all of her work and Şangóyèmi A. Ògúnsànyà, Assistant Curator, for the extraordinary essay on the work.

Evelyn Craft, Executive Director



Field 3705, 2005, oil on linen on panel, 36x34x2.5 inches



Squiggle caption, 2005, graphite, acrylic, paper and rope, 75x43x6 inches

SYNOVUS AND HOUGH GALLERIES
FEBRUARY 10 – MARCH 26, 2006

INTERSECTION: works by Creighton Michael

Creighton Michael creates sculpture, paintings and drawings that explore the potential and power of singular and collective "mark-making." Michael started out as a painter, became a sculptor and subsequently returned to painting, all the while continuing to draw. For Michael, "the work comes out of doing." He is a prolific artist who works in series, a continuum of ideas manifested, moving through time. His work is process driven, meticulous and labor intensive. Through all of his art making, drawing has remained a constant for Michael who comments: "My vehicle of [artistic travel] has been the activity of drawing. Its process, its immediacy and its attention to the basic unit, the 'mark', have guided my work for more than two decades."

In the 1980's his mixed media sculpture was wall mounted or wall related, made of paper and fabric "skins" stretched over wooden skeletal forms, with the surfaces receiving various treatments including layering of materials such as Rhoplex, charcoal and hand stitching. In the 1990's, the skin was removed to reveal linear underlying forms.

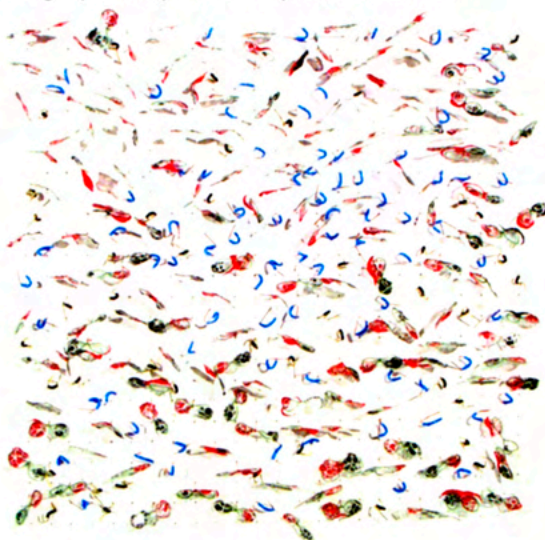
Since 1985 Michael has used his drawings to create a type of sculpture whose "intimacy as well as immediacy with the viewer was equal to that of a drawing." The concept of creating work in which the marks could be viewed simultaneously as individual units and collectively as pattern formed the basis for his *Dimensional Drawings*.

In the early 1990's Michael returned to painting armed with a visual vocabulary resulting from his mark-making activities and dimensional drawing. Michael relocated his home and studio to New York's Hudson Valley area and had the opportunity to observe nature daily. A pond on his property became an important influence in the development of his paintings. In the pond, Michael saw drifting leaves,

aquatic plants and duckweed forming and reforming configurations on the surface while layers below revealed schools of swimming minnows and leaves trapped in frozen layers of ice, all of which “suggested a relationship between reductive geometric form and the structures of nature.”

Michael's goal to reduce painting to the basic unit of the mark was achieved in his first series of paintings, entitled *Dust*. The *Dust* paintings, a response to his observations of the pond, are diptychs with white marks forming cloud-like shapes on a dark moody field. In the following series of paintings, *Notations*, areas of repeated, lyrical white marks form larger shapes on a black field. While not mimicking nature, these abstract oil paintings visually describe the mysterious poetry of a complex ecosystem. Michael continued his meticulous, repetitive mark-making process, developing a vocabulary of marks that would serve as the wellspring for future paintings.

In the *Mesh* paintings, Michael adds color to see how it would initiate spatial and psychological changes. The sized, square canvasses are undercoated with burnt sienna followed by a black glaze. The next layers apply dark, shape-shifting ellipses defined by white and painted over in areas with gossamer white and green marks. The final layer, a thin black grid, adds definition to the space, coupling the fluid with the static and giving the viewer dual perspectives, looking into the painting and looking out from it. The introduction of the color red as a spatial device brings ambiguity and a symbolism of passion to the work.



Grid 3005, 2005, wire, glue, and plastic tubing, 24x24x1.5 inches

In the four paintings of the *Vestige* series, Michael continued “to compare the world that is seen to the world that is felt.” There is a greater contrast between the dark and light while more attention is directed to the underlying gestural marks.

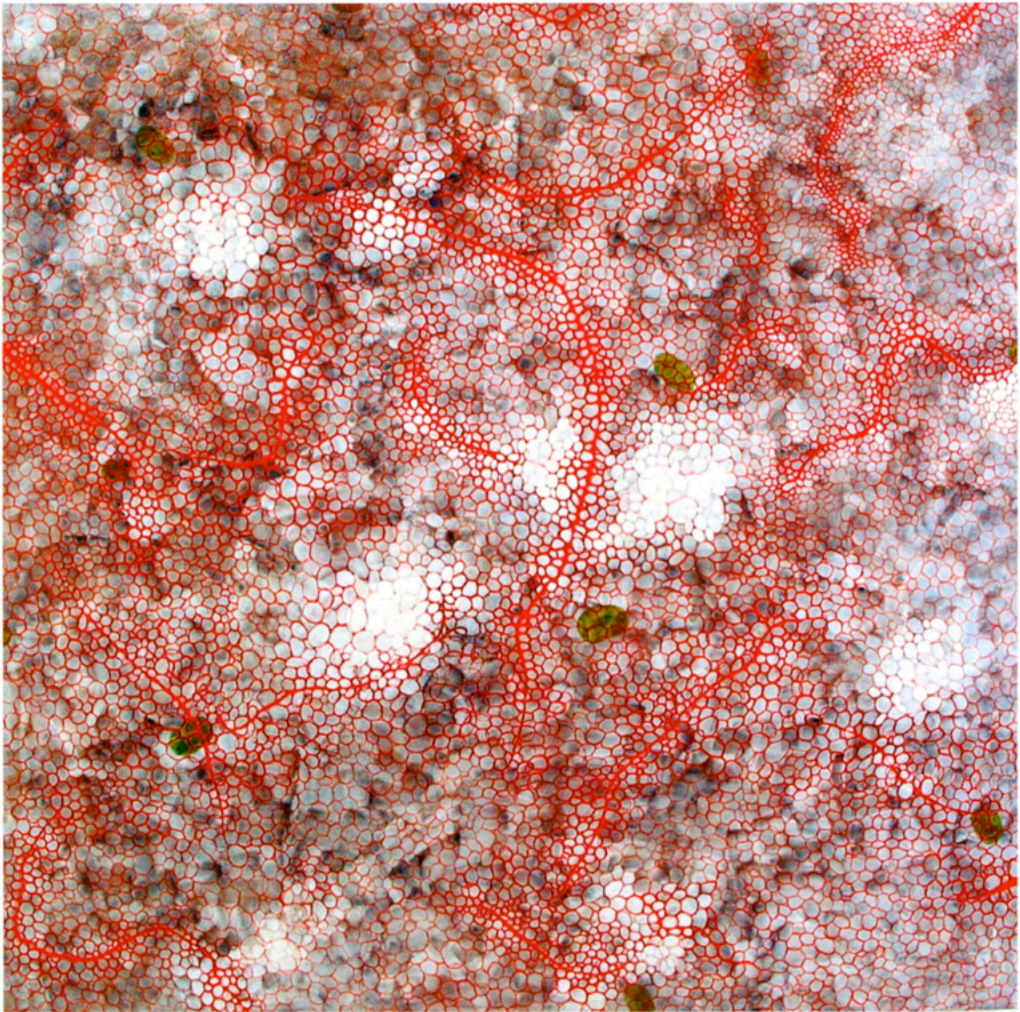
In the *Innuendo* paintings, the marks and circles placed in random patterns establish various relationships. The gestures and circles weave patterns, moving in and out of planes while trading dominant and subordinate positions, suggesting associations. Michael continues to use the dark, red and black palette introduced in the *Mesh* paintings.

The *Pulse* paintings create a rhythmic space to explore the relationship between music and body. Michael departs from the dark tone of previous series by using both black and white glazes over a burnt sienna undercoating. Red gestural marks and a network of ellipses are placed above a topography of soft, cloud-like gray and white forms.

The *Field* paintings developed from the visual language established in the *Pulse* series. The field of vision induced by ocular migraines, which the artist experienced, became the inspiration for the *Field* paintings. During the migraines, Michael saw yellow, red and blue aura after-images that impeded his depth of perception. The *Field* paintings are hybrids that combine elements of painting, sculpture and drawing. Layers of colorful marks increase the depth perception created by the sculptural, convexly shaped canvases.

The *Dimensional Drawings* encompass several series of three-dimensional works and installations all stemming from the treatment of the mark as both individual unit and collective pattern. Inspired by the late reed pen and sepia ink drawings of Vincent van Gogh in which calligraphic marks were employed collectively to describe landscapes, Michael created a series of reed pen and ink drawings entitled *Rhapsody* (1998-2001). *Dimensional Drawings* resulted from this initial exploration. These three-dimensional works are informed by the activity and process of drawing. Of the *Dimensional Drawings* Michael states: “These works have strived, through concept and instruction, to capture a sense of immediacy and discovery inherent in traditional drawing.”

The *Grid* pieces, in the *Dimensional Drawing* series, utilize various materials such as plastic, wire, glue and rubber. Two-prong staples to which various materials are attached



Pulse 401, 2001, oil on canvas, 60x60 inches

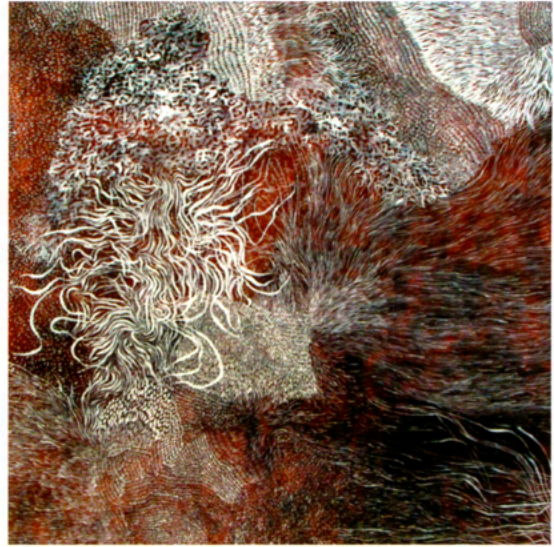


Innuendo 800, 2000, oil on canvas, 60x60 inches

are inserted into either the wall or independent standing sculptural forms. The staple units suggest the repetitive hand motions and marks associated with drawing and create patterns that cast shadows onto the background surface. After experimenting with different forms, Michael settled on the two-prong staple because the shadows they cast place the mark in space. Through the development of this work, Michael articulated the difference between the line and the mark. The line is the distance between two points and the mark is the physical trace of drawing activity. Michael states: "Discovering this dichotomy in drawing, the contrast between the intangible and the physical or the contrast between space and form has greatly expanded my perception of the process and product of drawing."

Michael uses the grid, which is drawn on the wall or sculptural surface, as the structure to deploy his three dimensional marks. The 3-D marks are inserted into pre-drilled holes on the grid. Michael tried various sized grids before settling on the 24-inch or 12-inch square standard format and experimented with different systems for creating the patterns of individual compositions. He now places the responsibility of the composition on the preparators who receive a specific number of drawing units, based on a percentage of the 625 holes in a 24-inch square, and the schematic with general instructions. By relinquishing control, this installation process allows for endless variation and unexpected results.

Squiggle is the third in a series of installations that "mimic the physical action of drawing or marking on a wall by focusing on the character of the resulting marks." The *Dip* and *Tuck* installations created marks out of lengths of wooden dowels that were dipped in a mixture of paper pulp, graphite and acrylic. These marks were attached to the wall forming compositions that physically manifest both drawings and the act of drawing. Because the dowel limited the character of the mark to straight lines, Michael used rope in the *Squiggle* installations to add flexibility. The *Squiggle* installations employ cotton rope that has been coated with a paper pulp and graphite mixture to form bold, animated, calligraphic, gestural groupings that begin on the wall and spill onto the floor below. The rope enables Michael to mimic gestures associated with handwriting, which adds an entirely different character to



Notation 998, 1998, oil on canvas, 60x60 inches

the work, giving it a decidedly human touch and opening it up to the range of emotions associated with written language. Michael adds white marks to represent erasures and in beige, the "ghost marks" that survive erasures. The additional markings reference the tonal element in drawings and serve to involve the viewer in the process.

The works of Creighton Michael illustrate the steadfast pursuit and exploration of an idea. Over the years Michael has patiently and methodically explored his ideas and the places to which they lead, developing a vocabulary of marks and methods along the way. His work has an integrity that stems from "the doing" and is firmly grounded in his sensibility. With each new series, the work becomes richer from the traces of previous incarnations, while making fresh tracks, covering new ground. Moving with ease from drawing to painting to sculpture, Michael makes visible his connection to nature and spirit, his ceaseless curiosity about the world, how things fit together and his place in the mix.

Şangóyẹmi A. Ọgúnsànyà
Assistant Curator of Exhibitions

CREIGHTON MICHAEL

EDUCATION

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, M.F.A.; 1978 (Painting/Multi-Media)

Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, M.A.; 1976 (Art History)

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee, B.F.A. Honors; 1971 (Painting)

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

Paintings: Creighton Michael, Galerie Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark; 2006

VantagePoint IV Creighton Michael: Patterns of Perception,

Mint Museums, Charlotte, N.C.; 2005

Creighton Michael: Dialects of Line; selected works

1985-2003, Collaborative Concepts Beacon, NY; 2003

(includes a collaborative installation with composer, John Morton)

Articulated Spaces: Paintings by Creighton Michael,

University of Richmond Museums, Richmond, VA.; 2003

Mark To Multiple, The von Liebig Art Center, Naples, FL; 2003

Haiku/Innuendo: Paintings by Creighton Michael,

Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY.; 2001

Visual Matrix: Paintings/Drawings (1997-1999),

Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL; 2000

Creighton Michael: Painting (1995-1998), The Queens

Museum of Art at Bulova Center, Queens, NY; 1998

Creighton Michael: Marks and Metaphor/Drawings

(1990-1995), Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN; 1996

Creighton Michael: Landscape, Katonah Museum of Art, Katonah, NY; 1994

New Sculpture and Drawings, Littlejohn Contemporary, NYC; 1992

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Pages, I Space, University of Illinois, College of Fine and Applied Arts, Chicago, IL; 2005 (organized by Buzz Spector)
Ideal: Selections from the American Abstract Artists, Metaphor Contemporary Art, Brooklyn, New York; 2005
In Line, Rockland Center for the Arts, West Nyack, New York; 2005
Cursive, Tenri Cultural Institute of New York, NYC; 2005
Dimensional Line: Recent Work by Sharon Louden and Creighton Michael, Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, NY; 2004
Synthesis: Experiments in Collaboration, Grossman Gallery, Lafayette College, Easton, PA; 2003;
Axel Raben Gallery, New York City; 2004
Art in Embassies Exhibition, Zagreb, Croatia; 2003-2006
Art in Embassies Exhibition, Nicosia, Cyprus; 1999-2002
Body Language, Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY; 2002
End Papers: 1890-1900 and 1990-2000. Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; 2000
Selected Works From The New York Collection, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; 1999
First Sightings: Recent Modern and Contemporary Acquisitions, Denver Art Museum, Denver CO; 1993

SELECTED TEACHING

Visiting Assistant Professor, Hunter College, New York, New York, 2005
Adjunct Faculty, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; 1986-1997, 2004 (drawing, 2-D design, 3-D design)
Visiting Lecturer, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ; 2003 (adv. sculpture), 2001, 2000, 1998 (drawing)
Visiting Artist, University of Richmond, VA; 2003 (lecture)
Visiting Artist, Anderson Ranch Art Center, Aspen, Colorado; 2003 (painting)
Visiting Artist, Purchase College, SUNY, Purchase, NY; 1988 (sculpture) 2001 (drawing)
Visiting Artist, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA; 1991 (lecture), 1999 (workshop) 2003 (critic)
Visiting Artist, Haverford College, Haverford, PA; 1997, 1993 (lecture)
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA; 1995-1996 (critic)

SELECTED DISTINCTIONS

Golden Foundation for the Arts Grant; (painting) 2000
Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation Finalist; 1998
College Art Association, Panelist, Toronto Canada; 1998
Honorarium, Selection Committee,
New York Foundation for the Arts (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
AT&T
The Brooklyn Museum
David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University
Denver Art Museum
Neuberger Museum of Art
High Museum of Art
Mint Museum of Art
Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art
National Gallery Art
New York University
Pfizer, Inc
Progressive Corporation
Prudential
R.I.S.D Museum of Art
University of Richmond Museums
Vanderbilt University
Weatherspoon Art Gallery, UNC Greensboro

INTERSECTION: works by Creighton Michael

SYNOVUS GALLERY

1) Pulse 401	2001	oil on canvas	60 x 60"
2) Vestige 299	1999	oil on canvas	60 x 60"
3) Innuendo 600	2000	oil on canvas	60 x 60"
4) Innuendo 800	2000	oil on canvas	60 x 60"
5) Field 702	2002	oil on linen on panel	26 x 24 x 2.5"
6) Field 1302	2002	oil on linen on panel	26 x 24 x 2.5"
7) Field 3505	2005	oil on linen on panel	36 x 34 x 2.5"
8) Field 3705	2005	oil on linen on panel	36 x 34 x 2.5"
9) Field 4005	2005	oil on linen on panel	36 x 34 x 2.5"
10) Notation 798	1998	oil on canvas	60 x 60"
11) Notation 998	1998	oil on canvas	60 x 60"
12) Mesh 999	1999	oil on canvas	60 x 60"

HOUGH GALLERY

1) Grid 2703	2003	brass wire and rubber tubing	12 x 12 x 1"
2) Grid 2903	2003	steel wire and rubber tubing	12 x 12 x 1"
3) Grid 2905	2005	wire, glue and plastic tubing	24 x 24 x 2"
4) Grid 3005	2005	wire, glue and plastic tubing	24 x 24 x 1.5"
5) Grid 3105	2005	wire, glue and plastic tubing	24 x 24 x 2"
6) Grid 3305	2005	wire, glue and acrylic	24 x 24 x 1.5"

All Grid pieces are accompanied by their schematic,
graphite on handmade paper, 20 x 16" framed

5) Squiggle linear B	2006	graphite, paper and rope	dimensions vary
6) Squiggle caption	2006	graphite, paper and rope	dimensions vary
7) Squiggle blackboard	2006	graphite, paper and rope	dimensions vary

the arts center

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Administrative Hours
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