

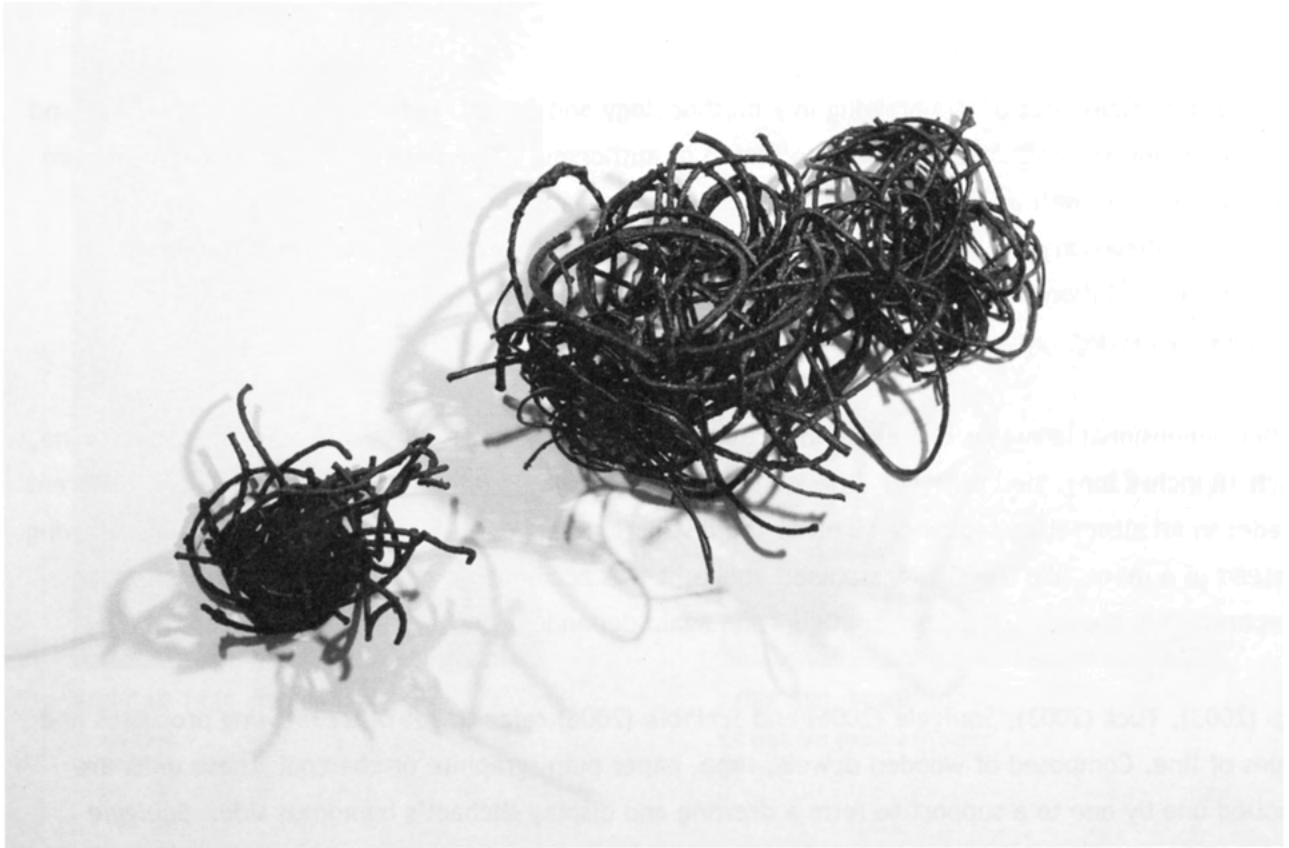
Creighton Michael: Plane Drawing

Toward a Re-definition of Drawing

Creighton Michael prefers to think of himself as an artist rather than a painter, sculptor or draftsman. Adept in multiple media like many artists today, Michael—who dislikes hard and fast classifications—has always instinctively searched for ways to integrate disciplines that were once kept separate and to blur the boundaries between them. In doing so, he inevitably questions both the nature of what he is making, how he is making it and our perception of what he has made. For this provocative, conceptually tight re-consideration of drawing spanning more than two decades, Michael presents works in an array of materials and formats from the flat to the three-dimensional. He was inspired by Vincent van Gogh's reed pen and ink drawings with their rush of pointillist marks, of "miniature gestures," as he aptly describes them. It was the Dutch master's ability to isolate strokes, to permit them visual independence at the same time he forged them into an overall pattern or image that Michael found most intriguing. Challenged, he then made his own series of reed pen and ink drawings called *Rhapsody*, based on the simultaneous existence of the mark as both discrete and part of an aggregate. Process driven, this first *Rhapsody* series (1998-2001), consists of "episodes" (periods of mark-making of varying intensities and duration) "quilted" together. From this very significant grouping in his evolution came the drawings related to sculpture as well as to writing that have occupied much of his practice since then.

Calling them dimensional drawing, Michael began to experiment with a range of formulations, in particular grids, his next series, proceeding in an intuitive but also systematic way, incorporating repetition, difference and an element of chance. Using wire to represent the mark, shaped individually by hand into forms that suggest leaves and petals, the process replicated the act of drawing while creating more substantive delineations. The delicate wire units, combined with glue, plastic or rubber, were inserted into a sectioned, pre-drilled wall, the resultant shadows from the interaction with light functioning as a shimmered modeling, enhancing the work's three-dimensionality. In essence, Michael created a hybrid of drawing and sculpture, incorporating actual space and movement, claiming the architecture as the support. These early grids, drawn in graphite on the wall, were always 30, 24 or 12 inch squares, the measurements he favored.

The next *Grid Series* (2003) utilized a simpler, staple-like shape affixed into the wall. It was slightly raised, more emphatically a mark in space and the shadow it cast drew the fourth line that closed



RHAPSODYwallHorizontal 108, 2008

Graphite and paper-coated rope
24" x 38" x 13"

the form. Michael provided instructions for the creation of the staples and the grid including a numerically determined, fixed pattern for drilling holes at certain of its intersections—as well as the artist's signature. As a variation, he stipulated only one point of insertion for the staple, relinquishing absolute control. The placement of the second point was the installer's choice. Since the staple could be rotated, the work was new every time it was shown. Michael likened the grid with its schema of holes to a musical score or to jazz improvisations, to be interpreted by the installer. Consequently, the results were always unique, the work "re-drawn" each time. This innovative plan transferred partial responsibility to the installer for the work, in effect making him the artist's collaborator.

From there, further permutations evolved. By mid-2004, Michael eliminated the pre-conceived pattern of drilled holes in the grid. Instead, holes were made at every intersection of the lines while the number of "marks" became fixed, based on a percentage of the holes. The installer in effect was

now the sole fabricator of the drawing in a methodology and process linked to those of John Cage and Sol LeWitt that opened up even more the notion of authorship. The following year, Michael removed the grid from the wall and placed it on the sides of a pedestal. The two-dimensional plane of the side, in combination with the other sides, essentially became a sculpture/drawing in the round. It was also one solution to the vexed issue of pedestals for contemporary sculpture, resolved in this instance by making the stand the work rather than what the work rests on.

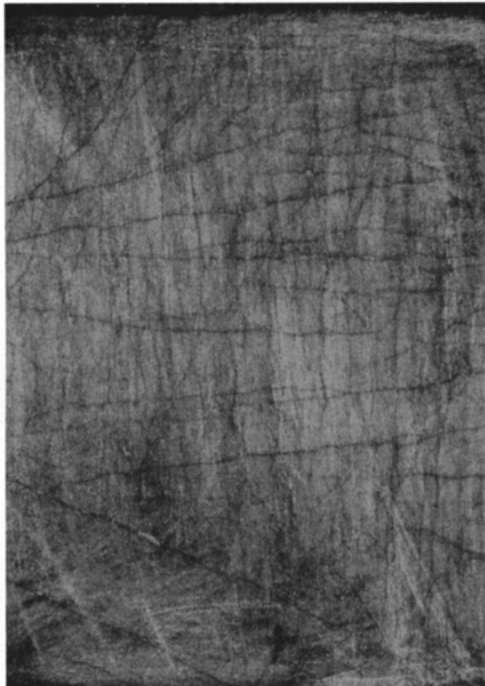
Other dimensional drawings emphasize line, such as *Segment*, constructed from 100 sections of twine, each 18 inches long, tied together. The knots and the intervals between were painted in two different shades in an alternating sequence to make the distinction between them clear. A contour line drawing instead of a mark, like the *Grids* discussed above, it was accompanied by a schematic plan for the preparation of the wall, the final configuration again dependent on the installer.

Dip (2003), *Tuck* (2003), *Squiggle* (2006) and *Scribble* (2006) refer to yet other drawing processes and types of line. Composed of wooden dowels, rope, paper pulp, graphite or charcoal, these units are applied one by one to a support to form a drawing and display Michael's humorous side. *Squiggle* and *Scribble* consist of wiggly pieces of pulp and graphite coated cotton rope. A cross between drawing and writing, they recall unruly, doodled lines that have escaped the confines of paper, some slipping down onto a shelf, as if they were the detritus of drawing. The actual leftovers became the starting point for the *Debris Field* series, 2008. A commendably economical artist, he is an inspired re-purposer and more to the point, wanted to include and validate all aspects of drawing, including its by-products such as graphite powder and charcoal nubs.

Michael's illuminating dialogue with Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and Conceptualism is also infused with the meditative and even the mystical, taking them from the art historical and formal into more metaphoric realms. At its best, his work offers not only a critique and analysis of perception, of the tangible, but perhaps more significantly, an improvised poetics of the spiritual and the transient.

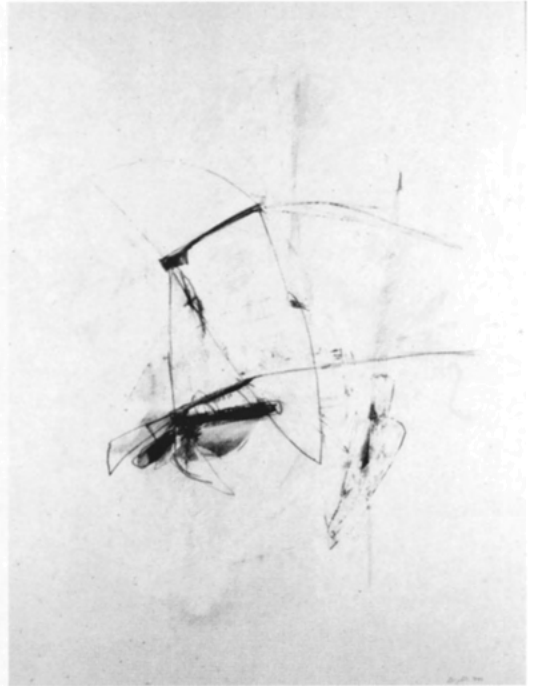
Lilly Wei

Lilly Wei is a New York-based independent curator, essayist and critic who writes for Art in America and is a contributing editor at ARTnews and Art Asia Pacific.



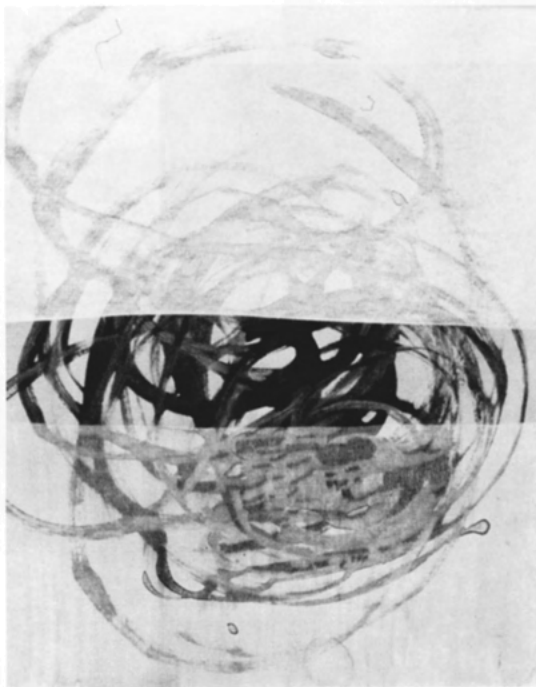
SIDECAR 1985, 1985

Emery cloth
11" x 19"



LORE 490, 1990

Oil stick and graphite on paper
24" x 18"



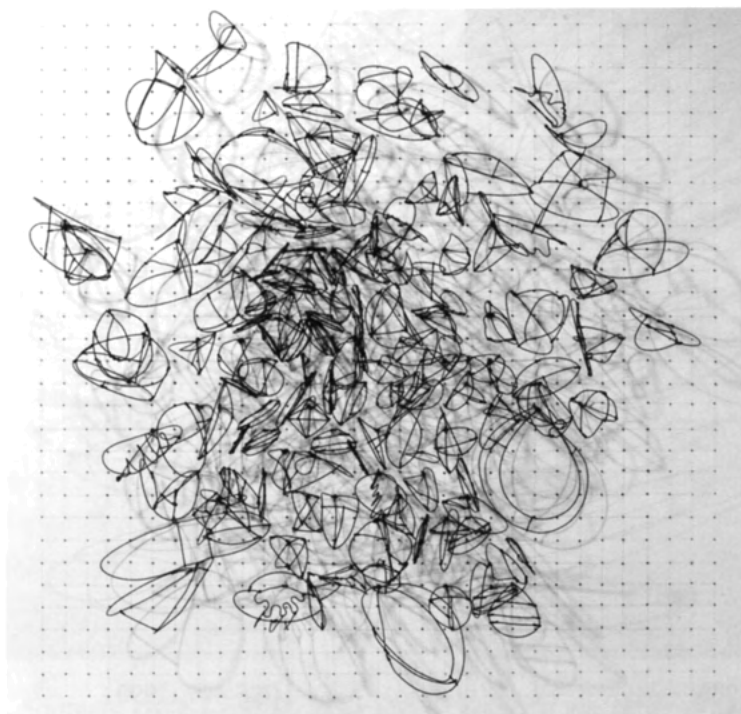
PULL 497, 1997

Graphite, shellac, gesso on paper
17" x 14"



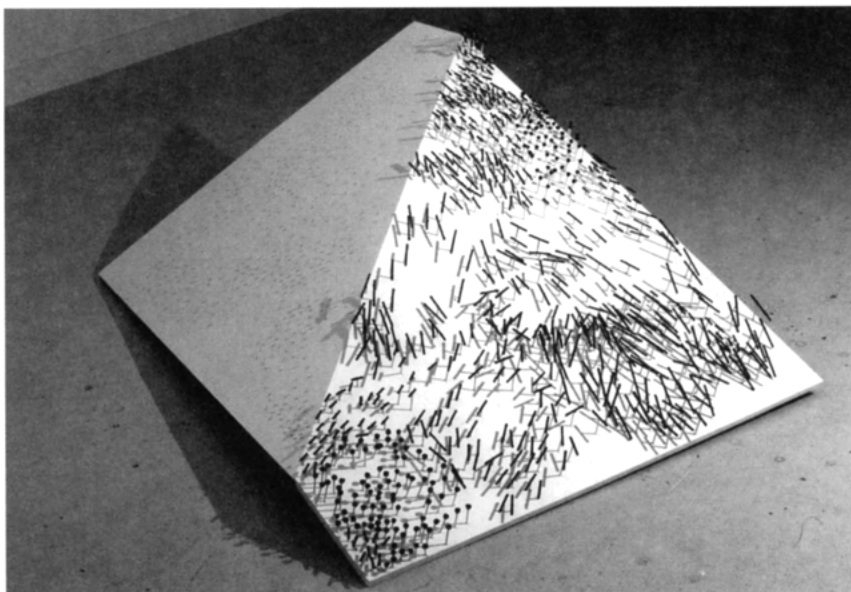
RHAPSODY 498, 1998

Ink on paper
29" x 23"



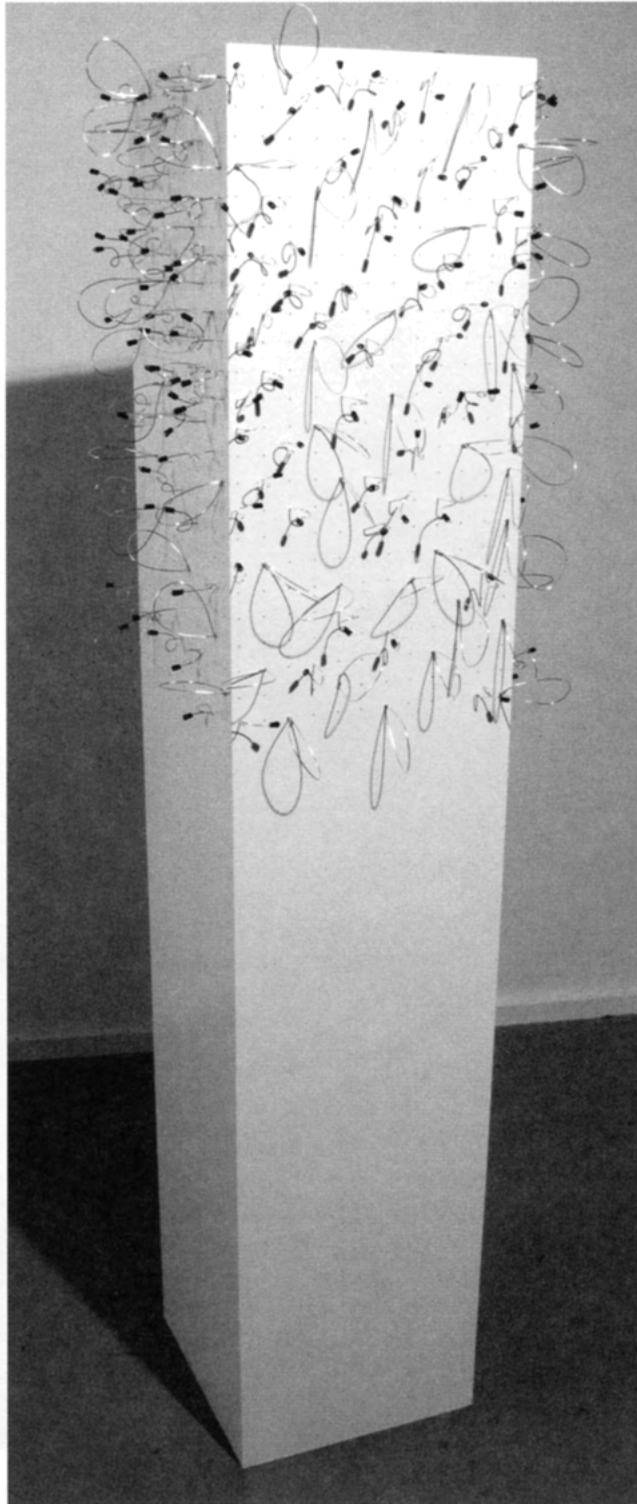
GRID 4007, 2007

Steel wire
30" x 30" x 7"



DIP 903, 2003

Graphite and paper-coated dowels
48" x 72" x 25"



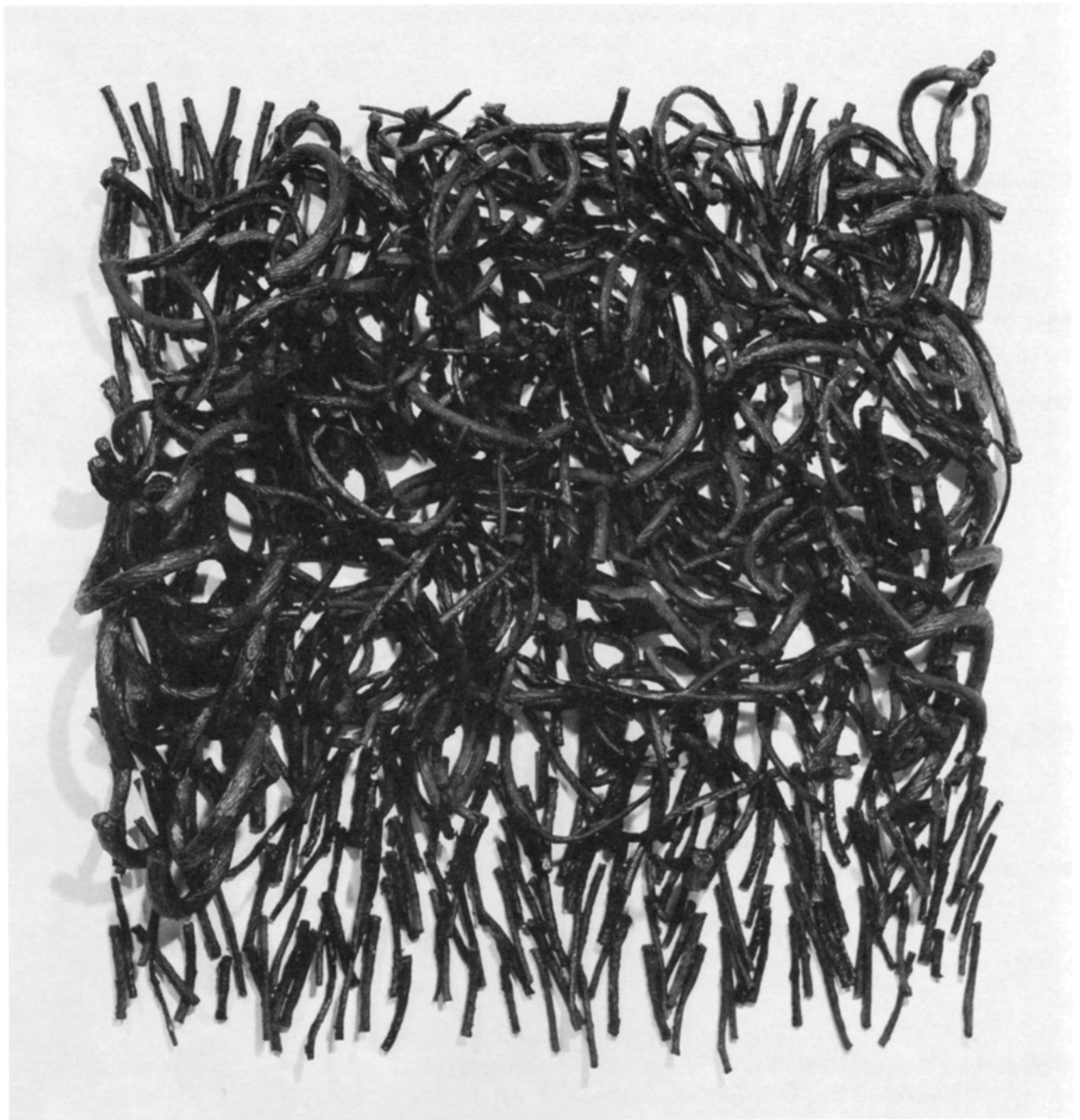
GRID 4906, 2006

Steel wire and rubber tubing
Plywood pedestal
60" x 12" x 12"



AERIAL 193, 1993

Graphite on paper
14" x 17"



GLYPH 208, 2008

Graphite and paper-coated rope
28" x 25" x 6"



13102, 2002

Shellac and graphite
14" x 11"

CREIGHTON MICHAEL

American: Knoxville, Tennessee, January 12, 1949

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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

- Creighton Michael, Lesley Heller Gallery, New York City; 2008
- Wavelengths: The Drawings of Creighton Michael, Hafnarborg, Hafnarfjörður; Start Art, Reykjavik, Iceland; 2008
- Graphite: Drawings and Installation Works, Robischon Gallery, Denver, Colorado; 2006
- Paintings: Creighton Michael, Galerie Egelund, Copenhagen, Denmark; 2006
- Articulated Spaces: Paintings by Creighton Michael, University of Richmond Museums, Richmond, VA; 2003
- Haiku/Innuendo: Paintings by Creighton Michael, Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; 2001 (brochure)
- Intuitive Drawing: Sculpture/Drawings (1985-1999), Kim Foster Gallery, NYC; 1999 (exhibition essay by Ann Landi)
- Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, Virginia; 1999
- Galerie Trois Points, Montreal Canada; 1999
- Line Play: Sculpture/Drawing (1991-1996), Cantor Fitzgerald Gallery, Haverford College, Haverford, PA; 1997
- Haines Gallery, San Francisco, CA; 1990
- LedisFlam Gallery, Brooklyn, NY; 1989
- Art At The Edge: Creighton Michael, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; 1987 traveled to St. Louis Gallery of Contemporary Art, St. Louis, Missouri; 1988; (catalogue essay by Susan Krane)
- Craig Cornelius Gallery, NYC; 1987, 1985

Selected Group Exhibitions

- American Abstract Artists: Tribute to Esphyr Slobodkina, The Painting Center, New York, NY; 2008
- Material Matter, Sideshow Gallery, Brooklyn, New York; 2007
- Cursive, Artist Commune, Hong Kong, China; 2007
- SENSi/aBLE SPACES: Space, Art and the Environment, University of Iceland, Reykjavik, Iceland; 2006
- 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 (brochure)
- Art in Embassies Exhibition, Zagreb, Croatia; 2003-2006
- Art in Embassies Exhibition, Nicosia, Cyprus; 1999-2002
- End Papers: 1890-1900 and 1990-2000. Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; 2000 (catalogue)
- A View To The Future: Recent Acquisitions, David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University, Providence, RI; 1994
- First Sightings: Recent Modern and Contemporary Acquisitions, Denver Art Museum, Denver CO; 1993
- Working on Paper: Contemporary American Drawings. High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; 1990
- Innovations in Sculpture, Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, CT; 1988

Selected Teaching

- Visiting Assistant Professor of Art, Hunter College, New York, NY, 2005 to present
- Adjunct Faculty, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI; 1986-1997, 2004 (drawing, 2-D / 3-D design)
- Visiting Lecturer, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ; 2003 (adv. sculpture), 2001, 2000, 1998 (drawing)
- Visiting Artist, University of Richmond, VA; 2003 (lecture)

Selected Collections

- American Express • AT&T • David Winton Bell Gallery, Brown University • The Brooklyn Museum
- Denver Art Museum • Hafnarborg Institute of Culture and Fine Art, Hafnarfjörður, Iceland
- Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina • National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York • New York University • Pfizer, Inc • Prudential
- R.I.S.D. Museum of Art • University of Richmond Museums • Vanderbilt University



RHAPSODY floorstack 108, 2008

Graphite and paper-coated rope
19" x 45" x 33"

Front Cover:

SQUIGGLE shelf 206, 2006

Graphite and paper-coated rope
81" x 51" x 6"



Martin Art Gallery/Baker Center for the Arts
2400 Chew Street
Muhlenberg College
Allentown, PA 18104

Gallery Hours: Tuesdays – Saturdays, noon – 9 p.m.

Information: 484.664.3467 www.muhlenberg.edu

Exhibition dates:

Nov. 25, 2008 - Jan. 9, 2009

Lecture: Susan Isaacs

Tuesday, Dec. 2, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

Opening reception:

Wednesday, Dec. 3, 4:30 - 6 p.m.

Curator:

Professor Scott Sherk. Scott Sherk teaches sculpture at Muhlenberg College.