

Art in America

NOVEMBER 2001

TOWERS OF LIGHT

GREENBERG'S MODERNISTS

SITE SANTA FE

PICASSO'S EROTICA

ALEXIS SMITH



\$5.00 USA
\$7.00 CAN £3.50 UK

have a sense of humor, while remaining entirely serious and earnest through the precision with which they are painted and his consistently arresting choice of colors. These paintings are not Op and are not simply geometric abstractions, but they reference both and draw on the viewer's familiarity with such visual vocabularies. Like Agnes Martin's pencil-drawn grids, Westfall's paintings talk back to the mathematical precision of Minimalism.

Westfall's use of color provides the initial invitation to rest

thick square grid in a cerulean blue; a thin, off-kilter grid in reddish burnt orange appears behind it. In this work there is a quiet tension between the broad bars of the standard grid and the underlying field of color. They seem to cover equal amounts of the canvas in a regular arrangement broken only by the thin orange lines. Perhaps the title of the painting lends some insight: it means "perfect wisdom," and is also the name of the Buddhist goddess of knowledge. But the key concept is

paper cutouts on similarly colored modulating backgrounds, *Sixty-eight, Sixty-nine* was the most obvious representative of hippiedom. Many of the cutouts featured vintage Ungaro fashions arranged according to the fabrics used: synthetics at left, woolens at center, leather and vinyl at right. But while this large hit of loopy eye candy fit the exhibition theme, and was in some sense its flowery poster child, the conceptual trip it provided was less intense than those of Harris's more restrained works.

Playing off the color vocabulary and visual intensity of *Sixty-eight, Sixty-nine* was the show's title work, *Hippy*, a 103-inch-high, 68-inch-wide wall hanging that is an assemblage of painted-over paper cutouts, reminiscent of Pollock's dense webs but with a *japoniste* feel. What seems a random pattern of painstakingly rendered cuts in the paper is in fact a nine-times repeating pattern made from a rubber matrix print containing the Pollock-like marks.

Marijuana in the U.K. (1999) is a two-screen, synchronized video in which the British artist, seated alone in what appears to be a cannabis herbarium, reads on one monitor from Baudelaire's 1858 essay "Poem of Hashish" and on the other from Walter Benjamin's 1928 text "Hashish in Marseilles." The camera ranges

copped from Herman Hesse? Despite the radical disjuncture of prose styles, typography and *Weltanschauungen*, the book is an original compendium. With beautiful efficiency, it achieves a dizzying information deluge that would appear to be central to Harris's goals. —Joe Hill

Yigal Ozeri at Stefan Stux

Throughout his two-decade-plus career, Israeli-born painter Yigal Ozeri has engaged in a productive dialogue with the work of the old masters, particularly Velázquez. This engagement has led him to an interest in the esoteric world of art restoration. In "Tikkun: The Restoration Series," his recent show at Stux, Ozeri showed new works that elucidate the process of restoration, both as a practice and as the metaphor for a dynamic exchange between secrecy and transparency. For Ozeri, the marks inscribed on the back of a picture—scratches, discolorations and other ravages of time—constitute a unique visual record, a kind of secret history. In the "Restoration" series, he brings these histories to light.

Primarily, the series consists of oil paintings on stretched canvas or on layers of silk tissue, though there are also etchings and mixed-medium drawings.



Mark Harris: *Sixty-eight, Sixty-nine*, 1999, mixed mediums, 9 by 28 feet; at Trans Hudson.

in front of each work. He chooses odd but vibrant hues that, juxtaposed, glow without quite popping; they go together while remaining distinct, referencing some memory that can't quite be identified. In *River Road*, for example, the background of the square-format canvas is a pale, seemingly flat hue—a cobalt blue to which white has been added. Superimposed upon this is one of Westfall's characteristic slipping rectangular grids in pale yellow; while the intervals of the grid are uniform, each of the bars is very slightly askew. On top of these elements is a slightly wonky square grid in navy blue. What's alluring is the harmony in the disharmony: the way the shifted lines work within the rigid lines of the frame and how the surface appears to be completely flat, but on closer inspection has subtle variations created by the careful hand-painted application.

Similarly, *Pranaparamita* is a rectangular painting with a dark ochre background and a

"prana," the Sanskrit word for life force. This work conveys a perfect balance of weight through its colors, and a visual imbalance in its structure that is as subtle but important as the movement created by breathing.

A number of other paintings in this exhibition, such as *Germantown* and *Grand Opening*, seem to be departures and experiments—more like landscapes than enclosed spaces. All nine of these new works testify to this artist's commitment to the fact that the practice of painting continues to satisfy, surprise and endure. —Anna Hammond

Mark Harris at Trans Hudson

A large-scale mural (9 by 28 feet) titled *Sixty-eight, Sixty-nine* (1999) set the tone for Mark Harris's exhibition "Hippy," which included seven works in as many different mediums. Consisting of rainbow-colored, drip-shaped

over plants, the artist's profile, his moving lips and the words on the page, as the simultaneous readings in Harris's lulling baritone voice create a discommodulating cacophony. The waves of words are interspersed with cadenced pauses, reminiscent perhaps of the delirium of sensory experience the texts describe.

Another work, an artist's book titled *In Sight of Chaos by Mark Harris* (1999), collects the first and last pages of 100 prophetic books related to the subject of chaos. Where else could one find in a single volume the work of Voltaire, the Marquis de Sade, Malevich, Susan Sontag and Doris Lessing (to name but five of the 100 authors), with a title

Yigal Ozeri: *Pandora's Box*, 2000, oil on canvas and wood, 40 by 29 inches; at Stefan Stux.

