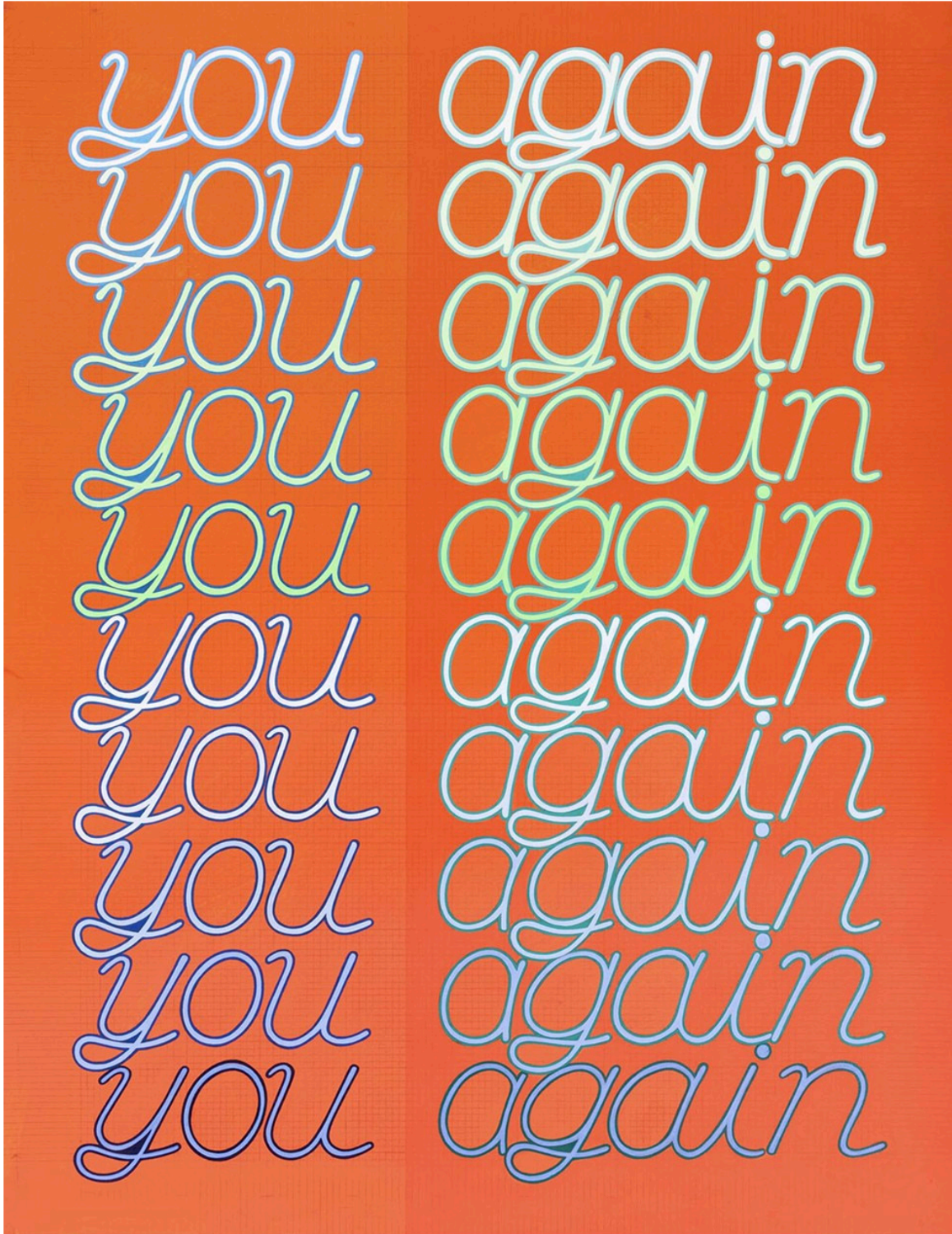


Chronogram

"Text" at Joyce Goldstein Gallery in Chatham

Eric Wolf curates a charming group show of paintings, drawings, collage, books, and small sculptures

By Taliesin Thomas



"You Again," Sue Muskat

While the art-fair madness overpowered the scene in Manhattan last week, the ripened energies of the late summer season in the Hudson Valley added a perfect touch to a cheerful opening for “Text” at Joyce Goldstein Gallery in Chatham this past Sunday. Goldstein—an astute gallerist, artist, and doyenne of her generation—gracefully greeted the mingling crowd while seated at her desk in the back of her charming one-room space. Founded in New York City in 1992 and in Chatham in 2005, this quaint spot at the edge of town is a local gem. Curated by Eric Wolf—a painter and designer who studied at RISD and has exhibited widely, including Salon 94 and Barbara Gladstone Gallery—“Text” is his second presentation at Joyce Goldstein Gallery. The show is a mix of paintings, drawings, collage, books, and small sculptures by 38 artists, most of whom live in the Hudson Valley.



“McCormick Food Coloring,” Matt LaFleur

With language as the baseline for this lively exhibit, the range of artworks offer an encounter with the provocative and persuasive nature of words, turning them into a protean muse of every variety. A rainbow-colored vinyl LP titled *Hidden Wheel of Fortune* (2022) by Ori Alon-Ray, for example, is dense with words such as OBESE, BANKRUPT, ELDER, and HOMELESS and is positioned in direct dialogue with a glowing neon sculpture *Intent* (2023) by Francine Hunter McGivern hung high up on the wall just above it. Three small colored pencil on paper sculptures by Matt LaFleur that re-present kitchen familiars such as *McCormick Food Coloring* (2017) and *Bell’s Seasoning* (2017) instantly won me over. Bold, bright paintings by Chris Pennock, Sue Muskat, and Geoff Young are literal visions of text as full disclosure—Muskat’s *Timeless and Untrammelled* (2022) solicits a smile with her repetition of “you again” as the refrain—while more esoteric works by Richard Saja and Joan Grubin use text as a murky vehicle for alteration and inquiry.



"Nine January," Fern Apfel

Motley group shows often sing an unanticipated song, even with a conceptual motif to steer the melody, and with "Text," a pleasant poetics fills the room. Two ink-on-paper drawings by Evan McGraw, *Thick* (2023) and *Ligature* (2023), demonstrate the lost art of exquisite penmanship, while two acrylic and pen on wood panel paintings by Fern Apfel, *Dearest Honey* (2023) and *Nine January* (2019), disclose the meticulous nature of letters as the intimate keepers of biographies and confessions. Two fabric pieces, *ouch* (2012) and *TOUCH* (2012), by Cynthia Atwood prove that thread never goes out of style, and among the more ambitious text-based explorations are paper-cast pieces by Pamela Lawton, who engages with street graffiti to achieve her sunk-relief effect in works such as *Ghost* (2023).

Wolf states that text as medium or subject in art has interested him since the 1970s, when he became aware of Pop Art, concrete poetry, Egyptian hieroglyphs, illuminated manuscripts, Cubism, collage, and a diverse world of signs and semiotics. His curatorial effort reveals his adoration of text as an indispensable darling of art and life, indeed adored by all. A dynamic group exhibition such as this one presents the impossible task of summarizing a bevy of flirtatious artworks within a word-count limit, alas the confines of text! Nevertheless, the moments recounted herein are a mere slice of the fun. This exhibition expresses a kind of "we are all feeling the same thing" by way of words as text, and text as the ineffable passage from one thought to the next, as we revisit meanings and their means ad infinitum.

"Text" will be on view through October 14 at Joyce Goldstein Gallery in Chatham.

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

JULY 11, 2022 BY ETTY YANIV

Eric Wolf: When There is a Solid Fog on the Lake



Eric Wolf, Mooselookmeguntic Lake, 2016, ink on paper 22" x 30". Courtesy of Pamela Salisbury Gallery

Eric Wolf's landscape paintings are made with ink on paper and reference nature—water, sky, trees. In their sharp light and dark shapes they resemble woodcut, linoleum prints or even highly contrasted black and white photographs, but the more you look at them, the immediacy of the painted ink comes through—from the artist's direct observation of nature, through his mind, to his hand—in a magical transformation ink flowing on paper fibers becomes river and white floating shapes become clouds.

Your art education includes both painting and photography. Looking at your ink drawings, I can see how both disciplines inform your work. What are your thoughts on that?

Black and White photography was my primary medium from 1975, when I first learned to print in the darkroom of a friend, until my last year of RISD, as a photo major in 1982. In Rome during my last year of school, I developed an increasing interest in painting. There was so much old work to see that was new to me, and all of it came across as powerful, earth shaking. I had first developed an interest in abstraction, as a kid, and the immersion in Rome's art treasures and experiences opened up new imaginings for me. It took years of life in New York before things sorted themselves out, creatively.

Eventually, works in charcoal replaced the tonal richness of black and white paper photographs I loved to make. I can now see how the aesthetic connections make sense, in retrospect, and the early and continuing preoccupation with formal issues guided aspects of both projects similarly. But at the time I could not make sense of the progression.

It seems like you have chosen to work with the same medium from early on: ink on paper, the most basic tools. Why ink and paper?

I was excited about the idea of trying to make an interesting artwork with the most limited and efficient possible means, during my time in grad school. While at first my work continued in charcoal, my teacher, the artist Jay Milder suggested that I switch to ink, so I did. I decided to use one brush, black ink, and a sheet of watercolor paper, as the basis for making paintings. They were all abstract at first. While at Skowhegan in 1989, I began to work from observation out in nature. The goal was to extract representation out of this entirely unforgiving medium, without the use of color or tone, and bring a painting to life. It was satisfying to set out on a project that seemed so challenging.

I was fascinated by Matisse's ability to give form its full impact with line. I love how Van Gogh pen and ink drawings used discreet simple marks to describe everything complex and organic. I was intrigued with the evolution of Mondrian's landscape paintings of trees, and how they became his revolutionary abstract neo-plasticism, what we think of as Mondrian.

Ink, and black and white per se, are the essence of representation, from writing to printing, and the medium of the ancient Chinese painters and scholars. Also, I grew up with a black and white TV, only. While representation has certainly now changed, I remain stubbornly devoted to this austere approach, as it has not been fully explored. I like the idea of working in a specific area of the discipline of painting, that is both rich and austere, hoping to join its estimable dialogue.



Eric Wolf, *Yaddo Pond*, 2008, ink on paper, 29" x 41". Courtesy of Pamela Salisbury Gallery

When I look at your work, I keep thinking: “painting” (though traditionally they would be probably considered “drawing”), and often they also remind me of woodcuts or linoleumcuts because of the bold edges and graphic sensibility. Do you see them as “drawings” and is this distinction is at all important in your view?

Because of the use of ink and a brush, I consider these paper works to be paintings. Over the years, I’ve made oil on canvas paintings in black and white, as well, and these are very different on the surface, but made on site, painted from life, just the same way. In the spirit of our age, I am ok with people calling works on paper “drawings” or “paintings” as they prefer.

The choice to carry on with paper was as much about efficiency as it was devotion to paper. The reference to woodcuts and linoleum prints stems from my negative space approach to representation, which itself is an abstracting method of seeing. The discreet brush markings of my earlier more digit-y works do look very much like the carved-out markings of a wood chiseled inked print.

In some of your work you use the minimal bold shapes, or lines and in others you add subtle values. It is as if you are playing — how minimal can I get? What makes you go one way or another?

There is a deliberate effort, as you suggest, to play “how minimal can I get?” You are right to ask what makes me go one way or another. As I stand lakeside at my painting table, in the wilderness preserve, all the subjects are there at once, from complex spreads of stones, to a vast plain of undulating water, mountains near and far across the lake, a giant sky with an ever-evolving display of clouds, sky and light. The subject and the weather conditions together will suggest which way the work is heading, from day to day.

When there is a solid fog on the lake, complex choices are swiftly narrowed to one choice: the fog itself, over the water. The similarity between the fog and the thinned out ink I’m using to portray it is intriguing. I love the way the medium and the subject have so much in common.



Eric Wolf, Fog, 2018, ink on paper 30" x 22". Courtesy of Pamela Salisbury Gallery



Eric Wolf, *Hand Hollow*, 2011, ink on paper 41" x 31". Courtesy of Pamela Salisbury Gallery

Since my summer at Skowhegan, 1989, I have worked outdoors, observing and painting the landscape, as in "plein-air painting." This tradition carries a lot of baggage, as well as numerous masterpieces of the centuries past and present. Nonetheless, at the time, I believed that I could "stay modern" while tackling a genre subject from a new angle. I thought that I could bring my desire for abstraction to interact with the subject "in a new way."

Once I'd launched into the landscape painting project, connections about nature from my childhood began to emerge. Here I will spare you the details about the youthful adventures in nature, but they were abundant. It turned out that combining art making with being out in nature had a special quality to it, that captured my attention, and took over my painting practice by 1990. Working with the landscape as subject was as much a means to a desired experience, as it was to a desired painting outcome. It took a few years before I realized that, but I remain happily engaged in the project now decades later, somehow.

Looking closely at your work since early on I start seeing repetitive patterns that associate for me with language: these curvy parallel lines are "waves". These black and white shapes are "boulders." Do you have in mind developing visual building blocks, like letters you can combine in endless possibilities?

My work uses a notational approach to representation, and with the continuous focus on landscape, there has indeed been repetition over time, in the use of visual elements. I get so much pleasure out of the process of refining and perfecting particular elements, like the hypnotic waves of water that have absorbed my attention in many works, for example. While I think that I do rely on a set of mark-making conventions I've established for myself, I hope that the work will continue to evolve.

I understand that you are also engaged with the Shaker Museum and design work. Tell me a bit about these aspects in your practice and if / how they impact your artwork?

At the Shaker Museum, I'm a member of the exhibitions and collections committee, representing the

artists' perspective, as the museum plans its' future new Museum building in Chatham, NY. Currently, I've curated an exhibition of contemporary Shaker Inspired artworks at the Joyce Goldstein Gallery in Chatham, adjacent to the Museum site. The goal of my involvement is to bring artists into contact with the extraordinary collection, and the amazing site, on Mount Lebanon, nearby. The Shaker Inspired exhibition did just that, with artists creating works inspired by the Museum's objects, and its North Family 1787 site and buildings.

My design work has been part of my long-running personal creative project. It also tied in with my work as a construction project manager and designer in NYC for many years. The largest, and most notable among these efforts was a ten year long project, the headquarters of The Endeavor Foundation, Inc, a family foundation in NYC. This effort included designing all spaces, lighting, furniture, everything, and can be seen in part, in a March 2020 video interview on the artist website Gorky's Granddaughter. I've designed and built my own spaces as well, including my studio, which can be seen in an interview for Two Coats of Paint.

You have had a lot of shows recently. What would you like to share about them?

It has been great to have several shows in Hudson and the area, recently, and a chance to share some of the recent works I've done. An April 2022 solo show with Pamela Salisbury was the most extensive show I have had since 2000. It was gratifying to see 25 works spread through the carriage house space, covering a range of approaches from the last few years. Several works have gone to great collections, and this is always exciting.

The March 2022 Show at Private Public was a group show of large scale abstract paintings, and my own largest ink landscape paintings. With my creative origins in abstract painting, this was a fascinating pairing, which made sense visually. I like to think of my work as "going either way." It's both abstract and representational, and in this context that quality was fluid, and active.

A recent group show at the Berkshire Botanical Garden's gallery curated by Sue Muskat and Phil Knoll was a cornucopia of beautiful nature subject creations, and was warmly reviewed in the Times Union of Albany. Sue and Phil are wonderful freelance curators and artists themselves. Their shows are always dynamic, and full of the surprises that make our upstate art scene so refreshing and inspiring.



Eric Wolf, Heat Wave, 2021, ink on paper, 11" x 15". Courtesy of Pamela Salisbury Gallery

Eric Wolf (b. 1960, American) is a painter and designer based in New York's Hudson Valley. He is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, BFA 1982 in Photography, and the City College of New York, CUNY, MFA in Painting, 1990, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, 1989. Wolf has had residencies at Yaddo, The MacDowell Colony, Giverny, the Blue Mountain Center and Art Omi. Solo exhibitions include Gregory Lind Gallery, Oresman Gallery at Smith College, The Williston School, Jeff Bailey Gallery, Fredericks-Freiser Gallery, Jessica Fredericks Gallery, Kristina Wasserman Gallery, and Pamela Salisbury Gallery. Currently his work is featured in a group show at McKenzie Fine Art through August 13th, 2022.

Etty Yaniv works on her art, art writing and curatorial projects in Brooklyn. She founded Art Spiel as a platform for highlighting the work of contemporary artists, including art reviews, studio visits, interviews with artists, curators, and gallerists. For more details contact by Email: artspielblog@gmail.com

HYPERALLERGIC

Art **Weekend**

Artists Quarantine With Their Art Collections

“If I have to be discarded, let it be in the beautiful green space of this painting.”



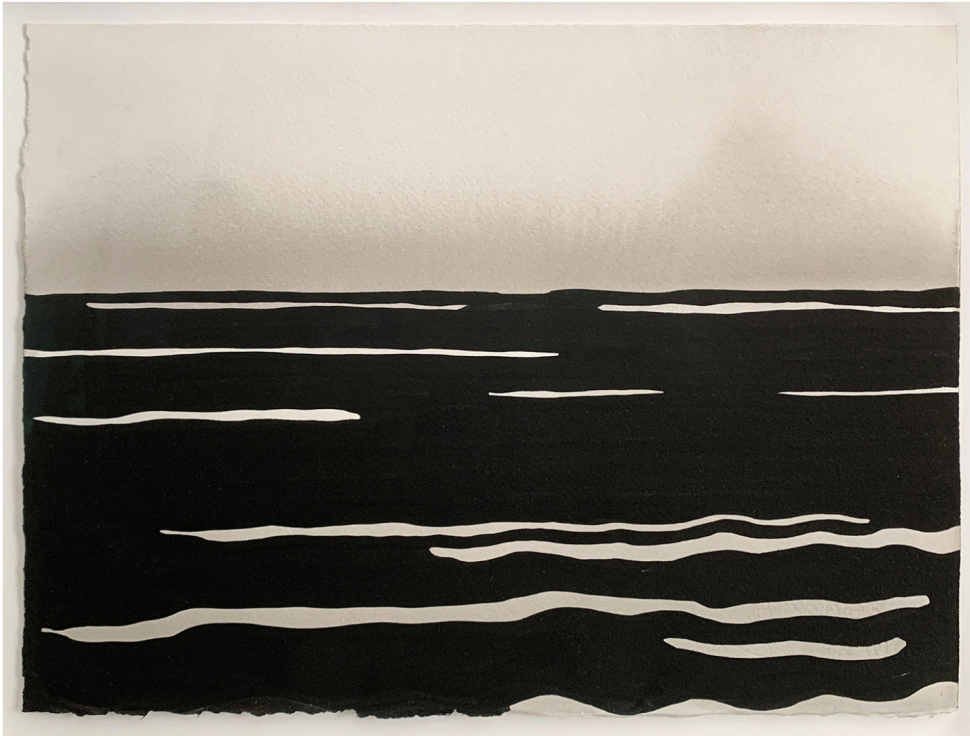
by Stephen Maine
October 3, 2020



Eric Wolf, "Observatory Mountain" (2018), ink on paper, 11x15 inches (image courtesy of Chie Fueki)

Chie Fueki (Beacon, New York): During the lockdown in March, I shifted the location of my studio routine away from a multi-use building to our apartment, where two ink paintings by Eric Wolf bracket either side of a window.

In the painting on the left, "Observatory Mountain," a rippling lake foregrounds the silhouette of a summit that Eric has painted repeatedly on visits to Maine. When we hung this painting after moving to Beacon, we discovered the uncanny coincidence that Mount Beacon, visible from town, shares the same angles and undulations as Eric's "Observatory Mountain." In its sister painting, "Fog," the lake is present but the mountain has vanished, exchanged for a gradation of gray wash that bleeds upwards towards raw paper. The air has been stilled, the mountain obscured, and the ripples flatten toward straight lines.



Eric Wolf, "Fog" (2018), ink on paper, 11×15 inches (image courtesy of Chie Fueki)

When the season shifted to spring, Mount Beacon would occasionally disappear behind fog or low clouds, and Eric's two paintings would take turns quoting the world. Friends and family were veiled from us too, gradations of themselves communicating from afar. In-person encounters became almost too saturated to be real. We were routinely humbled by the value of things we took for granted, and the truth of our local and global interdependence was made undeniably plain. It was, and is, a time of rethinking.

Eric's solitude when he painted these works, his tent and table set up in a Maine preserve, reaches out to me in these times. His past seclusions, captured in the decisive fluidity of his paintings, are both companion and guide. Working next to his inks, I painted two large paper ribbons that evolved into *Mother Altar* — an installation of offerings and works by artists, friends, and the public, contributed during the summer months of the pandemic.

There's a heavy tactility to Eric's paintings, an insistent materiality. The ink is so densely saturated, the thick paper bordered with ragged edge. How are they at once so full of air, light, space, and motion? Can we embrace their alchemical optimism, grounded and yet transforming?

Eric Wolf

Gregory Lind Gallery, San Francisco, California

Recommendation by DeWitt Cheng



Eric Wolf, *Maine*, 2017, ink on paper, 29 x 42"

Continuing through June 30, 2018

Since 1989, New Yorker Eric Wolf has been making one and two-week artistic journeys to Phillips Memorial Wilderness Preserve in Maine, absorbing the place's natural beauty by "sleeping, eating, working, [and] daydreaming" there, as described by art writer David Masello. Wolf speaks of the preserve (near Oquossoc, Maine) as inspiring "a creative burst of energy that I work through until it ebbs." Ten monochrome ink-on-paper landscapes from Wolf's latest "immersion" pilgrimage show that the artist (who had his plein-air epiphany years ago at Monet's garden at Giverny) captures his experience of land, water, wind and clouds in compressed, graphic form, without the attractions of color. Wolf executes each in one session before the motif, recorded in bold, calligraphic black strokes, delicately modulated grays, and pictorially active unpainted white spaces.

The artist is clearly referencing Asian landscape painting, but with an elemental dynamism suggestive of American modernists like Rockwell Kent, Marsden Hartley and George Bellows (another Maine devotee). With their abstracted flat shapes, one can also see in them the urban and urbane presence of Roy Lichtenstein. Wolf's wind-roiled waves and tattered or rolling clouds convey a hint of Albert Pinkham's Ryder's and Edvard Munch's similarly solitary, pantheistic visions (albeit, in those cases, of nocturnal Brooklyn and rural Norway). In Wolf's Maine marines, seen in "Oquossoc," "Reflection," "Storm Sky," "Bald Mountain," "Observatory Mountain" and "Mooselookmeguntic Lake," we revisit nature, primordial and magnificent.

The New York Times

ART GUIDE

April 21, 2000

ERIC WOLF, Fredericks Freiser, 504 West 22nd Street, (212) 633-6555 (through April 29). Black and white are so perfectly interwoven in Mr. Wolf's ink-on-paper landscapes and still lifes (less so in portraits) that it is hard to believe he does not carefully plan them out. In fact, he works with a single brush directly and spontaneously from observation. His bold, convoluted compositions call to mind a range of associations from medieval woodcuts to German Expressionism, from Art Nouveau to Pop (Johnson).

The New York Times

Art in Review

By Ken Johnson

July 2, 1999

'Walking' Danese
41 East 57th Street Manhattan

You'd expect to find a piece by Hamish Fulton in a show called "Walking" and you do: the Conceptualist who practices walking as an art is represented by a phototext work documenting an eight-day hike in Switzerland. There are also photographs of the performance artist Marina Abramovic walking the Great Wall of China and photographs by Andy Goldsworthy, who goes on outdoor excursions and makes sculpture from available natural materials; here are pictures of a snake molded in sand.

What makes this show particularly intriguing, however, is the unexpected variety of approaches to the theme. A gouache painting in the form of a maze pattern by Richard Fleischner evokes walking as a mystical ceremony. Garry Winogrand's photograph of an attractive woman in a phone booth suggests walking in the service of urban voyeurism.

In some works, the relationship to walking needs to be explained by the gallery staff. A striped minimalist column by Anne Truitt, for example, is painted colors that reflect the experience of walking in a particular landscape (you also notice that sculptures often require circumambulation). Walking is relevant to Eric Wolf's "Melting Forest" because, contrary to what looks like imaginary cartooning, the artist actually walks to woodsy places and paints on site.

The show's most amusing work, a series of digital photographs by Nobuhira Narumi, also needs explanation. Grainy pictures of nondescript back alley spaces were actually shot by a camera attached to the artist's dog's head; they document spots where the dog made his mark. KEN JOHNSON



THE NEW YORKER

APRIL 10, 2000

ERIC WOLF

These squiggly brush drawings turn everyday motifs—clouds, trees, vegetables, and the human figure—into excuses for euphoric, psychedelic pattern-making: everything coils, meanders, and undulates. If the effect feels artificial—as though Wolf had been carried away by the sheer pleasure of guiding ink across a surface—these eddying motions are natural, too. They're a reminder of the breezy volatility of the world around us, and of the happy bafflement that comes from staring for too long at something as familiar as a cabbage leaf. Through April 29. (Fredericks Freiser, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)

—Alexi Worth

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

APRIL 15, 1996

ERIC WOLF—Landscape paintings rendered in heavy, looping somewhat schematic black brushstrokes against white grounds; at times the figurative elements—trees, rocks, clouds, streams—are virtually lost in dense whorls of abstract patterning. Richter's and Lichtenstein's deconstructions of the brushstroke, as well as Peter Nagy's more recent photocopy paintings, loom as obvious precursors. Through April 21. (Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sunday, 11 to 6.)

—David Rimanelli

Art in America

JUNE 1998

ERIC WOLF

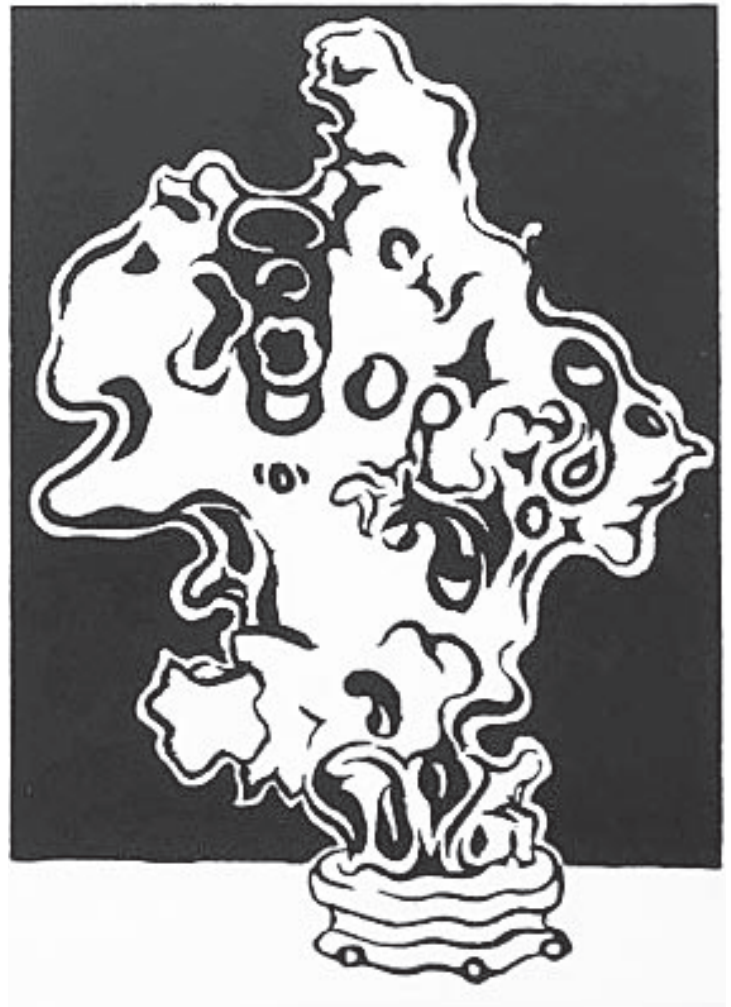
AT JESSICA FREDERICKS

There is an engaging quality to Eric Wolf's recent black-and-white works—seven midsize oil paintings and two ink drawings on paper. Wolf works in a limited palette—black on a white ground. The relation of positive and negative spaces makes one think of woodcut, as though the white in his paintings were those areas cut away from a block, and the blacks were the remaining raised portions that pick up the ink.

While Wolf takes recognizable subjects—trees, clouds, Chinese scholars' rocks—as his starting point, it is often a work's title that allows us to interpret the shapes. His canvases are filled with flurries of undulating forms that alternate between a represented subject and an abstract pattern. In *Pine*, for instance, one can safely make out parts of three tree trunks with protruding branches on the right side of the canvas. Other marks proliferate with such abandon that one is hard pressed to decipher them. In wolf's work—as in traditional woodcut—subtleties of shading and form are absent.

Cornered Tree Tops makes clear the artist's strategy in its title. The few trees huddle in a corner, while the canvas is dominated by tightly curving black forms. We can call them "clouds" or "sky" but feel no immediate need to do so. This painting has a discernible momentum to the shapes. A predominantly black swath moves from the lower left corner to the midpoint of the right side of the canvas, then continues up to the middle of the top edge.

Two paintings of Chinese scholars' rocks are at once more defined and less readable than the landscapes. The titles help us recognize a white band across the bottom as a table, black background as space, and the undulating, pockmarked form



Eric Wolf: *Perforated Vertical Stone in the Form of a Dancing Figure*, 1997, oil on canvas, 48 by 35 inches; at Jessica Fredericks.

as a rock. Wolf strips his subjects of their evocative subtlety, rendering them in Pop-like simplification, though his hard edges look hand-painted and lack mechanical precision. If Wolf were to become more precise in his mark-making, his works might lose some of the raw energy they now possess.

— Vincent Katz

ARTFORUM

MAY 1998

ERIC WOLF

JESSICA FREDERICKS GALLERY

Applying the reductive rigor of black-and-white abstraction to scenes from nature, mostly in upstate New York, Eric Wolf's open-air landscape paintings look more like mazes or optical illusions in some kind of puzzle or pages from a pristine coloring book than anything from the Hudson River School. Moreover, the views offered in the seven paintings in this show weren't picturesque, majestic, or sublime, but mysterious in a rather banal way. The roiling masses in *Cloud Painting* and *Cloud Painting II* (all works 1997) are replete with the kind of weird partial images—ears, shoulders, scrunched faces—that the imaginative skygazer finds looming in tufts of cumulus. *Molten Sky* and *Cornered Tree Tops* feature similar atmospheric turbulence above views of woods in black outlined in white (or maybe white outlined in black), while *Pine* is an all-over, undulating riot of forest forms.

Wolf may be distilling details into their abstract essential energies, stripping nature down to black and white, but that's not to say these paintings aren't full of complexities. Like the optical tricks they evoke, they offer a heady mix of dualities. They could be whimsical descendants of Pop; but Wolf employs a strict method that suggests the gravity of painterly tradition. Each canvas, roughly four by three feet or five by four feet, is stretched over plywood, coated with gesso, and sanded smooth, and Wolf uses just a single brush to make each work. So up close, the paintings reveal the brush's sweep and show subtle variations in tone, depending on how much paint the bristles carried. There's no getting around a certain irony in an artist of the '90's working *en plein air*, yet Wolf's paintings undeniably partake of an animism akin to that of the landscapist Charles Burchfield.



Eric Wolf, *Molten Sky*, 1997,
oil on canvas, 60 x 48".

This exhibit also showed Wolf applying his method to another moribund genre, the still life, with two ink drawings of pumpkins and gourds and two paintings of Chinese scholars' rocks. Here too the choice of objects is strategic; the rock paintings, *Perforated Vertical Stone in the Form of a Dancing Figure* and *Large Rock with a Pronounced Overhang and Perforations*, portray objects that are seen as microcosms of nature, and thus offer tantalizing links between the representation of an object and the representation of nature *tout suite*; painting an object of contemplation versus painting as contemplation.

Though the black-on-white strokes of his canvases resemble the inking of prints, Wolf isn't invoking the trope of bringing the appearance of mechanical reproduction to the handmade, as pioneered by Roy Lichtenstein. That effect is a result of the precision (but not perfection) of his process. Each stroke remains an individual entity while playing a larger role in creating the whole image. And yet, like Lichtenstein in his giant brushstroke paintings, Wolf amplifies the artifice of painting by enlarging its fundamental unit. His idiosyncratic method allows him to carry on the tradition of painting from nature while speaking to more contemporary beliefs about our ultimate remove from it.

— Julie Canigula

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The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

By Roberta Smith

Dec. 12, 1997

Eric Wolf

Jessica Fredericks Gallery

504 West 22d Street

Chelsea

Through Dec. 24

In his second solo gallery show, Eric Wolf continues to effectively explore the possibilities of a black-and-white palette in paintings that flip back and forth between positive and negative, and between abstraction and representation. The tension between painting and works on paper also applies here, for these works sometimes suggest the tactility of woodcut prints and the intimacy of extra-large ink drawings, in exaggerated form.

The increased scale heightens the visual energy, as does the dominant subject of roiling skies full of arabesque clouds and whiplash currents, presented on their own or bearing down on trees. It is as if Mr. Wolf means to update Chinese painting by adding the jumpiness of Op Art and the muscularity of Jack Youngerman's thick-surfaced, two-color works from the early 1960's. Roy Lichtenstein's assured compositions may also be an inspiration. Appropriately, two of the paintings depict the intricately organic forms of Chinese scholar's rocks, whose dramatic overhangs and perforations read as alternately solid and ephemeral, like so much smoke. ROBERTA SMITH

The New York Times

Art in Review

By **Holland Cotter**

April 12, 1996

Eric Wolf Jessica Fredericks Gallery 504 West 22d Street Chelsea
Through April 21

The five landscapes in this strong, pared-down show by a 26-year-old artist are painted in black and white and appear to be just a step removed from drawing. It is as if each image of a body of water or a cloudy sky were spun from a single thick twisting line, which in some cases fills the canvas from edge to edge.

The impression of solidity -- one thinks at first of the heavily outlined images in children's coloring books -- is deceptive. The images are, in fact, as fragmented and discontinuous as reflections in water, and they are full of the gestural seraphs and trailing strokes that confirm a mutable hands-on touch.

It's a touch with interestingly contradictory intentions. Though Eric Wolf paints from nature, his landscapes have the abstracted look of mechanically reproduced images, as if each were the result of repeated photocopying. (Peter Nagy's work comes to mind.) They also project what one can only call a referential verve: the organic flow of Chinese landscape is here, as is the roiling ecstasy of Charles Burchfield.

If, like many contemporary painters, Mr. Wolf is more comfortable with the idea of ecstasy than with the real thing, he's hedging his bets very persuasively. HOLLAND COTTER

Eric Wolf "Recovered Innocence"

NEW YORK When Eric Wolf describes his arresting black-on-white paintings as "landscapes"—once the most commonplace of painterly endeavors but now virtually an anomaly, especially among serious younger artists—one should take him at his word. Typically, he selects an outdoor site—the Adirondack mountains in upstate New York and various locations in New Hampshire have been particularly fruitful—and proceeds to paint exactly what he sees, often obsessively and usually during a single session, although larger works based on studies can take considerably longer.

At the core of his work there is a deep engagement with nature, even a kind of homage to it—and not to recognizably spectacular settings but to more humble and physically subtle ones. As he explains, his paintings "are not fixated on a central object, nor on a dominating natural wonder, but on a scene, on a bank of trees, for instance, or on a pond," which he closely and patiently observes for their physical structures.

There is something meditative about this process, which, Wolf notes, involves "an emptying of oneself, during which all local thoughts go away." One senses that in this anonymity there is an available if temporary peace, which is one reason why the 34-year-old Wolf, whose earlier works are largely colorful abstractions, has chosen to operate in this manner. Yet while he willingly speaks of his time spent painting in nature as a kind of "recovered innocence," his works are not in the least naive, nor are they laden with emotion. Instead, they juxtapose austerity and lyricism, abstraction and representation, within an idiosyncratic language that is engaging and technically accomplished.

Wolf's paintings consist entirely of short black brushstrokes on a background of white gesso. Out of a tangle (albeit an orderly one) of rapid marks, the overall form assembles. Because his method



ERIK WOLF (ARTIST)

Eric Wolf, who distills nature into arresting black-and-white paintings, says painting outdoors involves "an emptying of oneself, during which all local thoughts go away." *Blue Mountain* (above) and *Pond Four, Yaddo*, both 1994.



ERIK WOLF (ARTIST)



of working incorporates constant gaps between brushstrokes, his paintings seem simultaneously fragmentary and integrated.

By isolating individual brushstrokes, no matter how small, Wolf brings the central artifice of painting to the forefront. There are few, if any, secrets or illusions in his work, and one can clearly see how each image was constructed. Yet there is still the inviting natural scene with its shimmering waters and quietly tumultuous trees, which comes in and out of view. Wolf addresses both the primacy of an invigorating experience in nature and its inevitable dissolution, along with the way such an

experience is mediated through the actual process of painting.

Wolf, who was born and raised in New Jersey and who studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and the City College of New York, first exhibited his work two years ago in New York, where he now lives, at the Drawing Center. Several months thereafter he appeared in a group painting show at the Barbara Gladstone Gallery. Increasingly, his thoroughly contemporary "landscapes" are finding a responsive audience. In the autumn, he will have his first one-person exhibition, at the Paul Morris Gallery in New York.

GREGORY VOLK

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

By Roberta Smith

July 2, 1993

Painting Invitational Barbara Gladstone Gallery 100 Greene Street
SoHo Through July 30

Compared with the relatively exuberant shows of cartoon-oriented painting with which several New York galleries are winding down the season, this group show of five young painters has the cool, clinical air of Conceptual correctness. The precedents here are 1980's Pictures Art (especially Jack Goldstein), Gerhard Richter and Photo Realism; the appropriation of images is carefully self-referential.

Rainald Schumacher's blurry, hotly colored, seemingly abstract paintings descend from television images. Ken Weaver takes sexual illustrations, photocopies them into total obscurity and then paints them in black and white, with only the titles indicating the incendiary subject matter. Julie Roberts renders small grisaille images of gurneys and other hospital equipment evocative of the human body on subtly striped abstract grounds, as if contrasting the facts of life and art.

Of the two artists who make the strongest impression, one takes such tactics to icy but ironic extremes and the other avoids them almost entirely. Glenn Brown bases his paintings on color photographs of heavily impastoed Expressionist images by artists like Frank Auerbach and Karel Appel, reducing their bumps and swirls and heated emotion to a fastidious smoothness that's easy to mistake for a photograph. Eric Wolf, the most old-fashioned artist in the show, creates large black-and-white paintings based on his own small landscape ink drawings, an exercise that gives them a punchy, paint-by-numbers visuality.

That the artists come from different points of the art world -- New York, London and Cologne, Germany -- gives the coherence of their work added weight; perhaps Pictures Art, Part 2, is in the offing. Still, a little more body heat would help.

The New York Times

Review/Art; Group Shows in SoHo for a Weekend of Gallery Hopping

By **Roberta Smith**

Jan. 15, 1993

In "Selections/Winter '93" at THE DRAWING CENTER(through Feb. 20), things unfold in elegant black and white with intermittent grays. Part of a series that presents relatively or completely unknown artists, this show has no stated theme other than the medium itself. But the seven artists mine the territory between drawing and language, or at least syntax, and their works reverberate with one another. The show's inadvertent theme is perhaps clearest in the work of Kenneth Goldsmith, whose layerings of loosely rhyming words condense all manner of experience, information and colloquial talk into striking images that are as pleasurable to speak out loud as to look at.

The others in the center's show also have carefully honed systems of mark-making that play drawing and meaning against each other: Eric Wolf's muscularly patterned, van Gogh-like landscape images; Cornelia Cottiati's carefully calibrated fingerprint drawings; Carl Fudge's mind-boggling computer-generated elaborations on Durer's "Resurrection"; Janine Gordon's taut and profoundly Viennese little "Hypothetical Tattoos," and Quentin Morris's obsessively worked graphite drawings.

But the balance between language and drawing is at its most precise in the notebook drawings of Charles Crumb (the brother of the cartoonist Robert Crumb), a recluse who committed suicide last summer at the age of 50. Spending most of his life in his bedroom at his mother's home in Philadelphia, Mr. Crumb in a sense rewrote the books he read, covering page after page with floods of abstract cursive. In one notebook, rows of tiny dots fill the page; in others, words are sometimes discernible but the writing is always different, as if tailored to the voice of the author being read. The work is unusual and moving, and it provides the show's emotional center. Thinking Big