

Pattern and Decoration

An Ideal Vision in American Art, 1975-1985





LEFT:
KIM MACCONNEL
Flourishing Side Line Occupations, 1978

FRONT COVER ABOVE:
JOYCE KOZLOFF
Hidden Chambers, 1975-76

FRONT COVER BELOW:
TONY ROBBIN
Untitled, 1976

BACK COVER:
ROBERT KUSHNER
Slavic Dancers, 1978

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Pattern and Decoration as a Late Modernist Movement

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The emergence of art movements is one of the most distinctive features of modernist art history. Until modernism, art history tended to be marked not so much by movements as by stylistic periods, like the Romanesque, the Gothic, the Renaissance, the baroque, and beyond. Period styles like these pertain not to art and architectures alone, but to the attitudes and values of entire cultures over an extended interval of time. By contrast, art movements are restricted to a more or less small number of artists, who usually know one another, share certain tastes and distastes, and consummate their relationship by exhibiting together as a group. Ideally, they seek a sympathetic critic, often a poet or philosopher, to generate an aura of excitement and even controversy—though often it is a hostile critic who gives the movement its name, as happened with impressionism, cubism, and the fauves. The Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood was a typical modernist movement, consisting of several ambitious young artists who managed to enlist the great Victorian thinker, John Ruskin, in supporting their claim that the entire history of art had taken an unfortunate turn with Raphael, away from visual truth, which they embraced as their ideal—getting art back on track, as it were. It is typical of movements to identify their philosophy with

the future of culture in this way. To support their art was to invest in the future of society.

There were dozens of such movements in the modernist era, and while no one of them can be said to have defined it in the way the Gothic style did the high Middle Ages, a case can be made that their number and diversity, considered in the aggregate, may itself be one of modernism's defining marks. It was not a period of consensus, and it is fair to say that when each movement must find reasons to disparage the others, the question of what is and is not art must, more than any answer, be what distinguishes modernism as a period. In light of this, what is striking about the present stage of art is the almost complete disappearance of movements. The emergence of movements has been replaced with the idea of emerging artists. That alone has to mean that modernism as a period has ended. Artists today are very much on their own.

The great movements of the 1960s were for the most part efforts at de-exalting art, bringing art down to earth. Pop certainly attempted to obliterate the distinction between fine and demotic art. Minimalism was an effort to obliterate the distinction between the handmade and the manufactured. Fluxus obliterated the distinction between creativity and play. Conceptual art obliterated the idea that art need even be an object. Pattern and Decoration or "P&D," as its members and supporters called it, declared itself a movement in the late 1970s,

when the very idea of movements seemed to belong to an earlier era. But its spirit was very much that of the 1960s. It sought to obliterate the distinction between art and decoration, often understood in the most vernacular terms, which, in the case of one of its founding members, the painter Robert Rauschenberg, meant the patterns he remembered from his Central European grandmother's house in New Jersey—floral prints, painted china, lace curtains, embroidered pillows, wallpaper, rugs—in the warmth of which, as a boy, he felt embraced and secure. "In my grandparents' house," he told an interviewer, Charles Saba, "ornamentation was everywhere. They had embroidered tablecloths and armrests. They used stencils to paint flower patterns on their walls, which gave me an affinity for stencils. My grandparents refused to live in bleak empty rooms and decorated everything."

The "bleak empty room" is a disparaging reference to the "white cube" that had become the paradigmatic exhibition space of modernism. The artworks shown were not usually intended as decorations, for that space or any other; the blankness and bleakness of the room was calculated to neutralize the ambient space, allowing the work to stand on its own. I remember some photographs, in an exhibition at MoMA of the work of Lee Krasner, that showed some of her paintings in her home, with plants and furniture, rugs and curtains—and I thought how much better her work looked in its domestic setting, where, together with the surrounding

furnishings, the urgent florid canvases helped create an atmosphere of life. Until P&D claimed decoration as its artistic criterion, the term had long become one of critical disparagement. Lee Krasner would have been crushed by a review that praised her art for its decorativeness.

There is an affecting moment in the movement's history when Rauschenberg told another of its founders, Miriam Schapiro, in her studio in Los Angeles, that he wanted to start a movement—and then asked, "How do you do that?" Schapiro would have been an obvious one to ask, since she had shown considerable organizational skill in the creation, together with Judy Chicago, of feminist art as a political force, and she well understood what she described, in an interview, as "the structure of the women's movement, the networking and the ways of disseminating information and all of that." She answered his question with a question: "Well, how did the cubists do it? How did the impressionists?" Both she and Rauschenberg knew other artists who had turned their back on the formalist dogmas of the time and sought, to use a slogan of the 1960s, to close, or at least narrow, the gap between art and life. Schapiro herself saw considerable artistic merit in the kinds of decorative touches with which ordinary women, women with no sense of being artists, created work that enhanced life—decorative table linens, aprons, coverlets, samplers, afghans. Far from contrasting these achievements with "real" art, Schapiro celebrated them in her own "femmagés"—collages and

assemblages of womens' work. "If there's a period in history when a number of artists are working in a similar way, what's interesting is for these artists to talk to each other," she explained. Zakanitch said, "Okay. I'm making a meeting at my loft, and I want you to come."

Zakanitch and Schapiro arrived at the aesthetic beliefs and attitudes of P&D from very different directions, and this is also true of the others who became part of the movement in its early stages. Zakanitch had been a formalist and had made a name for himself in the New York gallery scene. But by 1975, when P&D got under way as a movement, he had turned with a certain revulsion away from the critically approved mainstream, which he felt had come to an end. He became, so to speak, a late '60s artist and thinker, and sought some way to bring into his painting what he described as "the sentimental visuals of my childhood environment." Feminism, on the other hand, gave Schapiro license to "bring all the parts of my life together" into what her husband, Paul Brach, referred to as "one seamless existence." She recalls that there were about five women and five men at the meeting in Zakanitch's loft, and that she and her friend and fellow artist, Joyce Kozloff, found this balance particularly exciting. They had been so immersed in what she terms "the woman's part of it" that the discovery that the artistic values of decoration and all it stood for had as much meaning for men as for women was a deep validation of its artistic significance. "Here were

men who were interested in an analysis of the decorative. Why make the decorative? Where does it happen?"

Though P&D had more women than most art movements, all of them feminists and some very active in feminist causes, it was not a feminist movement. Feminism was but one of its roots. Zakanitch's roots lay elsewhere. So too did the roots of the California artists Robert Kushner and Kim MacConnel, both of whom were inspired by the teaching of the critic and art historian Amy Goldin at the University of California at San Diego, who taught them about Islamic art, which was manifestly decorative. In the spirit of the 1960s, Kushner was eager, as he told his dealer, Holly Solomon, to elevate decoration in much the same way that pop had elevated commercial art. It was clear that decoration fell somewhere between figuration and abstraction and encompassed almost the entire visual culture of many non-Western traditions. Islam was deeply aniconic, but its patterns were not bereft of meaning because of that. Alois Riegel, who had been a curator of textiles in Vienna, attempted in his masterpiece, *Problems of Style*, to identify certain objective formal structures in the visual culture of a given period, irrespective of any differences between vernacular and fine art, and to explain these structures with reference to the world outlook of those whose art it was. This approach was taken up by Ernst Gombrich in *The Sense of Order*, in which he felt he had thereby done justice to abstract art, which repelled him.

The P&D artists did not appeal to this scholarly tradition, but it would have lent support to their intuition that from the perspective of meaning, decoration was on a footing with figurative or abstract art, and that the impulse to decorate was the impulse to humanize.

What has to be emphasized is that all the artists in the movement were already using decoration before the movement was created. What P&D's existence as a movement did was enable its members to recognize what they had in common in making decoration central to their art, and to deal with the kinds of negative attitudes the art they were practicing generated in an art world that could not, for whatever reason, take decoration seriously. But there was a countercurrent in the art world of the 1960s such that by the time the decade was over, it had become the common wisdom that anything could be art, so why not decoration, which in any case had so much to offer so many in terms of pleasure and meaning? If everything was possible as art, who was to say that decoration was beyond the pale? When that was finally understood, sometime in the 1980s, the need for a special movement dedicated to pattern and decoration had disappeared, together with the need for any movements at all.

What the actual Pattern and Decoration movement contributed to cultural understanding was that the decorated surface has its own kind of artistic meaning, alongside the meaning

shown in traditional Western art by figures represented as engaged in performing actions, or the kind of meaning with which abstract forms are symbolically vested once abstraction becomes acknowledged. "We are meaning-makers, not just image makers," as Kirk Varnedoe argues in his posthumous Mellon Lectures. "It is not just that we recognize images . . . it is that we are constructed to make meaning out of things, and that we learn from others how to do it." It is a genuine insight to recognize, as Joyce Kozloff did, that there is "a third category of art which is neither representational nor abstract"—the art of ornament, pattern, and decoration. The members of the movement to which she belonged were tirelessly inventive in pointing out how much meaning this third category contributes to human life. Formalism ought easily to apply across the boundaries to all three categories of art, had it not been weighted down with prejudices that had little to do with its essential practice. My own effort as a philosopher of art has been to replace aesthetics of form with aesthetics of meaning, grounded in a definition of an artwork as the embodiment of meaning. It is not difficult to suppose that there are three modes of embodiment, corresponding to Kozloff's scheme of three categories of art.

However much the P&D artists contributed to the understanding and practice of art, their movement has remained fairly obscure. There are several Web sites on Google given over to directories and timelines of art movements, but I

was unable to find Pattern and Decoration listed anywhere. Since these Web pages must reflect the syllabi and reading lists for Art History 101 as it is taught to undergraduates in institutions of higher learning everywhere in the world, it is reasonable to assume that those whose art education is defined by these know nothing of the wonderful art the men and women of this movement created. It is not just that the issues they raised are deep and important to the understanding of the relationship of art to life—the painting and objects through which their ideas were expressed are well worth knowing directly. P&D was an early step into a globalist aesthetics, and in light of that, this exhibition acquires a fresh dimension.



ROBERT ZAKANITCH
Big Bungalow Suite II, 1991-92
Acrylic on canvas, 11 x 30 feet

Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art

ANNE SWARTZ

IDEAL VISION

Pattern and Decoration, or P&D, was a seductive and alluring movement in 1970s and 1980s American contemporary art. Optimistic and progressive, it was important as a new pathway for artists facing a crisis in painting in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Artists involved in P&D used decoration, pattern, beauty, and visual pleasure as a response to the restrictive aesthetics of the contemporary art world and its market.¹ They wanted to fill the vacuum left by minimalism and sought a way out of the rigidity of formalist and conceptualist impulses of the prior decade. Abstraction had become an extremely limited dialogue, which didn't make sense outside of a very specific context of Western mid-twentieth century art history. The artists wanted to participate in a much broader dialogue; they saw from the world around them that this art world background could not be the whole story. Robert Kushner said:

I think all of us felt like saying, "It's a big world, look at your grandmother's quilt, look at the carpet you've been standing on, look at that ornament outside your building, look at what's happening in other countries. . . . Enjoy it, it's a huge rich visual feast out there."²

The P&D artists opened a Pandora's box with their willingness to expand on the existing ideas about contemporary American art. Once they began moving in this new direction, they could not go back to their previous isolation.

This movement is one of the last of modernism and one of the first of postmodernism. As such, it has been challenging to classify. It was one of several movements in the constellation known as pluralism. P&D offers a lexicon of images through which many past sensibilities have been filtered. Its artists challenged presumptions about the definitions of art versus craft, West versus East, and inclusion versus expansion, especially as some of these issues were addressed by the feminist movement. They made it possible for countless subsequent artists to use pattern, decoration, and ornament,³ and their innovations and concerns continue to resonate in the art world today. These artists' investigations coincided with a moment of rising interest in exoticism in the American contemporary art scene, partly a result of changing American travel habits.

The title of this exhibition is intended to convey the romantic qualities in the works of this group of eleven artists—Cynthia Carlson, Brad Davis, Valerie Jaudon, Jane Kaufman, Joyce Kozloff, Robert Kushner, Kim MacConnel, Tony Robbin, Miriam Schapiro, Ned Smyth, and Robert Zakanitch—working on art inspired by imagery from the distant past, faraway places, and the

beautiful, sentimental, or kitschy close at hand. Kim MacConnel remarked on their unity: "Here is this clearly defined group of people creating interesting, strong, visual compelling art, in a rousing, high-energy environment that received tremendous recognition." Robert Zakanitch noted that it was a disparate group, though: "We all disagreed on almost everything except this attitude that we had about ornamentation and decoration and kind of attacking the sterile approach that art was at that time." The focus of *Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art 1975–1985* is on these artists who came together for a brief period for meetings, panels, and exhibitions. P&D as a movement can be understood by surveying its beginnings, considering the main events/exhibitions, and then exploring the recognition that resulted and the backlash that occurred.

THE BEGINNINGS WITH GOLDIN

Art critic Amy Goldin became the primary mentor of this loose group of artists. Working in New York as a critic and historian, Goldin decided to take a break as a visiting critic in California for the 1969–70 academic year.⁴ Her friends, artist Eleanor Antin and poet David Antin, invited her to the University of California at San Diego, where they were both teaching. There, Goldin met graduate student Kim MacConnel and undergraduate student Robert Kushner through a class she taught called "The Art Box,"⁵ in which she questioned the

rigid definition of Western art. MacConnel and Kushner sought out Goldin's advice, friendship, and guidance in developing a different approach to their work. MacConnel recalled that Goldin posed the question, "What are the boundaries of art making and how could you transgress them?"⁶ He and Kushner found her embrace of Islamic art particularly compelling. Initially interested in kilims, MacConnel then began tracing carpet patterns—borders and fields—to unravel the compositional system. It was but one of his sources, but an essential beginning. He decided to make paintings that mimicked a textile he had found comprised of several pieces of ikat weavings sewn together. He found this single piece an extraordinary revelation.

Kushner similarly fell in love with Islamic patterning, art, and ornament through MacConnel's passion for their compositions and through his nascent efforts as a collector. When Goldin occasionally returned to New York, as she did in the spring of 1970, Kushner would visit with her. They wandered into a carpet store and he purchased one, which became a kind of talisman for him. He would display it wherever he lived or visited and even took commissions to repair small carpets. They returned to California and decided, with MacConnel, to use the carpets they were purchasing as the basis for one of the art department's "Crit Nights." Kushner remembers, "Amy had such strong feelings about presenting them."

metal flake (reflective material, like used on motorcycles). And then she began showing her beaded pairs, on black velvet canvas, as a way of exploring light reflective material. The pairs of "paintings" functioned for Kaufman as decorative elements, which then prompted her to emancipate the beading into hangings, free from the background into the space of the gallery. Beading was a female adornment used on women's dresses, on bags—it was using women's materials—but was mostly about the reflective quality of the bead, which for her was also about the decorative. Kaufman wanted to make a statement about the gorgeousness of the material. She was close friends and allied politically with artist Ree Morton, who died an untimely death in 1977 from a car accident, and was an influence on Cynthia Carlson in her work. Morton worked extensively in installations, which were broadly influential on Carlson, who created several important installations in 1975 and 1976 at Hundred Acres Gallery, where she literally covered the wall with squiggles of paint to suggest embellished reliefs. Carlson came to the use of the squiggles of paint from her pattern paintings of the early 1970s, whose compositions and forms are based on woven textiles. Additionally, articles of the period discuss and define common features and qualities of women's art, as when Cynthia Carlson, Jane Kaufman, Joyce Kozloff, and Miriam Schapiro are noted for the obsessive repetition that was a recurring feature of women's work.¹⁷

The notion of irony and anxiety are constants in recent American art, but absent in P&D. P&D artists focused their energies elsewhere—on eroticism, play, and color. The use of pattern and fabric suggests clothing and, by extension, the body.¹⁸ Kim MacConnel perhaps summed up the significance of soft, cheerful imagery and forms in reference to his practice when he commented, "I was actually fighting the good fight."

THE IMMEDIATE AND DISTANT PAST IN EUROPE AND AMERICA

The artists did not spring forth fully formed, but their work did "have something to do with pleasure," which was a much-maligned concept for art.¹⁹ "Decorative" was a negative term, despite many minimalist painters creating works that could be called that, such as Frank Stella, who invoked Matisse as the forerunner for his desire to make decoration "truly viable in unequivocal abstract terms."²⁰ David Bourdon (or his editor) perhaps crystallized the sentiment most perceptively, when a piece he wrote for *The Village Voice* was titled "Decorative Is Not a Dirty Word."²¹

P&D artists have many debts to the art of the preceding generations.²² Miriam Schapiro, Robert Zakanitch, and Jane Kaufman had all achieved recognition as abstract painters in the late 1960s and early 1970s before turning to

work, aimed at mending the firmament that is constantly being torn. He continued, "Art can plant seeds of optimism deep into the human psyche." Just as traveling was becoming more common, so these artists wanted to "embrace the whole world," a phrase several of them have used in describing their desire to investigate all the possibilities. This very antiminimalist stance was expansive and has often been called "maximalism" for its inclusiveness.³⁷

CALIFORNIA AND NEW YORK AS SOURCES

The presence of several of the artists in California and New York City permitted a meaningful dialogue about their emerging interests in pattern, decoration, and ornament: Kushner and MacConnel with Amy Goldin in San Diego; Schapiro, Kozloff, and Zakanitch in Los Angeles, then back in New York; Jaudon and Robbin in New York, where most of the artists and Goldin were based. Some critics and some of the artists have argued that the bright light, the connections to nature, and the more emancipated lifestyle in Los Angeles and San Diego directly influenced the colorful, vivid colors of P&D. Miriam Schapiro noted that "P&D came out of the sense of lushness of the landscape. We're not talking about living in an asphalt city, we're talking about being under the sky at the beach and being surrounded by the blueness of blue of the water."

Some have seen the grid of the patterning in P&D art as an outcome of the urban structure of New York City. Kim MacConnel told me that George Sugarman berated him for using color (despite Sugarman's active use of bright colors), insisting, "This town is about somberness. It is dark and it is serious. The West Coast palette is something antithetical to the New York eye, so to speak, and you're never going to make it in this town, kid." And Robert Kushner described how entranced he was by Brad Davis's habit of photographing architectural ornament on buildings in New York, identifying a whole encyclopedia of decoration there.

JOY

POSTMODERNISM AND COLLAGE

Arguably, Pattern and Decoration is the first postmodern art movement, because the artists utilized a broad array of source material and embraced the impermanent, the common, and the excluded in their content and images. "Without P&D," Robert Zakanitch noted, "there would be no postmodern." P&D artists employed pastiche, appropriation, and hybridization in substantially new ways, introducing a new kind of collage into contemporary art. Critic Jeff Perrone characterized their practice as either "literal collage," where the media are layered, or "metaphorical collage," where elements "have been decontextualized and then layered, not

merely juxtaposed." He further noted the expansive nature of the references "to other decoration, as a feminist statement, as a diaristic accumulation of experience, as a pun on modernist painting, or even as a diagram of the 'fourth dimension'."³⁸ Kozloff described her art after the early '70s as collages of imagery from other cultures.³⁹

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GRID

The grid would form the basis for the use of pattern.⁴⁰ Tony Robbin noted that "patterns—which can be complex in themselves—when juxtaposed, superimposed, or interpenetrated, establish spatial complexity, which I think is the most potent metaphor for contemporary experience."⁴¹ Robert Kushner remarked to me that "if you think about it, the grid is really the ultimate decorative reduction." Grids were related to the recent past of minimalist obsession with geometry, but also to homes in the case of Miriam Schapiro; quilts for Schapiro⁴² and Jane Kaufman; and architectural ornament in Valerie Jaudon's work. The notion of repeating patterns and tessellations came from rugs and wallpaper for Robert Zakanitch, Cynthia Carlson, and Robert Kushner and from Chinese clip art for Kim MacConnel and also for Robert Kushner, while tiles from Mexico and Morocco were of central importance to Joyce Kozloff. Jane Kaufman looked closely at Moroccan and Tunisian art and considered carefully Eugène Delacroix and Henri Matisse.⁴³

Ned Smyth looked to European architectural motifs and decorations, while Brad Davis focused on the details of Islamic art, then Chinese art.

It is necessary to understand the radical nature of what these artists were doing, even as they used the much-celebrated grid. The P&D artists liked the romantic spirit of abstract expressionism, but disliked its machismo and the austerities of minimalism and conceptual art.⁴⁴ Individually, they figured out how to use the grid as a way to move from the existing dialogue in a new direction. Critic John Perreault remarked to me that these artists were "filling in the grid with historical references and beautiful colors."⁴⁵ The grid served as an organizing principle for the surface, evident in several of the more geometrical works in this exhibition, such as the art of Kozloff, Jaudon, Robbin, Carlson, and Smyth. In the more organic pieces on view, the grid is utilized in forming the structure of the work itself, as evidenced in the art of Zakanitch, Kushner, MacConnel, Schapiro and Kaufman, as a way to define themselves in distinction from the then-current emphasis on formalism and the severity of the picture plane.⁴⁶

INCLUSIVITY AND EXPANSIVENESS

The American art world had become increasingly insular by the end of the 1960s. Some artists were searching for other

directions. Robert Zakanitch summed up his approach in a 1983 statement:

Painting had become too cerebral and I wanted it to become more physical, more touchable (but still intelligent), and I wanted to reach a broader audience and not just the art historian, artist sect. . . . What was becoming evident and wonderfully ironic was that although I was now using referential imagery (which gave me the feeling of freshness, newness, unlimitedness and excitement), it was through the use of abstraction, the emphases on the paint and surface that the dynamics began to happen and what made it art. But what had radically changed was the content and my attitude which was now interested in additive and not reductive ideas. Modern art, as I knew it, would never be the same for me.⁴⁷

Zakanitch's comments echo many similar sentiments from the other P&D artists, who wanted to broaden the formal language of art. Amy Goldin helped many find their way in doing just that by emphasizing the formal language of pattern, of ornament.

AMY GOLDIN

Goldin's role in providing an intellectual framework for pattern, decoration, and

ornament largely evolved from her efforts to define the formal aspects of art and ways to communicate them and her study and promotion of Islamic art, non-Western art, and folk art⁴⁸ through private meetings with the artists, public panels, and a series of important articles in the American art press. Goldin problematized the distinctions between fine art and craft and the relationships between grid and frame.⁴⁹ She was a formalist, interested in basic concepts of art and how to communicate them, so she began using textiles and rugs to discuss ideas like balance, pattern, and rhythm.⁵⁰ She also actively embraced Matisse's late work, even though at that time in the 1970s, it had not been considered an important part of his art. She articulated a concept of decorative art that was profoundly influential to the P&D artists: that decoration could and should be examined with the same intensity as art.⁵¹ Goldin defined the three characteristics of decoration, according to Kushner, as: flat, expansive, and with subject matter subordinated to the overall visual experience.⁵² She exposed the artists to forms, including the expressive possibilities of geometrical complexity, nonmimetic conceptualism, and vegetal, organic imagery. These features were enormously important because P&D artists were interested in abandoning the static, planar approach of American art from the 1960s. P&D represented an energetic alternative to the then-dominant formalism espoused by Clement Greenberg, among others, so Goldin was an important guide.

proved emancipating for Miriam Schapiro, Joyce Kozloff, Valerie Jaudon, Jane Kaufman, and Cynthia Carlson personally and professionally. Its inclusivity enabled each of them to look at women's work—vernacular forms, such as quilts, embroidery, and beading—and the domestic in ways that been previously verboten in the art world. Critic Carrie Rickey has commented that feminism was central to the move away from minimalism: "minimalism was ready to tumble, and women were there to push."⁶⁹ Cynthia Carlson, Robert Kushner, Kim MacConnel, and Robert Zakanitch looked closely and carefully at wallpaper design, textile patterning, and rug compositions for imagery, forms, and designs.⁷⁰

SCHAPIRO AND KOZLOFF AND SCHAPIRO AND ZAKANITCH IN CALIFORNIA

Separately, in 1971–72, Miriam Schapiro was involved in the consideration of decoration as a means of breaking free from the rigid proscriptions of contemporary art. As a professor at Cal Arts, she was actively involved in the Feminist Art Program, a landmark course designed to help women students make art from their own content. She made a room for *The Dollhouse*, a small sculpture consisting of six rooms done in collaboration with student artist Sherry Brody, that was a seraglio, the living quarters for women in a Turkish home. The dollhouse was part of the larger feminist installation known as *Womanhouse*, a milestone in the history of contemporary art. Schapiro

made this lavish, Persian-inspired room as a way to investigate how women's experience had been structured through the domestic interior. Additionally, the idea of using exotic fabrics was another transgressive act, beyond the conceptual contravention of a dollhouse as an artwork.

Joyce Kozloff's association with Miriam Schapiro would eventually flower into her involvement in feminism and later P&D-style painting. Kozloff began her career auspiciously with a series of geometric abstractions at her first solo show at Tibor de Nagy Gallery in 1970 at age twenty-eight;⁷¹ these particular works were based on a trip through Sicily the artist took with her husband, the art critic Max Kozloff, in 1968. Kozloff was strongly influenced by the Greek temples there, particularly Agrigento, Selinunte, and Segesta, the visual appearance of the "columns against the sky and spaces between them." She continues, "I also held in my memory the color and light—springtime, the wildflowers in the fields around the temples, pinkness in the morning light, deep purples as the sun set in the evening."⁷² Kozloff and Schapiro were introduced in 1967 by Max Kozloff, who was close friends with Schapiro and her husband, Paul Brach. Brach invited Max Kozloff to teach at Cal Arts the first year it opened in 1970–71 and the foursome spent much time together. Kozloff became involved in feminist consciousness-raising groups in the fall of 1970, invited by another faculty wife. She notes, "I was radicalized very fast."⁷³ In the winter of that year, at a brunch

Schapiro had invited her to attend at the home of June Wayne, she became directly involved in initiating a feminist project, specifically the first organization for women artists in Los Angeles, the Los Angeles Council of Women Artists. Kozloff continues,

This group protested the Art in Industry show at the L.A. [Los Angeles] County Museum of Art, a big blockbuster show, all male. We had a press conference and made a lot of demands. One of the most visible outcomes was the show, "Women Artists: 1550-1950," curated by Ann Sutherland-Harris and Linda Nochlin [which was held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art].

Leaving L.A. in June 1971, Kozloff went to San Francisco for the summer with her family, where she joined another consciousness-raising group. She returned to New York in September, when her husband took a position at Queens College alongside colleagues such as Amy Goldin, newly appointed to teach there as well. Kozloff's work of 1971-72 contained motifs taken from California and New Mexico.

Robert Zakanitch, invited out to California by Schapiro, gave several lectures to her students on a new direction in his work. Later he wrote about this new approach, "I had to make my own decisions."⁷⁴ A geometric abstract painter, Zakanitch was shifting more and more toward

patterns, such as those seen in wallpaper. The work also evolved from his desire to create luxuriant imagery using lush domestic patterns and opulent fabric decoration. He became intently involved in considering the notions of ascribed beauty within Western culture. He was very interested in Islamic art, but subsequently disavowed its influence on him. One of the key issues of his work—the absence of distinction between painting, sculpture, architectural ornament, and all other forms of visual artistic expression—could arguably be seen as stemming from Islamic and Asian art.

Zakanitch was hesitant to speak, but Schapiro encouraged him. He has noted that support as important in his increasing desire to explore decoration. He has told me on several occasions that decoration was a third option after realism and abstraction, which he found provocative. Kushner tells a humorous anecdote about Zakanitch's bravura in embracing the decorative when he was asked during a panel discussion how he was saying his art was different from wallpaper, Zakanitch boldly responded, "I'm not!"⁷⁵ A shocking statement to the assembled crowd of art world aficionados. Dr. Willy Bongard, author of a newsletter for collectors, reported from Europe about P&D with much interest in the mid- to late 1970s. He remarked on how P&D was sometimes called wallpaper, but he saw it as filtered and revised, remarking on how the artists had transformed the source much like Roy Lichtenstein had modified his

Robert Zakanitch

Robert Zakanitch's main concern with the basic issues of line, form, color, and scale prompted him to find new outlets for painting. In the 1970s, he wanted to create sumptuous surfaces, engaging and lavish, even as his peers disdained him for making art embodying this kind of visual pleasure. Zakanitch wanted to make generous, abundant images unlike any the world had ever seen before, and felt pattern was a third alternative painting style, after realism and abstraction. His paintings have graceful surface designs that recall garden structures, feathered cloth, and elaborate textiles, and also have luxurious color. His use of repeat motifs enables him to locate this typically marginalized kind of imagery in the center of his canvas. In each of the three paintings in this exhibition, *Green Goose Waltz* of 1977, *Day Trellis* of 1979,

and *Wasp (Gentry Series)* of 1983, the artist has explored romantic beauty in several forms.

Green Goose Waltz, Zakanitch remarked to me recently, was personal to him. He was impressed by the Europeans, who were so interested in P&D painting, following the Basel Art Fair when Holly Solomon sold so many paintings in 1977. The American art world had largely rejected P&D, so Zakanitch wanted to embrace it in paintings like this one. Also, he wanted to play on imagery related to his Czech, Ukrainian, and Hungarian ancestry and all the handiwork and crafts his aunt and grandmother did that were displayed in the home, as well as flowered drapes and slipcovers. The ornamented surfaces of 1940s linoleum tile, which he recalled from his childhood, were also extremely influential on the feathery forms in this painting. Brad Davis had a book of linoleum tile patterns that Zakanitch loved to examine. He felt nothing could be more vulgar than using the reference to linoleum tiles in contemporary painting. Above all, he wanted to breach the walls of formalism to make a new kind of modernism, as an affront to what he calls "honcho" art, which he confronted by taking things a step further and using iridescent pink and silver paint.

Day Trellis, based on a trellis in his garden on Long Island, was quite confrontational because it was a fresh assault on minimalist thinking—flowers on a trellis, quite taboo as a subject. Zakanitch wanted to abandon the intellectual

rules of art to make beautiful paintings. Patsy Norvell, his wife at that time, was making a site-specific work using a trellis (much less ornate than this painting), so he decided to investigate the form and shape as well, as the central image.

Wasp (Gentry Series) was created soon after he and Norvell visited Florence. He saw many Giotto paintings in person for the first time and was incredibly moved by the way the artist handled fabric and cloth. Giotto's fluid treatment of fabric is evident in almost all his paintings and frescos, as in *The Epiphany*, circa 1320, in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art; it reveals Giotto's use of subtle modulation, extremely difficult in the media of tempera and fresco in which he worked, as a way to render textiles. The Gentry series ended up looking like some kind of couture study, as several of the paintings looked like fabric studies. Arguably, the linear structure underlying Zakanitch's composition in this painting harkens back to Giotto's earlier schematization of textiles. Zakanitch wanted to combine the old with the new in a joyful expression of the beauty of painting and its possibilities.



Giotto di Bondone
The Epiphany. c.1320
Tempera on wood, gold ground
17 3/4 x 17 1/4 inches
The Metropolitan Museum of Art
John Stewart Kennedy Fund, 11.126.1



ROBERT ZAKANITCH
Day Trellis, 1979
Oil on canvas, 88 x 132 inches
Courtesy of the artist



ABOVE:
ROBERT ZAKANITCH
Green Goose Waltz, 1980
Acrylic on canvas, 84 x 180 inches
Artist's Studio, Brooklyn, New York
Courtesy of the artist

RIGHT:
ROBERT ZAKANITCH
Untitled, 1973
Silkscreen, 64 x 40 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Anonymous gift 91.8.3





ROBERT ZAKANITCH
Untitled, 1983
Silkscreen, 50 x 38 inches
Collection of the Hudson River Museum
Anonymous gift 91.8.2



ROBERT ZAKANITCH
Wasp (Gentry Series), 1983
Acrylic on canvas, 85 5/8 x 67 3/4 inches
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian
Institution, Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase, 1983

Chronology of Shows and Writings

ANNE SWARTZ

The P&D artists were part of a conscious movement: they knew each other, held several meetings to exchange ideas, and exhibited their work together. Their efforts developed and coalesced several prevailing interests in the art world, in pattern painting, in women's work, and in decoration.

1974–1975

In November 1974, pattern painter Mario Yrissary held a meeting, attended by Valerie Jaudon and Tony Robbin, in preparation for a panel on "The Pattern in Painting," scheduled for February 1975 as one of the "Artists Talk on Art" series at Artist's Space, coordinated by art historian Irving Sandler. The panel was organized by Yrissary and moderated by Peter Frank; speakers included Martin Bressler, Rosalind Hodgkins, Jaudon, Robbin, and Sanford Wurmfeld. Perhaps the first major event where P&D began to be fleshed out was when Robert Zakanitch held a general "Pattern" meeting at his loft on Warren Street. The attendees included Amy Goldin, Leonore Goldberg, Rosalind Hodgkins, Jaudon, Kozloff, Kushner, Robbin, Schapiro, Kendall Shaw, Nina Yankowitz, and Zakanitch. Several of the artists had solo exhibitions in 1974 and 1975 where they began to show P&D work, including Kozloff's 1974 exhibition at Tibor de

Nagy Gallery, Robbin's 1974 exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, Zakanitch's 1974 show at Cunningham Ward Gallery, and a series of shows at Holly Solomon Gallery, which officially opened in September 1975. Solomon represented only one of the women associated with P&D and never really took to the feminist politics underscoring it. She briefly represented Jaudon, who then moved on to Sidney Janis Gallery. Her opening exhibition was a group show that included nineteen artists, most significantly Kushner, MacConnel, and Smyth. Davis had a solo show at Holly Solomon Gallery, immediately following the opening group show. And MacConnel had a show there from late November through early December 1975, followed by a very decorative show of Lanigan-Schmidt, also in December. Also of particular note was the number of works by Kushner and MacConnel related to P&D that were selected by curator Marcia Tucker for the Whitney Biennial. Goldin commented on this in an article for *Art in America*.

1976–1977

The P&D artists were impressed and astonished by the surge of interest in their work. They had a rapid succession of shows, by 1970s standards, in the United States and then in Europe. They spoke on panels together; they got reviewed by major critics; they sold entire exhibitions to prominent collectors. It was a heady period of interest that developed very rapidly. "Ten Approaches to the Decorative," the first show

Pattern and Decoration: An Ideal Vision in American Art, 1975-1985

PLATE 19

ROBERT KUSHNER

Visions Beyond the Pearly Curtain, 1975

Acrylic on fabric, 120 x 202 inches

The Estate of Horace H. Solomon

PLATE 20

KIM MACCONNEL

Flourishing Side Line Occupations, 1978

Glued found fabric, 121 x 142 inches

Courtesy of the Artist

PLATE 21

KIM MACCONNEL

Good Work, 1979

Acrylic on mixed fabric, 50 1/2 x 114 inches

Marieluse Hessel Collection, Hessel Museum

of Art, Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard

College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

PLATE 22

KIM MACCONNEL

Mirro Lure, 1979

Acrylic and metallic paint on cut found fabric,

107 x 44 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PLATE 23

TONY ROBBIN

79-8, 1979

Acrylic on canvas, 70 x 120 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PLATE 24

TONY ROBBIN

Untitled, 1976

Acrylic on canvas, 54 1/2 x 140 inches

Gift of William D. and Norma Canelas Roth,

Collection of the Orlando Museum of Art

PLATE 25

TONY ROBBIN

Untitled #19, 1978

Acrylic on canvas, 56 x 70 inches

Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Howard Zipser

PLATE 26

TONY ROBBIN

Untitled #20, 1978

Acrylic on canvas, 56 x 70 inches

Private collection

PLATE 27

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

Collaboration: Mary Cassatt and Me, 1976

Fabric, acrylic, paper on paper, 30 x 22 inches

Collection of Dr. Melvin and Mrs. Nora Berlin

PLATE 28

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

Gates of Paradise, 1980

Acrylic, digital images, and mixed media on

canvas, 50 x 60 inches

Courtesy of The Flomenhaft Gallery

PLATE 29

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

Heartland, 1985

Acrylic and fabric on canvas, 85 x 94 inches

Collection of the Orlando Museum of Art,

Gift of Women for Special Acquisition

and Council of 101

PLATE 30

MIRIAM SCHAPIRO

Little Fan, 1975

Fabric and wood, 17 x 15 inches

Courtesy of Danielle Dutry

PLATE 31

NED SMYTH

Black & White Columns, 1985

Wood, stone, glass mosaic,

each 24 x 11 x 108 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PLATE 32

NED SMYTH

Leap of Faith, 1985

Stone and glass mosaic on wood, 60 x 48 inches

Collection of Janet and David Brinton

PLATE 33

ROBERT ZAKANITCH

Day Trellis, 1979

Oil on canvas, 88 x 132 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PLATE 34

ROBERT ZAKANITCH

Green Goose Waltz, 1980

Acrylic on canvas, 84 x 180 inches

Courtesy of the artist

PLATE 35

ROBERT ZAKANITCH

Untitled, 1977

Silkscreen, 64 x 40 inches

Collection of the Hudson River Museum,

Anonymous gift 91.8.3

PLATE 36

ROBERT ZAKANITCH

Untitled, 1983

Silkscreen, 50 x 38 inches

Collection of the Hudson River Museum,

Anonymous gift 91.8.2

PLATE 37

ROBERT ZAKANITCH

Wasp (Gentry Series), 1983

Acrylic on canvas, 85 5/8 x 67 3/4 inches

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden,

Smithsonian Institution,

Washington, D.C., Museum Purchase, 1983

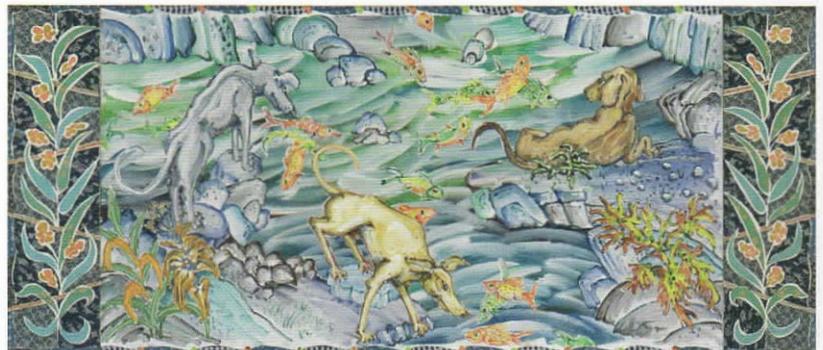


PLATE 4