

Kendall Art & Design:

From the

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HUDSON — Two words come to mind immediately upon first glance at the small watercolors by painter Andrew Forge and sculptor Garth Evans — nature and thought.

Nature is initially suggested by the superficial resemblance of color, light and in some cases, form, one would commonly identify as derived from perception of one's natural surroundings. Thought here is not digressive or associative but is attached to decisions about how to reconstruct nature through an equivalently organic process whose aim is revealing the "nature" of nature.

Andrew Forge's opaque dots, thin dashes and expansive marks, are a language system: precise symbols created for the specific purpose of visually communicating the activity of a space through reconstructing it. As a result of this, the watercolors

are like a code whose legibility depends upon the interrelation of specific attributes and accretion of elements. They are not generally visually seductive, but affect one's brain like a puzzle.

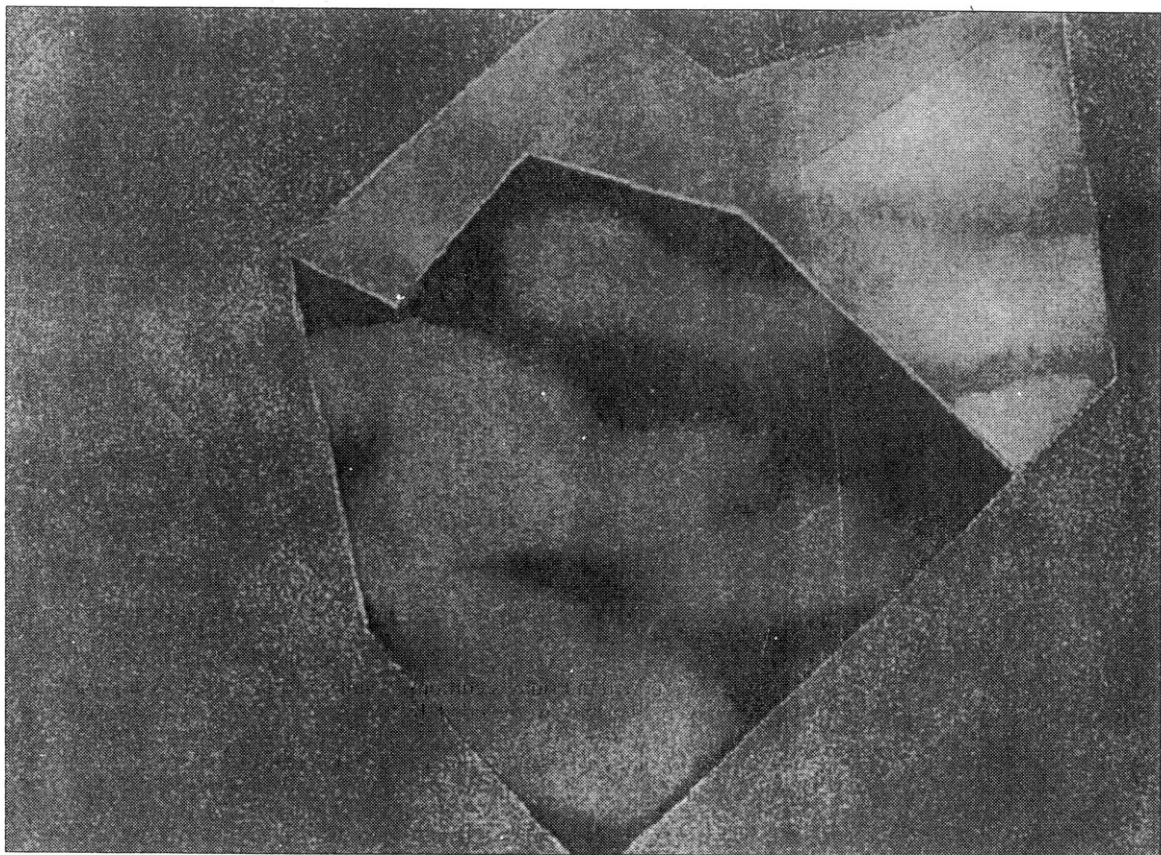
If in the pieces called *Hang* or *Branch*, the title were changed to the infinitive, by adding the preposition "to," to hang, to branch, it would clarify how much these carefully layered and positioned dots and dashes are about actions — verbs — and the painstaking encryption of those actions from the inner most core of spatial relationship. In other words, these are not paintings of the way the branch looks, these construct the phenomena of branching.

Despite thus far sounding exclusively cerebral, Forge's work is simultaneously sensual. Transparencies and densities, direction and surface are distinct and full of contrasts which embody the interdependent

rhythms of nature. Forge selects a palette of relationships which will develop the internal spatial boundaries of the action being created. They range from bright clear and opaque colors often paired with several neutral variants of those colors, to liquid and airy transparent dashes. Whether densely layered as in *Branch* or open, charting and circumscribing ambiguously deep passages of white field as in *Study: Broken Grid*, each color dot and type

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serves to establish a plane of space, traverse a plane of air, direct one around or behind edges, demarcate boundaries and denote surface character.



Garth Evans' watercolor #55

inside out

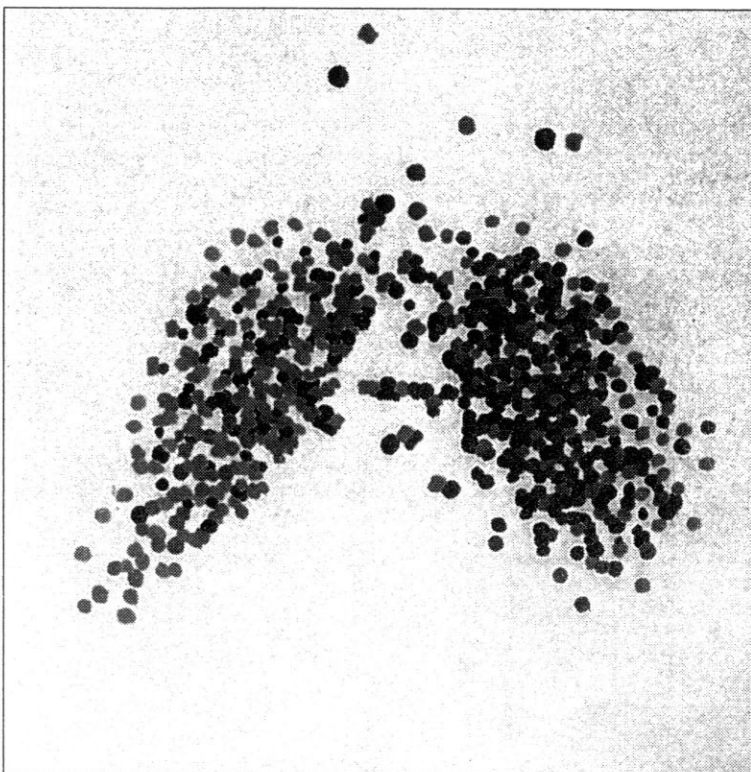
The more the use of dots and dashes are analyzed the more their use implies references to optical phenomena as well. They seem capable of reflecting or absorbing light. In *Against Blue*, a back-lit maze of yellow lines emerges against blue and red fields of dots. Neutral reds and blues, while creating sandwiching walls of different proportions and densities, also construct an equivalent of the bouncing afterimage dot, resting the eye between exposure to bright stimulus.

Read phenomenologically in *Breath*, the most mysterious, shape oriented of the paintings, the title refers to the activity of dots rhythmically pulsating in paired beats, organic forms suggest lungs, transferring and dispersing clean or "dirty" colored dots; the pink, red and blue nearly linear fingers of dots reach across the lower portion of the page in which these forms have settled.

The rigor of thought exemplified in all these works is most keen in *Breath*, so sure are its coordinates, so self-contained and extraordinary in its clarity, simultaneously ambiguous and open to the viewer's experience. Over all, the watercolor's success in Forge's body of work may be derived from its focus on isolated and specific incidents which allows the viewer to have more direct access to the thought/action, without being bogged by a labor intensive process. Even the variable density of gouache versus watercolor contribute to their specific sensuality.

Garth Evans' smoldering watercolors of contained, mostly organic forms, display a sculptor's concern for surface continuity and tactility, apparently the polar opposite of Forge's permeable planes. Through the process of applying and washing away pigment from the surface of the paper, Evans re-enacts nature's process of erosion, creating form through destroying the surface uniformity. Evans selects shapes from the residual color shadings with a decisive line, extracting and delineating facets and curves.

The layering of the color builds in the possibility of excavating depth from shallow overlapping fields. The inner luminosity of #20 hollows out an interior space for the snail-like aggregate of rounded forms, compactly curving in on themselves. As represented in this grouping, Evans' watercolor forms typ-



Andre Forge's *Breath*

ically join volumetric implications with a figure/ground ambiguity derived from his sensitivity to contour as well as to color. This shape play allows the forms to unfold actively as you look at them, shifting from flatness to volume, from a shape appearing to be on the top of a form to being inside it, for example.

One of the most concise and light filled pieces, #15, is reminiscent of both the color, light and drawing of Matisse, as well as the playful biomorphic shapes of Jean Alp. Made of pure, flat red, green and burnt sienna on a black field, it is like a cross section of a vegetable at one glance and like an armchair the next. Though Evans does not rely on the bleeding of color to imply inner space here, we are constantly watching the top point become a negative shape, shifting from concave to convex. Because of this we can imagine we can see both inner and outer views of the form.

The wall sculptures being exhibited along with the 2D work are of the geometrically faceted variety, and the forms still encourage one to examine the textures and subdivisions of the inner space. In wall piece #4 from 1988-

90, Evans' sumptuous use of contrasting waxed wood surfaces simulates the appearance of transparent membranes of frosted glass. Many aspects of the later watercolors' obsession with inner light are given 3-dimensional form in this sculpture; A white smooth concave surface is cut away from a facet like the negative wedge of an orange, also introducing some of the organic shape shifting.

Evans' mostly curved and rounded shapes unfolding in some petal-like #18, some egg-like extrusions, #14, still conform to the strong outer walls of the total shape. In them, it appears that Evans is applying nature's processes of splitting and morphing to an artist's world of forms. Pulsing with warm light, the watercolors appear to recreate it's constant fecundity.

Andrew Forge, former Dean of the Yale School of Art, and Garth Evans, both mature and distinguished artists, and both recipients of the John Simon Guggenheim Award, as well as numerous other grants and honors, will be exhibiting at Kendall Art & Design 609 Warren Street, Hudson through Oct. 19.