

In January 1981, six artists created works for the gallery walls in the Cranbrook Academy of Art/Museum. The works were made specifically for the spaces in the museum and existed only during the time of the exhibition. This publication acknowledges and records these monumental paintings.



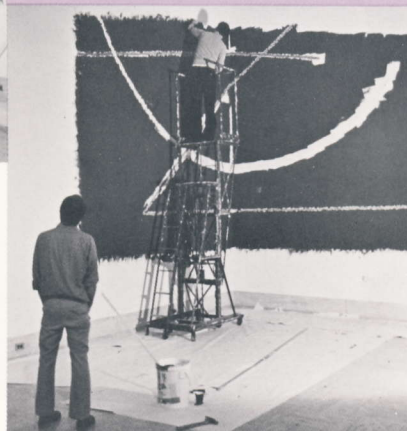
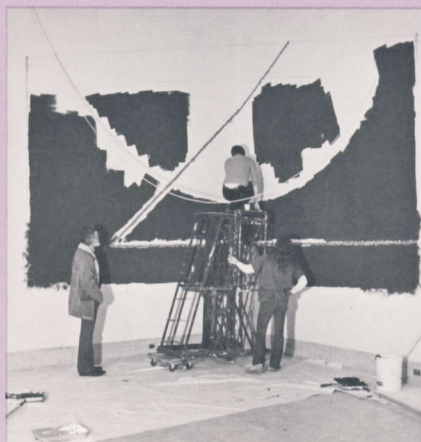
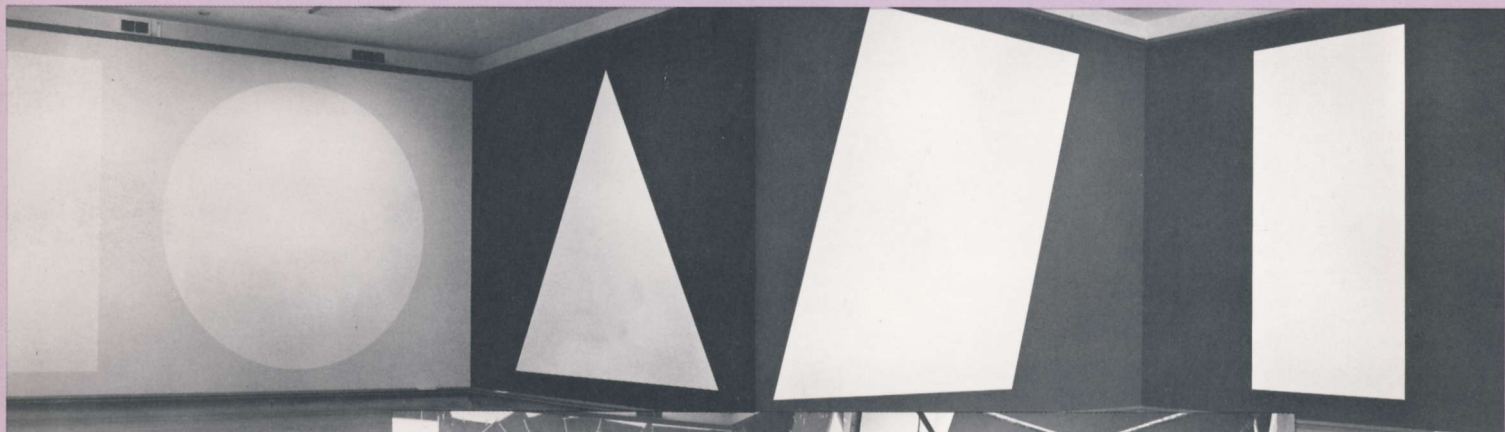
viewpoint'81



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Sol LeWitt Six Geometric Figures on Red, Yellow, Blue and Black Walls, 1981
White chalk on painted walls.

Born: Hartford, Connecticut, 1928. Lives and works in New York City.
Selected Exhibitions: Retrospective traveling exhibition, Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 1978-79. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, 1975. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Holland, 1974. Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, England, 1973. Documenta, Kassel, West, Germany, 1972, 1968. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN, 1972. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, 1971. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 1971. Tokyo Biennale, Japan, 1970. The Hague, The Netherlands, 1968. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 1967.

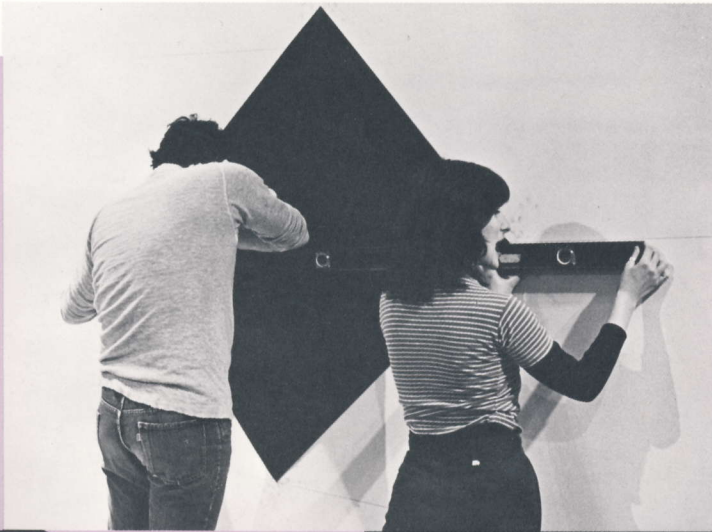


Patrick Ireland Wall Painting #6 (without rope) for Joe and Sadie, 1981

Born: Ballaghaderin, Ireland, 1934. Lives and works in New York City.
Selected Exhibitions: Akron Art Institute, Akron, OH, 1980. Charles Cowles Gallery, New York, NY, 1980. Protetch-McIntosh Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1980. Hanson-Fuller Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 1979. Pace Gallery, New York, NY, 1979. Castelli Gallery, New York, NY, 1978. Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA, 1978. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA, 1977. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA, 1975. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1974. Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, NY, 1974, 1970.

Dorothea Rockburne Drawing Which Makes Itself Series-
Indication Drawing for "Whitney Piece", 1973. Carbon paper and line.

Born: Verdun, Quebec, Canada, 1934. Lives and works in New York City.
Selected Exhibitions: Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona, 1979. Dayton Art Institute, OH, 1978. John Webber Gallery, New York, NY, 1978, 1976. Seibu Museum of Art, Tokyo, Japan, 1976. Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1975. Fogg Museum of Art, Cambridge, MA, 1973. Hartford College of Art, Hartford, CT, 1973. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, 1967. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 1972. University of Rochester Art Gallery, Rochester, NY, 1972.

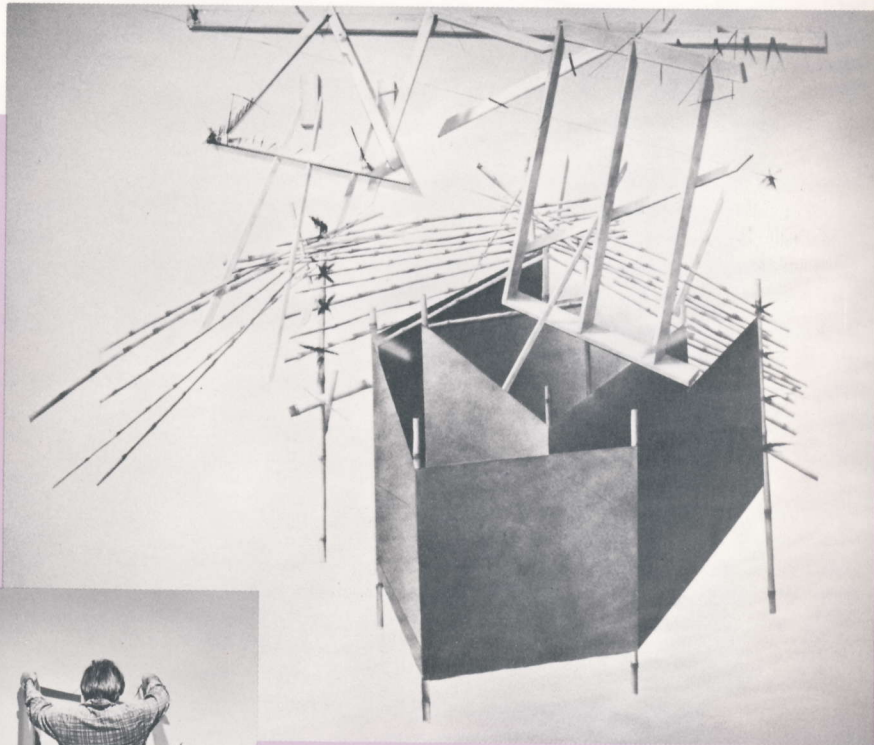


Daniel Buren Around the Openings of a Box, 1981

Born: Boulogne, France, 1938. Lives and works in New York City and Paris, France.
Selected Exhibitions: Watch the Doors Please, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1980-81.
95 Chairs, 7 Colors, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 1980. Space as Support, University Art Museum, Berkeley, California, 1979. Europe in the Seventies, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1978. Europe in the Seventies, The Art Institute of Chicago, 1977. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1976. Leo Castelli, New York City, 1976. Institute of Contemporary Art, London, England, 1976. Corridor Passage, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1975. 12x1, Palais des Beaux Arts, Brussels, 1975. Art and Project Gallery, Amsterdam, 1974

Rick Paul Black and White Series #3, 1981

Born: Cleveland, Ohio, 1943. Lives and works in Lafayette, Indiana. Selected Exhibitions: Lafayette Art Center, Lafayette, IN, 1981. Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago, IL, 1980. Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, OH, 1979. Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 1978. Miami University, Oxford, OH, 1978.



Gene Davis Black Yo-Yo, 1981

Born: Washington, D.C., 1920. Lives and works in Washington, D.C.
Commissions: Mural, South Mall Project, New York State Capitol Building, Albany, 1969. Mural, Neiman-Marcus, Bal Harbour, Florida, 1970. Franklin Footpath, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1971. Official Poster, List Foundation, Lincoln Center Concert Series, New York. Art Park Parking Lot, New York, 1979. Selected Exhibitions: Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1970, 1968, 1965, 1964. San Francisco Museum of Art, 1968. Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, D.C., 1968. Max Protetch Gallery, Washington, D.C., 1972. Museum of Modern Art, 1967, 1966, 1965. Guggenheim Museum, 1974. Whitney Museum Annuals, 1973, 1971, 1969, 1967.

The museum, designed by Eliel Saarinen in 1940,

affords magnificent spaces for contemporary art; many exhibitions have been presented there in recent years. For example, the first 'Viewpoint' exhibition in 1977 dealt with 'painting which is no longer stretched in the formal sense upon a canvas stretcher.'¹ Among the artists represented then was Sam Gilliam. He created huge hanging canvases, which filled much of the main gallery and orchestrated the environment with colorful and flowing forms. The work was unforgettable and suggested how an interior can be enriched and changed through painting.

Accordingly, the changing of the interior became of prime interest in 'Viewpoint '81', conceived to be a continuing exploration and dialogue with contemporary painting. Two of the artists, Gene Davis and Sol LeWitt, were invited to Cranbrook Academy of Art/Museum, based on the strength of their installations at the 1975 Corcoran Biennial of Contemporary American Painting. Both artists have considerable experience in dealing with large surfaces; Gene Davis, for example, had produced two enormous stripe paintings for road surfaces, one in front of the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the other in the parking lot of Artpark in New York State. The opportunity to create such vast works was obviously appealing to these two as well as the other artists who were invited to participate in 'Viewpoint '81'.

The transient nature of the paintings, lasting only a few weeks, is both an attraction and frustration. To be able to take risks and create a work of a passing moment attracts many artists; but when works are successful, as these works at the Cranbrook Museum were, it is frustrating for only their memory remains. Perhaps this aspect in itself holds an appeal to certain artists.

The opportunity to deal with new spaces and scales allows the artist to experiment, innovate and grow. Although the work may not endure, the experience does bring reputation to the artist and, in some cases, important commissions. This is the case of the earlier Viewpoint exhibition; Sam Gilliam has now two major commissioned works on view in Detroit; 'Wave Composition' at the Detroit General Receiving Hospital and 'Box Cars' at the Patrick V. McNamara Federal Building. One hopes that other commissions will be forthcoming; the region would be greatly enriched by a work by Gene Davis, Sol LeWitt or any one of the artists who participated in 'Viewpoint '81'.

At Cranbrook, the museum has a dual role—to enrich the education of the student and to enrich the community. The exhibition 'Viewpoint '81' achieved both, particularly for those students who participated in preparing and painting the work. These students, mostly from the Painting Department, had an unforgettable and invaluable experience working on such a scale and with such distinguished artists. The students were unselfish and untiring in their efforts and received praise from the artists—a reward, other than the experience itself, which should have a profound and lasting influence, especially toward the potential of their own painting. That potential is one of the most exciting achievements. In past years, the tendency has occurred to say that painting 'is finished', 'is done with', 'has no future'. 'Viewpoint '81' confirms that painting is vital and vibrant with potential. The act of painting will continue to fascinate and offer much to explore and discover for the artist and viewer, presenting ever changing viewpoints of art.

Painting directly on a surface is one of the oldest forms of art. 'Painting on walls goes back to those prehistoric days when cavemen had bison for breakfast', wrote Marsha Miro. 'The caveman, it seems, believed that if he didn't draw that ungainly animal on his cave wall to summon helpful spirits, his hunting party would return bison-less. Such artistic expression evolved into work as grand as Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling. But the concept is still as basic as graffiti on a vacant building or a child's scribbled fantasies on a bedroom door. It is also essential within the environment: a wall is part of a room's skin. Contemporary artists were led back to the wall in the late 1960's after New Yorker Sol LeWitt used the medium for his conceptual drawings. The return to wall paintings

occurred not out of necessity this time, but rather because the wall provided different parameters for ideas. Painting on walls was also an anti-commercial gesture, a way for artists to make impermanent art that could not easily be bought.'²

In her review 'Paintings Destined for a Brief Life', Corinne Abatt wrote, 'this exhibition of paintings directly on the interior museum walls gathers heightened value from its transience. Only a few of us will ever experience it, the rest of the world will have to enjoy it in another and less direct way—through a catalogue or video tape.'³

Considerable documentation of this exhibition from the preparatory work painting to final installation has been achieved through slides, photographs and video tape. No photographs, however, can convey the sensation of the works themselves. Several critical reviews in local newspapers serve as written documentation just as this publication serves as record of the exhibition.

The six artists invited to participate and produce work for the exhibition were Daniel Buren, Gene Davis, Patrick Ireland, Sol LeWitt, Rick Paul and Dorothea Rockburne.

'Washington artist **Gene Davis** took over the museum's main gallery for his **Black Yo-Yo**', writes critic Joy Hakanson Colby, 'fracturing the 104 feet of running space with two paintings on facing walls—one black with gray stripes and one dark blue with lighter blue stripes. The intervals between the stripes are reversed in the two paintings to set up a softly rolling cadence down the walls, and lights spotting the paintings emphasize unfolding rhythms.'⁴

The work was executed by Academy students working from the artists designs. Gene Davis visited the gallery months prior to the installation so that he could develop a work specifically for the museum environment. Over a ten day period, the students worked intensely from his design to create the painting. Davis says of his 21 year old preoccupation with painting stripes, 'I like their rectitude. They seem right . . . a very economical way to divide space and create a matrix to juxtapose color.'⁵

In an interview with John Gerard, curator of collections, Gene Davis said of his Cranbrook piece that, 'It is one example of the various utilizations of the stripe that I have done in smaller paintings over the years. That is this idea of an almost monochromatic surface with just two versions of the same color. I've done quite a few paintings like that.' Asked if this was his largest interior work, Davis replied, 'Yes, it is. As you already know, I have always been attracted to the extremes in scale—from very, very big paintings, down to my micro-paintings, some of which are 1/4" X 1/4". I believe one should go almost too far, one should go to the extreme. It gets back to this area of the seemingly ridiculous. The idea of doing a painting in the street and letting the cars drive over it seems to fall in that character, in that class. I got into doing overly large paintings as a result of this Philadelphia street painting, which I did in 1971-72. The Cranbrook piece is another variation of it, although it is not exact analogy—it is quite different actually. The Cranbrook piece has to do with fracturing the unity of a room by creating a gentle conflict between two walls. I could have fractured it much more abruptly by having that wall yellow, black and yellow; first I was going to do black and red, and I did a number of studies on it, but I didn't want that violent fracture. So I decided it should be a gentle fracture; you can see a conflict, a tug between the two sides, but it is a very gentle tug.'⁶

In the center gallery, the artist **Patrick Ireland** stretched a furry-looking blue plane across one corner of the space. It's all illusion, from the soft blue shape hanging in space to the swinging red and yellow rope lines intersecting it. The artist's main concern is a visual impact without the use of mechanical aids. He keeps the artist's hand evident, capitalizing on brushed edges. The illusionistic qualities of the paintings with an image suspended across the corner create an optical ambiguity. In his notebook, Patrick Ireland has written of corners;

A corner always seeks its vanishing point.
A corner has an horizon.
A corner is a frustrated corridor and vice versa.
From wall to wall across a corner, a straight line
(string) is convex upwards.⁷

Patrick Ireland painted the work himself with the assistance of Mark Roeyer, David Logsdon and Michael Jones.

In the south gallery, Anthony Sansotta was also responsible for the installation of the work by **Dorothea Rockburne, A Drawing Which Makes Itself**. The work is from a series of carbon paper and line works from 1973. This piece starts with a two sides carbon paper rectangle, folded and tipped on the wall to generate extension lines. '... the paper literally activates all the lines and is activated by them, by itself bearing the lines which it caused on the wall.'⁹ To make the drawing a human record, the artist insists that the smudgy fingerprints in the corners be left intact.

Rick Paul is an artist from Indiana, relatively unknown nationally, who deals with two dimensional illusion. He uses paper collage shapes, which he staples to the wall to create sculptural forms. The work of Rick Paul expresses the inspiration of visual interaction between two and three dimensional space. He intends his work to be patterned to the environment, by changing our spacial understanding. Responding to the interior, he invites the viewer into the mysterious ambiguity in space. The kaleidoscopic juxtaposition of line, shape and material results in work of deceptive fascination. His work is environmental in nature and, of necessity, transient.

Another artist who concerns himself with perception is **Daniel Buren**, who has conceived one of the most illusive of the works in this exhibition. It consists of sheets of black and white striped paper, which have been glued to the recesses of the museum windows, almost framing the view outside. The fact that the positioning of the windows makes some of the artwork visible only from outside the building and that the striped paper is nothing special seems to provoke viewers: It's not really art, the cry goes. The answer is that Buren's stripes do not constitute the whole of his art but just part of it. 'By drawing attention to the site, installation rescues site from obscurity, shows it as an auxiliary to the work; it is shown to inflect value upon the work without declaring its own visibility. Daniel Buren's work questions the situational conditions which affect the way art is seen, but he questions them situationally, and through an eye that is itself conditioned by situation.'¹⁰ He seems to be saying that works of art are no more than frames around nature's grandeur.

In bringing together these six artists, the Cranbrook Academy of Art/Museum continues its concern with contemporary art, particularly the exploration of new directions in painting and sculpture. This particular exhibition deals not only with painting, but the environment.

The transient nature of all these works is one of the most fascinating aspects of the exhibition. The works will remain in memory and documentation but not as object. The changing of our perception to the environment and the experience of these monumental paintings should remain as a stimulating and everlasting memory to those who were fortunate to view these works.

Roy Slade
January 1981

1. Cranbrook Academy of Art/Museum, *Viewpoint '77*, (Bloomfield Hills, Mi., 1977).
2. Marsha Miro, 'Cranbrook Artists Decorate A Room's Skin', *The Detroit Free Press*, (February 22, 1981).
3. Corinne Abatt, 'Fleeting: Paintings Destined for Brief Life', *The Eccentric Observer*, (January 22, 1981).
4. Joy Hakanson Colby, 'Cranbrook's TKO (temporary knock out)', *The Detroit News*, (February 8, 1981).
5. Gene Davis, interviewed by John Gerard, (Cranbrook Academy of Art/Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Mi.), January 24, 1981.
6. *Ibid.*
7. Patrick Ireland, *Notebooks*, January 1981.
8. The Museum of Modern Art, *Sol LeWitt*, ed. by Alicia Legg, (New York, 1978), p. 169.
9. Bruce Boice, *Dorothea Rockburne*, (Hartford Art School, University of Hartford, Hartford, Conn., 1973).
10. Jean-Francois Lyotard, 'The Works and Writings of Daniel Buren', *Artforum*, Vol. XIX, No. 6, (February 1981), p. 57.

Acknowledgment

'Viewpoint '81' is a continuation of Cranbrook exhibitions dealing with issues in contemporary painting and sculpture. Acknowledgment is due those who funded the exhibition and catalogue and those who worked so hard to produce the works.

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Thanks are due to the artists for their work and designs and encouragement. Gene Davis, Patrick Ireland, Rick Paul and Daniel Buren visited the Academy and worked with the students. Anthony Sansotta worked unselfishly on the installations of the paintings by Sol LeWitt and Dorothea Rockburne. Special thanks are due him for his involvement with the entire exhibition.

The works were installed by the artists, their assistants and the painting students of the Academy who devoted two weeks of intensive work for the process. They were: Gari Bernardi, Robert Brooks, Josie Browne, Doug Collins, Steve Daiber, Cliff Davis, John Derry, Kevin Falco, Addison Gross, Doug Johnson, Lucinda Johnson, Michael Jones, Gordon Lee, David Logsdon, Ruth Lyons, Nancy Metcalf, Tom Noffsinger, Sheila Provazza, Wayne Rodberg, Alan Roth, Stephanie Sarris, Sally Schluter and Susan Wadsworth.

A video tape of the exhibition was produced by the Archives of American Art under the direction of Dennis Barrie; Jerome Grove, president of the Center for Creative Studies made the equipment available. Finally, thanks must go to Linda Parks, museum administrator, and the museum staff for their continuing unselfish efforts and hard work. As can be seen, the entire venture was a cooperative effort which in itself was an education and enrichment for those involved.

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Credits

Catalogue designed by Lucille Tenazas.
Photographs by Steve Daiber and John Gerard.