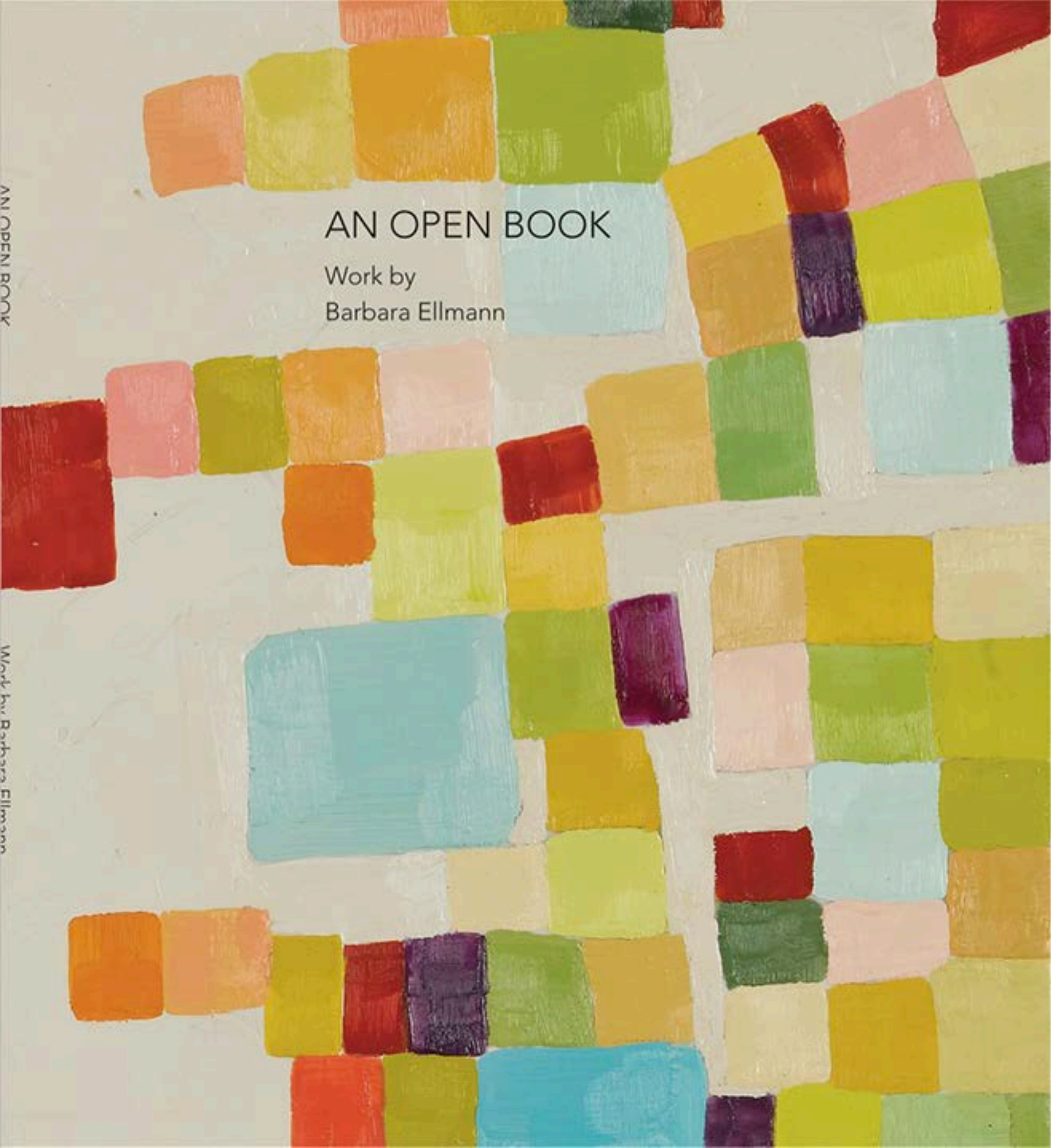




AN OPEN BOOK

Work by
Barbara Ellmann





AN
OPEN
BOOK



Barbara Ellmann



Preface

Within the gallery, the experience of this exhibition of Barbara Ellmann's work is presented as "an open book". With its absence of wall text, the exhibition is meant to be "read," perceived, and comprehended entirely visually, so that any narrative paired with these images originates from the viewer in response to, and in exchange with, the works. Each panel is developed from a variety of influences that Ellmann puts aside, brings forward, forgets, remembers, and returns to; her memory, its gaps and associations, becomes a means for abstraction. Likewise, as viewers, our prior experience and memory become a means to learn, know, and remember images—hers or ours.

On many levels the work is about ways for democratic communities and interactions to emerge. Her paintings are discrete projects; but they are displayed in grids, in galleries, and on her studio walls. In these "communities" their various qualities are highlighted or shadowed by their neighbors. The groupings can span over a decade of painting, and they uncover the artist's affinity for certain shapes, palettes, and compositions, changing and resurfacing over time; together they converge, conflict, or merely coexist.

As viewers, our eyes move across and throughout the grids with their own pathways, perhaps identifying a particular organizing principle first, or instead allowing one to emerge as we follow our intuition. Thoughtful essays in this catalog (full of words, of course) by Albert Mobilio and Joseph McElroy, provide an opportunity for us to follow two viewers as they move and are moved by Barbara Ellmann's arrangements. Mobilio steps across and down painting grids, noting confluences and dissonances along the way; from the drawings McElroy collects symbols, distilling urges to see and make.

The interest in highlighting this subjectivity comes from Ellmann's work as an aesthetic educator, and the profound influence her concerns and principles as painter and as instructor have had on one another. Maxine Greene, educational philosopher, friend, and mentor to Ellmann has said:

Lending their lives, young readers expand and deepen experience, ordered on these occasions in unfamiliar ways. Through this expansion, the readers discover ordinarily unseen and unknown dimensions of their own experiences. Not only may there be a pull toward new relationships, toward community, but such readers may be moved also to new modes of self-definition, new beginnings arising from an emerging awareness of both difference and possibility.¹

Ellmann has invited visitors to take on a critical role in this exhibition, as makers of their own aesthetic experience. *AN OPEN BOOK* is in part precisely about this collaboration. Her work and the viewer's response are a key subject of the show—an experiment in mutual exploration of the reflexive natures of artistic practice and aesthetic education; instruction and learning; experience and perception; subject and object.

An installation of contextual material has been included in order to fully parse these opportunities for collaboration and the transaction of ideas, to further stimulate active viewing and participation. The grid *PICTURE IT* [see opposite page] and its complementary iPad application take this invitation to share agency with the artist to its logical conclusion, wherein the viewers' visual choreography of the artist's arrangement are made manifest on the gallery wall. In this catalog, an excerpt from the writing of education scholar Elliot Eisner prompts us to focus on "Attention to Relationships" just as we encounter a series of grids with which to do so.

AN OPEN BOOK disavows the notion that teaching and doing are at odds, positing instead that the roles, like Ellmann's works, are fluid rather than fixed.

— Sophia Marisa Lucas, Curator

1. Greene. *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts and Social Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995.

Sophia Marisa Lucas is a curator based in Brooklyn, NY. Her practice is often slow and collaborative. She has developed and facilitated exhibitions and programming at The Artist's Institute, Hunter College Art Galleries, and the Museum of Arts and Design, among others.

AN OPEN BOOK

Work by
Barbara Ellmann

Albert Mobilio

Metaphorical and implied meanings follow in the wake of the phrase “an open book.” For instance, to say one’s life is an open book is to suggest candor and transparency. And the literal thing—an open book—is more than mere object. It implies the act of reading; the book is being used, or more specifically, being entered. An open book, then, signals a process of engagement with text and narrative. Barbara Ellmann deliberately invokes this meaning with the title of this show. She wishes to invite viewers to read her work—as both visual artifact and story. *AN OPEN BOOK* is very much an action: we are being asked to enter this “picture book,” to read and interpret, to exercise subjective judgments, to reformulate the artist’s propositions (much as we might choose to re-read written passages or read them out of sequence). How we contemplate and move about these paintings—our bodies following our eyes—inevitably becomes a part of the overall work, and thus *AN OPEN BOOK* is not simply *about* seeing, but rather an enactment of that experience.

Ellmann understands movement. Before her career as a painter, she was a professional dancer and her sense of the body—its means of visual orientation, movement in space, and potential for finesse—is vividly present in her work. This bodily awareness manifests itself within individual paintings, in which shapes both biomorphic and biomechanical proliferate, as well as in the relationships between the paintings as they have been assembled for *AN OPEN BOOK*. The artist uses the word “choreography” to describe these kinetic connections and disjunctions between paintings, and it is very much the case. The show comprises four sets or groups of paintings. Each titled group is made up of a number of encaustic on wood panels—each an individual work with its own title—and is arranged as a large rectangle or grid. Two of the groups (*TURNING TOWARD* and *PICTURE IT*) are made up of twenty panels arranged four down and five across; the other two (*OUR BELIEFS* and *WHERE TO STOP*) contain thirty pieces, five down and six across. The purposefully dynamic relationships between the panels within these grids, and not least the macro relationship between each of the groups in the gallery, can be thought of as a perceptual dance. “It’s the viewer’s job,” Ellmann says, “to figure out the associations.”

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A body in motion is conjured by the title *TURNING TOWARD*. To turn is to pivot from one thing to another—to redirect ourselves, our sense organs (hands, eyes, and ears) to a fresh subject. The variety of forms and patterns in this ensemble spark such redirection: the panels can be read across, left to right or vice versa, down or up, or diagonally. A corner composed of four adjacent panels might be considered a subset worth brooding upon, or the six pieces at the center. Each conjectural reading provides a different rhythm of form, color, and design.

Taking a conventional tack, the top row, from left to right offers, among other things, a lesson in how representational imagery is constructed. The first painting (“SOUNDS YOU RECOGNIZE”) presents a series of horizontally stacked colored squares; the various lengths of the stacks suggest that movement is either leftward into the white space or rightward, from the empty zone into a more crowded precinct. In one case the color and shapes are breaking free; in the other, they are coalescing into a formidable



block. That possible urban scenes come to mind is no accident when considering Ellmann's work: she has long drawn on cities such as her hometown of New York, or a city like Seoul, for visual and kinetic inspiration. (Smokestacks and water towers are discernible in many panels; she has created several pieces of public art in New York, including seven glass windscreens for the MTA's Arts for Transit Program.) So it's not overly speculative to ask if the image has something to do with lines of people queuing up to enter a train station or theater, or is this traffic exiting a bridge?

The panel to the right ("HORIZON") incorporates a stream of these blocks—they penetrate a landscape of triangular shapes—trees, hillocks—that sweeps and dips according to a decidedly more pastoral pattern. The blocks have found a sleeve in which they advance deeply into the yellow and green field; their geometric kinship with the triangles is a strong one, but they are clearly a novel element in this environment, one betokening change.

"IDEAS OF ORDER" comes next. The allusion to Wallace Stevens feels apt: the pastels are island hues and, if we accept that Ellmann is essaying an impressionistic response to a particular place, the poet's lines ("It was her voice that made / The sky acutest at its vanishing") seems to have found a visual equivalent in a painting in which neither sky nor land are divided by a horizon, certainly not one as clearly delineated in the previous panel. But that panel's squares persist even as they hover, transparent, above the smudged greens and yellows, miniature frames emptied out of substance and color; they are ghosts of the teeming crowds that once pushed forward. "COMING TOWARD ME" indeed comes toward us most surprisingly—the narrative that we have witnessed developing abruptly halts and a whole new pictorial world quite literally blossoms. While the flower imagery is somewhat familiar, the panel acquires its particular power from the panels around it—especially the ones that precede and follow.

With the title "MIDTOWN," the last piece in this row announces its New York pedigree, along with its explicit connection to Mondrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. The squares that have migrated across the panels have skipped across the flowers to reassert the urban grid and its



underlying dynamism of crowded movement, if not outright collision. But with that skip, accomplished as the eye traverses this row, “COMING TOWARD ME” offers up some small revelations about the way painterly elements can be discerned “travelling” seamlessly from abstract works through an assertively representational painting only to emerge again in a purely formal display. Situated between two abstract images, the flowers are revealed, also, as patterned assemblages of color and shape. Ellmann speaks of trying to illuminate “what comes forward and what comes back,” and this push and pull energizes the groupings. Thus, in this context, the flowers are broken down to their constituent parts—the viewer sees the story of city and pastoral life as told by color and form, a story in which the unities that guide perception are manifest, even as the disunities that flow from subjectivity are asserted. “Abstraction,” Ellmann says, “comes from lived experience.”

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An altogether deeper, darker palette has been employed for the pieces that constitute *OUR BELIEFS*. Ellmann describes the wall-size grids as being “like a social group,” and the visual and thematic affiliations wax strongly in this gathering. Rust, red, and yellow tones dominate and create a feeling of interior life, a feeling enhanced by the numerous patterns inspired by rugs, tiles, and fabrics. Ellmann’s encaustic technique—the paint is melted on the wood and accretes in thick layers which are then carved by the artist with dental tools—proves especially eloquent in this grouping: the depth of surface and consequent sensation of tactility amplifies our apprehension of these domestic points of inspiration. Not only does, say, a particular panel look like a swath of fabric, it possesses that fabric’s dimensional presence. Indeed, nearly all of the paintings in the show pulse with this physicality.

The group is marked by an inward, meditative, even spiritual mood that can be noted explicitly (“CROWN” could be depicting a ceremonial room, the kiva, used by Pueblo peoples) or more associatively (many of the shapes and patterns seem to be variations on occult or pagan signifiers—mandalas, ouroboros, god’s eyes, pyramids), and even biologically (shapes suggest



microorganisms, anatomical features, and reproductive activity). A mathematical precision infuses nearly all these panels, and yet that pictorial rigor retains the charge of spontaneity, of bodily presence. Reading down, the first column on the left, the first panel ("A TAD INTRUSIVE") surely evokes this paradox—the patterning of ornament versus the unpredictability of the biology. The repeated cruciforms dance in three-dimensional space while a brown-hued interloper—is it a follicle, a worm, a spermatozoon?—slides among them, dividing the panel asymmetrically. "I love irregularity," the artist enthuses. The relative fixity of the other figures sharpens the surprise sparked by the playful, off-kilter arrival of the biomorph.



Just below in "MAMBO" the cruciforms now dance with starburst partners. Stars and crosses mutate to create the effect of stop-action photographs of cell division; all around them electrical current—the action of synapses?—appears to catalyze the proceedings. This could be photomicrography or a detail from a Native American weaving. Alert to the visual consonances between the cellular and the artisanal, Ellmann proposes that there is no difference. The created thing, whether it occurs "naturally" or is the product of intention, shares something more important than etiology—it shares a vocabulary of figuration.



"BORDER PATROL" divorces the notion of borders from its geo-political sense and, instead, explores border as the fundamental unit of patterning. Any one border necessarily gives rise to another by predicating an interior and exterior. As this design moves inward (or outward) the demarcations call to mind the trope of Russian nesting dolls. Borders create space as handily as they exclude it; a border is both an embrace and a preclusion. The panel readily resembles an Oriental rug, but, upon reflection, the biological imperative from the panels above asserts itself: the circular form at the center presents itself as a cell, with a nucleus, nuclear membrane, and endoplasmic reticulum all visible. Placed at the center of a series of increasingly restrictive borders, this cell—the fundamental unit of life—vibrates with potential. Yet Ellmann presents it as isolated, perhaps trapped. The mutations depicted above have been stilled by the artist's patterning; nature and human nature are shown at a standoff.



The titles of the last two panels ("TEMPLE GATES" and "PEPPERMINT") feel pitched against one another in both mood and association. If "BORDER PATROL" emphasized uncrossable lines, "TEMPLE GATES" offers alternatives—modes of penetrability. Gates in holy places are sites of welcoming and revelation and the forms in this panel might be interpreted as a brief compendium of sacred symbols. A mandala and cross, a yang sign, Islamic design elements—all have been layered over one another to effect a kind of merging or synthesis. The biomorphic shapes are present, too. In fact, the cell—if we call it that—can now be read as the mandala superimposed on a cross. The gates have been opened and the borders loosed. In discussing the way patterns both harmonize and clash in her work, Ellmann describes symmetry as a signifier of "entering" and asymmetry as one of "going out." Both are at vigorous work in this panel, one which seems in some ways to be a resolution or at least a provisional resolution of the paintings above.



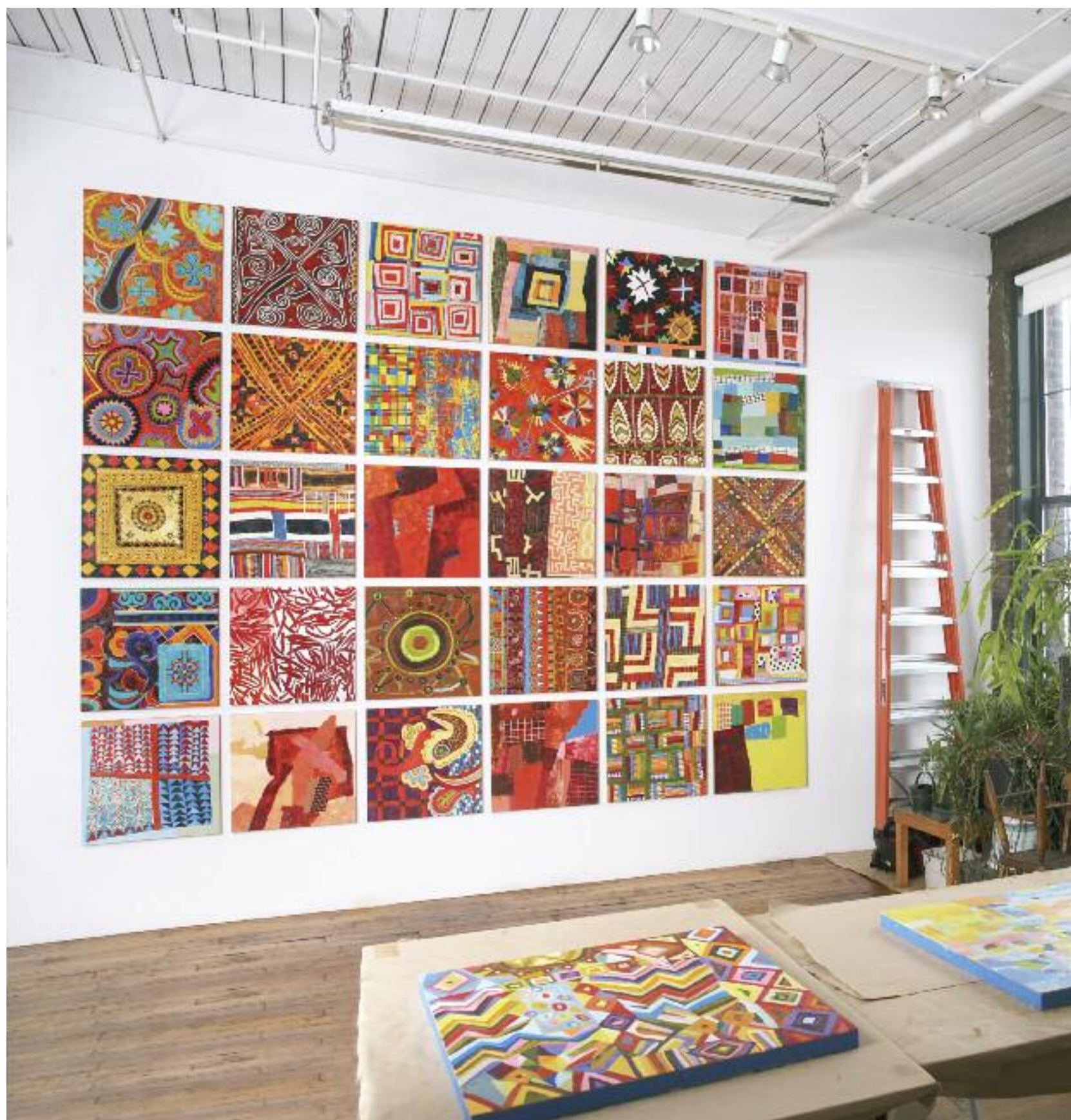
“PEPPERMINT” (the word itself is a delight to say) evokes childhood, play, and the possibility of wonderment. The panel handily incorporates all these notes. The striped triangles most obviously allude to the candy, but the composition with its resemblance to a game board, one for four players, most pointedly elaborates on the ludic theme. (Ellmann has painted a large series of game boards—their patterns providing ground for a multiplicity of variations.) Except for the asymmetrical cross that divides the field of triangles into four quadrants, the spiritual and biological signs are absent. But there is perhaps a broader statement about the speculative paradoxes that have emerged from this reading down the column. At first glance, the triangles all appear to be pointing up, as if to direct the eye to reconsider what has just been viewed. But closer inspection reveals that all the upward directed triangles also form downward figures, only they are—owing to being halved by color (peppermint striped?)—less conspicuous. If this is a game, these contradictory “arrows” are the Op art surprise hidden in plain sight. The viewer’s double-take response is no doubt what Ellmann has in mind when she speaks of “breaking codes of seeing.”

The last panel in this “image story” (which is just one possible tale out of an infinite number of different interpretations, particularly if the choreography began with any one of dozens of locational or directional relationships between panels) employs pure abstraction to gloss the contested ideation that has been voiced. The suggested yang sign just above is reiterated and given its yin in a composition that vivifies the paradoxical interconnectedness of movement. Depending on your vantage, to raise up is to fall, to fall is to raise up. Ultimately, the dance is more than any one motion.

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As is the case for reading any one panel or subset within the larger group, these interpretations are personal, provisional, and perhaps fleeting. Ellmann characterizes her works—individually, collectively—as “invitations to make meaning.” To make good on this solicitation, one of the groups, *Picture It*, offers viewers the opportunity in this exhibition space to use an iPad to manipulate and record possible rearrangements of its constituent panels. Projected on the wall, these new grids (some of which will, in fact, be used to reset the actual panels) will generate myriad narratives and their interpretations. Ellmann regards these groups (*TURNING TOWARD, OUR BELIEFS, WHERE TO STOP, PICTURE IT*) each as a “community of images,” and this openness—expressed here directly, but vibrantly present throughout *An Open Book*—expands that community to include us. We are called to see, to read, to move about between and among these images. To regard our experience as interpreters as the completion of the painter’s work. Ellmann’s book is open, her pages are ready to be imagined anew. Just picture them, the artist asks.

Albert Mobilio is the recipient of a Whiting Writers’ Award and the National Book Critics Circle Award for reviewing. His work has appeared in *Harper’s*, *Black Clock*, *Bomb*, *Cabinet*, *Open City*, and *Tin House*. Books of poetry include *Bendable Siege*, *The Geographics*, *Me with Animal Towering*, and *Touch Wood*. A volume of short fictions, *Games and Stunts*, is forthcoming. He is an assistant professor of literary studies at the New School’s Eugene Lang College, an editor at *Bookforum*, and an editor for *Hyperallergic Weekend*.













Barbara Ellmann's GAME BOARDS: Seeking What We Have Found

Joseph McElroy

Any one of these mysterious drawings of circle and square, arc and intersection, segment, hyperbola, other intimate handmade geometries, will do to look at and to think with; but Many is what they also mean. And much more: not only the two hundred and twenty drawings Barbara Ellmann puts forth in this show but an idea of inexhaustible variation, an act, a pang to be felt in ourselves, as in these transparently clear, hoveringly firm images we seem to revisit like a welcome that has point always as potential or a question to be discovered.

Drawings on 10" x 10" sheets of Japanese paper have been passed through a bath, a coating, of liquid beeswax and damar resin which, when it cools and sets, may develop the image further toward transparency; then, silver leaf, appropriate for the ceremonial or sacred emblems implicit often in the images, is applied as the inspiration moves the artist. Intended to be unframed, the drawings hang from magnets leaving a subtle space even for faint breaths of air along the wall to slip beneath and lift or ripple the paper.

The pictures remain themselves while being about how one might find a way from one to another, a way out, a way in. Pictures we recognize yet come to know again. Forms powerful but somehow not insisted on by the artist. Circle, "highest emblem in the cipher of the world," Emerson believes, eye and eye's horizon, wheel within wheel, holding more than we can say. Often a four-fold way in these drawings. Cross not exactly the Cross, but crossroads, less crucifix and awful sacrifice than cruciform we find shaping what is given, meditating a particular tilting or turning, aligning, climbing, slowly spinning or opening, paused and on the move, or like a ground plan.

Recurrent North South East West coordinates prove true and free. The pictured "something" may imply star, diamond, mapped cosm, territory, a direction or its risk. A game we must never forget in Ellmann's work is the ancient royal Indian (in my day domestic American, trademarked parlor game) Parcheesi, its rules, its throw of the dice, the curiously comfortable yet urgent patterns, the strategies, colored routes, and ladder-like entries and arrivals aiming for home.

And color? Close to the intentions Ellmann initially outlines in black ink, the colors that follow, filling in spaces of the developing images, seem at my first overall impression a luminous gray (especially in contrast to the bold, bright, stunning density of the paintings); but then, drawing by drawing, it is resolute and varying blues, pale-grounded seemingly, while then darker gatherings may momentarily absorb the lightness of the field, and I find fugitive greens with some agenda of their own, a rare violet or purple, to say nothing of the silver leaf, which, tarnishing over time, will acquire a faint pink- or peach-toned depth.

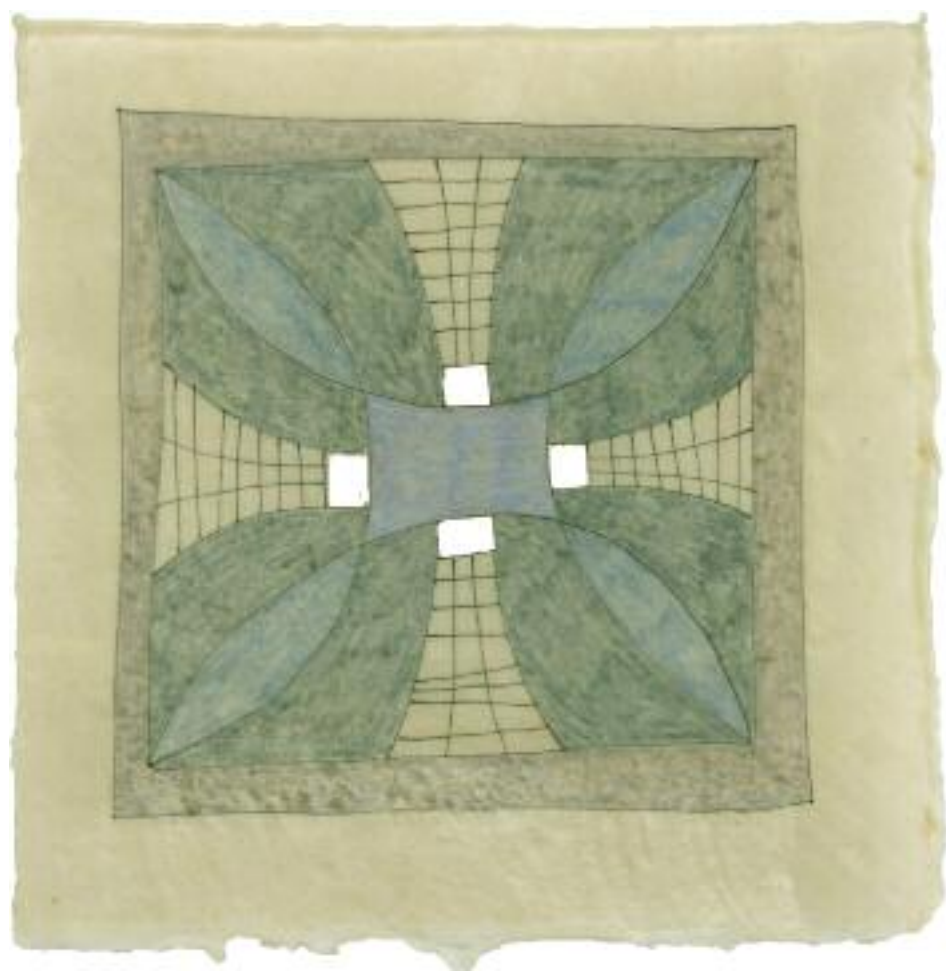
These are pictures to see through and accept in their informal delicacy and closeness to the

viewer. "Portable," Ellmann has called these drawings. She has done them on camping trips or traveling in South Korea or New Mexico or California, made them in New York and between other tasks and ambitions. She has always drawn. Earlier a dancer, in a company often on the road, she had already begun to develop a likely second act after dance—visual art a constant desire, large-scale, small-scale, pattern and motion in the work, in her. "How can we tell the dancer from the dance?" Yeats asks of art.

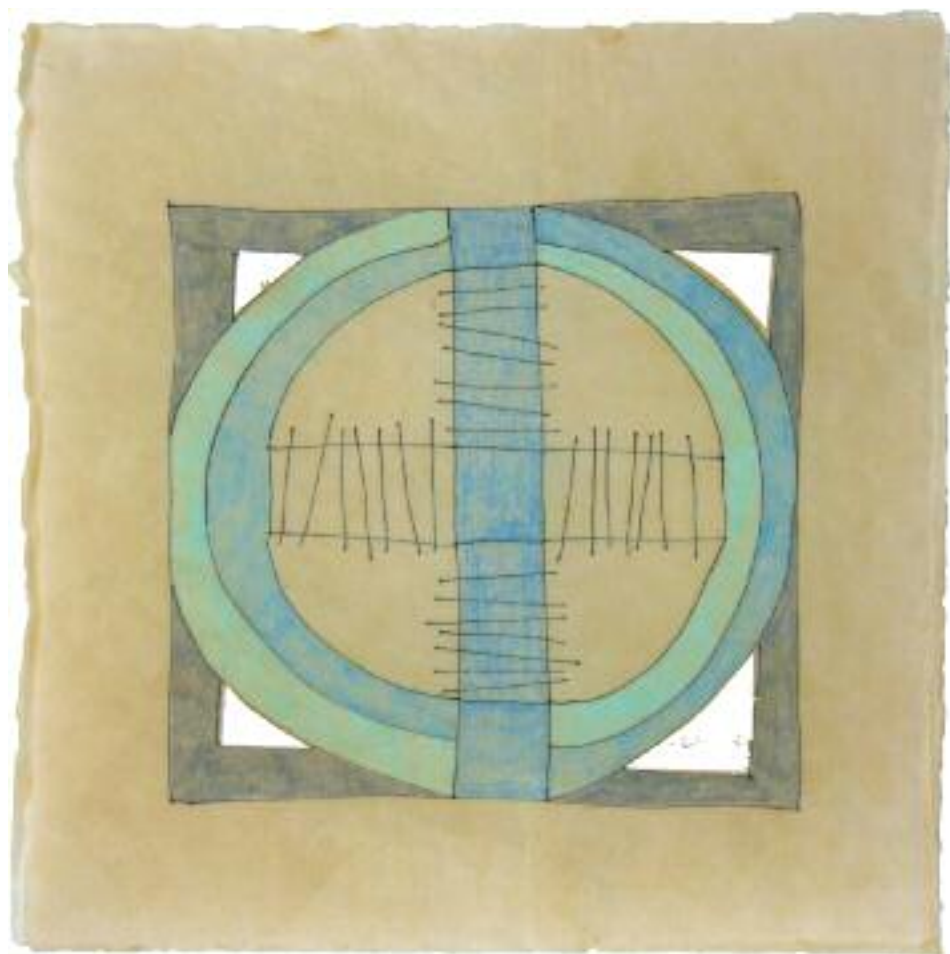
Unfolding of bloom and petal, the sectioned bole of a tree we might see in the familiar abstractions, the turn of wheel, of spoke, a satellite in orbit. Polygonal or circular emblems of the large in the small, the circuit perhaps of a life will often suggest ritual mandala: in ancient art the universe in a squared circle, opening inward like these drawings that focus attention, inspire trance, the mandala severe yet richly populated.

What is at stake? Making and consulting are the same thing, is that it? Along a mandala's circumference a series of outcomes contained in one vision, devoted habit, thing made. We draw mandalas. Make of them a story of stories, think music into them, build them. The Buddhist tradition draws the mandala in colored sands, grain upon grain, world within world. I have seen it done and felt the memory of it in me seeing the sands finally poured away and dispersed, the mandala one might say fulfilled in its impermanence, which is ours. A faithful and continuing impermanence we may call it; as, without yet quite the same passings, the variations on their theme are traced in Barbara Ellmann's drawings. The works show that there will be variations within the meaning we seek, which we would not seek had we not in some sense found it. This is what these drawings are getting at, and what we are about.

A window lens glimpses variation surprised by likeness, a metaphor for metaphor itself, but solidier than that, and, in the solvent of art, made with whatever resources are at hand, a meditation upon patience, too, because of all there is to see.







RISING CLOUD, 2010

CITY COMING CLEAR, 2011

WELCOME, 2013

CUBA OVERHEARD, 2009

WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?, 2009

NUDE WITH THE BLUES, 2013

INNER MEETING, 2011

ROOFING, 2012

A QUESTION OUT OF THE BLUE, 2011





















One area of the exhibition is designated for the display of contextual materials about the artist's process, and about the aesthetic, perceptual, and cognitive transactions that occur at various levels of engagement with the work—in particular panels, across grids, and across the body of work between viewer and work (or viewer and artist). It is a visual information lab where questions and curiosities that are piqued within the exhibition can be developed, leading viewers to engage further with the work.

Among the lab's components is a large format photo of the view outside the artist's studio [see opposite page] which has been printed on wallpaper. While Ellmann does not normally "paint from" her view, she considers her work to be a response to place, and has noticed that changes in frequented geography indirectly influence her forms.

Also available is an iPad with an app that allows viewers to alter the grid *PICTURE IT*, and submit their configurations to the artist. The iPad connects to a projector for other viewers to witness the arrangement process in the gallery. All submissions are submitted to a public running Tumblr feed and at intervals an arrangement is selected to be configured on the gallery wall.

Not always, but at times, Ellmann will snap photos of scenes or patterns that strike her. Laminated photo cards of images that have multiple relationships to the abstraction that occurs within the body of work will be hung on the gallery wall for viewers to carry into the painting installations, encouraging conversation about the ways an idea or image can reappear and what its morphology might indicate about the process of abstraction and where it comes from.

In order to impart a sense of the material process, a number of elements have been included in the lab, namely: encaustic texture panels that will be available for visitors to touch, a case of tools of the types Ellmann uses to create such textures, a case of paint bricks, which convey that the solid medium undergoes an alchemical process to become a painting, and finally a short film which further suggests the solid-liquid-solid cycle of encaustic, as well as the ways some of the tools are utilized to produce texture.

WHAT THE ARTS TEACH: Attention to Relationships

A fundamental concern of anyone working in the arts, whether painting, composing music, writing poetry, or engaging in dance, is to create satisfying and expressive relationships among the “parts” that constitute a whole. Composing, the putting together of elements, can be resolved in the arts only by paying attention not to literal matters, not to matters of reference or to logic, but to qualitative matters. How do the parts of the composition hold together? Do some parts dominate? Is there, as Nelson Goodman calls it, “a rightness of fit”?¹

The creation of such relationships, relationships that display rightness of fit, require careful attention to highly nuanced qualities; very subtle differences in the temperature of a color or in the strength of a line can make all the difference between achieving a satisfying array of relationships or an array that doesn’t work.

Learning to see these relationships requires use of a new form of vision. Most perceptual activities are essentially efforts to recognize rather than to explore the particular expressive qualities of a form. In typical circumstances, seeing stops when a label can be assigned to quality:² That’s my house. That’s a stop sign. that’s my Uncle Harry. Other forms of perception attend to components qualities but do not explore the relationships among them. In Piaget’s terms, perception is “centrated” rather than “decentered.”³ In Arnheim’s terms, the solution is “local” rather than “contextual.”⁴ The viewer looks, but looks at parts rather than at the ways those parts interact with each other. Teaching in the arts is very much concerned with helping students learn in life drawing classes. It is here that not only must the configuration of the figure be addressed; the student must also see the figure in relation to the ground on which it is to be placed. If the figure is, for example, off-center, the balance needed to achieve a satisfying image will be lost. If one wants an unbalanced image, fine. If not, there is work to be done.

One of the techniques people use to heighten awareness of these relationships can be seen in an art museum as people move close to a painting and then step back several feet. Move up, and then step back. what is happenning here is a kind of visual analysis-synthesis relationship. The person is trying to see the details or nuances of the part and then, by moving back, how those qualities influence the whole. One might say it’s a kind of dance in service of sight.

In the kind of perception I am describing, sight alone will not be adequate for resolving problems of fit. Problems of fit must be addressed not on through sight but also [...] through *somatic knowledge*, through being tuned in to the work and being able to make adjustments to the image on the basis of what is felt emotionally.⁶ Body knowledge comes into being as the individual learns how to use sight to inform feeling. In this sense, each modification of the image in the course of doing a painting or drawing and its emotional consequence can be likened to a personal experiment. These effects then become cues for further adjustment. Over the years artists in all fields

have become extremely sensitive to these embodied effects and depend upon them to make choices about emerging forms.

The sensitivities I have described come into play in the entire painting process. A painter, for example, must make choices that depend upon “feel” well before the finishing touch is applied to the work. The artist regards preliminary moves as leading to the creation of qualitative relationships that are necessary if the creation of later qualities is to be possible. For example, an underpainting having particular qualities may need to be achieved before the overpainting can be applied; unless the underpainting possesses the necessary qualities, the overpainting will not have the desired effect. What we have here is more than technical expertise—although it is surely that; it is also the creation of a somatic connection with the work, a connection secured through refined sensibilities. What such choices depend upon is judgment in the absence of rules. Indeed, if there were rules for making such choices, judgment would not be necessary. As in the scoring of multiple-choice tests, judgment would be superfluous; the optical scoring device scores without considering alternatives. Work in the arts, unlike many other rule-governed forms of performance, always leaves the door open to choice, and choice in this domain depends upon a sense of rightness, a form of somatic knowledge that allows the makers to finally arrive at the most difficult of artistic decisions: “It’s done.”

Nelson Goodman, *Ways of World Making*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978. See John Dewey, *Art as Experience*. New York: Minton, Balch, 1934. See Jean Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. New York: Basic Books, 1954. See Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954. reference to earlier chapter omitted See Jonathan Matthews, “Mindful Body, Embodied Mind: Somatic Knowing and Education”, PhD diss., Stanford University, 1994; and George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

1. Nelson Goodman, *Ways of World Making*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978.
2. See John Dewey, *Art as Experience*. New York: Minton, Balch, 1934.
3. See Jean Piaget, *The Construction of Reality in the Child*. New York: Basic Books, 1954.
4. See Rudolf Arnheim, *Art and Visual Perception*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954.
5. reference to earlier chapter.
6. See Jonathan Matthews, “Mindful Body, Embodied Mind: Somatic Knowing and Education”, PhD diss., Stanford University, 1994; and George Lakoff and Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

excerpted from Elliot Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*

Elliot W. Eisner is the Lee Jacks Professor of Education and Professor of Art at Stanford University. He is the author or editor of sixteen books addressing arts education, curriculum studies, and qualitative research methods, among them *Educating Artistic Vision*, *The Educational Imagination*, *The Kind of Schools We Need*, and most recently *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*. He has lectured on education throughout the world.

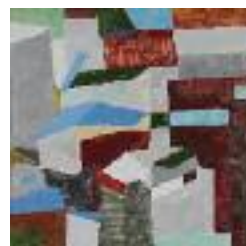
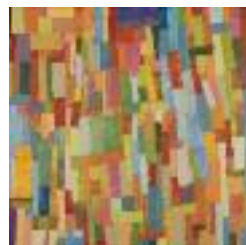
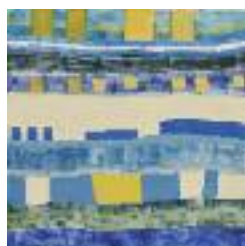
TURNING TOWARD



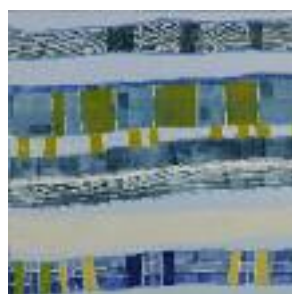
OUR BELIEFS



WHERE TO STOP



PICTURE IT



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In the Spring of 2007, The James W. & Lois I. Richmond Center for Visual Arts (RCVA) opened its doors to the rich cultural region that is Southwest Michigan. One of the first local collaborations to occur was with an amazing resource that Kalamazoo County schools have in Kalamazoo RESA's Education for the Arts (EFA). In the first two years alone, over 2,000 public school students visited our exhibitions and studied the architecture of the RCVA. Since then, EFA has brought its programs through the arts center to educate and enhance the lives of thousands of Kalamazoo County students. To Bryan Zocher, the entire staff at EFA, and the teachers and teaching artists involved in teaching kids how to look and think about what they are seeing, we thank you, we love your presence in our community and look forward to countless more interactive collaborations in the future.

The basis for Barbara Ellmann's paintings and drawings comes from a place of freedom. Even the historical rigidity of an exhibition installation has been set free because the installation is changeable. Viewers can make decisions about how the works will be seen, and how the installation can change over the course of the exhibition with their recorded dialog with the artist and her works.

This direct viewer involvement is by no means a trick or a device to just make the exhibition more physically connected. It is the work. The viewer is at the very foundation of why these paintings exist. Without audience, they are a mere storage of information, waiting for release. The audience becomes the partner in the visual dance, and the works support those partners in going to places to which, until that moment, they have never traveled.

The community process of seeing/reacting/interpreting the art is critical to the origins of the compositions and how Ellmann has placed herself within the education of her community. With a visual vocabulary that captures the skyline outside her NYC studio window, to the movement of paint and line in the encaustic media as she interprets the association of pedestrian traffic on the busy streets around her, Ellmann always seems to add energy to an already energetic chronicle of subjects.

To Barbara Ellmann and Sophia Marisa Lucas, curator of this exhibition—we at the RCVA say thank you.

— Don Desmett, Director, James W. & Lois I. Richmond Center for Visual Arts

In the summer of 2001, Kalamazoo RESA's Education for the Arts (EFA) and Lincoln Center Institute for Arts in Education (LCI) began its partnership in developing and implementing Aesthetic Education (AE) with Kalamazoo County schools, teachers, teaching artists, students and arts organizations. Through the generosity of the Irving S. Gilmore Foundation this partnership began with a BANG—54 school and arts administrators, principals, teachers, and teaching artists spent an intensive week at LCI's National Educator Workshop (NEW) to be immersed in AE philosophy and practice. The "group of 54" then returned to Kalamazoo as an enlightened, inspired critical mass equipped to jumpstart AE in Kalamazoo County schools. In fact, that initial BANG led to an EXPLOSION of experiential, inquiry-based learning that is continually re-energized and expanded.

At the 2001 NEW, the group of 54 was introduced to visual artist and LCI master teaching artist Barbara Ellmann. From then on, our relationships with Barbara and LCI grew in many ways. EFA leadership and staff were invited to serve and learn with LCI on national advisory and program steering committees; EFA teaching artists were trained to lead national teaching artist development; and EFA became a satellite NEW site. Barbara Ellmann remains Kalamazoo's first choice to introduce and expand our working knowledge of AE, to deepen our practice and inspire excellence.

In early 2012, EFA explored the idea of working with Barbara Ellmann on a different level – as a nationally recognized visual artist. Conversations with teachers and teaching artists confirmed the desire to select Barbara's artwork as the focus of AE study. Barbara agreed, beginning the quest to develop the exhibition and learning lab entitled: *AN OPEN BOOK*. The desire from the outset was to create an exhibition/learning lab of artistic excellence that was interactive, and provided AE educational enhancements.

The development of *AN OPEN BOOK* is first the vision and product of Barbara Ellmann. But along the way, important partnerships were forged that helped shape the vision to its present reality. I'd like to personally thank: curator, Sophia Marisa Lucas; EFA Aesthetic Education Coordinator, Nick Mahmat; EFA Secretary, Kris DeRyder; Western Michigan University (WMU) Richmond Center for the Arts' Director of Exhibitions, Don Desmett; WMU Art Education Coordinator and Assistant, Bill Charland and Christina Chin; WMU's Saturday Morning Art facilitated by WMU Arts Ed students; EFA teaching artists; all the Kalamazoo County teachers who are heavily invested with EFA's AE program; and the nearly 2000 students who will actively study, interact, and create personal and curricular connections with Barbara Ellmann's artwork.

Collectively, I believe that we have created an exhibition that incorporates viewing, interacting and being educated through and with Art in new, exciting ways; I invite you to dive deeply and experience Barbara Ellmann's *AN OPEN BOOK*.

— Bryan Zocher , Director, Kalamazoo RESA-EFA

I would like to thank and express my gratitude to the many people who have gathered around THE OPEN BOOK and who helped to realize its exhibition at Western Michigan University, the partnership with Kalamazoo RESA's Education For the Arts, The James W. & Lois I. Richmond Center Gallery, and the University's Art Education program, and especially to Don Desmett, Bryan Zocher, and Nick Mahmat.

I would like to thank the many people involved in the making of this catalog for their thoughtful and inspired work—the essayists Albert Mobilio and Joseph McElroy, my photographer Peter Chin, and the catalog's designer, Leslie Miller of The Grenfell Press. Also thanks to Elliot Eisner and Yale University Press for granting reprinting permission. Without the generous financial contribution and enthusiastic support of Amy Hagedorn this catalog would not have been possible.

I owe a great deal to my long friendship with Maxine Greene and the role she has played in shaping the aesthetic education practice at Lincoln Center Institute, where my own ideas of teaching to and studying art objects has developed. Her belief in the unique role that artists could play in the classroom has shaped much of my professional life. This type of teaching in turn has had an extraordinary impact on my painting, as I examined the complex transaction between the making of art and the viewing of art. The lab space contained in this exhibition emerges from those experiences as well as my involvement with education at The Museum of Modern Art.

Finally, the scope and breadth of this exhibition has been inspired by my collaboration with Sophia Marisa Lucas, curator. I am grateful for her tireless attention to the preparation of this exhibition and her valuable reflections on the development of my work.

— Barbara Ellmann

Barbara Ellmann was born in Michigan and lives and works in New York. Originally trained as a dancer, Ellmann has been working as a visual artist for more than 30 years. Imbued with the feminist ideals of community and sensuous knowledge, Ellmann's aesthetic and her use of encaustic can be traced to her intimate understanding of the body in motion, and in orchestrated space.

Ellmann has been a teaching artist at Lincoln Center Institute since 1980. A consultant for universities, orchestras, theaters, private schools, and arts programs, she conducts professional development for teaching artists and faculty members. Currently, she is also a museum educator at the Museum of Modern Art and a presenter in the Kennedy Center's National Partnership Program.

Among Ellmann's accomplishments are permanent public artworks that are part of the collection of the city of New York, commissioned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) and Cambria Heights Public Library, as well as the city of Summit, NJ. Her paintings have been exhibited in galleries and museums around the country and beyond including the Haslla Art World Museum, Bellevue Art Museum, the Montclair Art Museum and the Parrish Art Museum. Ellmann's work appears in several books including *Along the Way*, *MTA Arts for Transit* by Sandra Bloodworth (The Monacelli Press), *The Art of Encaustic Painting: Contemporary Expression in the Ancient Medium of Pigmented Wax* by Joanne Mattera (Watson-Guptill), *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America* by Gail Stavitsky (Rutgers University).

Her work is in numerous corporate and private collections including Peter Norton, Peter J. Sharp Foundation, Leonard Nimoy, Four Seasons Hotel and Resort, Marrakech, Morocco, and the United State Embassy, Kampala, Uganda.



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Front cover: SOUNDS YOU RECOGNIZE, 2013, (detail)

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EXHIBITION CHECKLIST

Individual paintings encaustic on wood panel, 24 x 24 inches

TURNING TOWARDS 2013

SOUNDS YOU RECOGNIZE 2012	HORIZON 2013	IDEAS OF ORDER 2010	COMING TOWARD ME 2007	MIDTOWN 2013
EVERYONE WITH A JOB TO DO 2010	LOTUS MORNING 2012	BLISS IN PROGRESS 2005	FORMS SEEKING TO ESCAPE 2013	THE PINK ONE 2011
LOVE BIRD'S CORNER 2005	WE PART 2013	OMIGOSH 2010	RIVERTOWN 2006	CLOUD BURST 2011
DREAM OF A FUTURE PLACE 2012	EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK 2007	WHAT THE YELLOW SAID 2010	OUR GREEN 2009	PRINTS 2007

OUR BELIEFS 2013

A TAD INTRUSIVE 2013	DETOURS 2008	I MIGHT TAKE A TRAIN 2007	INNER ORGANS 2009	SEEING STARS 2008	SEE THE LIGHT 2007
MAMBO 2013	INNER MEETING 2011	EITHER WAY 2013	POND WATER 2008	CORN FIELD 2008	WHERE WE GO 2009
BORDER PATROL 2008	A FUTURE 2004	NUDE WITH THE BLUES 2013	BROTHER SISTER 2008	RED LOVE 2013	NIGHT GAME 2004
TEMPLE GATES 2012	CHILI PEPPERS 2013	CROWN 2009	PARADE ROUTE 2005	RIGHT YOU ARE 2007	HOUSE HUNTING 2007
PEPPERMINT 2003	LIPSTICK 2013	ELEPHANTA 2013	WHERE YOU CAME FROM 2013	WORK YOU LOVE 2007	FRIENDLY JAM 2009

WHERE TO STOP 2013

SOMETHING IN THE DISTANCE 2012	PARTY TOWN 2009	TWO FLIGHTS UP 2012	MAJOR 2012	THAT IS THE QUESTION 2011	PLENTY OF GIVE 2011
IMMIGRANT SUCCESS 2013	ANCHORAGE 2013	A GOOD YEAR 2012	WHAT COMES THROUGH 2013	CHAOS OF THE REAL 2013	STAY A WHILE 2006
MY LAND, YOUR LAND 2004	RED RESEARCH 2012	WHAT'S FAIR IS FAIR 2012	WOULD THIS BE YOURS? 2013	HAPPY HOUSE 2012	WELCOME 2013
ROOFING 2012	WE MUST MEET 2010	EVERYBODY HAVING A LOOK 2012	EARLY ON 2012	DIGGING IN 2010	HOME MOVIES 2006
EUCLID AVENUE 2006	WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN? 2009	FROM THE PASSENGER WINDOW 2009	STILL ORANGE 2012	CITY COMING CLEAR 2011	CUBA OVERHEARD 2009

PICTURE IT 2013

THE GEOLOGY OF IT 2009	RIISING CLOUD 2010	THE MINING OF THE SKY 2009	PARTIAL ECLIPSE 2011	A VIEW FROM THE LOVE MOTEL 2012
WE THREE ON THE WAY UP 2009	PIANO PIANISSIMO 2003	THE SHAPES IN FRONT 2012	A QUESTION OUT OF THE BLUE 2011	WATER SCULPTURE 2011
WATER TOWER 2009	LIVING DANGEROUSLY 2010	VEIN 2013	CATCHING ON 2012	AN OPEN BOOK 2010
DRAWBRIDGE 2010	REMEMBERING THEM AS ONE 2009	ASK ME IN THE MORNING 2010	BLUE KEEPING WATCH 2010	CITIES 2011

GAME BOARDS 2013

Installation of 220 drawings, beeswax and mixed media on Kitakata, each 10 inches x 10 inches, 2001–2013