



1983

## Southern Abstraction: Five Painters (Exhibition Catalogue)

Sam Yates

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**Southern  
Abstraction:  
Five  
Painters**



October 26-November 18, 1983  
Art & Architecture Gallery  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, Tennessee

January 10-30, 1984  
Lee Hall Gallery  
School of Architecture  
Clemson University  
Clemson, South Carolina

**Southern  
Abstraction:  
Five  
Painters**



## Herbert Creecy

**Born:**  
1939

### Education

University of Alabama, 1958-60  
Atlanta School of Art, 1960-64  
S.W. Hayter, Atelier 17, Paris, France, 1964-65

### Present Position:

Temporary Lecturer, Department of Art,  
University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

### Grants and Fellowships:

French Government Fellowship, 1964-65

### Selected Solo Exhibitions:

The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, 1961, 1971  
Clark College, Atlanta, Georgia, 1961, 1971  
Illian Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, 1968, 69  
Image South Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, 1972, 73  
O.K. Harris Gallery, New York, New York, 1972  
Heath Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, 1973, 1974, 1977, 1979, 1980  
D.M. Gallery, London, England, 1974  
Dick Jemison Gallery, Birmingham, Alabama, 1974, 1976, 1978  
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 1979

### Selected Exhibitions

Mead 9th Annual Painting of the Year Exhibition, Atlanta, Georgia, 1963  
Hunter Annual Exhibition, Chattanooga, Tennessee, 1964, 1967  
Art in the Embassies Program, U.S. State Department, 1966

The American Federation of Art-Drawing Society National Exhibition, 1970

New American Abstract Painting, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1972  
Artist Biennial Preview, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana, 1972

*Thirty-five Artists in the Southeast*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, 1976

Thirty-fifth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1977  
*Art Patron Art*, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1979

Toy Design by Artist, Little Rock Art Center, Little Rock, Arkansas

### Collections:

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York  
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia  
Akron Museum of Art, Akron, Ohio  
Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana  
Norton Gallery of Art, West Palm Beach, Florida  
Herbert J. Johnson Collection, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York  
Lamar Dodd Art Center, La Grange, Georgia  
Housatonic Museum of Art, Housatonic College, Bridgeport, Connecticut  
Cannon Chapel, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia  
Chase Manhattan Bank, New York, New York  
American Telephone and Telegraph Corporation  
McDonald Corporation, Oak Park, Illinois



Landscape, 1982, acrylic, 66½" x 66½"





## Tom Dimond

### Born:

1944

### Education:

Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, B.F.A., 1966

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, M.F.A., 1969

### Present Position:

Assistant Professor of Art, College of Architecture, Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina

### Grants and Fellowships:

S.C. Individual Artists Grant, 1976

### Selected Solo Exhibitions:

Harbor Gallery, University of Massachusetts, Boston, 1975

Newberry College, Newberry, South Carolina, 1976

Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina, 1977

Spartanburg Art Center, Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1977

Art Gallery, Francis Marion College, Florence, South Carolina, 1977

Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, North Carolina, 1978

University Union Gallery, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1979

Lander College Art Gallery, Lander College, Greenwood, South Carolina, 1980

Moon Gallery, Berry College, Rome, Georgia, 1981

### Selected Exhibitions:

Southeastern Painting and Sculpture Exhibit, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1973, 1976

Biennial Painting and Sculpture Exhibit, Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1977

Group Painting Exhibit, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1978

Appalachian National Drawing Show, Boone, North Carolina, 1980, 1983

New Talent Show, Allan Stone Gallery, New York City, 1981

National Open Media Show, Laguna Gloria Art Museum, Austin, Texas, 1983

### Collections:

Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina

South Carolina National Bank, Greenville, South Carolina

First Federal Savings and Loan, Greenville, South Carolina

City Hall Art Collection, Greenville, South Carolina

South Carolina State Art Collection, Columbia, South Carolina

North Carolina National Bank, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

National Bank of Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Equitable Life Assurance Corporation, New York, New York

First National Bank of Rome, Georgia

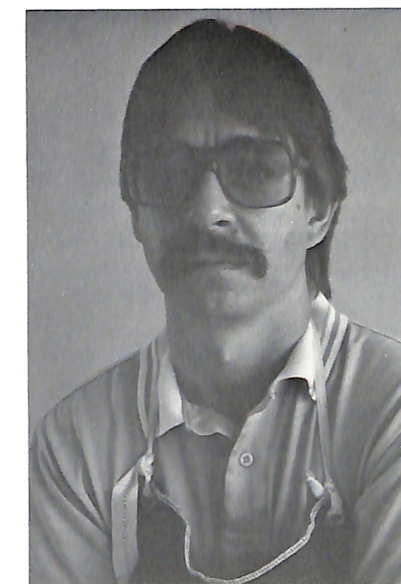
Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, North Carolina

Bernhardt Industries Art Collection, Lenoir, North Carolina

### Gallery Affiliations:

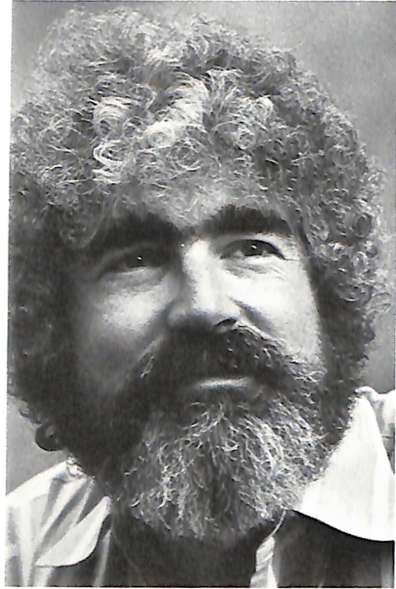
Allan Stone Gallery, New York, New York

Virginia Miller Gallery, Miami, Florida



Night Games II, 1983, acrylic on canvas, 48" x 60"





## Herb Jackson

### Born:

1945

### Education:

Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina

Philips Universitat, Marburg, West Germany

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

### Present Position:

Chairman, Art Department, Davidson College, Davidson, North Carolina

### Grants and Fellowships:

NEA/SECCA Southeastern Artists Fellowship, 1982

### Selected Solo Exhibitions:

Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1973, 1983

Impressions Gallery, Boston, 1975, 1981

Van Straaten Gallery, Chicago, 1977

Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1981

Phyllis Weil and Company, New York, 1981, 1983

Princeton Gallery of Fine Art, Princeton, New Jersey, 1982, 1983

Oxford Gallery, Oxford, England, 1982

Hodges/Taylor Gallery, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1982, 1983

DBR Gallery, Cleveland, Ohio, 1983, 1984

### Selected Exhibitions:

USIA Touring Exhibition, Japan, 1977

*100 New Acquisitions*, Brooklyn Museum, New York, 1978

*XV International Sao Paulo Biennale*, Brazil, 1979

*Childe Hassam Purchase Fund Exhibition*, American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, 1981

Biennial Painting and Sculpture Exhibition, Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1983

### Collections:

Baltimore Museum of Art

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

Brooklyn Museum, New York

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, England

British Museum, London, England

Minneapolis Institute of Arts

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

### Gallery Affiliation:

Phyllis Weil and Company, New York



Talisman IV, 1981, acrylic, 57" x 57"





## Richard Kevorkian

**Born:**  
1937

**Education:**

Undergraduate Study, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts

B.F.A. Degree in Painting, Minor in Art History and Printmaking, Richmond Professional Institute (now Virginia Commonwealth University)

M.F.A. Degree in Painting, California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland, California

**Present Position:**

Professor of Art, Virginia Commonwealth University

**Grants and Fellowships:**

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Traveling Fellowship, 1960

Graduate Teaching Assistantship, California College of Arts and Crafts/ Drawing and Painting, 1961-62

Individual Senior Artists Grant, National Endowment for the Arts/Painting, 1972

Faculty Creative Research Grant, School of the Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, 1974

National Endowment of the Arts/Southeastern Center for Contemporary Arts Grant/Painting, 1976

Guggenheim Fellowship in Painting, 1978

**Selected Solo Exhibitions:**

Eric Schindler Gallery, Richmond, Virginia

Gallery 4, Alexandria, Virginia

Anderson Gallery, Richmond, Virginia

The Gallery of Contemporary Arts, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Exhibition of Lithography, Jewish Community Center, Richmond, Virginia

**Selected Exhibitions:**

Traveling Exhibition, "Thirty-five Artists in the Southeast", High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia

"Southeast 7" Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Group Invitational, Anderson Gallery, Richmond, Virginia

Group Show, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Realists Invitational, Gallery of Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Group Painting Show, Richard Bland College, Petersburg, Virginia

Two-Man Invitational Drawing Exhibition, Jewish Community Cultural Center, Harrisonburg, Pennsylvania

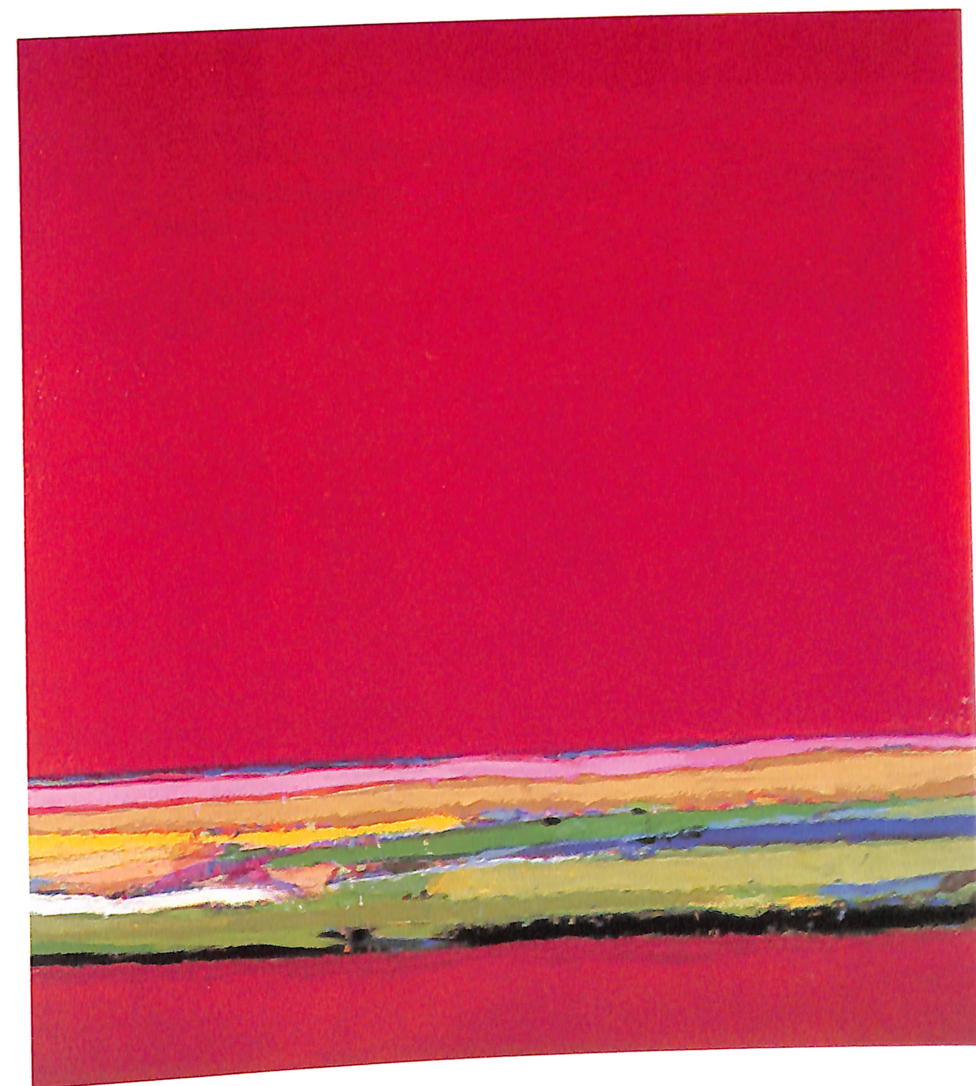
Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Robinson House Gallery, Richmond, Virginia

Drawing Exhibition, Williamsburg Arts Festival, Virginia

"Ten Young Americans" Drawing Show, University of Guam

"27 Artists" Painting Invitational, Muggleton Gallery, Auburn, New York

15th Irene Leach Memorial Exhibition, Chrysler Museum, Norfolk, Virginia, Honorable Mention



W. Red Field, 1982, acrylic, 5½' x 6'





## Whitney Leland

**Born:**  
1945

**Education:**  
Memphis Academy of Arts, B.F.A.  
The University of Tennessee, M.F.A.

**Present Position:**  
Associate Professor, Painting, University  
of Tennessee, Knoxville

**Grants and Fellowships:**  
NEA/SECCA Southeastern Artists  
Fellowship, 1977

**Selected Solo Exhibitions:**  
McClung Museum, Knoxville, Tennessee,  
1970  
College of the Lake, Grayslake, Illinois,  
1973  
American Gallery, Bern, Switzerland,  
1981  
Ashbury College, Wilmore, Kentucky,  
1981

**Selected Exhibitions:**  
Box Top Invitational and Traveling  
Exhibition, Normal, Illinois, 1971-72  
Two Person Exhibition, Frostberg State  
College, Frostberg, Maryland, 1975  
Two Person Exhibition, Barry College,  
Mount Berry, Georgia, 1975  
*Without Words*, Group Invitational,  
Atlanta, Georgia, 1976  
Columbus Museum of Art and Sciences,  
selection from LaGrange National,  
Columbus, Georgia, 1978  
The NEA/SECCA II Traveling Exhibi-  
tion, 1978-79  
Western Association of Art Museums  
Traveling Exhibition, selection from  
Watercolor U.S.A., 1979-81

Dulin Gallery of Art, *Continuum I*,  
Knoxville, Tennessee, 1979  
Roy Boyd Gallery, Gallery Artist Group  
Exhibition, Chicago, Illinois, 1979  
Arts Festival of Atlanta Invitational,  
Atlanta, Georgia, 1982

**Collections:**  
Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts  
Tennessee Arts Commission  
Hunter Museum of Art  
Springfield Art Museum  
National Museum of American Art  
IBM  
Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, Miami  
Branch  
Chase Manhattan Bank  
City of Knoxville Convention Center

**Gallery Affiliations:**  
Heath Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia  
Jackson Avenue Gallery, Knoxville,  
Tennessee



"July 2, 1983", 1983, acrylic, 72" x 40"



## How does the Southern environment, both culturally and socially, affect your approach to painting?

**Creecy:** The South, culturally and socially, has not affected my work because through the years I have not consciously been dealing with these matters. I am just trying to make a structural or a spacial statement, and if a cultural or social comment appears, I like to think it's more than regional.

**Dimond:** My approach to painting is based on a need to establish a communication between my inner consciousness and the pure forms of art. The geometric figures and interplay between positive and negative forms reflect this dialogue between the inner and outer consciousness. The cultural and social environment of the South is not a consideration in this approach.

**Jackson:** I suppose it's fair to say that the Southern temperament is affected by a slower way of life, perhaps more in tune with the rhythms of nature. At least, as I travel both here and abroad, this feeling seems to mark the differences between the gentle and seemingly casual Southerners and their efficient, pragmatic neighbors to the North. With this said, I think the differences are disappearing rapidly, as our population becomes more mobile, and the sun belt becomes the focus of national attention.

My youth was spent in close contact with nature, and the lessons that can only be learned by waiting, listening, and watching. Since the nature of my current work is a slow build-up of layers from which the images emerge, I feel that the privilege to have deeply felt a rural environment had a profound impact on my work.

**Kevorkian:** Richmond is no trouble. It provides an opportunity to work without distraction. In a region where abstract art has not enjoyed a broad audience, pressure to exhibit is not evident. This provides time to work, make mistakes, and explore visual searches which are necessary for my artistic growth. There are people in Richmond who have a genuine love and deep respect for serious art as well as those who view art as pure decoration.

I've recently been included in an exhibition entitled "Painting in the South, 1564-1980" which originates at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts and then travels to other states for viewing. At the same time, I am one of over twenty artists asked to leave a studio building which was recently purchased by a local arts organization for use as an arts center.

**Leland:** I cannot point to any direct influences of the southern environment on my work. I have lived in the South all my life and assume some kinship with the people and attitudes that are inherent in one's sense of place. I do feel, however, that I can contribute to the South's cultural environment, of which I am a part, by sharing responsibility for its development.

## How has the visual environment (i.e., light, color, atmosphere) of the Southeast affected your work? Do you see any distinct Southern sensibility in your own work or the work of other Southern artists?

**Creecy:** Of Course, light, color, and atmosphere affect my work. For example, if I worked in New York City, all the above would change from rural Georgia because of the height, mass, etc., of the city and most likely the structure of the picture plane would be more to the vertical; whereas here in the piedmont of Georgia, the light, color and atmosphere would be altogether different and the painting would be more horizontal.

**Dimond:** Oftentimes certain color relationships or textures observed in the natural environment or the marks of man in the environment may trigger or influence choices made during the creative process. I do not feel that my work specifically represents the Southeastern environment per se, but more a synthesis between certain aspects of the visual environment and the intellectual and emotional responses encountered in the creative process of painting itself.

**Jackson:** I consider visual aspects of rural life to be important to my work, but I suspect this would be true if I grew up in Maine. I'm not sure I buy the notion of a distinct Southern sensibility. For it to be true to me, I would have to be able to recognize a painting to have come from a Southern artist without knowing that to be true in advance, and except for painters whose subject matter (not the manner in which it is painted) is clearly Southern, I'm not convinced I could make that distinction.

**Kevorkian:** The visual environment...light, color, atmosphere...of the Southeast has an indirect influence on my work. It helps create an atmosphere which signals certain attitudes in my painting. However, I feel less directly involved with these elements now than I did a few years ago when I was working with figurative subject matter. In a more direct fashion, discussions with other artists help me to gain insights and give shape to my own thinking. I draw heavily from the modernist tradition.

**Leland:** My relationship to the visual environment of the South, and in particular East Tennessee, has to do with its natural beauty. What is seen everyday has some effect on your state of mind. I feel good about what surrounds me and, in a quiet way, it is psychologically reassuring. I am sure this contributes in a positive way to my attitude towards painting, teaching, and living.

## Has your current work evolved from other forms of painting; e.g., landscape, figurative, etc.?

**Creecy:** My work deals mostly with elements from the landscape even though most people find the paintings to be non-objective and confused. The Southern countryside is confusing to me because it is very thick and dense with overlapping movement which can be jumbled, but still organized and beautiful, like a Southern spring.

With the paintings on exhibit here, I have tried to simplify this beauty by using the illusion of things flying and blowing around stationary objects, thus keeping the painting in movement, almost as if the viewer is passing by or entering in at a fast rate of speed.

**Dimond:** For the past fifteen years, I have worked exclusively with circular forms on a grid structure. In its earliest stages, these forms resemble figures and in their latest form are referential to landscape forms. However, the natural evolution of these forms, has been born directly from the intellectual manipulation of circles constructed on a grid pattern.

**Jackson:** After a brief involvement with figure and landscape. I moved toward abstraction because for me it was the most personal form of visual expression.

**Kevorkian:** The work exhibited has a direct line back through styles of painting beginning in the early seventies. At that time I was very much concerned with color used indirectly to create optical effects. I thought about what image could be the vehicle for my ideas, and I decided on a six by eight foot painting of Jesus walking on water and giving the sign of the benediction. I carefully chose Jesus because at the time I was feeling particularly Messianic, and I figured no one was around to argue with how I painted His features. I completed the painting and tried to give it to the priest of the local Armenian church. He, being a good Armenian, began to bargain for two paintings, and I tried to explain that this was an atypical work and no more would follow. Next, I tried a Catholic priest who liked the painting but wondered if I could darken Jesus' complexion since his congregation was primarily black.

The painting is now in the Pamunky Indian Reservation Chapel. The painting rests with old friends who, over the years, have shared their good food and duck hunting with me. Everything is time now except once there were some rumbles about the painting possibly being Catholic. When I explained that one of the churches which helped introduce me to the Bible was Southern Baptist, all was well.

My next paintings, the Virginia River series, were chosen for the usual thousand reasons—my love of nature, interest in fishing, and concern for what I considered neutral subject matter. These paintings allowed me the space to apply my structural theories to canvas. As I progressed, I

became less interested in direct subject matter and more involved with abstract elements. At one point, I questioned the use of naturalistic color and moved into optical color. I moved away from overall marks to large canvases, working complementary colors against a large field of gestural paint.

The elements of construction in these paintings, I felt, needed a more direct application. I wanted a more declarative statement. I didn't want the eye to move through the painting, constructing form against form, but rather to have the painting present itself directly without easel painting preferences. To help achieve a less transparent surface of thick paint, I began to experiment with acrylic medium and pigment. They are not to be viewed as windows to look through. They are not involved with metaphor. They are meant to have presence and to be expansive.

**Leland:** In my own work, the most tangible influences from painting as a history come from Abstract Expressionism and colorfield work. These influences manifest themselves in the gestural and "all-overness" of my painting. I probably feel more influences in what I listen to than in what I have seen. A sense of timing and order is pretty critical to my work. I am most interested in experiences that develop complex relationships between rhythms, balances, weights, and movements that together build and respond to something central.



Early American abstractionists often spoke of a spiritual element in their work. Do you likewise find a similar experience in the process of creating a painting? (Or, how important is the "process" in your work)?

**Creecy:** All great painters have a spiritual element in their work; it is not just found in American abstraction. For example, look at the works of Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Goya, Van Gogh, Picasso, etc.

**Dimond:** The process that I employ to create my paintings is very methodical. During the early stages of a painting, the drawing, defining of foreground and background shapes and the setting up of color relationships, are done in a very formal manner. This setting up of the surface is very important: this activity triggers the subconscious elements that will be reflected in the later stages in the development of the painting. I would define this communication with the subconscious and the resulting dialogue with the painting as a spiritual activity.

**Jackson:** I consider painting to be an act of meditation. There is an excellent essay on this subject entitled "Abstraction, The Religious Art of Our Time" by Roger Lipsey in the catalogue *Transpersonnal Image* published by the International Transpersonal Association, 3519 Front Street, San Diego, California.

**Kevorkian:** I believe the process during the making of a painting is a very important whole activity. It brings together attitudes, influences and knowledge, both learned and intuited. The process becomes a whole act, totally committed and aware. Perhaps the difference between the philosopher and the artist is a work of art.

**Leland:** I want my painting to present an experience of something that is meditative and slow to reveal itself. I also place importance on options and do not wish for them to be read in a singular fashion. The rapport between the process and the ideas throughout the development of the paintings is absolutely crucial. The physical process is simple and repetitive; it involves the addition and subtraction of many similar units. The function of these units is to generate a complex series of continuously changing relationships. Lately I have begun to think about some of the aspects of my process metaphorically. There is a fragile chance—like quality in the relationship between repeated elements and the physical process of subtraction—which suggests to me a possible metaphoric image of options developed and not developed in one's own life.

In a recent essay, Joshua B. Kind, a Chicago art critic, suggested that current abstraction is essentially conservative and without avant-garde radiance. How do you react to Mr. Kind's generalization about abstraction in terms of your own personal motivations and philosophy of painting?

**Creecy:** Remember, there are only a few original visual ideas per century and it seems that critics have to find the new before the old has been finished, and when they have the new, they rarely can see it. So, we must take into account that being new does not make it good, but the critic must write a column every week, right or wrong.

**Dimond:** It has always been my conviction that art should be a unique and pure expression of the individual creating it and should certainly do more than mimic nature. Current abstract art may be conservative and reflective of a return to the influence of abstract expressionism, but I see many artists experimenting with new media and techniques that expand the barriers to personal expression.

**Jackson:** I paint because it's the same as breathing for me. My goal is to make the best painting I can make on any given day, and if I stay true to a personal vision which is not concerned with trend, this is possible. The avant-garde to which Mr. Kind refers is a self-conscious attempt to be new or shocking, and it has not been my experience that "radiance" is produced by what is essentially an intellectual approach to painting. The issue is not between figurative and abstract painting, which is purely the choice of the individual artist to follow his or her vision, but rather between art which is a learned response to what gets the most attention and art which is deeply felt. If there is character behind the work, it will come through.

**Kevorkian:** Huh?

**Leland:** My motivations for painting have more to do with a personal sense of order and balance than considerations as they relate to what is conservative or avant-garde.

## Paintings on Exhibit

- Herb Creecy:** *River Tones*, 66" x 66", 1981  
*Falling*, 67½" x 67½", 1976-82  
*Sea Sounds*, 66½" x 67", 1983  
*Playing in the Pond*, 59" x 67", 1983  
*Landscape*, 66½" x 66½", 1982
- Tom Dimond:** *Night Games I*, 48" x 60", 1983  
*Night Games II*, 48" x 60", 1983  
*Night Games III*, 48" x 60", 1983  
*Harlequin*, 60" x 48", 1983  
*Tri-vari*, 48" x 60", 1983
- Herb Jackson:** *Bull Run*, 84" x 36", 1979  
*Cool Odyssey*, 60" x 36", 1979  
*Tiger Rag*, 54" x 36", 1979  
*Talisman I*, 57" x 57", 1980  
*Talisman IV*, 57" x 57", 1981
- Richard Kevorkian:** *W. Red Field*, 72" x 66", 1982  
*Yellow Field*, 72" x 66", 1982  
*"M"*, 72" x 66", 1982  
*Green Field*, 72" x 66", 1982  
*Blue Field*, 72" x 66", 1982
- Whitney Leland:** *Mar. 6, 1981*, 72" x 40", 1981  
*May 19, 1982*, 72" x 40", 1982  
*Nov. 10, 1982*, 72" x 40", 1982  
*Mar. 3, 1983*, 72" x 40", 1983  
*July 2, 1983*, 72" x 40", 1983  
*Oct. 10, 1983*, 72" x 40", 1983

All paintings are acrylic on canvas and height precedes width



