

JILL GIEGERICH

NEW WORK

23 JUNE 1988

THROUGH 21 AUGUST 1988

SAN FRANCISCO MUSEUM

OF MODERN ART

A CONTINUING SERIES OF

RECENT WORK BY YOUNGER

AND ESTABLISHED ARTISTS

One of the more notable features of much recent contemporary art has been the appropriation of architecture and design—furniture particularly—as subject matter. As long ago as 1963 Richard Artschwager was constructing sculptures that, covered with Formica (surely one of the few *truly* disreputable materials of late modernism!), could be regarded as reductivist parodies of production-line furniture. Briefly pigeonholed with Pop art, over the longer stretch Artschwager's work languished in a sort of aesthetic limbo, falling between the two stools of Pop and Minimalism. More recently, however, Artschwager has emerged as a leading figure in the investigation of the language of representation itself. In utterly fusing furniture and sculpture, Artschwager and (later) others maintained a fresh, creative ambiguity and invited the viewer to contemplate the relationship between art, subject matter, and the everyday environment.

Jill Giegerich's earlier work was clearly related to this tendency. Her predominantly brown, black, and gray-hued wall pieces were based on common objects—faucets, kettles, tables, and so on—"reduced," as one critic remarked, "to two dimensions before it was reconstructed in three."¹ But what she reconstructed was simultaneously an object in its own right—a work of art—and a shadow of its former self—the thing represented.

If asked to name the artists by whom she has been influenced, Giegerich cites a varied list of contemporary and historical figures led by such movements as Cubism, Constructivism, and Dada.² Though her application of these influences are clearly her own, her predilections from these early twentieth-century revolutionary movements are reflected in her use of faceted form, raking lines, and industrial materials. But if she is fascinated by Constructivists' radical approach to form and materials, Giegerich has little or no interest in their social agenda. The philosophy underlying her art has more to do with Plato and the founders of Greek philosophy than with nineteenth- and twentieth-century political theory. In looking at a Giegerich sculpture of, say, a table or kettle (all her work is untitled), viewers are acutely aware that what confronts them, flattened and largely drained of color, is no more than the *notion* of this artifact, rendered in such a way as to constitute a critique of all kettles. In a curious and highly personal fashion, Giegerich offers something that can be regarded as both the shadow glimpsed by the inhabitants of Plato's cave—as they sat with their backs to the entrance—and, at the same time, the Platonic *idea* (perfect form) that cast the shadow in the first place.

Another paradox in Giegerich's work derives from her penchant for rendering such amorphous substances as flowing water and steam in the same terms as the artifacts from which they issue, thereby undercutting the semblance of analysis with a distinctly inventive—even irrational—strain. It is this strain that Giegerich has chosen to explore in her most recent work. Unlike the previous wall pieces, based largely on recognizable objects, Giegerich's new work relies almost entirely on invented form. The strange spindle shape, featured in several works, looks vaguely utilitarian. Actually, it evolved out of a series of free-flowing drawings and has no basis in observation. Further, in a partial abandonment of her earlier gritty industrial finishes, Giegerich now experiments with colors that verge on the decorative. The artist seems to evoke not so much the spirit of materialist philosophy as that of Middle Eastern transcendentalism.



Untitled, 1987

Even so, underlying this recent shift from hard-nosed to ethereal forms are concerns similar to those that have always motivated the artist. Where before she seemed to inquire "how do we reconstruct and maintain an image of something?", her question is now "how is an image or an idea formed in the first place?" A voracious reader, Giegerich has recently been exploring the Hindu stories of Shiva and Marxist ideas of the evolution of consciousness. She finds the common ground in these otherwise dramatically different philosophical manifestations in their emphasis on activity (creation for Shiva, work for Marx), which stimulates awareness and deeper understanding. In related fashion, through her search for new forms her creative actions as an artist will contribute to a language that will ultimately cast some light on how she perceives the world.

Pure abstraction—one possible "logical" conclusion of this particular line of inquiry—does not seem to interest Giegerich. As for the previous wall reliefs, "the balance between illusion and objects" is of critical importance to her new paintings.³ In *Untitled, 1987*, a black, smoke-like form loops over a translucent object, itself made up of trumpet, claw-hammer head, and bulb-like shapes; the black smoke is more tangible than the mechanistic but ghostly contraption. Alongside them both is a black sans serif "2" signifying, in the artist's mind, the notion of options. It is this optional challenge that Giegerich offers as a "theatrical confrontation" for the viewer hoping to "tear the piece apart by riding the two lines of object and illusion."⁴ In a sense Giegerich asks the viewer to complete the work; to go beyond the artist's very real, formal accomplishment and to examine the mechanisms by which, in a world of infinite possibility, contradiction, and chaos, some measure of certainty can be established.

Graham W. J. Beal
Elise S. Haas Chief Curator

JILL GIEGERICH

Born in Chappaqua, New York, 1952

Lives and works in Los Angeles

EDUCATION

California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, B.F.A., 1975;
M.F.A., 1977

SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS

1980

Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art
Entrance Gallery

1981

Riko Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles

1983

Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

1985

Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

1986

David McKee Gallery, New York

1987

Carnegie Mellon University Art Gallery, Pittsburgh

Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1978

Ten Artists From California, Hallwalls, Buffalo, New York

1979

Altered Photographs, P.S.1, Long Island City, New York

1980

The Young/The Restless, Otis Parsons Art Gallery,
Los Angeles

1981

Southern California Artists, Los Angeles Institute of
Contemporary Art

The Drawing Show, Newspace Gallery, Los Angeles

California: A Sense of Individualism, L.A. Louver Gallery,
Los Angeles

December Show, Riko Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles

1983

LA-NY Exchange, Artists Space, New York

Black and White, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

1984

American Sculpture, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

Significant Others, Patty Aande Gallery, San Diego

First Newport Biennial 1984: Los Angeles Today, Newport
Harbor Art Museum, California

1985

Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art,
New York

Drawings, David McKee Gallery, New York

Selections from the William J. Hokin Collection, Museum of
Contemporary Art, Chicago

Black and White, Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary
Art

1986

Meanwhile, Back At The Ranch . . ., Kuhlenschmidt-Simon, Los Angeles

1987

Toyama Now '87: New Art Around the Pacific, The Museum of Modern Art, Toyama, Japan

Awards in the Visual Arts 6, Grey Art Gallery, New York University

1988

Cal Arts: Skeptical Belief(s), Renaissance Society, University of Chicago

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Brown, Betty Ann. "Quotation, Illusion and Construction." *Artweek*, 11 April 1987, p. 3.

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Gardner, Colin. "Los Angeles: Jill Giegerich." *Artforum*, vol. 25, no. 10 (Summer 1987), p. 128-29.

Grossman, Stephen. "Perplexing Object." *Artweek*, 24 September 1983, p. 5.

Knight, Christopher. "ART: Sitting on Top of the Art World." *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, 1 January 1988, p. 4.

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Rickey, Carrie. "Art Attack!" *Art in America*, vol. 69, no. 5 (May 1981), pp. 41-48.

Russell, John. "Art: Summer Finds at New York Galleries." *The New York Times*, 24 June 1983.

Selwyn, Marc. "La Dynamique de l'Art." *Beaux Arts Magazine*, no. 42 (January 1987), p. 89.

Singerman, Howard. "Jill Giegerich." *Artforum*, vol. 22, no. 3 (November 1983), p. 85.

CHECKLIST

Untitled, 1987

wood print collage on paper; gesso, charcoal, rubber; tracing paper; and asphalt emulsion on plywood
70¼ x 53½ x 2¾" (178.4 x 135.9 x 7.0 cm)

Untitled, 1988

ink print collage, charcoal, paintstick, Xerox, rubberized cork, and wooden balustrades on plywood
69 x 47" (175.2 x 119.4 cm)

Untitled, 1988

ink print collage, gesso, charcoal, paintstick, and wood on gessoed plywood
72 x 47" (182.9 x 119.4 cm)

Untitled, 1988

ink print collage, gesso, encaustic, wood, and rubberized
cork on gessoed plywood
84 x 60" (213.3 x 152.4 cm)

Untitled, 1988

rubber, Xerox, shellac with pigment, charcoal, and
paintstick on gessoed plywood
84 x 60" (213.3 x 152.4 cm)

All works courtesy Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles.

NOTES

- 1 Howard Singerman, "When a Glass is a Glass," *LA Times*, University Gallery, San Diego State University, 1982, pp. 1, 5.
- 2 The list is most complete in the interview with Julia Brown and Jacqueline Crist published in the catalogue for the exhibition *Summer 1985: Nine Artists*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1985, unpaginated.
- 3 Author's conversation with the artist, at her studio in Los Angeles, 28 April, 1988.
- 4 Ibid.

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