

Ronald Davis

Forty Years of Abstraction

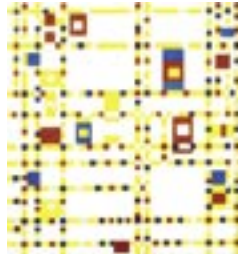
1962-2002

Foreword

The generation of artists of which Ronald Davis is a part has made a lasting contribution to the field and in fact continues to inspire the art of the new century. But very few of Davis's contemporaries can claim to have affected the course of events to the extent that this California-born painter has, in both substance as well as style. And perhaps no other painter of his era explored media with as much intensity or investigated new approaches to abstraction with such depth.

Despite enormous success with his early, visually masterful canvases he pushed full speed ahead in developing ways to express his ideas in newly developed resins, new material developed for industrial applications. These extraordinarily complex works soon became among the most exhibited and critically acclaimed works of the Post War era. They pointed to the future and to its possibilities with the same significance of Gabo's and Pevsner's constructivist works of decades before. Davis's resin works in fact proved to be a high water mark for American geometric based abstraction, rivaling in importance Modrian's *Broadway Boogie Woogie*.

Given Ronald Davis's history in taking risks and in exploring new modes of visual expression, it is not shocking to learn of his early plunge into electronic media. His reach into computer graphic works was undoubtedly the earliest serious work done in this new media. Certainly he was the very first established artist to recognize the importance and the wide-ranging possibilities of this, the



most exciting new media since the creation of oil paint. This, like the previous trendsetting departure from tradition, has shown the world that Ronald Davis should rank as one of the great innovators of the twentieth century and clearly is an artist whose work will ultimately help define the art of the new century.

On a personal level, this exhibition represents a special moment in my career. I have admired the work of Ronald Davis for nearly four decades since I first experienced its amazing beauty and power at the Leo Castelli Gallery. His work from that moment on would remain for me a standard of achievement by which I would compare other abstract works. I am honored and most proud that The Butler Institute of American Art would play host to Ronald Davis's first major museum show in recent years. He is an American classic and a star of our visual arts heritage who deserves all the recognition and acclaim we can give.

— Louis A. Zona

Director, The Butler Institute of American Art

The Butler Institute of American Art wishes to thank the Ohio Arts Council for its operating support and appreciates the generosity of Max and Cil Draime who helped to make this exhibition possible. We also thank Barbara Bentley for the design of this exhibition catalogue, and most of all we express our gratitude for the genius that is Ronald Davis.

Gratitude

It is with gratitude that I remember Nicholas Wilder, without whom my life work, and so much more, would not have been possible. I am also grateful for the memory of Dr. Richard Rosen, who kept me afloat during bipolar winters. Special thanks to my friend and colleague Ronnie Landfield for his essay and for his friendship, and for Jenny Landfield's. Thanks to Captain Marble for lending me his acute eye in critical moments. For his

enthusiasm and help, I thank Philip Bareiss of Bareiss Gallery. Thanks to Dennis Holloway for sharing the co-creation of my creative spaces. For the bi-weekly renewal of my life force, thanks to healer Paul Sowanick. For her love and support, I am deeply grateful to my partner, Barbara Bentley. Lastly, I thank Dr. Lou Zona and his staff for the opportunity to mount this exhibition at the Butler Institute of American Art. — RD



The Butler Institute
Museum of American Art

Ronald Davis

Forty Years of Abstraction

1962 - 2002

September 21 - November 17, 2002

The Butler Institute Museum of American Art

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The curatorial thrust here is diversity.

Choosing a body of work that suitably represents my forty years of abstraction from the thousands of works I've made during that time must necessarily be constrained, and even further limited by what's available in storage. What I have resolved to do, therefore, is to choose a representative sample of my forty years of commitment to abstraction, emphasizing the eclectic and diverse means and origins by which the art developed over time. Certain periods of my personal art history have been omitted from this exhibition; fortunately, this only serves to illuminate my oscillation between hard-edge art (which was never intended to be minimalist or post-modern) and more painterly art.

Leo Castelli, during a visit to my studio in the 1960s, said with a twinkle in his eye, "This masterpiece



RONALD DAVIS 02.04.2002

is even better than your last masterpiece!" Neither of those two works was available for this exhibition. However, works that were created concurrently, using similar styles and methods, were found and dug out of the deep recesses of my cargo container storage bins. They demonstrate the sheer diversity of my *oeuvre*, and, I hope, the level of intensity and commitment to seriousness I have tried consistently to bring to my



THE STUDIO, SUMMER 2002

work. Included are journeys up *cul-de-sacs*, as well as unfinished or undeveloped series which fit neither into the "masterpiece" nor the "trademark" category, as well as samples from those series which propelled my forward motion and enhanced the art's development.

I have explored many mediums: oil, acrylic, watercolor, ink, pencil, lithography, silkscreen, drypoint, aquatint, etchings, wood, resins and fiberglass, dry pigment, encaustic, plastic, computer-aided painting, giclée. I've made some pretty good art just trying to figure out how to make a material work. For instance, I just bought a big bottle of "Gorilla Glue" down at the hardware store and I don't know what to do with it yet (it foams up when you mix it with water)!

A more comprehensive overview will have to be relegated to a future venue: The Harwood Museum Foundation of Taos has promised me a retrospective on the occasion of my 90th birthday, June, 2027.

— Ronald Davis, June, 2002

Ronald Davis: The Essence Of Abstraction

The best abstract painting made in America during the past thirty-five years has been eclipsed. Great American abstract painting hasn't been replaced by anything comparable, and I'm using the word *eclipse* here because eclipses pass. Fanfare and fluff tend to obscure what has always been: that great art gets overlooked by mediocrity, pretense and market strategies, and today is no exception.

We all pay the price and suffer the vagaries of money and fashion in an art world with little or no taste and seemingly little regard for quality. Without belaboring the point too much, the greatest, most universal, timeless, original, genuine and important works made by American abstract painters now in their fifties and sixties are by and large suppressed from textbooks, academia, art magazines and museum stages across the world. With very few exceptions, many important American abstract painters have fallen into obscurity and some have fallen by the wayside. Nonetheless, and to our benefit, there are dozens of great American abstract painters who, though sometimes disillusioned and suppressed, have still continued to produce their work, and Ronald Davis – who's had his share of the limelight – is one of the best.



Spindle, 1968 (Dodecagon Series) Molded polyester resin and fiberglass 50 1/2 x 132 inches

I've known Ron Davis and his work for nearly forty years. I first encountered his paintings in 1964 when I was an art student at The San Francisco Art Institute. Ron had recently left the Art Institute, and I'd hear about these guys who were painting hard-edge paintings in a roller rink. I was painting hard-edge paintings too and my name is Ronnie so I looked at his work, which I saw at the Art Institute. Clearly his paintings were among the best student paintings I'd seen and I'd been looking at student work all over the country at that point. Over the years we've become friends and we've talked for countless hours about art and life. Ron is a generous soul, he is tough-minded about his art, he has had his share of grief and struggle, he's raised a family the best he could, and he's fought many internal battles with himself. He is a spiritual man, as I think most important painters are, even if they don't let on.

When I visited Davis's studio in downtown Los Angeles in January 1969 and saw his new resin paintings for the

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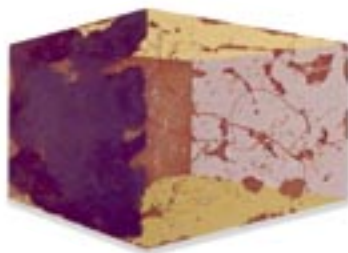
first time, I was thunderstruck. It can be argued that between 1966 and 1972 Davis produced one of the most remarkable bodies of work ever created by an artist on these shores. Certainly the *Dodecagons* from 1968-69 remain among the most visually stunning, audacious and intellectually interesting bodies of work made by an abstract painter in the last half of the twentieth century.

Davis, born in California and raised in Wyoming, was inspired by Wyoming-born Jackson Pollock and, against all

kinds of logic, remains perhaps the only American painter who has successfully used Pollock's drip and splatter technique with fruition. His virtuoso paint handling in the resin paintings created a new kind of geometric expressionism, keeping an unspoken promise made to Abstract Expressionism years before.

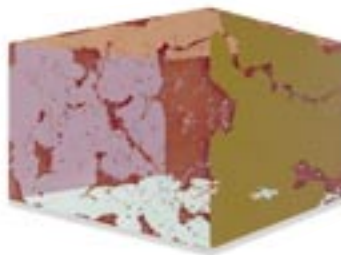
Ronald Davis refers to his work as Abstract Illusionism. With the *Dodecagons*, Davis created plastic paintings that were optical illusions of shapes in three dimensions, under a flat shiny surface on a twelve-angled object to be seen on the wall.

They essentially broke all the rules of modernist rhetoric while being brilliant modernist paintings, thereby expanding the definition of modernism. It's difficult to remember just how innovative and radical these paintings were when they were made. The paintings of 1968-1969 were daring in so many ways. Davis took risks with his perspective drawing, color, use of transpar-

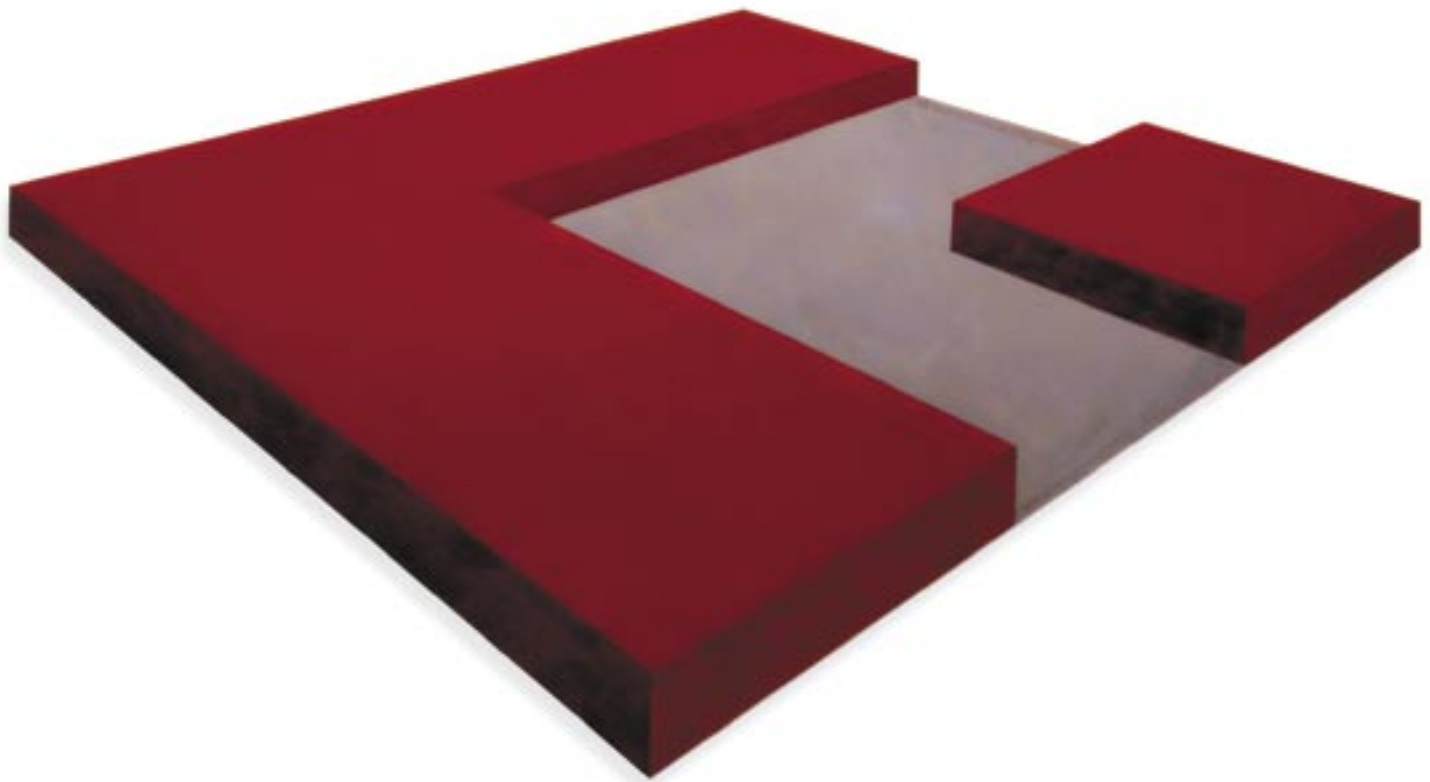


ency, his paint handling, his materials, his shapes, his style, and his use of illusion. He essentially painted his resin paintings backwards, face down, unseen, under the picture plane. They are utterly original and brilliantly conceived. Besides masterpieces like *Zodiac*, *Double Ring Roto*, *Spoke* and *Double Ring*, an early *Dodecagon* I find particularly interesting is *Spindle*. *Spindle*, 1968, with a deceptively simple geometric format, breaks new ground with its clear painterly forms, mysterious depths of field (nearly dispensing with perspective and illusion), reading flatter than most of Davis's paintings. In *Spindle* the hard reflective surface toughens the picture and gives strength to its lyricism.

Among the few reservations that I have about Davis's work of that period, albeit in retrospect, is his use of plastic surfaces which, as impressive as they look, tend to interfere with my ability to feel his paintings full force. The glossy plastic surface casts reflections and those reflections reveal pictures of pictures that I find distracting, although the reflections add to the power of the work. The plastic surfaces tend to be cold and put me off when I look at the paintings. I can't feel them, perhaps because instead of paint on a surface they are paint *under* a surface. Paradoxically that is also one of the strengths of these works. If the weakness is the hard, glossy surface, the artist's painterly skill transcends mere surface more often than not. I



think Davis's consistent use of forms in perspective sometimes gets in the way of discerning the pure quality of the paintings, which are extraordinary and in my opinion don't always need the rendering



Six-Ninths Red, 1966 (Slab Series) Molded polyester resin and fiberglass 50 1/2 x 132 inches

of the illusion of forms in space. I think Davis succeeds as often as he does because of his color, his versatile surfaces and the concentration, intensity and clarity of his vision. When Davis allows himself the freedom to just paint pictures, the results are usually remarkable. I'd prefer more emphasis on pure feeling, paint quality, directness, transparency, translucency, surface vulnerability and drawing. When Davis is most successful, his paintings draw you in, providing easy access to the viewer. His paintings succeed most often when they resonate with the power, timelessness, and clarity that is always there in his best work.

It's probably worth saying that during the late sixties there was a lyrical revolution in American abstract painting. By the early seventies the strongest and most independent young artists were disenchanted with the hypocrisy and hierarchy of the Formalist followers of Greenberg and gave it up looking for alternatives. The second generation Abstract Expressionists, who Clement Greenberg called "Post-Painterly Abstractionists" and everyone else called "the Color Field Painters," had essentially closed down the field. Trying to find alternatives to the pedantic and tedious

The poetry in his work comes with a mathematical precision and a master painter's imagination.

rhetoric of minimalism and formalism, some independent young painters changed the face of painting radically.

Young artists looked again to their origins as modernist painters, going all the way back to Goya, Manet, Monet, Cézanne, Chinese and Japanese landscape painting, Luminism, and The Hudson River School for new inspiration. Hans Hofmann, Jackson Pollock, Clyfford Still, Barnett Newman, and

other abstract expressionists were renewed as sources for inspiration. In a search for meaning the landscape provided the fertile direction for change. Young painters in the late sixties created a new hybrid abstract art that was about process, but was also about liberation, subjectivity, and sincerity. It was about making art that was painterly, pictorial, historical, precise, geometric, literal, spiritual, and occasionally overtly representational.

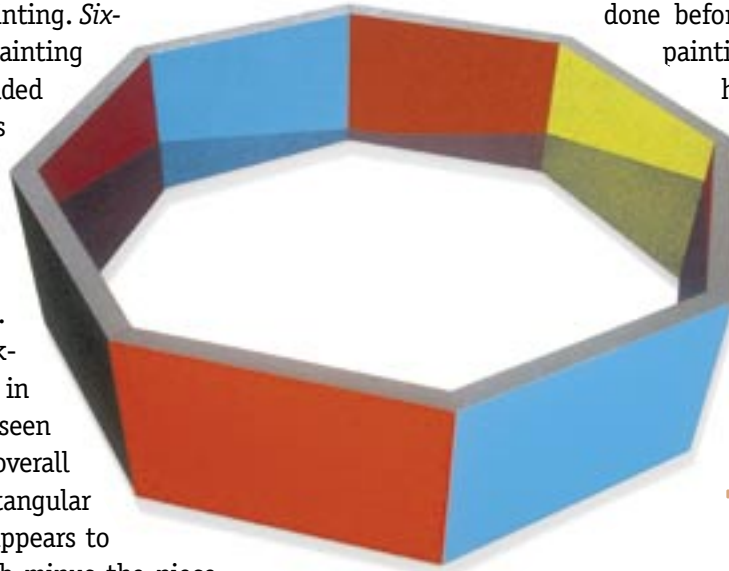
The direction those artists took demanded a more personal and poetic course than the ones proscribed by the philosophies of minimalism and the philosophies of color field painting. Ironically, the innovations and influence of *Lyrical Abstraction* as it was then called quickly spread to the older Post-Painterly Abstractionists, the so-called Color Field Painters, who relaxed their dogmatic approach and limited mannerisms, quickly embracing and following many of the ideas originated by Lyrical Abstraction and the new generation. Consequently, taking the cue from us, the Color Field Painters dropped theory and became painterly, pictorial and landscape oriented, thereby also liberating themselves. Along with other painters of his generation (like me) Ronald Davis was one of the important leaders of that revolution.

The paintings that first brought Davis interna-



tional acclaim were the *Slab* paintings begun in 1966 and exhibited at Tibor de Nagy Gallery in New York City in October, 1966. The buzz around New York among most of my painter friends and at Max's was about how important that show was, and I agreed. The paintings I saw were complex, precise, although somewhat repetitious, and began what was to become one of the most astonishing six year runs in American painting. *Six-Ninths Red* is a significant painting of the series, made with molded polyester resin and fiberglass mounted on wood. The paintings depict rectangular forms in perspective. Frankly these are very difficult paintings to describe. Generally the viewer is looking down onto the paintings in which a rectangular slab is seen from the top, shaped in an overall diamond, with a smaller rectangular slab at one end, and what appears to be the other side of the slab minus the piece on the end. *Six-Ninths Blue* was reproduced on the cover of *ArtForum* in April 1967 and in that issue Michael Fried authored an important article, *Ronald Davis: Surface and Illusion*. Fried discussed Davis's use of three-dimensional illusion, two-point perspective and the unique surface quality those works had.

I think the paintings have a curious way of dealing with time and space; they take a lot of time to digest, and the forms that seem to occupy particular spaces seem to slide around a lot. Sometimes the smaller slab slides away from the other slab, and sometimes the viewer senses an impending collision on the part of one or both



of the rectangular slabs. The surfaces make these paintings special; they are painted from the back, face down on a smooth fiberglass mold and are both translucent and opaque. Translucency adds to the rich mystery and tension these paintings evoke. My favorite painting from that series was *One-Ninth Green (The Unicorn Pen)* which was nearly totally translucent. Nothing like them had been

done before. One minor aspect of these paintings is their wit. For Davis, humor, paradox and wordplay seem to have a special place. There is a Duchampian aspect to Davis's work too, best comprehended by contemplating Duchamp's *The Large Glass*, *T.M.*, and *The Chocolate Grinder*. Davis's work relates to the only charm Duchamp has for me: his sense of humor.

Davis followed the *Slab Series* of 1966, the *Crab Series* of 1967 and the *Dodecagons* of 1968-1969 with the *Cutout Series* in the early seventies. The *Cutouts* are especially remarkable for their refined use of transparency, and those paintings should be fully appreciated for their sheer beauty and sophisticated uniqueness and delicacy. The level of concentration in the *Cutouts* is exceedingly high. They are perfection in their complex directness; perhaps they were the zenith of the run of paintings Davis made in downtown Los Angeles. When I first saw them around 1971 I admit that I didn't understand them, then. In retrospect they have gotten far better for me and I realize that, as my own taste has grown over the years, I've come to understand



and appreciate those pictures. Those were the last series of Davis's resin paintings as he left downtown Los Angeles in 1972 and moved into his mostly self-designed studio built in collaboration with then-unknown architect Frank Gehry in Malibu. In his new studio and for reasons of health and aesthetics, Davis discontinued working with the extremely toxic fiberglass and resins of the previous six years in favor of works on paper, prints and the slightly more benign paint and canvas which he took up in 1973.

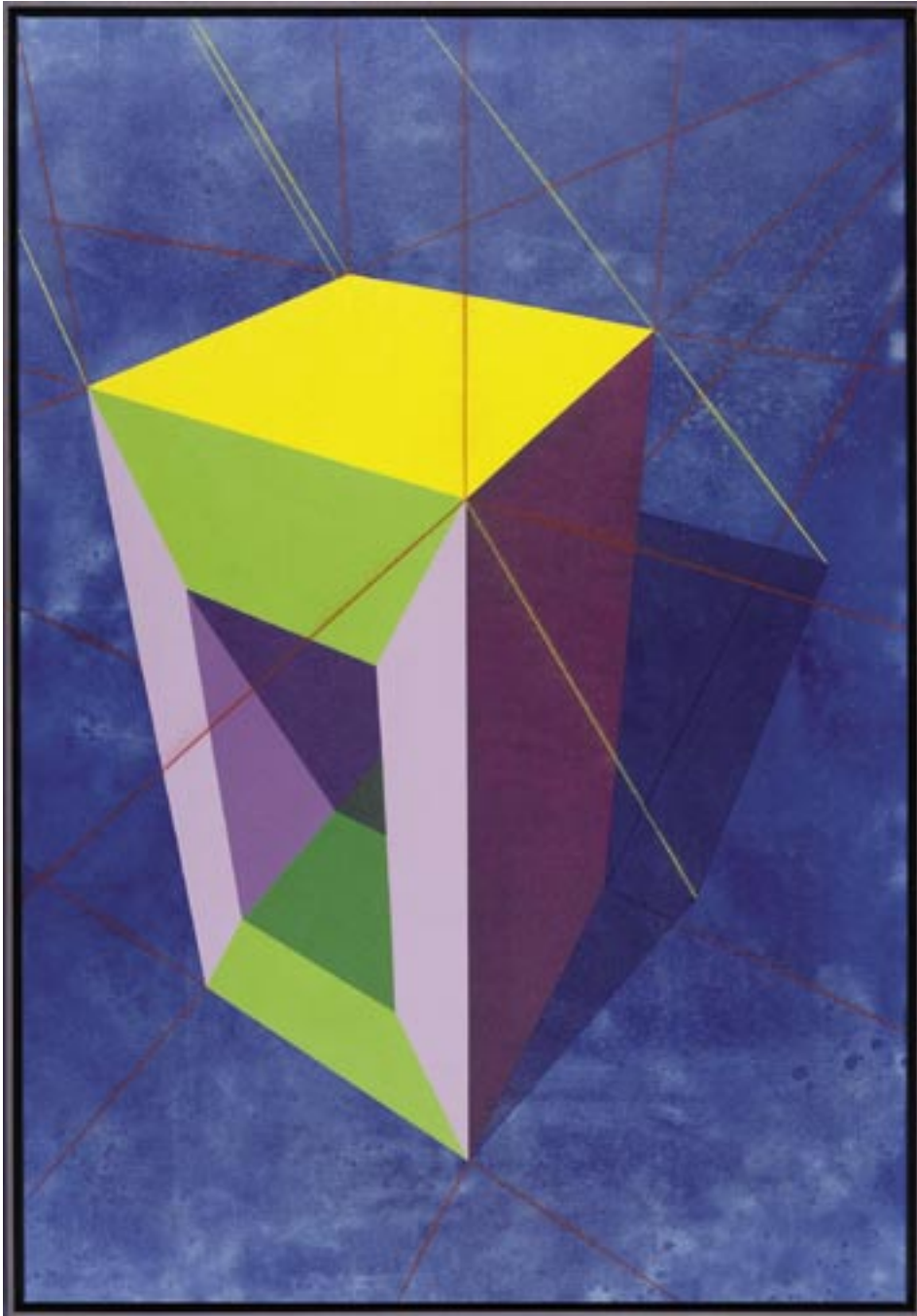
For me, besides his resin paintings of 1966-72, the most enigmatic, thought provoking and successful series of Davis's work are the *Snap Line Paintings*, which were done in the mid-1970s and taken up again in the late 1980s. Generally they were large-scale, and uncharacteristically made on rectangular canvases. He painted grounds of loose, painterly, acrylic stains, often applied with random abandon and overlaid with a precise network of dry pigment snap lines. He used a full range of

painted surfaces, opacity, translucency, transparency; and his color was often charged with emotion. The paintings feel right, they are intense, urgent and intelligent. The *Snap Line Paintings* define whole complex universes of geometric shapes in perspective, resembling mathematical portraits of objects in space, suspended in a psychological landscape. The paintings combine (as Davis tends to do in his best work) several historical directions in one. The viewer has quick access because they are so direct and are endlessly filled with rich, subtle meaning and nuance. While Davis has created works in a wide range of manners he is inconsistent within his varied series, and the *Snap Lines* sometimes seem a little forced.

From the beginning, Davis has had a preoccupation with re-defining abstract painting. His interest in trying new materials and new shapes goes back four decades. He's a paradoxical mixture in that his sensibility is clearly grounded in conventional painting but his paintings



Black Block Near Moon, 1983 (Splatter Series) Acrylic on canvas 114 x 72 1/4 inches



are rarely ever conventional. His long running interest in computers, plastics, inventing new and different surfaces to paint on, his use of animator's colors, resins, encaustic, and acrylics sets him apart from most other painters. He makes geometric objects, in relationship to the viewer, the wall, each other, often with the illusion of perspective, deep space, shallow space, or infinite space. While these are consistent and co-existing themes in his work, there have been other works that chart other directions too.

Davis is a painter of precise and paradoxical measure, practice and procedure. His new paintings are object-like and seemingly non-pictorial. The theme of objects in space has been a constant in Davis's work for forty years, and these new paintings are a continuation of that theme with a renewed sense of vitality and commitment. These new works are the most succinct paintings of his long career. *Yellow Hinge*, 2001, for example, reads quickly as abstract object on the wall, intensely and sensitively colored and at the same time highly complicated when read as an abstract object in space, carefully balanced and constructed so the illusion of bends and twists in space is often literal.

Ronald Davis is once again the master of illusion but this time a little more direct. The surfaces of his new paintings are worked with layers of paint rolled on sometimes thick and heavy, allowing for the pure language of surface to flow fast and then slowly emerge in the eye as paint and as in some cases literal material. His

color is full, loaded, aimed at the viewer, and he pulls no punches; the emotional impact is compelling. It's surprising that for a painter as conceptual and cerebral as Davis, his color is so crucial to the power of his paintings. His color is passionate at times, cool at times, always carefully weighed and intuitively regulated. He is a complicated and sometimes weird combination of brilliant forethought and planning and spontaneous combustion. The

poetry in his work comes with a mathematical precision and a master painter's imagination. He hasn't exactly made paintings in the conventional sense of paint on a rectangular canvas for many years and the argument can be made that these paintings aren't paintings. Which is one reason Davis's work is always interesting.

The range of style that Davis allows for is usually fairly close, going from hard edge precision to a loose painterly relaxed manner that tends to be contained in an organized, controlled system of ribbons, boxes or bands of color. A new work, *Octagon Ring*, 2001-2002, is organized in such a way, and is a good example of one of the typical container type formats Davis has used in variation over the years.

His new prints and digital work on the computer are decisively pictorial. In *Ball and Chain*, 2001, and *Mazzocchio in Room*, 2001, he creates abstract still-lives using geometric imagery that verges on realism in a surreal kind of way. As if to underscore his

Davis is from a generation of American painters who are somewhat irreverent, independent and very serious about what they do.



penchant for word play and allusion to realism, *Crate 99*, 2001 is a picture of an actual wooden box, with lettering and wood grain included, used to contain paintings when they are shipped. There are a few series from the late seventies to mid-eighties, notably *The Music Series*, *The Floaters* and *The Checkerboards*, that also read primarily as pictures with an abstract geometric narrative at the heart. *The Music Series* is Davis's most direct homage to Jackson Pollock who remains one of his most important inspirations, and those paintings ironically remain among Davis's most under-appreciated bodies of work. *The Music Series* breaks free of the constraints of style Davis usually imposes upon himself and often they are unabashed expressionist pictures occasionally held in check by various floating, phantom shapes.

By the late 1960s Davis was showing his paintings in leading galleries worldwide. He was represented by his longtime dealer and friend Nicholas Wilder in Los Angeles, Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, Kasmin Gallery in London, and David Mirvish Gallery in Canada. Davis's paintings were widely collected by important museums and private collectors all over the world. Articles about his work were written, and his paintings were shown everywhere there was an important venue for contemporary art. During the late seventies and until the early nineties, Davis was represented by the BlumHelman Galleries in New York and Los Angeles and since the early seventies the John Berggruen Gallery in San Francisco. While fashions came and went Davis continued producing his visions, remaining true to his essential self.

In 1962, I saw an exhibition that rocked the world. The Sidney Janis Gallery shocked me, and the art world, with

From the beginning, Davis had a preoccupation with redefining abstract painting.

The New Realism Show in a rented storefront on 57th Street. That exhibition marked the official arrival of Pop Art in the very heart of the abstract expressionist stronghold. The arrival of Pop Art and the advent of Post-Painterly Abstraction and Minimalism had by 1962 struck a nearly fatal blow to Abstract Expressionism. I regularly began visiting Dick Bellamy's Green Gallery where I saw *Op Art*, *Hard-Edge Painting*, *Pop Art*, *Minimalism*—and frankly, I was stunned. I was fifteen and an art student on 57th St. in New York, painting large gestural abstract expressionist oil paintings with charcoal and enamels, working in a manner similar to the artists I admired most: Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning, Hans Hofmann, Franz Kline.

I began to re-think what I was doing after I'd been to the Kansas City Art Institute (and left in early November 1963) having done scores of abstract expressionist paintings in my two months there. I'd met Hans Hofmann at the Kootz Gallery in December 1963, and Hofmann's words of encouragement impacted me almost as much as his paintings did. Hofmann's rich, deep color range, his sophisticated formats, his free and bold brushwork, his occasional use of white grounds, the masterful use of hard-edge rectangles against organic stains, had left an indelible impression on me. In early 1964 after I turned seventeen I decided it was time for a big change in my work. I hit the road, left New York City and headed for California determined to create new paintings. When I settled in Berkeley in March 1964 I began to paint my first hard-edge acrylic paintings. The challenge I faced was how to bridge all that I loved about *Abstract Expressionism* with all that I'd seen that was new and radical; I vowed to myself that I'd find the way.



The corbeled dome of Hondo Hogan was inspired by the Navajo hogan dwelling structure, considered not merely a living space but also the primary symbol of Navajo cosmology and the container for a rich spiritual life. The dome is not a true dome but is rather an infinitely upward-expanding trumpet bell, representing access to the center of the cosmos.

It's nearly forty years since I first saw Ronald Davis's work in San Francisco in 1964. He struck me then as an important new painter and thirty-eight years later, having created a deep and rich legacy of art in five decades, he remains an even more important painter. In 1964 I saw hard-edge acrylic paintings of high levels of intensity, clearly distinguished, defining and dealing with major issues facing advanced American abstract painting of that time. The dilemma many young abstract painters faced was how to create relevant, meaningful art that was new, would reflect their own time, and would be viable, universal and as timeless as was the best *Abstract Expressionism*. Some of the issues were clarity, clear color, sharp surface distinction and the elimination of the subjective, relational approach for a more rational decision making process. I was struck by the level of quality in Ron's work and the interesting resonance his work had with some of the best new work I'd seen in New York.

In 1993 Ronald Davis moved to Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico, where in collaboration with architect Dennis Holloway and anthropologist Charley Cambridge he built a compound of six Navajo-type hogans to live and work in. Davis has worked in many mediums and in 1997 he created the remarkable, educational web site www.abstract-art.com. He has made master-

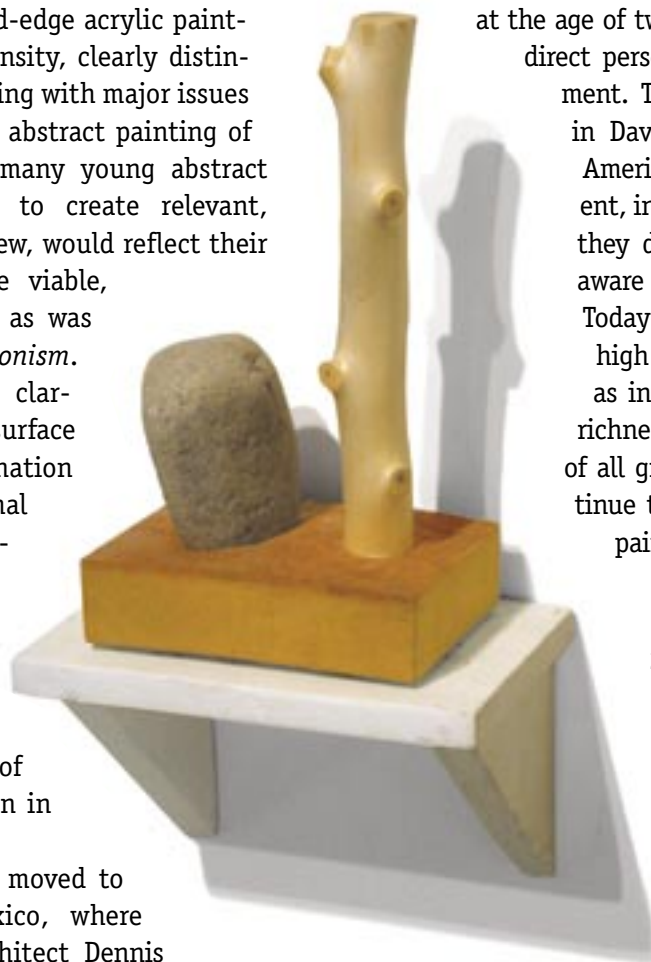
ful digital works on the computer for two decades, and some of his digital works are among his most stirring and moving images.

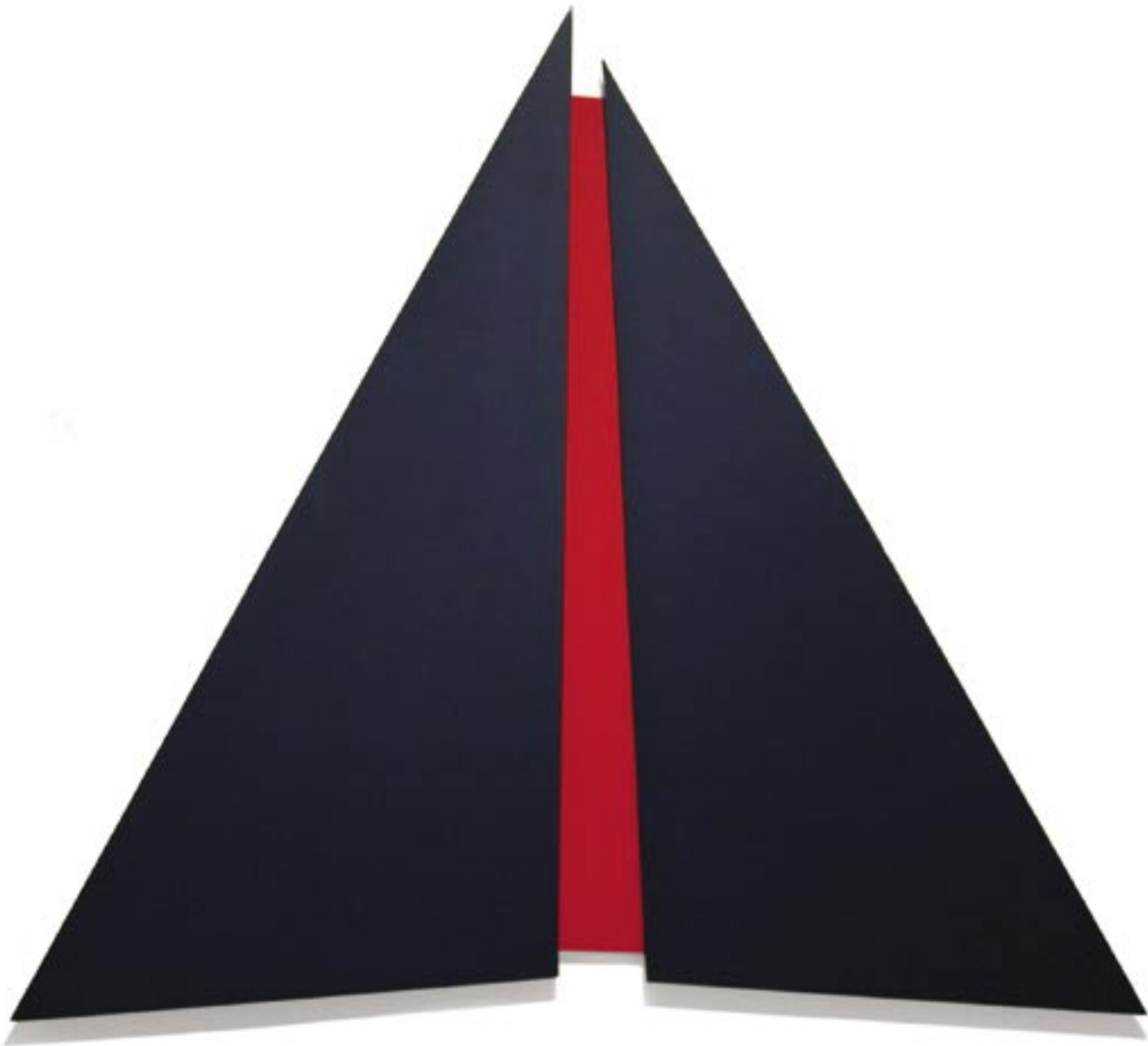
For all of his humor, subtle wit and clever ideas, Davis is a sincere artist. He came to painting somewhat late at the age of twenty-two. He is a shy but straight and direct person and that's reflected in his achievement. There is no place for irony or cynicism in Davis's work; he is from a generation of American painters who are somewhat irreverent, independent and very serious about what they do, and Ronald Davis has always been aware of his place in American art history. Today he continues to create paintings of high quality and, if the issues have changed as indeed the world has changed, then the richness of his new art—as does the richness of all great painting from any time—will continue to compel anyone who loves the art of painting.

— Ronnie Landfield
New York City, March

2002

Ronnie Landfield is an abstract painter who lives and works in New York City. He is represented by the Salander/O'Reilly Galleries. Since 1966, at the age of nineteen, Mr. Landfield's paintings have been included in hundreds of group exhibitions worldwide. Since his debut in 1969 at the David Whitney Gallery in New York, Landfield has had nearly sixty one-man shows of his work. His paintings are in the permanent collections of dozens of museums worldwide including the Museum of Modern Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the National Gallery, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the Art Institute





A Painting's Just Gotta Look Better Than the Wallpaper

My work is comprised of aggressively decorative, meaningless, unidentified floating objects that pretend to be rational. Illusion is my vehicle. Opticality is paramount.

I really had no aspirations to be an artist. It was my third choice. I wanted to be a racer, or possibly a writer or a musician. Mostly a sports car race driver. I blew up an engine and went into a ditch in my twin-cam MG-A once in La Junta, Colorado, and narrowly escaped being creamed by two guys in Porsche 550s going around me at 180 while I was going just 120. I realized I might get killed doing this. That would have been OK at the time, but racing is a rich man's sport, and I couldn't afford it. So I switched to painting.

Later I found out that being an artist is much more dangerous – and just as expensive.

The first painting I painted, a couple of years before I had thoughts of becoming a real painter, was a bleeding half of a cantaloupe on a checkerboard tablecloth with a fork looming overhead. As Yogi Bera says, "When you come to the fork in the road, take it."

Needing therapy, I enrolled in the San Francisco Art Institute. My father paid my tuition and \$150 a month for four years to keep me off the street, and to keep me from embarrassing him.

Originally, I just wanted to go to Mexico and live on the beach, eat fish heads and rice, and paint; but my father wouldn't let me. I had this big ball of something in

my gut, and I needed desperately to vomit it out. At the same time, I was about to be drafted into the army, and I was terrified, although willing to go. I somehow made them understand that I was incapable of military duty. I told them I would go, but that I couldn't be responsible for my actions under the stress of regimented duty. They deferred me.

In art school I discovered I had to try harder to compensate for the deficiencies of growing up knowing nothing of art in the cultural desert of Cheyenne, Wyoming. I mean, there was a watercolor society there, and some cowboy and Indian paintings, but nothing more. I saw some paintings at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC in my teens once, on a one-day

whirlwind tour: the Lincoln Memorial, the White House, and the National Gallery. It didn't occur to me then that making those pictures that were hanging there could be something one could actually DO in life.

In painting, I had discovered a "profession" that suited my dependencies. That is to say, if I became an artist, it was partly because it fitted my lifestyle. Life is funny that way: I haven't had a drink in 18 years, but I am still an artist. Because now I know I really qualified, whereas when I went to the Art Institute for "therapy," I only suspected it. I agreed with Camus – that I was a rebel, a criminal; but one who wanted to change the world to a more beautiful place, rather than deface it. The



Tapestry, 1962 Oil on canvas 68 x 84 inches





My choice was to do the opposite, yet remain on the playing field of twentieth-century abstract painting.

director of the Art Institute, Fred Martin, said that I was “a pain in the ass, but a worthwhile one.” In later years, the visionary art dealer who launched and nurtured my career, Nicholas Wilder, said, “You can say what you want about Ron Davis, but he sure can paint.”

In the early 1960s at the Art Institute, the pervasive influence of both Clyfford Still’s legacy and the prevailing Bay Area expressionistic figurative style presented a truly insurmountable hurdle, one I couldn’t even go around, much less go over. I couldn’t paint man’s aspirations as opposed to his physical limitations! But I discovered I could paint a stripe. And later, checkerboards. Abstract geometric objects.

Thus, I was led to do the opposite, not to be intentionally contrary, but out of desperation. During my first months in San Francisco I attended an exhibition of the Ben Heller Collection of Abstract Expressionism in the Palace of the Legion of Honor, the memorial building to the veterans of World War I. Out in front was one of the many casts of Rodin’s Thinker, squatting on a pedestal. Inside was Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles*. I looked at it a long time, and the poles began to churn viscerally, literally, in my gut. I had to go outside and throw up on the lawn. And, I didn’t know what it was, but there was a Joseph Cornell box that transported me to the starry heavens. The pictures by Clyfford Still presented to me the stratified canyon walls of the mind and soul. My despair was that I could not, would not ever be able to make a picture like that. Having been “churned up,” I struggled to learn and eclectically emulate the space and power of these great paintings. But it had already been done. The buzz word at the time

was “commitment,” or “existential commitment.” And, as a young artist, I had to admit I didn’t yet have anything to express, let alone a commitment to do so.

These were issues of personal artistic development, abstract content, and style, problems that to me were overwhelming. But my concern was how to make a picture, not how to look at one. Rather than just emulate the great works of my predecessors was not enough. My strategy became to do a Mondrian in the style of Jackson Pollock, and a Pollock in the style of Mondrian. And down in Studio 15 at the San Francisco Art Institute, an instructor of mine, Frank Lobdell, emphasized the importance of what you leave out of a painting, not what you put in.

I drove east in 1962, having been invited to the Yale-Norfolk School of Music and Art as a grantee. The crits I got there were incomprehensible. After a while I figured out they were analyzing my paintings



in terms of Cubism, and Cubism was something I was not looking for. I didn’t want to look at the world and then abstract it. I said I wanted to approach it more directly, just make abstract paintings – which resulted in a couple

*As it works out,
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the length and
breadth of it –
is an artist,
in the studio,
doing stoop labor.*

of heated discussions. Phillip Guston came up to Norfolk and sat on the lawn and talked about himself for five hours. He said, "You have to paint flat footed, not looking at your painting while you're painting it." Good advice indeed!

While I was back east I expected to be able to view the works of Pollock, Still, De Kooning, Rothko, et al. But what I did find in the museums and New York galleries were

some gray boxes and some blown-up versions of panels from comic books. I was taken aback because these were not the serious, even elitist pictures I had been seeking to emulate and learn how to make. They amused me, particularly a Lichtenstein, where the viewer is looking through a keyhole at a couple, with the bubble caption: "I just looked, Brad, and there's nobody out there."

It was reassuring to find out that I was the "nobody," and interesting to find in these formative years that art had become entertainment rather than a means of expression. It was liberating to discover that art didn't have to express anything or mean anything. That it didn't matter what a painting looked like.

Struggling to gain a fingerhold in the formidable tradition of abstract painting, I attempted synthesis between "the Minimal Object," Pop and Op fashion, and traditional, emotion-driven expressionist painting. For instance, even though I, like DuChamp, reintroduced

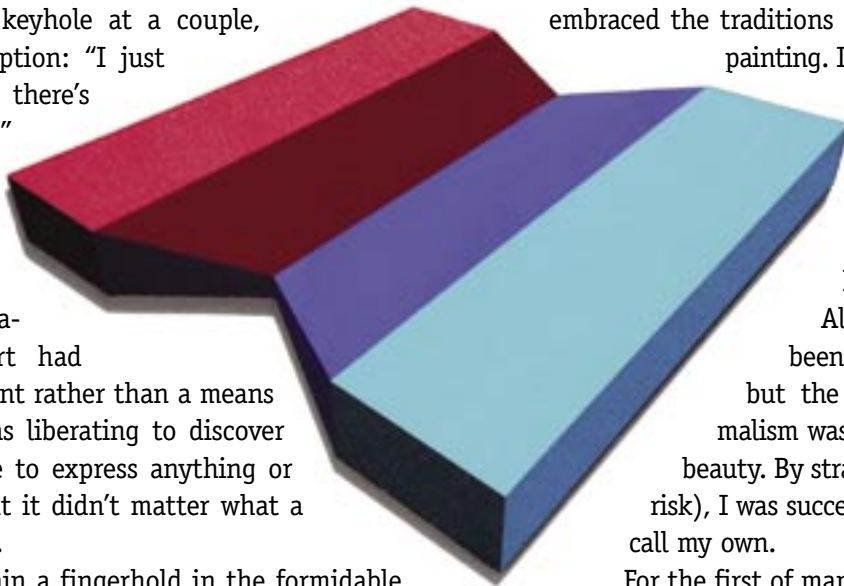
perspective illusion – and the illusions of objects – into my painting, the objects themselves remained abstract and non-referential, although that's usually up to the surrealist viewer. This struggle between object and the pictorial remains central to my work after forty years. I did not bring ironic non-art objects or concepts into the context of art at a time when trendy non-art was being redefined as "art." It's my belief that art as art has become devalued.

It was never my intention to deconstruct art as I found it. I strove to expand the boundaries of painting, not the boundaries of what was then becoming art: gray or glass boxes, conceptual art, installation art, performance art, minimalist art, or political art. My choice was to do the opposite, yet remain on the playing field of twentieth-century abstract painting. In my case, doing the opposite did not mean doing something completely different; I embraced the traditions of twentieth-century abstract

painting. In fact, I have always remained in the Clement Greenberg "dialogue of post-painterly abstraction," although in the studio – in the moment – I haven't always followed his theoretical suggestions.

Also, I can't say that I haven't been influenced by minimalism; but the emptiness of classical minimalism was not enough. I had to include beauty. By straddling the fence (not without risk), I was successful in forging a style I could call my own.

For the first of many times, I had painted myself into a corner. I was left with making an object: a container for the activity and intensity of the stoop labor. The deal is, this activity is not fun, not romantic, not expressive – it is a mindless activity that requires an



empty mind, beginner's mind in the Buddhist sense. The hard work of making an object without thought or effort. "Having fun" and "feeling good," I have found out, are two different things. As it works out, the art world – the length and breadth of it – is an artist, in the studio, doing stoop labor, making things – making objects. I am envious of the craftsman, because he at least makes things that are useful.

My paintings present no narrative. What you see is not what you get. They are self-didactic, teaching me about form, and color, and perception itself. They are concave and convex, to serve either sex. But then, I am not really trying to be of service to the "art world." The paintings are often the opposite of what they seem. People think they're "happy," because I use bright colors. Conversely, some think the paintings are aloof and cerebral; rather, they are defensive, protecting my fragility. I don't know what they mean; I just know how to make them. A painting's just gotta look better than the wallpaper.

I'm hardly ever confronted with the blank canvas syndrome. It starts prior to that – I have to reinvent the concept of a blank canvas. I know a painting is finished, at least for me, when I get bored with it. Or, if it's any good, it pushes me outside of it, and I just become another viewer.

Between 1964 and 1988 I painted about a thousand paintings, bouncing between painterliness and hard-edge, or combinations. A "Pollock in a box" comes to mind. I

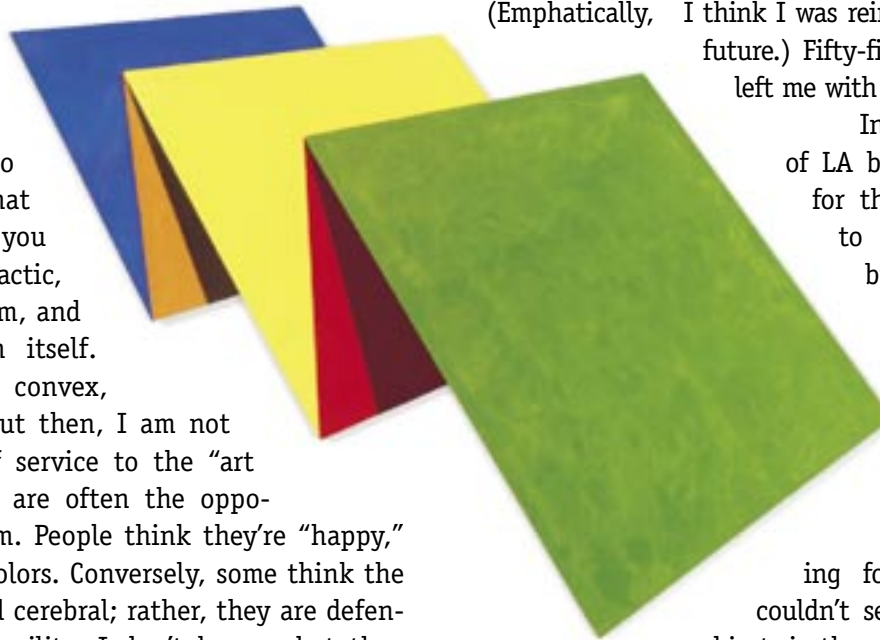
don't always equate expressionism with gooey paint on canvas. Apollonian can be just as "expressive" as Dionysian; it's a matter of what is being expressed.

In 1965, I moved to LA. I showed a lot, sold a lot, built a big studio in Malibu, and consumed a lot. I had a very successful career. By the late 80s, I'd had enough. I'd accomplished what I'd been sent back from the future to do. (Emphatically, I think I was reincarnated. I'm from the future.) Fifty-five one-man shows had left me with the taste of ashes.

In 1990 I left the freeways of LA behind, and disengaged for the most part. I moved to New Mexico, where I built a group of domed polygonal buildings I designed with architect Dennis Holloway, based on the Navajo hogan dwelling.

I stopped painting for a while because I couldn't see any reason to make objects in the context of the 1980s, for the sake of "show biz." The self-indulgent self-promotional 80s: I didn't fit into that. So I disengaged for 10 years. This exhibition at the Butler Institute of American Art is my first major exhibition in 10 years – with the exception of a small show of the 1996 Wax Series in January 1998 at a gallery in Taos, New Mexico. I did attempt to do some sculpture, enough to know I am not very good at it.

Now, I can reflect that my aspiration was to be an abstract expressionist, to walk in the footsteps of Still and Pollock but, characteristically, I was unsuited to do so. I



I stumbled into a style of painting that can excavate walls.

can only construct things, something like the old European constructivists. Yet, like Clyfford Still and Jackson Pollock, I am an American Westerner, and an unsophisticated one at that, though I've learned a lot in my more than 40 years of painting. I am not a "cultured" man. I can only make objects, but "paintings as objects"

was not enough, either. I was able to make it a bit more complicated by attempting to make pictures of *illusions* of objects. One thing I can say is that the subject of my paintings is *not* the unconscious.

A lot of people think I make my paintings – these objects – for them. They're wrong about that. The activity is selfish. On bad days, I feel that it's just a vehicle to confirm that I will be misunderstood once again.

Ultimately, my success was really my personal failure, my original goal being to be a starving artist. Dealing with success has been so much harder than making paintings. If I've made any contribution at all, it is that counter to the glacial movement of serious twentieth century painting since Cézanne towards flatness, I reintroduced the theorems of three-dimensional Renaissance mathematical perspective into my made objects – my constructions. This is my legacy, my contribution to the art history books. With this, I stumbled into a style of painting that can excavate walls, shift the point of view of a Looker in a post-Einsteinian relativity within the context of a terrifying, existential, overpopulated nuclear world, where the observed is – only perhaps – relative to the Looker.

Even though paintings are not intrinsically useful, it was my thought that my paintings never wore out, no matter how much people looked at them, nor how many people looked at them. But I found out that when

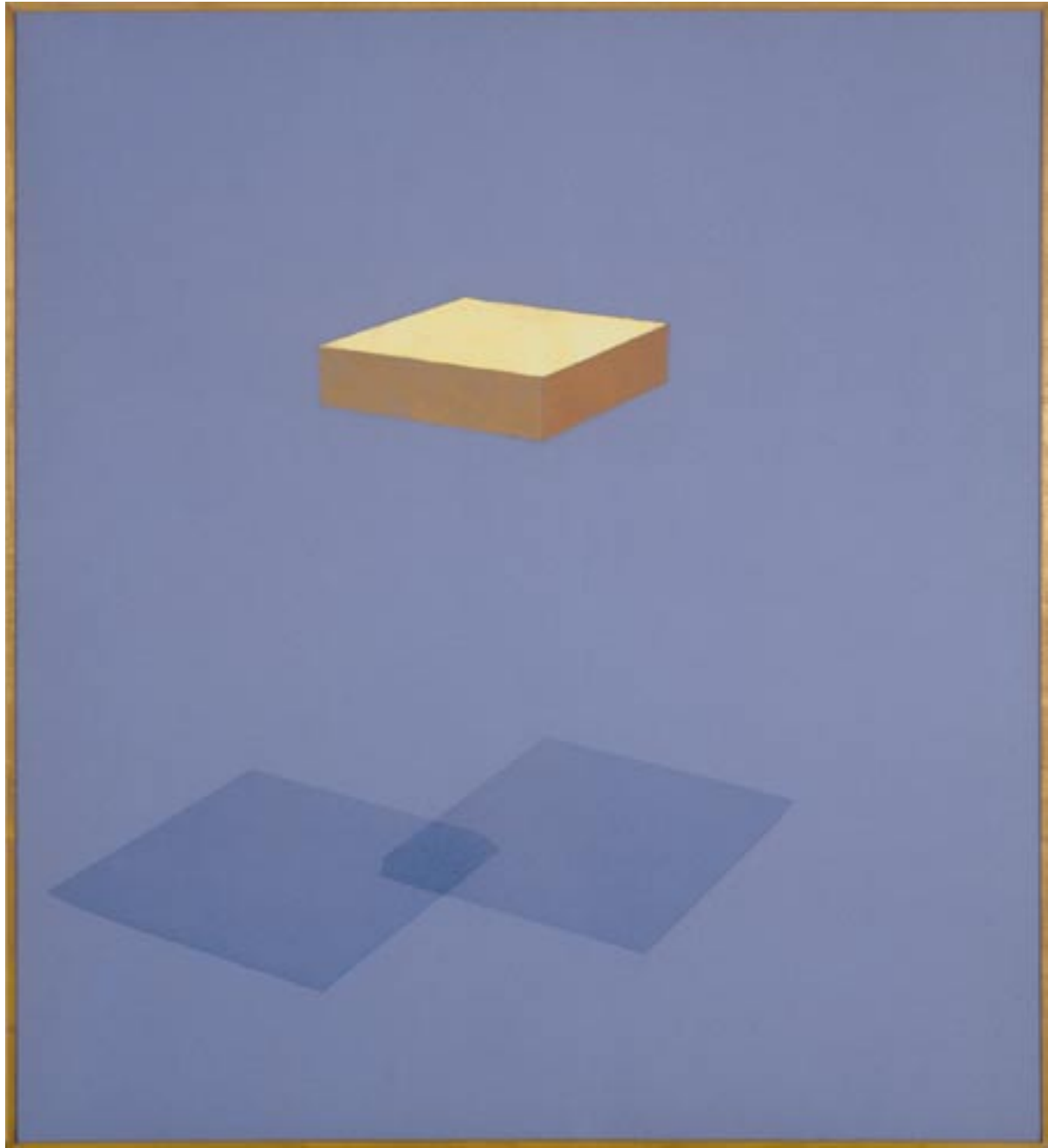
the paintings are moved or shipped, they are physically easily damaged. Of course that doesn't happen out of maliciousness, but from lack of common sense. People will carefully put a plate in the cupboard, but will hang a big fragile painting with a little picture hook – and it falls off the wall!

People don't understand that as an artist, I sometimes feel like the world wants to hang me on the wall by the scruff of my neck. I am not my paintings. (Sometimes I catch myself talking about them in the third person.) People often don't understand that an artist is someone who has to fill out a credit card application, who has to put the word "artist" in the space after "occupation."

I think "Artist" has become a devalued word. Somebody told me once that the Greeks didn't even have a word for "artist." Their word was "artisan." That word fits me better, I believe, because I make things – I'm more of an object-maker than a picture-painter.

I did make a few gallery-museum sales and connections during the time I wasn't working on actual painting. Actually, I have been working all along, the whole time. The wood sculptures, the encaustics. The watercolors I painted with my son Kermit. The computer drawings – hundreds of them. I am always in the process of learning three dimensional drawing and technical modelling techniques with new computer programs. The exploration of and experimentation with new modes of visualization. And I spend a lot of time building and maintaining the web site www.abstract-art.com.

When I stopped serious painting, I didn't go dormant. There has been an alchemical process at work, a transformation I can't explain except to say that these new paintings are an "inside job." I am making them from a sense of personal obligation, which means a lot of things to me. On September 11, 2001, I watched the second



Jelm, 1979 (Floater Series) Acrylic on canvas 72 1/2 x 66 1/2 inches

airplane fly into the World Trade Center on television. After I cried, lit candles, and hung up my American flag on the front door of my kitchen hogan, a grave sense of my own mortality struck me. A week later, I drove to Albuquerque and bought seven hundred dollars worth of materials, something I haven't done for a very long time. I know that for me, the only way to make a difference – which really will make no difference whatsoever – is to go into the studio for the rest of my life, and vent my emotional responses to the events that have changed all our lives forever. The new paintings are neither expressions nor representations of that event. My generalship in the world against existential terror-at-large is to just do the work in my studio.

I am not a connoisseur. I have not intentionally been to a museum in 15 years. I have no gallery affiliations. I have no subscriptions to art magazines. I read paperback novels and military history. I socialize little, and I watch a lot of TV. I abhor travel.

As I near my 65th birthday, I have come to know that the whole of the art world and of art history itself, is contained in the isolation of this artisan, making an object, a picture, in the dark of the night.

I'm just trying to figure out how to pay the \$186 light bill.

— Ronald Davis
February 2002
Arroyo Hondo, New Mexico

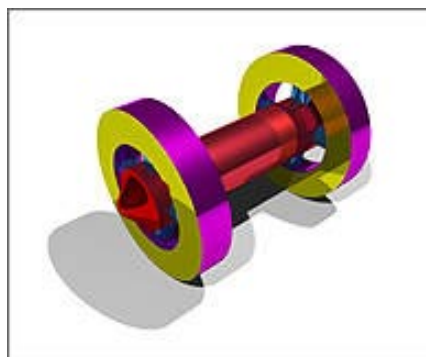
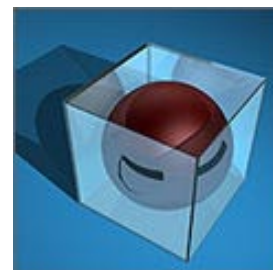
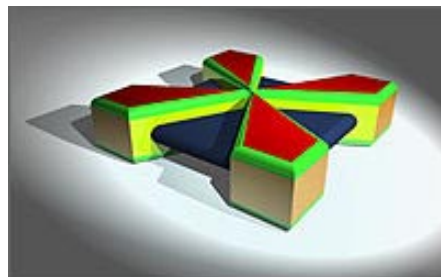
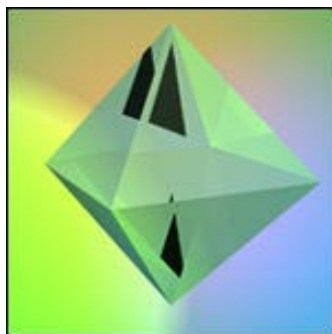




Computer-Aided Painting

Cones and *Tetrahedron Eve*, 1983, was one of the first computer-aided paintings Ronald Davis made, using a sketch made on his Apple II computer in a program called "Graforth." He used a very low-power opaque projector to transfer the drawing to the canvas, the result being that much of the painting was painted in the dark. It was included in the book *Digital Visions* and was shown in a number of museums as an example

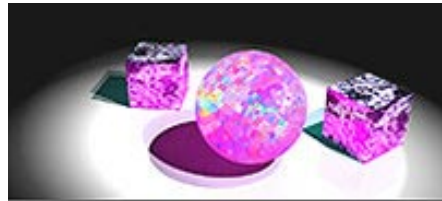
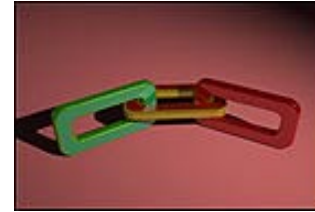
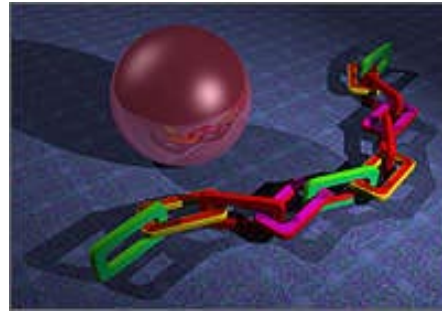
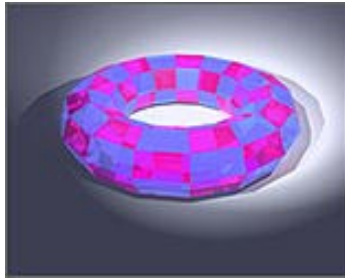
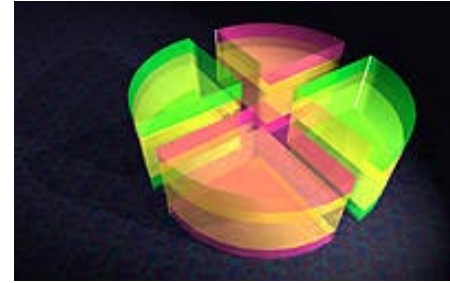
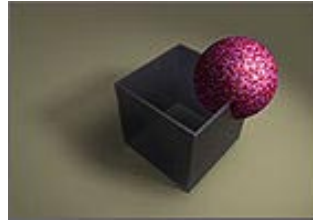
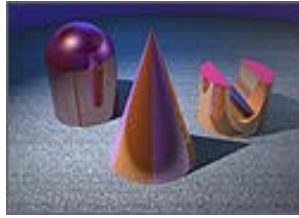
of "computer art," including the IBM Gallery in New York City. As early as 1968, when Davis submitted a proposal to the Los Angeles County Museum's Art and Technology Project – facilitated by the designer of the first Apple Macintosh, Jeff Raskin – he became interested in using computers to help design geometric, 3-D configurations for his paintings, qualifying him as pioneer in the development of computer graphics and computer art.



Digital Paintings 2001

With the advent of the Apple II computer in 1982, Ronald Davis began experimenting with early three-dimensional drawing programs, utilizing them as his primary sketching and drawing tools. He was one of the very first to create 3-D digital artworks, guaranteeing his place as an innovator in the new field of computer-aided art. In 1987 he began using three-dimensional modeling and rendering programs for the Macintosh com-

puter, creating hundreds of digital color drawings over a ten-year period. These digital images are not reproductions of other paintings; they are entirely digital, created with Davis's edge-cutting computer skills. This suite of images was rendered throughout the late 1990s, and was printed by Digital Color Imaging, Akron, Ohio during the summer of 2001. The entire series is included in the permanent collection of the Butler Institute Museum of Art.



Octahedron 24 x 24 inches
Octahedron On Post 22.25 x 14.25 inches
Five Balls 14.5 x 20.25 inches
Four Plus 6 x 7.875 inches
Mazzochio In Room 20 x 12 inches
Maltese Cross 16 x 26 inches
Sphere In Cube 19.5 x 19.5 inches
Axle and Wheels 19 x 23 inches

Three Rounds 11.375 x 16 inches
Sphere and Cube 14.5 x 18 inches
Jello Cake 14.5 x 22.875 inches
Gray Shadow Mazzochio 16 x 20 inches
Ball and Chain 18 x 26 inches
Three Link Chain 12 x 18 inches
Sphere And Cubes 11.6875 x 26.825 inches
Crate '99 18 x 27 inches

The *Digital Painting Series 2001* is printed on state of the art 150-year archival Petgloss paper using pigmented archival inks. The prints are shown relative in size to one another.

When the illusion is lost, art is hard to find

The recent paintings included in this exhibition represent a necessarily constrained group chosen from the eighty that have been manufactured since October 1, 2001. They are Modern, coming at the twilight of the Modern Era, or perhaps forty or fifty years after the actual ending of the Modern Era which began with the European Renaissance around the year 1500. Enlightenment has ended.

I suggest that these works are seeking a new visual epistemology that is serious, moral, and spiritual, deviating from the self-indulgent, ironic, post-modern, politically correct painting and non-painting (remember, “painting is dead”) or *scum-bling* of recent years, placing them in the tradition of the excellent abstract works of Abstract Expressionism — Pollock, Still, Rothko, and Newman to name a few of the greats who continue to inspire me. Constitutionally, I remain a geometrician and an expressionist.

These recent paintings mark a departure from the major structural element that I have pursued in the majority of my work over the past thirty-nine years, that being theoretical three-vanishing-point perspective illusions (my trademark). In those works, I employed three primary construction methods to draw or shape my paintings: 1) In the early years I relied on traditional drafting illustration methods to create drawings of depicted 3-D objects that were then cartooned-up to the final scale of the painting. I should note that these depicted objects retained my commitment to abstraction; for me, a slab is just as abstract as a square. 2) In the seventies and eighties I drew my perspective grids full-scale using snap lines, placing the vanishing points 40 to

60 feet apart. 3) Beginning in the early eighties, I increasingly relied on three-dimensional computer programs such as Renderman or Cinema 4-D to sketch out the shapes and shadows, then projected them up in scale onto the painting. These methods served me well in solving the fundamental problem of painting: “What color and where to put it?” But the temporal gap between concept, preparation, and execution of a work led me to a studio crises. What I needed to do was reinvent a do-able concept of the blank canvas.

These recent abstractions evolve from crude pencil sketches, eschewing traditional perspective illusion, and are drawn with the eye and the saw. Illusion remains, but these paintings are more optical and elusive — and given looking time, move around a lot in subtle, ambiguous, and mysterious ways. They require greater focus.

Note should be made of the reductive, Hard Edge nature of these abstractions. Over the years I have oscillated between the Hard Edge and the painterly. I do both loose and precise with facility. However in these complicated times a need for clarity seems paramount: I have found that color contrast and interaction trumps drips, splatters, scumbles, brush-work and other non-art content (sludge) as the means to true expression of the

soul and intellect. Indeed, the chary binding of these bipolar opposites is at that extreme where opposites simultaneously meet and transcend sign making. Unknown archetypes of heart, head and crotch are discovered and revealed.

— RD, July 2002





BIOGRAPHY

Ronald Davis

was born in Santa Monica, California on June 29, 1937. Raised in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Engineering student at the University of Wyoming 1955-56.

Worked as a sheet metal mechanic 1957-59. Found his calling as a painter in 1959 at the age of 22. Studied painting at the San Francisco Art Institute, 1960-64. Started painting as an abstract expressionist, the influences and elements of which would be incorporated into many of his future paintings. Yale-Norfolk Summer School of Music and Art grantee, 1962. In 1963 began to paint in a hard edge, geometric, optical style. Began showing his paintings at museums and galleries in 1964. Moved to Los Angeles. First one-man show at the Nicholas Wilder Gallery, LA in 1965. Made geometric shaped illusionistic paintings using colored polyester resins and fiber-glass from 1966 until 1972. These paintings laid to rest the demand that important abstract paintings not be illusionary. Colored planes of splattered resin created the surface of pictures that depict deep space reminiscent of Renaissance perspectives, paradoxically retaining the flatness, composition, and color of Modernist painting. Instructor, University of California, Irvine, 1966. First one-man show in New York at the Tibor de Nagy Gallery in 1966 followed by a solo show at Leo Castelli in 1968. Paintings acquired by the Museum of Modern Art; The Tate Gallery, London; The Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The San Francisco Museum of Art; and the Chicago Art Institute in 1968. National Endowment for the Arts grantee, 1968. Purchased a Buchla synthesizer and began sound sculpture and electronic music composition. In 1972 built a 5000 square foot studio-residence in Malibu, CA, collaborating in its design with architect Frank Gehry. Learned silk-screening, lithography, etching, and paper making from Ken Tyler at Gemini, GEL and Tyler Graphics, Bedford, New York. Returned to acrylic paint on canvas in 1973. In 1975-78 painted the large scale, geometric, and illusionistic *Snapline Series*. Painted *Floater Series* 1978-79; *Flatland Series*, 1980-81; *Object Paintings*, 1982; *Music Series* of abstract expressionist paintings in 1983-85; *Freeway and Freeline Series* 1987; *Spiral Series* 1988. Began designing paintings using Macintosh computers in 1988 using 3-D rendering and animation programs. Continued intensive involvement with computers using them as primary sketching and drawing tools. Traveled to Taos, NM in 1990 and purchased a 10 acre lot north of Taos on the Hondo Mesa. Began building a complex of six living and studio buildings, the designs based upon the Navajo dwelling hogan, collaborating with architect Dennis Holloway and anthropologist Charley Cambridge. Discovered the relationship between the Hogan corbeled dome and prior work. Built a number of *Hogan Frame Spirit House* log sculptures and showed the 18' diameter x 12' high octagon *Hondo Hogan* in Los Angeles in 1991. Sold Malibu studio and permanently moved to Arroyo Hondo, NM in 1993. Began painting again in 1995, using encaustic (wax) medium on shaped wood illusionistic compositions. These paintings continued Davis' preoccupation with "painting as an illusion of an object," a style that has been called *Abstract Illusionism*, and related to the style labeled *Lyrical Abstraction*. After ten years of relative inactivity in the painting studio, began a major new painting group in October, 2001, consisting of three distinct styles: *NuShapes*, *Hinges*, and *Diamonds*, producing 40 paintings in five months. *Rectilinear Open Box* acquired by The Harwood Museum Foundation, Taos, NM in Nov., 2001. Exhibited a selection of new work and computer-generated *Digital Painting Series 2001* at the Victoria Meyhren Gallery at Denver Univ., Denver, CO, Sept. 2002. Survey of new and historical works and computer print series shown at The Butler Institute of American Art, late Sept., 2002.

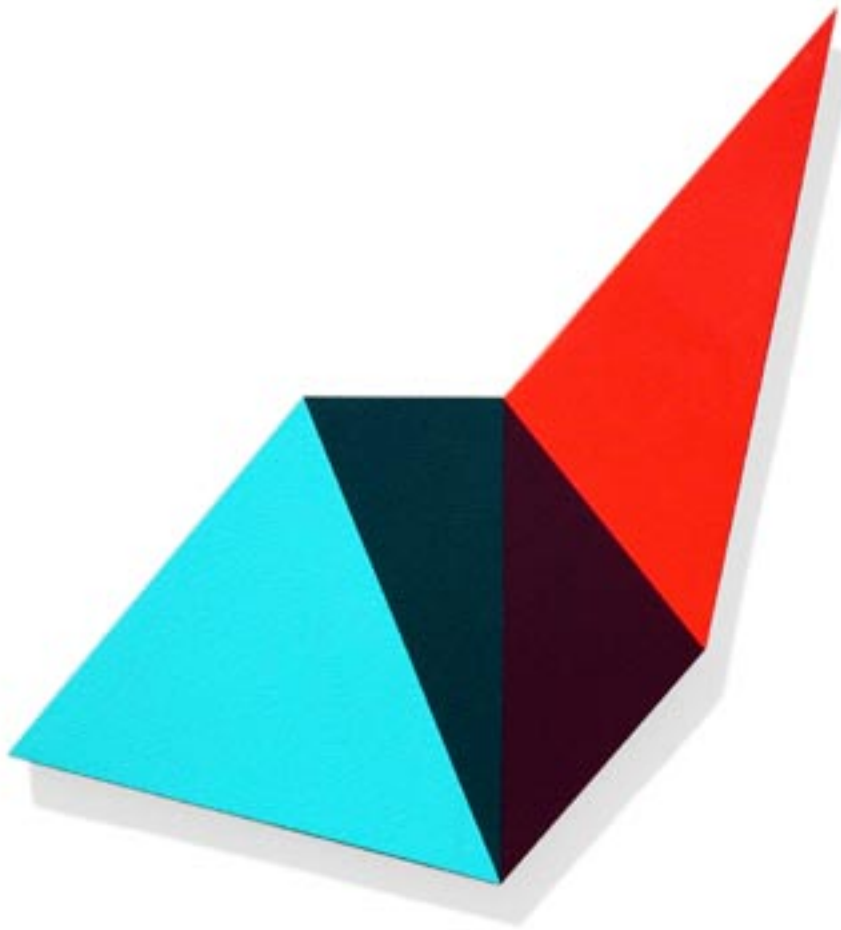
• **WORKS IN PERMANENT COLLECTIONS:** Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Modern Art, NYC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Tate Gallery, London; San Antonio Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Art; Whitney Museum, NYC; Virginia Museum of Art, Richmond; Phoenix Art Museum;

The Art Institute of Chicago; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Denver Art Museum; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, DC; Wallraff-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany; Palm Springs Desert Museum, California; The Harwood Museum, Taos, NM; and numerous other collections.

• **ONE-MAN SHOWS:** A total of 58 Solo Exhibitions including: Leo Castelli, New York, 1968, 1970, 1974, 1976; Nicholas Wilder Gallery, Los Angeles, 1965, 1967, 1969, 1973, 1977, 1979; Asher/Faure, Los Angeles, 1982, 1983, 1984; John Berggruen, San Francisco, 1973, 1975, 1978, 1980, 1982; Kasmin Gallery, London, 1968, 1971; Galleria Dell'Ariete, Milano, Italy, 1972; Pasadena Museum of Modern Art, 1971; Oakland Museum, Oakland, California, retrospective, 1976; Pepperdine University, Malibu, California, 1979; University of Nevada, Reno, 1977; San Diego State University, 1980; Trump's, LA, 1985; New York Academy of Sciences, NY, 1986; Sedona Art Center, Arizona, 1987; BlumHelman Los Angeles, Santa Monica, California, 1987, 1989, 1991; BlumHelman New York, 1981, 1984, 1988; DEL Fine Arts, Taos, NM 1992; Jaquelin Loyd Contemporary, Taos, NM, Jan. 1998; Butler Institute Museum of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio, Sept. 2002.

• **GROUP EXHIBITIONS:** Included in numerous local, national, and international shows since 1963 including: Painting and Drawing Annual, 1963, Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA (First Place Award); II Biennial American de Art, 1964, Cordoba, Argentina; A New Aesthetic, 1967, Washington Gallery of Modern Art, Washington, DC; 4 Documenta, 1968, Kasel, Germany; 31st Corcoran Annual, 1968, Washington, DC; XXXVI Venice Biennial, Venice, Italy, 1972; 71st American Exhibition, Chicago Art Institute, 1974; Painting, Drawing, and Sculpture of the 60's and 70's from the Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection. 1975, University of Pennsylvania; The Theodora Pottle Memorial Collection of Contemporary Art, 1978, Macomb Public Library, Macomb, IL; American Painting of the 1970's, 1979, Albright-Knox, Buffalo, NY; Reality of Illusion, 1979, Denver Art Museum; Art in Los Angeles - Seventeen Artists in the Sixties, 1981, LA County Museum of Art; Gemini, GEL: Art and Collaboration, 1984, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Prints from Tyler Graphics, 1985, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN; Digital Visions: Computers and Art, 1987-89, Everson Art Center Museum, Syracuse, NY; New Mexico Sculpture, Stables Gallery, Taos, NM, 1991; Seven Painters, 1995, Nicholas Alexander Gallery, NY.

• **SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:** Charles Kessler, *Ronald Davis's Paintings, 1962-76*. Catalogue, Oakland Museum, 1976; Hans Christian von Baeyer, *Finity/Infinity, the Art of Ronald Davis*. Catalogue, New York Academy of Sciences, 1986; Barbara Rose, *A New Aesthetic*. Catalogue, Washington, DC Gallery of Modern Art, 1967; Knute Stiles, "Thing, Act, Place." *Artforum*, January, 1965; Michael Fried, "Ronald Davis: Surface and Illusion." *Artforum*, April 1967; Barbara Rose, "Abstract Illusionism." *Artforum*, October 1967; Annette Michelson, "Ron Davis: Leo Castelli Exhibition." *Artforum*, May 1968; Walter Darby Bannard, "Notes on American Painting of the Sixties." *Artforum*, January 1970; John Elderfield, "New paintings by Ron Davis." *Artforum*, March 1971; Marshall Berges, "Ron Davis: Home Q & A." *Los Angeles Times: Home Magazine*, August 17, 1975; Paul Goldberger, "Studied Slapdash." *New York Times Magazine*, January 18, 1976; Fred Martin, "Ron Davis: Cycle of Work." *Art Week*, July 31, 1976; Hilton Kramer, "The Return of Illusionism." *The New York Times: Arts and Leisure*, May 28, 1978; Edward Lucie-Smith, *Art in the Seventies*, Cornell University Press, 1980; Peter Carlson, "The Collectors: Contemporary Élan." *Architectural Digest*, March 1979; Dennis Hopper, *Out of the Sixties*. Twelvemtree Press, 1986 (photo of the artist); Phyllis Tuchman, "The Sunshine Boys." *Connoisseur*, February 1987; Cynthia Goodman, *Digital Visions, Computers and Art*. Book, Harry N. Abrams, 1987. Pepe Karmel, "Seven Painters," *The New York Times*, Nov. 17, 1995; Peter Plagens, *Sunshine Muse: Art on the West Coast. 1945-1970*. Book, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999.



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