

STEVE MILLER

E L G A W I M M E R

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MAY 28 - JULY 3

E L G A W I M M E R

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GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY - SATURDAY 11 - 6 P.M.

"Cold Comfort"

For those viewers already familiar with the work of Steve Miller, the thought of making a show out of his drawings might appear to be something of a deliberate inconsistency. This concern is not rooted so much in the fact that Miller has never made a lot of drawings over the course of his career, although he hasn't. Instead, the lapse seems even more fundamental, to the degree that most viewers (including myself and, to some extent, even the artist) had long ago assumed that deploying the traditional language of drawing would represent the exact opposite of what Miller's work has always been presumed to be about. Nevertheless, this incompatibility may not only still be as true now as it ever was in the past, it may actually help to explain why this body of work must be considered

to have an unexpectedly challenging and yet satisfying relationship to Miller's paintings as a whole.

In the canvases, the shortest route between the artist's impulse and the viewer's receptors has always been via machine--or, ideally, machines. Embracing the visual language of digitalized form as a latter day equivalent to the Pop artists' photo-silkscreens, Miller has tended to see the intersection of technology and aesthetics as perhaps the most pressing issue in contemporary art. Because they begin and/or end with the transposition of some kind of found imagery onto a gestural field, his paintings are therefore neither abstract nor representational. On the contrary, as the viewer's conscious recognition of Miller's source material starts to take a back seat in importance to the

overall effect of familiarity created by such mediated images, what begins to concern us more is the very range of sensations suggested by his apparently depersonalized technique. Miller himself has referred to his work as the point where cave painting meets artificial intelligence, and it is clear from this remark that he sees the shared terrain as being infinitely more interesting than the cultural gulf which conspires to keep them apart.

Considering that for him, the direct manual gesture has neither more nor less legibility than the dot pattern which makes up the image from an electron microscope, it is not surprising that Miller's work on paper tends to cover the complete range of combinations and extremes located between the two poles, just as there are works in which the pure photographic image seems to comprise the sole

reference to form, so there are others in which a few well-placed marks form the basis for the entire composition. Generally speaking, however, each drawing entails some act of balance between the two extremes, bringing together the handmade and the machine-made into a close symbiosis with one another. In fact, from the artist's point of view, both systems are actually necessary in order to lend meaning to one another; rather than think of digital technology, for example, as a way of censoring the primitivism implied by pure gesture, Miller's work is geared towards an attempt to recover or enhance that meaning, which he sees as having been lost along the way. Although the gesture has been deliberately vulgarized through this new treatment, it has somehow also been made to seem more real.

In recognizing the ways in which Miller allows for

such happy accidents to take place, it is also helpful to recognize the extent to which his use of digital imagery involves a consolidation of process and spatial description. The original image, "captured" by a video camera, is transferred into a computer graphics program, sometimes using that program to alter its density or contours. Rather than make direct use of this "new" original, however, Miller then photographs the image from the screen, thus ensuring that a little bit more of its visual integrity has been lost along the way. Even more importantly, the double mediation of the image seems to effectively dispense with any lingering questions of authorship that might have otherwise made themselves felt. It is not important where Miller obtained these images, nor even what they signify in their original form. The crucial factor is that these ghosts of unchallenged authority continue to call to mind the state of blind faith that was

once their stock in trade.

The importance of this group of drawings within Miller's oeuvre lies not so much in the fact that he has made his images more lyrical, or even more recognizable. It is rather that he has discovered an unexpected application for a visual language that had previously existed only in a strictly pictorial form. Furthermore, the co-existence of that which is handmade with that which originates (if we can use this word) within a machine--a factor which is fundamental to Miller's vision--enters into much sharper focus as perhaps the primary target of his investigation. This is not to say that the artist doesn't find aspects of what Baudrillard has called the "fractalization" of contemporary culture quite disturbing; any other point of view would be nothing short of inhumane. But the drawings help to articulate a completely different perspective, that being Miller's total embrace of digital

culture as a fait accompli--a reality which needs to be dealt with instead of denied.

Drawings are not quite the windows into the future aspired to by the paintings, but they have taken the issue of automatism to such a stage where Miller's relation to more general questions regarding abstraction or painting suddenly seem quite beside the point. Instead, Miller seems preoccupied with the dialectic between distance and proximity, and with the possibility of using technology to enhance the value of the painted image, as opposed to devaluing it. The drawings even seem to serve the argument that Miller's work is finally grounded in a kind of lyricism, albeit one which offer little solace to the viewer whose sense of touch is grounded in nostalgia. On the contrary, rather than permit a short-cut between painting's historical imperative and the hegemony of the

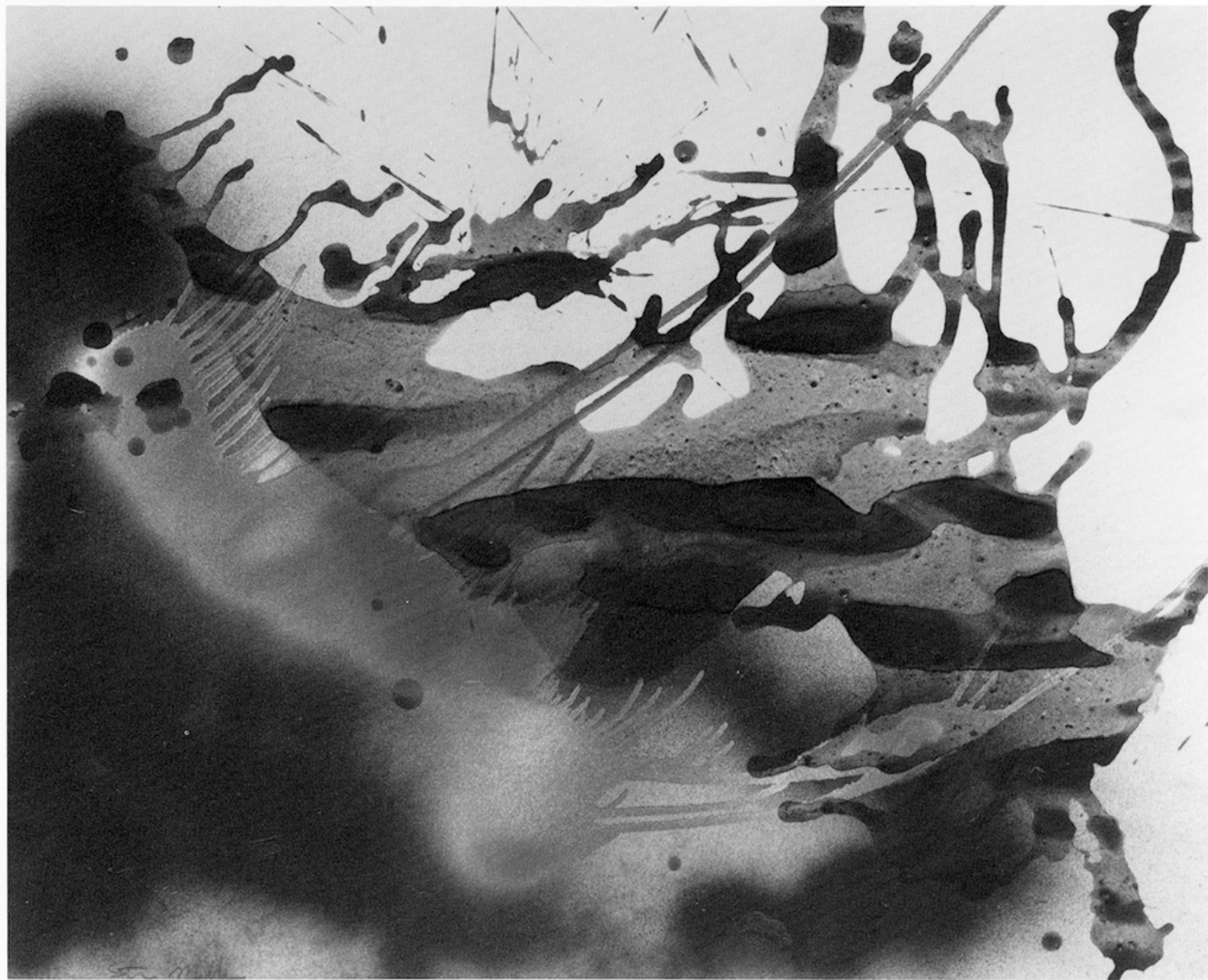
machine, this body of work represents an attempt to reassure the viewer that nothing is wrong with using art to establish a heightened intimacy with the body--that is, as long as we recognize that wherever we go from this point forward, the machine is not so much our constant guide or companion as it is an inseparable part of ourselves.

Dan Cameron
May, 1992

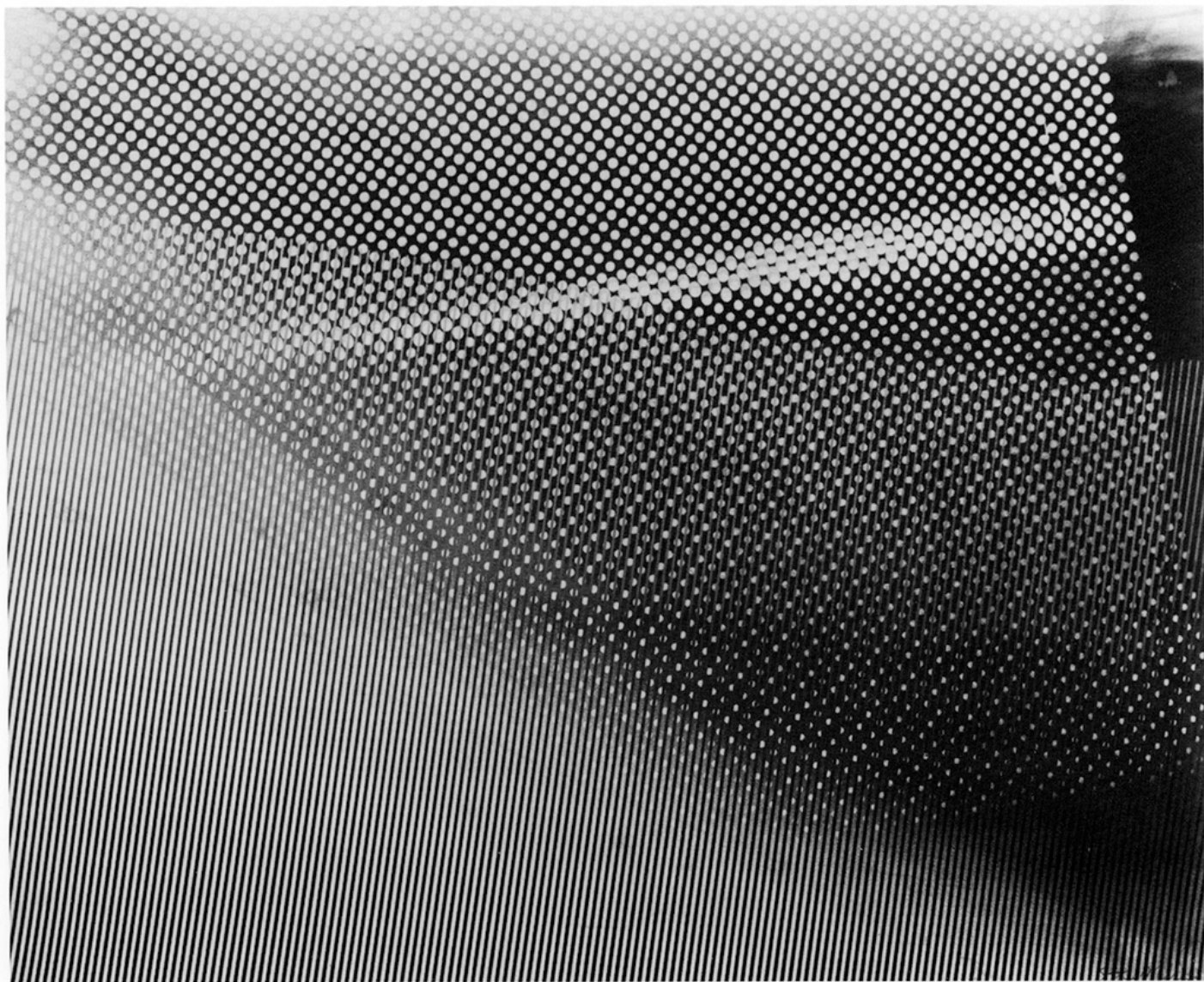
23" x 29" FEBRUARY 26, 1992



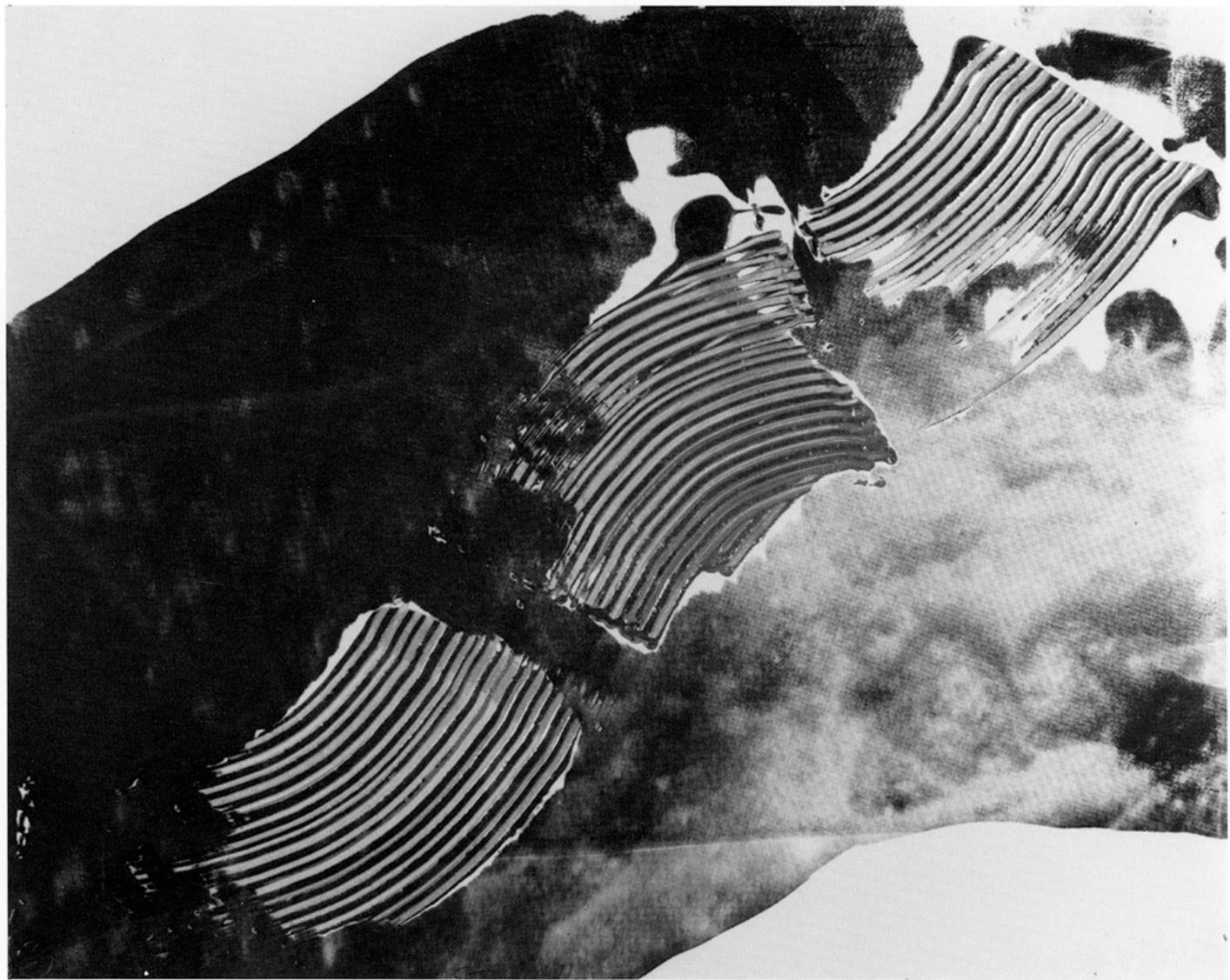
23" x 29" FEBRUARY 7, 1992



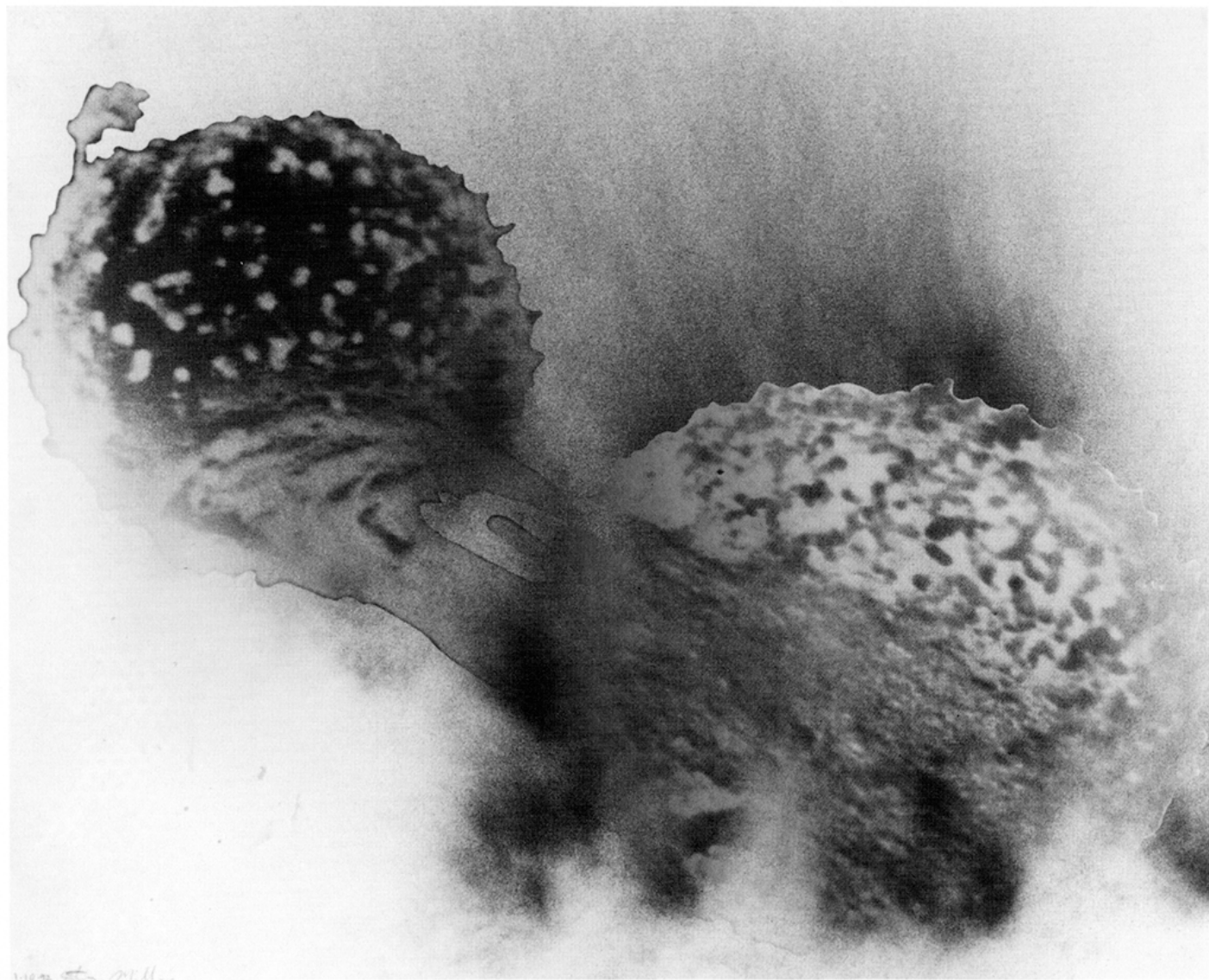
23" x 29" JULY 15, 1991



23" x 29" JULY 2, 1991

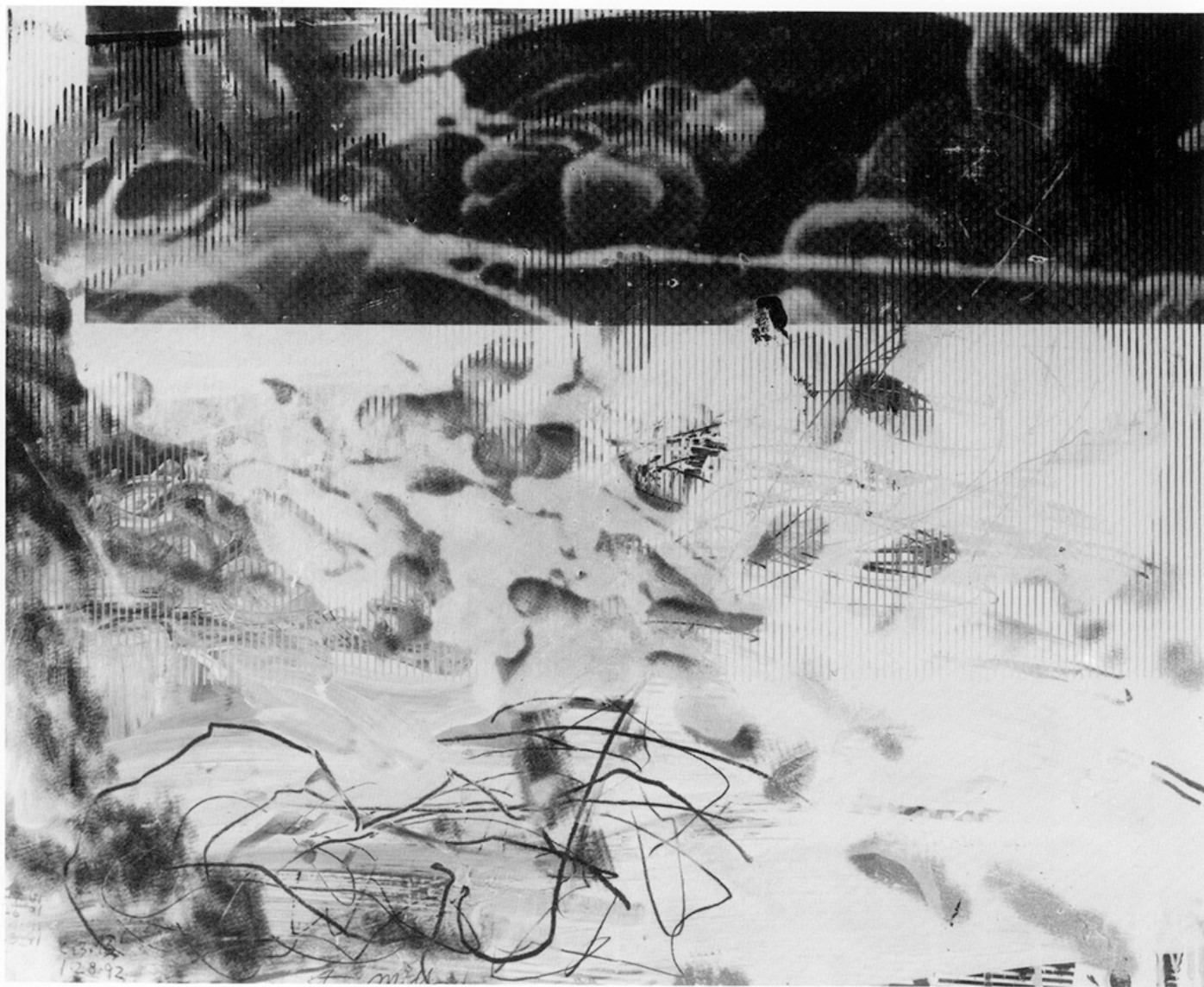


23" x 29" JANUARY 10, 1992



11042 *St. M.H.*

23" x 29" FEBRUARY 3, 1992



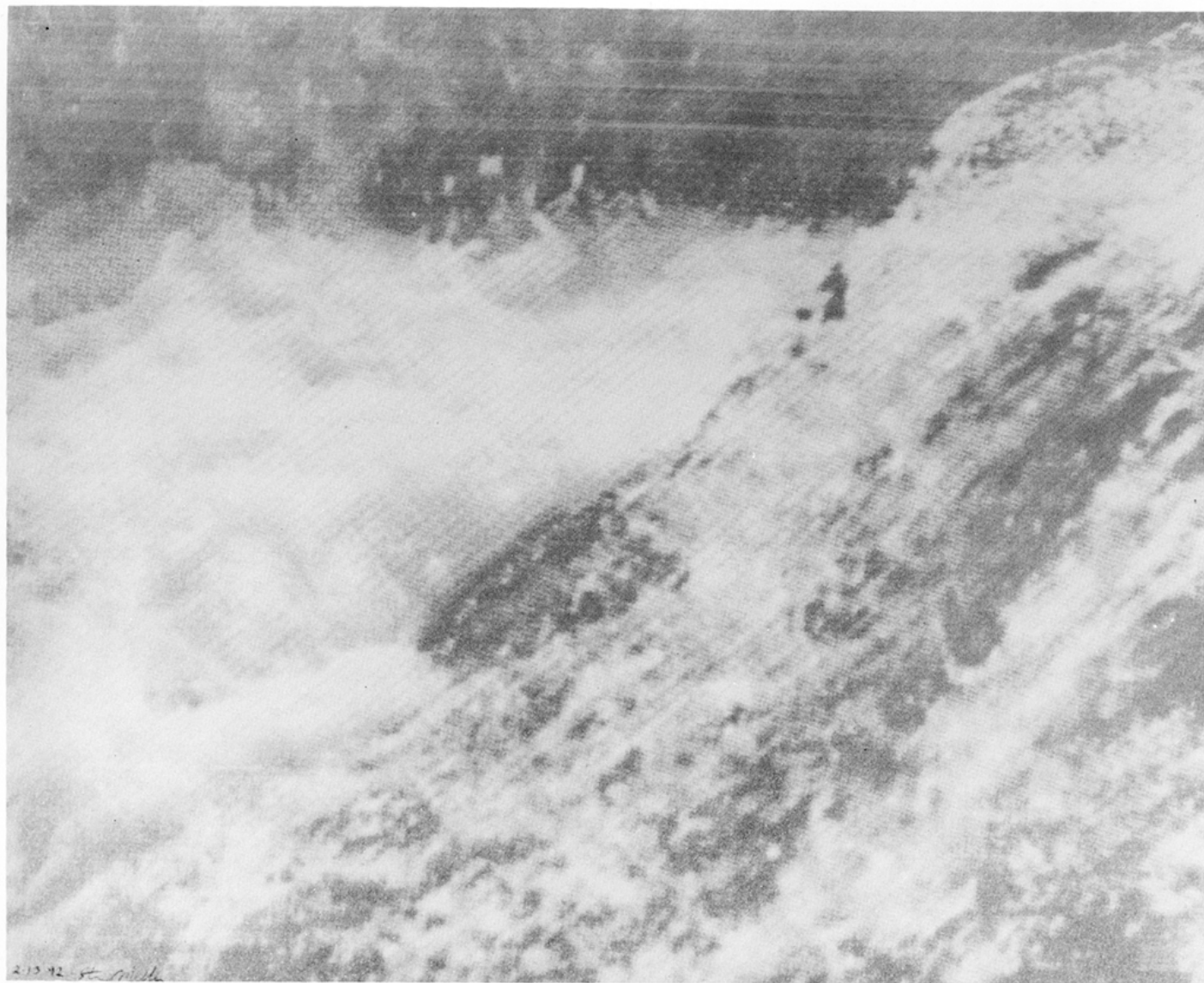
23" x 29" FEBRUARY 14, 1992



23" x 29" FEBRUARY 26, 1992



23" x 29" FEBRUARY 13, 1992



213 92 St. Michel

S T E V E M I L L E R

SOLO EXHIBITIONS:

- 1992 Elga Wimmer, New York, NY
- 1991 Galerie du Genie, Paris
- 1989 fiction/nonfiction Gallery, New York, NY
Carol Getz, Gallery, Miami, FL
- 1988 Josh Baer Gallery, New York, NY
Galerie du Genie, Paris
- 1986 Josh Baer Gallery, New York, NY
Jack Shainman Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Josh Baer Gallery, New York, NY
- 1985 Public Art Fund - Times Square Electronic Billboard,
New York, NY
Jack Shainman Gallery, Washington, D.C.
Bette Stoler Gallery, New York, NY
- 1982 Artist's Space, New York, NY
- 1981 White Columns, New York, NY

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS:

- 1992 *Excess in the Techno-Mediocratic Society*, Musee de Dole,
France, curated by Joseph Nechvatal
20th Century Prints, Renee Fotouhi Fine Art, East
Hampton, New York
Artistes Pour Amnesty, Hotel Des Arts, Paris, Sponsored by
Amnesty International
- 1991 *Michael Byron, Christopher French, Steve Miller, Anton
Solomoukha*, Elga Wimmer, New York, NY
- 1990 *V.I.P - Video - Image(s) - Peinture*,
Galerie du Genie, Paris
Hollywoodland, fiction/nonfiction Gallery
New York, NY
Not Painting, Goldstein, Miller, Paik, Richter, S. Bitter -
Larkin Gallery, New York, NY
Komoski, Miller, Minter, Carol Getz Gallery, Miami, FL
White Columns 20th Anniversary Benefit Exhibition,
White Columns, New York, NY
- 1989 *10 Gallery Artists*, Nina Freudenheim, Buffalo, NY
Chaos, The New Museum, New York, NY
Invitational with Gallery Artists, fiction/nonfiction Gallery,
New York, NY

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| <p>1989 <i>Earth Remembered</i>, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY,
curated by Richard Mock
<i>Science / Technology / Abstraction</i>, Wright University,
Dayton, OH</p> <p>1988 <i>Twenty in New York</i>, Nina Freudenheim, Buffalo, NY
<i>Digital Explorations: Emerging Visions in Art</i>, Tibor Nagy
Gallery, New York, NY
<i>New Work</i>, Josh Baer Gallery, New York, NY</p> <p>1987 <i>Computer Assisted: The Computer in Contemporary
Art</i>, Freedman Gallery, Albright College, Reading, PA
<i>Computers and Art</i>, Contemporary Arts Center,
Cincinnati, OH
"Dwyer Jackson, Miller", Nina Freudenheim, Buffalo, NY
<i>Digital Visions: Computers and Art</i>, Everson Museum of Art,
Syracuse, NY
<i>The 2nd Emerging Expression Biennial: The Artist and the
Computer</i>, Bronx museum of the Arts, Bronx, NY
<i>Group Show</i>, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, NY
<i>Paint / Film</i>, Bess Cutler Gallery, New York, NY
<i>Art Against Aids</i>, Baskerville & Watson Gallery, New York</p> <p>1986 <i>Nancy Dwyer, Annette Lemieux, Frank Majore, Steve
Miller, Peter Nagy, Tim Rollins & KOS</i>, Rhoda Hoffman,
Chicago, IL</p> | <p>1986 <i>Spiritual America</i>, curated by Collins & Milazzo, CIPA,
Buffalo, NY
<i>Calvin Brown, Steve Miller, Peter Nagy, Taro Suzuki, Colin De
Land Fine Art</i>, New York, NY</p> <p>1985 <i>Alan Belcher, Lee Jaffe, Frank Majore, Steve Miller, Jeffrey Pittu,
Bette Stoler Gallery</i>, New York, NY
<i>Past and Future Perfect</i>, Hallwalls, Buffalo, NY</p> <p>1984 <i>Anna Bialobroda, Dike Blair, Steve Miller, Aura Rosenberg,
Baskerville and Watson</i>, New York, NY
<i>Between Here and Nowhere</i>, Riverside Studios, London,
England (travelling Exhibition)</p> <p>1983 <i>Portrait for the 80's</i>, Protech McNeil Gallery, New York, NY
<i>Language, Drama, Source & Vision</i>, The New Museum,
New York, NY
<i>Steve Miller and Brigid Kennedy</i>, Burchfield Center,
Buffalo, NY</p> <p>1982 <i>The Ritz Hotel</i>, Washington Project for the Arts,
Washington, D.C.</p> <p>1979 <i>Dimensions Variable</i>, The New Museum, New York, NY</p> |
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CONCEPT

Elga Wimmer and Patrice Landau

DESIGN

Patrice Landau

PRINTING

Ensig Press

PHOTO CREDIT

John Lamka

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