



FOUR ARTISTS

bowdoin college museum of art, brunswick, maine january 22 - march 7, 1982



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FOUR ARTISTS

acknowledgments

One of the happiest responsibilities of a museum affiliated with a college or university is the exhibition of the work of contemporary artists. These shows complement the studio and art history curriculum and answer the natural curiosity of students vitally concerned with the art of today.

Exhibitions are interpretive links between artists and the larger public. The point of view expressed may be only one of many possibilities, but the attempt at clarification challenges the viewer not only to enjoy but to evaluate critically the works of art.

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art is fortunate to have as curator of collections John W. Coffey, who has organized this exhibition of recent geometric abstraction. With enthusiasm and great care he has selected the work of four young artists: James Biederman, Paul Maddrell, Johnnie Ross, and Livio Saganic. I am most appreciative of his perceptive management of the project.

The artists themselves have been of great assistance during every phase of preparation for the exhibition. I am grateful for their good will and generous gifts of time. The artists' galleries cheerfully lent works, as did several private collectors. I am grateful for their cooperation.

The following individuals should also be thanked: Robert L. Lennon of Artransport, Inc.; Michael W. Mahan, graphic designer; Peter H. Vaughn and Susan L. Ransom of the College Editor's Office; and John B. Green, who once again volunteered his services as lighting designer.

Finally, several members of the museum staff deserve special thanks: Brenda M. Pelletier, registrar; Paula J. Volent, curatorial assistant; H. Neil Culpepper, technician/preparator; and Suzanne K. Bergeron, secretary to the director.

Katharine J. Watson
Director

introduction

In the years surrounding the First World War, Western art underwent a radical remaking. Carrying the arguments of Cubism and Futurism to their logical conclusion, artists of de Stijl, the Bauhaus, and the Russian avant-garde pioneered an art abstracted from nature and disciplined only by the imagination. A work of art was "constructed," assembled like a machine from geometric elements. Its meanings derived principally from the structure imposed upon those elements.

After sixty years, the militant iconoclasm of this art has become less strident, its shock absorbed. Abstraction has achieved the status of an honored tradition—accepted if not universally approved. This has prompted some critics to declare that abstract art has lost its voice and to dismiss it as "anemic," "academic," or merely "decorative." However, when one surveys the innovative work of a new generation of artists, these criticisms ring hollow.

This exhibition presents the work of James Biederman, Paul Maddrell, Johnnie Ross, and Livio Saganic—four artists whose widely divergent styles express the vitality and possibilities of contemporary geometric abstraction. Their work is imagined with all the vigor of the early modernists but with greater fluency and sophistication. They permit wit and personality to surface and have opened their art to a perplexity of influences: architecture, pop culture, and other art—this perhaps in reaction to a decade of unadorned minimalism. Yet, the root meaning of their art remains fundamentally abstract, compressed within the object, clarified but never fully rationalized by geometry. As with all good art, resolution is ultimately left to the viewer.

John W. Coffey
Curator of Collections



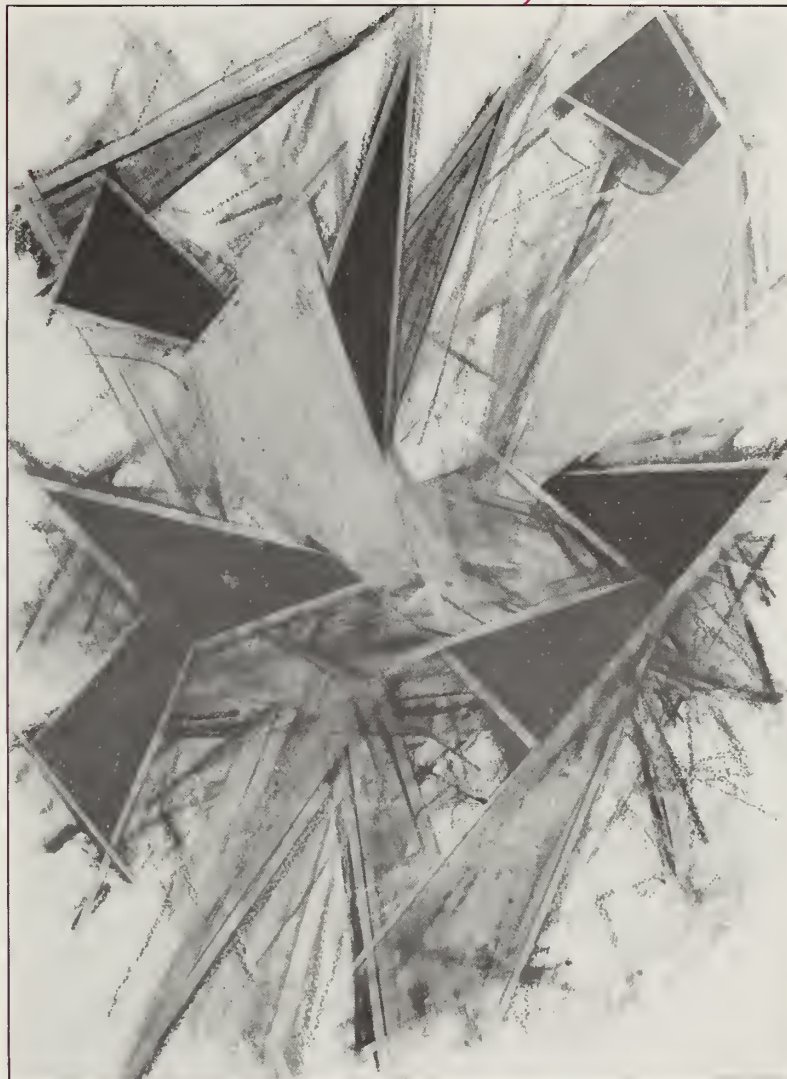
James Biederman

september 16, 1981

I make drawings and sculpture. The making of each is a separate activity: the two evolving from their own specific materials and processes of marking and the putting together of things. They do not function as literal or direct models for one another, however they are related to each other in their patterns of development.

I usually stand to one side as I make my drawings, slightly askew to the wall or table (a work will be very different if it is made horizontally or vertically). I begin marking with an implement in an arbitrary manner; there is no a priori structure. It is during this subconscious meandering period (moving from point to point, from space to space) that personal dreams, thoughts, and fantasies emerge and become realized on the paper (a public, outward space) and in my mind (an inner, private space). The experience of drawing is the here and now, derived from my own intuitive emotions. It is an art of the self and how that self is relating at that particular time.

One should be in constant motion to observe the wall sculpture. From the various positions (frontal, lateral) the work changes, and the viewer is required to call upon his or her memory in order to perceive the whole and the relationships of the parts. While the work contains its own private space, it also protrudes and thrusts into the public, physical world of the



James Biederman, *VH 82381*

Photograph by D. James Dee

viewer. One is simultaneously beckoned into that private realm and repelled by its protrusions and tentacles.

The work is not done during one session but requires several sessions with contemplative intervals in order to become developed and clarified. During this

time I am open to radical change in the work and will alter it many times. These changes become a history of the building and marking processes and function as a structure to build upon. As each session becomes more removed from the original mark, I begin to reach outside the apparent self into other realms.

james biederma

checklist

- 1.) *PRIVATE BUSINESS*, 1980
Oil on gessoed wood construction
Collection of Dr. & Mrs. R.E. Anderson, Greenwich, Conn.
- 2.) *Untitled*, 1980
Charcoal, chalk, pencil on paper
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Harris Kahn
- 3.) *JEALOUSY*, 1981
Oil on gessoed wood construction
Courtesy of John Weber Gallery, New York, N.Y.
- 4.) *7/13/81*, 1981
Pastel, charcoal on paper
Collection of Wellington, Thorndike, Doran, Paine & Lewis, Boston, Mass.
- 5.) *VH 82381*, 1981
Pastel on paper
Courtesy of John Weber Gallery
- 6.) *VH 83081*, 1981
Pastel on paper
Courtesy of John Weber Gallery
- 7.) *MAIN SPRING*, 1981
Oil on gessoed wood construction
Courtesy of John Weber Gallery

james biederma

born: Bronx, N.Y., 1947

education: M.F.A., Yale University, 1973
Whitney Museum of American Art Studio Program, 1970
A.B., State University of New York at New Paltz, 1969

individual exhibitions:

- 1981—John Weber Gallery, New York, N.Y.
- 1974—Artists Space, New York, N.Y.

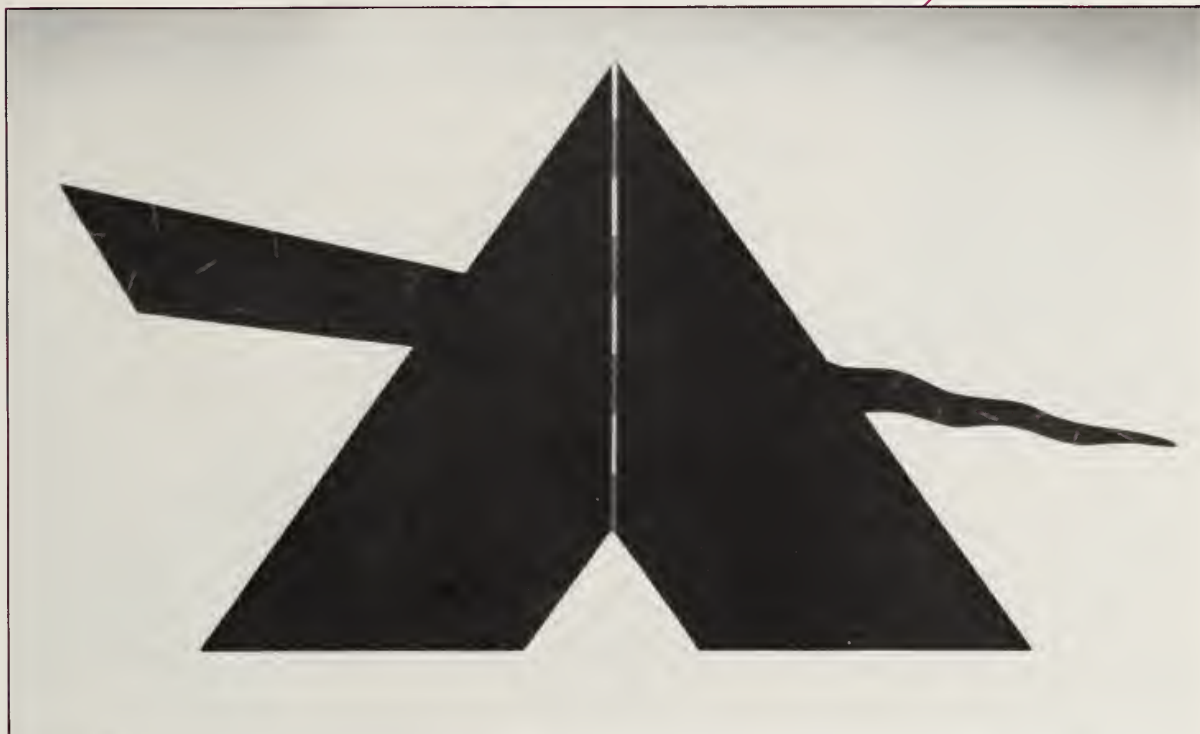
selected group exhibitions:

- 1982—"Four Artists," Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Me.
- "Biederma, Kendrick, Gummer," Arts Club of Chicago, Chicago, Ill.
- "Structured Color," Hayden Gallery, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass.
- "A New Mannerism," Jacksonville Art Museum, Jacksonville, Fla.
- Drawing Center, New York, N.Y.
- 1981—Artists Space
- "Large Format Drawing," Barbara Toll Fine Arts, New York, N.Y.
- "New Visions," Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Conn.
- "Color on Structure," William Patterson College, Wayne, Ind.
- "Media Relief," John Weber Gallery
- The Clocktower, New York, N.Y.
- "New Dimensions in Drawing," Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art
- "Recent Acquisitions: Drawings," Museum of Modern Art, New York, N.Y.
- Gloria Luria Gallery, Bay Harbor Island, Fla.
- 1980—"Aspects of Geometric Art: 1917-1980," University of Kentucky, Lexington, Ky.
- John Weber Gallery
- "All in Line," Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.
- 1979—"Mind Set," John Weber Gallery
- "Sitework," World Trade Center, New York, N.Y.
- Cooper Union, New York, N.Y.
- 1978—Drawing Center
- 1977—"Works on Paper," Katonah Gallery, Katonah, N.Y.

selected bibliography: Ronny Cohen, review, *Artforum*, March 1981.

Sara McFadden, "James Biederma at Weber," *Art in America*, Summer 1981.

paul maddrell



Paul Maddrell, *Turbo*

Photograph by Dennis Griggs

a residue of meaning

The installation piece designed for this exhibition has developed out of an extensive investigation of tablet studies over the past two years. During this period the distinctions between painting and sculpture have narrowed as the works have become more removed from a traditional relationship to the wall. Establishing a tension counter to this emergence is an expanding

awareness of the ambient relationship between a work of art and its surroundings. This has led to several "mood" pieces, such as *Fable for Susan Webster*, a work which is more "of" the wall than "on" it.

The archetypal image that has developed concurrently with this process springs from my continued fascination with the mysteries of the female body. What was once an evocation of

a nude torso has now become a reference cloaked in personal iconography. And, as if superimposed on a dream, this image is then set against layers of continuing speculation on the human condition. Working through the depths of mystery, grace, and desire, and informed by signs and calligraphic fragments which are ever more elusive, we are in the end left with nothing more certain than a residue of meaning.

paul maddrell

checklist

- 1.) *ENIGMA (TABLET STUDY #7)*, 1980
Acrylic, pencil, crayon on wrapped paper form
Lent by the artist
- 2.) *AMBIENT: BURUNDI (TABLET STUDY #18)*
Acrylic on canvas
Lent by the artist
- 3.) *FABLE FOR SUSAN WEBSTER (TABLET STUDY #22)*, 1981
Acrylic, wax on masonite
Lent by the artist
- 4.) *MILANO (TABLET STUDY #25)*, 1981
Acrylic, wax on masonite
Collection of Mr. Joseph Redman, Portland, Me.
- 5.) *TURBO*, 1981
Acrylic, wax on wood, masonite
Collection of Mr. Johnnie Ross, Portland, Me.
- 6.) *A RESIDUE OF MEANING*, 1981
Installation:
 - A.) *DARK VISION*
Floor piece: acrylic, wax on laminated form
 - B.) *PENETRATION ANXIETY*
Floor piece: acrylic, wax on laminated form
 - C.) *FORBIDDEN IMAGE*
Triptych: acrylic, wax on cantilevered formLent by the artist
- 7.) *PREPARATORY DRAWING FOR "FORBIDDEN IMAGE,"* 1981
Lent by the artist
- 8.) *FOUR PREPARATORY DRAWINGS FOR "A RESIDUE OF MEANING,"* 1981
Lent by the artist

paul maddrell

born: Cleveland, Ohio, 1948

education: M. Div., Drew Theological Seminary, 1974
A.B., DePauw University, 1970

individual exhibitions:

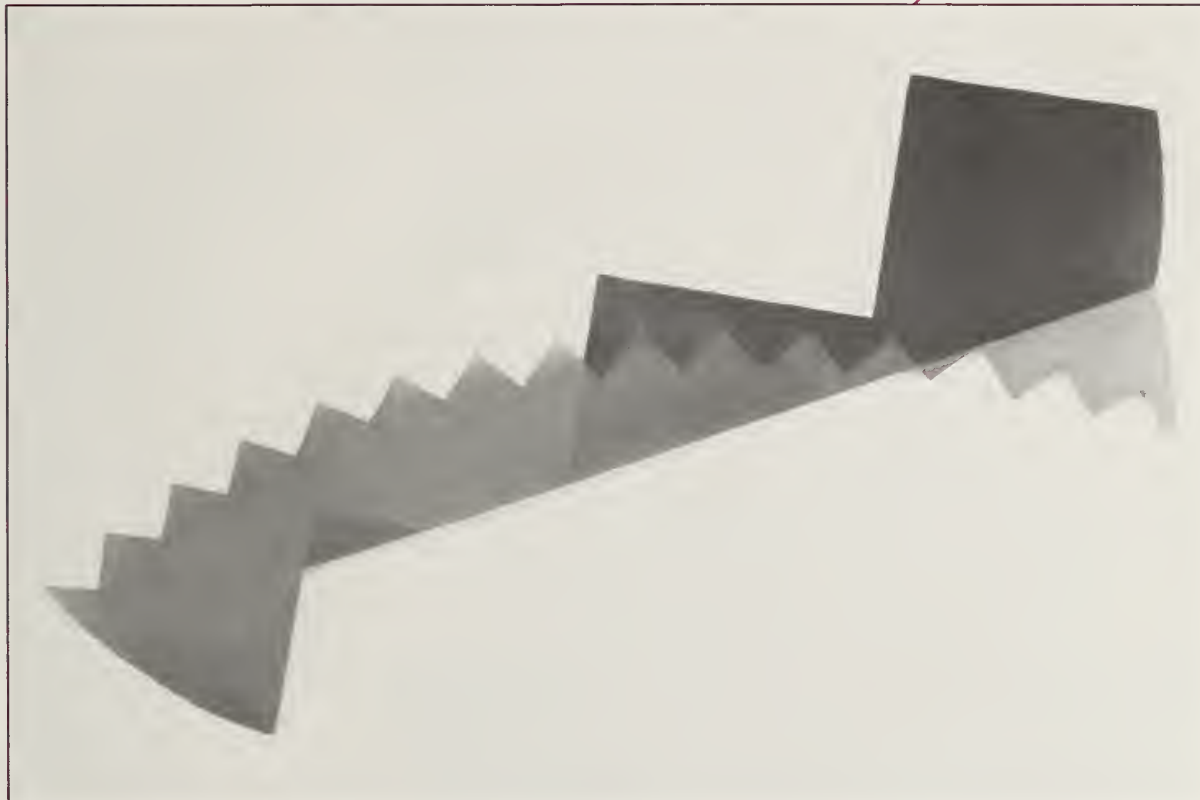
- 1982—Barridoff Galleries, Portland, Me.
1980—Barridoff Galleries
1979—Joan Whitney Payson Gallery of Art, Westbrook College, Westbrook, Me.

selected group exhibitions:

- 1982—"Four Artists," Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Me.
1981—"Works on Paper," Maine Coast Artists Gallery, Rockport, Me.
—Barridoff Galleries
1980—Barridoff Galleries
1979—"Portland Live," Barridoff Galleries
—"All-Maine Biennial," Bowdoin College Museum of Art
—Maine Coast Artists Gallery
1978—Barridoff Galleries

selected bibliography: Lois Tarlow, "A Conversation with Paul Maddrell," *Art New England*, March 1981.

johnnie ross



Johnnie Ross, *Self-Consuming*

Photograph courtesy of Stux Gallery

statement

Each piece is a series of components synthesized into an active unit. The work in many respects runs parallel to the polyrhythm layering that occurs in African music and in some contemporary American and English compositions.

The pieces are shaped, stretched canvas. The canvas support, or stretcher, acts not only as a

definition of the perimeter but also determines the interior divisions by making contact with the canvas at strategic points causing delineations of shapes. From three to twelve layers of stain are used in the softer areas, and as many as seventy layers of color are used to finalize the harder-surfaced areas. The process of

painting involves not only the application of color (building) but also the removal of areas to reveal activity beneath the surface (subtracting).

Under the obvious analytical structuring there is an intimate quality drawing one into the piece, offering a meditative vehicle not unlike a mandala. There are simultaneous aggressive and seductive qualities to the pieces.

johnnie ross

checklist

- 1.) *RED JUNE*, 1980
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on canvas
Lent by the artist
- 2.) *THIRD WORLD*, 1980
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on canvas
Courtesy of Stux Gallery, Boston, Mass.
- 3.) *YELLOW JANUARY*, 1981
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on paper
Courtesy of Stux Gallery
- 4.) *SELF-CONSUMING*, 1981
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on canvas
Collection of Mary Jane & Frank Ryburn
- 5.) *DEAD RIVER*, 1981
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on canvas
Collection of the Dead River Company, Portland, Me.
- 6.) *FIVE PREPARATORY DRAWINGS FOR "DEAD RIVER,"* 1981
Lent by the artist
- 7.) *Untitled*, 1981
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on paper
Lent by the artist
- 8.) *Untitled*, 1981
Acrylic, wax, marble dust on paper
Lent by the artist

johnnie ross

born: St. Louis, Mo., 1949

education: M.F.A., University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), 1973
B.F.A., Washington University, 1971

individual exhibitions:

- 1981 — Stux Gallery, Boston, Mass.
- 1980 — Portland School of Art, Portland, Me.
— Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1979 — A St./Donnelly Gallery, Boston
- 1978 — Plus Gallery, Portland, Me.
- 1977 — Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1975 — Roswell Museum & Art Center, Roswell, N.M.
- 1974 — Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi, Tex.
— Frank C. Smith Fine Arts Center, Kingsville, Tex.
- 1973 — Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign, Ill.

selected group exhibitions:

- 1982 — "Four Artists," Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Me.
- 1981 — Delahunty Gallery, New York, N.Y.
- 1980 — Susan Caldwell Gallery, New York, N.Y.
— Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1979 — "Artists as Teachers," Maine Coast Artists Gallery, Rockport, Me.
— Springfield Museum of Art, Springfield, Mo.
— Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1978 — "1978 Texas Invitational," Southwest Texas State, San Marcos, Tex.
— Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1977 — Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1976 — Ine Apers Gallery, Austin, Tex.
— Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
- 1975 — Jewish Community Center, Houston, Tex.
— Delahunty Gallery, Dallas, Tex.
— Texas Gallery, Houston, Tex.
- 1974 — Museum of South Texas
— Frank C. Smith Fine Arts Center
- 1972 — Sheldon Swope Gallery, Terre Haute, Ind.
- 1971 — Steinberg Gallery, Washington University, St. Louis, Mo.
- 1970 — Public Works Gallery, St. Louis, Mo.

selected bibliography: Robert Raczka, "Two Sides of Flatness," *Art-week*, Sept. 27, 1980.

livio saganic

statement

It is the artist's task to initiate conditions and to develop concerns through which matter can reflect upon itself without changing—to transform in meaning but not in substance.

* * * * *

My pieces are bits of nature interrupted from their sedimentary/dormant state and projected into a new role—transformed without the loss of identity.

* * * * *

Stone as a sculptural medium should be restored to its absolute function: a connecting link to the earth.

* * * * *

It is important that the substance I use predate any cultural and/or historical reference which may be addressed in the sculpture. This helps me keep my own role in perspective.

* * * * *

That which is still absorbs and devours time.

* * * * *

Architectonic elements—such as a step, a column, a wall, or a passage—are coordinates designating a “place.” When used in sculpture, they become vehicles that enable one temporarily to “inhabit” the work. In this role they act as instruments of memory and as carriers and repositories of meaning.

* * * * *

Sculpture is only beginning to come to terms with the fact that there is much to be learned from architecture.



Livio Saganic, *Total Extraction/Displacement #6* Photograph courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery

livio saganic

checklist

- 1.) *TOTAL EXTRACTION/DIS-PLACEMENT #4*, 1979
Slate
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery, New York, N.Y.
- 2.) *EXTRACTION #5*, 1979
Slate
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery
- 3.) *PREPARATORY DRAWING FOR "EXTRACTION #5"*, 1979
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery
- 4.) *TOTAL EXTRACTION/DIS-PLACEMENT #6*, 1979
Slate
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery
- 5.) *TOTAL EXTRACTION/DIS-PLACEMENT #7*, 1980
Slate
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery
- 6.) *TROGLE 1*, 1981
Slate
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery
- 7.) *EIGHT PREPARATORY DRAWINGS FOR "TROGLE 1"*, 1981
Courtesy of Hal Bromm Gallery

livio saganic

born: Yugoslavia, 1950

education: M.F.A., Yale University, 1976
B.F.A., Pratt Institute, 1974

individual exhibitions:

- 1980—Hal Bromm Gallery, New York, N.Y.
—55 Mercer Street, New York, N.Y.
—Special Project, P.S.1, Institute for Art & Urban Resources, Long Island City, N.Y.
- 1979—Installation, Morris Museum of Arts & Sciences, Morristown, N.J.
- 1978—Nobe Gallery, New York, N.Y.
—College Gallery, Drew University, Madison, N.J.
—Soho Center for Visual Artists, New York, N.Y.
- 1976—Yale School of Art Gallery, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.

selected group exhibitions:

- 1982—"Four Artists," Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Me.
- 1981—Hal Bromm Gallery
—"Selections from Hal Bromm Gallery/New York," Eaton/Shoen Gallery, San Francisco, Calif.
—Robeson Center Gallery, Rutgers University, Newark, N.J.
- 1980—Hal Bromm Gallery
- 1979—Hall Bromm Gallery
—"Modern Master Prints," Guilford College, Greensboro, N.C.
—"1979 New Jersey Artists Biennial," New Jersey State Museum, Trenton, N.J.
—"Sixteen New Jersey Sculptors," Morris Museum of Arts & Sciences
—Julian Pretto Gallery, New York, N.Y.
—55 Mercer Street
- 1978—Julian Pretto Gallery
- 1977—Artists Space, New York, N.Y.
- 1976—"Young American Printmakers," Pratt Graphics Center, New York, N.Y.

selected bibliography: Vivien Raynor, "Sixteen State Sculptors Come into Their Own," *New York Times*, June 24, 1979.

Thomas Lawson, review, *Artforum*, Nov. 1980.

James Biederman

Paul Maddrell

Johnnie Ross

Livio Saganic
