



James Havard, Flat Head River, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 96 inches. Louis K. Meisel Gallery.

## Abstract Illusionism: Taking the Realism out of Illusion

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Figure 1: Ronald Davis, Disk, 1968, moulded polyester resin and fiberglass, 62 x 132 inches, Dodecagon series.



Figure 2: Paul Sarkisian, Untitled #12, 1980 acrylic, silkscreen, & glitter on canvas, 46 x 48 inches.

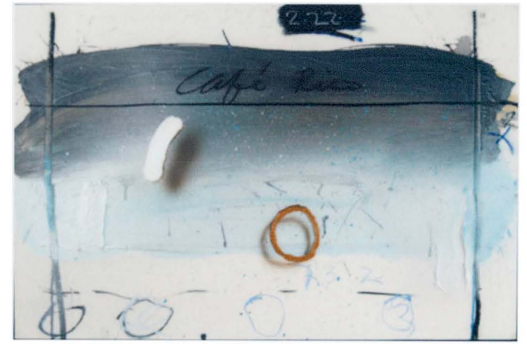


Figure 3: James Havard, Cafe Rico, 1979, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 30 inches.

“When the illusion is lost, art is hard to find.” The work of the artists dubbed Abstract Illusionists heroically dealt with so many painting issues. Sometimes the beauty and lyrical painterly qualities of their work is overshadowed (to the untrained eye) as the observer unravels the visual complexities involved in the abstract depiction of space. Dimension always exists in abstraction, no matter how it may be concealed. It is the ironic honesty of Abstract Illusionism that ranks it among the great “isms” of twentieth century painting.<sup>1</sup>

Andrea Marzell  
Los Angeles, California

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<sup>1</sup>Posted to the *abstract-art.com* guest book in 1997. The *www.abstract-art.com* web page was founded and is maintained by Ronald Davis.

In September of 1976 the Paul Mellon Arts Center in Wallingford, Connecticut held the first “official” group exhibition of Abstract Illusionist paintings.<sup>1</sup> The show was organized by Louis K. Meisel who, together with Ivan Karp, coined the phrase “Abstract Illusionism”.<sup>2</sup> Meisel extends credit to Karp (owner of the O.K. Harris gallery) saying that Karp was the first to refer to the style as “illusionistic abstraction”, but, in Meisel’s words, his own phrase “abstract illusionism” is the one that “stuck”.<sup>3</sup> Meisel and Karp had picked up on an emerging trend in which artists were using elements of *trompe l’oeil* in conjunction with abstract expressionism. Meisel felt the new trend had the potential to be as successful as Photorealism, the most popular movement of the time, and he began showing Abstract Illusionist paintings at his New York gallery.<sup>4</sup> The period of Abstract Illusionism lasted twenty years, at best, coalescing in the 1960s and petering out by 1986. The Abstract Illusionist artists were disparate and worked relatively independent of each other but their works were united in the quest to synergize the abstract application of paint with methods of realism and illusion. Many critics likened their work to the American *trompe l’oeil* masters, such as William Michael Harnett (figure 5) and John Fredrick Peto (figure 4), however, there are several illusory tactics that set the Abstract Illusionists apart from these early counterparts.

Until the works of Abstract Illusionism entered the scene, *trompe l’oeil*, or “deceiving the eye”, referred to works that were based on intensely accurate realism.<sup>5</sup> The history of *trompe l’oeil* paintings demonstrates a life-like precision used to recreate a specific scene that the audience could conceivably participate in. These *trompe l’oeil* scenes are based on a reality that has context and meaning for the viewer. In order to achieve a successful deception, a *trompe l’oeil* painting must consist of a one to one ratio with the audience; meaning the objects depicted

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<sup>1</sup>Julie Sasse. James Havard (New York & Manchester: Hudson Hills Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ib.

<sup>4</sup>Ib.

<sup>5</sup>John L. Ward. American Realist Painting, 1945-1980 (Ann Arbor & London: UMI Research Press, 1989), 252.

are life size (figures 4-7).<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, the Abstract Illusionists' work does not afford the viewer a context based in the physical world. The AI artists (as they are often called) instead, expounded on the multitude of historical painting traditions available to them to arrive at a distinct, deceptively real, entirely fabricated, illusion of of an actual space. In other words,

modern artists simply have more extensive visual vocabularies at their disposal. A direct and broadly significant example is the fact that the majority of these painters have at one time practiced abstract or non-representational art and those few who may have been realists all along were surely well acquainted with abstraction. The abstract experience has left indelible influences upon the way these artists arrange their compositions and even upon the nature of the subject matter they select.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, the AI painters were pulling their ideas not just from centuries of outstanding *trompe l'oeil* heritage, but also from such movements as Abstract Expressionism, Op Art, and Photorealism. This allowed the AI artists to produce unprecedented images where illusion did not need to be based on realism.

John L. Ward, in his book American Realist Painting, 1945-1980, relates that, "it has often been assumed, as in the story of Zeuxis and Parrhasios, that deception is the ultimate test of a picture's realism."<sup>8</sup> Ward deduced that while *realism* aims to *represent*, the "representative" *illusion* of Abstract Illusionism is more about an attempt to *deceive*.<sup>9</sup> Realism, he says, involves accurate representation. The AI artists' paintings, however, ranged from "heavily textured paint marks with no descriptive function"<sup>10</sup> to "*trompe l'oeil* interpretations of Synthetic Cubist collage"<sup>11</sup>, to the use of perspective to perceive forms projecting into space. These three distinct approaches can be seen in the works of James Havard, Paul Sarkisian and Ronald Davis,

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<sup>6</sup>Donald J. Brewer. Reality of Illusion, Exhibition catalog (American Art Review Press, 1979),8.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, 10.

<sup>8</sup>Ward, American Realist Painting, 252.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 254.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Alvin Martin, American Realism, Twentieth Century Drawings and Watercolors (New York: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art & Harry N. Abrams, Inc, New York, 1986), 159.

respectively (figures 1-3). The AI paintings are more akin to Abstract Expressionism, Cubism, and Op art in their composition and yet they also function as three dimensional forms. One of the primary, new-found ingredients in producing this deceptive representation was the advent of the airbrushed shadow. This shadow, incorporated into the painted abstract marks and forms, allowed the image to take up imaginary space and even float *in front* of the canvas; what should have been purely abstract now seemed tangible.

Abstract, or non-representational, imagery was not the only difference between early works of *trompe l'oeil* artists and the new Abstract Illusionists. In order to create a believable illusion, a traditional *trompe l'oeil* painting could really only push the depth of the picture plane in a relatively shallow direction (figures 4-7).<sup>12</sup> The deception used the picture plane as a fixed point of departure to create space that receded into it or protruded slightly out of it. In contrast, the AI artists denied the picture plane entirely. Louis Meisel summarizes that,

the Abstract Illusionists break the plane both into it and out of it. They go beyond the few inches of *trompe l'oeil*, and the illusion is extremely convincing until one actually touches the canvas. The eye and the mind have no real or previously experienced object to help analyze what is being seen.<sup>13</sup>

In this quote Meisel addresses the first main divergence from traditional *trompe l'oeil*, the abstraction, as well as the second deviation, the AI artist's consideration of the picture plane. Instead of using the picture plane as a base for illusionary tricks of perspective, AI artists often purposefully disregarded it, as in the works of Ronald Davis, or, established fictitious space *parallel* to it as in the works of James Havard and Paul Sarkisian. These three artists are examples of three different genres of Abstract Illusionism. In 1979 an exhibition entitled Reality of Illusion emerged from the Denver Art Museum. The show brought together these three artists, among others, to highlight the increasing number of painters and sculptors who were addressing the notion of illusion in vastly opposing manners.

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<sup>12</sup>Brewer, Reality of Illusion, 8.

<sup>13</sup>Sasse, James Havard, 15.

The Reality of Illusion exhibition organized a wide array of illusionistic painters that included such stylistic classifications as contemporary *trompe l'oeil* painters; *trompe l'oeil* sculptors, either of a realist or abstract, geometrical bent; monumental illusionistic murals; even a video artist; and of course, a variety of abstract illusionists. All of these works can be seen as illusionistic and many of them are abstract and yet only a handful fall into the specific Abstract Illusionism movement. The Abstract Illusionists showcased at the Reality of Illusion exhibit represent a very narrow category but it is the group Meisel and Karp were referring to when they defined the movement. The artists included were Jack Lembeck, Tony King, George Green, Joe Doyle, Michael Gallagher, Allan D'archangelo, Jack Reilly, and James Havard.

The Abstract Illusionist work of James Havard epitomizes the genre. In fact, the airbrushed shadow and the entire invention of the Abstract Illusionism movement itself is attributed to James Havard.<sup>14</sup> This faction of AI artists, complete with Havard at the helm, is characterized by works that display these airbrushed, invented shadows (figures 8-11). Among these artists the number can be widdled down even further into a group that includes just Jack Lembeck, Joe Doyle, Michael Gallagher, and, again, Havard. The distinction with these artists is that they used paint in an abstract expressionistic manner whereas the others based their images on hard-edged, geometrical, nearly optical, illusions. The expressionistic-esque paintings of this smaller group of artists all share a few similar qualities. Qualities that Julie Sasse says, in speaking about the work of Havard, include

elliptical slices of paint now fully evolved into “sticks” of color that float horizontally, dominating the center of the composition. The shadow play underscoring various elements, including the implied shadow on large, troweled-on swaths of paint. . . unabashed layering of pinks, brilliant yellows, mauves, pearlescents, and blues with-in a deep-toned field .<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Dianne Vanderlip, James Havard, 212.

<sup>15</sup>Sasse, James Havard, 15.

According to Sasse, Havard was implementing “gesso wipes, chalk scrawls, incised lines and squirts of paint” to build up an abstract surface and pattern. He was also partial to the mother-of-pearl finish that appeared on his earlier, sculptural pieces that he achieved by means of auto body paint. In order to recreate this appearance on canvas he used a pearl-finish powder shipped to him from France via a cosmetic company in the United States.<sup>16</sup> Havard was also experimenting with acrylic paint and he used it in conjunction with airbrushing in order to test the limits of his illusionistic compositions “by adding subtle airbrushed shadows to unobtrusive backgrounds.”<sup>17</sup> Sasse uses a quote from Anderson-Spivy who explains the effect as beautifully as Havard painted it, “they wander beyond the edge of his painted ‘landscape’ to an unpainted border while other thin, striped, dagger-like shapes float on yet another plane like insouciant clouds, airbrushed shadow beneath them.”<sup>18</sup> It seems apparent that the most notable features of a James Havard Abstract Illusionist piece, as well as the other aforementioned artists, are the squiggly lines of color squeezed directly from the tube “that appear to float freely in front of the abstract painting surface”.<sup>19</sup>

Allowing abstract marks of paint to float freely in front of the picture plane is what set these artists apart from *trompe l’oeil* artists even more than the lack of representational imagery. For the first time the subject matter actually moved out into a whole new plane in front of, and parallel to, the picture plane. In 1973, James Havard painted his first image using this technique, in what was then the yet-to-be-classified style of Abstract Illusionism.<sup>20</sup> By 1974 Havard was thoroughly immersed in this investigation of “the quality and manipulation of paint in the dynamic tension between the flatness of the canvas and the implied illusion imposed on it.”<sup>21</sup> The ingenious simplicity of what Havard and his cohorts were doing with their conglomerations of

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<sup>16</sup>Laura Addison, *James Havard*, 219

<sup>17</sup>Sasse, *James Havard*, 13.

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

abstraction and illusion garnered attention from around the globe. It also posed a critical question as to the nature of the formula it presented.<sup>22</sup>

In 1975 Havard began to show in New York with Louis K. Meisel. Havard's increasing popularity and that of Abstract Illusionism itself naturally inspired a great deal of critical acclaim. That same year, Judith Stein, a reviewer for *Art in America*, proclaimed a great deal of his appeal was due to "the virtuosity of Havard's optical illusions."<sup>23</sup> Stein writes,

James Havard is a painterly prestidigitator whose sophisticated understanding of surface springs from the divergent sources of Abstract Expressionism and Renaissance illusionism. His nostalgic love of pure paint energetically dashed onto the canvas is combined with a canny use of *trompe l'oeil* shadow, resulting in a tactile, yet seemingly transparent picture plane.<sup>24</sup>

While Stein hails Havard's use of ambiguous *trompe l'oeil* devices, Michael Sgan-Cohen, writing simultaneously for *Artforum*, was, as recorded by Julie Sasse,

concerned that the *trompe l'oeil* effects of Havard's paintings were "gimmicky," and believed that abstract painting had inherent "self-imposed" limitations.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the temptation to write the Abstract Illusionists off as "gimmicky" and to reduce their use of *trompe l'oeil* to a device, this seems to be the very definition of what Abstract Illusionism was. Indeed, as Sasse sites in her essay, Janet Kutner for *Arts* magazine, noted "the obvious illusionistic qualities of Havard's work," and placed him into the "larger context of American art."<sup>26</sup> Sasse also references a comment made by Anne d'Harnoncourt in which she remarks on the overt references to the acclaimed Philadelphia *trompe l'oeil* artists William Michael Harnett and John Fredrick Peto.<sup>27</sup> The connection she finds between these artists is not far-fetched,

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<sup>22</sup>Sasse, *James Havard*, 13.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup>*Ib.*

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*



Harvard himself was schooled in Philadelphia. However, as Havard established his own concept and aesthetics his illusions moved miles away from traditional *trompe l'oeil*. Additionally, by the late 1980's, Havard's *trompe l'oeil* lines and dashes had moved off of his canvas completely, departing from the "illusion" and persuing the "abstraction".

It is apparent that James Havard was nodding to the great Philadelphia *trompe l'oeil* artists before him, as he also studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, while at the same time carving out his own interpretation of illusion. However, another artist, Paul Sarkisian, offers a more obvious path of evolution and allusion to these works. Where Havard was using color, texture, and gesture in an expressionistic manner coupled with airbrushed shadows to fabricate dimensional deceptions, Paul Sarkisian, approached Abstract Illusionism through work as a Photorealist (figures 12-18). During the late 1960's and 1970's, Sarkisian was painting ultra-realistic "mixed media" collages that took on Cubist, abstract qualities.<sup>28</sup> In these works, such as *Five Envelopes with Landscape* (1976), figure 13, Sarkisian utilizes contemporary subject matter reminiscent of items employed by Peto in his piece *Office Board for Smith Brothers Coal Company* (1879), figure 4, and Harnett in his painting *Mr. Huling's Rack Picture* (1888), figure 5. It is one of these pieces, *Untitled* (1977), figure 15, that toured with the Reality of Illusion exhibition.

Paul Sarkisian's inclusion in the Reality of Illusion show represents another aspect of the different approaches to illusion in the exhibition. Sarkisian is a quintessential example of the realist artists who implemented *trompe l'oeil* illusions in a contemporary fashion. One of the prerequisites of this genre is the use of contemporary subject matter. For example in *Untitled* (1977), figure 15, Sarkisian uses the representation of a fertilizer bag along with a printed label in a relatively traditional *trompe l'oeil* painting. The subject matter, however, combines, in what Alvin Martin calls, a "*trompe l'oeil* interpretation of a Synthetic Cubist collage".<sup>29</sup> This can also

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<sup>28</sup>Steven Henry Madoff, "Paul Sarkisian at Nancy Hoffman," Art in America, 71, March (1983) : 156.

<sup>29</sup>Martin, American Realism, 159.

be said about *Untitled (Sunset)* (1979), figure 18. These paintings, like others in the Reality of Illusion exhibition reveal a strong, abstract compositional aesthetic even though they are using ultra-realistic forms of illusions. During this time, like Havard, Sarkisian stumbled on the powerful illusionistic property of an airbrushed shadow, one of the few elements of realism that would carry over into his next body of work. Although it was Sarkisian's ultra-realist pieces that appeared in the 1979 Reality of Illusion show, it was the later evolution of these works that identified him as an Abstract Illusionist.

As the Abstract Illusionism craze was gaining momentum, Sarkisian was "slowly emptying his geometric forms of their realist detail."<sup>30</sup> In the spring of 1983, Paul Sarkisian had a show of nine paintings at the Nancy Hoffman Gallery that Steven Henry Madoff says, "present the question of illusion in radical terms, turning the premise of trompe l'oeil realism on its head".<sup>31</sup> In these paintings, like Havard, Sarkisian used an exhilarating palette of yellows, oranges, pinks, and even glitter, but unlike Havard's expressionistic flare, Sarkisian's compositions were a collage of hard edges. It is easy to see Sarkisian's structural aesthetic as the imagery morphes from crisp, representational photorealism into what Madoff described as abstract geometric planes suspended in space.<sup>32</sup> Sarkisian accomplishes this illusion by

laying down a brilliantly colored acrylic ground, occasionally patterned, upon which a variety of rectangles and squares is painted. They too are patterned with stripes, dots and even glitter, thus calling out their identities as palpable things. They are then "lifted" from the canvas by means of illusionistic shadows air-brushed beside each form.<sup>33</sup>

Not only does Sarkisian use the airbrushed shadow that assisted in labeling these works Abstract Illusionism, but along the way he also played with elements of perspective to create forms that intersected the picture plane. This can be seen in the stepping stones on the way to Sarkisian's

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<sup>30</sup>Martin, American Realism, 159.

<sup>31</sup>Madoff, Paul Sarkisian, 156.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ib.

Abstract Illusionism pieces and to the works in the 1983 exhibit. A good example is *Untitled #5* (1978), figure 17.

In his book, John Ward, explains *Untitled #5* and why it can be seen as bridge between Sarkisian's Photorealist works and the Abstract Illusionist pieces.

Two large, off-white strips of paper, identical in color and width, are bent so that they can be perceived as a rectangular form projecting into space, a kind of illusionism that has been developed in the painting of Ron Davis. . . the illusionistic rectangle affects the rest of the space, causing the different pieces to float freely in relation to each other, and giving it a dynamic life. The viewer is never permitted to doubt the position of the original strips of paper that form the rectangle. Its rectangular form is an illusion contained within the original elements, just as is the space within the photograph at the painting's center.<sup>34</sup>

This piece is from the body of work that was represented at the Reality of Illusion exhibition. In these pieces the airbrushed shadows are evident in their ability to produce three dimensional deception. Although this piece touches on the Abstract Illusionism tactic of illusionistic planes dissecting each other, like Ronald Davis, the pieces in the 1983 show reveal Sarkisian moving in a direction more concerned with abstract geometric planes that sit in front of and parallel to the picture plane, more like James Havard. Although, as John Ward feels Sarkisian is using perspective in a similar manner as Ronald Davis, it is but a miniscule experiment compared to the monumental explorations of the artist who pioneered this illusion (figures 16-17).

Ronald Davis's work is a third genre of Abstract Illusionism. Davis uses expressionistic color like Havard and the hard edges like Sarkisian in conjunction with shape and two point perspective to create depth and space (figures 19-31). While the illusions of Havard and Sarkisian tend to come away from the picture plane in a parallel fashion, creating shadows on the surface behind them, Davis fabricates spaces that deny any picture plane at all. In fact they even

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<sup>34</sup>Ward, American Realist Painting, 252.

completely disregard the wall they are hung upon, creating three dimensionality where none actually exists.

Davis began investigating his version of Abstract Illusionism earlier than Havard and Sarkisian, in the mid- 60s, in the form of large geometric shapes fabricated from polyester resins and fiberglass. Like both Havard and Sarkisian, Davis' work was also an experiment with materials. Where Havard and Sarkisian were assaying auto body paint, acrylic paint, airbrush, and silkscreen, Davis was manipulating plastics and painting on the *back* of the transparent surface.<sup>35</sup> James Havard had also been working with vacuum- formed resin shapes when he started to play with auto body paint. As a result, Havard produced a series of sculptural pieces prior to the Abstract Illusionism that reflected the California "finish fetish" works.<sup>36</sup> Ronald Davis, on the other hand, constructed his much larger pieces from molded resins and wood and fiberglass armatures.<sup>37</sup>

During the period between 1966 and 1972 Davis manufactured "cut-out", geometric, colored polyester shapes that he built up in layers on a waxed surface held up by a fiberglass support.<sup>38</sup> In this way color was added from the front backwards giving the finished piece a high-gloss, reflective surface quality. Davis also used metal-flaking and marbleizing during the process to accentuate the paint and plastic qualities of the colored resin.<sup>39</sup> Using this process Davis produced the Slab series, the Crab series, the Cube series, the Eye Level series, the Dodecagons, and the Cutout series (figures 19-31). There were even sub- series of these series such as the Double Slab, Slab III, Interior Slabs, and Frames (figures 19-31). Davis produced an incredible amount of paintings between these years all relating to abstract forms that took up

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<sup>35</sup>Ronnie Landfield. Ronald Davis: Abstractions 1962-2002 (Santa Fe: Butler Institute of American Art & Eight Modern, 2002), 2.

<sup>36</sup>Addison, James Havard, 219.

<sup>37</sup>Landfield, Ronald Davis, 3.

<sup>38</sup> "Ronald Davis" Oxford University Press: Grove Art Online, 2007, <<http://www.groveart.com/shared/views/article.html>> (22 October 2007).

<sup>39</sup>Barbara Rose, "Abstract Illusionism," Art Forum, (1967): 34.

physical space through perspective. This body of work contained some of the earliest inquiries into “abstract illusionism” and it can be argued that Ronald Davis was a self-proclaimed Abstract Illusionist working in California long before Meisel and Karp got wind of the idea in New York<sup>40</sup>

In his version of Abstract Illusionism, Davis, was primarily concerned with spatial illusion and creating a completely fictitious sense of depth. The artificial surface Davis devised with the polyester resin was just as artificial as the space he implied through illusion. In 1967, in her article, entitled, “Abstract Illusionism” (Art Forum), Barbara Rose extrapolates,

Davis’s paintings are superior to work that merely takes advantage of the technical properties or effects of new materials because the issue that they are made of plastic is not peripheral or after the fact: that the paintings are made of plastic is central, even crucial, to the definition of a highly developed illusionistic space as not literal or actual but entirely abstract and imagined.<sup>41</sup>

Davis’s paintings are so convincing in their illusion that in order to remind the audience that they are actually flat, the shiny surface is paramount. Rose goes on to say the “explicitness of surface deliberately limits the type of illusionism possible to an entirely abstract, conceptual and anti-naturalistic one; and the emphasis on surface serves not only to identify but also to locate the plane of the picture.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, unlike the illusions of *trompe l’oeil* and realism that attempt to disguise the picture plane in an effort to fool the audience, Davis, because the illusion is so successful, has to remind his audience they are completely abstract and the space depicted could never contain a landscape, a figure, a still life, or any other tangible object.

Although Davis’s premise for his paintings is contrary to the deception employed by *trompe l’oeil* artists, it still demonstrates a legacy of such works. Where Davis rejected that his cut-out illusionistic space could contain anything humanly perceivable, American *trompe l’oeil* artists S.S. David, figure 31, and John Haberle, figure 32, used cut-out shapes to enhance their realist deceptions. However, even these 19th century painters were not the first to use cut-out

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<sup>40</sup>Landfield, Ronald Davis, 1.

<sup>41</sup>Rose, Abstract Illusionism, 34.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

shapes. They were preceded by Italian and Dutch artists going back to the 16th century (fig. 33-34). Consequently, in their own way, each of these three Abstract Illusionists addressed here demonstrate a unique expansion on the work of *trompe l'oeil* artists before them.

The work highlighted in the Reality of Illusion exhibition indicates vast versions of Abstract Illusionism. Working very individually within this scope of talent were three distinct artists James Havard, Paul Sarkisian, and Ronald Davis. Each of these artists created bodies of work that fit into Louis Meisel and Ivan Karp's definition of Abstract Illusionism in their own way and set precedents for certain genres within the movement. Each of these artists also took elements of *trompe l'oeil* and tweaked it to reflect their modern concepts of illusion. Likewise, all three artists contributed to the new notion that illusion was not inextricably tied to realism, and, subsequently, that abstraction was not completely ethereal if it could take on wordly dimensions and even shadows.

In the end, the airbrushed shadows, to many critics, was a borderline gimmick, and John Ward admonishes that "the startling deceptiveness of the illusion produced by this simple device caused it to be overused for a time."<sup>43</sup> Ward seems skeptical of the merit of these artists and the Abstract Illusionism movement and says, "whatever the value of such work will ultimately prove to be, it raises the interesting question of what its relationship to realism is."<sup>44</sup> Ward sounds relieved as he later writes, "the popularity of this device seems to be on the wane."<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, Ward obliges credit to Abstract Illusionism for bringing up the important question as to what the connection is between realism and abstraction and how each is effected by illusion. Artists working after the advent of Abstract Illusionism will not be able to view illusion in the same way as artists working prior to it. Despite differing opinions, there is no doubt that the Reality of Illusion exhibition was nothing less than an homage to the spectacular diversity, creativity and craft that erupted from artists addressing "abstract illusionism".

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<sup>43</sup>Ward, American Realist Painting, 254.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ib.

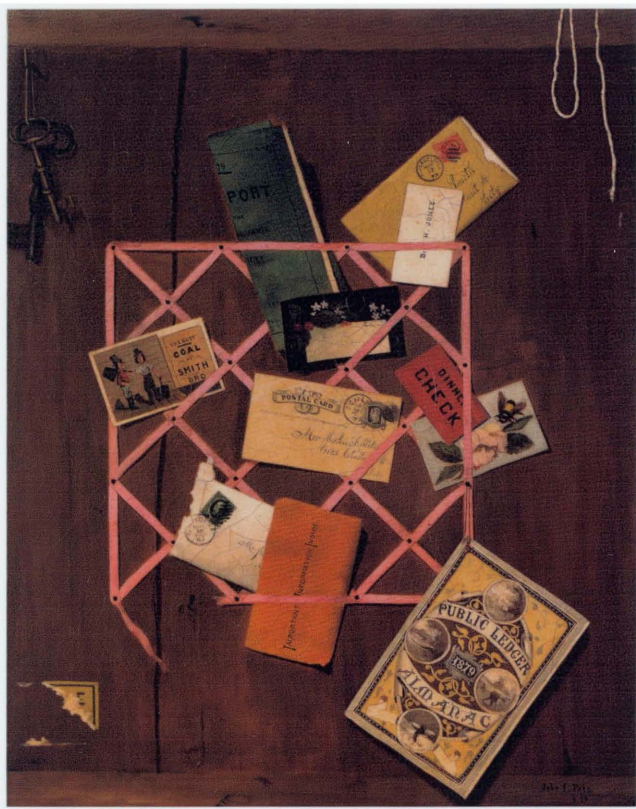


Figure 4: John Fredrick Peto, Office Board for Smith Brothers Coal Company, 1879, oil on canvas, 28 x 24 inches.

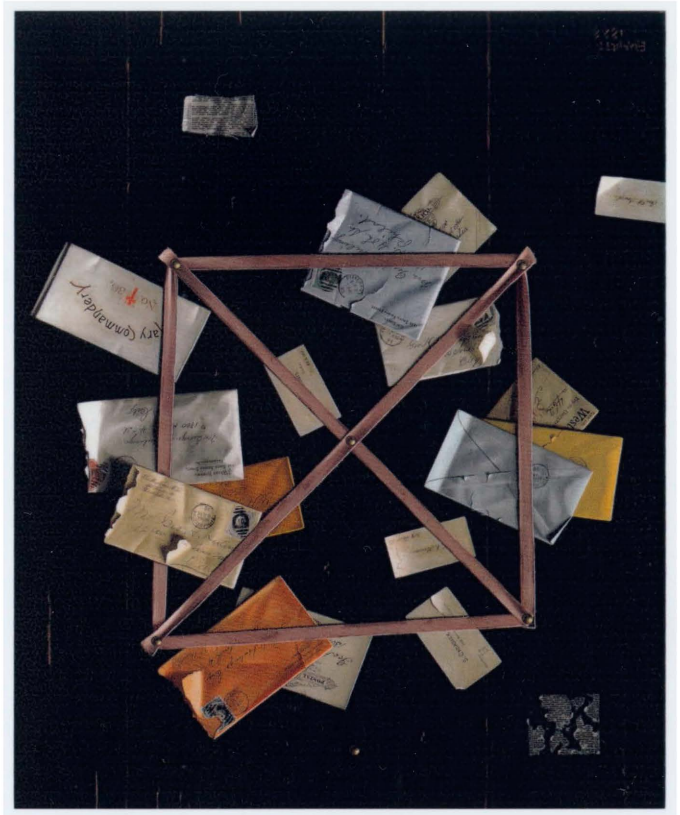


Figure 5: William Michael Harnett, Mr. Huling's Rack Picture, 1888, oil on canvas, 30 x 25 inches.

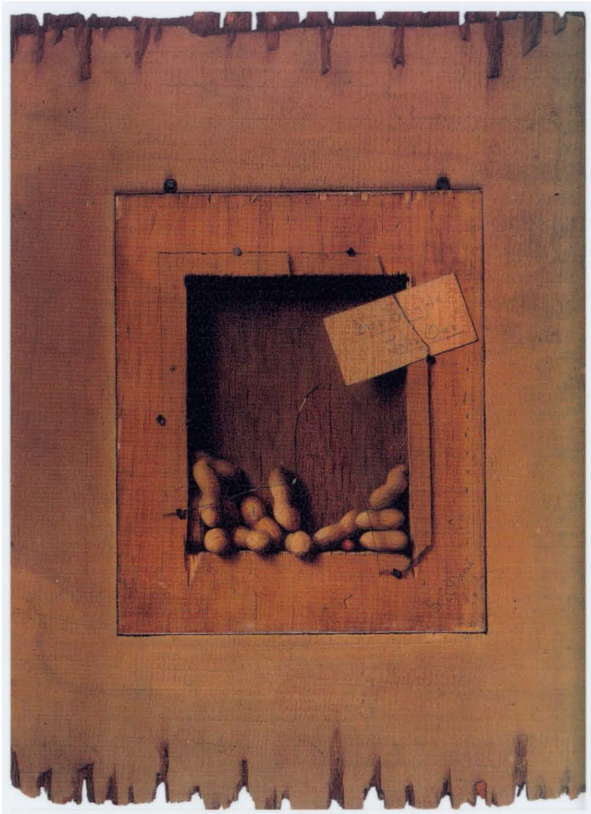


Figure 6: S.S. David, Free Sample, Take One, c. 1890, oil on canvas, 12 x 10 inches.



Figure 7: S. S. David, Homage to a Parrot, c. 1890, oil on canvas, 20 x 16 inches.

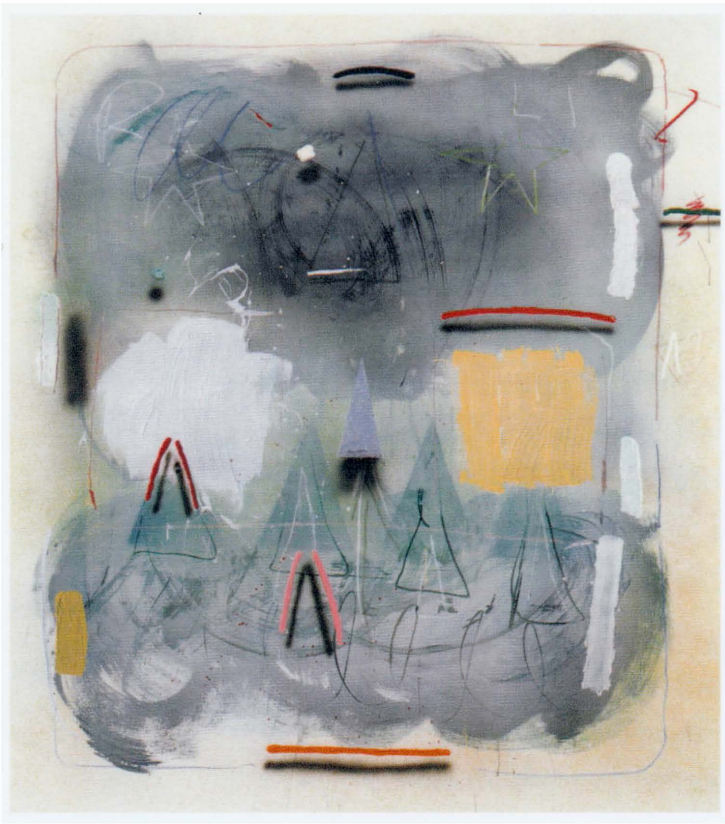


Figure 8: James Havard, *Bear's Belly*, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 80 inches.

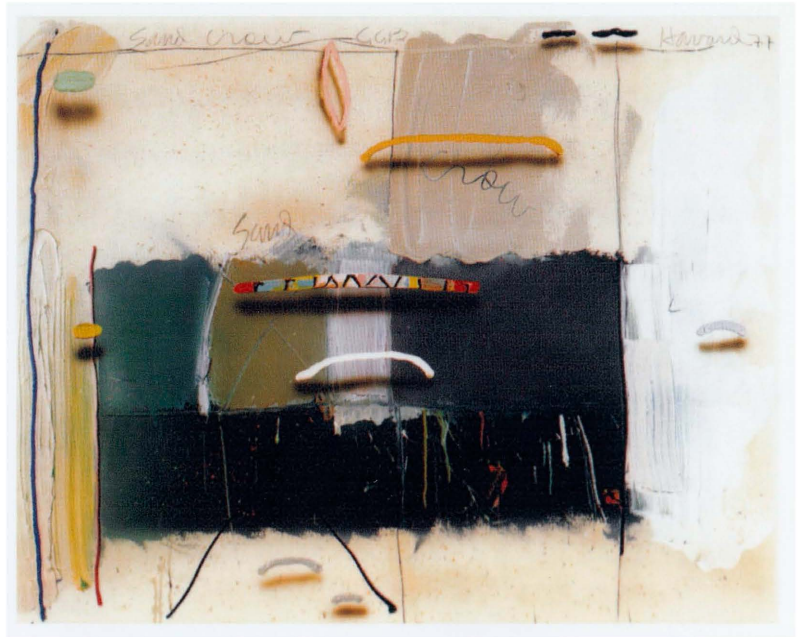


Figure 9: James Havard, *Sand Crow*, 1977, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 68 inches.

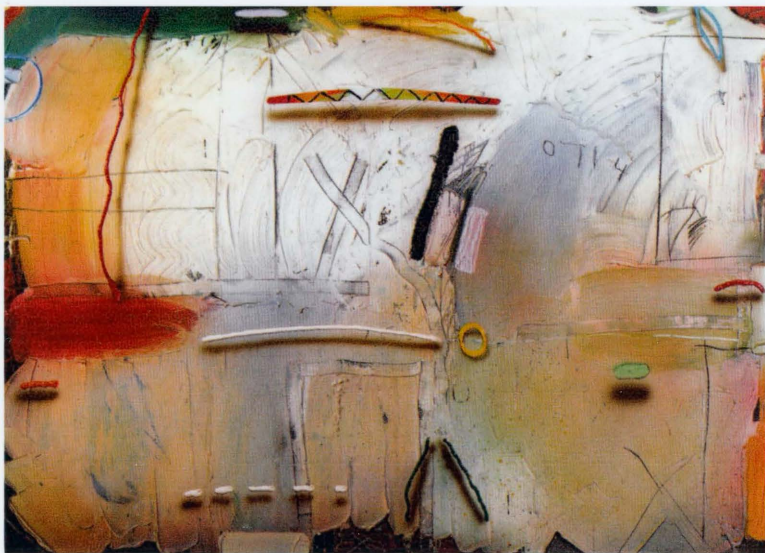


Figure 10: James Havard, *Bird Sight*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48 inches.

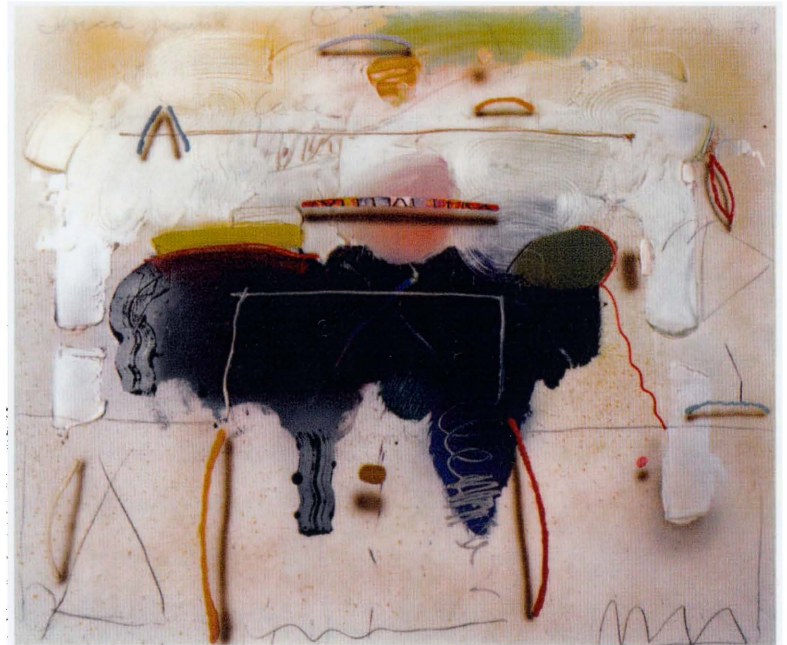


Figure 11: James Havard, *Inca Ground*, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 84 inches.





Figure 12: Paul Sarkisian, Untitled #4, 1982, acrylic and glitter on canvas, 96 x 95 inches.



Figure 13: Paul Sarkisian, Five Envelopes with Landscape, 1976, oil and silkscreen on canvas, 28 x 36 inches.

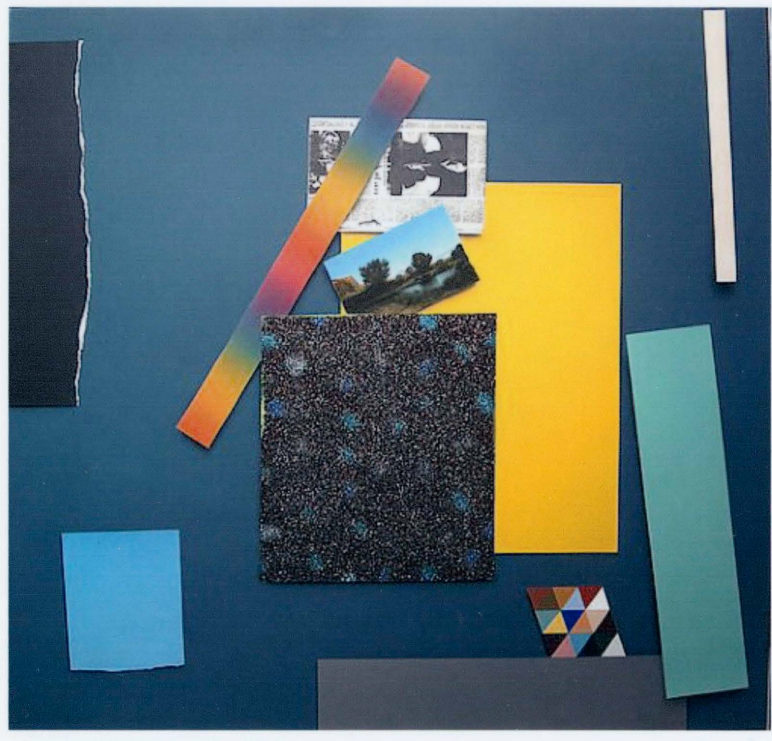


Figure 14: Paul Sarkisian, #9 with O'keefe, 1981, oil, silkscreen, glitter on canvas, 40 x 58 inches.



Figure 15: Paul Sarkisian, Untitled, 1977, acrylic on linen, 48 x 44 inches.

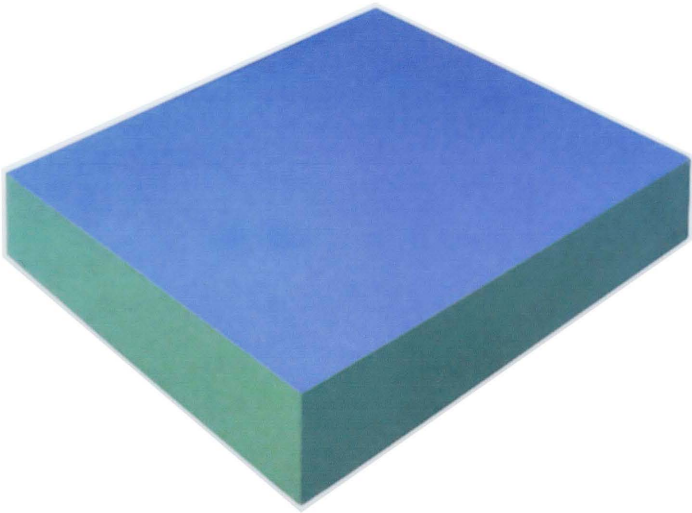


Figure 16: Ronald Davis, Lavender Slab, 1966, acrylic on polyester resin, 45 x 61 inches, Slab series.

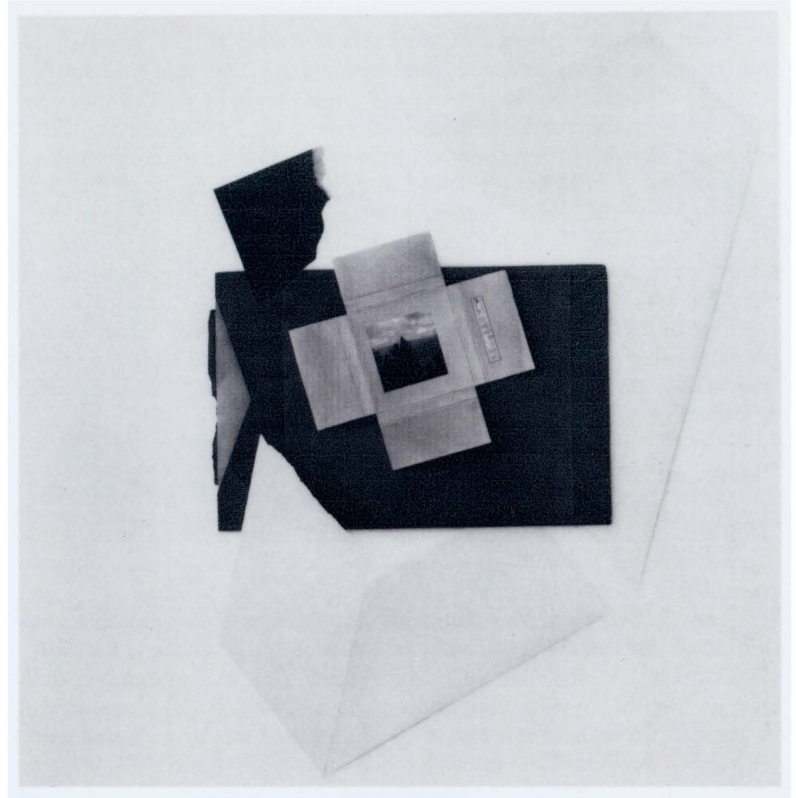


Figure 17: Paul Sarkisian, Untitled #5, 1978, acrylic on linen, 71 x 71 inches.

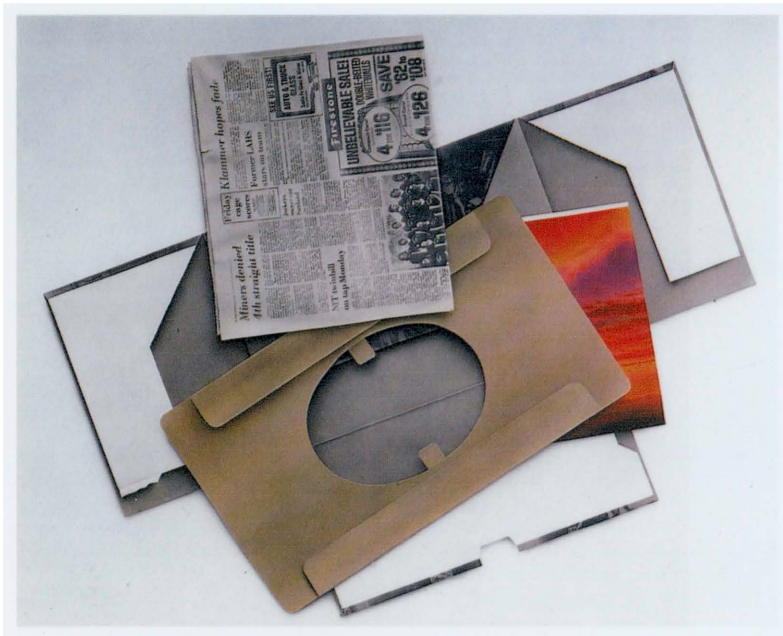


Figure 18: Paul Sarkisian, Untitled (Sunset), 1979, acrylic on board, 32 x 40 inches.

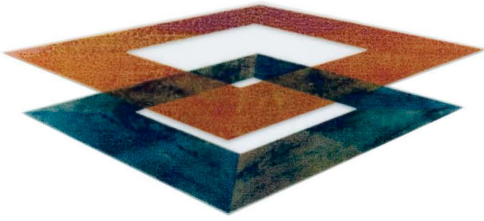


Figure 19: Ronald Davis, Overlay, 1971, polyester resin, fiberglass and wood, 60 x 136 inches, Cut-out series.

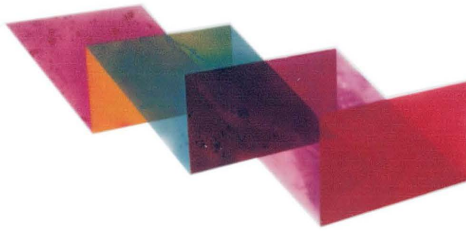


Figure 20 : Ronald Davis, Single Saw Tooth, 1971, polyester resin and fiberglass, 37 x 102 inches, Cut-out series.

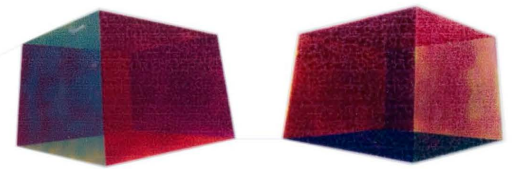


Figure 21: Ronald Davis, Eye Level Block Left & Right, 1970, polyester resin and fiberglass, 31 x 94 inches, Eye Level series.

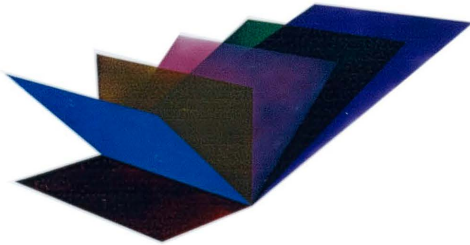


Figure 22: Ronald Davis, Fan, 1971, polyester resin and fiberglass, 50 x 116 inches, Cut-out series.

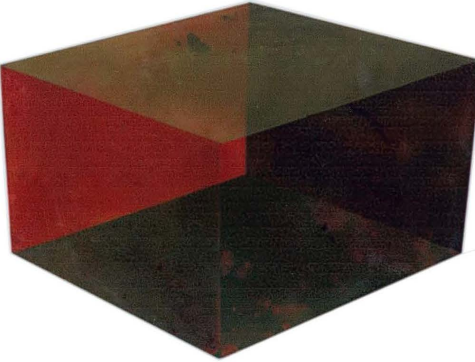


Figure 23: Ronald Davis, Cube, 1970, polyester resin and fiberglass, 30 x 40 inches, Cube series.

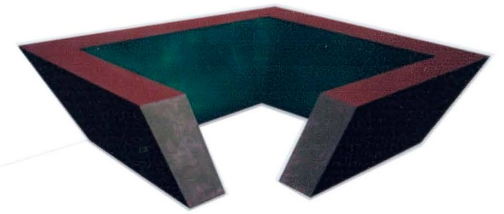


Figure 24: Ronald Davis, Green Black, 1967, polyester resin, fiberglass and wood, 54 x 134.5, Crab series.



Figure 25: Ronald Davis, Eleven Colors, 1967, polyester resin and fiberglass, 72 x 131 inches, Crab series.

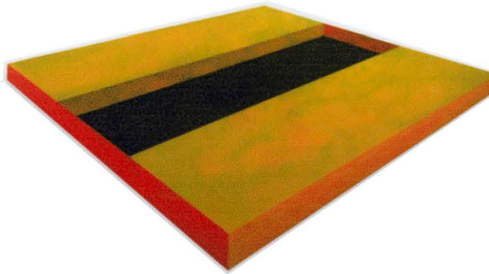


Figure 26: Ronald Davis, Two Thirds Yellow, 1966, polyester resin and fiberglass, 72 x 131 inches, Slab series.

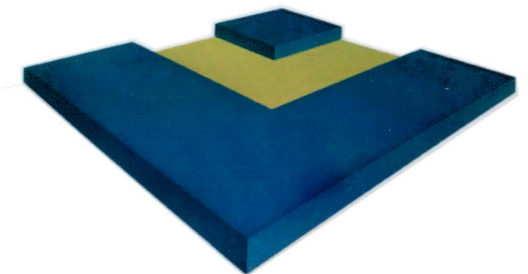


Figure 27: Ronald Davis, Six Ninths Blue, 1966, polyester resin and fiberglass, 72 x 131 inches, Slab series.



Figure 28: Ronald Davis, Vector, 1968, polyester resin and fiberglass, 60 x 132 inches, Dodecagon series.



Figure 29: Ronald Davis, Three Corners- Cool, 1969, polyester resin and fiberglass, 30 x 40 inches, Cube series.



Figure 30: Ronald Davis, Frame, 1969, polyester resin and fiberglass, 50 x 140 inches, Slab III series.



Figure 31: S.S. David, *Cat in a Crate*, after 1887, oil on canvas, 10 x 12 x 8 1/2 inches.

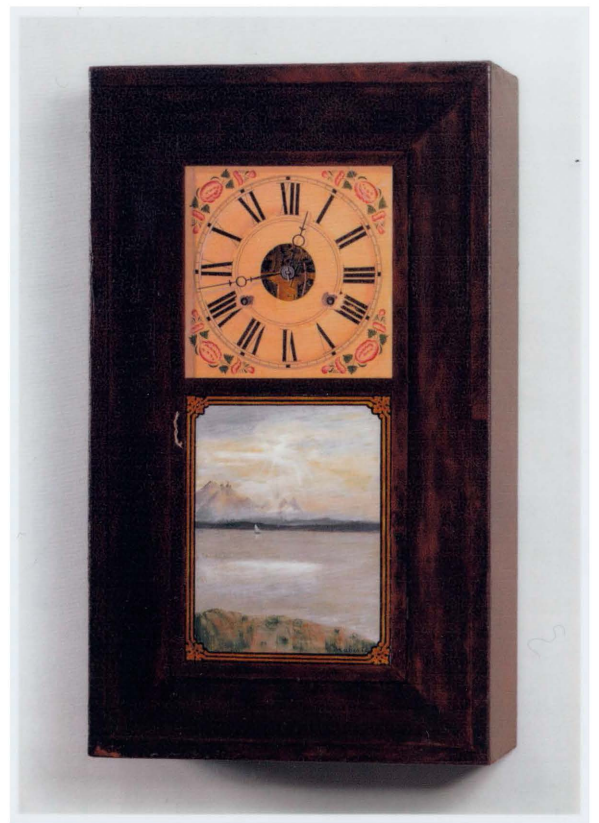


Figure 32: John Haberle, *Clock*, c. 1900, oil on canvas, 28 x 18 x 3.25 inches.



Figure 33: Antonio Cioci, Florentine, *The Painter's Easel*, c. 1775-1780, oil on canvas, 51 x 33 inches.



Figure 34: Johannes Cornelisz Verspronck, Dutch, *Boy Sleeping in Chair*, 1654, oil on panel, 38 x 30 inches.

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