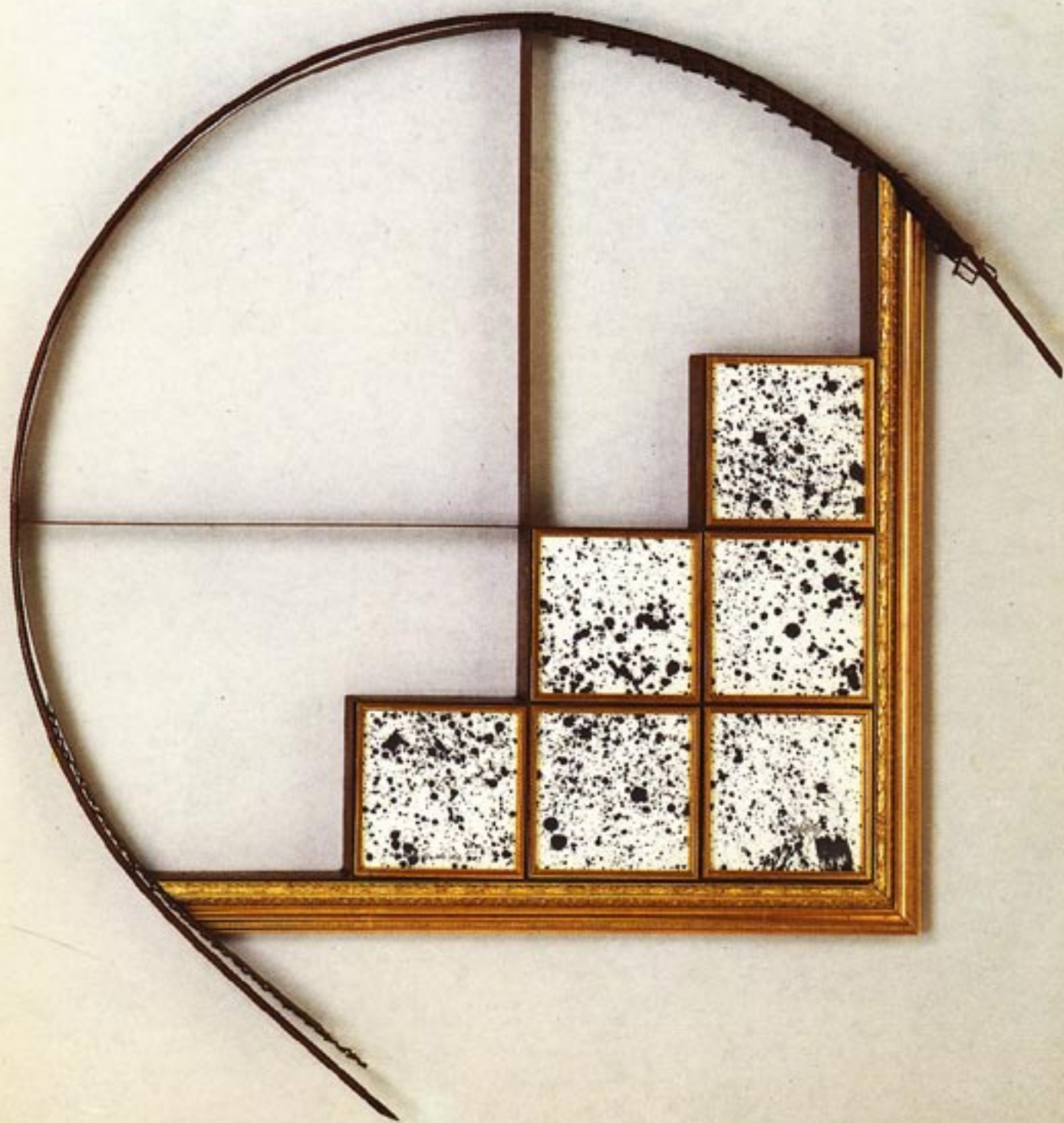


JACQUES MARTINEZ

BY CARTER RATCLIFF



KOUROS GALLERY

JACQUES MARTINEZ
BY CARTER RATCLIFF

KOUROS GALLERY

THE FORMS OF JACQUES MARTINEZ'S ART ARE QUICK. A CLUSTER OF THIN IRON BARS CURVES OVER THE WALL WITH THE SPEED OF PENCIL LINES. PENCIL LINES MOVE ACROSS A PAGE LIKE A FLICKER OF LIGHT. THE FORMS ARE QUICK BUT THE ART ITSELF IS NOT. THERE IS A QUALITY OF DELIBERATION TO THE WAY MARTINEZ HALVES A SHEET OF PAPER SPLASHED WITH BLUE PAINT, THEN ENCLOSES EACH HALF IN ITS OWN FRAME. MOREOVER, THE TWO FRAMES, VERTICAL SHAPES OF RECENT MANUFACTURE, REST ON A HORIZONTAL STRIP OF WOODEN FRAMING FROM AN EARLIER, SLOWER TIME. THIS ADJUSTMENT OF OLD AND NEW OCCURS IN A WORK CALLED "LE MANTEAU DE LA VIERGE" (1987), WHICH CONTAINS ITS BLUE SPLASH, THE RECORD OF AN EXTENDED INSTANT, IN A PATTERN OF LONG PERSPECTIVES. BECAUSE "LE MANTEAU DE LA VIERGE" HUGS THE WALL AS CLOSELY AS ITS SWEEPING METAL ELEMENTS PERMIT, THESE PERSPECTIVES ARE OF NECESSITY TEMPORAL, NOT SPATIAL. MARTINEZ BUILDS HIS WORKS WITH EMBLEMS OF HISTORY. OFTEN THEY ARE PERSONAL, THE TRACES OF HIS HAND. HE HAS PLUCKED OTHERS--FRAMES, CORBELS, AND MOLDINGS, SOME CARVED IN THE 18TH CENTURY--FROM THE PAST THAT PAINTING SHARES WITH ARCHITECTURE AND CABINETWORK. MARTINEZ ELABORATES A VISION OF OUR CULTURE'S PAST, YET HIS ART ARRIVES IN THE PRESENT WITH NO DIDACTIC MESSAGE ATTACHED.

MUCH RECENT ART HAS MADE A TOPIC OF HISTORY, NOT TO MENTION PLEASURE. PLEASURE IN HISTORY IS THE SOURCE OF MARTINEZ'S ART. AS FOR HIS TOPICS, THE LIST BEGINS WITH WOODWORK AND ENDS WITH LANDSCAPE AND GEOMETRY. IN-BETWEEN IS EVERYTHING THAT HIS ART EVOKES, FROM THE LOOK OF CONTEMPORARY STREETS TO NUANCES OF WEATHER. THE FORMS OF "COLUMBUS' SHADOW" (1987) SUGGEST THE FACADES OF A CITY, PERHAPS IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN, WHERE MODERN METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION HAVE INTRUDED--IN OTHER WORDS, JUST ABOUT ANY CITY IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD. THE RED OF "COLUMBUS' SHADOW" SEEM TO SINK INTO A HEAVILY GESSOED SURFACE, AS IF MATERIAL IN ITS SHEER PERSISTENCE WERE ABSORBING COLOR. ARCHITECTURE ENGULFS PAINTING. YET MARTINEZ'S PLAY OF COLOR AND TEXTURE COULD BE SEEN ANOTHER WAY, AS A REMINDER OF THOSE MOMENTS WHEN THE SUN IS SO INTENSE THAT A RED WILL THROB AND DISAPPEAR IN A SURGE OF SHEER LIGHT. "COLUMBUS' SHADOW" SUGGESTS, AMONG MUCH ELSE, THAT SOLID FORM IS FINALLY AS PROVISIONAL AS ITS COLORED SURFACE. WITH THAT SUGGESTION, PAINTING'S WEATHER DRIFTS FREE OF ARCHITECTURE'S AUTHORITY.

MARTINEZ GUIDES OUR ATTENTION TO THOSE POINTS WHERE THE PERSONAL AND THE CULTURAL INTERSECT. OR, ONE COULD SAY, HE ENCOURAGES US TO TAKE MATTERS OF THE GRANDEST IMPORT IN AS PERSONAL A WAY AS WE CAN, FOR THAT IS WHAT HE DOES. HE INTERESTS HIMSELF NOT IN HISTORY IN GENERAL BUT, RATHER, THE HISTORY OF PAINTING. WHEN HE MAKES AN IMAGE OF A LANDSCAPE, HE REFERS LESS TO THE VISIBLE WORLD THAN TO THE ACT OF INVOKING THAT WORLD WITH PAINT ON CANVAS. HIS TEXTURED GREENS DIRECT THE EYE AWAY FROM GRASS TO THE PAINTS THAT, FOR CENTURIES, HAVE DEPICTED GRASS, FOLIAGE, AND THEIR MEETING WITH THE SKY--SEE "BLUE MOUNTAIN WINDOW" (1987), WHERE THE SKY IS UNPRIMED LINEN OF THE FINEST GRADE.

MARTINEZ'S GEOMETRY IS NEITHER EUCLID'S DOWN TO EARTH VARIETY NOR PLATO'S HEAVENLY KIND. THE ARTIST LEARNED HIS GEOMETRY WITHIN THE FRAME THAT, SINCE THE TIME OF THE RENAISSANCE, HAS CONFRONTED PAINTERS, IMAGES WITH A STRAIGHT-EDGED, RIGHT-ANGLED, IMPASSABLE BORDER. MARTINEZ'S TOPICS ALL COLLAPSE INTO ONE: PAINTING, AND YET THIS IS A MISLEADING SORT OF THING TO SAY IN NEW YORK. IT IS ASSUMED HERE THAT PAINTING ABOUT PAINTING IS NECESSARILY A REDUCTIVE EXERCISE: THE ARTIST TRACKS DOWN AND EXPELS FROM HIS ART WHATEVER IS NOT ESSENTIAL TO HIS MEDIUM.

SUCH POLICE WORK NATURALLY RESULTS IN THINNISH IMAGERY AND, SINCE MARTINEZ'S WORKS ARE SO LUSH, IT MAY SOUND ODD TO HEAR HIM DESCRIBED AS A PAINTER WHO TAKES PAINTING AS HIS TOPIC. REDUCTIVISTS DEFINE THEIR MEDIUM IN NARROW WAYS THAT CAN ONLY PRODUCE FURTHER NARROWINGS. MARTINEZ RUNS NO RISK OF THAT, FOR HE DOESN'T SEE PAINTING AS SUSCEPTIBLE TO ANALYSIS. RATHER THAN DEFINE HIS MEDIUM, HE ENGAGES WITH IT, AS IF IT WERE SOMEHOW AN ENTITY LIKE HIMSELF. AS HE INHABITS HIS PRESENT, SO PAINTING INHABITS WESTERN CIVILIZATION'S PAST. GRAPPLING WITH PAINTING, MARTINEZ FINDS HIS WAY--ONE COULD SAY, FEELS HIS WAY--INTO HISTORY. HE ALSO INFLECTS THE PRESENT WITH TAUT, WITTY, AND FLAGRANTLY SENSUOUS WORKS OF ART THAT DO NOT, AFTER ALL, LOOK PRECISELY LIKE PAINTINGS. AS MARTINEZ GRAPPLES WITH HIS MEDIUM, HE TRANSFORMS IT. THIS IS HIS WAY OF KEEPING IT ALIVE.

AS I SAID, HE CARRIES OUT NONE OF THOSE EXCLUSIONARY PROCEDURES THAT HAVE ENDOWED SO MUCH ART OF THE LAST SEVERAL DECADES WITH THE INVESTIGATORY ATMOSPHERE OF POLICE WORK OR, PERHAPS, A KIND OF SOCIOLOGY OF THE IMAGE. NEITHER AT THE DICTATES OF A METHOD OR BY PERSONAL INCLINATION DOES MARTINEZ CENSOR ANY POSSIBILITY. YET HE ADVANCES NO IDEAL OF ABANDONED ACCEPTANCE. WHEN I TALKED TO HIM LAST FALL IN MANHATTAN, HE RETURNED OFTEN TO WHAT HE CALLS THE LAW OF PAINTING. THIS IS THE LAW OF COMPOSITIONAL CHECKS AND BALANCES THAT BRINGS EQUILIBRIUM TO THE IMPROVISED, SOMETIMES VIOLENT ELEMENTS OF HIS ART, AS COLOR JUMPS ACROSS A SURFACE IN A FLURRY OF QUICK OILSTICK MARKS, IT GENERATES NO PRINCIPLE FOR ITS OWN CONTAINMENT. ORDER MUST BE IMPOSED, SOMETIMES BY THE SUDDEN INTERVENTION OF A STRIP OF WOODEN FRAMING. GILDED OR LAYERED WITH PAINT, THESE FRAGMENTS INSINUATE BALANCE INTO MARTINEZ'S IMAGES. SETTING BOUNDARIES, THEY GIVE A STABLE SHAPE TO FIELDS OF COLOR AND BARE CANVAS THAT THREATEN, WHEN THE ARTIST'S HAND IS STILL AT WORK, TO DISPLAY THE INSTABILITY OF CLOUDS. WITH BALANCE AND CONTAINMENT COMES SELF-SUFFICIENCY. AS ELLIPTICAL AS A WORK MAY BE, AS MANY INTERPRETATIONS AS IT MAY PERMIT, IT NONETHELESS ATTAINS AN AIR OF WHOLENESS.

WHETHER HE PLACES THEM AT THE EDGES OF A WORK OR WITHIN ITS BORDERS, MARTINEZ'S SCRAPS OF PICTURE FRAME INDUCE COMPOSITIONAL ORDER WITH ALL THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A STANDARD FRAME, COMPLETE WITH FOUR STRAIGHT SIDES AND FOUR RIGHT ANGLES. HE ACHIEVES THIS ECONOMY OF MEANS IN PART BY JUDICIOUS PLACEMENT; TO SOME DEGREE, HOWEVER, HIS BITS OF FRAMES ARE COMPOSITIONALLY EFFECTIVE BECAUSE, ARRIVING IN THE PRESENT FROM OTHER PERIODS, THEY BRING WITH THEM THE ENTIRE TRADITION OF THE PICTURE PROPERLY FRAMED AND COMPOSED. MARTINEZ IS SO AT HOME IN THIS TRADITION THAT HE CAN BRING IT TO BEAR EVEN WITH FRAMING DEVICES OF THE MOST IDIOSYNCRATIC KIND.

THE LAW THAT SAYS A PAINTING'S FRAME MUST BE RECTILINEAR IS STILL, SO TO SPEAK, ON THE BOOKS. EVEN NOW, A SHAPED FRAME READS AS A VARIANT ON THAT RECTILINEAR STANDARD. THE OUTLINE OF "JARDINO TRE" (1987) IS AN EXTREME VARIANT, FOR IT RECALLS THE SILHOUETTE OF A FLORENTINE CHURCH FACADE. YET THIS FLORENTINE OUTLINE DEPARTS FROM THAT STANDARD FOR THE SAKE OF REINFORCING IT, FOR THE WORK EVOKES THE ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE THAT LONG SERVED AS THE FRAME AROUND THE FRAME THAT CONTAINS THE MEDIUM OF PAINTING. IN MARTINEZ'S UNDERSTANDING OF PAINTING'S LAW, ONE MUST BREAK IT TO OBEY IT. MODERN TRADITION SUPPORTS MARTINEZ'S DELICATELY CALCULATED LAW-LESSNESS.

ONLY IN AN ACADEMIC, EVEN BUREAUCRATIC, SPIRIT DO PAINTERS TRY TO SAY LITERALLY WHAT LAWS DEFINE THEIR MEDIUM AND ITS EVOLUTION. MARTINEZ IS AMONG THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND THAT THE

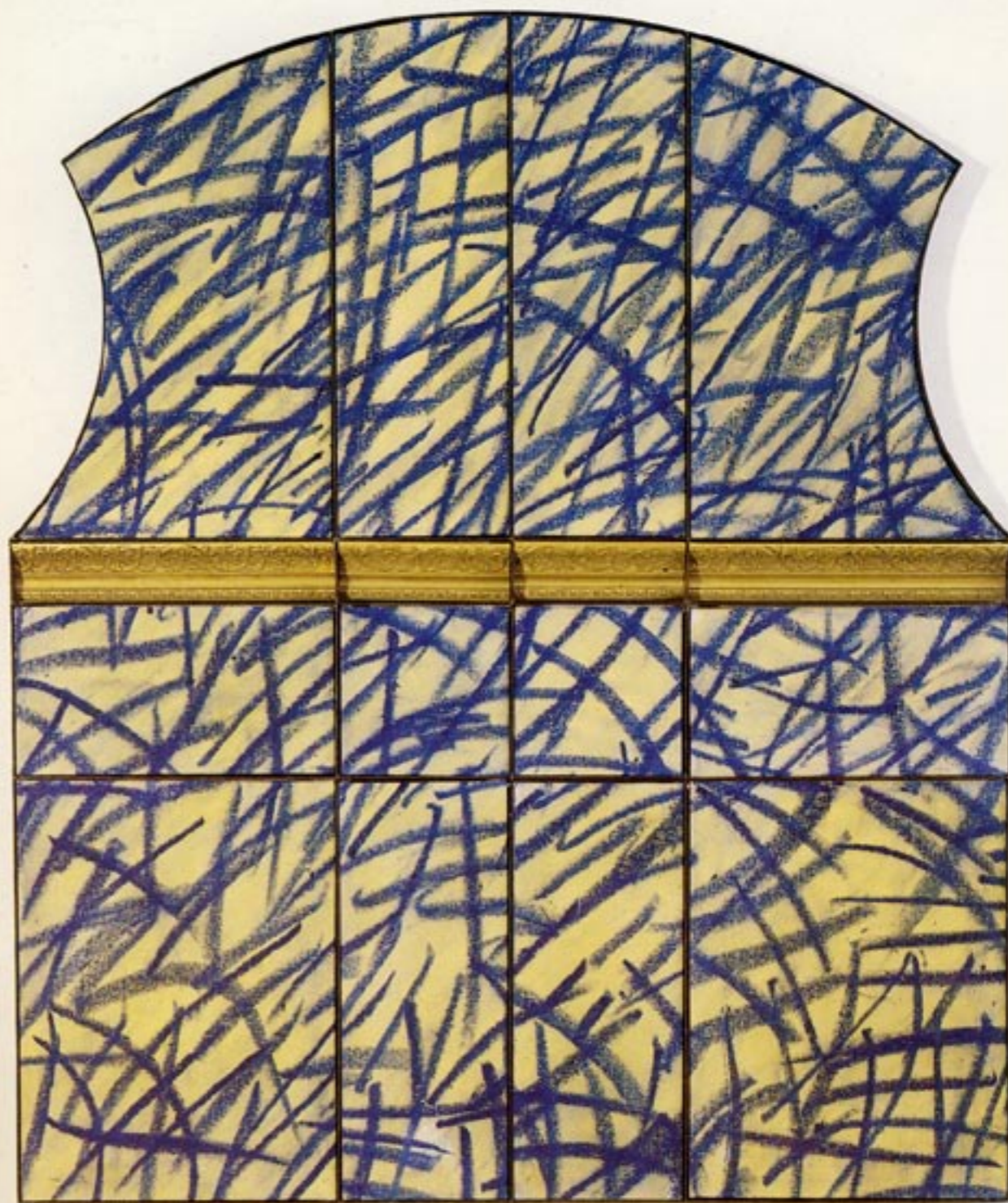
CONCEPT OF LAW MUST BE APPLIED TO PAINTING IN A STRICTLY METAPHORICAL SENSE, BECAUSE PAINTING, ITSELF METAPHORICAL, CAN ACKNOWLEDGE ONLY FIGURATIVE MEANINGS. THE EYE IS TEMPTED TO DISAGREE. DON'T THE TWO BLUE PANELS IN "OPOX" (1987) MAKE A SHEERLY PHYSICAL APPEAL? ISN'T THIS WORK AN EXERCISE IN MINIMALISM, LUSCIOUS RATHER THAN SEVERE, YET MINIMALIST NONETHELESS? THE CURVING PANEL OF RUSTED STEEL TEMPTS ONE TO THIS CONCLUSION. HOWEVER, THE BLUE OF "OPOX" REFUSES TO HOLD FAST TO THE SURFACE WHERE IT APPEARS. ITS TEXTURES INDUCE IT TO DRIFT FREE, AT LEAST FOR VISION, AND THIS SEPARATION BETWEEN FACT AND APPEARANCE PROVIDES AN OPENING FOR SPECULATION. BLUE BECOMES A FRAGMENT IMPLYING A LANDSCAPE AND EVEN THE METAL PANEL, SO INSISTENTLY WHAT IT IS, BECOMES, FOR THE IMAGINATION, A FRAGMENT OF SOMETHING ELSE.

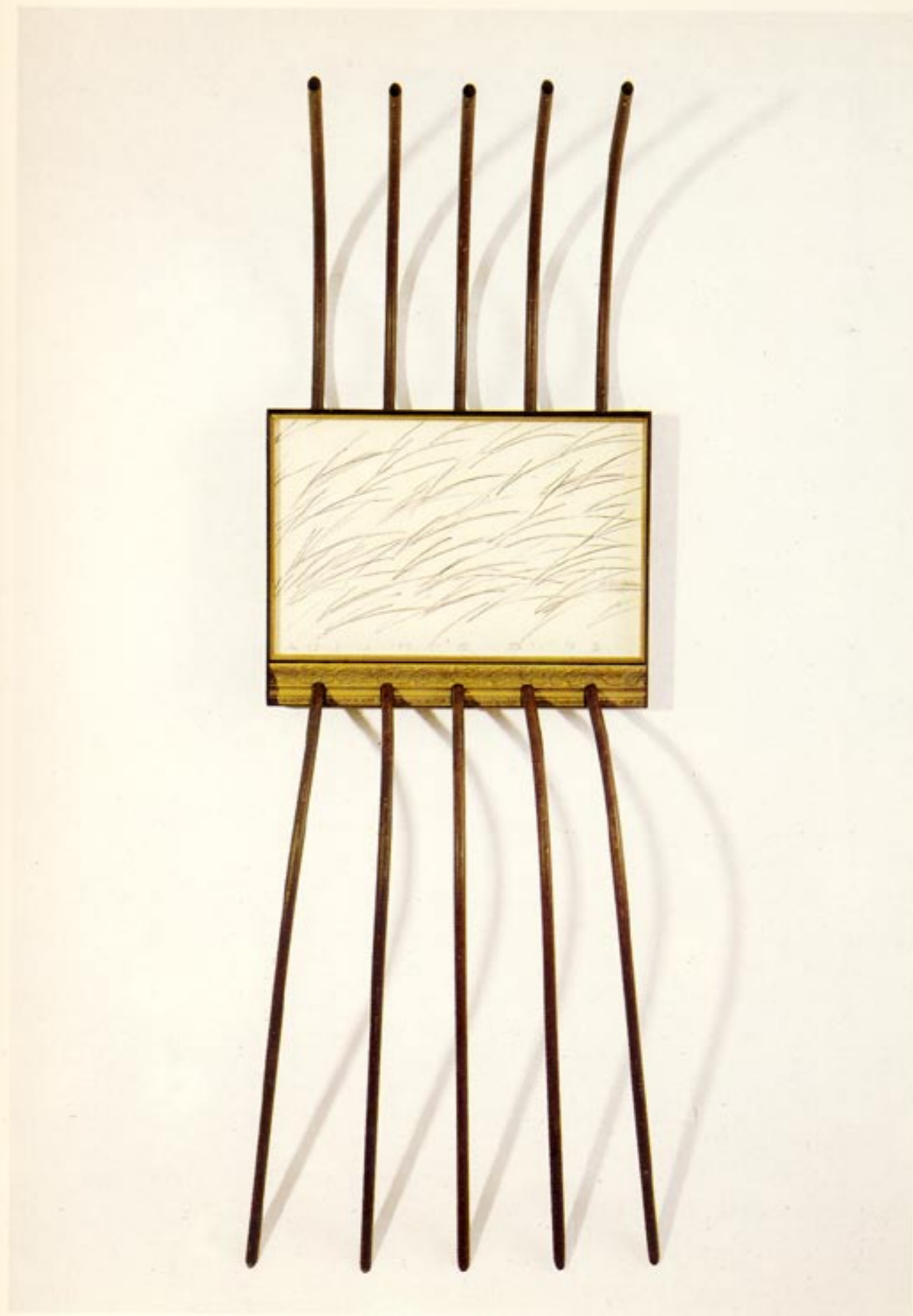
THOUGH MARTINEZ ENCOURAGES US TO RECOGNIZE THE ELEMENTS OF HIS WORKS AS METONYMS, PARTS OF WHOLE, THE VERSATILITY OF THESE PARTS DISSUADES US FROM SETTLING INTO CERTAINTY ABOUT WHICH FRAGMENT BELONGS TO WHAT ABSENT ENTIRELY. THE FORMAL EQUILIBRIUM OF HIS WORKS INVITES OUR SPECULATIONS TO BE AS PRECARIOUS--INDEED, AS PLAYFUL--AS WE LIKE. "AUTUMN'S BIRDS" (1987) IS UNUSUAL BECAUSE IT ATTACHES A DEFINITE MEANING TO AN IMAGE--THE PAPER CONTAINS NOT MERELY A SCATTERING, BUT A FLOCK, OF PENCIL MARKS, FOR THE ARTIST HAS CHOSEN TO SEE THESE MARKS AS BIRDS IN FLIGHT. BUT THE OPENNESS THAT PREVAILS THROUGHOUT MARTINEZ'S OEUVRE SHOULD CAUTION US AGAINST INTERPRETING THE METAL BARS OF "AUTUMN'S BIRDS" AS THE BARS OF A CAGE. IT WOULD DENY THE OPENNESS OF THE ARTIST'S IMAGES TO IMPRISON THEM IN A CLOSED SYSTEM OF INTERPRETATION.

WHATEVER THE REFERENCES, THE EMOTIONS, THE SENSUALLY-CHARGED RECOLLECTIONS STIRRED UP BY A PARTICULAR WORK, MARTINEZ INVOKES THE HISTORY OF EASEL PAINTING IN ITS FULLNESS. IT IS THE FIELD WHERE HIS IMAGERY ORIGINATES AND TO WHICH, IN ITS LARGEST MEANINGS, IT ALWAYS RETURNS. HE IS SO THOROUGHLY AT HOME IN THAT VAST FIELD THAT HE CAN GIVE THE MASS-PRODUCED ELEMENTS OF HIS SCULPTURE THE HISTORICALLY-LADEN PRESENCE OF THE FORMS HE MAKES FROM TRADITIONAL MATERIALS. MARTINEZ'S ART ARRIVES IN NEW YORK FROM A LUSH CLIMATE MORE IMAGINARY THAN REAL. CHROMED AND GILDED, GESSOED AND PAINTED, HIS IMAGERY HAS AN IMMEDIATE, SENSUAL ALLURE. YET EACH WORK QUESTIONS ITS OWN PHYSICAL PRESENCE, EVEN UNDERMINES IT, WITH HISTORICAL ALLUSION. AT THE SAME, MARTINEZ MAKES THOSE ALLUSIONS IMPOSSIBLE TO PIN DOWN.

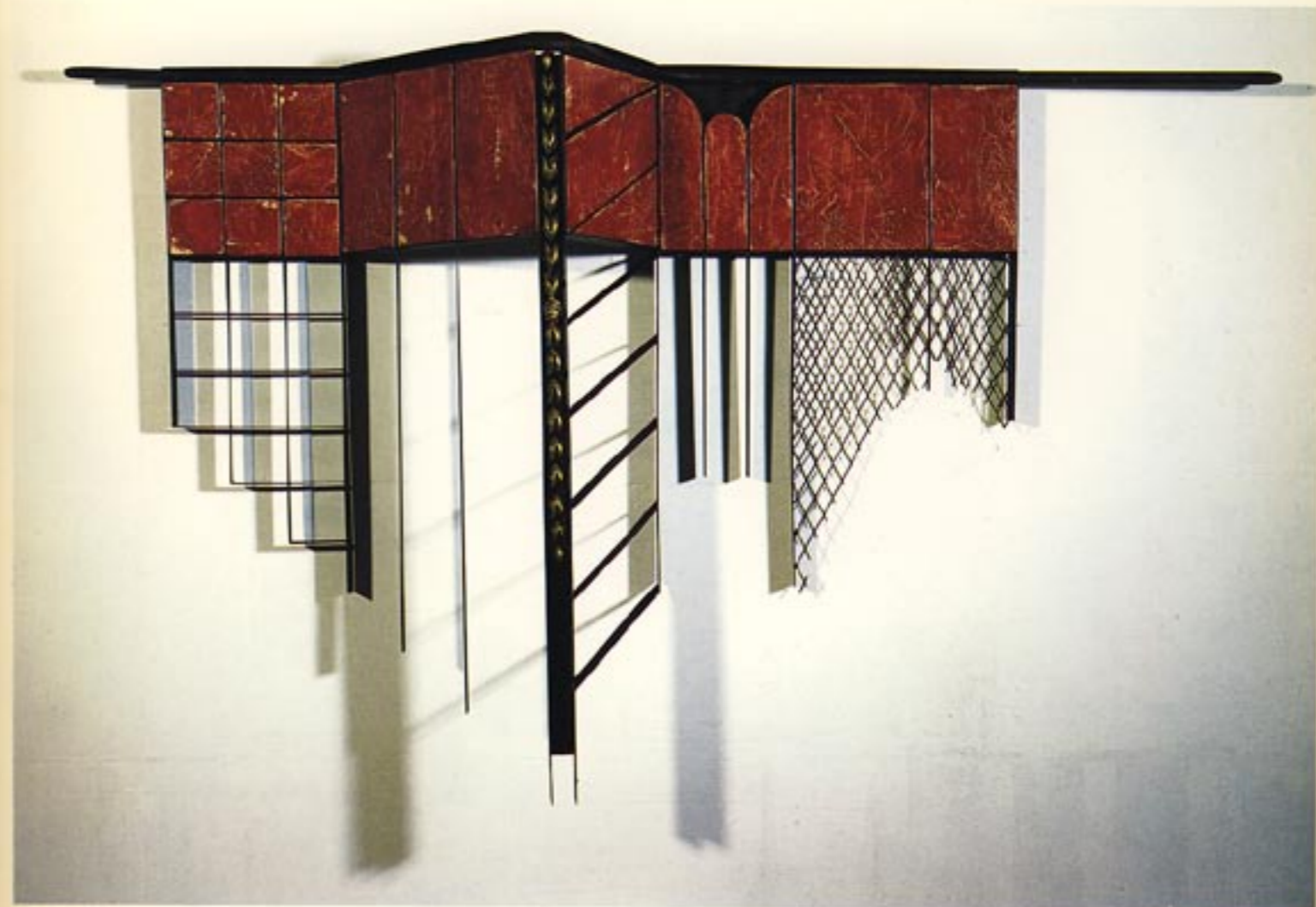
HE PRESENTS US WITH NO ART-HISTORICAL PUZZLES TO SOLVE, RATHER, WITH ENCOURAGEMENTS TO MEMORY AND ITS EMOTIONS. PHYSICAL YET DOT REDUCIBLE TO THEIR PHYSICALITY, MARTINEZ'S WORKS EVOKE THE COMPLEXITIES AND OF COURSE THE PLEASURES OF EMBODIMENT--THAT IS, THE STATE OF BEING IDENTICAL AND AT THE SAME TIME NOT IDENTICAL WITH ONE'S CORPOREAL SELF. HE PRESENTS THIS PARADOX IN TERMS BORROWED FROM EASEL PAINTING, WHICH IS THE ART THAT HAS COME CLOSEST NOT MERELY TO PICTURING US BUT, IN ITS INTERNAL CONTRADICTIONS, TO SHARING OUR CONDITION. SOME PAINTERS HAVE FELT EMBODIMENT AS A BURDEN. FOR MARTINEZ, IT IS A JOY TO BE ELABORATED.

CARTER RATCLIFF





COLUMBUS SHADOW. MIXED MEDIA, 1987

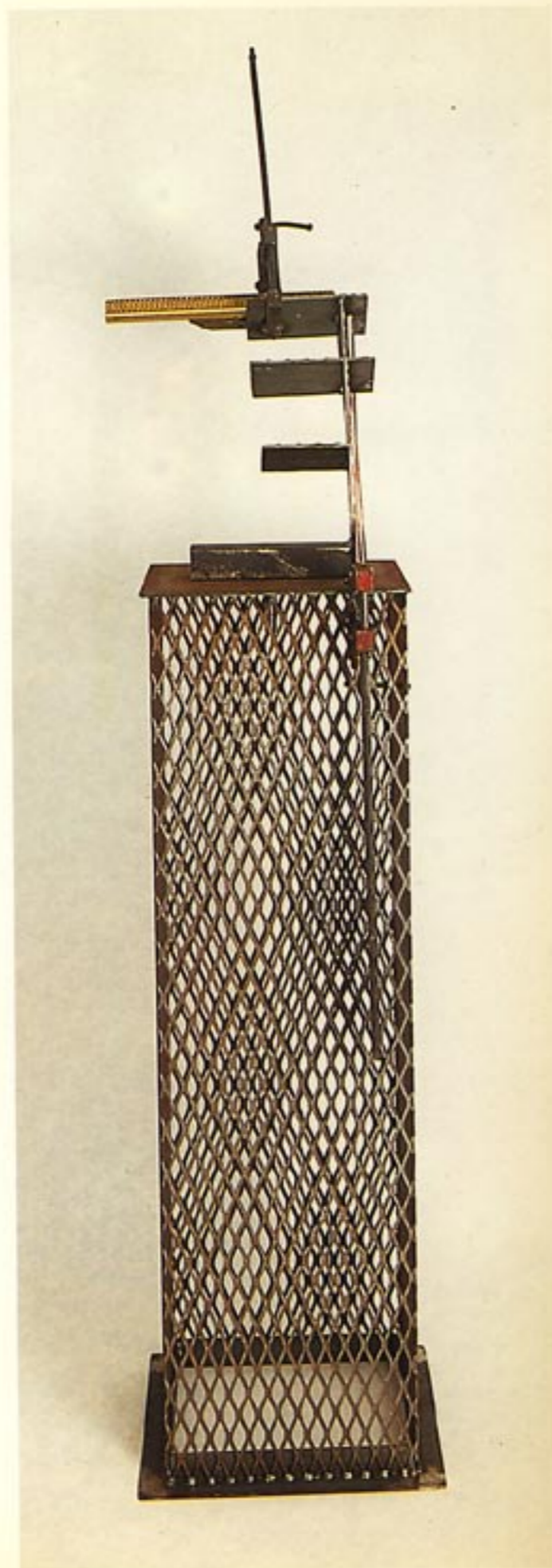


FROM LEFT TO RIGHT

CHAPPAQUA CHIQUITA 1987

WEIMAR BYKE, 1987

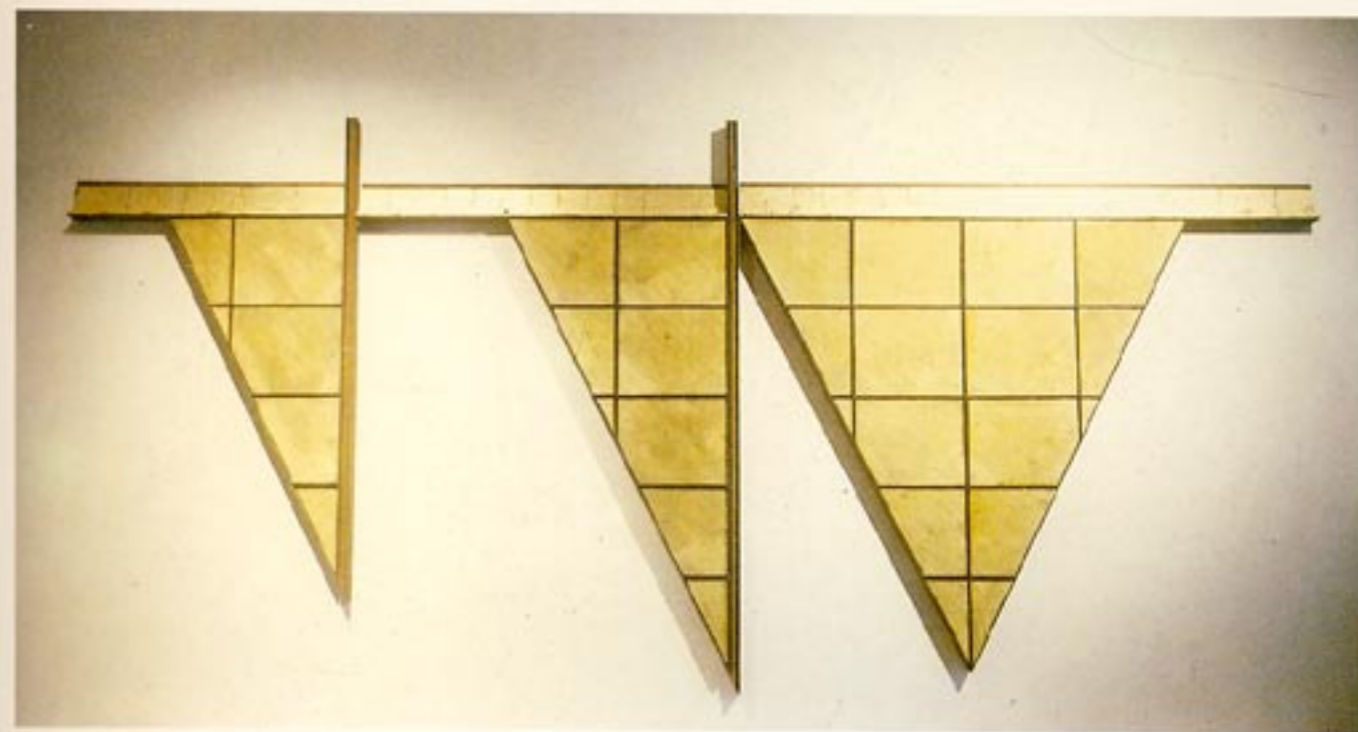
SILENT BUMPER, 1987



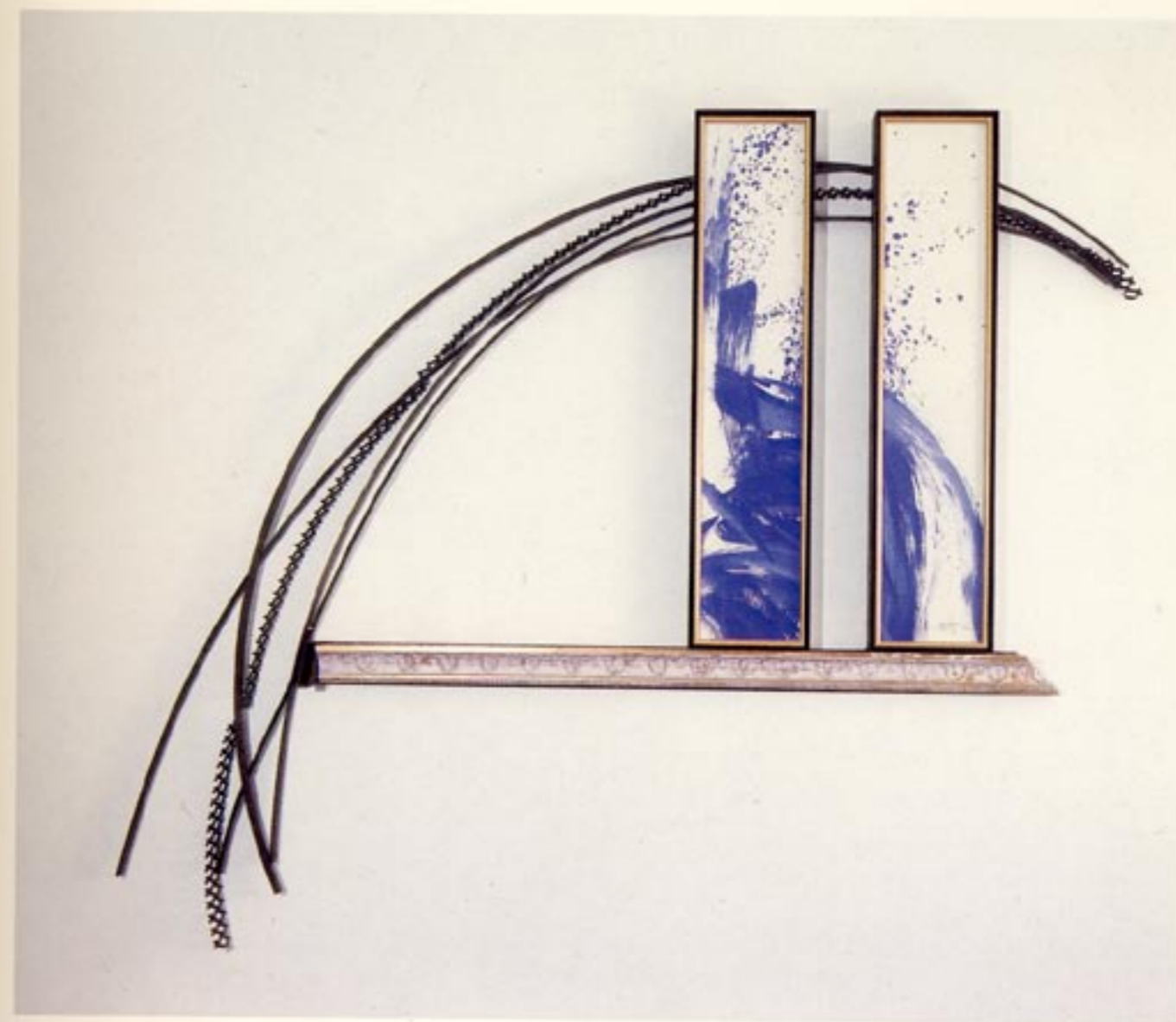


BLUE MOUNTAIN WINDOW. MIXED MEDIA. 1987





LE MANTEAU DE LA VIERGE. II. MIXED MEDIA, 1987.



JACQUES MARTINEZ

Born in 1944 El-Biar (Algérie)
Live in Spain

One-Man Show Exhibition

- 1973 Galerie Ferrero, Nice
- 1975 Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris
"Peinture hors peinture", Galerie Aarp, Paris
Galerie Le Flux, Perpignan
Galerie Daniel Templon, Milan
- 1976 Galerie Löwenadler, Stockholm
- 1977 Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris
- 1982 Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris
- 1984 Galerie d'Art Contemporain des Musées de
Nice, Nice
- 1985 Forum Art Gallery, Monte-Carlo
- 1986 Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris

Group Show Exhibitions

- 1972 "Ecole de Nice", Galerie Ferrero, Nice
- 1974 "L'Art au présent", Musée Galliera, Paris
"Peintre français d'aujourd'hui", Galerie d'Art T,
Mulhouse
- 1975 "Dessin de la nouvelle peinture", Musée Municipal,
Saint-Paul-de-Vence
"Peinture analytique", Galerie La Bertessa,
Düsseldorf
"Trois peintres français" Galerie Kriwin, Bruxelles
"Barré, Cane ; Martinez, Morales ; Wery", "Galerie
Peccolo, Cologne
"Nouvelle peinture Française", Galerie Seconda
Scala, Rome
- 1977 "A Propos de Nice", Centre National d'Art et de
Culture Georges Pompidou, Paris
Biennale de Paris
Biennale de Paris
- 1978 "Dix ans d'Art en France", sélection Marcellin,
Pleynet, Festival d'Automne, Paris
Biennale de Gravure, Tokyo
- 1982 Salon de Montrouge, Paris
- 1983 "Carré, cercle, triangle", Hôtel d'Escoville, Caen
- 1984 "Carte Blanche à Daniel Templon", Centre Culturel
Le Parvis, Tarbes
Salon de Montrouge, Paris
- 1985 Salon de Montrouge, Paris
- 1986 Salon de Montrouge, Paris
- 1987 "Qu'est-ce que la sculpture moderne ?"
Galerie Eric Franck, Genève
- 1987 "Made in France"
1967-1987 catalogue Catherine Millet,
Jean-Pierre Bordaz, château de Jau

Bibliography

- Combat, 21 février 1973
- Artitude International n° 3
- Artitude International n° 21/22 (Interview avec Ben)
- Le Monde, 17 février 1975
- Le Quotidien de Paris, 21 avril 1977
- Info-Artitude, avril 1977
- Art Press, mai 1977
- Art International, juillet-août 1977
- Arts Antiques Auctions, décembre 1982
- Le Quotidien de Paris, 9 décembre 1982
par C. Francblin
- Décoration International, 9 décembre 1982,
par E. Vedrenne
- Les Nouvelles Littéraires, 9 décembre 1982,
par B.-H. Lévy
- Télérama, 15 décembre 1982, par France Huser
- L'Express du 24 au 30 décembre 1982, par Otto Hahn
- Art Press, janvier 1983, par Catherine Millet
- Art Vivant, décembre 1984, par François Pluchart
- L'Evénement du Jeudi, février 1985, par B.-H. Lévy
- Le Matin de Paris, mai 1985
- Globe, février 1986, par Franck Maubert
- Art Press, mars 1986, par P. Dagen
- Le Nouveau Chêne, avril 1986, par F. Pluchart

Jacques Martinez writings

- Spirales, octobre 1982 : "Pratique picturale et discours
littéraire"
- Spirales, nov.-déc. 1982 : "La question de l'Abstraction"
- Elle, juillet 1985 : "Humeurs"
- Globe n° 3, déc. 1985 - janv. 1986 : "Objets"
- "Modern for ever", éditions Grasset, 1985

Catalogues

- "Jacques Martinez" par Bernard-Henry Lévy et Catherine
Millet, 1982, Daniel Templon Edition
- "Jacques Martinez" par Claude Fournet, Bernard Henry
Lévy et Catherine Millet, 1984, Galeries d'Art
Contemporain des Musées de Nice, Direction des Musées de
Nice Edition
- "Jacques Martinez" par Philippe Dagen, 1986, Daniel
Templon Edition



ON THE COVER :

UN BRIVIDO ALLA SETTE DELLA SERRA. MIXED MEDIA, 1987

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK, KATY AIDAN, ANNICKA BARBARIGOS, CHARLOTTE AND DANAE CAMILLOS, AGNES COSTA, FIFI, YVONNE AND HELENE ROUX, JULIETTE SALZMANN, ELLA VENET, HERVE AARON, BERNARD AIDAN, THIERRY DE BEAUCE, ANGELOS AND JASON CAMILLOS, JEAN-FRANCOIS COSTA, DAVID EDELMAN, YVES MABIN, PETER DE MARFFY, JEAN-CLAUDE MOYRET, EMILE OSSANA, RIC PARISOT, BENJAMIN WEILL. I HOPE THAT THEY UNDERSTAND THAT I WOULD LIKE TO SAY MORE. IT IS ONLY MY POOR ENGLISH WHICH DOES NOT ALLOW ME TO THANK THEM THE PROPER WAY I WANTED TO. (DON'T YOU THINK SO ANGELOS ?)

PHOTOS : KOUROS GALLERY - MICHEL APPOLLOT
STUDIO AUGEROT - ALAIN TURPAULT

