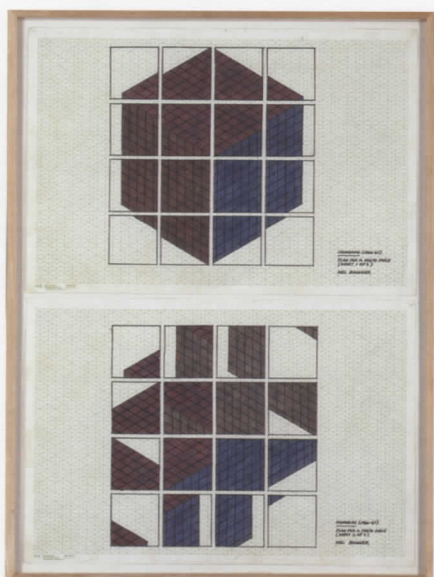


“Building and Breaking the Grid, 1962–2002” at the Whitney Museum of American Art

The ubiquity of the grid, actual or implied, in recent American art assures that its examination in this exhibition (on view through January 8, 2006) will not spark controversy. Its varied use in divergent cre-



Mel Bochner, *Isomorph-Plan for a Photopiece*, pen and colored inks on graph paper (19 x 13 in.), 1966–67. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; gift of Norman Dubrow. Photograph by Sheldon C. Collins

ative practices is exemplified here in the juxtaposition of a small, tidy diagram by Mark Lombardi that charts a sprawling network of international influence peddling, with a ferocious 1991 pastel by Joan Mitchell on an opposing wall. Assembled from the museum's permanent collection by Carter Foster, the Whitney's first curator of drawings, this compact show offers familiar work as well as numerous surprises.

An untitled John McLaughlin oil on paper from 1963 nods to the Constructivist foundations of geometric abstraction, but the bland stack of horizontal red and yellow bars is not up to the job. The sense that breaking the grid is more fun than building one is furthered by Bruce Connor, who leavens this selection with *Inkblot Drawing* (1990); along many vertical folds of the sheet swarm tiny, symmetrical Rorschach-like blots vaguely resembling crustaceans, mandalas, or arcane alphabets of astounding intricacy.

The legacy of Pollock's all-over compositions, structurally indistinguishable from the grid, surfaces in barbed-wire tangles by Brice Marden and Terry Winters, and in a charcoal rendering by Vija Celmins of a

star-studded, infinitely deep night sky. In *Maagal* (1990), Jacob El Hanani packs a 12-inch square with impossibly tiny ink circles, from out of which barely perceptible figures and patterns suggest themselves. In the process-conscious spirit of the time, a 1974 drawing by Blythe Bohnen, *Two Motions with a Graphite Bar*, pairing horizontal and vertical strokes, is a silvery semaphore of the studio.

—Stephen Maine

Raleigh, N.C.

"In Focus: Contemporary Photography from the Allen G. Thomas, Jr. Collection" at the North Carolina Museum of Art

Allen G. Thomas, Jr.'s collection of contemporary photography, acquired over the past fifteen years, consists equally of works by contemporary "masters" such as Rineke Dijkstra, Sally Mann, Andres Serrano, Doug and Mike Starn, and Hiroshi Sugimoto, and those by rising stars including Loretta Lux, Alec Soth, Anthony Goicolea, and Ryan McGinley. This show presented fifty-four pieces from his collection, grouped in three sections titled "Identity," "Place," and the "Natural

