

ANN PURCELL

“PLAYGROUND SERIES” PAINTINGS

"The Playground Series" developed from a longtime desire to do something from Matisse's paper cutouts, which I greatly admire, and have considered one of the last great innovations in art. These - together with an interest in the history of painting, children's art, etc. - were all merging sources. Also, on the practical side, being frugal (or rather needing to be frugal) for years I had been saving canvas selvage. Two years ago, I saw a show of Helen Frankenthaler's early small works on canvas at Andre Emmerich Downtown Gallery. I had always admired her work, especially her use of color; and this work particularly excited me -- her freedom of drawing with the paint in this small scale which can be very liberating. I then began paintings on my small canvas selvage and began piecing them. This became "The Tapestry Series", which evolved in scale and complexity to "The Playgrounds". The fundamental idea that I consider important in "The Playgrounds" is the **process** which is technically and philosophically expanding. I consider "The Playgrounds" **pieced paintings**. I balk at them being termed "collages" as I feel collage has more to do with the material and identity of the object used.

My "Playgrounds" are about exploring new ideas in painting and expanding the possibilities of painting, especially new space. The process of piecing in this manner creates a new illusion of color space. It becomes a tension point of being both the "illusion" and the "reality". The process expands into all sorts of possibilities one might not consciously arrive at and also expands the color-mixing, relationships and juxtapositions. Although the process is very freeing, the "Playgrounds" are extremely analyzed and not at all random or arbitrary. Furthermore, in the "Playgrounds", the aspect of texture and surface is very important. The many different surfaces add another dimension and, at times, several levels of spatial contradictions. The use of shaping and implied form is another aspect of the spatial tensions and ambiguities set up. All of these painting elements are continuously in the process of affirming and denying themselves. For example, in some paintings there is a contradiction between the implied shape and the surface (i.e. a soft stain in a "hard shape"; a tension between the implied form and the manner in which it is painted). Also, in order to achieve various spatial surfaces, varying densities and applications of gesso underpainting are used.

Obviously, the scale of these works presents various presentation possibilities. Personally, I like them informally push-pinned to the wall. This best conveys both their tangibility and illusion. They also can be velcroed to the wall or put on a constructed, shaped frame.

There are still many untrodden paths in this adventure i.e., pushing the shape of the canvas more in relation to the wall structure and also in relation to the environment.

I saw them after this: "Playground Series" was begun, but I must say how excited I was by the "Indian Birds" of Frank Stella. I believe Stella took Matisse's cutouts and extended them sculpturally. My intention is to extend them in a painting direction.

Written 1982