

My initial encounter with the exaggerated gaiety rebounding on Fay Gold's gallery walls was rather disorienting. I felt re-routed by paintings which exhibited a turn of the century sensibility recharged by all-American tap dance colors. I wasn't sure if the artist's intensity or my concentration would falter first.

Sidney Guberman's visual glossary, however, in both his paintings and sculpture, proved eminently manageable. Angular and organic shapes of repeatable hues in varying tones animate a loosely additive block structure. This combination of impregnable and inviting configurations invokes a curious feeling of equilibrium that is restated by the impersonal texture of a matt surface filled with high-key color.

The use of decorative elements keeps the images taut and close to the surface. This kind of ornamentation embellishes not only each individual space but the canvas as a whole; the patterns often reflect the more autonomous forms within. Simultaneously, however, the patterning works in a reductivist manner by further distinguishing and defining the individual entities. Elemental relationships become emphasized, bringing into question the perception of the totality and construction. The marks of the patterns themselves are varied in their application, form and dimensions. Some are loose, calligraphic and unevenly dispersed, while others occur at more regular intervals and in a more methodical fashion. Dots, S-curves, flecks, bars and circles, of varying dimensions, convey a sense of order to many of the colliding or adjacent forms. Occasionally the laying of color upon color within a given area makes for some surprising optical and emotional effects, adding to the integrity of such self-contained units.

Guberman pays attention to the edges of the canvas with the use of borders which may be erratic even within the individual work. They may or may not be continuous and often vary in color, width, pattern, and length. Each works as a definite area, being ordered even as it is ordering. In the absence of a border, aquatic and geometric shapes enter and exit as they will.

*Gail's Estate* is the most lucid and gratifying of the large-scale works on display. Its motif, informed structure, and exquisite coloring is a lively and successful homage to Matisse whose work this painting so readily evokes. The strong and concise vertical arrangement which anchors the work architectonically allows for a lyrical application of the paint. Its perpendicular members, which vary in size and weight, are subtly and delicately edged in the colors of neighboring shapes. Their formal dominance is interrupted in the bottom half of the painting by superimposed forms—a large triangle on the left and three striped bulbous forms on the right—which are equally assertive. The top half of the painting, the left half of which hovers coolly and lightly, is balanced by darker and warmer adjacent colors which become a promising but not quite penetrable aperture. The work extends an invitation, albeit an ambivalent one.

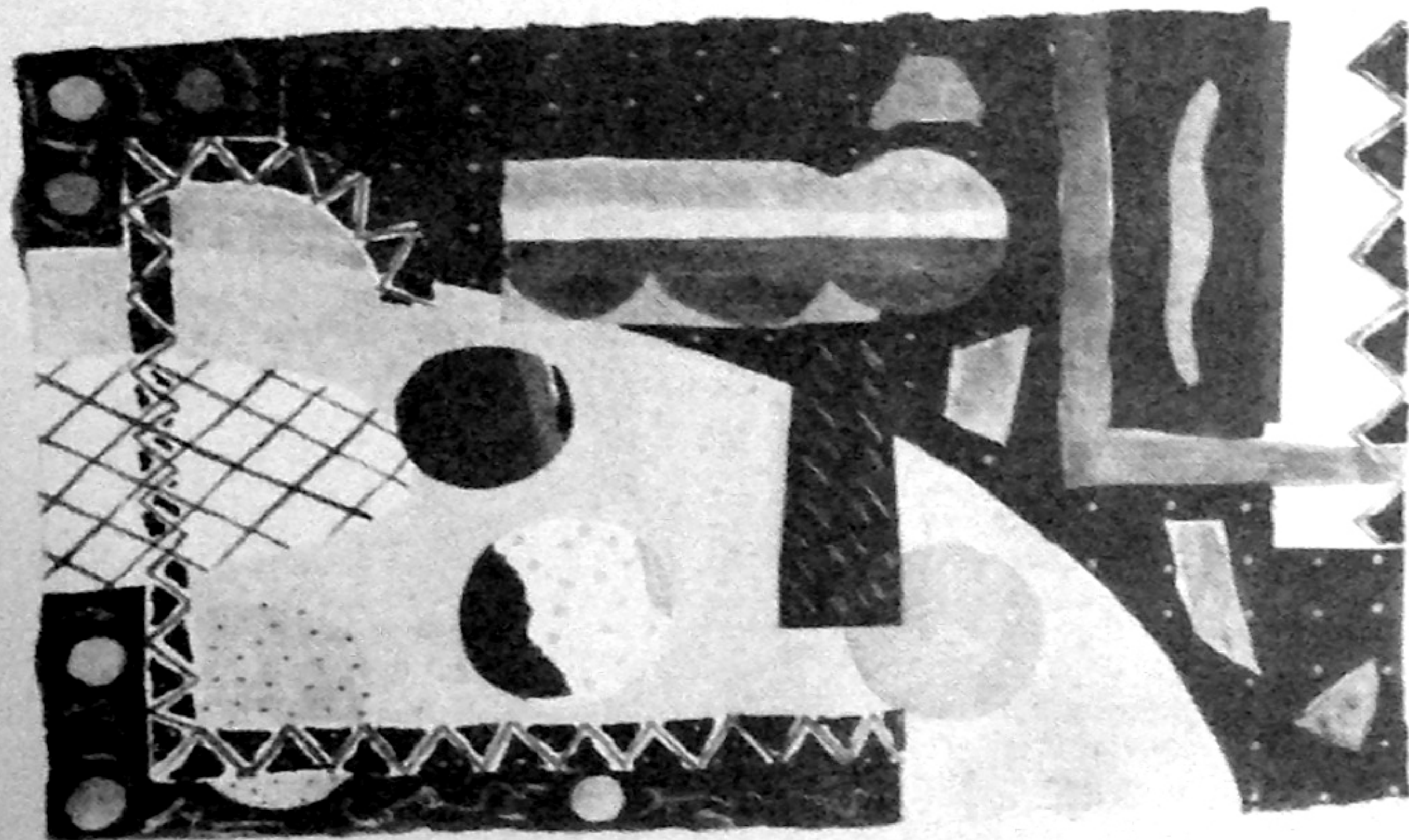
A smaller painting, *Le Lit D'Edouard*, is composed with a similar sense of structure. Its narrative nature invests it with a more direct and keen sense of interplay between the tangible and the intangible. True to the nature of that exchange, it expresses an analagous ambiguity in its perspective of the tilted conjoining of the walls and floor. A less tentative sense of space and matter is introduced by an old fashioned poster bed which projects in a truncated manner into the foreground, receding diagonally into a startling white space behind. This is balanced by an adjacent blue-green area which further establishes the picture/window motif, implying a world beyond the painting. To the left side of the bed, the foreground is filled with several decorated serpentine shapes. Their sinuosity suggests a human or natural presence which activates and relieves an otherwise empty room. As the palette is limited to a wide range of reds, it reflects the possible moods associated with such an intimate space, reminding one of Van Gogh's painting of his room at Arles.

Of the mixed media works, *Maxwell's Galaxy* is a blithe glimpse into the extraterrestrial. Since collage is primarily an expression of the desire for a mixture of realities, its use here is well warranted. The texturing which the various media gives to the work parallels the artistic ordering with a cosmological one. The visual effect of suspension is achieved by a color scheme which isolates a blimp and other globular bodies, errant signs adrift in a predominately blue universe. Their fluid movement, however, is hindered toward the right edge of the canvas by the introduction of vertical geometric shapes. The last impediment, a large white decorated rectangle, is the more assertive one, ultimately obstructing this travelling procession. As the painting of the galaxy is abruptly terminated, another painting, a new galaxy, begins.

The stars, gases, and dust of Guberman's paintings are given a three-dimensional expression in the five small sculptures on display (four foam-core maquettes, one painted steel). The smallest of the pieces is the painted steel, *Boanerges*, which, for its scale and size, requires much turning, peering, and maneuvering on the viewer's part. Circular, rectangular, and elliptical shapes of various sizes meet each other side-on and head-on. Their tangential association creates open spaces, shadowy corners, and minute recesses which enlarge the visual proportion of the work. The extension of these elements in all directions into space, is multiplied by the individual markings on each facet.

The remaining four maquettes can be generally characterized by winging arcs, whole and segmented, buttressed by rectangular and angular pieces. Each is vigorously decorated differently than the next, their circus colors being true to their structurally acrobatic exhibitionism. Guberman entitles them serially with lines from Wallace Stevens' "Disillusionment At Ten O'Clock:" "none are green/or purple with green rings/or green with yellow rings/or yellow with blue rings." All are honorably strange and give visual form to the poem which asserts an illusionary corrective to a world without imagination.

Sidney Guberman, *Maxwell's Galaxy*, watercolor, acrylic, collage and crayon on hand-formed paper, 22" x 32", 1982 (photo: courtesy of the Fay Gold Gallery).



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