

Spring 5-1973

Visual Concepts, Through Painting, of Space/Earth Forms in Transition

Jeanet Steckler Dreskin

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THESIS

VISUAL CONCEPTS, THROUGH
PAINTING, OF SPACE/EARTH FORMS
IN TRANSITION

Jeanet Stecker Dreskin

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
VISUAL CONCEPTS, THROUGH PAINTING, OF

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The author wishes to express her appreciation to Professor Robert
Nuttall, Chairman of the Advisory Committee, for his guidance and direction
in the graduate program. Thanks is also expressed to members of the Advisory
Committee: Associate Professor John Acorn, Robert England, and Ireland
Regnier. With the cooperation, understanding and encouragement of my
husband, Dr. Arthur Dreskin, and daughters, Jan and Lisa, the pursuit of

Approved Robert H. Nuttall 4/12/1973
in charge of Major Date

Approved Thomas S. Marshall 4/12/73
Head of Major Department Date

Approved Arnold E. Schwartz 4/13/73
Dean of the Graduate School Date

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of Clemson University
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in the Department
of History and Visual Studies

May 1973

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VISUAL CONCEPTS, THROUGH PAINTING, OF
SPACE/EARTH FORMS IN TRANSITION

by

Jeanette Stecker Drexler

4/10/73
Date

4/10/73
Date

4/10/73
Date

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Twenty-four works of art were exhibited at The Ardagh E. Lee Gallery, College of Architecture, Clemson University, from April 12, 1972, through May 11, 1972, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts. This exhibition represented work produced during thesis study.

The paintings presented reflect an interlocking of conceptual ideas and perceptual insight into a personal visual art form. The imagery created expresses visual elements of space/earth forms in transition.

In order to communicate such visual concepts, polymer and water color were selected as media. These water soluble paints have the versatility and inherent properties that meet the technical demands for expressing the painter's relationship to and involvement with her environment. The work produced exemplifies many of the characteristics of color field painting.

CHAPTER I

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In order to communicate such visual concepts, polymer and water color were selected as media. These water soluble paints have the versatility and inherent properties that meet the technical demands for expressing the painter's relationship to and involvement with her environment. The work produced exemplifies many of the characteristics of color field painting.

Other Earthform paintings such as Wide Terrain I, Soft Terrain, Terrain Variants, Wide Terrain II, Autumn Terrain, Winter Terrain, and Coastal Terrain (Figures 1-3 and 2A-G) are each a personal expression of a sensitive relationship to his environment. Whether in cool blues and greens or warm reds, yellows and oranges, each of the fluid paintings depicts a love for

CHAPTER II

SPACE/EARTH FORMS IN TRANSITION

A personal visual image of space/earth forms has been conceived and painted. With liquid flowing layers of pigment, an attempt has been made to express feelings and attitudes toward nature and environment in terms of an art form.

Through the development of rhythm and flow, with paint used as a medium, imagery has been created that reflects the beauty and richness of nature. The completed paintings do not represent one particular place or one element in time, but are a synthesis of latent images and lyrical expressions.

In the painting, Goldform II, (Figures 1 and 1-A), overlay transparencies of polymer were used to build up a concept of land forms. The almost abstract visual statement in this work involves a repetition of oval shapes and a rhythm and fluid interplay of closely related colors. An almost flat picture plane is maintained. This painting has many of the characteristics referred to as color field painting.

Other Earthform paintings such as: Wide Terrain I, Soft Terrain, Terrain Variant, Wide Terrain II, Autumn Terrain, Winter Terrain, and Coastal Terrain, (Figures 2-8 and 2A-8A) are each a personal expression of man's positive relationship to his environment. Whether in cool blues and greens or warm reds, yellows and oranges, each of the fluid paintings depicts a love for



Figure 1. Goldform II (polymer - 34" x 42")





Figure 2. Wide Terrain I (polymer - 40" x 48")

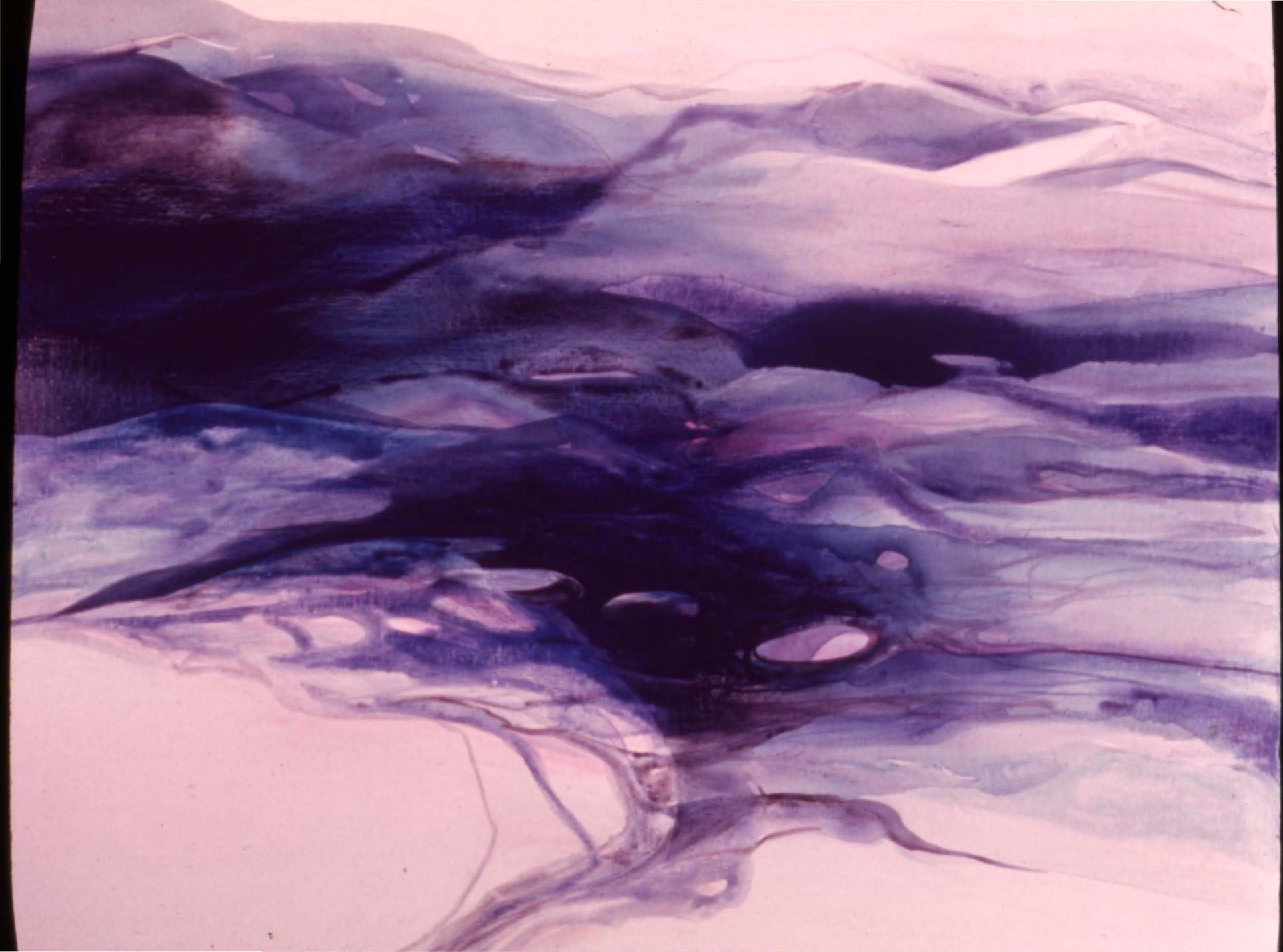
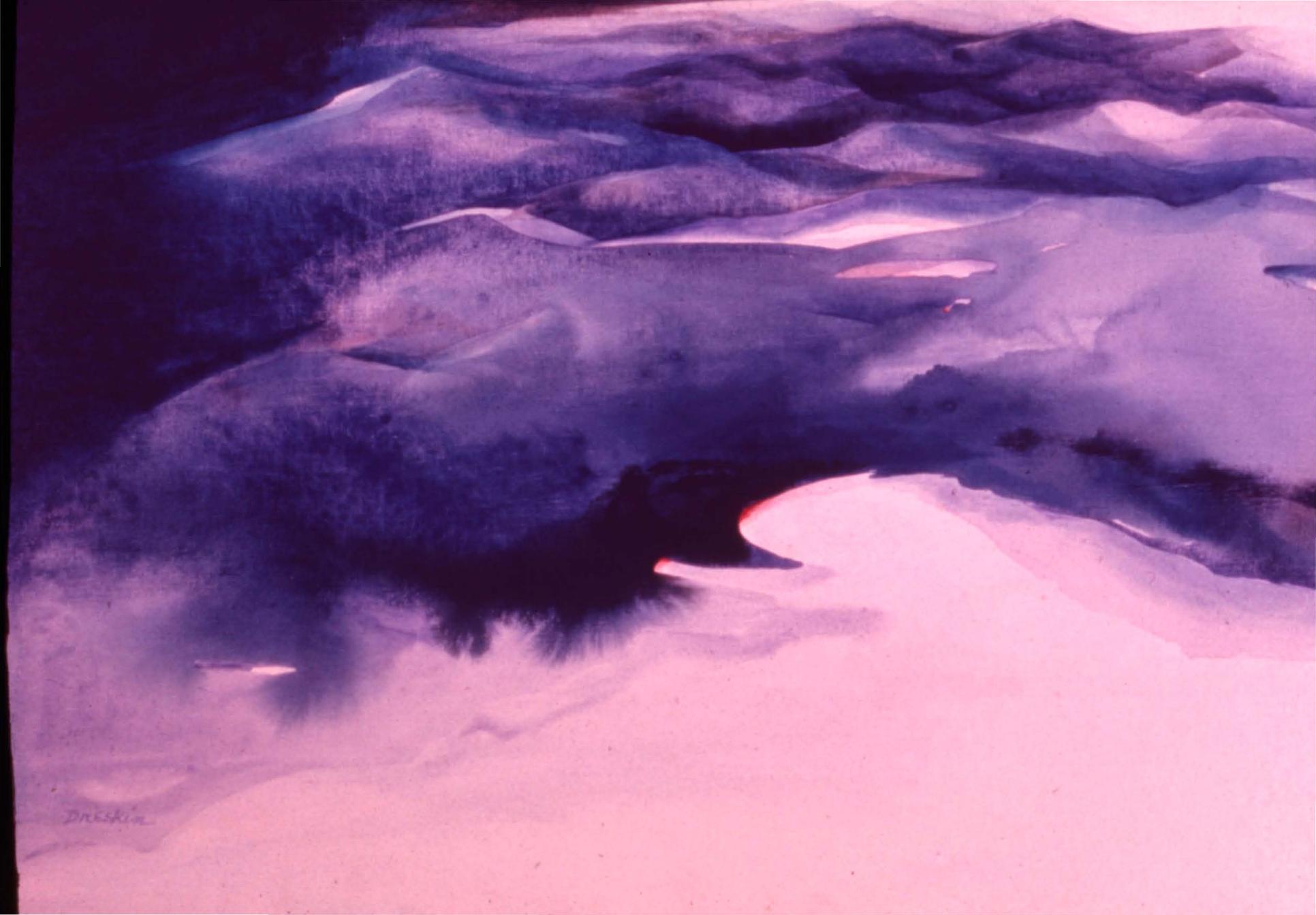




Figure 3. Soft Terrain (polymer - 22" x 30")



Dreskin



Figure 4. Terrain Variant (polymer - 34" x 40")





Figure 5. Wide Terrain II (polymer - 42" x 48")





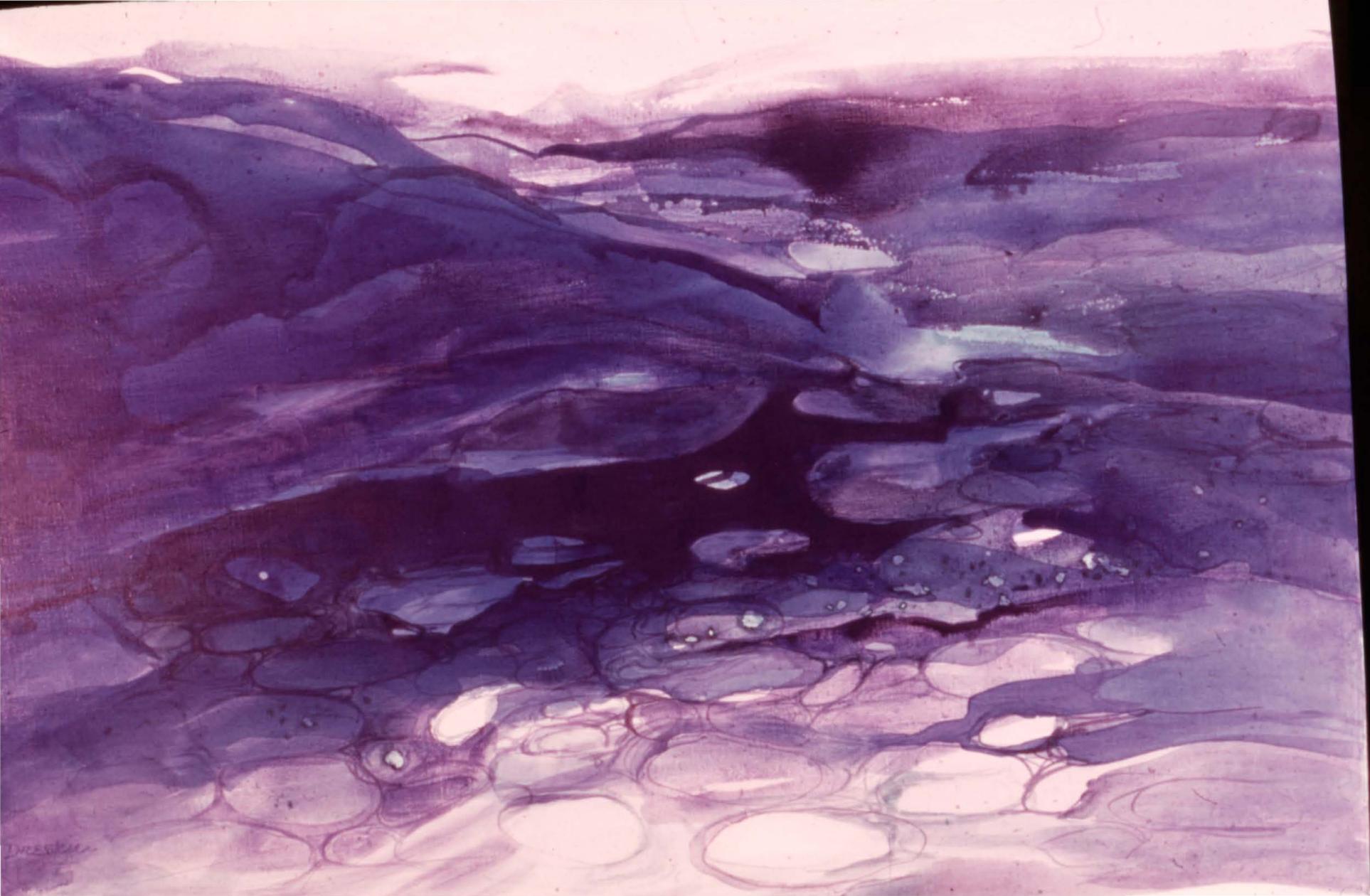
Figure 6. Autumn Terrain (polymer - 14" x 18")





Figure 7. Winter Terrain (polymer - 14" x 18")





land and water. In Soft Terrain, (Figures 3 and 3-A) the transition from an area that has characteristics of land forms to an area of water imagery is particularly evident.

In each of the paintings, the fluid movement of paint, which when dry still seems liquid, continues laterally beyond the boundaries of the canvas. This deliberate extension of space beyond the picture's edge strengthens the concept of continuation, growth and evolving forms in nature.

While in the process of working on the aforementioned series, the painter was disturbed and actually challenged by some of the destructive forces of man in our society, and the series of Sere paintings was developed (Figures 9-15 and 9A-15A). These paintings visually express disdain for man's disruption of nature and its processes. The burn forms, created by means of water color and fire, were motivated by an awareness of the problems associated with overpopulation in a society that is devastating its natural resources. Constant emphasis on aspects of ecology by the news media, as well as a long standing interest in genetics, was an influence that led to a personal concept of the Sere series.

In contrast to paintings of the Earthform series, where land masses are created and built up, the Sere series portray an inner organic destruction. The single burn and micro floating forms represent the space of destruction and explosion in a surrealist manner. There is a suggestion of reality achieved by unreal means. A continuation of flow is developed as the imagery seems to grow in from below the circular mat enclosure.



Figure 9. Sere A-1 (watercolor-fire - 11 1/2" x 15")

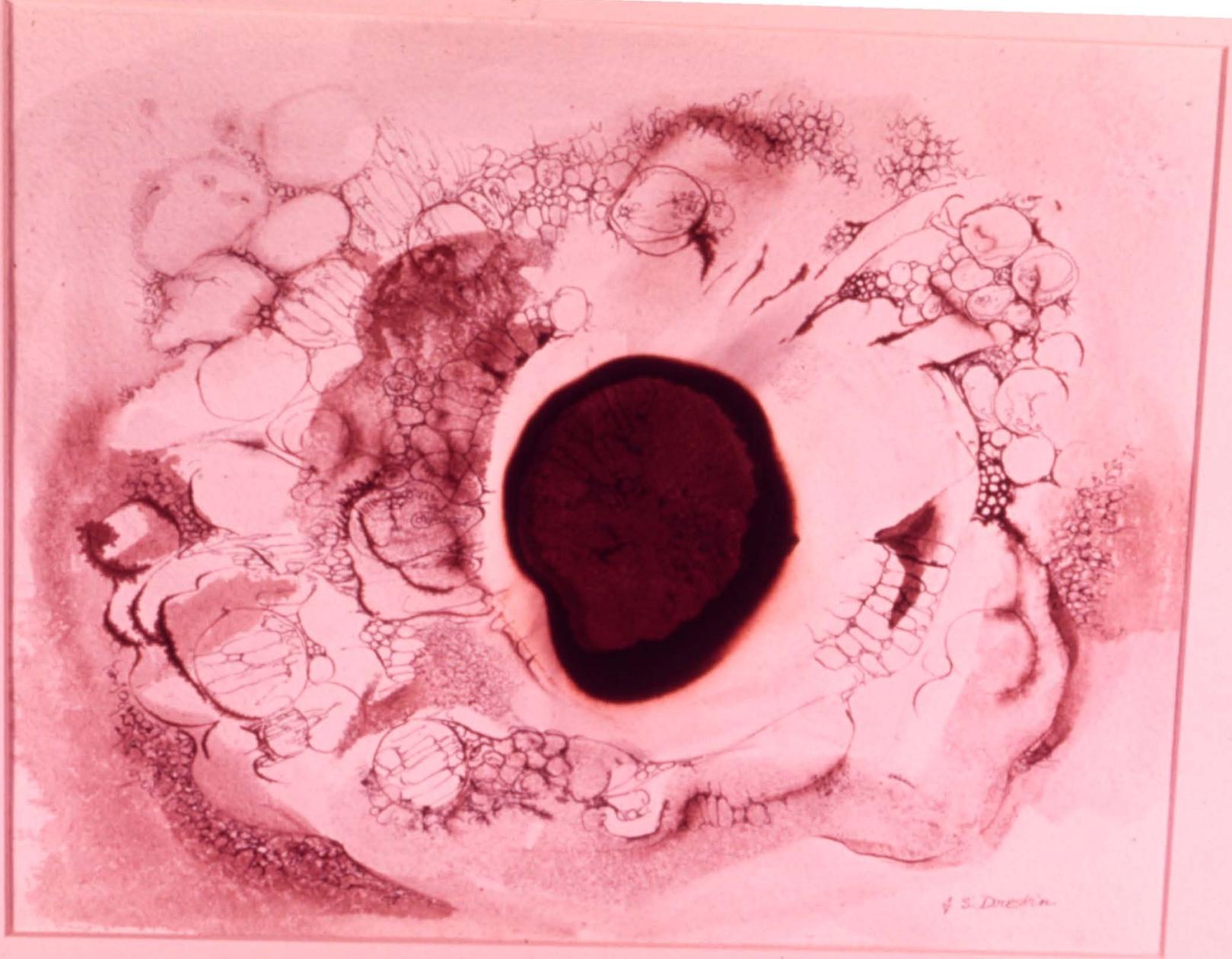
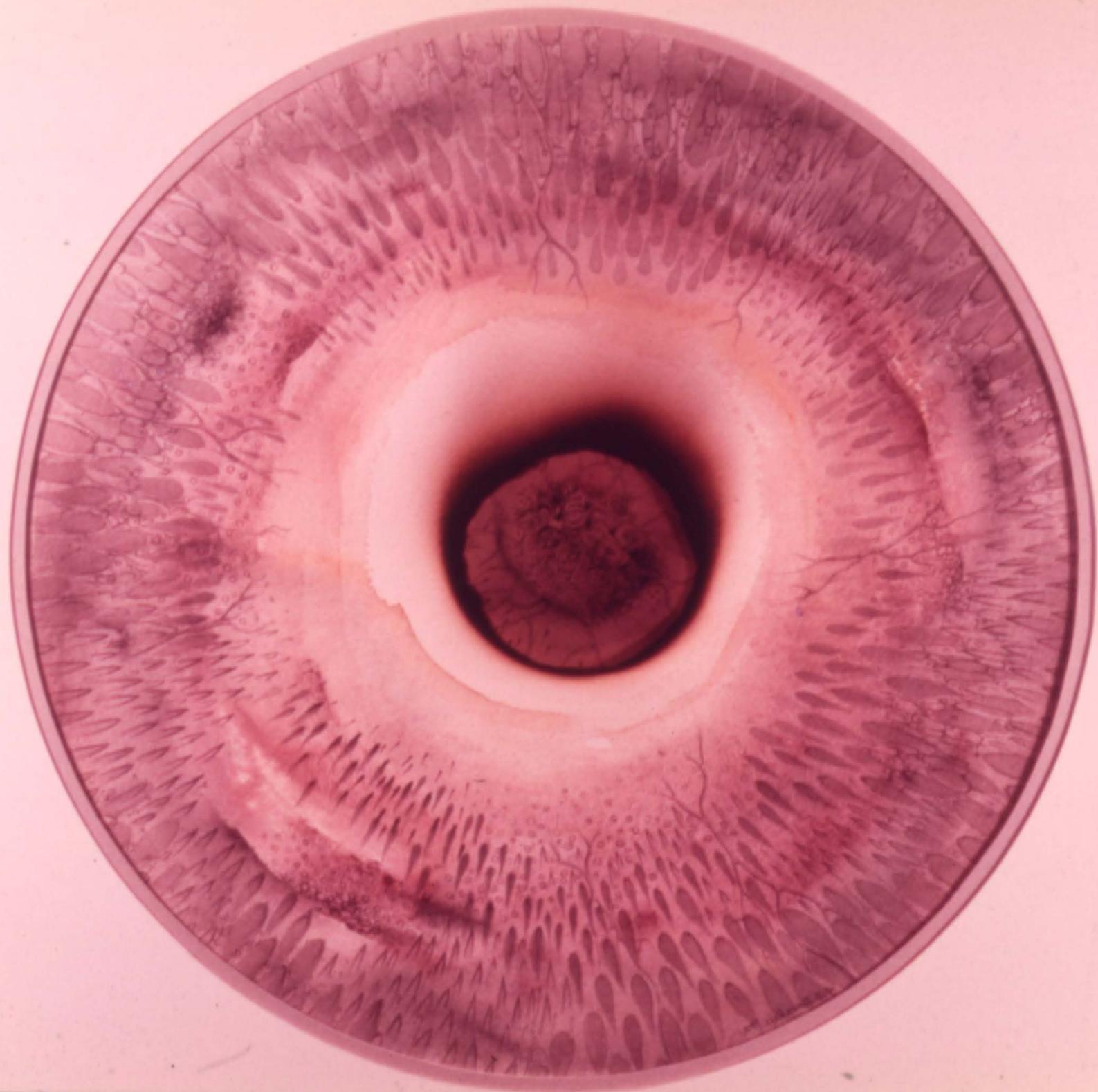




Figure 10. Sere A-II (watercolor-fire - 20 1/2" diameter)



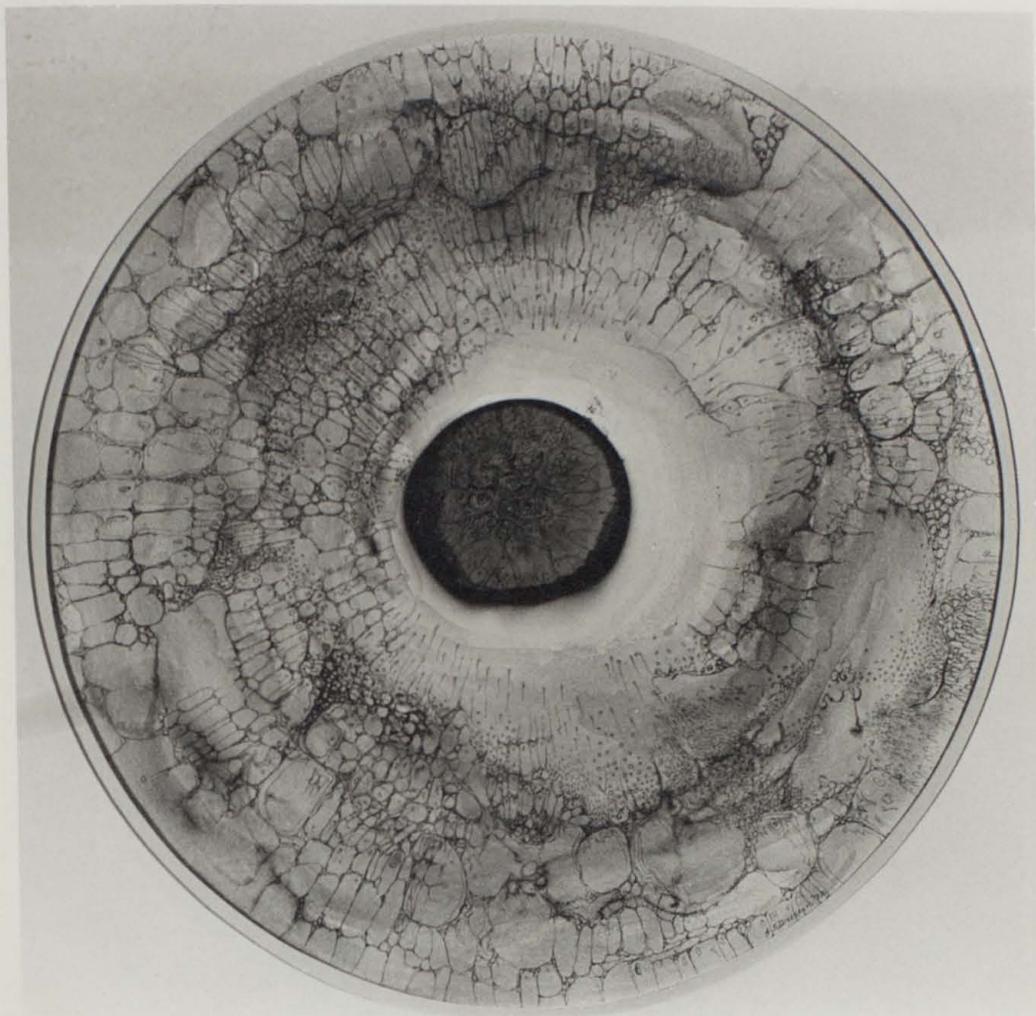
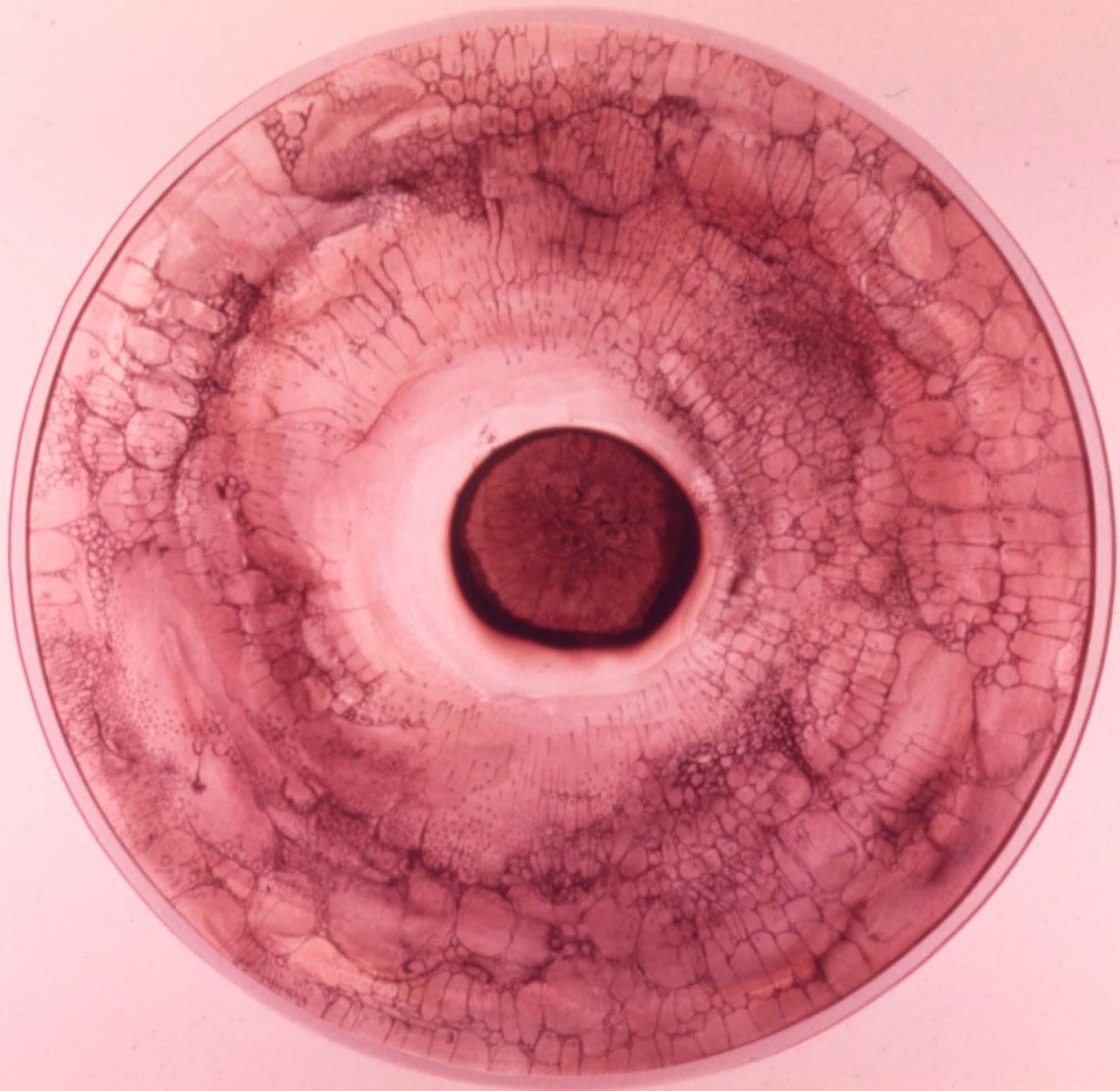


Figure 11. Sere A-III (watercolor-fire - 20 1/2" diameter)



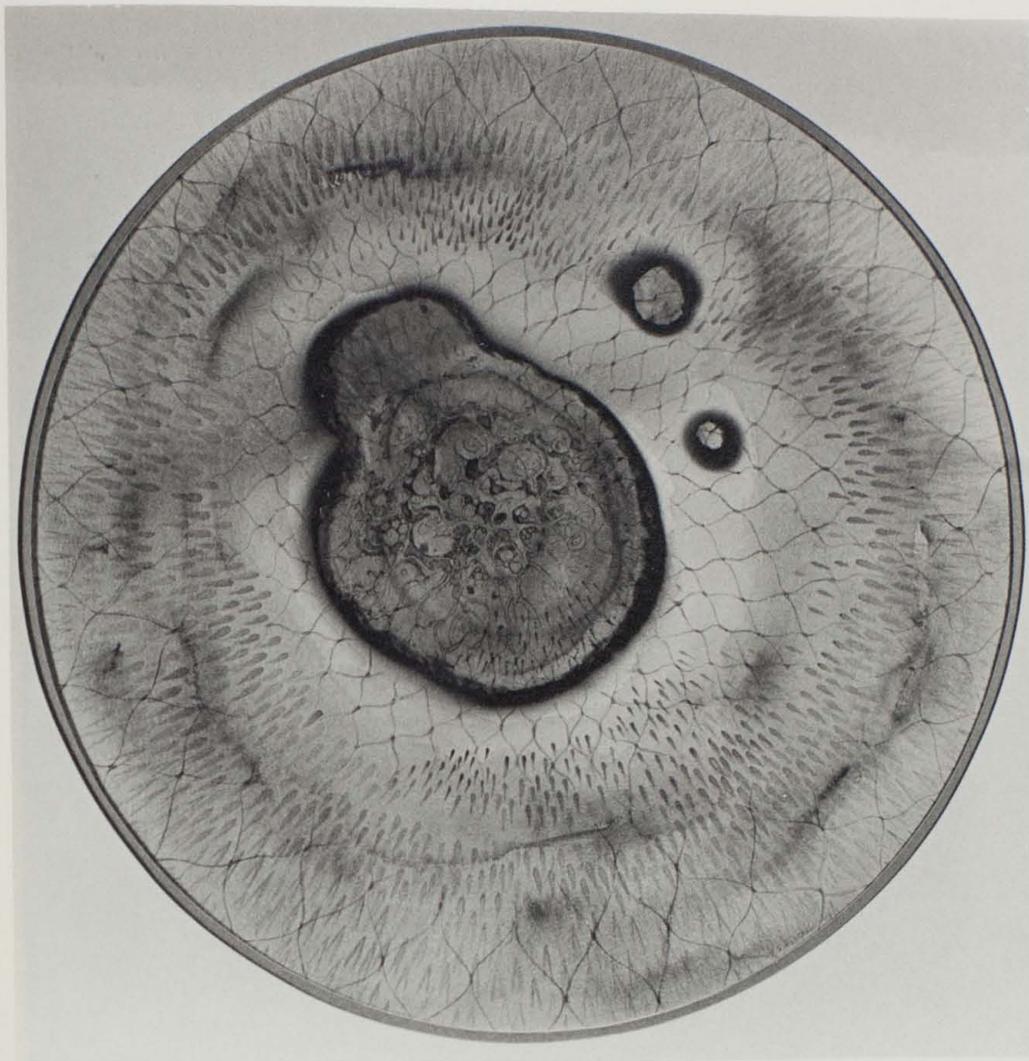


Figure 12. Sere A-IV (watercolor-fire - 20 1/2" diameter)



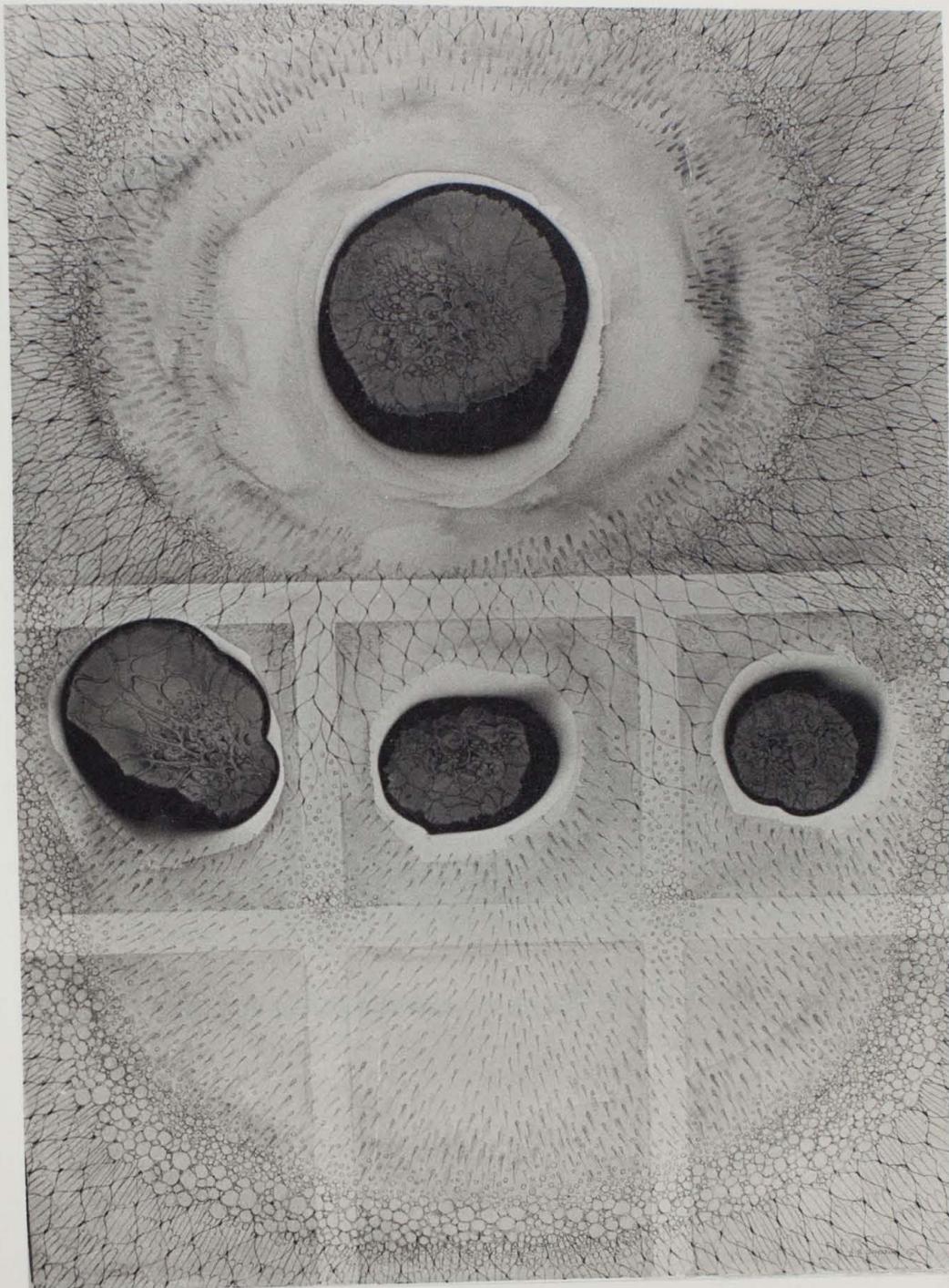


Figure 13. Sere Vertical (watercolor-ink-fire - 22" x 30")

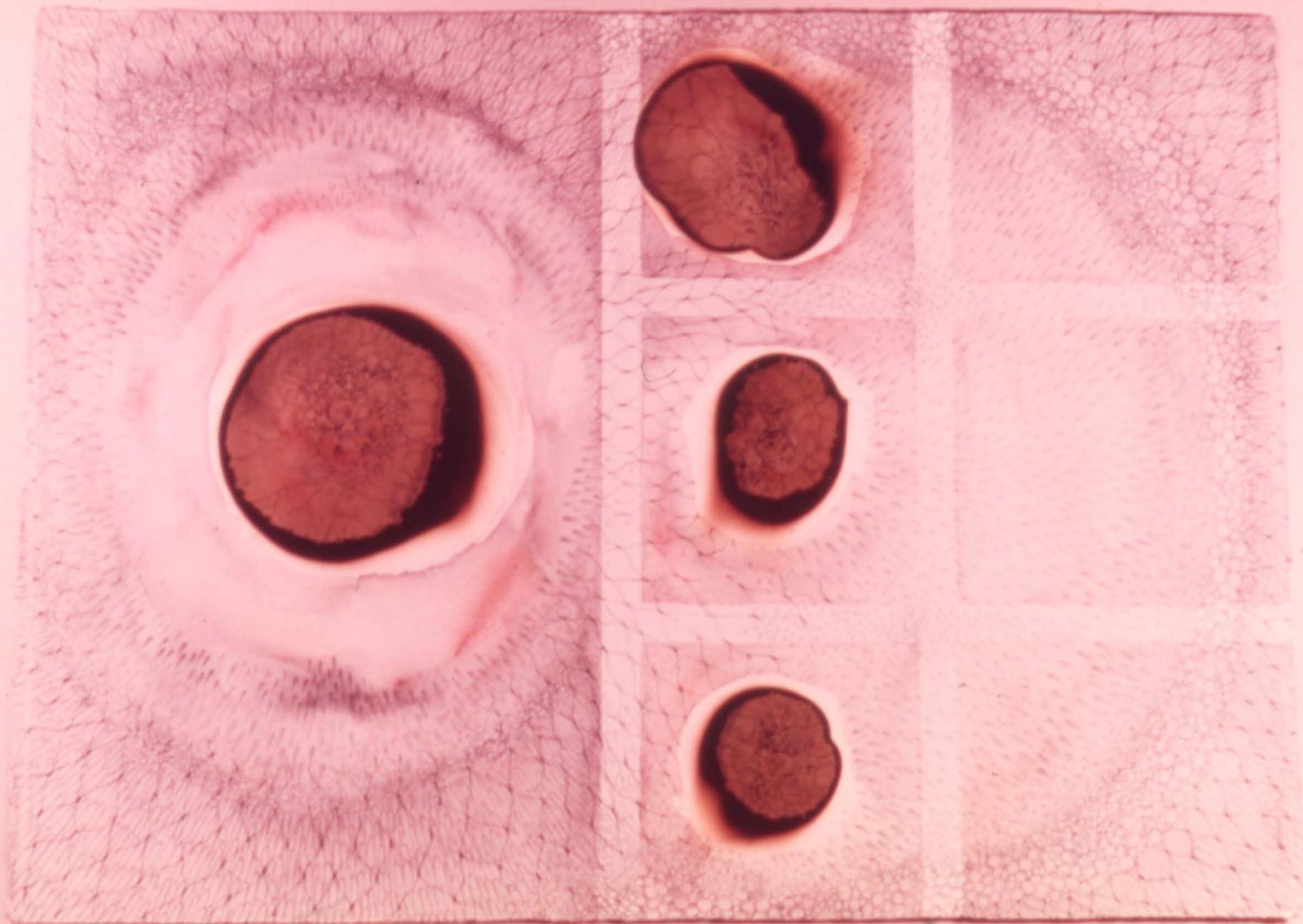




Figure 14. Sere A-V (watercolor-ink-fire 20 1/2" diameter)

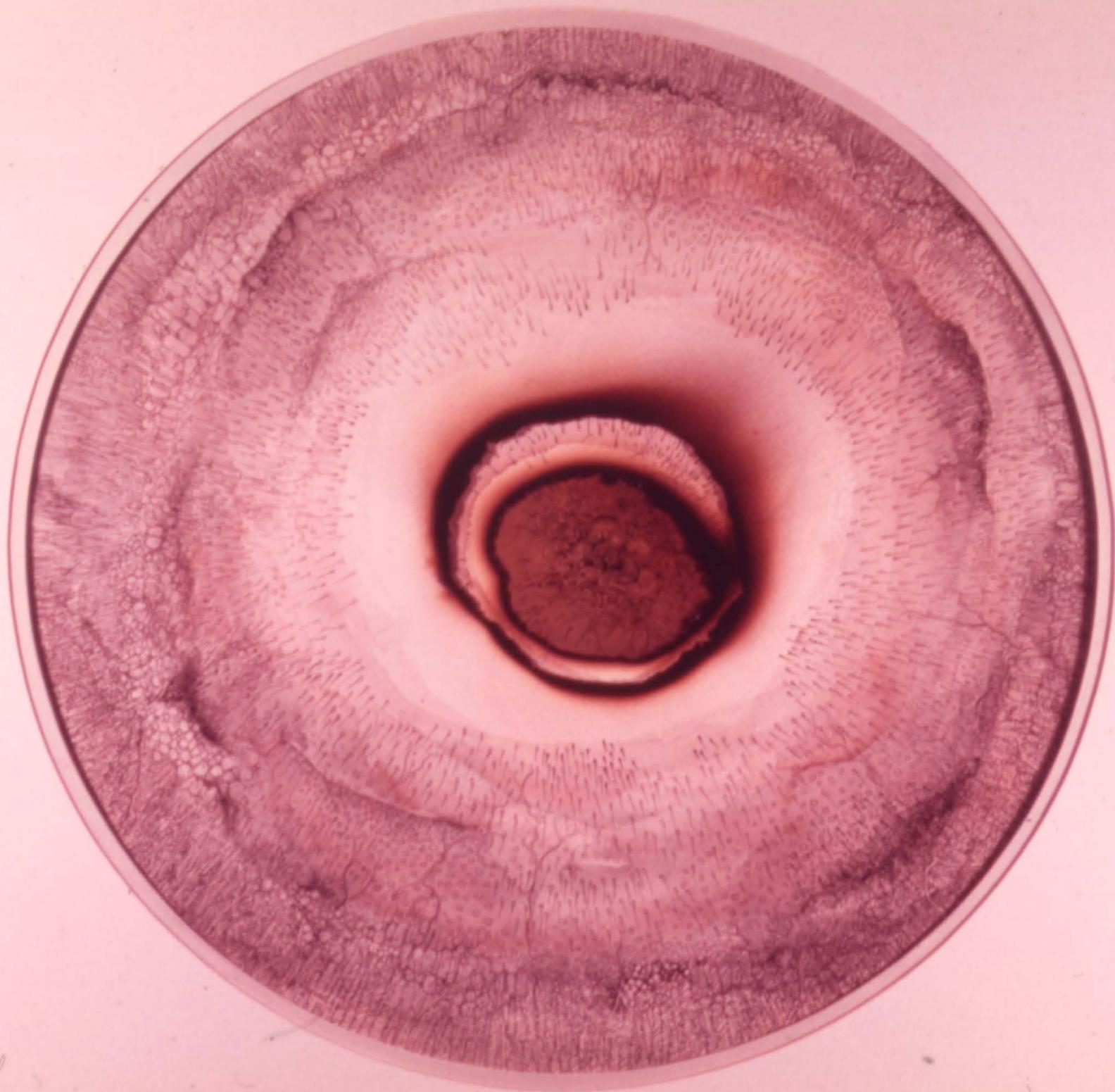
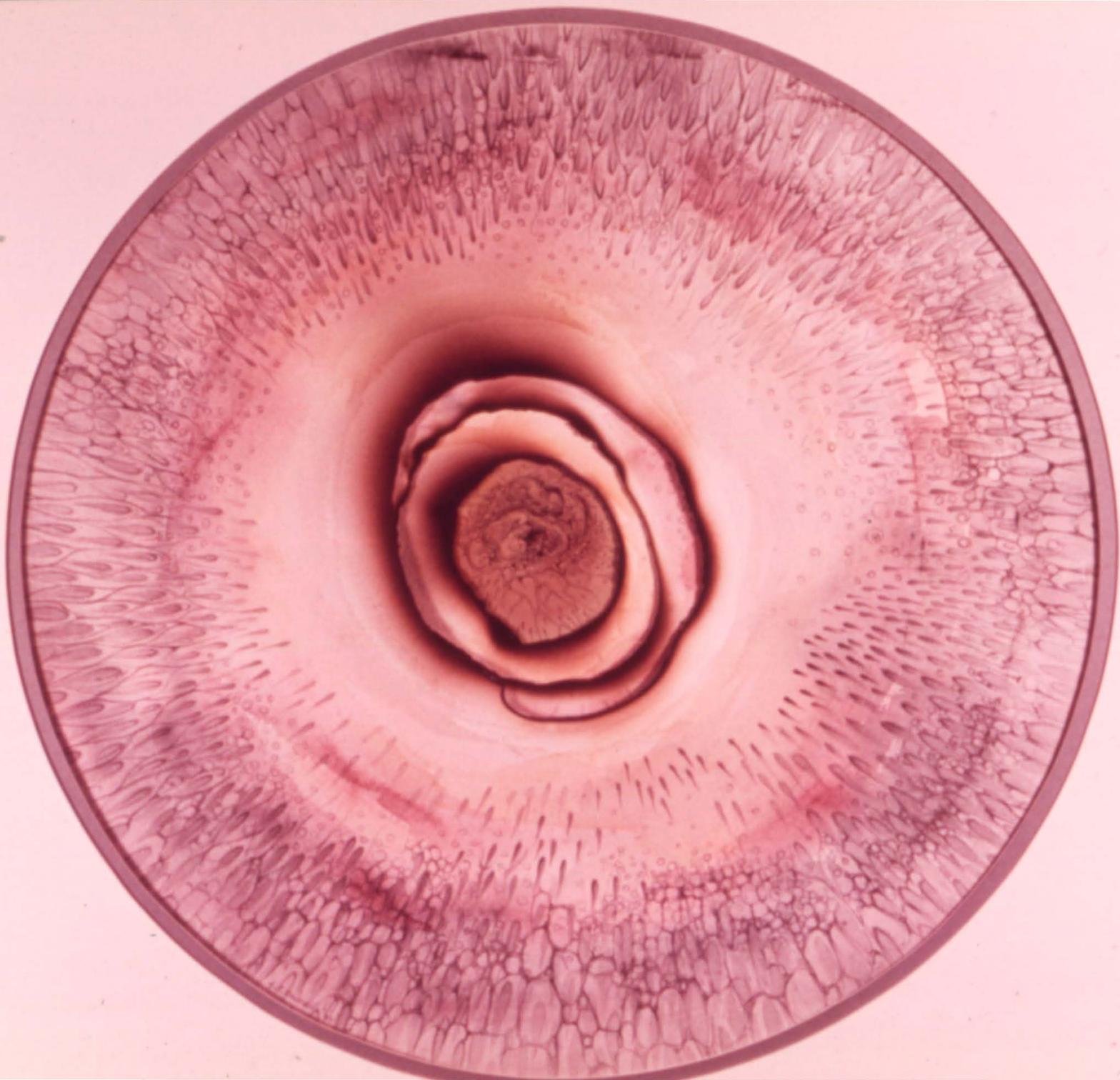




Figure 15. Sere A-VI (watercolor-fire - 21 3/4" diameter)



In Sere A-II (Figures 10 and 10A), with a single burn, and in Sere A-VI (Figures 15 and 15A), with multiple burns, the fire creates a natural illusion of translucency. The blackness of the burn has a three-dimensional luminosity that is analogous to the translucency of water color. The painting of the surrounding area created in the transparent medium of water color restates the translucent quality. The final illusion is the imagery itself created by the overlay depth and the floating forms within.

To further develop visual concepts of organic form, several printing media were explored. Many prints involving oval, floating and transparent shapes were produced. Works seen in Figures 16-20 and 16A-20A were selected for this exhibition. In Innerform II, (Figures 19 and 19A), a litho-serigraph, the seeming destruction of organic life is related to the elements expressed in the Sere series. In contrast, the imagery visualized in Limplicity, (Figures 20 and 20A), a serigraph, is akin to the peaceful, joyful element of the Earthform series.

The ever present oval shape is used as a void in the Earthform paintings, as a negative space in the Sere series, and is developed as a positive shape in the Terrestrial and Celestial series. The oval shape, a variant of the circle of the earth, sun or moon, is a never ending form in the continuation of life. Nature forms, even in destruction, are seen as convex or concave shapes, never as straight expanses. This concept recurs throughout the work presented.

In Celestial Float I (Figures 21 and 21A) and in Subterranean Float I (Figures 23 and 23A), as well as in the other paintings of this series (Figures



Figure 16. Lucky Yellow (serigraph - 11" x 11")



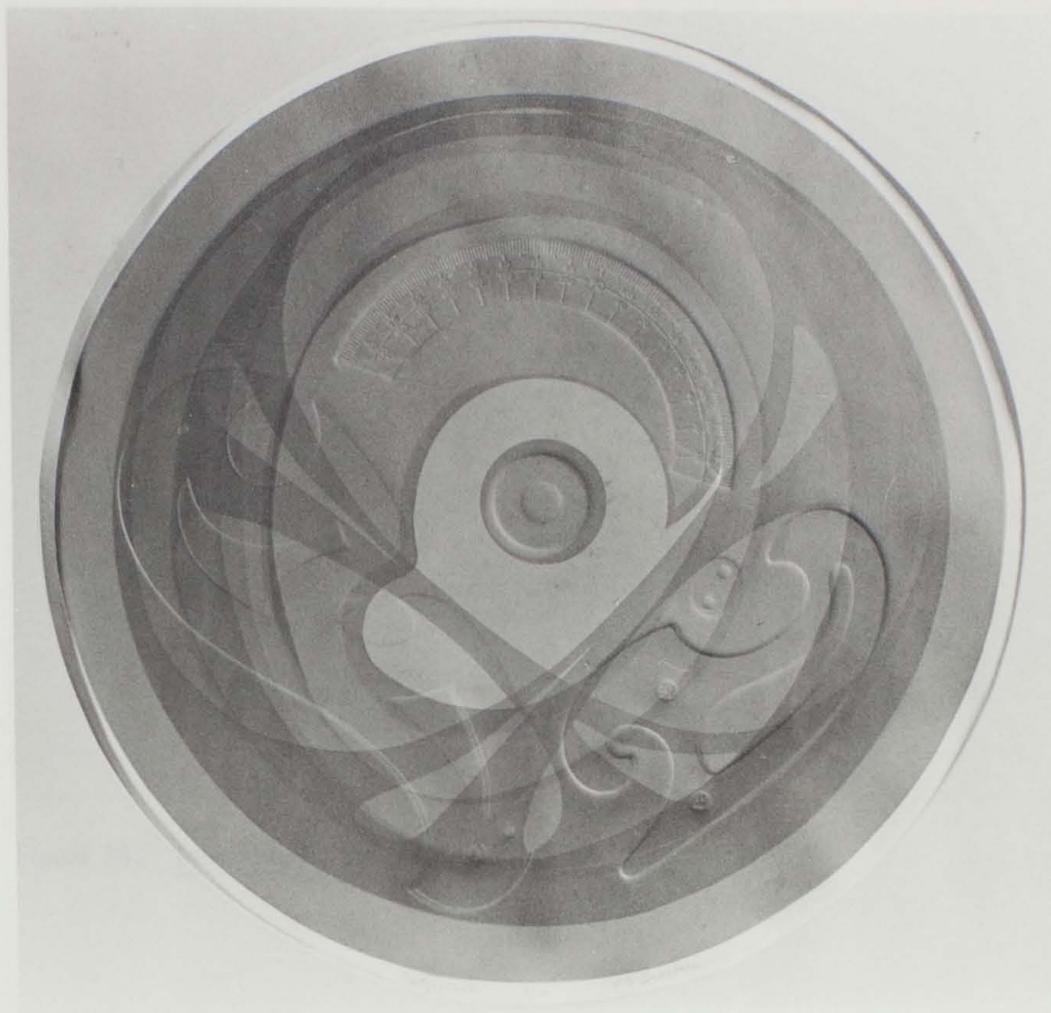


Figure 17. Outgrowth (embossed serigraph - 13 1/2" diameter)





Figure 18. Innerform I (lithograph - 7 1/2" x 10")

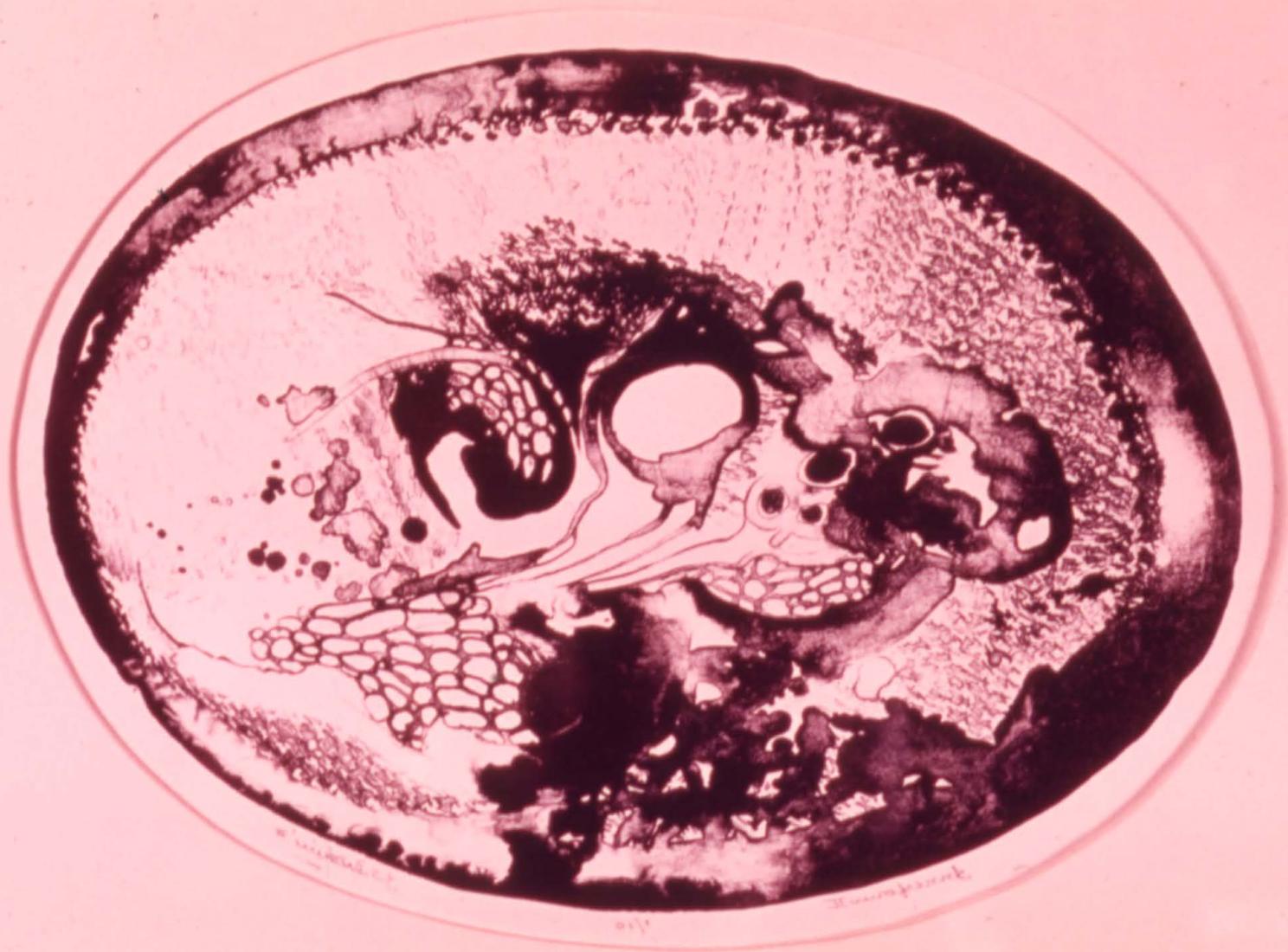
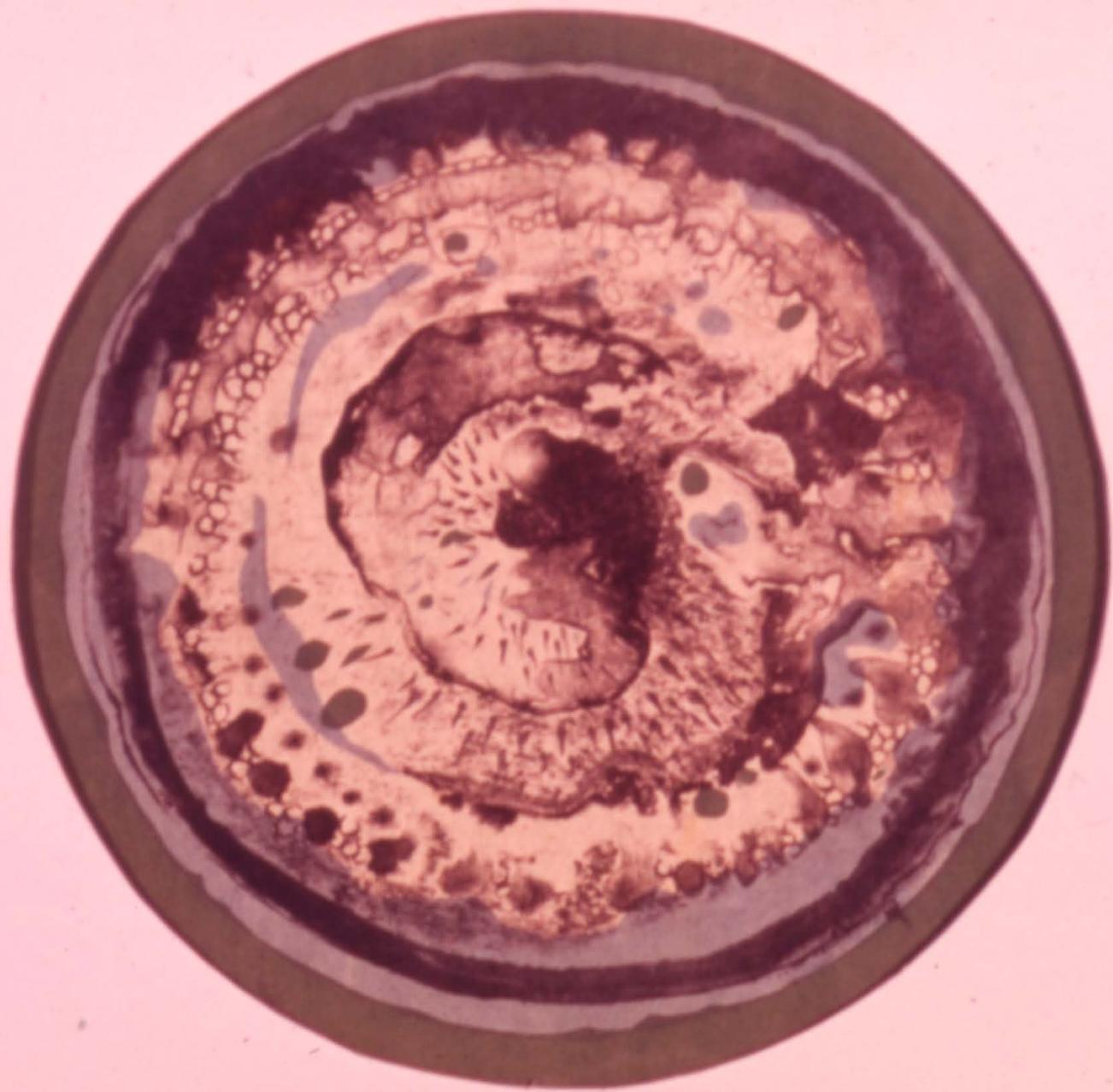




Figure 19. Innerform II (lithoserigraph - 8 1/2" diameter)



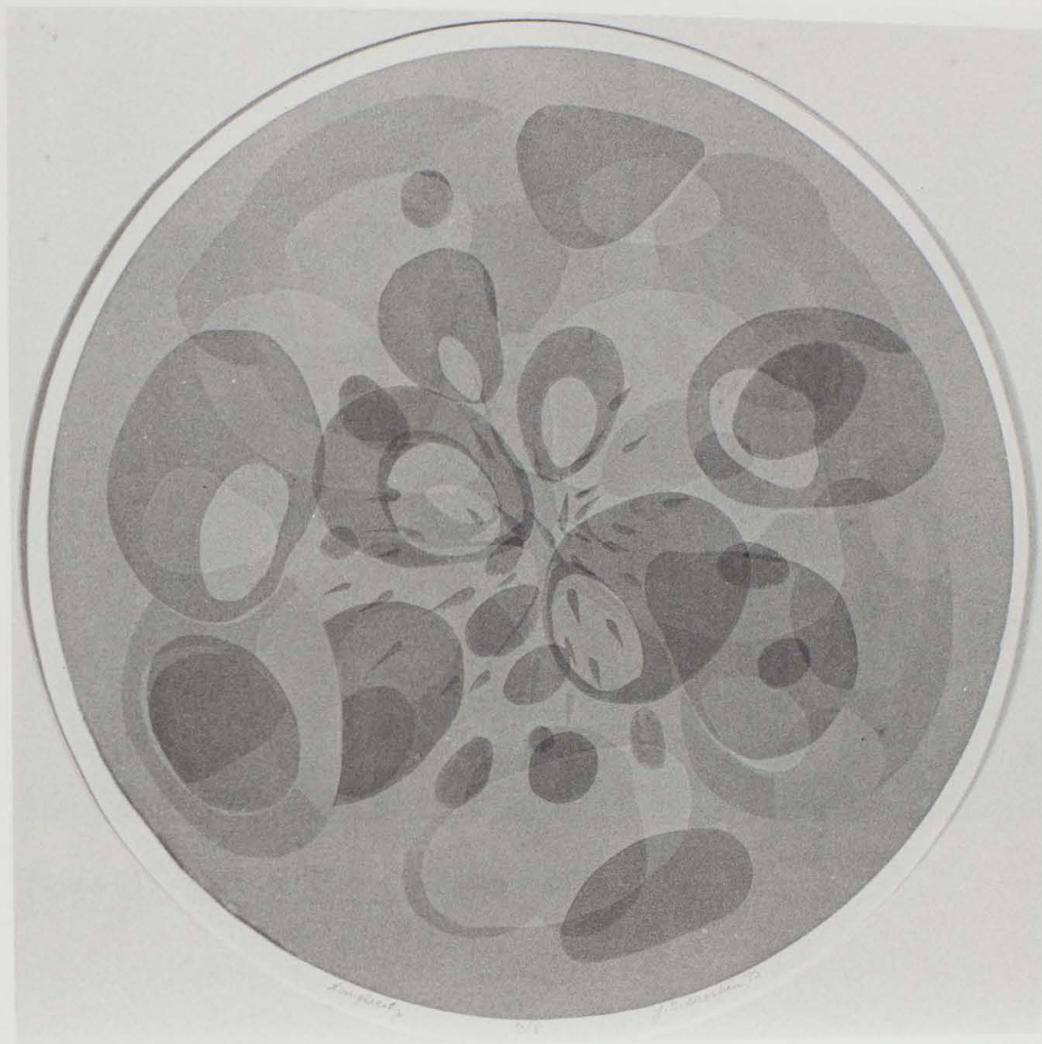


Figure 20. Limplicity (serigraph - 13" diameter)

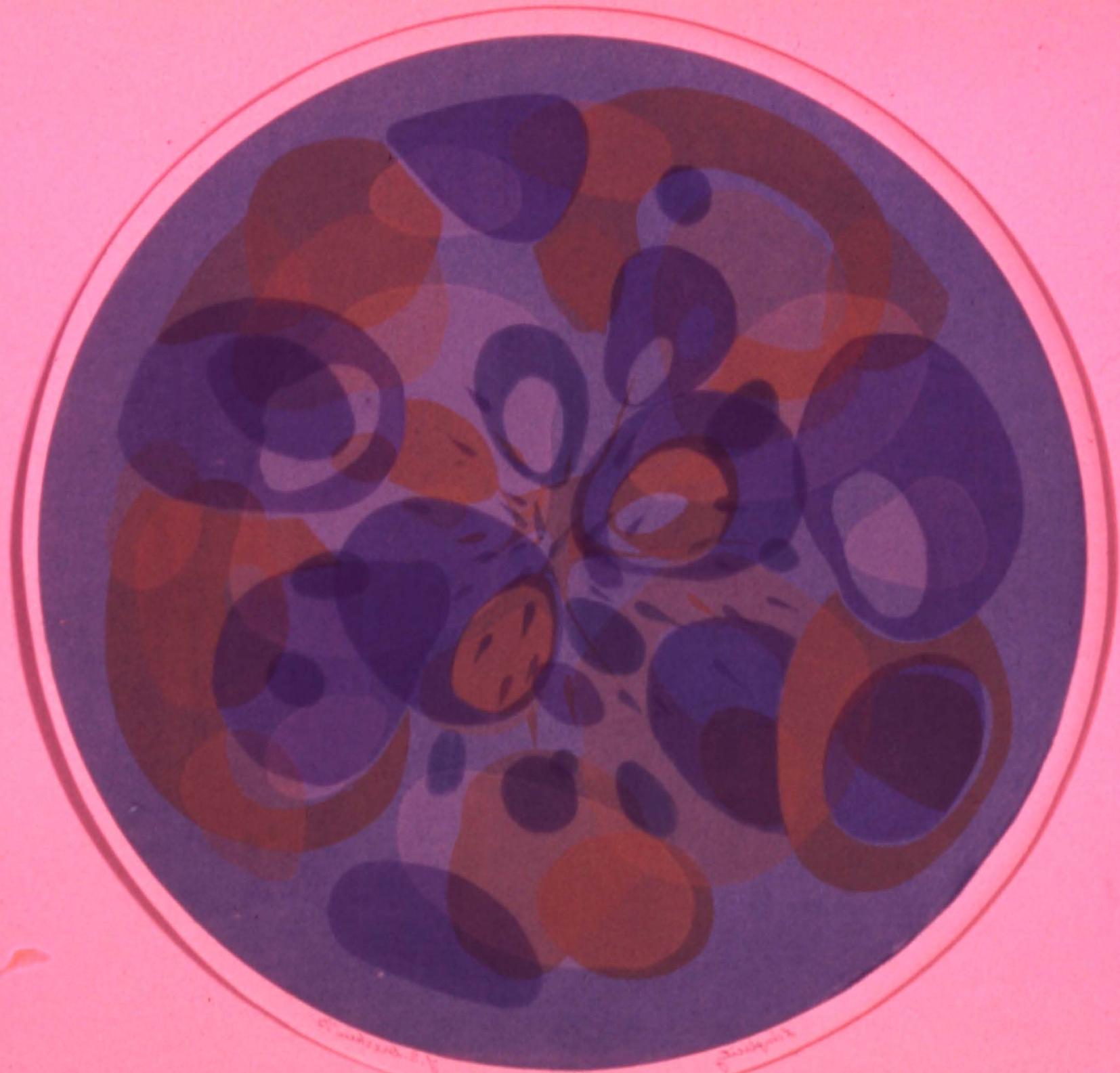




Figure 21. Celestial Float I (polymer - 48" x 60")





Figure 22. Celestial Float II (polymer - 36" x 48")





Figure 23. Subterranean Float I (polymer - 36" x 42")

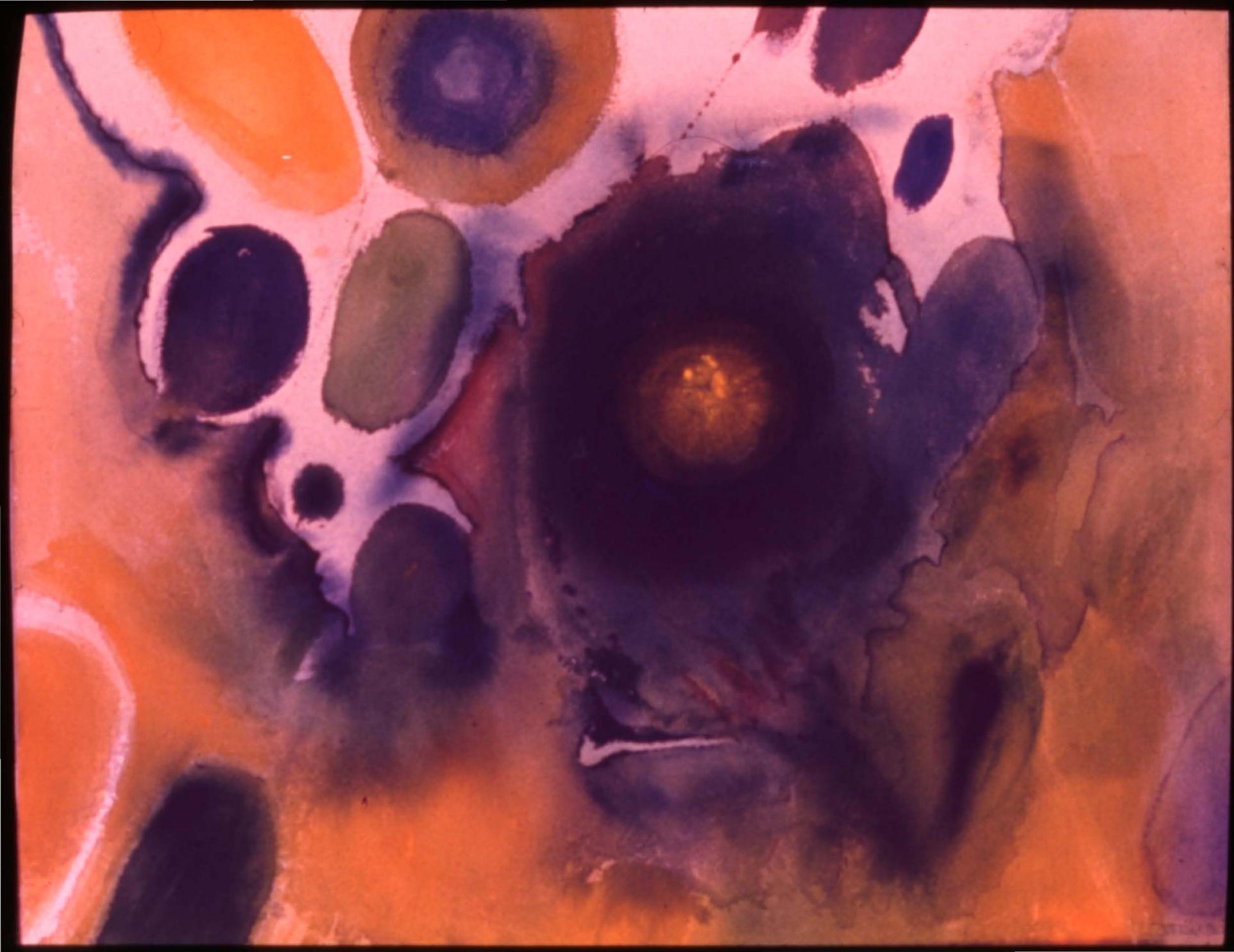


22 and 22A and 24 and 24A), there is a continued involvement with an expression of forms of subtly modulated colors which join, overlap and resist each other. These oval positive shapes are an outgrowth of involvement with the negative oval forms of the Earthform and Sere series. The visual statement that is expressed in the Celestial and Subterranean series reflects a reinforced appreciation and love of beauty created in the translucent and flowing quality of natural forms.

Figure 24. Subterranean Part II (polymers - 22" x 28")



Figure 24. Subterranean Float II (polymer - 22" x 28")



CHAPTER III
MEDIA

Polymer paint and water color were the major media used in painting. In each work the aesthetic concept is integrally related to and developed within the possibilities of the media involved.

For the polymer paintings, linen canvas has been stretched and sized with two or more applications of gesso in order to build a white luminous ground which produces a gleam or radiance from beneath the paint. Medieval artists painted layers of white lead over a wood panel that had been sized with rabbit skin glue. This gave their egg tempera medium a luminous quality. In using the Twentieth Century plastic medium, polymer, an attempt was made to acquire this medieval luminous painting quality as well as to achieve a feeling for the element of the translucency found in the stained glass windows of Gothic Cathedrals.

One canvas (Figures 24 and 24A) was left unsized and served as an example of experimental staining of raw canvas.

In the painting process, polymer paint, which had been thinned with water and gel medium, was poured from containers onto the flat sized canvas. Sometimes colors fused and flowed together for a wet in wet effect. In other instances, one layer of paint was allowed to dry in part, or completely, before

adding additional layers of paint. On occasion, paint was removed when it was partially dry and, therefore, left a build-up of edges of previously painted areas. Or, if removed at a certain time, the pigment of the polymer medium formed a stain or dye image. (On the unsized canvas, the dye image was absorbed and became part of the canvas.) Tilting of the canvas, pre-wetting of areas with water, and the occasional use of cloths and brushes were all methods used to create a personal aesthetic visual image.

As a painting surface for the water color paintings, a three hundred pound medium texture rag paper was used. This weight paper was selected after experimentation because it held its flat shape even when destroyed in part by fire.

In order to burn the oval shapes that are an integral part of the Sere water color series, a match was held directly below the paper. A slight tilting of the paper or a draft distorted the burn shape. When the oval area expanded to the desired size, the flame was extinguished by blowing. A spray plastic fixative was applied to the charred edges from below and above. This technique hardened the burned edge and established a durable surface. Water color was painted in the area around the oval burn with a wet in wet method. At times, overlay transparencies of color were added and other times linear shapes or painted masses were developed with water color or ink.

Correlated graphic imagery was executed on a separate section of paper and then firmly adhered below the void created by the burn. Double round mats

were cut to enclose the total painting and to give the illusion of flow from beneath the mats.

In order to develop concepts of overlaying imagery further, some experimental printing, involving serigraphy and lithography and combinations of these methods, was used. Transparent base paints for silk screens and liquid tusche for lithographs were media used to create this effect.

For all of the paintings, the selection of materials was limited to the water soluble media of polymer and water color. Canvas was used only after it was stretched. The surface of the canvas was deliberately not destroyed. If it had been burned or otherwise destroyed, it would have been necessary to use a framework support or a transparent protective covering. The framed water color paintings are covered by glass.

CHAPTER IV

ORIGINS OF COLOR FIELD PAINTING

The development of color field painting, to which this series of twenty-four works is related, has evolved as a Twentieth Century phenomena with a divergent heritage.

In an exhibition on the origins of color field painting organized by Priscilla Colt and held at the Dayton Ohio Art Institute in 1971, works by earlier artists who exerted an influence included: Matisse, Delauney, Cezanne, Gaugain and Monet. Edward B. Henning (1, p. 46), in his review of the exhibition, said:

She could reasonably have included many old masters' works as far back as Egyptian reliefs or cave paintings from Lascaux.... Jackson Pollack and Hans Hoffman are the seminal artists in the development of this kind of painting while Helen Frankenthaler is the most significant transitional figure leading to Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland.

Vital influences on the work produced for this Rudolph E. Lee Gallery exhibition have been the work of the German expressionist, Emile Nolde, and the Russian abstract expressionist, Wassily Kandinsky.

The painting, Red Poppy, by Nolde, typical of this influence, communicates a fluid, free, psychological interpretation of a color image. John David Farmer (2, p. 177), in describing Nolde's work, states:

Outrageously unnatural color and distortion of form suggested to Nolde and Die Bruche Artistis, with whom he was associated for a short while, emotional states of mind and a reality more profound than surface appearances....The basis of their art lay in a re-evaluation of what a work of art ought to convey, the underlying tensions and psychological possibilities of man's relationships with other men, nature and the social order.... His superb understanding of the evocative quality of water color, brilliant, transparent and yet blurred as if at one removed from normal vision is one of the Nolde's great contributions to modern art.

Wassily Kandinsky's painting, Blue Mountain, seen in the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York, along with work in a Kandinsky retrospective, has also influenced the work of this artist.

Lyonel Feiniger, in the preface to the 1945 edition of Kandinsky's volume, Concerning the Spiritual in Art and Painting in Particular (3, p. 14), says:

His treatment of color, rich and beautiful in itself, as if endowed with magical qualities to carry emotion, his shapes and forms, detached, ethereal, flowerlike, floating, or strong and powerful, with his sense of construction showing clearly yet never becoming mechanical or merely decorative, his vision and inexhaustible fantasy, all this controlled by his trained mind--that is Kandinsky, the unique painter whose work is today admired and understood by artists of the world.

Edward Henning (1, p. 47), a contemporary art critic, includes work by Jackson Pollack, Philip Guston and Mark Rothko as direct influences on color field painting. Writing in 1971, he states:

Many painters now included under the rubric "color field," however, have continued the romantic abstract-expressionist tradition but in modified forms tending toward more lyrical connotations and decorated surfaces.

This statement embraces the basic concept in the twenty-four works exhibited at the Rudolph E. Lee Gallery, Clemson University, and discussed in this paper.

Henning (1, p. 47) in discussing color field painting mentioned a comment by Clement Greenberg, the noted art critic:

The traditional framed composition, suggesting more or less deep space, was voided and the flat plane of the canvas emphasized. Furthermore, the canvas seems to be expandable in all directions.

The art historian, Arnason (4, p. 165) cites:

Robert Matherwell, who in developing his abstract-expressionist style of painting, created ovoid floaty shapes in suspension.... His work bridges the gaps between early abstract-expressionism and color field painting of the 1960's.

Arnason (4, p. 165) describes Mark Rothko's work as attaining an almost original abstract surrealism.

The Peinture series, by Joan Miro (5, p. 42), which were seen at the Maeght Museum, St. Paul de Vence, France, has many of the qualities attributed to color field painting.

Of direct significance is work produced by Helen Frankenthaler. Arnason (4, p. 623) says of her work:

She was the first American painter after Jackson Pollack to see the implication of color staining of canvas to create an integration of color and ground in which foreground and background ceased to exist. This concept was taken up by Morris Louis and out of it emerged important aspects of color field painting.

In 1953, Kenneth Noland and Morris Louis visited Frankenthaler in New York and saw her Mountains and Sea and found new possibilities for developing their own concepts in staining and configuration.

A study of Louis' Veils and Florals, Unfurleds and Stripes, as described by Michael Fried (6, pp. 1-40) revealed the aesthetic intensity he had been able to achieve with polymer on raw unstretched canvas. Amy Goldin (7, p. 48) and Elizabeth C. Baker (8, pp. 36-39), art critics, discussed and evaluated Louis' work in recent articles. Original examples of Louis' paintings have been seen in museum collections and galleries in this country and abroad. Most recently, intensive reading has been done about the work of artists such as Sam Francis, as discussed by Carl Belz (9, pp. 40-45) and James Brooks as evaluated by April Kingsley (10, p. 48). A description of the work of Sam Gilliam by Donald Miller (11, pp. 42-43) and an analysis of paintings by the artist Paul Jenkins by David Karshan (12, pp. 48-51) present other approaches of artists who are working with color stain.

Jenkins, for example, has painted on sized as well as raw canvas. Most of his work is stretched after painting. Sam Gilliam has draped his recent canvases instead of stretching the fabric.

Chleo Aaron (13, pp. 74-9), in his article "The Video Underground," discusses photographic fluid imagery. Recent viewing of films produced by John Reuley and Rudi Stern of Global Village, through an electronic synthesizer which creates a floating imagery of color, has had an influence on the work

produced for this exhibition. More particularly, a personal expression of color field painting has been developed by this painter and is evident in the work exhibited.

Twenty-four small paintings in color, each having been produced in a narrow series of related colors, are exhibited. Although the paintings do not cover an extensive range of color, they do present the artist's personal view of color. The artist's response to color and its relationship to the viewer will be discussed.

The painting itself, which is a very simple, yet it is the artist's response to the technical aspects of the painting, that is the main subject. The quality of these small paintings is the main subject of the exhibition.

The exhibition of these small paintings was presented at the Robert L. Lee Gallery, College of Architecture, Southern University, from April 11, 1970, through May 11, 1970. These works were exhibited, however, for viewing or purchase purposes in the final effort.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

Twenty-four visual statements of space/earth forms in transition were produced in a manner generally designated as color field painting. Although the paintings do not cover all possible aspects of this manner of paintings, they do present the artist's personal visual art forms. The works express her relationship to and involvement with her environment.

The painting media, polymer and water color, which have the versatility to meet the technical demands of the concepts, were selected and used. The qualities of these media met the requirements for developing specific imagery.

The exhibition of twenty-four works were presented at the Rudolph E. Lee Gallery, College of Architecture, Clemson University, from April 12, 1973, through May 11, 1973. These works were completed, framed and hung for viewing as aesthetic statements in the visual arts.

1-A. Goldform II.
polymer, 32" x 42"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



1-A

2-A Wide Terrain I.
polymer, 40" x 48"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



2-A

3-A. Soft Terrain.
polymer, 22" x 30"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



3-A

4-A. Terrain Variant.
polymer, 36" x 40"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



4-A

5-A. Wide Terrain II.
polymer, 42" x 48"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



5-A

6-A. Autumn Terrain.
polymer, 14" x 18"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



6-A

7-A. Winter Terrain.
polymer, 14" x 18"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



7-A

8-A. Coastal Terrain.
polymer, 26" x 36"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



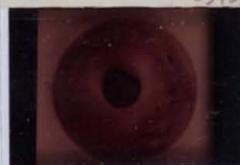
8-A

9-A. Sere A-I.
watercolor-fire, 11½" x
15", by Jeanet S. Dres-
kin, 1972



9-A

10-A. Sere A-II.
watercolor-fire, 20½" dia.
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



10-A

11-A. Sere A-III.
watercolor-fire, 20½" dia.
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



11-A

12-A. Sere A-IV.
watercolor-fire, 20½" dia.
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



12-A

13-A. Sere Vertical.
watercolor-ink-fire,
22" x 30", by Jeanet S.
Dreskin, 1972



13-A

14-A. Sere A-V.
watercolor-ink-fire,
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
20½" dia. 1973



14-A

15-A. Sere A-VI.
watercolor-fire,
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
21 3/4" diameter, 1973



15-A

16-A. Lucky Yellow.
serigraph, 11" x 11"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



16-A

18-A. Innerform I.
lithograph, 7 1/4" x 10"
By Jeanet S. Dreskin
1972



17-A

17-A. Outgrowth.
embossed serigraph,
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
13 1/2" diameter, 1973



18-A

19-A. Innerform II.
lithoserigraph, 8 1/2" dia.
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



19-A

20-A. Limplicity.
serigraph, 13" diameter
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



20-A

21-A. Celestial Float I.
polymer, 48" x 60"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



21-A

22-A. Celestial Float II.
polymer, 36" x 48"
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
1973



22-A

23-A. Subterranean
Float I, polymer,
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
36" x 42", 1973



23-A

24-A. Subterranean
Float II, polymer
by Jeanet S. Dreskin
22" x 28" 1973



24-A

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ABSTRACT

Statement of the Problem

An exhibition of twenty-four works of art was presented at the Rudolph S. Lee Gallery, College of Architecture, Clemson University, from April 12, 1972, through May 11, 1973, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts. This exhibition represented work produced during their study. Black and white photographic reproductions and thirty-five small slides of each work and selected color prints were included with the written presentation, which was a supplement to the exhibition.

ABSTRACT

The paintings presented reflect a fluid mapping and interlocking of conceptual ideas and perceptual insight into a personal art form. The imagery captured expresses visual statements of space, earth forms in transition. The paintings were done in a manner characteristic of color field painting.

Method and Procedures

In order to communicate the desired visual concepts, polymer and water color were selected as media. These water soluble paints have the versatility and inherent properties that met the technical demands for expressing the painter's relationship to and involvement with her environment.

The joy and beauty of nature forms were reflected in the Earthform, Celestial and Terrestrial series of twelve polymer paintings, while the disjunct

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The joy and beauty of nature forms were reflected in the Earthform, Celestial and Terrestrial series of twelve polymer paintings, while the disdain

for man's disruption of nature and its processes was evident in the Sere series of seven paintings in which water and fire were used as media.

The polymer Earthform paintings, macroscopic in concept, were produced on sized canvas with liquid stains and overlay transparencies of closely related colors in a relatively flat picture plane. An illusion of continuation beyond the boundary at the picture edge was created. Oval forms, negative and positive in concept, symbolizing a variant of the circle of the earth and a never ending form in the continuation of life, reoccurred throughout the work.

In the microscopic Sere series, water color and fire were used as media on paper. The natural translucency of the oval burn area and the created transparency of the water color medium formed an illusion in imagery. A suggestion of reality was achieved by unreal means.

Transparent base inks were used for five experimental lithographs and serigraphs that added dimension to an interpretation of this aesthetic concept.

Summary of Findings

1. Visual concepts of space/earth forms in transition express the artist's involvement with and relationship to her environment.
2. The inherent quality of the painting medium is essential to the aesthetic concept produced.
3. The work produced has many of the major characteristics of color field painting.

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