

Spirals and Rotations

Sculptures

Relief

October 11,
1997

Vernon Art Gallery

September 19 to

Paintings,
Works on Paper,

Personal Grids,

Chris Watts
Selected Works:

Chris Watts

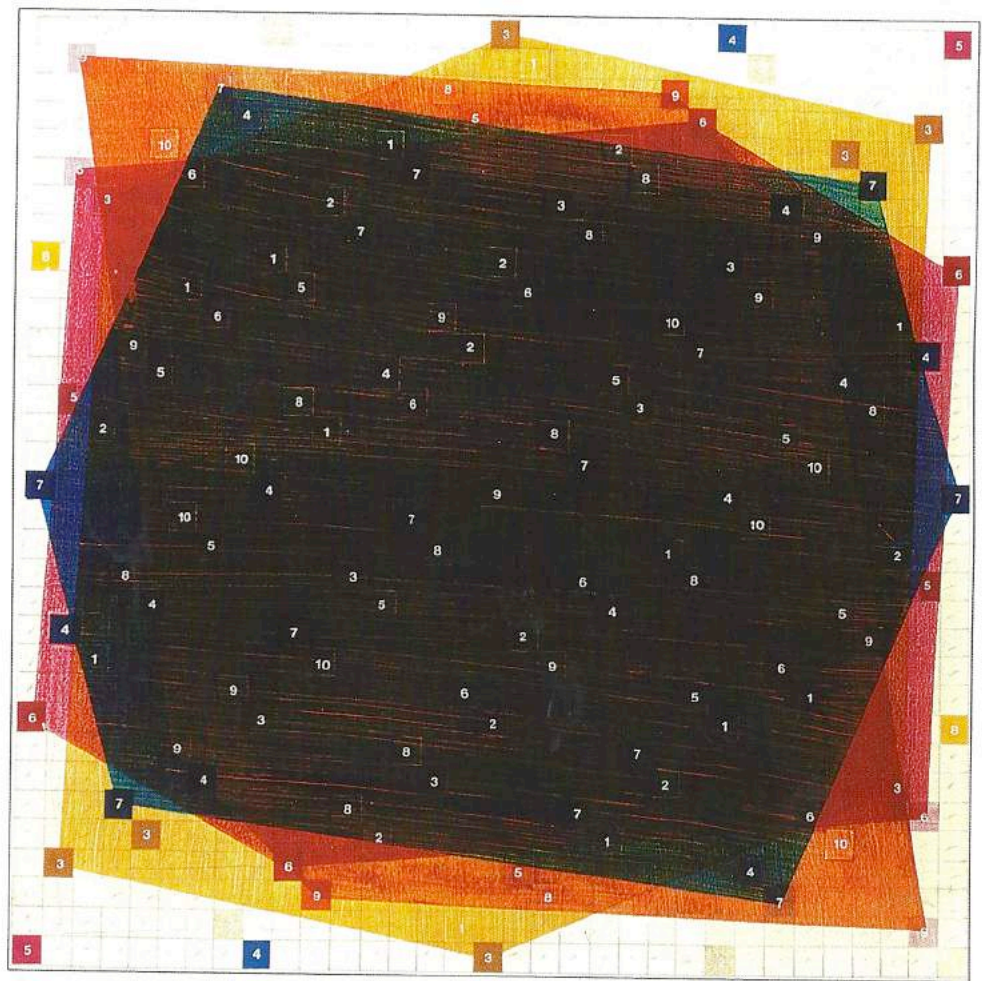
Personal Grids, Spirals and Rotations

Consistent with each phase of evolving new work, the images selected for this exhibition find their genesis in previous ideas involving spirals and rotations. The work continues to incorporate numbers and their related colour palette. Each number is always linked to a colour: One-Golden White, Two-Gold, Three-Golden Yellow, Four-Blue, Five-Heliotrope, Six-Magenta, Seven-Indigo, Eighth-Yellow, Nine-Red, Ten-White. The number marks and colour relationships point to an underlying interest I have in esoteric philosophies.

The set of six works on paper, represented in the exhibition, comprise of two intertwining spirals formed by a repetition of the number sequence one through ten and spaces. Groups of odd and even numbers are connected by transparent fields of colours related to the numerical value. The shape of each field is defined by the location of like numbers that form the perimeter. The areas defined, by the one's, four's, six's, eight's, and nine's, are seen as a layering of transparent shapes. Given time, more relationships can be drawn out of these matrixes.

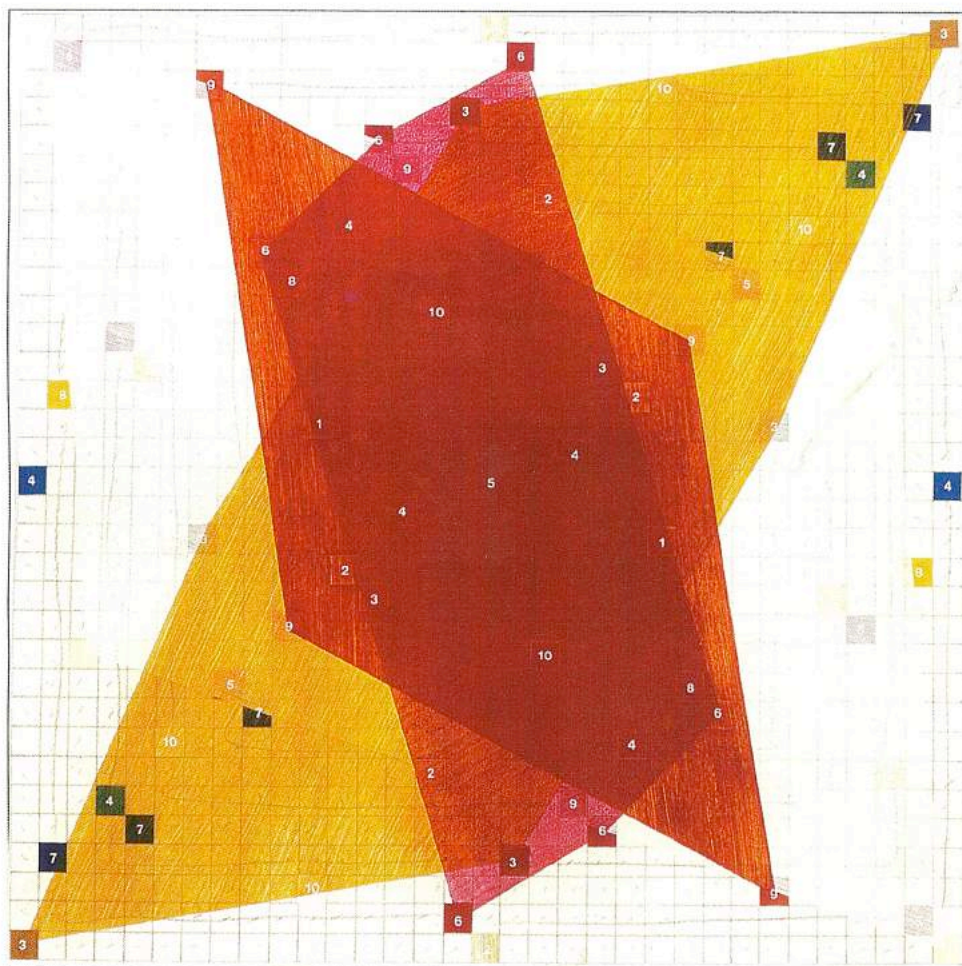
The relief sculptures represent two different approaches to incorporating dimension. The series, "Two Spirals Intertwined", interprets numerical value into length. For example a location with a value of one results in a cube that represents one unit of length, carries the colour golden white at one end, and is signified by the mark number one. In comparison the location for a number nine results in a nine. In all other respects the rule construction for this piece is similar to the two dimensional work.

The "Saturn" relief series also interprets numerical value into



*Grid 33 x 33 . 7 up . 3,6,7,9
acrylic on paper, 1992*

dimension but in this case the length is viewed more as a ruler. Eight for example is seen as a band of the colour yellow, represents eight units in length, and is marked by the appropriate number. Another example is the number one which is represented by a flat golden white square. The rule construction for his series is similar to the three "Four Around" paintings.



*Grid 33 x 33 . 15 up . 3,6,9
acrylic on paper, 1992*

Rotations of numerical sequences, represented by lengths, work across a grid plane. The number sequences are derived from the Magic Square that represents Saturn in medieval mysticism.

4 9 2
3 5 7
8 1 6

My interest in order, number location, and the constructional history of arrangements, derives from childhood experiences growing up in the "West Country" of Britain. While walking the landscape of Bodmin moor and Dartmoor, the archeology of the bronze age remains, tin and copper mining, medieval pathways, and their inherent mystery drew my attention to ideas of order and retrievability. Uncovering the history behind the stone rows, circles, menhirs, Celtic crosses, pathways, and land use has become a life of the western mountains in North America, I am always looking for signs and the marks of previous inhabitants and visitors to the land. Testing ideas, looking for clues, observing marks, intuiting and contemplating are processes that I hope have found a place in my imagery.

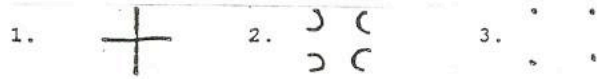
My artistic influences are rooted in the traditions of Constructivism (Naum Gabo), Suprematism (Kasimir Malevich), and Neo Plasticism (Piet Mondrian). As a young student the various artistic groups that stem from the British Constructionalist movement and the participants in publication Circle also influenced me a great deal. In particular, artists such as Mary and Kenneth Martin, Malcolm Hughs, Jean Spencer, Gillian Wise, Anthony Hill, Jeffrey Steele, Terry Pope, Susan Tebby, and Peter Lowe, to name a few, provided a rich tapestry of theory and visual invention from which to react and learn. The work of the Structuralist group in Canada, Charles Biederman in the USA, North America and Europe had an additional impact on my artistic development. To them all I owe a debt of gratitude.

Before I end this narrative, I would like to thank the Vernon Art Gallery for the opportunity to present my work, and Kelowna artist Ruth MacLaurin for her support, interest in my work, and curatorial involvement with this particular exhibition. My thanks to you all.

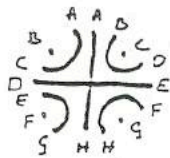
Chris Watts
July 18, 1997

Involvement with Spirals

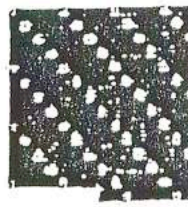
During the last ten years my enquiries have involved the use of spirals to determine the location of numbers within grids of various sizes. Initially, my interest in spiral forms came from the discovery of a maze found in old Celtic monumental sites, the Mediterranean and the Hopi culture in North America. This form has some very interesting characteristics, it can be constructed through the use of three groupings which when placed together establish the structural underpinning for the spiral/maze:



by connecting the end points a, b, c, d, e, f, g, & h, the maze is revealed.

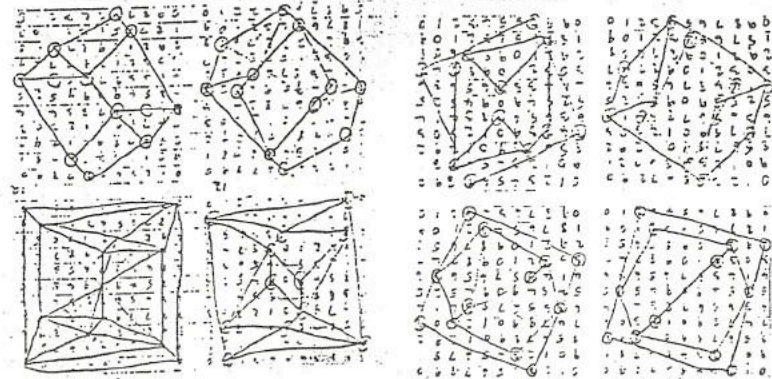


Curiously, by transposing the maze into a grid format, placing number sequences with spaces through the grid, some very specific diagonal alignments occur; this is particularly evident if the numbers are spaced at intervals of three or seven.



What is surprising about this form is that the asymmetrical image possesses some very specific symmetrical characteristics some of which appear to be dimensional. With this idea in mind I have been looking into locational and planar relationships that arise out of the juxtaposition of spiral forms, grids and numbers. I have used one, two and four spirals of numbers and spaces that intertwine within grids; these produce images that have spatial symmetrical and planar characteristics.

Some structures, related to the colour image included in this edition, imply an isometric form. The idea that an image comprising of essentially flat components can generate volumes that are isometric in character is interesting. In one particular set of images lines were drawn to connect numbers of the same value whilst enclosing as large an area as possible; although not exact, often the perimeter of the resulting shape suggested the outline of an isometric volume. By looking to the middle of the grid area numbers were found that correspond to the point location of the front and back corners of a space cube.



While generating rule based images, I am looking for visual surprises or events where grid size, numbers, spaces and loading forms (a spiral for example) interrelates proportionally. This working process continues to bring to bear the question, is the artist the originator of the images or does the systematic working process reveal pre-existing visual order that is waiting to be uncovered?

Chris Watts.

Curatorial Statement

The ancient coupling of text and image into graphic symbols take the form of numerals and colour codes linked and located on various grid formats from works on paper to relief sculpture. This selection of recent work exemplifies Chris Watt's fascination with number sequences, codes and systems which explore the ideas of spirals and rotations mapped into the grid formats. Visual equivalents for change and movement, visual equivalents that symbolizes esoteric philosophies using numerical mark and colour connections are layered into the investigation of spirals, mazes, rotations and numerical sequences. Systems of order, the ideas pertaining to order, the human order upon the landscape and universal order, the mapping of these ideas, the linking and the layering into the surfaces are a continual exploration in Chris's work.

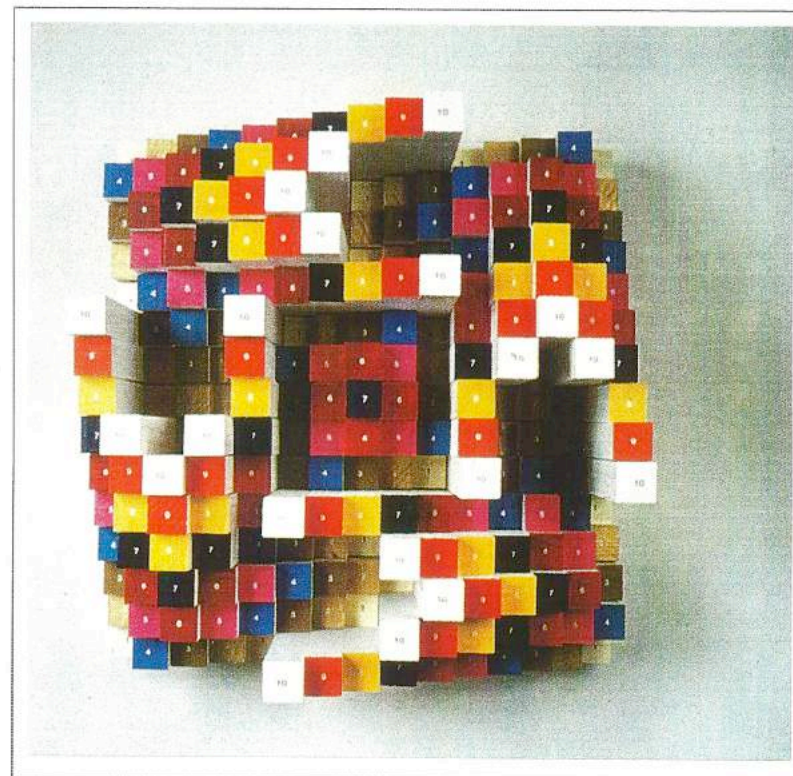
This attraction to ideas pertaining to order finds their roots in the English countryside of Devon and Cornwall, in particular, the landscape of the Bodmin and Dartmoor regions, near Chris's boyhood home. That landscape contains the references of ancient marks, the remains of the Bronze Age tin and copper mining sites, the stone rows, circles, menhirs, Celtic crosses and medieval pathways. His interest in history, connected to these ancient sites and codes is coupled with the exploring the ancient settlement areas in the Western Mountain regions of North America.

The selected works in this exhibition are from the 1990's. In Chris' words, "Consistent with each phase of evolving new work, the images selected for this exhibition find the genesis in previous ideas involving spirals and rotations. Testing ideas, looking for clues, observing marks, intuiting and contemplating are processes that I hope have found a place in my imagery."

Ruth MacLaurin

Guest Curator

Okanagan University College Fine Arts Department



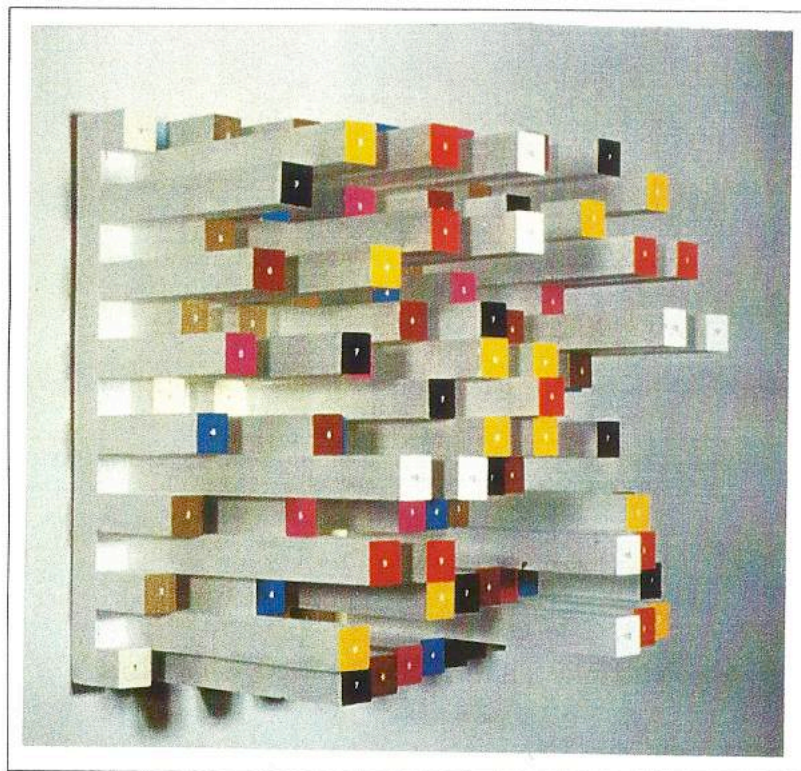
Relief Two, Science and Art Portable (Two Views)
acrylic on wood, 15" x 15", 1992

BIOGRAPHY

Christopher Watts was born in London England, 1947. He received his Master of Fine Arts degree in 1971 with honours at Ohio University. Prior to this he had complete a Bachelor of Fine Arts with first class honours at the School of Art, London University, Goldsmith's College, London, England.

Since 1988, he has been chairperson of the Fine Arts Department at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington. Watts has taught at Middle Tennessee State University, Cornish Institute, Seattle, Slade School of Fine Arts, London, England, University of Reading, Dartington College of Art, Gloucestershire College of Art, Trent Polytechnic, Nottingham, England, and University of Rhode Island.

He has lectured extensively on his own works and topics as diverse as Computer Use in the Arts, and Art and Technology. His work can be found in many private collections in Europe and North America. Corporate and public collectors include Seattle First National Bank, Honeywell Inc., Carnegie Museum, Seattle Arts Commission, Northern Telecom, and the Washington State Arts Commission, to name a few.



Selected Recent Exhibitions

- 1996 *Translations*, Norwich Gallery, England
Approaches to Abstraction, Art Gallery of the South Okanagan, Penticton & Grand Forks Art Gallery, Grand Forks
- 1995 *Group Invitational*, Prichard Art Gallery, University of Idaho
Washington: 100 years, 100 paintings, Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue, Washington
Artfair, Seattle, Washington
- 1994 *Two Hats: Artist/Administrator/Curator/Critic*, Art Center Gallery, Seattle Pacific University
15 from America, Khabarovsk Regional Museum, Russia & Artetage, Vladivostok, Russia
Rational Sysytems, Art Center Gallery, Seattle Pacific University, Kittredge Gallery, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, & Northview Gallery, Portland Community College, Portland, Oregon
- 1991 *Multiples: The Sciences and Art*, Washington State Arts Commission, Olympia, Washington