

ARTS REVIEW

Wilmette Arts Guild... to inform, stimulate, inspire.

Summer 2023



Indra's Pearl by Aaron Karp
In Chicago: Jean Albano Gallery



Aaron Karp in Chicago

Jean Albano Gallery showing work by New Mexico artist Aaron Karp.

by Everett Lee Campbell



Aaron Karp-Indra's Pearl #20

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These pictures are part of a long series of paintings done in a process original to himself that involves multiple layers and made of incredible number of small units of color creating a mosaic. This is achieved by an elaborate process of makings layers upon layers of paint. The result is a painting not about any one image, rather the subject is the whole painting. If you study only, say, one quarter of the painting you get the same effect as if you are looking the entire work. This is composition by field. It is infinite in scope, not limited to the size of the frame. This is reminiscent of a quote from M.C. Escher: "Chaos in the beginning, simplicity is the end.....order is repetition of units, chaos is multiplicity without rhythm."

The works shown here are indeed made by repetition of units, small units of color without specific shape, which altogether create a field of images. Indeed there is a rhythm which appears as you study one section of the painting at a time. Gradually abstract shapes emerge from the field but never dominate. Rather form pieces of the whole which grows in an organic matter, never constructed as a dominant subject.

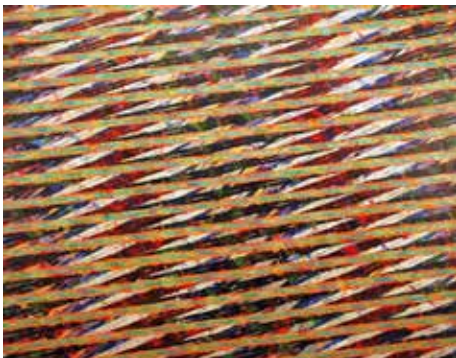
Indra's *Pearl #20* is a work based on the Hindu legend of the goddess Indra which describes a net, infinite in size that stretches out in all directions. At each intersection of the cords is a jewel which creates a series of beautiful images as each jewel is covered with colored shapes and forms. The painting shows the vast sea of these jewels which often overlap to create a sense of depth with the jewels emerging and receding. Although there are loads and loads of jewels, no one or bunch of them dominate the work, it is all about a

field, the whole rather than having any one part more important that the others. This is a field bursting with energy, a microcosm of infinity.

Little Red is another work of composition by field. Rather than showing specific objects like the net of jewels we see swirling pods of color which intersect with one another. Irregularly shaped leaf like elements, shades of red and brown, gradually emerge in different parts of the picture but are fragments within the whole. Again, the sense of infinity comes while we look at it. As the eye moves around the work rhythms of shape and color bristle with energy. Again, the subject of the painting is the entire image, from border to border, without privileging any one part over the whole.

Trailer is similar to *Little Red* in showing a field of colors and shapes that have an almost palpable energy. One pod of round shapes is drawn towards the next in a push-pull manner, while again small leaf like elements emerge dull red and yellow shades so that they are in the background as it were and working their way into the surface. There are no straight lines in Karp's paintings. They are all about curves, shapes and figures growing out of an organic mass. Depth is implied by the interaction among the elements; background is foreground and vice versa. It is only by making layer after layer, adding and subtracting small units of form and color that the illusion of space and depth can be achieved. This is exactly what is unique in Karp's work. He carries it off brilliantly making it an original statement with each painting.

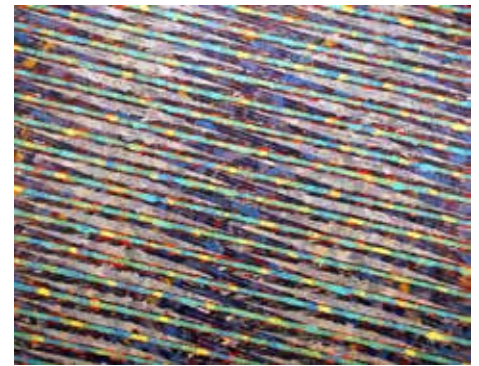
Aaron Karp works displayed at the Guggenheim Museum, New York



Splintered Interlude for Big Skinny 1982



Repeated Journey 1982



Boo's Night Jewel 1982

Aaron Karp Biography

Aaron Karp is a practicing artist of more than 45 years. Originally from New York he has lived in Albuquerque, New Mexico since 1979 where he worked as an Assistant Professor of Painting and Drawing at the University of New Mexico until 1984. Since leaving the University, he has painted full time, has exhibited his work extensively and has received recognition through a number of awards, grants and artist-in-residencies.

In 1976 Karp developed a unique style of painting utilizing various systems of taping to develop fractured fields of color and space. Shortly afterwards, in 1979, his work was recognized in major exhibitions at the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh entitled "Systems", as well as a second exhibition in that same year at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem. From 1977 to 1979 Karp was Gallery Director and Lecturer of Design Fundamentals at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

In 1983 Mr. Karp was included in the Guggenheim Museum's national exhibition "New Perspectives in American Art". According to Guggenheim Museum Curator, Diane Waldman, in a catalog essay for the show "His paintings function on the level of pure perceptual phenomena-as statements about color, line and movement-as complex and inventive commentaries about the visual stimuli generated by the worlds of nature and art."

In 1981-82 Aaron Karp was awarded the first of two artist-in-residencies he received through the Roswell Artist-in-Residence Program in Roswell, New Mexico. The second was awarded in 1985-86. In 1987 his work was once again shown in an exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum entitled "Emerging Artists 1978-86: Selections from the Exxon Series". In 1989 Karp had a major one man show of his work at the Katharina Rich Perlow Gallery in New York followed shortly after in 1990 by a retrospective exhibition at the State University of New York at Albany's Fine Arts Museum. In 1992 the Amarillo Museum did a exhibition of "Stolen Objects" his series of paintings that combined still life elements with shifting layers of paint. In his catalog essay for the show. James Moore, Director of the Albuquerque Museum writes: "The broken color of the paint creates the illusion of movement, it vibrates in the retina, it pulls everything forward and continually reduces the space that the objects themselves define. It is as if these paintings have stolen the objects they contain and hold them hostage to their own purposes."

In 1994 Karp was included in a group exhibition entitled "Modernism in New Mexico" at the Fine Arts Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico followed in 1997 by "Eye Dazzlers" at the University of New Mexico Fine Art Museum. He was awarded an artist-in-residency in 1998 at the Anderson Ranch Art Center in Snowmass Village, Colorado where he produced a folio of six large scale digital prints combining visual information and source material from his paintings entitled "Occurrence at Owl Creek Road".

In 2000 Karp was invited to a pair of residencies, one at The MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire and the second at The Djerassi Resident Artist Program in Woodside, California. The paintings produced during these two residencies made up a series of paintings that the artist titled "Somersault" that were featured in one person shows in 2001 at the R. Duane Reed Gallery in St. Louis, Missouri and in 2002 at the Carson-

Masuoka Gallery in Denver Colorado. In his essay that accompanied the two shows, William Peterson, arts writer and former publisher of "Artspace" writes: "An extraordinary playfulness animates these paintings, and the crystalline imagery chimes with a music of its own making. Emitting their own unearthly light, the decorative devices mock natural forms and comprise a mesmerizing mechanical universe fraught with droll whimsy and wit. I am not the first to notice that the busy artificial space in Karp's paintings resembles the shimmering, fragmented, and rhythmically dynamic space that the Italian Futurists achieved when they set Picasso and Braque's Analytic Cubism in motion. Though startlingly original, these paintings connect to a long artistic tradition that toys with artifice, playing with the tricks of the trade and inherited conventions to question the relationship between art and reality."

In 2001 Karp was awarded a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant and in 2002 a Kittredge Foundation Grant. Also in 2002 he was awarded an artist-in-residency in Costa Rica at the Julia and David White Artists' Colony. In 2004 Karp was awarded a residency and a monetary grant through the Robert M. MacNamara Foundation located on Westport Island, Maine. In 2006 the Fundacion Valparaiso in Mojacar, Almeria, Spain awarded him an artist-in-residency. In October, 2007 he was invited for two months as a visiting artist at the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha, Nebraska. In October 2013 Aaron was invited to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts in Amherst, Virginia for a one month endowed residency and in 2019 he was awarded a residency at the Tao Hua Tan artist residency in Anhui Provence, China.

His most recent exhibitions include shows at R. Duane Reed Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri, William Havu Gallery, Denver Colorado; Lee Hansley Gallery, Raleigh, North Carolina; Duke University Fine Art Museum, the Albuquerque Museum, New Concept Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico and Jean Albano, Chicago, Illinois.



Aaron Karp-Magilla #1

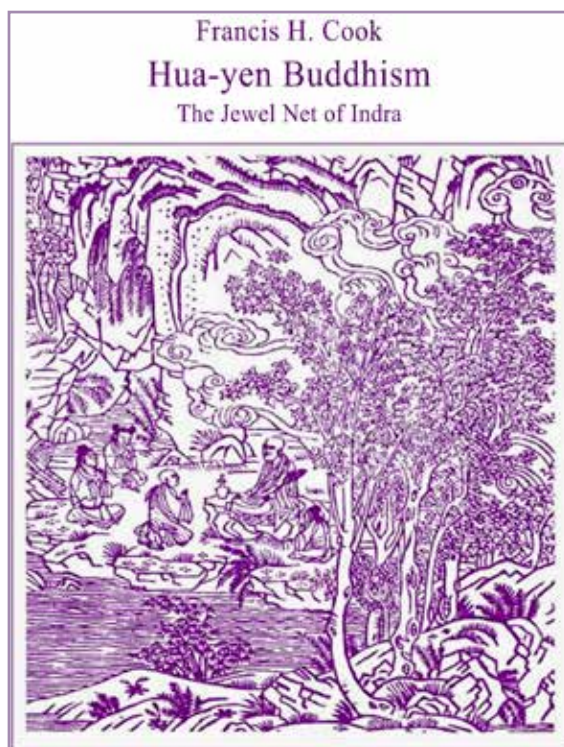
Francis Harold Cook

Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra

Indra's Jewel Net, or the Jewel Net of Indra, is a much-loved metaphor of Mahayana Buddhism. It illustrates the interpenetration, inter-causality, and interbeing of all things. The Story of Indra's Net begins "Far, far away, in the abode of the great god Indra, king of heaven, hangs a wondrous vast net, much like a spider's web in intricacy and loveliness. It stretches out indefinitely in all directions. At each node, or crossing point, of the net hangs a single glittering jewel, reflecting radiance on all the others.

Indra's Net symbolizes the universe as a web of connections and interdependencies among all its members, wherein every member is both a manifestation of the whole and inseparable from the whole.

For the Huayan school, Indra's net symbolizes a universe where infinitely repeated mutual relations exist among all members of the universe.



Available on Amazon

Aaron Karp: Building Within

Rebecca S. Cohen

It was my original intention to introduce Aaron Karp's work by pointing out the impossible-to-count layers of acrylic paint and complex masking technique that give his work its depth and allow his joyful arrangement of technicolor orbs to float forward and recede, to appear at once solid and translucent. Thank God I came to my senses. In this instance my tendency toward analysis of process over poetry would have been a terrible way to begin. A distraction. The above quotation, suggested by the artist, provides a much more inviting gateway to appreciating the jewel-like quality of his images. This series of paintings follows the artist's established pattern of working within one self-imposed system after another, each approach built on the last. A longstanding infatuation with abstract curvilinear shapes has led to this intensely focused study of circles varying in size, color, pattern and placement. It is interesting to note that the artist's cataract surgery with the attendant brief explosion (real or imagined under the influence of anesthesia) of brilliantly cascading red blood cells may have also played a part. Here and there an oculus, an ornate iris of sorts--the artist's surrogate?--attempts to make eye contact with the viewer. Who can turn away?

Karp's work has always been good at capturing attention. He has garnered an impressive array of grants that include the Pollack-Krasner Foundation Grant and artist-in-residencies from California to Costa Rica over his thirty-five years as an artist. his paintings appear in numerous private and public collections such as the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, the State University of New York at Albany, the Museum of New Mexico in Santa Fe, and the Museum of Albuquerque in Albuquerque, New Mexico where the artist has made his home or many years.

Rebecca S. Cohen has been a decades long supporter of the visual arts in Austin as a volunteer, a gallery owner, art consultant and arts writer. In 2004 the University of Texas Press published her book Art Guide Texas, a listing of the state's museums, art centers, alternative spaces and nonprofit galleries.