

THE NEW MUSEUM

65 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK 10003 (212) 741-8962

INVESTIGATIONS: PROBE.STRUCTURE.ANALYSIS

September 27 - December 4, 1980

The works included in INVESTIGATIONS do not adhere to Matisse's maxim that art should be "a mental soother, something like a good armchair in which to rest from physical fatigue." This art does not relax, but challenges, stimulates and provokes.

The artists included here share a similar attitude toward making art. They are not content merely to skim the surface of an idea, but instead probe deeply to reveal underlying structures. Theirs is an analytic sensibility that investigates what is hidden, unique or complex. More specifically, these investigations have led to a questioning and analysis of the fundamental nature of perception, explored through their incorporation of strategies from such other disciplines as science, linguistics, mathematics, and philosophy. Their work requires the viewer to unify the information through his or her own activity.

Since these artists address complex ideas, the ways in which information is structured is essential to the communication and understanding of their work. Physical structures (i.e., house, table, etc.) and mental structures (i.e., categories, frameworks, etc.) are the concrete means by which we govern actions, articulate thoughts, measure distances and achievements, and basically function in the world. These structures are constructed in order to impose some order on a world that is in constant flux. This concept of reality as dynamic, changing, and relativistic is realized formally in the works of all five artists.

On a basic level, each work of art in INVESTIGATIONS is physically constructed from component parts, each of which must be considered in relation to each other, as well as to the whole. The work therefore presents rather than concludes, in an attempt to provoke within the viewer a succession of ideas and experiences. The richness and complexity of the work therefore derives from the ways in which the essential component parts coalesce into a total experience.

AGNES DENES restructures information derived from many disciplines in order to create new ways of thinking and behaving. For instance, in her drawings from the Pyramid Project, Denes gives form to a theoretical system which she translates into a symbol. She then subjects the form, a pyramid, to a series of visual transformations.

LAUREN EWING has constructed a "Mini-Factory" which contains two large silk-spinning machines. By also using video, sound, and texts, she leads the viewer on a journey of physical and mental encounters. The archetypal building which she uses is a metaphor for the mind in that it shelters, isolates, and eventually inte-

grates each component in a complete encounter.

VERNON FISHER also juxtaposes texts and images. He incorporates writing into his paintings by actually sanding words through painted, drawn, or photographed images. The correlations between the simple actions and predicaments he describes in his texts and the everyday images and objects he depicts evoke elusive layers of meaning.

STEPHEN PRINA's installation in this exhibition reveals a step-by-step analysis of a metronome's two essential functions -- time duration and marking beats -- and subjects them to four operations that utilize a full range of thirty-nine possible speeds. He then translates this aural and visual information into a film sequence and an audiotape. At all stages of the work, Prina also makes the operations visible in drawings.

DAVID REED aligns two canvases or panels -- the left containing a solid color field, the right having one or more large gestural strokes on either a black or white ground -- thus separating the elements of color and line. Through his theoretical research on how the mind works, Reed has intuitively isolated, in visual terms, the specialized functions of right and left hemispheres of the brain.

While these artists' works appear so distinctly different from each other's, common attitudes underlying their various approaches bind them together. Theirs is a dynamic art, both in concept and in character. Likewise, it is not a finite art; new meanings and applications are suggested as the contexts and perspectives change.

These artists utilize an analytic and investigative mode to question and explore both formal and metaphorical areas of thought, without resulting in "art for art's sake." Rather, they are trying to come to grips with essential questions about the nature of the world and our place in it by allowing their work to question, analyze and restructure itself as a way of addressing larger issues. It is work which derives from a sense of conviction about the effectiveness of a visual rather than technical language in altering the way we see and respond to the world around us.

THE NEW MUSEUM hours:	Monday through Friday:	12:00-6:00 p.m.
	Wednesday:	12:00-8:00 p.m.
	Saturday:	12:00-5:00 p.m.