

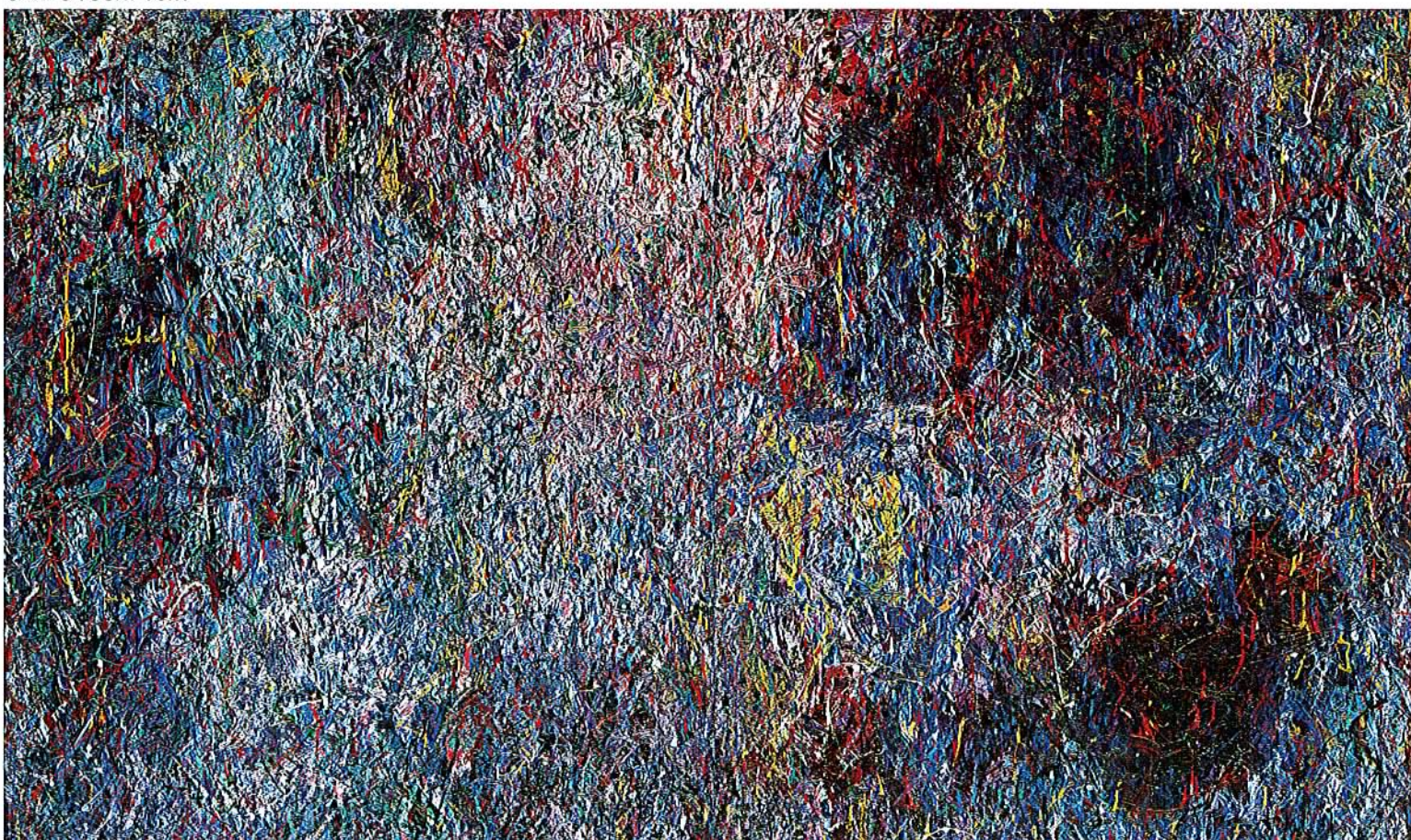


Red Malibu #15, acrylic on linen, 1993  
34x28"/86x71cm

This issue of Global Art News features the paintings of Michael Rubin who lives and paints in Soho, New York. Rubin's color abstract paintings represent the next aesthetic stage in pure abstraction.

**F**or Rubin color is the most powerful element. Color imprints from early childhood to accumulate a color history each person uses in all visual decision making. In Rubin's paintings, color reigns through techniques including optical color blending, effects of luminous light, opposing color field reversals and color shifts that direct composition and visual movement. Emotionally, we sense color as our most immediate and intimate visual experience. By arranging and modulating color, Rubin constructs a color environment that stimulates the viewer's unfolding awareness of color pleasure.

**O**ften compared to the art of Jackson Pollock, Rubin's paintings represent the next aesthetic stage in pure abstraction. Rather than Pollock's primary use of line, Rubin creates luminous and at times illusionistic color fields. The unique role of color perception within each person's life adds special power to the visual encounter of Rubin's paintings. The continuing and everchanging color associations, coupled with an activated color memory, charges and interacts with the viewer's creative process. Distinguished from Pollock also is Rubin's use of color as catalyst. It is the center point for viewers of Rubin's paintings to explore their own emotional and intellectual lives.

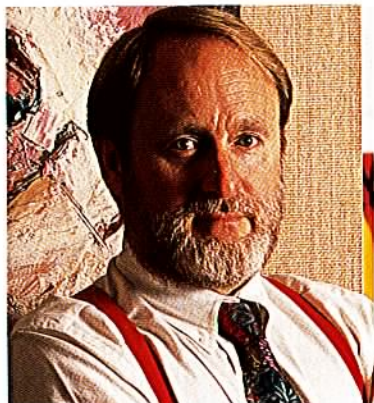


Black River, acrylic on linen, 1990, 72x108"/183x274cm



# MICHAEL RUBIN - A

Charles Whitchurch, past President of the California Art Dealers Association, features Rubin's paintings in his Huntington Beach gallery.



bristle with visual information — articulated with imagination. And each work is unique. We do not find cliché solutions to the pictorial problems he sets for himself any more than we hear him blunt his thoughts and feelings when he speaks.

Each creation relates to past achievements, yet each maintains its own integrity. In every work Michael essays to express and define himself anew. This existential artist studies his past work, accepts what is good, then challenges himself to improve and re-create himself through paint, ink, canvas, paper. He does not copy himself. He knows that if he were to repeat past success, he would stop being creative, hence stop being an artist — at least, the kind he is committed to being.

Thus he continues to *become*, challenging us with an ever-evolving variety of colors, transitions, structures. And the man does not rest. He paints, draws, makes prints. When he isn't creating art, he's thinking — about art, about relationships, about meaning. For Rubin, the meaning of his art and life are intrinsically involved — a commingling that evokes Goethe's words, "he only earns his freedom who creates each day anew." Unlike Faust, Michael Rubin has not wagered his soul in the process — though he does stake his life on his art. But like Faust, Rubin continues to strive — aware of the past, absorbed in the work at hand and impelled, always, by his vision of new creations."

— Charles Whitchurch  
Charles Whitchurch Gallery,  
Huntington Beach, California



"People new to the work of Michael Rubin often want to compare him with Jackson Pollock or Tobey or Riopelle. Yet the longer they look, the more sensitive they become to the structures and nuances that make Rubin's art unique. As Peter Frank, editor of *Visions Art Quarterly*, once remarked, "Rubin's work recapitulates the entire abstract expressionist movement since Jackson Pollock, but he continues the dialogue — and speaks in his own voice." Indeed, Rubin is deeply involved in art history — and dedicated to making his own statement.

What he says as an artist affirms his personal values. When you listen to him speak, you notice a drive for accuracy, thoroughness, honesty — for complete and authentic communication. This integrity informs his friendships as well as his business dealings. As we can readily see, every square inch of his art manifests the same drive. Canvas and paper



Venus Heart, acrylic on linen, 1992, 60x96"/152x244cm



French Water, acrylic on



# ABSTRACT COLORIST

**"P**ainting for Michael Rubin is always an opportunity for innovation. Whether the acrylic paint is applied by brush or literally with the artist's fingers, the marks left continue the tradition of the artist creating a unique vision.

There is nothing distant about experiencing Rubin's paintings. The sumptuous layers of paint form a dense texture with our eyes acting as the blender. Here the audience feels the delight and physical pleasure in the act of painting."

— Marisa Del Re  
Marisa Del Re Gallery  
New York, New York

**"E**motions that color generates, are the first experiences I have with Rubin's paintings. Similar to music, Rubin's color abstractions create lyrical rhythms of sensual experience.

Constantly changing perceptions as basic human reality is the other portion of Rubin's art. What first appears random, emerges as pattern. What looks flat recedes into openings of illusionistic space, moving our eye, altering our visual understanding."

— Kaj Forsblom  
Galerie Kaj Forsblom, Zurich, Switzerland;  
Helsinki and Turku, Finland



, 1992 30x36"/76x91cm



# MICHAEL RUBIN

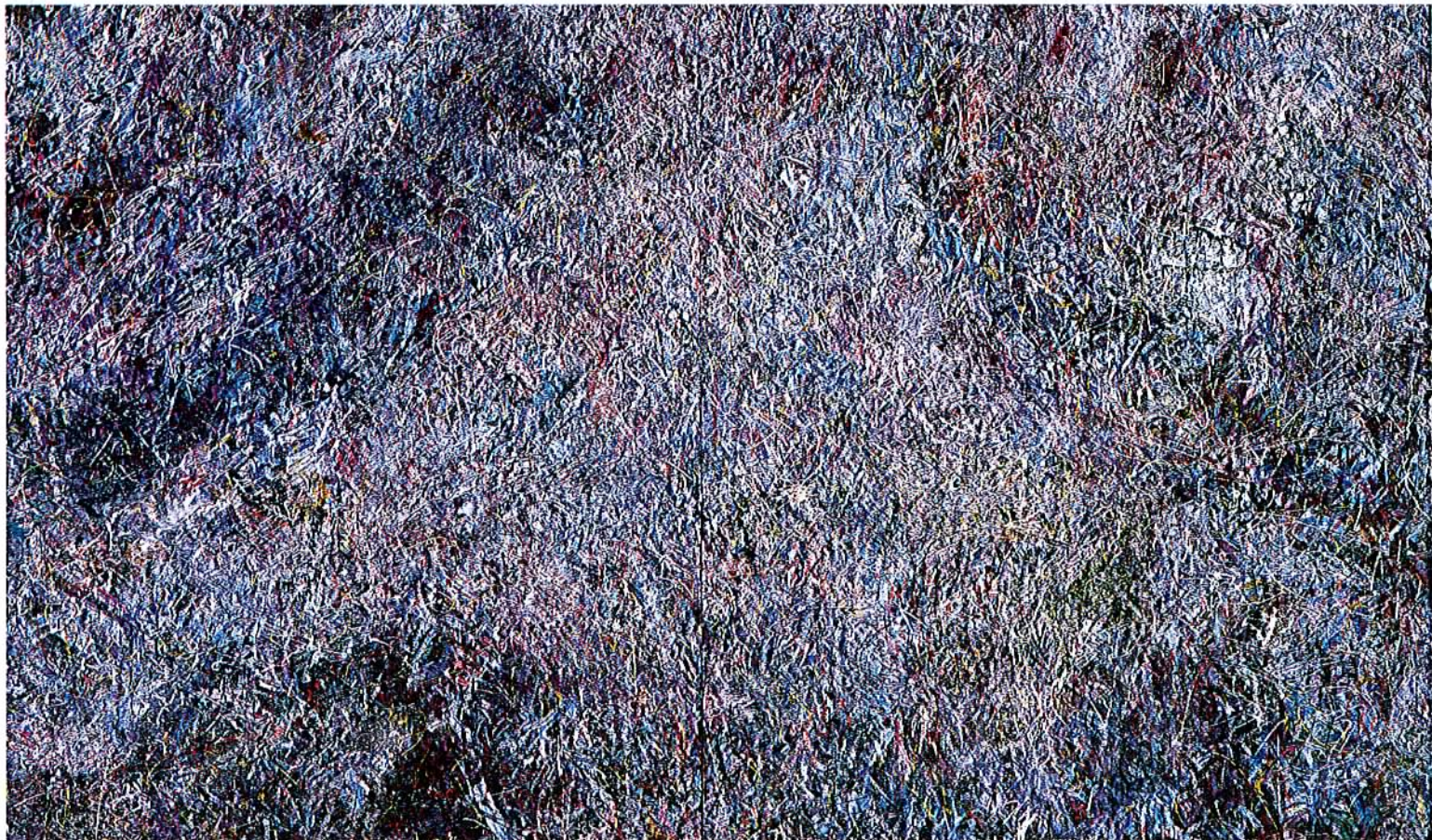
"The paint -- now thickened acrylics -- is applied to the surface in screen-like layers. It is put on with his fingers, dripped on from sticks, spattered on, trowelled on, poured on in rivulets, and sometimes he even attaches pre-dried clots of pigment to the canvas as well. Like Pollock before him and Monet before that Rubin has developed a large repertoire of very specific kinds of strokes which he draws upon at will."

—April Kingsley

Curator, American Craft  
Museum, New York, New York

right: **Evening's End**  
acrylic on linen, 1993  
40x60"/102x152cm

bottom: **In God's Light**  
acrylic on linen, 1992  
74x108"/188x274cm





# MICHAEL RUBIN

Reprinted from

**ArtNews, Summer 1992**

**Michael Rubin**

Los Angeles Contemporary Arts

**J**ackson Pollock is probably the first name that pops into the viewer's mind during a show of Michael Rubin's paintings and prints — and for good reason. Rubin's densely impacted fields of drips, splashes, and swirling lines would be unthinkable without the seminal work of that pioneering Abstract Expressionist. The issue of indebtedness soon fades, however, as Rubin proves his ability to deliver fresh-looking work in this familiar territory.

In various formats, from the 6 1/2-foot-tall *White Line Body* to the 12-foot-wide diptych *Against the Dragon*, Rubin unifies vast expanses of space while orchestrating passages of intimate detail in acrylic on canvas. He also emerges as a deft colorist. Whether seen from a distance, as inflected fields of intense hues that invite contemplation, or up close, as multilayered pockets of discovery, Rubin's paintings are visually engrossing.

Their surfaces coalesce as fields of energy—quivering, throbbing, and occasionally plunging into caves of darkness. *Chinese Orange*, for example, is a closely keyed, richly textured hymn to color, while *Yellow Climber* inspires thoughts of mysterious landscapes as a yellow arch rises amid skeins of blue pigment.

The same sensibility informs the etchings and lithographs, shown here for the first time, but Rubin lets more air into the prints and allows more contrast. Working with white space and watery paths of color as well as barbed, wiry line, he reveals a considerable repertoire of energetic expression.

— Suzanne Muchnic



**Light Reflection**, acrylic on linen, 1993, 34x28"/86x71cm (section)



**Neptune Before Dark**, acrylic on linen, 1991, 64x96"/163x244cm



# MICHAEL RUBIN -

Reprinted from  
***Visions Art Quarterly*, Fall 1992**

**D**espite the biblical fact that the human race has long since fallen from grace and has been sentenced, for our original sins, to a lifetime of labor, there are still places in the world that act as beacons for those who seek paradise. Malibu surely must be one of those idyllic sites. Here, one can find warm days of perpetual sunshine, palm trees swaying in the ocean breeze, wide and smooth beaches, and pounding surf that seems too Hollywood to be real. This is a place where one could conveniently neglect the Creator's intent and forget the world of worry and work. Like any Garden of Eden, the temptations are seductive; but some individuals actually come to Malibu to work, seeking inspiration in Arcadia.

The East Coast painter Michael Rubin is one of these determined pilgrims searching for what is left of California's paradise. The artist is temporarily in exile, a long way from home, far from his own territory: a city with an aggressive edge which he misses, a city with museums full of old master paintings which he worships — New York. In contrast to sharp-tongued Easterners and drifting

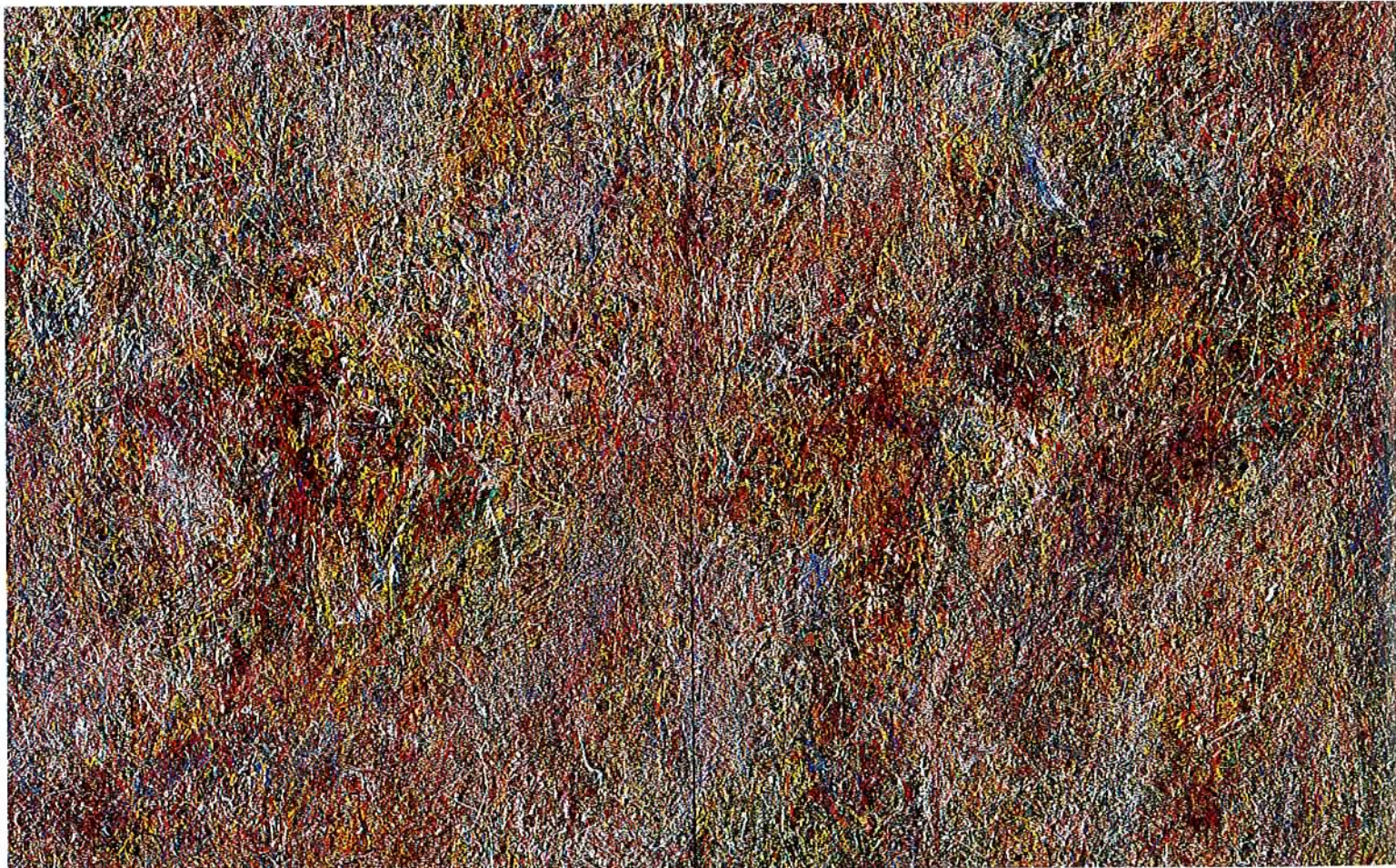
piles of snow, California provided Rubin with a gentler and kinder ambiance and a strong Mediterranean light. Over the winter and spring of Malibu, he produced an impressive body of work, painted in tune with the sound of wind and waves. I was one of the last to see the Malibu paintings: a few days after my visit, they were packed up and shipped back to New York. **The art world has taken notice of Michael Rubin, and his complex and vivid canvases are greatly in demand.**

For many years Rubin worked in near obscurity, slowly building a group of supporters and collectors. His reputation grew the old-fashioned way: he earned it by word of mouth. **Finally, the dealers began coming to him, eagerly gathering up his abstract and expressive canvases that seem to explode with bizarre colors, barely contained within the stretcher bars.** Today, Rubin is represented coast to coast, from New York to Huntington Beach. He is in the process of arriving, staking a claim to his own territory in painting.

Like many successes, Rubin's artistic recognition hardly came overnight but was the result of a long professional evolution. In his neatly pressed khakis and polished Weejuns, Rubin looked

every bit the Easterner, but his origins are actually more homespun and middle American, the Kansas of Dorothy and Toto. An articulate man, the painter is, like his own paintings, made of many layers, for he is also printmaker and schoolmaster with a degree in art education. He could have been many things: an architect (he almost has a Masters' degree in architecture), or a ceramist (he was a gifted potter who no longer throws). Rubin is aware of history and thinks like an art historian, visiting art exhibitions over and over to see "how good art can be" and to reassure himself that "art is possible." Deeply moved by great art, he once cried before Rembrandt's *Flora*. Regardless of his versatility, Rubin is, above all else, an artist who paints.

In studying Rubin's work, one is reminded of the critic Harold Bloom's discussion of artists who respond by way of a "strong mis-reading" of their influential predecessors. As an artist of the postmodern period, Rubin shares the burden of history and the legacy of art and the question that troubles the sleep of all who stretch canvases and clean brushes: **how is it possible to paint after Pollock? Far from feeling belated, Michael Rubin, painting in 1992, feels challenged.** Rubin chose to go back to the basics of line, color and



**Triflora, acrylic on linen, 1992, 66x84"/168x213cm (section)**



# EXILE IN PARADISE

composition, to re-look at the masters and to re-learn new solutions. The inheritance of Pollock is not a spent one, but a richness of possibilities.

Jackson Pollock, like Monet and Seurat, worked with artistic and formal problems of line and color and composition, problems which are eternal to painting, regardless of time and style. There are those who see the apparent spontaneity of Pollock but miss the slow deliberation; those who see the color of Seurat but miss the precise configurations; and those who see the slashing brushstrokes of the late work of Monet but miss the architectonics. And the individuals who might initially think of Rubin in connection with these predecessors are looking at his work only superficially, for the early Modernists tended to resolve their paintings into a whole Gestalt. Rubin, on the other hand, withholds completion and allows agonism to rule.

Monet, Seurat and Pollock all relied upon a strong, powerful structure which was akin to an all-over grid, underpinning the play of the brush. Michael Rubin's training in architecture provides his work with an armature that acts as a governing foundation for thick, raking layers of paint. His considerable experience as a printmaker also comes into play, for Rubin is a tireless experimenter who confounds his printers by stacking sheet upon sheet of color on a single sheet of paper. His lithographs and etchings are delicate and heavy, airy and weighty, spontaneous and controlled at the same time, with all polarities held in suspension.

Although his paintings are as layered as those of the early modernists, they are much less lyrical and far less decorative than the gardens of Monet or the spun clouds of Pollock, and less harmonious than the repetitious patterning of Seurat. Rubin is an artist who works against himself and who gets satisfaction out of struggle. The painter, who both re-reads and mis-reads is not a natural colorist, but he obstinately uses color. This strange color is just a bit off, acidic, terse and tense, the biting tones acting as a record of a wrestling match against the aesthetics of the sensuous. His colors range from shrill oranges to trenchant blacks which somehow allow other colors to co-exist on lower levels. **The large acrylic paintings appear to be vibrating with living color, self-activated and organic but they are, according to the artist, "as constructed as a Swiss watch."**

Not to be confused with Gerhard Richter, who is more of a commentator on Abstract Expressionism, Rubin seems to have chosen to re-enter that same arena simply because no artist can ever have the last word. There is always more to be said. His self-imposed task is not to be a follower but to be a re-enactor, to return to the scene of painting and to relearn how to make a mark and how to construct a painting. The late art critic Harold Rosenberg explained the process of those early New York artists by remarking "What was to go on the canvas was not a picture but an event." The "event" for Rubin is, as the critic envisioned it,



**Seaweed, acrylic on linen, 1992, 54x42"/137x107cm (section)**

an existential one in which the artist uses what he describes as his "awkward" sense of color to do something else to and with painting: to become himself — problematic, contradictory and completely human.

As a painter, Rubin is also an archaeologist of his own life and of his own art, sifting through the strata of the canvas, shifting layers of paint, piling up, not to cover, but to reveal. Like the Chinese master painters of the Sung period, Rubin creates "landscapes" which are also painted topographies of psychic and physical duality. The Chinese would call this doubling of artist and landscape a dynamic harmony, referring to the uncertain existence of human beings on earth and the never-ending cyclic oscillations of nature itself. This New York artist, however, does not see nor does he seek a stasis in his work. "Contradiction is all there is," Rubin stated. For him, a canvas is something to push against, and he reacts to it not as a mere surface to be covered but as an object to be worked upon, like a lump of obstinate clay. This pushing, this struggle is visually expressed as the experience of living itself, and this spiritual working sets up a compelling visual experience for the audience.

The archeological and existential exploration is both painterly and personal, pulling and pushing the viewer from the notion of painting as perceptual disfigurement to a discovery of the conceptual deliberation. At times Rubin's colors can be difficult and unexpected, and at other times beautiful and gentle. The thoughtful paint handling just misses being virtuosic and refuses free facility in favor of an

intellectualized scaffolding of slabs of color. The spectator is confronted with collisions between the traditional expectations of harmonized color and the surprising reality of raw paint and off-beat hues.

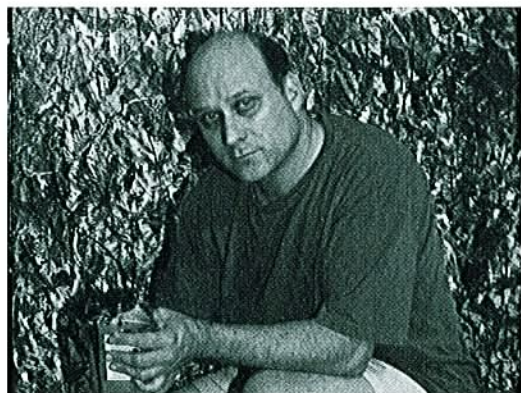
Nothing is ever finished and nothing comes easy to this artist who resists the seductive qualities of southern California but is vitalized by the change of scene, bringing his own New York brand of intensity to the soft Malibu spring. For Rubin, the process of architectonic layering and the visual journey through the many levels of markmaking are of paramount importance. Through works (mis) ruled by a harsh and massive calligraphy captured in a controlling architecture, Rubin explores the territory of the Beautiful; what is and is not beautiful?

If there is beauty in the New York artist's work, it is a new and "forced" beauty, akin to Matisse's "forced deformations" that reinterpreted the human body from a desirable object into a conceptual form. Many paintings and prints by Rubin force ideas of structure and harmony into new arenas by turning up the volume of color and markmaking to the high pitch of an ostinato-like intensity. Painting is pushed far away from the civilizing armchair experience sought by Matisse. For Michael Rubin, a temporary exile in a temporary paradise, art seems to be a fundamental and atavistic act, a return to a starting place. From the beginning, after all, art has been a writing on the wall, a gesture of humanness, an act of being, a marker on the long and lonely journey we have named life.

— J.S.M. Willette



# RUBIN EXHIBITIONS



Michael Rubin in his studio.



**Water #5**, acrylic on cotton canvas, 1993  
37x48"/94x122cm (section)

**bottom left:**  
**L.A. 7A.M.**, acrylic on linen, 1993  
28x48"/71x122cm

**bottom right:**  
**Ground #1**, acrylic on linen, 1993  
22x34"/56x86cm

## Solo Exhibitions:

- 1994 • Galerie Kaj Forsblom, Finland
- 1993 • Robert Stein Fine Art, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1992 • Los Angeles Contemporary Art Gallery, California
- 1991 • Charles Whitchurch Gallery, Huntington Beach, California
- 1990 • Phillip Samuels Fine Art, St. Louis, Missouri
- Magidson Fine Art, New York
- 1989 • Philip Samuels Fine Art, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1988 • Grae Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1987 • Grae Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1984 • Forest Park Art Gallery, St. Louis Community College, Missouri
- 1983 • Spectro Gallery, Newcastle, England
- Signet Arts Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1982 • New Harmony Art Gallery, Indiana
- 1981 • Maryville College Art Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1980 • St. Louis University Gallery, Missouri

## Public And Private Collections:

(shortened list)

- The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
- Fort Wayne Art Museum, Indiana
- Owensboro Art Museum, Kentucky
- Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville
- St. Louis University, Missouri
- Steinbergh Gallery, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
- Fairmont Hotels, San Francisco
- IBM
- Jewish Hospital, St. Louis, Missouri
- Ivona Roth and Jan Martens Collection, Brussels
- Vincent Melzac Collection, Washington, D.C.
- Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone
- Raymond & Arlene Zimmerman, TN
- A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc.

## Group Exhibitions: (shortened list)

- 1994 • Joel Kessler Fine Art, Art Miami '94
- Marisa Del Re Gallery, Art Miami '94
- 1993 • Phillip Samuels Fine Art, Art Miami '93 International Art Exposition
- 1992 • Charles Whitchurch Gallery, Art L.A. '92, Los Angeles, California
- Shark's Incorporated, International Print Dealers Association Print Fair
- Valerie Miller Fine Art, Palm Desert, CA
- Phillip Samuels Fine Art, Art Miami '92 International Art Exposition
- 1991 • Helander Fine Art, New York
- Shark's Incorporated, The Armory, New York
- Fred Dorfmann Fine Art, New York
- Hokin Gallery, Bay Harbor, Florida
- Helander Fine Art, Palm Beach, Florida
- Phillip Samuels Fine Art, Art Chicago International Gallery Invitational
- Judith Posner, Los Angeles Contemporary Art Fair
- 1990 • Judith Posner, Los Angeles Contemporary Art Fair
- 1989 • Shark's Incorporated, Los Angeles International Art Fair
- 1988 • Shark's Incorporated, Los Angeles International Art Fair
- 1987 • Center for the Arts and Humanities, Arvada, Colorado
- Grae Gallery, St. Louis, Missouri
- 1985-92 • Sharks' Incorporated, Chicago International Art Exposition
- 1985 • Dayton State University, "Prints by Shark's Lithography", Ohio
- 1983 • Edinburgh Arts Festival, Scotland
- Gallery 7, Newcastle, England
- Charlotte Press, Newcastle, England
- 1982 • London Printmakers Council, England
- 1981 • London Printmakers Council, England
- New Harmony Art Gallery, Indiana
- 1980 • Mid-America Art Exhibition, Owensboro, Kentucky; Purchase Prize
- New Harmony Art Gallery, Indiana
- 1979 • DeKalb '79 National Drawing and Print Show, Illinois; Honorable Mention

