

# MYARTSPACE>BLOG

MYARTSPACE IS A FRESH NEW COMMUNITY-BASED WEBSITE FOR ESTABLISHED ARTISTS, EMERGING ARTISTS, ASPIRING ARTISTS, PHOTOGRAPHERS AND MEMBERS OF THE ART WORLD - TEACHERS, COLLECTORS, MUSEUMS, GALLERIES, ART BUYERS. MEMBERS WILL BE ABLE ESTABLISH THEIR PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY, BUILD AND DISPLAY GALLERIES OF THEIR WORKS, PROMOTE THEIR WORKS AND CAREER, PARTICIPATE IN DIALOG, COMPETITION AND EVENTS, AND BUILD AN ONLINE STORE TO SELL PRODUCTS.

MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007

## Art Space Talk: Marcia Kocot and Tom Hatton

I recently interviewed Marcia Kocot and Tom Hatton. This husband and wife team have been creating art together for several decades. Tom and Marcia met at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1964. Their first collaborative interaction took place in 1965.

Over the years, their work has been exhibited/ reviewed under the following names: Hatten Co., Hatten, Tom Hatten, Tom & X Hatten, Tom Hatten Xochital, XOCHITALTOMHATTEN, Kocot-Hatten and Kocot and Hatten. Their collaborative work has been exhibited widely and has been published/reviewed in New American Paintings, Artnews, Art-forum, New Art Examiner, and several other publications.



(Scale/Ratio: a work for two sites, 1989)

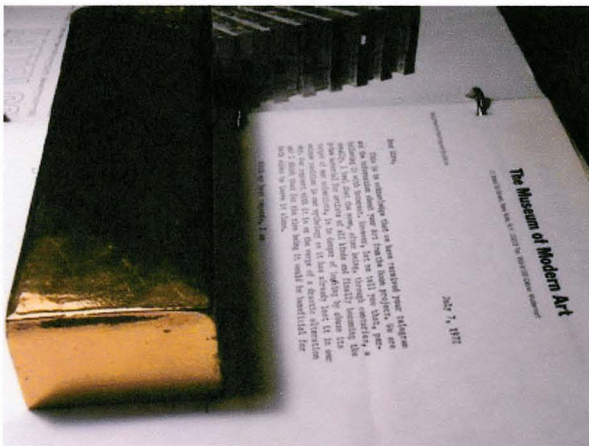
Q. Thomas, Marcia... the two of you met at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in December of 1964. Your first collaborative interaction took place in 1965. What made you both decide to work together as a team?

A. "We spent several years of working together prior to realizing we were "collaborating". Initially we posed for each other and critiqued each other's paintings and drawings. This lead to actually touching and altering the other's work in a variety of media; it was just a natural evolution leading to collaboration.



(Study for a Life Size Photograph of the Empire State Building)

The decision to work as a team came in 1970 when we proposed building a life size photograph of the Empire State building to be erected in Manhattan for the nation's bicentennial. We approached Leo Castelli with the concept; all of us knew it could never happen, because even though the technology existed for making the photograph (by way of a mosaic method NASA developed to photographically map the Moon) architectural requirements would necessitate erecting a building to support the photograph. Nonetheless, we all got a kick out of the thought of giving the icon the opportunity to reflect on its own beauty.



(18 Karat Gold Plated Prototype for First Piece of Art for/from the Moon)

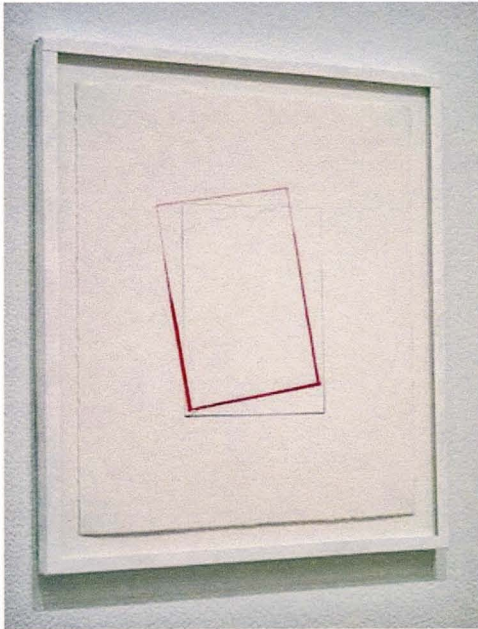
Also during the early 1970s, another unrealized work, but one that was central to our realization of how important it was for us to work together, was the First Piece of Art for/from the Moon. Approximately five hundred 18-karat gold-plated wooden bricks were to have circulated between three acrylic chambers, each ten feet on a side, placed in three museums around the country. The gold would travel from one location to the next, leaving an empty space in its wake for the duration of the exhibition. The reactions to the proposal varied; MOMA's causing the biggest



surprise. Without naming names, we were advised to "leave the Moon alone" because it was losing its unique place in history."

Q. I will assume that you have met many interesting people in the 'art world' having worked together for so many years. Who has been the most influential person you have both met?

A. "As strange as it may sound, it would be each other. From the outset our influence on each other has been a constant, affecting every facet of our work. What is most intriguing is the more time we spend together, the more we inspire each other."

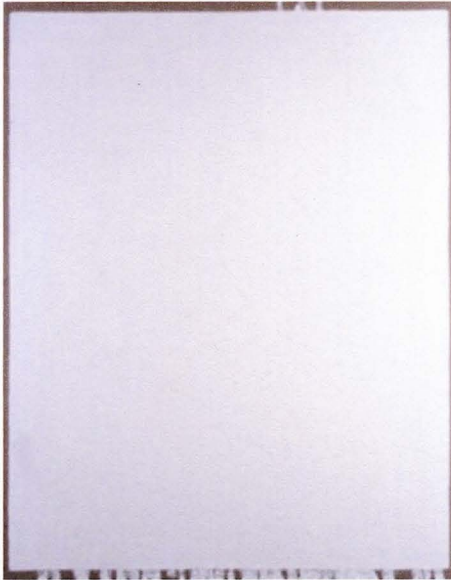


(Untitled From 'Semiconscious' Series, 6-7 May, 2004- 2004)

Q. Do you ever have a 'clash of ideas', so to speak? Have you ever had a conflict in creative direction? How do you work it out?

A. "We tend to appreciate the same artists and developments in the history of art; we have like-minded aesthetic sensibilities. Yes, there are clashes, but that is just part of the process. As individual artists clash with themselves all of the time, we are no different. Additionally, in our collaboration division of labor is not an issue. We are not interested in simply what technically, or conceptually either of us has to bring to a project. If neither of us knows how to do something that is relevant to a work we are creating, we learn what needs to be done.

It is not whose idea we follow, but rather the idea and its potential that is scrutinized. Often we do not remember whose idea sparks the initial thinking. Rather than be completely one person's idea, it usually becomes a compilation of thoughts that rapidly morph into what may or may not be recognizable from that first "spark". Sometimes we begin with a radical idea that then frees up the thought process. Other times we work out sketches then compare and discuss where we go from there. Often the concept determines the choice of medium.



(Untitled (Snowrain white tablet), 2000)

Q. Over the years, your work has also been exhibited/ reviewed under the following names: Hatten Co., Hatten, Tom Hatten, Tom & X Hatten, Tom Hatten Xochital, XOCHITALTOMHATTEN, Kocot-Hatten and Kocot and Hatten. Why have you used so many names? Do they represent changes in direction?

A. "Yes, sometimes the name changes represent changes in direction.

The Life Size Photograph of the Empire State Building and the First Piece of Art for/from the Moon were presented as works by "Hatten Company" because the magnitude of the requests needed a sense of authority and given the attitude towards female artists at that time, we felt the need for ambiguity. It was not unusual to receive letters simply addressed "Dear Sirs".



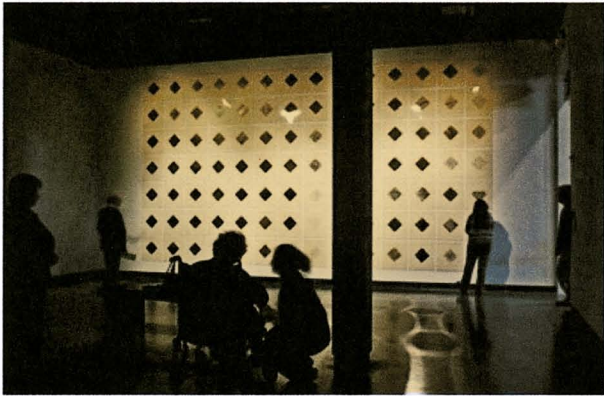
(Diptych from 10 Year Portrait Project (1981))

When we made the commitment in 1973 to spend ten years on a painting project, we also decided to credit those paintings to "Tom Hatten". Our primary reasoning was practical- the goal was to learn and grow together by painting a portrait of ourselves and each other, once a week for the ten years. We did not want or need the distraction of people trying to figure out who did what and

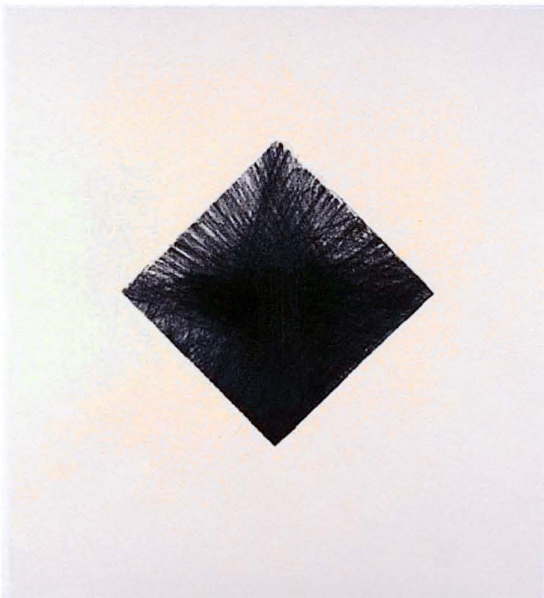


thus give them the opportunity to "decide" who might be the more deft painter. Still, this type of questioning did take place among those few who were aware. This was exactly what we were trying to avoid. We wanted the work to stand on its own. The reason we came up with the ten year project in the first place was because many of our artist friends were growing apart, separating and divorcing due, in part, to the divisive pressures of the art world.

We never cease to be astonished by the value placed on an artist's signature. A 1976 exhibition titled "Artist's Signatures" included "X's Forgery", a clear acrylic panel (the same size as the Mona Lisa) upon which Marcia forged the "Tom Hatten" signature in gold leaf. This work too was credited to Tom Hatten. The issue of the artist's signature came into question again in 1994 when we asked a fellow artist to sign over the authorship of one of his most familiar works. The work was subsequently exhibited along with the signed transfer of authorship."



(DCCA "Wake" Installation- Drawings)

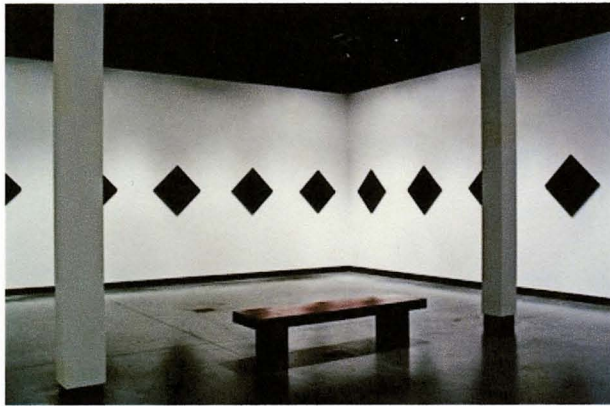


Q. Your work has been exhibited at the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art, Andy Warhol Museum, Philadelphia Museum of Art... what exhibit do you consider to have been your most important? Also, how has society influenced your art? Are there any social implications in your art?

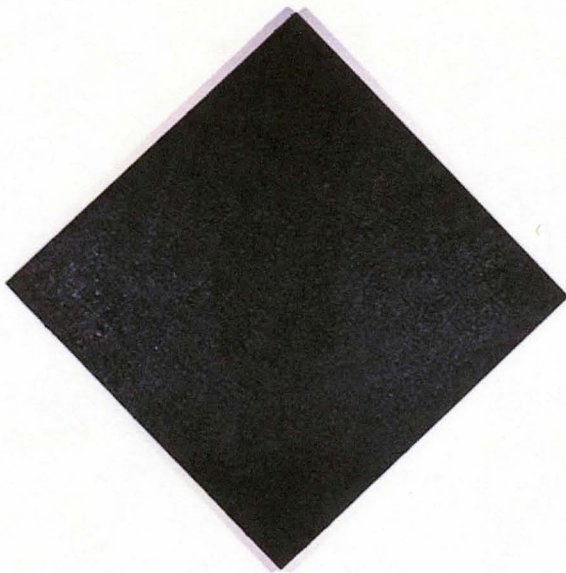
A. "'Wake' at the Delaware Center for Contemporary Art was probably the most important

exhibition for us and that work following 9/11, most influenced by society.

9/11 shook us to our very core and as we struggled to regain our footing in the dark days and months that followed, our elegiac "Black Ground" series began to emerge. These paintings and drawings were created in the dark, in the middle of the night, on the bridge between sleep and wakefulness. While this method of working was not new for us, other paintings from a few years earlier were all white with lines, which like synaptic impulses, seem to appear and disappear. Our "Semiconscious" canvases continued in the summer of 2001 with black replacing white. However, the somber Black Ground paintings born of 9/11 replaced earlier dreamy canvases with dense tar-like paint, an enveloping pitch-black shroud. Each of the ninety-seven "Wake" drawings held a different strata, one an impenetrable gray fog, another marked by deep ebony gouges, still others a tangle of interlocking lines."



(DCCA "Wake" Installation- paintings)



Q. Your work has been published/reviewed in New American Paintings, Artnews, Art-forum, New Art Examiner, and several other publications. Did you expect your combined effort to be so successful?

A. "We are greatly appreciative of not only the efforts put forth in reviewing our work but also with



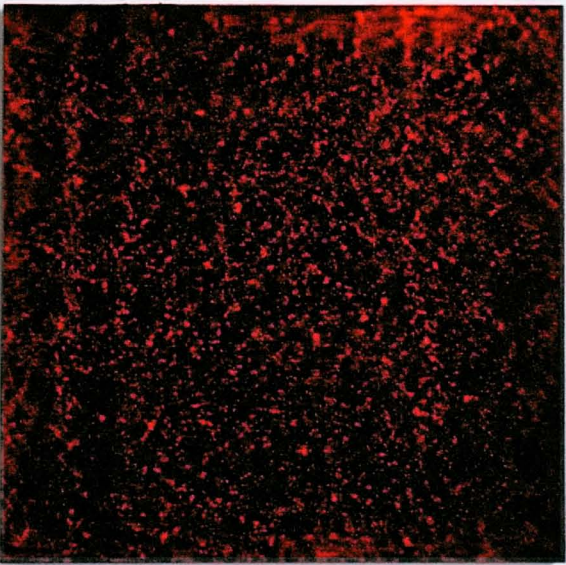
discussions we have with our peers. Our focus has always been on the work and multiple perspectives can be very enlightening."



(Additive Subtractive Primaries - Green, 2005-2006)

Q. Marcia, Thomas... can you share some of your philosophy about art and artistic creation?

A. "To paraphrase a quote by us in an Institute of Contemporary Art catalogue from 1975, "the job of the artist is to forever try to prove that there is art.""



(Additive Subtractive Primaries - Red, 2005-2006)

Q. Do you have any 'studio rituals'? As in, do you listen to certain types of music together while working? What helps to get you both in the mood for working?

A. "The majority of our current work, at least on the creative side, is done in the hypnopompic (waking) state, as opposed to the hypnogogic state preceding sleep. An entry in one of Andre

Breton's diaries listed the hypnagogic as where he got the idea for automatic writing.

In the "awake studio" when grounding canvases or setting up for video shoots, music ranges from Koto to Cecilia Bartoli to set the tempo for the tasks at hand. As for getting in the mood for working, we do so whether we are in the mood, or not."



(Dawn- 8 August 2005 - sky water)

Q. Discuss one of your pieces. What were you thinking when you created it?

A. "Dawn (Image above: 8 August 2005-Sky Water) is one of a suite of thirteen DVDs titled Meditations. Our videos are not edited aside from clipping the start and end points. Many of our non-narrative videos are basically like watching the earth breathe, they function as a way for us to preserve moments of a disappearing and often fragile nature. Sky Water was filmed in the Berkshires, the recordings took place at dawn over the course of five days. During taping neither of us thought we were going to be able to record anything satisfying. Our original intent had been to capture the mountains at first light, but shifted after reviewing footage that focused on the pristine lake itself. We found our gaze moving downward and upward, outside, in-between and inside simultaneously, reflections affecting us physically and mentally. A dark and solid mountain became fluid, part of some primal rhythm. The clouds shaping and reshaping themselves as they moved across both sky and water... bits of life inserted themselves unexpectedly- fish nibbling at invisible insects- dragonflies gracefully cruising a mere fraction of an inch above the serene surface."



(Meditations: Moonlight (29 August 2004), 2004)

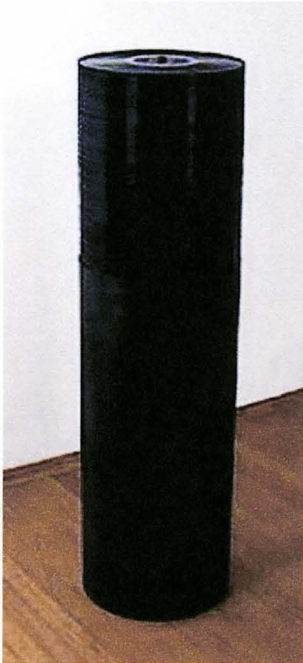


Q. Where can we see more of your art?

A. "<http://www.artnet.com/lbecker.html> (Larry Becker Contemporary Art)"

Q. Are you both represented by the same gallery?

A. "We have not created work individually since the early 1970s."



(Voice Print, 1970-2001)

Q. "Any tips for emerging artists or artists who are thinking of collaborating on projects?"

A. "Our collaboration focuses on two artists wanting to create a work of art that upon completion stands on its own, one that in the final result could have been created by one, two or any number of artists. Perhaps the most difficult and rewarding aspect of working in this method of collaboration is having a partner, or partners you trust so much that you're willing to allow them to change anything, or everything you have done."

At the opening of Jean Tinguely's 1959 exhibition in Dusseldorf, Yves Klein in a prepared talk spoke of his concept of collaboration that included the right of any artist to walk up to any other artist's work and sign their name. That degree of ideal trust and belief in artistic community was not practical in his time or ours, but conceptually he articulated how every artist's work is linked with the work of all other artists."



(Scale / Ratio, [Plan of Bipolar Dynamic] Floorcloth, 1989)

Q. Has your work ever been censored? If so, how did you deal with it?

A. "Our work has not been censored, but several instances censoring our collaboration have occurred. In 1984, we had a work included in an exhibition, a tribute to another artist. The work was catalogued only by Hatten's name. The curator, who happened to be a female, refused to re-credit properly. She stated she did not think it was important that the female of the collaboration be given credit. A correction was made only when she was informed the work would be removed from the exhibition."

Q. What can you tell our readers about the art scene in your area?

A. "Philadelphia has a number of fine major museums such as The Philadelphia Museum of Art, currently exhibiting Thomas Chimes, The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (art school and museum), where a large work by Robert Ryman was permanently installed only recently, the Rodin Museum, and the Barnes Foundation, with its wealth of Cezannes and Matisses (just a short ride from center city.) Among the outstanding galleries in the city are Larry Becker Contemporary Art, Locks Gallery, Gallery Joe, Gallery 339, Slought Foundation, Vox Populi and Basekamp."

Q. Is there anything else you would like to say about your collaborative art or the 'art world'?

A. "We are only qualified to speak on long term collaboration. We are always trying new ways to bring our collaboration closer yet still retain our own individuality. Ego is most dangerous to collaboration. Our objective is to sublimate ego by way of working in the hypnopompic state."

I hope that you have enjoyed my interview with Marcia Kocot and Tom Hatton- Kocot and Hatton. Feel free to critique or discuss their work.

Take care, Stay true,

Brian Sherwin

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