

### **Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia**

Elsa Longhauser, Director

Richard Torchia, Curator

Moore College of Art and Design

20th Street & The Parkway

Philadelphia, PA 19103

### **Jessica Berwind Gallery**

Jessica Berwind, Director

1618 Latimer Street

Philadelphia, PA 19103

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the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts and  
Golden Artist Colors, Inc.

Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia  
Moore College of Art and Design

KOCOT and HATTEN:  
**SCALE**  

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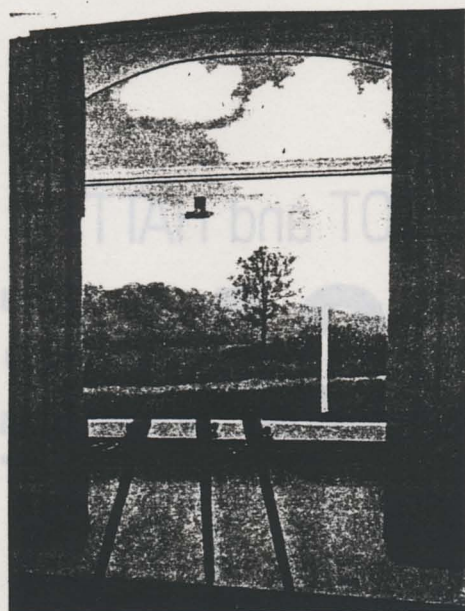
**RATIO**

a work for two sites

"Scale/Ratio" depicts the artists' interest in the nature of resemblance, combining multiple and often contradictory perspectives, and a growing dissatisfaction with the historically persistent construct of painting as window-scape that have been central to their work since Kocot and Hatten initiated their collaborative activities more than twenty years ago.

"Scale/Ratio" for two sites  
The artists' collaborative work  
Jessica Berwind Gallery  
January 6—February 4, 1989





Rene Magritte  
*La Condition Humaine*, 1933

## SCALE RATIO

The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space a presence possessed by other spaces where conventions are preserved through the repetition of a closed system of values. Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics.

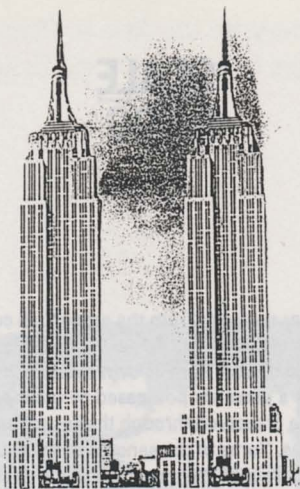
Brian O'Doherty  
"Inside the White Cube:  
Notes on the Gallery Space", 1976<sup>1</sup>

For "Scale/Ratio," a work for two sites, the collaborative team of Kocot and Hatten have appropriated two opposing variations on what critic Brian O'Doherty has labeled the "white cube." The Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia, at Moore College of Art and Design, is perhaps one of the finest contemporary examples of an institutional manifestation of the cube. The Jessica Berwind Gallery, a small, historical town house ten blocks away, is an ideal residential interpretation of the cube. Both spaces are as classic as they are eccentric; both rely on the clinical purity of white paint to become "chambers of esthetics." As sites for "Scale/Ratio," they function as laboratories for a circuitous investigation that explores how context, site, and scale affect the perception of painting, and, conversely, how paintings affect the perception of context, site, and scale.

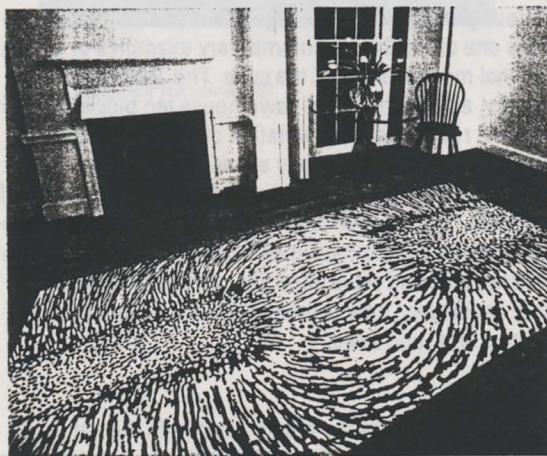
"Scale/Ratio" distills the artists' interest in the nature of resemblance, combining multiple and often contradictory perspectives, and a growing dissatisfaction with the historically persistent construct of painting as window-- concerns that have been central to their work since Kocot and Hatten initiated their collaborative activities more than twenty years ago.

"Scale/Ratio" is one artwork, one installation for two sites. The artists are not interested in focusing the viewer's at-





Kocot and Hatten  
Study for *The Life Size Photograph of  
the Empire State Building*, 1970  
collage  
4" x 6"



*Scale/Ratio*, Floorcloth, 1989  
installation view of Jessica Berwind Gallery

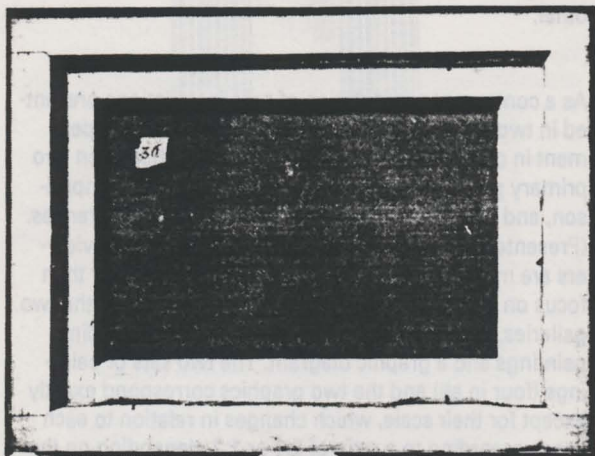
tention on any single component in the piece but, rather, on the relations between components-- what Robert Smithson, discussing his "sites" and "non-sites," referred to as "the back and forth thing."<sup>2</sup> Visiting the Levy Gallery is not a substitute for visiting the Jessica Berwind Gallery, or vice versa. It is the artists' intention that viewers visit both galleries to experience the complete piece. To this end, photographs of each installation are hung in both galleries to entice viewers in one space to visit the other.

As a concurrent presentation of twin installations presented in two different locations, "*Scale/Ratio*" is an experiment in comparative analysis. The piece is based on two primary principles: that scale is determined by comparison, and that close resemblances exaggerate differences. (Presented with two purportedly identical objects, viewers are more inclined to single out contrasts rather than focus on the likenesses between them.) In each of the two galleries, the artists have placed a pair of freestanding paintings and a graphic diagram. The two sets of paintings (four in all) and the two graphics correspond exactly except for their scale, which changes in relation to each space according to a ratio of 2:1 or 1:2, depending on the sequence or direction of viewing. The larger work, for the Levy Gallery, relates to its spacious open plan; the smaller work, for the Jessica Berwind Gallery, responds to its intimate residential proportions.

Considering the many architectural differences between the two sites, the artists have been extremely sensitive to maintaining as many parallels as possible between the two installations, including the sequence in which the individual components make themselves known to the viewer. Each installation is introduced by a hallucinatory black-and-yellow graphic that diagrams the field between the two freestanding canvases that occupy an adjacent gallery. Once in the second room of each site, the *Plan of Bipolar Dynamics* as the graphic is titled, disappears from view, though its presence can still be felt.

The image is derived from a photograph of iron filings placed between two opposing magnetic poles, an illustration taken from a standard physics text. Rendered into high contrast by repeated photocopying and the use of a matte black against an iridescent yellow ground, this shimmering image radiates with the force it depicts. In the Levy Gallery, it covers an entire wall that separates the college atrium from the gallery proper, transforming the wall into a third freestanding painting. The mural is so optically overwhelming, it threatens to bend the linear contours of the architecture.





Cornelis Gysbrechts  
*Turned Over Canvas*, c. 1680  
oil on canvas



Rene Magritte  
*Representation*, 1962

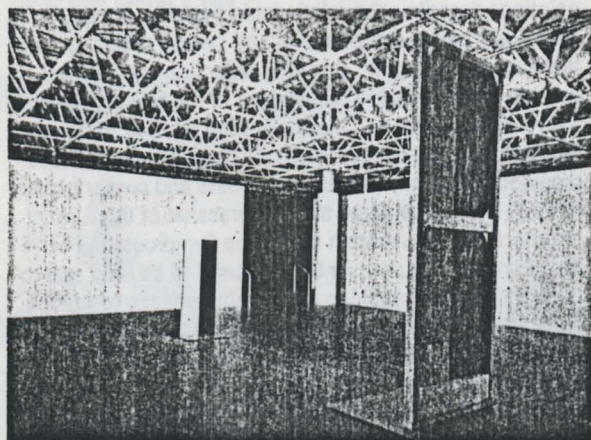
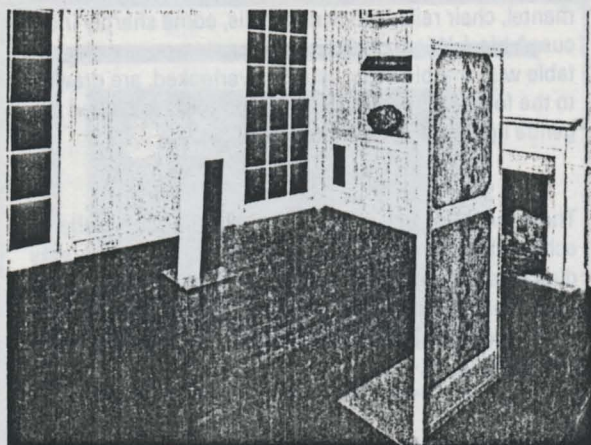
In the Jessica Berwind Gallery, the graphic plays a slightly different role. Even when reduced to half the scale of the Levy Gallery wall, the only surface large enough to receive an image of such proportions is the wood floor of the ground-floor gallery. This reinterpretation of the mural as a decorative floor covering expresses the gallery's identity as a renovated nineteenth-century town house. With nothing on the walls to distract the viewer's attention, the room's period details, such as its fireplace and mantel, chair rails, and windowsills, come sharply into focus. A black Windsor chair and a contemporary glass table with marble base, usually overlooked, are drawn into the foreground. Everything in the room is bathed in a gentle light cast upward from the floor.

The floorcloth's position in Berwind's first-floor gallery echoes the interaction of the two freestanding canvases directly above on the second floor. It is as if the force between the canvases themselves had activated the pattern on the cloth, which was created for viewers to walk over and stand upon.

While the graphic at each gallery describes the dynamic field between the two freestanding paintings, each set of paintings describes the relationship between the two sites. Each pair is comprised of one canvas precisely half the scale of its partner. This 50% reduction is conveyed not only by the relative dimensions of the two canvases--their height, width, and thickness-- but by their materials. The weave of the canvas linen, the size of the tack heads, the width of the exposed stretcher bars and corner braces have all been considered as an expression of this almost photographic reduction in scale. The fastidiousness of their construction permits the canvases to be read as two differently scaled versions of the same unseen prototype. The smaller of the two paintings in the Levy Gallery is exactly the same size as the larger of the two paintings in the Jessica Berwind Gallery. Thus, the ratio of 2:1 is maintained not only between each pair of paintings, but also between the two installations. It is no coincidence that this medium-sized work of the set-- the painting that appears in both installations-- is the height of the average adult, allowing it to become an objective physical link between the two installations.

Facing one another in the center of each gallery, and standing free from the walls, these monolithic works challenge the historically persistent concept of painting as window. The artists' intention is to liberate the viewer's position before the work, to make all approaches, perspectives, and viewing distances equally valid. We are encouraged to create our own pattern of orientation, to consider oblique views that foreshorten and distort the picture plane in all directions. One is invited to study the





*Scale/Ratio*, 1989  
installation views;  
Jessica Berwind Gallery (top)  
Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia (bottom)

backbone and vertebrae of the stretched canvases, as well as all other structural details that traditionally are hidden from view. Such thorough exposure transforms each canvas into an X-ray of itself. The thin line of unpainted linen between the broad stripes of black and white, invisible on the face of each canvas, becomes a vertical zip of light when seen from behind.

The relative positions of the paintings, in combination with their graduated sizes, provide textbook examples of linear and reverse perspective, depending on the viewer's approach and proximity to the works. This is particularly true in the Levy Gallery, where the tiled floor provides that classic instrument of perspective -- the grid. Walking from one canvas to the other, some viewers may feel subtle shifts in the perception of their own body size, a sense that they are smaller when standing near the larger canvases, larger when standing near the smaller one-- changes that are intensified by visiting both sites. Viewers tower over the smaller painting in the Jessica Berwind Gallery, yet feel dwarfed by the larger painting in the Levy Gallery, sensations not unlike those experienced by Alice in Wonderland or Gulliver on his trip from Lilliput to Brobdingnag.\* As the audience interacts with the canvases, the installation takes on the distinct character of theater and performance.

Supported by carbon steel bases, these canvases assume the pedestal posture of sculpture, yet they are undeniably paintings. The vertical bands of opposing black and white stripes are mirror images of one another. The pattern intensifies their verticality, causing them to be read as flaglike banners, or markers of the site, as well as reflective panels: black reflects black, white reflects white. The paired canvases actually seem to be staring at one another in a prolonged narcissistic gaze that the viewer interrupts by standing between them.

Though invited to inspect the differences and similarities between the two paintings, viewers are never quite able to look at both head-on at the same time. Instead, we are presented with the unusual opportunity to see at once the back and front of what is ostensibly the same object. Never, though, are we offered the chance to compare the

\* Gulliver, upon first observing the giants of Brobdingnag, is prompted to think of his own scale in relation to that of the Lilliputians: "I reflected what a mortification it must prove to me to appear as inconsiderable in this nation as one single Lilliputian would be among us... It might have pleased Fortune to let the Lilliputians find some nation, where the people were as diminutive with respect to them, as they were to me. And who knows that even this prodigious race of mortals might be equally overmatched in some distant part of the world, whereof we have yet no discovery." Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*, "The Voyage to Brobdingnag," Chapter 1, 1726.



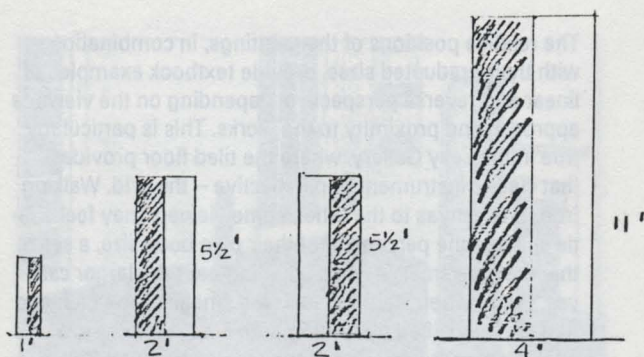
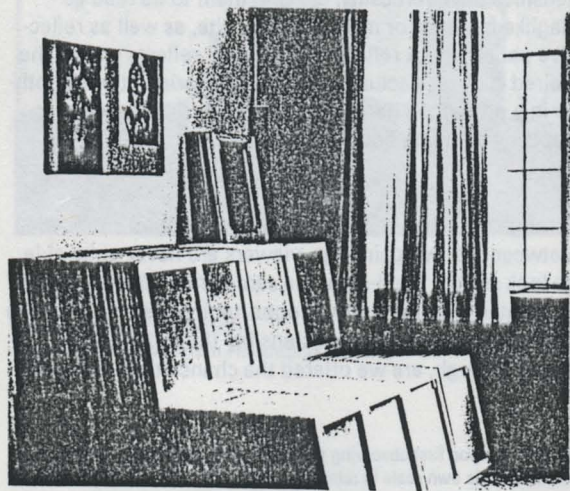


diagram showing relative sizes of freestanding paintings



Kocot and Hatten  
Studio photograph, 1977  
180 of 400 diptychs from  
self-portrait project (1973-83)

two objects side by side. Their placement frustrates our usual methods of comparative analysis, stimulating a more active, physical examination of the paintings. This investigation requires the use of memory and elicits a heightened perceptivity to the empirical data before the viewer—not only in relation to the paintings but to every nuance of the respective viewing spaces.

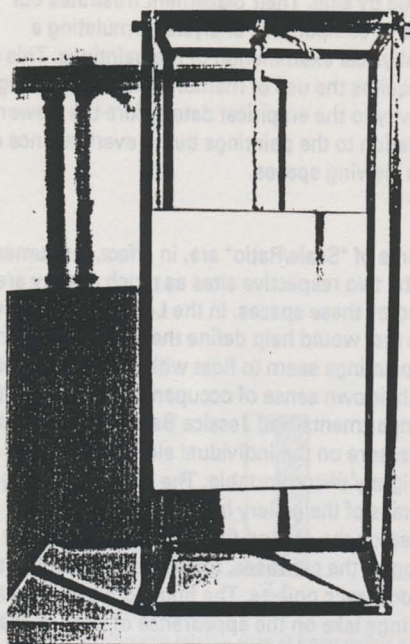
The components of "Scale/Ratio" are, in effect, instruments for studying the two respective sites as much as they are objects framed by these spaces. In the Levy Gallery, devoid of visual cues that would help define the scale of the components, the paintings seem to float without interference, determining their own sense of occupancy. The more intimate and compartmentalized Jessica Berwind Gallery exerts a faint pressure on the individual elements, making them seem slightly uncomfortable. The bare walls bring all the period details of the gallery into high relief. The few books arranged on the second-floor bookshelves attract as much attention as the canvases, restricting the paintings to the status of domestic objects. The floorcloth becomes a rug; the paintings take on the appearance of state-of-the-art stereo speakers.

With its emphasis on how artwork is seen, as opposed to what is observed, Kocot and Hatten's installation suggests the sculptural displacements of Michael Asher and the arrangements of Louise Lawler. Lawler's photographs of artworks as presented both in museum settings and in the homes and offices of collectors seem particularly relevant to "Scale/Ratio."<sup>3</sup>

The piece is, in many ways, a summation of Kocot and Hatten's work to date, as well as their most deliberate attempt yet to find a new place for painting. The artists are critical of the manner in which many easel canvases demand a single position for the viewer directly in front of the picture plane. "Scale/Ratio" eloquently redresses the problem.

In 1973, the team initiated a ten-year self-portrait project intended to document the variety of social masks worn over a decade. Employing the diptych format and painting mostly on unprimed linen, Kocot and Hatten developed a new approach to self-portraiture that permitted both artists to render their likenesses on the same canvases. Hatten painted Hatten and Kocot, Kocot painted Kocot and Hatten. The portrait series led directly to a subsequent body of work that combined a variety of perspective systems on one canvas, thereby offering the viewer a choice of entrances into the paintings. "Scale/Ratio" does not so much represent this diversity of perspectives but, rather, literalizes them in the physical activity of the viewer's changing orientation around the work.





Kocot and Hatten  
*Hanging Painting*, 1987  
 oil and acrylic on canvas, wood, rope, steel  
 33 1/3" x 15 3/4" x 13 1/4"

The installation emerges directly from an earlier series of monochrome canvases hung by ropes within iron supports that invited viewers to shift their position in relation to the paintings as they pleased. These "cages," which cast gridded shadows on the suspended canvases, not only functioned as frames for the paintings but could also be read as diagrams of the gallery space. They might easily serve as models for "Scale/Ratio" in the way that they isolate paintings in a specific space.

Kocot and Hatten are committed to their collaborative work. With its repetition of polarity and multiple perspectives, as well as its division of the viewer into spectator and object, "Scale/Ratio" is clearly the product of a dialogue between two minds. The work is a conversation, posing more questions than can be answered. Despite its appearance as a hermetic, highly self-reflexive system, it invites participation, interpretation, and involvement. Ultimately, "Scale/Ratio" calls into question the conventions of the "white cube" and how it is used.

Richard Torchia  
 Curator  
 Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia

#### Selected Bibliography

- Doherty, Suzanne. "Made in Philadelphia II," *Working on the Edge*, Institute of Contemporary Art, 1974.  
 Donohoe, Victoria. "Lawrence Oliver Gallery Installation," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 January 1982.  
 Halpern, Susan. "Institution of Contemporary Art," *Artforum*, January 1975.  
 Jermoluk, Ann. "Artists' Statements," *Art News*, November 1976.  
 McFadden, Sara. "Report from Philadelphia," *Art in America*, May/June 1978.  
 Stewart, Pat. "Art as 'Total Experience,'" *The Observer*, 26 October 1976.  
 Stewart, Pat. "Nexus Gallery Installation," *Art Exchange*, June 1978.

#### Footnotes:

1. Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space," *Artforum*, March 1976, Volume XIV/6. (Reprinted in *The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, The Lapis Press, San Francisco, 1986.)
2. "Symposium," in Nina Jager, ed. *Earth Art*, Ithaca, Andrew Dickson White Museum of Art, 1970, n.p.; reprinted in Nancy Holt, ed. *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, p. 160.
3. Louise Lawler, "Arrangements of Pictures," *October* No. 26, (Fall 1983), MIT Press.



## Checklist

Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia

*Scale/Ratio*, Plan of Bipolar Dynamic, 1989

mural, acrylic on gallery wall

9' x 20'

*Scale/Ratio*, Large Canvas, 1988

linen, acrylic, wood & steel

10'8" x 5' x 5'

*Scale/Ratio*, Medium Canvas-LG, 1988

linen, acrylic, wood & steel

5'4" x 2 1/2" x 2 1/2"

Jessica Berwind Gallery

*Scale/Ratio*, Floorcloth, 1989

canvas, acrylic, polyurethane varnish

4 1/2' x 10'

*Scale/Ratio*, Medium Canvas-JB, 1988

linen, acrylic, wood and steel

64" x 30" x 30"

*Scale/Ratio*, Small Canvas, 1988

linen, acrylic, wood and steel

32" x 15" x 15"

## Kocot and Hatten: Professional History

### Education

Kocot: B.F.A., University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia  
C.F.A., The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,  
Philadelphia

Hatten: C.F.A., The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,  
Philadelphia

### Selected Solo Collaborative Exhibitions

1976 Nexus Gallery, Philadelphia

1977 Nexus Gallery, Philadelphia

1979 The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,  
Philadelphia

1983 Lawrence Oliver Gallery, Philadelphia

1989 "Scale/Ratio," Levy Gallery for the Arts in Philadelphia,  
Jessica Berwind Gallery

### Selected Group Exhibitions

1974 The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia

1976 Alessandra Gallery, New York

1977 Fourteen Sculptors Gallery, New York

1978 A.C.T. Gallery, Toronto

1980 The Governor's Mansion, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
Glassboro State College, Glassboro, New Jersey

1982 The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

1984 The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts,  
Philadelphia

1988 Bucks County Community College, Newtown,  
Pennsylvania

Jessica Berwind Gallery

### Selected Bibliography

Delehanty, Suzanne. "Made in Philadelphia II." (catalog essay) Institute of Contemporary Art, 1974.

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*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 23 January 1983.

Heineman, Susan. "Institute of Contemporary Art."  
*Artforum*, January 1975.

Jarmusch, Ann. "Artists' Sketchbooks." *Art News*,  
November 1976.

McFadden, Sara. "Report from Philadelphia." *Art in  
America*, May/June 1979.

Stewart, Pat. "Art as Total Imperfection." *The Drummer*, 26  
October 1976.

Stewart, Pat. "Nexus Gallery Installation." *Arts Exchange*,  
May/June 1979.

### Permanent Collections

The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia

### Fellowships

The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts: Collaborative Painting  
(Special Projects Division)