

PRESS RELEASE
SKEW: THE UNRULY GRID

Exhibition Dates: October 16 - November 30, 1995

Opening Reception: Wednesday, October 18, 1995 4 - 7 p.m.

Gallery Hours: Monday - Friday 9-5; Saturday 12-4

For further information call: 312-996-6114

The exhibition Skew: The Unruly Grid will feature works by artists engaged in the reframing, shifting, and/or varying of conventional notions of Constructivism, Minimalism, Op Art, Geometric painting, psychedelic design, Suprematism or systematic abstraction.

Points of reference for the artist's lie within the period of pure abstraction, from Kasimir Malevich to Jasper Johns. Appropriating and critiquing modernist styles was pioneered by artists like Sherrie Levine, Peter Halley and Philip Taaffe in the early 1980's. It is this ideological agenda that established the foundation for this exhibition. These works of art either recapitulate, allude to, paraphrase or parody modernist strategies of art making.

The recurring motif of the grid has been handled in a variety of ways: the grids can be relatively orderly, crazily warped, unruly, bent out of shape, subverted, dissolved, arbitrary, organized, logical, methodical, exacting or finite. The grid is used by some artists because of the neutrality and structure it offers and the way in which the repeated gesture forms an armature that pulls the viewer toward a work. The grid is also used to examine how inconsequential, individual units can together amass unexpected effects. Some see the grid as fixed and controlled while others see it as active and changing. This exhibition is a widely divergent but a somehow coherent set of variations based upon the language of the grid.

Some of the artists mock the pretensions and the grandiose iconic achievements of modernist work; while reveling in the visual delight that the modernist work could deploy. These artists deflate modernist pretention by equating avant-gardism and kitsch therefore giving the works a sarcastic edge. They poke fun at formalism's doctrinaire approach to questions of aesthetic quality.

Other artists in the exhibition clearly regard the "megamyths of Modernism" with affection, paying homage to modernist canonical works. These artists would like us to look back at the rejuvenating aesthetic possibilities of their art. Their work is not really a matter of appropriation but of "alluding to" or "paraphrasing" these tottering idols.

The artists in this exhibition are historically conscientious, yet the works all relate to the politics of meaning in a manner that reflects demands specific to the present. These artists explore the grid with great formal and visual acumen. These works encourage a slow and prolonged response from the viewer, and this sustained attention gradually reveals the formal play operating among their simple shapes.