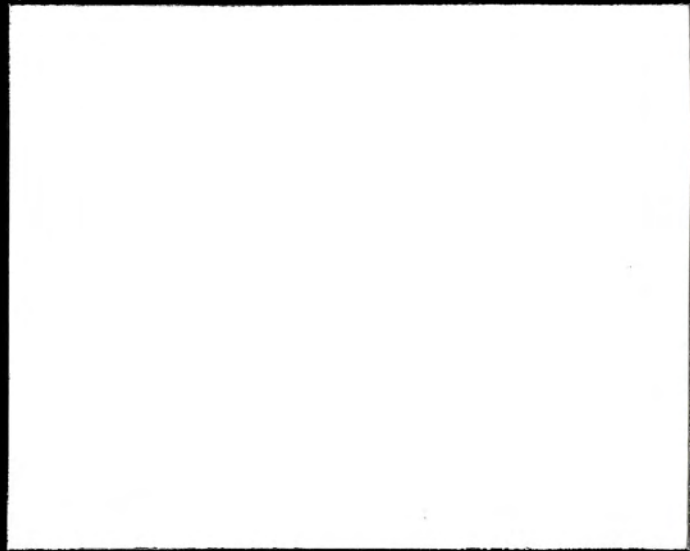


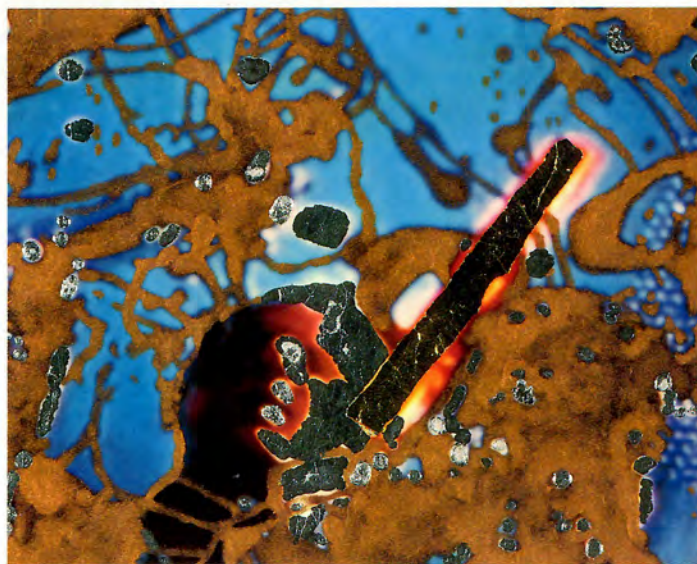
**VICTOR RAPHAEL**



**SANTA MONICA COLLEGE PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY**



# VICTOR RAPHAEL



**SPACE FIELDS, ABSTRACTIONS  
AND JACKSON POLLOCK**

1980-1991

Santa Monica College Photography Gallery  
October 19 - November 16, 1991

**RICHARD MOORE**

Superintendent and President

**ROBERT GODWIN**

Gallery Director

A Community Service of Santa Monica College

Previous page: Out of the Web II, 1987

Unless otherwise noted, all works are courtesy of the artist.

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The Santa Monica College Photography Gallery is the only public exhibition venue in Los Angeles County dedicated exclusively to photographic art.  
The Gallery endeavors to provide the community at large access to exhibitions that represent the artist's original vision.

**SPACE FIELDS, ABSTRACTIONS  
AND JACKSON POLLOCK**

1980-1991

Victor Raphael's eleven years of work transcends and challenges conventional notions of photography. Most often, photography is understood and used to freeze a moment. Raphael's Polaroids freeze a moment, but that moment becomes an element in a complex, personal statement. His photographs are at different times, appropriated, painted, metal-leafed, re-photographed, enlarged. Victor Raphael's work is not easily categorized except as art. Dealing with universal elements: the cosmos, ghostly images of Jackson Pollack and reality-based abstractions, Raphael achieves a profoundly personal status.

There is not too much distance from childhood role playing: to be the brother, father, fireman. The ease with which he slips into character, released from all adult, real world pressures and responsibilities, and explores fantastic places, gives the viewer the same pleasure as when adults observe a child engaged in play. Raphael does not ask us to become innocent, or feign naivete, but to know that he is still becoming a person.

Robert Godwin, GALLERY DIRECTOR

# IMAGES ONTO INFINITY

Magnification and miniaturization cross paths in Victor Raphael's altered Polaroids. Intensely concentrated, but still expansive, his pictures mark out a territory in which extreme shifts in scale mirror fantasy's capacity to move through worlds incommensurate with physical reality.

Raphael's images turn to photography not to verify the facts of the visible world, but to document the impossibility of excluding, from this world, the play of the imagination. His conjunctions of the taken and the made function like constellations. At once integral parts of the natural world and cultural projections onto its random order, these astral mappings model Raphael's own work on the cosmos.

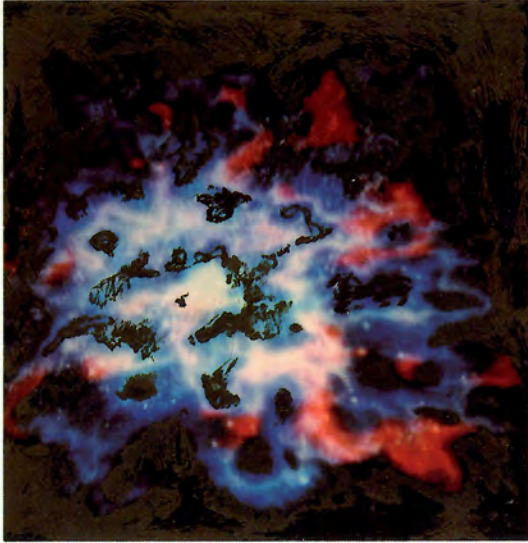
Ancient astronomers and sailors used the stars as a sort of connect-the-dots drawing-board. They found heroic and mythical figures in the sky and thus located their ships at sea, and themselves in a meaningful universe — in a world in which nature was the basis for a complex and effective, if highly artificial, system of signification. Likewise, the contemporary artist uses modern technology to chart a fantastic cosmology in which myth intermingles with reality and fantasy inflects the "facts." Raphael's manipulated Polaroids transform the appearance of the visible world to give form to the whims and idiosyncrasies of his rich, personal vision.

By working on and with photographs, Raphael ensures that the machinations of his imagination take place in the external world. Like much modernist painting, his images follow abstraction back through automatic writing and psychoanalysis to its roots in an individual's unconscious. Like much photography, his art emphasizes that it exists in a shared, social space. Raphael's painted Polaroids thus find points of intersection between inner and outer worlds.

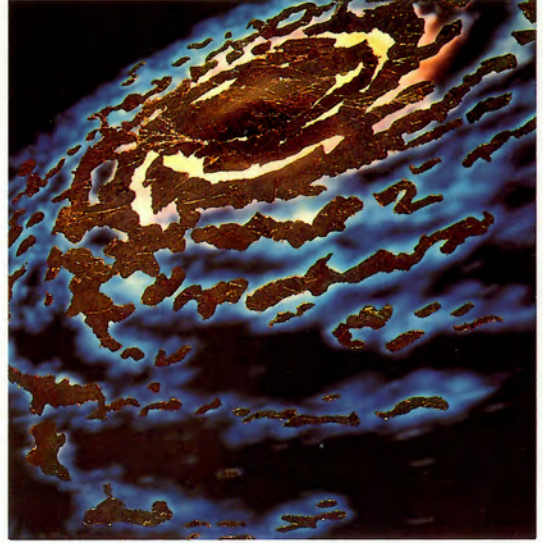
In Raphael's images, the known commingles with the unverifiable. In this space between the past and the future, time folds back upon itself: the present is continually renewed as a fleeting moment whose unremarkable ordinariness signals not its simplicity, but our blindness to the myriad configurations that give it shape. Raphael's altered Polaroids trace an emergent awareness of the often invisible forces that lurk beneath the surfaces of the immediately visible world. Here, events unfold with time-defying simultaneity. As history is (re-)written and common images are (re-)configured, subjective states and objective approaches shift positions, giving back to the ordinary world a sense of its extraordinariness.

Three series made over the past eleven years constitute Raphael's exhibition. The general intentions and broad purposes of "Space Fields" "Abstractions," and "Jackson Pollock" overlap and build upon one another to form a coherent whole in which fantasy puts a mesmerizing spin on reality





Untitled, 1986



Spiral Nebula VIII, 1991

as it pushes myth and empiricism together and pulls the artist's imagination into the shared visual world. Nevertheless, each of Raphael's series focuses on particular issues which define his peculiar vision.

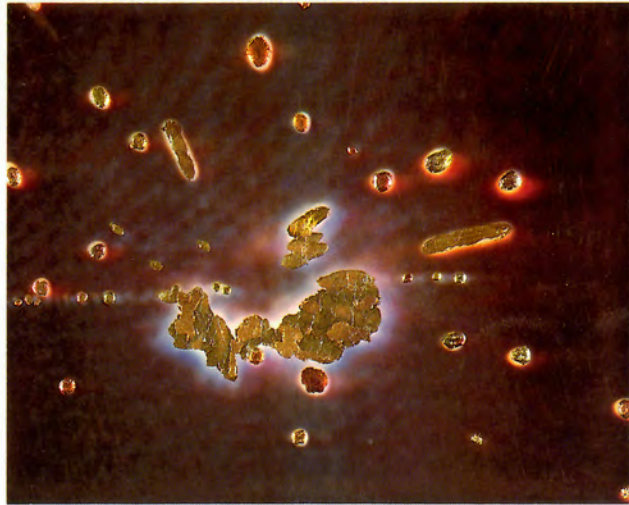
Raphael's "Jackson Pollock" series is both an homage to the founder of American gestural abstraction and a double-edged meditation on the arbitrariness of fate — on why the lives of some disappear into anonymity and others disappear into myths. In either case, whatever is preserved tells little about what actually existed. This series consists of Polaroids taken from the notorious film of Pollock making his trademark drip-paintings and others of Raphael — made-up to heighten his resemblance of the dead Abstract Expressionist — posing before a painting of Pollock's, his studio, and grave. Raphael has blocked out, from all his photographs, selected segments. These areas of metallic leaf and lines of acrylic paint look like angelic intercessions into the mundane reality depicted by cheap snapshots. These shimmering intrusions emphasize the pictures' otherworldly splendor and redeem them from being conventional paeans to the myth of American originality. The real and the staged figures in Raphael's retouched photographs often appear as shadows or silhouettes. Sometimes they look like ghostly outlines. At others they totally dissolve into the shiny camouflage of abstract splashes made up of seamlessly smooth emulsion, encrusted metal leaf, and thick droplets of metallic acrylic paint. As if pieced together from materials from different times, Raphael's homages to Pollock acknowledge the inimitable nature of his actions as they preserve his achievement by opening it to reinterpretation and play.

Raphael's "Space Field" series uses Polaroids taken from N.A.S.A. programs on television to create a rather literal but no less effective collision between formal abstraction and illusionistic deep space. His popularization of somewhat esoteric painterly issues takes seriously both the realm of aesthetics and that of the mass media. Raphael's photographs of stars, planets, comets, novae, galaxies, rocketships, and eclipses play the luscious hyper-real colors of the high-tech devices that bring us images of outer space against Modernist painting's well-worn attempt to create a third dimension out of two, without violating the integrity of the picture plane. In the same way that he blocked out parts of each image in his "Pollock" series, he fills in sections of his "Space Field" series with dabs of acrylic, orbs of metallic leaf, and swirls of each mixed together. These highly reflective and often thick layers contrast radically with the slick surfaces of the Polaroids. At some angles they appear to be three-dimensional additions to the pictures while at others — when they directly catch bright light — they seem to dissolve altogether, becoming almost blinding elements within the illusionistic deep space of the photographs. Many of the images in Raphael's "Space Field" series derive from the quivering optical fields Pollock created with his electrifying drip paintings, punctuated, as they were, with metallic pigment,





Planet, 1991



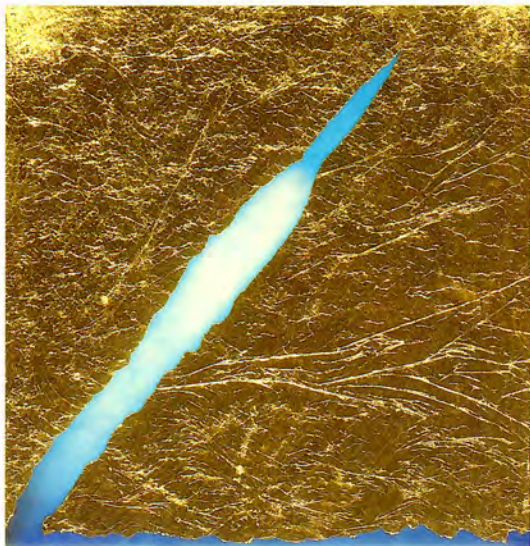
Space Field, 1991

coagulated globs of paint, and odds-and-ends the artist found around his studio. It is not difficult to imagine that Raphael's works are snap-shots taken on a tour throughout the spaces created by Pollock's magisterial canvases.

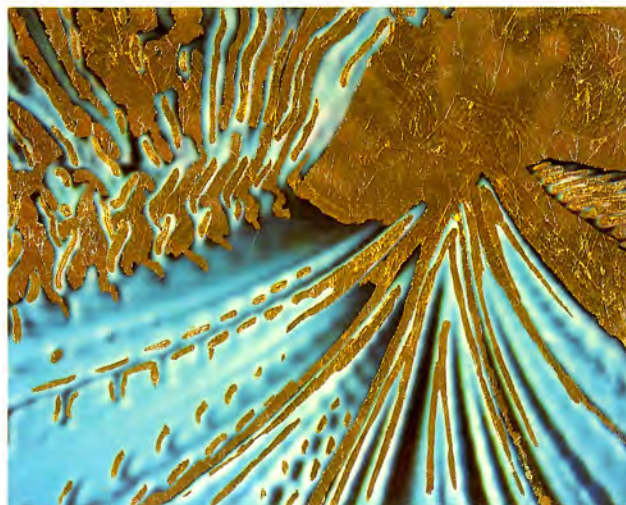
Raphael dispenses with naturalistic reference in his "Abstraction" series. If his "Space Field" works allowed fantasy to enter the picture, but anchored its play with some recognizable markers, his "Abstraction" series is more promiscuous in its admission of this slippery force: its images abandon such constraints for a more free-wheeling foray into the possibilities of picture-making. It is as if the artist felt too constrained or crowded in outer space so moved to a realm in which the vicissitudes of his imagination and the qualities of his materials would not be even partially governed by representational duties. The altered Polaroids in this series most compellingly play out the potential of Pollock's fields of cosmic energy. They do so, however, in terms that are Raphael's own. The found and the made are always in tension in his inventive re-uses of appropriated images. Absolute originality is not an issue for the artist who would rather tease beauty out of the unremarkable than pretend or attempt to create something out of nothing. These altered photographs also intensify the shifts in scale that got lost in Raphael's "Space Field" series. With the "Abstractions," we are never given the security of a stable, overall scale. Instead, we are catapulted from the microscopic to the galactic: the tiny Polaroids seem to be taken through a microscope or out the window of a jet or an interplanetary rocketship. Raphael's willingness to manipulate the photographs he uses as a base for his paintings and rubbings add to the ambiguous richness of this series. Motion more aggressively enters their fields as the grounds become, in some cases, out of focus and blurred. The layers of metal leaf and strokes of gold and silver acrylic take on greater complexity and delicacy as they register the artist's increasing confidence and facility. In this series, Medieval icons are often evoked. Their pristine and impenetrable gold-leafed skies peel away and crumble, to reveal the deep blue of a naturalistic skyscape. This shift in perspectives opens onto another transformation as the luminous glow from the "real" sky suddenly seems more like that from a video monitor.

These shifts and inconsistencies energize all of Raphael's altered Polaroids. Seen together, they form a charged constellation or a web that catches some perceptions as it allows others to pass through. Raphael's art attests to his success in giving form to the elusive present without destroying its fluidity.

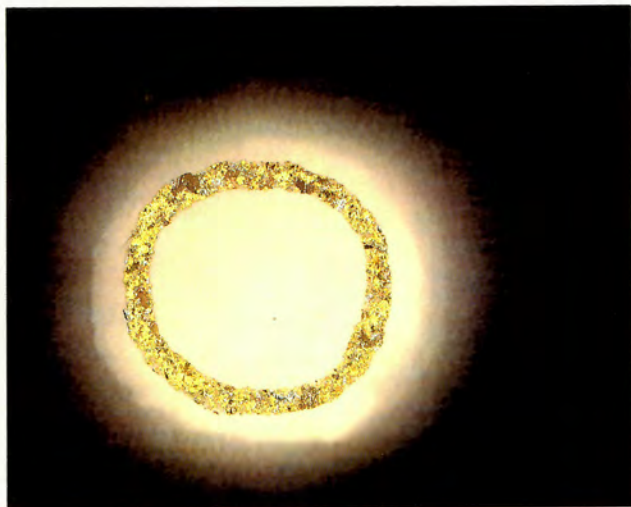
DAVID PAGEL



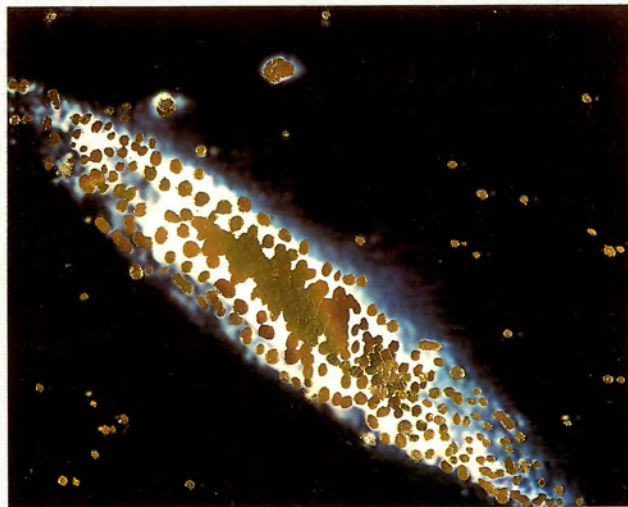
Rocket, 1988



Video Volcano, 1988  
*Collection of Saul and Helen Reid Brown*

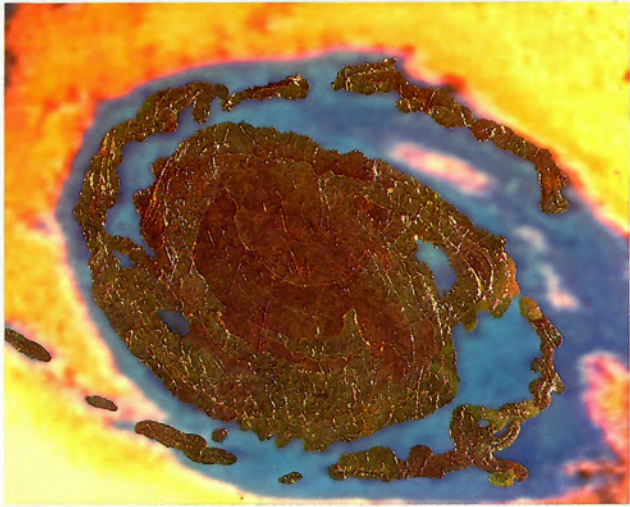


Circle in Space, 1987  
*Collection of Carey Peck and Lita Albuquerque*

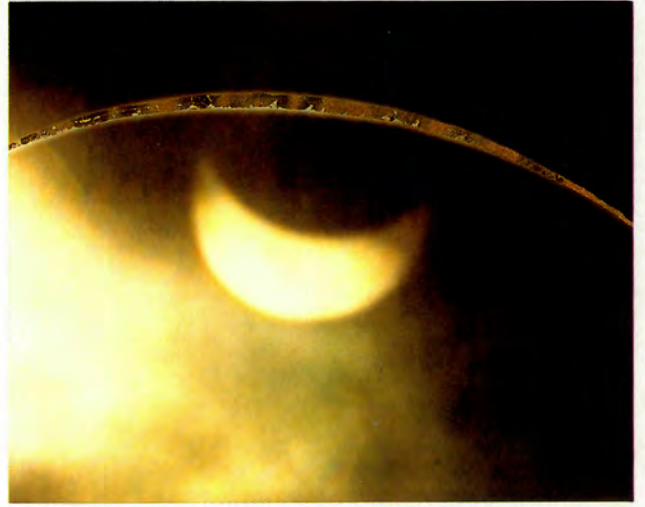


Galaxy, 1987

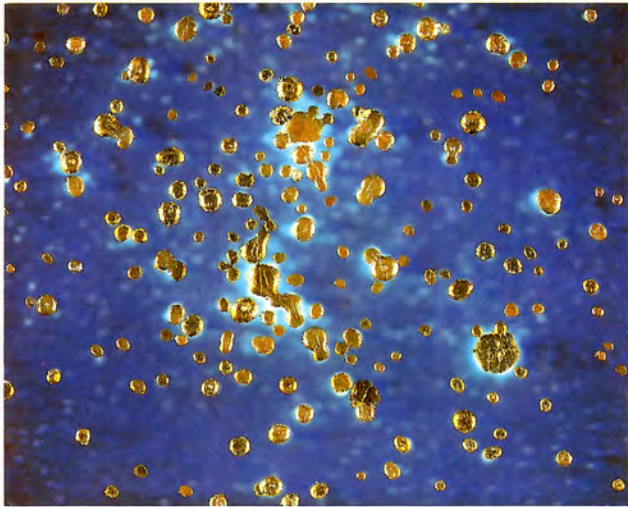




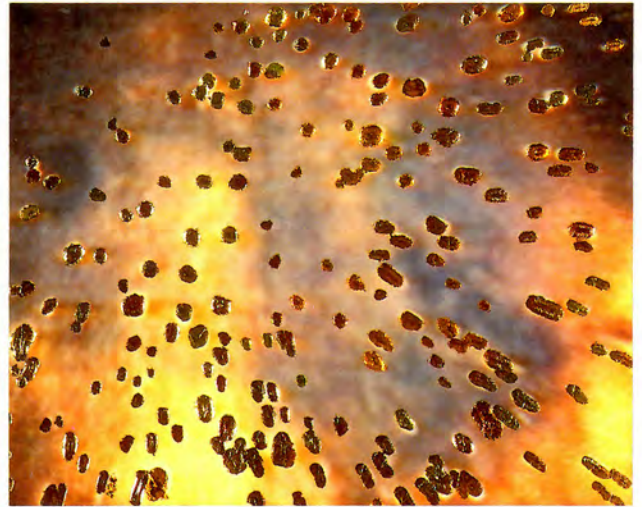
Spiral Nebula III, 1988  
*Collection of Jane Raphael*



Arc Eclipse, 1991

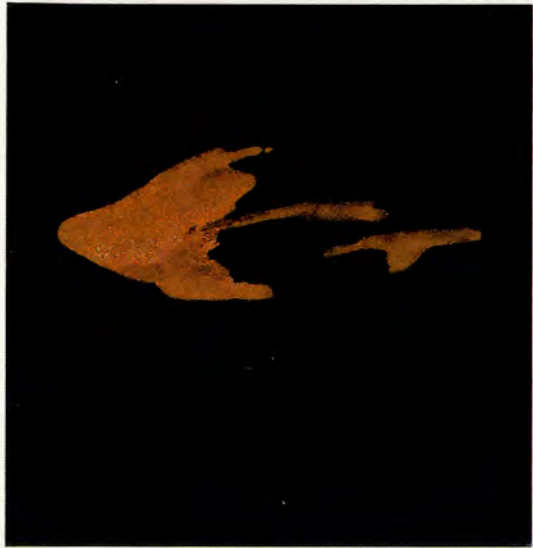


Space Field, 1988  
*Collection of Peter Erskine and Gretchen Woelfle*

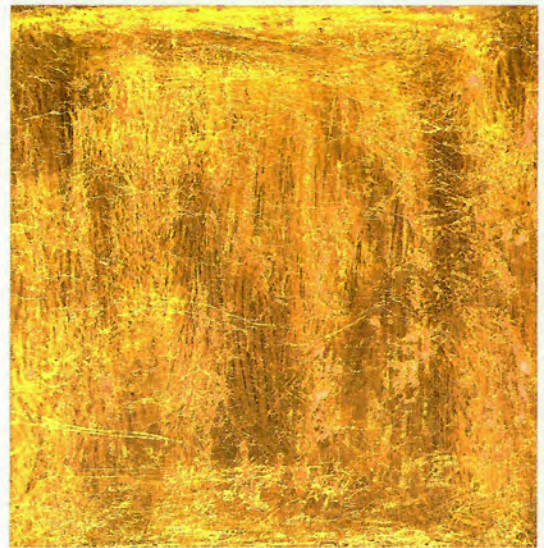


Aurora, 1988  
*Collection of Saul and Helen Reid Brown*

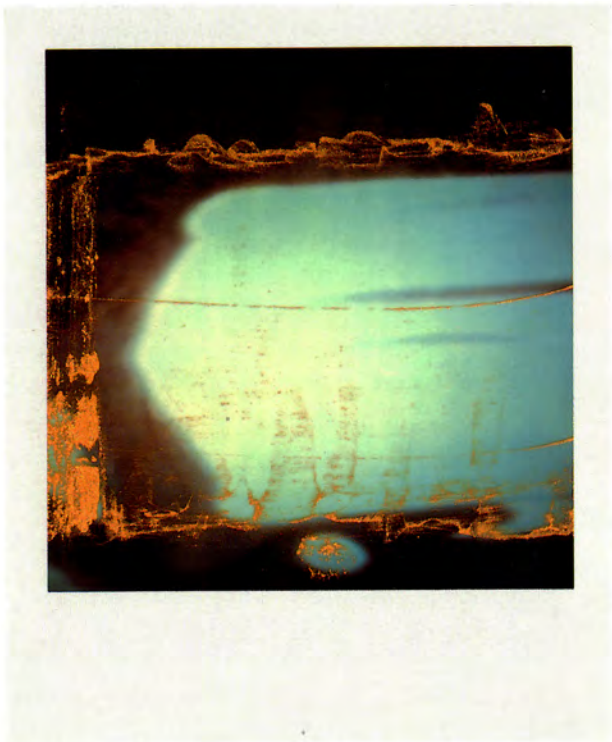




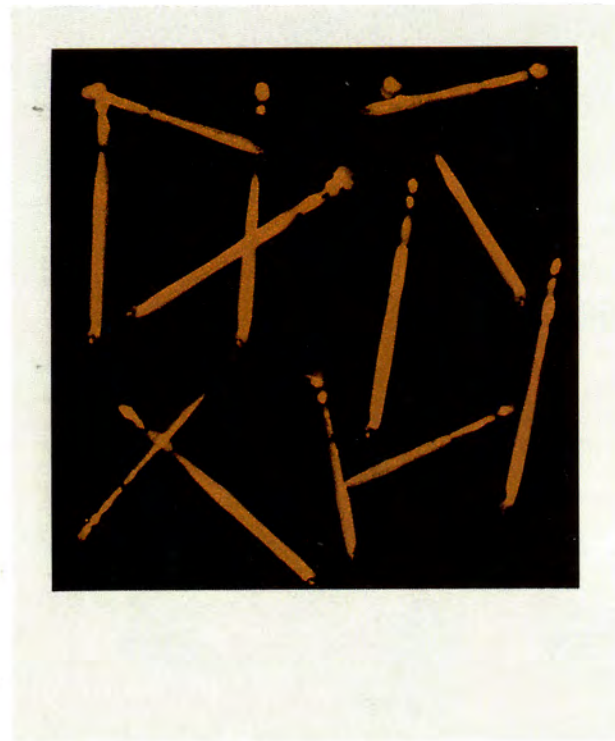
U.F.O., 1980



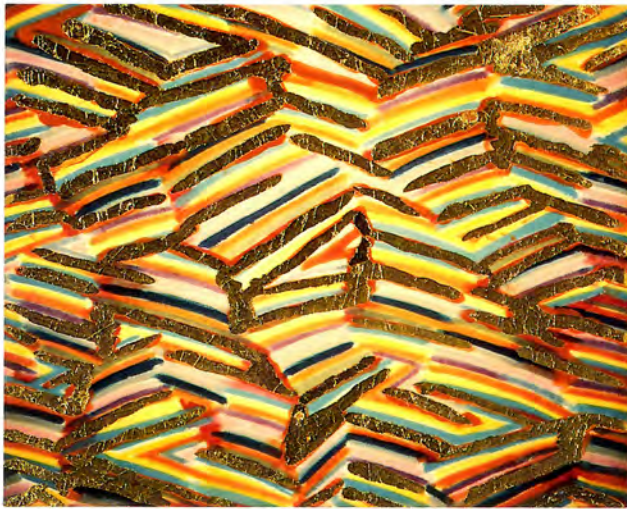
Untitled (Gold Field), 1984  
*Collection of Marjorie and Leonard Vernon*



Lago Perduto, 1986  
*Collection of Cheryl Brantner*



Abstraction #2, 1987  
*Collection of David and Sarajean Ruttenberg  
through the courtesy of the Ruttenberg Arts Foundation*

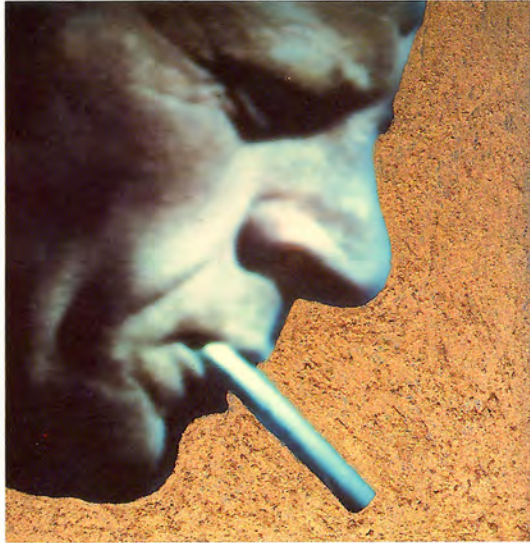


Revolution II, 1987



Art Fair (after Rauschenberg), 1988

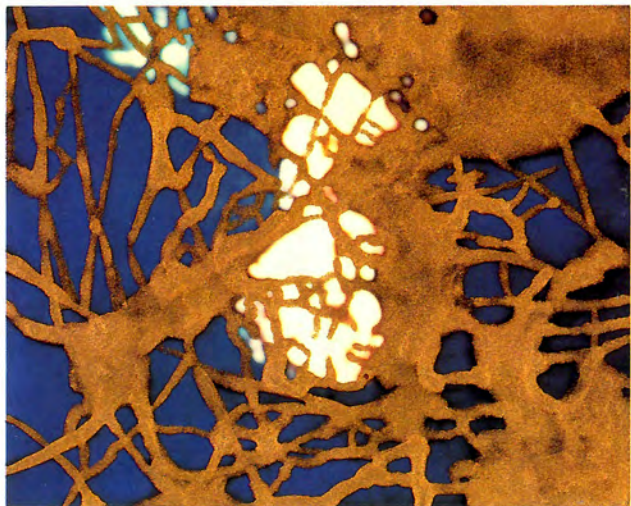




Pollock Profile I, 1985



Self-Portrait at Pollock's Studio, 1986



Out of the Web I, 1987  
*Collection of Barbara and Avram A. Jacobson*



Out of the Web III, 1987



©1991 Don Weinstein

**1950** Born, September 14, Los Angeles, California

**1968** Entered San Fernando Valley State College. Began taking art classes.

**1969** Traveled to Europe with Ben Adams. Visited British Museum and Tate Gallery in London, Louvre and Jeu de Paume in Paris, Picasso Museum in Barcelona, and Rijksmuseum and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam.

**1970** Co-Founded Gallery West. Exhibited and published artwork by local and international artists including: Karel Appel, Marc Chagall, Robert de la Rocha, Jim Dine, Harold Gregor, Robin Mitchell, Pierre Picot, Stuart Rapeport, Ed Ruscha, Howard Smagula, and Andy Warhol.

Began working as Intaglio Edition printer for Triad Graphics printed works for Bong tae Kim, Vida Hackman and Robin Vaccarino.

**1971** Enrolled at U.C.L.A. began taking film and theatre classes.

**1973** Graduated U.C.L.A., with a B.A. in International Relations, Magna Cum Laude. Printed aquatint for Bruce Nauman and Cirrus Editions.

**1974** Studied acting with Jeannie Berlin at 20th Century Fox and MGM Studios. Worked on "Sheila Levine is Dead and Living in N.Y.", as an actor.

**1975** Took train across U.S. to Boston and N.Y., visited MOMA, Guggenheim, and Whitney. Stopped over in Chicago to visit Art Institute. Studied acting with Stella Adler in Los Angeles. Traveled and camped through Pacific Northwest.

**1976** Studied directing with Tom Gries, Mark Rydell, and Judd Taylor at Sherwood Oaks College. Studied acting with Gordon Hunt.

**1977** Traveled to Europe, North Africa, Greece and Turkey. Visited birthplace of grandparents in Rhodes and Solonika, Greece and Istanbul, Turkey. Impressed with Prado in Madrid and Alhambra in Granada, Spain.

**1978** Married Jane Goldsmith. Traveled to N.Y., New Orleans, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Mexico City.

**1979** Began working at Behavioral Sciences Media Lab at U.C.L.A.'s Neuropsychiatric Institute as associate producer/director. Collaborated on numerous award winning, documentary and educational films and videos.

Directed and produced "Opening Night" an art/documentary of Cirrus Galleries last opening at Manhattan Place location.

**1980** First daughter Leah born. Traveled to Europe with brother Robert, spent month in Spain researching Sephardic history.

**1981** Moved into downtown studio. Went into business as Azurite Productions producing and directing independent documentaries and instructional videos.

Exhibited at California Museum of Science and Industry, July 23 - September 11, took 1st place in Professional Photography.

One person show in studio "Paintings, Drawings, and Photo Collages, 1978-81", October 17 - November 20. Announcement.

**1982** Exhibited at California Museum of Science and Industry, July 16 - September 10, took 1st place in Professional Photography.

Exhibited at Los Angeles County Museum of Art Rental Gallery, August 13 - September 24. Announcement.

Exhibited at Conejo Valley Art Museum, October 7 - 31, Honorable Mention. Announcement.

**1983** Exhibited at La Grange Aux Crepes Photographic Gallery, January 28 - March 13. Announcement.

Exhibited at Old Cabrillo Beach Museum, April 29 - May 15. Announcement.

Exhibited at Los Angeles County Museum of Art Rental Gallery, August 5 - September 9. Announcement.

Co-produced and directed "Rehabilitating the Chronic Mental Patient" for Brentwood V.A. - 1st prize International Rehabilitation Film Festival.

**1984** Exhibited at Brea Civic Cultural Center Gallery, June 8 - June 29. Announcement and catalogue.

Exhibited at Roger Morrison Gallery, July 11 - August 31. Announcement.



Co-produced and directed "Introduction to Behavioral Family Management," honorable mention at International Rehabilitation Film Festival.

**1985** Exhibited at Los Angeles County Museum of Art Rental Gallery, February 1 - March 1.  
Announcement.

Exhibited at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, February 4 - April 5.  
Announcement.

Co-produced "Open Studio" art video premiered at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions "Open Studio Tour", April 21.

Co-produced "Video Feedback" art video (segment of this piece used by Lorimar Productions for "Max Headroom" television series).

Visited Jackson Pollock's home and studio in Springs, Long Island, N.Y.

**1986** Exhibited at Los Angeles County Museum of Art Rental Gallery, January 17 - February 21.  
Announcement.

Exhibited at S.P.A.R.C. Gallery in Venice, CA., June 1 - 30.  
Announcement.

Co-produced and directed "One Gesture of the Heart" a tribute to Jackson Pollock.

Moved out of downtown studio.

**1987** Birth of second daughter Sarah.  
One person show at Richard Green Gallery, Los Angeles, "Small Paintings", June 6 - July 18.  
Announcement.

Reviewed by: ARTWEEK, July 11, 1987, "The Importance of Scale," by Chuck Nicolson. THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, June 19, 1987, "Galleries," by Kristine Mckenna.

Exhibited at 2nd International Contemporary Art Fair, L. A. Convention

Center, December 10 - 14.

Collaborated with Lita Albuquerque on video version of "Abhasa."

**1988** Exhibited at Diane Nelson Gallery, Laguna Beach, August 13 - September 11.  
Announcement/poster.

Exhibited at Murray Feldman Gallery, Los Angeles, December 14 - January 29.  
Announcement and catalogue.

**1989** Exhibited at Ohio University, "Alternatives 89", curated by Thomas Barrow, February 20 - March 10.  
Video catalogue.

One person show Richard Green Gallery, Los Angeles, "The Space Field Series", April 1 - May 6.  
Announcement. Reviewed by: THE LOS ANGELES TIMES, April 7, 1989, "Galleries," by Kristine Mckenna. EXPOSURE, Volume II, Issue II, 1989, "State Of The Arts," by Lisa Sawahata.

Exhibited at Dubin/Wolf Exhibit Center, Los Angeles, September 18 - January 7.  
Announcement. Video documentary for cable television. Reviewed by: THE JEWISH JOURNAL, September 15 - September 21, 1989.

**1990** Exhibited at Photo Impact, September 14 - November 8.  
Announcement.

Exhibited at Photo Impact - 2 person show, "Victor Raphael and Michael Going, Works on Polaroid". November 30 - Jan. 17.  
Announcement.

**1991** Began teaching multi-media painting at University of Judaism.  
Appointed Visual Arts Coordinator at University of Judaism.

One person show Santa Monica College - "Space Fields, Abstractions, and Jackson Pollock 1980-1991", October 19 - Nov 16.  
Announcement and catalogue.

**S**pecial thanks  
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and publication  
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CHRIS GARLAND

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MARIO GOMEZ

FRANK GREEN

FLO PISACRETA

ALAN RAPHAEL

JANE RAPHAEL

FRANK STYDUHAR

DON WEINSTEIN

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- Friends of the Photography Gallery
- Vaughn Printing

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