Joan Waltemath

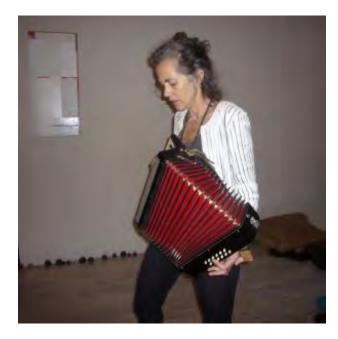
museumofnonvisibleart.com/interviews/joan-waltemath

May 3, 2018

Subscribe: <u>Apple Podcasts</u> | <u>Android</u> | <u>Google Podcasts</u> | <u>Stitcher</u> | <u>TuneIn</u> | <u>Spotify</u> | | <u>Click here to join mailing list</u>

Joan Waltemath, born in 1953, grew up on the Great Plains where her German ancestors settled in the late 19th century. Her early experiences in nature and looking at native geometries inform her subsequent abstract paintings and guide their complex use of materials. As her multifaceted 2 dimensional surfaces unfold in time, their spatial voids constructed of harmonic progressions emerge to facilitate an interaction with her audience and allow for a reflective response from a sustained engagement.

Waltemath holds a BFA from the RI School of Design, an MFA from Hunter College, CUNY. She has lived and worked in New York city since 1977 and collaborated with filmmakers, musicians, and writers in collective groups and through special projects since the early days of the downtown No Wave era.



"Ok, Today, Tomorrow" a film produced out of her studio was shown at MOMA and archived in their collection as part of a recent survey of the LES 1980's.

Shown in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Houston, Portland, San Diego, Omaha, London, Basel, Amsterdam and Cologne, her paintings and drawings are in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the National Gallery of Art, Yale University Art Galleries and the Harvard University Art Museum, among others. She has written extensively on art and served as an editor-at-large for the *Brooklyn Rail* since 2001. She taught at the IS Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union from 1997 to 2010, at Princeton University and has lectured widely. She is currently the Director of MICA's MFA program, the LeRoy E. Hoffberger School of Painting.



M's Crossing (1,2,3,5,8 west) 2015 -17 172" x 168 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Oil, lead white, marble dust, haematite, cooper iron oxide, aluminum, interference, florescent, mica and phosphorescent pigment on prepared natural and black canvas sewn from individual pieces.



right arm 2014 thread and pencil on natural and black canvas 21 3/8" x 3" left arm 2014 thread and pencil on natural and black canvas 22 1/2" x 3 1/4"

JOAN WALTEMATH: M's Crossing

BR brooklynrail.org/2018/06/artseen/JOAN-WALTEMATH-Ms-Crossing

By Ann McCoy June 5, 2018



On View

The American Academy of Arts and Letters

May 24 – June 17, 2018 New York Joan Waltemath's stunning painting *M's Crossing* (1,2,3,5,8 west) (2015 – 17) is political art at its best. Today, a lot of political art feels mired on a flat positivist plane; stuck in a historical materialism where all theories have an economic foundation determined by external factors —racial, colonial, geographic, etc. Critical theoretical approaches to art are often based on the assumption that the spiritual dimension can be removed from the equation. Waltemath's work is political insofar as it is a meditation on historical events, and how the white man's genocidal manifest destiny destroyed indigenous cultures. Yet her explorations of the tragic clash of two cultures, and how a flawed European worldview led to the destruction of an indigenous people, draw from deeper experiential wells, the artist takes us across a bridge to a world of Native American rituals that predate history and into another realm few access today.

Waltemath has been a twelve-year participant in traditional Sun Dance ceremonies with Lakota, Omaha, Diné, and Ponca people, and these experiences give her work an authenticity, a numinosity, and aura that defies literary discourse. Her paintings are made in between ceremonies and around the culture of the sweat lodge, a traditional purification ceremony. The artist strives to elucidate how the ground we walk on determines both our point of view and perception in the world. The ceremonials are part of a participation mystique, and the artist is an actual participant. Without real transformative experiences, it is impossible for an artist to make paintings with a transformational effect. Waltemath stitches together not only her canvases, but also geometric abstraction with mark making, and they become a field for a dialogue between realities. The fifteen foot dimension of the work is taken from the size of a teepee, and is a reminder of the sheltering structures of a decimated civilization. As a descendant and a beneficiary of a landed German settler family, she revisits this territory to not only bear responsibility for this historical outcome, but to also make a peace offering of great artistic value in a troubled world. As Frank Waters says in speaking of John G. Neihardt's epic vision, "It must include not only the tragic decimation of all the Indian tribes, but also the disastrous effect upon us, their white conquerors."

The intangible mystery of this work transports this viewer to an archaic place in consciousness when nature and mankind were inseparably fused in peaceful coexistence and respect. This critic was reminded of Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (2010)—like the drawing at Chauvet, the petroglyphs on the surface of her painting are messages from this archaic strata. Consciousness is like stratigraphy, where all layers old and new, still exist simultaneously. Waltemath, like the philosopher Jean Gebser, and filmmaker Werner Herzog, is telling us that a visit to this archaic plane may be our salvation. As we confront an apocalyptic ecological situation fueled by scientific monstrosities like Fukushima, rituals like the Sun Dance have a renewed resonance. America now has no profound rituals like the ancient Eleusinian mysteries to link us to agricultural and spiritual renewal. The artist worked hard to establish relationships with these tribes, and is one of the few white participants to enter into this world. Waltemath celebrates the power these rituals hold to connect art to occluded histories with her series *Treaty of 1868: A Lament*.

M's Crossing, a stunning work made of sewn rectangles of natural and black canvas, painted with oil, lead white, marble dust, hematite, copper, iron oxide, aluminum, interference, florescent, mica, and phosphorescent pigment, is part of a series of eight large paintings titled the *Treaty of 1868: A Lament*. The work sets up a dialogue between the pioneer history of the artist's settler family and the indigenous Planes Indians, and traverses back along the timeline aided by the artist's participation in Native American rituals. The work is a way of coming to terms with a tragic history of settler theft through broken treaties. As Waltemath says, "One day, after reading a Lakota woman's historical account of the Plains Indian Wars I connected the dots and recognized that my German ancestors had settled on Treaty of 1868 land."

The Lakota Sioux sometimes refer to the Sun Dance ceremony as "dancing with the ancestors." For some indigenous and aboriginal peoples the membrane between the realms of the living and the dead can be passed through in visions, altered states, and during sacred rituals. The dancers in the Native American Sun Dances enter the circular arbor around a central cottonwood tree, where after several days they are joined by the spirits of their ancestors. Waltemath also summons her ancestors, as their representative, to bridge and heal this sad history. For it is by participating in the transformative rituals of another culture, that we can sometimes sense what we are lacking in our own.

artnet Asks: Artist Joan Waltemath and the Secret Beauty in Math

a news.artnet.com/art-world/joan-waltemath-interview-906335

April 5, 2017



Opening April 5 at Anita Rogers Gallery, "<u>Fecund Algorithms</u>" is the latest solo exhibition by <u>Joan Waltemath</u>. Grappling with the complex and often contradictory relationships between the body and mind, the artist's abstract paintings look to mathematical equations for their harmonious and inventive grid-based compositions.

Waltemath is not only an artist, however: She is also known as an influential educator and a writer, having taught architecture for years at Cooper Union and serving as editor-at-large for the esteemed <u>Brooklyn Rail</u> since 2001. Here, she discusses her new work, the beauty in

mathematics, and what to expect at her show.

What inspired you to create the Torso/Roots series?

I am intrigued watching people perform tasks they know by heart, observing movements that seem to stem from the corporeal, rather than being directed by the mind. I want to create something that speaks directly to the body that touches our movement in the way architecture does. The more all our devices assert their dominance over the mode of our communications, the more compelled I feel to explore the multi-faceted nature of perception. How the body knows things, remembers a thing is my tabula rasa.



Joan Waltemath, *Three Bodies or how I knew you were gone (east below)* (2011–2013). Courtesy of Anita Rogers Gallery.

How do you decide on the placement of materials for each grid on the panel, how would you explain that in relation to the human body and mind?

I work with a grid matrix based on harmonic ratios as a way to determine the relationship of elements and the proportions of my paintings. There is a kind of precision involved in the geometry here that I really like. That's the mind part—it wants to control everything. Then the materials come in and counter it, they have their own rules to overrule the mind. Paint has to flow onto the surface. I often see in my mind's eye the moves I need to make—aiming to set everything into relation, into motion in sync. The geometry sets limits. Opposition is essential to keep things alive.

You choose interesting titles for your work. What were you thinking about when deciding them, and should it affect the way a viewer experiences your work?

Often a relationship or movement becomes an analogue for events, perceptions, or realizations in my life, so the titles are a way to acknowledge that aspect. If the unfolding of a painting enables an experience or thought to happen, that's great! Some people need language or narrative to find a point of entry into a painting—on the other hand, the title could affirm an understanding after the fact.

I mean, it's an *abstraction*, so you have to go somewhere with it: It demands an engagement from the audience since I'm distilling the experiential, not directing where it should go.



Joan Waltemath, *RA's dream (East Below)* (2012–2016). Courtesy of Anita Rogers Gallery.

The *Torso/Roots* pieces are based on a grid derived from harmonic mathematical relationships, do you think perhaps your approach may lure the more "mathematical mind"?

Recently I was making my way through a series of publications the Getty released on Latin American Surrealism. What a surprise to discover that during the post-war time artists were coming to terms with Freud and the notion that we all see different things when we look at works of art, that our perceptions are relative to what we already know and have experienced. It's not such an extraordinary notion for contemporary art; we can easily acknowledge a mathematician would recognize aspects the architectural mind might see as something else and vice-versa!

What memorable response have you had from your work?

During my 1994 exhibition "Zwischenzeit" at Stark Gallery, a beautiful young woman opened the door and ran towards my 12-foot square drawing; she jumped, kicking her leg up high to meet its center. "This is cool, isn't it?" she said as she turned in mid-air towards her b-boy

friend. They ran out. I was stunned, it showed my initial construct of harmonic progressions in black and white really could speak to the body. The drawing is now in the collection of the Hammer Museum at UCLA, thanks to Wynn Kramarsky.



Joan Waltemath, interwoven (East 2 1,2,3,5,8...) (2013–2016). Courtesy of Anita Rogers Gallery.

What is your favorite skyscraper or building, and why?

I don't know favorite, but here is a thought: When I moved to Manhattan I took a loft across from the Stanford White Bowery Savings Bank. The pediment was visible through the window and the clock was still working in those days. It held a distant feeling of Rome: I could look down on the unique portico of the bank, whose outer façade ran parallel to the Bowery, while the inner one was aligned to the cardinal directions. The way White had set the relationship between these two orientations was significant for me; in plan it was a parallelogram not a rectangle. I used to sit inside the bank and make phone calls in the wooden phone booths, light poured in two stories above me through the amber glass, sounds echoed in a familiar way and the framed yellow marble slabs with their lighter

colored veins running on a diagonal felt like Modernist painting. I could love the way the architectural void held my body. I haven't been inside for many years, it's no longer a public space. The clock stopped sometime in the late 80s after it was sold.

What is the most important first impression that you hope your viewers will get from your work?

One that is uniquely their own.

The artnet <u>Gallery Network</u> is a community of the world's leading galleries offering artworks by today's most collected artists. Learn more about becoming a member <u>here</u>, or explore our member galleries <u>here</u>.

Follow <u>artnet News</u> on Facebook:

Want to stay ahead of the art world? Subscribe to our newsletter to get the breaking news, eyeopening interviews, and incisive critical takes that drive the conversation forward. Art & Design

SUBSCRIBE LOG IN

Joan Waltemath: 'One does not negate the other'

MARCH 5, 2015

Art in Review By MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Painting and architecture used to be much closer, such that at least during the Renaissance artists sometimes practiced both. Joan Waltemath is a painter, although she taught at the architecture school at Cooper Union for many years, but her works are planned and constructed almost like buildings.

Ms. Waltemath's paintings here, which feature grid-based compositions, are measured and squared off, and you can see pencil lines on the sides of the wood panels. Some of the titles include orientations ("East" or "West") or references to architectural elements like arches and thresholds. Several took longer to execute than most buildings - in one case, the serene "Oaxaca Blue/darkness too (East 4 1,2,3,5,8 ...)" (2007-2015), over seven years. (The gallery release also mentions, as a precedent to Ms. Waltemath's paintings, the works of El Lissitsky, the Russian avant-garde artist whose two-dimensional "Prouns" were conceived as "interchange stations between architecture and painting.")

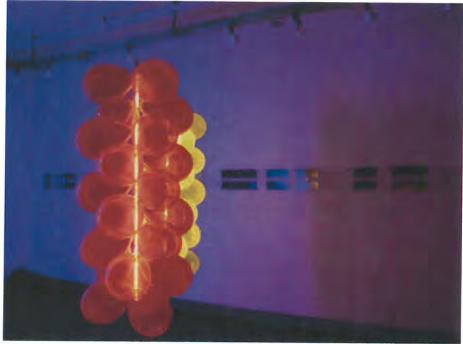
More important for Ms. Waltemath is the relationship between architecture and the human body, and how that is echoed in painting. The pieces in the "Torso/Roots" series at Hionas are vertical and narrow and emphasize the phenomenological - conscious, sensory and perceptual - experience of standing before a painting. Also significant are Ms. Waltemath's use of unusual materials like graphite and luminescent phosphorous and fluorescent pigments, and the fact that the gallery feels like a crypt where you'd encounter a religious icon or a fresco embedded in a wall. The total effect is pleasing, surprising and structurally very sound.



Oaxaca Blue/darkness too (East 4 1,2,3,5,8 ...)" (2007- 2015), in oil, graphite, bronze, and fluorescent and phosphorescent pigment, by Joan Waltemath. The work correlates architecture and painting. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND HIONAS GALLERY

Art in America

March 2003



"this isn't Kansas..." with Jim Clarke Sideshow, Brooklyn, NY 3.17-4.8 2002 graphite on xeroxed mylar print

James Clark and Joan Waltemath at Sideshow

Robert Morris's 1966 statement that "the better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light and the viewer's field of vision" is pertinent to last season's collaborative installation by the painter Joan Waltemath and the sculptor James Clark. Although it had none of the reductive purity that characterizes the work of Morris's generation. the installation explored another Minimalist theme, the impulse to immobilize theatricality. It was titled "This isn't Kansas anymore, Toto!" Clark, who chose the title, said that he and Waltemath "just wanted to take you someplace else." And they did.

Clark's contribution, in the center of the gallery, consisted of three vertical neon lights mounted on square plastic bases and encased in Plexiglas tubes. Attached to each unit were columns of tightly stacked balloons that began a foot or so off the floor and rose to a height of 8 feet. Apart from some weak light coming through the front door, the neon glow filtering through the balloon columns (one red, one yellow and one blue) provided the only illumination in the space, bathing the gallery in a neutral half-light.

neutral half-light.

Waltemath's piece involved narrow waxy sheets of Mylar that were mounted horizontally along three walls at eye level. The Mylar was held about an inch off the wall by square aluminum clamps. On the surface,

pairs of precisely delineated rectangles in dense graphite. The proportions of the rectangles were based on Fibonacci numbers, and the shapes resembled equal signs that truncated as they stretched across the expanse of the unconventional support.

The colored light from Clark's columns was reflected in the graphite surfaces so that the viewer found it impossible to look at Waltemath's drawings without being reminded of the balloons behind. The Clark piece was more autonomous. Peering through the sequence of regular gaps where the tapering balloons met the columns, the eye would meet color from the other balloon columns, or would wander farther inward, past the Plexiglas tubes to the neon lights themselves.

Clark and Waltemath seemed to be engaged in the fundamentally serious project of dismantling the viewer's gaze, but they chose to stage the operation as a kind of cerebral fun house. Overall, the pleasurable sensation of being both distracted and mesmerized was the chief effect here.

— Joe Fyfe

Harvard University Art Museums



Arthur M. Sackler Museum T Fogg Art Museum Busch-Reisinger Museum Vol. 11, No. 2



Joan Waltemath, American, born 1953. Untitled, 1991. Oil on canvas, 32 x 156 cm. Fogg Art Museum, Louise Haskell Daly Fund, 1992.9

Contemporary Art and the Department of Paintings & Sculpture

Ivan Gaskell, Margaret S. Winthrop Curator of Paintings

The newly constituted Paintings and Sculpture Department of the Fogg Art Museum is responsible for European and American paintings, sculpture, and decorative arts, principally of the centuries prior to our own. How is it to respond to the art of our time? In the belief that dividing twentieth-century or contemporary art from earlier art serves nothing other than an obfuscatory purpose. I. like my colleagues in the Fogg's Departments of Prints and Drawings, have sought fully to engage my department in twentiethcentury and contemporary affairs, all the while respecting the director's reservation of interest in this field.

The very first acquisition that I proposed after my arrival was an untitled painting of 1991 by an emerging New York artist, Joan Waltemath. The generosity of Sarah-Ann and Werner Kramarsky allowed the Museums simultaneously to acquire the drawing on which it, and others in the same series, was based. An institution such as the Harvard University Art Museums cannot hope to be encyclopedic in its acquisition of contemporary art, so arguably should therefore choose to develop a particular specialization or theme in which it can excel. The constant factor in our unwritten policy to date has been the exploration of the relationship between contemporary art and the art of the past. This is

exemplified by the Waltemaths. Although her work is apparently modernist abstraction, the artist in fact engages with tradition both physically, by employing age-old techniques (she even grinds her own pigments), and by deriving her interest in the mathematical progressive series that informs the works from Byzantine liturgical vestments represented in medieval Russian icons and from Islamic architectural decorative motifs. By exhibiting her painting and drawing with a fifteenth-century Novgorod icon and a seventeenth-century Moroccan ceiling panel (Arthur M. Sackler Museum, May 4-June 21, 1992), I attempted to demonstrate that art is a continuum in a very particular sense: a sense that this institution is ideally placed to explore. given its resources and responsibilities.

Furthermore, this choice of themetradition (in an untraditional sense)accords exactly with the epistemic shift that has taken us beyond modernism. The postmodern condition entails a number of urgent consequences for the formulation of future museum practice. First, the art of the past is released from its burden of history to become the arr of the present. From this point of view contemporary art comprises all humanmade or designated visual material that is physically (or conceptually) available to us, regardless of when it was made. There is no essential distinction between the art of the past and the art of the present. The necessary complement to this perception within our new epistemic space is the notion that all art is subject to the pull of the past, even the art that we think of as contemporary and reference-free. Our task is to develop new, appropriate modes of articulating the relationship between these two dialectically related, basic perceptual terms, respectively the ahistorical and the historical—modes that free us fully from distinctively modernist notions of tradition and contemporaneity. Tradition no longer means looking backwards, but rather the subsumption of practice, past and present, for current examination.

In conclusion, an important part of our responsibility as a university art museum is to explore issues of art museum scholarship and practice in depth and detail in the light of continuing theoretical developments. Therefore the systematic consideration of the structures of curatorship is properly on our agenda. In teaching future curators, should we not educate them within a museum structure that encourages them to emulate those scholars who do not confine themselves to single periods of the history of art, but who, like Hans Belting. Herbert Read. Meyer Shapiro, and Leo Steinberg, deal confidently with the art of their own times as well as the past? To suggest by precept or example, or both, that the art of today and the very recent past is different in kind from older art, and can therefore only be dealt with in isolation, would be to mislead our constituency of students, faculty, and visitors. Differences certainly exist, but they require radical, critical discussion, rather than acceptance at face value, if we are to fulfill our academic responsibilities.

Rechteckformationen. «Mexico dark portal» von Joan Waltemath.

Rechteckig verschlüsselt

Joan Waltemath bei von Bartha

TADEUS PFEIFER

In den abstrakten Arbeiten der amerikanischen Künstlerin ist überall eine Kreuzidee auszumachen.

Das Werk der heute etwa 50-jährigen Amerikanerin Joan Waltemath ist trotz seines klipp und klaren Aufbaus, trotz luzider Flexibilität, trotz seines immer wiederkehrenden Elements Rechteck ein verschlüsseltes, das heisst schwer zugängliches. Man hätte gerne eine Erklärung für einzelne Bilder, von der aus man ausgehen könnte und den Sinn erahnen. Man würde gerne eine Beziehung herstellen zwischen Titel und Zeichnung, zwischen den gezeichneten Artefakten und zumindest dem Ausstellungstitel «Torso/Roots»

Aber es ist wie im Konzert. Wie soll ein Zuhörer, der nicht Noten lesen kann, das Zusammenspiel des Orchesters begreifen und beurteilen - die Raffinesse des Solisten und des Dirigenten? Und trotzdem wird er sagen können, es war ausgezeichnet oder langweilig. Der Galeristin Margareta von Bartha ging es zumindest so. Auf detaillierte Fragen mochte sie gar nicht eingehen, sie, die in dieser Welt lebt und unendlich viel davon versteht. «Ich habe Joan Waltemath überhaupt nichts gefragt», meinte sie, «und die Bilder als solche genommen.» Es sei die Frage nach der Erfahrung und nicht der **Kunstkritik**

Und man muss ihr recht geben. Das System, dem eine abstrakte Zeichnung folgt und aus dem sie gemacht ist, braucht überhaupt nicht bekannt zu sein, um ihre ästhetische Wirkung voll zu entfalten. Voraussetzung ist nur, dass die einzelnen Schritte den geheimen «roots» (Wurzeln) folgen.

UNLESERLICH. «Torso/Roots» ist ein Anagramm. Beide Wörter haben dieselben Buchstaben. Sowohl das Wort «Torso» als auch das Wort «Roots» geben ihrer dialektischen Bedeutung das Feld frei für Interpretatio-

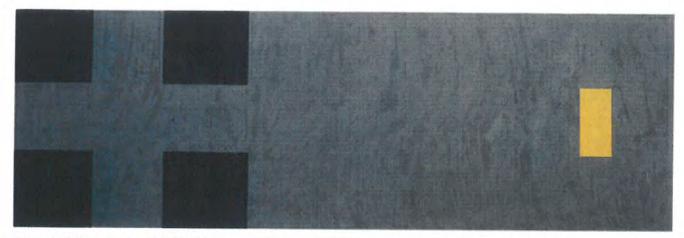
nen, die zwar unendlich, aber in sich geschlossen bleiben. Es ist wie ein Computerprogramm. Man kommt zwar nicht über das Programm selber hinaus, aber in das Programm hinein via das Auge, das einem total verwirrende Kombinationen zur Verfügung stellt.

Es bleibt dabei egal, wo und wie man den eigenen Einstieg vollzieht. Jeder bedeutet eine subjektive Entscheidung. Einzelne Zeichnungen verfügen über Zahlen, die am Rande beigefügt sind; man trifft sie an akkuraten Stellen an. Sie sind - in Computerschrift - auf den Kopf gestellt und rückwärts gedruckt. Sie machen - bildnerisch - «Sinn». Aber weshalb? Joan Waltemath nennt sie «the computers own language». Sie gibt ihnen einen Namen, «ghost in the machine». Und versteht sie kaum

UNAUFLÖSBAR. Was eindrucksvoll zu erkennen ist an dieser Ausstellung, ist die niemals limitierte künstlerische Begabung anhand des Computers. Die Zeichnungen, die gleichzeitig ein «unendliches» Wissen darstellen und dessen Nichtwissen, sie bestehen aus äusserst fein dargestellten «Architektur»-Zeichnungen in kleinen Rechteckformationen, es ist überall eine Kreuzidee auszumachen. Es sind «Mylar drawings», wie Waldemath das nennt, die das, was wir «grid» (Gitter) nennen, als formelle Erkenntnishilfen beiziehen. Die Sache wird nicht ganz so kompliziert, wie sie sich darstellt. Wenn man sich an die «grids» gewöhnt und sie als formale Übersetzung akzeptiert hat, werden dünne Bleistiftstrukturen genauso «verständlich» wie Grafit und Ölbemalung.

Worauf wir wieder am Anfang wären: der unauflösbaren Dialektik zwischen Computerlogik und individuellem Sein.

> Galerie von Bartha, Basel, Schertlingasse 16. Bis 28. Februar, Mo bis Fr 14–18 Uhr. www.dalerievonbartha.com



Joan Waltemath, Untitled, 1992, oil on canvas, 301/2x90 in. Stark Gallery, New York.

Tema Celeste

Joan Waltemath

Gender... gender... gender... a a a a a a. I never escape the feeling that this word takes the sex out of sexuality, out of the eternal war between the exes. That upsets me. Isn't that the best part of it all? I could say that I love being a woman, but then I've never been anything else. I love well-cut clothes and high-heeled shoes, fine cosmetics, feeling beautiful, acting sexy when I feel that way, and seeing other women who embrace their own sexuality. What I see

around me is that most of the people I find conscious, together and in control of their lives are women. But here the danger starts; to speak about "women" is to speak in general terms. I work with mathematical ratios because the precision involved really excites me, generalities don't.

Obviously, there are divers factors that contribute to the formation of a point of view from which any one of us makes their work, and being a woman is one of them. What I want to acknowledge here is my indebtedness to those women who have struggled in their lives

and through their work to transform the feminine from what has been perceived as an obstacle to a source of illumination.

Art in America

July 1992

Joan Waltemath at Stark

The drawing behind the desk at Stark was a stunning work by an artist possessed by the process of mapping out a personal geometry. Joan Waltemath makes large, amazingly dense drawings of variable grids in which the expanding and contracting intervals between the horizontal and vertical lines are sequenced according to mathematical progressions.

But Waltemath considers her drawings to be preparatory works for her paintings, which exert a much cooler and more restrained presence. In her paintings she works with a set of four rectangles, which she lines up in such a way that they can be seen as locating the corners of a large square; the resulting image is a chunky cross of the sort that appeared in the work of Malevich and the Constructivists. In some cases this cross-in-a-square constellates as a small figure floating

on a larger painted field. In other works, the cross-in-a-square figure fills the picture plane. The apparent simplicity of these paintings yields, upon contemplation, an engagingly elaborate machinery of perceptual "doubling." At a primary level of perception each painting makes a distinction between two surfaces-sanded polish and raised icing. A fundamental color differentiation is made between solid color and hazy, more generalized hue. Waltemath's color sensibility is bracing and complex, but these are basically two-color paintings. Finally, there is the dualism of inside and outside—in relation to both the field and the figure. For the cruciform defined by the ostensibly negative space of the field can, like an optical illusion, suddenly seem to be a positive figure.

Waltemath's paintings are rigorous and elegant, and they reward sustained looking. It was the glimpse of the drawing behind the desk that left me wanting something more from them. The paintings move to a purity of conception and process through a relatively programmatic method. Where intuition comes into play (scale of the work, quality of color), it remains hemmed in by the program. The drawing, on the other hand, reveals the exciting arbitrariness of the program it--Stephen Westfall



Joan Walternath: Untitled, 1991, oil on canvas. 57 by 57 inches; at Stark.