



Richard Yarde, *Head with Hands II*, watercolor on paper, 30" x 82", 1992

MOJO HAND: RECENT WORK BY RICHARD YARDE

Bakalar Gallery, Massachusetts College of Art,
621 Huntington Ave., Boston

The hand here is that of the weaver, the collector, the *bricoleur* rather than the engineer. Richard Yarde's large-scale watercolors develop their all-over even texture by joining flat parts from edge-to-edge, rather than building them out from some imagined internal center. Constructed of brief grid-like planar shards or accumulated dots, Yarde's forms are at once rigidly-seamed wholes and utterly fragmented shells. And their watercolor foundations give such forms a frightening fragility while providing their only source of stability—the gentle overlap that gives Yarde's work the feel of stitched textiles.

Most of the time, Yarde's tapestries describe figures or figure-parts. Hands, mouths and heads, when isolated or scattered gently across the artist's broad surfaces, develop metaphors about wholeness and fragmentation, construction and disintegration that make best use of his formal innovations. But the geometrically-arranged contrasting dots that begin to appear seemingly arbitrarily around Yarde's figures can cut both ways. In the monumental triptych *Back to Front*, 1993, these Braille-like domino dot arrangements seem little more than dressing as they reach for the extended metaphor of fragmentation they seek. But they do find it in *Head and Hands*, 1992 whose dot structure loosens itself more carefully from depiction of those figures to an outright minimalist non-representational scattering.

Such scattering finds its logical conclusion the artist's wholly-abstract works. *Who's Game is This Anyway?*, 1996 gives over its entire pictorial structure to these domino-like constructs. And *Rectal*, *Menteric Inferior*, *Menteric Superior*, and *Double Spiral* (all 1996) develop their capillary-like biological organic forms through the accumulation and disintegration of Yarde's dot collections. *Prayer*, 1996, however, seems to bring the artist's entire practice together, as its hand forms and dot drawings draw even broader metaphorical implications from its title—the idea of prayer appears through the coded sign of uplifted palms, as well as through the suggested code of cryptic dot patterns. Yarde's formal language meets his conceptual language head on as we realize that, for Yarde, a prayer is potential or release, not fact or resolve. It is in such potential that Yarde's language finds its strongest ally.

Jeff Perrott