Dean Smith was born in Oakland, California, in 1961. He received Bachelor of Arts degrees in Art Practice and History of Art from the University of California, Berkeley in 1984. He received a Master of Fine Arts degree from UC Berkeley in 1988. Smith lives and works in Berkeley.

Selected Recent Solo Exhibitions

2002
Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA

2001
Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

2000
"Drawings," Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
"Drawings," Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA

Selected Recent Group Exhibitions

2002
"Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore," Marvelli Gallery, New York, NY
"Fast Forward IV," University of California, Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
"Julia Fish, PA Free, David Ireland, Dean Smith: Works on Paper," Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica, CA
"Being There: 45 Oakland Artists," Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

2001
"Different Strokes," IM N IL Gallery, Brooklyn, NY

1999
"Invitational Exhibition," Curt Marcus Gallery, New York, NY

1998
"Freie Sicht aufs Mittelmeer," Kunsthaus Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland and Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany
"Six Painters," Gallery Paule Anglim, San Francisco, CA
"Thén et Now. Terrain’s Tenth Anniversary Celebration," Terrain, San Francisco, CA

1997
"Città Aperta Ed. 1997," IDRIA Cultural Association, Città Sant’Angelo, Italy
"Entfremte Bekanntschaft," Foundation Bca 39, Zürich, Switzerland

Selected Recent Bibliography


Work in MATRIX
Dean Smith
black hole sun #3 (x-ray vision), 2002
8 feet in diameter
Photocopy toner on acetate

The MATRIX Program at the UC Berkeley Art Museum is made possible by the generous endowment gift of Phyllis C. Wattis.

Additional donors to the MATRIX Program include the UAM Council MATRIX Endowment, Ann M. Hatch, Eric McDougall, Glenn and April Bucksbaum, and Christopher Vroom and Illya Szilak.

© 2002 The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved.

Dean Smith / MATRIX 201b
black hole sun #3 (x-ray vision)

October 20 – November 17, 2002
University of California Berkeley Art Museum
When describing his art, Dean Smith states, "I start out with a pattern based on a Fibonacci number series and, to my surprise, end up with the structure of a fractured mandala, or some seductively vulgar seventies design motif. How is that possible?"

*black hole sun #3 (x-ray vision)*, the Berkeley-based artist's large-scale, intricate, and meticulous photocopy toner-on-acetate drawing that vertiginously hangs in the Bancroft Way lobby, evokes both Op Art and botanical textbook illustrations. The choice of materials for this work is a departure from the graphite and metallic ink on paper that Smith usually uses, but like all of his work, *black hole sun #3* is composed of thousands of minute marks, bristling rhythmically over the surface of the page, collectively forming shimmering patterns that seem to pulse with life.

The work is derived from an illustration of an eye by seventeenth-century Dutch scientist Anton van Leeuwenhoek, best known for discovering the richness of life in the microscopic world: bacteria, blood cells, sperm cells, and much more. By using an ambiguous spiral motif as source material, Smith makes the viewer pause and attentively look at the patterns. He hopes to create a sense of wonder and uncertainty, a site of reverse; he is less interested in having the viewer decipher the meaning of the work than he is in creating an experience of not understanding what one is seeing. At most, we understand that this is an experience similar to those felt by the gentleman scientists of van Leeuwenhoek's milieu, who worked at the very birth of the Enlightenment. Smith explains that in van Leeuwenhoek's era, science, philosophy, and theology were all mixed together, and goes on to note that, by "allowing myself to unfold meaning in multiple directions, what I achieve is something akin to emotional life. By this I mean, do we always feel the same, every changing minute? The imagery I make use of is complex, in the same way that dealing with another person is complex. Like a relationship, there is a constant readjustment of attitude, thoughts, and perceptions at each interaction with the image."

The effects Smith achieves in *black hole sun #3 (x-ray vision)* are more emotional, more redolent of the shifting constellations of feeling, than those of many of the artist's other, more figurative works. Smith's monochromatic works on paper, built up from closely packed lines, dots, and other discrete elements, are like a cloudy day, when the absence of color does much to reveal the landscape. His tight and precise lines make abstract claims about distance, process, and the ultimate limitations of artistic self-effacement. The lines argue that one can stay inside, that pencil or ink on the shelter of paper or acetate can stretch time and perception.

There are also specific references to the concept of interior space in Smith's work. *topology #7* or *portrait of my father's brain*, 1999, with its form and bilateral symmetry, offers the viewer a direct emotional contact with the artist. Other drawings seem to open up—seem to have already opened—like a leaf or a book, along a spine. Smith's *burst*, 1997, now in the UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive's collection, demonstrates the meditative organic process Smith is continuing to explore in his current work. A large twisting form rests in the middle of the paper. The repetition of simple forms creates a vibrating effect, the sense of depth is exaggerated, and the intertwined structure moves in and out, a trick of visual perception on this two-dimensional surface. When you give the work enough attention and time, careful repetitive lines that look like they could be magnetized iron shavings form a mysterious, awe-inspiring shape: is it intertwined spiders, enlarged bacteria, vegetation made of fur, tree veins, a piece of cast-iron garden furniture, a map of the Paris Metro with fur-tufted legs and hooves? It is safe to assume that this is not what the artist had in mind, of course, but Smith's goal is for the viewer to get as much out of the piece as he or she is willing to bring to it. The lines are as controlled and thin as in a Dürer etching, yet the large shape softly swells as the eye wanders around it, playing a marvelous guessing game.

Kevin E. Consey
DIRECTOR