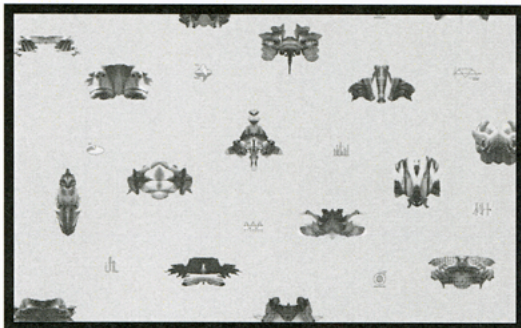


Oregon

Emily Ginsburg at Manuel Izquierdo Gallery

Portland, regionally known as a printmaking town, lived up to that reputation during the month of October with some fifty galleries exhibiting work in conjunction with "Crossing Boundaries," an international print symposium organized by Portland State University, Pacific Northwest College of Art and the Portland Art Museum. The symposium drew not only proponents of the traditional craft, but also a healthy contingent of those who honor printmaking's other great traditions – that of mass, democratic distribution and social comment. The latter, vocally declaring themselves unafraid to follow the lead of new technologies, must have appreciated Emily Ginsburg's *Blotto*, an installation of prints situated in spirit somewhere between the home décor department of a trendy hardware store and a therapist's couch. Stretching the conventions of the fine art edition to frame an environment where decorative and behavioral patterns echo one another, *Blotto* clocked in as a persuasive argument for the role of conceptually driven, technologically sophisticated print work within the Portland art scene.

By the yard, the centerpiece of the exhibit, is a continuous run of wallpaper covered in a baroque pattern of inkblots, originally a children's game of free association called Blotto, hence the show's title, and later developed as a clinical tool for diagnosing psychological disorders. Ginsburg's blots have been filled in with video stills of habitual body language – close-ups of people biting their nails, crossing their legs, grimacing, stretching, yawning or compulsively adjusting their clothing. The images, mirrored to mimic the symmetrical shape of the inkblots and retaining traces of their video genesis, create unsettling conjunctions of flesh that range from the erotic to the ridiculous. At once creepy and beautiful, these lacy forms of private, unconscious moments frozen into a repetitive pattern might have been suitable decoration for the anteroom to Freud's study. A secondary motif sprinkled among the inkblots like forget-me-nots references systems



Detail of *Blotto: Single Repeat (Anguished Aqua)*, 2001
digital prints on archival paper, 35" x 36"

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Detail of *Blotto: 1-10 Prototypes*, 2001
dry mounted digital print, 8" x 10"

for measuring time and frequency of occurrence, suggesting that these neurotic ticks and tugs should add up, beyond their decorative impact, to some insight involving human behavior.

Keeping the work in motion between the poles of domestic decoration, clinical observation and commercial display, Ginsburg introduces notions of personal choice and style with a series of panels that offer identical patterns in a selection of hues such as "latent lavender," "skittish sky," "anguished aqua," and "confused chamomile." *Swatch*, available from a dispenser in the gallery free of charge, summarizes the decorator options, complete with inventory control numbers, in the form of a sample or paint chip. *Blotto: 1-10 Prototypes* isolates the inventory of images that make up the wallpaper pattern, each gesture printed in rich blue-blacks and silvery grays on its own archival card and boxed into a set, like a special collector's edition of the original children's game. The reference to cheap, commercial reproduction and unlimited distribution on the one hand and to the coveted collectable on the other recalls the strategies that caused many contemporary printmakers to claim the late mixed-media artist Felix Gonzales-Torres as one of their own. Placed, as they are here, in the context of consumption, personal adornment and desire, they serve as a metaphor for what author Hillel Schwartz has called "the culture of the copy."

As a whole, *Blotto* would benefit from installation in a more sympathetic space than the Manuel Izquierdo Gallery can offer, with its poor lighting and close proximity to dusty, working studios. But even under these less than ideal circumstances, Ginsburg's riff on our need to quantify, decipher, isolate, replicate and analyze is a complex melange, formally tight and quietly funny.

-Pat Boas

Emily Ginsburg: *Blotto* closed November 8 at Manuel Izquierdo Gallery, Portland.

Pat Boas is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.