

of vivid color. However, it is Siler's small, conventionally framed drawings (in both shows) that best meld his thoughts about the brain's activities and his actualization of them. Slightly bigger than sketchbook leaves, they are musingly Leonardo-like, with clear writing next to drawn and painted diagrams. They are less calculatedly *about*, and more evidence of, Siler's working through of his ideas.

*The Encoded Monolith* (1980-90)—shown at Feldman, where he concentrated on the integration of emotions and awareness—is the most memorable work in either exhibition. Presumably a "processmorph," this 10-foot stack of number-coded laboratory drawers is filled (according to gallery information) with more than 700 of Siler's drawings, paintings and notations. These columns of steel condense his vast excogitations into a single potent visual form.

—Ann Wilson Lloyd

## NEW YORK AND NEW BRUNSWICK

### Harrison Burns at E.M. Donahue and Rabbet

In two shows last year, Burns demonstrated the range of his subject matter and the fecundity of his complicated production techniques. At Rabbet, in New Brunswick, N.J., he presented 20 canvases (most from 1985-89 but some from 1975-82) from his series of dark-toned "black paintings." The works in this show, called "Paintings Now," were mainly derived from still photographs that Burns made from television broadcasts of such cult B films as *Murder in Malibu*, *Kiss Me Deadly*, *Cat People* and *House of Wax*.

Burns has been borrowing televised images since 1969. Having grown up in a small town, he learned about the world largely through popular movies, TV and magazines. Rather than repudiating such experiences as too "low" for high art, he became one of the first artists to simply incorporate TV and Hollywood images into his work. Although Warhol, Rauschenberg and Baldessari (among others) worked with found images before him, Burns has developed his own way of combining photography, drawing and painting. His series of both dark and light paintings since the early '70s testify to the variability of his method.

In producing these works, the artist first makes charcoal drawings based on the photographic images obtained from a given film. The drawing is then photographed and projected onto paper, and a stencil of the image is cut from the paper. This stencil is then applied in turn to several canvases that have been variously prepared with grounds that suggest the scan lines of the original TV image. Sometimes Burns makes another group of pictures by cutting up the stencil and collaging it to canvas. In either case, the resulting image keeps something from its sources while nonetheless remaining totally abstracted from its origin as a film frame. In the "black paintings," particularly, the violence or horror of the image is enhanced by the suggestion of TV glitches and ghosts as well as by the dark paint. While these works carry a hard-hitting reminder of the cruelty of life, in other series Burns's procedures yield brighter, happier paintings. His newest canvases shown at E.M. Donahue concentrate on bouquets of flowers, especially daffodils.

Although each of Burns's ser-

ies includes paintings that are quite similar to one another (since they are made from the same stencil of the same drawing of the same image), his "multiples" are never identical. He uses different backgrounds and orients his images in various ways, and he employs a range of different colors. Even in the "black paintings" there are actually numerous colors, but it is in the brighter pictures that the artist's unique color sense is best displayed. Probably because of his partial color blindness (Burns cannot visually distinguish between red and green), he juxtaposes and superimposes colors oddly; he certainly doesn't run the risk of making paintings that are excessively tasteful. The shock of his color choices, together with the grotesquerie that is innate in the original televised images, add up to a very specialized kind of painting. One can easily understand why Burns's two most important influences are probably Goya's black paintings and Warhol's silk-screen works. —Frederick Ted Castle

## WILLIAMSTOWN, MA

### Michael Singer at Williams College Museum of Art

Just as architectural models define relationships of scale, space and perspective, Michael Singer's *Ritual Series 1990* (1988-90) offers a model for contemplating our positions in time and in nature. Initially one saw only rough, darkened-wood half walls in the center of a capacious gallery. The front wall—its lapped corners and flared sills suggesting some ancient structure—was blank except for low, horizontal slits that allowed glimpses of small shapes and patterns on the floor within. One was drawn around the wall, looking for a way in. But doorways in the other three walls were only for looking—not passing through.

These walls formed a protective husk around an assortment of ordinary materials—stone, granite, copper, bronze and wood—arranged in tight geometric grids, casually stacked, balanced, suspended, divided, submerged or penetrated. The arrangements almost always stopped short of formal elegance; there was ever another layer, surface or juxtaposition that implied the randomness of

nature. The surfaces of the materials were also mixed. They were weathered and amorphous, scored, roughly cut or highly polished. Sometimes the materials were cast into facsimiles of odd patterns in the natural materials. While the selection and treatment of materials seemed idiosyncratic, the assembly alluded to the processes or forms of geography, architecture and archeology. Scored timbers resembled grids miniaturized by distance (landscape seen from an airplane) and by intent (diagrams on blueprints). Layered arrangements also suggested models of mountains and underground lakes, futuristic cities and ancient ruins, tectonic plates and megalithic outcroppings—or real-scale rock-strewn walkways and streets. The detritus evoked associations ranging from cemetery headstones to costly scraps of pretentious architecture. In this elaborate and ambiguous installation, Singer seemed to focus on natural phenomena and human artifacts through a constantly shifting zoom lens.

A sturdy bench along the unbroken interior wall offered a symbolic respite from this dizzying prospect. Singer started his "Ritual Series" in the 1970s with ephemeral, contemplative structures woven of grass, branches and weeds hidden in the landscape. The rules for perceiving our complex world, he seems to say, are constantly evolving, and one might now need a more substantial refuge from which to sort them out. —Ann Wilson Lloyd

## DALLAS

### Otis Jones at Barry Whistler

For more than a decade, Otis Jones has made paintings from pre-cut slabs of 2-inch-thick basswood, pieced together into eccentric verticals and slathered with textural patches of pigment in unexpected color combinations. The solidity and candor of these works emulate the folk art, old tools and antique furniture that Jones admires and collects. Yet in probing issues of painting vis-à-vis sculpture, these substantial planes reveal contingent formal concerns at the same time that they present themselves as vivid independent objects. The box paintings and drawings on paper, all from 1990, that Jones



Joel Feldman: *A Change in Order*, 1990, woodcut on Okawara paper, 37½ by 73½ inches; at Sazama.