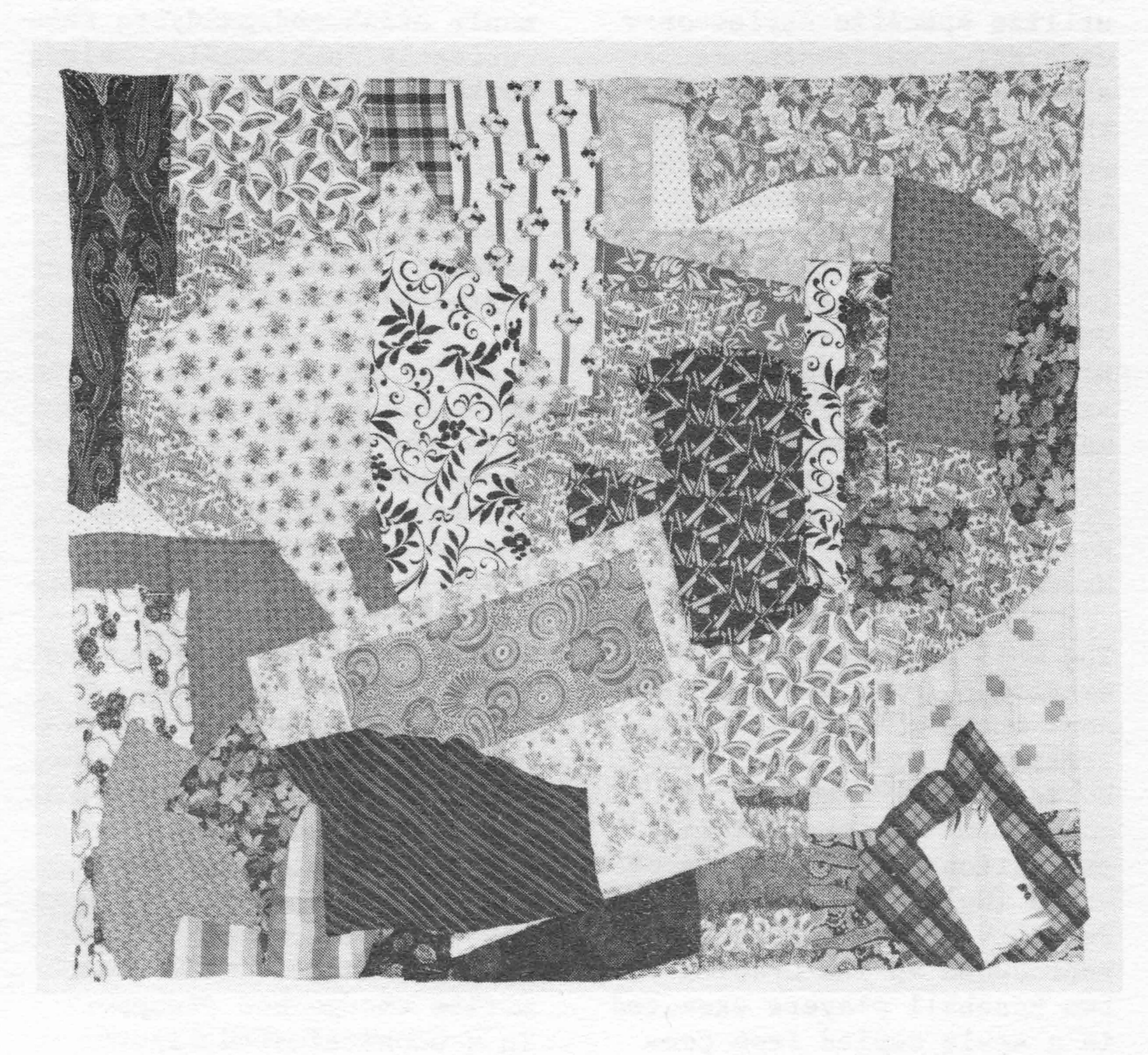
Spare Time Shooting Practice, 1978



Southern California artist Kim MacConnel is one of a growing number of contemporary painters interested in the pictorial possibilities of decorative patterning, an area which has been relatively unexplored since Matisse. While many of the artists currently working in this sensibility--Valerie Jaudon, Joyce Kozloff, Miriam Shapiro and Robert Zakanitch for instance-utilize specific styles of decorative patterning as structural models from which they invent new designs and patterns vis a vis conventional modes of painting, MacConnel directly manipulates a wide variety of found patterned fabrics which he pieces together and hangs unstretched. He states flatly, "I'm not making up anything." (Kim MacConnel: Collection Applied Design, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, March 1976).

The wall hangings currently exhibited in MATRIX represent what MacConnel has collectively titled "The Third World Series." On the announcement for the original exhibition of this series of works (Holly Solomon Gallery, February 1978), MacConnel reproduced an ink drawing of two baseball players executed in a style copied from contemporary Chinese pattern books. While intentionally droll, this gesture captures the spirit of eclecticism that characterizes MacConnel's work.

Constructed solely of common synthetic fabrics, MacConnel's works are dense in their variety of images and references. MacConnel is attracted to Western and non-Western forms of popular culture and folk

art, and this attraction is clearly reflected in his work. He rummages thrift shops, swap meets and other second-hand outlets in search of materials. Curio shops in Los Angeles' Chinatown and the Mexican border city of Tijuana are also favorite sources for materials and ideas which generate his work. In selecting fabrics and patterns for potential pieces, he prefers the commonly brash and gaudy to the currently fashionable. His works are an astonishing compendium of the visual cliches which decorate modern synthetic fabrics. From the commonly ugly, MacConnel makes uncommonly beautiful and sophisticated art.

The distinct character of MacConnel's imagery results from the unlikely coupling of these banal forms of fabric decoration with a thorough knowledge and utilization of the formal elements of painting. Spare Time Shooting Practice (1978), for instance, presents a rapid series of perceptual shifts as individual motifs suggest a specific reading speed and spatial location. MacConnel establishes a tension between the identity of a single motif and its relationship to the overall image. Individual motifs emerge and disappear in a sophisticated figure/ ground relationship reminiscent of the manner in which camouflaged animals disappear into their environment. Polka dot, paisley and floral prints intermingle in a cacophony of pictorial energy.

Works like Spare Time Shooting
Practice bear a structural
resemblance to early American
quilts and coverlets in that
the image is built from separate fabric units. MacConnel's

process of working similarly parallels the working methods associated with early American craft movements. Like most pre-industrial era work, MacConnel's pictures-which he constructs in a small shack-like garage attached to his house--refer to the home as the center of industry. Using primarily recycled scraps of cloth, he substitutes highly specialized "professional" skills with practical domestic skills such as glueing and sewing. Titles like Flourishing Side Line Occupation (1978) and Never Stop Being Thrifty and Industrious (1978), although playful in intent, are nevertheless in keeping with the scrap-box character of MacConnel's art. Further, MacConnel's use of domestic techniques and materials traditionally associated with the feminine gender refutes the stereotyping of art into "typical" male and female images.

Accompanying these largescale, quilt-like works is a series of smaller, vertically-oriented pieces made primarily of aprons suspended upside down from thin ribs of bamboo. Double Harvest (1978), which consists of five aprons stacked vertically, is ambiguous in appearance. While the materials and motifs utilized to construct the work remain conspicuously American, the resulting image projects a curious sense of cultural and aesthetic hybridization. In its verticality, lateral symmetry and bold decoration it suggests an Americanized version of a Chinese caterpiller kite. Other works of this type vaguely resemble Mexican banderitas in their striking coloration, incorporation of feathers and

elegantly draped cloth fragments and streamers.

In reference to the eclectic nature of his works, MacConnel mentions his frustration with the self-reflexive character of much contemporary painting. He is interested in sources outside the confines of modernist conventions.

Indeed, his works intentionally refer to images and aspects of Western and non-Western cultures not previously associated with the realm of fine art.

Kim MacConnel was born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, in 1946. He has received a BA (1969) and an MFA (1972) from the University of California, San Diego, where he currently teaches painting. He lives in Encinitas, California, and is represented by the Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

MA

Works in MATRIX:

Spare Time Shooting Practice, 1978, Fabric collage (polyester fabric, hot glued). Lent by Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

Flourishing Sideline Occupation, 1978, Fabric collage (polyester fabric, hot glued). Lent by Holly Solomon Gallery, New York. Never Stop Being Thrifty and Industrious, 1978, Fabric collage (polyester fabric, hot glued). Private Collection, Zurich, Switzerland.

Opportunity, 1978, Mixed media (polyester fabric, bamboo, glitter). Lent by Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

Progress, 1978, Mixed media (polyester fabric, bamboo, feathers). Lent by Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

New Luck, 1978, Mixed media (polyester fabric, bamboo, glitter). Lent by Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

Double Harvest, 1978, Mixed media (polyester fabric, bamboo, glitter). Lent by Holly Solomon Gallery, New York.

Selected one-person exhibitions:
Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC

'75; Metropolitan Museum and Art Center, Miami, FL '75; Gallerie Ehrensperger, Zurich '76; LaJolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, CA '76; Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC'77.

Selected group exhibitions:
University of California,
San Diego, Decorations, '71;
Jack Glenn Gallery, Corona
Del Mar, CA '73; The Clock
Tower, NYC, Toys Artists
Make, '74; Whitney Museum of
Contemporary Art, NYC,
Biennial Exhibition, '75;

Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC '75; Gallerie Monnet, Brussels '75; Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC '76; Museum of Modern Art, NYC, Los Angeles, '76.

Selected bibliography by MacConnel:

"Luiseno Pictogaraphs,"

<u>Southern California Indian</u>

<u>Rock Art</u>, University of

<u>California</u>, San Diego '73,

with Nina MacConnel.

"What You See Is What You Get," Art-Rite, (Special Issue, Sept. '77).

Selected bibliography about MacConnel:

Goldin, Amy. "The 'New' Whitney Biennial: Pattern Emerging?" Art in America, vol. 63, no. 3 (May/June '75), pp. 73-3.

Armstrong, Richard. Collection Applied Design, La-Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, (March '76).

Auping, Michael. "Kim MacConnel-Questioning Taste," Artweek, vol. 7, no. 14, (April 3, '76).

Goldin, Amy. "Review,"

Art In America, vol. 64, no.

3 (May/June '76), pp. 109-10.

Shirey, David. "Diverse And Lively," New York Times, Sunday Feb. 27, '77.

Perrault, John. "The New Decorativeness," Soho Weekly News, June 2, '77, p. 17.

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