

## ARTISTS

Alice Adams	Nancy Manter
Martin Ball	Joanne Mattera
Siri Berg	Creighton Michael
Emily Berger	Manfred Mohr
Susan Bonfils	Judith Murray
Power Boothe	Jim Osman
Sharon Brant	Corey Postiglione
Henry Brown	Lucio Pozzi
Marvin Brown	Raquel Rabinovich
James O. Clark	Dorothea Rockburne
Matthew Deleget	Ce Roser
Gabriele Evertz	David Row
Heidi Glück	Anne Russinof
John Goodyear	Lorenza Sannai
James Gross	Mary Schiliro
Lynne Harlow	James Seawright
Mara Held	& Mimi Garrard
Daniel G. Hill	Claire Seidl
Gilbert Hsiao	Edward Shalala
Phillis Ideal	Susan Smith
Julian Jackson	Li Trincere
James Juszczuk	Kim Uchiyama
Cecily Kahn	Lynn Umlauf
Marthe Keller	Clover Vail
Iona Kleinhaut	Vera Vasek
Victor Kord	Jeanne Wilkinson
Irene Lawrence	Mark Williams
Jane Logemann	Kes Zapkus
Stephen Maine	Nola Zirin
Katinka Mann	

graphite arcs. She remains open to the irregularities of the curvilinear forms that accumulate.

In the 17th century, mathematician Johannes Kepler determined that the ends of a straight line, drawn outward forever, will eventually meet, forming a continuous circle with an infinite radius.<sup>11</sup> Endlessness is an important concept in Zen Buddhism, taking shape in the meditative practice of drawing enso, calligraphic circular brushstrokes which impart a range of symbolic meanings, among them the achievement of enlightenment: a balanced state of total openness and total emptiness.<sup>12</sup> The enso is neither perfect nor studied; it is drawn quickly and freehand. In this way it reveals the particularities of its maker and remains open to those of its observer.

The loose, curving gesture of an artist's hand, wrist, or arm can open up a composition to unforeseen possibilities. **Martin Ball's** layered scrims of line and shape reveal what he calls the "aleatoric nature of doodles," unearthing from the blank sheet structure, depth, and explosive character. Through gesture, **Anne Russinof** and **Lynn Umlauf** play with the tension between boundary and content, exploring what happens when these designations flip or when one gives way to the other.

Each of the artists included in this exhibition shows us that acceptance is an essential attitude. In its utter imperfection, the circle reminds us that we, like our world, are dynamic and indefinite. We can examine ourselves, but we can't always determine beginning, ending, content, or edge. And that's okay. As Emerson writes, "The way of life is wonderful: it is by abandonment."<sup>13</sup>

*Rachel Nackman is a curator, editor, and web developer based in Brooklyn.*

<sup>11</sup> William M. Ivins, Jr., *Art & Geometry: A Study in Space Intuitions*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1946, 84-85.

<sup>12</sup> Audrey Yoshiko Seo, *Enso: Zen Circles of Enlightenment*, Shambhala, Boston, Massachusetts, 2007, 1-2. Seo's introduction to this volume is a beautiful and thorough exploration of the circular form throughout history in the context of Zen Buddhism.

<sup>13</sup> Emerson, 414.

This exhibition was made possible by a grant from the  
**Lily Auchincloss** Foundation, Inc.

An exhibition of drawings and works-on-paper can provide a behind-the-scenes view of an artist's thinking and working process, and a thematic parameter can push an artist into new territory or revive a latent interest. Consequently, this exhibit turns a fresh eye on the work of members of American Abstract Artists revealing a remarkable breadth of approaches to a complex and historically rich theme. We welcome this opportunity to share our vision and our thinking with the Crown Heights community and the public at large.

I'd like to thank Hanne Tierney, Director of FiveMyles, and Marine Cornuet, Cultural Events Planner and Programs Manager, for making this exhibition possible and for running things so smoothly.

I also thank Rachel Nackman for curating the exhibition and for her insightful essay, the thoroughness of her research and the diversity of her interpretations.

A special thanks is due to Emily Berger, AAA Vice President and Chair of the Exhibitions Committee, and Creighton Michael for once again shepherding us through the complex process that such a large exhibition entails; to Vera Vasek for collecting and organizing all of the digital images that were reviewed; to Anne Russinof for her graphic design; and to all AAA members who have lent their work for the exhibition.

— *Daniel G. Hill, AAA President*

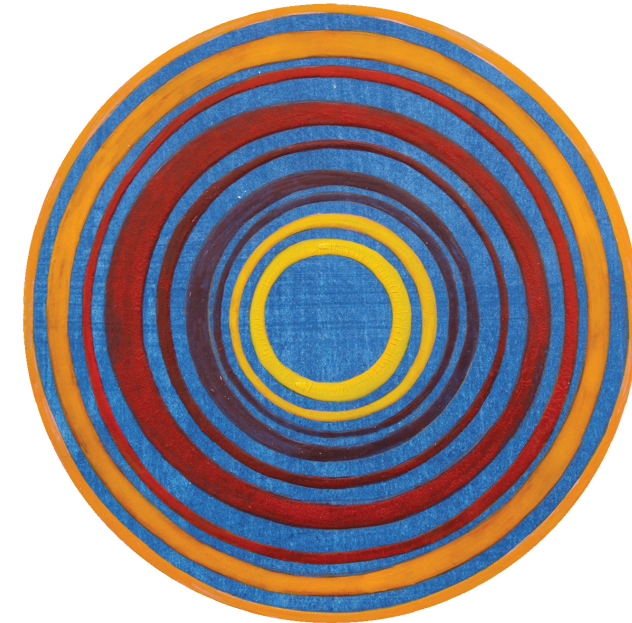
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When Emily Berger first suggested this exhibition to me, it seemed a challenging idea to show such a large number of works at FiveMyles, but *Endless Entire* quickly turned into a very exciting project. Not to mention that it turned into a very well organized project, due to Emily and Rachel's foresight and planning. From the beginning they kept this process so easy, and I'm delighted and glad that the exhibition takes place at FiveMyles.

— *Hanne Tierney, Director, FiveMyles*

# ENDLESS ENTIRE

AMERICAN ABSTRACT ARTISTS



November 21 – December 20, 2015

OPENING RECEPTION:

Saturday, Nov. 21, 5 – 8pm

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Sunday, Dec. 6, 4 pm

## FiveMyles

558 St. Johns Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11238

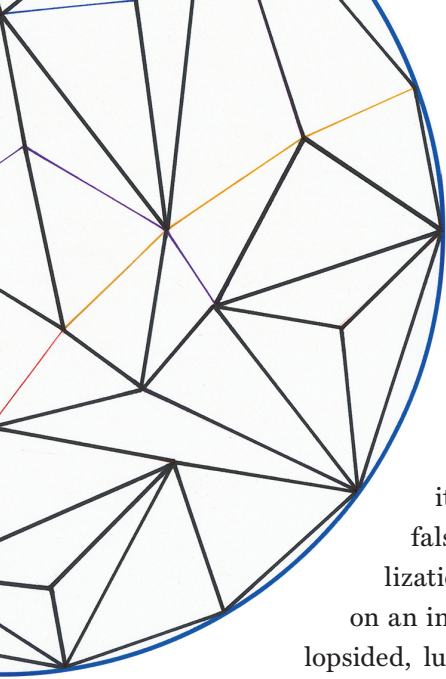
Gallery Hours: Thurs. – Sun., 1 – 6pm  
718.783.4438

[www.fivemyles.org](http://www.fivemyles.org)

[www.endlessentire.com](http://www.endlessentire.com)

[www.americanabstractartists.org](http://www.americanabstractartists.org)

Shown above: Mara Held



*“This line is endless and begins nowhere.  
It contains all the truth a man might know”<sup>1</sup>  
— Louis Johnson, “The Perfect Symbol”*

*“The one thing which we seek with insatiable desire is to forget ourselves, to be surprised out of our propriety, to lose our sempiternal memory, and to do something without knowing how or why; in short, to draw a new circle.”  
— Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles”*

**THE CIRCLE** is often associated with perfection. We think of it as a pure form, balanced by symmetry and surface tension. But this is false. “Try to find a circle in nature, or even in the artifacts of human civilization,” writes mathematician Ernest Zebrowski, Jr., “and you’ve embarked on an impossible hunt.”<sup>2</sup> All the circles we encounter are actually fuzzy-edged, lopsided, lumpy, or elliptical. We can’t expect perfection of circles. In this gulf between expectation and reality, perhaps we recognize something of ourselves.

This exhibition highlights 58 members of American Abstract Artists who engage with the circular form. They do so not to seek perfection, but to explore ways of understanding and responding to the world. The artworks gathered here show us where these artists find circles, how they use them, and how they break the form apart. Through their collected works, we see how the circle contains and organizes, how it echoes the cyclical nature of our lives, and how it teaches us to welcome the indefinite and the imperfect.

We confront the many unknowns around us by observing and defining them. For centuries the circle has been the rational foundation of these attempts to measure the irrational: distance, time, space, relationships, our environment, and our cosmic universe. Yet while it’s only human to seek explanation, it’s equally human to question and crack open the explanations we establish. “Logic itself can never give final answers in the real world,” writes Zebrowski.<sup>3</sup>

In the third century BCE, Archimedes took a four-sided polygon and began adding sides to it. The square

became a pentagram, a hexagram, a heptagram. Each side Archimedes added brought his shape closer to being a circle. For his purposes -- he was trying to calculate pi -- he determined that a polygon was a circle once it reached 96 sides.<sup>4</sup> In theory the number of sides could increase forever. Wassily Kandinsky, writing in the 1920s, defined the circle as a plane formed by the condensation of every radial line one can draw from a central axis.<sup>5</sup> Any shape can reach toward the circle, and the circle at once contains every shape and every angle.

Many artists in this group toy with the flexibility of the circle’s geometry. **Siri Berg**’s Tape Drawings pose the circle as a modular starting point for serial play, dividing the whole into arc sectors and reconstructing it in progression. **Emily Berger** and **Kim Uchiyama** both employ the arc as a gestural fragment, insinuating the completed circle we don’t see. **Lorenza Sannai** seats her drawing inside a circle, but refuses to adhere to any pattern in the application of line within, instead choosing to lean into what she calls “improvisation,” creating a confounding surface of impossible geometry.

remarkable in its technical accuracy.

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Zebrowski, Jr., *A History of the Circle: Mathematical Reasoning and the Physical Universe*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, NJ, 1999, 1.

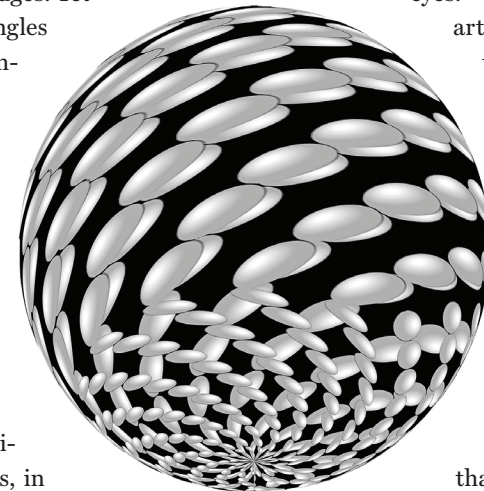
<sup>3</sup> Zebrowski, 88.

<sup>4</sup> Zebrowski, 7.

The 2nd-century philosopher Hierocles suggested we map our interactions with others to a series of concentric circles rippling outward from ourselves.<sup>6</sup> Today we still rely on the semantics of the circle to describe the organization of our social lives, those in the “inner circle” being closest. In his drawing *Six Friends*, **Lucio Pozzi** has gathered an assortment of rectangular shapes within a large graphite circle at the center of his sheet. We cannot help but read these rectangles as six individuals arranged by raw emotion. While the title of the drawing implies they’re equally amicable, we somehow feel that those at the center exhibit a kinship greater than those at the edges. Yet Pozzi intended to place these rectangles at random, and none of the relationships we perceive are designed. Pozzi plays with “the inner tensions of irregular patterns as an occasion for the enactment of sensibility.”<sup>7</sup>

In his 1841 essay on circles, Ralph Waldo Emerson observed, “Our life is an apprenticeship to the truth...that there is no end in nature, but every end is a beginning.”<sup>8</sup> This cyclical sensibility is embodied in many cultures, in particular by the symbol of the ouroboros, a serpent eating its own tail, first introduced in ancient Egypt. Its form distilled is that of a circle, in which “beginning and end flow into each other and in the same instant disappear without a trace.”<sup>9</sup> Among its many implications is the inevitability of birth, growth, death, and renewal at any scale.

Many cyclical forces operate upon our planet: climatic, lunar, temporal, agricultural, geological. The residue of this eternal action and reaction is ripe for abstraction. **Vera Vasek** pulls plaster reliefs directly from the patterns carved into sand by tidal changes



IMAGES: At left, Lorenza Sannai  
Above, James Seawright & Mimi Gerard

in the Florida Keys, while **Raquel Rabinovich** layers mud drawn from riverbeds onto paper as pigment, referencing the flow of water and settling of sediment. **Nancy Manter** condenses her geological observations into deep black arcing voids and silky, tenuous mounds that read as water and sky, or as two frozen formations reaching for each other.

The nature of intimate conversation is also cyclical and unpredictable. “Conversation is a game of circles,” wrote Emerson. “All that we reckoned settled shakes and rattles; and literatures, cities, climates, religions, leave their foundations, and dance before our eyes.”<sup>10</sup> The conversation between artist and artwork is a continuous process of assertion, observation, and refinement.

Some artists converse directly with their materials. **Jim Osman** responds to the rings in cross-sections of wood, manipulating the placement of these lines as a method of drawing. **Katinka Mann**, an experienced papermaker, takes advantage of her material’s balance between flexibility and rigidity, coercing it into ring-like reliefs that maintain their own dimension.

**Mark Williams** experiments with circular mark-making tools unusual to his practice to observe the effects of a novel shape on a familiar medium and support.

For many artists, to relinquish control is to grasp a tool. **Creighton Michael** delivers personal source material to his computer, which translates his marks into an algorithmically-generated pattern. He responds to the computer’s feedback by reintroducing more of his own material, refining the image toward compromise. **Sharon Brant** uses a pair of dice to determine between which points on a paper sheet she will draw her

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand poet Louis Johnson’s poem “The Perfect Symbol,” from which the title of this exhibition is drawn, tells the story of the Early Renaissance painter Giotto, who was asked by the Pope to demonstrate his skill as an artist. Giotto responded with a simple freehand drawing of a circle, which was

<sup>5</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, *Point and Line to Plane*, Dover Publications, Inc., New York, 1979, 60.

<sup>6</sup> Ilaria Ramelli, trans. David Konstan, *Hierocles and the Stoic: Elements of Ethics, Fragments and Excerpts*, Society of Biblical Literature (2009), lvi-lvii.

<sup>7</sup> Lucio Pozzi, artist statement, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Circles,” *Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, Literary Classics of the United States, Inc., New York, NY, 1983, 403.

<sup>9</sup> Kandinsky, 81.

<sup>10</sup> Emerson, “Circles,” 408.