

The American painter William Schwedler has been lost in time and space. He was an elegant surrealist now virtually unknown in his native city. Though educated at the Art Institute of Chicago with the Imagists, he differed radically from them. They were, in Lawrence Alloway's term, post Pop, aggressive and conscious in the ways they self-branded themselves with alterity. Whereas the Imagists reveled in an almost frenetic vocabulary of low cultural artifacts - tattoos, pinball machines, newspaper graphics, and sideshow freaks, Schwedler's vernacular was serene. And though molded by New York and its aesthetic trends for his last sixteen years, he remained a singular talent. His tragic death at age forty was responsible for his regrettable absence from artworld discourse. Under such circumstances, there has been little critical space to fully appreciate him.

Born in Chicago on March 22, 1942, William Arthur Schwedler was adopted as an infant and christened after his father's brother.¹ The artist spent his entire youth and adolescence in Forest Park, a suburban railroad village in Cook County some eleven miles west of the city. Forest Park was a virtual necropolis, with more property devoted to cemeteries than homes. His family included some of the community's earliest settlers involved in the town's business and social life.² Bill's father, Arthur C. Schwedler, was a postal worker.³ Arthur's first wife died when Bill was two; his father soon married Katheryn (nee Wille) Schwedler, the only mother he knew. The Chicago Transit Authority Blue Line terminated at Des Plaines Avenue near the family home, with Schwedler's extended family living within a few doors of each other.⁴ He often rode this train to the city and later adapted iron trestles suggestive of the Chicago El and skyscrapers as a signature motif.⁵ In this, Schwedler may have employed industrial icons for personal reasons; his namesake (Wilhelm Schwedler) was a preeminent 19th century German mechanical engineer, responsible for innovative construction techniques.⁶

Schwedler cut a striking figure; tall and handsome with dark hair and blue eyes, his disarming humor made him very popular. During sophomore year in high school, Schwedler met fellow art student Fred Wiedenbeck.⁵ On weekends, they and their friend Kaaren Klingel took classes at the Art Institute of Chicago. Afterwards they would walk around the city, surveying the architecture or have lunch at the Arts Club of Chicago. Because of his precocious talent, he accumulated accolades.⁷ In April 1959, Schwedler won a Scholastic Magazine National High School Art award with his work shown at the New York Coliseum.⁸

Schwedler and Wiedenbeck chose to attend The School of the Art Institute of Chicago⁹ at an auspicious time.¹⁰ Elizabeth Murray and Ed Paschke were a few years ahead of them and his immediate classmates included Cynthia Carlson, Art Green, Gladys Nilsson, Jim Nutt, and Karl Wirsum. Roger Brown arrived two years later. Schwedler rented a studio apartment downtown his freshman year with another student because he didn't have a place to paint at home.¹¹ Sophomore year, Schwedler, Green, Bill Grams, and Murray Simon were roommates at 1923 Orchard Street.¹²

Schwedler's midwestern education left an indelible mark on him. In 1960, American Pop Art and Minimalism did not yet exist and New York was seven hundred miles away. Distance permitted aesthetic difference; Chicago art students assimilated the regional legacies of the Monster Roster and Dubuffet's Anti Cultural lecture while developing their own concerns. The young artists, later called the Imagists, forged their own identities; often portraying the human body as a bawdy, tortured, seeping, screaming mass of flesh. They were influenced by the AIC's Surrealism collection and the Field Museum's ethnographic materials.

In contrast, Schwedler was the most abstract of his schoolmates. Cool and refined and working like an architectural draughtsman, he adopted linearity not as aesthetic choice but rather as an extension of his

personality. His early works revealed a restrained classical sensibility of almost Platonic order; manipulating compositions like Froebel blocks, adjusting forms into place until they coalesced. He internalized these visions while intuitively developing his own metaphysics. His unpopulated landscapes embodied anxious architectonic sites with contradictory spatial perspectives as surrogates for the human condition.¹³ Instead of illustrating figures in situ, he illuminated what space itself might feel to the viewer. His schematic buildings were constructed of skeuomorphic girders adorned with rivets.

Influenced by Ray Yoshida and Whitney Halstead's Dada and Surrealism courses, his other instructors included Thomas Kapsalis and Vera Berdich.¹⁴ Green and Schwedler enrolled in several of Berdich's printmaking courses, producing small editioned etchings (more for practice than production it seems). These are the few remaining examples of Schwedler's early work.¹⁵ "[H]eloved Durer, Medieval etchings and woodcuts (wherein his then-mania for cross-hatching), graphic art in all its forms."¹⁶ Through his print titles, (which had not yet adapted the jocular quality of his later works), we can infer something of his less guarded and still innocent psyche, reflective of social conditions in the 1960s. Along with his thesis, they are among the few direct indices into Schwedler's thinking.

Confer, a small 1963 intaglio, shows the intricacies of Schwedler's primary concerns; the depiction of architecture in the landscape, how those structures are constructed, and his reverence for Chicago's funky heritage. Confer's two towers rests on a plinth with projecting dovetails, directly quoting H.C. Westermann's sculpture *Old Eccentric's House* (1956-57).¹⁷ Within the right tower, a small spray paint can is sequestered; in its emission one can barely read the title in tiny letters.¹⁸ One of the meanings of the verb confer is "to include together, comprise, comprehend."¹⁹ Schwedler's carefully observed wood imagery and his obsessive techniques parallel those of Westermann.

Living through the Second World War into the Cold War, Chicago's Atomic Age birthplace resonated with the young artist. Images in *Christian Symbolism with Nuclear Unit*, suggestive of Enrico's Fermi's first fission mechanism,²⁰ thematically relate to Schwedler's oil painting *An Apocalyptic Assist*,²¹ shown less than two years after the Cuban Missile Crisis.²² The vertical steel trestle in *Landscape Unit into Firmament's* links to the axis mundi, a means of heavenly transcendence.²³ One shouldn't dismiss irony in these titles which anxiously question existence, yet the references to heaven and Christian symbols suggest serious subject matters.²⁴

Schwedler's largest student etching, *The Back Stairs at the Institute*, (printed June 1963) was inscribed "Golub" and "Gottlieb,"²⁵ emphasizing the import these painters had for him, while forecasting his future trajectory.²⁶ Schwedler was attracted to ambitiously sized canvases, something disregarded by his colleagues.²⁷

Just before graduation, Schwedler collaborated on *Silent Electric Fish Tattoo*, an exquisite corpse etching with Berdich, Green, and Suellen Rocca.²⁸ Due to the format, this intaglio is the most overtly anthropomorphic of Schwedler's career. In *Silent Electric Fish Tattoo*, Art Green depicted the head, Berdich the heart and arms, while Rocca's corseted area defined the hips. Schwedler's trestle and foot propped on a brick plinth completed the construction, with small ejaculatory heart droplets spilling between the legs.

Even at this early date, Schwedler's style was fully formed. Compared to the exuberance of other Imagists with their quotations of tattoos and verre églomisé pinball machine panels, Schwedler's works reflected influences of *Pictura Metaphysica* and Surrealism.²⁹ Architectural structures profiled in sharp isomorphic perspective filled his deserted vistas with deep de Chirico-like shadows. Schwedler constructed these elegiac sites from girders, wood and brick; these formal compositions may have subconsciously derived from his hometown's vast cemeteries.³⁰ Curtains or skewed tangential tables were often drawn directly in charcoal onto bare canvas, imposing isolated elements in grisaille from the flatly painted sky and ground planes. His subtle earthbound color was distinctive

too, with verdant lawns and Giotto blue heavens.³¹ There are no clouds in Schwedler's skies, nor foliage in his landscapes, only the manufactured artifacts of man. The stark boundary where the sky met Lake Superior provided another demarcation. The horizon was not just a physical border but a conceptual alignment to play up to, against, and cross. The edges of foreground objects abutting this limit, enacted a performance of two and three dimensionality, simultaneously giving the paintings flatness and depth.

Art Green described Schwedler as "a very charismatic person who never seemed to show the slightest hesitation in being fully himself - at least that is the way he seemed to me at the time. I was not at all sure of my own footing then and it was very liberating to watch him develop a painting. It all seemed so effortless and natural; he would begin with some small whimsy and play with its possibilities for a while, maybe turn it upside down, add a few strokes of charcoal or collage, set it aside to age for a while (all accompanied by John Coltrane or Kurt Weill, a tumbler of whiskey and numerous witty remarks) and somehow it generally ended in success. He ...was a great influence on many of his fellow students, including me."³⁹ And Carlson added Schwedler "was [an] incredibly active and imaginative guy... he would do his paintings fully dressed up. He dressed very well."³² While a student Schwedler often exhibited.³³ In May of 1964, Schwedler participated in the annual "Artists of Chicagoland" exhibit at the AIC³⁴ and at graduation, both he and Grams were awarded \$4,000 fellowships, which Schwedler used to visit the Netherlands and study classical ruins in Greece and Italy.³⁵

Directly after this European sojourn, Schwedler moved to Brooklyn for graduate studies at the Pratt Institute.³⁶ A few days into the semester, Schwedler jotted Green a short note on a vintage picture postcard which expressed his excitement and aspirations:

A photo of the Art Department at Pratt. N.Y.C. is indeed great- feisty, huge, difficult & desirable. Have only seen Pratt and the Brooklyn Bridge (a masterpiece). This place appears impregnable but I shall try.

Schwedler³⁷

Still orienting himself, his immediate admiration for the Brooklyn Bridge is significant. Candidly, Schwedler didn't refer to fellow students or art masterpieces in the Brooklyn Museum, MoMA or Manhattan galleries but rather Roebbling's magnum opus of industrial design.³⁸ Schwedler already held a warm spot in his heart for cold steel. Moreover, for decades the iconic bridge had served as a modernist muse for many.³⁹

He soon met painter Curt Barnes and Marilyn Lerner, who was studying printmaking and sculpture in the program. The next year, Cynthia Carlson followed Schwedler's example to school.⁴⁴ The artists all stayed life-long friends. As Barnes describes "Bill and I met at Pratt Graduate School. He was as effusive and outgoing as I was solitary; he introduced me to my eventual wife, [painter Byoung Ok Min] who occupied a workspace between us and he impressed me as the most interesting fellow student in the population. So when he proposed becoming roommates and renting an apartment together, I was game, even though he was openly (and very actively) gay and I wasn't. What was striking about him was his enthusiasm for practically everything. He wanted not merely to share an apartment but to take charge of the decor. He proposed having identical desks, matching Luxolamps. He found collectible furniture, stripped and installed it." "Bill's eclecticism allowed him to borrow from everywhere, since his purposes and point of view were his own. [H]is intentions had more to do with discontinuity, outrageousness per se, the irrational and unexpected than anything decorative."⁴⁵ "Bill talked constantly about his teachers, SAIC alums and Chicago artists, rejected a lot of the mainstream art he saw in New York, embraced the oddballs and outsider art."⁴⁶ He wasn't an academic reader yet knew a tremendous amount of art history.⁴⁷

Their Clinton Hill apartment on Washington Avenue near DeKalb was three blocks from the campus. Beyond decorating, Schwedler's taste ran to music, Brooks Brothers clothes, and even film. According to Barnes they "had a large party during that time and in addition to dancing and wine Bill wanted to show an art film; so I rented one from the city library. He envisioned a "Washington Avenue Cinemateque" with regular showings."⁴⁸ After grad school, Barnes roomed with photographer Bard Martin when Schwedler moved to Madison Street just off Manhattan's Chinatown. Martin's NYU Film School thesis, Cynthia's Ceremony, centered around her preparations to marry a tree.⁴⁹ Schwedler's studio is seen in one brief scene, while he and Carlson dress up and vamp in another passage.⁵⁰

Schwedler seems to have learned little new at Pratt, merely polishing his personal iconography further. Photographs of his MFA show document 22 paintings with the cast shadows, elevated platforms, and trestles of his Chicago days. Schwedler continually played off horizon limits; trestles end there, brick columns rest directly on its line. In several examples he depicts the square cruciform window used prior.⁵¹ His symmetric compositions with floating elements in the sky reflected his lofty ambitions, perhaps tinged a little with hubris.⁵² "If the work suggests, through the representation of earth and sky, an infinite space, it is because I attempt to rival nature in its vastness."⁵³

Schwedler remained in Manhattan the rest of his life, establishing ecosystems of support. His affable nature coupled with winsome good looks facilitated social connections, and he effortlessly networked dealers, cognoscenti and critics. Barnes observed that during grad school "[a]t least one, and possibly two, critics dropped into the apartment to look at his art and schmooze."⁵⁴ "he probably identified more with artists like Vito Acconci than with anyone in the Hairy Who, for example. In other words, sui generis, not part of any school. I'm sure after Pratt he considered himself a New York artist."⁵⁵ Over time, Schwedler befriended Ray Johnson, Malcolm Morley, Alfonso Ossorio, James Rosenquist, and Lucas Samaras.

Schwedler didn't deliberately abandon his Midwestern roots however. By dint of his 1964 departure from Chicago, he had missed the six defining Imagists shows which began two years later. As geographic dislocation diminished his regional credentials, the Imagists closed ranks.⁵⁷ At Christmas time in the late 1960s, Schwedler, Carlson, and Ron Coe went back to Chicago to visit. They hung out with their SAIC classmates and visited the studio of David Smyth.⁵⁸ Schwedler ultimately acquired works by Westermann, Nilsson, Nutt, and Paschke,⁵⁹ but unfortunately, there is little evidence of much reciprocity.⁶⁰

Schwedler's career seemed off to an auspicious start. In the fall of 1966, Schwedler began teaching drawing and painting at Tyler School of Art, one of the numerous Philadelphia art schools.⁶¹⁻⁶² And just one year after graduate school, Schwedler had his New York gallery debut at Allan Frumkin Gallery,⁶³ in *Three Painters: Toward a New Metaphysics* with William T. Wiley and Carlson.⁶⁴ Schwedler definitely made an impression here; he designed the exhibition poster and of the twenty-one objects shown, eleven were his.⁶⁵ Exposed to Wiley's artworks, he briefly adopted new pyramid motifs⁶⁶ and began signing his artworks "Wm. Schwedler" (as opposed to "William") after noticing how Wiley inscribed his own works.⁶⁷ Following the opening, a party was held in Schwedler's loft near Tomkins Square attended by Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg.⁶⁸

Toward a New Metaphysics was reviewed by several critics including Perreault in *The Village Voice* and Robert Pincus Witten in *Artforum*.⁶⁹ While Pincus Witten questioned Schwedler's scale, he generally praised his "competently conceived and obsessively executed items." "Caught up in the depiction of anti-structural structures, rendered in detached and empirical terms like the blueprints of a drunken Engineer Hartmann, his simple computations are rendered in sensitive variations of isometric perspective. They are diagrams and visual puns argued in terms of landscape painting."⁷⁰

The next year at Tyler marked the arrival of sculptor Italo Scanga. Both men were engaging, charismatic characters with an admiration for Westermann and soon became fast friends.⁷¹ They also loved music; Schwedler listened to Gustav Mahler and jazz⁷² and Scanga cited Busoni and Webern in his drawings.⁷³ That October both were included in the Tyler. The work of both artists educed domestic sentiments. Scanga's environments recollected his Calabrian religious roots; his social interactions were communal meals with colleagues and students.⁷⁴ Schwedler depicted rustic wooden table tops propped on brick bases with billowing curtains while reflecting that "I would like my painting to be regarded with the same concern as reproductions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus or the Blessed Virgin found in the lower-class homes of the faithful. It is this respect, awe, deference as to a fetish, that I hope to evoke in the observer."⁷⁵

Along with sculptor Harry Anderson, the trio scoured Eastern Pennsylvania flea markets to garner material for their work.⁷⁶ This scavenging was practical for Scanga and Anderson who used found elements in installations, sculptural lamps, book designs, and prints. At the markets Scanga introduced Schwedler to Roseville pottery, which became his obsession and source of new imagery.⁷⁷ Early in 1968, Schwedler was in two national exhibits in Philadelphia. He contributed to American Drawing 1968 at Moore College of Art and submitted two paintings and a mixed media work on paper to The 163rd Annual Exhibition of American Painting and Sculpture at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.⁷⁸ The PAFA catalog listed Schwedler's address as 30 S. 10th Street in Philadelphia, indicating that he rented a pied-à-terre not far from Philadelphia College of Art.⁷⁹

That May, after two of Schwedler etchings were in the Biennale de l'Estampe at the Museum of Modern Art in Paris, William N. Copley solicited him to produce an edition for his periodical S.M.S.⁸⁰ Schwedler's offering for S.M.S. Portfolio 5 was *Against the Grain*, a die cut tableau which could be taken apart, glued, and assembled into a sculptural proscenium stage.⁸¹ He even provided a printed "blueprint" for the assembly.⁸² The same month as the S.M.S. edition, Schwedler was included in *Beyond Literalism* at Moore College of Art. This seven-artist group exhibit curated by Dianne Vanderlip, was accompanied by a small catalog text by John Perreault.⁸³ Perreault's ambitious essay countered Michael Fried's contentious "Art and Objecthood,"⁸⁵ the notorious formalist attack on Minimalism for failing to attain medium specificity and defaulting to theater. Perreault's unorthodox rebuttal utilized Magritte and De Chirico's models as well as ideas contained in Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* and Morse Peckham's *Man's Rage for Chaos*.⁸⁶

In *Beyond Literalism*, Schwedler was represented by eight works of various sizes, including drawings and the large canvases *Against the Grain* (1968) and *Picnic Table* (1968).⁸⁷ Perreault described Schwedler's dreamscapes as "sparsely populated by irrational structures made of brick and ... the hallucinatory aspects of wood grains and draperies. His paintings are cool, eerie and disconcertingly poetic." Schwedler's surrealist vocabulary which continued since Chicago was again becoming au courant in critical circles. Gene R. Swenson's ICA exhibit *The Other Tradition* reevaluated Greenbergian formalism, and its small black catalog with "the air of an illicit, seditious pamphlet," was widely recognized for reasserting a surrealist lineage for Modernism.⁸⁸ Schwedler may have actually seen this exhibit while visiting Philadelphia to interview for his position at Tyler,⁸⁹ while its viewpoint was substantially reinforced by William S. Rubin's, *Dada, Surrealism and Their Heritage* at the Museum of Modern Art.⁹⁰

Perreault also noted Schwedler's formed stretchers. Frank Stella and others used shaped canvases to objectify paintings, making them literal things not windows.⁹¹ Schwedler's profiles ricocheted off their critical positions while fashioning illusionism comparable to Elizabeth Murray. His barely perceptible adjustments imparted a

subtle emphasis, like the entasis of Greek columns. Other times, Schwedler contorted space dramatically, projecting a foot out from the wall. Identical drawings on perpendicular surfaces suggest template use in his process.⁹² Contrasted to Alloway and Greenberg's concepts of abstract field painting that denied the viewer and interpretation, Schwedler's works remained irrefutably pictorial.⁹³ Always riddled with content, his impure works were not medium specific. Schwedler was conscious of this dichotomy and filtered his thinking through an unconventional lens. Indeed, he stated that "[t]he three-dimensional forms built outward from the picture surface, like the eaves and molding incorporated into religious frescoes of the Renaissance, act against the illusory perspective and retain the viewer's consciousness of the picture-as object."⁹⁴

Later that year, he exhibited at Henri Gallery in Washington, D.C.⁹⁵ and Gertrude Kase Gallery in Detroit.⁹⁶ The next February, Schwedler had a small one person exhibit at Pennsylvania State University.⁹⁷ The seven-page catalog contains this wonderful introduction by Perreault:⁹⁸

Wm. Schwedler's very attractive paintings are also quite disquieting, but only if you look at them very carefully. He uses a variety of techniques within each work: the ground of his landscapes is painted in acrylic, the sky (blue to yellow, darker and darker) is oil. Fake wood grains are like topographical maps in oil, imitating linoleum- an imitation of an imitation of an imitation. Cloth and bricks are charcoal drawing, fixed, varnished, and like geometrical smoke. In the shaped canvases, the thrust into further dimension is additionally ambiguous. The isometric perspective he employs furnishes a clue that we are seeing, not things, but an idea of things; not the shape of things as seen, or even as imagined, but the shape of things as measured. Ideoplastic art in the service of...of what? Certainly not an easy Surrealism or a mélange of Freudian symbols.

Upon closer inspection these paintings are hallucinatory, not with the swirling flashiness of what has been called psychedelic art, but with the insanity of cold logic and with the obsessiveness that under the right conditions can be transmogrified into poetry when poetry comes to mean an unexpected whiff of the unknown. Nothing adds up. Stairs, columns, beams, curtains and all the paraphernalia of a dream architecture are not in the least but dreamy. Symbols do not count. Everyday textures- wood, cloth, brick- are transformed into literature. Schwedler's paintings are novels that have no characters (everyone is "missing in action") and have no plots. The setting or the stage set is the message, the emptiness, the climate. These paintings are puzzles, iconographically and visually. Freezingly perverse, his world of anti-totems and delicate plans is a world of negatives and nervous emotions.

Wm. Schwedler is playing an old game in a new way. But his works are more than merely up- dated De Chirico. He makes painting- when painting means more than just canvas decorated with attractive colors- seem interesting again. Schwedler shows us how it is possible to be contemporary without being just another modernist. There are other games being played, both metaphysically and artistically. Wm Schwedler is one of the most talented painters that I know.

Grace Hartigan and Lila Katzen also endorsed him for the Baltimore Art Museum⁹⁹ and by May, Schwedler had garnered enough attention that he was being compared with Wiley and Westermann in Artforum reviews.¹⁰⁰ That fall, the new Philadelphia ICA director, Stephen S. Prokopoff, included Schwedler in The Spirit of the Comics which amalgamated Pop Art, California Funk, Chicago Imagists and Pop Abstractionists in expanded vernacular vocabularies.¹⁰¹ Schwedler's participation in this diverse salon, including artists as diverse as Claes Oldenburg, Wiley and Nicholas Krushenick, accelerated his artistic development. Once deep space and solid mass was abandoned, the rules of representational logic no longer held. Now in uncharted territories, hard iron became soft: beams bent, bowed, and twisted. Perhaps "getting bent" literally reflected Schwedler's new co(s)mic attitude.¹⁰² With the elimination of staunch horizons, floating elements became suspended in infinite atmospheres incorporating aspects of Kubrick's 2001 spacewalks with headshop comics. Rejecting the mimicry

of wood or cloth, Schwedler now invented surface patterns with little concern for veracity, representing a funky parallel universe, not bound by natural forces but one with comic implications. His palette too changes; adopting synthetic harmonies of blush pinks and acrid greens. As these buoyant objects became unhinged from gravity, they required tethering for stability.

Form does not follow function, attitudes become form. Schwedler's approach was ontological and as his subjects evolved, so did the structures in his paintings. Frankel's next position after Penn State took him to the University of Rhode Island and in November 1969, Schwedler exhibited there at the Fine Arts Center, where he introduced new imagery incorporating rope and chain link lattices possibly under Robert Rohm's influence.¹⁰³ Rohm had been included in the S.M.S. portfolio 5 and was Ree Morton's undergraduate teacher in Rhode Island.¹⁰⁴ His wall hung rope grids were showcased in the Whitney's Anti-Illusion: Procedures/Materials and Contemporary American Sculpture,¹⁰⁵ and chain link was also utilized in postminimalist sculptures by Alice Adams, Bill Bollinger, and Rafael Ferrer.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to these real materials, Schwedler's canvases relied on illusionism; his painted catenaries with draped fabric metaphorically became aprons or flayed animal pelts. Drawn with curved repetitive gestures for shading, Schwedler's ropes resembled rebar used in the building trades. As overall formal devices, they neutrally obscured deep space, while being symbolically carceral too.¹⁰⁷

In December 1969, Schwedler was represented in his first Whitney Painting Annual by Balanced Ball.¹⁰⁸ Sharply divided horizontally, Balanced Ball's lower plane was bisected by vertical rectilinear columns; a brick one on the left and a wooden construction on the right, almost heraldic in its diagrammatic symmetry. Both structures recede in one-point perspective towards the vanishing point. A sphere straddles the column tops, behind which hangs an apron stretching to the corners like a crucified torso.

By the 1970s, Schwedler seemed destined for fame, surpassing perhaps the celebrity of his Chicago chums. "He was very ambitious and, although he was successful and had quite a few shows at leading galleries in New York, I think he was very frustrated at not having become a real star."¹⁰⁹ Schwedler's second Washington exhibit was at Ramon Osuna's Pyramid Gallery; a dealer relationship that was to become Schwedler's longest.¹¹⁰ Art Institute of Chicago curator A. James Speyer penned the Pyramid introductory text, placing Schwedler into a midwestern context by virtue of his irreverent contrariness.

"Wm. Schwedler is a Chicagoan. If there is any especially pervasive attribute of this generation's Chicago artists, it is a particular combination of irreverence and irrationality. Chicago is a city with more distinguished architecture than any other city in the United States, and it is tempting to believe that the consciousness of strong materials carefully put together imbued the young Schwedler and resulted in the present, contradictory structures. Certainly, the restraint and severity of these canvases owe much to this influence. There is a consciousness of structure, not only in the selection of materials themselves, but in their manner of assemblage and the tautness of connections, while the whole thing breaks down, logically, the more architectural the pretension. One becomes inextricably engaged in the movements of rope, wood, brick, or steel which enter everywhere outside the canvas and move with sturdy intention to nowhere on the other side. There is the fascination of an indecipherable objective, very much like studying the movements of a dog or cat which might walk through pedestrians, turning corners, proceeding with sturdy concentration and going - where? These are perplexing objects of an impossible and unreal nature, in a space which, itself, does not exist. Schwedler says his paintings are crazy and put people off. I would disagree. These beautiful paintings are crazy enough, and they do fall between objects and landscapes, but enormously involve the very people who are bugged by them."¹¹¹

This exhibit was notable for its first incorporation of impossible shapes in his paintings.¹¹² As early as 1967, Schwedler began investigating impossible shapes in drawings; imaginary three-dimensional objects whose contour outlines are not completely coupled to the third dimension.¹¹³ One example of this genre is *Feh Peh* (1970), derived from his earlier study *Two Unnatural Services* (1967-8).¹¹⁴ Feigning nonsense utterances, “feh” and “peh” are the names of very similar Hebrew alphabet characters.¹¹⁵ The appropriated shape in *Feh Peh*’s center - the *Poiuyt*- was a well-known optical conundrum.¹¹⁶ At first glance, this wooden construction seems to continue his masterful practice of *trompe l’oeil* graining. But upon closer examination, the grain of this fictitious object has taken a creepy vermiform pattern, like so many Zap comix spermatozoa. Indeed, the exclamation “feh” in Yiddish conveys disapproval or disgust.¹¹⁷ The painting’s fantasy and its aggressively repugnant color schemes- a reptilian green shape against a purple ground- signals a rejection of acceptable norms of harmony. Schwedler seems to be tempting his audience to accept an alternative sense of beauty. Certainly, these works were not a user-friendly at all.

Schwedler’s affiliation with James Speyer extended to Speyer’s sister Darthea. Galerie Darthea Speyer opened at 6, rue Jacques Callot, Paris during the student revolution of May '68.¹¹⁸ Speyer's American stable contrasted sharply with the other Parisian galleries run by women,¹¹⁹ functioning as an alternative venue where Chicago and West Coast artists gained European exposure.¹²⁰ In the spring of 1970, Schwedler exhibited there along with Cynthia Carlson and Art Green.¹²¹ Perreault again supplied the short statement.

They make art for themselves differently than the abstract and literal canvases to which we are accustomed. A paint stain is a paint stain. A beam or a bomb is not just a beam or a bomb.

What I like about these very young artists who, although equally accomplished, are true to themselves as different as they are similar, is that they offer alternatives to reality. They construct visual puzzles [not unrelated to De Chirico and Magritte] that do not supply simple “right” solutions. I see in this aspect of their work a more real metaphor for reality than “realism.” Life too is a puzzle without a “right” solution. We stumble from day to night, from nightmare to nightmare, from dream to dream, constructing the answers as we go. What could be more terrifying and more exhilarating? Freedom is the most difficult of sins.

Schwedler’s “bombs” had appeared as early as 1966, perhaps in response to the Viet Nam War.¹²² Photographs from Pratt showed a painting depicting a shell casing elevated upon a girder. Schwedler soon developed a rounder, more idiosyncratic version of this munition; his spherocylindrical bombs were capsule shapes inscribed with wood grain or fingerprint patterns. One of the most elegant iterations is a small single bomb drawing attached to a horizon line.¹²³ The bombs cozy up to pyramids in several eccentric larger compositions such as *Beams and Bombs and Ball*, *Pyramid Piercing Bending Bomb*, (both 1969).¹²⁴ Some bombs erect phallically or bend from gravity; *Pyramid piercing bent bomb* (1968-69) for example.¹²⁵ Possibly these detumescent missiles embodied a paramilitarist critique, defusing the political tragedy of the era with humor.¹²⁶ After the Speyer exhibit, Schwedler toured Turkey, Egypt, and Greece continuing his study of classical ruins.¹²⁷

Around 1970, Schwedler befriended another valuable patron, Fred Mueller. “[A] man of amazing taste and style,”¹²⁸ Mueller graduated from Harvard University in 1957 with a B.A. in art history and took acting classes at the American Theater Wing.¹²⁹ An heir to the Mueller Brass fortune, he was Arne Glimcher’s Pace Gallery partner for fourteen years.¹³⁰ Mueller purchased Gloria Vanderbilt’s penthouse which he stylishly decorated with antique furniture and Asian pottery. There Schwedler’s canvases were prominently displayed along with major artworks by Dubuffet, Morris Louis, and Nevelson. Although Mueller never facilitated Schwedler’s entry into Pace’s stable,¹³¹ he procured and provided major canvases to many American museums.¹³²

One these donations Call It a Day (1971) now resides in the Smithsonian. Call It a Day reveals its graphic scheme slowly. At first, you only perceive its pale horizon and the ouroboros. The modest rope patterns make colorful secondary patterns. The triangle pattern on the green neck of the serpent right where it hits the coppery flange end counteracts the triangular point on the other end. The serpent head (or rather the glans) is a 1930 Futura Roseville wall vase from Schwedler's collection. Convex bulges on the left are balanced visually with concentric patterns on the right, all defined with chromatic panache.

Arguably, it was the exposure to Mueller's refined Chinese pottery collection and not his art collection that was most beneficial for Schwedler. Slide projected details of Mueller's pots and his own collection were used by Schwedler to replicate glaze patterns.¹³³ Lines redrawn in layered charcoal, powdered graphite, and acrylic built up random networks of craquelure with fractures resembling ridges of encrusted engobe glazes. Like Lichtenstein's enlarged Ben Day dots, Schwedler's shifting scales moved their magnified concrete sources into the realm of abstraction. Some compositions awkwardly applied unfiltered representations of Roseville vessels as chimeric appendages.¹³⁴ Always a subtle colorist, the work now seemed keyed to sophisticated glaze spectrums which revised Schwedler's chromatic sensibility from the verdurous greens and atmospheric blues of his earlier landscapes to more somber earth tones, plums, and bruised purples.¹³⁵

In early 1971, Schwedler was included in Continuing Surrealism, a large group show at the La Jolla Museum of Art.¹³⁶ That spring, Pierre Apraxine invited Schwedler into an intimate show at the Museum of Modern Art.¹³⁷ The MoMA press release ascribed that "although the works in the exhibition represent various aesthetic approaches, they all share a quietly disturbing quality, which through subject matter or the use of material operates insidiously on the physical and mental levels of experience...William Schwedler combines a surrealist interplay of perspective and color with a bluntness of line inherited from the comics."¹³⁸ That association may be a reference to The Spirit of the Comics, or perhaps the odd works with impossible shapes.¹³⁹ Schwedler himself acknowledged how strange his work was becoming. "My paintings are really getting freaked out shape/form wise and color/spray wise."¹⁴⁰ Schwedler was listed in Stephen Mazoh & Co. Inc's April 1971 inventory from which Richard Brown Baker purchased Take the Cake (1970).¹⁴¹ That October, Schwedler and Carlson shared an exhibit at Galerie Klang in Cologne.¹⁴²

Early in 1972, Schwedler had a one-person exhibit in New York at Kornblee Gallery around the corner from Castelli.¹⁴³ The exhibit which recycled Speyer's Pyramid Gallery statement, garnered several reviews, but few sales.¹⁴⁴ In February, Schwedler sent Miyoko Ito a postcard about his experience:

Dear Miyo-

Thank you for your letter. The show was a critical success but it didn't exactly put me on Easy Str.

I have already mentioned you highly to Jill Kornblee & I think she might dig your work. You know I always have. Either send slides mentioning my name or when you're in NYC, buzz me & we'll contact K. together.

I need someone to push me in Chicago - Phyllis has some of my old paintings but has done nothing with them. Phyllis was in my NY studio about 1 1/2 months ago & and appeared to like my work but she hasn't made any move. Have you any suggestions?

Best regards, Bill

P.S. Phyllis and Jill are alike in many ways so you will know what you 're up against.¹⁴⁵

This note illuminates his admiration for Ito but also his growing dissatisfaction with the market. His social networks continually failed in his hometown.¹⁴⁶ As Art Green commented on Schwedler's surprising lack of fame. "In Chicago, it seemed inevitable to many of us that would be the case. His work attracted well-deserved attention and he hung out with all the right people but perhaps he was too impatient."¹⁴⁷

In 1971, Prokopoff left Philadelphia to lead Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art.¹⁴⁸ The next spring, Schwedler was in the Midwest for exhibits and to care for his mother.¹⁴⁹ He met with Prokopoff and enthused "Steve Prokopoff is really a good addition to Chicago Scene. His house in Oak Park is too much. Satellite of F.L. Wright designed it-Tiffany fixtures, freaked-out woodwork."¹⁵⁰ In May 1972, Schwedler was included in Chicago Imagist Art, the first institutional exhibit on the subject.¹⁵¹ Anticipating the museum festivities, he wrote to Art Green "Glad to hear you're in the Chicago Imagist show at the MCA. Hope you are coming in for the opening. I guess they are gonna block off street in front off (sic) museum- dancing-hooting etc. Should be a picnic. Saw Jim Nutt's show at Phyllis'. He's good. He's in the Venice Biennale. It's amazing how the Chicago scene has changed tho., wait til you experience it anew."

Given this was Schwedler's first Chicago exposure since 1964, his incorporation into the Imagist roster was short-lived. Schwedler had lived in New York for eight years and hadn't participated in any recent Chicago exhibitions; it became obvious that Schwedler had diverged from his roots. In the catalog essay, critic Franz Schulze merely acknowledged that Schwedler's "work took on its fundamental character during his Chicago years. If the city did not form him it was surely the place where his formative experiences occurred." While attempting to reconcile Schwedler back into context, Prokopoff later may have reconsidered. Though the Imagist pedigree seemed somewhat elastic, Schwedler was eliminated in subsequent iterations by Walter Hopps and Prokopoff at the Corcoran, New York, and São Paulo, Brazil.¹⁵² By default, Schwedler's reputation remained tethered to New York.¹⁵³

Six months after Chicago Imagist Art, Phyllis Kind endeavored to galvanize Schwedler's local reception with a one-person exhibit.¹⁵⁴ Kind's poster centered his painting Better Goods (1972) with four Roseville vessels in the corners.¹⁵⁵ Although exhibiting canvases with ceramics might seem unusual, Chicago artists often commingled collectables in installations.¹⁵⁶ One of the Kind paintings, Fam Size illustrated an impossible shape like a Mad version of a Wassily chair.¹⁵⁷ Here tangible vision disintegrates upon analysis; a phantom seemingly constructed out of faux bois Formica and rebar displayed in an atmosphere blended from poisonous salmon to grey blue. The jocular quality of graphically duplicitous efforts like Fam Size were commercially unsustainable. Despite Kind's imprimatur, it did little to establish Schwedler's reputation,¹⁵⁸ and he remained an eccentric outsider in his hometown, collected by few in the Chicago area.¹⁵⁹

Increasingly however, curators and critics elsewhere were recognizing Schwedler's import. In quick succession, Schwedler was included in several national shows. At the end of 1972, he showed at Philadelphia's ICA¹⁶⁰ and the John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art.¹⁶¹ In January, Schwedler's painting Ball. Pyramid Piercing Bending Bomb (1969) was showcased in the 1973 Whitney Biennial along with installations by Carlson, Ferrer, and Morton and subsequently entered into the permanent collection.¹⁶² Later that season, Schwedler's Better Goods and the Wrong Turnstyle were included in Storm King's The Emerging Real.¹⁶³

In the fall of 1973, Schwedler was living in a small V-shaped loft at the south east corner of 18th Street and Broadway. There his Roseville collection was prominently displayed on specially built white shelves in the

kitchen. These contrasted with the studio, bedroom and front room walls in the studio which were covered in semi-gloss near black paint. Even his bathroom fixtures were black. The owner of the building ran a cigar store downstairs often frequented by the artist.¹⁶⁴ Soon Schwedler seized an opportunity to move from such restricted quarters.

In late October, Schwedler was included in Robert Doty's "Extraordinary Realities" at the Whitney.¹⁶⁵ There during the installation, Schwedler met Charles Magistro and Jack Solomon.¹⁶⁶ At lunch, the pair voiced their frustration over a downtown loft property they couldn't afford. Schwedler immediately convinced them that by pooling their resources, they could partner in a real estate venture.¹⁶⁷

Their 52 White Street building was between Broadway and Church Streets, 2 blocks south of Canal, in the area that had just been designated as TriBeCa by the Office of Lower Manhattan Development.¹⁶⁸ As pioneers, they were among the first in the neighborhood to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy.¹⁶⁹ Purchasing the building for \$140,000; they named their cooperative, the Bosphorus Roseville Corporation, reflecting Schwedler's love of Turkey and pottery.¹⁷⁰ Their new community soon gained a reputation as an outpost of new-age urban cool, attracting a coterie of some of the most successful artists and performers of the 80's,¹⁷¹ though at the time of their signing their street level was still occupied by a pornographic movie house.¹⁷² Magistro and Solomon took the second and the third floors respectively and did their own carpentry. Schwedler secured the fourth and fifth stories and employed artists such as Fred Struthers for construction.¹⁷³ The south facing windows offered a spectacular view of the World Trade Center.

White Street was the first property that Schwedler actually owned and provided a momentary stability in his work. By 1974, Schwedler's surrealism subsided and calm overall patterns obliterated his reliance on figure/ground relationships. Now for the first time, the compositions completely distance his formative Chicago imagery from his New York abstractions. No longer pictures, they engage field painting as overall eccentric abstractions that extend the history of landscape sensibility. Within these threads, denser concentric arrangements developed; residual echoes of woodgrain now turned into cryptic mazes reminiscent of fingerprint whorls and topographical gradients. In those intricate eddies, the micro scanning of ceramic surfaces expanded several orders of magnitude to the macro of aerial geographical surveys.¹⁷⁴ While synoptic and concrete, these canvases seem significant. His synthesis of the inorganic married by the fingerprint index, supplied a slightly unsettling air to these delicate fields.¹⁷⁵ Like Celmins galaxy and desert drawings, they escape the confines of actual scale, connecting the New York school with contemporaneous earthworks. Indeed, Schwedler referenced Robert Smithson, who had died in an airplane crash on July 20, 1973 while canvassing Amarillo Ramp.¹⁷⁶ Like Smithson, Schwedler's scale plays back and forth in these works. No longer confined to minute contours, long arcing lines ape the panoramas of the Nazca lines with similarities to archeological terraces and tectonic plates of Smithson's mirror displacements in the Yucatan.¹⁷⁷

All Show No Go projects this airborne attribute, as if looking from a plane at the ground. Here the craquelure reads like a network of stream beds with country roads crisscrossing randomly through the terrain or isomorphic lines in a geodetic map. The gradient's highlighted summits are blackened allusions, the moody sfumato resembles cloud shadows dusting the landscape. The black tracks on a muted pink ground open up in four places to disclose whorls of black lines upon red, yellow and other bright colors, projecting a somber sense of decomposition in the Ivan Albright tradition.¹⁷⁸ Stretching the canvas on a thin panel mounted onto a smaller block slightly projecting from the wall, All Show No Go, anticipates his eccentric panels of the 1980s. How is one to connect the loaded title *She's Not Well* (1974) with its rather lyrical abstraction? Did it have a personal reference— as his mother had been ill less than two years prior?¹⁷⁹ Should it be compared to Jim Nutt's *She's Hit* (1967)? Struthers deciphers the contemporary patois "'She's not well' was common gay slang, meaning that 'he's nuts' or 'he's twisted,' in a good way." Another wordplay composition, *Buy and Large*, (1974), was purchased by

MIT.¹⁸⁰ Buy and Large's pale crazed surface modulates from creamy white to a blanched marigold yellow stained with ghostly blue shadows. In bold contrast, the upper right corner is defined by his signature finger print motif accented in a harsh iridescent blend of turquoise, verdigris, and purples. The title *All that Glitters is Gold* (1974) derived from a heavy metal song lyric.¹⁸¹ All these canvases are strangely serene compared to what came next.

Although truly sympathetic to Schwedler, Mueller never plied his influence on Arne Glimcher.¹⁸² Schwedler's desire for a gallerist who could catapult his reputation nationally was soon fulfilled across 57th Street from Pace. The career of wunderkind art dealer Andrew Crispo was both legendary and tragically meteoric. He grew up an orphaned, street-smart hustler in Philadelphia, turning tricks in Rittenhouse Square with high-profile conquests purportedly including Liberace and Henry McIlhenny, chairman of the board of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. By 1964 at the age 19, his situation had become so legally precarious that Crispo fled to New York. For five years he worked at ACA Gallery while gaining experience in the field, then Crispo found backing to open his own space. In 1973, a 28-year old Crispo incorporated his New York gallery as "Canova & Rittenhouse Inc." perhaps a droll reference to Philadelphia and McIlhenny's European Art expertise. He included Schwedler in the group exhibition *Contemporary American Artists* that year. Two years later, Crispo opened a luxurious Fuller Building suite in proximity to Andre Emmerich and Pierre Matisse.¹⁸³ Arthur Smith, a high-end decorator and Crispo's lover, designed the sumptuous showcase; Crispo's stable included Richard Anuszkiewicz, Arman, Fred Eversley, Lowell Nesbitt, Richard Pousette-Dart, and the estate of Irene Rice Pereira along with a lucrative 19th- and 20th-century art resale operation.

Schwedler held high expectations when Crispo first approached him and hired Struthers as his studio assistant.¹⁸⁴ Schwedler's exhibit opened in February of 1975, accompanied by a forty-page illustrated catalog featuring an essay by E. John Bullard.¹⁸⁵ There were 48 works in the Crispo show with massive canvases and smaller works on paper. Included also were a few museum and private collection loans for cachet value. Schwedler was not averse to reworking his paintings. After the small untitled canvas (illustration # 24 in the Crispo catalog) was published, for example, he applied an ochre impasto palette-knifed passage onto a left section of the painting. Its diminutive size and open linear drawing is reminiscent of Paul Klee's *Burdened Children* (1930) in the Tate.¹⁸⁶

Given his initial excitement, it is surprising that Schwedler soon left Crispo. There may have been mitigating circumstances for his quick departure,¹⁸⁷ because a mere six months after his uptown vernissage, Schwedler was represented by Tony Alessandra in a new SoHo venture. Alessandra had been an associate of Crispo,¹⁸⁸ though the main enticement to change was John S. Samuels 3d, a patron with significant financial resources. A self-made multi-millionaire, Samuels began his art world ascent in 1975; he was chairman of the boards of the City Ballet, City Opera and Vivian Beaumont Theater.¹⁸⁹ Samuels bankrolled Alessandra with quality photographers, lighting experts, designers, and printers and bought Schwedler's work in quantity.¹⁹⁰

Alessandra's "Inaugural Show" opened October 4, 1975 featuring Charles Garabedian, Green, Michael Hurson, Jane Kaufman, Scanga and Schwedler.¹⁹¹ Seven months later, Schwedler premiered his first one-person exhibit at Alessandra Gallery.¹⁹² Perhaps with foresight, Schwedler titled two canvases *Time is Money* and *Bad Reception*.¹⁹³ Though widely reviewed with sympathetic press, there were few sales.¹⁹⁴ By May, Schwedler's financial situation dramatically worsened. He was fired from Fordham University¹⁹⁵ and Alessandra, who was already having issues with Samuels, called a meeting with his artists.¹⁹⁶ A South American project also fell through.¹⁹⁷

As a new dealer openly crossing aesthetic boundaries, Tony Alessandra valiantly tried to keep topically relevant and financially afloat. He invited Kaufman to curate "Ten Approaches to the Decorative," one of the first shows of *Pattern and Decoration*.¹⁹⁸ P & D challenged artworld biases against the decorative while its multicultural

appropriation rejected authorship and touted traditional textile skills by women.¹⁹⁹ Carlson was quite familiar with P & D's critical tenets.²⁰⁰ Allied too were Morton's installations of painted Celastic. In 1977, Morton was tragically injured in a car crash and as with Smithson, Schwedler devoted a memorial for their friend, First Things First (to Ree Morton).²⁰¹ Schwedler was not immune to their concerns; indeed, his *Skirt the Issue* (1975 – 76) was dedicated to the feminist art movement.²⁰² Though his rich color and gestural elements shared decorative impulses, his intent was differently aligned.²⁰³ Embellishing wallpaper and cigar bands into his compositions, there was no granular repetition in Schwedler's work, nor did his singular motifs ever deny originality.²⁰⁴

Gallery circumstances imposed severe economic repercussions on Schwedler. Crispo had a vindictive nature and sued Schwedler for breach of contract.²⁰⁵ Schwedler recognized his situation. "I am going to sell the 4th floor to get some \$ to live on...empire is collapsing" he wrote in a letter. Fearlessly he scheduled another Alessandra exhibit, which opened on May 7, 1977.²⁰⁶ It too was a failure; selling only one painting with no reviews. "And it was my best show I ever made. I'm leaving him. Having a show at Pyramid next year" he angrily wrote.²⁰⁷ With Samuel's dwindling support, Alessandra Gallery too was doomed.²⁰⁸ Schwedler complained that Alessandra was worse than Crispo and everything had to be done through a lawyer. Schwedler was forced to sell White Street's fourth floor to Robert Skolnick to cover expenses.²⁰⁹

Fortuitously, his relationship with Osuna resulted in a successful Pyramid Gallery show in the fall of 1977 and seemed to lighten his mood at least temporarily.²¹⁰ In a letter he noted "1978 turning out to be a good year. Pyramid selling quite well at good prices... Have 30 new paintings on paper w collage, wallpaper leopard skin rolling papers wood veneer." ²¹¹ He also experimented with a few monochromatic canvases.²¹² But instead of restrained order, most of Schwedler's ambitious paintings grew wildly more anarchic, perhaps in reaction to his situation. His economic hardships were not unique; they were endemic to the era but affected his optimism for the city. Suffering from a deep recession, New York was on the verge of bankruptcy and crime and strikes were rampant.²¹³ In July 1977, the city experienced a total power blackout with considerable looting. Twin blizzards in the winter of 1978 dumped 37 inches of snow with drifts up to 8 feet tall.²¹⁴ Because of related concerns, the city's population declined 10 percent from 1970 to 1980, to just over 7 million.²¹⁵ Depressed, Schwedler too considered moving to Santa Fe or Los Angeles.

Thwarted by unsuccessful grant attempts, he recounted rejections from CAPS, the Guggenheim Foundation, and the NEA.²¹⁶ After the Alessandra fiasco, Schwedler tried to interest Tibor de Nagy and Charles Cowles galleries in his work to no avail.²¹⁷ Schwedler scheduled a show with Andre Zarre, but it was cancelled.²¹⁸ Burr Wallen's long article in *Arts*, in time to promote that exhibit, described Schwedler's "man-ordered landscapes, futuristic airports, freeways of some bizarre L.A. on the outer reaches of the imagination."²¹⁹ Finally in desperation, he lapsed into selling work from his loft and starting in 1978, he contracted for a number of his paintings on paper to be transcribed into large editioned serigraphs.²²⁰

Frustrations radically affected his work. Whereas his early metaphysical dreamscapes remained tranquil, Schwedler's new efforts were fast and loud, piling system upon system, dancing with space and structural contradictions. They combined chaos with raw fractal freneticism. Lush color is now applied to compositions decorated with complex collages affixed to plywood like tattoos. The constructions elongated into awkward objects which undulated and curved off the wall. These late efforts are Schwedler's New York Boogie Woogies, defining new domains too rambunctious to be aligned with Nazca lines or P & D's order.²²¹ They stop dangerously short of complete pandemonium: in danger of dancing right off the picture plane, of crashing the car into a tree, of becoming hermetic disco era Pollocks. Yet lush and distinctive, almost Punk in their assertion of life energy, they remain.²²² Schwedler's line starts and stops, changing direction abruptly, much as the musical time signatures in John McLaughlin's Mahavishnu Orchestra or harmolodic funk jazz of that era. Even

Schwedler's musical taste changed to include club music.²²³ Magistro complained that loud music played through his Altec Lansing speakers shook the ceiling.²²⁴

Schwedler had experimented with narrow canvases in 1974.²²⁵ Now concentrated on bent bands of thin plywood mounted a couple of feet off the wall, he attempted a sculptural fusion. These serpentine objects barely function as a picture plane; they torque feverishly, lushly decorated and almost abject. Possessing a manic exuberance that traipse across the picture plane, linearity became freed. Like cracked splinter fractures in the Large Glass, sooty lines defining tectonic plates reinforced built up passages of resin and gel within the picture plane. Atmospheric colored grounds or segregated passages were liberated; not bound to representational codes whatsoever. Indeed, his color was almost eclipsed by a layered complexity which bordered on complete disorder.²²⁶ Yet within this chaos, Schwedler retained his own identity that reined in the bedlam. Amidst the disarray, Schwedler cordoned off the dense concentric typographic/fingerprint swirls, which remained signature motifs.²²⁷ These liminal landscapes were only shown once a few blocks from his loft. The Clocktower at 108 Leonard Street operated as a new venue under the aegis of the Institute for Art and Urban Resources.²²⁸ In the spring of 1981, The Clocktower's founding director, Alanna Heiss, invited Schwedler to exhibit the panels and associated paper works along with his ceramic collection.²²⁹ Although Schwedler initially balked at incorporating Roseville again, he acquiesced and designed shelves incorporating the vessels on cardboard sculptures.²³⁰

Richard Flood reviewed the exhibit in Artforum and like Wallen described the work in automotive terms:

William Schwedler's recent paintings are done on plywood, molded into large S-shapes, or, at their simplest, into convex and concave arcs. Hung horizontally, their streamlined curves hug the wall as a good set of tires hugs the road. Indeed, there is much about the work that evokes classic automobile-ad copy: phrases such as "aerodynamic styling" feel absolutely right applied to Schwedler's visual concerns, which manage, like the cars the copy describes, to look brand new while remaining comfortably traditional.

Schwedler's paintings are unquestionably abstract. They are also undeniably metropolitan; his composition has a jazzy tensile rhythm that could serve as a visual analogue for a good bebop riff. The gessoed and painted surfaces are activated by a highway system of charcoal webs that pull together discrete areas of collage. Recurrent decorative rest stops include affectionately *recherché* pieces of patterned linoleum, banded arrangements of matchbook covers stamped with an elementary portrait of Jack Kennedy, and drink vouchers with the logo of the Anvil bar. Other less culturally specific leitmotifs—a toothbrush-shaped wood relief and a wood-grain pattern echoing out from a central whorl—are overlaid with a clear acrylic glaze to achieve an effect not unlike a beveled windscreen. Lest it all sound hyperkinetic, it should be stressed that, to relax the composition, Schwedler uses a smoky palette of colors which, from a distance, belie the frenetic surface.

The titles of these panels Arrested Development, Come to Mind, High Maintenance, and Retain the Restrictions reflect states of mind more autobiographical than overheard.²³¹ Consider Schwedler's *The Acid Test*, (1980–81) for example.²³² An acid test tests the mettle, challenges value, to see if something or someone is up to the task.²³³ During this time, he became involved in psychedelics in order to induce new aesthetic possibilities.²³⁴ Schwedler hoped opening the doors of perception would provide a creative advantage to offset his diminishing sales. The shaped panels may have been analogous to the space warping visions perceived during trips. Perhaps Schwedler was not waving but drowning.

Indeed, unhappy and dissatisfied with life in general, he had phone conversations about dropping out of the scene yet didn't know how to make the transition.²³⁵ In the 1970s and 1980s, New York was a city in dire

economic crisis. When the factory lofts closed after shifts, the dark night streets became dangerous. Neighborhoods were divided by functional and economic demographics; while Magistro frequented artist's bars like McGoos and Puffy's, Schwedler headed north to Chelsea.²³⁶ In the pre-gallery era, Chelsea was a work zone aptly named the Meatpacking District. During the day, its buildings were occupied by men in food processing industries.²³⁷ At night, the streets, deserted Hudson River piers, and after-hours clubs were alive with an Elysian frenzy of men with other destinations and other definitions of packing.

One of the haunts that Schwedler often visited was The Anvil, an afterhours gay nightclub located at 500 West 14th Street.²³⁸ Struthers reports "Bill was deep into Night Life, which he had always loved. He was out more nights of the week than not. He wasn't a disco person, he went to bars in the meatpacking district. Bill was charming, handsome and fit. He was advantaged and he worked that." Magistro recounts Schwedler taking him to the Anvil as a lark to test his reaction.

As early as 1979, Anvil membership memorabilia and drink coupons start appearing in Schwedler's paintings, collages and prints along with the surfaces of the late sculptures.²³⁹ There they function as code, much as Warhol's Nancy (1961) or Rauschenberg's use of socks in his combine Satellite (1955) signified within the gay community.²⁴⁰ The Kennedy matchbook portraits that dot some panels came from Schwedler's habitual cigar smoking. JFK's face was cropped on the right of his temple when Schwedler cut away the \$2.95 price for collectable postage stamps that were being advertised. Eliminating the price took away its Pop value, instead providing a compositional device rife with the aura of commemorative fandom. Such iconographic material begs for a deeper unraveling of "decorative" collage elements such as his use of patterned rolling papers.²⁴¹

Multiple partners and sundry sexual practices precipitated opportunistic infections within the community.²⁴² In the early 1980s, men in New York started coming down with mysterious illnesses that didn't yet have a name. Doctors had no idea why young men were developing Kaposi Syndrome, usually a rare skin cancer of the elderly, or meningitis at alarming rates.²⁴³ In June 1981, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published a report about five previously healthy men becoming infected with Pneumocystis pneumonia, which was caused by the normally harmless fungus Pneumocystis jirovecii. This type of pneumonia, the CDC noted, almost never affects people with uncompromised immune systems.

Schwedler was one of the earliest New Yorkers to become ill. Struthers reports that in the "spring of 1981, Bill told me that he was sick with something the doctors couldn't fix ...which experts were calling GRID." GRID was the acronym used by health officials for gay-related immune deficiency, a new systemic syndrome that had affected 335 people and killed 136 of them.²⁴⁴ From 1981 through 1987, people diagnosed with AIDS died within 18 months.²⁴⁵

Schwedler's doctors were dumbfounded when he first became physically thin and frail. They initially thought he might have spinal meningitis or he might have caught Parvo disease and made him get rid of his cats.²⁴⁷ As he deteriorated he didn't want people to visit him necessarily because he hated the fact that he was sort of falling apart physically. It was very painful."²⁵⁰ Carlson, Haber, John Kelly, Magistro, Caroline Winston, and Rosenau continued to visit their friend at Beth Israel Hospital through the summer of 1982. No one then could fathom how many more would die and how many more would mourn in the coming years.²⁵⁷

Towards the end, Andy Berler, Schwedler's appointed executor, arranged for hospice care at home.²⁵¹ On September 24, 1982, the CDC first used the term AIDS to describe the disease that was afflicting the artist.²⁵² William A. Schwedler died the very next day.²⁵³ He had lived 28 years less than the average male in Manhattan at the time.²⁵⁴ His friends gathered briefly in his loft. Schwedler was cremated; Berler and Winston placed his ashes in a large Roseville urn, then shipped it west to Chicago. There Wiedenbeck convened a small service with a

minister, interring his remains in the Forest Park cemetery next to his parents. Like the ouroboros, Schwedler had gone full circle in just four decades.

Within days, Berler, started inventorying Schwedler's belongings. Stephen Neil Greengard assisted in evaluating his decorative objects.²⁵⁸ Soon afterwards, Magistro asked his dealer if they might hold a memorial exhibition. It was a quixotic labor of friendship; with 32 objects it was Schwedler's largest exhibits in years.²⁵⁹ But it not a retrospective, sometime Schwedler never achieved in his lifetime. Schwedler remained an artist's artist, his aesthetics perhaps against the grain of the times. Though the exhibit was heavily attended and there were several favorable reviews, Tibor de Nagy declined to represent the estate.²⁶⁰

In her review of the exhibit in the New York Times, Vivien Raynor cast a pall:

William Schwedler died in 1982 at the age of 40, and it is easy to read into these 32 paintings and constructions an awareness of impending doom. Befitting an artist born and trained in Chicago, Schwedler was much affected by funk and given to jokey titles ... But his colors, which seem as if they are veiled by fine black gauze, don't fit with the jokes.

Following this posthumous exhibition, no other gallery was assigned to represent the estate. Berler explored no further options and dispersed the remaining inventory to eleven of Schwedler's closest friends.²⁶¹ The estate was settled by December 21, 1984.²⁶²

Afterwards, Schwedler's paintings were not seen again for two decades. The facts of his life can be uncomfortable.²⁶³ AIDS victims were often stigmatized, as if complicit and culpable in their fate. His premature death early in the course of one pandemic perhaps made it easy for him to be forgotten, to be buried and remain invisible. His jumping from gallery to gallery forged no sympathetic allegiances.²⁶⁴ Moreover, after the dispersal of Schwedler's estate to private hands, the material became relatively rare to find. With time, even the mourners die.

Schwedler's drawings and paintings rarely surface. Major canvases linger in Europe where Schwedler remains an unknown quantity. Without advocates eager to reset history, Schwedler virtually disappeared from view. Even in Chicago where his work could be associated, he has appeared in only a few posthumous exhibits. Indeed, interest in Chicago's milieu continues to expand without him.

Like many eccentrics, Schwedler was not part of a communal endeavor.²⁶⁵ Even those sympathetic may give pause. Schwedler's direction often went against the grain. As a contrarian explorer who forged across the known world into visionary realms, Schwedler's topography was of the mind. He surveyed this new world effortlessly, uncovering droll domains, while mapping a lush terrain of serene surreal beauty. But time does not travel one way. There are tides in time, and memories, like waves, return. His awkward beauty must be seen.

¹ William F. Schwedler died in 1937 at the age of 25 from a long illness. The artist was not the only adoptee in the Schwedler family.

² Ed Schwedler obituary, Forest Park, Illinois: Forest Park Review August 24, 1939, p 1

³ Fred Wiedenbeck. Eileen Rosenau telephone 3.3 21

⁴ Arthur C. William A. and Katherine Schwedler lived at 132 Desplaines, his aunt Elizabeth Schwedler Haas at 140 Desplaines, and Joseph and Helen Haas at 138 Desplaines.

⁵ Indeed, Schwedler so identified with trestles that he even posed against one in his 1975 Andrew Crispo Gallery catalogue.

⁶ Schwedler was well known for his iron arches used in railroad stations and large expanses. Given his close friendships with architects A. James Speyer and George Danforth, it seems improbable that this fact was never discussed.

⁷ The Herald, (Proviso, Illinois) Vol LXXVI No 42. October 20, 1960 p 7. In January of 1960, he designed the emblem celebrating his high school's 50th anniversary and the banner to fly over the Madison Street flagpole. As the art editor for his high school yearbook, Schwedler was responsible for its cover design which won national honors and he was the President of Palette & Chisel club which had 60 members.

⁸ Chicago Evening Bulletin, April 8, 1959 p 6 section H Age 17 Maywood IL (Proviso East High School) mixed media along with Barbara Tomassi oils one of 36 youngsters from Illinois.

⁹ Because Klingel and Wiedenbeck each recollected attending Saturday classes alone with Schwedler, one may infer that memories lapse after decades or Schwedler attended several such sessions over years. Fred Wiedenbeck

¹⁰ Klingel attended the University of Michigan.

¹¹ Wiedenbeck lived with his parents back in Forest Park and commuted to school all four years while studying design.

¹² Email Art Green, February 18, 2014. Simon was slightly older? SAIC class of 62 Their 1923 North Orchard Street building with its generous front studio and the four-room living quarters in the back, was spacious enough to accommodate large gatherings. The apartment rented for only \$70.

¹³ Those open landscapes may have been reactive to the vast Forest Park cemeteries. Moreover, his sexual orientation (which was out in person) was not revealed through his artwork as overtly as Roger Brown.

¹⁴ Cynthia Carlson interview July 22, 2015

¹⁵ Each printed in editions of three. Email Art Green February 18, 2014

¹⁶ Curt Barnes email June 9, 2021

¹⁷ Ex collection Dennis Adrian. For more information see Timothy J. Garvey, "Mysteriously Abandoned New Home: Architecture as Metaphor in the Early Sculptures of H.C. Westermann," American Art 10, No. 1, (Spring 1996): pp 42-63. Westermann lived in Chicago until 1961 and David McCarthy suggested the sculpture would have been known to Schwedler.

For Westermann's obsession with technique and mystery see Jo Applin "Death Ships," parallax, (2009), vol. 15, no. 1: pp 90-99.

¹⁸ The title is misread or mistyped as "Coufer" by the Art Institute of Chicago. One example is in the collection of the AIC, written on the print was a dedication to Ray Yoshida and it was later donated to the museum by the Raymond K. Yoshida Living Trust and Kohler Foundation, Inc in 2013. Another example is owned by Mary Louise Ashley, Scanga's first wife, while a third surfaced in a May 21, 2011 auction with a James Speyer/Darthea Speyer attribution info https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/9046000_295-william-schwedler-1963-engraving-conefer

¹⁹ This etching was incorrectly catalogued by AIC registrars who misread Schwedler's handwritten title as "Coufer." The definition of confer in the OED

<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38737?redirectedFrom=confer#eid>.

²⁰ Fermi's Pile-1 reactor, inside which the first demonstration of man-made, self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction was produced on December 2, 1942 in the squash court under the stands of the University of Chicago's Stagg Field.

²¹ Shown in the Sixty-Seventh Annual Exhibition of Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, May 1-30, 1964, plate 59

²² The American populace feared it was within minutes of nuclear annihilation during The Cuban Missile Crisis, October 16 to November 20, 1962.

²³ Landscape Unit into Firmament etching (edition of 20) 492 x 59 mm (image/plates); 547 x 160 mm (sheet) donated to the AIC in 2010 by Vera Berdich. The trestle motif was important to Schwedler; he had himself photographed against an example in his Crispo catalog.

²⁴ According to Wiedenbeck, Schwedler was not religious, yet he defined his art in this context (perhaps tongue-in- cheek) in his Pratt thesis and there was an ivory crucifixion in his bedroom when he died. FN John Kelly DATE ²⁵ Major canvases by these artists entered the AIC collection in 1961 and 1962 respectively and would have been prominently displayed as new acquisitions The two paintings referred to in Schwedler's print were Leon Golub's Colossal Figure (1961) and Adolph Gottlieb's Primeval, (1962).

²⁶ For an earlier example of attitudes in Chicago towards New York art see Nancy Spero and Leon Golub in Bob Cozzolino and Maggie Taft's wonderful survey Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now, University of Chicago Press, 2018.

²⁷ For example, the dimensions of the largest artwork in the Hayward Gallery's Chicago Imagist exhibit was Art Green's canvas Consider the Options, Examine the Facts, Apply the Logic, 1965 at 89 1/4 x 68 inches. Even that was atypical of the works in the exhibit - the smallest was Jim Nutt's 1969 etching He Snort, 5.3 x 9.5. Compare that with Schwedler's Both Sides of the Fence (1971) 86 x 117 or Seeing is Believing (1975) 84 x 134.

²⁸ Exquisite Corpses were common surrealist games and this print was indicative of Chicago's strong collecting legacy. Joseph Shapiro and Edwin Berman, whose Surrealist collections were the finest in the city, were among Schwedler's Chicago collectors.

²⁹ Chicago was a center for pinball machine manufacturers: Stern, Williams, Bally, Gottlieb were all based in Chicago and the vicinity. Even the way Schwedler presented himself to the public was different. Hairy Who publications mimicked cheap comic books whereas Schwedler's art catalogs presented definitive essays written by serious critics and curators.

³⁰ His orderly facture (which he shared with his generation at the SAIC) may have come from his home life. Green relates helping Schwedler move his furnishings from his Forest Park and being admonished not to touch any of his parent's pristine furniture which was encased in plastic slipcovers.

³¹ For theatrical curtains in Imagist works see Rosie Cooper page 26. In this, Schwedler was closer to Miyoko Ito compared to the saturated synthetic color of his Hairy Who colleagues. Green signified a post war color for the household (ref. Lawn) Colomina, Domesticity at War, p 132

³² Carlson video interview. <http://invisiblecity.uarts.edu/interviews>

³³ A year after matriculation, the Chicago Tribune noted his inclusion in a group show. In September 1963, Schwedler and Stanley Edwards had a two person show with at Gerald Bernard Gallery.

³⁴ Which offered \$10,000 of prize money for promising artists. Forest Park, Illinois: Forest Park Review, May 7, 1964, p 13. This is where An Apocalyptic Assist was shown.

³⁵ James Nelson Raymond Traveling Fellowships. Chicago, Illinois: Chicago Tribune, June 12, 1964, p 43

³⁶ At that time, Pratt's Master of Fine Arts program was one of a few in the United States.

³⁷ Postcard of a man in a machine shop dated September 14 Art Green email date

³⁸ With a span of with a span of 1,595 feet it was the world's longest suspension bridge at its opening in 1883.

³⁹ Joseph Stella *The Brooklyn Bridge* (1919-1920) and numerous poets Hart Crane *The Bridge* (1930) for example. Similarly, Sonny Rollins practiced on the Williamsburg Bridge for over a year, a place of solitude where he could improvise without bothering his neighbors. The result was the breakthrough invention of free jazz. Because Schwedler could cross the bridge on foot, Roebling's massive cables may have provided his linear rope motifs of the early 1970s. These ropes have implied volume indicated by contour lines - volumes like clotheslines or Roebling's steel cables. In later years his concerns expanded to rope trusses suspended and splayed out into space, then overall abstraction and finally baroque physically layered compositions.

⁴⁰ As listed in his Pratt thesis March 1966.

⁴¹ Wickiser became the Director of the Division of Graduate Programs in Art and Design at Pratt Institute in 1962; thus, study with Wickiser was mandatory. Email with Curt Barnes June 9, 2021.

⁴² These were seen in the *Art of Assemblage* at the Museum of Modern Art (October 4-November 12, 1961).

⁴³ Marilyn Lerner recalled McNeil required that his students paint in an Abstract Expressionist mode, which would have been anathema to Schwedler. To pass and placate McNeil, they loaded up brushes and painted with closed eyes to produce acceptable work. Marilyn Lerner email April 13, 2021. Carlson's experience with McNeil however was completely positive and she denied McNeil ever mandated any painting style. Additional Pratt faculty of the time included Ernie Briggs, Herman Cherry, Edward Dugmore, the philosopher Lucian Krukowski, Jacob Lawrence, Stephen Pace, and Philip Pearlstein.

⁴⁴ Although Schwedler was obviously gay and out, he was charismatic. Carlson may have had a platonic crush on him too: "He was remarkably handsome. He looked like the Marlboro man. He had a beautiful square jaw. He was just so handsome it was eye stopping."

⁴⁵ Curt Barnes email June 8, 2021. Several sentences here edited for flow.

⁴⁶ Curt Barnes June 9, 2021

⁴⁷ Marilyn Lerner date conversation Art Green said this knowledge of art history may have been related to his rigorous AIC classes.

⁴⁸ Curt Barnes email June 9, 2021

⁴⁹ The film's characters included Barnes and Min, Ira Joel Haber, John Perreault, Dennis Loy, Richard Crook, Michael Intintoli, and Schwedler.

⁵⁰ Visible in the loft is a tall Italo Scanga column sculpture, his canvas *Unnatural Service* (1969) and his growing Roseville collection. *Unnatural Service* and Scanga's presence points to a post 1969 date to the film. Although Carlson reported it was shown at the Museum of Modern Art young filmmakers when first finished, there seems to be no record of a MoMA screening.

⁵¹ In his *Christian Symbolism with Nuclear Unit* etching for example. His Pratt professors included Ralph L. Wickiser, George McNeil, Robert Mallery, and Walter Rogalski. As director of the program, Wickiser's courses were mandatory. Mallery was making raw assemblages of burnt detritus cemented together with resin. Though Rogalski taught printmaking, no evidence of Pratt period prints remain. Schwedler studied painting with McNeil.

⁵² William Schwedler, *MFA An Exhibition of Painting and Graphics*, Higgins Hall March 1966. He shared his MFA exhibition with Ronald Piotrowski, a sculptor. Only one example from this Pratt exhibit has surfaced *Fallen Table*, 1965, oil on canvas 22 x 22 inches. Private collection Illinois. Another of his MFA canvases had been owned at one time by Gertrude Kase in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

⁵³ Schwedler, *An Exhibition of Painting and Graphics*, Pratt thesis 1966

⁵⁴ Possibly one was John Perreault as he was featured in Martin's film and was an early Schwedler reviewer.

⁵⁵ Ivan Karp was the director of Leo Castelli Gallery, arguably the most influential New York gallery from 1959 until founding his own eclectic SoHo enterprise OK Harris in 1969. He also owned Hundred Acres Gallery where Carlson showed in the 1970s.

⁵⁶ Curt Barnes June 9, 2021.

⁵⁷ Remarkably many of the Imagists were anti-drug, politically conservative; Schwedler only became loosely linked to Chicago's cultural heritage by Franz Schultze in 1972.

⁵⁸ Schwedler became furious that Smyth's work now mimicked his own. Carlson interview March 12, 2021. Smyth participated in Frumkin's Towards a New Metaphysics II (January 6 - 30, 1969) with artists Fernando Maya, Naoto Nakagawa, Email Eva Rivlin Apr 4, 2023.

The poster for that exhibit looks suspiciously like Schwedler but was most probably designed by Smyth.

⁵⁹ Fred Struthers email. Only a series of Jim Nutt etchings was listed in his estate inventory.

⁶⁰ Less collected among his Chicago friends. Anderson, Barnes, Carlson, Green, Scanga, Struther and Weiderbeck have works. However, the Elmhurst University Art Collection's Chicago Imagist Collection does not include anything by Schwedler though its curator is Suellen Rocha. Art Green, Cynthia Carlson and Curt Barnes did retain works presumable traded for.

⁶¹ Roger Des Rosier, the Assistant Dean of Tyler, may have been fundamental in this, as both artists exhibited in the 67th annual Chicago and Vicinity Exhibition at the AIC two years prior.

⁶² Wiley had previously shown in Painting and Sculpture Annuals at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1961 and 1962.

⁶³ September - October 1967, "Towards a New Metaphysics," Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York with William T. Wiley and Cynthia Carlson. Carlson was right out of Pratt and her invitation was initiated by Schwedler.

March 12, 2021. As noted above Schwedler may have become acquainted with Wiley through earlier exposure in Chicago, Philadelphia and New York.

⁶⁴ Frumkin's original gallery started in Chicago in 1952; he opened his second space in New York seven years later Dennis Adrian worked at Allan Frumkin Gallery in Chicago from 1955 to 1959, and was the manager of Allan Frumkin Gallery in New York from 1959 to 1965. After leaving the business, Adrian taught at Philadelphia College of Art from 1965 to 1967, before returning to Chicago as an influential critic.

⁶⁵ Information provided by Eva Rivlin of George Adams Gallery, New York, April 28, 2022.

⁶⁶ The pyramid motifs continued for some time. See Wiley's To Marcel Duchamp, 1887-1968, Artist, Tool and Die Maker, (1968) formerly in the Edwin and Audrey Sabol Collection now at Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey.

Schwedler could very possibly have seen this sculpture either at the Sabol house or in Sculpture of the Sixties at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Apron with Large Wood (1968) Marywood University Collection, Scranton PA was one the first to depict a hanging cloth form plus this pyramid in this iteration the pyramid is wood grained; in Ball, Pyramid-Piercing Bending Bomb the pyramid is stone transfigured to wood at its apex.

⁶⁷ Barnes email. Barnes provided this information meaning it originated from Schwedler himself though the dates may predate this. In 1961 and 1962 Wiley showed in Chicago and Schwedler's undergraduate prints have "Wm." signatures. Wiley was also influential to Dennis Adams and Donald Dedic. two Tyler grad students from the Midwest and at least one post graduate sculpture by Morton was influenced by seeing Wiley's work at the ICA in Brenda Richardson's WIZDUM 1971 See Sid Sachs "Does Philadelphia have an Imagist tradition too?" New At Examiner date page 1,

⁶⁸ At 128 East 7 Street Carlson email March 12, 2021. By 1967, Rauschenberg had represented the United States in the Venice Biennale and Johns was highly acknowledged since his first exhibit at Leo Castelli Gallery in 1958. Their attendance at this party by artists not in their gallery nor cultural circles suggest previous interactions not recognized at this time.

⁶⁹ John Perreault, Village Voice, September 28, 1967. This recognizes Schwedler's early connection to Perreault. Also

Robert Pincus Witten "Toward a New Metaphysics" Artforum, December 1967, p 56

⁷⁰ Robert Pincus-Witten on "Toward A New Metaphysics"

<https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/196710/toward-a-new-metaphysics-71998> Page 3 of 4 Artforum International 1/20/21, 3(03 PM

⁷¹ Scanga started corresponding with Westermann in 1964. <https://italoscanga.org/biography.html> letters David McCarthy

⁷² Wiedenbeck "Carimina Burana, Soundtrack from Death in Venice 71 (Mahler Beethoven Franz Lehár, the Stylistics, Nina Simone, Greek Dance Music, Oum Kalthoum, Aretha Franklin, opera (Callas?), disco divas (Donna Summer?)...Don't remember any jazz. Women favored over men". Fred Struthers didn't remember Schwedler listening to jazz but Marilyn Lerner mentioned his love of Nina Simone, Dinah Washington Lerner email April 13, 2021.

⁷³ The Art and Music of Italo Scanga, Joseph Clayes III Gallery, Athenaeum Music and Arts Library, La Jolla, CA, June 9– July 18, 1992. The Tyler Faculty show was held from October 12 to November 5, 1967 to which Schwedler submitted Landscape with Commonsense Elements (1966) oil and acrylic and Landscape Element into the Firmament (1967) oil and acrylic. These works have not surfaced to date.

⁷⁴ Marcia Tucker, Bruce Nauman; Work from 1965 to 1972, Los Angeles County Museum of Art ; New York : Praeger Publishers, 1973

⁷⁵ Perhaps this not ironically. See fn 29 Pratt Thesis page # March 1966

⁷⁶ Almost incredulously, even Dan Flavin was known to frequent the markets with them. Flavin was one of Scanga's friends, naming an installation at Penn State in his honor. Harry Anderson interview.

⁷⁷ Factory-made in Zanesville, Ohio, Roseville pottery developed after the Arts and Craft movement and was designed for domestic use, unlike the studio pottery of Peter Voulkos or Rudolph Staffel who taught at Tyler. Beginning in 1967, Schwedler became so obsessed with collecting Roseville that he began incorporating its images into his compositions. See for example his poster for his 1972 Phyllis Kind exhibit with four samples.

⁷⁸ American Drawing 1968, January 13 – February 16, 1968 was juried by Stephen Prokopoff, Brian O'Doherty, and Richard Anuszkiewicz. Schwedler contributed Hold Up, pencil, 24 x 23 inches. Other artists in this exhibit included Claes Oldenburg, James Melchert, Eva Hesse, Donald Burgy, Robert Rauschenberg, and Charles Fahlen. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. January 19 to March 3, 1968. 42. Hatches Risers (acrylic and oil) 48. Double Tread (acrylic and oil)137. Untitled (mixed media).

⁷⁹ Telephone interview with Cynthia Carlson March 12, 2021. Carlson stayed there briefly overnight when she first taught at PCA before rooming with Ree Morton. Morton only arrived at Tyler in the fall of 1968 after Schwedler's Tyler tenure, suggesting Schwedler's retention of the apartment or that his lease was not immediately terminated. Many thanks to Houang Tran, the Archivist at PAFA for information of this exhibit.

⁸⁰ In 1967, Copley and Dmitri Petrov began publishing the six volumes of S.M.S. ("Shit Must Stop") the for his Letter Edged in Black Press. Perhaps through Copley's connections to Frumkin. Copley held many artworld positions as an art dealer, a major collector of Surrealism, and museum patron. As an artist, he painted under the moniker CPLY. His Cassandra Foundation paid for the secret studio where Duchamp's Étant donnés was constructed.

⁸¹ S.M.S. Portfolio 5 October 1968. The other artists included Congo, William Anthony, Wall Batterton, William Copley himself, Edward Fitzgerald, Neil Jenney, Angus MacLise, Bruce Nauman, Yoko Ono, Mel Ramos, Robert Rohm, Diane Wakoski, and Lawrence Weiner.

⁸² Although cut and pasted three-dimensional paper sculptures existed for decades for children's dolls, it had a prominent and more recent model in the artworld. In February 1966, Claes Oldenburg designed the Chrysler Airflow cover for Art News with a do-it-yourself cutout sculpture of the 1934 car. Art News 64 no. 10 (February

1966) edition approximately 36,000. Schwedler's multiple bore many similarities to his large canvas *The Curve of the Earth* (1967). In

both cases, two stairs leading nowhere were propped up by three increasingly diminished girder supports. The *Curve of the Earth's* stairs and girders were drawn in charcoal, while two zones of oil paint - flat forest green for the ground and the atmospheric blue sky - signify the landscape. The painting's symmetry is not perfectly mirrored. Although the two pylon piers seem completely frontal, the stairs subtly torque with the left stairs in slight recession. And if that doubling were not enough, Schwedler also produced two painted versions entitled *Against the Grain*.

⁸³ Dianne Perry Vanderlip and architect Jay Vanderlip previously ran the short lived Vanderlip Gallery at 1823 Sansom Street in Philadelphia and showed Schwedler. *Beyond Literalism* ran at Moore College of Art from October 4, 1968 through November 2, 1968. The other artists included Allan D'Arcangelo, Charles Fahlen, Jack Krueger, Naoto Nakagawa, Frank Roth, Schwedler and Wiley.

⁸⁴ See John Perreault, "Questioning Reality," *The Village Voice*, September 27, 1967 and Perreault "Beyond Literalism," *Art International*, XIII, January 1969, pp 36-38. See also Dore Ashton "Beyond Literalism but not Beyond the Pale," *Arts Magazine*, LXIII, November 1968, p50

⁸⁵ *Artforum*, Vol V, June 1967.

⁸⁶ Enconced at the University of Pennsylvania a few blocks from Moore College, Venturi and Peckham were prominently touted during the time. Venturi's book was an opening salvo of postmodernism. Although he has now been rather eclipsed in academic circles, Peckham's *Art at the End of its Tether* was reviewed by Ernst Gombrich in the June 23, 1966 issue of the *New York Review of Books* and certain of his volumes—*Beyond the Tragic Vision*, *Man's Rage for Chaos*, *Art and Pornography*—gained something of cult status. *Introduction to Romanticism Taken Seriously: Morse Peckham and the Study of Human Behavior* by David Dennen; July 2015 https://www.academia.edu/19736172/_Introduction_Romanticism_Taken_Seriously_Morse_Peckham_and_the_Study_of_Human_Behavior

⁸⁷ In addition to these, were the paintings *Overlap Service* and *Draw the Curtain*, and four drawings *Two Unnatural Services*, *Muffled* (a collage with a picture of a car muffler), *With the Grain and Beam*, *Melting Beam*, *Twisted Beam* (all from 1968). Prices were listed in the catalog; \$900 for the paintings to \$200 for drawings.

⁸⁸ *The Other Tradition* was at the ICA January 27 – March 7, 1966. See "Banned and determined: Scott Rothkopf on Gene Swenson," *Artforum* 40, No 10, Summer 2002, pp 142-45, 194 and Lucy Lippard, 'An Impure Situation (New York and Philadelphia Letter)', *Studio International*, vol. 10, no. 5, May 1966, pp. 60–5. According to Anne M. Wagner, 'The Other Tradition' turned out to be, 'one of the first—if not the first—pieces of writing to propose an alternative to modernist criticism'. Anne Wagner, *Three Artists (Three Women): Modernism and the Art of Hesse, Krasner and O'Keeffe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp 255-6

⁸⁹ Schwedler's Master's thesis from Pratt dated May 20, 1966 remarks that he had employment at Tyler in the fall of 1966

so, he would have had to secure the position in the spring of that year.

⁹⁰ March 27 – June 9, 1968. MoMA

⁹¹ 'The Shaped Canvas', organized by Lawrence Alloway at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, in 1974. Paul Feeley, Sven Lukin, Richard Smith, Frank Stella, and Neil Williams. And there was the example of Tom Steigerwald, who utilized shaped edges to his two-dimensional vinyl paintings.

⁹² The replication of specific drapery elements in both *Picnic Table* (1968) and *Curtain Wall* (1968) for example suggests this use of templets.

⁹³ See *Fried Shape as Form*, Greenberg etc...

⁹⁴ Schwedler Pratt thesis p 6

⁹⁵ Schwedler showed at Henri at least two years before other Philadelphia connected artists Scanga, Anderson, Rafael Ferrer and Gerald Crimmins.

⁹⁶ The Image Transformed exhibit Gallery listings Detroit Free Press (Detroit, Michigan) December 29, 1968, p 32 with May Wilson, Philip Van Brunt and Michael Doner (perhaps Michelle Oka Doner). Schwedler showed there again in 1970 and 1972. Also, Marilyn Lerner sculpture/William Schwedler paintings, Gertrude Kasle Gallery, May 23 - June 18, 1972 "Two talents-will they be famous?" The Detroit Sunday News, May 31, 1970

⁹⁷ The Pennsylvania State University College of Arts and Architecture presents Wm. Schwedler: paintings and drawings. Pennsylvania State University, College of Arts and Architecture. February 22 -April 2, 1969. According to Moore's catalog for Beyond Literalism, Schwedler's work had already been acquired by Pennsylvania State by this date; perhaps instigated by Richard Frankel, Penn State's gallery director, who was also acquainted with Scanga. Indeed, Scanga's youngest son, the artist William Frankel Scanga, was named after Schwedler (his godfather) and Frankel, indicating the depth of respect and friendship that Scanga held for both.

⁹⁸ William Schwedler: Paintings and Drawings, University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, Hertzell Union Gallery, 1969. Perreault repeats ideas from the Moore College of Art (MONTH 1968) for the Penn State catalog essay written December 1968 [Feb - April 1969] exhibit. According to the Beyond Literalism catalog, Schwedler was already in the Penn State collection prior to this exhibit.

⁹⁹ Both were instructors at MICA. Artists included Roy Slamm, Ronnie Landfield, William Anastasi, John Salt, Lindsay Bos, Russell Raymond Dunbar, and William S. Dutterer. Except for Dutterer, it was the first time their work had been shown at the BMA. The Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, Maryland) March 12, 1969, p 18. Hartigan may have encountered Schwedler at Tyler in 1966 while teaching a monthly seminar and honors course for juniors and seniors.

¹⁰⁰ Ironically in a show of his friend Marilyn Lerner. Emily Wasserman, Review of Marilyn Lerner, Zabriskie Gallery, Artforum May 1969 p 66 [see Gertrude Kasle Gallery]

¹⁰¹ The Spirit of the Comics, October 1–November 9, 1969. Prokopoff held an affinity for the northern California Funk and

may have noticed Wiley and Schwedler in Vanderlip's Beyond Literalism at Moore College of Art when he first arrived in Philadelphia in 1967.

¹⁰² The phrase "getting bent" indicated reaching an altered state of consciousness through the consumption of psychoactive drugs. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Getting%20Bent>. Additionally, there was also the sexual innuendo of getting bent.

¹⁰³ Kingston, Rhode Island. November 3-21, 1969. Richard Frankel had moved from State College to become the gallery director at the University of Rhode Island.

¹⁰⁴ Morton studied in Tyler's graduate program with Scanga 1968-1970.

¹⁰⁵ Contemporary American Sculpture. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, May 19-July 6, 1969 included Ferrer, Morton, Rohm, and Scanga

¹⁰⁶ Ferrer was a teaching colleague of Morton and Carlson. The Castelli Warehouse Show presented Anselmo, Bollinger, Hesse, Kaltenbach, Nauman, Saret, Serra, Sonnier, Zorio, December 4 –28, 1968. Chain link was also woven in three

sculptures by Alice Adams in Lucy Lippard's Eccentric Abstraction exhibit at Fischbach Gallery, September 20 - October 3, 1966.

¹⁰⁷ These hint at a darker use of ropes in shibari bondage. As such, the purple hues now becoming increasingly evident in Schwedler may be read viscerally as bruises.

¹⁰⁸ Schwedler, Balanced Ball, acrylic and oil on canvas 79½ x 66 inches. The Whitney exhibit December 16, 1969 - February 1, 1970) was curated by Marcia Tucker. One of his Tyler students, Tom Steigerwald, was also included.

Steigerwald airbrushed organic abstractions onto shaped transparent vinyl pinned directly to the wall. His work *Two Shapes*, illustrated in the Whitney catalog, was lent by Scanga.

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¹¹⁰ Osuna Gallery 2121 P Street, N.W. Washington DC, opening December 12 through January 20, 1970.

¹¹¹ Brochure Introduction by A. James Speyer.

William Schwedler; A. James Speyer

1970

1 folded sheet: chiefly ill.; 21 x 22 cm.

Washington, D.C.: Pyramid Gallery Feh Peh, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 78 x 90 inches

Turnstyle with Red with Red Rope, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 41 inches

Buffalo Tone, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 78 inches

Under the Weather, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 78 x 90

inches On the Ball, 1970, oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 78

inches

¹¹² October 1 – November 9, 1969. Impossible shapes are optical illusions that seem to exist in space but simultaneously contradict the possibility of their existence. If one's eye follows planar elements or contour lines of an impossible shape, contradictory visual situations occur which can't sustain both positions at once. Like a literal trompe o'leil conundrum, one can't believe one's eyes. Impossible figures were popularized in R.L.

Gregory, *Eye and Brain: The Psychology of Seeing*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966, pp 227, 235

¹¹³ For example a drawing called *Two Unnatural Services* (1967).

¹¹⁴ *Two Unnatural Services* was shown at Moore College of Art in 1968. Its forms were built of brick while Feh Peh (1970) had wood grain. Feh Peh, 1970, oil & acrylic on canvas 78 x 90 inches originally shown at Pyramid Gallery.

¹¹⁵ Feh and peh are only distinguishable by a dagash (or dot) in the center of the letter peh. Perhaps Schwedler overheard these sounds in New York, appropriating their names for his optical conundrum Feh Peh.

¹¹⁶ One of the most famous impossible figures was the Mad Poiuyt which debuted on the March 1965 cover of *Mad Magazine*. "Poiuyt" derived from the last six letters of the top row of QWERTY keyboards read right to left as in Hebraic texts. It was also known as an impossible trident, impossible fork, blivet, or devil's tuning fork. An earlier version of this absurd illusion described as a "hole location gauge" was printed in the June 1964 issue of *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*, with the comment that "this outrageous piece of draftsmanship evidently escaped from the Finagle & Diddle Engineering Works."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Impossible_trident#cite_note-7

Penrose c. 1958. Something else called a "hole location gauge" had actually been patented in 1961.

¹¹⁷ Although Lutheran, Schwedler as a New York resident would have easily heard "feh" as a common colloquialism. As such, Schwedler's title almost makes sense in a parallel universe of optical illusions and overheard conversations.

¹¹⁸ The gallery space was designed by A. James Speyer. See Archives of American Art Darthea Speyer

¹¹⁹ For example, Denise Rene and Iris Clert promoted contemporary European art. Ileana Sonnabend's sophisticated mixture of the European and American vanguard worked sympathetically with artists handled by her ex-husband Leo Castelli. See Ann Temkin, "A Lasting Legacy," in Ann Temkin and Claire Lehman, *Ileana Sonnabend: Ambassador for the New*, Museum of Modern Art, 2013, p 11

¹²⁰ For example, Speyer presented Roger Brown, Rafael Ferrer, Lynn Foulkes, Sam Gilliam, Leon Golub, Clinton Hill, Craig Kauffman, Ed Paschke, Deborah Remington, Peter Saul, and George Segal, as well as her sister, the painter Nora Speyer.

¹²¹ Galerie Darthea Speyer (Paris), Exhibition of paintings by Cynthia Carlson, Art Green & William Schwedler, March 18. - April 24, 1970.

¹²² For context, "The Ballad of the Green Berets" by Barry Sadler became the No. 1 hit in America in March 1966. Bombs were in the air. Robert Pincus Witten's May 1966 Artforum review of the Graham Gallery's Abstract Inflationists and Stuffed Expressionists contained this description: "Eva Hesse whose slapstick ball and chain might easily pass for an anarchist bomb designed by a color-blind obsessive compulsive." p54.

¹²³ Bomb drawing Rhode Island School of Design, 11 1/8 x 23 3/16 inches Item 2009.92.210. gift of Richard Brown Baker 1970

¹²⁴ Beams and Bombs was shown at Darthea Speyer. Ball, Pyramid Piercing Bending Bomb, (1969) in the Whitney collection bears a resemblance to William T. Wiley's sculpture To Marcel Duchamp, 1887-1968, Artist, Tool and Die Maker, (1968) steel, stainless fabricated chain 6 ft; diameter sphere 29 in; 84 in x 112 in x 90 in; pyramid 6 ft x 6 ft x 7 ft

Grounds For Sculpture, Trenton, New Jersey, Gift of The Seward Johnson Atelier, Original Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Sabol ACCESSION NUMBER 2014.1.336 In the Schwedler a sphere and pyramid are joined by a pierced "bomb" in the Wiley they are connected by a chain.

¹²⁵ This large canvas was shown by Osuna; sold on Auction May 22, 2022

https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/127570616_27154-william-schwedler-american-1942-1982-pyramid

¹²⁶ Or perhaps the bombs also represented amyl nitrate poppers? For reviews of the Speyer exhibit see Judith Applegate, "Exhibition at Galerie Darthea Speyer," Art International (May 1970): p71 Also M. Ricour, Art International (May 1970): pp 65-67

¹²⁷ In 1970, Crispo catalog date page possibly accompanied by James Speyer. Speyer shared the home he designed in Crete with Darthea and visited two months every summer. According to Fred Wiedenbeck, Schwedler's relationship with James Speyer started in Chicago.

¹²⁸ Arnold Glimcher Archives of American Art Oral interview

¹²⁹ In 1961 his Off-Broadway production "Another Evening with Harry Stoones," featured newcomers Barbra Streisand, Dom De Luise and Diana Sands. "Fred Mueller, 53 i-Modern Art Collector," New York Times, May 9, 1989, Section D, p 26

¹³⁰ Oral history interviews with Arne (Arnold) Glimcher, January 6-25, 2010.

Archives of American Art

<https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/interviews/oral-history-interview-arne-arnold-glimcher-15912#transcript>

"...I think a lot of our mature taste certainly ...came out of Fred. ... he had this amazing eye in the decorative arts." As a high school junior in 1952, Mueller inherited \$2.5 million for his paternal grandparents who owned Mueller Brass in Port Huron. Mueller's funds facilitated Pace Gallery move from Boston to New York in 1963. Mueller obituary New York Times, May 9, 1989, Section D, p 26.

¹³¹ In a typed letter to Art and Natalie Green dated August 6, 1971, Schwedler mentions that he was making a silkscreen edition for Pace Gallery. Dick Solomon confirmed that published print, remembering only Schwedler's association with Lucas Samaras and that the work was black ink on a brown sheet. MoMA was most likely sold the print through their art lending program. Pace had no other records associated with the edition that they could access. Email from Jeff Bergman. Director of Pace Prints August 13, 2021.

¹³² Mueller donated to the Smithsonian, the Whitney, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Ringling Museum for example. Schwedler's Ball, Pyramid piercing Bending Bomb, (1969), entered the Whitney Museum of Art collection through Mueller's donation in 1970, Call it A Day (1971) given to the Smithsonian American Art Museum in 1979, Hi Mom, Hi Dad (1971) was given in memory of Kathryn Schwedler and Beatrice Mueller to the Ringling Museum in 1972 and Bad Reception (1976) was donated to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1978.

¹³³ Diane Kelder's essay mentions Chinese and Japanese pottery sources from Mueller. Wm. Schwedler, New York: Alessandra Gallery, 1976 np. "Yes he slide-photographed 'craquelure' (he LOVED that word and would pronounce it with relish) and projected the patterns onto canvases, tracing the patterns. Some of his Roseville

had surfaces with very defined craquelure. The crack patterns were definitely sourced from ceramic (vs earth).” Fred Struthers July 8, 2021. E. John Bullard dates the craquelure patterns to 1973 which fits with this information. See Schwedler: Paintings and Drawings, New York: Andrew Crispo Gallery, 1975

¹³⁴ Flowers in 1970s print

¹³⁵ Schwedler’s color sensitivities have often been compared to Olitski. But Scanga also might have contributed to his earthen palette. During this period, Scanga’s assembled sculptures utilized the simplest of found objects, iron farm tools, beeswax, foodstuffs, with his color determined by the intrinsic nature of his rustic materials. In the 1970 Whitney Sculpture Annual for example, Scanga presented an assemblage of animal horn and handmade Pennsylvania Dutch soap on a bare wooden base.

¹³⁶ Lawrence Urrutia, Continuing Surrealism, La Jolla Museum of Art, San Diego CA January 15-March 21, 1971. Urrutia was the Assistant Director of the La Jolla Museum of Art from 1969 to 1973 and from that date until 1979 was the Executive Director of the Museum of Photographic Arts. He was hired to curate the San Diego Museum of Art’s Weisman collection in 1998.

¹³⁷ Apraxine, the Assistant Curator of Painting and Sculpture, was in charge of MoMA’s Art Lending and Art Advisory Services in the Member’s Penthouse. Apraxine traveled in Sam Wagstaff’s circle and is listed as having owned Schwedler’s work.

¹³⁸ Press release MoMA, Untitled I, Museum of Modern Art, Art Lending Service March 24 – April 1971. Marvin Brown, Richard Haas, Ira Joel Haber, Tom Kovachevick, Gordon Newton, Emmanuel Pereire, William Schwedler, Phil Sievert, Bob Thompson, Christopher Wilmarth, and Peter Young.

¹³⁹ Schwedler showed three drawings and the massive canvas Hi Mom, Hi Dad. Hi Mom Hi Dad now in the collection of Ringling Museum Sarasota, Florida was a 1972 Mueller donation.

¹⁴⁰ Letter to Art and Natalie Green March 20, 1971.

¹⁴¹ Richard Brown Baker (1912– 2002) was a major and discriminating collector. He began collecting works by emerging artists in the 1940s, becoming one of the first collectors to actively embrace both Abstract Expressionism and Pop art. He eventually amassed a collection of more than 1,600 works from the postwar period, including works by such groundbreaking American artists as Jean-Michel Basquiat, Chuck Close, Franz Kline, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Morris, Jackson Pollock, Robert Rauschenberg, and James Rosenquist, as well as European and Asian artists such as Alberto Burri, Jean Dubuffet, Georges Mathieu, Kurt Schwitters, and Jirō Yoshihara. Baker bequeathed the majority of his collection to the Yale University Art Gallery in 2008, with the balance to the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, in Providence. See Jennifer Farrell editor Get There First, Decide Promptly: The Richard Brown Baker Collection of Postwar Art 2013 The Frick’s Center for the History of Collecting.

¹⁴² William Schwedler und Cynthia Carlson: Galerie Klang, Cologne Köln (Oct 1971). Günter Pfeiffer 1971 Kunstwerk / Schriftl. Leopold Zahn. 24.1971, pp 6, 81

¹⁴³ Kornblee Gallery, New York, William Schwedler: Paintings and drawings of wood, steel, rope and Roseville pottery,

January 29 – February 17, 1972. Ivan Karp often referred promising artists to Jill Kornblee when he couldn’t accommodate them. Among Kornblee’s artists were Rackstraw Downes, Rosalyn Drexler, Janet Fish, Dan Flavin, Al Hansen, Alex Hay, Howard Hodgkin, Howard Kanowitz, Michael Mazur, Malcolm Morley, the gallerist Betty Parsons, Peter Phillips, and Richard Smith. Carlson later showed in Hundred Acres in SoHo, a gallery owned by Karp.

¹⁴⁴ “Show at K’blee went O.K. Sold nothing during show. Since have sold 2 pgs. Good reviews Ny Times etc.” handwritten letter to Art Green, April 7, 1972. Collection of Art and Natalie Green

Reviews: NYT February 4

NYT February 17

Village Voice February 17

Arthur Secunda, review of William Schwedler at Kornblee Gallery, NY, January 29 – February 17, 1972, Arts, March 1972, Vol. 46 Issue 5 p 62

Those sold Kornblee artworks include the painting Heavy Going 1971 from Kornblee. Sam Green influence on Rosenau bought directly from the studio with Sam Green advice.

Rosenau gave Both Sides of the Fence 1971 to Hirshhorn (from Kornblee?) was in husband's office and too big to hang in house

Both Sides of the Fence, 1971

oil and acrylic on canvas

86 x 117.25 inches

Hirshhorn

Gift of Peter and Eileen Rosenau, Bryn Mawr, PA 1975

1971 Sadly Mistaken acrylic

and oil/canvas 84 x 72

Akron Art Institute (Museum) purchased from Kornblee Gallery

¹⁴⁵ I thank Karen Lennox for bring this letter to my attention email. 7.10.21 The abstract quality of Schwedler's illusionism aligned him with Ito as both of their aesthetic concerns were outside the cartoony domain of other Chicago Imagists.

¹⁴⁶ Indeed in a comprehensive list of hundreds of artists who worked or exhibited at the Hyde Park Art Center, Schwedler is not listed once. Goldene Shaw, editor, History of the Hyde Park Art Center, 1939 - 1976, Hyde Park Art Center, 1976, pp 56 - 61.

¹⁴⁷ Green

¹⁴⁸ He apparently was glad to leave Philadelphia for the three-year old museum in Chicago. As Prokopoff opined "I was born in Chicago and lived there until I moved to California at the age of 11. There's an enormous energy and drive in Chicago that I don't sense here. Chicagoans want to do things in art, and are willing to make a greater effort. The Quaker city is tight and lazy. I'm ready for something else." Victoria Donohoe, "ICA: Appraisal at a Time of Change," The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 30, 1971, Main edition p72

¹⁴⁹ Schwedler visited Illinois in April of 1972 to take care of his mother and for concurrent shows with Marilyn Lerner in Detroit (May 23 - June 18, 1972) and in the Society of Contemporary Art exhibit at the Art Institute.

¹⁵⁰ Handwritten letter to Art and Natalie Green April 7, 1962. Collection of the artist.

¹⁵¹ Stephen S. Prokopoff, Chicago Imagist Art the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, May 13 – June 25, 1972. The artists included George Cohen, James Falconer, Edward C. Flood, Leon Golub, Theodore Halkin, Philip Hanson, Miyoko Ito, Ellen Lanyon, June Leaf, Gladys Nilsson, James Nutt, Edward Paschke, Irving Petlin, Kerig Pope, Christina Ramberg, Suellen Rocca, Seymour Rosofsky, Barbara Rossi, William Schwedler, Irene Siegel, Evelyn Statsinger, Steven Urry, H.C. Westermann, Karl Wirsum, and Ray Yoshida. Three years prior, Prokopoff had included Schwedler's work in The Spirit of the Comics and perhaps with an unbiased view, determined he belonged here.

¹⁵² In 1974, Prokopoff, as co-commissioner of the American section of the São Paulo Biennale, curated a Chicago Imagists exhibition.

¹⁵³ Russell Bowman, author of Made in Chicago for instance never exhibited Schwedler in his gallery. For a more recent example, Cynthia Roznoy's 2000 exhibit Chicago Loop; Imagist Art 1949 - 1979 at the Whitney Museum Fairfield County included several generations of artists with less imagist credentials as Ivan Albright, George Cohn, Cosmo Compoli, Leon Golub, Ellen Lanyon, June Leaf, Irving Petlin, Seymour Rosofsky, Nancy Spero, H.C.

Westermann but no William Schwedler. Sarah Canright experienced similar with lack of sales after leaving Chicago.

¹⁵⁴ William Schwedler: Paintings and Drawings, November 3 - 29, 1972, Phyllis Kind Gallery, 226 East Ontario, Chicago, IL ¹⁵⁵ William Schwedler Study for the Magic of Roseville c. 1973 Colored pencil on paper 30 x 22.5 inches Label on verso Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. See also Untitled (Black and White Drawing) graphite on paper sheet: 22 3/8 x 30 inches sold on auction May 26, 2022.

¹⁵⁶ For example, in the Nonplussed Some exhibit at Hyde Park in 1968 exhibit objects from the artists collections were shown in vitrines alongside their works. Rosie Cooper, "Who? How? What?" in Chicago Imagists 1960 – 1970, Hayward Gallery Publishing. 2019, p 25. Direct Roseville transcriptions often occur in the work. See William Schwedler Study for the Magic of Roseville c. 1973 Colored pencil on paper 30 x 22.5 inches. Label on verso Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (present location unknown). An untitled black and white pencil drawing with six turn styles and a Roseville Snowberry bowl was sold at auction on May 26, 2022.

¹⁵⁷ Shown at Phyllis Kind Gallery Fam Size (1972) acrylic on canvas 54 x 54 inches was illustrated in the 1975 Andrew Crispo catalogue and still in Schwedler's estate at the time of his death. It was sold at Abell Auctions CA Sept 23, 2021 mislabeled "Fan Size."

¹⁵⁸ According to Karen Lennox, the gallery didn't place any works with clients thus there may have been a little animosity on Schwedler's behalf; his moniker for the dealer was "Sy-Phyllis" Kind. Fred Struthers email June 23, 2021. According to Lennox this reaction was not uncommon among her artists. Email March 14, 2021

¹⁵⁹ For example, there are only four student prints and one 1971 drawing in the AIC collection and no works at all in the Museum of Contemporary Art, compared to some forty works by Jim Nutt. Perhaps jealousy played a part in his hometown reception too. As an avid golf enthusiast, Jim Nutt's lifestyle for example was surprisingly conservative and he was vehemently anti-drugs. His worldview might have been in a collision course with Schwedler's; he must have been appalled by Schwedler's shenanigans after the opening. As Karen Lennox relates "My favorite memory is of the opening celebration for his one man show in Chicago. Someone (pretty sure it was Arne) paid for the party at the Tip Top Tap Lounge of the Allerton Hotel (once the tallest building in Chicago) Everyone came in drag. Alice Adam (my old boss from Frumkin) was there complaining that one of the guys had on a gorgeous white silk suit and 'his eye lashes were longer than hers'. LOL. running around in Nuns outfits bare assed i think! FN Jan 30. Here Lennox's vivid memory may have lapsed. Instead of Arne Glimcher, it is probable that Fred Mueller paid for the Tip Top Lounge.

¹⁶⁰ Inside Philadelphia: Selections From Private Collections, ICA, Philadelphia, November 11 - December 19, 1972. Culled from local collections by Suzanne Delehanty, this exhibit included a wide range of European and American masters, Abstract Expressionism,¹⁶⁰ assemblage and Neo Dada, Pop Art, several generations of Colorfield painters, and outliers such as Schwedler, Saret, and Wiley.

¹⁶¹ Leslie Judd Ahlander, After Surrealism: Metaphors & Similes November 17-December 10, 1972. Ahlander was the museum's Director of Education and formerly an art critic and employed at the Corcoran, where she may have encountered Schwedler from Henri or Pyramid exhibits. Schwedler's nine-foot canvas Hi Mom, Hi Dad (1971) would have made quite an impression here, dwarfing smaller offerings such as Ed Ruscha prints or Suzi Gablik's dozen collage paintings. A review notes "William Schwedler's large, shimmering mauve canvases have pylons or ladders and ropes

outlined upon them, the big painted texture in these forms resembles fingerprint whorls while the tiny surface textures is grainy from charcoal particles. This reversal of scale and sense of obsession are derived direct from Surrealism." Charles Benbow, "Ringling Show Is For Real," Tampa Bay Times (St. Petersburg, Florida) November 26, 1972, p 114

photo caption: William Schwedler's "Hi Mom, Hi Dad"(1971) is 9'9" wide and permits luscious subtleties of surface texture unseen in a photograph.

¹⁶² January 10 – March 18, 1973 Eliminating alternating painting or sculpture annuals, the Whitney initiated biennials inclusive of all media. William Schwedler, Bomb, Pyramid Piercing Bending Bomb, 1969, acrylic and oil on canvas. 75 7/8 x 84 1/8in. Accession number 70.19

¹⁶³ William Schwedler, Better Goods (1972), acrylic and oil on canvas, 60 x 96 in. Better Goods had just been returned from Phyllis Kind Gallery and Wrong Turnstyle was supplied by Kornblee.

¹⁶⁴ Cigar bands and thin cedar veneers began to be incorporated into his works. “Manny, who ran the cigar store downstairs, owned the building. Bill certainly bought a lot of cigars from Manny. I think Bill was still showing with Phyllis Kind (a.k.a. to Bill and Tony: Sy-Phillis) around this time, with other Chicago-connected artists.” Fred Struthers email June 23, 2021.

¹⁶⁵ Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, October 16 - December 2, 1973; Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, January 15 - February 18, 1974; The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio, March 8 - April 27, 1974. The catalog acknowledged Schwedler as among Doty's colleagues and friends who contributed expertise to the project.

¹⁶⁶ Both taught painting at Virginia Commonwealth and were looking for studios in New York.

¹⁶⁷ Schwedler may have inherited funds from his parents or perhaps funds from Mueller's purchases also aided in this real estate venture. Obituary of Kathryn A. Schwedler, Chicago Tribune (Chicago, Illinois) April 24, 1972, p 59. Obituary listing for Arthur C. Schwedler, Forest Park, Illinois: Forest Park Review, September 12, 1973, p 19.

Schwedler also subsidized his studio practice with part time teaching at the Trinity School in New York City¹⁶⁷ and also instructed high school students for four years at the Scarsdale Studio workshops¹⁶⁷ with additional courses at the Fordham University/ Lincoln Center campus where Curt Barnes was the Director of Studio Art. Schwedler “taught drawing (and raised Jesuit eyebrows by sending a student out for beer on the last day of class)... Significantly the greater part of drawings chosen to be reproduced in the school's art publications were from his class[which] bore the imprint of his Chicago surrealist background.”

¹⁶⁸ or triangle below canal

¹⁶⁹ Jack Solomon conversation 3/18/21

¹⁷⁰ Magistro reports being excited at closing the sale and celebrating at Puffies (a Tribeca artist bar) that evening but being chided by John Torreano for making a very bad investment as lofts in the area were then being rented for \$200 a month.

¹⁷¹ The area's residents included Ross Bleckner, Yvonne Rainer the performance artist, Laurie Anderson, the painter James Rosenquist, the singers Bette Midler and Cyndi Lauper, the director Martin Scorsese and the actress Meryl Streep. “Tribeca, A Guide to its Old Styles and it's New Life,” New York Times, October 18, 1985, Section C, p 1 of the National edition.

¹⁷² By fall of 1976, the Collective for Living Cinema, a film society, became the first-floor tenant and later the Lois Greenfield Photography Studios.

¹⁷³ Struthers describes the loft “sanding, caulking, painting walls, small stuff...the studio in the back of the loft would have been finished first, and I was probably busy in there while the rest of the loft was being finished. The work on the loft went smoothly...bathroom the last to be finished, painted almost black, with black fixtures and a huge shower area all tiled in Mexican Terra Cotta. There was a wonderful view of the Twin towers out the front windows and lit up at night they were quite dramatic. Angular walls and a studio in the back. His entire collection of Roseville was on display on high, white, stepped shelves.”

¹⁷⁴ The Chicago artist Evelyn Statsinger shared this quality of merging micro and macro scales. See https://hyperallergic.com/740529/the-endless-realities-of-evelyn-statsingers-art/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=D061622&utm_content=D061622+CID_12d41e801737f901d1a3d6beb6371f40&utm_source=hn&utm_term=The+Endless+Realities+of+Evelyn+Statsingers+Art

¹⁷⁵ Allied to the informed, described by Bataille where significant form dissolves because the fundamental distinction between figure and ground, self and other is lost...’33

Steihaug, Jan-Ove. *Abject/Informe/Trauma*. www.forart.no/steihaug/toc.html>. p 27.

¹⁷⁶ William Schwedler, *Polish It Off (Homage to Robert Smithson)*, 1974, oil on canvas, 78 x 102 in. Ex collection of John Samuels. Considered part of the overall ethos; at the time of his tragedy, Smithson’s earthworks influenced many with his expanded sense of time and landscape.

¹⁷⁷ See Robert Morris, “Aligned with Nazca” *Artforum* October 1975 which coincidentally illustrates Ree Morton’s 1974 Whitney Museum installation *To Each Concrete Man*. Nazca also mentioned in Rosie Cooper, *Chicago Imagists*, p 23. Kelder mentions Pre-Columbian fortresses such as Sacsayhuaman or Paramonga. They also resemble the stacking instructions accompanying the S.M.S. portfolios so that collectors could efficiently repack them into their protective folders.

¹⁷⁸ Vivien Raynor, *New York Times*, March 4, 1983 Section C, p 24

¹⁷⁹ *She’s Not Well* was owned by the Edmundson Art Foundation, it was sold on auction on September 30, 2010 to benefit its Acquisitions Fund. In a letter to Art and Natalie Green dated April 7, 1972, Schwedler mentions his mother being ill “Just returned from Chicago where mom is still dying; hope it doesn’t drag on even longer. One morning I asked her how she was feeling & she said, “Well it’s no picnic.” Isn’t that kind of fabulous?”

¹⁸⁰ William Schwedler, *Buy and Large*, 1974, Oil, acrylic and charcoal, 74 1/2 x 74 1/2 inches. Purchased with MIT Percent-for-Art Funds. Illustrated Crispo catalogue #10

¹⁸¹ *All that Glitters is Gold* (1974), New Orleans Museum of Art, oil acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 85 ½ x 117 inches.

Illustration #7 Crispo Catalog 1975. *Led Zeppelin, Stairway to Heaven* (1971). “There’s a lady who’s sure all that glitters is gold and she’s buying a Stairway to Heaven.”

182 Mueller left the Pace Gallery partnership in 1975 when he was 39 years old. He died of heart failure at the age of 53. *Obituary, New York Times*, May 9, 1989, Section D, p 26

183 The Fuller building at East 57th Street and Madison Avenue was directly across the Street from Pace Gallery.

184 Struthers recounts “I do remember real excitement when Bill was picked up by Crispo and when the show was in planning stages. I put in about 5 hours a day, 5 days a week working on stuff for that show incl. Included lot of small-scale pieces, these 5 x 8 inch ‘picture frame’ pieces with triangular stands — miniatures of larger paintings. Strategy to provide affordable pieces.” Fred Struthers email July 8, 2021

¹⁸⁵ Schwedler paintings, drawings: February 21-March 15, 1975. This was Schwedler’s largest catalog. Bullard was then the Executive Director of the New Orleans Museum of Art and shared Schwedler’s passion for ceramics. Schwedler knew Bullard for some time; in a letter to Art Green dated March 20, 1971 he mentions Bullard as an Assistant Director of the National Gallery. Bullard probably was responsible for the acquisition of Schwedler’s *All that Glitters is Gold* prior to its inclusion in the Crispo catalog.

¹⁸⁶ The Crispo exhibit was reviewed by Jane Bell, *Arts*, April 1975, Vol. 49 Issue 8, p 4

187 Perhaps the bdsm scene around Crispo was too extreme. A decade later, Crispo was implicated, though never charged, in a grisly murder. Occurring three years after Schwedler’s death and years after his exhibit, ultimately the association tainted Schwedler’s reputation with collectors.

188 He was acknowledged in the catalog as “Anthony de Alessandre.” Other noted in the catalogue were the Lebron brothers for stretching the canvases, Italo Scanga, Fred Struthers, Larry Becker and Jay Gorney who was a gallery employee. “At this time Bill started working with Tony who had gotten backing from John Samuels for a gallery. I believe Samuels had bought paintings of Bill’s and friends.” Struthers. Samuel’s investment in Schwedler is documented in the lender’s checklist of the 1982 Tibor de Nagy exhibit.

¹⁸⁹ “In 1975, however, *Fortune* magazine estimated that Mr. Samuels was worth at least \$100 million, though later estimates of Mr. Samuels’s money have gone as high as \$500 million.” *Samuels: A New Force On the Arts*

Scene," John Corry, New York Times, Jan. 28, 1979. His considerable wealth came mainly from ICM/Carbonim. He had major investments in the National Sugar Refining Company, the largest American deposit of graphite, coal (one mine worth 30 million dollars), banking, and finance. He lived with in a 79th Street town house purchased from the American socialite Marietta Tree.

¹⁹⁰ Samuels had been Crispo's client and owned at least six of Schwedler's works including Polish it Off (Homage to Robert Smithson) 1974, 84 x 84, Bound to happen 1974, 48 x 108, Seeing is Believing 1975, 84" x 134", Time is money 1976 102 x 78, A Perfect Stranger, 1974, 30 x 22 and Against the grain, 1974, 30 x 22.

¹⁹¹ Art Green Email June 22, 2021. A contemporary advertisement in Art Rite promoted Curt Barnes, Jane Kaufman, Italo

Scanga, and Wm. Schwedler. Art-Rite, Issue 10, Fall 1975. According to Curt Barnes, Alessandra took a lot of advice from Schwedler and Scanga on the gallery's stable including Jamie Carpenter, Kaufman, Julius Tobias, and Green.

¹⁹² April 3 – May 4, 1976 An illustrated catalog was published with an essay by Diane Kelder.

¹⁹³ Schwedler, Time is Money, 1976, acrylic on canvas, 102 x 78 inches; Schwedler, Bad Reception, 1976, oil, acrylic, and charcoal on canvas, 60 x 70 1/8 inches PMA collection, Gift of Frederic Mueller

¹⁹⁴ William Zimmer, "William Schwedler at Alessandra Gallery, New York," Arts Magazine, April 1976, Vol. 50, p 5 Barbara Zucker, William Schwedler at Alessandra Gallery, ARTnews; Summer 1976, Vol. 75, issue 6, p 175

Nancy Grove, Review of William Schwedler exhibit at Alessandra Gallery, Arts, June 1976, Vol. 50, Issue 10, pp 23-24

¹⁹⁵ Letter to Fred Struthers May 23, 1976

¹⁹⁶ At the same time that he fronted Alessandra Gallery, his investments began to falter. Although Samuels studied economics, bad decisions had repercussions to his overall wealth. When coal prices plummeted in 1975, revenues of the Carbomin Group fell, and Samuels turned to the American Bank and Trust Company of New York for short-term capital needs. When that bank failed, Samuels had to repay \$6 million of outstanding loans within 60 days. Samuels owed

\$2 million to FDIC, the receiver of the defunct American Bank and his shares in the Exchange International Corporation, were pledged as collateral. He had other bank problems in Chicago. Fortune magazine described Samuels's in February 1978 as one of the richest men in America, with \$200 to \$300 million in assets. Ann Critienden, "Cultural Impresario's Businesses Tumble into Debt and Disarray," New York Times, April 29, 1979, p 1

¹⁹⁷ A Bogota, Columbia exhibit was scheduled for the fall of 1977. Schwedler letter to Struthers, dated December 22, 1976.

¹⁹⁸ Which opened on September 25, 1976. The artists included were Valerie Jaudon, Jane Kaufman, Joyce Kozloff, Tony Robbin, Miriam Schapiro, Arlene Slavin, John Torreano, Robert Zakanitch, and Joe Zucker. Kaufman intended a statement about alternatives to non-Western material culture. For example, Islamic decoration provided celebratory alternative models through arabesque, tessellation, tiling, broken symmetries and pulsating illusions that Western art history granted to fine art painting, sculpture, and architecture. P & D could be viewed as a fluffy transition between figuration, formalist abstraction and more muscular styles of the '80s like Neo-Expressionism; the obsessive repetition and craft sources used by these artists had domestic or seemingly feminine connotations.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁹ Jenni Sorkin, Patterns and Pictures: Strategies of Appropriation, 1975-1985, <http://contemporary.burlington.org.uk/journal/journal/patterns-and-pi>

²⁰⁰ Although Carlson was not in Ten Approaches she did make installations at Hundred Acres Gallery.

²⁰¹ First Things First (to Ree Morton)1977, oil and acrylic on canvas, 48 x 72, Collection Mr. and Mrs. Hilton Rosen, New York, illustrated Burr Wallen, "William Schwedler in Orbit, or, Pattern is More than You Think It Is" Arts Magazine, Vol. 54, issue 7, March 1980, p174. Wallen died in Santa Barbara after a long illness on September 24, 1991.

²⁰² Letter to Fred Struthers January 28, 1976. Skirt the Issue (1975 – 76) acrylic on canvas, 54 x 48 inches, is illustration # 7 in the Alessandra catalog.

²⁰³ “I don’t think he was interested in the artwork or the movement of Pattern and Decoration particularly. I’d say his interest in finish fetish (another term he loved) would have referred to the many layers of Liquitex matte medium seamlessly covering the surface of every piece. Also, finish as pertaining to the controlled and obsessive patterning. I watched him working those fingerprint patches and passages ... fully absorbed in the headspace of making, hour after hour.” Fred Struthers email to the author, July 8, 2021.

²⁰⁴ Janet Kardon, The Decorative Impulse, ICA Philadelphia Jeff Perone on ICA The Decorative Impulse “The impulse to pattern and decorate is said to come after a period of Minimalism and “sensual starvation”; decorative art is thus “anti- minimal.” Decorative art also gets points from Kardon for its “anti-sensibility,” by which she means it challenges taste. Artforum review of The Decorative Impulse at ICA CITE DATE page

²⁰⁵ For other examples of Crispo’s pique see Pat Hamilton example in Crispo book.

²⁰⁶ William Schwedler —Paintings and works on paper, May 7 – May 31, 1977.

²⁰⁷ June 10, 1977 to Struthers.

²⁰⁸ Often allied with decorative options in his eponymous gallery, after leaving New York Tony Alessandra became a European dealer in furniture. I found him in Hungary in 2019. Died September 2020 in Budapest - email info date

²⁰⁹ Skolnick had worked as an installer at the Whitney before becoming Dan Flavin’s assistant in charge of his fabrication. He was also one of the recipients of Schwedler’s estate.

²¹⁰ Pyramid Gallery, Washington DC Oct 14 – November 5, 1977

Works from 1974 – 1977

211 March 14, 1978

212 [Ro Gallery and Delaware collector] for example

213 “During the four-month period ended April 30, 1975, robberies were up 21%; aggravated assault was up 15%; larceny was up 22%; and burglary was up 19%.” From Welcome to Fear City; A Survival Guide for Visitors to the City of New York, a pamphlet published in 1975 by the Council for Public Safety. <https://researchdestroy.com/welcome-to-fear-city.pdf>

²¹⁴ Black ice remnants from snow piled up on Houston Street were still visible in May. It was one of the rare times that a snowstorm closed New York schools.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northeastern_United_States_blizzard_of_1978 Schwedler reported in a letter “You wouldn’t believe how dirty this poor city is now that the snow has melted.” Letter to Fred Struthers DATE For evidence see the Thomas Struth photograph Crosby Street, Soho, New York (1978) which shows the aftermath of the storm. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/284775>

²¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Demographics_of_New_York_City

²¹⁶ March 1979 letter to Struthers.

²¹⁷ It was common opinion that Crispo had blackballed Schwedler in the community.

²¹⁸ It would have taken place from April 8 to May 3, 1980.

²¹⁹ Burr Wallen Arts March 1980, p172. Wallen was an estate beneficiary who donated a Schwedler to the Princeton Art Museum.

²²⁰ To date, nineteen serigraphs have been identified: Dead Give Away (1978), Fall for It (1978), Let it Ride (1978), Come to the Light (1979), Divided Loyalties (1979), Firm Believer (1979). First Things First (1979), Hawaiian Flowers (1979), Head Start (1979), Hold the Line (1979), Losing Track (1979), Lost Cause (1979), Snap

Judgement (1979), Press Charges (1979), Ready Answer (1979), Sheer Numbers (1979), Bridge the Gap (1981), Piece by Piece (1981) and Rise to the Occasion (1981). Schwedler produced these in editions of 200 and in several sizes. Purportedly, they were done as a tax shelter for an investor. They have no chop marks and print curators from AIC, the Smithsonian, and the Philadelphia Print Center have unable to find further information about the print publisher.

²²¹ Although sympathetic to feminist art and P & D he recognized that the latter had already begun to lose steam. Letter to Fred Struthers.

²²² He was probably too old to be included in Ronny H. Cohen's failed movement Energism. He mentions Energism in a letter to Fred Struthers.

²²³ Schwedler's new music tastes included the soundtrack from the movie Car Wash 1976, The Village People 77, Donna Summer 82, Rose Royce and the Pointer Sisters.

²²⁴ Cite Magistro DATE? John Kelly also commented on the eclectic musical tastes of Schwedler.

²²⁵ Misery Loves Company, Dragging it Out, Grab Your Hanky, Hard to Come By and Shoot the Breeze, all from 1974 and illustrated in the Crispo catalog. Long works on paper continue in the Alessandra catalog: Broad Daylight, More Traffic, Sheer Oversight, and Itala (all dated 1975-76). Struthers confirms the latter was a reference to Scanga. "In Bill's circle of intimate gay friends (common in those days) men had alternate female names used only with insiders. Fred Mueller: 'Frieda'; I was 'Fern'; Schwedler: 'Billa'; Italo became 'Itala' at some point - you could say it was a testament to his tolerance, openness and willingness to have a good time." Email July 16, 2022

²²⁶ Commentators often remarked on his color; BLANK compared him to Olitski for instance. SOURCE

²²⁷ "I think he thought of them as finger prints. They were really an exercise in concentration, stoned-obsessive no-mind drawing with super precision (he did take acid occasionally, so he was experienced — I don't remember him smoking pot)... I do think he thought of the images as aerial (to a point)." Fred Struthers email 7.8.21

²²⁸ The former New York Life Insurance building, designed by McKim, Mead & White, was city-owned. It was later affiliated with the Museum of Modern Art. Scanga showed there in 1978.

²²⁹ This exhibit Wm. Schwedler: Recent Paintings on Plywood and Paper with Roseville, April 22–May 16, 1981 was to be his last. ²³⁰ Alaina Heiss requested that Schwedler show his Roseville collection. Schwedler was not too pleased (Curt Barnes date interview) Jill Kurtzer who worked at the Clocktower also reiterated this was Heiss's idea. DATE

²³¹ William Schwedler

Arrested Development, 1980

16 x 38.5 x 8

Private collection Colorado

William Schwedler, Come to Mind, 1980–81

Mixed media on bent plywood

15 13/16 x 44 11/16 x 7 1/16 in

Princeton University - Gift of Burr E. Wallen, Class of 1963

William Schwedler, High Maintenance 1981

15.5 x 74 inches.

Private Collection PA (Mary Ashley)

William Schwedler, Retain the Restrictions

(1981) 16 x 72

²³² In those works from the period 1978 to 1981, the crackle patterns are reduced into small but strategically located islands which punctuate linear and coloristic compositional rhythms within maplike, intercrossing arrangements of lines, bars, and curves. In this group, represented here by *The Acid Test*, 1980–81, Schwedler's ability to turn abstract imagery into perceptual and extraperceptual information is strikingly illustrated. In this canvas, which curves gently inward, the precise relief rendering and pervading luminosity of the surface seem to evoke outer space, and the syncopated structure brings to mind transportation arteries for some futuristic city, or the circuits made by unseen electronic impulses whizzing about inside computers. While vivid sensations of directionality and speed seem on first glance to dominate viewing, the painting's metaphoric/symbolic aspects come through with prolonged viewing" Ronnie Cohen Artforum May 1983 p 96-97 [Tibor de Nagy Memorial review]

²³³ Tom Wolfe's *Electric Acid Kool Aid-Test* (1968) described the antics on Ken Kesey's bus *Further* in which Kesey and his posse took copious amounts of lysergic acid to challenge the outer limit of their consciousness.

²³⁴ "We were partners together 'til '75. And he very unfortunately got very involved in the drug scene, and it really destroyed him ...In the '60s we'd go to parties, and you'd be careful not to drink the punch because it was all spiked with LSD. And Fred was on LSD continuously." A. Glimcher Archives of American Art. For the use of psychedelics by Schwedler see *Arts Magazine*. Schwedler's drug use was also corroborated by some interviews conducted for this essay. This is not to label Schwedler as a druggie but to acknowledge that most artists and many people in this period experimented with recreational drugs.

²³⁵ Struthers

²³⁶ McGoos closed in August 1988.

²³⁷ "The piers were not only a cruising haven; it was an artist outpost, attracting the likes of Alvin Baltrop, Keith Haring,

Peter Hujar, Robert Mapplethorpe, Stanley Stellar and David Wojnarowicz who also found inspiration in the scene." Gordon Matta-Clark sliced a huge crescent-shaped, light flooded hole in a west-facing wall on Pier 52 and titled it "*Day's End*"; a painter named Tava (Gustav von Will) was doing murals, as were younger contemporaries like Mike Bidlo.

²³⁸ "The Anvil was one of the hottest, sleaziest, and most glorious places to be for gay men of that period." <http://www.back2stonewall.com/2022/04/nyc-forgotten-gay-history-anvil-500-w-14th-street-1974-1986.html> Film Director William Friedkin used the Anvil to shoot some scenes of *Cruising* in 1980. Similar neighborhood bars included Badlands, the Mineshaft, The Ramrod, and the Stud.

²³⁹ "membership cards and vouchers from that notorious gay watering hole and hangout, The Anvil" started appearing in collages," Ira Joel Haber Arts. Anvil membership coupons can be seen in *High Maintenance* (1981) and the serigraph *Ready Answer*, (1979) for example. Although few of the canvases on which this series of silkscreens have been found, we can assume dates from the prints. One of these lost paintings was last seen on an internet auction.

²⁴⁰ "There is no poor subject. A pair of socks is no less suitable to make a painting than wood, nails, turpentine, oil and fabric." — Robert Rauschenberg quoted in the catalogue for "*Sixteen Americans*" (1959). For more uses of coding see Jonathan Katz *BLANK*. Schwedler was specifically named under a row of blue bunny heads in Ray Johnson's work *Untitled (Tab Hunter)* (1976, 1977, 1978, 1992). These works were reworked at various times hence the sequence of dates.

Schwedler is cited under the grey ink washes in the center of the work, indicating an earlier contact date in the late 1970s. Since both Johnson and Schwedler were Anvil regulars, Schwedler's appearance may infer a familiarity with each other. <https://theguide.art/event/ray-johnson-what-a-dump-david-zwirner/> Thanks to Zwirner Gallery for further information on this work.

²⁴¹ The rolling papers signifying or hinting at the use of marijuana for instance and the repetitive JFK heads functioned like homemade Warhol Jackies.

²⁴² See Randy Shilts, *The Band Played On: People, Politics and the AIDS Epidemic*, 1987; New York: St. Martin's Press

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Lawrence K. Altman, "New Homosexual Health Disorder Worries Health Officials," *The New York Times*, May 11, 1982, Section C, Page 1

²⁴⁵ <https://hivprevention.blogspot.com/2011/11/history-of-hiv-aids.html>

²⁴⁶ Jack Solomon phone conversation March 18, 2021

²⁴⁷ Parvo reference, Ross Bleckner July 13, 2021. Schwedler loved pets; he loved Dinah Washington so much "he named his cat Dinah... the other one was Diego, and the dog was Donatello. For a while he lived with someone who had a couple of parrots that had no name names. Italo Scanga said the place look like a manger." Fred Weidenbeck, May 6, 2021

²⁴⁸ Magistro

²⁴⁹ John Kelly

²⁵⁰ Cynthia Carlson

²⁵¹ Struthers. Andy Berler was CAPS arts administrator in New York and Schwedler's friend who arranged for hospice care at home in his last days.

²⁵² <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/00001163.htm>.

²⁵³ Obituary notice *Chicago Tribune* Sunday October 10, 1982 p 55.

²⁵⁴ <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/27/nyregion/life-span-dips-for-men-born-in-new-york.html>

²⁵⁵ The Pyramid club opened in 1979 at 101 Avenue A in the East Village. The Pyramid Club closed in 2021 due to another pandemic, covid 19. *New York Post* April 1, 2021. <https://nypost.com/2021/04/01/a-safe-haven-for-freaks-nycs-iconic-pyramid-club-closes/>

²⁵⁶ Kelly NYT

²⁵⁷ The curator Dan Cameron was one of Schwedler's friends. Cameron compared the morning he learned of his death, as significant for gay men in the 1980s as 9/11 was for another generation.

https://issuu.com/georgiaokeeffemuseumresearchcenter/docs/1980s_aninternetconference

²⁵⁸ Schwedler's Roseville collection may have been acquired by a museum in Puerto Rico. Many people have confirmed this information including John Kelly and Cynthia Carlson but to date the museum hasn't been identified.

²⁵⁹ February 5 to March 9, 1983. Tibor De Nagy also provided the valuation of the estate for Berler.

²⁶⁰ Vivien Raynor NYT, Ronnie Cohen Art Forum, Ira Joel Haber Arts

²⁶¹ The beneficiaries included Berler, Mary Ashley (Scanga's first wife), Bruce Benderson, Dennis Echevarria, Charles Magistro, Richard Palmer, Ivan Polley, Robert Skolnik, Fred Struthers, Burr Wallen, and Fred Weidenbeck. Tibor de Nagy conducted the estate art evaluation.

²⁶² Schwedler's portion of the loft sold for \$284,000 with \$325,00 evaluated for objects and property.

²⁶³ But not more so than those of Paul Thek or David Wonarwicz

²⁶⁴ Crispo was indicted in a scandalous murder for which he was acquitted but later was convicted of tax fraud and sent to jail. Knowing of his connections to Crispo, collectors uncomfortably shied away from presumed associations though the incident transpired years after Schwedler's death. Alessandra closed his gallery and later became a decorative arts dealer in Budapest. Berler died in 1994.

²⁶⁵ The same could be said for many ambitious artists - Elizabeth Murray, Ron Gorchov, Donald Judd, Dan Flavin. See also Judith Russi Kirshner, ed. *Surfaces: Two Decades of Painting in Chicago; Seventies and Eighties*, Terra Museum of American Art, 1987. Cozzolino and Taft's *Art in Chicago: A History from the Fire to Now*, University of Chicago Press, 2018, doesn't even mention Schwedler in the index. *The Other Tradition; Alternative Representations and Eccentric Abstraction in Philadelphia*, (2003) The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA included Harry Anderson, Sandra Brownlee, Charles Burns, Mark Burns, Robert Crumb, Lin Dihn, Joy Feasley, Rafael Ferrer, Tara Goings, Marcie Hermansaeder, Jim Houser, Jane Irish, Tristan Lowe, Kate Moran, Joshua Mosley, Ree Morton, Claire Rojas, Italo Scanga, Judith Scheachter, Bill Schwedler, Paul Swenbeck, and Clint Takeda. *Corbett vs. Dempsey*, Chicago, *Abstract Imagist*, October 27 – November 25, 2006 showcased Joe Clower, Jordan Davies, Roland Ginzler, Art Green, Ted Halkin, Philip Hanson, Richard Hull, Miyoko Ito, Thomas Kapsalis, Phyllis Kresnoff, Errol Ortiz, Christina Ramberg, Barbara Rossi, William Schwedler, David Sharpe, Rebecca Shore, Ray Siemanowski, Murray Simon, Evelyn Statsinger, Bruce Thorn, and Ray Yoshida. *Invisible City: Philadelphia and the Vernacular Avant-garde*, Rosenwald Wolf Gallery, The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, January 15 - March 4, 2020