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JOHN WHITE

Pattern painting has gone into the employ of more earthly concerns, as John White's most recent work demonstrates. White is known for cartographic drawings that diagram either the propelled paths of golf balls across greens and pits and roughs, or the stage movements of his warmly humorous yet strongly intellectual performances. Throughout the '70s, his "Golf Course Notation" and "Floor Plan for Performance" pieces had the flat linearity and minimal coloration typical of architectural renderings. This is not surprising, as White cites aerial maps and blueprints as formal inspirations.

His more recent work seems based on an anthropomorphic model, with a central columnar spine flanked by patterned patches of parallel ribs. While maintaining the bilateral symmetry, linear structure, and apparent flatness of earlier examples, it explodes with intense color. "Explodes" is a particularly apt term, in fact, as several of his new colored ink drawings look like cut-away diagrams of volcanoes, the molten lava pushing through tense green hills on the verge of eruption (see Quarry.) There is a sexual vigor in the strong central thrust of these compositions.

Others are more cerebral, more lyrical. In one, you seem to see the colonnaded façade of a temple above a gently curving horizon; the central bar becomes a path to its porch. In another, the central fold is thin, tenuous, and can be read as the fragile balsa body of a model airplane with the balancing panels its delicately engineered wings.

When the color rather than the structure dominates, numerous alternative allusions arise. The textile stripes of some evoke the brilliance of butterfly wings; the short colored strokes of others recall quill work on Plains buffalo robes or the modular cedar reliefs before Kwakiutl homes. Anchoring his patterned colors on a solid architectonic structure, White creates a richly multivalent body of work that covers as wide a range as his very personal, very political performances. (Jan Baum, May 6-June 11)