

## **Between Prescribed Principles and Deliberate Disorder**

by Michael Schmid

### **Concentrated Strength**

The works of Harold Wortsman make use of other techniques and formalistic language. A series of prints reveal Wortsman's search for a simplification of form, a reduction of the pallet of color and a questioning of the spatial situation. In so-called "intaglios," he explores the possibilities of an uncommon technique, utilizing thin sheets of aluminum in place of the customary copper or zinc plates and incising them with sharp knives, engraving tools and even with stones. The result: abstract bodies of irregular contour, multi-misshapen forms, sometimes pierced and ruptured. At the same time, these bodies resemble geometric shapes. Here too . . . the artist teases the indefinite, mining the tension between prescribed artistic principles and disorder. His cubes are polychrome, various layers of color are superimposed on the etching plate and transferred to the print. The colors are not luminous, but rather darkly replete with somber blue, Sienna and olive tones. Wortsman often works in small series, and sometimes simply in monotypes.

### **Reciprocal Tension**

Aside from graphic arts, Wortsman concentrates on plastic works. As in his aluminum plates, so too in his sculpture two abstract bodies are often juxtaposed for a creative tension. Reciprocally infusing each other with visual ideas, they generate a host of concrete associations. Wortsman experiments with different silicate surfaces and firing techniques. Sometimes he employs an oxide, which accords the piece a shimmering rust-red patina, sometimes he seals his sculptures in a container filled with diverse materials, which, in the course of the firing process, leave their telltale trace on the surfaces. With such controlled-uncontrolled experiments, Wortsman creates forms that bring to mind archaic cult objects and exude a quiet, concentrated strength all their own.

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