

BILL RAMAGE: DRAWINGS

Flynn dog Gallery • Burlington, VT • www.flynn dog.net

In his recent solo exhibition at Burlington's Flynn dog Gallery, Bill Ramage challenged assumptions about drawing by including monumental works up to forty feet in length. He also skillfully integrated a broad range of media, including oil sticks, graphite, colored pencil, and charcoal. His collection of several monumental installations was perfectly suited to the copious wall space of Flynn dog. The Castleton State College professor's show, simply entitled *Drawings*, married esoteric conceptual roots with his proven technical virtuosity.

Ramage's nearly incomprehensible, three-page artist's statement, however, inadvertently suggested that the artist is as much a mystic as a brilliant technician. His *Centripetal Gates of Kiev* (eight-by-forty feet) was a remarkable, abstract panorama of overlapping grids, crosses, and beautifully defined and colored circles. To Ramage, centripetal "means to move or tend to move toward a center," which is indeed a simplified explanation of the concept of centripetal force in Newtonian physics. But how

that force relates to the actual massive drawing is far from obvious. Like William Blake, Ramage's writings surely make perfect sense to him, but don't need to be wholly understood by others in order to see the vitality of his art.

The David Bohm Quintet—Five Easy Holomovements was a group of five eighty-four-by-eighty-four-inch, mixed-media drawings



Bill Ramage, *The Centripetal Gates of Kiev* (detail), mixed media on canvas, 40 x 8'. Photo: Marc Awodey.

running along another forty-foot expanse of wall. They have rich backgrounds, dominated by blue lines running diagonally through deep red fields. Perfect, white circles—each larger than the picture plane—swept across the five drawings, unifying and enlivening them. Spheres containing measured cruciform elements and brightly-hued squares containing organic forms were spaced across the entire installation.

Ramage's stated concern for curving space in a manner that defies linear perspective is best seen in *Appolonians*, Raphael Giotto Pollack (2002). The six-by-eighteen-foot triptych seemed to superimpose flat, floral forms in three diamond-oriented squares over a lower hemisphere defined by fine lines and a matrix of small, blue crosses.

Ramage may be ultimately concerned with how large-scale works affect perception. Whatever his concerns, the works come together in one beautifully manifested body.

—Marc Awodey