



*Mona Dukess*

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CATALOG ESSAYS:

April Kingsley, "A New Light on the Past"

Monique Brunet-Weinmann, "Contrasting Harmonies"

Translation by Ilona Kinzer

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Provincetown, Massachusetts



*Still Life Abstraction*  
laser print, 3½" x 3½"

FRONT COVER:  
*Still Life with Purple Grapes*  
handmade paper with  
colored pigments  
30" x 30"

## *A New Light on the Past*

The painted shop signs were hanging in the back room of a small historical museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. They were bold and colorful—golden loaves of bread for a bakery, purple grapes for a fruit shop, a bright blue fish—and would be the inspiration for Mona Dukess' most personal and unique artwork.

Dukess was traveling in Russia to visit her youngest daughter, who was working there, and to explore her family history. During the mid 19th-century, when shop signs decorated the streets of St. Petersburg, her great, great-grandfather operated a photography studio in the heart of the city, where he experimented with what was then a new technology. More than 100 years later, sensing a connection between the signs and her most recent work, Dukess followed the tradition.

She photographed the signs in the museum as well as reproductions of them that appeared in books and catalogs (along with folk art, the signs inspired the artists of the Russian avant-garde in the early 20th-century). Using the process of Polaroid transfers, she reproduced the images onto her handmade papers. To intensify the colors, she used the techniques of icon painting, medieval illuminated manuscripts and gilding. She painted with egg-tempera

combined with pigment made from pulverizing semi-precious stones.

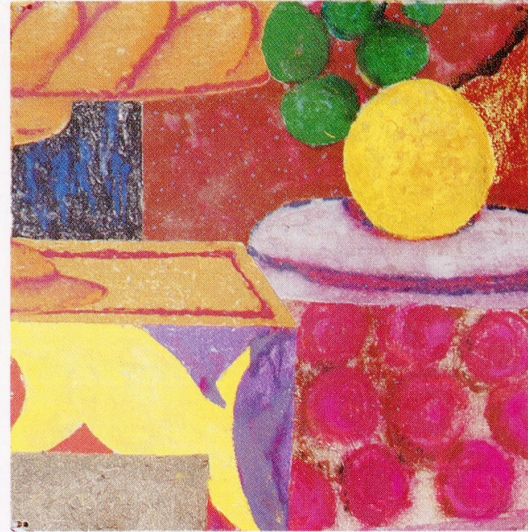
In a leap from ancient techniques to present day technology, Dukess scanned the painted transfers into a computer. She used computer graphics programs to alter and enhance the images. Using a color ink-jet printer, she then printed the refined image onto commercially-produced handmade paper and let the colors blend as they were absorbed into the soft paper fibers. The result, in such pieces as "Russian Fruit," is rich and timeless; the technology that achieved it is hidden.

Seeking a more abstracted image, Dukess then used a laser copier to enlarge small sections of the computer prints. These fragmented enlargements became the visual studies for a series of hand-made papers, such as "Triptych," in which the original images from the Russian signs are recognizable, but as inspiration rather than reproduction.

The technology that Dukess used to create these dramatic and whimsical papers was a medium of seeing more than a tool of creation. It allowed her to see the Russian shop signs in a way that was hidden to the naked eye, and to create something new from them that is uniquely her own.

— APRIL KINGSLEY

## *Contrasting Harmonies*



*W*ith her restless curiosity, her respect for the various techniques used through the ages, and her quiet boldness in adapting them to her own ends, Mona Dukess successfully joins the most ancient practices with the latest technologies.

In the '80s she began to experiment with her own subtly colored handmade paper, using it like paint on canvas, suggesting—though never spelling out—movement and form through delicate application. In a second stage she enriched the work by adding dry pastel. Then, in a final move combining art with modern devices, she incorporated photographs into the whole in a variety of ways, creating a personal vocabulary that brought along its own expanded possibilities.



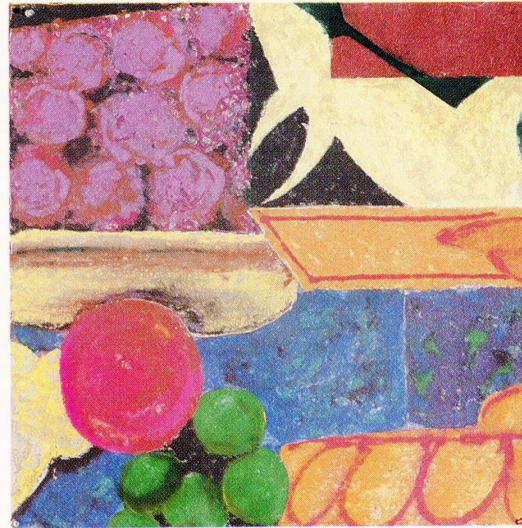
Next came the transfer, onto papers she made, of Polaroid pictures and photocopies, a process she studied at the International Center of Photography in New York. Keenly aware of the rapid strides in technological art, she refuses to be outstripped by them. No sooner had she mastered the procedure of photocopying, than she went on to integrating it



with laser ink printer, computer and bubble-jet copier.

So eminently personal are her "copygraphs" that they defy classification. Whether based on ancient images or inspired by 19th-century French paintings and Russian painted shop signs, her iconographs are altered by technology to such an extent that often all trace of the original is lost. This she achieves by different methods, such as making slight variations in each print within a series deriving from a single model, enlarging one section or another, or focusing on one abstract fragment of the original, itself the object of numerous later transformations.

The result may be an image that is either printed by acetate transfer or pigmented



directly, segment by segment, within still damp paper, using the old stencil technique familiar to New England. Colors are rich and vibrant, contours blend or meet in contrasting harmonies, while textures possess a velvet quality I have never before seen in works of technological art.

Thus Mona Dukess confers the aura of ancient art to contemporary methods of expression. She evokes in the viewer both a nostalgia for the past and an appreciation for the avant-garde.

— MONIQUE BRUNET-WEINMANN

ABOVE:

*Triptych*, handmade paper with colored pigments, 30" x 30" each

FAR LEFT:

*Still Life with Gourd*, handmade paper with colored pigments, 30" x 30"



*Russian Fruit*  
ink-jet print  
40" x 30"

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS (selected)

- 1994 Atlantic Gallery, New York  
1985-93 Provincetown Group Gallery,  
Provincetown, MA  
1987 Brockton Art Museum, Brockton, MA  
1987 Brown University, Providence, RI  
1975 Pace University, Pleasantville, NY

GROUP AND INVITATIONAL SHOWS  
(selected)

- 1994 "Small Works," Provincetown Art Association,  
Provincetown, MA  
1994 "Salon Show," Atlantic Gallery, New York  
1993 "Collage," Provincetown Art Association,  
Provincetown, MA  
1993 "The League at the Cape," Provincetown Art  
Association, Provincetown, MA  
1993 "Illuminated Art," The Cloister Gallery, Houston,  
Texas  
1992 "Paper-Minded," Pelham Art Center, Pelham, NY  
1991 "Paper Works," College of New Rochelle, New  
Rochelle, NY  
1991 "Accent on Paper—15 Years at Dieu Donne," Lintas  
Worldwide Gallery, New York  
1991 "Art in the Garden," Cape Museum of Fine Arts,  
Dennis, MA  
1991 Exposure Gallery of Photography, Orleans, MA  
1990 "Landscapes: Reflections of the Narrow Land,"  
Chandler Gallery, Wellfleet, MA  
1989 "The Assembled Image," Provincetown Art  
Association, Provincetown, MA  
1988 "Paper Works," John Szoke Gallery, New York  
and Silvermine Gallery, Stamford, CT  
1985 "Paper as Paint," Fashion Institute of Technology,  
New York  
1984 "Material and Metaphor," William Paterson College,  
Wayne, NJ  
1980 Long Point Invitational, Provincetown, MA  
1980 "Contemporary Papermakers: Artists of an Ancient  
Craft," Rockland County Historical Society of New  
York, Rockland, NY

CORPORATE, MUSEUM AND  
PUBLIC COLLECTIONS (partial listing)

- United States Embassy, Residence of US Ambassador,  
Warsaw, Poland  
Conde Nast Publications, Office of *Mademoiselle*  
Magazine, New York  
IBM Corporation, Bethesda, MD  
Fidelity Investments, Boston, MA  
Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York  
TRW Corporate Headquarters, Cleveland, OH  
Chevy Chase Savings and Loan, Chevy Chase, MD  
Office of U.S. Controller General, Washington, DC  
Brockton Art Museum, Brockton, MA  
Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA  
New York Law School, New York  
Provincetown Art Museum, Provincetown, MA  
Millenium Hilton, New York  
Marriott Marquis Hotel, New York  
Crown Plaza—Holiday Inn, White Plains, NY  
Martin E. Segal Company, Boston, MA  
Greater New York Savings Bank, New York  
U.S. Trust Company, Stamford, CT

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