

1001. 27



Come Fly with Me 7½" x 7" 1995

Among the many accomplishments that are represented in Wendy Mark's monotypes, there is one that strikes me as being particularly important. And I believe it provides one of the most fruitful approaches to appreciating her art.

Ever since the celebrated Roman poet Horace coined the phrase "ut pictura poesis"—a poem is like a picture—some 2,000 years ago, writers, artists, and critics have continuously debated the commonalities shared by these two forms of human expression. Painters as widely divergent in their style and epoch as Leonardo and Picasso shared a belief in Horace's formulation, the first writing that "Painting is a poetry that is seen and not heard and poetry is a painting which is heard and not seen." In a similar vein, Picasso mused, some 500 years later, that "Painting is poetry and is always written in verse with plastic rhymes."¹

It is precisely this approach to picture making, this conviction that visual images can convey the expansive feeling of great poetic metaphors, that makes Wendy Mark one of our generation's most interesting artists.

A painter who reads poetry daily, Wendy Mark feels most at home in the textual and metaphoric worlds of a special group of poets. Among them are Baudelaire, Vaughan, Donne, Mallarmé, Whitman, and Ashbery. Mark's vision operates in ways similar to those of the writers she admires most, moving, as do their metaphors, from the specific to the universal, from the real to the imagined, and from the closed condition to the open. And though she bases her work on a visual, rather than verbal, vocabulary deriving from the observable world, her images—of clouds, of arboreal landscapes, of moonscapes—convey highly poeticized representations of these phenomena.

One finds, I think, in nearly all of her work something akin to Baudelaire's "Invitation to the Voyage", where Mark invites us to join her in venturing into new, seductive, and mysterious landscapes, filled with the arresting colors of Turner or the nuanced palate of Stieglitz's "Equivalents".

Baudelaire, in his celebrated poem, created the promise of a place of order and beauty, of "luxe, calme, et volupté". And he created simultaneously in his readers the longing for such a place. For Wendy Mark, the promise is similar: her cloudscapes, moonscapes, and landscapes, whether bathed in ethereal lights or embracing the dark densities of forests, are seductive but reassuring in their allure. In her hands, we can become what Baudelaire called "true travellers":

Those whose desires have the shape of clouds,
Who dream, like a recruit of the canon,
Of boundless, changing, unknown pleasures
Whose name the human mind has never known!²

But if the metaphorical nature of poetry inspires the content of Mark's images, what of their form?

The answer to this question, I believe, is less to be found in the miniaturists of the Middle Ages or the work of a Joseph Cornell; rather, it also comes from the world of poetry, where the rigid constraints of form have helped, rather than hindered, the production of great masterpieces.

Instead of seeing the diminutive images of Mark as some sort of late 20th-century equivalent of an illuminated medieval initial, I prefer to view them as works that succeed in the same way that Shakespeare's sonnets do.

The physical compression of an expansive metaphoric message into a limited—and at times exceedingly limited—space gives Mark's monotypes a power that would be lost in a larger scale. It also gives them their defining character: poetic images that inspire wonder, that elicit engagement, and that win their creator our admiration.

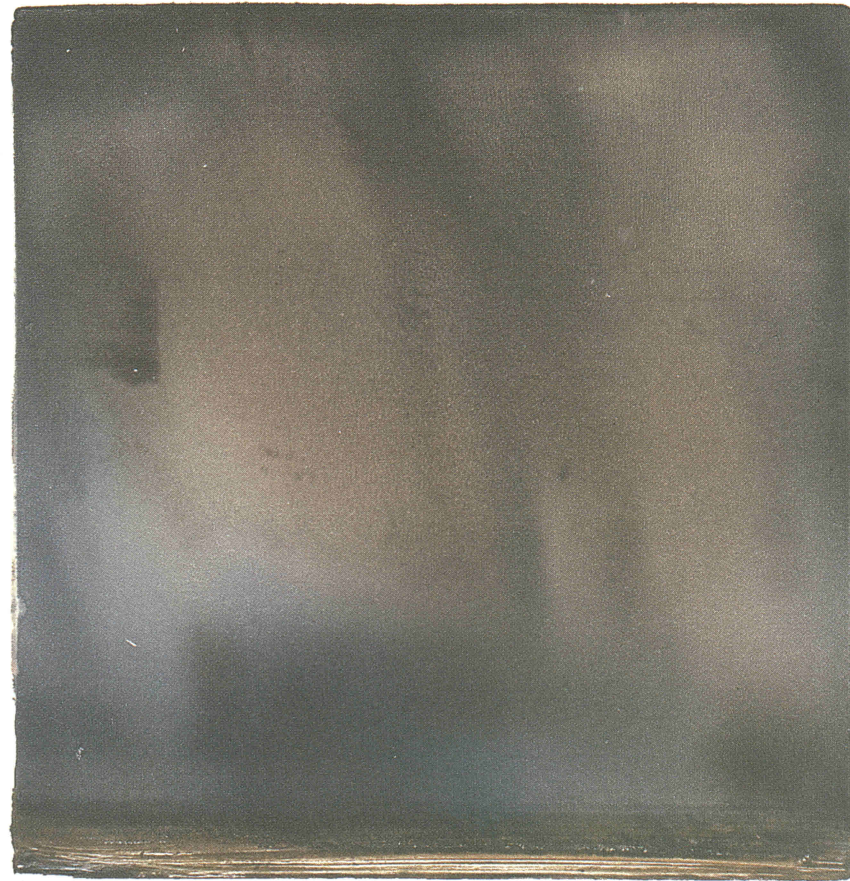
Paul LeClerc President, The New York Public Library

1. Both citations are taken from Franklin R. Rogers, *Painting and Poetry*, 1985, pp. 41-42.

2. "Le Voyage", translated by Barbara Gibbs, in *An Anthology of French Poetry from Nerval to Valéry in English Translation*, ed. Angel Flores, 1958, p. 45.



One Path Leading Away 3½" x 3¼" 1994



Blues for My Baby 7 1/8" x 6 3/4" 1994

WENDY MARK'S MONOTYPES

One only needs to divide a blank piece of paper with a line of the horizon and the imagination starts working. Soon there are fields and clouds, there is a solitary tree, the changing light of the day and the seasons with their colors. Wendy Mark's monotypes remind us of those moments when we make our world larger by dreaming.

Dusky images. Magnificent silent evenings. Overcast landscapes of the soul. The still moment of the eye grafted to the heart. Every time shadow and light come together, it's a different world we are looking at. Here are blurred images out of old dreams and skies of half-forgotten memories. If lyric poetry is the art of making an image of what we feel and cannot say, then Mark is your artist.

The water stains on my ceiling are old maps by early explorers whose rivers and deserts I navigate in my reverie. So it is with Mark's monotypes. As someone said, one must lie down behind the blade of grass to see how large the sky really is. In an age in which large format is often mistaken for ambition and greatness, it is refreshing to find a true miniaturist working.

I thought it only appropriate that Wendy Mark would bring a piece of heavy machinery to an art that requires the most delicate of touches. Nature, too, in its own way, is a steamroller. The same force that pounds us down into dust and sand is capable of finest nuances. Once, after the hurricane was over and the trees and power lines lay everywhere, I saw a lone white butterfly cross the meadows against the pale gray sky.

Charles Simic



One Path Leading Away 3½" x 3¼" 1994



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor
Henry J. Stern, Commissioner

ARSENAL BUILDING GALLERY, NEW YORK CITY

MONOTYPE PRODUCTION WITH STEAMROLLER: October 18, 1995 3 - 5 PM (rain date October 13) in New York City's Central Park in front of the Arsenal Building 65th Street and Fifth Avenue. RECEPTION: October 18, 1995 5 - 7 PM in the Arsenal Building Gallery 830 Fifth Avenue at 65th Street and Fifth Avenue. EXHIBITION DATES: October 18 through November 29, 1995 Arsenal Building Gallery.

KENNEDY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART OHIO UNIVERSITY. ATHENS, OHIO

MONOTYPE PRODUCTION WITH STEAMROLLER: November 1995 at the Kennedy Museum of American Art, Athens, Ohio. EXHIBITION DATES: October through December 1996 as part of our inaugural exhibition schedule.

This very special monoprint project and subsequent exhibition has been organized by the City of New York Department of Parks & Recreation in conjunction with the Kennedy Museum of American Art at Ohio University, Athens, Ohio.

CURATORS: Aina Abiodun, New York City Parks & Recreation. Sally Delgado, Kennedy Museum of American Art. Charles A. Shepard III, Kennedy Museum of American Art. PRODUCTION CONCEPT: René Grayre. PRODUCTION TEAM: Tully Construction Company. Frank Daly, Equipment Superintendent. Samuel Dabate, Steamroller Operator. ENGINEER: George Fox. PHOTOGRAPHY: Bob Sasson. MUSIC: Steven Sacco. Randall Wolfgang, Oboe, Courtesy of the Chamber Music Group "An Die Musik". DESIGN: Arlyn Simon. ESSAYS: Paul Le Clerc, Director, New York Public Library. Charles Simic, Winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. SPECIAL THANKS: Jill Minelli, Director of Community Projects, New York City Parks & Recreation.

Thanks, God, for providing me
with a lovely job and
such charming co-workers!



hope to see
you in NY

Love -
wm.

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Wendy Mark
The Steamroller Project