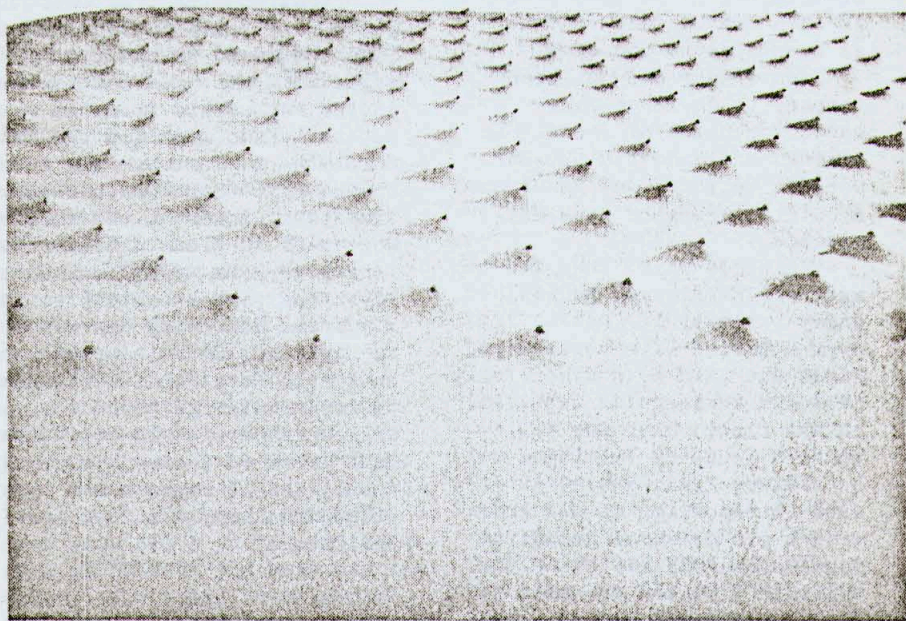


Connie Zehr
MATRIX 11

Wadsworth Atheneum
September October 1975

Eggs



Thirty years ago I talked my Mother into letting me go to school with my hair falling loose instead of tied into braids. That day while swinging, seeing the blur of the sky and leaves, feeling the air pass around my body, through my hair, I let go! My work, I believe, is a way of letting go without falling. It is a synthesis of an inner reality of the self and an exterior reality of the environment.

The synthesis occurs through a process of drawing and working with materials. It is a slow continuous formation like a mollusk extruding it's shell. For me, drawing is discovering a way of seeing, then filtering and focusing in on that information. I need to find images that express certain unseen, inarticulated aspects of my human experience. Perhaps that is a universal human need which provides a link between myself and the viewer. The materials used are either available in nature or products made from natural materials. I select those that seem inherently right already and spend time learning how to present them in the most direct way. The choice of materials related to the natural environment provides a particular kind of link between the work and the viewer. The familiar origin of the materials and images, the scale of their presentation all help to draw the viewer into the work.

As an artist, I am interested in providing an affect but I cannot be responsible finally for the effect. That belongs to the viewer who is willing to let go.

Connie Zehr, Art: A Woman's Sensibility '75

Zehr symbolically re-creates and miniaturizes nature within the geometric context of an interior space.

Looking at Zehr's installation, the artifice of manipulation is apparent - not the effort of crafted labor, however, because all that is hidden. The effect is of a perfectly arranged stage setting in which we become the actors, or of a timeless dream image upon which we are invited, to meditate sympathetically...It is ordered and symmetrical, but not formal or hieratic. It balances, as do most of Zehr's other works, the tenderly intimate and symbolic with the ideal of perfection...

In her works Zehr usually confronts viewers with poetic qualities and the impermanent nature of the materials she uses...Some spectators might be intimidated by the pieces or take advantage of their tender defenselessness. Zehr's perfection could be a dead end - closed off or inaccessible. Her works, however, are perfect and vulnerable, like the poetry of Emily Dickenson. Their intimate tone, their close-focus vision and their very private awareness, both particular and sharing, are striking. On the surface Zehr's pieces are insightfully controlled, but the greatest impact comes with reflecting on their resonance of meanings.

Eddie and Fidel Dannieli,
Artweek, April 5, '75

Work in MATRIX:
Eggs, 1975, white silica (no. 45) and brown eggs (empty).
Built on the floor out from existing MATRIX walls, four sides approximately 6' x 31' x 17 1/2' x 33 1/2' and 6" high.

Connie Zehr is an artist interested in natural materials and human scale. She has decided to work only with readily available materials which are of a size and a cost she can comfortably handle. Perhaps this accounts for the gentle rapport evident between the artist and her medium.

Zehr says that she is fascinated by emerging energy, implied energy. Since 1969 she has worked extensively with sand. She likes its shifting, moving quality. Zehr, intrigued by "the beginnings of things", finds inspiration in such commonplace objects as bean sprouts and eggs.

Connie Zehr has not been tempted to do large scale earth works out of doors. She prefers enclosed spaces. Her work is intimate and generous-- a quiet sharing of personal visions.

The piece which Zehr has made for MATRIX was painstakingly built by the artist over a period of several days. First she laid down a carefully measured rectangular tape grid on the floor. Then she built up each mound by filling a bottomless cylinder set at each intersection of the grid with a pre-measured amount of sand and slowly lifted up the cylinder allowing the sand to take its natural angle in relation to the earth's gravity. After each mound was built she carefully placed an egg into the top.

Many who have seen such intricate installations built by Zehr are troubled that they are temporary and that they must be undone when the exhibitions are over. Permanence is no longer a unanimously agreed upon criterion for art. Visitors to MATRIX have seen wall drawings by Sol LeWitt and Richard Tuttle on view for a period of time and then erased. For Zehr the fact that the work is temporary is im-

portant. It heightens the experience of the moment. Zehr herself found Judy Chicago's smoke pieces a profound experience. She also admires the work of Robert Irwin, Barry LeVa and Newton Harrison. Zehr draws an analogy to Navaho sand paintings in which the ailing individual is asked to roll in the paintings and thereby absorb the magic and curative powers. For Zehr the museum visitor becomes a container for her work.

Connie Zehr was born in Evanston, Illinois in 1938. She received a BA from Ohio State University in 1960. In 1964 she moved to the Los Angeles area and received a Visual Artist Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts for 1974-75. Her work was seen on the East Coast for the first time this winter at the Whitney Museum of American Art Biennial. Zehr's work in MATRIX marks her first one person exhibition in a museum. Following her visit to Hartford, Zehr is travelling on to the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design where she will be an artist-in-residence. Zehr lives in Chatsworth, California and is represented by Orlando Gallery, Encino, California.

AMK

Selected one-woman exhibitions:
Mount San Antonio College, Walnut, California (first) '70;
Orlando Gallery, Encino, California '74, '75.

Selected group exhibitions:
Columbus Art Museum, Annual Juried Exhibition '59; Lytton Center of the Visual Arts, Los Angeles, Newcomers '67 '67; California State University at Los Angeles, Fourth Annual Small Images Exhibition '70; Pasadena Art Museum, 15 Los Angeles Artists '72; Long Beach Art Museum, 21 Artists-- Invisible/Visible '72; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Four Los Angeles Sculptors '73; Womanspace, Los Angeles, Invitational '73; Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC, Biennial '75.

The New England Silica Company of South Windsor donated the sand to the Athenaeum and we would like to acknowledge their generosity.

Selected bibliography about Zehr:

Plagens, Peter. "Los Angeles" Artforum, vol. X, no. 3 (November '71), pp. 84-85.

Glueck, Grace. "Winning the West," The New York Times, April 16, '72.

Plagens, Peter. "The Decline and Rise of Younger Los Angeles Art," Artforum, vol. X, no. 9 (May '72), pp. 79-81.

Manger, Barbara. "Four Sculptors from L.A.," Artweek, January 12, '73.

Plagens, Peter. Sunshine Muse. Praeger (New York) 1974, pp. 137-138.

Bourdon, David. "The Whitney Biennial: A Safari to the Backyard," The Village Voice, February 10, '75.

Danieli, Edie and Fidel. "Gary Lloyd and Connie Zehr," Artweek, April 5, '75.

Smith, Roberta. "Reviews: Biennial, The Whitney Museum," Artforum, vol. XIII, no. 9 (May '75) pp. 71.

Golden, Amy. "The New Whitney Biennial: Patterns Emerging?" Art in America, vol. 63, no. 3 (May-June '75) pp. 72-73.

Selected bibliography by Zehr:

"Miniature Sand Environments: A New Way to See and Feel and Explore," Young Children, vol. XXVIII, no. 5 (June '73), pp. 283-286.

"The Place Between Two Waters," Four Los Angeles Sculptors. Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago) '73.

Art: A Woman's Sensibility. California Institute of the Arts (Valencia, California) '75. Statement by Zehr, p. 77.