

Projects 6 : Mike Glier : Museum of Modern Art, New York, May 9-July 12, 1987

Author

Glier, Mike

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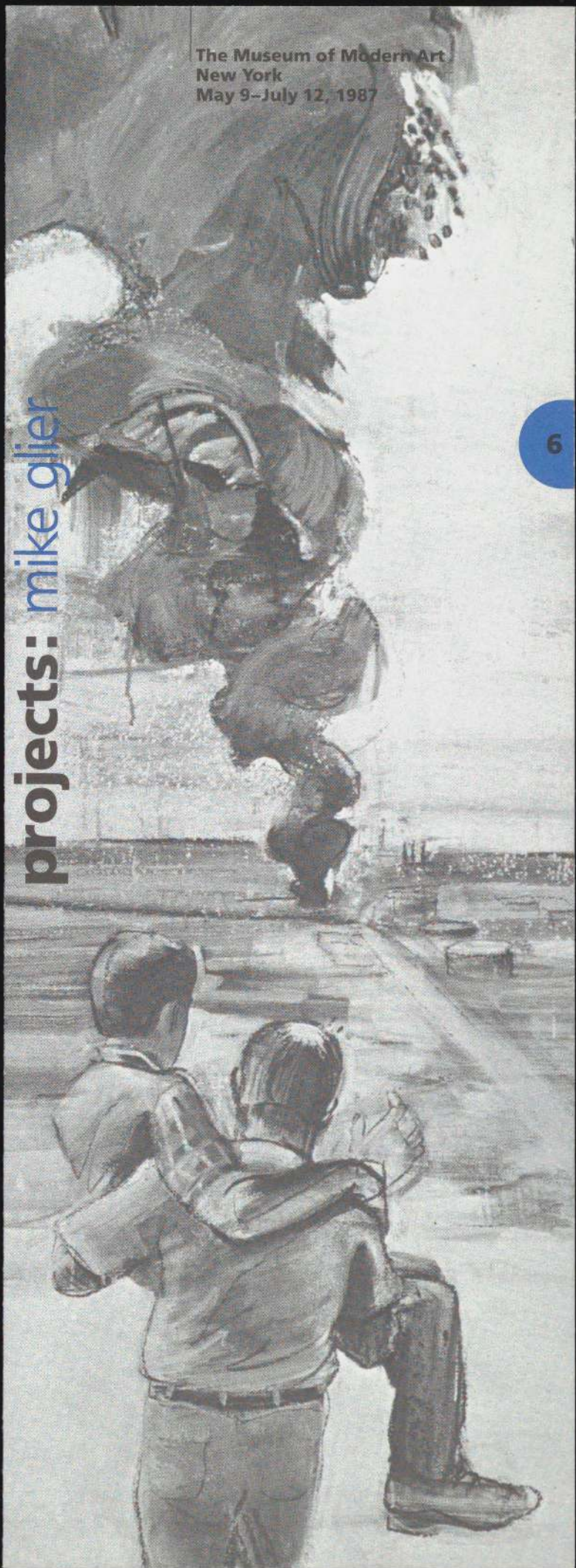
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The Museum of Modern Art
New York
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6



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Designed to present recent work by contemporary artists, the new **projects** series has been based on the Museum's original **projects** exhibitions, which were held from 1971 to 1982. The artists presented are chosen by the members of all the Museum's curatorial departments in a process involving an active dialogue and close critical scrutiny of new developments in the visual arts. The **projects** series is made possible by generous grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Lannan Foundation, and the Wallace Funds, established by the founders of Reader's Digest.

mike glier

Utilizing the architecture and scale of a room, wall drawing incorporates the third dimension. The sensation of being physically encircled by drawing is novel. . . . Since it focuses on the surface of the walls and the dimensions of the room, a wall drawing emphasizes the here and now. Unlike a framed picture that suggests a window through which we see a vision of another place and time, wall drawing emphasizes the immediate situation of the gallery and the moment of viewing.

Mike Glier, *Wall Works* catalog, 1986

Mike Glier's wall drawings exert a haunting, intriguing force with their powerfully drawn monumental images. Using recent social, economic, and political issues as points of departure, Glier's work immediately engages the viewer not only through its dramatic

content but also by the startling manner in which it compels attention. Executed directly on walls, inseparable from the architectural environments that contain them, the drawings activate space, address issues of scale, and stress the immediacy of the experience of looking at art. Glier further animates the architecture and surrounding space by using perspective to create an arresting sensation of depth and by widely varying the scale of his figures. In some of his pieces flat cutout shapes strikingly project from the floors and walls to interact with the wall drawings. This spatial complexity and the sensation of being surrounded by and drawn into the action of the drawing are major components of *The Third Sketch of Chernobyl*, a work that evokes the tragedy and horror of the Russian nuclear accident of 1986. Employing linear perspective, lifesize scale, and *tromp l'oeil* to convey the illusion that the gallery space extends into the distance, Glier enables the viewer to feel capable of physically entering the drawing, intensifying a sense of participation.

In working in this medium Glier draws upon a tradition of painting on walls that extends from cave painting to Renaissance frescoes, from the political murals of Francisco Goya and Diego Rivera to today's graffiti art. Glier was particularly influenced by Sol LeWitt, whose wall drawings of the late 1960s originated the identification of drawing and wall. The environmental wall drawings of Jonathan Borofsky, which Glier recalls from Borofsky's 1978 *Projects* exhibition, were also important to him.

In the late 1970s Glier joined Collaborative Projects, Inc. (Colab), an artists' organization committed to social change and political involvement. Glier's response to his growing concern that art incorporate and communicate ideas and feelings of social significance was to begin drawing with chalk directly on walls. He found wall drawing an especially appropriate medium with which to address current issues because its customary impermanence both underscores the topical nature of his subject matter and removes the work from its conventional role as marketable commodity. Glier's graphic black-and-white images evoke newspaper photographs and cartoon illustration, reinforcing the immediacy and urgency of his themes.

Most of Glier's work has investigated forms of oppression. *White Male Power* (1981), a provocative and humorous depiction of the American male, explores the differences between male and female consciousness. The *Exploding Refrigerator* series (1982) attacks consumerism while emphasizing the inequalities of poverty and wealth. *The Funeral* (1986), a prominent image from a series dealing with the racial conflict in South Africa, depicts a violent confrontation between soldiers and people in a funeral procession. In the present exhibition, as in two earlier installations that treated the subject of Chernobyl, Glier considers nuclear apocalypse and ecological ruin, recurring themes in his work. Because he examines the larger significance of specific events—often in generalized, metaphorical terms—Glier does not, however, consider himself a political artist but rather one "who comments upon the situation in which he finds himself participating." Nor does he ally himself with any particular art movement, although he follows in the figurative tradition, borrows elements from Neo-Expressionism and popular art, and feels affinities with artists such as Nancy Spero, Leon Golub, and Jenny Holzer, whose art also deals with societal issues.



South Africa Drawings (detail). 1986. Chalk, charcoal, and latex on wall. Installation at Washington Project for the Arts, Washington, D.C. Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York. Photograph Mark Gulezian/Quicksilver

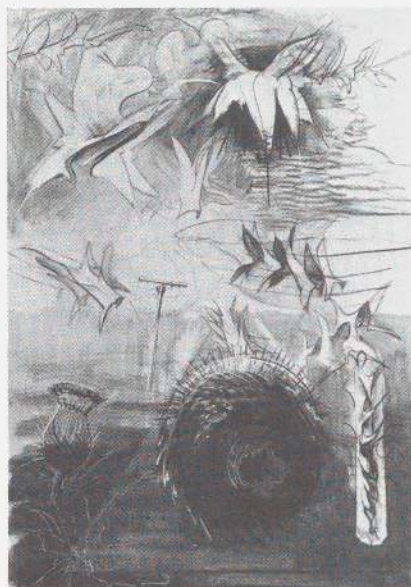
The Second Sketch of Chernobyl. 1986. Chalk, charcoal, and latex on wall, 17 x 27' (518 x 823 cm). Installation at The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Courtesy Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York

Cover: The Second Sketch of Chernobyl (detail)

Back panel: Thistle Study. 1986. Charcoal, conté crayon, and gesso on paper, 62 x 45" (157.5 x 114.3 cm). Courtesy Merrill Lynch and Co.



Two years ago Glier moved from Manhattan to upstate New York, a change that significantly altered his working process and iconography. Prior to this shift he produced composite drawings based largely on multiple photographs and journalistic reproductions. After this move his interest in drawing from life was rekindled and, accordingly, his efforts to incorporate elements of his immediate environment into his work increased; he turned from his customary narrative imagery to poetic, metaphorical depictions of plant life. *The Third Sketch of Chernobyl* continues these new directions, for in this wall drawing Glier both includes components of his plant studies and responds very specifically to the physical characteristics of the Museum. He used the ten-foot span of the windows and arcade facing the Garden Hall Gallery and the foot-wide I-beams that divide them as modules for organizing the work. As is his custom, he applied chalk and charcoal to the gallery walls, which he then washed down to achieve subtle gradations in tone and partially erased by overpainting with wall-colored paint. This method, together with his graphic skill and assurance, allows Glier to combine improvisational drawing of a distinctive gestural nature



with more carefully worked out compositions. The vegetation of his plant drawings, now unnaturally enlarged to suggest irradiative growth, and the image of one man carrying another who appears uninjured but is evidently overcome with radiation poisoning, express the invisible destructive force of radioactivity. This wall drawing, which is less overtly political and more melancholy than Glier's earlier work, is characterized by a pervasive sense of mystery and foreboding that is enhanced by the incongruous juxtaposition of a rational, serene setting with one of nuclear disaster. Through its abnormal scale, its sense of unnatural silence, and its rendering of immense distances, Glier's work realizes a terrifying apocalyptic vision.

Glier's obvious strength as a draftsman and his feel for the theatrical enable him to integrate his social concerns with his artistic sensibility in wall drawings possessed of psychological as well as visual power. Charged with expressive energy and distinguished by a commanding presence, his art succeeds in emphasizing "the immediate situation of the gallery and the moment of viewing." To experience Mike Glier's work is to become involved.

Laura Rosenstock, Assistant Curator
Department of Painting and Sculpture

biography

Born Fort Thomas, Kentucky
August 26, 1953

education

Hunter College, New York. M.A., 1979

Williams College, Williamstown,
Massachusetts. B.A., 1976

Rhode Island School of Design,
Providence. 1975

selected individual exhibitions

Washington Project for the Arts,
Washington, D.C. *South Africa
Drawings*

Institute of Contemporary Art,
University of Pennsylvania,
Philadelphia. *Investigations*.
Catalog, text by Judith Tannenbaum

Galerie Tanja Grunert, Cologne

1986

1985

Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York

1984

Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago

La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art,
California. *Hair Breadth*

1982

N.A.M.E. Gallery, Chicago.
*New Wall Drawings from the Exploding
Refrigerator Series: with Bugs*

1981

Annina Nosei Gallery, New York.
White Male Power

1980-81

The Kitchen, New York. *Training for
Leisure: A Public Display of Collapsed
Desire Designed for the Next World's
Fair*

selected group exhibitions

1986-87

The Corcoran Gallery of Art,
Washington, D.C. *Drawn Out*.
(*The Second Sketch of Chernobyl*.)
Catalog, text by Ned Rifkin

1986

Norton Gallery of Art, West Palm Beach,
Florida. *Walls*. (*The First Sketch of
Chernobyl*.) Catalog, text by Bruce
Weber

John Weber Gallery, New York.
Wall Works. Catalog, text by James
Cohan, artists' statements

1985-86

Musée d'art contemporain de
Montréal. *Écrans politiques*. Catalog,
text by France Gascon

1984

The Fifth Biennale of Sydney. Catalog,
text by Richard Flood

Galerie Tanja Grunert, Stuttgart.
Idea. Catalog

1983

Whitney Museum of American Art, New
York. *1983 Biennial Exhibition*. Catalog