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**ART**

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**ON BLENDING SCIENCE AND ART**

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PRINCETON

THESE was a time when many people believed that science and art could not be mixed successfully. Science was one discipline, precise in its methods, systematic and rational. Art was another, often indirect and imprecise. It depended on irrational imagination and an ambiguous spirit.

Science was objective and the same for everyone. Art was subjective, different for everyone. However, there have been a number of artists, especially in the modern age, who have been able to create successful mixtures of science and art.

The mixtures by Susan Mohl Powers, now on view at the Squibb Gallery, are fascinating, relying heavily on both disciplines for their expression. Although a few examples might not be considered eminent successes, most of the pieces in the show are striking for their adventurousness and for their emphatic presence.

Miss Powers says that she bases the forms in her cloth constructions on cellular and crystalline structures found in nature. This may not be im-

mediately apparent to the untutored eye; however, with a spurt of imagination, one one could fancy that the many-sided geometrical shapes might be blow-ups of microscopic structures.

Moreover, the materials the artist uses in her cloth constructions come from scientific developments — Dacron and polyester.

The transition between science and art in these works is nicely made by the way we go about discovering them. Our initial reaction to the cloth pieces might be called scientific, or at least descriptive.

We immediately notice their monumental size: 5 feet by 7 feet, 8 1/2 feet by 11 feet and even bigger. We also notice that they seem to have a kind of mathematical precision about them.

Too, since these works are suspended, we can walk about them, examining them on their various sides. We can also walk inside some of them.

But all of this becomes an artistic or fantasy trip as well. The cloths turn into colored canvases or sculptures, depending on how we look at them.

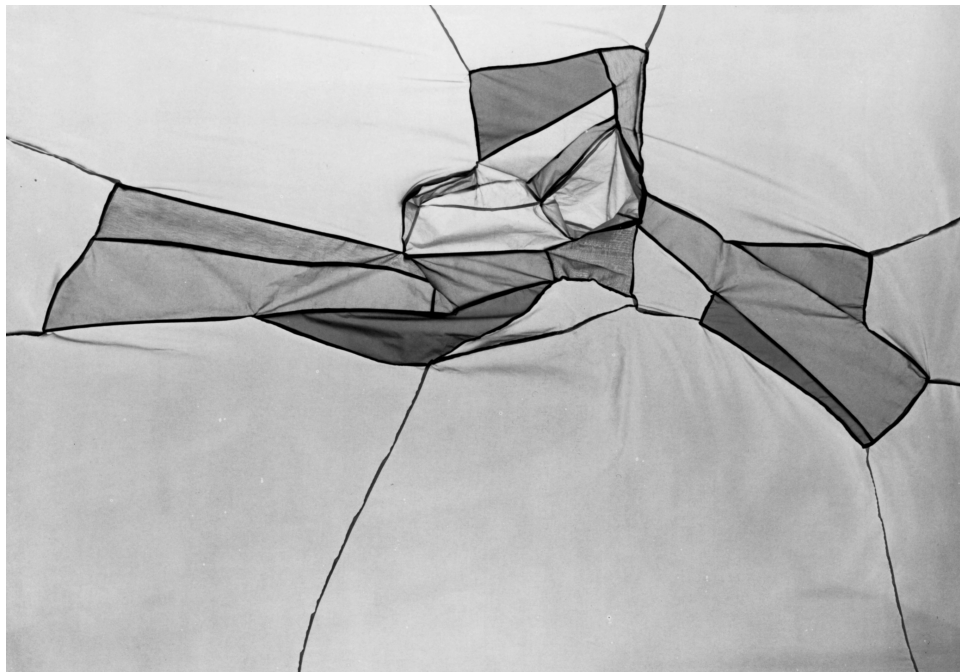
They also might suggest oriflammes or gonfalons, those magic banners that standard-bearers used to carry in public processions. Or, maybe they can make us think of circus tents or levitating dream houses. One large, stretched piece even might be seen as a whimsical canopy.

All of these pieces were made by Miss Powers especially for the Squibb Gallery, and experiencing them is directly related to the gallery environment. Different intensities of light suddenly transform them into different visual phenomena.

Since the works are suspended, a draft of air can make them move, making them seem lively and playful. We are tempted to touch them, too, feeling their textures and making them mobile.

What makes these pieces interesting from an esthetic point of view is their apparent contradictory nature. One look might tell us that they are an Expressionist canvas using geometric shapes as imagery. Another look might tell us that they are soft sculpture. In fact, they work well as both.

And even though they are soft — and this is contradictory, too—they



**'Cloth Construction,' by Susan Mohl Powers, at the Squibb Gallery in Princeton**

have a consistency found in harder sculptures. They also seem heavy and light at once, as well as dense and flimsy.

Miss Powers' art reflects her background. At Mount Holyoke College she studied astronomy and physics, and she has taught science

at a private school in Minnesota. Now a resident of Massachusetts, she also has a Master of Fine Arts degree.

Miss Powers is not yet well known in the metropolitan area, but the chances are that we will be seeing more of her work. And it will be

welcome.

The exhibition will remain on view through next Sunday. The gallery, which is in the Squibb headquarters on Route 206, is open from 9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. Monday through Friday (until 9 P.M. on Thursday) and from 1 to 5 P.M. on Sundays.