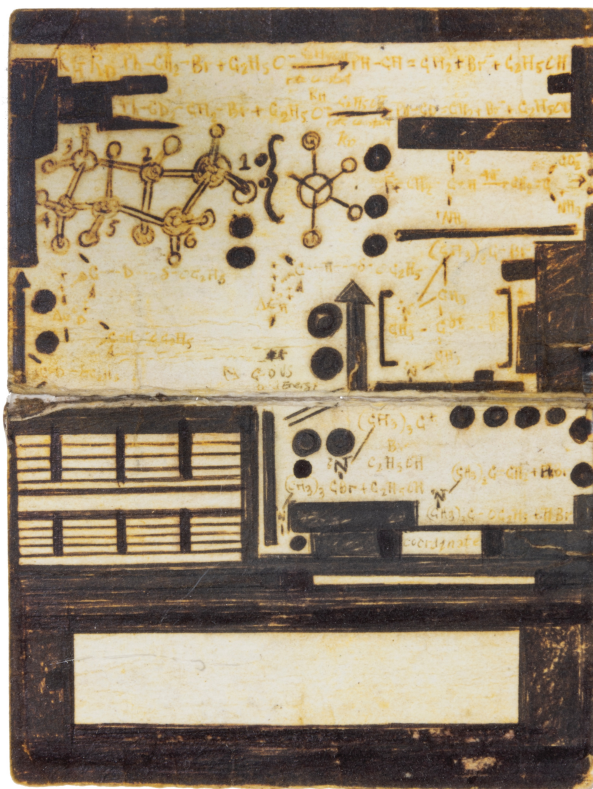


Melvin's Way: Computation Considerate Coloring Outside the Line

By JOHN DRURY, December 2020



Melvin Way, C₂H₂CH, 2010, Ballpoint pen on paper with Scotch Tape, 5.5 x 4.5 inches.

From deep down inside of and secure in his pockets, and concealed there in rubber-band bound bunches, an urgency to share is revealed in Melvin Way's scrap bits of recycled and mismatched papers and on incongruous surfaces – dozens of them now on exhibition at the Andrew Edlin Gallery. It is in that small, stashed bundle of folded notes sometimes numbering nearly one hundred and carried for months, or even years, that secrets revealed, are yet – if ever – to be understood beyond their fastidious maker; whether knowingly, or not, receipts for a certain personal disaster as culled from his previously institutionalized life (most notably at New York City's now defunct Hospital Audiences, Inc.) or the recent formulaic masterworks, there is in the logic of Melvin Way a rare and consistent clarity of intent, the believed visually realized.



Perhaps it is our own exposed ignorance, that allowing only a shortsighted and rash attempt to categorize Way's battered work, as art (ours a too often insular, needy and self-assured, capital "A" artworld; and however then apparently incongruous, if that's how we gonna' roll – think the color fields of Mark Rothko, in paired combination - a mash-up - the revealed lies and line work of neo-conceptualist Mark Lombardi); believing his but a mere recording of a certain scrawled faculty, a transcribed if doubtful confidence, computation the seemingly nonsensical as relayed in obsessively combined dots and dashes, symbolic lettering, musical notes and numerology. In Melvin Way's work, there is not the self-conscious quest for elusive balance in studied design, nor a pursuit of color theory, or even composition

aimed at pleasing the eye. Portions of the page, if at this tiny scale they can comfortably be called that, naturally shape themselves at the edges of transcription - and those consequential spaces are subsequently colored in, as a child might mark inside (or outside) an image; intervening moments of deciphering on implied pause, inevitably color space.

Most all of Way's works are realized in ballpoint pen, and cheap markers - hardly the materials of pursued "serious" art, as we are accustomed to evaluating it, or displayed concern for shelf life - and the legitimacies of color bleeding, body staining and finger smearing are par for the course. Employed in combination the like meager marking materials, skins of cheap cellophane tape allow some extended durability to the work but, as applied more in pursuit an extended personal utility and sought remembered sequencing than any true preservationist practice.

And yet as busy as the surfaces are, in Melvin's mysterious works, there is no overlap - there is no attempt at spatial reference, any more than in that of the mathematician's problem or the scientist's recipe. Hermetic in nature, and defying easy classification, only the ever-broadening

studies of math and science are of truest relation to these works; Way's concoctions perhaps nonsense but, as likely the work of a yet understood genius. Melvin, like each of our previously mentioned professionals, strives to conquer the often elusive and sometimes impenetrable - the secrets of time and space, as he perceives them from the material world. His, like theirs, is a relentless search for truth.



Installation view, Assorted works presented as part of "Melvin Way: Recent Work and Drawing from H.A.I.", at the Andrew Edlin Gallery (December 5, 2020 - January 23, 2021).

With space seemingly at a premium, one might expect that the backside of Melvin's notational works to be equally dense with his explorative activity. Surprisingly, they are generally blank, or include only his name and a date (and infrequently, a title of sorts - in descriptive compounds, or results) - revealing some pride in his authorship; dismissive the thought that his labor is only the unintelligible folly of madness. In character all that is natural in this world, there is no lone ingredient avenue getting something, for next to nothing and sheets are intuitively combined - the irregular edges of the presented work the result incongruous matchings. In Melvin Way's understood authenticity, we find candor the unveiled, an unfiltered account of that which is simply "given". Credence is in the eye of the beholder. **WM**