

art/suzaan boettger

Photocopylation



The immediate gratification of "making-it" with a machine.

AT FIRST BLINK, the show could be subtitled "Fun and Games with a Photocopier" or "Art is only a Xerox Flash Away." The title *Generative Systems* seems a bit inflated for an exhibition along one wall of the Heller Lounge (UC Student Union), particularly when the "Xerographic Art" is united more by the system of photocopy than the generation of art. However, the energetic new curator of the Heller "Gallery," Helen Holt, apparently wanted to put together a lively show to signal the metamorphosis of restful redwood wall into provocative gallery space, and for this fun survey of techniques and attitudes of photocopy art, she succeeded.

Indeed, the playful aspect of making art via the photocopy machine may have been the first attraction of this generative system — as well as the appeal of immediate gratification offered by "making it" with a machine. **Howard Baizer** indulges in the simplest kind of fooling around: leaning down over the glass, Narcissus-like, to capture his own visage by the light of the Xerox 3100 bulb. Unfortunately, the hazy grey tones and sleazy paper that this copier uses don't tell us

much about Baizer's beaming face.

Humorous puns are rampant: **Kevin Crocker's** "Art for Arts Sake" uses the Xerox 6500 to overlay patterns of concentric circles and vivid red and blue squares of repeated photos of the Arthurs Linkletter and Godfrey. **David Peters** also comments upon the creative process with a picture of a man bowling repeated three times — the shirt each time a different color — in a witty version of the printing technique titled "Three Color Process."

Photographs provide the most widely used "original." One of the most intellectually sophisticated works is **Tom Wells'** clever use of an Edward Muybridge photograph showing successive stages of movement. By photocopying it in a "moving pass," the slight blurring underscores the movement of boys broad-jumping across the image.

Robert Barton, as well, recognizes that the essential act of artmaking is one of transformation, not photocopying. His articulate statement in the show's catalogue describes the transfiguration of initial postcard image in which color copying was only one

of many techniques toward dynamic collage. Barton uses the copier's idiosyncratic sharp electric colors to accentuate geometric patches of architectural facade in his "De Young Series."

Others play down characteristics of xerographics to emulate those of different media. **Randy Magnus'** tiny "Braid" on rice paper achieves linear delicacy and subtle balance between auburn hair and acidic chartreuse accents, and with the addition of a Japanese artist's stamp in a corner, is almost convincing as a wood block print. The exquisite detail and pastel coloration of **Vicki Coulter's** serial image of an "Inside Pocket" likewise appears more as a fine drawing than a derivation from photocopy.

Aside from the irony of creating a single "monoprint" from this reproductive process, several of the artists' books of pictures and narration are available for perusal, and fabric is displayed which has been decorated with heat transfers originally photocopied. It's refreshing to find among these an artist with concerns additional to those of the routine of "artistic process." **Nancy Macko** goes out of the artist's studio to make "an intense visual study of ladies' public bathrooms." The resultant book, "Nine Pink Napkins" contains a social message which, as well, goes beyond the intimate narration of much feminist art.

After the abundance of the playful and provocative among the approximately 48 works, there is, finally, a dearth of the profound. Perhaps due to the newness of the media, experimentation with the machine presides over expression of the personal.

One artist, at least, has been doing it long enough to be able to subordinate the demands of mechanical reproduction to those of creative imagination. **Stephanie Weber**, originally a printmaker and a well-known xerography artist, uses the photocopy literally as background in her "Entrance"

series to show a central image of a torn hole in faint grey paper, muted pastel lines radiating outward. The configuration is a universal, archaic one which can symbolize a gate, a source of light, the spirit, soul, heart, or more curiously, a vagina. It's a powerful image which we don't need to know anything about art, nor about Xerox, to understand.