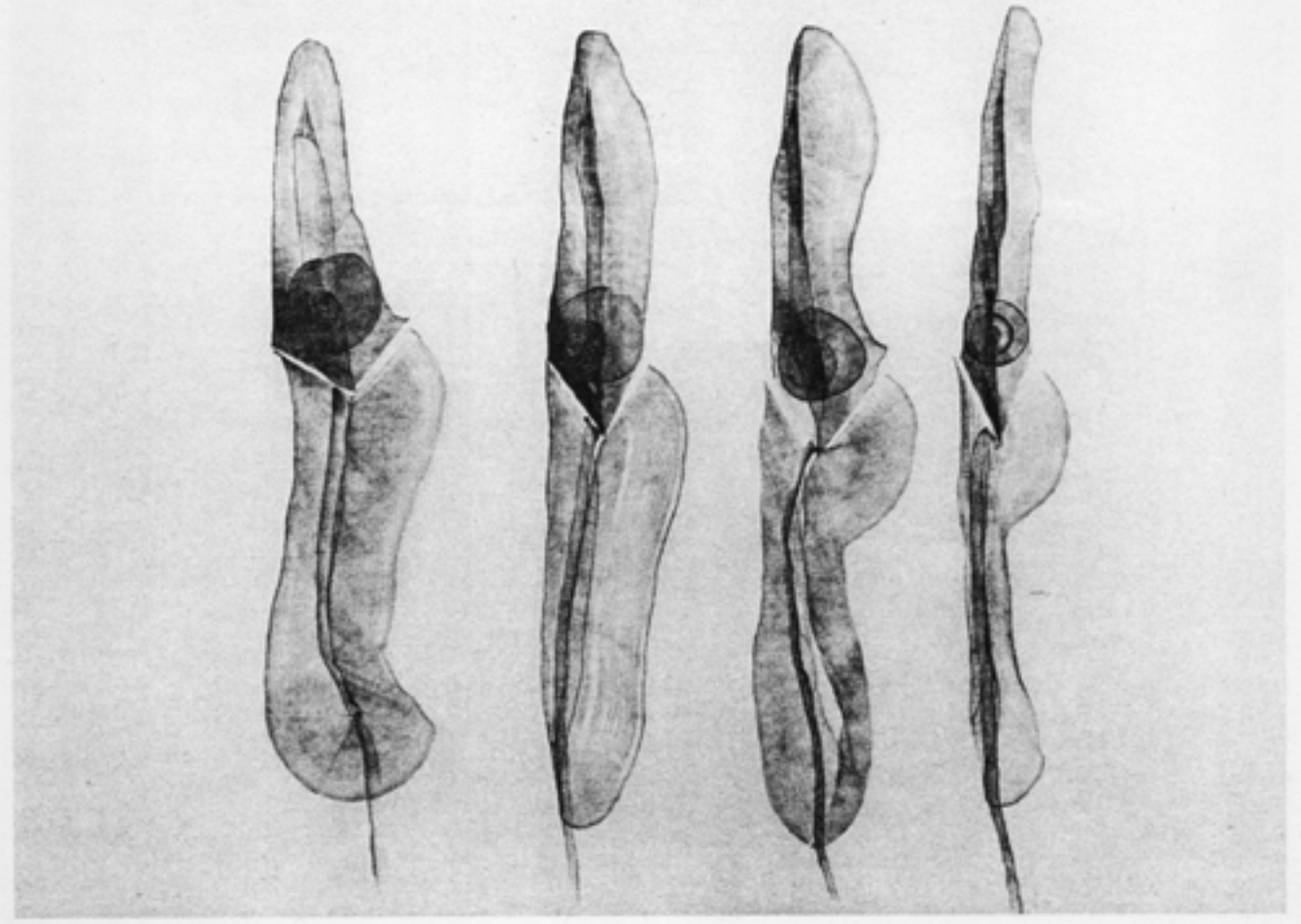


# Finding the Forest



Top: Documented Performance - "I Don't Know Where To Find The Forest" 1991 (photo; Jim Bonath)  
Bottom: Pods release/decay) 1992 24"x30" charcoal drawing



With his first solo show "The Forest" in December 1993 at Fuel Gallery behind him and a group show at the Open Space Gallery in Vancouver (tentatively scheduled for early 1995) ahead, Collin Shutz has an intriguing future to look forward to. For the past eight years, Shutz's art work has focused on the cyclical nature of the life process. Since 1992 he has produced three series of two dimensional works that combine an Abstract field with Formalist presentation. In addition to a meticulous aesthetic presentation, his work takes the viewer on a quest for a deeper understanding of nature and humankind's relationship with it. It is important to understand that as an artist, Shutz challenges us to find our position and standing in today's world. It is not this artist's intent to say "this is what's wrong" or "what do we do now?"

The first of the series, an exploration in charcoal, establishes his biological lexicon, that he dictates with a meditative ease. Highly recognizable figures, such as pods, are representative of birth into life, followed by death. Organic iconography continues to be the main staple of his work, however Shutz evolves his forms to a more suggestive state and offers unending metaphoric content to his work. In a series of acrylic patterns, activity is restricted to the surface of the canvases leaving depth (into the canvas) to be implied like a face behind a veil. The figures are released from definition leaving the viewer to see endless possible metaphors for the "cellular groupings". Outgrowths from a felled tree, lichen on a rock, cross sections of an endless variety of fruit, and exotic marble all become correct interpretations when definition is left to viewers.

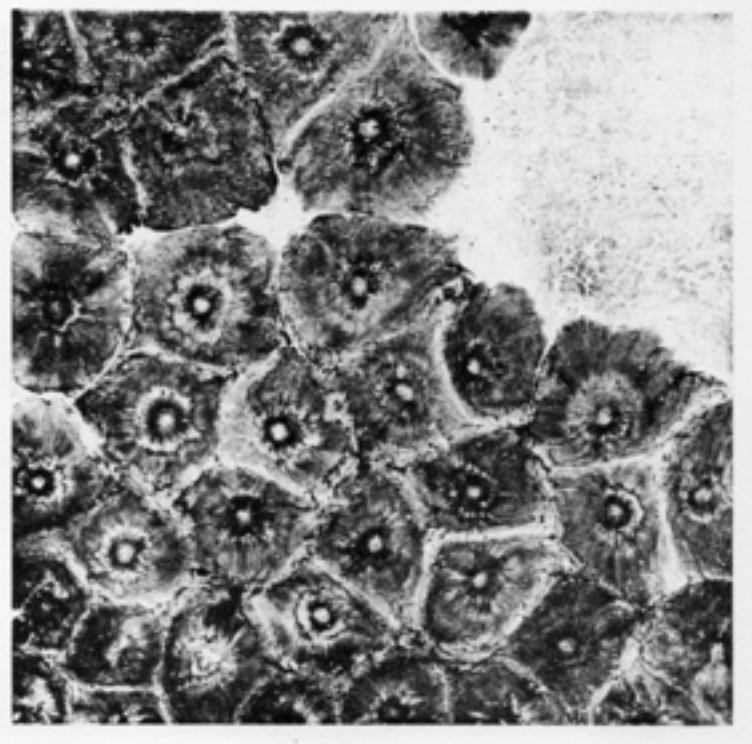
A third series explores the expansion of both conceptual as well as aesthetic ideas. The surface is pulled outward by leaving behind the static nature of the square canvas to pursue more active canvas shapes. The identity of "cellular forms" is stripped further from clarity as the canvases evolve from paintings to sculpture. One has to realize the whole piece as opposed to considering the image solely.

Sunyata (Earth) is a title taken from the Shinto Buddhist faith of universal oneness meaning "things in their essential state present no duality". In a world that presents us with dichotomy upon dichotomy, it is difficult to accept this idea.

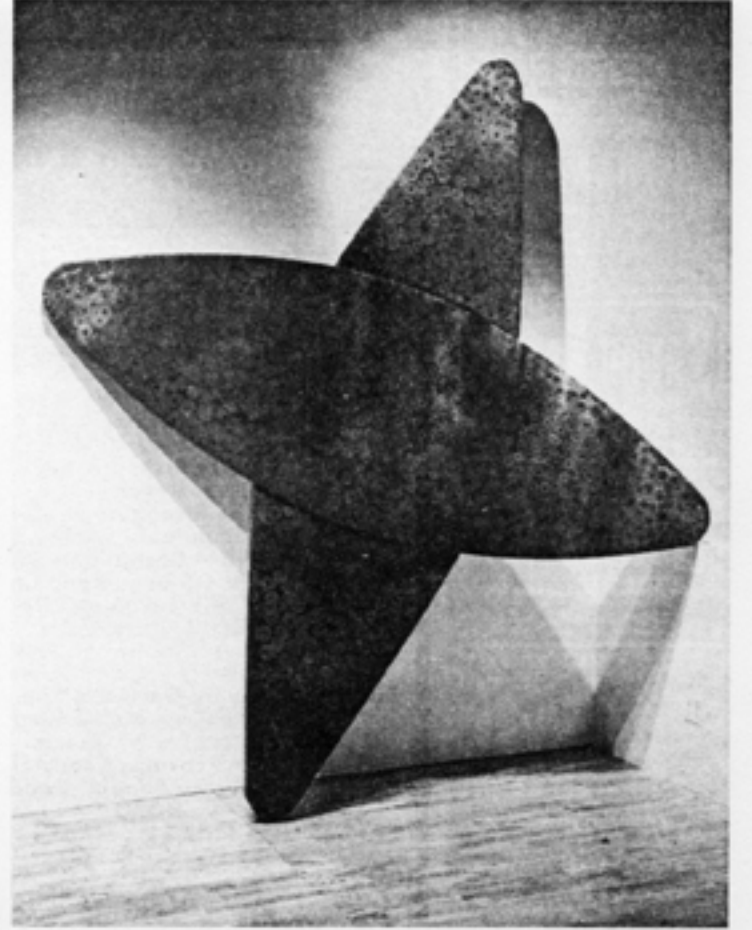
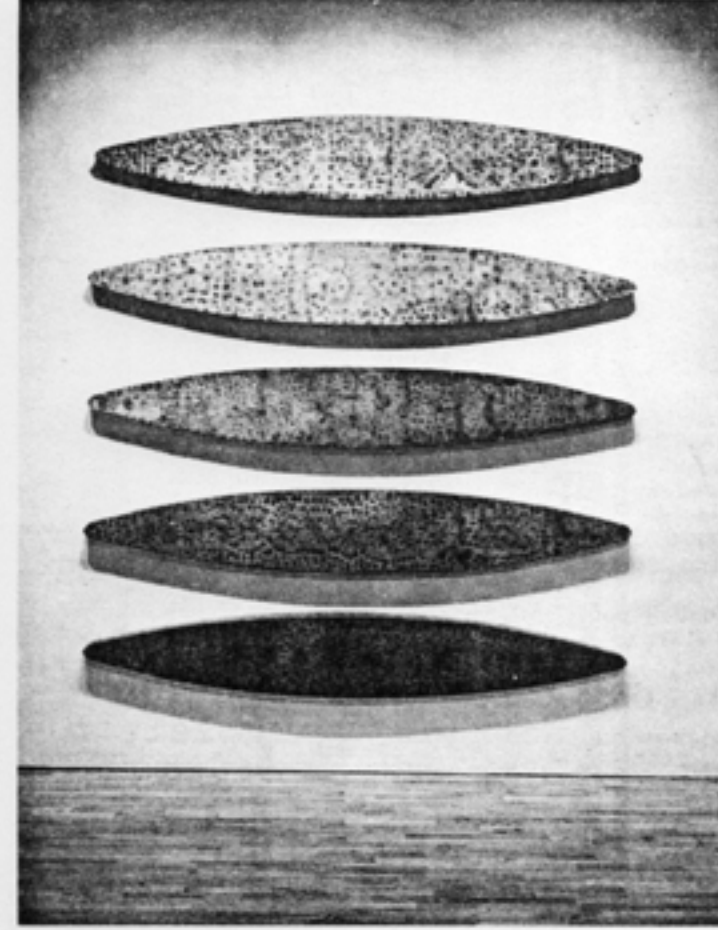
Shutz offers this statement on his most recent canvas; "Bearing catapults us into the philosophical void we find ourselves in; where are we? rather than this is where we are. One is infinite the other is finite." The massive scale of the 9 x 10 foot canvas implies a foreboding tone in its darkness. It appears to be the first piece in this most recent progression to give its viewers a mood to perceive. The star shaped canvas achieves a more ominous rate of expansion than does Sunyata. Each point radiates outward, leaving a wake of sustained visual elasticity at the center of the canvas. This piece is intended to rest on the floor, askew from the wall, adding greater sculptural dimension than previous works. Shutz gives us considerably more to ponder in Bearing as the title presents multiple meanings. All possible definitions of this title from bearing weight to bearing as in direction are considered correct.

In his artistic journey of the past two years, Collin Shutz may not have found the "Forest". It is quite apparent however, that he has presented us with the sturdy foundation of that metaphor. His works are subtle, giving us little direction as to how to perceive it, becoming a much welcome departure from the often tiresome world of spoon-fed propaganda.

Eddah Manning



Top: Shore 1993 12"x12" acrylic on canvas  
Bottom Left: Sunyata 1993 6"x5.5" (five ellipse paintings) acrylic on canvas  
Bottom Right: Bearing 1994 9"x10" acrylic on canvas



## Finding the Forest by Eddah Manning for MONTH MAGAZINE June 94

With his first solo show "The Forest" in December 1993 at Fuel Gallery behind him and a group show at the Open Space Gallery in Vancouver (tentatively scheduled for early 1995) ahead, Collin Shutz has an intriguing future to look forward to. One can find Shutz in his basement studio, pursuing complex processes that push his works to the threshold of a finished state. For the past eight years, Shutz's art work has focused on the cyclical nature of the life process. Since 1992 he has produced three series of two dimensional works that combine an Abstract field with Formalist presentation. In addition to a meticulous aesthetic presentation, his work takes the viewer on a quest to a more pluralistic understanding for nature and humankind's relationship with it. It important to understand that as an artist, Shutz challenges us to find our position and standing in today's world. It is not this artist's intent to say "this is what's wrong" or "what do we do now?"

The first of the series, an exploration in charcoal, establishes his biological lexicon that he dictates with a meditative ease. The conceptual content is held captive to the highly recognizable figures as described by their titles [*Pods (release/decay)*]. They are representative of birth into life, followed by death. Death is ironically represented in an embryonic fashion, suggesting an untraditional maintenance or perpetuation of this cycle. The figures, transcribed from memory, suggests their origin of water as they float on expanses of paper. This suggestion is enhanced by their transparent and delicate skin like that of paramecia. Shutz's works on paper become even more rigid in definition as they stand in the shadow of his continuing series.

Organic iconography continues to be the main staple of his work, however Shutz evolves his forms to a more suggestive state and offers unending metaphoric content to his work. The following series of acrylic paintings enhances the multiple identities contained within the cellular icons as they focus on an allusion of space. Activity is restricted to the surface of the canvases leaving depth (into the canvas) to be implied like a face behind a veil. The titles of the paintings [*Squeeze*] seem to relate to this activity as opposed to suggesting meaning. The figures are released from definition as it is up to the viewer to see and define endless possible metaphors for the "cells". Outgrowths from a felled tree, lichen on a rock, cross sections of an endless variety of fruit, and exotic marble all become correct interpretations when definition is left to viewers. A condensation of meaning begins to occur as soon as one gets past asking "what is it?" and finds oneself saying "this is what it could be." That condensation of meaning starts to expand when one considers the possible definitions of others.

His burgeoning third series explores the expansion of both conceptual as well as aesthetic ideas. The surface is pulled outward by leaving behind the static nature of the square canvas to pursue more active canvas shapes. The movement of the cellular forms is accelerated as the gentle curves outlining the canvas imply an expanse for that movement to take place. The interpretive possibilities become greatly increased by titles that introduce concepts external to mere figurative identity or surface activity. The identity of "cellular forms" is stripped further from clarity as the canvases evolve from paintings to sculpture. One has to realize the whole piece as opposed to considering the image solely.

*Sunyata (Earth)* is a title taken from the Shinto Buddhist faith of universal oneness meaning "things in their essential state present no duality". In a world that presents us with dichotomy upon dichotomy, it is difficult to accept this idea. To consider the title with its elements of five ellipses without contradiction demands an understanding of microcosm-macrocosm as a whole and not as a dichotomy, as if to say the sum of the parts equals the whole without the rigidity of simple mathematics.

Shutz offers this statement on his most recent canvas; "*Bearing* catapults us into the Philosophical void we find ourselves in; where are we? rather than this is where we are. One is infinite the other is finite." The massive scale of the 9 x 10 foot canvas implies a foreboding tone in its darkness. It appears to be the first piece in this most recent progression to give its viewers a mood to perceive. The star shaped canvas achieves a more ominous rate of expansion than does *Sunyata*. Each point radiates outward, leaving a wake of sustained visual elasticity at the center of the canvas. This piece is intended to rest on the floor, askew from the wall, adding greater sculptural dimension than previous works. Shutz gives us considerably more to ponder in *Bearing* as the title presents multiple meanings. All possible definitions of this title from bearing weight to bearing as in direction are considered correct. Endless combinations of meaning and intent are achieved when the title is considered with the star shaped canvas.

In his artistic journey of the past two years, Collin Shutz may not have found the "Forest". It is quite apparent however, that he has presented us with the sturdy foundation of that metaphor. His works are subtle, giving us little direction as to how to perceive it, becoming a much welcome departure from the often tiresome world of spoon-fed propaganda.