



IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Betsy Siersma or Regina Coppola

Robert Cumming: Prelims and Finishes is an exhibition of paintings and drawings on view at the University Gallery from November 3 through December 16. Robert Cumming, a recent arrival in the Northampton area, began his career in the 1970s, and has alternated working among several media--photography, painting, printmaking, drawing, sculpture, and writing. Drawings from 1978 to the present, and recent large-scale paintings make up the current exhibition. They display Cumming's distinctive logic in perceiving visual hybrids in everyday things. Although it is difficult to identify the artist with a specific style, certain aspects of his art have remained intact throughout his career: the intersections of illusion and reality, word and image, and idea and object are still at the heart of his explorations.

For the past 20 years, Cumming has chosen to dwell on such items as the disc, cone, boat, house, and chair, subject matter that appears throughout his work regardless of the medium. Multiple readings can be inferred depending on the artist's presentation within a particular context: the disc can appear as a watermill, a comma, or a buzz-saw blade; the cone as a whirlpool, an arrow, or the top of a skyscraper; an Adirondack chair, upended and suspended in space, takes on the form of a constellation through a superimposed pattern of diagrammatic lines. The persistence of multiple readings in all his work suggests Cumming's greater interest in his own thought processes than in reaching any conclusions. Allusions to astronomy, psychology, mechanics, art, and politics abound, with a speculative quality of "and/or-ness" that playfully underlies its rationale, and pervades our understandings.

Robert Cumming was born in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1943. He attended the Massachusetts College of Art (B.F.A., 1965) and the University of Illinois, Champaign (M.F.A., 1967). Cumming's work has been shown in group exhibitions at numerous institutions including the List Visual Art Center of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; and the Brooklyn Museum and The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Solo exhibitions of his work have appeared at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the University Art Museum, University of California at Berkeley, among other institutions. This past summer, the artist completed three outdoor sculptures for the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission. Cumming lives and works in Whately and Northampton, Massachusetts.

This exhibition has been partially supported with funds from the UMass Arts Council and the University Alumni Association.

Phantom Cities, a major 3-channel video installation by Rita Myers will reopen on November 3 and remain on view through December 16.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held at the Fine Arts Center Concert Hall.