

Airbrush Retrospective at Featherstone

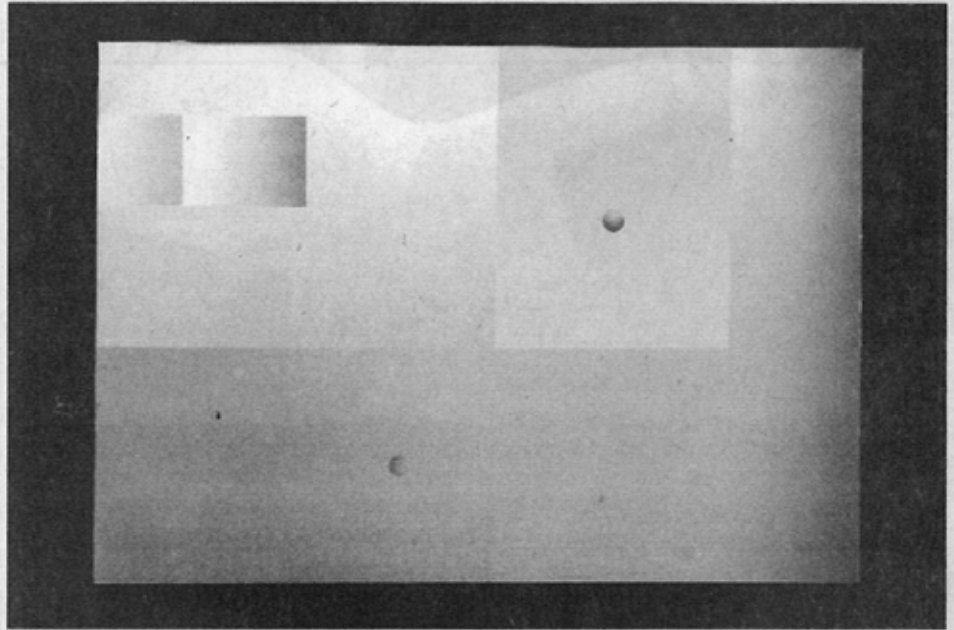
An artist since the 1950s, Jack Greene recently reached into his archives to retrieve a number of airbrush drawings and paintings he created 30 years ago, and will present a small revival of the retro-artistic style for an exhibition opening at Featherstone Center for the Arts in Oak Bluffs this weekend.

While the exhibit features airbrush drawings and paintings from the 1970s, its actual title is *Palaces of Impermanence: Early Airbrush Work* by Jack Greene. "The title of my show is from the Bhagavad Gita," he said, quoting the Hindu scripture, "palaces of impermanence arise and disappear with the beings therein."

"Everything is subject to change," he said. "I feel it's a good title not only because it's the title of one of the paintings in the show but also it expresses my course in painting over the past 50 years — change."

In the studio he built just outside his Vineyard Haven home, Mr. Greene reviews some black and white drawings he did in preparation for his large-scale paintings, wherein geometric designs dominate. "I spend quite a bit of time doing it," he said. "These are my studies."

He enlarges each study, meticulously measuring each frame to get an exact replica of the original design. He then creates massive oil canvases with an



MR. GREENE'S AIRBRUSH ART RELIES ON PRECISE GEOMETRY,

airbrush gun. His *Venetian Sequence* is nine feet long by 19 inches high.

Mr. Greene explains the evolution of his art. "By the 1970s, I was focused on using airbrush and masking techniques to achieve my vision of unification of multiple spaces defined by geometric imagery."

These are time-consuming pieces to create. *Palaces of Impermanence*, the signature piece for the show, took six months. He sprays the oil paint and lets it dry for several days, then masks the section just painted before moving on to paint the next section. "You have to visualize and remember what you have just masked out before you paint another section to get it right," he said.

Occasionally, Mr. Greene paints on linen. To show texture, he sprays sideways, bringing the coarseness of the material's grain into relief. One of the disadvantages of spraying oil is the wet overspray, which permeates the studio. Nowadays, he works with acrylics, which dry faster and are cleaner to work with.

"There are three jobs in being an artist," he said. "You paint. You market your art. And you have to work to earn money." Besides selling his work,

Mr. Greene was a house painter and did public and private murals to earn money.

A review of a 1979 Edgartown show commented on his painting's dramatic geometries: "Eye-dazzling fruits . . . paintings, with complex arrangements of color and spaces . . . boldly individualistic, yet meticulously disciplined." (C.A.P. Vineyard Gazette, May 9, 1975).

With this gallery show at Featherstone, Mr. Greene hopes to recapture that excitement and perhaps attract some new students to his airbrush classes at Featherstone. He still uses the airbrush in the studio and teaches.

He also creates his own stretchers and frames. Last autumn, he sent out three-dozen hand-painted Christmas cards, laboriously spray painted with stencils and intricate designs. He is an artist, through and through.

The Featherstone show, which runs April 19 through April 29, will consist of a dozen large paintings and 16 small drawings and studies. An opening reception will be held on Sunday, April 19, from 4 to 6 p.m. The gallery is open daily from noon to 4 p.m.