

Glueck, Grace, "George Ortman – 'The Models, an Imitation'" *The New York Times*, June 22, 2001

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

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Published: June 22, 2001

In the searching 1960's, George Ortman showed relief constructions whose bold colors and geometric shapes stood out amid the era's developing Pop-Minimalist trends. But his work, influential at the time, hasn't been seen in New York for almost 30 years.

This small display of paintings, constructions and drawings focuses on his production of the 1980's. It continues his long involvement with parsing by geometric means the compositions of well-known works of art, putting them into abstract terms. He makes these imitations, as he calls them, to search for ideas for constructions, in the process re-interpreting the structures of the originals.

The works here are based on his analysis of "The Models" (1886-88), the painting by Georges Seurat that deploys a single model in three different poses. Mr. Ortman has copied it to exact size, reproducing but cleverly ringing changes on its vital elements. The setting is a corner made by two walls; one bears a large reproduction of the artist's masterpiece, "Sunday Afternoon on the Island of Grande Jatte" (1884-86).

In Seurat's original, the model standing in the center forms the apex of an equilateral triangle whose two sides can be inferred: on the left by a seated version of the model seen from the back and on the right by a second seated woman donning a pair of stockings.

In his rendition, among other adjustments Mr. Ortman has replaced much of the head and torso of the standing woman by a colorful triangle with a bull's eye at her navel that forms the picture's dead center. A triangle below that declares the space between her legs. And his reproduction of "Grande Jatte" reduces its stiffly posed figures to silhouettes in gray, white and black.

Then, in drawings and paintings and one relief construction, Mr. Ortman explores the geometry of the figures and their grouping and subjects them to his own "translations," some in a figurative mode, others geometrical. One model, "Solange," is seen as a symmetrically marked diamond shape incorporating triangles in various shades of blue, black and white stripes, and a pair of bulging round white eyes in wood relief -- the whole set symmetrically on a field of larger black and white stripes.

And so on. Cerebral as the exercise is, the work comes out pretty lively. Seurat, one of the most theoretical and schematic of painters, might have enjoyed it.