

# THEODORA VARNAY JONES: MANIFOLD

Focus Gallery

November 7, 2009 - February 20, 2010

A solo exhibition of two and three dimensional works that represent the artist's exploration and interpretation of form, space and repetition

**Opening reception:** Friday, November 6, 6pm-8pm

**Conversation with the Artist:** Thursday, January 14, 7pm-9pm

*Manifold* is supported in part by a grant from the James Irvine Foundation.

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## Theodora Varnay Jones: *Manifold*

In the twenty years that post minimalist artist Theodora Varnay Jones has worked in her San Francisco studio, she has observed dramatic changes in her neighborhood. It has shifted from a landscape of vacant industrial warehouses to gentrified coffee shops and hip sushi bars. However, inside her warmly lit studio space, the noise from the urban exterior is quickly quieted by the calm of her minimal drawings and geometric sculptures. While Varnay Jones' work does not formally resemble the flux and cacophony of her surrounding city, her daily artistic practice is intrinsically in tune with and informed by all she encounters both inside and outside her studio door. In the spirit of artists like Agnes Martin and Eva Hesse, who favored the personal experience over the cold intellectualism of minimalism, Varnay Jones' primary concern and challenge is the process of distilling her experience into optical and sensual forms.

It seems appropriate then that one of the many definitions of manifold, the title of this exhibition, means "a whole that unites or consists of many diverse elements." At first glance the work in *Manifold* may appear deceptively simple and physically concrete. However, upon closer inspection, the work reveals its multiple layers - both physical and conceptual. Unified by their visual aesthetic, the wall works, drawings and sculptures in this exhibition reflect Varnay Jones' sensitivity and reverence for material and form while evoking an open-ended range of concepts - from perception to relativity, invisibility and time.

Carefully juxtaposing disparate materials like clay and steel, fiberglass and beeswax, the works in *Manifold* are infused with a palpable tension. Transparent and opaque, hard and soft, light and dark visual

elements parallel opposing forces found in nature. The transparent and reflective surfaces trap light from within and play with our shifting sense of depth and space in relationship to the work, raising questions regarding what is revealed and what is concealed. Circles, grids, lines, and fields of subtle color repeat, pulse and accumulate. And, despite the precision of their construction, the work often intentionally reveals subtle hints of the artist's hand and process. A quivering line, the inconsistency of a brush stroke and the slight irregularity of a shape remind us of the process and time embedded in the artworks.

A native of Hungary, Varnay Jones received an MFA from the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. While her training was steeped in formal instruction and the rigidity of communism, she fondly recalls the influence of her mandatory mathematics and geometry schooling in her artwork. When she moved to the United States in 1972, she discovered her kinship with conceptual and minimalist art. Interested in both the practical and open-ended process of art making, Varnay Jones cites her eyes as the physical instruments for her work. *Manifold* represents fifteen years of interpreting what she sees into meditative abstractions. As viewers, we are invited to bring our own interpretations to these contemplative works.

## Checklist of Artwork:

### 1. *Remanence*, 2003

Paper, clay, beeswax, aluminum and wood

### 2. *Transparent Indistinction*

(*Indistinction #1*), 2001

Paper, graphite, fiberglass, acrylic polymer and wood structure

### 3. *Distaff*, 2000

Gauze, beeswax, gut, fiberglass mesh, aluminum and wood structure

### 4. *Transparency #9 (November 2001)*, 2001

Paper, graphite, acrylic polymer and wood structures

### 5. *Indistinction #6*, 2009

Paper, color pencil, pigments, beeswax, fiberglass mesh and wood

### 6. *Test Negative*, 2009

Synthetic materials

### 7. *Indistinction #4 B (color)*, 2007

Paper, graphite, color pencil, acrylic polymer and wood

### 8. *Indistinction #4 A (B&W)*, 2005

Paper, graphite, color pencil, acrylic polymer and wood

### 9. *Diary*, 1998-'99

Paper with incense burns and wood

### 10. *Multitude*, 2008

Paraffin, beeswax, plexiglass boxes, aluminum sheets and wood

### 11. *Transparency #37*, 2009

Color etching, acrylic polymer, pigments and wood structure

### 12. *Indistinction #5*, 2007

Paper, color pencil, acrylic polymer and wood

### 13. *Transparency #27*, 2009

Paper, graphite, pigments, acrylic polymer, fiberglass, plexiglass and wood structure

### 14. *Transparency #38*, 2009

Acrylic polymer, pigments, graphite and wood structure

### 15. *Transparency #32*, 2007

Paper, graphite, pigments, acrylic polymer and wood structure

### 16. *Transparency #33*, 2008

Paper, gauze, pigments, acrylic polymer, fiberglass and wood structures

### 17. *Ghost*, 2009

Plexiglass, acrylic and mirrored Plexiglass

### 18. *Step a Side B*, 2006-2009

Synthetic materials, pigments, rubber and wood structure

