



Gloria Garfinkel, *Square Flip*, 2008, painted aluminum, 30" x 30" x 1.5"



Gloria Garfinkel, *Diamond Flip*, 2008, painted aluminum, 36" x 36" x 1.5"

Origami Interpretations

Gloria Garfinkel at the George Walter Vincent Smith Art Museum in Springfield, Massachusetts

by Christopher Hart Chambers

This survey of American artist Gloria Garfinkel's piquant output over the last two decades is self effacingly titled, *Origami Interpretations*. Yet, it is far more than that. This is no mere mimesis of the triumphant *Origami* exhibition being held concurrently in another gallery on the impressive campus of small, world class museums in Springfield, Massachusetts. Although the Japanese influence is ineluctable, equally significant is the fact that it is an interpretation through Western eyes. Her bright palette and canny compositions are reminiscent of West Coast native, originally British painter David Hockney's faux naïf oeuvre, the schools of color field painting, geometric abstraction, and perhaps most saliently, by Robert and Sonia Delaunay's forays into Orphism and surface design. Or, is it perhaps that these artistic visionaries were each independently compelled to mine these deep traditional Eastern sources

as well? Whether intentionally or not, these comparisons are amplified by the fact that in order to gain entrance to the Garfinkel exhibition we must first pass through a hall of plaster casts of classic Western masterpieces. Michaelangelo's horned *Moses* is the first to glare at all who dare enter before we wend our way through to the approximately fifty by seventy foot gallery which houses the Garfinkel exhibition of twenty five individual works: highlights from several series germinated during three sojourns to the archipelago nation in 1990 culminating in her taking up residence there for several years.

The Curator, Julia Courtney's ingenious placement of the works in the gallery remarks strongly on the artist's consistency of intent while eschewing strict thematic sectionalization, leading the viewer to discover the artist's development and learn alongside her years of effort

within the limited amount of time one is likely to remain within the confines of the exhibition space. Central to the display are the four *Origami* maquettes presented in glass cases on pedestals. Colorful geometric designs have been pristinely painted on aluminum triangles that seem to joyously dance and balance in various arrangements. They are jointly titled, *Hanabi*, which



Gloria Garfinkel, *Hanabi #8 (Front view)* 1995, maquette, painted aluminum, 21" x 16" x 5.5"



Gloria Garfinkel, *Obi #5*, 2001-2002, oil & acrylic on shaped canvas, 25" x 72.25"



Gloria Garfinkel, *Obi #2*, 2001-2002, oil & acrylic on shaped canvas, 25" x 72.25"

means, "celebration." On the walls around the gallery hang assorted poster sized, framed works and slightly larger shaped canvases all clearly in the same spirit of Occidental fascination with Asiatic aesthetics.

The four, *Obi*, canvases are named after the sash worn with a kimono. Each consists of an upper section of a single pattern representing the sash, and a lower parallelogram employing a plethora of decorative printing, stenciling, and hand

painted floral elements. The framed pieces also demonstrate an array of techniques, ranging from collaged etchings to a modernist take on certain compositional devices used by legendary eighteenth century Japanese printmaker Utagawa Hiroshige, and reverence for the traditional homespun craftwork of patching and repurposing scraps of ornamental cloth.

Finally are the *Flip Paintings*, which may be a bit less obviously Asiatic in derivation, but they certainly

don't stand out as such. These three pieces: one square, one diamond, and one a string of circles; are fabricated steel with colorful moving parts – encouraging the viewer to rearrange the components at will. There is, unfortunately, one detracting factor to all this joyous, explosive, multi-cultural eye candy. You really need to experience the work in person. Reproductions and descriptions just don't hold a candle to the real thing!