

**steven sorman** inside weather 1998 tyler graphics ltd.

steven sorman    inside weather    1998

as remembered

memorized distance

obedient nerve

on purpose

far and away

could be

must be

instead

usual sense 1997

noun's plural 1997

essay by mason riddle

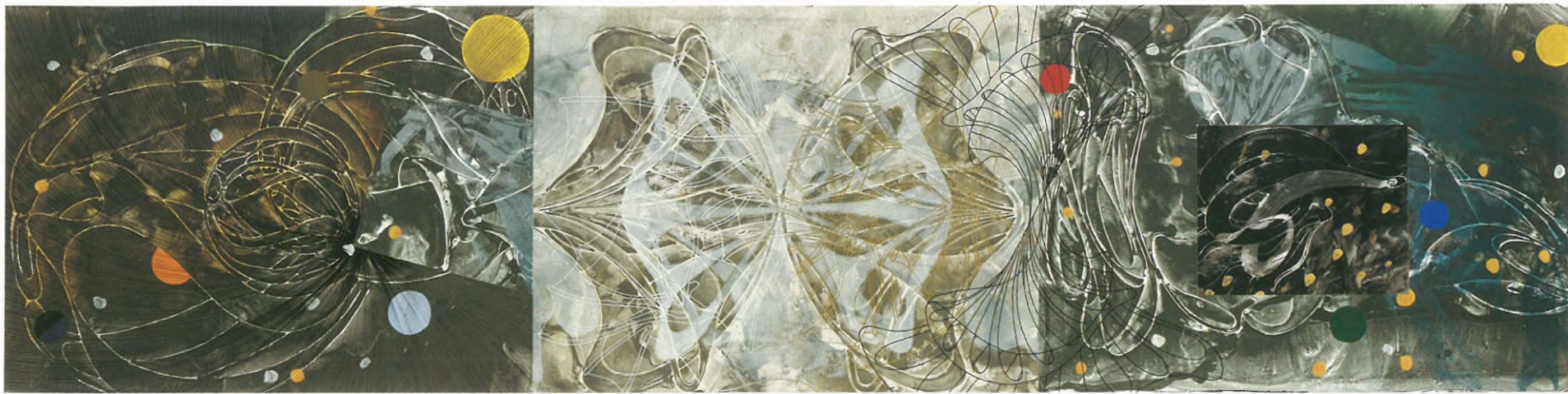
**as remembered** 1998

38 color lithograph, screenprint, relief, collage, bronzing, stencil, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

21 x 77 inches (53.3 x 195.6 cm)

Edition of 30 plus proofs



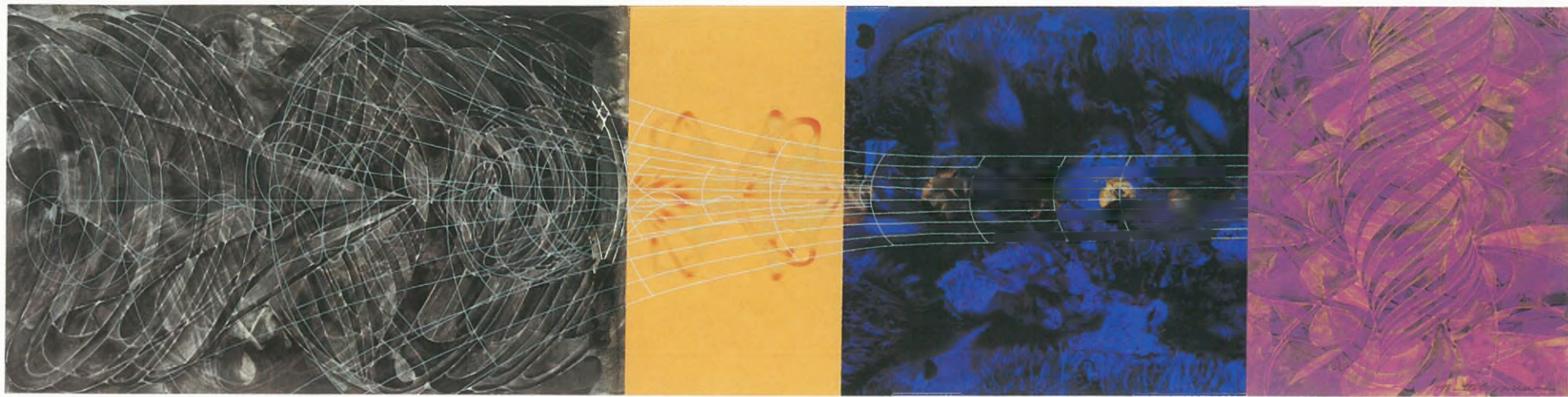
**memorized distance** 1998

13 color lithograph, screenprint, bronzing, stencil, collage, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

20 1/2 x 73 1/2 inches (52.1 x 186.7 cm)

Edition of 18 plus proofs



**obedient nerve** 1998

12 color lithograph, screenprint, stencil, bronzing, collage, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

20 1/4 x 59 3/8 inches (51.4 x 150.8 cm)

Edition of 18 plus proofs







**on purpose** 1998

10 color lithograph, screenprint, collage, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

20 1/2 x 58 inches (52.1 x 147.3 cm)

Edition of 16 plus proofs



**far and away** 1998

15 color lithograph, screenprint, bronzing, collage, hand-colored  
Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper  
19 1/2 x 67 inches (49.5 x 170.2 cm)  
Edition of 15 plus proofs



**could be** 1998

20 color lithograph, screenprint, bronzing, collage, stencil, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

12 x 49 1/4 inches (30.5 x 125.1 cm)

Edition of 20 plus proofs







**must be** 1998

12 color lithograph, screenprint, bronzing, collage, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

10 1/2 x 36 5/8 inches (26.7 x 93.0 cm)

Edition of 20 plus proofs



**instead** 1998

12 color lithograph, screenprint, bronzing, collage, hand-colored

Assorted papers collaged to white Rives BFK, mould-made paper

11 1/2 x 48 3/4 inches (29.2 x 123.8 cm)

Edition of 16 plus proofs



**usual sense** 1997

gel medium, watercolor, acrylic, polymer on paper on panel

25 1/4 x 52 5/8 inches (64.1 x 133.7 cm)

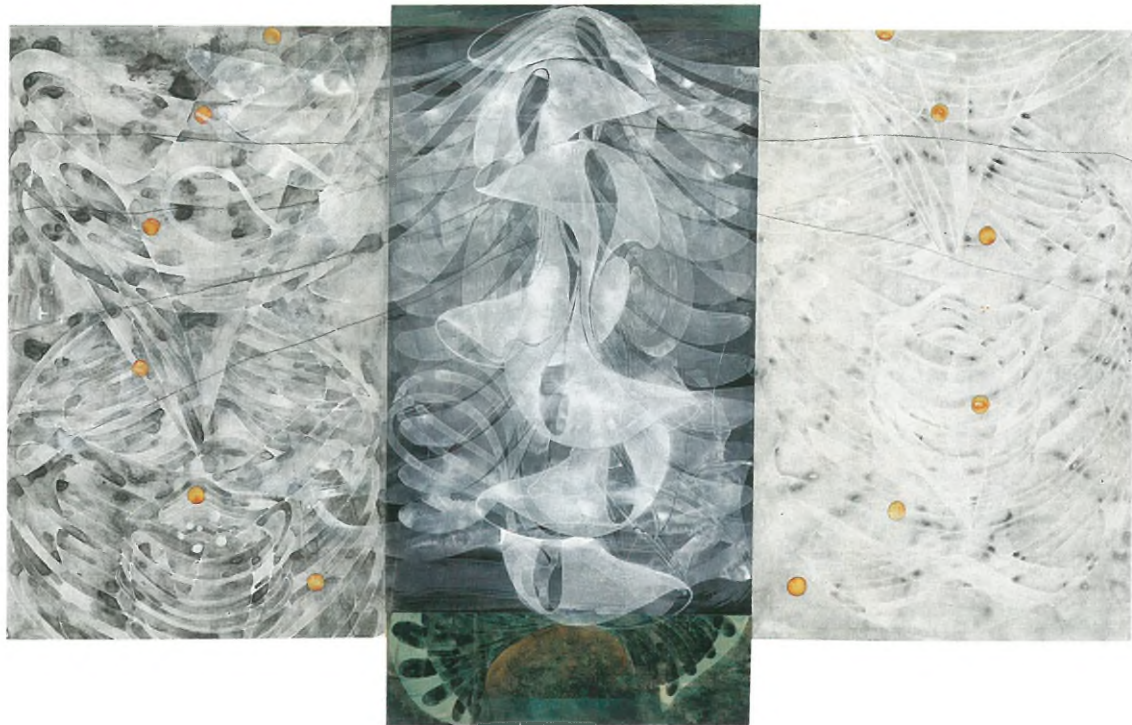






**noun's plural** 1997

gel medium, gouache, acrylic, polymer on paper on panel  
32 1/2 x 52 5/8 inches (82.6 x 133.7 cm)



**steven sorman: inside weather**      by mason riddle

*The greatest marvels  
of painting are not easily  
explained in words.  
Its primary elements have  
been transmitted from  
antiquity, but the style  
has changed in accordance  
with the conditions of  
later times.*

—Yao Tsui

(6th century Chinese critic)

Steven Sorman continually reinvents himself by linking his artistic past to his present. It is a subtle, evolutionary reinvention which, at times, is barely noticeable. Where some artists make a career out of bold stylistic shifts, Sorman excels in a consistency of artistic practice. With the eye of a connoisseur,

he discriminately borrows formal elements from the aesthetic trove of his past to create a more visually compelling present. His creative slate is never wiped clean, only refined. Nor does one ever sense that a mark has been made, a form envisioned, or a process explored just “to try something new.” While a new

spirit is often evident, it is one that is confident with the past.

Not surprisingly, Sorman’s new paintings or prints, acknowledge an earlier series of intimately scaled paintings, each of which represent a day in 1996. Their making was a form of therapy for the artist who was recovering from a serious illness.

Borrowing from these earlier paintings, Sorman has continued to explore their organic iconography—elegant, linear repeating forms that conjure up notions of sea shells, woodland flora or skeletal remains. Other motifs recall the decorative vocabulary of early 20th century modernist design as practiced by the

German Secessionists or the Glasgow designer Charles Rennie Mackintosh. However, these are only passing suggestions, making his abstract compositions about association, memory and emotion.

As Sorman's current offering attests, all mediums carry equal weight within his artistic oeuvre. His mixed media paintings, editioned

lithographs, and monoprints exemplify a process of cross fertilization that fosters a continuum, not a difference, of intent. Never an afterthought, his prints are imbued with the same ideas and degree of technical skill as are his paintings. Relationships are visible at every turn, making the dialogue between the two rewarding.

Sorman's editioned series of eight prints, collectively titled "inside weather," are the heirs to an earlier series of paintings. Like much of his previous work created at Tyler Graphics Ltd., the prints are an invigorating fusion of materials, techniques and processes including lithography, screenprint, collage and bronzing. Executed in a

horizontal format of varying scale, these mixed media prints are defined by rhythmic marks and gestures that have been printed on vibrant grounds of saturated jewel-toned hues. Each is then embellished with elaborate hand-painting by the artist. The result, one of gorgeous depth and visual complexity, inextricably links the prints

to the paintings.

Sorman has long championed the notion of ornament, the embellished surface. Yet, his pieces are never gaudy or flamboyant. He works on the other side of austerity and minimalism, hitting his stride only when he is creating sophisticated surfaces from overlapping layers of form, color and materials. Like

a fine brocade, his recent prints and paintings are luxurious but unobtrusive. His cryptic titles recall a fleeting memory, prompting the viewer to associate freely about what is before him.

In spirit, Sorman's work could be compared to the Chinese landscape paintings of the Northern Sung Period

(960-1127). Ostensibly, this is due to the horizontal format of the prints which suggests the ancient Chinese hand scroll. However, the comparison goes deeper. Although Sorman's work is abstract, and the Sung landscapes are realistic in that they depicted nature from a rational and moral point of view, Sorman,

recalling his Chinese predecessors, is motivated by a desire to create works of visual complexity whose surfaces are rich, varied and detailed, and full of vivid color. Moreover, Sorman's prints are divided into distinct passages like the Sung hand scrolls, allowing the aesthetic organization of the horizon-

tal surface to visually propel the eye edge to edge, through time and space. Thus, in the spirit of the Sung hand scrolls before them, Sorman's paintings and prints are ornamental landscapes of intuition and skill, abstract environments that allow us to contemplate and wander within their borders.

*Mason Riddle is an art critic and curator living in Saint Paul, Minnesota.*



## project notes

Steven Sorman began his **inside weather** series in September of 1997, combining his hand-painted imagery with printing and collage. The line separating one-of-a-kind paintings and Sorman's multi-media prints is oftentimes blurred, as Sorman deliberately brings painting into printmaking and vice versa. For these

editions, he worked both in his private painting studio in upstate New York and at Tyler Graphics, transporting painted sheets of paper and drawings on mylar to be used in lithography to the workshop and developing them during his collaborations primarily with John Hutcheson and Kenneth Tyler, but also with printers Michael

Mueller, Yasuyuki Shibata, and Bruce Porter.

Sorman's lengthy proofing and editioning sessions with Hutcheson involved the artist's direct participation both in the selection of papers and mixing of inks, as well as manipulation of printed areas immediately after impressions were printed. In seven of the

eight editions he applied powdered bronze to the wet inks, "bronzing" the freshly printed areas with delicate metallic veils. In all eight editions, Sorman painted over his printed surfaces, layering his hand-applied and printed imagery and creating a richness of depth unlike any of his previous work.



Steven Sorman (right) and John Hutcheson printing *inside weather* sheets on lithography press.

## **inside weather series**

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### **Project supervision**

Kenneth Tyler

### **Bronzing, stenciling and hand-coloring**

Steven Sorman

### **Lithography and relief printing**

John Hutcheson

### **Screenprinting**

Michael Mueller

### **Collage**

Steven Sorman

John Hutcheson

Yasuyuki Shibata

Bruce Porter

## **Catalog Credits**

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### **Photography**

Steven Sloman

### **Design and typography**

Lorraine Ferguson

### **Printing and color separations**

Color Express/Minneapolis

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### **Essay copyright** © 1998

Mason Riddle



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