

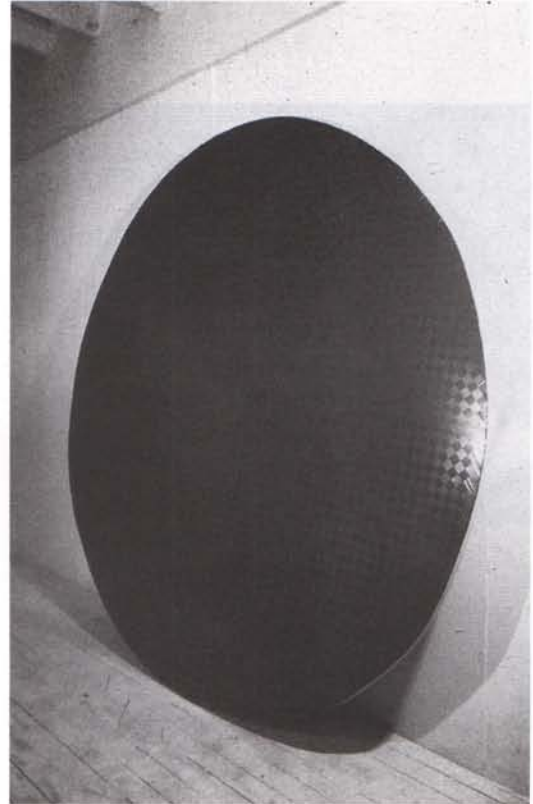
school 33 art center

As interpreted by Alan Watts, *The Bhagavad-Gita* distinguishes between the oversoul or supraindividual Self (*atman*) in which we all share and the individual soul or self (*jivatman*), which exists in an abstract sense alone. As the epic puts it, "Truly this atman—the poets say—travels on this earth from body to body." Yet although we all partake in this *atman*, or single spirit, it is the artist's task to uniquely manifest its influence. The seven artists in this exhibition are investigating aspects of Self—investigating the self / identity as it relates to the body and physicality, exploring its relationship to memory, its origins, and its symbolic nature, and its universal and spiritual aspects.

Siemon Allen's large-scale, subtle, and densely black monochromatic constructions reflect, quite literally, a sense of the physical self in space. Allen uses a variety of VHS videotape, magnetic tape, and 16mm film to weave intricate patterns in rectangular and circular forms that act as frontal pictorial structures, screens, and facades. The nuances of the resulting surfaces depend upon the reflective characteristics of the tape used: The magnetic tape has a dull, matte quality; VHS tape is shiny and luminous; 16mm film, depending on whether or not it contains images, varies in its properties.

Allen is interested in the visual information of how we see ourselves in the blurred reflections, shadows, and silhouettes of this vast monochrome veneer. We are reminded of the chromatic abstractions of Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb and Ad Reinhardt, in which, according to Robert Hughes, "the resulting centralized image is still in a sense a symbol—of oneness or wholeness or transcendent unity." Barbara Rose also has written about Reinhardt's work that in his search for an absolute, he wished to arrive at an indivisible image and a single color; he sought a scheme that was, like the Buddha image in Eastern art, "breathless, timeless, styleless, lifeless, deathless, endless." Likewise, Allen uses the surface as a field and the emotive power of black to contain the spiritual content and the inner contemplation of the transcendental self.

Claudia Amory
Director



Siemon Allen, *Untitled*, woven magnetic tape, 1995