

## Joyce Kozloff: Early Works

1. "Agrigento": At Kozloff's first solo exhibition in New York, 1970, she showed a series of large, thinly washed acrylic paintings. Their patterned zigzags drew inspiration from the columns (and spaces between them) of antique Greek temples in Sicily. The color corresponded to her memories of the moment when she viewed them: "Segesta" was seen at early morning in a meadow of wildflowers; "Agrigento" at dusk on a cliff high above the ancient city.

3. "Futurist Painting with 15 (large and small) Boxes": The patterns in her paintings from 1971-1972 were culled from her immediate environment, California beaches and New Mexico mesas; they continued to sustain a generalized suggestive character of the natural and social landscape. These works break the rectangularity of the canvas into large geometric shapes. Within each area Kozloff works with subtle textures and patterns, using stippled, washed, dry brushed, and hatched color to integrate the whole.

6. "Three Facades" was inspired by Churrigueresque tile and brick church facades near Puebla, Mexico, which Kozloff visited and sketched during the summer of 1973. She was drawn to the design motifs, which had both indigenous and Spanish colonial sources. Like an architect, Kozloff organized her patterns on a grid. Then each "brick" was washed in earthy tones and embellished with rhythmic brush strokes, and each "tile" was decorated with a blue and white floral design.

8. "Mitla": While in Mexico, Kozloff began a series of works on paper that combined and interpreted her Zapotec and Mayan inspirations. Echoing the decorative schemes of the original temples, the patterns are aligned in registers to form the structural framework of the composition. For instance, "Mitla" is derived from the ornament on the temple of the same name, where carved stone geometric friezes define and decorate an otherwise simple structure. She unified the registers by applying an all-over opaque chalky gouache punctuated by delicate colored pencil touches.

9. and 10. "If I Were a Botanist" and "If I Were an Astronomer": Kozloff purchased books of Islamic patterns, cut and collaged their line drawings of star motifs, and thereby created complex pattern-on-pattern designs. When executed, these designs became "like a forest one walks in and can't find one's way out of." She also wanted to investigate the possible

astronomical and botanical origins of the patterns, collecting them into two books of her own making. They contain a series of full-page drawings in saturated colors that became a laboratory for the development of Kozloff's art. The books are a cross between a coloring book (something mass produced and disposable) and a book of illuminations (something precious to be treasured).

13. "Striped Cathedral": The ideas that engaged Kozloff in her early Mexican- and Islamic-inspired works were fully explored in large pattern paintings, 1975 - 1977. She employed motifs derived primarily from ornamental architectural patterns, enlarging them to intensify the experience. In their size and impact they presage her later installations. "Striped Cathedral" conveys the stately verticality of Gothic cathedrals ornamented with filigreed bands. While her specific source was the Romanesque-Gothic cathedral of Orvieto, she embellished its Italian facade with Islamic details, reflecting her fascination with those moments when East and West meet, as in early Italo-Byzantine architecture. Kozloff wrote: "The horizontal paintings had become very long and were broken into sections which I meant the viewer to 'read' sequentially. This was my private metaphor for travel, paralleling the experience of walking through a bazaar or the streets of an unfamiliar city, taking in complex and variegated visual stimuli at unexpected intervals and rhythms."

18. "Mad Russian Blanket": In 1977 Kozloff turned to collage. That year she had made a series of three lithographs, called "Pictures and Borders," at Solo Press in New York. Taking the rejected proofs, she cut, glued, and wove them together to make new patterns, working back into them with colored pencil. From each of the three prints she made several small collages and one major work. She exhibited two of these large collages, "longing" and "Mad Russian Blanket," between ceramic pilasters at the Whitney Museum of American Art's Biennial in 1979 (2 under Installations).

Excerpted from Joyce Kozloff: Visionary Ornament, "An Overview," by Patricia Johnston, except the notes on "If I Were a Botanist" and "If I Were an Astronomer" by Thalia Gouma-Peterson from "Decorated Walls for Public Spaces: Joyce Kozloff's Architectural Installations." Boston: Boston University Art Gallery, 1985.