

## Edwin Schlossberg at Feldman

While lacking the large scale of a retrospective, Edwin Schlossberg's recent exhibition of poems provides a glimpse of the range of his achievements over the past 14 years, including a complete display of the poems from *wordswordswords* (a book published by Universal Limited Art Editions in 1968) and a selection of individual poems on vinyl, plexiglass, aluminum and copper. The three most recent works, which are the most complex and imposing in the show, consist of lettracast letters applied to sheets of transparent vinyl. These sheets are suspended one behind the other on wood frameworks projecting from the wall in a way that calls to mind both Oriental scroll painting and newspaper racks in libraries. Parts of each letter have been placed on each transparent plane, so that the words cohere and can be read only when the viewer faces the poems straight on. When viewed from oblique angles the alignment of letter parts changes, and the words fragment into abstract patterns of suspended shapes (in one case so complex as to be reminiscent of Analytic Cubism). Verbal art is transformed into visual art as the spectator's point of view changes, and the transitory quality of insights as they occur in the mind is given an objectified visual and temporal form.

Many of the words and lines, such as "Nothing can be made in pieces" and "As words become," not only are poetically expressive but also refer to Schlossberg's process of making the poems and the viewer's process of reading them. The words encourage acts of synthesis by their meaning as well as by their visual structure; yet paradoxically the syntax is often nonlinear and discontinuous in ways that refer back to the physical fragmentation of the words and make the works seem more dream-like than systematized.

The smaller, framed works on aluminum and copper also enlist the medium as an aspect of content: they contain puns that refer both to psychological self-reflection and to a reflective surface in which the viewer literally sees himself. In these poems the words and letters are dispersed throughout the rectilinear fields—sometimes pulled apart, sometimes overlapping—in patterns that afford the viewer a multiplicity of ways to combine and recombine them.

Color never dominates and only rarely plays a major role in Schlossberg's works. However, in some of the aluminum and plexiglass poems red, yellow, or blue lines and drips meander around and through the black and white letters, adding an explicitly automatist quality to the spontaneous effect of the word formations.

Schlossberg has, since early works of the '60s, grown palpably more skillful at coordinating the visual and poetic devices which make up his work, turning with increasing success to the third dimension to expand verbal meanings.

—John Baker