

G

R I C H A R D G R E E N G A L L E R Y

EARRINGS AND GIANT
MOBILES FROM AN ARTIST
WHO'S ON THE MOVE
KRIS RUHS

"Order is the main thing in my work," says Kris Ruhs of his paintings and constructions, but you wouldn't, on the face of it, guess that to be the case. A mobile dangles hundreds of lavender and speckled loose teeth made of wood and rope, and the paintings practically jump off the wall.

Part of the appearance of disorder comes from the junk man's warehouse of materials. The thin, carved wood in the pendants was found in the street; there are masks made of corrugated cardboard; bangles of wound rope, wire caging mesh, copper wire, and mailing tubes. "I'm not averse to using house paint if I run into a can," he says. More to the point, however, is the artist's transformation of the materials. Like a Cubist's sculptural assemblage that makes a toy car almost unrecognizable in its role as a monkey's head, even the paper Ruhs uses looks like something else—silk, glass, or smoke.

Ruhs disclaims any specific artistic influences. But among the harpoon and arrow-like constructions and the bricolage, there are overtones of African art, while some of the large canvases, with their heavily impastoed black oil paints, are reminiscent of the artifacts of New Guinea tribesmen. Yet his best inspiration is his environment—"My ideas and patterns come from the cityscape. You're assaulted

all the time by patterns and grids."

Two years ago, Ruhs decided to try his hand at jewelry-making. It started simply as gifts, and was so successful that he has not been able to take the time from painting to meet the enormous demand. Artwear, a Manhattan jewelry boutique, mounted a show of it; Madonna wore one of his crosses for a magazine spread. One project was a series of earrings for a man with several holes in his ear. When not worn, the earrings fit into black frames and become 3-D paintings or hanging sculptures.

At 33, Ruhs could support his art by being a fashion model. He's very handsome; enough so that he's posed for Giorgio Armani and Calvin Klein—and "not bus-stop stuff," he says with a slight New York accent. Though represented by the Tower Gallery (3 South Main Street, Southampton, NY; and 45 West 18th Street, New York City, where he has a fantasy rooftop studio decorated with 19th-century stone lambs), he sells mostly to people who see his work in places other than the galleries.

One of his giant mobiles hangs over the bar at Cafe Seiyoken on West 18th Street, where Ruhs is likely to be hanging out, too. After full days in the studio aerie, Ruhs likes to get out, go to clubs. Despite the conspicuous plastic butterfly clip holding back his hair, he says he goes to observe rather than to be observed. "I spend much more time collecting ideas than being socially acceptable."

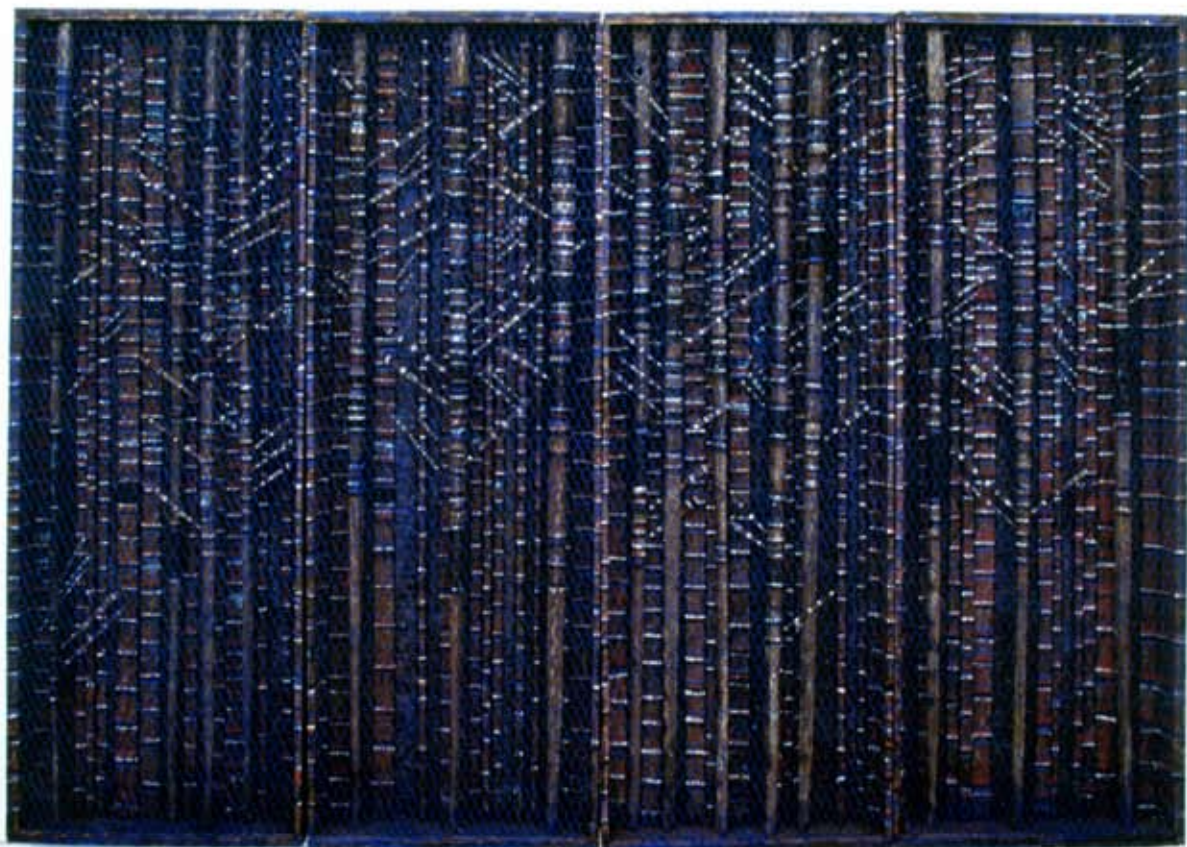
ANNA SHAPIRO



Artist Kris Ruhs decided to try his hand at jewelry-making "just for friends." Now he can't meet the demand.

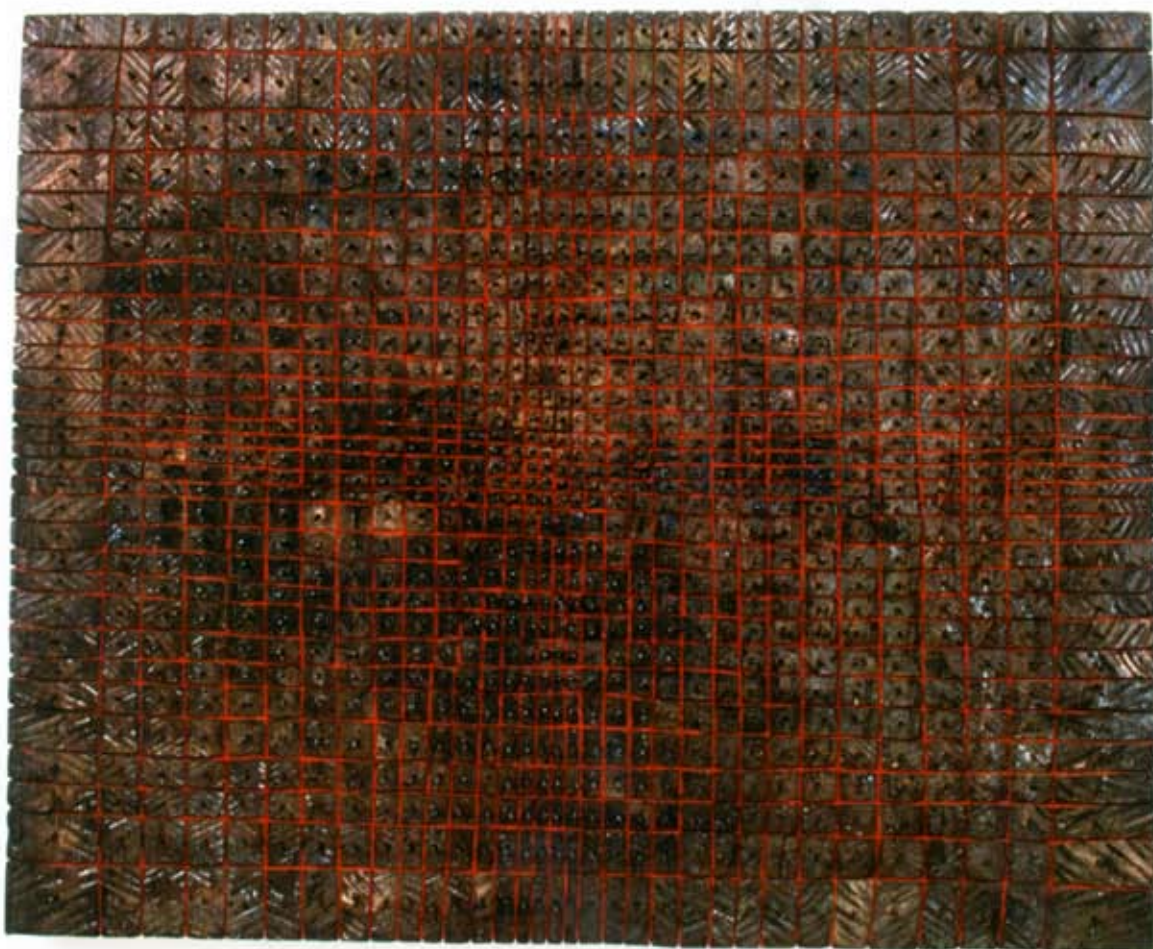


152 WOOSTER STREET
NEW YORK CITY 10012
TEL (212) 982-3993



KRIS RUHS #2
Untitled 1986

wood, string, oil & wire
114 $\frac{1}{4}$ ' x 81" x 6"



KRIS RUHS #13
Untitled 1986

wood, nails and oil
39 $\frac{1}{4}$ ' x 48" x 4"

KRIS RUHS #7
Untitled 1986

wood, twine and oil
96" x 17" x 10"

