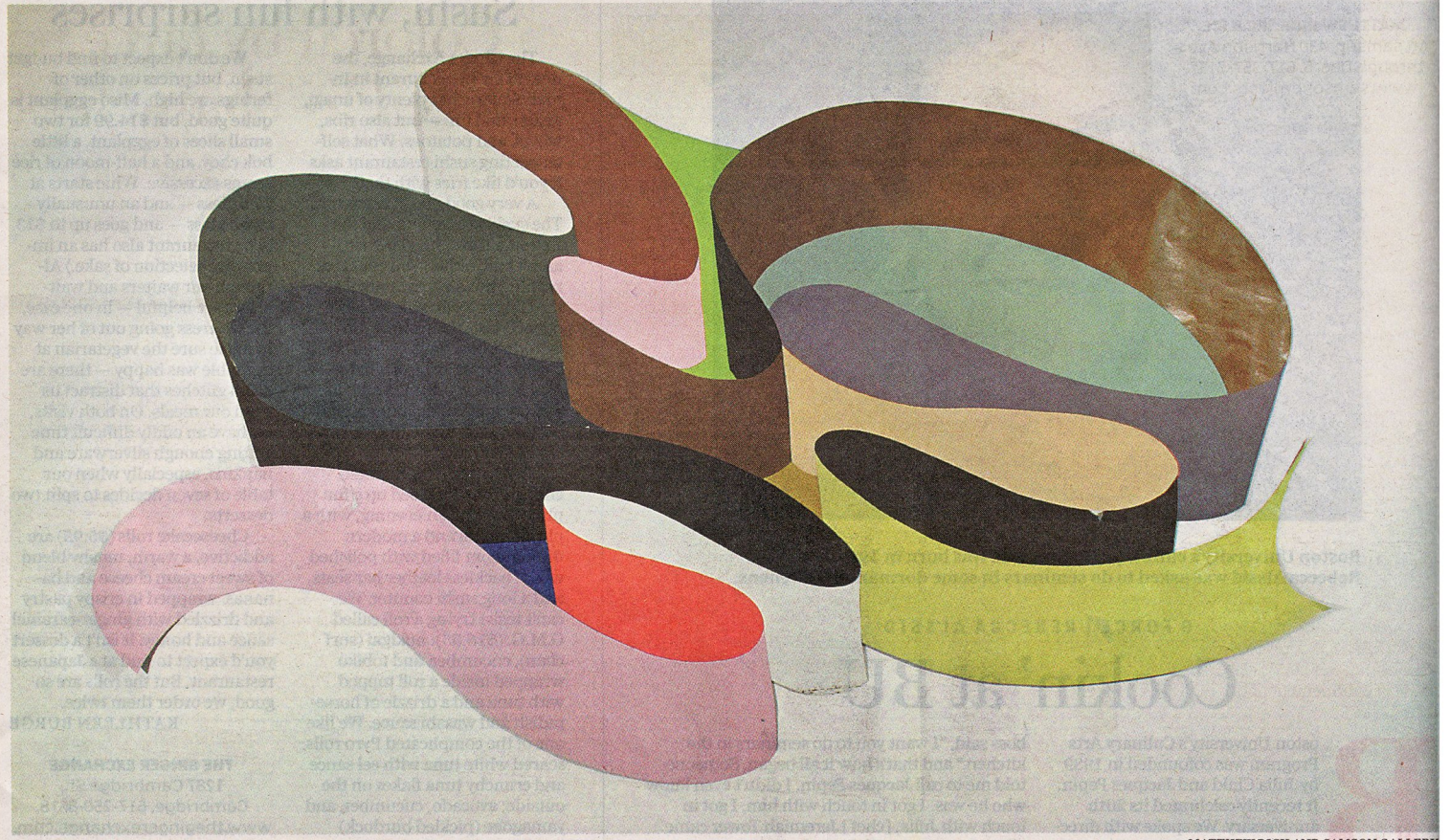


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ARTS



MATTHEW RICH AND SAMSON GALLERY

In Matthew Rich's painted-paper construction "Ribbon," each time the form doubles back, its colors change. Even the ground beneath the ribbon changes tones.

Opposites, successfully married

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

"So what is this show?" Matthew Rich asks in his artist's statement for "IRE & ICE," his solo exhibit at **GALLERIES** samson. "In and out, single and multiple, intention and accident, refined and crappy . . ."

He goes on. It's the sort of non-specific artist's statement that can drive a concrete thinker crazy. But often, art that successfully marries opposites breaks old molds. It's true here. Rich's painted paper constructions are sharply intelligent and often surprising. Rich thoughtfully crafts every element. At the same time, his pieces look battered, like something you'd find tacked to a refrigerator with a magnet.

Rich makes his work out of pieces of paper that are painted and fastened together with linen tape. In "Ribbon," he has us looking down upon a ribbon looping backward. Each time it doubles back, colors change. Even the ground beneath the ribbon changes tones. A small trapezoid near the center, colored like the sun shining through olive oil, feels like the work's origin point.

Constantly switching tones pits the piece's flatness against its pictorial qualities. Then there are the nicks and wrinkles, even a piece of tape, that evoke another way to view the piece, pulling us out of its spell of color and form and pointing to the fragile material and the artist's hand.

Rich pointedly titles one of his pieces "Ampersand," as if its task

is that of a bridge. It's the most angular work in the show; it looks as if he's cut open a cardboard box and laid the carcass flat on the wall, except here and there it has big, arcing hinges.

Again, the way he lays the pieces together has flatness vying against three-dimensionality. He's daring with color, veering from lurid green to subtler browns. He deploys the very same latex white with which the gallery wall is painted. Up close, the piece, like any on your refrigerator, curls and billows a bit at the edges, and here we see that Rich has painted the underside of his white sections neon orange, which reflects off the wall, creating a steamy little halo. Each of the works in this exhibit, scuffed and torn though they may be, offers a trove of visual

puzzles and challenges. They are humble, but they are deep.

MATTHEW RICH: IRE & ICE
At: samson, 450 Harrison Ave.,
through Dec. 5. 617-357-7177,
www.samsonprojects.com