

ELLEN AUERBACH  
321 EAST 85TH STREET  
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10028

(212) 737-0988

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Dear Eliot,

Enclosed is a sample of the Dibbets photos I told you about. I am afraid it is not very clear. I hunted for the Denver book you told me about. It was nowhere. At Scribners I found 2 books by R. Adams and that were 2 too many. "Spring in California" (or L.A.) and one about the Southwest. Depressing, pessimistic pretensions, lousy. I shall not look any further. To recover I went to the M.O.M.A. and looked at early (1930's) Cartier Bressant. They are beautiful. When I see the attempts of "modern" photographers I try to console myself with the thought, that this artform is as much in transition as all the others and something might emerge, which will use our technical phenomenology in a wonderful way. — I feel outdated and am

surprised that Ringl + Pit " are now  
considered " fore runners, pioneers etc.  
I am caught between the impossible  
wish to photograph in the "old way"  
and the inability to be modern." So, I  
cannot take pictures at all. It is as  
if I looked at everything cross-eyed. Which  
makes me very cross.

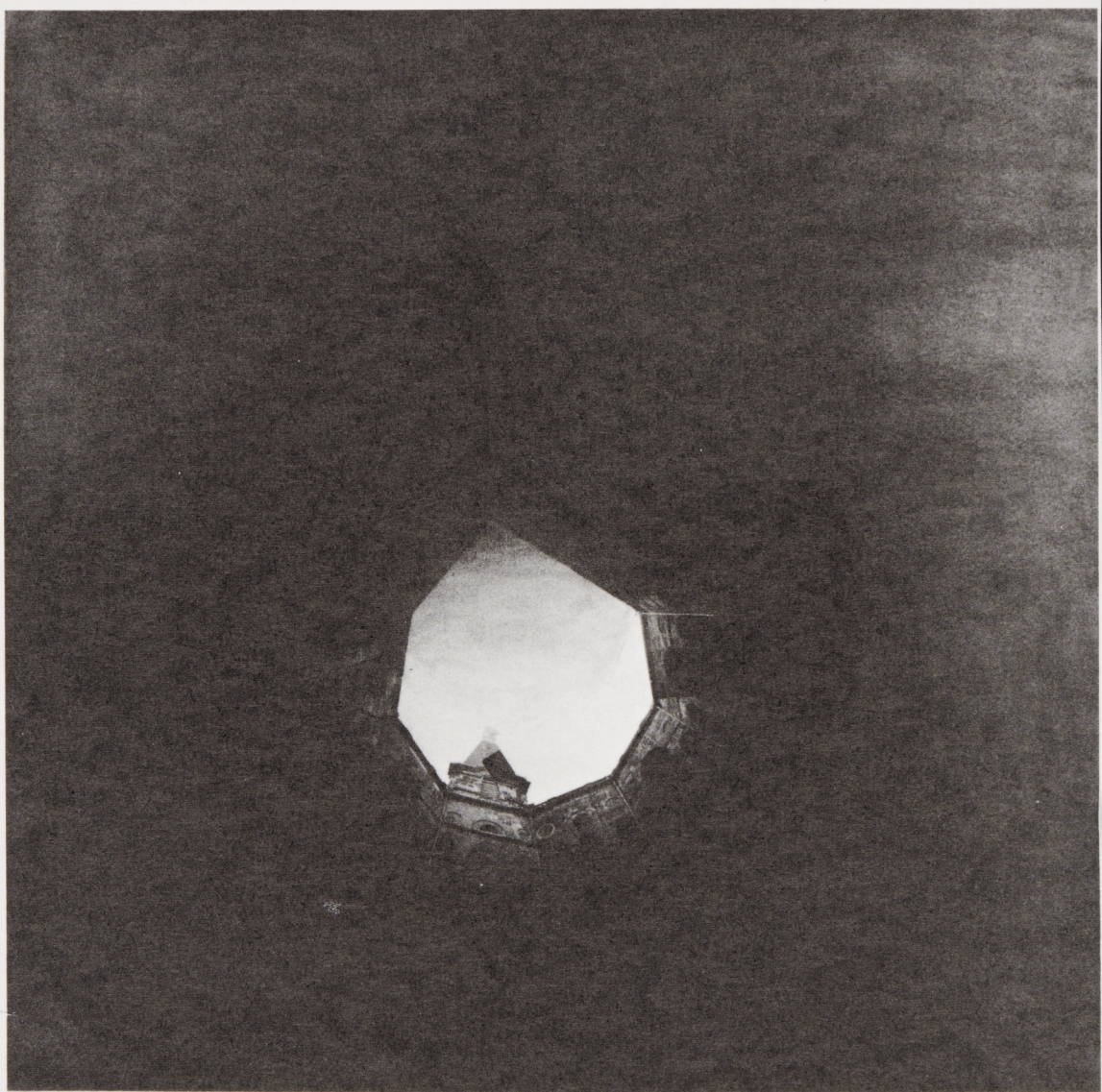
Have you signed a few thousand more  
bookplates? It is quite a feat, even with  
strong hands.

I am looking forward to your book very  
much. To ours too.

With love

Ellen





Jan Dibbets

*Octagon I.* 1982

Color photographs, watercolor and pencil on paper mounted on chipboard, 73 x 73"

Collection Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Purchased with funds contributed by Stephen and Nan Swid



## Collection Highlight

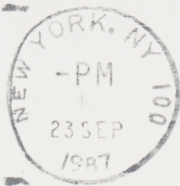
When Johannes Kepler, the celebrated German astronomer, presented his theory of retinal images in 1604, he demonstrated his principles in two ways. First he used a type of pinhole camera that roughly simulated the action of the eye. Second he claimed that the image formed at the back of the retina could be likened to a painting. Almost four hundred years later, the Northern tradition of combining the study of vision with the study of art finds fruition in the work of Jan Dibbets, which is on view at the Guggenheim in a retrospective spanning twenty years of the Dutch artist's career.

*Octagon I*, which combines a color photograph with watercolor and pencil, is an eloquent and characteristic example of Dibbets's studies in optics. The subject is a Romanesque church photographed sequentially from many angles so as to compose an octagonal courtyard. This image is set against a soft gray watercolor wash that deliberately contrasts with the crystalline outlines of the photographed structure. Dibbets used time and motion to create the scene, carefully controlling each frame to blend seamlessly into the next. By using a succession of invisible intervals in time, the artist succeeds in rendering a precise architectural form. The result is a study in space and location.

*Octagon I* has its origins in the series of *Perspectival Corrections* Dibbets began in 1969, in which he explores relationships of light, perspectival ambiguity, camera angles and movement. Unlike the works of the earlier series, however, *Octagon I* combines photography with drawing and watercolor. Here the photograph is a means rather than an end product for Dibbets, who was trained as a painter and whose analytical approach aligns him with Minimal and Conceptual artists. Dibbets demonstrates his affinity with his Northern forebear, Kepler, in his vision of the world in general and in *Octagon I* in particular. He invites the viewer to consider the nature of human perception and the essential conditions of visual consciousness in artworks presenting visual phenomena according to laws of optics. Even though man is not present, the celestial center of the arresting image of *Octagon I* implies Dibbets's hidden subject: the human eye, of both the artist and the viewer.



Ellen Auerbach  
321 East 85th Street  
New York, NY 10028



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