

VAN DOREN
WAXTER

VOGUE

October 2016, by Leslie Camhi, p. 236

People Are Talking About



Art CRAFTWORK

A photograph shows artist **Alan Shields** towering above the crowd at the opening of his 1973 exhibition in Stockholm, wearing a full beard, long hair, and a suit he'd stitched from multicolored strips of fabric. Shields, who died in 2005, was a child of the sixties, but his loosely painted canvases—embroidered, hung with beads, or woven and sewn into soft sculptures—speak to contemporary artists, from Jessica Stockholder to Jim Drain, interested in radiant color and a DIY aesthetic. A new show at New York's Van Doren Waxter gallery includes two of Shields's exuberant, large-scale works, and a series of luminous watercolors, many painted on paper towels—mandalas, latticeworks, and forms reminiscent of Klee and Kandinsky. Born in rural Kansas in 1944, Shields credited his farm-boy upbringing and early exposure to quilting with influencing his art. After he moved to New York, his first show, at the Paula Cooper Gallery in SoHo in 1969, established him as an unusually joyful star in the Post-Minimalist firmament. Later he moved to Shelter Island, where he helped support his young family as a fisherman and ferryboat captain, finding new inspiration in lures, nets, and the sea's watery geometries. He also made prints and late in life turned his hand to animation. "It's just like farming," he once said of his own versatility. "It's good to rotate crops."—**LESLIE CAMHI**

SHIELDS'S BROWN BOX SET #13, 1974, WATERCOLOR AND PENCIL ON PAPER.