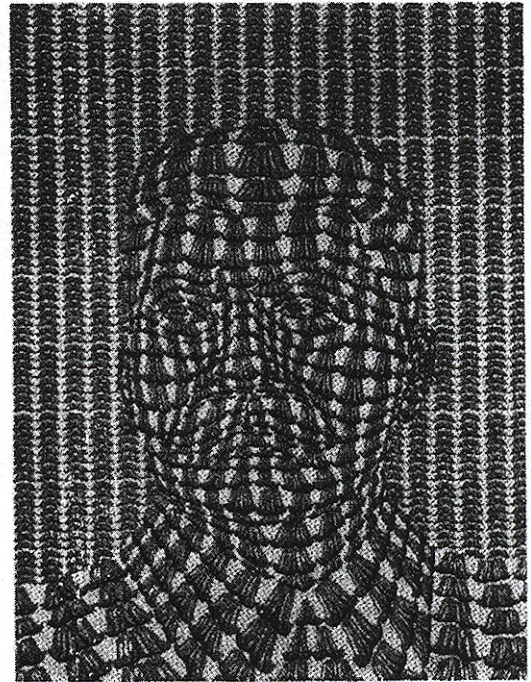


**Thomas Bayrle  
at Gavin Brown's  
enterprise**

This exhibition of Thomas Bayrle's multifarious production, his first show in the States in over 25 years, allowed a fresh look at the German Pop-era artist, an early colleague of Sigmar Polke and Gerhard Richter and an influential teacher of a generation of artists including Martin Kippenberger and Tobias Rehberger. Although Bayrle's works include videos, collages, silkscreens, paintings and installations, they are generally organized around a common theme: the relationship between macroscopic and microscopic realms of experience. At Gavin Brown, this idea was explored through a series of silkscreens in which a large image is generated through the repetition of hundreds of smaller images, some identical or related to the larger. So, for example, a multitude of men grasping umbrellas comprise an overall image of an umbrella; tiny ideogramlike pictures of Chinese men reading the Little Red Book constitute an image of Mao; and repeated tiny representations of a factory worker arranged in a gridlike form add up to a portrait

of Gianni Agnelli, the founder of the Fiat automobile empire. Such works explore the much-theorized coercive relationship between part and whole in communist and capitalist systems. But they also express a fascination with the ways in which a charismatic person is elevated to an icon through the coordinated actions or beliefs of the multitude, even as they offer a critique of how individuals are dehumanized and regularized when subsumed as indistinguishable units within such grand systems.

Bayrle pursues this structural relationship along other dimensions as well. His videos of organic forms suggesting the relationship of cell to body and his elaborate cardboard maquettes of highway under- and overpasses and railroads that crisscross like woven bands suggest the optical puzzles of M.C. Escher or the unresolved passages of Piranesi's prisons. Bayrle was once employed as a jacquard weaver with the German fabric company Mikro Makro and many of these works draw on ideas associated with weaving and fabric. Some, such as an image of Condoleezza Rice, are literally woven from wide bands of silkscreened cardboard. But these works don't suggest that Bayrle is sanguine about there being any global point of view from which the organization of things as a whole can be surveyed and understood. Indeed, while one needs to step back from these representations to see how the repeated, serially arranged elements resolve into a picture, one is always drawn



Thomas Bayrle: *Stalin*, 1970, silkscreen on paper mounted on board, 32 1/4 by 23 1/4 inches; at Gavin Brown's enterprise.

back in to consider, as primary, the individual building blocks over which the image supervenes.

—Jonathan Gilmore