



EWEN: You have to remember that up on two saw-horses about four feet high it is a platform. So first I stood by this eight by eleven foot platform of plywood and I made the horizon and I put in the islands and a few of the waves. I may or may not have left them final. This very elemental magic marker drawing included almost none of the sky. This much I could do while standing beside it. Then I got up, and up on all fours in the middle of this platform, I went to work. All over the whole thing I grooved into the wood with the electrical router, changing the bit as I felt the grooves should be larger or smaller. And keeping in mind at this point now what it is I want in terms of direction and velocity and proportion I have to put myself in

the center of the whole thing that's going on and hold it together. When I move to one side and feel it tipping I must be careful to shift my weight back and stretch out my arm as far as I can. And in this very exciting and very physically demanding process, the machine is very noisy and dangerous at 25 thousand revolutions a minute, I have to be quite careful not to get my clothes caught or gouge the side of my knee. Then towards the end I probably jumped off, shut the machine off, turned the machine on and standing up put in those last few streaks that are there to one side.

JOHNSON: You drew that low horizon and sort of outlined this place and then did all of the gouging before you began painting?

EWEN: Yes, once finished the gouging, the first thing I did was roll on the sky with darker grey paint. Then I did the water and then I did the islands. The sky was too dark so I rolled it over again with white. At the last minute I changed the water. That is how I remember it now.

JOHNSON: This wood weather work began about four years ago when you said you were sick and tired of strict paint and canvas work. Your paintings previous to that time were narrow one-color lines crossing one-color canvases, some of them called *Lifestream*. But you didn't just stop and start all over again so how did it begin and what began?

EWEN: At that point I was sick of canvas and stretchers and paint and sort of sick too of the

art market and thinking about when and where I would show. I really felt like just playing instead and I thought I was making an anti-art gesture in the formal sense with those last paintings. Daubing rows of dots on plain canvas with felt. But then somehow this turned out feeling to me like traces of things moving through space and this is what first suggested the idea of phenomena. Looking back on the earlier paintings of lines I thought those too were like traces or vibrations in space. So I began reading. I got all kinds of amateur books and old text books about phenomena. How rain falls and how lightning works, clouds, eclipses and waves. I began to get the feeling as I read that what we usually call the more simple things are immensely complicated so I just accepted my limitations and put down the parts of these happenings that were for me fun to do. My first idea was to make a great big woodcut print. I got a four by eight piece of plywood and hand gouged out something, an eclipse or some rain, I don't know which came first. But then as I was doing this and as I was painting in the gouges and as I was rolling it over with a printer's roller I realized that that was the work, and that's how it happened.

So I began to really paint pictures again as opposed to just formal minimal art. I actually began to paint pictures again and say well I don't care if the art world doesn't like it I can't go on doing formal painting so I think I'll do some things that are really fun which I enjoy doing otherwise I will have to stop painting and



Lollipop Rainfall, 1973
mixed media on plywood,
96" x 66 1/4"