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Feeling, Thinking, Being

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FEELING, THINKING, BEING

by

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B.F.A., University of Colorado at Denver

Health Sciences Center, College of Arts and Media 2005

A thesis submitted to the

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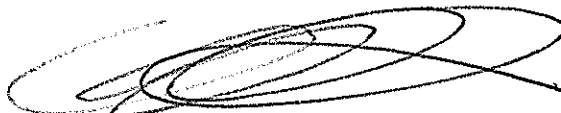
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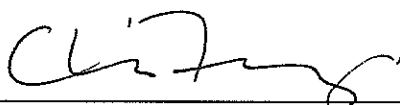
Master of Fine Arts

Department of Art and Art History

This thesis entitled:
Feeling, Thinking, Being
written by Lorey Lee Hobbs
has been approved for the Department of Art and Art History



Alvin Gregorio, Assistant Professor



Claire Farago, Professor

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation
standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

ABSTRACT

Hobbs, Lorey Lee (M.F.A., Fine Art, Department of Art and Art History)

Thinking, Feeling, Being

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Alvin Gregorio

This Thesis provides a general description of my creative work from inception to completion. The dialectic process of making the work and its intellectual development are discussed as well as why and how the content is related to the physicality of the finished work. Also discussed is the fundamental metaphysical and spiritual relationships, which are both a cause and a projection of the relatedness to human experience.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this Thesis
in memory of parents
and their constant presence
Leonard R. Hobbs and Patricia M. Hobbs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

My work is an expression that seeks to give form to my experience. I view the experience of living as a continuing path toward awareness, and also to gain knowledge that I may find and give meaning to life. While the answers I seek cannot be found in the sensory environment, the phenomenal world can be a catalyst for a turning inward.

I paint to affirm life and to elaborate on the perception of my individual spirit, which desires and needs to find that which is sublime. I seek an experience that becomes a place to transcend the often triteness of the everyday. There is a perception beyond sensation that I find only in solitude. I discover that the most profound solitude arises for me with a connection to forms found in nature. When contemplating these forms I find a spaciousness that supports an inward reflectiveness.

My intention is not to describe or represent mere physicality, but that which I imagine might animate and therefore transcend the phenomenal: the ground of being and the cause of all. I interpret this ground as a reality of consciousness that is both felt and imagined. In working from this premise, painting itself becomes both the vehicle and the object of a transcended reality of mind where truth and beauty may be realized through the expression of individual experience. Therefore, the work is a mirror and

metaphor to life and also to the creative process; wherein, the division or perceived duality between the objective and spiritual has vanished, and paint is the *materia prima*. The finite, or what is apprehended as finite, and the infinite are not divided, but one. For me this a sacred space, where I can forget myself as a separate ego self, a separate body self, and find my spirit. This is my idea of extraordinary beauty, which is always for me an affirmation of life. I keep a journal and frequently write poems that continually assist to develop and influence my investigation. The following is a poem that attempts in words to describe my goal and experience:

NIGHT RAIN

Night rain tumbles like velvet rose petals
Lingering on wet grass, goose bumps ripple
nostrils flair savoring scents of muddy soils
Pupils dilate as liquified sky melts into trees
Sounds of night bugs bend grass expanding presence
Clutching air
Rose petals transform allowing penetration
As Limbs break open swallowing fear
Earthly shackles will be transcended

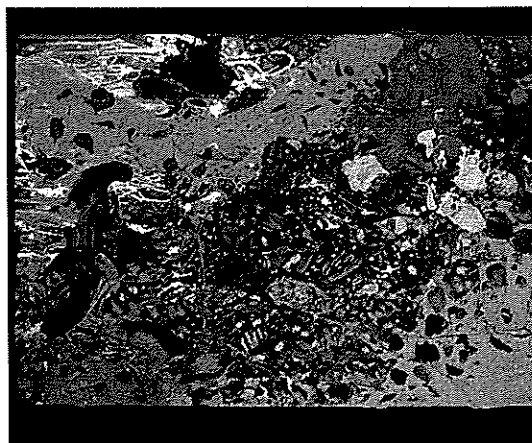


Figure 1: *Blackbird*, 30" X 36", Acrylic on Canvas, 2008

CHAPTER II DESCRIPTIONS

While I have and continue to experiment with non-traditional forms of painting, the work presented for my Thesis Exhibition embraces the historical model of working on primed canvas stretched on rectangular supports. I believe this historical model is appropriate for my most recent investigation since the foundation for the imagery is expanded drawings from my sketch book and the contemplative writings from my journals. This form is also a reference to my continued interest in eastern calligraphy and the scroll and the connection for me between writing, drawing, and painting.

My interest in calligraphy has also informed the creation of my visual imagery and the way in which I make marks and use paint. Most recently, I have been interested in Kufic script from the Middle East, which is an ancient form of Arabic writing used for making copies of the Koran. This particular interest was sparked by the current conflict in the area that lead me to a study of Persian miniature painting from the Mugal Period. The Middle East has always held a fascination for me as the cradle of civilization. I began copying Kufic script, which I found both historically and aesthetically engaging and as a way to heal the current conflict in my mind. As a result, the symbols have found there way into my work as a way of making marks.

I have developed and continue to develop a visual abstract language. Prior to 1998, my work was concerned with narrative, symbolism, and the

creation of representational illusionistic space. As I began to consider and question the meaning of life and to seek a spiritual path, abstraction seemed a more appropriate language with which to document this journey. There is no burden of recognizable form to interfere with the experience for me as a painter nor for the viewer.

The choices of color for a particular work or body of work are based upon at least several sources. I make notations in my journal or sketchbook to record the colors found in the images I am drawing and its surroundings. When mixing a palette, I give further consideration based on the mood or specific idea that has influenced a body of work. I also recognize that the color and my use of it can also subconsciously come from the existing culture. The lyrical and often kinetic qualities in my work are the result of an emotional response to the sacred and profound solitary space that I find.



Figure 2: *Oracle*, 36" X 30", Acrylic on Canvas, 2008

CHAPTER III MAKING

The work begins with observation and drawings. Drawing plays an important role in my process. It is a direct and immediate kind of way to experience, to record experience, and is also a way to find an opening to the spiritual. Time seems to slow down and I become very mindful of the silence in nature. By silence, I do not mean quietness or no sound, but an expanded form of awareness that is listening. A longing to be in this awareness that is caused by the noise, the suffering, and the discontent in the world, which is the impetus to seek the forms to draw. In this sacred space of profound silence the mysteries of the cycles of life and death seem to unfold to me and become luminous and transparent: a point between all of the dualities, like finding a jewel in the mud.

While nature is the ground for my sacred space, the studio is the place to perform a ritual that becomes a painting; thereby acknowledging the sacredness of the world. The painting emerges as a result of my conversation with the work and the paint as the medium. Below is a listing that has recently become my artistic statement that references some of the many dualities that I have considered:

life - death
sacred - profane
beauty - terror
desire - morality
illusion - dissolution
spiritual -temporal
illumination - degradation
emancipation - isolation
conscious - unconscious
thesis and antithesis

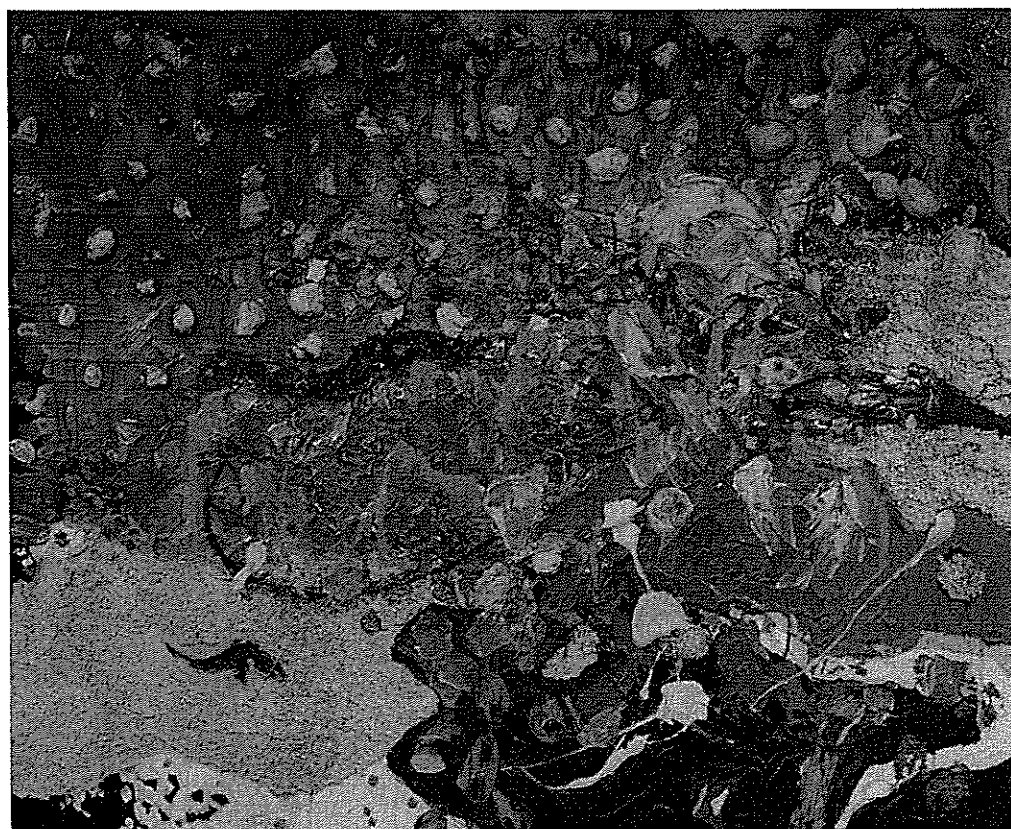


Figure 3: *Passage*, 36" X 48", Acrylic on Canvas, 2008

CHAPTER IV CONNECTIONS

I cull through my drawings and photographs and begin to arrange them on the wall in my studio. I make choices from these that I believe will be best suited and provide me the greatest opportunities and potential to serve an idea for a particular body of work.

The larger idea behind the work is always to create not only a feeling of the anticipation of form, but also its disintegration. I view the anticipation and disintegration as relative and interactive, which I attempt through invention, to give a sense of the simultaneous existence of duality and therefore propose the possibility of a unified third. In a sense, I have been working on a larger body of work that has chapters or segments that are smaller bodies. The chapters represent specific time periods that are divided by life events; discoveries made through experimentation; or an idea that has been assigned life in my mind through study or investigation. For example, the work exhibited for my MFA Thesis represents a portion of a continuing investigation that began the end of July, 2006. As a whole, I would say that this work is about a process or conversation of anticipation, pain, and a continuing attempt at recovery that may open toward reclamation. So the choices that I make when working have been very much tied to the idea of a rite of passage. I usually choose between 10-20 images from the drawings and photographs and then complete a second set of drawings.

Decisions are then made regarding the size and proportions of stretchers. I like to have at least 10-15 prepared at a time so that when I begin the painting part of the process it is not interrupted and I can create a kind of flow and continuity while I am working. Making the stretchers, stretching the canvas, priming and sanding takes about a week's time.

I typically choose the drawing and stretcher at this point that I believe represents the main idea and is usually one of the larger canvases, and this will be the signature work for a body of work. The work that is titled *Passage* is the signature work for the MFA Exhibition. The additional works created are like smaller ideas within the larger idea, perhaps like lines in a poem. I usually produce a series of works on paper that I think of as compliments that are derived from images from the paintings and take the form of mixed media collages.

The next step in the process is to mix a palette for a specific work, which takes 8 to 9 hours to complete for each painting. I have a set of Color Aid Paper, containing 500 sheets of high quality inked sheets of 3" X 5" paper, each representing a different color. I then go back to my sketchbook notes where I previously recorded ideas about color, which is the basis for palette decisions.

The specific color choices are then decided upon that I feel will relay a particular feeling or a kind of mood or dynamic to the work and how they interact. In addition to color choice, I add different mediums to the paint that

range in their opacity, textural quality, luminosity, transparency and viscosity. I may also add other materials to the paint while the work is in progress to reference an element from nature that was found during the drawing process. I consider the overall temperature of the palette and then create a color for the *imprematuro* and apply it on the entire canvas including the sides. I dislike the white of the gessoed sides and believe that they become a distraction to the work. Before installing a work, I re-paint the sides a neutral color which I feel gives the painting a sense of weight as a thing and not just a plane sitting off the wall and increases the painting's sense of substance and physicality.

Transferring the chosen drawing onto the canvas is the next point in the process. I divide the drawing into a grid, grid the canvas, and transfer the drawing. I mix up a color that is in contrast in value and temperature to the *imprematuro* and draw with this paint on the canvas. On small paintings and all of my works on paper, I work *ala prima*.

To support the idea of the work, I bring back mementos from the place where I was drawing. I always bring rocks, (a family tradition) and a metaphor to me of the idea of the dynamic potential that I believe exists in the cosmos and therefore all things. I also gather examples of other life forms such grasses, flowers, twigs, seeds, and feathers, which I place in my studio around me before I begin to paint. I have dipped the branches or sticks in ink to use on works on paper. On a recent gathering trip, I camped and was

allowed in the area to build a fire. I brought back charred remains of wood to use as drawing material for works on paper. Sometimes these materials also end up in the paintings. I feel that the works are often like markers on a continuing journey.

Music is an important and relevant part of my process. I began playing the piano at age five and studied classical music and dance and was later in a rock band. Before I begin to paint, I choose music that feels appropriate and complimentary to my idea. For the work in the MFA Exhibition, I have been listening to and feeling Chopin, which is intensely sad, but simultaneously so gloriously beautiful that it often brings me to tears. I think Chopin was so in touch with the duality of human experience, the depth of feeling, but was able to embrace it all through his music. Some of the paintings in the MFA Exhibition are titled in feeling after Chopin's work.

When I start a painting, I deliberately work from dark to light moving around the entire surface of the canvas. I spend a considerable amount of time in my studio chair looking at the drawing on the canvas, getting a feel from the objects in my studio and the music, while considering the particular idea and thinking about the sacred space that began the entire process. During this time, I feel that I am infusing myself, warming up on the inside, gathering forces that will be unleashed once I begin to paint. I am at this time both creator and viewer.

In the first stages and layers of paint, the images are reflective of the

objects and forms that I have drawn. As I continue to build up the surface of the canvas, a conversation takes place and the abstraction is the result of this conversation. Each mark and brush stroke or series of marks takes on a particular role and agency in the work like characters in an event. The conversation grows; the marks, the texture, the color, and the composition are all in communion with my idea, with me, with the surface and the plane upon which they are played out. I feel that I can walk away from a particular work when I get a sense that the work represents a feeling place that embraces dualities, and seems to create a sense for me that is a response to my sacred spiritual place that is informed intuitively by events in the world.

I specifically seek to represent a sense of shallow space that pushes out toward the viewer rather than drawing them into the space. When I began to study abstraction as a language and way to work, I was taken with the way that paintings that pushed the flatness of the plane caused me to have a more internal, self-reflective experience. During this time, I also consider the historical relationship of the use of shallow space in Renaissance altar paintings.

For some time, I considered myself to be a landscape painter. However, the time that I have spent reading and thinking and working in graduate school have helped me to come to know that the images from nature are catalysis for an internal investigation.

There is a parallel relationship between the materials and me as an act

of recreation: a convergence and remembering as a means to find the deeper meaning in my own life and to remember who I really am. Creating is an act toward self realization that is both noetic and poetic. The very act of painting is for me an experience of the mystical that I imagine unifies the physical to the causal.

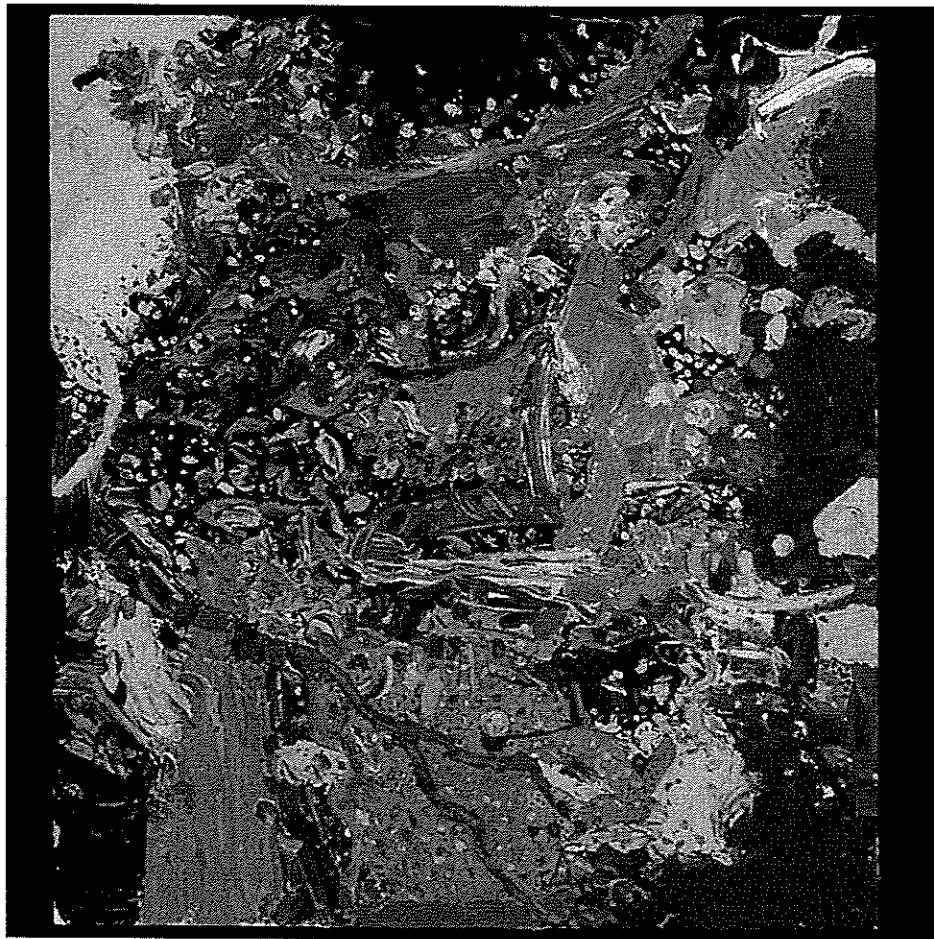


Figure 4: *Messenger*, 60" X 54", Acrylic on Canvas, 2008

CHAPTER 5
ENDING PROPOSAL: BEGINNING OF BEING

I offer my work to humanity, with the believe that the contemporary global community has lost sight of the search for truth and beauty, which I feel needs to be resurrected from "flat-land," hierarchical views. As a result of the loss of and belief in truth and beauty, we are experiencing various forms of isolationism that encompass art, culture, society, and the individual, causing destructive patterns of divisiveness. I view my work as an invitation to others to also turn inward to come to know that all life is sacred. I am not motivated by money or a desire for personal recognition or fame, but wish to share my vision to become aware that spirit is spirit equally in all things. The causal is not more in humanity that it is in a blade of grass or the feather of a bird, and no nation, or man or woman, religion, or idea can claim its ownership, for it animates all. I believe that we must, therefore embrace them all for we are truly one spirit expressing infinite potentialities.

I believe that a recognition of this dynamic system is a way of thinking and being in the world that may cause true change in the social, intellectual, and moral forces that may positively alter production and activity. Being in the world in a state of grace and gratitude, I believe in the end there is only love.

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