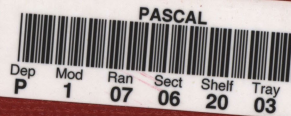


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REPETITION OF THE REGULAR AND IRREGULAR

by

Michele Amateau Alhadeff

B.F.A., Boston University, May, 1968

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Colorado in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Department of Fine Arts, Creative Art

1973

University of Colorado Libraries - Boulder

This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree


by

Michele Amateau Alhadeff

has been approved for the

Department of Fine Arts

by


George Woodman

Lynn R. Wolfe, Chairman

Date _____

My thesis exhibition is composed of 3 paintings and 4 drawings. In the paintings I use the human form as I use a plant, an oriental rug, a fish. I use a form for its shape and its relationship to other shapes, and for the essential spirit it possesses- for its "magic". A "likeness" in a portrait is only important to me insofar as it probes the soul. I, in fact, first paint the head to a somewhat complete state and then proceed with the "actual" painting. As the progresses, the head becomes less of a portrait; it is abstracted, and becomes a complete part of the painting. I use short bristle brushes with which I scrub on oil paint. When I prepare my canvas, I include pieces of string -knotted or straight- in my gesso. The gesso itself is always of a sand-umber color which I roll on with a nubby roller to avoid the smoothness a brush would inevitably create. I use a closely woven but heavy and thick Belgian linen. All this is done to create as coarse a surface as I need, and to give a sensation of a sand, stone-like surface worn by elements of nature and time. I use no oils or varnishes. My paint is applied in thin dry layers, eventually forming a somewhat crusted and always dry surface. This surface sensation is essential to the conception of the work. I strive for a sense of time marking and paring away what once existed. In a broader context, art subjected and exposed to the erosion of time, is what interests me. For instance, with primitive and ancient art, we do not

respond to the original intention of the work. Time and situations have altered relationships. We can only see the Parthenon in the context of 1973- white and in fragments: a sort of nakedness that exposes truth.

I focus heavily on silence and stillness: that moment when activity has momentarily halted (not in a metamorphic state but in a complete state); where weight and timing of the elements present are working together, whether the character of their union be symmetrical or asymmetrical, or both. Time and movement in my work exists somewhere between the kinetic and the static. Repetition of an element or shape is used to arrive at subtle variation, and emphasis of that variation. A geometrical format orders and contradicts chaos and asymmetry, which in turn contradicts order and symmetry. I try to use these opposites to explore the moment when they meet. In my work there is a quality of stillness but there is also the rhythm of repetitive forms which deny and emphasize the stillness. In relation to this, I have noticed my 2 year old daughter moving in searching repetitive movements: each the same and each different and each emphasizing the whole and the individual movement- like the serried columns of the Parthenon and the systemic work of Robert Ryman, Sol LeWitt, and Eva Hesse. To paraphrase Lucy Lippard in relation to Eva Hesse: Eva's work has a fanaticism which has absorbed a strong formal sense and has the quality of suppression and release- of being free and confined, regular and irregular.

Scale, color and visual proximity are intimately woven together to create both form and content in my work, whether the work is in 2 or 3 dimensions. As in Mark Van Doran's poem "Undersong", art is like nature, woven from storm and calm and completely unified and held by a strong but taut thread: a constant calm and constant storm beneath the surface. At any moment the harmony may break even though it is from this state from which the harmony grows. We are obviously dealing in contradictions. It is not easy to grasp this, and I think, in reference to my own work, it is important to see a body of work in order to develop an understanding of it. This is true of contemporary art in general! Ingmar Bergman has said that he expects those who want to understand his work, to see all his films. One or two is not sufficient. Jean Renoir has said that all his films are about the same thing: they are all one work. Therefore, one must see as much Renoir as possible to know what he is about. I agree with this approach. To understand the whole, the parts must be looked at closely.

My drawings are actually subtly layered "constructions". They consist of off-square wax paper taped at four corners to clear glass, brown cardboards, and a mirror. The cardboards have pencilled grids, somewhat centered. Each wax paper has four areas of an oil paint shape or brushstroke, which is somewhat abstract expressionist in character. (In this context I see my drawings as painterly as my paintings) These painted areas repeat the taped corners. The tapes are not cut evenly but are torn irregularly, and they in turn repeat the

spontaneity and chance form of the painted areas. My "space drawings", as I refer to them, seem at first 2 dimensional and flat and weightless. But hung away from the wall, as in the glass drawing, the paper, the tape, and the paint, become sculptural objects- floating weights- independent bodies. Waxpaper is an uncommon material in that it is semi-translucent and semi-transparent. It is like skin in its waxy texture. It reminds me of animal skins stretched on a frame either to be painted or pulled as a drum. In an abstract sense, I use the tape just as strips of hide are used to pull and hold the skins. Function and aesthetics are intimately combined.

My paintings each share the weight of silence and stillness. Symmetry and assymetry co-mingle to help define and emphasize the other. Flat space becomes shallow layered space and moves again to flat space, as in my drawings. Thus far, my work has taken the shape of the off-square. The popularity of this shape has been particularly strong since the "all-over" influence of Jackson Pollock. When I first began painting my series of heads, this "all-over" feeling became a serious though difficult goal, since the idea of a portrait immediately denies an all-over emphasis. My more recent paintings have come closer to this goal because the head has been more obviously reduced in importance and detail activity. The head has been replaced at times by other elements which lend more easily in connotation to becoming one with the totale painting. The object has

moved into the "background" and the "background" has moved forward in importance. I think I began with an allegiance to Mycenaean painting with its more formal, monumental structures, and have moved into a greater kinship and appreciation for the more naturalistic and freer aspects of Minoan art. I am dealing with traditional things in an untraditional way. My approach is untraditional in that the concept remains in the middle of my work, with the work moving toward the concept from various stylistic directions. I find this a valid and exciting way to work.

I have tried briefly to describe those qualities of art which are most meaningful to me. They are qualities which artists often strive towards. Different movements have different approaches to reaching the same goal: from Matisse's "Dance" with its convulsive creatures rejoicing in the orgiastic birth of time and mankind, to Tanguy's silent, airless, time-arrested world of infinite space, peopled by primordial stones, to Pollock, Rothko, Newman and Still, who were obsessed by the earth, and possessed by the mysticism of the very elemental and primitive.

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree M.F.A. in Creative Arts

Michele Amateau Alhadeff

has submitted this written thesis as
a supplement to the creative thesis

One Drawing
Number and Medium

14 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 15 $\frac{1}{2}$ "
Size

Space Drawing
Title

which is in the permanent possession of
the University of Colorado and recorded
with the Department of Fine Arts

Approved by

Mary Woodman
Chairman of Committee

Chairman, Fine Arts Department

Number of slides and medium

<u>#1 Painting</u>	<u>48" x 60"</u>	<u>Andy with Nana's Rug</u>
<u>#2 Painting</u>	<u>60" x 72"</u>	<u>Joe's a Wizard</u>
<u>#3 Painting</u>	<u>detail</u>	<u>Joe's a Wizard</u>
<u>#4 Painting</u>	<u>60" x 60"</u>	<u>Maya's Rug</u>
<u>#5 Painting</u>	<u>detail</u>	<u>Maya's Rug</u>
<u>#6 Painting</u>	<u>detail</u>	<u>Maya's Rug</u>
<u>#7 Waxpaper, mirror, tape, oil paint</u>	<u>15" x 15"</u>	<u>Space Drawing 1</u>
<u>#8 Waxpaper, oil pt., cardboard, tape</u>	<u>16" X 17"</u>	<u>Space Drawing 2</u>
<u>#9 Waxpaper, tape, cardboard, oil</u>	<u>14$\frac{1}{2}$" x 15$\frac{1}{2}$"</u>	<u>Space Drawing 3</u>
<u>#10 Waxpaper, glass, tape, oil paint</u>	<u>13$\frac{1}{2}$" x 14$\frac{1}{4}$"</u>	<u>Space Drawing 4</u>

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