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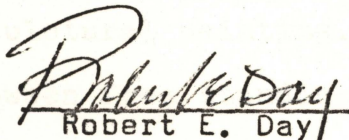
COLOR, ILLUSION, AND REALITY
OF THE SHAPED CANVAS

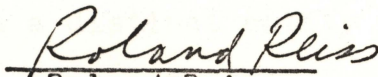
Richard Gray
ROBERT L. GRAY

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Colorado in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
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Master of Fine Arts
Department of Fine Arts, Creative Art
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This Thesis for the Master of Arts Degree by
Howard Allen Eige
has been approved for the
Department of
Fine Arts
by


Robert E. Day


Roland Reiss

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Eige, Howard Allen (M.F.A., Fine Arts, Creative Art)

Color, Illusion, and Reality of the Shaped Canvas

Thesis directed by Roland Reiss

The shaped canvas may be seen as an excellent vehicle for the display of light and color. Initial experiments dealt with the shaped canvas as a three dimensional sculptural substructure. Contextual changes led to the idea of an illusion : the sculptural painting. Efforts to resolve the relationship between free standing sculptural form and the wall canvas through specific continuities proved unsuccessful. The shaped canvas was next seen as a primary source for shape and form; as a distinct entity as distinguished from painting and sculpture. In this case, color was based upon naturalistic references. Sprayed color provided opportunities for the denial of three dimensionality. Sprayed color led to concepts of "suspension" and "negative" color value, a special condition of "formlessness" results from surface treatment. Surface may be seen as the source of light. "Formless painting" can be used to establish a "real illusion" as opposed to ambiguous or implied illusions. Light projections used in overlay superstructure result in diffusion of light energy and color. Light projection is a necessary means to work involving pure spectral color.

This abstract is approved as to form and content.

Signed Poland Reiss

COLOR, ILLUSION, AND REALITY
IN SHAPED CANVAS

For the past year, my immediate concern has been to find a new vehicle to display light and color. The structure that I have found to be quite satisfactory is the shaped canvas. The earlier canvases made a strong reference to organic form and shaped structure, while the painted forms and shapes remained dependent upon the shape of the stretchers and canvas. The shaped canvas could stand by itself as a sculptured three dimensional object. Being a wall object, it appeared to be a stretched primed canvas awaiting the moment when paint would be applied to its surface.

I considered what would happen if I changed the location of the canvas. For example, what would happen if I placed the object on the floor instead of hanging the canvas on the wall? This context change produced an entirely different condition. The unpainted object became a floor object of shaped canvas structure. By adding another separate piece which fixed itself and related itself to the canvas, I came upon another illusion : the sculptural painting, one piece of three dimensional organically shaped sculpture, a canvas shaped background. The free standing sculptural pieces were constructed of cut plywood for the main superstructure, with stretched canvas and masonite to enclose this superstructure.

and make the shape a three dimensional solid.

At this point I ran into a major obstacle which made me question the entire problem once again. Basically, it appeared that the free standing sculptural piece was an extension of a painted two dimensional shape. I had hoped that the three dimensional shapes would remain so. What appeared was a three dimensional sculpture seemingly attached to a two dimensional shaped canvas, which had lost all of its visual potential for becoming a flat canvas. A necessary and obvious connection between the two structures was needed (note that the surface was still primed and unpainted). The answer appeared to be accomplishable through paint, color, and surface quality of light and color resolution. Linear devices and forms on the canvas were used to make a definite relationship to the outlying three dimensional free standing sculpture. Color was sprayed similarly on both surfaces (obvious color and form relationships of geometric organic shapes). At that time I believed I had created a new experience in sculptural painting. I realized at a later date that I was wrong. The relationship between shaped canvas and three dimensional shape was too weak and confusing. The use of color and obvious connecting devices did not create the impression of the unit as a whole. This effort ended my initial encounter with the shaped canvas and three dimensional object sculpture.

My next idea was to establish the shaped canvas as a shaped canvas, not as a painting. In other words, the shape of the canvas dictated what my imagery would be in terms of shape and form.

Again I chose a geometric organic form strongly leaning towards a linear system. Sometimes the color became very subtle, it was simply used to define the shapes. The effect was that the shapes or color bands were absolutely aligned with the physical shape of the canvas except that my shapes were three dimensional and had three dimensional contours. The shapes flowed within the surface contours of the canvas. One could no longer see color as a motif, but simply as lengths of differing hues which organized the actual physical shape of the canvas. In essence, I was organizing the shape and surface of a predetermined shaped canvas using an organic geometric structure for my format.

My main interest in my work lies in the use and implications of color. Instead of the color being vital, intense and confined within the bounds of geometric bands, the color, in my painting, is based on naturalistic references. The color is not pure color. There is no distinct separation of, for instance, reds and blues as in the spectrum colors. The color is diffused, mixed, and varied to form a mixture of sprayed color.

The use of sprayed color opened up another door in reference to the shaped canvas. Color was used to deny the

shaped canvas its three dimensional attitude. Certain variations of color were employed which flattened the space of the surface. The space no longer had the implication of infinite space. The canvas became a surface, not a painted surface or a space to paint upon. This illusion was furthered by the repetition of similar shapes or, in one case, a series of modules was established. On further consideration of space versus illusional or three dimensional space, I perceived a very interesting concept; color could be suspended (the illusion of color in front, not on the surface of the object or plane) in front of a given picture plane. To "suspend" color meant that I would have to lessen the intensity of saturation of pigments.

I suspended pure pigment in silver and white acrylic, which created the illusion of suspended negative color. The shapes became the color and the color became the shapes: a perfect union of paint and color. The shape of the canvas and the design both have to do with one underlying structure, the shape of the structure. This type of painting, in my estimation, offers a perfect unification of underlying and overlying structure (design and shape) wholeness.

One aspect of composition generated by the frame (an attitude within this structure) lies in the area of formless imagery. "Formless", in this context means that there are no definable shapes within the boundaries of the stretched canvas. The only form would be that of the shaped canvas

standing by itself as a sculptural object instead of as a painting vehicle. This condition is impossible to maintain without creating an illusion if the work is to remain painting. But I want the canvas to exist in real rather than illusionary space, allowing the painting to become an object. I feel that the answer lies in formlessness (a treatment of the surface).

A mixture of "all color" suspended in one color seems to create the "perfect surface". As I mentioned before, this allows the painted surface to become the object surface rather than a painting executed on a shaped canvas. Depending on the saturation and luminosity of paint, a number of conditions can occur. The surface can become illuminated, visually implying a hidden electric light source. The surface can become the source of light instead of being the source of the illusion of reflected light.

Another possibility lies in surface treatment of subtle negative colors. This may seem to be an ambiguous statement since this condition is hard to describe verbally. By using "negative", I am making a reference to negative reversal: let us say black and white, like a photographic negative. Then, condensing all of this in a neutral medium (acrylic), the color is visually anxious or negative. I am still exploring this condition of negative (or neutral)

color. This possibility and its application seems very exciting, in the sense that it would allow me to obtain a "real illusion",

This structure, the shaped canvas, implies an escape from the traditional boundaries and framework of painting. Projecting the ultimate perfection of this kind of painting, I can foresee totally formless paintings of color "things" (projecting themselves into self-created space). The paint quality would project itself from its tangible container (the picture plane) into real space. In this context the painting would be a real illusion not an implied ambiguous illusion. My conception of a real illusion could be compared to a motion picture camera projecting an image on a screen. The rays between the camera and the screen appear to be a shaft of light. However, the light contains the form of the picture on the screen--this can be illustrated by thrusting one's hand between the camera and the screen. The image appears on the hand as the shadow of the hand appears on the screen.

Another interesting potential lies in the fact that the underlying structure would not be obvious in its effect. It would not be conforming to any predetermined structure (only the picture plane or picture object). The color would just be color and nothing else--the utmost achievement in painting. This condition can be achieved by constructing light projections (a superstructure of overlays of light images and patterns), resulting in the diffusion of

fantastic light energy and color.

Presently I am involved in experimentation with light projection. Using lasers, prisms, and optics, I have produced the most vital and pure light energy-- pure spectrum colors.

I have tried to paint within a range of bright spectral colors; to achieve this through commercially purchased colors is impossible. Pigments will never achieve the vitality of projected spectrum color. For this reason, much of my work in the future will lie in the area of light itself.

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

Approved by *Robert Rauschenberg*
Robert Rauschenberg
 Director, Fine Arts Department
 July 14, 1972

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Degree M.F.A. in Creative Arts

HOWARD ALLEN EIGE
Name

One acrylic and one pen drawing
No. and Medium

13'x3'-12'x3'
Size

UNTITLED
Title

10x14"
Size

UNTITLED
Title

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

Approved by Roland Reiss
Co-Chairman of Committee

Luis Esder
Co-Chairman of Committee

Rolande Day
Chairman, Fine Arts Department

Date July 10, 1968

