



Paintings

by Alexandra Ingrid Wiesenfeld

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
Montana State University

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Abstract:

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of

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**MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana**

March 1995

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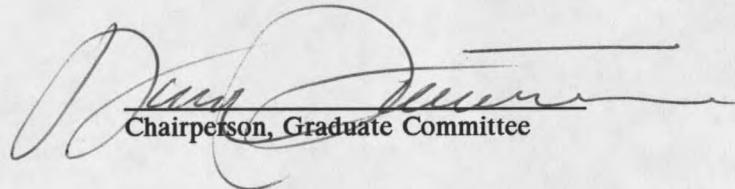
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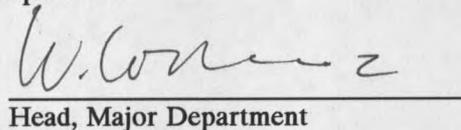
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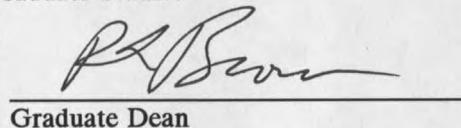
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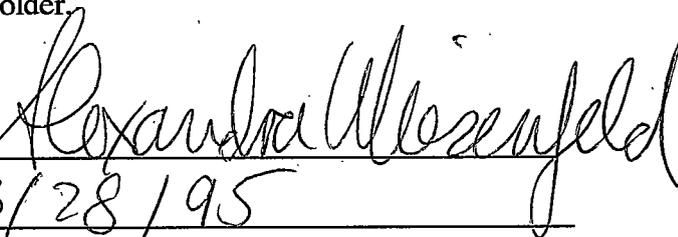

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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"It is important to work with something that moves your spirit, and in order to move the spirit there must be content, you must create content..."

-Baselitz

My paintings are inspired by the interiors of abandoned houses I discovered in remote areas of Montana. In these spaces I find a strange combination of intimacy and history. Personal items, like a coffee cup with hearts or a red high heeled shoe, are left behind. Nature slowly reclaims territory: the wind rips at the wall paper, revealing layers of color and time; the light pours in, singling out details and creating a satisfying order within the apparent chaos. I see the objects around me, whether familiar or decayed beyond recognition, as if for the first time. Each seems imbued with a hidden symbolism and a mysterious meaning. Rummaging through the traces of the people living there before, I feel like a voyeur intruding upon a space secret and ominous. Simultaneously there is the surreal sensation of my being on a stage, observed in the same secretive way.

My intent is not to imitate in paint an actual likeness of the buildings but rather to express the emotion they evoke in me. This emotional impact prompts my choice of imagery as well as the formal elements of my paintings. It is the mood of these abandoned spaces that stirs me to set up juxtapositions, which create psychological and emotional content.

In my compositions I contrast various objects, both found and imagined, which creates a dialogue between them. I look for formal and psychological contrasts, in shape, texture, color and connotation: the closed versus the open, the soft versus the hard, the

light versus the dark, the safe versus the dangerous...

The figure personifies my own feelings of displacement. When the naked woman is part of the composition, the objects become her props and the space her stage. I omit her features, as I am not interested in her as a specific person. Rather she serves as a tool, an "object", to set up a potent pairing with the space and the other objects. I want her to be young, sexy..transitory. She is what she is, unself-conscious and without shame. Her pin-up-girl quality and her sexually evocative outfits are in contrast to her gestures, which are introspective and private. Even though the viewer might construe her open sensuality as an invitation to be violated, it is important to me that she does not appear as a victim. She is full of contradictions: she is paradoxical to her surroundings and therefore absurd. The naked woman and the objects around her create another, inner dialogue, one of which she is fully aware and which ultimately mocks her with her own existence.

The imagery provides me with a basic structure, a vantage point. I am not interested, however, in mere illustration. I aim to re-construct the object with paint, to build it physically by surrounding it and penetrating it with brush strokes. The canvas becomes like a puzzle in which all elements are connected and interdependent. I play these elements against each other, contrasting flatness of surface and depth of space, line and color, representation and abstraction. In this process I am searching for ways to break through boundaries, which are often present when painting a representational image. One way to help me loosen these boundaries is to mirror my perceptual and intellectual processes. With the interiors, for example, I want to capture the way my mind works its way through the chaos of the abandoned spaces: it focuses on one object or the other, lingers on an object to where that object becomes bigger than others, overlaps others, and

even blurs out some areas - a process without a hierarchy of importance and yet clear and inherently structured.

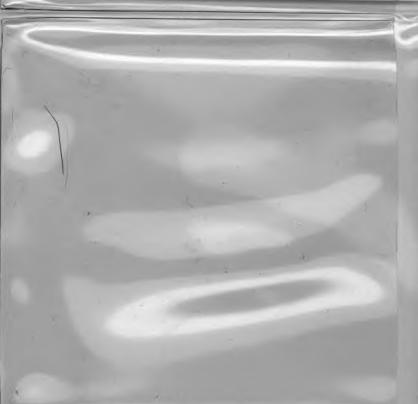
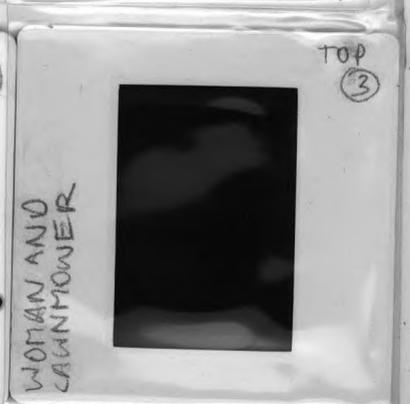
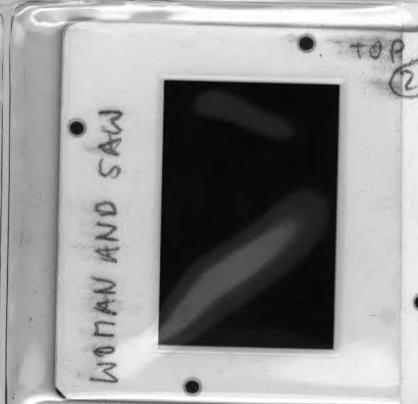
Though my ideas are studied, my process of painting is spontaneous and evolutionary. Fast and aggressive, impatient and physical, my painting process often seems to me like a race to overcome the intellect before it takes control over the image. With my brush, palette knife and hands I want to create marks that show my presence, that are spontaneous and raw and reflect the object, or space, in its essence. I painted the woman's body with my hands, for example, in my desire to reconstruct the physicality of flesh. To reflect the intangibility of murky space, I layer dark, transparent colors like deep purples and rich browns.

In the process of constructing a painting I overlap various images in order to lose the composition in a mass of color and marks. This loss of control then prompts me to physically struggle with the paint to pull certain objects from the background and push others back into it. Through the pushing and pulling and overlapping of images, I let the layers beneath shine through. With this constant constructing and destroying of images, a process of "trial and error," I open the possibility to serendipitous relationships of color, strokes and texture - an excursion into the unknown that makes painting exciting and innovative for me.

I am satisfied with a painting when it functions on two levels. Formally I aim to create an autonomous pictorial structure, which can exist independent of its content. but equally, I would like the painting to evoke emotional and psychological issues in the viewer and especially in myself.

LIST OF SLIDES

1. "Teapot and Shoe," oil on canvas, 8' x 6', 1994
2. "Woman and Saw," oil on canvas, 7' x 6', 1994
3. "Woman and Lawnmower," oil on canvas, 8' x 6', 1995
4. "Yellow Bird," oil on canvas, 6' x 8', 1995
5. "Woman and Bag," oil on canvas, 8' x 6', 1994
6. "Woman in Green Shoes," oil on canvas, 7' x 10', 1994
7. "Tryptich," oil on canvas, 7' x 16', 1995
8. "Woman and Milk Jug," oil on canvas, 8' x 6', 1994
9. "Sheets," oil on canvas, 6' x 8', 1995
10. "Cups and Pliers," oil on canvas, 6' x 5', 1994



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