



Painting as illusion or not  
by Kristine Ann Aro

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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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

March 1984

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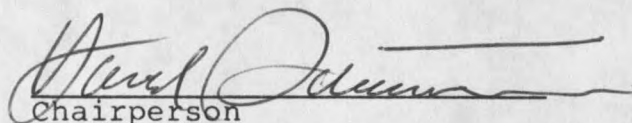
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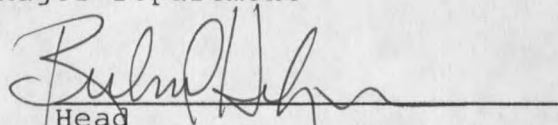
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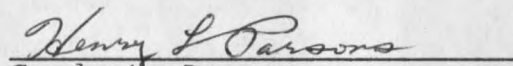
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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

When I began to consider painting seriously, I was excited by the late 19th Century idea of pictorial illusion played against the two-dimensional picture plane. I later developed a way of working in which I would intricately paint patterns over areas of the paper, then splash water and paint across the image and tear it apart. These scraps of torn paper would be used to make finished work. I started to incorporate small pieces of wood in these paintings and gradually began to work with wood alone.

The material nature of wood allows me to reuse it and re-paint it numerous times without deterioration. Its natural character gives me a base from which to start. Two-dimensional problems are expanded: physical sculptural concerns are pitted against the illusionism of painting.

The physicality of wood includes both two and three dimensions. In my work I reverse the natural role of these elements. Three-dimensional parts are incorporated into the pictorial illusion of a two-dimensional background (thin plywood). At the same time, I use framing devices and rough edges to reiterate the fact that the paintings are also objects. I thickly paint separate wood elements the same color and texture, fabricating a unified surface. When the piece comes together, it creates an illusion that negates

its three-dimensionality.

While I constantly make use of these ideas, the most significant aspect of my art is the process by which it is made. It has been said that I "cannibalize" my pieces, but that term is too grisly. I see my process as one of reincarnation. I use parts of older paintings in my new work. As the parts are recycled, they become entirely personal found objects, reflecting the transition from one painting to another and revealing clues to the earlier pieces (from which they are made). Nails, globs of glue, painted surfaces and plain rough wood all suggest some previous existence. The wood parts assume a new function and a new image with each piece. These small parts, which reflect the process with such facility, may be more important than the finished paintings themselves.

It is the process that gives my work its sculptural identity. The paint actually becomes part of the structure: a binder that pulls parts together, lies between layers of wood and sits on the surface. As parts are pried off, raw wood is exposed, reminding the viewer of the underlying materials and structural reality of the painting.

My work may look precious: the small scale, the 'objectness', and the rich detail and color lend to this conclusion. But the look of my work is the result of the ongoing process of destruction and reincarnation; and the ostensible 'preciousness' is an illusion denied by knowledge

of this process.

I approach each piece with the intent of creating a final statement at that point in time. However, after a certain period, I step back to re-evaluate the finished work. I decide whether the paintings have the presence which I first intended. Those that do are left intact; they become metaphors for the way I work. Those paintings that do not withstand this scrutiny continue to be dismantled and eventually re-used; they become active and temporal examples of my process.

The paintings and objects included in the thesis exhibition are untitled. They are documented in the following fifteen slides.

TOP

1



14 x 9

TOP

2



5 1/2 x 10 x 14

TOP

3



13 x 10"

TOP

4


 ARO  
 8 1/2 x 11  
 Wood  
 +  
 paint  
 '83

TOP

5


 ARO  
 9 x 12  
 wood  
 +  
 paint  
 '84

TOP

6


 ARO  
 14 x 8  
 wood  
 +  
 paint  
 '84

TOP

7

ARO 13 x 9 1/2

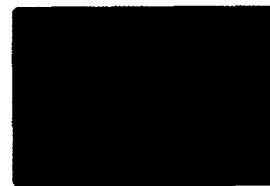


wood + paint '83

TOP

8

ARO 13 x 12



wood + paint '84

TOP

9

ARO 11 x 15



wood + paint '84

TOP

10

 K. ARO  
 11 x 16  
 wood  
 +  
 paint  
 '83


TOP

11



6 1/2 x 8"

TOP

12

ARO



25 x 38"

TOP

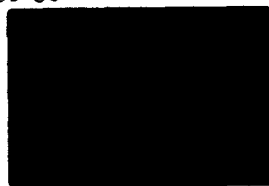
13

 ARO  
 9 x 13  
 wood  
 +  
 paint  
 '83


TOP

14

ARO



small objects

TOP

15

ARO wood / paint



83

4 x 2"

JAN 8 1983

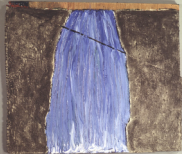
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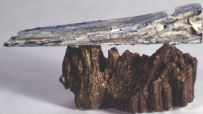


















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