

Parallel Realities
by Karl Vautrain McDade

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

April 1997

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Karl Vautrain McDade

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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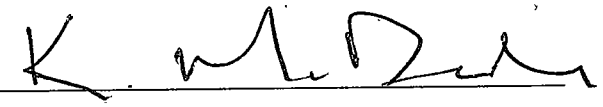
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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Vessel forms and industrial objects are the images of my work. Initially, I became attracted to ceramics for the pleasure of making functional objects and have since become interested in the sculptural quality of functional forms. This body of work has evolved from my curiosity toward the passage of time, our concept of age, and the randomness of nature. By combining reproductions of found industrial objects with ancient Greek pottery forms, I am attempting to build relationships with the past and the present. Ancient Greek vessels are a symbol of early industry and basic human needs to control and simplify life. Industrial objects are a metaphor for the advancement of our technology and the control we have gained over our environment. Combined, these objects symbolize a long history of technological advancement, attempts to control our environment, and ultimately, nature.

In my eyes, true beauty is found only in nature, through natural processes of creation and destruction and no object contrived by human hands and logical thought can compete with natural phenomena. The man-made objects that I am most attracted to are those which are old and have been exposed to the elements for many years. With this exposure to the elements an object becomes subjected to the chaos and chance of nature which does not work in terms of logic and is ultimately a purely random process.

In order to accomplish this quality, my work has become highly process

oriented. Instead of precise manipulation, I set up events which allow for random and natural occurrences within certain parameters. This concurrently makes my work less concerned with the issue of traditional craftsmanship and more with the idea of emulating chaotic natural beauty in the form of an archetypal craft object; the pottery vessel.

Before I begin building a sculpture, I create a series of drawings in which I reduce each vessel form into its most basic shapes. This enables me to construct each sculpture from various segments. Rather than working from the bottom up on one sculpture, I work in a series and create enough pieces to build multiples of the same form. In so doing, each part or section becomes the evidence of an individual event, the actions of which are recorded in the soft clay. Although the basic form of the sculpture is intentional, the irregularities that occur in the creation of its individual parts allow for random alterations in proportion and form.

Random alterations also occur during the firing, but only within certain parameters. This takes place while firing each piece in a saggar. In this sealed chamber within the kiln, I place a variety of materials directly against the piece. These materials consist of chemicals, metals, and combustibles each of which influence the surface of the piece in a distinct manner. During this event, the clay is pushed to its physical limits, often causing it to deform and crack, and creating a surface with a wide variety of textures. This is sometimes followed by sandblasting which allows for the removal of superficial layers of texture, exposing underlying surfaces. I simulate the passage of time under the assumption that the greater the

force of the event, the more impact it has on the perceived age of the object.

Drawings and monotypes serve as devices to further explore my aesthetic. I begin drawings with the intention of exploring a particular image, or group of images. As the drawing progresses, I build layers of information which often lead to the development of new forms, I feel that the act of drawing and that of working with clay are interrelated through the immediacy of each material. This quality lends each to direct and spontaneous changes where the medium physically records intuitive actions and thoughts. In this sense both drawing and working with clay have the ability to record the decision making process involved in the creative act.

Through intuitive layering of events on both drawings and sculptures I am attempting to emulate natural beauty, and simulate the passage of time. I am interested in the process of creation, and decay, and the preciousness that we give to old objects. It seems to me that objects become more important once they have withstood the test of time.

LIST OF SLIDES

1. "Beaked Oinochoa," 23" x 15", saggar fired and sand blasted ceramic, 1997
2. "Beaked Oinochoa," 24" x 16", saggar fired and sand blasted ceramic, 1997
3. "Beaked Oinochoa," 22" x 16", saggar fired and sand blasted ceramic, 1997
4. "Lekythos," 34" x 13", saggar fired ceramic, 1997
5. "Lekythos," 33" x 17", saggar fired ceramic, 1997
6. "Calyx Krater," 20" x 27", saggar fired ceramic, 1997
7. "Hydria," 36" x 30" x 28", saggar fired ceramic, 1997
8. "Alabastra," 28" x 36" x 36", saggar fired ceramic, 1997
9. Detail
10. Untitled, 40" x 60" x 60", saggar fired ceramic, 1997
11. Untitled, 60" x 36", goauche, charcoal, gesso, graphite on paper
12. Untitled, 42" x 29", monotype on paper, 1997
13. Untitled, 42" x 29", monotype on paper, 1997
14. Untitled, 30" x 22", monotype on paper, 1997
15. Untitled, 30" x 22", watercolor, charcoal, on paper, 1997
16. Untitled, 42" x 29", monotype on paper, 1997
17. Installation view
18. Installation view
19. Installation view
20. Installation view

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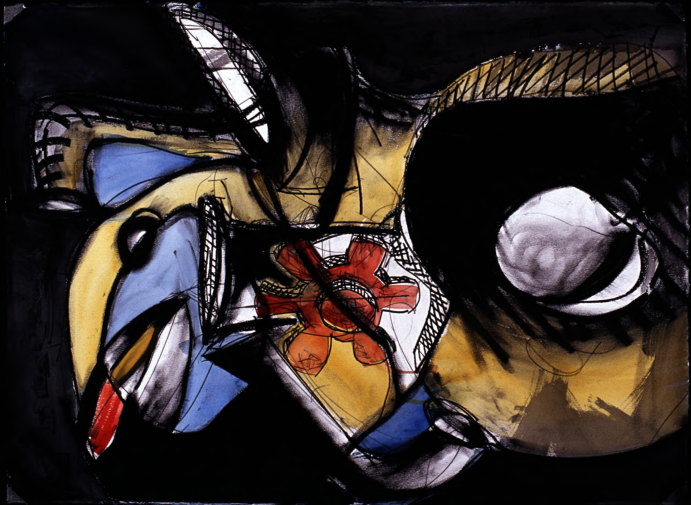







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