



Rebirth and regeneration : a personal myth
by Lewis Rifkowitz

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:

My work is derived from a personal mythology, focusing on how myth determines human values. Most myths act as social commentary: a type of oral and written tradition which imparts a methodology of making life traditions. My role as artist functions somewhat as commentator and critic. The personal commentary I address ranges from male/female issues to social issues. The sources of information that I use for my work vary; being inspired by nature, and provoked by personal, political, and social actions. What I do is describe a network of relationships among forms; organic, architectural, and figurative, attempting to reveal the connection between form and issue.

The work deals with the ideas of life and balance; life on the edge, and life in harmony. Working within this emotionally charged context with the theme of rebirth and regeneration, certain images have emerged. These forms are rooted in my past and project symbolic meaning. Houseforms are indicative of home and homeland, and sticks, stones, eggs, and whirling tops are the basic building blocks of youthful imagination exploring nature. Architectural elements are symbolic of culture, knowledge, and societal concerns. In unison with the figure, these elements make a somewhat cryptic and enigmatic attempt at narrative; creating truths or events that will hopefully transcend their personal revelation into the mystery of my place within the larger world.

REBIRTH AND REGENERATION: A PERSONAL MYTH

by

Lewis Rifkowitz

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

of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

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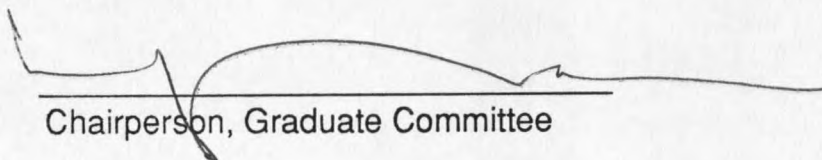
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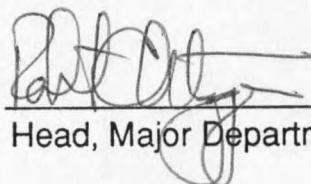
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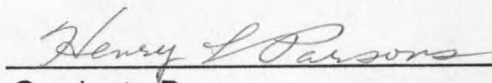
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ARTIST STATEMENT

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The work deals with the ideas of life and balance; life on the edge, and life in harmony. Working within this emotionally charged context with the theme of rebirth and regeneration, certain images have emerged. These forms are rooted in my past and project symbolic meaning. Houseforms are indicative of home and homeland, and sticks, stones, eggs, and whirling tops are the basic building blocks of youthful imagination exploring nature. Architectural elements are symbolic of culture, knowledge, and societal concerns. In unison with the figure, these elements make a somewhat cryptic and enigmatic attempt at narrative; creating truths or events that will hopefully transcend their personal revelation into the mystery of my place within the larger world.

The majority of work is handbuilt out of clay. The nature of the material dictates certain limitations. Scale, structure, weight, balance, and gravity all become prominent issues. The figures are built without the aid of an armature, which places restrictions on height in a certain pose. If I pass this point, they crack, fall, and fail. Sometimes this failure suggests new possibilities. Exploring these tangents, the act of discovery overrides my following one preconceived notion. Pushing my technical knowledge of the medium, I have compensated for these failings by incorporating other materials such as wire, epoxy, wood, and rebar. I am at a point where I ask: does this form need to be made out of clay; thus freeing me to explore the properties of new materials.

Formally, I use the process of layering, by creating parts which I assemble to make a whole. I combine forms to create relationships, then analyze them for further ramifications. As I layer these ideas, I attempt to harmonize opposing forces, particularly the conscious and unconscious, masculine and feminine, chaos and order, movement and stasis, life and death. Ideally I want the work to read on multiple levels utilizing a network of language, and evocation of memory and of visual and emotional experiences.

My drawings are the medium which supplies the link between concept and realization. The drawings have evolved from scribbles to works which contain their own pictorial reality. The drawings are symbiotic with my sculpture, both mediums feeding and nourishing each other. My investigations with different 2-D mediums have given me the freedom to bring the same investigation to the clay. By utilizing a combination of traditional and nontraditional ceramic surfaces, I am now able to underglaze, glaze, paint, draw, or do whatever needs to be done with the surface of the clay.

The imagery that has found its way to the clay's surface is tied directly to my personal experiences and changing perspectives. This has entered the work with a new found intensity. While this new work is figurative and narrative, I don't see this as a departure, but rather a synthesis and extension of all my previous exploration. The work is allegorical, not to any idea or intellectual statement about art, nor any art idea in particular; rather it is a menagerie of my own social and psychic history, becoming a ritual, sensual, comic game about elements in life.

LIST OF TITLES

1. ROPE WALKER ON A TIGHT HOUSE
1989
Clay, pain, pencil 7' x 4' x 2'
2. ITS JUST A QUESTION OF BALANCE
1989
Clay, Cast Aluminum, paint 6' x 3' x 3'
3. PAN MAN, SNAKE LADY, and THE SEEKER, Installation View
1988
Clay, slip, paint 5' x 2' x 2', 5' x 3' x 2', 4' x 2' x 3'
4. UNTITLED
1988
Pencil, and ink on canvas 6' x 3'
5. THE BUTTONDANCE
1989
cattlemarker, pencil on tarpaper 6' x 7'
6. TORNADO WOMAN
1989
cattlemarker on tarpaper 6' x 3'
7. MEPHISTO
1989
clay, glaze 4' x 3' x 2'
8. ROWING AND WADING IN THE WATER
1989
clay, glaze, goldleaf 2' x 2' x 2'
9. MY WAR
1989
cattlemarker on tarpaper 4' x 3'
10. UNTITLED
1989
cattlemarker on tarpaper 4' x 3'

LIST OF TITLES

11. THE DUKE RIDES AGAIN
1989
clay, glaze, wood, and paint 8' x 4' x 3'
12. THE SNAKE CHARMER
1989
clay, glaze, charcoal on wall, wire, paint 7' x 7' x 3' , 20' x 14'
13. UP A TREED HOUSE
1989
clay, glaze, paint, goldleaf 8' x 2' x 2'
14. ROOTED IN THE PAST
1989
clay, glaze, goldleaf 9' x 4' x 4'

vue-all

Slide • Saver
Made in U.S.A.

DATE

No.

TITLE

Rifkowitz



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Rifkowitz



13

Rifkowitz



14

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9.

RIFKOWITZ



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