



Tangible dreams and inner visions
by Ernest Pepion

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

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Bozeman, Montana

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Ernest Pepion

This thesis has been read by each 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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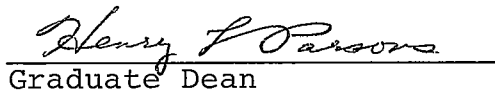
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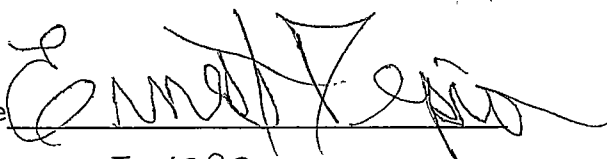

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Artist's Statement

X My paintings are autobiographical narratives which reflect my handicap and my Native American heritage. As a result, my work is more than a documentation of personal history as it expresses emotion and feelings.

X I've experienced various degrees of discrimination as an Indian growing up near a reservation border-town and attending a predominantly non-Indian school. I have had similar experiences since becoming a quadriplegic. These experiences have included belittlement as well as pity. While some non-Indian and able-bodied persons tend to feel "holier than thou," there's no basis for their feelings of superiority or pity.

X Painting is the language I use to express my feelings about the degradations we all experience at different times. This expression allows me to become a person beyond limitations. Thus, I share my dreams and fantasies through the universal language of emotion. My happy-go-lucky facade is slowly dissolving as I become more open in my work.

X Art has allowed me to address many emotions that I find difficult to talk or even write about. Before my accident, there were many activities that I enjoyed that I'll never be able to do again. Among the things that I miss most are being able to compete in rodeo events, getting up at the crack of dawn and just riding along Blacktail Creek, pow wowing or deciding spontaneously to drive to Glacier Park.

End

To compensate, I use humor to persevere. When the stick-horse of my childhood appears in my paintings, the humor is obvious. But as one looks deeper, the irony is apparent.

As a Native American, I also believe that the land is our most precious resource because it is our spiritual home. Our dependence upon technology has weakened our culture and forced us to live in a fast, plastic, imitation world. With the rape and plunder of our lands, we have threatened our cultural heritage. Since we cannot turn back time to fully restore our damaged environment, we have to protect what remains. I am greatly concerned that we are in danger of annihilating the already limited resources on the Blackfeet Reservation. The natural beauty is threatened by profit motives. When we lose our land, we shall have lost our culture. My paintings are inspired by these beliefs.

It bothers me that we are so dependent on today's technology in our daily lives. Although I need today's technology to live a more independent life, technology doesn't determine the caliber of my life. I control the quality of my life by the way I use the hand brace that holds my brush, the easel that maneuvers my canvas, the electric wheelchair and the hydraulic lift for my van. I also use technology to pursue my goal as an artist. Technology does not inspire my paintings; it only assists me in the pursuit of my artistic goals.

My paintings are inspired by my dreams. I can rodeo, hunt buffalo, and live my past life in my dreams. While my dreams are my fantasies, they become others' reality when I put them on canvas. We Indian people are very firm believers in our dreams and as such, dreams are a valuable part of our culture. I'm also able to share my dreams through the use of symbols. The women and children I incorporate into my paintings express my unfulfilled dream for an ideal family life. I've used variations of the Madonna and Child including the Immaculate Conception and the perpetuation of Isis, the Egyptian icon for maternal love. I've also created my own Venus as a substitute for my true love.

My paintings are born from the integration of my Native American culture, handicap experiences, and dreams for which I have created symbolisms that draw the viewer into my paintings. While the subjects of my paintings are very personal, the viewer is able to transcend personal histories to share the powerful language of emotions.

List of Titles

1. AS LONG AS THE GRASS SHALL GROW
1988
Oil - 66 1/2" X 171"
2. GOOD MEDICINE
1989
Oil - 88" X 54 3/4"
3. COMPANY C (God Damn You, Charlie Ranger)
1989
Oil - 50 1/2" X 109 1/2"
4. SUN DANCER
1988
Oil - 54 3/4" X 59 1/2"
5. BUFFALO JUMP
1989
Oil - 59 3/4" X 59 3/4"
6. NOT TO BE SOLD OR EXCHANGED
1989
Oil - 50" X 54 3/4"
7. AUKSOKAPI
1989
Charcoal and Pastels - 22" X 30"

TOP ↑
Ernest Reption
1988



11 1/2 x 7 1/2 x 17 1/2

As Long as the
Grass Shall Grow
Oil

TOP ↑

Good Medicine
Oil



88 x 54 3/4

Ernest Reption

TOP ↑
Ernest Reption
1989



10

1 1/2 x 10 1/2 x 10 1/2

Company C (God
Damn You Charlie
Ranger)

TOP ↑
Ernest Reption
1988



54 3/4 x 59 1/2

Sun Dancer
Oil

TOP ↑
Ernest Reption
1989



4 1/2 x 6 5/8 x 6 5/8

Buffalo Jump
Oil

TOP ↑
Ernest Reption
1989



50 x 54 3/4

Not to be Sold
or Exchanged
Oil

TOP ↑
Ernest Reption
1989



22 x 30

Aukso Kapi
charcoal, pastels















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