

Working progress [slide]
by Terence Brooks Karson

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

of

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APPROVAL

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Terence Brooks Karson

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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THE SETTING

An art gallery. It is dark; the floors are covered with plastic; debris is spread about the place; something is going on; there is someone there; a radio is buzzing; a machine is running; a light is on; large black paintings loom on the white walls. In one room--the floor covered with black plastic--is a big black desk--drawers full of things--a chair, a slide machine clicking images across its screen (familiar images). Another room: a light, a ladder, clear plastic on the floor covering a chaotic pattern that appears to be dozens of black and white drawings (more familiar images emerge, images from the screen); a chair, some paint cans and a brush. The radio is obnoxious. There is no one there.

THE PRINCIPALS

The artist, the curator, the viewer.

The exhibition is in a state of flux, it is in the process of becoming something else. The specific activities of the principals are ambiguous. The roles are obscured.

Is the artist going to use the paint on the blank canvases or is the curator about to patch and paint the walls? Is the artist looking at the images on the screen, deciding what image to paint, or is the curator reviewing the artist's work? Has the artist brought his materials into the exhibition space and is doing his work there? Has the curator decided beforehand where the paintings will go? Is the artist in his natural setting, or is he an intruder in the curator's space? Are the artist and the curator both there working toward the same ends? Why are the drawings under the plastic? Is that a floor?

If the artist and the curator can be perceived by the viewer as the same presence in this setting then the interpretation of the activities becomes more

clear. The artist/curator is doing his work in the gallery and is not an intruder. He is painting the canvases, and he is painting the walls. He is making the images and deciding on the design and display. He has made a floor of his drawings.

There are a number of cross-references that should lead the viewer to this perception. The canvases are associated with the artist, particularly blank ones in progress. The display of the canvases is associated with the curator. Buckets of paint are connected to the curator, but generally paint is associated with the artist. The desk is related to the curator. The things in the drawers identify the curator as a collector. It is his territory; they are his things. The slide machine is the curator's. Slides are associated with the curator. The images on the slides are associated with the artist. The artist can be seen as a collector of images, a curator selecting from them, using them for his own ends. The images are repeated in a different form and scale on the floor. The plastic on the floor, the debris, the ladder, the light and the radio are essentially associated with the curator but are also associated with the artist.

It is through the darkness, the drama of the backstage process and the absence of the principals that the stage is set for the third presence, the viewer.

As the artist my intention is to immediately make the viewer aware of the space he is in by placing him in direct contact with the work. To make him watch his step. He is in darkness, he is walking on plastic, the radio is making noise, a machine is glowing, clicking, buzzing. There is activity.

I want to make the viewer feel, if only for a moment, like an intruder, as if he were somewhere he shouldn't be. It is not a natural setting for the viewer. He is an intruder into the art process. This is the gallery's realm, the

curator's realm, the artist's realm. The public is not invited to work in progress.

After the initial uneasiness, the viewer is drawn into the space through curiosity. By using familiar things that he can identify with, the newspapers, the plastic, the desk and the things in it, the ladder, the paint, the radio and the gallery space itself, I hope to bring the viewer from a state of slight discomfort to a state of recognition of the various elements and on into a state of response to the images on the screen and on the floor. Once the recognition is established, I hope to bring the viewer into a state of familiarity and active participation, playing a guessing game with the images he perceives and the space he finds himself in. The knowledge and information brought to the installation by the viewer is critical to the viewer's perception and interpretation of it. In this setting the viewer is brought into the process of art and becomes a part of it. The viewer is no longer an intruder but an essential participant.

The fundamental premise in this installation is that my work is always in process. I will work a single subject into an entire body of work through the process of transformation. Each time my work transforms itself through another medium or material, it further informs itself on another level. Through this method the work develops a chronology and a history that is intrinsic to the whole.

As an artist and as a curator I rely on the viewer to complete the process of my work. It is through the communication with the viewer and the viewer's participation and interpretation that the work is fulfilled. It has gone from the mind of the artist, through the physical process of art, into the realm of the curator and finally into the mind of the viewer.

My work as an artist and my work as a curator have, after years of conflict and resistance, begun to resemble each other. As an artist I gather, collect, cull, alter, manipulate and fabricate objects and images for art. As a curator I gather, collect, cull and manipulate objects and images of art. It is the love of objects and images that enriches and informs both activities.

LIST OF SLIDES

1. WORKING PROGRESS #1
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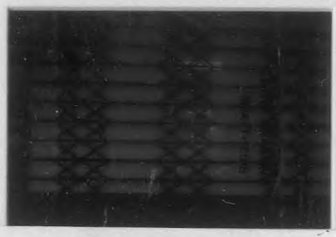
13. WORKING PROGRESS #13
14. WORKING PROGRESS #14
15. WORKING PROGRESS #15



1. WORKING PROGRESS #1



2. WORKING PROGRESS #2



3. WORKING PROGRESS #3



4. WORKING PROGRESS #4



5. WORKING PROGRESS #5



6. WORKING PROGRESS #6



7. WORKING PROGRESS #7



8. WORKING PROGRESS #8



9. WORKING PROGRESS #9



10. WORKING PROGRESS #10



11. WORKING PROGRESS #11



12. WORKING PROGRESS #12



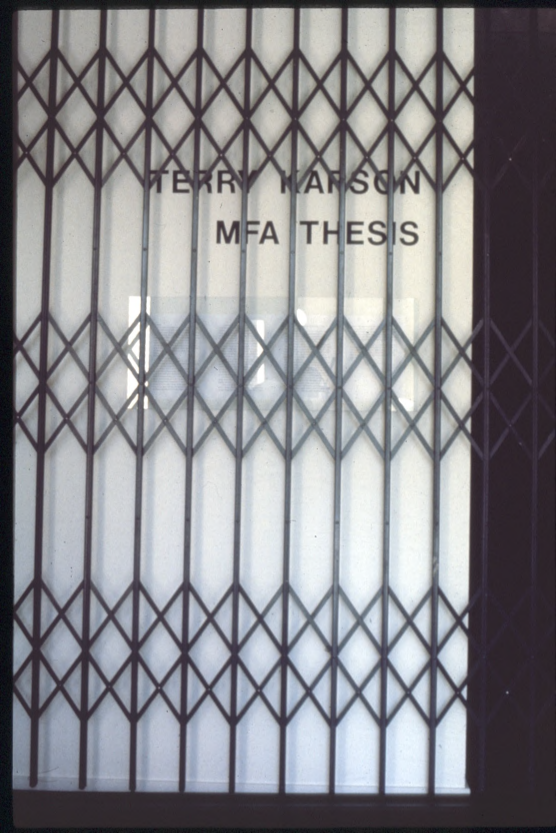
13. WORKING PROGRESS #13



14. WORKING PROGRESS #14



15. WORKING PROGRESS #15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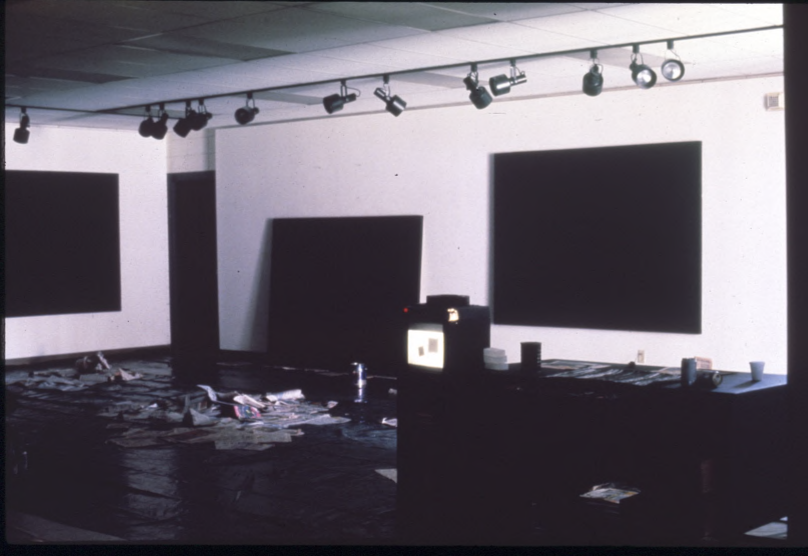

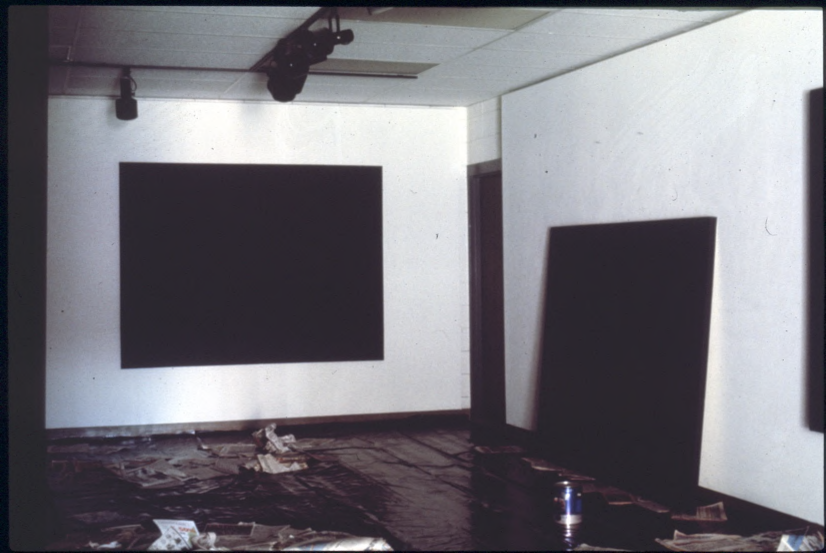


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