



Transmutations [slide]  
by Grayce Holzheimer

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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TRANSMUTATIONS

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

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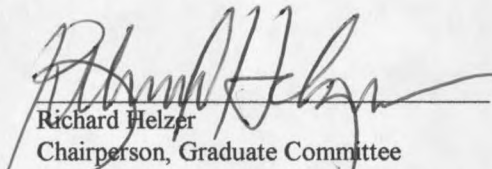
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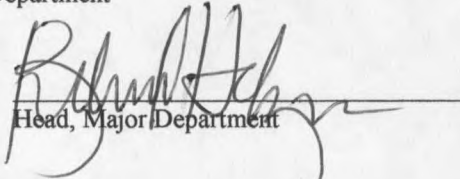
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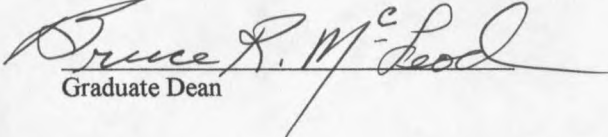
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Grace L. Holzheuer

Date

April 14, 2001

Growing up in the rural west charged my life with a rich sense of discovery and creative adventure. As a child I would gather fossils, driftwood and animal bones and arrange them into sculptures which I then painted. I was imposing my own order on the natural world and made it part of my personal vision. My pastime of collecting from Nature and rearranging found materials into these early sculptures was a formative experience leading to the imagery apparent in my current body of work.

As an artist, I am interested in making sculpture that depicts the evolution of an imaginary species. Evolution, metamorphosis, movement and growth are my main inspirations. To transmute means to change from one form, species, condition, nature or substance into another. Transmutation is expressed by the fusion of unique pieces of driftwood that have animated qualities and combined with natural shapes I have manipulated to create a dynamic organism. The handmade forms are distinguished with general animal and human qualities, such as legs, arms, heads and fingers. The action of growth is exhibited by a rhythm of forms that dissolve and merge, creating the illusion of a world in motion.

Among the surface details on the sculpture "Tactile Loop" are replicates of my fingers, hands and knuckles. These details are remnants of the process, the action of my hands digging into clay. More importantly, the rhythm of the surface treatment visually aids the appearance of undulating forms that change into or come out of each other. The use of

my hands and fingers as surface details along with plant and animal traits is a reflection of my belief that I am part of Nature and not separate from it.

As a sculptor, I borrow freely from my previous painting experience to assert vivacity through the use of energetic color to accentuate form, texture and movement in my work. Color has a visual impact. If these pieces were black and white, they would be more about shape and form than about motion and transformation. In the piece "Blue Morpho", the flow from primary into secondary colors heightens the striding movement and implied growth in the sculpture. With color, the heavy emphasis on texture is more apparent. Color allows me to achieve emotional qualities that give each piece character and vitality.

The actual process in which these sculptures are made reflects the idea of evolution. I begin by making Nature derived shapes which are captured in two part molds. Clay is then imbedded into the molds. Details and refined form are carved into the clay and then wax is poured into the negative impressions. An investment mold is made around the wax and it is then cast in metal using the lost wax method. From the beginning form to the final piece a transformation takes place that mirrors the transmutation that is the subject of my work. Despite the laborious casting process, I am enamored with how metal captures the fluidity of Nature with such static permanence.

My sculpture is about a series of amalgamations and transmutations. Conceptually, I unite plant, animal and human characteristics to reveal the beauty of unlikely regeneration and create my own cross-pollinated species. The process of casting transitory natural materials such as wood and plants into metal is also a transformation. This change from one material into another gives durability to the ephemeral and stability to the delicate. Joining these cast natural materials with cast metal shapes that have been imbedded with animal and human characteristics infers evolution and a celebration of mutated Nature. Lastly, the artwork itself is a result of a combination of painting and sculpture. My body of work speaks of the universal the issues of evolution, regeneration and transmutation through the visual language of sculpture.

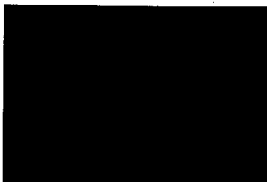
## LIST OF SLIDES

1. Gallery View
2. Gallery View
3. Gallery View
4. Exanthema, patinate aluminum, 2' 4" x 2' 10" x 8' 9", 125 lbs, 2001.
5. Exanthema, detail
6. Jubilum, polychromed aluminum, 5' x 4' 5" x 7' 4", 155 lbs, 2001.
7. Jubilum, detail.
8. Mantis, patinated aluminum, 4' 7" x 3' 9" x 9' 8", 140 lbs, 2001.
9. Mantis, detail.
10. Blue Morpho, polychromed aluminum, 4' x 5' x 7' 2", 75 lbs, 2001.
11. Blue Morpho, detail.
12. Tactile Loop, polychromed aluminum, 4" x 3' 5" x 7' 8", 90 lbs, 2000.
13. Tactile Loop, detail.



GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Tactile Loop"  
detail

2001



MARCH 31, 2001 38

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Mantis"  
detail

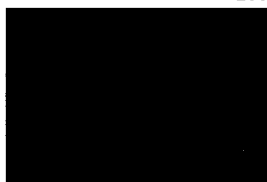
2001



MARCH 31, 2001 21

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Exanthema"  
detail

2001



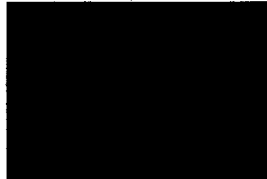
MARCH 31, 2001 9

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Blue Morpho" 4' x 5' x 7'2" 75 lbs.  
polychromed aluminum 2001



MARCH 31, 2001 24

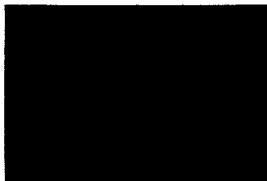
GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Jubilum" 5' x 4'5" x 7'4" 155 lbs.  
polychromed aluminum 2001



MARCH 31, 2001 12

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Blue Morpho"  
detail

2001



MARCH 31, 2001 27

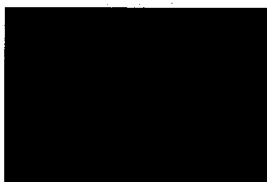
GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Jubilum"  
detail

2001



MARCH 31, 2001 15

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Tactile Loop" 4' x 3'5" x 7'8"  
90 lbs., polychromed alum. 2001



MARCH 31, 2001 30

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Mantis" 4'7" x 3'9" x 9'8" 140 lbs.  
patinated aluminum 2001



MARCH 31, 2001 18

MARCH 31, 2001 2

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
Gallery View  
Thesis Exhibit 2001



MARCH 31, 2001 4

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
Gallery View  
Thesis Exhibit 2001

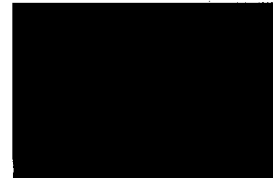


MARCH 31, 2001 36

GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
Gallery View  
Thesis Exhibit 2001



GRAYCE HOLZHEIMER  
"Exanthema" 2'4" x 2'10" x 8'9"  
125 lbs., patinated aluminum 2001



MARCH 31, 2001 7































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