



Functional forms [slide]
by Louis Howard Katz

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 and I are participants in a dialogue. This dialogue concerns the interrelations of Beauty and Nature, Fine and Minor Arts, and process and product. The dialogue is an investigation. As in all investigations, some leads are more fruitful than others, but all of the evidence has relevance. I am only one of the participants in the dialogue, and consequently have only partial control of the direction this dialogue takes. In this dialogue my work functions as the primary link to the public; that is, to teach the public my vocabulary and then show them the content of this dialogue.

During the development of this body of work, I have begun to clarify my concept of Beauty, and its relationship to Nature. Nature as I see it is beautiful, and I believe my esteem is due to comprehension of natural order. Nature does not exhibit total control. Nature only sets the parameters within which random variation will occur. Nature does not determine where the wind will carry a leaf, only the means of its transport and the limits on its final location. I feel myself a part of this order. As Nature's pawn, I set some of the parameters. I am as much a part of my work as it is a part of me.

I have chosen terracotta clay and salt firing for most of this body of work. This combination of material and process most vividly shows variation in color and surface caused by the random effects of fire. If the distribution of color, from light to dark, in "Alike Jugs" were plotted on a graph, the data would assume a bell shaped curve. This form is common to many graphed natural phenomena. In "Sigma," the distribution of colors reminds one of rocks in a streambed. Other variables in my work such as glaze thickness, size, and shape, similarly graphed, also exhibit this distribution.

When I was a child, a common thought of my peers was that the solar system was just an atom on a broader scale, its nucleus and electrons like the sun and the planets. Much of my interest in packing and stacking pots, both in and out of kilns, comes from my elementary knowledge of crystalline structure and its relation to efficient use of space. "Sigma" can be thought of as having a structure composed of multiples of a variation of an octahedron, a form coincidental ly similar to that of many ceramic oxides. Likewise, the layering in "Out of Kiln" is similar to that in kaolinite, the mineralogical building block of clay. An extension of my concept of Beauty in natural order and the subjectiveness of truth is my feeling that there is beauty in all things. Natural order, and therefore Beauty, manifests itself in everything, and all artifacts of man illustrate the nature of their maker.

This view of Beauty I hold intellectually. However, there are objects my aesthetic eye tells me are not beautiful. It is my belief that my eye is being negatively prejudiced, due to cultural values, against these objects. This conflict between eye and intellect is a driving force in my work. A key example of this disagreement is the styrofoam cup whose form is in near perfect harmony with its function.

My objection to this object of intellectual appeal seems to reside in its unyielding homogeneous sterility. Rather than make works that primarily function as embodiments of beauty, I have attempted to make objects which speak of that beauty. My work expresses the manner in which it was made.

As Duchamp's Readymades balance between Art and Nonart, my assemblies of pots and bricks balance

between being individual objects and collections of objects. They are simultaneously representations and presentations. While the collections may be classified as sculpture, they remain pots and bricks. As a maker of "found objects," I use art for the glorification of craft.

FUNCTIONAL FORMS

by

Louis Howard Katz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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Approval

of a thesis submitted by

Louis Howard Katz

This thesis has been read by each member of the author's graduate 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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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

My work and I are participants in a dialogue. This dialogue concerns the interrelations of Beauty and Nature, Fine and Minor Arts, and process and product. The dialogue is an investigation. As in all investigations, some leads are more fruitful than others, but all of the evidence has relevance. I am only one of the participants in the dialogue, and consequently have only partial control of the direction this dialogue takes. In this dialogue my work functions as the primary link to the public; that is, to teach the public my vocabulary and then show them the content of this dialogue.

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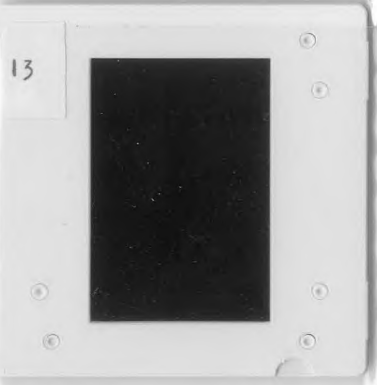
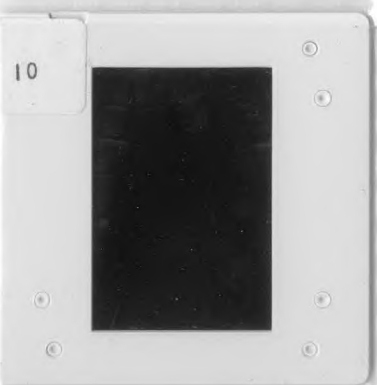
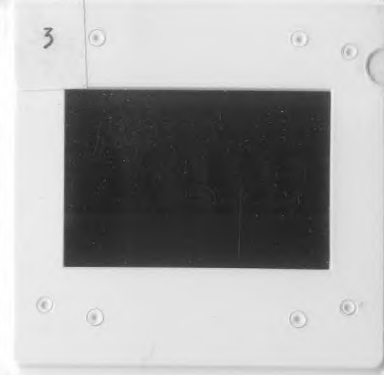
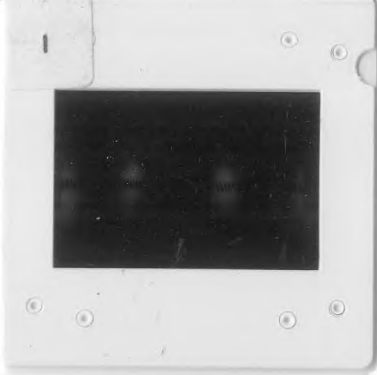
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LIST OF SLIDES

1. Gallery Installation, Thesis Exhibition
Fine Arts Gallery, Haynes Hall, MSU
2. Title Wall, Thesis Exhibition
Fine Arts Gallery, Haynes Hall, MSU
3. Bottles
detail
salted stoneware
4. Array
5'x5'
salted stoneware
5. Out of Kiln
4'x4'x2'
salted terracotta
6. Out of kiln
detail
7. Sigma
18"x24"x20"
salted porcelain
8. Sigma
detail
9. Scove
4'x4'x4'
terracotta
10. Scove
detail
11. Brick Cart
3'x4'x2'
studio floor adobe
12. Oil Droppers
5'x1'x1'
salted clays

13. Jug
5'x1'x1'
salted clays
14. Model for a Monument to The Tomb of the Unknown Craftsman
24''x6''x6''
brick and tile, ersatz gold leaf
15. Equipment
10'x10'x4'
borrowed and made artifacts
16. Line Blend
9''x20''x4''
salted terracotta, nepheline syenite and wood ash
17. Three in a Box
11''x16''x5''
thrown, extruded and rampressed clays
18. Split Bricks
10''x7''x3''
found object of inspiration
19. Tamari Droppers
8''x5''x6''
salted stoneware, pyrometric cones
20. Avadim Haiyenu
4''x10''x2''
studio floor adobe



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LOUIS KATZ

FUNCTIONAL

FORMS

