



983 Impetus, statement, media
by Matthew Lamoureux Sugarman

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:

This paper touches on the impetus for the creation of my art; the expressive/statement function of my art as it relates to how I view objective and subjective realities; and the form my artwork takes formally/graphically on a two dimensional surface - including some indications as to why I chose that form. Several offshoots of these basic themes will also be discussed.

IMPETUS I will begin by quoting a statement about creative impetus made by Giulio Argan as part of the introduction to Paul Klee's notebooks. The statement summarizes my own needs to create art: "The fundamental themes are always those of non-positivity, of allusiveness, of the uncertainty of existence, of the emptiness of reality, and the need to fill that void by human endeavour and artistic creation. These are born by the contradiction which exists between our understanding of the anguished uncertainty of everything, ! and our indestructible awareness of existing, and of existing by necessity in one time, in one space, and in one world." For me, this quote outlines those contradictions which define the tragic elements in human existence, the key to creative impetus being the desire to transcend the tragic.

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Matthew Lamoureux Sugarman

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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ARTIST'S STATEMENT

This paper touches on the impetus for the creation of my art; the expressive/statement function of my art as it relates to how I view objective and subjective realities; and the form my artwork takes formally/graphically on a two dimensional surface - including some indications as to why I chose that form. Several offshoots of these basic themes will also be discussed.

IMPETUS

I will begin by quoting a statement about creative impetus made by Giulio Argan as part of the introduction to Paul Klee's notebooks. The statement summarizes my own needs to create art: "The fundamental themes are always those of non-positivity, of allusiveness, of the uncertainty of existence, of the emptiness of reality, and the need to fill that void by human endeavour and artistic creation. These are born by the contradiction which exists between our understanding of the anguished uncertainty of everything, and our indestructible awareness of existing, and of existing by necessity in one time, in one space, and in one world."

For me, this quote outlines those contradictions which define the tragic elements in human existence, the key to creative impetus being the desire to transcend the tragic.

For the artist imbued with this idea or philosophical relationship to the world, perhaps the only true element for heroism, or spiritual assent on a grand scale, is through the imagination. That is, imagination as a vehicle for freeing imaginative and intuitive mental functions so that they may both work in confrontation with a certain void of meaning I find in everyday existence.

OVERALL THEME - IDEA/STATEMENT

The overall idea/theme in my art is that of the search through imagery for the ways that consciousness works in the world, and beyond that, to discover what the true nature(s) of consciousness is and/or are. I often feel intuitively, as a momentary revelation, that the true nature of consciousness is that of one universal consciousness bonding man, nature, and even all matter together in some way. The connection to universal awareness is not the experience of my own consciousness in everyday life, but a missing link to be found hidden somewhere within myself and probably this missing link can be found in my own perception which is changeable.

I find that through working in art one can probe different ways of perceiving, doing, experiencing, and discovering different states of awareness, including intuitive states of being in a now space, between past and future.

GRAPHIC/VISUAL CONTENT

The graphic content of my own artwork is largely image oriented, but seldom images that are literal representations or illustrations of the real world. While remaining conscious of formal aspects, I create graphic forms (springing from my imagination) about both my inner reality and some aspects of the way I see reality in a universal context.

Although the basic compositional structure of my artwork is usually clear cut and simple, some of my more recent compositions exhibit a generally cluttered appearance which belies those simple compositional elements which are the foundation of those pieces. The clutter comes about where I have worked to create a contradiction between the image presented as a dimensional illusion, and the drawing surface itself (the flat paper). I do this because I enjoy the feeling of visual tension created when cross-reference is continual between flat paper and dimensional illusion. This type of visual confusion or ambiguity strengthens the mood, idea, or statement of that particular piece of art.

The pieces of artwork that I handle in this fashion are in the minority. Their mood and appearance is somewhat different from the majority of my work, and I will not address specific differences in this paper. I will, instead, continue to discuss my overall work in general.

My formal aesthetic in art follows my wish to make simple and strong statements. It follows, then, that my formal idea in regards to making art is almost always to create a simple and compelling combination of formal elements: color, form, overall composition, and in some cases, emotional mood. With color, for example, I try and use simple and compelling combinations of color that are in harmony both with all the aspects of the image, and with those ideas/statements I am trying to express through it.

I usually prefer single, iconographic images. Sometimes an iconographic image appears in my mind almost complete, so that I have only to bring the dream image to reality. More often, an idea springs from a conscious or partially subconscious idea. As I begin to understand something of the impetus of an idea, I find the central visual image may require a support system of symbolic and/or structural elements around the visual center, or core of the statement.

When I work in that mode, my artwork is very construction oriented; that is; I add physical embellishments: idea, intuitional, emotional, symbolic, unconscious and formal elements to a piece of art until it arrives at a logical point of conclusion. One overriding concern in doing this is that the artwork end up a comprehensive system, making a clear a statement as possible.

I am always trying to clarify the idea, not to the expense of the visual. If I don't feel a statement is as clear as I can make it, then a more clarified visual statement about an idea may well be attempted in a future work.

Let me make a short divergence at this point. I don't mean to suggest by my wording that I somehow expect my artworks to present some kind of statement clear in all of its levels of meanings to a wide audience. On the most important level of the artwork's deeper meanings, they seem somewhat intellectually ambiguous to me just as they might also seem to other people viewing them. It is impossible for me to accurately explain the meanings of my artworks. They are inexplicable in that they can't be grasped by the somewhat flat, linear communication processes of literature or speech. The meaning of the work is brought about through empathetic and intuitive modes. My understanding of the artworks comes through these modes and so it must come to the viewing audience if they are to understand them in any real way - at least in my opinion.

As to empathy and intuition; I feel that they are real and possible due to certain common bonds, certain universals, which seem to me to be the foundations for what is universally defined as human experience, (the shared experience of human existence). This shared experience can be arrived at through empathetic and intuitive processes, and through

them the universal systems (foundations) of human experience are felt and understood to exist.

I deal with three dimensional objects continually as a part of everyday life. For me, dreams are constructed of these objects. I hold onto reality and the function of existence through these objects. Use of the three dimensional illusionary (from my imagination) object is the tool I feel most consistent with both my personality and the idea/statements I wish to make.

Symbolism: A candle, for instance, may symbolize hope. Or an upturned candle may symbolize the extinction of hope. Communication through visual symbolism predates written languages. It would seem that if mankind was to think conceptually, before language grew into the complex structure it has in the last thousand or so years, then mankind must have used solid objects to represent purely conceptual ideas. The idea of hope is a good example. It doesn't exist as an object, yet it can be symbolized through objects, by choosing those objects most suited poetically and/or contextually toward emoting (or expressing) the idea of hope. Of course, those objects that come from the artist's mind must come from his own field of experience. For this reason, those objects used symbolically by an artist to represent an idea or feeling must differ somewhat from artist to artist.

Symbolism reaches into the artist's conscious and/or subconscious mind to find its poetic symbols, and with them

tries to evoke a response within everyday reality. When I use symbols within my artwork, they may be subconscious and/or allude to my conscious understanding, but I am not satisfied until I feel symbolic representations are as perfectly depicted as I can make them within the context of the given work.

MEDIA

In working with any medium, I try and work on ideas that address themselves to my concerns and at the same time take advantage of that mediums special qualities.

Lithography, for instance, is a medium I have worked in most extensively during the last five years. Because lithography lends itself to detailed and sensitive draftsmanship, it is a medium particularly applicable to three dimensional illusionistic images. At the same time, lithography influences me toward thinking and imaging in terms of images and ideas particularly adaptable to it as a medium.

An example of a special quality available through the lithographic medium is the freedom to draw images that can be worked on extensively over a long period of time, and still retain a high degree of crispness and clarity.

Another special quality of lithography is that by employing the lithographic medium I can create artwork possessing a unique luminosity of color wedded to an overall consistency of surface. This effect is acquired through the printing process itself which allows for the relatively flat

overlaying of colors, combined with the use of fine quality semi-transparent color inks.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would just like to restate that the idea/statements my art attempts to communicate, the intuitive act as it is involved in the making of art, and the use of art in a search to discover what lies beyond reality, are my three main concerns.

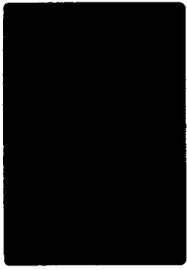
This last concern to discover what lies beyond reality is, to me, the most important of all. I feel there is a mystical reality to the self (soul) which goes beyond the physical and bonds all nature together. Ideally, I want my art to allude to that reality, and make a universal statement.

LIST OF SLIDES

1. Bird Monks Journey
20½" x 22½"
2. The Ship
22½" x 30"
3. The Paris Man
18" x 23"
4. Birthday Lady
30" x 40"
5. Top
9" x 16"
6. Spining Top with Candles
45" x 56³
7. Crazy Artist Heads Out
to Measure the Landscape
22" x 28"
8. Dog
22" x 30"
9. Story of Mankind
22" x 34"
10. Story of Mankind (Detail)
11. Purple Lady with Two Tops
30" x 40"
12. Hurricane
22" x 30"
13. Hurricane (Detail)
14. War Scene
22" x 30"
15. War Scene (Detail)

①

MADE IN U.S.A.



Lithograph

②

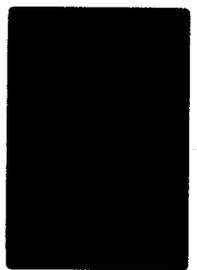
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Lithograph

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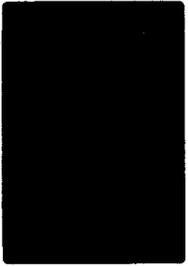
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color Lithograph

④

MADE IN U.S.A.



Pastel

⑤

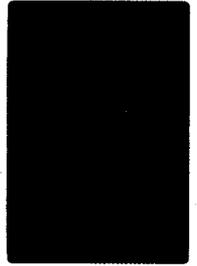
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lithograph

⑥

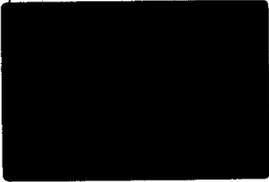
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Pastel

⑦

MADE IN U.S.A.



Pastel and Serigraph

⑧

MADE IN U.S.A.



acrylic and Pastel

⑨

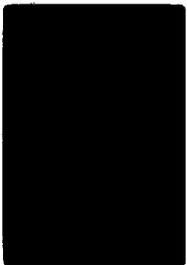
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Serigraph

⑩

MADE IN U.S.A.



Serigraph

⑪

MADE IN U.S.A.



Pastel

⑫

MADE IN U.S.A.



Lithograph

⑬

MADE IN U.S.A.



Lithograph

⑭

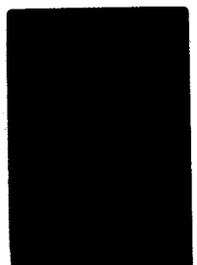
MADE IN U.S.A.



Lithograph

⑮

MADE IN U.S.A.



Lithograph



