



Dawn of a new day [slide]  
by Susan Henderson

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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Susan Henderson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

June 1989

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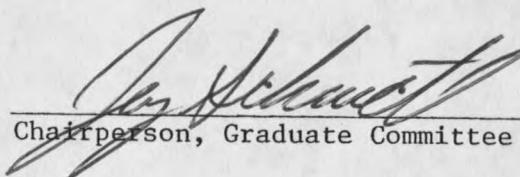
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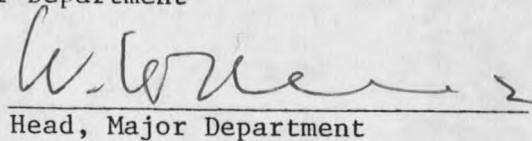
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Date

  
Chairperson, Graduate Committee

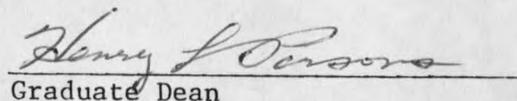
Approved for the Major Department

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July 21, 1989  
Date

  
Graduate Dean

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Artist's Statement

I have worked in clay for sixteen years. For me, answering the question "Why do I work in clay?" is hard. Clay reinforces my imagery and content of landscape and figures because clay is earth; when it is fired it becomes rock. The brittle unevenness of the surface, the colors, the cracks, the dents, the holes represent human vulnerabilities, frailties, imperfections, their humanness, their perserverance, their impermanence. I alter the clay body to make the clay surface look similar to a slice of land with veins of color running through it. My firing process furthers the geological nature of my sculptures. The clay is underfired and unevenly fired resulting in further color variations on the surface. Clay cracks as it dries. These cracks add to the natural land image and reinforce my content. I build in supports on either side of where I want a crack, cut the clay on the inner sides and let the shrinkage do the rest of the cutting. Clay lends itself to texture. Feelings are channeled directly into the clay surface through finger marks that follow the contour of the form.

Coil building in clay is meditative and centering. I surrender over to a process much bigger than myself by working in this scale. The duration in time involved in completing each sculpture helps me develop deeper involvement. The monumental aspect of my work reinforces my content of land and figures.

I make paintings in conjunction with sculptures for three reasons. First I use painting as a vehicle to translate an abstract concept into a sculpture. Second, by placing the sculpture I'm working on into another context (a painting), I can see it differently and resolve problems. Finally, the paintings are an immediate expression of feelings as compared to my sculptures, which are a slow expression of my feelings on a deeper, more profound level. In my paintings I record glimpses of the beauty in life, the moment.

The forces of nature cannot be bound. They symbolize something intrinsically inherent in human nature, freedom. My influences are the sensations evoked by nature. I stand still and conjure up sensations such as the wind blowing on my ears. I am interested in such concepts as becoming one with nature and animals. Outer voices from my environment and inner voices from childhood influence my work.

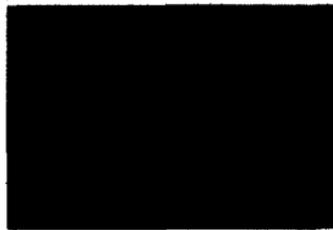
Therapy, spirituality, religion, philosophy and sociology are the topics of my work. I am interested in how individuals, groups of people and the natural world fit together. The essence of human spirits and how one is shaped by life is the basis of my art. My work is about an on-going process of growth and healing stimulated by a transformation from dualism to spirituality. My work is about an acceptance of who one is by recovering what has been lost. I do work to offer hope and stimulate ideas of alternatives and choices in life (being). My sculptures are meant to convey the sense that we are the same. No one is better or worse than anyone

else, and that even bad experiences in life are positive, for one can learn from them.

List of Titles

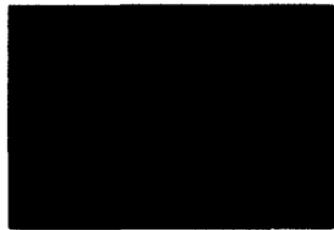
1. UNTITLED  
1988  
Clay - 240" x 180" x 50"
2. UNTITLED  
1988  
Clay - 240" x 180" x 50"
3. REMEMBERING  
1989  
Clay - 200" x 190" x 55"
4. REMEMBERING  
1989  
Clay - 200" x 190" x 55"
5. THE ABYSS I  
1988  
Acrylic - 162" x 96"
6. THREE FIGURES  
1989  
Acrylic - 72" x 36"

"Untitled" 1988 top  
Clay 240x180x50"



Susan Henderson

"Remembering" 1989 top  
CLAY 200x190x55"



Susan Henderson

"Remembering" 1989 top  
CLAY  
200x190x55"



Susan Henderson

"Untitled" 1988 top  
Clay 240x180x50"



Susan Henderson

"The Abyss I" 1988 LB  
Acrylic 162x96" top



Susan Henderson  
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"Three Figures" 1989 top  
Acrylic  
72x36"



Susan Henderson

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