



Sanctuary [slide]  
by Susan Rae Robinson

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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SANCTUARY

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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of

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APPROVAL

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Susan Rae Robinson

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.

April 19, 1994  
Date

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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"To see a world in a grain of sand  
and a heaven in a wildflower  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
and eternity in an hour?"

-William Blake

Human beings have a long and rich history of creating sacred places. From Anasazi kivas to Gothic cathedrals, man has built an environment to suit his spiritual needs. For a lot of people, the ancient traditions are still a powerful source of inspiration, but for some, although still valuable, they lack a modern perspective. Joseph Campbell, an expert on mythology, said, "We in the West have named our God; or rather, we have had the godhead named for us in a book from a time and place that are not our own." In my sanctuary I am attempting to create a space for our own time, based on what I perceive our needs to be.

In this sanctuary, the accent is on experience, attained by active exploration of the space. Joseph Campbell said people need to seek out their "own experience: not [have] faith in someone else's." This sanctuary requires the participant to physically search the space with a small flashlight for objects, textures and images that allude to the mystery of life on earth, and beyond. The limited length of the flashlight beam demands a closer scrutiny of the space and increases the intimacy within the structure. One cannot merely shuffle along a traditional museum wall and view the area. Our culture has transformed us into passive viewers and insatiable consumers. We watch television, listen to the radio, watch sports with religious devotion, and passively glide through galleries and museums,

consuming information, but gaining no experience. However, in this environment, the idea of the traditional viewer is obsolete.

For nearly nine months the installation has been in bits and pieces. The environment has built itself in my mind, but the physical reality of the whole space eluded me until I actually installed it in the gallery. This is the riskiest project I have ever undertaken. There were three main stages in the construction phase. Each phase took on its own personality throughout the process. I was worried about unifying all three stages without severely limiting the possibilities of new ideas finding their way into the piece. This created a wide range of emotions which included frustration and fear, punctuated by feelings of anger, entrapment, and futility. Unless I wanted to feel like this for the whole year, I had to surrender some control of the outcome to chance and trust the process of art and my intuition. Therefore, the outcome will very likely be a mixed bag of successes and failures.

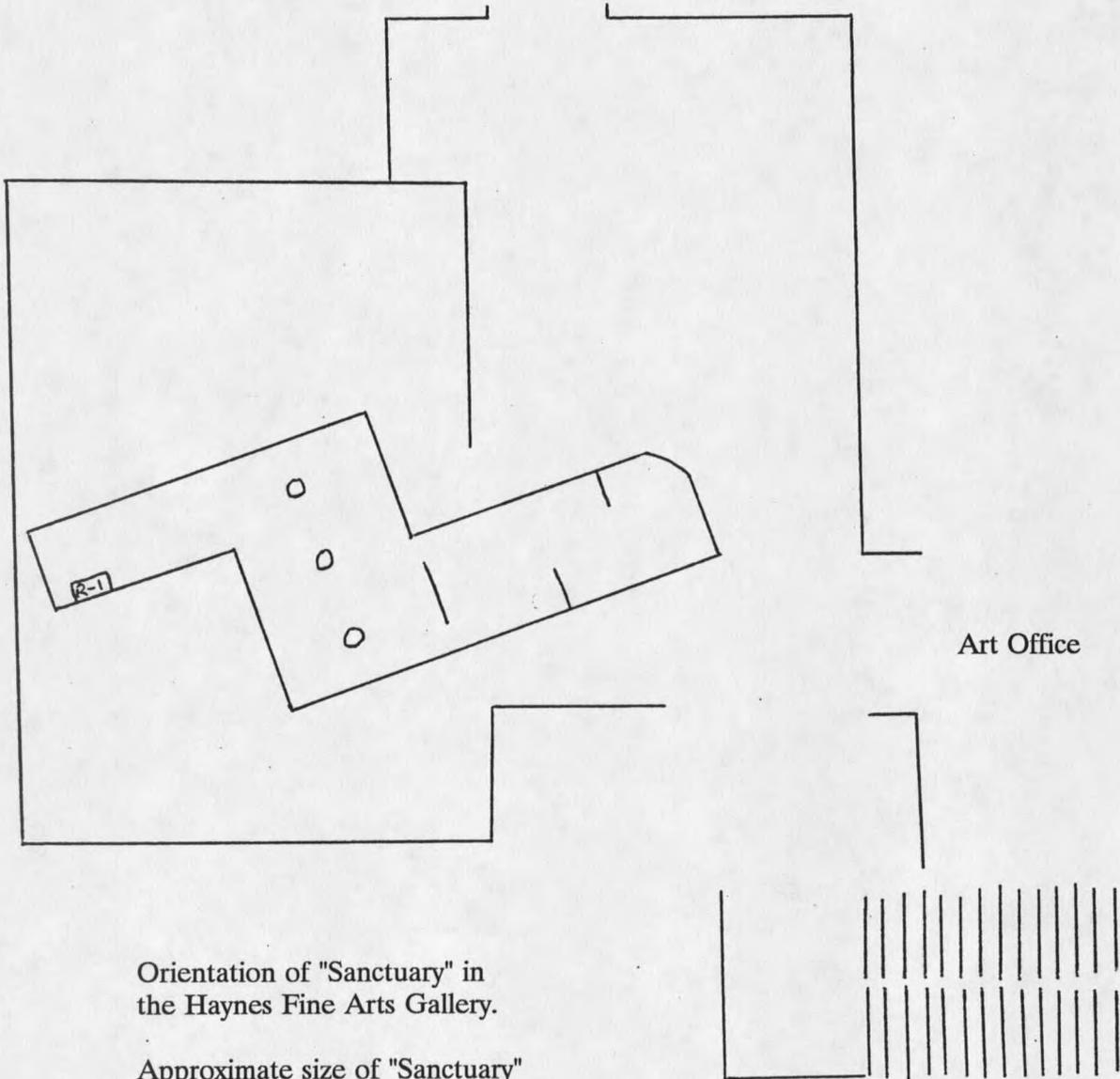
Texture is of utmost concern. That is why I chose to keep the natural achromatic quality of the clay and paper mixture. The small amount of color that is present will be unexpected, since in the muted light of the space, the color cannot be seen until a beam of light directly hits the object.

The traditional materials for sculpture are stone, wood, clay and metal. I am using all of those materials in this structure. Wood and metal provide the structural support and integrity, but their presence is not hidden. Stone is present in small amounts, both in its natural state and also transformed by the machines of man. The use of clay was the most challenging aspect in this project. The problem was how to manipulate the media of choice to do what I wanted it to do. Mixing paper pulp with the clay was the answer. This provided me with an extremely versatile medium. I could build small or

large, sturdy sheets of clay.

Clay is an inorganic substance, but to me, it brings everything to life. Man attempts to answer the fundamental questions "Who am I?", "Where did I come from?" and "Where am I going?" through religion, art, and science. It is my belief that in order to survive we must find a way to integrate these pursuits into a new set of beliefs which will guide us through the twenty-first century and beyond. Albert Einstein believed God "to be essentially the sum total of the physical laws which describe the universe." The physical laws of the universe created us from the atoms of dead stars. New scientific evidence suggests clay may have acted as a catalyst to form RNA, a molecule that controls chemical activity within cells. Thus began our creation myth. What a rich history all living things share in this evolutionary journey! This sanctuary is a repository for my interpretation of the basic building blocks of life that are present on earth, and are abundant in the universe as well.

N



Orientation of "Sanctuary" in the Haynes Fine Arts Gallery.

Approximate size of "Sanctuary" 265 square feet.

R-1 = Entrance

## LIST OF SLIDES

1. "Sanctuary" entrance, paper clay, wire, wood, glass. Total area approx. 250 sq. ft., 94" high, 1994.
2. Southeast exterior, 94" x 23'.
3. East end and northeast exterior.
4. Northwest exterior.
5. North side exterior.
6. Detail, north exterior wall, approx. 30" x 22".
7. Detail, north exterior wall, (paddles) approx. 30" x 22".
8. Detail, east end, approx. 60" x 50".
9. Interior entrance, toward Pillar Room.
10. Pillar Room, northwest view, approx. 8' x 13' x 9'.
11. Pillar Room.
12. Interior, east view, approx. 8' x 5' x 15'.
13. Interior, east view.
14. Interior, detail, 9".
15. Interior, detail, 18".

Susan Rae Robinson



Entrance

1

Susan Rae Robinson



Southeast Exterior

2

Susan Rae Robinson



East End

3

Susan Rae Robinson



NW Exterior

4

Susan Rae Robinson



Exterior

5

Susan Rae Robinson



Detail

6

Susan Rae Robinson



Detail

7

Susan Rae Robinson



Detail

8

Susan Rae Robinson



Interior

9

Susan Rae Robinson



Pillar Room

10

Susan Rae Robinson



Pillar Room

11

Susan Rae Robinson



Interior

12

Susan Rae Robinson



Interior

13

Susan Rae Robinson



Interior Detail

14

Susan Rae Robinson



Interior Detail

15



