



The far field [slide]  
by Denise F Carter

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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by

Denise F. Carter

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

of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

April 2000

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by

Denise F. Carter

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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April 5, 2000  
Date

Approved for the School of Art

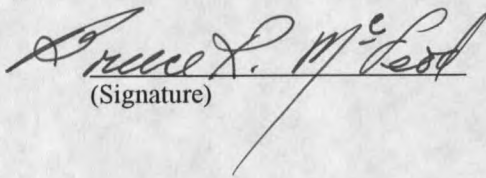
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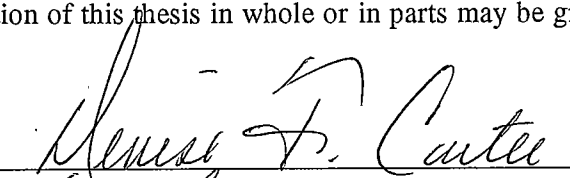
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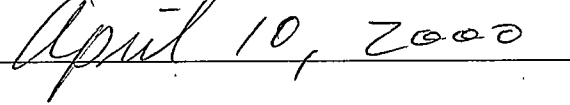
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The “far field” is a place where the familiar merges with the unknown. It is a field where neglected cultivation melds into untamed ditches and brambles. It is here that the artificial commingles with the natural to create new forms and environments. All human making is a transformation of the natural world. The sculptures in this exhibition are the result of my interest in physically manipulating natural materials to create forms that retain and reflect the intrinsic qualities of the organic and the artificial. My intent with this work is to create forms that seem to span both the natural and manmade worlds.

Natural materials are very concrete. We gain an intimacy with them by directly experiencing them through touch, sight, and smell. I selected the organic materials used in these sculptures from fields and roadside ditches. By using my hands to harvest the materials, I had a personal, tactile involvement with them in their natural state. The relationships experienced at the gathering sites eventually became important components of my sculpture. For example, at one site, several large rectangular rocks hanging in barbed wire webs held down a fence line above a ditch. This practical use of natural forms became an important consideration in the piece “Suspended Cache”.

In forming the sculptures, I wanted a more intimate involvement with the materials and with the creative process—closing the distance between my hand and the final form. To achieve this, I processed the materials by gently manipulating them into shapes without the use of any mechanical intermediaries. Working in this way maintained my sensitivity to

the qualities of the natural materials and allowed for playful, spontaneous composition.

The process is similar to the one that English sculptor Barry Flanagan employed during the late 1960's for his own work. Flanagan's filled and stuffed sculptures were the result of his own response to materials and his delight in playfully manipulating them. This sense of play in the composing process allowed the element of chance—the precocious character of natural materials-- to enter into the final form. In this way, play led to discovery.

However, unlike Flanagan, I exert some control over my sculptural shapes by instilling into the natural materials a sense of contemplation of the processes involved. The direct yet sensitive methods I use in approaching materials and the creative act brings to mind the processes and products involved with the more familiar forms of commercial packaging. Packaging implies value and purpose through the sensitive manipulation of materials into a concealed and/or contained form. The contents of the bundle is defined by the bundle's "skin" or outer layer of the form. In my sculptures, the distinctive physical qualities of the natural materials are the textural surface of the forms, imbuing the sculptures with a tactile, organic quality. In "Seedbed", the wheat is clearly visible sandwiched between waxed layers of cheesecloth. The stiff stalks create impressions on the surface of the form while the delicate bearded heads fray dangerously outside of the packet. The form's surface shows the wheat's intrinsic duality—the combination of fragility and strength within one material. In contrast, the process involved in containing and/or concealing the natural contents of the bundle is reflected in its form. The bundle's

form is created by my direct manipulation of the natural materials through the process of packaging. In this way, an artificial or man-made quality is instilled to the sculpture. In "Suspended Cache", the process I used to manipulate the natural materials and create the form is clearly seen. The sisal ropes were pulled and wrapped, squeezing the straw stuffed column into a constricted sensual shape. The rocks provide an honest and direct anchor to the form's shape. By manipulating the straw, ropes, and rocks, I imposed an artificial quality in the creation of an organic shape.

The sensitive choice and combination of natural materials through an equally sensitive process of creating forms in a direct, spontaneous way lends an element of ambiguity. The sculptures seem to hover between natural and manmade worlds. The intimate knowledge I gained through the direct handling and manipulation of the natural materials allowed me to retain qualities of both the natural and artificial worlds without having one quality overshadow another.

## LIST OF SLIDES

1. SEEDBED, 1999-2000,  
Cheesecloth, Wheat, Sisal, Wax; 2" x 312" x 132"
2. SELECTION, 2000,  
Sunflowers, Cheesecloth, Sisal, Wax; 47" x 92" x 14"
3. SELECTION (detail)
4. CUT BULB , 2000  
Cheesecloth, Straw, Pigmented Wax; 47" x 27" x 27"
5. CONTORTED SEED, 2000  
Cheesecloth, Straw, Sisal, Pigmented Wax; 30" x 36" x 36"
6. DROPPED BULB, 2000  
Cheesecloth, Straw, Fennel Stalk, Pigmented Wax; 105" x 30" x 20"
7. TWISTED CACHE , 2000  
Cheesecloth, Fennel and Corn Stalks, Pigmented Wax; 31" x 164" x 12"
8. TWISTED CACHE (detail)
9. SUPINE CACHE, 1999  
Lodgepole Pine, Cheesecloth, Straw, Cottonwood Twigs, Pigmented Wax; 120" x 50" x 30"
10. WEBBED CACHE, 2000  
Lodgepole Pine, Net Wrap, Straw, Sisal; 148" x 27" x 20"
11. SUSPENDED CACHE, 2000  
Net Wrap, Straw, Sisal, Rocks; 151" x 180" x 102"
12. INSTALLATION VIEW, 2000
13. INSTALLATION VIEW, 2000
14. INSTALLATION VIEW, 2000
15. INSTALLATION VIEW, 2000

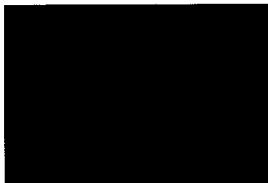


#1 Seedbed



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#2 Selection



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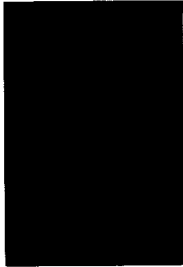
#3 Selection  
(DETAIL)



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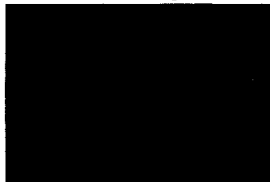
#4 Cut Bulb

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#5 Contorted Seed



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#6 Dropped Bulb

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#7 Twisted Cache



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#8 Twisted cache  
(detail)



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#9 Supine Cache

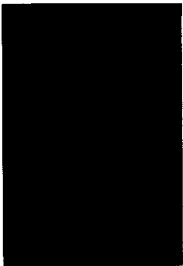
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#10 Webbed Cache

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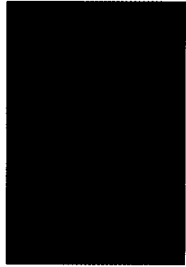
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#11 Suspended Cache



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#12 Installation View



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#13 Installation View



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#14 Installation View

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#15 Installation View



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