



Forecast in hindsight
by Julie Comnick

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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of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

April 2001

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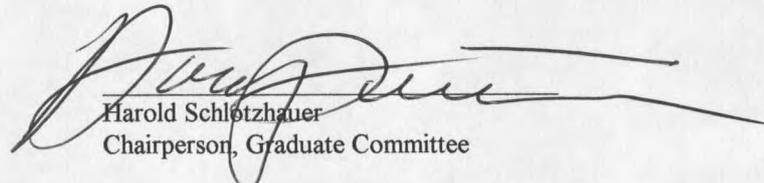
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Julie Connick

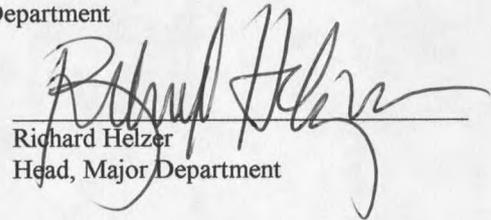
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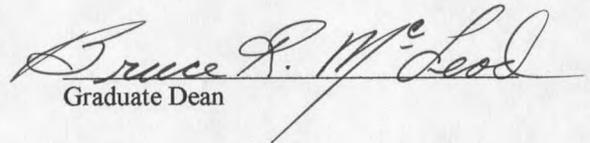
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In memory of Mark Alan Rogers, who has brought me a step closer understanding the nature of precariousness.

Prediction is confirmed only in retrospect. To find out that a friend has taken his own life causes me to look back, in hindsight, at the music, words, and images he made in premonition, or forecast, of his suicide. Those closest to him never suspected that his suggestions might be in contemplations of an actualized death; consciousness overlooked the most important signs until the signs became most important.

This loss has caused me to begin thinking about my art as if it were a memory to be retrieved by the departed. To someone who has revoked consciousness, what would my images trigger as recollections of lived experience, and what would they reveal about the place and time of the living? What becomes ordinary to the deceased?

For those of us who continue our observations above ground, what do these images tell us about our individual circumstances as we head towards a collective future? What is ordinary to the living? What becomes of the mundane when it is made curious?

Death is not the subject of my paintings, but rather it is an analogy of observing art from outside the periphery of consciousness. Consciousness is necessarily selective, a process of "weeding out" the extraneous to enable focus. In *The User Illusion*, Tor Norretranders explains that the information we 'discard,' or pass over, reveals most about

what we say. "Meaning is information that has been discarded: information that is no longer present and no longer needs to be" (98). What we actually perceive is only a small portion of the information with which we come into contact. What we say, show, or describe is only a small portion of what we perceive. Consciousness is trained to recognize information that is relevant to a specific context; filtered through the unconscious, the remainder is deemed unimportant, or unnecessary, to what we are apparently trying to see. What happens, then when we are confronted with the details that we ordinarily overlook, and intentionally overlook what we conventionally see?

In my paintings I depict the "weeded out." The people in my images are socially commonplace, and the material objects are unsentimental, discards, or debris. They are persona and things that inhabit our everyday experience, but go overlooked within our urban landscape. In my continued tendency to portray the disregarded, or to look at the overlooked, I have become concerned with the act of making the unpictorial pictorial. When commonplace elements are extract from their ordinary environments and posited within the painting, they come subjects. Renewed within the painting, the subjects take on a primary role as allegorical signs and social indicators.

I depict these subjects on monochrome grounds, secluding them from their conventional settings. By isolations the subjects I have, in effect, pre-selected the focus of the paintings, disrupting consciousness' accustomed task. Without the need to distinguish or discriminate, the observer perceives the images from outside the periphery

of consciousness. Consciousness predetermines what not to observe; my paintings ask the viewer to go back and see the things that went previously overlooked, In *The Power of Images*, David Freedberg contemplates the history of pictures and "their peculiar ability to keep the dead among the living" (42). Perhaps the peculiarity is altered when we consider that, through pictures, the living can be kept among the dead.

The isolation of the subjects in my paintings parallels the isolation of paintings within the gallery. The gallery itself contributes to the altered process of consciousness. The notion that a gallery is like a tomb is not altogether in jest; it is a vaulted space, a crypt, sterile of the familiarities and securities of lived time.

In the context of the gallery, the objects in my paintings become 'objectified,' or open for speculation. Depicted in conjunction with human activities where the functionality of the object is made arbitrary, the question of the role of the object is raised. What is the function of the object? What is its usefulness in the image? In the isolated arena of the painting, magnified in the gallery, the object becomes artifact, and it is our renewed consciousness of it that becomes art.

The disregarded becomes an 'object' through our acknowledgment of it, and when it is attended to in the painting it becomes 'subject.' If a renewed awareness of the subjects becomes 'art,' it then calls into question consciousness' ability to decide what is important from the outset. How many things do we continually overlook that would have provided us with significant insight, warnings, and signs? Norretranders urges us to consider the importance of the information we are not observing in the process of consciousness.

"We must learn to know what we do not know: learn to be aware of the fact that we are not aware of everything; learn to be conscious that consciousness is limited"

(Norretranders, 413). Supposing we could now see what we previously overlooked, how would we have acted differently? How will acknowledging the significance of the unseen inform our future actions?

What meanings reside in the overlooked, the dismissed, and the mundane? To position ourselves as if from outside the periphery of consciousness we redirect its selective behavior, and perceive experience that has been excluded in its process. We observe the disregarded and make it primary, responding to signs that were ignored or neglected. Then we are able to forecast in hindsight.

REFERENCES

Freedberg, David. The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response. Chicago, 1989.

Norretranders, Tor. The User Illusion. New York, 1991.

LIST OF SLIDES

All paintings are oil and graphite on canvas.

1. *Funeral for an Undertaker*, 2000. 75 x 90".
2. *Passage*, 2001. 75 x 85".
3. *Broadcast*, 2001. 75 x 90".
4. Installation view.
5. *Preamble to Aftermath*, 2001. 75 x 82".
6. Installation view.
7. *Prediction*, 2000. 75 x 90".
8. *Demonstration*, 2000. 85 x 95".
9. Installation view.
10. *Reunion*, 2000. 85 x 95".
11. *Allegiance to Consequence*, 2001. 95 x 85".
12. Installation view.
13. *Circuit*, 2000. 85 x 95".
14. Installation view.
15. *Meanwhile*, 2001. 42 x 45".
16. Installation view.

ASSIGNMENT:

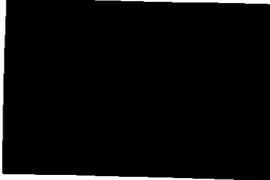
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Undertaker 2000



Oil on Canvas
75 x 90"

Julie Connick
Reunion 2000



Oil on Canvas
85 x 95"

Julie Connick
Demonstration 2000



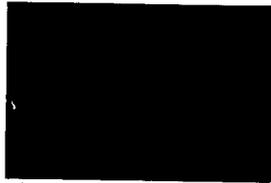
Oil on Canvas
85 x 95"

Julie Connick
Circuit 2000



Oil on Canvas
85 x 95"

Julie Connick
Passage 2001



Oil on Canvas

Julie Connick
Forecast in Hindsight
Installation view 2001



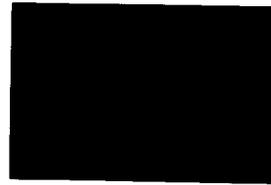
Julie Connick
Forecast in Hindsight
Installation view 2001



Julie Connick
Forecast in Hindsight
Installation view 2001

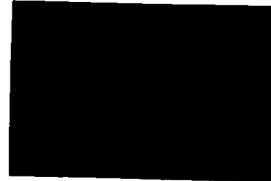


Julie Connick
Meanwhile 2001



Oil on Canvas

Julie Connick
Prediction 2000



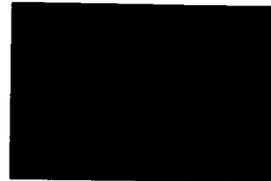
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75 x 90"

Julie Connick
Allegiance to
Consequence 2001



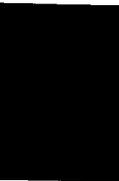
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95 x 85"

Julie Connick
Broadcast 2001



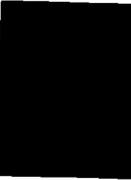
Oil on Canvas
75 x 90"

Julie Connick
Preamble to
Aftermath

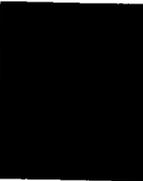


Oil on Canvas
75 x 90"

Julie Connick
Forecast in Hindsight
Installation view



Julie Connick
Forecast in Hindsight
Installation view



Julie Connick
Forecast in Hindsight
Installation view







