



American Paintings  
by Jeremy Covert

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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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

April 2004

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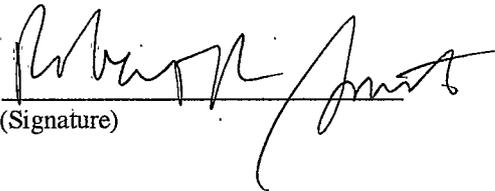
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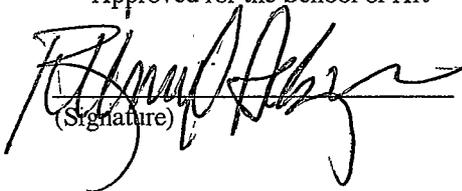
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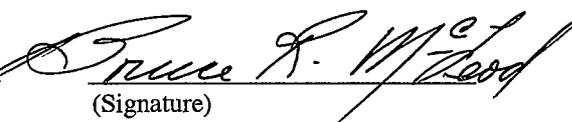
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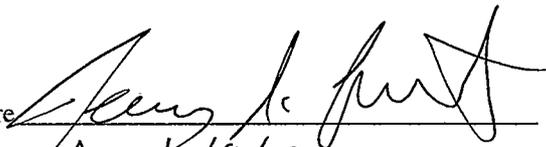
  
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All my life I have been surrounded by average America: crowds in the mall, people in parks and neighborhoods that cover the landscape. These places and these people represent our country. Occasionally I see something that is special, a place or a group of people. These scenes strike me as special because when reproduced in a painting they can represent and communicate something of our culture to the viewer. Each painting does this in a different way. We are surrounded by these scenes everyday. I want to reproduce them to make people think and feel about who they are, what they do, how they live, and what they value. For example, you are in a public place, like the mall or Yellowstone Park with friends or family in the midst of daily routine. You are confronted with a situation that strikes interest both visually as well as in a narrative sense. You cannot stop glancing at the scene. You relate it to your own life. You think of differences and similarities. It can make you want to change your own life. It can make you feel something that you did not feel before. My paintings are intended to create these special feelings.

Once I have decided on an image I take a photograph. The color and surface of the photographs are manipulated when I change them into paintings. For each painting, this manipulation is slightly different. For example, in some works I like to paint with a dark blue palette with bright oranges for high lights. This is a dramatic change of the colors from what was recorded in the actual photo. At other times, I paint by following the color structure of the photo. Sometimes I simplify information from the photo. The brushstroke is left to be seen. Additionally, I choose the color for each of the objects, and how thick and how crude the brush stroke is. It is my feeling that this mark of my hand is what elevates this object from a reproduction of a photo to an emotionally charged and special object. I paint this way intuitively. I keep the same value and form as the photo and synthesize a new color scheme and surface to make it a unique image.

I paint the scenes of every day life because I can relate ideas, and emotions regarding what it means to be a person. The paintings show human activities and interactions in our culture. The average day in our life defines us as people. I want to paint images that make others think and feel. I want them to relate my work to who they are and what they do.

Each painting has its own specific visual idea that inspired me. I was interested in capturing the interaction at the mall: people eating, and in another viewing a lawn mower. These two normal activities are singled out and made dramatic. The composition is modeled after master paintings using strong directional force, such as the perspective lines in *The Last Supper* by Leonardo Da Vinci.

The river scene illustrates a recreation destination. People are fishing, drinking beer, looking for rocks, swimming and playing with a dog. These are very common activities. It is sunset and the light is very beautiful. Three figures are in the foreground, a figure behind them glances in the direction of the setting sun leading the eye back to a drinking girl, and over to a dark figure examining rocks in the distance. But within this normality a quiet drama can exist. It exists everywhere.

The men and women waiting in line show people in a universal state. People are all different yet we have much in common, not just on a physical level. These pieces are meant to confront the viewer with simple reality. People get old. People get fat. People wait in line for the bathroom. These things are facts of life. These images are a way to remind people of their own humanity.

The trailer paintings show the strange social stigmatism that goes along with living in such a place. People in and out of trailer parks regard them as a

different type of living environment. What type of environment is it? Why are their twenty and thirty thousand dollar vehicles sitting in front of what is perceived to be impoverished dwelling? Subject matter like this interests me because it relates ideas about people and life. The subject matter relates ideas psychologically, while color and mark making are the technical elements visually. These pieces make people think and feel using their own traits and images as symbols.

List of slides

1. Parking lot Acrylic 34"x51"
2. The mall lunch Acrylic 51"x81"
3. Hutterite life Acrylic 34"X51"
4. An afternoon at Churchill Downs Acrylic 16"x20"
5. Men Acrylic 34"X51"
6. Women Acrylic 34"X51"
7. Gallatin riverside Acrylic 51"X81"
8. Pump Acrylic 16x20
9. 11013 Dixie Highway, Louisville, Ky. Acrylic
10. Trailer with red truck Acrylic 34"x51"
11. Trailer with Cadillac Acrylic 12"x20"
12. Trailer with PT Cruiser and motorcycle Acrylic 34"x51"
13. Relaxation destination Acrylic 16"x20"
14. The lawnmowers inspect their tools Acrylic 34"x51"

**Condition Noted**

Feb 2005

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