



Untitled [slide]  
by Phillip S Ahnen

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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UNTITLED

by

Phillip S. Ahnen

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

of

Master of Fine Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

July 1999

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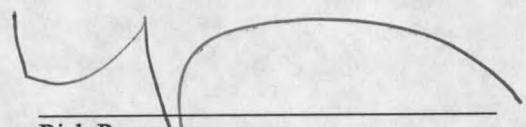
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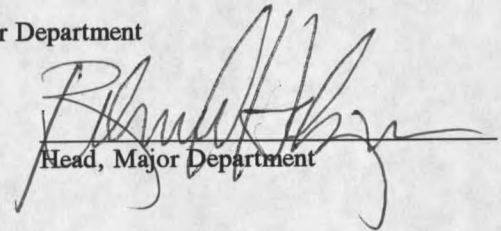
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Date

  
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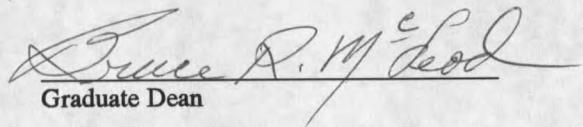
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Date

  
Head, Major Department

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Date

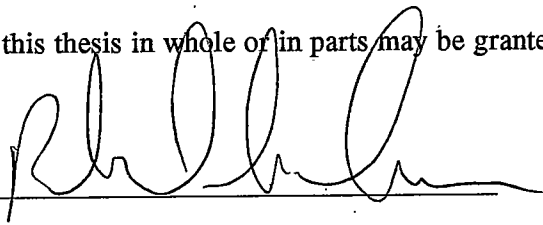
  
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A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'R. J. ...', written over a horizontal line.

Date

7.30.99

When I begin to work on a sculpture I am face to face with a 300 pound lump of solid clay. Each of these lumps holds a torso waiting to be uncovered. My work is about the process of manipulating clay, finding the torso within that clay and bringing it out so that it will engage me, invade my space, and indulge a dialogue with the viewer.

I am a very physical person. Simply looking at things is not enough. I need to touch, hold, and twist objects, turn them around, set them in motion, watch their shadows, feel their textures; I want to know if they are warm or cool, heavy or light, solid or hollow. Creating these sculptures is a very physical process. In order to work the sculpture, I need to experience the clay with my whole body. I need to grab, hug, gouge, punch, and kick the work before me. I must remove clay with the powerful strokes of an axe, and add clay with forceful throws. The intensity with which I work allows me to become the sculpture, to get inside it and feel its gesture. Working on a subconscious level, intuition takes over and there is nothing else in my world, just me, and the sculpture. Thoughts manifest themselves as spontaneous physical actions. What I feel, is what I feel in the clay. What I am uncovering is me. The result is a concrete record of my emotions, my feelings, and my thoughts.

This work is carved using different axes, a process that does not allow modeling, and involves no "finishing touches". Using these tools, I engage abstraction, and work to

reveal myself through the clay. To me, the work is primarily about the nature of clay as a malleable material; it is about the permanent record of my actions left in the wet clay, and vocabulary of expressive mark-making. Secondary to abstraction, is the figure. The figure is the lure for the viewer to engage my abstractions. The human form is common to everyone, and in this scale invites the audience into its personal space. At the same time, these sculptures are nameless, and faceless, which affords each viewer the opportunity to feel the body before them as if it were their own.

## LIST OF SLIDES

1. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
2. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
3. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
4. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
5. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
6. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
7. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.
8. "Untitled", Raku-fired earthenware, 1999.

FILE NO:

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