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Pieces of My Puzzle, In Search of the Big Picture

Leann M. Haferkamp

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Thesis
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**PIECES OF MY PUZZLE,
IN SEARCH OF THE BIG PICTURE**

Leann M. Haferkamp, B.A.



A Master's Thesis Presented to the Faculty of the
Department of Art of Lindenwood University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master's of Art
1998

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

Doctor Elaine C. Tillinger, Chairperson
Professor Grant Hargate
Dean Marsha H. Parker, Advisor

Dedication

To the best gift I ever recieved, Amelia, the source of my inspiration. Thank you for putting up with your mom as she went a little crazy at times, I know you think the computer is now a permanent attachment to my body. I won't promise to change, because that would be a promise I probably couldn't keep. I'm also thankful you don't really know what 'normal' is!

Hopefully some day you will understand and realize you can reach the stars! I love you as big as the sky (...and more). --mom

Acknowledgements

To my wonderful family, who tolerated me, supported me emotionally, as well as helped financially, and enabled Amelia to maintain her often hectic social schedule, I love you all!

To Dawn, a very special friend, thanks for giving me a big shove, I will be forever grateful. It's nice to dream again.

To my friends, who tolerated my stress and stayed my friends.

To my friends at Grace Church, thank you for giving me the opportunity to experience and learn so much, and allowing me to find a place to feel at home.
God Bless!

To Joe Angert, whose patient style of teaching along with his lack of intimidation, allowed the enormous cloud of fog over my head to clear.

To Dr. Elaine Tillinger, whose enthusiasm led me to graduate school at Lindenwood. Thanks for the extra support and the "crazy" idea.

To everyone at Lindenwood University, you are all pieces of my puzzle. Thank you for the challenges and environment to grow!

To my constant companion, the Holy Spirit, a friend worth having.

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Introduction:

Pieces of My Puzzle, In Search of the Big Picture

As I entered graduate school at Lindenwood University, I was searching for answers to many questions. My life took a very wrong detour, and I was in search of myself. After graduating from the University of Missouri – St. Louis with my degree in Art History, I moved to the Lake of the Ozarks with my boyfriend.

Shortly after we settled in, I found out that I was pregnant. Life was not going as planned. We didn't really get along and knew very little about each other. Both of us were very immature and had absolutely no ability what so ever in communicating with each other. Well, that was the end, or quite possibly the beginning of that story. I moved back to St. Charles, took a job bartending at the airport, gave birth to Amelia, and didn't come up for air for the next five years.

The years spent studying art history, brought many issues to the surface regarding my religious beliefs. I was born and raised Protestant. Growing up, I came from a very "normal" family. We went to church every Sunday. My childhood was actually terrific. I loved my life, all the way through high school and most of my college years. I was happy, optimistic, & thought I could change the world. I had great friends, a very close relationship with my mother, and I was the apple of my father's eye. Life was just as it should be. Well...my normal family turned out to be really normal after all. My mom and dad got divorced. My world (as well as my brother and sister's) was turned temporarily upside down. Little by little life began to change. I see now that it is all part of growing up. But as I later discovered, change did not come easily for me. I realized that not everything was as picture perfect as it appeared. As a result of my inner battle, I quit going to church. Honestly, I think I rather dismissed the theory of God.

After muddling through life for the next several years, my life was once again on the brink of change. My sister and her husband, along with my mother and stepfather, urged me to give their new church a try. Finally, I caved in. I loved it. Together as a family, we took a few religion classes. As I rediscovered my faith, I made new friends and started praying for some answers. As a creature of habit, I was in desperate need of a change, but was also deathly afraid of one. God took it in his hands, and slowly things started to piece together. I lost my job, which was actually a good thing. It was my security blanket, although it was getting me nowhere. I hated it and wanted to leave for years (six to be exact). However, uncertainty and change was something I could not yet accept. As I began to rekindle my relationship with God, my new -found support system held me up as I was relearning to walk.

Right before this, Dawn (my best friend), her husband Dan and two kids moved to Columbia so they could enter the world of graduate school. I was completely envious. As they began adjusting to their new life, Dan started counseling and was diagnosed with Adult ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). Dawn quickly dove into massive amounts of reading on this particular subject. One night she called to say, "Leann, I've been reading about adults with ADD. Everything reminds me of you... Listen to this checklist..." I remember feeling slightly offended, and like many issues I felt uncomfortable with, dismissed it from my mind.

Around Christmas that year, I was extremely depressed. The rainy day blues were no longer a temporary mood swing. I felt I was in a terrible rut and life was going nowhere. I cried continuously, and just could not seem to keep it together. I finally sought help, guess what? I was diagnosed with ADD and depression. I entered counseling. Prayer, relying on my faith, as well as diagnosing and understanding the ADD, allowed miracles to happen.

I found my way to Lindenwood, in search of a computer art degree.

Dr. Elaine Tillinger persuaded me to enter graduate school instead of pursuing another undergraduate degree. Graphic design was a love of mine from the beginning. It was the path I had originally approached, before I ventured into photography, psychology, then on to art history, then faded into the never, never land of bartending. Up until this time, the computer was not my friend. It was not even an acquaintance. It was an alien from Mars. Yet Dawn, my knowledgeable friend, had been telling me for quite some time it would be just my thing. It appears she knew me better than I knew myself, or she could at least see past this stage of my life, where I could not.

As I began my first semester of graduate school, I also signed up for an introduction to video class at Grace Church, where I now was a member. They were looking to introduce video to those interested, in hope of gaining a few volunteers for their Video Ministry. Coincidentally, Dean Marsha Parker convinced me to enroll in a video class that same semester. In return, Grace offered me a video production internship. My internship proved to be a wealth of knowledge.

Ironically, my return to school in pursuit of computer art, started with a semester course in color photography, a course in 19th Century Art History (which ranks as my favorite second only to that of Modern Art), and my introductory course in video production; with no available options in computer art.

As I began my journey into graduate school, along with my volunteer work within the Video Ministry at Grace, I began to discover the amazing relationships among the areas I found so enduring, yet at that time separate. I saw each area separately, as an individual interest. I did not yet realize that they coexist, piecing together in our highly complex, technical world. It also became evident that knowledge of one made the other more comprehensive. For me, their relationships began to take on a pattern similar to building blocks and puzzles.

Attention Deficit Disorder & the World Wide Web

I inherited my love of the arts from my mother. She is probably also the one that passed along the Attention Deficit Disorder. ADD “is not really a disorder at all, although that is how it has been labeled by the health-care community. In reality it is simply a particular style of brain wiring—one that goes hand in hand with exceptional creativity” (Weiss 10). The more I learn about ADD, the more insight I gain. I see why I am like I am, and the factors contributing to it. I have discovered creativity is a fundamental necessity. Suppressing my creativity left me feeling less than complete, imperfect, and depressed.

Lynn Weiss, Ph.D. writes “the only people who fail are those that quit. Now there’s nothing wrong with quitting if you’re no longer interested in your creative endeavor or decide that the time has past for it to be useful to others. But don’t ever quit just because you’re afraid you won’t succeed (5)”. For me, her statement pretty much summed it up. Using single parenthood as my excuse to quit, I was afraid I could not successfully achieve a career in addition to being a competent parent. I gave up. Without the necessary ingredient of creativity in my life, soon I became completely miserable. Like many with ADD, I needed excitement, stimulation, and validation to keep my interest. In a society where the non-ADD brain wiring is the norm, life becomes a never-ending struggle for those of us who see it differently. I do say differently, not wrongly, there is a difference. We do things in a way that comes natural to us, although often conflicting with our surrounding culture (Weiss 16).

I seem to firmly fit under the classification of Highly Structured ADD. Some negative attributes of Highly Structured ADD are excessive talking, compulsive behavior, difficulty creating a structure and unable to work without one (this is a major problem for me), difficulty recovering from change, demanding,

over-organizing, temper (often undeservingly aimed at my daughter Amelia), over-focusing (causing defeat), and judgmental. On the flip side, the positive aspects are: appreciative of quality and willing to work for it, well-organized, leads forcefully, intense when on a mission, focuses for long periods of time, holds high standards, and neatness (Weiss 56).

In the beginning I knew little about ADD, although a few of my friends' children were diagnosed with it. I did have many preconceptions. I felt that it was overdiagnosed, and often used as an excuse for bad parenting. I can be pretty close-minded. I also knew that kids with ADD did poorly in school and were usually hyperactive. This is probably why I refused to believe I had ADD. I never performed poorly in school, although I am quite hyper. Most of us with highly structured ADD do not have problems learning. The problem lies more with retaining. Highly Structured ADDer's learn in their over-focusing way to survive in society, to get through. We just cannot seem to grasp the basics on how to retain and apply the knowledge.

In my search for discovery of self, I stumbled upon the fact that the WWW (World Wide Web) and ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) have more similarities than being three letter acronyms. It is my belief that the WWW works in the same way that the ADD mind does. You start one place and end up somewhere completely removed from where you began. This, accompanied by the fact that the World Wide Web offers endless opportunities, is probably why I love it so. It does not allow boredom. It's the nature of the beast. It does the mind wandering for you. Although at times it doesn't seem to go quite fast enough, in time technology will take care of this little setback.

Letting my mind wander through a countless number of web sites, I think I finally found my niche. In this new frontier there is so much to learn, so many areas in which I can explore, it truly is mind boggling. My journey has just begun.

In the course of my graduate studies, I have been tackling many forms of software that are available. It amounts to only a few pieces of my puzzle. Computer technology is continually changing and growing. The World Wide Web and the issues it presents are in a constant state of advancement. For me, it has become a complex three-dimensional puzzle. As it grows, the big picture becomes a little clearer. As I approach the end of my graduate studies, my big picture seems to be a little clearer, focused. Yet I realize, it is just the beginning.

My Projects: The Pieces of My Puzzle

Web Design

My graduate show took place in the form of a web exhibition. I decided to create a web site in order to integrate my various interests. The site includes my artist statement, thesis, computer art images, photography, 3-dimensional design, and scenography costume designs. It also contains an electronic guestbook and e-mail form, which enables visitors to interact by submitting their comments and critiques.

From being almost non-existent a few years ago, the World Wide Web is now the fastest growing medium on earth, providing creative opportunities for artists and non-artists alike. With the endless options available in software today, one need not possess creative talent in order to create a computer image. However, the almost overwhelming assortment of digital tools that are available today play only a part in the creative process. Fortunately, I was an artist first. Understanding the fundamentals is important regardless of the tools and medium you use to create it. Every medium has its limitations.

Web design is still in its beginning state. There are no rules or standards. Yet, the Web, with all its possibilities, has numerous limitations and constraints. In order to design a successful site “we must put our creativity to the test in order to find workarounds within the web’s strange new rules.” We must learn “to make our visuals—be it the color of our text, images, movies, or animated buttons—flexible enough to hold up under a multitude of situations”(Weinmann xiv).

As I discovered, Web design requires an understanding of cross-platform issues and compatibility concerns. Although the Web can be viewed from various platforms, the pages do not display the same across different platforms. For instance, the designer can not control what the end user will see on his screen. The browser software interprets the coding and displays the page on the screen

according to the end-users specifications. The designer has no control over the output system's preferences or defaults. Therefore, pages will appear different depending on the browser they are using, the platform viewed on, as well as the screen monitor resolution and the amount of colors the viewer chooses to use.

HTML (HyperText Markup Language) is an evolving language, which makes the Web possible. It is a programming language for browsers. An HTML page contains text along with tags. Tags embed commands that supply information about the pages structure, appearance, and content. Browsers must be able to understand the HTML in order to work. I soon learned that not all browsers support all HTML.

In an attempt to gain control over these text styles and layout issues, designers may be tempted to turn to full-page graphics. In this case, the end user will see the layout exactly as the designer intended. Here again lie two potential problems. First, there is the user who has the text only browser. Secondly, large graphic files create long downloading times. Will your audience wait? Probably not, they will just click on. Although the Web does support two file formats—CompuServeGIFS and JPEG's—both which offer impressive compression schemes. New technologies for compressing multimedia files are in the works, but for now low-bandwidth graphics is the greatest challenge. Therefore, keep this in mind when dealing with graphics.

Browser software enables you to view the Web. They greatly affect how your images display. "Fortunately, the most popular browsers—Netscape, Mosaic, and Internet Explorer—all share the same palette management process. They work with the system palettes of each respective platform: Mac, Windows, Win 95. This means that any artwork you create will be forced into a variety of different palettes, depending on which operating system it is viewed from" Weinman 20). There are 256 common colors, minus 40 which the browser reserves for its

own use. The remaining 216 are considered browser-safe colors. As a designer, if you stick to these browser-safe colors you will be able to avoid most of the cross-platform inconsistencies which create adverse effects on your artwork.

These are just a few of the obstacles I encountered as I began my journey into web design. There are many more as well. With the World Wide Web it is possible, as well as necessary, to merge many different disciplines. For me, Web design is an intoxicating new medium. As I further explore this newly chartered terrain, I can't help being excited and optimistic.

<a printed copy of my web site is included. The background patterns and images do not display in print>



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My Projects: The Pieces of My Puzzle

Video

Video will probably turn out to be the core piece in my puzzle. Yet, I can not say that with any degree of certainty. Although it started as a chance happening, it has become much more than that. My first project in video was an infomercial on Missouri Botanical Gardens. I was very pleased with the spring footage of tulips, sunlight, and waterfalls. A grandfather, his wife, and three year old grandson were the unsuspecting victims of my first interview. It was a terrific learning experience. I also helped with Lindenwood University News, which included shooting the footage containing highlights of St. Charles, and editing the introduction to the newscast. I was one of the camera operators and editors for Dance Alive II; Lindenwood University's dance company performance. I also ran camera for various talk shows at Lindenwood, for example, "Youth's Advocate 's Gang Awareness."

During my independent study in video production, I was able to try my hand at directing. I worked on a project called "Healthy Holiday Living" which aired on public access television during the holidays. The project was collaboration between St. Louis County Health Department, The American Heart Association, Radio Fit America, and Wild Oats Natural Food Store. I also edited the project.

On a more personal level, I produced a music video from archival family videos to Donna Lewis' "I Love You, Always and Forever" featuring my daughter Amelia. This project brought about much family fame and adoration!

My internship with Grace Church's video ministry proved to be the most

educational. As my internship progressed, here is where I became aware of the co-existence of the many interests in my life. I was able to train on Avid's MediaComposer 4000, an amazing video editing program. Some of the video projects I was involved with were:

"Cults: Good People Gone Bad" This was a very short, intensely filled video clip which was inserted into the weekend service drama. It represented the nightmarish flashbacks of a mother upon learning her teenage daughter has entered a cult. I did the video and magazine article research for this project, which included Reverend Jim Jones, WACO's David Koresh, and Marshall Applewhite's Heaven's Gate. I also participated in digitizing the material into the Avid as well as editing the project.

"Tinsel and Tylenol" This video clip narrated by, none other than the Grinch, aired just before Christmas. Its intent was to show how the holidays could stress you out. I did research, digitizing, and editing on this project.

"Relationship Disasters" This video clip, taken from excerpts of popular movies, intended to show relationship disasters created by rushing into commitments, being attracted to opposites, and the impact of Hollywood.

"Let the Heaven's Rejoice" A nature/wildlife clip, accompanied by Grace's band and singers, demonstrated the issue "Is God Real?" by showing that the world is an incredibly beautiful place.

I also gained experience with various types of video shoots ranging from testimonials, musical, man-on-the street interviews, to nature shoots using a steady-cam. While working on varied projects, I was able to experiment with various lighting and camera techniques. In preparation for our Christmas program, I was introduced to the world of drama. I gained backstage experience in set and stage design. I even crashed the lifty thingumajob with my fresnel light into the rafters, making it an experience I will also never forget.

I finally victoriously defeated AltaVista's character generator, which I am now assigned duty for every third weekend of the month. This is the system that controls the video screens during service. It displays informative graphics supporting the sermon, songs, and events of the church as the controller is cued. This was a monstrous accomplishment for me. The church, of course, is currently looking into a new system. At least I am able to say I prevailed against this primitive beast. I am also currently working on setting up Grace's web site. I hope to have a fair amount accomplished so that you will be able to link onto it from my personal site, which is my thesis project. Among this delightful new world, the time spent in video editing is my favorite.

My Projects: Pieces of My Puzzle

Computer Art

My Mom: This image was created from a black and white photograph of my mother in kindergarten. After retouching the photograph in Adobe's Photoshop, I converted the image from greyscale to RGB color. I then colored selected areas with pastel colors. From this point several filters, including add noise, were applied as I tried to achieve an "Impressionistic" look.

Amelia in a Bucket: The first in my series blending photography and nursery rhymes. This photograph is a favorite. It is of Amelia, my daughter and source of inspiration. After a few hours of boating and napping, she was hot and crabby. Nothing seemed to be making her happy, so we stuck her in a pail of lake water. Not only did it entertain her, it resulted in some humorous pictures as well.

The background is a watercolor I scanned into Photoshop. The flower border I drew in Illustrator, imported into Photoshop, then layered with the watercolor and cutout photograph of Amelia. The image was finalized in Pagemaker, where the text was applied.

A Star: The next piece in my series playing with the concept of nursery rhymes. The image is from a playful photo session I encountered with Amelia. She was feeling 'quite the star', therefore the verse felt extraordinarily appropriate. The design elements were achieved in the same manner as *Amelia in a Bucket*.

Evia: During my Easter visit at the Lake, I was rummaging through my mother's hat box of old family pictures. Here I discovered my latest body of work, I smuggled several home with me. It is amazing how much detail I am able to achieve with the help of my scanner and a few filters. This image is of my grandmother, Evia, and her little brother Jimmy. After retouching the photograph, I converted it from greyscale to RGB color. I selectively colored areas in earthtones, then applied filters in Photoshop.

My Projects: The Pieces of My Puzzle

3-Dimensional Design

My web site contains projects from my 3- Dimensional Design class. It is not that I feel mine are excellent works of art, but I see them as analytical, eye-opening exercises. Somewhere midstream the significance hit me. I believe the understanding came with the “sphere” assignment. When I was told “three foot sphere, must be able to roll” my mind imagined—”solid mass... 36 inches”. I could envision only one thing. This is how my tape ball came to be.

As I observed my classmates, I began to understand that there was more to it than that. There were many solutions to the task at hand. Not that mine was altogether wrong or unsuccessful. However, it had taken me much longer to complete. As I began to fall behind, I thought I would never finish. I took my project home in order to keep up. In my living room the project still went rather slowly, then a problem arose. It had reached its designated size, which was great, yet it no longer fit through the doorway! Then problem number two surfaced, it was huge as well as heavy, how was I to get it back to the studio?

This is when it started to sink in. It was a quest for solutions to the task at hand. Planning and foresight were necessary. My usual two-dimensional thinking, which does not explore play of depth or flow of space, had to be changed to that of three-dimensional thinking. Although enveloped in a three-dimensional world, visualizing the whole form mentally can often escape us. The new understandings I am developing challenge me to establish a different way of seeing in all my areas of interest. I am learning to be less closed-minded, to broaden my vision in seeking answers with my art.

Is Computer Art Art?

As technological change becomes inevitable, the world becomes wired together, and the Internet becomes the latest addiction—we discover vast and confusing new avenues for art. As we are bombarded from all directions by television, radio, the motion pictures industry, newspapers and magazines, the quest for meaning and reality becomes even more difficult. This raises the question, “Is computer art art?” Science and technology have utterly changed man’s picture of the physical world and himself. Today’s technology has provided unique experiences. Yes, I do full-heartedly believe it is art. Nevertheless, like art from any period, it must be dealt with in terms of its own time frame in order to understand.

Art is a reflection of time; in a sense it is dependent upon it. The period of time in which a work of art was made has everything to do with the way it is interpreted. The fact that works of art from one time period look different, sometimes dramatically so, from those of other time periods leads us to assume something has changed. This something can only be the point of view of the artists and the time in which they live. Traditional art are pictorial lessons in history. Art tells us about society, as well as religious and political beliefs. All works of art have their stories to tell. Computer art does just that! It fully embodies today’s culture creating cultural lag, span of time between innovations and their understanding and popular acceptance. It is not at all unlike that of Christopher Columbus and his belief that the world was not flat. His discovery was difficult for his peers to grasp. Modern Art had the same question imposed on it as well. At the

of the artist and what he had to say about his society. Today, photography still deals with this issue, "is it art?" With the development of the camera and photography, art no longer needed to fill the task of actual representation, therefore taking art into an area requiring a depth of intelligence as opposed to visual likeness. "Around the turn of the century the new self-conscious use of science in aid of art was one of the many elements that promoted the belief that art itself should be new and different"(Modern Art 11).

Art is a pictorial display of the soul and of the mind. We need to open our eyes a little more and look deeper into its framework. Art fulfills our need to escape, showing us different worlds as well as different ways in viewing our own. An appreciation of art leads to better fulfillment of life and awareness. Regardless of the confusion surrounding it, I believe computer art is art. And I love it.

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1997.

Vita Auctoris

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Microsoft Word

Exhibitions:

1998 Graduate Exhibition, Butler Hall AVR Room
Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri

1988 Student Exhibition, Lindenwood Univ. Cultural Center
Lindenwood University, St. Charles, Missouri

1988 Student Exhibition, Instructional Resources Building
Florissant Valley Community College, St. Louis, Missouri

1987 Student Exhibition, Instructional Resources Building
Florissant Valley Community College, St. Louis, Missouri