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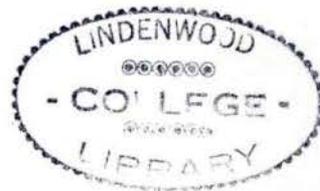
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MY THESIS

Kandice L. Kelley
B.F.A. 1979



A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Lindenwood College in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Art

1988

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1988

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ABSTRACT

MY ABSTRACT

Kandice L. Kelley

An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

The substance of the paper is to acquaint the reader with the aspects, ideas, influences, personal writings, thoughts about the exhibition that encompasses who I am in relationship to the art works in the exhibition; as well as to what makes me tick as a person and as an artist. The works in the exhibition center around two themes: 1. a house with a red door and surrounding trees and gardens; which is a sentimental response to my grandmother's house with the red door - it is a way of remembering. 2. The other motif consists of a memory of a Swiss lake, mountain and landscape from when I went to school there from 1973-1974. There are three types of ceramic works; my little people, Easter baskets, and vessels. They represent my experimentation with handbuilding versus traditional handthrown works on the potter's wheel.

The section 'thoughts about the work' is a poetic account of my years with my grandmother and my development into a painter. The third section deals with artistic influences on my work. I refer to Hans Hofmann, Joseph Albers, and Paul Klee.

The final section of the thesis offers a few of my poems and are an example of how words and images combine to produce work that has an urgency and freshness and the poetry is the light and color in the image. . . .the art is the visual dream where songs are

sung by the heart in the dark while searching for the light so as 'to see'.

I am a very private person and this paper reveals that; yet I think I have finally found the light.

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper is my thesis paper to fulfill the requirement for a Master's Degree in studio art. For the past three years I have been taking the art courses required for a degree. . . I have been studying art history (Baroque Art, Japanese Art, and American Art) and studio courses in ceramics, printmaking, three-dimensional design, painting, and drawing. Lindenwood and its art department have greatly enriched my life and I have had the time of my life. I have made many friends and owe a great deal of thanks to John Wehmer, Dean Eckert, Alyce Schermerhorn, and Grant Hargate. The individuals which have also been my friends are Nancy Follis and Mary Spangler. And of course, our mom Eva Dessert. I have learned a lot about what it really means to be an artist. To have artistic responsibility and integrity. This is what Lindenwood has taught me and given to me, unconditionally.

In this thesis I am going to be writing about the Thesis Exhibition and the works themselves, thoughts about my work, influences from other artists and a few of my very personal writings - my poems.

So let us begin with the exhibition itself. The exhibition was on March 17 - March 26 at the Harry D. Hendren Gallery in the Fine Arts Building. There are

fourteen works on paper, fourteen paintings, forty three small figure sculptures, four Impressionist bowls, and three vessels. The works on paper are more analytical and draw directly from a conscious effort of reproducing my understanding of Claude Monet's techniques of painting utilized in a drawing instead of a painting.

Essentially my credo about technique in my work is that it is all weaving and layering. Imagine if you were working on a weaver's loom—all different colors and you would manipulate the colors to blend and form a woven garment. Well, that is how I am thinking about light/dark contrast and I will say to myself, "Ok, let's remember now, Kandice; dark-light, light-dark, dark, dark, light-dark," and so on. And what I just wrote is how I will layer stokes and color.

I usually start out in a drawing or a painting with a grid and then a drawing in felt tip pen on top of the grid, then the underpainting, then layers, and, thus, weaving a painting.

Also, I would like to comment on the realism or rather the reason for the shift or evolution towards figuration. Granted, the paintings are not strictly realistic, but there is a realistic flavor. When I was doing strictly abstract work, I had to constantly refer to notes on painting systems, techniques and process,

or else I would get lost. When I am dealing with a more figurative motif or approach it is easier to manipulate and develop the image. . .in other words, I never get lost. I always know where I am and where I want to go. Also, I wanted to show that I had good facility with the abstraction as well as with the figuration. I am reminded of a comment someone once said when they were looking at one of my abstract works. . . first they said, "What is it?"; next they said, "Is it finished?". That comment, as well as other comments, prompted me to question whom I was painting for, myself or others? My conclusion was that I wanted to get my aesthetic and philosophical point across effectively. . .I was not doing that successfully with the pure abstraction. . .so I decided to develop a motif to form an image that was a synthesis of realism and abstraction.

The paintings in the exhibit fall into four categories: (1.) house with a red door and red or pink trellis, a walkway, and with surrounding foliage and trees; (2.) mountain landscape; (3.) one studio interior still life; (4.) a triangular lake, trees in the foreground and background, mountain(s), sky with calligraphic clouds. The drawings (works on paper) fall into six categories: (1.) Mountain landscape after Gustave Dore; (2.) House with trellis, red door,

foliage, trees, and sky; (3.) still life-studio interior; (4.) trees, lake, mountains, terrain, sky; (5.) fields of color and flowers; (6.) self-portrait.

The red door series as the others of like content are a series of repeating motifs which are very personal. . they are reminiscent of the years I spent with my grandmother and her house with a red door.

The still lifes in the works on paper and the painting of a still life studio interior are a salute to Van Gogh. I was also thinking about Van Gogh with the fields of color. The red door series was a response and reference to the influence of Monet and Cezanne. The mountain are a response to Hans Hofmann and Gustave Dore.

The tree, lake, mountain, and sky motif are a salute to Constable and Corot. I do not mean in any way to compare myself to these artists, rather I admire them, and their work has influenced me.

The ceramic works in the show are very personal: (1.) The smaller blue sculptures are titled "My Little People." Some have shelters or a half dome of clay over the small figures of people inside. These little people were done in my ceramics class. Each class time I would do about six to eight people. And depending how I felt about myself and life and people that day would be reflected in the people. For example, if I

was feeling shy and skittish then the little people would be totally enclosed or partially enclosed. I got the idea from looking at figure sculptures by Wilhelm deKooning.

(2.) The bright, multi-colored bowls and baskets in the show are called the Easter Basket series. They are an Impressionist response to ceramics. A friend of mine, Renee Pintar, called them Easter baskets when she first saw them, hence, the name.

(3.) The ceramic vessel forms in the show were an experiment in handbuilding and coiling and were meant to be a free-form response to typical handthrown vessels. They were done in fashion with my admiration for the work of Peter Voulkos.

Another creation of mine, so to speak, are the poems. I have written while I was at Lindenwood. They are included in this paper. The poems are the real me and really what I am all about as a very private person. I write them when I want to communicate. Sometimes from deep inside myself--it is like a primal scream for me. When I write I feel as if someone can hear me and is listening to me. Many of them were written while I was in great pain or loneliness. It is a connection.

As to how the poems relate to the works in the exhibition, I will say that the poems are the music

which is the light and color in the art works. If my paintings could speak for me they would utter the exact words in the poems. It is much like when you are listening to some ethereal chamber music that makes you feel as if it were really true that there is an eternal life for us all if we follow the ever-burning light of truth and beauty. That is the connection between the poems and the art work.

II. THOUGHTS ABOUT MY WORK

Irises. . .Roses. . .Daffodils. . .Tulips. .
 .Morning Glories. . .A garden full of potatoes,
 peppers, onions, strawberries, green beans, sweet
 potatoes--this is what a fine garden has. A yard full
 of cherry trees, gooseberry bushes, apple trees and
 pear trees. . . . a yard where an old and rugged
 grandmother worked from sunrise to sunset and then in
 the twilight hours fell asleep in a rocking chair on a
 patio under the stars and the moon; right next to the
 red door of the patio's back porch. My grandmother,
 Nellie, is no longer with us but in her eyes I could
 see and hear and feel the joy of a robin singing at
 dawn's first light and also hear the strange melody of
 crickets out behind the old porch's red door.

It was my grandmother and her profound and deep
 love of nature; its creatures and beauties and

mysteries that I inherited my love of the land and the rhythm of life. When I was young I would write in strange and dark poems my feelings about the world, life, people, and the whole of it all. I tried to capture the light in my grandmother's eyes. Yet I felt incomplete in my poetry; I couldn't express the vivid colors, the muted light of a summer morning and the heat of the day. For several years I searched for the answer. I found the key in painting. I saw paintings by Van Gogh and my heart and soul sang a song that has never quieted.

I had found my other self--the self of the eye and heart and soul. I began to teach myself how to draw--I drew trees, flowers, birds, skies,--I had found my world. I came alive and I began to feel the breath of the land in my hands and fingers. The chord chimed and sang with the brush in hand.

I have never given up on my purpose in life to show the beauty of what can be truly felt and seen.

I have had many difficult and hard times but I know joy.

To show people the special gift of beauty to be seen in art and in also writing about art; I hope to offer to others our own personal grandmother we all wish we had, and through whose eyes, we may glimpse the unfolding story of life.

Each of us has our own song to sing and my song is that of an iris blooming in the spring rain and the dew on the grass fresh for morning cool breezes calling me forward. I go forward in life always excited about what new visual surprise nature will show to me fresh and clear. Also, I am able to take my grandmother with me everywhere I go.

I took my grandmother and her vision with me when I went to school in Switzerland in 1973-74. It was there that my personality reflected phases of closing and opening due to being away from home and that is reflected in the ceramic vessels. My self portrait is how I see myself having evolved from closed composition to open fragmented composition.

III. INFLUENCES

The following is a list of artists that have greatly affected my work:

Hans Hofmann and his push/pull theory of design through color led me to find earlier influences from Delaunay and then to Monet and to a limited extent Chevreul; these have been a definite influence.

The jazz and improvisational music of John Cage are also an influence of my usage of color.

Claude Monet and his method of painting were a great inspiration to me and how I develop my motifs.

Influences from Paul Klee and Joseph Albers--their color theories, ideas on composition and effect of color and its application and usage--have had a strong relationship to my thinking in my work. Further, Henri Focillon and his book "In Praise of Hands" helped formulate my personal aesthetic in my art.

Albers said, "With color reading there is a recognition of color context and seeing what happens when colors interact and to realize one almost never sees a single color themselves in a continuous flux, constantly related to changing neighbors and changing conditions."¹

My work involves the correlation of many ideas. Such as Albers has been quoted as saying: "...structure, color, the autonomy of line and value, structural images, pictorial form, etc.; as well as personal, intuitive type of knowledge about expression in with color. It is important to develop an eye for color (a gut response and comfortable feeling), develop perception of color action as well as a feeling for color relatedness, development of observation and articulation, placement of practice before theory, development of one's sensitivity for color, and understand the illusion, relativity and instability of color. Seeing implies and is coupled with fantasy and imagination. This is a way of searching that will lead

from a visual realization of the interaction between color and to awareness of the interdependence of color with form and placement which with quantity and with quality of light or hue and with pronouncement (by separating or connecting boundaries) suggestion of a way of study."²

I have also been concerned, as Albers has said, "with light intensity lightness, the darker one, is visually the heavier one, or the one containing more black or less white, Light-dark relationships are the bane of my work and a continual concern. Also, color subtraction is a concern. It can be seen that color differences are caused by two factors: by hue and by light, and in most cases by both at the same time. Recognizing this, it is possible to be able to push light and/or hue, by the use of contrasts away from their first appearance toward the opposite qualities, it follows that one might achieve parallel effects by subtracting those qualities not desired."³

Also another concern in my work is the idea of optical mixture. According to Joseph Albers, "In contrast to after-image, . . . I will say a little about optical mixture. Instead of two or more colors changing each other, pulling or pushing each other into different appearances (toward both greater difference and greater similarity); two colors or more, perceived

simultaneously, are seen combined and merged into a new color. In this process, the two original colors are first annulled and made invisible, and then replaced by a substitute called optical mixture. From the Impressionists one learned that they never presented green by itself. Instead of using green paint mixed mechanically from yellow. . . and blue, they applied yellow and blue unmixed in small dots, so that they became mixed only in our perception—they applied yellow and blue side by side as an impression. That the dots were small indicates that this effect depends on size and on distance. The discovery of the mixing of colors in one's perception led to many other developments in art history as well as technological developments such as photochemical reproduction techniques."⁴

In a similar view, Hans Hofmann wrote, "In painting by pure colors it is the color itself and its contrasts that form the structure. . .and not the use of other devices such as geometry. Color is form and subject. It is the sole theme that develops, transforms itself, aside from all analysis, psychological or otherwise. Color is a function of itself, all its action is in force at every moment. . ."⁵

Taking his cue from Cezanne, Matisse, Kandinsky, and Delaunay, Hofmann emphasized in his own writings that color had to be used as an independent element,

an expressive force on its own. He described the development of color and form as conceived and performed virtually simultaneously and mutually pre-conditional, and often quoted Cezanne's statement, "When color is richest, form is fullest."⁶

As many art critics have said that Hofmann reveals, "The particular meaning he attaches to the term 'plastic', i.e. the transference of three-dimensional experience to two dimensions, is crucial to an understanding of Hofmann's color concepts. Hofmann insists that plastic creation is based upon the dualism of flatness and depth, as seen in the works of Cezanne and Matisse who exploited the play of two- and three-dimensional cues against the other." Hofmann further stated, "That which lies deep in space as form must, by means of the advancing power of color oscillations, be brought forward again into the two-dimensional poised quality of formal creation, and that which lies as form in the first plane of space, must be brought to expression by means of the heaviness of color, so that the balance of the picture plane is not destroyed."⁷

Hofmann also said, "I hold my mind and my work free from any association foreign to the act of painting. I am thoroughly inspired and agitated by the actions themselves which the development of the painting continuously requires. From the beginning,

this puts me in a positive mood, which I must persistently follow until the picture has found realization through paint. This seems simple, but it is actually the fruit of long research."⁸

From Paul Klee came some additional ideas:

"One starts the structural image with out a plan. The image is produced not preconceived. The only element given and only known factor is the structure. It serves as a base, as the point of origin. Further planning of pictorial actions go on from there."⁹

"The working process becomes a dialogue. It takes place between the formative intentions of man, the characteristics of the material and the effect of the work being created. Each specific phase during formation is the source of the further information and inspiration. Thus the basis on which to build. There is a constant interplay. Coincidence plays an essential part in the working process."¹⁰

Some other properties analyzed and considered in my work are the "orientation of the line and plane in space, converging and diverging lines, and lack of or usage of perspectival construction of space. A usage of discharge of tension through manipulation of pictorial elements--from point to line, line to plane, and plane to a body. There is a concern about the idea of endotopic and exotopic form. There is also accent

and interpenetration of forms(s) and elements as well as with space and volume. Sometimes I will have a space with a displaced center. There may be shifting verticals with shift of view-point from left to right--the phenomenon of counter-movement. There may be varying subjective height-visual point variable to left to right (multi-dimensional simultaneity of projections). I have begun to use some archelectronic structures, as well a development from the static to dynamic movements. Often points will set themselves in motion, whether it be due to color or character of style. Form is a synthesis of figuration and appearance. The point, as seen dynamically, is an agent of style and movement. Growing may occur longitudinally."¹¹

My own approach to aesthetics is similar to that of the art historian, Henri Focillon, who writes: "Human consciousness is in perpetual pursuit of a language and a style. To assume consciousness is at once to assume form. Even at levels far below the zone of definition and clarity, forms measures, and relationships exist. The chief characteristic of the mind is to be constantly describing itself. The mind is a design that is in a state of ceaseless flux. Like the artist, the mind works upon nature. This it does with the premises that are so carelessly and so

copiously offered it by physical life, and upon these premises the mind never ceases to labor. It seeks to make them its very own, to give them mind, to give them form. This labor is so strenuous that at some times the mind can do no more. And yet these static moments as well as the riots and tumults of the mind and language; it over- turns the checkerboard of logic. Thus it is in this way that new forms are created and thus given form. Thus it begins the path of creation perpetually giving form, life and substance."12

IV. THE POEMS

The following is a collection of a few of the many poems I have written while I have been a student at Lindenwood. The poems were written to express loneliness and the need to communicate how I was feeling and show a need for someone to share or perhaps take away the pain I feel at times. They are more from the heart and more direct than perhaps, the art work. Yet, the paintings are what my eyes see and the poems are what my heart says. The poems are like a tear frozen in time. . .a jewel of myself, a self I don't always like ---a way of acceptance of the way things are and could be and I have faith will be some day.

CENTAUR

Loafsome, pitiful, centaur, pitiful human animal
writhing gyrating, encircling self endlessly in the
dust. . .

Suffering, suffering loathsome, pitiful centaur, animal
figure. . .

writhing, gyrating, encircling self endlessly in the
dust. . .

Hands clawing, pawing, tearing at the dirt-insides
ripping, tearing bursting-trembling chords of the
heart quivering to the melodic music. .

tensing, straining, within-heart pitching to the
moment of music the shrill, high notes play on;
quivering with the restless whining, echoing wind,
Anxious, eager violent wisps of wind intermingling,
intermeshing, printing her voice,

Ear-piercing echoes plunging into the depths of
the psyche.

Always lurking within the heart, waiting, listening,
maybe a facade of suffering.

swirling within the maddening
eye of the storm

tragic, yet harmonic moment. . .

Eyes weeping, dilating to see the vision;

it is here

within you

Look.

SEAGULL

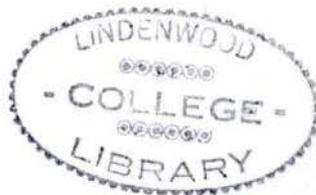
Sovereign demagogue of the sea and sky,
graceful, swooping, gliding,
free seagull-astromer bird, calculating with
rank knowledge. . .your skill is seen by me,
always mocking the wave.
Laughing at the static wave, shores of the endless,
tireless beach,
Surveying your point in time. . .Is it there?
Beneath her searching tireless gaze-knowingly. .
cognizant of the limits of life, contented simply
to understand
she continues to gracefully slice the blue sky.
A true carpenter of the land, sea, and sky.
Constructing lines of life
agility is known to be free.

WIND

Subtle, unnoticed, welcomed; the wind. . .
rushes through the trembling spirit.
Easing the frightened heart into her arms. . .
Caressing it with its sweet breath,
Fleeting with a kiss, humor the movement,
hope,
like the gypsy, carrying the restless spirit
through the silent, rustling branches of the trees,
into the infinite whole-into one-
picking up the pieces of one's self, /
up to the expanse of the sky,
raising the chords of the heart into the infinitude,
forever the heart waits for the wind,
Wait and it is so much above
Hear it.

FIRE

Anxiously-looking within the eternal flame of
the burning, fiery white heat
Self subjected, cognizant only of the flame,
lighting, illuminating, the innermost iris of the eye,
Stable, fearless, guileless,
Sangfroid
Froid
Sang
Penetrating the mind at its center
enveloping it in fear, terror-the
heart screams a lone, anguished
primeval cry
touched by the fire.



TIME, ETC.

Ballerina,
pirouetting to the rhythm
Valiantly white beguiled in the spectrum
Changing within the light
she refracts the light on her right and left
green, like the innocence of spring
yellow, like the brightness of the eternal sun,
pink, like the faded blood stain on your sleeve,
red, the vitality of it all.
Yet, still, transient, yet let us not forget
immobile in eternity.

THE ANGST

If I knew a name to call out
I would.
If I knew the letters
I would write them.
Yet, the syllables pass not beyond my lips.
Some say it is fear-
others weakness.
But, my friend, it is neither
it is the angst of our existence.
And there are no words that either you or I can utter.

SAILBOAT

Racing across the smooth waters of the sky (my mind)
Dashing amongst the waves of the water (my spirit)
My heart soars to unknown heights with the seagull
the watchman of the sea (my eyes)
The serenity and solitude of it all
overwhelms
and every fiber within me
is attuned to that which surrounds me.
The restless waves rush upon me
and too, they ebb away from me
I am with them
and yet I not.
Cautiously, they beckon to me. . .
Anxiously, they coax me
And slowly
but assuredly
I am swept out to sea
with the eternal tide-
my essence.

1, 2, 3, ETC.

Her tiny chest heaved a
wavering sigh-groping urgently,
for reassuring breaths of warmth-seeking a
rest upon the cold earth, seeking
the break beyond the barriers
of the trees . . . swaying in the cool air
to rest upon the tiny hands
Heartbeat pacing frantically
Brows knotting under the stress
tensed in a delusion
Aspiring to an equilibrium
a black jaguar hunts us all
it may be a death of sorts
but we all never die
and yet we do die.

FADED

In the fading twilight of the sunset

I sat by the river.

Slowly, the sky; in shades weakened

until

it was all darkness all around-

enveloping me. . .

She (the river) clutched me-

I laid a bed in her palms easingly-

Within a twinkling of a moment

I was plucked out of the waters

Thrown into the heat and cool of the earth.

And the wind blew softly through my hair

in a silent, restless beckoning to me it was

the gilded flute enticed me with its melody

to follow. . .

to listen.

THE PEBBLE

If I answer the voice that calls
within me,
then I will be sustained.
Yet, my God,
from this, too;
stems my restlessness.
And, alas I am again
the lovely pebble in the sand
that the waves wash over
time and time again,
But, this is what
I know to be the ambiguous eternity
within us all.

BLIND

In the quiet. . .
yes, in the vast stillness of things,
I can feel myself. . .
Like I am blind,
my quivering hands cautiously touch my face.
Yet, I find it is really not my face;
but it is you and I-
everything.

In conclusion, what I have talked about here are basically the exhibition and the works in general, thoughts about the work, poems and writings, and major influences. I have by no means even begun to tap the well of meaning that is really in the work; but will sum it all up by writing a few prosaic words to tell what I see.

Irises. . .Roses. . .Dahlias. . .Tulips; all glittering, glistening in the summer morning mist and the sun beckoning is all to touch but not touch, to see but not see; but most of all to feel and hear the song, to make music for us all to hear and sing and to dance the dance.

Kandice L. Kelley

Summer, 1988

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