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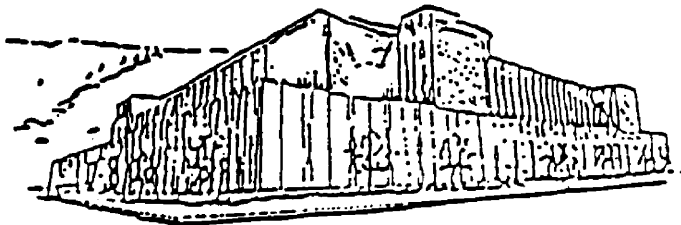
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VEHICLES

by

William A. Gregory Jr.

B.F.A. East Carolina University, 1997

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

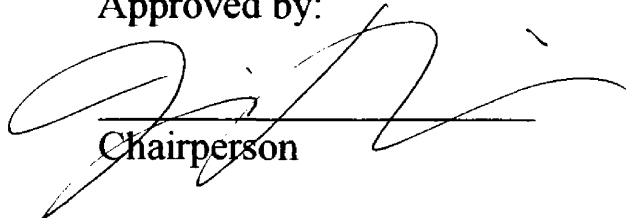
for the degree of

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The University of Montana

2000

Approved by:



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Dean, Graduate School

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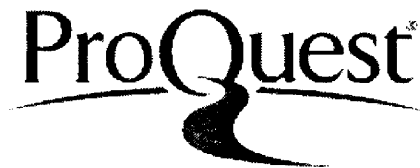


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Introduction:

My thesis work is constructed by the means of a series of prints that are formal studies of the automobile to represent myself iconographically. These silhouettes of vehicles are produced as large-scale relief prints. These prints are about me, but they are not self-portraits. Rather, they symbolize my feelings towards the automobile. The term “vehicle,” as discussed in my thesis, will not only mean its use as transportation; it is also a symbol of my feelings.

The images I have chosen are from my own direct and perceptive interpretation as well as personal contact with each vehicle. These interpretations have also derived from my experience with automobiles. As visual objects they have influenced my work both formally and conceptually. These examples evoke strong sensations and perceptions that I feel through interaction and experience. Each vehicle has its’ own personality that personifies its’ existence. Engrossed in the sights, sounds, and smells of the automobile, I am overwhelmed with the paradigm of mechanical verses emotional response each vehicle produces.

Automobile images surely evoke feelings and relationships between owners and their chosen vehicle. My fascination is concerned with the strong bond that develops between the automobile and owner. This relationship can be psychological, however, I wish to demonstrate perceptual self reflection. This relationship between an animate and inanimate object produces a powerful response. I intend for viewers to reflect and intimately connect with their life experience. Perhaps an outcome of personal identification can be achieved.

Historical Background:

The historical background from which my work originates combine *Pop Art*, and the art of the early lithograph poster. These genres influence my use of scale, color and imagery. Both *Pop Art* and the lithograph poster have been attributed to mass societal consumption of imagery. The invention of lithography by Alois Senefelder in 1798 made mass consumption possible. Artists were able to turn out larger editions of work as well as expand into new ideas in expanded areas of the world market.

My work has been influenced significantly by several *Pop Art* artists. These artists of the early 1960's were attracted to the American media and accessible objects for their work. *Pop Art* was highly recognizable to the mass culture which reflected and was made conscious of a new high-art form. The subject matter that made *Pop Art* influential directly related to the consumer society. *Pop Art* created a new phenomenon and delighted society with imagery of hamburgers, cartoons, and movie stars in new form (illustration 1). The new art form would encounter fame unlike any prior genre of past art forms.

The scale of my work is closely related to Claes Oldenburg's thoughts about imagery size and scale concerning three dimensional objects. His statement, "*on a large scale gravity most wins out completely*"(Madoff 229) is comparative to my efforts with large scale prints. Although he makes this statement about his large soft sculptures (illustration 2) of the late 1960's, I have constructed prints in large scale in order to *pull* the viewer *in* and grasp his/her attention. I intend for the viewer to associate the weight



Illustration 1. Roy Lichtenstein, *Little Big Painting*, oil on canvas, 1965

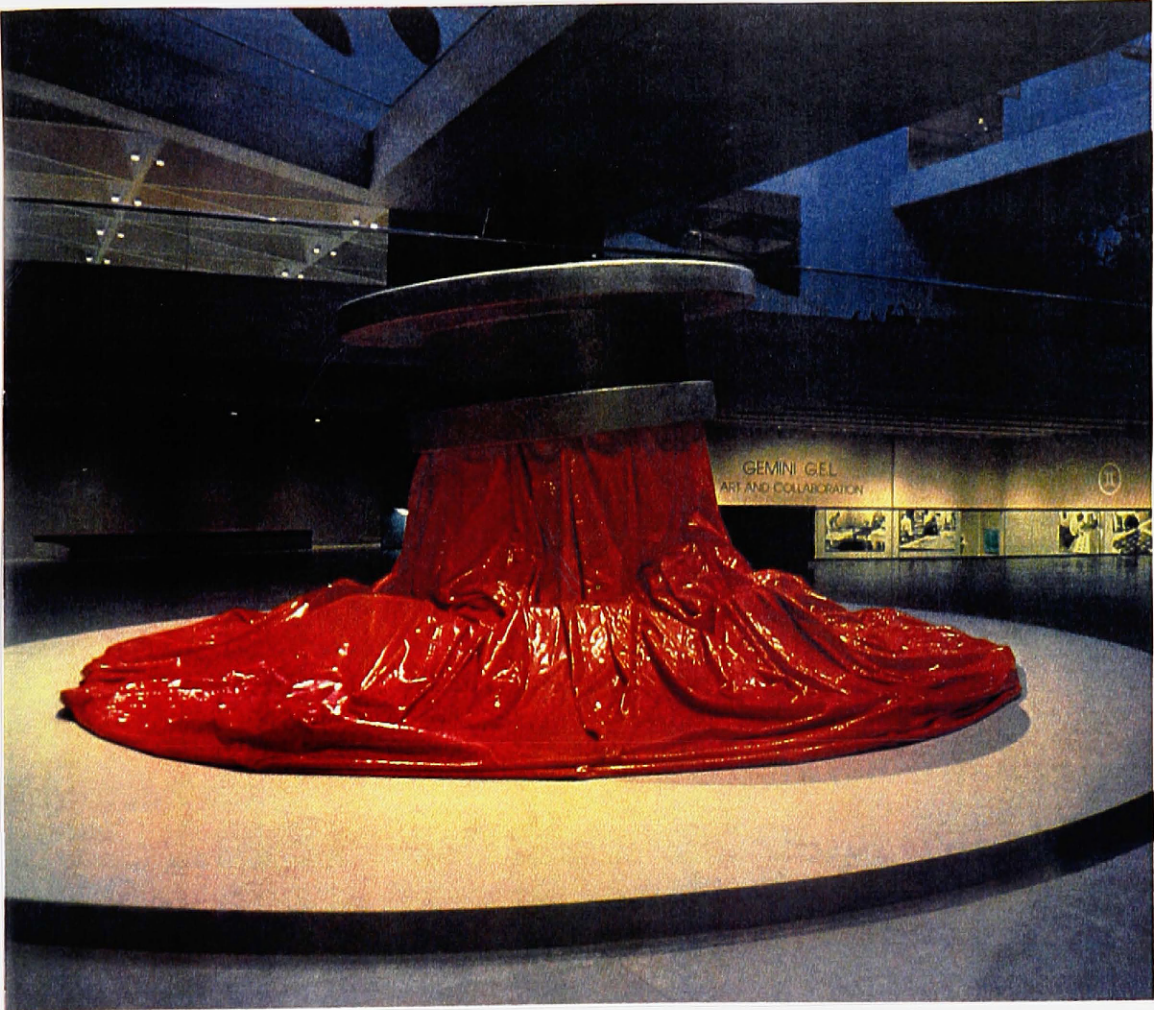


Illustration 2. *Claes Oldenburg, Giant Icebag, vinyl and wood, 1969*

of the automobiles through the scale of the prints. The presence of the large automobile image should actually bear down upon the viewer and almost consume him/her.

Oldenburg described this as being a *theatrical problem*. The props are large in order to attract the attention of the viewer.

Another *Pop Art* influence I have chosen is the use of a singular image within the work itself. I intend to use symbolic metaphors to describe myself as the artist. The difference however, is that *Pop Art* artist denies any self-association with the work. There is speculation though, that no matter how distant the *Pop Art* artist projected him/herself from the work, there had to be a shimmer of personal relation to the work. In 1965, Lucy Lippard wrote about James Rosenquist in *Artforum*. She stated, “*They (the work) have no story to tell, but they often do have personal significance to the artist, a significance which he refused to make obvious because it is personal, and because the painting is to be seen first and foremost as a painting, as a visual boomerang. He constantly avoids clever, witty, poetic, easily absorbed or humorous imagery in his use of juxtaposition*” (247). I emphatically feel this similar connection with my work. I am presenting an object for the viewer to enjoy; however I intend to leave behind my personal feelings. At this conjecture my personal feelings towards the automobile are not entirely the issue. I intend to concentrate my efforts on an interaction between the print and the viewer. The objective of this work is to allow viewers to make a personal connection with each print at their own interpretive level.

The art of the early lithographic poster is fascinating and entices my creative approach. Both German and French lithographic advertisement posters from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have had the most impact on me as an artist

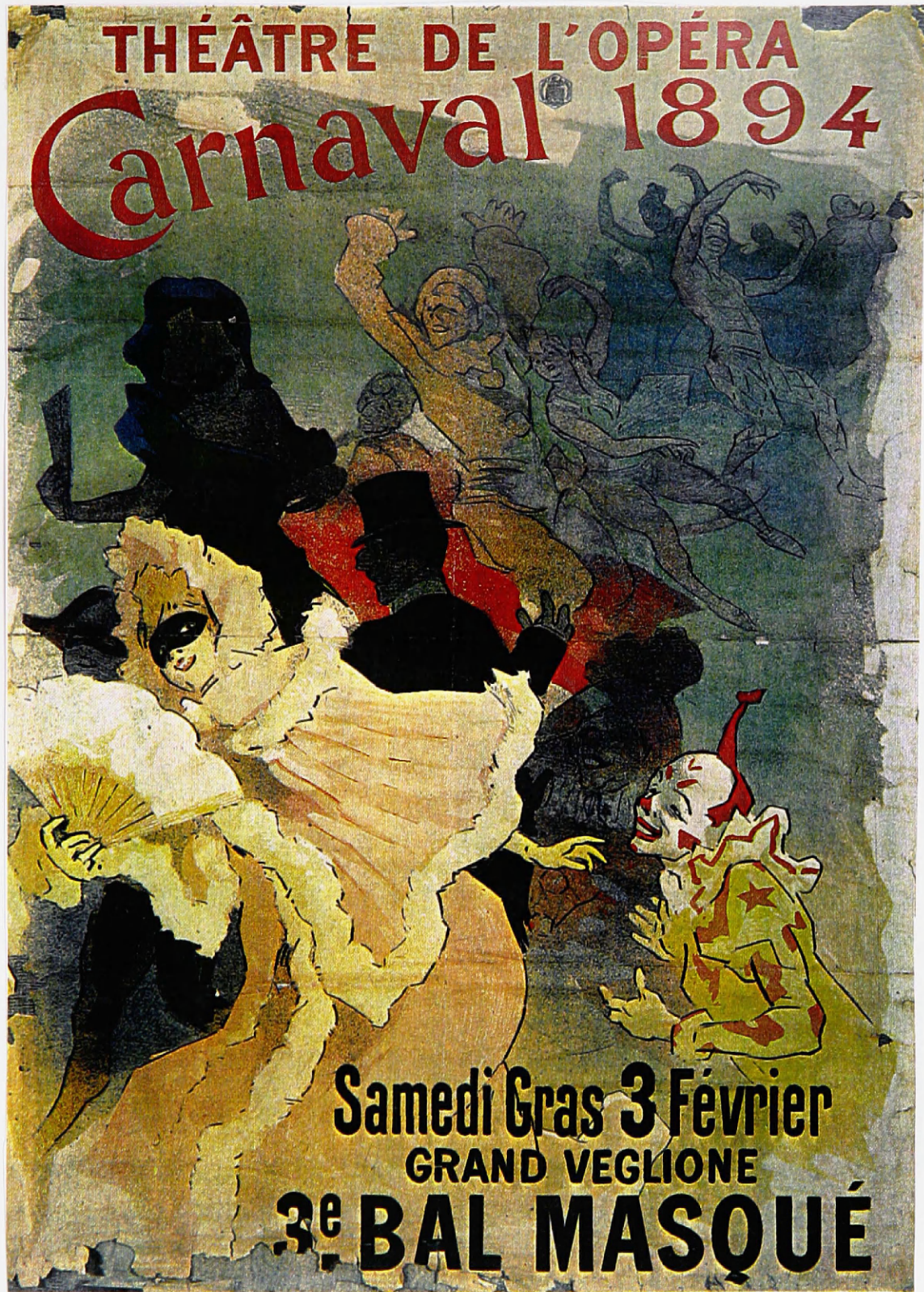


Illustration 3. *Jules Cheret, Carnaval 1894: Theatre de l' Opera, lithograph, 1893*

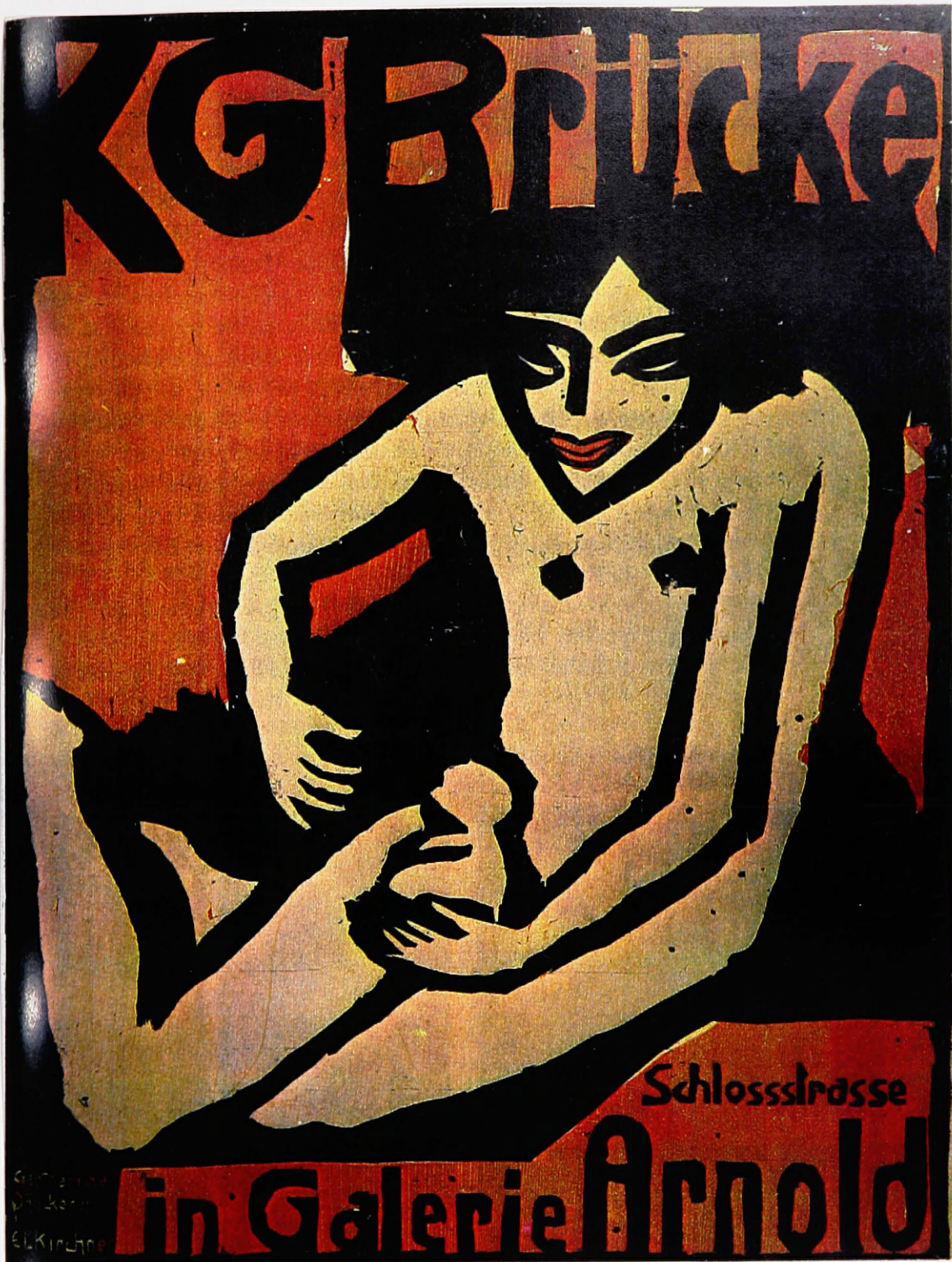


Illustration 4. *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Die Brücke, 1910*

(illustration 3 and 4). As a printmaker, I am intrigued by the use of this medium as a commercial tool. I am equally intrigued by the personal mark making on stones rather than technically generated media. The most notable of poster designers I enjoy, is Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. His ability to design posters proved remarkably efficient as fine art. He presented dramatic and enticing scenes of life in Paris, France.

Toulouse-Lautrec's, *Jane Avril at the Jardin de Paris* (illustration 5) is an example of bold lines and silhouettes thus producing it brilliantly succinct and expressive. "*His resourcefulness in the graphic media allowed him to set down his subjects with a stylized flatness and still to characterize them in the psychological round*" (Hunter 50). These bold silhouettes have had a significant impact on my work. My marks have become economical, yet they have a personal quality of which I have tried to individualize as my own. Influenced by Toulouse-Lautrec, my work is a purposeful expression of my intent to produce work worthy to be called original. Toulouse-Lautrec had a genius for reducing the whole style of a personality to a simple few gestures and capturing it with a bold silhouette or a single line. "*He managed to hold the spectacle of life and pure pictorial valued in a wonderful tension*" (50). To this I compare my own work. The silhouette I created is intended to pull the viewer in and therefore become involved with the immensity of the size of the work. From this involvement a relationship is established.

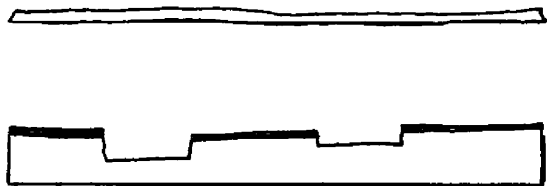


Illustration 5. *Henri De Toulouse-Lautrec, Jan Avril at the Jardin de Paris lithograph, 1893*

Materials and Technical Concerns:

Printmaking is my chosen medium for this thesis direction. The work in this series is constructed primarily from relief printmaking (illustration a.) methods. I have also included intaglio prints (illustration b.) to accompany the work. Printmaking has given me prolific opportunities to explore visual communication. My enjoyment involves the physical work that printmaking requires, of which I find rewarding.

a.

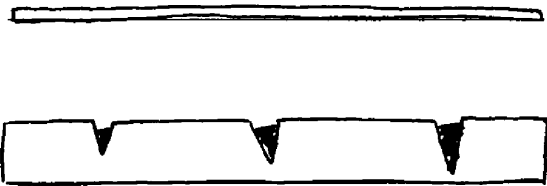


paper

ink (surface)

printing block

b.



paper

ink (crevasses, clean surface)

copper plate

My relief prints are constructed using both traditional and modern methods of printmaking. Utilizing a new plastic material (*Sintra plastic*), I am able to imitate the traditional methods of relief printing. I cut material away to expose a recessed white line when rolled with a colored relief ink. The block is then printed using an electric printing press transferring ink to paper. The image becomes a reverse of the cut.

I used plastic as a cutting medium. This plastic cuts with ease and has proven to be a worthy alternative to wood. The plastic can be cut producing crisp lines as well as gesture marks. The quality of printing is also exceptional. I prefer a quality with a smooth surface over the wood grain of *Shina* plywood and other wood products. The plastic can create flat colors with minimal problems. However, plastic is susceptible to scratching which may appear in a print.

The inks and paper I used, also lend themselves to the relief process. The specific inks are oil based inks, which produce crisp and smooth tones. To obtain the desired color, I mixed small amounts of inks. I applied no specific methods of mixture other than aesthetic appeal. This was specifically done to be compatible with each automobile. A majority of color combinations, when printed, were direct associations of *Johannes Itten* studies of color. Ittens' color theory is "*on color mixture, on ways in which hues can be arranged for harmonious order, simple relationships between colors and form, spatial effects*" (Itten 5). The color combinations I have included are a mix of hues, light-dark, cool-warm and complementary associations. Rather than using my traditional black and white, I used assorted colors to print. This has become a recent exploration to my work. The strongest aesthetic quality I compare my work to *Ittens* theories, is his rule of subjective opinion. This theory permits the student to utilize his/her own judgment to resolve color. In my work, intuitive processes are the foundation for my color choices and therefore become my subjective process. "*To help a student discover his subjective forms and colors is to help him discover himself*" (24).

Printmaking is a physically demanding art form. I enjoy printmaking because of the physical expenditure I experience. I also enjoy developing myself as a craftsman.

Despite the many years it has taken me to develop an understanding of the materials and media associated with the process, it has been personally rewarding. The diversity of intaglio, lithography and relief printing, have their definite individual merits. Learning a craft means continuously updating oneself on methods and techniques.

Title: Vehicles

The subject of my thesis is the automobile as an extension of myself as well as my feelings. These prints are large scale with flat color enhancing images of the automobile as iconography. I will discuss further how these formal qualities have collectively joined together to produce the individual prints. I have chosen three of the works from which I will explain my formal concerns. It is important to remember that my discussions of individual prints also detail the efforts of the entire body of work.

Scale:

My primary concern is scale (illustration 6, *Blue Four by Eight E-type*). I have intended to create a visual impact. This print is intended to be large and overwhelming in order to include many viewers at one time. Charles Baudelaire once stated that work should have the ability to be seen in a swift visualizing glance. From this glance, art should also hold undeniable truths within the work. I have created visual space to allow an instantaneous summation of the work with swiftness and a sense of energy. The size and scale for this print is retained by the viewer with a simple glance pronouncing my own undeniable truths. The scale of this work allows the flat pattern to be easily assimilated. The viewer's mind becomes imprinted with the block form, which becomes an easily recognized after-image.

It is necessary to enhance the image of the automobile through scale. I discerned that size of the automobile is important to reproduce closely to its' original size. The

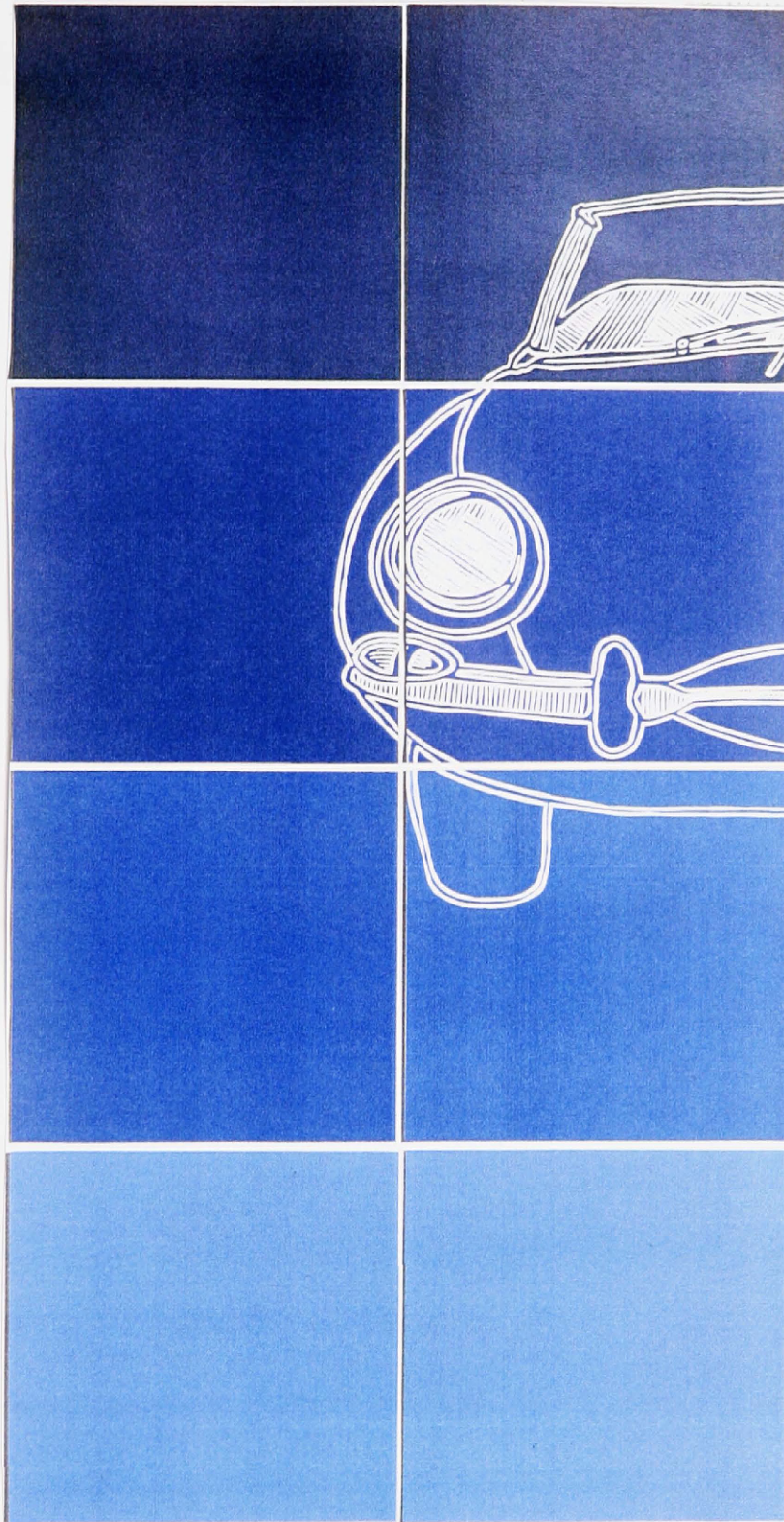


Illustration 6. *Bill Gregory, Blue Four by Eight E-type relief print, 1999*

impact of largeness produces a physical awareness of size and significance.

Metaphorically, the viewer is consumed and overwhelmed by the size of the print. To experience the presence of the automobile, one may desire to touch the print and feel the surface.

Color:

My choices for color are derived from the positive and negative reactions of their visual influence (illustration 7, *Blue and Orange Four by Eight SWB*). I have been inspired by Johannes Itten's color theories. I have independently taken the liberty of expanding my own color mixing technique. Both balance and harmony impact the patterns I use. The colors I chose are intentionally vibrant and intense. Blue, being the coolest, challenges orange, which is the warmest. I utilized color to reflect the personality of the automobiles' image. This reflection is an intuitive decision based upon my interpretation of each vehicle's personality by means of color. A sense of motion is further enhanced by an intense vibrancy of color. Complementary colors create a dynamic impact in order to capture vitality.

To design an atmosphere of motion within these prints, reflections of gas station signs, product displays, billboards and actual vehicle colors are intertwined. The prints are bold with color, similar to highway signs which grab our attention and readily relay information. They too, are a part of the visual surroundings we consume consciously and unconsciously when we travel. Therefore, the conscious and unconscious is revealed and explored throughout my thesis presentation.

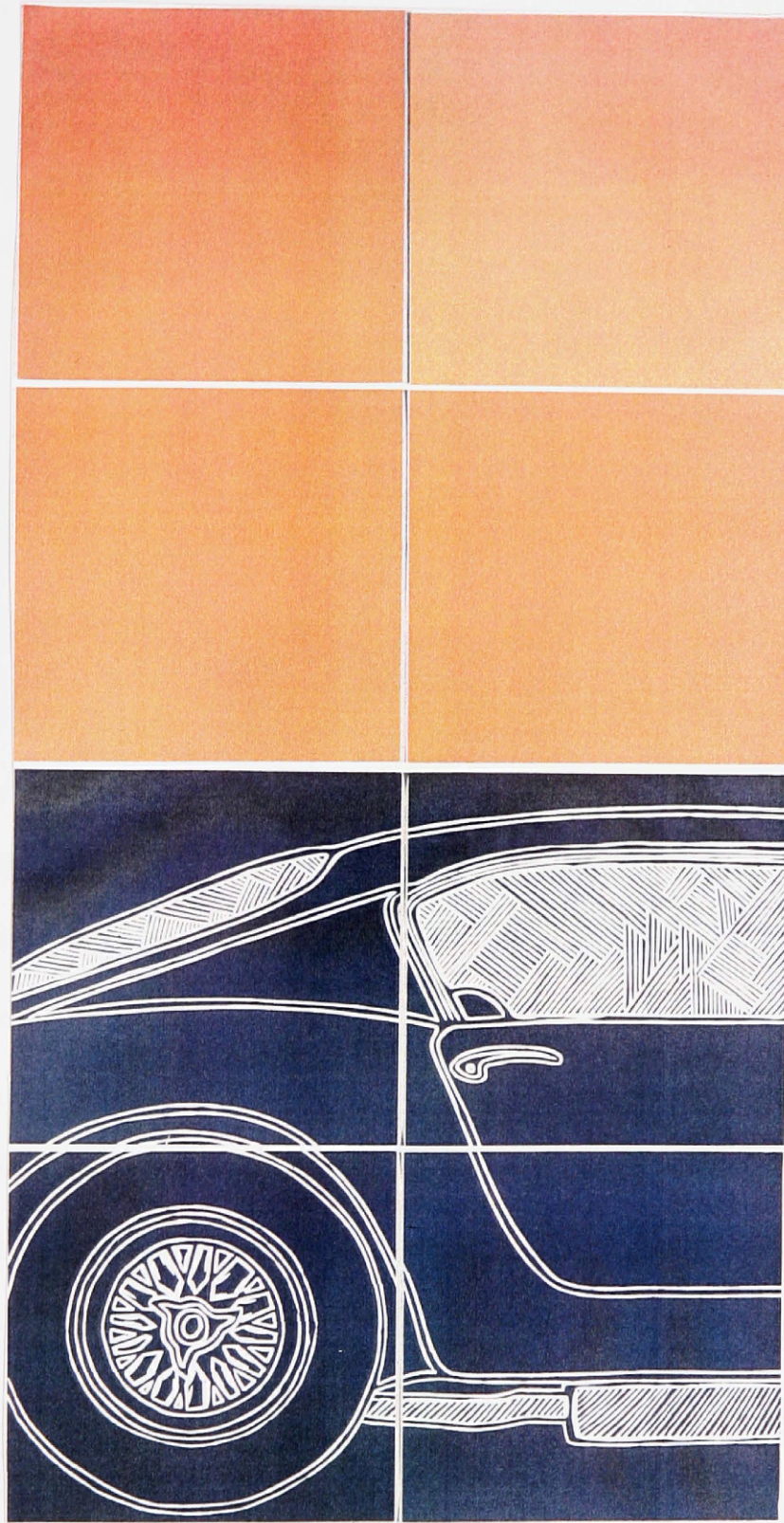


Illustration 7. *Bill Gregory, Blue and Orange Four by Eight SWB*
relief print, 2000

Imagery:

In the final print (illustration 8, *Green and Yellow Four by Eight Gullwing*) I will discuss my use of automobile imagery. I have chosen the automobile as an iconographic image of myself. My relationship with the automobile is one of admiration and enjoyment. My attraction to automobiles can be attributed to the 'classic' vehicle. These automobiles have a line quality and aesthetic appeal I am drawn to. I have found these images to be close interpretations of myself. Aesthetically, I illustrated this automobile by personal choice. The uniqueness of this automobile is displayed in partial elements in order to entice the viewer to identify if they may, make and model. The identifiable portion is the classical line. Other prints also define a portion of the remarkable character identified by lines, craftsmanship and or appeal.

Deciding the portion to present to a viewer defined the figure-ground relationship. Because of the scale of the print, I cropped the image to the top and center. This created another form of visual movement within the print. When presented with the entire collection, the viewers actual eye movement is directed across the automobile, and directly impacted by both scale and color.

Another formal concern involves the image placement and the space surrounding the automobile. I intentionally chose not to create a predetermined atmosphere. There are large portions of empty space below the primary image. This space creates a platform for the viewer to develop his/her own atmosphere. The formal attributes and conceptual feelings come together in this print. This space opens up a realm of

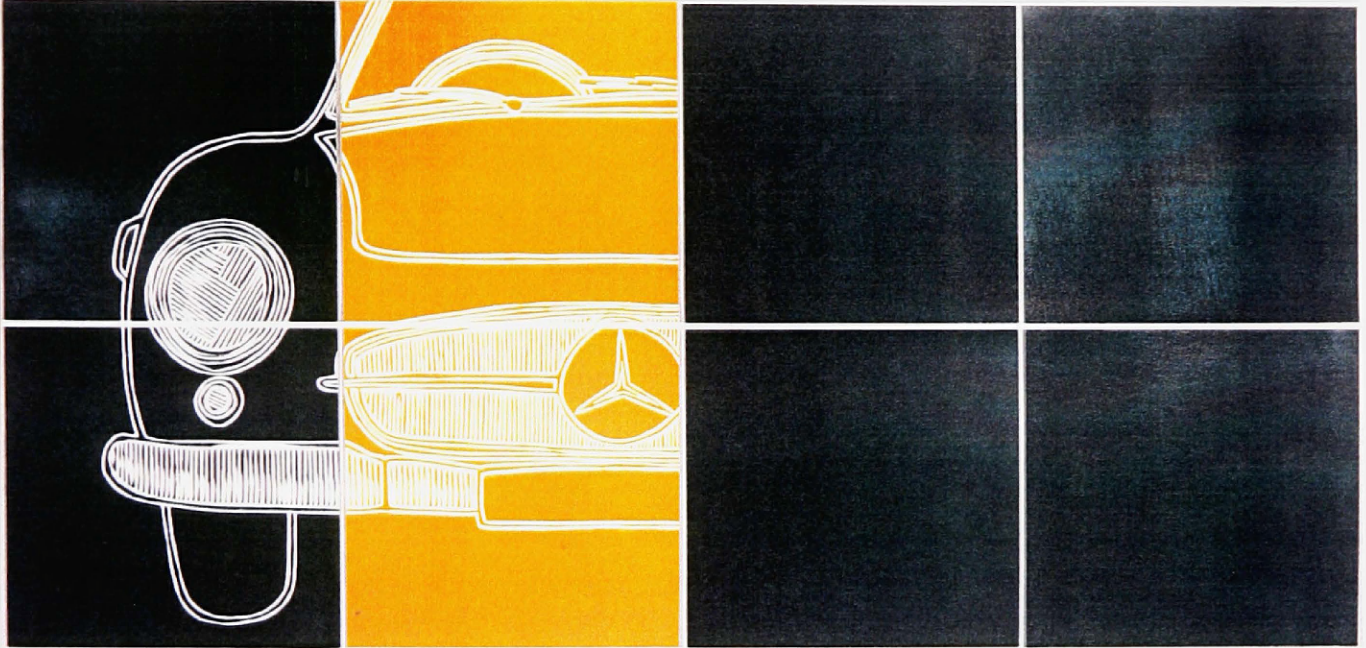


Illustration 8. *Bill Gregory, Green and Yellow Four by Eight Gullwing, relief print, 2000*

possibilities for the viewer to interpret. The outcome is for the viewer to each relate to one and create a fantasy of his/her own.

My craftsmanship is identified through the marks I created within the image of each automobile. These marks are my definitive logotype. The lines I use for this work are bold, double silhouetted lines intended to create a flat, two-dimensional form. I intend to utilize these specific marks in future prints as a trademark. The heavy outline defines the mark of closeness I feel with these prints. The double outline is intended to accentuate the lines of the automobile. Aesthetically, lines of automobiles pronounce their differentiation from one another. There are distinctive traits within the lines of the automobile which transcend time and are passed from model to model. Individually, my created lines take on the same attributes. Therefore this identifies my work, separate from other printers and creates a foundation for my future work. The silhouettes created are a handsome form of expression for myself and all of the prints.

Conclusion:

I have been influenced by the combination of dual art forms, the automobile and printmaking. As in printmaking, the production of an automobile is an art form unto itself. Whether utilitarian or an object of pleasure, the prints and cars transcend their intended uses. The automobile as a creative and emotional art form was used to develop this project.

Printmaking has offered me the opportunity to explore ideas and emotions at a far greater realm than any other medium I have encountered. My thesis is an exploration of this medium. This collection of prints is the beginning of a relationship that I desire to continually develop. These prints are an investigation of relief printing and what I conclude to be a self expression of art and the automobile.

The automobile is an iconographic representation of myself as well. Throughout my experiences with printmaking I have consistently used images that have had personal value to myself and my work. For this work, the automobile has been a gateway for my expressive emotions. This representation is one of self reflection which I hope to share with others. *“In the beginning was the Car, and the Car was with Art, and the Car was Art”* (Hickey 61).

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