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University of Colorado at Boulder



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STOCHASTIC PROCESSES IN NATURE AS ARTISTIC THEME

By

Richard E. Buff

B.A., University of Colorado, 1969

Richard E. Buff
has been approved for the
Department of
Fine Arts

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate
School of the University of Colorado in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

Department of Fine Arts, Creative Art

1971

May 25 1971

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Buff, Richard E., (M.F.A., Fine Arts) Thesis Title:
Abstract Processes in Nature as Artist's Theme
Thesis directed by Professor Roland Reiss

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This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by

Richard E. Buff

has been approved for the

Department of

Fine Arts

by

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perhaps a most important aspect of my new conception of
the physical world.

Roland Reiss

Roland Reiss

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physical world.

Charles A. Qualley

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and artistic relevance.

Date May 25, 1971

Buff, Richard E., (M.F.A., Fine Arts: Creative Arts)

Aleatory Processes in Nature as Artistic Theme

Thesis directed by Professor Roland Reiss

The intent of my creative work has been to explore forms and formal situations that derive from natural occurrences which appear on a level of normal vision to be transient and/or aleatory. This work is intended to expand my own receptivity (and hopefully that of the spectator) to that which may be perceived as visually interesting in general experience. This exploration has not precluded the possibility of non-random, overtly-purposive visual elements as relevant factors in my work. Indeed, the juxtaposition of orderly, symmetrical elements with random themes, imagery, or intentions is perhaps a most encompassing and inevitable perception of the physical world and Man's part in it. It has been my intention to extend my awareness of the visual and physical environment as completely as possible. Contemporary elements of landscape such as vapor trails and roadside effluvia (gravel, etc.) are not without artistic merit if only for the sake of formal comparison with traditional or accepted standards of beauty and artistic relevance.

My method of achieving the above intentions in the creation of art work has been essentially two-fold:

At a primary level, I have been involved in the creation of individual art works that combine sculptural and painterly interests. These works occupy space sculpturally but are illusionistically representational and emulate natural occurrences that are random in appearance. This illusionism may be either pictorial or literal. Because the information which my art conveys is strongly based at this level upon a representation of the real world, I have sought to reconcile an interest in natural forms with an interest in abstract, man-evolved forms. A codification of visual information derived from Nature has been the result. My explorations of random elements in Nature have subsequently led to a division of landscape elements into several categories. These include; sky, landscape proper, highway references, and plant forms. Developing interests have added animal life and human architectural schemas to this categorization. Each of the above codifications has been separately explored and the elements contained within each category have been examined mainly in terms of random properties and inherent physical qualities.

My investigation of sky as a visual system that exemplifies visually random ordering processes articulated by random or transient forms has been generally simplified to the creation of blue and white patterned "paintings" executed in polyester resins and pigments. To emphasize the abstractness and randomness of the compositional tendencies found in the sky, I have generally presented illusionistic representations of sky within a rectangular format that is exaggeratedly extended in one direction; that is, a "plank" form. Landscape and highway references have been similarly treated in my past work. These three areas of codification have usually been visually represented as being seen at a distance. That is, the scale of the illusions has been smaller than literal scale, mainly to accommodate an adequate area for viewing the theme without consuming the great amount of space that these landscape elements occupy in reality.

The codification of plant forms or vegetation has been investigated differently. Scale is generally literal (i.e., "life-size") and this might imply a lack of interest on my part in consistency with regard to the relative scale of these elements. This lack of overt consistency may be defended when one accepts the realization that such scale discrepancies occur constantly in our perception of reality.

For example, clouds are never equivalent in visual scale to the immediate landscape environment of a spectator on the ground. And a spectator of landscape in an airplane experiences the reverse effect--the atmospheric presence of cloud masses and the relative diminution of the landscape below. The factors of time and space allow us to experience equivalent data in a variety of scales and relationships, and these factors have always been treated quite plastically in the visual arts. My loose treatment of scale also allows further visual clues to my thematic intent by implying that the didactic motivations of the work supercede any attempt to present a complete "pictorial" representation of reality.

The use of literally-scaled plant forms also incorporates another factor important to my art; the use of the found object. It is my contention that the ready-made or found object may serve art's purposes if the artist attributes artistic usefulness to such non-art objects and claims them as a portion of his work. In this case, I have found artificial flowers and greenery to be a useful supplement to my own hand-made rubber plants.

My developing interests in categorizing animal life and human architectural forms in terms of the aleatory theme have also been treated separately and specifically.

To date, with the exception of an early work dealing with a fragmented human form, I have employed animal forms as complete entities whose implied animation allows their spatial placement anywhere in relation to additional elements. Architecturally-oriented elements have generally assumed a formal treatment similar to that of the sky and landscape planks. That is, fragments of a larger whole have been presented to imply that whole (as a plank of sky replicates the qualities of formal arrangement in the sky as a totality). The work contained in these latter two categories has thus far been of literal scale also, as a means of asserting the art works' presence in real environments.

The second level of my art work is basically the combination and arrangement of any or all of the individual art works in the above categories into a variety of artistic situations that are subject to rearrangement and have no ideal placement or environment. Rather, these sculptural situations are able to compositionally reinforce the theme of randomness or chaotic ordering at their own composite level. These situations are compositionally dependent only upon the environmental, thematic intent, and the inherent physical and structural properties of the

separate elements. For example, planks are treated in terms of their own structure and may consequently be leaned or rested upon the physical components of the environment at hand--replicating the dependence of natural elements upon such structuring factors of real experience as gravity.

This system of situational art further pursues the notion of transiency implied in my thematic pursuits and allows the artistic re-cycling of forms and formal arrangements. This system, affording the possibility of re-using the same visual elements in a variety of combinations, gives each individual element a greater responsibility to be artistically functional and stresses the differences and uniqueness of all environmental matrixes that the art works find themselves in.

This two-fold system of creating art has provided a sense of freedom in both the creation of forms and in their placement in various visual environments. Art may be viable apart from an expectable gallery situation and, indeed, be capable of mingling with general reality or non-art locales.

Nature's constant but usually unnoticed presence in affecting even Man's most controlled environments (such as modern highways) has led me to conclude that Man has separated himself from an aesthetic appreciation of forms and formal arrangements which do not emulate his own usual modes of visual assertion. By "usual modes" I mean such facets of Man's visual life as his architecture, highways, and the general structuring of the human environment. This structuring is almost always asserted in terms of components that are linear, rectilinear, and/or symmetrical. Man has chosen a certain sort of visual pragmatism and at the same time has tended to close himself off from other inevitable forms and formal realities in art-experience and in general experience. It is my hope that my art work may be useful in providing some visual alternatives in favor of a broader view of the interaction of controlled and chance conditions in the human environment.

Department of Fine Arts

Approved by _____

Chairman of Committee

Joseph Clower

Co-Chairman of Committee

Chairman, Fine Arts Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree M.F.A. in Creative Arts

Richard E. Buff

has submitted this written thesis
as a supplement to the creative thesis

One Mixed-media Situation (13 pieces)
Number and Medium

Variable
Size

Easter-lean
Title

which is in the permanent possession of the
University of Colorado and recorded with the

Department of Fine Arts

Approved by

Roland Reiss
Chairman of Committee

Joseph Clower
Co-Chairman of Committee

Charles R. Gualtieri
Chairman, Fine Arts Department

Number of slides and medium

<u>#1 Mixed-media</u>	<u>ca. 9'x9'x9'</u>	<u>Easter-lean</u>
<u>#2 Mixed-media</u>	<u>ca. 8'x6'x2"</u>	<u>Flag</u>
<u>#3 Mixed-media</u>	<u>ca. 8'x3'x8'</u>	<u>Flag--Rearrangement #1</u>
<u>#4 Mixed-media</u>	<u>ca. 4'x4'x8'</u>	<u>Flag--Rearrangement #2</u>
<u>#5 Mixed-media</u>	<u>ca. 30'x30'x12'</u>	<u>Studio Situation</u>
<u>#6 Mixed-media</u>	<u>ca. 3'x3'</u>	<u>Snappy Tie Commercial</u>



