

PASCAL




Dep	Mod	Ran	Sect	Shelf	Tray	Item
P	2	04	23	16	10	001

PASCAL

ARTARC  
---  
T  
1977  
L576

University of Colorado at Boulder



U18304 9083508



NON-CIRCULATING



FOR REFERENCE  
DO NOT TAKE FROM THIS ROOM

ARCH  
T  
1977  
L576

JOURNEY TO A CLEAR PLACE

By

Janet Madeleine Lever

B.F.A., University of California, Santa Barbara, 1973

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

1977

University of Colorado Libraries - Boulder

This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by

Janet Madeleine Lever

has been approved for the

Department of

Fine Arts

by

Thomas J. B. [Signature]

Lair [Signature]

Gary Metz [Signature]

Carl [Signature]

Date

May 6, 1977



I INTRODUCTION

II MAPS: deciding where you want to go

III RESEARCH OF THE TERRITORY: readings, drawing, learning the dialect

IV EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS FOR THE JOURNEY

V PASSENGERS, CHANCE AQUAINTENCES, INFLUENCES

VI NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL PIECES: site reports, snapshots

VII A TRAVELLER'S STATE OF MIND

VIII WHERE TO NEXT ?

## I INTRODUCTION

In choosing the theme of a journey for my thesis show, it seemed appropriate to organize my written statement in the same way one would organize and carry out a real journey. One can be a traveller in the world of ideas and forms as well as physical space. The general coordinates of time and space allow an infinite number of possibilities in the realm of art; having taken material form, a work of art becomes a vehicle which demonstrates, contains, orders our perceptions, making a configuration of events into one whole. Norberg-Schultz, in his book, Intentions in Architecture, describes perception as "an active force, when directed towards a particular phenomena." It is through personal experience that one discovers the relationships between these phenomena. By simply walking into the environment (whether a nearby foothills trail or a more remote canyon path), we create a sense of order and proceed to objectify certain elements that engage our attention.

"...the next three days will be determined by a folded piece of paper with dotted lines. The trail is chosen, pack is on the back, go. It's easy to travel through this dry wash with little growth, few flowers, but rock, lots of rocks, huge boulders, high cliffs pressing in on both sides: conversing, nestling, splitting, stacking, falling, piling-up, forming lines, walls, bridges, arches, hiding springs, watching through holes like eyes." (notes from a journal- Canyonlands, Spring 1976)

The twenty-six pieces shown have been selected from the work of the last six months. As clay objects they demonstrate a consistent treatment of materials, combining handbuilding, casting, and throwing techniques, exploring a wide palette of glaze colors, achieving a range of textures, experimenting with shapes and tensions between forms. As the title suggests, they deal with specific places, or the process involved in getting there. It is my hope that the ideas behind the actual fabrications of the pieces provide a system of unity which runs throughout the work. Using imagination and abstraction, one can translate ideas into tangible form. An idea has a "landscape" or a map just as any real place. One person's vision may allow someone else to see clearly in idea behind the form. To try and retain an element of freshness and vitality in the medium, an opening or possible escape in the form, gives room for new ideas and other personal musings.

## II MAPS: deciding where you want to go

I once met a fellow who decided where he would go next by closing his eyes and having a friend spin him around. Whichever way he faced at the last turn would be the direction for that day's travel. For those less daring, it helps to have a map. Mel Bochner defines a map as "an attempt to order the apparently tangible stuff of our perceptions by catching it in a net of co-ordinates, framing it and containing it-making it knowable and finite and making us feel that we know where we are." In this body of work there is a concern with directions, not dimensions; settings, not points; regions, not planes; and distances, not routes. In several pieces there is a specific reference to a visual line, to a distant point. The form of a circle or spiral suggests a continuum, a never-ending movement. One always hopes to discover someday "the feeling of infinity on the horizon line or just over the next hill". (Georgia O'Keefe)

"The time and space experienced today are difficult to write about. Perhaps because of the randomness-no trail/any trail, just another turn in the river and then another, a dominance of sound. Today was another journey- to a clear moment or two, when less means more; like trying to listen to the water falling over stones, and nothing else; shutting eyes and ceasing mental meanders-just listening!" (journal notes, April '77)

## III RESEARCH OF THE TERRITORY: readings, drawing, learning the dialect

In order to achieve the most fruitful dialogue with the landscape it helps to know something about the geology of the actual place. One can more readily identify the incredible number of surfaces, textures and forms in the rocks, plants and landforms. Myths and narrative fictions often provide information on the more mysterious occurrences in the natural world. Land that has been lived in retains a presence of all previous inhabitants through their artifacts, footsteps, plantings, and architectural remains. The definition of the word 'draw' is particularly extensive. A few of the more compelling meanings include:

1. to cause to move toward or after a compelling force, to haul, to drag, to cause to be raised, to pull over so as to conceal, to bring out or cause to come out, to remove, to cause to depart, to cause to bend, to pull off.

2. to cause (as a person) to move, proceed or act, to attract,



to influence towards, to force from cover, to rouse to action, to force the playing of.

3. to alter in form or content, to tear into pieces, contract, pucker, wrinkle, to extend in length, stretch, to shave, shape

4. to produce by or as of by tracing a pen or other instruments of delineation over a surface; to represent by lines, to represent by words, to set forth in due and proper form.

Thus familiarity with ~~the~~ situation and a willingness to physically participate with the contours of the land, the depths of gorges, the summits of mountains, all return to the basic pool of resources from which ideas and images are formed. From a review of Ree Morton's work by Lucy Lippard:

"Recall sources, recent centerings, recast nature, reclaim other paths, recollect from the past, record experience, reflect distance, reflect on order, regions familiar yet unknown, regard clearly."

#### IV EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS FOR THE JOURNEY

Once the decision has been made to explore a particular place with a definite schema of ideas, it's necessary to prepare and operate appropriate tools and media. I will never cease to be amazed by the variety and flexibility of the medium of clay; whether as multi-colored earth in the raw material form or measured and mixed earthenware; the qualities of clay as it stretches, folds, cracks, records textures, encloses space, have the capacity to refer back to the sources of canyons, walls, desert light, river stones. Using organic vegetable materials in the firing process, one can achieve a random flashing and surface texture that echos conditions of weathering and change in the natural world. To maintain clarity and direction, it is best to limit the amount of 'baggage', the number of ideas that accompany the piece in progress. It would be impossible to perceive the order of the universe of one constantly layered it with mental constructs and abstractions. To rely more often on the direct physical experience, grounding the more rarified ideas, staying in touch with the clay while it is most receptive to change, insures a more honest statement. Walking to the summit of a mountain is a lot more informative and rewarding than getting a hazy view from the bottom.

#### V PASSENGERS, AQUAINTENCES, AND INFLUENCES

Happier is the person who can host the uninvited and welcome the unexpected. Traveling, journeys, new means, and a variety of ends guarantees an

array of fellow wanderers; some out merely to catch a view, some involved in similar explorations of time and space. Dialogue itself can become a medium when the sharing of ideas also orders a particular situation. The discovery of forms in art of the past that fit present day concerns is exciting. I have become acquainted with the stones from ancient dwellings, the rock paintings of artists of another time. One carries the universal forms of the circle, the square, the spiral, the triangle forever; they are reflected so many times in so many situations. One may take on a particular style or confess to following a definite school; there comes a time however, when it is necessary to travel alone on an inner journey as well as one marked by miles. "I decided to start anew- to strip away what I had been taught - to accept as true my own thinking. This was one of the best times of my life. There was no one around to look at what I was doing- no one interested - no one to say anything about it one way or another. I was alone and singularly free, working into my own, unknowns - no one to satisfy but myself." (Georgia O'Keefe)

#### VI NOTES ON INDIVIDUAL PIECES: site reports, snapshots

Cityscape - a crowd of stones, an ancient city, remains of buildings with suggestions of rooms, windows, a frivolous geometry drawn onto rectangular forms; sizes from four to thirty-six inches, variety and confusion; a view from afar, looking down a canyon or up to a cliffside. Shapes themselves, soft, hazy, distorted, obviously; folded, fired, marked randomly like rocks, returning to the source. Artifacts posing the question, "Was someone there?"

"Far above me, a thousand feet or so, set in a great cavern in the face of the cliffs, I saw a little city of stone asleep. It was as still as sculpture- and something like that. It all hung together, seemed to have a kind of composition: pale little houses of stone nestling close to one another, perched on top of each other, with flat roofs, narrow windows, straight walls, and in the middle of the group, a round tower..... In sunlight it was the color of winter oak leaves. A fringe of cedars grew along the edge of the cavern, like a garden. They were the only living living things. Such silence and stillness and repose - imortal repose. The village sat looking down into the canyon with the calmness of eternity... I had come upon a city of some extinct civilization, hidden away in this inaccessible mesa for centuries, preserved in the dry air and almost perpetual sunlight like a fly in amber, guarded by the cliffs and the river and the desert." (Willa Cather)

Return to Mountain - A spiral road which curves around a centered form. A small model of an experience many times repeated - to reach the summit one must climb slowly around in lateral bands. Recall July 1, 1975, Zion Nat-



ional Park: "Magnificent and unchanged after ten years, in the early morning sunlight, the Court of the Patriarchs, carved in red and white sandstone by wind and water; enough to wake one up even after all night driving exhaustion. Fantastic cliff faces: poured brown, black, red, white and tan. White gatherings of rocks against a sun-bleached sky, chiselled pillars, soft arches. A sense of the road winding with direction through fragmented space. A sense of fallen rock crumbled to dust - massive beginnings."

Long Way to Tipperary- theme and variation, the same format as above, where a final bridge returns to the center and an encounter along the way reminds one of the geometric, formal interruptions that accompany any journey.

To a High House - A borrowed title with an explanation

" The adventurous state of mind is a high house.

To enjoy life the adventurous state of mind must be grasped and maintained. The essential feature of an adventure is that it is a going forward into new territory.

The joy of adventure is unaccountable.

This is the attractiveness of art work. It is adventurous, strenuous, and joyful.

(Agnes Martin)

Surveyor - another look at a city: odd juxtapositions, graphic lines that take the form of buildings, geometric antics; and then there's the red onion just sitting in a field, gazing at the other half of the piece; the city becomes abstracted, joined to bands of color.

Searching for Salt, Offering to Sotuknang, Distant Dwelling- are three earlier pieces that deal particularly with miniaturization. They are objects which have roots in another culture and another time. The following is a quote from an essay by Rose Slivka, written specifically for an exhibition, "The Object As Poet": "We confront the object and it reminds us of something, something old, something not yet known. Something lodged in our ancient selves, the selves we fear, the selves we seek, the selves we yearn to create, calling on our magic, our power, our art. It is to experience again the authentic states of life- birth, anger, love, wonder, death, longing. All authentic forms coexist and interpenetrate."

Will the Circle Be Unbroken- the constant circle is enclosed; amphitheatres, Green Mountain



and ascents, hills and descents. In the first one finds three stones, or dice, objects to be turned or tossed; the latter offers a resting place, to simply take in the view.

Blue Canyon and Dwelling Place - two places I've never seen, but always wanted to visit; dark hidden recesses, possibilities for adventure and new experience.

Noctambulation- I saw this piece in a dream, thus the title. From dreams come some of the most potent images and personal worlds. "The association of things-their mutations, their fusions- takes place on intersecting paths of a journey that continues toward another meeting that continues the path and the journey. These objects take us on a voyage across vistas of time, binding us to our human ~~experience~~, our destiny. They invite ghosts, phantoms, fables, reality."

(Rose Slivka, "The Object As Poet")

Arroyo Hondo - This piece deals not only with the spacial location of this place, but a temporal sequence of events which occurred there. I can think about the picture of a particular river, read a poem about water, or actually experience the place. By walking along the bank, crossing at a narrow turn where the rocks are adequately spaced, getting the feet wet as it were, one can comprehend the placement of the river in the canyon, an arroyo, in a time continuum that is marked by the water-worn rock walls. Estimating the width, depth; taking in the sounds, changing surface, colors; all these add up to a participation in the environment in a holistic way.

When approaching art and life in as holistic a way as possible, it is possible to participate in, with full awareness, the currents and rhythms of the universe. From a book on Yoga Art by Philip Rawson:

Just as the fragile equilibrium of the atom must undergo fission so as to accelerate and release energy, so art begins with disturbance in order to seek a higher equilibrium. In this way it transcends its functions as medium or language to become a voyage; starting as something intensely personal and ending by adding to the incremental resources of human experience. From this perspective time and space have no more meaning. Value lies only in the depth and quality of the artist's insight, whether he was born centuries ago or recently, and whatever his individual point of departure. Time and space are merely the conditions for his evolution."

Shelter I, Shelter II, Shelter III and No Exit - consider the spiral, repeating the motion of moving the clay from the center, coil after coil (whose archaic meaning refers to a commotion or tumult). The course takes our eye back to the center, sometimes with a reminder near the rim that "looks back." All of the pieces contain a shelter, a primitive structure; the image is remote, ancient, empty; the field surrounding it is weathered, burned, marked by flames and by time.

Tokpeŋa, Tokpa, Kuskurza and Tuwaqachi - are the names given to the four worlds in the Hopi myth of creation; they refer to the emergence of man into the world. Each is described according to its color, its associated mineral, the the event that instigated change, and passage to another world. I found the imagery accompanying these myths compelling enough to abstract and define in the clay medium. Woge is the name given to the 'first people' in another Indian myth.

Journey To a Clear Place - has but another suggestion of a journey. The road moves up and to the edge, where there is yet another gateway, another beginning.

## VII A TRAVELLER'S STATE OF MIND

I would have to agree with Agnes Martin's description of the adventurous state of mind, being strenuous and joyful as well. In this state there is a sense of hope, of the possibility of achieving clarity. Again from the "Object as Poet": "Craft is that act of perfected attention, absolute skill, with which which the maker brings her/his rhythms to bear on the means, whether material of words, that will bring out, find out the form. Craft enables the object to do exactly what it wants to do whether it be a pot or a poem or both. When we willfully - with our senses and our intellect transform that which essentially ephemeral, temporal, and transitory by giving it form, we enter the state of art, the state of poetry." (Rose Slivka)

When I walk in the mountains and am face to face with the rocks and stone walls, I become aware of the silent dialogue between forms....It's in the cracks and caves, where the lichen hangs out, where the water seeps, where the snow hides from the sun. One boulder fits into another, pairs, crowds, collide and crumble, I see colors, layers of time, veins of ore, stone gardens....

"An artist is that person who has become fully conscious of himself, of his emotions. He is aware of the world - its sights and sounds and sensory data - and is able to perceive intuitively among its flux and complexity the experience....The sources of art are passion, conviction, caring, concentration in the sense of centering, in-getting to the center. The artist moves from some unknown center, a center which is certainly not the brain, a center which is connected with the rhythms of the whole universe and consequently as sound, solid, unshakeable as durable, defiant, anarchic, purposeless, as the universe itself. The sources of art are the artist's awareness, thoughts, feelings, perceptions. Perception is not simply a matter of seeing, of taking in sensory information; the perceiver projects what he perceives, transforms, reorders, even disorders at times, becomes conscious, has an experience."

(John Chandler, "The Sources of Art and Its Obstructions")

#### VIII WHERE TO NEXT ?

Somewhere on a road in the middle of nowhere, late at night, when the only traffic on the road are a few big trucks, where the only company is country/  
western music, where the mind is free to wander, somewhere between the dream and the waking.



12 Slides : CERAMICS - Earthenware

Earthenware	3" h. 16" d.	"Will the Circle Be Unbroken"
Earthenware	3½" h. 16¼" d.	"Shelter II"
Earthenware	12" h. 15" l. 13" w.	"Arroyo Hondo"
Earthenware	11" l. 10" w. 11" w. 14" l. 6" h. 16" h.	"Woge" "Tokpela"
Earthenware	7½" h. 16" d.	"It's a Long Way to Tipperary"
Earthenware	7½" h. 15" w. 19" l.	"Surveyor"
Earthenware	7½" h. 18" d.	"To a High House"
Earthenware	4" h. 11" w. 11" l.	"Tokpela II"
Earthenware	4½" h. 18" d.	"Shelter"
Earthenware	7½" h. 23" l. 9" w.	"Journey to a Clear Place"
Earthenware	4½" h. 16" d.	"Shelter III"









