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DRAWING FROM OBJECTS:
OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE REALITIES

By

Judith E. Stone

B.A., Vassar College, 1962

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

To be frank, I've never had a more difficult time setting ideas to paper than I've had conceiving this thesis. Talking about other peoples' talk, which is essentially what one does in formal academic papers, is "small potatoes" compared with the problems implicit in the description of one's intentions, compul-

sions, excitement. This thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by Judith E. Stone has been approved for the Department of Fine Arts

by moving a drawing tool over a surface, paper, metal, has always been a very felicitous, satisfying, and conscious experience for me. Causing an illusory shape, with an edge and a texture and suggested volume, to appear is still nothing short of amazing. But making a mark or network of marks, unrelated to objects seen and responded to, has never been sufficiently interesting and involving. I'm acutely aware of specific, tangible objects in the world, and aware as well of how they represent, or connote, or connect with personal, emotional history.

Frank Sampson

Professor Frank Sampson, Chairman

John Wilson

Professor John Wilson

Clinton Cline

Professor Clinton Cline

Luis Eades

Professor Luis Eades

Date 7/1/77

• Hayes Thisboard; John Coplans; catalogue for show at Pasadena Art Museum; Pasadena, 1968, pp. 34-36.

To be frank, I've never had a more difficult time setting ideas to paper than I've had conceiving this thesis. Talking about other peoples' talk, which is essentially what one does in formal academic papers, is "small potatoes" compared with the problems implicit in the description of one's intentions, compulsions, excitements, detours, letdowns in making visual art objects. I fear falsifying, glorifying, simplifying, complicating, or obscuring my motives and conceptual process; replacing rather muddled honesty with a rigid, theoretical I don't feel while I'm actually working. How did I get into this, anyway? Why do I draw? Why do I draw what I draw? Why do I draw the way I draw?

Moving a drawing tool over a surface, paper, metal, has always been a very felicitous, satisfying, and sensuous experience for me. Causing an illusory shape, with an edge and a texture and suggested volume, to appear is still nothing short of amazing. But making a mark or network of marks, unrelated to objects seen and responded to, has never been sufficiently interesting and involving. I'm acutely aware of specific, tangible objects in the world, and aware as well of how they represent, or connote, or embody complex moments in my personal, emotional history. My perception of them is heightened and conditioned by experiences I've had in their vicinity. I tend to stare at objects in my environment for long periods of time, in a kind of brown study, until they seem to seethe with personal significance.

"Close staring has a tendency to expand what you are looking at...staring fixedly at an object does something to expand time. The more you look at it, the more the edges, the inside and the minute particles quiver. It is almost as if it is loaded and you recognize a kind of stillness which tends to vibrate. When I stroke around the object with a loaded paintbrush [or pencil], it is calculated to echo the presence of that object."¹

An intense sensitivity to the presence of exterior objects is accompanied by an equal sensitivity to interior response, and the two together compel the act of drawing.

The problem of "choosing" significant objects was indeed a problem in the past, but recently certain things have simply imposed themselves on or risen to the surface of my consciousness and demand to be drawn. Their shapes, details, textures, volumes, and intersections with other objects offer sufficient visual and emotional material for a lifetime of drawing activity. However, I am still gambling on my ability to render images of washlines, bicycle shadows, piles of junk, etc. in such a way as to convey to the viewer the moods of quiet, isolation, or ambivalence they indicate to me.

"...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 labour. It seeks to make them its very own, to give them mind, to give them form."²

What to leave out, what to put in, and how to relate forms spatially: poor decision-making regarding the endless options available in these three areas of selection have at times had a severe negative effect on my drawing and printmaking. Although drawn to simple, elegant Oriental spatial organization, I've tended in my work to include a great deal more visual material than was obviously necessary, important, or even manageable for the viewer. Giving visual, objective material "mind" for me has meant zeroing in on particular details or singling out aspects that bespeak much about the object rendered and my reaction to it; it has also meant simplifying and clarifying relationships between positive and negative shapes, so that the expressive import of positively drawn forms is more apparent. "Every art image is a purified and simplified aspect of the outer world, composed by the laws of the inner world to express its nature."³

²Herbert Read, Art and Alienation; Viking Press, New York, 1969, p. 70.

³Susanne Langer, Lectures on Art; Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1957, p.26.

Limiting my materials to graphite and negro pencil, and reducing my two-dimensional compositions to a minimum of interrelated shapes, I've been somewhat apprehensive that the results would indicate a kind of personal coldness, evenness of temperament, or dispassionate distance I almost never feel toward things, people, and total situations. In other words, my work would belie my more typical, "natural", gut-level self. The following comments by Susanne Langer and Stravinsky, mutually reinforcing, elucidate and dispel my confusion regarding art in its emotion-bearing function.

"What [an artist] expresses is...not his own actual feelings, but what he knows about human feelings. Once he is in possession of a rich symbolism, that knowledge may actually exceed his entire personal experience. A work of art expresses a conception of life, emotion, inward reality. But it is neither a confession nor a frozen tantrum; it is a developed metaphor, a non-discursive symbol that articulates what is verbally ineffable..."⁴

"When we suddenly recognize our emotions, they are already cold, like lava." ⁵

Intricate, intense emotional states, repeated, extended, and magnified through time, are only really capable of identification and clarification when they are no longer at their highest pitch. I am most able to pin down and analyze a morass of related feelings and responses when they are of such long standing as to be familiar, and no longer totally distracting and engrossing. They are "recollected in tranquillity." The mingled sense of boredom, calm and control I've felt, for example, in the ritual of hanging my wash, has been a chaotic but "warm" one at individual moments in my life; but the total memory of the ritual seems "cool" and uniform in emotional tone. I am hoping both qualities of experience, warm, vital immediacy and cool observation and comprehension, come across in my rendering of the washline.

⁴ Susanne Langer, Lectures on Art, p.26.

⁵ Herbert Read, Art and Alienation, p.64.

Many of the decisions I've made in my work stem from analyses I've made of my strong reactions to other artists' achievements. The work of Franz Kline, Marc Tobey, Louise Nevelson, and Eva Hesse all affect me powerfully. Obviously, there is a monochrome monumentality in all their imagery that links them visually. There is, indeed, an element of wish fulfillment in my predilection for their work, painting, drawing, and sculpture, as my own has at times been termed "timid" and "unresolved". There is much aggression, anger, and general darkness (!) in my personality that has only begun to appear in my prints and drawings. I do still feel, as well, a failure of nerve and reluctance to carry an idea to conclusions that causes my work to lack full force. I don't want to forgo the delicate, precise, sensitive quality I see in some of my drawing, but I am eager to continue working on a larger scale and investigate the range of dark to light contrasts more thoroughly, in order to develop more aggressive, powerful imagery. I am also increasingly interested in working with relief surfaces, although very shy of actually starting. These intentions reflect not so much an urge to become as famous as Nevelson and Eva Hesse, but a feeling that I share with these women, about whom I've read much, a need to move from drawing to sculpture and back again, over a period of productive time. Hesse's preoccupation with titles, as verbal parallels to her visual output, adds to my sense of having found a "kindred spirit" in her. Although I suspect I'll never move very much further away from literal, object-oriented imagery than I have, I am interested in projecting the rather jagged, rough, abstract strength through my work that Hesse and Nevelson do.

I am altogether conscious that I am choosing women for my models. I was attracted, however, to their work first, and subsequently researched their comments about their professional and personal development. A common mood of anxiety, ambivalence about female "role", and contrasting drive to do more and succeed, *Lucy Shepard, 271-282; New York University Press, New York, 1976, p. 27* bind the two women in my mind and them to me. Hesse's quote from Simone de Beauvoir's Second Sex, recorded in her notebooks, seems apt and as relevant to my future

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as my earlier discussion of form, objects, and subjective reality.

" 'What woman essentially lacks today for doing great things is forgetfulness of herself; but to forget oneself it is necessary first of all to be firmly assured that now and for the future one has found oneself.' "6

Making up one's mind to do, rather than concerning oneself with how one seems, is apparently the crux of the matter.

Judith S. Stone

has submitted this written thesis

as a supplement to the creative thesis

one lithograph

12 1/2" x 27" "Lucien, la Lucien"

and eight slides

which are in the permanent possession of the

University of Colorado and recorded with the

Department of Fine Arts

Approved by

Frank J. Ferguson
Professor Frank Ferguson

John W. ...
Professor John W. ...

William G. Uline
Professor William G. Uline

Paul ...
Professor Paul ...

William G. Uline
Chairman, Department of Fine Arts

⁶Lucy Lippard, Eva Hesse; New York University Press, New York, 1976, p.27

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree Master of Fine Arts

Judith E. Stone

has submitted this written thesis

as a supplement to the creative thesis

one lithograph

17½" x 27" "Lucien, Lu...cien"

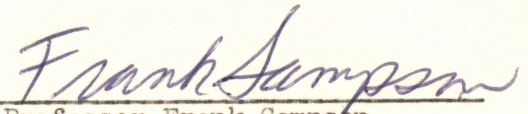
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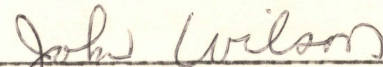
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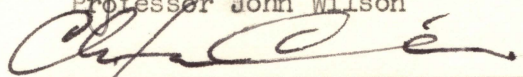
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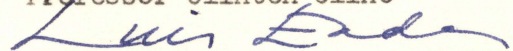
Professor Frank Sampson



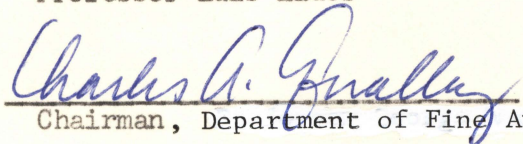
Professor John Wilson



Professor Clinton Cline



Professor Luis Eades



Chairman, Department of Fine Arts

Number of Slides and Medium

Drawing	30" x 40"	"Heavy"
Drawing	30" x 40"	"But I Was Long Gone"
Drawing	30" x 40"	"Ambivalence"
Drawing	22" x 29"	"Would Have Been Enough III"
Drawing	22" x 29"	"Would Have Been Enough IV"
Drawing	22" x 29"	"Would Have Been Enough V"
Lithograph	17½" x 27"	"Lucien, Lu...cien"
Lithograph	22" x 30"	"Junk I"

