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BACKYARD

By

Earen Stone

B.F.A., The Kansas City Art Institute, 1980

A thesis presented 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
1985

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BACKYARD

By

Karen Stone

B.F.A., The Kansas City Art Institute, 1980

Garrison Roots
Garrison Roots Committee Chairman

Chuck Foreman
Chuck Foreman Committee Member

Linda Herritt
Linda Herritt Committee Member

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

1985

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This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by

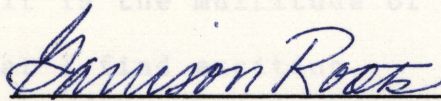
Karen Stone

has been approved for the

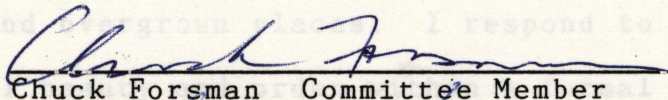
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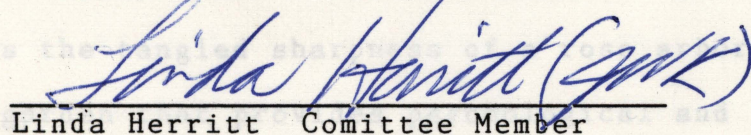
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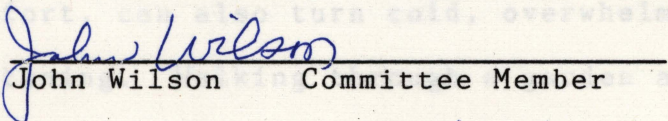
Garrison Roots Committee Chairman



Chuck Forsman Committee Member



Linda Herritt Committee Member



John Wilson Committee Member

Date 1/7/86

I also believe that plant forms are unpredictable. Flowers that grow wild in a natural garden have the potential to smother surrounding structures. It is

Backyard is the garden I always wanted. For years I have imagined planting beds of flowers, constructing shrines and building a sitting area within the garden for thinking, watching and listening. A garden to me can be a beautiful place that feels warm, protective and seductive. I associate springtime with these feelings. Every year during this time I notice a refreshing change in my emotional state. Beyond the change of attitude it is the multitude of colors and wild growth that I find exciting.

I have spent time in rose gardens, formal gardens and overgrown places. I respond to the individual beauty and order within a formal garden, as well as the tangled sharpness of a rose arbor. The same garden that provides psychological and human comfort, can also turn cold, overwhelming and threatening. Walking through a garden at night can be a lonely and intimidating experience. For me my perception of myself and surroundings become distorted in the darkness. Sounds seem to be amplified and pathways that were once clear, transform into a maze. When I am in this emotional state of panic, I sometimes imagine seeing all kinds of animal and human images that do not really exist.

I also believe that plant forms are unpredictable. Flowers that grow wild in a natural garden have the potential to smother surrounding structures. It is the vivid color, the ever changing mood, and the collection of special objects which create the ambiance that I love about a garden.

My House and The Garden two earlier sculptures have lead to my ideas for this show Backyard. My House dealt with a specific narrative incorporating figures trapped within a cage surrounded by vines and animals. The shrine filled with birds and flowers titled The Garden explored the possibilities of embedding tile and mirrors into cement, creating a surface pattern and color. Both works combined a memory from life with imaginary elements of a garden.

Because I am in a transient time of my life, my garden is not a literal place. Backyard is a reflection of my emotions, memories and fantasies. Including both painting and sculpture, the show talks about a sense of place. While in Skowhegan this summer, I realized how important it was for me to find an imaginary place, where I could escape to. Concentrating on painting during this time allowed me to explore a variety of moods and events which take place within the garden.

Until I gained an understanding of the event within the garden and believed I was standing in the environment, I could not resolve the work with

clarity. Because I abandoned the use of relief painting and was confined by the perimeter of the canvas, projecting myself mentally and at times metaphorically into the situation was essential.

In the painting titled Backyard the animal like fence is a metaphor for myself and other people that watched my house fire four years ago. The arbor represents my house, while the flowers are caught within the transformation of fire. Beyond the symbolic meaning of the painting, I feel the emotion is hot and the primary subject of the painting is the garden.

Night Garden the tarred sculptural cluster was also inspired by the charred remains of my house fire. I vividly remember rummaging through the ashes, the day after the fire, finding my deceased grandmothers' diamond ring and earrings still intact. I also salvaged the broken glass chads of my fiestaware dishes and windows that had melted into droplets of glass. Although I am able to make this association with the materials used to make the sculpture, it was not my intention to depict my memories in a literal sense. I feel Night Garden has many emotions and connotations. This piece is a pun on the structure of a formal garden. The fountain and ducks are cheap plastic, covered with tar, the gate and benches are unusable. Deception and fright are two elements that to me describe the night. . In Skowhegan I was

fascinated by the light of the moon, but afraid of walking down the wooded path on nights moon shadows were cast. The Night Garden to me reflects silhouettes of reality and illusion.

The Lake also focuses on the feeling of night. The black creatures within this painting are my guardians as well as part of the fence. As the color black, the silhouettes read as negative and positive shapes. It was my intent to diffuse some of the edges of the creatures with the sky creating a sense of mystery.

The painting Two Chairs and the Birdhouse Garden was inspired by my summer in Skowhegan. I feel the painting Two Chairs describes the essences of my time there. I think of the arbor as a reflection of my studio, active and jammed with confusion. Sitting in the chairs three times a day became a ritual for me. It was my time to stare at the timeless lake, ignoring the activity behind me. I feel the contrast of moods within this piece combines the chaotic movement of my earlier work with the selective sparseness.

Over the summer I became fascinated with the birdhouses. I saw them as lonely markers on the landscape. I feel the Birdhouse Gardens have taken on a human quality. Although there are many similarities, the houses have their own personalities. I find the houses to be sad and lonely despite their

crowded placement. The relationship to the scale of the birds and the holes of the houses, reveals their lack of function. The fence is a barrier to mark the perimeter of the territory and to bring the houses into the realm of a garden.

The Flower Garden I feel is visually the most active of the sculptural clusters. It is also a garden based on the traditional elements of a garden. The combination of scale, vivid colors and textures ellude to an exotic and overgrown feeling. Within this large cluster are smaller sections that become intimate scenes. These private viewing spaces are needed to balance the surrounding activity. I have always found it important to have a place to escape to.

I feel that Backyard is an extension of my thoughts and desires. The sculptural clusters are closely placed in the room to give the feeling of pathways within a garden. Secrets and specific places are described within the paintings. It is necessary for me to have both painting and sculpture to create the atmosphere of the garden.

The entire room or Backyard is a small portion of the garden I imagine. In my mind, the garden encompasses endless acres, memories and changung ideas. I will continue developing these ideas allowing them to grow.

Beyond personal connections, folk artists such as Simon Rodia, S.P. Dinsmoor and Romano Gabriel have influenced my work. I understand their need to fulfill

an imaginary dream and place. I respect their
dedication and drive. I respond to their intuitive
need to make art.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts
Karen Stone
has submitted this written thesis
as a supplement to the creative thesis
and nine slides
which are in the permanent possession of the
University of Colorado and recorded with the
Department of Fine Arts

Approved by



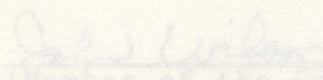
Chairman of the Committee



Member of the Committee



Member of the Committee



Member of the Committee


Chairman, Department of Fine Arts

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts

Karen Stone

Wood, Tile, has submitted this written thesis
as a supplement to the creative thesis
Wood, Tile, Fiber, Paint and nine slides Flower Garden
which are in the permanent possession of the
University of Colorado and recorded with the
Department of Fine Arts

Wood, Tile, Metal, Paint Detail Birdhouse Garden

Dry, Iron, Mirrors, Wood 15'x13'x10' Night Garden

Tar, Iron Approved by *Larrison Roots*
Chairman of the Committee

Oil Paint on Wood *Chuck Johnson*
Member of the Committee

Oil Paint on Wood *Tricia Smith*
Member of the Committee

Oil Paint on Wood *John Wilson*
Member of the Committee

[Signature]
Chairman, Department of Fine Arts

Number of Slides and Medium

Wood, Tile, Fiber, Paint	25' x 9' x 11'	Flower Garden
Wood, Tile, Fiber, Paint	Detail	Flower Garden
Wood, Metal, Tile, Paint	14' x 16' x 6'	Birdhouse Garden
Wood, Tile, Metal, Paint	Detail	Birdhouse Garden
Tar, Iron, Mirrors, Wood	15' x 13' x 10'	Night Garden
Tar, Iron, Mirrors, Wood	Detail	Night Garden
Oil Paint on Wood	5½' x 4'	The Arbor
Oil Paint on Wood	5½' x 4'	Two Chairs
Oil Paint on Wood	5½' x 4'	Hiding

Number of Slides and Medium

Flower Garden	25' x 9' x 11'	Wood, Tile, Fiber, Paint
Flower Garden	Detail	Wood, Tile, Fiber, Paint
Birdhouse Garden	14' x 16' x 6'	Wood, Metal, Tile, Paint
Birdhouse Garden	Detail	Wood, Tile, Metal, Paint
Night Garden	15' x 13' x 10'	Tar, Iron, Mirrors, Wood
Night Garden	Detail	Tar, Iron, Mirrors, Wood
The Arbor	2 1/2' x 4'	Oil Paint on Wood
Two Chairs	2 1/2' x 4'	Oil Paint on Wood
Hiding	2 1/2' x 4'	Oil Paint on Wood

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