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VARIETY SHOW

This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by

By

Lisa Rubin

Lisa Rubin

B.A. in English, The Colorado College, 1981

[Faint signatures and text, including "Lisa Herritt, Chair" and "Approved"]

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

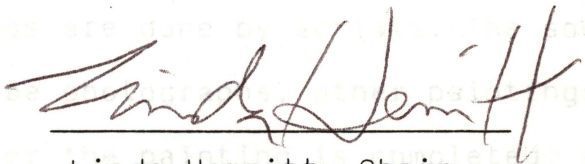
Department of Fine Arts, Creative Art

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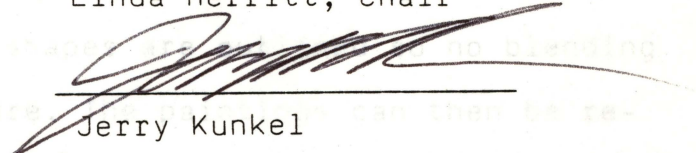
My exhibit is called "Various, Many" because each piece addresses a different issue, with the common denominator being paint. This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by Lisa Rubin has been approved for the Department of Fine Arts by [redacted] through the device of presentation, I can interpret their meanings and create new ones.

Paint-by-number paintings are like [redacted] source material for the paintings could [redacted] real life or the imagination. After [redacted] it is reduced to a formula. All the [redacted] is required to re-paint the picture [redacted] can then be re-created by non-artists or aspiring [redacted] people making art, as well as a [redacted] to create, has political overtones. Further [redacted] becoming a construction is a [redacted] where in individuality and originality are [redacted] not attainable, because style is exhausted, style is a system. [redacted] attempts to deconstruct some of the systems that [redacted] art - style, representation, originality, narrative, presentation and framing.

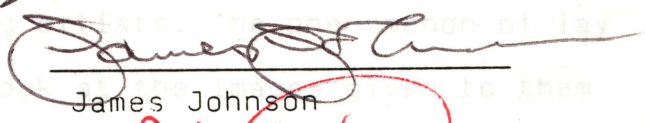
"No Exit" combines a pastoral scene from an unpainted paint-by-number painting with a painting of a Mexican playing card.



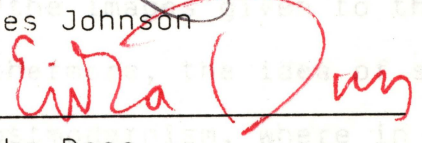
Linda Herritt, Chair



Jerry Kunkel



James Johnson



Erika Doss

Date _____

My exhibit is called "Variety Show" because each piece addresses a different issue, with the common denominator being paint-by-number paintings. I use paint-by-number paintings because I am interested in how painting functions in people's homes as opposed to painting's existence in galleries and museums. The images in paint-by-number paintings can be perceived as being cliché, but are in fact barometers of our culture. Hence, each paint-by-number painting heralds its own message. By putting these paint-by-number paintings in revealing contexts, through the device of presentation, I can interpret their meanings and create new ones.

Paint-by-number paintings are done by artists. The source material for the paintings could be photographs, other paintings, real life or the imagination. After the painting is completed, it is reduced to a formula. All the shapes are outlined so no blending is required to re-paint the picture. The paintings can then be re-created by non-artists or aspiring artists. The phenomenon of lay people making art, as well as a look at the images given to them to create, has political overtones. Furthermore, the idea of style becoming a construction is a tenet of postmodernism, where in individuality and originality are neither desirable nor attainable, because style is exhausted, style is a system. My work attempts to deconstruct some of the systems that compose art - style, representation, originality, narrative, presentation and framing.

"No Exit" combines a pastoral scene from an unpainted paint-by-number painting with a painting of a Mexican playing card,

which depicts a ladder. This collage describes Eastern Europeans leaving their homes in order to escape Hitler's holocaust. The bathos of the sentimental rural image and the playing card contrast with the pathos of this historical event. I liken the use of low art imagery to depict serious subject matter to the use of vernacular or slang in literature to describe epic events, as in Dante's Divine Comedy. The image of the ladder, which doesn't lead anywhere, but points to the sky, is an indicator that these people are heading towards their deaths. The numbers from the paint-by-number painting refer to the number of people slaughtered. My hope is that the tension that arises from the combination of banality and tragedy will shed new light on a story that has been rehashed to the point of becoming unreal.

"Slice of Life" addresses the issue of how paint-by-number paintings exist in the homes of the people who do them. Hence, the domestic scene in the pictures and how they are presented on wood paneling (the paneling is made of photographs of wood). The addition of curtains into the rural scene creates a sort of palimpsest, which in turn narrates an allegory about paintings as windows, which uncover a reality that is staged. This last point is brought home by the artificiality of the paint-by-number style (or lack of it), in terms of color - melodramatic sunset, romanticized composition - posing as realism.

"La Chalupa" underlines how boats, which all serve the same function, have very different intentions. The rendering of the boats and the types of boats are intertwined with the political content of the image. Hence, the black and white documentation of the navy man

painting submarines on the side of his battle ship. A ritual performed by the British navy to record the number of German subs they'd torpedoed. The Mexican playing card is in technicolor and illustrates a peasant woman hauling her wares, her vessel is a function of survival, and this is romanticized through color and composition, perhaps because it is a thing of the past. The ground that these two images figure upon is an upside down drawing of a paint-by-number ship. This is a stereo-typical image of a "ship" as well as a masculine image. So, there is a connection between the female chalupa and the male ship.

"High and Low Art, Circa 1952" investigates the relationship between two images from the same year, one from a paint-by-number painting and one from Edward Hopper. Both paintings depict couples enjoying leisure activities. The women are shapely and the carriage driver black. The theater patrons in the Hopper image are anglo and dressed in furs and tuxedos. The fact that the antebellum imagery in the paint-by-number was being produced during the McCarthy witch hunt is a frightening sign of that time. Also, both paintings employ similar compositions, which daringly crop curtains, fences and carriages. By comparing these two images I realized they had more similarities than differences.

"Before, During and After Lee Krasner" is a collage of images of women from advertisements and paint-by-number paintings that were proliferating at the same time Krasner was producing her own images. I also wanted to refer to cubism, specifically "Nude Descending a Staircase" (see ballerinas) as setting precedents for abstract expressionism. Krasner used pencil, charcoal and collage

in her paintings and I did too with the portrayal of the ads and to mime part of her painting "Bird Talk", this was an attempt to merge form and content.

"Almost Asian" is an installation that uses altered paint-by-number paintings to resemble Asian art, perhaps sumi painting. Hence, I laquered a wood panel and put rice paper behind the paintings. This piece is about the codes used for "Asian" and how deceptive codes can be.

In "Artemis", I used the image of a model from a 1948 "Look" magazine. She is modeling "ranch apparel". I named the "rustic" portrait after the mythic goddess of the hunt, artemis. The paint-by-number stag ties the hunted to the huntress, which is why the animal is upside down, to reflect her.

In "Abandoned Ship", the image of a sunk and decaying ship is juxtaposed with an empty frame, they are different representations of the same thing. Also, I wanted to contrast the picture and its frame. The frame conveys neutrality while the ship is melodramatic, emotional. The askew ship reinforces its portrayal of ruin and this resonates in the corner of the painting that is in the frame. The frame is straight the image is crooked.

In "Still Life in a Girl's Room", the picture becomes the wall and the representation of a still life becomes the ground for the frame. Frames separate art from life. The framing or editing of life in art is the subject matter of this piece. The feminine frame and the feminine imagery obviously are a pair, the sign system is very apparent. Furthermore, I wanted to establish a suffocating feeling, the imposition of those significations,

by making the image overwhelm the frame, which fences in the flowers. The academic still life also serves to heighten how art constructs such as composition, line, shadow and color are artificial. Leaves are "green", roses "pink", but all the edges are wobbly and everything is distorted and wrong - even though this is supposed to be an ideal representation - a classic still life. The walls in the frames look like those shiny, plaster walls found in homes of the forties, as do the image and frames.

In conclusion, my work addresses domestic art and its presentation in people's lives. Presentation becomes a metaphor for constructions of reality and, by the way I present my presentations, presentation becomes subject matter. The wall becomes part of the work of art, creating a context that persists in reminding the viewer of the picture we call reality.

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

Lisa Rubin

has submitted this written thesis
as a supplement to the creative thesis
ten slides of oil paintings

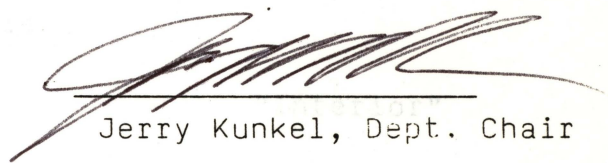
which are in the permanent possession of
The University of Colorado and recorded with
The Department of Fine Arts

Approved by


Linda Herritt


James Johnson


Erika Doss


Jerry Kunkel, Dept. Chair

Ten Slides of Oil Paintings

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|--|------------|---|
| Oil | 6' x 6' | "No Exit" |
| Oil | 6' x 6' | "La Chalupa" |
| Oil, wood panel | 4' x 10' | "Slice of Life" |
| Oil, wood, enamel, rice paper, paint-by-number paintings | 4' x 10' | "Almost Asian" |
| Oil, marker, charcoal, graphite, paper | 6' x 6' | "Before, During and After Lee Krasner" |
| Oil | 6' x 6' | "High and Low Art, Circa 1952" |
| Oil, frame | 6' x 6' | "Abandoned Ship" |
| Oil, frames | 110" x 72" | "Still Life in a Girl's Room" |
| Oil, frame | 6' x 6' | "Artemis" |
| Oil, frames, found paintings, wood panels | 8' x 10' | "Interior" |

Location of the findings

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| "The Chains" | 112 |
| "Fiction of the" | 113 |
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