

PASCAL



Dep	Mod	Ran	Sect	Shelf	Tray	Item
P	1	07	06	24	08	006

PASCAL

NON-CIRCULATING

University of Colorado at Boulder



U18304 1947122

ARCA
T
1991
Sl 51

INFORMATION

By

Linda Jean Slobodin

B.F.A., Diploma Art Education, University of Colorado, 1985

A thesis submitted to the faculty of the Graduate

School of the University of Colorado in partial

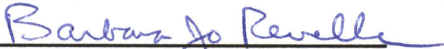
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

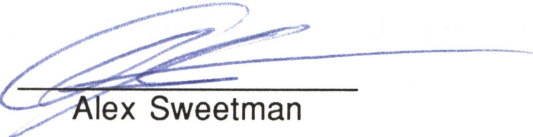
Master of Fine Arts


Department of Fine Arts, Creative Art

1991

This thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by
Linda Jean Slobodin
has been approved for the
Department of Fine Arts
by


Barbara Jo Revelle


Alex Sweetman


Erika Doss


Antonette Rosato

Date 5/02/91

InFormation, my thesis exhibition presented to the University of Colorado in April of 1991, is based on my experience teaching in the public school system for the last 5 years. Through my interactions with my students, I have discovered that they feel a tremendous amount of fear, anger and anxiety stemming from mass media's emphasis on commodities over compassion and our concurrent military postures; both of which are values being transformed into social icons. My student's often fatalistic outlook and overall sense of self reflects this emphasis. The overwhelming amount of media information that children are presently exposed to often contains conflicting messages that these young impressionable minds do not have the sophistication to resolve.

As an elementary school art teacher, I attempted to cultivate the imaginative and creative side of a child's educational experience. What I encountered was fantasy tempered by reality; creativity contaminated by imitation. I was compelled as an artist and a teacher to investigate my concerns regarding this condition. This thesis is a written summary of my thesis exhibition and an explanation of the views which have informed my artwork. I also make reference to the book *Voices and Visions*, which I authored from related material and present as an addition to the thesis exhibition.

I have created a complex multi-media, sculptural installation of video, audio, mass-media images, large scale photographs, text and school desks to signify an elementary school classroom. The classroom is intended to appear dark, daunting and sparse upon entering the installation. Eighteen 72 inch by 40 inch black and white photographs of children aged 6 through 10 hang from the black walls. The identical head-to-toe vertical format of the children provides a continuity around the room. Their individual expressions exhibit an awareness of truth far beyond their years.

Four rows of black elementary school desks work together with the murals to create a uniformity to the installation. The function of the desks is twofold: they are didactic symbols of uniform receptacles, yet they also function as representations of individuality. Each desk has a lid that can be opened. Inside each one is a collage of duplicitous information in the form of 2-dimensional advertising such as magazines, toys, television or audio. One example of a magazine collage contrasted two advertisements found in *Young Miss* magazine: An army recruitment ad for women juxtaposed with an advertisement for *Canteen* perfume, which featured a young woman in a tight pink mini-dress parading in front of a row of smiling young men on motorcycles. The ad reads: "Critical to survival". This is an example of references I have made to the present militaristic, patriotic fervor interposed on advertisements which objectify woman by using their bodies to sell products. These are the kinds of mixed messages that I feel impart a perplexity to the voices of children.

The voices which I refer to throughout this summary are statements that were collected in response to my inquiry to my students about their thoughts concerning life in general. The responses were written extemporaneously over the course of several years. Over half of the desks in this installation are examples of these voices that are written on the lids by my students in white crayon:

Every now and then I think about life and how scary it can be. How so many things happen and go on in the world that is horrifying and bad. People are killing each other, kidnaping and how it is not a peaceful world anymore, like the old days were. Back then you didn't think about those things happening like that. Life used to be wonderful but things have changed. Teaque Angle, age 10.

A different perspective for a different time.
No longer can you buy anything for a dime.
The crime wave is high, education is low,
how many poor people does anybody know?
War, peace, which one do we choose?
Does it really matter if we win or loose?
Many lives lost to save many more,
in war nothing matters except settling the score.
Steroids, cocaine, crack and dope,
for starving AIDS babies there is no hope.
Smoking or drugs is a big mistake,
but unfortunately its one most kids make.
War in the middle-east must be the worst,
but don't you think our country should solve its own
problems first?
A different time, a different place,
trying to improve our own human race. Brooke Robar, age 10

Our current social conditions have clearly shaped their desires and aspirations. As easily as they can slip into invention, their thoughts are tempered by actuality.

Small televisions with headphones placed inside two different school desks and on the teachers desk which continually play a carefully edited 5 minute video collage, depict some of the societal influences. The viewer is forced to sit in the desk to use the headphone(in the case of the children's desks) and experience the piece. It is my hope that by sitting in the desk, a participatory response occurs as the viewers each have their own individual classroom experiences to relate the present experience to.

In the elementary desks, one video piece is directed at a boy and one is directed at a girl. For example, the video collage used in the girls desk juxtaposed portrayals of woman as homemaker and wife with news footage of woman as soldiers. In one clip from a Saturday morning television commercial, a young man holds his infant daughter, while in another commercial a man is being presented as aggressive and violent. The presentation of sex-role stereotypes are still prevalent in the media, portraying traditional attitudinal postures concerning male and female roles in society. The presence of the televisions inside the school desks reflect my view that television is perhaps the most powerful influence on the attitudes and values of children who are raised in front of it. The seductive, glamorous and even hypnotic power of television can influence children to adopt the attitudes, prejudices and fears it projects. Television and mass media shape the way children view the world by suggesting the perspectives they should adopt.

The video, audio pieces and advertising imagery used in the desks, exemplify the seductive, yet confusing power of television. The messages given by the media create conflict and frustration. For every glamorous image, there lies dead Iraqi children. *Dick Tracy* is replaced by *911*, a real-life situation police drama, complete with "real-life" violence.

The video playing on the teacher's desk sincerely reflect my personal views and experiences. By carefully editing a collage of world war II and Vietnam era footage with footage of my elementary students, I convey my concern for their future and the recurrence of history. The media, especially television, are as important to the child's learning environment as the classroom and the teacher. This is presented in my exhibition, where the teacher is symbolized only by the teacher's desk with an apple on it.

The media, especially television, provide a narrow and distorted view of the changes taking place in the (real) world. Because television is predominantly a magic doorway into a world of fantasy, glamor and excitement, it is easy to understand how any message, be it a cartoon or a socially relevant situation, regardless of exaggerations or distortions, will be taken for truth.

A complicating factor in the whole issue of education, is the intervention of corporations to fund educational programs to be used in the classroom. These corporations have created a new audience in which to sell their products, by enhancing their name. Philip Morris Companies Inc., for example, has recently created a slick advertising campaign under the guise of its title: *The Bill of Rights: Protecting Our Liberty*. It is a multimedia education packet

on America's Bill of Rights. I used some of this material in the school desks to exemplify this intervention. Ironically, one of the activities suggested for the teacher from the packet explains how to:

allow students to experience an information-controlled environment to understand how information can be used to shape public opinion and create false reality. The point of this activity is, of course, to help students think critically about information control in a totalitarian society and about whether it is possible to have instances of information control in our society.¹

With Philip Morris, Inc., encountering its share of resistance to tobacco marketing, the above exercise clearly has a double meaning. Schools across the country are being threatened by the decline in educational funding and private enterprises are taking advantage of the situation.

Children now learn consumer skills quite early: advertising at present plays a major role in the educational process, creating children's desire to possess only brand name products. Advertising creates materialism in children far beyond what might exist without it.

Philip Morris and other corporations creating educational programs that include advertisement of their products before or after the programs, are making education a mass-media in itself. Writer Hans Magnus Enzenberger, refers to the industry responsible for the development of the electronic media as a consciousness shaper of society with its "mobilizing power". The

¹ Philip Morris Companies, Inc. "The Bill of Rights: Protecting our Liberty" 1991

"consciousness industry", says Enzenberger, "does not owe their irresistible power to any sleight-of-hand but to the elemental power of deep social needs which come through even in the present depraved form of the media".²

Generally, children reflect the views of their elders. However, the "mobilizing power" of the media is quite evident in the case of a second-grade boy who wrote on one of the desks:

I agree with George bush because we are fighting to save the people of Kuwait. I don't like war, but I think it is the only way". Adam Mueller, age 7

Although his strongly liberal parents did not support Bush and the Persian Gulf War, the boy's views clearly reflect the enticing power of the media. The overwhelming effect of media messages is conveyed in two audio pieces that are in two of the desks. Four tracks of audio sounds containing children's voices and concerns, commercials and educational influences such as the Pledge of Allegiance, evoke an eerie feeling of confusion.

A 1977 study on children and television done by Thomas Barry concludes that "children do not effectively distinguish between reality and fantasy and have a limited sense of social responsibility and ethical behavior"³ From my experience as a teacher, I would argue that children have a much deeper sense of

² Hans Magnus Enzenberger, The Industrialization of the Mind, Seabury Press, New York, 1974.

³ Thomas Barry, Children's Television Advertising, southern Methodist University, 1977, p. 97.

"social responsibility and ethical behavior" that Barry suggests, than they are obviously given credit for.

We're living in a world where kids are forgotten. Babies in the third worlds eating food that is rotten. How can children survive if a shelter is their only place to live? How can they be helped if even our government won't even give? From adoption to adoption, to house to house. Sold like a toy, not give enough food for a mouse. Children are bad in their own little way, but is that bad enough to be hit everyday? Abortions for young girls might be a choice some take, but after their older they will know their mistake. I think life should have a chance to try. Just ask any kid and they'll tell you why. Amanda Michalski, age 11

My friends and I are all working for a better future. We all want something good. Something happy. But one will be caught in a mist, a homeless, hungry person wanted the same thing. Becky Schmidt, age 11

However, for the most part, children are strongly influenced by current public opinion and the prevailing conflicting messages are evident in their thoughts:

I want to be apart of the air force too. And I will help out the nation and out-smart the other countrys jets and bomb them down to the ground.

But I still think that this country is sort of unfair because the whites should still let the blacks be apart of the whites instead of killing them and being mean to them.

And they should stop the wars and fighting and make this world a peaceful world. Mike Hill ,age 10

Some parents and the media already exercise enough influence to frustrate a teacher's effort to provide a different perspective. If growing up entails an acceptance of adult values,

and if adults generally accept war as necessary, then most children will too.

I am writing about what I am going to be when I grow up.
I am going to be a member of the air force.
And I want to be a pilot. And I am going to help
this countrys nation.
And I will help the Russins
from putting war on us.
And I know I am taking a risk
of being killed. Stacy Samuel, age 9

My intention as a teacher is to create an educational process which aims at fulfilling an individual's self-realization, creativity and imagination; an educational process which is a vehicle for growth, and a means to reach a state of harmony with ourselves and others.

Soldiers in the middle east have finished dying. Relatives of these brave people are still crying. Flags and banners are still posted, even after we won no one boasted. Is it because of the lives that were lost? Losing your life is a tremendous cost. They knew what they were doing and most came home, but for others looking for them, the graveyards we roam. I think to myself was it right for the U.S. to retaliate? Just ask a soldier who had a leg amputated. I'm sure they are angry but I'm glad most of the soldiers know that we will support them wherever they go.
Amanda Michalski, age 11

InFormation is a critical reflection of the sources for the voices we see and hear. By presenting the sources of children's influences inside the desks or learning receptacles, the viewer is left to examine the responsibility we as a society hold to the voices we must closely attend to.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Fine Arts
Linda Jean Slobodin
has submitted this written thesis
as a supplement to the creative thesis
and 15 slides
which are in the permanent possession of the
University of Colorado and recorded with the
Department of Fine Arts

Approved by Barbara Jo Revelle
Barbara Jo Revelle, Committee Chair


Alex Sweetman


Erika Doss


Antonette Rosato


Jerry Kunkel, Chair, Department of Fine Arts

15 SLIDES. Photography. video . mixed media

Photo, video, mixed media	Entry view	InFormation
Photo, video, mixed media	Frontal view	InFormation
Photo, video, mixed media	Frontal view	InFormation
Photo, video, mixed media	Overview	InFormation
Photo, video, mixed media	Side View	InFormation
Photo Murals	72" X 40"	InFormation
Video	Viewer interaction	InFormation
Color laser prints	15.5" X 21.5"	InFormation
White crayon on desk	18" X 24"	InFormation
Photo, video, mixed media	Viewer interaction	InFormation
Video on teacher's desk	5 " screen	InFormation
Video in boy's desk	5 " screen	InFormation
Color laser prints & headphones	15.5"X 21.5"	InFormation
Video in girl's desk	5 " screen	InFormation



