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University of Colorado at Boulder



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FLOTSAM AND JETSAM  
By  
Tracey L. Thomas  
B.A., Connecticut College, 1987

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  
Tracey L. Thomas  
has been approved for the  
Department of  
Fine Arts



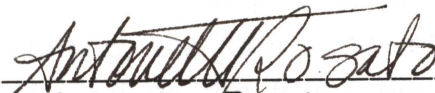
Robert Ecker, committee chair



Clinton Cline, member



Chuck Forsman, member



Antonette Rosato, member

Date

4/25/91

"...art is seldom to one exclusive meaning and is not necessarily tending toward a definite conclusion."  
Joseph Conrad

As defined in Webster's, Flotsam is ' a wreckage of a ship, and jetsam is defined as, ' goods cast overboard to lighten a vessel; especially such goods when washed ashore.'

So this shall be a discussion about goods; the jettisoning of cargo; lightening the load so that the vessel will balance. Unloading that which is necessary. Ballast is, 'any heavy substance put into the hold of a vessel to steady her, or to determine her trim in the water.'

Working within a formal framework - colour, line, form, and composition, the work serves as a vessel, and what is within these frames is ballast. Some of the elements of the work becomes jetsam, while what remains is flotsam; images that float to the surface. These remaining forms act as a container, and because of their figurative nature, anchor the work. As objective forms they serve as a means of grounding the composition, and containing colour. Without this sense of structure, is to be set adrift; as these figures represent substance, colour represents that which is intangible and cannot be rendered as matter.

This body of work originated as a delineation of the figure in flux. By using a gestural line as the 'skeleton' of the painting, the idea is to retain that sense of movement, and as the forms develop, those initial, tenuous lines become contours that shape and define the

form, connotating a sense of clarity and simplicity in the composition.

Although figurative, referring to a specific form, performing familiar actions, in recognizable poses the paintings remain in the realm of abstraction. The concern lies not in the representation, but more in the presentation of structure. Structure is important as this is what holds all upright and in place.


As the form is a vehicle, the container; then colour is the content, the cargo, and the ballast which is essential in keeping these vessels properly set up. While contour encloses space and describes form, colour animates and articulates these shapes. The figures react within their limited surroundings. Colour acts to either engulf or release these forms that are inevitably bound to the space. Colour determines the state of a painting; the density of colour balancing against the skeletal frame of the figure.

Ballast is the weight that is used to 'steady, or determine a vessel's trim in the water.' Trim describes a vessel's state of readiness and fitness for sailing. Therefore in these paintings, it is a question of balance, determining what shall be cast off, and what shall remain, and where to place this weight, is the form sound and when brought together to work as a whole, is the vessel trim.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Fine Arts  
Tracey L. Thomas  
has submitted this written thesis  
seven slides  
which are in the permanent possession of the  
University of Colorado and recorded with the  
Department of Fine Arts

Approved by   
Chair of the committee

  
Member

  
Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Department of Fine Arts

Seven Slides of Oil Paintings

Oil on Canvas	48"x71"	Untitled
Oil on Canvas	66"x51"	Untitled
Oil on Canvas	55"x65"	Untitled
Oil on Canvas	61.5"x35"	Untitled
Oil on Canvas	24.5"x47.75"	Untitled
Oil on Canvas	24"x48"	Untitled
Oil on Canvas	72"x33.5"	Untitled



