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*CLOSET #2347*

*By*

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*B.F.A., Guilford College, 1993*

*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*

*1993*

*This Thesis for the Master of Fine Arts Degree by*

*Corissa Jordan Schweitz-Gold*

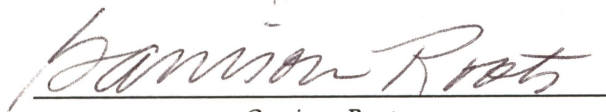
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Date 1/19/94

Questions regarding the practices of political slavery, loyalty, community, and identity build the basis for this written aspect of my thesis work, "Closet #2347 and other Sculptural Works".

The conceptual development and the physical description of all eight works will be discussed within this essay. These works are a collective display of present and past work from the last two years at The University of Colorado. The eight pieces shown create an installation dealing with general to personal issues facing the Interracial/Multi-racial communities.

In the beginning, my sculptural work was based on identity dilemmas and social distortions surrounding life as an adopted Interracial woman. Being of Caucasian and some African-American lineage, I am part of the most unaccepted racial taboo in society. The "Caucasian" and "African-American" communities agree that sexual integration has and will cause confusion and disease, within our so called "structured society". The collective White hysteria about "invisible black blood", and the separation within the black community over color differences are but two

examples of the discomfort caused by such  
mescegenation. These fears have forced  
society to establish laws and promote stereotypes  
to instill concrete boundaries. Our society  
creates classifications of race based on physical  
characteristics. Issues such as "passing for  
'White'" are confronted by many Interracial people  
who have different racial features. Such an option  
is raised negatively by the "Black" community,  
believing it disloyal to One's "true" racial  
identity as well as to the "Black" community. The  
negativity's strength lies in the "one drop  
rule" and the haunted memory of slavery. The "one  
drop rule" states that children with any Black  
ancestry are to be defined and treated as Black  
individuals, not just as human beings without a  
racial identity, or as a racially mixed individuals  
of varying color. The issues of slavery have  
trapped the Black community into the state of mind  
of "never again". As the Jewish community is not  
expected to forgive and forget the Holocaust, the  
Black community views the Interracial community as a  
reminder of slavery and White supremacy. The  
"White" society created the "One Drop Rule" to  
distinguish themselves from the "Mulattoes,  
Quadroons, and Octoroons" that were created between  
slave owners and slaves. This law established and

maintained a loop hole for the "masters" to rape the slaves and hold no responsibility for the children produced by that violence. The Black community has strongly reinforced the "One Drop Rule" for the simple benefit of numbers. There is strength in numbers and the Black community understands that. Informal, but powerful social pressures deter those who can pass from doing so, and punish those who marry Whites. The rule has come to be considered essential to maintaining pride in the Black ethnic community. Closet #2437, has several different components. The main piece of the installation is a closet which represents the symbolic metaphor for a "conceptual closet". This closet illustrates how society's acceptance of this separatist illusion perpetuates exile and lack of acknowledgment. The meaning of this "constructed illusion" is that society has manipulated the manner in which Americans (as a collective unit) will view those who do not fit into the illusionary "norm". The closet's random number #2437 is used to represent the fact that there are many communities and issues that society has forced into this "conceptual closet". Closet #2347 specifically is confronting the societal illusion that the Interracial/Multiracial community does not exist in our society. The Gay and Lesbian community

represents a more obvious example of how the "conceptual closet" has exiled a segment of the population; however, many other communities and issues are forced into exile through lack of acknowledgment. Society has created the illusion that the Gay and Lesbian community created their "conceptual closet" for protection, instead of acknowledging that society uses the "conceptual closet" to isolate and disempower those who threaten the "normal" ideal. The community within Closet #2437 is equally disempowered by society's lack of acknowledgment. The clothing hanging in the closet represents the different choices that Interracial and Multiracial individuals must make to "racially" acknowledge themselves. Racial identity in our society is primarily based on appearance; however, within this nontraditional community, appearance is no longer an acceptable way of judging racial identity.

The other seven pieces that will be in the gallery space will also deal with the issues of racially mixed individuals. These pieces will be seen in the round of the gallery and will be connected, but separate to "Closet #2347". These pieces range in different issues but read like a conceptual book.



The first piece is titled "Family Album", which speaks to the issues of adoption. "Family Album" is a standard photo album that has been wrapped with the non-identifying factual material that I received at age eighteen from the adoption agency. The non-identifying material is what the agency considers to be worthy for the adoptee to know, but will not aid in specifically identifying the birth parents. The factual sheet was xeroxed and cut into segments to illustrate the fragmentation that such a system perpetuates. The piece asks the viewer to examine what the family album constitutes and the coldness of adoption system in terms of the lack of biological information.

The second piece which is titled "Victim Sacrifices" is about the raising of children as numbers for a cause instead of with concerns to the individual identity. This issue can be seen directly influencing transracial adoption, which I am personally effected by. "Victim Sacrifices" is constructed inside of a drawer, which is hung vertically on the wall, to talk about the issues of being politically hidden. There are six baby bottles standing in the drawer, which are filled with different objects which metaphorically represent the political issues fed to children as infants.

The objects within the bottles are blood, black paint, dirt, water and oil, matches and bullets, and nuts and bolts, which symbolize the violence facing certain members of our society.

The third piece, titled "measurements" confronts the issue of blood versus color. This issue is seen directly in the confrontation between individuals in the Black community. The color of One's skin is often in confrontation with the previously stated "One Drop Rule", causing the Black community to instill a fragmented and isolating status system within their community.

The fourth piece titled "Take Two They're Small" is a representation of a subway advertisement that my parents saw when they were in process of adopting me in 1968. The advertisement had a White woman in a nursing outfit, standing holding two Black babies. The bold heading read "Take Two They're Small". This display of objectification has continued throughout the years within the adoption system. Although adoption is a profoundly important and beneficial way of finding families and homes for waiting children, one must understand the flip side to this social construction. "Take Two They're Small" is constructed out of a baby's bed front, which is stamped completely with the statement, Take Two They're Small. On the face of the bed front is

a speaker cover to represent the idea of selling.

The closet, which is 8ftH X 8ftW X 4ftD, is constructed with plywood and assembled with screws. The closet will then be painted white with a primer coating. It will be assembled against the North wall of the third gallery. The louvered doors will open on the ground level, which is the only level. The hanging clothing will be recessed into the closet to invite the viewer into the environment which will then become a "walk-in closet". By having the viewer walk into the closet, the viewer is asked to confront her/his personal feelings about being the one in the "closet". The clothes hanging within the closet are fabricated collages of literary material, which range in size to represent various ages of individuals. The collages that build up the articles of clothing are photographs, articles, and newsletters which are sewn together to represent fragmentation. There will be over one hundred hanging articles of clothing. Similar to the limited choices that a department store offers to it's customers, society has little flexibility with which racial label one can "wear". The collaged materials all relate to the Interracial/Multiracial community and to the societal dilemmas that must be confronted. The viewers are invited to handle and read the collaged material as they realize that they

themselves are standing within the isolated environment.

The seven separate pieces will be set up in the body of the gallery. They all will be exhibited on white painted domestic objects to relate to the closet/house center piece.

Closet #2437 is not only an artistic expression of a personal and global concern for the acknowledgment for the Interracial/Multiracial community, but an opportunity to create a network for support, dialogue and future potential for other works of art. The photographs within the collaged clothing have been collected from numerous families and individuals nationwide. Those who have decided to participate by sending their photographs and sharing their stories are also working to connect with local galleries in their area so that Closet #2437 may be used as an educational/supportive tool for many other communities.

In conclusion, my future goals as an Artist deal with continuing to portray the Interracial/Multiracial community in society. Closet #2437 constructs the basis for many other powerful displays of personal and global concerns about the Interracial/Multiracial community.

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree Master of Fine Arts  
Corissa Jordan Schweitz-Gold  
has submitted this written thesis  
as a supplement to the creative thesis*

*Various "Closet #2347"*

*and 20 slides*

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

*Approved by* *Antonio Rosado*  
*Chair of the Committee*

*Harrison Rots*  
*Member of the Committee*

*Kay Miller*  
*Member of the Committee*

*[Signature]*  
*Chair, Department of Fine Arts*



