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In the same breath

M.T.B. Bois

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IN THE SAME BREATH
by
M. T. B. Bois

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
July, 1986

Tom Muir Wilson
Tom Muir Wilson, Chairperson
Associate Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Joseph E. Brown
Joseph Brown
Professor
School of Printing Management and Sciences

Robert Webster
Associate Professor
School of Printing Management and Sciences
IN THE SAME BREATH

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c/o William and Lucille Bois

M. T. B. Bois

Date 7/86
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M. T. B. R.

Rochester, New York
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INTRODUCTION

Originally in my thesis proposal, I stated my intention to put photographic images onto fabrics. Later, in the process of working, I found this to be technically difficult and pragmatically near impossible.

I considered writing a new proposal, but decided it was unnecessary because my intentions were not primarily technical. The original proposal still covered all the aesthetic concerns, so changing substrates for my images was of relatively minor importance.

Nevertheless, I should like to explain the shift from using fabrics to constructing handmade paper pieces. The advantages of making paper in relation to my work will become more evident in later writing.

From a technical standpoint, putting photographic images onto fabric is a long and meticulous process. I found working with commercially produced fabrics limiting by the available width, fiber content, and to some extent, texture. Additionally, I would have to undo the various fabric treatments, such as Scotchguarding™ and perma-pressing, before I could add photoscreenprinting, colour xerox transfers, or cyanotype. This proved to be overly time-consuming;
I could not work as quickly as I wanted.

There were aesthetic concerns as well. I found I was increasingly interested with texture, scale, and the inclusion of objects within the work. I considered weaving, but decided not to pursue it because weaving would be as time-consuming as preparing commercially made fabrics. Furthermore, I would be dependent on a loom of some sort. A strong woven pattern would be too obvious and would prohibit photoscreenprinting due to its bumpy texture.

Finally, there were the more practical concerns of finances and workspace. Some of the commercial fabrics available were often twenty dollars or more per yard and, at most, were 120 inches in width. The cost was prohibitive and kept experimentation at an absolute minimum. Also, large fabric pieces wet with dye, cyanotype, proofing ink and the like would need to be dried in some manner. Clotheslines hung with wet fabrics in my apartment or somewhere on campus would be both cumbersome and vulnerable. Drying racks and drying machines were impractical due to the size that would be necessary.

Handmade paper had the advantages of texture, permanency, and flexibility. I could obtain pulp inexpensively, dye it easily, and make it in pieces that could be fitted together to whatever dimension
I wanted. Also, I could include objects, such as flowers, weeds, silver photographs, and threads.

I believe that changing from fabrics to hand-made paper made me think and work in a different manner than I had planned. The process of making the pieces for the thesis satisfied the goals of my proposal and became highly involving.
Writing about how one makes one's work, one's art, is a secondary thing in relation to actually making the work itself, which is primary. Writing or talking of the process of making art is much like writing or talking about how one would swim. The description of the process does not approximate the actual process, the experience of the water, nor the results of it. Like swimming, a how-to description of the thesis work does not equal my experience of making it. Knowing this --- that my writing will not give the reader the experience of the process or the feeling of seeing the thesis work firsthand --- I will give an overall description, realizing the inadequacies all the while. Furthermore, I will write of the technical process and my aesthetic concerns involved in making the gallery pieces for the thesis. I think it important to recognize that technique and aesthetics are interdependent; realize that the differentiation between the two is at times alogical and unclear. Aesthetic results do depend partially on technique and craftsmanship. Therefore, I will describe how the gallery pieces were made, and more importantly, how I came to make them.
II

I have always had an interest in fabrics and their textures. My early training came from my grandmother in the form of sewing lessons. And the purpose of these was to learn to make clothing and household items. But it was from this interest in fabrics, along with my background in oil painting and photography, that I came to write my thesis proposal. I made some exposure tests on graphic arts film and on fabrics with proofing ink. These worked well enough. However, the problem of finances arose when I started to make the actual pieces for the gallery. I wanted to do large work, play with the scale, change the gallery with the work to make an open environment. Because all the techniques I was using involved contact printing of some sort, I needed large sheets of ortho film. This was necessary to make the large screenprinted, cyano-typed, and proof-printed images I wanted. Both film and fabrics became financially prohibitive. (I had already finished my graduate coursework in the program and was supporting myself while I completed the thesis). The early experimentations I had done with 4 x 5 and 5 x 7 graphic arts film. I could have imaged these repeatedly and economically, like a Warhol painting, but this was not my purpose. My inclination was to
make an overall singular image. My interest in non-silver photography rose. I wanted to paint, to physically include objects in the work, to combine media that up to this point had remained separate in my work.

III

Making paper became the solution for me in this process. Previously, I had made only a few small pieces of paper. But in the spring of 1985 I started experimenting, making paper in my home that eventually became the panels for the piece called *In The Same Breath* (see Appendix B, slide # 1).

I should like to give the reader general instructions as to how I made the paper and then to describe some of the work specifically. For in-depth instructions the reader should refer to the technical books in the bibliography.

I did not use the traditional mold and deckle method of making paper due to the desired dimensions and textures. Instead, I made large wooden frames with fiberglass screening stretched and secured over them. These frames became, in effect, a mold and deckle. For the gallery pieces: *In The Same Breath*, *Ocean*, and *For* (see Appendix B, slides 1, 4, and 16), I constructed
these frames to be eighteen inches wide and three feet long. This size frame fit on top of the bathtub in my apartment. Therefore, I could pour the wet pulp onto the screen and some water would fall through into the tub. Then I covered the screen with another frame stretched with screening and rolled as much water as possible out of the paper with a brayer. I then flipped the two screens over and continued rolling the water from the paper. Once this was done, I stacked the screens and let the paper air dry. A large fan was used to hasten the drying. Using this method, the paper would dry usually within one and a half days, even if I made the paper extremely thick. Because the paper was dried this quickly, bacteria and molds did not have time to grow. This bypassed the need to add a fungicide to the pulp, although this meant that I had to work quickly: making the pulp and drying the paper so it would not spoil. And on several occasions I had to dispose of pulp that had gone bad before I had a chance to use it. Refrigeration would have extended the effective life of the pulp, but due to the quantity I needed, it became impractical. So I worked quickly and in stages, making one or two large batches of pulp, dyeing it, sizing it and making the paper.

The pulp itself was all derived from commercial sources. Primarily I used 100% cotton rag matt board
so that the work would be archival. I also used rice pulp and wood pulp.

To make the cotton rag pulp, I broke up the matt board into small, hand size pieces and put them into a twenty quart stock pot made of stainless steel. I filled the pot with water and added a tablespoon of sodium hydroxide (lye). The water was brought to a boil and then simmered for several hours. Each batch was allowed to cool and then rinsed well to remove the lye. During these stages I wore goggles, rubber gloves, and a rubber lab-type apron as protection from the lye. Also, all working areas were well ventilated. I wore the gloves during all the wet stages of the process to protect myself from the drying effects of the water and the caustic chemicals. (See Chapter VI, On Safety and Procedures).

Once the matt board was boiled and rinsed, I began the process of beating it to break it down further. This was done in a Hollander beater machine with which I could quickly beat the matt board into pulp. Using this machine, I could produce gallons of pulp in a few hours. (This beating process can be done in a common household blender, however only small amounts may be done at one time so the process becomes tedious). I strained the water to condense the pulp so it could more easily be transported from the paper laboratory at
R. I. T. to my apartment.

For two of the gallery pieces I dyed the pulp the colours I desired for the background. The dyeing process I shall explain in later writing. (See Chapters V and VI).

All of the pulp for the gallery pieces was sized with a synthetic, alkaline sizing. This added overall strength to the paper once it was dry and made the paper easier to maneuver while it was still wet. However, the sizing's primary function was to make the paper less capable of absorbing fluids such as paints and cyanotype. In so doing, the colours that I used on some of the pieces did not bleed or crawl in the paper. Therefore, I used varying amounts of sizing on each gallery piece depending on the "bleedability" I desired. For example, I used the most sizing for Ocean so that the resist that was photoscreenprinted on the paper would not be absorbed but would stay on the surface with good edge definition. For this piece, I used fifty drops of sizing per gallon of uncondensed paper pulp. For In The Same Breath, I used only ten drops of sizing per gallon in order for the pigments of the plants to bleed through the pulp like watercolour paints. (See Appendix B, slides 1 and 4). Once the pulp was mixed with the sizing, I could make the paper in the dimensions I wanted using the method described earlier.
The various flowers, feathers, and photographs included in the paper were laid down on the screening prior to pouring the pulp and rolling it. These objects adhered to the pulp physically. That is, the fibers of the pulp meshed with the fibers of the flowers, threads, and silver photographs because all are of cellulose origin. In the case of the feathers, the pulp fibers meshed with the tiny barbs of each feather to bond them in place.

With the gallery pieces made up of smaller panels of paper, I could make each panel in my apartment. However for Ménage à Trois, Mais le Faux à Deux and and Torso, the frames used were so large that I could not make the paper in my apartment. For these two pieces I raised and inclined the frames on blocks in my garage and proceeded to make the paper there. Because the panels were large and heavy they defied being physically flipped and rolled. Therefore, I had to extract as much water as possible out of the paper by rolling the surface with a large brayer. Once this was done, I left the panels in the garage for several days to air dry.

Although the process of making paper involves the many steps described in the above, I found it to be satisfying. The process itself was, and continues to be, enjoyable and a viable way in which to
work. It is meditative and ritualistic just as the developing of film and the printing of photographs.

IV

In the exhibit for my thesis, I believe Ocean to be the most immediate aesthetically and technically the most complex. It would seem to be the easiest for the viewer to engage with due to its scale and representation of the object, namely the water of the ocean. The other pieces in the thesis are more subtle conceptually. Their reference, although not unclear, is more involved.

When I first conceived the basic idea for Ocean, my concern was to surround the viewer with what, in my opinion, is the essence of the ocean. The ocean is essentially about monumentality, pressure, coolness, murkiness, and the unknown. In order to achieve these, I knew I would have to make the Ocean large, so in my design, I planned it to extend over the height of the gallery wall, to have the watery image climb the wall like a giant wave. The resulting size was approximately eight and a half feet tall and thirteen feet wide. (See Appendix B, photograph 1).

In deciding the basic colour scheme for Ocean,
I made several small watercolour paintings of the basic colour layout. These were painted in the same proportions as the final painting. Over the watercolour I drew a grid that would correspond to each panel of paper in the gallery piece. This resulted in the visual flow from one panel to another so that Ocean had an overall sense of wholeness to it even though it was composed of panels pieced together.

Because each panel of paper was made face down, the resulting Ocean was a reversed image of the watercolour painting. Therefore, in painting the watercolour and in making each panel, I had to think effectively upside-down and backwards. I planned the composition of the basic colour ground so that when reversed it would balance visually.

To prepare the pulp for Ocean and Torso, (see Appendix B, slides 4 and 9), I added powdered fabric dyes. First I boiled the dye in two gallon batches, then added condensed paper pulp to make five gallons. Each batch was allowed to cool and stand overnight to yield maximum dye retention. Wearing rubber gloves, I rinsed, re-condensed, sized, and finally stored the pulp in five gallon plastic containers. I had to prepare my palette of six colours of dyed pulp before I could start making the paper itself.
The dyed pulp became my paints with which to follow the plan of the final watercolour. The pulp was poured onto the frames; each frame and resulting paper panel corresponded to each grid of the watercolour. (See Chapter VI, On Safety and Procedures).

The sense of pressure, of the weight of the water, and murkiness, was achieved by the play of lights and darks. As if the viewer were in the water and looking obliquely through the water to the surface, the lower depths were blue-black, brown, and greyish. The upper portion of the painting is blue, green, clearer, and more saturated in colour. Throughout the piece, there are small fish swimming randomly. These I imaged by photoscreenprinting a resist material onto the paper panels. Once the resist dried, I sprayed cyanotype around the resist areas and over most of the paper. The cyanotype was air dried and exposed with quartz lamps for thirty minutes. I developed it out with a water rinse. Again the paper was dried and I removed the resist by peeling it off and this revealed the fish images. To darken parts of the painting, but give it a sparkling appearance, I sprayed on a thin mixture of finely powdered graphite and linseed oil. The combination of the two substances produced a slight overall sheen on the painting's surface. Finally,
I added another layer of the cyanotyped fish. (See Chapter VI, On Safety and Procedures).

In order to secure the panels to the gallery walls, I coated the backside of each with an archival bookbinder's glue and adhered a tightly woven cotton muslin to them. This fabric added support to the paper. I left the corners of the fabric free so that common tacks could be pushed through them and into the gallery wall. This held the panels securely to the wall; I used this method for all of the thesis work made of paper.

Ocean took approximately six weeks to complete. Within its twenty-four panels there are over fifty-five gallons of the dyed, condensed pulp.

Thus far I have written about the process of making Ocean, but I would like to encourage the reader simply to look at it for some time. (See Appendix B, slide 4). I believe it is not the place for the artist to be the art critic; the creation of these pieces and the creation of critical writing are two different endeavors, so I will not attempt the latter here. I do feel this painting is important in the course of my work. I have always felt a definite affinity to water; I think Ocean holds the essential quality of this kind of water: that it is mystical. I understand those who have devoted their
time painting and photographing water. It is a possible and captivating subject for one's work.

V

The seven gallery pieces in the thesis exhibit are related to each other aesthetically and conceptually although each piece is thematically specific. They are, albeit separate and independent, done in the same breath. I do not think it is important to tell the reader how I made each piece. Rather, what I was thinking of as I made them and how I intended them seems more important. Ocean has already been described in these terms.

The piece, In The Same Breath (see Appendix B, slide 1), is about language, about tablets, hieroglyphics, and palimpsests. The panels of paper literally became my tablets to write on with the dried flowers and feathers. The language is difficult to decipher; it is repetitious and contradictory at the same time. The colours of the flowers dye the pulp like watercolours, and, like an aquarelle, look like it could be washed away. So it becomes vulnerable like an ancient language that is no longer spoken and can fade from usage. However, one does not need fluency in a language to derive
some meaning from it. Sanskrit and cuneiform have visual meaning even if one does not know how to read it literally.

In The Same Breath was the first paper piece I made for the thesis exhibit. Once I completed it, I hung it on the wall of my room. It hung there for several months while I worked on other pieces. I would often wake up at sunrise and lie in bed and watch the light creep into the room and across the panels. It became a way of telling time. The subtle textures in the light would forecast the weather of the morning. The sharpness of the tablets' shadows would foretell the brightness of the day. I learned the piece well and it was comforting. It became an instrument outside myself about language and time like some archeological object.

The two kimonos, numbers II and IV (see Appendix B, slides 7 and 12), were both done with muslin torn at the edges. The muslin was lightweight enough to reveal the wearer's body, or in the gallery, to slightly reveal the images on both sides of the kimonos.

The kimonos are an attempt to understand a different system of clothing. They are perhaps more theatrical, classicistic, and restrictive than Western clothing. Also, they are physically and sexually
repressing when worn, yet have an eroticism that is foreign to this culture. Simultaneously, they may be worn demurely. This seeming contradiction is what interests me.

The back of the kimono is the perfect area to paint one's picture, to make one's theatre like the Noh costumes of the Edo period. The images on them are abstracted as soon as they are put on and belted at the waist.

*Kimono IV* is intended to be worn with its long formal sleeves knotted behind the back. This abstracts both the image and the form of the kimono. Its image is skeletal and negative, showing only the tracings of the objects that were cyanotyped on it. Contrarily, *Kimono II* is detailed and positive. It has a feeling of lightness. (See Appendix B, slides 12 and 13). They both convey a sense of ceremony and ritual. They are about a different way of dress and the delicacy of wrapping the body and surrounding oneself with images.

*Ménage à Trois, Mais le Faux à Deux*, or *Meeting of Three, But the Folly of Two*, (see Appendix B, slides 14 and 15) is an interpretation of the relationships between people. The piece resembles a puzzle with the included photographs fitting and not fitting like friends and lovers and strangers.
It is not intended to be narrative, but I do think it has a filmic or musical quality. I think in any relationship between two people that there is always a possible third, forth, or fifth person that is carried into the situation of the two. So the meeting of three could actually be a meeting of two with an unseen third party or the meeting of many more unseen influences.

_Torso_ (see Appendix B, slides 9, 10, and 11) has an ethereal quality wherein the figure of the nude torso is difficult to differentiate from the ground that surrounds it. I intended the piece to look like air, or water, or smoke, with the torso being only slightly visible. It becomes very atmospheric. The lightness of the rice pulp veils both the dyed cotton rag pulp and the torso. And the curve of the figure follows the direction of the coloured pulp itself.

_For_ (see Appendix B, slides 16, 17, and 18) is a visual notation of repetitious music such as Indian chants. In order to do this, I imbedded milkweed fibers in the pulp in small bunches by scattering them across the screening. There is both a randomness and a repetitious quality as a result. Once the paper was dry, I combed the tufts of the milkweed bunches so they formed a soft relief
from the paper's surface.

Each panel is slightly different than those around it. The meaning of the panels in total is greater than the meaning of each panel seen separately. For is intended to be looked at while listening to the afor mentioned music.

VI

Throughout this writing, I have explained some of the safety precautions I took while working on the thesis. I believe it is crucial for artists and photographers to handle, store, and dispose of the materials they use properly. Although manufacturers of dyes and chemicals should provide complete procedural and chemical information, ultimately the individual who chooses to work with these materials is responsible for his or her immediate safety and long-term health. The two most important considerations are inhalation (of hazardous fumes and particles), and direct contact (of the skin, eyes, and mouth with dangerous materials).

First of all, adequate ventilation and filtration of the air is extremely important and often overlooked by artists and photographers alike. Therefore, as I was working I made certain that
both fresh air was coming in and fumes were being exhausted from the darkroom or studio. I used two large box fans to create a current of air that would carry fumes and vapors away from me. Also, I wore an air respirator fitted with filters for fumes, mists, and dusts whenever I needed to mix dry chemicals, and powdered dyes, or use noxious liquids such as lacquer, polymers, and cyanotype. The respirator is simple to use and does not hinder breathing. It greatly exceeds NIOSH's standards and is approved by both NIOSH and MSHA*. (See Appendix D: List of Products).

Secondly, I guarded myself from direct skin contact by using rubber gloves, safety glasses, and a rubber apron whenever I used harmful liquids that could by absorbed through the skin into the blood system. These include most photographic chemicals and fabric dyes, the lye that I used to break down the matt boards for pulp, and polymers, resists, and lacquers.

I would like to describe briefly, but specifically how I handled each substance used in this thesis.

*National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Centers for Disease Control), and Mine Safety and Health Administration (U.S. Department of Labor).
The reader may find referring to Appendix D helpful. The list of products details the brand and trade names for the items used although this is not intended as an endorsement. Simply, these specific materials were appropriate for making the work in the thesis.

I found I needed to take the most precautions in using the sodium hydroxide, commonly called lye, or caustic soda, to prepare the paper pulp. Lye is extremely alkaline, can cause severe burns, and damage one's sight irrevocably if it is splashed into the eyes. Furthermore, the fumes from boiling matt boards with lye are highly dangerous as they can have a burning effect on the throat and lungs. Therefore, I wore a full-length rubber apron, long rubber gloves, safety glasses, and the air respirator when preparing the pulp. I wore these throughout the process which included the final rinsing of the lye from the boiled matt board. Lye is sold in grocery and department stores to clean household plumbing. I used the Red Devil brand because it is pure sodium hydroxide and does not contain the metallic additives that are in Drano. It is also very important to use only stainless steel pots and utensils for the lye as the chemical will burn through those items made of aluminum and other metals.
For the dyeing process, I used powdered fabric dyes. Although these are easy to use and give excellent light-fastness, they impose their own problems for long-term health. The liquid dye bath can easily be absorbed through the skin and dye powder can be inhaled, thereby damaging the respiratory and circulatory systems.

A powder form the dye should be handled carefully to avoid breathing in dye particles. I opened the packages of dye underwater so that the powder would not be released in the air. I wore rubber gloves when handling the dyes and the dyed pulp. The pulp was rinsed thoroughly with water, sized and re-condensed for storage. Rinsing removes the unused dye bath and prevents the colours from running together in the finished paper.

Proper disposal of lye and dye baths is essential for protection of health and the ecological environment. Simply pouring these solutions down the drain and flushing with water will cause damage to one's own household plumbing and the public sewer system. The most responsible way to dispose of exhausted dye bath is to test the pH level and slowly adjust it to neutral (pH 7). A mild soda ash solution will balance an acidic discharge; a white vinegar solution will balance an alkaline discharge.
Remember to add acid to water and not the reverse. The resulting solution should then be poured slowly down the drain and flushed with water to dilute the liquid.

When I was making Ocean, I sprayed cyanotype over a photoscreenprinting resist material. Spraying the solution produced a short-lived mist of cyanotype. This is poisonous if inhaled or imbibed. It is also absorbed through the skin. During this process I wore the respirator to guard against mist, plus a long-sleeved shirt, a rubber apron, and surgical gloves. The work area was well ventilated at all times with fans exhausting the fumes. Disposal of cyanotype rinse water and unused solution should be handled in the same manner as the dye baths.

I used a special hand cleaning paste made for the removal of dye from the skin. On the few times I did get dye and cyanotype on my hands, I used this cleaner as soon as possible. The paste is manufactured by a leading skin care pharmaceutical house for use in the graphic arts and textile industries. (See Appendix D: List of Products). It contains no chlorine or abrasives which could roughen the skin.

The photoscreenprinting resist does not produce any unusual vapors or fumes, however the usual attention to ventilation should be used. I also wore
surgical gloves while coating the photoscreen-printing emulsion onto the screen and again as I squeegeed the resist through the screen.

I used the same safety equipment while spraying lacquer on the piece called For. (See Appendix B, slide # 16). Lacquer gives off strong, hallucinatory fumes which cause severe headaches and cell damage if inhaled. It can also damage one's skin. I wore the respirator and ventilated my work area thoroughly.

The paint I used was a water-based metallic polymer. This does not require respiratory protection, however, I was careful to keep it off my hands. Water-based paints are fairly innocuous, but it is the pigments they contain that may cause harm. Therefore it is important to protect the skin from the various pigments carried in the base.

Additionally, I should like to caution anyone who might try papermaking against taking the process casually. Pulp may contain traces of lye, dye, sizing and other additives which may be harmful over a period of time. Rubber gloves are the best protection from additives and the pulp fiber itself. The latter may be abrasive to the hands and be caught under the fingernails which may consequently infect the nail bed. Furthermore, water has a dry-
ing effect on the skin and often my hands were working in the pulp and water for eight to ten hours a day. The effects of direct exposure to water and pulp can be minimized by wearing rubber gloves, and they should be your first choice over barrier creams.

Finally, I think it is important to gather as much information on the media one chooses to work with and then to handle the materials properly. Responsible use, storage, and disposal of these substances are crucial for safety, health, and ecological balance. I would encourage the reader to refer to the pertinent books in the bibliography and to investigate any materials before using them.

VII

In the above, I have written about the process of making the work and the resulting work itself. This relationship between process and product concerns me because I am not solely oriented towards one or the other. Rather, I find the process satisfying and exciting. The making of the work is textural and immediate. The work itself, the product is highly important to me as it is the result of the process. However once the process has
ceased, the product gains an independence from it and is usually addressed separately. I consider the process of my work to be fairly private; the product to be more public. Both are personal. (See Appendix B, installation slides A – F).

In future work, I should like to explore several directions that came from this thesis. Like the kimonos, I should like to make a series of wearable pieces and perhaps ornamental costumes that are more like sculpture than like clothing. I would like to make an ocean installation to fill a gallery from top to bottom with a singular watery image. Or make a jungle or a sky installation. Imbedding photographs in paper and paintings interest me as a way of combining the media. I should like to make a series of pieces that are musical and meditative. I am interested in developing my own hieroglyphics within my work, to build my own visual vocabulary. Obviously, time does not allow for exploring all of these completely, so, in time, I shall have to choose. Some ideas being better than others, I hope to choose well.

VIII

In all seven of the gallery pieces, I have
worked to combine materials effectively as set out in my thesis proposal. (See Appendix D). I believe I have accomplished what I proposed.

The work itself and the process however, became much more than simply a fulfillment of a thesis proposal or a mixture of pigments and pulp. All of the work is about things that are larger than myself. The work became an attempt to clarify the meaning of those things. The ocean, the ancient language, the foreign dress all have a great influence and effect. This searching through things for their essence is what interests me. And regardless of the medium, this is the direction for my work. The thesis pieces are related by this theme and, therefore, have been done in the same breath.
Appendix A

Thesis Titles, Media, and Dimensions

In The Same Breath
cotton rag pulp, plants, feathers
120" x 76"

Ocean
cotton rag pulp, wood pulp, cyanotype, graphite, linseed oil, photo stencil resist, plants, fabric dye
156" x 108"

Kimono IV
tea-dyed muslin, cyanotype, salt crystals
67" x 55"

Torso
cotton rag pulp, wood pulp, rice pulp, pastel, cheesecloth
39" x 68"

Kimono II
muslin, colour xerox transfer, muslin appliqué
60" x 53"

Ménage à Trois, Mais le Faux à Deux
cotton rag pulp, silver photographs, thread, ribbons, metallic polymer
102" x 33"

For
cotton rag pulp, milkweed fibers, lacquer
120" x 72"

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Appendix B

Thesis and Detail Slides
And Photograph
3. In the Same Room

9. Torso
mixed media

copyright 1986
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10. Torso (detail)
muslin, colour xerox

copyright 1986
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11. Torso (detail)
mixed media

copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

7. Kimono IV
muslin, cyanotype

copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

8. Kimono IV (detail)
muslin, cyanotype

copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

12. Kimono II
muslin, colour xerox

copyright 1985
M. T. B. Bois

13. Kimono II (detail)
muslin, colour xerox

copyright 1985
M. T. B. Bois

4. Ocean
mixed media

copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

5. Ocean (detail)
mixed media

copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

6. Ocean (detail)
mixed media

copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois
14. Ménage à Trois
mixed media
copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

15. Ménage à Trois
(detail) mixed media
copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

16. For
mixed media
copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

17. For (detail)
mixed media
copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois

18. For (detail)
mixed media
copyright 1986
M. T. B. Bois
Ocean

Photography Gallery,
Rochester Institute of Technology

3/29/86
Appendix C

Thesis Installation Slides
Appendix D

List of Products

Films: 35mm: 

- Tri - X Pan
- Plus - X Pan

4 x 5:

- Tri - X Pan
- Agfa Pan 100
- Kodalith Ortho Film, type 3

Film Developer: 

- D - 76

Cameras & Lenses: 

- Nikon F3
- Nikkor Macro 55mm, f2.8
- Nikkor 35mm, f2.8
- Nikkor 50mm, f1.4
- Calumet 4 x 5
- Fuji 150mm

Photographic Paper: 

- Kodak Ektamatic SC Paper, A Surface

Matt Board (for pulp): 

- 100% cotton rag matt board

Rice Paper (for pulp): 

- Sakuragami 100% rice paper

Lye: 

- Red Devil Lye

Alkaline Sizing: 

- Hercon 40

Fabric Dyes: 

- Wintex Fabric Dye
- Deka Series "L" Textile Dye
- Cushing's Powdered Fabric Dye

Photoscreenprinting Emulsion: 

- Kiwi col 22

Photoscreenprinting Resist: 

- Resist Bien

Powdered Graphite: 

- Lock-Ease Extra-fine Graphite

Colour Xerox Paper: 

- 3M Color Electrostatic Transfer Paper

Bookbinding Glue: 

- Thermabond 2000

Pastels: 

- Alphacolor Hi-Fi Grays
- Rembrandt's Soft Pastels
Metallic Polymer:  Deka Permanent Fabric Paint  
(Pearl White-Metallic 420)

Lacquer:  Grumbacher's Lacquer Varnish

Pulp Beater:  Hollander Beater

Respirator:  Survivair Half-Mask Air-Purifying  
Respirator (Series 2000)  
with filters for Dusts, Fumes, and Mists

Dye-Removing Hand Cleaner:  ReDuRan
Appendix E

Thesis Proposal
In The Same Breath

by

M. T. B. Bois

Thesis Proposal

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM

SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES

ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

January, 1984

Tom Muir Wilson, Chairperson
Associate Professor, Photography
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Charles Arnold, Jr.
Professor, Photography
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Robert Webster
Associate Professor, Printing
School of Printing
Statement of Purpose

Through a combined media of photography and fabrics I intend to fuse together these two areas of my life, my work, that heretofore have been separate pursuits. My intent is to juxtapose reality and fantasy, building upon my personal penchant for dance, texture, and colour.

Background

The foundations of my work are closely dependent upon and interwoven with my emotional states. I am, and have been, given to working on only certain flavors of these emotions and realize I may have the strength to show my full palette. And I want to. There seems to be a difference between talent and passion, or, head and heart. The overlap is at times unclear, frightening, and marvelous. It occurs to me frequently in periods when the overlap has been too frightening, when the strength of the passion has been enormous, I and others have turned to the gathering of concrete talents. And, with great skill, have distilled most of the strong emotions from the work, leaving traces of them nonetheless.

So often things are described by what they are not, as opposed to what they are, especially those we misunderstand. One should not describe the sen-
sation of the colour blue by stating that blue is not yellow, not red, and not green. One should describe the physical properties of blue, its connotations, sensations, its flavour and its breath. With this, I wish to pursue some entities, some emotions, that are not traces, not clandestine, not concrete. I have been increasingly frustrated by descriptions of what is not. I need to push this to a more positive state in my own work in order to determine what is.

I have been largely concerned with things beautiful. And this is what I see and feel. I find the ugly brief, but deserving of exploration too. But it is the texture, the flavour, the breath of glimpses that has held me from my beginnings. And it is as frightening and as fascinating as the ugly.

Through photography I have come to realize that I have both the skills and the emotions that must grow together in a way that all my painting and dancing and constructing never required. I have gathered carefully my photographic and fabric talents; the thesis is to be a fusion of talents and passions.

Procedure

My thesis work will involve broadening the emotional scale of my work and myself.
I will be working in both silver and non-silver photographic processes. I will be using fabrics and many handwork and dyeing processes. And in order to image photographically onto the fabrics, I will employ printing processes such as screenprinting and xerography.

To clarify both technical and aesthetic concerns, I will seek responses from my thesis board members and others.

I will continue my own reading and study of painting, textiles, chemistry, sculpture, and photography in relation to the thesis work. I will seek music, dance, poetry, and other media as necessary and intuited.

Throughout the thesis, I will seek my own visual equivalents for the passion I see when I listen to music such as Kitaro's Tunhuang, or when I read Jong's At The Edge of the Body, or when I see the movement of dancers.

Presentation

The presentation of the thesis exhibit and the written work will be in late 1985. The exhibit shall have approximately ten photographic sculptures.
At The Edge of the Body

At the edge of the body there is said to be a flaming halo—yellow, red, blue or pure white, taking its color from the state of the soul.

Cynics scoff; scientists make graphs to refute it; editorial writers, journalists, & even certain poets, claim it is only mirage, trumped-up finery, illusory feathers, spiritual shenanigans, humbug.

But in dreams we see it, & sometimes even waking.... If the spirit is a bride about to be married to God, this is her veil.

Do I believe it? Do I squint & regard the perimeter of my lover's body, searching for some sign that his soul is about to ignite the sky?

Without squinting, I almost see it. an angry red aura changing to white, the color of peace.
I gaze at the place
where he turns into air
& the flames of his skin
combine
with the flames of the sky,
proving
the existence
of both.

–Erica Jong, *At The Edge of the Body*
BIBLIOGRAPHY


