Projected reality

Richard E. Schneider

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PROJECTED REALITY
by
RICHARD E. SCHNEIDER

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
November, 1981.

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This work is dedicated to my parents, Ellie and Gary Hopponen, who have been supportive of my education and many of my crazy ideas.
The author of this work wishes to recognize and thank the following people who, in their own way, helped make it all possible.

Elaine Spaull - Complementary Education, R.I.T.
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Bonnie Taylor - Marketing Education Center, Kodak, Rochester.
Gus Van der Heyde - Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia.
Hans Zandvoort - College of Liberal Arts, R.I.T.
Don Bujnowski - College of Fine & Applied Arts, R.I.T.
Ann Kingston - Residence Life, R.I.T.
Mr. Duke - owner of the abandoned building at Genesee St. and Frost Ave., Rochester.
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CHRONOLOGY

September 1980 - enrolled at the R.I.T. as an M.F.A. graduate student in Photography.

November 1981 - attended Gyorgy Kepes lectures which touched on Public Arts issues.

- approval of thesis proposal, "Projected Reality" by the M.F.A. faculty.
- approval of Charles A. Arnold, Jr., as thesis Chairman.

February 1982 - completion of 5 Van Dyke Brown "tile-like" modular units.

- photographs and research of potential installation sites in Rochester.
- elimination of non-silver and obvious tile references from work.

March 1982 - experiment with large Xerox photocopies using an early modular unit.

- videotaping of "Gift-wrapping America" for laser-disc portfolio.*
- first meetings with City Hall officers, propose art project for city.

April 1982 - early experiments in pure photographic units and patterns.

- audited Surface Design class, screen prints onto dyed fabric explored.
- consultations with Dave Dickinson, possibilities of lithography.

May 1982 - attempts to involve Printing School and G.A.R.C. in reproduction stage.

- meetings and review of work by Gus Van der Heyde of the R.I.T.
- underwent graduation ceremonies, but no degree received at this date.

June 1982 - completion of 20 purely photographic "rough state" modular units.

- first lengthy critique with both Charlie and Gunther present.
- ended attempts to involve City Hall in project, possible funding sources dwindling, rethinking of concepts, no longer "Public Art" oriented.

July 1982 - first meeting with Elaine Spaull of Complementary Education.
   completion of 16 "master copies" now ready for reproduction process.
   second lengthy critique with Charlie and Gunther.
   rephotographing of 10 masters; toning, mounting and coloring of patterns.

August 1982 - creation of large contact prints using 4 different masters.
   lengthy discussion and critique with Patty.
   permission to photocopy 6 masters at Kodak's M.E.C., piecing together.
   first meetings with Dormitory administrators, lobby murals proposal.

September 1982 - temporary photocopy installations, 11 sites, photographic documentation.
   19th: installation of exhibit in the Photo Gallery.
   20th: opening of show "Projected Reality/Gift-wrapping America"
   22nd: modification of gallery space, change lighting, include photocopies.
   26th: Closing reception.
   29th: end of the show.

October 1982 - addition of Dave Dickinson as a Thesis Board member.
   numerous meetings with Thesis Board to determine additional project.
   further meetings with Dormitory Administrators regarding murals.

November 1982 - received Complementary Education Grant to produce a campus mural.
   tentative approval of murals for dormitory lobbies.

December 1982 - creation of alternative modular units in case dormitory mural fell through, these would be for an urban location.

January 1983 - meetings with Mitch Green, Margaret Chapa and Jan Quitzau, certain approval for mural located in "The Cellar", tentative approval for large C.U. Cafeteria mural.
February 1983 - creation of "Things are Looking Up" modular unit.
- further research into printers, papers and other factors regarding mural installation.
- approval of modular unit by Thesis Board, Margaret and Mitch.

March 1983 - approval of mural proposal by the R.I.T. Beautification Committee.
- modular unit sent to Eagle Graphics for reproduction.

April 1983 - mural installation in the C.U. Cafeteria, documentation photographs.
- permanent Rochester installation created from printer's rejects.
- completion of the written portion of thesis requirement.
- Thesis Board approval of "Projected Reality".

INTRODUCTION

When I first conceived of "Projected Reality" I knew of the challenge that awaited me. For not only did I wish to alter my usual method of producing photographs (Illustration 1), but I also wished to change the context in which these images were ordinarily seen by the public. I felt that my message was important enough to justify the effort, no matter what, if any, tribulations awaited me.

My desire to change the context of exhibiting photographs governed the manner in which I would create my images. By seeking to change this context, I saw myself reacting against two circumstances which appeared to be norms for much of the photography world. The first was that photographs were presented so the observer could see only one at a time. The second being photographs exhibited as art objects are rare and therefore valuable in relation to this rarity.

The first circumstance reflects on my experience that the majority of photographs in a museum or gallery setting are presented in the same manner: A single image, neatly matted and tastefully framed amidst a slice of wall space all of its own. Of course, the overall show may have a unifying theme and often each image is part of a deliberate sequence or series. But having seen so many shows that were presented the same way, I felt, for myself, it was time for a change.

It would be absurd to condemn photography, or any other medium for that matter, because a person could see but one image at a time. My point, therefore, might best be illustrated by relating a sequence from an art documentary I saw,
which proved to be influential on my work. At first, a single image of Leonardo's "Mona Lisa" appeared on the television screen; then, coinciding with the monolog, several images of the same work were seen all butted together, filling the entire screen and giving the impression of being a page of postage stamps. 1 Somehow, the significance of the single, unique "Mona Lisa" was lost in the wake of being shown with copies of itself (Illustration 2), which was exactly what the narrator tried to point out. I found this phenomenon to be very exciting visually and questioned whether I could duplicate such a thing utilizing photographs and a standard gallery space.

Galleries and museums, by and large, instill a belief onto the observer that the objects contained within are rare and expectedly command a high monetary value. For paintings and sculpture, the situation may be appropriate, for they are indeed unique works of art. But a photograph printed from a negative has the potential for being reproduced an infinite number of times. Could or should one arrive at an exhibition plan that recognizes this potential? Would a gallery or museum be apropos for such an exhibition? Why are most photographs exhibited as if they were rare objects when they need not be? The following paragraphs might supply the answers.

Photography, in addition to the printmaking techniques of lithography, etching and others, can be grouped into a class where the artist (originator of a design) and printer (reproducer of the design) could be found in the same person. The images resulting from this creative endeavor are acknowledged and displayed as artworks. This was not always so and, roughly before 1840, the majority of printed reproductions were not regarded as sophisticated artworks and were not marketed as such. In this case, they were manufactured by a

1 Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New, p. 325.
separate designer and printer whose goal was cheap, accessible visual information for the lower classes. This goal required the printing of as many reproductions as the technology would allow. Hefty profits provided the impetus for printers to insist on maximum output, and the dissemination of ideas and knowledge utilizing pictorial information was perhaps the reason behind Europe and America's military, economic and scholarly domination of the world then.  

Dating back to the 15th century, printmakers were involved with marketing reproductions of famous artworks. By the 17th century, advances in engraving and etching spawned a new generation of artisans whose occupation was based solely on documenting paintings and sculpture for the printer who himself, was a highly skilled craftsman. The original works were owned by nobility, the Church and the monarchs, but the printed reproductions allowed the bourgeoisie and lower classes an historically unique opportunity to bring quality artworks into their homes. Sometimes, they had the signature of an important artist/printer such as Marc Antonio, Callot and Rubens. We find here, perhaps, the first real democratization of art in an entire society since the days of Classical Greek pottery, which also could be owned by most people.

In contrast to the reproduction marketplace, an artist using printmaking as a means of expression would not usually think in terms of the maximum number of prints a plate would allow. For example, we find a great multitude of etchings and lithographs of Guido Reni's "Aurora", while very few of "Christ Preaching" designed and executed by Rembrandt. Such is the reason why a reproduction of a painting is only worth a pittance compared to an artist's original print.

__________________________

2 William M. Ivins, Jr., Prints and Visual Communication, pp. 16-20
Rembrandt, for the most part, made etchings and the like for himself and not for a large audience. His were experiments in the creative potential of the medium and are among the most successful and inspiring of all time. Their purpose was to educate himself and his circle of colleagues and this accounts for the small editions he would pull from a plate. Anyway, there was a very limited audience who would have patronized Rembrandt during his lifetime, for the upper classes would have preferred his paintings and the lower classes would not have understood them; besides, they were so few in number that no gallery then could profit from their sale.

Few people in 1660 imagined that Rembrandt, a now destitute man who would die in obscurity, would eventually be recognized as a great master. It is ironic that this recognition occurred after his death, not enabling him to share in its rewards. With the expanding art market and the rise of a powerful class of aristocrats, most of Rembrandt's paintings were purchased and resold for profit over and over again. By the mid-20th century, most of his works were housed in museums, many of whom were erected by the wealthy and are worth millions of dollars apiece.

The quality and rarity of Rembrandt's etchings, in time, would also make them quite valuable and sought after. One might be skeptical about this whole affair, for the deeply personal nature of the prints had now been publicized and turned into a commodity. In fact, many Rembrandt prints circulating about today were not printed by the master, but by galleries and museums who secured rights to the plates.

Many printmakers today have insured their fate would not mirror that of Rembrandt and others in the past. Unlike 17th century Holland, our world provides a strong market for both the artist's original print and the machine crafted
reproduction. In response, artists have arrived at a concept known as the "Limited Edition". The term basically means that an artist will conscientiously limit the number of reproductions made from an original, enabling him to benefit from the rarity value of them while he is still alive. Rembrandt's etchings were not limited editions because they were not conceived for the marketplace. One should also remember that etched and engraved reproductions of artworks virtually ceased with the advent of photography and the half-tone printing process.  

It is common knowledge that an etched plate could easily yield a few hundred prints and with photography, the number of images taken from a negative is unlimited. But, the art market does not encourage a photographer to take fullest advantage of the reproduction potential of his medium, for if rarity can, without doubt, be connected with monetary value, then why not take advantage of this rarity potential instead? This answers the question as to why most photographs are exhibited as rare objects.

How could I respond in my own work to all of the circumstances I have described? First, I would attempt the creation of images which had no rarity value, for they would hold true to the reproduction potential of photographic processes. Without this value, they would be "worthless" in terms of monetary investment. Would I reach the point of producing works which could not be bought or sold, removing the market entirely from our perception of them? I searched for historical accounts of projects having similar concerns in mind. Was there an artwork that was owned by everyone and yet not by any person in particular? The answer was as obvious as the Washington Monument.

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3 Ibid., pp. 113-134.
Having an artwork situate itself in a gallery or museum space usually implies an ownership of some kind. They either own the work or they want you to own it. But suppose I took my photographic reproductions out of this environment completely and arranged them in an authentic urban setting. This might pose a solution of how to exhibit my works with innovation and how to create something which physically could not be owned by anyone. It would also remove the idea that each individual print was valuable, because I would have great expanses of space to install vast numbers of them in. This endeavor might ultimately be regarded as a public art project, though no public funding would necessarily be involved with it.

The only photographs ever seen in the urban environment are not usually associated with art. These, of course, are advertisements, billboards and wall posters. Many modern artists can aesthetically enjoy the visual impact of a 60-foot hot dog amidst a boring cityscape, but for most average onlookers, it is just an obnoxious sign, and for a few of these, it might symbolize the utter disregard city-planners and investors have for the visual dignity of their home.

Wall posters are meant to be temporary and achieve their visual impact through quantity and not gargantuan dimensions per image. Instead of screaming out one message on the top of their lungs, they repeat their message over and over again. An elaborately postered wall might display characteristics we normally find in sophisticated art pieces, though the intent of the advertiser was certainly not to produce art. For most, the billboard and the postered wall are an inescapable fact of urban life. Would it be possible to utilize this predicament to my/our advantage?

For myself, the most important characteristic found in the postered wall was seeing a repeated image in an architectural setting. I thought back to
seeing multiples of the "Mona Lisa" on the television screen, but having the same pattern occur in such a large space was most inspiring. Posters are more personal than their huge cousins and sometimes carry on a strange dialogue with their surroundings. Posters also had an abundance of artists who used the format to express their artistic views, such as Rodchenko and Kathe Kollwitz. The format presented a wealth of possibilities and a definitive history to support it. I set out from this point to make posters'.

At the time my thesis proposal was approved, I was planning to produce a series of posters that, in effect, were my own versions of what was already found in the environment. There was obvious folly in this endeavor. My first break-through came when I carefully studies all the possibilities inherent in poster installation. Sometimes the units would be in rows, other times they would all be grouped together. The act of placing like-images next to and on top of each other formed a crude pattern.

The crude pattern I mentioned is one of those artistic coincidences that often happen in the urban landscape. Suppose though, that a pattern of greater sophistication visually, were deliberately conceived of and postered up in such a place. It would serve as a declaration that the postered wall was a legitimate art form and not simply an accident. It would also change the normal role of postered walls in a city environment from being advertisements to being embellishments.

As I saw it, the method of achieving a sophisticated pattern in posters was to remove the obvious and to have them hook up into a preconceived design scheme. Removing the obvious meant removing all suggestions of its being an advertisement: words, numbers, images of consumer goods, faces of famous people, etcetera. What I anticipated from this distillation process was the visual
vitality of the poster remaining intact while the installation would become a statement onto itself, with no clear reference to the commercial world or to that which is familiar to us all.

The design scheme would be based on techniques not often used in photography until recently. This is the step-and-repeat process, ordinarily found in ceramic tiles (Illustration 9), woven rugs and other fabrics, and in architectural ornamentation. The process simply uses a modular unit that is repeated to form a pattern. But the dynamic possibilities of this technique were most inspiring. Patterns could be formed within patterns, a vast and ever-changing mosaic of motifs was possible, and this, only the beginning.

With the discovery of the tile formula, I would soon arrive at images that had vitality, dynamism and subtle touches of my personality contained within them. Though my first attempts were weak and mimicked tiles directly, my later images would be almost entirely photographic and would try to bewilder the viewer into how it was produced, for reality as first seen through the viewfinder would be projected into a new frame of reference throughout each step in the process. The unit is designed as a module, would be reproduced in large number, installed in an urban location as if they were posters, and, ultimately, might be seen through a viewfinder again, this time by a passerby wishing to record the scene for their own enjoyment.
CHAPTER I

THE MODULAR PHOTOGRAPH

When one observes something through the viewfinder in a camera and elects to release the shutter, they have arrived at a conscious decision to isolate a single area of interest from the surrounding space. With this in mind, it is unbelievable that two photographs by two different people could possibly be exactly the same. As I mentioned earlier, the resulting print will usually be displayed as a singular statement: This picture was taken at that place, at that time, of that person. When I sought to create modular imagery through photography, I changed my perception of the world as seen through the rectangular viewfinder. The single area of interest would no longer remain so, but would be a small portion of an infinitely larger image composed by that single area repeating itself. Therefore, I had to project my vision beyond the initial experience and regard this reality as a stepping-stone.

If one were to paint or draw a proposed modular unit, it would not be difficult to repeat this unit manually and create a pattern on the spot. The directness of these media cannot be equaled by photography, except the instant processes. Photography created a challenge for me: First, I would be observing real objects without a means to abstract them and make it easier to compose; second, I would not truly be able to determine the success or failure of a composition until I was well into the printing stage, long after the picture was taken.

I discovered after my shooting commenced, that the pictorial elements of
shape, texture and dimension were to play an important role in my final composition. But what would prove inconsequential to this product was probably the most significant characteristic of traditional photography: what was represented and what it meant.

The context of a particular object or scene will be altered when converted into a repeatable modular unit: singularity replaced by plurality. But when an image was multiplied in the manner I proposed, that doesn't mean that the meaning behind the original would be magnified or clarified also. In fact, the original interpretation will have been lost amidst the regimentation of clones all saying the same thing, and a new would arise not having any relation to that of its components. So I had to observe and record something not for what it was, but for what it would become. In this aspect, I may have been using a mental set found in abstract painting and in collage or photomontage.

An abstract or non-figurative painter chooses not to represent anything visually familiar to the normal realm of human experience. What many see within the response of the spectator, is an equivalent to those emotional and psychological bonds which unites the individual with things he is familiar with. It should be remembered that in photography, Alfred Stieglitz and Minor White had similar governing aesthetics. In other words, feelings of joy, sorrow, patriotism, loneliness, were generated in art of the past by depicting human forms and other recognizable motifs that people had predictable reactions towards. The abstract painter wishes to convey broader feelings simply through the use of flat areas of color, geometric shapes, splashes, drips and lines (Illustration 3). In a similar way, I was abstracting reality in my final product, observing it in almost pure formalistic terms. I had to disregard the meaning of the original unit to create a different type of viewer response to the pattern and its location.
On the other hand, an artist working in collage will often utilize images of the natural world, frequently photographic, but not in an effort to fabricate something that is familiar and predictable. This is the reason why collage and its relations were so important to the Dadaists and Surrealists working in between world wars (Illustration 6). These two groups of artists demanded people question reality, not only in art, but in the world around us. One should not blindly accept things, the way people accepted those politicians and social institutions that nearly succeeded in destroying all of Europe.

Objects and scenes reminiscent of the pre-war period were symbolically distorted and disturbing through collaging them into an image with new meaning. Artists of this period sincerely believed that art could help pave the way towards a new modern social order, which could only be realized by severing all ties with the past. The truth, as they saw it, behind the antiquated policies of yesteryear, was often found in artworks visually seeking to legitimize oppression and injustice to the ruling class. Dadaists had a "field day" with pre-modern artworks. Politics and symbolism will not dominate my work, for I am more interested in process than in meaning at this point in time. I feel, however, that my installation proposal does represent a political sentiment which will not be seen within each image, but this will be discussed later. With my modules, collage will serve a function that is purely artistic.

Another concept dealt with in the Dada/Surrealist period was that of drawing a viewer's attention and response toward the true nature of the medium and not to what it pretended to be. Painted pictures, especially those in oil produced before the age of photography, were almost always about being something: a woman's skin, a freshly peeled orange, etcetera. Oil paint had the virtue of almost perfectly mimicking an infinite number of textures. The practice of
presenting the observer with an illusion through paint dates back to Antiquity and was resurrected by Renaissance artists, who had the advantages of oil paint and the theory of perspective to further baffle and amaze the viewer with. Perspective allowed objects to be placed in a setting that has often been described as a "window onto the world". This window created an illusion that the scene was beneath the picture plane of the canvas and not simply lying on top of it. The window also meant that the craftsmanship of the image did not draw attention to itself as being a painting. Within the craft, we find the all-important use of oil glazes, giving the work a high gloss finish not unlike that of glass. The standard that served for generations, both for the artist and the patron, had its first real challenge in the mid-19th century Impressionists.

Impressionist painters in France were the first significant group of artists who collectively wanted to consider a painting in terms of what it truly was: a flat canvas and not a window. To accomplish this, they relied on quick and immediate responses to the light and color of a scene leaving the observer with an impression, not an illusion (Illustration 7). The works were often thickly laden with paint and the texture of objects represented became muted within this overall painted texture. Impressionists usually did not coat their works with varnishes or glazes. Often, the artist did not fill the entire canvas and this, along with the unconventional use of paint, led many to regard the works as "unfinished" and, therefore, not worthy of acclaim. Paint was being used to express its own character and this may have caught many by surprise.

Surrealism produced some painters who created a sense of doubt in the viewer by challenging what they think they see with what is actually there.
Impressionistic thought was about to reach its extreme. Many Surrealists chose to paint a window, but not onto anything on this world, others offered perceptual challenges. For instance, Rene Magritte painted a realist and familiar image of a pipe and then chose to title the work, "This is not a Pipe". There are no profound solutions to this apparent riddle; it is not a pipe because it is a painting (Illustration 4). Magritte was certainly dealing with many more perceptual and philosophical points than I have mentioned here, especially the relationship between words and images. All I wished to demonstrate is that by challenging the viewer, Magritte makes him aware of exactly what he is seeing.

Salvadore Dali would sometimes challenge viewers by playing games with their subconscious. In paintings such as "Apparition of a Face and a Fruit Dish on a Beach" (Illustration 5), one sees an ordinary landscape metamorphose into the apparition as suggested by the title. Empty space, shadows and loose objects often come together in a subliminal manner in Dali's work, fooling the observer into thinking something was not there when it actually was and vice versa (Illustration 10). Each example I discussed demonstrates a reaction against the traditional notion of the believability of oil painting. Magritte sought to disassociate words from their pictorial representation. Dali used the grammar of the tradition, for he used glazes and painted individual objects as would the finest 17th century Dutch still life artist, but painted worlds of the subconscious mind. In retrospect, it would be useful to describe photography in terms of these movements, for photography is often claimed to have freed the painter from the bondage of tradition.

Photography apparently allowed many mid-19th century painters the option to pursue the expressiveness of the medium for its own sake. This would have freed the artist from constraints imposed by flawlessness of oil paint's ability
to imitate different surfaces and textures, which found their roots in the Renaissance and had dominated the tastes of his age. Among the constraints dictated was that an average artist, those whom history might never recognize, must paint subjects in a realistic and detailed manner if he expects to earn a living. The average portrait painter was probably the hardest hit with the advent of photography; the great masters were established and could break the rules and norms of contemporary taste in paintings for themselves and the Avant-Garde had few patrons, although selling works was not a high priority for them. Photography achieved what the traditional Renaissance-influenced painter could only dream about; it was the perfect window onto the world. The average painted portrait could never equal the inexpensive, portable illusion of reality as found in the photographic print. Reality and detail had long been requirements for the commissioned painting. It is ironic that an entrepreneur, using a simple mechanical device for the simple task of making money, would have snatched the golden fleece from the painter's hand! But, there were painters who welcomed photography and history has shown, through movements such as Impressionism, Pointalism and Fauvism, that after the invention and widespread use of photography, most serious paintings would cease to be about things other than the paint in itself.

The reputation sought by photography, as a legitimate vehicle of artistic expression, came into full bloom during the Photo-Secessionist period between 1895 and 1915. These artists wished to counter the widespread belief of their day that photography was, at best, a mechanical craft. As a result, they utilized concepts and pictorial motifs that were identified with Impressionist painting, which, in turn, produced photographs that did not present an illusion of being in another space and time (Illustration 8). The act of obscuring this perfect window onto the world was perhaps best illustrated by the gum-bichromate
images of Edward Steichen and Robert Demachy.

The gum-bichromate emulsion was introduced to a sized paper surface with a brush, allowing the ensuing print to contain a texture and expressiveness not found in the original negative. This texture could be further exaggerated in the development stage. Within the syntax of the gum-bichromated surface, the object or scene will have lost its ability to draw attention to its own distinctive characteristics through texture. Often, the emulsion would not cover the entire sheet of paper, giving it that "unfinished" look. The Photo-Secessionists transcended the mechanical and were true to their images as being but marks on a flat piece of paper.

To recapitulate, the modular photographic unit will display characteristics found in painting and photography movements of the past and present, while not trying to imitate any one directly. The pattern design, initially composed of flip-flop images of reality, was conceived through the eyes of an abstract painter. I had to discount the representation and its meaning within the unit, for it would eventually mutate into something far different when formed into a pattern. Neither the module nor the projected was designed to foster any predictable emotional or spiritual response from the viewer. Part of this project's dynamism is based on each person being affected differently by the pattern and its proposed location.

I was drawn to the Dadaists because of their work with collage and their cynical attitude towards the reigning social order. My cynicism is directed more towards the art market than society. Politics would become the primary motivating factor behind Dada images; with me, the message would not be contained within the module or the pattern, but in the installation and radical use of the fine arts image.
Surrealism helped me determine the scope of my modules, especially with their use of subliminals and perceptual trickery. I would seek to use the vocabulary of traditional photography, meaning that reworking and collage would be minimalized as not to distract from the photographic information, but for a wholly different result. Some patterns will confuse the viewers spatial orientation to those depicted objects and scenes he is familiar with. The act of taking familiar things and forming something foreign by piecing them together is also an influence of Surrealist collage.

Impressionism and Photo-Secessionism influenced me by the way each was true to the flatness of the paper or canvas. The image was no longer beneath the picture plane in an illusionary sense, but lying right on top of it. This concept would later couple with the idea of photographs being true to their reproduction potential, to hopefully form a dynamic statement. Another Photo-Secessionist concept would arrive during my proposed reproduction process, in which the areas of distinguishing texture in the unit, whether it be found in the actual photograph or in the reworking, would be fused into the syntax of the process, the way an object in a negative would assume the textural syntax of the gum-bichromate print.

But before I dwell on the reproduction procedure of the modules, I feel it is necessary to fully describe the creation of two units in terms of the process and the reaction to them and the rest by my thesis board. To this end, I dedicate the following chapter.
CHAPTER II

THE CREATION OF THE MODULAR UNIT

When I released my shutter on that cold December afternoon, I realized I had just recorded an abstracted image of urban decay (Illustration 11). Gone were the derelicts, the gargoyle, the obvious reminders. A building, probably a roach-infested apartment, had been chosen for demolition and the only record of its existence was the rubble on the ground and its relief pattern on the adjoining structure. At the time, I was not certain whether I enjoyed more, the design or the abstracted meaning behind the scene.

By itself, the image is not very interesting. It does not exhibit the compassion of a Davidson nor the shock value of a Weegee. It speaks of injustice and disconcern, but in a distant way. But, within the design, interesting things began to happen. Without its metaphorical overtones, the image is just a wall receding into a shallow space. The lines, curves and dots do not mean anything in themselves, but are simply design motifs. Had my original intent been to mat and frame this image for presentation, my efforts would have been futile. The image is simply not strong enough to stand on its own but, again, that was not my intent.

I had to think of what role this "unit" would play in the formation of a larger image composed of repetitions of itself. It was difficult visualizing something like this with just the viewfinder up to my eye. For this reason, I mentioned earlier of being envious of those who could draw out a pattern on the spot. For this image and many others, I would have to rely on my compositional
instincts and ability to visualize a scene as being a pattern. Such a thing is challenging enough for those involved in textile surface design, but applying this to photography would be a unique experience!

During the printing stage of the negative, I had my first real learning event. My stated intention was to produce posters, so I made a few identical prints, trimmed the borders and arranged them so they butted together as if they were pasted on a wall. Nothing happened here that did not already happen in the streets. I envisaged a pattern that did not truly materialize; the question was why.

What I discovered was that the design capabilities of each image did not exert themselves if they all faced the same direction. This is why posters on the city walls form crude patterns that are, at best, happy accidents. After this, I proceeded to flip the negative over and print reverse images of the original. It is quite difficult to envisage something in reverse, but not when it comes to printing it. Upon assembling the normal with the reverse prints, I found that all the designs coordinated themselves.

It was therefore determined that my modular unit would not remain the single image recorded on film as I had planned; it would not be that simple. The necessity of incorporating reverse images into the projected pattern forced me to include them as part of a now larger unit composed of four images instead of one (Illustration 13).

By arranging two normal with two reverse prints, I was allowed to witness all the design possibilities in each combination and decide which sections would need further attention. Few combinations were successful in every direction the pattern would lead. Therefore, the weaker sections were mounted so they occupied
the center of the board; this made the job of reworking a lot easier. It also allowed for the addition of photographs and drawn material that could not have existed in the original negative. Before I elaborate further on my wall image, I wish to briefly consider the columns, which were arrived at through a slightly different process.

The columns print, unlike that of the wall, was regarded as being successful on its own; it did not need to be transformed into a pattern to justify its existence (Illustration 12). But, once I saw the swelling and diminishing of the columns when pieced together into a module, I knew something special was happening. However, the walkway formed an oval space that was flat and boring, nothing was happening in almost half the module. What I did was to cut away the walkway entirely, leaving the columns temporarily suspended in mid-air. Within this space, I was recommended adding some form to counter the strong geometry of the columns, something organic, preferably. I searched through some negatives and found a distortion image I had recorded a few months earlier. After taking that image away from its original context and placing it in the middle of the column forms, I had arrived at something I could enjoy.

In other images, I would add suitable photographs and drawings as well to the empty space, depending on my inclinations and advice from my board. Sometimes I would consider leaving the area blank, in others, I would mount additional photographs directly onto the bothersome space without cutting any away. My choice of photographs to be collaged into the unit was usually based on their design characteristics and not necessarily what they might mean. There will, of course, be exceptions to this, but my overall intent, as I stated, is not to produce easily translatable images.

When I massed a group of modules together, it was time to obtain some
critical advice from my thesis board. The units I first presented were in their "rough" state, meaning that none of my reworking or refining procedures had yet taken place. The general reaction sought to separate the geometric or architectural from the organic or natural. Those which relied heavily on geometric designs for their success were not well received, for there was nothing very photographic about them. Favorite images were those which fooled the eye by rendering the familiar, unfamiliar, most of these were of natural forms. Some images were also not as obvious with regards to the technique and this added to their strength. Many units served as cultural reminders, both past and present. My drawings have often been described in terms of being bold, pre-Columbian, American Indian, primitive, but with many modules I received the same responses. These comments gave not only my thesis work, but all my work in general, a consistent personal theme that had existed for a long time, though I was not completely aware of it. What began simply as an investigation into a process turned into an effort to produce images that were somewhat biographical and spoke about me.

There were a number of problems in keeping my modular units in a "rough" state. For one, the paper surface of the prints was not suitable for the inclusion of paint or charcoal. Plus, it remained obvious what process I had employed in the units, removing much of the mystery from them. And, last, whatever collage was utilized looked quite crude, displaying an inept craftsmanship. But my aim was to rework drawings into the collage for the purpose of adding consistency and believability to the work. These were never meant to be my finished pieces. In order to fulfill this aim, it would be necessary to rephotograph the unit so that all the visuals were on the same plane.

I photographed the units using a 4 x 5 negative, whose grain structure
was fine as not to add a syntax of its own to the ensuing print. The negative was enlarged onto 20" x 24" paper, approximately double the size of the original unit, which had a matte surface apropos for paint, charcoal and pencil.

My first task was to carefully "cover up" all the creases and stray shadows that happened to be recorded and printed (Illustration 14). By masking out the obvious, it was hoped that the process would mystify the onlooker again. The second was to crop the images so they were almost equal in size. This would allow me to interchange one poster for another when the installation finally happened. My reasoning for this will be explained in Chapter IV. The last task was simply to dress the units up a bit. These were now my "master" copies and did represent a good deal of labor. I also anticipated using them for demonstrative purposes in my thesis show, though my heart was not set on having these regarded as finished works onto themselves. In reality, it did not matter what these copies looked like, for all their information would be translated into the reproduction process and its syntax. What I really looked upon as the finished work was not the hand-crafted original but the machine-crafted reproduction.

There was strikingly little I wished to alter in my wall image, for it was one of the few that achieved success at the moment it was conceived. I gave thought to adding other photographs to it; perhaps I was intoxicated by the potential of collage, or just unsure of where to stop. Fortunately, my board members cautioned me against reworking an image excessively, that often, the sign of sophistication lies in a picture's simplicity. So my additions to the wall became careful and subtle. A motif had presented itself and I chose to exaggerate it ever so slightly. This being, when the relief design of the stairwell combined with its reverse, it formed what appeared to be two arms touching each other. The associations drawn between it and some kind of pagan
ritual image were now substantiated. As I suggested earlier, this interpretation is a far cry from one's response to the single picture of the wall. I concluded the reworking stage by drawing in the fingers on the hand shape and darkening in some areas and highlighting others, to give a greater sense of volume, as well as allowing this alternation of tones to eventually form a pattern of its own in the final product.

With the columns, I accomplished introducing an organic shape into a geometric space, my next step was to blend the two together rationally. As I progressed, with my paints and drawing, I discovered an interesting but somewhat menacing image taking shape. The bottom portion of the figure kept the organic feeling alive by "melting" into the columns, which were not truly themselves anymore, rather were strange elongations of this poor fellow. The shading at the top of the man served to curiously flatten that shape and the surrounding columns as well. They appear to be flat objects casting their shadows onto a shallow space beneath them. So what we have is a contradiction between the voluminous, spatial dynamism on one side and the flattening of these forces out on the other. I feel this adds to the character and strength of the piece.

The wall also altered its spatial orientation to the viewer, for it had ceased to present a receding space when placed in the company of its opposite. We are left with a space that is actually quite flat. Needless to say, this is not all a window onto the world. The image gives no impression of being beneath the picture place, it looks like it is flat on the paper surface; this was a real eye-opener for me. I also changed its natural orientation axis, meaning that I turned a normal horizontal image of a wall into a vertical modular unit. The same was true of the columns and many other units. It was interesting to see how a response changed by simply shifting this axis.
By the end of July 1982, I had completed twenty master units, all which contained varying degrees of reworking and abstraction. All were theoretically ready for the reproduction process. Each of the twenty had its own identify, but all were bound together by the manner in which they were conceived and executed. When I brought the group before my board, many questions and criticisms were directed towards this unusual "hodge-podge" of images. I understood their point, for one traditionally views a body of work in the hope of discovering a consistency from image to image. They expected such a thing and I did not provide it. But it remained my belief that both the process and the installation would serve as unifying factors in the thesis, that it did not really matter to me if my master units had a visual continuity between them. It had been (understandably) suggested that any photograph could undergo my modulation process and transformed into a pattern, so what was special about the ones I chose to show them? Well, it was difficult, if not embarrassing to be coerced into explaining my life's story, as represented by these modules. Perhaps Patty expressed it best when she remarked that these many themes contained the most accurate reflection of my life as anything I produced. Rather than admitting to being in a state of confusion, I prefer to say that a great many things interest and touch me deeply and I have yet to reduce these things down to a few, as many do, with the coming years. Though some contradict each other, I feel my "eclecticism" has been accurately portrayed in these images.

A great deal of Patty's comments also focused on the difference between what is forced and what comes naturally. She felt that my wall unit among others, was the result of a natural process beginning with the original negative. In fact, the single image is usually best left to its own devices. I was not seeking to establish modularity as the "end of the rainbow" for photography. But some pictures naturally lent themselves to pattern making and those I should endeavor
to find. Addly enough, the early paintings of Picasso served as a guiding factor in the creation and editing of the units. He had mastered the ability to sketch forms in a very convincing manner, using just simple lines and shading. Nothing seemed forced; if it were to happen, it would happen right away.

My board members touched on the rigidity that might occur when the full pattern was realized. This proved very helpful in establishing a technique to install the posters by, for it would be necessary to break up the mechanistic structure. I think we all agreed that a thesis simply bent on creating photographic patterns would not be taking fullest advantage of my abilities. So I would not only propose making patterned images, but creating installation patterning with them as well. This whole issue will be dealt with in depth in Chapter IV.

Patty brought up one last point which I found thought-provoking. She believed that I should stick to exploring and refining these modules as artworks onto themselves. Some had the makings of handsome pieces, even though their intended function had yet to be fulfilled. I was possibly being risky in spreading myself thin with the rest of the project. Again, I was faced with when to leave well-Enough alone. But her comments got me thinking about each step in the process: the single original, the master copy, the pattern reproductions, the installation and the photograph documenting the site, and how each might be crafted as artworks themselves. It sounded promising, but sounded almost as if it were a cheap way to milk the most out of your artistic efforts! I remained determined to see my project to its conclusion. I had worked until this point in hand-crafting modular units; the task was now to find a method to cheaply reproduce them in large numbers so the pattern and its dimension could finally be seen.
CHAPTER III

REPRODUCING THE MODULAR UNITS

The reproduction stage presented me with the greatest crisis of my thesis for the possibilities were exciting, but subject to forces I could not control. When the thesis was proposed, I weighed the advantages of both creating reproductions by hand or enlisting a mechanical device to complete the work. By hand, the prints might not be uniform but they would each have its own character; the process would be very time consuming and their final size might be reduced, conforming to the printing facilities available to me. However, my machine, the prints would all be exact, the process quick and efficient, and I could print hundreds more than possible by hand. There was a problem though, affording it. So, in addition to creating the modules and researching reproduction processes, I also had to search for funding for the project, as I certainly had not the money to accommodate it myself.

My first logical choice was Rochester itself, as served through its Office for Recreation and Community Services in City Hall. The proposal I had established was to construct an urban arts project utilizing my modular poster patterns. The project would especially involve delapidated areas, places that public arts often neglect. It was hoped that when my images were posted to the walls and abandoned buildings, perhaps some life, as symbolized by art, could brighten up an otherwise dreary setting. The proposal was received well by a number of bureaucrats, who saw the idea as appropriate, feasible and affordable. My choice, at this time, was the economical offset printing process. But nothing was ever finalized, despite all my calls, visits and messages. This
was the first episode in the frustrations of trying to acquire public funds for a public art project as I had proposed.

I did not lose sight of my urban installation goal, so my next step was to approach the bureaucrats of R.I.T. and the Printing School, hoping that my posters could be manufactured using their equipment. I proposed that my image(s) be used by the printing classes studying the various photomechanical techniques. In such a way, the students would gain some practical experience in copying artworks and I would have my posters, with no real cost to anyone. The school had amazing facilities devoted to all phases of lithography and screen-printing and much of its materials were donated, so my request seemed rational. But again, I was presented with a "merry-go-round".

It was explained to me that all the printing occurring within the school was for demonstrative purposes only. The student was taught how the machine worked and that was all; he did not learn how to create art with it. Also, the school adhered to an "honor code" with local printing companies. This meant that a business loaned its equipment to R.I.T. for use in its classes, not to steal business away from them. This was understandable, but it still confused me that R.I.T., with among the most extensive printing facilities in the region, still had most of its work contracted by outside companies. If carried out by R.I.T., my project might have been viewed as a conflict of interest, even though my aims were "philanthropic", meaning I stood to gain nothing monetary from this public-oriented project, in addition to the fact that among my proposed installation sites was the R.I.T. campus itself, to be discussed later.

Industry has made Rochester a hub for photo-copying facilities. I was led in this direction in March, 1982, after hearing of the Xerox 2800 copies that could enlarge originals up to 24 x 36" on a single sheet of paper. The possi-
bilities of photo-copying had always been known to me, but I saw myself having to piece together the normal sized copies (\(8\frac{1}{2}" \times 14"\)) to form the pattern and that prospect was not enjoyable. The process would be time-consuming and the product would be far from ideal. But even with this advanced copies, I was cautioned of flaws, for it was not calibrated to reproduce continuous tone images. I decided to try anyway, for even if moderately successful, it might prove the answer to my quest: no inks, no screens and especially no bureaucracy.

I chose my earliest unit to try out the copier with. It was among those images imitating tiles too directly and would ultimately be abandoned from the thesis. My original was 13" square, which was enlarged to 18" square. As the machine proceeded with its work, I discovered those who sounded the warning signals proved to be correct. The resulting copy was very low in contract, had lines and uneven tonalities and did not adequately reproduce fine detailings. To my thesis, it was another unfortunate dead end, for there was little one could change to drastically improve the quality of the copies. Besides, my use of the machine had been without charge, thanks to the graciousness of Xerox, who viewed such projects as an informational learning experience for both parties. As fate would have it, by July they had discontinued the practice, in a budget trimming measure. The tile copies might not have been completely successful, but they were usable and wound up in my video piece, "Gift-wrapping America", which was produced for the optical laser-disc portfolio our M.F.A. class participated in.

By late April, after experiencing my tribulations with bureaucracy, I first tried my hand at manually producing images using the screen-printing method. This process was recommended over the more technically complicated photolithography and supposedly just as efficient. My goal for this experient lay within the course "Surface Design" in the textiles department. The idea was to
repeatedly screen-print a unit onto a single large sheet of fabric so each was coordinated forming a pattern. There is no easy way to accurately reproduce a continuous tone with normal screen-printing, even though the methodology is fairly simple. I shall first describe the abbreviated technique I followed, then the process that should have been used.

For myself, the importance of the half-tone lay in its ability to accurately interpret my photographic masters into a printable language. With regards to the rest of history, I will now relate a passage on the half-tone by William Ivins, Jr.:

The great importance of the half-tone lay in its syntactical difference from the older hand made processes of printing pictures in printer's ink. In the old processes, the report started by a syntactical analysis of the thing seen, which was followed by its symbolic statement in the language of drawn lines. This translation was then translated into the very different analysis and syntax of the process. The lines and dots in the old reports were not only insistent in claiming visual attention, but they, in their character, and their symbolism of statement, had been determined more by the two superimposed analyses and syntaxes than by the particularities of the thing seen. In the improved half-tone process there was no preliminary syntactical analysis of the thing seen into lines and dots, and the ruled lines and dots of the process had fallen below the threshold of normal vision. Such lines and dots as were to be seen in the report had been provided by the thing seen and were not those of any syntactical analysis...At last men had discovered a way to make visual reports in printer's ink without syntax, and without distorting the analyses of form that syntax necessitated. Today we are so accustomed to this that we think little of it, but it represents one of the most amazing discoveries that man has ever made—a cheap and easy means of symbolic communication without syntax.5

Finding a half-tone screen large enough to cover my proposed poster size proved to be an unexpected drawback to this newly found ideal. The cost of a new screen in the 20" x 24" format would have been expensive, almost as much as having a commercial printer manufacture hundreds of them. Screen-printing offers a wealth of potential to future projects in murals and installations, especially with incorporating textiles along with the flat poster reproductions. But without

5 William Ivins, Jr., *Prints and Visual Communication*, p. 128.
the necessary materials to pursue the subject, it was best left for another occasion. My own experiment yielded an interesting product, but the visual information was contrasty to the point where it no longer spoke of originating from a photographic source. Without the half-tone process, I was condemned to these contrasty images. Though I was somewhat aware of what was in store, I decided to research lithography further, for it was a process I indeed had experience in.

Lithography by hand is a process more difficult in terms of achieving a large uniform edition, than its mechanical counterpart. After a while, meaning a few hundred prints, the lines tend to fill in and tonalities, even with half-tone, retreat towards blackness. I was determined to find uniformity at the time and almost regret I did. Since then, I have thought of ways to play into the apparent shortcomings of hand lithography and am most excited by the possibilities of purposefully altering the technique, so that the image remains constant, but the printing factors fluctuate. I had not engaged in actual thesis work with the screen-print or lithographic process, for by hand I was not physically capable of producing the quality and quantity of posters I was counting on. The cost of such a venture was also weighing heavy on my mind.

It was now July and my master copies had yet to be reproduced. My exhibition was only two months distant and envisaged posters were to be its foundation, not to mention the urban installation. For the sake of the exhibition, I decided to rephotograph selected masters using a 4 x 5 camera. The negative was then printed onto ordinary photographic paper 11" x 14" in size. Some prints were sepia toned in an effort to create a pattern within a pattern between the brown and black prints. I really enjoyed this interplay for the entire image suddenly ceased being a pure photograph in a pure visual sense. Once trimmed, the prints
were arranged and mounted onto a foam core board. When complete, I saw for the first time exactly how my pattern looked when reproduced. These boards, which measured up to 40" x 48", contained between 12 and 16 images each and were mounted using a diluted solution of rubber cement (Illustration 15). Such a process is surely not archivally conceived, but these works were not intended to function as finished pieces anyway. For one, only a pattern was created through this process, not a dialogue between the pattern and the environment. These boards would be presented simply as an illustration of the pattern product. I may have been obstinate in this procedure, for I did produce a few that were handsome enough for display apart from my original intent. The best of these was the Indian pattern, which was sepia-toned and hand-colored in oil. This extension of the basic pattern displayed a fine craftsmanship and opened up an entirely new arena for me, coloring my reproductions afterwards and the actual patterning effect of color.

When researching printing possibilities, I had color in the back of my mind but was rightfully scared of its implicit cost. With each additional color, printing costs rise a corresponding 50% or more, in a commercial studio. After completing and enjoying the Indian pattern, I realized the same could be done with posters, saving quite a lot. I also saw that the potential of each poster expressing an individuality through color existed. Color made the Indians come alive and added further to its meaning. But the dynamic possibilities of creating color patterns within the basic black and white pattern remains among the most important discoveries in the thesis. In such a way, this type of exploration can be found in the work of Andy Warhol and Richard Anuszkiewicz (Illustration 16).

By printing up reductions of my unit and mounting them all together, I was
allowed to witness firsthand my envisaged pattern, but not in its foreseen scale. Therefore, I set out to produce full scale photographs of selected master units. Because of the high cost of large photographic paper, I could not afford to place the resulting images into the "hostile" environment of the city. At least to me, they were precious and would be displayed for demonstrative purposes and little more. I purchased a contact printing paper early into the summer and had yet an occasion to use it. I knew by contact printing my master I would end up with a negative image. Therefore, for the sake of adventurism, I chose masters which had been crafted from negative images in the first place, expecting to yield a strange hybrid of the original viewfinder scene.

During the reworking stage, I enlisted the help of many different supplies toward my goal: inks, charcoal, paint, etc. What I discovered was that each had a different opacity when held up to a light even though they all appeared black on the surface. The papers were contact printed and developed normally in Dektol. The intense light from the arc lamp penetrated the less opaque areas and recorded itself onto the print as textural marks. This served to ultimately break up the rigidity of the pattern once more and created an image rich in diversity. It might also confuse the issue still further as to how the picture was made. To its possible disadvantage though, was the image's appearance of being more a drawn lithograph than a product of the photographic process. This was of no bother to me, for in the evolution of this thesis, I was discovering a multitude of alternate photographic techniques and this I was happy about, despite the fact that many might not look like photographs at all.

In both the small reproductions and the contact-printed reproductions, the end result were images that had a rarity associated with them, due to my
inability to manufacture more. The paper was expensive and much of the craftsmanship was fine and this prevented me from installing them in the outdoors. This was all in contradiction to my intended goals, so I chose to reproduce my units in the only manner left to me.

As I mentioned before, Xerox discontinued free use of its copying machines over the summer. I fortunately had success in August with another copier giant in town, Kodak. Through the efforts of Charlie and the graciousness of Bonnie Taylor, I was able to use the Ektaprint 150 copies at no charge. The machine produced fair to good copies onto 8½" x 14" paper, so obviously I would have to piece an image together. I dreaded such a thought a few months earlier, but chose this time to make the best of the situation. Without overstaying my welcome, I managed to copy over 1000 images, which translated into 250 posters.

The Ektaprinted copies that were pieced and glued together would finally be those which would find their way into the environment. One can imagine the excitement I felt when faced with this realization. The next chapter will deal with the process of installation and my feelings towards art in architecture and public art.
CHAPTER IV

THE INSTALLATION OF THE PATTERN REPRODUCTIONS

The photocopied reproductions of my master copies were the point of departure for the remainder of my thesis. As described previously, the printed photographs on boards would remain in the gallery and would be for illustrative purposes, though some might be regarded as artworks onto themselves. These photo-patterns presented me with the design scheme I envisaged, but only the photocopies would display the scale I chose to concern myself with. Before I dwell on the installation procedure, it would be useful to examine the phenomenon of the pattern and its unheralded use in art and architecture.

What many have forgotten is the fact that patterns, created by painters and widely accepted as "fine arts" date back to Antiquity. With regards to my thesis, the most important of these classic examples occurred during the period of 100-20 B.C. within the Second, or Architectural Style of Roman painting. This style is broken up usually into two distinct sections which seemingly contradict each other. The earlier section is actually an adaptation of the First Style (there are four altogether) which recognized and paid homage to the painting surface as being a solid, flat surface (with few exceptions, all non-portrait Roman paintings were designed to embellish the interior of a patron's home and were painted on walls). The artist accomplished this through the repeated use of geometric motifs which coordinated themselves into a pattern. Most of these first "pattern paintings" resemble American quilt designs and certain Vasarley paintings of the 1960's. The latter section of the Second Style directly opposed
flatness and patterns and instead, opened the wall to give an illusion of the outside world. Through history's first use of architectural perspective and the painting of natural, often mythological scenes, the wall, previously having been accepted as a flat surface, was not a "window onto the world". As we have seen, these two adversaries will battle each other all throughout history, changing their names, but not their ideals (early Second vs. late Second, Academic vs. Impressionists, Pictorialists vs. Purists, etc.). But in terms of my work, it was most helpful to learn of the early Second Style, perhaps history's first example of a painted pattern embellishing an architectural setting.

Paintings which dealt with pattern as its sole concern surfaced in the late 1960's and spawned a loose collective of artists (mostly women) known as "Pattern Painters". Historians often speculate that this movement was an emotional outburst against the intellectual severity that characterized Minimalism and other late Abstract Expressionist styles, though most patternist's work remained within the gridwork sphere created by Ad Beinhardt and Frank Stella. Others saw the pattern in terms of a general social trend toward that which was folksy, crafty, primitive and naive. And what might better reflect the turmoil of the 60's and the young rejecting the Establishment (Academic?) than a return to the basics? Still more thought of this movement in purely Surrealistic terms. Forty years earlier, Paul Klee and Joan Miro looked toward children's artworks as among the highest forms of artistic expression for it was pure, untarnished by the Academics, the Avant-Garde or by the war-torn world adults had created. Pattern, for artists working in war-torn America, perhaps meant a return to the playful, the impulsive, to a world now only visible in history books. To further confront the issue of pattern, I wish to quote a portion of an essay by Amy Goldin:
Pattern, for Americans, has never been an esthetic issue. Our artistic self-consciousness developed out of painting and, perhaps architecture. Associated with decoration and the machine, pattern was always outside the area of legitimate artistic concern. The stylistic revisions of the last decade or so—remember the defense of boredom?—might have been expected to alter that situation...Pattern carries the aura of craft and contrivance, although many individual aspects of pattern—its affinities with number, rationality, mechanical production and depersonalized imagery—have been reclaimed for art...Our esthetic vocabulary was built for unique forms and closed aggregates, and in pattern nothing is unique or closed. Orchestration is all. Pattern can be so enthralling that the convert, disengaged from the usual pleasures of painting, begins to feel that only the most outrageous prejudice keeps pattern from receiving the artistic enthusiasm it deserves. Pattern is basically antithetical to the iconic image, for the nature of pattern implicitly denies the importance of singularity, purity and absolute precision.

When the original modular unit was created, I saw that a lot of visual information was contained within a relatively small space. But if seen against a neutral backdrop, this 15" x 23" image presented no cause for alarm. The photographic prints of the unit were the first to be formed into a pattern. When mounted onto a single board, the active shapes, lines and tonalities all interacting with each other created an image that was both enjoyable and disturbing. What disturbed me was that the pattern image seemed to directly challenge a rule fundamental to my art education (Thou salt not create busy pictures!) for my images were busy, real busy. My experience with educators, especially in photography, has shown teaching styles emphasizing the rational (techtonic) over the chaotic (busy), which is perfectly rational. The degree of "busyness" in a work always helped in determining its success or failure with teachers and students alike. I wished to inquire as to the true nature of this situation and found an article by Jeff Perrone. He explains:

More than just a prejudice against the decorative, the criticism I cite reveals an assumption of a certain set of minimal reductive norms for art that stress calm rather than busyness, holistic rather than fragmented images. These are inherited prejudices, not inherent biases.

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7 Jeff Perrone, "Approaching the Decorative", p. 28.
Who was this prejudice inherited from? Probably and most recently from the age of the Renaissance, which embodied all the rationality the Western world could offer during that period in history. The Eastern lands of Arabia and Persia on the other hand, were not exposed to those (Classical) elements which played such an important role in European thought and the "rebirth". Artists there continued producing artifacts such as tiles, carpets and architectural ornaments as they had for centuries, in a traditional busy manner. Thus, the arrival of Oriental carpets and other motifs into Renaissance paintings might not only represent a distant fascination with the exotic East, but might also embody the bigotry and chauvenism held by the (Christian) Europeans over the (Pagan) Arabs and Persians. In paintings, the busy carpet conforms to the rational composition.

Arab tiles and Persian carpets have long earned my admiration, yet my thesis work was not consciously geared towards mirroring their rich, busy, design scheme in particular. My imagery was also not a direct reaction against my past teachers, though I did wish to challenge whether busyness was a legitimate ground for determining success (pastoral) or failure (busy). Admittedly, when I first pieced together the small pattern photographs, they were busy to the point of being hard to look at for long. It was then that I drew upon the lessons learned from my inquiries into Roman painting and Arab architectural ornamentation. Much of their success was based on creating a visual harmony between the busy and the pastoral. In their work, sometimes the busy areas acted as a framing element, other times it would be framed by calm areas or empty space. As long as some kind of balance is maintained, the busy areas will not overwhelm the onlooker. Thus, I would create an installation which accounted for the negative space; the entire structure would be conceived of in terms of a single, large composition.
Artworks conceived for and installed onto buildings are usually regarded as ornaments or decorations. Sometimes these decorations function in a purely formalistic sense, emanating from the design aesthetics of the architect. But more often decoration, or the lack of, serve to visually embody the aesthetics and ideology of the building's owner: they become a symbol. On occasion, the owner will commission an outside artist of notable reputation to create works of art for the structure. On the surface, these works might represent an individual's personal statement, but, in fact, they, from the manner in which they are displayed, again become symbols and these symbols form statements more about the patron than the artist: they become decorations. Now artists usually do not like their works referred to as such, for decoration (generally) implies form without content, and true art has to be about something! But the nature of the average corporate environment is not geared toward people proclaiming things about themselves, whether they be employees or commissioned artists. And, though an artist's work is supposed to be about something (theoretically), the nature of the patron and the manner in which he chooses to exhibit the work usually does not allow for the artist's statement to declare itself. It has become "something to put on the wall", it is a decoration. Now I do not really hold anything against this way of thinking, after all, it is perfectly rational and besides, I was trying to obtain corporate (bureaucratic) funds for my project anyway. But I did not (until 11/82, see Chapter VI) and this would greatly affect my attitude toward the photocopy installations. A great many questions bounced around in my head concerning what the posters would truly be about and the answer lay in the nature of the poster itself.

Poster advertisements are installed onto buildings but are never really thought of as ornaments or decorations. As I stated earlier, poster installa-
can have artistic characteristics, but their major purpose is simply to advertise.
A poster declares its own message and not necessarily that of the building's owner. Though advertising posters are usually the product of a corporate structure, through their installation they would seem to represent individuality and freedom as opposed to conformity and rationality (decorations). The building is just an arena for the poster's message, it is a convenience - posters can almost be thought of as graffiti. If I wanted to make a personal statement and not simply decorate a building, then it would make sense not only to utilize posters (which I had made anyway), but to install them as if they were advertisements for some rock concert or political figure.

With regards to my proposed installation sites in Rochester, I had to consider procedural difficulties in posterizing someone's building without getting arrested for "defacing" it. Would it make sense to ask the owners for permission to add artworks to his structure? Yes and No. It would be courteous to the owner and might save me from trouble, but this would not keep to the true nature of the poster, which does not ask to be seen. Being caught between both camps, it was decided that I would poster up buildings which did not appear to have an owner, those which were abandoned, damaged or neglected. I still might get arrested for tampering with them (after all, they were not mine!) but wondered who would raise such a fuss. When considering these types of buildings and the neighborhoods they were situated in, a curious parallel was formed between my thesis work and projects I was involved with as an undergraduate.

During those years I lived in a town of faded glory called Saratoga Springs, N. Y. Within the setting of aged Victorian estates, I first became aware of and concerned about the rapid destruction, through neglect and ignorance, of some of the town's most beautiful ties to the past. These ties were best seen in Saratoga's architecture. I speculated that most citizens were not
aware of the historical significance these weather-beated carcasses of homes had. I chose to involve myself in the preservation of Saratoga's heritage through research. Much of the results that I, and many others, obtained were publicized and received well by the public. Since then, legislators and businessmen alike, seeing that it was truly in their best interest, enlisted a massive restoration boom and thus, have saved Saratoga from obscurity.

With this as a background, I approached the neglected areas of Rochester (known to be rich in abandoned, damaged buildings) with the idea that art could somehow be used in an effort to spark rejuvenation. My sites were chosen by considering how art, any work I produced within the pattern mural context, might serve to liven up an otherwise dreary setting. They were not chosen necessarily by how a pattern might integrate itself within a particular space. It was thought that if these two variables became dependent on one another, they would fast approach that of being mere decorations. The posters declare that as artworks, they belong in this neighborhood and with these people. These works reject the conception that artists tend to limit their audience to only those able to afford their work. They seek to strike a chord of change, that the neglected areas of Rochester are worth caring about. Their existence is a declaration in itself, the installations embracing the hope for equal rights and justice.

When photocopies became the only reproduction process available to me, it was decided that my installations would only be temporary. My reasoning was based on the lack of durability in the copies - the paper was thin, unprotected or reinforced and was printed using a water-soluble toner (to an extent the image is permanent but the copier technology was not based on having the prints endure weather conditions). My aim was to produce an artistic statement, not an
eyesore. Within a week, of wind and rain, my installation would be nothing but rubbish. It is true that even lithographic reproductions on fine, durable paper in time would weaken and finally disintegrate, but the difference is how long it would take to get to that state. During the course of my research, I was introduced to the work of Wes Disney and his immense mural constructed of photocopies, located in Burlington, Vermont (Illustration 19). The artist performed extensive research into glues, plastic coatings and other materials that ensured his 143 x 40 foot mural would survive the elements. I performed much of the same research, but did not have $40,000 worth of donations to work with. The Burlington mural remains one of those projects that my post-thesis work will aspire towards.

The sites I ended up choosing to poster up were characterized by their industrial or commercial past, machine shop, hotels, service stations, boutiques, all now in disarray. I gravitated towards these in particular because of their architectural design and how I envisaged my posters could fit themselves in. A few contained aged posters of their own giving me a situation to play with. I looked upon the building facade not unlike that of a carpet designer studying a blueprint for a proposed piece. And like those busy areas in a carpet or tile design, my posters would end up "framing" something interesting on the facade, or would be "framed" itself by the existing wood and stucco. But in my installation, the busy posters would not conform to any rational composition; I was purposefully not allowing myself the time to perform that. Sometimes the posters would run into each other, creating patterns within patterns, this explains why they all were printed the same size. The dynamism of such a project is almost limitless.

There was relatively little planning going into my installation procedure.
I had photographed the sites months before and basically determined what might go where when I finally got the posters. It might have been better to plan each site specifically, some might contend. And sometimes I think I should have done absolutely no research into anything. After all, would a poster advertiser spend time and money to make sure his posters looked nice in their setting? The installations were a little of both.

The posters were adhered to a building using a clear tape and sometimes staples. Most often I postered over wood or metal areas, rarely over brick or cinder block, which the tape adhered poorly to. Why tape? Because my installations were very temporary. In fact, I usually constructed and dismantled a site within two hours. And with all the wind blowing around, it is amazing some of them lasted that long. The same posters were formed into different murals at different sites. Most contained two or more images which both played off of each other and the surrounding environment.

Some might understandably argue (see Chapter V) that a two hour installation is of no use to anyone. Yes, I was using a public space and yet, only a few passers-by would actually see this "work of art" before I took it down. But on the other hand, the space could be considered private as well. What I mean is this: When Time Inc. decided to put a large, blue steel sculpture in front of their office building, I'm sure they did not ask New Yorkers whether they wanted it there or not. They were placing their artwork onto their property. And yet, its a public property in that a great many people have to walk past this thing every day. It's a dilemma which deserves great consideration, but I think its wrong to assume that if an artwork is in a public space, then its a Public Arts project. Remember, every individual has their own idea as to what Public Art should look like. One person, or even a small group, cannot create a work
of art that deals with and represents all these individuals. Many city councils, the boys that provide the bucks, play the game safe by commissioning a work by a famous artist under the guise of Public Art. Thus, the city can boast of its accomplishments (We've got a Calder! We've got an Oldenburg!) while neglecting the whole premise of what Public Art is supposed to be about. It is most interesting to sometimes gauge the response of "the Public" when they are confronted with an arts project they do not like and a price tag they cannot believe some bureaucrat accepted (as was the case in Hartford, Connecticut and the Carl Andre sculpture the city paid $150,000 for). Is this what Public Art is all about? Of course not. The installations I constructed were based on expressing myself in a public space, a space that would be no worse for the wear after my intrusion. They were a proposal for a project a city or corporation could be involved in if they wished. I could not finance this by myself, for mine is a public art on a great scale, it is larger than life.

During the course of my installation, quite a few people could confront me with questions and opinions. Most were ignorant of intellectual art issues, which made their comments all the more believable. The naive were faced with the naive (patterns). The consensus appeared that people were downright pleased to see anyone (especially a white college boy) interested in bringing art to their (predominantly black) community. Many thought I was sprucing up the building in anticipation of my purchase of it. Perhaps I would bring in new business and the need for a few idle workers. I replied "no" to these assumptions, but suggested that if I wrapped the building up like a gift, maybe someone else would. People seemed not very bothered by the abstract nature of the patterns. Many needed to know what the image was of, others just did not care. Someone always had a story to tell about the site, who lived there, what they manufactured, tales about the good ol' days. I got a feeling that these folks really cared
about the place, though they had not the money to transform it into something they could love. Many drew distinctions between mine and urban arts they are used to seeing. To them, it seems that all murals are the same - the post-psychedelic collage of faces and figures all screaming out, the need for civil rights, black heroes, the dangers of drugs, etc. But all, including those not really enjoying the actual posters, were disappointed to learn that my installation would be only temporary. I was saddened by this response, for even if these people did not like the art, they still liked the idea that it was there.

My last act, before dismantling the site, was to photograph it - a documentation of my effort (Illustration 20). After the building returned to normal, it intrigued me to think that the photograph would be the only evidence that such an event occurred. I could not help but think of all those art pieces lost during World War II which live on only through photographic reproductions. The document, along with the image of the site before my installation, would demonstrate a "before and after" for my exhibit. The document would also serve as a model for future projects, possibly involving public funds, in which the installation would be permanent. But in a different light, these photographs could be thought of as "the primary agents of (my) work, rather than secondary or reproductive" (Illustration 18). Such is the case with performance video. If these photographs of the now defunct installations were to be viewed as artworks onto themselves, then the cycle beginning with the very first viewfinder scene, which, in turn, was manipulated, reproduced and installed, would be complete with the viewfinder scene and subsequent photographing of the installation site. In the past, Edward Steichen achieved similar goals by photographing Rodin's "Balzak" bronze sculpture and later creating a series of multi-color gum

8 Douglas Davis, "The Size of Non-Size", p. 47.
prints. Both are easily seen as legitimate artworks. More recently, Eikoh Hosoe completed a beautiful black and white series based on the undulating ceiling of an Antonio Gaudi building.
CHAPTER V

THE THESIS EXHIBITION AND SHARING

From the beginning, the true intent of my photographic reproductions was to exhibit them away from a traditional gallery setting, hence the installations. I had not foreseen, however, the great difficulty and frustration associated with making these installations permanent. The only proof that I engaged in this process, the goal of my work, were the documentation photographs. I had always thought of the gallery space (which M.F.A.'ers were required to use) as being entirely demonstrative. Meaning that one could venture into Rochester, observe the installations, then return to the gallery to learn how it was done. But without the installations, the gallery had quickly turned into the only outlet available. Throughout the summer of 1982, my thesis board provided me with advice on how to deal with the gallery space. Most of their suggestions coincided with my own, though it was expected that actual urban pieces would be completed as well.

But because my project was never fully realized (i.e., permanent installation - see Chapter VI and Chronology), I thought it best to remain with the idea of a demonstrative exhibition which would provide a groundwork, a proposal if you wish, of a project that could happen, but to this date, had not. The viewer would, therefore, have to envisage my proposal in their own minds. Thus, my show was of a highly conceptual nature, in which the ideas may have been more developed (perhaps even more important) than the actual work. This was a bit discomforting, for I tend to look negatively at "Conceptual Art" and all the theories, intellec-
tualizing and "blah-blah" often associated with it. But mine became a conceptual show out of sheer necessity. I was sincere in the hope that someday I could complete what I had proposed.

There remains a tradition in the arts of project proposals that reached far beyond the capability of one man to complete. The Colossus of Rhodes in ancient Greece was a great idea, but would have required most of the world's bronze to manufacture. In the 1780-1810 period in France, the idea of "fantastic" architecture may have been born in the designs for massive, elaborate buildings celebrating the new Republic, buildings which really, could never have been built. Similarly, the Italian Futurist movement in the early Twentieth Century spawned a group of serious, committed architects, none of whom ever completed a Futurist building. Tom Wolfe, in his book, From Bauhaus to Our House, describes a situation where architects have received awards for drawings and not finished structures. All of the above share one thing in common: the project was larger than life and yet it was still taken seriously. Perhaps art in a conceptual sense, is as old as artworks you can physically touch. With this in mind, I decided to play into the conceptual nature of the show and modified its title for the benefit of the spectator. "Gift-wrapping America" was added to "Projected Reality" in an effort to coerce the viewer into projecting the information I provided into a larger than life dimension.

On September 19, 1982, I began arranging my exhibit in the Photo Gallery. I was to share the space with Ismail Bin Abdullah and his thesis exhibition "Rasa - A Sense of Meditation". My aim was an almost narrative one, in that I planned to lead the observer from each step in the process to the next. It would begin

9 Tom Wolfe, From Bauhaus to Our House, p. 117.
with the first viewfinder scenes and end with the documentation photographs. But the nature of the space was not entirely conciliatory, so the narration juggled itself up.

Upon entering the gallery, a visitor would first be greeted by Indians photographic pattern and the introductory statements. The story would then unfold in reverse, with the documents situated on the gallery partition directly adjacent to the Indians. The before (8" x 10") and after (11" x 14") images numbered ten and were placed on top of each other. "Gift-wrapping America" referred to these images, "Projected Reality" would refer to the remainder of the exhibit dedicated to the modular units and their manufacture. I chose to display four 8" x 10" images of the original viewfinder scene with no manipulation or change in the orientation axis. Next to these were the same four images converted into "rough state" modular units. This clearly showed the flip-flopping of the print, the portions I wished to discard and those I wished manipulate through collage. On the next wall continued the exhibit with the same four units turned into "Master copies". By now, whatever shifting in the orientation axis had occurred. Next to the masters began ten photographic pattern "samples" which continued along the following three wall spaces. On the last wall were posted the full-scale contact prints and by this point, the exhibit was complete.

On September 21, Charlie and Gunther visited the gallery for the first time and were not entirely pleased with what they saw. The following day we all had a meeting to discuss what could be done to make the space more interesting. It was their opinion that it was too sterile, scientific and lit poorly (i.e., too many lights). The show did not contain any of the playfulness found in my installations, in fact, there were no posters in the gallery at all! Their comments, interpreted as a demand for change, helped initiate an apparently
positive modification to the exhibit. The poster photocopies, in a somewhat damaged state, were installed onto the gallery walls in a similar fashion to those in the city and indeed, brought a lot of life to my space. Some pattern photos were rearranged, the lighting became more selective and the general atmosphere was much improved by day's end. The slides contained within this report were taken of the gallery in its truly finished state. My board members gave their approval for my efforts, though I was not entirely convinced it would better convey my message in this state. The gallery seemed now an end in itself and not as much proposal of what could be. This change would eventually spark mixed feelings as we shall witness shortly.

On September 25, my Thesis Sharing was held in the Photo Gallery and was open to all wishing to attend. The purpose of the Sharing, required of all graduate theses, is to provide a critique of the work involving all members of the faculty and student community. It also gives the Thesis Board and the candidate a chance to hear what others think, those seeing the work for the first time. The rest of this chapter is devoted to transcribing selected comments and criticisms taped at my Sharing. Each section deals with more or less different issues regarding the work. The Sharing lasted about an hour, so what you see here are the most pertinent comments brought forth. The text is a precise account of the recording, omitting only redundances, coughs and mumbles. Any additional comments on my part will be clearly designated.

Q - What determined the imagery you would use for your wallpaper and how does that differ from just taking wallpaper and putting it on a building?

A - ...I never conceived of it purely as wallpaper...I never thought about covering up the whole object as I showed here, it wasn't only because I didn't have enough poster to go around, but I always wanted to keep that reference as to what exactly I was covering up...Now I guess it can be said that I just wanted to use my own imagery...maybe my own response to the environment...I didn't make each of these images for a specific site, that's what I'd like to be
able to do. It is my hope that if this would become a full-fledged project, that I'll be able to poster up a building, poster images of the building on top of the building.

Additional: This was a harmless question that for some reason made me fall apart. Though my imagery alludes to being wallpaper, it does not fulfill the same purpose. Wallpaper is a decoration for a specific site even though its generic in manufacture. It is meant to combine pleasantly with an environment, usually interior, and reflects the taste and artisanship of its owner. My installations have no owner, so they do not reflect anyone's aesthetics except my own. They are artistic declarations not decorations. The imagery was determined simply by how well a modular unit formed itself into a pattern. I was wrong in stating that I never thought about covering up the whole object. Not only do I think about it, but I plan to do it. I was also wrong in saying I would like to make posters for a specific site. This was explained in the previous chapter. The project I suggested at the end remains more of an option than a necessity.

Q - Have you at this point selected any one particular type of imagery you prefer more than the others and can you tell us why?

A - I'd say it's probably imagery which has a natural base to it...I'm more attracted to the organic...I think some people like the architectural ones better...I'd like to work more with taking pictures of natural images, changing their frame of reference, putting nature back into buildings, but in a weird kind of way.

Comment 1 - You're taking natural elements and making them so geometric and so sharp and so precise, I wonder is there not a conflict in taking a natural shoreline and making it so scientific, so patterned...

Comment 2 - From a microscopic standpoint, the symmetry involved in these pictures are a natural element as far as if one were to look at the crystal structure of various minerals and natural elements such as a beehive, like a honeycomb. And they are very symmetrical and from that standpoint you can call it a natural occurrence.

Additional: My answer was a bit misleading here. Though I am intrigued by the idea of covering a man-made structure with images of natural origin, I will certainly not focus on that area exclusively. Again, it is another option. Ask a Marine Biologist, and they will tell you that a natural shoreline has a lot of science going on in it. I do not see any conflict. Perhaps the commentator meant to stress that patterning makes the natural scene appear man-made. It may be just a personal preference. Much of the imagery I wish to work with in the future happens to be very scientific, such as micro and aerial photography. Though in a strict sense, this imagery is not meant to be art, but they often contain beautiful, artistic characteristics that I know I would work with. For scientific "art" photographs, check out the work of Roman Vishniac.

Q - What interests me a lot is the relationship between your stated interest here with decaying cities and some of the obvious references to earlier, ancient cultures in some of the pictures and I think maybe that's a connection that's strong, that you're realizing but not stating that...I wondered what that relationship means or could mean?
A - As far as the imagery goes, I wasn't consciously thinking of trying to come up with a visual equivalent of prehistory...it's the kind of thing you've seen in my photographs of the past and my drawings, there tends to be this bold, primitive type of approach to it...I think the connection between primitive type of imagery and a decaying building is kind of interesting... When I took courses in Greek and Roman Art it was always interesting to see peeling paintings in Rome and Temples of Pompeii, seeing them decaying along with the building it was in...but I didn't put these images on there specifically so you could draw that conclusion.

Additional: Not specifically, but I'm glad they got one of the messages of my thesis. Not only are the images themselves evocative of a primitive or ancient culture, but as time wore on (assuming we are talking about a permanent installation) the posters would decay to the point where they matched the deteriorated state of the building. Perhaps only them, would a true harmony exist between my artworks and their environment.

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Comment (regarding change in the gallery space) - I was delighted to find that he altered it the way he altered it, because the scale aspect in these pictures is very important to me. One of the things that bothered me about the documents was that there were these many postage stamp images that are now large enough so you can sense what their scale is and how much impact they would have on you if you were confronted with fifty of them. And somehow, being confronted with them much more as things pasted on a wall than tapestries hung in the Metropolitan - this made a tremendous impact on me in terms of the original...I think the decorative grand tradition in the arts of the decorative being a very strong component of what one does, and I think we in Photography get very snobbish about that. They don't as much in the Fine Arts...I felt that there was going to be a reaction, on the part of other people, wondering why these things were presented as tapestries and not actually having been executed as tapestries. And now, when I walk into this gallery I feel it has some relationship to his intention.

Additional: I was happy that the commentor referred to the "decorative aspect" of my works and did not simply call them decorations. I was also relieved to hear another photographer talk in terms of others in the field being snobbish about the decorative. There might be a lot of areas photography, as art, has not ventured into because of prejudice, but they are still out there to be discovered.

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Q - Are there people who saw both versions (of the show)? I'd like to know how you felt about that change, yourselves.

A - I don't like it. I don't like the change. I liked the old way mainly because he didn't propose to gift-wrap a gallery and I don't think that was really the point at all, and before, it was a simple document of a proposal almost, and that's the way I took it. Not that you were going to actually do it, since there were some infeasibilities and it's kind of a crazy idea - trying to wrap up the whole country maybe. So we get a few tastes of what would happen if you did it. It isn't done and that was alright with me. And bringing in a very straightforward before - and possibly what could happen, but it didn't
occur, but still a potential - and then seeing what the potential is in the
gallery, in a very straightforward, like: this is the scale of what we're
talking about. That was fine for me...here is all the information with which
we can all go out and gift-wrap America. This is not a one-man project. It's
one man's design concept and this to me, is a little weaker only because it
tries to flash it up with unnecessary information.

Q to A - Do you think maybe you like it less because its further along the road to
actually doing it...it starts doing what he proposed to do and you realize how
little of it he's actually done. Because it does seem...like a proposal and
it seems that it should have been developed a lot more. But if you're going
to make an installation of photographs like that...to actually make the install-
ation and not make a sketch of the installation and then photograph the sketch.

A to Q - I think he's proposed the materials with which to work...I don't think
they're designed to be used in this setting. They are not meant to be on
light gray walls, they're meant to be in the outdoors installed. And I'd
rather just see the materials presented, rather than trying to have them used
inappropriately...as an analogy: if he proposed to paint America, though to
me this is like the color swatches being up on the wall with proposed colors
...by repainting the gallery, you haven't demonstrated that you've repainted
America.

Q to A - What's the value in proposing to paint America? It has to go beyond a
proposition, it has to effect a change.

A to Q - Maybe I like to color...I think that's the debate: Does it have to
happen?

Additional: After this exchange I was not certain whether changing the gallery
helped or hurt my message, for the person answering the initial question under-
stood the message that my Thesis Board did not. He realized that the gallery
was not an end in itself. The rest of the exchange followed along the age old lines
of those who can be satisfied simply with ideas, and those who need to see the
finished piece right before them. Also, the consequences of adding "Gift-wrapping
America" to the title seemed to be worse than opening up a Pandora's Box. People
seemed to get stopped and confused by it, and the controversy surrounding it grew
larger and larger.

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Comment - I was disappointed when you put these up and that you didn't really
include the responses of the people to that environment...It seems that if you
put something up, you want someone to respond to it...and I think if someone
writes something obscene on it, that's great. I think if someone rips it down
or someone's angry at it or someone pee's on it, that's a statement on their
part to what you've done, and I think I was very disappointed that you put these
up, photographed them and took them down. I would like to have seen where you
documented what happened to a wall in two or three days and even asked people
their response to them like, "What is this crap?" or if someone thinks this is
really quite exciting. I mean, Public Art. I think you've reduced it. You've
kind of kept this whole thing in a closet and I think this stuff is, in a
sense, meaningless outside of this room and I think its meaningless to go out,
put it on a wall, quickly photograph it and then take it down and bring it here
and I think you have that responsibility if you're going to do it, to do it.
Part of the problem a person working with Public Art is that he has to get funds, get the permission and deal with that quagmire, deal with that responsibility of getting it done. And I think that's one thing I miss from this - its too sterile without people. I think people are a big part of it because people look at it. Building's don't really-someone's going to say they do- feel what you're doing to them. They don't respond to the posters. I think people are very important, I think people are missing... I think its the responsibility of the artist to carry it out, to go all the way. If that's your project, that's your concept, don't just bring in the drawings...cause we can all sit around and talk about all these grandiose ideas -it would be neat if we could do this or that- have a couple of beers and have a wonderful time. But I think you have to do it...that's your responsibility.

Additional: I cannot think of any Public Arts project in which the artist was responsible for documenting people's reactions to it. I'll agree that such a thing is good and perhaps such a thing should be done more often. But I do not look upon this facet as criteria for determining success or failure, much less something to get all disappointed over. Nowhere in my Thesis Proposal or the written material I included in the show did I use the term, Public Art, specifically. Yes, it did try at the beginning to become one, but without public funding for it, I saw no reason why it should conform to standards reserved for official works. One should perhaps, think of my efforts as art temporarily in a public place, a performance documented by photographs.

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Comment A - Part of the problem for me is that it seems to be too ambitious...I always have this backdrop of "Gift-wrapping America" and when I hear that, I immediately freeze up and I can't get beyond that. So, therefore, whatever you do never even comes close to what I would think you might want to do, or what I'd want you to do...That perhaps, if you were to focus on one element of the process, a particular building, a particular image, a particular way of producing this image...and then start from there and have people deal with that...

Comment B - You mentioned a couple of things, Ivins, Rodin, but...the thing you're actually calling to mind more than that is Christo's stuff, of course. So you're going to expect that this guy's got a couple of buildings wrapped, or a Volkswagen or something, and you don't make the connection with Ivins or Steichen photographs (Illustration 17). You're forcing yourself to be compared to people who have done stuff like that, to Earthworks, who have actually done it. That's the problem...

Comment C - I thought it was quite pretentious, the title "Gift-wrapping America" ...I think the title sounds wonderful, but its kind of unrealistic and you set the audience up for it though, we expect something. If you were to narrow the scope of what you're doing - and I'm not sure if you think you're wrapping right now, it just seems like you're posterizing. I don't get that sense of wrapping...

Comment D to C - You've got to be a pretty innocent sort to read "Gift-wrapping America" on a poster and come up and expect America wrapped up. He does six representative, dingy kind of, outedges of urban America...Don't you get it?
Comment C to D - I don't get it because I think there's more to America that that. Is he trying to improve poverty? Is he trying to improve urban blight?

Comment D to C - But what difference does it make what he calls it? Blight Improvement? He isn't going to improve all the blight.

Comment E - I went to see a show called, "The Empire State Building at Zero-Gravity" and it wasn't there floating in the air, but I didn't expect to see it...but the idea was projected out there and you simply had to think about it.

Comment F - Well, I would keep the title and expand what's inside.

Additional: I think if I called the show, "Gift-wrapping Rochester" or "Gift-wrapping Last Avenue", I would have set the audience up for something that was realistically possible, and when they could not go out and see these installations, then I feel that the criticisms would have been more than justified. I think it would have been more of a letdown. I chose my dingy representations of urban America specifically so that the observer could visualize this phenomenon happening just about anywhere. My sites are not just about Rochester, but of every place that suffers from poverty, neglect and inequality. Sure, there is more to America than that. But I think it is absurd to insist that a project like mine incorporates every facet of our country into it. I mean, one does not expect to see teams from Madagascar participating in the World Series.

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Comment - The expectations come from what you read from the Thesis Proposal and so forth...I don't know how many of you have experienced Corita's Gas Tank image in Boston, but it's a joyous experience to drive into that ugly town and see that great big, silly damn gas tank that has big splashes of paint on it...and just imagine these professional painters up there making the splashes...the way she wanted them to be made, and I came into this project thinking that way...that someday we were going to walk into someplace in the school and the school was going to be changed, and that was a joy and a delight to me...and my tendency is to still be hard-nosed...But the things that you people have said have tempered a lot of the thinking that I had, and I think it's very important that you, as members of the class, get heard, because we do come in with considerable prejudices and we need to hear your reactions are to these things...I have a lot of strange feelings about this thesis and I've been on three or four thesis boards this year that without the slightest hesitation, I haven't felt the need to argue, I haven't felt the need to bitch, I haven't felt the need to...certainly to threaten! And yet, I suspect that he has learned more than any of those people. Anyway, it's a hard problem and it's a hard one to deal with...and my attitudes are somewhat changed, but I still have a problem and we will have to sit down and gently do battle...

Additional: The greatest source of conflict in my thesis work appears to be a discrepancy between what I said I would do and what I did. However, the acceptance or rejection of this work as a Thesis should not necessarily be based on that conflict. I cannot deny that I told my board of hopeful projects involving the city or R.T.I., and perhaps I built up an expectation that one of these projects would materialize. And I could understand their disappointments when confronted with "mere skeletons" of these projects, I was a bit disappointed myself. But neither my Thesis Proposal, nor the written material I included in
the exhibit, would account for this expectation. Many a student will divert from
the proposal, which is often written months before work is actually begun. I
fell into that category. But though my temporary installations were not exactly
Public Art, I feel they did satisfy my stated objective of "present(ing) these
works with innovation". - taken from Thesis Proposal located at end of report.
CHAPTER VI

THE C. U. CAFETERIA MURAL

THE GENESEE STREET INSTALLATION AND CONCLUSION

The "battle" spoken of at the end of Chapter V would, as one might expect, occur between myself and my Thesis Board. Shortly after my Sharing concluded, the Board conferred and by unanimous vote determined that my show was unfinished and inconclusive. The exhibition was not wholly rejected, however, rather it was conditionally accepted pending the creation of a permanent installation or mural. Their opinions centered about the belief that mine was not a thesis conceived of for the purpose of suggesting a future project I might eventually become active in, and on this point, I am inclined to agree. In fact, no "battle" would ever really take place, for as they saw it, the board was basically forcing me to do something I had wanted to do all along.

Yet, I cannot admit sharing most of my board's opinions and was disheartened to find that even after my exhibition, I was still at square one. My thesis show resembled a proposal out of sheer necessity, not because I was sidestepping my responsibilities or was trying to pull a "fast one" on my board. It was impossible to complete a project of my intended scale with the very limited funds I had at my disposal. But I felt that my message was important enough to justify whatever tribulations might await me. I also viewed it as impractical for me to wait around Rochester hoping that one of my sources would finally come through. As a thesis, a concept based on the pursuit of new ideas and original research, I felt then and feel still that mine was more than
adequate and was completed to the best of my financial, scholastic and creative abilities.

After arriving at their decision, my board members did not gloat or pat each other on the back. They seemed to sympathize with my setback and the hardships being brought about because of their insistence. They were sincere in their desire to judiciously resolve the situation, but they were not entirely certain of what specific project would satisfy them and myself. In an effort to arrive at this, Dave Dickinson of C.F.A.A. was installed as an additional board member and Hans Zandovoort of C.L.A. served as a consultant. Both newcomers were involved in the fine arts, lithography and painting, respectively, and both had favorable responses to my show. It should be noted that their positions were of very limited authority, for the point was not for them to determine whether my show was a success or failure - which had already been dealt with - but that they help the board decide what additional project would make my thesis a complete success. In effect, they had to contribute suggestions as if they agreed with my board's findings, which, in fact, they did not. I had given some consideration then to the possibility of scrapping the old board and arriving at a new. But the procedure would have been painstaking and besides, it might be worth the effort to win over the hearts and minds of the board I already had.

A month and a few meetings after the end of my show, no concrete determination had yet been made. Charlie favored some kind of mural on campus, Gunther preferred something along the "Public Arts" line, I was leaning more towards arsenic, tell you the truth. No one was absolutely certain which one would be more appropriate and I was so confused then that I did not know either. My input into all of this was minimal, for I knew I could not afford anything
they might suggest, though all I really wanted to do was make them happy and get my degree. Charlie's suggestion was more practical to me, though it was somewhat removed from original intent, for I had already established contact with administrators in a position to give me help.

Since early summer, I had proposed the idea of a campus mural to Deans in the Fine Arts and Photography schools. Their responses were positive and enthusiastic, though somewhat vague when touching on the specific mechanics of putting such a project in motion. This idea was proposed thinking it would be an interesting addition to and application of my thesis work. I never conceived of such a project as the goal of my thesis and tried to make this clear to my board, for if it somehow were to be cancelled, I would not want my degree to go down with it.

The most pressing of the specific mechanics mentioned before was who would finance the whole operation. I was encouraged to meet with Elaine Spaull of Complementary Education who was in a position to help fund campus oriented art projects. I would soon learn that she was actively involved in aiding production of the laser-disc portfolio. Elaine stressed that monies could only be obtained if the project accounted for other student's involvement and a sincere desire for campus improvement; in other words, she would not fund acts of self-indulgence. Her requirements were quite reasonable, in fact, at the time I was planning to involve the Printing School in producing the images and members of my class with their installation anyway. Elaine also informed me of the bureaucracy associated with putting a public artwork on campus. It appears that the Deans of each college have the authority to commission and finance artworks for their own respective area. Everything else, save for a few, is governed by an entity known as the Beautification Committee. Elaine was more inclined to having a mural in a
neutral location such as the Student Union or in the tunnels connecting the student dormitories. In July, she gave me a verbal promise that my project would receive aid from her office. Now I was left with finding a suitable place to put it.

After giving up on the idea of installing my murals in stairwells, I looked into the possibility of adding my artwork to those already in the Union Cafeteria. But I was discouraged from doing so by those familiar with the frustrating bureaucracy governing that space. So I took Elaine's suggestion and in August, began meeting with administrators from Residence Life, those who oversee the dormitories. It was her belief that I would encounter the least bureaucratic hassles when dealing with these people. Unfortunately, nothing could have been further from the truth.

My first meeting with Residence Life officials, like so many others, was cordial and positive. It was believed that murals could be situated in lobbies and hallways within the dormitory itself, rather than placing them in the tunnels underneath. At the time, there appeared to be a chance that a mural could be completed by the time of my exhibition opening. Again, this was simply supposed to be icing on the cake. But what followed appeared like a scenario out of some strange nightmare. Over the next four months, I would deliver presentations about my project to student and adult administrators, all of whom had to put in their two cents worth toward its resolution. Meetings, more meetings, waiting to hear the results of their meetings and not getting notified typified those four months. I had ideas bouncing around in my head about what type of image might look good where but nothing concrete to show, because I was not told what specific location would be mine to embellish. What made all this worse was the fact that by this time, the project was no longer icing, but was being demanded from me. My degree
depended on its completion, if not I would have said to hell with it. My fate was in the hands of teenie-bopper bureaucrats. I can understand the need for rules and committees which govern the stability of the dormitories. But what I was faced with was unnecessary, counterproductive and humiliating. It is no wonder to me that the dorms are a mess and nobody wants to do anything about it.

In January, 1983, I was recommended to discuss my proposal with Mitch Green of Food Service, with the possibility of installing it somewhere in his jurisdiction. What followed was a welcome relief. Mitch took instantly to the idea and swiftly arranged a meeting between himself, Margaret Chapa of Student Activities and Jan Quitzau who ran "The Celler" (a campus operated bar located underneath one of the dormitories). After the meeting, I had certain approval for a mural in "The Celler" and tentative approval to replace the painted murals in the Union Cafeteria with one of my design, the very space I first thought of using. I was much more enthusiastic about the Cafeteria and geared all my efforts toward the fulfillment of that goal.

In December, 1982, I was visiting New York City and chose to collect images that might someday be used for pattern murals. For patterns of the geometric variety, no single location surpasses New York as a wealth of imagery. The strongest image from my outings would later be proposed for the Cafeteria mural. This image was taken looking up from street level somewhere on Park Avenue. My intent was to complement the receding space created by the office buildings and balance these solid, geometric objects against an aggressive negative space formed by the sky. Originally, I was planning to combine this image with one of natural origin, forming a unit which juxtaposed the geometric with the organic. But once I printed my Park Avenue picture and then its reverse, I realized I had a real gem on my hands. The prints were made on 16" x 20" paper, trimmed so that
the master copy would be 17" x 23", the intended size of the poster reproductions. My paper choice was the Agfa Portriga-Rapid 118 surface which allowed direct manipulation of it. But there was very little I wished to change with this unit. In the end, I played with the idea of Trompe L-Oeil and pencilled shadows into the area originally thought of as the sky. Now the geometric buildings, instead of receding into an infinite space, became flat objects casting their shadows onto a very shallow space. This contradiction becomes even more apparent with the later addition of painted dots to the shallow space. At first, they allude to being stars, but then how does one explain the shadows being cast upon them? Maybe they are just drips of paint after all. The image was complete in this "rough state" so there was no subsequent rephotographing and reprinting of it.

When I brought my completed unit to the Thesis Board in February, they instantly approved of it, the same response came from Margaret and Mitch, who would cover the increase in printing costs. But the stage would be truly set only after approval by the Beautification Committee, which fortunately occurred in early March. Though the unit had no true name, "Things are Looking Up" seemed an appropriate title to describe the situation.

Now the time came to put all my theories, beliefs and manifestos into motion! Because the reproduction process would be handled by a commercial printer, I had to research what variations could be thrown into the pattern at no extra cost. Color would be the key ingredient in this quest. By using a multi-colored palette of printing papers, and additional but harmonious pattern could be formed. But as the paper's spectrum shifted from warm to cool, the plain black image might be lost. Therefore, it was decided that a 2-color process should be employed so that the buildings would remain black and white despite the fluctuation in paper color. This would add a lot to the cost of
printing, but I saw the result as being worth it. However, Charlie thought it
might be nice to print a few images in both pure black (half-tone) and pure white
(silhouettes of the buildings). I heeded his suggestion, for it would be just
another surprise thrown into the gridwork of the pattern. After doing a lot of
research into commercial printers in Rochester, I chose Eagle Graphics on
University Avenue, mostly on the basis of their cost, helpfulness, laid back
approach and enthusiasm for my project. The paper they would be using was
purchased for Alling & Cory on Verona Street. It is called Strathmore Rhododendron
65 lb. Cover Stock and I selected nine different colors of it. The paper was
chosen for its strength, durability and the harmony its colors would form with
those found in the Cafeteria.

On the technical side, the printing process is known as sheet-fed litho-
graphy. I had to supply the printer with my camera-ready original, plus a painted
acetate sheet, showing which areas I wished to remain white. When each image was
rephotographed using a process camera. The photographic unit was recorded
through a 133 line half-tone screen, the white underlay was photographed onto
line reproduction film. The process camera negatives were then placed in contact
with Polychrome Negative Subtractive Plates, exposed by an arch-lamp and the
printing surface was formed. An HCM Champion 127 20" x 29" single color press
was used for the major step. Two hits of opaque white ink, cut with some varnish
to prevent smearing, were run through the press first. Black was laid after the
white surface had become tacky. After drying, the 20" x 26" sheets were trimmed
down to size using the Polar Programmable Cutter. It is estimated that roughly
450 sheets were run through the press, half of which were mainly used as test
prints. For some strange reason, I wanted to keep these rejects, perhaps there
was something I could do with them!
My mural could not be installed in the Cafeteria until the existing mural had been removed and the wall surface primed. I was perfectly willing to accomplish this myself, but the Beautification Committee tied me into a bureaucratic knot by requiring me to enlist the professional help found in R.I.T.'s Physical Plant. My cost estimate for the mural did not include monies for this and I had reached my limit with Elaine and Mitch. My Board was outraged that the Committee would pin this on me and were on the verge of making a stink about it when Dr. Zakia, the Coordinator of the M.F.A. Program, volunteered his financial support to cover these unforeseen costs. The last obstacle had been cleared and I owe a lot to Dr. Zakia for helping me, now it was time to get to work.

While driving home with my posters that rainy afternoon on March 26, I thought about the old phrase of killing two birds with one stone. It was certain that my Board would be most pleased by the printing quality and the resulting Cafeteria mural. This is not to suggest that I would not be, but my thesis still was not formulated on putting up a mural in a cafeteria. My aim all along had been to take poster reproductions of a photograph and cover up some abandoned building with them! And, as I looked across to those posters in my car, I knew my dream would soon become a reality.

Prior to picking up my images from the printer, I had completed some research into the proper way to adhere them to a wall. Now that I was involving myself in two projects, I had to discover which glue was best for which situation, outside or inside. I enlisted the help of Terry Carter, an amiable and knowledgeable employee of Foster & Kleiser Inc., an outdoor advertising company. Through his efforts, I received a 5-gallon container of glue professionals hang billboards with. Five gallons looked like it would suffice for both installa-
tions, but for the sake of the Cafeteria, I thought it best to experiment with glue in a large scale urban setting.

On an abandoned, boarded up, burned out building six blocks from where I live, a strange new art form was about to take place. On the morning of March 30, when the temperature finally edged above 32°F, I set out from my house with a step-stool, buckets, rollers, towels and squeegees, intent on creating and installation, this time for keeps. Before I left, however, I made certain that a few people knew about what I was doing. These people included notable like Laura Stewart from the Democrat & Chronicle newspaper and the news director for the Channel 13 television station. I had no idea whether these people would actually cover my event, but I felt that enough passers-by might want to learn about the mural and why I was doing it. Besides, the media would make my project even that more public!

The 130 or so printer's proofs, discards and extras were installed in the same uncontrived, haphazard manner as my temporary ones were in September. The pattern would thrust itself into every direction changing its orientation axis, repeating itself, framing some existing architectural outcropping or having itself framed by the surrounding space. During the course of the installation, it was interesting to note the mechanistic way I was pasting up these machine crafted reproductions. I guess it was Andy Warhol who said, "I want to be a machine", but mine were not the same concerns as his. He wanted to show the boredom of repetition; I chose to examine the plight of the individual within a regimented system, that an individual unit can express itself while remaining within the demands imposed by the pattern. But the pattern would disintegrate if every unit expressed itself apart from the rest, so most of the units are needed to conform to the gridwork, but those few addballs thrown in there keep the pattern from
getting monotonous. I know you'll want me now to explain how life is like a pattern, but I think you get the picture!

As it turned out, my urban installation attracted a great deal of attention, two results of which are found in the Appendix section. The mural was more or less completed in six hours, though the following day I ended up pasting a few more on. The glue, in fact, did not hold as well as I expected, probably because it was still a bit cold outside for it to adhere properly. When finished, I really took pride in what I had done, for it was as if the building had been transformed, so that people might never think of it again as an abandoned eyesore. Though the media rewarded me with flattering coverage, someone in the neighborhood decided to reward me by stealing my down jacket from inside my car. It might not have been so bad if my wallet and keys had not been in one of the pockets. I was angered and dismayed by this turn of events, it was as if I now understood why no one bothers to do anything about these sections of town. I do not plan on abandoning proposals for future projects, but it will be hard to forget this incident and it will always be hard to convince others that projects like mine are worth the risk. A footnote: the wallet and keys were eventually recovered; the money, of course, was missing, along with the coat; no suspects were ever apprehended.

The Cafeteria mural received a lot less media fanfare, but it too was a crowning achievement. I began work on April 4 and continued throughout the entire week. The mural was actually in two parts, one being 274" in length, the other 303", the height remained a constant 90". On one side, I chose to orient the posters vertical to the viewer, the other side was horizontal. The format for installation had to be much more controlled than with the urban location, but I still managed to include some surprises and variations. The wooden surface
first had to be primed with a flat oil paint so the wood would not draw the glue away from the paper. And as for the glue, well, I did not want to chance having my images bubble and curl like some of those on the building front, so I purchased vinyl paste, a super-strong adhesive. The paste worked like a charm and the paper went on flat and dried smooth. The designs formed by the colors and patterns motifs were kept simple so that people would not get dizzy looking at this thing while eating lunch. After all of the posters had dried to the wall, two coats of Satin Polyurethane Finish were painted over the mural to protect it from stains.

On Thursday, April 7, I stood back to observe, both murals declaring their presence in what a friend of mine called, "one of the ugliest rooms in America". Ugly room or not, the murals were beautiful and so was the feeling that at last I could say I was done. Nothing in the world sounded as sweet as that.

*********************************************************************

After all of these months and all this writing, it is difficult to arrive at some kind of fixed conclusion about what I did. Was it worth it? Well, I would have to say that it was, though all of the hardships I had to endure keep me from being enthusiastic with my response. As with many people working in the art field, I wonder whether my message, expressed through my work, will ever be understood once I am no longer around to explain it to people. Part of my aim in life is to produce art which needs no explaining, perhaps that ideal is reserved only for those making paintings on velvet. One of my sharing's commentators was quite right, my work does not evoke the spirit of Ivins or Steichen, but rather Christo, who, in fact, played no role in my thought process whatsoever. So, if people think of Christo when they see my work, will I have succeeded or failed? I guess it's better to be compared with Christo than with velvet paintings. I also have concerns about my urban goals. Sometimes I wonder whether my installations could serve to divide a community instead of helping to strengthen
it. My urban murals have an added attraction not found, at least by choice, in most other public artworks. A person can make their response known directly to the mural itself and, in time, the collection of remarks—whether they be graffiti or disfigurements of the posters—become part of the piece and its real meaning to the community. The trouble lies in the anticipation that only the negative will find its way onto the wall surface. I mean, if a person likes the mural, why would they scribble all over it? And would the negative comments inflected by other people prevent that person from enjoying the piece? Perhaps it is unnecessary to think about such things, for once the installation is up, it has ceased being something that I own and control. Maybe my message can be found in that. I have a sincere desire to pursue work of this sort for many more years. Much of my inspiration comes from the belief that artists can and will extend themselves out to the public in whatever manner befits them. Artists are a useful and necessary ingredient in our social structure and it is time to start showing that to others outside our "sophisticated" community. For we are the dreamers, the idealists, the intellectuals, the humanists, the projectors of reality and the oddballs who keep the pattern from getting monotonous.

Richard E. Schneider
April 1983
ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Richard E. Schneider; Postered Wall, London, silver gelatin print, 1980. ...this is representative of background images and early motivating influences.

2. Andy Warhol; Marilyn Monroe Diptych, oil on canvas, Tate Gallery, London, 1962. ...an example of the single image repeated, similar to the "Mona Lisa" example in text.

3. Robert Motherwell; Elegy to the Spanish Republic #70, Metropolitan Museau, 1961. ...this shows one of the most powerful images of the Abstract Expressionist period.

4. Rene Magritte; The Treason of Images (This is not a Pipe), L.A. Country Museau, 1929. ...is what you see what the thing really is?

5. Salvador Dali; Apparition of a Face and a Fruit Dish on a Beach, Wadsworth Atheneum. ...surrealistic encounter with subliminal perception.

6. John Heartfield; Madrid 1936, from "Die Volksillustrierte"1,15 (25 November, 1936). ...a political use for juxtaposing images ordinarily not found together.

7. Claude Monet; A Bend in the Epte River, near Giverny, Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1888. ...a response to the light and color of a scene giving an impression, not an illusion.

8. Rene Le Begue; Etude en Orange, Alfred Steiglitz Collection, 1903 ...a photograph imitating a drawing and obscuring the perfect window onto the world.

9. Netherlands; blue painted tiles, 16th century. ...a series of pattern motifs will extend themselves into every direction.

10. M.C. Escher; Mirror Symmetry with Four Animals, artist's collection, n.d. ...exhibits the use of negative space forming pattern motifs of its own.

11. Richard E. Schneider; City Wall, normal 35mm photograph, silver gelatin print.

12. Richard E. Schneider; columns, normal 35mm photograph. " " distortion, 35mm. photograph.

13. Richard E. Schneider; City Wall, rough state. " " Melting Man, rough state.

15. Richard E. Schneider; *City Wall*, pattern pieced together from similar photographs.

16. Richard Anuszkiewicz; *Orange Delight*, each panel is 2' x 2', Whitney Museum, 1969.
   ...a modular unit changing the overall effect through differing its tonalities.

   ...an early example of wrapping an object for an artistic statement.

   ...the influence of wrapping an object up with photographic images of itself.

   ...a large scale photo in the urban environment functioning as an art piece.

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.
MADRID 1936

¡NO PASARÁN! ¡PASAREMOS!

Sie kommen nicht durch! Wir kommen durch!
FOOTNOTES


3 Ibid., pp. 113-134.

4 Hughes, The Shock of the New, p. 244.

5 Ivins, Prints and Visual Communication, p. 128.


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Purpose

To create photographic images which consolidate elements of painting, drawing and assorted printmaking techniques. To incorporate within these, compatible themes resulting in the communication of a message, the propagation of an idea or belief, or the advertisement of a person or place. To present these works with innovation, especially through the use of unconventional framing and installation techniques.

Background

I regard the thesis for the master's degree not simply as the culminating experience of my graduate work, but rather as an all-inclusive, dynamic summation of everything I have learned and loved. There are few opportunities in the scholarly or artistic worlds for such an event to occur and even fewer chances for one to be recognized for the effort.

As an undergraduate, I was mostly involved with painting, drawing and the many chapters of Art History. As a graduate, my training in photography has branched out into non-silver processes, studio lighting and video imagery. Although all of these picture-making systems are quite distinct from each other, they all potentially can convey the same type of message. When brought together into a single harmonious statement, it is hoped that the message, along with the visual stimulation will have been improved.

Pictorialism, and the masters associated with it, have long been an influence on the photographs I have produced. In the 19th and early 20th century, photographers working with the idea of photography as a fine art created textural, subtle images which, in some instances, resembled paintings. This aesthetic is clearly seen in the landscape work of mine completed between 1978-1980. These images however, remain tied to a bygone age and proved to be merely a stepping stone towards a full realization of my own photographic expression.

Among the many devices a photographer would use to create a pictorial flavor in his imagery, was the use of non-silver processes. Robert Demachy and Edward Steichen used the gum-bichromate technique in particular, adding a distinctive mood to the picture. Others would experiment with a wide range of emulsions including: cyanotypes, Van Dyke Brown printing and multi-color gum printing. The inherent fact that one can make a print assume any color desired, make non-silver techniques essential in what I wish to accomplish.

In the mid-1870's, Henry P. Robinson was experimenting with the concept that one could create a fictitious reality in the finished print that was quite different than what they observed in the natural world. The procedure was to use the sky from one negative, the earth from another and the figures from still another negative into one final print. Jerry Uelsman, a contemporary photographer, uses similar techniques in his own work to create mystical and surreal images. John Heartfield, a German photographer of the mid-20th century, carried this idea still further in his use of photomontage. Instead of working with many different negatives in the production of a piece, Heartfield would assemble actual photographs into a montage of juxtaposing images ordinarily not found in the same company. What each of these artists did was to manipulate reality in order to convey their message more clearly. I wish to essentially do the same, along with using non-silver techniques, the inclusion of objects in collage and incorporating my drawing into the image as well.

My drawing style has been likened to everything from the Mexican murals of Orozco, to the Social-realist posters from the 1930's. In any event, most would agree that the style is certainly adaptable to communicating a message clearly, no matter
what the intent. Illustration work by Arthur Rackham, early paintings by Picasso, stained glass windows and 19th century Japanese prints have all had a great impact on my approach to drawing, although my work does not mirror any one of those. Within the thesis, the drawings and coloring techniques will serve to further still, alienate the print from the natural world and draw it into the world of Surrealism and the visual expression and propagation of ideas and beliefs.

The formats I expect the finished works will assume are purposefully those traditionally aimed at conveying messages to a mass audience. The poster, especially those produced before the age of telecommunications, were among the primary sources of advertising for the business and social community. Among those capturing my interest and admiration were made by Alphonse Mucha, Edward Hopper and Kathe Kollwitz. The post card still remains a popular medium to send one's visual experience to another back home. It is not uncommon for the post card to idealize a location through visual manipulation. Lastly, television images have become the single most influential and popular form of second-hand information gathering in our world today. Convenience and the believability of the programming has conditioned most of us to accept the media as bringing us truth. Finding the truth out for ourselves is becoming less and less common. What this thesis will hope to exploit is the fallacy behind the belief that what these media communicate is truth. When in fact, they manipulate reality in order to form an opinion of their own design. I will not record reality as the eye sees it in nature, rather I will project it into a whole new frame of reference through the manipulative use of the photograph, the drawing and the found object.

Procedure

As I mentioned before, the non-silver process will enable me to choose whatever color best fits the intent of the image. Gum-bichromate printing will also allow me to manipulate the texture of the print with my brush, as well as overlapping colors over each other. Rag paper is recommended for most non-silver work and has a great capability for the application of color pigments afterwards.

The negatives used in the creation of these images will mostly be produced through the use of the copy camera. To begin, this device enables one to make an arrangement of any design using photographs, drawing and collage material, and the subsequent photographing of the whole lot. Therefore, what used to be simply an assemblage of unrelated objects, differing in character and texture, is now a single infinitely reproducible negative which has a constant texture of the film grain. Finally, this negative can be of any desired size, working well with the large-scale images I have in mind.

Although many of my finished works will closely resemble the media device it is imitating, many others will be presented in a manner which is innovative and unusual. I have become weary of the rectangular format most images in every media assume. What I wish to do is extend the image beyond the rectangular border, experiment with circles, ovals and even triangles, and have the environment of the gallery interact more closely with the images exhibited in it.
November 5, 1982

Richard Schneider
Re: "Projected Reality"

Complementary Education is pleased to award you a grant this academic year for $300. Your proposal was reviewed and this amount was determined as an appropriate amount. It may be less than you requested but since we had many requests, some proposals were not funded at all while others were cut. I am confident that this will not limit the success of your project.

Kathy Routly, in the Student Affairs office, distributes the funds and keeps an account of the records. Please contact her at x2268 with any questions. She can help you access your money efficiently while following the necessary procedures for documenting expenses.

You should refer to your grant as 3 -62-83 for our records or be certain that your organization or project is included on all paperwork.

Students working on Comp Ed projects are eligible for certification and a folder describing this process is attached here.

Congratulations and good luck. Please keep in touch with my office. We will be interested in hearing more about your projects.

Sincerely,

Elaine Spaull
Assistant to the Vice President
for Student Affairs, and Director
of Complementary Education

ES:kr
Att.

Richard —
I don't know whether this is going to be used or not — I saved it for you. Please let me know by Dec. 1 —

Thank you!
CONCEPT: To construct a large mural composed of photographic reproductions of a single design unit. This unit is based on the step-and-repeat formula, often found in textiles and ceramic tiles, meaning that when the reproductions are placed in contact with each other a symmetric pattern is formed. The image I have assembled is of an architectural origin and will create an exciting geometric pattern motif.

LOCATION: The two bay areas towards the rear of the cafeteria, currently this space is occupied by two large painted murals.

MEDIUM: The original unit is the result of a purely photographic method, with additional reworking by hand. The reproductions will be commercially manufactured by an offset press and the use of a halftone. The image will be printed onto assorted colors of Strathmore Rhododendron 65 cover stock. The colors will form a pattern of their own in the mural.

DIMENSIONS: Each poster will measure approx. 15 x 20.5 inches, its orientation will be horizontal to the viewer.

SIZE: Bay 1 = 90 x 274". Bay 2 = 90 x 303". The mural will fill up each space to the nearest full poster size.

QUANTITY: It will require between 175 and 225 posters to fill the proposed space, Bay 1 = 6 down by 14 across, Bay 2 = 6 down by 15 across. This figure includes a margin of error.

METHOD of INSTALLATION: Wallpaper adhesive. In keeping with the theme of my thesis and with the consent of my thesis board, I will arrange the color patterns at the time of installation.

COST: Including everything the cost will be $300-$350.

FUNDING SOURCE: Complementary Education.

APPROVALS: Mitch Green, Margaret Chapa, Elaine Spaull, my Thesis Board.

COMPLETION DATE: As soon as possible.

PRESERVATION: At your request and recommendation

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Richard E. Schrader

P.S. The completion of my thesis, and subsequently my master degree, is dependent on my being able to fully realize this proposal. The single design unit is essential for me to finish this very soon.
Quotation:

Quantity and Description: 400 sheets supplied 25 x 25
C.D. Rural

Number of Pages: 1; 21.15

Stock: Strathmore 85% cover; assorted colors

Composition: Camera ready

Presswork: 1 process; full size opaque white & black

Delivery: Pick-up

Price:
2/colors $350.00
1/color, black $223.00

Michael Whinn
March 4/83.
At its March 9, 1983 meeting, the Beautification Committee approved your proposal for the installation of a mural on the cafeteria wall in the College Alumni Union. The Committee does, however, insist that the photographic material be mounted on some form of board, rather than directly over the existing mural, in order to be replaced by another mural, at sometime in the future. You should contact Mr. William Mets, Director of Physical Plant, to determine the process to be used for putting the entire mural in place.

You may contact Mr. Mets at extension 2050.

/f
cc: W. Mets
E. Spaull
March 14, 1983

To Dr. Zakia and Dr. Kraus - S.P.A.S.,
re: College Union Cafeteria Mural.

In order to complete my thesis requirement and obtain my M.F.A. degree, it was decided that I should install a mural in a campus location, keeping within the style I already arrived at. I have since arrived at a mural design satisfactory to my thesis board and my client (Cafeteria). I was awarded a Complementary Grant in 11/82 to complete the mural, I have since received additional funds from Food Service and Student Activities. The R.I.T. Beautification Committee approved my proposal in 3/83 but added a couple of modifications which had previously not been (financially) planned for. The most troublesome of these is the apparent requirement that I finance the removal of the existing mural and preparation of the wall surface for mine. It had been understood that whatever funds I was allotted would pay for the conception and printing of my mural images, only. Therefore I am in need of additional funds to complete the project to everyone's satisfaction. I would greatly appreciate your help in resolving this matter.

Sincerely,

Richard Schneider

Tabulations

Sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complementary Education</td>
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Costs:

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<td>Estimate for work on existing mural</td>
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<tr>
<td>- I would like for this figure to include primer paint for existing wall, adhesive and protecting polyurethane finish. I would do all the painting if need be.</td>
<td><strong>$601</strong></td>
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($Jan Reich quote)
Richard Schneider giving his gift to a neighborhood that, he says, "art doesn't touch that often" — a mural on the side of a vacant building at Genesee and Frost streets.

-art in 19th Ward: You don't have to like it, just notice it

RIT grad student plasters wall with his own 'anarchistic' mural

By Laura Stewart

RICHARD SCHNEIDER can't be bothered with art's usual purposes.

"It's fine with me if people think the 130 images I posted on the side of an abandoned frame building at Genesee and Frost streets yesterday are pretty. And it's nice if they enlighten or amuse. But that's not what they're about. "It's kind of anarchistic, just taking a space and covering it with art. I want people to notice it, even if they don't like it," said the 35-year-old Rochester Institute of Technology graduate student.

"It's a gift, basically, to the neighborhood and to people who don't touch that often. And I think they'll like it more than they didn't pay for it.

If you don't count his afternoon's blood, Schneider didn't pay for his billboard-like mural either. The whole paper mosaic is made of artist's proofs, printed to test the quality of a piece of art, and leftovers from the monochromatic RIT commission that Schneider created for the College Union cafeteria. He put up that mural today.

A friend videotaped Schneider as he worked on a performing piece and for his master's thesis on photographs. Schneider, a New Jersey native who came to RIT in 1980 after graduating from Skidmore College in Saratoga, based both projects on one photograph he took in New York City. He says, "pointing the camera up to show where the buildings end and the sky begins.

Then, with the technical help of Eagle Graphics and the financial help of RIIT, he converted it into hundreds of lithographed sheets. 30 inches wide.

A billboard advertising company contributed the glue and — all unknown to itself — the 19th Ward donated the building. Schneider has no idea who it belongs to, that's part of his anarchism.

But also satisfy the requirements for his master's degree. It will be awarded in June, more than a year after Schneider completed his course work. By then, the photographer says, he'll have "relocated at my parents' house in New York while looking for work.

But for the moment, Schneider had his work cut out for him. After the mural's up, he says, "people can look down the street and window into a bouncy, mostly black and white pattern.

"It's not as long as God wants it to be."

The artist with his 130-piece mural he's making with artist's proofs of a single photograph he took. In addition to bringing a bit of art to the neighborhood, it also will help him earn his master of fine arts degree.
Certificate of Excellence

For outstanding use of the graphic arts in effective communications

Presented to

Richard Eric Schneider
COLOR SLIDES

1. **New Nebraska I**, Indian modular unit, Kallitype and color pastels, 18" x 23".
2. **Brooklyn Bridge**, modular unit, mixed-media contact print, 15" x 23".
3. **Canopy of Trees**, modular unit, mixed-media contact print, 15" x 23".
4. **Cathedral Interior**, modular unit, black & white print, paint, charcoal, 15" x 23".
5. **Lions Abstraction**, modular unit, black & white print, paint, charcoal, 15" x 23".
6. **Melting Man**, modular unit, black & white print, paint, charcoal, 15" x 20".
7. **Indians**, photographically reproduced pattern, sepia-toned and hand-colored, 40" x 48".
8. **Brooklyn Bridge**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white contact prints, 42" x 66".
9. **Canopy of Trees**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white contact prints, 45" x 69".
10. **Cathedral Interior**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white prints, 40" x 48".
11. **Lions Abstraction**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white prints, 40" x 48".
12. **Ocean's Edge**, photographically reproduced pattern, sepia-toned prints, 28" x 48".
13. **City Wall**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white prints, 40" x 48".
14. **Seneca Paper Co.**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white prints, 28" x 48".
15. **Homage to Magritte**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white prints, 42" x 40".
16. **Horseman and Auto**, photographically reproduced pattern, sepia-toned and hand-colored, 40" x 48".
17. **Chimney Bluffs**, photographically reproduced pattern, sepia-toned and hand-colored, 42" x 40".
18. **Basilica Dome**, photographically reproduced pattern, black & white prints, 42" x 40".
19. **Colosseum**, modular unit, photocopied prints pieced together, 15" x 23".

20. Temporary installation of photocopied prints; Ames Gas, Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester.

21. Temporary installation of photocopied prints; Building front, South Avenue, Rochester.

22. Temporary installation of photocopied prints; Cliff's Citgo, Monroe Avenue, Rochester.

23. Temporary installation of photocopied prints; Building front, East Main Street, Rochester.

24. Temporary installation of photocopied prints; Building front, Jefferson Road, Rochester.

25. Thesis Exhibition-Photo Gallery: four original prints before any manipulation.

26. Thesis Exhibition-Photo Gallery: four modules in their rough state.

27. Thesis Exhibition-Photo Gallery: four modules as master copies.


31. Thesis Exhibition-Photo Gallery: *City Wall* posters and pattern photos.

32. Thesis Exhibition-Photo Gallery: *City Wall* posters, large contact prints and patterns.

33. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Frost Avenue, Rochester.

34. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Front Avenue, Rochester.

35. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Front Avenue, Rochester.

36. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Front Avenue, Rochester.

37. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Front Avenue, Rochester.
38. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Front Avenue, Rochester.

39. Permanent installation of Lithograph Posters; Genesee Street and Front Avenue, Rochester.

40. Multi-color mural of Lithograph Posters; College Union Cafeteria, R.I.T., 1983.

41. Multi-color mural of Lithograph Posters; College Union Cafeteria, R.I.T., 1983.

42. Multi-color mural of Lithograph Posters; College Union Cafeteria, R.I.T., 1983.

43. Multi-color mural of Lithograph Posters; College Union Cafeteria, R.I.T., 1983.

44. Multi-color mural of Lithograph Posters; College Union Cafeteria, R.I.T., 1983.

45. Multi-color mural of Lithograph Posters; College Union Cafeteria, R.I.T., 1983.