Motionalization

Emily S. Rosen

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact ritscholarworks@rit.edu.
MOTIONALIZATION

by

EMILY S. ROSEN

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

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
MAY, 1984

Richard D. Zakia, Chairman
Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Bea Nettles
Associate Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

Joan Lyons
Director
Visual Studies Workshop Press

Special Advisor:
Michael Tanimura
Photographer/Technician
Chicago, Illinois
I, Emily S. Rosen, hereby grant permission to the Wallace Memorial Library, of R.I.T., to reproduce my thesis in whole or in part. Any reproduction will not be for commercial use or profit.
"The problem of our generation is to bring the intellectual and emotional, the social and technological components into balanced play; to learn to see and feel them in relationship. Without this interrelatedness there remains only the disjunctive skill in handling human affairs, a rigidity stifling biological and social impulses; a memorized, not a lived life."

L. Maholy Nagy
INTRODUCTION

It becomes easier to write about a visual thesis in retrospect. The exhibition was the culmination of a visual process whereas the written report for a Master's of Fine Art, will terminates a year long mental process. Its purpose will be an explanation and interpretation of my approach to creativity as represented by my photographs.
DISCUSSION

"phi-los'o-phy (Greek philosophia love of wisdom) n. 1 study and knowledge of the principles that cause, control, or explain facts or events; 2 study of the basic principles of a particular field of knowledge; 3 practical wisdom that comes from knowledge of general laws and principles; 4 system of general beliefs or views; 5 serenity and composure"

Philosophy is the attempt to interpret life's continual experiences. The role of an artist is akin to that of a philosopher in that both understand the necessity of generalized approaches to the portrayal of their attitudes.

As the philosopher and the artist, I have taken the generalized approach through an understanding and awareness of the importance of emotions. How do we (man) guide our emotions, and what role do they play in the course of our lives. The understanding and effect of emotions is what I wish to portray photographically.

Emotions have had a tremendous effect on my life and I realize the control that they hold over me. My memories and response to these feelings can be evoked at any time. Emotions, although totally personal, are also universal. Experiences while different have produced similar levels of emotional intensities.

While it is necessary for me to have a thorough understanding of my own emotions it is not necessary for these to be explained to the viewers for them to appreciate my work. In putting my life into perspective, I now can understand why and how I take the abstract approach to
photography. My images are a culmination of this awareness.

I was born visually handicapped. From the beginning, my orientation has been tactile. Once glasses were available, I had another option. While glasses clarified my sense of sight my tactile sense was still innately more comfortable. A piece of glass or plastic while making the world functional did not allow me to understand how or why it worked. I was somewhere in the middle; not totally blind, needing assistance and training, yet not capable of withstanding all the pressures and routines of the sighted world.

Which would I favor with respect to my education? My one wish was to be "normal". Many years were spent hoping people could not see the obvious, pretending that I was normal. Only I saw the extent of the dichotomy forming in my subconsciousness.

I played the game well until fate interfered. At age thirteen, I developed a detached retina. Luckily, it was repaired successfully. The total blindness lasted only a month. Although scared and weary, I tried to bounce back. At this point I was wearing contact lenses allowing me to not look different. Deception was the name of my game.

Slowly changes did come. Deep inside I was so joyous to see again that life took on new meaning, but beneath all the joy lay a nagging fear of losing my sight once again. From the experience, I had gained an appreciation of seeing. I enjoyed the gift immensely and began to not only look, but
to also see.

One year later, I began to take pictures. I loved it. When one's sight is not so clearly defined, one questions its accuracy in recording scenes. My pictures acted as a test of what I saw. Did I see it right? Did I understand it? Is this what it really looks like? Good photographs while recording memories allowed the feedback of viewers to verify the accuracy of the image.

Besides problems with my eyesight, other tremendous changes were occurring in the rest of my life. The death of my father, and the resulting change of family structure, a brother who became involved in hard drugs--to name a few. Physical and mental developments that were beyond control. Freighting instability would describe it all.

In my photographs (which were conventional) I began to concentrate on landscapes. I was attracted to the optimistic beauty and unyielding stability; both qualities which I so fiercely desired. Nothing is as strongly rooted as the natural landscape.

At age eighteen, I experienced another retinal detachment. The reconstructive surgery was not as successful as the first. Permanent damage occurred. I no longer could "forgive and forget" and quickly came to the realization that I was indeed, quite handicapped and had to learn to adjust to this situation. How did I feel, knowing both sight and blindness? How would it affect my life? What was I going to do with it? And how could I use my
uniqueness to advantage?.

Answers to these questions were seven years in coming. Most of these years were spent in frustration and dislike of self. I was angry that I could not do what I wanted most, to see clearly.

According to Patrick Trevor-Roper, in his book, "The World Through Blunted Sight", there are three stages of development in all people who are primarily subjective or "autoplastic" interpreters and who are spared from having their natural tactile evaluations overlaid by good vision. "In the earliest stage there is diffuse representation of the whole image; self confrontation. That stage is replaced by a general appreciation of the separate elements of form and expression. At first there is a structural overemphasis of the meaningful parts. All objects become geometric forms (as could be described from the photographs that I took in college). The third, and final stage occurs only when one has experienced the intellectual and emotional power of imagery. The result is a flexible expression of both their visual and tactile experiences."²

My entrance into this third stage of expression occurred during my first term at RIT. I was enrolled in a Beginning Color Workshop and was totally dissatisfied. My pictures did not describe the effects of color in my world, and "geometric patternning" was not portrayed as successfully in color as in black and white. One night as a distraction from my work, I walked around my apartment and photographed
in color. Not having a flash attachment created the need for long exposures. Not taking the project seriously resulted in my not using a tripod, as I usually did.

The pictures were great! The blurred imagery made the subjects generalized not specific. The process of creating abstract movement allowed me to transcend the reality of time, place, and subject. The picture I envisioned however was both personal and specific in its concept. When sequenced together in a book form, the singular thoughts became a strong, solid idea.

I then wondered if this type of picture making was a one-time fluke, or could it be transfered into the types of landscape photographs that I was taking previously. Unfortunately, that Christmas, my brother, Andy died unexpectedly. BOOM...shock. At that point, I could not have held my camera steady even if I had wanted to. Through camera motion and the resultant blurriness, I was able to transform all the conflicting emotions I was feeling into my photographs.

The loss of Andy forced me to remember the loss of my vision and the loss of my father. What was left from the sense of loss of these specific things was their essence. Their concreteness was gone; their spirit remained. Because I believe that Nature is the soul of man, my ability to express myself via landscape photography came easily.

Since then I have continued to work in this area. Over time, the element of chance has been greatly reduced. I am
now able to consider how the photograph will appear in the final product before it is even taken. I understand the effects (within each photograph) of moving the camera a certain direction and the use of different shutter speeds and apertures on the process.

My subject matter transcended through the landscape has also changed. The subjects at first were grief and anger. As my grief subsided my subjects became the elements of the beauty in life which surrounds me. (See Results)

I have selected my best results of photographs taken during the past year and a half for inclusion in my thesis exhibition.
INFLUENCES

Needless to say, I have been influenced by many things. As explained in the earlier stages of this paper, most of what has influenced my thoughts and actions are the occurrences in my life; its joys and tragedies, people and events.

My outside influences are ever changing, yet the basis for the type of abstraction that occurs in my photographs are stable, beginning its history in the period of art entitled Impressionism. Impressionism began around the same time as did photography (the mid nineteenth century). A photograph was capable of recording elaborate detail; a job formerly held by paintings. Painters were able to free themselves from that type of structure and worked on ideas and feelings rather than literal subject matter.

The field of philosophy was also emerging and influencing painters. Natural philosophy opened the world to rational thinking, beyond that of man's everyday existence. Thought became unlimiting. The Impressionists aim was to record the vividness of the artists' first conception of time and space in Nature. Reality was altered into abstraction, replacing facts and documents in art.

Most Impressionists worked outdoors within the natural environment. Their goal was to copy nature in a scientific direction which related the properties of light and color with intuition. As English painter, John Constable remarked, "Painting is a science and should be pursued as an
inquiry into the laws of nature. Why then may not landscape painting be considered a branch of natural philosophy of which pictures are but experiments?" Light, space and experience transferred from the unconfining landscape were the real subjects for the Impressionist painter. Their use of color assimilated that of the forms. The paintings were spontaneous as were the fleeting moods.

So, this school of painters were the forerunners of Modern Abstract Art. Although their medium was paint, I can assimilate their theories with my own in photography. The medium of photography is young, and is just now at the point of conventional departure as Impressionism was in the mid 1800's.

Modern artists have studied and abstracted on these ideas. I have been influenced by the painters Josef Albers, Milton Avery and Mark Rothko. I am drawn to their choices of color, space, and subject material done in abstracted forms.

Being that photography is my craft, it is more difficult to pinpoint those who have influenced me. While I have been influenced by many photographers and artists I am most attracted to those artist photographers who while having learned the science and technicalities of photography are able to transform this process into a miraculous and powerful aesthetic art form. (Timothy O'Sullivan, L. Maholy-Nagy, Eugene Atget and Edward Weston, to name a few). Many of the teachers I have studied with, have worked with blurred imagery. (Richard Linke, Nancy
Rexroth and Elaine Matczak). Although it was never forced upon me, subconsciously and aesthetically I have been influenced by their teachings.
THE RESULTS: The Photographs

The statement introducing my exhibition best describes what I am striving for in my work. It reads as follows:

"Through camera motion and blurred imagery, I will study light and space and their transference from visual landscapes to emotional landscapes. The essence of objects (subjects) will shift into abstract forms by means of their composition, texture, and idea."

The above statement is taken from my thesis proposal. However, it seems much too rational for the occurrences here.

Through camera motion, Nature modulates to its most base level; being exposed to suggestion, change and the notion of romanticism. The result is sometimes chaotic, and at other times unbelievably calm. These photographs illustrate the ambiguity between our perception of reality and fantasy; that blurry area that transends definition or concrete boundaries. The work expresses my personal philosophy which is a result of my life's experiences.

I came to these conclusions while working on the sequencing of the photographs. To realize what they said collectively, I needed to understand them individually. I began to make lists; to define and catagorize them.

abstraction
subjective
aftermath
nothingness
whirling
vibrating
stillness
memory
flowing
thinking
confusion

nostalgia
music
living
seeing
color
subject
space
depth
texture
light

fear
anger
aloneness
isolation
happiness
thoughtful
watchful
pensive
questioning
speed

Most of the descriptions were intangible and abstract. Music seemed to be the only way to put the lyrics (notes?) together.

The show (and poster) were sequenced in an
unconventional way. By staggering the placement of the photographs, and changing their size, the photographs were composed in "measures" which were visually punctuated with "rests, slurs, whole notes, half notes and staccatos" (See EXHIBITION SLIDES in APPENDIX). With this method, I could direct and lead them through the unique measures of the blended melody. I could orchestrate for the viewer my emotions in such a way as to make the internal feelings become a tangible, visual experience.
CONCLUSIONS

So, what next? I don't know. It is hard to predict the future when the present is just now being lived. At this point, I am satisfied and content with the work I have done thus far in the completion of an MFA. It is a whole (complete) body of work which can definitely stand on its own, while, and at the same time, there is much room for expansion.

I would like to work more with mystical types of photographs; those where form is almost completely triggered by color, force and deep remembrance. I believe these to be the most successful components joined in a singular image. They seem most personal to me.

Someday I hope to sequence my photographs into a printed book so that viewers may have a more personal and tactile viewing experience. The intensity of space, emotion and subject in the act of turning pages or the opening and closing of the book is a different kind of involvement which will add to the photographs' power. There exists a preciousness in this type of presentation and possession that if done well, will never lose its impact. Books are stable. There is always something new to be learned from them.

And, after all, learning is the name of the game. Although this thesis was technically involving camera motion and blurred imagery (and their effect within a photograph), its main purpose was that of self knowledge and realization;
what I have learned about myself and how I choose to share that knowledge with others. The process is never ending, and ever changing. This thesis is just one step in the journey to further my artistic growth.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


TIME CALENDER

Summer 1983- Begin to work on thesis photographs
September 1983- Thesis Show scheduled for April 7, 1984
October 1983- Thesis Proposal due
September-December 1983- Continue to photograph for thesis
January 1984- Begin to work on color show poster
January-March 1984- Print final prints/ Work on sequencing
Late February 1984- Poster printed at Visual Studies Workshop
March 1984- Work on final sequencing/ Matte finished prints
April 7-13, 1984- Thesis Show
April-May 1984- Write thesis report
May 1984- Completion/ Graduation
TECHNICAL DATA ON PHOTOGRAPHS:

Camera- Rolleiflex TLR with 80mm f/3.5 lens
Hasselblad 500 CM with 80mm f/2.8 lens
Film- Kodak Vericolor III Type S Professional
Paper- Kodak Ektacolor Type 78, F Surface

TECHNICAL DATA ON POSTER

Color Separations- Hell DC 300 Laser Scanner
Type- Simincini Garamond
Paper- Vintage 65# Cover
Press- Heidelberg Kord
PROCEDURE

The procedures for my photographs are relatively standard. Long exposures, hand held to get motion and blur, with Vericolor III in a 2 1/4 camera. The rest is straight color printing on Ektacolor 78 F Surface paper. Many tries... understanding motion... many hours... moderate successes.

The poster, is actually my exhibition catalogue. It displays all types of my imagery and brings across the concept behind my exhibition. Technically it was difficult to do. My study at RIT and my Internship at Visual Studies Workshop Press did not prepare me for these difficulties. Before preparing the poster, I only knew the theories behind color reproduction. After designing the layout, there are many steps, descriptions of which follow.

1. In order to be reproduced, all color photographs must be photographically broken down into magenta, yellow, cyan and black layers. The mixture of these colors in varying degrees will produce any color actually rendered by light. The continuous tone photographs must also be broken down in various sized dots (done by a halftone screen). A press can only lay down one density of ink at a time. The dot pattern is a way to vary the ink's intensity so that different values can be correctly reproduced. Both steps are done in one stage either by hand (in a darkroom) or, electronically by an optical scanner. I was fortunate to be able to do my seperation on an RIT Hell DC 300 Laser Scanner with a 150
line screen (and the help of Joe Noga and Blair Richards).
Except for dust and moire pattern (incorrect screen angle on a color), the process was relatively easy, yet time consuming.

2. A color proof was then made by the Transfer Key Method in order to check the accuracy of the separations. Each color was transferred onto chemically coated, color acetate and registered with the rest. In my case, the proof was less accurate than the finished product.

3. The type was set by Linda Pickert on a Merganthaler CRTronic. A line negative was then made of the "speced" type.

4. The next, and most crucial step was the negative (the separations) stripping. If not registered properly, the colors and registration will not be correct in the finished product. Each color was placed on a different masking sheet, with the exact same layout. A model (for placement) was done beforehand. Each separation negative was registered over the model until the correctly shaped and angled halftone dot was seen. Much time, patience and good vision was necessary. For his help at this step, I thank Ed Reed.

5. The finished "flats" were each exposed (by a UV source) onto separate Aluminum Lithographic Plates and then developed by detergent and water. This is a relatively easy step, providing air dust is not flying freely.

6. The final step was the printing, done on a Heidelberg
Kord Press at VSW by Tom Sullivan. The four colors were registered and printed on top of one another on the same sheet of paper. If not registered correctly (in either the pre-press or press stage), correct color and outline will not be produced. A good press and press person can achieve this by familiarity with the press operations and the overall desired effect.

The finished product was my poster. There were flaws in most of the steps (camera flare, moire, misregistration), but, because of the size of the images, its content and idea, they were not overtly noticeable. The poster was claimed a success technically and aesthetically.
PURPOSE:
Through camera motion, blurred imagery, and printed matter, I will study light and space and their transference from visual landscapes to emotional landscapes. The essence of objects (subjects) will shift into abstract visual forms by means of their composition, color, texture, and idea.

BACKGROUND:
I was born visually handicapped. My photographs are attempts to record, clarify, and portray my vision for myself, and, for others. There are no boundaries or limitations on nature except those placed by my camera. I attempt to "teach" the camera how to see the "essence" of objects rather than their fine-line detail; their mass rather than outline. Light, space, movement, and time (subjects of a visual landscape) are transformed into ideas and emotions.

The basis for this type of abstraction comes from the work of the impressionists of the nineteenth century: Van Gogh, Turner, Manet, Monet, etc. These painters began the abstract movement which has come to be known as Modern Art. Their use of substitute or arbitrary color was later studied by Josef Albers in his book, "The Interaction of Color". Definition and theory are explained. Maholy Nagy and Man Ray photographically studied the play of black, white and gray with time and space in the 1920's. Milton Avery, Mark Rothko, and others have continued the tradition in painting. Because of the nature of the medium, all photographers must deal with one or more aspects of these concepts.

I know sight and I know blindness. This thesis, with my camera, will be a definition of how I adapt to this in visual, spiritual and emotional terms.

PROCEDURE:
I have been working with blurred imagery and camera motion for almost a year now. I need to push the ideas much further. Currently, my photographs are singular images which stand alone. I want them to work in unison in order to become a theme unified by their content rather than subject. To achieve this sequencing will be inegral to my work. My final goal is a portrait; a portrait of my visual landscape--tight, concise, and sincere. This will take the form of an exhibition.

The work will be mostly in color, using a medium format camera. The costs for this type of work are not extravagant. I will be experimenting with the size of the prints. Film, paper, matte board, and framing supplies (the usual photography show expenses) will be needed.

I have taken courses in graphic arts to learn the
procedures involved in reproducing printed material (from
the pre-press designing stage until the finished product
piece). Currently, I have an internship at the Visual
Studies Workshop in the Print Shop. They produce artists' 
books by lithographic means. I would like to incorporate 
this into my thesis by producing an exhibition catalogue of 
the show. An exhibition is such a temporary thing whereas a 
book or catalogue or poster keeps the ideas and memories 
alive in a concrete form. If done correctly, a catalogue 
can also be the beginning for new ideas rather than just a 
documentation of an event.

The catalogue will be an autobiographical documentation 
of the seven months involved in doing my thesis, along with examples of the work itself. Since I will be doing most of the work myself, I believe that the cost will not be too high. I have allotted $1,000 for the total cost of the 
exhibition, publicity and catalogue.

I have been scheduled gallery space for my thesis 
exhibition in the spring (April) of 1984. My schedule is to 
photograph as much as possible in the fall quarter, 
sequencing and presentation during the winter months, the 
final catalogue production and thesis report in the spring. 
I am planning to have the whole process completed by 
graduation time in May 1984.
EMILY S. ROSEN

MOTIONALIZATION
AN MFA THESIS PRESENTATION

APRIL 7-13, 1984
OPENING RECEPTION: APRIL 7, 7:00-9:00 PM

RIT PHOTOGRAPHY GALLERY
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, N.Y.