3-11-2005

Fears

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GRADUATE THESIS
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

By Vincent C. Gothard

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I would to think everyone that made this possible.

To my mother that pushed me to always be better.

To my wife and children, without your support and love I don’t think I could have made it.

To all of are friends at the RIT community. Thanks!

Finally, to my thesis committee, thank you for your support and patience with helping me to achieve my goals as a person and as an artist.
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Chapter 1

Artist Statement

Throughout all the years of creating art for an audience, crafting an artist statement still remains the hardest process for me. How does one explain years of emotions, thought, and actions in just a few lines or paragraphs?

For me, my work changes as quickly as the clouds. As an artist I am the changing winds. There is a hidden force that every artist looks for in their work that answers the question: Why? Or What? I think of it as "The Process".

My work is a reaction to my inner emotions. I'm not saying that my art is simple in meaning. Take a soccer player that is getting ready to kick a ball but this particular player has five feet on one leg. So when one kicks the ball it is almost impossible to just hit it with one foot: therefore the ball has a very different look to it as it goes through the air, because more than one foot struck the ball.

Creating art is identical to the five footed soccer player. I begin creating with one emotion in mind but as time passes emotions change. New spins become embedded into the work and I end up with a creation that is several layers deep. Sometimes the webbing of layers becomes so entangled that I have difficulty separating the visual layers in my mind.
Chapter 2

Artist Introduction

I was born in a metropolitan area of Orlando, Florida. I took to drawing about the same age as any young boy does to avoid boredom. It's just that I never grew out of the doodling stage. I have typically used art to channel emotions that I just did not know how to understand. By the time I reached high school, I developed a pretty good foundation in visual arts. At the end of high school, my teachers encouraged me to go to college and hone my skills. Attending my local community college, I got a real taste of how many different mediums there were. I was like a kid in a toy store. I didn’t settle with one medium until I took a photography class. Even then I had no intention of focusing on photography. I enjoyed the fact that other mediums offered different solutions to my shifting emotions. It wasn't until I transferred to a four year university that I started to direct myself to the medium of photography. I was floored to find out that university didn't have as much to offer than a community college.

This was where my world began. The love-hate relationship of creating art and the questions of oneself and the process of becoming.
Artistic Influences

Influences are everywhere throughout my life; objects, symbols, and even theory have dramatic effects in the way I use my senses. As an artist I found stimulates everywhere in my surroundings. To simplify my thoughts as I write, influences come in two ways: artist that create or use techniques that stimulate me and theory that supports the making of art. Artist that create or use techniques that stimulate me are broken down into three groups: painters, photographers, and sculptures. While painters generally influenced my attitude towards subject matter, photographers influenced my notion of craft and composition. Finally, sculptures and installation artist were also drawn upon for techniques and presentation. Finally, the second group is theorists that support the making of art. I will not try to hide the fact that this group has less of an impact on my work. When I do lean toward art theory it tends to be group influenced.
The following artists helped me create a mind set or mental setting.

Francisco de Goya has always been an influence on me, Goya’s realistic hellish visions. It seems as though his emotions drive his art work. After some research, I found that there was a common ground, it was hate. It wasn't until I got to my later years of undergrad that I started to realized how hated drove me and my creations. According to David Sylvester from his book About Modern Art, "Others have created images as terrible as his (Goya) of man's inhumanity to man, but no other major artist has conceived of a world so comprehensively consumed by hate" (internet). I can not even remotely imagine the hated of war as Goya saw it. I still can only relate to hated based on my failures. Goya’s etches fascinated me for truthfulness of the time and the piece of historic clarity that they represented. The detail to the surroundings and reality, also his effort to exploit the situation had an intriguing interest to me. I was intrigued in the change that Goya's work went through as he started to lose his emotional grasp on reality, when the darkness of his surroundings started to take over his world.
Salvador Dali's influence provided an interesting contrast to Goya's in terms of his sense of distortion. Even though the elements in Dali's painting are recognizable, I was visually struck by the way he distorted and bent reality to create his surroundings. It gave the idea that time is a flexible piece of mylar that can be stretched, twisted, or melted to form a new environment based on the interior self.

Hieronymus Bosh brought an uncontrollable sense of reality and chaos to the canvas, his environments always seem to create layers of distortion. This is where my visual perception begins. These influences were some of the artists that started to affect me in my mid to late teens. It was not until I changed my focus to photography that I found it possible to create work that could convey my world that lied within.
The Photographers

I have adopted one or more techniques from each artist, in order to create my individualized concept that satisfied me. I started to look at the works of photographers and sculptors, and only paying attention to the elements that they used and composition in which they presented their visual world. I also was interested in the techniques which they developed.

Edward Weston brought the beauty of form. It did not matter what the subject matter was, the form excited me as the light and smoothness of each form had a flow to it. Perception is changed by Weston's handling of a familiar object in a new way, altering our reality of that object forever. This simple use of perception was calming and helped to ease the reality of the surroundings.

Jan Saudek's work affected me in a similar way. But I felt that more attention was paid to the surroundings in which the subject matter existed. The warming of the tones and softness of the background formed visual comfort for the subject matter.
Jerry Uelsmann brought the element of distortion and creditability. I was visually aroused by both the technique and the manipulation of reality. The work was soothing to the visual stress of the environment that he created. I felt that the work was effective much like Dali's but used the medium I wish to work in (photography).

Joel Peter Wiktin's work of manipulations was bold, but yet it soothed me. The visual exploitation of reality to those whom were different and the feeling of the relationship between subject matter interested me. I felt as if there was a personal bond, otherwise how could someone let themselves be exploited so boldly. As much as Wiktin wanted, in my opinion, chaos in his work, it was also very controlled. He manipulated the environment in order to have control. This being my visual perception of his work true or not became a major influence in the way I viewed reality and controlling my surroundings.
Another photographer Arthur Tress gave support to the relationship between the creator and the subject in the line of studies that he was doing with children's dreams. I felt the environment controlled the relationship, even though the creator controlled the surroundings. It was this struggle of control that became a major issue in my work, challenging my process of shifting visually.

Ralph Eugene Meatyard brought more subject matter to the table with his use of masks. It is the fear of loosing control that the mask offered me a shield. By using a mask I could conceal my identity from the viewers, and have a little bit of denial and lack of consequences. It creates a lost sense of reality and allowed me to feel more in control of the harshness of the surroundings.
The Starn Twins (Mike and Doug) creativity to bring some of the photographs off the wall and survive in a three dimensional world was bold. This change of traditional display brought endless ideas of control. As I developed some techniques of my own, I felt as if I was missing something. I saw my reality in three dimensional ways, but I had no concept of materials. So I started to look at sculptors and other similar works of art.

**The Sculptors and Installation Artist**

I was interested in George Segal's work with plaster and human figures, since I too was working a lot with self-portraiture. I liked the idea of his installations. It was as if you were seeing a photograph brought to life. But even more, I liked that the reality and the environment were both controlled.
I was also looking at Alfredo Jarr's work. In some of his works, the viewer's gaze was taken away. The viewer was forced to view the work through the reflections of an object to see the imagery, and, by doing so; the viewer would occasionally see a glimpse of themselves in or next to the photo. I enjoyed this idea of visual play and even taking the artist's continuing reference to the viewer in his work.

Eva Hesse was another influential artist. Her work with materials such as latex, fiberglass, and liquids was uniquely organic. These materials had energy and were always changing. Change was good for me. With change I felt as if I could stay one step ahead of my surroundings and the pressures that followed. With material exploration, I could try and achieve the right surface for my work.
The Thinkers

Finally, the last group of artistic influences included artists who presented theoretical ideas in their work. I enjoy learning and reading about art and art movements. Your mind is allowed to conclude on its own terms. For me the best concepts are open ended. The subject matter can be on any topic. What makes a concept teasing is when you walk away wanting more. One is more intrigued with emptiness than fulfillment. Some of the concept art it's my baggage verses their baggage. Neither side wins or loses, since both individuals can be right and wrong. What I see as a failure is when the concept can be answered; the image is what it is and no further discussion needs to occur.

As I looked back to many of the and self-ego books that I have read, the ones that I tend to set aside ask questions without direct answers.

Two of these books are Art & Fear by David Bayles and Ted Orland and The Artist's Way by Julia Cameron. The book Art & Fear introduces so many direct questions for the artist to think about. It's a guide to responsibility and facing the fears of creativity. The book The Artist's Way is more of a spiritual look within to find direction and clarity. I also read books by psychologists, including: Driven to Distraction by Edward M. Hallowell and John
J. Ratey *Insearch* by James Hillman *Dark Night of the Soul* by St. John of the Cross, and *Care of the Soul* by Thomas Moore, just to name a few. I believe that you must come closer to yourself in order to understand ones inner thought, I intend to leave a special place at the end of this paper for such.
I felt a sense of insecurity regarding the new medium of photography. At first my initial work in photography had no energy or life. It wasn't until my studies at University of Central Florida (UCF) that I started to see some interesting work from fellow classmates. One that was working with multiple-exposures and another was altering surfaces of the photographs. I tried to copy their styles with little to no success.

The images to the left are all untitled examples of work done at Seminole Community College and University of Central Florida. Techniques varied:
- Pinhole
- Infrared
- Alternate Process
- Multi Media
- Multi Exposure
- Negative Manipulations
- Multi Negative Printing

Work dated from 1992 to 1995
I had come to think that my surrounding was holding me back, so I packed up and change my residence. I left everything that I knew as security, my home, my job, and my friends, and transferred to the University of Florida (UF) to finish my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree.

At University of Florida I felt I was making some new head away. I was getting exposure to some new mediums such as metal, plaster, printmaking, and others. But my world was about to change when one professor verbally slammed me for creating "shit art". I lost all direction in my work. I submerged myself in an act of visual gluttony by looking at other artist's work to find the answers of a process that could work for me.

At the time, I was taking a large format class and had no choice but to shoot in a studio setting. I had never shot in this type of setting before. At first it was like putting me in a cage, my freedom had felt stripped. But I remembered back to a student at University of Central Florida and his attempts at multiple-exposures and some of the artists I had looked at during my healing phase of visual gluttony. The process of multiple-exposures had features that could enhance the larger format and the cage-like setting. Now, my head was being filled with new influences and new hope when I discovered the larger format.

I used the studio every day for weeks photographing objects and teaching myself the control factors of multiple-exposure. As I emerged back to my social status I had a new appearance to my work.
The work was starting to have the resemblance of layers. Meaning, the work wasn't so straight forward. Images and objects were started to interact with each other at multiple levels. (Spiritual presents, do to the ghost effect, and multiple actions of direction). The process of discovery was overwhelming to me. I was like a shark in a feeding frizzy. I just kept taking photos of a group of objects that I had selected and changed the order in which I shot them. I always achieved very different results. Some good and others bad. At this stage of execution my focus was on learning to read the characteristics of objects to lower the chances of burning the negative out with to much light. I was caught in the suspense of the outcome.

The real fear came when it was time to show the work to my peers. Although, their reactions weren't negative, some viewers thought the subject matter could be pushed more. One comment was that they showed no life. I remembered back to some of the artists I was influenced by, (such as Edward Weston) and the way he showed the human form so elegantly. I also wanted to try to achieve the studio control of Joel Peter Witkin. I faced another problem, I was to shy to ask anyone to model nude. I had already had a bad critique for photographing a female, so I decided to put myself in the photo and shoot in the studio. But there was one last thing that I feared, and that was people seeing me nude. That's when I remembered the work of Ralph Eugene Meatyard and used the mask to hide my personality and identity. So once again, I submerged myself in the studio, I experimented with the process of
sequencing of using myself as the main subject matter but concealed my identity.

This time the audience response was much more positive. My peers were intrigued with what they saw, but I remained in complete fear due to being naked. I felt vulnerable and defenseless against the gaze of my peers.

It wasn't until I was exposed to more three dimensional work that I felt I could counterbalance this anxiety. This was where the influences of Alfredo Jarr and others played a role in my future
My creations started to embrace reality on the same scale. Materials became an issue for integrity and safety from the surroundings, and size needed to be life size. Things had become complicated in the blink of an eye.
Photographic size was not much of challenge. But three dimensional realities were a learning experience, via, trial by error. Materials such as; steel, plaster, glass, mirrors, and fabrics were all new to me and I had to turn to research and look for influences, such as the Starn Twins, Eva Hesse, and George Segal. I experimented a lot with the construction of materials. But the final challenge came from increasing the size of the photograph to resemble the size of the materials in the surroundings.

Much of my earlier images were more like free standing framing sculptures. I would use a selected series of mural photographs and frame them in the steel frames. This way I could present them in random spaces or all in one space. I used steel a lot in my work for the structural strength and assemblage. I started with two dimensional steel frames that were sometimes linked by chair, wire, or pushed into the ground.
My peer's critiques turned out to be somewhat successful. I then started making more three dimensional frames that resembled cages. These cages started to house photographs of me. By this time, my interest in installation art was emerging. Every idea that my mind pondered was about controlling my surroundings.

Establishing control was much harder to achieve than I
thought. In order to challenge my surroundings, I started to move my work from one location to another on campus, I wanted other peers would react to my work. On four or five different occasions, I came back to the site of my work only to find it vandalized. Most of the times people kicked the frames with the photographs down or broke the steel frames and I would just weld them back together. In one instance, I moved the work and someone had splashed a red bucket of paint on the photographs, so I took more red paint and add to what one had started. I was amazed with how much the work went through in just six months. I was finding myself enjoying the interaction of others on an anonymous scale, it kept the work alive for me, as well as exciting.

I also tried to develop installations in interior spaces. My thoughts were if I can not control the outside world then I'll attempt to control an environment constructed on the inside. The results of this were a little bit more predictable because I controlled who entered the space and the amount of their interaction with the work. My interests in these types of installations soon waned after their completion. I continued to make a few more installations as I awaited reply's from graduate schools.
Untitled Installation
Mixed Media
Room Space 7' x 17'
1997
Chapter 4

First Year at Rochester Institute of Technology

I arrived in Rochester, NY to begin my graduate studies at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). My transition to Rochester from the southern areas of Florida was not without its difficulties. I felt a little out of place. It could have been because of the regional change or just the simple fact of trying to be accepted by a new set of peers. I found my surroundings more demanding. The resources at RIT were abundant, but accessing them was another world. Due to the departmental structure, cross studying was not something done that often.

I found myself experimenting in new areas like glass, clay, metal, and molding processes. The advantages of the facilities and resources drew me into a world of constant apperception with new materials, such as, glass, rubber, fiberglass, molds, and new artistic mediums and approaches.

Fall Walkthrough (Hard times begin)

During my first quarter of study I found myself fighting my surroundings. This pressure greatly influenced the appearance and construction of my first walkthrough evaluation.

Concept:

I constructed an installation that enabled others, the audience, to experience the kinds of pressure I was feeling in the controlled academic surroundings of graduate school.
Description:

For my fall walkthrough, I created an installation of: seven modified wooden pallets, seven large black and white prints, seven open faced boxes made of Plexiglass, lights, water, and walls. The installation also included me as a primary subject.

The center support beam was knocked out on each pallet so that other pallet boards would bend when stepped on by a viewer. Then the pallet were cut and resized to create a one point perspective view. A plexiglass box was placed in the center of each pallet. One black and white print of me was placed in the Plexiglass boxes and the boxes were filled with water. The pallet were then placed on blocks to elevate them off the ground, the seven pallets were placed end to end to create one platform. Walls were constructed around the pallets to constrict the viewer's movement and vision. Lights were placed beneath the platform to illuminate the water and the photographs. Finally, I placed my own body at the far end of the construction. As viewers experience the installation my body was back lit appearing as a silhouette figure. The result was to hide my identity.
**Review:**

My intentions were to create an environment that would make an individual conscious of the pressure that is placed on others. The center beam was taken out on the pallets to create a weaker structure that would bend. The Plexiglas boxes were placed inside the pallets and filled with water and the photograph. The effect here was as a viewer walked on the pallets the boards would dip into the water and apply pressure to the photographs, which was symbolic of my circumstances. The walls and narrowing of the space was to create a sense of confinement and insecurity. The last element was the invasion of me appearing as a dark, shadowy figure. I found that all of my intentions of control in my installation could not be achieved. Control was the last thing I had. The work enraged people, which in turn made me defensive.

I started to withdraw inward after my first walkthrough. I dearly wanted something or someone to protect me, hide me, and nurture me. Based on this experience, I began to experiment with body molds and masks as ways to protect myself. I had a great desire to burn the past. Due to what I felt was a failed critique, I began to re-examine the materials and methods that symbolically conveyed the appearance and interpretation of protection.

**Winter Walkthrough (The Isolation)**

After first quarter walkthrough, I wanted to burn my past. But most of all I wanted protection from the future; I still had two
more Walkthroughs to survive. During the winter quarter, I experimented with lots of materials such as plaster, clay, fiberglass, and steel. I was searching for that material that would best represent and symbolize protection from all I feared. The one thing I found is that photography had become less of a factor in my work. It did not convey, as the other materials did, and did not meet the level of protection or security I sought. With the photograph, I exposed myself due to the representational nature, with the new materials I handled; exposure was limited and greatly controlled.

**Concept:**

I wanted to incorporate some of the same ideas of special control from my first Walkthrough but combine them with new added elements.

**Description:**

For the winter evaluation, I used some of the same deficiencies that I used in my first walk-through, including walls, and a tunnel with one point perspective view. I introduced some new materials, such as a plaster body cast, cages, burned clothing on panels, and a video camera.

This tunnel had a new twist to it. The tunnel started at the doors entrance so that there was no way to bypass the installation. The tunnel controlled the viewer by getting narrower and smaller in height. Thus, by the time the viewer got to the end of the tunnel they where on their knees, the result was an unnerving constricted
space that forced the viewer to feel insecure. At the end of the tunnel, I placed two doors, the doors were separated with a space just big enough for the viewer's hand to fit through and grab artist statement. Chained closed, the doors did not open. The viewer was forced to turn around and return to the front of the tunnel. But the tunnel was not a stand alone piece. It incorporated views seen from within the tunnel. These views consisted of burned panels containing my clothes and a plaster body cast placed in cages. Finally, a camera was placed in the tunnel from a hidden vantage point, surveying the viewer and his/ her experience in the installation.

**Review:**

In the winter Walkthrough, as in the fall, my installation angered viewers. But this time I felt the point of environmental control was a little more effective. I even felt safer from the negative responses because I still was behind the walls of my installa-
tion. The viewers were forced to talk through the walls at the entrance of the tunnel. I was able to speak more positively about the experience. One thing that caught me off guard was the visual interest on the burned panels. Many viewers wanted to know what they represented, for me it was the idea of stopping a sense of time. Similar to the way a camera freezes time for one split second. But overall, a lot of the feedback was similar to the fall Walkthrough.

At this point I was beaten. I knew that I was not going to do another Walkthrough based on controlling the responses of the viewer. I was losing the will to fight against everyone; I was starting to lose the will to create art at all.

**Spring Walkthrough (The Truss)**

In the spring quarter, I found I no longer had the ability to fend off the circumstances of my work. I felt mentally and physically tired. I had successfully pushed people away. My finished experiments had no life. I was finally alone. The only thing that was working for me was the visual promise of works in progress.

**Concept:**

I simply wanted to show viewers the experiments that I was working on. I wanted the focus to be my working work and not myself.
Description:

In my spring Walkthrough, I utilized a variety of new materials, including t-shirts with images of myself, graded steel figure, a life size glass figure bonded in wire, framed wall panel collages, and a fiberglass figure. The work was straightforward and did not represent any single idea. In contrast to my earlier installations there were no tunnels, no control, and no protection.

Review:

Oddly enough my spring Walkthrough turned out to be the best of the three. People were invited to talk and I was amazed by how much interpretation viewers brought to each work: work that I felt was still in progress. I was simply showing what I had been doing for a year, and how each failure led me a new level of working, understanding, and knowledge.
Chapter 5

Second Year at
Rochester Institute of Technology

The Direction of Questions

To my amazement I made it through the advancement process. Now advanced, I would be allowed to work more independently on my work. This meant that I could continue to experiment with the molding process in fiberglass that I had left off with at the end of the first year's walkthrough. At this juncture this was how I felt.

As I walked to the studio and reach out to touch the door knob, it is cold. As I turn the door knob I felt my flesh twisting to free itself but instead the door moves forward slowly as a cold breeze simultaneously rushes from the room. The air is stimulating as it scraped across my outer covering. Each strain of hair and every layer of my skin was roused. The hair on my body moves liked cilia drawing me gradually into the darken room as I inch forward moving my hands across the wall slowly searching for the light switch. My finger tips send millions of visual stimuli. The most prevailing vision ice blocks and sandpaper melting together in a way never felt before.

The wall was slick with a slight oiliness to it. As my inner vision slips out of control, my fingertips tread across the cold metal casing that surrounds the light switch. After powering the lights a visual flicker of the florescent light bulb indicate its response. The room was so quiet that I can hear the faint buzz of the light and pulse of the electricity pacing back and forth within the bulb. My own pulse tried to keep up with the harmonic rhythm of the light but falls short of beat. I bring my eyes downward to focus on the job that I must accomplish. I gather up the
tools and lay them out vary methodically way similar to that of a surgeon. The anticipation of the start begins to affect my entire body. Every limb of my body tingled all over as if they have fallen asleep. I recognize my endeavor is about to begin. My body felt very warm. My thoughts were now flowing in my head causing my receptors to passionately response, yet remaining incomprehensible. Then as quickly as it all begin it stops. My mind is clear. My body felt normal again. I know that I am ready to take one thought and make it reality. Now the process begins.

It is these very strong emotions that inspire me. I don't know most of the answers to my work. Thinking just slows down the process for me; I like to feel like I'm part of the work. The secrets are the unknowns.

With the new start of the second year, I continued the experiments with the medium that I had found a little success with: fiberglass. I started to explore fiberglass. The brittle qualities and the uncontrollable flow of the fiberglass frustrated and excited me. I also liked the liquid qualities of this pliable substance.

I begun simple by making small figures out of clay and then making a negative mold with plaster. Then I took the mold and lined it with cheese cloth to give added support, then I poured liquid fiberglass into the mold and pushed it around evenly. I'd let the fiberglass cure overnight, and come back and break the mold to free the new work. What pleased me about the fiberglass was that it did not take hold of every detail, it would. It produced a new, uncontrolled look I really enjoyed this abstract quality. It reminded me of the unpredictable steps
that can exist in multi-exposure photography. Finally more comfortable with the plaster mold process, I started to make full scale faces. I had made several masks before, I enjoyed being able to change my mood and the mood of my peers by wearing the mask. This concealment gave me security in my surroundings.

I concurrently also used the fiberglass as an incasing medium, taking clothes, photographs, and sometimes both laying them flat and pouring fiberglass over the materials to seal them in time. I got tired of working on a small scale I've always had a desire to work in a larger scale that is more natural and tangible.

Producing large scale work soon turned to creating installation that covered a large space. I went back to experiment of the face and returned to experimenting with the face, but this time I increased the size to twice the natural scale. Still the size was not covering the space as my mind had imagined. It wasn't until I came across some scraps of theater foam props that I saw an opportunity to create in an even larger scale. I took a couple of sheet of foam 18'D x 5'W x 6'H and glued them together. It took about a week to carve a face out of the foam. Once the face was carved, I used clay to build the face up. Now the mold was ready for the fiberglass. First, I had to cover the face with a gel to act as a release for the fiberglass. Then, covered the entire face with cheese cloth, and covering the mold and allowing it to cure was the final step. Within twenty-four hours the fiberglass was hard and I could pull the mold off. The first one that I pulled offered to be a success. The face had
Untitled
Fiberglass Studies
Life Size Heads
2000

Untitled
Plaster Mold Base
48" x 55"
2000
an amber-yellow tint to it and it resembled what my mind had imagined. I was very pleased with the results, so pleased that in the next few weeks I pulled four more different faces this process.

While installing the work, an unexpected accident had caused wonderful results. I was hanging one of the faces when the string broke and the face came crashing down to the floor, breaking into three large pieces. I was so mad that I decided not to show any work at all! A few days went past and one of my professors asked me what happened to my installation. I showed him the outcome of the one that fell. He was very pleased with what he saw and suggested that I should break the others and rearrange the different parts. At first, I thought that there was no way that I was going to break all the faces that I spent months working on. I mean each face had a different expression, unique to itself. My answer was NO! But after a few weeks of looking at the broken pieces, I started to see some of the qualities the professor had mentioned. I decided I would break one face and if I didn't like the results I still had two more left to work with. I took one of the faces and laid it down on the floor and stood on a 6 foot ladder with a 6' foot ½ inch thick steel rod and dropped it. The results were indeed interesting. What was more inspiring was that for the first time I saw an opportunity to do photography again. I did not see the faces as three-dimensional work any more. Instead I saw the frag-
ments of a broken face. I photographed the parts of the faces at different perspectives, the results were wonderful. Importantly, the graduate class was lobbying the college for a grant to produce a portfolio. All graduates and faculty were invited to submit one 16" x 20" photograph.
For the portfolio, I created the only photograph produced in my two years of graduate school. It was a photograph of desire. For my new photographic work, I wanted to incorporate some kind of multiple imagery. I started to dig through a lot of my old pictures. I was interested in merging the old with the new investigations of the face. In my search, I came across a series of images that I shot of my body. I had never shown these images because I just never found the right context to show them. Now I had all the elements to create a photograph, I just needed to figure out how I was going to bring them together. I thought about using multiple enlargers and layering one image on another. After a few attempts, it didn't give me the look I wanted. I needed the bodies to be a little less pronounced. Then I remembered that I had some high contrast ortho film (transparent film). I printed some of the individual bodies onto the transparent film and did a few contact prints onto the paper. Then I moved the paper to another enlarger, with the negative of the fiberglass faces, and print the face onto the paper. After I processed the paper, I felt that I had the image I was looking for. I continued to contact print all the body images that I
had, and taped them together to make one 16" x 20" contact sheet that I could just lay over the entire sheet of photographic paper. I set up another enlarger with the face negative so that it would cover as much of the area as possible. In the trial print, I was very pleased with what I saw. The bodies had broken up the face even more, creating a dynamic negative space. The face was absorbed enough by the negative space that it slowly floated into view.

The quality of the negative space and the abstract appearance of the broken face in this work would ultimately lead me to my thesis project.
**Chapter 6**

**Thesis Show**

_Fears_
Installation
15' x 15' Space
2001

**Concept:**

For my thesis show, I focused on the external expression of the face. Everybody uses body language to communicate or to react to a situation. After reveling studies and experiments, what came down to for me was, observation and judgment. I find that I happy observing people looking at my work and over hearing their reactions. My images have always struggled to hold a place in my heart. This means; I am attached to the creative stage of production, but once done I start to become detached quickly from the work. This is not something I try to do purposely, it just happens. However, there is one exception; sometimes, the work starts to take a life of
its own. In time, as a result of climate the work starts to decay. It is a formidable object that is always in flux. This transiting character has produced results that have made me re-examine my work, opening my eyes to new opportunities, new directions for artistic pursuit.

**Description:**

My thesis consisted of three large vacuum formed faces, mounted to wooden beams and floor filled with sand. The faces were designed from a square foam base that was carved similar to the shape of a mannequin's face. I made a portable armature of the face out of plaster and burlap. Once the positive mold process was obtained, a build-up of clay created the facial qualities that I wanted. I wanted to create faces that showed distress and judgment. The faces were to mirror my surroundings and my peers. At this stage of production, I was interested in the negative form of the mold. For it is the negative side of the mold that the Plexiglas will be pulled down into. I begun by building a wooden box to the dimensions given to me by the vacuum forming company. The wooden box needed to be air tight so the pressure could pull
the Plexiglas down into the mold. The mold itself would also need
to have small vent holds for the same purpose of pulling the plexi-
glas down into the mold. Once this was archived, a wooden lip was
fastened to the mold that allowed the mold to sit in the box level.
Then the box with the mold was sent to the vacuum formers. These
steps were repeated for the next two faces. After the faces were
returned by the vacuum former, I coated each face with liquid
emulsion and used an enlarger to project photographic images
onto the surface. The final result is a constructed face with
some translucent areas and opaque areas, resembling the
photographic face that I did for the graduate portfolio. Once the
faces dried, excess plastic was trimmed off. The final step was
to prepare the wooden boards on which the faces would be mounted.

**Intentions:**

After two years of graduate school I had been placed under pressure that almost broke my will as an artist. I had been judged, to the point where it felt that, I knew nothing else. The one thing I did know was fear. I had tried to judge others as I was judged and failed. My faces were my last attempt to look out at my peers and my surroundings. Not to judge, but to observe!
Why did photography become less of an active roll in my work? This was the first question asked at my verbal defense. I was not sure why I had gotten away from photography. My first thought was that sometimes we must step back from one medium in order to explore other kinds of materials and reach the next level of our work. Surprisingly, my graduate work took the same cycle of development as my undergraduate, but in a different medium. In my undergraduate work, I found ways to conceal the face of expressions. I didn't want to present my inner vulnerabilities, so I focused on the figure and the gestures of the body. But as the figure slowly started to be removed from the photographs, I realized that there was a shift to reveal my emotions through facial expression. In both my undergraduate and graduate work, it took extreme pressure for the work to evolve.

In undergrad, I just never saw artistic evolution for what it was. The biggest example of this was my series of installation photography. In creating the work I was born and full of life. I lived to create more, my only regret is that we all seem to grow up and forget what the creative adolescent stage feels like. As I matured, I started working to present my work to my peers. Although it is pleasing to see the outcome of my creations, the pleasure is shortened. I can't even pinpoint the emotion that stamps out the satisfac-
tion of presenting. It's not until we get to a certain level of maturity does one reach back to the past. It is this stage of remembrance that I noticed wonderful things happening to my old work. The work was in the mist of erasing itself from the tangible world. But like all things fading away, we try desperately to hold on. In the end, I was left with a whitened, heavily stained photographic sheet of paper.

My graduate work went through the same cycle of development. I was alive when I was working on the face molds. I could have created more new expressions, I knew that there was an element of time that was working against me. I was forced to cut my childhood feelings short. I had to prepare the work for its final presentation. Once all was said and done and the work was displayed in the gallery, I felt very detached. I felt like that there was a large void sucking the life out of the work. I think that the problem was that you could not see the entire installation of the work. A marker of development was not visible. One professor even made a comment that I should have
showed all the work together, overwhelming the viewer with the shear mass of the work. I wasn't sure how I felt about this response until I came back to do the thesis defense. He was right. The work and the cycle was very clear when I showed the progress of the work through slides. This was also the first look for others at what the faces had become. The faces where well on their way to erasing all human touch that I had applied to them. The emulsion was breaking away from the Plexiglas and they were completely stripped of any foreign substances, and broke in places. It is only time before they are just fragments and memories. Only once I saw the work in its entirety did I begin to understand its true strength. To look at one stage of development is not adequate. At times the work is able to stand alone, but to truly see the cycle of the imagery it must be seen as a whole.
Fears
Detailed Views of the faces decaying
Installation
15' x 15' Space
2002
I will not begin to act as if I can summarize the whole two years of my studies at RIT into one satisfying sentence or paragraph.

In the end, I learned a tremendous amount about myself and the ways that I am affected by my surroundings. I was pushed around, and forced to artistically bend in ways that sometimes I didn't know top from bottom. Life is a process to be lived day by day. As I move forward I will find myself in new surroundings, and viewed by a new set of peers. I can only speculate that my creative energies will some how follow the same path.
Questions and Quotes

These are conceptual thoughts that have influenced me over time. Some of these are quotes, statements, or just straight questions. All of the writings below have come up in my career more than once, and I believe that anything that repeats itself has meaning.

- Hippocrates (460-400 B.C.)


Can artmaking be learned? Vincent Gothard, Myself.


If artmaking did not tell you (the maker) so enormously much about yourself, then making art that matters to you would be impossible. To all viewers but yourself, what matters is the product: the finished artwork. To you, and you alone, what matters is the process:
the experience of shaping that artwork. The viewers' concerns are not your concerns. Their job is whatever it is: to be moved by art, to be entertained by it, to make a killing off it, whatever. Your job is to learn to work on your work. David Boyles, and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear*. (Santa Barbara: Copra Press, 1993), p.5.


Lesson for the day: vision is always ahead of execution - and it should be. Vision, Uncertainty, and Knowledge of Materials are inevitabilities that all artists must acknowledge and learn from: vision is always ahead of execution, knowledge of materials is your contact with reality, and uncertainty is a virtue. Do you agree? David Boyles, and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear*. (Santa Barbara: Copra Press, 1993), p.15.


As far as most people are concerned, art may be acceptable as a profession, but certainly not as an occupation. David Boyles, and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear*. (Santa Barbara: Copra Press, 1993), p.87.

The dilemma facing academia is that it must accommodate not only students who are striving to become artists, but also teachers who are struggling to remain artists. David Boyles, and Ted Orland, *Art & Fear*. (Santa Barbara: Copra Press, 1993), p.80.

Is it acceptable for an artist not to know the answer to his or her work? Vincent Gothard, Myself.
Bibliography


Boyles, David and Orland, Ted. Art & Fear. Santa Barbara: Copra Press, 1993


