Entropus: entropia ex aisthetikos

Gerald LaMarsh

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ENTROPUS: ENTROPIA EX AISTHETIKOS

BY

Gerald William LaMarsh

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

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
June, 1985

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Permission Statement

Title of Thesis:  ENTROPUS: ENTROPIA EX AISTHETIKOS

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Date:  June 25, 1985

Gerald W. LaMarsh

Gerald W. LaMarsh
Dedication

To my dear Kathleen, Jennifer Lynn, and Emily Kai-Kim, for granting me both leave and resource to seek out my own special images.
Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deep gratitude to Professors Richard D. Zakia, Weston D. Kemp and Bruce R. Brown for their individual encouragement and personal contributions as teachers, mentors and friends.

I wish to thank Mr. Robin Hodge and Mr. James R. Szczygiel, Chemical Mixing Technicians, SPAS, respectively, for their assistance and considerations in my behalf, throughout the printing and processing of this effort.
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Cool Tombs

When Abraham Lincoln was shoveled into the tombs, he forgot the copperheads and the assassin... in the dust, in the cool tombs.

And Ulysses Grant lost all thought of con men and Wall Street, cash and collateral turned ashes... in the dust, in the cool tombs.

Pocahontas' body, lovely as a poplar, sweet as a red haw in November or a pawpaw in May, did she wonder? does she remember?... in the dust, in the cool tombs?

Take any streetful of people buying clothes and groceries, cheering a hero or throwing confetti and blowing tin horns... tell me if the lovers are losers... tell me if any get more than the lovers... in the dust... in the cool tombs.

Carl Sandburg (1)
INTRODUCTION

"...Einstein's space is no closer to reality than Van Gogh's sky. The glory of science is not a truth more absolute than the truth of Bach or Tolstoy, but in the act of creation itself. The scientist's discoveries impose his own order or chaos, as the composer or painter imposes his; an observer's frame of reference, which differs from period to period as a Rembrandt nude differs from a nude by Manet."

Arthur Koestler (2)

Both art and science involve manipulating nature, attempts at understanding it, to dig deeper into questions that have been asked generation after generation. One of these questions runs almost as an obsession through the history of art, and science. This is the question of the relation between being and becoming, between permanence and change. (3) It is hard to avoid the impression that the distinction between what is outside of time, what is eternal, is at the origin of human symbolic activity. This is especially so in artistic activity. One aspect of the transformation of a natural object to an object of art is closely related to our import on matter. Artistic activity breaks the temporal symmetry of the object. It leaves a mask that translates our temporal dissymmetry into the temporal dissymmetry of the object. (4)

As the temper for the craft becomes refined, so does the awareness of an "extended" revealing the blend of art into philosophy as mentors tend more and more to the metaphysical issues or relatedness identity, being, order, time and space, form and function, existence and perception. It is through a host of philosophiers that studies deposit one
at the base of the law of nature that governs everything, the supreme metaphysical law of the entire universe, the Law of Entropy.

The Entropy Law is the second law of thermodynamics. The first law states that all matter and energy in the universe is constant, that it cannot be created or destroyed. Only its form can change but never its essence. The second law, the Entropy Law, states that matter and energy can only be changed in one direction, that is, from useable to unuseable, or from available to unavailable, or from ordered to disordered. In essence, the second law says that everything in the entire universe began with structure and value and is irrevocably moving in the direction of random chaos and waste. Entropy is a measure of the extent to which available energy in any subsystem of the universe is transformed into an unavailable form. According to the Entropy Law, whenever a semblance of order is created anywhere on earth or in the universe, it is done at the expense of causing an even greater disorder in the surrounding environment. (5)

It should be emphasized that the Entropy Law deals only with the physical world where everything is finite and where all living things must run their course and eventually cease to be.

It is a law governing the horizontal world of time and space. It is mute, however, when it comes to the vertical world of spiritual transcendence. The spiritual plane is not governed by the dictates of the Entropy Law. The spirit is a nonmaterial dimension where there are no
boundaries and no fixed limits to attend to. The relationship of the physical to the spiritual world is the relationship of a small part to the larger unbound whole within which it unfolds. While the Entropy Law governs the world of time, space and matter, it is, in turn, governed by the primordial force that conceived it. (6)

A comprehension of the Entropy Law is crucial for understanding the physical context from which all spiritual sojourns must start. The less attached a civilization is to the physical world, the freer the human collectivity is to transcend the confines of the material plane and become one with the profound spiritual essence that encompasses all. (7) Values come to play when we make decisions as to how to interact with the entropic flow. The entropy process is neither optimistic nor pessimistic. It is just a description of how the physical world unfolds. It is true that entropy represents decay and disorder, but at the same time also represents the unfolding of life itself. (8)
Discussion

We must avoid here two complementary errors: on the one hand that the world has a unique, intrinsic, pre-existing structure awaiting our grasp; and on the other hand that the world is in utter chaos. The first error is that of the student who marvelled at how the astronomers could find out the true names of the distant constellations. The second error is that of the Lewis Carroll's Walrus who grouped shoes with ships and sealing wax, and cabbages with kings...

R. Abel (9)

The word "Entropus" is the conjunction of the words entropy and opus. The word "entropy" was coined from the Greek by Rudolf Clausius in 1865 to mean "transformation.«(10) The word "opus" comes from the Latin, meaning work. The title of this thesis, ENTROPUS: ENTROPIA EX AISTHETIKOS, translates, Transworks: Beauty of the Transformation.

Purpose and Procedure

It is the intent of this inquiry to photographically examine the abstract aesthetic effects of entropy on found objects with in the common environment. Before commencement on this exercise could be undertaken, certain understandings and parameters had to be defined and established.

The first of these required a basic understanding of the Entropy Law beyond the detrimental definitions available in the dictionaries of technical and scientific terms. The most general account physicists are willing to give of changes in time is often formulated to mean that the
material would move from orderly states to an ever-increasing disorder and that the final situation of the universe will be maximal disorder. (12)

In physics the principle of entropy asserts that in any isolated system, each successive state represents an irreversible decrease of active energy. The universe tends toward a state of equilibrium in which all existing asymmetries of distribution will be eliminated. Along the same lines, psychologists have defined motivation as "the disequilibrium of the organism which leads to action for the restoration of stability." Freud interpreted his "pleasure principle" to mean that mental events are activated by unpleasant tension, and follow a course that leads to reduction and tension. Artistic activity can be said to be a component of the motivational process in both artist and consumer, and as such, participates in the striving for equilibrium. (13)

The state of balance is the only one in which the system remains at rest, and balance makes for order because it represents the simplest possible configuration of the system's components. Order is used not in the sense of what works best in a particular environment, but as an objective description of the simplest, most symmetrical, most regular form. (14) This new emerging unity, irreversibility, is the mechanism that brings order out of chaos. (15) Only by looking at the interaction between the energetic life force and the tendency toward balance can we reach a fuller conception of the dynamics activating the human mind and reflected in the mind's products. Balance remains the final goal of
any wish to be fulfilled, any tasks to be accomplished, any problem to be solved. (16)

The second activity requiring definition, was the establishment of parameters for the execution of the image making. The following criterion were defined and adhered to throughout the inquiry.

First, all images were to be of man-made metallic products. Second, all images where to be recorded during a rainy period or immediately thereafter. Third, all images were to be recorded parallel to the object without physical manipulation to the object in any manner. Depth of field, selective focus and composition where the only distortions allowed. Fourth, all images were to be recorded within the course of common travels. No attempt could be made to seek out unique locations. Fifth, all images had to be within the view of any person or persons passing in that locale. Sixth, no attempt could be made to define the actual size of the image.

These definitions and parameters served as the boundaries for the extent of this project.

Equipment, Materials and Process

Throughout the project, the following items of photographic equipment, materials and processes were to be utilized. Their selection was based upon availability and suitability to the confines of the stated project.
Cameras and Lenses

All images were recorded with the following camera equipment: OLYMPUS OM-1, OLYMPUS OM-2 35mm cameras with a ZUIKO auto-macro 1:35, 50mm lens, for 8x10 prints, and a ASAHI PENTAX 6x7 with a TAKUMAR 6x7 super multi-coated 1:2.4, 105mm lens fitted with a VIVITAR No. 2 close-up lens, for 16x20 prints.

Film

Exposures for the 35mm format were made on Kodachrome 25, Kodachrome 64 daylight color reversal film or Kodak Ektachrome 64 professional daylight color reversal film. All 120mm format exposures were made on Kodak Ektachrome 64 professional daylight color reversal film. Kodachrome 25 daylight film and Kodachrome 64 daylight film are color reversal slide films of slow-to-moderate speed that feature extremely fine grain, extremely high sharpness, and high resolving power. They are designed for exposure to daylight, electronic flash, and blue flash-bulbs without filters. They produce very saturated colors, especially reds. The best color rendering is obtained in clear or hazy sunlight. Other light source may not give equally good results even with the most appropriate filters.

These films can only be processed by the Eastman Kodak Company or a laboratory offering the Kodak Process K-14. Kodak Ektachrome 64 professional daylight film is a moderate-speed color reversed film that features very fine grain, very high sharpness, and high resolving
power. It is designed for exposure to daylight, electronic flash, or blue flashbulbs without filters. It produces soft highlight contrast and very bright colors, especially blues. The best color rendering is obtained in clear or hazy sunlight. Other light sources may not give equally good results even with the most appropriate filters. The bluish cast which is otherwise evident in pictures taken in shade under a clear blue sky can be minimized by the use of a skylight filter, which requires no increase in exposure. The filter is also useful for reducing bluishness in pictures taken on an overcast day. Processing requires Kodak Ektachrome Process E-6. All Kodachrome films used in this project were processed by the Eastman Kodak Company. All Ektachrome films were processed by local commercial film processing laboratories.

(18)

Enlarger

Enlargements for both 35mm and 120mm films were made with an Omega D-6 Super Chromega Dichroic Color Enlarger with Schneider-Krauznack 50mm, 80mm, and 135mm lenses.

Prints

Color prints, both 8x10 and 16x20, were made on Cibachrome II Deluxe Paper CPS1.K Glossy. Cibachrome print material consists of a white opaque support coated with light-sensitive emulsion layers on one side, and a matte, anticurl gelatin layer on the opposite side. When unexposed, unprocessed material appears dark brownish-gray from the emul-
sion side and pure white from the back. After processing, normal drying produces a glossy print without special treatment. \(^{(19)}\) The Cibachrome system is a direct-positive, chromolytic process. In this process, performed yellow, magenta and cyan dyes are incorporated in the color photographic material during the manufacture. These dyes are bleached during processing. The extent of bleaching is proportional to the mass of negative image silver resulting from light exposure and subsequent chemical development. After the dye-bleach step, silver compounds and other chemical by products of processing are removed by fixing and washing. \(^{(20)}\)

The first and most important thing to remember in printing Cibachrome material is that it is a direct positive material. That means it reacts to exposure variations and changes in the same way as reversal color film used in making slides. These materials respond to changes in light in that more light gives you a lighter image, and less light a darker image. If the light becomes more yellow, the direct positive color image becomes more yellow; if the light is more red, then the image becomes more red. A person experienced in making black and white prints or color prints from negative films will have to remember to use just the opposite connection in Cibachrome printing. To "dodge," which is normally meant to lighten a specific area, you must add more light to that area of a Cibachrome print. The technique of "burning-in" a print is just the reverse of "dodging." In order to darken an area of the print with Cibachrome, a decrease in the amount of light to that area will be required. The amount of light to be given to the area depends
upon the effect desired and must be done by judgment or trial and error. (21)

On the back of each package of Cibachrome print materials is a printed label listing the basic filter packs information for each of the following types of slide film material: Kodachrome, Ektachrome, Agfachrome and Fujichrome. Use the appropriate filter packs listed for the specific type of slide film being printed. There inherent color balance of Cibachrome print materials, varies to some extent from batch to batch. For that reason different basic filter pack information on different batches of Cibachrome print material will be given. Although the system correction factor will tend to remain the same for appreciable periods of time, it may have to be adjusted occasionally owing to aging of the enlarger lamp and filters and changes in processing. However, the Cibachrome system is quite tolerant to color balance changes and it is easy to secure good results consistently. (22)

All prints were processed in a Kreonite Model SMD 0-1CP2 photographic paper processor using Cibachrome P-3 processing requiring fifteen minutes for each print.

Exhibit

The Thesis Exhibit opened on Sunday, April 14, 1985 from two until four-thirty in the afternoon in the Photographic Gallery of the School of Photographic Arts and Sciences of Rochester Institute of Technology. (See Appendix B.) The Gallery was shared with Mr. Philip Burzynski
of Rhode Island. Two hundred and fifty invitations were sent to fellow students, faculty, colleagues and friends. Approximately one hundred and thirty persons were in attendance for the opening of forty-three color images in sizes of 8x10 and 16x20 Cibachrome prints. (See Appendix F and G.) Guests were served individual pastries created by Joan Hendrick of Sweet Stuff. Savory and James Deluxe Cream Sherry Jerez, Chateau Doisy-Vedrines Sauternes, 1978, and Chateau La Tour Sauternes, 1979, were served in addition to a non-alcoholic fruit punch. Light classical and semi-popular music was provided by harpist Ms. Roxanne Ziegler, with floral arrangements created by Mrs. Catherine Farneth, both of Rochester.

**Thesis Sharing**

The Thesis Sharing was held on Tuesday, April 16, 1985 from ten-thirty until twelve in the morning in the Photographic Gallery. (See Appendix C.) Dr. Richard Zakia, Chairperson and Professor Weston Kemp of the Committee were in attendance, in addition to a small number of graduate students and guests. An introduction was made by Dr. Zakia, with questions put forth by members of the Committee and others in attendance.

An extensive explanation was provided by the candidate of the developmental procedures and the parameters establish prior to undertaking the image making process. (See Appendix D.) The critique and comments of inquiry were positive and supportive, and of great benefit to the candidate. (See Appendix E.)
Conclusion

Everything is just what it seems to be. There are no hidden meanings. Before he is enlightened, a man gets up each morning to spend the day tending his fields, returns home to eat his supper, goes to bed, makes love to his woman, and falls asleep. But once he has attained enlightenment, then a man gets up each morning to spend the day tending his fields, returns home to eat his supper, goes to bed, makes love to his woman, and falls asleep.

I Ching (23)

Bringing the activity of participation in the Master of Fine Arts degree in Photography to this closure is met with delight and sadness. The friendships, discussions, lectures and works associated with this effort exceed beyond comparison, the concerns, disappointments and frustrations inherent in such an undertaking. For this candidate, being a part of the program has proven to be among the most rewarding of many academic experiences. In addition to the many pleasant relationships with both fellow students and members of the faculty, two distinct gifts were granted. The first relates to the opportunity to participate in the program over a period of several years due to a part-time student status. This expanded participation allowed for greater access to a wide range of professors, resources and evaluations from a variety of valued inputs; it provided time for ideas and concepts to "simmer and stew" in the process of fermentation. The second gift was that of voluntarily being able to be force to grow, expand and stretch one's abilities through critiques meant to support and assignments designed to challenge.
This final effort of the thesis project required reaching back to an old assignment in order to seek the path of a new visual direction. Some delight is taken in the eventual outcome of that effort, and the resulting product is a source of encouragement for the candidate to pursue this avenue of interpretation in color, black and white and electronic mediums. Though other projects await, the insights discovered in this exercise have become innate and will force themselves into the future.

Any conclusion would prove empty without expressing a special gratitude to those who contributed so mightily to this accomplishment. Their unwritten concerns and grants did not go unnoted or without appreciation. For those who come to this effort anew, it is wished that they depart with more than they approached in their inquiry.
Grass

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work --
    I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.

Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
    What place is this?
    Where are we now?

    I am the grass.
    Let me work.

    Carl Sandburg (24)
References


References


22. Ibid.


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Abel, R., Man is the Measure, Free Press, New York, 1976, p. 270.


Bibliography


Appendix A

Thesis Proposal
ENTROPIA EX AISTHETIKOS

A Thesis Proposal Submitted
For Approval As
Partial Fulfillment Of The Requirements
For The Degree
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

by
Gerald William LaMarsh

MFA PHOTOGRAPHY PROGRAM
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
ROCHESTER, NEW YORK
October, 1982
Thesis Proposal
ENTROPIA EX AISTHETIKOS
by
Gerald William LaMarsh

Thesis Board
Richard D. Zakia, Ed.D., Chairperson
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Rochester Institute of Technology

Weston D. Kemp, M.F.A.
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Bruce R. Brown, M.F.A.
Associate Professor
Department of Art
Monroe Community College

Approved by Graduate Committee

Chairperson

Date
Statement of Purpose

It is the intent of this thesis to photographically examine the abstract aesthetic effects of entropy on found objects within the common environment.

Background Information

Until the mid-1960's, photography had always been a medium that I used to display information via other media. Had it not been for a course of study with Henry Holmes Smith at Indiana University, photography would still be an appendage to other visual forms for me. During the period that I had access to this master teacher, he introduced me to four elements that have had influence on my development and continue to be of major importance in the growth of my photography.

During the Bloomington years, Henry Smith introduced me to the works of Paul Strand, Minor White, Wynn Bullock and to both the work and person, Aaron Siskind. Although there are many others whom I greatly admire, these are the photographers that I have continued to use as my point of reference. Secondly, he introduced me to the realization that I did not have to go a great distance to find a picture. "Everything is within walking distance......the uncommon is to be found in the common, if only you will look." Next, he introduced to the development of a private and personal vision through the selective use of the camera as a method of
inquiry that would lend itself to artistic observations if I would apply discipline to myself and those things which were common and known to me. Toward the end of my time with him, he introduced me to the concept that I would always be working to improve the same visual conflict and tension which would present itself to me again and again. As my skill levels became more complex and my process of inquiry becomes more distilled I find an increasing justification in Henry Holmes Smith's "introductions."

As the temper for the craft becomes refined, so does my awareness of an 'extralevel' revealing the blend of photography into philosophy as my photomentors tend more and more to the metaphysical issues of relatedness, identity, being, order, time and space, form and function, existence and perception. It is through these visual philosophers that my studies have brought me to the law of nature that governs everything we do, the Law of Entropy. The Entropy Law is the second law of thermodynamics. The first law states that all matter and energy in the universe is constant, that it cannot be created or destroyed. Only its form can change but never its essence. The second law, the Entropy Law, states that matter and energy can only be change in one direction, that is, from usable to unusable, or from available to unavailable, or from ordered to disordered. In essence, the second law says that everything in the entire universe began with structure and value and is irrevocably moving in the direction of random chaos.
and waste. Entropy is a measure of the extent to which available energy in any subsystem of the universe is transformed into an unavailable form. According to the Entropy Law, whenever a semblance of order is created anywhere on earth or in the universe, it is done at the expense of causing an even greater disorder in the surrounding environment. Rifkin

It is the aesthetics of entropy in the environment common to me that I wish to explore in this thesis.

Procedure

Upon acceptance of the thesis proposal, a continuation of the photographic and literary inquiry into the effects of entropy will be intensified through visual examination, recording, reading and research into these aesthetic, physical and social transformations. The coming months will be expended on recording, printing, editing, and selecting images for the thesis display. The display will consist of thirty-five to forty final color images recorded on small or medium format film and enlarged to 8 x 10 or 11 x 14 prints. All work for the display, scheduling of the exhibition and sharing should be completed by April, 1983. The thesis exhibition is tentatively planned for mid-May, 1983, and the thesis report is to be completed and filed in accordance with established procedure before the end of the Spring Term, 1983.
Bibliography


Arnheim, Rudolf. *Entropy and Art: An Essay on Disorder and Order*, Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkely, 1971


Appendix B

Exhibit Announcement
Gerald LaMarsh
Appendix C

Thesis Sharing Announcement
Thesis Sharing

ENTROPUS
by
Gerald LaMarsh

Tuesday, April 16, 1985
Morning, Ten-thirty till Twelve

The Photographic Gallery
Third Floor

Your attendance and critique will be appreciated.
Appendix D

Unedited Transcript
UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT OF THESIS SHARING

for

ENTROPUS

by

Gerald LaMarsh

April 16, 1985, 10:30 a.m. - 12:00 noon

Photographic Gallery, SPAS

Rochester Institute of Technology
Committee Member: It is Tuesday, April 16, 1985 and this is a thesis sharing for Gerry LaMarsh. What I would like to do is to ask Gerry to start things off by giving a little background on how he got interested in this particular project, and some of the people that has influenced him. I know Henry Holmes Smith was a very significant figure for him. You may tell us in your own words what Entropy is. Then maybe you could tell us a little bit about how Entropy applies in your study and vision. Gerry.

Gerry LaMarsh: The purpose of the thesis dealt with found images that had the effect of Entropy and the aesthetics Entropy had on found objects. My travels to go about finding these images were rather simplistic, and I'll talk about the parameters that are dealt with in these self-imposed parameters that I came up with in a few minutes.

Entropus is a conjunctive situation where I took the term "Entropy" from physics which is the second law of thermodynamics. The first law being, that in any transfer of energy from one form to another, there is no loss of energy. The second law, which is the law of Entropy, states that in any transfer of energy from one form to another, in that transfer there is a percentage of energy that is not recoverable. So even though it still exists, that energy form will still exist, you just can't use it. If it were recoverable, the cost of recovering the energy would be so much more expensive that the amount that was recovered would not be worth it.
The law of Entropy is something you probably will encounter in the second chapter of any basic physics text in high school or college. But it has other implications. If you look at the art or the science of economics, you'll find that Malthus is really dealing with a kind of Entropy saying that we would, through breeding and population explosion, reach a point where we would almost be cannibalized ourselves.

In the classical physics sense, that's what Entropy is. It's a kind of self-imposed cannibalism or internal decay. If you want to use that standard definition.

But high technology has now taken on the uses of Entropy in almost every area, whether it be in the communications, art, or other areas of the sciences. And certainly now the social sciences have used the realm of Entropy in their disclosure and examinations of varieties of social situations.

I guess I latched onto Entropy, not knowing that this was some kind of feeling, somewhere in college, and I guess it is a universal sophomoric feeling where you have the burden of the world on your shoulders, and your writings and your poetry of that period have a tendency to have a sort of entropic mode to it.

It was not until probably a year and a half ago that in my thesis proposal, Dr. Zakia introduced me to a relatively obscure work by Rudolph Arnheim, where he has a treatise on Entropy and Art and
Arnheim kind of turned the whole thing around for me. Instead of being a negative situation and thinking of Entropy in a negative state, it actually becomes quite a more than natural state from the standpoint of philosophy. That is that trend of philosophy follows all areas of philosophical thought, but most naturally, we should say it is an oriental philosophy and you'll find a lot of it in I-Chang and those writings. It's one of not a state of loss or a state or decline, but a state of balance and harmony. It's nature returning to its natural form.

As that relates to my work, all of the pieces that you see are pieces of technology, they've all been forged by man and are now being reclaimed by nature. So these pieces will be returning to their natural state. And as a Libran, even though I'm not a follower of the Zodiac, that's one of the natural traits of the Libran, having balance and harmony. So I can't say that that was really a major influence, the Zodiac portion of it. But certainly the attitude, as it got started to find the things that Arnheim describes became more in balance with me. It changed my attitude about the work, and I think, it changed my attitude about the aesthetic.

Entropus was the kind of slamming together of "entropy and opus," opus meaning work. And the more I studied playing with those words, in the beginning I was going to use Entropy work, and then it just sort of revolved into Entropus and slammed it together and graphically, I liked the way it looked and my committee did not object to the word.
Committee Member: I thought it was a Greek word.

LaMarsh: Well, in my original proposal, it is half presented as being Greek.

Committee Member: It is spelled quite differently.

LaMarsh: Well, it's like you'd call it the aesthetics of Entropy and it's spelled in Greek and I'll just add this to that if that's acceptable.

Committee Member: Currently, the way you have combined the two words -- Entropy and opus.

LaMarsh: In terms of the influences, I need to put a little history around it. As I've stated in my proposal, I've done photography for a long time. Not this kind of photography. Photography was not my primary medium, but I've worked in my training previous to coming to RIT and my commercial and professional experience was primarily in video and I have worked in that commercially for a number of years and have academically worked in that area for a number of years. A secondary medium was film, but primarily I used film as it related to television. Because, before portable video equipment, if you were going to shoot on location, you had to do it in film and then edit and run it through film chains. Part of the reason has been that until within the last, probably eight or nine years, that portable video really was portable unless you were the Jolly Green Giant.
So I have used a lot of photography, and have done a lot of photography previous to really attempting to do anything in the fine arts area. It was always a tool to another mean. I was concerned with the information in the photograph not really in the photograph, through the images that I created myself, shot myself, and printed, are through the use of slides or with the work of other photographers, where I was simply the editor and did an assignment to use their work.

It was not until the mid 1960's when I was at Indiana University, working with Dennis Pett, that he recommended that I go to the other side of the campus and work with an old friend of his, Henry Holmes Smith and use photography in another way. And being around Henry Smith, I used everything in a different way. He has a terrific personality, is a superb teacher and he just introduced me to a whole new realm of thinking that photography could be used as art and that it could be used as a mode of personal expression. That was something I had never attempted before.

It was interesting in those days, such unknown photographers as Jerry Uelsman and Betty Hahn were graduate assistants there and they kind of rambled around the campus. But it was an exciting period and it was an exciting thing to be with Henry. And in the design of my attempt, I really went back to an assignment, one of the earlier assignments that Henry Smith gave me. And I would like to speak a little bit about that.
I think whenever you work in any art form, whether you're trying to attempt music or other visual forms, certainly dance and filmmaking, the beginning artist or the student artist always feels that his own background and his own heritage is insignificant to his attempts. And as a result, you stress and try to find the exotic and the unusual kinds of things to either interpret or photograph or paint or compose. And I was not different in that.

In trying to find something unique in Bloomington, Indiana, as she knows, it's hard to do. I would go out and try to make some great social document or statement on the stone cutters, and in Bloomington, Indiana, you have two people, you have the Unis, who are connected to Indiana University, and you have the others, who are stone cutters, in which the Indiana limestone comes in all the government buildings. And you have this immense cleavage between the two, and the stone cutters are probably the most documented population in Central USA because there are three departments of photography at Indiana University: the Department of Instructional Technology where I had my homebase, there is the program of Fine Arts with Henry Smith; and there is the School of Journalism, which is quite a noted school of journalism. So whenever anybody goes out to do their assignment, the stonecutters are the first thing that come to mind and probably know more about being photographed than any group outside of the population that Dorothea Lange studied.

One night I thought I was trying something different -- it was about 10:00 o'clock at night and the assignment was due in the morning and I
was really frustrated and technically I wasn't sure where I was going inasmuch as I didn't know enough photochemistry or zone system or other things that never really entered my vocabulary. So I called Henry Smith at home and he said come on over though it's late, come on over anyway. We had probably talked until 2:00 a.m. (his wife was a little bit disgusted at that), but we had a terrific conversation. He said "I'm going to give you a whole series of assignments and if you can't follow these; you are just not looking, you're not seeing things. I want you to go home and in the morning, forget about your assignment. When you get up in the morning I want you to find images in the bedroom. In this assignment you are going to make abstracts of shots in the bedroom." From then on I had a series of five assignments, he gave me assignments to shoot in the backyard. The parameter was the backyard. Then he expanded to the block that I lived in and it was really a process that forced me to look smaller and smaller and that's why a lot of these images are really shot with the macro lens and they are very close. The size of the items are not important to me and I don't think it should be important to the viewer.

Before I came to RIT, and after I left Indiana, I went out of the academic world into the commercial setting where again I was using photography as a product, as a piece of information which were purchased or I shot myself, and the art aspects of it sort of dissipated for me, I didn't do any at all. It was through some work a number of years later, in the late sixties and early seventies that I started back to study through Dr. Zakia. I became familiar with RIT and later when he became chairman of this program, I became more interested, and he
said why don't you come over, "There is going to be a speaker whom you might like to hear." So then I started meeting faculty, and I decided to take this one class that became an epidemic. The only courses I've not taken at RIT are the ones in Astrophysics and that might be next. But even coming into the program and developing some technical competencies, it was felt by a number of faculty, two of which are sitting here, that technically, my images were okay. But aesthetically not only was my work not very original, I wasn't making any statement, and I wasn't stretching very much. And having had several conversations with a number of individuals here, I just said I was going to set some preconceived attitudes about photography aside and develop something new. In reality, I had to go backward instead of going forward and I looked at some of those other influences not so much of Henry Smith's images, photography that he himself did, but the things that Smith had said to me. And his introduction to his friend Aaron Siskind, who was at the Illinois Institute, and frequently came down to Indiana because of the close friendship that Siskind and Smith enjoyed.

It was through the two of them that I encountered someone whose work I never tire of looking at, Minor White. I'm constantly looking at his things and think about his images. And when I look at my own images I don't think I consciously ever try to mimic them because his things are considerably different. But there is his insight into the common things that are commonplace that I admired so much in his work.
Since being at RIT, there are two other or three other photographers that I respect and enjoy. One of the first one was Paul Strand. The thing that I liked about Strand's work is the way that he used the dynamics of the frame. It's not so much the images themselves, even though they are spectacular, but the way he used the forces of the frame. He has vectors in his images that I did not find in other people's work and I liked that strength.

The two other persons are Wynn Bullock, simply because I admire his craft and the subtleness and the beauty of his images even though he worked totally in black and white. I don't find anything in my work that is really similar to Bullock's. I just love to look at his pieces. And the last person whom I think is the ultimate color printer-photographer is Elliot Porter. His work is so subtle and so beautiful, so graceful, I find it so marvelous what he does. And it's so simple.

When I designed this project after talking with members of the committee, I put certain parameters around it. The first one was based upon the original Henry Holmes assignment. It had to be found images, they had to be of an abstract sort and the major parameter was that they were all found within the course of my common travels. There was never a day when I went out specifically and say I was going to go to a place where I think there are some specific images that I can find. There were days that I went out with my camera and in the course of my travel of that day, I found these images.
The other parameters were that I only shot on rainy days. So everything here was done while it was raining or immediately thereafter because I wanted the quality of light that you can only get in Scotland, Scandinavna or Rochester on a rainy day.

There were not any manipulations. Everything was found the way it is. The only time that I really intentionally manipulated something was with the depth of field. Then I would use that to select the parts that I wanted to pick up.

In all honesty, everybody walks by these pictures everyday. Anybody could have made these shots. It was simply the act of finding them. And I would do the assignment again, using nonmetallic materials. I would on many days, pass up what I felt could have been great shots, because they didn't fit the parameters. And that's part of the reason why I arrived at using Cibachrome.

My original intent was, Ektaflex had just come out, to do the first thesis printed on Ektaflex and I tried to make some contacts at Kodak, I didn't like the little plastic processor that they had, we had one at work and I find quite flimsy to work with. I understand that there was a commercial processor being made by Kodak but it was not out and it was a much sturdier metal thing I could have worked with, the size being 16 x 20. I did not make the contacts at Kodak in order to have one of those available or even a prototype available. So the Ektaflex assignment fell away.
In the meantime, I had a course with Wes and we were playing with big cameras trying to do some different things with it. We attempted doing some pinhole work with color positive materials, we were experimenting, there were only four of us in the class, five counting Wes because he became a student in the class also. And we were just playing with ideas and we had a lot of failures and we kept some accurate data and did some comparisons and I had a pack of Cibachrome and one day we just started loading Ciba's up in 8 x 10 cameras and we went up in the studio and that's where we originated. We started shooting outside trying to come up with filter packs that wouldn't work with it because the paper was balanced for tungsten light and by the time we had enough filters in front of the balance there was no way enough light would get through the film, it would have a four day exposure. So we went up and Wes arranged for us to have the big, hazy light studio, and we started playing with that. Within a couple of hours we got filter packs, and started to do very nice quality portraits. They were gorgeous! And we played with that for a couple of weeks.

**Committee Member:** Howard Ringley was part of that group.

**LaMarsh:** And it was because of the loss of Howard, that the matrix of the class kind of changed and I think just sort of by agreement because Howard had been so intimate. Mainly because it was sort of painful for us, in fact, we didn't come together as a class for about two weeks. It was simply because of that relationship.
I would like to make a comment about making the decision to go to Ciba because it's really important to this work.

As I became more familiar with Ciba, you have a lot of latitude with it but it is like Kodalith. A lot of people think that you can take Kodalith and shoot it with both guns. No matter how much you abuse it its gonna happen for you. Well Kodalith, is a very delicate kind of film and if you want to fine-tune it, you have to caress it in order to make it happen for you and its the same with Ciba. You have latitude. Your color corrections for Ciba is about like this in comparison to working with regular colored paper. When you do a 5 cc change on regular color paper and have a noticeable change there, with this, a five change in your color pack means nothing. You can make a 20 change and it may mean nothing.

The problem is, it's a very expensive game to play. Ciba is $120/box for 8 x 10s; 16 x 20 is $310 for a box of 50. I'm sort of a Helen Keller on test prints. It will take me $20 to get to where I think I want to be, not in only in terms of finding the color balance, but the way I want to interpret the work.

So I'm not quick in the darkroom, and, sometimes I'm relatively clumsy finding it.

Inasmuch as I had already started shooting what I call liquid images, shooting in the rain with metallic and gave me greater color saturation and I changed the index a little bit on the Ektachrome and Kodakchrome
with 25 or 64 that I was shooting. Greater saturation there, the images were liquid in part, because they were wet and then Cibachrome just added to that quality. The Cibachrome glossy is a very metallic feel to begin with. I think it has a different kind of depth to it and my feelings for some of these is almost as though they had been dipped in clear baby oil and you could kind of reach in there. There is another dimension that is not in some of the other papers.

Committee Member: Okay Gerry, let's open up to other questions that we would like to pose.

Committee Member: I have some questions. What I'm trying to say, is that it's a one-statement statement but I think it's much easier to ask things that way.

You spoke of Henry Smith and the most of the work I know do not give the subject matter, most people call them abstract, non-objective, psychological... You also talked about White, that's very important there too. In that he's done so much shooting of buildings -- works that become metaphors. But how would you have defended the argument if someone told you that these photographs are not all about Entropy? They are not about rustic metal, but they are much more about abstract expression concern with shapes and forms in this case colors. Is this a psychological meaning rather than speaking about physical processes?
LaMarsh: I probably wouldn't make the argument at all. I mean you're absolutely right.

Committee Member: What would you respond to somebody, "I wouldn't make it that strong but I thought that it was easy to ask it that way."

LaMarsh: "I think you're absolutely right."

Committee Member: "Then why did you give it the title of Entropus?" That's the meaning would be adjunctive, but I don't really mean it just totally but its easier to us if the title described the process, that is the subject matter whereas...

LaMarsh: Okay, it's almost the classic argument that you would have in a creative writing course, are you dealing with processing, are you dealing with content? I think process dictates content and it certainly does here. It was the Entropy that makes the content. Without that effect of that erosion and knowing that works on the metal, I wouldn't have the effect. The viewer brings the effect. I simply found the location and recorded it and possibly interpreted it. But the viewer brings to these images.

Committee Member: I don't want to monopolize the question but this brings up a full set of issues. Your argument would be that what White, Siskind or Smith, or for that matter Franz Kline, or any of the outstanding expressionists that they just are making marks to which the viewers responded. As you said, these photographs could have been
taken by anyone. I disagreed with that because they are a statement. So how you show those prints is your statement. And the way people will respond, they will be very much a function of how you show it.

LaMarsh: Well I think I have to take into effect a very deliberate development of a style. I think I have a style here and if you were to see other pieces of work you might say okay, that's probably the way Gerry worked. The intentional way that I went about developing that I think I worked relatively hard. I don't know that I have this awesome psychological thing that you are referring to in terms of my statement. And I don't know that the other people that I mentioned do either.

I think there is an innate quality that people develop when they say I found this image, I like the aesthetic piece. I frame it this way, I compose it this way, I record it this way, I print it this way. Maybe because they have some objective criteria; I don't know that that objective criteria is arrived at through an objective psychological process. It's an aesthetic process. It may be a philosophical process. But, when I look at White's work or the other artists that I've mentioned, I not bowled over by their psychological effect that they make on me.

Committee Member: What touched you?

LaMarsh: It's the effect that I have on myself that's generated through their work.
Committee Member: How would you separate it from a psychological response?

LaMarsh: The psychological response is my response to their work and not their response to their work.

Committee Member: I really don't think that we will ever unravel that. The other way to respond to questions that Michael's raising, which is an excellent question, is that is the content to some extent determines an interpretation of the meaning of the word. I think that it could represent abstract expressionism as well as Entropy. We all know that photographic images have multiple layering with multiple meanings. If one can look at this, and let's say there wasn't any title, a person just walked into it, depending whether that person is coming from, what they're looking at, you'll find that looking at abstract expressionism will apply if you are looking at something that suggests a state of decay or energy loss, whatever, they could find it. It doesn't have to be either or, it isn't either or. It probably could be even more.

Committee Member: This being my point that's where I started. I feel that the title limits it at least to some extent. Because you're giving a context. And I think the interpretation is showing much greater latitude without it.

Committee Member: That's a very good point we are victim of our language. Being that it's an abstract expression, it sets up a category just like entropy sets up a category. It really is a difficult thing to be able to do.
Committee Member: I have a question I want to ask Gerry if I can join in. You choose to work with color, and I find that colors are very exciting. When you think of entropy I associate it thinking like loss of energy, structure going to loss of structure or something being lost, decay, death. When I see color I think of things of the opposite. Life, excitement... Was it your intent here of one playing against the other, or, why did you choose to go in color instead of black and white?

LaMarsh: I'd always worked in terms of my personal assignments and certainly almost all of the things that I had done here at RIT have been in black and white. I'd not really worked with color very much. When I took the first color course with John, I kind of prepped myself for that the summer before by taking a three-week seminar workshop with Ira Current.

Committee Member: "You say John, John Pfahl?"

LaMarsh: "Right." And upon till that time I'd always thought of images in terms of black and white from an artistic point of view simply because it was the medium I could work in. I didn't know color very well and I really didn't know how to manipulate it. If I did color work or needed color work in a commercial sense, I hired it done, or, if I shot it myself I hired the printing done. I didn't print color. It wasn't until I got into it and started being able to use the medium and manipulate the medium that I found a whole new level of excitement. I think the same vectors exists in the images I attempted in black and
white photography, but when I added color to it it got to be more exciting. It also leaves that whole different range of interpretation. Your point about thinking of entropy in a negative sense and almost a black and white sense is a cultural thing we live with. And if you get into other cultures, that same thing you'll find that red may be the color of that decline, or yellow, depending upon the history of that particular culture. I started finding that the culture dictated the form and the composition, when I started putting this structure (I structured the image) and used the color within that image to change. It was another layer to deal with and it got pretty exciting, even though you're shooting every image straight on.

Committee Member: I notice that some of your images leave anthropomorphic qualities to them.

LaMarsh: There are times when you are obviously conscious of that while you're shooting. As soon as I saw the Flight of the Phoenix, the grand bird. I just have a feeling of the flight and you can look at that I can see the figure in there. And in other pieces, certainly during the opening of the show and at other times, they'd say, well you know, "isn't that a picture of the butterfly wing?" or "the mask of the knight?" "I can see his face...?" "What're you talking about...?" (chuckle) "I don't see that in there..."
LaMarsh: So, there are some pieces that I could say consciously yes that I was aware of it when I shot it, and I'm certainly more aware of it when I printed it and I even tried to emphasize it. And then other people have seen things there that I didn't think or don't see now. So I think that's part of the viewer bringing his...

Committee Member: I guess the question I'm asking is, how that might, if the image has anthropomorphic quality in it, I can't say life, biological life, but what you're photographing is inorganic. You're dealing with Entropy, the anthropomorphic qualities. Was it an attempt here to suggest that all matter whether its organic or inorganic goes through this process.?

LaMarsh: Well, we have a tendency, and certainly in this country and in the Western philosophy, to disregard decline and death as part of life. That's part of the cycle. The decline and the terminase is equal to conception and you don't have one without the other. And, particularly in this period of history, certainly since say probably the turn of the century, where we have accelerated the celebration of youth and beginnings and living and hidden growing old and increpindness and almost banished death! It's really a lack of recognition of the other half and because we would look at entropic states, as bad and destructive, instead of saying perhaps we need to change the value. And if we are in a state of decline, and it comes so subtly and certainly in the last four years that it has really begun to take some witness to my own falling apart and it's just been many hours in my dentist's chair, and he's telling me how these things are changing with
glasses now. I had the same pair of glasses from the time I was in the eighth grade until three years ago. I mean the same pair did the job! I've now had two changes. Two weeks ago I reached bifocal status, and that was the beginning of an entropic state, and it's kind of amusing that I needed to arrive at that I was in the darkroom and couldn't focus well. So instead of eyeballing I needed some focusing there, then I got myself a handy-dandy little Bausch & Lomb thing to find numbers in the phone book and I have my half glasses. Well, when you recognize these things in yourself then it's not different than making this recognition of these images. It's simply, I don't know, personally, I'm not philosophic, it does change the value for you. And because of these little mini personal changes, and as people that you care about and love, change and certainly their beginning stages of ultimate decline. What it does, it changes a value and say I'm not going to have it forever. So better make use of the time that I have, I want a better quality of time and I want those things to be.

Committee Member: Would anyone else like to raise some questions?

Committee Member: Okay. I'd like to ask you to do something very difficult. Just a photo of your experiment. I'm going to ask you to change roles. You are not Professor Gerry LaMarsh of Monroe Community College. You're not Gerry LaMarsh candidate for a MFA degree, but sitting right here is Henry Holmes Smith, who's looking at this work.
LaMarsh: (After a long pause) Well, if I were Henry, I don't know that I'd recall that evening in 1965 in Bloomington, Indiana with his wife impatiently walking around the bedroom and making about 12 trips to the bathroom back and forth and wondering when this skinny kid from Splinter Creek was gonna go home. But I think I'd say that that conversation had an effect. And the fact that it had an impact 20 years later, and that in all this time I was going around looking at sidewalks and pieces of refuse that may have been aesthetically and in terms of development for something that I did later, maybe the best conversation I'd had on, if I were Henry Smith, perhaps, not the best lecture he ever gave, but certainly one of the most appreciated. I like these pictures, and I've liked them for quite a while. My ratios in working, I had about a 15:1 ratio in shooting and I finally brought it down to 9:1 ratio doing what I shot and what I printed and I had probably I had a 3:1 ratio now. I've edited down, based upon the last meeting where I was encouraged to chop things down, and I've added some pieces. Then in another conversation that I had with Wes, he commented that I cut down even further.

Committee Member: Well, it's difficult to edit things down.

LaMarsh: Once you get over the ego, I think when you're putting these kinds of shows up, you don't use logic, you use some kind of ego. I had this print that I did and it was wonderful. It's a lot like editing film. I'm glad that I had more experience with film when I got into photography because it makes editing photography easier. You've
got all this footage and you're so wrapped up, "I got this shot in this mood..., so terrific!" And when you get to the point where you say I can take that out because it doesn't work, because it doesn't advance my mission. I found that I took pieces out because it made the presentation stronger. Wes pointed that in a number of places. He'd never say take that out. All three of you, the two of you and Bruce, have been very kind about that. There's not a piece here that one of you said I want to see this in, or, I didn't take anything out because you said take it out. It's here because you prodded me to rethink where I was. The hanging of the show, I went through a number of generations with that, I played with little models, that was more work in a shorter period of time than I had done in a long time. Not the physically hanging it up, but doing the ordering. Because even when I got here, I made a lot of changes. Originally I was gonna hang things up in a row, Wes warned me about that. He said it won't work that way. I tried it that way, reordered some things. A couple of other times people would come and say why don't you do this and this. I tried, rejected and accepted...

Committee Member: Does anybody have anything else that they want to add? I guess we'll close now.

One last part. Where do you, now that you've gone through this, are you gonna try to do this particular kind of work further, or are you gonna switch into another direction?
LaMarsh: I would like to continue with this theme. But I think I will take a different approach to it. I like the Entropus concept but I think I would probably bring this part to a closure because I have something else I would like to work on, and I've mentioned that to Wes. I want to stop here with this while I still like it. And I have three other projects visually that I would like to deal with. I would like to deal with this in motion and I don't quite know how to do that. I think I probably will attempt it with video simply because I now have the equipment to work with. I have the editing capacity now that I didn't have before. And one of the reasons why I came back to photography was kind of because doing film, the portability of video was not available to me and doing film became so awesomely expensive. My last short piece that I did in film was 7½ minutes and I had probably spent over $2000 in the thing and I just could not afford to play that game. Now, with video, and the portability of that equipment, I think I can take that equipment and attempt this in motion, which calls for different kind of thinking, but I think the construction of the image will structurally be the same. It's a matter of being able to use motion and have the same control of depth of field. And I would like to be able to work through that.

I also have a project that I want to do in black and white which goes back to more of a Walker Evans attempt, having to do with a region where I spend the summer.

Committee Member: Okay. Well, you got a lot of plans of work ahead of you. That's great!
What we can do is wind this up now. Anybody has any questions they'd like to have answered, Gerry, on a one-to-one basis, I'm sure he'll stay around to answer them.

LaMarsh: Well, I'd like to thank you for coming. I know I was gonna have a problem with crowd control. (Laughter) It's been an experience for me here at RIT, I've been here a long time. I certainly have developed some very close and lasting friendships and I appreciate the advice and the opportunity for the growth. 'Cause it has definitely been a very growing thing for me. I know now, that its time for me to get out of the program because two weeks ago as I was finishing up some things in the darkroom, there were some first-year students working one evening that I had not met. I was introduced to them at the end, one young lady said, it was very nice meeting you sir...(Laughter). It's time to go.

Committee Member: Well, thank you all for coming.

LaMarsh: Thank you.
Appendix E

Thesis Sharing Approval Form
Thesis Sharing

This is a record of the thesis sharing
for Gerald William LaMarsh, student

Date held: April 16, 1985

The thesis show was: Approved

Disapproved

Richard D. Zakia
Chairman

Comments:
Outstanding Exhibition. Steptem!
Appendix F

Photograph of Exhibits
Appendix G

Transparencies of Exhibit Prints