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GILLING, THOMAS FRANCIS. Forms in Fluctuation. (1972) Directed by Associate Professor Walter Barker. Pp. 3.

The purpose of this series of three paintings was to investigate the dynamics of abstract forms in space.

The material used was acrylic paint with polymer matte medium, an acrylic additive to strengthen the surface of the painting, and raw cotton duct canvas to obtain a soft, mat surface and diminish the possibility of a glare off the painted surface.

The three paintings are:

Six To Seven, a six by seven foot painting.

Six To Eight, a six by eight foot painting.

Seven To Twelve, a seven by twelve foot painting.

FORMS IN FLUCTUATION

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by

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A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School at  
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro  
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Approved by

Walter Barker  
Thesis Advisor

This thesis has been approved by the following committee  
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North  
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May 4, 72  
Date of Examination

The forms painted are intended to induce a fluctuation of form and space and color; an oscillation that has been suddenly arrested and is momentarily still. Although the elements (color, size, line, direction, depth, shape, and form) are calculated arrangements to one another, they are generalized and simplified in order to perpetuate the fluctuation (or oscillation) amid the lull of the painting. That is, all these elements appear to be caught in the height of change. They are both arriving and retreating, overstated and understated, they are marginal and, thus, ambiguous. It is, then, the explanation of the use of these elements about which this paper is written.

The color of the forms is subdued by being mixed with grey. This is consistent with the unusual character of the form's shape and situation. A color, shape, and situation that is "unusual" because of the generalized motif and marginal situation. The colors do not conform to the convention of "cools" receding and "warms" approaching; but the colors do, by repetition, unite with the linear movement to construct the composition. Above all else, though, the colors are selected for their own sake- they originate out of no symbolic nor representational intent. They are manipulated to fit within boundaries of compositional structure, but the key to their character cannot be found entirely and simply through a descriptive analysis; for the origin of the colors is as circumstantial and intrinsic as the source of the forms.

The size of the forms is another important factor in the development and the understanding of the paintings. These forms are a size most accessible to the viewer's empathy. In other words, the size is not so large as to be monolithic and overwhelming nor so small as to be ineffectual and, consequently, inconsistent with the dynamics of the force of the forms. These forms, instead, are intended to be on a one to one relation with the spectator; they may be cumbersome, if handled, but they are not overpowering.

As previously mentioned, the colors have no representational intent- nor do the forms. However, the collection of all these forms, and their color, do relate to impressions of buoyancy, flowing organic and geometric weights, atmosphere, and human proportions. The illumination of the distinct areas found in the paintings is a direct influence by the Dutch Baroque Masters. Furthermore, the fact that these forms can be described as bumping, descending, ascending, thrusting, retracting, and hesitating, is evidence of their figurative typification to similar sensations from our own environment. The questions still remain however- What are these forms? From where do they come? To where are they going? What exactly are they doing?

Both the elements, direction and linear movement, are similar by being key factors in the tightening of the composition. Moreover, these are the two elements most susceptible to the fluctuation and

change. It is the linear movement that carries the directional momentum. This movement is at one point restrained and then released. The two elements organize the depth and the design of the painting. They are both three dimensional and two dimensional illusions.

There are three paintings referred to and three distinct types of fluctuation. The Six To Seven painting has the most widely fluctuating forms and colors and shapes and, consequently, is the most complex. The depth, however, is shallow in the Six To Seven, but not nearly as confining as the painting Seven To Twelve where the depth is all but lost in the collective diagonal thrust of the forms. Of all the three paintings, the one with the greatest distance into the picture plane is Six To Eight; one form is caught and illuminated in an area beyond and below the dark conglomeration of forms in the foreground. The significance of holding the darkest values in the foreground and pressing the lightest valued forms into the background, is an attempt to reaffirm the oscillation. An ambiguity results, then, when these elements retain a certain, though precarious, degree of familiarity and yet hold fast to the margin of fluctuation where the forms and spaces and colors are in their most crucial state of change. In other words, it is the duality of expectation that heightens, if not totally establishes, the fluctuation.