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UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

STENHOUSE, RICHARD WEARN. Genesis : Into Being. (1975)
Directed by: Walter Barker. Pp. 3.

The thesis consisting of eight drawings was exhibited at the Weatherspoon Art Gallery of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from April 27, 1975 to May 11, 1975.

A 35mm color transparency of each work is on file at the Walter C. Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

GENESIS : INTO BEING

by

Richard Stenhouse

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1975

Approved by

Walter Barker
Thesis Adviser

This thesis has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at The University of North
Carolina at Greensboro.

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Walker Barker

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Paul Pettit

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4-21-75
Date of Acceptance by Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express gratitude to the members of my committee for encouraging me, and to my dear friends for supporting me.

CATALOGUE

TITLE	DIMENSIONS	MEDIUM
1. Self Portrait with Dresser	15½" x 27"	Pencil, pastel
2. Self Portrait with Chair	16" x 22"	Pencil, pastel
3. Self Portrait with Lamp	14" x 23½"	Pencil, pastel
4. Self Portrait with Window	16" x 24½"	Pencil, pastel
5. Self Portrait with Door	20" x 17½"	Pencil, pastel
6. Self Portrait with Setting for One	17" x 16"	Pencil, pastel
7. Self Portrait with Woman	10½" x 7"	Pencil, pastel
8. Self Portrait with Spoon	13½" x 10½"	Lithograph

* Height precedes width

GENESIS : INTO BEING

The MFA thesis work discussed in this paper consists of eight drawings, each of which portrays an entity within the limited environment of the artist. For the artist the creation of the drawings entailed an exploration into the metaphysics of his tangible surroundings and extensive experimentation with the sensual qualities of a rarely used medium.

The drawings were done on mylar, a material with qualities similar to fine paper but far superior to paper in its ability to mate with graphite and pastel, the materials used to create the work discussed here.

Mylar is a plastic film, the surface texture of which is finely controlled during its manufacture and is very uniform. Drawing on this surface is quite different from drawing on paper. The pencil point does not intrude into the surface as with paper, rather the tooth of the mylar files away the graphite point. The value of a drawn line on mylar is extremely sensitive to the pressure with which it is applied.

Mylar differs from paper in another aspect that is critical to the drawings presented here. It is semi-transparent. This quality allows the application of color and line to both sides of the film. When applied to the back surface, color and line have a muted, airy quality to them. Color and line applied to the front surface have a solid, tangible quality. As the creator of these drawings, I find that

the ability to combine these qualities within a single drawing is an aid to the expression in the work.

These drawings provide me with a means of expressing introspective interpretations of the physical, emotional, and spiritual environments through which my life leads me. Understanding this should be helpful to a full appreciation of the work introduced by this paper.

In the summer of 1974, I moved my residence and my body to the city of Greensboro, North Carolina, where for the first time in thirty years I found myself completely alone. The impact of this situation was psychologically electrifying and, for a time, socially incapacitating. Consequently, I lived almost totally within my rented room. With time, but without the constant influential reflections from other personalities, I grew increasingly aware of the metaphysical reality of my own being and of my immediate environment. When I began to work on the series of drawings which was to become my thesis show, this feeling of "knowing" my immediate physical environment was very strong in me and led to the concept of object portraits. Each of the drawings is of an object or objects within the room where I live and work. There is no intention to imply that I perceive these objects as living beings. I do, however, see each of them as an entity consisting of more than just the sum of its parts, something with perhaps personality and character.

To portray these objects as personalities, there was a need to take them out of (or at least to modify) the objective context in which they actually exist. The lighting in the drawings and the generally

muted colors are used in an attempt to alter this context as well as the physical properties of the object itself. As with a portrayed person there are things about the subject which can be answered only by conjecture, admittedly to a lesser degree than one would experience with a portrayed person, or perhaps just conjecture of a different line. Again I stress that it is not my intention to portray these objects as people with all their hidden emotions and thoughts. It is my intention to portray them as beings of creation, beings worthy of compassion from those able to give it.

In order to enhance the feeling of portrait → individual → personality, I elected to modify the surrounding environment within the field of vision. In the majority of the drawings, the modification entails the elimination from the field of vision all the objects other than the subject. In each of the drawings, the field of vision (excluding the subject) has been rendered in an uncertain focus, giving the subject (which is depicted with a definite clarity) a status of individual reality. Additionally, the field is much greater in the dimensions of width, height, and depth than it actually need be to accommodate the subject, a characteristic serving to isolate the subject.

The drawings could be conceived of as disguised self-portraits. The artist living in a room void of life has moved toward its inanimacy and has traded off some of his life to it.

The initiation of the series concept was influenced somewhat by Edward Hopper's work. He is a master of the subtle creation of mood. Hopper is able to summon the totally human phenomenon of

emotion without producing an image illustrative of emotion. His portraits of deserted streets, isolated houses, and nameless windows evoke a mood far stronger than the image of tearful eyes might. In the manner that some artists make use of negative space, Hopper makes use of negative existence. More often than not, the strength in his work comes from what he does not show rather than from what he does. This is knowledge I have tried to gain from Edward Hopper and have attempted to employ in my own work. It has become for me a means of manipulating reality by going behind it rather than beyond it.