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RODGERS, KENNETH GERALD. A Personal Interpretation of the Facial Expression. (1973)
Directed by: Mr. Walter Barker. Pp. 3.

This thesis of five paintings and six drawings was of various facial expressions found within society.

The drawings were executed on Strathmore drawing paper with pencil and the paintings were executed on primed cotton duck canvas with oil.

The works were exhibited in the Weatherspoon Gallery of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro from April 22 to May 7, 1973. They were accompanied by 35mm color slides that are on file at the Jackson Library of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

A PERSONAL INTERPRETATION OF
THE FACIAL EXPRESSION

by

Kenneth G. Rodgers

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
1973

Approved by

Walter Barker
Thesis Adviser

APPROVAL SHEET

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

Thesis
Adviser

Walter Barker

Oral Examination
Committee Members

Joseph Cury

John Simpson

Robert J. Cuyler

Walter Barker

April 17, 1973
Date of Examination

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I wish to acknowledge my special debt to the encouragement given by my mother and father, and the inspiration and criticism of Bernard Baird.

I am grateful also to Mr. Joseph Crivy, Mr. Walter Barker, Mr. Gilbert Carpenter and Dr. Joan Gregory for their advice and suggestions.

The drawings and paintings of facial expressions executed for thesis presentation were derived from my ordinary observation of contemporary society. While they are self-evident manifestations of experiences by man everywhere in the universe, it has been my aim to render a microcosm of these experiences. Whether they were initiated by outside forces or by profound psychological differences, the visible manifestation of experience and feeling was what I intended to render. Although the rendition of these experiences necessitated both the psychic and physiological changes that take place in an expression, I found that they acquired a certain universality. On the other hand, they evolved from my personal inquiry into the diverse encounters, conflicts, and dilemmas experienced by mankind.

As a point of departure the head was studied and numerous sketches were made of it. The drawings were executed on Strathmore drawing paper with pencil and the paintings were executed on primed cotton duck canvas with Winsor & Newton oil. Although my face was used because of its convenience the works are not intended only as self-portraits. My work at the outset consisted of geometric, curvilinear renditions that concerned itself largely with design and relegated facial expression to a secondary role. I began my concentration on the expressive range of the face with a decision to eliminate all other parts of the figure as either excessive

or irrelevant. I became obsessed with and studied the facial expressions found in common people. The most intriguing influence was found in the projected close-ups of faces and expressions on commercial television.

Considerable study was devoted to the cropping of each image to maintain the full impact of its facial expression. Exactly where to begin and stop with the cropping was resolved by placing a frame over a sketch of the head to be rendered, and moving it around until the best composition was obtained. A grid was then used to transfer the preliminary sketch onto the working surface, and in some instances mirrors and photographs were used for proportional and lighting effects. Within the drawings a homogeneous tonality was sought. Most all of the area of the drawing paper was heavily textured. This was achieved by applying the pencil in a circular motion creating strong contrasts of values. The paintings are different from the drawings in that they have a more heterogeneous tonality. The drawings and paintings delineate the profile, three quarter, and frontal views of the face and evoke expressions that range from amusement, pleasure, affection, irony and derision as represented by the sneer and smile, to disgust, disapproval, distress, rage and pain as represented by the grimace.

On the one hand, the pictorial devices used in my work to resolve the transference of the three dimensional subject to two dimensional surface approaches traditional realistic

representation in its superficial appearance. On the other hand, the drawings and paintings mainly sustain their emotional content through highly charged facial expression. It is within this context that I have intended to convey a personal manifestation of universal experience without any intended social comment.