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THE FIGURE

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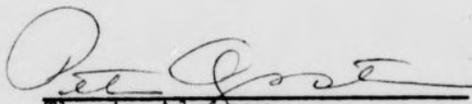
by

LOUISE B. STEVENSON

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Approved by


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.

[Faint, illegible text listing committee members]

Thesis Adviser *Pat Goss*

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Chis Kelleher

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Dec 9 '75
Date of Examination

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5. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
6. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
7. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
8. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
9. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
10. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper

CATALOGUE

1. Figure Study Pencil, oil and wax on paper
2. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
3. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
4. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
5. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
6. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
7. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
8. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
9. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper
10. Figure Study Pencil and watercolor on paper

When I started graduate school I was working with very different artistic problems, all of which seemed to me at the time to be incapable of evolution. I was attracted to geometric abstraction and "conceptual" art. Some of the ideas have remained exciting today and are incorporated in my present work.

Still with me from my earlier work is the idea of the object in space, now the human "object". I had tried to approach this problem from a time point of view by making myself or some other person in actuality be the object. (That was in a piece in which two signs would be put on a highway at an arbitrary distance from each other, one saying "begin", and the other, "end".) In some pencil drawings I used semi-discs arranged on a grid. Each unit existed separately and as a part of a configuration of units, that relationship, plus an atmospheric background, implying the space/object relationship. Although these drawings were successful, they were too limited in the desired area (i.e., the exploration of the object in space).

Working with the object in space in a more concrete form has revitalized and clarified my ideas about my earlier work as the questioning in previous work has influenced my present direction. Now I am drawing the human figure. Being such an expressive object in itself, it introduces elements perhaps

that an orange, for instance, would not. One problem is the position in which the body should be placed. When I began drawing the figure it was difficult to find satisfying poses. Part of this difficulty came from the vastly varied use of the human form as a motif or theme in the history of art and from the often aimless posing of the model in life drawing classes. The immediate problem was to find positions characteristic of the body as it is used in actuality and which let its accidental and unconscious qualities appear. As I have continued working I have found that simple body positions--lying, sitting, standing--without any implication of movement are the most satisfactory. I work with these poses from a point of view that allows a cohesive shape to be formed by the body, thus emphasizing the phenomenon of the body itself as expressive, not as a carrier for other messages relayed through activities, gestures. Is there anything gained in the expressiveness of the body by comparing a raised leg with a prone leg in a reclining figure, or the knees to the head in a shape formed by those two points connected by the torso? Perhaps one sees more directly the different conditions of the various body parts, and that each is located at a different place, albeit in a continuous space and of a continuous volume. In regard to this problem, Egyptian and Indian sculptures of single figures have been a source of inspiration because of the self-contained treatment of the figure and, in the Indian tradition particularly, the sculptural concept of

the body as a unity of parts forming a homogeneous volume.

Some attention is given to the model's environment in order to establish the location of the figure. I pose the model in a comfortable and natural place, trying to avoid obvious "model-in-the-studio" type situations. Most of the reclining and seated figures are on a bed or some other soft material which often behaves in a way directly related to the presence of the figure. The standing figures have the least articulated environment.

The drawings are small in scale. After a time of drawing on a large scale and then returning to small scale I found that smallness provided a quality of distance which was important to the pictorial effect of the drawing. I was not interested in the confrontation implied in larger figure work, but rather in seeing from a removed point of view.

Line is used to define the volume of the figure, suggesting weight and implying the space in which the volume exists. Wash continues this definition with hue and value and adds to the attention given the figure as it appears in reality by incorporating local color and introducing conditions of light. By using a wash instead of pencil shading to articulate the figure, the drawing is kept from being overpowered by its medium and thus detracting from the investigation of the object outside of the drawing. I avoid emphasizing the texture of the paper itself or of any object depicted. I

want attention to be focused on the representation of the object as it is perceived in reality first, rather than as a drawing. The faithful recording of an object's surface is not as important to me as is suggesting its "body" (i.e., how it exists in size, weight, and location). The changing conditions of the model's body, where the flesh falls away from the mass of the body, or pulls closely over a bone, the tension inherent in living tissue which lets a muscle relax, but only to a certain point, are things I observe and record in my drawings.

As I continue working I want to explore more the problem of how to make a representation of the human being in its phenomenological condition without dehumanizing it or abstracting it to the level of symbol or caricature.