

IT'S ALL IN THE APPROACH

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I believe that the ability to change and freely rearrange a drawing or painting by erasing or painting over a mistake allowed me the freedom of spontaneity, whereas the perceived finality of printmaking hindered a freer approach. I began to start thinking of my prints as if they were my paintings or drawings. Fully freeing myself from planning any of my work has led to some unforeseen consequences. I have begun to realize that the work creates a life of its own. Some works have a greater influence over me and tend to live longer in my work. These pieces, whether they are drawings, paintings or prints, start a chain of ideas that push me to investigate new areas of conceptual and formal application related somehow to these first influential works.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| Chapter  |      |
| 1. INTRODUCTION.....                           | 1    |
| Statement of the Problem                       |      |
| Methodology                                    |      |
| 2. DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION OF THE WORK..... | 7    |
| 3. CONCLUSION .....                            | 21   |

## CHAPTER 1

I think that it is important as an artist to realize how you approach your work. Usually as time passes, an artist's strategies and thought processes change, as does his or her art. In this paper, I will outline the events that led to the critical revelations that truly changed my artistic approach. I have, in the statement of problem section of this proposal, addressed the issues that I face in my artwork. I completed a new body of work that incorporated and challenged those issues that I set forth in the statement of problem. In order to analyze my work, I will answer the three questions in the statement of problem section in chapter two of this problem-in-lieu of thesis.

When I first arrived in graduate school my printmaking was mostly about the male gender and how it is viewed by western society and how men view themselves in that society. I executed prints that I had planned out in my sketchbook which were comprised of juxtaposed photographic imagery, such as the female figure and technical diagrams. After a semester or two of commenting on this subject matter I tried to expand my scope to comment on the subtler inner thoughts that I had from day to day. I found myself planning different prints in my sketchbook. I eliminated any reference to the human figure in my photographs and instead, took photographs that suggested the presence of a person. The diagrams I began to use were of star charts and constellations. Soon after I started to plan and execute prints that were nothing but photographic juxtapositions, entirely leaving out the diagrams I had started with.

As my work continued in this fashion, I began to realize that prints were becoming more and more confusing. The photos I juxtaposed next to one another looked too similar in their lighting and subject matter. The images had a similar quietness about them that made it impossible to see any true dichotomy, which my work depended on. I knew I had to change the treatment of my images in their variety, appearance and/ or tone but did not know how.

In the summer of 1998, I took an independent study with Stan Baden that gave me an entirely new approach to my art. After the second week of my summer semester, Stan and I met for an informal critique of what I had started on and what I was planning to do for the rest of the semester. Stan sat silently looking at my work for a full two minutes. After what seemed an eternity of silence he told me to simply stop using any and all photographic imagery. I was confused and shocked at his suggestion and asked him to clarify. Stan looked at me and said flatly that he didn't want to see any photographic imagery at all that summer but instead wanted me to draw. This was something I had not done in any real way (except for thumbnails in my sketchbook) for at least five years. I glumly said I would do as he asked and he reassured me that it was what I needed.

What began as a chore became an obsession. I had found that not only was I better than I had thought at drawing, but that I enjoyed the process of mark making as well. My initial efforts began simply with sphere shapes and shading. The sphere was the most basic form to me and ever since that summer it has reappeared in my work in different guises. In the fall, I enrolled in a drawing class along with my usual printmaking class. I began to draw mundane objects and sometimes copied my drawings to etching

plates to further explore the possibilities with state printing<sup>1</sup>. The iconographic value of each object I rendered became clearer to me. I began to explore the various ways drawing could affect the reading of an object as I changed the style in which I rendered the objects I was drawing and how I placed them on the paper or plate. Soon after that I began to re-introduce photographic imagery into the work by drawing from photographic scenes in my drawings and paintings and later by using photographs in my printmaking juxtaposed with drawing.

My subject matter at this time was derived mostly from juxtaposing a drawn object with a photographic image or scene. I had a better understanding of how each element could be read and would start a piece with a general idea to begin with and chose images to fit that piece. When I was executing a drawing I would simply draw the elements I had thought about and collected. When executing a print, I would sketch the various elements of the print in my sketchbook until I had the “right” combination. I was investigating how different readings could be interpreted from the combination of drawing and photographic elements. For the following two semesters, I continued with this approach in my art and found that I began to dislike printmaking more and more and could not understand why. Then one day the answer occurred to me while I was having a conversation with my printmaking professor, Rick Allen.

I was sitting in the printmaking lab working in my sketchbook when Rick came in and asked me if I was going to print that day. When I answered no, that I had to nail down the idea before I could print the image Rick shook his head.

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<sup>1</sup> State printing refers to the practice of drawing on a lithographic stone or etching plate, printing the initial image then altering the image and printing it again as a second “state.” This process can continue as long as

“If you worked half as much as much at the press then you do in that sketchbook you could fill this room with prints.”

I smiled and kept working, but what Rick had said stuck with me and I began to realize my problem. I was pre-planning everything in printmaking, which was a stark contrast to painting and drawing. In my paintings it was simply a matter of finding an idea and executing it. In hindsight, I believe that the ability to change and freely rearrange a drawing or painting by erasing or painting over a mistake allowed me the freedom of spontaneity, whereas the perceived finality of printmaking hindered a freer approach. In my mind I had to pre-plan my prints because I did not want to make a mistake. Consequentially what occurred in my printmaking was the rigid execution and approach to my work.

Although the answer was simple, it took me a while to see it. I understood that I had to approach my printmaking as I had been approaching my drawing and painting and let my artistic intuition be my guide. I began to free up my thinking by constructing prints “on the fly.” My printing became more spontaneous in its making. In short, I had begun to start thinking of my prints as if they were my paintings or drawings.

As I began to “play” with the imagery and its multiple meanings I found my work expanding in its scope. Consequently, the less I planned my prints the more playful they became. I began to employ game and toy related imagery that was often drawn over images of war or heavy machinery. By losing the pre-planning and relying mostly on artistic intuition, the work began to become more esoteric. There was no single right

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the printing substrate is in tact or as long as the artist wishes. The visual evolution of the original image is often the reason for executing state prints.



answer to any of the work I was producing but instead a series of questions relating to the images employed in my work and how they affected each other.

Fully freeing myself from planning any of my work has led to some unforeseen consequences. I have begun to realize that the work creates a life of its own. Some of the pieces live a “short life” meaning that once I exercise a given image or group of images in a certain piece it proves to be an anomaly that for some reason interested me. Other works have a greater influence over me and tend to live longer in my work. These pieces, whether they are drawings, paintings or prints, start a chain of ideas that push me to investigate new areas of conceptual and formal application related somehow to these first influential works. There are times when this influence is definitely recognizable and others when it is much subtler, such as a treatment of background or placement of an object on the visual plane. Since I now view all of my work as a “sketchbook” of sorts, this is not totally surprising to me. What I do find interesting however, is the direction the work is taking me. Recently, I have found myself playing with elements of installation and sculpture to further investigate the formal and conceptual potential of my imagery. This in turn has led me to think about stand-alone sculpture based on the prints and drawings that I have been treating as my sketchbook. This last thought is something I never foresaw happening because I have never thought of sculpture as a venue for my work until now. I am curious about this new direction my work has taken me for other reasons as well. The formal and conceptual elements of my sculptures, and how they relate to my two-dimensional pieces, are what interest me the most.

## **Statement of Problem**

I proposed and completed a new body of work that began with the notions of asking how my imagery works formally and conceptually. Furthermore, I took mental notes in what caused me to choose the initial objects or scenery within the work. Since I have begun to sit down and truly look at my body of work, I will trace for the reader what visual elements have traversed from one work to another and why they do so. Finally, by tracking my sculptural endeavors, I will answer the third question of how sculptural elements have affected my approach to my art. To sum up, I will illustrate to the reader how I, as an artist, approach my work by answering the following questions:

1. How do my choices of juxtaposed imagery work conceptually and formally?
- 2 What visual elements, if any, do I find reappearing in my work and why?
3. How will the addition of sculptural media and practice create new or add to the possible conceptual / formal concerns of my work?

## **Methodology**

The completed body of work was done in multi-media, ranging from installation, drawing to printmaking and sculpture. I completed fourteen works that I displayed together at the Cora Stafford Art Gallery. I kept mental records of my thought processes and kept away from my sketchbook in order to keep from over contemplating the works while I was executing them. I did keep a log of what I considered to be aesthetic and conceptual accomplishments and failures among the completed works. I will use these notes and the documentation of the work to help illustrate this problem-in-lieu of thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

In the spring of 2000 I began to play around with my prints as an experiment to help re-invigorate my work. The results of that semester began my interest in various approaches to my work. It was then that I created my first print installation titled *S. S. D. D.*, which was an acronym for “Same Shit Different Day.” The work consisted of forty-two 3 x 3” prints of a roughly drawn bowling ball colored in various hues, hung in a seven-print wide, six-print tall, grid format. The last of the bowling ball prints in the lower right hand corner was left uncolored and barely wiped, leaving a dark halo along the print’s borders. Further more, the last print was hung askew from the rest of the grid so that it was purposefully crooked. At that point in time, I just wanted to see something I had not done in my work, which was to create an installation. What transpired after the creation of *S.S.D.D.* was a total rethinking of what I could do with my work. Not only was my approach to printmaking affected, but my artistic scope also became larger. I began to think of installations in general and how I could utilize the elements of installation, such as the grid format of hanging prints, in my work. From installation my mind became interested in more three-dimensional aspects of the work. I then began to think about how the installations could come off the wall. From this thought, my mind turned to sculpture and I pressed forward to create the objects and installations that I began to see in my head. The resulting pieces became the body of work that I have shown at the Cora Stafford Art Gallery. I have chosen to discuss six of the fourteen works in my show. I will first write about the prints in the show and illustrate the formal evolution to my installations and finally, sculptural works.

The first of my prints, *Rest* is a vertically oriented etching measuring approximately 16 x 22” centered on a 22 x 30” sheet of Rives BFK. It features a semi-realistic value drawing of an easy chair surrounded by a black background. Chine colléd<sup>2</sup> above the chair, rests an appropriated image of a chrome sphere covered with light bulbs that light an otherwise black background, measuring roughly 5½ x 4” printed as a dark, blue-black photo-lithographic duo-tone<sup>3</sup>. There is a subtle difference between the cool blue-black of the chine colléd image, to the warm black of the etching ink. When I was printing *Rest* I began with the image of the chair which was a state print I had been working with on and off for about a year and a half. I was interested in capturing the idea of a personal space that I felt totally comfortable in. The easy chair that I do most of my thinking in became an easy solution for me. In printing the states the chair began to symbolize a more masculine ideal of space without my realizing it. The associations of Archie Bunker, the father from the TV series, *All in the Family*, and his favorite chair, not to mention my father’s and grandfather’s predilection to their own personal chairs grounded the image of the easy chair in the male “mystique.” I began to play with the space around the chair to affect the moods of each piece finalizing the state series with the Chine colléd version that is *Rest*. The chair is warm and soft in its rendition. There seems to have been some wear and tear on its upholstery, but the chair seems that much more comfortable and inviting because of it. The warm black background surrounding the chair isolates it, giving the space of the chair itself a feeling of sanctuary. The light

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<sup>2</sup> Chine collé is the practice of adhering a secondary piece of paper to a print through the use of the paper sizing and wheat paste. The process usually involves running the two sheets of paper through an etching or lithographic press.

ball amplifies this feeling of absolute comfort. The inspiration behind the addition of the light ball was the idea of that moment of relaxation immediately after an artistic epiphany. Another way to look at the light ball in this instance is the total satisfaction one has after having an epiphany and the bolstering of the ego that accompanies it. I didn't want the print to be too obvious in this instance. I decided to print a duo-tone, blue-black version of the image in photo-lithography rather than a full- color version, subverting the tone of the piece to a cool, passive mood which was more along the lines of relaxation rather than excitement.

I like the addition of the light ball in this print, because of its spherical forms, which comprise the chrome ball and light bulbs. Further contemplation on the sphere in its many guises in my work has lead me to understand why I gravitate towards balls formally. The sphere or ball, in its essence, recalls a sense of birth or renewal as well as a sense of play. The sphere in its perfect simplicity is the starting point of all living things. Everything from animal life to celestial bodies start from a sphere, whether it is a single cell at conception or hydrogen atoms colliding with each other, respectively. During the summer session with Stan Baden, I drew spheres because they were in my mind, the beginning of my drawing. I associated the drawings I was doing at that time with atoms and leptons, some of the smallest building blocks known to man. I was also reborn as a mark maker and my drawings were a direct reflection of that emotional and mental state. The light ball in *Rest* to me has more of these connotations. In the moment of artistic epiphany and the sense of relaxation that follows it, many times not only a single solution

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<sup>3</sup> Photo-Lithography refers to the use of light sensitive lithographic plates instead of stones in order to get a truer photographic image; Duo-tone images are printed from these plates in two colors, usually black and a second color to add to the image quality and tonal range.

is put forth, but numerous offshoots of that initial spark are created which fuel the artistic process. The “ball” also holds the great aspect of playfulness, which I frequently use in my pieces. Connotations of games and sport, and even physical intimacy through connotations of male and female genitalia are all playful aspects that the uses of the ball reference. This can be seen in my second print *Mind Games*.

I created *Mind Games* to comment upon personal relationships. The print is a horizontally oriented four-color process<sup>4</sup> photo-lithograph and is comprised of two images juxtaposed together measuring approximately 11 x 21” centered on a 22 x 29” sheet of Rives BFK. On left side of the print is an appropriated, playful image taken off the Internet of a young couple playing croquet. The woman is standing in a superior pose as she playfully smirks while looking off into the distance. She is standing on one of two balls while holding the croquet mallet leisurely over her shoulder again emphasizing her position of authority in this scene. The woman is obviously getting ready to send her male partner’s ball well off the playing field and is apparently relishing the moment. This becomes more evident when the male is studied. He is slouching in an iron-wrought lawn chair, eyes covered with one hand, while his face is set in a definite grimace of defeat. The male’s foot also rests slightly outside of the croquet goal post, which appears strongly suggestive of a phallus, in its proximity to the two croquet balls, which then reference testes and suggest imminent castration. The image overall playfully pokes fun at the gender roles that we associate with men and women. This is evident in the addition of the dog underneath the lawn-chair, which covers its eyes at the impending switch of

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<sup>4</sup> Four color process printing refers to the practice of using the colors of cyan, magenta, yellow and black in a photo-lithograph. When these four colors are combined, they make up most of the colors of the printed visual spectrum. Most newspapers and magazines use this method to create their color images.

authority in the relationship. On the right side of the *Mind Games* I again used the chrome light ball, this time much larger in size, but still a cool purple-black in color. The light ball in this instance has more to do with the fragility of the male ego. The easily breakable glass bulbs, which house the literal and figurative “light” would definitely break when confronted by a blow from the woman’s croquet mallet. Likewise the croquet ball’s reference to testes also support this sense of fragility. The difference in cool tone and color of the image on the right, to the bright playfulness of the image on the left creates a somewhat somber undertone to an otherwise playful image. When the two images are juxtaposed together, the event of a presupposed overtaking of male authority and what that authority is comprised of is evident. The croquet balls and the light ball are in essence the same thing. There is even a subtle joke here in that the male ego resides in his testicles. Breaking the idea of relaxation in the last connotation of the light ball in *Rest* was also a thought when I added it to this image. When referring the title to the images the print takes on a larger scope. The title brings an ephemeral quality to the work. The idea of playing mind games in any relationship has negative overtones and when that is applied to the two images a greater understanding of what is possibly at risk is questioned. The ideal of authority, in this case of men over women, is at best a fragile if not stupid thing. After completing what essentially was a diptych in *Mind Games*, I began to experiment with adding more images to the mix and came up with several other works, one of which was my next print, *The Last Time*.

*The Last Time* is a horizontal oriented four-color process photo-lithograph comprised of four images 6 x 32” overall. The images are roughly centered on a piece of 41 x 28” Rives BFK. I created *The Last Time*, as a narrative comprised solely of disparate

images. The idea was to tell a story revolving around a sexual event without a definite protagonist or antagonist and yet have an over all mood and outcome. The images from left to right are as follows: An ocean liner sinking, an astronomic photograph of the Shoemaker-Levy comet after its break up, but prior to its impact with Jupiter, A closely cropped image of a female seemingly bent over in a sexual moment. Her face is partially cropped out of the frame but she appears to be coyly looking over her shoulder, shirt halfway on, and finally an image of storm clouds in the background, which are obscured by telephone lines and the tops of telephone poles.

The first two images set up the tone of the piece for me. The image of the sinking ship is almost banal in its portrayal because it is happening on an otherwise clear day on a very calm sea. I tend to think of this image as a metaphor for a troubled emotional state. The ship sinking on a clear day with no apparent reason subtly refers to inner trouble within the ship or of trauma suffered in its past. The second image of the Shoemaker-Levy comet sets the tone in an overall way. I added this image to give several connotations. First I like the connotation of the sense of impending disaster with a series of impacts. Secondly, the idea of star-crossed lovers, which was amplified, with the addition of the female image and the title was intentional. The third idea had more of the opposing element of hope. When you see a shooting star you make a wish. This third layer of reading was also very appealing since it added to the meaning of the title. With a title as resolute as *The Last Time*, an opposing element of hope helps to turn the reading of the work into more of a questionable outcome. Also I finally liked the use of this image because of the intellectual reference to stars, the opposite of the lepton or atom which I was dealing with earlier in my work.



The second two images of the closely cropped female and the storm obscured by telephone lines read for me as climax and resolution, respectively. The female image read as an action or instance in time that revolved around sex. Although the element of sexuality has always been present in my work in some form or another, I believe that with the conception and execution of *The Last Time*, my work has recently begun to address the act of sex much more openly. The theme of sexuality has moved to the conceptual forefront of most of my newer works, addressing sex first and foremost in all of its different aspects. I attribute this new aspect of my work to my deeper understanding of the dynamics of sexual relationships having recently been through a long and intimate relationship myself. I also believe that my confidence as an artist has grown to the point where I can comment upon sexual matters without being trite or cliché in doing so. In *The Last Time*, the female is smiling and seemingly has offered herself or is offering herself to the viewer. I cropped this image for several reasons. I wanted to push the envelope with my imagery towards lewdness but pull it back enough to the point where viewers would linger upon the image, and yet feel as an uneasy voyeur. There is a feeling of guilty pleasure experienced when looking at the image, much like we experience when there is an accident upon the road and must slow down to see it. Secondly, I wanted to suggest a physical act of intimacy or the moment right before or right after it had occurred. Cropping the image in this way leaves the image open to several different readings most of which are erotic in nature. While it is obvious a sexual act is taking place, what is unclear is whether or not the female is the seductress or the seduced. This gives *The Last Time* an ambiguousness as to who the protagonist and antagonist are in the narrative. The last image of the oncoming storm was a resolution of sorts.

The sublime image of gathering cumulus clouds obscured by telephone lines reads purposefully as an open-ended resolution. The ephemeral quality of the storm clouds against the stark black of the telephone lines has several connotations. The first idea was of a bad omen of a storm on the horizon. The telephone lines added to this idea suggest a breakdown of communication. The image of the clouds also gives the piece an open-ended resolution in that the image depicts a place that could be virtually anywhere. Once read altogether, the images set a mood of dark, troubled emotions in a troubled time with a sexual act between two people who's future, because of the title, seems uncertain. The images that I chose convey the ideas I was dealing with at the time quite well. Each image helps to set a certain mood and pace. There is a stepped dynamic diagonal within the piece created by each of the images. The image of the sinking ship, which leans to left, creates a diagonal composition that is amplified by the comets which are falling towards the lower left of the image. This in turn is reinforced by the woman's arm that creates a diagonal, which also falls to the left bottom corner and finally by the telephone lines in the last image that echo its three predecessors. These diagonal elements within *The Last Time* create a series of visual steps that build up to the next. The steps create a visual pace that aids in the reading of the print. I feel that this piece is a success in its distillation of imagery. While I was working on the visual composition of *The Last Time*, I completed an installation that greatly helped in my choice of images for this print. While working on the installation, *Full Circle*, I learned to pick and choose images that would help tell an open-ended narrative.

My installation piece, *Full Circle* is variable in its installation dimensions. It is basically comprised of thirty 1½ x 4 x 1" poplar wood sections that are painted white.

Twenty-nine of the wood sections have an image taken from a magazine, cropped according to the individual wooden pieces, while the thirtieth piece is left white. The sections are installed in a variable diameter circle on the wall to represent a large clock or stop watch. Once again, as in *The Last Time*, I wanted to relate a narrative through a wide disparate use of imagery. I have chosen five key images from the thirty that I believe relate the intent of the piece. The first image, which rests atop the installation, is a close up of a robed arm clothed in a boxing glove. Almost directly opposed to that image literally and figuratively is a close-up of a Wonder Woman plush doll that rests at the bottom of the circle. Just to the right of the Wonder Woman image is that of a marionette puppet dressed in what is known as swinger-style. The puppet is sporting a red button up shirt, a white tie, a navy blue pin-stripe vest and slacks with two-tone penny-loafers. The puppet is also ambiguously looking down at his sports-watch and to the left (in Wonder Woman's direction). Roughly at the three o'clock position rests the image of a school of piranha. At approximately the nine o'clock position of the circle is the close-up image of a woman dressed in her underwear whose loosely clenched hands are bound by fur-lined handcuffs. The woman's arms are clearly bound behind her back as her hands lie tensed at the intersection of her semi-exposed thighs and buttocks. The other images in *Full Circle* are various but set an overall mood for the piece, which is I view as the "whole story" behind the narrative of my print *The Last Time*. I chose the boxing glove image and placed it on top to immediately indicate ideas of conflict both metaphorically and physically. There is also a definite sense of the masculine persona in the association of men and boxing. However, the addition of the recent social acceptance of women's boxing helps to obscure this reference to the piece's benefit. The use of the Wonder

Woman plush toy is the antithesis of the boxing glove. While the image is of a toy the symbol of Wonder Woman is a strong feminist icon that creates a sense of feminine power within the piece. The fact that the image represents a toy Wonder Woman connotes the subtlety of this feminine power. The marionette is an obvious relation to loss of power or being controlled by an outside source. The puppet's dress amplifies the irony of this in that he is dressed in a very machismo, "cool guy" attire. The fact that he is looking at his watch and subtly towards the Wonder Woman image reference just who may be controlling his strings. The school of piranha image was an image that had several readings. The first and foremost was that of the threat of being "eaten alive" metaphorically. The second reading was that of imminent danger. The last connotation was that again of conflict. The fish are facing each other with menacing teeth showing and it is unclear if they are about to turn on each other. The last image of the fur-lined handcuffed arms is another reference of submission, this time of the feminine personality. There is also the added reading of sexual submission and deviance given the fetishistic fur-lined handcuffs and the woman's presupposed attire. When all of the images are read together *Full Circle* tells the full story of relationship between a man and a woman. There are obvious power struggles within the relationship and communication problems but in the end the piece is unclear about if there is a definite winner or loser. I was more interested in the aspects of the conflict with male and female relationships and tried to keep any sense of metaphoric ending out of the piece to avoid any true clear-cut answer or resolution. Formally, I chose the colored images and placed them accordingly to give the piece a visual rhythm and pace. If one reads *Full Circle* as a clock, then the beginning of the relationship begins with vibrant color, while about at the four o'clock position the

images become more subdued in their color palettes. From the three o'clock to approximately to the six o'clock positions the images are either monochromatic dark hues such as the piranha's dark orange-red or altogether black and white. After the six o'clock to roughly about the eight o'clock position the colors are much more vibrant and rich, as with the Wonder Woman doll. I also chose the images due to their color's comment on emotion. The colors also work metaphorically to insinuate emotional levels at certain times during the piece. While the images of power in the pieces, such as the boxing glove and the Wonder Woman toy are rich and vibrant in color the images of submission have more cool tones to them.

After creating *Full Circle* and several other installations along the same vein of thought, I became more interested in freestanding sculpture. I had broken away from the two-dimensional plane of the print with the creation of my wall installations and was ready to move on to my more sculptural ideas. The first piece I conceived in this series of sculptures was *Babel*.

I conceived *Babel* early on in my print experimentation and originally was going to draw the planned sculpture as a print and leave it at that. After gaining the confidence from creating my wall installations I decided to go on with the physical construction of the piece. *Babel* is an installation-based freestanding sculpture comprised of twenty plaster cast bowling balls that have been stacked in a pyramid. The inspiration behind the piece was obviously from the earlier work *S.S.D.D.* in which I had used the image of the bowling ball in an installation. I have always liked the connotation behind the bowling ball. It has a definite masculine connotation and yet it is a sphere, which as I have written before, reminds me of birth and play. Fred Flintstone or John Goodman in the Cohen

brother's movie *The Big Lebowski* are standard male archetypes who enjoyed the sport of bowling. The idea of bowling over or being bowled over is also there within the ball and that too has appealed to me. There were several ideas behind stacking the bowling balls in a pyramid. The first inspiration I had was that of a cannon ball stack. The obvious connotation of war and or conflict coupled with the substitution of the bowling ball for the cannon ball entranced my imagination. I imagined great bowling wars, which is a direct comment on the cliched male past time of bowling tournaments. The connotation of the Tower of Babel is evident from the title. In the biblical story of the Tower of Babel, men from all over the world attempted to build a tower to reach heaven in order to be face to face with God. God saw them doing this and created different languages amongst the men so that they could not understand one another and thereby could not complete the tower. The story is basically about the ego of men and the price it had cost them. I liked the idea of this in relation to my pyramid of bowling balls. While men have done great things, their vanity and egos have often betrayed their accomplishments. While the pyramid is a great thing, my pyramid is constructed from the bowling ball, a sphere used in game that is commonly associated with the hubris of men. After using the bowling ball form, I decided to move on to the bowling pin in my work. *The Bachelor Party* is a piece that is derived from my work on *Babel* as well as a few of my other bowling ball pieces.

I created the freestanding sculptural installation, *The Bachelor Party* as another commentary on the foolishness of men. The piece is comprised of ten plaster-cast bowling pins set up in their commonly associated positions as bowling pins. On each of the pin's heads I placed a colored, rubber-latex balloon which was rolled up to represent a

makeshift derby. There are several references in *The Bachelor Party* to address. The first of which deals with Duchamp's *The Bride Stripped Bare, by her Bachelors, Even*, which is also known as *The Large Glass*. I gave *The Bachelor Party* its title to draw a contemporary parallel to Duchamp in order to set the conceptual stage. In *The Bride Stripped Bare, by her Bachelors, Even*, the "bachelors" are made up of nine blocky figures which were to represent a priest, a department-store delivery boy, a soldier, a barber, a policeman, an undertaker, a flunky, a busboy, and a station-master. All of which are professions from all walks of life that were mostly held by, or associated with men in Duchamp's time. The irony of the bachelor's representation in the piece is that although the bachelors are from all walks of life they all appear similar to one another. In other words they are all just men. I used ten bowling pins to draw upon that idea of a virtual male similitude. The bowling pin reminds me of a chess piece or on a more comical note, a simplified gesture of a man in a tuxedo with his arms firmly at his side, much like the Penguin, a comic book villain. The different colored rubber latex balloons that were rolled up the pins' heads connote the idea of their different professions or hats each of the bachelors wear. The balloons also reference condoms, which leads to the more comical connotations of the piece. The overt theme in *The Large Glass* of men left to their own devices (masturbation) while their bride lies in another dimension is echoed in *The Bachelor Party* by the title, the placement of the pins, and the rubber latex "hats."

Bachelor parties are events commonly associated with male drunken debauchery. The celebration of the bachelors is usually accompanied with the suggestion of temptation through exotic dancers, and in some cases, even prostitutes. In most cases the groom-to-be and his friends revel in the temptation of sex, but do not, or cannot satiate their

incensed libidos. Hence, you have the figurative and literal setup of *The Bachelor Party*. The pins or bachelors are set up in the one to ten bowling formation ready for the ball to come and bowl them over. The rubber latex balloons over the phallic pinheads, as I have written above, also connote condoms and still moreover since they are balloons, a sense of play or celebration, which puts a comical spin on the eager male libido. In other words, *The Bachelor Party* once again, as in my previous sculpture, *Babel*, points to the hubris of men, who left to their own libidinous devices will often set themselves up for a fall.

After completing my three-dimensional works, I began to understand how my sculptures were not a tangent of my prints or drawings, but instead, a direct parallel. In the pieces *Babel* and *The Bachelor Party*, the elements of placement, spacing, and use of material are three-dimensional replacements for the formal elements of juxtaposition of images and the dichotomy they create on a two-dimensional surface. Where I created a conceptual reading by placing the croquet-playing couple next to the light ball, so too did I create a similar reading by placing ten bowling pins tipped with rubber latex balloons in a one to ten pin formation. Conceptually, my sculptural works function identically to my prints and drawings. It is at the formal level where the sculpture and prints are different. Where my prints are complex in their use of imagery, my sculptures are much simpler in their execution. I tend to use multiples of a single object motif and as I have stated before, rely on those objects placement and/or installation within a space to garner a reading. This may change over time, as I tend to think of my first sculptural works as my re-discovery of drawing. When I took up drawing again I drew simple forms at first and then in time chose to render more complex imagery. I perceive my sculptural endeavors will possibly fall into the same path of execution.



### CHAPTER 3

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate some of the points I have made in this paper about my formal, conceptual, and sculptural concerns in order to fully illustrate my artistic approach. I will begin by addressing the repetition of images and forms in my work and how it illuminates my concepts. Secondly I will address the use of juxtaposition as a formal and conceptual device. Finally, I will discuss the sculptural work and how it relates, conceptually to the installations and printed material.

Repetition is a formal device that I frequently use in my work. Often I repeat images I have selected from one piece to another. This repeating of visual elements works in two ways. First the using of the same imagery in different pieces works as a visual signifier. In *Rest* and *Mind Games* I used the same image of the light ball to represent similar ideas, both relating to the ego. The second and more important way the repetition of an image or form functions is that of addition of meaning to the signifier. While the light ball in *Rest* comes to signify the relaxation after the artistic epiphany, the bolstering of the ego and the possibility of further artistic ideas, the same image in *Mind Games* speaks about so much more. Pairing the light ball with the croquet-playing couple plays on the previously established signified conceptual elements and adds the state of fragility. This addition of meaning to the signifiers is the most important aspect of the process of repetition because of its ability to carry a discourse through my body of work. In other words, although I may use the same image over and over in my pieces, the image never means exactly the same thing. The repeated image instead speaks of itself in the present work while recalling its former incarnations in other works increasing its conceptual weight in the present and former pieces by its additional associations. This is

also true of my repetition of forms in my work although in a much subtler way. The ball, which appears in many of my pieces, references itself over and over in my body of work, speaking of the ideas of birth, renewal, sexuality, and play. This discourse of meaning would not be possible without other formal aspects in my work such as juxtaposition, and in my sculptural works, placement in space.

The juxtaposition of disparate images in my pieces works as both a formal and conceptual device. Formally, the placement of two non-related images next to one another helps to set up a visual pace within the work. In pieces such as *The Last Time* and *Full Circle*, the different image's individual color and emotional tone help to move the viewer's eye across the work. The spurts of color in *Full Circle* move in a rhythm that leads the viewer around the circle of wooden bars. The different images, such as the comets streaking across the sky or the female engaged in a sexual moment in *The Last Time* cause the viewer to pause within the piece to contemplate the mood and possible meanings behind the images. Conceptually, the juxtaposition of imagery in my work plays upon the viewer's associations of the images in and of themselves and what they signify when they are taken in as a whole. This epistemology is the aspect of my work that I find most interesting because no two readings of an image are exactly the same. In *Mind Games* the couple playing croquet can be read several ways. The association of the feminine dominance can be read into the illustration as I have put forth above, or the total opposite could be the case. Another reading of the croquet-playing-couple illustration in *Mind Games* could be that of total ineptitude on the part of the female. The illustration could read that the female has indeed already hit her ball and is looking for her partner's in the distance when in fact she has not even moved it, signifying her ignorance of the

situation and casting a totally different read upon the light ball and indeed, the whole nature of the piece. It is this multitude of possible readings that allows the work to exist in an ever evolving discussion of the piece which is accented, as I have stated above by my repetition of visual signifiers. However, no matter how many different readings are garnered by a specific piece, all of my works seem to touch upon certain general conceptual themes through the use of juxtaposed imagery.

Issues of relationships between men and women have always played a part in my artistic themes and my current body of work is no exception. Communication and the lack thereof between men and women, issues of sexuality, power struggles in relationships, and the birth and death of relationships are all current themes within my latest works, which can be gleaned through my use of juxtaposition of imagery. *Full Circle* is the one piece that holds all of these themes in its images, but other pieces such as *The Last Time* and *Mind Games* also comment upon the general relationship issues between men and women. Other pieces, such as *Mind Games*, *Babel*, and *The Bachelor Party* speak of other conceptual themes such as the aspects of play, and the hubris of men, to name a few. Although I employ juxtaposition in *Mind Games* to illustrate among other themes, the idea of play, it is through the placement of sculptural motifs in space and the objects themselves that illustrate my conceptual ideas in sculpture.

While I do not rely on the formal device of juxtaposition in my sculpture, I do employ other formal methods such as repetition of sculptural motifs, the placement of those repeated forms in space, and the objects which I have cast and/or found themselves to comment upon my conceptual ideas. All of my sculptural works use the formal device of repetition, as in the thirty sections of wood in the wall installation *Full Circle*, the ten

bowling pins in *The Bachelor Party* or the twenty bowling balls in *Babel*. Although the same formal device is used in each one of these pieces, the repetition of each sculptural element has a totally different effect on the piece due to how they are placed in space. In *Full Circle*, sections establish the concept of time and connote the average thirty days of a calendar month or, placed in a circle on the wall, mark the places on a stopwatch. The repeated bowling pins of *The Bachelor Party* connote the game of bowling itself and the relation to the bachelors in Duchamp's *The Large Glass*. The bowling pin's placement in *The Bachelor Party*, when given the rest of their connotations, speak of the sexual idiocy of men. The repeated bowling balls of *Babel* connote the theme of play. When the bowling balls are stacked in a pyramid, their placement in space brings to mind the pyramids of Egypt, or more closely cannon ball stacks. When these elements of association are read with the bowling ball object the hubris of men as a theme becomes evident.

It is the formal concern of space and the activation of that space which is a new concern for me. Since the advent of sculpture in this body of work, it is the only true new concern that I have encountered. I do not think that my sculptural works are conceptually that much different from my two-dimensional pieces, but instead parallel one another. My prints, installations and sculptures speak on similar themes and subject matter. It is basically the way I put forth those ideas, or the formal concerns of the pieces that are truly different.

Just as I started with drawing balls, then more complex imagery when I seriously began to incorporate drawing into my printed work, so I see my progress in sculpture. I have started out simplistically in sculpture and will work towards more complex forms

and installations. As this problem-in-lieu of thesis illustrates, sculpture is a parallel, and a new concern in my work. I believe, as time goes on I will continue to activate the space in my sculptures and installations in a more dynamic way, and continue to develop my concepts as I progress in my artistic career.