

THESIS
RESONANCE OF AWE

Submitted by
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the Degree of Masters of Fine Arts
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Fall 2004

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

November 8, 2004

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY JULIE ANNE KEITH ENTITLED "RESONANCE OF AWE" BE ACCEPTED AS FULLFILING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS.

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

RESONANCE OF AWE

My art is a visual expression of my intimate relationships to family and my surroundings.

It is a search to unite the dichotomy of self and other, and a seeking out of the divine.

Using landscape as subject matter I strive to create a visual vocabulary with line, shape,

color, and movement to express a universal and spiritual way of seeing

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this to my beautiful girl Sarah and my beautiful boy Tarryn. Oh how in love
with you I am!

I would like to thank Jim Dormer and Steve Simons for their insight, integrity, and the courage to let me search, David Ellerby for your knowledge and help, Blane Harding for being such a loving, and supportive person, and Patrice Sullivan for your wonderful friendship. I would especially like to thank Sarah Vaeth for her love and support as a friend, and extraordinary artist.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures.....	v
Thesis.....	1
References.....	6
Bibliography.....	7
Figures.....	8

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. <u>Always Theirs</u> , Dry Point, 5.7/8”x 5”.....	8
2. <u>The Gift</u> , Engraving with Mezzotint, 23.3/4”x 30”.....	9
3. <u>Ma</u> , Intaglio, 23.1/4”x 24.1/4”.....	10
4. <u>Wo Hao</u> , Engraving, 12”x 8.3/4”.....	11
5. <u>My House</u> , Lithograph, 23.1/4”x 24”.....	12
6. <u>Balancing In the Grass</u> , 9”x9.3/4”.....	13
7. <u>Yellow Diptych I, II</u> , Lithograph with Graphite, 24”x 16.3/4”.....	14
8. <u>Willows</u> , Engraving, 11”x10”.....	15
9. <u>Syzygy</u> , Reductive Intaglio, 11”x 10”.....	16
10. <u>Tarryns Angels</u> , Engraving, 10.5/8”x 8.3/4”.....	17
11. <u>My Beautiful Boy</u> , Lithograph, 17.1/2”x 12.7/8”.....	18
12. <u>The Path Through</u> , Engraving with Intaglio, 16”x 10”.....	19
13. <u>Grass</u> , Lithograph on Mylar, 12.1/8”x 12.1/2”.....	20
14. <u>Standing</u> , Lithograph, 17.3/8”x 23.3/8”.....	21
15. <u>Light</u> , Intaglio, 19.1/4”x 18”.....	22
16. <u>Embers</u> , Engraving, 15.1/8”x 21.3/4”.....	23
17. <u>Seeing</u> , Intaglio, 23.7/8”x 21.3/4”.....	24
18. <u>Tall Grass</u> , Intaglio, 35.1/4”x 16.1/2”.....	25
19. <u>My Sarah I,II</u> , Lithograph on Mylar, 16”x 16”.....	26

RESONANCE OF AWE

My work is an exploration of self and the search for sacred moments using landscape as subject matter. My art is a visual extension of my intimate relationship to family, environment, and life experiences. I strive to unite dichotomies such as self and other, which popular western culture manifests, in search of a more universal and spiritual content. My time in Japan and my study of Zen Buddhism have influenced my way of seeing, the exercise of embracing what is at hand, and the presence of change and possibilities in each moment.

Printmaking shares these principles and is an ideal format for me because the process is one of discipline, controlled chance and metamorphosis, analogous to my own practice and learning. I am able to choose a process to render an idea, but ultimately there are unpredictable outcomes. The process, though methodical in practice, resonates the existence of change by eliciting inspiring variations that lend themselves to the emotional and formal content of my imagery.

The unifying formal element in all of my work is a sense of space and movement. It is by marks, shapes, lines and color that I attempt to create a sense of depth both visually and emotionally. I first approach an idea by using literal images such as the panoramic view in Standing and by reworking the image, I pare down the figurative landscape to simple shapes, marks and colors that create a rhythm and

feeling of continuing space. The darker vertical shape in the images foreground serves as an anchor, as the smaller shapes create diagonals that move the viewer back and through the picture. Though the colors and shapes have a familiarity to the actual landscape, I have consciously exaggerated forms and values, attempting to create an energetic impression.

A second approach to my work is to take on a more intimate perspective as in the image Tall Grass. By means of a vertical format to stress the sensation of being smaller than the subject, I force the diminutive view of grass. Again, using the darker grass like lines to ground the image, they work their way up through the image diagonally and vertically creating a sense of movement. Behind them, shapes, blocks and lines of a lighter value echo the progression, transporting the onlooker up and through, imparting a sensation of uplifting space.

In both formats, I attempt to express the intangible sensation of a moment or a memory. The two approaches to my work, abstract in nature, are interdependently related and each has a quality and matter that feeds the other. Using imagery that has a representational base, allows me a springboard for nonrepresentational images that embody or bear the signature marks, shapes, colors and ideals that are the root of my work. The mark, color, and energy of the nonrepresentational work then permit me to bring an immediacy and spontaneous gesture to the more representational pieces. The images arising from my nonrepresentational works are a deeper introspection of self as in the piece Always Theirs which emphasizes the use of color to convey my meaning. Brown symbolizes strength and persistence, the color pink symbolizes joy,

and blue is symbolic for love. The spontaneous gestural line combined with the vibrational qualities of the color form continual progression of space that is a formal, emotional and almost auditory in content, acknowledging presence of change and possibility.

Each work, emotively based, is an allusion to works previous and the search for the divine moment. The principle behind my work is that I am not separate from my subject but rather an extension or expression of it, and it is through the printing process that I render those experiences into a visual arrangement. I purposefully limit editions and chose methods in my work that have intuitive and unpredictable results to make the print at hand more precious and unique echoing Marden's idea of "creating something bigger than what we actually see"(Stomberg, p. 40). Pieces that look planned are in fact a variation of the idea of intuitive unpredictability. An example is the engraving Willows: a culmination of a memory from childhood that I recalled when I was on a walk with my son. Coming up a path Tarryn and I were both moved by the field of willows; the arc of the dense orange red branches as the sun shined on them. Evoking memories of my own childhood, I could remember hiding in the undergrowth, the smell of the earth, sounds of birds, voices loud and soft as I looked up at the sky through the curved brush. The plate itself was not created with this memory or idea but rather evolved in the process by selectively following lines already present in the plate. All past experiences, combined with the present moment, intuitively guided me to an action of pure expression and because engraving requires

me to be fully present in the process to eliminate mistakes, all unnecessary thoughts, designs and conceptual ideas fall away eliciting a pureness in the image.

Pureness in an image for me is associated with a minimalist content and I consciously work to avoid overdoing or emphasizing a subject. Influenced by my time in Japan, I find the Zen Buddhist aesthetic enters into my work but is not deliberately incorporated; rather, it is an extension of my evolution in my time spent there. The balance and rhythm of my work is influenced by Eastern art: use of interior space, Zen gardens, Sumi-e (ink paintings) and ethos, and I am fascinated that a single mark(s) or color can complete or alter an image; not attempting to duplicate or emulate the culture, I strive to recreate the spirit of their cultural philosophy.

The works Ma and The Gift arise from this way of seeing and more specifically signify my own spiritual practice, but my way of seeing also points to a universal inquiry of why. A significant part of my art and life is that I never stop questioning, exploring and acknowledging self and the awe of change. The arched form which is a central or secondary form through nearly my entire body of work denotes self and journey, and thus becomes an indirect self portrait. The arched form is also a reference to Daruma, the first patriarch of Zen that is referred to in many Japanese ink paintings: "...the artist is not painting Daruma as an historical figure (or even a saint) but as a symbol of penetrating insight, self-reliance, ceaseless diligence, and the rejection of all externals. Furthermore, in order to bring the image of Daruma alive with brush and ink, the artist must become Daruma. Thus, a Daruma painting is a spiritual self-portrait" (Stevens, p. 49).

In my work I continue to search and expand my visual vocabulary . Using printmaking as a vehicle I am able to work directly with line, shape, color and texture to create an image and let processes unfold, revealing nuances of the subject and myself. I strive to create an energy and sense of movement on paper, getting closer to the divine that is inherit in myself and the viewer.

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FIGURES

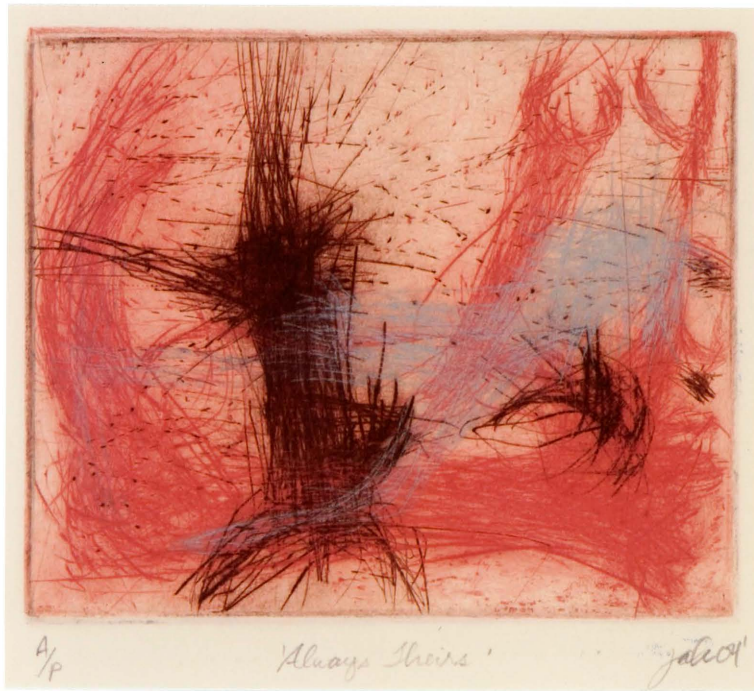


Figure 1. Always Theirs, Dry Point, 5.7/8"x 5"



Figure 2. The Gift, Engraving with Mezzotint, 23.75" x 30"



Figure 3. Ma, Intaglio, 23.1/4"x 24.1/4"



Figure 4. Wo Hao, Engraving, 12"x 8.3/4"



Figure 5. My House, Lithograph, 23.1/4"x 24"



Figure 6. Balancing In The Grass, Intaglio, 9"x 9.1/4"



Figure 7. Yellow Diptych I, II, Lithograph, 24"x 16.3/4"



Figure 8. Willows, Engraving, 11"x 10"



Figure 9. Syzygy, Reductive Intaglio, 11"x 10"



Figure 10. Tarryns Angels, Engraving, 10.5/8" x 8.3/4"



Figure 11. My Beautiful Boy, Lithograph, 17.1/2"x 12.7/8"

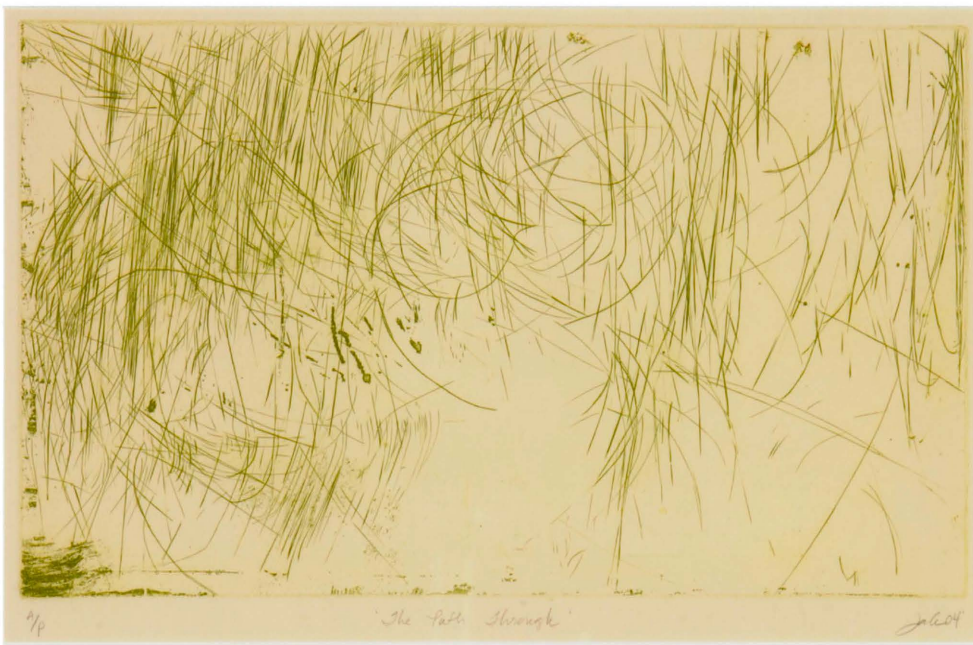


Figure 12. The Path Through, Engraving, 17.1/2" x 12.7/8"



Figure 13. Grass, Lithograph on Mylar, 12.1/8"x 12.1/2"



Figure 14. Standing, Lithograph, 23.7/8" x 21.3/4"



Figure 15. Light, Intaglio, 19.1/4"x 18"



Figure 16. Embers, Engraving, 15.1/8"x 21.3/4"



Figure 17. Seeing, Intaglio, 23.7/8"x 21.3/4"



Figure 18. Tall Grass, Intaglio, 35.1/4" x 16 1/2"



Figure 19. My Sarah I, II, Lithograph on Mylar, 16" x 16"