

THESIS

VINCULUM RIGOR

Submitted by
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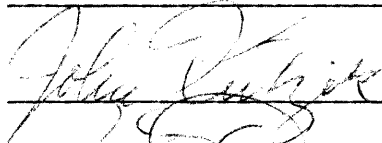
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Summer 1989

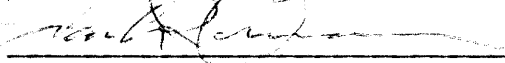
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER
OUR SUPERVISION BY SUSAN SMALLWOOD HEROLD ENTITLED
VINCULUM RIGOR BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ART.

Committee on Graduate Work









Adviser



Department Head

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

VINCULUM RIGOR

Vinculum - a band or connecting fold
Rigor - extreme hardship or difficulty

The Psychology of the Living

The Homo sapient is my fascination. How it functions and what it does. How it masks itself in varying situations. Its joys, its sorrows, its ability to come back from immense tragedy or illness. Its ability to learn of change and to inevitably accept that change.

The Psychology of the Dying

The Homo sapient is not immortal. It dies. I have been surrounded by and immersed in death, its realities, and its unknowns, for most of my life. I am in fear of it and am curious about it.

I have seen the importance of ceremony for the living when someone dies. I am fascinated with the idea of the human form as a reliquary, as keeper of relics, as well as reliquiae, remains, as of organisms. What we keep and what we bury or discard tells many stories. It

is all part of the ceremony of acceptance, the ceremony of reckoning.

My art is about relics and remains, keeping and throwing away. When a part of us dies we keep and we throw away. When someone we care for dies we keep and we throw away. We decide ceremonially what is relic and what is remains (to remain):

The aura - a particular quality surrounding a person

The essence - the basic nature of

The spirit - separate from matter.

I work with skin, with hide, because its qualities best express for me the aura, the essence, the spirit. I admire its strength, its unpredictability, its translucency. It represents the layers the Homo sapiens uses to cover up, to protect, or to peel away, opening itself to life and to death.

The threads on the forms represent the wounds upon the body, the spirit. We are injured, we are ill, we are repaired, but we are never the same. This illness, this injury alters us. We are transformed. Sometimes we are better for the suffering, renewed, or we are left embittered and anxious. The threads represent this transformation, this altered self.

When we are born we are born screaming at so frightful and difficult an experience or we are stunned

silent and have to be firmly whacked to remind us to suck in life, to breathe into the immense journey.

When a person dies he or she seldom does so by choice but is either struck immediately silent through some violent act or dies slowly, sucking in life for as long as the body can gasp.

It is an arduous dance.

Watching someone die we begin to see through that person and into ourselves. We begin to seek out what is valuable, what is good. We also begin to see what is not so good and what we would choose to peel away. We open ourselves to the Homo sapiens that will watch us continue our journey through death into

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