

THESIS

NEIGHBOR-SCAPE

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
Fall, 1981

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Fall 19 81

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION

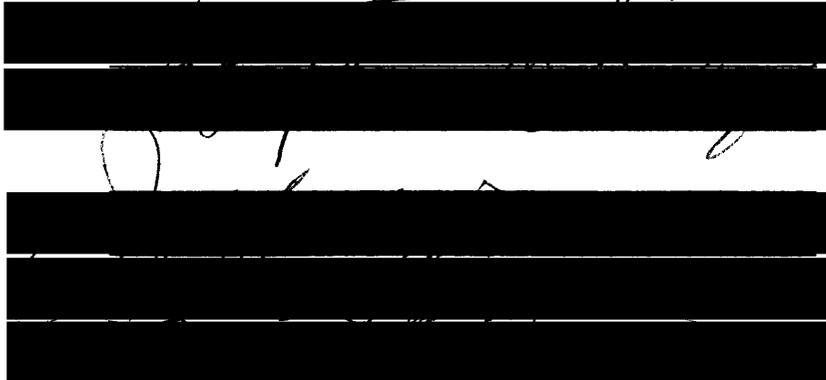
BY RICHARD M. AMBROSE

ENTITLED NEIGHBOR-SCAPE

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Committee on Graduate Work

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Adviser

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

NEIGHBOR-SCAPE

"Neighborhood" is a complex and diverse concept. It is an area where the natural environment is manipulated and redefined, and interacts with architectonic forms reflecting at the same time chaos and order. The common thread that establishes a neighborhood's identity is its architectural style, social strata or geographical location. My fascination with the "neighborhood" comes in part from my interest in architecture and the interaction of light and form. It also derives from my growing up in a midwestern town in which the neighborhood was one's identity.

In observing our environment (i.e. neighborhood), our perception is fragmented, into a mentally constructed patchwork of images. This fragmentation occurs because our environment is vast and chaotic, both in the quantity and arrangement of architectural styles and organic shapes. Instead of dealing with fragments in my drawings, I have chosen to piece various neighborhood images into a panoramic view ("neighbor-scape"). My interest in panoramic views is to some degree related to my interest in Chinese landscape painting, particularly of the Sung and Yuan periods. In

Chinese painting, the viewer is encouraged to experience the whole environment as well as its parts, moving through it visually as if he were actually travelling within its confines. A second reason for my interest in panorama is my own experience of neighborhoods. I wish to recreate the physical sensation of moving through the environment in visual terms.

Traditionally, the panoramic western landscape was revealed through a birdseye view that expressed a sense of vast, spatial depth. Instead of expressing the neighborhood with vastness of spatial depth, I have expressed in it a lateral and continual space while emphasizing movement through it. This reflects my ground level examination of neighborhoods, which are viewed along continuous public and private thoroughfares. Expanding from a standard format (rectangular shape), that limits the spatial sense of the neighborhood, I have elongated the physical size of my work from two feet to as much as twenty feet in length.

I have used several devices that encourage visual movement through my work. The most obvious is the use of the elongated horizontal format. The use of the roving eye perspective in which a number of vanishing points are incorporated, enhances the continual movement. I have also manipulated the play of light to capture the overall essence

of the continual space of the neighborhood panorama. Light, a fascinating element in nature, filters through the neighborhood, creating and breaking up forms into tonal patterns. These patterns establish a rhythm in my work that carries the eye throughout the neighbor-scape. Another compositional device is the use of shadows to guide the viewer's eye. These shadows are also used to enhance the curvilinear placement of forms which gradually come forward or recede.

In my work, the physical size of the neighborhood stretches beyond one's peripheral vision (greater than 45°). Combined with the content, the viewer is treated to several possible experiences. When seen up close he must literally travel through my drawings, introducing the element of time into his perception of the space depicted. The element of time can be taken on two different levels. The first level is the actual time needed to take in the entire work. The viewer must be involved with it for some time before perceiving all of its parts. On a more abstract level, the viewer is aware of the time necessary to travel through an actual neighborhood.

The viewer can also step back to experience the overall physical size. In doing so, he is forced to rotate his head from side to side in order to see the entire work. While he can only see segments when looking up close, he

visually connects the segments when stepping back. In connecting the segments, a feeling of contemplation may set in. Overwhelmed by the complexity and vastness of the work, one may lose himself in it. Contemplation can be described as a form of absorption. Despite the feeling of absorption, an irony develops. Some may feel a resistance to enter the work despite its size. This alienation occurs in part because of the absence of human beings -- only evidence of their presence exists (e.g. clotheslines, wagons, basketball hoops, and trashcans). In addition, when viewing the work from a distance, one feels separated from it physically. I am fascinated by the concept of alienation or disengagement. Man builds borders or boundaries to differentiate himself from his neighbors. I have tried to break down these boundaries by attempting to capture a sense of alienation, isolation and even mystery which I feel when I view the various types of architecture in my own environment. The close juxtaposition of commercial buildings and private homes and the obvious elements of the old and new, and rich and poor, provide for me the most interesting paradox. The natural environment seems to retreat as civilization approaches only to engulf it once again as time passes. (e.g. Compare Fig. 3 "Neighbor-scape #22" to Fig. 5

"Neighbor-scape Engulfed".) Other questions surface in my work. Isolated forms become figurative elements. The location of certain man-made forms in unusual places creates a feeling of uncertainty (i.e. a power transformer in someone's backyard).

In essence, my works reflect a continual examination of the neighborhood's spatial sense and the interaction of architectonic forms and the natural environment. Presenting the concept of the neighborhood in a panoramic view sets up an interplay of form and light; contemplation and alienation; time and space. The long, horizontal format has enabled me to conjure up images and ideas which not only reflect my perception of the neighborhood but my own feelings toward it as well.

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DOCUMENTATION



Fig. 1. "Neighbor-scape #11". Graphite. 20" x 62½".

Fig 2. "Neighbor-scape #15". Graphite. 19" x 118".



Fig. 3. "Neighbor-scape #22". Graphite. 16" x 212".



Fig. 4. "Urban-scape #23". Graphite. 13" x 165".

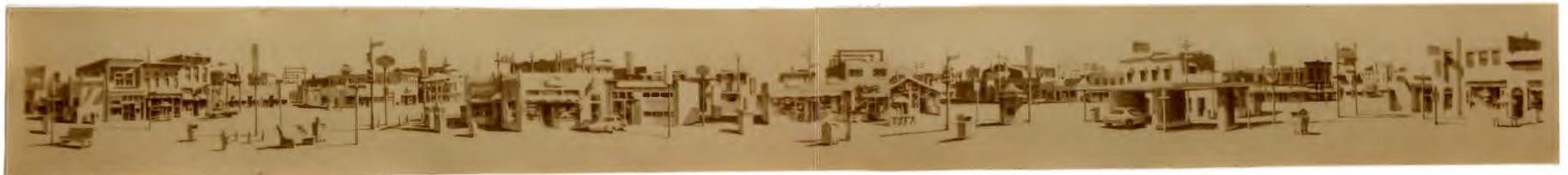


Fig. 5. "Neighbor-scape Engulfed". Graphite. 14½" x 209".

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Fig. 6. "Neighbor-scape #24". Graphite. 13½" x 252".



APPENDIX

NEIGHBOR-SCAPE

I propose to deal with the theme of the neighborhood by itself, and in its larger context within an urban setting. I will attempt to capture the sense of alienation, isolation and even mystery, which I feel when I view the various types of architecture in my own environment. The close juxtaposition of commercial buildings and private homes and the obvious elements of the old and new, rich and poor, provide for me the most fascinating paradox. Finally, through the use of an extended format, I will attempt to capture the continual sense of a panoramic space in which the content will exist.

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