

THESIS

MYSTERIOUSLY SPEAKING OF THE MYSTERIOUS

Submitted by
Eugene Allen Schilling
Department of Art

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Master of Fine Art
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Spring, 1986

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

March 31, 1986

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR
SUPERVISION BY EUGENE ALLEN SCHILLING
ENTITLED MYSTERIOUSLY SPEAKING OF THE MYSTERIOUS
BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ART

Committee on Graduate Work

Daniel A. Ellorby

Pat Covene

A. J. Busch

David H. Gitewann

Adviser

Peter Jacob

Department Head

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

MYSTERIOUSLY SPEAKING OF THE MYSTERIOUS

As an artist, my work represents an esoteric, creative expression in terms of nonverbal, abstract communication. I intend to make use of certain aspects of abstract expressionism to convey my feelings through painting. These aspects represent personal thoughts and symbols. In so doing, I intend to bring a number of conceptual and visual stimuli together simultaneously. A primary concern is to take abstract expressionism to a new technical and conceptual level by using back-lighting as a principal element. In essence, this new element allows me to intensify the attention of the viewer.

Eugene Allen Schilling
Department of Art
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado 80523
Spring, 1986

DEDICATION

To the memory of my mother,
also
to Verna Mae and Ed, Eddie, Grandma,
and all my friends,
without whose love and support
this thesis would not have been possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
THESIS.	1
REFERENCES.	5
PLATES	6

LIST OF PLATES

<u>Plate</u>		<u>Page</u>
I	R. B. (Lori's Lead) - Acrylic on paper - 36" x 8" - 1985	7
II	R. B. I. (Kes influence) - Acrylic on paper - 36" x 8" - 1985	8
III	SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1985.	9
IV	SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1985.	10
V	SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1986.	11
VI	SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1986.	12
VII	SS5 Jazz Light I - Acrylic on polyester - 60" x 15" - 1985.	13
VIII	SS6 Jazz Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1986.	14
IX	SS6 Jazz Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1986.	15
X	SS6 Jazz Light Series - Acrylic on poly- ester - 60" x 15" - 1986.	16

THESIS

Abstracting from my personal symbols and surroundings which are held in suspense by light and formal painting elements, I intend my paintings to achieve a unique visual communication with the viewer.

The concept of my light paintings developed from previous works on paper (Plates I and II). The illumination of color caused by the white paper evoked the idea of back-lighted painted Plexiglas. The difficulty of paint adhesion to the surface, plus the cost of this material, led me to the use of a 5 mm polyester film. After being stretched over a precut mat board, this film allows me to regain my painterly technical approach.

The next step was to establish a vocabulary of techniques on this new surface. Because I paint on this clear film of polyester, my work depends on the nonyellowing and flexibility factors of acrylic paints. I researched applications of paint and their effects after light was introduced. Light passing through color, not color reflecting light, has become of prime importance. Glazing and removal of paint became replacements for overpainting. The paint is applied in stages or steps. First, all highlights and outlines are applied; then flat grounds of color are applied.

The first two steps are then sealed from behind with white spray paint, achieving a dispersion of light emanating from behind the picture plane. This application also creates a ground on which I can develop a complete composition.

I have developed a range of expressive marks and shapes that are used to establish a departure point for the composition of each painting. Other aspects such as formal elements, color application, and implied third dimension can then be established by painting in a traditional manner. Starting with these images also frees my painting process from the battle which, in the technique of a traditional nonobjective painting, can be compensated for by overpainting.

My paintings rely on the readability of a horizontal format. Our society has educated us to read in a left-to-right, horizontal format. Therefore, I feel the dimensions of my paintings mirror this same cultural element allowing the viewer in a sense to "read" the painted imagery. This, along with the lighting, enhances the viewer participation.

In concept, my work stems from a form of abstract expressionism dealing with creating a mode of communication through abstract images that are esoteric symbols in my life. Kandinsky stated, "The artist must have something to communicate, for mastery over form is not his goal, but rather, the adopting of the form to inner significance."¹ In

¹Herbert Read, *Kandinsky (1866-1944)*. New York: Whittenborn, 1959.

Plates III-IV, the image of a fish is used for the purpose of establishing a rhythm shape. It is used throughout the painting, echoed by lines and marks which express movement. I feel that these marks are manifestations of the collective subconscious which occur while painting. These manifestations then pull the painting into a vocabulary of imagery directly connected to my personal visual sensibility. They reflect those intense visual experiences that I have had throughout my life. I feel that no painting is entirely abstract in the nonliteral or nonobjective sense, the implication being that it contains no images which have been seen previously.

Few, if any, of the images in nonobjective paintings are the complete invention of the artist. They may not be directly derived from the normal process of seeing the outside world through the eye but from the visual imagery which depends on the artist's insight for its material. My paintings are neither totally esoteric nor divorced entirely from visual perception. Therefore, the composition may lead the viewer at first to imagine that he or she sees actual objects, but instead, it achieves the creation of a new mythology of form.

In essence, I am not only relating my thoughts, imagery, and marks to abstract expressionism but also I am taking it to a new technical and conceptual level by using backlighting as a new principal element. The objective of the

lighting is to amplify this expression through illumination of painted color. This addition of back-lighting causes color to obtain a new warmth and life adding to the formally created illusion of a three-dimensional space. The paintings attain a quality of a surrealist, mysterious landscape within which my personal vocabulary of expressionistic images exist. The richness of color achieved by the light, combined with passionate rhythm of movement, obtains a sensuous unreality. With this back illumination, through a complexity of color, I strive to achieve a three-dimensional depth unfamiliar with the traditional painting disciplines.

I also believe feelings play an important part in my conception of creative expression. Through my paintings, my intention is to express a mood or feeling esoterically, amplified by recall of the subconscious. Through this, I intend to increase the awareness of the viewer to the painting itself. I feel my paintings increase the expression of mysterious content and cause the viewer to slow down and reflect on what he or she sees. The need is not to have the viewer "see" what I do but to be confronted by my means of communication. The amplification of my painted images through back-lighting helps achieve this goal and intensifies this unique visual communication.

REFERENCES

Read, Herbert. *Kandinsky (1866-1944)*. New York: Wittenborn, 1959.

PLATES



Plate I. R. B. (Lori's Lead) - Acrylic on paper - 36" x 8" - 1985.



Plate II. R. B. I. (Kes influence) - Acrylic on paper -
36" x 8" - 1985.

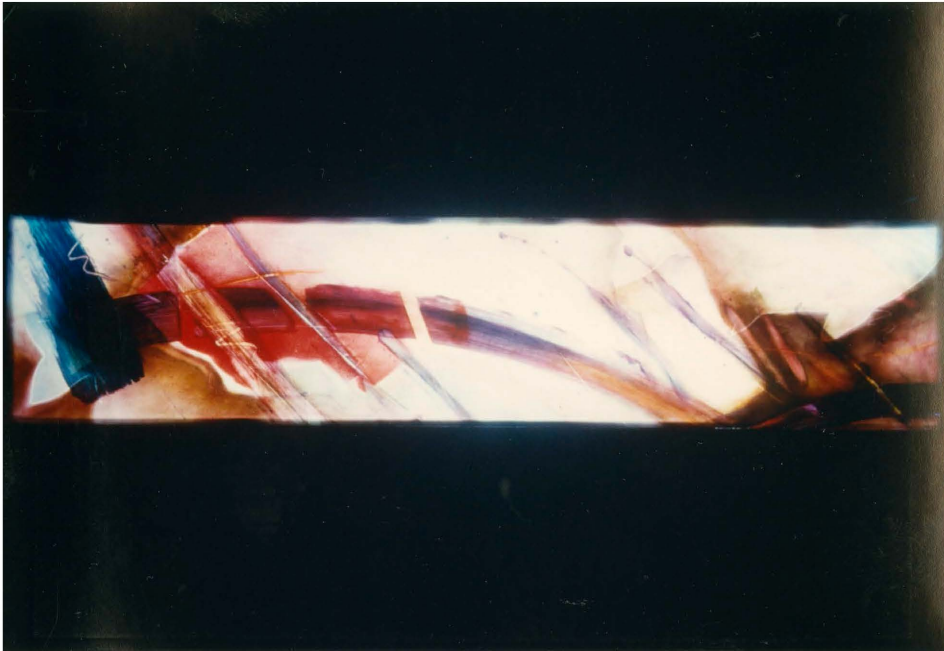


Plate III. SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1985.



Plate IV. SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1985.

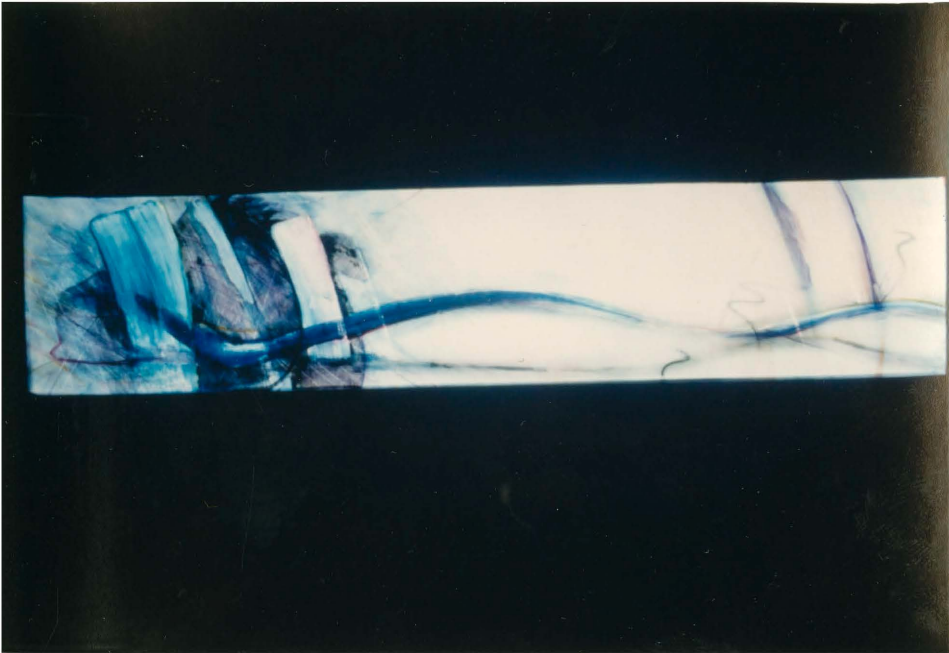


Plate V. SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1986.

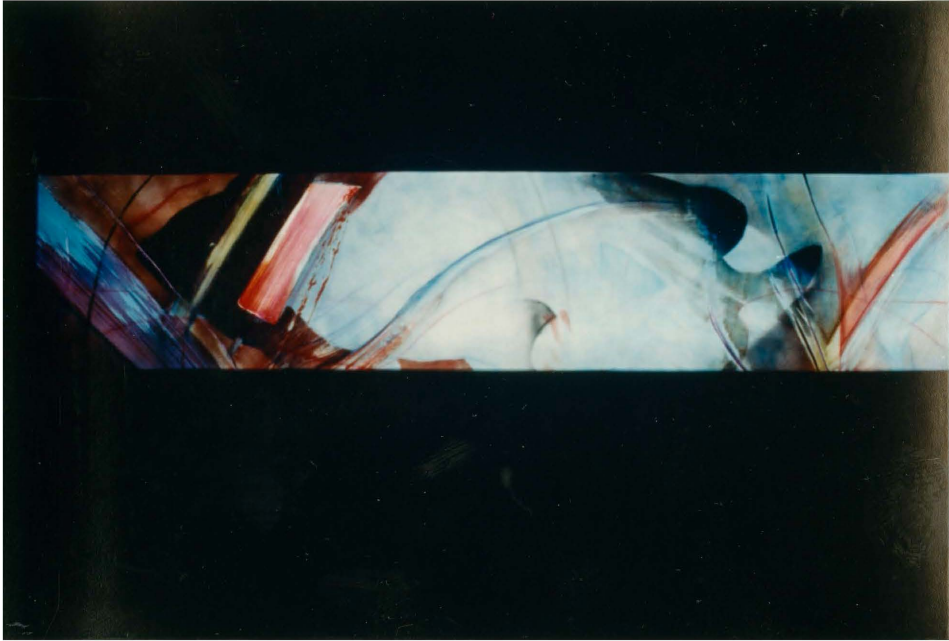


Plate VI. SS5 Fish Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1986.



Plate VII. SS5 Jazz Light I - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1985.

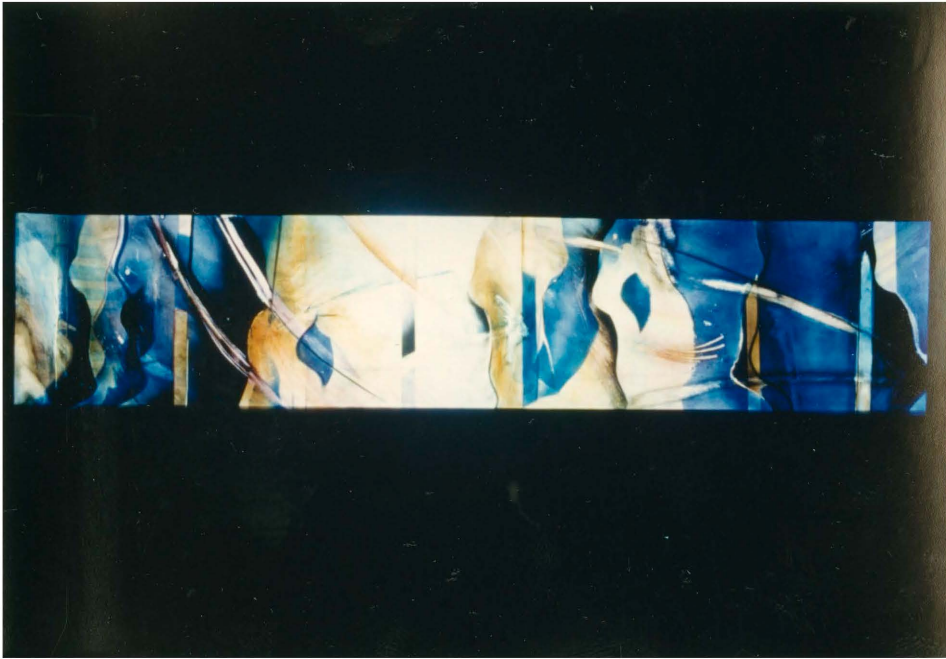


Plate VIII. SS6 Jazz Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1986.



Plate IX. SS6 Jazz Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1986.



Plate X. SS6 Jazz Light Series - Acrylic on polyester -
60" x 15" - 1986.