

THESIS

FROM HER GARDEN

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

Spring 1995

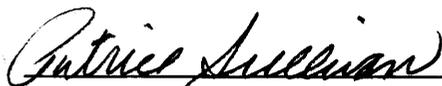
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

April 5, 1995

WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY ANN A. FERGUSON ENTITLED FROM HER GARDEN BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS.

Committee on Graduate Work





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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

FROM HER GARDEN

Knowing that beauty is a subjective response, I work diligently to translate my response into a broader visual expression. Accentuation of value, color, and implied movement is the formal vehicle for that translation. I select subject matter, that of vegetables, fruits, flowers, baskets and tablecloths, for both formal and psychological reasons. The chosen imagery refers to the "garden" of my childhood and to the challenges of growing up, leaving home and meeting the world with all its complexities. Painting is a recreation of my odyssey.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	iii
From Her Garden.....	1
The Garden, The Lady, and The Easel.....	3
The Work.....	5
List of Paintings.....	7
Beets, Cucumbers.....	8
Leeks, Red Onion.....	9
Green Beans, Stripes.....	10
Sunflower, Celery.....	11
Eggplant.....	12
Red Chili.....	13
Purple Pumpkin.....	14
Taos Blanket.....	15
Coconut, Red Pears.....	16
Black Pot.....	17

FROM HER GARDEN

I have always made things. I began with doll clothes and pot holders, Christmas ornaments and white chalk drawings on blue paper, gourd tambourines and papier-mache maracas, soap sculptures and folded paper snowflakes, hand print greeting cards and May baskets, clover bracelets and hollyhock dolls, mud pies and Lincoln log houses, snowmen and sand castles. I danced, I sang, I studied acting; I wrote poems and stories about my life. I had three children, I made dinner, I sewed, I took care of my family.

One day I felt my body lift off the ground and hover over the living room floor. Something terrifying took hold of my life, and I was never the same from that moment. For a long time I couldn't sleep or eat much at all. The color left my dreams, I was extremely weak, and when I walked down the street, I felt someone pushing me from behind. I was sure I was dying. After six months I was prescribed anti-depressants. Some things got better, some things stayed the same. I was changed forever.

I began having dreams about people I hardly knew; the dreams came true. I no longer suspected that I was different; I knew I was. People called me a mystic. I pursued the occult practitioners in my community. I saw psychics and astrologers,

body workers and aura balancers. They saw the same story; I am a seer, a psychic; I am clairsentient. I wondered how to use this ability.

Knowing only that in some way I wanted to work with color, I enrolled in an art class. My life exploded like a milkweed pod on a windy day! I had found my way! But could I do this magic task? Could I learn to draw and paint, to create this illusion. Could I fulfill my destiny?

Simultaneously, I met an instructor of extra-sensory development. He showed me his "bag of tricks" and gave me a set of tasks to perform to substantiate my own abilities. The previous predictions given to me seemed to be correct.

Many years before, I had a dream. I saw myself as an old woman sitting in my backyard, in front of an easel. I was surrounded by the most heavenly of gardens. Everywhere I looked, fruits and flowers and vines grew up from the earth in front of my eyes. The richness and beauty was beyond my imagination; I was in a state of ecstasy!

I had been given a gift of vision. I chose my life's work to be more about me and less about others, so I make things. I make art. As with my shaman's journey to the underworld, I was chosen and I was changed forever. Art chose me. I have no choice; my medicine pouch is brush and paint. I do magic, and magic does me.

My thesis is about the garden, the lady, and the easel.

THE GARDEN, THE LADY, AND THE EASEL

As a child, I thought of my backyard as a magic garden. Bordered by huge pine trees and lilac bushes, my yard was filled with apple and cherry trees, peony bushes and morning-glory covered fences, spirea and forsythia, iris beds and zinnia patches. My safe, happy, magic garden was my sanctuary, and I thought that all the beauty of the world was in my own backyard. I responded to the smells, the sounds, the changing colorful forms, the movement of the trees and flowers, the sound of bees and tickle of ants, the nagging bite of chiggers in the grass.

The garden shifted with every changing season, the shadows grew long and short with the days. I grew up and out of that magic garden. Now, I know that my life has been a search to find that place again. One day, I intend to build a studio amongst apple trees and flower gardens, but in the interim that garden grows in my work.

I have always said that my work is about beauty, and in the years I have spent in pursuit of it, I have thought continuously about the meaning of the word. What is it? What does it look like? How can I capture it to leave behind for others to enjoy? Lately, I have come to know that beauty is not a look, a feel, a quality, a theory, or an idea. It is not

a noun; it is a verb. Simply, beauty is a response; it is my response. And so, my work is subjective. It is completely me as I shift, grow, and change. I respond. I am beauty and beauty is me.

THE WORK

Knowing that beauty is a subjective response, I work diligently to translate my response into a broader visual expression. Accentuation of value, color, and implied movement is the formal vehicle for that translation in the thesis work. In the making of a painting, I first look for the implied movement of shapes inherent in the subject matter. I consider movement to be defined by the edges, which I delineate through the explorative use of line. Further, I employ gestural line and stroke as a unifying element, tying shapes together across the flat, but not static, visual plane.

Secondly, I define the local color. Then, using a "chiaroscuro" approach, juxtaposing imagery both in terms of hue and intensity, such as deep purple grapes adjacent to bright yellow bananas. Many of the works represent a balance of warm and cool colors, high and deep values, bright and subdued hues. The color and value is developed slowly, over the entire surface, through the application of many thin layers of pigment. Value, color, shape, and gesture are both unified and set in motion by a mostly transparent and flowing manipulation of paint.

I select the subject matter - vegetables, fruits, flowers, baskets, and tablecloths - for formal and

psychological reasons. I am excited and intrigued by the contrast of the sensuous, curvilinear shapes, their emotive colors, with the linear, repetitious patterns of the woven baskets and striped tablecloths. The use of the mirror adds an element of abstraction, a subtle shift of the subject matter. The use of reflection enhances the spatial quality of the picture plane, suggesting the space including the painter.

The chosen imagery, that of garden forms and domestic items, refers to the "garden" of my childhood, and to the challenges of growing up, leaving home, and meeting the world in all its complexities. The imagery recalls my experiences of satiation and loss, a recreation of my odyssey. Painting, for me, is the cumulative balance between work and pleasure, limitation and possibility, fear and trust, truth and fiction, materialism and metaphysics.

In the end, and most of all, creative action requires courage, to which I pay homage.

LIST OF PAINTINGS

BEETS, CUCUMBERS

1994 30" x 40"
acrylic on masonite

LEEKS, RED ONION

1994 24" x 24"
acrylic on masonite

GREEN BEANS, STRIPES

1994 30" x 40"
acrylic on masonite

SUNFLOWER, CELERY

1994 48" x 48"
acrylic on masonite

EGGPLANT

1994 9" x 9"
acrylic on masonite

RED CHILI

1994 9" x 9"
acrylic on masonite

PURPLE PUMPKIN

1994 9" x 9"
acrylic on masonite

TAOS BLANKET

1994 9" x 9"
acrylic on masonite

COCONUT, RED PEARS

1995 30" x 40"
acrylic on masonite

BLACK POT

1995 24" x 24"
acrylic on masonite



BEETS, CUCUMBERS

1994



LEEKs, RED ONION

1994



GREEN BEANS, STRIPES

1994



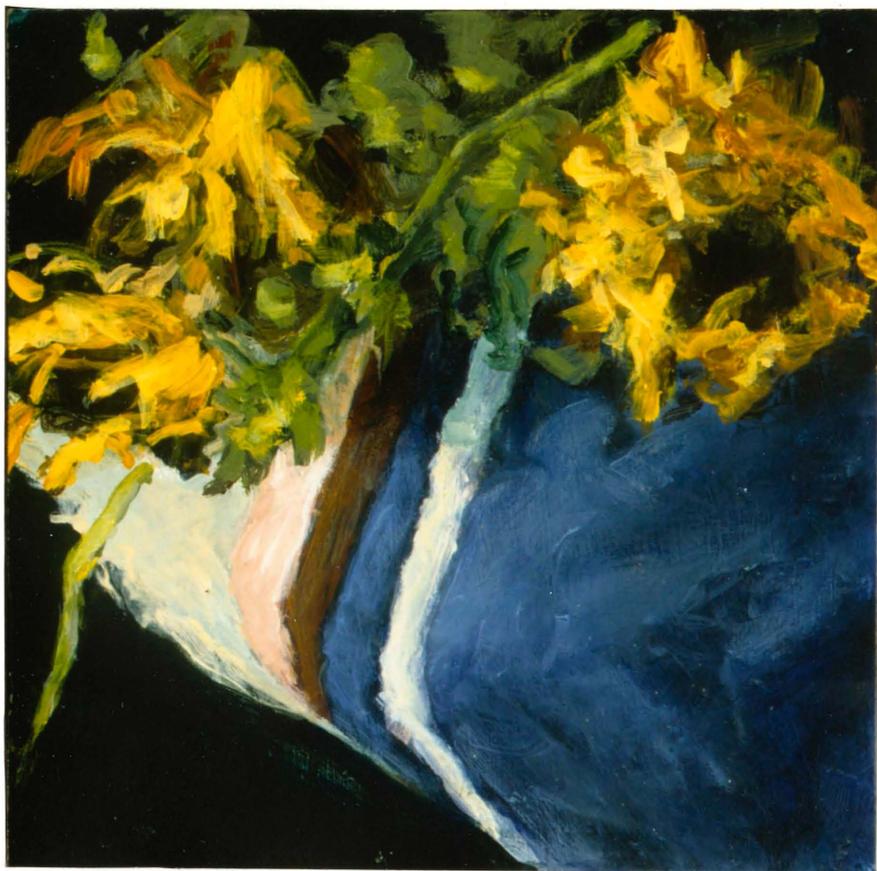
SUNFLOWER, CELERY

1994









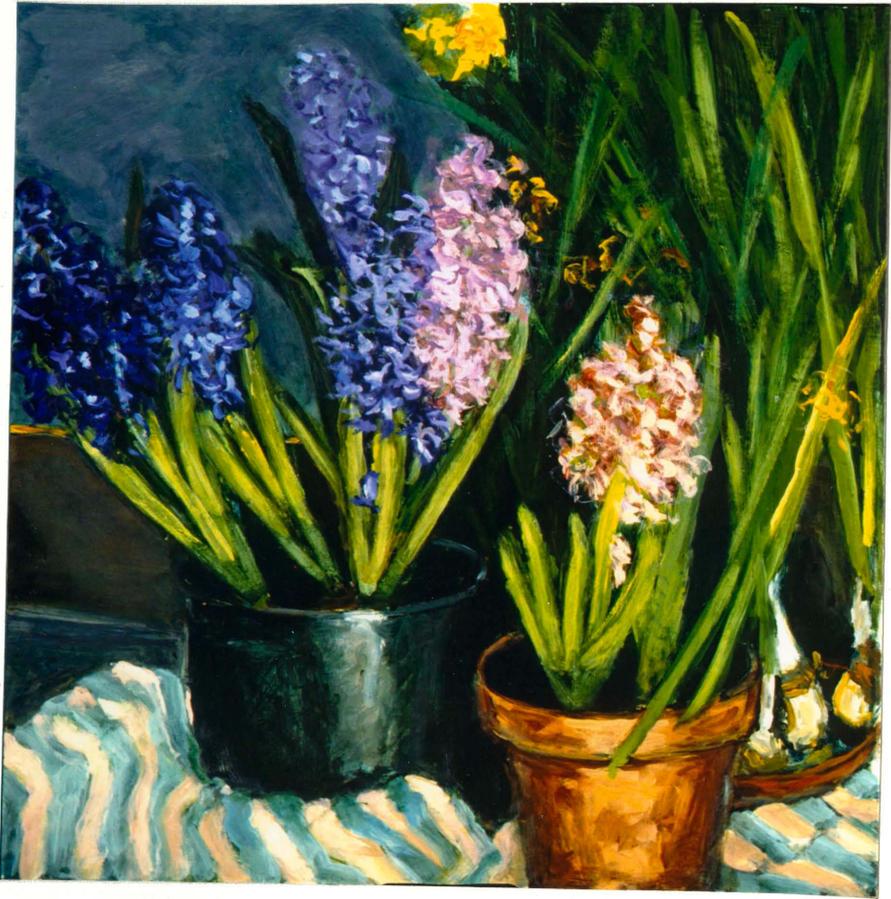
TAOS BLANKET

1994



COCONUT, RED PEARS

1995



BLACK POT

1995