COLOR AS IT IS INSTRUMENTAL TO PAINTINGS,
WALL HANGINGS, AND INFORMAL FURNITURE

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This thesis is dedicated to Mr. Hoyt L. Sherman who has greatly influenced my creative thought.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paintings</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wall Hangings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Furniture</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalogue of Works</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I have explored several different formats in my art works to date. They developed from the flat format of a painting, to a relief type wall hanging, and finally to three dimensional informal furniture. While each series of works had a different appearance and approach, they all reflected my interest in color, pattern, and form. Also, the works were related to one another in their spontaneous attitude, in their organization, and in my concern for process. In the following pages each of these three series; paintings, wall hangings, and informal furniture has been explained in terms of the processes involved in their making, the relationship between each series, and the possible significances of each.

My paintings started with un-gessoed canvas tauntly stretched on a wood frame. Raw canvas was used because it permitted the acrylic paint to be fully absorbed after it was applied to the canvas. This absorption united the paint and the raw canvas into a new material, having different properties than their initial state. Initially the canvas had a somewhat oily surface, which was partially resistant to paint and water, causing the paint to bead and to temporarily resist absorption. The pattern of resistance to water was used to form the pictorial pattern of the painting. The paint was then freely poured, splattered, and spread in a very thin mixture over the canvas. In addition the paint was manipulated to form drips. The process was pursued by tilting the stretcher in one direction and then another. The beads of paint formed what seem to be tributary lines over the canvas from the original paint source, these tributaries of color were in
fact the painting's skeleton. These lines were generally followed, but selective
decisions were made where these spontaneous lines became mottled and/or
lacking. Washes of paint were applied between the lines with a margin of raw
canvas left on either side of the lines. The transparent colors presented a
translucent property (plate No. 1, 2). The colors in general were slightly
modified from the original tube color by adding water, white paint, or possibly
another hue. The color washes were usually high key colors, similar to those
used in popular advertisements and current fashions. The color maintained a
surprising flowing quality which appeared to be fresh and spontaneous. In
addition, the thin washes fused with the canvas as they dried, giving the surface
of the paint the same soft fabric-grained appearance of canvas. This does not
mean that the intensity of the hue was lessened, for they usually maintained
a high saturation in spite of their soft surface quality. The absorption of paint
into the canvas also produced varying amounts of richness and depth in each
color area depending on how thick the original wash mixture was (plate No. 3).
The washes of color advance and recede in rhythmic patterns giving the painting
an overall strong pattern character. The colors were applied in response to
the previously chosen ones. An interesting, but somewhat apparent shallow
space was created by the use of color, patterning, and raw canvas areas. The
paintings in general retained a fresh spontaneous response to the initial act of
spilling and splashing paint on the canvas. Reacting to the color and its rela-
tionship to the canvas was of primary concern at all times, there was no
preconceived system.
Another facet of my art work deals with the making of wall hangings.

The wall hangings started from a stained canvas (plate No. 4), which was painted in a similar manner as previously mentioned, but had a somewhat looser organization. The canvas used in creating each wall hanging was treated in terms of an overall pattern of washes and brush strokes. The paints were applied directly next to one another and often ran together and merged to create different mixtures of the colors and forms. It also softened at the edges of all the shapes. Varying thicknesses and mixtures of paint were applied in numerous patterning brush strokes and splattering marks. The overall effect was more of a field type painting with repeating patterns of hues. After the stained canvas was completed it was removed from the stretcher and cut into easily handled shapes: parallelograms and equilateral triangles were frequently chosen because of the great variety of combinations they afford. In certain combinations they give the appearance of three-dimensional cubes (plate No. 7). Parallelograms and equilateral triangles constitute the most frequently reoccurring elements in most of these wall hangings. After the painting was cut into pieces, fabrics in varying colors and patterns were selected for design purposes. The fabrics were chosen for their saturated color and pattern properties. Patterns were suggestive of unsophisticated taste; materials were loud and active with overtones of what are generally considered "bad taste." Some fabrics were also chosen for their tactile properties: in general, most fabrics were inexpensive cottons.
The next step was to organize the cut pieces of painted canvas and commercial fabrics. This was pursued by freely arranging and rearranging the chosen fabrics on the wall with pins. No definite preconceived scheme was followed here either, intuitive and innovative decisions were made in their respective organization. The organization of the patterns dictated the overall shape of the wall hanging (plate No. 5, 6, 7, 8). Each wall hanging was different from every other one, because each was conceived and arranged in a different manner dependent on my responses to the fabrics, patterns, and colors used. A slightly different problem was dealt with in each wall hanging: each was started from a different stained painting and commercial fabrics therefore each had a different character. After the design was arranged it was sewn together by machine. At this point cotton filling was added to some sections of the wall hanging for emphasis. Not all wall hangings were evenly stuffed, some had no stuffing, others had only one or two stuffed areas and/or borders. The stuffed portions of the wall hangings were backed separately, so in effect they became pillows connected to other pillows or flat areas. After the wall hanging was sewn together one large canvas backing was sewn to the entire piece. This backing added to the body and the surface qualities of the wall hangings by giving the wall hangings more of an object-like thickness -- separation from the plane of the wall.
The wall hangings are related to the drip paintings in several ways. Both series of work dealt with the process of staining canvas with thin washes of acrylic paint as previously described. Similarly, both series were dependent on an edge for their organization. In the paintings, the edge was the dripped colored lines. In the wall hangings the edge was the sewn seam between fabrics and canvas. Pattern was an important element in both series, but in the wall hangings there was a further complexity not found in the paintings: several seemingly unrelated types of fabrics, prints, and stained canvas pieces were juxtaposed to create the organization. The pattern combinations in the wall hangings activate their individual character, to create a totally new character in the overall appearance of the wall hangings. The colors used in the wall hangings were usually high key like those in the paintings. The color was organized in such a way that it contributed to the patterns' impact and gave energy to the wall hangings. The canvas' and fabrics' natural properties were treated as a part of the finished wall hangings, exhibiting their sewn characteristics to wrinkle, stretch, sag, and pucker. All the characteristic properties of the wall hangings encouraged them to be touched and/or squeezed. The visual excitement of the wall hangings encouraged viewer participation, response, and reaction to the textures, patterns, and colors. (Generally people are seduced by one of these aspects, if not the overall rich, sensuous appearance of the wall hangings.) The idea of an art object that was somewhere between a painting and a quilt fascinates others.
It was my intention to create an object that would have an appeal to a type of person that a painting might not reach. Therefore my wall hangings were derived from a common recognizable utilitarian-type object, with which most people might be familiar or intrigued by -- a quilt. Quilts have been with us for centuries and have become a part of our culture, crafts, and heritage. Quilts are seen to represent today's revival of the crafts movement. Sewing itself is considered a handicraft. By using this quilt-like format people related to the wall hangings on many different levels; as a soft painting, a geometric construction, an illusion of space, a colorful quilted shaped object, an extension of crafts, a statement on materials and/or patterns, or possibly what makes something art.

An outgrowth of the wall hangings can be seen in the informal furniture. The informal furniture was made from manufactured fabrics. To make the furniture a general form and volume was decided on, after which the construction approach was decided on (plate No. 9, 10, 11). Then a pattern to hold the filling was designed and executed in canvas, after which it was sewn together and filled to the desired shape and firmness with shredded foam rubber. From fabrics previously selected to emphasize the furniture's form an outer slipcover was then made. The slipcover snugly fitted the shape and there was a zipper on one seam to allow the slipcover to be taken off and cleaned. The same inexpensive cotton fabrics were used to make the slipcover as were used
in the wall hangings. These inexpensive fabrics promoted the use of the furniture. 

Prints used in this furniture-situation evoked the similar responses and associations as they did in the wall hangings.

The informal furniture was developed beyond the wall hangings. The wall hangings are seen to explore the idea that a painting does not have to be on a stretcher, while the informal furniture develops the idea that a painting can be a useful functional object, such as a chair or cushion. This informal furniture was the complete realization of a three-dimensional form in space, while the wall hangings were dependent on the wall and were not as volumetric. This type of furniture also reflects today's casual life styles, mobility and flexibility; as well as society's search for pleasure and comfort, combined with aesthetic significance in their environment. The furniture also suggests the numerous possibilities an environment holds and how changing attitudes might shape an environment.

A bibliography has been omitted because of the complexity of the materials I have presented.
CATALOGUE OF WORKS

Plate 1. Colored Surf, acrylic on canvas, 5' x 7'.
Plate 2. Colored Ribbons, acrylic on canvas, 5' x 5'.
Plate 3. Vertical Landscape, acrylic on canvas, 4' x 6'.
Plate 4. Under-Sea scape, acrylic on canvas, 5' x 7'.
Plate 5. Marble Facets, sewn acrylic on canvas and fabric, 5' x 7'.
Plate 6. Rainbow Patterns, sewn acrylic on canvas and fabric, 8' x 8'.
Plate 7. Cubic Format, sewn acrylic on canvas and fabric, 7' x 8'.
Plate 8. Cubic Format with Pink, sewn acrylic on canvas and fabric, 8' x 10'.
Plate 9. Whooppee Cushion; purple, orange, and yellow, sewn fabric with foam rubber, 3' x 6'.
Plate 10. Black Sectioned Pillow, sewn fabric with foam rubber, 3' x 7'6".
Plate 11. Orange Parallelogram, sewn fabric with foam rubber, 3' x 3'.