ART AS ACTION AND IDEA
A Personal Statement Discussing
Performance Art, Photography, and Video

A THESIS

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by

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INTRODUCTION

I believe that my approach to art is unique because of my background. With a Master of Science in physiology and the intention of continuing in medicine, I am sensitive to the effects which science and technology have on contemporary society. During the course of my studies in the Expanded Arts department, I used the media of photography, video, film, performance, and installation to present works which either were conceptual in nature, dealt with science and technology, or were humorous. This thesis will describe and analyze selected topics dealing with my work of the last two years.
CHAPTER 1

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ART

Michel Foucault, a French structuralist philosopher, wrote that the "ideology of religious power" used to be based on a fear of nature and the unknown. According to Foucault, our fear of nature is due to a universal fear of death. It is this fear, Foucault contends, that leads to the many symbolic immortalities of various religious systems (i.e., life after death, heaven, etc.)¹. The art and rituals of pre-historic man developed simultaneously with an organized system of religious beliefs. Such rituals can be related directly to the fear of nature of which Foucault writes.

Foucault's ideology of religious power has undergone changes throughout time which parallel changes in societal structure. The earliest agrarian societies, such as those which developed out of the Tigris and Euphrates river valley, had religious systems inspired presumably by fears associated with the natural world. As society developed and particularly with the onset of the industrial revolution, the ancient basis of religion no longer had meaning. The industrial revolution represented a shift in man's fears from fear associated with religion to fear associated with the social world. Foucault writes that:

Following the industrial revolution...religious self-interpretation gave way to the ideology of atheist, liberal power. The end of religious fear was not the end of fear. Social...forces were henceforth the sources of dread.²
This eradication of religious fear is at least partially the result of what Foucault calls the "medical domestication of death." The fear of death, on which the earliest religions were based, gave way to fears associated with the social world as science and technology alleviated the fears associated with death.

Concomitant with the shift in the basis of religious ideology from fears associated with the natural world to fears associated with the social world was an increased awareness of the potential hazards associated with living in an industrialized society. In 1887, Ferdinand Tönnies brought forth his philosophical interpretation of the social changes which occurred during the industrial revolution. He proposed two contrasting types of societal organization—one pre-industrial and the other largely a product of industrialization. The work was titled *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. The term *gemeinschaft* does not translate easily into English and the word "community" is often offered as its equivalent. Tönnies uses the word to represent a type of pre-industrial societal organization in which people are strongly bound to one another through tradition, through kinship, through friendship, or because of some other socially cohesive factor.

*Gesellschaft*, as used by Tönnes, refers to a type of societal organization that is built around a contract. The contract in Tönnes' theory is a formal relationship, often written, which is always backed by impersonal mechanisms of social control.

In the *Gesellschaft*...everybody is by himself and isolated, and there exists a condition of tension against all others. Their spheres of activity are sharply separated, so that everybody refuses to everyone else contact with and admittance to his sphere; i.e., intrusions are regarded as hostile acts. Such a negative attitude toward one another becomes the normal and always underlying relation of those power-endowed individuals, and it characterizes the Gesellschaft in the condition of the rest; nobody wants to grant and produce anything for another individual, nor will he be inclined to give
ungrudgingly to another individual, if it be not in exchange for a gift or labor equivalent that he considers at least equal to what he has given.6

The concepts proposed by Tönnes and Foucault are important in understanding the work of artists and writers who were responding to the effects of industrialized society. For example, in the work of Edvard Munch one is made aware of an unsettling state of affairs in which the individual's ability to cope with society is overwhelmed. When this happens, there is no apparent escape and the mental turmoil which can ensue is represented in works like "The Scream" of 1893.

I believe that photography was important in elucidating the problems associated with industrial society, for to understand and explain the world, one must search for empirical truths. Such truths can be found in the work of the photographer and physiologist, Etienne Jules Marey. Since Marey was a physiologist, he had the scientific, analytical background which I believe is required to discover a truth about reality. Marey's photographs on movement, like those of Muybridge, show the viewer a scientific reality. This is the same type of scientific reality that led to the formation of sociology as a way of gathering and using empirical information to explain social structures.7 An analytical approach, as seen in the work of Marey, is essential for the conception and institution of social change. During the time of Marey's experimentation with photography, writers such as Auguste Comte were proposing that our knowledge of the universe is entirely based on material reality and empirical observation. These notions of reality formed the basis for the school of thought known as positivism. The camera seemed to behave in a scientific manner and accurately record all that was seen by the lens. This, therefore, made it a tool of empirical observation and the camera's image could be related to positivist philosophy. Thus, early in the development of photography the relationship between photography and empirical science was established.
Early in my development as a multi-media artist I had the desire to combine elements of science with my art. I was also interested in using art as an instrument for social change. As I have stated earlier, through photography I realized that art, like science, can have an empirical, analytical foundation—which is to say that I believe art can be based on fact.

My performance "Music for MJS" (performed February 21, 1986 at OSU) was inspired by news of an intern at OSU Hospital who may have killed some patients at the hospital. The performance suggests a ridiculous explanation for the presence of gauze in a dead patient's esophagus (i.e., that the patient deliberately swallowed the gauze). The gauze was found after the patient's body was exhumed and examined by the Franklin County Coroner. The death certificate was signed by the intern in question and the cause of death was cited as accidental.

"Baker's Dozen," which was performed March 1988, is in many ways a restatement of the issues addressed by "Music for MJS." The incident that "Music for MJS" was based on is factual; however, I wanted to combine a number of similar related incidents into a fictional composite in order to better convey my ideas. Although this was a fiction, it is important to realize that it was based on factual material. Through the newspaper I had learned of a number of cases involving hospital workers or physicians in which patients were apparently murdered. This paradoxical state of affairs, where healers become killers, is a manifestation of the stress of living in what Foucault calls a post-industrial society. (According to Foucault, the post-industrial period begins sometime after the Second World War and continues to the present.) One of my theories about this state of affairs suggests that a creative outlet is essential to the alleviation of social stress. Without a creative outlet, other means of dealing with the pressure are found. In the case of the hospital killers, this outlet
manifested itself in the act of killing a number of patients. If Foucault's "medical domestication of death" removed fear from death, then one might also look upon these hospital murders as a reinstatement of fear, possibly making some connection with pre-industrialized religious ideology.

The structure of "Baker's Dozen" was determined according to three musical compositions that I had previously recorded on a multi-track recorder. I had been listening to music by Robert Ashley and was fascinated by his style of incorporating a story line with music. Drawing upon my musical background, I attempted something similar. Information from newspaper articles was assimilated into a fictional story dealing with a hospital killer. Then I photographed a number of scenes to illustrate the narrative. During the performance, slides were projected onto a large wall, and I stood at a microphone and delivered a narrative against a musical background provided by the pre-recorded audio tape. The tape and the slides were synchronized so that the technical crew could concentrate on other activities.

If the movement from "Music for MēS" to "Baker's Dozen" can be seen as a progression from the specific to a more generalized statement, then the performance "Four Humors" is a continuation of that trend. "Four Humors" addresses issues of disease transmission through contact with bodily fluids. During the performance a character (played by myself) dressed in white clinician's garb systematically filled four condoms and hung them on thread such that they seemed to be suspended in space. Each condom contained a different body fluid; blood, urine, semen, and phlegm. The lighting was concentrated on the almost fluorescent latex vessels. As the thread unraveled, the condoms spun. A sound track with amplified breathing and heartbeat sounds filled the room. An institutionalized antiseptic feeling was given to the performance space by alcohol-soaked bands of paper that were hanging from the ceiling. An
assistant carrying a white porcelain tray followed the main character. In a very methodical manner, the main character filled each condom with a different fluid. The name of each fluid was projected on the wall behind the performers. After all of the condoms were filled and suspended, the main character pierced each condom with an instrument, allowing the contents to spill to the ground. At this point, the word "dead" appeared on the back screen and the piece was over.

This performance can be interpreted on a number of levels. In one respect it is about barriers which exist in contemporary post-industrial society. As people become more engaged in technological society, the relationships between people change. The condoms in "Four Humors" serve as a metaphor for the barriers to personal interaction which are set up in Tönnes' gesellschaft society. Sex, the most intimate form of interpersonal contact, is no longer a true form of contact as a result of the barrier produced by the condom. The fear of contracting AIDS has limited the way in which people in society interact. Impersonal, contract-binding relationships are becoming more prevalent as the fear of intimate contact increases.

Michel Foucault writes that an epidemic is not an act of God "but merely a large disease that encompasses an entire population of living organisms." The eighteenth century combat of epidemics is seen by Foucault as follows:

A medicine of epidemics could exist only if supplemented by a police: To supervise the location of mines and cemeteries, to get as many corpses as possible cremated instead of buried, to control the sale of bread, wine, and meat, to supervise the running of abattoirs and dye workers, and to prohibit unhealthy housing.⁸
A link, therefore, needed to be established between medicine and the State. Sickness was seen by Foucault to be an economic and political problem requiring action by the collectivity. The State then provided a new legal definition of a physician under a principle of organization that "sought to ensure that doctors were competent, knowledgeable, experienced [and that] in the midst of the household the physician appeared as the figure of authority."  

The foundation and institution of medical training in state-funded schools and the requirement of physicians to pass board examinations are present day examples of Foucault's synergism between medicine and state. As a further fulfillment of this medicine-state interaction, the notion of public health was born, and with it the dream of a healthy society.

Contemporary society is witnessing a conflict between the forces of disease and those of modern science. As of yet there is no known cure for AIDS and the likelihood of a cure in the near future seems small. Yet even the presence of a cure will not alter the balance of sickness and disease which exists as part of the natural world. As new cures are developed, new diseases follow. The mutations of common cold and flu bacteria and viruses are well known and documented. As certain susceptible strains are killed off by bacteriocidal drugs, new resistant strains are given the opportunity to thrive. During the performance of "Four Humors," the main character bursts the condoms, allowing the presumably tainted fluids to escape. This image serves as a metaphor for the course of disease in general. As stated above, the balance of sickness and disease is not altered by the presence of a single cure and the hope of a disease-free world is probably unrealistic.
CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL AND RELATED WORKS

At least one source defines conceptual art as art in which the idea behind the art is more important than the object produced during the course of the art.\textsuperscript{11} Art of this type captured my interest and I began to study the conceptual work of Edward Ruscha and John Baldessari. Both of these artists used photography as the physical product of their conceptual art.

While working in California, Ruscha produced a number of photography books dealing with simple subject matter; one book consisted of aerial photographs of parking lots, and another, \textit{Every Building on Sunset Strip}, merely recorded every building on that street. I was interested in these works because the informational content of the photographs in these books was made more prominent than the aesthetic content. A viewer of the work who attempted to interpret the aerial photographs of parking lots as formal abstraction would be missing the point. The informational content of the photographs of empty parking lots suggests a reading more along the lines of increasing viewer awareness of the vast concrete desert which is characteristic of Californian urban centers. The iconoclastic notion of presenting parking lots for a presumed aesthetic consumption was intriguing to me and seemed to challenge notions of what constitutes fine art.

During the time that I was studying Ruscha and Baldessari, I began work on a collaborative project with a fellow graduate student. The project
was called "Site Specifics" and it was a collaboration between Edward Myers and myself. The project was initiated through our mutual desire to sample various locations using audio recording (Ed's specialty) and still photography (my specialty). The project culminated in an installation which was presented to the public in the Fall of 1987. Visitors to the installation were to listen to audio tapes in supplied cassette players and, using color coded markings on the materials, make associations between objects that Ed and I had collected, the audio tapes, and photographs from the area where the objects were found.

Another work of Ruscha's that influenced me was his series consisting of photographs of desert plants on a white background. These serial photographs led me to produce a photographic series dealing with the gloves that were collected during our "Site Specifics" expeditions. The series of six glove photographs was intended to demonstrate a figure/ground relationship between the gloves and the environment in which the gloves were found. The glove in each photograph was quite obviously the figure and the white background represented the ground. Since the gloves each seemed to take on the appearance of their environment the viewer was to construct in his or her mind the background for each glove. In spite of an explanatory text panel, most viewers found this perplexing, possibly because they attempted to interpret the glove photos only on the basis of their formal qualities.

Following the "Site Specifics" project, I started working on a computer installation. This computer installation was part of the Expanded Arts 1987 Exhibition held in the Hopkins Hall gallery at OSU. Participants viewed a series of photographs under the guided direction of a taped voice, which was controlled by the computer. The photographs were from a previous untitled performance in which instructional photographs were used to direct subjects toward a hidden object which was subsequently to be used in
a manner depicted in the photographs. The participants of the first performance were graded by persons interacting with the computer during the installation.

In the Summer of 1987 I was involved in another collaborative project. "Artattack" was a performance art group consisting of Fran Resch, Denise Cerretta, Wayne Schmidt, Andrew Scott, and myself. Although not all of the members of the Artattack group would consider our performances conceptual art, I believe it was at least a synthesis of conceptual art and performance art. The actions and movements of Artattack performance were, to me at least, not entirely representative of the ideas around which the art was developed. Which is to say that the ideas were the important part and the actions were a secondary manifestation of the original idea. Artattack was interested in using construction-related objects to create a new formal meaning. Some of the objects used in the performance were orange barricade barrels with reflective tape and flashing lights, orange safety fence, hardhats, and matching orange jumpsuits. During one performance, the group put up a fence, unrolled a black tarp and then proceeded to tear down the fence and leave without a trace. The process was the final product.
CHAPTER 3

"THE BLUE HOLE" VIDEO

"The Blue Hole" is a video which was produced during the Summer of 1987. This video is a self-documentary or a sort of video diary about the events in the life of this artist as he tries to complete a video project for a class. The video is self-reflexive, in that it deals with the process of shooting and editing a video tape. At one point the narrator says of some still photographs flashing on the screen ":...I wanted to incorporate these still photographs into this videotape..." The mere suggestion of these photographs and their presence on the screen has allowed them to be part of the video but they show no relationship to the rest of the story. Instances like this suggest to this artist that video may be more suitable for the production of humor than a meaningful work of art.

"The Blue Hole" was also partially the result of an exploration of a dichotomy of realities that exist in documentary image-making. One reality made evident is the reality of the subject, and the other reality is that of the video itself. The video, as an object, exists and is real. Likewise, the things depicted by the video are real; however, the video images are separate from the reality of the subject. For example, the video image is two-dimensional, while the real subject can be three-dimensional. The reality of the subject is that which the videographer or photographer experiences during filming. The trip to the Blue Hole, as depicted in the video, actually took place. And the intention of using the trip as material for a video tape was clear from the start.
As director, I was interested in conveying the reality of the subject (i.e., staged scenes were clearly evident and little was done to conceal the fact that this was a video documentary). This video presents what appears to be a clear distinction between the fake or set-up nature of the Blue Hole trip and the implied reality of the self-documentation. The first-person narration at the Blue Hole states "...We arrived early to check color balance and light levels and to shoot the entrance scenes." The viewer is led to believe that the Blue Hole scenes are fake because we are told what is supposedly the real story of what is happening by the narrator. The viewer does not readily recognize the fact that another level of reality exists beyond the narration. When one realizes that the producer typed up the narration and carefully layered the voice on a multi-track tape for inclusion in the video, one begins to see that the "reality" of the narration is just as fake as the trip to the Blue Hole is shown to be fake.

The film "David Holzman's Diary" (1970, by Jim McBride) is a spoof on the cinematic style of cinema verité. It is just this style under which "The Blue Hole" hides. For under the protection of cinema verité, "The Blue Hole" can exist as a portrayal of the reality of the filmmaker in everyday life. The main character in "David Holzman's Diary" holds a strip of film up to the camera and says "this is reality, twenty-four times a second." This character wants to capture the reality of his life on film so that he can then view it and see what is wrong with his life. In the end, however, the medium of film fails to capture the reality Holzman seeks. In terms of "The Blue Hole," the reality of the main character is altered by the presence of the video camera. This is similar to one implication of the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle, which is understood as the inability to detect the presence of certain entities when the means of detection alters the nature of the entities (such as using electromagnetic radiation to detect the position of an electron in an atom). The electromagnetic radiation alters the energy state of the electron and, therefore, makes it impossible to know
simultaneously the electron's location and velocity. The presence of a camera alters the nature of the subject in the same way that electromagnetic radiation alters the nature of the electron in the above model. In terms of "The Blue Hole," it seems therefore that reality tends to be excluded from the camera's view.
CHAPTER 4

THESIS EXHIBITION

My MFA thesis exhibition was divided into four segments as follows: black and white still photographs, color still photographs, videotapes, and performance documentation. The purpose of this chapter is to address the still photography and performance documentation, which was included in the thesis exhibition.

Performance Documentation

During the production of most of my performance art pieces, I was careful to include documentation duties as an integral part of the technical crew's responsibilities. At best, the documentation consisted of a videotape, still photographs and second-party written reviews. The videotapes from the performances range in quality from poor to very good. In an effort to make better sense of some of the videos which had poor live quality, some performances were recreated specifically for video. This is evident in the following videos, which appeared in the thesis exhibition: "Music for MJS," "Projection on Head," and "Baker's Dozen." To further enhance viewer cognition, text panels were included as part of the exhibition. These text panels were associated with color photographs of either video footage of a performance or photographs of a public performance, or a public installation.

The use of text panels in the exhibition is consistent with my ideas regarding the cognitive nature of my art. Unlike art which relies on formal content to convey meaning or emotional response, the work presented in my thesis exhibition requires of the viewer some background information with respect to art history and contemporary history of photography. By
requiring a certain level of education in the viewer, I may seem as if I am violating post-modern notions of democratization of the arts. I do believe that all persons should have available to them an education which would allow understanding of my art; however, I will not cater to the willfully uneducated.

**Black and White Still Photographs**

While preparing the black and white still photographs for the thesis exhibition, I was reading two books which drastically influenced the direction of my photography. One book, *The Mirror of Production*, by Jean Baudrillard, describes a post-structuralist view of modern society which suggests we are living in a simulation of reality. The other book, *The Snapshot*, by Jonathan Green, is a collection of photographs and essays by photographers such as Gary Winogrand, Bill Dane, Henry Wessel, Jr., Lee Friedlander, and Todd Papageorge. These two books provided inspiration for much of the work in my current portfolio.

At least one post-modern critic has ridiculed the work of Friedlander for its non-statement attitude toward the social conditions depicted in the photographs. My initial reaction to this critical analysis was that Friedlander's work is becoming dated. Although I do not try to take pictures like Lee Friedlander, my sense of aesthetics was formed through study of his work. Upon seeing the book *The Snapshot*, I was surprised not as much by discovering the number of photographers that were working with imagery based on a sense of aesthetics similar to Friedlander, but by the fact that this imagery was being created in 1974 and earlier. This gave me the feeling that my own work was dated and I had the impression that much of what I was trying to do had already been done.
Later in the quarter, I read a number of articles by and about Jean Baudrillard. Of primary importance to me was Baudrillard's theory of simulation. Based on a structuralist analysis of language, this theory suggests that contemporary society exists as a simulation of reality because signifiers in language no longer stand for referents. To explain, structuralists break down the linguistic sign (a word) into a signifier (a language term), a signified (an intended meaning), and a referent (an object pointed to by the signifier). What Baudrillard and others have been able to show is that signifiers have become abstracted from the subjects (the signified) and from the social world of objects (the referent). Baudrillard states that "the signifier becomes its own referent and the use value of the sign disappears to the profit only of its commutation and exchange value. The sign no longer designates anything at all...All reality becomes the place of a semiological manipulation of a structural simulation."\textsuperscript{13} The signs for reality come to replace reality. Artificial sunsets and technicolor hues, glossy finishes, plastic wood and hyped-up special effects "fall within the compass of such 'hyperreal' production, to say nothing of Disneyland."\textsuperscript{14}

Before reading Baudrillard, I had completed a series of photographs called "Types of Soap in Apartment." After becoming aware of Baudrillard's theory of simulation, it was clear to me that the soap photographs are a statement of Baudrillard's theory:

What is crucial about, say, a given underarm deodorant, is not that it has a given exchange value or a given use value. The secret of this commodity is that it can totally transcend all of these "referents," that it can become a totally detached object of exchange and that the person who consumes it can find a "meaning" in it to be appropriated that is totally divorced from the mechanisms of production and distribution. What is consumed is not a thing, laden with materiality and the complex cycle that finally derives from labor and nature, but purely and simply an element in a code.\textsuperscript{15}
That one would have so many types of soap when all soaps are essentially similar chemical compounds and their mechanism of action nearly identical is a result of the marketing strategies of the soap producers. No longer does the sign "soap" signify the referent of a chemical compound with a hydrophilic head and a long, hydrophobic, hydrocarbon, tail. If the relationship between the signifier and the referent were still intact it would be obvious that only one type of soap would be necessary.

The black and white still photographs assembled for the thesis exhibition have not all followed the same path as that of "Types of Soap in Apartment"; however, there are some important connections between the work and Baudrillard's post-structuralist view of society. Most specific is the notion of banality and boredom and its relationship to simulacrum. Robert Pincus Whitten writes of Baudrillard's theory of simulation: "'Simulacrum' always equals 'absolute banality.'"¹⁶ That American photographers, such as Frank Gohike, Nicolas Nixon and Lee Friedlander, deal with banality in their work would come as no surprise to Baudrillard, who finds American banality more interesting than French banality—presumably because America does not have the same history of 19th century bourgeoisie that France has.

However thick the boredom, the prison of daily routine in the U.S.A. as elsewhere, American banality will always be a thousand times more interesting than the European version, especially the French. Perhaps it is because in American banality was born of the extreme vastness, of the monotony of extended cultures, and of a radical lack of culture.... While French banality is an offshoot of bourgeois everydayness, it was born from the tail end of an aristocratic culture that was sloughed off with petit bourgeois mannerisms, it was born of that stinking, good-for-nothing, hexagonal bourgeoisie that like a skin of sorrow constricted the 19th century. It's all there: it's the cadaver of the Bourgeoisie that sets us apart, it's that cadaver that carries the chromosome of banality for us—
whereas the Americans knew how to keep their humor about the material signs of conspicuousness and wealth.\textsuperscript{17}

If American banality is a product of post-industrial simulation, the photograph seems an appropriate medium for representing the American simulacrum, as the photograph is itself a simulacrum.

But it is in the photograph that pure serial production finds its apogee; Walter Benjamin's noted axiom that "to ask for the 'authentic' print makes no sense" would phrase the photograph as the very "type" of industrial simulacrum, as one in an endless number of identical copies. Indeed, the increasing circulation of such simulacra in society testifies to reproduction's role as the core of industrial capital.\textsuperscript{19}

Artist and critic Peter Hally has used abstract art rather than photography to underline Baudrillard's theories. According to Hally, "there can be only a simulacrum of art, not the 'real thing' resplendent with transcendent significance and referents, only a simulacrum with 'orbital recurrence of the models' (nostalgia) and 'simulated generation of difference' (styles)."\textsuperscript{18} In his paintings, Hally uses day-glo colors which he thinks of as simulated colors, and he also uses Roll-a-tex, which is a material that simulates stucco. I have decided not to use the techniques of painting for I feel that the photograph is the best medium to represent Baudrillard's simulacrum since all photographs are simulations. Many photographs included in the thesis exhibition deal with the Baudrillarian concept of simulation by showing that the photograph as an object makes no references to anything other than itself. This is demonstrated in my photographs in which either the photographer or his shadow appears in the image. These photographs contain evidence of their own making and emphasize the fact that they are photographs and not the scene which was photographed. This separation between the scene and the photograph serves to emphasize the notion that the photograph itself is a simulation.
Large Color Photographs

After producing "The Blue Hole," I became interested in using myself as subject in my still photography. I have been aware of the work of Cindy Sherman and, although the narrative content of her work is somewhat different from my own, there are elements which I borrowed directly. Much of Sherman's later work was done in color and her exhibition prints were very large. I felt that these two elements of her work helped to separate her work from that of the stereotypical modern photographer, such as Steiglitz, Weston, or Adams. These photographers worked almost exclusively in black and white and even after the institution of color photographic materials, they helped establish black and white as a fine art medium. Intimacy of scale was also a characteristic of this fine art photography with 8x10 inches being the largest that some photographers would print, since that was the largest contact print that could be made from conventional photographic processes. Some photographers, like Alfred Steiglitz, even exhibited 4x5 inch and smaller prints.

Sherman may not have intended to make this separation of her work from the modern fine art photographers of this century; however, I believe that this separation is important in understanding my work. Like Sherman, I wanted my exhibition prints to be in color and also I wanted them to be large. The final size of the matted and framed prints was 34x40 inches.

Photographers such as Les Krims, Boyd Webb, and Sally Skoglund had constructed installations solely for the purpose of photography. After the photograph, the installations were disassembled. I was interested in the notion that something I created would exist only for the purpose of making a photograph, and that the final piece would be reduced to a two-dimensional facsimile of the original installation.
My interpretation of the Modern movement in photography is that in some respects it was a rejection of the pictorialism of the nineteenth century. I would like to think of my most recent work as fitting in with what is now called post-modernism, in that I see it as a rejection of many of the modern ideas of what photography should and should not be. One modernist idea that I have been concerned with is that of originality. A post-modern rebellion against originality is inherent in the early work of Sherry Levine. Levine photographed photographs by famous photographers of this century, such as Walker Evans. Levine then exhibited these photographs as her own work—in fact, they were her photographs, but the subject matter was not hers. Being aware of Levine's work led me to question the notion of originality. It was at this point that I decided to do take-offs of famous paintings.

One example was "Et in Arcadia Ego" (Figure 1), which is a take-off on Nicolas Poussin's classical Baroque painting of the same name. Roughly translated, it means "Even in Arcadia (I Am Present)." In Poussin's stoic painting, the reference is to the existence of death in Arcadia. In my remake of the painting, the object of contemplation is not death, but a microwave oven.

Francisco Goya provided the inspiration for "The Sleep of Reason Produces Toasters" (Figure 2). Goya's original etching is part of his disasters of war series. The original title translates to something close to "The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters." The connotations in my photographs suggest that consumer society is flawed because it is not based on reason or rational thought. In another attempt to display the folly of consumer society, my "Death of Mr. Bubble" (Figure 3) uses Jean Paul David's "Death of Marat" as a model.
"Portrait of a Man in a Blue Box" (Figure 4) makes reference to a study for a portrait by Francis Bacon (c. 1947). Bacon's study was made during the time that he was working on his interpretations of Velasquez's "Pope Innocent X". There are many similarities between the portrait study and the Pope series, as both are seated and screaming and in some paintings the Pope appears to be in some type of box confinement similar to the portrait study. So, in a way, Bacon's portrait study is a derivative from his Pope series, and the Pope series is, of course, based on Velasquez, and the Velasquez looks like an El Greco from a century earlier than Velasquez.
LIST OF REFERENCES


7 DeFleur, Ball-Rokeach. Chapter 7.

8 Cooper, Pg. 36.

9 Cooper, Pg. 36.

10 Cooper, Pg. 36.


15 Baudrillard.


18 Linker.

Figure 1
"Et in Arcadia Ego"
Figure 2
"The Sleep of Reason Produces Toasters"
Figure III
"Death of Mr. Bubble"
Figure 4
"Portrait of a Man in a Blue Box"