TECHNOLOGICAL EFFECTS ON THE ARTIST,
ART FORMS AND SOCIETY

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Fine Arts

by
Jo Ann Parkinson Holtrey, B.F.A.
The Ohio State University
1972

Approved by

[Signature]
Advisor
Division of Art
I would like to thank Professor Wayne Schuth, Professor Clyde Dilley, and Professor Sidney Chafetz for teaching me that art forms can be discussed, analyzed, and most of all taught.
Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technological Effects on the Artist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Art Forms, and Society)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technological Effects on the Artist, Art Forms, and Society

The twentieth century, being an age of rapid technological and scientific advances, has placed mankind in an uncomfortable position. Machines that can do practically everything demanded or needed by man (including the complicated "thinking" processes done by computers) have made man somewhat uncertain of his place and function in the complex order of society.

Artists, being mirrors of society, have attempted to reflect the conflicts that have arisen as man, machine and the electronic age have begun to progress toward an interdependence upon one another.

We exist in the midst of a social revolution which is indicated by the change in life styles brought about by the technological and scientific revolution. Marshall McLuhan has stated that the typewriter and the telephone did much to change the position of women. They were no longer limited to being housewives when they were part of the business world. Also, mechanization has released man from much of the toil associated with getting manual labor done. This release from manual labor has allowed some men to spend more time thinking about the inner or psychological man and his relationship to other members of society. Art forms seem to be changing in relation to the changing life styles, values and morals of society.

-1-
This struggle for a reconciliation between the scientific and emotional aspects of man has been presented in many ways by many artists. Today, it seems, very few artists, including myself, feel bound by traditional art classifications such as photography, painting, film, sculpture and graphics. The intermedia revolution has released many artists from the rules and regulations of antiquity. Artists like Robert Rauschenburg has screen-printed photographic images on large moving plexiglass constructions. Andy Warhol has produced silkscreen prints as well as films.

I consider the revival of archaic printing media as a means of escapism from the contemporary emphasis on technology. This like every other aspect of art is an indication of societal attitudes and needs. The fear people have of the future, the unknown, seems to force individuals to rely on what has been tried and known, in other words, the past. It is impossible for me to appreciate artists practicing a form of German expressionism in the year 1972. Strong imagery alone is insufficient as far as the conception of innovative art is concerned.

Our age is dynamic and exciting, and there is a massive attempt to find immediacy, involvement, and intensity both in personal relations and in art forms. Current art trends that glorify sex are far more than an attempt at sensationalism. These forms express the need for sexual
involvement, and also work as an exorciser for sexual inhibitions.

Family ties, in many cases, are totally dissolved, and the glorification of the individual has broken down the loyalty to the family institution. Missing the security and closeness afforded by the family unit, the contemporary individual has developed different kinds of needs. Involvements are based on more of an emotional level than a culturally acceptable responsibility to family and society. Marshall McLuhan believes that there is a movement back to the tribal society where there is greater dependence on the interrelation of individuals for the good of society as a whole. Man does not exist in an ivory tower; it is too lonely.

Perhaps one of the most important influences in my work has been the avant garde film movements in America and Japan. They have accomplished what other media have been striving for. Japanese filmmakers and the Japanese audience are not encumbered by a linear sense of time or space; instead their filmic language seems to be the culmination of all the art forms, the mass media influence, and most important, the pulse of contemporary society. Television presents a series of interruptions in thought. Commercials constantly intermingle with films and other programs. Thus a different way of looking at time and visual continuity is made a part of our everyday lives. James Joyce
forewarned society of this discontinuity in Finnegan's Wake. Time becomes very ambiguous in the American film Rachael Rachael which is directed by Paul Newman. In the film Rachael Rachael past and present time intermingle in an attempt to show the distraught mind of Rachael.

The boring, monotonous concepts of linear time and space relationships have been obliterated. Many people have become aware of the fact that the world is quite unlike a John Constable painting. The diverse happenings that pop into everyone's existence and then disappear affect people at a subliminal level. This effects our conception of validity more than the stable occurrences we have been conditioned to recognize and acknowledge.

Buckminster Fuller has said:

As Einstein and Planch discovered, "Universe is a scenario of non-simultaneous and only partially overlapping transforming events." One frame in the scenario of caterpillar does not foretell the later event of its transformation into butterflies. One frame of butterfly cannot tell you that the butterfly flies; only large time-sequence segments of the scenario can provide meaningful information. Cogitation on the myriads of stars apparently scattered in disorderly spherical array about the heavens, individuals often remark, as may you, "I wonder what is outside outside?"—asking for a one frame answer, which is as unintelligent as asking, "Which word is the dictionary?" You know the order of the dictionary to be alphabetical, but its words do not read sequentially. Just hearing them read aloud, they make an only apparent disorderly array. This is typical of the manner in which nature hides her orderliness in only apparent disorder.¹

It is not a lack of order or a negation of time and space, it is a different way of looking at our world which has been influenced, in part, by Eastern thought, the drug culture and Einstein's theory of relativity. A somewhat different sense of time and space has been recognized, and I believe it is the artist's responsibility to condition people to accept what would seem to many to be disorder in an ordered way.

Perhaps the most important factor in my development thus far has been the consistent expansion in my appreciation of the potentials of the photographic media. I have no loyalty to any medium beyond the capacity it affords me to express myself as I wish. Photography allows the creation of images which are intense largely due to the illusion of realism so inherent to the medium. Photography also allows an immense range of visual and technical controls which make the ostensible limitations more apparent than real.

In my photographic print "Allegory" (slide 1) I have contact printed two images on black and white photographic paper. At the top of the page a man and woman, (an early photograph of my paternal grandparents) sit above a photograph of two glass bottles filled to different levels with a fluid. The bottles are tightly capped. Around the oval image of my grandparents a bright orange tape surrounds them and connects them to the image of the bottles by the vertical
lines connecting the two images. The allusion to their emotions is connected to the bottles visually as well as allegorically. The intensity of the colors; orange, bright blue, and magenta symbolically forces them into the world of the present. They must now live in a different world even though they sit passively in the dress and position of a half century ago. The intensity of the other elements in the image will not let them sit back in apathetic non-involvement.

I do not feel that so called "straight" images are the only domain of photography. Photographers have proven to themselves and to the world that "straight" photography is an art form. Now it is time to drop traditional labels and boundaries; the mixing of media can produce new dimensions and new truths. For example, look at the accomplishments of the cinema where many media are mixed; movement, sound, visual images and, of course, literature.

I am more excited by the photographs of Jerry Uelsmann and the films of Scott Bartlett than I am by the paintings of Raphael, Matisse and Kandinsky. There is an immediacy, contemporary relevancy, and a realistic intensity possible with photography and film that many artists striving for photographic-like paintings have attempted to attain. In photography the magical excitement is in the process as well as in the imagery. There is an excitement each time an image slowly begins to appear in the developer. I find
graphic printing by antiquated methods dirty, drudgery. For me intaglio and lithographic printing processes are so slow and boring that my images loose all freshness before they are completed. I believe that photography, film, and television are the graphic media of the present, and I am certain that they will be improved on and probably will be replaced by other media in the future.

In my work I am concerned with mingling the past with the present. To say that all periods of time are the same is a generalization explicated without thinking of how new conditions effect values or of how the total interaction of what Marshall McLuhan calls media and society constantly change and grow.

The incongruities that people live with, the impact of living with things they cannot understand is frustrating and isolating. Filmmakers such as Antonioni are concerned with the alienation, isolation and eventual adjustment forced on people by our electric and technological society.

Chronological age is an important factor in my work. Elderly couples sit lethargically in the midst of conditions they will never be able to understand. Their surroundings are visually presented as a black void while hovering over them undefinable masses intimidate and paralyze them. (slide 2)

Children exist in a world of blank walls and strange structures. A boy vaults over undefinable waves.

In my serigraph print "High Jump" (slide 3) I have shown a boy pole vaulting from a strange wave-like structure.
The structure is repeated as a negative image coming down from the sky. The two wave-like structures form an enclosing spiral. This world is orderly, without people other than the boy. The boy's place in this kind of world is ambiguous in that many viewers may make individual interpretations of what the boy is feeling and doing. First of all, there is the boy's extreme isolation. A boy vaults into a pure kind of world with no one to interfere with him or constrict his thoughts. At another level the boy could be seen as falling into something unknown or uncontrollable because of the power which is imposed by the orderliness of the structure.

At still another level, the print is printed on a mirrorlike surface so that the reflection of the viewer can become part of the image due to this perceiving of his own image. This merging of the viewer and image is accentuated due to the psychological identification with the pole vaulter.

Society is involved on a quest for some kind of stabilizing order in all levels of human interaction. The artist conditions society to accept, understand, and thus to redefine order and life both present and future.

John Kenneth Galbraith argues that business must now study art, for the artist makes models of problems and situations that have not yet emerged in the larger matrix of society, giving the artistically
perceptive businessman a decade of leeway in his planning.²

Society imposes order and artists, being instruments of society, reflect the hang-ups and needs of society. They translate the pulse of society into a visual form.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


List of Illustrations

1. "Allegory" (colored photograph)
2. "Changing World" (colored photograph)
3. "High Jump" (serigraph)
4. Untitled (photograph, black and white)
5. Untitled (colored photograph)
6. "In the Wood" (serigraph)
7. "Maggie & Jim" (colored photograph)
8. Untitled (serigraph)
9. Untitled (serigraph)
10. Untitled (colored photograph)
11. "Conjunction" (serigraph)