EXPLORATION OF THE MACHINE:
PAINTING, DRAWING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

A Thesis
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by

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INTRODUCTION

Machines in general are visually interesting in terms of form. Stemming from man's wish to facilitate certain operations, machines have a relation to mankind in both form and function. One way to dig a large hole in the ground, if machines were nonexistent, would be to have many people on their knees digging at the earth with their fingers. Over the years people have found it necessary to use tools such as the shovel or, on a larger scale, the steam shovel. The desire to dig a large hole in the ground has led to the invention of a machine which relates in form and function to man's needs. The large claw on the shovel digs as fingers dig (function) and has the appearance of a large claw (form). (Number 1)* The cab of the shovel has a window as a person has eyes, and the activity of the shovel is directed by a person as a person's activity is directed by his brain. (Number 1) In this sense, the machine becomes a living, functioning extension of man that performs a certain activity. Man has created the machine in his own image. In other words, man has made machines, as super tools, to extend his capacity to do

*Numbers refer to photographs in the thesis.
particular jobs. This is the basic idea that motivates my work as an artist. It is this relationship between man and machine that underlies all my work. I deal with creating a certain kind of life, taking cues from this basic idea about the machine.

PAINTING

In terms of time and productivity, painting has been the most important direction my work has taken. I started in undergraduate school with machine shapes relating to no particular machine. The first paintings involved an emphasis on dark values and more intense color from the warmer end of the spectrum in some of the paintings. (Numbers 2,3) I moved from this kind of imagery to the painting of actual machines. The first two machines were the shovel and the first race cars. (Numbers 4,5) The shovel form was taken directly from a Polaroid picture of a shovel which was my first photograph. The race car was taken from a magazine photograph, and with this relationship I started to work directly from magazine reproductions of imagery. Both the shovel and the first race cars employed hot color as a nucleus or "center of interest". From there I stayed with race

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cars and refined the painting process in terms of achieving a harder edge (Numbers 6, 7, 8) until I entered graduate school where I began using masonite shapes in relief.

The last paintings and the first of the masonite pieces were trucks. (Numbers 9, 10, 11, 12) The most significant aspect of the change in materials was that it afforded me a more effective way of presenting my ideas. Instead of merely painting objects on canvas, I was now actually making the objects and then painting them. The pieces became autonomous and free from any rectangular restriction. The move from the rectangle to free shape has evolved over the last two years and can be traced through my first masonite pieces. (Numbers 12, 13, 14, 15)

Color experimentation has been kept to a minimum throughout the last two years. What I want from color is the utmost in energy. This has meant, in other words, the re-use of high intensity color to its maximum power potential. The concept of "free shape" means that there are absolutely no restrictions on the shapes that I employ. I am not, for instance, confined to the rectangle or any other regular geometrical boundary.
Free shape also involved my use of color because the free form pieces define and contain shapes on the wall (which should be a neutral white.) So, I have a given color factor which is the neutral white of the wall. (Numbers 16,17,18,19)

PHOTOGRAPHY

My involvement in photography started with the Polaroid photograph of the shovel. From this point I focused my attention more on the formal aspects of photography than on the pursuit of it as an art form. My primary consideration at this point was technical rather than aesthetic. The subject matter, again, was almost always machinery, but the emphasis in the beginning was limited to a concept that was rather uninteresting to me: that of simply photographing machinery. The concept was uninteresting because my work did not transcend the machine; it merely recorded it. This period was very similar to the period in painting during which I was painting objects on canvas. With the multiple imagery, my photographs finally transcended the ordinary machine and became something that is, to me,
the making of art. The machines that I photographed were mainly earth movers which were much more readily available for subject matter than racing machines.

The medium of photography sets the artist free from having to totally create his product. The use of this medium necessitated a move toward transcending given visual reality. This was an extremely important move because it allowed me to make images that I didn't have to totally conceive. Some of the idea was derived from the given element of the actual machine. Therefore, the process became variations on the theme of the machine, but from another direction: the direction fashioned by photography itself. By using photographic imagery I was able to see things in a different way; photography itself is a medium for making art. (Numbers 20, 21)

DRAWING

Drawing is the most recent medium that I have employed for making finished images. In my drawing there is a visual tie between what I am doing in painting and photography. In this medium I am involved in using photographic imagery as part of the subject matter. Certain areas of the drawings deal with accurately
rendered objects: e.g. in terms of linear perspective. Other areas involve free form shapes. The tonal assignments, however, are in most cases done in terms of compositional criteria as opposed to a realistic light source. (Numbers 22, 23, 24) It is this use of accurately rendered objects and compositionally assigned value that ties my paintings and photography together.

CONCLUSIONS

I feel that my work is integrated by the idea of the machine and manifests this idea in terms of the various media discussed; painting, photography and drawing.

The integration of the three media is very apparent to me when I look at the work all together. What is important is the insight that it affords me as to my future development. My direction in the future is now more solid than before the exhibition because I have seen all my work together and therefore know more about where I have been.

I am now thinking about making larger and lighter pieces while maintaining total control over my material. I feel that my photography is just getting off
the ground. I will probably leave my photography for a while and allow the ideas in the photographs to feed into my drawing and painting. I plan to relax the photography because I am getting slightly stale, and also, I feel that I have exhausted the capabilities of my 35 mm camera.

The art that is in my exhibition is not as good as what I will be doing in the future, but I am satisfied with it as "my graduate work". I am very satisfied with my graduate career because, generally speaking, it has given me a more potent means for the expression of my ideas.