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PERCEPTUAL TRACE

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PERCEPTUAL TRACE

By

Sherry Black

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

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In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Karen Kunc

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PERCEPTUAL TRACE

Sherry Black, MFA

University of Nebraska, 2008

Adviser: Karen Kunc

My work stems from the activity of perception through the drawing process, and a mental analysis of what I imagine but cannot see. The contemplative state of drawing is a careful outward projection, an internal dialog with an external object. Each work is a heightened state of perception as I seek clarity to distill the moment while meditating on my own physical existence.

Apprehending by means of the senses is universal. In the most basic terms, the activities of perception amount to small, seemingly inconsequential moments. Yet, perception is a personal, even intimate occurrence, which is individualized. I am interested in this invisible, personal aspect of sensory experience, and selective nuances of stimulatory information. Sensory perception is subtle, yet it is essential to who we are and how we interpret being.

Perception is a taking in of the outside. We "take in" information regarding space through our individual bodies. The way we think about space is in relation to our physical being. We identify internal and external first as a relationship to us. Though space is not us, it

becomes us through perception. Space, through perception, is individualized by the body, and thus individualizes the body.

Internal and external relationships to the body are depicted in my work as suggestive rather than literal. Sight has an outward connotation, while hearing is a taking in. Breath is both inward and outward. The apprehension of space in this way creates a trajectory for the traces of sensory activity. This extends the spatial relationship between the body and the external world, to the conceptualization of external information within the mind.

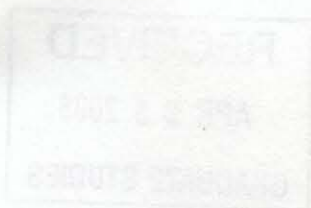
Projecting an internal sensation outward has always been an impulse in my work. My mind creates images for things I cannot see but most definitely feel. The pressure around the sensory organs, the implied direction of sight, the inward, outward motion of breathing, and the collection of sound around the ears are specific occurrences for which I have sought to develop a visual counterpart.

In this body of work the head is depicted as a transparent linear structure through which ethereal sensations move. I am interested in the fact that the head often responds to the world around us before the body. The implied orientation of the head affects the activity of the line. The line transects the head, moving across a somatic field of the form suggesting a tension around specific areas of the senses. The head in which the eyes are closed directly explores the internal consciousness and an awareness of external pressures. The washes in these works depict the movement of both space and sensation, a feeling of being.

Fragmentation serves a similar function of transparency, as suggested bodily forms relate across an expanse. This is to evince apprehension through absence of the whole.

A high contrast depiction of the senses in which the marks fade abruptly into the white of the page allows these elements to exist in isolation while emphasizing their awareness. The dissimilarity of the wash recalls the notion that sensation is amorphous and the body is concrete. The sensory organs are placed in uncommon positions to negate mere representation. This is to recreate the heightened awareness of a particular sensory locus, which is felt when one sense subsides to another.

The process of making through drawing is a mirror of my physical motions as well as mental inclinations. For me, drawing and perception are parallel activities that allow a concentrated access into the internal consciousness through physical activity. It offers a dialog with the external world and a way of seeing the unseen. In this the traces of perception are recorded and externalized.



Sherry Black

Image List

- 1 – Apart Collecting Sound
- 2 – Detail of LD36562008B533.1
- 3 – Arcing Glance
- 4 – Detail of LD36562008B533.3
- 5 – Crossing Glance
- 6 – Diminished Echo
- 7 – Echo
- 8 – Gravity After Image
- 9 – Gravity
- 10 – Installation
- 11 – Sharing Air
- 12 – Detail of Sharing Air
- 13 – Thought Above
- 14 – Thought
- 15 – Untitled
- 16 – Untitled
- 17 – Vision
- 18 – Detail of LD36562008B533.17



