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REST FOR THE EYE

by

Jason L. Briggs

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College at the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Fine Arts

Major: Art

Under the Supervision of Professor Gail Kendall

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 1999

REST FOR THE EYE

Jason L. Briggs, M.F.A.
University of Nebraska, 1999

Adviser: Gail Kendall

My work is the product of two chief motivations: a desire to touch and a compulsion to create. Beyond any external inspiration lie these two gut-level responses. The obsessive character of these drives is reflected through an extravagant covering of surface with minute, repetitive markings. The result is intensely focused, highly articulated work that combines passion, beauty, and diverse content.

The very nature of the surfaces--pushed, poked, scored, marked, indented, smoothed, carved, wiped, and sanded--are taken to extremes. As the maker, I am both captivated and at ease; it is just me and the clay. The act of texturing becomes a fetish.

This attention to surface remains a constant. The overall effect, significantly, is not one of chaos. Through arranging, layering, and division of space, I create an intense order that includes a variety of visual and tactile sensations. Reduced scale, meticulous finish, and a sense of time create feelings of intimacy and preciousness; touching becomes sensuous and personal. Smooth, raised areas contrast with excessively marked spaces to provide additional imagery, increase tactile stimulation, and, formally, to provide rest for the eye. Silent areas become eloquent in such a context. Finally, layered planes of texture are built up to imply an evolution within the piece--a history.

More than formal aspects, my work explores a variety of ideas. The "beautification" of common household appliances promotes dialog concerning the art vs. craft debate; can a decorated, functional object serve as art, or vice versa? Other, less representational objects, often refer to an enigmatic ritual or ceremony through their intriguing nature and apparent lack of presentation qualities (no top, no bottom, etc.). Through the use of ornamental handles and certain twists in form, I give figurative objects character. This, in turn, suggests narrative and invites humor and playfulness. Also, issues of scale, quantity, and presentation are investigated using piles or reliquaries as display options.

One thing that keeps all of my art cohesive as a body is the notion of fantasy. The forms, surfaces, and imagery I use come almost entirely from my imagination and/or subconscious. Herein lies a link with Surrealism. Though the work may resemble forms found in nature, I am more interested in using my intuition to create fiction. In the end, each piece is to be as engaging and seductive to the viewer as the process is to me.

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