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THE EXPLORATION OF THE IDEA OF THE HORSE IN GRAPHICS AND SCULPTURE

by

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COLBY COLLEGE
1981
The exploration of the idea of the horse is a very complex and open quest. Primarily it entails some conception of what the idea of the horse is. In choosing to title the project as such, I was attempting to indicate that what was of major interest to me was the representation of those qualities of the horse which are abstract and intangible as well as the physical qualities of the horse. Because of this interest, much of my work is concerned with movement, gesture, and the effects of structure, or lack thereof, on movement and gesture.

The first semester work can be divided into gestural drawings, welded steel gestural sculptures, figurative drawings, wax sculptures, and monoprints. In the monoprints I developed the idea of movement in a specific direction. This became an important compositional tool for me as I did many prints and drawings which stemmed from this idea. Second semester I decided to try to enlarge some of my smaller movement oriented drawings and using large sheets of butcher paper, I commenced doing the monumental drawings, generally 3' x 6', which I continued doing throughout the semester. In these I explored new concepts of composition and in some I explored the use of color. Sculptures I did during this time were again gestural welded steel studies and I did several large (3' x 4') mixed wire sculptures which grew from ideas that I derived from the large drawings.

In general the exploration of the horse in graphics and sculpture was a successful venture, for the two media worked well together.
The exploration of the idea of the horse is a very complex and open quest. Primarily it entails some conception of what the idea of the horse is. In choosing to title the project as such, I was attempting to indicate that what was of major interest to me was the representation of those qualities of the horse which are abstract and intangible as well as the physical qualities of the horse. Because of this interest, much of my work is concerned with movement, gesture, and the effects of structure, or lack thereof, on movement and gesture.

The first semester work can be divided into gestural drawings, welded steel gestural sculptures, figurative drawings, wax sculptures, and monoprints. In the monoprints I developed the idea of using groups of horses to convey the idea of movement in a specific direction. This became an important compositional tool for me and I did many prints and drawings which stemmed from this idea. Second semester I decided to try to enlarge some of my smaller movement oriented drawings and using large sheets of butcher paper, I commenced doing the monumental drawings, generally 3' x 6', which I continued doing throughout the semester. In these I explored new concepts of composition and in some I explored the use of color. Sculptures I did during this time were again gestural welded steel studies and I did several large (3' x 4') mixed wire sculptures which grew from ideas that I derived from the large drawings. In the remaining text I will discuss the works included in the manuscript individually in an attempt to explain their significance to the project as a whole.
The works are discussed chronologically by semester and divided into Graphics and Sculpture.

1) "Dream #1" (Etching: Hard and Soft Ground, Aquatint, Spit-bite, Scraping) The work on this plate was very complex and time consuming but the composition spurred ideas for later works; the use of lines of movement and multiple horses instead of one single subject.

2) "Circus Horse Series" (Monoprint) This is one of many monoprints which I did first semester. The first set were called circus horses because they were playful and reminded me of circus horses. Other monoprints in the final exhibit were "Trotting", "Turning", "Jumping 1", and "Jumping 2", but unfortunately, pictures of these could not be included.

3) "After Sarah" (Pastel Drawing) This is one of several abstract drawings done in color pastel which depict my feelings of riding a horse. For me they say as much as the more figurative drawings.

4) "Jake" (Welded Steel Rod) This is the first of the steel gestural studies. It is very primitive but motion is clearly depicted.

5A & B) "Horse Jumping a Puddle" Also called "Study in Diagonals"; this piece forces an angularity onto the flowing forms of the horse. The internal structures accent the forward thrust implied in the piece.

5A & B) "Beeswax" As one of the few mass-oriented pieces I did, this sculpture is important in terms of the correct proportioning of the anatomy of the horse. Surface treatment became important to me in this piece.

7A & B) "Landing" (Welded Steel Rod) This piece is formed by curvilinear lines primarily. It was my first welded piece in which I utilized the flexibility of the steel when heated.

8) "Jakelets" (Beeswax) This set of 4 wax figures was prompted by one of the "movement" monoprints and was the only sculpture I did which incorporated multiple figures.

9) Untitled (Spit-bite Aquatint) This small etching spurred the large drawings. I liked the movement in the work and decided to work towards the same feeling in a larger drawing.

10) "Dream #2" (Pastel on Butcher Paper) This large drawing (about 3' X 7') evolved from the small etching. Working in this way opened new doors for my imagination, hence the titles "Dream #2-5". (#10-14) In these drawings movement is primary in importance. They became exciting but rather self-conscious compositions. **Dream #3, 4, 5" and Neon Blue and Green Dream " (all of these were in the show).
15 & 16) These are both large drawings from a series of drawings which dealt with the central axis of movement in a series of horses. Again abstract, these were closely related to the movement feeling pastel drawings.

17 & 18) "Cubic Gold and Brown", and *"Cubic Blue"* (Pastel on Butcher Paper) My interest in doing these drawings was finding a new method of recreating motion. The sharp angular cubist lines produced a vibrant energy unlike the floating and soft motion conveyed by the Dream series figures.

19 & *20) "Baroque Series" (Brush and Ink on Building Paper) These are two drawings indicative of a series inspired by a Carraci drawing. The flowing and all encompassing quality of the Baroque line seemed to produce yet another type of energy which was both flowing and vibrant.

* 21A & B) "Star Horses 1 and 2" (Copper welding rod, and Electric Fence Wire) These were the largest pieces I did. (About 3' X 4') They were directly influenced by the large drawings and while they were hung together in the show, they are effective separately as well.

* 22A & B) "Trotting" (Welded Steel Rod) This welded steel piece is built largely from the curving and flowing line similar to that in the earlier piece. "Landing", I became interested, in this piece, and the two following, in the use of only one point of contact with the base. Not only does this device enhance the forward movement implied here but it also adds to the general capriciousness about the piece.

* 23A & B) "Suspension" (Welded Steel Rod) In this piece rather than accenting curved lines, I built up the round areas mostly through small series of straight lines. This helps to achieve the basic sense of muscular tension I hoped to convey. Again in this piece there is a feeling of possible forward motion, a sort of kinetic energy.

* 24A & B) "Jumping" (Welded Steel Rod) The final piece to be discussed was also the final sculpture that I did. In this piece curved and straight lines were more evenly distributed, again to convey a sense of muscular tension as we know it must exist in any movement of the horse. A strong sense of captured motion is about this piece as well as a sense of what is to follow.

*These pieces were exhibited in my show.*
Cubic gold and brown

Cubic Blue