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**PROVOCATIONS Raw Constructs in
Mixed Media by HEINRICH KLINKON**

**A Thesis Report Submitted in
Partial Fullfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree**

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

**MFA Imaging Arts Program
School of Photographic Arts
and Sciences**

**College of Graphic Arts
and Photography**

**Rochester Institute of Technology
November 1990**

THESIS BOARD APPROVALS

Jeff Weiss
Associate Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

11/5/90
Date

Elliott Rubenstein
Associate Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences

11/5/90
Date

Judd Williams
Professor
School of Art and Design

5 Nov 90
Date

I, Heinrich Klinkon, prefer to be contacted
each time a request for reproduction is
made. I can be reached at the following
address: 38 Fairfax Road, Rochester, New
York 14609.

Signature

Nov. 15, 90
Date

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INTRODUCTION

The cave paintings were the first historical instances of art created by man. The images we create evolve as time, culture, and the purposes of art change. However, the need to create, express ourselves, reflect our world, and share our creations continues from one generation to another.

My exposure to art was conditioned by the region and the people I grew up with. My fascination with and aptitude for art became an integral part of my life. This involvement with art has served me in different ways. Through art, I have learned about myself, found refuge, built worlds of my own, learned about others, taught others, reached out, sought reality. My thesis work represents a stage in my life in which the reaching out and seeking reality are more emphatic.

BACKGROUND

MYSELF

I am a teacher of graphic design at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and have worked as an illustrator and graphic designer in Washington, D.C. and New York City. I also have an interest in fine art, which hails back to my early exposure to art as a teen in Germany, persisted simultaneously with job experiences in Switzerland and London, and continued during my two years' study at the Corcoran School of Art and after.

On a personal/social level, I believe my personality incorporates tensions which have to do with my struggle to balance the polarities of German versus American culture, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the polarities of convention/formality versus the wish to challenge/express.

Also, on this level, I believe it is a tendency of mine to take the stance of an observer and to draw broad social meanings from everyday experiences.

I have chosen to pursue the Master of Fine Arts in Imaging Arts to enhance my value to the Institute, to enrich my teaching perspective, and to explore the imaging arts as a means of personal and creative expression. I have been a part-time student in photography and imaging arts since 1983. In the course of my MFA work, my artistic perspectives have undergone some change. I believe, however, that the work for my thesis show represents the culmination of an evolution that began much earlier with respect to my work in fine art.

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MY WORK

Prior to my immigration to the United States, I had produced small series of artworks at various times that tended to serve two purposes: to explore the aesthetic aspects of a medium and, then, to challenge the related artistic conventions. This art had not addressed social issues.

In the sixties, as a student at the Corcoran School newly arrived in this country, I produced aquatints and etchings that represented personal interpretations of the rock-n-roll and hippy-pop cultures. Though I never actively took part in

these cultures, I admit I was sympathetic and that I secretly enjoyed the establishment's discomfort in the midst of confrontations. It was at this time that I began to deal with convention and challenge on a social as well as aesthetic level.

Later, as an undergraduate and graduate student at RIT, my approach to the media I studied tended to follow the same pattern on an aesthetic level. For example, in the three courses I took in sculpture, I became interested in formal aesthetic conventions, the role of the medium in relation to the whole, the way shape, volume, line, texture, etc. could be manipulated with respect to the medium. Then, I tried somehow to challenge the aesthetic conventions.

The work I've done for the thesis adds a third stage to this evolution, and I feel that it has most in common with my sixties aquatints. Both the aquatints and constructs tend to challenge aesthetic conventions. Both the aquatints and the pieces for my show draw their subject matter from the social developments of their time. They are different in feeling in that the aquatints project a more exhilarating sense, whereas my constructs project a sobering reality in which polarities are unavoidable. They are also different aesthetically in that the aquatints are strictly a pure medium, which, in my mind, was probably not ideal for the images I presented at that time. The constructs use many media. The effect of this diversity, I believe, is to heighten contrast, polarity, and a sense of reality.

THESIS PURPOSE

My thesis purpose was "to select from the current social, moral, and artistic environment, issues that are personally perplexing to me, and then to project them as questions in concrete form. These provocations are intended to involve the viewer in interpretation, thought, comment, evaluation, and will take the form of mixed-media, three-dimensional representations."

I believe this purpose statement reflects my personal need to balance polarities and to present challenges of a socially significant nature. I believe my emphasis on what I expect from the viewer may stem in part from my graphic design back-

ground where I was required to think in terms of results. Yet, comment and discussion ease tensions, so that from this standpoint, my hope that the viewer will become involved in thinking about the challenges or issues I present, stems from a desire to communicate or compare notes.

In my own evolution as a person and as a fine artist, this desire to communicate with others represents something of a breakthrough. Personally, I am for the most part reserved. In fine art, I have, until now, sought merely to express myself on issues that I felt were of uniquely personal relevance. In recent years, it seems, I have come to realize and accept the idea more readily, that topics I see as relevant to myself may also be relevant to others. My decision to draw topics for artistic representation from the newspaper has to do with my desire to extend, so to speak, to my viewers.

Thematically or semantically speaking, the major goal of my thesis show was to involve the viewers in thinking about issues that are present in the world that confronts us daily. I wanted, secondarily, to maintain the qualities of rawness and neutrality in materials and production so as to support a sense of unresolvedness.

OTHER CRITERIA AND ASSUMPTIONS

Other criteria that helped me in arriving at each piece had to do with the timeliness of subject, the balanced intellectual and emotional quality of the message, clarity of the stimulus, the presence of a surprise element, and uniqueness.

Though the following statements did not function as outright criteria in arriving at the pieces in my thesis show, they are principles that I have internalized over the years, that I believe are valid, and that may have guided me in the course of developing my work.

A message is critical in a work of art because, often, this is what we respond to. The less a work reveals its creator's own intention and opinion, the more easily viewers can accept the work as relevant to themselves.

A dramatic stand taken by the artist tends to diminish the work's credibility.

Making a dramatic or a neutral statement through art is in either case an exercise in control.

Differences in culture, place, time, etc., make it almost impossible to get across a clear, unmistakable meaning.

If the intended meaning is simple or basic enough, it is potentially understood in the same way by everyone.

ARTISTIC PRECEDENTS

As part of my study for the MFA degree, I learned to appreciate the accomplishments of many photographers. Yet, for my thesis work, my interests turned toward a number of artists who in the purest sense, cannot be called photographers, but artists in general. While most of them applied photographic processes in their work, they had a tendency to work in a variety of media, and to be centered around ideas, messages, or causes as opposed to art for art's sake. Among these are Aleksandr Rodchenko, Man Ray, David Hockney, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Longo, Marcel Duchamp, Gerhard Richter, Robert Heinecken, Lucas Samaras, Joseph Beuys, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Escobar Marisol, and others.

DEFINITIONS

The following "definitions" relate to questions that viewers or reviewers might have regarding my work, my background, or the terminology I have applied to describe them.

MIXED MEDIA VS. SINGLE MEDIUM

At one point in the course of my degree work, I began trying to define photography for myself. I tried to grapple with the usual questions regarding the medium's dependency on the camera, the scientific aspect of the zone system, the acceptability of "interfering" with the image by altering the print, the predominant role of lighting conditions in creating an image, the impermanence of the print, etc. I also began to look at the image itself, i.e., the two-dimensional aspects of the image, the inflexible characteristics of the frame, the invariability and appropriateness of the surfaces and contexts characteristic of the photograph.

Past experiences also began to resurface at this time: an experience in display design in London, where I transformed a "man-made" room into an "organic" jungle using leaves imported from Africa; an experience in graphic design in New York, where I helped to transform a two-dimensional construction fence the length of a city block, into a three dimensional message carrier. The contrasts and the three-dimensionality of these projects had held considerable interest for me.

I wanted to explore behind the matted and framed 8"x10" gelatin silver print and to lend it a certain permanence. I also became fascinated by the challenge of integrating two dimensional imagery on a three dimensional body.

I decided to alter the silverprints to derive a three-dimensional aspect. I cut into the print so that the wall behind became part of the image, or cut out part of the print and affixed it with an eight-inch spacer so as to achieve a relief effect.

As time went on I experimented with gluing scrap wood together and covering it with images. Then I tried revealing the structural materials. These first constructs were actually sculptural objects incorporating photography.

Three years ago, with the encouragement of faculty, I began to seriously develop this direction in my degree program and thesis work.

We have very personal images stored in our mind about things we have seen and even not seen. I had begun to feel that the camera's output capability, like that of any other single medium, would be limiting. I decided to accept any medium in combination with others, as long as these could help create the images I envisioned.

CONSTRUCTS VS. INSTALLATIONS

Both installations and constructs, which had their beginnings after the turn of the century in Europe, have been produced with tools and machinery and materials found more often in factories and on construction sites than in traditional sculpture studios. They have other characteristics in common. They might be prefabricated in a studio and assembled at the exhibit site. In both, materials used are readily available from lumber, paint, and hardware stores. In either case, ready-made elements such as new or old tables, chairs, carpets, clothing, utensils may be incorporated. Objects specially crafted for the work such as small or large sculptural pieces, paintings, drawings, and/or photographs may be included.

It is my perception that installations are larger works, often intended for outdoor exhibition. They are usually built for a specific site, then, dismantled and stored--or, occasionally, discarded. An installation may allow the viewer the opportunity to climb over, walk through, touch, or even operate it. That is to say, an installation is a work that creates an environment in which the viewer may feel at least partially immersed.

My own constructs are relatively modest in size, with 9'3" being the longest dimension. They also are intended primarily for indoor display, and were built without a particular space in mind. While most could be displayed so as to allow viewing from all sides, each does have a preferred "frontal view". While an installation might be intended to hang on the wall or to stand in a corner in a traditional manner, allowing only a frontal view, this type of treatment would seem to be

more characteristic of constructs in which, following a traditional mode, the "sculpture" is placed within surroundings to which it is not related. In this case, as in my own constructs, the viewer must isolate the object from its environment and experience it in a manner that is neither tactile nor kinetic.

I chose to call my works constructs also to reflect my own perception of the works as something built or composed of various elements, as originating in thought as "mental constructs", and as appealing to the thought processes of viewers.

GRAPHIC DESIGN VS. FINE ART

For me, graphic design and fine art have been so closely related that in a few instances, people have reminded me that I should make a clearer differentiation between (fine) art and (commercial) graphic design. To me, both fine art and graphic design address an audience. And the audience has to be moved with a message, whether it be a slogan, a mathematical formula, a lyrical train of thought, a business presentation, or a folk tale..... Both art and design make use of a visual language which seeks to get attention and response.

Fine art speaks to viewers in galleries, museums, places of worship, public plazas, corporate headquarters, and now, even shopping malls. Graphic design reaches out through billboards, package design, magazine layout, TV commercials, brochures, annual reports, greeting cards, signage, and retail ads. Fine art tends to be produced in single "copies," whereas graphic design tends to appear in multiples.

In my opinion, neither the location nor the numbers of a work of art should be measures of excellence. And it is the work's excellence that is most important.

Greek sculptures are now found in our museums, but many were originally located in homes, in temples, in public places. Many are so similar they seem to be duplicates of each other. Yet there is no question, regardless of where they were found, or how many were replicated, that they are works of art incorporating excellence.

NATURAL VS. COSMETIC COLOR

People may see a lack of color in this work, because they are used to seeing art that applies color as a surface treatment. From my standpoint, color often goes too far to transform the original object, thus creating both distortions and illusions. I prefer a more natural surface coloration that is alive without make-up. To me, the natural state of materials and their color are more truthful than I can produce. I prefer, that is to say, not to interfere with what is there. By doing this, I suppose I, too, am creating an illusion. I like to think that the meaning behind it has to do with respect, consideration, or tolerance.

Occasionally, in executing my constructs, whenever I felt I should apply paint, I did so in such a way as to show the stroke of the brush and also to let the surface show through. At times I allowed texture to interplay with the paint.

FINISHED VS. UNFINISHED

Our past experiences, acquired values, learned moral standards, emotional condition, intellectual ability, etc., form very personal opinions and images. Changing those opinions or images can be painful. Yet, our everyday reality confronts us with new ideas or situations that seem to require change.

In my work, I try to reflect both the tension and the struggle involved in changing or adjusting to the "new" situations.

From the standpoint of production, refinement, even in something as simple as joining pieces of board together or as sensitive as applying an acid-resistant coating to a copper plate, is a struggle. The material I used, the wood, metal, photographs, etc., all reveal the struggle of being submitted to change. Seeing as I dealt with unresolved issues, I thought the unfinished state of the objects I created was actually more appropriate than ultimate refinement. My work refers to thought processes and illustrates the premise that everything is in a state of constant transformation.

From the standpoint of perception, our moods, surroundings, and orientation of the moment can affect the way we react to or perceive the same subject at different times. I believe that the three dimensionality as well as the combination of media, techniques, shapes, and objects I use reflect this dilemma to some extent.

The rawness, like these other aspects, therefore, is intended to support a sense of dynamic non-completion--as well perhaps, as a desire to reveal the reality below surface illusions.

INTERPRETATIONS: The Constructs

JapAm

Dimensions: 3'4" x 4'0" x 1'8"

Media: Plywood, sheet aluminum, photo silkscreen, spray enamel

The influence of Japan on American society has been growing to such a degree that the greatest nation on earth seems to have lost its preeminence. Japanese purchases of real estate in the United States such as the Rockefeller Center and companies like Columbia Pictures, the building of the Toyota factory, and Japanese dominance in certain consumer goods are now perceived as welcome by some Americans. News of a Japanese bank's intention to enter the credit card business in the United States shows how much Japan has become a partner in our everyday lives. Though my six year old son doesn't own the Nintendo video game, he studies classical piano according to the Suzuki method.

The United States is a great consumer market. Our materialistic values demand that we have the latest gadgets. We easily buy on credit and, in so doing, make ourselves dependent on others.

I wanted the viewer to think about these issues. I wanted to raise questions that would bring out many opinions, facts, perceptions. I wanted the viewer to think about Americans as they are and in relation to the "intruding" Japanese.

The objects in this construct are suggested, actual, or reflected. Suggested, for example, is the American flag with its small field for the stars and large field for the stripes. In the small field, I placed, instead of our fifty stars, an actual green tinted image of the American Express credit card. In the large field, I exchanged the red and white stripes for an untinted image of a 1000 yen bank note. Reflected faintly in the surface of these images, are mirror images of the presumably American viewer.

The credit card represents individual membership to consumerism with its debtor responsibilities. The stars would have represented freedom and unity within the fifty states. The yen represents the peacefully won domination of the Japanese economy, the stripes would have represented the founding States who won independence at the cost of blood. The mirrored image of the viewer is meant to ask the question, "Who are we?" in this context. Here, I confront the viewer not with facts or even clear images, but with contrasting ideas that I hope will elicit involvement.

To produce this JapAm flag, I used two aluminum plates, one for the Japanese yen and one for the American Express card. I spray painted the credit card sheet metal lightly with green enamel paint and silkscreened the photographic image of the card with black enamel ink. In contrast to the credit card, the Japanese yen is large, thin, and neutral in color.

As supporting structure to the credit card, I nailed the aluminum sheet onto a plywood frame. In doing this, I had two things in mind: one, the wooden frame would lend substance to the sheet metal and importance to the relatively small credit card; two, the frame would be a reminder that the card is attached to a very basic social pact which demands payment of monthly installments. As a physical support to the yen, I used a scrap piece of plywood.

As with the imagery I used, the materials and execution suggest more levels of meaning than are apparent at first glance. The aluminum plates for the yen and the credit card resemble the slickness in which high technology products are often presented. The sparkle of light and the reflections of viewers standing in front of it create excitement. The photo silkscreens of credit card and yen, though not perfect reproductions of the originals, manage to suggest the real worn object they represent. The dissonant qualities of aluminum plate, silkscreened images, and rough plywood, tend to bombard the viewer with additional contrasts.

All during the planning and production of JapAm, my intention was to hang this two-part flag from the ceiling, in the center of the gallery. Yet, shortly before installation, I became convinced that my placement of the work in progress on the floor near the door, almost as something to be picked up before going out, would be an appropriate position for this piece in the gallery.

I feel that with JapAm I accomplished reasonably well what I set out to do. Through only two actual images, this construct raises questions about consumerism, the significance of Japanese incursions in the American marketplace, national pride, dependence, the dubious nature of political alliances, etc. At the same time, the viewer is provoked by a number of actual and suggested images, and the quality of the production contributes effectively to the whole.

Most likely, each viewer will pick one of the issues to think about, and each viewer will interpret the work differently. I believe these differences should stimulate discussion on the subject presented.

The Gentle Patter of Erma Bombeck

Dimensions: 2'4" x 5'6" x 1'2"

Media: Oak and basswood, aluminum rod and plate, photo lithography

Erma Bombeck is a syndicated columnist who writes about her daily thoughts, revealing the mentality of her American upper middle-class suburban environment. Possibly her patter, funny as it is, might be offensive to someone from a different class or culture. I feel this polarity has potential for dynamic reactions.

This construct consists of an old oak pedestal, an arrow-shaped abstract object, a crushed aluminum collander, an angular sheet of metal, a wooden hand and arm, three rods connecting the arm to the sheet metal, and photographic reproductions of Erma's lips and eyes.

The pedestal, a simple column, stands for a formal foundation and traditional values. The arrow-shaped object, thick, bulky, and unfriendly, stands for an irksome something that has intruded into Erma's environment. The collander, unflatteringly, stands for Erma's head through which matters drain either to separate or to cleanse. The arm and hand connected to the rods, much like those of a mari-onette, stand for the spellbinding stories she weaves. The eyes and lips, scattered over the construct, repeat the idea that Erma might be a bit scatterbrained.

The imagery here is mixed. The traditional and representational modes play against contemporary and abstract modes, such that this construct might be said to border on surrealism. By incorporating for each element a different mode of visualization, I hoped to create conflict in the viewer, to offer, perhaps, the same challenge Erma may represent to readers outside the world she experiences.

The unflattering aspects of the arrangement and imagery, make fun of Erma and risk either of two possible reactions on the part of the viewer: agreement with the message or outrage for Erma.

In this construct I am expressing satire with regard to Erma's humor. Some of the issues she seems to make light of strike me as serious matters, and sometimes, I do not understand. It's true Erma laughs at herself, and even at matters that are likely to be of great importance to her. In fact, writing with humor about worrisome subjects is probably a healthy way to try to cope with them. Yet, I believe that there might be others who are offended by her humor.

Still, when I designed and executed this construct, I simply threw my feelings out to the public, subconsciously expecting the viewer to become involved. I hadn't worked out a balanced perspective and was not ready to deal with this subject. I would have preferred to have more control over the message and viewer's reaction.

Footloose

Dimensions: 4'10" x 3'10" x 1'2"

Media: Plywood, copper plate, aluminum sheet, photo engraving, gouache

Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos had been in the news regularly and for some time. The ousted president of the Phillipines and his wife had used their position to accumulate personal wealth by freely and irresponsibly misappropriating funds from the state's treasure. Their Swiss accounts, real estate acquisitions, and shopping sprees became so well known that some people just made fun of them, whereas others were seriously disturbed. The Marcos' became a popular news item because this fantasy of getting rich quickly inspite of ethical obstacles is widespread, with roots in legend and folklore. I wondered how many people in their heart felt the Marcos' lifestyle to be the ultimate way to live!

To me they appeared as common people who had come upon a grand opportunity to misuse trust, and who, nevertheless, could not resist the temptation of showing off their ill-gotten wealth. They seemed to act as instinctively as animals.

I wanted this construct to reflect the enjoyment of the perpetrators and to elicit smiles from viewers. I wanted the seriousness of the problem to dawn gradually and to refer not only to the Marcos' but to ourselves, our society, and our values.

To achieve this I came up with these objects: a shoebox, a lady's shoe, two Swiss bank notes and two monkeys. With the monkeys, I wanted to represent the carefree animal side of the Marcos', but also to indicate the ancestry of monkeys to humans. The shoe and its box represent the shoe collection Imelda was constantly updating. The Swiss bank notes are reminders of the Marcos' appetite for money and their habit of depositing it in unusual places.

I arranged these objects so that the monkeys would be carrying the shoebox on their back. The shoe would be resting on top of the box with its strap hooked to one monkey's tail. One Swiss bank note dangles out from under the shoe box lid; the other is carried in the mouth of the larger monkey. With this "action" I wanted to suggest the idea that in looting and, as easily, governing under the eyes of an accepting public, the Marcos' had created a world of grotesque illusion where monkeys might just as well eat money and parade with their glamorous booty on their backs. The arrangement itself, being pyramidal, is actually very traditional, and suggests the formal status of the Marcos' as state rulers.

Like the objects and arrangements, the materials and the degree of refinement also were intended to bring out contrasts. For the monkeys, I chose the cheapest plywood and cut out the shapes with a jigsaw. I did not correct any cut that might be

somewhat off, nor did I sand or hide any splintering of the wood. The structure that clamps them at a seven inch distance is plywood cut in "jewel-like" geometric shapes and sparsely painted with black gouache. The shoebox and shoe are of aluminum, which I finished to a high polish so as to achieve a precious appearance. The positive and negative images of the Swiss banknotes are photographically transferred onto copper plate, then enhanced using a blue-purple etching dye. The combinations of cheap and precious, polished and raw, were intended to make for a dynamic focus on the real and illusive character of the Marcos'.

I believe "Footloose" has the qualities I was trying to incorporate. To me, it interweaves reality and illusion in an atmosphere of lightheartedness and surprise. At the same time, it raises serious questions about the wisdom of regarding certain men and institutions as infallible. The imagery creates a satisfyingly unique dream scenario which, all the while, calls attention to an underlying reality. I feel that I was able to exercise a good deal of control over materials and processes so as to bring about a single effect. If I would change anything in this construct, it would probably be the arrangement, which is perhaps too traditional and predictable.

Standard

Dimensions: 9'3" x 4'6" x 2'0"

Media: Steel plate, rod and pipe, raw cowhide, and enamel paint

Having emotional ties with Germany, I took the news about her possible reunification as a joyous surprise. But the joy was temporary. The thought of what the changes might bring, or, worse, bring up again began to make me anxious.

The drive for perfection has brought Germans advantages and admiration in many instances. Yet this same quality becomes dangerous when it is applied to ideas such as Lebensraum, Herrenvolk, and Vaterland. Can one treat all things with the same process and attitude? Can one justify efforts to survive, prosper, and maintain integrity regardless of the cost to other creatures?

This construct is very simple and consists of the parts of a flag, i.e. the flag itself, a flag pole, and a base. Its title, *Standard*, I feel, is also a significant element here.

The word *standard* has two meanings: flag and the expectations--usually the high expectations--we have of something. Values or expectations are, in fact, traditionally associated with the flag. In Nazi Germany, the flag was especially important. Yet, the Germans misused the symbolism of the flag by attaching to it the message that Germany--the nation and its expectations--were to be valued above all else.

Instead of the German flag, I used the skin of a cow. As, here in America, we use skins of animals for upholstering our luxury cars, it is said that there were Nazis who used human skin for lampshades. The skin may remind the viewer of such abuses. In any case, it should remind the viewer of a living thing, though, in itself, the skin is dead. The use of "skins" in either case is a symbol of dominance--the display of power over life, where that life is seen as either subversive or subservient.

The flag's shape is also a symbolic element. Determined by the shape of the animal, it calls to mind the actual removal of the skin from the flesh. I hoped that, by extension, the irregular hide would remind the viewer of the violent acts which are typically responsible for separating a nation from previous political conditions.

I am pleased and even thrilled with this construct. I believe it draws a great deal of strength from its conceptual simplicity....a simplicity that may have potential for making contact with our collective archetypal awareness. I feel that it alludes to the significance of life, death, and power as they pertain to groups as well as to individuals. Other supporting elements are those of surprise, purity of materials, and extreme lack of structural complexity. The minimal effort that it took to produce *Standard*, is perhaps a testimony of its basic "truth"; the impression, to me, is as a thoughtless sigh or an anxious recollection of death in life.

Hide and Seek

Dimensions: 6'3" x 8'2" x 1'6"

Media: Particle wood, basswood, aluminum plate and rod, vinyl sheet, photo lithography

More and more articles in the news media have appeared about homosexuals and their fight for equal rights. Individuals have come out to identify with and promote the gay rights movement and yet others still hide for fear of prosecution.

This led me to think about a number of related issues: the frustrations of gay men and women who reach out for rights and acceptance, the relationships we are taught to have and not to have, the survival and dignity of minorities in society.

It's hard to guess what people think on these issues. It was a challenge for me to try to elicit some opinions by incorporating these issues in *Hide and Seek*.

To make the imagery challenging, I chose as objects two gay men, one straight and one loose, i.e., one in the closet and the other, in the open.

The straight man has a lower body in the shape of pants, or rather, a rectangular box with a wedge-shaped opening splitting the form to three fourths of the height. The chest, of sheet aluminum, is screwed onto the pants. The head, a rectangular aluminum sheet with photographed images of eyes and mouth, also stands on top of the pants just behind the chest.

The overall effect is that of a rather heavy body with a light chest. Through the oval hole of the chest, one can see the eyes and mouth placed upside down as if the head were lowered and looking inside the person.

I constructed the pants with particle board and reinforced all edges with a basswood trim set flush so as to achieve a solid, reasonably well crafted base. The aluminum components are, by contrast, thin and light. As to shape, with the exception of the oval in the chest, most elements are square and angular.

The "loose" figure features a flowing outline of a torso made of bent aluminum rods, a magenta-color vinyl sheet with cut out eyes and mouth for the head, and a shadow of the torso outline against the wall.

This figure is entirely supported by the wall, and is raised off the ground, with the torso outline projecting about three inches, so as to provide a shadow. As in the first man, the head is inverted downward into the chest.

The overall effect is light, playful, yet artificial. The artificiality, heightened by materials and the mask-like head, suggests make-believe and the masking of reality.

The two men are placed next to each other against the wall. The first stands on the floor; as people say, he is on solid ground. The second seems to float in the air but really hangs from the wall.

The first or square man's standing on solid ground conforms to the rigidity of society's laws and only his head gives away his tendencies. The head panel leans against the wall on which the second man is hanging. The second or loose man's dangling in mid-air is quickly recognized as an illusion, for the wall on which he is attached sets the limits.

I believe that this construct only partially accomplishes what I had set out to do. Though this is one of the more sparkling and lively, I feel it addresses only the issues pertaining to gays, without addressing the other more basic questions such as whether conformity to the predominant ethic is necessary to the achievement of equality.

The Dominion of Art

Dimensions: 10'6" x 9'3" x 2'8"

Media: Maple, basswood, and oak plywood, molding plaster, aluminum, and steel primer

Traditionally, artists see themselves as creators and critics as judges. Interestingly, both roles are attributes of divinity. And both roles are actually attributes of both the artist and the critic in their mutually dependent and dynamic relationship. While the influence of the critic can be enhancing or devastating to the artist, this influence is important. Likewise, the existence of the artist is necessary to the growth of the critic. The struggle and competition between these two "gods" are a source for defining art and an enticement to new creativity.

In this construct, I chose to try to communicate the position of art and the artist in their relationship to the critic.

The work consists of four parts: there is a large pedestal tipped over on its side, a relatively small stylized wood figure of a critic standing next to it, a rough plaster sculpture lying two feet away on the floor; pierced into the sculpture is an aluminum javelin.

The critic standing next to the monumental pedestal is there as a victor. He has toppled the established work with his weapon--a javelin--and the *sculpture* now lies on the ground, pierced by the javelin and disconnected from its base.

I had carved the wooden figure of the critic in a highly stylized manner to ridicule qualities such as sharp, bloated, strong, stiff, artificial. The size of the critic is relatively small in proportion to the rest of the construct. He is small because, at times, the artist is bewildered by the fact that a single, apparently insignificant being, with just a few words, can bring to ruin a monumental creation.

The pedestal turned on its side is there symbolically for its lost purpose. This dislodged foundation is meant to be interpreted as a traditional rationale for the artwork's merit. As it lies on its side one can see that the pedestal has been heavily braced so as to give the structure strength and solidness. This can be found also in artwork that has fallen out of favor for some time but is rediscovered later because of its solid structure or rationale.

I made the plaster *sculpture* that lies defeated on the floor stand for the creativity of the artist. I wanted the *sculpture* to be somewhat objectionable so that viewers might tend to reject it. The *sculpture* is actually molded plaster, and is supposed to be the artist's representation of the inside of a box. It has volume, variety of shapes, concave and convex planes, as well as a variety of surface textures. Yet, as a whole, it is blank and quite simple.

The aluminum javelin pierced into the sculpture is meant to be a statement of rejection.

The size of the javelin is large in proportion to the critic so as to equal the artist's dejection when his work has been debased. The javelin is poised at an angle in such a way that the eye travels off into empty space--a space where the question remains as to what is good art.

This work is high on complexity and low on focus. It is difficult to perceive the relationship of each object to the others. I am not so certain here that the objects I chose communicate the meaning I intended. Though I am proud of how well I was able to execute the parts--in themselves unique and reasonably well crafted, as a whole, the work is clumsy, and the obstructed message creates confusion.

SUMMARY

My main goal for the thesis work was that it would involve viewers in thinking about issues that are present in our lives; other criteria included a raw or unfinished appearance, timely subject matter, uniqueness and surprise, a balance between intellectual and emotional content; a clear and basic message.

I felt that I could involve viewers in thinking about the issues I presented through the inclusion of polarities, contrasts, paradoxes. I also felt that the raw or unfinished appearance would encourage involvement. The elements of surprise and uniqueness would constitute, along with the contrasts, provocations that would prompt involvement.

The balance between the intellectual and emotional content has to do with the neutrality that I had spoken of in my thesis show statement. I sincerely believe that too much drama or emotion in a piece of communication ultimately robs the viewer of the opportunity for meaningful intellectual or even emotional involvement. I also feel that not enough emotional content in the message can alienate or block involvement.

The timeliness of the subject was important as an aid to recognition and identification; it was the element that in itself would lend clarity to the stimulus. The topic in the news, in other words, would be the common socio/cultural bond between myself and the viewer or between the construct and the viewer. Another sort of bond, if I could achieve it, would have been a human bond, where the issues would be so basic as to communicate to almost anyone.

Most of the works did adhere to my major goals, that is, to involve the viewer by presenting contrasts and to maintain an unfinished appearance. Other criteria weren't so consistently met. In *The Gentle Patter of Erma Bombeck*, I believe I lost the balance between intellectual and emotional content. In *The Dominion of Art*, the stimulus was not really clear, the subject was not especially timely, and the content was probably too abstract or intellectual. In *Hide and Seek*, the contrasts between rigid and lively were probably not sufficiently related to any specific topic in the news or to the more basic human issues I was trying to project.

In *JapAm*, on the other hand, in *Footloose*, and in *Standard*, the subjects were timely and the intended issues came across in a powerful balance between intellectual and emotional. In these constructs, I believe, the issues, i.e.: national independence,

uncontrolled greed, and the abuse of power--were also basic enough to communicate in a similar way to most people. I felt these were my most successful pieces, where nearly all my goals and criteria were met.

Besides the question of whether I achieved my goals in the pieces I created, there are the lessons that I have been able to draw from the process of working towards them. On a personal level, I feel that, with these constructs, I have discovered a language that is unique to me and yet common enough for communicating with others. I have had the opportunity to review my own attitudes towards a fairly broad range of social issues.

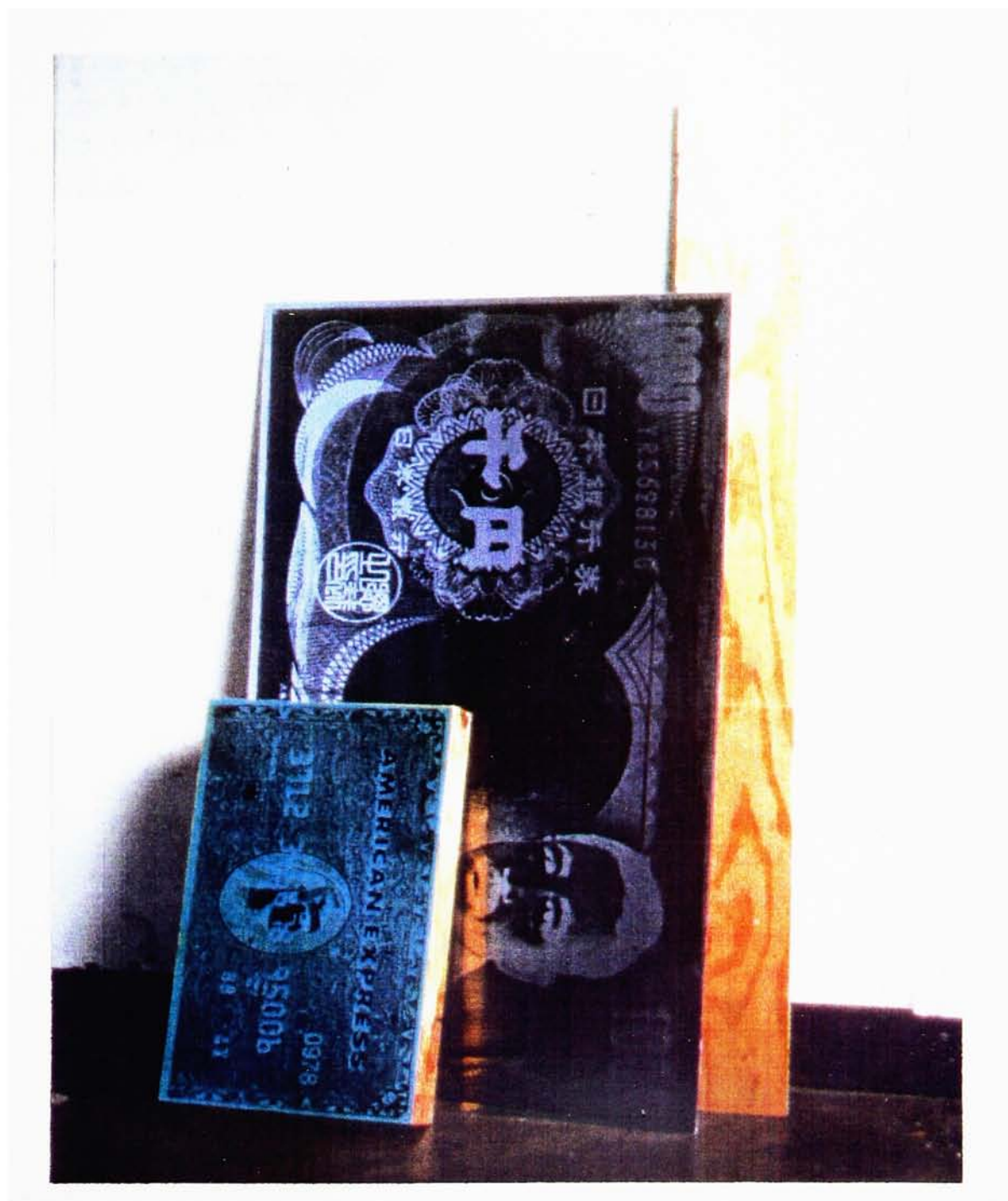
Aesthetically speaking, I have experienced more directly the value of the kind of unity that exists in my best piece. I have been able to explore the idea that with variety in materials and processes I may be able to communicate more satisfactorily than with a single medium. I have come to a fuller appreciation of the interrelationships between media, craftsmanship, and message.

On a technical and professional level, I have become adept in applying a variety of processes and materials and have gained competence and satisfaction in solving problems that have arisen from self-initiated goals and challenges.

While I am quite content with these achievements, as far as they go, I look forward to applying in future projects the discoveries and proficiencies gained from my thesis project.

APPENDIX: Photographs of Constructs

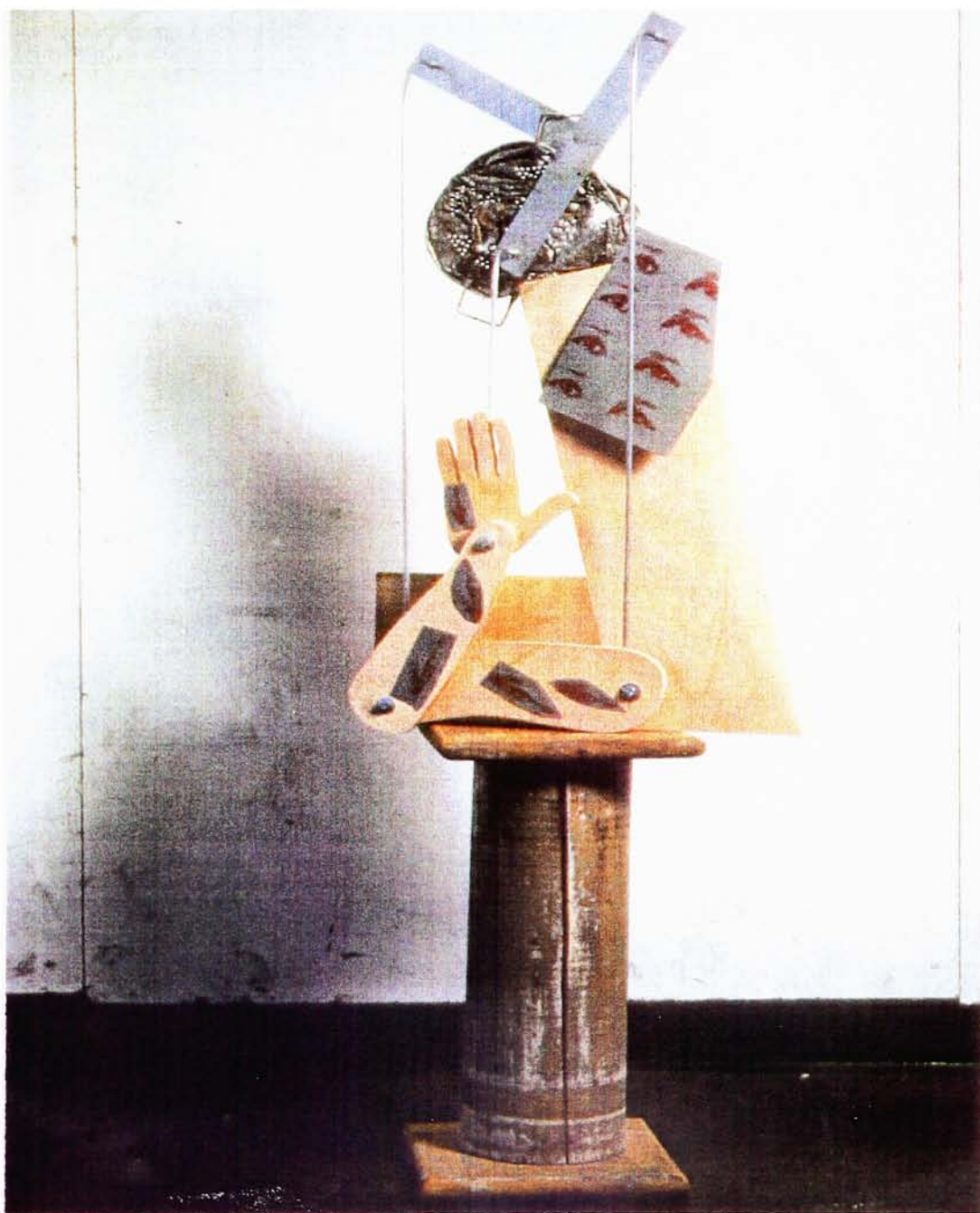
Color Laser Copies



JapAm

3'4" x 4'0" x 1'8"

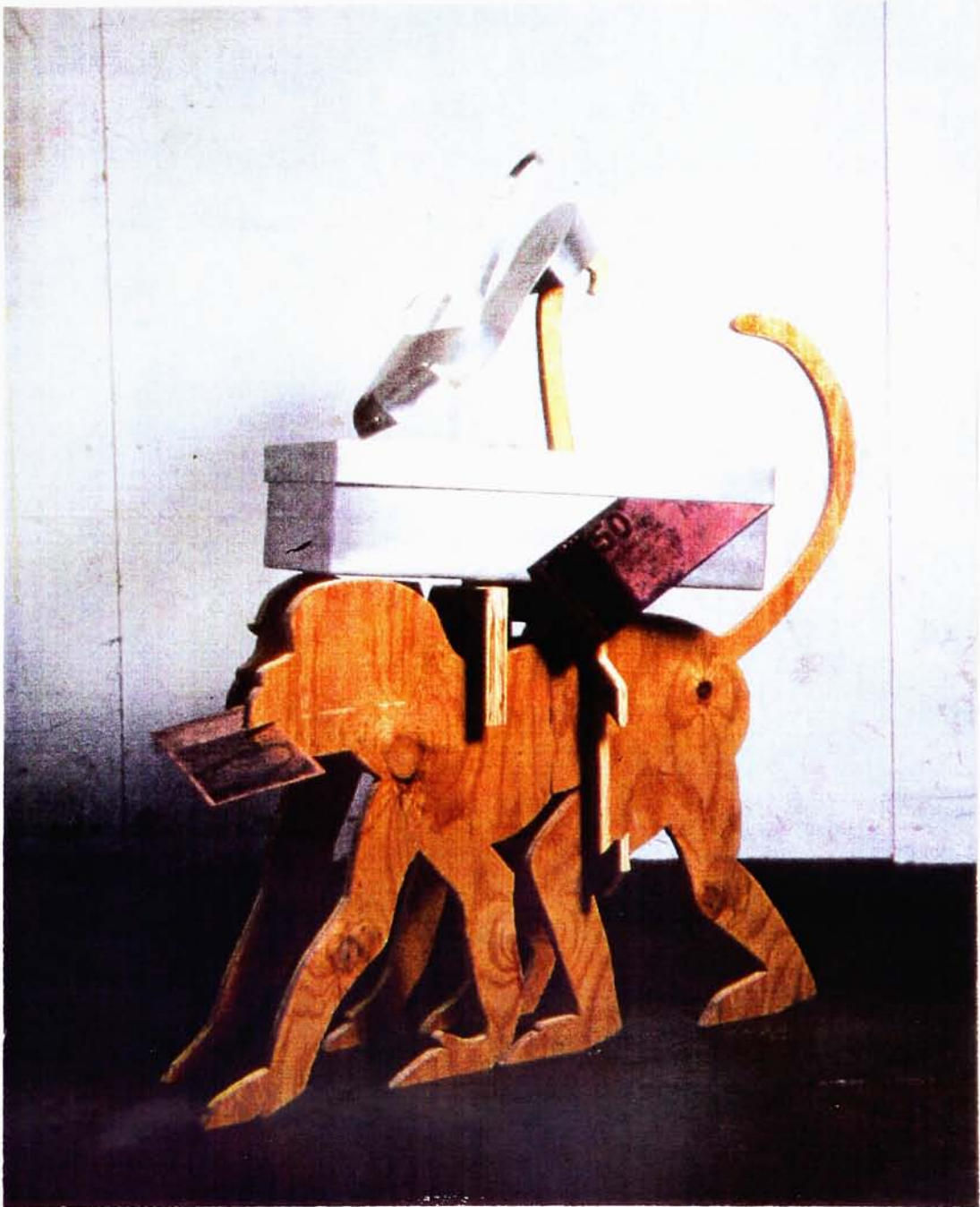
Plywood, sheet aluminum, photo silkscreen, spray enamel



The Gentle Patter of Erma Bombeck

2'4" x 5'6" x 1'2"

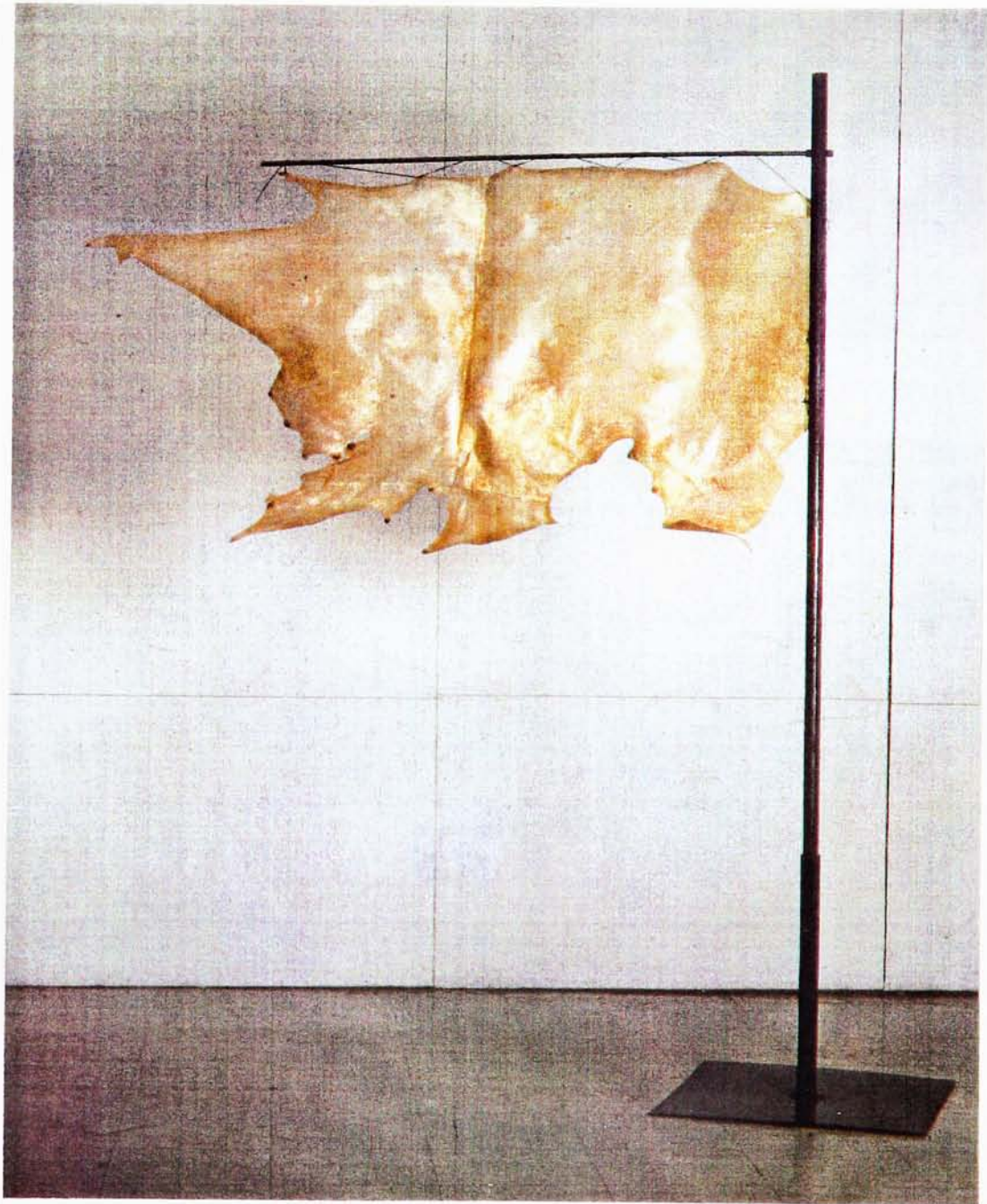
Oak and basswood, aluminum rod and plate, photo lithography



Footloose

4'10" x 3'10" x 1'2"

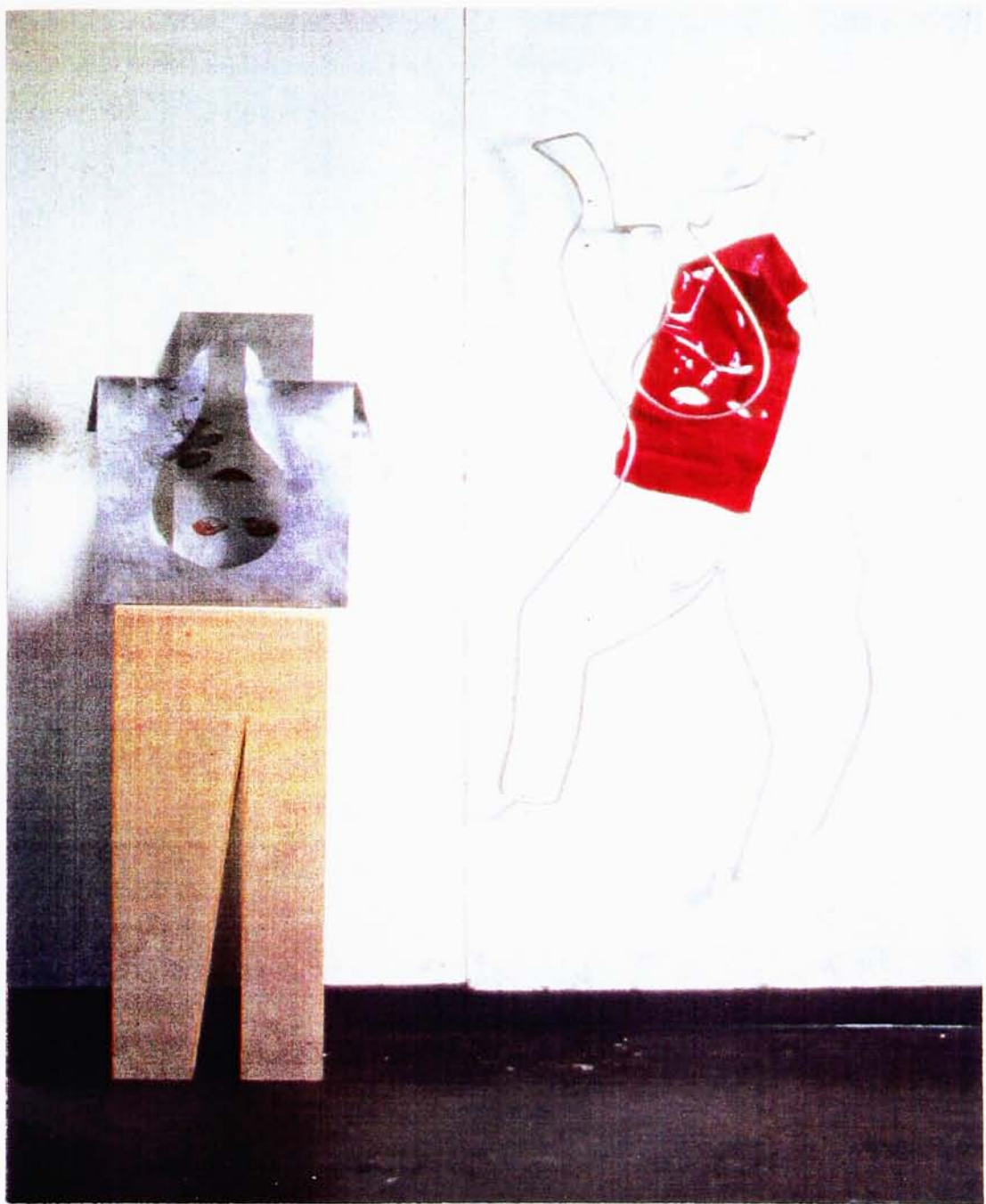
Plywood, copper plate, aluminum sheet, photo engraving, gouache



Standard

9'3" x 4'6" x 2'0"

Steel plate, rod and pipe, raw cowhide, and enamel paint



Hide and Seek

6'3" x 8'2" x 1'6"

Particle wood, basswood, aluminum plate and rod, vinyl sheet, photolithography



The Dominion of Art

10'6" x 9'3" x 2'8"

Maple, basswood, and oak plywood, molding plaster, aluminum, and steel primer

APPENDIX: Photographs of Constructs

Color Slides

JAPAM
© HEINRICH KLUNKON, 1990



3'4" x 4'0" x 1'3"
PLYWOOD, SHEET ALUMINUM,
PHOTO SILK SCREEN, SPRAY ENAMEL

THE GENTLE PATTEN OF ERMA BOMBECK
© HEINRICH KLUNKON, 1990



2'4" x 5'6" x 1'2"
OAK AND BASSWOOD, ALUMINUM ROD
AND PLATE, PHOTO LITHOGRAPHY

FOOTLOOSE
© HEINRICH KLUNKON, 1990



4'10" x 3'10" x 1'2"
PLYWOOD, COPPER PLATE, ALUMINUM SHEET,
PHOTO ENGRAVING, GOUACHE

STANDARD

© HEINRICH
KLUNKON,
1990



4'3" x 4'6" x 2'0"
STEEL PLATE, ROD AND PIPE, RAW COWHIDE,
AND ENAMEL PAINT

HIDE AND SEEK
© HEINRICH KLUNKON, 1990



6'3" x 8'2" x 1'2"
PARTICLE WOOD, BASSWOOD, ALUMINUM PLATE
AND ROD, VINYL SHEET, PHOTO LITHOGRAPHY

THE DOMINION OF ART
© HEINRICH KLUNKON, 1990



MAPLE, BASSWOOD, AND OAK PLYWOOD,
MOLDING PLASTER, ALUMINUM,
AND STEEL PRIMER