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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

The Adventures of Rose and Jody, Chapter 17:

Jody Does Her Thesis

by

Jody Williams

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Date: May 5, 1983

Part One: Who are Rose and Jody?

Rose and Jody came from the Midwest. One day, they decided to go to graduate school. So they went to R.I.T. Upon arrival, they were shocked to find that graduate school was very different from undergraduate school, and it was not fun. The two keen young graduate students suffered. Their confidence was shot down; their work regressed. They had no time, no money, and the red tape at R.I.T. bound them up so tightly they could barely breathe.

But things got better. Once they realized what they were up against, they could deal with it. Establishing themselves as spies, Trudy Smith and Lorraine Jones, the two scavengers gathered together as much information as they possibly could, stooping as low as necessary. Alias Smith and Jones earned themselves quite a reputation.

"The Adventures of Rose and Jody" were compiled by Jody in her journals, along with a lot of other babbling about life. Their adventures took them to Buffalo, Canada, The Big Apple, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, and Michigan. They attended many social functions. They went to Wegmans. Whenever possible, they publicly disgraced themselves.

I have been keeping a journal, irregularly, since 1975, when I first went off to college. My interest in the journal, and the amount of writing, has increased, particularly since I came to graduate school. I have become almost dependent on my journal to keep me in some state of mental balance, (although there are times when I question whether this is possible.) When I began my journal, I was a very insecure undergraduate, always confused as to which end was up. I needed somebody to talk to without worrying about what I was saying. Anaïs Nin, a French novelist who is perhaps more famous for her volumes of diaries than her novels, writes that her journal...

is the only steadfast friend I have, the one who makes life bearable, because my happiness with human beings is so precarious, my confiding moods rare, and the least sign of non-interest enough to silence me. In the journals, I am at ease.

(1)

Although I don't feel that my journal is the only one who makes life bearable, (I do depend on other people to do that, too), my journal has been a steadfast friend. In a new situation or environment, my writing increases. My journal has accompanied me around the country, and to Europe, and I can always count on it to hear what I have to say.

I generally try not to stop and think as I am writing, which is easy to do, as a journal makes no demands on coherence or style. It did take a while to get used to the idea that nobody would read what I wrote. When I was in third grade my brothers got hold of my diary, and I still haven't heard the end of it. I have gradually become more relaxed about writing.

Virginia Woolf, on re-reading her own diary, observes the "haphazard gallop" of her ideas, and remarks,

the advantage of the method is that it sweeps up accidentally several stray matters which I should exclude if I hesitated, but which are the diamonds on the dustheap.(2)

I doubt whether anyone would care to plod their way through my own journal looking for diamonds, but it is exciting for me to read through and hit upon an idea which seemed unimportant at one time, but which sheds new light on a current situation.

The concept of growth has been a major theme in my journal. As a child, I was always under the impression that one day I would be "grown up," emotionally as well as physically. I am now 26, and I do not yet think of myself as an adult. After I got over the shock of understanding less at 21 than I did at age 10, I realized it was a great advantage not to consider myself as someone who had more answers than questions. I recorded one of my conversations about this after an evening of Bloody Marys with my Minneapolis counterpart, Nanette, in November, 1978. We talked about growing up and never thinking we've gotten there;

always retaining a part of ourselves that wants to be better--a part that remains open to positive, desirable qualities in other people.

My journal not only records growth, and my ideas about growth, but it is a means for growing. If I can see why I feel a certain way, by writing, I can at least begin to challenge my actions. I have often noted how easily things go up and down; my moods, things happening to me. Little things can have a lot of impact: Juanita, my car, not starting, a friendly professor's greeting, lost keys, Elvis Costello, reactions to my work, no money. More control over my moods is always desired. Virginia Woolf experienced similar ups and downs, particularly with her writing;

the worst of writing is that one depends so much upon praise. One should aim, seriously, at disregarding ups and downs....The central fact remains stable, which is the fact of my own pleasure in the art. And these mists of the spirit have other causes, I expect; though they are deeply hidden. There is some ebb and flow of the tide of life which accounts for it; though what produces either ebb or flow, I'm not sure.

(3)

Personal highs and lows do not necessarily coincide with artistic ones; both are recorded in my journal. My method of working allows for, and demands, a high level of productivity in order to find resolution. But I often learn as much in a reflective period, looking back on a series of prints completed at breakneck speed, than while I was doing them. During some periods the ideas connect and need to be turned out as quickly as I can work. Other times I feel I am doing more sitting than anything. Writing in my journal does not lead me to artistic resolutions, but my journal does find words for my reactions to my work, to what it may be lacking. My journal has helped develop a critical sense, and it has helped me to discover connections between my life and my work.

My journal also serves as an outlet for creative writing, as with "The Adventures of Rose and Jody," which followed the two keen young graduate students through the underground. Most of the adventures are not worth repeating here; they would require too much background information and gossip. Life at that point in time needed to be glamorized, dramatized, escaped, and for about a year, the adventures made that possible. Some of the key figures in the stories have gone on to lead relatively normal lives, but most of us are living in a confused world where reality is a useless word.

My own confusion - expressed in my journal - has led me to read the writings of other artists. R.I.T.'s library offered diaries and other notebooks of famous male painters I knew about from art history. Unfortunately, I had a lot of trouble

relating to them. Also, I could name very few women artists, so I gave myself a quick education by reading recent survey books on women artists, and used bibliographies to track down published journals. I did not limit myself to visual artists; I read several writers' diaries who expressed ideas about their work which were close to my own.

So my journal began recording influences on my thinking, from others' writings, as well as from my environment. It became a means for capturing observations and ideas from everywhere, so that I could sift through everything and try to make some sense out of the whole mess. There must be some connection between the many personages I embody. I doubt I will ever understand what it all means, but if I can get any closer that I am now, I will continue on my merry little way, writing in my journal. Emily Carr, a Canadian painter, expressed a similar desire;

I wish I could express what I feel..., but so far
its only a feel and I have not put it into words.
I'll try later, because trying to find
equivalents for things in words helps me find
equivalents in painting. That is the reason for
this journal. Everything is all connected up.
Different paths lead to the great it. (4)

Part Two: What is an Artist?

Rose and Jody had never really met before graduate school. Life was one big question mark from day one, for both of them, and it was this question mark that spiritually bonded the two. "What is life?," "What is art?," "How are we to find meaning in a world of chaos and confusion?" The answer was R.I.T., of course. A common meeting ground where they could grow and learn together. Or so they thought, for they found that R.I.T. supplied no answers, only more questions.

An outlet for their frustrations did develop, however. They could make art. And if they directed their questions into their work, answers would appear. These questions and answers could not be written in the English language, however, so the two keen young graduate students had to develop intricate codes. It was only the beginning, mind you, the beginning of a long journey to artistic maturity. Finally things began to tie together.

My original hope for my written thesis was to end up with a somewhat sophisticated, logical answer as to why I do what I do, or, "Why am I an artist?" To answer that, I would have to define "artist," and there are probably more opinions on what an artist is than there are artists. This thesis will obviously be no one answer to "Why am I an artist?;" the harder I try, the more confused I become. I'm only going to express some of the wierd thoughts floating around in my head, or those thoughts which can be put into words, anyway.

Part of the need I feel to express these thoughts comes out of having to justify myself to non-artists. Artists will always be questioned as to why they do what they do; they are thought of as stupid for choosing a profession with no guaranteed annual income, they are thought of as selfish for creating things for their own amusement, and they are thought of as many other things as well. Man's need for artistic expression is so basic, with its roots in prehistoric times, that it is impossible for me to imagine life without art. Yet there are people who consider artists as expendable. With the current recession, or whatever it is, the government, individuals, and even art schools are turning their backs on artists they previously encouraged. I am not asking to be supported, financially or emotionally, by society, just to be accepted as a legitimate human being. And I must be understood to be accepted.

Not that I could ever bring anyone else to my own understanding, but I want to be able to hold my own against being stereotyped and accused of being an artist. I find I have different levels of explaining myself, depending on the audience. Aging relatives who don't understand why it is necessary to go to school to learn art, get more sympathetic, thought-out answers than drunk customers at The Brass Monkey Restaurant, which sponsored me during graduate school. One of the hardest things to explain is that artists DO work and learn. Explanations do not have to be in words, either; my attitude towards what I do, and who I am, can say a lot, and my attitude towards myself depends on my understanding of myself.

If I have gained anything in my thesis, the whole thing - the work, the reading, my journal, and the "written" - it is a much better understanding of what I do, what I have done, and what I want to do. This will not all be evident here, but during the past year I have forced myself to think things through and put them into words more than I have ever done in the past. The ideas are still all in fragments, but more and more I have come to feel that "everything is all connected up," that the fragments in my mind and my work mean something, that everything has some importance, and must be considered. There must be some meaning to all of this, and I want to know what it is.

That last sentence is one I have said or thought many, many

times. Ever since I was young, I had a hard time making sense out of what went on around me. Life is perplexing, especially for a child. I looked at the sky and was told that it went on and on and on. What significance could I have if that was true? Why was I alive? Was there a universal meaning to the whole of life? If only my mother had read me Anaías Nin instead of Curious George.

What makes people despair is that they try to find a universal meaning to the whole of life, and then end up by saying it is absurd, illogical, empty of meaning. There is not one big cosmic meaning for all, there is only the meaning we each give to our life, an individual meaning. (5)

Anaías' words were something I had sensed for a long time, but hadn't heard expressed so simply. It is only through my personal experiences that life in general is something I can comprehend or tackle; I can only understand it in terms of myself, and I am totally responsible for its value. Making art has become the physical means for me to attach some sort of meaning to my life.

It took me a while to make the decision to invest a good deal of my time in art, partly because my ideas about it had been influenced by stereotypical ideas about artists, but more so because I had to immerse myself in it before I knew what it was. I had always enjoyed and done well in art classes, but I did not begin to think of myself as an artist until college. I don't think I had any particular talent, or that inborn talent even exists; my earliest drawings in school were no better than anyone else's. But I took drawing seriously, and as it gradually became less frustrating, I began to take liberties in trying to go further than merely rendering what was there. And I realized that I could do anything with art once I got past technique. Like anything else, it was a discipline, but it was more rewarding for me than anything else. Art was what I enjoyed most, and it provided the most challenge.

In a way I consider being an artist as an escape. Escape from what, I'm not sure - maybe from a meaningless, routine existence, or from the world's problems. My professional ambitions are concerned with developing a method of visual expression, not with making money. In my art I create worlds which most people cannot enter; when I am working I am far removed from day-to-day frustrations. Anaías Nin stated that "art was the prescription for sanity, and relief from the terrors and pains of human life." (6) Many of the other artists I read, and many of my friends, have expressed similar ideas. Being able to escape has given me what I consider a healthy perspective on life. I have always been most happy with a somewhat detached attitude, trying not to get hyperactive over things which frustrate me, things I can't control.

This outlook, as well as being helped by my work, is reflected in it. My concern in most of what I do is to create an atmosphere, a space, which cannot be described with words. I am not merely expressing a vision, I am developing one, in my work as well as my personality. I often accuse myself in my journal for having stupid, unproductive thoughts, (anger, jealousy, etc.) I have come to realize how much control I can have over my state of mind, if I try. My work reflects a fanciful attitude towards life, one which will make my stay on this planet as pleasant as possible, and one where I begin to understand and put into perspective the chaos.

It always seems that the more I see, the more there is not to understand. Some of the artists I read addressed this. Eva Hesse: "The artist is seeking the unknown, seeking to give it order, but he or she must find the chaotic before it can be given order." (7) And Auguste Macke: "Man is driven by something to find words for conceptions, clearness in obscurity, consciousness in the unconscious." (8)

Not that my art, or my journal, will ever provide complete understanding, but if I get any closer than I am now, that will be fine. And I can't see any endpoint, any one answer, so it must be the process, or the search, which is important. Dore Ashton:

In the arts somehow, there is never a surcease of doubt, and never a place to arrive. I sensed as a young woman - and I still believe - that the quest itself is the most important experience of all, and that there are no answers. (9)

I do not think of any of my pieces as finished. Each piece comes out of all that has preceded it, and is only one step in a long procession of developing ideas. The steps leading up to the resolution of each piece - the process - are as important as the piece. The entire process gets at a clearer, more defined statement of my artistic concerns. I am, in my work, on a journey, to artistic maturity perhaps, or somewhere.

The artist I found who hit closest to what I wanted to do with my thesis was Virginia Woolf. I read other journals to hear what artists had to say about their work, to see how their work tied in with their lives and personalities. I can see this easily with my friends - how what they do ties in with what they are; their work makes more "sense" as I get to know them. But I don't often engage in deep discussions about life and art with them, partly because my ideas are so vague. With Virginia Woolf I saw many obvious ties between her work and her journals; more obvious than with visual artists because her art was words, as were her journals. It was interesting to run across ideas expressed in her novels that were also found in her journals.

The following is a passage from *To The Lighthouse*, describing the thoughts of Lily Briscoe, a painter:

Beneath the color there was the shape. She could

see it all so clearly, so commandingly, when she looked; it was when she took the brush in her hand that the whole thing changed.' It was in the moment's flight between the picture and her canvas that the demons set on her, who often brought her to the verge of tears, and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child. Such she often felt herself - struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage, to say, "But this is what I see; this is what I see," and to clasp some miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her..." (10)

In her diaries Virginia talks about how...

the determination not to give in, and the sense of an impending shape keep one at it more than anything. I'm a little anxious. How am I to bring off this conception? (11)

These two passages say a lot for me - describe how I have felt myself. Lily Briscoe's thoughts, her struggles, are Virginia's, though expressed in a much more painterly way. They get very close to defining art, without defining anything. They express feelings about an artist's frustrations, about her goals. As an artist I am after something which at times seems very tangible, very close, but I only think I'll get closer and closer to total understanding. I keep learning things, but I will never really know anything about art; it's too precious, too wonderful to be understood.

Virginia talks about a hidden pattern in life; "that we, I mean all human beings - are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are all parts of the work of art." (12) So maybe the basic goal, (and frustration,) of artists is to keep expressing things so as to get a picture of Virginia's "whole world," the work of art we all make up. And nobody will be able to reach an endpoint of total understanding; it is the efforts which are important. One must keep going on; the quest, the journey, is what I am trying to make some sense of. I am going somewhere, I am taking my work with me, my work is taking me there; I don't know where there is, or if there is a there, or a here, or an end. There is no prescribed way to get there, only how to go, just to work, to go after one's vision.

Emily Carr:

How badly I want that nameless thing! First there must be an idea, a feeling, or whatever you call it, the something that interested or inspired you sufficiently to make you desire to explore it....that starting point must pervade the whole. Then you must discover the pervading

direction, the pervading rhythm, the dominant recurring forms, the dominant color, but always the thing must be top in your thoughts. Everything must lead up to it, clothe it, feed it, balance it, tenderly fold it, till it reveals itself in all the beauty of its idea. (13)







Part Three: What is a Do-Dad?

So Rose and Jody were going after something. They weren't really sure what it was, but they had to develop a plan of action. There were certainly enough ideas - do-dads floating around, and horses racing through the air. The images were everywhere. They were real, they were fake; it was only a matter of observing them, making sense out of them, putting them down. Their early attempts were continuations of undergraduate discoveries. They beat on metal, sawed it, filed it, soldered it. But the metal resisted. It had no color, it was cold, hard, inflexible. A substitute had to be found. Something that could be spontaneously crazy. Rose began to play with plastics, Jody with paper.

Finally, they began to answer questions put to them by the Big G. "What are you trying to do with your work?" "Why do you make these things?" Jody found it necessary to re-locate headquarters to the fourth floor in the printmaking department, where paper was more abundant, as well as fruit flies. She had more breathing room, more bulletin board room, more privacy and security. With her feet up on her desk by her pink polka-dotted coffee mug, she took a deep breath, and the do-dads came to life.

My thesis experience was a good one. I was finally happy with my work. It is hard to trace the steps that led up to the "resolution" of my graduate work. Looking back into my journal, I see more a record of frustrations than anything else. I don't think my writing had a direct influence on the work - breakthroughs and discoveries were generally recorded after the fact; highpoints were not usually recorded. But my state of mind was influenced by my writing, and my work influenced by my state of mind. When I was happy with myself and my situation, I was usually doing successful work. Not that I haven't benefited from periods of frustration, and worked well during some of them, but being content with myself and my work generally go hand in hand.

I feel the least frustrated when I am learning something new, and my expectations of myself are relatively low. As an undergraduate I was overwhelmed with the exposure to many different techniques, and I was easily pleased if what I was doing "worked" mechanically. It wasn't until my first sculpture class that I began to use ideas other than technical ones; to learn about aesthetics. I used sculpture - any materials, any combinations, any inventions, - as a means of relating shapes; making things out of shapes, and breaking things down into shapes. I'm still doing this.

The shapes have gone through many changes. I don't even call them shapes anymore; they're "do-dads." My first sculpture had these: , Jean Arp-type shapes. His work influenced me a lot then, and still does. Now, the do-dads can look like wishbones, or boomerangs: , which derived from the basic iron: , which derived from a triangle: , as did this one: . In my earlier work I did many drawings of shapes before I chose one. Now they just come to me, or I keep using the same ones until I get sick of them. And they have gotten much simpler, like this one: , a variation of a square. And now the shapes, or do-dads, are only secondary to their environment.

The ideas about shapes which I started using are ones I am still working with. Shapes seem pretty basic to some people, but they've kept my interest for a long time. I'm not exactly sure why. My mind has always worked in a mechanical way, trying to break things down, and piece them back together, to figure out why they are the way they are, to simplify and categorize them perhaps. Anyway, all of a sudden I was making art in a certain way, looking at things in a certain way, and I'm still doing this. Most artists must do this. The qualities of my earliest work are still the same, too. Other people have blessed me with adjectives: subtle, refined, animated, spacey, airy-fairy, structured. But even if my artistic concerns are close to those I began with, I'm a lot more aware of them now, and I've discarded a lot of extraneous, non-successful elements.

One of the benefits of going to school is watching other

people's development, as well as one's own. Mr. Bill, of the metals department, put into words what I think most graduates could say about their work; that he watched and guided it through a change in emphasis of form to content, from functional to sculptural. Or from the obvious, expected vision to the personally expressed vision. My conscious concern was to do work I wanted to do; work that did not speak of any technique, but which said something irrespective of technique. I did not find any one technique that combined my personal strengths, skills, and interests, so I had to invent my own combined methods.

Coming from a small liberal arts school to R.I.T was quite a switch. There were many pros and cons, and it took a while for me to just ignore the cons. Soon after I arrived, I realized that - for a lot of reasons - the metals department was not my ideal environment. I knew a lot less about metals than I thought I did. By spring of my first year I began working with paper, using metal as a form to emboss, and sometimes as a secondary element; a piece of wire or screening embedded in the paper. After that, I switched my major to printmaking, which had been my minor.

My journal entries of my first year are very painful to read through; questions, questions, questions: "What am I doing here? I want to go to San Diego." I was living by myself that year, too, so I really depended on my journal. My entries from the fall of my second year are much more light-hearted; I liked school again, although I had a lot of catching up to do. I have very little work that I would show anybody from my year in metals. The majority of my work in printmaking has been monoprints, (one of a kind prints.) Looking back I really feel that I was pushing myself just to crank work out to make the progress I felt I needed to. I couldn't see spending time laboring over making multiples when I had so much to catch up on.

Monoprints also suit my methods of working. I use small, separate printing plates - little shapes - instead of one large rectangular one, so each plate is embossed into the paper. It's easy to work in series this way, using the same little plates in different arrangements and combinations, with different colors. It is difficult to get the same print twice since I do a lot of the decision making at the press, once I see how things are printing, color-wise and placement-wise.

The do-dads are all floating around in space; movement is very important. Each shape implies a movement of its own with its outline and position. And the way the do-dads are grouped implies an overall movement. Space itself is another theme, or concern. My early prints implied one level of space; now the do-dads exist in an infinite, yet ambiguously flat space. The space is defined or created by patterns, textures, colors - I guess those also define the qualities and atmospheres of the

print. Both space and movement were easier for me to express in printmaking. I like to make "pictures," or images; things which represent something else. I had a harder time making objects that said something about space or movement.

I don't think I realized this at the time; my thesis writing has helped to put things into perspective. When I switched my major I didn't think: "printmaking suits my way of thinking more than metals," or "my basic concern is to relate shapes in space." I was just having fun inventing ways of printing off different surfaces, photoetching fabric and screen onto metal, and experimenting with colors. I was still confused my second year, but the confusion was much more productive. I was less paranoid about my confusion too, because nobody in printmaking expected me NOT to be confused. The working atmosphere was a lot healthier for me.

At the end of my first quarter in printmaking I had a wide variety of prints. It was pointed out to me that there were a lot of directions I had started, but I should narrow down what I wanted to follow through on. Most of my prints from that quarter, especially those where I was learning or re-learning specific techniques, were timid, conservative, and strongly related to my undergraduate work. I did do one series of mini-monoprints which directly followed the work I had done in metals with paper, and which directly led into what I am doing now.

My second quarter in printmaking was also very productive. I did a series of about 20 monoprints, much larger than the fall series. The increased size really opened up the space, and more variables and experiments could be introduced. The prints were all done on a single run through the etching press, again with many of the decisions made right then. I tried printing off different surfaces for backgrounds and do-dads: fiberglass and metal screening, nylon mesh, expanded steel, brass, zinc, and copper. I just rolled colored inks onto the different surfaces, laid them down, and sent them through the press.

I also began using chine-collé, a collage-type process using paper. Cutting tiny shapes out of paper is easier than out of metal. Generally, I would use a large sheet of paper, brush on the collé adhesive, (I used methyl cellulose,) and then let it dry before cutting out do-dads. The dampness of the printing paper would re-wet the adhesive, and the collé pieces became almost part of the paper, lying under the ink layer.

These basic techniques are ones I am still using and perfecting; by spring of my first year in printmaking, I was able to exercise a fair amount of control over my results. I will probably always be somewhat surprised when I lift a piece of paper off the press - maybe all printmakers are. A good test of control is consistency. And I have found it is possible, though not enjoyable, to consistently edition the monoprints. The effort required for me to get five copies of the same print,

when I could get five variations in a series, does not seem worthwhile. When large editions are required, I can use lithography to get a consistent background or texture, rather than printing directly off screening or fabric, which may not hold up for multiples. The lithograph background can then be printed a second time with etching plates to get embossed do-dads.

The last new technique I learned at R.I.T. was papermaking, and this was what really pulled everything together in a fun and exciting way. Handmade paper suited my prints; there is much more depth and texture in a piece of handmade paper than a piece of commercial paper, and it gives a much more physical embossment. I also can control the color of the paper, and do-dads of fabric, mesh, screen, ribbon, or whatever can be added to the pulp.

The actual technique of making a piece of paper is simple enough to learn in a few hours, so it lends itself easily to experimentation. I played with throwing things in the pulp, laminating, and stenciling sheets together. After I had a stack of experimental flat sheets, I decided to go three-dimensional. I knew nothing about intricate latex molds, which most papermakers use for casting, so I just constructed my own forms out of whatever was handy. Metal screening, foamcore, and discarded lithographic plates were all easy to work with, and inexpensive, and I could cast directly off those materials. My metalworking background came in handy here. Simple joining systems were used - tabs, lacing with thin wire, staples, and tape.

I initially worked off flat backgrounds (which could have a relief pattern,) and arranged the three dimensional do-dad forms on top of this, so I ended up with a flat surface as a foreground in the finished piece - the bottom layer of the mold - with the do-dads penetrating this surface, going back into the wall if the piece was hung. The flat bottom layer related to a sheet of paper, a print, and it was easy to work off a flat surface. Later pieces involved more complex molds, so do-dads would come out towards the viewer, or go off at angles. Just prior to the casting, once the mold was in place, I would spray the mold with several coats of clear Krylon enamel. This prevented the paper from sticking to the mold, assured me of a clean surface, and also prevented rust problems with metal molds.

While the Krylon dried, I would prepare the paper pulp. I have primarily used recycled paper for pulp. Old prints and scraps of printing paper (natural cotton fibers,) are thrown into a blender along with some water. For casting, I would make large, thick, wet sheets of paper, and place them onto the mold in a sort of patchwork fashion, until the mold was completely covered. Leftover pulp was used as a sort of glue where the patches of paper overlapped. Sharp corners, high reliefs, and

edges were reinforced with several layers for strength. Once the mold was covered, I would press out the excess water, using cheesecloth, making sure the pulp was pressed firmly onto the mold. The casting was then left to air dry, anywhere between one and four days, depending on the thickness of the paper, and the humidity.

Taking a casting off a mold is even more exciting than taking a print off the press. My molds are constructed out of many different materials, with different colors and qualities; the mold is a negative of the final piece; the paper picks up every little detail. So the cast piece looks entirely different than the mold; it has a much more consistent, even quality. The strength of the cast pieces is also surprising. Most of them are less than 1/4 of an inch thick, and they have withstood being dropped on the floor, and falling off walls.

I am now done with my thesis - it seems that the work I did just in the last few weeks of school pulled together everything I had been trying to say for two years. There are still things I haven't figured out; I have always been frustrated with a two-verses three-dimensional dilemma, and I am often questioned as to my preference. I see the majority of my work trying to establish a two-and-a-half dimension. My prints, on thick handmade paper, with layers of ink and colléd paper, deep embossing, and an emphasis on space, cannot be considered "flat," when compared to a slick lithograph. And my cast pieces are not quite sculpture, as they are strongly related to the prints. I don't see myself working strictly two- or three-dimensionally in the near future; perhaps I'll always be working with this conflict; and perhaps it will lead me to create more unusual work. So maybe the conflict is good. It's a challenge, anyway, something to keep me going.

There are still many things I am unable to express. In graduate school I learned more about what it is to be an artist than I'll ever need to learn again. Some instinct - some guess - something inside - told me that I was what I was - or what I wanted to be, but it took over two very frustrating, very rewarding years to find out what I had committed myself to. I learned how to develop my own vocabulary for artistic expression, how to express that vocabulary, how to express myself and my ideas.

Is It Over Yet?

Graduation has come and gone. Rose is in Texas, aiding the Pink Flamingo, while Jody keeps watch over the Blue Heron in Minneapolis. The others are scattered about the country, or soon will be, with the notable exception of A.A. '80-whatever. Life in the real world is certainly different, and it didn't take anybody any time at all to figure that one out. The biggest challenge: how to be able to keep making art? They are hooked, and they have to continue, since they never really finished, but it certainly isn't easy. Still, the real world does have some benefits. Money is slightly more accessible, socializing more possible. And they have come to a point in their work where they can continue without the supervision of anybody, once they learn self-discipline. The memory of R.I.T. lingers, and it becomes more and more a fantasy world as time goes by.

Footnotes

1. Stuhlmann, Gunther, ed., The Diary of Anaias Nin, p. 224.
2. Woolf, Leonard, ed., A Writers' Diary, p. 7.
3. IBID, p. 14.
4. Clarke, Irwin, ed., The Journals of Emily Carr, p. 22.
5. Stuhlmann, Gunther, ed., p. vii.
6. IBID, p. 108.
7. Nemser, Cindy, Art Talk, p. 210.
8. Kandinsky, Wassily, ed., The Blaue Reiter Almanac, p. 85.
9. Shapiro, Miriam, Anonymous was a Woman, p. 60.
10. Woolf, Virginia, To the Lighthouse, p. 32.
11. Woolf, Leonard, ed., p. 25.
12. Schulkind, Jeanne, ed., Moments of Being, p. 71.
13. Clarke, Irwin, ed., p. 22.

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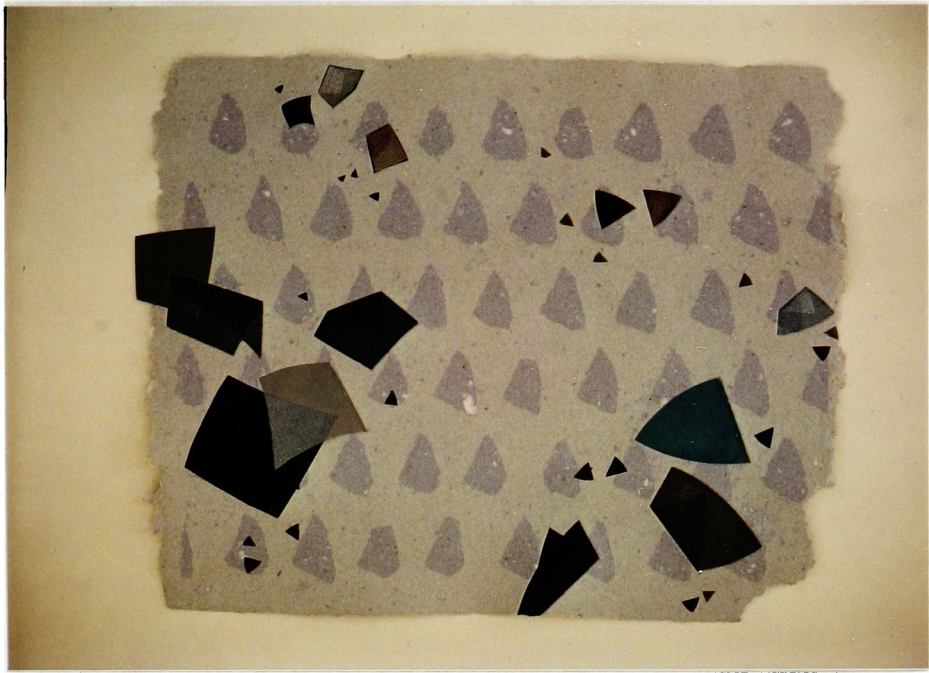
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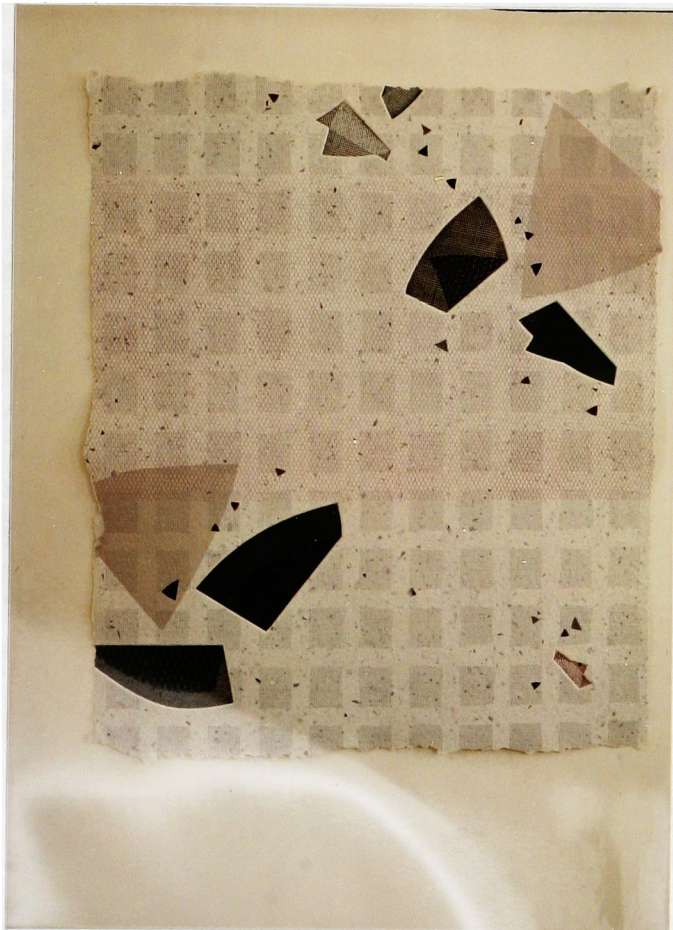
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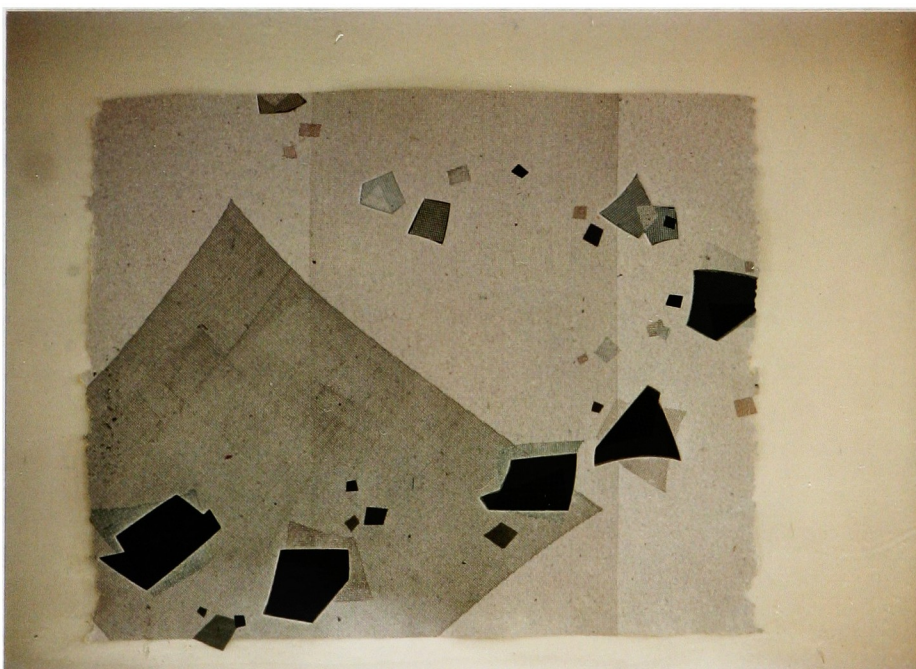
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monoprint/ etching/ handmade paper
17 x 20



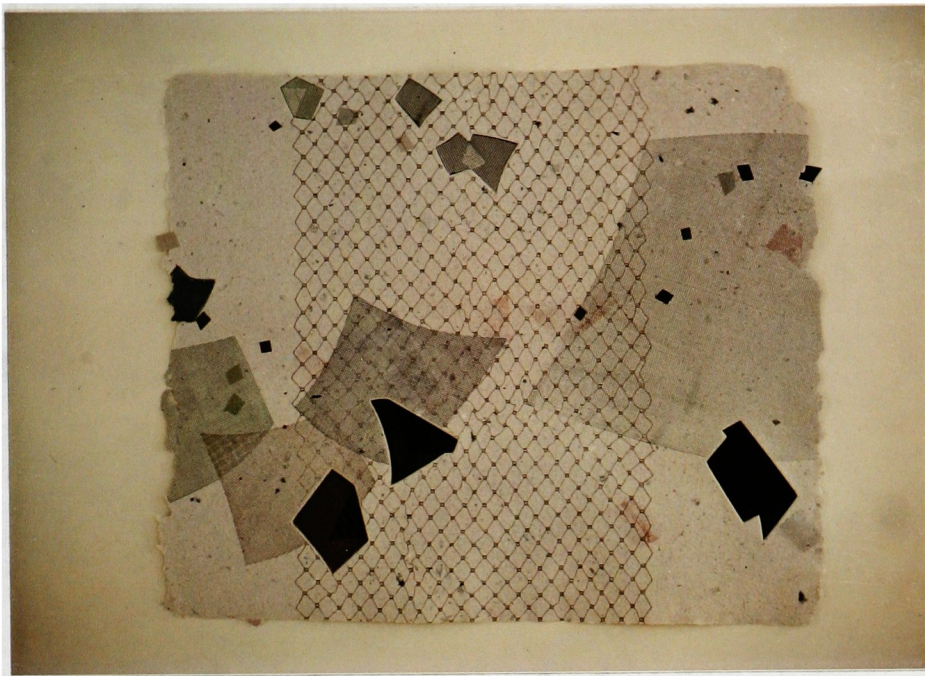
"Lost Do-Dads"
monoprint/ etching/ handmade paper
20 x 17



"Onslaught of the Do-Dads"
 lithograph/ etching/ handmade paper
 9 x 12



"Move Over, Hiroshige"
 monoprint/ etching/ handmade paper
 17 x 20



"Cruising Thru the Veil"
monoprint/ etching/ handmade paper
17 x 20



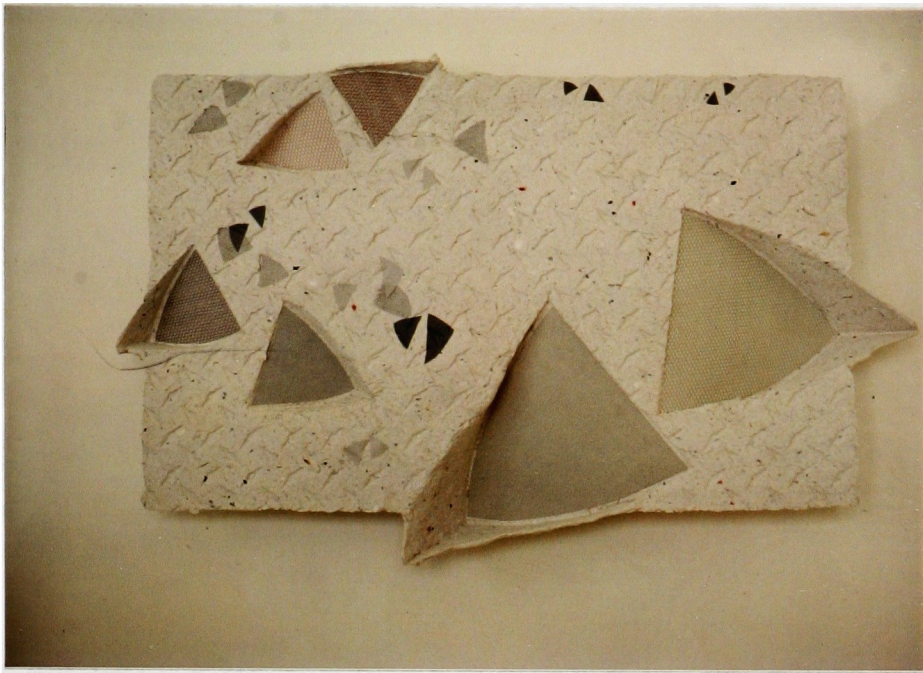
"3-D-Do-Dads"
monoprint/ etching/ handmade paper
20 x 17



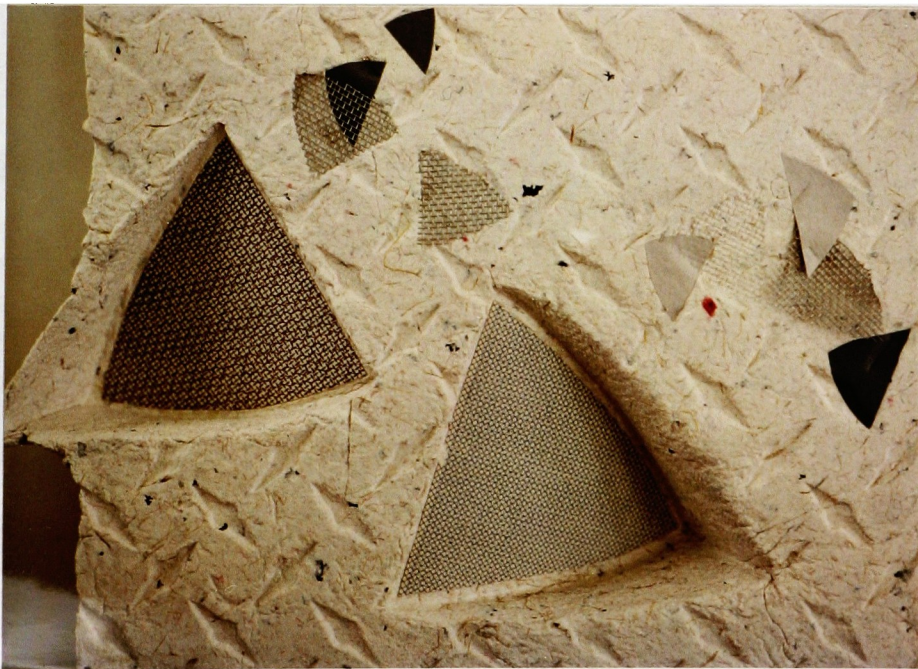
"Well-Fed Do-Dads"
wallpiece/ cast paper
20 x 32 x 5



"Well-Fed Do-Dads"
wallpiece/ cast paper
detail



"Do-Dads for Marilyn"
wallpiece/ cast paper
18 x 24 x 4



"Do-Dads for Marilyn"
wallpiece/ cast paper
detail