

Summer 1971

Expansion Systems in Drawing

Anna Jane Licka
Central Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd>



Part of the [Illustration Commons](#), and the [Printmaking Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Licka, Anna Jane, "Expansion Systems in Drawing" (1971). *All Master's Theses*. 1645.
<https://digitalcommons.cwu.edu/etd/1645>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Master's Theses at ScholarWorks@CWU. It has been accepted for inclusion in All Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@CWU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@cwu.edu.

EXPANSION SYSTEMS IN DRAWING

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in Drawing

by
Anna Jane Licka
July, 1971

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

William V. Dunning, COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

J. John Agars

Margaret Ahrens Sahlstrand

EXPANSION SYSTEMS IN DRAWING

Drawing as a creative mode of expression has maintained in some artistic circles a "puristic doctrine." "Puristic doctrine" in this case means the utilization of characteristic drawing implements and techniques (ie. pen, pencil, ink, charcoal, cross-hatching, shading). In contrast to this "puristic doctrine" is what can be termed an "eclectic expression" in art. As applied to drawing in this thesis, an "eclectic expression" will go beyond the traditional techniques by the application of other media such as photo-stencil, stuffed fabric, and three-dimensional tableau considerations. The purpose of this creative thesis is to expand the two-dimensional quality of drawing into a more tactile expression for the spectator.

The twentieth century Dadaist impulse has dispensed with the academic performance of the artist in accordance to aesthetic rules and regulations of the past centuries. The result has been the acceptance of objects as objects, and the use of materials beyond the traditional artistic repertoire of effects. After Dada, Surrealism and its freudian implications rejuvenated the art world by aesthetically justifying psychic implications in artwork.

In Dada, the verbal pun or the literary aspect becomes just as important as the visual element. Thus, the literary statement or title becomes an important adjunct in the work presented in this thesis.

Coupled with this literary factor is the "removal of context"

approach used by both Surrealists and Dadaists. For example, when Duchamp takes a bicycle wheel and places it upside down on a stool. This allows the wheel to revolve aimlessly without any apparent function. The enigma is complete. The removal of the wheel from its proper context allows for an expression to be met on its own terms. The use of this contextual dislocation is a major influence in the creative work done for this thesis.

The other factor that has permeated the creative work of this thesis is the attitude conveyed by the avant-garde artists operating in the Conceptual Art area. For example, as Kynston L. McShine (Associate Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art) points out in his essay on the Information Show at the Museum of Modern Art in 1970:

The general attitude of the artists in this exhibition is certainly not hostile. It is straightforward, friendly, coolly involved, and allows experiences which are refreshing. It enables us to participate, quite often as in a game, at other times it seems almost therapeutic, making us question ourselves and our responses to unfamiliar stimuli. The constant demand is a more aware reaction to our natural and artificial environments. There is always the sense of communication. These artists are questioning our prejudices, asking us to renounce our inhibitions, and if they are re-evaluating the nature of art, they are also asking that we reassess what we have always taken for granted as our accepted and culturally conditioned aesthetic response to art. (1: 141)

Most of the visual work in this creative thesis is derived from photographic negatives of my grandmother's, Mrs. Omar Senn,

childhood years during the 1920's in Chehalis, Washington.

Keeping this in mind, it seems quite logical to assume that nostalgia and reminiscences are part of the photographic album condition in our culture. There is a condition of preserving heritage and family lineage through the photographic image that captures that transient moment of activity of one's life and family. The result is a frozen moment on a two-dimensional surface. The tableau or scenario condition of Chehalis Progeny/ Mendelian Memories is in line with "Kienholzian" and "Segalian" environmental tableaus. However, there is a difference in the removal of three-dimensional figures and the removal of highly critical social commentary. Americana is not explored at the level of criticism, but at the level of nostalgia and familial relationships tinged with sensual overtones. The wall of the tableau merely sets up a series of images that one might find during the twenties of this century in the rural areas of this country. Visual allusions are made between the framed pictures on the wall and the small environment outside of the wall condition. It is as if one contrasts the two-dimensional reality of past reminiscences and activities, with the inactivity of the objects in the three-dimensional reality which is also a moment of the past. The viewer senses a closeness of the moment to the three-dimensional setting much moreso than the wall images which become an appendage of the activity of the present time as it was in the past. A further comparison can be made between the "fenced in" sexual dreams or

activities of the progenitors of my geneological line and the random objects of bras, dresses, pants on the dresser and chair to the Ideal Scrapbook images on the end table (the scrapbook contains negatives and positives of the family drawings in this exhibit). The overtones of this work are familial and sexual. Sex becomes play, art becomes play, and our reality becomes play.

Ida and the Flag/Only a Matter of Degree depicts an Independence Day Holiday on Aunt Ida's farm in Chehalis, Washington. The flag in this provincial setting was used in a humorous fashionplate sense. Ida appears as some Athenian goddess draped in her regalia of stars and^d stripes. Today's American culture suffers from extreme patriotism on one end of the scale to excessive abuse on the other end towards the flag as a symbol. Ida's use of the flag was simple, playful, and perhaps even somewhat patriotic. Today as then, it has become "only a matter of degree." This visual statement was also an exercise in color gradation moving from low hued grays to black. At the same time there is an increase of the two-dimensional format with a minimal amount of drawing to a more complex drawing pattern. The final product ends up being stuffed with black velvet and white satin with drawn in portions. The technique and the title are quite applicable, for the work in content and method becomes only "a matter of degree."

Multiple titles are used in Bizarre/Bazaar/Fashionplate Lesbianism/or Just Friends to allow the spectator a choice of titles. The themes present in this piece revolve around the overriding tendency

in our culture to psychoanalyze its sexual habits. For example, Bazaar magazine is continually parading female fashion models together holding each others' hands or arms around each others' shoulders. Today's social pressures disavow the simpler aspects of friendships as depicted in the middle portion of this triptych (the middle portion depicts two women simply having a good time in a field with their arms around each other). Lesbianism, homosexuality and bisexuality are maladies and perversions to some laymen and moralists as well as "sexual selling ads" for the advertising milieu and cinematic industry that produces "C" and "D" caliber movies rated for an all but too immature "X"-rated audience. The interplay of these contrasting conditions as exemplified by the accepted standards of advertising fashionplate couples and the center panel's friendly relationship express themselves even in a formal hugging arm-body relationship. It is quite bizarre to be in America's bazaar of products and advertising. We can sell fashion and lesbianism to our subliminal psyches far easier than friendship.

Miniaturization Process involves a conceptual approach of the romantic and the absurd. All that is indicated in the visual process of the enumerated panels one through nine is that some sort of mechanical process is beginning to take place. A schematic screw begins to make its entry into (or screw) some sort of mechanical event. The process is continued through number six. At this point the countdown begins to take place in fractions of one-fourth, one-half, three-fourths which is gradated in color to fuse into the final

three stages of miniaturization. The final process is indicated inside the the black hinged door of process number nine which contains a schematic drawing of an airplane glider (plans are taken from Scientific American magazine) and a stuffed black velvet cape. Thus, the miniaturization process becomes an escape for the contemporary romantic to flee in the middle of the night. It is that portion of the dream world which can never come to grips with the real world. However, a technological society with all its magnificent prospects makes the romantic's dream quite possible today. Science fiction tends to corroborate the romantic episodes in all of our lives, and the unknown and intangible will continually have its metaphysical appeal for the romantic.

Oracle Unlimited/or Umbilical Diptych is the most complex symbolic piece. It involves a seated female figure in a tree stump. The figure appears to be in a trance, and takes on the appearance of an oracular figure-type in a state of ecstasy. This is in keeping with the sybils and oracles of antiquity that prophesized the future. There is also a cavernous womb-like quality in this photo-stenciled drawing. The upper seated figure-type is closely allied to the lower section's sleeping Joachim from the Arena Chapel frescoes of Giotto at Padua, Italy. According to Christian belief Joachim and his wife Anna were childless. An angel comes to Joachim in a dream and tells Joachim that his wife will bear a child. In Christian mythology this is a parallel story of immaculate conception that coincides with the story of the Virgin

Mary's immaculate conception. Therefore, the oracular and mystical quality of the upper section is tied in with the lower section by the association of expectation and birth. Even the condition of Joachim asleep in the sheepfold is similar in form to the contained quality of the seated female figure in the stump. Both sections are then connected by an umbilical system. The second half of the diptych is a contrast between a tree-stump palm reading episode and children peering into the tree stump. The middle section contains tarot cards that designate certain aspects of astrological import. It becomes a reversal of crystal ball reflections. The children are peering into the womb, the cubicle of prophecy and birth from which they came.

Rhubarb Parasols involves two photo-stencil stuffed drawings that express nothing more than a fantasy on a hot summer day in Chehalis, Washington. The rhubarb becomes a parasol delight for the older women. A child's imagination returns to these aging matrons.

Soup Can Farewell Private Warhol becomes a contemporary fetish. The play is on the words and pop imagery of Andy Warhol. Two men in a boat embark from the shore with a female figure stuffed in Campbell Soup Can fabric at the shore's edge. There is a quality of farewell about the whole scene. Over this depressed panel is an overlay system that consists of a Campbell Soup advertisement from World War II vintage. A play in terminology is made in the term "soupcan" which becomes "tincan", a World War II naval term for a

destroyer. The farewell is both to Warhol and war in an aesthetic and social sense. The attached hanging section involves a procession of warships and soup cans in a funk type of battle.

Little Alice's Peyote Play consists of fantasy and children's play in the mushroom world of a contemporary Alice in Wonderland. The distortion is part of the play and peyote. The piece involves a small tableau with actual tea cups, crackers and jam on a table. The drawing becomes a mirror of the dream play that cannot touch the reality of the jam and crackers. The child's world appears to be incubated from the adult world, and has not been acculturated and programmed to fit in society. The child still has its freedom even though it goes through the imitative cycle of "playing house." Role playing in this case has not yet been crystallized.

The title of this thesis exhibit is Blue Print for a Bygone Era. It is also the title of a conceptual piece which consists of blueprints of all the genealogical negatives used in this exhibit for photo-stencil purposes. They are bundled and wrapped and a note is attached to it as follows:

Dear Vixen,

Russ Meyer was hit by a Greyhound Bus while crossing Hollywood and Vine in search of a bi-sexual prospector looking for gold at Chinese Graumann's star-studded treasure chest of concrete imprints.

yours,

Art Linkletter

The reason for using the packaged idea was to point out the transience

of image and art. The blueprints will fade eventually as well as the images of our culture and this thesis show. We are already artifacts of a bygone era.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. McShine, Kynaston L., Information, Baltimore: Publication Press, Inc., 1970. 207 pp.