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## Exploration of Directions and Philosophies of Two-Dimensional Media

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EXPLORATION OF DIRECTIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES  
OF TWO-DIMENSIONAL MEDIA

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A Thesis  
Presented to  
the Graduate Faculty  
Central Washington State College

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Art

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by  
Michael James Murphy  
June, 1971

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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EXPLORATION OF DIRECTIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES  
OF TWO-DIMENSIONAL MEDIA

by

Michael James Murphy

June, 1971

My thesis show records the exploration of directions in two-dimensional visual experience with particular emphasis on the perceptual experience of space.

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## EXPLORATION OF DIRECTIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF TWO-DIMENSIONAL MEDIA

A piece of art (essentially experiential in nature) results from an artist's attempt to in some way get closer to things revealed to him by his sensitivities. A composer's sensitivity to sound, a sculptor's sensitivity to form, even a chef's sensitivity to taste; all are examples of persons with heightened sensitivities in some area attempting to utilize that sensitivity for the communication of some awareness. The awareness can be gained elsewhere and simply made eloquent in its expression through that area of sensitivity, or it can be an awareness inherent in the medium of its expression. Most of the works in my show are concerned with exploration of that second category: two-dimensional perceptual experiences.

Self-conscious attempts at profound revelation aside, there exists for me the desire to create a stimulus capable of evoking a certain indefinable (because it is inherent in the experience of perception and thus beyond the ability of word-systems to produce) state of awareness/perception/feeling. My rational understanding of the nature of this pursuit currently centers on my knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon of perception, both intuitive and intellectual.

To perceive a drawing or painting or photograph is to perceive an alternate reality while engaged in the act of perception (which frequently extends, though not necessarily, beyond the actual act of

visual perception) and the nature of the reality presented will determine the nature of the experience (art being experiential) resulting. This situation is representative of the art object's ability to act as a catalyst. To be significant art must be catalytic. It can catalyze an action, an idea, a thought, an emotion, a simple response, a communication; but most significant for me is that a visual experience catalyze an awareness, perhaps even an awareness intrinsically perceptual--with no real counterpart in any other area other than perception.

The single element that comes closest most consistently in eliciting the response within me for which I intuitively seek is spaciality. I think my concern with spaciality arises out of its potential for impact or intensity. The farther one can be lifted out of his normal reality the more susceptible he becomes to stimulation (or catalyzing) in whatever form it may take.

Providing the viewer (myself) with an alternate reality to inhabit is essential to the kind of activity I want. This alternate reality is not necessarily spatial in the traditional sense but is spatial in that it houses one's sensitivities during perception. Since we spend our lives functioning (perceptually) in three-dimensional space we take its understanding as an environment for granted and can easily relate (and consequently become easily very involved perceptually) in a spatial experience. A spatial environment then becomes a setting for, or even the, events of experience.

So began an exploration of spaciality beginning in traditional understandings of object-environment relationships: defining space by filling it, full space and empty space, linear perspective, aerial perspective and value control. Figure/ground relationships led to the reduction of coherent (three-dimensional illusion) space and the development of ambiguous space in which, while the illusion of three-dimensionality is maintained the guides for understanding coherently are removed or distorted. Also explored were figure/ground reversals, simultaneities, controlled ambiguities, optical illusions and eventually a very subtle kind of space that is non-spatial in fact but spatial in essence: implicit space. Just as every yes has a no implicit in its existence so can non-spatial surfaces have spaciality implicit in their existence.

Simultaneous with this development and somewhat subordinate was the exploration of image. To every perception there always belongs a horizon of the past as a potentiality of recollections, of conditionings that can be awakened; and to every recollection there belongs the continuous intervening intentionality of possible recollections up to the actual "now" of perception. Spaciality in this case becomes the habitation of images; an environment to be shared with the perceptual phenomena able to provoke the change from normal reality to special reality. The attainment of that alternate reality is the end to which all else are but means, the tools for its achievement.

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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