

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE EVOLUTION OF A THESIS

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The process of evolution inspires me. A chain of information needs to be created before any evolutionary process can occur. This information must be passed on and transmitted in order to create something new. During this transference, the information becomes mutated as certain traits are lost and picked up along the way.

In my work tension is created by the push and pull between drawing and painting. I want my work to possess the refined qualities of a painting, yet retain the immediacy and vitality of a drawing. At the heart of this struggle is a quest for balance.

VERTIGO

By

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Chapter 1: The Evolution of a Thesis

The process of evolution inspires me. A chain of information must be created before any evolutionary process can occur. This information is passed on and transmitted in order to create something new. During this transference, the information becomes mutated as certain traits are either lost or picked up along the way. These mutations sequentially lead to alternate manifestations of the ideas and concepts that preceded them.

My current work evolved out of a series of drawings based on medical diagrams of the human nervous system, brain and sensory organs. These diagrams focused on the physiological aspects of human perception. My goal was to gain insight into my own perceptions of the world, thus making my work more visually effective. One set of drawings explored how stimuli are triggered and processed by the eye. Sections of these drawings were scanned into the computer and revised. These drawings were subsequently printed out and manipulated further.

It was important to me that there was evidence of the hand altering these images. I approached this process with the attitude that every tool could be utilized as a drawing instrument. The scale and orientation of the drawings went through a period of experimentation. I projected them on the wall and overlaid them in different combinations. My desire was to create similar voices that would resonate at various depths.

In my work a tension is created by the push and pull between drawing and painting. In some areas the drawing is squeezed out through the knotting and congesting of the pictorial space. In other areas the painting dissolves or dissipates to reveal the diagrammatic space. My desire is for the work to possess the refined qualities of painting, yet retain the immediacy and vitality of drawing. I am searching for that edge where the work can exist in a state of flux between the two. At the heart of the struggle is a quest for balance.

Each painting is full of contradictions. A color that should recede in space pops forward. What appears to be a gestural mark is actually meticulously rendered, but an area that appears tightly controlled is the result of spontaneous actions. Serendipity plays a large role in determining the direction of each piece. Although the imagery is based on science, the execution is dependent upon improvisation and intuition.

I create compositions where the movement is overwhelming. My intent is to instill in the viewer a sense of vertigo; to experience the image slipping out of control. In doing so, I am searching for something that appears to be sliding between order and chaos. My goal is to create a painting that appears to be harmoniously falling apart.

To better understand how my work evolved we should start at the beginning. My early work was comprised of grid-based paintings. These paintings explored a range of formal qualities that included geometry, color, pattern, surface, and space. This

period of exploration provided me with the opportunity to establish a basic visual vocabulary. At one point I began to question and reject what I was doing. This shift in thinking opened up my experimentation. The grid needed to be discarded because it was too rigid and stagnant.

The focus shifted to gestural mark making. The canvas was removed from the stretchers and stapled directly to the wall. The emphasis shifted from painting to drawing. This work became loose and organic as the forms became much more generative. It forced an awkward period of adaptation; I began to sense that something was still missing. The elimination of the grid created chaos, and it became apparent that balance had to be restored. With the lack of structure, there were inconsistencies and distractions in the work that had to be overcome.

A major shift occurred when I began working with a limited palette. This palette was comprised of black, white and various gray tones. The removal of color provided clarity. The setting of limitations restored order, and provided the opportunity to refine the compositional aspects of my work. My experiment with tonal structures and chiaroscuro carries on into my later work. In addition, I learned how to develop complexities through a process of simplification. Over the course of time, color was gradually reintroduced into the palette in the form of subtle temperature shifts and complex neutrals. These complex neutrals provided a basis to push the intensity of color even further.

As the process changed, so did the content. I grew bored of creating purely formal

paintings. The content of the grid paintings were inherent in their structure. The organic paintings resembled clusters of cells and brain tissues. I began utilizing medical diagrams as source material and discarded the gestural approach. Setting limitations on color allowed me to focus on the development of form, and building on the basis of source material clarified the direction of the painting.

Diagrams of the frontal lobe and cerebellum intrigued me because they are the control centers in the brain. There are obvious metaphors that these images suggest that I do not want to mention; the viewer will come to their own conclusions about possible meanings for this material. I was interested in examining the microscopic versus the macroscopic, and what happened when these were reversed? Taking an image of something you can only see in a microscope and blowing it up to the size of a wall can be quite humorous. As a result, I developed a more playful attitude that led to a more ambitious use of materials and a deeper investigation into surface.

Evolution is the cornerstone of growth. It has driven my process and revealed itself in the imagery. This current body of work is the most recent manifestation of my ideas. A prolonged period of experimentation led me to where I am today. My decision making process is more informed and clear. My approach has become more balanced and deliberate. I have gained confidence in my ability, and it shows through in my work. By letting go and painting my way through it, I overcame many obstacles. The willingness to relinquish control has put me in the position to truly

harness it. All of these processes have culminated in the work that you see before you today.