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Dreams for sale

Kathleen S. Fogel

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Dreams For Sale

A Thesis submitted to the
University Honors Program
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree
With Upper Division Honors

Department of Art

by

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DeKalb, Illinois

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Approved: John F. McCarty

Department of: Art

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Art Objects-Advertising Collage Installation

ABSTRACT (100-200 words):

The goal of the work of art is the production of a cohesive
object that becomes a significant form by succeeding in its
development of an ideological thought. The concern chosen dwells
in the arena of psychological implications that result from
societal beliefs through the medium of printed advertisements.
The idea found form in the production of mock billboards and
newspapers in a pseudo-collage that further undergo metamorphosis
when accumulated and installed in a space. Production included
the accumulation of large amounts of source materials from news-
papers and billboards which were reorganized so text and images
juxtapose each other in form and content.

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Every age in the history of time has projected an image of itself through art. Those viewing these works of art are taken on a voyage through the forms to the age's essence. Perceptive viewers find inherent messages in a work of art and are able to classify a particular age's beliefs, influences, spirituality, goals, and ideals. This is evident in the visual arts even in the earliest cave painting in Lascaux, France and Altamira, Spain dating from 15,000 B.C. or the legendary Paleolithic sculpture, "Venus" of Willendorf, dating from 30,000-25,000 B.C., (Hartt, 35). Modern observers catch a glimpse of what early human existence was like and what their perception was of it through such images. The importance and spirituality of the hunt is documented in the images of bison depicted on the cave walls. Likewise, early humans worship of reproduction idols is defined through the "Venus" figures found all over Paleolithic Europe.

Such a definition covers the entire history of human existence up to the present where the art forms mirror the transient overturning on itself. Almost as soon as an event has occurred it is captured and projected through mass communications to all media equipped corners of the world. Almost as quickly as these news events arrive, they are cast aside by our minds long-term memory. The aim for an artist today is to capture these moments collectively and therefore capture the universal experience of the age. If this is done successfully, it becomes a significant form.

An approach to understanding the significant forms of humans is the study of the history of art as an evolutionary organism where preceding movements breed their successors in an ideological chain of historical and artistic thought. Study of such a history enables one to evaluate its predecessors in regards to success and failures in aesthetic achievement and historical relevancy. The search leads to countless influences on thinking for an artist in regards to form and ideology. A few particular movements in the study were similar with my experience and ideology of a significant form.

The most influential of these movements would be Pop Art with its champion Andy Warhol. The Pop artists took the concept of humans projecting an image of themselves into art from the "Pop" world experience and directed that reality into the art object. Specifically with Warhol, the Pop world of commercials, advertisements and products become the image of the works of art and thus the images we as an age identify as a symbol of our existence. Pop stars such as Marilyn Monroe or a Coca-Cola bottle are images that explicate our desires and idols. A future anthropologist could describe such images as artifacts, and through them classify the goals and ideals of our society. Robert Rosenblum said of Warhol in 1979,

That Warhol could paint simultaneously Warren Beatty,
and electric chairs, Troy Donahue, and race riots,
Marilyn Monroe and fatal car crashes may seem the

peculiar product of a perversely cool and passive personality until we realize that this numb voyeuristic view of contemporary life, in which the grave and the trivial, the fashionable and the horrifying, blandly coexist as passing spectacles, is a deadly accurate mirror of a commonplace experience in modern art and life, (Rosenblum, 12).

Warhol, (or rather his workers, true to mass media production), silkscreened his images onto the canvas. Another approach to achieving such imagery is to take those already produced in advertisements. The decision to allow physical images taken from newspaper or magazine to exist in their natural state, pushes further the reality of the object as an artifact. Such an artifact emphasizes the perversion of the societies passion for the ideal. This perversion is twisted by the juxtaposition of the numerous stories of death, poverty, crime, misfortune, and suffering found next to advertisements promoting the pursuit of pleasure, desire, and relaxation.

The literalness of the newspaper reality was a necessary material to retain. Mock newspaper become art objects by reorganizing the layout of the imagery and text to emphasize their natural juxtaposition with all the latent implications. The objects were constructed by wetting down newspaper and applying adherents to both sides, then building up a surface of layers until a metamorphosis was achieved. Advertisements were

cut from their negative space in the ad and placed in an appropriate position to a corresponding article or image. Often images and stories of crime or war were juxtaposed against an image from a Bloomingdale's ad, Presidential candidates placed next to a Marshall Field's ad of men wearing underwear, or starving Ethiopians next to a food advertisement of lush, fresh fruit or a weight loss, liposuction ad.

The result produces an object projecting the complexity of life and the duality of messages sent to us as a society from the society. The duality of our interests come into focus with the dominant foreground imagery possessing our ideals and desires along with the voyeuristic experience of seeing the agonies, which ultimately makes the ideals more appealing and seem necessary.

The billboard pieces deal with the problem in a slightly different manner. They projected various advertisements that portray the clichés of society. Used But Not Used Up was text taken from an Illinois Bell phone book ad. The "used up" phone book image was eliminated leaving only text. More text found in a New York Times article on the destruction of the rain forests and pollutants destroying the environment were painted on top. The monumentality of the object's scale and cliché text dwarf the added text and assimilates the ages apathetic concern over their future, and further expands the interest of the transient desires.

The installation of the exhibition pushed the reality of the art objects as artifacts further by the placements of the mock newspapers on the ground as "trash" and the hanging of the billboards as "signs". Three billboards in all were hung with 20 newspaper objects scattered about to mimic their disposability.

At the opening of the exhibition a performance was held in celebration of the conceptual focus. The Young Ensemble, a group of three graduate and two undergraduate music students, performed a piece written in 1951 by John Cage entitled Radio Music. The performers were positioned in glass cases in the gallery space, each equipped with radio and a score that listed frequencies and their durations of length. Each performer "played" their radio somewhat simultaneously, which produced an audio collage of advertisements, news broadcasts, gospel services, music and sports. The effect was that of real time as opposed to the implied time in the newspaper and billboard objects. Certain moments passed by never to be captured again, yet leaving their imprint on the senses. One particular moment struck me as simultaneously humorous, repulsive, absurd, and painful, just like this period in history. In this moment, there was an advertisement for acne, a newscast explaining how a man cut up his wife in little pieces, and Louis Armstrong singing, What a Wonderful World.

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9. A 1989 vacation.
22'' by 28''
completed September, 1988
10. Strong Defense; Buy One, Get One.
22'' by 28''
completed September, 1988
11. There's No Such Thing As Scratch And Taste Advertisements.
22'' by 28''
completed September, 1988
12. I'm moving to The New York because I hear Chicago still has a lake.
22'' by 28''
completed September, 1988
13. Money doesn't make you happy -but it quiets the nerves.
22'' by 28''
completed October, 1988
14. Just over the horizon.
22'' by 28''
completed October, 1988
15. Homelessness at a Remove: An Urge to Stare.
22'' by 28''
completed October, 1988
16. How To Become Wealthy.
22'' by 28''
completed October, 1988
17. $\frac{1}{2}$ off; Check Us Out; Nobody has More.
22'' by 28''
completed October, 1988

18. Too bad.

22'' by 28''

completed October, 1988

19. We should vote for candidates, not for their combs.

22'' by 28''

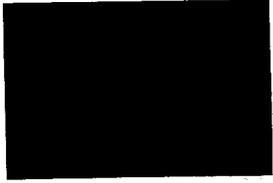
completed October, 1988

20. The story you are about to read is true.

22'' by 28''

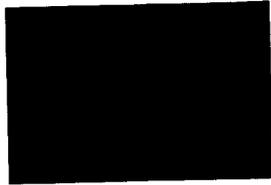
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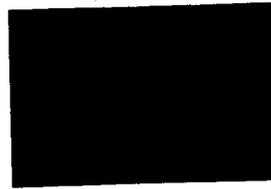
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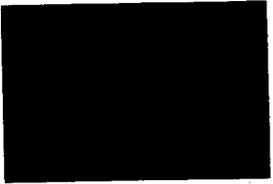
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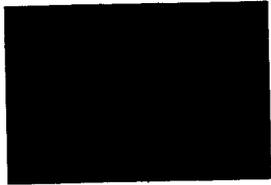
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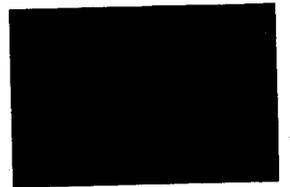
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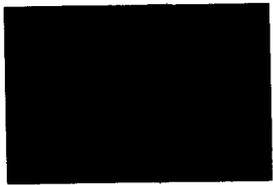
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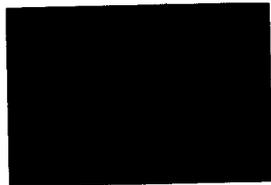
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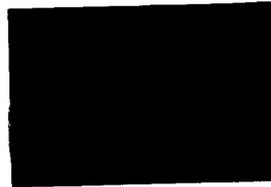
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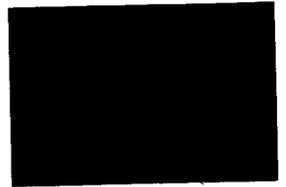
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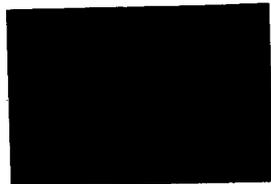
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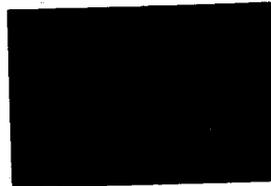
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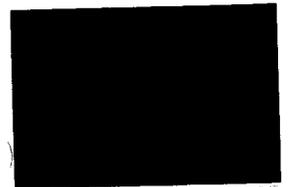
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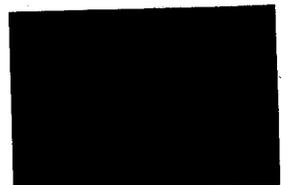
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The Installation of

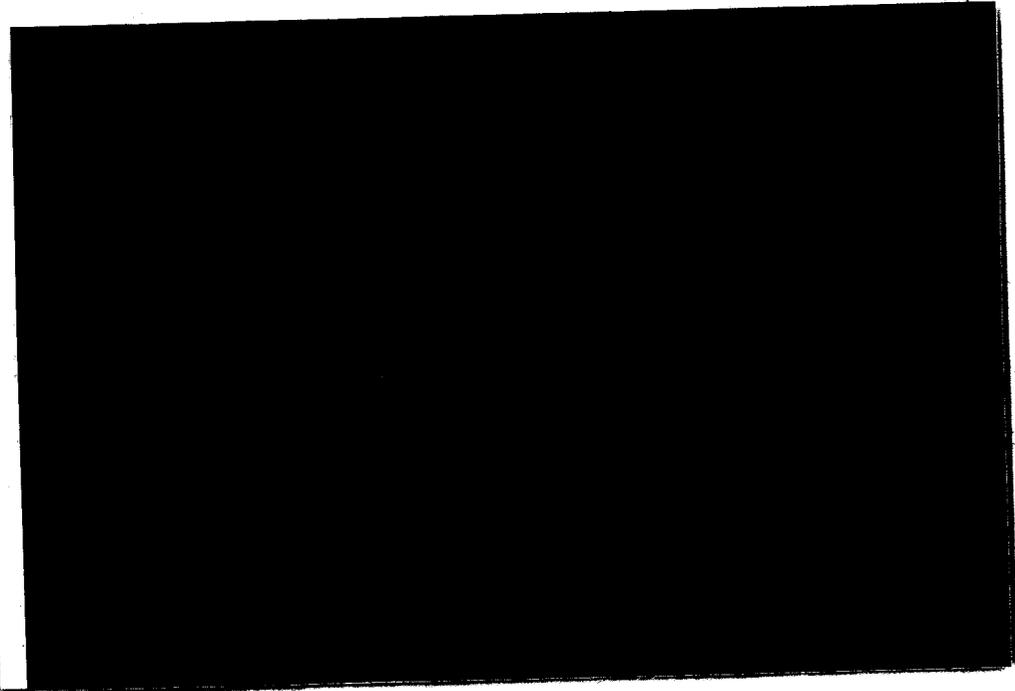
Dreams For Sale

in the

Holmes Student Center

DeKalb, Illinois

October 23, through November 4, 1988



"We should vote for the
candidates, not their combs".

"Money does not make you happy
but it quiets the nerves".

