



Opposites Abstract

Artist: Elizabeth Victor
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Unlike artists in language or music, the emotional or intellectual predicament of a visual artist may not be immediately accessible to the audience viewing the end result. Even given the intentions of directly expressing emotion, a visual artists' expression of passion or pain, or even peace, may still take unusual, relatively inaccessible forms.

"Black Window" (1987), an original work, measures 5 by 8 feet. Each of the "figures" in this piece were taken from drawings of large, human-sized swaths of drapery material, (true still-lifes). "Making a drawing or painting which reflects, however indirectly, questions that are disturbing me," the artist notes, "is a great way to relieve the stress caused by those issues."

Georgia O'Keeffe is probably the artist who most influenced me in this work and in my work of the last four years because the most striking aspect of her work is the use of color, and I do not work in color. O'Keeffe's influence can also be seen in terms of the types of forms that interest me (plants, rocks, shells, and organic twists of drapery material). Other O'Keeffe influences are that I tend to monumentalize forms—to make small objects large and powerful—and I am always trying to find a balance between abstraction and accurate representation.

Methods and Materials

Compressed charcoal, black and white conte, and white chalk were used. These materials are essentially interchangeable, but their different forms allow me to more readily alter the size and types of line. Chalk and charcoal are easy to control, are well suited to variations in clarity and fuzziness, are good for layering and are appropriate tools for depicting light as opposed to color.

I work on brown craft paper which is available in large rolls, three feet across. I use this paper because it is relatively inexpensive and I also enjoy the warm tone that the brown color of the paper imparts to my drawings.

Each of the "figures" in the work came from a different

drapery still-life, which I set up and sketch in detail (on a smaller scale) in order to record and understand how light and dark elements interact with the forms. A rough sketch, obtained from placing the figures together and adding the bars from imagination, then was made. I drew a grid over this rough sketch, which enabled me to place the separate objects accurately in relation to each other when I expanded the drawing to its final 5 by 8 feet dimension. I drew in everything on the large paper, using a faint white outline in order to insure correct placement. I then layered the charcoal and chalk over each other to build up the grays.

Results

Gradually, as I worked to improve my ability to collect the necessary information from my still-lifes and manipulate them as I wished, the draperies assumed life, at least in my mind, taking on both personalities and gender. What had been a general notion about opposition became specifically an exploration of relationships between male and female. With "Black Window", one of the final drawings composed as part of my senior thesis, I came close to achieving the goal of creating drawings that embody an idea and integrate form and content.