"The Self Rediscovered"

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Scott Anderson, faculty mentor

Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

May 2003

Graduation date: May 03, 2003
Artist Statement- *The Self Rediscovered*

For my Senior Honors Thesis Project I have elected to create a body of artwork addressing the idea of the *self rediscovered*. While studying at Ball State I was an exchange student at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It was there that I discovered and reawakened to a change in the way I perceive myself and my place in this universe. I was exposed to the spirit of life and the spirit of nature in this new setting. The laid-back, easygoing style of the southwest opened my eyes to the beauty of the earth and the connection my own soul feels to it. This unique environment is the catalyst for the show. My major of Environmental Design through the Architecture Department is about the creation of the built environment. However, for me it is the interiors of spaces that matter most. My growing interest in Interior Design along with the metaphysical change I experienced in New Mexico is the inspiration to the artwork in this show. The work is a reflection of these life-changing events.

The show consists of nine interrelated wooden panels and six larger mixed media drawings. The nine panels work together to form an entire storyboard of the Southwestern landscape. For me, one of the most notable aspects of New Mexico is the natural landscape and the power it holds when not corrupted by human hands. These panels are a tribute to a dwindling treasure.

The mixed media drawings address the human condition; they convey this in a variety of formats: the passion and pain of the Flamenco Dance, the self revealed and rediscovered in the Zozobra puppet, the inconsistency of contemporary architectural forms, the mystery of deities, the cycling of humankind, and the presence and history of artifacts. All pieces strive to express the culture I found ever-present and ever-alive in New Mexico.
The self revealed in Zozobra piece can be regarded the basis of the show. The figure of Zozobra, also known as "Old Man Gloom" is a five-story puppet burned in a yearly festival meant to dispel and repent sins. This very cathartic experience presented me a new situation as I observed others praying, crying, and spouting profanities as the symbol of the past year burned to the ground. For the piece, I gave the figure a doll-like face fashioned after myself over a contrasting field as a means to relate the duality in every individual.

The body as a whole acts as a visual diary of the trip to New Mexico and the meaningful encounters I experienced. I hope to express the intrigue, excitement, and power I found there. For me this project was a journey as I learned new life lessons far away from home. It has begun a new chapter in my life. It is these events and experiences that created a personal reawakening and a very positive conclusion to my growth at Ball State University. I want to thank Scott Anderson, my faculty mentor, for his constant help and advisement in completion of this show. I am thankful to the Honors College for giving me the opportunity to creatively express what four years has taught me. Also, thank you to the Architecture Department, my family, Jared and Linda, and Jared for support along my journey.

K. Leia Yabut
Southwestern Presence
9 pieces wood panels in no particular order
Old Town On Sale

Inside My House
Zozobra Self Portrait
Cuchina Dolls
The Complete Story Behind the *Self Rediscovered*

I decided to participate in the National Student Exchange Program the fall semester of my senior year at Ball State. My destination was The University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, New Mexico. And I was ecstatic. The decision to leave came from a variety of impulses. Feeling as though I was wading in stagnant waters at BSU, I felt it was time for a refresher. I knew New Mexico was known as the "Land of Enchantment;" with such a mixture of culture in Albuquerque, how could I refuse?

It was these three main cultures that drew me in initially: the artisan culture, the Native American culture, and the Hispanic culture. The artisan culture is alive and recognizable all over the city. Jewelers, sculptors, painters...you name it...make a livelihood out of their creative endeavors. All over the downtown vibrant murals decorate empty wall space and are not seen as "graffiti." The city is exploding with artistic energy. The Native American culture also inhabits this land, and their presence is noticeable everywhere. The architecture itself has its roots deep in pueblo and adobe-style. Every building on campus is of stucco, not the brick or limestone you find on the Ball State Campus. And Indian Reservations dot the landscape on preserved and respected lands. Also, the Hispanic culture adds unique flavor to the southwest. UNM is the only University in the nation (to date) that offers Flamenco Dance as a major. And not just the university, but the whole city is growing as the hub for Spanish Dance. The Spanish language is spoken just as much as English. In this city, the population is almost fairly divided amongst Caucasians, Hispanics, and Native Americans. This was not a common sight in Indiana, and I was glad to be here. This was the only city I had ever been to where the history is visible and successfully mixes with the present to create a rich setting.
My major is in Environmental Design with the Architecture Department. My minor is in Studio Art with an emphasis in Drawing. I wanted to be able to take both of these interests and absorb their offerings in this new setting. It was simple: I wanted to take what I knew and expand upon it in ways I could not even predict. I wanted to learn about architecture and art and life in this foreign land. For my Honors Thesis Project it was discussed with Dr. Edmonds that I create some sort of visual diary of my experiences and bring those back to BSU. With my faculty mentor, Scott Anderson, we decided that the next step would be to use that diary as a catalyst to create a body of work. It was my goal to try and translate my experiences and share them with the Ball State Campus through my artwork. I drew up a proposal the summer before I left (it is enclosed) and a revised copy upon return (also enclosed).

I did not have definitive answers or subject matter when I departed, but my topics created themselves while I was in New Mexico. The outcome was nine wood panel drawings and six larger mixed media drawings on stretched canvas. The nine panels work together as one interrelated work, and each of the six pieces can stand alone.

At New Mexico, because of my Architecture Studio I studied the mountain, the desert, and the forest in depth. I assure you, these would not be the topics explored in Ball State’s Architecture Department. New Mexico lacks only one of the seven biomes: the rainforest. You can understand how this Chicago-native was awestruck at the beauty of the natural landscape. I found peace and a new outlook on existence. I found one of my topics that I wanted to address.

The idea of the simple power and beauty of the land struck me. I am so used to this westernized idea of consumerism and sprawl, but New Mexico was just the opposite. Especially being and architecture student, I sometimes battle with the idea of wasting the land, or at least, condoning the wasting of the land through other peoples or projects. I found that people in New
Mexico had a deeper respect and connection to the land. Perhaps this was influenced by the Native American culture. Perhaps this is influenced by the fact that there just is not a large population in the state. (It's noted that more people live in the city of San Diego than all of the state of New Mexico.) Regardless of either possibility, I was intrigued and moved. The landscape is so vast and expansive. And when on a high plateau or peak, the land just extends forever in front of you.

I discovered an awakening in myself that lead to the theme of my show: the self rediscovered. I devised ideas for ten or so wooden panels. The idea initially came from my attraction to interior and furniture design. I wanted to create coffee table tops and cabinet door faces, and that got me started on the wood. But my train of thought quickly changed as the wood just became a surface to work on. With these I hoped to bring an awareness of the destruction humans are capable of and the primitive beauty in the pristine. The wood pieces are a tribute to the land and the hands that have not touched it.

The piece *Inside My House* addresses many of the same issues I spoke about above, but in a different language. The drawing gives four separate views into the spaces of peoples houses. All of the houses are typical of houses in Santa Fe. The subject matter only takes up a horizontal line going through the middle. Muted out in the background is a landscape of a valley. The line work is very simple and the colors are few. The basis of this drawing is the misunderstanding of architectural forms. New Mexican and especially Santa Fe-based architecture is notable for looking a certain way- a certain adobe Spanish style. And though most people think that it attractive, and though I myself think it is attractive, people neglect the truth and lack the ability to respect the roots of this architecture. In other words, this architecture has a history and a
meaning, and like so many architectural forms, it is just used and reused because it is aesthetically pleasing. Wayne Thiebaud’s *Seven Lipsticks (1991)* served as a jumping off point.

Another piece form of neglect and missed opportunity to respect accompanied the idea of cuchina dolls. Cuchina dolls represent every possible feeling or emotion you could posses. There are good and bad dolls because there are good and bad emotions. These dolls are meant to be respected and revered. They are deities in themselves. What I found, all over the malls of Albuquerque was a manufacturing of these dolls. In reality, people are not allowed to photograph these dolls, let alone reproduce them and sell them to tourists in the malls. I found this very disturbing and wanted to do a drawing based on this.

Old Town in Albuquerque is comparable to the Plaza in Santa Fe. This is the tourist hot spot for shopping and Spanish Colonial-style Architecture. Vendors line the street with their own made jewelry. Pottery and authentic New Mexican restaurants are located here too. The drawing *On Sale in Old Town* strives for a playful take on this area. Rows of pottery seem to float in front of you with no sign of shelving or problems with gravity. I looked to the artist Wayne Thiebaud for inspiration. His *Food Rows (1964)* and *Ten Pies (1990)* lent much help. This piece accompanies *In My House* with its horizontal lines and washes.

I absorbed a variety of cultural experiences. Notably, the Zozobra Festival held in Santa Fe in September. Zozobra is the yearly burning of this monstrous puppet. While he moans and groans, people spout out vulgarities at him. The intent behind Zozobra, or “Old Man Gloom,” as his name is translated to in Spanish, is a festival to purge and rid you of your sins from the past year. Hopefully, after all of that cathartic yelling and swearing, you feel refreshed. When I attended this festival, I didn’t know what to expect. The puppet was five stories tall and not at all attractive. There were dancers at his feet waving their arms around- “fire dancers” they called
them. His torso turned left to right, and his head bobbed around, but it was really only his arms, which moved in all directions. The scene was altogether creepy. When the sun goes down, people start to yell more than ever. Soon the fireworks rigged up to Zozobra explode, making their way toward him. Again, this is a very disturbing scene— an effigy is burning before your eyes and people are jumping and clapping. The last part to be burned was his hand. For some reason, the rest of his body was burned, but this single hand kept moving up and down, and the moaning on the loud speakers continued to play. This was most disturbing for me of all. As we began to walk away from the scene, I saw people crying and praying on their knees. This was the most moving thing I had experienced. People you may stereotype as “hoodlum-ish” or “misbehaving” or almost as a “gang member” were crying and praying silently. It was then that I realized the importance and the power of ritual and spirit, and its intense presence in the state of New Mexico.

This led to, debatably, my token piece of the show. The Zozobra Self Portrait started out as a self-portrait of myself and became the face of a little boy. I looked to imagery of Indian deities to help me. I wanted a sort of innocent and god-like face for this scary puppet. The idea behind the Zozobra drawing was that every single person has the ability to sin and yet to perform acts of ignorance and innocence. We are all human, and therefore capable and guilty of these acts. In the drawing there are puppeteers at the top and random shouting/instigating figures along the body of Zozobra. Ida Applebroog’s artwork, notable her 1950 (1995-96) helped me out a lot.

For fun, and to gain Honors Colloquia credit, I took a Flamenco Dance course. The dance program is very strong at UNM, especially in flamenco. My instructor was a very talented woman, just starting to make a name for herself in the circle of dancers. She taught me about the
pain and passion of the dance, and this inspired me to create the drawing the *Flamenco Dancers.* The *Flamenco Dancers* addresses the strength, more specifically emotional strength. The figures in the drawing are women, although men too can experience the intensity of the dance.

The piece I had the most trouble with became known as *Kiva- Through Cycles.* It started out as a colorful take on the city of Albuquerque. Purples, bright pinks, and neon greens dotted the canvas. At the base was my interpretation of the past in Albuquerque. Pueblo's started out the skyline and grew into modern day skyscrapers about halfway up the canvas. The mountain range in Albuquerque is the Sandia's. In Spanish it means watermelon and is named that for the pink hue it gives off at sunset. In the drawing, the upper third of the drawing was my interpretation of the Sandia's. I wanted the drawing to be a representation of all the life changes the city had undergone. Feeling unsettled, I eradicated the whole drawing and drew a simple kiva on top of the whole canvas. A kiva is an Indian smoke room underground- like a sauna. People gather there to sweat out visions, as the space is linked to the spirit world. The piece works as a constant cycle throughout the birth and rebirth of Albuquerque. You just happened to stop and look at the drawing right as it was reliving its rebirth.

The nine panels and six larger drawings were hung up in the University Theatre Gallery the last week of March. I also displayed the visual diary I made while at UNM and also my sketchbook from this semester of synthesis. Inherently, I hope I sparked some sort of curiosity or interest in one person as motivation to travel and get accustomed to another part of this world.
Leia Yabut
Honors College Project Proposal
Summer 2002

1. The Honors project should broaden your educational experience through independent work that adds to your knowledge and develops your talents. How will your project help you accomplish these objectives and add to your personal goals? Why, in short, do you want to do this particular project?

I have been studying Architecture and Drawing at Ball State for the past few years. I see the Honors Thesis project as an excellent opportunity to form a marriage of my two passions. I am confident this project will help me build on the experiences and talents I already posses in both of these areas while introducing me to new ideas and schools of thought. This project will help my major by having me study and observe new forms of society and architecture while helping with my minor by having me draw my findings. To the artist's point of view, I hope to create almost a body of work, in smaller scale. I am excited to study something I am interested in and present it in a form I feel comfortable executing.

2. When are you signing up for HONRS 499 (or what is the proposed equivalent)?

I will go on National Student Exchange to the University of New Mexico in the fall of 2002 and return to Ball State for the Spring 2003 semester. During the Spring 2003 semester I will sign up for HONRS 499 under the advisement of Scott Anderson of the Art Department.

3. What will be the outcome of this project? (Be specific—e.g. a paper, a finished piece of research, creative activity...)

The end product of this project will be a bound visual diary of my experiences to the University of New Mexico. In scrapbook form I will include drawings predominately, but also photos and text. It will be a record of my new experiences in visual form, but also include insights to the southwestern culture. I hope to successfully address how the culture affects the interior architecture of structures as well. I will explore New Mexican culture, which includes Hispanic culture, Native American culture, and an artisan culture non-existent to Indiana.

4. Objective or Thesis (Include target audience, purpose)

The objective of this project is to widen my circle of experience to unfamiliar cultures (specifically New Mexican culture), refine my drawing and creative capabilities, and communicate a very non-Indiana type of life to peers, advisors, and future students hoping they may be inspired and experience an interest to travel.
5. Project description (please be specific- approximately two paragraphs)

My major lies in the school of Architecture (more specifically Environmental Design) and my minor lies in the school of Fine Arts (more specifically Drawing). I want to execute an Honors Thesis that will help me to explore and refine both areas.

The fall semester exchange to New Mexico will be an excellent opportunity to learn about cultures I am not familiar with, having been born in Illinois and schooling in Indiana. My experiences do not travel too far from the Midwest.

I will develop a knowledge base of New Mexican culture by exploring a variety of the state's native cultures (including Native American, Hispanic and artisan cultures) and focusing on forms of architecture through the media of drawings. I do not feel as though Indiana has strong representation of these different societies and their architectural forms (i.e. the importance of limestone to Indiana versus the importance of adobe to New Mexico). In the field of architecture, I believe it is not only essential, but integral that one gain as much exposure from a variety of locations, people, and places as possible to be the strongest architect as possible. My specific interest lies with interior design, and I am more than enthusiastic to seek and depict my findings.

In scrapbook form, like a visual diary, I will keep a record of my observations and findings in drawings, photos and texts.

6. State what the importance or implications of this project is (or are). I.e. what do you expect to learn, or what would others learn from knowing about your anticipated results?

After completion of this project I will have gained insight to a culture I know little about – New Mexican culture – while sparking an interest to learn as much as I can about other cultures, including their architectural personalities. Also, I believe that it is not only important to build upon what one already knows, but to explore and expand the mind. I am hoping others will recognize this and perhaps my project can act as an inspiration for travel and cultivation of more worldly experiences outside of the state's borders.
1. The Honors project should broaden your educational experience through independent work that adds to your knowledge and develops your talents. How will your project help you accomplish these objectives and add to your personal goals? Why, in short, do you want to do this particular project?

I have been studying Architecture and Drawing at Ball State for the past few years. I see the Honors Thesis project as an excellent opportunity to form a marriage of my two passions.

I am confident this project will help me build on the experiences and talents I already possess in both of these areas while introducing me to new ideas and schools of thought. This project will help my major by having me study and observe new forms of society and architecture while helping with my minor by having me draw my findings. To the artist's point of view, I hope to create almost a body of work, in smaller scale. I am excited to study something I am interested in and present it in a form I feel comfortable executing.

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3. What will be the outcome of this project? (Be specific—e.g. a paper, a finished piece of research, creative activity...)

While I am on Semester Exchange I will produce a bound visual diary of my experiences to the University of New Mexico. In scrapbook form I will include drawings, photos and text. It will be a record of my new experiences, with insights into the southwestern culture. Because my interests lay with interior design, I may try to address how the culture affects the interior architecture of structures, but I want to go further and address the interior architecture of a person—what makes them tick and what awakens them when in a foreign environment. I want New Mexico to show me a new point of view and I will illustrate my findings in this journal. I will explore New Mexican culture, which includes Hispanic culture, Native American culture, and an artisan culture non-existent to Indiana.

When I come back to Ball State for the Spring Semester, I will work closely with Scott Anderson of the art dept to produce a body of work based on the journal I created. I will produce a series of paintings on canvas of large scale. Tying in my interest with interior design, I will also create a series of "tables" out of painted/drawn on wood and a mosaic
of tile work. The tables will address issues/feelings brought about by New Mexico. And the tile work will be scenes of interior spaces.

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In scrapbook form, like a visual diary, I will keep a record of my observations and findings in drawings, photos and texts. When I return, this diary will be the foundation of a body of work, later to be displayed in a senior show.

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Leia Yabut
Honors Thesis
Drawings

Honors Thesis
University Theater Gallery
Ball State University
Muncie, Indiana

March 24th - March 30th
Opening Reception
Thursday March 27th 5 to 8 pm
Hours: M - F 9 - 5:00 pm
Sat 12 - 7:00 pm

Faculty Mentor Scott Anderson
Leia Yabut
The Self Rediscovered

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