

Beauty Within Destruction

A Project Presented to
the Faculty of the Undergraduate
College of Visual & Performing Arts
James Madison University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts

by Julia Rindal Kron

May 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of Studio Art: Painting, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Fine Arts.

FACULTY COMMITTEE:

HONORS PROGRAM APPROVAL:

Project Advisor: Cole Welter, Ph.D.
Professor of Art, Painting

Barry Falk, Ph.D.,
Director, Honors Program

Reader: Maureen Shanahan, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Art History

Reader: Edward J. Brantmeier, Ph.D.
Assistant Director/Assistant Professor, Faculty
Innovation/Education

Julia Kron

Journal of Progress

May 2013 – February 2014

499A (Spring 2013)

Spring Semester 2012; in Introduction to Painting with Professor Lisa Tubach, I became fascinated with the final project assignment. It was our 5th painting of the semester that was the spark for what I wanted to do with my Senior Honors Thesis. Making Art as if the World Matters: Activism and Other Inspirations was the topic of the final painting.

Artists reviewed:

- Picasso's "Guernica"
- David's "Death of Marat"
- Honoré Daumier's "Third Class Carriage"
- Sue Coe
- Leon Golub
- Alexis Rockman
- William Kentridge
- Laylah Ali
- Kerry James Marshall

Article read:

~"Making Art As If the World Mattered," by Suzi Gablick from [The Re-Enchantment of Art](#)

Art has the power to communicate one's outrage, sadness, and strategy for change. The idea to accomplish for the project was to explore a topic of great concern to you, or to use an inspirational resource!

My Idea of an Oil Spill came from the fact that in high school, my neighbors oil tank leaked 1,000 gallons of oil underneath our house—resulting in my family and I having to leave my childhood home (what I thought to be the safest place in the world). The oil under my house was found in the stream/creek in my backyard, which is a significant distance from the location of my neighbor's oil tank.

My oil spill happened at the same time as the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. My final project = a 36" x 44" oil painting with acrylic underlying of an abstract interpretation of an oil spill.

Since I enjoyed this final project so much and wanted to grow from it, I thought I would ask Professor Tubach to be my main advisor. Unfortunately for me, she had the opportunity to go on a sabbatical in Russia during one of my semesters for the honors process.

I had to change my plan fast because I needed to sign up with a professor as soon as possible. I remembered having a photography professor who was interested in working on the honors thesis project with me. I went to her and she said yes but we ended up having different ideas on how to accomplish the project. She wanted to add on another year but I didn't have time to add on that time commitment. I was in a definite time crunch; I asked around to other professors but no one was interested.

Eventually, I came across Dr. Cole Welter who was interested in working with me. I presented him my proposal at the beginning of January 2013. I brought my painting from my other class to propose my idea of what I wanted to focus my honors thesis on.

Dr. Cole Welter was very excited about getting started and helping me through this process. He gave me lots of information to help me research and get started on the direction that I wanted to take the project. He helped me narrow my vision and figure out what I really wanted to get out of the project.

After our first meeting, Dr. Cole Welter introduced me to a list of artists that I needed to research. Those artists included Helen Frankenthaler, Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Sam Francis and Paul Jenkins and Max Ernst. All of those artists had a love for color in their work, which is the most important thing to me. I need to find some artists that I could find some inspiration in that will help me create a definite plan for my project. Along with the artists I watched the film, *An Unmarried Woman* that is about the life of Paul Jenkins and how he creates his paintings. It is not a documentary but a movie adapted to his life. Once I did my research, my advisor wanted me to write a one page – 250-word statement on my intentions for the project. It needed to include a theme, specific medium and my motivation for the project. Also, I needed to keep in mind that "no man is an island" and that I must find my own originality through research. The most difficult and important thing that I needed to create was a title for my project. The title means everything; it tells the viewer the goal of your project and it ties everything together. My advisor inspired me to be my own poet and take control of my work as an artist.

For the first time in my life, Dr. Welter made me feel like a true artist and that I had a purpose. In art class, we have lots of assignments and for those assignments we try our best to please the teacher in our own unique way but my advisor finally gave me the opportunity to please myself with my art. I

am of course nervous of the outcomes and how others will view my non-traditional approach to art. It is quite daunting to constantly think about how others will perceive your work. As I thought about how daunting it was going to be I took on the journey of creating.

My working title for my project is Suspended in Time or Beauty & the Beast. A quote that I keep in the back of my head while I am working is said by Edgar Degas, "Art is not what you see but what you make others see." The main artists that I felt the most connection to from my research are Helen Frankenthaler and Paul Jenkins. For my approach, I create a mixture of acrylic paint (petroleum byproduct), detergent and water. The paint is poured by hovering over the raw unstretched canvas. The key is to create control and balance within each piece. Once the canvas is dried after being poured it needs to be stretched onto stretcher bars and have a gloss medium applied on top. I focus on the combination of nature of thinking, combining the technique and understanding. By having the detergent, it creates an ability to soak into the product. In all my paintings, I focus on creating a veil of colors.

Things that I could use as I begin working include: a towel, some sort of drop cloth, huge roll of canvas, cheap squirt bottles (might create too much of a uniform effect). My recipe try #1 includes 3 pumps of detergent, half a cup of water and 1/8 cup of paint. The colors of paint depend on the mood that is needed to create a piece. My recipe try #2 includes 2 pumps of liquid detergent, 1/3 cup of water and 2 scoops of paint. That is the recipe that ended up being my final recipe. It seems to have worked out quite well.

As each painting is created on the raw canvas, I wait until it has fully dried in order to figure the size of the stretcher bars. Some paintings end up being cut down so it becomes a piece of the painting. When that happens I try to find the most attractive part of the painting, the part that I wish to be displayed. In the beginning as I prep to stretch them I try to figure out the titles for each piece. I spend a lot of time with the pieces in order to figure out the title of each piece. Sometimes it takes a couple of days before I figure out the title of the piece. Titles are very important to me. They are what connect the viewer with the piece if only for a second. I want titles that help the viewer see the paintings in their own way but with a little help from me.

On February 26th, 2013, I wrote: The process is getting very exciting as I am starting to stretch my canvas. I like the direction in which my project is going and I can't wait to see where it will end up! Paint is everywhere; it would be so cool if it rained paint.

Throughout the process, I get several paintings together for meetings with my advisor. He comments on them and then we talk about which ones have the potential to be stretched. Ultimately, it comes down to my decision and how I feel about the pieces. But every couple of weeks during the first semester, I put together some paintings for him to view. We work closely on the direction that the project is going and eventually at the end of the semester examine the work as a whole.

My techniques include choosing colors and getting physical with my medium/ the paint in order to create the movement. It is all about the movement and colors choice of my paint. Sometimes I turn my canvas into a tee-pee and pour the paint from the top so it drips down all sides.

On March 20th, 2013, the struggle to figure out a real title begins. By giving a piece a title, it is like naming your offspring. The titles that I began to brainstorm about:

- Variation in Reason
- Serenity in Destruction
- Beauty within Chaos
- The Beauty of Destruction
- Beauty dissolved into Petroleum
- Beauty from Destruction
- Beauty within the Nonrenewable
- Searching for Beauty in Destruction
- Struggling to find Beauty (in an unlikely place/ through an unlikely source)
- The Poetry of Petroleum

My ideas began to develop, as I would spend afternoons in the studio pouring my paint onto my canvas. I learned a lot from the colors that I created through my movement and action of painting. My thesis focuses on the reactant → product. I realized that this destructive reaction creates a beautiful product. My experiences were an example of a diamond in the rough. This semester led me to what I was trying to say with my paintings as I created them: *Beauty Within Destruction*. That is what I ended up calling my project.

499B (Fall 2013)

With a significant number of paintings completed, I applied for a show at ArtWorks Gallery and had an interview with the director of the following semester, Michele Strickland. I continued to add to my paintings and progress on the subject matter. I noticed that I began with powder detergent migrated into using just liquid detergent and finally I came up with using both. Most of my paintings, I created during 499A which was helpful because I spent most of 499B putting together a booklet with a graphic design student, Emily Benusa. We worked collaboratively on the creation of the booklet. I told her exactly what I wanted to accomplish and she helped me put it into the format that I wanted. I had several items that I wanted to include in my booklet in order for the viewer/reader to understand my paintings. It is important to me to include quotes and other items that are valuable to the reason for me creating doing this project in the first place. We spent the entire semester working together on this booklet. We were constantly sending messages back and forth to each other edits that we had for product. It was a great professional relationship that made the end product very successful. In the end, without my booklet this project would not mean as much to me as it turned out to. I really appreciate having the booklet now because it is something that I can bring to interviews and professional meetings as well. It is definitely something that I will never forget and something that I can enjoy for the rest of my life.

499C (Spring 2014)

For a large part of this section of the project, I was focusing on preparing for my ArtWorks Gallery show. I spent my time installing hooks and wire onto my pieces. I organize what I wanted to display besides my paintings in my show. I printed copies of booklets that I had available for purchase at my show. I had invitations made and sent to everyone from family members to local galleries and professional artists. Also, I had a press release made up and sent out to all the local galleries around where I live in Northern Virginia.

I applied for Harrisonburg's Sunday Soup which is an event where you can submit a proposal and you receive a micro grant if your proposal is voted as the number 1. I received a lot of great feedback but I unfortunately missed the micro grant by one point. I am certainly glad that I participated in this event because it was the beginning of me realizing how appreciated my art can be.

In the end, it turned out to be a very successful opening and all around show. The gallery director received lots of great feedback and was pleased with the show. I think it was the best all around show that I have seen artworks put on and I think that was all thanks to Michelle Strickland who was the Artworks Gallery coordinator at the time. I received a lot of great feedback during the opening from my professors and friends. I had several people interested in purchasing my pieces as well, which is always exciting. It was such a great moment in my life and a wonderful experience to have.