THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

"Branchworks"

A Written Accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition

by

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A PAPER

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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DEPARTMENT OF ART

CALGARY, ALBERTA

September, 1996

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The undersigned certify that they have viewed and read, and recommend to the faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, respectively, a Thesis Exhibition and a supporting paper entitled "Branchworks": an accompaniment to the Thesis Exhibition, submitted by Leanne Erickson in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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ABSTRACT

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This paper "Branchworks" accompanies an exhibition composed of a variety of media, including prints, drawings and sculpture. Discussed in the paper is how the mimetic theory of architecture inspired this imagery and how conceptually the mimetic theory, methods and materials are used to focus on issues surrounding the individual, society and history.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I feel highly indebted to many individuals whom have supported and encouraged me throughout this program. First, I would like to thank my supervisor Bill Laing. Bill provided me with many invaluable learning opportunities, such as the RCA student exchange which broadened the scope of my educational experience. Bill's combination of persistence and patience has taught me to work hard and always strive to do my best. I am also grateful to my committee members, John Will, Peter Deacon and Ann Calvert, for their continual support. Others on staff at the University who unselfishly gave of their time and talents are Helen Miller, John Hall, Dr. Geoffrey Simmins, Arthur Nishimura, and the technicians Rick Calkins and Steve Nunoda. To my studio mate Katy McKelvey, I am ever grateful for her kindness, friendship and support over this past two years. I would also like to thank Margaret May from ACAD, who served as my external examiner.

Many individuals from outside of the University have been of great help to me. My father Bill Parker who helped with the construction of the frames and Jeremy Mayne who gave me encouragement many times throughout this program.

Specific acknowledgment in the area of printmaking goes to Nik Semenoff from University of Saskatchewan. Nik Semenoff introduced me to the printmaking technique of Waterless Lithography, a technique that was used to create portions of this exhibition. Many thanks to Nik, who freely shared his time and knowledge with me.

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DEDICATION

To my husband Gerry and my two children Jenica and Tanner, who have patiently and freely given me the time to pursue my goals over the past two years.

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INTRODUCTION

While working to support my visual artistic activity in a written form, I immediately realized that trying to explain succinctly a body of work that is continually growing presents an interesting challenge. I view my work as being in a continual growth cycle. Not only do I continue to generate new images (as all artists do), but also my feelings about this work evolve introspectively and retrospectively. Therefore, this support paper represents a step in the evolution of the understanding of my art.

Although I am primarily a printmaker, this exhibition encompasses a wide variety of media. Prints, print-based drawings, prints on stone, boxworks and sculpture are all represented in this exhibition, yet each of these media share a commonality in that they explore similar themes.

The artwork in this exhibition is an exploration: exploring the past, exploring media, exploring the origin of forms and exploring the visual vocabulary that I have developed. The architectural forms that initially inspired my work derive from certain prehistoric and historical Classical architecture. Therefore, prehistoric architecture in the context of this paper refers to wooden structures prior to Classical stone architecture. I define these wooden structures as prehistoric since there is little or no physical evidence of these structures remaining today. In comparison the term historical Classical architecture will be used to refer to Classical stone architecture, whose remains are still evident. What interests me about these forms is considering how they have evolved and speculating as to their prehistorical origin. As twentieth-century art critic Lucy Lippard states: "What interests me most about prehistory is precisely what cannot be known about it."¹ In my own work I search back to early architectural theory, which speculates on the origin of form from nature; I then use these speculations as an inspiration for my own work. Letting my work follow this pattern of evolving from one point to branching beyond allows me to create my own visual vocabulary, which can be described as my artistic method of branching.

The work in this exhibition has many common threads running through it. The most visually evident are the naturally based forms portrayed in the imagery. This tie will be explained through mimetic, or nature-based, architecture. Naturally based forms within the context of my work will be defined as forms that refer to natural materials (such as rock or wood) or natural forms (such as branches or trees). The initial inspiration for this series came from the mimetic theory of architecture as well as my interest in architecture. Because I am using mainly prehistoric and historical architecture as an inspiration for my work, allusions to time become an inherent element. This support paper will discuss how the investigation of architectural forms has shaped my artwork and how I use architectural forms metaphorically to evoke the past and reflect the present.

CHAPTER I

MAPPING OUT THE EXPLORATION

Architecture and some of its theories connect with my artwork in a personal way. This section of the paper begins with mapping my interest in architecture and discussing its use as a tool for my artwork and as a point of origin for my imagery. I want to emphasize that although the inspiration for my work comes from architecture, my work does not depict architecture. In tracing the influence of architecture on my work, I will begin with Classical stone architecture and then refer back to one particular theory of the origin of Classical stone architecture, namely, the mimetic theory of Classical architecture. Classical architecture in this context will be defined as architecture "of the Ancient Greeks and Romans."² Through this investigation I will discuss how ancient forms and architectural theory inspire my work and find parallels in my method of working.

1. Architecture as a Source of Inspiration

For some time architecture has been an interest of mine, as well as a source of inspiration. As I look at both historical and contemporary architecture I find myself questioning architects' visual vocabulary. I am not questioning in a critical manner, but exploring why architects choose to borrow a formal vocabulary or decoration from the past. In particular, I am interested in classically based forms adapted to modern buildings.

Many examples of modern-day architecture that utilize classical orders can be cited: the Capitol in Washington or the Pantheon in Paris are but two.³ I find it very curious that architects use Classical forms such as the egg, the claw or the acanthus decoration, which have little meaning as to their original use for many people in contemporary time.⁴ As Janson discusses in the <u>History of Art</u>, the Classical is a style that we are not strangers to, but feel related to in some way; he notes the "air of familiarity" evoked by Classical forms: "A Greek temple will remind us at a glance of the First National Bank around the corner, a Greek statue will bring to mind countless other statues we have seen somewhere But this air of familiarity is not an unmixed blessing."⁵ If we are to get an "unhampered view" of Classical architecture, we must search beyond the remnants of Classicism that surround us today.⁶

Classically based forms in the contemporary setting carry implied meaning far removed from their original intent. Individuals are so far removed from the original intent of the classically based architecture that surrounds us today that many are unable to absorb its meaning. It is my desire, by speculating beyond prehistorical or historical forms, that I can in response begin to create my own visual vocabulary; because of this influence it will be shown that my use of architecturally based imagery is a search back to naturally based forms. Each of these elements, and their intrinsic interconnection, is considered in my work. It was when I began looking at and responding to past historical forms (i.e. those of Greco-Roman Classicism) that I began questioning why we continue to use traditional vocabulary from which we are so far removed. How could I make this connection more meaningful in my own time? To try to understand this disparity between ancient and contemporary usage of Classical architectural vocabulary, I began searching back to the roots of Classical architecture and its implications. This search became a starting point to develop my own visual vocabulary.

2. Exploring the Implications of Architecture

The implications of architecture go beyond its physical structure. To study the history of architecture is to study the society of its time; it reveals the social, economic and technological systems of that society.⁷ Architecture can also be studied to investigate the individual, society, history and the interplay that occurs between these elements in past and present times. Spiro Kostof interprets responses to history and architecture in an interesting manner. In his book <u>A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals</u> Kostof observes:

Architecture is a medium of cultural expression only to the extent that we are able to absorb its messages. And these messages are elicited through the questions that are preoccupying us today. The way we interpret the culture of a period or as a nation through its architecture may tell us as much about it as ourselves.⁸

My preoccupation with questions of the evolution of early Classical architecture and our responses to it has shaped my work. As I view and interact with the classically based forms prevalent in our society, my encounters become a search of past society and architectural meanings as well as eliciting an individual response in contemporary society. It is my intent to explore the interrelationship between the individual, society and our history through this work.

3. Mimetic Theory of Architecture

As I considered my growth as an artist and the evolution of my work, I discovered a theory of the origin of Classical architecture that intrigued me and became the pivotal point for this exhibition of work. The mimetic theory, posited by George Hersey, speculates that Classical stone architecture originated in naturally based vegetal forms. This theory of the origin of Classical architecture is illustrated in Hersey's book, The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture (fig. 1). Hersey's theory states that the ancient Greeks initially worshipped in groves of trees and later constructed their temples from trees.⁹ The theory of architectural mimesis in Greek architecture is also supported by Vitruvius, a second century BC architect and treatise writer, as well as historians such as Jurgis Baltrusaitus and Carl Boetticher. They concur that Classical architecture is derivative of structures made of trees and that later Classical architecture imitated the trunks of trees.¹⁰ Vitruvius specifically claims that the first columns were trees.¹¹ These forms evolved into the cut stone structures whose remains exist today. For the sake of simplicity, the term I use here for architectural forms derived from trees is naturally based forms. These naturally based forms are mimetic in that they are an "imitation or representation of nature."12

Since these wooden architectural forms that inspired Classical architecture have long since disappeared, the mimetic theory of the origin of Classical architecture is academic and difficult to prove. However I am not so much interested in proving or analyzing the validity of the mimetic theory as I am interested in patterning my own artistic imagery, mode of working and use of materials within this context. Although the theory engaged my interest in the prehistory of classical forms, ultimately the validity of this theory is irrelevant to my work. Like other sources of inspiration, it need not be proven or disproven to serve as a springboard for new artistic work. In like manner my interest in prehistory is sparked by what *can not* be known.¹³

In the context of this discussion, prehistoric will be defined as previous to cut stone Classical architecture, more specifically, naturally based architecture, theorized to have been made of trees. The ambiguity of exploring an unproven theory of prehistoric architecture elicits in me feelings of a disconnection with the historical past, but allows me greater latitude for imagination. The mimetic theory with its connecting of natural forms and manufactured objects (whose vocabulary has lost its meaning to me) allows me to explore architecture in a personal and meaningful way. It allows me to use prehistorical theory as an inspirational source to create my own visual vocabulary in a contemporary sense. This vocabulary is based on the combination of naturally based elements and manufactured forms. The combining and contrasting of natural and manufactured elements creates tension yet fusion between the present and an unknown past. 7

4. Exploring in an Imitative Manner: The Imagery of Branching

The "Column and Tree" (fig. 1) illustration from Hersey's book became compelling as a starting point for my imagery as well as for a mode of working. As I looked at the possible evolution of Classical architectural style from the simple form of a tree, I had to also consider how my work could evolve in response to this architecture. I literally took this plan of action: from images of these truncated trees I allowed these forms to grow, much like a tree does in nature.

The first two prints of this series, *Structure 1* and *Structure 11*, will serve as the focus for this discussion. If one looks at two examples of Greek temples -- the circular columnar structure (a tholos) made of marble at Delphi and the Temple of Poseidon at Sunium (fig. 2 and 3) -- one can see the basic forms from which *Structure 1 and Structure 11* are drawn. At Delphi the construction is a circular columnar structure, whereas the form of the Temple of Poseidon is based on linear rows of columns. These examples are only two of many examples of Greek temples that could be cited to demonstrate either circular or linear groupings of columns. In comparison, my forms in *Structure 1 and 11* are similarly based on a circular or linear 'grouping of wooden columns, although in my work the imagery has branched from or grown beyond their original form. These two prints are prototypes for this series. Visually, the connection of these two prints to the mimetic theory can be identified by comparing Figures 2 and 3 with *Structure 1 and 11*.

The mimetic theory not only provided me with visual inspiration as to the origin of Classical forms, but also provided me with a strategy to develop forms in my own work. As I continued this body of work, I used the mimetic theory of architecture as a stimulus and began to manipulate these forms to reflect my own vision. I realized my desire was not merely to illustrate the mimetic theory, but to use my interest in this theory as a point of origin to begin my own evolution of forms. By searching the roots of Classical architecture back to the point of speculative theory, I felt that I could begin developing my own visual vocabulary: the imagery of branching. The concept of branching (a secondary shoot or stem arising from a main axis, as of a tree) metaphorically became the strategy for developing my personal vocabulary for this body of work.¹⁴

СНАРТЕВ П

EXPLORING MY PERSONAL VOCABULARY

1. Branching as Artistic Method

I have explained that just as the mimetic theory of architecture allows me to develop my own metaphoric visual language (the imagery of branching), likewise the mimetic theory acts as a catalyst for the development of my artistic method of branching. Conceptually branching allows me to explore a wide variety of imagery and materials within the central framework of my ideas. I view this diversity in imagery and materials as a positive aspect of growth in the development of my personal vocabulary. The growth of my own vocabulary from one central idea to a wide range of connected but disparate imagery parallels the development implied by the mimetic theory of Classical architecture. The evolution of Classical stone architecture from the form of trees involved a great deal of change and diversity. Likewise, my work grows and develops its own unique characteristics over time. Several concepts that are central to this body of work will be discussed; I view the central concepts as the main stem or trunk, from which the branches feed.

Relationships among the individual, society and history are the core ideas in my work. Developed from these core ideas are many offshoots, or secondary branches. These branches can be described as the exploration of growth/decay, natural/manufactured forms and passage/containment. Each of these branches retains the character of its source, or trunk, but develops its unique pathway and attributes. The mimetic theory of architecture serves as a source of inspiration for my imagery to reflect the elements of growth/decay, natural /manufactured forms and passage/containment and the tension that occurs when contrasting and comparing the individual, society and history.

2. Individual, Society and History

As previously discussed, Kostof related architecture to society and the individual. I agree with this approach and will expand on it specifically in relation to my work. Initially my interest in Classical architecture was primarily an interest in history or an exploration of the past. As my work progressed, my desire was to make my work less distant and more reflective of myself and my time. In this manner the work in the exhibition is an introspective look at myself and the society of which I am part. Society and the individual are difficult to separate. I feel that I cannot just explore myself or the individual, since as individuals we are an integral part of our society. Likewise, I feel I cannot explore just the society of my time because its identity is so deeply interwoven with past history. Therefore, I view architecture as a reference to the individual and society, both past and present.

a. Growth, Decay and Transformation

References to growth, decay and transformation are present throughout my work. I see these references as an outcome of exploring history. Each of the pieces in the exhibition refers to at least one, if not all, of these elements. The elements are conveyed through the imagery and materials. The invented objects presented in the imagery are architecturally inspired and have branch-like qualities. As the series continues, the continual reconfiguration or decaying of imagery occurs and allows for reconfiguration of yet another set of images. In some cases the imagery combines branch-like imagery and stone images into one; other times only stone is represented. I consider each of the materials -- stone, wood and metal -- to be fundamental to my work.

The materials referenced can be divided into two categories: organic and inorganic. I choose these materials because their differences emphasize the cyclical nature of growth, decay and reconfiguration. The organic component in this exhibition is comprised of wood branches or the depiction of branch-like imagery in the paper prints. I see these organic materials as reflecting growth and change. Conversely, the inorganic elements appear to be unchanging and associated with endurance and durability. The inorganic element is depicted through imagery based on stone surfaces or, in the case of the marble pieces, the actual pieces of stone.

The natural outcome of referencing growth, decay and transformation is the implication of time. The combining of two similar but unlike elements -- the inorganic rock and the organic trees/branches -- allows for the interaction of disparate meanings of

growth, decay and transformation and the struggles associated with these elements. The organic and inorganic have different connotations. To me, stone implies stability, lack of transformation and an exceedingly long period of time (that of geological time). Conversely, the trees/branches, because of their organic nature, imply a more rapid transformation and therefore a much shorter period of time. Therefore, growth, decay and transformation are portrayed through the disparate references of organic and inorganic materials.

b. Natural versus Manufactured Forms and Materials

The materials I chose for the exhibition are natural materials and materials that have been altered to have a manufactured look to them. This alteration from natural state to manufactured also implies the passage of time. The natural elements of wood or stone imply time in that they have formed or grown whereas the reworking of these elements, either through reforming or refining, implies a shorter time. All of these materials were chosen because they represent particular types of architecture as well as juxtapose natural versus manufactured forms. Through nature, each of these materials displays evidences of history through surface, growth rings, underlying patterns and stratification or patina. Conversely, each of these materials, whether inferred through the drawings or prints or directly used in a sculptural format, is refined from its natural state. The branches are stripped of their bark, the marble is cut and polished into a slab, and the copper is a patined thin veneer. All of these materials were created long ago but have been tempered into a new form, either through industrial refinement or through the art-making process.

The mixing, matching and refining of materials and media is indicative of our contemporary world. For example, in contemporary times, artists freely use and imitate materials which are not native to their area. In comparison, some of the imagery I evoke - - such as *Redstone* -- has a very primitive look. This crossing between contemporary and prehistorical forms draws attention to the disparity I see between these two times. One example of a more contemporary example of refining of materials is the marble slabs, as in *Ghost of Me*. The marble is removed from its source of formation and manufactured into a smooth surface. Likewise, the wood branches utilized in *Ribcage* and other pieces in this exhibition are removed from their original location of growth. These implications of reworking/refining into a different form, far removed from the past, support my desire to emphasize the origin of form through materials and imagery.

c. Passage, Barriers and Containment

To draw some analogies between the visual qualities of my imagery and its relation to architecture, I will now consider it from a spatial point of view. As I view architecture, it is a device that designates space in a two-fold way. Architecture is a container that defines interior space in a confining manner. Conversely, the exterior of a building defines outside space in that it acts as a barrier. Therefore, architecture can be viewed as defining space dichotomously: it defines both positive and negative space. It is only through passage from the exterior to the interior that one can experience both. Much of the imagery I employ resembles gateways, fences or barriers, which refer obliquely to these spatial characteristics of architecture. But on a more personal level, many of these images elicit feelings of entrapment or containment. Some images portray passage, some containment -- often this is determined by the individual viewer.

3. Exploring My Personal Vocabulary

This chapter has discussed how individual, society and history is a central theme in my work. From this central idea branch off ideas of growth/decay, natural/manufactured forms and passage/containment. These themes are explored through the imagery, wide range of media and format in the exhibition. This diversity of media emphasizes the importance of materials and their references in my work. Each of the pieces, regardless of the medium, is created to work individually and together in the exhibition as a cohesive unit.

СНАРТЕВ Ш

CHRONOLOGICAL EXPLORATION OF MEDIA

The exploration of the media used in this exhibition is discussed in a chronological fashion. Because my inspiration is an evolution of forms through time, paralleling the evolution implied by the mimetic theory of Classical architecture, I feel the evolution of my visual vocabulary and forms should be tracked chronologically. Therefore the works in the exhibition are discussed in the order that my strategies developed.

1. Paper Prints

a. The Formal Strategy of Exploration

The formal strategies in my prints on paper were chosen not only for their aesthetics, but also for the contextual connections they allowed me to make. They serve me in the following ways: one, they become a sounding board to which I respond; two, they mimic other materials which provide important references and resonances; and three, they emphasize theme. These strategies will be discussed individually to clarify these points.

One of the first strategies I began to employ was the use of lithographic tusche washes to create an allover marbleized pattern on the background of the paper. Besides providing a visual ground to respond to, the tusche washes refer to marble -- the construction material of most historical Greek architecture. I found creating these tusche washes a very contemplative process. For me it conjured up several relations. The liquid tusche, when combined with a variety of solvents, would form patterns in part generated by my handling of the material, but more so by factors I had very little control over: environmental factors such as water tension, rate of evaporation or unevenness of the work surface. These patterns, which continually change in a liquid state, would dry, leaving behind a static reference to their past form. This gave the appearance of being frozen in time. The marbleization of the tusche refers to marble, a metamorphic rock. Although apparently static (due to the time frame we view it in), marble is continually changing due to the forces of heat, pressure and erosion. Thus the tusche washes provided one visual element that linked my contemporary forms with the past. Allusions to marble, Classical architecture, transformation, and past and present forms are implied by using these backgrounds.

After employing the technique of tusche washes in several prints, I had to question further how I could refer to past imagery and have it connect in a way that would be personally meaningful to myself while ensuring that the meanings and connections implied can be accessible to a contemporary audience. This was achieved in two ways. First, I began to manipulate the tusche washes by softening the dried tusche (either chemically or physically by heating). I then responded to the patterns in the tusche wash by removing or adding details plus making impressions of fabric or objects in the tusche (similar to an etching technique known as soft ground). This technique provided a reference to the past through marblization but also allowed me to inlay a sense of the present by adding and responding to these designs.

Second, I began using frottage of architectural elements as an alternate to the tusche washes for a background pattern. I began by taking rubbings off the studio floor. To many people, the chipped gray painted concrete floor of my studio may seem to be just an ordinary industrial surface, but to me the frottage of this surface revealed a history. The studio which I now occupy has housed many printmakers. I view this room as a space where many ideas were generated, perhaps a location of inspiration. Through its chipped layers of paint, the floor reveals evidence of the past. My use of the frottage technique soon expanded to include many other floors and architectural surfaces such as marble and wood. All these techniques, or combinations of them, allowed me to reference past architectural surfaces through the use of background patterns.

The next layer of imagery I printed on the paper was an architecturally based invented object. These objects generally have the appearance of being constructed from (or imitative of) branches, stone or both. Often they contain figurative or construction elements. *Between* and *Amethyst Stone* are two examples that display these qualities. These objects are composed to reflect feelings of growth/decay and passage/containment. Overlaying the invented object over an architectural or metamorphically based pattern (whether tusche wash or rubbings) results in the combination of a new image. At the same time each layer remains a separate readable entity. This occurs visually due to the inherently transparent nature of the inks that I use. This manner of working in separate layers suits my intent. Like the past and the present, the layers are distinctly unique, but the underlying structure of the background pattern inevitably molds the vision of the foreground object, as can be seen in *Amethyst Stone*. The foreground/background separation -- and at the same time integration -- becomes imitative of what I see as an interplay of past historical influences in the present. The past can be viewed as the underlying surface, which has some formative influence on the foreground, yet the layers can still be read as two separate but unique entities that, when combined, create a third reading. Therefore I can refer to the past in a contemporary realm.

Within this composition I adopt several other tactics to emphasize intent. These are absence of a horizon line, centralization of composition and reduction of the depth of space. I seldom portray objects in a space delineated by a horizon line. I feel the introduction of a horizon line would locate the object within a specific place. Therefore in order that my work cannot be construed as being of a certain time or place, I tend not to indicate a horizon line. This ambiguity allows me freedom to explore both the past and the present in the same framework, yet make the images readable in a contemporary sense. Absence of a horizon line, combined with centralization of composition, is utilized to produce free-floating forms. These tactics are employed to allow the viewer to set the stage for these objects, allowing for other links between present/past and individual, society and history. Visually, the result is to create a combination of free-floating and constrictive qualities. Constriction is also emphasized through the flattening of space, or reduction of depth. Because architecture is supposed to define space, it could be thought to be diametrically opposed to my imagery. But, in this instance, although my reference is architectural, I am dealing with it in a compressed form or a reduced depth of field.

Compression of space allows me to reduce a vast difference in time into a smaller, more readable element.

b. Imitative Nature of Printmaking

Printmaking, whether it be lithography or silkscreen, enables me to achieve goals of compressing and combining different layers. This layering of surfaces mimics marble slabs, which have several layers of patterning within their surface. Layering and transposition also occurs through the printmaking process. The passage back and forth from original intent, to lithographic plate or silkscreen, to the finished printed surface, is an evolutionary process. Although I would like to be able to say that technically I can always predetermine the finished product, this is seldom the case. When overlaying imagery over strong backgrounds, the result is seldom predictable due to the transparent quality of the inks. Sometimes the print leads me in a direction away from my original intent. The artistic process becomes a push and pull between the evolving print and myself. This evolution is a positive process that compels me to use this medium.

c. New versus old printmaking technology

I have researched lithography most extensively during my program. My main focus is utilizing a new technology within the traditional realm of lithography. Lithography is one of several traditional printmaking processes that have been utilized by artists since its development in the 1790's by Alois Senefelder. This process and variations of the medium developed quickly within a few years.¹⁵ The traditional lithographic process, which is currently used by many artists, is still based on Senefelder's original premise that grease and water do not mix. Though I do use traditional lithography, the majority of paper prints in this exhibition utilize a relatively new printmaking process --Waterless Lithography.

I learned of this process from Professor Nik Semenoff from the University of Saskatchewan, who has been developing the process since 1990.¹⁶ Waterless Lithography works on the premise that a thin layer of silicone covering the non-print areas of the lithography plate will reject ink, whereas in traditional lithography, the ink is repelled from the non-printing areas with a layer of water.¹⁷ The waterless process suits my aesthetic needs because I can rework tusche washes indefinitely until I am pleased with the result. In comparison, continuous reworking of tusches in traditional lithography is very difficult: tusches are difficult to remove, and tend to go lighter or darker if they are reworked.¹⁸ Waterless Lithography allows me to continually rework the tusche in a push and pull manner. Sometimes the tusche determines the outcome, other times I direct the path. In the end it becomes a joint project between artistic intention, natural characteristics of the material and, of course, chance.

Mixing of new versus old printmaking technology provides an interesting method of working when conceptually I am exploring the use of ancient architectural vocabulary in contemporary times to create my own vocabulary. As I compare early architectural forms, and explore how their architectural vocabulary has transformed through time and technology, I find a similarity in my use of old printmaking technology and the new technology of Waterless Lithography that I am using in my work. The new technology of Waterless Lithography not only allows development from within the realm of traditional lithography, but also allows me a unique system of mark-making, greater freedom and interesting results.

2. Branchworks

After working with these images for several months, I found a complementary source of inspiration while exploring the landscape on my husband's family's property. Tucked away at the back of the property was an old willow tree that was intertwined with several fallen trees. It had eventually been uprooted by the pressure of these trees. Immediately I realized that the shape of the branches bore a likeness to my drawings; which, as I have already shown, have been inspired by the mimetic theory of Classical architecture. I cleared the branches out of their entangled source and brought them out into the open. These branches prompted me to wonder how I could respond to these forms in relation to my drawings. Since my drawings are based on three-dimensional objects, the next logical step was to make sculpture from these branches, and I arranged several sculptural installations of branchworks in the University of Calgary's Little Gallery. This provided a way for me to explore the three-dimensional sculptural format, and also provided a source of inspiration for my two-dimensional drawings. Previously, all of the branchworks in my prints were invented forms, whereas these installations provided for me a still life from which to draw. The sculpture came after the drawings. Installing this sculpture, *Ribcage*, in this exhibition provides visual clues to the origin of the invented forms on paper. Allowing the viewer to realize that the invented forms are based on natural materials reinforces ideas of growth, decay and reconfiguration.

Growth, decay and reconfiguration are evident in *Ribcage* as they are in the invented objects on paper. However, the willow branches in *Ribcage* serve as a metaphor for the artistic strategy of branching that I had developed. Letting imagery grow from one image to the next, as well as from one medium to another, allowed for a continual reconfiguration of forms. The sculpture became an inspiration for the drawings and, conversely, the drawings became sources for the sculpture. In this way, each of these forms became imitative of each other.

Several key factors are apparent in the branchworks: scale, use of materials and suspended format. The large scale of the sculpture implies architectural scale; it is an object large enough for a person to walk in and out of. The larger scale is a scale I would like to investigate, but am unable to due to plate size and difficulty of printing. Therefore, the sculpture provides a life-size scale for the viewer to respond to when viewing the prints and drawings, thus reinforcing architectural inspiration.

The inherent qualities of the willow branches are very important to my work. The curvature of the branches are their natural state, they have not been bent in any way. These natural forms provide an interesting comparison with the rock pieces. The commonality I see between these two media are that they are both reflective of the external pressures exerted on them. For example, the marble is transformed metamorphically through heat and pressure. The willow branches were contorted by the weight of fallen trees on top of them while the willow tree was still growing.

To prepare these branches, I removed any secondary branches and stripped the bark. I wanted to pare down the branch to its central form and rid it of its covering. Conceptually I am focusing on the origin of form, as I have done with Classical architecture. Since I was reworking these branches to create a new form, I felt it was essential to rid them of their outer covering. Stripping the bark revealed a whiter surface, indicative of the branches' earlier living form. What I could not remove was the dry rot that permeates these branches. However, this provides a comparison between the apparent vitality of the newly exposed white wood versus the dark discoloration and decay of the dry rot.

The final product resembles a ribcage. This figurative reference is useful when employing architecturally based forms to discuss the interaction of the individual, society and history. *Ribcage* is suspended from the gallery ceiling. This format mimics the freefloating objects in the paper prints. Shadows from the suspended sculpture casting across the floor connect the interior of the exhibition space with the exterior walls and the sculpture to the prints and print-based drawings. In conclusion, *Ribcage* references architecture through its scale and use of materials in addition references the figure through its shape. An important contrast is achieved by imposing the organic forms of *Ribcage* within the geometric confines of the gallery.

3. Print-based Drawings

Chronologically, the Origin of Form series, which encompasses Origin of Form I to Origin of Form VIII, was the next to develop. Like the other works, this series developed through exploration. This exploration was initiated with questioning the parameters I had set. If I am interested in how one particular theory of Greek architecture could lead to a diverse vocabulary so disconnected from its origin, I had to consider that same possibility for evolution of diversity in my own work. Can there be only one solution to a particular inspired form? Therefore during the production of the exhibition and this accompanying paper, I began to analyze closely how I could use an edition of identical prints to explore further how forms evolve.

I took one edition of prints, which was in its formative stage, and began to draw on each print as a separate entity. I want to explore each print's individual evolution and question how diverse in form and intent each print would become. As I began, these questions came to mind: Would my final resolution be a suite of eight identical drawings, or would they vary greatly? How much of the original form would remain or would there be any reference as to the original intent? The combining of print and drawing emphasizes the use of previous vocabulary from one medium and its adaptation to fit another medium; this adaptation and transformation echoes that seen in the movement from wooden-based architecture to stone-based architecture. The transformation of imagery was previously employed in my work by letting the prints respond to the sculpture *Ribcage* and vice versa.

I began by placing one of the prints on my studio floor and drawing with chalk to pick up the frottage element through this drawing technique. I wanted to continue using architectural surfaces as an integral part of the composition. As discussed previously, my studio floor provides me with an architectural surface that has a direct meaning to the evolution of my work.

After I finished the first drawing and began the second drawing, it became immediately apparent that, since I did not mark the exact position of the first print on the textured floor, each of these drawings would have inherently different characteristics. Therefore, I realized that I should let each print-based drawing develop in response to its unique position on the floor. Again, a push and pull occurred between the surface texture revealed on the paper and my own objectives for the print.

On the surface of the print where the lithographic ink was particularly heavy, the chalk tended to be repelled by the thick layers of ink and therefore tended to retain the original printed image. Even with the addition of conte' crayon, heavily printed areas had enough of a relief surface that the conte' still reacted in a different manner. There came a certain point where the conte' crayon and chalk were layered so thickly that areas of the paper would no longer take on the textural qualities of the floor. In the end the floor did contribute to the overall patterning of the print, but due to the printed image scale being much larger than the floor pattern, the printed image became more dominant. Similarly,

the chalk, due to its inherent opaqueness, finally became the predominant visual element over top of the printmaking marks.

This process of drawing became both additive and subtractive in its method. Each print started with exactly the same format, but as I began drawing on the image, randomly at first, different areas of the print-based drawing would attract my interest. I would be drawn to a specific area and react to what was evolving. At times I would be adding to the original form; at other times I would be reducing the original form by covering portions of it with drawing medium. The *Origin of Form* print-based drawings became many variations of one image. Each developed its own unique qualities through masking or veiling of the original form.

In some prints, such as *Origin of Form II*, the opacity of the chalk and conte' crayon began to cover more and more of the printmaking marks. I began to open 'viewing windows' to the original print surface, by leaving rectangular areas virtually untouched. The challenge with this strategy is to combine these areas visually so that there is not a disjunction between the window and the rest of the drawing. I wanted a cohesive look so that this 'viewing window' would not be the predominant element, but something that must be discovered or revealed.

Wanting to explore the origin of form and its evolution, I felt it was necessary to begin with as many common elements as possible. These fixed variables are paper size and type, printed image, color scheme, drawing media, drawing surface and limited range of vision. The paper on which I work is 22" x 30". Working in a smaller format would be much easier physically, but I prefer this scale since it approximates the size of a human torso. When exploring which format to work with, I twisted and turned my compositions, continually trying to explore the horizontal format. In the end this process reaffirmed the vertical format that all my works employ. No matter how I twisted and turned the composition, the horizontal format did not suit my intent. This outcome reaffirmed my choice of scale and vertical format in relationship to the individual.

The color scheme used throughout *The Origin of Form* series comprises earth tones derived from rocks. Although there are variations in the emphasis of particular colors, the majority of the colors are chosen within a particular range. Specifically they are related to colors of rock that I viewed in the summer of 1995 while driving through the Rocky Mountains during a rainstorm. Although the beauty of the mountains always amazes me, the overcast sky drew my eye away from the large scale of a panoramic view to a much shorter range of vision. The rock formations close to the roadside, wet with rain, revealed a magnified color range in the rocks that are usually dulled through dust and dirt. This unveiling of a beautiful range of colors became the inspiration for the color choices in the print-based drawings.

I found this choice significant because of my interest in stone-based architecture and also because the veiling of one viewpoint (the long range vision of the mountains) led to another viewpoint (that of a more closer range of vision) provided me with two equally inspiring viewpoints. I mimicked this shorter range of vision when drawing these works on the floor. I knelt or sat directly on the floor while completing these images. This limited my point of view to approximately fifteen inches. By focusing in this close, I was able to explore smaller areas of the print-based drawing in more detail, as I had viewed the mountains at a much closer range than I had done previously. Unforeseen was the greater realization of space within these works, compared to my previous prints, which have a limited and less detailed depiction of space. This may be partially due to the medium used, or the direct manner of drawing, and perhaps also the shorter range of vision employed.

The end result displays the movement of development between forms, and the markmaking is indicative of this movement in contrast to the previous frozen-in-time vocabulary from the lithographic tusches. In conclusion, the initial intent of form is veiled and revealed at different levels. The original printed form is a commonality in this series, but it is manifested in a wide range of outcomes. There became no single answer; each permutation is as valid as another. While the combination of all the drawings may give a clue to the underlying printed structure, no copy of the original print remains untouched. But, to employ Lippard's concept, what interests me and hopefully the viewer is precisely what cannot be known or seen.

4. Works on Marble

It has been discussed how marble patterning is utilized in the paper works. Likewise, the use of marble slabs as printing surfaces to create such works as *Ghost of Me* indicate similar referencing. I see marble as indicating a historical tie through Classical architecture, but also the patterns (veining or stratification) within the rock are visual clues to natural or geological history. As I have referenced the mimetic theory of Classical architecture, and its relation to nature, I feel that using stone -- another natural element -provides references back to Classical architecture and to nature itself.

Stone in this state is a curious thing. Outwardly I view stone as an unchanging or static form. But in fact, over large periods of time stone behaves as a liquid. It conforms with, and is shaped by, external pressures, much as the willow branches were formed by external pressures exerted by fallen trees. This commonality, of being shaped by external pressures over time, is akin to architects' use of ancient architectural vocabulary, which has transformed in character over time.

Marble holds special interest for me because of its Classic architectural implications, yet it is a rock not indigenous to the area I live. It is imported from areas that I am not familiar with. Similarly, the format I use in *Ghost of Me*-- a refined polished slab -- is far removed from marble's natural state and its original use in historical Classical architecture. But, this use of refined materials has been adapted to my personal vocabulary. The processed surface alludes to the borrowing of architectural vocabulary and its use in a contemporary sense. I view these half-inch slabs like a veneer, or surface covering, that reveals several levels of information, yet still emphasizes the two-dimensionality of the surface. The thin slice of marble appears strong and steadfast but is overlaid with a fragile, transparent silk-screened image. Like the paper prints, it has a reduced depth of space and the image/stone is suspended. This is achieved by mounting a split batten on the back of the rock so that the marble slab appears to be floating a half-inch away from the wall.

The photographic-based imagery silk-screened on the marble's surface integrates with the marble surface due to the transparent nature of the ink. This imagery can be viewed as a veneer covering on top of the rock. The photographic images provide an interesting contrast to the inherent age of the rock. The photograph represents one sixtieth of one second, whereas the rock represents thousands, if not millions of years. By juxtaposing these two vast differences of time, I hope to diminish within my work, the vast scale between prehistorical time and contemporary time. By referencing these two time scales within the same picture plane, I strive to make past references meaningful in a contemporary sense.

In a like manner, the imagery overlaid on the marble deals with individual, society and history. In contrast to the works on paper, the reference to the individual is emphasized through the photographic-based figurative element. Even though the images are based on photographs of particular individuals, the cropping, posing and manipulation of the photographic-based image allow for a less distinct reading. The purpose of diminishing the specific identity of the individual in the marble pieces is to inspire in the viewers' minds thoughts of their own individuality within the context of this work.

Cropping of the figurative imagery, as in *Unfolding*, relates back to the branchworks in several ways. First, there is a correlation between the limbs of the tree and the limbs of the figure. Secondly, elements in both *Unfolding* and the sculpture *Ribcage* are pared down and removed from their source. In *Unfolding* only the arms of the figure are depicted. Likewise with *Ribcage*, the branches were pruned, yet make reference to the entire tree. Branch-like imagery in the lower portion of *Unfolding* is created with copper. This branch-like imagery appears to be collected at the bottom portion of the piece. Whether the branches are being formed by the hands or are being collected by the hands is ambiguous. This is due, in part, to the pliancy the thin gage of copper used in the branchlike imagery. The historical and manufactured implications in the use of the copper and the marble are similar, although the copper provides a more malleable media that works well in combination with the stone.

5. Boxworks

The *Boxworks* series evolved as another format in which I explored recurrent themes. *Boxworks* is comprised of six separate pieces exhibited on the back wall of the exhibition space. These boxes are filled with a variety of media to reflect the individual, society and history and the themes which offshoot from this central core of ideas.

While constructing these containers, I carefully considered the size and depth of these boxes. The size, $8" \times 12" \times 3"$, is smaller than the sculpture *Ribcage* to provide a more intimate enclosed space. This scale is more personal, therefore emphasizing the individual or perhaps evoking the sense of an individual's collection. The shallow format is reflective of the shallow depth of space portrayed in the prints. The combination of the small scale and shallow depth of field serves to compress, therefore emphasizing barrier and containment.

Outwardly the format of these boxes is reminiscent of the work of American artist Joseph Cornell. I have seen and admired many of his works in boxes although the focus of my *Boxworks* is quite different. Even though the box format interests me in that it can be utilized as a container to arrange found objects as Cornell does, I am specifically interested in using the box as a reference to architecture. The materials I incorporate in these boxes, such as in *Landscape Chamber*, have historical mimetic references and include objects that I have collected from my environment. For example branches collected from nearby sites are incorporated within these boxes. Unlike Cornell's boxes, they are not meant to be handled, turned or tilted but are float mounted to the wall to emphasize the reduction of depth of field.

Materials utilized in *Boxworks* encompass a wide variety of similar themes that occur in other works in this exhibition. For example, the construction material of these boxes have been recycled from an old, rough wooden palette. During the process of construction this wood was, in part, refined. Yet some of the character of the old wood was allowed to remain. Some of the boxes, such as *Inner Chamber* and *Residual Sections*, have smoothly sanded bleached exterior surfaces, creating a *new* looking wood. But the interiors of these same pieces have been left close to their former state, allowing for a reforming of old forms as well as emphasizing interior and exterior space. Likewise not all of the edges of the wood have been cut to create straight edges; some have been left in their original broken state.

Other media are incorporated in these boxes, but again the main focus is on three materials: wood, stone and metal. Most of these materials have been refined or altered in

some manner. For example branches removed from their source and reworked are placed in the boxes, thus stressing the differing qualities of natural and manufactured materials as well as the themes of growth, decay and reconfiguration. The branches in *Inner Chamber* are combined with a refined slice of stone. The figurative qualities of this arrangement again emphasize the individual. The emphasis on collecting, combining, and reworking of old materials into a new vocabulary is utilized physically and conceptually. Inclusion of objects indigenous to my environment became fundamental in the growth of my personal artistic vocabulary. Likewise, *Boxworks* provides another source of inspiration for further prints and drawings.

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CONCLUSION

1. Using Prehistoric Architectural Theory in a Contemporary Sense

As I look through this body of work and its relation to the speculative theory of mimesis, I question how prehistorical architectural theory can be used as a viable way of investigating present day experiences in contemporary art forms. As previously explained, the inspiration from the mimetic theory is an attempt to explore the lack of connection I feel exists between past and present times. Lucy Lippard suggests that artists using prehistorical forms as an inspiration are "resurrecting lost connections within a contemporary framework."¹⁹ Furthermore, she proposes a challenge that using resurrected forms must go beyond nostalgia and be made meaningful now.²⁰ It is my goal that my work goes far beyond nostalgic reminiscence. In respect to imagery, my forms have grown far beyond mere representations of prehistorical forms. The work reflects myself as an artist in a contemporary framework. The imagery becomes my voice, though its impetus stems from long ago. I agree with Lippard that for artists to make pertinent reference to prehistorical forms in art today, they must somehow emulate the present. My strategy is to "make resurrected forms meaningful now" through a combination of development of my own concept (branching as artistic method), visual vocabulary (imagery of branching), method of working and materials.²¹

2. The Exhibition Space and Set Up

The exhibition space is always a concern to the artist, although the emphasis and specific concerns of the space in relation to the artist and the works vary greatly. Since my work is inspired by architecture, as well making reference to architecture, my choice was to design the space to reflect the architectural concepts in my work. This is not to say that my work could not exist outside of this specific architectural setting, but rather that my choice of exhibition space emphasizes the concepts portrayed within the exhibition.

Branchworks is exhibited in a long rectilinear space (60° by 29°) with the entry/exit on the narrow end of the space. The proportions of the exhibition space are reminiscent of the proportions of many examples of historical Classical architecture, such as the Temple of Poseidon at Sunium, which is six columns wide by thirteen columns deep (fig. 3). Placing the entrance on the narrow end of the space not only mimics the design of many Classical buildings but also accents the comparison of enclosure and passage in my work. The singular entrance/exit leads the viewer around the interior exhibition space, emphasizing the juxtaposition of the walls (which display the two-dimensional works) and the interior space, from which the three-dimensional sculpture *Ribcage* is suspended. The terms two-dimensional and three-dimensional are used quite loosely here since many of the wall pieces have some depth to them, ranging from one inch to approximately three inches.

Ghost of Me is the only piece of work on the exterior of the exhibition space. Placing such a small subtly colored piece facing the wide expanse of the Nickle Arts Museum has its risks in that it may appear lost against the strong colored large scaled works in the

adjoining room. Nevertheless, my first reason is to draw the viewer into a close personal viewing distance prior to entering the exhibition space. My second reason is to emphasize the exterior of the space in relation to the enclosure of the interior space. This separation emphasizes the aspect of passage, barriers and containment.

By placing works of different media on opposite walls within the interior I emphasize certain comparisons. For example, prints are displayed on the opposite wall to the printbased drawings; likewise the *Boxworks* (made of wood) are on the opposite wall to the marble works. Placing these media in opposition to each other emphasizes the idea of growth, decay and change across media as well as within individual works. The use of contrasting elements complements the comparative nature of these exhibition pieces in both concept and materials. Conceptually, the set up of the exhibition space and the works within it stress recurrent themes such as the exploration of connections between society, individual and history as well as the comparative and evolutionary use of materials and form.

3. Looking Back/Looking Forward

The works in this exhibition and this supporting paper are part of the evolutionary process of my work. As explained, this work has progressed as a continuum, each form relating to and evolving from the last. Inspired by the mimetic theory of architecture, I have developed a body of work as well as an artistic method of working which I have described as branching. This has led to a diversity of media and subsequently a crossingover and diversity of imagery in my work. Prints have led to drawn images, drawings have led to sculpture and so forth, but each medium is utilized to discuss the individual, society and history. This manner of working has helped me establish my artistic vocabulary and the artistic method of branching that I will use to conceptualize other works. Looking back at this exploration I realize that the method of working I have developed over this time provides me with the tools and inspiration for endless future explorations.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Lucy Lippard, <u>Overlay</u> (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 3.

² Victoria Neufeldt, <u>Webster's New World Dictionary of American English</u> (New York: Prentice Hall, 1994), 259.

³ George Hersey, <u>The Lost Meaning of Architecture</u> (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 1.

⁴ Hersey, 1.

⁵ H. W. Janson, <u>History of Art</u> third edition (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1986), 96.

⁶ Janson, 96.

⁷ Spiro Kostof, <u>A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals</u> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 7.

⁸ Kostof, 19.

⁹ Baltrusaitus in Hersey, 14.

¹⁰ Jurgis Baltrusaitus, "The Romance of Gothic Architecture." <u>Aberrations: An</u> <u>Essay on the Legend of Forms</u> (London: MIT Press, 1989), 110, 181.

¹¹ Vitruvius in Hersey, 14.

¹² "Mimetic," <u>American Heritage Dictionary and Electronic Thesaurus</u> (n. p.: Houghton Mifflin, 1986) n. p.

¹³ Lippard, 2.

¹⁴ Henry Bosley Woolf, ed. <u>Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary</u> (Springfield: G& C Merriam, 1973), 134.

¹⁵ Donald Saff and Deli Sacilotto, <u>Printmaking: History and Process</u> (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston ,1978), 183.

¹⁶ Nik Semenoff, <u>Waterless Lithography Using Common Caulking Silicone</u> (Unpublished document: 23 March 1995), 1.

¹⁷ Veda Ozelle, "A Brief Guide to Siligraphy." <u>Hot Off the Press</u>. (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press), vol. 15, 117

¹⁸ Garo Z. Antreasian and Clinton Adams, <u>The Tamarind Book of Lithography:</u> <u>Art and Techniques</u>. (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1971), 52.

¹⁹ Lippard, 5.

²⁰ Lippard, 6.

²¹ Lippard, 6.

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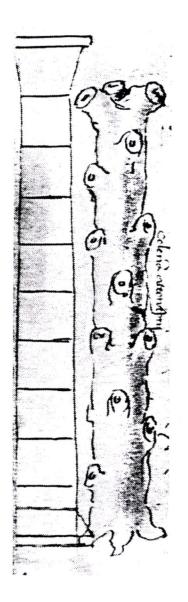
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ILLUSTRATIONS

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Figure 1. Column and Tree. Francesco di Giorgio, From the Saluzziano Codex, Biblioteca Reale, Turin, folio 15r reproduced in: <u>The Lost Meaning of Classical</u> <u>Architecture</u>: (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 15.



McGraw-Hill, 1963), 46.



Figure 3. Temple of Poseidon at Sunium, 444-440 BC World Architecture: (London:

McGraw-Hill, 1963), 47.

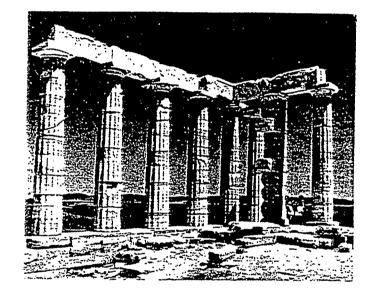
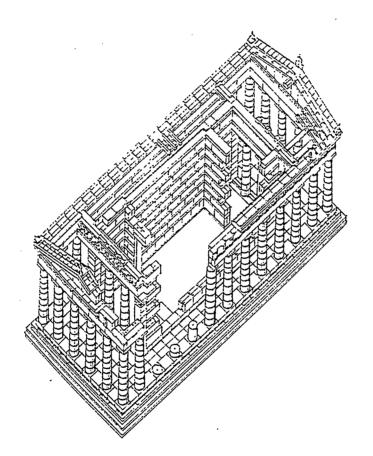


Figure 4. Temple of Poseidon at Sunium, restored. World Architecture: (London:

McGraw-Hill, 1963), 47.



Appendix A: Slides of the Exhibition

PRINTS

I INL				
1.	Structure I	Lithograph on Somerset	24" x 12"	1995
2.	Framework	Lithograph on Somerset	30" x 22"	1995
3.	Structure II	Lithograph on Somerset	24" x 12"	1995
4.	Between	Waterless Lithograph/Serigraph on BFK Rives	30" x 22"	1995
5.	Amethyst Stone	Waterless Lithograph/Serigraph on BFK Rives	30" x 22"	1996
6.	Beneath the Surface:	Waterless Lithograph/Serigraph on	30" x 22"	1996
	Germination	Arches		100/
7.	Redstone	Waterless Lithograph/Serigraph on Arches		1996
8.	Beneath the Surface:	Waterless Lithograph/Serigraph on	30" x 22"	1996
	Residuum	Arches		
PRI	NT BASED DRAWINGS			
9.	Origin of Form I	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
10.	Origin of Form II	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
11.	Origin of Form III	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
12.	Origin of Form IV	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
13.	Origin of Form V	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
14.	Origin of Form VI	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
15.	Origin of Form VII	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
16.	Origin of Form VIII	Waterless Lithograph, Conte', Cha and Oil Pastel on Somerset	lk 30" x 22"	1996
WO	RKS ON MARBLE			
17.	Ghost of Me	Serigraph on Marble	29.5" x 11.5" x 2'	1995
18.	Unfolding	Serigraph on Marble, Copper	18" x 12" x 2"	1996
19.	Disclosure	Serigraph on Marble, Copper	18" x 12" x 2"	1996

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BOXWORKS					
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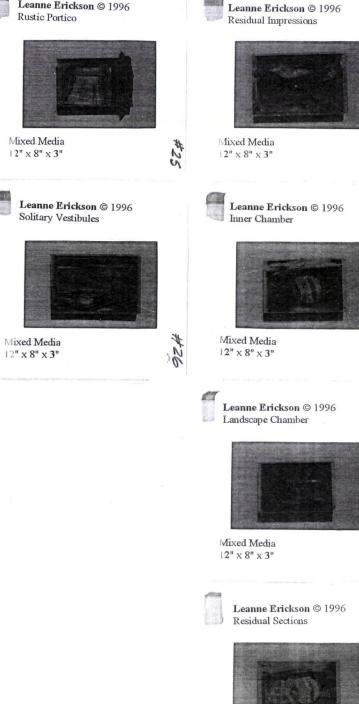
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Leanne Erickson © 1996 Rustic Portico

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ASSIGNMENT:





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Mixed Media 12" x 8" x 3"