Serigraphy: A method for hard edge design

James Douglas Staples
The University of Montana

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SERIGRAPHY: A METHOD FOR HARD EDGE DESIGN

by

James D. Staples

B.Ed. University of Alberta, 1967

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Approved by:

[Signatures]

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INTRODUCTION TO THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The group of serigraphs, illustrated by the photographs following, constitutes the terminal project for a Master of Arts in Art degree.

The beginnings of serigraphy lie deep in the past. Medieval European and Ancient Japanese woodblock printers used paper stencils for the addition of color to their prints. Centuries ago, as the paper stencils of Japanese artists became more complex, the artists began using threads of silk or hair to support parts of the stencil that were not attached to the main part of the stencil. From there they began to support the entire stencil with a regular pattern of silk threads so that, in effect, the threads became a woven mesh or screen made of silk. In Europe, at the beginning of this century, artists began using actual silk cloth as a stencil support. Instead of a brush, they used a squeegee to apply paint through the stencil. While some refinements have been made, the process is essentially the same today.

The process soon came to America where it became a bonanza for commercial printers. Because of the secrecy with which the commercial printers guarded the process, silk screen printing did not come to be used as a fine art medium until during the 1930's a group of artists, supported
by federal government funds, began to investigate its possibilities as a means of creative expression. Through their efforts serigraphy, the name which they ascribed to the process as a fine art medium, became a popular and accepted form of fine art printmaking.¹

Perhaps because of its use of primary color systems, its sharp, clear use of line, and its immediate message, the advertising arts have influenced American art in recent years. The use of large, flat color areas defined by sharp, clear edges is known as "hard edge" painting. It was found that paper stencil serigraphy is an ideal method for working in the hard edge style. Possibly more important is that serigraphy affords the artist with a means of reaching more people with its many copies than does a single painting. Indeed, from its beginnings, the very purpose of printmaking was to make art available to more people than was previously possible.

The work seen here can be divided into three phases of development. The first phase (Still Life) began when common articles such as bathroom towels, a hollow chimney brick, a sliced orange from a vodka advertisement were used as a beginning basis for flat two-dimensional designs.

The second phase (Severed Circular Lines) was an extension of the first with the elimination of any natural

object as a basis for starting the design. On the first series, it was discovered that the circle was playing an ever-increasing place of importance in the pictures. The circle now became the sole basis for a starting point. Then the line (circumference) that makes a circle became important. The breaking up of these circular lines became a method of attempting to catch, to hold, and to entertain the visionary possibilities of the viewer.

Up to this point the work had been strictly non-representational. No real objects could be definitely discerned. It was thought that a harder "visual impact" might be achieved if something that is easily recognized was used as an integral part of the design. In recent years the color combination of red, white and blue, with its connotation of patriotism, has been used with effective results by the advertising arts. Capitalizing on this effectiveness and using patriotic symbols as a "recognition factor" was an attempt to achieve a "visual impact" of color and design.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Fig. 2. — "Still Life No. 2"
18" x 27"
Fig. 3.--"Still Life No. 3" diameter 13"

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