

Statement of August 2006

My current work is meant to produce an active and fluctuating relationship between the anticipations of the viewer and artist in relation to the art object. For example, there can be a need to “see” a subject as expected that overpowers whatever competing images I’ve placed in the perceptive pathway, which themselves are made up of structured abstract wholes that demand attention just as the subjects in the work do. Exploring various combinations of visual and verbal information (such as a title or statement about the work) seems to produce interesting sequences of perception and comprehension. The subjects – carefully chosen for each work – alternate as foreground and background visually, thematically and conceptually in ways that depend on the specific work and the perspective an observer takes. There can be a collapse into abstraction upon abstraction, or perhaps the mind switches over to seeing a more “objective” view. What I seek most is what is referred to in computer programming as a *race condition*:

A *race condition* occurs when multiple processes access and manipulate the same data concurrently, and the outcome of the execution depends on the particular order in which the access takes place.¹

A given operation may yield a result, but a delay or mistiming may cause that result to be *read* as the result for a second, independent operation.

This condition frequently results in a discussion among those viewing a work (much as a computer race condition might produce logs of its going back and forth). This adds layers on top of an ostensibly immediate experience in order to “understand” it somehow. There may be some conceptual, political or sociological meaning to my use of squares and my choice of subject matter to be fragmented², but it is most satisfying when this *living situation* occurs.

To also have things not be seen, but *re-seen* is of interest. Both my use of “abstraction” and “representation” have a chance to be re-seen, since both are made to stand out against each other and yet remain integrated. Perhaps my choice to paint these works by hand can cause the act of painting to be re-seen because the “realistic” results are undone by the composition and vice-versa.

What strikes me most in this regard is when I am asked why I paint these works rather than simply make them from collaged photographs. I have to assume this would not arise if I painted them “normally”. This question leads to a potentially deeper coherence, because a “race condition” is now set up between representational painting and the notion of some “real” object (especially as conditioned by our photographic culture). We know that painting something “realistically” is a just a facsimile. That I mix a number of

¹ A useful enough definition for my purposes found on tech-faq.com.

² See my “Statement of June 2006”

discrete colors or shades and can thus model a convincing “thing” only shows that I have mapped most of what the eye requires to form a conclusion, which is often relatively little. This makes one wonder how much is required before we think we see anything at all.

Nonetheless, *conspicuously constructed* images do seem intrinsically interesting to us. Though I would not be much driven to make them straightforwardly, it is admittedly stimulating to *make* such an image, while viewers are brought within closer orbit of the work and – importantly – its ideas for the same reasons. The attraction may be in opening up the seams of an apparently regular and seamless vision, continuously operating just to make it across a street or hail a taxi. Of course, I wouldn't really have to *paint* an image, though I like the medium. I suspect I could make an image out of anything – so long as I *made* it – and achieve much the same outcome.

– Robert Burnier