Research Grant – Fall 2008

Title or Proposal: PARASOL HOUSE : GRANTPIRRIE GALLERY WINDOWS PROJECT, SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

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Unit: Art & Art History

Abstract: From March 4 – 28, 2009, at the height of the Australian art season, I am invited to exhibit a Windows Project at GrantPirrie Gallery in Sydney. This internationally distinctive venue represents significant recognition of my work and career. For the window I will create the large paper scroll “Parasol House,” portraying geometric dwellings and images from Asia and Europe within lyrically abstracted space in an expansive single format. I will apply College Research funds toward travel to Australia to install the show, attend the opening reception, travel within Sydney and connect within the artist community as the exhibition opens.

Proposal: Grantpirrie, one of Sydney’s most prestigious galleries, recently inaugurated a Windows Project Series for international artists. Gallery director Tony Stephens has invited me to present a Windows Project in March 2009. For this project, I will create “Parasol House,” a paper scroll landscape combining impressions of Beijing, Miami, Taichung, New York and Paris. The scroll will be on public view 24 hours a day.

For five years, since moving to Florida, I have become increasingly fascinated by landscape as a space where memory, experience and location intermingle. Travel to Asia and encountering its long tradition of landscape painting first-hand, deepens my understanding of landscape as motif and metaphor. In traditional Chinese painting, landscape is both anthropomorphic and abstract, a visualization of interior consciousness that becomes a container for all experience. Borrowing from traditional Chinese scrolls, Indian miniature techniques and the “found” pours by French abstract painter Wohls and others, I integrate my perceptions of places lived and traveled combining disparate elements within landscape space. Thus my landscapes suspend dichotomies such as abstraction and representation, traditional and contemporary, Asian or American. Currently, I have absorbed the ubiquitous construction sheds and awnings in New York within geometric structures inspired by their radial shapes, which I call “parasol houses.” These geometric structures offset colorful explosions of poured paint and contribute to the visual tension between diverse cultural idioms or structure and collapse in my work.

At Grantpirrie I will expand these visual concepts in a 7 x 17 foot scroll that conflates urban “parasol houses” with subtropical foliage, patterns derived from Indian miniature painting and Chinese idioms for trees and mountains. This project challenges me to work in breadth as well as depth by shifting my predilection for shallow layers into sequential areas punctuated, as in traditional scrolls, by empty spaces that demarcate passage from one island of activity to the next. Portraying specific landscapes will elaborate distinct movements between one area and another for more vivid visual travel. Compositionally,
the panoramic format follows the processional nature of royal commissioned scrolls, as well as migration of Aboriginals from the gallery’s industrial neighborhood that has recently undergone urban development. I want to offer a landscape for contemplation, succor and aesthetic delight for viewers on the move, inviting their initial engagement with an epic scale that in time yields more intimate intervals. “Parasol House” responds to traditional Chinese landscape and its contemporary correlate of urban displacement by inverting its progression from small to large, leading viewers instead to and through parasol houses, oases within the shifting landscape.

“Parasol House” unites my research aims with the objectives of my unit, College and University in both immediate and far-reaching ways. It provides the opportunity to engage a culture’s traditions and contemporary practices in situ; presents my work in an internationally distinctive venue that heightens my research profile, thus that of my unit and College; introduces a landscape that inspires future research and crucially, promotes heightened global and cultural literacy among my colleagues, students and the USF community.