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## Variations on two themes

Florence Lyn Bafus

*Portland State University*

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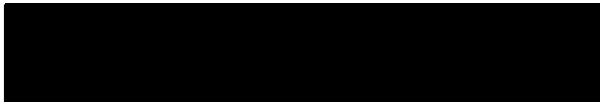
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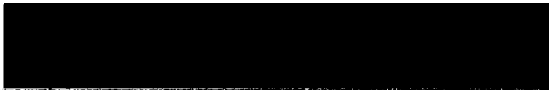
AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

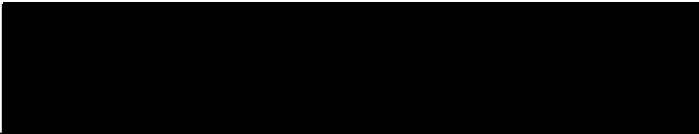
Florence Lyn Bafus for the Master of Science in Teaching  
in Art Presented on May 17, 67  
Title: Variations on Two Themes  
Abstract approved: Richard J. Prasch

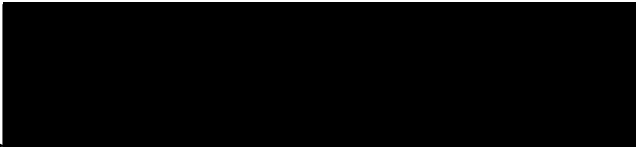
Contained within my thesis is an analysis of my paintings in relation to paintings that are being done in this age and area. Thus, I have discussed the geographic and atmospheric environment which necessarily affects the artist's work. The paintings which have been chosen to comprise my thesis are two views of the Steel Bridge and four views of an old barrel mill in North Portland. They have been executed in Polymer-Acrylics, a Hy-Plar product. This medium, plus the subject matter, compositional and technical problems are given consideration. Lastly, I have briefly summarized what I believe painting to be.



APPROVED:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Professor of Art in charge of major

  
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Head of Department of Art

  
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Dean of Graduate Studies

Date thesis is presented May 17, 1967

Typed by Mary Sauter for Florence Lyn Bafus

Variations on Two Themes

by

Florence Lyn Bafus

A THESIS

submitted to

Portland State College

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Master of Science in Teaching

June 1967

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## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

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## Variations on Two Themes

Painting has been said to be a projection of the personality of the painter and a statement about the age that produced it. There is within each age, broadly three groups: those who cling to the past, those who paint in conformity with what is being done, and the avant garde.

At this stage in my development as a painter, my work lies between the first and second categories. Evolving from the Naturalistic, my work remains for the most part Realistic, with definite colorist tendencies. I have been influenced considerably by the French Impressionists, particularly Cezanne.

The paintings which have been selected to comprise my thesis work consist of two views of the Steel Bridge and four views of an old barrel mill in North Portland. The paintings which have been executed in Hyplar Copolymer are based on structured drawings which suggested a variety of compositional possibilities.

To place myself in excellent company, I subscribe to Renoir's conviction that this is a good world and happiness is the natural state of man. Renoir's art is simple, direct and profound. My work at this stage is simple and direct.

I find it quite possible to look at the Portland area with a sense of awe and wonder. The atmospheric changes often result



Mill # 1\*

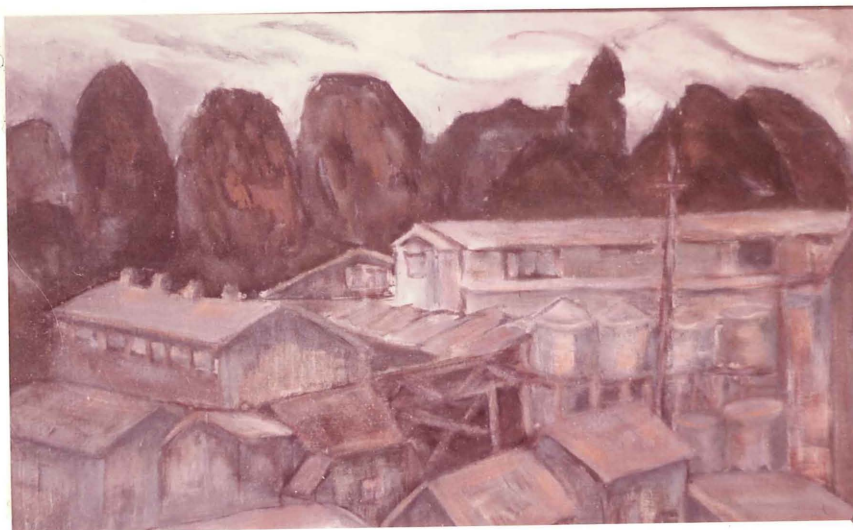
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\* The sketches have been reproduced by a 3-M copier (originals in India Ink.





Mill #1 Copolymer\* 30 x 30"



Mill #2 Copolymer 24 x 36"

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\*Plastic water color for artists



in the subtle mistiness of a Corot landscape. On occasional bright days, the absolute clarity of the area becomes a Leger in scope. However, predominately cool colors typify this locale and I seldom feel inclined to use warm colors on my palette. A notable exception is Mill #1 in the series. The mill, still in operation, was apparently bright red in its robust youth. The years, however, have left it a weathered and warm motley of dusty pinks. Thus, it appeared to me under the bright summer sun. The composition is necessarily linear, verticality is predominant, although diagonals state the lines of basic utilitarian architecture of the roofing.

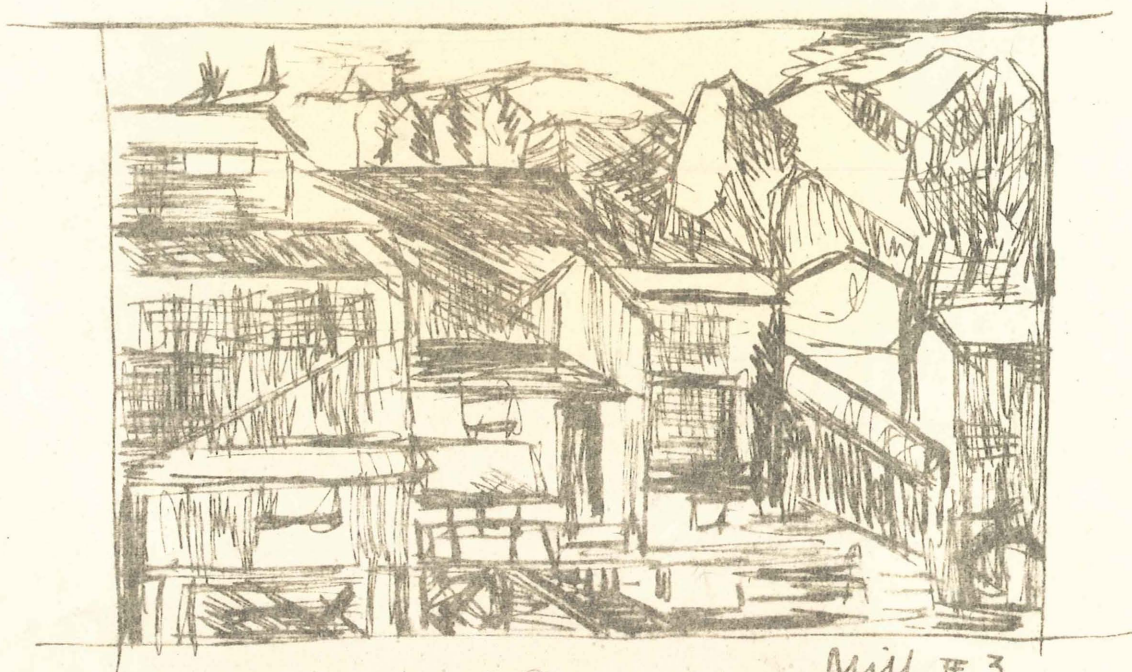
Hyplar extender was used (in an experimental way) to build up areas in the composition. As acrylics (or polymer) is flat in nature, has a slippery feeling, and does not possess the gritty body of oil, the use of a modeling extender must be employed. Thus I attempted to build up a rich surface texture, using a palette knife, alternately with a serrated knife.

The extender was applied directly from the container, over areas of paint that appeared to lack cohesion with the whole. The result was an added richness, however, one feels that the method is open to arbitration as an artificial texture has been created which is not organically related to the material.

Small planes related to each other as in many Cubist works are employed in Mill #2. These small planes lead into larger planes to create the pattern within the composition. A similarity



Mill # 2



Mill # 3



Mill #3 Copolymer 24 x 36"



Mill #4 Copolymer 24 x 36"



to C. S. Price may be noted in the buildings in the foreground. The paintings that Price did of the paper houses that he constructed as models seem to have some of that same quality. It is possible that the whole work may suggest some of this artificiality. However, this is not necessarily a condemnation of the work when one considers that under certain light conditions in the Northwest, landscape does take on an artificial character. Buildings may seem to be highly transitory and the sky may appear to take on substance.

The painting, Mill #3, gives evidence of this as the quality of the sky, described in the preceding paragraph is effectively captured in this work. The effect of the light on the objects of this work contribute to the compositional variation nearly as much as the edges of the objects themselves. In this manner, diagonals created by edges are opposed by diagonals created by areas of light and dark on the building surfaces.

Opposing diagonals work their way across the horizontality of the canvas of Mill #4. Repeated verticals extend outward from the diagonals to give a total effect not unlike the abstract designs employed in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Perhaps the mysterious element which I believe exists in Portland skies is best portrayed in Bridge #1. Often the sky over Portland is predominately grey, streaked with delicate pinks and lavenders. The bridge structure is effective tracery against this permeated grey. I believe that I have succeeded

in relaying my feelings concerning the subtlety of the scene. Although the work is subtle and delicate, the surfaces around the bridge are divided in terms of value and linear quality so as to relate to the bridge structure, creating an effective total composition.

Having lived in and been influenced totally by the colors of the West and Northwest, I am naturally somewhat conservative in my choice and use of colors, and find too much color distracting. Thus in Bridge #2, I have painted the structure of the Steel Bridge rising majestically out of the murky grey-green base to become a silhouette against the foggy sky planes of an early morning in Portland. The two main verticals which are actually composed of both vertical and diagonal line are effectively intersected by the strong curved line of the bridge span. Oppositional curves are seen in the area of the sky and small curve linear aspects are effectively repeated in the bridge towers.

If through my painting, communication takes place, sophisticated compositions will not be forth-coming, at least not immediately. As stated previously, my interpretations, as I attempt to analyze them objectively, are simple and direct, and I will add, not without nostalgia.

My thesis proves the moot point that each of us under the same set of circumstances sees in a very different manner and further, that individually, one can perceive the same objects in different ways. Thus, I submit my six paintings, two views of

the Steel Bridge and four views of the Barrel Mill. After all, variation on a theme is what painting is all about.





Mill #4



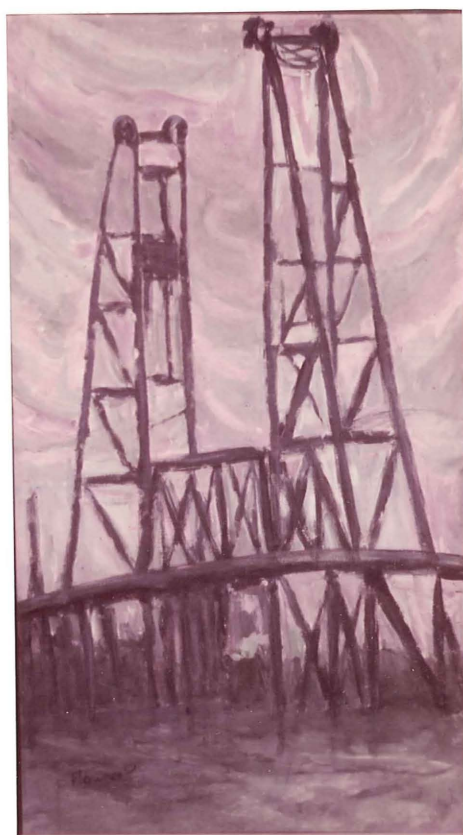
Bridge #1







Bridge #1 Copolymer 24 x 36"

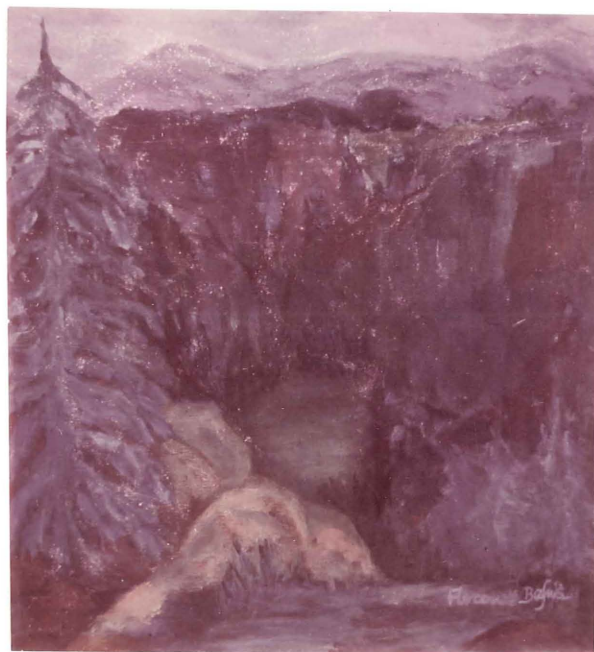


Bridge #2 Copolymer 28 x 42"





Remembered Moonlight    Acrylic\*    30 x 40"



Northwest Landscape    Acrylic    32 x 32"

\*Polymer Emulsion



Memory of the Mill    Acrylic    34 x 38"