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**FROM EDMUND HUSSERL'S *IMAGE CONSCIOUSNESS* TO
MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY'S *FLESH* AND *CHIASM*:
THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ESSENCE OF IMAGE**

By

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M.F.A., Cranbrook Academy of Art, 1990

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of the University of Louisville
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Humanities
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

December, 2010

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A Dissertation Approved on

November 23, 2010

By the following Dissertation Committee:

Dissertation Director

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother and father.

Your love and support is the strength that carries me through life.

“I stayed focused Dad!”

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Annette Allen,
for her creative insight, guidance and encouragement.

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unparalleled mentor in the wonderful world of Phenomenology.

Additionally, I want to express my gratitude to Mary Carothers
for being a continuous source of artistic fortitude.

I felt honored to have each of you on my committee and as part of my dissertation.

Last, to my family and friends, many thanks for their patience and understanding.

I could not have done this major life accomplishment without each of you.

ABSTRACT

FROM EDMUND HUSSERL'S *IMAGE CONSCIOUSNESS* TO MAURICE MERLEAU-PONTY'S *FLESH* AND *CHIASM*: THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ESSENCE OF IMAGE

Sara J. Northerner

November 23, 2010

This dissertation presents the philosophical concepts of Edmund Husserl on phenomenology and image-consciousness and explores the phenomenological project of Maurice Merleau-Ponty as I have sought to render them in my creative artwork. By building upon Husserl's theories on the phenomenological constitution of an object and his specific work with image-consciousness, the diverse structures of a contemporary image-consciousness are realized photographically in my artwork. His sketches, collected works and lectures provide a foundation of knowledge beyond traditional and contemporary photographic theory. Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty's writings on phenomenology, perception, embodiment and the visible/invisible have strengthened my ability to create diverse structures of meaning in images throughout an exhibition of artwork. His ideas of body schema, flesh and chiasm are directly incorporated into the

physical reality and aesthetic experience of my work. As artist, I disclose the possibilities of Husserl's image-consciousness as perceived through Merleau-Ponty's concept of the embodied viewer in intimate communion with the world.

The creative work associated with this dissertation consists of a series of eleven images, most of which are larger than life-sized portraits. These images, while photographically captured and digitally produced, do not result in what are considered traditional photographs. The method of their production, surface treatments and multi-layered technique of integration makes each image a unique entity. These technical aspects additionally allow a degree of translucency and image depth to be manipulated within the work through a changing quantity and variable quality of light. The large scale of the pieces, physical characteristics and amount of movement required for the viewing an image comprehensively places emphasis on the phenomenological theories as embedded within or illuminated by the artwork. Whether it is one image or the entire body of work, all must be considered as part of a predetermined horizon or world that can only be constituted by the embodied viewer as his or her consciousness and world are synthesized or intertwined.

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
PROLOGUE	
An Introduction to the Dissertation Project	1
CHAPTER	
I. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HUSSERL	
Phenomenological Constitution of an Object	5
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HUSSERL	
Husserl on Image-Consciousness	12
III. APPLICATION: HUSSERL	
Development and Structure of Image	22
IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MERLEAU-PONTY	
The Bodily Nature of Perception	34
Body Schema	40
V. APPLICATION: MERLEAU-PONTY	
Artistic Perception	50
Flesh and Chiasm	54
CODA	
Final Thoughts on the Dissertation Project	67
REFERENCES	71
APPENDICES	77
CURRICULUM VITAE	82

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

ILLUSTRATION	PAGE
1. Image of <i>RobertN3</i> , <i>RobertN2</i> , <i>RobertN1</i>	11
2. Detail of <i>RobertW1</i>	19
3. Image of <i>RobertN1</i>	21
4. Image of <i>RichardW1</i>	21
5. Detail of <i>RobertN1</i>	24
6. Detail of <i>RichardW1</i>	24
7. Comparison of <i>RobertW1</i>	26
8. Comparison of <i>RichardW1</i>	27
9. Comparison of <i>RobertW3</i> , <i>RobertW2</i>	29
10. Image of <i>RobertW3</i> , <i>RobertW2</i> , <i>RobertW1</i>	31
11. Image of <i>RichardW3</i> , <i>RichardW2</i> , <i>RichardW1</i>	32
12. Detail of <i>RobertN3</i>	37
13. Detail of <i>RobertN3f</i>	39
14. Detail of <i>RobertW2</i>	44
15. Comparison of <i>RobertN2</i> , <i>RobertN3</i>	54
16. Image of <i>RobertN2</i> , <i>RichardW1</i> . Section of <i>RobertN2</i>	56
17. Detail of <i>RobertN2</i>	56
18. Detail of <i>RobertW1</i> . Detail of <i>RobertW2</i>	57
19. Detail of <i>RichardW1</i>	59

20.	Detail of <i>RobertW1</i>	60
21.	Image of <i>RobertN3x</i>	62
22.	Detail of <i>RobertN2</i>	62
23.	Comparison of <i>RobertW2</i> , <i>RichardW1</i>	65
24.	Image of <i>RobertN3</i> , <i>RobertN2</i> , <i>RobertN1</i>	65
25.	Comparison of <i>RobertN2</i>	77
26.	Image of <i>RobertW2</i> . Studio view of <i>RobertN2</i> and <i>RobertN2</i>	77
27.	Comparison of <i>RobertN1</i>	78
28.	Details of <i>RobertN2</i>	78
29.	Comparison of <i>RichardW3</i>	79
30.	Details of <i>RichardW3</i>	79
31.	Comparison of <i>RobertW3</i>	80
32.	Rear view of <i>RobertW3</i> . Detail of <i>RobertW3</i>	80
33.	Studio installation views of <i>RichardW1</i> , <i>RichardW3</i> , <i>RichardW2</i>	81
34.	Studio installation views of <i>RobertW1</i> , <i>RobertW2</i> , <i>RobertW3</i>	81

PROLOGUE

An Introduction to the Dissertation Project

For over five years, the ideas for this dissertation have developed from my growing understanding of the philosophical field of phenomenology and its application within aesthetics, art theory and photography. Previously, I turned to prominent contemporary artists or postmodern theory to support my artistic research and inspire my creative endeavors. In pursuing the doctorate, my artistic aspirations have been shaped by the writings of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. My entire visual field in working artistically has been challenged by merely reflecting on a proper description of an embodied concept of sense perception. Whether sketching an idea, conceptualizing a photograph, creating an entire work or confronting a gallery space where an installation will occur, the phenomenological methods of sense perception and reflecting upon those perceptions have become central to my creative practice. Through phenomenology, I justify and enhance my ability to perceive, through an interiorized ‘as-if’ perception, a completed image or possible apperceptions by a viewer. This capacity enhances the creative process and yet, is part of the theoretical underpinnings of the artwork.

My artistic choices concerning this creative dissertation have expanded upon my earlier methods of working and taken on an entirely new conceptual direction. Artistically, the visually reflective qualities of working photographically have always

allowed me to investigate perception as an interaction of the human body with the world. Traditionally accepted as an objective record of reality, the photographic images within society are usually measurements of our existence in the world. Photographic portraits, as defined by our experience and knowledge of others in the world, provide a projection of both body image and an image of body. In my artistic work, how a specific image is perceived, sensed and constituted in the mind of the viewer influences the construction of meaning. Through phenomenological study, I have gained new insight into the tangible and intangible ideas of perception and embodiment and now incorporate these concepts into the physicality of the materials, the transparent nature of the images and an interweaving of real space/image space for the viewer.

For this dissertation portfolio, I have chosen to work with the portraits of three specific white males that differ significantly in age, body type and outer persona. While I acknowledge the implications of concentrating exclusively on a certain gender or race, the selection originated from a choice of representing familial connections and contrasting dynamic reflections of the male body at three different points in life. A personal relationship with each individual enabled multiple positions of analysis for me as both artist and phenomenologist. To this end, I elected to do portraits that could fall into the category of vernacular images to promote a sense of familiarity in the same manner that Edmund Husserl utilized a photograph of someone he knew to establish his theories of image-consciousness. However, this personal background information is not vital to the phenomenological purpose of this project. These characteristics are secondary to the physical differences or similarities immediately apparent to the viewer. The repetition of particular poses or gaze of the subject against the presentation of each figure

as clothed/unclothed were meant to sustain ideas such as body as cultural marker (physically and metaphorically presented) or a comparative study of body. The photographic framing of each individual, differences in scale of the figures and overall size of the pieces additionally contribute to these culturally determined views of body but, also, are not the main focus of the dissertation. Throughout the work, the importance remains in the weaving together of the viewer's perception and his or her own mediating body to create an interaction or 'texture of being' that envelops both the concept of body and its reality as subject/object of perception in an image.

In structuring this creative dissertation, four main areas of concern must be articulated. Essential to the project are the following concepts: 1) Husserl's theory of image-consciousness as foundational to the viewing of images, 2) the incorporation of Husserl's concepts within the artwork, 3) Merleau-Ponty's embodied being as viewer, and 4) the artwork as representing Merleau-Ponty's intertwined fabric of 'flesh' and a site of 'chiasm'. In my approach to these four areas, I expound first in the essay upon the concepts of phenomenology as embedded ideas important to my artistic practice prior to an application within the artwork. The need is to recognize how the artwork is perceived by a viewer on multiple horizons and within numerous possible veils of perception. However, I am not proposing to project meaning onto or presume the significance of the artwork from the viewer's position. In this essay, I address only how I, as artist, consider the viewer's perception as part of my creative process and in application towards the phenomenological study of the images.

In each of the four issues of concern, a philosophical foundation for the creative artwork will be established with phenomenological underpinnings. My research on the

writings of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are explained, and then specifically applied. As a result of the meaning embedded within each aspect of the images as drawn from these sources, I believe that the perceptual experience of the viewer places the artwork into the context of contemporary photographic discourse. My creative methods and critical stance concerning the relationships of phenomenology, image-consciousness and an embodied viewer are given as an alternative to current methodology found in postmodern visual culture. The projection of meaning from the perspective of the viewer, and the relationship of body image to image of 'other' as well as control over the horizon of an experience of a work of art are all part of the practice of contemporary art. The structuring of visibility, as the perceiving, sensing and constituting of an image, opens the theoretical foundation of the postmodern intertextuality of image. By analyzing the manner in which a contemporary image-consciousness functions, I challenge the viewer's awareness of how photographic images are interpreted via the body, our bodily experiences and our knowledge of the world.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HUSSERL

Phenomenological Constitution of an Object

The philosophical understanding of human experience and the manner in which objects present themselves as embedded within that experience has become a foundation for my artistic research. My study in the field of phenomenology has strengthened how I engage with art on multiple levels: in appreciating it, in critical reflection on it, or in creating it. The phenomenological method of direct observation and analysis of the perceptual process has allowed for a new awareness of different modes of presentation and representation. However, before any application of any methodology to actual works of art, important underlying principles of phenomenology must be explained in order to apply these concepts to my artwork.

To engage in a phenomenological study is to perceive, as the focus of my experience, a specific object. In the perception of this object, I seek the essence or truth of the object only as experienced. The constitution of this object is founded on a truthful description of my direct experience of the object as originally given. My directedness toward this object completes a characteristic called intentionality. The concept of intentionality, as explained by Edmund Husserl and taken from Franz Brentano's notion of *intentio* (Latin for directed toward a goal or thing), asserts that every mental process is

an awareness of something (Husserl Meditations 33). Otherwise stated, in every act of consciousness, I am conscious of something. To immerse myself only in the one-sided experience of any object, I overcome any reliance on all mediate judgment or presuppositions of the object and base my experience on my immediate perception or that which is originally or evidentially given to me. I recognize that the beliefs that make up mediate judgments are not enough to be taken as truth. All essence of this object has to be grounded in an immediate judgment. As all forms of knowing are centered in our experience or our immediate awareness, I accept as truth only those experiences of this object of which I myself have complete evidence. Furthermore, I do not acknowledge any experiences which I only have a limited awareness of or for which I have no evidence and I reject as non-truth any second-hand opinions or information that are contrary to my own direct insights. In doing all of these activities, I perform an epoché or bracket-out all influences of the world outside of my direct experience of this specific object (20). Husserl calls this process a “parenthesizing of the Objective world” to the extent that we acquire a new, subjective relationship with the object (20).

As my consciousness or mental life functions either at a prepredicative level (the level in which we understand the world through our experiences) or in a thematized manner, I acknowledge that I am intending the object as a thematized act of perception. The object correlate, the noema or cogitatum (object existing separate from my mind), of which my consciousness is aware, is separate from the act of perception, the noesis or cogito (existing in the mind), the intentional act or process of consciousness by which I intend it (33). Within the idea of intentionality, my directed awareness constitutes not only this external object but also my reflection upon each of my mental processes. This

reflective awareness deepens the intentional structure of my perception of the object. By entering into a reflection on my perception on this object, I shift my awareness from a straightforward intentionality to a reflective intentionality. I adopt a phenomenological attitude by re-focusing my attention to reflecting upon the act of perceiving the object. As Husserl explains,

“Natural reflection alters the previously naïve subjective process quite essentially; this process loses its original mode, ‘straightforward’, by the very fact that reflection makes an object out of what was previously a subjective process but not objective. The proper task of reflection, however, is not to repeat the original process, but to consider it and explicate what can be found within it” (34).

From my reflective intentionality, I rise above any natural attitude to describe my awareness of the perception of the object and distinguish between the aspects in which that perception and its object were presented to me. Additionally, from this phenomenological position, I am able to reflect upon all aspects of my mental life and the world in which both the object and I reside.

My reflection builds upon my original act of straightforward intentionality in that I reflect on my experience as specifically directed at this object. I expand the original subjective process to become analytical of the original perception. Thus, in my self-reflection, I am able to find certain aspects of my experience that were not necessarily evidentially given to me in my previous, straightforward perception. My reflective awareness reveals some aspects based in my prepredicated level of awareness of the world and some noematic aspects of the object that were previously co-intended non-

evidentially. Aron Gurwitsch, in his essay *On the Intentionality of Consciousness*, clarifies the relationship between the object perceived (noema) and the perceiving (noesis) of it: “It is with respect to the noema that the given perception is not only a perception of the determined object but is also that awareness of the object rather than another... Hence the noema may also be designated as the perceptual sense” (Gurwitsch Intentionality 111). By examining the perception from a reflective stance, I open myself up to the variety of mental processes that occur in my awareness of this real object. When I reflect, within my mental life, on my experiences of this object, I find a variety of mental processes. A correlation between my mental process and the object of which I am aware includes different modes of experience. As a viewer, a variety of mental processes such as perceiving, knowing, sensing, willing, imagining or remembering determines my intending of this object. My intentionality depends on the relationship between the multiple conscious states of awareness. It only exists in the bringing together of these processes. The unity of mental processes, going on at many different levels of my mental life and produced by the awareness of an object as identical is what Husserl calls synthesis (Husserl 39). Specifically, a multiplicity of perceptions create, “a synthesis of identification with one another, and it is by, and in, this synthesis and the parallel synthesis among the corresponding noemata that what appears successfully constitutes itself, for consciousness, into this real thing.” (Gurwitsch 111)

To be conscious of the object is also to be involved in the many empty co-intendings that are unified by multiple aspects of the same object. The numerous empty co-intendings that occur automatically and make my mental life possible lead me to experience the same subject over time. In his writings on Max Scheler, Manfred S. Frings

confirms this, “that which is ‘seen’ by way of intentionality of consciousness is ‘phenomenon’ in that it appears in consciousness. Thus reality appears within a stream of immanent experience of pure, intentional acts” (Frings 34). In other words, this object exists in the real, temporal world. I experience the object in the spatial-temporal world and can reflect on my perception of the object, as it exists in this world. The multiplicity of my mental processes flows in a predelineated horizon or a direction that contains my experiences (both evidentially given and non-evidentially given) in the present but also contains a past and works toward a future, albeit one that is emptily intended until fulfilled (Husserl Meditations 43, 45). To elucidate, Gurwitsch specifies that,

“A perceived object offers itself in a certain manner of presentation.

Experiencing such a perception, we are free to remember past perceptions and to look forward to future perceptions, so that to all these mental states, past as well as future ones, there corresponds the same noema as that corresponding to the present experienced perception. Thus we become aware in an originary way of the noema and of its identity, as distinct from, and opposed to, the multiple acts to which it corresponds”

(Gurwitsch 114).

Continuing in my application: the synthesis of all of these mental processes of experience, occurring over time, allows me to identify this object as something specific which I know to be useful and believe it to be as object that will continue to exist over a period of time.

Because I am able to pro-tend and re-tend my automatic experiences as well as to egoically anticipate or actively remember both of my automatic and thematic experiences

along this horizon, my mental life is able to constitute the world and the objects within that world. A “passively flowing synthesis, in the form of the continuous consciousness of internal time,” occurs on many different levels and always with the unity of consciousness (Husserl Meditations 41). The harmonious flow of my mental processes allows for my awareness of the same object as perceived in many different appearances over the course of time. In other words, I constitute the object by virtue of its “multiple modes of appearance” (42). Moreover, as I continuously constitute both the world and objects within that world, I constitute myself as an object within that world. As a phenomenologist taking on a self-reflective, descriptive standpoint, I examine all objects as given to me strictly from the point of view of the multiplicity of mental processes through which they are constituted. Through a transcendental attitude or phenomenological point of view, I recognize all of the perceiving, knowing, sensing, willing, imagining or remembering that occurs in my mental life as well as the hidden presuppositions about my being in the world (39). Additionally, I use my reflective position while still perceiving within the epoché to enact a transcendental reduction (52). My suspension of the natural attitude and adoption of a transcendental viewpoint forms a transcendental genesis where I come to understand my role in the constitution of objects, in constituting the totality of those objects and the world and last, in the constitution of myself in this world (Wiggins 9/26/05). By continuing within this transcendental reduction, I am able to further examine the multiple syntheses that occur when I reflectively constitute the world and both myself and this object as part of that world.

As an artist, I gain a significant understanding from the projection of the experiential knowledge gained and a reflection upon the constitution of an artwork as

based upon the essence of a perceptual experience by the viewer. In pieces, I can both control and open up for the viewer the structure of a transcendental reduction as created by aesthetic perception. By integrating these numerous processes of awareness, I expand the generation of new horizons that become apparent in my artwork. For me, the phenomenological method of inquiry clarifies the strata of sensory processes necessary in creating meaning throughout the entire perceptual process.

Illustration 1. Comparison study of three pieces, same figure. Moderate natural lighting.

From left to right: *RobertN3*, 43 x 62", *RobertN2*, 43 x 66", *RobertN1*, 44 x 70".

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: HUSSERL

Husserl on Image-Consciousness

While there are many components of phenomenology that are integral to my research, the concepts that are foundational in regards to the photographic aspects of my artwork would be Husserl's writings on image-consciousness. His complex examination of the differing degrees of perceptual intentionality concerning an image has profoundly influenced by own methodology. In the *Collected Works, Volume XI, entitled Phantasy, Image Consciousness and Memory*, Husserl's sketches, collected writings and lectures on image-consciousness, provide multiple examples of his thought on a variety of visual images, including specific and numerous references to photographic images. As the dates of these notes, on images specifically, range from 1898 to 1912, it is important to recognize that no other critical writing of this nature on the structural theory of the photograph existed until the late 1960's.

First, a distinction between that which is presented and re-presented must be made. As stated in the first section, the basic form of intentionality is in a direct experience of an actual object. There is a perceptual belief in the object as factually existing or, otherwise stated, through my perception, the object appears to me as really presented. However, to imagine an object or have a fantasy of an object would be that the

object does not appear in actuality. In other words, I create a mental image of the object. For these experiences, Husserl expands his concept of a conscious perception to include what is also known as re-presented (Husserl Collected XI 18). He assigns special consideration to “internal image presentations” as “capable of presenting another object by means of resemblance” whether in imagined or picture form (19). By creating a different classification, he acknowledges that in any perceptual appearance of an image or that which is re-presented, a fundamental form of consciousness that differs greatly from ordinary, straightforward perceptual consciousness occurs.

A substantial amount of the writings on image-consciousness resulted from Husserl’s work on intuitional and conceptual presentations where he examined how “higher-level, conceptual acts and categorical acts of intending...are founded in the sensuous, intuitive acts of perception and their modifications” (Bernet, Kern, Marbach 141/2). One of the key features in this analysis was Husserl’s interest in how picturing apprehension, in regards to phantasy, memory and expectation, differs from the perception of an evidentially given object. He also connected but, at the same time, separated this same picturing apprehension when concerned with “ordinary picture-consciousness which requires mediation of something appearing perceptually in the present” like a photograph (144). By investigating image apprehension and image presentation as qualities of both types of sensuous, intuitive acts, he sets the foundation for his three levels of perception required for image consciousness. For each type of apprehension, among the mental processes that Husserl defines, is an awareness of ‘presentation’ or the presenting of something within one’s mind. These “non-intuited co-intended... potential perceptions that would make the invisible visible” are part of the

intentional act and important to the predelineated horizon of perception (Husserl Meditations 48). The connection of the object as directly perceived to the object as remembered, for example, is part of the intending of the object over time. However, in the form of presentation, we are not confronted with the object itself, only the memory or imagining of the object. By qualifying “internal image presentations” as those “in which a perceived object is designed to present and is capable of presenting another object by means of resemblance,” he distinguishes between the image and the subject of the image for all presentations or re-presentations (Husserl Collected XI 19).

Initially, Husserl was interested in the distinctions between a perceptual presentation, intuitional presentation and a picturing apprehension that is purely fictitious. This attention widened when faced with the notion that picture-consciousness in photographic images presented characteristics in common with each of these areas rather than holding significance in only one. An “interpenetration of intuitions with conflict is Husserl’s name for a phenomenon differing in kind from overlapping and yet akin to it. He finds this phenomenon actualized in ordinary picture-consciousness, that is, in presentation which is no longer purely reproductive but is rather perceptually founded” (Bernet 150). In a photograph, he established that image consciousness had a complex relationship involving three separate types of apprehensions: perceptual, sensing and constituting. Additionally, it was the tension between each of these apprehensions that made image-consciousness phenomenologically distinctive.

To breakdown the formal structure of image-consciousness, Husserl divides the description of the experience into three levels. The first would be the physical foundation or object of our perception. As a physical entity, it is constituted as a thing itself.

Normally a photograph exists as a glossy, thin stratum of phenomena that maintains a minimal physicality as layers of polyester suspending ink on a support paper. The object grounds itself in the world by the rectangular proportions and a certain amount of depth or weight. However, as a perceptual object, the reason for being extends beyond that of a mere object. Our perceptual apprehension of a photograph, as held in our hands, phenomenologically becomes a horizon with an unfixed, non-spatial yet linear, temporal mode of experience. We cannot escape, in our need to develop a structure of meaning for its physical existence, placing the physical object into the cultural context of what constitutes a 'photograph'. To this fact, Husserl states, "as printed paper...we say that the *image* in this sense hangs askew, is torn, and so forth" (Husserl Collected XI 118). This concept is later reinforced by Roman Ingarden, who designates the physical foundation of a painting as a condition of concrete seeing or actual object as immediately given (Ingarden Ontology 197).

For Husserl, the next level of intuition would be that of the image object. The object or physical foundation presents the image object. The image object is significant because it "bears a new apprehension-characteristic because it is fused in a certain way with the original" or physical foundation (Husserl Collected XI 31). As the depicting object, he tries to distinguish "the image as the *image object* appearing in such and such a way through its determinate coloration and form" (20). To be more specific: the colors, shapes, lines or shaded forms that give the illusion of having depth or perspective generate the image object. By only exhibiting or making the next level intuitable, we perceive or sense the image object without acknowledging its moments or parts. It cannot constitute itself as actual and is therefore dependent on the image subject. As Husserl

states, “we look *into* the image object, we look at that *by means of which* it is an image object” in order to arrive at the next level of image subject (33).

The constitution of the image subject involves an inactual perception of the image subject or re-presented thing in that, where the image object directly appears, the image subject is ‘meant’ or sensed by the viewer. The presentation of image object gives rise to the re-presentation of the image subject bringing forth a consciousness of presentation of a subject not actually present. Phenomenologically, we have a doubling of apprehension in seeing the image object in the physical image and seeing the image object in the depicted ‘state of affairs’ or image subject. The apprehension of the image subject depends on “the *relation of similarity* between that which appears and that which is depicted” (Bernet 150). A new object relation or new apprehension that “points beyond its primary object” is created in the re-presentation of the image subject as grounded upon what it resembles (Husserl Collected XI 27).

Photographic images, or perceptual re-presentations, are considered the most complex as examples of image consciousness in regards to their constitution. The three conflicting levels of perception (physical foundation, image object, image subject) work together to make image consciousness possible. The multiple perceptions cannot exist separately but fuse, in reflection, to become its own horizon of multiple intertwined apprehensions within one image subject. A tension between both physical image and image object sets itself against a second tension between image object and image subject. Within the strata of mental processes that constitute the re-presentational image, these tensions reinforce the belief that one is experiencing an image and not reality. This is due to the fact that, unlike ordinary perceptual intending, Husserl’s re-presentational

consciousness can apprehend what presently exists, yet, not as evidentially given.

To explain, the constitution of a photograph of a person or body-object requires that my consciousness reflect upon the three conflicting levels of perception. I first reflect upon my perception of the photograph as I would a real person, as an intended object. However, the photograph as object differs from the person in its reason for being. In my awareness of the photograph as a physical object, I acknowledge that it exists only as a substrate for my perceptual experience of an image (20). My perception of it as an object, as it exists in real space and time, is only essential to its role as support for my awareness of it as an image. My awareness of it as image object would be the second level of perception. I am conscious of what appears on the surface of the substrate or physical object. In my apprehension of the sensuous contents of the image, I see the colors, values, lines and shape or the formal elements as presented in the “re-presenting or depicting object” (20, 25). The culmination of my three levels of perception occurs in the seeing-in of both the first two founding levels to arrive at an image-consciousness of the image-subject (27). In my reflection upon the perception of the appearance of the image-object, which includes my awareness of its dependence on the physical object, I also distinguish an in-actual perception of its image-subject (27). The image-object acts in a specific manner, “it exhibits, it re-presents, ... it makes intuitable” a subject (31). In fact, only from my reflective position on my apprehension of the sensuous elements as appearing in the image-object can I additionally constitute the re-presentation or subject that I intend as resembling a real person.

In review, Husserl’s image consciousness can involve three separate types of apprehensions: perceptual, sensing and constituting. For example, I can sense or feel as

well as perceive the physical image “which yields the appearing image, the appearing re-presenting image object but with the constitution of this appearance, however, the relation to the image subject has not yet become constituted” (24). In my intending of a photograph, I see and feel the paper substrate as object and perceive the visual elements as presented in the image as separate apprehensions prior to completing my perception of the image subject. The apprehension of the image subject is not the reality as given within the first two apprehensions. As for the image subject, Husserl states: “the perceptual appearance depicts a nonperceived object” (27). He finds within image apprehension, another apprehension or a new act of meaning based on a perceived sensation. This is the “characteristic of re-presentation by means of resemblance, the characteristic of seeing-in an image” (28). I complete the perception of a photograph of an individual by apprehending the subject of the image as a human being or person. Because of this fact, image apprehension sets itself apart from both symbolic and signifying apprehension. In either a symbolic or signifying apprehension, Husserl designates that meaning in the signitive intending is directed toward something outside of itself. A sign or symbol points to something that does not appear in its presentation. However, with imaging apprehension the direction of meaning is inward. Images or signs that point beyond themselves are in Husserl's terms “internally representative” because they are a part of the unfolding experience of looking at a depictive image (37). The image presents itself in itself while pointing to something external through itself.

Illustration 2. Detail of *RobertWI*, 44 x 82". Mixture of natural and artificial lighting.

For instance, in a photographic image within the artwork created for this project, the image subject appears as a result of the image object while it presents a secondary apprehension of the individual I know to be re-presented. This allows that, to complete my apprehension of the image, I must bring to it my prior knowledge of the subject or depicted individual. Husserl goes on to suggest:

“We are supposed to immerse ourselves in the image; we are supposed to find the object displayed in what carries the imaging function in the image. And the more vitally we grasp it, the more alive the subject is to us in the image, the more vitally is it made intuitable to us, re-presented to us, in the image” (37-38).

By asking this of the viewer of the image, he sets up a participatory experience that he calls the aesthetic contemplation of the image (39). Although he later connects this experience within image consciousness to an essential foundation for aesthetic feeling in fine art, Husserl is redirecting the reflective nature of our investigation of the image subject, as viewer, to how the image presents itself within image consciousness.

Otherwise stated, I am no longer looking at the image subject within my conscious perception, I become aware of the manner of its appearing. My awareness extends to the differences of how the individual appears in the photograph to the manner in which I compare the individual to someone of which I have direct experience.

A specific example of these concepts is given by Husserl, as taken from his notes from 1905, in a phenomenological description of a photograph of someone named Fechner. Husserl arrives at a secondary apprehension of an internal re-presentation (188) through the image object. He explains how the meaning of the image, that of Fechner, is brought to the mind through the continual re-evaluation of the image object. Through an immersion in the image, an intention of meaning is aimed at the subject as he is seen in the image. This additionally establishes the relationship of how Fechner is re-presented in the image “to the extent that the image actually presents him adequately (or inadequately for my sensing), to that extent I see him in the image” (188). By returning to the image for a conformation of his reflection of Fechner, Husserl places the significance for the positing of Fechner only within image consciousness.

Illustration 3. *RobertN1*, 44 x 70". Mixture of natural and artificial lighting.

Illustration 4. *RichardW1*, 43 x 83". Frontal natural lighting only.

CHAPTER THREE

APPLICATION: HUSSERL

Development and Structure of Image

As stated previously, the phenomenological method and Husserl's notions of image-consciousness were instrumental in the conceptual development of this body of work. While not readily apparent to all, I believe that these ideas are embedded in the artwork and can be distinguished once revealed. First, it is important to acknowledge that each of the pieces of art for this dissertation, fundamentally, is a photographic image. However, I have sought to remove the connotation of a traditional photograph in order to manipulate how the viewer perceives each of the images. In both Illustration 3 and 4 (page 21), for instance, backgrounds are removed so that only the figures remain and the construction of the artwork can immediately be recognized. As the structure of image-consciousness transitions from a straightforward perception of an object to a re-presentation of image, I am able to intensify a certain degree of ambiguity at the points where the image is not inherently a traditional photograph. My objective is to exaggerate the tension essential to Husserl's interpenetration of three levels of perception that are found in image-consciousness. Certain characteristics of each artwork were created to challenge the overlapping of the multiple dual apprehensions necessary for image-consciousness.

In developing each artwork, I began in the same manner as Husserl's unbuilding of the structure of image-consciousness, at the level of physical object. While each piece is unique, the physical foundation of each, or that which is given perceptually through direct observation, does not exhibit the same attributes as a traditional photograph. The work intentionally presents a dichotomy in regards to classification as a tangible object where there is an added physicality in some respects and a diminished material substratum based on other perspectives. The increased size of the images, averaging three and one half feet in width to over six feet in length, must be considered initially. By creating the work on a dimension comparatively similar to or, in some manner, overwhelming to the viewer, the physical object constituted is not co-intended as a traditional, hand-held photograph. For example, in comparing Illustration 3 and 4 (page 21), the physical differences in surface quality, construction of the image and scale of the figure can be immediately recognized. Tonal and textural distinctions between these works are a result of the choices of physical materials used. In every artwork, my attention to the overlaps or layering and segmenting of the pieces of substrate to generate such size reinforces the physicality of the paper as object. The hand-sewn stitches, as essential in the formation of size and in regard to their presence as part of the physical object, are integral to manipulating the viewer's direct observation. These small details demand a fluctuation of perception, similar to the Gestalt concept of the figure/ground, between the individual stitch or knot and overall piece. In the same manner, the surface treatment of each work strengthens the physicality of the paper substrate while providing unique opportunities for directed observation of drips or thickening of the veneer.

Illustration 5. *RobertN1*, 44 x 70". Detail of middle right section of artwork. Density of image reveals the overlapping of three prints (top darker where hand can be seen) and joining of five prints (hand sewn line of stitches). Paper and varnish choices determine crystallization of surface treatment.

Illustration 6. *RichardW1*, 43 x 83". Detail of upper left section of artwork. Paper choice and varnish application determine ambiguities in physical foundation and overlapping.

It is crucial to realize, however, these same physical elements also provide a disparity in the observable strata of existence of the object or foundation when viewed in different lighting situations. My decision to create pieces that are translucent allows for a constant change in the physical properties of the work depending on the amount and quality of light available. For the viewer, the constitution of the artwork as object depends on the manner of its appearance. Several factors such as paper choice, layering methods or amounts and surface treatments are all selectively varied throughout the body of work. The quantity and direction of the light that illuminates each work can determine the perceptibility of the different materials. If viewed with flat, frontal lighting only, as seen in Illustration 6 (page 24) for example, the surface dominates all direct observation. Additionally, the contrast and color of the light source can alter the ability to discern the physical substrate altogether in some situations. For instance, the neutral paper support of images illuminated from behind with extreme light can fade from existence in relation to the printed or layered areas of the work. By exhibiting different tangible qualities depending on the main light source or combinations of light sources available, the artwork maintains a unique physical existence from many viewpoints. Ultimately, in respect to this concept, I am manipulating the viewer's perception as the founding act through which the physical foundation becomes the image each time the artwork is viewed.

Illustration 7. Comparison of *RobertWI*, 44 x 82". Mixture of natural and artificial lighting from front (left image) and from behind (right image).

As image object, the re-presenting or depicting image is also dependent on the semitransparent quality of the piece, light source(s) available, layering of materials and treatment of the surface. The experience of the image object involves the multiplicity of sense data determined by these characteristics. This can be seen in comparing the upper left quadrant of *RobertWI* (see Illustration 7) where an additional or third print layer is embedded into the area of the head and neck. For example, by concentrating on the configuration of pigments alone, the image exhibited or content as presented (without constitution of image subject) have differing degrees of depth. The intensity of color is determined in each work by having more than one layer of image in any given area and the choices of coating substance and method. Variables such as brush strokes, bubbles or gaps where the layered images are not adhered to each other and thickness of treatment

applications alter the depth apparent in the image object and the intensity or quality of color throughout each piece. This is very apparent in each individual work or in comparing several pieces in the dissertation. By including differing degrees of image depth and considering the same distinctions of how light will considerably distort the sensed experience of the image object in different situations, I intensify the doubling apprehension connecting this level of image-consciousness to the other two levels. Furthermore, by generating works where color is intentionally altered or changed as a result of a multitude of conditions or characteristics I influence the sensations that are lived through to arrive at the intending act of re-presented subject.

Illustration 8. Comparison of *RichardW2*, 43 x 83". Contrast of natural and artificial lighting to demonstrate surface, density and color differences. In left image, natural light from behind on left side. In right image, artificial light from front right side.

In the constitution of image subject, the viewer reflects upon the first two levels of image-consciousness and a further doubling of the perceptual apprehension of image occurs. While the mode of givenness of the image subject is dependent on the state-of-affairs present in the artwork, each piece builds upon the image object as a semblance of a depicted individual. Specific artistic choices and already acknowledged factors of indeterminacies play a significant role in the degree of intentionality possible for the viewer. As artist, for instance, my own constitution of image subject is supported by the direct knowledge of each individual depicted in the work. A co-intending of meaning based on my prior experiencing of the people contributes to the determination of the image subject as re-presented. From their reflective position, another viewer will arrive at a different constitution of the image subject or depicting image. In order to refer to the thing of which it is the image, a viewer will have other distinct combinations of intuitive and non-intuitive experiences. A co-intending of many noematic aspects non-evidentially given about the image subject would most likely be part of the viewer's awareness of meaning.

Illustration 9. Comparison of *RobertW3*, 43 x 85" and *RobertW2*, 43 x 84".

For example, an obvious initial, fundamental co-intending of meaning, for each of the artworks, would be that the image subject is a human figure. The size of the overall work and scale of the figures, in direct relation to the distance perceived, contributes to the bodily intentionality of the viewer in the constitution of the image subject as an adult male. By creating and exhibiting more than one artwork portraying each individual, my intention was to augment the co-intending or determining of meaning for the viewer. In the reflection upon both the physical foundation and image object as directly experienced in *RobertW3* (left image in Illustration 9), for instance, the constitution of the image subject for *RobertW3* could include a synthesis of identification that the individual depicted is the same as experienced in *RobertW2* (right image in Illustration 9). However, in considering this occurrence, I made specific choices in the particulars of how each person was photographed and the manner of presentation of each subject. For each set of

images, pertaining to one individual, I intentionally juxtaposed representations that invite multiple comparisons of the image subject to initiate conflict in the constitution of each image subject as based on these co-intendings. This variance is meant to parallel Husserl's conflicting levels of perception that establish image-consciousness. The resemblance of the figures as re-presented subjects, like the related physical properties or attributes of the artworks, becomes part of the state-of-affairs given for each work.

Furthermore, my decision to present work where the individual is both clothed (*RobertW3*, left image in Illustration 9, page 29), and with minimal clothing (*RobertW2*, right image in Illustration 9, page 29), is based on confronting how, within image-consciousness, multiple separate apprehensions make their appearance as founded upon a relationship of similarity. Even the layering of physical foundations to create one image object and building up of the levels of image object within each artwork to present one subject was intended to reinforce this multiplicity of apprehensions. Throughout all of the work, the image object or physical image displays the image subject, yet neither have distinct contents. The same properties generate two different apprehensions intertwined to create an understanding of the image subject. In a comparison of images of the same figure (Illustration 9, page 29), the viewer bases an understanding of the subject on the perception of similar properties as displayed in both individuals depicted. Moreover, the culmination of image-consciousness, as related to one image, is the "seeing in" or "seeing through" the image itself to that person or object to which the image refers (Husserl Collected XI 188). The intertwining of different apprehensions is directed toward something outside of its content, i.e. the depicted individual. A comparison of more than one image brings forth, immanently, another doubling apprehension available only

through the constitution of each image subject, as generated by image-consciousness, originally experienced separately. Additionally, because of the translucency of pieces, multiple images of the same individual, when exhibited together, directly display the seeing through of an image toward the subject to which it refers.

Illustration 10. Comparison study of three pieces, same figure, different surface treatments and varying artwork construction. Mixture of natural and artificial lighting.
From left to right: *RobertW3*, 43 x 85"; *RobertW2*, 43 x 84"; *RobertW1*, 44 x 82".

Illustration 11. Comparison study of three pieces, same figure, different surface treatments. Mixture of natural and artificial lighting. From left to right: *RichardW3*, 43 x 84"; *RichardW2*, 43 x 83"; *RobertW1*, 43 x 83".

As perception unfolds over a horizon of one's mental life, a significant consideration in challenging the tension of interpenetration of intuitions necessary for image consciousness was based on the relationship of each artwork to viewer over time and within a space. Specific to the individual pieces are the size and scale of the image in relation to distance of the viewer in an exhibition environment. Also, as mentioned, the strength and varying degree of light directed toward an image can inhibit the viewing of the substrate or support paper and enhance the degree to which the image depth is saturated. Some of the artworks are intended to suspend all immediate perception of

image as image because of their place within environment and as situated on an empty intended horizon of the viewer. The intent is to create a field of vision where image subjects and other viewers become fused as multiple possibilities of indeterminacies that must be constituted over time and as a viewer moves throughout the exhibition space.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MERLEAU-PONTY

The Bodily Nature of Perception

The importance of perceptual intentionality and image-consciousness, as defined by Edmund Husserl, sets the foundation of my dissertation artwork but does not explain the complexity and depth of my application of phenomenology. Further research into the role of the body, pertaining to both viewer and within the images, as well as research into phenomenological perception has had a significant impact on the construction of meaning present in the work. The theoretical position of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on embodied intentionality and the perceptual unfolding of all experience as part of our bodily embeddedness in the world must also be considered. A direct connection between his ideas of a 'lived' perception and the essential connectedness with what one perceives in the world exists in relation to viewing each image in this body of work, especially when they are seen together in an exhibition or installation.

The bodily nature of perception is a fundamental concept when focusing on the relationship between viewer and object of contemplation. In Husserl's theory of intentionality and the phenomenological reduction, the body can only be considered as noema or intentional object. Any perceptual constitution of a body is limited to a purely descriptive account as the body presents itself to transcendental consciousness. In

Husserl's bracketing out of the world, an object or one's own body is suspended from any causal explanation or reality. All explanation of perceptual constitution of the body comes from the body as a bearer of sensations. As Taylor Carman states, "Husserl's theory of body intentionality is predicated on what he considers 'the privilege of the localization of touch sensations', that is the double aspect of tactile sensation that he thinks grounds our bodily intentionality" (Carman Body 211). The body acts as our point of origin or place from which we perceive the world and with which we encounter or sense the world. Through kinesthetic sensations, we are able to constitute the body as object and as an organ of perception. By separating the terminology of body as *körper* and *leib*, Husserl differentiates between a material body and a lived body. The intersection of these two concepts, however, always resides in the body as organism along with "transcendental-constitutional perceptual consciousness" (Bernet, Kern, Marbach 132). As Husserl recognizes that while perceptual acts are bodily, even in regards to movement and spatiality, he believes perception to be "a thing 'inserted' between the rest of the material world and the 'subjective' sphere" (Husserl Ideas 161).

In his *Preface to the Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty acknowledges Husserl in the historical premise for his stance on phenomenology and offers some insight to the basis of the text that follows. Initially, Merleau-Ponty addresses Husserl's "famous phenomenological reduction" and the concerns that establish Merleau-Ponty's philosophical stance as different (Merleau-Ponty Perception xi). Merleau-Ponty first analyzes reflection in support of Husserl,

"Reflection does not withdraw from the world toward the unity of consciousness as the world's basis; it steps back to watch the forms of

transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice;” (xiii).

Merleau-Ponty poetically draws attention to the reflection of our relation to the world as an awareness of being a part of that world. He finds that, within a reduction, we are not naïve in our constitution of the world and of ourselves as embodied beings in that world. This awareness disrupts the possibility of a complete reduction. Merleau-Ponty asserts the paradox that “our reflections are carried out in the temporal flux on to which we are trying to seize” because we exist within an infinite world (xiv, xvii). By building on this foundation that the world is not completely laid out before consciousness, Merleau-Ponty can investigate how we are “inextricably bound” to the world (Smith 2). This inquiry begins with perception and the embodied viewer.

Throughout all of his writing, Merleau-Ponty puts forth the fundamental premise that it is the ‘body’ that perceives. The significance of this statement defines a starting point in my own artistic vision and creative work. As an artist, my creative interaction with the world begins with the body. Merleau-Ponty asserts, “I regard my body, which is my point of view upon the world, as one of the objects in that world” (Merleau-Ponty Perception 70). The two-sided aspect of perceiving, that we maintain both subjective and objective views, also allows for our evidential experience of the world to be self-directed and self-aware. With this, perception is both intentional and bodily. But in reflection on such experience, Merleau-Ponty retains the awareness that, “In so far as it sees or touches the world, my body can therefore be neither seen nor touched. What prevents it ever being an object, ever being ‘completely constituted’ is that it is that by which there are

objects” (92). Thus, in contrast to Husserl’s fundamental idea that intentionality is an awareness of our consciousness as based in thought, Merleau-Ponty’s concept of perception stems from the body at a pre-predicative level of awareness. We are oriented in our world via the body and perceive as a mode of existence or being in the world. There is an “ordinary intuitive understanding we have of ourselves as embodied perceivers” which serves as a starting point for his phenomenological method (Carman Merleau-Ponty 94).

Illustration 12. Perspectival detail view of *RobertN3*, 43 x 62”. Comparison of surface treatments, overlapping of print layers and stitching. Application of beeswax (textural enhancement) on upper section of image can be seen best in frontal side lighting.

In regarding a work of art, for example, as an object of direct experience, my immediate judgment of the object is dependent on perception as stemming from my body's one-sided point of view. All understanding of the evidential experience as given to me has formed in relation to my body. The orientation of scale, distance to/from and physical proportion of the object, for example, are all given in association to my being in the world. I am aware of the space inhabited by my body in contrast to the existence of the artwork. The act of perception can cross the divide or threshold of depth between my body and the object/artwork. For instance, my intending of the image can suspend the spatial distance of the artwork but not the orientation of it in relation to my being. An inseparable active and passive perception allows for my embodied constitution of the object/artwork as part of the world and myself as part of that same world through movement over time. As I reflect on my understanding of the image as given to me, this reflection includes my multiple awarenesses of my body and the world. The predelineated horizon that Husserl establishes as the spatial and temporal synthesis of all of our mental processes of experience, Merleau-Ponty redefines as continuously constituted through a synthesis or moving flow stemming from our bodily nature of perception. My body, not the object or world, serves a foundational structure allowing me to recognize the continuous transformation of evidentially given or non-evidentially given experiences that occur in my mental life along this horizon.

Again, as Merleau-Ponty states, reflection "watch(es) the forms of transcendence fly up like sparks from a fire; it slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice;" (Merleau-Ponty Perception xiii). He embeds reflection as part of a lived experience of the world. Our lived horizon fuses how we are

essentially interwoven with the world we perceive, and each feature of the perceptual field is interwoven with others throughout space and time. In other words, as I interact or move in the world over time, I accept a unified yet constantly restructured, embodied perception that both automatically and thematically constitutes the world and the objects/subjects within that world. For Merleau-Ponty, a 'lived-through' world encompasses a transcendental field that can never be fully disclosed because it exists prior to the phenomenal field or any possible reduction (60). Where as Husserl speaks of a transcendental reduction in which my reflective position allows me to understand my role in the constitution of objects, Merleau-Ponty puts forth that this concept "is included in and transcended by" itself within all reflection (213). I reflectively constitute the world as part of the phenomenal field in which I exist. Furthermore, all bodily movement or lived experience takes place within the "domain of the phenomenal" because it connects the 'intentional threads' that intertwine our body and the world (106).

Illustration 13. Detail view of *RobertN3f*, 32 x 42". Natural light only from behind.

Because of the range of materials and physical applications throughout the dissertation, I approached the creation of each artwork with Merleau-Ponty's notion of a unified structuring of perception. As Merleau-Ponty placed emphasis on the concept that "perception is essentially interwoven with the world we perceive, and each feature of the perceptual field is interwoven with others," the essential interconnectedness stems from the body's sensory relation with the world (Carman MP 46). Within this idea, the intertwining of sensing and sensible is not isolated but creates a framework in which the body is already oriented in the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this structuring or bridge between the body and the world as perceived grounds his notion of body schema. Body schema serves as the position from which and against which the world is perceived in flux and over time/space. The body schema provides "the crux or reference point that establishes a stable background against which I perceive and respond to changes and movements in my environment, at thereby opens me onto a world of other selves" (Carmen Body 220).

Throughout the *Phenomenology of Perception*, it has been argued most recently by Shaun Gallagher, there are mixed references and mistranslations of the specific term for body schema. Merleau-Ponty's use of the term *schema corporel*, translated by Colin Smith as both body image and body schema, needs specific definition depending upon the relation to consciousness. Most sources classify that body image can only be identifiable when the body is mentally represented. However, the intentional states that body image comprises include perceptions and mental representations of one's own body and a conceptual understanding of 'body' in general. For the purposes of this dissertation, I recognize the implicit image involving a reflective position when "the body makes its

appearance as an appearance only, as an intentional object, as the body image” (Gallagher 231). This descriptive analysis places the role of the body, as image, in Husserl’s model of intentionality because it is presented and reflected upon only within consciousness. With body image, “the body can be described in its noematic appearance” only and does not constitute the body as a body for an embodied subject (231). When Merleau-Ponty utilizes body image, he references only the body as an object of awareness or concrete particular (Carman MP 106).

A more appropriate application of Merleau-Ponty’s use of *schema corporel* in his writing, according to Gallagher, would define body schema as a dynamic capacity independent of consciousness. At the pre-thematic level, body schema organizes or gives structure to the open-ended crossing of the body with the world. While crucial to perception, body schema formulates the initial moment prior to a conscious understanding that signifies an openness of the body to the world. As Gallagher tells us, “Merleau-Ponty sets out to show that the body itself is doing the perceiving, and that the operations of the body schema provide specific conditions that constrain perceptual consciousness” (Gallagher 233). Drawing upon my earlier explanation of a lived horizon, I maintain that as I interact or move in the world over time I accept a unified yet constantly restructured, embodied perception that both automatically and thematically constitutes the world and the objects/subjects within that world. It is my body schema that constantly restructures and unifies my awareness of the world. Hence, body schema provides an “ongoing self-correcting bodily orientation” that “constitutes the perceptual background against which discrete sensory particulars and explicit judgments can occur” (Carman MP 110). Thus when I reflectively constitute the world as part of the

phenomenal field in which I exist, my body schema articulates the perceptual appearances as given to me as my body moves through space/time so that an intentionality of perception can occur. Influenced by the Kantian concept, schemata are “procedures that issue from the faculty of imagination and specify the construction of the sensible images adequate to pure concepts of understanding” (Carman Body 219). This is vitally important when differentiating between body image and body schema since body schema anticipates the world prior to an awareness or perception. It establishes our immediate sense or understanding of an embodied perception because body schema structures our awareness of the body as both a subject and object in the world. Furthermore, our awareness of other bodies stems from this same bodily understanding of ourselves. While difficult to discern completely, in his working notes from *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty’s thought process tells us:

“For one perceives only figures upon levels - - And one perceives them only by relation to the level, which therefore is unperceived. - - The perception of the level: always *between* the objects... Her corporeal schema is for itself - - for the other - - It is the *hinge* of the for itself and the for the other - - To have a body is to be looked at (it is not only that), it is to be *visible* -” (189).

A recognition of two levels or layers, “body at this moment” and the “habit-body,” places the body schema with the second or naïve mode of perception (Merleau-Ponty PP 82). A questioning of the subject as “pure for itself” is both a Kantian and Husserlian reference bringing together *a priori* and *a posteriori* knowledge with a unified horizon of intersensory experience from a phenomenal body (218-222).

Our knowledge unfolds along the horizon, as we perceive the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this unfolding or opening up to the world comes to us through perception or sense experience. As we move through the world, judgments of sensible qualities emerge from an observing and thinking subject. He uses inductive psychological studies and artistic references on color to explain,

“Is it then ‘in consciousness’, and must we say that the experience of blue as a sensible quality produces a certain change in the phenomenal body?
...Blue is that which prompts me to look in a certain way, that which allows my gaze to run over it in a specific manner. It is a certain field or atmosphere presented to the power of my eyes and my whole body” (210).

The choice of color repositions the concept of a sense experience to that beyond the tactile yet still incorporating motility. In Merleau-Ponty’s quote, he emphasizes that one’s eyes “run over” or have movement directly related to an embodied perception. He additionally applies this same idea to light,

“If a light stimulus is gradually increased from a sub-liminal intensity, there is first of all the experience of a certain bodily disposition and suddenly the sensation runs into and spreads through the visual domain.
Just as, when I look closely at snow, I break its apparent whiteness up into a world of reflections and transparencies...” (211).

Whether the representation of color, or absence of color as in light or white, he recognizes how a sense experience spans all layers or levels of perception. The quality or essence of color or light reveals itself prior to, in direct experience and upon reflection or judgment. As his example, it strikes at our sentient nature to extend beyond any mere

motor or perceptual experience to a manner of being in the world, communally related to all that is sensed.

Illustration 14. Detail view of *RobertW2*, 43 x 84". Natural light only from side.

Understanding the perception that inheres with the crossing of the body and the world allows Merleau-Ponty to explain what he means by a “flesh” of existence (Merleau-Ponty VI 127). Perception intertwines with all that is sensed and each object perceived is interwoven with all other aspects of the perceptual field. Sensing of light involves an acceptance of its essence by the body and an awareness of how light distinguishes all objects in our perceptual field. The place of body schema or *hinge*, referred to in an earlier quote of Merleau-Ponty, enables the overlap or intertwining of existence. This weaving together or fabric of existence has significance because of our place within it. “For in sensing, we ourselves must be thoroughly and inescapably sensible” to constitute ourselves within the world (Carman MP 123). We must be both

subject and object of our own perception, a seer and the seen. Additionally, we are an embodied viewer embracing this perceptual field, both at visible and invisible levels. As Merleau-Ponty tells us, “he who sees cannot possess the visible unless he is possessed by it, unless he *is of it* (flesh)” (Merleau-Ponty VI 135).

Between the crossing of the sensible and the tangible, whether in regard to the world or ourselves, is a tissue or thread of possibility. This interwoven tissue is not an object or thing but a “flesh of things” that maintains and cultivates all aspects of the phenomenal field (133). It creates a texture to the fabric of the visible. As in the representation of color or presence of light, he states that there is:

“something that comes to touch lightly and makes diverse regions of the colored or visible world resound at the distances, a certain differentiation, an ephemeral modulation of this world – less a color or a thing, therefore, than a difference between things and colors, a momentary crystallization of colored being or of visibility” (132).

The modulation of visibility springs from a mutual relation of the embodied viewer and the world but does not belong to either. Merleau-Ponty believes this modulation to be the “means of communication” connecting the seer and the seen, even if the object of perception is the body itself or a “sensible for itself”(135). Thus, the perceiver is not the origin of flesh but finds himself/herself/itself immersed within the connective flesh of existence.

To gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena of flesh, in *Textures of Light*, Cathryn Vasseleu discusses the concept as a fusion of consciousness and the world in regard to all subject and object relations. The body’s position, as perceiving/perceived,

cannot exist independent of flesh nor is it reducible to flesh. She prefers to think of both as definable “in terms of its own divergence and reversibility” because it distinguishes the body from flesh and sets up what Merleau-Ponty refers to as the chiasm (Vasseleu 29). Citing Merleau-Ponty’s reference of the hand touching itself against his use of two mirrors facing each other, Vasseleu points to the reflexive position of each subject/object. This reference, from Merleau-Ponty’s *The Visible and Invisible*, emphasizes how the “body’s simultaneous status as perceiving subject and object of perception” constitutes a doubling of perception upon itself yet differs from an objective mirror by the perceptibility of sensing/sensed (29). While the intertwining of perceptions is flesh, the establishing of the differences in perceiving/perceived constructs a divergence or crossing over of perception. This chiasm or opening of the perceivable world is one that separates from inside of itself. “It is this fecund negative that is instituted by the flesh, by its dehiscence” Merleau-Ponty tells us (Merleau-Ponty VI 263). Vasseleu explains, borrowing from biology to clarify his use of dehiscence, that to “bring forth a flesh which differs from but is part of their flesh” allows for flesh to reveal a divergence within an embodied existence (Vasseleu 30).

The optical chiasma, as a crossing over of vision into a single visual field, is another example of a crossing over of perception for Merleau-Ponty. He relates a binocular perception of reality as the founding perspective for a sentient being-in-the-world. Instantaneously, “it is by *looking*, it is with my eyes that I arrive at the true thing, with these same eyes that a moment ago gave me monocular images – now they function *together* as a though *for good*” (Merleau-Ponty VI 8). An object perceived with depth (two eyes) and in relation to the motility of the embodied viewer has emerged from an

optic chiasm to the flesh of the world. However, a unique dichotomy exists in these illustrations. Where a dehiscence of a cut or wound is a bursting open of flesh, the separation/coming together of vision is, ironically, beyond one's perception. From the flesh/wound analogy, a new skin or creation of tissue comes forth to merge into or with flesh once again. Yet in stereopsis, our consciousness fuses the "dehiscence in/between visibility that is neither absent in vision nor properly visible" (Vasseleu 32). The contrast of illustrations provides Merleau-Ponty with a means to uniquely define chiasm via the double enfoldment and an emergence by/for itself of flesh in both the body and perception.

In several of his texts, Merleau-Ponty uses light as a metaphor and a phenomenon in relation to an embodied viewer. As cited in the earlier quote, he develops light as a sensible entity or thread of communication between the body and the flesh of the world into light having an embodied nature of its own because of its visible and invisible qualities. In another contrast of meanings, he "insists that the light of conscious illumination and reflection cannot be separated from its experience as a lived phenomenon" (33). His idea draws upon the fact that in our perceptual experience, constitution of light occurs at all levels. Even when it occurs an object of our attention, a ray of light does not exist as an object but phenomenon. Vasseleu tells us,

"light is objectifiable and inhabitable only from within it. Light has the diacritical structure of flesh. The ideality of light cannot be separated from the carnal experience of light" (45).

No distinction can be made in how light weaves through the fabric of flesh amidst our phenomenal field and variables of light that illuminates objects or creates a transparency

from within objects. Merleau-Ponty gives light corporeal significance because it intertwines or becomes one with our sensible articulation in making “the flesh of things” known (Merleau-Ponty VI 133). Whether visible or invisible, light as “ephemeral modulation” additionally has its own juncture of divergence and reversibility (132). For instance, to enact the lighting of an object or reflect upon the lighting of an object is to create a chiasm. In this manner, lighting is divergent from light. Our embodied perception of light (flesh) becomes torn or doubled upon itself when a sensed illumination gives way to a conscious reflection of lighting.

Where Vasseleu places the “making sense of light” a result of vision or as translated within the gaze, I believe that Merleau-Ponty speaks to an embodied perception where sensing and sensible define the place between visible and invisible is more appropriate (Vasseleu 45). Think of standing, with eyes closed, in the penumbra between shade and pure light. Upon stepping into the light with eyes still shut, the body creates the openness or awareness of the world of light. The tactility of the world is not acted upon via the gaze but the flesh of light becomes one that touches the body or is sensed. The warmth of the light upon the skin, the illumination perceived without distinction or depth from closed eyelids and even a reflection upon these experiences (a chiasm) occurs without vision. In this way, our communication with the world, whether visible or invisible, does not only extend in one direction but unfolds reciprocally. My bodily perception changes due to light as touching and communing with me.

Other theorists, such as Drew Leder and Taylor Carmen, do not focus on light as a way to define the concept of flesh as a fusion of consciousness and the world in regard to all subject and object relations. They too utilize Merleau-Ponty’s example of two hands

to combines a sense experience with sight-determined perception that provides reflexivity in the double touch. For them, however, the intertwining of body and world contrasts against the lived body as chiasmatic in perceiver/perceived to set the perimeters of the 'other' within the visible/invisible. As in my illustration of stepping into the light, they believe that the reciprocal nature of flesh includes the embodied awareness of my being as perceptual subject/object of determination integrating with 'otherness' or other beings in the world. Leder writes of "another chiasmatic relation: that which connects me to other perceivers" (Leder 211). For Merleau-Ponty, the divergence of the sentient and the sensible creates "transitivity from one body to another" (Merleau-Ponty VI 143). He states, "for the first time, the body no longer couples itself up with the world, it clasps another body, applying itself to it carefully with its whole extension" (144). Just as I come to know my own body, from a reflexivity of touch, sight and movement, an awareness of the other body "in its coupling with the flesh of the world" secures a new perception of my own body (144). In other words, the experiencing of 'others' holds dehiscence or a bringing forth of a flesh which differs from but is part of my flesh.

CHAPTER FIVE
APPLICATION: MERLEAU-PONTY
Artistic Perception

“The problem is to understand these strange relationships which are woven between the parts of the landscape, or between it and me as incarnate subject, and through which an object perceived can concentrate in itself a whole scene or become the whole *imago* of a whole segment of life” (Merleau-Ponty PP 52).

My application of Merleau-Ponty’s concepts within the dissertation has numerous manifestations. His writings have influenced the manner in which I understand and integrate the role of the body throughout my artwork. Where traditional phenomenology offers an artist unique insight into a descriptive and reflective analysis of a object as given, a process familiar to their mode of critical assessment, Merleau-Ponty’s ideas place an emphasis on an embodied viewer. The embodied self as the point of orientation on the world is crucial whether considered in regard to the artist themselves and the creation of the work or how another individual perceives a work of art. In a Husserlian phenomenological reduction, the point of view comes from outside of the object and world. A distancing exists for the purpose of objectivity like in art when the viewer takes

an aesthetic critical perspective on something. However, the reflective awareness that transpires in Merleau-Ponty's embodied experience of an object occurs in intimate communion with the world. A dialogue of flesh where all forms of perception intertwine is already established.

Merleau-Ponty wrote three major philosophical essays on visual art, *Cezanne's Doubt* (1945), *Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence* (1952) and *Eye and Mind* (posthumous 1961). In each, painting and the nature of representation provide him with the means to clarify his phenomenology of perception with respect to the body, mind and world. Of these three, the last work, *Eye and Mind*, is most significant in explaining how "the meaning of our experience comes from our bodily and perceptual confrontation with the world, from within it" (Gilmore 296). Recognizing these qualities in Cezanne's paintings, Merleau-Ponty discusses how the artist embraces an embodied perception to enhance the overlap of the seeing/seen and the visible/invisible. He believes that artists give form, through direct contact with the flesh of the world, to the process of how the world opens up to our perceptions. The phenomenon of visibility unfolds for the artist so that a pre-reflective awareness can be realized within the artwork. Ultimately, my interest in this essay centers not on his discussion of painting or Cezanne but on how the artist brings forth visibility. Because the center of visibility or place of the 'eye' is the body, the artist creates "by lending his body to the world" to transpose the world into the artwork (Merleau-Ponty Prm 162).

The idea of the connective flesh of existence, as explained in the previous section, does not separate the sensing subject from that which is sensed. A crossover from "the one who sees in that which he sees, and through inherence of sensing in the sensed" takes

place perceptually in everyone (163). For the visual artist, an interaction with the world primarily occurs though or results from the sense of sight. The texture of the world perceptually makes itself known to the artist so that they can seize the multiple sensible qualities in order to make them apparent in an artwork. As “his vision in any event learns only by seeing and learns only from itself. The eye sees the world, sees what inadequacies keep the world from being a painting,” the artist makes the invisible visible in and through the artwork (165). The intertwining of visibility creates a chiasm that exists both in the work and as a result of the work. In that,

“Painting establishes what Merleau-Ponty calls ‘visibility’. Visibility arises out of the conjuncture of the visible and the invisible, out of the making visible of what is invisible to everyday seeing” (Silverman 371).

The significance of this concept does not lend itself only to painting nor confine itself to revealing some hidden aspect of the world. Merleau-Ponty poetically draws upon the fact that artists call attention to the act of perception or sensing of that which is sensible. In my artwork, I provide a heightened responsiveness to the intersubjectivity of the body and one’s motor-sensory awarenesses. For example, the viewer extends beyond the visible to the tactile as co-intended differently from various distances. To enhance and strengthen an awareness of the visible or sensed between an embodied viewer and the object of which they are aware or to augment the possibility of perceiving something of which they were never aware previously is the goal of all artists.

With my pieces, I challenge the viewer’s perceptual relation to the image on multiple levels. As primarily photographic in nature, the artwork mirrors yet questions the line of visibility that exists between reality and the image. As Taylor Carman

explains, “they are perceptibles that speak of perception and perceptibility” (Carman MP 187). The artwork, as expressive object, does not function in the same manner as other objects in the world because it articulates a network of visibility that structures our perception of it and the world. Artworks inherently generate a space of perceptual exchange where the viewer looks for significance beyond the art object as exclusively given. The artwork “surpasses itself toward the world” (186). For the image, this network of visibility is the structure of Husserl’s image-consciousness. As explained in the earlier section, the physical foundation, image object and image subject each establish the construction of meaning on which the image is constituted. A threshold of the visible/invisible exists within the intertwining of intuitions necessary for image-consciousness. The overlapping of the multiple dual apprehensions essential to image-consciousness is “the undividedness of the sensing and the sensed” (Merleau-Ponty Prm 163). By increasing the tension that resides between the layers of the physical foundation, image object and image subject in my artwork, I call attention to the field of difference in which visibility fluctuates.

Illustration 15. Comparison of *RobertN2*, 43 x 66" and *RobertN3*, 43 x 62". Same figure, different surface treatments and overlapping or layering of prints.

Again, Merleau-Ponty places this intertwining of visibility or chiasm within the body. As a "strange system of exchanges" between flesh or my body and the world, "vision must somehow take place in them; their manifest visibility must be repeated in the body by a secret visibility" (164). In other words, as we experience the artwork "a tracing which arises out of the concatenation of things and my body" allows us to see beyond the thing itself (Silverman 372). This secret visibility or tracing establishes the culmination of image-consciousness or seeing through the image itself to that person or object to which the image refers. Merleau-Ponty explains, "it is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I *see* it" (Merleau-Ponty Prm 164). His concern is that visibility emanates from the perspective of the body and encompasses more than merely the visible. The "quality, light, color, depth, which are there before us, are there

only because they awaken an echo in our body and because the body welcomes them” (164). For the embodied viewer, the apprehension of each level of image-consciousness toward a re-presentation of image is through the unity of body image, body schema and world. For example, to constitute the artwork one does not just sense how the light affects the image object or tacitly perceive the manipulated surface of the physical foundation but “sense their bodily affinity with us, to commune with them, to inhabit them” (Carman MP 186). In each piece, I have intentionally accentuated the connection and contrast between the tangible sensory (texture of different surface treatments, stitching, paper choices, overlapping/layering of images) and the intangible sensory (lighting as changing appearance, visual relationships between images) to enhance the “system of exchanges” or allow the embodied viewer to bring together the “manifest visibility” with the “secret” (Merleau-Ponty Prm 164). This can be seen, for instance, in comparing the same section (extra print layer of hand and arm) of the artwork *RobertN2* in the three different representations as shown in Illustration 16 and 17 (page 56).

Illustration 16. At left, a comparison of *RobertN2*, 43 x 66" and *RichardW1*, 43 x 83". At right, bottom left section of *RobertN2*, showing layering of prints and surface treatment.

Illustration 17. Detail of *RobertN2*, 43 x 66". Bottom left center section of *RobertN2*, showing layering of prints, stitching, surface treatments and pooling of varnishes.

The tangible sensory qualities of the work were created to directly make evident Merleau-Ponty's concepts of flesh and chiasm. He places the identity of perception and perceptibility within flesh because it is the shared tissue between our consciousness and the world. His choice of this term, as an interwoven fabric of the visual, obviously unites the surface of the body with the sensed/sensible relation to the world. As part of the physical foundation, I have endeavored to simulate, in different ways, flesh on the surface of each piece. A skin-like substance has resulted in multiple forms by varying and building the layering of the surface treatments applied to each image. For all the work, the flesh or skin of the piece holds the image within it to replicate the manner that our flesh is seen/senses as the surface of our own bodies. While only distinguishable in certain sites or in specific instances, the layering together of multiple prints to create one image reflects the "thickness of flesh" or invisible connective fabric of existence (Merleau-Ponty VI 135).

Illustration 18. At left, detail of *RobertW1*, 44 x 82". At right, detail of *RobertW2*, 43 x 84". Both images showing layering of prints, stitching and surface treatment.

The body as connective tissue or, with the prints, paper as connective tissue is fused by the skin or surface treatments and joined with the world through a binding thread. In hand sewing together the sections of image I reference the action or motility of the body as the hinge, which weaves together the fabric of existence and establishes our place within it. The binding thread or chiasm literally interlocks the body and world. Initially taken from his *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty refers to idea that the body “will carry with it the intentional threads linking it to its surroundings” (Merleau-Ponty PP 72). Additionally, the hand-sewn stitches purposefully demand a modulation of perception and physical movement for viewing. The significance of the loops of thread differs depending on the viewer’s distance from the artwork. In combination with the thickness of varnishes or piling of wax (flesh) also swelling up at these intersections, a perceptual transformation overtakes the viewer. The tactile sense breaks the structuralization of vision by negotiating with the sensing and becoming of it, as sensible. As chiasm, the threads unite the differences in sensible/sensed to construct a divergence or crossing over of perception.

While a clear relationship to the binding of flesh in the technique of stitches can be made with regard to the sewing together of the image, a stronger reference to wound or opening of the perceivable world would be the bubbles or inconsistencies that occur within the print layers. For a comparison of stitching, print layers, gaps and surface treatments, please consult Illustration 18 (page 58). Like a chiasm or flesh that separates from inside of itself, often gaps or separations within the images are produced through the adhering together of two or more prints. These unique vesicles can be seen in different works but never in any pattern or regularity. To explain: Each section of a large

image has, at least, one print layer. Most of the pieces have two overlapping print layers fused and presented as one section of the image. Some of the works have, in various sections, an additional layer built up within the two outer prints or adhering to one another on top of two merged print layers. The thickness of the layering is most apparent in comparing the density of the sections in the overall image. In any given artwork, for instance, there can be from one to five layers of prints (all still perceived as one image) because of the seams and overlapping of the sections. Where the extra print is within two other layers, a gap is created along the edge of the interior print. The small pockets of air or a pooling of the varnishes separate the print layers in different yet similar ways because of the range of techniques used in creating the artworks (see Illustration 19).

Illustration 19. Detail of *RichardW1*, 43 x 83". Bottom center section with natural light at right. Image shows layering of prints, air pockets, surface treatments and pooling of varnishes.

Illustration 20. Detail of *RobertWI*, 44 x 82". Middle center section with frontal natural light. Image shows layering of prints, surface treatments, dripping and pooling of varnishes.

As detailed in the earlier section about the perceptual change in the physical properties of the artwork created by various lighting situations, the perceptibility of the inconsistencies, overlaps and surface details depend on the direction and amount of light available (see Illustration 20). Merleau-Ponty discusses light and changes in determining color in *Phenomenology of Perception* to consider perception of “the same phenomenon under different conditions” (307). However, I disagree that light and color, in these cases, must act like a reflection and, “remain in the background as a discrete intermediaries, and lead our gaze instead of arresting it” when under consideration as specifically lighting an object (310). As explained in the previous section, in order for light become part of the sense experience that “spreads beyond our visual domain” it must be interwoven with all

of the perceptual field (211). I want the changes in the intensity or spectrum of light to become an integral part of the pieces and create different variations of the same images. A viewer's sensing of the light should intertwine with the perceptual experience of the artwork. The light works to illuminate and/or hide what is visible and/or invisible in the work.

Each of these examples of flesh and chiasm within the artwork establishes the image as a place of interweaving of an inner and outer visibility. Moreover, the subjects within the images also demand a crossing of visible/invisible to contribute to the fabric of existence. Attention to the flesh of the pieces as revealed or hidden corresponds to the surface of the bodies as seen within the images. The choice of clothed/unclothed for each figure represented is an obvious distinction. A comparative study of body throughout the artworks exhibits the cultural relationship of the body as seen/unseen in reference to each individual as clothed/unclothed. A more engaging distinction can be found in comparing the visible/invisible on/beneath the surface of the flesh. In the three images of the young man, various tattoos or body marks are visible on the skin but it is the detail of the heavily muscular structure underneath that gives weight or strength to the body (see Illustration 10, page 31). In contrast, in two of the three images of the old man the flesh hangs in folds against a vulnerable skeletal structure (see Illustrations 21, 22 and 24, pages 63 and 66). The hidden or invisible comes to the surface of flesh yet remains beneath the body. To understand the implications of these details, i.e. the pacemaker and defibrillator raised on each side of his chest, the viewer must extend "the bond between the flesh and the idea, between the visible and the interior armature which it manifests and which it conceals" (Merleau-Ponty VI 149). The devices and their wires are not

immediately known to the viewer (and sometimes are concealed due to the lighting situation) but can recognizably be perceived as something foreign to the body and flesh.

Illustration 21. *RobertN3x*, 31x 34". Mixture of natural and artificial light. Middle section shows pacemaker and defibrillator with same detail as bone structure.

Illustration 22. Detail of *RobertN2*, 43x 66". Mixture of natural and artificial light. Middle section shows scarring on chest, defibrillator with wires and folds of skin.

In considering an artwork, perception of the embodied viewer “allows us to see the world as something separate from us, as independent of our point of view on it, as fully and genuinely real” (Carman MP 191). In this case, the ‘real’ means the image or object of our perception. It is important to realize this distinction as the body in a photograph is not an embodied being. Nevertheless, the artwork increases our awareness or makes visible the viewer’s embodiedness. The disparity between body image and body schema demanded definition in the last section for similar reasons. In the manner that the constitution of body image depends on the reflection of body as represented rather than body as subject of perception, the photograph as the object of perception culminates in Husserl’s third level of image-consciousness with the image subject as reflected upon separate from the photograph as presented. As Shaun Gallagher points out, perception (such as reflecting upon, imagining, conceptualizing) of a body as “the content of intentional consciousness” would be considered body image (Gallagher 226). Body schema performs the functions that render the body image possible at both the conscious and unconscious level (234). Both reside in the viewer yet body schema, which establishes the interaction of the body and world, is rarely controlled by body image (235). In my artwork, however, I intentionally call into question the role of body image and manipulate the performance of the body schema by means of body image within the viewer.

For each of the works, the large size and varying scale of the figures, from almost life-sized to larger-than-life, exist in direct relation to each other and the viewer. As Merleau-Ponty discusses in *Phenomenology of Perception*, the body schema moves in contrast to important objects or figures that are prominent against the background

structure of bodily spatiality (Merleau-Ponty PP 101). Next to the images, the viewer is placed in an environment where “every figure stands out against the double horizon of external and bodily space” and must be negotiated by the body schema (101). But where mere objects in our horizon are not always subject to conscious reflection, the viewer perceives the artwork as an intentional object creating an awareness of body image in relation to the image subject. By eliminating the background from each of the images, I have deliberately isolated the figure against any possible horizon within the image. The result of image-consciousness, a mental representation of a body, occurs communally (as intertwining flesh) with the perceptual experience and conceptual understanding of the viewer’s own body image. Furthermore, the translucency of the pieces allows for the overlapping of figures in other images and regarding other viewers within an exhibition environment to establish a perceptual horizon interweaving external, image and bodily space together. In this, I force the embodied viewer, the one that “straddles the boundary between subject and object, visible and invisible, conscious and unconscious”, to constitute an image that attempts to integrate these same characteristics along the same perceptual horizon (Carman MP 185).

Illustration 23. Comparison of *RobertW2*, 43 x 84" and *RichardW1*, 43 x 83". Mixture of natural and artificial light. Similar poses yet difference in age and body type.

Illustration 24. Comparison study of three pieces, same figure. From left to right: *RobertN3*, 43 x 62", *RobertN2*, 43x 66" and *RobertN1*, 44 x 70". Natural light.

In the unfolding of knowledge, which comes to the viewer through sense experience along this perceptual horizon, he or she is “of the same flesh as the world one inhabits and perceives” (123). With each artwork, I present a figure that, through the culmination of image-consciousness, parallels the constitution of ‘otherness’ but only with regards to the viewer’s (self) body image in contrast to other beings in the world. In other words, I acknowledge that the chiasm that exists in the “transitivity from one body to another” cannot be formed between the viewer and the image (Merleau-Ponty VI 143). However, because the intertwining of an embodied viewer and the other bodies in the world is based in the recognition that others also exist as perceiver/perceived, knowledge of the viewer’s body image is transformed in reference to the perceived representation or body image of other. My images compel the viewer, to, in their reflection on the image subject or as part of the perceptual awareness between an embodied viewer and the object/figure of which they are aware, to recognize meaning as related to or differing from their own body image. The chiasmatic structure creates a crossing of different perceptual modes where the consciousness moves between levels of body image, body schema and world. A naïve perception makes way for a reflective perception where the expressive body opens to the events that occur within image-consciousness because the artwork immerses the viewer within the flesh of the world.

CODA

Final Thoughts on the Dissertation Project

As an artist, I find that the validation of contemporary art often resides in the complex statement or theoretical momentum of the artwork rather than the creative impact, aesthetic intent, or unique visual qualities an image holds. In postmodernism, the cultural result of the artwork has become more important than the approach of the artist or the impression of the viewer. Current artworks rely on difference, plurality and paradox where the artist is less concerned with what one sees *in* the art object than with the relationships into which one enters in reaction to it as a cultural object. The artwork denies an aesthetic experience for the viewer because it does not offer a valuable object to be perceived or a unique meaning to be realized. In this regard, artists can neglect the truth or essence found in the numerous layers of visual interaction possible within any contemporary genre of art.

In the current range of postmodern art discourse, attention to the complexity of the actual experience of work of contemporary art remains absent. Earlier art theories that privilege the art object as perceived are insufficient when applied to the explosion of genres and elaborate installation environments produced today. Rather than explicit involvement with the perception of an artwork, contemporary models addressing the

world of postmodern visuality often apply theory from other disciplines to classify cultural and societal relationships or interpret meaning as defined by language. Critical discourse in literature, architecture, film and culture studies has assumed the role of contextualizing the contemporary 'metanarrative' approach to art. The rise of the sign and the disconnection of visuals from their meaning have created an overwhelming amount of theory distanced from the aesthetic experience of the artwork. And while the continued application of theory often provides a cohesive critical stance or an explanation of the societal relationships found in contemporary work, these can be impenetrable and removed from the reality of the perceptual experience found in visual art for even the educated viewer. Traditionally, a viewer is conditioned to search for meaning as part of a subjective value judgment when presented with something distinctive. In a museum setting, uncertainty, anxiety and misinterpretation can taint the perceptual response by a viewer to a work of contemporary art. Often, a critical response, whether based only on personal taste or an educated understanding of a specific artist, will bias or distort even a straightforward interaction with an artwork. By deviating into subjective readings or critical stances, the viewer can restrict his or her involvement with and perceptual comprehension of the entire piece. As an artist, I believe that the truth must remain in the viewer's experience of the art itself.

To look forward from this dissertation, I must place this research into perspective. I have come to realize that focusing on the relationship of sense perception and reflecting upon those perceptions can clarify the entire visual field of awarenesses required to work successfully in multiple genres of contemporary art. An application of the 'lived body' as a definitive aspect of perceptual/artistic/aesthetic experience can function as artistic and

critical approach to a wide range of new media. In searching for an alternative to postmodern art theory, I found an opening of visibility and artistic experience not possible with previous critical models. In some manner, studying phenomenology has resolved my discontent with postmodern or contemporary art because I have returned to focusing on the perception of the artwork as experienced in the mind of the artist and for interaction with an embodied viewer. I utilize phenomenology as a philosophical foundation to confront the image or artwork as a focus of perceptual experience given through its mediating body. The role of embodied viewer in translating the intangible moment found in an aesthetic perceptual encounter cannot be denied. I have found new meaning by returning to traditional Husserlian methodology in a phenomenological approach by applying the conceptual framework essential to the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty on perception and an embodied experience. The placement of perceptual consciousness within the viewer's mind/body provides for an acceptance of an exhibition space as a controlled world through the use of provisional bracketing and the projection or co-intention of possible meanings as co-constituted on a horizon pre-delineated by the artist.

A phenomenological approach to contemporary visual art, of any form or genre, provides a different context for an artist or viewer to seek out meaning and value. Unlike other applications of theory, which often function as external viewing devices for artworks, through phenomenology embodied viewers are communally intertwined with the artwork to determine his or her perceptual experience. As an aesthetic theory, a previous knowledge of art or theory is not required for interacting with the artwork. The individual, in their exploration of the phenomenological experience, maintains a unique yet connected viewpoint and becomes an active participant with the work of art. The

reductive technique of eliminating all but what is directly experienced by consciousness requires the artist or viewer to establish the viability of the image or artwork. Since the spectacle has become a norm for most postmodern visual experience and the simulated visual world as presented represents what reality has become, a basis for truth can only be found in examining one's directed perception of their immediate environment. The world of contemporary art has already become a phenomenological theater or expanded transcendental field set out for viewers to immerse themselves within. The need is to connect meaning and value with the aesthetic experience of the artwork. Ultimately, the capacity of this philosophical approach to incorporate multiple possibilities for meaning at the culmination of the viewer's reflective response make it indispensable to the artist. The potential for meaning in the work can be considered inexhaustible as the viewer's perceptual experience escalates from a plurality of interpretations. The deciphering of experience must be a continuous process of perceiving, sensing and constituting. In other words, the potential of the application of phenomenology to the contemporary image lives in the projection or pro-tending of, on multiple levels or strata, the knowledge, experience and perceptual understanding of how the artwork can be constituted again and again.

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Illustration 25. Comparison of *RobertN2*, 43 x 66". At left, frontal natural and artificial light. At right, studio installation view with natural light from behind.

Illustration 26. At left, image of *RobertW2*, 43 x 84", frontal natural light. At right, studio installation view of *RobertN2* and *RobertW2* in natural light.

Illustration 27. Comparison of *RobertNI*, 44 x 70". At left, wall view, artificial frontal light. At right, studio installation view, natural light from behind.

Illustration 28. Details of *RobertNI*, 44 x 70". At left, detail of head to show embedded print layers. At right, detail of bottom to show effects of natural cross-light from side.

Illustration 29. Comparison of *RichardW3*, 43 x 84". At left, *RichardW3*, artificial and natural frontal light. At right, studio installation view, *RichardW3* (foreground) seen with *RichardW1*, 43 x 83", natural light from behind.

Illustration 30. Details of *RichardW3*, 43 x 84". At left, detail of upper middle to show surface treatments. At right, detail of middle to show stitching and varnish drips.

Illustration 31. Comparison of *RobertW3*, 43 x 85". At left, studio installation view, natural light from right side. At right, frontal artificial light.

Illustration 32. At left, rear view of *RobertW3*, 43 x 85". At right, section detail to show surface treatment, stitching and overlapping of prints.

Illustration 33. At left, studio installation view of *RichardW1*, 43 x 83" (foreground) and *RobertW3*, 43 x 85", natural light from right. At right, studio installation view of *RichardW1*, 43 x 83" and *RichardW2*, 43 x 83" (foreground), natural light from behind.

Illustration 34. At left, studio installation view of *RobertW1*, 44 x 82" (foreground) and *RichardW2*, 43 x 83", frontal natural light. In middle, studio installation view of *RobertW1*, 44 x 82" (foreground) and *RichardW3*, 43 x 84", frontal natural light. At right, studio installation view of *RichardW1*, 43 x 83" and *RobertW1*, 44 x 82", back to back, natural light from right.

CURRICULUM VITAE

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EDUCATION

- PhD 2010 University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky.
- 2006 Universitas Catholica: Institut Catholique de Paris, France.
- MFA 1990 Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
- BFA 1986 Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1985 Parsons School of Design, Paris, France.

PUBLICATIONS

Critical Writing

- 2009 *The Intangible Entities – The Artwork of Nancy Wride*
Dresden Artists-in-Residence, Saxony State Ministry for Arts, Dresden,
Germany.
- 2008 *Dismantling Geneva Steel as Contemporary Phoenix: Chris Dunker's
Postmodern Metaphor* (Catalogue Essay), Dismantling Geneva Steel:
Photographs by Chris Dunker. BYU Museum of Art, Provo, Utah.
(ISBN 978-0-8425-2700-2 hdbk, 978-0-8425-27002-6 pbk).

Images

- 2010 *Wishbone*, a novel by Julie Wade, Colgate University Press (ISBN 978-0-912568-21-8).
- 2004 *Forgotten Knowledge*, Isotope: A Journal of Literary, Nature and Science
Writing, Fall/Winter, Issue 2.2.

Artwork

- 1996 *A View of Seven: Visual Arts Fellowship Finalists* (Exhibition Catalogue), Essay by Gordon McConnell, Utah Arts Council, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1996 *20/20* (Exhibition Catalogue), Essay by David Susec, Utah Arts Festival, Salt Lake City, Utah.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- 2009 Presenter, Chair of Panel. Paper: *Contemporary Fashion Photography and Image Consciousness: Postmodern Photographic Theory*, Panel: *Social and Cultural Processes of Image*, Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association of the South National Conference, Wilmington, North Carolina.
- 2009 Presenter, Chair of Panel. Paper: *A Force of Nature or the Beauty of Art? Determining a Contemporary Aesthetic Experience*, Panel: *Landscapes: Interdisciplinary Approaches*. Humanities Education and Research Association National Conference, Nature and the Humanities: Interdisciplinary and Intercultural Perspectives, Chicago, Illinois.
- 2008 Presenter. Paper: *Is It Art? Popular Culture Has Consumed the Art World*, Popular Culture Association/American Culture Association of the South National Conference, Louisville, Kentucky.
- 2002 Featured Presenter. Performance/Paper: *No Thinking Required?*, National Conference, Society of Photographic Education, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- 1997 Featured Speaker. Southwest Conference, Society of Photographic Education, Park City, Utah.
- 1997 Speaker, Panelist. Paper: *The Female as Body/Image*, Panel: *Visual Imagination and the Female Body*. National Women's Studies Association, National Conference, Women Generating Creativity and Change, University of Missouri, St. Louis, Missouri.
- 1993 Speaker, Panelist. *Educational Strategies: Old Critiques, New Methods*, Northwest Conference, Society of Photographic Education, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- Present Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, Kentucky.
- 2005 - 2010 Lecturer, University of Louisville, Department of Humanities and Department of Fine Arts and Art History, Louisville, Kentucky.
- 1998 - 2005 Associate Professor, Department of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1992 - 1998 Assistant Professor, Department of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1991 - 1992 Temporary Assistant Professor, Department of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1991 Lecturer, Department of Art, Owensboro Community College, Owensboro, Kentucky.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

- 2000 - 2005 Assistant Department Chair / Director of Undergraduate Curriculum,
Department of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1994 - 2005 Emphasis Chair, Photography Program,
Department of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1993 - 2005 Faculty Chair, Visiting Artist Program, College of Humanities, Arts and
Social Sciences, Department of Art, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.

GRANTS AND HONORS

- 2006 Faculty Mentor Award. University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky.
- 2002 Recipient, Program Grant. Marie Eccles Caine Foundation,
Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 2001 Professor of the Year. College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 2001 Recipient, Individual Artist Grant. Marie Eccles Caine Foundation,
Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1998 Creative Artist of the Year. Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1995 Grant Recipient. New Course Development Grant, College of Humanities,
Arts and Social Sciences, Utah State University, Logan, Utah.
- 1995 Visual Arts Fellowship Finalist. Utah Arts Council, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1995 Utah Arts Council Individual Artist Grant Recipient.
- 1993 Grant Recipient. New Forms Regional Initiative Grant, Helena Presents,
The Myrna Loy Center, Helena, Montana.
- 1993 Utah Arts Council Individual Artist Grant Recipient.
- 1989 - 1990 Robert H. Daisley Memorial Scholarship Recipient.
Cranbrook Academy of Art, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
- 1986 John T. Milliken Scholarship Recipient.
Washington University, School of Fine Arts, St. Louis, Missouri.

VISITING ARTIST

- 1993 Artist in Residence. Mary Anderson Center for the Arts, Mount St.
Francis, Indiana.
- 1989 Visiting Artist. Photography Department. Washington University, St.
Louis, Missouri.
- 1987 Artist in Residence. Cite' Internationale des Arts, Paris, France.
- 1986 Visiting Artist. Department of Art, University of Southern Indiana,
Evansville, Indiana.

SELECTED ONE AND TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 1996 *Reflections* (Two Person Exhibition). Finch Lane Gallery,
Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1995 *At a Threshold of Silence...* (One Person Exhibition). Nora Eccles
Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, Utah.
- 1994 *Structured Perceptions/Perceptual Structures*. A Collaborative Installation
with Janet Shapero (Sculptor), Alliance for the Varied Arts, Logan, Utah.

- 1994 *Perceptual Figurations*. A Collaborative Installation with Janet Shapero (Sculptor), Corner Gallery, Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, Utah

SELECTED CURATED AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2002 *Love, Lust and Motorcycles* (Invitational Artist Project/Exhibition). Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 2002 *Perspectives of Conflict* (Curated Exhibition). Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1998 *Chair* (Invitational Artist Project/Exhibition). Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1997 *Making Waves: Controversial Art in Utah* (Curated Exhibition). Salt Lake Art Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1996 Mary Anderson Invitational (Curated Exhibition). Floyd Museum, Anderson, Indiana.
- 1996 *20/20: Exhibition 1996* (Curated Exhibition). Utah Arts Council, Union Pacific Building, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1996 *A View of Seven*, Utah Arts Visual Fellowship Finalist Exhibition, Utah Arts Council, Salt Lake Arts Center, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1996 *Personna* (Curated Exhibition). Vital Arts Gallery, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1994 Three Photographers (Curated Exhibition). Eccles Art Center, Ogden, Utah.
- 1993 *16 x 20 Black and White* (National Curated Exhibition). Alias Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia.
- 1993 *Hidden Treasures: Exhibition 1993* (Curated Exhibition). Utah Arts Council, Union Pacific Building, Salt Lake City, Utah.
- 1993 *But is it Art? Currents in Electronic Imaging* (Curated Exhibition). University Gallery, Pacific Lutheran University, Tacoma, Washington.
- 1993 *4 to 8* (Curated Exhibition). Alliance for the Varied Arts, Logan, Utah.
- 1992 *Twenty - Twenty Vision: A Photographic Exhibition* (Curated Exhibition). Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.
- 1991 Indiana Photographers (Four Person Exhibition). Evansville Museum of Arts and Sciences, Evansville, Indiana.