IN-SIGHT

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By

Madeleine Söder

Thesis Committee:

Patricia L. Hickman, Chairperson
Ivy H. Andrade
Mamoru Sato
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IN·SIGHT

We mostly use our sight to view and explore the world. Ironically, the inquiries we have about ourselves and the world we live in often have answers that are not to be found outside.

INTRODUCTION

Through a perplexing deficiency in our society, human intelligence often takes us far away from ourselves. Everyday we are bombarded with information through sound and visual images and there is no time or space for momentary experience. We are so dependent on time and schedules that we sometimes forget to breathe.

My installation is not about this societal deficiency per se, but more about the counter balance to this problem. IN·SIGHT is about turning our focus, our vision away from the external world for a while, in order to be present with our internal selves. The installation grew out of the need for more balance in our time.

When one is a stranger to oneself
one is estranged from others too
Anne Wilson Shaef
I use the eye and the sequence of an eye blink as a symbol in this installation. I am concerned with sight and our inclination and emphasis on paying attention to the external world as opposed to the internal world.

The eye is a symbol that has followed me since my very first art class. While making ceramic vessels and hand-built sculptures, I had the urge to include eyes in the design. I carved eyes in the clay and painted them with glaze. At this point the symbolic meaning of the eye was a reference to being watched and evaluated.

*In Focus* (made in steel) had eyes attached to the form of a female body like enormous flowers with a giant eye at the top of each stem. This work was more specifically about being evaluated as a woman, being an object of approval or disapproval. The eye kept coming back again and again in my paintings and sculptures. Now when I look back, I realize that the eye at that time did not only symbolize the critical eye of others, but also my own judgment, evaluation, and criticism of myself. Today I see the eye as a
symbol of clarity and awareness, of seeing things as they are, going beyond the distortions that the mind makes up.

Because of my experience and practice in meditation, yoga and other Eastern philosophies, the eye in this work is also referring to the "third" eye, which is the eye looking within. In Hinduism, the third eye looks within ourselves, observing our own mind and thoughts. Going one step further, the third eye represents and recognizes our inner core, soul, heart, or godliness in ourselves and others.

IN-SIGHT is about turning our attention, our sight, toward our internal space as opposed to constantly giving our attention to external stimuli. Several of my earlier works visually describe my experience of this internal space. *Embracing, Embraced, Current,* and *Respire* are the four works I find most
related to this theme.

In *Embracing*, I described the internal space through the human figure. I used skeletal leaves formed as a “skin” to hold the shape of a hollow figure. The hollowness describes this state of being as spaciousness, lightness, breath, and transparency.

*Embraced* expressed the same concept as *Embracing* but in a more abstract way. The same transparent material of skeletal leaves was used but the abstract shape of a half sphere held the void, which makes the work more open for interpretation.
In *Current*, the space was more rigid due to the many lines of interwoven copper wire that held the form, however, the silk organza worked very much like the leaves in allowing air to move in and out.
Respire was a kinetic sculpture which in its movement simulated breath and other life cycles. This work described internal space at its core, beyond thoughts and feelings, the steady flow of the breath. These four pieces were all descriptive in that they visually portrayed internal space.

In IN-SIGHT, I approach the same idea in a more conceptual way leaving room for the viewers’ own interpretation.
THE EXHIBIT

My goal with IN·SIGHT is to allow viewers to have their own experience of internal space, inviting them to find that place in themselves. My intent is to encourage the viewer to stop for a moment and ask what it means to her/him. In order to experience the moment, one has to stop doing and start being, like a quiet observer of one’s own mind, body, breath, environment etc. This is not an easy thing to do in today’s busy society, a society where we are constantly bombarded with information both on conscious and unconscious levels. We are so used to being human doings rather than human beings.

To look within is also about visiting our true values and seeing how we live up to them. When we are in a situation with another person, do we tend to look at that person as being the problem or are we willing to see how we played a part in that person’s behavior in our interaction? Are we willing to truly take responsibility for our own actions? Are we willing to look at our unconscious behavior? Are we willing to make the unconscious conscious? These are the questions IN·SIGHT explores when we are quiet with ourselves.

This installation originates from a small work which I previously made consisting of only five panels. These five panels depicted the complete cycle of the eye blinking, going from open to half-closed to closed to half-open to open again. With these five panels I wanted to remind the viewer of the moment, the present moment as it is right now.
The reason why I saw it as natural to use the eye-blink cycle to symbolize a moment is because in my Swedish language, the word for moment is Ögonblick and the direct translation for that word is eye-blink or eye-glance.

The cycle of the blink is also a symbol of the cycle of our life-sustaining breath. It is a reminder to pay attention to our breath and not take it for granted - to use our breath as a tool to reach a state of better mental, physical and spiritual health. The suspended silk hanging in two layers symbolizes light and breath. My intention is that as the viewer moves around the room passing the silk images, the cloth will move in a subtle, fluid motion. In this way, the transparency and sheerness of the silk is important in portraying breath and life. As the two layers of silk overlap they also create a moiré effect which is important in that it creates an additional 3D effect to the two dimensional surface - it makes the eye seem like it is coming out of the cloth hanging freely in the air without suspension. The moiré creates life within each eye (see plate 5.)

Each individual eye in the cycle also symbolizes the different stages of awareness. An open eye symbolizes the use of the eye in a physical sense, viewing the world, while the closed eye is a symbol for looking within. When we close our eyes, unless we go to sleep, we come closer to ourselves - feeling, hearing, and seeing what is going on inside. The half-closed eye is a symbol of

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1 moiré
n [F, fr. E mohair] (1660) archaic: a watered mohair moi.re n [F moire, fr. moire likemoire, fr. moire] (1818) l a: an irregular wavy finish on a fabric: a ripple pattern on a stamp 2: a fabric having a wavy watered appearance 3: an independent usu. shimmering pattern seen when two geometrically regular patterns (as two sets of parallel lines or two halftone screens) are superimposed esp. at an acute angle -- moiré or moiré adj
the balance between the two giving internal and external reality equal importance.

My intention for the installation was that the viewer would enter the space and have his or her own experience of being seen or of seeing himself/herself in a different way. It is also my intention that it works as a metaphor for looking back at and questioning oneself.
PROCESS

In discovering my technical process I went through many trials and ended up using a rather simple technique. I started by using a lithographic stone to create and transfer the image; however, this never gave me the detail, clarity and contrast that I wanted. I also explored screen-printing, which gave me a lot of contrast but not enough detail and subtle nuances in gray tones. Finally I settled for a very simple surface design method called heat-transfer, consisting of the following steps:

1. I took a high-resolution digital photo of my eye in the 5 different stages of an eye blink.
2. I used Photoshop to edit and manipulate the images for the result I wanted.
3. I experimented with the quality of dark-light contrast of the final prints.
4. I made over-saturated color copies (copies made with multiple layers of color toner to mix the subtle tones of gray.)
5. I transferred the image to the fabric using the heat of a regular iron. I made a frame where I placed my fabric to register the image in the same place for each transfer. Then I put the image face down on the fabric and evenly moved an iron over the image area. The paper with the image must be pulled upward toward the iron as the iron moves over the image. If the paper is not removed immediately, the paper will stick to the fabric.
A disadvantage to this technique is that it is difficult to control the consistency of the image for two reasons: first, because the image is copied by a machine, the amount of toner will differ depending on the level left in the machine. And second, as one irons the image, the toner is fluid only when hot and will not stick evenly as the iron is moved around.
PLATE 1. OVERALL VIEW OF "IN-SIGHT" EXHIBITION
Commons Gallery
University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa
December 5 – 10, 2004
PLATE 2. SIDE VIEW (LEFT)
PLATE 3. SIDE VIEW (RIGHT)
PLATE 4. BLINK SEQUENCE
PLATE 6. HALF-CLOSED EYE (DETAIL)
PLATE 7. CLOSED EYE (DETAIL)
PLATE 8. HALF-OPEN EYE (DETAIL)
PLATE 9. SIGNAGE
CONCLUSION

When I first made the original piece of five panels printed on paper and silk, I had no plans to display or exhibit the work to the public. I simply made it because it was a concept very important to me. However, the work wanted to be larger.

I made a maquette in the early stages of my work. During this process changes were made: each eye was made larger: and the internal space of the gallery was changed to take on the shape of an eye. Conceptually, the gallery shape served as the sculptural aspect of the installation. The eye shaped gallery added to the intimacy of the work, placing the viewer within the eye.

Although the maquette and all the pieces for the installation were completed at an early stage, I was not able to fully experience the installation until the gallery walls were configured into its eye-shape and all the silk prints were mounted on the wall.

When I first saw the completed installation, it looked exactly the way I had envisioned it - yet I felt uncomfortable with it. When I scrutinized my discomfort, I realized that this installation was not as easily accessible to the public as most of my earlier works. It was more conceptual. This work was very personal and by exhibiting it, I felt more vulnerable than ever before. While my own experience was not always pleasant, I created the space with openness to individual experience in mind. Sometimes I truly enjoyed the quietness and the peace of the installation, and other times I felt very uneasy.
However, the installation was successful in that it did what I intended it to do. Confronting its meaning brought up questions and evoked emotions that encouraged introspection and awareness.

See the world as your self
The outer mirrors the inner
Tao Te Ching
BIBLIOGRAPHY


