CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTH RIDGE

A CREATIVE APPROACH
TO PHOTO-ILLUSTRATIVE GRAPHICS

An abstract submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Art by Michael Douglas Arthur

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The Abstract of Michael Douglas Arthur is approved:

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I. INTRODUCTION

The camera is one of the most precise instruments available to the artist for visual expression. Together with the artist's good sense for composition, the camera lens format helps in the elimination of distracting elements in the environment. By its very nature, the camera allows the artist to communicate clearly and simply.

There are many photographic techniques available to the graphic artist today. The photographic image can be reproduced as posterizations, line resolutions, and literally hundreds of various screens which separate the photographic image into textures, colors, and patterns. Chosing which technique to use should be determined by what enhances the subject in relation to the concept. The majority of photographic techniques used today, produce flat two-dimensional effects. Very few techniques can add free-form shapes and three-dimensional qualities to the original photographic image.

This abstract introduces a new technique in the area of photo-illustrative graphics. This unique process enhances the photographic image by the application of color, texture and form.

II. THE PROJECT

A. Theme: Trains

The mechanical objects and massive machinery found among old locomotives and box cars are desirable subjects for demonstrating the qualities of this new process. This is due to the high contrast of form and color.

The linear, hard-edged shapes and the high contrast tonal features captured in photographing old trains, produces a strong graphic image. Applying brilliant, fluid water color dyes to this image results in a dramatic contrast of two opposite qualities. In addition, the use of brilliant color to a subject that is not recognized as colorful, stimulates the viewer's attention to the work of art.
B. The Process

This project is an experiment with a photo-chemical process that is presently used only in producing 35mm transparencies for industrial slide show presentations. The process has been used to prepare film so water color dyes can be applied to the surface to color the background of title and copy slides. This process was taken one step further for the purpose of this abstract.

Realizing that in the hands of the imaginative artist, this color application could be applied in a free, expressive manner and with multiple colors on the film surface, this project was undertaken. Instead of dying film with typography on the surface, color was applied to photo images of various subject matter. The fluid three-dimensional qualities of form and brilliancy of the water color dyes, in contrast with the hard-edged photographic image, distinctly separates this process from any other technique used in the graphic arts. This process allows the artist to apply color in a controlled and expressive manner to the subject.

Typical transparency films used in photography cannot reproduce exact color. The greyish, bluish cast of the film itself prevents exact duplication of color in the subject. The water color dyes applied to the surface of the film's emulsion in this process, prevents loss of color quality when reproducing the art for printing and reproduction.

C. The Procedure

Step 1: A 35mm Nikon F camera and Tri-X black and white film was used to produce high contrast and graininess in the subject matter. After selection of what seemed to be the best shots from the proof-sheet, the frames were enlarged on 11 x 14 sheets of Kodalith Estar Base film.
Step 2: After developing a number of images to the result of film positives, they were carefully touched up with black opaque, if needed. This is done on a light table.

Step 3: When satisfied with the film positives, they were contacted to another sheet of Kodalith film in a vacuum contact frame.

Step 4: Immediately after exposure of about one minute under a controlled light source, the film was developed until the density of the image was satisfactory.

Step 5: Following the developing, the film was submerged into a peroxide solution which stops the developing action and begins to loosen and remove the silver bromide crystals on the film emulsion. The gum base of the emulsion was still present.

Step 6: After the excess residue was cleaned from the film, it was washed thoroughly and slipped into a tray of fixer until the image looked as though it had disappeared or dissolved.

Step 7: Next, the film was washed again, squeegeed and hung up to dry.

Step 8: After the film was thoroughly dry, it was taped down to the surface of the light table and, with cotton pads, a light coat of yellow dye was applied to the emulsion side of the film until the image appeared clearly.

Step 9: After wiping off the excess dye, the image was seen clearly enough to express it with other colors using any desired application technique. Various colors were allowed to bleed and blend into one another which resulted in a third color. The longer these colors were rubbed into the emulsion, the more brilliant and intense the color appeared.

Step 10: Finally, after producing the desired effect, smears and areas of question were removed with a slightly moist cotton pad.
Step 11: The works of art were then backlit for display.

III. CONCLUSION

This process is one of unlimited usage, not only in illustrative graphics and photographic art, but can be applied to crafts, sculpture, architecture, and interior design.

In crafts, for example, photographic images produced with this technique can be applied as backlit decoration mixed with wood or fiber art. The film images can be laminated between plexiglass or adhered to surfaces in a collage manner. A stained glass window effect can be simulated by laminating the film between glass or plexiglass and used on exteriors and interiors of buildings as decor.

Backlit free-standing sculptures can be produced using colorful photographic images on film.

The commercial uses range from printed collateral to tradeshow display and point-of-sale purchase displays.

The only negative aspects of the process are that the films' emulsion is soft, therefore, could be scratched easily, and the color that is applied to the surface is water soluble and attention must be given to environmental conditions such as humidity and moisture.

This project has been very beneficial because it has given me another creative approach to my advertising design work to consider. The characteristics of the process allows the designer to take the product or object being advertised and communicate in color, in an abstract manner and also retain the clear definition and identity of the object.
A. Locomotive Mid-Section
B. Oil Tanker
F. Iron Wheels