Accelerate into the accident

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ACCELERATE INTO THE ACCIDENT

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

by
Jeffrey D. Hill
B.F.A., East Carolina University, 1998
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This exhibition is dedicated to the support and memory of my parents, Joseph and Helga Hill.
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Abstract

The installation uses purely steel to describe the organic and chaotic nature of thought processes. It looks for a way to confront grief and anxiety. The procedure's purpose is to understand abstract, emotional thinking in immediate, familiar physical terms. By examining each fine strand, either steel rod or line of thought, I attempt to revel in the overwhelming complexity and irrefutable beauty of the mind. It is not a strategy to control mental imbalance. It is rather a humble acceptance of the organic chaos of thought.
Accelerate into the Accident

This work embraces the chaotic, organic nature of thought processes. It looks for a way to confront grief and anxiety. In a simple exercise I want to learn to grasp the overwhelming complexity and irrefutable beauty of the mind. The procedure’s purpose is to understand abstract, emotional thinking in immediate, familiar physical terms. I designed a system where I could intuitively unravel all the threads of my experiences and then watch them build themselves back up, tangling and losing themselves in one another. By stripping everything down and then watching a chaotic system build itself I hope to gain some form of reconciliation with mental chaos.

I specifically chose to make this a physical act that left a visual record. It is a simple repetitive act that is a means of introspection. It is a slow, rhythmic, determined way to approach thinking. It is the physical act of making that provides a platform for resolve. The physical object provides a visual record of the examination of this chaos. The tangible facilitates an understanding and acceptance of this turmoil that brings resolution closer.

A very stable, invariable process was needed to allow for an unencumbered examination of the mind’s mechanisms. Technical issues were not allowed to interfere with a very direct immediate reflection in the material. The character of my feelings governed the character of my work. Intuition was free to determine form. The consistency of the forms allowed the final work to create itself. Connecting the distant mind to familiar physical sensation liberated seeming irrational thought processes.
Purely linear elements were used. Each individual line contracts and expands in an irregular rhythm in imitation of the erratic nature of thought. The lines are of different weight to reflect the different severity certain thoughts have. Lines of consistent character repeat, overlap, interlock to represent a perpetual system. Each individual line, thought, constructs a whole that mirrors the reflexive expression of unchecked mental responses.

I chose steel as a material. It is an industrially consistent material that is readily available. The predictable physical property of steel that I exploited is its malleability when heated. When red-hot, steel is as fluid as the imagination. When it cools the opportunity has passed. It is the nature of this limited time frame that demands confidence in intuition. The simplification of process, the stripping down, dictates sincere expression through the material.

Using steel makes this creative process a physical act. When troubled thoughts are suppressed they are sometimes termed internalized. The mind's chaos can adversely affect our perception, our reality, and our body. We seek to rationalize our thought's indefinability into logical physicality. Our language reflects this. Grief is most easily defined in the physical sense of pain. Loss hurts. I wanted to use the familiarity of the body's presence to manipulate a material in order to comprehend my psychological state. I believe that we readily accept that a concrete physical object that feels rough produces a certain sensation. This work is about how an experience can psychologically elicit the same feeling.

A painstakingly simple process creates intuitive lines that are gestures of thoughts. The straight steel is cycled through my mind. The lines of thought whip around
and through each other. Their organic repetition creates energized forms. The whole construction and process are as loud and aggressive as this very determined confrontation of thought. The final work has although sought its own course.

When the work was removed from the machinery of its own making and presented outdoors it chose to resolve itself. The steel evidence that depicts disjointed thought mimics live oaks and the patterns of fallen leaves. Nature’s harmonious forms are constructed by chaos. Chaos is beautifully organic. Thought is chaotic and organic. The obstinate power of the mind can not be controlled. It must be allowed to propagate.

I have created a scenario to examine my own mental traumas. Very low-tech parameters have been established to eliminate calculation and to liberate instinctive thinking. Specifically, a labor-intensive process has been chosen to use the familiarity of physical sensation as an agent to interpret the less tangible chaos of thought into visual form. I am trying to use my physical reality to externalize my equally credible mental reality. By examining each fine strand, either steel rod or line of thought, I struggle to revel in the strength and beauty of our mind’s complexity. I need my body to be privy to the development of each individual strand and my mind to witness the inevitable development of chaos. It is not a strategy to control mental imbalance. It is rather a humble acceptance of the organic chaos of thought.
Vita

Jeffrey Hill received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in sculpture from East Carolina University in 1998. During his undergraduate studies he had the opportunity to study printmaking, photography and German as a foreign language at Justus Liebig Universitaet in Giessen, Germany from 1994-1996. His previous sculptural work at LSU included literal figurative references. This recent installation returned to more abstract descriptions of the human experience and included crucial auditory elements. A video work based on the "Accelerate into the Accident" exhibition will be made available in August of 2003.