

PERSONAL STATEMENT: LEON N. HICKS (ARTIST/ 1992)

The philosophical, cultural, and formal principles which have determined my approach to my artworks include (1) African, Pre-Renaissance, Renaissance, Oriental Calligraphy, (2) Processes of execution in creating line-mass textures and light-value tones in black and white artworks, and (3) visual perception (styles), such as Cubism, art and artifice, and generative visual forms, as these image-ground concepts relate to manipulations, and bi-dimensional (two-dimensional) surfaces in my artworks.

The artistic ideas which motivate me have remained a constant in my artworks. This includes the desire to explore the synthesis between surface image and its visual components (details), and the act of seeing the surface itself, its materials, in the artwork, and how these artistic ideas can determine the processes, and the concepts of manipulating the " perceived structures " in the artworks.

In the 1950's my studio artwork in undergraduate school was produced primarily in painting and sculpture. In graduate school, my studio artworks were produced in painting (M.A., Degree), and printmaking (M.F.A., Degree).

My development as an artist, and my artworks can be divided into four major periods of evolution. They are the following:

PERIOD NUMBER ONE: 1961-1965

This period of artwork was developed from the perspective of developing a synthesis between painting, sculpture, and drawing, to create Intaglio prints in the Iowa " Print Group " Workshop. My teacher, Professor Mauricio Lasansky, had a great influence upon me and my personal development as an artist, and as a printmaker. It was in my drawing and printmaking that I attempted to continue the evolution of the visual language, by extending its syntax as it relates to illusionistic and non-illusionistic presentations, and as it relates to its evolution from the past to the present.

During this period, my artworks were representational. The visual concepts of image-ground, and the bi-dimensional surface, line-masses, and light-value tones, contour lines, and sketchy textures influenced my creative process. Some of the artists, whose artworks influenced my creative process, included Antonio Pollaiuolo, Martin Schongauer, Albrecht Dürer, Andrea Mantegna, Hendrix Goltzius, Hendrik Goudt, Rembrandt VAN Rijn, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

TRANSITIONAL ARTWORKS: My artwork, developed during the period from 1965-1968, evolved (from representational) to non-represent-

stational in visual form. My prints (black and white, copper plate burin engravings) focus on visual and optical interplays between planes in a given visual field. This idea of a visual field was critical to my realizing my artistic intent, which was grounded upon the foundation of " Op Art," and governed by my personal ideas the the creator's hand must be completely disguised in the completed artwork. Incidentally, I was successful in having approximately fifteen (15) prints, from this series, accepted in National Print exhibitions.

During this transitional phase (1965-1968) I used my \$2,500 savings to journey to Italy and study Italian art. This study included visits to Assisi, Orvieto, Florence, Siena, Rome, etc. My imagination and creative energy was greatly inspired by my studies of architecture, sculpture and painting. Upon my return to America, I developed an " Installation," which I titled " Baroque Transformation, " which I displayed in a One-person exhibition at Lehigh University in 1970 (Bethlehem, Pa.), and also in New York City in a one person exhibition at the Acts of Art Gallery in 1971. This Installation is part sculpture and part painting, and it cost me approximately \$1,500 dollars to construct.

Baroque Transformation was modified, and it was presented at Webster University in 1982. It is now an environmental Installation, and it is designed to demonstrate how " environmental art (sculpture) employs the artist-performer, and viewer's seeing and performing. It is also designed to engage their sensibilities and experiences of the environment---by blending environmental presence and the visual phenomena generated by the artwork itself.

This past year I developed my second Installation. It was accepted as part of the Grand Center " First Night " St. Louis, City celebration. I proposed a sculpture installation for a window which was accepted and presented on New Year's Night. This Installation was titled: Dance/ A celebration of " Performance " in Art and Life. Note: The date of this presentation/December 31,1991.

PERIOD NUMBER TWO: 1968-1978

The second period of my artwork evolved during the Black Art movement here in America. This period marked a critical turning point in my career as a creative artist, and as a human being. For the next ten (10) years, I concentrated on a " cultural agenda" in my creative process. This was a sacrifice of my creative sensibilities, in one sense. However, I would do the same artwork today, if similar conditions existed here in America for blacks. In this evening of my professional career, I celebrate my decision to participate in the Black Art movement. My participation had many implications. Primarily, it meant that my artworks would be rejected by the mainstream etc. However, I am proud of these art-

Max Bense writes:

" Generative Aesthetics is analogous to generative grammar, insofar as it helps to formulate the principles of a grammatical schema---realization of an aesthetic structure. "

CYBERNETICS, ART AND IDEAS

My present artworks in engraving have evolved into new concerns for shapes, surfaces and textures. These artworks center, as visual forms, on the " employed " generative shape, and the operative processes of viewing the artwork itself, as object. However, the efficacy of my present artwork, as an engraver, is in the sensation projected---in terms of its density-field, as educed from the perception of the characteristic components of the shape(s) employed in the artworks.