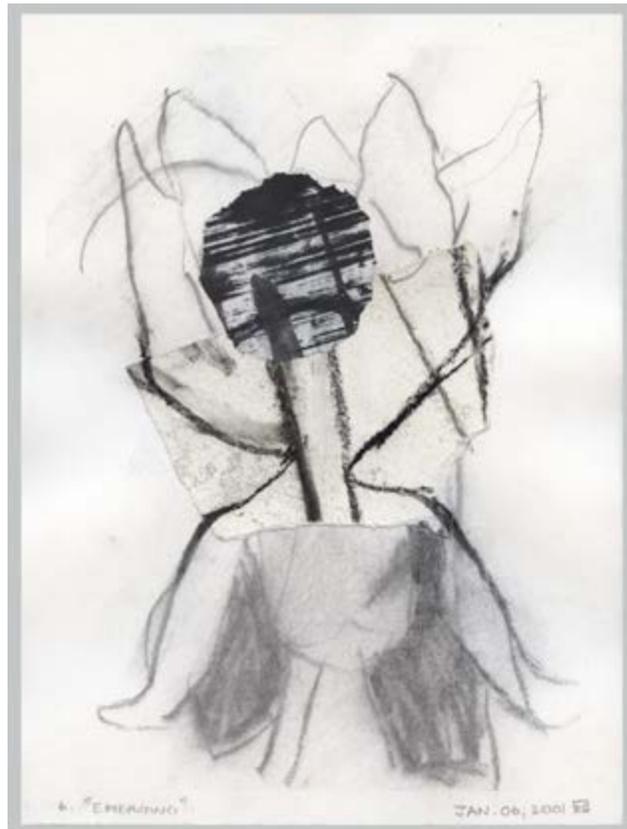


365

Visual Meditations

Helena Hadala · Deng Ming-Dao



2001—2002

#14. Positioning

Heron stands in the blue estuary,
Solitary, white, unmoving for hours.
A fish! Quick avian darting;
The prey captured.

— Deng Ming-Dao



Positioning Jan 14, 2001 mixed media collage 10" x 7.5"
Helena Hadala

Concept:

Returning to Calgary from a residency at the Vermont Studio Centre, I had to change flights in Montreal. While waiting for my connecting flight, I set out to look for something to read. At the airport bookstore I discovered a modest paperback entitled *365 Tao: Daily Meditations* (Harper San Francisco) by author Deng Ming-Dao. I took an interest in Ming-Dao's book, as his ideas from a Taoist perspective were parallel to my own philosophical views and focus on Zen Buddhism. Ming-Dao weaves the wisdom of Taoism and everyday spirituality into contemporary Western life. Each daily entry begins with a one-word title, an aphorism providing the theme followed by insightful contemplation. The book's subject matter is structured in a chronological format and I thought it would lend itself ideally to a re-interpretation of its Taoist content in a visual genre. My project was based on a commitment to start one drawing a day for the year of 2001. All the drawings in the *365 Visual Meditations* series are a direct response to the corresponding daily poetic aphorisms in Ming-Dao's book.

Process:

I started the project on New Year's Day, January 1st, 2001. Each day, I would read the aphorism and accompanying text in Deng Ming Dao's book and then begin the drawing on the corresponding day of the year. The choice of small-scale format of consistent dimensions, (7.5 inches by 10 inches) allowed for the completion of each piece given the short time frame of one image per day.

The most important rule of the project was to start each new drawing on the corresponding day of the year but it did not have to be completed on that day. On some days, the resolution of an image would be immediate; but occasionally, several days were required to resolve the drawing. To fulfill the obligation to start one image each day, on several trips away from my studio during the year of 2001, I carried Deng's book and my materials with me, even on a sea-kayaking trip to the West Coast. Fortunately, I managed to complete all the works and did not miss a single day during the entire yearlong process.

The indirect nature of the collage technique was an ideal media for the intuitive approach to creating the imagery in response to the words. Each image is composed by layering direct drawing techniques with various collage papers collected from recycled drawings, prints and occasionally, digital imagery. It was very cathartic, in keeping with the cyclical theme of the project to tear up my old discarded works in various mediums and use the fragments to make new images. The table and adjacent drawers in my studio are full of potential collage papers with a variety of marks in different media, colours, and textures.

After the initial reading and contemplation of the text, I would make the first direct marks. Then, subsequent layers were applied and could be manipulated, moved, changed and even reversed if necessary to bring the image to resolution. Every aspect of the images communicates information. Structure, quality and character of line, movement, tone, colour and placement are all constituents of visual language and key to the poetic interpretation of each piece. With each drawing, my intention was to create a complimentary link to the word, to assimilate its meaning, and to convey my visual interpretation of that word.

The entire project was displayed at the Nickle Arts Museum, Calgary, in 2002 as an exhibition fulfilling the visual component for my Master of Fine Arts thesis program at the University of Calgary. Mounting the 365 Visual Meditations on a 70-foot wall in chronological order necessitated the layout to be 53 rows wide and 7 high. After installing the drawings for this exhibition, I was surprised at the imposing scale of the work. Seeing the work as an installation shifted the focus from the individual images based on each day of the year to that of a unified singular piece representing the chronological manifestation of an entire year enhancing the abstract notion of time.



#178 · Childhood · June 27, 2001 Mixed Media on Rag



#92 · Accuracy · April 02, 2001 Mixed Media on Rag



#182 · Flow · July 1, 2001 Mixed Media on Rag



#284 · Environment · Oct 11, 2001 Mixed Media on Rag



365 Visual Meditations · 2001 · The Nickle Arts Museum at the University of Calgary · 14 ft x 70 ft (4.3m x 21.5m)



Installation Detail



Installation Detail

Four Seasons Installation Concept:

I would like to exhibit the 365 Visual Meditation series in a new installation configuration entitled Four Seasons. The drawings would be arranged on four equal-sided walls, one wall for each season. Four revolving doors that thematically represent each season would add a sculptural component to the installation. These doors were exhibited in a previous group exhibition entitled Three Definitions of the Sublime at the Triangle Gallery of Visual Arts in Calgary. The revolving two-sided doors are inspired by traditional Tibetan prayer wheels and represent portals for each season of the year, March, July, October and January.



Preparing the framework for the revolving doors



March, July, October and January · 2006-2007 · Side 1 Oil, Mixed Media on door



March, July, October and January · 2006-2007 · Side 2 Oil, Mixed Media on door

