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Tangible Transformation: Change in Intangible Times

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Tangible Transformation: Change in Intangible Times

by

Rhonda R. Dass, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

In

Art

Minnesota State University, Mankato

Mankato, Minnesota

March 2022

Tangible Transformation: Change in Intangible Times

Rhonda R. Dass, PhD

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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Master of Arts in Art

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY, MANKATO
MANKATO, MINNESOTA
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ABSTRACT

Pulling the intangible cloud to the forefront, this exhibition transforms the ethereal image of the cloud into the tangible paper and canvas representations that flirt between what is and what can be. I combine techniques from drawing, painting, and papermaking, to create clouds that leave the heavens and solidify and yet spark the imagination in new directions. Presented as my thesis exhibition, my exploration of the ever-shifting cloud scape helps express my understandings in and about a transforming world of change.

Two years ago, when the world turned sideways, I was in the middle of a series of paintings and drawings of artists. I found that the people in my world were too precious to place front and center for the world to destroy. I chose to hide them away and protect them. And I searched for something that would spark joy for me in what seemed like a bleak and hopeless world. One day as I was isolating after a second exposure, I escaped for a drive alone across the prairie. And there, laid out before me, the clouds danced across the skyline twirling and shifting as if performing just for my entertainment. It made me smile. Pulling from art history and tattooing, I have stylized clouds that step away from the sky and move toward the tangible.

Mixing drawing and painting, I shift the cloud scapes into a new perspective that develops as the viewer approaches the work. My canvases are a view from above the clouds that make the viewer question their understanding of a cloud in the series of Cloud Nine. The small versions are the beginning of a set called Cloud Mine that brings the work down to the individual cloud, allowing for the work to be more accessible.

The hanging cloud scape allowed an additional exploration into paper making. I took student papers, shredded them, and repurposed them into the raw material for creating

paper cloud forms. This river of clouds became the base for various quotes on clouds that cast their shadows over my other works.

The cloud sourced work in progress is a way to bring my two worlds together. I know that I have several students and colleagues who may see my show at the University, and I want to bring them into the work as well. Applying my experiential teaching approach to my art work, I am asking those who visit the show to create a cloud from the paper forms I have provided, that I can then turn into various cloud scapes.

Behind every cloud is another cloud...