

# **arbora versa**

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## JERRY PETHICK

*Working on these arrays, watching the space form and grow gradually with each lens that is added, gives a sense of controlling the aperture of space and its peripheral dimension. – J.P.*

*Wheelbarrow/Cabin*, Jerry Pethick's two-part piece in this exhibition, is one of a series of works he has produced that combine Fresnel lenses, photographs, and sculptural material into objects that contain elements of both the two-dimensional and three-dimensional worlds. Pethick's statement above guides us toward an understanding of a work that defies all efforts to be photographed in a way that allows the reader to see the image. An example of this is provided by the accompanying illustrations— the image of the cabin reproduced on page 37 is essentially the same image that we see by looking at the grid of lenses. Yet this is only very partially revealed in the reproduction on page 35, in which the tree standing behind the cabin may be barely detected in the upper half of the lens complex.

In the wall-unit part of the work, Pethick has mounted the lenses directly in front of the photographs. Each lens is aimed at a slightly different part of each photo, and focused on only a small portion of it. Although the photographs appear to be exactly alike, they are not— each one is part of a *scan* of the scene, similar to the way in which a stereoscopic image is shot from two slightly different angles. Here the process covers approximately a hundred different angles. The lenses use a kind of insect-like vision to reconstruct the photograph in a low fidelity view of the scene that Pethick has chosen. The net result is an approximation of the eye's creation of a whole image from fragments of visual information. Pethick has sought to recreate the seamless quality of the world as we picture it at the neurological level.

Pethick's image recreations though, are in fact the opposite of a stereoscopic construction. One of the key research elements in these works refers to the Cézannian program of flattening the picture plane through the creation of a pseudoscopic image. This anti-perspectival effect, resulting from the cancellation of the viewer's ability to read the image using binary vision, takes the idea of flattening the picture plane back to the perceptual experience of the pre-Renaissance period.

The following text fragments describing this series of works has been compiled from notes Jerry Pethick has made over the past year:

"The space arrays provide the opportunity to include the reality of selected landscape spaces which may then be transformed, as nature, into sculptural constructs extending the installation to include another world, reorganized as space. The spatial element has always been for me a means to extend some direct rapport with material density and presence. If it is not possible to alter gravity, then perhaps spatial reconstructions can attempt to equalize the overpowering presence of material itself and create another set of relationships.

"Perceptions of dimensional imaging — they have always simulated a different world than the one I inhabit. When considering dimensional imagery we are talking about illusory reconstruction.....we judge perceiving in terms of the *resolution* that we equate with the real environment we breathe in.....The difference in appearance, when evaluating fidelity or the quality of the illusion, has a symbiotic relation with the illusory space through which it is perceived.

"It is a complete world sustained by its own space, light and structure. These structures give you an indication of spatial relationships not encountered before, a situation you are not conditioned to expect —the quality of vision itself.....The clarity and tactility of space itself is portrayed....The material, and the way it is used, must echo or resonate with this new space and also to respond to a resolution-based vision.....The paradoxical nature of a dedensified object and the increased tangibility of space, create for me a fluctuating binary pattern that can be modified, tampered with.....In the mind's eye, this realm is not unlike the two different pieces of flat visual information required for the coherence of dimensional vision.

"The simple existence of fly's eye lens reconstruction being viewed in the manner of ordinary perception allows the specialized viewing of sculptural form to be further absorbed into the inclusive dreamlike reality of integral imaging. "

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It takes many works of art to produce a body of work, many images to produce an overall image of what an artist is thinking. In Jerry Pethick's photo-sculptures it requires many images to make a single image, as if he has codified the 'body of work' concept into each work — reminding us that each work has, in its deconstructed form, an array of images leading to its meaning.



Jeffries, Bill. "Jerry Pethick." *arbora versa*. Vancouver, BC: Contemporary Art Gallery. 1991, p. 32-37.