

LESLIE BOSTROM

Mixed Messages & Other Confusions



Repentant Bill 60" x 84", 1999

Mixed Messages & Other Confusions

November 18, 2000 – January 7, 2001

Artist's Statement

I'm an opportunist and a pragmatist as a painter and printmaker. I borrow liberally from art history, contemporary theory, mass media, and cartoons. I have taken the idea of a socially constructed body out of context in order literally to construct bodies. Employing the cartoon-like "big head" look and often conflating the body into the head, I mix up features of anatomy, codes of gender, and other identity markers to "construct" absurd characters. I intend these pieces to be anti-nudes—a repudiation of ideal form. Into these head/bodies I draw and paint personalities, gender politics, and sexualities.

A good book tells a gripping story. It keeps you reading to the end immersed in a sequence of events told in compelling language. Similarly, a good picture seduces the viewer to stop and look—to laugh, to wonder, to admire. It can be minimal like a Robert Ryman, or maximal like an Elizabeth Murray, but either way, arrested in the paint will be an intelligent and entertaining narrative about both process and idea. The painting is not a moment frozen, like a photograph. It's a record of hours, days, even years of accumulation of painterly sludge. Because a picture does not depend on a sequential structure, like a film, the narrative is open-ended. It's an idea that builds and changes in the eye and mind of the viewer.

Some of my work refers to topical subjects, such as the Monica and Bill story, or to queer or feminist issues. I thought of Monica and Bill as a country-western saga, complete with the long-suffering wife. Hence "blue" Monica and "repentant" Bill, icons to narcissism and hypocrisy. *Yup, She's a Brainy Gal* is a parody of the Cubist and Surrealist depiction of women, the "cubist" head packed with brains with a hairstyle lifted from Magritte's *The Rape*.

The latest works are the *Brick Smiles*. All the smiles are from fashion magazines, where they were carefully constructed to convey happiness and enthusiasm to the eager and anxious heterosexual female consumer. I wanted to re-construct them in bricks, freezing them and



exposing their blatant falsehood. In the same series, I tried some other expressions in bricks, building on the previous work about "expressionism," playing again with the doubling of facial expressions with my "expression" as an artist.

In many of my recent works I am playing with double meanings, the meshing of contradictory truths. *Onslaught*, *Twin Towers of Expressionism*, *Mixed Messages*, and *Oh No* are an exploration of literal "expression of emotion" and an ironic comment on the artist "expressing" herself in paint. The eyes and mouths are painted from illustrations of expressions in anatomy books for artists. The hands in *Mixed Messages* are another example of "obvious" communication undermined by conflicting signals. My work is full of sloppy emotion and uncool notions. I create awkward moments: humorous and embarrassing situations, intellectual jokes, bodily betrayal, and clumsy anger. I intend my work to be physically and psychologically opulent. I want to move my audience, make them feel and think, and compel them to re-discover their love of painting, of pictures, of prints. I want them to guffaw. I want to knock their socks off. I want to knock them into the middle of next week. I want them to remember.

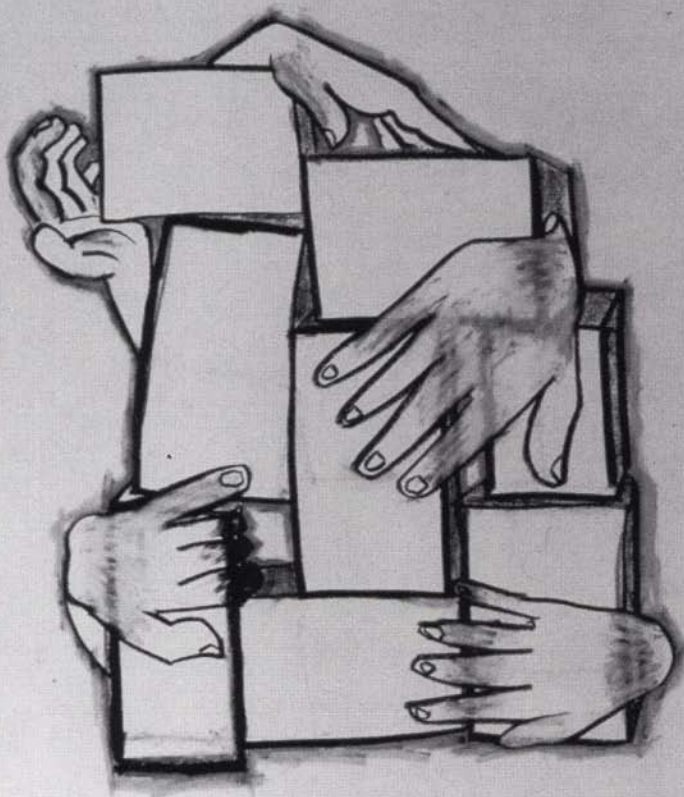
Leslie Bostrom
November 2000

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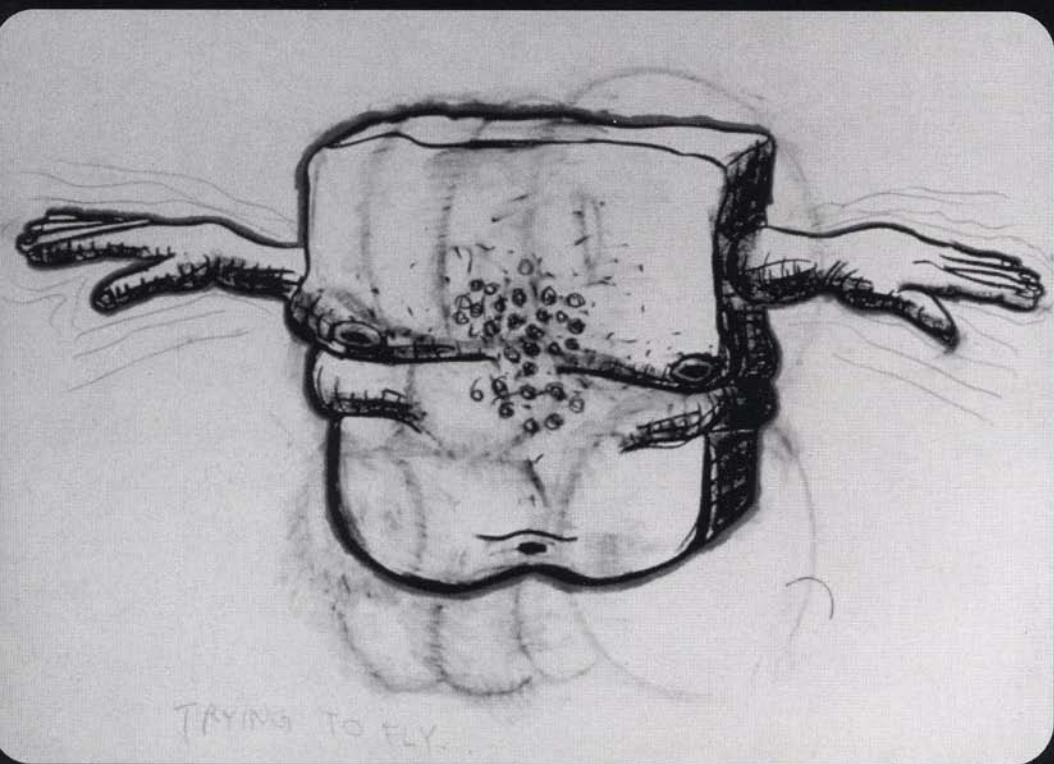




TRYING TO HOLD IT UP, IN, TOGETHER

LB '77

Holding it up, in, Together 41" x 29", 1999



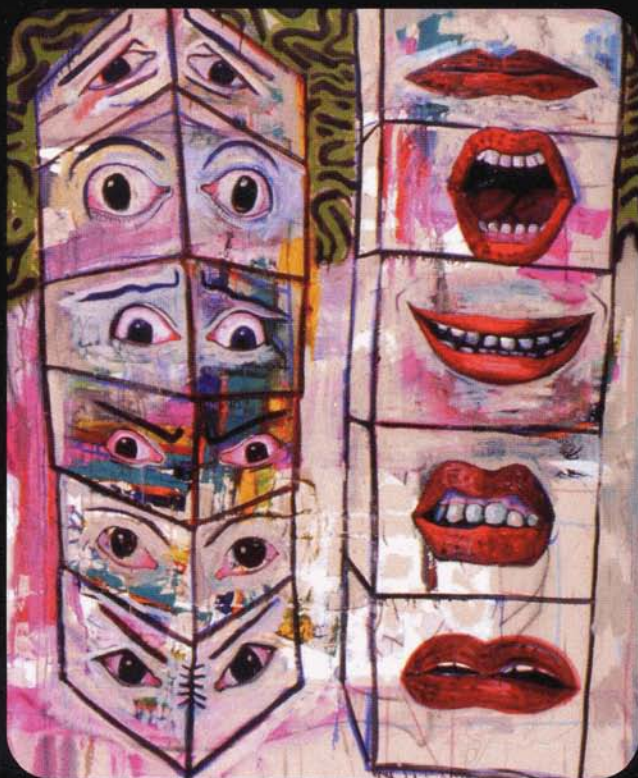
Trying & Flying (Male) 29" x 41", 1999



Blue Monica 68" x 82", 1999



Mixed Messages 78" x 105", 1993



Twin Towers of Expressionism 82' x 68', 1998