

THE UNDOING OF THE SELF: AN ARTISTIC EXPLORATION

Valerie A. Wedel

James H. Calvin, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This creative research investigated the nature of interpersonal relationships through the lens of Theravada Buddhism and took the form of interactive video, performance and installation. Tangible materials, video projections and bodily movements were employed in the works to manipulate viewers so they could observe their relationship to the material world, to themselves and to others. The performances were collaborative opportunities for all participants to step outside normal behavior patterns and observe barriers to self-understanding. This research purposely blurred boundaries between artist, viewers and artwork so that viewers became participants and interactors as well as observers. This process allowed the following specific issues to be explored: identity, self vs. other, desire vs. aversion and personal boundaries. The work encouraged participants to mine this content for information about personal psychological states in order that they may better know and accept themselves. They were encouraged to embrace the notion of undoing the self in order to function in this world with a heightened sense of grace.