

Jennifer Pastor The Perfect Ride

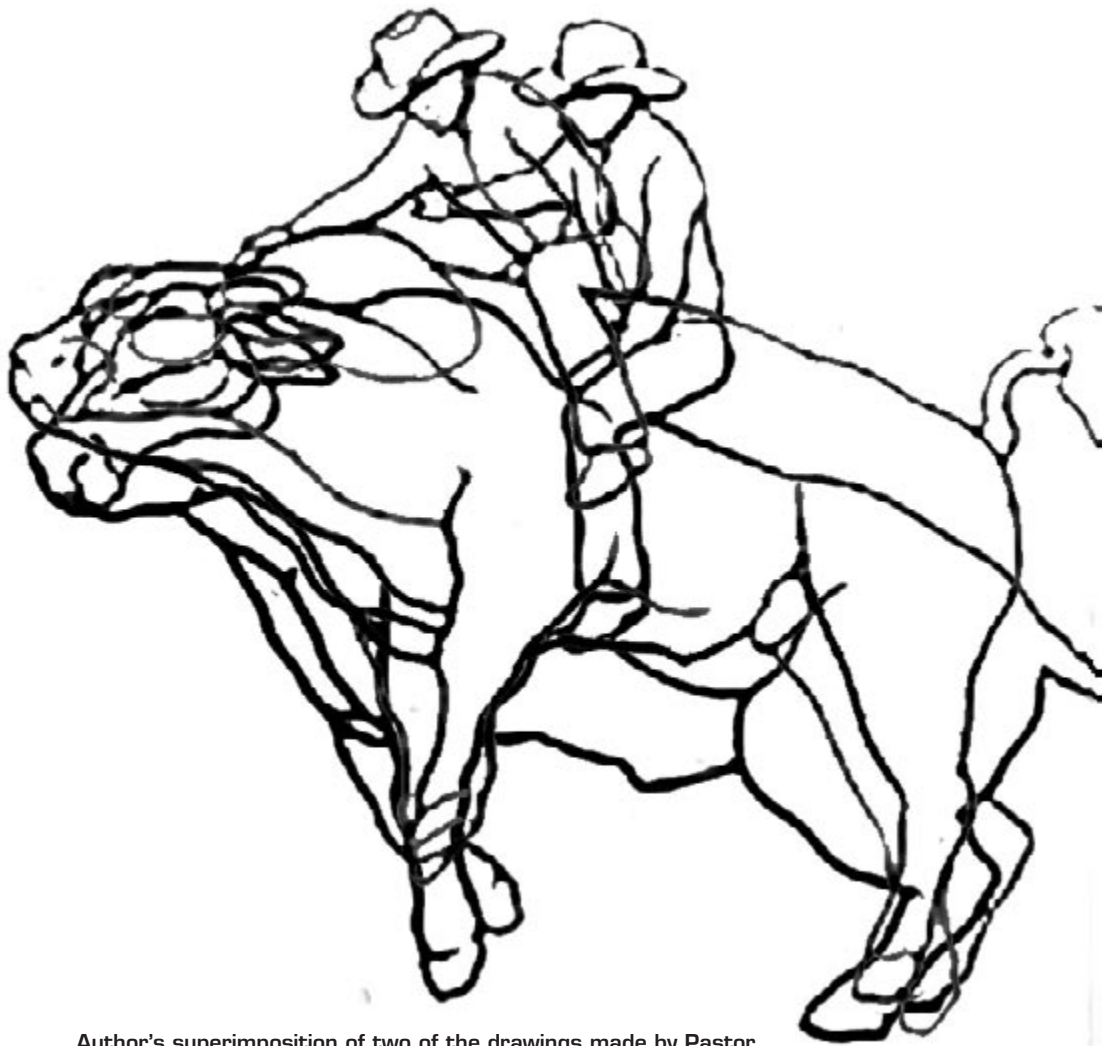


The Perfect Ride, 2003. Steel, aluminum and plastic. 102 x 108 x 153 in (259.1 x 274.3 x 388.6 cm)

When one experiences Jennifer Pastor's installation *The Perfect Ride* one is puzzled. On the one hand there is a strange sculptural configuration that does not appear to represent anything in particular. And on the other hand there is an animated film of a rodeo rider. But this is a work that stretches metaphor and narrative to its limits and in so doing it provides a rare window into creative process.

The background to *The Perfect Ride* lies in another discarded project which was to be based on the structures built by craftspersons for State trade fairs in the US. Pastor attended many such fairs and spoke to the people concerned and became increasingly depressed about the validity of the project, the subject seemed so unremittingly functional. Her frustration built to fever pitch until one night in her hotel she watched a rodeo on cable TV and was struck by the peculiar sculpturality of the bull's movements. She reports that the 'bull became a single moving point like a spirograph' (Pastor 2005). But a moving point describes a line and then a plane and then a complex of interpenetrating surfaces. As she watched closer she saw that the bull's movements were so rapid and chaotic that they blurred the distinction between figure and ground: a phenomenon of particular interest to Pastor because it reminded her of her experience of seeing the Hoover Dam.

If we move away from the animated film aspect of *The Perfect Ride* and turn to its sculptural centrepiece, what we find



Author's superimposition of two of the drawings made by Pastor for the rodeo animation aspect of her *Perfect Ride* installation. The superposition serves to indicate the blurring of spatial boundaries arising out of a frenetically moving form which appealed to Pastor when watching a rodeo on television.

is a remarkable interpretation of the Hoover Dam. Remarkable because of its extreme abstraction. The artist's intention is not to represent the architecture of the dam but rather the interrelationship between the gushing torrent of water and the way in which that is transmuted by the Duchamp-like (i.e. *The Large Glass*) apparatus of the dam. I mention *The Large Glass*, 1915–1923, because it was Duchamp's attempt to represent a fourth dimension of space (Henderson 1998) and I think that Pastor achieves something similar in *The Perfect Ride* via her intertwining of space and time.

The dam apparatus is also strangely sexual (a 'desiring machine?'), and this intuition is supported by other sculptural pieces by Pastor that emphasise a burgeoning ripeness and readiness of natural forms. A similar intersection of force and form is evident in her interpretation of the interrelationship between rushing water and the concrete walls and conduits. Pastor explains that rather than being a representation of the dam her interpretation is 'about fluid embedment' (Pastor 2005) which is to say a nestling of one form and/or force within another.

But the poetic moment in *The Perfect Ride* comes when we focus with Pastor onto the interrelationship between the flux of the water rushing through the dam and the frenetic motion of the rodeo bull. She notes that the 'relation of the bull to the ground is like the relationship of the dam to its surroundings' (Pastor 2005) both are in movement, both are 'alive' and interconnected like a body of organs.

Her artistic problem was to reveal this interrelationship in a work of art and her solution was to create an installation, in

spite of the fact that she sees herself as a sculptor rather than as an 'installation artist'.

In the installation the two aspects are shown without explanation, as with many artists working today the ball is in the viewer's court. It is almost as though the artist is trying to force the viewer into making a similar conceptual leap to the one that gave birth to the work.