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Art As An Encounter: A Personal View

Jeffrey V. Freeman

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ART AS AN ENCOUNTER: A PERSONAL VIEW

by
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Bachelor of Science, Moorhead State College 1970

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

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This thesis submitted by Jeffrey V. Freeman in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts from the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an attempt to establish some insight into my personal aesthetic and creative philosophy as it relates to the metaphysical world I perceive. It will bring out points which I consider relevant and will give reference to the role that various past influences have had.

This thesis also will attempt to show examples of the chain of events in which my present work evolves from my past work. Since my viewpoints are constantly bombarded by new and various stimuli my endeavors continuously try to deal with those factors.

INTRODUCTION

Artists are a group of individuals who feel a need to express, in their own unique way, their reactions and thoughts about the occurrences they come in contact with. Most are motivated, I feel, by the fact that something needs to be said that hasn't been said before.

Recent trends in art such as earthworks, happenings, minimal art, and media-oriented art such as video-tape experimentation, brought to the forefront by the public demand for novelty and by the increase in technology have expanded art to its intellectual limits, however, and it now appears as if a further redefinition of art is impossible. As far as novelty is concerned the only area left is in further application of technology to art; although, as Barbara Rose has said,

For, once instant communication makes sources available to many at the same time, the viable alternatives present themselves simultaneously to a group of artists rather than to a single individual. As in simultaneous discoveries in science, it becomes inevitable that more than one individual is capable of arriving at a satisfactory solution given the available data. This appears in many ways to characterize the current situation.¹

It has been the object of my artistic endeavors to seek some place of constancy in life and some means of getting there while at the same time providing, for my fellow man, some tangible product that

¹Barbara Rose, "Quality in Louis," Artforum, October, 1971, p. 65.

signifies the efforts of this search. With the novelty of imminent new discoveries about the nature of aesthetics permeating the already existing creative environment my art is not involved with a redefinition of art in terms of tangible, plastic elements but with using those elements to reach into a greater reality--to suggest the presence of something not seen.

The technique I am using involves active participation in the studio with painting as the primary mode of discovery. The work itself involves physically the use of acrylic stains and various cube-like shapes on canvas; and, in a more important sense, the absorption of the consciousness into total involvement with the creative act.

CHAPTER I

CREATIVE AND AESTHETIC PHILOSOPHY

I feel that the creative process involves not merely making an object but attainment of a state of mind. In this way the artist attains some sort of insight into that which is unknown about what he experiences through normal sensory means. In the practice of Zen the attainment of this state is called satori and, in philosophical actuality, is only unknown when it is unrecognized. The experience of satori can be found in any relationship or situation. It is this mystic state of unity (mystic because it isn't common?) that I try to find or sense, in my art. It results in the experiencing of the relationship which things have with each other, but also must include the relationship of the experiencer. Art is a discipline--and through it I'm able to experience various truths about the world and existence on both a symbolic and a real level.

The satori experience does not mean that everything that happens will be a revelation. There will often be times when things will seem quite ordinary and any type of deep significance will elude you. For example, the changing of a flat tire may or may not allow you to see some special "element of truth" in this simple act. However, you may later realize that having performed that act, along with thousands of others like it, is an integral part of a discipline involving the forming of patience. The mystic experience itself is not

a state of mind, but rather an open receptive attitude making the satori experience that much more readily available as the play of elements and experiences work on the open mind.

To enjoy, to even love what you are doing in painting is not enough to enable one to see into the void that is the mystical experience. A mental discipline is also needed. This doesn't mean merely an ability to make your own ideas clear, or to clearly interpret the ideas of others, but it encompasses freeing yourself of habitual response to the elements of experience. It is "A discipline involving the emotions and their intimate connection with things spiritual."¹

Various segments of life (as most people see them) are the product of identification. That is, the nature of the self adopts certain objects, phrases, or mannerisms to stand as symbols of that self. When people see these mannerisms that an individual has adopted they can form an opinion as to whether or not they will "like" the individual. They will base a like or dislike on their own preconceived stereotyped view of that particular person. This can block the opportunity to respond to each other as people. In art this process also functions. Art observers and artists alike utilize image recall when they see certain shapes. However, to make a new use of a shape is what makes it a valid work of art--that is, to redefine content by tracing it to its source.

Personal insight achieves this end, but this still does not constitute the satori experience. As Clement Greenburg said in regard to the qualities of successful art in producing reactions, "You acquire

¹Allen I. Ludwig, Graven Images (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1966), p. 49.

an appetite not just for the disconcerting but for the state of being disconcerted."¹

If you recognize something in the creative process and go on with that thought you are not within the realm of the present but are holding on to a conceptualized segment of life which you are sure is right. That is, you have "decided what you know" and then proceed to prove it. However, the very act of mentally defining something involves sufficient proof of its truth; and to afterwards perform an act to prove it is, in fact, redundant and proves nothing. It is simply reinforcing one's own self image, saying in effect, "I said that!" when actually you only saw that. The identification process is one which sets man trying to define himself by circumstances external to his very being.

With each painting there is involved a new encounter on both physical and spiritual levels, and I must learn something from each encounter or it would be foolish to continue, although what I learn doesn't always make itself apparent as I finish each work. Art has been a source of enlightenment for me, not so much as a "symbol of culture" or as a "diploma of ability" but as a means of personal involvement and philosophical or religious contemplation.

What I do in the act of painting is a reflection of my experiences and, to some extent, what I am experiencing as I engage in the act of painting. Rosenberg has said,

The painter no longer approached the easel with an image in mind; he went up to it with material in his hand to do

¹Clement Greenburg, "Problems of Criticism," Part II, Artforum, October, 1967, p. 39.

something to that other piece of material in front of him. The image would be the result of that encounter.¹

Painting has been a source of insight for me as my involvement with my art has served as a microcosm of my involvement with other aspects of life. While I'm painting I'm intensely active in making a statement in visual terms. Sometimes things go well and sometimes poorly; in the end the quality or non-quality is the result of all the relationships and interactions between the artist, the paint, the canvas, his subject matter, time, physical stance and much more. Brushstrokes, for instance, can have a quality which is consistent or inconsistent with what is basic to the painting; or, shapes and forms and their positioning can be vital in a painting. To be aware of each of the many varied elements in a painting is not possible except within the context of the painting as a whole and to separate elements as to their function is to isolate them. This is a design consciousness which is important but is only a portion of the discipline involved in a significant painting act. That a certain group of shapes stretch out and seemingly shelter other shapes can be suggested by shape placement. Manipulation of the material being used will naturally come more easily with practice and this mere facility should not be relied on. Facility should not be ignored, but a painting should be more than a mere "showcase of ability."

When the painting is finished its personal impact becomes less and less active to me. After a period of time all that finally remains is the impression which the time spent painting it and the canvas itself

¹Harold Rosenberg, "The American Action Painters," New York Painting and Sculpture, 1940-1970, ed. by Henry Geldzahler (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1969), p. 342.

have both helped evolve. During the course of time what was once a noble effort in the long run shrinks to insignificance being subdued by other factors of more immediate importance. All these things combine to change my work by their having been present in my life. After years of painting you naturally learn to manipulate a brush better and respond to color. It's not something you decide to do, although a conscientiously applied effort to learn those things will be a strong factor in what you do learn. It's like the difference in what you know at age ten and at age thirty. You couldn't know what those last twenty years had for you without living them. You don't even need to be alert during those twenty years to know what the present culmination of that history is, although being alert would obviously yield more fruitful possibilities for that period. "The real flower is enjoyed when the poet-artist lives with it, in it; and even a sense of identity is no longer there, much less the eternal tranquility."¹ What you know after living those years is actually the sum total of what you are in the present. You don't have to remember the good acts you did, whether in painting or in other acts of life, in order to recognize your own inherent goodness. Using the memory for that reason is more a matter of historically justifying one's present actions rather than enjoying what one's environment can yield when he is free of the external pressures brought on by identity. A man shouldn't have to continuously look in a mirror to find out what kind of person he is. All he would be looking at is an image of himself, but not at the substance that makes him what he is.

¹D. T. Suzuki, Zen and Japanese Culture (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959), p. 354.

In the same way, in painting you don't have to remember how to achieve a certain effect. If you have previously involved yourself with technique it will make itself apparent as the circumstances demand. This in turn is, fundamentally, how to make an advancement, either personally or aesthetically though the terms need not be separate. Suzuki says,

To keep up the supply of information in the memory, the mind-body must continue to act on its own. It must not cling to its own record. There must be a lag or distance between the source of information and the source of action. This doesn't mean that the source of action must hesitate before it accepts the information. It means that it must not identify itself with the source of information.¹

By merely stepping out on the pretense that an active response to a stimulus will yield results one gets caught up in the events that occur and ends up filling in his part in order to make it all work.

The idea of role in painting is very important to me. The role a painting plays for me as I'm painting it is different than the one it will serve when I'm finished. This difference is dictated by my relationship with the painting in terms of the time, effort, and direction of attention involved, both while I'm painting and after I'm finished. In the creative process my concern is mostly with the basic elements of design such as line, shape, color, form, texture, etc., and not with content or the meaning my work will have. The meaning will be evidenced by the result of the creative process. When painting, I'm learning about response and interaction of shapes and colors. While each brushstroke or shape has a function for me while I'm doing it, after a work is finished those elements as a unit give way to the painting as a unit in evoking a response.

¹Ibid., p. 138.

The artist

. . . creates in an environment not of people but of functions. His paintings are employed, not wanted. The public for whose edification he is periodically trotted out accepts the choices made for it as phenomena of the Age of Queer Things.¹

Thus, the artist sees the work as a part of his life for a time but more and more learns to accept it as an element whose function is to decorate. Overall, he is left with an impression from having created it. A person cannot help being what he is and the meaning his work has will be the result of his involvement with it and with his past. He can only use what he is (the present and the actions done in it) as a means of becoming (a better person or at least different in the future).

The realization of the artist-object relationships mentioned above is primarily due to reflection. While one may be able to intellectually acknowledge the causes and effects of a satori experience that ability does not make satori any more readily available and preoccupation with the intellect can prevent the mystic experience from happening. The role of the satori experience is of the essence of the circumstances. As the Zen swordsman Takuan said,

In the case of swordsmanship, for instance, when the opponent tries to strike you, your eyes at once catch the movement of his sword and you may strive to follow it. But as soon as this takes place, you cease to be master of yourself and are sure to be beaten. This is called "stopping" . . . As soon as the mind "stops" with an object of whatever nature--be it the opponent's sword or your own, the man himself bent on striking or the sword in his hands, the mode or the measure of the move--you cease to be master of yourself and are sure to fall a victim to the enemy's sword.²

¹Rosenburg, op. cit., p. 349.

²Takuan quoted by D. T. Suzuki, op.cit., pp. 95-96.

An artist can consciously decide what to put in his work so that it will have significance, but if the artist can't or doesn't identify with an image or series of images it will be more likely to evoke a response that he had not realized before. "Mysticism is first of all a method of behavior rather than a series of comprehensible propositions knitted together by the mind into a system."¹ The method of behavior doesn't take into account prior events but is because of them. Patience is needed for satori to be attained. When one realizes that it is necessary for events to happen before they can have significance one doesn't alter the perception of their occurrence (which is also an event) by hurrying to find it or going too slow, mistaking laziness for appropriateness.

Men are afraid to forget their own minds, fearing to fall through the void with nothing on to which they can cling. They do not know that the void is not really the void but the real realm of the Dharma . . . It cannot be looked for or sought, comprehended by wisdom or knowledge, explained in words, contacted materially, (i.e. objectively) or reached by meritorious achievement.²

Suzuki, when writing about swordsmanship and the practice of Zen said of it,

An idea, however worthy and desirable in itself, becomes a disease when the mind is obsessed with it. The diseases and obsessions a swordsman has to get rid of are: (1) the desire for victory, (2) the desire to resort to technical cunning, (3) the desire to display all that he has learned, (4) the desire to overawe the enemy, (5) the desire to play a passive role, and lastly, (6) the desire to get rid of whatever disease he is likely to be infected with.³

¹Allen I. Ludwig, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

²Alan Watts, The Way of Zen (New York: Pantheon Books, 1957), p. 141.

³D. T. Suzuki, op. cit., pp. 153-154.

These things also apply to art as all of them are obstacles to reaching into the part of the self that is universal to all things. They are an intellectual insulation which shelters a person from confronting that universal element in himself while involved in a supposedly creative act. The desire to play a passive role is to let circumstances ride rough shod over you while the second, third, and fourth items have the artist imposing on the circumstances what he thinks are his finest points setting up definite "how-to" methods for victory. The desire for victory and the desire to get rid of whatever disease one is infected with are the source of all other desires.

When you are concerned about these two desires you are too concerned about how you look to yourself and to others to grasp the suchness of any situation. This "suchness" can also be described as being numinous, meaning a symbolic manifestation felt outside the self of a nature so as to be called mysterious.

Thinking is useful in many ways, but there are occasions when thinking interferes with the work, and you have to leave it behind and let the unconscious come forward. In such cases, you cease to be your own conscious master but become an instrument of the unknown. The unknown has no ego-consciousness and consequently no thought of winning the contest, because it moves at the level of non-duality, where there is neither subject nor object. It is for this reason that the sword moves where it ought to move and the contest ends victoriously.¹

Various paintings will function in various ways. This is also true of the act of making them. Some paintings will go at a frantic pace and others slowly. To this degree then the artist must be adaptable to what the circumstances demand. For his painting to reach the highest goal he must work to transcend the physical material world

¹D. T. Suzuki, op.cit., p. 133.

and live in the void of the so-called "cosmic consciousness." In painting a certain amount of developmental time is needed for the elements of form and content to achieve functional togetherness. Obviously, an entire painting can't be completed in a fraction of a second. If the technical and aesthetic approach to a painting is vigorous the only way to continue in that vein is by sustained and actual physically vigorous brushwork. In my painting I can't stand back and analyze how I achieved a certain effect and then try to do it. This amounts to that conceptualized plateau mentioned previously where you "decide what you know" and then prove it. What a person says he knows is one thing but what he actually knows will become evident by his actions. An artist doesn't have to continuously paint vigorously if he started that way. He can incorporate a slower, less energetic brushwork in his painting if that's what he has to say. The main thing is to be free from conceptualizations so the spirit can take over. As Alan Watts has said, ". . . there can be no doubt that the essential standpoint of Zen refuses to be organized, or to be made the exclusive possession of any institution."¹ He also said of Zen analysts, "I have associated and studied with the objective observers' and am convinced that, for all their virtues, they invariably miss the point and eat the menu instead of the dinner."²

By this same token, you can't really choose your subject matter. Some things will have an attraction to you and others won't. You will like what you like, not needing a reason for your choice other than it

¹Alan Watts, op.cit., p. xiv.

²Alan Watts, op.cit., p. xiii.

is right for you. Your usage of subject matter or imagery may have some symbolic meaning to you but you don't need to know what that symbolism means. That would involve a plateau again. What an image really means to you is best explained by its very being or suchness. For an artist to function with his subject matter he must continually know what it is and accept it as one that never exists again in the same way. This relationship is best shown by the Zenrin poem,

The wild geese do not intend to cast
their reflection;
The water has no mind to receive
their image.¹

This reflects a world of "suchness" where things merely are; being in harmony because there is no thought of not being in harmony. A unity is felt, not like the past pushing but like the future pulling. No fear of what isn't seen; just satisfaction with what is. When I spend a great deal of time on my art it becomes more recognizable not as a way of life but as life itself. The goal I have in my life is to do away with the distinction between them. This involves being in a receptive state of mind where thoughts can be seen but not grasped; only recognized as they pass through the mind; a realization that thought is external to being. Where the source of all information is acknowledged reverently, with humility, by appropriate response.

. . . the difference between forcing and growing cannot be expressed in terms of specific directions as to what should or should not be done, for the difference lies primarily in the quality and the feeling of the action.²

¹D. T. Suzuki, op.cit., p. 181.

²Ibid., p. 177.

Be aware of your glory and honor;
But in never relinquishing shame,
You should be to the world like a valley,
Where virtue eternal, sufficient
Sends you back to the Virginal Block.¹

By striving for the attitude of receptiveness you will achieve it but not in the way you had planned. For if you get there as you had planned to you would have conceptualized previously what you wanted the satori state to be like. It isn't something you can trap. It is merely justice.

¹Raymond B. Blakney, *The Way of Life, Lao-Tzu* (New York: Mentor Books, 1955), p. 80.

CHAPTER II

PAST INFLUENCES

In my development as an artist I found that the biggest problem for me was the transition of my ideas to physical actuality. I would lose much of the impact that I got from whatever inspired me when the artwork was finally completed. The problem of finding a pathway with which I could keep in touch with that inspiration as I was working was one of discipline as I would often be distracted either by an infatuation with technique or with concern over what the object looked like. Both seemed to be isolated from the feelings I had for the act of painting itself (which encompassed spontaneously both my reaction to the subject and the action involved in making an image).

During the years of development to my present artistic state there were five artists whose work and thoughts, I feel, influenced me substantially. These artists are Hans Hofmann, Robert Rauschenberg, Francis Bacon, Richard Lindner, and Morris Louis. There are many facets to their work, and some of these apply to my own endeavors.

The various physical characteristics of their work served as the catalyst in establishing my own creative momentum. However, I feel that their visual influence has only been manifested visibly in my work in minor ways; their major contribution was in educating, stimulating, and inspiring me. It is these aspects that I will attempt to bring to light.

The greatest influence on my work has been Hans Hofmann. Hofmann was a disciplinarian who felt that a good idea, unless it has a firm foundation of elementary art principles, doesn't necessarily mean that you will do good artwork. In an art endeavor of any kind you have to walk, so to speak, before you can run and the struggle with elementary principles at an early stage leads to a more natural incorporation of them later on. As Fritz Bultman said of Hofmann,

He believes that by the denial of forms one may effect quick, temporary results but only by the incorporation and understanding of the total art of the past is the artist able to change forms radically from within. Without this understanding of underlying forms there may be spurts that end in a gesture of defiance but never the real changes that give to art its continuing vitality.¹

In Hofmann's art there is a rhythm and balance which is manifested in the interplay of shapes, lines, colors, and textures. Often playing hard, solid shapes off against splatters of paint he developed what he called his push-pull method of painting. In this approach the first area of color laid down would take up a space on the canvas then by drawing on his reaction to that color area Hofmann would determine where the next brush stroke, splash, or series of color areas would be placed until the painting finally formed itself on the canvas. Frederick S. Wight said,

Hofmann begins with what he blandly calls his cosmology: his sense of the universe as a field of force, or series of such fields, loose-knit. It is a universe of separate galaxies, presaged emotionally in the sky of Van Gogh's Starry Night. The plane of the canvas cuts through this massive concept like the plane of the ecliptic. The plane organizes the depth, above and below, its two dimensions

¹Fritz Bultman, "The Achievement of Hans Hofmann," Art News, October, 1963, p. 54.

serving to capture a third otherwise beyond grasp. And these depths are not conceived as figures or numerals (for Hofmann is really an artist and not a scientist) but as forces and pressures transmitted into light and color. In Hofmann's metaphysics, tensions of a cosmic order can translate into the tensions of feeling. But this is a vital and not a passive process.¹

Hofmann appreciated paint for the qualities that it has as a result of the painting act. It could be washed out, splattered, dribbled, or put on in a thick impasto, mixed before putting it on the canvas or mixed directly on the painting surface itself. Although he was aware of technique in his work he didn't dwell on it. As Suzuki said concerning technique in swordsmanship,

Learning of the technique corresponds to an intellectual apprehension in Zen of its philosophy, and in both Zen and swordplay a proficiency in this does not cover the whole ground of the discipline. Both require us to come to the attainment of ultimate reality, which is the Emptiness or the Absolute.²

Robert Rauschenberg's work is similar for me to Hofmann's in that they both felt that they functioned with their art rather than separate from it. Rauschenberg said,

I don't want a painting to be just an expression of my personality. I feel it ought to be much better than that. And I'm opposed to the whole idea of conception-execution--of getting an idea and then carrying it out. I've always felt as though, whatever I've used and whatever I've done, the method was always closer to a collaboration with materials than to any kind of conscious manipulation and control.³

While Hofmann, using a more traditional concept of composition, opened up an awareness to the flow of those loose-knit force fields

¹F. S. Wight, Hans Hofmann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), pp. 14-15.

²D. T. Suzuki, op. cit., p. 153.

³Calvin Tomkins, The Bride and the Bachelors (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), p. 204.

which he epitomized in paint, Rauschenberg did the same thing in his combine and silk-screen paintings by using recognizable objects as elements in "force fields." By using such items as car doors, shirt sleeves, torn posters, stuffed goats and birds, and car tires, as well as paint, he drew my attention to the mystery of the object and although I feel Hofmann drew my attention, by his placement of forms on a canvas, to the harmony spoken of in Zen culture, Rauschenberg's work is no less unified. Rauschenberg's dimensional combine paintings make me feel as though the objects he used belong together. G. R. Swenson said of Rauschenberg, "He does not use them [objects] as pure color and form, destroying our sense of their origin . . . Rather he seeks to retain or reinstate some quality the object possessed in its original environment."¹

One of the important elements in Francis Bacon's influence on my work was his willingness to seek from the "void" his involvement with painting. In his personal life Bacon has a compulsion for gambling at casinos which carries over to his painting. Not being satisfied with what he knows will work, he'll paint over a figure time and time again until he is satisfied.

John Russell said Bacon's objective in painting is "to be exact in a new way,"² and that he looked at each painting act as "raising the stakes,"³ thus drawing on Bacon's gambling as an important aspect of his work as well as his life. Bacon in his art is very prone to react spontaneously. This fact was brought out further by Andrew Forge when

¹G. R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," Art News, April, 1963, p. 46.

²John Russell, "Francis Bacon at Sixty," Art in America, January, 1970, p. 111.

³Ibid.

he quoted Bacon as saying, "I see every image all the time in a shifting way, and sometimes in shifting sequences."¹ Forge went on to say of Bacon and his work,

Images breed one from another. A particular definition evokes further definition, not as a mere alternative but because he is hounding its life and is hounded by it. Each version carries a particular expression, nuances ebb and flow just as the attention, the nervous charge of an intimate ebbs and flows in intercourse with him."²

Although Bacon's paintings made me conscious of the process of painting, the involvement with it, there are other factors to his influence. His work encompassed another aspect of design, different from Hofmann and Rauschenberg. Bacon is primarily a figure painter whose work shows a resemblance to the European tradition of formal portraiture but is also reliant on the use of figure-environment relationships. It is in these figure-environment paintings that he uses various shapes and colors to break up the picture plane. Although design of this sort is evident in his work, to say that that was its purpose would be naive. These shapes and forms help set the stance of psychological impact for his work. The awning-like forms in the background of his painting "Portrait of Isabel Rawsthorne Standing on a Street in Soho" echo the general contortion of the figure itself while the railing-like lines in "Study for a Crouching Nude" amplify the impression of the squatting figure, placing visual limits on its possible actions by enclosing it in a box. As Russell has said,

It is common ground with a great many critics that Bacon's work has to do with a particularized revulsion before the conditions of human life, and that his feelings

¹Andrew Forge, "Bacon: The Paint of Screams," Art News, October, 1963, p. 41.

²Ibid.

on the subject are set down in a hectic, virtuosic way that has elements of Gothic Horror.¹

The paintings of Francis Bacon led me in two directions. One was towards introspection, letting the subconscious take over in the painting act to draw out some of the personal facets of my art; the other was towards a recognition of objects which was first brought out by Robert Rauschenberg.

Bacon often used, as a point of departure for his work, photographs and paintings done by artists of previous periods. When treated as subject matter a painting or photograph becomes more of an object in its own right as you are responding to it rather than the subject of the photo or painting. His painting "Pope Shouting" done in 1953 was inspired by Velasquez portrait of "Pope Innocent X" done three centuries earlier. Bacon also used as a point of departure a frame from the movie "The Battleship Potemkin," and his painting "Two Figures (The Wrestlers)" was inspired by Muybridge's photograph of men wrestling from his series "Animal Locomotion" of 1901.

Where Bacon's work drew my attention to the objectness of photos and paintings, Rauschenberg drew my attention to the object qualities rather than personal qualities of mass media with his silk-screen paintings. Rauschenberg used commercially printed photographs, non-personal in nature, as elements of his paintings. He didn't use them as textural devices but was more concerned with their graphic aspects and with their use as media icons. At the same time, however, he personalized these objects by his adoption of them into his own involvement with media.

¹John Russell, op. cit., p. 107.

The non-personal qualities of commercial photos was intensified by several means. First Rauschenberg removed them from their normal environment, a magazine; then, by photographing that image and enlarging it he drew attention to the commercial dot patterns of photo-engraving; and finally he silk screened the enlarged image on canvas, juxtaposing the various printings as symbolic elements of mass culture. In as much as he "collaborated" with materials in his combine paintings he also "collaborated" in his silk screen paintings. His goal was to draw himself into personal participation with the non-personal elements around us rather than merely making statements about them. He wanted not to teach ideas about life but to be active in life. As Swenson said, "Rauschenberg's works cannot be forced to fit theories; his art is not didactic; it presents, simply and gracefully, a point of view."¹

The work of Richard Lindner had a personal macabre and haunting aspect that I felt in Bacon's work. It exposed even more of the objectness which I feel is dominant in modern culture. Lindner's work isn't painterly as is Hofmann's, Rauschenberg's, and Bacon's; it is much more illustration-like. His method of painting is derived from his career as an illustrator which he relinquished in 1952 to paint full time.

Lindner's background tells something of why he sees and paints what he does. In 1922 he studied in Nuremburg and in 1924 he studied at Munich at state supported craft schools. Practical in nature, they furnished Lindner with an illustrator's background. Later he attended the Royal Academy at Munich. After moving from Germany in 1933 to

¹G. R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," Art News, April, 1963, p. 47.

avoid Nazi troops he lived in Paris and finally ended up in New York in 1941. It was his academy training and stoic German background which was confronted on his arrival there. Sidney Tillim said,

On his very first day in New York, Lindner recalls, he saw a boy of about twelve, completely drunk. And on his first visit to Harlem he saw a Negro dressed entirely in leopard skin, suit, hat, shoes. This he insists could never have happened in Germany.¹

It is these bizarre elements that Lindner saw in New York that he responds to and uses in his paintings. John Perreault said,

Lindner's nightmare penny-arcade of human types-- elephantine children playing hypnotically with insane toys, Dick Tracy strangers, hallucinating musicians, Venuses in vinyl--occurs on the razor's edge where private fantasy meets, and sees itself reflected in the public dream.²

Lindner uses two means other than his illustration approach to aid him in presenting his subject matter. One of these is his use of composition, abandoning the more traditional modes in favor of theatricality. This seems to adapt itself well to his presentation of figures and objects from the "living theatre" that he sees on the streets of New York. The other means he uses is color. Lindner sees the world as a place of the insane and is more taken by the plastic qualities of life which seem to dominate over the human qualities.

In Lindner's immaculate studio apartment there is a rather incredible collection of toys, old and new, with some combined as objects. What attracts Lindner to them he says, is their color--harsh, brutal, banal. Just as these extreme pallors give life to childless dolls, so do Lindner's color values bring a crude substitute corporeality to his images. In Lindner's paintings color is the measure

¹Sidney Tillim, Richard Lindner (Chicago: The William and Norma Copley Foundation, 1960), p. 12.

²John Perreault, "Venus in Vinyl," Art News, January, 1967, p. 48.

of what is repressed, an influence of the "naked truth" separated from substance by the centrifuge of fantasy.¹

The "nakedness" of Lindner's paintings which, I feel, is most strongly exemplified by his color, is perhaps the greatest point of his influence on my work, while his painting style and use of composition are foreign to me due to Hofmann's strong earlier influence.

Morris Louis was a painter whose work of the early 1950's was related to Hofmann's push-pull concept of painting. In his later works, however, he denied composition as an element of his painting. Often sending his work to a museum rolled up on a cardboard tube, he would let the museum staff mount it as they saw fit. He was not interested in the self-imposed restrictions of composition but in the creative process, in attaining to the source of creativity. Barbara Rose said, "Any exclusively formal interpretation of Louis' work which fails to mention the importance of the cosmic visionary imagery of the veils misses a large part of their content and quality."²

What I got from Louis' work is the sense of the object containing more than the mere physical elements that it is comprised of. The immediacy of poured paint to respond to such natural elements as gravity, viscosity, smoothness or roughness of the surface being worked on, and so forth, are all elements that I feel are important in the making of my own personal imagery. By removing myself, at least to some degree, from the process of directly controlling the elements involved, I feel that the numinous elements of my existence can become more evident in my work.

¹Sidney Tillim, op. cit., p. 7.

²Barbara Rose, op. cit., p. 65.

Miss Rose said of Louis' technique, "In pouring and spilling Louis removed not only the hand but even the arm and body of the artist entirely, thereby gaining greater abstractness through greater detachment."¹

Louis also drew my attention to the artwork as an object, but as a more self asserting entity devoid of identifiable objects. He used raw canvas as an element to absorb paint. He didn't put paint on the surface but insisted that the paint and the canvas be integral. As Daniel Robbins said,

To him it did not matter if the paint ran down a mile or a foot, but it did matter that the color (not the paint) impregnated the canvas, that the two were physically unified. Surface became body, ceased to exist, and the body, the raw unsized canvas, became surface.²

Paint wasn't on a surface but in it, and the paint wasn't about anything but color. His paintings weren't about some specific subject matter, but were more singularly, a unit.

All five artists mentioned in this chapter contributed elements to my development as both an artist and a human being. Some of those elements were physically absorbed into my work, others were philosophically stimulating. What I feel I got from them totally can best be summed up by Hans Hofmann's statement, "Quality is the essence resulting from convincingly established felt relationships. It can only be produced through an act of empathy, that is, the power to feel into the nature of things."³

¹Ibid., p. 63.

²Daniel Robbins, "Morris Louis: The Triumph of Color," Art News, October, 1963, p. 29.

³F. S. Wight, op. cit., p. 53.

CHAPTER III

PRESENT WORK

My involvement with art is based mainly on my view of the environment I live in. Seeing Hans Hofmann's work has been the primary factor in helping establish my own "cosmology." My paintings stem from a sensory and spiritual involvement with all of the elements I come in contact with. In the painting act I try to mold all of those elements into some tangible evidence of my viewpoint. I attempt to transform the many various items into one and to seek, for myself, some sense of the known in the unknown, of the infinite in the finite. This is not done by keeping track of each of the many elements and trying to discern their value but by attempting to commit my consciousness totally to some higher state of involvement.

What is sought is a sense of awakening in which all elements have their place. Alan Watts described it this way,

Awakening is only incidentally pleasant or ecstatic, only at first an experience of intense emotional release but in itself it is just the ending of an artificial and absurd use of the mind. Above and beyond that it is wu-shih--nothing special--since the ultimate content of awakening is never a particular object of knowledge or experience.¹

My paintings are symbolic renderings of what I experience, with the added stipulation that I make no attempt to predetermine what I am trying to symbolize. These paintings take form in a spontaneous manner

¹Alan Watts, op. cit., p. 170.

with the subconscious being very much involved in the creative process. The subconscious, in this case, is a means of reaching towards a more innate and instinctive involvement with life rather than an object for psychological examination. As Douglas N. Morgan said, "For once a man moves wholly through sensation to mere reference, he has begun to fit himself for a computer suit, tailormade for programmed participation in establishment society."¹

In these paintings I use acrylic paint thinned with water, which is then poured on the painting surface creating transparencies. The painting surface in the first several paintings is gessoed canvas. In my later work, however, I used a transparent sizing consisting of rabbit skin glue crystals dissolved in water and then brushed evenly into the fibers of the canvas. Since the canvas color and texture is visible beneath the glue wall I will refer to this surface as raw canvas throughout the rest of the chapter.

My description (later in this chapter) of mental and spiritual insights encountered while engaging in the painting act must be viewed as "second-hand" information since my first intention is to paint and not to write. In many cases my own understanding of the relevance of the work is incomplete, to be better established by inter-relating these paintings to other works as they are finished in the future. The closest the viewer can come to understanding my involvement is by viewing the work personally and openly, allowing the paintings to have their full impact.

¹Douglas N. Morgan, "Must Art Tell the Truth," Introductory Readings in Aesthetics, ed. by John Hospers (New York: The Free Press, 1969), p. 229.

As Ben Shahn said,

Reflection shows that anything in a work of art that can be talked about or pointed to automatically excludes itself from the "content" of the work, from its import, gist or "meaning," (all of which terms are but stabs at a generic term for what works of art are ultimately "about"). Anything in a work of art that doesn't belong to its "content" has to belong to its form."¹

Form could be defined as the physical characteristics of a work such as shape, color, line, and texture, Content on the other hand is a result of the application of form; its "import, gist, or meaning" being altered, at least to some extent, by each individual's response to the work.

While painting, my own involvement is with responding; not to the often absurd, sentimental connotations which can be read into the various elements which make up a painting, but to their more physical properties of taking up space on a canvas, advancing or receding in two dimensional space, and so on. All emotional qualities are mentally overlooked in favor of a more subconscious participation, mystical in nature.

In most cases, while painting, I was aware of the presence of symbolism in a stylistic rather than an iconographic sense and only after a period of several months can I verbalize the possible meaning a work had for me. Due to this time factor I can now make statements which would indicate that several of the paintings are not successful. These paintings, however, are only inadequate in retrospect as they each represented some new insight upon their completion.

Because of this factor I feel that the most appropriate measure would be to write in terms of what physical characteristics I was involved with and, where possible, give reference to whatever symbolic meaning I may have discerned. For the most part this chapter can be

¹Ben Shahn, The Shape of Content (New York: Vintage Books, 1957), p. 39.

looked at as a biography of the thesis paintings, each completed painting being the basis for the beginning of the next.

Due to my concern with the correlation of the finite and the infinite (which could also be spoken of as a relationship of the physical to the spiritual) I feel that there are elements in these paintings which have come to symbolize these two aspects and that all of my work deals with their inter-relation. The use of cubes in the first nine paintings represents that which is structured, contained or discernable while the stains represent that which is unstructured, unobservable, and undefinable.

In the first painting for this thesis, "Untitled" (Figure 1), the cubes are placed in two basic positions, a group stretching across the bottom of the canvas and a smaller group at the top. By preventing the cube areas from becoming visually stagnant certain allegorical overtones can be inferred. These allegories can be heightened by positioning the groupings so as to play them off, one against the other, creating a feeling of tension or expectation in the viewer. That is what was done in this painting. The top group has been arranged to suggest that the cubes are descending and opening up while the bottom cubes encompass many different angles and perspectives with variety being the main design element. In both groups the basic idea was to break up the space on the surface of the canvas by juxtaposing and overlapping the lines that make up the cubes.

The original blue and orange stain in this painting has been subdued to a great extent by the transparencies of pinks, oranges, and purples painted with a brush rather than poured so as to enhance the structured elements of the cubes.



Fig. 1.--Untitled
Oil and Acrylic 6' x 5'

In the next work, titled simply "Painting" (Figure 2), there are again two groups of cubes working with each other to create a tension. The right group suggests that it is absorbing or engulfing what is near to it while the group on the left side of the canvas seems to be withdrawing or retracting. In these cubes there is also a feeling that they are static due to the overpowering washes and colors of the stains which surround them. I have chosen to title this work "Painting" because I felt that the intensity of the color and the allegorical aspects of the work had too much visual power to lend any necessity to a title. This is also the reason for leaving the first work untitled.

From these paintings I went on to a painting originally called "Kingdom" which has since been changed to "Milepost" (Figure 3). The reason for this change is that I felt the original title was so vivid that it removed much of the mystery from the actual viewing of the painting since, in titling my work I try to find a title that will expand the potential of the work rather than define it.

In "Milepost" two new elements have been added. The stains now being confined to definite areas by hard edge lines and a glossy band of black being placed on the perimeter of the sides and top. This glossy black surface has the effect of coming to the front of the picture plane while the softer stained colors recede; the contrasting surfaces serving to heighten the mystic dualism of the known and the unknown. In addition, the hard-edged bands of stain allow the looseness of a poured color to be retained while the different colors within the bands advance or recede giving the suggestion of ambiguous spatial depth.

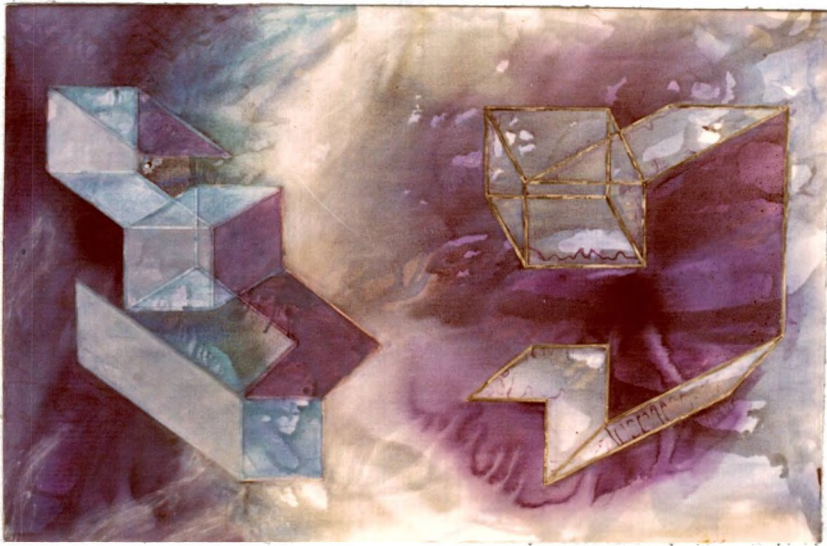


Fig. 2.--Painting
Oil and Acrylic 4' x 6'

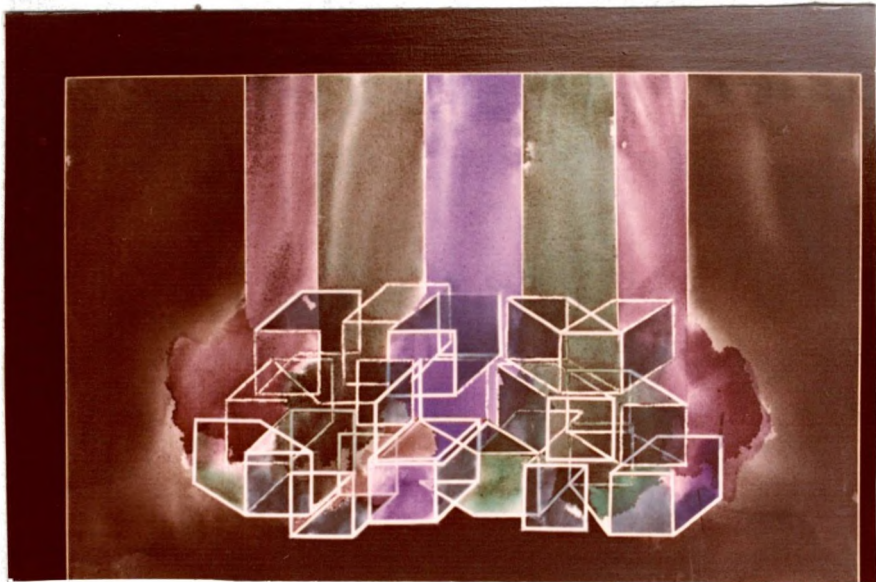


Fig. 3.--Milepost

Acrylic 4' x 6'

After "Milepost" I began work on "Stalwart," (Figure 4). In this painting I felt a need to confine the organic stains that moved in and out of the first two paintings. I find that, after dealing with the loose, energetic stain patterns in my work, I soon have a need to look to what I feel is the opposite end of what those stains suggest in order to re-orient myself. The hopeful, eventual result being to diminish the gap between those polarized segments. This movement had been initiated in "Milepost" and drawn to a further conclusion in "Stalwart" where the poured areas are enclosed completely within the cubes and the area outside is painted a vacant grey.

Feeling that the isolated cube structure was not a sufficient statement by itself I decided to introduce another element to set up some sort of visual tension. I added a thin off-yellow stripe surrounding the cubes and running off the picture plane at the top of the canvas. This not only established the off-yellow line as being in the foreground with the cubes floating somewhere behind, but also suggests the paradox of a large, volatile mass being contained by a fragile entity of unseen origin.

A paradox has also been enlisted in my next painting, titled "Radio" (Figure 5). In this painting the cubes were designed to raise some ambiguity as to which side is forward and which is behind, thus replacing a more allegorical paradox for a visual puzzle of sorts. By using horizontal stripes and opaque colors to show a static, surface environment, I reiterated and expanded on the basic attitude of the grey background in "Stalwart." The place where there is the greatest depth in the painting is in the stained area within the cube structure. This looseness combined with the harshness of the vivid stripes offers

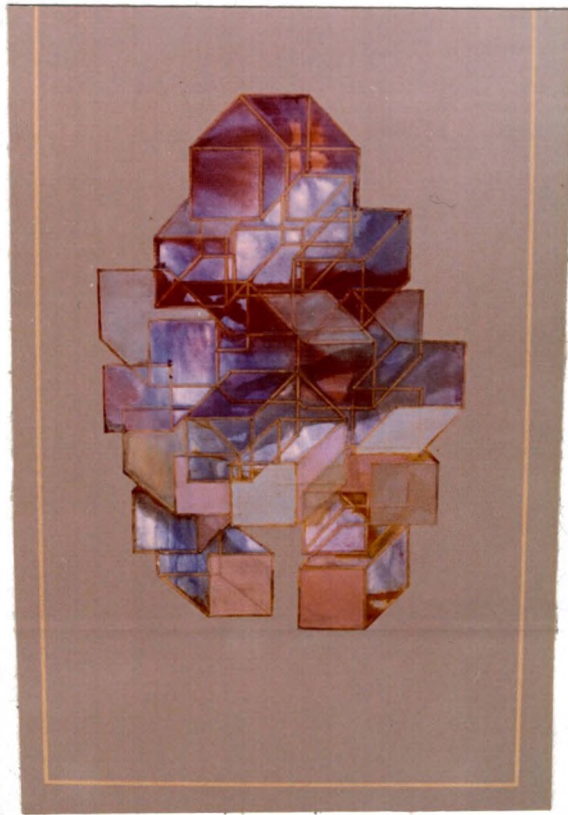


Fig. 4.--Stalwart

Acrylic 6' x 4'

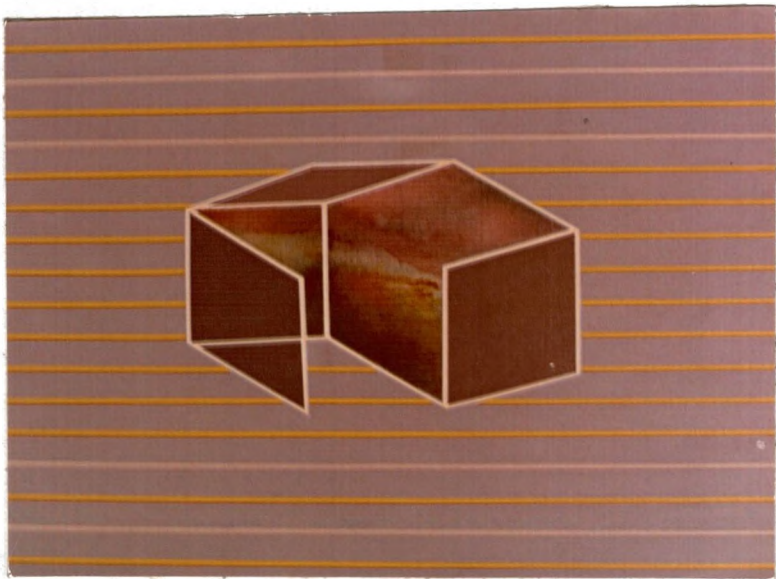


Fig. 5.--Radio

Acrylic 3' x 4'

some hint at an allegorical meaning but more than that serves to unravel new tonalities first set down in "Stalwart."

With the completion of "Radio" I found myself exploring even further the state of mind I was in while doing that painting and the previous one by starting a painting titled "Genesis" (Figure 6).

In "Genesis" I first tried to work from the same "plastic electric" feeling that I had when I finished "Radio" by placing the cubes in an almost symmetrical arrangement. In addition I tried to reassociate my attitudes by changing the color of the cubes to earth colors. In staining the areas outside the cubes, however, I found myself intellectually overworked, trying to decide how a specific color would enhance the "staticness" of the cubes floating in space. After several attempts at achieving what I considered to be an "appropriate" result, I loosely painted the background out with a color similar to the raw canvas that "Genesis" was painted on. The original idea was that I would try to restrain those areas; but, upon seeing the combination of the tan background and the reddish-brown cubes, I felt completely satisfied that the painting had taken its course.

In "Genesis" the staticness was retained but subdued from that of "Radio." The transformation of that one overtone from a visually kinetic state to a visually placid state was obtained completely by accident. The conscious act that gave the painting its present form was a decision to stop. As another unexpected bonus, the staticness was also enhanced by leaving a two and one half inch border of raw canvas around the edge of the painting, giving the background the same floating appearance as the cubes.

It was my intent to let the canvas and color be unified, thus applying what Morris Louis initiated in the late 1950's, but due to the

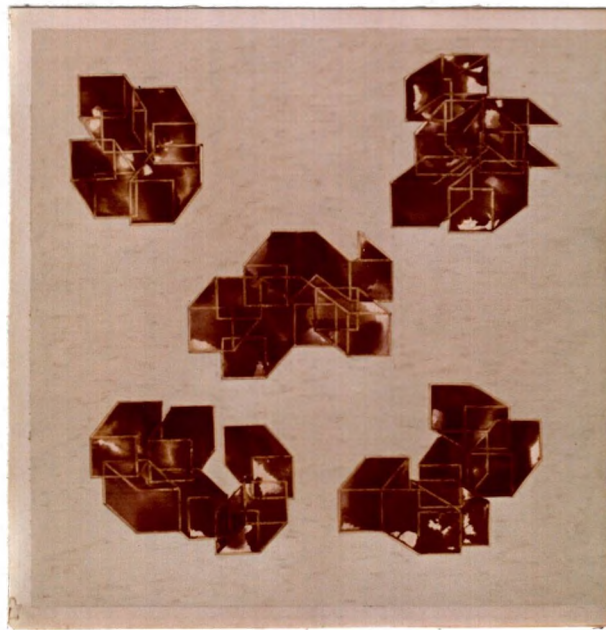


Fig. 6.--Genesis

Acrylic 5' x 5'

overpainting this didn't work out. I must admit, however, that the painting which did ensue was a more valuable experience than what I had originally planned.

The next painting I worked on was "Sextant" (Figure 7). In this painting the cubes took on a new language as curves were added to them which reiterate the rather strenuous activity of the stains. While working on "Sextant" I found myself again becoming too rigid in my reactions (much the same as in "Genesis"). This necessitated the overpainting and restraining of all but the cubes. In "Sextant" the border has also been painted so that, while the painting doesn't successfully incorporate paint and canvas, a sense of isolation is still derived from the floating square within the boundaries of the edge of the canvas.

At this point I felt a need to find other means of exploring the dualism represented by the cubes and stains. In "Corner" (Figure 8) I retained the allegorical aspects of the cubes, the use of the border, finally achieved a satisfactory result in my attempts to unify the color and the canvas, and introduced a new element with the double canvas. The purpose for this was to try to use the lower half of the painting to give the impression of a second dimension.

In "Corner" there is a strong tendency to view it as a surrealist landscape. That, I felt, made the painting too identifiable and detracted from the mystery that I wanted from my work. As a result I tried to overcome those surrealist overtones by giving the bottom canvas a "veil" or "curtain-like" quality to cause some doubt as to whether the split between the canvases was a horizon line or if it was rather a change to another dimension.



Fig. 7.--Sextant

Acrylic 5' x 5'



Fig. 8.--Corner

Acrylic 6' x 7'

Continuing with that idea I next started on "Postcard" (Figure 9). This painting is, I feel, much more successful than "Corner" as the lower section gives the impression that it is deeper in space than the upper section. This was done by using a smaller lower panel than in "Corner," then casting a darker stain on it, and finally, by overlapping the colors, creating a greater compactness which contrasts with the wider, more expansive space on the upper canvas.

"Serial" (Figure 10), marked the conclusion of my cube paintings. The paintings after "Genesis," due to the continuing use of rather bold stains and the continuously increasing size (climaxing at 6' x 7') left me somewhat traumatized by the massive effort required to make them. As a result of this I felt it was necessary to re-examine the scope of my paintings; the first step being "Serial."

The first painting of the next series shows a still further inclination toward redefinition of my work. The color and space combinations are more subdued and the cubes (which were beginning to lose significance) were removed altogether. In this painting, "Untitled" (Figure 11), the suggestion of another dimension is retained. Due to the simplicity of the painting I feel that to say anything more about it would be to destroy much of its impact.

In Figure 12 there is illustrated my last double canvas, "Freight." In this painting the suggestion of a second dimension is changed to include multi-dimensions, unified by a single common element: a small streak of purple in each section.

The last four paintings, "Window" (Figure 13), "Untitled" (Figure 14), "Untitled" (Figure 15), and "Admissable" (Figure 16), all rely on one basic format as a point of departure. This format is a



Fig. 9.--Postcard

Acrylic 6' x 7'

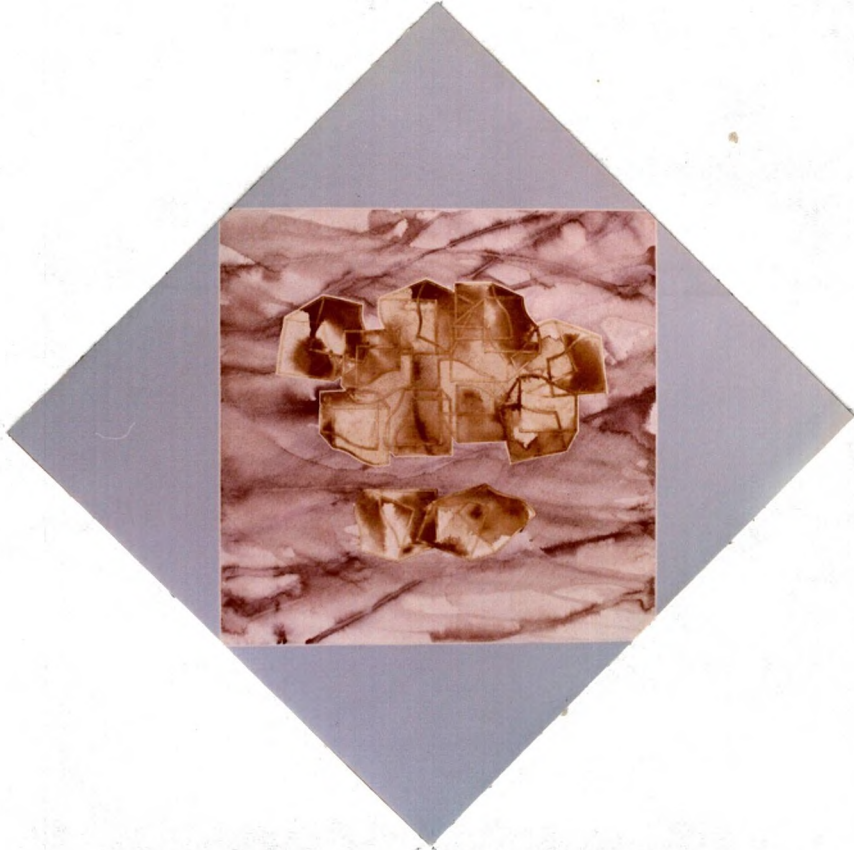


Fig. 10.--Serial

Acrylic 5' x 5'



Fig. 11.--Untitled

Acrylic 5' x 6'

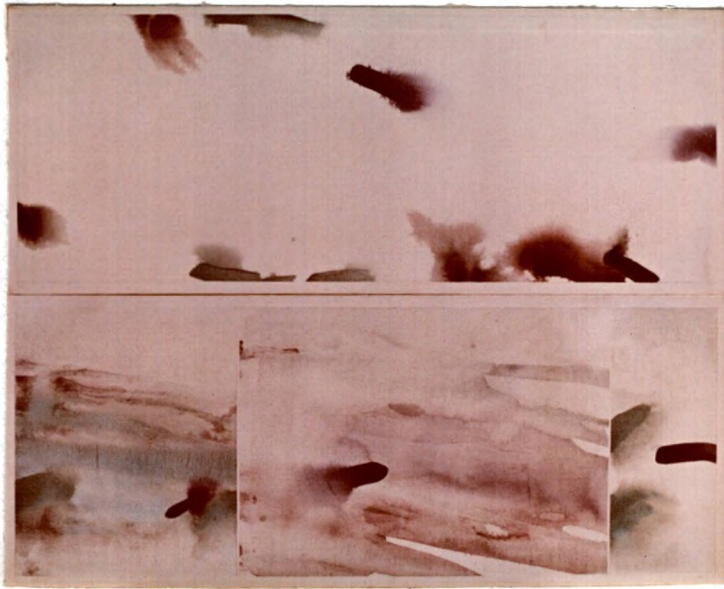


Fig. 12.--Freight

Acrylic 4' x 5'

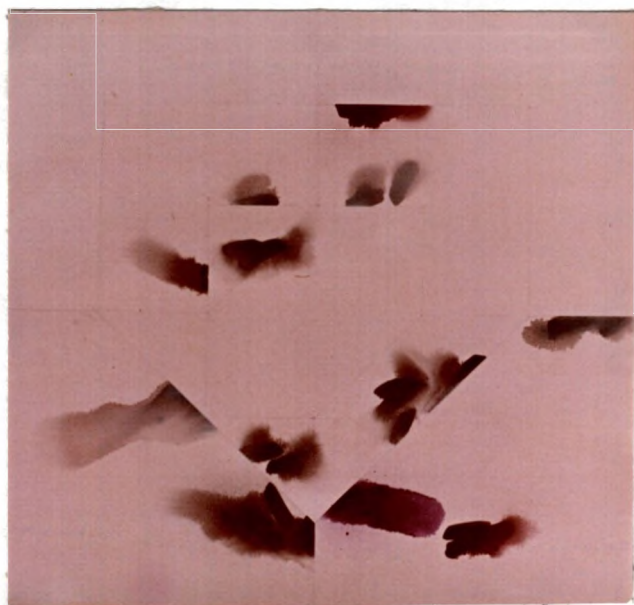


Fig. 13.--Window

Acrylic $5\frac{1}{2}'$ x $5\frac{1}{2}'$

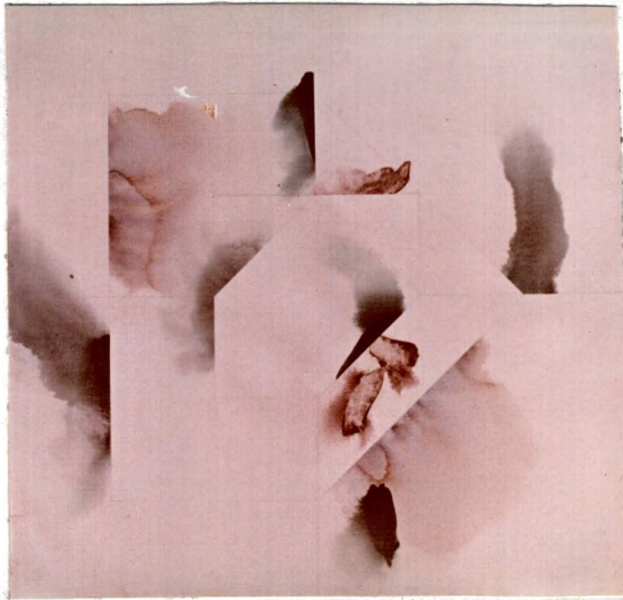


Fig. 14.--Untitled

Acrylic 4' x 4'

252
F. S. OAKS
CORNERABLE
PIONEER
BANK



Fig. 15.--Untitled

Acrylic 3' x 3'



Fig. 16.--Admissable

Acrylic 5' x 5'

grid consisting of squares, diamonds, and triangles which has been penciled onto each canvas. Throughout this grid are acrylic stains, both poured and brushed on, in various combinations and positions. In these works the raw canvas makes up the greatest extent of the visible surface with the paint serving as an accent, letting the space between the color become as much a part of the work as the paint itself. This idea grew from my original intent of unifying color and surface by using transparencies and raw canvas.

Another aspect of these four paintings is that the grid structure takes over the fixed or structured role of the cubes and the stains encompass more allegorical properties than they previously did. I don't feel, at this point, that I can adequately or significantly state further reasons for the placement of stains on these newer canvases. As I stated earlier, this should be left, for the most part, to the viewer to see, and hopefully enjoy and be stimulated by. The statements I have made offer a partial account of what basic motives and thoughts had occurred to me during the course of these paintings. As Douglas N. Morgan said, "We do not deserve God and truth if we see and hear as sensitive beings, without forever demanding that every sight and every sound must truth-clue some practical action."¹

My use of various allegorical elements in my work was meant to be atmospheric rather than didactic; to fill in the presence of symbolism rather than define it and for this reason I've tried not to state specifically what that symbolism meant but rather to state, somewhat vaguely, what it was related to.

¹Douglas N. Morgan, op. cit., p. 230.

I find that if I attempt to verbalize what a specific painting signifies to me, without adequate time for it to "soak in," the answers I put forth are, more often than not, based on wishful thinking. As Morgan said,

While knowledge and truth of every kind are precious, it is a pedantic, philistine mistake to suppose that everything precious must be translated into bits and pieces of scientific knowledge and truth in order to be honestly enjoyed. We must indeed learn and know in order to become ready to participate in art, but our participation alone can turn all our learning and knowing into human being. This intimate participative sense of being is a far truer guide to God and truth than any cognition can ever be."¹

Participative Guidance is related not only to art but to all acts of life. Some of the essential elements of this practice are the acceptance of responsibility and the willingness to forsake the need for profit which can soon become an obsession. As Alan Watts has said,

For the moral act is significantly moral only when it is free, without the compulsion of a reason or necessity. This is the deepest meaning of the Christian doctrine of free will, for to act in union with God is to act, not from the constraint of fear or pride, nor from hope of reward, but with the baseless love of the unmoved mover.²

The goals I have set for myself in both art and in other aspects of life are ones that must be met continuously. What I speak of is an ideal state which I have yet to attain. In my art the moments of awakening were found often within the course of making the painting; the most conspicuous being those that occurred by "accident." Since it would be impossible to adequately communicate those moments I have

¹Douglas N. Morgan, op. cit., p. 240.

²Alan Watts, op. cit., p. 169.

attempted to outline the circumstances which surround them. In much the same way, in my last four paintings, the paint is surrounded by canvas.

To find those "moments of awakening" I must be able to surrender to the unknown or as the ancient samurai would say "die to myself." Only in this way can I adequately fulfill that objective, although, being a Christian, I believe that I have help in meeting those goals.

Colossians 3:2-3

Set your mind on things above, not
on things that are of the earth
For you have died and your life is
hidden with Christ in God.

I Corinthians 15:28

And when all things are subjected
to Him, then the Son Himself will
be subjected to the one who subjected
all things to Him, that God may be
all in all.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The trend of my work has been to refine imagery to a simple essence which best epitomizes my involvement with each separate creative process, yet, still hints at something greater, not seen, that goes beyond the physical qualities of the painting. In as much as circumstances (i.e. time expenditure, colors used, physical condition of the artist, surface, etc.) vary, the end result will vary the basic objective, to more clearly embody that which Hofmann spoke of as quality. The success of each painting doesn't depend on well minimalized elements but rather on how clearly I present the impact of my involvement. This could be achieved with many elements as well as with few.

My past work (prior to 1971) was as varied and diverse as my influences. It carried me through the experiences of landscape painting, transfer drawing, and figure painting. With all of those efforts their main effect has been that of developing my visual awareness and in providing some meaningful source of insight. The reason for my involvement with painting has not been to use each painting as a teaching device but rather as a device for seeking. I feel that man's goal in life is to grow, both intellectually and spiritually. Not seeking static justification for his actions as an individual or his actions as a race (which could be selfish) but by his constructive actions and by his attitude make a positive contribution towards harmony.

I feel that the power of the intellect, while valuable, can be overstated and that even an increased state of consciousness, if not channeled into a more universal source, can prevent the intimacy that I feel is necessary between the various elements of existence.

Robert Rauschenberg summed it up this way:

I would not describe success as the goal, or even making the best picture, but using your sensibility and the materials in your life (objects and thoughts) as thoroughly as you can. I don't like saying it for two reasons: (1) defining the particular area tends to destroy it, or at least damage it, and (2) language tends to be fixed, and what I am describing is a mobility. I told a newspaper man the other day that I thought we were moving into an area now which has as its uniqueness that what a man thinks is less and less important than his way of moving from thought to thought. So that I think we'll eventually give up thoughts, and there will be a constant flow of concern. Thoughts would only lust when you were faltering or ineffective. By thoughts I mean particular ideas.¹

Art, recently, has witnessed several trends which could be termed didactic. They deal with removing the duality between art and life and because of their removal of art from its normal museum environment have been called anti-art. These art forms have all had, as one of their aspects, the self-educating qualities of life and have tried to call attention to that fact. The only problem I found was that I had to "second guess" what the involvement of the artist was supposed to do. Where I could normally learn from a natural environment or even from seeing, one time, a conceptual artwork such as a gallery with three feet of dirt covering the floor, the continuous use of that mode of expression seems not to educate but to alienate. It seems to assert the presence of the artist more than the presence of life itself by answering a question which hasn't been asked. In this case, too

¹Suzi Gablik, "Light Conversation," Art News, November, 1968, p. 60.

often, the acceptance of new trends in art has been based on the transfer of the viewer's identity to the "newest mode of expression" whether the viewer actually likes it or not.

In making my art I try to leave out any preconceived meaning as a consideration, as whatever meaning there is will be the result of my involvement. All things I come in contact with have significance to me, even if it is only that I personally acknowledge their existence by seeing them. As Suzuki has said,

To be thus free from all conditioning rules or concepts is the essence of religious life. When we are conscious of any purpose whatever in our movements we are not free. To be free means purposelessness, which of course doesn't mean licentiousness. The idea of a purpose is something the human intellect reads into certain forms of movement. When teleology enters into our life we cease to be religious. We become moral beings. So with art. When purpose is too much in evidence in a work of art, so called, art is no longer there; it becomes a machine or an advertisement. Beauty runs away, ugly human hands become altogether too visible. Suchness in art consists in its artlessness that is its purposelessness.¹

Barbara Rose has said, "Because its real purpose is to teach, to elucidate, or to edify, the work of didactic art has less value as art than as lesson."²

I do not intend the above written paragraphs as a tool to put forth a prejudice against didactic art but merely as reasons why I don't consider it a valid aspect of my own work. In as much as my art is not conceived of as a means of teaching (although experiencing it will make it have that function) I do not intend to say that my art encompasses the only valid way of approaching art either. I do not intend to erect walls within which art must function. A very valuable

¹D. T. Suzuki, op. cit., p. 376.

²Barbara Rose, "The Value of Didactic Art," Artforum, April, 1967, p. 33.

freedom lies in the involuntariness of aesthetic judging. The choice to paint as I do was made out of need. Not to shock, but to merely make a personal expression of my own aesthetic involvement. Indeed shock is not a valid element in my art since when the public has seen enough of what they before had termed offensive, they will merely accept it as common. Repeated shock has a way of numbing the senses. Art viewers might not understand the relevance of what they see, however, in which case they could feel that they are behind times and the artist's supposed superiority over them would be emphasized. In this case the state of harmony that I feel is important would not be enhanced but would be pushed back behind the more material concerns of identity. The involuntary nature of aesthetic judgment would be hidden behind the need to "be somebody."

Where consciousness today is reaching a more intense level of sophistication than ever before I believe that the attempt to intellectually grasp the importance of what you experience could hinder the spiritual development of the individual. By dealing with matters only on an intellectual level you soon become more concerned with finding reasons for the occurrence of an event so that you can do it again than with enjoying the action. As Clement Greenburg said, "You can no more choose whether or not to like a work of art than you can choose to have sugar taste sweet or lemons taste sour. (Whether or not esthetic judgments are honestly reported is another matter)."¹

In order for my art to be meaningful to me I can't use it as a means of pointing out to others how much I know or how little they

¹Clement Greenburg, op. cit., p. 38.

know. I present my art as the result of my endeavors; something to either enjoy or not enjoy, something for the viewer to find meaning in or not find meaning in; a point of view hopefully constructive.

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