

MODEL STAND CHATS

A Series of Classroom Lectures

By Morris Blackburn (1902-1979)

Edited by Marie Naples Maber
Brookdale Community College
Sabbatical Project, Fall, 2019

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Brookdale Community College's Board of Trustees Chair, Ms. Tracey Abby-White, each member of Brookdale's Board of Trustees, Humanities Dean Meg Natter, Dr. Matt Reed, VP of Learning, and Brookdale's President, Dr. David Stout, for their support of this project. Special thanks are extended to Dr. Kathleen A. Foster, Senior Curator of American Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and to Dr. John W. Ittmann, Curator of Prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art for their support of this project and access to the PMA collections.

It is important to acknowledge the work of Morris Blackburn's wife, Sarah Elizabeth "Betty" Thompson Blackburn (1911 – 1996). Betty Blackburn was key to the retention of Blackburn's words. Over the years she had transcribed her husband's studio lectures which had been presented at The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts during regular class meetings, 1952 to 1979, as well as at the School of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, where he taught 1945-1972. Hundreds of pages of her typed transcriptions are available within the Blackburn Papers Collection, by appointment. This collection is located in The Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts on the 5th Floor of the Hamilton Building, Philadelphia, two blocks north of City Hall.

Prior to their being offered to the PAFA Archives in 2000, Blackburn's papers were scanned in 1988 as part of the Archives of American Art's *Philadelphia Arts Documentation Project*. They were lent for microfilming by Betty Blackburn at that time. The description of this collection is provided by the AAA as, "Thirty-seven journals, 1927, 1942-1979, containing daily entries on teaching, exhibitions, work in progress, artists and the Philadelphia art scene; letters concerning exhibitions and sales, including 30 from Franklin Watkins, and 15 from Louis Rist; writings; a file on Blackburn's involvement with the Public Works of Art Project includes contracts, letters, clippings, and photographs; notebooks and registers documenting prints, contain title, date, size, edition number, exhibition record, experiments with materials, and lists of paintings sent to exhibition; clippings, exhibition catalogs and a scrapbook of clippings; and photographs of Blackburn, his art, installations, and his associates." ¹ This entire collection is preserved on 8 reels of microfilm which is available through Inter-Library Loan from The Archives of American Art, The Smithsonian Institution.

Betty had typed her husband's lectures using a manual typewriter while listening to his voice recorded on reel-to-reel tapes. These recordings were made while Blackburn's classes were in session. Over time, his lectures had naturally developed and changed. Several versions of each of these transcribed lectures reside in his Archives at PAFA. More than one Table of Contents exists. With the cordial assistance of the Director of the Archives of The Pennsylvania

¹ <https://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/morris-blackburn-papers-10152>

Academy of the Fine Arts, Hoang Tran, I have been able to review the many iterations of these lectures so that the most complete collection has been included here.

When I was unable to stay in Philadelphia to read from Mr. Blackburn's papers in the PAFA Archive, I was assisted with obtaining microfilm from The Smithsonian with the kind assistance of Ms. Ethel Brandon, Library Associate, Brookdale Community College, from May – August, 2019, and from Ms. Joslyn Weiss, Periodicals & Interlibrary Loan Librarian, Monmouth County Library, Eastern Branch, between September and December, 2019.

I have re-typed Mrs. Blackburn's pages with very few adjustments; corrected spelling errors, added paragraph breaks and removed the word, "etc." that often appeared in Betty's transcripts. Some terms and paint recipes have been reviewed with colleagues familiar with his studio practice. A common resource for 1970s-1980s PAFA faculty, The Artists Handbook of Materials and Techniques, by Ralph Mayer, published 1940, and updated over the years 1957, 1970, 1981, and later, helped me to clarify terminology. For example, Betty's notes indicate that Blackburn included "honey glycerin" as an ingredient of gouache. Are these words intended to be separated by a comma and listed as two ingredients?² Paint recipes included here may be useful to painting conservation experts when they encounter works by Blackburn that exhibit surface changes due to their age or their chemical components.

This collection also has benefited from the careful proof-reading and formatting expertise by Patricia Vanaman Witt, Kandice Fields, Linda DeButts, and Marie M. Naples. I appreciate their time and thoughtful comments.

Since these written words had been spoken and recorded by Blackburn while he taught, there are passages of humor conveyed by his casual, off-handed commentary. His era preceded the mandates of "political correctness" that we use to guide our classroom narratives as teachers today. Blackburn's former students may find themselves transported to their PAFA days when reconnected with his phrasing. Others will be introduced to this man and his curriculum through these lectures, for the very first time.

I have retained Mr. Blackburn's language in these lectures in deference to the man and his time. Consider that these ideas were expressed in the classroom setting, directed to his students, and that rather than discussing these comments once his lecture had finished, the students stood by their easels and got back to their work.

Marie Naples Maber, Fall 2019

² In Ralph Mayer's, *The Artist's Handbook of 1980*, Penguin Books, the vehicle for watercolor and gouache paints include honey-water (hydromel) 1:1, or sugar syrup or glucose, plus glycerin, gum Arabic, or pulverized gum Senegal, a wetting agent, and a preservative (286).

Concept of Model-Stand Chats

“The concept of ‘Model Stand Chats’ must be kept in mind in reading these pages. Morris Blackburn could take the opportunity afforded by the model’s ‘rest’ period to discuss something that came to his mind, or that he saw needed clarification as he looked at the student’s works.

His lectures are on tape and I have the tapes.”

- Betty Thompson Blackburn

Table of Contents

FORWARD NOTES by Morris Blackburn	i
INTRODUCTION	i
PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING	iii
Chapter One – Classroom Organization.....	1
FIRST CLASS MEETING	1
CANVAS AND EASEL	1
STARTING A PAINTING	2
WIPE ON-WIPE OUT	3
UNFINISHED PAINTINGS	4
UNFINISHING 1.....	5
ART IS WHAT ARTISTS DO	6
Chapter Two – Techniques of the Masters.....	6
ACCENT-PASSAGE and the CONCEPT OF THE ARROW	7
INTERVAL.....	7
ACCENT-PASSAGE	9
FORM AND CONTENT.....	10
Chapter Three - The Principle of Unrestricted Uncertainty.....	11
THE NOW	12
TRANSCENDENCE.....	13
INTROSPECTION	14
CYCLES.....	15
Chapter Four - Field Theory	16
QUANTUM	17
GESTALT	18
NO BACKGROUND.....	20
Chapter Five - Color Vs. Tone.....	21
MORE ON COLOR (or COLOR AS CONSEQUENCE)	22
THE WET SCUMBLE	23
VALUES.....	24
Chapter Six - Drawing.....	25
INSIDE TO OUTSIDE.....	26

LINE	27
SPACE	28
FORESHORTENING AND PERSPECTIVE	32
HEADS	34
Chapter Seven – The Oriental Contribution.....	35
YIN-YANG	35
LESS IS MORE (Sumi)	37
Chapter EIGHT - Painting Genres	38
ABSTRACTION	38
STILL LIFE	39
PORTRAITURE.....	40
Chapter Nine – Painting Media.....	42
WATERCOLOR	42
GOUACHE	44
EGG EMULSION	46
GUM TEMPERA	47
CASEIN EMULSION	47
EGG TEMPERA.....	47
COLD WAX.....	48
ENCAUSTIC	49
ACRYLICS	49
Chapter 10.....	51
HYPERAESTHESIA	51
CONFORMITY	52
CREATIVITY	53
Chapter Eleven.....	54
SCALE.....	54
TRANSPARENT WRAP.....	55
Chapter Twelve	55
CONCLUSION.....	55
Addenda – Omitted from Mr. Blackburn’s MODEL STAND CHATS’ Table of Contents	56
The Switch: Phase One and Phase two	56

Reality	57
More on Perception	58
Bibliography	61

FORWARD NOTES by Morris Blackburn

The job of the teacher is to open doors. The good student will pass through the door and add to his own body of knowledge. The best of all learning comes from experience. To experience something is to know it well. It becomes an inherent part of the psyche where it is put into the cybernetic bank of the unconscious for use at any time. The central idea in learning any discipline is to learn to think in it. At some point in your life you will find yourself thinking as a painter, twenty-four hours a day – awake or asleep. It is this type of involvement which separates the professional from the amateur.

INTRODUCTION

This book is a distillate of many years of teaching the fine art of painting, forty-five years so far. As a beginning teacher in 1933, I did just what every other tyro does, I tried to impose my enthusiasm for abstraction on all students. Years later I found, to my chagrin, that such blanket arrogance will not work. The insight was triggered by Herbert Read who pointed out in his fine book, Education Through Art, that there are various types of people, and to attempt to treat them all with the same ideology is a waste of time and effort.

After a period of shocked embarrassment and blushing remorse, I came to the obvious conclusion that one must start with each student on an individual basis. The blanket was removed and I got to work. Now, at the age of seventy-four years, I see that the art student has a more difficult problem than students in other disciplines. Basically, an idealist, he soon finds that ideals are laughed at by a society which places the race for a “buck” *uber alles*. He has no navigation chart to help him steer through the reefs, the Sargossa Sea of propeller-fowling weeds, and the myriad magnetic pulls from his peers, which make his compass in-operative.

How does one ever begin to be helpful to these mixed up young people? Knowing full well, as I do, that there are no absolute answers to any questions, and that absolute certainty is a form of being buried alive, the dead center of ineptitude. I cannot calmly accept such a senseless destruction of human potentiality. The one ray of light in the dark tunnel of “impasse” lies in the concept of “time-binding.” This means to me, that one can add one’s personal contribution to the long thread of history and “walk tall” in the effort.

The monumental scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, when asked about the source of his big ideas said: “I have dared to stand on the shoulders of the great men of the past.” This, in my view, is a perfect example of time-binding. What might have happened to the work if this great man had decided to be “*avant-garde*” and had tried to redesign the wheel?

Time-binding itself exists in many areas of life. The gene itself is the most common example: the chain of family mores which exists for centuries, the ethnic characteristic which determines the choice of food, for example. The artist, however, picks his own heroes and

believes in them. Over his lifetime, he will change his views about his heroes and will discard some and select new ones. He will not imitate their work but he will live in the aura of their probity. Having learned, finally, to think with the mind of a painter, it is within the realm of possibility that he can and will add his personal contribution to the time-binding thread of history.

It is clear that Thomas Eakins understood this concept profoundly. Arthur B. Carles, my teacher, also had the deepest respect for time-binding, although he was one of the earliest abstractionists in America. I have seen him tremble in front of an Ingres painting. He described to me his state of shock when he saw the Rembrandts for the first time at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Shaken to the very marrow of his bones, he had to run out to the courtyard to regain his composure. Then he added to me, "Every masterpiece has its own defense." Time-binding is, indeed, a heavy burden to carry. The weak-kneed mediocrity will not accept such a responsibility and will shake it off by saying, "That has been done before, one must be contemporary." These words, a complete *non-sequitur*, have been said thousands of times by people who have never felt the power of a masterpiece, and cannot accept the challenge of greatness.

The question is this, "Is it better to be a magnificent failure or to live in the safe nothingness of a fish worm?" The mediocre majority will not have much trouble in making this decision. The art student, on the other hand, bravely faces the possibility of failure when he pays his matriculation fee in an art school. The hedge against this clear and present danger, in my view, is to learn as much as possible about the fine art of painting, past and present. To contribute to the thread of history, one must first know of its existence, understand the thinking of those who have done it, and employ the constants of time-binding, to paint his own insides.

All too soon the art student finds that he is under pressure to be "contemporary." Such pressure, of course, comes from the inept "teacher" who has not yet learned that all students cannot be covered by the same ideological blanket. As he hasn't any assurance of a future he is easily conned into imitating the current successes. He becomes "avant-garde." The real "avant-garde" painter does not imitate anyone. The great Renoir has pointed out that true avant-garde, great painting grows out of tradition (time-binding). Such students, to disguise their sell-out, develop a widespread type of arrogant snobbery. They look down their noses at anything with a hint of realism in it and sneer at what they call academic. This works until you see their painting and it is clearly seen that they have "missed the boat." By the time they have finished their education their "contemporary" work is as old-fashioned as a Landon button: ineptitude on all sides "*ad absurdum*." What a waste of human potential!

PHILOSOPHY OF TEACHING

Seven years out of the Academy and already teaching in an art school: I had the feeling that there was a big gap in my education as a painter. By the stroke of good fortune, I was able to study, in a private class, with the great Arthur B. Carles, Jr. He was not only a great painter but a great teacher as well. An early pioneer abstractionist in America, he was highly respected although hardly anyone understood his work at that time, including me.

On the day of the first class in his studio, I saw with crystal clarity that there was indeed a gap in my education. In my four years as an Academy student, I had been told, through criticism, what was wrong in my work. I knew everything about wrong but nothing about right. By the end of that first class the “gap” was clearly defined in my mind. He told me, in looking at my study of the model, what was right about it and said: “Now bring the rest up to it.” This, the best criticism I ever had in my life, shook me to the very roots of my being. I saw, at once, that this great man placed the responsibility for “bringing the rest up to it” squarely on my shoulders, that he respected my potential enough to expect it from me. From that moment on, I proceeded to fill the gap. In the subsequent years of a wonderful teacher-student relationship with him, I learned about painting and about teaching as well.

It is this attitude toward teaching which I will use with you. When I point out the good parts of your painting, do not misconstrue it as flattery. On the contrary, this means that if one small area is better than the rest of it, you had better do something about the rest. I can tell you what is wrong about it but in doing so I will clamp on the hard cuffs of dependency. Sooner or later you will have to take on the full responsibility for your own work. The maturation process is not easy, I assure you. I will respect your potential as Carles did mine. You would not be here in this class if you did not have paint in your veins. So, let us get at it. As a teacher, my own effectuality is involved with your progress. For this reason, I must make this class productive for all of us.

Some years ago, in discussions with other painters, I listened to their talk. They used such terms as academic, abstraction, traditional, and realistic. After being exposed to their semantic double-talk, I suddenly saw that they knew nothing about traditional painting and neither did I, recognizing this vast chasm of ignorance, I saw that I absolutely had to close the gap. It took a lot of time and great effort and eventually, I learned something which I want to pass on to you. It became clear to me that a limited number of concepts have been used as “constants” throughout the whole history of art. The best painters of each and every art historic period, used them in their own way, for example, such artists as Arthur B. Carles, Pablo Picasso, Pierre Matisse, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and a host of others. More recently, Franz Kline, Willem de Kooning, Jackson Pollack, and Richard Diebenkorn reveal their knowledge of these constants in their work.

To me, these concepts are the spinal cord of a painter's education. I shall do my best to reveal them to you as the semester goes along. Any style of the past, present, or future, requires a real understanding of these constants. Many things in life remain constant, such as eating, sleeping, loving, and the perpetuation of the human race. There is no such thing as "*avant-garde*" sleeping. Some of the others might be considered to be experimental but the basic constants remain the same. So, it is in painting, the constants are there even though they do not look the same in every period and style. It is difficult to pigeonhole each one exactly as there is some overlap in them where the edges get to be blurred.

In my case, I shall give them to you in "Model Stand Chats" one at a time as we go along. In this way, I hope to give you insights into what the great masters thought about in painting, to learn the *modus operandi* of a painter's mind. I do not expect you to imitate their work for the reality is that you cannot do it at this stage. Masterpieces are not made by students, just out of high school. When you learn to think as a painter, you will become one.

Right now, you are in the most exciting period of your career. Later on, you will look back on it with great pleasure. You have nothing to do but to learn. The study of painting can be a wonderful excitement where it is always possible to find a basic insight "just around the bend." Insights do not announce themselves, they just happen at most unexpected moments. Always be on the alert for them as they are the essence of the learning process.

By the law of compensation, there are negative aspects to being a student. You will have your moments of doubt, indecision, depression, etc. There will be strong pressures from your peer group and some teachers to side track the learning process and just paint your subjective feelings. Everybody has subjective feelings – why should they replace their own for yours? Rembrandt had subjective feelings also – but he became one of the world's greatest painters. I say this because you will have to protect yourself from peer pressures of monstrous certainty. (Monstrous certainty is a recognizable cover for abysmal ignorance.) People who have knowledge are not so sure of themselves.

You will hear such criticism of your work as: "That's been done before." What does such a "profound" statement really mean? Nothing. It is meaningless verbiage, which is a symptom of a conformist, stereotype mind. Today high school graduates think they can improve on Leonardo da Vinci! Somehow the fact that they know almost nothing about painting is supposed to make it easy to do. Such "reasoning" can only be explained by an era of overwhelming infantilism. It will take courage to raise oneself above this pea soup fog of aggressive mediocrity.

Carl Jung has pointed out to us that the average person has a deep fear of his unconscious mind. According to him, artists who are not average persons, welcome the

exploration of the unconscious with the expectant joy of finding a big insight. Creativity is not a matter of servile copying of the latest style publicized by the media and sold on Madison Avenue. On the contrary, the creative act is the result of depending on your own insides, listening to the wee small voice of the unconscious and pulling out a golden nugget which is entirely your own.

Recently, I counted the number of *avant-garde* movements I have seen come and go during my career as a painter. There were at least twenty-eight! Obviously, the striving for excellence cannot be that expendable. As a student, as a painter, and as a teacher, I have made every mistake in the book. For this reason alone, I can help you to avoid the same ones. One of my bigger mistakes occurred in my first life class after being promoted from antique drawing. I spent a whole morning making what must have been a very inept drawing in charcoal and then spent three weeks filling in the lines. How little did I know that I almost invented number painting! What an inglorious flop it was. However, it is true that we do learn from our mistakes. I have learned a lot.

Chapter One – Classroom Organization

FIRST CLASS MEETING

Welcome to this first meeting of the class in the new semester. Before this afternoon is over, I expect you to be “head over heels” in paint. In the meantime, however, there are practical matters which must be discussed and I must try to make you comfortable in a new situation. The ultimate goal in all of this is to assure an effective semester for everyone.

To begin with a practical matter, it is important to be sure that each of you has a clear, unobstructed view of the pose. This requires an organized plan for positioning the easels. The best one I know is to place the easels so they radiate from the model. This means that the easel points to the pose and so does the edge of your canvas. To save space, two easels can be nested together. In order to make this clear, I have asked the monitor to put radiating lines on the floor with a chalk-line. Use them as a guide for the foot of your easel. As they are put on the floor at random, you do not have to match them exactly. To place a large canvas broadside in front of the model, so no one else can see the pose, is to live dangerously and an unnecessary risk. Such egocentric behavior will not be tolerated by the group.

Potentially, your classmates can become friends for life. The position of the easel is crucial to perception. It should be far enough away from the model so you can see the whole pose on one look or one cone of vision. If you are too close, you will have to shift your look and thereby divide your painting before it even starts. Insist on the “one look” and paint only what you can see without shifting your focus. To see the pose as a unified whole is to insure the possible unity of the painting. Chaotic looking means chaotic painting. To see in segments is to paint in segments and to miss the unified totality of the painting, obviously a self-destructive attitude. Learn to see strongly.

CANVAS AND EASEL

Painting on a canvas, standing at an easel, is a bit like fencing or boxing. The foot work is important; have some bounce in your feet. Some students stand too close to the canvas. This means that they can only see the small area near the end of the brush. Some choke the brush near the metal ferrule making it impossible to see the whole painting at once. Be sure you stand far enough away from the canvas to encompass the whole thing in your cone of vision.

Paul Klee painted small paintings for this reason. He wanted to see the effect of each stroke on form on the total gestalt. In time, one learns that every new addition to the painting changes the whole for better or worse. Not to be aware of this is not to be using your potential to full capacity. Standing and “fencing” at the easel is the best way to function. Do it while you

are young so you learn to watch the totality as it progresses. This is in essence what Picasso meant, as already quoted, "I don't seek, I find."

Other painters have said, "Let the painting tell you what it needs." As you get older, you may find, as I have, that you can no longer stand at the easel. However, it does not hurt so much to paint while sitting down. If you have to do this, use a rolling desk chair so you can back up and see the whole job. Standing or sitting, don't ever peer around the edge of your canvas. Let nothing be interposed between your eyes and the subject. Do not dilute your own effectuality.

Make sure your easel is steady and does not rock as you paint. One cannot draw on a moving surface. The canvas should be tightly stretched so it has some resilience to the brush. Linen is the best of canvases. Cotton duck is a lot cheaper but it does not feel right to the professional painter. Raw linen in fine quality is available. Do not stretch it too tightly at this stage. Natural shrinkage will take the wrinkles out of it on application of the glue size. A coat or two of traditional gesso is next. Gesso is very absorbent. We can take a hint from Renoir who used a thin coat of white lead oil paint and turpentine as a final surface. Let it dry for a few days and you will have a fine support for your paintings.

In laying the glue size, it is good to coat out the center first, avoiding the stretcher frame. The glue will immediately shrink the linen over the stretcher sticks and prevent sticking to them. Do the same thing with the gesso. This can prevent a mark on the canvas showing the inside edge of the stretcher sticks. If this does not correct the flaws, insert a piece of cardboard between the underside of the canvas and the stretcher as you brush on the gesso.

STARTING A PAINTING

For many years, it has been clear that students start from the wrong end in painting. Why do they want to paint in the first place? It is possible that they saw, at an early age, a painting which enchanted them and they wanted to do likewise. However, the crux of the matter is that the painting hanging in a museum or reproduced in a book is a finished product. Never having seen a beginning painting, it is natural that they would benefit by watching an instructor create a painting from start to finish.

How does one start a painting? This is, indeed, the sixty-four-thousand-dollar-question. Over the years, you will find that your starting attack will change as you grow in experience. Before getting into this, it is important for you to know that two basic types of painting have existed side by side in the history of art. They are the "Draftsmanly" and the "Painterly." The *draftsmanly artist* simply means that the painter draws first and paints later. *The painterly artist*, on the other hand means that the painter paints first and draws all the time, with the

brush, throughout the whole becoming of the painting. Masterpieces have been done in both attitudes.

The marvels of draftsmanly painting can be seen in the work of Hans Holbein, Albrecht Durer, the van Eycks, [Hubert (d. 1496) and Jan van Eyck (d. 1441)] and J.A.D. Ingres. There are others of course. The marvels of the painterly can be seen in the work of such greats as Diego Velazquez, Francisco Goya, El Greco, Peter Paul Rubens, Paolo Veronese, Jan Vermeer, Édouard Manet, Honoré Daumier, Edgar Degas, Paul Cezanne, Jacopo Tintoretto, and Vincent van Gogh, to name only a few of the greatest. Rembrandt might have been the most painterly of all. The painterly approach, the one I finally learned from immense personal effort is the one I shall demonstrate for you. Later on you will make your own choices between the two, depending on your personal predilection, the one in which you can function best.

As a teacher, I think the painterly approach may be a new thing for most of you. As children, many of us started with the outline and then filled it in with crayons or paint. Coloring books are a terrible influence on young minds, for this reason. The question is: should there be a continuation of childish ignorance or, now that you are *bona fide* art students, a clear break with the habits of your early past? The big mistake I made in my first life-class painting was a clear-cut example of my lack of knowledge and therefore a continuation of the thread of ignorance begun in childhood. The crux of the whole matter, in my current understanding, lies in the difference between line and outline. Outline is “kid stuff.” Look at the great drawings by Ingres and you will see what I am trying to convey.

Masterpieces are not made by children, high school students, or beginning art students. If you get even close to producing one in a lifetime career, you will be a grand success as a painter and you will make a place for yourself in history. The outline approach is one that you cannot afford to risk. It may cripple you for life as a painter. Do not use the coloring book technique. To make your best possible drawing on a canvas and then cover it with paint does not make sense to me. The best drawing should be done at the last minute, ‘the final touch,’ which everyone can see. Degas, who was one of the best draftsmen of all time, never stopped drawing as he painted. The final drawing grew and developed out of the painting process. It is possible that he learned this from looking at works by Rembrandt.

WIPE ON-WIPE OUT

Now I shall demonstrate the painterly approach. The monitor has set up for me, a small canvas panel, some raw umber, resin oil medium, and a rag. I have no charcoal, lead pencil, or even brushes at this stage. The problem, at the moment, is to locate the basic shape of the

model in relation to the tonic³. Years ago, I shared with many other students, the frustrating impotence of “placing the figure” within the frame. If we started with the head, the feet would go out of the bottom of the paper or canvas. If we started with the feet, the head would go out the top. Now, it is obvious to me that we started with the figure *per se* and not the tonic or frame of reference for the total painting. Many of today’s students tell me they have the same problem and it is “killing” them. This is no longer a problem for me.

Now I shall begin to paint by making a small ball of the rag and dipping it into paint and medium. Looking at the pose, I sense the main gesture line, the central movement that expresses the body language of the model. With the rag, I will now slam in the movement⁴. The main objective is, of course, to get this single line in good scale with the format of the canvas. No more feet or heads going out of the frame. With this established, in its best relationship to the perimeter of the panel, I can now use it as a sort of spinal column for the whole pose. Looking at it in the model, I see what happens on both sides of it, at once and can therefore produce the total flat silhouette of the pose. The negative shapes around the pose are equally important. Rough as it is, the painting has been born with a built-in future. Refinements begin with a brush at this point.

The other method is called wipe-out. In this case, the whole canvas is toned with umber or any color you prefer and while still wet the mass is wiped out with the rag and with the same concern for tonic. It has the advantage, for you, in establishing the pattern of the shapes of the lights for future refinement. Now a brush dipped in straight turpentine can be used to draw these shapes more accurately. The turpentine softens the drying paint and can be wiped out easier with a clean rag for greater contrast. It is now a painting in its infancy stage. A rough-looking mess as are newborn human infants. It has only to go through the growing process. The process of becoming (more on this later).

UNFINISHED PAINTINGS

As indicated above the start of a painting is crucial to its future. As a matter of fact, the large part of a painter’s career is devoted to starts and unfinished paintings. When a painting is “finished” the painter drops it and starts another. This notion was another big insight for me. I saw that love of painting and the desire to paint comes from being exposed to paintings that excite you. Finally, when you decide that you must paint, your whole experience has been in looking at finished works! Unless you have lived in a painter’s house or have visited studios, you

³ Mr. Blackburn sometimes uses terminology from his knowledge of music when describing the visual arts. The term, tonic, used here may be referring to the first degree of a scale.

⁴ Mr. Blackburn is using terminology from the Abstract Expressionists when he describes the action of his paint application as “slamming.”

have never seen an unfinished painting or the start of a painting. Your whole history as an art student, depends on how well you understand the potential rather than the finish. I have known for years that the tendency of art students is to start at the wrong end. The finish rather than the inception. The finish of a painting is a natural, normal result of its making; the result of the quality of its growth from beginning to termination.

Matisse, when asked how he knew when a painting was finished, replied, "When I can't make it any better." The student is apt to start with the "skin of the onion." Later on, he finds out that the onion developed from its inside core to its outside skin. So does a painting. It is important to understand that the finished look of a painting, is not a good starting point for you.

UNFINISHING 1

The fear of the bare canvas is another hazard to a good start. Where do you place that first mass or shape? Do you make it as good as the area of canvas it replaces? These are important questions which must be considered if the start is to have a future. The student will rush head-long into a hoped-for finish. The pro will stall it for as long as possible, knowing as he does that important creative insights can come at any moment. The teacher-critic also spends most of his concern with unfinished paintings. Having seen thousands of them, he develops a sharpshooter's eye for finding the best potential in the canvas. The object of the criticism is not to "finish" the painting for the student but to help the student to understand the unconscious elements in the work and their possible evolution into significant design.

When a painting is "finished" there is nothing to do but to start a new one. So the painter does, indeed, spend the most part of his involvement with painting in progress. Picasso had a profound understanding of this concept. He said, "I don't seek, I find." This means that he kept a painting "open" so he could squeeze all possible creative insights out of it before it was closed up and finished.

Roger Fry and Clive Bell wrote about this years ago. They called this notion "significant form" and defined it as the right color, in the right place on the canvas in the right environment with other right shapes. The big question, of course, is what is "right?" What is "right" depends eventually on the personal ability, experience, and knowledge of the painter. What is right in one canvas would not do at all in another. These words will seem a bit old-fashioned to some but then, so is a Rolls Royce automobile. The "constant" excellence of this car stands out in bold relief against the shoddy cut corners, planned obsolescence of today's over-priced mediocre, automobile junk. Great paintings will survive long after the novel, half-baked project has passed into limbo. An inordinate drive for finish is to exclude the creative potential.

ART IS WHAT ARTISTS DO

Carles has said, “Art is what artists do.” Later he amplified this cryptic statement by saying, “The subject matter of all art is the artist.” These insights from the great artist-teacher are patently true for me. Recently, a friend sent me an article on Eakins by Louis Mumford. As I read, it became clear to me that I was learning more about the beauty of Mumford’s prose than I was about the painting of Eakins. Reading his remarks about the Eakins work, I saw that the underlying structure, the syntax of this great painter had not been revealed to him. It is possible that this is the source of the anger, disdain, and disgust of the creative artist for the critics in general. The critic purports to write about the exhibition, the play, the symphony, or the dance, but he really writes about himself. Certainly Rembrandt painted Rembrandt, Shakespeare expressed Shakespeare—the poets express the very core of their being. The subject matter of fine art is the artist. The quibble here is the difference between fine art and illustration.

The critic in this sense leans toward illustration. He writes about himself but he also writes about the thing he is paid to criticize. The object of the criticism takes second place and the dichotomy induces a bad job on both ends. This is the dilemma of illustration. The subject matter of the illustration could be the exact details of a sailor’s uniform in 1812. The illustrator feels that he must get this right, the forms of the illustration are right for the idea. In fine art, the forms must be right for the painter first and foremost. The artist paints himself. The illustrator paints an idea that is not even his own.

Chapter Two – Techniques of the Masters

In all my years as an art student I was never informed of this very important concept, which, as another constant, has contributed greatly to the forging of the time-binding chain of history. As a conceptual principle, it simply means, that the great masters, recognizing the difficulty of painting, separated it into three areas of effort, transparent, translucent, and opaque. While I cannot give positive proof of what the masters did, the following is my own variation which works for me and gives a similar effect.

Step One:

The design is laid in boldly with black ink, black acrylic with a rag wipe-on, or charcoal used as mass with the side of the stick. This stage should produce a flat, two-dimensional pattern of dark shapes as a potential for the future of the painting. It can be quite rough as the drawing will continue throughout the life of the painting. Much can be accomplished in this early stage, for example, the positive-negative areas, the “tonic” and a promising sense of presence. When this stage is complete, but not finished, it can be “fixed” with re-touch varnish.

Step Two:

Next, the *"imprimatura"* is applied over the whole canvas. The *"imprimatura,"* or prime coat, is a colored tone of wet oil paint which sets the "key" of the painting.

ACCENT-PASSAGE and the CONCEPT OF THE ARROW

With the idea of accent-passage there is a tremendously interesting variation which is the concept of the arrow. And that is a very profound insight that I discovered over the years which has to do with: opaque, transparent, and translucent. The concept presented here is to introduce these qualities rather than actually making them with paint.

We've discussed the relation of accent-passage to music and it can also be talked about in relationship to the human body. In music, for example, in the opera, the accents are the solos, the duets, the trios, and the quartets. The accents are the big moments.

There is a whole concept of accent-passage predicated on the idea that there are no closed forms in nature. The worst thing that could happen to the human body would be to have no communication whatsoever, with the outside world. To be deaf, dumb, and blind. The passages are the open parts.

The eyes are passages because they look out of this form; the ears are passages because they receive sound. The nose is a passage because you breathe in and out. The mouth which is the main avenue of communication because we speak with it and also live with it by eating, drinking, and more.

By contrast, the accents are the bones --- the form, the closed parts.

I can also talk about accent-passage in terms of biology. Dr. Fetterman gave me the idea that we are discussing in relation to the idea of the cell. In a basic cell there is the nucleus and the nucleoli which has a pressure outward. There are three kinds of cells: permeable, impermeable, and semi-permeable. Again, it is opaque, transparent, and translucent.

INTERVAL

The concept of accent-passage is related to the intervals of differences. Accents are wide intervals; passages are close intervals. For example, a pot of cadmium yellow on an area of yellow ochre is a passage. The same cadmium yellow on black is a strong accent. A very light gray on white would be a passage, a darker gray an accent. Pure vermilion on cadmium orange would not be an obtrusive accent. Straight black on deep purple would have very low visibility.

It should be clear that the possibilities for accents or passages are infinite. When two adjacent colors are of the same light or dark value, with a minimal difference in warm or cool colors, a muted passage is created. On the other hand, a pure black against an adjacent yellow or white, makes for a brassy, immediate visibility. A kind of comprehension time is involved in this concept of the interval; which area or accent is seen first?

In music the violins, violas, cellos, and basses, when played together, form passage. The blast of a horn would be a noticeable accent. The same trumpet notes in conjunction with trombones, English and French horns, and tubas, although loud, could blend into a beautiful passage. The woodwinds when played together can also perform the same miracle of passage. A crash of cymbals in any of these situations could become a bold and powerful accent, an accent that adds quality to the passage by an effective difference.

As in music, so it is in paint and color. It is evident that viable relationships must be determined on the canvas and not on the palette. The colors, shapes, and sizes must be determined in painting, on a completely intuitive basis. Experience will develop an ear for music. Experience will also develop a razor-sharp eye for color and the accent-passage miracle.

The sculptor contrasts the smooth, bulging forms of the work with textured accents of the eyes and hair, for example. The "hole" in a work of Henry Moore, for example, accents the difference between bulge and non-bulge. The poet, too, uses the intervals of accent-passage by the skillful selection of harsh, grating words in contrast to soft sounding, muted ones expressing passage. The writer of fine prose does likewise. A master writer such as James Joyce used it wonderfully.

In opera, the principle exists in the generalized passages of recitation with accents in the arias, duets, and quartets. The dramatist plays the passage of the happy situation against the sudden accent of tragedy. Also, in the dance, the general flow is accented by the contrast of furious movement. In architecture, the wide, smooth areas are accented with the well-chosen accents of decoration.

It is clear that the constant of accent-passage is important to all forms of Art and has been so for centuries in all styles and periods. It is not to be understood in terms of academic formula, rather it is a feeling for the peripheral wonderment of symphonic structure, the very essence of personal creativity. Actually, what has been described as accent-passage is in essence the ancient, Oriental constant of Yin-Yang: the beauty of differences and similarities in resonant relationships which play on the chords of the affective system in the observer of the work.

ACCENT-PASSAGE

The principle of accent-passage could well be one of the most important of the “constants” that have persisted over the centuries in all epochs and styles of painting. The skillful and strategic use of the accents and passages can be “read” in all of the great masters of the past and in the more recent ones, from Francisco Goya, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, Gustave Courbet, to Arthur B. Carles, Franklin Watkins, Daniel Garber and Franz Kline. These, and many others, used this basic principle in their own way, producing great works with personal signature throughout the time-binding thread of history. The main function of this principle is to create the environment or ambience of objects in space. I see it as one of the main drives in the work of Josef Albers who used it so convincingly in his simple squares.

Because paintings are done by humans for other humans to appreciate, it might not be amiss to discuss “accent-passage” in relation to the human condition. The human passages are the connectives that enable us to relate to others and to our environment. The eyes, “windows of the soul,” have number one priority. The passages flow from inside to outside and vice versa. They take in the widest scope of our visual world and they can function in an arc of 180 degrees. They see all the nuances of shape, form and color, the wonderment of nature, the body language of our friends and enemies. Guardians of survival, they save us from falling into holes and walking over cliffs.

The ears, too, are exciting passages that send environmental messages to the brain. The sounds of music, the sounds of nature, strident cacophony that irritates the lining of the stomach, the soothing words of love and the deep satisfaction of conversation among friends, a mutually effective and affective interchange of thoughts and feelings.

The nose is another vital passage – the good smells, the bad smells, the warning smells of gas and smoke. Above all, it fills the lungs with air. The mouth, which takes in food, drink, and some air, is also a two-way passage. The communicating words go out; the poetry, the songs, the smiles and laughter, are projected into the environment.

“Background” is a term which indicates an ignorance of the principle of accent-passage. Each element is a vital part of the organized whole. As a beginning student, I was introduced to a shallow variation of accent-passage. It was called, at that time, lost and found. One observed by looking at the model with eyes that were almost closed. Absurd as this restriction of visual perception was, we did it. The idea was to “see” where the light areas of the pose persisted. This was called “Found.” The rest of the drawing or painting was an all-over-ness, a coal-bin fog of gray or black. It took me years to find out that this *modus operandi*, which purported to be

the method of Rembrandt, was not true. After this eye-opening experience, I never squinted again.

The squint not only eliminated the difference in tone, it also eliminated the nuances of color. Rembrandt solved the problem by making two adjacent tones exact in value but different in color, or at least different in warm and cool. Today, fifty years later, I still see in the work of some students, a tendency to soften edges in order to get the “lost” effect.

It may be surprising to know that Josef Albers, with his hard-edge squares, is a veritable master of “accent-passage.” After reading his brilliant book, Interaction of Color, and closing the book on its final page, I realized that the whole book was about accent-passage, although he never mentioned the concept in those words.

At the moment, the concept of accent-passage seems to narrow down to this: The accent holds the edge of a form, the passage permits the eye to move out and across the edge. Because of the critical nature of the passages, it is absolutely necessary to mix the colors on the canvas and not on the palette. This simply means that the colors are tuned *in situ* as in tuning a musical instrument. As the passages are so difficult to do, it is better to start with the passages and add the accents as required for articulation of the total design.

FORM AND CONTENT

The apparent dichotomy between form and content has been a matter of concern for many years in the history of art. A vacillating emphasis on one or the other can be traced through a number of epochs. In my formative years, the emphasis was on structure or form. Picasso put it bluntly when he said, “The object is everything; the subject is nothing.” He meant the structured object has quality and projective presence. The subject is only the excuse for solving the form. Of course, there have been numerous attempts to combine the two extremes.

Ben Shahn, in his fine book, “The Shape of Content,” indicates this concern for solving the dichotomy. Current *avant-garde* thinking places the emphasis on the idea or content. In fact, I have heard it stated that the idea is so important that it is not even necessary to make the object. Others do not go that far. They glorify the hamburger or the clothespin, in order to point out to all of us the inadequate interests of the mediocre majority. The message comes through by enlarging the hamburger to enormous proportions.

The monumental clothespin in downtown Philadelphia, is another example. Most people are confused by it. They do not see the ironic finger of scorn pointed at their very reason for existence, and a snide laugh at their absurd egalitarianism. As clever as this is, I see little hope in it for the advancement of the human race. On the other hand, the structured

object which projects a clear and present sense of unity or reality gives some hope. The inherent possibility for transcendence. If one human being can do it, so can others. To accept the status quo of the mediocre majority is to abandon all hope for the future of the race. They, too, must accept the challenge of “becoming.”

The greatest minds in civilized history have risen above the ordinary and they have successfully performed the wonderful transmutation which made them important to all of us. Such transformations are, of course, very painful. They take a monumental effort, a constant insistence on quality, a deep-rooted probity and enormous amount of intestinal fortitude. Even the projective presence idea is too much for many people. They will not make the personal effort to look at it in silence and let its wonders come through. NO, they will ask the nearest stranger to explain it to them. The implication, in this attitude, is if they do not understand it, the painter must be some kind of “nut.”

But then, they do not “understand” Rembrandt either. They see the surface aspects of the subject and completely miss the emotional impact of the structure. Carles said to me, “The purpose of art is to stop time.” After giving this cryptic statement some real thought, I saw that he was describing the intensely potent relationship between the observer and the observed work of art. Clock time does not exist, only unmeasurable duration. One can benefit by giving some thought to the difference between “time” and duration.” The famous quip of W. C. Fields, indicates duration. He said, “I spent a week in Philadelphia one Sunday.” There are wonderful forms of duration other than endless boredom. Many people have never experienced the durational confrontation with a painting. They do get it better in the direct response to music.

Chapter Three - The Principle of Unrestricted Uncertainty

The principle of restricted uncertainty simply means that a person does not doubt for a minute that he can do it but he doubts very much that he did do it. This mature attitude is predicated on the knowledge that human beings do make mistakes. It is normal enough to make them. The artist, on the other hand, knowing full well that mistakes are possible, will study his work until he finds them. He restricts his uncertainty to the job on hand, finds the “holes” in his work and fixes them. Far from scarring his ego, he feels a definite sense of triumph in his finding. HE has improved his work.

Polar to this attitude is the human weakness which Bronowski has called “monstrous certainty.” The Nazis “knew” for certain they were “right.” Therefore, they permitted themselves to murder millions of people in clear conscience. They were not right and the whole world knew it. This horrible penchant for destructive mayhem, seems to be inherent in the human condition. It can be turned on in a flash in normally decent people. Some modicum of

restricted uncertainty could have changed the course of history and prevented such a barbaric stain on the human race. Eric Fromm has defined this regrettable aspect of behavior as “malignant narcissism.” In painting terms this means, “If I did it, the painting must be perfect.” Many others, of course, see that it is far from “perfect” and just another contribution to mediocre ineptitude. A little uncertainty can go a long way in the striving for creative excellence.

Years ago, I asked Arthur Carles if he could tell me what made the French so great. This is what he said, “The French people have an inherent doubt.” If one writes a book he doubts if it is good enough, so he rewrites it. The painter makes a painting but he doubts its ultimate quality. He does it over again. A Frenchman who has a five centimes piece doubts if he will have another tomorrow so he holds on to the one he has. Obviously, Carles knew about the principle of restricted uncertainty although he had never heard of it by name.

A generalized uncertainty is not good either. It has been identified as an inferiority complex. No, the uncertainty must be restricted to the question: I can do it, but did I do it?

THE NOW

Many years ago, St. Augustine, after a brilliant flash of insight, pointed out that the now cannot exist without a past or without an effect on the future. In fact, the quality of now is determined by these other two aspects.

The painter, in his best moments, feels a heightened sense of awareness, a vibrant sense of existence, and an intensified reality of being alive. It is in this state that he does his best effort. The brushes “dance” across the canvas and the painter feels almost omnipotent. Richard Guggenheimer (Artist, Educator, 1906 -1974) described this wonderful sense of being as “a state of grace,” a marvelous now. Kant called it the “sublime.” Certainly, existentialism at its best is involved with this special quality of the reality of existence. Obviously, such a now could not exist without a past which leads up to it, and its effect on the future is a direct dividend. Renoir felt this in his bones when he said, “True avant-garde painting grows out of tradition.”

The hippie kids in their interest to live in the present and their complete rejection of the past have not yet learned the difference between an empty rudderless present and the wonderful qualities of the now. The now, it seems to me, is the quintessence of Andre Malraux’s brilliant definition of art. “Art,” he said, “is a revolt against destiny.” Of course, he meant that the quality of the now produces future immortality. The past is indeed, a Who’s

Who of the great artists who have achieved immortality. Without a past, the now is, indeed, limited by a contented mediocrity.

TRANSCENDENCE

To transcend one's own inherent weaknesses and the general human condition, is the apparent goal of all who strive for excellence. Many painters, composers, philosophers, writers, poets, and university professors are transcendentalists. Such people never stop trying to expand their potential. They continually sharpen and refine their efforts in order to achieve personal effectuality. Here again it is the orientation of going from the inside to the outside, interval involvement which eventually affects the whole civilized world.

Protectors of the thread of history try to do their best at all times. These un-sung heroes of the least noticed minority, are the ones who change and advance civilization (stuck with the battle of their own insides) they do not compete with other people, except in rare moments of debilitation or despair.

The opposite of transcendence is, of course, the struggle for ascendancy. The back-biting, back-stabbing, scratching and pushing to gain an advantage over the "other fellow." The outside competition with everybody, striving for power and the eternal "buck," puts them finally and forever under the all-embracing membrane that confines the mediocre majority. Such low-grade people can be defined as loud-mouthed activists, union bosses, politicians, and members of Congress. Their drive for ascendancy has no limit. The big lie of advertising and political propaganda are ever-present symptoms of the horrible waste of human potential.

Bernard Shaw said, "Youth is wasted on young people." The potential for transcendence is wasted on millions of people. They arrive, they die, and contribute nothing to the betterment of civilized society. It is clear to me that the biggest ideas, scientific discoveries, advances in the art of painting, all grow from interval insights with "spill out" and place their imprint on the whole world. Or at least on those who can feel and understand. The transcendentalist does not accept the ideology of any political party as a chart to be followed blindly.

In fact, he will not cater to any ideology as he sees the restrictive limits. There are no limits to a transcendental potential. Any neatly wrapped package, tied in a blue ribbon is not for him. There is, of course, a danger in trying to rise above the mediocre majority. In the Nazi revolution they were the first to go. The dictator senses that he cannot manipulate the minds of transcendent-oriented people. The mediocre majority also resents the transcendentalist. They have been told since early childhood that they are "equal." Equal to anything or anybody without even lifting a finger. The striving for excellence worries them with a deep-rooted suspicion that they may not be so equal after all.

That wonderful TV series on the “Ascent of Man” by Jacob Bronowski, should have shaken them a bit if they had bothered to listen. He made it clear that important changes in world history were made by individuals and not by groups or committees. Artists, poets, writers of fine prose, musicians, architects, and philosophers are the guardians of civilization. “They will overcome,” unless we unfold and expand the human potential, we have no chance in the “Revolt against Destiny.”

Ascendency can be defined as an inordinate drive for power, an insane type of power which assumes no responsibility for its consequences. Unions, for example, are drunk power and they do not take any responsibility, whatsoever for the havoc they cause in the lives of other people, and infantile, destructive attitude, which is unworthy of an adult.

The most absurd aspect of the struggle for ascendency lies in the fact that really effective power comes only from transcendence. A glance at history makes this clear. The Hitlers are eventually eliminated while those who transcend, change the face of the Earth.

INTROSPECTION

Carles said, you paint to find out what you don't know that you do know.” Simply stated this means, the act of painting is an adventurous exploration into the unconscious. A voyage of discovery. Placing oneself under the electron microscope of introspection. Picasso expressed the same idea when he said, “I don't seek, I find.” It is impossible that both of these great painters have touched on the very essence of what is called “talent.” The word, “talent” is most difficult to define. I don't really know what it means. Some teachers use the word, “gifted” as a synonym for it. I don't think it is a gift but rather a quality of effort in the use of the profound depths of the unconscious.

Frequently I am surprised to observe this mechanism in myself. For example, while painting, I have reached for color A in the palette and find that I pick up color B instead. I don't know why this happens but I have learned to trust it. As the “self” is central to self-expression, it might be well to keep an eye on it. Everyone understands, today, that a hyper ego is a disguise for inadequacy. The inferiority complex can be equally disastrous to creative effort. Somewhere between these two harmful extremes, there can be a quiet, comfortable ego which says to itself: “I don't doubt that I can and will do it sometime.” However, I must be ever-alert to see that I did do it.

This has been described elsewhere in this book as the “principle of restricted uncertainty.” The uncertainty is limited to the specific restricted uncertainty.” The uncertainty is limited to the specific job on hand, at the moment. A generalized uncertainty is crippling to

the creative act. It is little wonder that the art student is faced with this internal conflict. He cannot hang out a shingle which says, John Doe, Artist, and expect to make a living. Certainly, not in a society which thinks fine artists are strange people. Indeed, they are different. Always trying to level upward, they are in conflict with the majority whose drive seems to be to level everything downward to their own inadequacy.

The melting pot syndrome is a destructive disaster to the human potential. A wasted potential which is destroyed by self-satisfied incompetence. A sense of worth under such circumstances is difficult to achieve. However, it must be done. The only real security I can offer is to learn your discipline as well. The sense of worth which comes from knowing the thinking and behavior of the greatest artists in history. To feel that one has become a part of this long chain of striving for excellence is critical to the effective ego. With such a sturdy base, you can hold your head high and walk tall. Alfred North Whitehead has said: "We must not give up the vision of greatness."

CYCLES

Eventually, one learns to paint in cycles. As they are very much a part of our existence, one might do well to give them some thought. In life itself, we go through a number of cycles from the infancy stage to full maturity. The cycle of spring, summer, autumn, and winter is constant (in North America, for example). Each day has its cycles. From dawn to dusk, to dark. There are also body cycles. Everyone knows about these rhythms of ups and downs in the psyche. Cycles generally complete themselves and go on to the next one. They are complete but not finished. What could be any more contemporary than the essence of life itself. In the life cycles, from infancy to maturity the hazard of incompleteness is always with us. Mixed up cycles cause all sorts of neurotic problems. So, it is with painting. The masters knew this and solved it with the underpainting cycle, the light and dark pattern, and the color cycle of glazes, scumbles, and opacity.

Even in *alla prima* painting, the cycles are all important. Mixed up cycles in painting will defeat its final quality. To over work or over detail on part of a painting is to attempt to do two cycles at once. A painting divided against itself.

When Franklin Watkins said, "It is important to keep the painting under done all over," he was speaking of cycles. Arthur Carles was profoundly aware of this. He told me it was a constant problem for him. He said there was a tendency to work too long in a given area. A kind of enchantment which made him persist in overdoing it. When this happened, he would ask his wife to come to the studio, hand her a brush with vermilion on it and say, "Please put a dab of

paint on that canvas.” Apparently, she never failed to put the paint on what he called the schmaltzy area.

After this Spartan shock, he would “roll up his sleeves” and start a new overall cycle. His paintings were the result of many such cycles. It is no wonder that he became such a great painter. Some years ago, Mrs. Bonnie Winterstein showed me nineteen photographs of a painting she had acquired from Matisse. Each of the nineteen photographs showed a different stage or cycle. It seems that his practice was to paint all day on a new start, more or less wipe out the whole thing and start all over again the next day. Of course, it became a masterpiece.

My friend, Richard H. Guggenheimer, wrote to me about the fear of the white canvas. His fear was well founded. I have it also and I suspect you have it too. After all the potential of a pure white canvas, can, indeed, be frightening. It can become a masterpiece or an absolute daub depending on the life span of its making. The unity of the white canvas is disrupted by the first brush stroke. A new, unfinished cycle must then be achieved to replace the unity of the bare canvas. To quote the great teacher again, he said, “You must put down something, at least, as good as the white canvas which has been covered.” In other words, to subtract from the projection of the canvas is to weaken it if the color shape or form is not equal or better than the original white it replaces.

This became a big insight for me and I hope it will be a big one for you. I saw that the only real mistake in a painting is to try to do two cycles at once. A stand out or target form in a painting could be called a mistake. On the other hand, it could become the start of a new cycle. One could have a ninety percent unity with a ten percent fallout. The painter has the choice of changing the ten percent or the ninety as his drive dictates. This is the “right of selection” which creative painters have used throughout the whole history of art. With any right there is always responsibility for how it is used. The competition in the battle for excellence is indeed within the painter himself. He competes with his own moments of insensibility or awareness. The risk is always there and it cannot be eliminated. In this case “restricted uncertainty” can be a big help in spotting the problem.

Chapter Four - Field Theory

The Field Theory is an important concept in modern science. I make no pretense of understanding its full ramifications in physics but I do know that any knowledge of it is useful in painting. It was Niels Bohr and James Watson who gave the civilized world this monumental gift and contributed to the time-binding thread of history in the ascent of man. Painters in their penchant for non-discursive logic have been aware of certain aspects of it over the centuries. Simply stated, it means to them a strategic distribution of light and dark pattern in the mosaic

or grid of the total painting. An examination of masterpieces will reveal that some are composed with major dark areas and minor lights while others have major lights with minor darks.

Almost everyone has experienced the high school science experiment with the iron filings on a piece of paper. A magnet is placed under the paper and the filings immediately reveal a pattern or picture of the magnetic force or impulses within the field. Different size magnets will produce different patterns. Scientists have discovered that the gravitational pull which holds the planets and stars in orbit exist in sub, microscopic patterns of a similar nature. Electronic particles are in orbit. Neutrons, protons and electrons spin in orbit and are held in place by a “gravitational pull.” One of the most exciting examples of this in painting, can be seen in Rembrandt’s “Night Watch.” A real look at it will shake the fibers of your being. I saw it in Amsterdam and I shall never forget the feel of its impact on me.

Rembrandt, as an etcher, made great use of the field theory. It was natural for him and other graphic artists working in black and white to use the “higher voltage” power of the light and dark field pattern. For many years, I have heard Rembrandt’s etchings and his paintings discussed as “light and shade.” This, to me, is similar to comparing a little league baseball player with Babe Ruth. Rembrandt’s work was, indeed, chiaroscuro, but then the best of it was what is now known as The Field Theory, a structured pattern of lights and darks held in orbit. A favorite example of this motion can be found in “Ariadne and Diane” by Veronese (Johnson Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art); and don’t miss seeing Patinir (Jacob Patinir). Of course, there are hundreds of examples done by the best painters in history: Canaletto with his major dark canvases with flying lights, Caravaggio, Leonardo, Uccello, and many others. Study them well and put this knowledge into your own contemporary work, in your own way. There is no time limit on big ideas.

QUANTUM

According to Fritjof Capra, who has written an excellent book entitled, “The Tao of Physics,” the Orientals anticipated the Quantum Theory long before it reached the Western body of knowledge. They understood, deeply that mankind was not a detached observer of nature but was, indeed, very much a part of it. They knew that the same life force that flowed through the planets, rocks, trees, and mountains, also flowed through themselves. As we understand it now, this is pure *quantum*. It seems, in current thinking, the sub-microscopic electron particles are moving in a constant state of flux through all matter.

Polar to the stars, these particles called quanta, millions of them, behave in a similar pattern to the wonders of astronomers. Quanta exists in everything, the paper of this book, the

ink and the type with which it has been printed. They exist in you and me and the coffee cup which sits in front of me as I write these words. Quanta are also inherent in the pigments, binder, or vehicles, the brushes, and the canvas. All contain these ever-moving particles which are the very core of being. The basic structural context of every living thing. The very essence of existence. Why is this contemporary theory of importance to painters? It is simply this: the masterpiece is also an integrated thing, a viable structure with a life of its own, where all its parts are held together by a mysterious gravitational pull or force. All the colors, shapes, sizes, paint forms, combine to form a dynamic continuum which has a life of its own. A quantum of its own existence. All the masterpieces I have seen contain this quality regardless of period or style. Look at great paintings and learn to recognize this very special quality. It is one of the highest goals in human potential. By all means, read Capra's book for a wider and more definite explanation of the Quantum Theory. It will also give you an insight into the various Oriental philosophies and how they pertain to modern physics and art.

GESTALT

The study or awareness of Gestalt Psychology can greatly benefit painters. It is the study of perception, the organized whole and the quintessence of design, pioneered in Germany some years ago by three brilliant scientists; Wolfgang Kohler (1887-1967), Max Wertheimer (1880-1943), and Kurt Koffka (1886-1941). Their motive was to produce a new kind of therapy. As a corollary, they produced a monumental contribution to painting. I'm not sure they were aware of this most useful addition to the body of artistic knowledge regarding composition and design, however, the painters did recognize it and put it to good use. Rudolf Arnheim (1904-2007), a gestalt psychologist and painter, wrote a book called "Art and Visual Perception (1954)." He made the merger between the two concepts. It is basic, and sooner or later you will benefit by reading it. His latest book is called, "Visual Thinking (1969)" another fine contribution to civilized thought.

Gestalt is concerned with the ability to organize visual material into structured wholes to comprehend total shapes. The German word, gestalt, I have been told, is not translatable into English. The nearest to it are the words, "shape" and "image." Kohler, in his presentation of the new theory, broke it down into three parts which he called the geographical world, the behavioral world, and the resultant behavior. Wertheimer also broke his theory into three parts; he called them, constellation of stimuli, organization of stimuli, and results of organization. These capsules or distillates are exactly what a painter needs to know.

How does one look at the apparent chaos of a landscape in nature, a confusing "constellation of stimuli"? After some sensitive projection, the painter begins to see possibilities of organizing the stimuli. What he does with it is a record of his behavior. In short,

painting is behavior. What does a painter see when he gets involved with the organization of stimuli? What he “sees” is deeply involved with his personal knowledge, experience and depth of feeling. If he has never heard of over-lapping planes, he will not see them in the geographical world. If he knows enough he can see gesture, vertical and horizontal relationships, arrows, dynamic thrusts and counter-thrusts, rising and falling shapes, resonating color chords, and a host of other personal predilections and insights. This is creative behavior and creative seeing. The final recognition aspect of the painting, be it realistic, abstract, or semi-abstract, is secondary to the creative involvement. In other words, behavior comes first.

The same is also true in figure painting. The figure pose is also a constellation of stimuli and one has to battle with oneself in order to find those elements of design which contribute to the organized whole. This is not mere copying but is the projection of creative behavior, the behavior of experience and sensibility. The same thing, of course, pertains to any kind of painting from still-life to non-objective. Your paintings will live in history because of the behavioral unity of the whole and not on the superficial aspects of style.

In the classroom, I have demonstrated this principle by tearing pieces of paper in approximately equal size and throwing them at random on the floor. Starting with one piece, the addition of a second one will produce a tension line between them. A third will make something else. Possibly a triangle or a curve. As each single piece is added, the whole group will change radically. Now if a much smaller size is tossed into the group, it will not relate to the whole but will stand out as a target. As more of the smaller sizes are added, they will form their own gestalt and make a grouping of their own.

A paper larger than the first size will again become a lonely target. Several more, larger ones, will form their own group and will join the total mosaic or grid. It becomes clear at once that “birds of a feather flock together.” From this, we can deduce that verticals will form a family of forms, horizontals will relate to each other, similar sizes or shapes will “gestalt.” Colors, reds, yellows, blues, will each form a dynamic relationship with their own “family.” Circles, triangles, squares, or amorphous shapes will all be attracted to each other as a gestalt group.

It is the complex grouping of forms that give the symphonic quality to present-day painting. The painter takes on a responsibility similar to that of the composer of music. The possibilities for combinations of gestalt dynamics are endless groups of small sizes moving in one direction with groups of larger sizes moving in another. All sorts of counterpoint and overtones of movement can be discovered.

This structurally basic mosaic or “organization of stimuli” into an organized whole is not generally understood by the American public. It still prefers illustration in its ignorance and

judges painting on almost anything but the essential core of its being. The uneducated will tell you they “like” a painting of a boat because they like boats! It has been generally understood among the people who do know, that all art is abstract, a structured, unified whole. This is true in the work of the great masters of all time. However, many paintings are made which are neither abstract structure nor art. Being mere copies of facts, they never achieve a simple unity. Good paintings are not postcards of events or places. Look at illustrations. You will see that they are charts of researched “facts.” For example, which type of moccasin is worn by Taos Indians – good research but not pertinent to the fine art of painting. To understand the low grade “appreciation” of the average American, see the outrageous “paintings” on black velvet for sale on the boardwalk of most seaside resorts. Do not let this discourage you as there are still enough people who do know and encourage real effort.

NO BACKGROUND

In the semantics of painting, the word “background” is one of the most confusing of all. The students say to me, “I don’t know what to do with the background.” This means to them that having painted the figure, they do not know what to put behind it. This is indeed a problem as there is no background in an integrated whole. The word, background, implies division in depth, “a house divided against itself” with no dialogue between the two separate parts. Separated parts do not exist in an organized whole. How does a painter prevent such a disruptive dichotomy? There is no easy answer to this widespread problem. In fact, it persists long after the student period and throughout the whole career of a painter. In any momentary lapse of awareness, a drifting of concentration, it is inevitable that a form, shape, or color will appear that does not relate to the totality of the painting.

The opposite of this background effect is a spatial environment where all the forms are suspended and held together in a kind of gravitational pull similar, in a way, to the solar system. The nearest I can come to phrasing this non-verbalism of painting is to say, do not paint specific things from the model such as eyes, nose, breasts, etc. On the contrary, paint the articulated shapes of the lights in an integrated pattern or design as they pass over the physical forms. There will also be articulated patterns of darks, colors, sizes and shapes. A symphony of related forms. There is no background in a symphony. IF there were such a thing, it would probably be a cacophony of rattled tin cans (a big help to Beethoven!)

The surprising thing about the above approach to painting is that the physical forms of the model can emerge out of the context of the paint forms. As Cecilia Beaux said to Franklin Watkins: “You must turn the model into paint.” As also mentioned elsewhere in this book, Watkins said: “It is necessary to keep the painting equally underdone all over.” In short, the painting grows out of the quality of its making. Often, profound thoughts are expressed in jest.

Recently, I saw a cartoon in the Bulletin of a child working on a painting. Another child said to him: "What are you painting?" The first youngster answered, "I don't know yet, it isn't finished." The wisdom of Picasso who said, "I do not seek, I find." Creative painting is indeed a matter of letting it happen, guided by a hyper sensitivity and a heightened sense of awareness.

Chapter Five - Color Vs. Tone

Today I shall talk about color as consequence. There seem to be consequences to everything. Some good, some bad and some with complete ineffectuality. In this important concept, I shall use the idea of disturbing the placid surface of a mountain lake by throwing objects into it. For example, if one were to throw a cigarette butt into the water, it would cause a minor splash; with some rings going out as a consequence of the impact. A weak cause with a not too powerful effect. However, if one threw a pebble, the initial cause would be more powerful with wider rings. From a pebble to a stone, to a rock, to a boulder, the rings in the water would have wider consequences and might even cause waves on the distant shore. In short, there is a direct relationship between the force of the impact and the extent of the rings. Obviously, as the rings increase in diameter, they lose velocity and get to be closer to the original placidity. Everyone has experienced this phenomenon with water. Not so many have experienced it in painting.

Now, to get at the heart of the matter, we might imagine a stone which has been saturated with red dye. On impact with water, it will be at its greatest intensity of red. As the rings go outward, the dye is progressively diluted, in each diameter, until it is a slight tinge in the final ring. To sum up any bright color in a painting, will have consequences in other areas. Never an exact repeat but a responsive relationship in tones of diminishing intensity.

Actually, I have been discussing a form of orchestration as in music, of color as an integrating structure, a kind of continuum as in nuclear physics. The chain reaction of a causal impact. The ping-pong ball theory. There are many examples of this principle in great painting, past and present. Toulouse Lautrec was a master in its structured control (See Moulin Rouge).

Arthur Carles, my teacher, although he never discussed this concept with me, was a consummate master in this regard. I "read" it in his work then, and I can read its marvels even better now. So, roll up your sleeves and let us get to work. There is a vital experience to be gained.

MORE ON COLOR (or COLOR AS CONSEQUENCE)

Some years ago, the following concept came to my attention. I can't remember from where it came or the name of the person who conceived it. Perhaps I heard it in a lecture. In any case, it has been useful to me and I shall now pass it on to you. Here it is, the artist who made the discovery analyzed hundreds of paintings. He found a constant which persisted among them. In paintings by widely different artists and in various epochs, he saw that they fell into one of two categories. These categories are simply this. Many of them utilized the primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. Others used the secondary colors: orange, green, and violet. In either of the two it became clear that the basic attack was to generalize with one primary, to shock with the second, and whisper with the third.

For example, in the secondary schema⁵ one might paint a generalized green canvas, shock with some small but bright orange chimneys on buildings and then whisper the violet. The violet could even be a black and white grey which would become slightly violet because of the complimentary red produced by the general greenness. In the primary schema, one might have a generalized red canvas with a shock of intense blue and a whisper of yellow. The important thing one learns from this is to be fully aware of which category one is using in a given canvas. To equalize in quantity or intensity any two primary or secondary colors is to cancel out their effectuality and to weaken the whole painting.

To mix both categories in one painting is something on the order of mixing the major and the minor keys in one piece of music. The resulting cacophony can be raucous and unpleasant. However, I understand that this is done on purpose, today, in some areas. It does, indeed, serve the purpose of attracting attention. In painting, too, some people use both categories of color with the conscious intent of producing "bad taste." In such cases, the idea seems to be the production of noticeability, a screaming demand, which says, "Look at me." The proponents of cacophony in color will tell you that bad taste, if bad enough, becomes good taste.

The color notion I have expressed above is basic to the learning process. Learn to use it and when you reach maturity as a painter, do it any way you please. Or, to say it better: any way you must. As I said, the concept has been of great use to me in the process of self-criticism of one's work. For example, I have found in an orange, green, violet canvas, there may be a red too close to the primary. If I change it to one of more orange cast, the sun comes out and the painting, "works." In one canvas which had puzzled me for several years, I finally saw that the sky was too much a true blue. When I changed it to a green-blue the miracle happened. The problem was solved and I could forget it and go on with the next effort. For study, you can

⁵ This term, schema, refers to a composition reduced to its simplest forms.

check this out for yourself. Examine the works of the painters you like. See if they are structured in harmony or cacophony and then use the knowledge in your own way.

Actually, color is very much a matter of personal preference. Some people “like” certain colors and dislike others. Sometimes they react rather strongly about a color “they just can’t stand.” Lots of research projects have been done on the psychology of color. In this area, I heard a lecturer advance the premise that preference begins in the human infancy stage and the four seasons depending on which one the infant saw first. According to this theory, a child born in the spring would show a marked preference for colors of that period. Pale cool greens, yellow greens, violets, for example. A summer child would prefer the deeper greens of trees and grass, the yellow of corn kernels. An autumn-born child will prefer the orange color of pumpkins, corn shocks and the brilliant orange-red of tree leaves. It follows that the winter baby eventually “likes” the cold blues of ice and snow, the warm reds of sunsets and the overall greyness. Apparently, their first impressions of the “bare canvas” of the new uncluttered mind-set the direction of taste in color.

Color engineers have used this notion constructively. I heard of a case where a department store set up four racks of dresses. Each one in the colors of the four seasons. It was noticed that the customers would make a bee-line for one rack and ignore the other three. In any case, it is clear that color preference is a personal one. Sometime ago, there was a high incidence of suicide from a dull, dreary bridge in London. The city fathers called in a color engineer. He had the bridge painted “lavender” and the high rate of suicide was reduced to a minimum. Who could be so far gone as to jump off a “lavender” bridge!

This is another area where the painter can earn a living with his special understanding and keep the integrity of his own painting intact. The possibilities in color engineering are infinite. Industry is well aware of it. It is common practice to paint dangerous areas on machinery fire-engine red. Much study has been done on the color environment of production line workers. Somehow, selective color seems to alleviate to some extent, the dull, humdrum daily existence of these near-robots.

THE WET SCUMBLE

The wet scumble is a very useful addition to the glazing technique. Basically, it is a semi-covering, translucent glaze. Made of Naples yellow, a touch of cobalt blue and some white and lots of medium it is floated, with a soft brush over white flesh in a figure painting. As it sets up, it produces a beautiful “optical grey” in conjunction with the underpainting. Subtle nuances are obtained which are almost impossible to mix on the palette. The best time to use it is where the flesh tones of the model are too dark for the local complexions – after the highlighting with

casein white process. Further amplification of this stage, can be made with a mixture of genuine rose madder, a touch of viridian and white used as a wet or dry scumble. The masters called this the carnation stage – a way of obtaining pink cheeks, and other, subtle, expressive coloration.

VALUES

It can be good to question the Value Theory. The value scale which is essentially concerned with black and white is often stated as an absolute. It has to do with an interval scale from pure black to pure white. Between these two extremes, a series of greys are indicated or are created. Starting below white the lightest grey is called “High Light,” the next is called “low light.” Next on the scale is middle value, then high dark, low dark and black. My quarrel with this is that these values are not constant or absolute by any means. Any one or all of them will change considerably in different contexts.

One might as well ask, what is the color of a chameleon? It is clear to me by experience, that a given value on a chart is not the same value on the painting in relation to its environment. It might be lighter, darker, warmer or cooler, clear or muddy, positive or negative. Some years ago, I discovered this oddity when I attempted to use a mixture of black and white for the underside of clouds in a cold blue sky. The clouds turned pink (in comparison) due to the interaction of color! Values are just as elusive as colors and can only be established in their final place in the painting.

This is also true in music. Identical notes played on different instruments or in different combinations will produce shades of timbre that are not identical. Many years ago, as a beginning student, it was customary to look at subjects with half closed eyes. This “squint” was supposed to indicate the lightest areas and establish a range of “values.” We did not understand that this reduction in optical acuity also eliminated the color.

Colorists do not close their eyes in order to see. What an absurdity! Painters need all the eye-sight they can attain. Now, I understand that the great masters established approximate values in the “dead-color” of the underpainting. Thereby, keeping them in their own category of black and white. But even so, I suspect, as indicated elsewhere they were more concerned with field theory pattern than with values *per se*.

Many of my respected friends and colleagues talk a lot about values. Therefore, they must find them useful in their own work. Even so, one must question any concept to make sure he is not accepting a possible stereotype “hook, line, and sinker.” Find out for yourself how you feel about this. Try glazing pure color over various values of black and white grisaille will

produce surprising results. The only thing I can be sure of is that the glazes will not be the same as they were on the palette. It is clear that there can be no formula in the use of color. One must be aware of what happens, within the context of the painting. There is no “knowing,” only “finding” in the use of color or values.

Chapter Six - Drawing

I’ve found that some of my students probably feel that I don’t help them enough with their drawing. I think the reason they feel like this is that sometimes, young people who haven’t been teaching art for very long don’t know what to say, so they discuss the details, like how the fingernails aren’t long enough or something. And it occurred to me that probably is what most people think drawing is.

I think this is an extremely pedestrian attitude; it couldn’t be more pedestrian. I, in part resist it, yet at the same time I don’t want to become so esoteric about this thing that I’m useless to you. What I mean is that if I go around and measure proportion for you and take a penknife or a pencil to your work, then I’m doing the drawing instead of you doing the drawing. It’s treating people with due respect to their potentials. I think they have to learn to pull themselves up by their bootstraps in order to learn to draw, just as I had to do.

The confusion lies in the concept of the difference between matching and making. Matching is not drawing and yet people who have learned to draw become fine draftsmen. Great draftsmen can match. But the feeling that I have about it is that it takes much too long to get over the matching part into the making part. And that’s the difference. One is just a stupid copying of the figure and the other is making something magnificent out of it. Absolutely if I told you all I knew about drawing in the very beginning, I’d say take a rag and draw the mass. In other words, drawing comes from the inside not the outside.

The tendency of the beginning draftsman is to look at one side and draw it, then look at the other side and draw that. And never the twain shall meet; they’re not linked to each other at all. In drawing the first thing you think about and never lose it for a second, is the thing from the inside not the outside. The external form of the human being has lots of things to do with things doctors can tell you about – but let’s take a bottle for example. The shape of the bottle was blown by somebody. Blown to a certain size to take care of its insides not its outsides. How much will the bottle hold?

INSIDE TO OUTSIDE

At this late date in a long career, it has become clear to me that there are two distinct approaches to drawing and painting. The beginner concentrates on edges. The artist works from inside to and beyond the outside, as a magnetic field pushes ever outward. The beginner looks at and copies the edges of the object to be drawn. The middle of the form becomes a vacuum, a hole, or at least pipe-cleaner sculpture. The artist starts from the inside and lets the limiting edges respond to the thrusts of the forces moving outward.

This concept could be best described by the cell. Here we have the nucleus and nuclei floating in DNA. The energy thrust in this case is definitely from the inside to the outside walls of the cell. A similar situation in the adjoining cells creates a dynamic balance in a structuralized, viable relationship, in dynamic pushes and pulls between the cells.

In fact, the basic principle of growth is definitely from the inside to the outside. The tree is a perfect example. Bursting out of the germinated seed, the seedling points outward and upward in the first step of a journey which could take forty or fifty years. The central core of the seedling, called the pith, is the life urge of the tree. Each year of life it expands and provides itself with a new ring of growth. An ever-expanding outward series of rings continues to grow, and its growth is defined or limited by a layer of cork and the outer layer of bark.

The seedling becomes the main trunk of the tree; the limbs next in size grow out of the trunk; then the branches emerge from the limbs followed by twigs, and finally, the tiny buds of leaves. Reaching outward, ever outward, the tree grows to maturity and becomes a great mass of life expanding into the sky, developing the structure and strength to withstand the onslaught of heavy rain, wind, and snow.

This constant pattern for growth exists in all things and is very much the keynote of painting, a pattern of painting which does not “finish” too soon, a pattern of growth which, in tentatively searching, find its tenuous way through the viable pattern of creative growth. The patten of effective growth cannot be ignored in the creative process. In fact, it is the creative process in essence. This is not the “creativity” of novelty, or what sells on Madison Avenue. No, it is the powerful selectivity of organic design, the ever-expanding, outreaching growth of solid becoming, a becoming that contributes to the whole history of civilized man. A becoming that testifies to the infinite possibility of a human being finding his full capacity and raising the level of the whole of civilized society as he achieves his own effectuality. There is hope in creativity and expanding excellence. The other direction is hopeless limbo.

Clearly, the creative process is a matter of contention while involved in the act of painting. It comes out of the actual use of the brushes, colors, etc. – the quality of involvement,

the strength of the unconscious, the flow of insights and the daring to listen to the wee small voices that indicate the “way.”

As a follow-up on the remarks I have made about drawing and painting from the inside to the outside, it is clear that this pattern persists throughout the whole of nature. The baby chick or the baby eagle breaks from the inside to the outside of the shell. The germinated seed produces a shoot which breaks out of its hard shell and becomes eventually a blade of grass or an oak tree or whatever in between. All mammals and people are born from inside the womb and delivered to the outside world. With such a constant in the production of life in all things, it is not surprising that the innermost feelings of people are deeply rooted in their insides. I see this as the quintessence of the basic notion of “self-expression.” Certainly, the expression of the self is germinated from the mysterious depths of the sense of being, the sense of worth and the deep-rooted image of the “I am.”

This image is, of course, out of focus, vague and undefined in shape and direction in the beginning. Persistent probing and ever alert investigation of the mystery of the self will eventually, over the years, take on a definite shape and content which is called “personal signature.” The greatest painters throughout the history of art have had this special quality. One does not have to read the signed name on a painting in order to recognize a Rembrandt, for example. Arthur Carles, meant this when he said, “Art is what artists do” and again when he said, “The subject of all art is the artist.” He, of course, meant great artists and not high school students or amateurs.

LINE

The word, line, seems to evoke, in some people, an aura of sacredness. A search for the Holy Grail. It is true that great masterpieces have been done with line by such artists as Albrecht Durer, Hans Holbein, Michelangelo, Leonardo, Matisse, Picasso, and Miro, to name a few. Over the years of teaching I have found that the line is one of the most difficult hazards in the process of learning to draw. Obviously, the art student is not yet a master. Only recently out of high school one can ask, “Where did he learn it?” How well I remember a first-year student who wanted to talk to me because he was upset about his work. I arranged to have lunch with him and sitting down at the table, I asked him to state the problem. He said: “I want to be able to draw like Ingres.” I nearly fell off my chair as I realized, at once that his young student had set an impossible goal for himself and an excuse for inevitable failure. I asked him if he had any idea of how it took the great master himself to learn to draw with such remarkable excellence. Certainly, not in one year of art school.

I praised him for the highly idealistic goal and then pointed out that it could be better to aim each daily objective “*poco a poco*” and eventually gain a mastery of drawing. He wanted to do it overnight. As Bernard Shaw so aptly stated, “Youth is wasted on young people.” Of course, he had not had the time to find the vast difference between line and outline. Outline is the art student’s enemy number one. Most of us who “like to draw” began as children with outlines. What a struggle it is to gain the insight that outline is the worst way to learn to draw. Generally, the outline is the containment of a vacuum. I shall define the difference.

Lines do, indeed, have special characteristics – without volume or height, they can point direction, can be slow or fast, harsh or undulating, scratchy, or smooth and flowing. Also, as in color, their sensations change in context. Lines can become planes in some cases. For example, the black ribbon around the neck of the woman in Manet’s, “Olympia,” is a line. The same size ribbon wrapped around a finger would look to be a band. A four-foot wide bunting stretched across this studio ceiling would be a plane. However, the same bunting hung from City Hall tower, would look like a shoestring. So, the question is, when is a line not a line but something else in a given context? How heavy, how light, how fine or thick, are all questions that have to be considered in a drawing. In short, what “color” do they have? Perhaps, the most important aspect of line, is the fact that when you draw one side of an object, you also define the negative area at the same time.

SPACE

The history of art could be written in terms of the effort to solve the dichotomy between the flat surface of the canvas and the illusion of space. In each major period, various concepts of space have been employed. In the earliest known cave paintings, there was no attempt to create a sense of space; the paintings were an inherent part of the wall itself – definitely flat. This is understandable as their main function was an invocation to the God of Good Hunting. An early form of voodoo, the animals were captured or controlled by pictorial representation.

Little is known between this remarkable period and the earliest example of Western Art in the frescoes at Knossos of 1800 BCE on the Island of Crete. These wall paintings lead to the frescoes of Herculaneum and Pompeii. There, too, the integrity of the wall was not destroyed by “*trompe-l’oeil*” illusions. Later, in the Byzantine period a kind of Chinese perspective was used where the receding lines were widened instead of being diminished and therefore held the integrity of the flat plane. It has been said that Giotto was the precursor of modern space in painting. He created space planes which suggested depth but never lost contact with the flat wall.

Later on, in the Renaissance, the space became a box or room-like arena for the composition. Something like a little girl's doll house, the figures and elements of the design were tastefully distributed in the enclosed space. The discovery of perspective and the wide-spread interest in it during the Renaissance was a break-through in the history of space in painting. Such great men as Alberti and Fibonacci made enormous contributions to human knowledge and to the thread of history. The concept of infinity had not been known to the Greeks and was not employed in their geometry. The Renaissance was indeed a rebirth in the search for knowledge. The development and use of the "Golden Section" performed a kind of magic in painting. It was known by the Italians at the time as the "*Divina Proportione*." It was so wonderful in their view that it could only have come from Heaven. This proportion in numbers is 1.618 – an irrational number that goes on to infinity. It was found in nature in the logarithmic curve, as in the nautilus shell, in the curve of goat horns, seed patterns, in sunflowers, growth patterns in plants, and blowing dust patterns. Also, it appears in musical vibrations and in the arithmetic progressions of Fibonacci⁶.

In this expansive period of human knowledge, the great painters used geometry to the limit. Perspective was seen as an aspect of geometry. Each master had his own special geometry which was kept a secret within the confines of his own studio, his journeymen and apprentices. Such great painters as Uccello, Giorgione, Pontormo, Fra Angelico, made outstanding use of the new geometry and perspective. It will take much reading for the student of painting to understand fully and in depth the consequences of this great contribution to art. Although its current use has changed considerably, in the light of newer concepts of space, it is important to know it profoundly as a contribution of human knowledge.

The inherent weakness of perspective is revealed in the use of only one eye in a fixed position. Most painters have two eyes and use them both to the limit. Optical exactitude has been replaced by perception. Peripheral vision is the keystone of the painter's eye. He sees the total situation with one intensified look: strongly, where the two "cones of vision" overlap and the out-of-focus periphery at the same time. He actually sees the flow of space and the push-pull of over-lapping planes. This very special kind of perception can be honed to a very high degree of effectuality by constant use and years of experience.

It is possible that the use of "actual perspective" has had a regressive effect on the history of painting. Its use came out of the wide-spread concept that art is an imitation of nature. Aerial perspective is predicated on the geographical reality that colors are affected by intervening quantities of atmosphere. Colors are seen as progressively grayer as they recede. The distant mountains become a grayed bluish tint which fades into a soft nothingness.

⁶ Italian mathematician, Leonardo Pisano, b. ca.1175, Pisa, Italy, aka Filius Bonaccio later referred to as Fibonacci.

In linear perspective, sizes do the same thing in nature. They get smaller and smaller as they recede in the geographical world. The result of this type of thinking which implied that painting is indeed an imitation of nature sucked the observer into the painting and left him stranded in a distant limbo of faded tonality. Some careful observation of paintings will show that geographical reality and painted reality are two different species. Painting has used nature as a starting point with great success but the laws of painting have always super-ceded the laws of geography. This misunderstood phenomenon is now called a sense of projective presence, a feeling of “there ness” in the painting and the opposite of being left in limbo – the holding of the integrity of the flat plane of the canvas.

Paul Cezanne, probably more than any other single person, reversed the process of aerial perspective and thereby made possible all the newer concepts of space. This can be clearly seen in his great paintings of Mt. St. Victoire. What he saw in the geographical world was a house up close and a distant mountain diminished in size by perspective. In painting he reduced the size of the house and enlarged the mountain to a positive shape related to the negative shape of the sky. This process insured contact with the plane of the canvas, gave monumentality and bulk to the mountain and a viable relationship between the size of a mountain and the size of a house. This insight into pictorial space versus geographical distance was a salutary beginning of a whole new concept of pictorial space.

His interest in space was further amplified by the use of advancing and receding colors. Instead of graying the colors as they went back, he intensified them in order to make a vibrant dialogue with the flat plane of the canvas. He called this notion, “to realize,” meaning to make the paint real for its own sake, a reality of projective presence in the paint forms, a powerful “there ness.” To fully understand the greatness of his contribution to modern art one must experience it from his paintings. Because of Cezanne, it was no point. [He did not utilize the Albertian system which used the “vanishing point” system of linear perspective, rather created a new spatial language in his painting.] Space was defined powerfully by the use of over-lapping planes, a form of creative “distortion,” distorted geography but not distorted painting. The Cubist paintings of Braque and Picasso further amplified this new idea in art. The Cubists, increasing the gap between geographical distance and resolved space, used fractured planes in low-key colors. They attempted to paint the full three-dimensionality of a subject instead of a façade, but selecting planes from a walk-around view of the subject.

Later, the Cubists added color as space with simplified shapes and equivocal lines which gave the planes a sort of “double take.” This phenomenon is now called the figure-ground interchange. Something like the well-known Chinese steps, the forms alternate in direction. As Cubists became more colorful, it also became flatter in depth of space- the work of Juan Gris, for example. The box-like space arena still persists in contemporary painting composition

however, the depth of the “box” varies a lot. Very deep in Dali and other Surrealists, it becomes a slab in the work of Mondrian, hardly any depth at all. This can also be seen in the work of the white-on-white of Russian painter, Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935).

The question of how deep to make the space is a personal one and it has varied a great deal in current time. The work of Matisse, for example, was shallow in depth but not as shallow as in Mondrian. In any case, the important idea was to keep the greatest depth in resonant contact with the plane of the canvas. Hans Hoffman, in his famous theory of push-pull, used the contact with the plane to the limit. He found that to have a form or shape touch the edge of the canvas was to bring it up front in space. Forms in space did not touch the edge of the frame. A splendid example of this notion can be seen in the *Moulin Rouge* by Toulouse-Lautrec. In it, the green-faced woman with brilliant, red lips is cut by the right-hand edge of the frame. From this form, moving into the painting a whole symphony of color and paint forms ensues.

Space in painting is, of course, influenced by the adjustment to real space in the geographical world. No longer limited to the stride of a human being, one can fly across the ocean in a few short hours. The whole investigation of outer space has had a salutary influence on pictorial space. The Abstract Expressionists, for instance, never permitted forms to touch the limiting edges of the canvas perimeter. Polar to the outer space studies, is the sub-microscopic world of quanta. Jackson Pollack painted the spinning, whirling orbits of electron particles in the quantum theory. The Orientals have understood this for centuries. They felt that they were not standing by, observing nature, but were indeed a part of it. The quantum life force that permeated everything in nature, also flowed through their own being. This rare quality in painting is the very essence of the masterpiece. How did Rembrandt know this when he produced “*The Night Watch*”? A careful look at this great painting will show that he did know long before the quantum theory as stated by modern scientists.

Where and how forms have touched the edges of the canvas has been a long-time concern of painters. The geometry of the Renaissance was a big help in finding hot or sensitive places for the forms or lines to touch the perimeter of the painting. The co-ordinate centers were also established by the geometry and could be avoided at all cost. Forms placed on either the vertical or horizontal center, seem to arrest the dynamics of the painting and stop it on dead center, as in a fly wheel which cannot revolve. It is possible that Josef Albers in his paintings of simple squares came closer to the actual plane of the canvas than anyone else. Mondrian, before Albers, produced a shallow, compact space, extremely powerful in its projective presence.

To sum up, there have been many concerns for the quality of space over the history of art; shallow space, deep space, continuous space, abstract space, curved space, and fourth dimensional space. No other single element of painting has influenced the many changes in

style over the years. The study of space can well be the search for the Holy Grail of art. The greatest mystery of all is to create space on a tightly stretched flat piece of canvas.

FORESHORTENING AND PERSPECTIVE

Foreshortening, I have observed over the years of teaching, is one of the most frightening aspects of drawing or painting for art students. In some cases, it is almost a phobia. Actually, it is quite simple after you understand it. The key to it lies in some knowledge basic to orthographic drawing or drafting. The central words are “true size” versus “Observed size.” They are not the same thing. This difference is the crux of the whole matter. For example, is looking straight on at the knees of a seated model, with one leg back and the other forward, the legs do not show in their true sizes. A side view of the same pose will give you the true length of the legs and thighs, even though the legs are slanted. The front view will shorten both legs and the distance above the knee cap, and the joining of the thighs to the pelvis may appear to be a mere inch or so. The thighs will take on a circular or oval aspect.

In perspective vision the “lines of sight” are assumed to meet at the apex of the “cone of vision” in one eye. In orthographic drawing, the “lines of sight” are assumed to be at infinity and are considered to be parallel. They are also assumed to be parallel to the ground plane. There is only one such line in the perspective cone. It is the center line or altitude line from the base of the cone to its apex.

As orthographic lines are considered to be parallel, they are perpendicular to any vertical plane normal to the ground line. Therefore, a line parallel or in the plane of projection is seen in its true length and can even be measured. Such a vertical perpendicular line drawn in the front view, will show in its true length. It will also show in its true length in the side view. The top view will be a “point.”

Now, if we draw this line tilted back from the vertical, the front view will become shorter, the side view will show its true length, and the top view will become a short line instead of a point. This short line defines the distance between where it touches the ground plane, a vertical trace from it, and the distance back to the tilt. It becomes the sine of the triangle formed by the vertical trace and the hypotenuse of the tilt. In Pythagorean terms: $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$. The line in the top view becomes A^2 .

The vertical measurement from the line of sight or trace in the side view from the top of the tilted line to the ground plane will give us the exact amount of foreshortening, the difference between the side view true length and the observed front view. The more the line is tilted, the shorter it will become in the front view but it will retain its true length in the side

view. If the line is tilted until it lies on the ground plane the front view will become a point, the side will be true length as will the top view. To sum up, any line parallel to a plane of projection will show in its true size.

Over the centuries, art students searching for exactitude in the learning phase of drawing have used all sorts of “props,” from the plumb line, to measuring with a pencil, brush handle, or stick, to using a grid of squares of thread stretched on a frame. Personally, I prefer to feel the beat of the rhythm of the proportions rather than to measure them. Measure if you have to in learning phase one. When you reach phase two, you will not need to resort to it.

As mentioned elsewhere, learning phase one, will give you confidence and authority in your drawing. You, too, will give up phase one when you realize in phase two that design takes precedence over exactitude. Here, creative drawing takes over and one begins to function as an artist, and not a renderer of fact. By all means it is not a renderer of facts. By all means, learn about foreshortening so it will no longer cripple you with fright. Any book on drafting or descriptive geometry will amplify what I have said about it. Study it and get it safely tucked away under your belt.

Over your career, you will find many uses for a knowledge of orthographic drawing. Especially in mural painting, you will need to be able to read the architect’s blue prints and to make your own drawing of the setting for mural sketches. It is also most useful in understanding projective geometry and learning the very core of perspective. Projective perspective uses both the cone of vision and the parallel traces of orthographic drawing.

The trace of the plane of a tabletop for instance, goes to the vanishing point at infinity. Then it is cut off to its proper size for the table. Traces are drawn with light lines, the objects with heavier ones. Perspective lines of sight are never parallel to a projection plane. Vertical and horizontal lines can only be measured in one place, the plane orthographic established between the ground line and the horizon line. Nothing else shows its true length. Some time ago, I had the jolting insight that perspective is descriptive geometry in reverse.

In descriptive geometry, an untrue size is revolved with a compass into a parallel plane. In perspective, the true measurement is revolved into an untrue perspective size. Actually, a perspective drawing can be measured by revolving its lines back to the ground line and measured on it. Knowledge simplifies the complex.

To overcome the stumbling block in learning perspective is to understand that the basic layout or set-up of the plane of projection, the ground line, the horizon line, the vanishing points and measuring points are all established by orthographic projection. Euclid discovered that any point on a semicircle connected to both ends of a diameter will produce a true Ninety-

degree angle. Ninety-degree angles in the projective projection are never true ones. They only look like 90 degrees in the illusion (see figure).

Perspective lines drawn to vanishing points are never true size and are therefore foreshortened. To sum up, it is critical to understand that orthographic projection is used first. Then and only then can the logic of perspective be established in an orderly way. Learn this with a T-square and triangle in the usual way of a perspective course. After you have achieved the feel of it, you will not make the mistakes of the amateur painter when working from nature. Certain check points are all you will need. For example, the horizon line is always at your eye level, the “station point” is where you are standing, as you observe the scene. Are you centered or to the right or left of the center? Are you close to or distant from the object? The vanishing points are easy to find. Simply lay a brush handle, held at arm’s length, on the slant of a roof line and see where it touches the horizon line. Lines above the eye level, will go down. Lines below it will go up. It was part of the genius of Thomas Eakins that he comprehended all the ramifications of perspective. He was a master, indeed.

HEADS

No two heads are exactly alike. Anthropologists have cataloged them into group types such as brachycephalic, dolichocephalic, Australopithecus, and others. In any case, the gestalt gesture makes a difference and as I have said, is the key to the likeness. Many attempts have been made over the centuries to find constant measurements. It is surprising how many of them do become useful. For example, the eyes are generally centered at the half way point between the top of the head and the chin. The bottom of the nose is half way between the eyes and the chin. The distance from the nose to the chin is divided into three equal parts. The extreme width of the mouth is always directly under the center of the eyes. The ears always line up with the eye brows and the bottom of the nose.

A triangle is formed, different in each person, with its base running through the eyes and its altitude established by the length of the nose. Another is formed by the width of the mouth and the altitude to the center of the underside of the nose. A third triangle is formed by the width of the mouth to the center of the chin. A rectangle is formed by the centers of the eyes and the width of the mouth. Such measurements are useful only after the mass of the overall gestalt has been found. They help to locate the specifics in the context of the whole.

My personal discovery was the “X” in the side or three-quarter view of the head. These lines can be described as vectors. One runs from the point of the chin, through the top of the ear to the highest point in the back of the head. The other passes from the center of the neck, past the front of the ear to the forehead. The angles of this “X” are different in each individual.

Think of a pair of scissors and how open or closed they are. In fact, one could use a pair of shears to the angles by holding them at arm's length and laying the blades on the vectors. As no crossed vectors are alike, this helps to get the characteristic difference in each head. The one through the neck helps with the balance of the head or the spine. The other indicates the longest distance from the chin to the extreme of the back of the head.

From here on the painting proceeds by finding the shapes of planes or smaller to smaller masses of light, dark, or color. On a good basic shape, they will take their places within the whole, with a minimum of difficulty. Each shape or plane is seen as an integral part of the mosaic of the head. The portraits of Cezanne are a revelation of this insight.

Chapter Seven – The Oriental Contribution

YIN-YANG

The contribution of the Oriental theory of Yin-Yang, in spite of Rudyard Kipling, has made a formidable impact on western art. It is the theory of responsive opposites. An important “constant” in the history of painting, it encompasses every possible opposite, long-short, thick-thin, light-dark, warm-cool, night-day, male-female, and more. In fact, any opposite can be put to good use in painting. In essence, it is the law of simultaneous contrast, variety of texture, pattern, color, and the complementary effect of transparent opaque.

The mere fact of the difference is not enough. It is a vibrant, resonant quality of the difference, which makes Yin-Yang such a potent force in painting. The great French scientist, Chevreul, (Michel Eugène Chevreul, 1786 -1889), discovered this when he got his world-shaking insight into “Simultaneous contrast.” He found that the identical color spots could be made to appear different by their surrounding contrast of color. For example, in wood-cut, a patch of white paper can be made to appear brighter by surrounding it with pure black. On the other hand, a white area which is too intense can be “darkened” by reducing or greying the contrast. All the wonders of expressive nuances are inherent in this notion.

The Mandala, (see illustration) is the perfect symbol for this concept. In it the dark area indicates yin, or female. The light area yang, or male. The remarkable thing about it, to me, is the ogee curve which divides and balances the positive-negative areas. With one line both sides are designed! This insight is an important one in drawing. Suddenly, the painter realizes that he cannot draw one without the other, and that the positive and negative are realized simultaneously. Currently, there seems to be a growing interest in Oriental Philosophy among the young people.

This insight is an important one in drawing. Suddenly, the painter realizes that he cannot draw one without the other, and that the positive and negative are realized simultaneously. Currently, there seems to be a growing interest in Oriental philosophy among the young people. I have been concerned with its mysteries for a long time and I have found it to be the most helpful to me. Kipling, with his “East is East and West is West” stereotypes has probably done more to prevent a common understanding than anyone else. At long last, there seems to be a definite breakthrough.

The Tao and the Zen, have a great impact on the creative process. The Tao, pronounced D’ow, is also known as “The Way.” It has remained a corollary to all the Oriental religions. Over and beyond its religious aspect, its value to the artist cannot be calculated. I suggest, emphatically, that you absorb its profundity by reading The Way of Chinese Painting, an anthology edited by Mai Mai Sze. It can now be had in paperback. Fritjof Capra, a modern scientist, has written a very important book called The Tao of Physics. In it, he points out that Oriental Philosophy, long ago, anticipated the Quantum Theory. According to him, the Oriental is not a detached observer of nature, but is a definite part of nature, one who feels the flow of Quanta through everything, including himself.

Zen is an attitude, a state of being. It has to do with a realized intensity. An intensity that has not reached the cut-off point which actually prevents effectuality (tries too hard). It took me a long time to comprehend that my own phrase, “to dare to be lousy” is pure Zen. Herrigel in his excellent book, Zen in the Art of Archery, has made this point eminently clear. Another must for you to read.

Picasso also touched on this notion in his famous phrase where he said, “I don’t seek, I find.” Translated into my terms, this means, “I do not clench my teeth in the drive for a specific goal. On the contrary, I let it happen. Carles too, touched on this in speaking of “finishing” a painting. He said, “It finishes itself.” This is pure Zen.

It was Fritz van Briessen’s book, “The Way of the Brush: Painting Techniques of China and Japan,” that gave me the ultimate specific revelation of Chinese thought in painting. He enumerated the following principles:

1. 1. Dragon veins (tensions and pulls between points)
2. 2. Host-guest (dialogue between related pairs)
3. 3. Open and closed (contrapuntal responses)
4. 4. Heaven & Earth (thrust of forms rising upward from the Earth)

Dragons do not exist nor do dragon veins. They do exist in paintings as the invisible connectives which define the shapes of planes and resonant relationships throughout the work.

The host-guest notion pertains to an exciting interchange between two elements of design. The Chinese, for example, would paint two trees in dialogue. The larger of the two is called the guest, the smaller the host. The guest is larger because it is an “honored” guest in the best tradition of Oriental politeness. In looking at a Chinese painting, you will see an expanding proliferation of the host-guest idea. One pair of trees will relate to another pair or more. Two mountain peaks, two waterfalls, two houses, and two rock groupings, for example. All in effective relationship with each other and relating at the same time to all other groups, a wonderful and complicated symphony of Yin-Yang forms and vibrant relationships.

Open and closed is very much a part of the organized whole. It means accent-passage to some extent but the dynamic counter thrust is its main function. For example, a large arrow pointing to the right, will move faster if a small arrow is employed in the opposite direction.

Heaven and Earth almost speaks for itself. Often ignored in American painting, it is concerned with the vertical thrusts in the composition. A perpendicular counterpoint to the horizontals. It is a matter of chagrin with me to see that in earlier years I did the opposite of this in many of my paintings. I made the sky in landscapes heavier than the earth. The result was a swaying dangle similar to that of frozen underwear on a clothes line. A terrible mistake born in pure ignorance! In any case, I am pleased to have discovered the error. You too, will make many mistakes in your career. Do not be afraid of them. They are of infinite value in the learning process. The learning process, you will understand, does not end with formal schooling. It goes on and on throughout the rest of your life.

LESS IS MORE (Sumi)

This concept came to me in conversation with my painter friend, Michio Takayama of Taos, New Mexico. To the materialistic mind this notion will not make sense; at first glance, less money is not more than a lot of money. Even so, a lesser amount of money handles well is better than more money thrown down the drain.

In Western thought, this concept is often phrased as “Economy of means.” The work of Mondrian comes to mind as a fine example. A few black lines on pure white and two or three colors means, simplicity, resulting in great power of projection. A simple shape of the “right” color, in the right position, is much stronger than a hodge-podge of chaotic forms that do not relate to each other. Less is more.

In clothing, for example, a well-designed and tailored suit is better than a “burlap bog” from the bare pipe racks. The simple dress on a woman is much better than a flowery “tent”

from a bargain basement. The first is called *svelt*; the other is called “*ungapatchka*” which means in Yiddish “all messed up.”

The Orientals for hundreds of years have confined most of their painting to black and white: black sumi ink on white paper. Between these two extremes all colors can be implied. Franz Kline learned this well from Eastern art. Most of his later paintings were done in black and white. With less color he achieved great power by means of the “figure-ground” relationship. The positive and negative areas became effective, out reaching resonance. Less is more.

Poets, of course, understand this principle and devote their lives to it. Using, as they often do, ordinary words they produce works of great resonance. Especially when read aloud, they vibrate the innermost chords of your being. Less is more.

The haiku is a perfect example. In its structure of seven lines, the highly selective process of using a few words placed in an exact order perform the miracle of effective unity. In this case, less is, indeed, more.

The joke, so much a part of Western thought, is another example. The beauty of the perfect punch line is well known. To explain a joke is the quintessence of boredom. More becomes a great deal less.

Chapter EIGHT - Painting Genres

ABSTRACTION

Noticeable abstraction began in the early part of the 20th Century. Unnoticeable abstraction has been inherent in the work of the greatest painters in history, the very heart of masterpieces. I call it unnoticed abstraction because millions of people do not know of its existence and judging by the way most of them look at paintings, they will not find it. They stand within two or three feet of the canvas where it is not possible to see more than segments of the painting. After a few-seconds glance, they will go on to the next one. Recognizable abstraction was pioneered by Braque and Picasso. The idea was to paint more than one façade of the model. Apparently, they walked around the figure and selected planes or areas from each view. The result was a magnificent, conglomeration of dynamic planes suspended in a vital continuum.

Such paintings are not easy to see. A full comprehension of them requires real effort on the part of the observer. The expenditure of such effort is very rewarding. If you look at it long enough, without talking to yourself, it will become transformed into an amazing three dimensionality. The figure will be revealed as intact, although it looked, at first glance, like a messed-up jigsaw puzzle. You will see its fantastic power and feel it in your bones.

Picasso's "Man with Violin" in the Allen J. Berg Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, did this to me. Go to see it in quiet expectation of its possible revelation. If you do not see the transformation, try again. If you have not yet had this experience, be patient, as it will come to you sometime. As I said above, in effect, do not talk to it. Let it talk to you. The phenomenon of projective outreach is common to masterpieces of all periods and styles of paintings. In fact, it is the drive to produce this special quality that keeps a painter continually striving to find it in his own work. An exciting search for the Holy Grail of Art.

Carles produced masterpieces in abstraction. Abraham Rattner, an early pioneer in American Cubism, has also done it. My advice to you, is to find out what you can about noticeable abstraction but don't let it become a detour around the real thing. Great art has always been "abstract" in its under-lying structure. Because of the omnipresence of subject matter or content, it has been more difficult to see. It is also much more difficult to do. There is no easy road to greatness. Win or fail, the pursuit of the best is well-worth the monumental effort. At the very least, you will find yourself a niche in history.

Abstraction in painting has proliferated since the early inception of Cubism to the present. WE have seen a great many new ways to paint. Off hand, they run from the purism of Malevich and Mondrian, the personal wonders of Paul Klee, to Op and Pop to Environmentalism and Minimal Art. Minimal Art is not new. It is in essence an expression of the Oriental concept which has persisted over hundreds of years, "less is more."

STILL LIFE

By now you have the education of painting to look at a still life or any subject and see the potential in it. All you see is the possibilities. And, of course the idea in painting is to start with a motif of some kind. That's the difference: a picture starts with an idea, where a painting starts with a motif.

We've learned to do a silhouette of the figure. And every still life should have a silhouette, too. It might be very good to take any one of these and find the backdrop first rather than find a bunch of individual objects first.

As a reminder as I look at this still life, I see this rather wonderful movement through here. And I see this object here and it does something like that. Then the bottle comes up there to become this. In other words, I'm seeing this as "mass" not as line. I would've very much concerned with what kind of a map this makes. There's not one interesting shape on there yet, not one identifiable object bot what kind of shape does that make – a silhouette or total shape

of this still life. Once I've got it, I'll improve the map as I go along. It's comparatively easy to do the job.

Of course, there is a great deal in it. There's this big circle, all of these things, this line coming across here and this other line coming across here. The interesting thing about drawing (to me) is not whether the thing is exactly like what it is – not to match it, but the quality of difference between this bottle and this other bottle becomes critical. In other words, it's not whether I get either one of them exactly but that I get the interesting difference or the marvelous difference. Let me point out what I mean.

This bottle comes down this way and turns that way. This bottle does the same thing in a way, only it's different. That reminds me of the child who was asked the definition of the word, "poise" and he said, "poise is the same as girls, only different."

The rather square quality of this – the slight difference here, should make it easy. This is drawing and it's not where it's absolutely correct.

We learned this from Cezanne that there was a significant kind of distortion which is different from copying.

For example, now look at this dish – how the quality of that dish, the scalloped edge brings in a new difference between the bottles. This brings in a new note. Then we have this circular form. Also, we have two forms that are not quite circular. So, this again is a difference in shape. Then in here we have some more circular forms and this rather large one but one has got texture to it. And in a sense, it's a reverberation of that scallop. In other words, we could use it as a good excuse.

Now down here on the cloth we have to show this. The colors are sort of terrific. This is the orange stone and throw this orange stone into the water and get the rings. This then picks up a yellow in here – but not the second ring. The second ring is here. And then it reverberates again into this orange so that we have this wonderful orchestration of form and color. Does that help you see it? I don't want to tell you everything about it --- there would be no use painting it. You have to find these things and get the kicks out of it yourself.

PORTRAITURE

It is not generally understood that gestalt is the very essence of portrait painting. Everyone has his or her personal gestalt. This is why we can recognize a friend some distance away even though we are looking at the back of the head. Herein lies the secret of "likeness." Get the gestalt right and you have won half the battle. The specific details of eyes, nose, and

mouth fall naturally into the context of the general, organized over-all mosaic of the total shape. In order to achieve this simple likeness, one must learn to look in the middle in order to group the whole. Architects know this and have called it the “sky blotch.” This means that the total shape of the building is recognized at dusk or in a fog by its general mass or shape. The details which are a consequence of the mass are not required for identification.

John Singer Sargent has been quoted as saying this to his students, “A portrait is a picture of someone with something wrong with the mouth.” How true this is in many portraits. We do not normally stare for long periods of time at the mouth or nose of our friends and family. Such an emphatic overstatement of specifics really does weaken the total gestalt. You can see this yourself by looking at black paper cutouts or silhouettes of famous people. They are exact likenesses with no details at all.

How does one start a portrait painting? The answer is simple but the job is not easy. It will take your best effort and a heightened sense of awareness to locate the mass within the format of the canvas, to balance the positive shape of the figure or head with the negative shapes of its environment. Lay in the dark silhouette with a rag and dark paint. Push it around until it is “right.” At this stage, it should already feel like the sitter. It should have the personal gesture of the post and resonant relationships to the frame. In fact, it should be the beginning of any painting as well as of a portrait. I have seen hundreds of “portraits” which somehow never become paintings. They are compilations of specific details unrelated to the context of the whole. When the overall shape has been established, the details take their places, naturally and normally within the context.

Franklin Watkins was a great portrait painter. All of his portraits are paintings first. He told me of the agony of involvement he went through with each portrait commission. How he carried the “image” of the subject in his mind during the period of involvement. Once I saw him do a sketch of Dr. Strecher from memory of “retained image.” As I also know Dr. Strecher, I was well aware of the profundity of Watkins’ perception.

It is hardly any wonder that official portraiture has fallen into such low esteem. City Hall, hospitals and college buildings are filled with examples of inept “portraits,” specifics without the organized whole. Portraits, still very much in demand today, are mostly done by hacks. It is most difficult to find a painter who is good enough to do a real one. A good commission for a portrait will help you over the rough spots in your career, if you can “face up” to the quality of character in yourself required to do a good one. Look at the great portraits and bask in their brilliance.

Chapter Nine – Painting Media

WATERCOLOR

Currently, there are two types of things done in watercolor – “watercolors” and paintings using the medium. The first is most rampant and widespread, “handling” and spontaneity above all seems to be the objective of watercolorists. In the long run, most of such works have little else. I have heard it said by members of this tribe: “If you work on it more than one half hour, you have spoiled it.” The fact that they have completely missed the structure of design does not seem to bother them at all. How absurd can one be? Who is competent to paint a solid, projective painting in one half hour? “Put it down once and leave it alone,” they say – what utter clap-trap!

The second type and comparatively rare real one, is the painter who paints in watercolor. Fortunately, there are some who have painted masterpieces in the aqueous medium. Turner, for example, a pioneer in the use of watercolor, will live forever in the history of art. Winslow Homer, too, was a great one. Go to see his paintings of Gloucester at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and you will see what I mean.

They are paintings. Sir Russell Flint may well have been the first to understand profoundly, the concept of mixing the colors on the painting. The watercolor paintings by Cezanne are magnificent as might be expected. John Marin, our contemporary, was world renowned for his monumental contribution to the art of painting in watercolor. The work of Charles Demuth, is another outstanding example. He and Marin both studied here at the Academy, as you are doing now. Many great painters have been trained here, Carles and Watkins among them.

In order to paint in watercolor, one must use the best of materials. The paper should be 100% rag content, hand-made and three-hundred-pound basic weight. Such high-quality paper, will take the beating required by scraping, scratching, wiping out, washing out, and the countless changes required for distinguished painting.

Watercolor paper comes in three surfaces, rough, cold-pressed, and hot pressed. Rough is not pressed at all, it is just as it came from the mold. Cold pressed means that the paper has been placed between layers of felt, put in a screw type press, squeezed hard and left to dry naturally. Hot press is the same procedure except for the insertion of copper plates between the sheets of paper. It is then put in an oven and dried by heat. A smooth shiny surface is obtained through this process. It is difficult to use although Demuth was a master with it. Apparently, he used heavy color and blotted it to the exact tone required by the painting.

The basic weight of paper is determined by the so-called imperial size which is 22 x 30 inches. Five hundred sheets of this size paper will weigh 300 lbs., 200 lbs., 140 lbs., 90, and 70

lbs. Four-hundred-pound paper is also available. It is wonderful to work on but expensive and hard to find. Three-hundred-pound paper is the most widely used.

Brushes are, of course, very important. The number seven series by Windsor and Newton of Red Sable, is still considered to be the best. They are also the most expensive. My Number 14, which cost over \$35.00 years ago, is now priced at \$85.00. *Rob-flation* at is worst.

I have found the *Sableline* or ox-hair brushes to be more than adequate.

The short-handled, varnish-type of brush is extremely useful. Simmons #224 is one of my favorites – just be sure to get big ones. A round bristle brush is good for scrubbing out small areas. I have observed over the many years of teaching, that year in – year out, the students who wish to try watercolor, make the same mistake. They generally use terrible paper, student colors which will not wash out, and very small and very inadequate brushes, and never enough water. All too soon, the small container becomes puree of pea soup. The larger the water bucket, the more the pigment will settle in the bottom and leave the top of the water comparatively clear. Also, I have noticed, that the beginner has the tendency to use the paint too thickly, too opaque.

The biggest secret or insight in this medium is to clearly understand that adding water to water paints is exactly like adding white in oil paints. In other words, clear water on a white paper is still white. To add water to a color is to permit the white paper to show through the transparency and make the tint. The white is already there in the paper, use it to your best advantage. Again, the mixing of colors is done on the painting. Painting in watercolor, can be very effective in the process of learning to paint. The medium forces you to keep the painting tentative and to work it all over the same time. One cannot niggle with over-worked details in a wet area. As you gain experience in it, you will develop a feel for the wetness or dryness required for the proper touch. Do not scrub with the brush, *rather*, float the color on the paper.

Do not worry too much about the pure whites that are to be left in the painting. These are accomplished in the final stage by scraping out with a knife or razor blade or course ink erasers. In many cases, they can be obtained by drawing the white shapes to be with clear water. A wipe with a facial tissue will remove only the wet area. If you need to work a scraped-out area, rub it first with a ball of nylon net. This will remove the whiskers from the paper and permit the re-working.

There are three basic approaches to watercolor painting: the wash method, the direct method, and the wet-in-wet method. The wash method requires some skill in laying a flat, un-streaked wash, the graded (graduated?) wash from light top to dark bottom, and the dark wash from dark top to light bottom. The second method, is the direct “draw with the brush” technique used so wonderfully by John Marin.

The wet method is performed by soaking the paper for a long period of time. Some painters even use wet blotters under the paper to prolong the drying. An addition of sorbitol to the water bucket will also help. In this method, a lot of water is already on the paper. You can drop rather strong colors into the wetness and let me dilute at their own speed. In this way, one can assure the all-over totality at once. Strong pigment can be modified with blotters, tissues, and erasers. If you think you have made a failure, put the whole thing in the bath tub and wash off the paint. The slight stains which may be left in the paper, are of small consequence when painted over. The round watercolor brushes are, of course, a big help in learning to “draw with the brush.” Learn to squeeze the wetness out of the brush after laying a wash. The damp brush will neatly pick up the darker bead of color at the bottom. The squeezed brush, after being dipped in clear water, can also be used to lift tones which are too dark, if still wet.

Take a good look at the watercolors of Cezanne. You will see exactly what I mean by keeping intact with the white paper. His watercolor paintings are powerful because of the integrated pale tones which cling to the paper. Flashy, bright colors would have punched holes in them and turned them into Swiss cheese – what a loss to the world of civilized society that would have been. To quote F.D.R., “There is nothing to fear but fear itself.”

GOUACHE

To speak of gouache painting as “opaque water color” is to miss the point completely. It is true that white is used in gouache painting and that some areas are opaque. Such areas must be used with restraint and complement the transparent and translucent parts which make up most of the painting. The quintessential idea in gouache painting is to use the “optical greys.” This phenomenon is produced by the big insight of mixing the colors on the painting. Turner, of course, used it and pioneered it in the 18th century. He called it “body color.”

More recently, Marc Chagall and Picasso have produced masterpieces in this medium. Currently, gouache is the name of a type of paint. A less finely ground watercolor paint pigment with the addition of a chalk-like filler. The vehicle is the same as in aquarelle, gum Arabic, and honey glycerin. In our country, it is sold under the name of “Designer’s Colors” by Windsor and Newton. Gouache color by Pillard, a fine color maker in France, have only recently been imported here under the trade name of Louvre. Another gouache is made in Paris by Le Franc-Bourgeois. I think Schmincke in Germany make a gouache but I’m sure they do or did make a fine egg tempera in tubes.

Avoid at all costs so-called gouache which says “Plakat” on the tube. This means placard or show card colors. They are entirely too opaque for gouache painting. Gouache is not only a type

of paint, it is also a medium. Gouache as a medium or technique can be done with casein colors, acrylic, regular watercolors with the addition of white to the palette and even oil paint in thin washes of turpentine. I have used them all.

Traditionally, the technique of gouache included the use of tone-tinted paper. Turner used a blue tone frequently. He, David Cox, and DeWint, toned their papers with tobacco juice, coffee, or tea. I have used tinted papers called David Cox and DeWint for years. They are now almost impossible to find on the market. However, Mi-tintes paper by Canson Perrigot, is available as are toned papers by Fabriano. Also, you can tone watercolor paper yourself with a very thin wash of acrylic. It must be extremely thin in order to preserve the absorbency of the paper.

For outdoor painting in gouache, one could benefit by carrying a number of toned papers along in a portfolio. In this way, one can select the proper one for the “key” of the subject. For example, a yellow of orange tone for a sunset. Four large clips will hold the paper on the closed portfolio. Balance it on a rock, log, or whatever, and you are ready to work. Now, for the crux of the matter. The whole secret of painting in gouache, lies in the underpainting with black ink, at least in my personal technique. (Please note that this is a problem area in that some of the inks that Mr. Blackburn used had a larger fat content than did the gouache with which he painted his subsequent, colored layers. The rule of thumb is “fat over lean,” and some of his combinations of media inadvertently reversed that mandate.

I don’t remember when or how I got onto it but now I see it as a variation on the mixed tempera technique of the masters. In the beginning, I used waterproof black ink in various degrees of dilution. Sometimes, the under-painting came off and I did not dare to paint over it. This experience opened a new and wonderful vista for me. It led me into a profound interest in Sumi painting for its own sake. I was able, through friends, to acquire quite a collection of fine ink sticks from the Orient. Some of them are too beautiful to use.

There are a number of good reasons for under-painting in black ink first, it helps to develop the courage to work in large masses with a rag or brush instead of the filled-in pencil drawing. As it is not the finished thing, one can dare to let go with bravado. The underpainting should never be a finished work in itself. Rather, it should be an anticipation of what the color will do to it. To make this stage too exact is to invite boredom in doing it all over again in color. Let it be as rough and as free as possible. It is a fine exercise in gaining skill in “drawing with the brush.” Another good or important reason is to prepare for the wonders of the “optical greys.” Try any tone of color on white paper and then use the same one over the black. You will not recognize it as the identical tone. The miracle of mixing on the painting has been performed.

Another reason for the underpainting is that you can achieve a total context quickly. The painting is equally underdone all over and ready for the next cycle after it dries. The color cycle

begins with transparent washes over the dark under-painting. Minimal touches of white are added to the colors with restraint as the painting emerges out of the transparent passages. Slowly, more and more white is mixed into the colors and climaxed with opaques in strategic areas. White mixed with colors and considerable water will not cover but will produce a translucent optical grey. If a color or area dries out too light, it can be glazed with a darker transparent color.

To sum up, a dark transparent color over a light tone is a glaze. A light one over a darker one is a wet scumble or translucent tone. Impasto tones with white and little water are opaque. As I said above, gouache is not just opaque watercolor. Far from it. All the strategies of opaque, transparent and translucent are employed as the time-binding constant passed on to us by the great masters. Do not use Chinese white. It has been made of lead white and may still be made with that toxic ingredient. I know of a painter who “pointed her brush” with her mouth while using Chinese white. (She would put the paintbrush into her mouth and pull it out between her slightly parted lips to put a point on it.) She contracted the disease of “painter’s colic” or Plumbago. Titanium, called permanent white is safe. The lead white will blacken in time and defeat the whole quality of the opacity. It should be clear that gouache is the opposite of aquarelle. In watercolor, the more dilution of the paint, the more the white paper is utilized. In gouache painting, the diluted paint will reveal the quality of the ink washes. The proper amount of water will lighten the colors. In gouache, the right amount of water will make the colors darker. In either case, do not lose “contact” with the paper or the underpainting.

EGG EMULSION

Tempera can be spread and blended with the brush. It approximates oil painting as the oily ingredient in the medium gets fatter. Egg emulsions are made with the whole egg. The proportions are as follows: one whole egg, one eggshell full of oily ingredients, and two egg shells of water.

Procedure: First use a jar or bottle that has been coated inside with damar varnish and has dried. This isolates the glass which has high content of alkali which could “break” the emulsion. Next, break a small hole in the pointed end of the egg shell. Pour the contents of the egg into the jar and shake it well. Then decide on the oily ingredient. This can be any number of binders, for example, all damar varnish, or half damar and one-half linseed oil. All stand oil or all sun-thickened oil can be used. However, the presence of some damar varnish will help the emulsification.

The oily ingredient will determine the fatness or leanness of the paint. Now pour the oily ingredient into the jar and shake it hard with the egg. Next fill the egg shell twice with

water. Pour both into the mixture and shake hard (with the lid on, of course). The emulsion will become noticeably lighter with a somewhat creamy color. A few drops of a preservative such as oil of cloves will keep it from spoiling too soon. A broken emulsion will separate in a short time. A good one will not separate for several hours and needs only to be shaken again. This emulsion can now be used with titanium white in the mixed, oily tempera technique, or it can be mixed with a whole palette of dry pigments and used as in casein painting on paper, as gouache, or gesso panel or canvas. After you have used a few emulsions, you will decide on which oily ingredient you like best.

GUM TEMPERA

This emulsion is a good one for making your own gouache paints. It is made of one measure of gum Arabic, powder or crystals, dissolved in two measures of water. An equal amount of oily ingredient can be added to this solution and shaken up in a bottle or jar. The dry pigments are mixed with water only and put up in small jars. When ready to paint, put the colors out on a suitable palette. Add the emulsion to each one and mix it with a spatula. Add all the water you need from the water jar as with water color. It can be used as watercolor, gouache or with impasto as in oil paint. Small panels of Upson board, isolated with a coat of shellac or damar varnish are excellent for landscape sketches. For impasto use bristle brushes. Otherwise, use oil sable or ox hair brushes. The sketch can be vanished when thoroughly dry.

CASEIN EMULSION

Casein emulsion is made by soaking one ounce of insoluble casein U.S.P. in 16 ounces of water until the particles swell somewhat. Put the jar or container in a water bath and warm it. To this, $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce of ammonium carbonate in some cold water is added. This will immediately cause a foaming action. Watch it carefully to be sure it does not foam over the lid of the jar. If it does, take the water pan off the heat. In any case, stir the foaming solution until it becomes a smooth, creamy glue. Add to this 25% damar varnish (5 lb. cut) and shake well. Add a few drops of preservative. This is your stock solution. When ready to use it, pour some out in another container and add an equal amount of water. This emulsion will do anything the egg tempera will do except it has a slightly different paint quality. Fine the one you prefer.

EGG TEMPERA

The egg yolk tempera technique is similar to gouache and pastel with some modification. The main difference is in the extent of the form modelling in the black

underpainting. Dry brush is frequently used in this stage, a technique where an old beat up watercolor brush is dipped into black ink. Most of it removed on a newspaper or rag. The handle of the brush is then pushed down to make a fan shape of the hairs. With these spread out hairs, the modelled tones are slowly built up. This careful modelling with transitional tones or values must be done first because egg tempera is not a flexible medium for modelling with color. For example, in painting an orange or an apple, the modelling is carefully done and a single wash of color in egg medium is laid over the underpainting. The miracle of the optical grey takes place. The color will become different with each change of value in the underpainting. This kind of color selection requires a keen sense of the optical grey. After this stage, the colors can be modified to some extent with clear glazes and opaques.

The binder or vehicle is simply egg yolk with a small amount of water (strain out the skin of the yolk) the colors are dry pigments, wet with water, and kept in jars. Small amounts of pigment are mixed with the medium and tested on a piece of glass. If they powdered when scraped with a razor blade, they need more medium. If just right, they will scrape off in a thin ribbon of paint.

During the Renaissance, the tempera method used the cross-hatch technique in both the under painting and over painting. A long haired, thin brush, called a rigger, was used for this purpose. The support for an egg tempera should be a very smooth gesso panel. If you can't wait to try this technique and do not have the dry colors, use the tube water colors. They work all right as the egg yolk is stronger than the gum arabic and supersedes it. I have used this at times and it has all the characteristics of egg tempera. After an egg tempera painting is finished and dried, it will take on a beautiful polish if rubbed with a soft cloth.

In the egg tempera technique. The tendency is to lean more toward the draftsmanly than the painterly. This is due to the separate stroke quality of the medium and the pencil-like cross hatching patterns.

COLD WAX

Throughout the history of painting, many painters have used mahogany panels for sketches and studies. Cigar boxes were made of good mahogany for many years. The lids and bottoms of the boxes made good panels. Presently one can buy a 4' x 8' x 3/16" plywood panel of mahogany at a lumber yard and have it cut up to desired sizes. The redness of the mahogany suggests the imprimatur of the Masters. This warm undertone showing through in small areas, gives a sparkle to the sketch. Such panels should be isolated also by a coat of shellac or varnish.

Apparently, the medium used by Constable was a mixture of copal varnish with wax dissolved in turpentine. Discs of bleached white beeswax are available from your druggist or chemical supply house. Break the wax into small pieces, put them in a pickle jar and cover them with turpentine. In a few days, it will become a soft paste. Add as much of this wax paste to the copal varnish to suit your personal touch. Use it as a medium for oil paints. It “sets-up” quickly and holds the brush stroke very well for *alla prima* painting. I have used it with pleasure and many of my students have used it effectively.

ENCAUSTIC

The same wax paste can be added to oil colors on the palette and used with your favorite medium. Encaustic is really a hot wax medium. It can be employed in a number of ways. Melted wax can be mixed with dry pigments and formed into cakes by pouring the colors into muffin tins. Dip the brush in the melted wax and apply it to the canvas or panel. Manipulate the paint with a hot spatula or painting knife. It will harden very quickly. The next step is to fuse the paint on the painting with a hand-held infrared lamp, in a reflector if you wish. Encaustic painting can also be rubbed with a soft rag to make a beautiful sheen. Caution: Be very careful in making the wax pigment cakes. Do it in a well-ventilated room or better, outside the house. The fumes can choke you. I learned this the hard way and opened the window just in time.

ACRYLICS

The widespread interest and popularity of acrylic paints might well need a closer look. In the hands of a competent, experienced painter, they can be useful. However, I find them to be something of a hazard in the process of learning to paint. In the first place, they were invented by chemists who, no doubt, shared the common American ignorance of the art of painting. There are certain characteristics about them that are on the positive side. They dry through solidly and do not, as in oil paint, produce different drying times in the layers of paint. It is the ultra-quick drying characteristic that is the crux of my criticism of the medium.

The chemists could not possibly have known the big insight that eventually comes to mature painters, viz that the colors must be mixed on the canvas. How can one mix into or modify a color that has already become dry? It is impossible, of course. One can make another guess at the color on the palette and cover the first one. The chances are that it will also be a wrong note. This can be corrected to some extent by the buying of a retarder which slows the drying. One can also buy a paste which lends impasto to the paint. If you spend enough money, you can achieve a reasonable facsimile of oil paint. Why not use the real thing?

Acrylics also dry quickly on the palette and unused paint must be thrown away. Such a high percentage of waste is expensive. This, as usual, is good for the manufacturers but not for the student who has enough burden in buying materials. The maker of acrylics gets richer and the student gets poorer. I'm sure that manufacturers of acrylics have hit upon a bonanza and have greatly increased their "bottom line" in profits. I see it as another merchandizing "rip-off." No doubt, acrylics are here to stay even though, in my view, they do not contribute to the learning process.

Therefore, I suggest that you use the traditional oil colors until you have learned the constants that have existed for so many years in the history of painting. With oil paints, it is easier to learn the basic concepts of opaque, transparent, and translucent impasto glaze and scumble and above all the adjustments of the colors in their final context; on the canvas. My point is this, if you have learned these basics first, it is possible to achieve them in acrylics after the fact but not before the fact.

I have used them with some success as watercolor but even there because of their waterproof insolubility, they side-track the most important aspect of aquarelle, i.e., the ability to wash out and modify tones on the paper. Contrary to the widespread stereotype among watercolorists, you cannot "put down a tone and leave it along." Who is that good? Even the great, John Marin, had to wipe out, scratch out, and make numerous changes until he reached unity. The use of acrylics would have forced him to abandon his highly effective modus operandi with normal watercolor paints. You can glaze and scumble with acrylics after you understand them, but again you will have to buy something; glossy or mat medium. More profit for big business. I have bought and used them to some extent since their inception.

Karl Zerbe, a fine American painter who had a distressing allergy caused by turpentine, found them to be useful. The first ones were made of vinyl acetate. The polymers made by Rohm and Hass came later. They were made with "Rhoplex 55" or "Rhoplex 35." This means 55% solids and 45% water. If you must paint with acrylics, you can buy this vehicle and make your own paint with it and dry pigments and thereby prevent senseless waste.

F. Weber Company, made an interesting co-polymer, a combination of Rhoplex and vinyl. It was the only acrylic that could be combined with oil paint and it performed much like casein or egg tempera in the mixed technique. By the time they reached the market, my good friend, Fred Weber, had passed on. He was a painter as well as a fine chemist. I could have told him of this most useful aspect of the co-polymer paints but it was too late. Not being aware of this very special attribute, they did not press it in their advertising and soon had to drop the line in the face of heavy competition.

However, I insist that the waste in acrylics makes them very expensive. They harden in the tubes and jars and on the palette. This bit of merchandizing is called in the business world, “built-in obsolescence.” Simply, this means more sales of paint. As I have said elsewhere, don’t burden yourself with frustrating impediments –it is difficult enough to paint without them.

Dry pigments are excellent to have in the studio. They can be purchased by the pound and stored in glass jars, as they are the basic ingredient in all paints, you can make any medium you wish by mixing them with the appropriate vehicle. Linseed oil, Rhoplex, egg emulsion, casein emulsion, egg yolk, fresco, gum emulsion and gum Arabic for watercolor and gouache. You can also make your own pastels. I do not expect you to go to this expense as students but they will be most useful over your long professional career. Begin to acquire them a little at a time. In the long run, they will save you a lot of money and time. If you should inadvertently run out of color just make some as needed. Also, you can be sure they have not been “cut” by adulterants.

Chapter 10

HYPERAESTHESIA

My friend, the late, Richard H. Guggenheimer, has written brilliantly on this subject in his fine book “Sight and Insight.” Although, I shall try to give you a capsule glimpse into the concept, I suggest that you read his book for a conclusive description of it.

Hyper sensitivity in painting must be paid for in other aspects of living. The analogy that comes to my mind is that of the safe cracker, who sandpapers the tips of his fingers so he can feel the tumblers of the lock on the safe. These same fingers must hurt when he tries to cut a steak at the dinner table. A similar thing happens to painters, who develop a finely-honed sensitivity to color and design. Painting may be impossible without such a quality of sensitivity for the mysterious relationships required in the act of painting. The high cost of this special kind of feeling shows up in ordinary relationships in life.

He will become annoyed, angry, and even outraged by the behavior of insensitive people. Of course, they do not understand him and in self-defense put him in the category of “odd ball,” “koot,” or at least being “different.” Indeed, he is different, and as the guardian of civilized sensitivity as the opposite of the barbaric, he must pay the price for the difference. To understand the reality of this behavioral mechanism is to have some chance of keeping it in control and to reduce the pain as much as possible. In short, do not waste your energy on impossible situations with people who will never understand you. Conserve the energy for the most important thing of all, your own work. The immature teacher-critic frequently does the same thing. The student places his trust in such a “teacher” by showing his work to him. Instead

of receiving an honest evaluation of his effort and some helpful suggestions for improving the work, he gets an egotistical dissertation on the work of the teacher. A “self-portrait” which does not identify with the student.

Such a “criticism” which is no criticism at all, leaves the student with a sense of utter frustration, a feeling of being cheated and the uneasy suspicion that his hard-earned tuition money has been wasted. Obviously, a situation of utter futility, the student rejects the “criticism” in his own mind and loses all respect for the “teacher.” What a travesty of possible effectuality! Certainly, the subject of a painting is the artist but in criticism the subject of the painting is the student, not the teacher.

CONFORMITY

There are many hazards in the life career of a student and future painter. The worst or most dangerous of all is the unquestioned, acceptance of the current conformity mode. Self-expression is not a group activity. A serious psychological mechanism is rather widespread in many people. It is this: to set up an excuse for failure. In such cases, any lame excuse will serve the purpose. The current *avant-garde* of the moment becomes the detour around real learning. When everyone is *avant-garde*, it is obvious that no one is *avant-garde*.

A mature mind will not accept such nonsense as setting up a graceful excuse for his own failure. How well I remember a conversation with a student some years ago. I asked him about his family and he told me he was the oldest son and the dumbest. It seems that he had to wash the family dishes after dinner without reward. His younger brothers were paid for doing the same job. As the conversation went on, it became clear that he was suffering from a garden variety of sibling rivalry. His whole motivation was to win out over his more fortunate brothers. Everything he did was colored by this competition. A competition with others which was mauling his own sense of worth.

Obviously, in a self-expressive situation, the competition must be inside the self and not outside the self, with other people. If you must fail, let it become a magnificent ruin – a monument to the quality of your effort. The real rebel is one who contends with his own insides in the solitude of his studio. If he reaches an impasse on a painting, it is put aside until the insight comes along. When it does come, make the connections with verve and dispatch. Such a non-conformist has enough to deal with – without spending time and effort on what others are doing. In such a personal self-expressive involvement in the studio is beyond and above the rat-race and no one can touch or interfere with your effort. Of course, there are problems of normal living with must be taken into consideration. Family, health problems, and paying bills.

The best advice I can give to you is this, don't ever buy anything on time payments. The economic conformists will not like it as they fully expect an outrageous interest charge. Don't pay it. Save your money until you have the cash, then lay it on the line. The purchase is yours without fear of repossession. Painters in general do not have a steady income. They can be down to zero on the day the payment is due and sell a painting the next day when it is too late.

Take care of yourself and do not waste your energy with bill collectors. They can ruin your career by keeping you from your work. If you do sell a painting, now and then, put the money in the stock market or a savings account and let it work for you. Being a wage slave or time clock puncher is not compatible with being a painter. Conformity of any kind is not for the creative painter. It wraps the artist in a cloak of ineffectuality, dulls his sense of awareness and makes him just like everyone else. We are not like everyone else. The conformity mode is not for us, even if it is called "avant-garde." The difference between the processes of the unconscious with the expectant joy of finding a big insight, the creative thing is not a matter of servile copying of the latest style published by the media and sold on Madison Avenue.

On the contrary, the creative net is the result of depending on your own insides, listening to the wee small voice of the unconscious and pulling out a golden nugget which is entirely your own. Recently I counted the number of avant-garde movements I have seen come and go during my career as a painter. There were at least twenty-eight! Obviously, the striving for excellence cannot be that expendable. As a student, as painter, and as a teacher, I have made every mistake in the book. For this reason alone, I can help you to avoid the same ones.

One of my bigger mistakes occurred in my first life class after being promoted from antique drawing. I spent the whole morning making what must have been a very inept drawing in charcoal and then spent three weeks of filling in the lines. How little did I know that I almost invented number painting! What an inglorious flop it was. However, it is true that we do learn from our mistakes. I have learned a lot!

CREATIVITY

The creative thing clearly comes out of the act of painting. It is not a matter of being "saved" or "born again" by an ideology that is in current vogue. No matter what the latest "avant-garde" excuse may be, the deep involvement in the search for structured order out of the teetering and eve-present tendency for chaotic disorder is always there. Such a confrontation in the search for insights cannot be avoided. Many students are not aware of this battle in the early life of a painting. Some never learn about it and live out a life time career in total ignorance of its existence. The battle begins with a heightened sense of awareness of the frame of reference – the canvas itself. What size, shape or proportion does it have?

In sports, for example, we accept the arena as an inherent element in the game. The boxing ring has a definite size and shape which defines the limits of the action. This is also true in the shape, size, and layout of the baseball diamond, for example. One does not play football on a baseball diamond or vice versa. One reality accepts the limits of the canvas or paper. With a full realization of the limits of size, proportion, and shape of the arena, the attack begins with a vigorous burst of energy. The size, shape, and gesture of the initial form can become a vital immediacy with a sense of presence. If potently placed within the format, it will include a resonant relationship with the negative areas. A viable sense of order is established at once. It is in this early period in the life of a painting that contains the best potential for creativity. Pushing, changing and moving the forms around in this stage, assures the future of the work.

It is common practice among students and many painters to gloss over this most important stage and to get on, at once, with the final goal of “finish.” A finish which is already doomed to failure as it has been “still born” without the breath of life; the painting is on its way to the equilibrium of nothingness. A dynamic equilibrium is something else. In it the beautiful differences are maintained and kept intact with a resonant dialogue holding them in dynamic suspension. A structured order in time and space, a continuum of sizes, shapes, and movement, a quality of life spirit called *élan vital*, and an out-reaching projection of their presence.

Chapter Eleven

SCALE

George Howe, the great architect, was a man of keen intellect. I had some fine conversations with him, all of which produced insights. He said to me, regarding scale, “You can be totally ignorant of scale but the minute you get an insight into it, you know all about it.” In other words, the flash of insight reveals the whole concept. An out-of-scale hodge-podge is simply bad design. As a matter of fact, purposeful bad scale is a form of comedy. Everyone has seen the little fellow, on stage, whose trousers are much too long, shoes are enormous, the sleeves of his jacket hang down below the fingers and his tiny derby hat is perched on the top of his head. His voice is squeaky and the little fellow speaks with a *basso profundo*. This example of yin-yang where the scale reached a point of absurdity is basic comedy. Bad scale in anything can be funny or tragic.

In painting scale begins with the adjusted distribution of area sizes in relation to the format of the canvas or paper. I have spoken of this notion in regard to the tonic and the *arpeggio* of sizes. The van der Weyden masterpiece in the Johnson Collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is a perfect example of scale.

The two halves of the diptych are the largest sizes. Then the wall and red panels are the next smaller. From here it goes on into the continuum of smaller and smaller divisions of size until it reaches the very small teardrop cheek of Mary Magdalene. This tear drop could have been maudlin, cheap, bad taste or even comical, if it were not for the diminishing intervals of sizes which make it fit perfectly into the continuum. Go to see it. Sit and look at it for a long time until its wonders “get through” to you. Learn to “see” and understand a masterpiece. You may get the courage to try to do one yourself sometime.

TRANSPARENT WRAP

Arthur Carles discovered the use of transparent material over a questionable area in a painting. He used the cellophane from a pack of cigarettes. The cellophane permits the environments to be seen in relation as changes are made on it with oil paint. How he would have liked to current transparent wrap product which comes in long rolls from the grocery store – whole areas can now be changed by larger pieces of the wrap. Any far-out idea can be tried and investigated without hurting the original painting underneath. Any number of possible solutions to a problem can be tried until you find the one that improves the design and strength of the painting.

A brilliant adjunct to “finding.” Now I pass it on to you directly from the great painter. The sandwich wrap will adhere to the canvas by static attraction or it can be attached with tape. It is surprising to me how many things come out of the kitchen that are useful in the studio. To name a few: sour milk, soap, vinegar, ammonia, and eggs. They all become part of the alchemy in the studio. Eventually, you will acquire, as I have, all sorts of tools, hammers, saws, nails, screws, screw eyes, carving tools, a builder’s chalk line, dry pigments, various oils, and other chemicals. Boxes of facial tissue and nylon net are useful in watercolor painting. All sorts of knives, mat knives, razor blades, compasses, a trammel or beam compass, ruling pens, drawing pens, colored inks, masking tape, glue, and more. Over the years you can collect these necessities little by little and avoid a big initial outlay of money. To me, they are all part of the job of being a painter.

Chapter Twelve

CONCLUSION

There are certain aspects of painting that are impossible to put into words, visual phenomenon that cannot be defined verbally. They must be understood on the non-verbal level by looking at great paintings and discovering them as you paint. Such phenomenon are the very essence of self-expression, the personal secret of the creative painter. Such highly personal

aspects of painting come to blossom, at some point, as a result of the fertile soil of knowledge plus the deeply expressive feeling of the individual.

Creative painting is far above the superficial recognition of style. One should not even think of style as one paints. Just let the painting become its natural self. Let it happen. The knowledge will tell you if you did it or not. Currently, I see a frantic search of creating in pursuit of the miracle of style, a detour which avoids, at all costs, the facing up to the real thing – one's own insides. In order to be "self-expressive" one must first be a "self." A quiet sense of worth, which comes from the wide comprehension of a discipline, is essential to the creative act.

Floating anxiety and self-doubts are not conducive to the exercise of a full potential. With the acquired knowledge of the thinking of the greatest in the field, never doubt that you can do it. Just doubt that you did do it, until you do. I have tried in this book to put down what I have learned over a long career. It comes as something of a shock to realize that the most important aspect of painting cannot be put into verbal language. Only visual language will do it. Build yourself a sturdy ship of knowledge and then dare to explore the unknown seas of the self. They are unlimited.

Addenda – Omitted from Mr. Blackburn's MODEL STAND CHATS' Table of Contents

The Switch: Phase One and Phase two

Over the years of teaching, it has become clear that certain humps or barriers are encountered by most students. One of the barriers found in life class is the comprehension of the big difference between making the painting "right" for the model or making the model right for the painting. In fact, to be able to draw the model with exactitude can postpone the insight of the total painting for a lot of years. May not be with the painting needs to "work."

The painter is over the hump when he realizes that the all over painting comes first and that the drawing of the model fits into the established context of the total painting. With this understanding, it becomes clear that "distortion" is not a matter of ineptitude but rather, is a must in creative design.

This notion has been discussed elsewhere in this book as Phase One and Phase Two.

The mature painter, knowing the great difficulty in achieving total unity will start with the totality of the painting in the first brush stroke. This attitude produces a context which permits the painter to understand the limits of the amount of exactitude in the drawing of the figure. Simply stated, this means that the objectives of Phase Two do not require slavish

copying of the model just because one can do it (Phase One). More details than required by the context of the painting can arrest the creative act and prevent unity. The villain in this case seems to be the age-old cliché that art is an “imitation” of nature. It is clear that the greatest artists in history did not accept this stereotype as “gospel truth.” This destructive absolutism was the result of a bad translation of the Greek word, “mimesis.” Apparently, the word means participation with nature and not a simple, stultifying report on visual exactitude.

Van Gogh understood this perfectly. For example, in his portrait of “Young Blonde Peasant,” he increased the intensity in the yellow of the hair and further amplified it with the use of an intense blue behind him. He saw neither of these conditions but had to do it in order to increase the high voltage ontology of the painting. It is no wonder that his work was so misunderstood by the wearers of the toga of cliché and stereotype, who knew with absolute certainty that such a yellow and blue did not exist in nature. So did Van Gogh, but consummate artist that he was, he also knew that he had to make the colors “right” for the painting and not just for the model.

Reality

The word, reality could well be one of the most difficult to define in the English language. What is reality? It is possible that there are as many meanings for it as there are people. However, for our purpose it might be good to investigate two aspects of reality as they pertain to visual art – one - the reality of appearance and two – the reality of feeling.

It seems to me that “the drive” in illustration, for example, is to achieve the reality of appearance or fact – to make the Native American Indian look like a real one, to make the uniform of the Colonial soldier to look as it really was in his time. The factual exactitude of delineation triumphs above all. On the other hand, in painting, the drive seems to be toward a feeling of reality – a sense of presence, a quality of “there-ness.” One feels the power of this reality in the total affective system. Arthur Carles spoke to me about this years ago. He said, “You don’t look at a painting by Leger, it looks at you!” This feeling of projective intensity has been experienced by me many times, in paintings of “realistic” appearance through the whole gamut to Mondrian. In short, this is the primary drive in the best painters regardless of subject or subject matter.

The quality and quantity of this projective zone has varied over the centuries and in various epochs in history. There have been periods where the projection did not grow outward from the plane of the canvas but actually receded in depth inside the canvas. This phenomenon was called “Aerial perspective.” The idea was that colors and tones progressively faded out in detail and strength as they went back spatially. Here again, we have the true fact of nature accurately delineated as in illustration. The better painters did not do this nor did the great masters. So, we have the difference between additive projection and diminishing, subtractive

power. Walking or driving among the meandering geographical facts of nature can be exciting. Uplifting and even called “beautiful.” It is a special kind of reality but it is not the reality of painting.

The observation of the “facts” of nature can and frequently does produce a sense of existential wonderment. The need or desire to share such unique feelings with others, the need to express oneself is the starting point for the painting. A mere listing of geographical “facts” will not do it, nor will the instantaneous factuality of the photograph. No, the quality of felt or experienced reality, must be “turned into paint.” To me, this is crux of the whole matter – how can such an exciting experience be turned into an object which can produce the feel of reality, instead of the facts. An object that “looks at you” and reaches out to the observer of the painting by means of the projective aura of intensified sensibility. It should be clear that the transmutation from one feeling of reality to another, requires consummate skill and knowledge.

More on Perception

It is clear that true perception is a “turned-on” thing – a conscious and realistic state of being. Looking is not the same as perceiving. The most common mode of looking is a practical or conditioned reflex one. Thinking is not required in this phase of looking. It is automatic. For example, a pedestrian crossing the street, does not cogitate on the type of car or the license number of the car bearing down on him. He just gets out of the way fast.

One does not have to ponder over the latch on the refrigerator door or wonder how to button an overcoat. These and many other aspects of seeing are automatic. The brainwash of the commercial advertisement was designed to produce a similar non-thinking reflex in the buyer. Buy it whether you need it or not is the objective of the copy-writing enemy. The second phase of looking is called curious vision. If a person encounters an object not seen before, curiosity will engender wider aspects of observation. The curious vision could well be a partial motive of the tourist who wishes to see new and strange things – to live a heightened sense of awareness above the normal conditioned reflex.

The most unreliable type of perception is that of the witness in a police situation. In an automobile smash-up, for example, the good Samaritans who rush in to help, are so emotionally involved that they see nothing with clarity. The police, in trying to get the facts, receive widely conflicting reports from the participants. The only person who really saw it all, is the little old lady looking out of her front window. She sees it all because she is detached and not involved with action in the event.

It is this quality of detached, but at the same time, involved looking which is the secret of creative perception. This special kind of “turn on” could be described as a projective, non-

verbal, heightened sense of awareness. The painter looks at the subject with a non-discursive open-minded awareness of the totality. He sees the model with his eyes and with all of his experience in the creation of form and design. He paints or draws what he selectively sees as useful to the organized whole. Truly, this is a very special “state of being,” detached but at the same time deeply involved – a contest of sorts – a confrontation and a battle to achieve order out of disorder.

Everything happens at one. The location of the forms within the limits of the framed area, the flow of the space in and around the object, the positive and negative areas, the correspondence and variety of the two sides, the accents and passages, the articulation of the darks and the field pattern in general. Actually, it is something of a miracle that anyone can do it all. However, it can be done and there are large numbers of masterpieces to prove it. It can be done because the conscious “turn-on” is amplified, aided and abetted by the vast resources of the unconscious and the stored cybernetics of experience.

d. Moment of Truth

There comes a time in painting from nature or from a model that if you continue to look at this and never look at your painting, your painting might become extremely photographic and very academic.

There comes a time when the look of the painting is more important than what you have been painting from. If you send a painting out to California, nobody is going to ask what kind of table was that – and what room was it painted in, and so on. The painting has got to stand on its own two feet as a thing in its own right, regardless of where it was done, the geography or anything else. The final goal of the painting is to induce an objective unified whole.

Sometimes when you paint for long period from nature and you work on it all day and then go back another day and still another day, you might find that you’re putting in a lot of trivia and all sorts of details. And every time you put in another detail it detracts from the general quality of the painting.

On the other hand, if you go out and make a little sketch like we did this morning, this so-called watercolor drawing and close it up with pen-and-ink lines, this means that the moment of truth gets much nearer. You’ve concluded your data. You’ve arrived at your moment of truth. So that what you do on the canvas is more important than your memory of the place. It’s a simple idea.

But this moment of truth varies with each individual and it also varies with the same individual on each canvas. It’s the point where looking at the flowers is no longer important. But rather to look at the canvas to see that there’s something wrong with the upper left corner,

change the vase, or you've got to do this that or the other to it. In the final analysis, it's what you've got on your canvas instead of what the flowers look like. This varies in each case.

Bibliography

Morris Blackburn papers (MS.058), The Dorothy and Kenneth Woodcock Archives, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

Morris Blackburn papers, 1926-1986. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution