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THE PHENOMENA OF NATURE
AS INTERPRETED IN
EXPERIMENTAL PAINTING

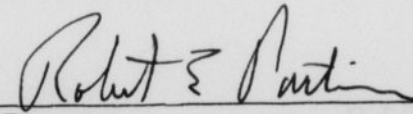
by

Barbara L. Bishop

A Thesis Submitted to
The Faculty of the Graduate School at
The Woman's College of the University of North Carolina
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
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PREFACE

This paper is written with the purpose of expressing an understanding of the elemental components of the earth, and the affinity of this body with man.

Experimental painting serves as a translation of the appearance and the inner structure into which man conducts an inquiry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere gratitude is extended to Mr. Robert E. Partin, as Director of the Thesis, the members of the Oral Examination Committee, and to Mr. Addison C. Bross for assistance in this work.

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CHAPTER I

THE EARTH

The structures of the earth emerged through creation, and became a part of the universe and a vastness a part of an immensity in time and space.

Their being is affixed to a network of patterns far wider than man's views. It is an unlimited, unmeasurable expanse of which current surroundings are the metamorphosis of growth. It is an infinite growth within finite boundaries.

The beginning in time is sought, but is unknown and unimportant. Only the fact of mere existence emerges and is significant. The entity of the earth prevails for it is a creation continuing. Here is existence it is life. Life is revealed nobly as more than a structure of color and forms. Each individual fragment has life within itself and fulfills a role within a unity. There then exists an essence building to full richness and glory of presentation, revealed from the inner core, so that to know nature is to be inside and discover the crux of existence.

Apart from the ethereal qualities of surface landscape it becomes apparent that nature in its most elemental concept reveals a friendliness that reaches out to touch the heart of man. For like a great hand it engulfs human existence and pulls it, ever so gently, within a vast womb.

It is here that man should come to inquire - not to change. For innate human qualities grope for a premise through which man can "cease to live and begin to be."¹ Importance lies not in that which is visible, but in that which is perceived through the selective senses. In this revelation nature is made known to man, who is himself a part of that domain of essence.

Never hidden, continually juxtaposed are violence and quiescence a cessation of action triggered for reappearance. Calm and singing the earth retains inherent forces. Thus sustained is an impetus which prevails within and surrounds the earth. It is a force with which a massive compactness moves to stimulate activity. Moments of violent rampage are paralleled by abeyant conditions, in neither of which nature is a cold external phenomenon, but an embodiment of being.

Fullness of movement and the color of life loom forth from the resilient surface. The crust is like a shield for the mysterious forms sheltered beneath. Unaware of history and passing of time, visible and latent stones are integrated with soil and water "every stone is a particular one. You can see it, pick it up, feel its hardness, its roughness, its own individual insistence on being, its stubborn way of making a place for itself. You cannot think it away; the universe has to accept it in all its uniqueness. It has to give room for it. Its place

¹Gyorgy Kepes, The New Landscape in Art and Science (Chicago: Paul Theobald and Co., 1956), p. 24.

and its space will always be its own and nothing else's."²

All materials of the earth possess these qualities, and occupy individual space within the complexity of earthly order. Making room for competitive co-existence is a means of separation and order, but at the same moment an integration. Constantly the materials attain an ultimate in structure only to experience a loss through process, and are then recreated and begin anew.

Rocks and soil are cumbled away by relative movements and disintegrate to be rebuilt from the products of their own destruction into new materials of a succeeding age. Attained by building, area upon area, the new existence and fullness of life is the latest mold in the changing environment. So it is indicative that this stage is not permanent, but kaleidoscopic for the duration of non-static existence. Man has changed the appearance of the earth, but inherent forces are not invented by human hand, for they evolve through time and motion, and work upon the earth in fulfillment of their purpose. This is not restricted action, but exists over the breadth of the land where the processes are hidden in the depths of the earth, away from visual conception, and are blended with the surface landscape.

Earthly structures have confronted varied stress and strain through the geological history of the many ages. Forces of the wind have sheared across the land and left behind an excavation to awe as majestic and

²Frederic Spiegelberg, Zen, Rocks, and Water (N. Y.: Pantheon Books, 1961), plate I.

sublime. The transportation of materials through this invisible spirit has left in its path the meticulous pattern and design common to a changing environment. On a more extensive and grander scale the transit resulting from force has brought to the surface the impressive developments of strata which extend to great depths. It has revealed interior folding and dipping undulations normally beyond exterior vision. This becomes apparent through bulges and shifting of land masses resultant in mountains and high or low relief, and marked by deep abyssal areas and crevices. From flatlands to great heights irregular movements are constant. Creation and destruction, gain and loss, continue persistently.

Snows melt, reappear, and melt again. Grating and tearing against the resistance of structure, glacial masses dwarf the earth. Rains slash, soak, and wash the soil. The mantle of ground is altered from subtle and vast movement of one area to another where dramatic changes and desultory scattering succeed the vigor of a storm. This is a world of multiplied dimensions. A terrain where purity, stability, and refreshment abides in a cycle of creation. This is the Earth, and the Earth is this.

CHAPTER II

THE EARTH AND MAN: AN AFFINITY

Man has awakened, progressed, and attempted to bring wider expanses of his environment into the clutches of understanding. He is a part of the earth and exists within an embodiment that shapes human vision, and he gathers the wonder and complexity within this realm. Discovery of a harmony and discord is a constant result of an intense inquiry into the womb and center of man's domain, the earth on which he dwells. It is here that "the grandeur, the vastness, the inexhaustibility of nature are discovered in Man, and the sensitiveness and mystic impenetrability of the soul are (revealed) also in the bosom of nature."³

As it is the primal instinct of man to uphold the continuing cycle of his life; it is the challenge of the earth to hold secure the secret forms and structures of its own existence. Inspiring man with wonder and amazement, the natural phenomena exude an impressive quality which seemingly appeals to and affects the human mind. There is a spiritual sphere where man can become one with nature, and move among diverse perspectives to absorb the inherent qualities of an immense landscape.

Through the ages man has lived, worked, and ventured on the

³Kepes, p. 256.

earth as a vital, living element, a creation of nature. As more of man's transcendental understanding of the earth's essence has been gained and brought into distinct focus, man has made material progress in adjusting economically and socially to his environment. As a disturbing, destructive agent he exerts a force similar to that with which a body moves against a resistance. It is an impetus with an affinity to nature. His penetration is forceful, and almost geological in its massiveness and deliberate approach, but it is not so inherently designed that he must not think and act in conformity with natural processes. Functioning in accordance with demands, man exists as an inescapable contributor to his geographical environment.

It is through his own darkness that man attempts to go beyond the realm of cooperation to dominate and utilize the offerings of nature in ways of which he is capable. In the exploration of the earth as an ancient and continuous development, man has gained knowledge of the eruptive and composed facets of his terrain. He confiscates the earth and compels it to function in fulfilling his needs. As in ages past, "the earth's yield has never been cheaply gathered. Its bounteous fruits have been torn from a hard, unwilling soil. Man has paid dearly for his tenancy of the planet. He holds it only by sufferance."⁴ Just as previously stated the work of human hands is apparent in the surface appearance, but the main structure, the core, is little influenced by man. The

⁴A. C. Sectorsky, The Book of the Earth (N. Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1957), p. 169.

unexplored nucleus is governed by inherent activities in a continuous creation within geological depths.

An imbrolios state turns the earth to the task of rebuilding to new existence. The structure is built and maintained by processes - chemical, biological, and physical - similar to those which create man, and in both vision and perception reveals a sharing of the same complexity, orderliness, and simplicity. The mind goes forth with diverse thoughts, outlooks, and ideals to prove the mystical existence of a relationship between these bodies. The weight of human venture increases a wonder at the enigma of the earth and its perpetually unfolding future. As this is absorbed into one's mind, there is a sudden and an incredible entry into a realization and a grandeur previously unconceived. The earth is a friend, and, at the same instant, an enemy. It is loved and feared, used and destroyed as man continues to grow. "At first, by making use of its resources, man sought to free himself from his environment later, it was not freedom he sought, but improvident dominion. He dug out great areas of the earth's surface to house and feed him. He tore down its forest, scooped out its ores for his cities. He squandered much of the substance of the earth, left it gullied and eroded for nature to fill and cover again."⁵

Men have reacted to the earth and to each other, failed and gained, and continued to search for the unknown - building area upon area, just

⁵Ibid., p. 61.

as the soil, to deeper awareness and insight. It is an inevitable rise in the course of events. The progression of intelligence continues to enable man to spread his influence and make effective use of the earth in ways to better serve human life. New understanding and knowledge have yielded ideas, assumptions and established beliefs which replace or are applicable to previously conceived thoughts. A critical, more imaginative populace and continued scientific endeavor have drawn men closer in understanding to their domain, and the affinity of Earth and Man persists. He undeniably occupies space and endures time, witnessing nature's forms and the vast interrelatedness apparent in her structures from embryo to decay.

Man, as a product of the Earth, is endowed with a specialized organic structure continually functioning and fulfilling a purposeful existence.

CHAPTER III

SOME EXPERIMENTAL PAINTING

My personal works are an extension of the sensory experience beyond the surface landscape and obvious surroundings to the forms, symbols, and images which are the earth. The sharpening of awareness and vision increases an understanding of the earth as a forceful agent which commits its structures to continued destruction and re-creation. These inherent qualities and relative movements are expressions of the dynamic energies which are a part of, and surround, our environment. It is in this realm that the deep spirit of nature's aspects may be found, and is thus translated and presented in a series of paintings as my thesis work.

The interpretation of the appearance and inner structure is achieved through the use of materials which allow themselves to be manipulated and combined in a manner to best present the tactile and visual qualities of the earth.

The following descriptions and chart are concerned with the technical materials and applications employed in this work. The paintings discussed are representative selections of the entire grouping, and are described in a step-by-step procedure.

PAINTING #1 "Gathering Storm"

- * (1) This painting was executed on an untempered masonite panel which had been primed with white Spread Ease Water Soluble Rubber Base Paint.
- (2) The relief areas were achieved by building up mixtures of Gold Bond Joint Cement, Durham's Rock Hard Water Putty in the desired consistency and combined with white silicon sand, and Permanent Pigments gesso. Additional texture was added by securing regular paper towel and impressing window screen wire into the semi-moist mixture. This was allowed to dry for 24 hours.
- (3) Application of oil pigments (Permanent Pigments and Utrecht linens).
- (4) A solution of turpentine and rubber base paint was applied to various areas. The very nature of this mixture causes it to separate and emphasize in a subtle manner the direction of the brush strokes. This device was used to achieve the desired feeling of depth and movement of force.

PAINTING #2

- (1) An Upson board panel primed with white rubber base paint was chosen for this painting.
- (2) The relief areas were built up with water putty. The board was re-primed. Additional texture was achieved by applying a commercial tissue paper with rubber base paint. A large shape of burlap cloth was secured with water putty and allowed to dry for 1 hour.
- (3) Application of oil pigment.
- (4) In the areas not covered by the oil pigment a water color paint was applied. It was allowed to dry almost completely (10 minutes) and then an application of white rubber base paint was layed over it in such a manner that the hue underneath showed through in strategic areas.

PAINTING #3 "Portentous Pause"

- (1) A primed upson board panel was used for this painting.
- (2) An application of Weldwood Contact Cement was spread over the panel and allowed to set for 10 minutes. While this adherent remained in a semi-moist state water putty was poured on the panel in predetermined areas and spread with a hand

*To avoid needless repetition all brand names of materials used will be referred to only one time.

tool. Because of the inherent qualities of these two products they tend to separate and produce a varied texture unobtainable by other combinations of materials. Both materials were allowed to set up and dry for 1 hour.

- (3) Application of oil pigments.
- (4) In the process of building up the panel to a completed work there were applied several layers of commercial tissue paper. The torn shapes were adhered with Liquitex Polymer Medium, which in a moderately concentrated solution (1 part water to 2 parts adherent) will dry quickly and proves to be a substantial and reliable glue for light papers.
- (5) A coat of polymer medium was applied to the entire area of the panel and allowed to dry for approximately 15 minutes.
- (6) Areas of the tissue paper were then torn away to reveal additional texture and matte images in contrast to the semi-glossy areas where the adherent had been spread.
- (7) To make the painting a workable and pleasing composition additional oil pigment and polymer medium was applied in the desired areas.

PAINTING #7 "Impetus"

- (1) This painting was completed on an unprimed, tempered masonite panel.
- (2) Application of a mixture of water putty and metal filings. Drying time was 45 minutes.
- (3) Polymer medium was used to adhere large shapes of commercial tissue paper and Scat Yoskimo Japanese handmade paper.
- (4) Application of oil pigments and Gray-Seal Flat Black Enamel Paint to predetermined areas.
- (5) Alternate layers of pigment and paper are built up to create an unusual texture and feeling of space.
- (6) Polymer medium was applied to the entire painting to obtain a semi-gloss effect and secure the papers.

PAINTING #12 "Earth Mystery"

- (1) This painting was executed on an unprimed, untempered masonite panel.
- (2) Water putty was spread over predetermined areas to achieve desired relief. Drying time was 1 hour.
- (3) The entire panel was painted with white rubber base paint.
- (4) Application of oil pigments thinned with turpentine.
- (5) In several predetermined areas Utrecht Linens tempera paint

with a wax binder was laid on the surface.

All materials used are relatively inexpensive and easily obtainable through local art supply, lumber, or hardware stores.

Additional characteristics of consistently used materials are:

Masonite - a substantial board proven successful for the adherence of relief. There are a wide range of masonite panels manufactured, but the two used by this artist are:

tempered - a panel which is oiled and pressed so that both sides are smooth.

untempered - a panel which is not oiled so that one side is smooth and the other side has a slight textural quality.

Upson Board - a compressed paper board

Spread Ease Water Soluble Rubber Base Paint - excellent for prime coat on all panels

Gold Bond Joint Cement - can be mixed with water to desired consistency and easily spread by hand or with a tool. Its texture is very slight. It will hold secure a wide variety of materials - whether mixed with it or impressed into the mixture after it is applied to the panel.

Durham's Rock Hard Water Putty - can be mixed with water to any consistency. Depending upon application its texture can be very rough or smooth.

Permanent Pigments and Utrecht Linens Oil Pigments - used exclusively on all paintings in a limited palette of mainly earth colors - yellow ochre, raw sienna, burnt sienna, burnt umber, green earth, ultramarine blue, black, and white.

Liquitex Polymer Medium - a solution primarily distributed as medium and varnish for Liquitex Artist's Colors and other Liquitex products. It thins with water and becomes insoluble upon drying. It is non-yellowing and adheres to any non-greasy surface. It proves to be an excellent adherent agent for thin papers.

The paintings described, and others presented for this thesis are

entirely experimental. Time will determine their permanency. As in all work of this character, if it is approached with a knowledge of the materials and methods of application involved it can prove successful.

These notes on experimental painting are here presented with the prospect of sharing the information gained with other interested persons.

Figure I MATERIALS USED IN TWELVE EXPERIMENTAL PAINTINGS

| | MATERIALS | Painting # 1 | Painting # 2 | Painting # 3 | Painting # 4 |
|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| PANELS | Masonite - tempered | | | | |
| | Masonite - untempered | | | | |
| | Upson board | | | | |
| PAINTS | Rubber base paint (primer) | | | | |
| | Rubber base paint | | | | |
| | Watercolor | | | | |
| | Oil | | | | |
| | Flat black enamel | | | | |
| | Tempra - wax binder | | | | |
| | Joint cement | | | | |
| TEXTURES | Water putty | | | | |
| | Gesso | | | | |
| | Sand | | | | |
| | Iron filings | | | | |
| | Burlap | | | | |
| | Screen wire | | | | |
| | Paper towel | | | | |
| | Tissue paper | | | | |
| | Japanese paper | | | | |
| | Aluminum foil | | | | |
| ADHERENTS | Contact Cement | | | | |
| | Polymer medium | | | | |
| | Elmer's glue | | | | |

indicate

| Painting # 3 | Painting # 4 | Painting # 5 | Painting # 6 | Painting # 7 | Painting # 8 | Painting # |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------|

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APPROVAL SHEET

A DISCUSSION OF A PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT WITH EXISTENTIALISM
AND ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM

by

Margaret Paris Haro

6331

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
The Woman's College of the University of North Carolina
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
May, 1962

Approved by

John P. Gedy with h
Director

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

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April 27, 1962
Date of Examination

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Introduction

This discussion of existentialism and abstract expressionism is developed from an understanding that has emerged from a personal involvement with each. These involvements have shared a similar and inescapable reality: the encounter with one has not occurred because of the encounter with the other. Existentialism and abstract expressionism are not totally similar in themselves. The encounters resulting from an involvement with each are similar in the nature of their demands and claims on the individual. And in light of this similarity I have developed this discussion. I have approached existentialism as a school of philosophy and abstract expressionism as a school of painting in order to clarify and objectify my personal involvement with each: however, existentialism transcends the "school" concept in that it philosophizes about actuality rather than attempting to bring it about (through philosophizing); and abstract expressionism transcends the idea of a central visual concern - that which forms a school or movement - in that it rejects the necessity for this and finds meaning in an attitude about or approach to the process of painting.

The separate discussions of abstract expressionism and existentialism as well as the joint discussion represent only the point at which I find myself in an understanding of them through involvement and participation; these discussions are not inclusive expositions and do not represent a plateau or end point in the realization of either. Neither are

these discussions summaries of the ideas and activity within each movement; these discussions are an articulation of a personal encounter with each and an objective exploration of the particular type of experiences that have emerged from the encounters.

The discussion of existentialism will take the form of an internal dialogue with various points of view: rather than interpreting or speaking as though it should be interpreted in this way, I will be articulating an understanding of existentialism. This understanding is initially the result of literary encounters - both with the philosophical writers who fall within the nebulous boundaries of this movement and with the fiction writers who appear to be describing existential encounters as variously understood. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand existentialism without a personal involvement that transcends the capacity to appreciate any philosophy and extends into the area of one's actual existence. Literary encounters with existentialism need the added dimension of personal participation and interpretation of literary encounters have enabled us to focus on particular details of my personal experience.

The ideas and reflections of such philosophical writers as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Martin Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Paul Tillich and such fiction writers as Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, J. D. Salinger, Walt Whitman, Dylan Thomas, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote have stimulated and enriched my introspective focus: however, these remarks are not a critical analysis or critique of the ideas and individual approaches of these writers.¹ Rather, these remarks about existentialism may be seen as an objective appraisal of a personal

A Discussion of Existentialism

The discussion of existentialism will take the form of an internal dialogue with various points of view: rather than interpreting or speaking on behalf of particular existential writers, I will be articulating my own understanding of existentialism. This understanding is initially the result of literary encounters - both with the philosophical writers who fall within the nebulous boundaries of this movement and with the fiction writers who appear to be describing existential encounters as they describe the drama of human existence. It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand existentialism without a personal involvement that transcends the empathy necessary to approach any philosophy and extends into the area of one's actual existence. Literary encounters with existentialism need the added dimension of personal participation and introspection; my literary encounters have enabled me to focus on particular details of my personal experiences.

The ideas and reflections of such philosophical writers as Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, Soren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, Martin Buber, Nicolas Berdyaev, Paul Tillich and such fiction writers as Ernest Hemingway, Franz Kafka, J. D. Salinger, Walt Whitman, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Nikos Kazantzakis, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote have stimulated and enriched my introspective focus: however, these remarks are not a critical summary or critique of the ideas and individual approaches of these writers.¹ Rather, these remarks about existentialism may be seen as an objective appraisal of a personal

involvement that in turn has drawn from the reflections of others engaging in the same sort of involvement.

Such an approach to existentialism leads to a discussion that extends beyond a concern about the diversities among the existential writers and the differences, both in form and content, in their expression that, in part, may be attributed to the differences in the national, social, religious, and intellectual heritage of each. Existentialism itself contains a "timeless sensibility" that transcends historical preoccupations and that finds more significance in the dialogue of the individual with his experiences than the analysis of them.² In other words, existentialism can be discussed apart from the history of civilization or an analysis of the experiences of an individual in relation to his times. Existentialism sees the individual as more than a reflection of his times.

Existentialism differs from most schools of philosophy in that it repudiates the necessity for a system of beliefs, breaking away from traditional philosophy as well as finding its content in a concern that evades precise definition. Existentialism does not describe or define a main proposition. It recognizes whatever proposition is impending to the individual. It sees man as being free to establish his own proposition and paradoxically equally free to establish no proposition, i.e., no set of moral, ethical, and economic guides. However, existentialism does not place man in a vacuum of freedom. It recognizes the fact that man seeks to understand the meaning of his existence. In his attempt to understand he involves himself in a search, and in this search he discovers that there are many possibilities to ascribe as the meaning for existence, even the possibility that existence has no meaning apart from

whatever the individual engages in at a particular moment. The individual is faced with the necessity either of making a choice and accepting this choice as the meaning of his existence (even temporarily) or of continuing his search indefinitely and accepting the continuing search - a decision for "no-choice" - as the meaning for his existence. Whatever his choice may be, it is this choice that gives the individual a direction which will forge his basic attitude or primary concern. The possibilities open to the individual as choices will depend on his situation geographically as well as historically and on the depth and breadth of his previous experiences. Existentialism recognizes that twentieth century man has more choices open to him than man in other eras yet at the same time, less given direction in making one.

Existentialism imposes no limitations on the choice that the individual makes; however existentialism does demand that the meaning the individual ascribes to existence be "authentic". The demand for authenticity is a basic concept in the existential apprehension of experience. Authenticity of experience can be seen as the delicate equilibrium between freedom and responsibility that is necessary to prevent an overpowering illusion from eclipsing reality. An overpowering illusion occurs when the delicate equilibrium has been disturbed by pursuing freedom to the exclusion of responsibility. Whereas the individual has the freedom to choose his own "proposition", he has the equal responsibility of keeping his proposition from trespassing on the freedom of others. Such responsibility points neither to a negative nor positive proposition in terms of the status quo or popular choices of the time. (Existentialism neither affirms nor condemns traditional values and propositions.)

Such responsibility necessitates a sensitivity to one's own self and an honest appraisal of one's subsequent relations with others.

Existentialism also may be seen as an understanding of the exhortation coming from literary and artistic sources, that perplexity is present in life, that it must be apprehended in order to experience fully the fact and nature of one's humanity. To reject this fact is to limit the scope of human experience and to betray the immensity of this scope. In the twentieth century this exhortation has found statement through means which traditionally have been the reflection rather than the direct expression of a philosophy. These means are the literary forms that the existentialists have used. (I am including the fiction writers who describe existential encounters but claim no deliberate or conscious affiliation with the movement.) The fact that narration has served as important a vehicle as exposition is significant: the perplexity present in life is realized or grasped as much by the senses as by the intellect. The sensory experiences are not only as valid as the rational ones but are necessary to understand the nature of one's own humanity and the scope of human experience. Existentialism holds that sensory experiences have a meaning above pleasure and gratification (however, it does not deny that these should be present); existentialism affirms that these experiences can add a depth and breadth to one's search for meaning in existence not possible through intellectual experiences alone. Yet, these sensory experiences must be "authentic". Although the individual is freed of moral and ethical concerns, he must not trespass the freedom of others.

Novels and plays can convey this new dimension of philosophy with an emphasis not possible in essays. In my personal opinion the novel is the most appropriate form for a dynamic statement of existentialism, for it allows expression of the multiplicity of influences and choices that confront the individual as he searches for meaning in his existence, as well as the span of time necessary to make this expression forcefully "realistic". Descriptions of human situations, of individual existential encounters can emphatically insist on the perplexity present and can graphically present the difficulties and frustrations that arise as the individual seeks to understand the meaning of his existence.

The search for meaning in the perplexity (which is a result of the many possibilities open to the individual as choices) of each present moment is at the heart of existentialism. There are no a prioris to this process, neither are there predetermined results or ends points. If motivation is present, it is the desire for freedom from concern for absolutes. Existentialism rejects the necessity for given absolutes, a single absolute as well as absolute values. Existence transcends the ethical and moral realm as this realm is not only limited but limiting as compared with the reality of existence.

The particular and even isolated details of an experience become important, for in the detail the fact of existence may be more intensified, thus the perplexity more fully realized, than in the total experience. Experiences, become transparent in that there is no actual time break or even sequence (except circumstantial) to them. Choices are made only at those times the individual feels the necessity for making

them, and these times may be the times of least crisis. The need for a choice arises only out of a conflict realized by the individual and not necessarily out of one imposed on him. Therefore, existence is defined at given points only by its momentary relationship to events or arbitrary circumstances.

Through a discussion of particular existential encounters - such as some contemporary novelists have done - a better understanding of existence may be gained; however, each existential encounter is different as the proposition impending to the individual is different from person to person and may be different for an individual from situation to situation.

A Discussion of Abstract Expressionism

An understanding of abstract expressionism can only result from encounters with the wide range of visual experiences found within this movement. These visual experiences will naturally produce some type of reflection, but conclusions about abstract expressionism must arise from the "seen" rather than the "thought" or "read". Because of the diversity of the artists that find consideration in reference to this term, abstract expressionism demands looking and re-looking; it demands the time necessary for familiarity, even intimacy. Abstract expressionism sees little separation between the viewer and the participant (painter): the viewer becomes an empathic participant by fact of his looking and the painter, at times, must look with cool detachment and critical unfamiliarity at his work. Of both are demanded an initial commitment for whatever involvement may be necessary to "get at" and "get in" the painting. However, an understanding of abstract expressionism does not arise by discussing it from the point of view of either a painter or a nonpainter; neither is abstract expressionism understood through an analytical approach. One may only share that to which the sum of his visual experiences points (whether they arise from empathic or actual participation).

My understanding of abstract expressionism has arisen from an attempt to "see" the pictorialized concerns of the artists who belong to this movement and to give visual expression to my own concerns. Both my painting and my looking have reinforced and stimulated each other.

The influences which have been important to my understanding of abstract expressionism have been of a situational nature - arising from what was present in total situations, rather than the "art aspect" alone. Although these situations have presented opportunities for encountering the personalities of other painters (both teachers and students) and inclusive samples of recognized contemporary painting, the element of freedom of expression in these situations seems more important; for it has allowed me to respond and to make visual decisions apart from any pre-determined standards or values. These situations have also provided opportunities for encountering the world of nature and the world of man's creations and distortions with the same freedom from traditional responses and directions. Influences of an ideational nature do not appear as important to me as those that have initially arisen from visual encounters, for ideas often distort what must first be experienced in the realm of the senses. In understanding abstract expressionism I have tried to use ideas and information only as secondary aids to reinforce or help to explain sensory responses and decisions.

The term abstract expressionism embraces many different visual approaches in contemporary painting. These approaches are related generally by the fact that the presentation of recognizable objects is not the primary concern of the artist. In its present stages of development abstract expressionism can be seen as a final break with the storytelling role which was once assigned to or expected of painting where the artist presented a scene or event in naturalistic ("realistic") but romanticized terms. If objects or figures do appear, they have not been subjected to any pre-determined visual discipline or any specific type

of abstracting process. The personal idiom chosen by the artist is paramount, and this personal idiom may or may not include the use, at any point in the painting, of objects.

Abstract expressionism has no pre-determined dialectic. A central visual concern is not present, as has been with other art movements or schools of painting. Sam Hunter says the artists engaged in this type of painting feel it is best defined by:

its climate of vitality, and a spontaneous ideal of freedom rather than by any prescribed technical procedures, shared subject matter, program or master-disciple relationship.¹

Harold Rosenberg extends this idea by saying:

This new painting does not constitute a school. To form a school in modern times not only is a new painting consciousness needed but a consciousness of that consciousness - and even an insistence on certain formulas. A school is the result of the linkage of practice with terminology - different paintings are affected by the same word. In the American vanguard the words . . . belong to the individual artists. What they think in common is represented only by what they do separately.²

Beyond these general points of relationship mentioned, the various approaches of abstract expressionism can only be discussed together by observing the similarities which seem to exist among them. These similarities are the result of a type of working process in which contemporary artists almost simultaneously found themselves involved. An understanding of the various phases of each artists' working process (including his emotional sets) is not as important as the recognition that an integral part of the painting is the activity that produced it. The result, as Rosenberg has said, is not a picture on a canvas but an event.³ Therefore, aesthetic concerns are subordinated to the

act of painting - what Rosenberg has called a "gesturing with materials".⁴ The act of painting can be seen as a series of encounters of one set of materials (paint, sand, etc.) with another set of materials (canvas, paper, wood, etc.). The artist may direct these encounters or he may only initiate them in that he lets the materials work as their own state (i.e. thick or thin paint) directs. The artist, however, in one sense always directs these encounters, for he has the final decision of when to stop - even what may be a chemical reaction of paint and solvents. The object d'art concept cannot apply to abstract expressionistic paintings, for the painting represents only the point at which the artist stopped his activity or the activity of the materials. It does not represent any final point. The painting in this sense is "unfinished", yet it can still speak with the authority of a complete statement. Mr. Hunter says,

Its (abstract expressionism's) productions characteristically bear the mark of the incomplete, of vital approximations, and end with an open question. . . .⁵

He goes on to interpret this as a means "to insure its creators adequate liberty of gesture and to discourage mere mannerism".⁶ Whatever the reasons may be, the painting becomes not a result of the working process but a part of it. This idea is reinforced by the attitude many contemporary artists have about sketching: sketching has become its own experiences and may be done at any time in the working process. It is not longer seen as one of preparations for a painting as the cartoon originally was. Sketching may only be an investigation of the possible directions open to the artist at a particular point as he pursues his own approach.

As has been stated, abstract expressionism is understood through visual encounters, and if similarities, resulting from the working process, do exist, they are observed similarities, arising from visual comparisons and generalizations; however, as was pointed out by Mr. Rosenberg, the importance of any similar considerations is the individual use to which each artist puts them.

Size seems to be an important consideration in the work of the abstract expressionists. The dimensions of some paintings have become so large that they require the same type of visual consideration given to a mural, i.e. Jackson Pollock's Number 12 measures 101 1/2" by 89". However, the consideration is not in terms of large canvases alone; it includes some feeling of necessity for this largeness. This necessity arises because the vital, spontaneous working process often requires a large surface on which to work as well as from, what appears to be, a desire to capture a certain type of space. The space of abstract expressionism has become more than a matter of the second or third dimension; it has become an attempt to embrace a vastness beyond human dimensions, a sort of cosmic dimension. This new concept of space presents a significant paradox: while the attention given to the creation of a visual vastness is an objective (visual) matter, the motivation for this and the attempt itself become a very subjective matter. Expressing this in terms of one artist, Harriet Janis has said, "The space in De Kooning's canvases is his own personal space, as physical as his body, as metaphysical as his mind".⁷

Such space allows for the intrusion of a "time" that apprehends existence apart from the dimension of chronological sequences but that

paradoxically is not the calculated essence of time (existence) observed in the work of such painters as Rembrandt: rather it is an immediate expression of the moment's meaning. Harriet Janis has summed up this time-space relationship in the work of De Kooning: "Here, then, is the De Kooning space: taut, depthless, stretched, a perspectiveless panorama where time and space merge into doomed immediacy".⁸

Abstract expressionism finds significance in the use of both vivid and startlingly contrasting colors and the spatial relationships created by monochromes and black and white. While abstract expressionism is not the first movement of this century to make use of pure or brilliant colors, it allows these colors to exist as entities. The vivid colors have no reference to "the real world of objects"; their reference is to the "complex" created by their relationship with other colors and to a surface movement created by the relationship of color to form, i.e., Grace Hartigan on the one hand and Mark Rothko on the other. While the colors exist as entities within defined areas, they find meaning in a relationship with other colors and forms.

Mr. Hunter suggests that monochrome painting is more abstract than color and dramatizes the two-dimensional character of modern painting.⁹ While the use of monochrome colors can speak of a facility in handling large areas, it also speaks of a concern for a total image that is not easily broken into separate components. This is particularly noticeable in the monochrome work of Jackson Pollock - where color is denied to give attention to the overall movement of the streams of paint and the enormous space thereby captured.

Other artists have chosen to work only in black and white (or some little color surrounded, almost hidden by black) to create brutal thrusts of energies as well as subtle spacial relationships. Franz Kline's black and white paintings refer more to a concern for spatial dynamism than to a concern for color relationships per se, while in the "Positive-Negative Series" of De Kooning subtle "color" and spatial relationships are created by the relationships of black areas to white areas and to other black areas. Balcolm Green uses white alone to create nebulous areas and to cover or half-cover existing forms.

In abstract expressionism there appears to be no central concern about the use of color, as there was about size and space. These remarks speak primarily of the individual use of color by each artist that is a direct outgrowth of his individual working process. The unifying point, then, is that the use of color is inextricably bound with the artist's own working process.

The working process and individual concerns that arise from it not only direct the choice of color relationships but the manner in which the pigment itself shall be applied to the canvas. With Pollock the approach lay in multiple streams and dribbles of paint that crossed and recrossed each other, while with Kline the black and white pigment is applied in harsh, forceful strokes. The working process of abstract expressionism has stressed a spontaneous approach. The concept of immediacy has become significant; attention is given to the accidental, and value is placed on the unplanned. The length of time involved and the particular technique used are important only as they serve the personal idiom of the artist. The authoritative value traditionally

assigned to "time" and "technique" were rejected in favor of the direction of the moment's awarenesses.

Consequently the painter's relationship with his work has become different. He is no longer the "master" in the sense that he works from a sketch to a preconceived end; he no longer "executes" paintings; he dialogues with his painting rather than imposing visual or emotional preconceptions on it. The painting is allowed to speak; the artist is allowed the freedom to listen, to decide, to respond. All of these may be done in only a few minutes, for the discipline (if such must exist) for the artist lies in a sensitivity to what is present in his painting and in his ability to make critical decisions. The response must be sure - if not swift - else the total moment's awarenesses escape him. The artist is, therefore, forced into a deeper communion with himself - not for the sake of "confessions" (in the sense of self-therapy) but for the source of choice and action. His basis for choice and action is the relationship of his self and the demands of the moment; he cannot rely on the past, even the immediate past. Mr. Hunter has said:

The painting becomes a denuded, structural exposure in time and space of the artistic self engaged in a series of critical esthetic episodes, choices and decisions.¹⁰

He goes on to say:

It is against this background of the drama of the individual revealing himself in the act of painting, and staking his identity on the act of painting itself, that abstract expressionism makes its most profound claims to seriousness.¹¹

Conclusions from a Personal Involvement with Existentialism and Abstract Expressionism

Before the basis for this joint discussion is established, it is necessary to understand that existentialism and abstract expressionism are not the same kind of phenomenon. The difference between them extends beyond the fact that, generally speaking, one is philosophy and the other, a visual art form. (and this difference is a characteristic of our time: the departmentalization of knowledge and activity into "fields".) Initially existentialism and abstract expressionism belong to different realms of inquiry and activity. Existentialism may be seen as one of the Weltanschauung of the twentieth century - although it is not only this. Abstract expressionism, as an art form, is aware of the numerous Weltanschauungs of this era that together form the ideational content of the twentieth century - aware, in the sense that the individual cannot escape his historical milieu and in exploring his inner self indirectly focuses on his times. Abstract expressionism, however, is not the result of existentialism and Marxism and materialism, etc. These "world views" separately or together do not serve as the "cause" of the arts; yet in some way the arts are aware of these "world views," and through the channels opened as the individual dialogues with himself and others, statements related to the impending concerns of the times are made. Therefore, because of this difference between existentialism and abstract expressionism, this

discussion is removed from any discussion of "art as experience". Not only is the "experience" of existentialism of a different kind from the activity-reflection experiences to which Dewey referred, but also existentialism makes no demand for, even reference to, continuity and interaction, the two criteria Dewey used to define what he meant by experience and by which the validity of experience could be judged.¹

In this discussion I have attempted to transcend the difference between existentialism and abstract expressionism by approaching them through my personal involvement with each, rather than trying to set up a parallel or establishing a relationship between them: to set up a parallel would be to assume that these are the same kind of phenomenon and, while there may be a relationship, I am not proposing one of cause and effect or of a conscious and mutual exchange of influence between the two. The discussion of existentialism and abstract expressionism comes from the result of my personal involvement with each, rather than from the preconceived idea that a parallel or relationship must exist. As was stated in the introduction the separate discussions of abstract expressionism and existentialism as well as the joint discussion represent only the point at which I find myself presently in understanding them through involvement and participation. The purpose of this paper is not the statement of a final realization of either.

Existentialism and abstract expressionism are not totally similar in themselves; however, an involvement with each leads to certain encounters which are similar in the nature of their demands and claims on the individual. If these encounters are similar, one must be similar to the other - in other words, one must be compared or dealt with

in terms of the other. This necessitates the recognition of the priority of one - in the sense that an understanding of the encounters of one leads to a recognition of the content of the encounters of the other. My understanding of existential encounters enables me to understand the substance of the encounters of abstract expressionism; however, this does not mean that existentialism is superior to abstract expressionism or that existentialism contains the substance of abstract expressionism. Rather it means that I have chosen to understand the similarity between existential and abstract expressionistic encounters through the realities to which existentialism has exposed me.

Existentialism has not attempted a social or historical diagnosis; but by centering its concern on man and his search for the meaning of his existence, it has indicated not only a direction for life but also a means by which life may become meaningful to the individual. Existentialism does not plot a particular path for the individual to follow; neither does it set up guide posts by which the individual may judge the validity of the meaning he has chosen to ascribe to existence. The individual is given freedom and exhorted to be responsible, that his choice may be authentic. Therefore, the individual, stripped of the traditional methods of judging in terms of absolutes or prescribed truths, is forced to dialogue with himself, with others, and, thereby, in turn, with his existence. The dialogue forms the substance of the existential encounter. It is through dialoguing that one is able to abandon the preconceptions about one's self and others that often create discrepancies in understanding fully one's self. To refuse to relinquish one's preconceptions and yet to seek to communicate with others

means that one is engaged in a struggle to rearrange the whole of reality in order to preserve a false understanding of one's self. In summary it can be said that preconceptions about one's self or others are totally incompatible with reality. It is through the acceptance of one's own as well as the world's continuing metamorphosis that one can have the zest as well as the insight necessary to find meaning in existence.

In abstract expressionistic endeavors the artist's encounters become "existential" as he dialogues with his canvas. He must bring a willingness to put aside visual or emotional preconceptions as well as a willingness to look at his canvas as the beginning of a new relation with reality in which there are no absolutes, no final points, in which there is only the fact of his encounter with his canvas. He must let his canvas become the world (the context of his existence) and himself the channel for a visual expression of the complexity present (his particular awareness of this whole).

The encounters of both existentialism and abstract expressionism make a demand on the individual for dialoguing, that the meaning arising from the encounter be authentic. Especially in terms of abstract expressionism this means that painting transcends simple craftsmanship, the conditioning circumstances, and the passing historical phase. As does the existential encounter, so the encounter with the canvas comes to grips with the permanent crisis of existence: that of finding meaning.

Existentialism makes no prior commitments. Rather existentialism may be seen as the search for a commitment and the finding of that commitment. Abstract expressionism involves itself in the same dilemma:

that of searching not only for the means to express but more important, the very place in experience (existence) at which we find ourselves. The art of abstract expressionism is a recognition that the mastery of certain techniques cannot serve as either means or ends, that ends grow out of means, that the working process itself (and in existentialism this is the process of searching), initially at least, must serve as the meaning and purpose of the endeavor. This means that abstract expressionism must take an existential stand: since there are no prescribed means or ends, there is the possibility that the meaning may be revealed in the working process, and there is the equal possibility it may not be. A "rescue" occurs when the individual finds a meaning, recognizing that this meaning may change in that it should be open to change.

In ascribing to the working process such importance, both existentialism and abstract expressionism point out that the whole of reality is not to be captured in one experience or on one canvas; neither is it captured through one approach to experiences or the canvas. One canvas cannot be a complete statement of what painting is about, as one experience cannot contain a meaning adequate to be ascribe to all of existence. The dialoguing of both existentialism and abstract expressionism point out that reality is incomprehensible if it is seen in terms of absolutes. Reality is something to be understood in terms of an involvement: a search for a commitment and the commitment itself. Therefore, the important thing is not to capture reality but to partake of it.

Statement of the Relation of the Paintings Presented to
the Discussion

The paintings that accompany this paper, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Master of Fine Arts, are not directly related to the paper. They represent the point at which I presently find myself in my involvement with abstract expressionism. I do not see them as allegorical statements of existentialism, i.e., "being", "non-being", "authenticity", etc. If they appear to embody something of existentialism, this is due, not to a conscious or deliberate effort, but to the fact that they are a result of visual concerns, stimulated by self-communication and dialoguing. They "philosophize about actuality" only as all art does, they reflect a "search for meaning in existence" only in that they represent individual encounters with a particular approach to an art form.

List of Paintings

1. Dialogue. February, 1962. Oil, 40" x 36 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
2. Community. February, 1962. Oil, 40" x 32".
3. I go there. March, 1962. Oil, 40" x 26".
4. Community is belief. March, 1962. Casein, 24" x 18".
5. Community is a coming together. March, 1962. Casein, 23 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 18".
6. He Is Not Here. March, 1962. Oil, 36" x 30".
7. Coexistence. March, 1962. Oil, 36" x 27 $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
8. The Process-Search. March, 1962. Casein, 24" x 15".
9. By the way of no Knowledge. April, 1962. Oil, 34" x 32".
10. Recognitions. April, 1962. Oil, 40 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 35".
11. Green Christmas-White Easter. April, 1962. Oil, 46" x 36".
12. Passes Away. April, 1962. Oil, 42" x 30".

Section II: A Discussion of Instantiation.

I find that these fiction writers particularly are describing existential encounters through the main characters or speakers of their works. These characters are seen in the process of discovering their Self. Although they engage in psychological investigations, their concern does not stop with the ego. They appear to realize that the meaning for their Self (and, in turn, their existence) is to be found outside an understanding of their awareness (sub-conscious).

For the phrase "timeless meaningful" I am indebted to Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, New York: Meridian Books, 1957, p. 12. Although the way in which I use this phrase is different from the way in which Mr. Kaufmann uses it, I found this particular wording appropriately successful.

Section III: A Discussion of Abstract Expressionism.

1 Hunter, Sam, *Modern American Painting and Sculpture*, New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1958, p. 119.

2 Rosenberg, Har, *Abstract Expressionism*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961, p. 29.

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

5 Hunter, op. cit., p. 119.

6 *Ibid.*

7 Jaffe, Harriet and Bleach, Edith, *The Abstract*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1960, p. 57.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

9 Hunter, op. cit., p. 119.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 152-53.

NOTES AND FOOTNOTE REFERENCES

Notes and Footnote References

Section I: A Discussion of Existentialism.

- ¹ I feel that these fiction writers particularly are describing existential encounters through the main characters or speakers of their works. These characters are seen in the process of discovering their Self. Although they engage in psychological investigations, their concern does not stop with the ego. They appear to realize that the meaning for their Self (and, in turn, their existence) is to be found outside an understanding of their neuroses (sub-conscious).
- ² For the phrase "timeless sensibility" I am indebted to Walter Kaufmann, Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre, New York: Meridian Books, 1957, p. 12. Although the way in which I use this phrase is different from the way in which Mr. Kaufmann uses it, I found this particular wording appropriately meaningful.

Section II: A Discussion of Abstract Expressionism.

- ¹ Hunter, Sam, Modern American Painting and Sculpture, New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc., ^c 1959, p. 149.
- ² Rosenberg, Harold, The Tradition of the New, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1961, p. 25.
- ³ Idem.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 26.
- ⁵ Hunter, op. cit., p. 149.
- ⁶ Idem.
- ⁷ Janis, Harriet and Blesch, Rudi, De Kooning, New York: Grove Press, Inc., ^c 1960, p. 57.
- ⁸ Ibid., p. 59.
- ⁹ Hunter, op. cit., p. 146.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 151.
- ¹¹ Ibid., pp. 152-53.

Section III: Conclusions from a Personal Involvement with Existentialism and Abstract Expressionism.

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This thesis has been approved by the following
committees of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the
Woman's College of the University of North Carolina,
Greensboro, North Carolina.

by

Mary Ruth Linville Jumper

Robert E. Pratt
Thesis Director

A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School at
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Approved by

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This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the Woman's College of the University of North Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina.

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NATURE, THE ELEMENTS AND MAN

Introduction

The subject matter of my painting is nature and the elements and my response to them. I try to make the painting big and open and leave room for the viewer's response to what I have felt.

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... are as detached from nature as they like to think. Sometimes people seem to me to like to deny that they are as close to nature as they are. Every spring, old and young alike abandon their shoes before the ground is warm because of a false sense of warmth from the sun. The things touched by the elements of light and heat, the surface of the water, the crust of the ground, are warmed. The dandelions have been pulled out of the cold, the mock fruit trees bloom, and I feel that if they knew how chilly the nights would be they might regret their haste, but like the people who have taken their shoes off, they can't go back to winter. The painting which I am doing is based on the change of seasons and the movement of the elements in the different seasons. Man himself, his mind, his moods, his desires, his actions change with the stirring of growth and death. Man has become so cocky they refuse to

believe they don't have some say-so about what happens in nature. I mean that man can predict hurricanes and name them but as they come, the boats are moved and the people evacuated.

NATURE, THE ELEMENTS AND MAN

What man has managed to do is live with nature. This reasoning is so simple that it seems unnecessary to explain and yet it is

Introduction

The subject matter of my painting is nature and the elements and my response to them. I try to make the painting big and open enough so that there is room for the viewer's response to what I have felt.

I do not think of man, nature and the elements as dis-united things. I question that twentieth century people who live in houses and ride in automobiles with dirty glass windows are as detached from nature as they like to think. Sometimes people seem to me to like to deny that they are as close to nature as they are. Every spring, old and young alike abandon their shoes before the ground is warm because of a false sense of warmth from the sun. The things touched by the elements of light and heat, the surface of the water, the crust of the ground, are warmed. The dandelions have been pulled out of the cold, the mock fruit trees bloom, and I feel that if they knew how chilly the nights would be they might regret their haste, but like the people who have taken their shoes off, they can't go back to winter. The painting which I am doing is based on the change of seasons and the movement of the elements in the different seasons. Man himself, his mind, his moods, his desires, his actions change with the stirring of growth and death. Men have become so cocky they refuse to

believe they don't have some say-so about what happens in nature. I mean that man can predict hurricanes and name them but as they come, the boats are moved and the people evacuated. What man has managed to do is live with nature. This reasoning is so simple that it seems unnecessary to explain and yet it is an attitude which causes my paintings to be as they are. It also causes me to wonder why individual statements in such media as words or stone and in such forms as canvas or buildings are so different.

Painting for me comes out of joy and bursts forth in energy that races with the light. Sometimes I am the creator and the forms grow strong as the brush and I race with the wind. Rather than terminate the effort the canvas edge seems to set free the force. The forms that grow compete but do not crowd for there is room in depth. There is another me and this me sits on a wave or knoll and watches a resting nature. Sometimes the sun is not shining or the wind is not blowing; clouds are not gathering and there is no rain. Sometimes the sun is shining and one is not aware of it, or the wind is blowing and it's so gentle that it can be mistaken for sound; the clouds are too far away to count and all the rain water is in the oceans. At these times I am quiet and the painting is pure. By pure I mean there is not a struggle in the painting. At other times the paintings struggle with the painter. Then I would like to retreat to my wooden-stool-and-paint-box and the smell of turpentine. I don't smell turpentine when I am actively working on a painting because my imagination overpowers the reality. The

minute I put down a big brush and sit on that box and look at the painting I smell the turpentine. This is true only during the working process because when the painting is finished it again overpowers the painter who becomes the viewer and is not the painter any longer. This must be qualified: this experience is true only when the painting is certain. Certainty comes to a painter after the painter has ceased to be afraid of exposing not the lack of technical skills but the self.

Sculpture is almost a plodding. There is time even while working to change the face. Painting moves faster, so you tend to crowd yourself and there is less time to think.

When I first began to paint I thought it had to be done with a tight grip on the brush. I thought painting had to be labored. I worried my first paintings into existence. I could not go on painting in this way. Collages were not the solution but the transition. Old horse, burlap and a bag of sewing scraps taught me the freedom of planes and the use of over-lay to build and strengthen a flat surface. These materials also had the quality of being transparent. The transparency makes it possible to accept the limits of the canvas in depth. Because of the texture and formation of these materials (which could be cut and torn) they had to give way to a more painterly process. The effects given me by the transparency of the materials used in the collages can be magnified by the use of pigment thinned with turpentine. The wash glaze frees the wits to wilds of illusion.

MY PAINTING

Painters begin in many ways. I began as a sculptor. There is a reality about sculpture that gave me sure footedness. It is like climbing a mountain with cleats. I found sculpture a strong medium. Until I had worked a length of time with clay, wood, stone and metal, I could not liberate the forces necessary to paint. Sculpture is almost a plodding. There is time even while working to change the face. Painting moves faster, so you tend to crowd yourself and there is less time to think.

When I first began to paint I thought it had to be done with a tight grip on the brush. I thought painting had to be labored. I worried my first paintings into existence. I could not go on painting in this way. Collages were not the solution but the transition. Old hose, burlap and a bag of sewing scraps taught me the freedom of planes and the use of over-lay to build and strengthen a flat surface. These materials also had the quality of being transparent. The transparency makes it possible to accept the limits of the canvas in depth. Because of the texture and formation of these materials (which could be cut and torn) they had to give way to a more painterly process. The effects given me by the transparency of the materials used in the collages can be magnified by the use of pigment thinned with turpentine. The wash glaze frees the wits to wilds of illusion.

Although the canvas is two dimensional, one can work with the restriction—the transparency of the wash glaze gives a feeling which does not have a post to post relationship to prove. One can then experiment with perspective and light.

Though one sees in perspective, it is, of course, not wholly necessary to treat space in a regimented manner. Part of the pleasure of painting nature and the excitement of landscape as subject matter has been that I have taken the liberty of moving planes forward or backward, choosing at will, intensifying or eliminating spacial relationships.

The taking of liberties is equally important in the treatment of light. The source of light does not have to be defined. Shadows can be on the wrong side, or not there at all. I frequently like light from all four corners of the surface. Space and light can exist simultaneously on the canvas. I think a lot of the space is made by the light and the light moves the space forward or backward. I can therefore feel no reservations about showing the canvas. The canvas does not have to exist for me. It can be an earth symbol because I can dig into it. An unprimed canvas then becomes a working surface.

There is just enough shade of difference between an unprimed canvas and white to help with the preliminary definition of space in light and light in space. The unprimed canvas is inviting; it has a warmth. It is as if the sized surface is in motion. The white, on the other hand, makes one reluctant; it

is chilling. Though I have disallowed its usefulness, the white can be a clarifying agent and can quietly tie together opposing elements. The opposing elements along the same line are just like enough to fight. So the white contributes serenity and is a field for struggle without losing the energy of the painter. In fact, I think white intensifies and controls the response.

The earth colors that often seem to me to lack life or appeal in thickness contain a buoyancy when used as glazes. They can be used as a melting of color to signify the challenge nature acknowledges as its own. One plant rarely outdoes another. (If a bush doesn't have purple blooms then it has yellow striped leaves. Or a beautiful plant with white striped leaves is thorny.) While white is for me almost the symbol of the elements, yellow ochre or raw umber are growing things. My black or leaf mold is often a composite of these colors. It doesn't necessarily take a flamboyant red to excite me any more. I am not opposed to its character but I am opposed to what I once meant when I used it. It was almost as if I had purposely to start a fight to get into a painting.

I now get into painting by the use of line. The word line can mean a fine thing. It can also mean for me a plane. For instance, I may put in a whole mountain with a swatch. This swatch often includes birds and trees. I feel their presence and I sometimes name the paintings for them, although in the painting they are only conspicuous by their absence. It is

must define the scene in which I think of each. The elements are the forces man cannot touch. This does not mean they do

the exception of the rule for me to paint without them because when they are frightened away I am frightened away. Sometimes I track man in nature. He breaks many twigs and mires deep. The more complicated the painting the more apt I am to have projected in the painting process the awareness of man's having tampered with nature.

I do believe, however, that man is capable of oneness with nature. In honesty, I feel that he must struggle not to be. He has to work to permanently frighten and disturb. If it is possible to come in softly rather than with bravado and a splash, the quietness gets one the greatest present of all, an acceptance. In nature, where the creatures live by senses, an unobtrusive entrance is a compliment—unlike our man-made society where aggressiveness usually is a sword and acceptance. I cannot always have a oneness with nature because I frequently forget where I am. To me, the oneness is an ideal worth seeking.

Curved lines are an expression of this ideal. The fact that some things are not bowled over in the wake of the elements but the force slides past them can be stated as a respect for their right to be there as when the wind brushes by the leaves. The wind rarely rips through the leaves; it goes around them. Force lines may be curved because of my involvement with the elements.

For descriptive purposes, I separate the elements and nature. If I can take the license to separate these two, I must define the sense in which I think of each. The elements are the forces man cannot touch. This does not mean they do

not touch man. Wind, light, warmth, darkness, air, thunder, lightning, all defy the touch. Rain which touches man first is a between force and in it the life of man begins. Through rain he finds a consolation in something that touches him but that he can also touch. A painting is a similar consolation.

Nature for me takes in growth, seedling and alligators, kangaroo and water lillies. Although for description I separate the elements and nature I paint the presence of the elements in nature and nature in the elements because they are simultaneous forces. Nature has always capped the efforts of the artist except when the artist is willing to take a greater chance than nature. Man cannot take this chance unless he experiences a oneness with nature. It is not that it is so difficult to take the chance; it is that man does not know what nature is. About all I have been able to come up with in my painting is to say, "Hello there, I want to try, too." So I get an echo, "Who do you think you are?"

LIST OF PAINTINGS

1. Red Road oil
2. Ore Hill oil
3. Brown Mountain Lights oil
4. Buzzards Bay oil
5. Wind oil
6. Color in Space oil
7. A Thousand Mountains and No Footpath oil
8. Iron Mountain oil
9. A Spring Past oil