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THE USE OF SYMBOLIC LINE AS A MEANS TO COMPOSITION

by

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INTRODUCTION

To the artist, a painting is the result of an act of creation; to the observer, a painting is the source of a visual experience. To the latter, it provides a sensory stimulation; to the former, it is the result of stimuli, visual, emotional, or intellectual. The painting, then, exists as a third entity between the creator and the observer, a receiver from the one and a giver to the other.

The artist, however, is primarily concerned with the painting, not with the observer nor with communication. His concern is how to express through visual means the stimulation, the inner impulse, of which he is aware. He seeks to translate the intangible sense impression, or emotion, or idea into a tangible form which is both apprehended and realized through the vision. Thus, a painting comes into being, conditioned by all the variables present in the personality of the artist, his experience, and his means of expression.

If this concept of painting is accepted, it raises issues in respect to (1) the experiential element in painting, (2) painting as an expression, and (3) the means employed to unite the experience and the expression into a composition.

A complete treatment of these three ideas would constitute an exhaustive analysis such as is not here proposed. Since there are widely varied opinions on each of these matters, especially among contemporary artists, even a cursory survey of the numerous theories on these subjects would lead too far afield. What is necessary to state, however, is that they do exist and that each may be supported by its proponents. In order

to approach the third point and to present one means to composition, it is needful to discuss briefly the first and second ideas from a personalized viewpoint and to present at some length that particular means to composition - the use of the symbolic line.

CHAPTER I

THE EXPERIENTIAL ELEMENT IN PAINTING

The word experience carries a heavy overload of meaning. Principally, it conveys two general connotations: one, an experience,¹ by which is meant a response to a particular situation or condition; and two, the cumulative result of forces and pressures acting upon the individual over an extended period of time.

What we speak of as an experience is a point, an impact of some intensity upon the emotions so that the person feels a sort of suspension in time and space, in fact even in his own being, and is aware only of the acuteness of the stimuli which bear upon him. At such times, the senses are aquiver and responsive beyond their normal operation in routine daily life. This is not to say that such an experience may not occur in connection with daily life, but when it does occur, it is as a specific instance of awareness, of heightened sensitivity. We know then, and later in retrospect, that for those moments we were stirred in a particular and special way and that we were more keenly aware, our reactions more vivid, than usual. The causes of such awareness are many. They may arise from a visual excitation, from a situation which stirs the emotions, from mental stimulation. Their source may be objects or situations, natural phenomena, man-made things, movements, relationships, or the combination of any or all of these. Perhaps this describes what is referred to as the aesthetic

¹John Dewey, Art As Experience (New York: Minton, Balch and Company, 1934), pp. 35-37. Dewey uses this term with a similar, but not identical, meaning.

experience, though that term is more often used to apply to a somewhat more objective stirring of the senses than this.

This causative factor must be met by receptivity at that particular time, place, and condition. This response is the subjective factor, depending on the biological and psychological complexes of the individual. It accounts for the fact that certain stimuli excite the same person at one time and not at another and that differing individuals respond to some stimuli and not to others.

However, and this is the important idea in this connection, there is a certain universality in human response. Even though the causes of the experience may greatly differ and the response take a different form, the basic perceptions and responses are remarkably few and deep-lying. To acknowledge this is simply to recognize man's nature and to take into account his biological structure, including the senses, the emotions, and the mind; his environmental conditioning; and that transcendent quality of his being which is the total of these and yet which is more than the sum of them. It is within this realm of the super-sensory, the non-rational, that the deepest stirrings occur and that the response is most real. Psychologically, this is the realm of the subconscious,² but it is also more - it is the region of the spirit. It is in the subconscious and through the spiritual that the deepest apperceptions occur, through whatever channel they may arrive there. This fact coupled with the commonality of man's nature and heritage makes understandable the universal factor in human experience and gives credibility to the idea that the subconscious

²Louis Danz, The Psychologist Looks at Art (London; New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1937), pp. 158-169; on "subconscious-unconscious" in relation to art.

may apprehend with a greater clarity than the rational and conscious mind could ever do. Why this is so and for research and data to establish proof of such statements, the psychologist offers a scientific basis. Yet the validity of the statement will be generally recognized without the presentation of scientific factual data because the idea itself is one of those universally acknowledged realities. We are aware of its truth without the application of reason.

This raises the subject of ways of knowing. Certainly, it is an accepted fact that knowledge may be attained through mental processes and that one may understand facts and comprehend them through a mental assimilation in such a fashion that they become a part of the personality. However, there is another way of knowing, which is equally, if not more, convincing. This is by intuition - a means of awareness related to the subconscious and especially concerned with the senses and the emotions. One may perceive through the senses as doors to intellectual understanding, but one may also intuit through the subconscious more than the conscious intellect indicates. It is by intuitive knowing that the sensory perceptions, emotional involvements, and ideas overleap the reason, and by this process that we are aware of an experience. So it is also that we may acknowledge the universal qualities which all human beings in the deeplying strata of their natures are aware.

Of course, all of these ideas may obtain irrespective of painting. They are basic to human experience; but it is for this very reason that they are also basic to creative art of any kind and thus are the foundation for the painter's creation. For a painting springs from an experience - its conception.

As an experience is a point, so the cumulation of experiences, point to point, becomes a moving line - the stream of consciousness. By its direction, by the forces impinging upon it, by the points which repel or attract it, it moves. This is the inner personality - the totality of experience, motivated by its direction from within, progressing to new points, and acting within the frame of its environment, which in pictorial terms, constitutes the picture plane. Though each individual acts independently due to its own causative impulses, it is also affected and influenced both by the environmental factor and other "lines" moving within that environment.

So it is that there is both an individuality and an independence in cumulative experience, but there is also a dependence and a mutuality because of relationships. Single experiences produce the line of experience, yet its growth, its movement result both from what it has become and what additional points it includes within it. Experience is always complete, yet incomplete; static, yet potentially moving.

This constitutes the experiential element in painting. It is what the painter gives to the painting - his total experience resulting in his sensitivity to the stimuli producing the moment of intensity which moves him intuitively and with inexorable urgency to give expression to the inner impulse. It is this same element to which the observer, according to his experience, responds. The one creates by intuition, the other interprets by it, and herein lies the area of communication. What one may say, the other may not hear; yet, such is the universality of experience in our deepest-lying responses that what the artist expresses from such depth may speak to the depths of another whose outward experience may be

quite different. Each expresses and receives from his own nature. A painting may receive one expression from the artist and convey another to the observer on the obvious level of meaning, and yet on the subconscious level reach communication, each intuiting in the light of his own experience the expression common to both. Thus, different paintings reach to different personalities and the same painting may be given superficially differing interpretations though there are for each observer underlying meanings which have a common core.

It is this experiential element translated into expressive visual form which has characterized all great paintings, past and present. It is what makes them speak to us, some more than others, depending upon the sensibility of the artist and the sensitivity of the observer, upon the empathy³ between the two, and the effectiveness of the artist's means of expression. Why does an El Greco reach one and not another, a Michaelangelo or a Titian, a Picasso or a Leger, a Kandinsky or a Hofmann stir one and leave another cold? Why does a Rembrandt, with its full impact of emotional overtones, or a Mondrian with its cool precision, affect the same person so differently? The answer surely lies within what we have described as the experiential element.

³See Hans Hofmann, Search for the Real (Andover, Massachusetts: Addison Gallery of American Art, 1948), p. 67.

CHAPTER II

PAINTING AS AN EXPRESSION

Experience provides the motivation, but without an outward expression, the impulse is still-born. To give expression is to act and to produce a result that has a meaningful relationship to the motivation. The mode of expression depends upon the personality of the expressor and his consequent medium of expression.

Literature, music, the drama, the dance, painting - all art forms, have this common source, and on this level are interrelated. To the visual-minded, painting offers one medium of expression; and to the painter, its materials, formal elements, and manner of execution provide the maximum potential for expression and the highest satisfaction.

In the creative process, the painter is by alternate stages the expressor and the perceiver.⁴ The work grows, first by the intuitive action of the artist as he converts the materials of paint and canvas into a pictorial form corresponding to his need; and secondly, as he perceives this result at any given stage and makes adjustments to it. In this interactive process, the painting takes on a life of its own, creating its own demands and eventually reaches its own fulfillment.

Here, it must be noted that there must occur a real union between the expression and pictorial form; for it is upon the form that the expression depends. To give vent to a feeling is not at all the same as to

⁴Dewey, op. cit., p. 54.

make that feeling manifest through visual articulation.⁵ Also, to paint a reflection of an emotion upon other objects is not to portray that emotion. A human face contorted with the expression of grief merely records how a person looks under such conditions. It may evoke sympathy in us through memory and associations, but it has nothing to do with the intrinsic quality of form which is the carrier of the underlying impact. Actually, it may even be a "happy" picture with complete equilibrium and congenial harmonies. Depicting a horse at one moment of arrested motion does not cause the movement on the picture plane (e.g., "Horses Coming Out of the Sea" by Delacroix), nor an ostensibly calm landscape evoke a feeling of calmness (e.g., "Landschaft Mit Ruine" by Rembrandt).

Experience and expression are conjoined in pictorial form - the language of vision. This form may be arrived at by instantaneous visualization which is then transferred to the picture plane, or it may develop during the painting process. In either case, it is accomplished through what Moholy-Nagy calls "intuitive assurances." "The intuitive is the fluid world of all the senses whose movements throw up ever new forms and meanings."⁶ "To these the spectator may react directly without reasoning and without conscious analysis."⁷

⁵Ibid., p. 70.

⁶L. Moholy-Nagy, Vision in Motion (Chicago: Paul Theobald, 1947), p. 57.

⁷Ibid., p. 152. Here the author refers to the intuitive meanings in Pre-renaissance painting.

CHAPTER III

THE MEANS EMPLOYED TO UNITE THE EXPERIENCE AND THE EXPRESSION INTO A COMPOSITION

Composition is the development of form through the structural means of the medium. It involves the organization of all the formal elements into a unified whole. It is an integrative process, not an additive one, a fusion of points, lines, planes, shapes, and color in meaningful relationship to produce an entity. The mere arrangement of objects within a space or of non-objective elements within a given area does no more than depict some possible arrangement of these elements and has no inner meaning. There are, of course, intrinsic qualities within these elements, but only through their relationship is there significance.

Broadly speaking, there are two general types of composition: the objective and the non-objective. Objective compositions are those wherein objects as such are depicted. This type includes illusionistic representation with or without perspective; cubism, with its juxtaposed and interpenetrating planes based on, but abstracted from, the structure of the object; and symbolist painting, either ancient, medieval, or modern, in which the single object becomes a symbol in imagery of a whole idea. Combinations of these types exist, of course; for example, the first and third types combine in surrealism.

Non-objective composition may also be grouped into several categories, though the line of demarcation is even more difficult to draw. Obviously, the non-objective composition is one which does not relate

directly to any object, unless it may be considered that a shape or color is itself an object. This idea is a matter of debate and may be held if the formal elements are conceded to be objects. From our viewpoint, however, they are not objects permissible of imitation of abstraction - they do not represent except in an expressive or associational manner. They are real, but abstract, forms. This indicates one type of non-objective composition: that based upon abstract form, which may be shape-color relationships in the purist manner, or may be forms abstracted from actual visual objects but used independently of their source within the compositional framework. This is an outgrowth and to some extent a development of cubism.

A second type of non-objective composition is that which is evolved by the use of subjective form. Such form develops from the inner impulse of the artist in response to stimuli of such intensity as to evoke an experience which demands expression. This inner meaning the artist attempts to translate into visual form corresponding to his awareness and arising from intuitive direction. In some cases, the painter endeavors to show the essence of the experience by selecting forms which epitomize the essential quality of the apperception. In others, the attempt is to utilize shapes having an organic or emotional symbolism. Miro's "Le Soleil" illustrates this type of so-called "abstract symbolism," which according to our classification, is nearer to personal symbolism expressed in the subjective form. In these instances, an intellectual analysis as well as intuitive apperception is involved.

Yet another means, growing entirely from intuition and conditioned

by the total experience of the artist and his response to the painting as it develops, may lead to subjective form. One such means is the use of the symbolic line as the formative structural element in the development of the composition.

Line, shape, color - these are the structural elements of pictorial form. Their relationships develop space, and they lie within the framework of the picture plane, which itself has significance as a space and a shape each of whose determining lines exerts its own influence.⁸

It is possible for line, used in a symbolic manner to be the causative factor in developing subjective form. The idea of emotion intuitively determines each line; the combination of lines determines the planes and space relationships. This is the exact opposite process from that which uses line as the outline for a given plane or which uses planes as the basis for establishing space. The line moves where it must, and the shapes formed are the result of the lines, not the cause. However, when the lines have been stated, planes caused by the conjunction of the lines will be established. The planes may then be treated as such and the lines which caused them may be obscured; yet, the force of the line remains as the motivating cause behind the compositional structure.

A line is a moving point. The symbolic line moves in accordance with its inner, intuitive meaning, but always in relationship to the picture plane and to other points or lines which are present. It becomes a visual translation in linear mobility of the artist's impulse. In this connection, Moholy-Nagy says, "Every drawing can be understood as a motion

⁸Wassily Kandinsky, Point and Line to Plane (Bloomfield Hills, Michigan: The Cranbrook Press, 1947), pp. 116-122.

study since it is a path of motion recorded by graphic means."⁹ He refers to physical or natural action such as wave lines on the beach or cracks in a painted wall. Why may not such a line be the path of motion of psychological reaction? He states, "They all originate as a diagram of forces."¹⁰ But may they not also be the result of psychic forces acting upon the subconscious of the artist? Such lines are then not diagrammatic, but symbolically expressive. They differ from the descriptive line in that their primary intention is not to delineate a shape and from the decorative line in that their purpose is not ornamentation. Neither may they be classed as calligraphic; for they do not depend upon the quality of the line itself for expressiveness. Rather, they are moving points of experience and feeling given expression in visual form.

Such lines are symbolic because their movement carries connotations over and beyond mere structure. As words are symbols of meaning beyond ordinary definition and carry both collective and personal overtones of implication, so the line as here described is a symbol. It is important to distinguish between this subjective, personal symbolism and symbols in the sense of imagery, such as emblems or other conventional signs which stand for some total idea expressed through them. Such symbols must be understood intellectually, though emotional qualities may attach to them by association. Yet the line here discussed is symbolic; for it possesses the essential qualities of the symbol; it is "a representation which does not

⁹Moholy-Nagy, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁰Loc. cit.

aim at being a reproduction,"¹¹ and it draws upon the common fund of understanding, consciously or unconsciously. It is because of these qualities that the experiential element is of much significance in the use of the symbolic line as a means to composition.

The symbolic line may only be described: it cannot be defined. It must be emphasized that the line grows in response to the inner impulse, to the interacting force of other lines, and to the picture plane. No line is ever a duplicate of another. In other words, there is no formula by which such lines may be used with precision. They are not static type which may be systematically combined to assure a uniform result. Neither is the line completely intrinsic in itself but always exists in meaningful relationship to its motivation.

Kandinsky in his Point and Line to Plane has made considerable analysis of such meaningful lines, but his ultimate goal would seem to be the detachment of lines from subjective meaning, arriving at an almost mathematical formula by which they would be used.¹² His analysis based upon empirical evidence is indeed convincing and may equally well be the point of departure for considering such lines as a subjective and symbolic expression.

The line does not meaningfully exist apart from its environment, the picture plane, each side of which has associational, but non-rational, meaning.¹³ The bottom horizontal forms a base and is related to solidity,

¹¹William Allan Neilson, editor, Webster's New International Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Company, 1944), p. 2555.

¹²Kandinsky, op. cit., pp. 55-112.

¹³Ibid., pp. 113-146.

security, calmness, even inertness and coldness. Because of these qualities, it is the area of return, of rest. Vertical lines rise from the base upward, horizontals lie upon it, and the distance of either from the base indicates the degree of suspension. If a higher horizontal is established upon the plane in such a way as to appear to be the base, lines depending from that horizontal or detached shapes below it appear to pass below the actual base or to fall with great force into an abyss. This is especially true because the base line is the strongest of the four sides, and that which breaks it must exert much force. The nearer that shapes lie to this base, the less weight they have, for they are sustained by it. Thus, a large shape in the lower area of a picture is more secure and less weighty than the same shape would be if nearer the top line of the plane.

The right vertical of the picture plane is next in strength to the base line. It tends to be a barrier beyond which lines do not easily pass, though they may enter from beyond it. The left vertical is even weaker. There is empty space beyond it. Lines moving toward the left are moving outward into the unknown, and lines quite close to it pass beyond the picture plane.

The top horizontal has the least restraining force of the four sides. Lines which rise from the base continue to rise as they approach the top, becoming all the while stronger in their ascent and may pass upward into infinity if allowed to reach the top horizontal. They attain their greatest upward thrust when they are quite close to, but not touching, the top. If, however, lines are attached to this top edge and do not have a close relation to a part of the picture which is secured from below, they appear to move into the plane from the upward beyond or to

hang from the top. Because of the lightness of this upper region, shapes lying within it have a greater weight than those below, and a comparatively large shape depending from the top gives the feeling of oppressiveness.

Because of the qualities of each side of the picture plane, the areas within it are influenced according to their adjacency or remoteness from any of the four sides. Another effect of the sides is felt in respect to the overall shape of the plane: that is, if the plane is dominated by the horizontal or by the vertical sides, its principal tone is characterized by their qualities. The square, consequently, is equally balanced and almost static, though the internal structure may give a dominance to either the vertical or the horizontal. The rectangle in approximately a 4:3 ratio gives the greatest feeling of harmony, whether the dominance is horizontal or vertical. None of these statements may be proved on the basis of reason. They may only be asserted, tested through visual evidence, and accepted through intuition.

The same is true concerning the lines moving on the picture plane. The first line growing in movement on the plane springs intuitively from the impulse. It is possible that a certain reasoning may take place; but it is so conditioned by acceptance of the process involved that it is certainly pre-logical. The dominant line having come into being, other lines occur, either reinforcing it or opposing it, until a complex of lines fulfilling the expression is upon the environmental plane. By their conjunction, shapes are formed and these become planes in space, interpenetrating, advancing, receding. The motivating lines have produced meaningful form.

A few examples for illustration may now be given. Since these lines

have meaning only in relationship to the picture plane and to each other, it is necessary to consider them in respect to a particular picture.

Painting No. 3 illustrates the use of both horizontals and verticals. The dominant shape is a moderate vertical. A white horizontal line is somewhat above the vertical center. This position gives the line a sense of detachment from the base and makes it seem to float. Though a horizontal line without relationships generally is followed by the eye from the left to right (probably because of our conditioning in reading the printed page), this white line moves from the right into the left unknown because of its nearness to the strong vertical mass on the left and its lack of connection with the receding right verticals. It is sustained by the self-sufficient semi-circle. Strong verticals rise upward from it giving a sense of aspiration, and sweep downwards touching the lower horizontals of security and substance, yet not supported by them. The total shape thus formed is a self-contained mass, poised and moving serenely into the unknown. It has already come through the mass produced by vertical lines at the more stable right side and moves toward the vertical barrier at the left. This mass, created behind a vertical line from the base to the top and in opposing direction to the moving line, gives the feeling of being static rather than moving, an obstacle rather than a force. There is one other line-mass to be considered in this painting. Several lines pass from the lower horizontals around the point of the moving line and turn back toward the right. These produce a shape that becomes a hazy but restraining force to the forward left movement. Within this composition there are other line-created shapes, whose purpose is to reinforce the essential lines or to create tension between them.

The foregoing has described line development and the resultant shapes or masses. The manner of treatment of these shapes, that is, the way the paint is applied, contributes importantly to the effect of the form. For illustration, consider the vertical left mass of the painting just analyzed. In this instance, the variation in tone and color values, the many small points of color, and the tenuous connection with the base lines give this shape a sense of disintegrating volume; so that, while for the moment it appears solid, one feels that it may dissolve or recede as the moving shape approaches.

Innumerable variations in the manner of painting are possible and each carries its visual appeal and emotional effect. Contrasting areas heighten the effectiveness of each. Though again, no set rule may be given, in general the smooth area gives a feeling of solidity, calmness, or coldness, while the textured surface produces the reverse reaction. The range and kind of textural treatment is limited only by the imaginativeness of the artist and his feeling for the appropriate development of each area in relation to the other parts of the painting. Any type of treatment may be used within the same painting, yet a relationship must exist which produces a sense of unity, of complements which play against each other rather than an accumulation of isolated units. The treatment given most prominence tends to set the emotional tone of the painting. For example, Painting No. 4 is characterized by turbulence to which both the line movement and textural quality contribute, while Painting No. 6 is much calmer and free-flowing.

What now of color? No line, no shape, exists apart from color and color must assume some form. Color, line, and shape cannot be disassociated.

The line is a color. The line gives the direction. The direction plus its color gives the line its total meaning. It is a vertical red line, a vertical blue line, and the meaning of each is different. The same applies to the resultant shapes, each of which is a union of color and shape from which is created its meaning, visually perceived and intuitively apprehended.

Warning should again be given that in discussing the connotations of color, as of line, that no "table of meanings" may be given. It is also important to disassociate color from schematic uses as well as the associational values attached to certain colors in emblematic symbolism and to consider any color for its own sensory stimulation and emotional impact. Kandinsky¹⁴ draws analogy between color and musical tones, speaking of the "sound" which each color emits. Each musical tone, each color speaks its own especial note, the one through the hearing, the other through the seeing; and both transcend the rational understanding and stir the depths of unconscious response.

The concept of advancing and receding colors applies here, yet it must be remembered that it is through their relationship to each other, to the line, and to the shape, that they advance or recede. Dark blue, which in relation to red, is recessive, when used as a blue horizontal has the quality of coldness, hardness, and immobility, while a dark red horizontal may be inert but possess an incipient capacity for movement and warmth. Note the dark red-brown horizontals in Painting No. 1. An undulant blue line may be fluid and withdrawing, while such a line in red is active,

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 98-99, on the "sound" of line, but the concept is used throughout the book.

growing, aggressive. Shapes and colors demand each other according to their subjective meaning. The blue round shape recedes within itself, the red round shape yields to pressures from all sides but stands its ground, while the yellow circle bursts its restraining lines. When the color is congenial to the shape, harmony is present; when it is contrary, compromise or tension result, depending upon the strength of either the shape or the color.

Painting No. 3 may again be used as illustration - this time for color analysis. Two principal colors are used, the complements, blue and brown. Contrast in meaning, yet an eventual resolution, is hereby implied. The white line possesses the potentiality of all color. The blue vertical masses are detached from the duller brown masses, and because of their intensity seem to be in front of the ordinarily more advancing brown. Their blueness gives serenity and assurance, and the several tones of blue (with touches of red) add depth in color, textural quality, and completeness. Red-brown horizontals at the base are stable but contain life-warmth. The left vertical, more advancing in color than that of the right is of a similar substance to the base, but offers definite opposition in both color and line to the moving blue form. It is principally by this color use that pictorial depth is achieved and space is felt to exist.

Such an analysis as has been made of Painting No. 3 in respect to line, shape, and color can be given only after the painting is completed. There is no blueprint formed by intellectually analyzing and equivocating the formal elements to the various parts of the idea. But upon completion of the painting, the idea or emotion has been translated into subjective form developed into a visual composition by means of symbolic line.

What is the idea or emotion depicted? Let each observer give his own response according to his experience. No explanation should be made, no title given to prejudice the observer's reaction. Yet, for the present purpose, a list of the paintings with titles indicating the motivational idea or emotion is now given.

Painting No. 1. - - Resurrection

Painting No. 2. - - Nativity

Painting No. 3. - - Faith

Painting No. 4. - - Life Cycle

Painting No. 5. - - One Moment in Time

Painting No. 6. - - Flight

Painting No. 7. - - Spring Burgeoning

Painting No. 8 - - Equipoise

Painting No. 9. - - The Sea

Painting No. 10. - Dissolution

CONCLUSION

The paintings themselves are the conclusion and the summary to the ideas herein presented. If the experiential element is evident, if the expression is adequate, if the symbolic line as a means to composition based on subjective form is effective, the artist has achieved a fulfillment through creation and the observer will be visually stimulated to an intuitive awareness spring from his own experience and reaching in to the depths of universal response which is the common heritage of us all.

In order that the relationship between the motivating idea or emotion, the development of the composition by means of the symbolic line, and the response of the observer may be made more evident, an explanation concerning each painting is now given. In some cases, all three ideas will be given, in others a briefer treatment is made.

Painting No. 1 - Resurrection

Easter Monday morning. The day before, Easter itself, had been a day of religious observance with its music and rites recalling the beliefs and feelings of religious heritage familiar since childhood. But what really is resurrection - of nature, of the body, of the spirit - present, as well as future? The inert, possessing the potential life force, becomes active again. The urgency of resurgence bursts its restraints and reaches forth into infinite freedom. This restless awareness translates itself into symbolic lines which take a formal structure as they grow.

Formal Structure: Inert horizontals into active verticals. Dark

horizontals lie upon the base. The lower one, green-brown, is cold, lifeless. The red-brown ones are passive but warm, possessing incipient life. Each bends into a rising vertical which grows more active in ascent forming a moving vertical structure which passes through the downward-pressing diagonals on the left and right. These tend to exert a certain pressure on the base horizontals which accentuates the force of the rising verticals. Each line of the central vertical mass expands in its ascent until it reaches release from the confining right and left sides and opens wide to the infinite freedom of the upper region, into which some of the lines pass. The colors of the resultant shapes in the central vertical also "rise," progressing from intense dark burnt siena to light, almost white, raw siena. They flow into or stand in space against the receding blues of the open space at the top. The areas surrounding the active vertical are a blue-brown combination, partaking of the qualities of both the brown lower horizontals and of the upper blue region. A compositional horizontal moves from the middle lower left to the upper right, reinforcing the central vertical mass, giving balance to the sharper diagonal which spreads from the vertical to the left, and leading the eye to the top of the right side, from whence it travels down the side to return into the horizontals and thus to continue the upward rise again. A dark green-brown mass on the left strengthens that side and prevents movement horizontally out of the left of the picture plane. This also reinforces the vertical movement. The technique here used, alternate thin washes of several colors, especially of the complements, produces a vibrancy in color which is appropriate to the continuous, pulsating movement of the line.

Comments by Observers:

1. A ten-year old child: "It looks like a fire in a deep canyon."
2. An elderly woman whose life has held much tragedy: "Difficulties and sorrows being overcome and rising into happiness. Also a sacrificial fire of a primitive tribe - primordial."
3. Middle-aged, uneducated, religiously-conditioned woman: "It makes me think of something from the Bible, like Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice."
4. "Something stirring, becoming active, and rising up through a mountainous cave into the open."
5. "Freudian implications - the inert becoming vital and penetrating through surrounding hardness into release."
6. "Peace - struggle through difficulties into light."

It is to be noted that each of these reactions, though some are outwardly quite different, give evidence of a response that is basically the same.

Painting No. 2 - Nativity

Christmas. Again, the background of religious practice and teachings is present; but the essential quality of the situation and the feeling is free giving, which spreads in ever-widening waves within one's being and returns in joy to its source. Individual, ineffable, it is also manifest as a collective experience including all of mankind and his eternal relationship to the source of all giving - Love, human and divine.

Formal Structure: Vertical into round. A central vertical falls

from the upper beyond onto a wide horizontal plane spreading into overlapping round shapes which return in circularity to the source of the vertical. A definite upper and lower division of the picture plane denotes two areas of activity - the upper, ethereal, vague, unknown, though suggested verticals aspire yet bend again downward; the lower, substantial, ever-reaching outward only to return again upward. Birth - spirit into flesh, ever-growing, yet finally combining to produce the completed whole, which has the vitality of the ellipse rather than the complete adjustment of the circle.

Comments by Observers:

1. "It's beautiful and mystical, but I don't know why."
2. By an art historian: "Reminds me of Blake. A church might buy it."
3. High school art student: "It's your love coming down and spreading. It could be Christmas." (The exact idea of the artist.)

Painting No. 3 - Faith

The struggle of decision, the sense of the past lived and difficulties overcome by some source of strength not one's own, the awareness that, though the future is unknown, there is a power that acts regardless of one's volition or plans - these are the conditions that call forth faith; and faith has contact with the actual and material, yet aspires above it and moves with steady assurance into the future.

Formal Structure: (previously analyzed) White horizontal line, moving from right toward left. It is suspended but sustained by the self-

sufficient semi-circle. Verticals rise upward from the white line and sweep downward touching the red-brown horizontals of substance at the base. The blue mass so formed is balanced and self-contained, having moved into the plane from the strong right, reaching upward, touching downward reality, and approaching without hesitancy the vertical barrier which stands between it and the left unknown beyond the picture plane. Though browns and blues are nearly equal in area, the tone of the painting is cool because of the dominance of the intenser blues within the active mass. The moving line is white, for all colors are incipient in white.

Comments by Observers:

1. "A suspended waterfall." (Essential response of suspension combined with active force, but failing to indicate the principal horizontal movement.)
2. "An iceberg."
3. "A huge bird flying through impeding mountains." (Apprehension of the intended movement.)

These comments indicate an attempt to identify the subjective form with an object, but that object in each case has characteristics common to the motivating idea.

Painting No. 4 - Life Cycle

What is the pattern of life? Birth; confident rising activity, which suddenly, unexpectedly, is stopped by the hard wall of opposition; a recoiling, only to rise again, and with more maturity and confidence to ascend above the obstacle; and then success, which now declines and

gradually, but with complacency, descends, to finally rest before vague stirrings start the cycle again. On the side of maturity and descent, the obstacle is seen to be not a solid form of opposition but mere hollow shells which disintegrate in space. In serious moments of solitude one thinks of these things and ponders them. The pencil moves on the paper, the line corresponds to the thought, and the concept is manifest in visual form.

Formal Structure: Circular motion around a core. Forces revolve around a central obstacle. The lines rise at the left in increasing force until they are stopped by the hard vertical of the left side of the central area. Bending backward, the line again resumes its upward climb, but in a more controlled color, until it overcomes the obstacle and rises by successive steps to the full height of the picture plane. Its color is now the mature, complete, red. The downward movement begins, gradually falling by slowly dropping horizontals of satisfied brown into repose, which yet gradually flows to the left bottom to begin the cycle again. The strong contrasts of color and the uneven application of the paint as well as the circular line movement give this painting a feeling of turbulence.

Comments by Observers:

1. "Wild, disturbed."
2. "A water picture, fluid, even rushing."
3. "Things going around and over that dark blue area."

Generally, the comments referred to the circular movement and the

sense of turbulence. This painting may have suffered from a giving vent to feeling rather than a genuine expression by the artist.

Painting No. 5 - One Moment in Time

Do you remember a moment when for just that instant time stood still? The flow of actual time with its regular beat continued; but from it that special moment dropped, and hung pulsating but complete within a void of time and space. Such moments may come in relation to another person, some act, some word, some mutual awareness. Perhaps they come in connection with a crucial event in life or amidst the most commonplace of duties, or even through remembering; but we are aware of them as an instant out of time and more real than what we usually call reality. So vivid, so fleeting, can such a moment be translated into visual form?

Formal Structure: Static, red, vertical - the moment is a line suspended in an ellipse of fluctuating blue tones from which vertical line-produced shapes flow outward into the right, the strength of the right side slowing the movement. The left vertical mass, which bends into a top horizontal, is a conscious and strong movement into the upper right corner, where contact is made with the outward-flowing verticals and the eye is brought back to the base, which immediately moves back into the upward and onward movement. Within the left vertical and top area, fairly regular shapes move in the principal direction. They are contained within the ordinary passage of time. The vertical red line is of the same nature as these shapes but detached, isolated in one moment of clarity when time seems to stand still, only to quickly flow back into the main stream again.

Painting No. 6 - Flight

One watches the bird in flight and is reminded of the life changes which follow the same pattern. To leave one place, to soar above the open space, to reach another base, and there to come to rest - this is flight. There is always the leaving, the suspension, the new arriving, and the settling down. For each flight there is a somewhat differing path. Sometimes the movement is direct, sometimes wavering, sometimes a deep falling which lifts again and by much energy and power finally reaches the destination. Each change in our life pattern, whether of an environmental nature (the move of a household from one city to another, the change from one job to another) or of a personal nature (the leaving of a close association and the establishment of another) - each such change includes the sequence of flight. It is the same linear motion as that taken by a bird as, leaving one tree, it soars through the intervening air and comes to rest upon another.

Formal Structure: Horizontals which begin at the left base, lift across the center at varying degrees of elevation and reach their destination on the secure right side and base. Each line varies according to individual movement, producing shapes which move with more or less activity, more or less color intensity to the security of the right brown mass. This is a more geometrized and decorative composition than the others here presented. Yet this style seems to fit the flow and regular irregularity of the idea.

Painting No. 7 - Spring Burgeoning

It is a day in March, overcast with scudding grey clouds. A wind, warm, insistent, blows against the Japanese cherry tree, and its tight buds, no longer able to resist, burst into blossoms tossed into the freedom of the open air. Within the earth, a stirring, an eminent bursting forth, and from the swirl of life emerge the excited expressions of that force. That stirring, that sense of emergence, that release is Spring, in all nature and in our very souls. Can you follow the line which expresses this movement and feeling?

Comments by Observers:

1. By a young teacher of art education: "Spring flowers."
2. By a college senior art major: "It makes me feel that something is about to happen - impending, but not sad. It rather frightens me, like a fire does."
3. Mature, experienced woman, who saw the picture shortly after it was painted in the spring: "It's the breaking forth of life in nature, joyous, but not light gaiety."
4. Dramatist: "I really like that. It has the qualities of seriousness and happiness at the same time."

Painting No. 8 - Equipoise

Each of us is a being with an internal center of balance, which assures steadiness regardless of our outward movements. Each of us also is extended in personality and activity in many directions. We touch down upon a shifting base of circumstance, reach into the past, and stretch

toward the future. We aspire upward to meet whatever challenges may hang above us, and though surrounded by a complex of mechanical circumstance, we are each individual, a separate self. With a change in any of the surrounding forces we must shift, but for any given moment, if there is equipoise, we are in quiet balance; we are poised, but capable of movement in any direction and at any instant, like a dancer performing an arabesque or a person moving, with less grace but with the same poise, on stepping stones across a stream.

The colors here used are in strong contrast and little attempt is made to reconcile them, for each must exert its full force.

Comments by Observers:

1. "It reminds me of the time I saw a display of fireworks at the World's Fair, when they burst in the sky and hung there for an instant only to quickly move on."
2. "A four-cornered starfish balanced on one point."
3. "Like a dancer on a stage."
4. "I'm not sure whether the figure is falling or not. It could be, but then it seems to be steady."
5. By a dancer; "It gives me a sense of balance which at any moment could become imbalance."

Painting No. 9 - The Sea

Swell and counter-swell, surging horizontals that seek but do not find, semi-circles that never find completion and so continue forever their onward movement - that is the movement of the sea, impelled by the same

force of seeking for completion that urges within each of us.

Painting No. 10 - Dissolution

Watch the fluid, ever-oncoming sea break against the rock-hard barrier. The barrier holds, yet slowly is worn away; the sea continues its ceaseless approach, yet is dashed into the dissolution of numberless drops which fall away into nothingness. Neither wins the victory here; but in dissolution the drops seep through the worn rocks. Both have won.

LIST OF PAINTINGS

1. Resurrection
2. Nativity *not received. H.H. (pnl) 11.1957*
3. Faith
4. Life Cycle
5. One Moment in Time
6. Flight
7. Spring Burgeoning
8. Equipoise
9. The Sea
10. Dissolution

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