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AN EXAMINATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL PHILOSOPHY
OF ART AND PAINTING

by

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A Thesis Submitted to
the Faculty of
the Consolidated University of North Carolina
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Greensboro
1956

Approved by

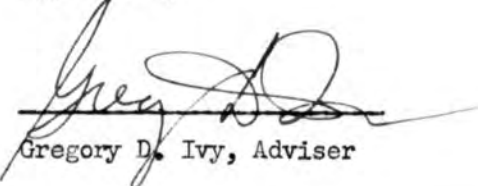

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Today, as man has moved into the second half of the twentieth century, much has been realized in regard to man's potential in many areas, and again, much is still to be realized. In some areas man's knowledge is much more advanced than in other areas, and new areas have originated as other areas have developed further, which is to be expected. As man's knowledge has been extended into these areas and has been continually manifested in the realm of his activities and endeavors, complexities have resulted, the nature of which lies in an age of the advancement of specialization and technology. As the prevailing interests of society give nurture to these complexities, it is no surprise that at this point in the development of society the totality of man's knowledge, activities, and endeavors is overwhelming to the individual man.

The prevailing interests of society are numerous and varied, indicating and reflecting values which are also numerous and varied. An analysis of interests, activities, and endeavors in terms of value-content would seem to indicate that there are many kinds of values as well as a range, qualitatively, of values. Without going into the nature of value, it is possible to ascertain that the degree of values ranges from ones with temporal, superficial qualities to ones with more everlasting, real, or intrinsic qualities. It is rather impossible to establish any absolutes as far as values are concerned, because values, as one of the predominant characteristics of man, are in a state of evolution as is man in a state of evolution. Values are essential to man, for due to his

rational nature, man must have some terms with which to evaluate his endeavors and to make his existence, and the aspects thereof, meaningful and significant as far as his comprehension is concerned.

Values are relative to individual ideals and interests. A coincidental group of individual ideals and interests may result in inducing a coherent set of values, which set standards for certain life-patterns and for evaluation or criticism of these life-patterns. There is a danger though of these patterns being set and becoming static, obsolete, or absolute, as a result of the neglect of an evaluative or critical action. The extent of this danger can be evidenced in the failure of some values, such as religious, ethical, cultural, to maintain a vital relationship to the individual and to society in changing times.

Besides sets of values resulting from coincidental individual ideals and interests, there are sets of values which result from projected (in the sense of "externalizing or objectifying what is primarily subjective"¹) individual ideals and interests, in which the effects are not coincidental but which are causal by the nature of their projection.

Actually, these two kinds of values have universal implications: the first by virtue of the fact that from subjective values certain common values have been induced or made into universal values, and the second by virtue of the fact that individual values have been deduced from universal ideals. It is evident that the latter is the more universal in outlook and in application. If examined in detail, there would probably be only a fine line of distinction or difference between certain aspects

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1951), pp675.

of these two kinds of values. Generally it would seem apparent that the first kind of values is based on a subjective, factual and realistic interpretation of life and the latter based on a more objective and idealistic interpretation of life.

Our society is not by any means unique in that in our society there can be observed a search for value, in terms of meaning and significance in human endeavor and activities. Much of this is probably due to an evaluative action prompted by certain series of events and certain developments further characterizing a complex age, which presents certain disagreements and conflicts in regard to some deep-rooted and well-established institutions and concepts. There is certainly an awareness that these institutions and concepts need to be re-evaluated with regard to values. This would seem to indicate that at the present time many of the existing values seem inadequate, and this might further seem to indicate that the inadequacy of many values would be due to their being of a superficial or false nature. A realization of the inadequacy of present values and a search for new values is a sign that a society is beginning to re-evaluate itself and to attempt to meet the demands of the age.

There is a relation between values and activities, or endeavors. In conjunction with value-content, 'endeavor' is used as an indication of that human activity which has as its end abstract values, such as moral or aesthetic. These abstract values are values which are often transcendental as far as the individual is concerned, but which have certain universal qualities significant to society. These are the values which transcend the individual, and which are associated with abstract universal concepts and ideals such as beauty, goodness, and truth. It is when

human resourcefulness is directed toward the realization of the totality of these ideas that man ultimately begins to realize fully the significance and value of life in its entirety. The dedication of individuals to this general endeavor has resulted in the flourishing of many areas of human endeavor such as the sciences and the arts.

The arts are concerned with the creative and appreciative elements of the individual and of society. These elements are very important as they compose a part of the whole individual and a part of a whole society. It is impossible for an individual to realize completely the many and diverse areas of human endeavor, but it is possible for him to relate in general terms these areas as a whole, and to relate his endeavor to this whole. It is only when an individual approaches the whole scheme of human endeavor openly that he can fully realize his individual potential and the significance of it and can make his contribution to society. This is very necessary in conjunction with the arts to prevent art which is, or has tendencies to be, esoteric and void of vitality and value.

In order to examine the creative and appreciative elements in the individual and in society, it is necessary to take many things into consideration. Creativity appears in many forms, and these forms, being the product of creativity, are the results of the interpretation of some elements of nature (nature in the sense of being all-encompassing). These elements have some subjective value which, after being interpreted, are presented in an art object by symbolism, or some other means. The art object, after being created, is offered to society as representing certain values. At this point the art object is interpreted by individuals (who will hence be referred to as critics) alien to the process of creation.

This interpretation will naturally result in some sort of conclusions. It is in these conclusions that the appreciative elements are realized.

Including the appreciative or critical aspects, the creative process is quite complex. Due to the freedom in the arts, experimentation is constantly opening up new directions. The arts essentially have much vitality, because change, resulting from experimentation, keeps them from becoming static. It can be observed that change from other sources also has its effects on the arts. The arts have a certain amount of influence on other aspects of society, and vice versa. This can result in some amount of change on the part of either the arts or society. These are also factors that must be taken into consideration in examining the entirety of art.

It is the purpose of this paper to examine more comprehensively the entirety of art as a human endeavor and as concerned with values. Specific attention will be given to painting, as an art form. The culmination of this examination will be in statements regarding the development of twelve paintings and prints.

CHAPTER II

THE CREATIVE POTENTIAL

The creative potential is inherent in and is a part of man. The realization of this potential varies with individuals, and it is under the submission of human volition. Therefore, because of the diversity of human volition, the creative potential will range in degree from neglect in some individuals to a creative endeavor in other individuals.

The realization of this creative potential has effect in various forms. With all of these forms taken into consideration and assumed to be art, art would be very broad and encompassing. However, since this realization does vary in degree, mainly the art concerning human endeavor will be taken into consideration. This will result in an examination of the creative forms which are known to be involved in the fine arts, in which the art form is more of an end rather than a means, as can be evidenced in the utilitarian arts.

The forms of creativity are concerned predominantly with elements evidenced in, and abstracted from, nature, such as form (shape), color, movement, and sound. Man has synthesized these elements into art forms such as sculpture, painting, dance, and music. Another art form - that of writing, in various configurations - differs in that by means of an attribute of man, human verbal and literary communication, the elements of nature are used indirectly. The difference between these elements as they exist in nature and the synthesis of these elements created by man is in the reduction of these elements to a scale useable to man. By this is meant that in these art forms man can experience a wholeness which he

is not able to experience in nature. The art forms are a human monument created by man which surpasses the temporal limitations of man. The predominant value of creativity lies in its timeless transcendentalness and in it as one of the distinguishing characteristics of man.

There are various ways in which the elements of nature can be synthesized into an art object. A basic premise is that the elements themselves (color, form, movement, et cetera), to which reference has been made, are both real and abstract elements. These elements are real in that they can be perceived by the senses and are abstract in that, in a reflective way, they are concepts. In some of the art forms the perceptive elements will compose a larger part of the creation of an art object than the reflective elements and vice versa. These elements are presented in a synthesis mainly by means of symbolization. The basic and primary symbol is that of the art object itself, such as is exemplified by a piece of sculpture or a painting, in that the art object symbolizes a perceptual or conceptual experience or association with nature. Excepting the basic and primary symbol, the symbol can be indicative of a direct or indirect literal interpretation or translation of nature, or it can be indicative of abstract qualities of nature interpreted or translated into an art object. By the nature of the art object being a symbol itself, exact reproduction of nature in any form is not possible, and the same is true of an exact interpretation. Much symbolization is concerned with creating or causing various effects in and through an art object, such as invoking or instilling a certain emotion or feeling or in attempting to express or communicate a certain idea. This accounts for the fact that with nature as a point of departure, art objects have numerous and probably unlimited possi-

bilities as far as universal interpretation and translation are concerned.

Interpretation and translation are relative to the critic. 'Critic' is not connoted in a negative sense, but rather, ideally, as the observer, audience, reader, et cetera, as the case may be, who approaches the art object as objectively as is possible, recognizing any personal bias or prejudices which may exist. If the art object is thus approached openly, there is a range in the appreciation or criticism which follows. The range of appreciation or criticism begins with the perceptive elements of man, by which the art object is evaluated emotionally, and ends with the reflective elements of man, by which the art object is evaluated intellectually.

It is by means of the senses and sense data that any emotional or intellectual activity takes place in man. The basic or primary level of appreciation or criticism is emotion, which consists of an immediate reaction resulting in either like or dislike. This can be exemplified by the perception of an art object, or nature, in which a stimulated sense response is provoked by the status quo, the status quo being the particular thing perceived at a particular time. In order to extend the appreciation of the individual, or the criticism, from this level to a more intellectual level, it is necessary for the individual to make some analysis by means of interpreting the data that is perceived by the senses. This analysis is based primarily on the wholeness or completeness evinced by the art object. It is to this end that the reflective elements of man construe or conceive, by means of symbols, images, or other abstractions, the relationships projected by the art object. If this end, the art ob-

ject being perceived and conceived as an independent complete and whole entirety, is realized, then the purpose of the art object itself has been realized, through the ultimate realization of the critic. This appreciative and critical process can be realized by any individual, however the stipulation is that the individual must necessarily instill in himself some intellectual discipline to understand the abstract nature which is the basis for any art form. Only by thus being conditioned, can he ever be able to realize ultimately and reflectively the art object as an independent complete and whole entirety in relation to human values and endeavor as a frame of reference which promotes a further and a more complete understanding. Conclusively, in the emotional process is the basic realization of the appreciation or criticism of creativity and in the intellectual process is the ultimate realization of the appreciation or criticism of creativity. For the enhancement of man's deepest potential understanding, it is necessary to have a harmonious combination of both the emotional and intellectual elements.

Considering the symbolization involved in an art object and the potential diversity, by nature of the symbolism, it is almost inconceivable that any absolute standards could be set up for the purpose of deciding which art objects are bad and which are good. The axiomatic assumptions that exist in society today indicate (many times vehemently) that all aspects of human endeavor can be completely judged by the criterion of good and bad. Ideally, art objects would not be offered to society at large unless the creator of the object had experienced a completeness both perceptually and conceptually in the object. At this point it would seem almost ridiculous to make any statement regarding the object

except that the object exists and is complete and whole in its entirety. Then the object would be open to interpretation, appreciation, and criticism by society at large in terms of the existence of the art object being a whole and complete entirety. At this point there will be divergent opinions, all relative to the critics. To bring this idealistic criterion to more realistic terms, it is necessary to assume that when, for some reason, collective judgements have to be made, that the most competent (in terms of experience with art objects in some particular form) individuals pass judgement on the art objects, the necessary decisions being as to which of the art objects succeed the most in being complete and whole.

The capacity to think and act creatively and the capacity for appreciative and critical understanding of creativity is potentially inherent in all mankind and needs only to be realized (the realization being dependent upon human volition). This can be evidenced in the development of an individual. It seems that upon reaching maturity, many individuals seem to lose, or do not realize, many of the vital qualities that were naturally exercised or realized by them during the earlier part of their life span (childhood). Among these qualities are the initiative of questioning, natural experimentation (resulting from questioning or curiosity), natural expression (verbally, plastically, and otherwise), and, perhaps most important, the quality of being natural themselves and not influenced by the conventions of society. This latter quality is probably the most important as the other qualities depend, to a large extent, upon this one. An individual, as a child, at first knows no restrictions on his volition, until, as he begins to mature, restrictions from external sources are gradually

imposed upon him. He begins to condition himself to the idea that he can no longer be egocentric and that he must succumb to the ideological framework that exists, without regard to factors indicating that it may be true or false. It is at this stage in his development that these qualities begin to diminish (in relation to his maturity). He begins to stop his questioning, as he finds that there are standard answers which he is expected to accept. His experimentation and creativity soon cease or diminish as it is not as that which is generally accepted in a realistic and practical world. Eventually his expressionism is reversed as he becomes impressionable because of the constant forces of society changing him. Although these qualities are not valued very highly by some individuals, many individuals do retain and develop these qualities, becoming autonomous individuals in spite of the conventions of society which are obstacles and which are not conducive to the retention and development of these qualities.

The creative person is one of the types of persons who has to be autonomous to some extent, in that his endeavor is based predominantly upon the retention of autonomous qualities. In order for him to realize his endeavor to the fullest, he must be able to question and analyse his endeavor in terms of value-content, so that his endeavor will not only have significance for himself but for others. Essentially and basically he is a person who exercises to a large extent a keenness of perception and conception in regard to the elements found in nature and abstracted from nature, such as form, color, movement, et cetera. It is his obligation to have at his command such technical knowledge as is necessary as an adequate means to develop favorably an art object to a potential

wholeness or completeness. Experimentation is necessary in order to broaden the range of means of presentation. Along with technical knowledge, extended by means of experimentation, the creative person must develop his ability to use skillfully these means to produce the desired effects or end in the art object. Ultimately, he must not only attempt to realize, in so far as is possible, his creative potential but also his potential in other areas. His entire development should not be limited to only the realization of his creativity, as there is a danger of his becoming esoteric and producing esoteric art, which would have no value beyond himself.

As the creative arts exist in society, there are certain influences exchanged which have some effect on the creative person, the creative arts, and society. To begin with the creative person, and what he is trying to do or accomplish in the way of endeavor, it is perhaps true to say that the entirety of society is not always conducive to this particular type of endeavor, as is also true of other endeavors, particularly of an intellectual nature. Increasing mechanization, industrialization, and systemization have considerable influence on twentieth century man. It increasingly becomes more difficult for man to adjust himself to the gigantic scale of these forces and institutions. If man is not able to exercise sufficient control over these forces and is not able to relate favorably himself to these forces, then he will have no part in determining the influences that these forces will have on him. One of the dangers evoked by these forces is that of passivity, indicating a dominance of these forces over man, rather than man over these forces. In a climate of passivity, there is generally a lack of initiative to utilize any means of realizing

human potential, other than that which is involved by necessity in these institutions. When such passivity exists, its influences do not directly affect realms of endeavor and individuals who recognize this danger and remain autonomous in spite of the danger. There is an indirect influence which is felt in terms of the contributions made by these individuals, which is not realized by the recipients dominated by this passivity. For this reason there is quite often no valid argument in the statement that many areas of human endeavor, such as the arts, are esoteric and isolated as far as the general public is concerned. In most of these areas enlightenment is offered to society at large if there is some receptivity or willingness to be enlightened, but as a matter of principle is not forced upon society. Ultimately it is the obligation of man to himself to withstand the obstacles of his own creation in order to realize his potential, individually and collectively, and thus realize the many values of endeavor and life.

CHAPTER III

THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN PAINTING

The arts are usually catagorized as major and minor arts, but these catagories are inadequate, except perhaps as a denotation of emphasis or endeavor over a span of time. Any distinction made should be of a relative and flexible nature. There is possibly as much difference within an individual art form as there is among the various art forms. One of the differences within an art form is that of purpose or function. The purpose or function can range from utility to non-utility. The difference is that in the former the art form is used as a means to utilitarian ends and that in the latter the art form is used as a means to aesthetic ends (as can be evidenced in the fine arts). By their nature, the utilitarian arts will have certain impositions and limitations enforced upon them, whereas the fine arts do not have these impositions or limitations. Another difference is that of depth. Depth is concerned with the degree to which values are realized or transmitted in the creation or appreciation of an art form, which could be false and superficial in one instance, or real and intrinsic in another. The last difference would be that of quality, in which numerous degrees of excellence could be manifested.

Painting, as an art form, in terms of emphasis and endeavor, would be classified as a major art. The purpose of painting is of an aesthetic nature and not utilitarian. The depth and quality evinced in painting is relative to the particular art object and to the individual painter and critic. An individual considering painting as an endeavor would attempt to pursue the attainment of both depth and quality.

Painting is a plastic symbolization of nature abstracted into elements, the elements concerned in painting being form (shape), color, and movement (perhaps more indirectly). These elements are synthesized, by various means, into an art object - the painting. As has been previously stated, it is in an art form or art object that man can experience a wholeness which he is not able to experience in nature. The ultimate objective in painting is to create an art object which, in its entirety, is complete and whole.

Contemporary painting today is not attempting to represent the external appearances of nature but is striving to present a realization of the intrinsic qualities of nature. This is done by either working with the abstract elements or ideas of form, color, and movement and conceptualizing these into plastic relationships on canvas (or some other surface), or by reorganizing form, color, and movement relationships perceived in nature into plastic relationships. The first type is usually classified as non-objective, abstract painting, but actually, although it is abstract as compared to traditional painting, in terms of subject matter, it is perhaps the most realistic of all painting, in terms of ultimate reality. The latter type is classified as abstract painting also and differs from the first type only in approach.

The particular emphasis of endeavor evidenced in contemporary painting is concerned predominantly with form, or shape. Since color and movement can not be divorced from form, they are therefore subsidiaries to form in this particular emphasis. There are numerous possibilities for potential relationships of these elements in paintings, which to a fairly large degree are being realized. These possibilities are being

realized as a result of much experimentation with these elements, and experimentation is quite essential to this realization.

As contemporary painting has evolved over a span of time, it is evident that there are new directions opening up constantly. It is very much the same as a chain reaction, with new directions holding numerous possibilities for other potential directions. It is necessary for an individual concerned with painting as an endeavor to realize his position in relation to painting of his time and to the various factors and forces which have influenced it and which do influence it, in order for his own particular endeavor to have significance and value to him. It is almost an ethical and moral obligation for an individual to realize his position not only in relation to the developments of the past but to the developments of the future, in terms of utilizing the past to the advantage of furthering the past as synthesized by his own particular time and by his own particular experience.

In projecting his ideas and creative potential into the realization of a painting, an individual is concerned with creating illusions of various types. The primary illusion is that of the manipulation of form and color on a two-dimensional surface to give the effect of a third dimension - depth. Considering the painting surface as being a spatial plane, this spatial plane is broken up with the introduction of form and color, thus introducing another illusory element - that of movement. All of these elements are closely related within the physical limitations of the original spatial plane and are closely related to it. These relationships are changed with the changing of position or structure of various aspects of the form and color involved. By manipulating these basic ele-

ments and being concerned with the effects produced by the various relationships of these elements, it is possible to achieve a wholeness and completeness in the entirety of the art object. There are other elements and illusions which are also used to produce certain effects in a painting, but they are subsidiaries to the predominant and primary elements and illusions. The manipulation of the elements in a painting to produce the desired effects may or may not be an extremely difficult task, as the degree of difficulty depends to a large extent on the individual approach to a particular painting. Essentially a painting can be conceived as an entirety before being manifested in the art object or it can be conceived as it is manifested in the art object. There are also other approaches that are a compromise of these two.

The physical means of presenting a painting or some other art object are important. The physical means, or the means of presentation, can not be divorced from the art object and thus has very much to do with the ultimate effects of the art object. The entirety of a painting depends upon a harmonious relationship of the means to the end. Therefore it is necessary to indulge in experimentation with a medium to discover what possibilities and potentialities it has in order to have at one's disposal an adequate means of creating the desired results. Not only can experimentation expand the means of presenting an art object, but it may also expand the possibilities and potentialities of the effects of the art object.

Although the creative process has not been examined in detail, an attempt has been made to present the essential, basic, and underlying ideas of the creative process in painting. As a culmination or ultimate

end, the creative process in painting should have vitality in its wholeness and completeness, which would be a true expression of man's creativity, evincing monumental qualities and values reflective of man's constant endeavor.

CHAPTER IV

STATEMENTS REGARDING TWELVE PAINTINGS AND PRINTS

In the development of twelve paintings and prints (specifically ten paintings and two prints, or serigraphs), an attempt was made to accomplish two things, the first being to simplify the forms (shapes) and the relationships thereof, and the second being to extend the use of the range of color. These two problems were not confined to the general development of the paintings and prints but were extended predominantly to each individual painting and print. The resolution of the problem of simplification of form is more evident on an individual basis than on an over-all or general basis. The resolution of the problem of the extension of the range of color is as evident on a general basis as on an individual basis, with the possibility of being slightly more evident on a general basis.

Before any further general statements are made about the paintings and prints, a brief and sketchy analysis of each individual painting and print will be presented:

Painting No. 1 - Social Group

The colors in this painting are quite vivid and pure and are not inclined to be values or tones of one color. Depth is shown in this painting not by an individual form but by the relationship of one form to another, as each form is essentially flat and two-dimensional. The painting succeeds quite well in being whole and complete.

Painting No. 2

This is one of the most complete and whole paintings of the entire group. Although the forms are clearly defined and are quite controlled, the entire painting does not evince this control. The forms are simplified, and the predominant contrast of these forms is of the dominant forms to the more subtle forms. There seems to be quite a successful relationship of all the forms to each other and to the picture plane.

Painting No. 3

Essentially this painting is very much like the second painting, except in this the forms are more complex and the contrasts between the forms are more subtle. There is also a repetition of rectangular forms. On the whole the painting is fairly successful.

Painting No. 4

As an individual painting, this painting differs in that the color used is quite different from that used previously. Although the relationships in some parts of the painting are successfully related to each other, the painting as a whole is not indicative of this relationship. Although the painting has much vitality in parts, it does not have vitality as a whole.

Painting No. 5 - Metamorphosis

This painting is also one of the most complete and whole paintings of the entire group, as it is very harmonious as a whole. The forms are generally well-defined, although the subtle color relationships of some of the forms are not dynamically defined. The breakup of the pictorial space

is very important to the harmoniousness and vitality of the painting.

Painting No. 6

This painting has dynamic qualities in the contrasts of its forms and of the relationships of the large areas to the smaller areas. The form relationships have been shown more successfully than the color relationships. There is a certain dullness which can be evidenced in the painting and which can probably be attributed to the superficialness of the large yellow areas. The painting does not show as much vitality as it could.

Painting No. 7

This painting is not quite as complete and whole as it has the potential of being, although it does have quite a lot of vitality. The forms have some very vital qualities, but they are not related to the pictorial surface very well.

Painting No. 8

As a whole, this painting seems to be quite successful. It has many similarities to the fifth painting. The forms are vaguely defined, which creates an illusion of slow and smooth movement. The colors are harmonious and helps to create a soothing vitality.

Painting No. 9

In this painting the colors are fairly unusual. The forms are fairly complete and close-knit, creating both dynamic and subtle movement. It

has a potential for being more complete and whole than has been realized in the painting.

Painting No. 10

There is much simplicity in this painting, in fact, the simplification is almost overdone, as the painting is not very successful as a whole. The painting depends on the tension between the forms, which is actually too weak. The textural effects could have been used to a better advantage.

Print No. 1 - Innovation

The forms and structure in this print are more free than the forms in the paintings and are not as geometrical. The print works quite well as a whole and has much vitality, which is due to the forms as well as to the colors.

Print No. 2

In this print the forms are also used quite freely, and the forms are related better individually than as a whole. The print would probably seem more complete if the forms were changed and simplified.

Essentially the forms in all of the paintings are predominantly rectangular. The presentation of these rectangular forms is in a very free manner, therefore in instances appearing to be somewhat diagonal or circular. The organization of the paintings within their limited surfaces or pictorial spaces is based primarily on geometrical relationships. Although these paintings were done with the purpose of simplifying form and of extend-

ing the range of color, this was not realized as much as was anticipated.

The quality shown in the development of these paintings and prints has not been exceptional, although in endeavoring to extend the range of these paintings and prints quantitatively an effort was made to extend the range qualitatively. Some experimentation was done in the process of developing these paintings and prints, along the line of textural effects in some of the paintings and along the line of another art medium in the prints.

Conclusively, the development of these paintings and prints have been significant in their furthering an understanding of the various potentials in both painting and print-making that may be realized.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this examination has been to incite a crystallization and materialization of ideas concerning art and painting. This crystallization and materialization is not meant to be absolute but is meant to be a relative frame of reference for further expansion and scrutiny of similar and related ideas.

It can be observed in this examination that many factors are involved in the consideration of ideas about art and painting. Such factors as values, human volition, and the realization of human potential can not be detached or isolated from art and painting. These factors have been shown to be vital as they relate to the creative nature of man and society and as they have effect on painting, as one type of human endeavor.

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