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A STUDY OF EXPERIENCE AND ITS
RELATIONSHIP TO PAINTING

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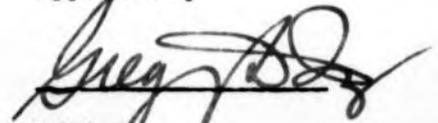
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A study of man's experience in its many aspects would eventually bring into focus a study of art. This paper will attempt to trace the relationship of art to experience by considering: first, those qualities in man which lead him to express himself through an art form and; second, some aspects involved in the production of that art form--in this case--in painting. The function of this paper is to clarify or explain the paintings it accompanies in order to assist the observer in his analysis and evaluation of them.

I. EXPERIENCE

There is more than one way to define experience. The word itself is a definition to some and a concept to others. It can mean a type of knowledge gained by "trial, observation, and practice"¹ as a dictionary states. In this sense it applies to an organism whose mental system is capable of selection, perception and habit. This imposes definite limitations on the word for it excludes both lower and higher forms of life. A more inclusive definition would be that where there is activity in a living thing, there is

¹ Winston Dictionary. (College Edition, 1934)

experience. The key word is activity, and in its definition rests the specific cases to which the term experience can be applied. A living thing stimulated by something into some kind of response constitutes an experience.

In very simple forms of life, activity is in the main automatic. If a caterpillar is nudged with a stick, it curls up and remains motionless. According to definition this would be an experience. As the organism grows more complex, the boundary lines of its experience increase. The ultimate point of expansion is found in the human being. Here there is a variety and an abundance of activity. In the human organism are found the simple reflexes of the lower forms, the ability to learn by "trial, observation and practice" as higher animals do, and, that most distinctive activity, the comprehension of ideas. This ability to consider ideas and to relate them; to conceive as well as perceive is an essential part of human experience. Included as well are the feelings, the emotions of the human being. Whatever has happened to a man, whatever he has responded to, physically or mentally during his lifetime constitutes his experience by definition of the word.

Having attained thus briefly a picture of experience as it applies to man, it is necessary to examine more closely how it is acquired and what it might effect.

Man is equipped with sense organs and a complex set of nervous and motor systems with which he is able to receive impressions of the outer world and make adjustments necessary for his existence in the world. All that he knows he has taken in through his senses. His concepts, of the reality or the existence of objects and events, are based on what he has been made aware of through sensation. As long as an individual is alive he is receiving sensations and making innumerable adjustments to them, but he is not necessarily aware of them. The difference between awareness and unawareness lies in consciousness. This is, however, a troublesome word. When it is used as opposed to unconsciousness it can imply the same difference as that of waking and sleeping. But when an individual is awake and moving about, he is still not aware of a great many sensations because of habit or inattentiveness. A clarification might be that consciousness in one sense refers to a kind of passive awareness to received stimuli; while in another sense it can mean an intensified and active awareness of a sensation. It is in the second sense of the word that an individual attaches meaning to sensation. To be actively aware of seeing a house, for example, is to give meaning to what has been received through the eye--an image of a house. At the same time there is a passive awareness to windows, doors and porch of the house plus additional sensation of

brightness of sun, warmth of the day, and so forth. The whole, however, adds up into a total impression of the image--house.²

To give meaning to what is seen or heard is to denote an understanding of some kind. If the object perceived is a familiar one, like a house, the individual recognizes the image as having been seen before and attaches the proper symbol or label to this image. Naming objects is a familiar pastime for most young children. Some spend a great portion of their day recognizing objects and stating what they are called. In cases where function or the use of the object is not known they often make mistakes. In this way a young child can call a dishpan a drum; because, if beaten it sounds like a drum. Therefore a deeper implication of meaning is attached to the ability to understand in a symbol its significance, for instance, the image named house means a dwelling place, and in particular, for human beings. Consciousness as it gives meaning, then, denotes the ability not only to recognize and attach correct symbols, but to relate symbols to the ideas behind them.

Memory plays an integral part in the process involved. Through memory comes the ability to accumulate and retain countless images and symbols. Habits are formed because of

² Durant Drake, Mind and Its Place in Nature, (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1925) pp.23-78

memory. Every thing learned, or acquired, either as a pattern of action or thought, is due to those qualities of memory which are retention and recall. They give a coherence and a co-ordination to what would otherwise be a constant impingement of sensations, unexplained and unrelated. Objects would be forever new; events forever in the present. The individual's experience would be only of a direct or immediate type. Memory is past experience, to which that individual makes almost constant reference. Something seen is familiar--it suggests something seen before. This suggestion may be pursued in active recall. If the original sensations left a strong impression, there would be, in all probability, little trouble in remembering it: the image appears suddenly "in the mind's eye." If the impression was weak--due to lack of interest or attention, not needed at that particular moment, or hidden by an image in which there was more interest--it may never be clearly remembered. The individual could receive a confused or fragmentary portion of the image or retain nothing more than a suggestion--a feeling. This is a simple and familiar variety of association. There are many others and they vary in their subtlety and complexity. It should be obvious that development of any import depends on this collection of past experience and on the human being's ability to make use of it in present situations. Theories of intelligence are based on this idea.

There is no distinct line between perceptual and conceptual types of experience. An intermingling was noted in the brief discussion of consciousness and implied in the equally brief consideration of memory. Like other living things, a human being's first consideration is to get along, to adjust to his environment in a way most comfortable and pleasant to himself. He is found, however, to have most complicated and often baffling methods of achieving what amounts to self-satisfaction and self-security. The ways in which he gains his ends are determined by (1) what he considers them to be; (2) how he can best achieve them; and (3) which ones are of the most importance. Such notions of how, why and what an end may be bring one to the study of the ideas governing mans' actions.

Consideration will be given first to ideas from a standpoint of their basic usefulness. It has been mentioned previously that the human being has the ability to recognize images perceived through the senses if he has experienced them before. The success of this recognition depends on the number of times he is exposed to an object and on his powers of retention of the consequent image. This simple process is a type of idea. Without ever having coined a name for the sights, sounds, smells, feels and tastes encountered, a man could identify, to himself, any repetitive perception. Another kind of idea is typified in action; using one object

to help acquire another, i.e., a stick to knock fruit from a tree. What is involved is the ability to relate one thing to another. So far, in this paper, this hypothetical human being has been placed in a solitary setting. His mode of thought has been simplified to the point of being primitive. The natural circumstance would be to place him in the society of other men, for the human being is inclined toward group life. With this addition of a social environment it is both natural and practical for the human being to describe his images and actions to others.

It would seem logical to assume that with the advent of the first sound that stood for something and the first diagram illustrating something, man had his first symbol. The symbol represents an image and the idea of an image. From a practical standpoint the spoken symbol has great value. Imagine a lengthy or complex episode retold in pantomime or drawings. The inclination to recount experience implies a desire for expression. Whatever the motives might be behind this desire, it finds satisfaction through symbol or combination of symbols. In a story of the day's experience, not only will the actions of the day be conveyed, but be colored by personal inner re-actions. There will be a selection of what is told, and with that selection comes an evaluation. What was important to the human being will be mentioned; what was unimportant will be omitted.

He will tell of what he reacted to most strongly, for those events he will remember best. He will also attempt to describe how he felt about an object or event. This means that besides words for vegetation, animals, weather conditions and terrain, there will be symbols standing for certain feelings and emotions and for judgements and evaluations.

The process is one of abstraction. The mental image is a reflection and, in a sense, an abstraction of a natural object--of something existing outside oneself and received through the senses. The symbols created for these images are further abstractions. Regardless of the order in which the images appear, they can be grouped, considered and expressed with some coherence through their symbols. The process holds true in the symbolization of those constantly recurring inner sensations to which an individual is subject. They are, in one sense of the word, controlled when a method is found to express them. This process of transformation and reduction not only serves to co-ordinate a human being's own knowledge for achievement of ends, but permits him to impart to others what he knows or wants, how he feels, or what his opinions are.

That every symbol has a meaning, has import, stands for something, should be obvious. When the meaning is gone, there is no symbol. Take away the meaning of a word and for practical purposes it is useless. It can be said, then,

that the symbol exists with the basic function of representing states and attitudes of existence and that the activity involved constitutes the basis of concepts of experience.

In Philosophy in a New Key, by Suzanne Langer, there are several passages deserving quotation. They serve to enlarge on the idea of symbols as they are used in thought:

The formulation of experience . . . of an age and a society is determined, I believe, not so much by events and desires, as by the basic concepts at people's disposal for analyzing and describing adventures to their own understanding.

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The limits of thought are not so much set from outside, the fullness or poverty of experiences that meet the mind, as from within, by the power of conception, the wealth of formulative notions with which the mind meets experiences. Most new discoveries are suddenly-seen things that were always there. A new idea is a light that illuminates presences which simply had no form for us before the light fell on them . . . Such ideas as identity of matter and change of form, or as value, validity, virtue, or as outer world and inner consciousness, are not theories; they are the terms in which theories are conceived . . .³

The "new discoveries" Mrs. Langer mentions, the "new idea", points to another and vital sphere of man's experience--creativity. The fact that an individual can originate an idea is due to imagination. This is a quality which permits him to envisage a situation or problem in his mind alone and to find unique or novel ways of solving that particular situation or problem. The desire to create is

³ Suzanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (New York: Penguin Books, Inc., 1948), pp.3-5.

closely connected with the desire to express, both being necessary for the appearance of a new idea. To speak of a desire to create and a desire to express indicates, by the terminology, that there is a basis for considering them fundamental in human beings, and that their effect on human life would not be limited entirely to practical ends. It would be reasonable to assume that these desires would reveal themselves in a variety of forms in their demand to be satisfied. One has only to look around to see that much of what a man wears, does, says, or thinks about he need not, from "practical" standpoints, do. The fact that he does do what he need not do, opens a new realm in the idea of experience; the realm ascribed to art, religion and philosophy.

Why the human being has art forms, or religions or philosophies is not the purpose of this paper. It would seem logical to assume, however, that they are the outgrowth of the primary questions of why, and what and how a life should be led; of how wants shall be satisfied and of how security shall be gained. If this be true, then one may say they exist to serve practical ends. The difficulty of a scientific proof substantiating a theory about the origins of, or the exact nature of such human pursuits, is that their very personality eludes laboratory control. This is especially true of aesthetic and religious forms whose

success depends so much on "emotional response." There is even difficulty in explaining exactly what is meant in the terms used to describe such experiences, words like; moving, soul stirring, inspiring, spiritual, or significant, genuine and sincere--yet almost everyone believes he knows to what is alluded, what qualities are being implied.

Scientific investigation can contribute to the understanding of an art form when it is used as a means of achieving an end. It can point to the illogical and impractical solution of an African native who dances and sings around a sick person with the idea that it will rid him of disease. This is because science understands the nature of disease, in other words, it knows the problem trying to be solved. But scientists can only theorize on such questions as why people dance and sing at all.

Although the internal raison d'etre of a work of art may be logically developed, the purposes to which it is put or the qualities ascribed to it may or may not be logical. These qualities and purposes can guide the external functions of an art. For this reason "practical" men have respected art. That art forms can be both attractive and persuasive to people, is shown by the use which religions, governments, and commercial concerns have made of it. Any one trying to impose his will on a society, regardless of motive, has recognized its potentialities and has attempted to control

or direct it, or ban it entirely.

The good or evil, the logicality or erroneousness of art is not a necessary factor in a definition of experience however. Human experience is all-inclusive. To summarize: it has been pointed out that experience is indicative of activity and that, in a man, this activity can take an abundance of forms, that one of these forms of activity is mental, the ability to make abstractions--to reduce what is real to symbol and to express what is felt about reality in a symbol, that with imagination, expression and creativity come new ideas, that ideas are not the product of reason alone, but stem from emotional activity as well, that art incorporates all of these activities plus the obvious physical one necessary for its forms; and that this whole process is regarded as an important part of human existence.

Having thus established art as a part of experience, the next step should be a consideration of its separate forms. But the size and the purpose of this paper makes it necessary to limit the discussion to painting. What its functions might be and how it might originate will be the problem of the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

PAINTING

To want to express something is to want to represent something whether it be a feeling or an idea. Ways of representation can vary from ordinary speech to poetry, from a wail, to a tragic aria, or from a diagram, to a painting. This suggests two classes of representation. One is the way of man in an everyday role, and the other is the way of an artist. Everyone uses the first group as a part of his behavior, but comparatively few have the compulsion, imagination, and skill necessary for the use of the second. The forms of the second are in the realm of art.

One method of investigating the nature of art is to consider its creator, the artist. The experiences of an artist are not, as a rule, extremely different from those of any other man. What "has happened" to him is often not as exciting or interesting as what has happened to men in other fields. The difference lies in awareness of things--not only of individual sights and sounds but of relationships; tree to house, mother to child, circle to circle, circle to square. Whether it be a tangible position as in the first case, or symbolic as in the second, or abstractly conceived as in the last, it is this relationship which excites the

artist to response. In each case, he makes an evaluation and an interpretation of what he sees or grasps.

The seeing of relationships--patterns, is an intellectual and imaginative activity. There are other things of which an artist is aware which are immediately attractive to the senses; color, texture, lines and sounds. These are not the only means of perception; elements received through the senses with which a person recognizes the outer world, they become for the artist, his means of expression. Colors, lines and textures and the pattern of parts to the whole are, for the artist, qualities enjoyed apart from the function of objects and the practical relationships of the parts to the whole.

These he sees in the world about him, and these he employs to reproduce similar sensation. Experience then for an artist is nothing more than the raw material from which he must now pick and choose to express whatever compelling feeling or idea he may have. He selects, casts out, replaces, distorts, reworks his images into an organized composition. The finished product, if it is to have a value, must not only retain in essence his original intent, but must have a delicately proportioned combination of those qualities appealing to the senses and of those appealing to the mind. It is this underlying structure which determines so much the timelessness of a work of art. For this

reason one does not have to be steeped in oriental lore to enjoy a Chinese wash drawing, or acquainted with the religious condition of the Congo tribe to be moved by their sculpture. To know how the wash drawing or the sculpture speaks for its particular society is to derive keener enjoyment from the art form as it fulfills its function. But this involves the study of history and is not necessary to the aesthetic enjoyment of an object but adds to its whole meaningfulness.

A quotation from Herbert Read serves as a summary of what has preceded, and as an introduction to the next point:

The essential nature of art will be found . . . in the artist's capacity to create a synthetic and self-consistent world, which is neither the world of practical needs and desires, nor the world of dreams and fantasy, but a world compounded of these contradictions: a mode, therefore, of envisaging the individual's perception of some aspect of universal truth.⁴

It would seem logical that the artist's presentation of what he feels or thinks about nature or about men would be influenced by and vary with his era and the conditions special to that era.

There are, today, special circumstances permitting painting unlike that of yesterday. If this age were to be described, it could be said to be the age of mechanical

⁴ Herbert Read, Art and Society, (New York: Pantheon Books Inc., 1945), P. 2.

devices, the age of speed, the age of new experiences in new fields. Today one can travel on land at 60 or 70 miles per hour and in the air at 300 to 700 miles per hour. One can speak across oceans to a friend, or witness events taking place several hundred miles away from one's home. All of these experiences have done strange things to old ideas of space and time. The journey of a hundred miles is accomplished in several hours, compared to the older time of several days. Ideas of distance have been changed by speed. The world has shrunk in the process and the life of a man has been accelerated and enlarged. This is evidenced everyday and everywhere. This speed has been absorbed into life.

With new ways of living and thinking, it would be natural that there would be new ways of considering a canvas. The space of a canvas is no longer considered in quite the same light as it was in the past. It is not so much the idea that things as they seem to be in life are no longer portrayed, but that ideas of fixed viewpoints, of stationary positions for regarding life have changed. A person can be here and there in almost a bat of the eye. What happens to an object in that length of time? One can see it from several different viewpoints at "Nearly" once. This is a theoretical conception. Everyone knows that basically the eye takes in objects in one position at one time. But notions of change and duration seem to have been absorbed

into notions of painting. Today a painter can think of using several views of an object for a composition as against a former use of one view.

From another view point, the idea of minute particles of matter in a constant flux, always in a transitory position in space changes the idea of the world from one composed of static "absolute" objects in space to one of objects actively participating in it as man participates in it. In this joining together in basic activity, what was for man space and time can be for all objects space and time. Thus in theory, all particles comprising matter have pasts and presents and futures, just as do those activities which form events in the life of living things. How such theories can affect daily life would be difficult to determine. They are, however, the concern of men of thought, and they seem to be in a way explored by artists. When a painter speaks of a new vision, new reality, and of abandoning the false reality (and purpose) of painting objects realistically in space, one can only conclude that he has found access to these theories and is attempting to portray the mingling and intermingling of this hidden life. Some of Picasso's paintings might serve as examples. His portraits of women, seen close up and at a distance, from the side and from the front might be explained through these theories. It is, however, not so much the artist, as the critic who attributes such new

experiences of thought to a painting. The artist is not aware, most of the time, of what he does until after he does it.

When Freud presented the world with an id and with subconscious wishes and a pertinent world of dreams, he did more than invigorate his field of psychology. He opened for the thinkers, the interpreters, new ways of looking at it-- new ways of evaluating it. The id is described as chaotic. Each man has a "cauldron of seething excitement"⁵ within him in the presence of the id, a raw energy as it were, which stimulates the mind into new poetic concepts of how man is a part of the world, how the primitive forces go on beneath a veneer of control and reason. The ideas of the forces of man open new avenues of painting. Objects or forms in a painting can reveal more than the forms embody at any particular instant. They can be distorted and explored so that all of their potential characteristics are there as well.

A painter may have only a feeling or idea he wishes to express about movement. Recent paintings by Jackson Pollack could serve to illustrate the outcome of such a motive. The painter can weave color and line into a pattern forming a symbol of movement and a symbol of the feeling about movement.

⁵ Ibid., p. 89.

Perle Fine's Silhouettes of emerging forms, a painting of broken mass, broken color and broken line, could readily be interpreted by a critic as her idea about reality. There has always been symbolic reference in the history of art, giving to an image or design a significance other than its own. Today psychology has influenced interpretation, directing it toward the basic sexual and security wishes which, psychologists say, take many forms in habits and mannerisms of daily living. This has resulted in a new form of distortion. The feeling of the incongruity of dreams and of fantasy becomes worthy of artistic portrayal. De Chirico's strange solemn architectural forms and lonely people, and Dali's vast landscapes filled with human fragments might be derived from new ideas about "unreality." Artists exploit new theories about misplaced images remembered in part, unconnected from a logical time, feelings of nostalgia and longing as in Berman's painting, and the conflict of desires in wanting to live and wanting to die which seems to occupy the surrealist writers and painters.

The mention of fantasy suggests another way of painting open to the artist. New importance has been placed on the child; his naive way of seeing the relationship of things, and the fresh and natural manner in which he applies color and distributes his shapes on the paper. There is a new appreciation of the unsophisticated point of view of

the sincere but untrained application of color and line.

Painting then today can include all these things. It can depict the restlessness and relentlessness of force and energy as it is believed to be. Or it can depict the complexities of human beings, can be thought of as an agent of reason combating and restraining chaos, or as a tool of these forces. The painter can be similarly imagined. He, in his canvases, can be giving a logical position and shape to something which refuses to be disciplined by aught but "universal will" or fate. By attempting to express his reactions to life, by revealing himself, he reveals those inconsistencies which make up the personalities of all people. In this way, there is room for a Klee as well as a Toulouse-Lautrec, for Orozco as well as a Matisse.

These many concepts have been the basis for many a manifesto, many a proclamation and many an argument. They involve the question of what a painter thinks is worth painting and how it should be presented. As the basic ideas are slanted, so are the paintings. The paintings follow political, moral or social beliefs as in Picasso's Guernica or as in Ben Shahn's "little" people or Gwathmey's bony negroes.

Some paintings however, do not seem concerned with the world, of what it might be composed, of how its inhabitants should be or are, but seem to have the simple and

difficult goal of presenting the structure of things in nature, and at the same time expressing a certain observed quality about them. The structure of a thing is explained by its shape, color and texture. As was mentioned earlier, it is nature's way of explanation as well as the artist's. Planes, as the mathematician knows them, or cubes are imaginary forms, devices of accuracy and simplification conceived by man. A human being is forever making these simplifications as he sees or listens. Cezanne is the standard example of a painter who was as interested in the structure and composition of natural objects, as he was in his own composition. With each brush stroke, he built the quality of a tree or a mountain. Marin is not as interested in structure as he is in quality of nature as a whole. Sky, water and island, rocks and trees are suggested by one or two strokes of the brush.

Whatever the shape of the form, geometric, organic, distorted, or realistic, they all result in the representation of something. They are all, regardless of source, conjured up from mind of the artist, and are both his tools and his materials with which and from which he makes a composition.

Once more, Herbert Read directs attention to the influence of art on man and its emphasis on understanding:

In all its essential activities art is trying to tell us something: something about the universe,

something about man, or about the artist himself. Art is a mode of knowledge, and the world of art is a system of knowledge as valuable to man as the world of philosophy or the world of science. Indeed, it is only when we have clearly recognized art as a mode of knowledge parallel to but distinct from other modes by which man arrives at an understanding of his environment that we can begin to appreciate its significance in the history of mankind.⁶

⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

CHAPTER III

AN APPROACH TO PAINTING

I do not believe in ruling out any manner of painting as long as it is a sincere attempt to visualize a feeling or idea. No civilization lives entirely to itself and within set bounds. Each absorbs and carries with it to the next what it received from the past. That today a most complex situation exists is natural and normal, and each generation will be increasingly more complex with the passage of time. Science can simplify, rule out as it drives toward a desired point, but man accumulates, struggles through a maze of ideas and actions dating from early histories. The urge to know, to catalog, to chart, to relate and order past events is irrevocably a part of us and so we live, for instance, with our efficient modern devices and our illogical superstitions. It is for this reason that I cannot allow any one school of painting to exterminate another.

As a painter, I have been freed of many artificialities by artists and thinkers before my time. It would seem silly to reject that freedom in limiting myself to one way of expression. This does not mean that I am unaware of the present circumstances of my particular age. To mimic a style of an earlier period would be a foolish and meaningless

act. Moholy-Nagy⁷ mentions an experiment where a Toulouse-Lautrec poster was moved at the speed of a carriage and appeared perfectly legible, but when it was accelerated to the speed of an automobile, it was incomprehensible. Not only must a painter be aware of his own sensations but fit them in some form that is abreast with his age. Paradoxically, the man himself is relatively the same as he was in early Egypt. He may know more, travel faster, live longer and be subject to a greater variety of external experience, but his responses are the same and his behaviour with other human beings in loving or despising them probably identical.

My work shows the same paradox. One painting may explore a new material or a new way of recording an image. Another may offer nothing novel except in the arrangement of mass line and color. Whatever I have wanted to express, the feeling or idea however vague, I can point to the work only as a product of my experience in the world as I find it today.

It is difficult to discuss each painting in detail. "No discourse can do more than suggest or symbolize in the most round-about fashion what is actually experienced . . .

⁷ Moholy-Nagy, "Space--Time Problems in Art," American Abstract Artists (New York: Ram Press, 1946)

As well try to render the taste of a pear or the feel of the skin of a peach against the skin."⁸

This difficulty in finding words for actual experiences is accentuated when trying to explain a painting in which those experiences were represented. All of the paintings grew entirely from the realm of past experience. By that I mean that at no time did I place a model before me and draw from it. My models were mental images--already fragmentary or distorted by time and by emotion. In the painting of a picture there was the co-operation of head, heart and hand. The image was called forth from the "head" and colored by the "heart" and ordered by the "hand." Each of these steps involved certain changes but the changes were toward a better work of art and a more expressive statement of the image.

The portraits are a combination of what I remember a person to look like and what his personality seemed to be. This led me to choose certain colors; make certain distortions. The small painting called "Very Well Thank You, and You" is not only a portrait but a commentary on how well one individual knows another.

The linear composition in blue, white and green was an experiment. It was my first attempt at incised line. The idea was to have the light line on a dark ground and a

⁸ Irwin Edman, Arts and the Man (A Mentor Book, 1949), p. 69.

dark line on light ground. The success of this painting rests entirely on its composition. It was a mental exercise and for this reason is the coldest of the group.

The first in the series of triangle pictures was composed with the idea of serene geometric proportion-- nothing more. The possibilities of other compositions became apparent while I was at work on it. The next small casein painting was of "jungle" triangles. By that I mean that I wanted to have more warmth and decorative qualities than the first. The last one I do not consider finished. The size and the feeling attempted were novel to me. The triangles are not so much broken or transparent as they are moving triangles.

The "Young Unicorn" came immediately after the second triangle and might have been a further statement of what I was trying "to see." It is sensuous in linear rhythm and somber in color. The appearance of a unicorn brought to mind the medieval interest in this animal. I tried some drawings following the tapestry story of the unicorn and out of the drawings came one of a captured unicorn which, to me, had the right feeling.

The casein painting of the tree, birds and boy is the hardest one for me to discuss. What I thought of first was the tree with the birds. The boy came later as I made drawings. I wanted the painting to have a kind of iridescent

light. The feeling accompanying the first image of the birds and tree was religious but festive. As the painting developed, it became increasingly sober and seemed indicative of some sort of meditative quality. Those who have seen it describe the painting as "religious" or as "disturbing."

The oil painting, "The Tight Rope Walker" came from a blithe and capricious feeling--a trivial, careless sensation. I do not remember deliberately choosing a circus setting or tight rope walker, but it is a natural representation of such a feeling. All I know is that I wanted as a background an airiness found in the intersection of transparent planes. The vivid colors add to its dynamic quality.

The rest of the drawings or paintings have similar basis for being. If I cannot point to a deep significance, it may be because my life has not been significantly deep. If the paintings afford the observer some insight into his own life through his interpretation of them, then I feel I have been in part, successful. To me, communication thus experienced is like the silent recognition of old friends; words add nothing to their meeting.

It might be of interest to mention that in every case, whether drawing or painting, there is an element relating them--an abundant use of line. I cannot phrase my enjoyment and interest of line as well as Mr. Edmun, who says, "To see a line is, for those sensitive to visual

appeal, to move incipiently with it, and to live in the abstract object of their rhythmic combination . . . We move in imagination and almost in fact with the lines of the painting; a broken rhythm on the canvas breaks the flow of our perception and our impulsive motor response."⁹ I am aware that I have a natural tendency to enclose a form or to connect forms with line. I find in it a fundamental expressiveness. It is my best tool of emphasis of a shape or movement. Paintings without line imply them. I attempted various kinds of line, incised, thin, broken, using them to intensify or clarify the forms in the composition.

In the statement for the proposed thesis, I spent a great deal of effort trying to tie time with painting. I came to the conclusion that unless I resorted to word-trickery, I could not truthfully see any connection between time and my paintings. To call certain patterns events and say that the relationship of one pattern to another could approach the notion of events related in time, may be intellectually stimulating but logically unsound.

My remaining comment is that I believe each painting to be a combination of a genuine motive and a sincere attempt to satisfy that motive with controlled inventiveness.

⁹ Ibid., p. 85.

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