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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of An Exhibition of Paintings
North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, North Carolina.

by

Nancy L. Neill

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

Walter Throckmorton
Greensboro,
North Carolina

May, 1964

270358

May 5, 1964
Date of Examination

Approved by

Gilbert Carpenter
Gilbert Carpenter, Adviser.

APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis has been approved by the following committee
of the Faculty of the Graduate School at the University of
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NEILL, NANCY L. An Exhibit of Paintings (1964) Directed by:
Mr. Gilbert Carpenter. pp. 8.

The thesis is an exhibit of thirteen paintings dealing with the human figure and its surrounding space. This document is a record of the thesis exhibit held in the Weatherspoon Gallery May 10 through May 31, 1964. Statistical information about all the paintings in the exhibit is included here. This includes title, size and media. Seven of the thirteen paintings are presented here in reproduction. Color prints of two of the paintings, also reproduced in black and white, are introduced to represent the kind of color usage and general color range. The printed catalogue is included as an appendix. A short essay describing techniques used in the thesis paintings is also presented.

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Preface

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Title, Size and Media

The thirteen paintings of the thesis exhibit were painted in polymer emulsion on canvas. This list of titles and sizes follows the approximate sequence in which they were painted. Some were painted during the same time span since the artist may work on up to five paintings in varying stages of completion during the same period of time. All the paintings were done during the 1963-1964 terms from September to May.

1. Steppenwolf, 32" X 34"
2. Man and Woman, 18" X 24"
3. Man and His Son, 20" X 22"
4. Man of the Earth, 32" X 36"
5. African Woman, 30" X 36"
6. Warrior, 30" X 36"
7. Young Man With Purple Grackles, 30" X 30"
8. King, 32" X 36"
9. Lear's Jester, 32" X 36"
10. Man, 32" X 36"
11. Woman Resting in Desert Sands, 32" X 36"
12. Young Man, Young Woman, 18" X 32"
13. Boy, 30" X 32"



King

35' x 21'

King



African Woman

307 V 307

African Woman



Steppenwolf - 1924 - 1925

Steppenwolf



LEAR'S JESTER

1881

Lear's Jester



Steppenwolf

By my sophomore college year I had taken two design courses, one stressing color and the other stressing composition. The first semester sophomore year I took my first course in painting. This initial class was a water-media course in which we used watercolor, casein, gouache and tempera. The teacher urged that we paint rapidly, freely and experimentally. We used large sheets of heavy paper of about twenty-four by thirty-six inches in size and painted with large brushes. We painted extemporaneously rather than from preconceived ideas. We were encouraged to paint abstractly. During this course we learned about color mixing and paint manipulation for the exploration of textural effects.

I practised the use of sets of colors that I felt were particularly interesting. One set was ultramarine blue, ultramarine violet, cadmium red (deep, medium and light), alizarine crimson, black and white. Another set I explored was yellow ochre, burnt umber, raw sienna and black. A third set I explored was cadmium yellow, the cadmium reds, black and white. These paintings were compositions of roughly rectangular blocks of flat color. Darks were usually dominant with lighter, brighter colors penetrating. These paintings were reminiscent of stained-glass.

I continued this approach in oil painting my junior year. I usually painted on large canvases of over forty-two

inches by forty-eight in size. I particularly liked this size and shape. The paint was applied thickly and only slightly moistened from its tubed consistency. Impasto effects that I wanted resulted. I sometimes added sand and gravel to the paint for texture. Areas of texture were balanced with areas of flat paint. Washes of highly turpentine saturated paint were poured or brushed onto the canvas. It became necessary to paint on a table or on the floor until the large quantities of paint had dried securely. The texture and color gave depth. This depth created an effect reminiscent of landscape. The paintings may be described as treeless or objectless landscapes.

After a time I placed an orb in the center of each picture. This orb was always of an extraordinary color. Because it was one color it seemed flat even though filled with sand. Varied colors and values of turbulent impasto surrounded the orb. This surrounding area had depth illusion. In this mode I wished to symbolize the vast strangeness of our universe. Natural phenomena, such as the sea, the sky, the planets, all beyond man's power were particularly evocative to me.

During my senior year, 1960-1961, I desired to experiemnt with Renaissance techniques of rendering people and landscapes. I dabble fruitlessly with these techniques. An occasional free figure painting was successful. Basically, I continued to paint abstractly, but continued attempts at naturalistic notation outside class. Up to the past September of 1963, I had not

concentrated on figure painting.

At the beginning of this semester I painted about four figure paintings. One was composed of naturalistic colors and color modeling to show roundness of limbs. Another technique I used was to shatter the figure into triangular shapes. These paintings were not very successful. I started a series of drawings hoping these would help me with technical development.

I started a series of paintings of heads. Initially, I painted on large sheets of paper in black, white and gray. I used a floppy, pointed brush for washes and textural effects. The heads were composed of varied dynamic textures. They were abstract patterns of texture composed within a head-shaped area. Many of the textures were repeated in the background for purposes of unity. Eyes and other features were made clearly recognizable. Only a few lines or edges severed the head from its surrounding space. This closeness of an object and its background bespeaks a relationship between the person and his immediate surroundings that I find interesting. These heads illustrate a conflict with, a conditioning by, elements of the surrounding world.

Repeating the head composition while experimenting with a variety of techniques allowed me to refine this pictorial idea. I painted about five or six of these studies on paper of twenty-

four by thirty-six inches in size. I also painted about seven heads in india ink and drew about seven in pencil. I continued by returning to the large sheets and adding raw sienna. I painted with liquetex polymer emulsion as binder with ground pigments. Next, I left out black and began to experiment with a frontal view of the head in a wide range of colors.

The head was a structural context for color and texture manipulation. Generally, the pictures consisted of bright areas of color. I usually employed reds, blues and yellows in varied tints and shades. Thus the faces were broken into fragments of solid colors. I painted at least ten pictures in this series and then continued the theme on large canvases. When changing to canvas I used similarly proportioned rectangles to those I had been composing as paper. I also painted groups of heads on long canvases since I was experimenting in order to epitomize certain textures, color relationships and compositional qualities that seemed best in individual paintings.

At this time I reintroduced linear techniques that I had used in the past. These consist of detached, curving lines formed with a soft, pointed brush. They embellish either a lighter or darker surface so that they stand out against it. The addition of these strong, rhythmic lines to an already richly textured area turned out to be an arduous, risky task. The lines often turned

out to be of the wrong color or in the wrong place. I had to find a new method. The linear techniques had to be replaced in the large paintings I wished to do. I did not paint for a number of days while thinking about the problem. I looked at pictures by other painters on exhibit in my area hoping for ideas that would help me in my work. I made no particular decisions.

Upon returning to my easel I painted steadily for about four hours and resumed for two more hours after mid-day. The resultant painting, Man, was unlike and better than any I had previously done in the figure series. My next problem was to identify the good qualities in order to repeat them in following paintings. I painted a "follow-up" painting using techniques I believed to be similar. This painting was quite poor. The third painting clarified the technique for me. In following paintings I was able to handle the new technique with assurance. Essentially, the edges of the color areas had to be in dynamic relationships since the conflict between these edges replaced the rhythms that had been carried by the lines. This is a simplification of the problem.

I will describe the process. First, the figure is drawn in paint on the canvas in a rhythmic, fluid line measuring about one-half of an inch in width. Then a central patch of

color is filled in in his chest region. The colors used to compose this patch are not thoroughly mixed so that the area remains textured. Then color areas adjacent to this central patch are formed. They contrast slightly in either hue or value, but they relate harmoniously to the central patch. Colors and values are repeated in varied parts of the picture so that one's eye moves back and forth over the canvas to similar color areas. One color dominates the others due to its repetition. Blue is often the dominant color. I found that any pure black or white, even as exposed canvas, would attract too much attention and concentrate interest that I wished to be dispersed in active movement throughout the entire picture. Black and white destroyed the balance of movement.

After painting the first two successful paintings of the series I painted two others that turned out to be unusual. They were not uniformly composed of separate colored areas. They seem more realistic, more closely tied to illusion. Land forms are recognizable. In Man of the Earth browns in the bottom portion remind one of land while blues and white are much like sky. Textures aid this naturalism. In Red Man some naturalism is present, but the colors are not naturalistic.

Man of the Earth relates a specific mood. Its dark greens and blues, its turbulent land forms, its dark, billowing cloud forms combine to show the viewer a dark storm inflicted on a

cowering, faun-like figure. The mood is violent. This mood is a well integrated part of the whole in Man of the Earth, but not a characteristic that I wished to repeat. I desired more ambiguity of mood so that a particular mood would not become the dominant issue. Abstract qualities could then dominate the viewer's experience. My aim was that the observer enjoy a spectacular or opulent sensuous color experience. Therefore, in the following paintings I changed a texture that seemed to symbolize nature or a definite mood. I chose colors that were not naturalistic.

Another painting of the figure series is exceptional. Boy with Purple Grackles presents more realistic images than other paintings in the series do. The two birds are painted similarly to the hands. Thus a suggested relationship is presented. These forms point in similar directions. The boy seems akin to the birds. He shares some of their characteristics and powers. I plan to develop this theme of man in relation to animals and birds at another time.

Color photographs and black and white photographs of parts of the figure series are presented here. This series was used to form the exhibit which was the thesis for my Master of Fine Arts degree. Unfortunately, the color photographs, although as good as possible, present the paintings with a strong yellow cast. This reduces the conflict between the blues and reds. This

intensity is vital in the figure series since I have used these color effects for the emotional power these conflicts convey. Most of the eight to ten hours spent on each painting was used in adjusting these color areas.

To conclude my description: the thesis paintings are based on a dominant human figure composed of areas of color that are repeated outside the figure. The figures have a nobility of stature and are poised rather than active. They face the front with open impenetrable eyes. Each figure has a definite character. These characters were not predetermined, but arose during the process of painting. They are neither specific characters nor references to an archetype. Instead, like individuals, they present many traits and are open to many interpretations. Title formulation was quite difficult. The titles were made up after the painting was finished. The titles were made purposefully vague so that the viewer's own ideas in relation to the pictures could be freed.

Paintings



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by

Nell

11. *Woman Resting in Desert Sands*,
32" X 36"

12. *Young Man, Young Woman*, 18" X 32"

13. *Boy*, 30" X 32"



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An Exhibition of Paintings by

Nancy L. Neill

These paintings are presented as a thesis for a Master of Fine Arts Degree. They were painted during the period of September, 1963 thru April, 1964.

All the paintings were done in polymer emulsion on canvas. They are titled and are of sizes as follows:

1. *Steppenwolf*, 32" X 34"
2. *Man and Woman*, 18" X 24"
3. *Man and Son*, 20" X 22"
4. *Man of the Earth*, 32" X 36"
5. *African Woman*, 30" X 36"
6. *Warrior*, 30" X 32"
7. *Young Man with Purple Grackles*,
30" X 30"
8. *King*, 32" X 36"
9. *Lear's Jester*, 32" X 36"
10. *Man*, 32" X 36"

