AN EXPERIMENT IN THE DELIBERATE SUBORDINATION OF

PRIMARY PICTORIAL FEATURES IN PAINTING AND

INVESTIGATION OF THE PICTORIAL INTERFACE

THESIS

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This study concerns the deliberate subordination in painting of thirteen art elements and principles, the primary pictorial features, and examination of the intervals between pictorial events, the pictorial interface. A written record was kept of the artist's observations and impressions during the making of ten nonobjective paintings and their later study. The artist selected five paintings as more successfully subordinating the primary pictorial features and three paintings as most successfully exhibiting the three characteristics determined for the pictorial interface: (1) conceptual resonance, (2) ambiguity, and (3) unbiasedness. The three paintings selected as most successfully exhibiting the characteristics of the pictorial interface coincided with three of the five paintings selected as more successfully subordinating the primary pictorial features.

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GLOSSARY

A. Concept Art is the term applied to a painting in
which the artist's intent and emphasis are directed more
toward ideas and the mind of the observer than toward the
traditional attributes of its style, subject matter, techni-
que, or romantic sensuality. The term implies a sympathetic
relationship with the ideas associated with antiart and the
dematerialization of the art object.

B. Ineffable Quality is a portmanteau term of refuge
used to describe the quality or qualities of a painting that
are left undescribed when all known attributes and explana-
tions have been exhausted.

C. Interface is the common area or extent between adja-
cent pictorial events. In painting, the interface is some-
times perceived as space, or is incorrectly termed "void."

D. Nonobjective is the term applied to a painting in
which the visual attributes are said to be exclusively imagin-
ative or ideational and are not associated with previous ob-
jective experience. While that may be realistically impossi-
ble, the term is useful as a description of intended contrast.

E. Primary Pictorial Features (PPF) is the phrase
which refers to the art principles and elements, also known
as the "formal art elements" and the "visual elements." For
the purposes of this study, the principles and elements were

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considered equal in importance and effect and are all included within the one phrase "primary pictorial features," as suggested by, among others, Edmund Burke Feldman's treatment of them in _Art_ _as_ _Image_ _and_ _Idea_ (3, p. 224). Feldman's listing and discussion of the primary pictorial features omits some that are otherwise traditionally cited by authorities as either principles or elements, although those authorities seldom agree entirely on the classification of the features as principles or elements, or on their number and definition. The following listing and definitions of the primary pictorial features are composites drawn largely from the published works of a number of recognized authorities:

1. _Balance_ is largely a matter of the reconciliation of weights and stresses (3, p. 263). It has no qualitative aspect in and of itself. For example, one could not say that a painting has either attractive or unattractive balance (2, p. 373). The element of balance is usually described as symmetrical or asymmetrical. Symmetrical balance is the resolution of weights and stresses by equal halves, quadrants, or radials. Asymmetrical balance is the resolution of weights and stresses by variation of the characteristics of the pictorial features present, e.g., the size of an area may be balanced by the color of an opposing area. Symmetrical balance tends to be monotonous to the viewer,

while asymmetrical balance tends to be more interesting
(2, 3, 4, 6, 8).

    2. <u>Color</u> is the perception of differences between
different wavelengths in the visible spectrum (6, pp.
260-261). Whether or not this is accomplished by the
perceiver making comparisons or by direct response to
each wavelength is not material to the artist. Feldman
wrote that artists work with color more on an intuitive
than a scientific basis (3, p. 248). Color always
occurs in relationships determined by its position on
the visible spectrum and its quantitative dimensions of
hue, saturation, and brightness. Hue is the visual
attribute of a color that permits its classification and
is, therefore, its name. Brightness (a.k.a. value or
lightness) is the attribute of color that refers to the
scale of perceptions representing a color's similarity
to some one of a series of achromatic colors ranging
from very dark to very light. Saturation (a.k.a. chroma
or intensity) is the attribute of color that refers to
the scale of perceptions representing a color's degree
of departure from an achromatic color (one lacking a
distinguishable hue) of the same brightness. Yellows
and oranges tend to be sensed as advancing toward the
viewer, while greens and blues tend to recede. Color
is the pictorial feature whose psychological associations

seem to have the greatest force and variety within
cultures (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8).

3. Contrast is the quality of nonrelationship of
one event in a painting to another, which may be ex-
pressed in terms of most of the other pictorial features
and which establishes the stress conditions in a work.
While contrast often emphasizes the dissimilarities of
events in a painting sharing a common boundary, this is
not necessarily so. For example, a line may establish
a contrast with a texture far removed from it in a
painting. Contrast tends to heighten viewer interest in
a painting (2, 4, 8).

4. Emphasis is the perceived position of dominance
asserted by an event in a painting. It may be estab-
lished by an extent of detail, size, color, shape, posi-
tion, or interpreted directionality, or by the use of a
strongly attractive image, such as an eye. The absence
of emphasis among events in a painting tends to be per-
ceived as a pattern. The artist's intended emphasis can
be subverted by an unintentional emphasis in the work,
such as that developed by an interesection of direction-
ally perceived lines. Emphasis is sometimes termed
"center of interest," or, analogous to photography, the
"focal point," to describe the attention it commands
from the viewer (2, 8).

5. <u>Line</u> is the perception of an event in a painting as having the dimension of length only. It is a dynamic entity implying action and can also mean direction, orientation, motion, and energy (3, pp. 224-233). A line can divide space and a line-effect can occur when there is enough difference between two areas to give the appearance of an edge (6, p. 259). A shape can suggest linearity when one of its dimensions significantly exceeds its other. Lines and linear shapes suggest stability when horizontally oriented, instability when vertically oriented, and suspension in space or movement when diagonally oriented. McFee described the perception of movement in a painting as the "feeling of dynamic action" (6, p. 253). The suggestions of stability or instability derive from a subjective reference to the human figure as most stable when horizontal and otherwise when vertical or at the diagonal. Line can have an extensive range of character, from sharp and regular to curved and irregular, and can be actual or implied, as by a series of dots (2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8).

6. <u>Proportion</u> is primarily the size relationship of parts to the whole and to one another (3, p. 272). Other proportional relationships can be made for events in a painting that are quantitative. For example, one pictorial event can occur more frequently than another and establish a proportional relationship of quantity.

Any comparison of the same quality of events in a painting establishes a quantitive relationship. The term "scale" is sometimes used to mean proportion, but scale is not considered to be one of the primary pictorial features and usually refers to the overall dimensions of a painting, rather than to its interior relationships. Proportion can be manipulated, as can most of the other primary pictorial features, to affect dominance, emphasis, balance, and other pictorial features (1, 2, 3, 4).

7. Rhythm is probably most directly expressed by Feldman's description of it as the pictorial feature which "relates to measures of interval" (3, p. 267). He amplified that brief description by adding that it is the "ordered or regular recurrence of an element or elements" in a painting (3, p. 267). McFee's short definition enlarges the emphasis on positive regularity of Feldman's definition with ". . . a grouping of similarities and differences" (6, p. 252). Faulkner and Ziegfeld emphasized the tendency to perceive rhythm as "organized movement" (2, p. 366). Rhythm can be effectively established by repetition and progression, although other attributes of the events constituting the rhythmic progression can be varied extensively. The predisposition of one viewer to sense rhythm in a painting, as opposed to another viewer, can account for a wide range of perception of its presence and descriptors

in any single work. Rhythm is sometimes invoked to describe the movement sensed in a pattern that has directionality or linearity (2, 3, 4, 6, 8).

8. Shape is the configuration of an area, or its "outward physical manifestation" (3, p. 234). An area includes any figure or pictorial event described by two dimensions. Other terms often used either in conjunction with, or in place of, shape are "form," "mass," and "volume." Feldman wrote that shape "is not usefully differentiated from form in art" (3, p. 233), although "form" is nevertheless used sometimes in descriptions of the overall effect of a painting. Faulkner and Ziegfeld described form as the "interaction between the interior and exterior portions of an object" (2, pp. 291-292). Mass is properly one of the descriptors of a shape and refers to a pictorial event's perceived weight or dominance. A large mass of light color can be perceived as having less weight or mass in a painting than a smaller area of saturated color. The volume of a shape can refer to its size or to its perceived three-dimensionality, such as the use of light and dark ("chiaroscuro" or modeling) to suggest, for example, the roundness of form of Francisco Goya's voluptuary in "The Nude Maja" (ca. 1796-98). Closed lines become the boundaries of shapes regardless of whether the closure is made upon itself, made by suggestion, or by

intersection with another event in the painting. Perfect regularity of shape implies a mechanical or human origin, and irregularity implies natural or organic origin (2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8).

9. Space is the illusion of three-dimensional intervals between events on a two-dimensional surface (2, p. 305; 6, pp. 264-267). The illusion can be suggested by variations in size, color, and definition of pictorial events and objects in a painting, as well as by overlapping of events and the use of linear or aerial perspective. In linear perspective, the suggestion of three-dimensional space is obtained by the diagonal recession of lines themselves or by the implied directionality of the lines. It is based on the phenomenon that parallel lines receding into space from the observer seem to converge on the horizon. Aerial perspective is based on the diffusing effect which atmosphere has on the shapes, outlines, and colors of distant objects. The artist controls the illusion of space by suggesting its depth to be near, median, or far; but it is difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate all aspects of the illusion induced by the stereoptic vision and experience of the human observer. An extent or surface having length and breadth, but lacking depth or thickness, is sometimes referred to as two-dimensional space, or even "void," but is more properly termed "interval."

Spatial depth need not be consistent at all places in a painting in order to be effective, and some painters mix this illusion (2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9).

10. Texture is the three-dimensional or tactile qualities of a surface (2, p. 298; 6, pp. 263-264). The texture may be actually created by the use of textured materials or by the textured application of paint. It may be implied by the painted description of a texture ("visual" or "simulated" texture) or suggested by the use of pattern-like repetition of lines or shapes ("invented" texture) (2, 4, 6, 7, 8).

11. Transition is the perceptual process described by the viewer's flow of attention from one event to another in a painting. Transition can be accomplished by the use of other pictorial features, such as line, shape, color, and value, to lead the eye from one part of a painting to another. The relocation or redistribution of attention can be suggestive of movement to a viewer and can be an important component of the total effect of a painting (2, 4, 8).

12. Unity is the "quality of oneness" of a painting (2, p. 349). It is a qualitative term used in descriptions of how all interior events of a work operate together. The qualitative attribute of this pictorial feature lacks precision and often provokes disagreement regarding its success among viewers of a

painting. Unity involves all other pictorial features
present in a work and often has a special relationship
with balance and the resolution of tensions established.
A review of the literature showed that the confusions
of "unity" with "form" are sufficient to make useful
separation invalid. Feldman wrote that regardless of
how well or badly the artist organizes the pictorial
features, they will be seen as a whole because of the
viewer's egocentric interest in relating them only to
himself (3, p. 259). Unity can be obtained so simply in
a painting that it can become synonymous with visual
monotony; hence, a qualitative statement concerning
unity is usually enhanced by the presence of variety,
the quality of diversity (2, 3, 6, 7, 8).

   13. Value is the presence of lightness and dark-
ness in a part or the whole of a painting. Value re-
lates to position on a scale from white to black and is
the component of color which refers to its relative light-
ness or darkness (a.k.a. brightness). In any one part
of a painting, value may be used to contrast pictorial
events, to model or suggest the volume of shapes, and to
establish relative spatial position, mood, dominance, or
emphasis. The overall value or tonality of a painting
can be high-key, meaning predominantly toward the
lighter end of the value scale; low-key, predominantly
toward the darker end; or contain a full range of values

along the scale, which may be used arbitrarily or sys-

tematically to create the impression of a light source

(2, 3, 4, 7, 8).

F.   Religiosity is the presence of convictions in per-

sons which arouse them to reverence, gratitude, the will to

obey, serve, and the like. The presence of religiosity in the

attitudes toward, and the traditions and conventions of, art

is of such strength and pervasiveness as to satisfy the require-

ments for a definition of art as religion, with all of the

exclusivity and emotionality that such definition would em-

brace.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

        I never aspired to be a sex symbol, let alone
   Marilyn Monroe. In the end, trying to be a sex
   goddess can only bring pain and despair. If the
   career has not been based on a creative ideal, then
   where is that solid bit of your life?
                            --Shirley Knight, Actress
                                 (2, p. 82)

Miss Knight's expression is remarkable for getting

right to the point with a clarity and an economy of style

rarely encountered in statements about the arts. It also

makes unnecessary a lot of explanation about what moves her to

do what she does and what it means to her. It would have been

convenient if Miss Knight had stopped there. However, she

ended by making an equation of her creative ideal with the

"solid bit" of her life, and that's where she has the advan-

tage over some painters, whose history often describes any-

thing but a surety of artistic vision and a constancy of

creative ideals.

     Surely, anyone as articulate and apparently thoughtful

as Miss Knight should be credited with the ability to come up

with a lengthy list of reasons, other than that she likes it,

for why she became, and remains, an actress. Similarly, the

report of this study might show a long list of personal reasons

for its being, which are, as certainly as Miss Knight's,

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subsumed under one overriding reason, and which would contri-
bute little additional to its understanding. The overriding
reason in this instance is the artist's view of his work as
investigative research in the pursuit of that "creative ideal"
to which Miss Knight referred.

The creative ideal has been examined with almost as
much interest as the sex and sex symbolism of Miss Knight's
reference and with about equal success. That is to say that
there is only sufficient understanding of either as to com-
pound the confusions and anxieties attending to both. Miss
Knight's statement implies that she has identified the criteria
for her creative ideal and that she has mastered the craft of
her art. It may be understood that such mastery has obtained
for her some relative freedom from concern with the problems
of technique, style, and the particulars of vehicle, which then
allows her to concentrate on her creative ideal.

It is not possible to tell which came first to Miss
Knight, the mastery of craft or the identification of ideal.
This study, however, is the account of a search for what is
probably but one aspect of the creative ideal. The artist,
having obtained a certain level of technical accomplishment
and ability to manipulate the art elements and principles, was
yet unsatisfied, as student and teacher, with the traditional
explanations expressed in those same terms for a painting and
for its relative success or nonsuccess. In the sense of the
artist's not understanding what it is that makes a painting

great, its elusive "ineffability," he is kindred with many
other men.

Assuming that a given painting demonstrates adequate
technical competency, its durabiltiy and success might reside,
then, with either of its three other traditionally invoked
attributes: style, subject matter, or employment of the art
elements and principles. The thirteen art elements and prin-
ciples considered in the study are collectively termed the
"primary pictorial features."

The issue of style is the special province of art criti-
cism and art history. However unique or historically related,
style, along with its ally, technique, will be classified and
analyzed by the one or the other of those social activities
peripheral to the actual making of art. That is inevitable and
is not a matter of enduring concern to the authentic artist,
as differentiated from the posturer or artist manque by the
psychologist Lawrence Hatterer (1).

The subject matter of painting is linked to style in
some ways but usually has more extrinsic than intrinsic impor-
tance for art. An interesting phenomenon occurs, however, when
a painting is occupied with nonrepresentational or nonobjective
shapes or figures. Then, the extrinsic-intrinsic importances
often reverse. Since much of American painting since 1900 is
nonobjective and is nonetheless accepted as successful art,
it was thought that a reconsideration of the primary pictorial

features would be useful to an artist's search for explanations of the intrinsic success of some nonobjective painting.

The formal pictorial features, however incomplete or unincisive they might be, are sufficient in number and variation to present an impossibly infinite number of combinations and permutations for examination. It seemed, therefore, that it would be useful to a search for that which helps to make a painting effective to examine the intervals between the pictorial events of some paintings, hereafter termed "the pictorial interface." From there, it is only a short step to an effort to minimize the presence of the formal pictorial features themselves, the better to explore that interface.

<div align="center">Statement of the Problem</div>

The problem of this study was fourfold: (1) to provide the artist with a sustained experience in the deliberate subordination of the primary pictorial features in painting, (2) to examine the pictorial interface, (3) to assign characteristics to the pictorial interface, and (4) to determine the relationship between subordination of the primary pictorial features and the pictorial interface, if any.

<div align="center">Limitations of the Study</div>

The following limitations were imposed on the study.

A. General Limitations.

The study was limited to the tradition of Western and American art since its focus is on a form of pedagogy especially

emphasized within that tradition. Excursions into the psycho-biological, sociological, and philosophical domains as they pertain to art, artists, and cultures in general were limited in the study. This limitation was imposed in order to (1) aid the focus of the study upon the actual experience and paint-ings made as part of the study, (2) confine the scope of the study to manageable proportion, and (3) avoid the particular style of sophistication attending existing theories and definitions for concepts expressed by the words universal, essence, art, aesthetics, beauty, values, ideals, ethics, and morals, since that sophistication assumes too much about the structure wished to be illuminated.

B. Specific Limitations.

1. Media and Materials. Paint was selected as the medium of choice for the study since it is this artist's pri-mary medium. Both rigid and flexible, flat, two-dimensional, rectangular supports for the paintings were used in order to be consistent with primary Western tradition for painting supports. The flexible support was unprimed, white, cotton duck, and the rigid was tempered Masonite. Acrylic paint was used in order to permit both wet-on-wet and wet-on-dry applications within the time-frame of the study and for the ready range of opacity it offers. The color palette was unrestricted, but white paint was selected for use both as the descriptor of the interface between pictorial events and as the interface itself. White was selected because of its

reputation for mirroring, and for being related to, all possible hues while being none of them itself. A part of that idea is even contained in the folk expression--white is a mirror and black is beyond. Size of the paintings was limited to not less then six square feet and to not more than twelve square feet. The lower limit was imposed in order to provide sufficient scale for the properties of the pictorial interface to become evident, if not dominant. The upper limit was established as a size appropriate to the scope of the study and as unrestrictive to it.

2. Technique. Paint application was made exclusively with a brayer in order to impose an artificial distance between the artist and the painting. The additional distance and imposition of an instrument usually considered to be less personal and more mechanical than a brush was intended to reduce the artist's awareness of his own personality while painting and to present an additional barrier to a predilection for concern with the pictorial features rather than with the pictorial interval. That predilection was further restricted by limiting the source-stimuli for the painting to the ideational or conceptual, rather than objective imagery. The use of a brayer also facilitated the relatively untextured and thin application of paint.

The conditions established by the limitations described to this point led to two additional limitations which seemed to follow as naturally occurring consequence. The one

limited the painting to spontaneous operations and militated against making preliminary sketches and the premeditation attaching thereto. The other was to avoid the application of existing analytical techniques to the paintings, since those techniques depend so much on precisely the kinds of theories about art and its definitions that it was intended for the study to avoid.

Assumptions

A. It was assumed that some of the primary pictorial features in painting could be deliberately subordinated.

B. It was assumed that the deliberate subordination of some of the primary pictorial features in painting would enhance the opportunity to study the pictorial interface.

C. It was assumed that any argument for the necessity of this study must proceed from the subordination of the traditional canons of painting.

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses formulated and tested in this study were as follows.

A. The pictorial interface is capable of examination relatively independent of the primary pictorial features themselves.

B. The quality or characteristics of the pictorial interface of a painting can be identified and described.

C. There would be some correlation between subordination of the primary pictorial features and the pictorial interface.

Significance of the Study

It was anticipated that this study would derive its significance from the following: (1) documentation of a study of the interface between the pictorial events of a painting, (2) a precedent for the investigation of possibilities for as yet undiscovered attributes of a painting, (3) a model for subordinating a tendency to solve painting problems in terms of the primary pictorial features, and (4) the example of an artist's verbalization about his work.

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CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In abstract art, we see . . . clearly.
                    --Piet Mondrian
                        (19, pp. 79-80)

This study developed as a consequence of several dis-
satisfactions and questions about painting which came
together at a time coincident with the obligatory preparation
of a vehicle that could be used for study of these trouble-
some issues. That some of the explication of this study is
more empirical than theoretical is not accidental and is es-
sential to its fuller understanding. The artist's developing
view of his work as investigative research into the nature of
art seemed to have displaced concern for the traditional man-
ipulation of viewer response. Two corollaries accompanied
that point of view: (1) a level of technical competency with
graphic media was obtained which reduced the challenge of,
and hence the interest in, representing or interpreting things
and their interactive events in the objective world; and (2)
the continued study of art, its making and history, height-
ened interest in the ideational or conceptual bases for art.
This meant, too, that the artist tended to increasingly iden-
tify with some of the ideas associated with the conceptualists
rather than with those of the objectivists and perceptualists.

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In *The Artist in Society*, Lawrence Hatterer described how the artist carries his pursuit of information to use in his art into all experiences, disciplines, and phenomena. Hatterer explained that the identity of the artist and of his work is identical, one and the same. This does not mean that his identity can be fragmented from his work in the manner of addition and subtraction of numbers, but that it is simply and uniquely, according to Hatterer, inseparable (11). Ben Shahn, painter and sculptor, enlarged upon Hatterer's description of the artist's necessary catholicism and earnestly prescribed widely diverse studies and experiences in his essay "The Education of an Artist" (28). Those descriptions help explain why this artist's approach to art and to this study should not be considered in isolation from any of the related influences described here, which determined its direction, gave it purpose, and shaped its form.

Feldman wrote that, in humanistic theory, the study of art means acquiring facts, information, or knowledge about man and entreated art education "to reconstitute itself as the study of man through art" (10, pp. 174-181). The artist's ancillary and interdisciplinary studies concerning the natures of man and his environment had led him independently to the same conclusion. Those studies had also seemed to confirm the idea that the differing particulars of human experience fashioned by geography and social organization were less useful to understandings of humans and their art than were the

similarities. The facility with which cultural differences
are traceable to the identical needs of individuals and
societies is, in fact, the stock-in-trade of the social
sciences (8, 9, 12). Feldman noted that "the disciplines that
examine art in its widest manifestation in time and space
perform a genuine service by helping us to overcome notions
of art based on cultural, geographic, historical, and emotion-
al provincialism" (10, p. 4). The combined focus upon simi-
larities and the cognitive emphasis of conceptualism can lead
easily to the illusion that one is dealing with universals
and even to the faith that one knows what that is. The attrac-
tion that such easy certainty holds for some endeavors was
considered to be unsuitable for this study, although the lure
of the "universal" should not be thought of as ever far from
the abstractions of the conceptualists and the realm of ideas.

Pictorial Features and Formalism

Traditional explanations of, and for, the art work
termed "masterpiece," especially and in general for the
lesser-ranked works carrying the onus of merely "great art,"
have in general and in the sense of Marshall McLuhan's thesis
(21), left the artist "cold," that is, largely unmoved, un-
satisfied, and disturbed by the fact. The agreement alone of
art expects on works so labeled should be sufficient to make,
if not the works themselves, at least the categories suspect.
By almost any standard, the proofs of greatness of works of

art are highly inelegant. An "elegant proof" makes use of
powerful theorems to arrive at a result with exemplary effi-
ciency (27, p. 57). That dissatisfaction with the inability
of the primary pictorial features, the existing "visual
language" of art, to provide adequate explanations of art
should be a matter of vital concern to the working artist,
the art teacher, the art critic, and the art historian. Its
persistence and effects have been an enduring problem for this
artist and comprised the driving force behind this study.
Feldman wrote, "Dissatisfaction with past. . . practices
leads to readiness for new approaches to persistently difficult
problems" (10, p. v).

In addition to the appeal of a modern diversity of tech-
niques and materials in art and the popularity of pseudo-
scientism, many of the hoary "isms" seem to hold a special
attraction for art and can be held ultimately accountable for
the largest part of the uses for the term "masterpiece." But
a few prominent examples would include anthropocentrism, a
tendency in art to personify extra-anthropic phenomena; ego-
centrism, a tendency to perceive and value art within an
exclusive concept of self as the center, object, and norm of
all experience; religionism, an antidialectic disposition
toward art (see also Religiosity in Glossary); sentimentalism,
a predilection to value the nostalgic and emotional content of
art; and romanticism, an emphasis in art upon the validity of

subjective experience while tending to discount its external realities.

Each of these points of view can be seen to converge, first, to describe the kind of circularly conceited attitude about art expressed by the philosopher George Santayana (26) and the aesthetician DeWitt Parker: "The aim of art is to afford pleasure in the intuition of life" (24, pp. 82-83). The convergence continues, then, via the verbal tradition and the emphases of Western art orthodoxy, on to the primary pictorial features. That convergence makes a pointed illustration of fundamental uniformity in the midst of apparent diversity; for while art experts rarely agree upon the name, number, definition, and importance of the formal art features, their overlaps and congruancies, reinforced by the absence of alternative explanations, constitute one of the fundamental supports of what the art critic Robert Wraight described as a loose-knit but awesomely effective "art establishment" (35).

Explanations for the appellations of "masterpiece" and "great art" have not been confusing to the artist alone. The psychologist Rudolf Arnheim considered the intangible substance, or ineffability, of art so important to whatever else is said about art that he placed his essay on incomprehensibility as the first of two "Keynotes" to a collection of his essays. Arnheim, however accurate with his concern for the dependencies upon formal art features to explain great art, in the end was loathe to leave it at "art for art's sake" or some

other vagary, and suggested estimation of the worth of visual
art in terms of its sensory impact, the grandness of its
subject, and the profundity of its message (1, pp. 7-16).
Nonobjective art is often in diametric opposition to those
measures and intends that art should be unrhetorical, that
ideas and thought should not be sacrificed to elegance of
style and meaning.

The authors of Art Fundamentals: Theory and Practice
(22) used the sensory distribution among sight, sound, and
verbalization to distinguish divisions between the visual,
musical, and literary arts. The authors' emphasis upon the
senses as receptors alone, as mere channels to the receiver-
perceiver, along with their despairing of the ability of
rhetoric to explain graphic art, was clearly made at the
expense of facile explanations of art. This appears to have
led them to the only alternative possible--an attempt to
explain the ideas presented by works of art. Although the
authors' attempt did not, in fact, develop as the signal
reality of their book, its example is useful for the dilemma
it illustrates. The authors, having acknowledged an inherent
inability of the one medium (literary) to replace the other
(visual), established an a priori argument for a nonrhetorical,
hence ideational, purpose for art, but were unable to describe
what was its nature or substance. Again, the mute ineffabil-
ity of graphic art remained inscrutable. In some ways
similar to this study, their point was best made when it

proceeded from the elimination of traditional purposes for
art.

Another of the interrelated reasons for the study arose
from a developing impression that the various assortments of
formal art elements and principles used to describe and explain
paintings, masterpiece and failure alike, might be not only
incomplete but also have specifically limited usefulness to
the professional artist and to the art viewer. The limitation
of usefulness to the art viewer is completely enough described
by the inability of the primary pictorial features to explain
paintings. Whether this derives from a shortage of identified
pictorial features or from some other inherent inadequacies
of the features is immaterial at this point. The effect upon
the viewer is the same; he is left on his own to grapple with
the imprecise notions of meaning, intuition, instinct, and
feeling, as suggested in Art Fundamentals (22). All of those
notions might be considered as included in the sense of
"einfühlung" (feeling into), or empathy. Aldous Huxley has
used what was for him a more accurate phrase: "inferential
understanding" (15, pp. 12-13). The range of variability in
the degree of understanding implied by the word "inference" is
important, for understanding greatly varies between different
individuals and between different works of art, despite the
best efforts of some interests to make populations "appre-
ciate" the same works in the same ways and to the same extents.

For the professional artist, the primary pictorial features can constitute a system for understanding and making art that imposes severe limitations to both. To be sure, it is a system of default; that is, the institutionalization of the primary pictorial features, coupled with the absence of alternatives, make their acceptance the practical and expedient course. All radical alternatives offer no promise for success. In their place, the assurances are for anxiety, uncertainty, and grappling with thoughts that seem to defy expression.

New information concerning the psychology of perception and the physiology of vision, along with concerns for the development of personal sensitivity, awareness and inner-directedness, have become prominent in some recent art texts. Those texts displace emphasis on the verbal-visual language of the primary pictorial features with a conceptual preparation for art experience, or what Philip Slater has called "responsiveness" (30). Although the primary pictorial features cannot be avoided entirely or for long, the deemphasis of their formal structure in those texts is an interesting trend (6, 7, 20, 25).

That the primary pictorial features do, in fact, constitute both the tenets of an ideology and the ideology itself has provided the special grist for such works as The Painted Word by Tom Wolfe (34), Precious Rubbish by Theodore Shaw (29), and for Feldman to have observed that "the ideology prevailing

in much of art education is a reflection of the definition
of art held in the culture as a whole" (10, p. 21). The old
game of playing at art in primary and secondary education was
perhaps not too inimical to keeping open ideas about art. The
full force of the pictorial ideology used to be brought to
bear only upon art students and others in their postsecondary
or preprofessional education. In recent years, however, the
verbal-visual pictorial ideology has become established at
all levels of education through the agencies of instructional
media, educational tests and measurements, and the pedantry
of the teachers themselves. The cumulative effects of this
upon the professional artist can be varied, long-lived, and
considerable.

The visual vocabulary of the art elements and principles
is sometimes juxtaposed with the notes and phrases of music
and the words and sentences of literature as proof of their
necessity. A less pedantic argument for their teaching can
be made from the proposition that knowledge of the "rules"
enhances alternative options, but this latter argument may be
no nearer the truth than the former. In either case, the
artists' training in the primary pictorial features generally
describes the following overlapping progression: first,
emphasis upon the verbalization of pictorial phenomena, some-
times termed "visual literacy"; and, second, graphic mastery
of the primary pictorial features. One or more additional
objective-steps can follow and might be characterized as, third,

the assimilation of formal pictorial phenomena into the artist's subconscious, or possibly unconscious, which allows him then, ostensibly, to manipulate them without conscious deliberation; and, fourth, to bring his concentration to bear upon interpretive or other advanced pictorial problems.

An event in the development of some artists which was found to have received no attention in the literature is his occasional and individual rebellion against the specific formalism of the art principles and elements. The rebellion assumes either verbal or graphic form, or both, and might in some ways be related to the safe and stylish rebellious mood of the times, to the currently high social expectations for change and variety, or to the controversial dissolution of formalism in modern art as described by the historian Jacques Barzun (3), the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset (23), and by the contemporary-art critics and writers Gregory Battcock (4), Katherine Kuh (17), and Lucy Lippard (18). It is, and should be, unsettling to hear more than one graduating Master of Arts student wonder aloud about how many years it will take to overcome their art training. How much each, or all, of those influences were part of this study is academic; their citation here is to acknolwedge their presence and to suggest their extents and effects.

Once the artist-in-training has passed to the stage of assimilation of the formal pictorial features, that is not the end of them, however, for within his mileau, the languages

of style, technique, subject matter, and art history and
criticism depend heavily for expression upon them. An under-
standing of the uses to those purposes of the verbal-visual
language of the primary pictorial features is readily obtained
from the examination of almost any survey text for art appre-
ciation or art history, many exhibition catalogues, and some
of the books which feature particular artists and schools.
Consequently, the mature artist's work continues to be de-
scribed, analyzed, and interpreted within the parameters, and
by the language, of the primary pictorial features. This
further perpetuates their force and effects upon the artist
from both within and without. Some kind of reconsideration of
so pervasive and enduring a force seemed appropriate, and even
inevitable, for this artist.

Art in Service to Other Ideas

Earlier references to the conventions of art and the art
establishment and to the movement of this artist's work toward
the nonobjective, the modality selected for the paintings made
as a part of this study, require some additional explanation.
The convention viewed, in influence upon the artist, as second
only to that described by the primary pictorial features and
of considerably longer history, is that of subject matter. It
is the subject matter of painting that makes a telling descrip-
tion of art in service to other ideas and which has had the
effect of inhibiting the use of art in wider investigations

about its own nature. It is also not remarkable that the
language and concepts of the primary pictorial features can
be seen to assert a presence and an influence, often as rules,
upon the subject matter of painting. The issue of art in
service to other ideas is particularly prominent in Jacques
Barzun's The Use and Abuse of Art (3), Art by Clive Bell (5),
and in Lionello Venturi's History of Art Criticism (33).
Feldman referred to this as "instrumentalism" and described
it as the use of art to serve purposes that have been deter-
mined by persistent human needs working through social insti-
tutions (10, pp. 375-377). A reasonable argument could be
made from turning around that idea so that the needs of social
institutions are understood as working through artists, with-
out much altering the effects upon art.

The chronicle of such uses of art is literally intermin-
able, for they reflect the aspirations of humankind for, in
the least, its own glorification, salvation, and immortality.
Rarely in the long, premodern history of art has it been con-
sciously used as an investigative vehicle for pursuing non-
categorical understandings of its other possibilities (3, 5,
33). Leo Steinberg confronted this issue head-on and suffered
no illusions about it: "Traditionally, the idea of art has
had too many untoward associations with High Culture and High
Church religion, with aristocracy and snob appeal . . . ."
(31, p. 56). A nominalist might observe that all of the mani-
festations of art have been the essential expression of a

desire to work magic of one kind or another, while the human-
ist, the pragmatist, or the existentialist could as easily
accommodate the varieties of subject matter within exclusive
points of view and systemic understandings. Notwithstanding
the currents of fashion that rhythmically flow over and eddy
about certain styles and subject matter of art, an acknowledg-
ment of the strength and duration of those "other purposes" is
inescapable today. The naming of but a few will, in turn,
suggest many others, but serves to make a useful amplification
of the other purposes identified already by Steinberg.

Perhaps the oldest "civilized" uses of art reside with
religion and the state, which have been scarcely differentiated
for the most of human history. The "religiosity" invoked by
religious iconography moves comfortably between state and re-
ligion, as does often the iconolatry of both. The great body
of images of political leaders from Ramesses II to Ché Guevera
is testimony to that fact, although Carl Jung's emphasis upon
religious art as the primary "cult object" (16) remains
secure. The historic symbiosis of art with church and state
can be observed today in some modern societies (e.g., North
America, Western Euope, and Japan) to have been largely sup-
planted by one of art with free enterprise, business, and
industry (13). The separation of art from church and state
may well prove to have been the single event pivotal to the
release of art from ancient prescriptions and responsible as
well for the confusions and directions of art emergent since

the last half of the nineteenth century. The invention of
the printing press, the camera, and television certainly ob-
viated most of the historic uses for art as propaganda and
allegory, as illustration, for documentary purposes, and as
entertainment, though the idea yet has currency that art is
an "effective agent in human behaviour" (10, p. 20).

Lippard resurrected the alleged "revolutionary powers"
of art ordinarily attributed to Francisco Goya's and Pablo
Picasso's graphic images of the barbarities of military op-
pression when she wrote, "Another idea that has come up
recently that interests me very much is that of the artist
working as an interruptive device, a jolt in present societal
systems" (18, p. 8). The artist in the role of social
commentator and iconoclast is nothing else if it is not
ancient and continuing, its range in time and place extending
from Egypt in the 11th century B.C., through Honoré Daumier
(1808-1879) in France, to Little Orphan Annie and Daddy War-
bucks.

To art and the artist has also been attributed the role
of prophet typified by such a posteriori pronouncements
that Max Ernst's "The Petrified City" (1933) prefigured World
War II, and his "The Angel of Earth" (1937) had more than a
coincidental connection to the onslaught of facism (14, p. 57).
The issue of "art-as-entertainment" seems not only to endure
but to thrive. A recent Time article accurately described
art as going beyond whatever one gets from merely looking; it

includes the variety of peripheral activities that surround its making, presentation, and discussion (32, p. 99). In fact, popularization of the entertainment possibilities of art has made the not unexpected inversion to "entertainment as art." To all of this, the poet W. H. Auden might have said, "[Art] makes nothing happen: it survives" (2, p. 142).

There is little question that from what is known of life and art today its particulars are culturally determined and its endeavor characteristically human, implying all the fallibility and frailty of life itself. Once freed from its temporal uses, art, along with its sisters poetry and music, might move toward some closer approximation of the human definition and its possibilities. That is a highly optimistic point of view; but the logical conclusion of an alternative pessimism is not antiart; it is no art.

When the uses of art in service to other ideas is viewed in conjunction with the ubiquity of the primary pictorial features, each in its cultural and historical settings, the combined effects of their canonization by authority and mass taste can be understood as more than adequate to limit the imagination and quite inadequate to stimulate it. John Wren-Lewis recently expressed that understanding: "Cultural forms tend . . . to harden into rigid patterns of custom that stifle the very impulse that gave them birth . . . ." (36, pp. 66-67). Ortega y Gasset made a direct connection of the explicit and

purposeful antecedents in painting to the ideation of the non-objective:

> The guiding law of the great variations in painting
> is one of disturbing simplicity. First, things are
> painted; then, sensations; finally, ideas. This
> means that in the beginning the artist's attention
> was fixed on external reality; then, on the subjective;
> finally, on the intra-subjective. The three stages
> are three points on a straight line (23, p. 127).

Ortega y Gasset explained intra-subjective as "the content of consciousness" (23, p. 129).

There comes a point in an artist's life when he must deal with the reality of that straight-line continuum and his position upon it. How he decides determines the course of all his work to follow. If the decision is to reach for the leading edge, as it were, he is de-expertized on the spot and left with values that cannot be explained in traditional ways, if at all; but he will represent an attempt to provoke a wrench of imagination that can stimulate the point of departure.

Summary

The primary pictorial features are inadequate for making qualitative statements about painting and for making explanations of it (1, 10, 17, 18, 22). The pervasiveness and force of their presence in the training of an artist and in the art establishment assert the limiting effects of formalism (1, 34, 35). Representational subject matter is the adjunct of the formalism of the primary pictorial features and makes a

description of art indentured to other ideas (3, 5, 33). The
progression of art from the particular to the ideational
promises new understandings of its nature and possibilities
(17, 18, 31).

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CHAPTER III

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND

COMMENTARY ON THE PAINTINGS

> Sirs: "Young Pheonix I," which was "blotted and splattered" by Walter Darby Bannard, is almost a duplicate of my 5-year-old granddaughter's effort in kindergarten, except that she used more colors and her own artistic fingers to create her masterpiece. I remember asking her what it was and she said indignantly, "a picture of paint"--which, indeed, it was.
> --Marie H. O'Brien
> (12, p. 4)

A study of the literature did not show any precedent for the specific examination of the pictorial interface in a painting. There is, however, some precedent in painting for the use of white paint as one of the major features. The extensive use of white paint in the paintings of this study spontaneously developed the name of "white paintings" for the group, as for the "white paintings" by Robert Rauschenberg.

Between 1949 and 1952, Rauschenberg employed a kind of disciplinary reduction in a series of first, all white, and then later, all black paintings. He said that he "didn't want color to serve him" (22, p. 202). Rauschenberg's use of white and black was also intended to assert the flatness of the picture plane which would develop the "foundation of an artistic language that would deal with a different order of experience" (19, p. 85). The white and black in paintings

seem to have some special relationship beyond their sequence
alone. Franz Kline has said, "I paint the white as well as
the black, and the white is just as important" (10, pp. 5-6).
Lucy Lippard commented in 1969 on Ad Reinhardt's making black-
square identical paintings in 1960, as follows:

> [It] was a very important ending point (of Reinhardt's
> concern with how much materiality a work of art has)
> . . . . The fragmentation is so obvious. . . . It's
> strange how [he] relates to much of the new art, be-
> cause these artists often make art out of unadulterated
> life situations and Reinhardt was so determined that
> art should relate to nothing but art (13, pp. 6-7).

The paintings of this study had some parallels with the
all white paintings of the body of work termed "minimalist"
in the 1960's and with their concern for neutralization of
heirarchical distinctions (13, p. 5). The earliest record
found of white paintings was that of the Russian abstract
painter and teacher Casimir Malevitch who, in 1919, exhibited
in Moscow his white painting, "White Square on a White Back-
ground," and described it as the "acme of simplicity and
delicacy" (11, p. 213). Some of the paintings of this study
might be seen to refer to those of the Chinese and Japanese
Zen artists. Not only are the location and extents of white
area important to the Zen artist, but the decision of what to
leave out of the painting is a major consideration (1, 20).
Although some closer parallels might be drawn between those
precedents and the paintings of this study, that was consid-
ered to be too tenuous to be directly relevant and was not
done. While this study used some logical techniques to develop

certain data, to this artist it is not so much the account
of a process leading to logical deduction as it is the descrip-
tion of a humus-like decidua of experience.

Description of the Study

Color-photograph reproductions of the paintings made as
a part of this study are in Appendix A. The attempt was made
to subordinate all of the primary pictorial features in each
painting, in turn. All paintings were subsequently dealt with
as a group or in two subgroups for their study and analyses.
Attempts to study and analyze the paintings singly were not
productive. Notes incidental to the study were made on loose
file cards instead of in a bound ledger or notebook. This
proved especially useful to the later selection and organiza-
tion of the materials. The paintings had the express anti-
formalist purpose of subordination of the primary pictorial
features in order to emphasize the pictorial interface exist-
ing between other events of the paintings and to enable its
examination. The paintings proceeded against the idea of
association with objective experience by the elimination of
representational, literal, narrative, and suggestive imagery
and symbol, and are characterized as nonobjective. Similarly,
beyond their purposes for this study, narrative and rhetorical
conventions of message and meaning were avoided. The technique
of painting used to achieve those purposes involved covering
each painting almost entirely with colors, shapes, lines, and

figures, and then painting out those areas which seemed to suggest specific objective experience. Each painting in turn was developed in this way. After the completion of the eight paintings, numbered 1 through 8, paintings numbered 4 and 5 were thought to need further development and received some additional painting. This resulted in numbers 4 and 5 being termed States I and II, of each.

The following described procedure was used to organize the experience of the study and as a sorting device for the perceptions and impressions generated by it. Other procedures, perceptions, and impressions could be developed by different persons for the same purposes. The validity of those used here obtains from the scope of the study and its conclusions.

The paintings were rated by the artist for their relative measure of success in subordinating the thirteen primary pictorial features. Initial attempts to accomplish that rating which considered each painting separately against the pictorial features provided inconclusive data. Usable data were obtained when the paintings were viewed together against each of the pictorial features in turn. The record of perception of subordination of the primary pictorial features is in Table I, Appendix B. By this method, the paintings were developed as having the following positions on a scale from -13 to +13 and to rank in terms of overall relative success in subordinating the primary pictorial features as follows:

Painting No.	Relative Value	Relative Success Rank*
1	0	2
2	+6	5
3	-6	1
4 (I)	0	2
5 (I)	+5	4
6	+3	3
7	+7	6
8	0	2
4 (II)	+9	7
5 (II)	+6	5

*Paintings with equal Relative Values ranked equally.

The assigned negative values were considered to reflect more directly and accurately than the "0" values the success of subordination, and a record of their distribution by individual painting and by each pictorial feature was made (Table II, Appendix B). The sum of assigned negative values was used as a second measure of rank of success of the paintings and developed as follows:

Painting No.	Sum of Negative Values	Relative Success Rank*
1	-5	2
2	-1	5
3	-9	1
4 (I)	-4	3
5 (I)	-3	4
6	-5	2
7	-1	5
8	-5	2
4 (II)	-1	5
5 (II)	-1	5

*Paintings with equal Sums ranked equally.

Next, a comparison of the two orders of rank of the paintings was used to isolate those paintings deserving of

closest observation of their interfaces. By this procedure,
all paintings bearing a rank number of higher than "3" by
the first ranking and higher than "4" by the second ranking
were relegated to a position of second importance to the
study. Cut-off rank orders of "3" and "4", respectively,
were selected because the data indicated that the further
value to the study of the larger numbered rank orders was
seriously questionable and to provide a basis for primary-
level discrimination among the paintings. This methodologi-
cal step is summarized as follows:

Painting No. (1)	First Ranking 1/* (2)	Second Ranking 2/* (3)	First-Level Paintings 3/* (4)	Final Rank 4/* (5)
1	2	2	X	(2)
2	5	5		
3	1	1	X	(1)
4 (I)	2	3	X	(4)
5 (I)	4	4		
6	3	2	X	(3)
7	6	5		
8	2	2	X	(2)
4 (II)	7	5		
5 (II)	5	5		

*1/ Cut-off with "3". 2/ Cut-off with "4". 3/ All
others Second-Level. 4/ Second Ranking weighted more than
first.

By this procedure the five paintings indicated in column (4)
were identified for special consideration. A final ranking
is shown in column (5) above.

The data thus far developed provoked the question of
which primary pictorial features (PPF) had been shown to have

been the more successfully subordinated. The comparison of
their relative rank in point of success, taken from the
rankings in Tables I and II, Appendix B, follows:

PPF (1)	First Ranking (2)	Second Ranking (3)	Final Ranking & Grouping (4)		
1. Balance	3	2	3		
2. Color	6	3		6	
3. Contrast	5	3		5	
4. Emphasis	3	3	4		
5. Line	2	1	2		
6. Proportion	7	3		7	
7. Rhythm	2	1	2		
8. Shape	8	3		8	
9. Space	4	1	3		
10. Texture	4	2	4		
11. Transition	1	2	2		
12. Unity	9	4		9	
13. Value	1	1	1		

This comparison implied the final ranking of column (4)
above, and suggested that the subordination of primary pic-
torial features bearing final rank orders "1" through "4"
were most successfully subordinated (viz., value, transition,
rhythm, line, space, balance, emphasis, and texture). This
seemed to suggest that those eight features might be more
readily subordinated and further to suggest the grouping as
shown by subcolumns in column (4) above.

Study of the pictorial interface independent of any
other referents of the study was unavailing of a determina-
tion of its characteristics. A predisposition to perceive
the interface within conventions implied by the PPF was

inescapable. The qualities of the interface as contained in
the notes made incidental to the study provided the descrip-
tive terms which were taken as valid indicators of its
nature. The descriptive terms were abstracted from the notes
and grouped by association. The identity of the descriptive
terms and some "flavor" of their context is preserved in the
"Commentary on the Paintings." The descriptive-term groups,
in turn, suggested larger characteristics of the pictorial
interface. Attempts to develop affirmative characteristics
only were not wholly successful. The descriptive terms and
the interface characteristics they suggested are in Fig. 1,
Appendix C, and are summarized as follows:

　　　Ambiguous: spatially, dynamically, optically.

　　　Conceptually Resonant: subjective, meditative,

　　　　　theoretical.

　　　Unbiased: unstructured, unassignable causality.
The application to all paintings of the study of the charac-
teristics of the interface so determined produced the table
of their perceived incidence in Table III, Appendix C.

　　　Subsequent comparison of the paintings identified by
this procedure as more successful at carrying the character-
istics of the interface (Table III, Appendix C) with the
paintings identified at column (5), page 35, as more suc-
cessful at subordinating the PPF, showed coincidence in
three of five instances, as follows:

Painting Number	1	3	4 (I)	6	8
By PPF Subordination:	X	X	X	X	X
BY Interface Descriptors:		X		X	X

Commentary on the Paintings

The following commentary on the paintings appears in two sections and is representative of the more informative observations made by the artist during the parts of this study concerned with the making of the paintings and their subsequent study. The commentary sometimes appears in the first person or the present tense. This style was used to preserve some quality of the experience and to be revealing of it. The commentary is largely generalized and makes no references to specific paintings, which was characteristic of the notes and observations made throughout the study. Some observations seemed to lend themselves to a grouping of sorts and others did not. Section I records those observations which were more generalized and did not seem to directly address the study of the pictorial interface; Section II contains those which did. The relative austerity of Section II suggests the difficulty encountered in dealing with the interface.

Section I

The deliberate subordination of the primary pictorial features (PPF) has proved to be much easier said than done.

It seems as though they can be applied to almost any frag-
ment of a painting. What is more startling, they can be
readily applied to each other: the qualities of a line or
a shape, for example, can be described by using the others.
This kind of thought seems to extend the range and effects
of the PPF, both objectively and subjectively, even further
than I had acknowledged. The conflict between the PPF as
"rules" and as "possibilities" is felt strongly, even where
the attempt is made to subordinate them by doing the oppo-
site, such as "unbalancing" the painting. It is ironic
that much attention is given to the PPF in the act of avoid-
ing them.

I wonder if any other than white paint would have done
as well, without overwhelming the paintings and referring
too explicitly to the work of the color-field abstractionists.
The use of white seems, anyway, to reduce and diffuse percep-
tion of the color used to its presence alone. This also
seems to heighten a kind of systematic silence attaching
to the paintings. The associations of color are too strong
to use any but white. "The pure red of which certain ab-
stractionists speak does not exist. Any red is rooted in
blood, glass, wine, hunters' caps and a thousand other con-
crete phenomena" (8, p. 54).

Although I am physically painting-out features of the
painting, the perception of what is happening is of an
ambiguous painting-in and uncovering--simultaneously. I

think I have discovered something of sorts: black is more colorful than white! This directly contravenes the definitions of science for black and white. "Darkness is not a positive phenomenon, it is the absence of light" (3, p. 24). That may be true for light but, it seems, not for paint. This could be an illusion created by the viewer's intent to perceive into the murk and gloom: a projection of the viewer. Or, it might be purely cognitively inferred from the intelligence that a number of saturated hues can be mixed to create black, a cognitive inference. "As I write this the night pours into my room like black sunlight" (6, p. 30).

Almost anything against white establishes contrast--not so, black. A solitary line on a page establishes contrast and edge and induces an ambiguous spatial relationship of the line with the white space around it. It is difficult to make the paintings "lie down," to make the visuals coincident with the picture plane; but that is the way to subordinate three-dimensional "space." "The flatbed picture plane lends itself to any content that does not evoke a prior optical event" (19, p. 90).

The awareness that some painters carry a code of shapes into all their work makes me alert to mine: a "Y" or yoke-shape and something like the figure "7"; and I paint them out (almost) wherever they occur. "(William Gaddis') message to an age obsessed with the vanity of creativity was actually

a disturbing reminder: art is not an invention but the recognition of eternal patterns" (18, p. 98).

The paintings are meant to be viewed from a distance of several feet, yet some seem to have been trapped in a surface texture which draws people's noses to within inches. Brush marks and surface texture are an assertion of the personal quality of painting; they reinvoke for the artist, and suggest for the viewer, the experience of doing the painting. The subordination of texture as a PPF serves here, but I am not sure that I want to give up that characteristic afterward.

As in some other paintings, the clutter of figures in these paintings before they are painted-out seems like a womb-cover. Their elimination and the ensuing removal of a concern to fill space presents a totally alien dimension. I feel a strong affinity with the concepts intended by the terms "dematerialization," "eccentric abstraction," and "anti-form." "Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) wanted to build his pictures out of the simplest elements: straight lines and pure colors" (4, p. 444).

The longer I am engaged with the departure from the particular and the objective, the more understanding I have of the recent discoveries of science which suggest possibilities rather than affirm facts. The paintings tend to become an accumulation of incidents.

Almost any single feature, or combination, that horizontally traverses a painting suggests the structure of the literal landscapist: sky at top, earth below. These paintings are to avoid structure.

> The great wall of China is not a work art (since it was built with a purpose). A work of art must be unusable. Art doesn't manufacture a product, or store or move anything. The function of a work of art is not mechanical, but human (7, p. 94).

This experience makes desirable learning more about the abstractions of Mid-Eastern and Oriental art, especially the Arabic use of pattern as a metaphor for infinity and Zen detachment and tradition of protest against worldliness. "Words do not make paintings; only painting makes paintings" (Anonymous).

Section II

The study of the interface in the paintings leads to an expectation for solutions and conclusions which risks their fabrication. The systematic silence of the paintings extends to the interface and to my attempts to understand and describe it. It would be easier to describe what the interface is not, than what it is. The twin lures of the universal and the transcendental hang heavy in the air as dust. Carl Jung described the formation of a collective unconscious, a timeless and unrestricted level of awareness that exists outside history, culture, fact, and particular (9). If this is it, I can testify that it is unconscious. The

writer Theodor Roszak argued that the human impulse toward transcendence is the most distinctively human characteristic, the root of all creativity, and the driving force behind all cultural innovation (17).

The confusions occurring as a consequence of seriously questioning the traditional canons and conventions are about what should be expected.

> So long as we think of all works of art as having some mysterious character in common . . . which necessarily elicits some equally mysterious mental state . . . it is impossible to tell whether people who do not talk about art actually have it (16, p. 62).

This entire exercise might be but one more unnessary chink in the wall of formalist logic. It is impossible to tell whether the interface is no more than another PPF or a pictorial feature of the same order as explicit subject matter. It would have been easier to study the artistic content of a person placing his thumb to the end of his nose. Nothing will be the same again. "Cultivate a meditative attitude of release toward things . . . which are nothing absolute but remain dependent upon something higher" (5, p. 54).

Though the distinction between conceptual art and process art may be fuzzy, it seems clear enough that the paintings and this study relate rather exclusively to the conceptual. What is sought is some coherent way to tie everything together without developing a formalist structure. The diagrammatic systems and those employing metaphor do not

apply here. "The philosophy of the whole is an unnamed philosophy of open syntheses. Those who think and act in its spirit may be identified, perhaps, by the absence of labels" (14, p. 314).

The attempt to verbalize the nature of the interface seems to transmogrify it. This search is much like that for the missing link in human evolution: the objective might not be discovered, but the search may engender some other information. Conversely, both may be more likely to be explained by Catastrophe Theory (21).

> Uncovering the world is the process of Rauschenberg, Stankiewicz, Nevelson, Ginsberg, etc. They don't like to boss the objects or the work around too much. Uncovering can only occur in a non-judgemental atmosphere which, through the mode of acceptance and incorporation, lets the lights come on (2, p. 30).

I may be fighting this too hard to let the light shine through. A break with traditional formulas goes beyond its direct causes; it describes what seems to be both a human and a cultural necessity. The interface is nonobjective and largely nonassociative. It has a detached quality, a quality of distance from experience. That should not make it irrelevant to the human definition though, since humans are not all, or just, experience. "In the scale of realities 'lived', reality holds a peculiar primacy which compels us to regard it as 'the' reality" (15, p. 18). To say that anything made as art has no human reference would be to deny that it represents a human effort.

Is it too presumptuous to say that the study of the interface refutes the notions that existence is only a biological activity or period of moral probation; that through contemplation of the interface, a mortal may aspire to insights that transcend a desire for temporal advantage or immortality? The interface has become, for me, a meditative object; its ambiguous opacity and transparency seem to set up a kind of meditative resonance that reflects not what I see, but my mind's eye. This seems to make it have more the properties of an event than a combination of physical features.

The nonspatial quality of the interface recalls Byzantine iconography: flat figures and fields of gold, the conceptual-theoretical world, the world of mind and thought. The interface lacks causal reference; it does not explain why it is there. As such, it neither asserts its objecthood nor denies it: it is only there. Its ambiguity extends to its dynamic or static quality as well; at times, it is either or both.

The irresolution of other pictorial features seems to keep the mind's eye in continuous motion over the surface of the painting. It has a kinetic quality that sometimes contradicts its silence and two dimensionality. I observe, in working on these paintings, that it is not what remains visible of the underpainting that moves into the picture,

that moves outward; it is the white interface that dominates and "flows" onto the surface.

The reality of the interface is subjective. Its reality does not have to be understood to be either real or truthful. The reality that exists in some optical illusions between the flip-flop of one perception of perspective to another and back again can represent that, as with M. C. Escher's n-dimensional reality. "Modern and medieval art agree that reality is not so much revealed as masked by surfaces" (19, p. 303). The interface does not "read" as a metaphor for something else, neither is it rhetorical or narrative. It does not reveal a bias or a structural formalism. It does not seem contrived or manipulated. It works in some ways that are totally unexpected.

Summary

The question of whether enough was learned to justify this study is irrelevant. It was undertaken with no illusions regarding outcomes. An insistence on absolute answers as a precondition for its undertaking would have subverted the main component of its energy: curiosity. Though some insights and symbols were sought, the insights remain uncertain, and the report becomes its own symbol.

Assumptions

A. The assumption "that some of the primary pictorial features in painting could be deliberately subordinated" was supported by the study.

B. The assumption "that the deliberate subordination of some of the primary pictorial features in painting would enhance the opportunity to study the pictorial interface" was supported by the study.

C. The assumption "that any argument for the necessity of this study must proceed from the subordination of the traditional canons of painting" was supported by the study.

Hypotheses

A. Hypothesis A that "the pictorial interface is capable of examination relatively independent of the primary pictorial features themselves" was accepted on the basis of the successful subordination of primary pictorial features and the consequent emphasis of the interface.

B. Hypothesis B that "the quality or characteristics of the pictorial interface of a painting can be identified and described" was accepted on the basis of the identification of three descriptive characteristics of the interface, which describe its quality.

C. Hypothesis C that "there would be some correlation between subordination of the primary pictorial features and the pictorial interface" was accepted on the basis of coincidence in point of success of each in three of five instances.

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CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS,

AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I believe that we understand nothing, we see nothing.
                    --Louis Grodecki, Art Critic
                      University of Paris
                      (1, p. 55)

Summary

This study was concerned with the deliberate subordina-
tion of the primary pictorial features in painting and an
investigation of the consequent emphasis of the pictorial
inferface. Eight nonobjective paintings were made, which
were rated for their relative success with subordination of
the primary pictorial features. Characteristics of the pic-
torial interface were developed and the paintings were
rated on their relative success in exhibiting those charac-
teristics. The two ratings were compared for coincidence.

Conclusions

The principle conclusions of this study are as follows.

A. It is possible to deliberately subordinate some
but not all of the primary pictorial features in painting.

B. The subordination of primary pictorial features in
painting can make prominent the pictorial interface.

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C. The characteristics of the interface developed by the study were (1) ambiguity, (2) conceptual resonance, and (3) unbiasedness.

Implications

The implications of this study are as follows.

A. Some primary pictorial features can be more readily subordinated than others.

B. The assertion of characteristics of a pictorial interface may be proportional to subordination of the primary pictorial features.

C. The development of alternative descriptors for some nonobjective paintings is possible.

D. It can be more useful to the understanding of some paintings to view them as a body or group of works rather than singly.

Recommendations

The recommendations based upon the conclusions and implications of this study are as follows.

A. The deliberate subordination of the primary pictorial features in painting is suitable for assignment as a problem for selected painting students in postsecondary education.

B. This study should be expanded to include a larger number of painters, paintings, and raters.

   C.   The possibility for alternatives to the primary
pictorial features should be emphasized in pedagogical ex-
planations of paintings.

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        pp. 54-55.

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APPENDIX A

PLATE I   55

Painting Number 1
(1972)
24" x 48"

PLATE II   56

Painting Number 2
(1972)
36" x 48"

PLATE III   57

Painting Number 3
(1972)
30" x 30"

PLATE IV   58

Painting Number 4 (State I)
(1972)
36" x 48"

PLATE V   59

Painting Number 5 (State I)
(1972)
36" x 48"

PLATE VI   60

Painting Number 6
(1972)
36" x 48"

PLATE VII   61

Painting Number 7
(1972)
36" x 48"

PLATE VIII

62

Painting Number 8
(1972)
30" x 40"

PLATE IX   63

Painting Number 4 (State II)
(1972)
36" x 48"

PLATE X

64

Painting Number 5 (State II)
(1972)
36" x 48"

APPENDIX B

TABLE I

PERCEIVED SUBORDINATION OF PRIMARY PICTORIAL FEATURES (PPF) *

PPF	Painting Number										Algebraic Totals	Order of Subordination
	1	2	3	4 (I)	5 (I)	6	7	8	4 (II)	5 (II)		
1. Balance	-1	0	-1	0	+1	+1	0	-1	+1	+1	+1	3
2. Color	0	+1	-1	+1	+1	-1	+1	0	+1	+1	+4	6
3. Contrast	+1	+1	-1	0	+1	-1	+1	+1	0	0	+3	5
4. Emphasis	+1	0	-1	0	0	-1	0	+1	+1	0	+1	3
5. Line	-1	0	-1	0	+1	+1	+1	-1	-1	+1	0	2
6. Proportion	+1	0	-1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+5	7
7. Rhythm	-1	+1	+1	-1	-1	+1	0	-1	+1	0	0	2
8. Shape	+1	+1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1	+1	+1	+6	8
9. Space	-1	+1	+1	-1	+1	-1	-1	+1	+1	+1	+2	4
10. Texture	-1	+1	-1	+1	-1	+1	+1	0	+1	0	+2	4
11. Transition	0	-1	0	-1	0	+1	0	-1	+1	0	-1	1
12. Unity	0	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	+1	0	+1	+1	+8	9
13. Value	+1	0	-1	0	-1	-1	+1	+1	0	-1	-1	1
Algebraic Totals	0	+6	-6	0	+5	+3	+7	0	+9	+6		
Order of Success	2	5	1	2	4	3	6	2	7	5		

*Scale--Absent: -1. Subordinate: 0. Dominant: +1.

TABLE II

DISTRIBUTION OF NEGATIVE VALUES OF TABLE I

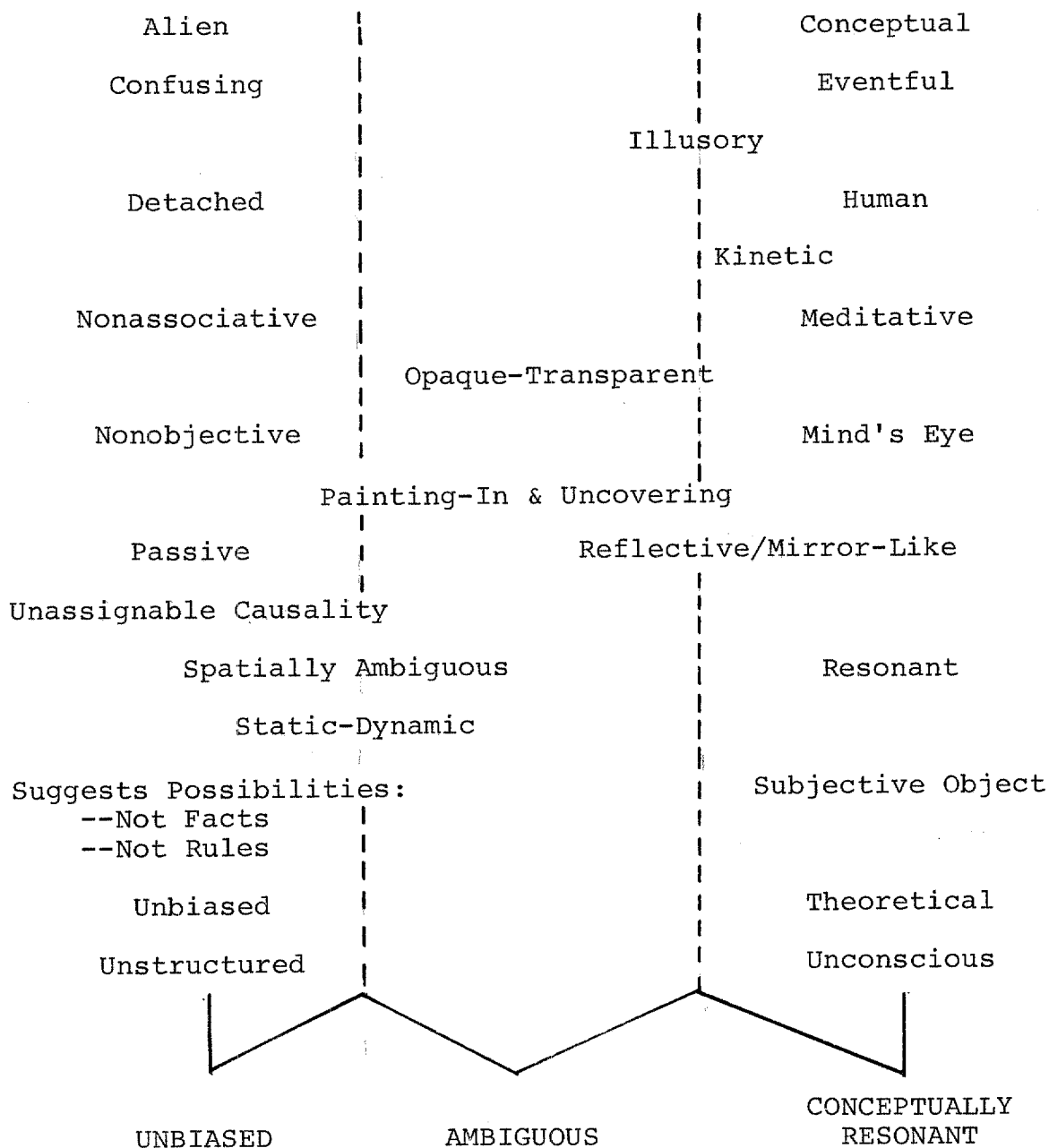| PPF	Painting Number										Line Totals	Order of Subordination
	1	2	3	4 (I)	5 (I)	6	7	8	4 (II)	5 (II)		
1. Balance	X		X					X			3	2
2. Color			X			X					2	3
3. Contrast			X			X					2	3
4. Emphasis			X			X					2	3
5. Line	X		X					X	X		4	1
6. Proportion			X	X							2	3
7. Rhythm	X		X	X				X			4	1
8. Shape					X			X			2	3
9. Space				X	X	X	X				4	1
10. Texture	X		X	X							3	2
11. Transition	X	X						X			3	2
12. Unity											0	4
13. Value			X		X	X				X	4	1
Column Totals	5	1	9	4	3	5	1	5	1	1		
Order of Success	2	5	1	3	4	2	5	2	5	5		

APPENDIX C

Fig. 1--Characteristics of the Interface

TABLE III

PERCEIVED INCIDENCE OF INTERFACE CHARACTERISTICS

Character- istics	Painting Number										Line Sums
	1	2	3	4 (I)	5 (I)	6	7	8	4 (II)	5 (II)	
Ambiguity	X	X	X	X		X		X			6
Conceptual Resonance			X			X	X	X			4
Unbiased		X	X			X		X			4
Column Sums	1	2	3	1	0	3	1	3	0	0	

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