

STANTON EARL ENGLEHART

Submitted By:
Alan P. Gerhardstein
Art Department

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Fine Arts
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado
Fall 1988



Stanton Earl Englehart
January at Farley Canyon
1985
Illustration 1

"The wise draftsman brings forward what he can use most effectively to present his case. His case is his special interest-his special vision. He does not repeat nature."

Robert Henri
"The Art Spirit"

PREFACE

I would like to express my gratitude to Stanton Englehart for his time he has spent with me and for what he has shared with me. I had the opportunity to be a student of Englehart's while in undergraduate school. The concerns he has and methods he shared in the classroom allowed me to view the world with more sensitivity. The paintings I own and the many others I have had relationships with have allowed me to love this earth more deeply than I would have had I not met him and his work. The world is a wonderful place to live and important to remember is that we are only part of it and leastwise a controlling part. Englehart's work invites me to become part of this earth and respect my position in keeping the balance that is necessary to the survival of the planet.

Alan P. Gerhardstein

Stanton Earl Englehart, was born in 1931, the son of a dry land farmer north of Cortez, Colorado. Dry and desolate land was without much of modern man's interference. Here mountains and desert meet to create a contrast between high altitude vegetation and mesa topography. The land is immense and magical, as unchanged by the ancient Anasazi Indians who once thickly populated it as it is by the state boundaries of modern man.

The family farm lays at the end of an irrigation ditch; one side enjoying the product of man's interference, the other side not. Part controlled by man, and part reliant on nature. Englehart's paintings all reflect this contrast of man's intrusion upon the natural environment. Controlled geometric lines lie in contrast to the natural lines of landscape. In most, wide horizons and big skies capture the country's energy.

This energy is within Englehart himself, he has taught art and art philosophy for nearly thirty years along with maintaining a rich personal life. For more than a decade, he has bicycled close to 10,000 miles a year and painted prolifically. For twenty years, he has taken an annual spiritual journey to the Lake Powell area to re-energize himself and study nature's forms and ideas. From these trips, he returns to paint his next series, from his memory alone, without the use of photos or sketches. He paints only in the studio, never in the field.

Englehart earned his BFA and MFA at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Now the University includes his work in its permanent display and collection. He holds still his first

professional job after college and graduate school: Professor of Art at Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colorado. There he teaches several courses; "Art Forms and Ideas" concerned with the artists' need to see the world more clearly; "Theory and Aesthetics" dealing with conceptualizing the world; and advanced painting classes. Incorporated into his teaching philosophy is the belief that technique can be taught to many talented people; however, without conceptual thought and concern for our responsibilities as humans, an artist will not emerge.

Englehart himself lives a life of duality in order to create his art. On one hand he is an artist, on the other a philosopher. The philosopher in him maintains purity in his work, while the artist expresses visions and conceptions without the verbal clutter of language. Such is the complex state under which Englehart must live in order to create the visual beauty so apparent in his paintings. One could call him, as he calls himself, a landscape painter; yet, his landscape paintings go beyond the mere replication of the physical topography. The more one looks, the more one wants to see until the painting appears alive. Land and sky are not just set beside each other in the hope of compositional success; they are aligned into a relationship. Nothing is forced. Nothing is artificial. Beauty comes from authentic interaction.

In an interview with Englehart,¹ this writer asked what

¹Interviews conducted by Alan P. Gerhardstein, graduate student, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, August 12-13, 1988.

inspired his production over the years. He gave as a reply three great movements in the twentieth century that affected his art: 1) the feminist or women's movement, 2) the environmental movement, and 3) the peace movement. He said, "For many years I have been sensitive to the rights and roles of women in our society." He has great compassion for women who are trapped in roles that have kept them controlled. He sees women equal to men, but believes the disrespect shown by some men toward women creates a unbalanced, disruptive atmosphere.

Since the 1950's he has been concerned with the environmental (earth) movement. He believes that we must understand and respect the earth and care for the environment in which we live. The third significant movement, the peace movement, relates to the other two in that he believes we must strive towards peace and harmony in order for us to continue as a species without destroying the environment or ourselves.

Englehart views the world as a complex system of relationships which he brings forth in his works. He sees the perception that an artist must divorce himself from family or friends in order to create his art as only a romantic notion. "The morality and discipline it takes to make a marriage work also make art successful." It is Englehart's understanding that the stability of good personal relationships helps an individual to comprehend and develop healthy relationships in art.

When asked in what historical art movement he sees himself, Englehart responded that he "tries to paint the mystery of energy

without any definition or explanation." He realizes that he is a good colorist. He also believes, like the Impressionists before him, that he cannot make nature better on canvas than it is in reality. He feels the tragedy of our time is that we have broken the mystery of the cosmos down into mere definitions and in doing so, we have lost much of the mystery of life. Through his work, he defends this undefinable mystery. His use of geometric or man-made forms in his landscapes is, as he says, "a comment on the structure we as humans place on the earth against the wonderful unrestricted energy of nature." This energy, "re-charges our batteries when we go out into nature." What so many of us experience camping or walking in the woods, Englehart imparts to his paintings: energy, the life force. Only the sensitive artist can record or measure this force we all feel, accept and desire. From his response to this initial question, this writer believes the movement to which Englehart belongs is as yet unlabeled but deals with reestablishing the myth of the mystery of the cosmos.

Throughout the interview, Englehart painted on a 60" x 40" sized oil, during which three relationships developed: artist with this writer; artist with his creation; and this writer with the painting. The experience of this triad of relationships brought to mind a story about self reflection Englehart had told in a class years before, of his self imposed responsibility as the sole driver of the family truck. He never delegated the power to his wife. One day he decided to sit in the back of the

a lawn chair facing backwards. The inspiration that came to him was that he became aware of where he had been instead of where he was going. From that point on he said he started reflecting more intensely on his life, its direction and his influence over others.

We discussed the topic of literature and the readings that have inspired him and helped him to sort out and prioritize his thoughts and directions in art. Currently, he uses the teachings of J. Krishnamurti as subject matter and text for both of his theory classes. Other authors such as John Fowles, Rudolfo A. Anaya, Robert Henri, Joseph Campbell and Tolstoy have influenced his philosophy of teaching, art and life.

In a meeting with Rudolfo Anaya, Englehart had the opportunity to discuss a couple of large oil paintings that deal with his chosen burial spot and advancement to another time. From this meeting, both artists realized they share a common theme of emergence in their work. Anaya's Bless Me, Ultima, is a book about a young man's emergence.

Robert Henri's Art Spirit, Englehart believes to be the best book on conceptual art. He also believes as Henri does that art is a denial of societal norms on the part of the artist and that it takes a great courage to be willing to do something different. "Because of this denial, art is a lonely business and ... most people won't attempt it because they want to be part of the crowd and ... won't isolate themselves long enough to do good art."

During his twenty-seven years of teaching he has seen vast

amounts of talent passing through his classes. "Sadly, however, I don't see the development of personal philosophies that are strong enough to promote subject matter that is durable enough to last through a dozen or so paintings in a student's time at school." This is why Englehart believes art theory to be a vital element in art programs.

Tolstoy's What is Art? also affected his philosophy of art since Tolstoy believed that an abundance of counterfeit art resulted from schools of art, critics and payments. Tolstoy saw a triad of true art consisting of individuality, clarity and integrity resulting in a highly developed personal philosophy with passionate feelings. From Englehart's belief in Tolstoy early in his career, one can begin to understand why he never meant to earn a living at his art, and why he chose teaching as a way to earn a living and serve his community at the same time.

Each March during his annual one-man show at Fort Lewis College, Englehart invites a group of junior high school students from his home town of Cortez to visit his show. "We sit in the gallery and discuss the paintings. I tell them that I make very little for my labor and just enough to replenish materials. Inevitably, each year a student asks why I paint, if not to make money." Englehart explains, "First of all I love to paint and it makes my life better. Living on this planet is an amazing gift and to think that it is possible that this is the only planet in the universe with this particular life on it and being part of it is therefore an incredible gift and that none of it could happen



Stanton Earl Englehart
The Great Spirit
1981
Illustration 2

without a balance in the environment. So, the paintings are in a sense a long and involved thank you for the incredible good luck of having lived on this planet."

By the end of the interview, the relationships between the artist, the painting, and the writer had changed and flowed back and forth between the three entities. With the canvas hung flat on the wall as if he is painting a window frame the beauty that comes through Englehart's brush becomes more evident. Each view is another perspective to share with the world. He paints from memory about the unique topography common to the Four-Corners area of the Southwest. Because of his concern for the earth, his landscapes become a universal vocabulary that communicates the beauty of the energy he feels from this particular part of the world.

The use of straight and geometric lines, in the skies and landscapes, represent man's attempt to control or affect the power of the earth's energy. "The Great Spirit" (Illustration 2) shows straight lines depicting roads leading behind the buffalo. Englehart's use of heavy paper in his mixed media work as well as dark pencil to embellish line movement and create relief, adds a sense of dimension to a two-dimensional surface.

In most of his work there is no direct light source, yet occasionally he paints naturally to check his vocabulary and to make sure "that the language he presently uses isn't inbreeding away from nature." "Above Red Canyon" (Illustration 3) represents this natural style he rarely uses.



Stanton Earl Englehart
Above Red Canyon
1976-77
Illustration 3

Without the use of a direct light source, landscapes become a universal statement without the reference point of time. A lack of light source also allows Englehart to paint the energy he feels and sees. For example, the "Energy Series" (Illustrations 4, 5, 6, 8) give the viewer a feeling that an atomic bomb has just exploded. Yet, it is actually nature's energy that he is portraying. Up and down the Rocky Mountains when thunder-heads build up off the mountains, the clouds rise up twenty to thirty feet in the air, violently encompassing the whole sky. As humans, we have no control over nature's energy, and the impact of this landscape demands the viewers unconditional respect and attention.

In "Energy Series" (Illustrations 7, 8, 9) the wind has thrust the clouds into one another and against the earth. The amount of energy represented dwarfs the landscape. The colors Englehart uses in many of his paintings are reds and other intense hues conjuring the feelings of intensity and vibrant movement.

The landscape continues to remain the vehicle through which Englehart talks about the significant movements in his life. Very evident is his concern for the earth and the beauty he sees in it which cannot be contained by the frame of the painting. The viewer absolutely knows the horizon goes on and out in all directions. Englehart expresses the relationship between man and earth as small and inconsequential to the eternity of time. Man has no control over the sky and only partial control over the



Stanton Earl Englehart
Energy Series
1988
Illustrations 4 & 5



Stanton Earl Englehart
Energy Series
1988
Illustrations 6 & 7



Stanton Earl Englehart
Energy Series
1988
Illustrations 8 & 9

landscape. What is so interesting about these landscapes? It is the easy access into the paintings that Englehart gives the viewer. There are no barriers, no fences, no rocks to climb over or through in order to enter into his perspective. There is peace and harmony and an invitation to enjoy what nature has to offer.

Englehart has made a conscious decision to use reflective glass on all his mixed media paintings. Through this glass, the viewer is forced to see himself in the painting and becomes part of the painting whether or not he or she wants to be. At certain angles of viewing, the immediate room or environment also becomes part of painting. A new relationship is developed each time it is viewed. More importantly, each new interrelationship transforms the painting from a two-dimensional illusion into the three-dimensional world in which it exists.

Englehart's paintings are representations of energy...the life force which gives all life its vitality. This is where the women's movement enters into the visual message he paints. He admits that this concern for women surfaces only occasionally in his work. It does, however, appear subconsciously in all of his landscapes. The earth gives life to humans, not the other way around; the earth is mother. The environment we live in is much like that of the fetus before birth. The fetus has no control over its environment and is dependent on the mother to provide the proper nutrients. If the womb is polluted, the fetus will suffer. Conversely if we pollute the environment which gives us

life, we will suffer. In the painting "Near Cedar Canyon" (Illustration 10), the character of womanhood is expressed quite clearly. The earth is intensely red with a round shape emerging from the cliff in the foreground, thus appearing to give birth. The head of a child is emerging and the hand of the mother is gripping the landscape in the lower right hand corner. On the subconscious level, Englehart's concern for womankind or the life giver is visualized in all of his work.

Englehart's landscapes present a universal picture of the world. He depicts the energy of the earth from a separate reality using the earth and color as motifs to share his vision. Englehart uses color as energy and purposely omits a direct light source as a method to diminish the importance of time. With easy access to his window on the world, one can share in the fascination of earth's mysteries. His resolution of man's effect on natural beauty and grandeur allows an appreciation of this mystery without defining it and allows man to appreciate his own presence without guilt.



Stanton Earl Englehart
Near Cedar Canyon
1985
Illustration 10



Stanton Earl Englehart
Energy Series
1988
Illustration 11

WORKS CONSULTED

Bear, Leith L., "Stanton E. Englehart Painting the Energy of Nature." Durango Magazine, Summer/Fall 1987, 22-23.

Englehart, Stanton Earl, "Bicycling", Mother Earth News, No. 11, 116-120.

James, Libby, "Time Encounters Space, Stanton Earl Englehart", Southwest Art, March, 1983, 60-67.

Art Center of Minnesota, 2nd Annual West Art Classic, 1985.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Stanton Earl Englehart

1. "January at Farley Canyon", oil, 1985, 42"x33", Private Collection Kim Greenspan.
2. "The Great Spirit", mixed media, 1981, 21"x19", Private Collection Al Gerhardstein
3. "Above Red Canyon", oil, 1976-1977, 65"x40", Private Collection Al Gerhardstein
4. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35"x45", Englehart studio.
5. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35"x45", Englehart studio.
6. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35"x45", Englehart studio.
7. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35" x 45", Englehart studio.
8. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35" x 45", Englehart studio.
9. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35" x 45", Englehart studio.
10. "Near Cedar Canyon", oil, 1985, 60" x 40", Private Collection Kim Greenspan.
11. "Energy Series", mixed media, 1988, approximate size 35" x 45", Englehart studio.

All photos by Alan P. Gerhardstein