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A Study of the Expressive Qualities of Non-Objective Form in Painting

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A STUDY OF THE EXPRESSIVE QUALITIES OF NON-OBJECTIVE

FORM IN PAINTING

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Graduate Faculty

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Master of Education

————————

by

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APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED

Throughout the history of art, the subject matter for most paintings has been clearly based on visually recognizable forms in nature. This clear relationship between the surface appearances of natural objects and the forms used in paintings gave the artist a confident key to the understanding of message.

Since the nineteenth century there has been a general trend, in painting, away from the reproduction of visually perceived forms toward a more abstract use of these forms. As these forms became more abstracted, the external appearances of natural objects became less important as the source of the message, and the feelings and emotions of the artist were stressed more. In 1910, the artist Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) went even further in emphasizing the importance of the "inner state of the painter" as a source of content when he completely divorced his painted forms from the external appearances of objects in nature. Kandinsky wrote, "That is beautiful which is produced by internal necessity, which springs from the soul." (4:75)

Non-objective forms have been used consistently in the candidate's paintings. The attempt has been made to develop expressive qualities in non-objective form.

I.   THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of the study was (1) to clarify the candidate's understanding of the expressive qualities of non-objective form; (2) to apply these understandings of the expressive qualities of non-objective form to a creative method in making a series of paintings; and (3) to evaluate the effect of the study in its enrichment of the expressive quality of the non-objective forms in the candidate's paintings.

Importance of the study. This study should enable the candidate to arrive at a deeper understanding of the essential qualities of form. This feeling should enable him to develop a style of painting that will allow a freer intuitive expression of emotional feeling.

This study should also help one understand the part that the inner feelings of the artist have in the expressive quality of non-objective painting. It will illustrate that "form is the external expression of inner meaning." (4:47)

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Abstract forms. Those forms which have a visually perceivable relationship to the physical appearances of objects in nature.

Expressive quality. That quality in a work of art which enables the artist to communicate an emotional feeling to an observer is expressive quality.

As Kandinsky writes:

A work of art consists of two elements, the inner and the outer. The inner is the emotion in the soul of the artist; this emotion has the capacity to evoke a similar emotion in the observer. (4:23)

Message. In this study, message and meaning will be used interchangeably to refer to the emotional feelings which the artist communicates, through his paintings, to the observer.

Natural forms. Natural forms are the external appearances of objects in our physical environment.

Style. Style refers to the mode, pattern, or manner of expression. It is the distinct technique or methods characteristic of, or identified with, a particular painter.

III.   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to a limited experience in art, the candidate was restricted to the use of rounded or rectangular non-objective forms in painting. Usually each form area was painted a uniform hue and intensity, and a simple pattern of positive and negative shapes was used for compositional purposes. Most of the forms were clearly defined by a change of hue and intensity. Often the forms were quite rigidly orientated to the center of the canvas.

As the study progressed and the candidate gained a greater understanding of the "inner element" of the forms, these limiting factors were largely solved. The vocabulary of forms became much more varied and subtly defined. Color, texture, and form relationships became as important to the compositions as the positive-negative relationships. Instead of the form structure orientated to the center of the painting surface, the focal point was often varied for a more interesting composition. By the conclusion of the study, the candidate no longer felt it necessary to plan out the composition in advance. He used the forms, colors, and intensities that seemed to relate to the forms which had already been painted on the painting surface. As each

painting progressed, the form vocabulary changed to fit into the developing structure of the work. As the selection of forms and colors became freer from preconceived restrictions, an accompanying freedom of brushwork also resulted.

An identical source of inspiration was not used for each painting in the study. The forms used in Painting Number One were directly based on a photograph of several bunches of weeds; the forms for Painting Number Two were based on the abstract qualities of rock formations; and the remainder of the paintings were non-objective, having no direct reference to natural objects.

Although drawings were made in preparation for some of the paintings, they were considered to be incidental to the study. The size of the painting surface, color, and style of painting were not formal limitations in this study.

Although more than twenty paintings were completed during the study, the twelve paintings that most clearly illustrated the development of expressive quality were included in the paper. Although the paintings that were included in the study were numbered for easier identification, each painting did not have to be completed before a subsequent painting was begun. Near the completion of the

problem, as many as ten paintings were in various stages of completion.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Sources of expressive quality in non-objective form.
It is difficult to ascertain the influence that the forms in
the visually observable world have on the meaning of non-
objective forms that appear in many contemporary paintings.
A review of statements by artists and others who are, or
have been, influential in art, however, indicates that the
natural forms, which are visually observable in nature,
influence the expressive quality of non-objective form in
painting.

Thousands of years ago, many early cultures were
aware that the qualities of an object, animal, or person
were evident in far more than its outward physical
appearance.

The art of the Paleolithic period (20,000-10,000 B.C.)
was primarily concerned with the production of highly abstract
forms of animals and men. Later, as the Neolithic man
(10,000-4,000 B.C.) gradually changed from a nomadic hunting
life to a more stable herding and farming way of life, he
had more time to contemplate some of the forces, real and

imaginary, that helped to shape his existence.

> Now he observed that his crops, his herds, and his
> companions were recurrently affected by the elements and
> other obscure forces, good and bad. With this realiza-
> tion, man went from magic to the threshold of religion,
> to what we call animism. Special powers were attributed
> to gods who were responsible for different phases of
> life. The new attitude arose from the feeling that
> there were spiritual entities behind all living things
> --human, animal, and plant--in addition to their earthly
> forms. . . .

> His cultural expression in art became more symbolic
> and generalized with few details of natural forms; he
> placed more emphasis on ideas and emotions than he did
> on facts. (7:7)

As Neolithic man became more interested in ideas and emo-

tions, he began to consciously alter the appearance of

natural forms to harmonize with his esthetic purposes.

Earlier Neolithic art, as seen in pottery and some basketry,

is decorated almost entirely in geometric patterns. This is

due, in basketry, primarily to the lines and textures of the

reeds and other weaving materials. Pottery sometimes imi-

tated earlier containers that were made of skins and woven

materials, and was sometimes geometrically decorated, due to

the markings on the clay as the pottery was being hand

formed. It is significant to note that the textures of

reeds and skins, which were used to make earlier containers,

were abstractly represented on these Neolithic-period pots.

A final and very significant type of ornament is geometric-symbolic in nature. . . . Here we go beyond the mere technical causes and necessities which yielded the first two types of simple, unsymbolic zigzags or crosshatching. Now we have the living forms which, although not represented in the same clear realistic fashion as in Paleolithic art, do suggest specific objects and their characteristics. (7:9)

An excellent example of the geometric-symbolic style is an earthenware pot from Susa (7:9) which dates about 3000 B.C. A decorative band around the top of the pot represents a horizontal band of flamingos, which have been reduced to a series of long parallel lines with an ovular shape at the bottom (the bodies of the birds), a triangle at the top of the line (the heads), and two short lines below the bodies that represented the legs. Although these shapes can be recognized as wading birds, the artist has made no attempt to reproduce the physical appearance of the bird, but has concentrated on capturing the abstract quality of the bird. On the same pot the artist has represented a recognizable ibix, but has reduced the body to two triangles and has used two circles to represent the horns. This geometric-abstract type of decoration, wherein physical surface appearances are abstracted into simple geometric forms, is to be found in most known cultures.

Closely related to the geometric-abstract type of decoration is the "animal style" which is also significant in the art expressions of cultures throughout the world. In the animal style, little attempt is made to copy the surface appearance of the animal, but the artist concentrates on the true nature of the animal. The artist often exaggerates or distorts the forms and simplifies them until they are in the rhythms and forms which convey the true nature of the animal.

The Chinese were very aware of the necessity for the realization of the inner nature or spirit of the artist's subject matter. In the Six Cannons of Painting, by Hsieh Ho, an artist of the Six Dynasties period, the first and most important cannon was:

> . . . animation through spirit consonance, qualified
> in Soper's translation by the phrase, sympathetic
> responsiveness of the vital spirit. Animation through
> spirit consonance is interpreted as kind of resonance or
> rhythm in the painting. . . . (6:253-4)

If the artist has this resonance or rhythm in his painting, then it will contain what the Chinese call "ch'i yun, the spirit of breath of life."

The geometric-abstract and animal-style characteristics are very significant because they show the earliest and simplest uses of the concept of altering a visually

objective form for the purposes of achieving a deeper under-
standing of the inner true nature of the subject matter.
Although in these styles the forms are still recognizable,
as shown by the row of flamingos on the pot from Susa, the
art form itself becomes as important as, or even more impor-
tant than, the original external appearance of the subject
matter.

Although the geometric-abstract and animal-style
characteristics are still in evidence to some extent today,
some gradual developments have taken place in the abstrac-
tion of form for purposes of greater aesthetic content. As
cultures became more sophisticated, so did the methods of
manipulating form.

Artists such as Fra Angelico and Fra Lippo Lippi of
the lyrical tradition were painters who used form to achieve
a specifically religious atmosphere. Both painters shunned
the use of diagonal tensions and violent contrasts of any
kind, but used soft rhythmic forms and rather closely
related intensities and values to attain an atmosphere of
spiritual calmness and a detachment from worldly tensions.
Both artists also enclosed their scenes in a clearly defined
space and used a fairy-like garden background, both of
which emphasized the non-earthly quality of the scenes.

In marked contrast to the gentle dreamy paintings of the lyrical tradition are the powerful paintings of the monumental style. Although Masaccio's series of frescos in the Brancacci Chapel of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence, Italy, are also religious in nature, his rather sculptural forms present a far different message from the soft rhythmic forms of Fra Angelico and Fra Lippo Lippi. Masaccio used a light and dark method (chiarescuro) to mold his figures into three-dimensional forms, which helped to indicate the artist's interest in the solidity and importance of the figures. He also made the figures of his frescos show unity by grouping them closely together and overlapping many of the individual forms. Thus, the viewer becomes aware of the group before he becomes aware of the individual figures. By placing the mass of figures at the bottom of the painting, Macaccio gave the entire section of fresco a feeling of solidity.

As the artist gained more and more insight into the techniques which could be used to manipulate form for pur-poses of intensifying meaning, he could control his subject matter progressively more to fit his own aesthetic needs. In the High Rennaissance in Italy, when the artist attempted to

. . . control rather than to portray the uncongenial
world of reality, the High Rennaissance master had
recourse to formulas of various kinds. Not the least
of these was projective geometry, which became one of
his chief resources for compositional and formal devices:
triangles and pyramids, ovals and ovoids, circles and
spheroids, squares and cubes, within which his person-
ages were arranged. (7:395)

A prime example of the setting of forms within a

geometric composition in order to achieve greater meaning is

the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci.

Leonardo has stripped his paintings of all unessen-
tial details and set his figures within an austere
geometrical framework in which all the visible lines
converge at the Savior's head. The Christ is portrayed
in firm triangular form against an open rectangular
window. . . . His electrifying statement causes waves of
feeling to flow from one group of disciples to another.
Their four groups move rhythmically back and forth, both
physically and emotionally, with gestures leading from
one trio to the next and helping to define the respective
reactions of these twelve individuals. (2:401)

Thus we can see that Leonardo has used the lines of

the architecture for the specific purpose of focusing atten-

tion of the Christ figure. He has also used the rhythms of

the groups of disciples to show or express psychological

meaning.

The artist Michelangelo also made much use of form to

express emotion:

The inherent tenseness of the artist's style causes
a tremendous emotional energy to be contained within the
outside dimensions of the original . . . form space.

> The figure seems to be trying to break out of the space:
> the upper part of the body moves in one direction and
> the lower portion in another. . . . (7:405)

This use of a line which changes its direction of
force is still used today, although often in more abstract
form, to express an emotional feeling. Often this line ten-
sion is used even when the forms are non-figurative.

Michelangelo also used a very simple technique to
heighten the emotional content of his sculpture and paintings
--huge size.

Through the history of art, color has been used to
convey emotional feelings. In the Isenheim Alterpiece, by
Gruenwald (1468-1531), we see the use of specific combina-
tions of color to convey a rather specific emotion. The
artist has painted the body of the hanging Christ a gruesome
grey-green, which was probably based on the color of sick
patients of a nearby hospital. The specific emotion that
the viewer gets is the suffering of Christ, which in turn
symbolizes the more universal suffering of mankind.

El Greco (1541-1614) is a very important figure in
the history of the arbitrary handling of form for greater
emotional meaning. In his Nativity, El Greco arbitrarily
placed the figure forms into two upward-spiraling forms

which lead the eye upward. The artist's use of many diagonal

lines of force and many intersecting lines of force gives

the painting a feeling of movement.

El Greco also "developed an intensification of the

white highlighting technique of T intoretto, a sharpening of

the latter's color contrast--again for impact." (7:444)

In the Nativity, we can see several techniques that

El Greco used to manipulate form for greater emotional

impact: distortion of space, distortion of form, and great

color contrasts.

> These elements together result in an almost complete
> dematerialization of form which. . . enables the artist
> to arrive at the spiritual truth that lies behind the
> mere appearance of things. (7:451)

Very early in the history of visual arts, light and

dark had been used in various, but related, ways to define

form. Masaccio used light and dark to mold his figures into

solid three-dimensional forms. He, as well as other artists,

including Caravaggio and Zurbaran, used a great deal of

darkness in many of their paintings to convey a sense of

solidness and solemnness.

On the other hand, painters such as Jan Vermeer used

much more light to achieve a more worldly and less serious

type of atmosphere.

Other artists used the effects of light and dark in still different ways to achieve an emotional impact. In El Greco's Nativity (7:450) and Goya's Execution of the Citizens of Madrid (7:475) there are violent contrasts of light and dark areas which heighten the emotional tension. In both paintings the major part of the surface is rather dark and in each painting the most important figure is very light. This contrast emphasizes the importance of the main figure, and perhaps the white is also used as a symbol of purity.

In the middle part of the nineteenth century a group of painters called the Impressionists gave their subject matter "a new-found color intensity that was to change entirely the direction of painting." (7:592)

> Like the realists, these men were also concerned with the appearance of things, but while the earlier painters had idealized their conceptions in many ways, giving them a feeling of permanence, the Impressionists attempted to render subjects in temporary and instantaneous terms. . . . Furthermore, the rapid and impermanent tone of most of these pictures suggests the new tempo of the late nineteenth century, the view that one gets from a bus, train, or other rapidly moving vehicle --fragmentary and fleeting. Impressionism, therefore, signifies a new way of looking at things. (2:592)

The Impressionists were primarily concerned with the appearance of forms under natural light. In Claude Monet's

House of Parliament the juxtaposition of complementary colors

gives the viewer "a shimmering moving appearance in keeping

with the momentary effect desired by the painter." (7:593)

Although there are discernible forms in the House of

Parliament, they are much less solid and stable than, for

example, the forms in The Forge, by Louis le Nain. (7:490)

During the 1890's a number of painters called the

post-Impressionists developed several ideas about art that

greatly influenced the use of form in the art that followed.

As a group, the post-Impressionists--primarily Cezanne,

Seurat, Gauguin, and Van Gough--were much more interested in

"form as such and in the organization of the canvas in

rhythmic relationships," (7:619) than the Impressionists had

been. Perhaps one of the major contributions of the post-

Impressionists was their:

> . . . growing interest in technique for its own sake
> [the aesthetic side of modern art]. . . . This concern
> with the manner of execution rather than the content
> would be increasingly characteristic of most twentieth-
> century artists. The pioneers of post-Impressionist
> thinking also disclose the henceforth typical concern
> of the twentieth-century artist with the "motif"--an
> aesthetically suitable bit of nature, a still life
> grouping, or even a human being, whose form and color
> are employed to convey a form sensation. (7:619)

Although the post-Impressionist painter still derived

his subject matter from nature, he carefully planned the

composition of the forms so that they would fit into a
carefully composed and organized composition. The meaning
of form in post-Impressionist painting was much more depen-
dent on the way in which the artist used it than it had been
in the past.

The Day of the God, by Paul Gauguin, is an excellent
example of the artist's changing and rearranging natural
forms to achieve a different psychological impact than was
inherent in the original forms themselves.

> The Day of the God, clearly shows his [Gauguin's]
> method of reducing what he sees into a series of
> arranged and decorative patterns. Here he has pro-
> ceeded from observed natural fact in an abstract
> direction, simplifying the forms. . . Both the linear
> designs and the coloristic patterning are arbitrary
> rearrangements of the facts. . . . (2:624)

Also, in the same painting, Gauguin has changed the
natural forms and colors in order to balance them and to get
rhythmic patterns of form.

> The color areas are so distributed throughout the
> canvas that a blue in one locale will be related to a
> blue in another, even where in the original natural
> situation these blues may not have existed as such.
> For the purposes of aesthetic design or to heighten the
> emotional possibilities of the scene, the artist has
> taken it upon himself to bring about the desired pic-
> torial effect. (7:624-5)

The Cubist movement, which began about 1907, was
primarily concerned with the manipulation of form, but in a

different way than form had been used in any previous art

movement. "In early Cubism, the forms are broken down into

a series of sharply angled, or facetted planes." (7:629)

Previously, the subject matter had been painted as if it

were viewed from a single viewpoint:

> . . . Picasso and his Cubist colleagues, on the other
> hand, disintegrate the form into a series of simultane-
> ously viewed but different aspects of the same subject.
> (7:629)

Because of these simultaneous views, the work of art

became a collection of views of the subject matter which

were combined into a single unity. Although the Cubists

were interested in a greater understanding of the forms that

they used, as a result of their dissection of the forms, the

end result is mainly a product of the artist's intellect and

imagination.

> The simultaneously rendered pluralities of views of
> one or several objects is caused not by Cubist knowl-
> edge of or interests in theories of relativity, but
> rather by the search for interesting and useful
> prospects that fit or "work" into the design while
> preserving reference to the object itself. The
> objects no longer perform utilitarian purposes . . .
> they satisfy aesthetic demands. (3:203)

Although the Cubists reconstructed form into a series of

decorative elements, the natural forms which their paintings

are based on can be recognized in the completed painting.

Wassily Kandinsky (1858-1944) was the first important painter to divorce his art completely from naturalistic forms. He felt that the forms of nature were "so powerful that it was useless to imitate them." (4:40)

> Pictures like his <u>Improvisation</u>, (1914) illustrate this; its musical rhythms and mystical pulsating style are designed to create in the spectator a "state of soul." It is the ultimate denial of matter and substance, interested only in a "graphic representation of mood" resulting from the combinations of psychological meaningful linear movements, form binding and color patterns. (7:639)

To Kandinsky and many other painters, the feelings and emotions of the artist were immensely important as a source of expression.

> Inner freedom was for Kandinsky the sole criterion for ethics and aesthetics. The creative process ideally meant suspension of consciousness and purely spontaneous and intuitive work, but Kandinsky did in fact impose critical judgement. He wrote, "I have painted rather subconsciously in a state of strong inner tension of some of the forms that I remember having given loud voiced directions to myself, for instance, but the corners must be heavy." (3:320)

Even though Kandinsky regarded the "inner state" of the painter as the prime source of expressiveness, he did not reject the world of nature as an important factor:

> A work of art consists of two elements, the inner and the outer. The inner is the emotion in the soul of the artist.

Being connected with the body, the soul is affected through the medium of the sensed--the felt. Emotions are aroused and stirred by what is sensed. (4:23)

In Nature in Abstraction, by the Whitney Museum of Natural Art, the author goes a step further in explaining the role of the inner psychological state of the painter in the painting process when he wrote:

Abstract Expressionism's principal aim, so far as it has been rationalized, is the expression of states of inner being, the spontaneous transferral to canvas of the complex impulses of the mind. . . . The artist is more concerned with himself than he is with the outer reality. (8:9)

Though the artist may be more concerned with himself than he is with nature, it should be noted that the world of nature is still a source of stimulation, even to the abstract or non-objective painter. For example, Arshile Gorky "was endlessly fascinated by nature and found it a vital stimulus to his imagination, giving him indispensable suggestions for the visual embodiment of mental states." (8:11)

CHAPTER III

THE INVESTIGATION AND RESULTS OF THE INVESTIGATION

I. MATERIALS USED IN THE INVESTIGATION

Stretched canvas primed with gesso was used as a
painting surface, except for Painting Number One, which was
painted on a masonite surface. Oil base paints were applied
with standard brushes; and in a few instances, various other
materials were used to apply the paint. Each of the works
that were included in this study was numbered consecutively
for ease of identification. The twelve paintings that best
illustrated the growth of expressive quality in the candi-
date's paintings were included in this paper. Color limita-
tions, size limitations, form limitations, and style limita-
tions were not considered; the use of each was arbitrary.

II. THE RECORD OF THE INVESTIGATION

The source of forms for Painting Number One was a
photograph of a large cluster of dried weeds. The first
step in the painting process was to use modeling paste to
build up the seed pod forms on the masonite board. Through

the use of an arbitrary color selection--primarily reds,
oranges, and yellows--the candidate attempted to abstract
the painting and retain only subtle references to the origi-
nal subject matter. The built-up seed pod forms, however,
were so dominant that they blocked any attempt on the part
of the candidate to inject any significant expression into
the painting.

WEED FORMS

PAINTING NUMBER ONE

A subsequent painting--similar to Painting Number One, except that the pod forms were "built up" with pieces of glued canvas--was started. Again, the seed pod forms were so dominant that the candidate was unable to progress beyond the surface appearances of the weed forms. It was felt that such a strong relationship between the natural forms and the painted forms obscured the candidate's attempts at a more intuitive emotional message.

For Painting Number Two, a photograph--in this case
of a rock cliff formation--was again used as a source of
forms. In this painting, however, the candidate did not try
to reproduce the visual appearances of the rock formations
but attempted to capture the inherent feelings of solidness
and strength. A horizontal-vertical arrangement of forms
was used to give the painting a feeling of stability. The
blocky, dark colored forms also contributed to this feeling
of solidness. Most of the forms, however, were rather
clearly defined and were grouped in the center of the paint-
ing, giving the form structure a rather rigid feeling.

ROCK FORMS

PAINTING NUMBER TWO

Painting Number Three was the first non-objective
work of the study. No photograph was used as a source of
form and there was no conscious attempt to relate to forms
of natural objects. There was more freedom and variation of
form, and the painting composition was less rigidly orien-
tated to the center of the canvas. The color selection was
light--mostly yellows, pinks, and reds--and with the excep-
tion of two areas of dark blue, the colors seemed to relate
quite well. Although the forms were freer in shape than in
the previous paintings, the candidate felt that each form

PAINTING NUMBER THREE

was too uniform in color and intensity, and too well defined

to allow the freedom of expression that was desired.

Despite a lack of variation in form shape and size,

a less definite identification of the individual forms

helped to achieve a more expressive emotional quality in

Painting Number Four than had been achieved in any previous

painting. The candidate consciously planned the relation-

ships of the central forms, but the colors and forms near

the edges of the painting seemed to flow spontaneously from

the candidate's inner feelings without a conscious effort at

PAINTING NUMBER FOUR

structuring them.   In several places the marks of the brush were left on the canvas without painting them into a uniform and well-defined area.

In many ways Painting Number Five was a regression to the style of work that the candidate had done in the past. Although the forms "worked well" together, most of them were rigidly defined by a change in intensity and hue.   Because of this definite identification of form, the composition of the painting seemed rather tight and lifeless.
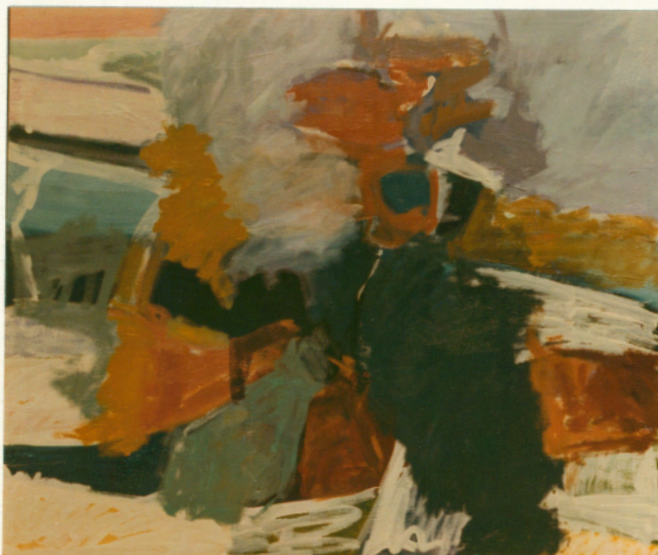
PAINTING NUMBER FIVE

    While completing Painting Number Six, the candidate consciously avoided the tightly conceived, well-defined forms which were evident in the previous painting. The painting was done quite rapidly, requiring about two hours to complete. At the beginning of the painting the candidate forced himself to paint quickly in an attempt to achieve a greater freedom of expression. Soon, however, the painting became a naturally spontaneous process which required no "forcing" on the part of the candidate. The forms were much freer in delineation than in any previous painting. Paint textures

PAINTING NUMBER SIX

were allowed to remain without being painted into a smooth surface, and many colors were mixed directly on the canvas.

Although Painting Number Seven was rather large --38" x 48"--it was completed in a single day. A large area of dark blue was placed at one edge of the painting to avoid having the forms being oriented to the center of the canvas. The remainder of the forms seemed to "flow" onto the canvas with no conscious attempt at organizing them into a pleasing composition. The interplay of paint textures and the freely painted forms helped to give the entire work an exuberant expressive quality.

PAINTING NUMBER SEVEN

Like the previous work, the eighth painting was
executed rather rapidly, requiring six or seven hours for
completion. There was a pleasing tension between the two
sides of the painting--between heavy forms and light forms,
and between relatively well-defined forms and freely painted
forms. Although this painting was not as free in execution
as Painting Number Seven, variations in form shapes, sizes,
colors, and textures prevented the painting structure from
becoming too rigid.

PAINTING NUMBER EIGHT

     A large, dark blue form served as the focal point in

the ninth painting. A feeling of deep space was achieved by

repeating the blue in a much lighter tone on the opposite

side of the canvas. The definitions of some of the forms in

this painting were influenced by the outlined figurative

forms in the works of another painter. Although most of the

shapes were described by a change of hue and intensity,

several of the forms were defined by a line which cut across

color areas.

PAINTING NUMBER NINE

The form structure in the tenth painting of the study
was markedly different from the composition of any of the
previous works. A dark, rectangular form ran entirely along
one edge of the painting surface. However, many subtle gra-
dations of hue and intensity kept the larger form from being
static. A large area of red and closely related colors ran
down the center of the painting and connected to a large
green-yellow shape. Again, each of the large forms was kept
from being static by many subtle color and textural changes
and the overlapping of forms. In most areas, the minute

PAINTING NUMBER TEN

color variations were achieved by overpainting several thin layers of paint. This glaze-like technique allowed some of the color to show through. A broad band of off-white, which was painted across the canvas, helped to keep the stronger forms from being too dominant.

The form structure of the eleventh painting of the study was basically vertically and horizontally orientated. The use of paint textures, overpainting with different colors, and an overlapping of forms, gave the composition a moderately free expressive quality.

PAINTING NUMBER ELEVEN

The form vocabulary for the final painting of the
study was significantly different from that of the
preceding paintings. Large overlapping forms covered most
of the painting surface. The various layers of paints were
applied in a glazing technique which allowed the hues to
blend and create new color combinations. The combination of
dark colors--raw umber, rose madder, thalo blue, and thalo
green--and large stable forms contributed to a quiet, but
strong, statement.

PAINTING NUMBER TWELVE

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

At the beginning of the study the candidate was aware of a number of restrictive factors in his personal paintings which blocked the achievement of expressive quality in his work: the lack of variation in form shape, size, and weight; the structure of the forms often rigidly oriented to the center of the painting surface; a lack of freedom in painting technique (brushwork); and a tendency to overpaint the surface of the canvas. He also lacked a meaningful philosophy concerning the source of expressive quality in non-objective form.

There were additional factors which affected the expressive quality of the paintings that had not been considered before the beginning of the problem: speed of execution in painting, an intuitive feeling for the expressive quality of non-objective form, and the size of the painting. As the study progressed and the candidate developed a greater understanding of the expressive qualities of the forms and the media, the painting process became more spontaneous: more intuitive and less intellectual.

A statement by the philosopher William James helped to explain why a spontaneous and intuitive approach to painting could enrich the expressive qualities of art:

> "What William James wrote about religious experience might well have been written about the antecedents of acts of expression," states John Dewey. "A man's conscious wit and will are aiming at something only dimly and inaccurately imagined. Yet all the while the forces of mere organic ripening within him are going on to their own prefigured result; and his conscious straining are letting loose subconscious allies behind the scenes which in their own way work toward rearrangement, and the rearrangement toward which all these deeper forces work is pretty surely definite, and definitely different from what he consciously conceives and determines. It may consequently be actually interfered with (jammed as it were) by his voluntary efforts slanting toward the true direction. Hence, when the new center of energy has been subconsciously incubated so long as to be just ready to burst into flower, 'hands off' is the only word for us; it must burst forth unaided." (2:72)

The authors of Elements of Psychology write, "The description of the world about us covers not only the simple attributes of objects--such as their size, shape, color, and location--but also their expressive, meaningful, and changing qualities." (5:4)

The expressive quality of non-objective form is not dependent upon the description of "these simple attributes," but rather upon the apprehension of the "expressive, meaningful, and changing qualities of things in the world about

us." As Kankinsky has proved many years ago, "A picture can

be moving without direct reference to external appearances."

(9:29)

In his book, Art as Experience, John Dewey points out

that:

Antecedent subject-matter is not instantaneously
changed into the . . . work of art in the mind of an
artist. It is a developing process. As we have already
seen, the artist finds where he is going because of what
he has previously done; that is, the original excitation
and stir of some contact of the world undergo successive
transformation. That state of the matter he has arrived
at demands to be fulfilled and it institutes a framework
that limits further operations. As the experience of
transforming subject-matter into the very substance of
the work of art proceeds, incidents and scenes that
figured at first may drop out and others take their
place, being drawn in by the suction of the qualitative
material that aroused the original excitement. (2:111)

Even though the non-objective forms of a painting

bear little or no apparent resemblance to the external

appearances of objects in nature,

Reference to the real world does not disappear from
art as forms cease to be those of actually existing things,
any more than objectivity disappears from science when it
ceases to talk in terms of earth, fire, air, and water,
and substitutes for these things the less easily recog-
nizable "hydrogen," "oxygen," and "carbon." When we
cannot find in a picture representation of any particu-
lar object, what it represents may be the pluralities
which all particular objects share, such as color,
extensity, solidity, movement, rhythm, etc. All par-
ticular things have these qualities; hence what serves,
so to speak, as a paradigm of the visible essence of all

things may hold in solution the emotions which
individualized things provoke in a more specialized
way.   (1:93)

II.   CONCLUSIONS

The non-objective forms which are used by the

candidate are valid motives for the expression of his

emotional feelings. These non-objective forms are not con-

cerned with a physical description of natural objects, but

are involved with the apprehension of the inner meanings of

phenomena, as interpreted by his conscious and unconscious

mental processes.

By the conclusion of this study, the candidate had

made a number of changes in his painting style which allowed

a greater expressive quality: a painting structure that was

not rigidly orientated to the center of the painting surface;

several ways of describing form; the intermixing of colors

for a more personal color vocabulary; using a glazing tech-

nique to achieve color depth; and a freer use of brush and

paint textures.

When the candidate was consciously concerned with the

use of these techniques to achieve specific goals, the

expressive quality of the painting tended to be obscured.

However, when he became able to control these techniques, he was able to employ them with a minimum of conscious effort, and was able to concentrate on the "inner meanings" of the forms.

It appeared that there are three interrelated aspects of the creative use of non-objective form in painting: (1) the painter observes the phenomena of his natural environment; (2) the artist's subconscious reacts and structures his experiences into an organized whole; (3) during the creative act of painting, the artist's subconscious "sends out" ideas of the forms, colors, etc., that are the most significant indicators of inner meaning.

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