CREATIVITY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

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INTRODUCTION

The overall intention of this thesis is to consider the subject of creativity and its relationship to the unconscious. My research has been concerned primarily with theories which exemplify my creative experience. The thesis, in dealing with creativity and the unconscious, explores the creative process as a means to unfold the unconscious mind and to enhance personal development.

The first half considers creativity as understood objectively through the work of Freud, Maslow and Ehrenzweig, and through the practice of Transcendental Meditation; the second illustrates subjectively the significance of these theories to my creative development.

In the first half I begin by presenting Sigmund Freud's theory of the relationship between Phantasy and Art. This is followed by Abraham Maslow's Self-Actualizing theory which resulted from his reconsideration of the basic principles of Freudian psycho-analysis. The next theory of creativity, as expressed by Anton Ehrenzweig, describes the mechanics of the unconscious in the creative process. Transcendental Meditation and the Creative Process is included to give the reader a more intimate understanding of my personal creativeness.

In the conclusion I explain how my creative process is best exemplified by the theory of Ehrenzweig. Included with this section are photographs of the works which best express the development of my creative process while painting. I have

used these paintings as the basis for describing the actual working process and how it evolved throughout my graduate program.

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1. FREUD: PHANTASY AND DAYDREAMS

Freud, believing that our most basic and powerful instinct is for love and pleasure, called the total amassed energy of this instinct the libido. He felt that the libido was primarily sexual in nature and is directed outwards towards objects. But in order to function effectively in the external world these energies must at times be directed either towards alternative channels, or be temporarily or permanently repressed. Freud maintained that the repression of pleasure causes men pain which can be temporarily alleviated through phantasy. In phantasy "every longing is soon transformed into the idea of its fulfillment; there is no doubt that dwelling upon a wish-fulfillment in phantasy brings satisfaction."[1]

Our most familiar means of phantasy is the day-dream. Day-dreams, like the dreams at night, bring an imaginary satisfaction of our wishes and desires in life, although, in the case of the latter, the instincts can give rise to unimpeded excitation. What is of importance to both is that the libido energies are allowed to be rechanneled into previous gratification pathways, which Freud refers to as fixation points. A fixation point is a libido attachment to a particular object. When the libido withdraws into phantasies or dreams it re-opens a channel to the repressed fixations. As the libido comes into contact with the fixation, it becomes augmented and presses towards fulfillment, finding resistance with the ego.*

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* The ego is the domain of the mind which is primarily concerned with appropriating internal and external satisfaction, as well as contending with the demands of the instincts. The ego basically strives for equilibrium and tends towards pleasure and avoids pain.

The ego resists, because it feels threatened by the emergence of the previously suppressed fixation. If the individual can overcome the resistance of the ego he can either satisfy its desire directly or rechannel the desire into alternate, acceptable means of satisfaction. If he is unable to overcome the ego's resistance, the ego again suppresses the desire which finds its way back again to the fixation.

This is what Freud calls introversion, which is the "deflection of the libido away from the possibilities of real satisfaction and its excessive accumulation upon phantasies..."[2] At this stage, if the person does not find suitable means for discharging the pent-up libido energies, there is a possibility that he may become neurotic. The neurotic loses perspective between inner phantasy and outer realities, and finds satisfaction only in the former. Freud states that a person's susceptibility to neurosis is dependent upon the amount of undischarged libido held in check by the ego and upon the degree to which he can transfer these undischarged energies from sexual to nonsexual goals through sublimination.

1.1 Implications for the creative process

Freud believes that the artist has the means of returning from phantasy back to reality again, and thus achieving health. Freud's description of phantasy is worth stating in extension to show the artist's use of phantasy and its significance to the creative process.

> The artist has also an introverted disposition and has not far to go to become neurotic. He is one who is urged on by instinctive needs which are too clamorous; he longs to attain to honour, power, riches, fame and the love of women; but he lacks the means of achieving these gratifications. So, like any other with an unsatisfied longing, he turns away from reality and transfers all his interest, and all his libido, too, on to the creation of his wishes in the life of phantasy, from which the way might readily lead to neurosis...But the way back to reality is found by the artist thus:...First of all, he understands how to elaborate his day-dreams, so that they lose that personal note which grates upon strange ears and becomes enjoyable to others; he knows, too, how to modify them sufficiently so that their origin in prohibited sources is not easily detected. Further, he possesses the mysterious ability to mould his particular material until it expresses the ideas of his phantasy faithfully; and then he knows how to attach to this reflection of his phantasy-life so strong a stream of pleasure that, for a time at least, the repressions are out-balanced and dispelled by it. When he can do all this, he opens out to others the way back to the comfort and consolation of their own unconscious sources of pleasure, and so reaps their gratitude and admiration; then he has won--through his phantasy--what before he could only win in phantasy: honour, power and the love of women.

1.2 Phantasy and internal resourcefulness

If we enlarge Freud's context of phantasy to include general unconscious resourcefulness and imagination, then we can more clearly see the relationship of phantasy to the creative process. The artist's ability to phantasize is one of the primary ways he gains access to his rich experiential background. Phantasy is then related to the initial or inspirational stages of creativity, where the realization of illumination inspires the artist into the production of the aesthetic object. The artist, being of an intuitive nature, uses phantasy and imagination not as an escape from reality,

as a means to discover and realize what is latent within himself. The artist in this way can get in touch with the sensations, experiences and information stored in the memory and can then transfer these into the work.

Besides having internal use of the unconscious, the artist must also have the skills and abilities to manifest the phantasy. This requires concentration, perseverence and hard work. For many artists the amount of time spent in actual production of an artistic image is far greater than the time spent in the inspirational stages which proceed it. However, the basic inspirational guides the whole production and development of the image, keeping the direction purposeful. Inspiration is the fuel which maintains the creative process, as well as being the substance, expression and message of the work.

1.3 Need for expressiveness

To Freud's beautiful analysis of and analogy between the neurotic phantasy and the creative process, I should like to add that the artist's need for expressiveness is for many more fundamental to their work than is the desire for honour, power and riches. Needless to say, these desires do, in fact, play a role in the cultivation of creativity; however, most artists usually do not concern themselves with the quest for honour, power and riches as the spur for creativity, but rather respond to the emotionally intuitive and expressive drive within themselves. When the artist feels compelled or desires to paint, he does not waste time trying to fully understand why, but

just begins painting, and through this experience he comes to understand why. When the work is finished the artist can contemplate it over an extended period of time. Through contemplation the artist realizes traces of unconscious information which form compositional relationships that were not preplanned or determined. These additions from the unconscious level keep the work fresh; Freud feels that they are the accidents which occur during the working process. This is related to what is called a Freudian slip, where a person will blurt out something that he would normally consciously repress.

The artist must learn to be open to and trust his intuition, because this is how the artist actively brings out the unconscious. Freud states that the success gained by the artist was primarily of external nature: money, power and the love of women. I feel the artist's reward is rather internal, because the artist gains greater insights into, and familiarity with, his own deeper self as well as gaining proficiency in expressing his inner world through his materials.

The outward expression or end product of creativity is of secondary importance to the artist. The artist's main concern is centered around the actual creative process, and the growth and excitement sparked within himself as he develops the painted image. Once the creative process is completed the artist changes roles and becomes a viewer, as now his intimate bond or oneness with the work is severed, and the work stands on its own. Thus the real joy of the artist

comes from having created something completely out of his own self.

2. MASLOW: SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Abraham H. Maslow belongs to the tradition of Humanistic psychology, an outgrowth and reconsideration of the basic principles of Freudian psycho-analysis. The major contribution of Humanistic psychology was a new theory explaining the behavior of normal individuals rather than developing new techniques for therapy, as in practice they followed Freudian models. This theory was developed by observing normal individuals, whereas Freud's theories were based on his studies of neurotics and psychotics. Maslow extended the basic Humanistic doctrines to include highly developed individuals; his findings form his theory of self-actualization. Maslow became discontented with existing theories because they did not give sufficient information to understand two of his professors, and in time a general pattern of basic characteristics emerged. Maslow's subsequent studies were based on "very fine, healthy people, strong people, creative people, saintly people, sagacious people."[4] These studies, he hoped, would yield a new and different view of mankind.

Maslow discovered that the oedipus or sexual conflict of Freudian psycho-analysis is but one of a whole series of basic needs which have to be fulfilled before positive holistic growth can transpire. These basic needs are for food, shelter, safety, belongingness, love, respect and self-esteem. As these basic needs are gratified, the individual has the time

and energy to consider the possibilities of personal development. This forms Maslow's self-actualization, which is the approach of the individual towards a greater utilization of his latent potentialities. He uncovers, makes conscious, and accepts his deeper hidden unconscious self. It is important to keep in mind that the self-actualization process proceeds, step by step, and extends over a lifetime.

Maslow states of self-actualizing people that "they grow upon themselves and instead of wanting less and less, such a person wants more and more...Growth is, in itself, a rewarding and exciting process."[5] The self-actualizer is a person who is comfortable and enjoys change, who can improvise and is able to face the unknown with courage, strength and confidence.

These individuals exhibit in their behavior a growth phenomenon called a peak-experience, which is a point in time when all aspects of the individual seem to integrate into a temporary wholeness, which gives rise to an experienced harmony. According to Maslow, during the peak-experience one feels less split between an experiencing self and an observing self, less fighting to adjust, more one-pointed and more at peace with himself.

Peak-experiences are high points in a person's life and are remembered because of their contrast to typical life experiences. These are times when everything flows smoothly; there is no wasted energy, no restraining or holding back. It is like the pure creative moment, when all controls can be

forgotten. "Self-actualizing and peak-experience perceptions can be relatively ego-transcending--self-forgetful, egoless."[6] One subjectively feels as if one is uninvolved or detached from the limitations of the individuality, that is, not participating in the experience in the same manner one normally experiences. This means a contact is maintained with the unconscious self as well as simultaneously having the surface conscious awareness. The secondary or conscious self is the analytical, critical agent, whereas the primary or unconscious self is emotional and intuitionally fluid. This fusion between the two allows for a more complete union between person and perceived. The object is then appreciated for its own intrinsic value, rather than what we think or feel it should be.

In his research, Maslow found that the peak-experience was a self-validating experience and one of the ultimate goals of life and living. The peak-experience actually changes a person's perspective on life. The individual's ideas, morals, and beliefs undergo a transformation due to the enrichening and integrative properties of the peak-experience. The peak-experience is a growth indicator; it will continue and even flourish as the person realizes more of his potential.

Maslow was able to document a series of qualities that he found to exist in greater quantities in the self-actualizing person. These qualities are: inner directedness, self-motivation, increased integration, self-acceptance, capacity for warm interpersonal relationships, acceptance of aggression, increased self-regard, greater ability to fuse concreteness

and abstractness, greater ability to love, increased autonomy, resistance to enculturation.

Maslow concludes that it is natural for life to grow, and that problems in mental and physical health are basically due to individual resistance and psychological rigidity.

> Man demonstrates in his own nature a pressure toward fuller and fuller being, more and more perfect actualization of his humanness in exactly the same naturalistic scientific sense that an acorn may be said to be 'pressing toward' being an oak tree.

He goes on to state that:

> Self-actualization is just as much a part of our own species membership as are our legs, eyes and brain.[7]

Maslow's self-actualization theory expresses a creative approach to existence; one that embraces change, progress and adaptability to situations as they arise. By increasing the individual's general creativeness and openness to life, Maslow feels that their existence becomes more enriched, meaningful and enjoyable.

2.1 Creativity

Maslow, in mapping out the general characteristics of human behavior, finds a close connection between creativity and self-actualization. Creativity, he says, is generally the act of the whole person, because during the creative process the artist actively uses both his conscious and unconscious mind. In this way the creative process is the artist's means for developing self-actualization. On the other hand, Maslow found that as people become self-actualized they grow in creativity.

According to Maslow, there are two main categories of creativeness: primary and special talent creativeness. Primary creativeness, the inspirational or illumination phase of creativity, is directly related to the peak-experience, the major difference being that in the peak-experience the integration is sustained over a longer period of time. Primary creativeness as seen in the early stages of the creative process initially requires an openness to oneself.

> They let themselves be completely uncritical. They allow all sorts of weird ideas to come into their heads. And in great bursts of emotion and enthusiasm, they may scribble out the poem or the formula...Then, and only then, do they become secondary, become more rational, more controlled and more critical.[8]

During primary creativeness the individual experiences detachment from the past and future, and absorption in the present. There is less awareness of the conscious self and more attunement with the unconscious, creating more innocence, lessening defenses and inhibitions, increasing self-sufficiency and non-interference (greater willingness to accept the situation as it is). These characteristics are also present in the peak-experience. Thus both primary creativeness and the peak-experience involve a synthesis between conscious and unconscious mental processes.

Primary creativeness and the peak-experience are brought about by the individual's ability to be open to his experience. Openness means availing the awareness to any and all stimuli existing either within or without the physical body. Internally this includes awareness of thoughts, memories, feelings, bodily reactions, and so forth. Externally, sensitivity to

stimuli means an awareness of experiences, sound, colour, or any environmental phenomena. Openness to stimuli necessitates an appropriate response devoid of set categories or modes of thinking or acting. The individual is free to honestly experience a particular moment in its totality, an experience that affirms the individual's lack of ego rigidity and defensiveness; he can tolerate inconsistencies, ambivalence and does not categorize experience in sweeping generalizations.

Special talent creativity, the secondary stage of the creative process, is more consciously oriented, that is, creativity occurring after the inspirational phase, and concerning itself primarily with the production of actual aesthetic objects. This phase of working out and developing the initial idea relies to a large extent upon personal discipline and hard work. It is more controlled and deliberate, and directs and oversees the activities of production. Special-skill creativity turns the dream or insight into a tangible aesthetic form. It is one thing to dream up wild ideas, but it is quite a different matter to create them. Actually, much of the artist's time is spent in production, rather than in the inspiration or illumination stage.

Maslow, being primarily interested in the inspirational phase of creativity, does not concern himself with a description of the secondary stage of the creative process. In the following section Anton Ehrenzweig discusses the mechanics of this stage in detail.

3. EHRENZWEIG: THE HIDDEN ORDER OF ART

Anton Ehrenzweig, in his book called The Hidden Order of Art[9], has offered a very important conceptual framework to understanding human perceptual processing and its relationship to the creative process. His work is well-steeped in psychology and the principles of general psychoanalytic investigation, including Freud and other great minds of this century.

"Syncretistic vision" (a term defined by Piaget)*, meaning a type of unconscious scanning which comprehends the whole of an experience, is opposed to the surface analytic vision with which we generally perceive the world. It is more subtle and all-inclusive, rather than narrow and focused. Ehrenzweig described the growth of the perceptual facilities of young children.

> Around the eighth year of life a drastic change sets in in children's art. While the infant experiments with form and colour in representing all sorts of objects, the older child begins to analyze these shapes by matching them against the art of the adult ...he usually finds his own work deficient. His work becomes duller in colour, more anxious in draughtsmanship. Much of the earlier vision is lost. What has happened is that the child's vision has ceased to be total and syncretistic and has become analytic instead. The child's more primitive syncretistic vision does not, as the adult's does, differentiate abstract detail...his vision is still global and takes in the entire whole which remains undifferentiated as to its component details.[11]

Thus the younger child's perception is more holistic, spontaneous and non-critical. He perceives himself and the

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* "Syncretism is the spontaneous tendency on the part of children to take things in by means of a comprehensive act of perception instead of by the detection of details...it is the tendency to connect everything with everything else."[10]

outer world in a more integrated, fluid way, without the fixed boundaries between self and non-self.

Ehrenzweig coins other phrases to help describe exactly the qualities of syncretistic vision. He introduces the terms "differentiated", meaning a more literal, conscious, fragmentary and secondary process, and "undifferentiated", meaning a dispersing, more comprehensive, holistic, fluidly unifying, unconscious primary process. The conscious level of perception has pinpoint focus and can only attend to one detail at a time. What appears to be ambiguous, open-ended and fragmentary on the surface can be unified within the unconscious during the low-level scanning, due to its more comprehensive nature.

3.1 Creative theory: first stage

To relate his specific views on creativity theory, Ehrenzweig uses three stages to describe the creative process. The first stage is "an initial ('schizoid') stage of projecting fragmented parts of the self into the work; unacknowledged split-off elements will then easily appear accidental, fragmented, unwanted and persecutory."[12] This is the artist's first attack where, after having considered the insight or realization, he sets about to capture his dream. The first attempts are generally, as Ehrenzweig stated, fragmentary or scattered, as the artist is trying to establish the outlines of the image. This stage is analogous to the free-association and brainstorming of Maslow. The artist is

searching for relationships and generally building the image, adding and subtracting elements, as he thinks through his materials.

Ehrenzweig comments that "while the artist struggles with his medium, unknown to himself he wrestles with his unconscious personality revealed by the work of art."[13] The artist's medium, having qualities of its own, frustrates the artist's purely conscious intentions. This structures an opportunity for experimentation, during which the conscious rigidity of the ego that is pinpoint focus, is relaxed. This allows the ego to surrender to the depths of the unconscious and sets low-level scanning in motion. Maslow refers to this as regression in service of the ego, meaning the individual can make use of the unconscious at will.

3.2 Second stage of creativity

"The second ('manic') phase initiates unconscious scanning that integrates art's substructure, but may not necessarily heal the fragmentation of the surface Gestalt."[15] In this stage the artist is completely absorbed and at one with his work on a deeply unconscious level; conscious focusing and discrimination ceases. The surface fragmentation of the work no longer exists for the artist, as through his syncretistic vision, he now experiences the countless unconscious bonds that will help to tie the surface together and maintain an unbroken pictorial space.

Syncretistic vision does not match details, one by one,

but directly experiences the whole. The artist experiences this state when for no apparent reason he stands back from his work and emptily stares, being completely engrossed in the work. This might be called the "artistic stare". To the outside observer, it may appear to be an empty, vacant stare, but inwardly the artist is completely experiencing his work. He now does not distinguish figure and ground and is not focusing on surface detail per se but experiences the work's artistic import (a term which was coined by Susanne K. Langer, meaning experiencing the work's emotional content,or the emotional tone of the work, or...its life). The artist is experiencing the work with his unconscious mind, intuiting its substructure or hidden order. This experience is generally familiar to most creative individuals. When we are engrossed in problem-solving we will find ourselves staring blankly out the window for a short period of time, and then a thought helpful to the situation will arise.

To help clarify the second stage of creativity, Ehrenzweig draws a comparison between the creative process of the sane artist and that of the psychotic artist. The sane creative mind accepts within its unconscious the fragmented pieces of its initial projections, pieces which are safely contained within the oceanic undifferentiated state. During scanning, these images or parts are as if melted down and reshaped for the re-entry into conscious awareness.

The psychotic artist fears his unconscious, and therefore cannot use it to integrate the fragmentated pieces of his self.

He feels a hostile void of nothingness within himself. To be trapped within his unconscious is experienced as destruction of the ego, meaning annihilation and death.

The sane artist must also face his fear of the inner void; through time and practice, the artist learns to let go more comfortably accepting the temporary loss of conscious control. Ehrenzweig feels, as does Freud, that there is a close relationship between psychosis and creativity, but the sane artist, as we have seen from Freud's work, has the ability to use phantasy and then return again to reality. The psychotic artist, on the other hand, is stuck in the first schizoid phase of fragmentation. Due to fear of his unconscious he has not learned low-level scanning to integrate the scattered fragments of the surface ego. The psychotic tries to resolve the lack of surface unity by further splintering the images in the hope of covering their separateness.

3.3 Third stage of creativity

The third stage, consisting of a "re-introjection part of the work's hidden substructure, is taken back into the artist's ego on a higher mental level...and contributes to the better integration of the previously split-off parts of the self."[14] After the second stage of low-level scanning*, the artist returns to surface consciousness with newly won insights to heal the painting's fragmentation. Due to repression the artist is unable to maintain consciously the

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* Please refer to page 12.

integration (of the work's surface) he experienced during scanning. However, enough new information will be retained to partially solve the surface's fragmentation. In the third stage the artist resumes working with his materials to structure this new information into the work. The exchange between conscious and unconscious thinking levels, and the conscious and unconscious structure of the work, enriches and strengthens the artist's conscious ego.

The major difference between the third and first stages of creativity is that the artist in the third stage receives back all that he previously projected into the work. Therefore, the third stage re-establishes meaning, significance and structure for the work. The artist can now also appreciate the work's independent life more fully, due to the greater degree of integration or resolution existing in the work. If the artist feels the work is still insufficient after having incorporated more of the substructure into the work, he can re-initiate the second stage. The creative process is mainly centred around the second and third stages after the initial series of projections.

A painting uses pictorial relationships or tensions between colour, form, texture, size and so forth as signals to create the pulsating embracive space which causes the viewer to experience low-level scanning. The larger the contrast between the pictorial elements within the painting, the more the viewer will have to rely upon his own unconscious to assimilate the work. The viewer must also surrender conscious control to bring about scanning. Through this means

the viewer becomes an active participant in the experience of the painting. Thus the viewer brings his own conscious self and past experience into the work. In this way, the artist creates for the viewer, as Freud believed, a way back to the viewer's own unconscious sources of pleasure.

4. TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION AND THE CREATIVE PROCESS

This section has been included in this thesis to help the reader gain a more thorough understanding of my personal creative process and its relatedness to Transcendental Meditation, or T.M..

4.1 What is Transcendental Meditation?

T.M., a simple system of meditation introduced into the world by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi twenty years ago, is practised twice a day for twenty minutes while sitting comfortably with the eyes closed. T.M. is an effortless mental technique based on the natural tendencies of life to be progressive and evolutionary. T.M. is to be distinguished from other meditation techniques, which involve concentration or contemplation, as its only prerequisite is an ability to think. During meditation one proceeds systematically from gross, active conscious levels to finer, more subtle areas of mental activity. In this way, one begins to experience how one naturally thinks, that is, the complete range of the thinking process.

The refinement of thought proceeds until one eventually transcends even the finest impulse of thought and the inherent

limitations of the surface awareness, normally attached to an object, are transcended so that one experiences awareness in its pure form. Herein one's attention is totally absorbed, and the subjective experience is that of inner freedom from mental and emotional excitation. This is a significantly different experience from the other three major states of consciousness: waking, dreaming and sleeping. Typified by suspension of the breath, deep physical relaxation, and high coherence or integration of the brain, pure awareness is the fourth major state of consciousness. Resuming activity, some of the characteristics of this least excited state are retained and provide a more creative approach to my work by increasing clarity and spontaneity.

During the deep rest of meditation, the nervous system rebuilds itself and removes stress, and one re-enters activity refreshed, with increased alertness and clarity. Through practice, the restful, silent coherence of pure awareness becomes associated with the mind. In this way, the surface conscious level grows to encompass the previously latent mental potential hidden within the unconscious; individual comprehension expands as well as the ability to focus or concentrate.

When this infusion is complete, the mind's potential is full, and one lives with the qualities of the silent state of pure awareness while engaged outwardly in dynamic activity. One then has the benefits of the deep meditative state at all times and lives a fully actualized inner potentiality in

a new and higher state of consciousness. One lives in the rotating cycle of waking, dreaming and sleeping illuminated by pure-awareness. Traditionally this higher state is referred to as enlightenment, which simply stated means that the experiencer is never lost or overshadowed by any experience. The individual not being overshadowed at any time is completely aware and open, and in full control of all aspects of himself: he can use his mind, body, intellect, ego, and senses to achieve the fulfillment of his desires.

4.2 Transcendental Meditation: its utility to the creative process

T.M. prepares the artist for the creative process by replenishing his inner resourcefulness, thereby increasing clarity. T.M.'s significance to the creative process can be most aptly appreciated when considered in reference to Maslow's self-actualizing theory. Maslow, in locating the general characteristics for the self-actualizing individual, did not specifically discover a means or method other than psycho-analysis for the development of individual potential. T.M., as an adjunct to psycho-analysis, can provide the individual with a direct means to discover and stimulate inner potentiality.

The individual practising the T.M. technique actualizes his inner potential by progressively experiencing and stabilizing the deeper levels of the mind. As these levels are enlivened, one becomes able to perceive abstractness consciously.

In the research study of the "Influence of T.M. on self-actualization"[15], it was found that the subjects practising

the T.M. technique showed a significant improvement in self-actualization over a two-month period. The "Personal Orientation Inventory", a test developed to measure Maslow's concept of self-actualization, indicated positive change in the following areas: greater openness to experience, increased integration, increased spontaneity, expressiveness, increased objectivity, firm identity, and resistance to enculturation.

A major overall contribution of T.M. for the artist is in establishing balance in life. T.M., by providing the direct means for the artist to internally fathom himself, structures a holistic pattern for personal development. The artist grows simultaneously on all levels: mental, emotional and spiritual. Thus as the artist grows inwardly through cultivation of intuition and sensitivity, he also develops emotional stability, enriched perception, and increased ability to manifest externally his inner vision. In this way, T.M. can bring about a situation where the artist expresses his inner potential at most times.

5. CONCLUSION

Ehrenzweig's description of the three stages of creativity most perfectly expresses the mechanics of my artistic process: "An initial ('schizoid') stage of projecting fragmented parts of the self into the work...[a secondary] ('manic') phase [which] initiates unconscious scanning that integrates art's substructure...[and a]third stage of re-introjection [where] part of the work's hidden substructure is taken back into the artist's ego in a higher mental level."[18]

In the first stage the artist establishes much of the underlying structure for the developing work. Here the artist begins to construct the image, adding and subtracting information as he works with his materials. This is the artist's initial attack as he energetically captures the image of his inspiration.

Ehrenzweig's initial stage must be proceeded by an idea or intention. The idea may be clearly formalized with preparatory sketches or designs, or merely an intuitive direction. The direction keeps ideas and experimentation purposeful. The idea, by creating a need for specific information, brings about the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious, and interaction which releases the hidden wealth of the unconscious. This is then projected outward and becomes the work. The artist constructs his image in fragments, oscillating between the conscious and the unconscious, and as the composition progresses, the artist must enact undifferentiated scanning to integrate his work.

The artist initiates the "artistic stare" when he steps back to contemplate his work, wherein he collects and digests the fragmented pieces within his unconscious. At this time normal conscious perception (i.e., pin-point focus and analysis) is relaxed to give way to wholeness; the artist is absorbed and at one with his work. This experience is generally sustained for brief periods of time.

A more advanced stage of this inner absorption and integration is Maslow's "peak-experience". The peak-experience

arises from a more intimate bond between the different levels of the mind; thus, it is more comprehensive and is experienced actively by the mind, body and senses. Herein, the artist enjoys the same intimacy with the unconscious as he did in the undifferentiated passive state, but now in the active states of thinking, speaking and interacting physically with the everyday environment.

The majority of the creative process is in the interaction between the second and third stages. In the second stage the artist scans the work's underlying cross ties with his unconscious, while in the third, these insights are consciously incorporated into the work's overall structure. If the artist is dissatisfied with these developments, he will again initiate the second phase. This oscillation between the second and third phases continues until the artist is satisfied with his work.

The following section will trace my development through painting during my graduate studies and illustrates how Ehrenzweig's stages of creativity are reflected in my creative process.

5.1 My development through painting

The major area of concern throughout my graduate work has been the process of breaking away from my earlier style of painting through the exploration of the landscape.** This

**The reader should note that even though at this time I was unfamiliar with Ehrenzweig's first schizoid phase of creativity, I was intuitively using this phase in my experimentation and search for an appropriate landscape image, described in the next few pages (pp. 23-27, 36-37).

process will be considered in terms of the problems presented, their resolution, and the resultant growth.

When I began my graduate program I felt it was necessary to deepen and enrich my paintings. I decided to accomplish this in two ways: through experimentation with new methods and techniques, and by learning how to render the landscape through the use of colour and aerial perspective.

My previous dependence upon the air-brush spray technique I considered to be a limitation because it hindered tactile experimentation and underpainting*. It is for this reason that I used the pallet knife and rollers to add a heavy impasto to my use of the spray.

As I began to observe atmospheric conditions and colour in nature, I realized that through landscape imagery it is possible to capture an artistic equivalent of unboundedness as experienced during Transcendental Meditation.

A painting from my first series (Plate 1), called Prairie Points, will clarify my meaning.

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* Underpainting means preliminary paint work which will be for the most part covered over as the work proceeds. Underpainting gives tactile clues for the artist's creative decisions during the working process. There are three uses of underpainting: traditionally, it was used to establish the dark to light values by progressive washes of transparent colour; underpainting was also used to cover over unintended mistakes; more recently it has been used as a means to build up the illusion of a three-dimensional surface or create a low-relief. Although I have used underpainting for all three purposes, its primary importance in my work has been to create the illusion of a three-dimensional surface.

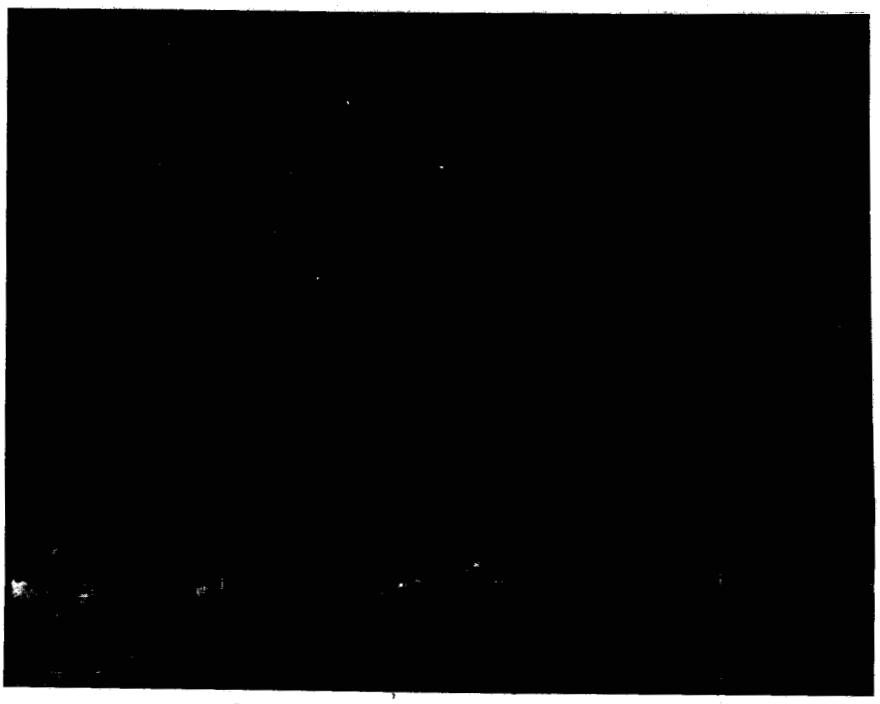

Plate 1

In this painting the dark impasto perspective lines suggest furrows and draw the viewer's attention into deep space. From the almost non-existent horizon line the attention is drawn into the all-embracing space of the sky. The experience of the deep space may elicit a feeling of relaxation wherein the viewer can surrender that conscious control which normally inhibits the undifferentiated state. The viewer may temporarily gain a sense of oneness with the work and experience an increased integration due to contact with his unconscious. This allows the viewer to experience momentarily the integrative wholeness of his inner being. As the viewer returns to conscious awareness, he may again appreciate this work's compositional elements and tactile qualities which again lead the viewer's attention into the deep pictorial space.

As I became more interested in the landscape, I found the making of drawings useful in studying its compositional elements and qualities. In drawing I worked with the linear elements present in Prairie Points (Plate 1) and drastically simplified the landscape imagery to enliven the entire surface spacially. In the drawing (Plate 2), I have used the white of the paper to unify the image throughout the composition.

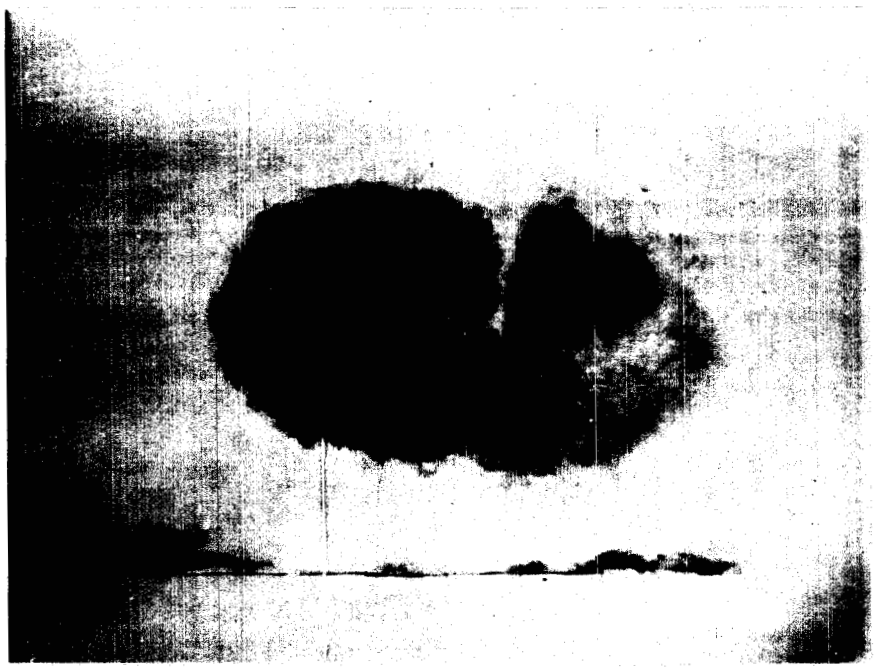

Plate 2

Continuing to work with the ideas of simplicity and unified space I began to draw from nature. My work became more realistic, and I came to know and to appreciate how compositional elements (balance, contrast and rhythm) may be used to convey the energy of the landscape.

In nature I sense an unbounded phantasy world wherein I enjoy peaceful freedom, silent fullness and magic. I now began to search for the appropriate means to convey my feelings of nature; the drawing (Plate 3) below, illustrates this direction.

Plate 3

In this drawing (Plate 3) I have introduced many linear elements (i.e., the border, the perspective field lines and the fence wire) to create the spacial framework. These lines were used to activate the blank white areas and to incorporate them into the composition. While making this series of drawings, I gained competence in manipulating the basic elements of composition and perspective.

Now I resumed painting, using squeegies and my hands to

achieve an effect similar to the air brush. This process helped to retain the underpainting quality which was lost with the spray. The technique loaned itself to a new approach to imagery: I began to break away from the formal over-planning of the image and to move towards an intuitive spontaneity*. Working more quickly, I tried to capture a more pure expression for my subjective feelings of the landscape.

In the first painting of this series (Plate 4), there is an obvious similarity with the previous series of drawings.

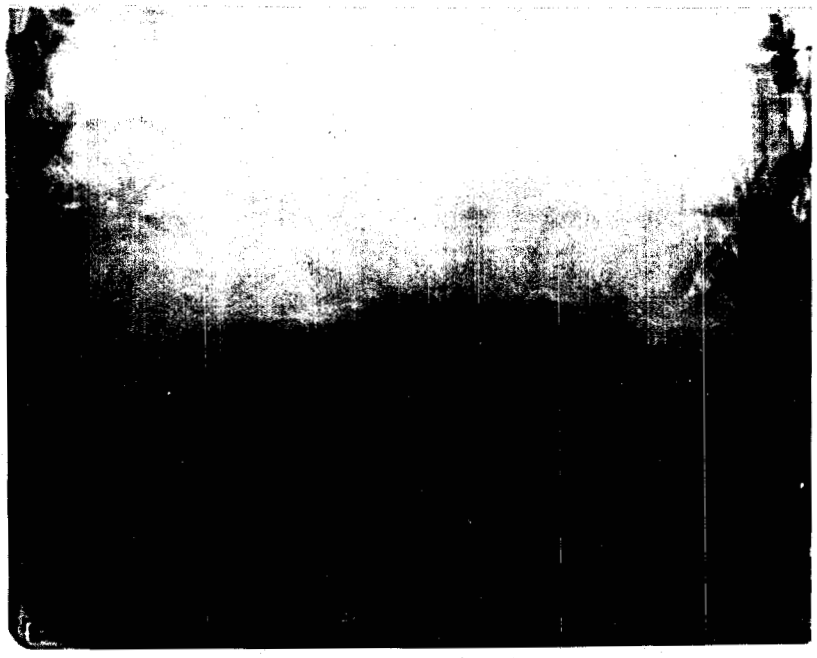

Plate 4

* At this time I began to intuitively use Ehrenzweig's second stage of creativity. (Refer to page 21)

In both series I used lines and colour to convey space; however, the painting's underpainted border becomes more significant in establishing the illusion of space moving outward.

The second painting in this series (Plate 5) uses similar compositional means to create an effect of space; however, the

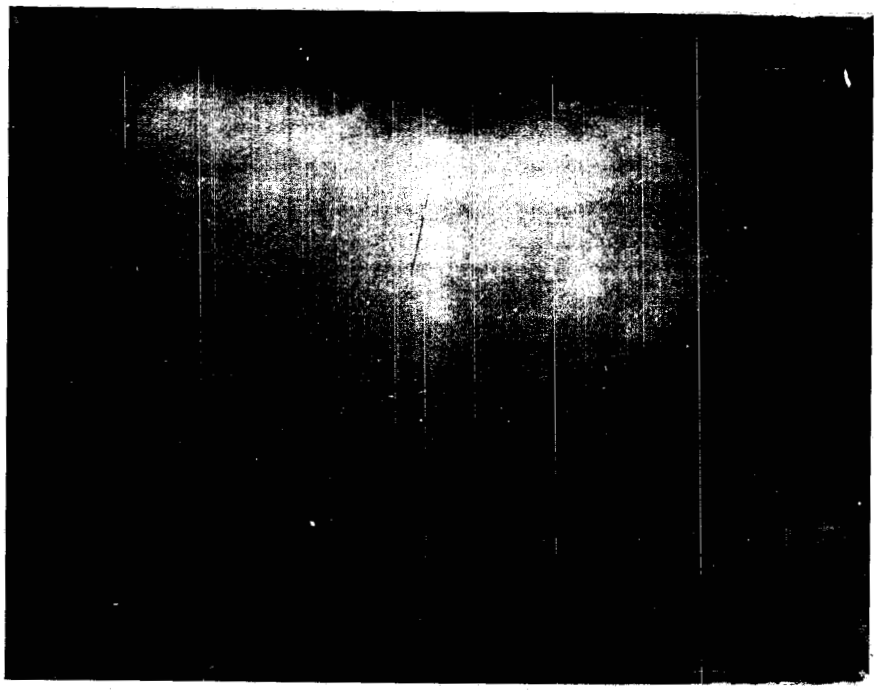

Plate 5

more intense areas of white around the border reaffirm more succinctly the flatness of the surface. During this period I began working on several canvases simultaneously in response to limitations which I was experiencing: the slowness of paint to dry, and resultant inability to resolve the image in one sitting.

I am most pleased with the next painting (Plate 6) because I have captured a personalized landscape with greater simplicity.

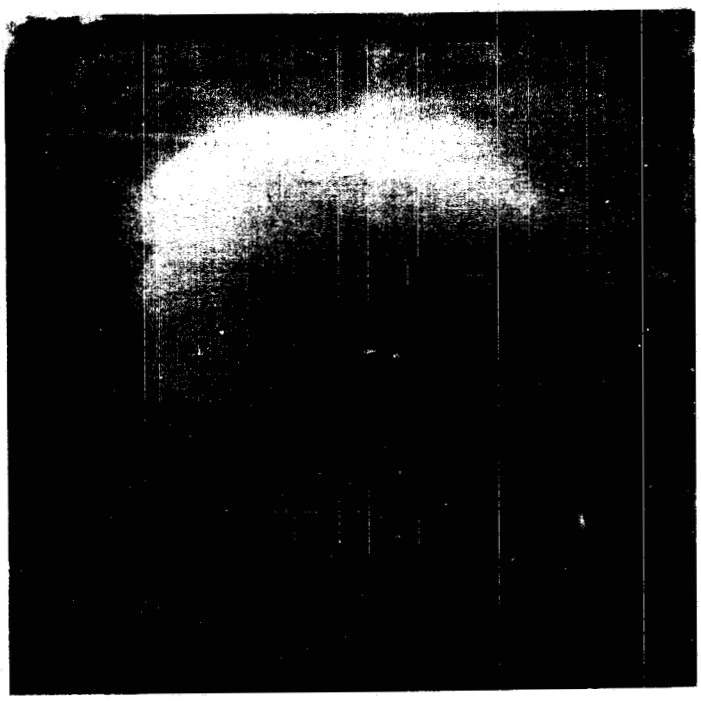

Plate 6

The cloud shape was created by rubbing colour directly into the canvas with my hands; in this way I was able to achieve an effect similar to the air brush.

Using the same landscape motif I now worked with mixed media drawings in pencil, crayon and pastel. I found that pastels can be quickly applied or removed, offering increased flexibility. The surface hardness of paper, being less absorbent, allowed me to work more quickly through ideas. Working on paper I was less hesitant and could take greater

risks than in painting because of less concern with material costs. The next drawing (Plate 7) is similar to previous drawings in its dependence upon line; it is made more active by the inclusion of dark and pure colour areas in the border, which move the viewer's attention along all four borders. The border, by defining sharply the edge of the drawing, makes the whole image float within the whiteness of the paper.

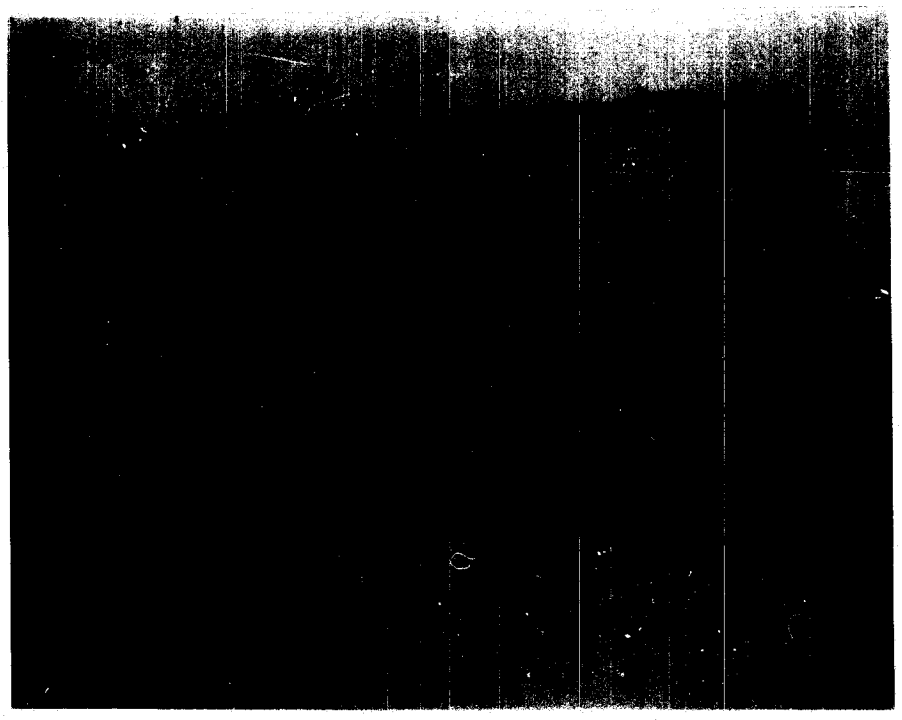

Plate 7

By creating a spacial relationship between the surface of the paper and the image, the drawing itself becomes cloud-like thereby reinforcing the subject of the image.

In the drawing below (Plate 8) my interest in texture becomes more apparent. I began to melt the pastels and apply

them with a brush; then I scraped the surface with a knife to vary the surface thickness. Here I incorporated the surface of the paper into the work differently by making distinct the edges of the image.

Plate 8

In this series it was exciting to create atmosphere with a thick impasto application. The energetic application gives an emotional intensity to the work. On top of the impasto I use coloured circles to create a deeper, more lively and active space. The coloured points, suggesting planets and stars, place the landscape into a more galactic context. In previous work (Plate 8) I had used line and colour around the border to suggest the co-existence of two worlds, deep space

and flatness. This paradox is greatly enhanced by the addition of points on the surface of the painting.

When I returned to painting I was able to incorporate the freshness and liveliness discovered through the use of pastels (Plate 9). The circles of colour now become larger cloud forms which activated the surface in the same manner as did the textured impasto of the pastels.

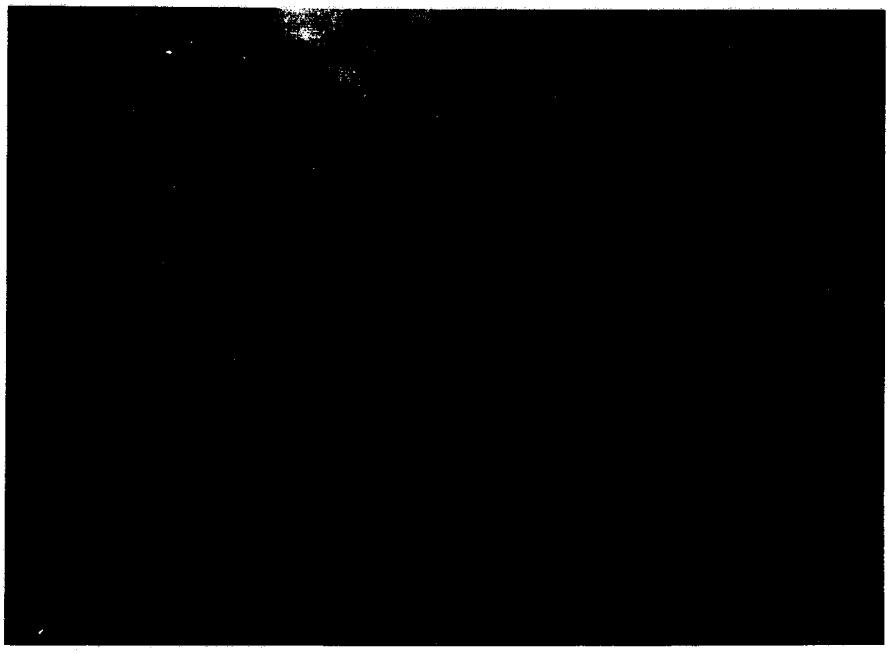

Plate 9

After an exhibition of these paintings and pastels during the early spring, I received a commission to paint a mural for the Chemistry Department of the University of Saskatchewan. The mural, based on the periodic table of chemical elements, consists of two panels each six feet by eighteen feet.

While painting the mural I began to experience moments when I felt the total organic nature of the creative process: each step was clearly recognized and understood in relation to the whole sequence. I would feel completely in tune with the work and everything I did was right; there was no hesitation, just a smooth flow between idea, action and results. These experiences, which I later learned were called "peak-experiences" by Maslow, encouraged my spontaneity and creativeness. My creative process had been transformed into a fluid, spontaneous relationship between that which is consciously planned and that which is intuitively discovered.* I could now begin with a relatively clear idea and allow it to evolve by adding and subtracting information as I worked. This approach differed from my pre-Graduate School rigidity, where I had taken a pre-conceived idea and reproduced it exactly.

In the next series of paintings I decided to resolve the problems encountered when fusing the spontaneous and formal approaches together. I wanted here to integrate my previous understanding gained through the landscapes with my new sense of freedom gained from the mural. I now used sketches and colour slides of the landscape for preparatory studies as an aid in planning the image.

I continued to experiment with underpainting to establish the basic compositional framework. These paintings, being

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* It was at this time that I began to intuitively use all three stages of Ehrenzweig's creativity theory.

larger than previous work, were exciting because the details necessitated greater resolution and thus challenged me as an artist. The first painting in this series (Plate 10) directly relates to my earlier pastels (Plate 8) which used coloured circles as a means to a deeper, more active space.

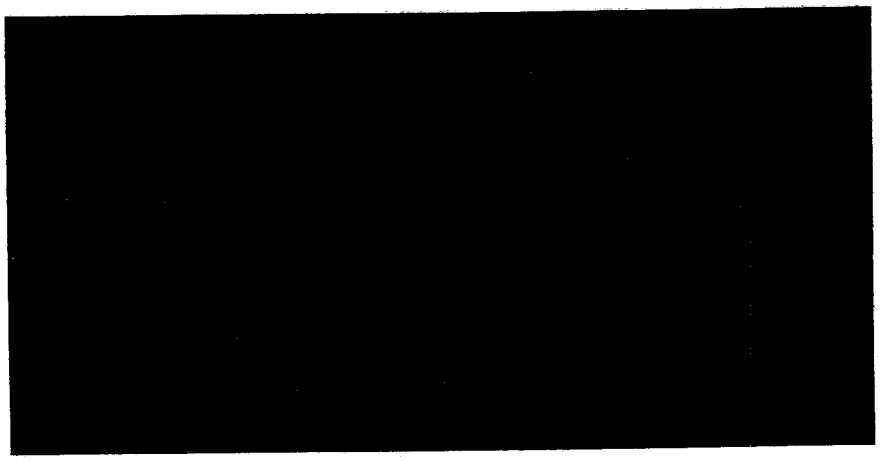

Plate 10

However, in this painting (Plate 10) the circles and oval shapes of colour also structure and will create specific movement through the surface. The previous use of the circle and the oval shapes now becomes more important to the compositions in suggesting a stellar environment within the landscape format. As the series becomes progressively more abstract the paintings lost their bond with normal landscape.

Throughout the series the focal point shifted from the horizon line to an object-oriented shape, in this case a triangle.

In the next painting (Plate 11), the object-oriented oval shape (on the horizon) becomes the point of convergence for all the compositional elements.

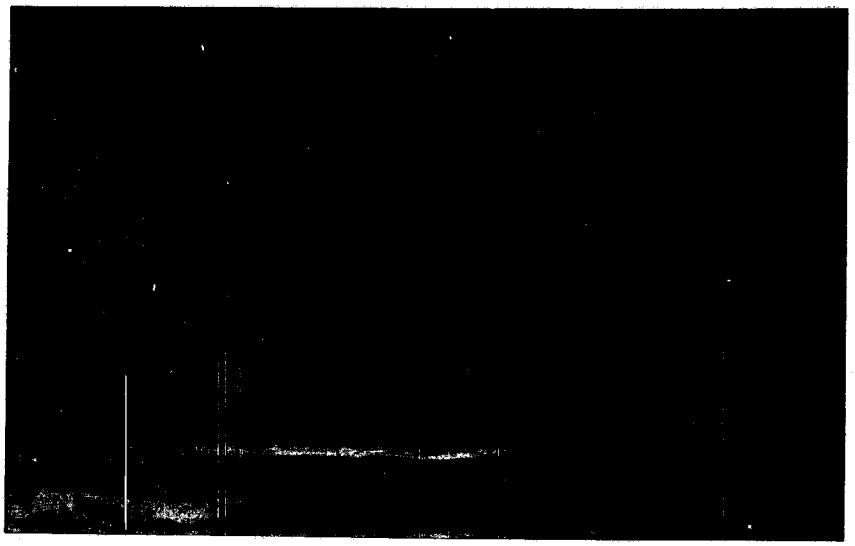

Plate 11

Spacially this painting is more active than the previous work because it causes the attention to pulsate inward and outward; the oval shape draws the attention inward, only to expel it to the outward reaches of the canvas. As I continued to experiment with the active pulsating space my work became more abstract.

The next painting (Plate 12) is an example of this

developing abstractness. This painting is compositionally more active than previous work because it stimulates a visual liveliness over the entire canvas. Painting abstractly I found more freedom to experiment with colour, composition, and underpainting.

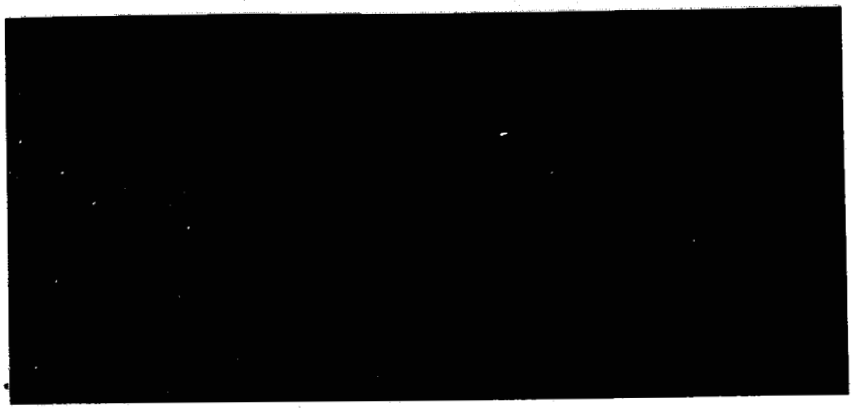

Plate 12

In my latest works I am attempting to fuse all my previous interests in colour, form and texture to create deep space. With the acrylic medium I now have the freedom to add and subtract information by applying washes as well as using the spray technique. It was when I first started this series that I began reading Ehrenzweig, whose theories made me realize that I was using underpainting as the means to

establish the deeper structure in my work. I now approach a painting as a whole and work on the landscape and sky simultaneously, a manner of working which maintains greater integration throughout the building-up process of the landscape image.

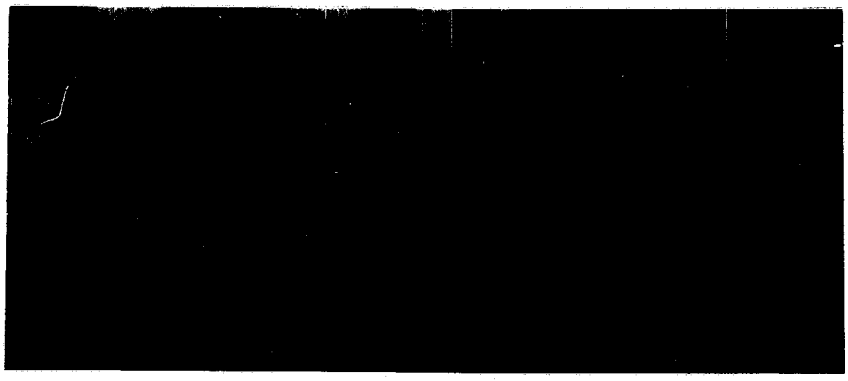

Plate 13

This painting (Plate 13), in the older landscape tradition, uses underpainting in conjunction with the spray to create deep space. Through underpainting I build up the surface textured areas and regulate the impasto thickness as I compare the work. The underpainted clouds and points are then integrated into the painting atmosphere by using the spray. In these new works I have introduced a thin multi-coloured

line to emphasize the placement of the underpainted clouds and points within the composition. The coloured line has become a dominant theme in my new work as a means to enrich my painting spacially.

In the painting below (Plate 14) the coloured lines bring the linear qualities of the landscape and horizon line into the atmosphere.

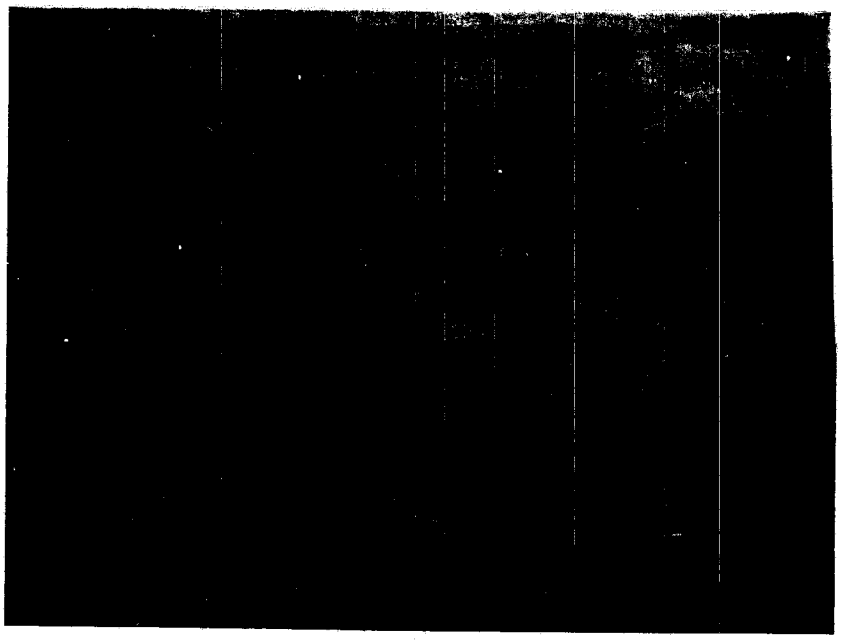

Plate 14

This painting clearly expresses my innermost experience with the landscape by eliciting a feeling of innocence, playfulness, and depth. Presently I am experimenting with how best to incorporate and harmonize the coloured line within the landscape.

It also became apparent during my reading of Ehrenzweig

that the approach to my thesis is in accordance with his three phases of creativity. Initially my research was seeking to discover and clarify my feelings about art. This process was without conscious direction and therefore fragmentary. It was from the fragments that I was able to locate the underlying direction, which, when defined, became the theme of my study. Most of the thesis comes from a continual conscious refinement process made possible my experimenting the underlying essence of the original fragments.

During the refinement process I gently work my way through an attitude of reluctance making changes in the work. This is easier now that I have learned to initiate low-level scanning and thereby solve the surface fragmentation through using my unconscious more fully. Time and time again, by trusting my intuition, I am able to push the painting even further than I expect. This I have achieved with the aid of underpainting*, where each layer is transformed to give way to a more unified image.

My deeper involvement with painting during my Graduate programme has enabled me to refine my technical skill and artistic language to a point where I now feel more capable of capturing my innermost sensitivity for the landscape artistically. I feel my personal creativeness as expressed through my paintings exemplify the continuing unfoldment of my unconscious potential and my ability to represent this growth in aesthetic form.

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* Please refer to footnote on page twenty-four.

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CONCLUSION

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