

THE CREATIVE PROCESS IN PAINTING:

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

A Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis concerns itself with the transformation of idea through the manipulation of visual language in the creative process of painting. The concept of idea includes visual ideas derived from conscious thought about experience with naturalistic forms, from subconscious dream sources and fantasy and from intuition through the abstract process of imagination. Visual or pictorial language includes the media with which the artist creates, that is, the paints, inks, crayons, pencils and other physical media along with the various techniques used to transfer these media to a picture plane. Visual language also includes the creative elements of painting which are line and plane, that combine into form and volume, space, created through form relationships, the sensation of movement and visual weight, and colour which creates light, internal illumination and atmosphere in a painting. The artist uses all of these elements in combination, each reliant upon the other to create a balanced, unified painting. A painting achieves pictorial unity through an adherence to basic pictorial laws.

Part one of this thesis will concern itself with a general discussion of the creative act and the role of imagination as part of that process. It will also deal

with the creative process in painting and some of the laws governing pictorial creation. Included in the discussion of pictorial laws and visual language will be a brief analysis of the use of symbolic forms in art. Both universal and personal aspects of symbolic forms will be discussed and will provide an introduction to Part two of the thesis.

Part two of the paper will concentrate on an analysis of my actual paintings produced from September nineteen seventy-six to March nineteen seventy-eight which comprised my M. A. Graduate Exhibition. This analysis will attempt to demonstrate the actualization of pictorial laws, the transformation of idea through the creative process of painting and the development of personal symbolism through the use of pictorial language.

Part three will consist of a brief concluding statement.

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Abbreviations

- a (acrylic paint)
- c (canvas)
- m.m. (mixed media)
- p. (paper)
- coll. (collection of)

1. PART ONE

The Creative Process in Painting - An Introduction

1.1 The Creative Act, Painting and The Role of Imagination

Rollo May, in his article, "The Nature of Creativity," provides this definition:

Creativity is the process of bringing something new into birth.

True artists enlarge human consciousness, their creativity is the most basic manifestation of man's fulfilling his being in his own world. Creativity is a process of actualization of potential.¹

The creative act is characterized by heightened consciousness resulting from an intense encounter with a physical reality, (for example, a landscape), or with an idea, (abstract concept). The encounter is an intense absorption, exploration, a viewing from different angles. The idea or vision may be excited by the paint, canvas and other materials which become a secondary aspect of the creative encounter, they are the language (media) of it. The encounter may be voluntarily directed but the important factor is the degree of absorption or intensity in the encounter.²

The encounter in my work is with a multitude of conscious ideas, stored memories, dream images, intuitive feelings, and the ambiguous initial imagery which I place on the picture plane. These initial images consist of blotted, stained, splashed, spattered, poured, rolled or brushed-on colour plus a variety of forms derived from crayon rubbings and crayon and

pencil marks. Colours and marks are placed on the canvas or paper without regard to colour relationships, formal or spatial relationships, allowing for maximum chance effects and unconscious imagery to develop in the initial stages of each painting. The initial ambiguous imagery provides strong stimuli for my imagination as my mind begins to form shapes and eventually a sense of overall direction and composition. These imagined shapes and forms are examined in my mind, selected and developed in relationship to each other. Some shapes are developed out of the initial imagery and a physically stimulated selection process occurs as both chance and controlled effects dictate changes of direction within the painting. The action of the imagination and the process of inner searching and examination of inner visions is crucial to the creative process. The action of the imagination is familiar to us in activities such as gazing into clouds and seeing animals, faces or other objects, or when we see a face sculpted in the side of a mountain. The importance of using the power of the imagination has been known for a long time. Leonardo Da Vinci encouraged the use of the imagination in his advice to artists:

If you look at any walls spotted with various stains

or with a mixture of different kinds of stone, if you are about to invent some scene you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys and groups of hills.³

The imagination can be stimulated by other means such as peering into a fire, into dried mud, into water, at clouds, for example.

The mind of the painter should be like a mirror which takes the colour of the thing it reflects and which is filled by as many images as things placed before it.⁴

Paul Klee uses the mirror as an analogy for inner vision:

There are some who will not acknowledge the truth of my mirror. They should bear in mind that I am not here to reflect the surface, (a photographic plate can do that), but must look within. I reflect the innermost heart. I write the words on the forehead and round the corners of the mouth. My human faces are truer than the real ones. If I were to paint a really truthful self-portrait, you would see an odd shell. Inside it, as everyone should be made to understand, would be myself, like the kernel in a nut. Such a work might also be called an allegory of crust formation.⁵

Klee's paintings are reflections of reality from the mirror of his innermost being, a distillation of the essence of things, whether those things be portraits of people, landscapes, or purely imaginary visions.

Like Klee I feel that my paintings are reflections

of my inner being and of a search for truth. In this sense all of my works are self portraits; they are worlds of my imagination, strange landscapes full of shapes and forms symbolic in both personal and "universal" terms.

Creative art never begins with a poetic mood or idea, but with the building of one or more figures, the harmonizing of a few colours and tonalities...⁶

Klee felt that this statement had validity as far as his work was concerned; it does have relevance to my paintings also. As I have mentioned I do not begin my paintings with a set vision or idea but rather with an unrelated jumble of images which act to stimulate my imagination and conscious mind. The drive to create meaning out of chaotic information or stimuli is a natural human need sometimes referred to as "the propensity to organize".

In the words of Harold Rugg, in his book Imagination:

Quiet seeing becomes in-depth-perception; there must be an intuitive mood of identification with the subject. Cezanne used the phrase, 'Clear Seeing', when he spoke of absorbing landscape so he could see 'beyond the surface' to become, 'completely one with the valley'. William Blake referred to the process as, 'cleansing the doors of perception', so that, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.⁷

With the building of relationships of form and colour, content becomes clearer in my paintings, changes of direction can and do occur, but eventually one direction, one vision comes to dominate, and the picture moves towards what will hopefully be a unified, harmonious statement. My work has to do with a progression from a state of chaos towards a harmony between content and colour plus other characteristics of painting. Leonardo Da Vinci felt painting should be concerned with a seeking of perfection through the physicals of painting, darkness and brightness, substance and colour, form and place, remoteness and nearness, movement and rest. Through exhaustive perception of the first raw marks and colours an imagined concept becomes the starting point for the creation of a visual statement or visual reality. Imagination and fantasy, emotions, and conscious thought operate mutually with the physical processes of painting to produce an eventually finished image. Through the process of painting the goal changes moment by moment because both vision and product change.

The nature of the expressional process is basically tentative and experimental. There are constant interventions, erasures, giving up old organizations, adapting new ones, the entire process marked by a discontent.⁸

As most of my paintings develop over a substantial period of time, and because I work on a number of pieces simultaneously, there are constant shiftings of direction within the works. There is a continuous interchange between the paintings. There is also new input into the works as a result of day-to-day changes in my life through new information, new sights or human contacts.

Man working as an artist sets his own problems internally. In the act of expressional statement the orienting attitude is created by the artist's drives and personal experience. Expression is compelled by urges to objectify meanings, moods, imagined conceptions. The drive may be to write a poetic line, or to portray with brush or pencil, with tones or bodily movements. But in this initial stage of the creative act the attitude is molded by the artist's subjective experience. The only external references are to the corresponding stages of the artist's product. The contrast between the creativity of the scientist and the artist, then, is provided by differences in the precision and fixity of the scientist's objective problem and the continually shifting character of the artist's subjective vision and imagined conception.

In the expressional arts the artist works from data of earlier experience, but his 'facts' are the words or images that well up in the unconscious; they are the tentative modelling movements in which the sensitive hands of the sculptor or painter objectify their vision. The data are a succession of changing unique organizations each of which depends primarily upon his changing imagined conceptions. The work consists essentially in objectifying moods and slowly defined images.¹⁰

In Harold Rugg's book, Imagination, is a quote from A.E. Housman, "The Nature of Poetry and Art", which I would like to include here:

Having drunk a pint of beer at luncheon (beer is a sedative to the brain, and afternoons are the least intellectual portion of my life) I would go out for a walk of two or three hours. As I went along thinking of nothing in particular, only looking at things around me and following the progress of the seasons, there would flow into my mind, with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza at once, accompanied, not preceded, by a vague notion of the poem which they were destined to form a part of. When I got home I wrote them down, leaving gaps, and hoping that further inspiration might be forthcoming another day. Sometimes it was, if I took my walks in a receptive and expectant frame of mind; but sometimes the poem had to be taken in hand and completed by the brain, which was apt to be a matter of trouble and anxiety, involving trial and disappointment, and sometimes ending in failure.¹¹

The two vital characteristics of the creative process in art involve first an indispensable period of conscious effort and intense concentration followed by an incubation in the unconscious mind resulting in a flash of illumination, accompanied by a feeling of certitude.¹²

The artist's mind must be equipped with all the needed materials with which to think: with that multitude of facts, principles, theories, that might contain the one stimulus to precipitate the new idea. The artist must know a great deal about the right things. Not just know a lot, but know the specially related things required to set off the particular spark. It is conscious preparation by deliberate manipulation of concepts into close juxtaposition that gives the greatest promise of permitting the spark of recognition to be ignited.¹³

In my own work I deal with ideas from many sources built up over a number of years. Sources of ideas and visual images include: the study of history (especially ancient and medieval); anthropology and archeology; literature (especially the poetry of Robert Graves and Samuel Taylor Coleridge plus a great deal of science-fiction and fantasy material); general readings in science (especially astro-physics, astronomy, genetics and related technologies); general readings in philosophy, religions of various cultures and times; psychology and parapsychology (with major concerns about the nature of humanity and our place in the universe); readings on occult topics, witchcraft, magic, numerology and ufology; readings on and experience with psychoreactive agents; continual study of the works of artists past and present; naturalistic experiences; as well as a study of theory and practice of art in a variety of media over a number of years.

I would approach a given painting with various combinations of these concerns plus the more subtle stimuli of day-to-day living with corresponding emotional fluctuations. I also bring, to my painting, skills built up over many years to which new techniques are continually added through the results of experimentation and the utilization of controlled chance.

We have seen in this section of the paper that the creative process in painting can have the following characteristics. First, an intense period of encounter with a subject or idea, Second, a period of incubation in the unconscious mind plus some stimulus which allows a new idea or vision to be born. In addition, the artist must be prepared with stored informations relevant to the creation of art. Finally, artistic creation involves to a large extent the manipulation and understanding of concepts and imagery internally. The internal processes operate on both the conscious and unconscious levels interacting with the particular physical media with which the artist works.

1.2 A Theory Of Plastic Creation - Some Laws and Elements of Painting

A theory of artistic or plastic creation and especially the creative process in painting comes from a number of sources. I will quote a number of sources in this section attempting not to be overly repetitive since writers on this subject will often express the same ideas in different ways. A particular handout from professor D.O. Rogers had influence on my work from the end of my B.F.A. study and into my M.A. program. Because of the length of this handout and because I will be discussing many of the concepts found there in this section and in Part Two of this paper especially in terms of my own work, I will refer the reader to Appendix A. Suffice it to say that, the theory revolves around the concept of the unity of opposites; a unity which results in a harmonious, balanced totality. A wholeness seen in terms of both life and art. When theorizing about artistic creation and discussing "laws" of creation there are apt to be differing points of view between artists. Therefore, I must say that I have quoted particular authors because I found parallels between their ideas and my own which have been strengthened by observations of my own creative processes.

Balance or equilibrium is attained in my works through counteracting forces including the formal, spatial, colour and light unity (see Appendix A - page 114). The achievement of balance is not strictly a rational process but rather it is an intuitive one. A composition is worked and reworked until no further change seems necessary or possible. In my work to be discussed in Part Two we will see that sometimes symmetrical elements are used but most often the balance is achieved while working with inequalities.

Rugg, in discussing form in nature and art, describes the creative process as a forming process and offers three principles which to him characterize the creative process:

The first principle is the principle of unity. The creative task is always the same, whether it be in art, science, or invention: that of reducing miscellany to order.

The second principle is the principle of economy or simplicity. The significant act always tends to seek the simplest possible solution. To find the irreducible minimum, as Louis Danz put it, ' Form is that kind of organization to which nothing can be added and from which nothing can be taken'.

The third principle is stated as the principle of functionality: doing what the situation demands. The creative artist asks of every word in a poem, every line of a drawing, every body gesture in the dance. What is its function? What nuance of meaning is this phrase to convey? What mood is this gesture to evoke? ¹

In Art and Visual Perception - A Psychology of the Creative Eye, Rudolf Arnheim discusses levels of abstraction in form creation:

The patterns that result from limiting representation to just a few features of the object are often simple, regular, and symmetrical.

The theorists of the last century, who were inclined to derive all properties of images from observed aspects of reality, tried to account for this tendency by pointing to regular shapes in nature that man was supposed to have imitated, - the disk of the sun, the symmetrical build of plant, animal and man himself.

More plausibly, we might observe that when by some circumstance the mind is freed from its usual allegiance to the complexities of nature, it will organize shapes in accordance with the tendencies that govern its own functioning. We have much evidence that the principal tendency at work here is toward simplest structure, that is, toward the most regular, symmetrical, geometrical shape attainable under the circumstances.

It should be noted that when the representational features derived from the physical world are few, the artist may develop those few features into an elaborate play of shapes, which may be described variously as geometric, stylized, schematic, or symbolic.²

We have been discussing the principle of unity in artistic creation, which is a directional process towards a state of balance, equilibrium, or harmony and seems to be manifest as a drive to produce order through regularity of form

and compositional structure. This is, of course, derived from a psychological need to reduce chaotic elements into a comprehensible form. There is, however, a contrasting psychological need for stimulation. Rogers refers to this (Appendix A) when he says:

Form and space have both static and dynamic aspects.³

The concept of unity must include the dynamic and stimulatory as well. A painting as a unified whole must be a balance of counteracting forces which produce a fragile tension. From Rudolf Arnheim:

Poetic vision focuses on the dynamics of perception as the carrier of expression. For example, Howard Nemerov writes: ' The painter's eye attends to birth and death together, seeing a single energy momentarily manifest in every form, as in the tree the growing of the tree exploding from the seed not more or less than from the void condensing down and in, summoning sun and rain.'⁴

In my paintings there are found forms which have equivalents in the physical world, such as, the circle, pyramid, organic forms and landscape seen as a type of form. However, my paintings start with a raw canvas which is a unified whole. Need for stimulation not derived from strictly natural sources

leads me to the technique of covering the canvas with drawings, rubbings from different objects and surfaces as well as ambiguous colour images and ambiguous compositional structure. Through the encounter with this ambiguous colour imagery, while looking and making associations between the forms and ideas in my mind, potential compositional arrangements are visualised. This activity of the active imagination is part of the drive towards order, simplicity of form and structure leading to balance and a unified whole. However, while the movement towards simplicity is occurring the alternate aspects of dynamism come into play. In my work this is evident through a complex and subtle layering and mixing of surfaces and colours within larger areas plus a use of rhythmic repetitions of lines, forms and planes. As some aspects of the painting move towards the simplicity of ordered form, other elements work towards the more complex stimulatory function. The end result sought for in each completed painting is a fusion of these two directions to create a unified whole; the total image of the painting is a balance of dynamic tensions within the two-dimensional reality of the picture plane.

The particular direction each painting takes is determined by the continual interaction between my conscious thoughts, in ideas and images, the activities of the unconscious as revealed

by dreams, daydreams and intuitions in combination with the abiguous, chaotic imagery seen in the initial stages of the development of my paintings. The initial random, ambiguous imagery provides not only stimulation to my visual imagination, it also provides the substance and base material to begin the synthesizing process. A work may develop to near-completion but then be radically altered because of some new input or way of seeing the potential finished picture. Many works progress towards a compositional structure relatively early in their developments although surface, details of forms and colour may go through many changes over a long period of time. There is, in my work, a continual interplay between movements toward simplicity of structure through the reduction or elimination of forms, space, colour and atmosphere and toward complexity of surface, form and especially symbolic meaning. The process, we are discussing, which moves towards an active-harmony is not necessarily a straight path. With the addition of new elements into the process, alterations of detail and overall composition may be necessary in the search for the unique balance of the whole that is the potential of each painting.

Having mentioned symbolism in terms of complexity of meaning within balanced structure above, we will now move on to the next section which is a discussion of this topic.

1.3 Universal and Personal Aspects of Symbolic Forms

The dominant forms found in my paintings in Part Two include the landscape as a form, the circle-sphere, the rectangle-box, the square-cube, and triangle-pyramid. These forms have developed partly as compositional structural devices and partly as symbolic forms. The symbolism expressed by these forms has both universal and personal aspects. In my work I have attempted to synthesize the formal aspects of painting with the symbolic aspects of the forms.

The Circle-

The circle is the primordial form which children create.

Circular shapes gradually appear in clouds of zigzag strokes reflecting a development of motor control and hand eye coordination of arms and hands.

The circle with its centric symmetry does not move in one direction, it is the simplest visual pattern.

Objects too far away to reveal their particular outline are perceived as round. As well the perfection of the circular shape attracts attention.

However, once the circular shape emerges in pictorial work, it establishes contact with the similar shape of objects perceived in the environment. Being the most unspecific, universal shape, spheres, disks, and rings figure

predominantly in early models of earth and the universe, not so much on the basis of observation as because unknown shape or unknown spacial relations are represented in the simplest way possible. After a god had separated the heavens, the waters, and dry land from one another, reports Ovid in the *Metamorphosis*, his first care was to shape the earth into a great ball, so that it might be the same in all directions. The circle, being the simplest of all shapes, stands for the totality of all shapes until shape becomes differentiated.¹

The circle form is to be found in the art, architecture, and religions of many different cultures and during many different eras of human history.

In ancient Egypt the circle is seen on the throne of Pharoah Tutankhamen where the sun is represented as a disk with rays which have hands on their ends. This image is symbolic of the sun's life-giving power. The sun was worshipped as the god Ra and for a short period Ra was considered the only god. The circle or disk became a symbol for the god but also a symbol of life energy and consequently life itself.

In Japan the circle also functions as a symbolic form in the Shinto religion. A circular mirror is used to represent the divine sun and this mirror is used in meditation as a means of concentrating spiritual energies to become one with the primal creative force.

In Tibetan Buddhism we see the use of prayer wheels and mandalas which are also used as meditational aides. The mandalas

are composed largely of concentric circular patterns representing the cosmos in relation to its divine powers.

The arts of painting and drawing are practised by Zen Buddhists as a means of meditation. The circle is a strong part of Zen painting; to a Zen master the circle represents enlightenment and symbolizes human perfection.

In Hinduism we find a circular representation of the pantheon of deities. In Hindu theology the many gods and goddesses are different aspects of one supreme being. This theology is expressed visually as a mandala image. The spokes and patterns within the circular mandala are the deities while the circle itself represents the unity of the whole. The circle can also be seen as a symbol for the concept of reincarnation. A pattern of birth-life-death-rebirth... can be seen as a repetitive circular pattern in two-dimensions or as an infinite spiral in three-dimensional terms. The state at which one while dead is at one with the cosmos can also be represented by the circle.

In Neolithic rock engravings are found "sun wheels" before the wheel as a transportation device was invented. They are thought to be symbolic of sun worship; the sun being seen as the source of life energy. Religious or spiritual uses of symbolic circles can be said to be a kind of sympathetic magic;

by drawing the form and praying to it one could invoke its mystical power.

The "medicine wheel" or "sun wheel" of the North American Plains Indians was a religious symbol representing the great spirit as the sun and the personified forces of nature as the "wheel's" spokes. In the artifacts of the Central American Mayan and Aztec Cultures wheels are seen as symbolic forms. Their calendar wheels depicting thousands of years in cryptic drawings and marks, are a symbolic connection to the cosmos and the sun god.

In Christian art we see the use of abstract mandala forms in the rose windows of cathedrals. These windows have been interpreted as representations of man transposed onto the cosmic plane, by followers of Carl Jung. Halos used in representations of Christ and the saints are circles or tilted circles (ellipses) and are symbolic of a "state of grace" or oneness with God.

In the ancient Chinese philosophy we find the concept of the Yin-Yang. The Yin and the Yang are opposite characteristics or natural forces. Unity is achieved by the harmonious pairing of opposites. A common symbol representing this philosophy is the circle divided into two equal areas by a curved line. Often each half is of a different colour, for example, red and black.

In Hindu and Buddhist Yantras the union of opposites is

symbolized by the union of the circle and triangles. The triad symbolizes the union of Shiva and Shakti, the male and female divinities, into a third greater being.

The squared circle of the ancient Greeks stood as a symbol for the union of opposites as it later did for medieval alchemists. This association was often reinforced by the inclusion of a male and a female figure within the circle.

As we will see in my own works, the use of the circle has been prevalent. Often the circle-disk plays the role of a sun, moon or planet and plays a part in the overall composition. The circle in my paintings can have a number of associations at once: a seed or seedpod, an egg cell, the female breast or womb which are life symbols. The circle can be a representation of other worlds, dimensions, potentials. The use of double circles and multiple circles for me symbolizes a multiple concept of the nature of reality, of worlds within worlds, of macrocosm and microcosm. The circle as the most basic geometric form is symbolic of unity, totality or wholeness in my work even while it is fulfilling other roles.

Dr. M. L. Von Franze has explained the circle (or sphere) as a symbol of the self. It expresses the totality of the psyche in all its aspects, including the relationship between man and the whole of nature. Whether the symbol of the circle appears in primitive sun worship or modern religion, in myths or dreams, in the mandalas drawn by Tibetan monks, in the ground plans of cities, or in the spherical concepts of early astronomers, it always points to the single most vital aspect of life, its ultimate wholeness.²

Carl Jung felt that the circle was an archetypal symbol and a universal symbol of the self. He said, for example, that the mass sightings of U. F. O.'s could be explained as a group projection of this archetypal image.

The Square-

The square (and often the rectangle) is a symbol of earthbound matter, of the body and reality.³

The square placed with its sides parallel to the edges of the canvas is a stable form emphasizing the two-dimensionality of the picture plane. Tilted to 60 degrees, it is still a balanced form, but is perceived as a diamond. The rectangle tilted 60 degrees creates an instability, being tilted in relation to the sides of the canvas.

The square and rectangle are used in my paintings generally as parts of a more complex structure. For example, they are used

as bases for temples, as parts of other monumental structures, as boxes, mirrors, windows or time-space portals or movie screens. They are often related to the concept of worlds within worlds; rectangles within rectangles each of which contains an individual landscape and yet which work together to create an overall picture or vision.

The Triangle and Pyramid-

The triangle, with its base parallel to the bottom edge of the picture, is also a solid, stable form; yet it has an upward-pointing or lifting effect as well. Pyramids are to be found in many diverse areas of the world from Egypt, Southeast Asia, to the Americas. These pyramids in their variations of construction, purpose and decoration were created by widely varied cultures in different eras of human history. In Egypt, the pyramids were constructed to be solid, long-lasting tombs for the remains of royalty. They pointed heavenward towards the sun as the source of life. The pyramids can be conceived of as ships taking the souls of the departed and their worldly goods to another world and another life. In Central American cultures, pyramids were most often constructed as bases for temples which were raised heavenward to be closer to the gods. The form of the triangle or pyramid with an eye placed in one side is a

symbol for the all-seeing eye of God (U.S.A. one dollar bill).

In my paintings I have used pyramid-triangles as temple structures, familiar to us through Egypt yet these pyramids seem to be constructed of materials unknown to human builders. These pyramids are alien in nature, they exist in strange, isolated earth landscapes, in other time periods, or on other worlds. My pyramids are often seen in association with one or more circles providing a visual tension. There is a connection between the circle as a symbol of wholeness and the pyramid as a symbol of the striving for harmony and balance. In some paintings we will see pyramids with circular eyes; the all-seeing eye, or as a temple to the sun, moon, god, goddess, and abstract concept of unity as well as being a doorway into other worlds.

Landscape, as a form, in dreams or in art, frequently symbolizes an indefinable mood. The inner light of the landscape reveals inner nature. Landscapes often contain one or more disk shapes, which are symbols of the self and other worlds. Multiple landscapes or multiple forms like the triangle are visual representations of the concept of worlds within worlds.

Part Two will discuss these and other forms as well as the roles of colour, light, atmosphere, space and composition.

2. PART TWO

An Analysis of 28 Works Painted by the Author, 1976 - 1978

Part Two of this paper concerns itself with a detailed analysis of 28 of my paintings which comprised the core of my M.A. Graduate Exhibition of March, 1978. Each analysis will refer to the creative process and image building in my work including the evolution of symbolic forms.

The development of the concept of the unity of opposites and the concept of multiple worlds (macrocosm and microcosm) will also be discussed as an element of the development of symbolic form.

Paintings are discussed in an approximate chronological order and are grouped according to similarity of ideas and developing symbolism.

pencils or wax crayons. During the initial stage of this and most of my other works to follow the choice of colours and materials was in large part arbitrary; I would most often use left over paints already mixed in various viscosities. The initial colours were not those I necessarily 'liked'. Often, however, the thicker paints and any wax rubbings have shown up in the finished work as structural elements or latent images. For example, in 'Search One' the texture in the circular area on the left-hand side of the painting is a result of the first blotting of paint on the raw canvas. Through a process of looking at the ambiguous forms on the picture plane and playing with the various elements, by juggling and manipulating the forms and colours, potential overall images or compositions would begin to develop in my imagination. Each modification of form, colour, space, surface, or atmosphere affects every other element of the painting. At this point intellectual choices began to be made in composition and visual realization of forms. The process of painting is a creative process combining chance effects, intuition and vision, knowledge of materials, skill and decision-making.

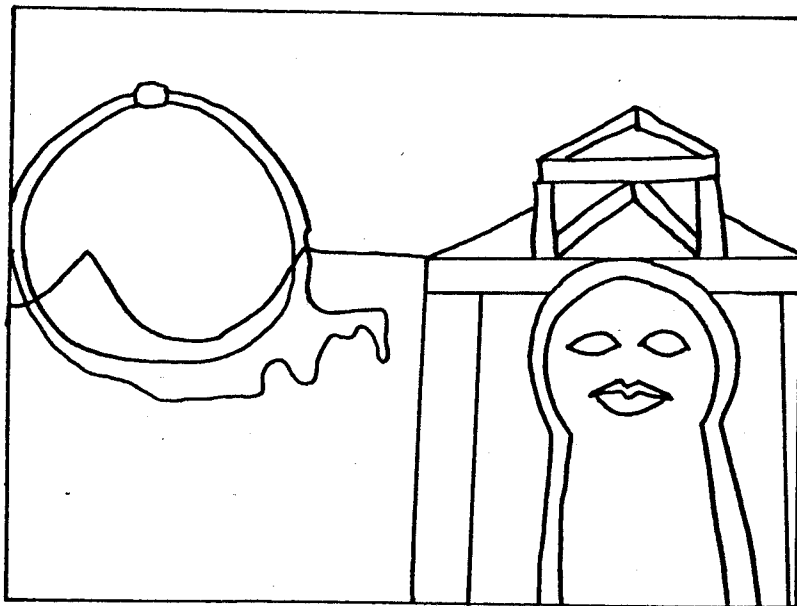


Fig. 2 In process drawing "Search One".

The first area to develop in "Search One" was the circular area on the left-hand side of the picture plane which is like a miniature landscape as seen through a telescope. The fact that this form is circular is itself important, as it relates to an interest of mine in science fiction and particularly a fascination with visualizations of other worlds. The circular form also relates to the idea of a circle as a symbol of completeness, (see Fig. 2).

The visualization of the essential nature of birth-life-death-rebirth as a cyclical process was developed by mankind very early in its history. This idea has had and still has

tremendous meaning for many, varied cultures as a part of religious beliefs and mythologies. The circular concept of totality and unity has a strong meaning for me both intellectually and at an intuitive level and thus circular forms appear in a great many of my paintings. The circular images in 'Search One' and works to follow are representations of other worlds, as worlds within worlds, or worlds, (as images of worlds), overlapping. Even though the small circular landscape is different from the encircling landscape both are connected through a shared horizon line. The miniature world in the circle has nurtured the total landscape of the painting suggesting the concept of mother earth as the nurturer of life. Because of this association I have also thought of the circular world as a womb or egg cell from which life springs. Along the same lines it is also like the female breast which nourishes new life. I can see it as a side view with a nipple at the top as well as a frontal view with the small planet representing a nipple. The idea of worlds within worlds and life from life are closely connected to the concept of the infinite, multiple nature of reality and the use of the circle as a symbolic representation of both the multiplicity of things and of the totality.

The figure on the right-hand side of the painting was the second form to develop. The monolithic, stone statue has a mouth and blank, staring eyes as its only distinguishing features, as we can see in the drawing on page 27. This statue is a representation of death and relates personally to my thoughts about my young brother who had recently died. Along with the development of this image the temple-like structure formed around the figure. This temple structure is in a Greek style and can be thought of as a shrine or as a sepulcher. The temple is composed of rectangular and triangular forms which will be seen developing into symbolic forms in their own right in paintings to follow.

As the concept of birth-life-death-rebirth as a circular concept was in my mind, the stone figure was transformed into a doorway leading into the temple, a symbolic doorway into a new world, a new life or an afterlife. At this stage I collaged a circular planet image into the doorway to represent the circular nature of life and the possibility of a new world or a life after death. Through the doorway floats the transparent, spirit-like figure of a woman. This image ties back to the associations of a nurturing world and woman as the bearer of new life. The figure developed through a number of stages from

a photograph into an etching, then into the painted image. Through these developmental stages, the figure lost its individuality as an image of a specific person and has in this painting, come to represent all women and the female principle. As these changes were being made, there developed a boat-like image on the left side of the picture plane. To me this image is like a gingerbread version of a Viking funerary ship which is carrying the figure on the back of the vessel across the sea to a new life in the afterworld. The figure represents both my brother specifically and all of us who will eventually end our lives in this world.

The space which I have created in this painting is flattened through the use of flat forms, soft, muted, pastel colouring and through a misty atmospheric effect. There is a contrast of soft forms, textures and atmosphere with sharply delineated details within the painting. This treatment creates a dreamy feeling. When recalling a dream sharp details often remain in the waking mind as symbolic images layered in meaning, details surrounded by vague, shifting, mysterious environments.



Fig. 3 'Search Two', (m.m./a/c, 1977, 24½" x 32½", coll. Mr. & Mrs. H. Dickenson).

In 'Search Two' the themes of the continuing search for the meaning to life and the possibilities of what may lie in beyond life on this world and reality is continued. In this work the triangular form and its pyramidal connotations has a strong role. The triangular form came to dominate the composition at an early stage as a conscious compositional and symbolic element. The choice of a triangular image was conscious, firstly because of its association with the ancient Egyptians and their conceptions of the afterworld; secondly, the triangle-pyramid is a very stable form symbolizing strength and longevity as it points upward to the heavens and the sun (Ra) as the source of

life-giving energy; thirdly, I used this equilateral triangle to bisect the picture plane to create two distinct environments, the external landscape and the internal world contained within the pyramid image itself.

The area of the triangle was defined with masking tape, the interior was worked with thick opaque paint and in a wet-in-wet technique to produce an optical texture which is not related to any existing pyramids of human cultures and contains the paradox of a smooth, glassy surface which readily reflects light. The surrounding landscape, in contrast, was painted with thin transparent colours of low intensity to reveal splattered and blotted textural areas underneath. The cloud forms in the sky area, for example, were developed from underlying textures produced from accidental boot prints on the raw canvas.

The idea of the pyramid as being somehow a vehicle to the afterlife is very strong in ancient Egyptian culture and is represented in this painting by a barred doorway within the pyramid. The image which became the door in fact preceded the pyramid form which encloses it. The doorway is a potential portal into another time-space or dimension, it is a barrier and a portal at once which shows something of the afterworld beyond. The double circle above the doorway began as a wax rubbing

to represent the sun in the landscape; here within the pyramid it represents the Egyptian sun god Ra but also the all-seeing eye of God, a symbol which was used on ancient Greek and medieval alchemical talismans and is still in use as a symbol on the emblems of various organizations including the Great Seal of the United States of America.

Collaged in front of the portal I have again used the female figure seen in 'Search One'. In 'Search Two' the female form was cut out from an in-process etching and comes completed with a piece of ground upon which the figure walks. The image as a whole floats within the pyramid and is again representative of the spirit seeking a way into the afterlife, into another dimension, or world beyond this world.

The surface of the pyramid has a surface which is fanciful as I previously mentioned; it is something like molten chocolate with specks of white sugar floating on top. The landscape is a transparent fantasy image, a product of my imagination and is yet another dream-like vision.

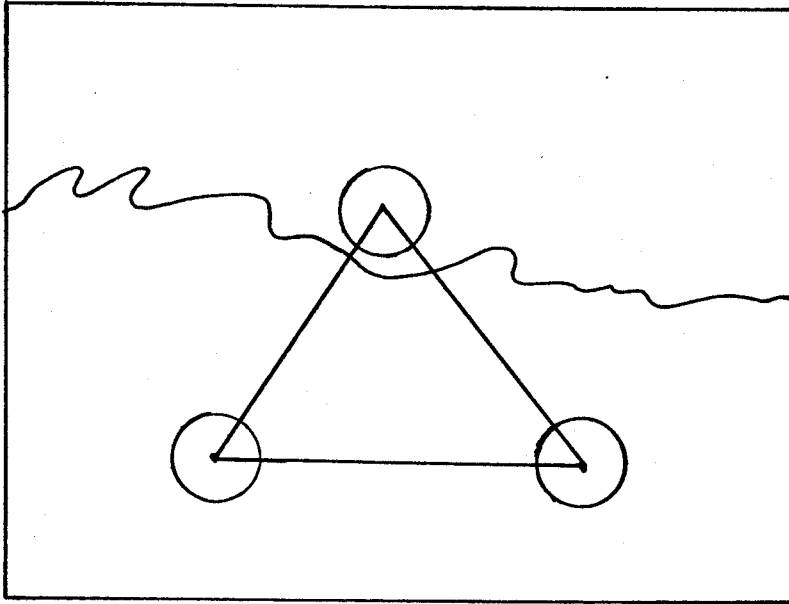


Fig. 4 'Ghost Triangle', (m.m/a/paper, 1977, 18" x22"), drawing.

'Ghost Triangle' follows from the works previously discussed. However, this work is more abstract, more spontaneous and contains fewer symbolic forms than the first four works in this series. The spontaneity of this piece can be seen in the flowing liquid-colours and the ethereal atmosphere. The landscape is dreamlike, the triangle highly transparent, ghostly, the sides drawn with thin lines which connect three equidistant circular planet forms. The entire structure floats within this liquid space and yet it gives a feeling of fragile stability as if it were an island within a sea. Physically the balance of the painting is achieved

because the eye is attracted to the circles which are interconnected by the lines which keep the viewer's attention within the picture plane. 'Ghost Triangle' is itself a symbol of unity, of the balance and harmony of opposites as represented by the soft, flowing pastel colours and ambiguous space combined with the harder, geometrical and definite forms of circles and triangle. The fact that the triangle is transparent, allowing us to see the space beyond, helps to unify the two contrasting elements into the same overall space. This space is essentially flat and it is in harmony with the picture plane which is itself a two-dimensional reality. As an aside on the stabilizing effects of the triangular composition, Raphael and other master painters of the Italian Renaissance used a triangular format extensively to compose human figures within the picture plane. My concern is to explore the triangle both as a compositional device and as a symbolic form.

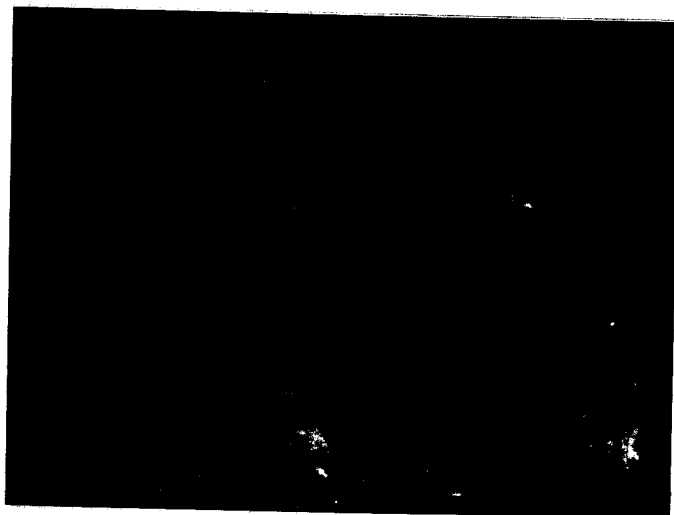


Fig. 5 'Walk Into The Eye In The Sky', (m.m/a/c, 1977, 24"x30", coll Mr. & Mrs. D. Smith).

'Walk Into The Eye In The Sky' deals with themes generated in the previous paintings. This work started as a group of wax rubbings of circles produced from various objects in my studio. The stack of figures on the right, from top down, were produced from a jar lid, the top of a tea tin, and a roll of masking tape; the circular image on the left was produced from a rubbing of an automobile wheel hub. I mention the sources of these rubbings to show that they can play a crucial role in the development of the imagery of the painting. For example, my use of the wheel hub brought two things to mind, first the concept of a wheel as

an energy device and from this images of the North American Indian 'sun wheel' or 'medicine wheel' and the visualization of the ancient Greeks that the sun was the God Apollo moving across the heavens in his golden chariot. As a result of these associations I developed this image as a sun disk-form as a vibrant energy source. To accomplish this aim I used the wavy line around the core circle as a shorthand device as well as to impart a sensation of movement around the circle. I then continued to develop this form by creating an outer ring of contrasting blue and pink to visually stimulate the eye and cause a perception of vibration.

This outer ring has its equivalent in nature in the sun dogs, moon dogs, solar corona and other atmospheric, optical phenomena. This sun image suggested itself to me as the source of life-giving energy, like the God Ra of the ancient Egyptians, and from this association it becomes the all-seeing eye in the sky. I then worked in a large single ray of light which I extended to the bottom edge of the canvas as a triangular form with its apex as the center point of the circle. While painting this energy beam I was still thinking of the Egyptian concepts of an afterworld, the wheel as a transportation device to the afterworld. As various

associations formed in my mind I imagined this beam as a 'stairway to heaven'. To emphasize this symbol I again used the female figure as a spirit form and placed it ascending the stairway into the eye, that is, into the source of life energies. The figure is another variation, a collaged, painted canvas cut out with colour flowing within the form as though it is absorbing energy.

The other forms on the canvas developed in relation to the above ideas. The stick person in a box is a symbol of physical death, the tick tac toe markings represent chance. The stack of circles are variations on the theme of new worlds or realms of existence. They are also like a set of traffic lights, which of course change, and are therefore a symbol for change which is, after all, what life is about.



Fig. 6 'Queen's Chamber', (m.m./a/c, 1977, 24"x36", coll. Mr. M. Levesque).

'Queen's Chamber' is a further development of the Egyptian 'connection' through the use of the triangular-pyramid forms. In this painting I have developed the double triangle, pyramid image. The pyramid structure above ground level is seen from one side while the pyramid below is viewed as a cross section of an underground chamber. In this work, therefore, two worlds, one above, the other below, are depicted and are emphasized by the contrasting treatments of surface and spacial views. Note again the use of an equilateral triangular composition centered within the rectangular picture plane and the stabilizing effect of the

triangles which allowed my use of contrasting loose treatments of colour, surface and atmosphere. The double triangle is also like an arrow pointing heavenward being symbolic of the hope for an afterlife. The two pyramids touch, they are connected first at the apex of the lower triangle and also by a balloon-like form which floats up into the top pyramid. This balloon is joined to the figure in the lower triangle by a thin cord. The circle-sphere of the balloon is a symbol of the self, its total essence or soul, which is connected to the earthly body but seeks to move to the higher plane or afterworld. The figure is like an Egyptian mummy, in this case that of a queen, hence the title 'Queen's Chamber'. This title is a play on the so-called 'King's Chamber' found within the Pyramid of Cheops in Egypt.

The pyramid group at Giza is the only one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World to survive into modern times. Because of this the pyramids of Egypt have long held a fascination for mankind especially from the time of Herodotus who wrote extensive descriptions of them when the Pyramid of Cheops still had its outer covering. The pyramids are still mysterious today; speculation has continued about how they were built, whether they contain within their dimensions mathematical

sécrets and whether they are a source or funnel of cosmic energies. Nevertheless, they are impressive monuments to a belief in immortality. The French writer Chateaubriand defined the functions of the pyramids and the sepulcher within,

the sepulcher is not a boundary marking the end of a day; it is the entrance to life without end. It is a type of door built on the edge of eternity. ¹

The pyramids can also be interpreted as solar monuments to Ra, the Egyptian sun god and the source of energy which makes life on Earth possible. At death the Pharaoh, who was seen as a god-king, would join with Ra to become one with Ra in eternal life.

The Pyramid Texts, hieroglyphs carved in stone columns, in the pyramid of the Pharaoh Unas, were discovered in 1881, and consistently refer to the concept of a divine stairway or ladder to the heavens. The very shape of the Great Pyramids could be taken to suggest the rays of the sun falling from the sky. ²

There is, as far as I am aware, only one pyramid found in the Americas which was used as a tomb although many served as temples to the sun, the moon or other deities. This pyramid

is found at Palenque, an ancient 6th century Mayan city in Yucatan. The city was abandoned for no apparent reasons hundreds of years before the Spanish Conquest of the region. Inside this temple-pyramid was discovered a burial chamber and a carved stone sarcophagus of the great king, Pacal, who ruled the region from AD 615 to AD 683. Within the chamber were found the remains of the king who was wearing a mask of jade. The rest of the body was still covered with amulets, bracelets and gold and silver chains. Pyramids and burial mounds of ancient civilizations are to be found in a great variety of locations around the globe; these are definitely connected to widespread beliefs in some sort of continued life after physical death occurs on Earth.

My paintings and the associations I have described to this point are my own, although I had read generally on the pyramids and the general ideas were doubtless in my mind from the various readings, the quotes which I have chosen above are from a recent addition to my readings and came to my attention after the works discussed in this thesis were completed. I have used these quotes because they so closely resemble the thoughts and ideas and resulting symbolic imageries in my paintings.



Fig. 7 'Sometimes Strange Visions' (m.m./a/c, 1977, 25"x36½")

'Sometimes Strange Visions' continues with ideas like those discussed on the preceding pages. This work and the preceding paintings in fact overlap to an extent since several of them were in process over the same period of time; hence, they influenced each other and are in a sense variations on a theme. 'Sometimes Strange Visions' developed first as non-objective imagery consisting of thin overlays of colour, other colours blotted from the floor and several frottaged shapes. The initial wax rubbings were from a water faucet tap, (the flower shapes contained within

the large circle on the right), the wide side of an automobile hub, (the large double circular form on the right), and the faucet and the top of a tea tin in combination, (the flower, circle, square in the left foreground). At this stage in the painting the flower shapes can be viewed as seeds in a pod drifting within the colour field, (see Fig. 8).

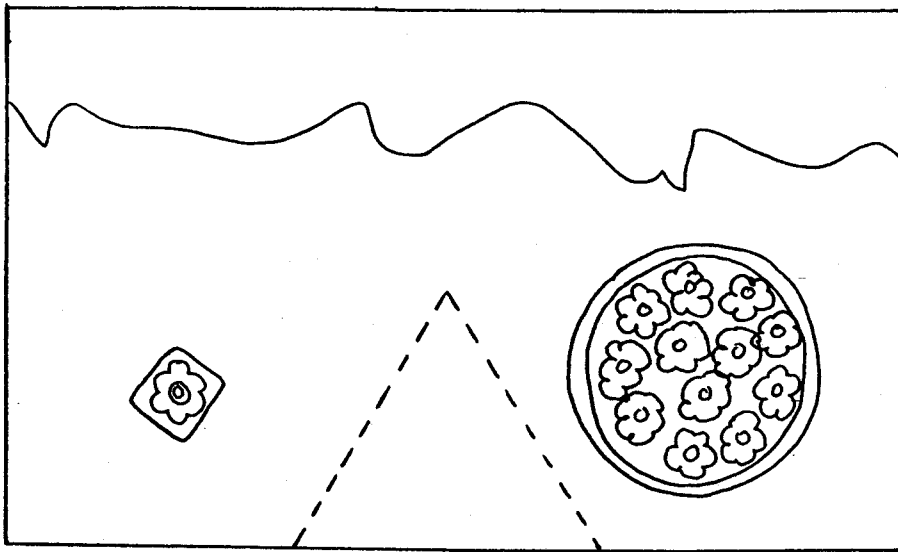


Fig. 8 In-process drawing 'Sometimes Strange Visions'.

In developing this metaphor two things took place: first, the circle and the box forms were extended to the bottom of the picture plane rooting into the landscape, (see Fig. 9).

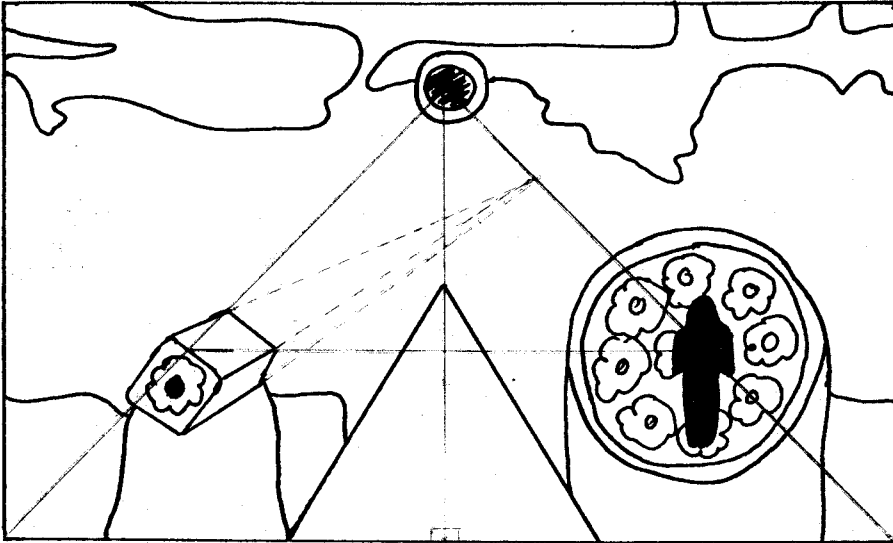


Fig. 9 Analytical drawing, 'Sometimes Strange Visions'.

The colour field was now defined as a sky area. Within this landscape I consciously constructed a central pyramid shape with its base on the bottom edge of the picture plane. Along with this shape I did a rubbing to produce the sun-circle directly above the pyramid in the sky area. The sun-circle is a symbol of totality and unity and of life energy. This circle now provides an apex for an imagined triangle which has the box and large circular form as its bottom corners. This imagined triangular form reiterates and reinforces the actual triangle of the pyramid and completes a double, arrow-like triangular form pointing toward the

heavens. All these forms are in fact contained within the imagined triangle, which has the sun at its apex and the bottom edge of the canvas as its base, providing a stable compositional design within which various forms are developed. I also drew the box in linear perspective using as the vanishing point a point on the imaginary line which connects the sun-circle and the bottom right corner of the picture thus creating two effects. Firstly, it helps reinforce the overall imagined triangle, and secondly, it suggests a three-dimensional effect whereby we can imagine the sun-circle to be back in space by implying a triangular plane tilted back. The intent of this compositional device is not to create an illusion of three dimensions but only a paradoxical suggestion of three dimensions, to contrast with the flat two-dimensional treatment of the forms and dreamlike space. To help restrain the sun-circle from retreating into deep space it is depicted as a flat shape which is in turn connected to the edge of the canvas producing a frontal effect.

The use of a stable triangular composition combined with a suggestion of three-dimensional space, plus the use of flat organic and geometric forms, soft atmospheric space and soft-edge forms that contrast with hard-edge forms

creates a balanced tension. It is as if a dream image was frozen in midstream. In one sense the painting is about circles, rectangles, triangles and organic landscape. These basic pictorial elements are used, however, to help create in the painting a feeling that the total environment of the painting is removed one step from the external realities of our world; moving the viewers of the painting into their own imaginary worlds of vision. The dreamlike nature of the content of the painting is emphasized by the strange spacial relationships, and by the object images which developed as an interplay between the paint and my imagination. These objects have their symbolic interpretations as do dream images. This painting as do many of my other works, is an interface between the external, physical realities of our world such as paint and light and the internal realities of dream and imagination which is reflected in the symbolic content and fantasy emphasis of the total image.

The final stage of this work included the addition of a spirit-like figure within the world of the 'seed pod' as a representation of the potential for new life. The figure is like an embryo within the womb. Also, I gave a flowing textured surface to the triangle-pyramid to further remove it from any earthbound models. The box-like form incorporates the

circle, the square, the rectangle, the pyramid form, illusionistic three-dimensional space and flat, two-dimensional space simultaneously. This form is a synthesis and symbolically, in homage, it is mounted high on a pedestal of rock representing nature. It sits next to the pyramid which represents all that is man-made or transformed by a creative intelligence. The pyramid is itself beside the organic 'pod' which is itself a monument to life. Together these objects form a triumverate of monuments.

'Sometimes Strange Visions' is the last work to be discussed from the first group of paintings. The works that follow do not utilize the female figure seen in the previous paintings. The works which follow are evolutions of the ideas generated in the paintings already discussed. Most of the works that follow are primarily fantasy landscapes, worlds of the imagination which involve less of the personally symbolic and more of the universally symbolic elements mentioned at the end of part one of this paper. Many of the paintings are involved with the circle-sphere, the triangle-pyramid and imaginary landscape forms which evolved from the first group of paintings. Another difference manifest in some of the paintings to follow is the addition of humorous intent.

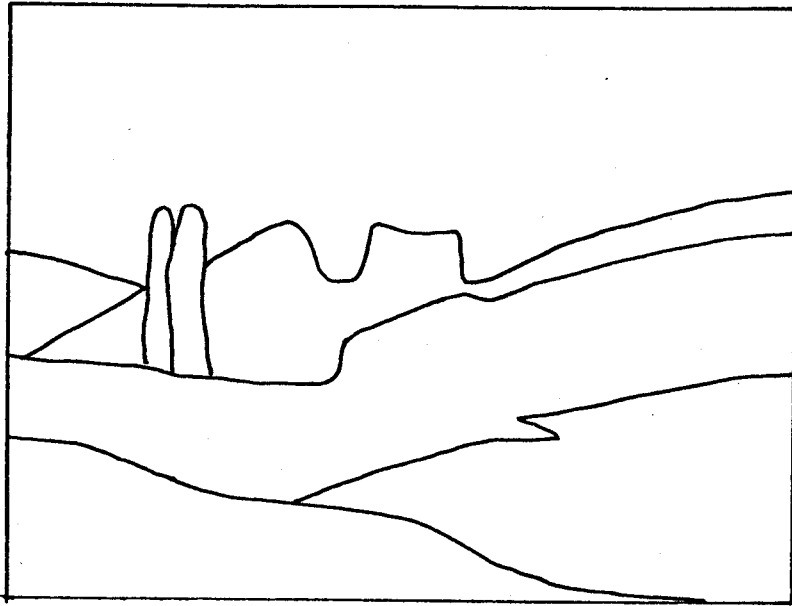


Fig. 10 'Mountain People', (m.m./a/canvas, 1977, 18"x24", coll. E. Thorson).

'Mountain People' is a small fantasy landscape related loosely to Norse myths of the storm giants. A landscape image quickly developed through the use of overlapping colours scraped across the surface which provoked in me a visual impression of a rocky, mountain landscape. Within this landscape there was a vertical swash of colour which made me think of the mountain giants of myth. I developed this colour patch into two interlocking figures. These figures do not have distinct features, but only a general human form; they are like stone statues which have been weathered away

by the elements over eons. I related these figures in my mind to a mythological story of the Norse which had the giants transformed into rock by the elder gods for some transgression. They are an enchanted couple who must stand in their mountain domain until the end of time, until the Ragnarok of the Norse Myths, until the giants and gods do final battle. The landscape is neutral to cold in colouration while the figures have a warm colouration, suggesting that some life or spirit remains trapped in the stone only to reawaken at the appointed hour. This picture of enchantment is enhanced by the use of pastel colours combined with a misty atmosphere.



Fig. 11 'Landscape Within', (m.m./a/c, 1977, 18"x24").

'Landscape Within' is another small scale painting. This work is a double fantasy landscape the smaller of which is collaged over the larger. As a real landscape can appear very different to us depending on time of day, season or atmospheric conditions, so too can an imagined landscape go through changes. This painting is constructed as two views of the same landscape within the same picture plane. Both landscapes are derived from loose applications of paint squeegeed onto the canvas and both have planet-circles purposely placed within the sky areas. They are of a different colouration, the larger tending towards the cool

the smaller consisting of warmer colours. However, both are unified on the same picture plane. The smaller landscape is like the larger one but is like a view from much further back, as the internal scale indicates. It depicts a different season or time of day as indicated by the colouration. The horizon of the smaller landscape continues on into the larger on the right hand side but is shifted on the left-hand side which implies both a connection and a difference between the two. This painting itself is a symbol for a multiple conception of reality. Reality in a physical landscape is not simply its appearance at one specific time but rather is a synthesis of all its ways of appearing. Both landscapes then are different segments of the 'reality' of this imagined landscape which I have attempted to synthesize pictorially as one vision. Another way to think of this work is to imagine that one took a polaroid photograph of this landscape on a misty day in the summer (this would comprise the small landscape); the large landscape could then be conceived as being a photograph of the landscape on a misty day in the winter with the small polaroid shot suspended in front of the lens. The lens is now a zoom lens which has changed the

relative scale of the landforms and the planet disk and produces a multiple vision of the 'same landscape'. This painting is then an attempt to explore a pictorial way of representing a multiple changing view of reality even though the subject matter here is an imagined landscape. This idea will reappear in some of the works to follow.

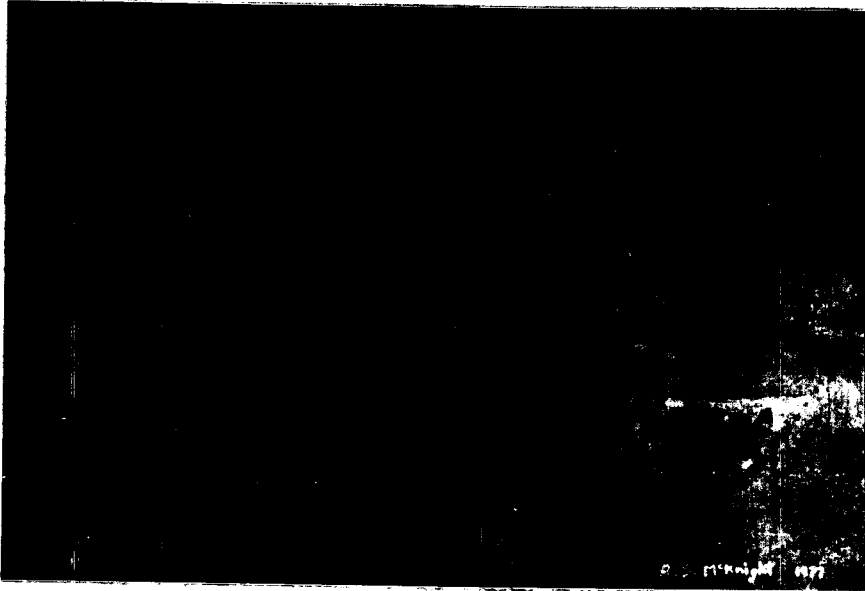


Fig. 12 'Night Vision' (m.m./a/c, 1977, 24"x36").

'Night Vision' is a somewhat whimsical painting of a dreamlike fantasy landscape. The landscape is built up of layers of transparent colours stained colours and opaque colour forms applied with brushes and a blotting technique. These ambiguous forms have been treated in two ways. Some of the forms have been allowed to remain ambiguous, while others have been defined into prehistoric fish-like and amoeba-like animals suggested by my imagination. These forms swim within the semi-transparent flowing colours. The browns, golds and ochre colours used here are earth colours but are handled in an aqueous or atmospheric

manner. This treatment stems from an attempt to create a dreamlike space. The landscape is a cut-away view of a riverbank showing the layers of conglomerate including fossilized creatures.

Among the ambiguous shapes in the painting were three brush marks which suggested smiling teeth like those we see on posters in the dentist's office and these I defined as such. While depicting these 'fossilized' teeth I noticed that the horizon line of the land form reminded me of a face. In the same way we can see faces in weathered formations in rock. If one turns the painting on its side the face in the landscape becomes clear.

The aspect of layering has a double meaning, one being the relationship to the layers found in natural formations, the other relating to the physical layering of paint. They are both products of layering through time. That is, the painting itself is a layering through time as is a natural silt formation.

So also the human consciousness is layered through time. From waking state, through various meditation states, to subconscious dream states, our own minds are in a sense parallels

of nature, microcosmic worlds within a macrocosmic world. The misty treatment of atmosphere is again suggestive of a dream state. The collaged fantasy planet is at once a symbol of the worlds of dream and at the same time a symbol of totality. 'The mind's eye' is the microcosm which reflects the macrocosm. This painting is both outward and inward looking and could as easily have been titled 'McKnight Vision' as it was 'Night Vision'.

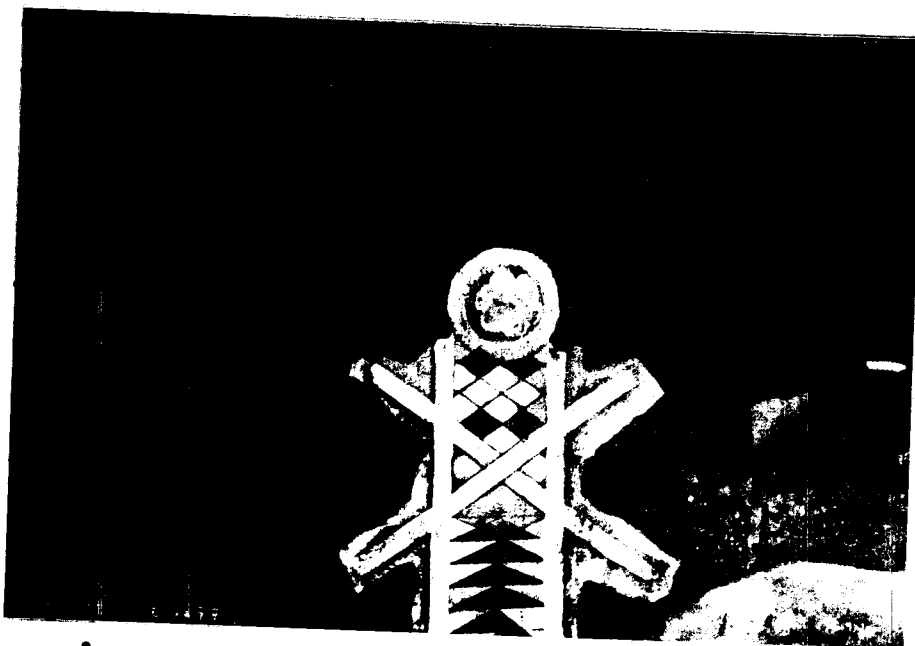


Fig. 13 'Space Ace 77', (m.m./a/canvas, 1977, 24"x36³/₄").

'Space Ace' is a painting which developed more in a science fiction direction than in a dreamlike vein. This work started, as many others, as layers of blotted paint. After the first layer of paint was applied I consciously used the double circle with the flower shape enclosed within it with the idea of using it as a planet or moon. At the same point in the painting I decided to make a grid structure which I did by using masking tape as a resist to the next layers of paint. The light blue blotted texture of the underpainting was then changed to the mottled yellow green seen surrounding the grid structure. At this

stage I began to integrate the circle and the grid structure together in one object form. I now began to think of it in terms of a space probe not one from earth but rather as one from another planet. The grid was developed into the body of the craft with its own internal grid structure based on triangles and diamonds. The circle I now envisioned as the eye of the craft. I then developed a surrounding landscape in blue leaving an aura-like shape on the left. Because of this association I then painted in the pyramid shape on the right which gives the 'Space Ace' an earth-like landscape to explore. The atmosphere is again misty. The landscape is a night environment in which the mechanical, yet living, craft sits.



Fig. 14 'Cosmic Chicken', (m.m./a/canvas, 1977, 24"x36", coll. Mr. W. Palchinski).

'Cosmic Chicken' began as a large paint blot in the center of the canvas. The canvas was folded to create a roughly symmetrical image. This shape suggested the image of a chicken which I developed through the delineation of the edges and the enhancement of colour areas creating the eyes and beak. The beak and eyes formed an inverted triangle so I decided to play with the triangle as a means of composing the picture. As can be seen in Fig. 15, I placed two triangle-pyramids on the horizon, another plus a circle collaged within the jowls of the chicken and a central triangle-pyramid in the foreground. These forms create an imaginary inverted triangle

The flower-circle within the square is again like the all-seeing eye mentioned previously. The other circles including the eyes are planets or multiple worlds and are in fact collaged elements, literally alien to the painted canvas as a whole. The triangle-pyramids are references to earth history and 'cosmic mysticism'. The nine main forms are a play on numerology, there being three angles in a triangle and three main invisible triangles forming the composition. The 'cosmic chicken' is not only bound within the compositional format but also floats up out of the painting like a mirage or the illusionary face of the 'Wizard of Oz'.

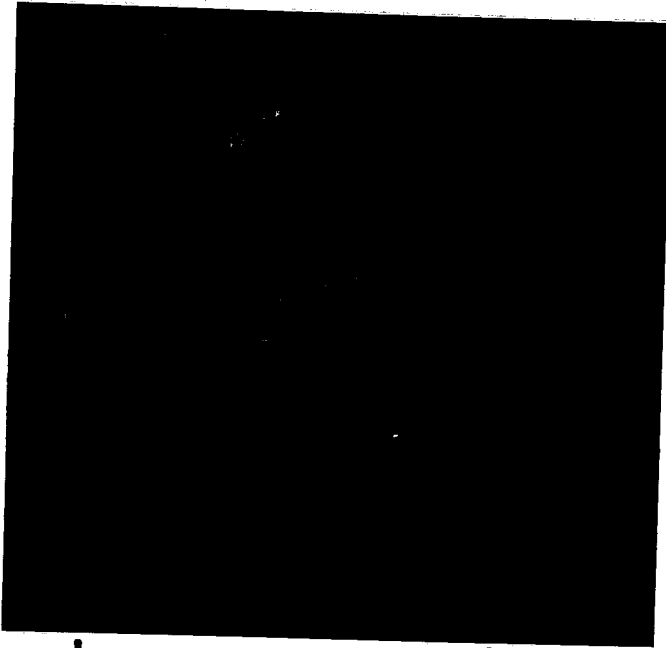


Fig. 16 'Peer-amid-the-Wastes', (acrylic/c, 54"x60", 1977).

'Peer-amid-the-Wastes', as a title, is a pun. On the one hand it refers to visions or mirages we may see when peering into a desert or waste land. On the other hand it is a painting of a pyramid set in a barren landscape. The process of painting this picture was very much like seeing a mirage since the more I looked into the layers of blotted and stained colour the more the landforms and pyramid formed in my mind. The pyramid-triangle was such a dominant suggestion that I taped out the edges and painted over the surrounding area which became the range of hills. Edges of the blotted colour forms defined the horizon line. The night sky was then

painted in leaving the double-ringed moon form.

The pyramid form is used almost universally on earth in a variety of cultures. The triangle is a basic geometric shape that can be found in almost every type of architectural style. In mathematics and geometry the triangle is a basic form, the equilateral triangle is the most stable of forms. Physically and pictorially the pyramid is incredibly solid. The manner in which I have used it adds to its stability since the base of the triangle-pyramid is parallel to the bottom edge of the picture plane. Having stated the above I think it can easily be visualized that alien beings, if they were builders like ourselves, might use the triangle-pyramid structure along with the rectangle-cube and the circle-sphere.

When viewing what I term pyramids in this and following works it should be kept in mind that pyramid is my interpretation of the flat triangle-shape since for me it is the basic form. As well as being like a pyramid seen from one side, the triangle could as easily be a conic structure seen under very flat lighting conditions. This ambiguity I believe adds a sense of mystery, dream or other-worldliness to this painting and other works which follow.

The treatment of the pyramid in this painting adds to the alien feeling, its flowing blue, pink and black colours are more like molten rivers of rock (or paint) than the blocks of granite marble, sandstone or brick, from which earth pyramids have been constructed. The colouration is towards the cool; the landscape is barren; no life forms exist here, not even plants, only the abandoned monumental, mysterious remains of some intelligence.

The circle-disk floating in the sky area is another of the infinite worlds of possibility seen from afar. With each painting there is always the hint of another vision, another world of imagination to explore. Each planet is a stepping stone to the next on the search for knowledge and truth.

'Peer-amid-the-Wastes' and many of the works to follow show the influence of science fiction, especially stories about the exploration of other worlds and contact with alien intelligences. One of my fantasies as a child was to someday become an archaeologist on other worlds. Through imagination I can explore other worlds in my paintings.

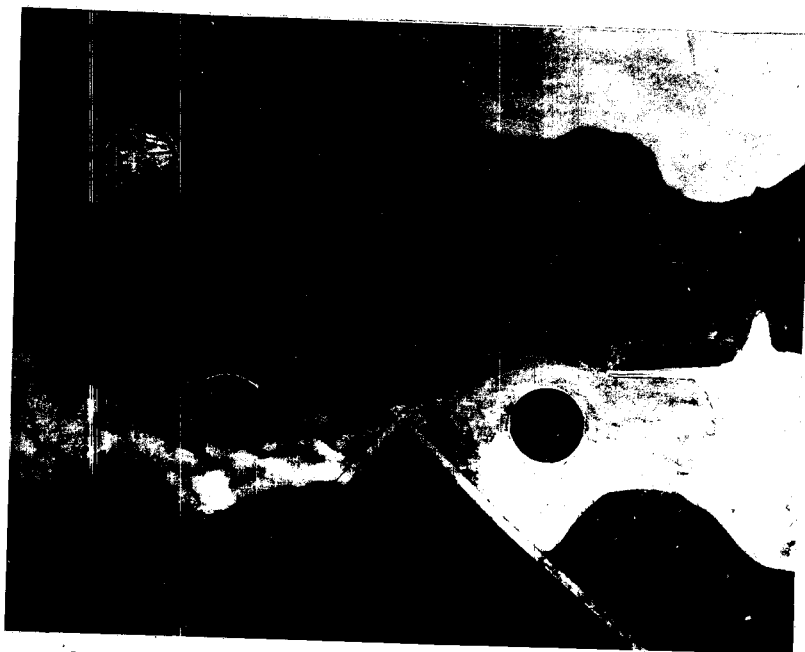


Fig. 17 'Cold Lake', (m.m./a/c, 1977 42"x54").

'Cold Lake' and 'Cold Lake II' are two paintings dealing with fantasy mountain landscapes. The landscape forms in both of these works came from a combination blot, stain and paint splattering techniques. They are closely related works since the mid and background landforms in 'Cold Lake II' were created by blotting those areas from wet paint in 'Cold Lake' thereby producing a mirror image. The landscapes are of imagined mountains and hills which surround a central lake.

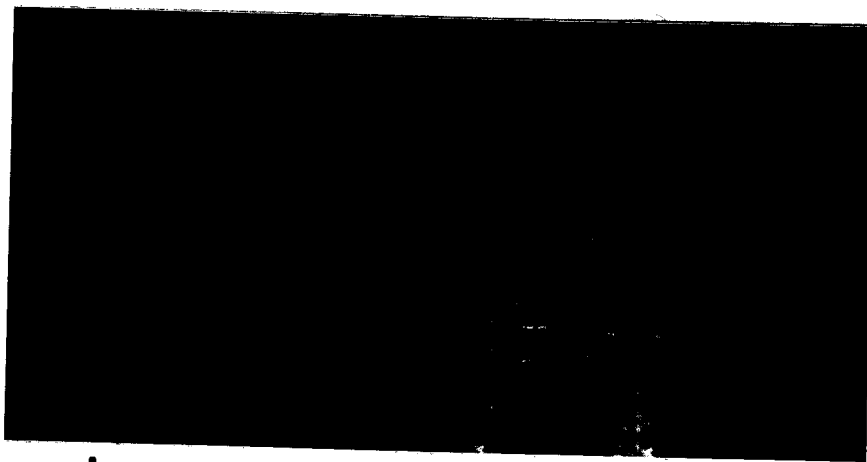


Fig. 18 'Cold Lake II' (m.m./a/c, 1977, 30"x60").

In 'Cold Lake' I used the triangle-pyramid as a central, stable form, its base on the bottom edge of the picture plane as seen in 'Sometimes Strange Visions'. The hard-edged, equilateral, glassy-black pyramid contrasts with the organic forms of the landscape which are treated in a misty-mystical fashion. Anyone who has seen the mists rise from a cold mountain lake in early morning will recognize the strange, other-worldly atmosphere I have attempted to portray. The pyramid is again like none built by human hands. It is edged by a contrasting white border which I conceived as an aura or energy field. Within the sky area of the painting is collaged a planet-disk which is like no moon of earth. It is another alien visitor. A small planet-disk is collaged into the far mountain range. This forms the apex of an imagined

triangle with the two larger disks in the lake area forming the base, (Fig. 19).

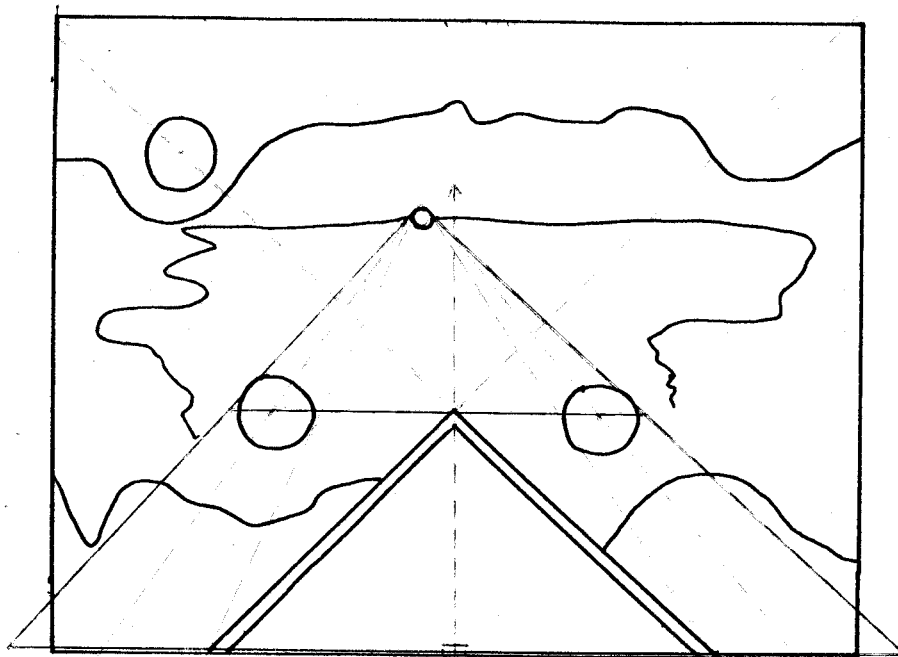


Fig 19 Analytical drawing, 'Cold Lake'

This invisible triangle is balanced on the tip of the painted pyramid and if lines are extended to bottom edge of the canvas a triangle is formed which encloses the painted pyramid producing a triple-triangular compositional device. This triangular design not only reinforces the flat shape of the painted image but also provides a paradoxical movement back into space from the glossy frontal pyramid, which would like to float off the surface of the canvas, back to the small

circle, which almost merges into the background mountain range. The normal visual response to a landscape, even one such as this which is composed of flat planes, is to see depth. My aim was to use this effect but to also contradict it by emphasizing the flat planes and by using the flattening effect of misty atmosphere to create a magical, dreamlike environment, an other-worldly space of the mind. Adding to this effect is the contradiction imposed by the collaged circles in the lake area. One such disk could be seen as a reflection off water or an inverted air layer of the planet image in the sky. Two reflections of the same object is not likely. Therefore, I think of the lake area as also another sky area. This adds to the optical paradox, suggesting symbolically the multiple concept of reality.

The content of 'Cold Lake II' is simpler than 'Cold Lake' but is also a dreamlike fantasy landscape. Instead of a pyramid form emerging in the central foreground, a pseudo-Greek temple structure emerges in the foreground off to one side. We can see part of the lake through the doorway creating a feeling similar to Japanese lake shrines. This landscape is more earthly in feeling than 'Cold Lake'. Similar images could be derived from actual ruins in the Mediterranean area. Yet this image is still dreamlike in its feeling.

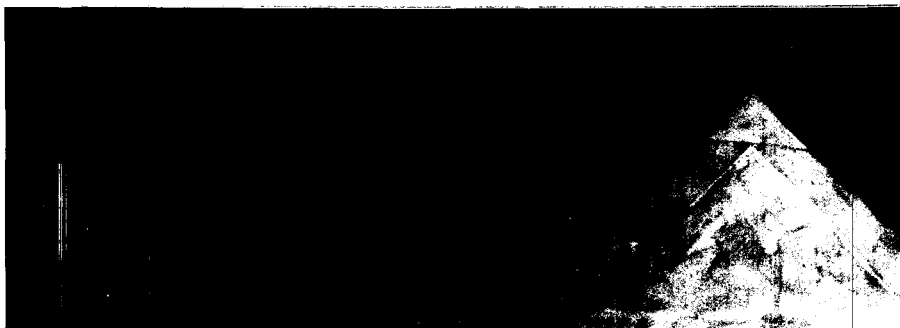


Fig. 20 'Egyptian Trip', (m.m./a/c, 1977, 21"x60", coll. University of Saskatchewan)

The title 'Egyptian Trip' relates not to an actual trip to Egypt but rather to a journey of the imagination. Although this work is a mental trip to Egypt it is a fantasy. The cut-off pyramid to the left is opaque but the pyramid on the right is semi-transparent and is in fact, a double-pyramid. It is a semi-transparent pyramid with a semi-transparent aura through which the backing landscape can be seen. This work is composed, not with a central triangular format, but rather with a center left open. In this work there are two cut-off pyramids set to the sides, an off-centered landscape and moon-circle that combine to achieve a compositional balance. The view is like a snapshot taken without centering a main object-form. In this case it is a mental snapshot of the dream. The

actual effects of the painting technique are similar to the works previously discussed in the relationships between hard and soft edges, cool and warm colours and the glowing pyramids through which a misty atmosphere drifts.

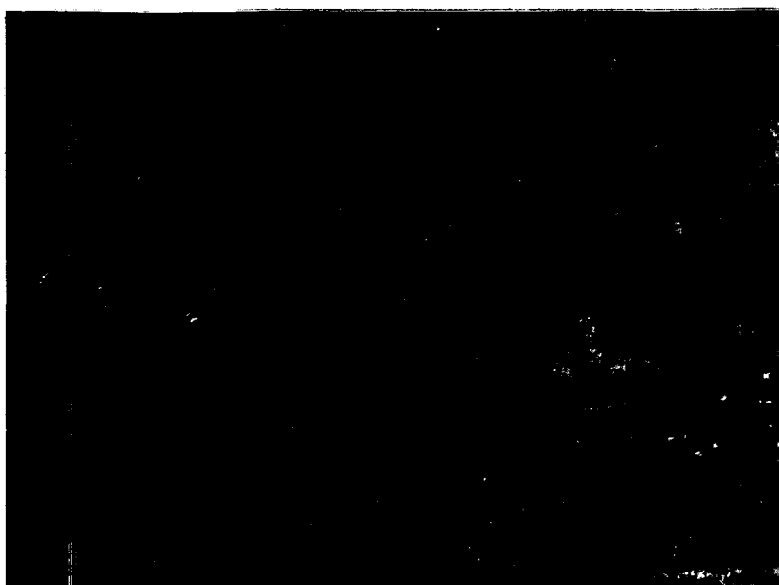


Fig. 21 'Misty Planet Morning', (m.m./a/c, 1977, 22½"x30")

'Misty Planet Morning' is a single-image, fantasy landscape. As the title suggests it is a misty landscape in which a painted planet drifts in a star-filled sky. The sky and hills glow with internal light, and the ghostly image of the inverted truncated pyramid. This could be an earthly landscape. 'Misty Planet Morning' is an expression of feeling

rather than a specific place. This work is interesting in its development because it was literally flipped over many times before being completed. The inverted pyramid which now hangs in the sky like a vision was at one stage a part of the ground.



Fig. 22 'Worlds Within', (m.m/a/c, 1977, 50"x50")

'Worlds Within' is the last work completed in 1977.

'Worlds Within' developed as a relatively complicated landscape vision and so deserves a detailed analysis.

'Worlds Within' is a triple landscape composition. The small internal landscape, (see Fig. 23), is painted onto a

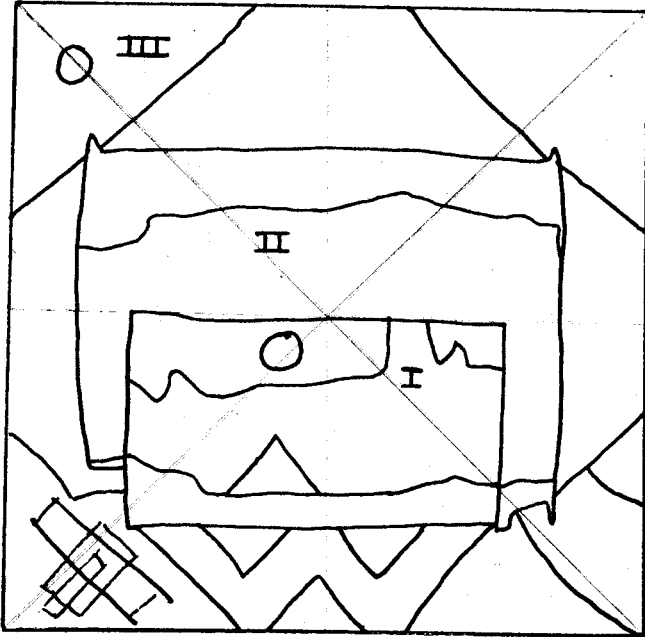


Fig. 23 Analytical drawing, 'Worlds Within'.

piece of canvas which has been collaged onto the large canvas. This small landscape overlaps the rectangular area immediately behind it into which another landscape has been painted. Finally, this second landscape is bounded by four, semi-transparent, triangular, petal-like shapes which lead into the third and overall landscape format.

This painting began with the large piece of canvas stretched over a drawing board the size of the middle landscape. During the painting process, some of the colour would bleed around the edges into the folded canvas at the back. I developed this effect by actually painting the back as well as

the front. At this stage I removed the canvas from the drawing board, unfolding it to reveal the triangular petal-like areas with blended colours moving from the internal landscape to the edges of the large canvas.

The resulting image fits into an overall X-shaped, compositional format or one composed of four triangular divisions of the picture plane. This static format allows for dynamic, visual action within the canvas as is seen with the many angular lines and multiple object forms in the completed work. The multiplication of forms in this painting, (triangles, rectangles, circles and the landscape as a form), are mutually reinforcing, helping to unite the complex image together as a whole. Colours are worked into each area, overlapping or blending into adjacent areas, strengthening the whole image which is one of multiple landscapes or worlds. By concentrating the light, warm colours in the central areas and bounding them by darker areas around the edge of the canvas the eye is also kept from straying off the canvas. Balance is aided through a contrast of warm-cool, hard-soft edges, clear and misty atmosphere. In short, there are a great many objects and lines which encourage an energetic eye movement within this composition but attention always returns

to the center of the image.

Paradox plays a part in this piece not only because of the multiplicity of vision but also because the deepest illusionistic space is created in the small, rectangular landscape which is actually collaged onto the surface of the large picture plane.

'Worlds Within' is the last painting I completed in 1977 to be discussed in this paper. The next group of works evolves many of the ideas originating and partially explored in the paintings already discussed, although they are characterized in general by the single-image fantasy landscape and a development of the triangle-pyramid more as an object than as an obvious compositional device. There are exceptions to this statement. For example, the work 'Stable-Mid' uses the object triangle-pyramid as a dominant compositional device while the painting 'Beyond Kadath' which is the last painting to be discussed in this paper returns to a complex multiple-landscape format.



Fig. 24 'New Horizons', (m.m./a/c, 1978, 24"x38").

'New Horizons' is a good example of a painting which has undergone a reversal of earth and sky during its development. Notice in the in-process photograph (Fig. 25) that the sky has become the misty foreground area in the finished work, while the ground area, in which we can see neolithic Stonehenge monuments, has reversed to become the sky area in the finished painting, (Fig. 24). Notice also that the moon-form in the sky area of the in-process stage remains in the mist area of the foreground of the finished painting. The finished sky area has been built up into a cloud-like textural surface which is very similar to the original sky area seen in the in-process photo. 'New Horizons', as a title, is therefore

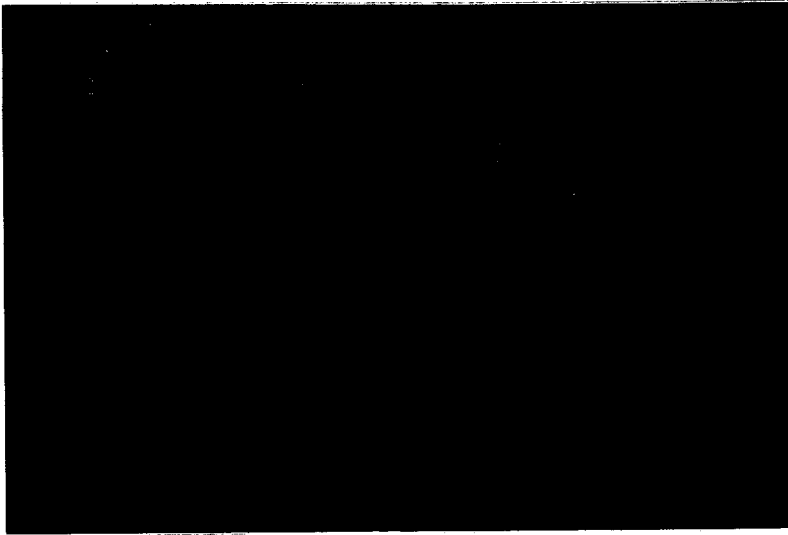


Fig. 25 In-Process Photograph, 'New Horizons'.

a play on the fact that this work went through a reversal process. Yves Tanguy, (1900 - 1955), a major Surrealist painter, sometimes painted his pictures upside down, then reversed them to be finished. This was his way to keep the creative process out of the conscious mind and to allow the subconscious mind to find the imagery. In 'New Horizons' I have done something similar, having started with a definite composition of megalithic monuments in a landscape. I then turned the painting upside down, stimulating my imagination to develop a new landscape image. A form such as the transparent coloured fog with its own moon drifting across the

foreground would not have developed otherwise.

Conscious choice had a role in this painting as well. For example, I decided to duplicate the textural effect for the new sky area as well as to make a decision to develop the foreground space with the aid of three triangle-pyramid forms. These pyramids are arranged to form a 'V' leading back into space. This is similar to the arrangement of pyramids in 'Cosmic Chicken'. The retreat into space is contained, however, as the eye meets first the fog and then the range of hills. Even though the colouring of this painting is 'earthly', the pastel, misty atmosphere plus the incongruous element of the moon in the foreground combine to make 'New Horizons' a dreamy landscape.

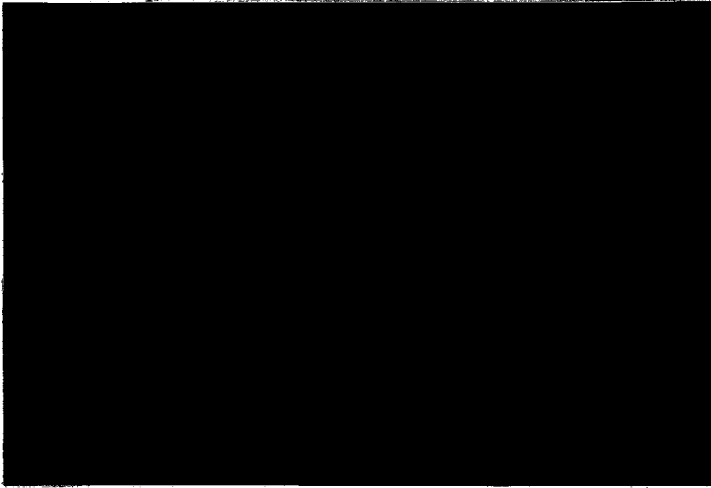


Fig. 26 'Mountain Temple', (m.m/a/canvas, 1978, 24"x36"
Coll. Saskatchewan Government Insurance).

'Mountain Temple' is a work in which the triangle-pyramid has become a temple. The temple is set in a high, isolated mountain range. The mountains are desolate and show signs of great age, being weathered and softened by the harsh environment. A snow storm rages in these barren peaks adding to a feeling of isolation. The temple is like a cross between a Tibetan Monastery and some ancient observatory.

In figure 27 we can see an intermediate stage in the painting's development. It shows the underlying forms of temple structure and landscape and displays blotting and spraying effect from which the landscape forms developed.



Fig. 27 In-process photograph, 'Mountain Temple'

This photograph also clearly shows the graphic elements of the temple structure. The temple base is composed of a drawn grid into which abstract markings have been etched in pencil. The pyramid itself consists of an open triangle which is semi-transparent. In this form are markings forming an alien script resembling runes. The pyramid image is an ambiguous double triangle.

In the painting's final version the temple structure has been solidified somewhat but has been heavily varnished to produce a glass-like surface through which we can still see the cryptographic symbols.

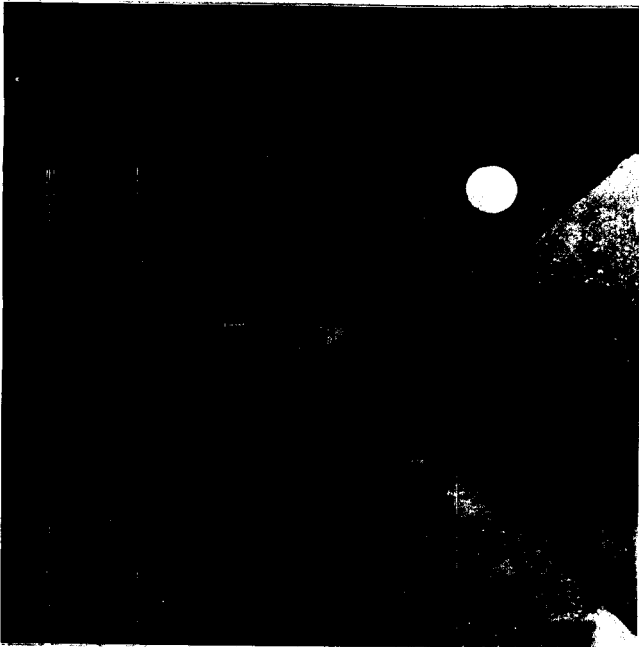
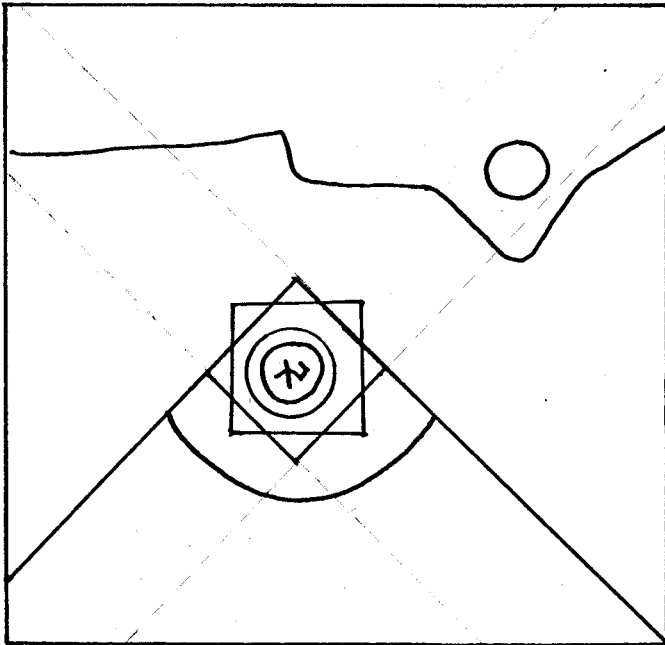


Fig. 28 'Ixland' (m.m./a/canvas, 1978, 44"x44").

The imagery in 'Ixland' developed from the familiar blotting, staining and marking techniques which I have previously described. In this painting, however, it was not the landscape which developed first. In this case the imagery developed from a double circle, crayon rubbing at the top of the pyramid, (Fig. 29). Around the circle I drew in two overlapping boxes to form a star-like or diamond-like crystal structure. Each box individually can be thought of also as top views of a pyramid. Using the circle as a center I also drew a larger concentric circle around the whole form. Into the circle I inserted a calligraphic mark which relates back to



Fif. 29 Analytical drawing, 'Ixland'.

the cryptic hieroglyphs in 'Mountain Temple'. From the edges of the crystal shape I extended the lines to form the pyramid completing a form that expands from the center of the circle. The pyramid can be seen as, possibly, just the tip of yet another crystal form which is an interpretation relating to the multiple worlds theme. Both the circular and crystal forms are reminiscent of eastern mandalas used in meditation. The notion of a crystal developing into the pyramid comes from thinking about their similarities of structure as well as thinking about the idea of worlds within worlds. I was also thinking about the Mayans who constructed pyramids with

temples on top and who created objects such as the crystal skull. I treated the pyramid like a flawed crystal, building up semi-transparent layers of colour and calligraphic marks and finishing it in a high glaze to achieve the glassy transparent surface encouraging perception of colour depth. The landscape then developed around the pyramid, providing contrasts of surface and colour as well as a contrast between the soft land forms and harder forms of the pyramid composite. The concept of crystal pyramids set in landscapes arises in the two paintings which follow.

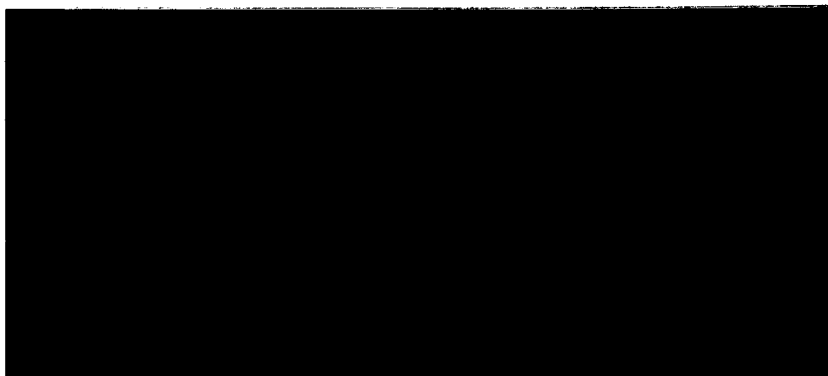


Fig. 30 'Crystal Pyramid-Day', (m.m./a/c, 1978, 26½"x59½").

'Crystal Pyramid-Day, (Fig. 30), and 'Crystal Pyramid-Night', (Fig. 32), are very closely related works. As can be seen in the in-process photograph, (Fig. 31), these two works began as one. While working on the large canvas, four

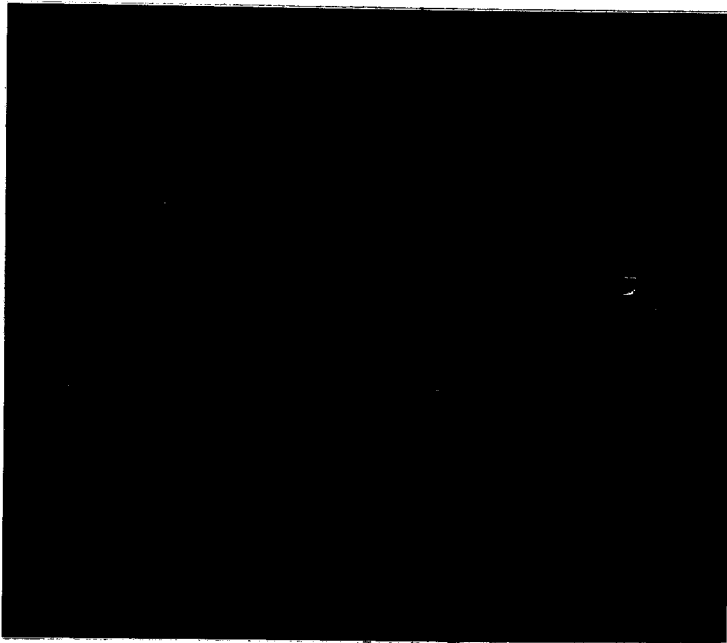


Fig. 31 In-process photograph of 'Crystal Pyramid-Day' and 'Crystal Pyramid-Night' together as one canvas.

landscape images, one in each direction, developed around a diamond-shaped area. The use of a diamond, crystal-shaped form is an image which is related to concerns expressed in 'Ixland'. The in-process photograph shows the work at a stage where the landscapes have been reduced to two clear images. It is a stage I had just divided the canvas and began to proceed on the two images separately, (fig. 31).



Fig. 32, 'Crystal Pyramid-Night', (m.m/a/c, 1978, 26½"x59½").

'Crystal Pyramid-Day' developed as a hazy, pastel-coloured landscape vision which has been reduced to three prime areas consisting of sky, ground and triangle-pyramid. The same reduction is seen in 'Crystal Pyramid-Night'. Both of these works are synthesized to their basic elements from a larger more complex whole that began as a multitude of frottaged shapes, splashes, blots, sponged paint, squeegeed paint and brushed areas. The process moves from the complex and chaotic towards the simple and harmonious. In the finished works there is a balance of hard and soft edge forms as well as a balance of contrasting colours.

In 'Crystal Pyramid-Day' there is little contrast in value but there is a contrast in colour between the warm earth tones of the ground and pyramid and the cool blues and whites

in the sky area. Over all areas a hazy atmosphere drifts down, softening the contrasts and helping to unite the three areas into one harmonious image.

In 'Crystal Pyramid-Night' we do see strong contrasts in value from the dark black of the night sky to the white moon shape and the light yellows, greens, pinks and oranges seen within the pyramid. Again over the whole area of the painting is laid a milky mist which creates an atmosphere designed to unite the separate areas.

The lighting in 'Crystal Pyramid-Day' is diffused with no apparent direct light source while in 'Crystal Pyramid-Night' we can see a light source in the moon. However, both works are illuminated from within and the lighting does not relate to a natural scene. Differences in lighting producing soft, general effects or hard-contrast, multisources lighting effects are designed to add to the mystery of the landscapes and to strengthen their associations with dream worlds, alien landscapes and the imagination.

The differences between forms such as the triangle-pyramids in the various works and their real life counterparts are also used to suggest an alien nature. The pyramid in

'Crystal Pyramid-Day' is primarily opaque and reflective, while in 'Crystal Pyramid-Night', the pyramid is very transparent and luminous, seeming to provide some of its own light. The use of unusual textures, colours and glassy surfaces as in 'Crystal Pyramid-Day' and in 'Crystal Pyramid-Night', has been seen in every pyramid form in works previously discussed and will be seen in works to follow. In all cases these effects strengthen the fantasy nature of the paintings.

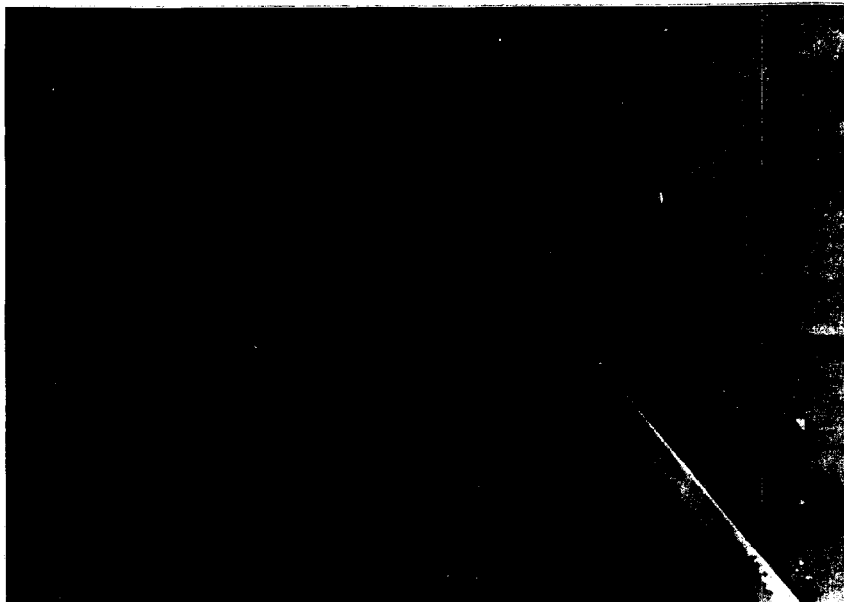


Fig. 33 'Off Angle', (m.m./a/c, 1978, 24"x36").

Originally titled, 'Off Angle Pointing The Way' the painting above shows the blots and stains of colour from its initial stages. The sky area shows large organic forms derived from

paint blotted from the floor onto raw unstretched canvas. The circle-sphere is drawn with coloured pencil then overworked with transparent paints. The hard, straight-edged, double triangle is painted with transparent glazes which are more opaque on the border revealing the underlying organic colour-forms. Even the fairly opaque beige colour of the ground reveals a latent image of the underlying forms by virtue of the thinness of the paint. The entire work displays an ethereal atmosphere in which nothing quite achieves solidity. The triangular form is not an equilateral triangle like those seen in most of the previous works nor is its vertical edge perpendicular to the bottom edge of the picture plane. The lack of a central placement of the triangle on the picture plane suggested the title; an 'off angle' which could still be part of a balanced image. The crystal-like triangle points towards the heavens in which hangs a circle-moon, the ancient symbol of unity and totality.



Fig. 34 'Stable-Mid', (m.m./a/c, 1978, 24"x34").

'Stable-Mid' as the title implies uses a central, broad-based, equilateral triangle form which is the 'mid' from the pyramid. Within the sky area we can see the remnants of multiple layers of blotted textures which creates a broken cloudy atmosphere. The pink showing through the blue sky is a part of the underpainting. It creates the feeling of clouds tinged by the rays of a setting sun. The green circle-planet remains from an even earlier stage of the painting. Thin overlays of paint in the ground areas allow the underlying textures to show through. The triangle-pyramid form in this painting is built up into a fairly solid, opaque structure. The colour

of the pyramid is a warm pastel providing a contrast with the cool sky blues. The surface of the pyramid in this painting was given a strange, mottled texture by means of a blotting technique which lifted the light-coloured paint to reveal some of the gold-ochre underpainting. This surface is not glazed as we have seen in other pyramids in my paintings, rather it is a chalky, rough-textured surface suggesting weathering and old age. The green planet and the ghost planet hanging in the sky add to the alien quality of the scene. The barren landscape may seem somewhat familiar because of the earth-browns, sky-blues and the pyramid shape but the overall effect is other worldly.



Fig. 35 'Standing in the Time Flow', (acrylic/canvas, 1978, 36"x48").

The in-process photograph of 'Standing in the Time Flow', (Fig. 36), shows the development of imagery and landscape forms. In this work the underlying layers of paint consisted of the black-brown area and spatters of beige within the triangle and the sky area of pastel blends of beige, blue, and white. The area of the triangle was measured and taped to produce the hard-edge border of the finished pyramid. The ground form follows changes in the underpainting with the grey acting as a block-out which becomes a new underpainting for the colours in the finished work. This area has then been

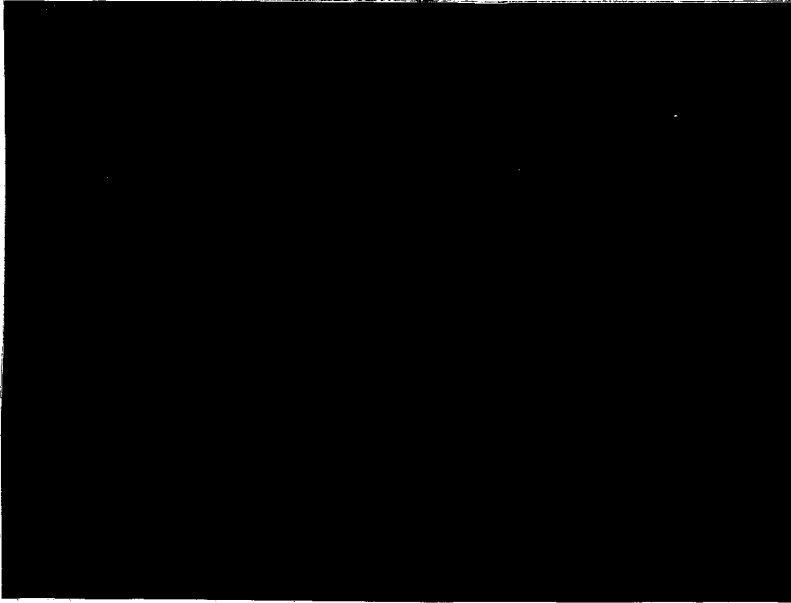


Fig. 36 In-process photograph, 'Standing in the Time Flow'.
overpainted in black and then in a rust-brown which was blotted
to reveal some of the black and to achieve a graduated change
in value. This produces a feeling of some three-dimensional
space out of the basically flat form of the ground. Over the
rust a lighter more pastel brown was sprayed and then blotted
to enhance the effect, the lighter colours appearing closer
to us and the darker, cooler colours appearing further away.
This type of effect reinforces a natural desire of the viewer
to see three-dimensional space in a landscape. An illusion
of space is a paradoxical element in a work which is concerned

basically with flat, layered forms.

Again in this painting the landscape is barren and somewhat earthly in colour while this pyramid form strongly contradicts an earthly origin and places the scene in another world, a world of the imagination. The triangle has been painted to produce flowing shapes within. The planet-circle is derived from earlier layers of colour and the pyramid's border is also from the earlier stage. Remaining areas have been built up. I think that a comparison of the two stages of the painting clearly shows the multi-layering method of image creation that I have used in most of my paintings.

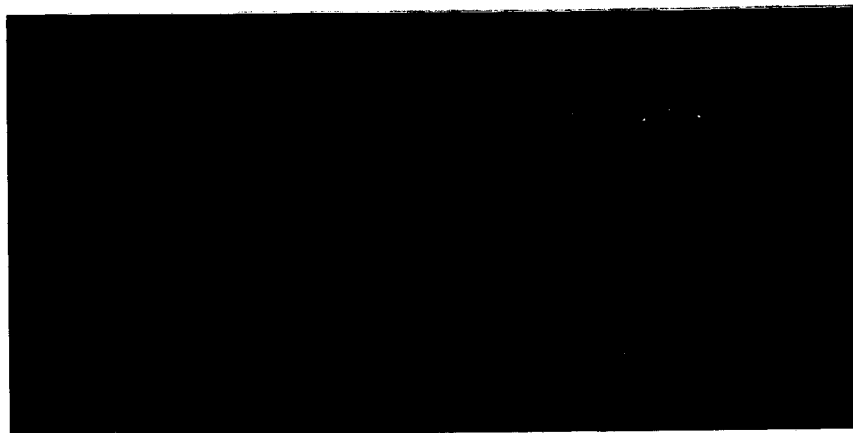


Fig. 37 'Trapezoids Banding Together on the Plains'
(m.m./a/c, 1978, 30"x60").

This is one of the few paintings which developed very rapidly with few changes of colour or form, as everything

'fell into place'. This work began with a texture area rolled on with transparent acrylic medium. This area was to be a latent image and to act as a resist to the next layer of paint. It shows up as the horizontal, irregular white form in the sky. The latent image became active when the first layer of colour went on. A transparent orange was worked over the entire canvas to create a glowing colour field. Other pinks, oranges and browns were splattered over the field. A crayon rubbing in white formed the sun circles in the sky. The outer ring was painted with the transparent varnish to act as a resist to the next layer of paint which was a different orange. Several other thin colours were sprayed on in turn to create a subtly blended colour field.

The ground area was built up of three bands of colour laid over the orange colour field which in fact shows through in the first two layers from the bottom. The form which became the long, low, distant range of hills was painted in an opaque manner. Over the entire canvas a light misty white was sprayed to create a glowing, hazy atmosphere which would bring the sky and ground closer together. At this stage the horizon line, the sky area, and the bands of colour

in the foreground all ran horizontally off both sides of the picture plane creating a very flat space. In order to break up the horizontal movement I decided to construct a linear, foreground structure which would create some vertical interest and act as a foil to the organic landscape.

Two pieces of board were used as models for the trapezoids which formed separate vertical structures. I arranged them so that a line drawn along the top edge of the small form would extend to touch the top point of the larger form and so the bases were even. Drawing lines to connect these two points gave me the idea of creating a sense of three-dimensionality by constructing one object. Various linear perspectives could be devised with this structure (Fig. 38). Lines going to vanishing points on the horizon, extended beyond the canvas, were constructed from points in the two forms to create a suggestion of dimensionality in much the same way as an architect would draft an idea for a building. However this structure would be difficult if not impossible to build since it provides paradoxical perspectival information. In fact the structure, although suggesting three-dimensions, is constructed of flat trapezoidal, colour forms. The entire structure is somewhat

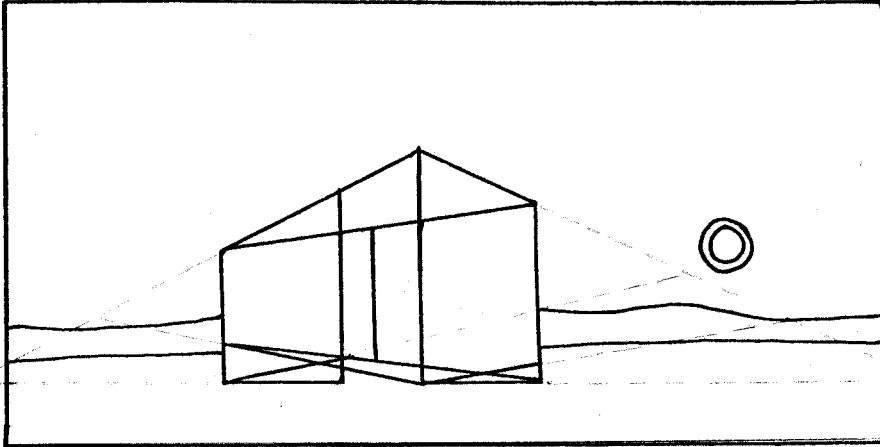


Fig. 38 Analytical drawing, 'Trapezoids Banding Together on the Plains'.

transparent allowing the range of hills to show through but with variations as the image passes through the more opaque original forms. The structure composed of trapezoids and lines is a paradox suggesting three-dimensions in its structure while remaining flat. By virtue of its location in the foreground and its verticle and angular lines, this hard-edge form creates a sense of depth in relation to the low horizon line of the flat landscape.

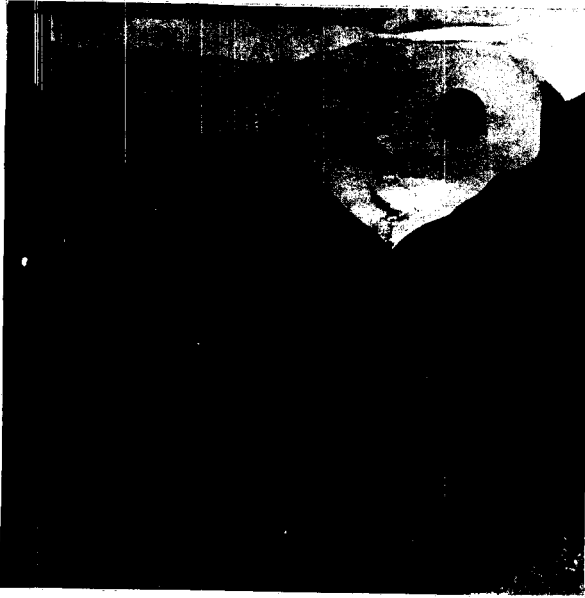


Fig. 39 'A Place Near the Mountains of Unknown Origin',
(m.m./a/c, 1978, 54"x56").

The painting above related to the paintings, 'Ixland', 'Crystal Pyramid-Day', 'Crystal Pyramid-Night', and 'Off Angle' works in which the associations between crystals and pyramids were first made. It also related to 'Trapezoids Banding Together on the Plains' in the use of perspectivel lines as well as in colours used.

This painting began with a colour field similar to that described in 'Trapezoids...' painted over some blotted colour shapes. In fact the orange colours were left over from 'Trapezoids...' in that I decided to construct a pyramid shape before developing the landscape. I drew in construction

lines to define two sides of the pyramid and then taped over these lines to create a resist against the next coat of paint. For the first time in my paintings we see a three-dimensional treatment of a pyramid as seen from a corner view point. Within the area of the pyramid, I then drew lines parallel to the base of the structure to reinforce a three-dimensional effect. The X on the right triangle also serves this purpose. (Fig. 40).

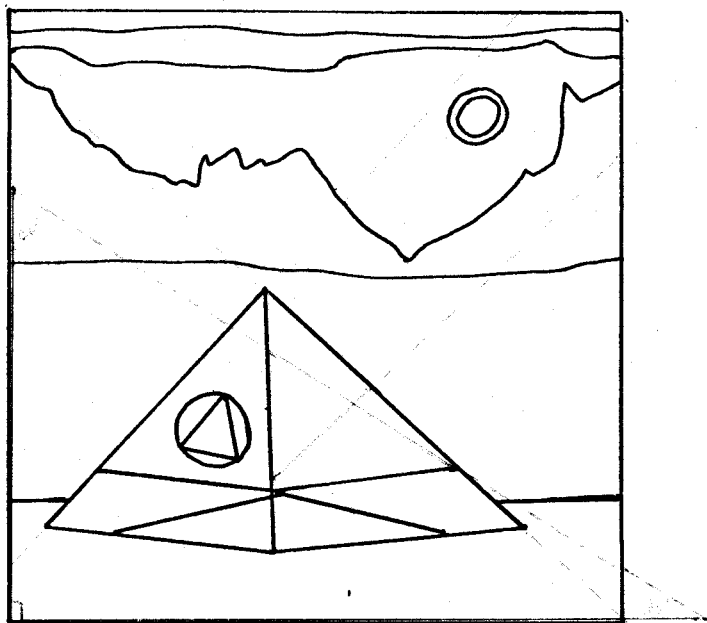


Fig. 40 Analytical drawing, 'A Place Near the Mountains of Unknown Origin'.

The next step consisted of painting the interior of the pyramid with colours similar to those used in the sky area.

The left triangle is built up to a semi-transparent surface while the right triangle is left relatively transparent allowing some original colour and texture to show through. The transparent area begins to inject an element of paradox into the pyramid structure. Although the right side is transparent we do not see a line marking the base behind the pyramid and the line we do see is in the wrong position to be marking the other side of the pyramid. This 'incorrect' line is emphasized by painting a blue colour into both areas of the triangle which shows through under the orange. Over the sky area I painted a milky white leaving a double-circle sun shape, the same colour as the pyramid. Because they are the same colour it adds to an effect of translucency as the pyramid seems to be lit up by the sun behind it. To make a symbolic connection between the sun, as a symbol of unity, and the pyramid, I constructed the circle with an interior triangle on the left surface of the pyramid. The circle repeats the sunshape while the green triangle repeats the triangular face of the orange pyramid. Even though the green and orange are complementary colors they are connected to each other through the circle. The pyramid is a temple to the circle as a symbol of unity of opposites. The use of a

circle rather than an ellipse on the pyramid's side contradicts the three-dimensional effect even though the internal triangle parallels on all sides the triangular left face of the pyramid.

The dark landscape, on each side and behind the pyramid, developed into the fantasy mountain forms we see in the finished painting. They are strangely dark with a light mist overlay which helps limit a perception of deep space. 'A Place Near the Mountains of Unknown Origin' evokes a feeling of strangeness. It appears real in a three-dimensional space and yet it contradicts three-dimensions with a two-dimensional treatment of some forms and surfaces infusing an unreality into the scene. Elements of ambiguity or paradox create a mystical-symbolic world of the imagination. To strengthen the multiple worlds concept I would ask the reader to imagine that this painting represents a magnification of a diamond-like stone set in a ring band. The band has been held up to the light, hence we are able to see the landscape beyond as well as reflections of the landscape and the internal structure of the stone, as the crystal acts like a prism. I mention this only to show that there are many ways to look at 'reality' as well as at a 'fantasy painting' which has become part of that physical reality. It attests to multiple levels of meaning and of symbolism in life and art.



Fig. 41 'Beyond Kadath', (m.m./a/c, 1978, 54"x84", coll. W. Palchinski).

'Beyond Kadath' is the last work I will discuss in this paper. It also happens to be largest and one of the most complex works discussed.

This painting began with a silkscreened image which forms the internal rectangle with its textured surface, (Fig's 44,45,46). After this the canvas was used as a drop sheet on my painting table and so became covered with chance drips, splatters, and spills of colour some of which I brushed out to form stained colour areas. Also, I would occasionally do crayon rubbings from objects I had collected, such as the images produced

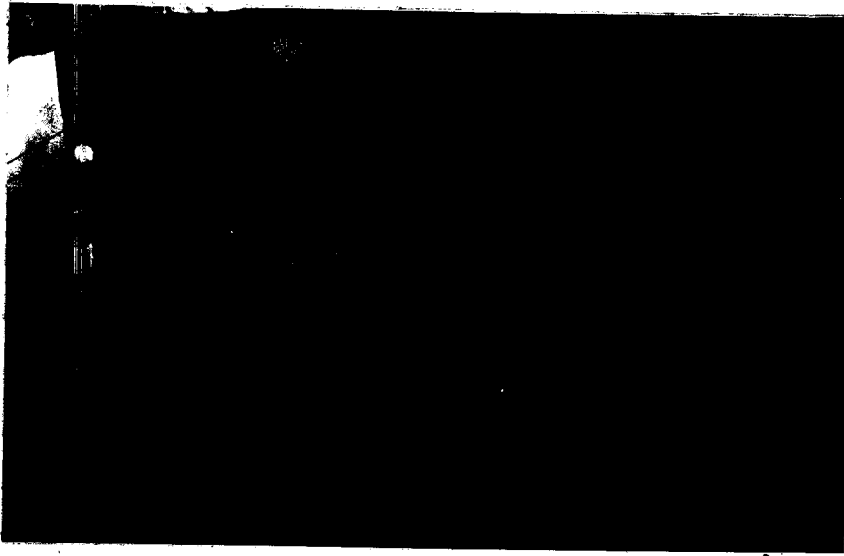


Fig. 42 In-process photograph, stage one, 'Beyond Kadath'. from a muffin tin on the upper left, the double-circle in the internal rectangle produced from a roll of tape, and the large black circle in the left foreground produced from a rubbing off of a wheel hub. After looking at the images on the canvas I began painting in large colour areas to map out a basic design for the landscape. I also created some new forms such as the small pyramid in the corner of the internal rectangle and on the right hand side, the large, rust-coloured double-circle which was painted by spraying around a stencil. These and other forms can be seen in Figure 42.

The next stage of development is illustrated by two photographs, (Fig 43, Fig. 44), top photo showing the work as whole and bottom photo providing a detail of the central

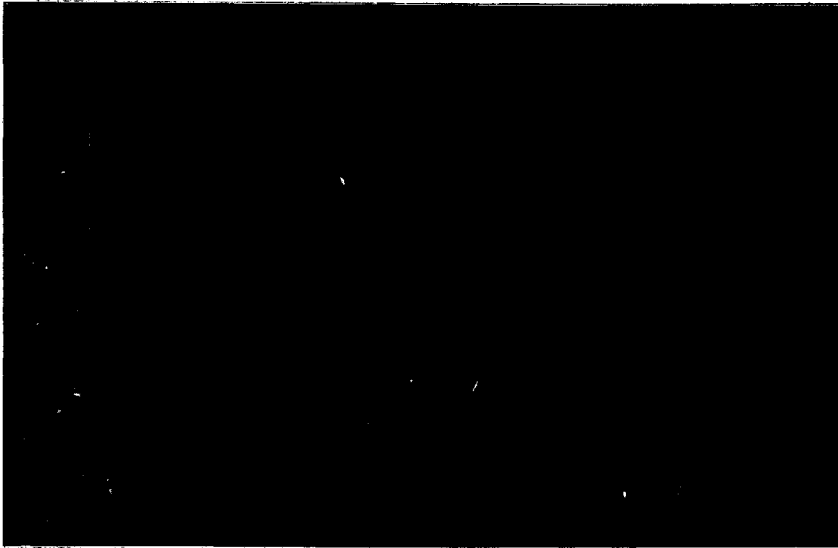


Fig. 43 In-process photograph, stage two, 'Beyond Kadath'.
Fig. 44 Detail



area. These photographs depict the further development of a landscape structure through the use of large colour areas to define the sky and ground forms. Through this stage some forms are blocked out while others are added. For example, there was the extension of the small pyramid and the addition of two new pyramid forms in the foreground (Fig. 44). The largest pyramid form now covers the large black circle incorporating it into the pyramid structure. The pyramids have begun to achieve some solidity although they continue to reveal some of the under-painting. From this stage I was able to develop the pyramids and the landscape by creating textures and by slowly layering colours over the land forms and the pyramids, giving each its own character. Through balancing colour and progressively eliminating some forms, I was able to arrive at a more simplified landscape composition. Conscious choice came into play through this process as did intuitive feeling, since the structure could have developed along different lines.

During the painting process I developed two landscape visions. First was the landscape which encompasses the whole canvas, and second was the small, self-contained landscape within the interior rectangle. At this stage the small landscape was

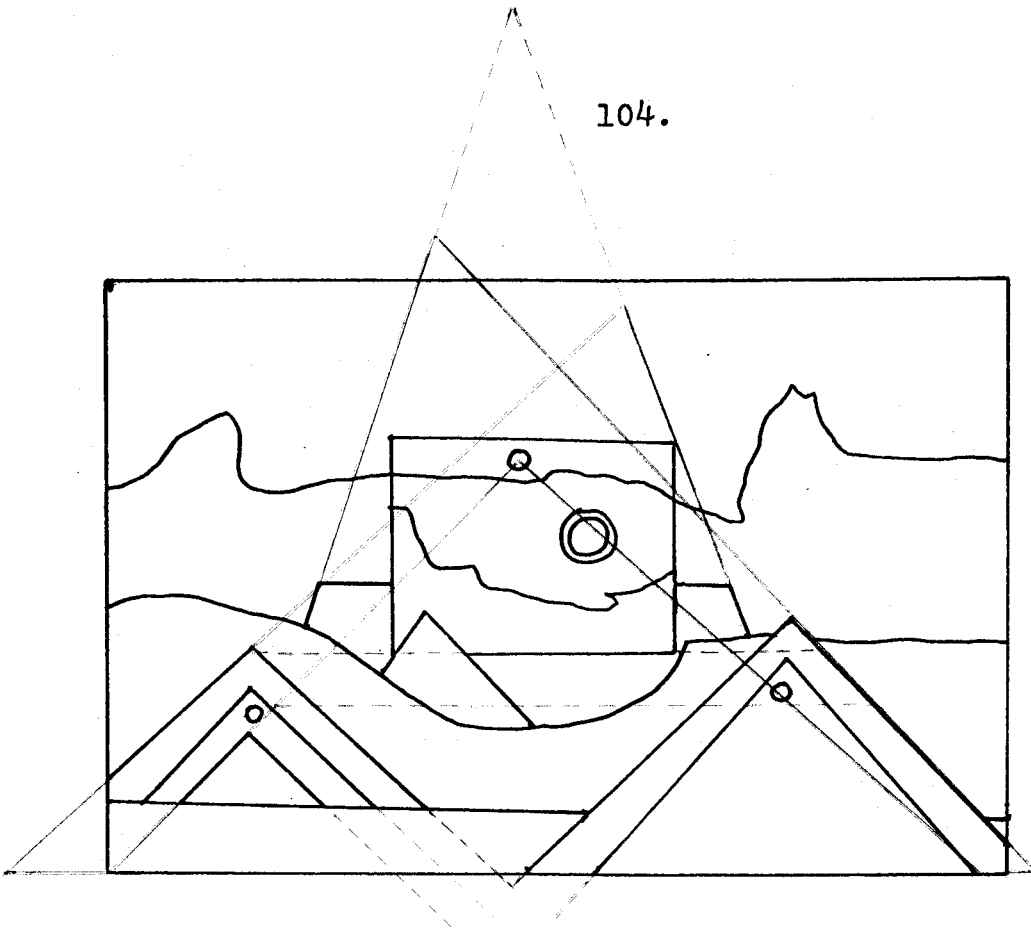


Fig. 45, Analytical drawing, stage three, 'Beyond Kadath'. like a day scene while the larger landscape was also light but with a dark sky area. A number of ideas floated in my mind: the ideas of multiple worlds co-existing in the same space, conceptions of the same world depicted at two different time periods but seen together, and from this a notion of a large television screen placed in a landscape or a magic crystal into which we could gaze, seeing different places or other times. To enhance the interior rectangle and to reflect these ideas, I built up the internal landscape to be different from and yet to be connected to the large landscape. To do this I painted a night sky in the small

landscape with a half-lit moon while lightening the sky in the large landscape. I also left the white moon shape in the internal landscape as an unreal element. The moon suggests that this land area may also be considered as somehow a daylight sky. There is also a ridge of land within the small landscape which does not correspond to the external landscape. However, I have made the top horizon line in the small landscape connect directly to the horizon line of the large landscape. A close colour co-ordination in the final painting also provides a sense of transparency in the small rectangle so that we can seemingly see through it to the landscape beyond. The small rectangle-landscape was then set into a solid black base like a gem stone set in a ring or a movie screen on a pedestal. Each flat pyramid form is composed of multiple triangles which refer to a multiple-realities concept of the world. Within the two foreground pyramids I collaged small circle-planets to indicate that these structures might be temples on some alien world. The pyramids overlap the landscape forms or are cut off by them, creating a sense of space in which they can exist as objects. I have restrained spacial depth to create a dream-like atmosphere by employing large flat areas of colour and similar colouring

within the landforms to flatten the space. 'Beyond Kadath' is conceptually a large, complex, multiple world vision and yet I attempted to reduce and compose the visual elements into a simple, balanced and harmonious statement. The title refers to a fantasy novel, in which the world of Kadath was a reality beyond dreams but a world that could be reached only through dream. In the spirit of the concept of a multiple view of reality, of macrocosm and microcosm, of worlds within or worlds beyond worlds, 'Beyond Kadath' makes sense.

This painting and all the others I have discussed have evolved with discoveries made in one work leading to the next work. Paintings completed since 'Beyond Kadath' have continued to evolve in this manner.

3. CONCLUSION

In part one of this paper I discussed creativity in general, creativity in painting specifically and the 'laws of plastic creation.' I also introduced symbolic forms describing some of the universal and personal aspects of forms which developed in my paintings.

In part two I analyzed actual paintings making reference to the structural aspects of the work and the roles of imagination, background concerns (idea and imagery) and intuition in the realization of the works. I have shown in the histories of the paintings the development of formal structure from large numbers of ambiguous, chaotic, images to the final unified statements. I have described techniques and their role in stimulating imagination and subconscious imagery and I have talked about the ideas from a multitude of sources which consciously played a role in the development of a personal symbolism.

The more information and concerns the artist can bring to his work the richer and more complex in an idea sense the works will be. I have found that continual personal development allows an evolution and expansion of concerns in my art.

The main concerns of my work continue to be the search for a unique expression of a balanced, unified, harmonious, visual statement in each painting. As painting is a creative learning process some paintings will be more successful than others, but even the least successful works add something to those that come after. In terms of unity I have dealt with the unity of opposites and the unity of complex multiple imagery. From a concern with the concept of macrocosm and microcosm (worlds within worlds), I have developed visual ways of representing two or more visions of an imagined world in the same painting. My concern with the interpretation of reality as a multiple layering of segments which we are normally aware of only sequentially has continued to be a strong theme in my art.

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2.. PART TWO

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APPENDIX A

D.O. Rogers, "Notes on - The Medium of Expression" ,
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An idea can be materialized with the help of a medium of expression the inherent qualities of which must be surely sensed and understood in order to become a carrier of the idea. The idea is transformed, adapted to, and carried by the inner quality of the medium, not by its external aspect. This explains why the same formative idea can be expressed in a number of different media. An idea to be expressed may be based upon naturalistic experience, fantasy, or abstract concepts. All of these sources generate impulses in the mind which may be transformed and given expression through corresponding vibrations, within the expression-medium.

Painting possesses fundamental laws. These laws are dictated by fundamental perceptions. One of these perceptions is: the essence of the picture is the picture plane. The essence of the picture plane is its two-dimensionality. The first law is then derived: the picture plane must be preserved in its two-dimensionality throughout the whole process of creation until it reaches its final transformation in the completed picture. And this leads to the second law: the picture must achieve a three-dimensional effect, distinct from illusion, by means of the creative process. These two laws apply both to colour and form.

Three-dimensional objects in nature are recorded optically as two-dimensional images. These images are identified with the two-dimensional quality of the picture plane. The most complete representation of three-dimensionality, in which all the three-dimensional fragments are summarized in an entity, results in pictorial two-dimensionality. The act

of creation agitates the picture plane, but if the two-dimensionality is lost the picture reveals holes and the result is not pictorial, but a naturalistic imitation of nature.

Pictorial structure is based on a plane concept; commonly these are colour-bearing planes. The line originates in the meeting of two planes. The course of a spatially conceived line develops from different positions in a multitude of planes. Only in a mathematical sense is a line, in itself, thinkable. In a creative sense, the line is to be considered as the carrier of a multiple meaning, since it results from the merging of planes. The line divides, combines, flows.

Colour-bearing planes, the lines and volumes created by them must be related to the picture plane and the concept of spatial unity.

The experience of spatial unity comes from a subjective feeling for the unity and coherence of things. The need to create spatial unity in a painting is a transfer of the subjective feeling, an ability to perceive disunity and to manipulate the plastic elements in a painting towards a state of balance.

Form exists through space and space through form. Form should not exist for itself since it represents only part of space. Space, through the existence of objects, becomes tripartite. We differentiate between the space in front of an object, the space within an object, and the space in back of an object. Space within an object is limited. Space in front of and behind an object suggests infinity.

Space discloses itself to us through volumes. Objects are positive space. Negative space results from the relation of objects. Negative space is as concrete to the artist as is objective-positive space, and possesses an equal three-dimensional effectiveness. Both supplement each other, both resolve into a unity of space.

Form and space have static and dynamic aspects. The static is the sum total of the dynamic just as in painting the two-dimensional is the sum total of the three-dimensional. Nature (and art) can be seen as a unity of opposing and counteracting forces in which form is balanced by space. Space and form in nature exist together in a three-dimensional unity which is represented by the two-dimensional unity of the picture plane.

Space expands and contracts in the tensions and functions through which it exists. Space is not a static, inert thing. Space is alive; space is dynamic; space is imbued with movement expressed by forces and counterforces; space vibrates and resounds with colour, light and form in the rhythm of life.

Movement exists as sensed motion in a painting. There is movement forward and backward in space and there is linear movement across the picture plane. Movement exists in space and both are expressed in paintings by the shifting of colour planes and lines within the picture plane. A tension of forces is built between movement and counter-movement, sensations of motion, of both colour and form. When tension is expressed it endows the work of art with the living effect of coordinated, though opposing, forces. The balance of many contrasting factors produces a many-faceted, yet unified painting.

We recognize visual form only by means of light, and light only by means of form, and we further recognize that colour is an effect of light in relation to form and its inherent texture. In nature, light creates colour; in painting, colour creates light.

Swinging and pulsating form and its counterpart, resonating space, originate in colour intervals. In a colour interval, the finest differentiations of colour function as powerful contrasts. A colour interval is equivalent to the tension created by a form relation. What a tension signifies in regard to form, an interval signifies in regard to colour; it is a tension between colours that makes colour a plastic means.

A painting must have form and light unity. It must light up from the inside through the intrinsic qualities which colour relations offer. It must not be illuminated from the outside by superficial effects. When it lights up from the inside, the painted surface breathes, because the interval relations which dominate the whole cause it to oscillate and to vibrate.

A painted surface must retain the transparency of a jewel which stands as a prototype of exactly ordered form, on the one hand, and as a prototype of the highest light emanation on the other.

Spatial and formal and light and colour unity create the plastic two-dimensionality of the picture. Light is best expressed through differences in colour quality, colour should not be handled as a tonal gradation, to produce the effect of light. The psychological expression of colour lies in unexpected relations and associations.

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