The Investigation of Figure-Ground Relationships in Painting

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THE INVESTIGATION OF
FIGURE-GROUND RELATIONSHIPS
IN PAINTING

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Barbara H. Jones
July 1968
APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The studies regarding figure-ground relationships are chronologically ordered. The multiplicity of questions and solutions tends to proliferate and juxtapose, so that any sort of linear order regarding specific discoveries is untenable.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The thesis problem involved the investigation of figure-ground relationships in painting. This study dealt with varying experiments in space, color relationships, the juxtaposition of form, and value relationships. The media used were those common to oil, watercolor and drawing. The investigation entailed the development of form and space relationships in a series of paintings. The study included a critical evaluation regarding achievement of the expressive aims, and the conclusions drawn from individual paintings, as well as from the series. The fundamental locus lay within the figure-ground relationship and that has been the emphasis.

Importance of the study. The importance of the study involves in painting, the notion that the manipulation of the tactile surface is presented as subordinate to a concern
for formal excellence through tension and resolution, ambiguity and resolve, rhythm and rest, discord and harmony.

The painting can develop in this process of making, changing, becoming, doing, re-doing, and finishing. A unity of creation and creator and cosmos can be achieved at a point when epiphany, act and resolve are art, exclusive of observation or not.

The images employed are usually eclectic manifestations of memory and experience or direct observation, continuous and unlimited. Silent meditation often precludes activity.

This investigator, nature oriented, aimed to clarify the content inherent in the subject matter; i.e., human form, landscape, or still life. Dream, myth or fantasy must never be excluded, for they are parts of the reality, if not reality itself. Cluttered, busy, complex life begets personal attempts at form and order transcending mere simplicity to a higher order of complexity. Questions of personal philosophy and challenge are indivisible from the painting experience, though they are subordinate to it. Growth and development and change are inextricably interwoven with sharing discoveries or finding new or unsuspected meanings. Notation is made here of personal regard for: Existential philosophical notions; the Neo-classical evidence; Impressionist light, color and motion; Romantic brushwork; abstract-Expressionist execution; pop art; and Medieval and Indian Miniature space.
Contradiction occurs in personal ego desires for communication versus ideas of the work postulates its own meaning. Artist is as one part in a whole comprised of execution, creation, presentation and the work itself. Each portion of the total is vital and contributes its own special identity. The self is the sum of all its previous exposure and experience. To speak of it as apart from the execution, (hopefully ephiphany of activity into creation) is to deny its totality. Awareness of fragmented idiosyncratic tendencies balances with acknowledgement of the strength or dominance of the finished work over each of its parts.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Anisotropic. This space involves the frontal plane and differentiates that the lower half of the painting and the upper half are not of equal weight.

Ambiguity. This limited meaning of ambiguity involves the idea of space, form, or color being equivocal, or capable of being understood in two or more possible senses.

Closure. The perceptual tendency to fill gaps or spaces which may exist in an incomplete visual pattern is called closure. This is when separate groups of separate and distorted shapes are suddenly understood as part of a larger visual form or recognizable subject. If sufficient clues are obscured or distorted, one image may seem embedded in the other. To shut, or the act
of closing or shutting; a conclusion; an end; this is the
definition of closure to be found in the dictionary.

Concept. A thought or an opinion is considered a con­cept. A mental image of a thing formed by generalization from
particulars and also, an idea of what a thing in general should
be.

Conception. A conception involves a conceiving or being
conceived; hence beginning; also that which is conceived. (a)
It is also the power of the mind to form ideas or to devise
schemes or designs, as for works of art; (b) The exercise of
this power; (c) Something as a work of art that results from
the exercise of this power is a part of the meaning of conception.

Dedifferentiation. The definition of dedifferentiation
involves the dispersing or the dynamic function by which the
ego scatters and represses surface imagery (7:19).

Definition. The meaning of definition involves the act
or power of making definite and clear or of bringing into sharp
relief a sort of distinctness or clarity of detail or outline
is primary to the meaning.

Differentiation. This means focusing (undifferentiation
= the static structure of unconscious image making.) (7:19).

Equivocal. Any equivocalty involves having two or more
significations, it is thence, ambiguous.
**Grouping.** Simularity of location creates grouping of color, form, or value.

**Illusion.** A deliberate discrepancy in a painting's continuity, an illusion, may be defined as a misleading image, presented to the vision. It also may mean a deceptive appearance or a perception, which gives a different character to an object perceived, than that which is thought to be its true character.

**Interstice.** Any gap, space or interval is called an interstice. A space between things closely set as between the parts of a body, is also called an interstice.

**Matrix.** A place or enveloping element, within something original takes form or develops is called a matrix. That which gives form, origin or foundation to something enclosed or embedded in it is another definition.

**Perceptible.** To be perceptible is to be capable of being perceived, to be discernable, or to be perceivable. Anything which comes within the range of sense--usually that which is clearly on the borderline or just above (i.e., phenomena), that which is apprehensible as real or existent, is perceptible.

**Perception.** Direct acquaintance through the senses is perception. According to Jung there are two types: (1) Sense perception is directly becoming aware of things by the senses;
(2) Intuitive perception or indirect perception of the deeper meaning with possibilities inherent in things.

Perceptual Concepts. The overall structural properties that are grasped in vision are called perceptual concepts. To visualize—to see or to form a mental image of; to be visual—produced, as or conveying a mental image as perceived, attained, performed by vision, also are factors in perceptual conception.

Schema. To scheme, plan, outline or diagram is pertinent to schema. (Schema must retain the effacacious nature of the prototype).

Schemata. The image; the starting point for corrections, adjustments, adaptation and the means to probe reality and to wrestle with the particular are definitions of schemata (9:173).

Symbol. That which suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, as well as, something invisible such as an idea, a quality, an emblem are symbol related definitions.

Syncretize. To fuse or hormonize, as conflicting principles is to syncretize. (A scattering of focus is inherent in syncretistic vision) which involves a comparison, especially, of contraries or opposites. The union or fusion into one or two or more originally different inflectional forms which is based on unconscious scanning, is in the meaning of syncretize.
**Syncretism.** A comprehensive and precise grasp of a total view in which the elements are variable and exchangeable. This involves the concept of undifferentiation and is non-analytical. (Syncretistic vision does not differentiate figure and ground). Complex unconscious scanning balances one distortion against the other and extracts a common denominator or fulcrum from them that is somehow discounted. "The syncretistic faculty (thing perception first then analytical awareness; grasp of the total object) can abstract from differences in analytic details and so identify an object in its changing aspects." (7:15).

**Undifferentiation.** Deals with the static structure of unconscious image making. "The new technical meaning which I have given to the terms 'undifferentiation' and 'dedifferentiation' may necessitate not only a modification of the present conception of the primary process, but also of the term 'unconscious'; images are withdrawn from consciousness not merely because of the superego's censorship of certain offensive contents; they may become inaccessible through their undifferentiated structure alone. Syncretistic vision, may appear empty of precise detail though it is in fact merely undifferentiated. Through its lack of differentiation it can accommodate a wide range of incompatible forms" (7:19).
CHAPTER II
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The study is concerned with the problem of figure-ground relationships. This involves various possibilities including differentiation between figure and ground, as well as multidimensional attention, which embraces both figure and ground and might be called "dedifferentiation" (see vocabulary).

Such an investigation will naturally involve a multiplicity of related areas: form and color relationships; spatial relationships such as positive and negative space; size and distance relationships; problems of balance, imbalance, density, solidity and atmosphere. For each positive point there exists an alternate point which may even be antithetical to the other. Thence, any discussion of the figure-ground relationship must include the reversible figure-ground relationship, and dedifferentiation (7:19). The reversible figure-ground relationship will be spoken of as: spatial ambiguity, illusion, contradiction, alternate interpretation, reverse relationship, indecision, oscillation, equivocality, and variance.

That further confusion may be avoided, notation is made that these terms are roughly synonomous, with no negative connotation implied by this investigator, when speaking about particular relationships. Susanne K. Langer speaks of illusion:

Illusion in the arts is not pretense, make believe, improvement on nature, or flight from reality; illusion is the stuff of art; the stuff of art out of which the
semi-abstract yet unique and often sensuous expressive form is made. To call the art image illusory, is to simply say that it is not material, it is not cloth and paint-smooches, but space organized by balanced shapes with dynamic relations, tensions, and resolutions among them. Pictorial space is a symbolic space, and its visual organization is a symbol of vital feeling. (12:34).

In order to discuss the figure-ground, it is necessary to define and distinguish the general conception of the figure-ground as being the relation between two separate elements, from the notion that such a separation or bisection of the picture plane, into significance and insignificance, is something that should be avoided.

Rudolf Arnheim, in his book *Art and Visual Perception*, speaks of the first systematic study of the figure-ground phenomena which was attributed to E. V. Rubins.

He found a number of conditions that determined which surface will assume the character of figure in a given pattern. One of his rules says that the enclosed surface tends to become figure whereas the enclosing one will become ground. This involves a further principal, according to which the smaller area is likely to become a figure under certain conditions (1:182).

Yet if a multispatiality exists, there could be many figures on many grounds and all of them inter-readable. Gombrich has asserted that readability of many levels may exist without commitment to any one special reading and yet he speaks of reverse relationships still being readable.

The general notion of the separation of the figure-ground is noted as:

Our capacity to distinguish or separate an object from its general environment. Numerous factors such as size,
shape, value and closure may determine which pieces of information will be perceived as figure and which will become subordinate ground. Figure generally has a shape or object quality, and seems to exist in front of the ground.

Some figure-ground statements may be experienced as equivocal or reversible relationships. The visual impact is achieved when the eye cannot choose between the positive and negative shapes and is forced to repeatedly shift from one area to the other (3:21).

Recent studies have presented material which indicates that situations where figure and ground are indivisible do occur. This has to do with the analysis of undifferentiated imagery, as multi-level attention inside and outside areas becomes one; and dedifferentiation, as explained by Anton Ehrenzweig, takes place. The recent studies have not yet influenced the figure-ground discussion to the point of affecting the present definitions. Carraher states:

Contradictory visual perceptions are not easily comprehended simultaneously. One interpretation may be exchanged for another, but only one can be verified at a given moment (3:91).

It is as though Gombrich anticipates partially the studies of Ehrenzweig, but he never seems to perceive dedifferentiation. He mentions the cubist experiments and discoveries; in particular, the notion that the viewer can "read and interpret familiar shapes even across a complete change of color or outline (9:285)." This superposition of objects used by the Cubist, renders each one transparent, as they fade out or into the neutral ground of the picture. He still does not suggest that he perceives further amplification at this point,
for ambiguous or equivocal readings were the apparent extent of his inquiry. "Frequent reversals force our attention to the plane . . . (9:236)."

After frequent reversal activity, the fatigue of the viewer forces the eye to seek rest on an interrupted, plain area or space. Movement in mind and body as visual shapes strive in certain directions begets fatigue as well as instigation of excitement, interest, and concentration.

By citing alternate views on the figure-ground relationship, the intention has been to suggest different possibilities, but not to engage in philosophical argument or a scientific discussion.

In order to amplify this point and clarify the meanings created by Anton Ehrenzweig, it will be necessary to quote his statement. According to Ehrenzweig:

The conscious Gestalt compulsion makes us bisect the visual field into significant 'figure' and insignificant 'ground.' Yet bisecting the picture plane into significant and insignificant areas is precisely what the artist cannot afford to do. A true artist will agree with the psychoanalyst that nothing can be deemed insignificant or accidental in a product of human spirit and that--at least on an unconscious level--the usual evaluation has to be reversed. Superficially insignificant or accidental looking detail may well carry the most important unconscious symbolism.

In a work of art any element however paltry has to be firmly related to the total structure in a complex web of cross ties radiating across the entire picture plane. There is no decisive division between the Gestalt or figure and mere background elements. The complexity of any work of art however simple far outstrips the powers of conscious attention, which, with its pin point focus, can attend to only one thing at a time. Only the extreme undifferentiation of unconscious version can scan these complexities.
It can hold them in a single unfocused glance and treat figure and ground with equal impartiality.

Paul Klee spoke of two kinds of attention practiced by the artist. The normal type of attention focuses on the positive figure which a line encloses, or else with effort on the negative shape which the figure cuts out (differentiates) from the ground. Klee speaks of the endotopic (inside) area and the exotopic (outside) area of the picture plane. He says that the artist can either emphasize the boundary contrast produced by the bisection of the picture plane; in which case he will keep his attention on one (endotopic or exotopic) side of the line he draws; or else he can scatter his attention and watch the simultaneous shaping of inside and outside areas on either side of the line, a feat which the Gestalt psychologist would consider impossible. According to the Gestalt theory, we have to make a choice; we can choose either to see the figure; then the shape of the ground becomes invisible, or else—with an effort—to scrutinize the negative shape cut from the ground; then the original figure disappears from view. We can never see both at the same time. Of course one can construct purposely ambiguous patterns where figure and ground are easily interchangeable . . . Ambiguous patterns of this sort are often called counterchanges . . . Counterchanges only represent a special case in which the negative is consciously related to the positive pattern.

What, of course, is needed is an undifferentiated attention akin to syncretistic vision which does not focus on detail, but holds the total structure of the work of art in a single undifferentiated view. Introspection will fail us. The content of this scattered attention appears essentially blank and empty to conscious memory. The truly unconscious and potentially disruptive quality of undifferentiation is brought out by the use of ambiguous patterns . . . There must be a smooth rhythm between different levels of perception . . . A flexible scattering of attention must come easily to the artist, due to his needs for holding all the pictorial elements in a single individual act of attention. He cannot afford the fatal bisection into figure and ground imposed by the conscious Gestalt principle (7:21-23).

A definitive statement of the Gestalt idea might explicate the argument.

The Gestalt School would have none of the theory here presented regarding the role of learning and experience in perception. They postulate an inborn tendency of the brain. The electrical forces in the brain which come into
play in the cortex during the process of vision tend toward simplicity and balance and make our perception always weighted in favor of geometrical simplicity and cohesion (9:219).

Gombrich further emphasizes the theory with "their simplicity hypothesis cannot be learned (9:272)." The contrast between the two views is amplified further by Ehrenzweig:

Thing perception comes before the awareness of a generalized abstract Gestalt. Moreover as we have seen, our recognition of reality is disturbed, not assisted, by such abstract awareness. Thing perception, with its syncretistic grasp of a total object, has to be firmly established before the analytic awareness of abstract pattern can come into its own . . . I am, of course, not decrying the awakening of the analytic abstract faculties during latency. Far from it; the new awareness of abstract form becomes one of the most potent tools in the hands of the artist and the scientist. Scientific abstraction is a product of unconscious dedifferentiation. It is based on a mixture of images which to conscious introspection appear incompatible and so blot each other out. I will discuss this close relationship between undifferentiation and abstraction in a separate chapter. (I will speak of undifferentiation when referring to the static structure of unconscious image making, of dedifferentiation when describing the dynamic process by which the ego scatters and represses surface imagery). The growth of new images in art and of new concepts in science is nourished by the conflict between two opposing structural principles. The analysis of abstract Gestalt elements is pitted against the syncretistic grasp of the total object, focusing on detail against complex scanning, fragmentation against wholeness, differentiation against dedifferentiation. These polarities are aspects of the same conflict between the secondary and primary process. The new technical meaning which I have given to the terms, 'im' and 'de', may necessitate not only a modification of the present conception of the primary process, but also of the term 'unconscious'; images are withdrawn from consciousness not merely because of the superego's centership of certain offensive contents; they may become inaccessible through their undifferentiated structure alone. The paradox of syncretistic vision can be explained in this way. Syncretistic vision may appear empty of precise detail though it is in fact merely undifferentiated. Through its lack of differentiation it can accomodate a range of incompatible forms . . . Syncretistic vision is
highly sensitive to the smallest of cues and proves more efficient in identifying individual objects. It impresses us as empty, vague and generalized only because the narrowly focused surface consciousness cannot grasp its wider, more comprehensive structure. Its precise concrete content has become inaccessible and 'unconscious' (7:18-20).

If sufficient information is obscured or distorted, images or ideas may seem embedded in each other. Ehrenzweig's theory is emphasized here regarding the idea that certain imagery or information has become inaccessible, because of its undifferentiated structure alone.

The undifferentiated structure of the unconscious (subliminal) vision is far from being weakly structured or chaotic as first impressions suggest, but displays the scanning powers that are superior to conscious vision (7:33).

His discussion of the syncretistic faculty (grasp of the total object: thing perception first; then analytic awareness), notes that this faculty can abstract from differences in analytic details and identify an object in its changing aspects. The complex presentation must be regarded in detail if it is to be truly appreciated. This can be done by reading The Hidden Order of Art by Anton Ehrenzweig:

The growth of new images in art and of new concepts in science is nourished by the conflict between two opposing structural principles. The analysis of abstract Gestalt elements is pitted against the syncretistic grasp of the total object, focusing on detail against complex scanning, fragmentation against wholeness, differentiation against dedifferentiation (7:15).

The continuous alternation between this investigator's innate tendency to complexity, multiplicity and ambiguity, and the pressure to simplify, expresses itself in an incompleteness. The resolution must be suspended until all the information is in.
CHAPTER III

THE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The approach to the actual painting experience varies with artist, experiment and painting. This investigator tends to require some initial impetus to which reaction can occur. This impetus is rather difficult to describe for it may originate in any exposure, experience, or intuition; it may be an epiphany, an illustration, a technical problem, a book, a movie, a social comment, or a personal philosophical notion. In addition to these instigating attitudes, the motivation may come through the use of the materials, the methods or application or the specific characteristics of individual media such as charcoal, graphite, gesso, oil and turpentine washes. The method of application ranges from orderly and controlled to random and spontaneous.

After the initial approach or covering of the canvas, the experiment begins to take shape rapidly as idea, intuition and act interinvolve. The painting begins to develop an identity as there is a continuous exchange or action between acceptance and rejection, recognition and resolution, action and meditation.

The beginnings of a particular painting will be mentioned only as they are deemed specifically pertinent to the work.
Specific layouts or designs or drawings used as points of departure usually seem to retard creativity and seldom result in new ideas, solutions to problems, or problems. The irrational doodles, to use Ehrenzweig's phrase, are useful for only the time they can disrupt a premature visualization of the end result. These devices for the disruption of conscious visualization are continuously sought in the development of a work. Ehrenzweig has noted that:

One can distinguish three phases in creative work: projection followed by the partly unconscious integration (unconscious scanning) which gives the work its independent life, and finally the partial re-injection and feedback on a higher mental level (7:57).

Taylor has also less specifically noted that "indecisiveness of the image, which suspends our certitude, has become a positive source of expression (15:95)." It is just through this sort of indecisiveness that the investigator begins to perceive the configurations.

I. THE TECHNIQUE AND RESULTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL EXPERIMENTS

In the painting, Dichotomy, the departure point for the painting was, as well as for other early paintings in the study, the most random accidental sort of approach, rather like action doodles. These are applied to the canvas with a slightly tinted wash of turpentine or paint thinner.

Areas then develop, as perceived or projected, rapidly,
until the direction for the painting becomes apparent. The indecisive nature of this approach has some obvious drawbacks as well as advantages. In addition to this preliminary sort of 'writing,' letter stencils were used, as were stencils through paper doilies.

The faculty of projection has aroused interest and curiosity as artist's attempt to use accidental forms for what we call "Schemata", the starting point of the artist's vocabulary. New combinations and variations of ideas occur in using the accidental and occasionally a fresh vocabulary of forms (9:183).

This painting developed from the Schemata and was completed very rapidly almost as a drawing.

The trained drawer acquires a mass of Schemata . . . This serves as a support for the representation of his memory images and he gradually modifies . . . until it corresponds to that which he would express (9:189).
The intentional incompleteness of the figures was to allow for an indivisible nature regarding figure and ground, that unity as well as ambiguity might exist simultaneously. The figures were also intended to alternately advance or recede as the perception dictated even though they are "logically" either different heights or different distances apart, or one seated and the other standing.

The compositional simplification, a figure and a circle on one half of the canvas and a figure and a rectangle on the other half, was intended to create a sort of formal stasis even though the figures within or upon the grounds are informally arranged. Some motion occurs in this balance-imbalance situation.

The perception of the large yellow oval as a point in space is one interpretational level; for this end the close values of most of the rest of the painting aid this reading. The arrow within a rectangle at the border of the painting attracts the eye due to its edge position, but the arrow forces the viewer back into the composition. The figure-ground differentiation can be made mainly through observing the use of light and dark value changes. The use of color is intuitive and the palette is predominantly warm.

The informal unfinished quality has a self consciousness rather than a spontaneity, which would be more desirable.
In the painting, *The Players*, beyond the figure-ground problem, the initial concern was rather simple; to impose a light source consciousness. In addition the desire was to create an effect of a sort of spotlighting, which might, in fact, be contradictory to the other lighting. The idea involved theatricality and the illusion as well as questions of play or reality. The work developed rapidly in the earlier stages, but then a plateau was reached which impeded completion. It was decided by the investigator that the painting would be left alone until a solution to the dilemma appeared.

The tendency to read a circle in the original format suggested that such a circle should be specifically introduced and emphasized. This was given prolonged consideration and then done. In doing so, the right hand figure was painted out and various others were tried in various combinations. At an early point in this experimenting an ambiguous sort of transparent figure consistently appeared, and finally, it was decided that the use of this figure suggestion would best serve the painting. The unfinished incomplete handling of the far right configuration allows the viewer to complete the figure, which is at once part of frontal plane and ground.

The incomplete can arouse the beholder's imagination and project what is not there. Projection is set in motion most easily when there is left no doubt about the way to arrive at the closure--or any empty area or ill defined area is left, onto which can be projected the expected image (9:208).
The green faced figure and the pink one to its right juggle back and forth in a deliberate discrepancy in the painting's continuity. This is partly the result of the point that cool colors are generally perceived as receding and warm colors as advancing. In this instance the cooler color is placed spatially on a foreground figure and the warmer one rather behind and beside, causing the visual oscillation.

The figures intentionally read from left to right becoming less specific on the far right. The more exacting
delineation occurs in the figures that are advancing. This is also due to their being of the lightest value. The foreground detail further amplifies the spotlight effect and the figures to the far right soften into shadow. The contrast between the obscure and the obvious amplifies and accentuates both.

The liberties of projective realism had remained within the limits of what was sanctioned by the rules of projection. . . . There were two principles that could not be violated. One related to overlapping, the other to projective aspects. Overlapping had introduced a new spatial dimension and thus made it possible for more than one object to be located in the picture plane. This coincidence in the projective plane was compensated, however, by strict separation in depth. One object had to lie clearly in front of the other. This meant technically that overlapping had to remain one-sided except when transparency was to be represented. . . . Interpenetration undermined the solidity of the object. Overlapping involves the paradox that incompleteness maintains solidity whereas completeness destroys it. Thus the pictorial object acquired the transparency of an apparition, which could be suspected of being a product of the mind rather than a thing of matter (1:121).

Complete changes in color or outline still allow the reading of familiar shapes across or within. The idea of reading an image is described by Gombrich as "testing an image for its potentialities." The possibility is that all recognition of images is connected with projections and visual anticipation and these lead to the idea of potential movement."

The figure to the extreme right that does materialize in The Players is one sort of perceptual visualization of an atmospheric kind, while the two adjacent figures oscillate ambiguously via color.
The intentional variation in figure presentation and development allows for a strong standard of comparison by which the equivocality is better perceived.

The artist makes a configuration . . . which will suggest an image to him; but he will be well advised to keep his image flexible so that any difficulty he may experience in the process of projection can be adjusted and rectified (9:189).

The bluish splotch across the left hand female's nose ought to recede but its lightness of value still projects it forward beyond its bluishness, beyond the flesh tone it subdues. An oscillation occurs as this figure shares a common contour with the adjacent male. The shadow of the male figure may be read as shadow or as some sort of dark garment or wrap on the white robed female.

Some attempt was also made to bring up the color vibrancy in this painting and this is particularly noted within the circle. There are areas that are dry and chalky, which detract from the desired effect of the painting.

The monochromatic color of the painting entitled, Still Life, was intentional and meant to further amplify and enhance the difference between the flat two-dimensional jar forms and "brushy" more actively rendered still life ground for them. The
still life itself becomes yet another figure on the shallow distant background in a simultaneous perception.

In addition to the variance in painting approach regarding the two contrasting figurations, further separation occurs by value. The jars are very light and the majority of the rest of the work is middle valued. These devices were intended to retard comfortable picture reading and create a viewer tension of sorts.

The movement implicit in the brushwork gives unity to most of the surface. Consistent attempts however, to reconcile the flat forms with the rest of the still life are
frustrating; then sought, is the rest or plainness of the flat forms. It seems that closure is resisted and simultaneously simplicity is sought.

The unfinished painting called Romanesque is included in the study as a representation of a transitional sort regarding the figure-ground problem. Consistent efforts at simplification led to the emergence of the circle usage. This idea grew from the observance of the relationships between the bottle forms in the previous painting, Still Life, and their grounds, as well as from the circle in The Players. The rigidity of the composition is accentuated not only by the use of the circle, but by the containing of it within a larger rigid form.

Changes in the size of the faces in the circle are aimed at suggesting differences in spatial position of forms really on the same level. E. G. Boring discusses the size and space problem: "Phenomenal size, like physical size is relative and has no meaning except as a relation between objects." (9:301).

The best known visual ambiguity is the so-called size-distance relationship. The size of an object cannot be determined unless the distance is known or vice versa. The
interdependence of knowledge and the estimation of distance, can only amplify the fact that all that can be really done is to try various interpretations by switching from one to the other. Also the temptation to guess at things where we lack previous guidance or experience is ever present.

The figures share the same base line and yet appear at different distances. The left hand figure alternates as a ground area and as a figure area. It is a hole in the main arched form and it is a part of a larger deep blue ground. It is a rectangle with a head on the frontal level. The deep blue between the far right figure and the female figure does not function and would have to be altered, as would the right
hand figure. This figure floats in front of a cut-out that does not really become shadow or hole as intended, possibly because the face touches the edge of the shadow.

The brushwork almost creates a feeling of volume as it moves diagonally across, yet within the major forms. It is checked by the rigidity of these forms. The central figures fight to emerge from the ground but are contained. The heads also float in front of the arch form at times.

"Involvement with a seemingly simple form must persist until discoveries can be refined and controlled as part of a consistent idea." (3:101).

The two circles of the same size appear different or unequal, partly because of their position and relation to the angle inferred by the apex beneath the head of the left circle. The circle nearest the apex seems larger. The implied triangle is further enhanced by the diagonal brush strokes.

To further achieve the illusion regarding difference in size of two circles of the same size: the interior configurations in the left circle were treated as enlarged, part of the outer rim is treated quite indistinctly, and the right circle contains a central circle reduced in size and more sharply connected to the outer edge than the left one is.

The rigidity of this painting stifled the investigator and so it was left unfinished. It greatly influenced some of the further studies, however, the next one particularly.
The painting, Cybernetic Illusions After Marshall McLuhan, came into being following a McCluhan film, The Medium is the Massage. The impetus then was partly an idea from this film and partly a carry over from the previous circle problems.

The circle with its centric symmetry, which does not single out any one direction, is the simplest visual pattern. We know that perception spontaneously tends toward roundness when the stimulus gives it leeway to do so. The perfection of the circular shape attract attention (1:137).

In this painting the circles are again the same size though they appear different.

Learning habits of seeing and the physiological process of perception contribute to certain errors in our attempt to judge size and direction. Illusions of size involve discrepancies between measureable fact and visual appearance. The illusion is part of our inability to separate the figure from its environment. As perceptual skills develop, fewer and fewer visual clues are required for separation (3:27).

The three circles left to right shall be described as A, B, and circles. Their placement near the edge and a row is known to be more static than any other place, except perhaps dead center. Yet, in spite of their stability, they do not particularly stay there; that is, movement or potential movement, thence tension, seems implicit. This is due largely to those forms surrounding the three circles, particularly the strong-pulling diagonal stripe patterns to the left of a circle and to the right of B in the circle configuration. These diagonals pull and push in at the same time, and their strength comes in part from their attachment to edge and the
dark larger area to the right. "The quality called movement of immobile form does not appear unless any indication that the object might actually move, is checked (l:337)." In addition to the left-right frontal plane motion, there is also a foreground-middle ground pull. Sometimes the right circle that shall be called "C" circle floats in front of the white ground and behind middle circle "B" and sometimes it breaks all the way forward. Circle "A" can be perceived as ground behind "figure ground" and as figure in front of ground and as a
hole in the middle ground. Circle "A" appears smaller and this is due in part to the relatively small and isolated sketchily drawn mouth. The sketchiness barely intrudes. The amorphous blurriness of circle "C" also adds to its multiple perceptability, as it is atmospheric.

The "B" circle reads figure in ground quite strongly—but can become behind, as seen through a hole in the ground area, if concentrated upon. It never goes deep enough to be in the farthest deep space behind the white form. This depth illusion is created by the strong contrast between values, and by using warm colors with high intensity light values.

The circle "C" is treated with diffused edges which creates some tension as the eye attempts to accommodate itself to the indistinct form. It is also given a monochromatic treatment which contrasts with "A" and "B" circles. The amorphous quality of the figure also tends to suggest some volume in an entirely different rendering from that of designed circle "B" or the linear drawing of circle "A".

The eye shifts between the figures and attempts to resolve the ambiguity, and acknowledgement of the relationship between actual movement and static illusion exists. The diffusion serves as a motion stimulus as well as a symbol for it. Diffused edges create a blur that cannot be readily resolved. Repeated information or blurred information creates a dilemma of attention as well as motion.
DaVinci was the inventor of deliberately blurred image, the sfumato, or the veiled form, that cuts down the information on the canvas and thereby stimulates the mechanism of projection (9:221).

The three circles also suggest various views of the same face, in yet another aspect of implied movement.

In his book *The Hidden Order of Art*, Ehrenzweig discusses a similar circle problem.

For instance it is difficult to detect among a row of perfect identical circles that one imperfect circle which shows a small gap in circumference. The 'law of closure' will always tend to round off and simplify the images and concepts of conscious thought. It makes it difficult, if not impossible for rational thought to handle 'open' material without rounding it off prematurely (7:39).

The investigator judged that this painting should be simplified; the two half faces seem too incidental to leave there and should be removed. The idea of altering the format to a square within a square is interestingly attractive. The orange areas disconcert this investigator and might be better worked over for they leap forward almost to the point of obliterating concentration on the white areas.

Another contemplated change would be to bring up the deep blue color area to the left of the orange, to a much lighter value, as it reads as too much of a hole. It is in fact a hole in the background.

The attempt to impose some verticality into a predominately squarish format by the vertical orange forms almost works, but detracts from the whole and disseminates picture strength. The strongest area is the white ground figure with
the adjacent circle face form figures. The two half faces on the vertical tend to push the top half of the composition forward to read as a frontal plane. Movement and the shallow space to deep space is experienced in the diagonal action, as well as in planal relations.

The blue oval form on the red flat plane also involves equivocal readings and the area can advance or recede at will or at once. The center of the blue oval also appears to be the same red as the outside of the oval. The white six, due to its brillance floats in one perception well in front of the total picture frame. Outlining of the six form also projects or isolates the form from the perceived pictorial surface, if that is the intention.

The point of origin on this painting, The Little Known Airplane, is related to an idea regarding associations in a succession of images within images. It was the intention that the figure-ground manipulation might make more difficult reading dominance for the viewer. The large fairly central airplane was intended to be the matrix of the associations. The use of related flying content was meant to be antithetical to the stasis of the form. The forms in The Airplane, float in front of the ground overlapping each other but connected. Breaks in
form connections really do not exist but are suggested by contrasting very light values against middle values. The hard edge delineation as well as the active contour further isolate figure from ground. The sharp angles act as breaks that in one way impede, if not stop movement; they contrast with the soft organic forms. To say that these elements only stop each other is incomplete, for in the form contradiction exists movement of another sort, as the eye and mind is forced to move back and forth in a different way from a smooth rhythmic
flow. Tension is visually implicit in the contrast.

If the perception is of a dual planal arrangement, this is amplified by the basic two tone value scheme. The light values advance and the deeper ones generally recede. Arnheim in a discussion of frontal and depth dimensions speaks of the frontal orientation: "The painter deliberately emphasizes the presence of the frontal plane and obtains the richness of double composition." The masked and goggled brown boxed head involves a spatial duality, or multiplicies; also. It can advance or recede spatially if so perceived as a positive or negative area.

Distortions of the human form to the point of non-objective organic shapes aims at contrast to clarify content. These forms are also intended to disquiet or unbalance viewer equilibrium. The juxtaposing of diametrically opposed figures tends to create further informational ambiguity.

Variation of edge and surface and multiple levels of refinement and control beget various sensory impacts or experiences.

Concern for color was secondary although this investigator had strong regret about this lacking aspect.

The negative shapes or interstices are not intended to read as any particular image. If such an image is sought, frustration can only occur, as any figure refuses to materialize.

Incompleteness in the drawing and the density or solidity of the figures helps to determine the position in the depth
dimension.

In Vasari's *Life of Luca della Robbia* he states:

He left it rough and unfinished so that it is not lost by the eye at various distances. Artists should pay much attention to this, for experience shows that all things which are far removed have more beauty and greater force when they are a sketch than when they are finished. And quite apart from the distance, it also appears in sketches which arise of a sudden in a frenzy of art that the idea is expressed in a few strokes, while a labored effect and too much industry sometimes deprives of force and skill those who can not ever leave their hand from the work they are doing (9:193).

The incomplete sketch leaves openings for the viewer to fill in if he must, but also allows intrusion of ground into figure or vice versa, making separation into forms challenging. In one sense strength of clear impact is disseminated, yet in another, it is increased because of the subtlety.

In the book "On Art and Unity," Tryggve Edmond discusses various aspects of pictorial organization.

The reason for the introduction of angular shapes among soft and curved ones may, of course, simply be a wish to obtain the striking aesthetic effect of contrast . . . The setting off of one thing by the other is a difficult task and must be done with great care or it may vulgarize the painting (6:101).

Somehow the investigator associates this vulgarizing with this painting in the study, which may be due to a lack of transition or graduation between the diverse forms. If the opposite forms are left irreconcilable, contradictions exist, which is of course to be distinguished from contrast which introduces tension. The separateness of the many elements can threaten unity, therefore the work had to be organized by color and
value and consistency in the manner of execution. The sketchiness of the airplane configuration thwarts this consistency somewhat. The pictorial organization is toward the rambling rather than the climactic. Framing certain areas attempts to subdue the activity of irregular contours, but also accentuates it.

In the painting, X3, the concern was to create various spatial levels that could be interinvolved or occur simultaneously. The intention was to use rigid form coupled with active brushwork. The forms were outlined, and often this outlining is the reason that figure-ground readings can take place. The line can be seen as its own form, but it also is, the boundary for a two-dimensional form that lies on top of a through going ground. The lines relation has ceased to symmetrical. It now belongs to the inner surface, but is still independent of the outer. The inner area gives the impression of greater density; it looks more solid, whereas the ground is looser, less limited to a given stable place (9:137).

The line can also be seen as dividing with equal space on either side, or as an interstice, or area, between forms, or as flat patterns on the same plane. The continuity or interruption in the line also affects its relation to the adjacent areas, much as the degree of density or solidity in a figure affects the ease with which it is read.
The upper bluish white area, at times quite atmospheric, can become a hole, that is seen through, to the blue 'ground'; or it can be seen as floating in front of the 'ground.'

The rules of similarity of location, involve lines or forms that lie close together, and the notion that they will
be grouped together by this proximity. This grouping is parti-
cularly evident in the upper area of the picture where curving
forms group with angular ones. "When surfaces are empty the
contour lines produce differences of density and spatial posi-
tion, and internal textures will reinforce the effect of the
contour (1:194)."

A particular area of visual oscillation that is easily
noted, is observed in the lower left blue boxed star forms,
which also create the red letter "M". The entire painting
moves busily in total and specific kinds of figure-ground
relationships.

The use of the faces in the cross form, tend to make
the cross appear rather transparent. This is a problem, for
the cross seems to be in front of the blue ground and yet,
still reads as a cut in the blue form. The majority of the
painting is non-objective and these faces create a degree of
contrast. They are a point of departure for pictorial meaning,
if one is necessary to the viewer.

The large cloud form in red was added to hold down the
whole thing perceptually. The warmth of color allows it to
advance even though its value is less than the value of the
white areas.

The general principal of simultaneous contrast in color
in its simplest statement is as follows: Each of two con-
trasting surfaces justaposed, will exaggerate its apparent
difference in the direction of the others complimentary of
the color which forms its context (15:183).
The organge-red on the white ground thence relatively turns the white greyed blue, which accounts for the projection of the red beyond the cooler color. Thus it is seen that the value in a pigment varies with the context in which the pigment is placed. This painting was very difficult to resolve partly due to the awkwardness of the shape and the attempts to reduce the extreme vertical arrangement.

In the painting, *Bye Bye Dorothy*, there is a repetition of form or similarity of shape, which is an important concern, as it relates to unity and variety.

The principle of similarity asserts that the degree to which parts . . . resemble each other in some perceptual quality will help determine the degree to which they are seen as belonging together. The difference of size has a grouping effect (1:67).

The large forms draw together against the smaller ones. There is a strong right hand pull to the painting which bounces back against the curve of the figures, and perhaps is anchored momentarily in the white cloud form. The similarity in the shape of the units comprising the figure area is differentiated from the receding ground area. The ground area is a similar blue value, while the figure areas have subtle value differences, though there is no abrupt change. "Elements linked by similarity also tend to lie in the same plane (1:67)." The unity of the painting is enhanced by the relationship between
foreground and background white areas.

The delicate balance between monotony and successful repetition is always a challenge.

There should be some variance in the forms or some gradual change in the aspect or character of the objects. A change which suggests the idea of their being individually free and able to escape, if they liked, from the law that rules them, and yet submitting to it (6:94-95).

To achieve a compatible relationship between the forms is vital, that they may assist in defining space (depth particularly), as well as achieving interaction. "Resemblance is combined with independence, sameness with difference; unity
of a less complex, more formal static kind (6:94)."

The figure of Dorothy is recognized as figure, that the contrast between forms is amplified. This contrast also acts as a frame of reference regarding the figurative abstracting. The figure is further accentuated by the lightness of the area around it, which has an aura effect.

An aura of space appears to surround any naturalistic representation. The mere sign stands out as a figure against a neutral background, but this same ground recedes and assumes potential extension as soon as it forms part of the representation (9:229-230).

The deliberate accentuation of the aura effect in Bye Bye Dorothy almost eclipses the illusion and prevents the phenomena of the ambiguity. The light area does contribute to the floating effect desired and tends to push the figure forward and up. The figure is held up partially by attachment to the edge and to bigger forms.

The greater the suggestion of movement or indeed mobility--ours or that of the object--the more certain will be the effect which obliterates ground from our awareness and turns it into a screen (9:229-230).

The idea of anisotopic space, that is the frontal plane being divided into two areas, one the heavier, aid this idea of weight and movement, since most of the forms exist in the upper half.

The busy use of many small forms disturbed the investigator, and the idea developed that the many little pieces should be connected into one large form (visual motifs) which would have some of the same characteristics as the others.
suggested. The forms were overlapped, but separation remained by value in some instances. The change in size relationships suggests a deep and shallow space contrast. There is also an intrinsic rhythm as the frequency of contrasts is increased or multiplied, the visual rhythm increases. The alternation of values: light, back to middle value, and then beyond deep in pictorial space, to light value, further amplifies the depth concern as does the rhythm.

An increase or diminuation of interval produces a distinction of frequency . . . the variation of slow and fast. The charged quickness of a Rubens composition depends always in part on the density of its element; its decisive monumentality depends on their amplitude, on the size of the positive forms in relation to the field (15:90)."

Similarity in shape, location, motion and speed produce grouping. The speed similarity facilitates depth perception. "The more consistent the shape of a unit the more readily it will detach itself from its environment (2:71)." This effect may be observed by noting the tendency of the rectangular forms to scoop forms forward, as in the case of the central top unit which is covered with the green color and the white forms. Then the brownish black floating "square" face pops out yet is held behind the white cloud--partially due to its intensity of white. The incomplete rectangle beginning to the right of Dorothy tend to support the figure rather like a fork-left tutting out from the cloud.

When there are no intervals between units, a compact visual object results. The principals by which grouping takes place are applications of principal of simplicity and the rule of similarity. A visual object will be more unified the more similar its elements are (2:72)."
The investigator, dissatisfied with the lower left hand area of the painting, intends to paint on this some more.

The primary motivation in the origination of this painting, Touch Me Not Meadow-Grass, was the juxtaposition of form, and the intention to take the human form and develop from that to a non-objective organic form orientation. Concern was always for spatial as well as compositional structuring. A juxtaposition of forms for a comparison of deep space and shallow space was intentional. Contrast between amorphous shapes and more static rigid forms was intended to amplify the difference—here again light values were used to advance and middle values to recede.

Inconsistency that suggests the ambiguous figure ground relationship appears, when attention is directed to light values of blue, that seem to fight to be placed behind the middle green plane. Another variance is noted if one reads the top blue area as a separate area from the reading of it as an area going to the middle of the picture and receding behind the upper configurations. Also the change in color hue in the blue areas, further amplifies the spatial ambiguity. In the upper left area of the painting, the blue and white areas may be read as floating in front of the green form or as holes in it. In addition to the color value relations, the alternation
between curved and straight contours, and the preoccupation with edge, tend to create visual movement in a rather static composition. Color and surface quality are of secondary concern in this primarily spatial problem. The upper left ambiguous area seems to detract from the whole rather than enhance and this will be changed so that the strength of the work will be improved.

A distraction is noted in the lower box-like form which projects an illusion of a third dimension which can disrupt
the planal totality. This would possibly be changed to be advantageous to picture unity and strength if that is desireable.

Common contours for certain forms have not attained the ambiguous level, generally. Exception is noted in the alternation between the large green cloud form and its adjacent white areas. This green form in the upper left area seems to project before the white forms, or impose itself, via contour and form interruption. Its deeper value, in fact, does not always posit it spatially back. Alternation between the white and green areas for frontal spatial emergence is constant, yet alternation is only one perception of the arrangement.

The linked white forms are merely linked or fused circles; an extension of the circle preoccupation. The simplification eliminates minute multiple levels of small forms over-lapping. The spatial levels are drastically reduced. Noteworthy is the contradiction of the laws of perspective, which imply that larger objects are seen nearer the observer. The smaller figure, which combines a rectangle with an organic popcorn like form, comes far forward of its larger ground, which in turn becomes a figure on another ground.

The bond between the forms is a function of their similarity, not their position. It should, moreover, be noted that the similarity in question is not restricted to similarity of shape. Let the shapes remain constant, and introduce among them a contrast of color, the similarity in color will suffice to establish felt affinities, to which the eye will spontaneously respond (15:77-78).
The painting, *Astrophysical Connection*, was laid out very rapidly with a primary concern for varied yet related forms and their spatial relationship.

There was some experimentation with the aura effect around some of the figures. The lower left hand configurations have an intentional similarity in the value and hue, that a kind of transparency effect might be affected.

The activity of the irregular contours of the forms, which undulatingly echo each other, required a much quieter ground. The primarily monochromatic palette was also intended to subdue the form activity.

The human mind has an inclination to variety in which it finds relief from dullness and monotony. Unless balanced by unity, however, variety will eventually lead to fatigue and confusion (6:52).

The strings of forms, kind of repetitively chain linked, can be read as groupings of larger forms or as elements or parts with specific individuality. The largest forms are at once figure and ground. Smallest forms of highest value float in front; but in the left hand circular form, the small forms are figure on the circle's ground, which in turn is a figure on the deeper blue ground.

Variety . . . would thus primarily imply diversity of color, differences in appearance and attitudes of shapes, variations in direction and qualities of lines . . . Unity would suggest that those factors are in no way at cross purposes within the field; they work together toward a single overall impression; the formal elements balance one another, there is order among them, harmony, coherence (6:54).
Straight and curvy edges accentuate, contrast and give some variety. The composition and form are satisfactory to this investigator, but the chalky white pigment and dry surface quality of the paint are not. As this painting will be completed, attention to these details will be given.
In this work, OSCMN Whizzer, the two primary concerns were for the simplification of form and space, and the development of color intensity. A higher level of color clarity was desired, as well as hue and value variation within an area. This variation may be seen in the central golden form. "In a pictorial field, if the proportions of the reflected and absorbed light may be governed by the action of selected pigments, the colors may be made to vary by design (15:150)."

Color is usually described in terms of value and saturation or intensity. Value is only the amount of white light reflected and saturation is that aspect of color which varies with the amount of a given hue. Intensity is the difference in relative unity or strength of a given hue.

The division of the almost square canvas in the middle, horizontally, does not actually divide the canvas in half, because of the activity in the upper half and the lightness (value) and brightness (hue) of the major form; this is related to the anisotropic idea.

The field as a whole can exhibit a visual equilibrium only as the negative as well as the positive space permits it. Equilibrium is their joint effect, and can be afforded by neither one of them alone. When the negative form is unstable, the positive form is felt, despite the tame symmetry of its motive, to have disturbed the visual economy. A complement is required which will serve to compensate for it and to neutralize it, in the field (15:38).

The contrast between the strong straight edges and the curving undulating form, emphasizes and intensifies their particular individualities, as well as their spatial position. An attempt was made to have the hose-like form completely pro-
ject from the pictorial surface perceptually and yet be attached within it. By connecting the undulating form to the simplified horizontal, the strengths of both are enforced. In addition there is then implied movement, akin to the undulating form, in the plain forms.

The strong visual movement often originates from the attitude that the shape retains traces of motor acts as well as the physical forces which have created the content being represented.

The relationship between lines and motions of objects rest upon the natural laws of our perception. Swift motions are actually seen as motionless lines. Objects that deposite a trail, like crayon, leave an actual permanent line; the line, too, expresses the motion of the object, though it is not physically a dynamic form like the circle made by the spinning dot. But such a line
does not naturally connote the thing that made it; what it connotes is only the directedness of its motion. It is a path; and in our seeing, every continuous line is a path, though it need not be the path of any imagined thing (12:54).

Positive and negative relationships come into play particularly in the area where the blue ground intrudes into the creamy white form.

The figure-ground version that produces the simpler total pattern will prevail . . . The more simply the interstices between figures in a picture are shaped, the more likely they are to be seen as positive patterns rather than as borderless pieces of ground (2:223).

In the long undulating form, certain ambiguity exists, because the modeling, or attempt at dimensionality, is unclear or inconsistent.

Convexity makes for figure, concavity for ground, so the highlighted top rounded forms become convex and their depressions concave and there is another ambiguity.

This painting began to be very busy and gradually was simplified until it reached its present state. In the beginning this investigator felt the work was rather syrupy, but now is favorably disposed toward it, due largely to color and the funny form.

In this painting, *Victory Leaving the People*, simplification was the impetus. A contour line or edge usually delineates
a figure-ground relationship, and attention was directed in this painting to the line as outline or figure on a ground.

It was the intention of the investigator to partially outline a form over other forms and by purposely leaving the figure open, make the problem more difficult to read. The interrupted system of lines partially impedes the idea that enclosed areas often seem to read as enlargements of the under area, or as some swelling of the forms.

Certain lines connect to the frontal forms of the flag and the central female figure, which cause the edge of these forms to be read as lines. The areas within these lines can at times be seen as atmospheric.
The handling of line is full of adventure. It soon reveals its double character. A line may be a self contained object, which is seen as lying on top of a homogeneous ground. But as soon as a line or a combination of lines embraces an area, its character changes radically and it becomes an outline or contour. It is now the boundary of a two-dimensional surface that lies on top of a thorough going ground. The lines relationship to the neighboring surfaces has ceased to be symmetrical. It now belongs to the inner surface but is still independent of the outer. The inner area gives the impression of greater density; it looks more solid, whereas the ground is looser, less limited to a given stable plane. This impression may seem to be nothing but a carry over from our experience with physical objects, which are seen against the empty spaces of their surroundings. Experiments suggest, however, that it is more likely to derive from physiological factors underlying the perceptual process itself, quite independently of previous experience. These experiments have shown that the area within the contour offers a greater resistance to the appearance of a visual object projected on it with increasing strength than does the outer ground—-that is, it takes strong light to make the object barely visible inside the contour (1:137-138).

Because of the recognizable content, the illusion is harder to achieve, which makes the problem more interesting to the investigator. In addition to the difficulty in the problem of illusion, color was another consideration. The color intensity was brought up in this painting, which satisfied this investigator, but there was little concern for surface texture or brushwork. There was a problem with the intensity of the color link.

The high intensity of the yellow gold color on the torso of the bottom figure causes it to advance before the frontal plane level. This is be subdued by changing it to a deeper value of less intensity.

Other experiments have proved that visual objects will shrink in size when their image falls on an area of the retina upon which an outline figure had been projected.
earlier. Thus the perceived density or cohesiveness of the surrounded area does not seem to be due to mere assumptions based on past experience (1:138).

The painting, The Twentieth Century Military Mind, is an extremely simple study regarding figure-ground relationships. It is the statement of a figure, the soldier, on a ground. The emphasis was on color.

The white areas of the uniform advance, because of their intense value. The diagonal sash the figure wears holds down the white area and keeps it within the picture plane.

The perception of the content, the figure, makes it difficult to perceive any ambiguous relationships. The large size of the canvas is intended to enhance the effect of imposing the large figure on the viewer.

It was difficult, in light of the prior experiments, to avoid any ambiguity and to opt for simplicity in this painting. Prior to the study, the investigator constantly had to battle to achieve simplification. It was necessary to include this simplification of the problems, that the complex nature of the overall study might better be perceived.

In the painting, the large hat of the soldier is merely an edge like unto a Napoleonic hat—the interior form is atmospheric and three blurry faces are within the area. The amorphous
quality of the area is a contradiction to the force of the edge. The degree of solidity of such a form determines its position--this is an odd thing, for the hat is really "invisi­ble"--one seems to be seeing through a window to some other place. The contradiction confounds, partly because of the recognizable content. Illusion is harder to achieve, when recognized content or a representational approach is involved. This made the problem more interesting to the investigator.

The color intensity was brought up in this painting, which satisfied this investigator, but there was little concern for surface texture or brushwork.
If the defined blue area around the figure could be changed to a closer value and color relationship, as well as related to the treatment of the hat interior, then perhaps a more exciting painting might develop, which would be harder to read.

The incomplete state of the painting, Party Masque, causes discussion to be limited, as change is imminent. Shared contour lines were intended to create illusions regarding the placement of the figures. Size-distance relationships are also considered. This is noted when the right-hand figure appears larger than the immediately adjacent figure, yet they share the same plane and fight for the frontal position.

The "shadow-phantom" is barely noticeable to the right of the white haired figure. His face can be seen as a profile, overlapping or interrupting her hair form.

A new level of comprehension is reached when initially perceived information is transformed by the discovery of a concealed image--the viewer participates in the process of organizing the new information into its various possible combinations (1:76).

The flag area to the right now contains a ground area of vertical stripes in yet another pattern change. The circle in the flag tends to emerge as though it were a magnification.
This is assisted by the value changes and by a line which becomes interrupted. The light value of the small pink-white far left figure forces it forward, projecting the front of the face adjacent to it, in another inconsistency.

As the painting is incomplete, it is important to note again, that the study is not intended to be climactic.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

The approach to painting prior to this investigation was largely spontaneous. As a configuration appeared on the canvas, it was the practice of this investigator to work primarily with what was manifest. Very little changing, in form, color, composition, or content, was done once the commitment had been made. Gradually the ability to move a figure across the canvas, to paint out areas, and to repaint other areas began to develop. The total epiphanic commitment had to give way to a combination of experimentation, meditation, intuition and conscious manipulation.

The primary concern in the study involved figure-ground relationships, space, composition, and grouping. Color was considered to be something less significant to this investigator. Gradually the dissatisfaction with color became consuming. It was difficult to restrain a desire for total preoccupation with color. This pursuit of color persists and further study and discovery is imminent. The rationale regarding the initial disregard for color has become obscured, and it is extremely curious to contemplate in retrospect.

The idea of including the various stages in the development of the work, and allowing remnants of each phase to persist into the completed work, still seems necessary. To observe certain instances of drawing, in contrast to lush paint, or plain
color areas, is more exciting than just the unified continuous surface of a similar technique. If technique becomes too uniform, it can take over completely, thence eliminating the totality.

The neglect of the concern for surface qualities in this study has also necessitated a consuming concern for surface. It now seems totally vital that variety of technique must be as important as variety in form, space, color and value.

Repetition and magnification of the parts within the whole also is important. This idea was suggested by the repetition idea, and might extend to a total repetition of units of the painting, or repetition of the total painting, on say, four separate units that would read as one.

It would be interesting to pursue the experiment regarding the use of images outside their recognizable accepted frame of reference. Various contrasts in degree of rendering or painting could then be used, specific to non-specific, from the super-real to the abstract; also color to non-color or vice versa would be involved. Interest might logically turn to questions of incorporating experimental found images with created images, as a further extension of the contradictions offered by juxtaposition. Further studies could involve the combination of new materials such as plastic and metals along with wood, found objects and paint.

The idea of similarity of form, color, plane and surface appeals, but the contradictions inherent in the juxtaposition
of opposites is more challenging. The curve lines, set off by the straight lines, begets understanding of straightness as well as curviness. Comprehension of their differences, their individualities, comes through their relationships.

A looser handling of the pictorial surface would enhance most of the paintings, as they would become more flexible. It is, however, possible that by utilizing exposure to the static qualities in the approach, the investigator has achieved a greater appreciation for a more flexible approach.

Prior to this study, emphasis was placed on one pictorial plane and there was a minimum of overlapping. It is now possible to be involved on multilevels and to overlap forms or figures.

The spatial shift between two dimensionality and a three dimensionality is purposely inconsistent, as is the contrast between rendering of surface and spontaneous drawing. This is a means by which a freedom in the painting is created and incompleteness and complexity is enhanced.

One conclusion to such a study on ambiguous space would be to arrive at pure optical painting. This end is noted. However, subtle problems in equivocal space regarding the figure-ground relationships, are more interesting.

Numerous discoveries continually involve the experimenter for they persist in recurring frequently. Many modifications in the painting approach of the candidate and part of the results of this study. Such a study must affect the influence philosophical and experimental attitude of the experimenter.
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