THE TWO DIMENSIONAL TREATMENT OF
AN ORIGINAL PROBLEM IN LANDSCAPE PAINTING

by

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STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

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INTRODUCTION

Andre Malraux states that the essential characteristic of contemporary painting is the "color patch":

"Our art...is the patch of color irrelevant both to the structure of the picture and to its composition (composition, in the traditional sense of the word.) It does not serve as an accent stressing any detail of the execution nor, as in Japan, some feature of the thing portrayed; rather, it seems to exist capriciously, as though it had been put there for its own sake."

But he modifies this statement:

"Nevertheless, in the work of those who make use of the patch we can always see that it has a certain relevance: in the case of Picasso, with a passionate constructivism; in Bonnard's, then Braque's, with an effect of harmony; in Leger's, with architectural lay-out."

Hence, he sees a "certain" relationship between the patch and the intentions of the contemporary artist. He understands that the artist of today is conscious of a new sense of color, and is adapting that new sense of color to his forms; and that consequently painting has gained an altogether different appearance. This new appearance; this new common denominator of art, is called by Malraux One-Dimensionality:

"Sometimes, too, the patch sounds a high-pitched note keyed to the calligraphy (Dufy onward to the blood-red splashes of André Masson)...the patch often exists in its own right, apart from any reference to the picture's content, and we are tempted to speak of one-dimensional art."

2. Ibid., p. 605
3. Ibid., p. 605
Malraux's term is apt not only to distinguish the extreme
two-dimensionality of contemporary art from art of previous decades,
but also to pin-point the artist's revived interest in his media,
and in the flat surface.

"...modern art, by substituting art's specific value for
the values to which art had hitherto been subordinated..." 4

It was not always conceivable nor possible that the artist
in past periods could give full consideration to two-dimensionality,
color and form, or express these qualities in his work, when his
major problems consisted of conforming to the Church, the buyer
and the journalist. It was not until after the 19th Century that
the artist, his necessity to render realism having been eliminated,
was free to turn his attention again to developing these especial
features so peculiar to painting.

The physical surface of the canvas has always stood between
the painter and his preferred or commissioned subject, and essen­
tially painters have always been concerned with the many problems
inherent to this flat surface. Down through the ages they per­
fected various ways of dealing with, and more or less solving
some of these problems; creating illusionist-realism or "tromp­
l'oeil" with perspective and/or box space behind the frame; sub­
ordination of natural paint texture to the precise rendition of
detail, or directly relating their images to the canvas or paper
surface. The works of Leonardo, Titian, Tintoretto, Rembrandt

4. Ibid., p. 605
and Goya are esteemed for just such formal inventions resulting from contemporary conditioning. It is curious and significant to note however, that this remarkable amount of energy and sophisticated thought required to organize perspective theory during the Renaissance proved alien to the painter after a relatively short period of time.

The majority of contemporary painters have been and are concerned with color, both free and structured, and its relationship to the flat surface. Along with this, importance has been given to the material, or physical, body of color; and the later canvases of Jackson Pollock result in all probability from this importance. The Impressionists were the first to place emphasis on color, both as color and as material, in their use of the small dot technique; and we can follow and appreciate these factors in the work of successive groups of painters and contemporary artists from the prominent and visible marks of palette knife and other tools of the trade.

This new interest in color as surface logically led to an interest in surface as "surface", or plane; thus, in contemporary painting, surface almost inevitably involves the question of structure.

Traditionally, structure has usually consisted of an arrangement of planes. The plane involves consideration of both color and detail, and its construction incorporates the disposition of these factors in such a way as to suggest to the viewer's

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5. See plates I, II, III.
PLATE I

THE FALL OF MAN

Titian

Oil on canvas, about 1560/70. Collection, Madrid, Prado.
PLATE II

ST. PETER AT THE DEATH BED OF TABITHA

Rembrandt

Pen drawing, about 1662/65. Collection Dresden, Kupferstichkabinett.
PLATE III

THE KISS

Honore Daumier

Charcoal drawing. Collection Paris, Musée du Louvre
eye a balanced sequence of movement, in a decided direction.

In the painting previous to this century, structure as such played at best a discreet role because of its tendency to distract from the realistic detailed image; and it can be recognized in these paintings only after careful scrutiny and analysis tracing.

Only since contemporary painting has come to the fore, has structure been released, so to speak, from this bondage; and included in the ranks of its liberators is Picasso, perhaps the greatest of the pioneers in modern art, who through use of his strident planes, put structure more into evidence and on an equal basis with form. 6

(A distinction here must be made between plane and form. Form is an ambiguous term which often describes a confusion of compositional elements; and it is frequently used interchangeably with the term plane. For purposes of clarity however, the term form will be used throughout this thesis only in reference to a detail or shape subordinated to a plane.)

No doubt there is a common denominator; a sixth sense, at work in the soul of every sensitive artist, that senses the logical existing impasse of the canvas's surface, and applauds in turn its ingenious solutions.

To overly stress the color-patch would be to preclude the structural inventions of the past from their rightful participation

6. See plates IV, V, VI
PLATE IV

MYRRHINA AND KINESIAS

Picasso

PLATE VI

Picasso drawing, 1946
in the status of modern painting; to disregard them, on the other hand, is to deny the inevitable progress of artistic trends.

To achieve a satisfactorily balanced composition by the interweaving of planes and colors, and the organization and placement on canvas of these and the other factors considered in this introduction, would be a pertinent step towards solution of this universal problem, hereinafter treated.
EXPLANATION OF STRUCTURE USED IN THE THESIS PAINTING

The procedure decided upon for evolving the thesis painting Mount Lemmon Landscape, was the development of a basic organization of planes which would best express the idea behind the initial drawing: slim vertical pines contrasted with mountain mass.

A quick primary sketch was organized into a firm working structure suitable to the 4 x 5 proportions of the canvas. 7

The picture surface was divided into two large vertical planes A and B on the diagram. The left plane tilts into the right at the top of the composition, and the right plane into the left at the bottom, thus serving, more or less, to automatically raise the left plane while lowering the right. The purpose in doing this is two-fold: to create a balanced tension on the surface; and to suggest to the eye of the viewer a clockwise, or left-to-right, sequence of movement.

Because of the large size of the format, an inverted triangular plane C was set in the uppermost portion of the composition, creating an illusion of appearing in front of the two main central planes. This offsets the peculiar tendency of perspective to diminish the total effect of the top part of the picture. The triangular shape further stresses the desired verticality, and at the same time enhances the illusion of expanding

7. See plate VII.
the upper area of the composition.

The plane D at the bottom of the composition serves the purpose of shifting and dividing the center planes while causing them to appear higher in the picture.

Two side planes E and F again suggest the verticality of the pines.

The general overall organization is comparable to that of a Greek temple: two side columns standing on a base, and supporting a tympanum. The essential difference between the thesis composition and the temple is obvious in the shifting of the central planes.
Diagramed Undiagramed

PLATE VII

Basic structure used in thesis sketches and painting.
**ANALYSIS OF THE SKETCHES**

All of these preliminary sketches are done on small unstretched canvas or shellacked paper, either 9" x 12" or 10\(\frac{1}{2}\)" x 12\(\frac{1}{2}\)".

Instead of beginning immediately on the large canvas, I considered it advisable to work out a group of color sketches as a guide to extending the drawing with color, while working out a satisfactory layout for the finished product.

The problem at hand consisted of experimenting with decorative possibilities, always related to the plane and the surface. I wanted the basic planes and the color to work together in such a way that each color would express the principal planes and their related planes as they were worked into the canvas; the color at the same time sustaining a poised position on the surface.

Where planes overlapped, a middle color had to be found complying with the preceding conditions as a mediator. This was a trial and error proposition, as was the mixing of all the colors; and it often had to be resolved by the mixing together of two hues, or mixing an intensity grey (combination of complementary hues); or using the inherent warm or cool tendency of another color (the characteristic of blues and greens).

In all the sketches, the color and drawing were continually adjusted in relation to one another in order to be compatible with the overall compositional effect.
The brush, the shape and pliability of which is distinct from the hard pencil-point, was used in a loose manner permitting the maximum of suggestion of color forms and plane involvements. Through this method of painting, new shapes and rhythms occurred which added variety and interest to the original conception.
SKETCH #1

The first sketch was painted in oil on a 9" x 12" canvas. The drawing was freely brushed in with pale permanent green, after which a dark Prussian blue was worked over the green in order to expand the drawing. Where certain details in the drawing seemed too small or too large, they were re-proportioned with the blue to fill out the composition.

The paled cadmium yellow areas in the painting achieve the effect of broadening the whole composition while sustaining the flat surface effect by their application in a clockwise movement, at the same time serving to shift and divide the planes A and B. 8

Paled ultramarine violet was used as the color for the right plane B, and it is painted low in the area in order to create the shift between the planes. The areas of the same color in the left plane A again restate the surface and movement related to the overall composition. 9

Paled cadmium green greyed with a small amount of cadmium red for additional warmth was used to accent the arch which had not become manifest in the painting. 10 This arch was advantageous in that it connected the two planes while making a poetic statement.

8. See Plate VIII, Detail I
9. See Plate VIII, Detail II
10. See Plate VIII, dotted line,
Paled ultramarine blue, used as the sky color, has been painted lower in the right plane B in order to stress the movement and to modify the arch. 11

For the inverted triangular plane C, very pale cobalt blue was selected in order to distinguish the plane from the rest, and to enhance the Prussian blues already present in the composition. 12

Although a single blue may have been very effective, the subtle characteristics of the various blues are more easily appreciated when used in contrast one with the other and for this reason I felt the necessity of just such a variety of hues.

This sketch was felt to be partially successful. Although it is well related to the surface, it is, perhaps, overly abstract and subjective. In general I considered the areas too simple for a large canvas, and was aware of the necessity for a more involved composition.

11. See Plate VIII, Detail III
12. See Plate VIII, Detail IV
SKETCH #2

The second sketch was painted on a 10\(\frac{1}{2}\)" x 12\(\frac{1}{2}\)" piece of shellacked paper.

The problem that I had posed for this canvas was to modify the previous image and to complicate the image.

Dots of color, which may be moved in much the same manner as checkers on a checkerboard, were used for their flexibility.

Conscious consideration was given to the two planes A and B, and to the clockwise movement in the painting.

Pale cadmium red mixed with a small amount of cadmium orange was used as the color for the right plane B, and indicated the truncated triangle of the mountain, a new interpretation of the arch form used in the first sketch. 13

Pale veridian green greyed with a slight amount of cadmium red for warmth was used to create an arch in the right plane B and to describe the two side planes E and F. 14

The left plane A is described in pale cadmium green, which completes the arch over the center and delineates the side plane E and the triangular plane C. 15

The arch and mountain forms are further accented with pale ultramarine violet, which also serves to form the division between

13. See Plate IX, Detail I
14. See Plate IX, Detail II
15. See Plate IX, Detail III
the central planes, and helps to form the upper plane C and the left plane A itself. 16

Pale ultramarine blue was used as the dominant color for the left plane A and the upper plane C in an attempt to consolidate the scattered color, and bring it more to the surface by strong restatement. 17

In a similar manner, medium Prussian blue was used for the right plane B.

The central diagonal plane formed by the complex of all the colors helps to tie the composition together. 18

The overall effect of this sketch was too spotty for use. The color and planes are poorly integrated and not on the surface; and the color itself, while being more complicated, is also more confused.

16. See Plate XI, Detail IV
17. See Plate IX, Detail V
18. See Plate IX, dotted line.
SLIDE NUMBER 3
Sketch Number 2

PLATE IX
Sketch Number 2
SKETCH #3

This sketch was painted in oil on a piece of 10 1/2" x 12 1/2" shellacked paper.

The problem posed in this canvas was to apply the color in broader areas than had been possible with the dot technique of the previous sketches.

The drawing was broadly brushed in with ultramarine violet again considering the surface division and the shift between the center planes A and B.\(^\text{19}\) Palecd cadmium orange was painted low in the right plane B and high in the left plane A in order to re-emphasize the shift.\(^\text{20}\)

The drawing, at this point, was in two parts that fitted together on the surface; the colors moving broadly, and successfully describing the planes.

The medium cobalt blue of the left plane B is restated in a partial base form under the right plane A, raising the plane and again suggesting the clockwise movement of both planes and color.\(^\text{21}\)

Cadmium green was used to accent the surface division, define the arch, the two side planes E and F, the upper inverted triangular plane D, and supplement the cobalt blue in the right plane B.\(^\text{22}\)

19. See Plate X, Detail I
20. See Plate X, Detail II
21. See Plate X, Detail III
22. See Plate X, Detail IV
This sketch was considered the most successful of the three so far produced, in that the color works both as well conceived planes; and as an interwoven and interesting image. It was considered as a probable start for the final canvas.
PLATE X
Sketch Number 3
SKETCH #4

This sketch is painted on a piece of 9" x 12" canvas.

Instead of beginning with a line drawing as was done in the preceeding compositions, I brushed in flat patches of cadmium orange and pale Prussian blue at random, in order to state the surface.

Ultramarine violet was then used for the drawing which I adjusted to the patches of color, while stating the planes. 23

A medium cadmium green was then used to define the two side planes E and F and the top triangular plane C. 24

Dark Prussian blue was used to define the right plane B and emphasize the top plane C. 25

Paled ultramarine blue was used as the dominant color for the left plane A, and was painted into the right plane to direct the movement of the viewer's eye. 26

Paled cadmium red mixed with a small amount of ultramarine violet for coolness was used to accent the side plane and to form a supplementary side plane which in turn crosses into the right plane B reappearing in the left plane D. 27

The white canvas area forms a central plane connecting the

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23. See Plate XI, Detail I
24. See Plate XI, Detail II
25. See Plate XI, Detail III
26. See Plate XI, Detail IV
27. See Plate XI, Detail V
two principal planes, as well as stressing the mountain form. This sketch was particularly successful in that the color is on the surface and directly associated with the planes. The color is disposed in such a way as to correlate the planes in their relationship to one another: the eye is aware of almost infinite possibilities.

28. See Plate XI, dotted line.
SKETCH #5

The fifth sketch was also created on a 9" x 12" canvas, and was begun in the same manner as the fourth: using patches of color.

The patches of cobalt blue, paler ultramarine and Prussian blue, paler cadmium green, paler cadmium red, and paler ultramarine violet were brushed onto the surface in such a way as to suggest the surfaces and their movement.

The original drawing was stated in veridian green in order for it to contrast with the light underpainting. 29

The composition was adjusted to the color while defining the planes. Pale cadmium red mixed with a small amount of ultramarine violet was used to delineate the left plane A, and to suggest a diagonal plane crossing from the upper left hand corner, and directing the attention to the right plane, both expanding the top of the canvas while moving the eye downward and clockwise. 30

Very pale Prussian blue was used to define the right plane B and its side plane F, at the same time stressing the upper plane C. 31

Medium cadmium green greyed with cadmium red for warmth was used to define the side plane E, tilted into the center plane.

29. See Plate XII, detail I
30. See Plate XII, detail II
31. See Plate XII, detail III
A. It also further accents the upper plane E. 32

This sketch was also successful in its interweaving of plane, color and movement, and was decided upon as the basis for the final canvas.

32. See Plate XII, Detail IV.
THE THESIS PAINTING

The thesis subject is painted in oil on 40" x 50" stretched Belgian linen, sized with two coats of rabbit-hide glue, and primed with white lead.

I decided to enlarge upon and further interweave the color and planes of the preliminary sketch. Adhering closely to the original plans of the composition, I laid in the charcoal sketch and then roughly blocked in the color. This prepared the painting for the final stages of composition. 33

The original work on this canvas consisted of retaining the image originally intended in the sketch, and probing with color for new possibilities in relation to the larger surface.

I worked intermittently with blues, greens and reds to reform this image, considering at all times the planes and their interconnections.

The dark veridian in the infant lay-out was painted over with Prussian and ultramarine blues and finally restated in the completed image with a lighter veridian, two shades of cadmium green and a cadmium red. The veridian was painted lower in the right plane B in order to accomplish the shift in planes. The upper or sky area became more complicated with varying hues of blue, green, and white; and was painted in such a manner as to

33. See Plate XIII.
PLATE XIII

Preliminary Layout Drawing on Thesis Canvas
direct the eye in a controlled motion downward to the base of the left plane A. From there it moves in a pale swing of pale cadmium red in the left side plane E. The strokes of blues, greens and reds in the upper portion of the right plane B make an involved definition of the upper triangular plane C, and are so organized as to produce a cadenced falling into the right plane. The base plane D was painted with blues from the top area in order to sustain the surface. This plane created tension between the two main planes A and B; the dark ultramarine blue at the base of the right plane B was used to complete the movements while stressing the contrast between the center planes, and to contrast the areas of the general surface division one with another.

The white area at the base of the left plane A restates the color above the right plane, and shifts the planes along with the veridian mentioned before. The paled cadmium green beginning at the top left center defines a diagonal plane which crosses to the triangular form above the base plane. This plane was used to connect the two main planes. The vertical veridian lines were used to state an internal reference to the edge of the canvas in order to stress and to sustain the composition. 34

Painting on a large scale from a small canvas is an exceedingly complicated process often involving more than one solution. The artist is constantly required to have at his fingertips not only technical tools of his trade, but also to exercise

34. See Plate XIV.
Diagram of principle planes in the finished Thesis Painting
to the utmost his individual imagination and sense of originality.

In this thesis I have tried to pursue not only my theory, but also to sustain a certain degree of freshness and vigor in the quality of the art, in the hope that I shall have made a valid contribution to the culture of our country and our generation.
VITA

I was born on July 27, 1927 in Santa Monica, California.

In September, 1948, I enrolled in the School of Fine Arts, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri. I received the Bachelor of Fine Arts from Washington University in June, 1952. While there, I received instruction in drawing and painting from Mssrs. Al Marsden Hamlin, Werner Drewes, Fred Conway, Paul Burlin and Carl Holty. My present artistic thinking has been to a large degree influenced by Mr. Holty's teaching. I also studied print-making with Mr. Fred Becker and Art History with Doctors George Mylonas and Frederich Hartt. I received the Van Blarcom Scholarship for my senior year, 1951-52.

I was employed by the Aeronautical Chart and Information Center, St. Louis, Missouri, from 1953 until 1956. I worked both as a shadient relief artist and in the training and supervision of specialized photo-reproduction projects for which I received a letter of commendation in June, 1956. I resigned in September, 1956, in order to begin graduate studies.

I entered the Graduate College of the University of Arizona in September, 1956, in order to work toward the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Painting.
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