

## Chapter 1

### *The Anatomy of Light*

“We are all involuntary painters-- to see is to paint, in secret for ourselves”, my mentor and teacher, Norman Raeben, used to say. Seeing and recognition is a lifelong affair between the eye and the brain. It is a kind of give-and-take where, in this case, the idea “it's as blessed to give as it is to receive” initiates an altruistic human condition, the eye gives and the brain receives. To see a sunset and to be inspired by the landscape of color and light, textures and movement, is the interaction of sensation and revelation. This integration of our psyche and sensuality personalizes our connectivity to the world around us. When the connection is made, we are inspired and brought to a higher level of being. So we become, much as the painter evolves, artists connecting to the world around us.

We think of the eye and the brain, as separate organs, and to an extent, it is true. Although the eye does have a certain autonomy, it's really part of the brain and cannot function without it. Whereas the brain, for its part, can exist without the eye, though badly crippled by the loss. The relationship between the two is unique and possibly the most symbiotic one imaginable.

Devoted to the eye though the brain may be, it has many other concerns and responsibilities which make it exceedingly busy. Beset by the needs and exigencies of daily life, the brain is always in a hurry to make sense of what the eye tells it. The brain's first need is its own orientation and so it discards all but those essentials that it simply, cannot do without. With an overriding priority, the brain tries to keep the eye in line; it tries to keep it perfunctory and prosaic, and generally it succeeds. Thus, as a rule, the eye is controlled by the utilitarian or the other preoccupations of its imperious partner in sight.

Sight, like all our senses, needs some stimulus from the external world to activate it and bring it to life. What stimulates the eye enables us to see, is its sensitivity to light and the interaction of light in gradations of tone, textures and variations of color. Light is the indispensable intermediary between ourselves and what we see. It is the element needed by the eye to transmit its messages to our consciousness--- to the brain. The ever lingering inquiry that neurologists, philosophers, psychologists and academia in general have pondered has been “ what and how does consciousness work or integrate into our human psyche? Linear thinkers address the question from numerous perspectives and in so doing, are most frequently looking for a bio-chemical, physiological or neuro-pathway representation of the event. The process of indirection that many visual artists, musicians, sculptors, even writers, from time to time, employ as their method, historically, is intrinsic to the recognition and appreciation of the dialogue between subject matter and the artist’s translation onto canvas. When the senses coningle

with the mind, our cognitive processing of the data as intuition kicks in, when perception transitions toward perspective. Perspective is the birth of consciousness and originates when the imagination engages the intake of visual, audio and tactile perceptions, our cognition stimulates consciousness. Scientists have sought to identify the biochemical transmittance as well as the neuro-psych circumstances that are engaged and recordable, but can make no clear picture as to the visual representation of the process. What and how, causes it to occur? We can measure the neurons firing, we can connect the dots to identify the stimuli, we can understand the entire environment of the brain as it is influenced and as it reacts to the stimuli, but we just can't seem to get a handle on the why and how the consciousness and unconscious conduct their dialogue. We can recognize the differences between the unconsciousness and conscious experience and in that very same context, we can comprehend that the dynamics of the unconsciousness are far more profound and powerful than those of the conscious experience. Art, is the result of rendering the unconscious in synchronicity with the conscious while engaging the processes of intuition and imagination.

Light is never seen by us as light alone. It is always seen in conjunction with darkness, as shadow. Obviously, in complete darkness we see nothing. But it is equally true that where it is possible to be in a place completely filled with light, where all darkness and shadow were eliminated, the objects in that place would disappear and again we'd see nothing, we'd be virtually blinded by the light. It's only the combination of light, intermediate and dark notes that makes sight possible. Given the nature of our existence in life, there will never be a time when there is a total absence of light suggesting that the intent of the universe is the relationship of light to shadow in order to see.

The act of sight, if it can be pinned down to a single point of origin, can be said to occur in the retina of the eye. The retina is the link between eye and brain. It is that all-important nexus between our inner and outer worlds, the only point, in fact, where the brain has direct contact with the world outside. Early in the embryo's development, two buds grow out of the brain to form the optic nerves and inner, sensitive coat of the eye, which is the retina.

It's little wonder that the eye, being so closely allied with the brain, that organ of perpetual activity, should itself be not a passive instrument but one in almost constant motion. Directed by the brain, it moves in its characteristic short, jerky fashion, until it encompasses the whole field of vision. Whatever the eye focuses on is projected onto the retina as a pattern of light and dark, but reversed from the light and dark of actuality, in very much the same way that the camera projects a negative on a film.

Rubens



Leonardo



Michaelangelo



This pattern or image on the retina, can be seen therefore, to be in the form of a code. In this sense it is two-dimensional. The code is the only form possible because the brain, encased as it is, in the small dark area of the skull, has no capacity for the three dimensions of the real world. The image or code is received as an immaterial, flat illusion, as flat and immaterial on the eye's retina, as the image on a photograph is immaterial and flat. This is where percept creates context for analytical constructs called concepts. As such, it is indicative of the human condition whereby the unconscious is the perceiver and the conscious behavior is then to conceptualize; suggestive that perception precedes and takes precedence over concept. It is also, perhaps, an explanation for the reasoning behind human behavior being so reactionary.

In order to make sense for itself, the brain must instantaneously decode the message from the eye. With the speed of light, it recognizes the light and dark as familiar configurations in three-dimensional form as objects are seen in life. This, it does by separating the light areas from the dark, so creating imagery lines of demarcation between them and thus identifying familiar shapes of different objects. Once done with the perception process, the brain reverses the image and says, "cloud, window, table, cup and saucer." All of the experiential sensations are recorded in the database of our senses, labeled by our linear processing catalogue and now become part of our accessible database for communication and coping system.

Most of this process, of course, is entirely involuntary and unconscious. Only at the last stage, when the brain recognizes the scene or objects before it, we can say we actually "see." Sight begins consciously only with the recognition and identification. To recapitulate: the eye gives the brain a flat configuration of light and dark, which the brain turns back into our three-dimensional world of actuality.

Although the eye and the brain perform different functions and approach sight from two different directions, their goal nevertheless, is the same and when they meet, their encounter is an all embracing one; to gather they form the single unit, the act of sight. This natural phenomenon in our nature suggests perhaps an innate need for unity, balance and oneness.

We have been speaking, so far, as if we live in a world of black and white, when actually, we live in a sea of color. Except in the dimmest light, everything we see is in color; a green couch, a blue sky, russet leaves, multicolored flowers, etc. etc. etc. And light itself, the celestial light from the sun, that illuminates the earth, is also made up of color, although the colors of which light is composed are not seen by us as so many colors, they are seen, in their sum, as a particular quality of light understood in its total effect and what we refer to as tonality.

We have two sources of color: the colors, though invisible of which light itself is composed and the colors of objects on earth, whether these be found in nature, in

trees or flowers or manufactured things such as colors of paint or dyes. As non-painters, it's only the colors found in the objects on earth, that we're aware of; what are known to artists as local color. It is here that we begin to conceptualize color and in so doing, distance it from our sensuality. The abstract connection being severed, if only by the most insignificant degree, might be the division or gap between our brain and senses. In our efforts to understand the potential dialogue and wholeness of our potential, we address the phenomenon as synesthesia, as a common bond both personally unique and universally communicable. I contend that without this division, the abstract will become one with the analytical and an expansive common dialogue occurs when there is a comingling of the senses. When this occurs, the poetic of the metaphor evolves dynamically to render a fuller representation of the moment of sensation. As to the degree of recognition and thus translation: ie. The sound of a color, the color or light of a musical composition or even the vibrations of textures. This might also refer to the most unique characteristic of human attributes: intuition: when imagination and sensation communicate.

The colors of which light is composed are, literally, all the colors of the rainbow. Rainbow colors are known as spectral colors, only a fraction of which the human eye is able to see. These are disembodied hues, attached to nothing but air, merely ghosts. Their significance to us is that they are the only colors we ever perceive which are not part of some solid surface or some material thing we can touch.

Spectral colors, when mixed, become luminous. Separated as they are in the rainbow, for instance, they constitute the anatomy of light. It is as if, in showing us the rainbow, nature had inadvertently opened her laboratory door and revealed one of her secrets within.

But to come back to earth, celestial light from the sun hits everything on earth and reflects back to us the colors of objects, as mixtures, as local color modified, or modulated, changed somewhat by the particular light the object is seen in. This modulated color is the color we really see at any given time.

A red robe, for example, will change its redness (warmer or cooler) as the light that hits it changes from warmer to colder. Light itself is subject to innumerable variables of time, place, and atmospheric conditions. The light in Mexico is different from the light in Belgium, which, in turn, is different from the light in New York City. Every climate and every locale according to the weather or atmosphere or even the elevation and trajectory to the sun, has its own light. And every hour of every day, in every spot on earth, has its own light. So the red of the robe changes from moment to moment, as well as from place to place.

The question might now be asked, "what is the actual color of the robe?" The truth is, we cannot know the "actual". The ultimate actuality is not for us; it is in the realm of a higher power, beyond our comprehension. All we can do is suppose there is a hypothetical actual, and let it go at that. It is in the acceptance of this premise that we can find the distinction between reality and actuality. A thing is what it is, which

perception offers us, but then there is the manner in which we experience the perception which might initiate a metamorphosis into perspective or reality. We commonly refer to the study of this event as phenomenology which seems to be our best effort to connect cognition to sensation from an analytical approach. Historically, art has been our best means of accomplishing the link, though we seem to struggle with the correlation of cognitive and dialectic response to the subject matter. .... continued in completed version.....

## Chapter 2

### *Within the senses: reality v. actuality*

We swim in the sea of illusion though few of us know that we do. It is only when we're initiated into a pursuit, such as art, that we realize we have been at sea all along. It is our imagination that embraces the illusions which results in our sanity for without imagination we would all go mad contending with the visual realities.

If sight were always a single, unvarying act, involving only optic nerve and brain, if there were no subterranean, poetic interplay between the two, would the art of painting even be extant, among the other arts that grace our aesthetic firmament? It is highly doubtful that it would. This said, as we go forward through time and discovery, if we allow one of these two circumstances to migrate away from the other, do we risk losing a dimension of the human experience? We will return to this phenomenon toward the end of this book to reevaluate our contemporary condition.

At certain unpredictable times the brain releases its hold on the eye, allowing the sensations deriving from our other, our nonvisual senses, to come to the fore, thus bringing our whole psyche into play. Our senses, though largely autonomous, being all part of a single organism, comprise a unit, a family, no member of which is an island unto itself. At these times they conjoin or comingle, so that we are not seeing with but, through the eyes. Sight at such times is not merely visual but psycho visual.

At first blush, this ability of the eye to engage our entire psyche, may seem a bit difficult to accept. But the brain, as controller of the vast, complicated network of our nervous system, with the help of memory, coordinates our sense impulses, carries our sensations, so to speak, which imbue the eye with almost clairvoyant power, making of it the super sense it is.

Broadly speaking, we are equipped with two kinds of senses: the earthly, visceral or gut senses of taste and smell, and the conceptual or concept forming ones of hearing and sight. And let's not forget the sense of touch, the most central sense of all which, as a complex of the two – the visceral and the conceptual – belongs in a class by itself. Touch, or our tactile sense, existing as it does throughout the whole body – the

skin, fingers, mouth, genital area, etc. – is so far-flung and multiple, it should not, perhaps be called a sense at all, but our brain, masquerading as a sense.

None of our senses are irreducible, each can be subdivided into their two components: one, the sensation itself, (the subjective experience of the sensation), and the other, the information received or identification supplied by any particular sense. It is in the emphasis on one or the other of these two components that the difference between the gut and the conceptual sense lies.

The visceral senses are bound up primarily with sensation. Taste, smell, and at times touch, are particularly hedonistic. They are sources of immediate physical satisfaction or pleasure, and of course, that inevitable concomitant, displeasure. Whatever information these senses provide, is relatively simple, and not, as a rule, very important to us. When eating an apple, for instance, our taste buds tell us it's an apple, not a steak; or when smelling perfume, we know it's perfume and not, let's say, horse manure. The information is secondary to the sensations of the apple and perfume themselves.

The conceptual senses, on the other hand, are less hedonistic than visceral; information and verbalization predominate over sensation. Vivid sensation in hearing and sight requires organization, as in music, for instance. Sight, as we shall see, organizes itself. It is the very absence of strong sensation in the conceptual senses that make it possible for ideas to be born. For it is precisely because we depend, in life, on eye and ear for our whole orientation, information and communication, to say nothing of self preservation, that we do suppress sensation in favor of comprehension. Art, suffers as a consequence. Taken together, our senses form a kind of hierarchy in the life of our imagination, ranging from the crudest to the most delicate of our sensibilities.

It is thanks to the presence of memory, with which our senses are endowed, that the all important, co-mingling of the senses occurs. To some extent, the past is always part of the present, even when it exists without our conscious awareness, as so many obscure phantoms of our forgotten selves. Just as the optic nerve – impulses from the retina lead to the back area of the brain where they are stored as visual memories, so according to their nature, we have memory banks for our other senses as well. These memories are quiescent, waiting for some signal, some duplication to occur in the present and get them out of storage. For example an older gentleman is walking on a country road in the dead of winter, though there be no leaves on the trees he smells the burning of leaves by a nearby neighbor, the scent of the leaves burning takes him back to his boyhood when he and his dad raked leaves and then burned them on the side of the road in front of their home. The sensation triggered a reaction to the storehouse of information that the senses retain from prior experience.

Taste and smell are always recalled as specifics. Rarely does the recollection of a taste stimulate thought or imagination. It is the conceptual senses of hearing an

sight we are not usually aware of memory as such, because being continuous and diffused, memory in both ear and eye, is part of the very fabric of our minds.

How exactly does the eye, with the help of memory, engage our nonvisual senses? Not, obviously, in their literal capacities as organs for tasting, smelling, touching and hearing, but rather as internal, psychic counterparts of their utilitarian selves. It is the sense of touch, operating as both brain and sense, that is responsible for the engagement of the visceral senses in sight.

Touch is intimately connected with belief – belief in the reality of things. Someone newly arrived on this planet – a-year-old baby – for instance, goes around touching everything in sight to make sure what it sees is really there, is for real. That which can be touched is real. This is the three dimensionality of life that our senses connect us to experientially. Later, when we are beyond this infancy or innocence and are convinced of the reality of the world and the things in it, we say, interestingly enough, “seeing is believing,” and not “touching is believing.” Sight has replaced touch as we subconsciously know that seeing is touching. The two senses have been irrevocably joined in our minds.

The presence of the tactile sense in sight, makes us sensitive, therefore, to the particular texture of things, whether they be rough or smooth, hard or soft, etc., without benefit of physical contact – a really remarkable feat when you think of it. This kind of transposition of one sense by another, is an integral part of the mechanism of sight, whereby the eye is able to feel or experience, what the eye, as an organ alone, is incapable of experiencing. But it is ultimately the almighty brain to which credit belongs, for the interrelationship of all of the senses within our psyche.

When we say the eye sees because of its sensitivity to light, it is tantamount to saying sensitivity to color. Color is food for the eye, it tastes and ingests color. As the mouth has a pallet for tasting food, so the painter has a pallet for the tasting of color by the eye. And the word palette here is more than a mere coincidence or idle pun. It is an example of the intuition of language, the collective verbal intelligence, so often more acute than that of any single one of us.

In the same way the taste palette differentiates between tastes, as well as temperature and textures, bitter from sweet, cold or warm, soft from sharp or rough, so does the eye respond to, or differentiate among colors a bitter or, somber gray from a sweet pink, a cold green from a warm orange, or a soft, or pastel shade of yellow from a sharp ultramarine blue.

But even these color sensations of the mouth, are rather rudimentary without those of the nose. We cannot separate taste from smell. The bouquet of the taste is in the smell and is no less a sensual connection. The nose is a more figurative mouth. The gamut of sensations the nose is able to distinguish, is a very long one. It is sensitive

to the faintest, the most delicate of odors or colors, while, on the other hand, it can be the source of our most vivid gut sensations of all.

What the colors of smell mean to the psyche are the sophisticated colors of the mature adult, as compared to the elementary sensations of taste colors. What the nose reacts to are such sensations as flowery, fruity, putrid, burning, resinous, rubbery and spicy. All of these qualities represent both the sensuous and the sensual to us. The nose contributes some of the erotic element of the colors on the pallet, tasted by the eye. .... continued in completed version.....

## **Chapter 3**

### **Prelude to art**

If there is one quality that marks the beginnings of most human enterprises, it is that of innocence, of naïveté. Innocence rather than its near synonym ignorance, because in innocence there is the strong element of intuition which plays so important a part in art, at times replacing or even surpassing so circumscribed a virtue as knowledge. The context for thought is perception and our senses show us life as it is, perception precedes and takes precedence over concepts. It is when our senses are in dialogue with our brain that we come to terms with intuition. In that moment, when our perceptions are in sync with our perspective, do we find inspiration. Inspiration does not last, it is found in the moment of oneness that our senses are synchronized with our thinking.

Innocence in operation, goes by the name of primitivism. Primitivism is a generic term; it takes on one connotation when applied to the art of Africa for instance and another when describing the early efforts of our own Western artists of the middle ages. The age of innocence or primitivism, in painting is a very long one, lasting from the remote eras of prehistory, all the way through the first millennia and a half A. D.

In our natural state, meaning unschooled and unenlightened as to the facts of sight – as most of us are – we are primitives, regardless to what era we belong. Ignorance of the facts of sight, in terms of art, means ignorance of what might be called, the grammar of art, innocence as to what the rudiments of visual knowledge involves.

In the Western world, as in most civilizations, art sprang, not directly from the senses and feeling – not as in life, as the apple grows from its core – but from the oblique direction of religion, from the concept of a higher power (commonly understood as “God” and the sublime.)

From the dark ages until the onset of the Renaissance, the gospel of Christianity, as embodied in the hegemony of the church, affected every aspect of life, holding man – body and mind – completely in thrall. During the first thousand years A. D. all the

arts were adornments of the church and the visual arts in particular – illuminated manuscripts aside – were adjuncts of the Cathedral, that concrete manifestation of the glory of the faith. It was probably the stained-glass window, the crowning achievement of the cathedral itself, that gave painting, if not its origin, its greatest impetus as an art

Each window depicted a message, a biblical theme, a figure, a scene or event – a story in picture form. So to the extent it was storytelling, the message was verbal as well as visual. However seductive the visual effect might be – and many were highly seductive – it was still Scripture, pictorial Scripture – half sign, half symbol, so well-suited to the illiterate populace of that day.

But the artist of the middle ages was primitive, ..... continued in completed version.....

## **Chapter 4**

### **Resemblance to things seen**

It was in the 15th century, with the Renaissance as overture, that the curtain rose on the 450 year-long saga of all manner of diverse events – the drama of light and shadow known as chiaroscuro, fiction and fact, illusion and actuality – on the seemingly interminable struggle to capture with paint on canvas, a resemblance of things seen.

Whereas the medieval artist had turned his attention inward, in silent communion with his God (or higher power), the artist of the Renaissance, in the new spirit of scientific inquiry, looked out at the world about him and finally came to his and her senses.

It was not objective truth alone that motivated the artist of the Renaissance. He was also seeking reaffirmation of his diminished faith by still linking religion – or at least religious subjects – with the real world as he was discovering it to be. Artists went pragmatic for the sake of their soul. After so many years of patronage and their dependence on support from those that would use the creative spirit of the artist to manipulate agendas, it all started to become something more personal. Being of one's time and rendering with all that was real and in the moment of one's existence became essential to the spirit of man.

In his quest for substantiality of God, the artist found, not surprisingly, the reality of nature, instead. ( This marks the origins of “religious naturalism” of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which is derived from “naturalism” and tied to “mysticism” from the renaissance and was indicative of the human, paradoxical circumstance that continues to challenge human behavior as identified by the contrast of science and faith. ) But to

go after one thing and find another is nothing new in human experience and typical of the arts in general. The process of discovery by indirection is at the core of inspiration and inventiveness. It too plays to the intuitive nature of the human experience and renders the analytical with the spontaneous, as not mutually exclusive from one another. Painting exemplifies the will of the artist. As Picasso puts it " painting is stronger than I am, it makes me do what it wishes. " When the artist initiates the painting, as he observes his motif, in his pursuit to capture the moment, the intuitive impulse transcends the origins of intent and the artist becomes transformed by discovery. However, as in life , the moment is constantly moving forward and the artist, while engaging in that moment, experiences a metamorphosis. It is at this point of demarcation that the painting itself takes over ( a life of its own) and leads the artist toward the translation of the moment. It was at this point in history that human perception became validated as oneness with experience which became identifiable, poetically or metaphorically.

The accuracy behind this observation can be found in the nature of our autonomic system. The percept not only precedes but also takes precedence over the concept. The live perceptions change any concepts the artist may have had at the start, thus transforming the picture as his thoughts change as he works. The original concept will have been effaced by new observations, new thoughts.

This process is what the medieval artist knew nothing about and what the Renaissance artists only began to discover when they started to use their eyes. The artist had opened the Pandora's box of his senses and would be ruled by them more and more in spite of certain deflections, not of his own choosing.

The painter Giotto, still chronologically of the Middle Ages, was the precursor to the Renaissance, a harbinger of change, when he broke with his teacher, Cimabue, who was still in the symbolic, medieval and Byzantine tradition, the hallmark of which is the decorative and the flat.

With Giotto, we see the first conscious engagement of the ear in painting since the early middle Ages, the musical element, the lack of which made for the stiff effect of the recent past. By encompassing the whole field of vision in a rhythmic continuity of movement, Giotto created a better illusion of figures in space, a greater reality than had been obtained before. The lyrical or musical quality in painting always implies a humanistic quality. Ironically it was his very humanism that reinforced his over-interest in subject matter and his persistence on the outlines, though musical ones, of his time.

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## **Chapter 5**

### **Perspective and Perception:**

## ***The square and the circle***

In Germany and Flanders to the north, the intellectual fire of the Renaissance was slower to ignite and burned with less flamboyance than in Italy, land of its origin, but it caught on with equal strength and with even more lasting effects.

Art is not an easily transplantable commodity, having its roots in the psychic soil from which it grows. And when it is transplanted, it invariably undergoes a mutation in the process.

In the somber climate north of the Alps, the passionate involvement of the Florentines with “objective truth” and the sensuous paganism of Venice, were here transformed into what might be called, “the humanism of the ordinary.” Even the medium was different. Here was no al fresco painting, no murals on walls and ceilings, as if the expression of an over-flow of a rich communal life dedicated to the greater glory of God and Pope alike. On the contrary, under somber Protestant skies, painting tended toward introspection, without pomp and show.

Thanks to the on-going flow of communication between north and south, and the exchange of ideas and inspiration – mostly in the opposite direction – the facts and effects of life-like illusion were readily assimilated in the north, leaving the artist free to pursue what interested him most – the rendering of actuality and naturalism on canvas.

Actuality meant the concrete, the object or form and especially human form. It was the three dimensionality of sculpture that signified actuality to the Gothic north of that era. The artists of the north always showed a particular fondness for minute detail, as can be seen in their illuminated manuscripts of the Middle Ages, as well as in wood-cuts and engravings which in Germany had long been established art forms.

It's small wonder then that when Germany's first Renaissance artist, Durer, visited Italy, he set out as a youth, thinking to become a painter, but returned a sculptor instead – an engraver on copper instead of marble or bronze.

Between a proclivity for precision over passion, for fact or the literal and fundamental over poetry, it was inevitable that Germany should have produced the first naturalistic art - or as naturalistic as contemporary knowledge would allow. A rare exception of that time was the painter Grunewald, who, in the fervor of his religious emotionalism, turned expressionistic, a case of naturalism in exaggerated form.

One of the first naturalists was Hans Holbein whose amazingly photographic portraits, devoid of all romantic notions – even the romance of religion – which for exactitude and detachment, are probably unmatched in the whole of Western art. We would be doing Holbein an injustice however, were we to consider him no more than an imitative photographer. There is evidence, in his work, of the ambiguity of things, in embryo. In his portraits, for example, we see the first reconciliation of the two extremes of form, represented by those two – what shall we call them – spiritual giants of the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti.

As was the practice during the Renaissance for the most part in Florence, both Michelangelo and Leonardo made exhaustive studies of cadavers, gaining considerable

knowledge of human anatomy. Michelangelo, who was primarily a sculptor, accented the skeletal structure of form – the straight of the bone behind the curve of the muscle. When he was commissioned to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, he was still a sculptor rather than a painter, in not very good disguise, his painted figures have the quality of being transpositions, intact, from sculpture into paint. This was the result of his natural training as a carver of stone. He carved out all of the silhouettes in all differing perspectives and mounted them on the ceiling, outlined all of the forms from those templates and spent the next 4 ½ years “painting by numbers”, so to speak.

Credit must be given to Michelangelo nevertheless, for being the first artist to portray, with conviction, the hidden half of human form, the straight or the plane of the bone not registered by da Vinci, who put all the emphasis on the curve.

Michelangelo, the sculptor, sees form in all its three dimensionality, in all of its solidarity, theoretically as a square or cube, made up of straights and/or planes of light. Whereas Leonardo, as the painter, sees everything more illusionistically, where he shows how the light and dark make form visible as a curve, theoretically as a circle or sphere.

In form, we see the “actuality” of the square within the illusion of the circle, the two components – the physical or the tactile and the visual. Between them is conveyed the full scope of form, that enigmatic reality in nature.

This ambiguity seems to have been reconciled in the still flat (therefore primitive) naturalism of Holbein, in intimations of the plane, when he feels the straight and in other places where he feels the curve, though in reality, form is always both curved and straight at the same time. Holbein’s accomplishment was that he combined the elements of both Michelangelo and da Vinci, without the profundity of either and not with the passion. He painted the illusion of the actual we see in life and call sight. He was true to his optic nerve and brain but not to the rest of his psyche – his senses and his imagination.

In his neutrality, Holbein is the exponent of the eternal superficial – that superficial which is the inevitable façade of sight and the skin of the soul in life. It was Holbein's very neutrality that points up the significant fact that the canvas can no more portray the actual without illusion, than can the eye in sight. It is then the imagination that must engage, with the senses, to establish the use of metaphor rather than the literal in order to contend with the limitation of a two dimensional surface.

The last Renaissance painter of the north, Peter Brueghel the elder of Flanders, was an artist of unusual originality. One of Brueghel’s lesser distinctions was to be the first to turn the tiny landscapes of illuminated manuscripts, so much in vogue during the 15th century, into paintings of true-to-life size and so, presumably, the true-to-life importance!

Where Holbein was objective and uninvolved, Brueghel was subjective in humanistic. Where Holbein painted portraits of single important personages, among them Henry VIII and Desiderius Erasmus – each sitter seeming to represent a law unto himself, Brueghel emphasized, in the peasant figures in his landscapes, the bond of man with man, toiling and carousing together, as well as the bond of man with nature, contrasting the placid neutrality of the former nature with the comedy and tragedy of human existence.

As might be expected from such intense personalities, Brueghel's interests and technical objectives were almost polar opposites of Holbein's. Not being a portraitist but a painter of panoramic landscape, Brueghel needed a different kind of illusion from Holbein. Not the illusion of objects but the illusion of three-dimensional space itself, that space the landscape, as a whole seems to occupy. In this aim, although he was primitive in certain other respects, Brueghel was centuries ahead of his contemporaries. Nobody before him had dealt with this aspect of the visual experience as a palpable reality.

Since all illusion of the third dimension, whether of objects or of space itself, rests on what is called the plane, let's digress for a moment and consider what the plane really is.

The plane is a drawing concept at its most sophisticated level. It embodies that ambiguity which we discover to be at the root of art as form and movement. First of all, the plane is a direction envisaged by the eye. Though it derives from something physical, which caused us to envisage it in the first place – it, itself, is not physical, having no tangible substance, it is visual. It is a flat surface going in a particular direction attributable to something physical that we see. Our eye and mind, together, call that flat surface a plane.

Let's imagine a nose seen in a full-face. We are aware of the three main planes of the nose: the frontal one and the two side planes that join the cheeks. These are three different planes, comprising in their sum the form we recognize as the nose. But the planes of the nose must not be confounded with the nose itself. The nose itself is bone, cartilage and flesh. The Planes are the three, flat services we envisage when we see the nose. So the plane, as a plane, is imaginary.

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## Chapter 6

## ***Paint on top of paint, paint over paint, paint into paint:***

It is in seventeenth century Holland that the Dutch painter, Rembrandt van Rijn takes a giant step into the future by bringing to the emotionally (if not intellectually) frozen ground of the painting of his day, intimate feelings, thoughts and interpretations into his canvases.

It was a time when painting had descended from the stratosphere of Heaven as well as the depths of Hell with Bosch and the artists of Holland having begun to find inspiration in discoveries and experiences distinctly of this earth. By focusing on his subjective self, though never for a moment relinquishing the closest observation of things seen, by arresting the free voyages of his eye through his field of vision, he realized just what was most important to him, to his psyche, in what he saw.

Rembrandt, transcendent of his peers, achieved a more personal and deeper understanding, thanks to an acute awareness of consciousness, established what was personal as his own role in art. We see Rembrandt in that role as the first great humanist since Giotto of the middle Ages.

It is in his subjectivity that Rembrandt is linked to us of the twenty-first century and at the same time links him to his compatriot and predecessor by about twenty-five years, Franz Hals, an influence in one important respect.

Hals, a contemporary of Rubens, was an innovator in awakening the long-dormant tactile sense, to an extent never before seen in western painting. He “discovered” the physicality of painting, is not its profundity. Each stroke of the paint is applied with bravura, with virtuosity, with a consciousness of arm and hand and in so doing, vulnerability. He is a swordsman with the brush – the hand repeating what the eye sees, acting as surrogate for the eye. We feel the physical attributes of the paint more than the chemistry of its color.

With his sensitivity to surface textures and then his abandonment to them – the seduction of human flesh, to satin and lace, Hals is the precursor of the hedonism of eras to come that have an appreciation for the meaning of sensuousness to our psyche. Unfortunately, the sense of touch is so dominant in Hals, an important ingredient is all but sacrificed – the interrelationship of colors contained in light with the local colors of objects.

Possibly to a larger extent than we realize, we equate light with life itself, light having a hypnotic effect, of which we are only partially aware. While Hals conceives of form only texturally, as divorced from light – he thinks of the texture deriving from the form itself – Rembrandt, with his more sophisticated understanding of light, is always conscious of the insoluble relationship of light and form or color and texture.

Technically speaking, this is Rembrandt’s innovative contribution to painting. To fully appreciate his interest in light, it is helpful if one was to be a painter oneself, an experienced observer and renderer of light, but we can all react to the music of his color, which also comes from his feeling for light. We notice immediately the contrast in his use of color to that of his predecessors.

Rembrandt's color is not static, it seems never to exist on the same plane, it seems to move, going away from, and toward us, traversing space, imbuing his canvases with a feeling of depth rather than a mere illusion of depth or three dimensionality. The reason his depth is more than illusion is because of the quality and consistency of his color. Rembrandt was aware, as other contemporaries were not, that light transformed the physical textures of things into its own consistencies – consistencies we recognize as existing in life – those of transparencies, translucencies and opaqueness. At this juncture he found that color and texture were not mutually exclusive from one another but inseparably linked and experienced as a network of symbiotic sensation.

Within these divisions of paint, could be found all the nuances of color for which one could wish. Heavy and flat consistencies for opaque colors, medium weight for jewels – like translucencies found in shadows and an application of transparencies, delicate, fragile and wispy like a butterfly's wing or lace and veils.

A new dimension is found in Rembrandt's color; we hear the music of it while seeing it, each color-note having its own degree of loudness or muteness, shrillness or melodiousness, its lyricism or its drama. The different color notes with their various consistencies of which the object in the painting is composed, may have the music of flat, unobtrusive tones contrasting with the ringing of bell-like notes, producing the metallic sound of light on helmets, casks and shields. It should be noted herein that there is a common misconception in the experience of sensations. It is thought that the act of synesthesia is an experience foreign to most human beings. This is not so, for all of us experience the comingling of our senses at all times. The cognition of those experiences varies according to our awareness of the circumstance and the degree of acute correlation of their integration. Most don't have the awareness of the integration but that, by no means, suggests that the event is not taking place. It is in that the moment that we find, in the cognition of that experience, in art what we call the metaphor, a highly intuitive connection, when and whereby sensation becomes revelation.

Rembrandt does not need color to explain that painting means light. In his black and white etchings, which are simplifications in the extreme, of Leonardo's chiaroscuro, we feel the form come to life because of the movement created as a dialogue between the light and the shadow. The simplification and omission of all irrelevant detail that takes away from the impact of strong light and shade, is in fact, no longer seen as light and shade but as the movement of light creating form, light creating objects, light creating reality.

A student of Rembrandt's, Jan Vermeer fills an important niche in painting by introducing light in a new role – as the force behind all color, whether in light or shadow. Vermeer is fascinated by the way the play of light brings out the planes of form, and in so doing, changing proportionality. His technique was to raise the color key of the painting as a whole, elimination of opaque and impenetrable shadows, allowing the luminous color, reflected in shadows, to be clearly distinguishable to the eye. He paints in the steady cool, north light of his atelier where there was no movement of shadows, no sun, to disturb his researches into the effect of light on form.

His light areas undergo subtle but effective distortions because of his discovery that light changes size. He notices, perhaps consciously, for the first time, that light favors

those areas that face it. That is to say, it gives them their full length, width and depth. In fact, in some cases it exaggerates them – making them larger, more real, as, for instance in “The Portrait of a Young Women,” where the light planes of the head are larger and the shadow planes smaller, making for the satisfying proportions, we feel.

Thus Vermeer makes a moderate advance in drawing – the size of things no longer following their anatomical size. He shows that the proportions we see are not the proportions of objects but the proportions that light gives those objects. Vermeer is not as melodious in his color as Rembrandt, who, on the other hand, gives us the steady tone, the overall quality of light, the harmony. This undertaking is more sophisticated, his colors pure, more translucent and compared to Vermeer, Rembrandt paints in the cellar.

While Vermeer is painting his light filled interiors in Holland, Diego Velasquez is giving his version of things seen in the warmer and stronger light of his native Spain. Like Vermeer, Velazquez goes further than either Rembrandt or Leonardo and the Renaissance in his understanding of composition, of the handling of the space represented in his canvas. He not only connects one object or figure with another by chiaroscuro, but he connects them in such a way that the eye is never forced to imagine beyond the limits of his canvas. Instead, it always stays within those limits, creating the desired effect of unity and balance. Velasquez composed his subject in the round where the focal point, or pivot, if you will, was the spot of greatest interest, as in the famous "Birthday of the Infanta," where the Infanta herself is the figure our eye immediately rests upon, being more or less in the center of the canvas. .... continued in completed version.....

## **Chapter 7**

### **Architecture and Drawing:**

#### ***Music and the of Laws of Nature***

“In our dreams at sleep, we move on the tide of our emotions – we are musicians, creatures of objective subjectivity – we fantasize. When we open our eyes we become architects – we build the structure of the objective world. Between these two states of being, there is a never-never land in tremendous flux – when we are not yet awake and no longer asleep, is when the musician changes places with the architect. When the architect goes to sleep and the musician had full sway, the builder in us was non-existent – we could dream. As the architect is about to open his eyes to the law of gravity, and the bed seems to fall down as he springs up, the musician hides from the full face of daylight, playing his tunes covertly while the architect moves about and acts. “ We are back in the

world again, dragging our musical case unconsciously, in secret from ourselves.” Norman Raeben once poetically identified the duality of consciousness.

The artist’s link with the architectural is their mutual preoccupation with space, and concomitant with space, the law of gravity. Neither in life as we experience it on earth nor in art can space and gravity be separated. If we think of a simply constructed room composed of four walls, four vertical planes, a ceiling and a floor, two horizontal planes, the area of the room can be compared to a six-sided or three-dimensional rectangle, or square – a sort of hollowed out cube. The cube of the room is not in a vacuum. It is a space filled with air. A canvas, on the other hand, has only two verticals and two horizontals, with no three-dimensional space (depth) at all.

The canvas the artist works on is flat. The only actual space he has at his disposal is limited to the dimensions of his canvas, as such, there is a specified number of inches or feet (cm. and m in the metric system) in width, and so many inches or feet in length. The depth which exists in the room, or three-dimensional space, is totally dependent upon the imagination. Any and all depth the artist achieves he has to create himself. Space or depth on canvas is pure illusion. Ironically, it is this artificially made space, this illusion, that creates the feeling of reality, so dear to the Western mindset. The architect is obliged to pay homage at all times, as is the case for the painter, to the universal law of gravity, – the latter to a lesser degree, because he may wish to take advantage of his sacred right of poetic license.

Although the architect’s constructions seem to defy gravity’s law by their upward thrust, that same construction is simultaneously subject to gravity’s downward pull, the same pull exerted on Newton’s famous apple. The downward pull is a vertical direction described earlier. It is represented by the vertical planes of the walls, set at right angles to the horizontal planes of the floors, creating the necessary gravitational reinforcement, or balance, without which the building would sooner or later collapse. When he draws, the artist is aware – if only subliminally – of his own balance – his own vertical position in space – which he transfers to all objects, since he feels the gravitational presence in everything he sees. Although drawing, by its nature, is in large measure tied to illusion, the artist must feel the actuality but create the illusion to adapt to the context of the two dimensionality of his canvas. This had held true to the culture of drawing until Picasso challenged the status quo by introducing distortion to his representation of form. This challenge was to draw with three dimensionality on a two dimensional surface which appeared to the viewer to be distortive.

Drawing is linear and is self-evident, though the line the eye traces is halting and static, without the guidance of the ear. The musical element of movement ignites the imagination – the horsepower of the mind. Guided by both eye and ear, the artist’s hand, traveling on canvas from object to object, is able to establish the directions of all lines by their opposition to, or degree of deviation from, the imaginary verticals and horizontals, subject to the law of gravity felt at all times.

The relationship between the linear, suggesting depth diagonally, and the stationary vertical, results in a feeling of tension and struggle or movement. Movement is inherent in all objects, as they seem to come toward, or go away from us in space. Movement is the linear progression in time and space. The linear of the architectural is as one with the

linear of the musical – literally, the line of the ear. Again we are, as perceivers, subject to the evaluation of our experience as reality and actuality come into play in our subconscious and conscious state. The actuality is that the objects are stationary as defined by the nature of gravity. However, the reality of perception suggests that the objects are in flux, not static. We perceive all objects as a result of the reflection of light by particles in atoms. The particles have mass and are subject to gravity. These particles transmit the light on waves which being subject to gravity (reference quantum and string theory by Merleau-Ponty, Heidegger and Einstein), which according to our perception suggest that everything we perceive is in flux experientially but cognition (our imagination and acceptance of gravity) allows us to accept that they are stationary.

So, how do we adapt, in our inherent pursuit for equilibrium and organic predisposition, to settle the paradoxical relationship between concept and percept? For instance, in the written score of a musical composition the individual notes or chords when strung together in linear fashion become music and composition, as the composer or instrumentalist progresses from one note to the next. In the same way is the drawing line, musical. All line, when broken down, which means analyzed, can be seen to be a succession of individual points, analogous to the musician's notes. As the artist draws, going from point to point, the series of contiguous points automatically becomes a line. Depending on importance of the role of the ear in making that line, it will have, more or less, the same abstract characteristics as does music, as in continuity of movement, rhythm, and tempo.

Movement makes possible (poetically) logical sequences, the indispensable gift of the ear to the brain. Sequence is order and order is what is required to change the chaotic tendency in thought and feeling the artist experiences in work into the coherent unity all art demands.

Just as drawing is both architectural and musical, so too is color architectural, or form creating on canvas, and musical. Not only are we all involuntary painters, we are involuntary draftsmen as well. To paint is to draw. What the eye constructs through color, the brain constructs through line. As we have said, the eye's reflex action is to light, seen by us as color. Light is the root of color. It is through color that the brain constructs the shapes of objects the eye sees. Color and line, architecture and music, since they come from the same source, are inseparable. It is here that the ambiguity of human vision lies. We see double, in color and in line. They are two different, unconsciously taken, points of view which give rise to two entirely different techniques or disciplines – painting and drawing – though ultimately they are one. Drawing is shorthand for full sight. .... continued in completed version.....

## **Chapter 8**

### ***THE DUEL: Truth and Imagination***

Throughout the eighteenth and halfway through the nineteenth centuries in France, where the mainstream of painting was taking place, a controversy seethed between artists who were partisans of the architectural persuasion: the reactionary academicians, who tried to return to the ideals and style of the ancients, imitating the sculptural drawing of the renaissance; and artists of a new and more personal intimacy with their subject matter: the discovery of light. This “aesthetic” conflict seemed to foreshadow that better known one, the holocaust of the French Revolution, then gathering momentum to burst forth before the century was out. Let us look for a moment at the background of the art scene at this time.

The eighteenth century opened with the last absolute monarch, Louis XIV, installed upon the throne of France, exercising his outrageous power to the hilt. The arts, like every other aspect of life, were controlled by the state: the ruling Aristocracy, an extension of the monarch’s will. Instruction in art was monopolized by the government (at least theoretically), by the official “art academy” set up in Rome in 1684. Even private instruction was forbidden by the academy and was considered a crime, nothing less than heresy against the state.

As we of the Twenty-first century should know, law and art are a near impossible mix. The progeny of a forced marriage between them are either stillborn, or spirituality dysfunctional. Just as Italian art deconstructed after the Renaissance, with the establishment of an official academy, so in France, in the seventeenth century, the classical influence of Poussin, who headed the French branch of the academy, nearly destroyed French painting for several decades after his demise.

Although Poussin far outstripped his Renaissance predecessors in his understanding of painting, it was precisely his talent, even genius, that resulted in his ideas being carried over into the eighteenth century, reinforcing the official “line” favoring the classicism of the past. This meant partiality toward the sculptural, over the more painterly qualities of color and light, or the musicality of compositions. By the end of the seventeenth century, in spite of interference from officialdom, painters were beginning to better understand the complex composition of light as it brings out form. It became generally understood that to paint was not to represent objects on canvas resembling sculpture, but objects or figures governed by light, and therefore color, living in color as objects do.

The structure, the architecture of objects, exists beneath the “liquid light” by which they are transformed. The softness, the curve of light, bevels, rounds out, and gives substance to the otherwise hard and empty objects. Light hits objects as a moving force. The object is static in painting without the musical element of light. It was no less a figure than Michelangelo, essentially a sculptor himself, not a painter, who with his great intuition said long before, at a time when painting was in its infancy “Painting is the music of God.”

Being under pressure by the Academy to put the accent on a conceptual or intellectual picture of the world to the detriment of the reality of painting, the painters of the eighteenth century became so interested in the social scene around them that they virtually lost track of their original instincts as to what painting was all about. Instead of responding to things seen and felt, they over-ornamented, over-burdened their canvases, in their anxiety to record, in almost compulsive detail, every visible object in their

surrounding. This proliferation and excess of ornamentation is what is known as the Baroque, a label applicable to all the arts of the eighteenth century. Scenes from life, episodes or anecdotes in graphic form—the superficial façade, rather than the meaning behind the façade.

What was an advance in Baroque painting was that it represented an attitude closer to life, more realistic. Unfortunately, the superficial or perfunctory façade was confounded with the truth—the belief the façade somehow explained interior meaning, something we can no longer believe today. The consciousness each artist had of his own idiosyncrasies only augmented the belief they were not being superficial. It is not that we believe there is something deeper in us than they believed about themselves, but because we relate the visual to other aspects of life, subjective phenomena linked with the visual. We have discovered that the visual has deep and complex counterparts in ourselves, that our predecessors might have only suspected.

No artist is an island unto themselves. Each has roots in the cultured soil of their native land. Until recently most painters could claim to have a compatriot, an immediate predecessor, who would be a direct influence and would determine the course their work was to take. Honore Fragonard – perhaps one of the most accomplished French artists of the 18th century, should no doubt, have named Antoine Watteau that influence for him. Watteau's short life – he died of tuberculosis at the age of 38 – bridged the gap in his work, between the 17th and 18th centuries. Although considered a French painter he was not born in France but as if symbolically, in a Flemish town halfway between Holland and France, in a province annexed to France soon after his birth. Watteau escaped classical schooling in France and turned instead to painters of his own choosing for inspiration and instruction, to the Flemish painter Rubens for movement, and to Vermeer for light. It was the study of light, so diligently pursued in the 17th century and further in the 18th century in France, which was to make for the understanding of light's unlimited domain, far beyond what one would expect the eye to give. It is the disciple who realizes the dream of the master. By 18th century standards Fragonard, whose name is indissolubly associated with hedonism at its zenith, with licentious aristocracy of the ancient regime, was born, appropriately enough, in the little town of Grasse, celebrated for its perfumery and its salubrious climate, whose very air delights both senses and the soul. The new spirit of sophistication which ruled European painting for the next hundred and fifty years epitomizes the work of Fragonard. It is the spirit of vanity, self adulation, next with self observation, and a degree of critical appraisal. For the painter it is an attempt at a realistic study of just what the eye sees when the human being is aware of himself, at the same time that he is interacting with his surroundings. Because Fragonard wanted to convey the full sense of the human form in its environment, usually a delightful one, he had to portray the figures in action." *A Woman on a Swing* for instance; a believable movement of form in space. It is the plains of light on the form that creates the appearance of the movement of that form. As a figure turns away from or towards the light, every gradation of light planes articulates the form living will or moving in

its surroundings. Thus Fragonard succeeds in getting the illusion of a figure moving in space with greater accuracy than was gotten before. Where Rubens' nudes are only illustrations of movements, only action, Fragonard brings us closer to his own experience by presenting the feeling of movement as sensations themselves.

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## Chapter 9

### *The Collaborators*

The emergence, around the middle of the nineteenth century, of the style of painting called Impressionism, was the result of the confluence of the artists' discontent with the painting of their time. The prevailing taste, the taste of the official academy – the only “showcase” where the artists could show their “wares” – at the time of Delacroix's death was, if anything, more backward-looking, more hypnotized, by the outmoded classic style, than ever before. The great poet and critic, Beaudelaire summed up the situation with his lament, “Who will deliver me from the Greeks and Romans?”

Of course it was only convention – that ever-lasting attraction of the salon for the ancients. But what is stronger than convention? It numbs the spirit at the time it atrophies the mind. On the other hand, “resemblance to things seen” was bankrupt. There had been a picking of the forbidden fruit and the only question remaining was what other tastes await in the light of discovery and the human spirit? To know now that there was a presence of such an expansive universe to explore, one that would ignite the senses, engage an awareness of that which was always at their fingertips but now was ascertainable and understandable was infectious in its insidious design as to make every moment in the studio an awakening of inspiration and wonderment.

One of the artists who addressed himself to the challenge of the future was Gustave Courbet whose clarion call was “Paint what you see.” Meaning the painters should take, as their models, the man and women of the day – not a hero out of sight 2,000 years or longer. But conditioned by his or her early ties, he could not, in his own painting, make a significant break with the past. He could only point the way.

Yet it was Courbet who, in the great international exhibition of painting in the World's Fair of 1855, had a specially built booth he named “Pavillion du Realisme.” This gesture of defiance of the authorities by use of the significant word “realism,” was one of the first straws in a wind of 25 year's duration which was to sweep away the dry-rot of the past and launch a path – however abortive in itself – into the new.

Edward Manet, a painter some twenty years younger than Courbet, took up the mantle of realism where Courbet had left off. Manet owed much to the great Spanish painters, Velasquez and Goya, with heir remarkable absence of hypocrisy and sentimentality. These artists, like the great Dutch painters, Rembrandt and Vermeer as well as the eighteenth century Fragonard, dared to paint fellow creatures of their own era in natural poses, and contemporary dress.

On seeing a pretentious historical painting by a conventional contemporary, Manet remarked, "How the devil can you paint when you've only got his hunting license to go by?" His own injunction echoed that of Courbet, "Take a good look, then put down what you see right away. If you've got it, fine. If you haven't, begin again." Beginning with Leonardo Da Vinci, and ending only with Manet, all painters – although it was with reluctance in the case of the greats – applied their paint with a technique known as modeling. To model is to make gradations of values from light to dark colors or vice-versa, in all objects to express their three dimensionality. These gradations, in their sum, create the illusion of solidity of form, its cylindricality. This technique stemmed more or less directly from Leonardo's chiaroscuro.

Most indoor light, in which virtually all painting, until Impressionism took place, is what is known as cylindrical light, because it brought out the cylinder in form, emphasizing the contrasts of light and shade of most interiors. And because as the light illuminated the objects or the subject matter, it surrounded the forms and tied them together in unity and balance revealing the wholeness of the subject being painted. The flat light of Spain divided space and form contrasting intense shadow with intense light in a rather melodramatic context.

Manet wanted to do away with the light of the past, where the shadows do all the work of creating the form, thereby obscuring the color. Not that Manet was interested in color so much – that was left for his confrere and opponent, Claude Monet – but because Manet believed "The greatest personage in painting is light." He felt light projected the true character, the "soul" of things. He wanted to convey what to him was the greatest reality – the fact that we see from the "eye of light." Manet made black, always used to identify shadow historically, into the strongest of lights.

He painted in a light that flattened, with his back to the window of his north-light studio, trying to see the object suffused with light. When he painted outdoors, he chose a light but cloudy day, with the sky overcast, as in his painting "The Funeral" to bring out the tone, the flavor, the mood of the light. Manet thus became the progenitor of certain painters of our era, Matisse, Braques and others, of the flat, of reduction in painting, by reducing the cylinder into the flatness of the plane.

In spite of his innovation, Manet was still within the concept of resemblance to things seen. The layman today cannot distinguish him from painters of the 17th and 18th centuries. A side of him that was so much the traditionalist that he actually said that "if the ancients didn't do it it wasn't worth doing!"

Manet's forte was in being able to put down directly, the eye's "first impression." He was the champion of the first impression, when we get a clear, strong picture, when sight affects us with impact is when an inner voice rings out that must be heard. He did not want to digest that sight (as painters do today). He simply wanted to register as swiftly and truthfully as possible, an impression of the human eye.

The word Impressionism, a makeshift term, originally one of derision, that stuck in the popular mind, includes artists of divergent convictions, somewhat thoughtlessly. The painters of the movement were divided into two, not very clear-cut factions.

Those who believed, with Manet, in carrying on, the innovations, the enlightened tradition of the past, and the more radical innovators, the ideologues of the movement, specifically Pissarro and Manet. Then there were those who straddled both camp's, belonging, strictly speaking, to either, such as Renoir and Degas.

Where the two factions differed was in that perennial argument, now reaching a showdown in more sophisticated terms, their differing concepts as to the relationship between color and form.

The faction headed by Pissarro and Monet might be called the true impressionists. What these diehards were after was the creation of form through color alone (equating light with color and texture) totally without line. To this end, they augmented and heightened their color scale. The one or two colors Delacroix had introduced, like a lavender we think we see when a blue and a red are juxtaposed, was a phenomenon started with other colors as well.

Monet and Pissarro, in their seeking for the true color of things, felt the need of a fresh look at nature, not for the sake of freshness per se, but because the stale look was a false look. They wanted to disassociate from the present, all the visual bias accumulated from the past. Perhaps for the first time in the history of painting, these men realized that although the past is always with us, in the first moment we see almost exclusively in the present. In that moment of the present, they thought, lay the reality of sight. That was the moment they wanted to paint. Monet said he wanted to see the world like a man born blind, who has suddenly gained his sight.

The Impressionists went out of doors for the freshness of things, where color was at its purest in most vibrant. The moment they took up on the spot landscape painting (unlike the Barbizon painters who only sketched outdoors and painted inside the studio ) while adhering to the principle, " paint what you see and feel," Impressionism was virtually inevitable. .... continued in completed version.....

## **CHAPTER 10**

### ***Dialectic of Art: concept and percept***

The quarrel between Gauguin and van Gogh points up a pervasive division in human temperament between those who believe in their intuitive power before their reason and those who put conscious reason ahead of their intuition. The tragedy of the encounter between Gauguin and van Gogh was due not only to the difference in their temperaments, but to the fact that Gauguin could not understand van Gogh whose temperament encompassed both types, as true genius always does. The tragedy that arises, when purpose precedes clarity, is often the result of conjecture and judgment based on blindness. The human struggle, if it were based on

establishing clarity, would rarely result in division and more often conclude in unity. What could have been a fruitful collaboration ended in isolation and despair.

During the latter half of the 19th century which included the Impressionist experiment and beyond, painters of all shades of temperament were having a difficult time of it in spite of a fecundity of talent in the gradual lifting of the constraints imposed by an uncomprehending public. In hindsight it is revealed, most were floundering for the specific reason that the art of drawing, had not yet caught up with the art of painting.

Impressionism represented the disintegration of form and an emphasis on the visceral domain of the eye, on color and texture, to the virtual exclusion of the workings of the brain, ( whose task is to serve as a coordinator of the senses rather than the totalitarian dictator) to whom form and line are so important. To redress this imbalance, as we have seen , Van Gogh and Gauguin attacked the problem in two quite different ways: Van Gogh becoming expressionistic and Gauguin as a latter day primitive.

Even during this time, when Orthodox Impressionism had center stage, there were artists working along with them who reacted against the Impressionist concept of color, texture and atmosphere, being interested basically in the delineation of form, artists who felt art is a more complex matter than meets the eye. Outstanding among these were Edgar Degas, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec and Pierre Auguste Renoir.

Although he painted, Degas was primarily a draftsman. He might even be called an anatomist because of his preoccupation with the human form. Degas pioneered in wanting to articulate form in a new, more intimate way. He recognized that space was one actuality and the figure another; that, in spite of the discrepancy between the two, they must be so related when drawn as to form and indissoluble unit.

As we have said earlier, all objects, animate or inanimate, are subject at all times to the law of gravity. This fact in itself indicates the vital connection between the object and the space it occupies, beautifully illustrated by the architect, Buckminster Fuller, when he tells us that a radish, for instance, when it falls, “knows” exactly where to fall because the pull of gravity “directs” it to come to rest at a certain spot on the ground, and only at that spot. The radish, of course, is inanimate. When an animate body moves, that body must fight the gravitational force as well as that of inertia, both for its upright position as well as the more obvious struggle of maintaining that position while moving through space.

The law of gravity is of paramount importance in art, being nature’s counterpart of the body’s inner equilibrium. Degas was fascinated with capturing the movements of the figure, especially that of dancers, which are seen as both obeying and defying this law, simultaneously. This dynamic equilibrium or ambiguity he felt in the dancing figures at such times, enable him to obtain the sense of reality we recognize from our experience in life. It is this sense of heightened reality that gives the artist

the indispensable belief in his work. It is this same “reality” that gives us, the viewer, a sense of “beauty” for the reason that we cannot take or leave the drawing, since ambiguity puzzles us. We feel a tension between the objects in the space that they occupy. Our brain cannot understand. We tried to separate the object from the space as we normally do in life. We are not cognitively aware of space as such when we look at an object due to our psycho-visual and tactile connection. In life we are only aware of so many objects which are so many symbols to us, the chair being one symbol, a woman another, a cloud another, an ashtray or a bird, still others, and so on. Here in front of this Degas our eye is forced to connect the object with the space it’s in because Degas was conscious when drawing the object of the truth of things, the beauty that we encounter in life, but all too often miss. Here, confronted with this truth, and not understanding it, only feeling it, we get into a state of intellectual excitement, which exhilarates us, a puzzlement that would ordinarily depress us in life.

Degas had an instinct for the architectural. In his ballet series, he depicts the whole architecture of the human body, bones and elbows sticking out prominently, sinew and muscle, moving in graceful arabesques in space. In his bathers, we are confronted with the grotesque movements of a human body adjusting to getting in and out of the cramped French bathtub.

It is difficult for us today to realize that a 100 years ago, these innocent subjects incurred the opprobrium of a public still capable of registering outrage and shock. Perhaps it was not only unconventional subjects, unconventionally handled, that irked the populace, but the intimations of sexuality, of cruelty hidden by the flesh, in the very bone in the vertebrae of the skeleton that supports our skull, our brain, that bears the brunt of the wear and tear of life. As Degas himself put it, “ art is vice. You cannot marry it legitimately, you rape it.”

Whereas Degas treated human form like an architect Toulouse-Lautrec dealt with it like a musician. Toulouse-Lautrec’s drawings are incisive, musical flights through space. It is interesting to note, how the exact same subjects at the hands of these two draftsmen provoke two different effects.

Toulouse-Lautrec was the supreme artist of the first impression. The first impression encompasses both percept and concept, feeling and thought, received in virtual simultaneity. The first impression is not the exclusive property of the artist, it is the experience of everyone who sees it as well. The first impression carries the seed of inspiration for the work to come. It was what Toulouse-Lautrec relied on, almost to a fault.

In the single figures of his posters and prints, he shows what the eye can do when directed by the lightning quick workings of the psyche. By unconsciously filtering out what he sees but doesn't want, he's free to find the essence of his thought.

Generally speaking, there are three different ways of looking at his subject that the artist can adopt. These are sometimes adopted consciously, but as a rule the choice is unconscious. He can look at his subject first, then apply himself to his work, on canvas or paper, relying thereafter exclusively on memory. Or, he can look at his canvas while working, then back to his subject again, alternating his attention back and forth between subject and canvas, comparing at every moment what he has on his canvas with what he sees in life. In the third way, the artist looks at the subject and never for an instant takes his eyes off that subject, relying on his kinesthetic sense to guide his hand, knowing that hand and eye at such times are so connected that he himself becomes a living pantograph.

As to the relative desirability of these three methods, we will not take sides. The method depends on the temperament of the artist. In fact, there is no reason why all three should not be used even within a single work. Toulouse-Lautrec chose the third, which allows for the greatest spontaneity, speed and concentration. So intense was his concentration on his model, he never knew where he was drawing, whether on his paper or on his pants. He was perception incarnate.

***Lautrec saw an analogy between himself as a draftsman and the surgeon friend whose procedures in operation he used to watch, struck by the similarity of the precision required of both. (if I were not a painter, undoubtedly I would have been a surgeon) ..... continued in completed version.....***

## Chapter 11

### ***East meets West***

Kipling's famous phrase, "East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet," written in the last half of the 19th century was no longer true by the 20th century, at least not in the art of painting. Eastern art, like the Eastern civilization generally, until very, very recently, was psychologically geared to the past, atavistic, virtually changeless. Steeped in tradition so profoundly that stagnation became prisonlike for younger generations.

The infiltration into Europe of Eastern reasoning and Eastern primitivism, decorative and the flat, without the quasi-scientific third dimension, struck the Western mind with considerable impact in the unselfconscious Renaissance taking place at that time.

This latter day Renaissance, which started with Impressionism, was attributable to dissatisfaction with both Art and life in Europe. Among the particularly irksome facts of life, was the ever increasing, all pervading artificiality, and mechanization,

while far from least was the commercialism, the ethereal rat race in which all but a small fraction, were forced to take part.

Paul Gauguin, a stockbroker turned painter, who incidentally, had been doing quite well in the race was one who chafed and complained most bitterly against these ills. Were one to be simplistic, one might think it was the “incompatibility” of the hereditary strains in Gauguin’s blood that made the maladjustment and turbulence in his life, inevitable.

His father was French bourgeois; on his maternal side he could and did boast dissent from the ruling Spanish aristocracy, his great uncle was Viceroy to Peru, impossibly a touch of Indian primitive, of which he was proudest of all.

We all know the story of Gauguin's flight from this “filthy Europe” to the Pacific island of Tahiti where he could “listen to the sweet murmuring music of my heart, beating in amorous harmony with the mysterious beings of my environment. Free at last was no money troubles.....” In Tahiti he need no longer fear he would grow completely stale in the drudgery of naturalism whose final manifestation was Impressionism, revolutionary as the latter may have appeared at the start.

What Gauguin wanted was the antithesis of Impressionism. According to Gauguin, “we have truth when we have a purely cerebral art, as in primitive art, the most deliberate of them all, as in Egypt.” In a further statement against naturalism, he says, “I am not a painter after nature..... With me everything springs from my mad imagination..... I begin with a still life and in the end, dispense with the model.”

Gauguin did not mean he gave up nature. What he calls his “mad imagination” was based on what he saw in nature, in the visible world. What he is really expressing is his rebellion against the almost total absence in painting, of the imagination. He wanted what every artist wants: the union, a marriage between his subjective and objective selves.

Gauguin’s intuition told him he wanted to express his primitive self, the primitive in his nature. He felt a kinship with the artist of the early middle ages, who, in spite of all that was out of joint at that time, at least he “..... Was not a slave to reality, could freely engage in his play of fantasy and imagination.”

By the 1890s freedom had entered the painting arena and was not to be denied. Each artist, being autonomous, was restricted only by his own limitations. Questions were asked and answers proliferated. Yet there was a common denominator among most serious painters that was the change in attitude toward the canvas itself, toward the means used as well as the meaning.

Before his Tahitian Odyssey, Gauguin painted with a group in Brittany who dubbed themselves the “Nabis,” a Hebrew word meaning of the Prophets. The Nabis continued the Impressionist’s idea, insisting that all form be realized by paint alone,

completely without drawing a line. Different forms were represented by paint, no important in the same manner as the Impressionists, but by creating contrasts between different color areas, without any drawing whatsoever.

Like their generation as a whole, the Nabis wanted to “break free of the official dogma.” It was they who wrote the manifesto of painting whose influence is with us today and is second in importance for that time, only to Cézanne, in which a picture was defined as “a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order.” Gauguin shared the iconoclastic spirit of the Nabis as well as their technical and ideological preference for colors of high saturation, applied decoratively, flat. He differed from them by not relinquishing line.

The Nabis should not be confused with the “Fauves” (wild beasts) who appeared several years later and who also painted in flat colors of high intensity, they used colors straight out of the tube, but being less interested in theory, had no compunction about using line and outline blatantly, in defiance of theory.

The Fauves were no doubt aware of Gauguin’s ideas, but the differences between them meant more than the resemblance. Although also flat, fauvistic painting is perceptual, extroverted, “happy” and still very much in the tradition of Europe. On the other hand, a brooding mysticism is at the root of Gauguin’s work. He was controlled by his mind, his ideas and his ideology. Though his work was visual it was also disproportionate in his use of narrative.

Manet’s statement that light is the most important personage in painting has a significant bearing on Gauguin’s work. Intuitively, Gauguin chose a climate where the light corresponded with his innate color sense. The equatorial light of Tahiti was dramatic, what we of the temperate zone, call exotic, with strong contrasts of warm and cold, making for a full-color expression, but without the subtle nuances of the light in France, minimizing the “air” and the atmospheric quality such as the Impressionists achieved. It is at this point that the artists find how closely related the art of painting is to the climate, weather and temperature in which they live and paint.

Fauvistic colors achieved in France, though feeling and imagination, were, in Tahiti, in actuality. Here Gauguin found the external counterpart of his “congenital” feeling for color and texture. As for drawing, it was the proportions of the local flora and fauna, especially the proportions of the Tahitian women that brought out Gauguin’s decorative sense, his sense of proportion. By itself the decorative is not art, it is artisanship. It is here that Gauguin made his error when he unwittingly separated the source of his painting imagery from his drawing. He went to Tahiti for color and texture but left his drawing in Paris, the deadwood of the Academy of his day.

Gauguin thought he could escape realism by going back into history, not the history of the dead past of Europe, but the living history of a race still primitive, such as the Polynesians, there, hopefully to rediscover his own primordial self, where life still

held a fragrance unspoiled by the “absurdities of civilization.” ..... continued in completed version.....

## Chapter 12

### Paul Cezanne: Father of Modern Art

Paul Cezanne, like his three confreres and contemporaries; Degas, Toulouse Lautrec and Renoir, was dedicated to his intuition. Unlike them, he was equally dedicated to the analysis of that intuition. In this respect he was a pioneer. He thought of himself as a primitive, working in a new way for others presumably, to follow.

No painter ever wrestled harder with himself and no painter, before his time at least, ever contributed so much to the understanding of painting and drawing. In this view of himself he was reasonably accurate and more successful than he imagined.

Cezanne knew what he wanted. Although he subscribed to color discoveries of the Impressionists, finding them indispensable for the felicitous translation of his experience- “realization of his sensations” he abhorred the impermanence and the evanescence implicit in their work. He wanted the sensation of reality above all else, the sensation of solid form. He “....wished to make of the Impressionists something as solid and durable as the old masters in the museums.

Cezanne was a conservative man and a conservative artist. He was a supreme realist, never for an instant did he want to depart from the look of nature. There is an exquisite irony in his reputation as the standard-bearer of the abstract. He was an architect, a builder, but a builder only “ after nature.” “ NATURE, follow nature,” was his oft repeated advice.

In spite of his strict adherence to this advice, it was a long time before his work pleased anyone either amongst his peers or in the general public. He was the ugly duckling of his whole generation. In an age of “Charming” Impressionism, he alone bypassed “charm.” There was an impalpable grimness in his work corresponding to the grimness of the heroic determination of his will.

Yet after his death, it was the work of Cezanne that had the most profound and controversial affect, not only on the generation immediately following his, but to the present day.

What did Cezanne do to cause such an upheaval? He riveted his eye on his subject and didn't take it off until his complete field of vision, all the objects and the surrounding space were taken care of, a strange thing happened.

Cezanne was a most persistent man. He had to find the way to “realize his sensations.” In his great desire and intensity to get to the “truth” of things ( he once worked 500 hours on one single still life. ) he unconsciously hypnotized himself, projecting his eye into the subject being painted, on to objects themselves.

He was no longer standing in front of his canvas, painting, the way artists before him had done. Unbeknown to himself, his eye brought him into his subject, forcing him to enter his canvas. At this point his visual context changed forever. This moment in his visual history was a breakthrough. For now he had opened Pandora’s box of penetrating his canvas and revealing a whole new world of the visual and tactile spatial relationship. One might enter the canvas as one would the subject matter but how was one to translate that experience to the voyeur who is seeing from the outside- in? The reconciliation of the two perspectives absolutely drove him mad.

In this moment what he found was a complete reversal. What was long was now narrow ( the old Masaccio, Gothic perspective) was now wider and more horizontal in shape. Things were flattened out, they seemed to Cezanne to be going sideways rather than away from himself into depth. There was a peripheral gain and some vertical loss. Apparently his eye was looking “flat”. Apparently, instead of going into space, as he thought he was doing - as all artists think they do- and going into depth, he was going up and down the canvas and from side to side. What happened to cause this miraculous transformation?

*These days, in planes, we fly at great heights, so high we can see the curvature of the earth. On the descent, when we’re still a mile or so up, the earth seems to be a horizontal plateau. Then, as we circle slowly, spiral-like toward our landing field, the landscape below- hills and valleys, the promontories and the depressions become increasingly clearer and clearer.*

*Before we have landed, while we are still parallel with the earth, we see a topographical landscape, a contour map of the world. The mountains and valleys, the promontories and depressions are foreshortened, they are somewhat leveled out. This effect is caused both by the distance we are from the ground, and because as everything is seen from above, everything is suffused with light, the shadows seeming to contract because of the distance between our eye and the peaks and valleys below, from our areal perspective.*

When we get off of the plane, the topographical map disappears, we are once again standing at right angles to the earth. The illusion we have always with has returned. We again see everything narrowly, from ourselves, into depth. We have lost the broad panorama, we are an eagle whose wings have been clipped.

Cezanne, however, was still an eagle, he still saw, what is, from our point of view, vertically. In his semi- hypnotic state, he himself thought he was seeing horizontally, into depth, as most of the time we do intellectually. In seeing vertically, what he lost in depth, he more than made up for in width or breadth.

A new perspective was born. That which had been long and narrow, became wider, squarer, the artist's field of vision was enlarged. Cezanne was now seeing in space. His painting had become spatial, which meant a more convincing illusion of reality. What we came away with was a horizontal plane, the level ground, going away from us, was now standing up on end; the vertical plane. ( still ,we need to recognize for the sake of historical fact that the Chinese and Japanese were engaged in the vertical, frontal plane centuries before in their scroll paintings as well and most of their landscape ink drawings. ) His eye was going up a series of "floors" instead of going into depth. Light areas became larger, dark areas became smaller. There was no longer a marked distinction between foreground, middle-ground and background. It was all one, it was all flat, it was the plane of the surface of the canvas. It was what is now known as the " Picture Plane."

If we look at any one painting by Cezanne, we feel a reality seldom achieved in western art before. In "The Two Card Players" for instance, it seems those two figures, smoking and laying in front of that wall, really exist and are moving in their immobility. They are no longer "glued " to the wall, there seems to be space between them and the adjacent wall. It is no longer the kind of painting Coleridge had in mind when he said " a painted ship upon a painted ocean."

This feeling of space created a unity between the card players and the wall. This is the unity Cezanne wanted so much. If we look at the portrait of Madame Cezanne, we will notice that the light side of her face encroaches upon the shadow, contracting the shadow and by so doing, gives us a greater impact of the humanity of her features, which are clearly delineated by the movement of the light on her nose, her mouth, her chin and her brow. This is the greater reality he achieved for the self-same reason that he was on the vertical position while at one and the same time he was also seeing from himself, as in the old organized perspective.

He doubled the view of Masaccio and by doubling he created the illusion we get in life. Because, while we see in depth, unbeknown to ourselves, our eye moves up and down and all around and we feel the space and the objects in it, whether animate or inanimate, are bound together in our sight as a single, living unit. .... continued in completed version.....

## **Chapter 13**

### **The Bridge :**

#### *The origins of tactile and visual space*

It is Paul Cézanne, the contemporary of the Impressionists, though not one of that stylistic persuasion himself, who took the first halting steps which started the avalanche of visual discoveries that characterized the era that has come to be known

as contemporary art. By revisiting the Masters of the past who gave his era its heritage, a heritage the painting of the Impressionists seemed to have abandoned, Cézanne conceived of a kind of painting that would combine elements of that past with knowledge and faith in and of that which was new.

It was a feeling of impermanence and evanescence in Impressionism to which he objected. Cézanne “wished to make of Impressionism something as solid and durable as the old Masters in the museums.” He realized the truth of the Impressionists color discoveries, but was disappointed with the painting that resulted. The object, the architecture, is virtually nonexistent in their work. “Air suffuses everything and air is wonderful,” says Cézanne who knows and refers to the process as the “envelope, but what of the letter itself?”

It was Cézanne's strong feeling for form that governed all of his work. Form in painting does not exist three dimensionally as it does in sculpture, he reminds us. Form is created in painting by the contrast of colors. He did not want the melodramatic, long gamut of Delacroix, where light and shade plays havoc with the form of the object. What he wanted was to go back to those artists of the past who understood the importance of space for the objects to live in. He was especially interested in those artists of the past whose angle of vision or perspective enabled them to look down on their subject in order to get a greater feeling of space. Cézanne changed the Impressionist's idea of color, going back to those painters of the past who felt, as he did, about the supremacy of form. Color, for him, was form in paint. If we look at one of his still life's of apples, we see the color in the light and the color in the shadow, always saying “red apple” or “yellow apple” not speaking of light and shade, but speaking of the form of the apple through color. Color itself is the architect of form. In Cézanne “there is a difference between a painted apple and an apple in paint.”

Cézanne was struck by a peculiarity of the human eye, of always going with the light, up and down and from side to side, toward oneself and away, as the light forces it to do so. He thus found “floors” of sight. He found that we see, not simply in-depth, but in several strata of “planes” of sight. These “floors” or “planes” form a picture plane that the canvas represents, comprising the artists' field of vision. Cézanne was interested in the arrangement of everything in that picture plane, not wanting to go beyond it into distance, where he could not “realize his sensation.” He wanted to make sure that what he put in his canvas was what he really felt whether in line or color. “Nature, follow nature,” “let her lead you, hand in hand,” was his often repeated advice. He realized he would have to simplify nature in order to really “see” it. He noticed that the myriad forms of nature can be reduced 3 basic geometric shapes; the cylinder, the sphere and the cone. These shapes have two qualities in common; they are all curvilinear and they are all three-dimensional, because nature, from which they are derived, is three-dimensional.

Yet one of the main tenants of Cézanne's theory was that painting was not sculptural. That being the case, he would have to translate these simplified shapes,

the cylinder, the sphere in the cone, from the three to the two dimensional or flat surface for the painting to be accommodated to his theory, that the illusion of form must adjust to the flat, two-dimensional canvas. This will be addressed again in the future, with the new dynamic introduced by his disciple, Picasso.

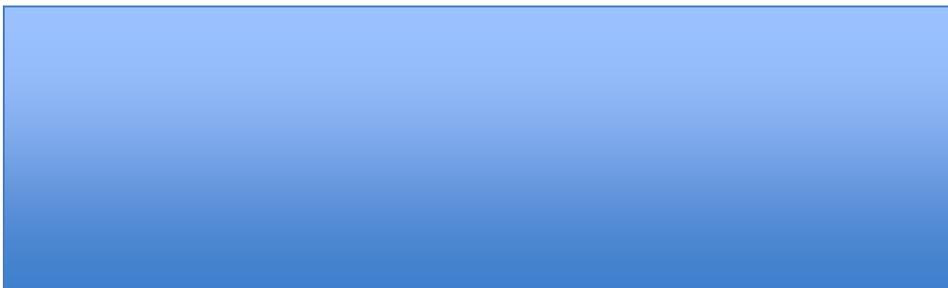
The answer to the flattening process that was needed, was the plane; the plane being both straight and flat. All the curvilinear shapes are transposable or analyzable, as so many straights. (*illustration to be used here*)



The plane is the basis of Cézanne's work. In his landscapes he was able to replace the object, as a three-dimensional or sculpturesque entity into the painted planes that fit the picture plane of the canvas. He never lost sight of the three dimensionality of form, however, as a feeling. In a portrait of Madame Cézanne, we feel the movement of that form, created by the movement of light on the light side of her face, humanizing the features by doing so. It is three-dimensional in its detail, yet the figure sits in space and in harmony with the flat plane of the canvas.

At first Cézanne's planes, more or less, defined objects only, but little by little they began to extend beyond the limits of the objects, to form an alliance with space itself. Space, called air or atmosphere, became as real as the objects, they became one, a unit. "I would have unity," says Cézanne. He wanted to "see space as palpable as the resistant tree trunk, that would create and instill, unity," he said. This unity created a new drawing concept. It was no longer merely color, it was light transforming line, as we see in the painting of the Card Players, or of the man in space.

It was the realization of the indivisible unity of space on the picture plane of the canvas which made Cézanne the great modern architect of space. The geometric drawing created by the planes, which Cézanne considered just so much preliminary abstraction. The life of the painting began only when he started applying paint or color. Drawing and color are not separate entities. "As one paints, one draws; to paint is to contrast colors, drawing is a relationship of contrasts," was how Cézanne found unity between color and line.



Cézanne went to nature in the same spirit as Rembrandt did; to find what he wanted from himself. But unlike Rembrandt, he understood that resemblance to things seen would not evoke from him what he wanted unless and until he used his free will to see and organize his canvas and that, his inner self would rule the painting. (one of the most profound influences on the development of Picasso as a visionary painter)

Cézanne thought of the artist as replacing “reality” by the imagination and by the abstraction which accompanies it. In this understanding he represents nature and art in a semi-abstract relationship. This abstraction though, must be derived from nature. To ignore nature and to replace it with imagination alone, was to fall into “empty, arbitrary abstraction” .....” Reducing the artist to his own pettiness, or mere self indulgence.”

In his new drawing discovery, Cézanne brought painting into the role it was always meant to play: he telescoped time. He took the past as well as the future and brought them into the present moments of existence, the primordial dream of humanity, the life of our imagination. His developed sense of balance and unity created a oneness of time on a single page of the book of experience to be represented by the painters canvas: terse, full, and complete. By bringing the whole field of vision into the picture plane, Cézanne exposed the trap of great distances which make for falsehood and sentimentality. They now know it not only intuitively but conceptually. Distance distorts. That which stands between sensation and analysis, is tied to an emotional or reactionary behavior and often leads to a dichotomy between perception and perspective. It is here where sentimentality contributes to distortion, either in the exaggeration or minimization of proportionality in the representation of form, not entirely unlike that which we do in life’s judgments. It underlines the great distortions between sentiment and true appreciation, feeling on the one hand, and sentimentality and self-deception on the other. The subject matter in Cézanne’s painting is always either at arms length or even closer. We can touch it, grasp it, and perceive things in it, not through the haze of fog due to distance, but in the clear light and closeness of day. That which is clearly seen and felt will convince, not only our senses but our reason, as well. .... continued in completed version.....

## Chapter 14

## **Of Form and Abstraction: the fork in the road**

Cézanne, in tears, thinking that his life as a painter was a failure. "Now being old, nearly 70 years, the sensations of color which give the light are for me the reason for the abstractions which do not allow me to cover my canvas entirely nor to pursue the delineations of objects where their points of contact are fine and delicate; from which it results that my image or picture is incomplete." (To Bernard, 1905). Little did he know that he would one day be known as the father of contemporary art. As an art student he struggled with the status quo of the Academy. He could not draw like so many of his contemporaries principally because he had clumsy hands. Although there is probably rationale that might suggest that clumsiness came from a sort of disinterestedness or perhaps a distrust of the hand for the eye. It went against his grain to merely be compliant without analysis to complement perception. "Nature is an infinite sphere, whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere." His struggles to reconcile the solidity of form and the freedom and personalization of the abstract, left him at odds with his two selves. In essence he became the paradox that he fought throughout his entire life in art.

The paradox, clinically existed between the cerebral or intellectual and the sensuous or spiritual nature of human circumstance. In art it was made manifest in his struggles to comply and yet depart from the commonality of the time, which was to imitate rather than translate one's perception. His incessant need to persevere in the reconciliation of these two predispositions became a great resource provided by nature and his capacity for discovery. Psychologically, the spectrum in which Cézanne was contending with was the relationship between the unconscious perceptions and the conscious perspective by which he could make manifest the rendering of his subject matter. His perseverance and fortitude brought him to a uniquely personal connectivity to the subject matter yet he was still able to present his rendering as accessible and true to the traditions of painting. He could not draw a hand like Michelangelo or Durer but he could recognize the same external influences of light, movement and shape. His analysis of light as it exposed form brought him to the discovery of planes which in turn, enabled him to find the simplicity of form. We had mentioned earlier that in his rendering of form, he reduces nature to its simplicity of three basic shapes inherent in all other forms. The cone, the cylinder in the sphere, and how he would represent them in a spatial reality yet to be addressed in the history of art.

As Cézanne identifies shape he also integrates texture, again it is the first time in the history of painting that color, texture and light combine simultaneously to create shape in space. It would be hard to understand if he accomplished this discovery exclusively from an analytical perspective, however it should be understood that he was no less intuitive than he was cerebral when he addresses nature.

For Cézanne form was quintessential in his poetic spirit. He was no less vulnerable to the romantic influences of the time regardless of his temperament for perseverance and intolerance of mediocrity. Make no mistake in assuming he did not have compassion for the commonality that he experienced thanks to the Impressionists. However he was cautious and fragile and he knew it.

Resulting from his reactionary behavior and the prospect that he could not paint like the others from the Academy, he drew off into the landscapes and the still lifes that would eventually become his hallmark of discovery. It was in that meditative state of being when confronting the circumstance, the still life, that he discovered a new connection to space. But to show his respect and understanding of his predecessors, it should be understood that he would never have made those discoveries had it not been for the magnitude and courage of the Impressionists who stood together against the Academy. Impressionism opened the door for Cézanne to attend to a new understanding in the spatial relationship of the subject matter to the artist's angle of vision.

What has come to be known as the tactile and visual space, originates with Cézanne's struggle with the still life. ( these two principals of space and perception became better known and definitive by the next generation of painters such as Picasso, Matisse Braque, Picabia and a host of their disciples. )

In the case of a still life and upon observing the objects of that subject matter, from the outside looking in; there exists a space between the artist and the objects of a still life that is known as the tactile space and addresses, primarily our sense of touch, that establishes the recognition of the distance or space between the still life and one's focus of vision. The psycho visual, where the eye travels directly to the objects and seems to touch the subject matter (the objects) and is concerned with the shape or form, texture and other details therein and the only space it captures is the space between the objects, often that which one cannot literally see, this is referred to as visual space. What Cézanne came to understand is that these two entities also referred to as, the real and the actual, are not mutually exclusive from one another, they are simply a part of the whole perception. Finding a balance between the two spaces, a sort of harmonic dialogue, will enable the unity and proportionality or the whole picture to take root.

In the act of observation and then rendering, should one object become isolated from the other objects, like a fixation might in life, it loses context and can become minimized or sensationalized, leading to disunity and disproportionality. However, integrating one's focus on a balance between the tactile and visual will result in unity and wholeness. Asked whether it is easier to paint a still life with one object or five objects in it; the answer would be five. The rational being that if we only have one object then we can never really understand the true dimension of that object nor would we know its true location. On the other hand, with 5 objects one might be provided a context to compare and contrast the objects as they relate to one another both spatially and in their linear interaction. Perhaps that is why we have

humanity, as it is easier to know one's self within the context of others, to compare and contrast rather than alone with no one or nothing to compare ourselves to. .

This would become one of the greatest achievements in the psychology of painting in the history of art. It was the bridge that ties the innocence of abstraction and the intelligence of analysis, that when conjoined, offer us a glimpse into one of the greatest attributes in humanity, intuition. It is in this quality of connectivity that we find inspiration. Of course there was a great price to be paid by Cézanne as he struggled with endless hours studying the relationship between these two spatial elements. He had no understanding of one versus the other but simply that they existed, for him as a dichotomy rather than unity. And this is where the struggle for recognition and acceptance challenged perspective versus perception. This is why he believed he failed, but it was out of that struggle that gave birth to the next generation that would give us the likes of Picasso, Matisse and the era of modern art.

As Isaac Newton once said "I stand on the shoulders of giants" so too have the artists of each generation stood on the discoveries that preceded them. The next generation of artists will come to a cross road in their evolution and growth of perception that will bring into question man's relationship to nature as either one with it or transcendent of it. At the core of the circumstance will be the nature of our ego, our sense of control of the world around us and in contrast, our more personal, vulnerable and intuitive self.

Out of the great tradition of the Spanish painters came a master draftsman by the name of Pablo Picasso. As a student in Barcelona, he was compared to Raphael, the great Italian draftsman of the Renaissance, at the age of 13. He would respond and thrive in that tradition which grew out of the Renaissance for years to come. But let us not lose sight of the fact that this was centuries past that era. Picasso was aware of what was happening in France, with the Impressionists and even though he was honored and respected in Spain as a young, talented artist of that great Spanish tradition, he knew that there was something more, something personal and something beyond the draftsman's line. It is important to note at this point that most of Picasso's work was derived out of the tradition of Chiaroscuro, or light and shade which is the essence of form, as depicted from the Renaissance. What was lacking in his work was color, texture and atmosphere, all of which were being addressed by the Impressionists. Picasso's ego and need for control left him vulnerable to a weakness in his own work, a sort of manic relationship to the rendering of form and that perhaps more than he wished, resulted in an imbalance and lack of unity in much of his earlier work.

So off he goes to France, a young man who intuitively understood he needed to address larger issues in the growth of his own sensibility, this intuitive connection was his genius. His strength of character and faith or love of himself gave him the inspiration to move on. The willingness to trust a new world would result in a journey of enlightenment for us all.

Before we leave Cézanne, it would be prudent to address the profound nature of the motif that he spent so much time struggling with, the still life. One need only spend five minutes observing his rendering of the peaches or apples in a still life to understand the dynamics of his discovery. In the meditative observation of the objects existing in his still life, one becomes acutely aware that the objects, though conceptually stationary, are in reality, in flux. What we experience is the vibration of color when presented in relationship to variations of opaqueness and transparency. Although he adheres to the basic premise of perspective the application of paint, in rendering form of various textures, pressures and intensities, what we experience is that the objects appear to rise and fall in accordance to our sense perception. This is the result of the transmittance of light, in relation to quantum, whereby what we experience visually, is the movement of light on waves as particles of reflected light are transmitted from the object to our eyes. Of course our imagination enables us to accept that gravity exists, so we thereby accept that the objects are stationary, but our senses experience movement. This of course would cause great disturbance in our equilibrium if our imagination was inactive, for it is our imagination that is our sanity. What Cézanne presents is that all of art is a lie, but as Picasso said, "it is a lie that helps us arrive at a greater truth."

Picasso would eventually utilize this discovery in an attempt to resolve the obsessive dependency of line and form in his own work. It is often been and continues to be the case that art is a means through which the individual finds the medication for the troubled self. All of art is therapeutic by its nature and it is the artist who engages their intuitive sensibility to find their equilibrium and balance.

When Picasso addresses his dilemma whereby form has become too dynamic and disproportionate resulting in his painting lacking in color, texture an atmosphere, he engages in the gift provided for him by the struggles of Cézanne. The cube, the most profound and solid of shapes in space, represents the dominance of form. So what does Picasso do? "in order to create one must destroy" Picasso must destroy the cube. He takes the elements that constitute form, light and shadow, and he deconstructs the cube, this is what the critics perfunctorily refer to as Cubism, for the sake of classification and definition. It is not an art form but merely the undertaking of an artist finding the means to medicate a manic state of behavior.

When Picasso destroys or deconstructs the cube he discovers what will eventually become his freedom from form. What he is left with is color, texture and atmosphere; the abstract. The abstract had been present for the application and use for centuries as part of the human perception and experience, yet no one had ever addressed it's potential until this time. Picasso gave a concrete and tangible connection to the purely subjective experience of sensation and it freed him from the obsession with form. Now he could reinvent the poetic or metaphoric presence of the line in conjunction with the abstract rendering of the subject matter as both objective and subjective simultaneously. Picasso has arrived as the whole painter in fulfillment of the whole self and the world is a better place for it. If we take the discovery as the basis for the growth of perception, rather than license for the

indulgence of blindness and the arbitrary application of “ anything goes” then we have discovered in abstraction, a bridge from the intellect to the heart.



Another recipient of the great influences of Cézanne was Henri Matisse. A contemporary of Picasso, Matisse also gathers the sensitivity to space as a means of composition in pursuit of balance, in his case the musicality of form. While Cubist's are endeavoring to address the effects of light on form and the process of deconstruction as a way that we see things in life, they were heterogenizing the homogeneity or completeness of the image the eye projects into the brain. In this manner, they altered ideas that had to do with the drawing element in art, the shape of things; while they were proving that there is a difference between a thing and its appearance, Matisse was analyzing vision in order to extract the most desirable elements captured by vision. Not a resemblance to things seen, nor that which lay beyond or behind the resemblance. He was not a draftsman first but a painter first and for most, a sort of romanticist. I wonder what would have been Renoir's response to the relationship of a Picasso to a Matisse? After all Renoir was a draftsman and yet his line was less significant than the abstract quality of his work. His was a tapestry more than a sculpture.

Matisse is one artist among many who knew exactly what he wanted: to flagrantly proclaim and cheer, the joy of living but he did not want to distrust either himself or others. He had to prove to himself that what he felt was honest. ( the temptation to falsify and manufacture as abstract, that which was non-experiential and charlatanistic, rather than to struggle with the unknown, vulnerable and the non-intellectual, had become the most challenging demand in art in centuries. ) That he could not find room in his soul for both good and evil, beauty and ugliness. In this he was like all artists, past or present, and actually very much like the Cubist's. But Matisse wanted his effect to be uplifting, and found within himself what we all find, that is, morality. It was his sacred and aesthetic duty to find the beautiful and to register it and stop in that moment of recognition, rendering it in a personal and authentic manner. All Matisse wants is to put things in their proper place, of their appropriate proportion, but in a lyrical relationship, his arabesque.

He "decorates" his discoveries by understatement, leaving out all material irrelevant to his needs. The naturalism of Matisse, while still addressing resemblance of things seen, is hedonistic austerity. Only those elements of vision that are elemental as the original signals the brain, our symbol or name maker, translates.

Economy of means is the beauty of Matisse, the very essence of his art. For Matisse, in painting there is light, the objects he sees are mere ghosts or notes tracing their ephemeral shapes on a screen of light. For him there is the light of intensity and the light of transparency, the light of depth and the lightness of touch. Color for Matisse is a means to an end, to create the textures, the light weaves in our imagination. The textures that speak to us of air and diamonds, of the transparent and the translucent, where the opaque represents the form and the transparent, the air.

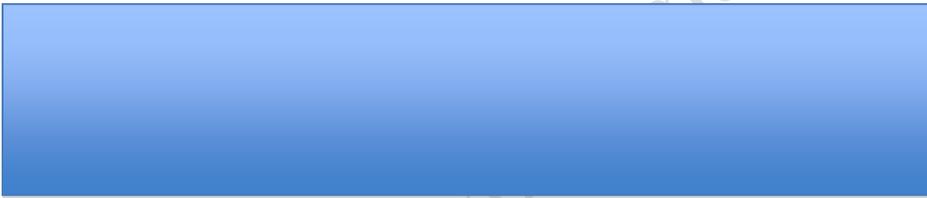
To Matisse, the poetic denies the physical, there is no need for it, the great materialist in him saw the whole substance of life in the substance of light and this is how he understood the visual experience. He was a believer in the illusion, an implementer of the decorative, but like Picasso, believed that all of art was a lie, but a lie that reveals the truth. It is no mystery that Matisse was attracted and strongly influenced by the fauves. The nuance was present in his line but the dynamics of his use of color and texture were analytical and methodical, not merely for decoration, but significant in addressing space.

He, like Picasso, had the most profound bond between the two of them, in the need to express in the poetic context, metaphor.

A major influence by Cézanne on Picasso and Matisse was the discovery of the vertical picture plane. This approach to the two-dimensional surface of a canvas dates back to ancient China in the rendering of landscapes in a manner quite different from what Masaccio addressed in linear perspective and the illusion of a receding horizon. Cézanne found a new way of drawing which he referred to as "scaffolding", an appropriate word to address vertical space as depth of vision. When one dismisses the altered proportionality in depth of vision as illusion then we are seeing the frontal plane of a canvas as two dimensionality of the surface, the vertical or frontal plane. Cézanne saw this vertical plane as a sort of ladder that the eye might climb. Now the artist faces the dilemma of clinging to the past in perspective or discovering the new invulnerable. Just as percept in concept challenge for predominance in presentation, so too does the contrast and challenges of truth and illusion. It is said in painting that color is truth in line his imagination. All three artists; Picasso, Matisse and Cézanne came two a similar acceptance. This is not to say that the line, when properly engaged and felt, cannot represent the truth, in fact, when the line is drawn in space and not influenced by the two dimensionality of a flat surface may be just as authentic in its presentation as the pure sensation of color. For Matisse this is what the decorative quality in his work made possible in harmony and lyricism between his color and his line. Picasso on the other hand, struggled with color until he discovered the abstract when he destroyed the cube. But eventually came around to an acceptance of color and texture in his own work

which now served his most profoundly poetic line. The result that these three artists confirm is found in the development of the semi-abstract use of color and line. Like the vertical plane, or scaffolding as Cézanne referred to it, there was an elevation of consciousness developing out of the discovery and implementation. With the arrival of the abstract, which by its nature is pure and subjective, it opened up the floodgates of speculation, as such the personal or the impersonal, the genuine and the charlatan.

In defining what is the relationship between the personal and the impersonal we might address both as a process of choice, one to be sensuous and vulnerable, the other being defensive and cerebral. When experiencing sensation the subjective quality becomes prominent, "can one deny having heard a brick fall and experiencing sound of the impact," of course not. On the other hand, do we all hear it the same way, do we experience it in the same sensuous connection. We may however enjoy a common definition of the event, the concept. In this case we see the origins of judgment, which is entirely based on reactionary behavior. As such, human behavior, when occupied with judgment, follows the concept without necessarily collaborating with the percept, the act of blindness.



***Perception precedes and takes precedence over concepts.*** In a simple rendering of this human behavior an example might be; "a man stands across the room, I look to the man and approach his perception by throwing a piece of pastel in his direction, the pastel leaves my hand and its trajectory proceeds in his direction, he reaches to catch the pastel, I asked the man what was his first physiological response? He states that he reached to catch the pastel. This, of course, is not true to his human circumstance. His first response was to see it coming, thus establishing clarity as well as the awareness of time and space. Clarity will always proceed purpose, for one must see a thing (perception) before one knows what to do about the circumstance (purpose). What the man was left with as he dismisses perception was intent, or purpose, based on reactionary impulse. I now pickup a large brick, I turned to the man and I asked him to close his, with a look of fear in his eyes he refuses. Does this man presume that I will throw the brick and hit his head? Without perception we are left in blindness, and in that blindness we conclude valueless judgment, blindness." The brain is dependent on the senses to provide context for reaction. Feeling, as perception and sensation, is and will always be the pursuit in the core of art. We have now come to a crossroad in abstraction, pure sensation, and concept, the intellectual reaction.

Who would be in a position to judge what one person's abstraction experience would be credible or authentic versus another. How could we judge what one person feels and translates onto a surface using color in texture, what is real? What

is authentic? What is truly experienced and how well as that experienced been documented in its authenticity and connectivity to nature. Or, Will the new rendering of experience be entirely cerebral, conceptual, the non-experience, the concept; "I think therefore I am" Descartes, and the fork in the road. Can we be inspired exclusively in the intellectual phenomenon? Will art now begin its journey into the world of the non-experiential, having evolved from many centuries in the development of our sense perception only to lead us down a path of the impersonal rather than the personal connections to life.

The tragedy of painting is that it is mute, it cannot communicate as speech in audible words where a word or sentence can reach from one person to another, a quote it seems memorable can make the rounds and arouse the imagination, starter train of new thought, propagate ideas. A painting is a tautology. It is sealed in its "envelope of air" to use Cézanne's famous phrase, truly a treasure, a diamond in the rough, never the commodity but frequently a rarity. So only one painting profits really, the work and the output is a byproduct of the artist. It represents experience in the adventure of discovery, the painting must speak for itself, it should need no further explanation or justification for being anymore than a young person entering into the life they choose to live. The act of translating perception, as metaphor, for reality must be driven by the sensation of that experience, as such it connects us to our time, no one can be ahead of their time, but to be of one's time is to identify the experience of living. This is why, as Leonardo took note, "the greatest tragedy in art and for the artist, is when theory outstrips performance." If art is to become a theoretical encounter we will no longer lend credibility to the act of living, it is an art of life, not for its own sake, but for the sake of living. The concept of "art for art's sake" is a pretense for what is genuine, in actuality it is "art for life's sake. "

Our brain is a decoder of the senses, an organizer and, in context, a wonderful gift to the human spirit, out of context, it destroys the things we love most. We all have a brain, it is our common bond, it is our imagination and enacts the process of connectivity to our higher powers known as Revelation; sensation is revelation.

In the abstract experience, a purely personal connection to the motif or subject matter, the question of metaphor arises. Is it enough merely to document the sensation from the stimuli? By what means, technically, can we authenticate the experience in color, texture, atmosphere, without a poetic point of reference providing context for that sensation. Through many generations the abstract quality of paint and surface and any manner of medium that was used identify the personal connection to the subject matter, did so on the subliminal level. But now our awareness has grown to such a level that our cognition of sensation can be quantified, identified and implemented acutely and uniquely our own. .... continued in completed version.....

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

So here we are, a fork in the road, the choices we are required to make as we grow and become more of what our potential can realize. Why choices, good and evil, faith and despair, uniqueness and mediocrity, free will which is inherent in the human spirit in the context from which define inspiration to choose at all. When examining the human condition it should be understood again that perception precedes and takes precedence over concept, just as clarity precedes purpose. For it is perception of the world around us and clarity of that perception that enables us to recognize the context through which we find motivation an inspiration which then satisfies the human spirit. Clarity is initiated when we engage our senses and learn to perceive, in that moment of recognition we find parameters that enable us to recognize what stands before us. It is in that recognition that the brain and the senses collaborate and to the degree that their collaboration is balanced do we find inspiration. So the senses precede the mind but they are not mutually exclusive in their collaboration, in fact they are entirely interdependent on one another and our human response should be to establish equilibrium in their relationship.

The great lesson in the painter learns is the salute necessity of being on the right point of contact with this subject at the very inception of his journey through space. We begin where intuition tells us a sort of Plum line or greatest attraction to the forces our magnitudes of nature. How do we recognize this point of reference; the picture plane of Cézanne which arises out of the tabula rasa or neutrality of the brain at the beginning of any work which has a deep purpose, which we call creative work is that point of pre-perception. (The painter cannot begin with the needs of his ego, the concepts he connects with his desires, which he believes he must pursue to arrive at his vaunted, most arrogant ideals, which he will never believe are actually completely egocentric in character, and are of no real worth to him, but only a hindrance between him and what his soul desires. We live in secret from ourselves and never know except in hindsight.)

The painter then attempts to make himself a blank as blank as his virgin canvas which stands before him with nothing but space to address. The painter then begins with nothing and thereby makes it possible to accept his first impressions for what they are without distortion by his ego. The results will be self – portraiture, but unconsciously so, therefore, harmless, even desirable. He can then give himself up to his intuitive power to feel the forces of gravity and distribute the objects found as they appear from his angle of vision.

His first step is accomplished. Now he must find the contradiction embedded in our site by looking from one object to the next but not looking back, only moving progressively forward. From that point of demarcation he must travel from object to object which explains their true position in space challenged by the distortion of his angle of vision. This vision is supplemented from an overall view, the Birdseye view or areal perspective, the vision now becomes attentive and the dichotomy is

discovered. A struggle is found between the object and the space it occupies. Our angle of vision suggests that there may not be a space between the objects, however intellectually we know as well as from above, space does exist as such our logic enters to give objectivity. Just as in humanity one thing is obvious at this point, isolation of an object in space (or an individual in life) is impossible. The space creates him and not the objects that surround him, it is only in relationship to one another that the objects can be perceived in proportion to the whole as well as a unified context by which we observe balance. It is far easier to paint a still life with five objects than one individual object as in life and art nothing exists in a vacuum, perhaps the most important understanding of humanity. It becomes obvious that space is time, at least time as we understand it in life, when we understand that all of the objects are relative to one another and that each provides a context for the next. It is for this reason that we must establish our angle of vision and remain constant from that perspective to address a progressive, unified vision, otherwise our ego in its attempt to control begins to isolate each object and is subject to distortion of proportionality in judgment.

We can now, and the painter can as well, make a fatal error. Using deductive logic or reason, the right premise, and found everything in its place and a place for everything and no one could blame him if he concluded that he did this job, completed is to self appointed task, in the name of posterity, might error in his judgment of which road he might travel when the fork in the road presents itself.

The process that enables his choice, in art, we call creative. Is it the search for reason? Is it deduction, as mathematics is presumed to be? Or is it something else, something more than logic? How did the painter begin? Which was his original intention? Was it not intuitive? Did he not stretch the canvas and lay out his paints on a pallet and put brushes in his hand because he believed in something beyond reason? Not necessarily above, but further than logic could take him, deductive logic. Did he not find in his peregrinations, analogous logic when the objects he painted, whatever their nature, sky, face, table, flowers, "spoke" to him. Is not his task subjective, and deeply so? And is not analogous logic a higher logic to intuition which he professes to believe in above all else? After all, intuitive logic has no premise. In fact, it is a logic in search of a premise, a spot to land on. If so, all he wants to do with his so-called discoveries or findings, is to prove the justice of his intuition to himself. He must return to his original intention. He must go against himself in more ways than one.

What do we know of this higher power, this entity that defies description or definition, this sensation of something bigger than ourselves yet entirely of ourselves as we exist in nature and of nature. The difference between ignorance and intelligence lies within our intuitive qualities. Once quoted Georges Braque, "sensation is revelation" suggests that is intuitive quality we experience when our senses communicate with our logic in sync with one another. Our senses perceive while our brain conceives and it is the interaction of these two functionalities both practical and spiritual that connect us to this higher power, our intuitive nature. To

what degree do we empower our intellect at the denial of our senses? How do we measure the influences of one and the other as they are experienced in our human nature? Art is the task of finding the equilibrium between the two and make manifest in some form or another, as in metaphor, that which you experience in life.

The painter finds the true order of nature in his canvas; namely that there is a time in space for everything. For example, the artist must address in his canvas the North and the South, the East and the West, which means both from side to side and from top to bottom of his canvas, and all this interlocked with his incurable desire to go in and out of space, three dimensionally, since only this seems real, only this can give him certitude and calm of his doubts. Only, this is his free will, his great desire that makes him want to paint or for that matter, to live beyond mere existence. (ie Aristotle said that the most beautiful thing in his experience was a vertical line. Given as such, one might understand his perspective as embracing the simple, the pure and the clarity; that being his aesthetic... (on the other hand, one might consider the diagonal; which is the vertical in space, it engages a duality in that it penetrates space, which in turn, engages the human imagination ( foreshortening) and within this perspective, is where Aristotle found true inspiration and the wholeness of the being. Not simply to pass the time away in life, but to penetrate life which is the true object in painting as it is a living. This is the experience of life and the inspiration that stands before us when our intuition is engaged. How can we deny our life force except by isolating the wholeness of our person, our humanity, which can only be realized in its fullest when our senses in our intellect find commonality. Did we choose to be born? Can we deny this supposition? If we accept that we did choose to be born, why? Imagine an existence where there were no sensations; pain, sorrow, melancholy, despair or happiness and joy, sensuality or as Shakespeare identifies as the thousand natural shocks that the soul is heir to... Now imagine looking from the outside in at a world that engages in all of these experiences, certainly one would choose pain over nothingness, joy or any sensation over emptiness. After all there are 400,000 sperm in pursuit of that egg to be fertilized and only one makes manifest the fullness of that journey, our life force certainly begins preconception. Of course this is entirely conjecture when we surmise that which challenges logic however why do we have the power in capacity to engage in such speculation? It is our intuitive nature that we can never turn our back on so why do we dismiss this truly human, yet vulnerable part of our nature. .... continued in completed version.....

## CHAPTER 16



## THE BIRTH OF CONCEPTUAL ART:

Out of the abstract came the conceptual and just how and why did that occur?

The arrival of Picasso and the process of cubism that he employed in order to escape the hold that form held over him, opened the floodgates of personalization and the connectivity to the subject matter or motif. Picasso knew intuitively, that his work had become disproportionately driven by form. He had lost all personal connection to color, texture, shape for the sake of the narrative. He had become victimized by the tradition that he so desperately sought to escape in coming to Paris. The Impressionists had enlighten him as to the need to see the big picture in painting, not be taken in by the eye/ brain relationship, one day to be labeled, visual space, while discarding the space and atmosphere between the artist and the motif. In breaking the cub he discovered the abstract. His years in exploring the rose and blue and ochre were nothing more than “searching to find “ rather than seeing and accepting or as he put it, finding. :” one must not search, but find” As such he used the very same elements that created the cube or form to start with, chiaroscuro, light and shadow, in order to destroy the cube, to break it up into particles of light color and texture or what we now understand as the abstract. The rose, blue and ochre implementations were simply monochromatic bad habits of chiaroscuro, or the repetition and fixation of/ on form. Having pushed himself to the limit of this fixation (stemming from the deep traditions of the Renaissance and form in light and shadow, he discovered that texture was inseparable from color and that in its multifaceted applications he could challenge the limitations of a limited pallet or the monochromatic work he was plodding his way through. Perhaps what also sustained him was that in these so called “periods” he became so desperate to connect to his subject matter that he began to find strength in gesture ( a la Van Gogh and Lautrec etc.) influences that inspired his need to make personal something more than just the presentation of form, he discovered the emotional impact of a limited pallet and this too became a new awareness and helped him escape local color. So even though he was clinging to many of his bad habits from the past, he continued to go forward intuitively. Thanks to Cezanne he had begun to see color as a tool to address space. This in conjunction with texture became an arsenal of tools that he would eventually utilize as coping mechanisms to confront his manic relationship with form and challenge his egotistic need for control. In short, self medicating organically, he found balance when he discovered the abstract in the breaking up of the cube. It should be noted here that it was only the critics that labeled this process as “an art form” when in all actuality it was just part of his own

method to “find” and implement for the sake of discovery. Once discovered he brought back his ego or faith in form but now in balance with the abstract in the semi-abstract rendering of his subject matter. He had found a true balance in the two. He had now become the wholeness of his person in his work. Yet, he struggled still with the analyzation or conceptualization of the process and fell into desperate straits again with synthetic cubism. That we remember that the time was charged with the remnants of the revolution when the Impressionist broke away from the Academy in the spirit filled the air with reactionary behaviors that embraced the new, the inventive and the intellectual establishment as contemporary culture. It was only natural that the absurdist's in the romantic's would join forces in collaboration is identified in various mediums as poets, playwrights, composers the musicians, painters, sculptors and performers fed each other's inspired insights into the new. Picasso's pulse was in line with the sensibilities of his time, as such, he was bound to be influenced by this wonderful collaborative spirit. Yet he was still a leader and the pioneer of the movement to make personal that which for centuries had been prohibitively cerebral and impersonal. This new vulnerability took root and became the revolution of the human spirit in the introduction of a new way of seeing in translating the human experience, both sensuously and conceptually. Eventually the new culture took root and began to establish greater credibility and authenticity by those artists whose intent was transcendent of fashion and deeply committed to the growth and development of the true sensibility based on balance between experience and intelligence. The likes of Matisse, Picasso, Modrian, Klee, Kandinsky, Satie, Beaudelaire, Sartre, Poulenc, the list goes on, all inspired in breaking away from an old school, prisoner to tradition, that all too often was driven by what was impersonal and then inspired to move toward a more vulnerable and intimate representation of nature. These were exciting times of collaboration and intuition, of inventiveness and awareness of something that would change the world's perspectives forever.

All things at work in a subtle and often unrecognizable manner, lead to the reactionary behavior and the release of the old and the invention of the new. There were socio-economic conditions that now came into play as to how this new culture would make manifest itself as it migrated from community to community, from culture to culture, in search for acceptance and survival. Social evolution, growth in conflict with stagnation, faith and hope in conflict with trust and conviction, control versus vulnerability, all contributed to a friction that would ignite change. Who could stand up against it, throughout all of history, no one could ever sustain such a battle of suppression of the human spirit. As Henri Bergson so beautifully identifies the perseverance of the human condition and spirit as the “elan vital,” our life force is not definable, not even approachable except in an intuitive sense and yet, there it is, present in us all, perhaps more active in some rather than others, there it is and there it has always been.

So when humanity is faced with conflict a compelling need to resolve is triggered, perhaps out of the need to control, to create order and balance or simply it arises out of our nature to explore and discover. The issue here is that we need not see a

thing in opposition to another, but as part of a greater whole and perhaps, in context, the counterpoint or light to the shadow in chiaroscuro as in defining the whole object by contrast rather than see it as divided.

With the arrival of Picasso, Matisse, Juan Gris, Braque, Picabia, Vlaminck, and so many others who built upon their predecessors, came the profound realization as to what and how does one make their connection to nature more intimate and personal. This triggered two new movements in the rendering of nature under the auspices of art: 1.) the abstract ( rendering of pure sensation) as translated in color, light , texture rendering some aspects of life's experience, but in not in a literal representation and 2.) conceptualization of the experience of nature. As abstraction gained momentum in the international art community, more and more inspired artists began to explore, what was now, the personalization of perception and the arrival of metaphor became a productive means of communication something that, by its nature, was indirection rather than literal in its rendering of experience. So, how can one render perception on a personal basis except by sensation recorded in color, light, texture and movement in an abstract rendering of nature. The exploration of perception and direct documentation of those sensations became paramount in the capturing of the moment. Some artists responded to the challenge with the vigor and vulnerable courage found in the greatest artist of all time yet they struggled with differentiating between what was pure sensation and what was contrived or conceived reaction to feeling. Who could judge what was truly experiential in the application process and what was real. When many false representations of the experience became marketed they became more and more sensational, overly dramatic and conceived rather than experienced. Still, who could judge? When a landscape of a city at night was represented as "Jazz" or when a still life was depicted as some of its subject matter in the boldness of color or obscure rendering of space, this too became the indulgence rather than the true representation of the experience. As we migrated away from authenticity we engaged in an "anything goes" mentality and that became more and more about the intellectualization of reflection rather than the visceral connection to the world around us. Concepts vied with percepts for recognition and that lead to the world of conceptual art.

A contemporary to Matisse and Picasso was Marcel Duchamp, born in France and migrated to the States to develop his career as distinct from so many of his colleagues in the eyes of both the critics as well as collectors. A rather poor academic painter, Duchamp was attracted to the more free application of paint explored by the Impressionists and found relief from the overbearing imitation of nature which went against his sense of symbolism, even the less cerebral, metaphor. Perhaps due to the profound intellectual upbringing he experienced in his early years, Duchamp was inclined toward the concept or narrative rendering of his motif deeply moved by such influences as Odilon Redon, who romanticized his imagery in an ethereal and semi-abstract use of paint. In fact, he was critical of Matisse and Picasso for their analytical insights into the mechanisms of the optic and sensuous experience , as being clinical and distant. Yet he remained in the company of the likes of Picabia, Leger, Juan Gris and poets like Apollinaire, a society of intellectual

and who became quite fashionable at the time. He found his identity or voice in the very same place that he was all too often critical of: the literal or verbal representation of a visual experience. He and so many others pursued such analytical representations of visual experiences (ie, "Nude descending the Staircase") and the more intellectually they all pursued this approach to painting and sculpture, the less personal and vulnerable they became in the translation of their subject matter. This all fell in line with the fork in the road when the abstract emerged out of cubism and artists wanted to secure their individuality in the ever expanding ( global) art world. Many of this generation's artists were fearful that they would be considered "insignificant" next to the likes of Matisse and Picasso if they pursued the metaphoric representations of nature and that resulted in a complete departure from any form or naturalism. What became an open forum for discovery and exploration was the undertaking of a cerebral and intellectual turn first toward the "Surreal" and then, even farther, the "Concept". There were still many who became confused between the two worlds and fought to find their "sign" in painting and sculpture. Pollock and Kandinsky, Mondrian and then came Milton Avery and Rothko, clinging to that which was personal and vulnerable yet, being of their time, strongly influenced by a wonderful sense of intelligence and awareness. It was a vibrant time for growth of the dual nature of the human spirit in synchronicity of feeling and emotion, the sensation and the concept. .... continued in completed version.....

## CHAPTER 17

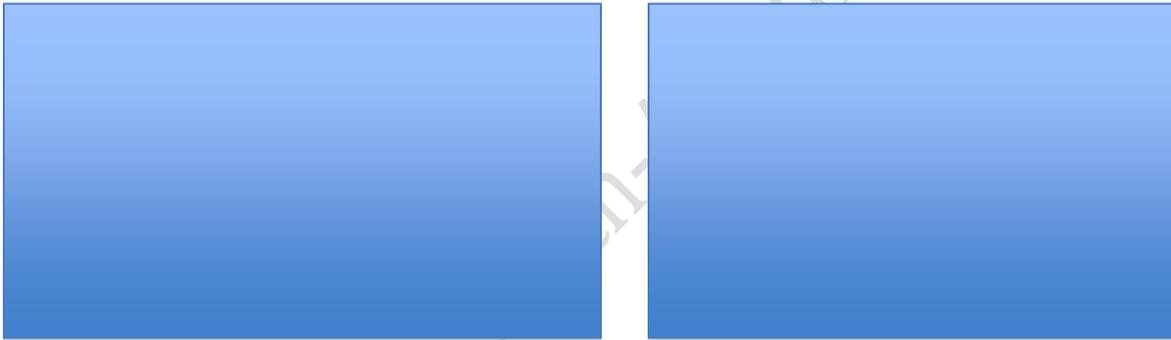
### THE DUST BOWL

By definition a "Dust Bowl" is , *an area of land where vegetation has been lost and soil reduced to dust and eroded, especially as a consequence of drought or unsuitable farming practice.* Resulting from severe drought, the land or culture continues to draw moisture from every nuance of existing circumstance but without reciprocation or recycling and replenishment.....

In recent years, conceptual art, a period that grew out of the discovery and exploration of the abstract in painting and sculpture, perception took a back seat to perspective. A blank canvas, though not offering an actual or intelligible experience by the viewer, in the act of perception, was accompanied by a footnote that would guide the audience as to what concept was being enriched and engaged. This was intellectually stimulating and provocative in its cerebral representation and considered a new phenomenon in the development of art. There followed an onslaught of intellectual insights and manifestations of the imagination as to how to translate concepts in a three- dimensional installation and theatricality of presentation.

A polarization of sensibility came forth as the worlds of the absurd engaged in battle with the traditional and fundamental means of representation of nature. Cultures initially were conflicted and human sensibilities were challenged as to what was authentic and credible. What was to be considered concept worthy and how shall achievements be measured? The divide became extreme and elitism took hold in the art world pushing the norms to new levels of cleverness, absurdity, intellectualization and marketing in a world of commercialization and economy driven agendas.

It should be noted that in the growth and development of the cerebral or conceptual representation of the human experience, that artists had not turned their back entirely on perception. More often than not, the visual elements were still a part of the entire process. What was occurring was analyzation of perception and a disproportionate association with a frequently forced and somewhat mediocre narrative.



The role of any artist is to be responsible to themselves and in so doing, accountable for representing their time with complete and credible representation of their connection to the personal experience. So the question being asked is “ what is the value of their experience? What is unique and noteworthy? **Can the** intellectual rendering of a thing really be the fullest and most complete undertaking? Or is it merely a small portion of the moment in time and space? ..... continued in completed version.....

## CHAPTER 18

### PRECEPTION IS THE CONTEXT FOR THOUGHT

All discovery in art and painting which is literally, an eye opener, changes the inner idiom or language of the painter. Having found a falsehood in what was considered

convention, which the artist took for granted and functioned with, thoughtlessly and mechanically, until the moment in which courage and conviction became one, can the artist identify what is essential and personal. The concept of a thing, its name or its label, is insignificant, in time and space and is no less an illusion than the form created by chiaroscuro on a two dimensional surface.

A new lexicon, or at least a new perspective must be substituted by our psyche for the internal jargon has changed. Old mottos, truisms, pills of wisdom we live with all our lives become suspect. The painter re-conceptualizes himself at the risk of losing faith of his own intellect or power of reasoning. The abstract challenges the artist to first know what he or she feels or senses and then, intelligently, demands that he or she translates that sensation onto a canvas, into a stone, into a composition for a musical score, etc.

On the other hand, in painting, the artist should never; play it safe, such as refraining from drawing. Why refrain from one more potential resource that might provide a context for the artist to connect to his or her motif or subject matter? By pursuing the investigation of the tactile relationship between the poetic metaphor and pure sensation, something new is possible to be realized. It is possible to paint without lines as in the use of the abstract or the impressionist application of paint where color and texture suggest form. However by engaging the linear representation of form, the artist draws upon a potential of intuitive and tactile connectivity to the subject matter. Further, when drawing is used to capture the motif in space, another means of holding time comes in to play. For example there is a direction that a contour follows when the artist is inside the canvas and perceives the tactile connection or direction, there is a different direction conceived when the artist is looking in from the outside in of his canvas ( Cezanne struggled with the relationship between the two for hours on end when studying his still lifes) ..... we come to realize that frequently such lines seem to go in more than one direction simultaneously. So, to avoid the contradiction, dismiss all lines, since theoretically, they are an illusion anyway and made by the logic or analysis of the brain, which observes objects as form, an unengaged artist might discard any use of line or poetic representation, as justified. But what exactly has been lost given this mentality?

All form goes around in an outline which is a fictitious need by the brain to identify things seen. Since the eye is subject to the limitations of the human anatomy and cannot always go around an object as seen from all sides, and from the bottom up, the mind's logic will, in the realm of conjecture, surmise the fullness of the form. This is the role of the imagination intermingling with the senses and within the struggle of observation, some invention and interpretation intercourses with the sense perception and a new reality is presented. The physical angle of vision which is always one point in space, since our vision can only be at one point at a time even if we stay at that point a fraction of a second. The importance of the line in drawing is that it connects, by means of the tactile nature within us, a sense of continuity between the visual and verbal selves. The painter who integrates the abstract with the tactile line creates a context of balance between the space within the canvas and

the space the artist occupies, as though there is a bridge between truth and illusion. As such, the painter finds self-control, within the moment, remaining honest in the dialogue of fiction that has its roots in actual experience. which is life experience, for the creative individual. The artist's poetic line on canvas cannot be arbitrary, but must come from feeling by the eye, the same eye we all possess that makes those mysterious, yet obvious outlines, but in art, transformed by the imagination. It is here, in this moment, that the artist must trust in their subconscious, what they are experiencing. To become vulnerable in the rendering of these two paradoxical representations of space, within the canvas and outside of the canvas, ignites the imagination which renders form, often unfamiliar to the viewer who has not experienced such a recognition and what appears as distortion. Exemplified when Picasso represents the distortion of the head in his portraits he is identifying the sensation of three dimensions as represented on the two-dimensional surface. It appears as a distortion but in fact is a true representation of his experience and perception. It is simply documented on the two-dimensional surface circumstantially and from the layperson's point of reference, seems distortive and possible contrived.

What true discoveries lie within the mind? Is there really anything new to be discovered within the brain's imaginative circumstance? Will knowledge and discovery become actualized, void of experience? Historically, inspiration, invention and awakening has been enacted through the doors of perception as we experience life, not as we conceive it.

It is our physiological circumstance which initiates by the engagement of the senses which connect experientially by means of perception. What follows the enactment of sensation is that which triggers the imagination and enables our logic to conclude what we perceive. As such, life as it is, is context and our perception segues to analysis which then gives birth to a concept; "perception precedes and takes precedence over concept" this would be the natural order of our human condition. It should be understood however that the true experience is the totality of the interplay between the concept and percept, not one to the exclusion of the other as they are never mutually exclusive from one another. It has always been inherent to the process by the artists to seek out and make manifest the balance and continuity of the percept and the concept when rendering the translation as an art form.

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## CHAPTER 19

### PARADOX IN PARADISE

Let us look at the register of information, herein noted as the pursuit of human knowledge or epistemology. What is it to know a thing? Can one really know anything without actually having the experience of that thing or is it the case the we

can only know of a thing unless we experience it personally. To have a concept of thing is not to know it but to surmise what it might be. Within the context of our psyche and thus our ego, we are often motivated to the act of control and therein lies a problem of human knowledge and reality. What comes to mind is the term infinity. Has one ever actually experienced "infinity" ? Of course not so what we actually know of it is a concept not the experience. In line with this mentality, we surmise in the process of defining the meaning of the circumstance and find an overwhelming need to define and construct upon that definition a system of order. This is the act of our ego's providing control of an abstract by the feeble use of a concept. One cannot provide a concept as a reality to the exclusion of experience and have some expectation that one knows a thing. The two connections to life are not mutually exclusive to one another but integrated and interdependent. All information, as it is experienced and can never be lost. Let us imagine in the existence of a black hole in our solar system and the theory of quantum mechanics which shall govern subatomic particles. Let us consider those particles as data or information that we have come to know by our experience and cognition of that experience. Next, let us also consider Einstein's theory of general relativity as the next source of information. Now let us conclude that the concept of gravity as we understand it and its effect on those particles as they are drawn into that black hole subject to its own gravitational pull therein. That information is connected in various ways outside of the black hole suggesting that knowledge is all interconnected and can never truly be lost. We understand the dynamics of a black hole might suggest that our entire universe would be swallowed up, in the wink of an eye, as though it never had existed. This said, does it suggest that the experience of life and living was an illusion? Or that all things being connected and thereby exist in a general relativity and that all things are connected in the act of experience. This phenomenon of knowledge by experience, would be an introduction to the prospect of paradox. Are we then, by the absence of experience, faith, love and compassion, subjecting ourselves, in doubt and denial, to a context dismissive of the paradise in which we live?

If you ask your heart for courage, you are an artist. Art is that action where the heart meets the brain and they both conspire to present a reality for the soul to live it. We call it happiness. We, sometimes mistakenly ask life to do for us what only we can do. It is a moral victory over one's vanity so complete that one's conscience is as untroubled as a child's.

How wonderful it is to have the knowledge of an adult and the as free as we were when we played with our toys and found in them our reality. We are all children acting out the roles of adults. When we think of it, we laugh in a moment of clarity when time and space dissipate and we connect to the absurd and find humor in our imagination. We really believe we are grown up, the absurd nature of our need for security and control, our ego.

The artist always walks holding his child by its hand. The artist is never lonely, never alone. He or she knows that they are two people, the grown-up mien that he assumes real infant that he cannot leave behind without relinquishing at one in the same time his best, his urgency, his enthusiasm for life-- desire, the incomprehensible phenomenon we never understand--our greatness-- since no one, or nearly no one, is foolish enough to look a gift horse in the mouth.

The most wonderful thing in our human world is recognition. And it is the eye that performs this feat best of all. Better than the year and better than the sense of touch. What does it mean to recognize? It means the ability to understand that one's self is not the whole world, that there are other things around, things that seem full of life and things that seemed to be hollow as if lifeless. That there is more than just empty space and consequently there is something to do with the time that one's beating heart allows one to **consume**.

To receive something from the outside that will gladden one's psyche or soul. Something to laugh with, to dance with, to sing with: the meaning and purpose of the miracle of life. Existence, coexistence, between oneself in the outer world filled with wonder to explore. And then the greatest pleasure possible: recognition.

To see or meet again what one met before and was so taken with, to meet life again, recognize it again in the skies, with its clouds, with the chills, and valleys in brooks and habitations and we humans, people like oneself and yet at times so different. So much variance, so much sameness, our commonality in our uniqueness all commingling in one potential reality. Surprise for having seen it only once, after one's childhood is gone, surprise for seeing it again and then again and again.

The surprise of repetition, the surprises of novelty, two contradictory surprises, both wonderful, both living one within another in a person one learned to know and got to love because of this great ambiguity.

The beauty of metaphor of combination of two things at once may be desirable because they came in pairs. All happiness comes in pairs, dualities, dichotomies and paradoxes. All problems, on the other hand, are three-dimensional. When something superfluous sticks to the soul or the psyche as in want confused for need (one took too much, when one asked too much, one saw too much, one knew too much) we can feel double, we can feel the beauty of love, or we can love the beauty, according to our disposition. The impetuous in the reflected light, the different difference his name is negligible but the important thing is the pendulum, the heart will swing between the two, and therein we must find balance, as such we contend with willfulness and find the distinction between will power and free will. Shall we allow prosperity to come to us or shall we chase it? Since life is a guided tour, why not listen to the guide, to the feeling of the heart?

Of course everyone to his own interests for we don't really know what it's all about, so why then are we so engaged in judgment, in the attempt to control rather than

accept with stands before us? How do we recognize what our heart intuitively offers us from life or another fellow human in the commonality of experience in life. How is it that we know this inherently from birth and yet we empower polarization, disunity and alienation rather than community, collaboration and unification?

The Art Spirit is the spirit of the most carefree adventure. In art, painting is like fishing, in that it all begins with conjecture and faith, that something bigger than we awaits us. So, in order to connect to that higher power we must learn to implement tools of connectivity: (we have a fishing rod and line, we have bait or lures, we learn to navigate the waters and read the signs of inhabitation and community, we learn the process of engagement and then we open the door or I should say, drop the line.) Ironically the process and implementation of those tools lead us entirely down a road that is, essentially, circumstantial. In the end, we are still subject to follow nature though we are of it, in it, and thereby subject and subservient to it, on every level. We are nature and only by living do we become one with it, in both time and space. It is here that art and the spirit of man become organized, significant and inspired. In Science we are asked to follow nature and that is as it should be, yet our intuitive qualities suggest an ambition more progressive than that circumstance and we sense this in our most human condition of intelligence.

The artist finds what works in life does not work in his most artificial position that he placed himself as the innocent bystander, observer and vehicle as visionary. Imagine the mountain in the distance and that lonely tree juxtaposed before it, but little shed, that car, those groups of people, those row houses with their windows staring out at the world around it into space; that little conversation of a mother to her child, the table with its objects placed symmetrically on it, war that artificially arranged ensemble of furniture in a living room in some dramatic presentation, all of these objects, conglomerate. The entire visual world. What in heavens name is the use of it to this strange perceiver who insists on staring into space and rendering on his canvas something resembling these very objects, but so presented, so transposed that one would think he'd be better off by himself somewhere away from all of this physicality. Is it some secret evidence that he's in search of, inspired by or desperately in search of justifying his time, his place, his being.

How are all these its innocent bystanders to know that it is they that are responsible for everything it happens on his canvas because a secret drama is enacted that no one will ever see. It is in the painter not the canvas that the evidence of the elements of nature are recorded in recognition of the experience as in the shape the paint creates, but that is only as an echo of the moment. The real thing is still inside although now changed because of the action that externalized the original fire that ignited when the eye of the painter and his subject matter met in mid-space. It is an expedition into the unknown a battle that rages between the painter and his soul. In the end, there is no victor only the vanquished artist in the evidence of his existence remain on that canvas. The painter sacrificed his pride his ego and was compensated by discovering his dignity which is a fair exchange and price to pay for the experience of life. He's glad he painted, although what he wanted never actually

transpired for how is the painter ever know that one is not intended to win in art, or for that matter in life but what is wanted is simply and primarily the struggle to find what is true to our spirit is true in our lives in the active living. That we must arrive at love and the voyage be difficult, that we always say the word and understand the concept, the idea, but to feel the experience of one's heart when meeting oneself outside ones protoplasm, to see oneself on canvas and then to find that one has no face at all, only a body in the heart that is reserved for those who battle, who struggle with their brain, lose the battle, but win the war-they find the purpose of having lived: the completed canvas, a victory of the heart.

What the artist in our era achieved in the discovery that all genius in the past intuitively captured: the ambiguity of what we know is there and what we see is there. The concept and the percept though bound inherently as one unified experience, was challenged in their division as a dichotomy rather than a unity, as such, the duality of this circumstance became divided disproportionately and resulted in the polarization of the human spirit. The artist, as any other living creature of consciousness, perceives things before they realize what these things are and later assigns names to classify them, evaluate them, dispose of them in our brain / imagination, accordingly.

Perception in the art of painting confines itself the objective realizations of the presence of light, air, texture and hue in all things seen. In simultaneity through this process, is the cognitive or identifying process of these objects seen under different conditions and in different places, before one can assess will recognize the wholeness of that experience intellectually a point of clarity must be established through perception. Although the experience is perception what we understand as the human circumstance is the conjoining of cognition to sensuality as such the fullness of knowing the thing. At this juncture the physical, natural were artifacts, will repeat themselves, will have been seen many times before, and recur in one's memory as a specific name or definition. .... continued in completed version.....

## CHAPTER 20

### REDEMPTION

Art is a way of life. Like Judaism or Buddhism or really any meaningful and purposeful practice of life management and connectivity to our spiritual, higher awareness, one might practice it religiously but not merely as ritual or duty as in blind faith, but simply as similarly as breathing and eating. Both religion and spirituality, when best serving our own wellness, are a combination of the subconscious and subliminal as we progress in life but are all initiated by learned, accepted and implemented influences and discoveries as in learned behaviors and coping skills that we develop and implement. It is therefore my contention that the

progressive state of art has always served to help humanity to learn to see and feel. This said, it stands to reason that the communicable properties of art are inherent to the process and our capacity to take both the literal and the metaphor to such a level as to no merely to communicate a narrative but to make that communication incredibly personal. The intimacy of the circumstance, though vulnerable, helps us all to lift our eyes and heads to the heights of greater potential just as we inherently decided to walk upright on two feet in order to look out at our potential and then become inspired by having it actualized by our actions.

In the last three centuries there has been a great advance in the interest of knowledge of the self. The study of epistemology which is the development and awareness of human knowledge, the self has sprung forth from religion, philosophy, psychology, in the clinical and scientific sense as well as the mystical and spiritual prospects. Art has always served, not merely as an example of one's development but perhaps more importantly, as a means through which we can further grow our own potential as exemplified in the birth of psychology and psychiatry and the advance in the so-called natural sciences. Frequently these approaches have made certain types of endeavor almost impossible challenging any point of view of Romanticism as amateurishness, without substance or simply out of touch with the overwhelming need for empirical reasoning. Thus, knowledge without the full incorporation and understanding of the science is simply ridiculous. In this sense we arrive at an impasse, out of which comes polarization and alienation rather than commonality and unity. We now speak in scientific terminology even in the arts.

Of course this is all to the good it has produced just as much harm in art. We have an art today which challenges our past understanding of representation, nature, metaphor and so many other traditional prototypes for communication. We have experiments today in the art world that have wasted our time as exemplified by certain clever concepts that serve no other purpose than to intellectualize and minimize the wonders of life. Without being entirely subjective and judgmental I would question to what degree if an art form or piece needs a document as to understand what you are looking at be determined as essential then are we truly experiencing something or only the concept of a thing. In these cases, what is lost is the innocence that we find in romanticism.

That which is now equated with the realism of the past, conceptualizes the human impulse for romance, which is the creative impulse. The seemingly results that we are experiencing currently is a culture that appears divided and almost polarized. In a world that indulges the intellect at the expense of lost innocence and sensuality, passion has become contrived. As far as painting is concerned, taking from nature has become a pejorative and at times, an insignificant part of the process. As we exhaust this approach what we come to understand is the necessity to find an equilibrium or balance between our pursuits of concept and the passion for which we involve the percept. As we become more and more hypnotized by concepts the inner spirit cry's out for nuance and subtlety and is returned with noise and chaos,

that in order to be heard will only become louder and entirely ego driven. The brain without the senses will become manic and disproportionate in its obsessiveness.

When we have artists of today following either the percept alone as many do, or the concept alone as many more do, both entities act like laboratory technicians conducting a chemical experiment with the kind of logic which is absolutely common sense. Here, however, in art, it is idiocy because art is not analysis alone but poetry and metaphor and intuition, some much is pure sensation and abstract rather than literal and linear. It appears today that all of art means, not the capture of reality but the transcendence of reality. In order to transcend reality in painting which of course is the illusion we all share, because what we see is entirely illusion. We must first know that illusion for what a truly is and in so doing we must, the world which we must never forget and that is the three-dimensional construct of space. For our mind is only capable of other experience in two-dimensional space when it is our imagination, sensation and sensuality that will provide for the 3 dimensions as we experience them.

In three-dimensional space we experience form much the same. There are different apprehensions of three dimensionality in human eyesight. There is the illusion of perspective which tells our brain that there is distance and therefore space. This is not a feeling it is a thought subject to the illusion made manifest in our imagination. There is another type of illusion which is an apprehension of solidity. The thing seen has substance or matter and this is not a thought, it is a feeling whether we feel something solid or opaque or whether we feel variations of opaqueness, when it becomes more liquid and even as transparent, the containing we realized, a certain amount of space within it. This too is a feeling of solidity. Let us understand the meaning of the word solidity as we use it; it is again an apprehension of the third dimension. It is for this reason that contemporary art has developed the process referred to as installation. This approach to the third dimensional representation of the two dimensional concept of the narrative is true theatre and this is the genius of our nature, if perhaps a bit grandiose or sensational. In fact it is an intellectual approach through which a dialogue, of the visual and the verbal, conceived through a process of analysis, conjoining the concept to the percept. In an attempt to discover a new understanding by which one might address space, time and other phenomenological circumstance, in an exploratory and inventively new presentation and implementation of medium. The problem here is that the result presents the concept as mutually exclusive from the percept rather than inherently connected and synchronized. When divided the two entities (concept and percept) are removed from their mutual or common context and result in a disproportionate relationship of imbalance and almost manic representation. Most often the narrative or concept of the presentation becomes quintessential and preeminent rather than contributory to the whole, unified experience. It might be said that we have reverted back to the days in art history that were driven by politics, religion and agendas or promotion and propaganda. When the narrative or for that matter, the subject matter is rendered as a concept rather than inclusively the duality of percept and concept, we have lost our visceral connection to the perceived world.

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## **Chapter 21;                    WHY ART?**

### ***Art for the people, by the people***

**Review: the evolution of perception and cognition of feeling as represented and documented by artists in the mediums and metaphors of their time.**

*Where are we in the now? Where are we going?*

*Acknowledging the historical context of art through the development of human perception and by understanding the process in perspective ( the big picture), we find ways to implement what has come before, that which is more than the superficial and is a useful foundation for growth. The Arts that have been preserved to benefit our spiritual and intellectual awareness and in so doing, teach us to see, to feel. It is a vital and essential manifestation of our humanity and reveals to us that we are not just an element of nature but perhaps, of the highest order therein. All of the arts reveal that we project our humanity upon them as we do with religion, our pets, nature and for that matter, our God. It is not entirely a narcissistic pursuit that is our constant need to assign meaning and order to the world around us. Art was always a design of connectivity until our egos became too embroiled in the process and we lost our way in searching rather than accepting and simply empowering the process of seeing a thing for what it was rather than trying to define it within the context of our own limited knowledge of humanity. We need to continue our exploration and discovery of nature in order to appreciate and respond inspirationally to the gift of life. If we turn our backs on it, we will lose our greatest human gift and enter into the darkness of blindness and emptiness. There are many ways we can learn from art and make it an integral part of our development. Just one example of how we can use the tools of perception and connectivity to a greater consciousness of the world around us is in the understanding of art and its therapeutic attributes.*

Art is humanity's manifestation of love. The process should be undertaken, not with the intent to create "greatness" or out of some expectation therein. It should not be driven by duty or cause, for all of this is pretense and inhibits the deeper aesthetic connection and undermines the spirit of art. The engagement of the imagination, comingling with the senses and driven by the love of holding on to the preciousness of any given moment, so as to hold it in one's palm just long enough as to remind us that life is precious. This sensibility is at the core of the art work and, to the degree that the artist recreates its presence in life's representation, such is the level of accomplishment and value of art as translated by its composer.

Love, throughout history, has inspired thought, sensuality, sexuality, spirituality and faith. Humanity has sought to define it, control it, imitate it and translate it in many formats ranging from theatre to fine art, family to religion, education to religion and beyond. We seek it out and somehow remain vulnerable to its influences in that which we most often find above reproach and entirely personal. Love is not a concept, it is a sensation, yet in our controlling nature, driven by our ego's, we lose sight of the essence of love, as such, the intuitive sensuality of the phenomenon. Perhaps it is because of the mutual dependency of the two, imagination and sensation, create an abstract circumstance that defies, flatly, any absolute definition. If we were able to define the sensation of love, in literal terminology, we would inevitably, diminish and most likely, destroy it. As it is understood in the Judaic traditions, to know of God but never to speak of him. For in that context one would merely reduce the higher power to that limitation we are subject to as human beings. This is why the great poets, writers, painters, sculptors, music composers, philosophers and artists as a whole use the metaphor as their best rendering of life and the experience of living. The arts are a profound connection to our higher powers of recognition, communication, collaboration and commonality. One can teach an elephant to use a paintbrush but what is the value of the process and outcome? It is only a human being that can experience the profound reality of love for it is only humanity that can make the cognitive connection between the act of sensation and the ensuing revelation of love. Art that is without love is not art at all, but simply the act of reducing humanity to a concept. Great art is that which embraces the process which is uniquely human, and makes manifest that aesthetic in an art form so completely one with nature and life as to render the art as life, not art.

**Process:** is the method by which one engages and experiences, to one's highest experiential potential, the sensation and cognition of perception. The process of making Art, has historically and continues to serve humanity, in its application and appreciation when in the act of discovery, inspires. Although the onlooker, appreciator, interpreter and educator are left with the end product to make sense of in their own entirely personal manner, it is the process of making this product of the soul in the creative undertaking that is, above all things, the *raison d'être*. We associate the more vulnerable, acutely connected and profoundly managed implementations to be the highest forms of art and are often on display for all of us

to share our sentiments and awareness of being in collaboration and communal offerings but, the essential action is entirely in the making/ doing and translation of experience that is meaningful and why artists engage in the first place. The fact that the rendering of time, space and sensation in a most intimate fashion inspires many but is certainly at best a secondary notion by comparison. This said, we should explore the “ process “ as best as we can in order to gain a better understand as to how art can profit all of humanity from nuance to the grandest of gestures. We have, over the centuries, gained limitless discoveries and insightful perspectives of both a visual and verbal nature when viewing exhibitions of paintings, sculptures, photographs and illustrations. We should note herein that although I am confining my overview to the visual arts, specifically painting, that anything said about one art is most certainly applicable to all other true art forms such as music and literature, film and theatre.... We have been taken to supreme awakenings inspired by such public displays but what we need to understand is that the implementation of the process is key to maintaining our overall wellness in life and this process is not designed for exclusivity or elite circles but for all of humanity to experience as a basic part of human development. Art is for all people to engage in and appreciate in the doing. Once this becomes a cultural aspect of human development, the commonality of our humanity will become more recognizable and communicable. If we are to grow as a society, closer and more unified, we must engage and encourage those elements that truly make us human. There is no reason that a Picasso must be seen from merely one perspective any more than a landscape where children are playing should be witnessed from any one angle of vision. We all hear the joy, see the movement, know the innocence but understand it differently, never to be lost in judgment of how and why, but simply inspired by the perception and connectivity.

We build upon one another’s interpretations, taking what we need from one another and arriving at our own conclusions. If we become so embedded in the concept of a thing at the expense of losing our sensuality or sensory connectivity, we risk losing our way into the darkness and are left with an endless repetition of recycled ideas and are lost in our blindness. On the other hand, if we allow ourselves to become a part of the process by engaging our own, personal connectivity to both other perspectives while experiencing our own perceptions we become collaborators and co-investors in our time and thus creating a bold and inventive platform for generations that will follow. Given this mentality, our potential as human beings is boundless and full of the true wonderment of our humanity.

We begin our process by first accepting that we are of nature, not above it, not beneath it and certainly not beyond it. We are subject to it, be we cognoscente of the moment or not. Just as we struggle with time as truth or illusion, reality versus actuality or what constitutes the meaningfulness of the past and future, the realization and the reconciliation of these dualities can either present things in opposition to one another or the potential to find unity and commonality. Just as perception connects to thought, or “perception gives context for thought,” these two

entities are not mutually exclusive from one another, anymore then good and evil, light and shadow, the senses and the intellect, exist as divided or disconnected. For in truth, destruction lies in the division and deunification, while our inspiration and life force( élan vital) is found in the balance and equilibrium of the two becoming one in our nature.

The process of making and appreciating art is the experience of a therapeutic nature. That art, by its nature, is therapeutic and that we simply need to embrace the implementation of the process, without pretense or expectation and we will come to appreciate the true dynamics of its value. It is true that we strive for individuality, inventiveness and originality, yet it is also true that we seek unity and commonality as an equal priority. This said, for all of our pursuits for recognition and acceptance, we need to be on our guard that in our aspirations for higher accomplishments and inventiveness, don't destroy the greater good of communication and connectivity for what might be the makings of pretense and elitism. It is not "art for art's sake" but art for life's sake. If we find personalization in the process of making art, then the accomplishments are limitless and bound to the context of the life we experience. This understanding will take us forward in an ongoing dialogue with life's exploration and our own inventiveness in line with sense perception and development. Learning to see and feel the world around us is an ongoing endeavor and can only deliver us beyond the limitations of the conceptual world to a greater potential and an end to the blindness ( the root of all evil) that has hampered our growth and humanity for far too long.

The development of art, in all mediums and methods, has been driven, in its purest sense, by connectivity to the world around us, not in a vacuum but in the common modality of our humanity. It is when we hit that cord in harmonics and balance that we are revered for our pursuits and that is where we find inspiration as in the case of love. For it is in the circumstance of reciprocation that we fulfill our needs and instinctual progressiveness. Often we refer to this engagement as intuitive but I am convinced that it is in our genetic makeup as definable as nutrients that fill or feed our bodily needs. We have always pursued the creative process in order to make our organic connection to the environment we perceive around us but each of us experiences that/ those moments as individual perceivers with individual perceptions and experiences. We embrace the unique vision ( though all too often it takes the insight of certain, enlightened, individuals to inspire the less engaged. ) The evolution of perception over the centuries occurs at different intervals for different individuals, this is common knowledge but we must always remember the need for all of us to be engaged and progressive, least we be subject to the blindness of mediocrity and dehumanization resulting in the disconnect from the true value of perception and feeling and rendering the human spirit divided and abandoned in isolation.

In understanding the true impact and therapeutic nature of art, the option arises to accept that the wonderment of the world in which we inhabit will, one day, provide a sense of peace and inspired gratitude as the foundation of human knowledge and

love. Is it possible that our earth is all that is to be defined as paradise and all we need do is develop the ability to see it all for what it presents? ..... continued in completed version.....

## PROLOGUE

The evolution of art, made manifest in many styles, voices and mediums, is reflective of our growth in civilization, identifiable in the culture we adorn. Art is the elevation of potential out of the turbulence of our passions and tempered by the determination of our ego in a progressive spirit. We learn from the process of doing and discovering in art, that we can move beyond the pettiness and pedestrian behaviors of our smaller natures and soar, above regressive and narrow perspectives. We have the ability to transcend mediocrity by delving into our vulnerable innocence and having faith in that we are here to explore and document as collaborators for future generations, in the battle to learn to see and feel. Art, like science and spirituality, lays the groundwork for the soul to take flight and embrace the wonderment of being human.

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Here is an example of only one approach to the infinite number of possibilities that exist through which, the engagement of art can serve humanity as a coping tool and developed skill that can help grow our life force.

*I have developed a process I refer to as “ Art as Therapy” and have provided a treatment of that methodology herein; as just one of hundreds of methods that might serve humanity well beyond the simple mounting of exhibitions in galleries and museums. We as a people must become more proactive in the respect and utilization of art as a means of preserving our humanity.*

## ART AS THERAPY

*Art, in context, has been one of the most accomplished and significant factors in the development of civilization, epistemology, psychology, meditation and contemplation, wellness, inspiration, innovation and invention, human perception and redemption. It has documented and translated throughout the human experience, the history of our humanity. We can make it a greater presence in our lives by understanding that it is our greatest tool to respond the growing blindness in the world.*

..... continued in completed version.....

John Smith-Amato