

PROGRESSIVE ABSTRACTION IN  
LANDSCAPE PAINTING

---

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ART  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY  
  
HUMANITIES AND FINE ARTS

BY  
LARRY WARREN LUPPLACE, B.S.

---

DENTON, TEXAS

JULY 1982

The Graduate School  
Texas Woman's University  
Denton, Texas

July 20 1982

We hereby recommend that the \_\_\_\_\_ thesis \_\_\_\_\_ prepared under  
our supervision by Larry W. Luptace  
entitled Progressive Abstraction in Landscape  
Painting

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Committee:

[Signature]  
Chairman  
[Signature]  
[Signature]  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Accepted:

[Signature]  
Dean of The Graduate School

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### A Special Acknowledgment

To Jeanie A. LupPlace for the many hours of assistance that she has given in helping to complete the thesis. Thank you for your support and kindness. I must say that you are truly a unique wife and friend. You are the sunshine of my life.

# LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

	Page
Photographic Plate Number 1	28
Photographic Plate Number 2	30
Photographic Plate Number 3	32
Photographic Plate Number 4	34
Photographic Plate Number 5	36
Photographic Plate Number 6	39
Photographic Plate Number 7	41
Photographic Plate Number 8	43
Photographic Plate Number 9	45
Photographic Plate Number 10	47
Photographic Plate Number 11	49
Photographic Plate Number 12	51
Photographic Plate Number 13	53
Photographic Plate Number 14	55
Photographic Plate Number 15	57
Photographic Plate Number 16	59
Photographic Plate Number 17	61
Photographic Plate Number 18	63
Photographic Plate Number 19	65
Photographic Plate Number 20	67
Photographic Plate Number 21	69
Photographic Plate Number 22	71



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	iii
CONTENTS.....	iv
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES.....	v
CHAPTER I	
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	1
Justification for this Study.....	1
Background.....	2
Delimitation.....	2
Methodology.....	3
Definition of Terms.....	4
CHAPTER II	
History of Romanticism and Landscape Painting on the 18th and 19th Century.....	8
CHAPTER III	
A Study of 20th Century European and American Painters.....	18
CHAPTER IV	
Comparing 20th Century Painters to the Writer.....	25
CHAPTER V	
Progression of a Painting.....	27
CHAPTER VI	
Painting Series.....	37
SUMMARY.....	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	74

# Progressive Abstraction In

## Landscape Painting

### Chapter I

#### Statement Of The Problem

This paper has examined the relationship between abstraction and representational modes in landscape painting. Visual examples of the works of the author and various Twentieth Century painters were included.

#### Purpose Of This Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand the complex relationship between aesthetic philosophies of artists pursuing representation and abstraction modes of landscape painting.

#### Justification For This Study

This thesis gave a brief history of the evolution of landscape painting from the Barbizon movement to contemporary American landscape painting. A standard is needed to define divisions in interim aesthetics, dealing with representative to abstract information and defining the relationship between representative to abstract information. Defining the relationship between representational and abstract points of view have been helpful in clarifying personal consideration of the differences and similarities

between the two.

### Background

Through personal experience as a painter, the writer has noticed a subtle irony developing in past and present works. While working to improve skills toward "realistic" representation, the writer became aware that recent paintings had become progressively more abstract.

By studying the artists of the past and their thoughts and by analyzing the body of the author's own work, the author has theorized that representation and abstraction considerations are often closely related. This theory has been demonstrated by the breaking down and examination of paintings at each stage of its development. Several of these stages of abstraction has been exemplified within a series of paintings.

### Delimitation

1. This thesis began with a brief history to examine the evolution of landscape painting from representation to abstraction using various Twentieth Century painters.
2. Through this study the author has examined his painting techniques and explained the use of values and warm and cool hues to produce eye movement. The author has incorporated a series of photographs to show the transition from representation to abstraction.

3. This study has examined the evolution of a painting, through photographs, from beginning to end; and has explained the author's various techniques.

#### Methodology

1. The researcher has acquired knowledge of Twentieth Century European art history through books, periodicals and personal examination of paintings.
2. The study began with a brief history of the subject matter based on research, and continued with examples of the author's own work. Paintings have been shown displaying a transition from representation to abstraction.
3. Examples of the writer's painting have been shown through photographs.
4. The ideas presented in this study have been reinforced with the writer's and other Twentieth Century painters' philosophies.

## DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Abstract: A visual interpretation that expresses the essence of a figure, object, or place in lines, geometric forms, or planes with little regard for its natural appearance (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 251).
- Composition: The art of combining the elements of a picture of other work of art into a satisfactory visual whole. In art the whole is very much more than the sum of the parts (Murray, Peter and Linda, Dictionary Of Art And Artist, p. 89).
- Cubism: Is the parent of all abstract art forms. It grew out of the efforts of Picasso and Braque to replace the purely visual effects of impressionist preoccupation with the surface of objects with a more intellectual conception of form and colour (Murray, Peter and Linda, Dictionary Of Art And Artists, p. 105).
- Design: An ordered arrangement of one or more of the components of art: line, value, shape, form or color (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 252).
- Expression: In art, a subjective interpretation of sensations, emotions, or ideas rather than of actual appearances (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis:

Art, p. 252).

- Form: Visual aspects or shape of a work of art  
(Hendrick, Long and Davis, Experiencing Art In The Elementary School, p. 232).
- Hue: A color (Hendrick, Long and Davis, Experiencing Art In The Elementary School, p. 232).
- Impasto: A particularly thick or heavy application of paint (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 253).
- Impressionism: A late 19th century movement in painting, concerned with the development of unusual techniques for applying color to express qualities of atmosphere and light (Hendrick, Long, and Davis, Experiencing Art In The Elementary School, p. 232).
- Intensity: In reference to color, the brightness or dullness (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 253).
- Local Color: The positive or natural color of an object or element; for example, leaf-green, lemon-yellow, sky-blue (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 253).
- Masonite: A pressed board made of wood fibers. Recommended for clay boards, table tops, and inking surface, (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art,

p. 253).

Middle Ground: That part of a painting or picture halfway between spectator and background (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 253).

Representational: Figurative, indentifiable subject matter (Hendrick, Long and Davis, Experiencing Art In The Elementary School, p. 232).

Study: A drawing or painting of a detail, such as a figure, a hand or a piece of drapery, made for the purpose of study or for use in a larger composition. A study should never be confused with a sketch, which is a rough draught of the whole, whereas a study may be very highly wrought but does not usually embrace more than a part of the composition (Murray, Peter, and Linda, A Dictionary Of Art And Artists, p. 400).

Texture: A visual element that identifies surface quality in a real or implied sense as being rough, smooth, soft (Hendrick, Long and Davis, Experiencing Art In The Elementary School, p. 233).

Underpainting: Is the preliminary lay-in, usually in which the drawing, composition, and tone values of a picture are worked out (Murray, Peter, and Linda, A Dictionary Of Art And Artist, p. 422).

Wash: A thinly applied paint usually found in water color techniques (Wachowiak, Ramsay, Emphasis: Art, p. 255).



## CHAPTER II

### History of Romanticism and Landscape Painting

#### In the 18th and 19th Century

The term Romanticism was established approximately between 1750 and 1850 by German critics to distinguish it from classicism. Romanticism was a result of the French Revolution. Many changes were taking place in governments, literature, music and the arts. The classicist society at large wanted a peaceful reformation of its culture. They did not expect the upheaval that came. "Although many of the radical revolutionary leaders and Napoleon believed themselves to be in the tradition of classical Greece and Rome, it was the Romantics, breaking sharply with past forms and traditions and with bold abandon trying the new, who reflected the revolutionary spirit."<sup>1</sup>

The French philosopher, Rousseau, lived almost a hundred years before the Romantic movement was fully developed. He was a true forefather to the emotional philosophy of feeling and instinct. Although the movement was years away, its precedents were being established by Rousseau. "He would stretch himself out on the ground, dig

---

<sup>1</sup>John B. Harrison and Richard E. Sullivan, A Short History of Western Civilization (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 1971), p. 734

his fingers and toes into the dirt, kiss the earth, and weep for joy. This mad genius was a true Romanticist in his revolt against the rules of formal society."<sup>2</sup> Spontaneous expression was one of the elements of the Romantic era and was exhibited by a trio of poets in England dedicated to interpreting nature's every mood. "Byron and Shelley combined an exquisite aesthetic sense with irrepressible revolutionary zeal, defying the forms and customs of society."<sup>3</sup> Although Keats associated with Byron and Shelley, he was less active in the revolutionary movement, and sought all his life for the beautiful things in nature.

The English School of landscape painting owes much to these poets, for its practitioners were greatly influenced by their work. Joseph Mallord William Turner and John Constable were born in England only a year apart. Even more than this, they were both Romantic landscape painters. At the age of 27, Turner won full membership in the Royal Academy in England.

Turner explored nature looking for the panoramic scene that could be transformed into a dramatic effect in which he could introduce light gradually to the center of the painting. Turner was so aware of nature that even the most

---

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 736

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 738

dramatic paintings came from experiences, not imagination. Turner studied the work of Claude Lorraine and learned much about atmosphere, light, and water reflections. "But in his later paintings he increasingly reveals his awareness that color and light are so closely related as to be the same and he brings his art to a point where it foreshadows Impressionism."<sup>4</sup>

John Constable, like Turner, was a master of Romantic landscapes in England. Constable was a philosopher of painting. He believed that painting was a science, and one should inquire into the laws of nature. Constable's respect for his art never wavered. He studied nature with a dedicated vision. Even the smallest detail was not overlooked or taken for granted. Constable's paintings differed from Turner's in that he did not need or want such a dramatic effect or panoramic view for his paintings. Constable thought of landscape painting as only an experiment in natural philosophy. "I hope to show that ours is a regularly taught profession; that it is scientific as well as poetic that imagination never did, and never can, produce works that are to stand by a comparison with realities...."<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup>Horst de la Croix and Richard G. Tansey, Art Through The Ages (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975), p. 684

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

The Romantic era was coming to an end, and with the nineteenth century came a new philosophy about life and painting. The first railroads were being developed to haul goods being produced by factories. The new order of events would take control of the Romantic culture. This society was interested in trade, technology, and industry, and a painting became only a material object to be traded or sold. The more realistic a painting could be the more it was prized; realistic being a term that took on the meaning of resembling nature as closely as possible. This led to the establishment of many art institutions, salons and academies.

The artists of this time found themselves gathering together to express and share ideas. During this period some artists had a hard time adjusting to the new philosophy. The artist that would not or could not make the transition to blend with his society found himself labeled as a Bohemian who preferred obscurity and hunger to bourgeois conventions. In most cases a Bohemian lifestyle was not chosen by the artist, but was forced upon him by his individual creative powers. Filled with the desire to escape from his social environment he often traveled in solitude to reinforce his individuality. The artist thought of himself as a loner fighting the forces of evil. "In return for freedom of

self-expression society granted him the right to starve."<sup>6</sup>

Jean Francois Millet was born in 1814 of a peasant family. When he was in his early teens, he entered an art school in Cherbourg, France. When Millet's father died, his art teacher convinced the Town Council of Cherbourg to send Millet to Paris to continue his studies in art. After a few years, very few of his exhibited paintings had been sold, so he started painting signs and portraits to earn a living. Millet considered himself a failure at the age of 35. He moved from Paris in 1849 and settled in Barbizon, France. This was a place that resembled his home town, a community of farmers and woodcutters. He painted the peasants and created masterpieces about the country life. In time, his paintings gained popularity and other painters came to Barbizon to work and study with Millet. "They became known as the Barbizon School of painters."<sup>7</sup>

Camille Corot can be linked to the Barbizon School, but was not a true member. He liked to paint in Barbizon in the summertime. There was a strong contrast between Corot and the other Barbizon painters. His outlook on landscape painting was more structural and complex. Corot saw nature

---

<sup>6</sup>George Heard Hamilton, 19th and 20th Century Art (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, New York: Harry N. Abrams), p. 47

<sup>7</sup>"Jean Francois Millet," Compton's Encyclopedia, XV (1971), 325



in terms of large areas of value or lights and darks. He was interested in photography, and much of his later works takes on the quality of limited color scheme. This can be credited to studies of monochromatic photographs. Corot painted peaceful landscapes with soft tones, hazy trees, and slow-moving waters. He liked to do small paintings outdoors and to study subjects that would only take one or two hours. Corot painted with two different styles, one for the salon that would please the public and the other, which was a higher quality, that showed a full scale of tones. This latter was an effect that photography had already achieved. "Both Constable and Corot point toward the Impressionist, but in different ways; Constable in his brilliant freshness of color and divided brushstrokes; Corot in his concern for the rendering of outdoor light, climate, and atmosphere in terms of values."<sup>8</sup>

By the mid 19th century, some of the views held by the modern artist was changing. Custave Courbet had participated in the romantic movement but by 1848 his philosophy had changed. He now thought of himself as a naturalist, a term which is more descriptive than realist. Courbet believed that the romantic feeling and imagination were used only to escape from reality. He also believed a painting should

---

<sup>8</sup> Croix and Tansey, Art Through The Ages, p. 686

come from the artist's own direct experience. "I cannot paint an angel because I have never seen one."<sup>9</sup> The painters of this time were involved in the painting of their environment using undramatized modern life. Courbet's work was rejected by the salons several times, but the last time, in 1855, when two of his nine paintings were rejected by the International Exposition, he removed all of his paintings from the exposition. Courbet had disagreed with critics about the form of Realism so much that he decided to build, at his own expense, a building where he could exhibit his work of the past fifteen years. It was called the Pavilion of Realism and it gave him the reputation as Europe's leading Realist painter.

In his later paintings, he returned to the Baroque way of painting using dark underpainting and heavy chiaroscuro. His intentions were to please the public. He painted subject matter that was familiar to the salon. "This conservatism disappointed the younger artists who had come to rely strongly on his vigorous style and technique and his courageous individualism."<sup>10</sup> In the early years of Impressionism, many of the painters would exhibit their work with him, but

---

<sup>9</sup>Hamilton, 19th and 20th Century Art, p. 47

<sup>10</sup>Croix and Tansey, Art Through The Ages, p. 692

Courbet could not grasp the idea of this new style of painting.

"Manet, in his later works, and the Impressionists seem to raise the question whether what we see is not a matter of how we see it."<sup>11</sup> The term Impressionism came from the writing in a review of the exhibition of 1874. The work was a deliberate act of revolt against the academic salon art. The public was angry and insulted by the exhibit. One of Monet's paintings called "Impression Sunrise"<sup>12</sup> looked to be unfinished, with very little detail, and hardly any lines. One of the critics wrote, "It did not deserve to be called anything except an "Impression."<sup>13</sup>

The Impressionist were inspired by the Barbizon landscape painters, Courbet and Corot, but the light airy painting of Turner and Constable in England soon worked its way into the Impressionist buildings, skies, trees, and people. Their entire ground became bright and colorful, full of broken brush strokes. "With brush, canvas, and easel in hand they went to the city street, parks, river banks, ocean, beaches, and countryside, seeking fresh views

---

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Patrick D. DeLong, Art in the Humanities (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 85

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.



of life. In such settings, painters like Monet, Pissarro and Renior attempted to capture the dynamic effects of reflected sunlight on water and foliage."<sup>14</sup> The Impressionist did not care to tell a story, paint objects in a realistic manner, or develop a painting that had the illusion of deep space. The main object was to produce patterns made on their groundwith paint and brush.

Impressionism lasted for about ten years. "Renior had become dissatisfied with an art whose content and technique permitted only the depiction of what was visually as well as psychologically transcient. He felt that he had come, as he said, to the end of Impressionism and decided to re-study the art of the past."<sup>15</sup> He painted up to the time of his death. The great painters of Impressionism went on to create their own style. Twenty years later Monet was the first artist of the group who became successful and grew rich. By 1923 Monet's eyesight was failing and he had an operation for cataracts, but poor eyesight continued until the time of his death in 1926. Many critics have argued "that Monet and other Impressionists destroyed the

---

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>George Heard Hamilton, 19th and 20th Century Art (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, New York: Harry N. Abrams), p. 99

traditional structure of painting by dissolving form in light so that all that was left was shapeless mass of colored vapor."<sup>16</sup>

By 1920, Impressionism was declining. "Monet with his freely flowing brush work is considered a forerunner, if not a pioneer, of Abstract Expressionism."<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

### CHAPTER III

#### A Study of 20th Century European And American Painters

With the end of Impressionism came many individualistic painters who could not be classified as painting in any one particular style. They were labeled as Post-Impressionists. This new generation of painters owed much to Impressionism, because it was this movement which opened the path for "a new way of painting."<sup>18</sup> The artists were free to experiment with new kinds of techniques and were liberated from restrictions of the past. The new paintings of nature became more colorful and dynamic.

The paintings of the Expressionist painter were different from the Impressionist. Impressionism was concerned with how things looked at a certain time or under specific light conditions. The Expressionist did not care how things looked on the outside but how the internal structure felt. Vincent Van Gogh wrote: "I am not much concerned with how hands look but with the feeling of hands."<sup>19</sup> Expressionism dealt with subjective feelings and depicted the artist's personal emotions, often in distorted and exaggerated ways. Paintings

---

<sup>18</sup> DeLong, Art in the Humanities, p. 89

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 90

of plants and trees seem to move as if electrified. The Expressionists painted nature not the way they saw it, but how they experienced it. Their paintings had a build-up of thick, rich, paint, thus creating varied textures.

Cubism was established between 1907 and 1914, and it was considered a major breakthrough for the modern artist. Cubists believed line, color, texture, and shapes to be plastic in quality, with the ability to be manipulated. The work of Paul Cézanne, the Post-Impressionist, was instrumental to the Cubist. Cézanne led the way in manipulations of form, color, and space. Cézanne would use his hue in a way which unified the entire picture, faraway things seem to be near and the foreground seems to be laid in to relate to the background, thereby creating a balance of space. He also would modify shapes in a picture if it would help to improve the composition. Cézanne's paintings of figures, buildings, and bottles took on the appearance of geometric form. Cézanne said "...treat nature by the cylinder, the sphere, the cone...."<sup>20</sup> This philosophy was the one that opened the door and gave the Cubists a starting point. "It was Cézanne who discovered the genius of this landscape, celebrated its form and colors and revealed in it a

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 95

profundity that no eye before had seen."<sup>21</sup> "This power of Cezanne's, to convey the essence of a landscape while eliminating much of its detail, tells us a great deal about the man and his works. The simplest and truest thing that can be said of him is that he taught the world to see in a new way."<sup>22</sup> Although Cezanne's paintings take on the appearance of nature, it was his interpretation that gave the Cubist movement its beginning.

Piet Mondrian started out as an Impressionistic painter using a representational style. His paintings were complex in technique using geometric patterns and straight lines to produce structure. The more he worked in painting, the more details he left out. This brought his paintings to the point of pure Non-Objective Abstraction with strong structural qualities. Non-Objective is used to mean "starting with nothing in mind and ending up with nothing in mind except the desire to make a successful design."<sup>23</sup> As Non-Objective art entered America it was labeled as Abstract Expressionism which would distinguish it as "action painting."<sup>24</sup> In the period of time before World War II

---

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Richard W. Murphy, The World of Cezanne (New York: Time Life Books, 1972), p. 7

<sup>23</sup>DeLong, Art in the Humanities, p. 107

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 109

Non-Objective art was not very popular in America, but the movement gained momentum when Mondrian arrived in New York during the war. This new American style had less control than the Europeans' Abstraction. The height of Abstract Expressionism came during the 1950's. There were many thousands of young artists working in this vain throughout the world, but few of them could match the strong statements that had been established by the masters in the beginning of the movement. Mondrian's scientific philosophy was "art goes before life,"<sup>25</sup> meaning that it was the artist's responsibility to analyze the world and to create a new language to be used to communicate with it.

The Armory Show was an exhibition unprecedented in the history of American art. It had been hoped that the showing of the modern art from the Post-Impressionist, Fauve, and Cubist work would help the Americans make a transition to understand it better, but most Americans felt that it was a quick fad or that the artists were crazy to invent such a visual mess. Supporters of the exhibition were excited to show American realistic paintings next to the European art, but the results were depressing for the Americans. The skilled techniques of the European painters made the

---

<sup>25</sup>Italo Tomassoni, Mondrian (London, New York, Sydney, Toronto: Crown Publishers, 1969), p. 10



American paintings look pale and immature. Europe "had a long unbroken tradition of painting dating back to the Renaissance."<sup>26</sup> Europe had state academies where art theories and traditional skills were taught, but most Americans were completely ignorant of the subject, and passed from one generation to the next without realizing how far they were behind the Europeans in painting. The single achievement of the Armory Show was, that the pamphlets and post cards that had been sold at the exhibition would eventually be circulated throughout America, which would cause Americans for the first time to be aware of this new thing called "modern art." There were two important groups at the Armory Show: the "Ashcan School,"<sup>27</sup> and those that exhibited work at the modern art gallery known as 291, (named after its Eighth Avenue address). Robert Henri was the teacher and writer for the Ashcan School. The school was located where the Lincoln Center in New York now stands. Henri taught basic realism based on a Dutch tradition with a somber palette, and the broad brush stroke of Manet. To the traditional training he added the "slashing brushstroke"<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>26</sup> Barbara Rose, American Painting, The Twentieth Century Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, p. 13

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 15

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

from the Munich School. Henri believed that an ugly subject could make a beautiful painting if the brushstrokes were emphatic, suggestive of movement, and had vitality. Henri was devoted to the principle of direct experience, and used it to teach his students to paint. "Henri's realism, however, was relative; it was not based on the careful study of anatomy or the traditional canons of painting and plastic form creation that made Eakins an outstanding realist within the convention defined by Courbet and the French realist."<sup>29</sup> This realism that Henri taught was fundamentally just a journalistic brand of illustration rather than a fine art.

Alfred Stieglitz was the founder and operator of the 291, an "attic gallery on the lower Fifth Avenue."<sup>30</sup> Stieglitz was a photographer whose beliefs were opposite of those of Henri. Stieglitz's philosophy was "if a photograph could capture reality that much more completely and accurately than the human eye and hand guiding a paint brush or chisel, what was the point of the painter or sculptor attempting to challenge the photographer in recording reality?"<sup>31</sup> Ironically, this statement by Stieglitz

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



became a nightmare for Henri and other artist journalist's painters. The invention of photography led to the end of many journalist's art careers, and caused them to work more in painting than in illustration. "This opposition would express itself again in the split between American scene painting and geometric abstraction in the thirties and forties, and later in the opposition between Pop Art and hard-edge or color abstraction in the sixties."<sup>32</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

## CHAPTER IV

### Comparing 20th Century Painters To The Writer

In comparing the Writer's paintings to the paintings of the past, the Writer does not have the representational qualities of Corot or Courbet, salon pleasing style, nor does he search out the smallest detail as Constable's paintings did. The Writer believes in the same philosophy as Turner that "color and light are closely related."<sup>33</sup> One of the painting styles that comes the closest to the Writer's work would be that of the Post-Impressionist and specifically that of Paul Cézanne's landscape paintings. The Writer's work has evolved much in the same manner as Mondrian's beginning with a representational style and eventually moving towards abstraction.

One of the earlier nineteenth century painters that the Writer has found to be extremely interesting was Albert Pinkham Ryder. He lived between 1847 and 1917. "Any of the great pictures by Albert Pinkham Ryder can be cited as exemplifying a transformation of appearances remote from the painted facts of contemporaneous academic landscape."<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup>Croix and Tansey, Art Through The Ages, p. 684

<sup>34</sup>Virgil Baker, American Painting (United States; Macmillan Company, 1950), p. 627

When Ryder was a boy he had problems with his health because of a vaccination that he had been given. He had trouble with his vision, which may have been an explanation for some of his stylistic regularity in painting. Ryder never waited long enough for his paintings to dry, and he used an excessive amount of varnish. At times he would take the risk of ruining his pictures by using alcohol as a solvent. In his later paintings his vision had declined to almost total blindness, and at this point there is a gradual transition from clear to diffused images. Near the end of his life he would go into nature and touch trees, cows, and other objects, then return to his studio and paint from his mental images of nature. He would place his fingers onto the canvas to find the point in which to lay the paint.

The Writer is not a representational painter recording nature, and he is not an abstract painter working merely for composition. If the Writer's painting were labeled, the term "progressive" in landscape would be used. The Writer uses representation and abstraction in his work. By using both of these modes the Writer is attempting to show the outside of nature and its internal structure in the same painting.

## CHAPTER V

### Progression Of A Painting

The painting begins with a wash of warm hues. This is considered to be the underpainting, produced by working in large abstract patterns.



The second step in this painting process is to bring warm patterns together with the transition of middle values of hues.



The process continues by using transparent glazes to blend broken hue patterns together.





By softening or breaking up hard edges the piece will become a unified whole.



The final stage of painting will commence with the laying on of direct paint to build up texture areas and to push values which are stronger and richer in hue.



## CHAPTER VI

### Painting Series

This portion of the thesis is concerned with demonstrating the ability to translate a painting procedure from one painting style to another. The series will be comprised of paintings commencing with representation and moving toward abstraction. This painting series was done from a selection of photographs which were selected for good composition and strong values.

This painting is representative of nature. The hues are local in content, and they are blended through glazing. The composition has been separated into three planes: foreground, middle ground, and background. To create a visual interest, the painting travels from left to right, moving into extreme distance. This was created by placing a warm hue in the foreground and placing a darker hue next to it, and gradually moving to a lighter value located in the upper right of the composition.



Landscape I  
18" x 24"



This painting has a horizon line in the rear which is broken by a thin line of light hue that is separated from the middle plane or dark hue. There is a tree located in the foreground to give the painting structure. Working in patterns of strong value changes create distance in the painting. The leaves on the trees were produced by repeated glazing to create a richness in hue. The tree trunk has form created by hue transition using lights and darks.



Landscape II  
18" x 24"

One of the interesting points of this painting is the use of chiaroscuro. The values move from extreme dark to light. The tree in the foreground has been formed with thick rich paint. The light in the middle ground is used in balancing the composition. In this painting there are both representational images and abstract patterns that create a subtle but dramatic effect.



Landscape III  
18" x 24"

This composition was created with planes of hue that break in contrast with each other. The painting has images taken from nature, but begins to show signs of increased abstraction. By using thick paint the brushstrokes in the foreground take on the appearance of sculpture. The tree is a solid form that has extremely good balance of light and dark. The leaves are a build-up of glazes that move the eye into absolute darkness on into the background.



Landscape IV  
18" x 24"

In this painting the sky becomes expressive and accents the entire composition. The extreme dark in the foreground creates distance by the use of lighter values in the middle and background. The far background matches the same value as the sky, which increases the visual distance in the painting. The water in the foreground matches the hue of the sky.





Landscape V  
18" x 24"

The light and dark patterns in this painting work together to create a dramatic effect. The use of warm and cool hues was required to intensify the entire composition. A glaze of a red hue was needed to warm up the painting because of the amount of cool hue that was used. The painting has virtually lost its representational appearance and has moved more into abstract patterns.



Landscape VI  
18" x 24"

Through the use of chiaroscuro the painting has become extremely dramatic. There are abstract patterns of lights and darks. The painting still displays aspects of specific observation, but mostly is constructed of parallel bands of hue. There are no details in the foreground or background. The brushstrokes show a moving force to the left of the tree.



Landscape VII  
18" x 24"

Through the elimination of details the painting takes on a quality of being out of focus. Glazes are used to soften the edges. The sky matches the foreground in hue. The foreground and background are close in value, but still under control with the use of light value in the middle ground. The painting is predominantly warm in hue.



Landscape VIII  
18" x 24"



Although the painting was taken from nature almost all the local hue it once possessed is gone. The painting is now dominated by the hue. The hue has the appearance of floating around in the composition. The changes of value patterns are subtle except where the tree stands in the left middle ground. The light behind the tree creates a silhouette pattern.



Landscape IX  
18" x 24"

The painting is separated into three planes: a dark foreground, a light middle ground, and the background which is broken into hues of lights and darks. The trees in the foreground create stability. Abstract patterns are strong because of the elimination of details. All the edges flow from one pattern to the next because of soft edges.



Landscape X  
18" x 24"

As the painting moves closer to abstraction, most of the natural qualities are gone. The trees exhibit no transition of value. The tree in the foreground is virtually obscure at the base because of little value changes in the middle or background.



Landscape XI  
18" x 24"

With elimination of detail and the strengthening of hue, the painting takes on the appearance of motion. The painting recedes in space because of value change between the foreground and the background.





Landscape XII  
18" x 24"

In this painting, the foreground is illuminated with light against a dark middle ground and the background is glowing with hue, creating a silhouette effect.



Landscape XIII  
18" x 24"

In this painting there is only foreground and background. The middle ground has been eliminated. There is very little value change in the foreground. The tree that hangs on the right side of the picture has been glazed to retain a modeled effect. The background has a little value change and is very limited in hue variation.



Landscape XIV  
18" x 24"

Patterns of light and dark has now taken control of the painting. The representational qualities only vaguely exist, with little value changes in the painting.



Landscape XV  
18" x 24"

Only small traces of specific information are left;  
all details are gone. Hue and values are strong.





Landscape XVI  
18" x 24"

All the representational information is gone. The painting has developed into total abstraction. Extreme values and hues are played against each other to create a dramatic effect.



Landscape XVII  
Abstraction I  
18" x 24"

## Summary

The history and philosophy of painting from the eighteenth century European to the twentieth century American has been briefly discussed.

The Writer has demonstrated, by stopping a painting at five different stages of development, how his paintings are produced. Through photographs the Writer has exhibited a series of landscape paintings that attempt to show a progression from representational to abstraction. The Writer had added a description of each.

In the future, the Writer will concentrate on increasing the size of his paintings to 24" x 36" or larger. The paintings will continue in the abstractional landscape style.

The Writer feels that there is a very close link between abstraction and representational painting. In a painting there can be both abstraction and representational information depending on how much detail is added or eliminated. The direction that a painting will exhibit in most cases was decided by the artist in advance. A painter will have a certain influence on his paintings. The many areas of painting are created by the preconceived goals and personal philosophy of the artist.

The Writer feels a painting can be beautiful for its plastic qualities alone, and does not necessarily need detail.

The series in this thesis has been exhibited at Texas Woman's University.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baker, Virgil, American Painting (United States; Macmillan Company 1950); p. 627
- Compton's Encyclopedia XV, "Millet, Jean Francois," (1971), p. 325
- Croix, Horst de la, and Tansey, Richard, G. Art Through The Ages (New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Atlanta; Jovanovich, Harcourt Brace, 1975), p. 684, 686, 692
- DeLong, Patrick, D., Art In The Humanities (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), p. 85, 89, 90, 95, 109
- Hamilton, George Heard, 19th and 20th Century Art (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, New York: Abrams, Harry N.), p. 47, 99
- Harrison, John B. and Sullivan, Richard E., A Short History of Western Civilization (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 1971), p. 734, 736, 738
- Murphy, Richard W., The World of C'ezanne (New York: The Life Books, 1972), p. 7
- Rose, Barbara, American Painting, Twentieth Century (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company), p. 13, 15
- Tomassoni, Italo, Mondrian (London, New York, Sydney, Toronto: Crown Publishers, 1969), p. 10