

TASMANIAN SCHOOL OF ART, UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA

MFA PROGRAMME IN STUDIO STUDIES - 1981, 82

MOUNT NELSON CAMPUS, HOBART

ROBERT ADAMSON

DOCUMENTATION OF THE STUDY



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## VOLUME TWO

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## INTRODUCTION

My paintings up until 1977 were large abstract expressionist works based on the various kinds of colours, rhythms and textures found in the fencing combinations used to isolate one part of suburbia from another, i.e. wooden palings, brick, and corrugated iron of many colours. Sketches of this subject matter formed the foundation for the colour. The forms were then pushed around to let the colours and shapes create their own boundaries. It meant destroying some forms or amplifying others to come up with the end result - an arrangement that was unified. Each part of the surface was intended to enhance the other parts. Towards March 1977, the work was up against a brick wall, literally, and was not evolving. There seemed to be two choices, quit painting or start all over again.

Setting up some simple still life objects was the means for starting again. The objects were used to learn more about handling paint and as a tool to come to terms with the formal elements of drawing, composition, value, colour and texture. They were useful in setting particular problems, how to make a warm colour sit back, how to make a cool colour come forward, how to get an object to sit on a surface and yet separate from its surrounds, etc. What began as an exercise became a long term preoccupation. A two dimensional painter suddenly discovered the joy of working with the illusion of the third dimension.

Some time later the set ups included a honey tin from a recycling shop. The tin had not been sealed up the side and had no bottom or top. It was intriguing because of the obvious element of reflection but also because light could get inside more easily and the inside

of the can reflecting on itself presented a whole range of abstract images. The paintings were considered as interior landscapes with a consistent image that because of its reflective quality took on the character of the objects and colours placed in and around it.

The objects were there to carry the paint and to act as a vehicle for gaining some understanding of the environment. I considered that a penetrating look at finer and finer levels of the surface value of objects might eventually expose some aspect of their inner nature; to allow appreciation of the full value of the object.

The paintings over the past two years have been about this sort of investigation. The work has been done on a wide range of supports, i.e. wood, canvas, paper and cardboard, and with various media, i.e. pastel, pencil, charcoal and paint. The subject matter has shifted from objects to posters to landscape and back again while the intention has remained constant; the paintings should be whole, ordered and harmonious and because of that reflect something of the wholeness of the subject matter through its representation. This is an on-going process requiring the development of both painter and painting.

## WORK PROPOSAL

1. In my paintings I intend to present work that is whole, complete, ordered and harmonious, and to have them express something of me and my environment.
2. If I can imbue them with some expression of "refined perception", they will hopefully expand the awareness of the viewer and provide a glimpse of the transcendental value of life.
3. My process of painting is built up through progressive steps of observation. Initial drawing and blocking-in is drawn from a response to broad areas of colour and general shapes. Subsequent looks reveal more detail. It is a process of peeling back layers of the object and opening the whole range of possibilities to the viewer.
4. I have chosen a representational format for this exploration because still-life, specifically objects reflected in a curved metal surface, seems to be an ideal vehicle for exploring these elements, i.e. it should be possible to probe more deeply into reality and penetrate the deepest value of the object through refining visual perception. The level of awareness I wish the viewer to reach can be attained through certain meditative techniques designed to expand perception.

These are several aspects to the original proposal - seeing, painterliness, and the formal elements - that need to be expanded. Seeing, carried to its conclusion of putting everything observed into the painting, was meant to transcend the seen surface values and to

reveal something of the inner aspect of the object, its wholeness. In the past artists have stripped the object of its detail to arrive at its essential nature. The idea, then, was to transcend complexity to get to the wholeness. Music played by a large orchestra, a complex group, can still be very intimate and create a unified effect. Complex structures can contain a high degree of order.

We know from physics that physical existence is composed of many different layers. Beyond the gross surface level of the object are increasingly subtle layers of existence, one within the other - molecular, atomic, subatomic - ... As we gain in insight we grow in the ability to fathom the deeper levels of the object until the total range of the object - from gross, to subtle, to unmanifest - is comprehended. Full knowledge encompasses both inner and outer values.<sup>1</sup>

A level of perception completely different than ordinary perception is described in Eastern and Christian tradition as perception refined to the point where one is not bound by surface values. Eric Fromm, and others, suggests there is indeed a difference in seeing and seeing. He says that few are able to see the full value of an object because they project their hang ups onto it. To respond to an object fully and completely is to become one with it. To perceive yourself in everything is to appreciate the full value of an object. While the idea of objects containing some wholeness or special inner quality might seem strange to some, I respond to the idea because I have always felt there was something more to life than revealed by ordinary perception. If it were possible to see this value within objects and represent it in paint, one could learn much about one's surroundings. This would take refining perception to an expanded conclusion beyond simple surface awareness. While perception can be developed through observation and the processes involved in drawing and painting, the level of

perception where one becomes unified with the object can only be developed through practicing specific meditative techniques designed to expand awareness.

This level of awareness should eventually be reflected in the works, when the artist and his or her handling of the formal elements are sufficiently evolved to come together to produce a unified result. Since there are several levels of endeavour in any work, the paintings should also be judged on the formal elements and whether or not they communicate anything about what and how the artist sees.

In *Painterly Realism and the Modern Language*, Gerrit Henry says, "Indeed the challenge of Painterly Realism is to get it right while respecting the plastic nature of the painters medium".<sup>2</sup> My paintings seem to swing between an emphasis on paint and an emphasis on the object. Something subtle, some abstract image on the surface of the object is seen and has to be noted. The paintings are about both, paint and the representation of the object. Painterliness, for me, is some evidence of the personality of the artist, a signature, a way of making marks that is inherent in the makeup of the artist. It is a way of describing a form that lets the viewer know that paint is the vehicle for the representation. There should be a balance between seeing, painterliness, and the formal elements.

## PHILOSOPHY

It is normal to think about what you are doing because thinking precedes any activity but it has been more intense over the past two years. A lot of the conversation about painting has been because many believe that the artist should have an intellectual reason for his activity, that he should be able to articulate a visual language verbally. "Pissaro taught him [Cezanne] by example to put foremost the study of the object in nature and to allow ideas and theories to follow, if necessary, only after that."<sup>3</sup> More and more, art is dominated by ideology but good paintings transcend ideology, they have a timelessness about them.

The work should be whole, ordered and harmonious and articulate that to the viewer. "The purpose of art is to touch the viewer, drawing him to a moment of silent comprehension and happiness. Great art is known by its appeal to all people, by its universal ability to elevate consciousness."<sup>4</sup> Alan Roberts, drama critic for the *Advertiser*, said, "In all great plays there are areas of mystery; codes that can't be cracked because not even the author holds the key".<sup>5</sup>

Marcel Brion in *Cezanne* suggested that Cezanne scorned any outside influence, whether technical or aesthetic, that might affect his work. There has always been a conflict between what one should learn from others and what one should discover for oneself. One can create from the knowledge of others or from one's own inner experience outside a particular knowledge. It may be slower but somehow the discovery is more interesting and fruitful when it is firsthand knowledge. Experience and theory constitute complete knowledge and

a balance is needed between the two. Reading about something after the fact serves to verify and validate the experience. It is important to have an open mind so learning can take place but it is also important not to be unduly influenced by others.

It is accepted that a painter does need a knowledge of painting of the past in order to be able to focus correctly on the problems of painting. Yet, it is this very knowledge that can hinder the possibilities for discovery that keeps our minds cluttered with past procedures, making our vision static and bound to the known. A painter is only limited by the known.

(Robert Ryman, source unknown)

As Robert Ryman suggests, knowledge can hinder the possibility of discovery, particularly if we accept knowledge as fact. Modern interpretations of Vedic science suggest that intuition is a finer faculty than intellect and closer to pure creative intelligence and, therefore, ultimately more reliable in the decision making process. This is the level that such scientists as Poincaré and Einstein attempted to work from. "Einstein said that intuition, or insight, is the ultimate source of the physicists' knowledge."<sup>6</sup> And, "knowledge is limited whereas imagination embraces the entire world."<sup>7</sup> "An absolute can only be reached by intuition, whereas the rest [of our knowledge] arises out of analysis. We here call intuition the sympathy by which one transports oneself to the interior of an object in order to coincide with its unique and ineffable quality."<sup>8</sup>

There are artists who work intuitively and artists who feel that the intellectual approach to their work is all important. The second group are not normally concerned with how well the idea is executed; the idea is everything. In my view, the content is the paint and subject matter, except to the extent that the artist chooses subject matter with an idea in mind and due to some response to it, is the vehicle for pulling the formal elements together.

something to set back or come forward. It is getting easier, the paintings should be getting better.

An action is enjoyable when it is within our capabilities, when we can do it well, when it suits our temperament and when we see it producing good results on all sides. ... When we have more energy and intelligence than is required to perform an action, the action is easy and remains a joy. ... Activity that [allows] full expression of your creativity [is performed with] feelings of effortless spontaneity, of mastery, of great satisfaction. <sup>10</sup>

An artist should be comfortable in the area in which he chooses to work. There is a danger in doing something for the wrong reasons. That does not mean art should not evolve but - how something looks in a gallery, whether someone responds to it, doing it because it has not been done before - these are not reasons for making art but rather should result from the art making process.

Perhaps our ability to appreciate a certain artist's efforts has more to do with our inability to appreciate his achievement. We judge everything from the level of our experience and general level of awareness. Once I built a house from architectural plans which were altered in an attempt to improve on the architect's vision. It was only later that I realised my mistake and appreciated what would have been the architect's achievement.

"A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees."

William Blake (source unknown)

## DOCUMENTATION

## Subject Matter, Can Paintings



278. One can and five pencils on red surface and paint table.

May 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm. O/L.

This painting was indicative of a series of paintings with reflective cans as the dominant feature of the work. They were considered as changing interior landscapes because objects rearranged around the cans presented a whole new set of problems for perception. There are three levels of seeing in these paintings; the objects around the cans, their distorted images reflected on the surface of the can, and the abstract images within the cans where the inside of the can reflects on itself.

"The closer you look, the more you see. You see a world within a world." (Peter Dombrovski, on the S.W. Tasmanian Wilderness).

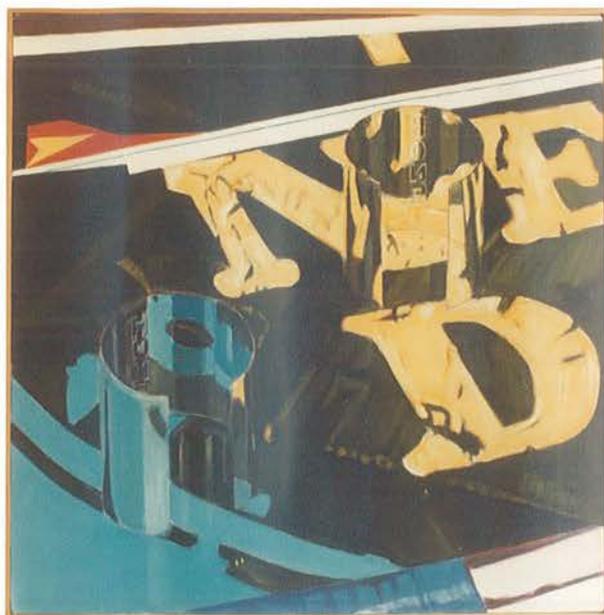
If the experience of seeing leaves an impression on the mind and influences our next experience of seeing, then art can break boundaries and expand awareness by presenting a new representation of the familiar.

Bill Delafield-Cook asked me why I did not get away from the can. He was not suggesting different subject matter but rather the use of the can as a starting point to abstract or otherwise change and expand the idea. Nature and man-made materials (which have their origins in nature) contain an abundance of abstract images which are more interesting than those I might make up. The environment contains a wealth of potential in terms of image. He agreed that he had the same problem; nature does it better. Both of us came to realism by way of abstract expressionism.

Finally I must tell you that as a painter I am becoming more clear sighted in front of nature, but that with me the realisation of my sensations is always very difficult. I cannot attain the intensity that is unfolded before my senses. I have not the magnificent richness of colouring that animates nature. Here on the edge of the river, the motifs are very plentiful, the same subject seen from a different angle gives a subject for study of the highest interest and so varied that I think I could be occupied for months without changing my place, simply bending a little more to the right or left.

(Cezanne: from a letter to his son, Paul).<sup>11</sup>

The paintings, at this stage, had a certain crispness and clarity about them but seemed to be lacking in painterliness. They were becoming more about the object and less about the painter. They were beginning to look like coloured-in drawings using thin paint. Moving paint around had always been an important aspect of the work. Drawing, using pastel and charcoal, was useful in opening the way for more expressiveness because the change in media necessitated a different approach. It was more difficult to get caught up in surface detail.



295. "Two cans on blue poster with yellow letters, NED."

December 1981, 61 x 61 cm, O/L.

This was the first painting that seemed to be a bit more painterly. It was difficult to break the habit of detailed representation which had developed over the past few years and to get back to a more painterly way of working. Earlier can paintings seemed to be the fulfilment of a conviction in the process of trying to put down everything and appeared to be the end of an exercise. Marks should be put down with the sureness of experience and the spontaneity of innocence.

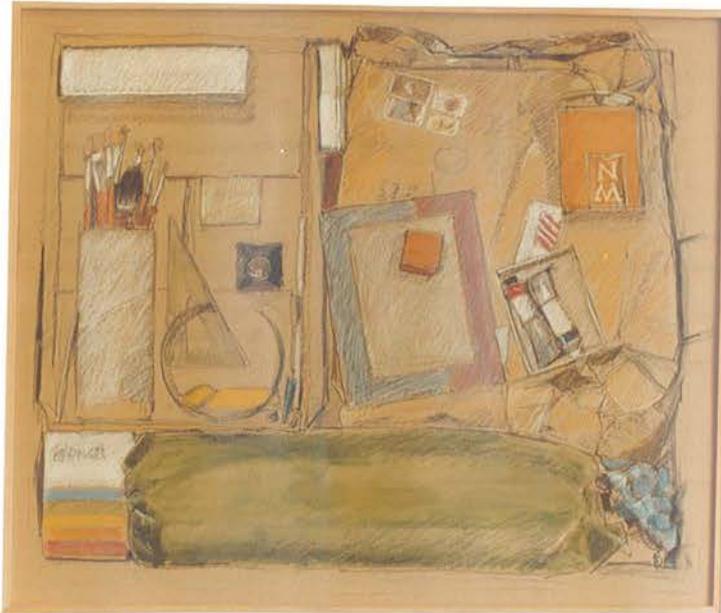
Using posters as a single format beneath the cans created a whole new set of images that were less cluttered. The cans tended to break up the poster image. Some posters, with cans attached, were mounted on the wall and while the cans broke up the format to a certain extent, they did not have as much relevance to the poster. Although the images were interesting, painting the posters by

themselves would have been like copying a photograph, of dubious value. The paintings were different from the posters because they were about brush marks rather than a dot process made up of magenta, cyan, yellow and black but something more needed to be done with them. The first of the series were about cans sitting on posters and became paintings about posters with cans attached.

Drawing and value are two formal elements that are not easy to handle. Value is difficult to separate from colour and it seems to hold the key to how the objects relate in space and how the painting hangs together. Seeing values and colour involves two separate operations, i.e. seeing the colour with the rods at the centre of the eye and value with the cones at the edge of the eye. When we use colour we have to do two things to arrive at one conclusion.

Drawing is a continuous activity which goes on all through the painting. It is a continuous process of correction, even changing the drawing at the last look. The realisation that the position of something could be changed when the painting was nearly finished was an important discovery at the time. It meant that something incorrectly stated did not have to be lived with, the difference was only a coat of paint. The work should also be less static as a result of moving the paint around to correct the drawing with some tension created by the push and pull. It is still fascinating to watch how a few materials put together in a certain way cause objects to appear to come out of the surface. Earlier abstract works were not about depth as such but about the surface of the painting. It is common knowledge that when you make one mark on a white surface or put two colours together you immediately create spatial relationships but that was not a conscious aspect of the work.

## DRAWING



324. "Box with brushes, triangle and can within box with tubes and tent."  
 June, 1982, 64 x 76 cm, Mixed media on cardboard.

Drawing is a procedure for training the hand and eye to work together. In the recent past it has also been an opportunity to approach the same still life format in a more painterly way because the basic tools are different, dry rather than wet, and they dictate a different approach. A range of materials, charcoal, pastel, pencil and thin paint, have been used on a variety of surfaces, stretched paper, stretched fabric glued to board, straw board, a smooth card, mount board and cardboard of the just-plain-box variety. Cardboard proved to be the best surface for my purposes.

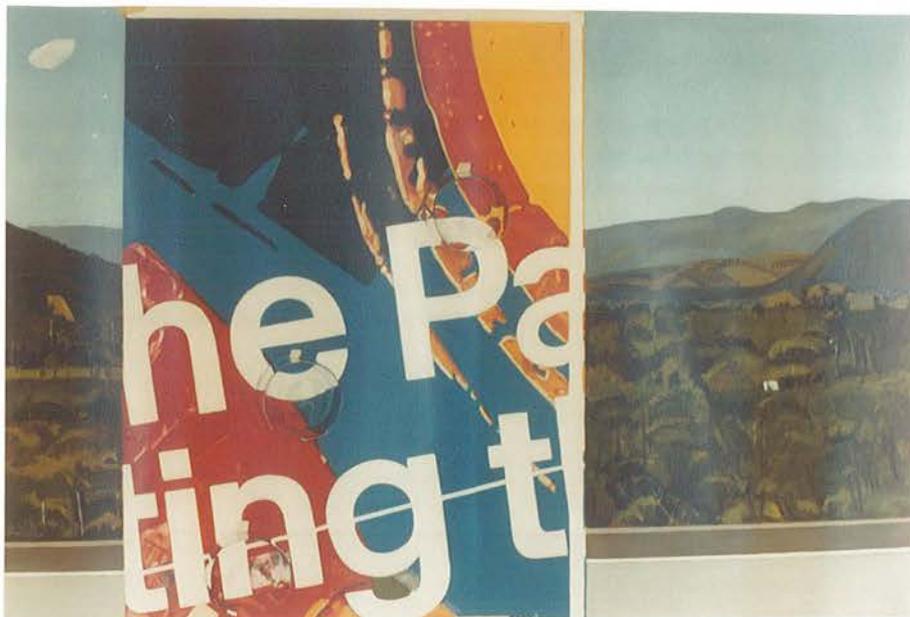
The process of drawing develops a sensitivity to materials and a heightened awareness of the visual

world. This awareness is both subjective (knowing how you feel about things) and objective (understanding how things actually operate). Perception is molded by subjectivity as well as by the facts of the world.

Art is a way of realizing your individuality. The making of art and the making of the self are both part of the same exciting process. <sup>12</sup>

What often starts as an exercise becomes important in itself. It is amazing how people with drawing ability do not always use it. An athlete goes with his strength, an artist often goes with his weakness. Perhaps that is where the struggle and consequently the challenge lies. You have to make a weak area strong; come to terms with it or one or more of the formal elements will not hold up and the work will suffer. Some drawings seem to work better than the paintings. Perhaps it is because of the white paper around the drawing which does not try to deny the two dimensional aspect. The looseness of the drawing is also a contributing factor. It is necessary to measure and compare constantly. Drawing requires the ability to focus attention while maintaining broad comprehension. You learn to draw, or paint, through the experience of drawing and painting.

## LANDSCAPE



299. "Three cans on 'he-Pa-ting' poster with landscape."

June, 1982, 101 x 151 cm., O/C.

This painting was the beginning of a look at the landscape. It was about man-made and natural forms and how they worked together, flat and deep space, and about how the cans are present but lost in the format. The cans functioned as punctuation marks; they were not obvious but were there on a subtle level. The posters, if they were not going to end up as paintings of posters, required something to act against. Mounting them on a window looking out onto landscape was an obvious foil.

Since the cans were always considered as changing landscape, it was probably inevitable that it would be impossible to ignore the Tasmanian landscape forever. It begged to be painted, probably all the more so because the art school sits in the middle of a very

beautiful part of it without so much as a single window in the studio. The structure and texture of the landscape does not lend itself to close scrutiny so it was easier to finish the paintings as they are normally started, loosely.

The first stage of looking at the landscape was through a window but it was too far away to be effective and the scale between the distant landscape and the large image posters was wrong. The next step was to brave the elements and to move into the landscape. It was quite enjoyable being surrounded by the subject matter with the canvas lashed to a tree and the elements - the wind and rain - threatening. Enjoyable but frustrating as well, to someone used to having objects sit still. The landscape was approached as still life which was difficult because it would not sit still, the wind and sun changed everything constantly. The third way of working with the landscape was from a photograph. It was not altogether successful; it was static which helped but something was missing as well. Of the three methods of working, the most successful ones were done in the landscape. However, as winter approached, it was nice to get back to the studio with objects that were stationary. The landscape deserves another look at some stage but it will be necessary to get into it as landscape rather than treating it as still life. Landscape is obviously a specialised field in which to work, and, among other things, one is up against a long history of Australian landscape artists. It has all been done before - like still life. Something different will have to be done with the landscape to make it work. At the time, thinking was revolving around still life.

## OBJECTS



323. "Box with jars, white box, paint box and can underneath paint trolley."  
 June, 1982, 38 x 76 cm. O/C.

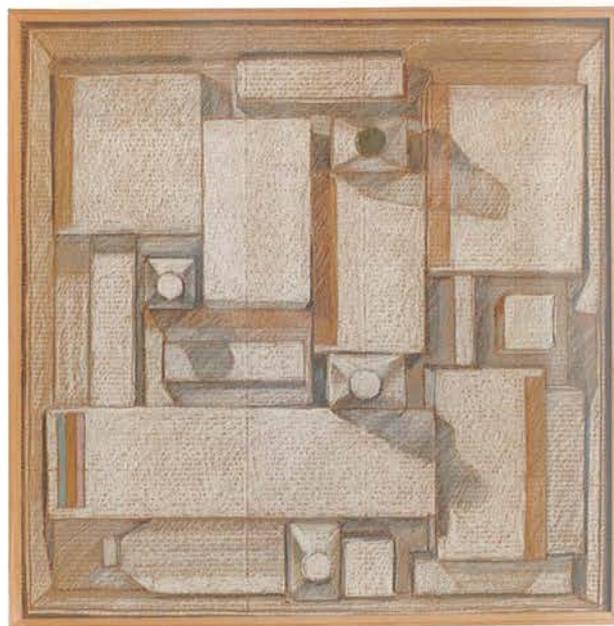
The objects in this painting just sit there. They look solid because the paint is thicker and more about describing the form. It would be good if all the paintings were 'solid and durable' like a Cezanne. In a Cezanne, you enjoy the luscious paint quality, the objects are there to carry the medium. When the paintings get too crisp, the objects do not have a chance to move. Locked too tight in their place, they cannot breathe. This work, tilting toward paint, may, in the end, say more about the object.

One attempt was made to extend the idea of presenting the object by placing real posters besides the paintings of posters, attaching real objects over same-size painted objects, and attaching drawings to the paintings. Ever mindful of the problems associated with doing something for its gimmick value, this approach seemed to

be another way of looking at, and presenting, the object of perception. Most of these ideas were discarded because they seemed to be getting away from the original intent; the representation of the object as a means of discovering something about the object through simple, straightforward painting:

It is the ordinary things that reveal the simplicity which points to a higher and more hidden state of being, and which is the very secret of the splendor of art.

(Carra on Morandi).<sup>13</sup>



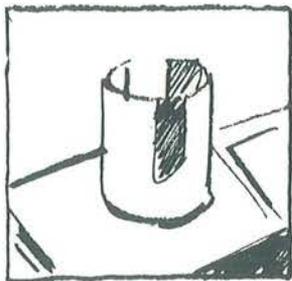
## TECHNIQUE

My paintings are built up through a series of what I call looks, starting with initial drawing out and blocking in. Subsequent looks are about seeing more and more detail in the surface quality of the objects. This seems to correspond with the need to build up a surface through progressive steps and also the general tendency to see general shapes and colours before becoming aware of fine surface detail.

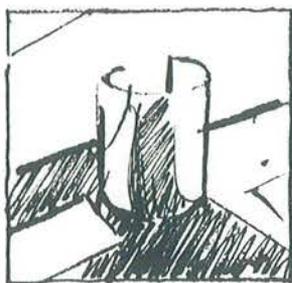
I use a limited palette of oil colour made up of the three primaries, including a warm and cool of each, and white. Almost any colour can be mixed from this combination and it is possible to end up with a more closely related family of colours as a result. I use a black oil medium made up of one part litharge, one part bees wax, and ten parts linseed oil which I brew myself. The advantage of this medium is that it dries quickly, usually over night, which means there is no lost time due to drying difficulties. It also leaves a sheen on the work that is neither glossy nor flat.

All the information for structuring a painting is contained within the objects themselves. I try not to be influenced by what others have discovered to help them pull a painting together. If some aspect of the painting is not working then the solution lies within accurately interpreting the information in front of me. Everything in the painting, both positive and negative shapes, is dealt with at each look so it all has a better chance of hanging together. "When Bonnard places a woman amongst the bric-a-brac of her boudoir, her hand is no more significant than her powder box, for everything is equally significant in a harmoniously closed vision of a universe."<sup>14</sup>

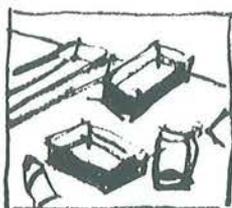
## THE WORK - 1981



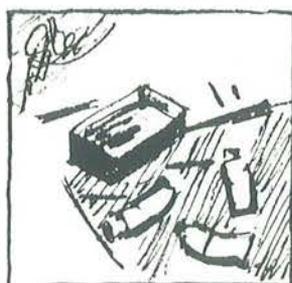
273. "One can on red cardboard."  
March 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/C.



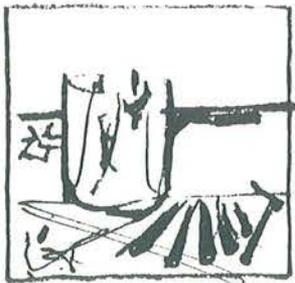
274. "One can on blue poster with  
light blue inset."  
Mar-Jun 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/C.



275. "Two black boxes, jar, paint  
tube and pastels."  
April 1981, 23.5 x 23.5 cm O/C.

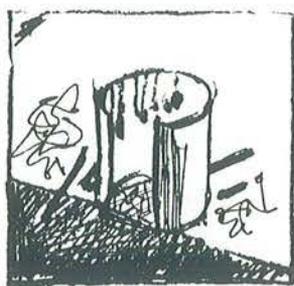


276. "Black box, 3 paint tubes and  
pastels."  
April 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/C.



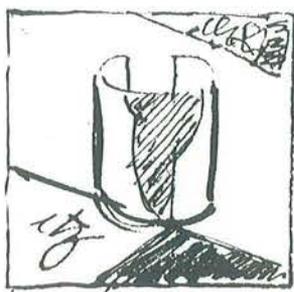
277. "One can on red surface and paint tube with pencils."

April 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/C.



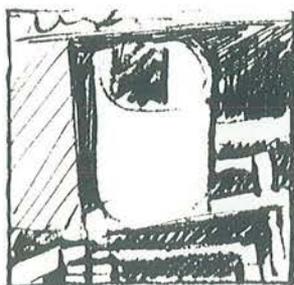
278. "One can and 5 pencils on red surface and paint table."

May 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/L.



279. "One can on red surface and Miss Fitz bag."

June 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/L.



280. "One can on dark red surface with narrow white strips of paper."

June 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/L.



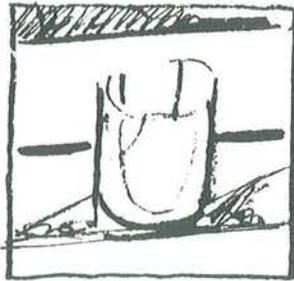
281. "Promite jar on green table  
and white paper with marks."

July 1981, 15 x 17 cm O/Wood.



282. "Self portrait - reflections  
in a mirror."

July 1981 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/L.



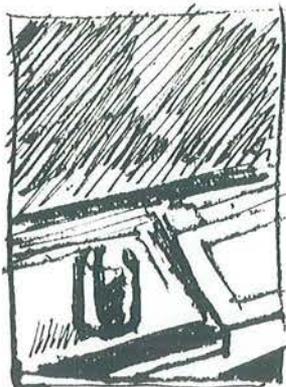
283. "One can on drawing with  
yellow."

July 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/L.



284. "One can on Witchery bag."

August 181, 30.5 x 30.5 cm. O/L.



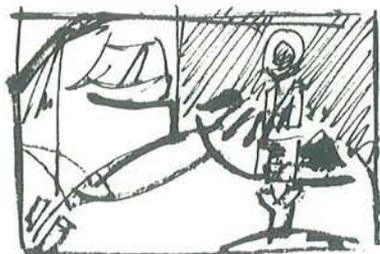
285. "One can on film box."

August 1981, 100 x 83 cm O/C.



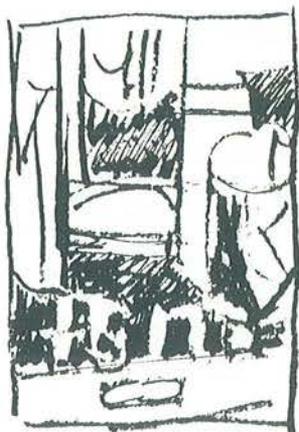
286. "Section of can."

October 1981, 30 x 45 cm O/C.



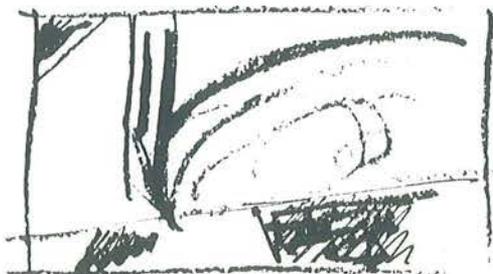
287. "Pastel box distorted in section of can."

October 1981, 32 x 46 cm O/C.



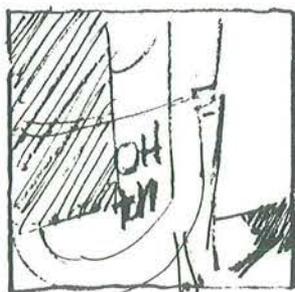
288. "One can and part of one can  
on Just Jeans bag."

October 1981, 46 x 31 cm O/C.



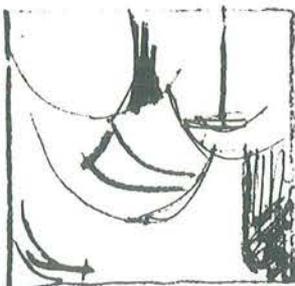
289. "Section of can sitting on  
yellow surface."

October 1981, 51 x 92 cm O/C.



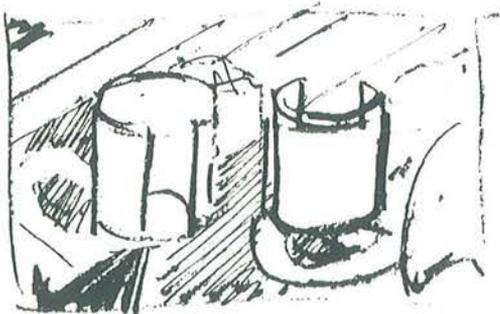
290. "Section of stacked can."

November 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/C.



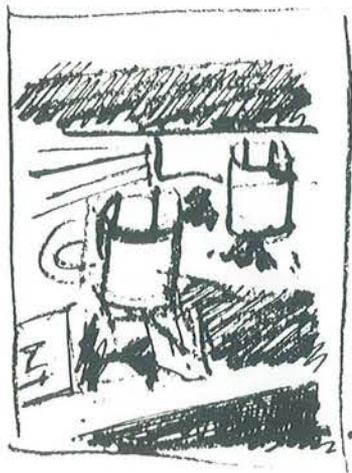
291. "Close-up of section of a  
stacked can, above."

November 1981, 30.5 x 30.5 cm



292. "Two cans on blue poster,  
with white P & E."

November 1981, 33 x 45 cm O/C/



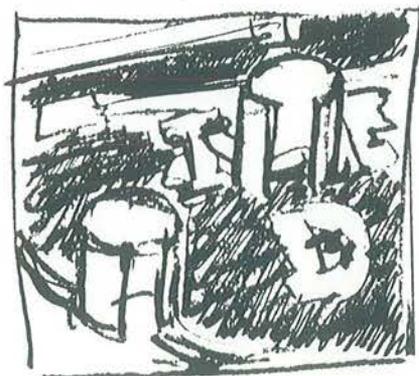
293. "Two cans on poster with  
yellow E and N."

November 1981, 102 x 76 cm  
Pastel/litho.



294. "Two cans on poster with  
letters, *ing, get.*"

November 1981, 102 x 76 cm  
Pastel/litho.



295. "Two cans on blue poster  
with yellow letters, NED."

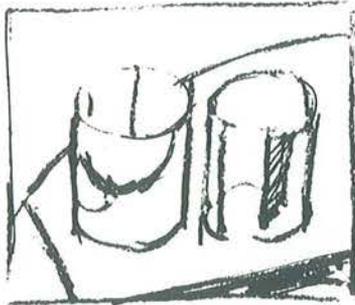
December 1981, 61 x 61 cm O/L.

1 9 8 2

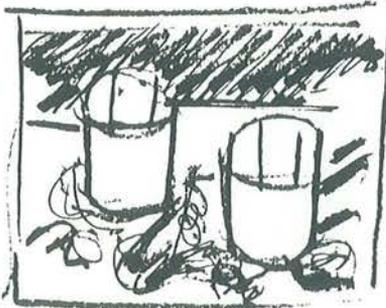


296. "Two cans on 'ing-get' poster."

January 1982, 61 x 61 cm O/C.

297. "Two cans tight together on  
yellow painting."

January 1982, 33 x 39 cm O/C.

298. "Two cans on black and orange  
poster with face."

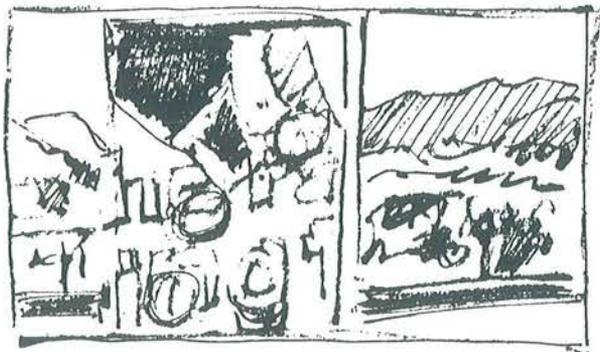
January 1982, 46 x 51 cm O/C.



298A. "Two cans on face poster."

January 1982, 102 x 76 cm

Charcoal/litho



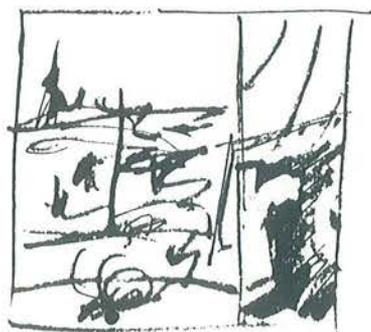
299. "Three cans on 'he-pa-ting'  
poster with landscape."

January 1982, 101 x 151 cm O/C.



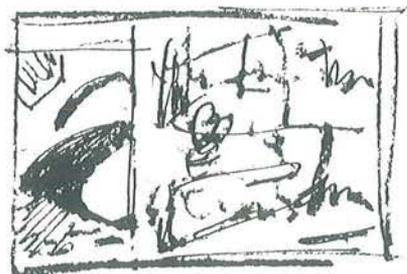
300. "Landscape with one can on  
RE poster."

February 1982, 61 x 61 cm, pastel/litho.



301. "Landscape with one can on  
RE poster, No.2."

February 1982, 61 x 61 cm O/C.



302. "Splash down poster with  
square landscape, 2 pcs."

February 1982, 76 x 116 cm O/C.



303. "Girl with cigarette poster and landscape."

February 1982, 84 x 84 cm O/C.



304. "RA poster with landscape."

February 1982, 90 x 90 cm O/C.



305. "REAS poster with landscape."

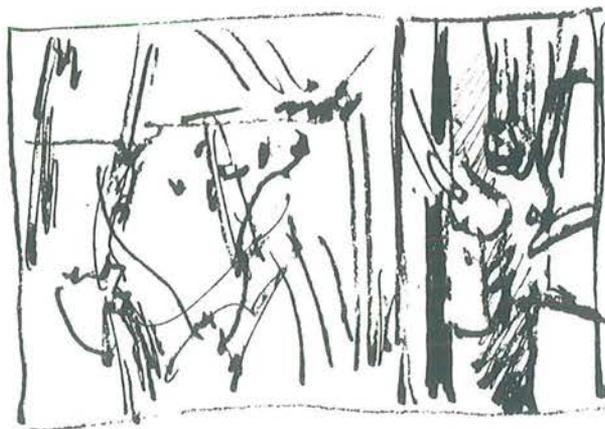
February 1982, 127 x 100 cm O/C.



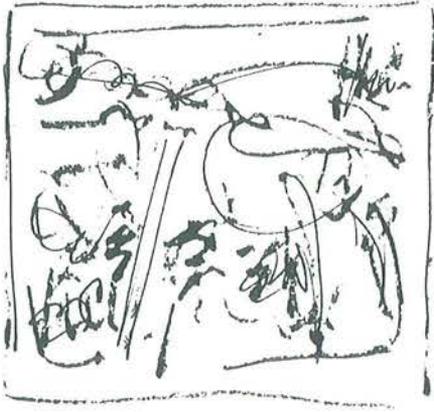
306. "Landscape from end of  
car park, Mt. Nelson."  
March 1982, 92 x 92 cm O/C.



307. "Gum tree from end of car  
park, Mt. Nelson."  
March 1982 92 / 51 cm O/C.

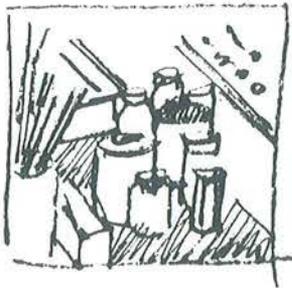


308. "Landscape and gum tree from  
end of car park, Mt. Nelson."  
(306 and 307 together).  
March 1982, 92 x 143 cm O/C.



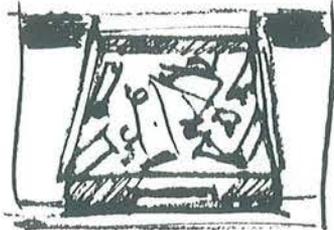
309. "Landscape from halfway  
to busstop, Mt. Nelson."

March 1982, 92 x 92 cm O/L.



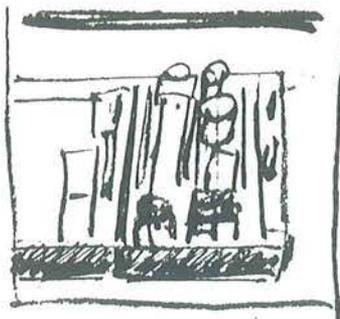
310. "Cans, bottles and brushes  
on top of paint trolley."

March 1982 46 x 30 cm O/C.



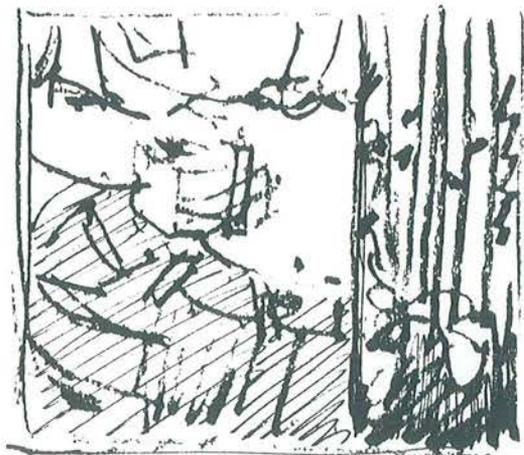
311. "Paint box with paint tubes  
on green table."

April 1982, 33 x 45 cm O/C.



312. "Paint box with tools and  
things on red surface."

April 1982, 61 x 61 cm O/C.



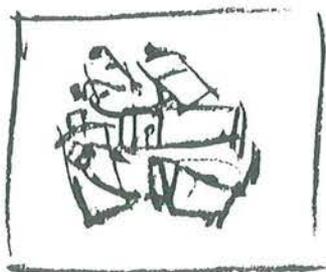
313. "Drum girl poster with improved landscape."

April 1982, 84 x 84 cm O/C.



314. "Paint box, jars, burshes and plastic bottle."

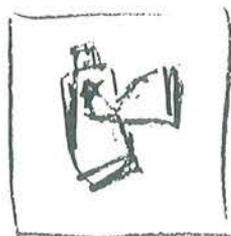
April 1982, 77 x 56 cm Charcoal/paper.



315. "Eleven paint tubes."

May 1982, 35 x 35 cm

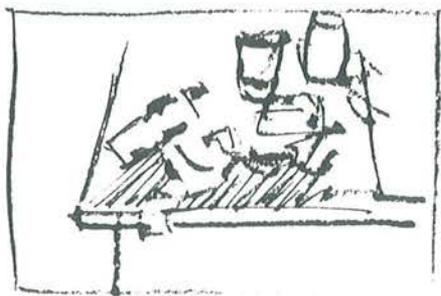
Paint, pastel and charcoal on cardboard.



316. "Two paint tubes."

May 1982, 20 x 20 cm

Paint, pastel, charcoal on cardboard.



317. "Tubes, glass, jar and palette knife on paint stand."

May 1982, 51 x 76 cm

Charcoal on paper.



316. "Tripod, mitre box, hammer and corner clamps underneath paint trolley." No.1

May 1982, 41 x 71 cm. O/C.



318A. "Tripod, mitre box, etc."

No. 2.

May 1982, 51 x 76 cm

charcoal /paper.

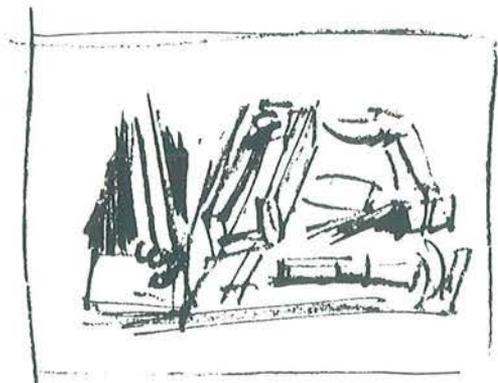


319. "Tripod, mitre box, etc."

No. 3.

May 1982, 41 x 71 cm

Pastel and charcoal on white card.



320. "Tripod, mitre box, etc.

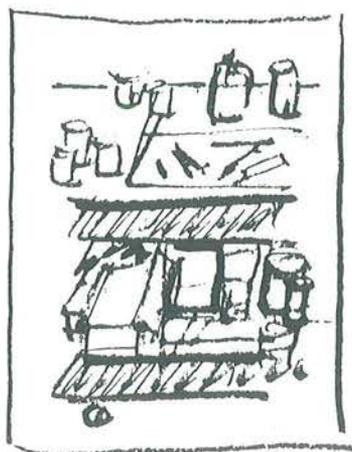
No. 4.

May 1982, 76 x 64 cm Paint,  
pastel, charcoal on cardboard.



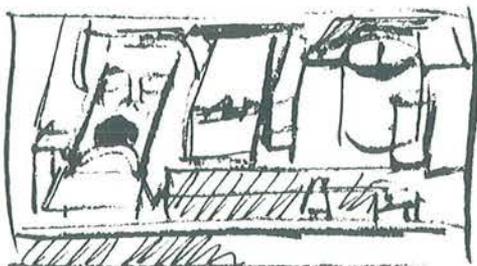
321. "Radio, lamp, desk and wall."

June 1982, 121 x 91 cm. Paint,  
pastel, charcoal, and coloured  
pencil on cardboard.



322. "Miscellaneous items on paint  
trolley." (Bottles, tubes, brush,  
white box, paint box.)

June 1982, 121 x 91 cm Paint,  
pastel, charcoal, coloured pencil  
on cardboard.



323. "Box with jars, white box, paint box and can underneath paint trolley."

June 1982, 38 x 76 cm O/C (was 302)



324. "Box with brushes, triangle and can within box with tubes and tent."

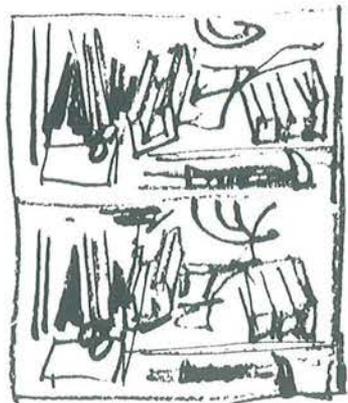
June 1982, 64 x 76 cm Paint, pastel, coloured pencils, charcoal on cardboard.



325. "Box with brushes, etc. No. 2"

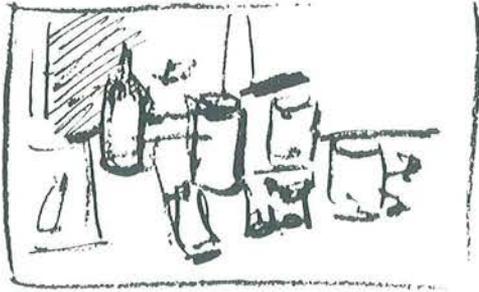
June 1982, 64 x 76 cm. O/C

(was 302)



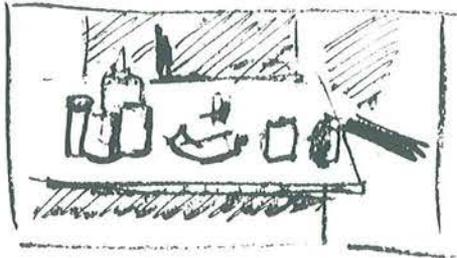
326. "Tripod, mitre box, etc., 318 and 319."

May 1982, 82 x 71 cm Mixed media.



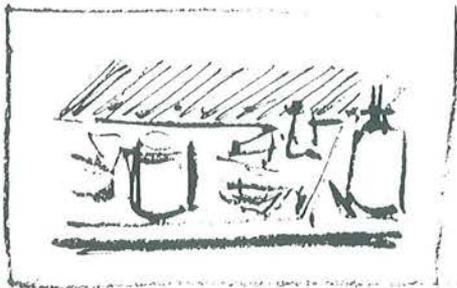
327. "Three jars, one squeeze bottle and paint tubes on green table."

June 1982, 30 x 51 cm Mixed media on cardboard (oil pastel).



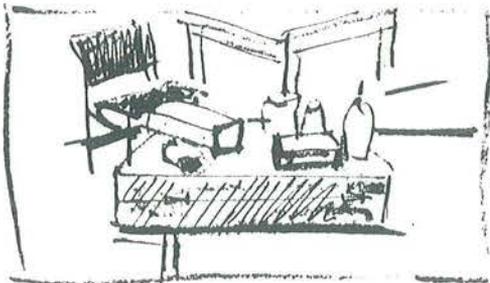
328. "Four jars, squeeze bottle, paint tubes and brush."

June 1982, 32 x 57 cm Oil pastel/ cardboard.



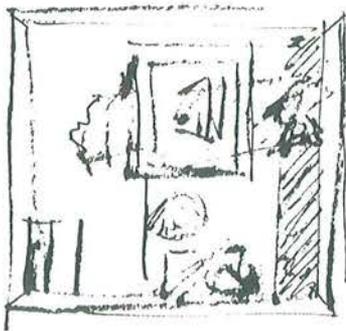
329. "Jar, squeeze bottle, paint tubes and pastel sticks."

June 1982, 25 x 46 cms Oil pastel/ cardboard.



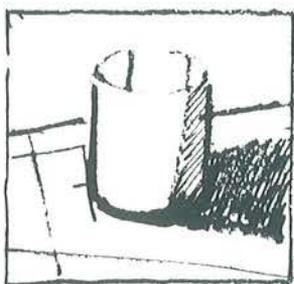
330. "Paint box, paint, jars and chair."

June 1982, 30 x 49 cm Oil pastel/ cardboard.



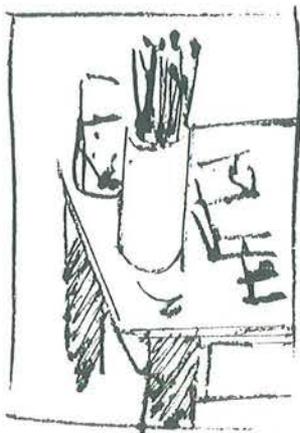
331. "Boxes, jar, frame and brushes in a box."

July 1982, 61 x 61 cm O/C.



332. "One can on black, yellow red and white paper."

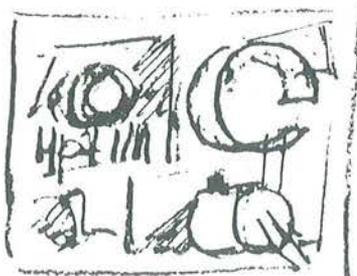
July 1982, 30.5 x 30.5 cm O/C.



333. "Brushes, boxes and pencils on desk."

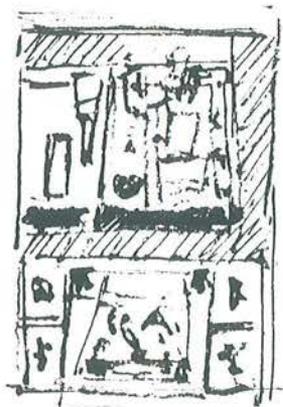
July 1982, 56 x 40 cm

Pastel/cardboard.



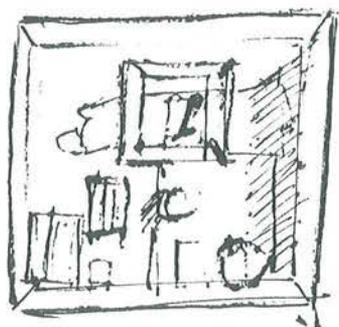
334. "Bottle, can, brushes in a box."

July 1982, 31 x 40 cm Oil pastel/  
cardboard.



335. "Wooden boxes with tubes and miscellaneous items." No. 311 and 312 with drawings.

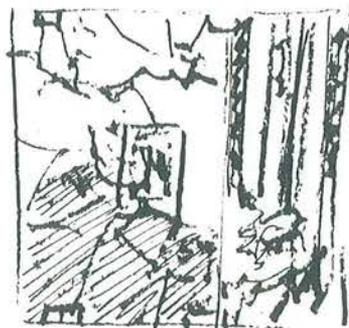
July 1982, 93 x 61 cm Mixed media.



336. "Boxes, jar, frame and brushes in a box with drawing."

(was 331)

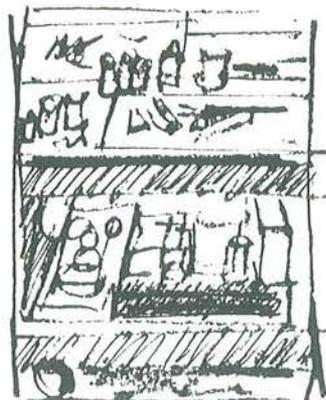
July 1982, 61 x 61 cm Mixed media.



337. "Drum girl poster and landscape with drawing over cigarette."

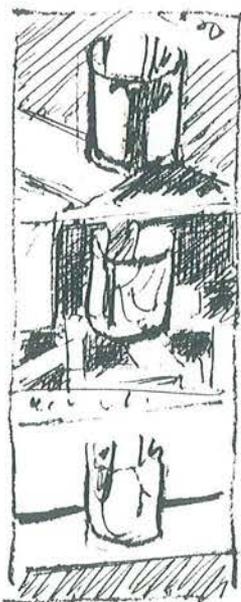
(was 313).

July 1982, 84 x 84 cm Mixed media.

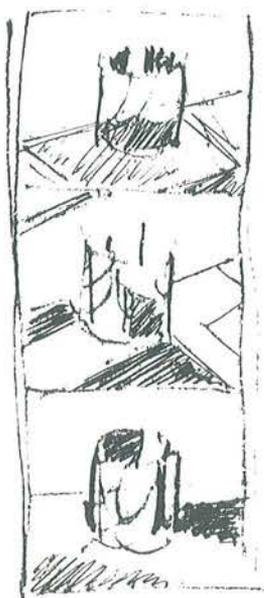


338. "Bottles, tins, tubes and brush, white box and can on paint trolley."

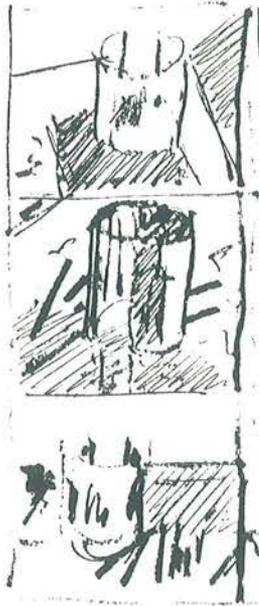
July 1982, 100 x 75 cm O/C.



339. Can on 'Witchery' bag;  
can on red surface with five  
pencils; can on paint trolley  
with nine pencils and pastel stick.  
April-August 1981, 93 x 30.5 cm  
O/C.

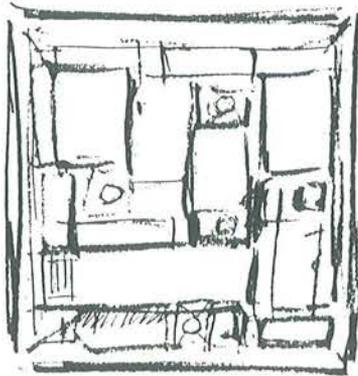


340. Can on red cardboard; can on  
blue surface; can on black, yellow  
and red paper.  
March 1981- July 1982, 93 x 30.5 cm  
O/C.

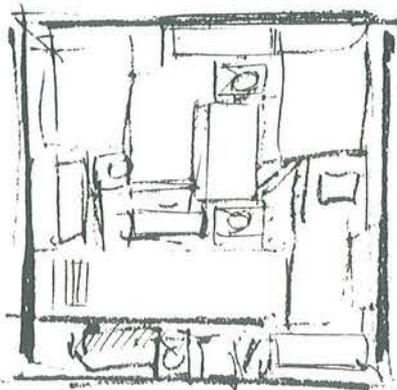


341. Can on 'Miss Fitz' bag;  
can on white strips of paper; can  
on yellow surface.

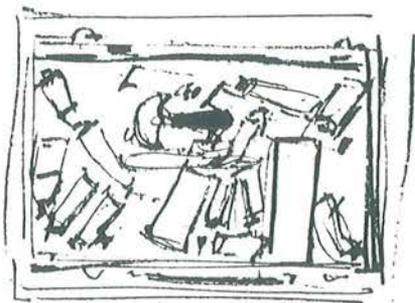
March-July 1981, 93 x 30.5 cm O/L.



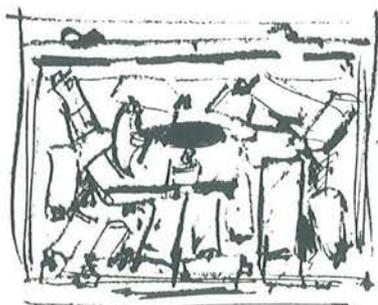
342. White boxes in white box, No. 1.  
August 1982, 75 x 75 cm O/C.



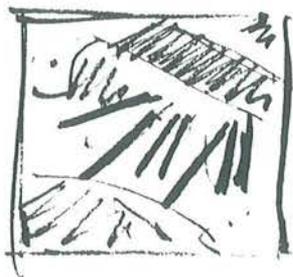
343. White boxes etc. No. 2.  
September 1982, 75 x 75 cm,  
oil pastel on card.



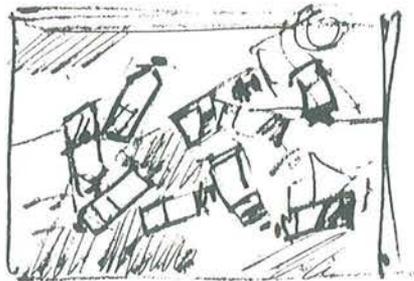
344. Eighteen paint tubes, palette  
knife and white box in paint box,  
No. 1.  
September 1982, 33 x 39 cm O/C.



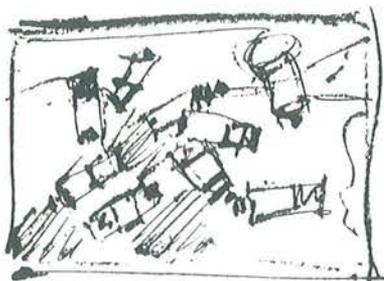
345. Eighteen paint tubes, etc.,  
No. 2.  
September 1928, 33 x 39 cm  
oil pastel on cardboard.



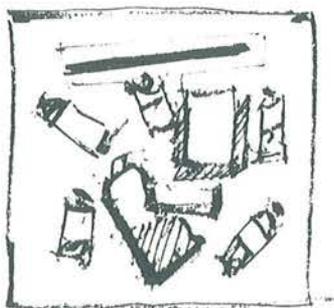
346. Pencils on painted surface.  
September 1982, 29 x 30 cm  
pastel on paper and cardboard.



347. Paint tubes on painted surface,  
No. 1.  
October 1982, 33 x 40 cm O/C



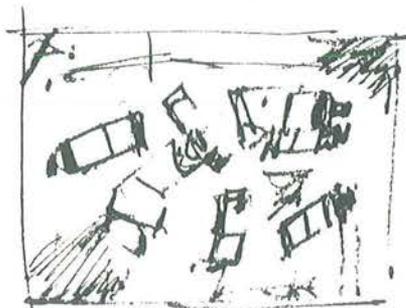
348. Paint tubes, etc. No. 2.  
October 1982, 33 x 40 cm,  
mixed media on cardboard.



349. Paint tubes, etc., No. 3.  
October 1982, 40 x 40 cm O/C.



350. Paint tubes, etc., No. 4.  
October 1982, 40 x 40 cm,  
mixed media on cardboard.



351. Paint tubes, etc. No. 5.  
October 1982, 40 x 40 cm,  
mixed media on cardboard.

## THE FUTURE

I believe that human consciousness contains within it all possibilities and that for the paintings, and understanding, to evolve, the artist and his perception must evolve. "If the artist's consciousness is underdeveloped, his art will inevitably be immature. If one wants to grow as an artist, he must first evolve in consciousness so that his expression will be profound."<sup>15</sup> At full development, both artist and painting will exhibit wholeness. Continuing to evolve as an individual is important to my future as an artist.

Both the artist and viewer need to have expanded awareness for full appreciation - the artist to appreciate the object and the viewer to appreciate its representation. Just as someone is moved by a particular piece of music, say Beethoven's Ninth, this situation of relatedness is what the painting should contain. "When our consciousness is fully developed, when the deeper levels of our own awareness are lively, then insight into the deeper levels of the object are spontaneous."<sup>16</sup>

The objective work has been important because it has allowed me to reach a certain level of competence in an area that I would have thought previously that I should avoid. There should be no self imposed limitations regarding how, or why, one works in a particular area. The choice should be made on the basis of motivation and naturalness.

There is still something to be learned from a continued look at still life but it will not be a problem if there is a brick wall on the horizon. Intuition and intellect, as a result of natural

evolution, will guide new directions. I hope the work will continue to develop and to reflect the experience and growing understanding of the artist.

"I seek the bridge that leads from the visible to the invisible."

Max Beckman (source unknown)



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1. *Science of Creative Intelligence for Secondary Schools* (West Germany: MIU Press, 1975), p. 152.
2. Henry, Gerrit, "Painterly Realism and the Modern Landscape". *Art in America*, September 1981, p. 113.
3. Chipp, Herschel B., *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 14.
4. *SCI for Secondary Schools*, p. 97.
5. Roberts, Alan, "Saturday Review", in *The Adelaide Advertiser*, 6 March, 1982.
6. *SCI for Secondary Schools*, p. 243.
7. Ashton, Dore, *The Unknown Shore* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1962), p. 228.
8. Flam, Jack D., *Matisse in Art* (London: Phaedon, 1973), p. 33.
9. Ashton, Dore, *A Reading of Modern Art* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University, 1969), p. 168.
10. *SCI for Secondary Schools*, pp. 144, 145.
11. Chipp, *Theories*, p. 22.
12. Betti, Claudia and Sale, Teel, *Drawing, A Contemporary Approach* (N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980), p. 18.
13. Bell, Jane, "Messages in Bottles", *Art News*, March 1982, p. 117.
14. Ashton, *A Reading*, p. 169.
15. Cain, Michael, *SCI and Art* (Switzerland: MERU Press, 1975), p. unknown.
16. *SCI for Secondary Schools*, p. 153.

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## SECTION II - SEMINAR PAPERS

## INTRODUCTION

The seminars have been a format for exploring subjects of personal interest and I have taken this opportunity to tie together two aspects of my art, external and internal. The external aspect relates to the formal elements and manipulative skills while the internal aspect relates to the growth and evolution of the artist.

I am an object painter in the sense that I select things from my environment, set them up in front of me, and take my information for the paintings from these objects. That might be described, today, as a rather old-fashioned approach to painting.

My topics for the seminar papers, creative intelligence and perception, are equally old-fashioned because they have been around for a long time and they have been studied and researched thoroughly. Nonetheless they both hold a great deal of relevance to my work. The relevance is rather obvious; creative intelligence is that energy or field that underlies any creative act and gives rise to new expression, whereas perception pertains to assimilating information taken in through the senses. Both are important aspects of any artist's work and are necessary to, and complement, the formal elements.

In doing these papers I was interested in what had been written about these two topics but I also wanted to see whether creative intelligence could be experienced as a concrete reality and developed, and whether perception might be different in different states of consciousness.

The format for giving the second paper was changed slightly at

the suggestion of one of the members of the group. Normally, discussion followed the papers whereas we attempted to have some preliminary discussion about perception before the paper was given. I showed selected slides of my work over the past four or five years to see whether there might be some apparent growth in perception over that time.

## TAPPING THE STREAM OF CREATIVITY

"With a clod of clay I cleave the distant mountains."

Rig Veda.

It would be unfair to suggest that Art schools completely ignore creativity as central to that process and set of circumstances that develop artists. At the South Australian School of Art, for instance, we had a number of guest lecturers one year talking not about their work so much as what they thought made them work. The only one that made an impression on me was a poet who described his flow of expression as automatic and spontaneous and apt to come at any time. When it started he had to have a pencil at the ready or it was lost. It originated from somewhere inside him and surfaced on the conscious capacity of his mind. One such time he was driving down the street and did not have a pencil and was not in an area where he could borrow one. He panicked because the flow was very profound and worth remembering. He even tried telephoning his wife but had no change. He managed to remember part of it but not all of it. That happened twenty years ago and it still needled him because the rest of it was still nestled there just outside his reach.

He also suggested that the most creative artists at any given time are placed at the pinnacle of a pyramid. Other artists, not so resourceful but responding to their thrust are further down and interspersed along the expanding bulk of its base. He said that the truly creative artist was very lonely at the top because he was often misunderstood by other artists and always misunderstood by the general public.

I do not remember that the poet gave credit for his model of

the pyramid to Kandinsky but I suspect he did. It is a beautiful model because it explains the unique position of the truly creative. Kandinsky suggests in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* that those artists that exist and work closer to the base are understood and appreciated by a larger section of society. The public can relate to the artists working at the base because they have the same vision and level of awareness. As you rise higher your perception of your surroundings expands and at the top one possesses the broadest comprehension. Anyone not enjoying that view cannot fully appreciate the artist's vision.

The pyramids start out small and eventually are dwarfed by models with an artist expanding his own ideas from the information of the smaller models. The base eventually rests where the top used to be. Someone breaks new ground and then there may be a long period of consolidation by the individual genius and a large group of lesser artists. It is the period of consolidation that bring society to accept the new as old. The Impressionists, 80 years after the fact, are credited with expanding our vision. The Impressionists taught people to see in a new way. In searching out their own visual experiences, they made the viewer re-examine his or her own experience. This requires an adjustment of old ideas. The more entrenched the old theories, the more difficult it is to see the new.

Brewster Ghiselin in his book, *The Creative Process*, suggests in the introduction that creativity has been written about, wondered about, and speculated about. It is from some of the millions of words that have been written that we get some idea of what creativity means. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* describes creative as: giving rise to; originate, and bring into existence. *The World Book Dictionary*

gives slightly more to its having the power to create, invent, produce, construct, be purposeful and evolutionary. It is all these things and more as well. The psychologists and scientists (some at any rate) define it more poetically and powerfully. Anthony Storr, in *The Dynamics of Creation*, gives a popular definition of creativity as "the ability to bring something new into existence".<sup>1</sup> It may not necessarily be new to anyone except the person who creates it; something outside his range of previous experience.

The definition I particularly respond to adds something more by extending the meaning to express a more holistic approach to the creative process. From *SCI for Secondary Schools* we have:

Creative means having and displaying creativity. When we think of creativity we may think of a poet writing a poem, an artist painting a picture, or a potter making a pot. What is common to each of these acts is that something is designed in the mind, and then it is projected, created. A new expression of life is formed; something that did not exist before is brought into existence. This same creative act is continually taking place in nature: everything in nature is constantly changing and growing; giving rise to new forms of order, and therefore we say that creativity is present everywhere.

Intelligence is the quality that gives direction, purpose, and order to growth; it encompasses the natural laws, or principles, governing growth and change. When a potter makes a pot he first has a conception in his mind of what he wants the pot to look like, and then he proceeds to produce the pot. His actions are not random; they are orderly and purposeful. In the same way, growth in nature, the creation of new forms of life in nature, is orderly and purposeful. An apple tree will only produce apples, not bananas or oranges. Intelligence gives an evolutionary direction to change so that life unfolds in an orderly way.

Creative Intelligence is that impelling force which continually gives rise to new expressions of life<sup>2</sup> and order, progressive and evolutionary in nature.

Creativity expanded to creative intelligence; evolution and change through order and direction.

Brewster Ghiselin says that one of the problems of identifying something as creative is that the whole process operates outside the norm. New direction comes from outside our perception of the world order which is why the person at the apex of the pyramid appears eccentric. And yet we can see from the definition of creative intelligence that the artist's actions are orderly and purposeful, qualities not always readily apparent when he is breaking new ground.

The problem with talking about, and trying to define creativity is that it is intangible, inexplicable, and abstract. It is characterless itself yet feeds and nourishes the artist. Like the sap of the tree, odourless and colourless, but at the root of the hardness of the stem, the softness of the petals, the colour of the flower, and shape of the fruit. All these different qualities are contained in the sap. Like that, creative intelligence is present in everyone but expressed most vividly through the artist's subjective creativity and the scientist's objective creativity.

Henri Poincaré, the mathematician, is a favourite subject for anyone discussing creativity because he was able to describe his own personal creative process in great detail. One night he had too much coffee and was unable to sleep. He became aware of activity of the mind in areas unfamiliar to him and was able to establish the existence of a class of Fuchsian functions. He described the thought process as taking place in the subconscious part of the mind. "Though Poincaré was conscious; he did not assume direction of his creative activity at the stage described; and it seems to have been a sort of activity not susceptible of conscious control; apparently he could not have done so. If he is right in supposing that what he witnessed was typical of processes ordinarily subliminal, then

some part of his creative process - a classical example - was automatic."<sup>3</sup>

His experience of refined mental activity was exceptionally strong but most of us have, at one time, had a name, on the tip of our tongue and realised it would only come when we stopped trying to remember it. The answer comes during a period of relaxation. The mind will spontaneously refine itself and bring up the answer from the subconscious.

Ghiselin discusses the unconscious at length and the hesitancy of some to admit to its existence, or rather usefulness, because the idea of a useful psyche breaks new ground and shakes the tree of accepted order. The fortunate creators seem to be the artists, writers, scientists who recognise the potential of the unconscious.

The creative act is made up of ten percent inspiration and 90 percent perspiration. Poincaré describes labour, quiescence, illumination, and further labour as common to the experience of creative people. The fourth stage is verification - for the artist that means re-painting and re-appraisal. The artist completes the work by re-arranging through feedback. Inspiration points to new directions until the work resolves itself. Kneller calls it preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification. Anderson in *Creativity and its Cultivation* suggests that often the initial inspiration is the start and must be followed by hard work to bring it all together which would be difficult, to say the least, without a deep grounding and knowledge of the artist's discipline. One has to know language in order to explain oneself verbally.

The person who said, "A first-rate soup is more creative than a second-rate painting", Abraham Maslow, describes self actualised

people as more natural and less controlled in their behaviour; those who use more of their full mental and physical potential. Self-actualising creativeness arises from people open to their experiences. "It can come only if a person's depths are available to him, only if he is not afraid of his primary thought processes."<sup>4</sup> He describes self-actualisation as a high level of maturity, health and fulfilment; transcendent of deficiencies; a clearer, more efficient perception of reality; more openness to experience; increased integration, wholeness, and unity of person; increased spontaneity, expressiveness, aliveness; a real self; increased objectivity, detachment, transcendence of self; ability to fuse concreteness and abstractness; ability to love; a firm identity, increased autonomy, and resistance to enculturation. Maslow says that he sees the idea of creativeness and the fully developed person as coming closer together and predicts that they may turn out to be the same thing.

Physics tells us that a particle is more powerful at its source, closer to its most simple state. Perhaps this is true of thinking and we only have to experience thinking closer to the source to be more effective and creative. Unfortunately, the harder one tries, the less one accomplishes. Strain and disease seem to be the antithesis of the effortless flow of ideas that Poincaré described as emanating from his unconscious. (I think I prefer subconscious to describe that part of the mind outside the two, five, ten percent of the mind that psychology tells us is normally used. Unconscious is associated with sleep - dull and unaware - whereas the subconscious seems to be lively with potential.)

While some may deny the existence of an inner world, Anthony Storr suggests not only that there is one but that it has content and

structure and that it is possible to experience it and gain mastery over it. He even says that understanding the inner world is as important as understanding the external world. He does not offer a formula so much as cite the example of the mystic. Freud postulated that there was a large part of the mind that was unconscious and that there seemed to be little activity between the part that was conscious and the unconscious. Analysts may disagree on its content and structure but most agree that there is an inner self.

"The painter is always midway between design and anecdote, and his genius consists in uniting internal and external knowledge, a 'being' and a 'becoming', in producing with his brush an object which does not exist as such and which he is nevertheless able to create on his canvas."<sup>5</sup> The artist thus unites internal and external and broadens the awareness of the observer. As the viewer enjoys the finished product he engages in the artist's vision and discovers the possibility for such a union. Art is universal rather than personal which is why it communicates. To comprehend an object visually it is necessary to reorder our perception which is interfered with by what we know and have learned from other pictures. Plato described the really true artists as the ones that were bringing something new to light and were expressing Being itself. Those artists enlarge human awareness.

Eric Fromm says that there is a difference in seeing and seeing. Creative people are generally sensitive to their environment; noticing things that others do not, but few are able to see the full value of an object, because they project their hangups onto it. To respond with the whole person with full emotions, openly and naturally, is beyond most of us. To respond to an object fully and

completely where it ceases to be an object is to become one with it. "This kind of response occurs in a situation of complete relatedness, in which seer and seen, observer and observed, become one, although at the same time they remain two."<sup>6</sup> He is talking about unity consciousness, a level of consciousness beyond normal waking, dreaming and sleeping. Unity is where everything is as near and dear to you as you yourself. A condition of the creative process is to be fully aware and able to respond openly and completely. To perceive yourself in everything is to appreciate the full value of an object.

This reminds me of a conversation I had recently with Dr. Byron Rigby, a psychiatrist. He suggested that there is life in everything and that objects ask to be painted. This may be part of the reason that artists respond to particular images. It is an interesting idea that objects exhibit life and energy. Perhaps that is why Cezanne was able to breathe life into a teacup; life existed there and he had the ability to communicate with it. His perception could have been so refined that even though some objects might not be so attractive on the surface, he, in appreciating the deeper, truer aspects of their nature, was able to express that special quality.

Eric Fromm describes the criteria of a creative person as having (1) the capacity to be puzzled, (2) the ability to concentrate, e.g. fully committed to the moment and able to perform one task at a time without thinking of what one plans to do next, and (3) to feel the sense of creativity as originating in me.

Anthony Storr explains the artistic bent by suggesting that highly creative people are extreme examples of a general human nature. "Man carries with him throughout life a discontent varying in degree, but always present, as a consequence of the intrinsic frustration of

his infancy. This drives him to seek symbolic satisfactions: ways of mastering the external world on the one hand, and ways of integrating and coming to terms with his internal world on the other. It is by means of his creativity, both in art and science, that man has survived and achieved so much."<sup>7</sup> The creative person is made up of a continuation of qualities which grow out of his past experiences and drive him to order and explain his surroundings.

It would be cowardly to go too far into a paper on creativity and not bring up stress, tension and anxiety, particularly if you plan to refute their importance in relation to the creative process when some hold these qualities so dear and claim they are essential to that process. Dr. Hans Selye, a Canadian endocrinologist, describes stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand made upon it. Excessive stress has negative effects on health, emotional well-being and intelligence".<sup>8</sup> It has also been described as any overload to the system that causes the system (chemical or structural) to function less effectively than it otherwise would.

The flight or fight response is engaged often in our society with nowhere to go. So we remain in a state of tension. Koestler suggests that a moderate amount of heated emotion may exhilarate. However, when it reaches a critical point, it becomes stress, frustration, suffering. A consuming action when one is full of stress can be pleasurable because the tension is decreasing. The activity acts as an outlet or escape valve. If there is no tension, boredom sets in. It seems to be a very delicate balance to maintain. We are held together by the same force that holds the universe together. Planets circling the sun have binding forces that hold the system together as a whole. To "fly off at a tangent" is to get out of balance with

the whole.

Kneller says that tension and stress work together toward motivating work in non-self motivated individuals; it is the stirrer for getting started and easing tensions can be seen by some as a positive by-product of the creative process.

In his book, *Creativity Approaches, An Integrative Model*, Ross L. Mooney interviewed, among others, artists to determine what they needed to create - (1) ground, (2) figure, (3) tension, (4) make the painting. The artist was the only one that suggested tension rather than action or application was necessary to his creative process.

Storr, and others, blame infancy for structuring most of what happens in the adult life. This is probably so in the sense that stress taken on in early years inhibits our ability to function as fully self-actualised people. A lack of fulfilment and satisfaction in life leads to more frustration. The creative artist may be attempting to dig deep through that frustration to bring more understanding to his surroundings. Stress, rather than supporting the creative act would seem to be a hindrance to contacting the depth of thinking essential to the whole process. Too much stress retards progress.

There is a curious popular notion that stress and tension inspire the creative artist. This idea deserves careful attention because it represents a fundamental misconception. The idea may have arisen from the fact that the artist's creative activities are sometimes so intense as to make his faculties function at an accelerated pace, and so their actions may seem to be motivated by stress. Whereas excessive stress results from an unnatural imposition from outside, the creative worker's heightened activity is the internally motivated and entirely natural expression of unbounded creative intelligence. It is therefore not surprising that no significant correlation has been demonstrated between creativity and stress. <sup>9</sup>

"Any penetrating explanation of the creative process must take it as the expression of the normal man in the act of actualising himself; not as the product of sickness but as the representation of the highest degree of emotional health."<sup>10</sup> Rollo May in *The Nature of Creativity* describes the artist as wholly absorbed at the time of creation. "By whatever name one calls it, genuine creativity is characterised by an intensity of awareness, a heightened consciousness."<sup>11</sup> He describes what the artist experiences at what he calls an intense encounter - quite clear neurological changes.

There seems to be a quickened heart beat, probably heightened blood pressure, increased intensity and narrowness of vision with eyelids narrowed so that we can see more vividly the scene we are painting; and we become oblivious to things around us (as well as to the passage of time). We experience also a lessening of appetite: creative persons lose interest in eating at the moment and may work right through meal times without noticing it. Now all of these correspond to a lowering of the functioning of the parasympathetic division of the autonomic nervous system (which has to do with ease, eating, nourishment) and activation of the sympathetic nervous division. And lo and behold! we have the same picture which Cannon described as the 'flight-fight' mechanism, the emerging of the organism for fighting or fleeing. This is the neurological correlate of what we find, in broad terms, in anxiety and fear. But the affect of the artist or creative scientist feels is not anxiety or fear: it is joy. I use that word meaning precisely that - not happiness or pleasure. The artist at the moment of creating does not experience gratification or satisfaction or happiness (although he may well when he considers the work afterwards), he experiences joy, joy defined as the affect that goes with heightened consciousness, the affect that accompanies the experience of actualising one's own potential. 12

Works of art reorder and bring balance into a chaotic world. The artist finds creating order out of chaos satisfying and fulfilling. Thought born of desire to reorder leads to action and if it meets with achievement, brings fulfilment. Storr suggests that the creative person has a desire to arrange, order and control his environment

and most importantly exhibits a concern for form and elegance. Without these qualities, art ceases to exist and one is left with self expression. The person with these qualities may be an artist or a scientist.

Arthur Koestler in *The Act of Creation* said that the scientist should allow his subjective feelings about something right and beautiful about an equation to rule over contrary objective experimentation. Subjective intuition may in the end be more correct. There are eight transformations to experiencing the inner self. We transcend the senses which receive stimuli, the mind which thinks, intellect that discriminates, heart that feels, and ego which constitutes our sense of personal identity. The intuition, closer to the source of creative intelligence, is a more subtle level of awareness. Einstein's theory of relativity lasts partly because it is beautiful and sounds right even though some scientific theory tends to disprove elements of it.

Einstein denied the influence of others and established himself as a separate identity. Not to be held back by other's thinking, he was free to create outside popularly held views. One can create from the knowledge of others or from their own inner experience outside a particular knowledge. Either appears to be fruitful ground, although, if one's knowledge comes from within it is apt to be more powerful coming as it does from a point closer to the source. Knowledge closer to the source of creative intelligence is true knowledge and transcends relative knowledge. Supported by the laws of nature, activity from this level is more in tune with nature.

"In the genius, imagination, energy, persistence and creative qualities are more highly developed than in the rest of us, but

fortunately he has no monopoly on them."<sup>13</sup> Everyone possesses the same creative intelligence but expresses it to more or less degree. It is as if hoses are connected to the town water supply but most of them have a kink or two and are not drawing the full amount of water available to them. What is needed is to straighten out the kinks.

Koestler suggests that self-transcending tendencies are basic to man. Transcendental awareness has been experienced by most everyone; maybe as a child, or brought on by a particularly beautiful landscape, or being in love, or listening to a particularly moving bit of music. Called peak experiences, they are well documented and are natural to the mind; those moments when one feels completely alive and in tune with nature. Unfortunately it is difficult to turn on at will and performing action is the surest way of breaking that charmed state.

Many creative people have developed personal means of calling their inspiration into activity; e.g., the habit of organising their work area in a particular way, or not organising it at all, or listening to music while they work. Used as a means to stimulate creativity, they are less than reliable.

What has been missing is a systematic technique for making creative intelligence lively in activity by experiencing it at its source.

There are scientifically researched meditative techniques, i.e., Transcendental Meditation, designed to refine mental activity until creative intelligence is experienced at its source in a very systematic way. Normally one is aware of a thought on the conscious level of the mind. It must originate at subtler levels in the sub-conscious. At its subtlest level, it is possible to transcend the

thought entirely and experience what is left - creative intelligence at the source of thought. As this happens, pulse rate and breathing slow down and one has the feeling of diving within. This is transcending the self and is accompanied by a sense of inner wakefulness and a feeling of oneness with nature. At the same time consciousness expands and knows no boundaries.

Ghiselin says, "to clear the mind for creative action, something more positive than relaxation and less restrictive than voluntary diversion is required".<sup>14</sup> Contacting creative intelligence at its source on a regular basis has several advantages. Like diving, one comes out a little wet with creative intelligence and carries the influence into activity. And because of the mind/body relationship, as mental activity settles down, so does physical activity and this allows the body a deep level of rest so that the body can begin to normalise itself and throw off deep rooted stress. In other words, the kinks in the hose begin to be ironed out and channels constructed for the free flow of creativity.

It would seem that the conscious and subconscious areas of the mind function in the same manner but that creative imagination is most active and operates with greater clarity at deeper levels. Art springs from an inner area universal to all.

Many have studied creative intelligence and most agree that the subconscious needs more investigation. Perhaps one method of investigation will come from practising a systematic procedure for 'tapping the stream of creativity' at its source.

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## PERCEPTION -

Different in Different States of Consciousness;  
Appreciating the Full Value of the Object.

I am going to start with a quote from *Painting* by Frederick Gore about representation.

This problem of representation remains the problem of every painter since every painting must mean something (an abstract painting must have an abstract meaning; it must represent an idea or a sensation). At its simplest the problem is this: we can paint a rough orange circle and it precisely evokes an orange; we can then add solidity, light and shade, porous texture, cast shadow, colour in shadow - adding one observed detail after another until it looks like nothing on earth. Obviously, likeness depends not on copying detail but on striking some chord of recognition within ourselves by economical means; whatever we are trying to paint - an idea, a fact, sensations or physical situations, objects in light or relationships of pure colour - demands a synthesis which corresponds to this inner image, in the medium of paint. In the end we find we cannot paint an orange, but some qualities of an orange, a comment on an orange, something which an orange stands for. The painter comes to read external experience intuitively in terms of an image and in terms of his medium. But it is the painter's inability to cope with the object as such that has brought us to the point of murdering it.<sup>1</sup>

In another section he says:

It is not the convention which matters, but how it is used. If we make a descriptive line drawing of a simple branch, it will be inadequate unless it indicates the way the branch has grown and how that branch comes to be supported and suspended in the air. In the end a kind of knowledge is required that goes beyond scientific observations....<sup>2</sup>

As a painterly realist, that is someone concerned with the object, I face the problems described. Until recently, I was trying to put down everything I observed in the object in an effort to transcend the surface qualities and arrive at the essence. In other words, murdering the object of perception. It is not possible to put down everything about an object without perceiving the full value of the

object. I will discuss what I mean by 'the full value of the object' in more detail later.

I tend to look at the world around me in terms of how I would go about painting it. Most of my surroundings are pretty straightforward but every once in a while nature presents something that would be very difficult to paint and pull off. I have often thought, "How could I paint that and make it convincing?" There is an example behind us. The mountain at dusk often looks like a velvety dark blue hole in the sky. Painted as it appears, it would never be convincing. Yet there it is.

I was taking some photographs in the landscape recently and came upon a puddle on the path. I tried to focus on the puddle with a telescopic lens. I could have the tree, the clouds, or the water and surrounds separately but not all three. Each maintained its individual integrity even though to the naked eye they all appeared to be on the same relative surface.

Perception involves the acquiring of knowledge of particular facts about our surroundings by means of our senses. Many suggest we are conditioned to see the world as we do and some suggest it may not be as we perceive it at all or that there is more to see than meets the eye. The artist is in an interesting position because he normally has insights that others do not possess. There are two sides of the brain. The left side is the domain of the scientist, analytical in nature, and the right side entertains subjective responses, the domain of the artist. Most of us presumably have the left side dominating. We have a special ability to see things more clearly, to see things in a way that others do not. To see, record, and explain for others. Artists have always expanded our

vision of our surroundings. As Lloyd Rees explained, he was attracted to piles of rubble at construction sites after object process artists started bringing aspects of them into the gallery. Man-made rubble developed new meaning. Since the artist is not held down by facts, as the scientist is, he can leap-frog preconceived notions and lead the way to seeing more clearly. As the artist plays this special and interesting role, he has an obligation to himself to see from his optimal level of awareness. Just as we would not attempt to produce art in our sleep because it is an obvious duller state, neither should we settle for producing art in the lesser of the waking states.

A popular black Southern Baptist minister was asked why he was so popular. He said, "First ah tells them what I'm going to say. Then ah says it. And then ah tells them what ah said".

It is a bit late but I intend to start by discussing some of the wealth of research and scientific investigation that has been done on perception. A lot of it is interesting, with some significance for the artist. I am purposely being selective in presenting material because the subject is very broad and a lot of research has been done into the phenomenon of seeing. A lot of it relates to drawing, particularly the problems associated with trying to accurately portray what we see. Since our ability to create is directly related to our level of awareness I also propose to examine perception as it might be for the artist in higher states of consciousness.

I will begin with summaries of the main points of the books I have read on perception. R.L. Gregory seems to be well known and respected for his insights, so his book, *Eye and Brain, the Psychology of Seeing*, is a good place to start. He says,

The seeing of objects involves many sources of

information beyond those meeting the eye when we look at an object. It generally involves knowledge of the object derived from previous experience, and this experience is not limited to vision but may include the other senses; touch, taste, smell, hearing and perhaps also temperature or pain. Objects are far more than patterns of stimulation: objects have pasts and futures; when we know its past or can guess its future, an object transcends experience and becomes an embodiment of knowledge and expectation without which life of even the simplest kind is impossible. <sup>3</sup>

That quote immediately expands the idea of perception to take in all aspects of life. Obviously, this is going to be more complex than we thought. Incidentally, man's brain is the most complex and his eye is the simplest. Animals with simple brains have complex eyes.

Our simple eye contains cones and rods. Cones give best visual detail and colour vision in daylight conditions and are mostly clustered toward the centre of the retina. Rods work under low illumination and give vision in shades of grey. This information is important for the artist because it means that we cannot see colour and the lightness or darkness of that colour at the same time. They are two different aspects of seeing. It is why astronomers look off-centre to detect faint stars. Rods at the edge of the retina are less sensitive to detail. Wave something at the edge of our peripheral vision and its presence is noted; if it is stationary it is invisible.

To me size constancy is one of the most intriguing aspects of perception and many writers have touched on it. Gregory gives us a formula to explain it; e.g., "The image of an object halves in size with each doubling of the distance of the object. But it does not appear to shrink so much. The brain compensates for the shrinkage of the image with distance, by a process we call constancy scaling."<sup>4</sup> This can best be dramatised by placing our hands at arms' length and

and half arms' length from our eyes. They will look the same size even though they form different images on the retina.

Gore, in his book, *Painting*, says,

But if we look at our visual field in a normal way, the eyes moving over it continually, examining, recognising and relating, we adjust what we see towards what we know to be there (or what we imagine or wish to be there). We form an image in which relative sizes may be quite different. A good example is a landscape with distant mountains. A photograph will show the mountains as a shallow line of humps behind the large shapes of the middle distance and the even larger masses of the foreground. But what our eye perceives are mountains towering above the landscape. We leap the foreground, denigrate the middle distance, and the mind's eye - the mental image which we form - enlarges the mountain and re-arranges the landscape to agree with our factual reading of what it contains. In addition, the mountain may have an emotional impact, or the trees and flowers in the foreground may appeal to us; we will see larger what interests us most. <sup>5</sup>

If we look at objects or the interval between them, their relative sizes change. <sup>6</sup>

Just looking at something is enough to make it appear larger than its surrounds. This aspect of perception interests me because of the obvious problems associated with drawing. You can choose a composition by responding to a particular aspect of it and watch it change dramatically when you apply perspective and measurement.

John Berger in *Ways of Seeing* says, "We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice."<sup>7</sup> Dialogue is often an attempt to verbalise the way in which we see to determine that others see the same things. The photographer's way of seeing is reflected in the way in which he or she chooses the subject and positions it within the photo format. The painter's brush marks imply how he sees and the paintings can even be compared to the subject matter, in the realist work, and the viewer can say, "Yes, he sees well", if it agrees with their own perception of the object.

Messrs. Segal, Campbell and Huskovite in *The Influence of Culture on Visual Perception* carry this idea further. They suggest the world looks like what we are told it looks like. Cultural differences in perception can result from interpreting the perception; e.g., hearing a footstep and unconsciously and instantly associating it with another person. There are many descriptions of encounters with photographs for the first time. Primitive people see them as abstract shapes making no sense at all. The photograph translates 3D to 2D, values into shades of black and represents something often very large in a small format; a rectangular shape with a white band around some fuzzy dark contours.

D.M. Armstrong in *Perception and the Physical World* suggests, "There is no reason why two observers should not observe different features of the same object without either observer being subject to illusion. Objects have an indefinite number of characteristics, and perception is a selective affair. We never perceive more than *some* of the features of an object at any one time".<sup>8</sup>

The further one is from something, the more distorted is the perception or information. There are layers of existence and close observation reveals more of the fine fabric of an object. A seemingly straight line will look jagged under a microscope. Magnification does not distort but rather reveals which is why we trust the microscope more than the naked eye. Ordinary perception could be steeped in error. We teach, and are taught, to see in a particular way which may be wrong or if not wrong, not all there is. A line that looks straight but is, in fact, full of indentations should make us question all our perceptions. But wait, it gets worse. Physics tells us that everything exists of molecules, all in motion. We see

matter as static. Previously, we had to take this discovery at face value but now, apparently, there are powerful probes that see matter as being in a constant state of change.

Armstrong has something to say about colour as well. We perceive an object as different from its surrounds due to the amount of light it reflects. Surface colours of an object are not the same under a microscope. Colour only exists, or reads as red say, on a particular size. Below that size, colour is not an apparent property. Another interesting aspect of colour is our inability to describe it. We can describe a horse, a complex organism, to someone who is not familiar with a horse but describing a colour, say yellow, to someone is beyond the scope of human expression. We do not see yellow as sufficiently complex to be able to describe it. The simpler the subject, the more difficult to describe.

There are a couple of interesting quotes about seeing from Claude Bailblé in *Programming the Look, A new approach to teaching film technique*. "I not only look at the point of fixation, it looks at me. Sight, then has two meanings: 'I look' and 'I am looked at'."<sup>9</sup> "A clever gadget the eye. It is as if all rays converge on my eyes and I am the centre of what I see. In imagination, I contain all of space; I survey the universe."<sup>10</sup> And, "Our eyes move constantly, the images that they form on the retina also move, and yet what we see remains stable. Thus from the start the subject itself is excluded from perception, and remains unaware of its own existence."<sup>11</sup>

The next group of comments are garnered from articles published in the *Scientific American* under the title, *Image, Object and Illusion*. In his *Process of Vision*, Neisser suggests that people who apparently have no visual images, those images that remain after the object of

perception has been removed, can count off the number of windows in their house by mentally picturing the rooms. This process uses stored visual images.

In his article, *Visual Illusion*, Gregory points out that a vertical line will look longer than a horizontal line of the same length; another problem for accurate drawing. The eye also tends to expand the inside corner of a room and shrink outside corners.

Harman in *The Recognition of Faces* says that his research indicates that distorted faces viewed from a distance are still recognisable (see fig. 1 and fig. 2; distorted by computer). This seems to relate to how we can recognise someone at a glance as they disappear around a corner. A glimpse is enough to make identification. It comes from varying knowledge of the subject, stored information. A lack of stored knowledge of a person might explain why eyewitnesses are notoriously unreliable.

I also have a sample eye movement study by Norton and Stack (see fig. 3). The problems for drawing are obvious.

In *Introduction to Perception*, Irvin Rock has something to add to what I said earlier about size constancy.

It is interesting to consider the problem of drawing ... As noted earlier, the artist has the task of putting down on paper the visual angle relations that prevail in the retinal image, just as they would be captured by a photographer. The viewer of the picture then receives the same retinal image as he would if he viewed the scene represented. Providing the picture cues in the drawing yield an adequate impression of depth, the viewer will then achieve a degree of constancy in the picture he perceives. At any rate, the problem for the artist is to draw in terms of the visual angle relations given by the objects in the scene. But if we perceive size in terms of visual angle, why should this be difficult? It should be the easiest thing in the world. Yet few of us are able to do it and, in fact, this is one of the major difficulties

in drawing. After all, would we find it difficult to draw if the task were nothing more than copying a 2-dimensional shape? The difficulty arises because of the third dimension in the scene since we tend to perceive primarily in terms of constancy and not in terms of visual angle. 12

(see fig. 4 and fig. 5)

This relates to a problem I had recently with a still life. I saw an object in the distance as larger and drew it that way. I then measured the object and corrected the drawing. I said to myself, "I don't like it that small, it may be what I measure but it's not what I see." I decided to do two paintings and compare approaches. In the second painting, I could not draw it as large as I saw it the first time because in correcting the drawing I had learned its measured size relationship. I think this presents a problem for the object painter if he is trying to paint his view of his surroundings. The key word is 'his view' because as some would argue, changing composition to suit the art is what it is all about.

Some believe that visual perception is learned through the sense of touch. I have recently started wearing glasses with a minification which means that to make things clearer in the distance, objects in the distance appear smaller. It does not make sense but that is how it is. It took two weeks to get used to them. At first I felt terribly disoriented and was told to touch things to retrain my eyes to accept my surroundings. My drawing has improved in terms of measurement versus what I see. Now my response to a still life is closer to the retinal image. Things in the distance are no longer viewed as if through a telescopic lens. The world is not nearly as flat nor as interesting as it used to be but drawing accurately is easier.

There are lots of cues to distance; value, perspective,

increased loss of detail with distance due to impurities in the air, overlap, and shadows are some of them. These cues help to locate objects in relation to each other and us.

Most of what has been written on perception is with a view to the differences in seeing but not much consideration has been given to how differences in consciousness might affect perception. Our physiology and psychology change regularly and each different state can affect perception. The senses are our grossest aspect, the organs through which we perceive, take in experience. Finer than the senses is the mind, it weighs information from the senses, thinks. The intellect discriminates differences, decides, while decisions of the heart are on the basis of feelings, intuition. Then the ego, the I sense with its individuality. Finer still, beyond the relative, is the absolute value of life. The development of higher states of consciousness enhances all these finer values and increases awareness so perception is different in different states of consciousness. I want to go through all the possible states of consciousness as explained in Eastern philosophy and particularly Vedic literature and see how perception is different in each.

We are familiar with three of the states of consciousness; waking, dreaming and sleeping. Each has its own signature and if our metabolism was monitored by sufficiently sophisticated equipment, someone in the next room would know whether we were awake, sleeping or dreaming.

The 4th state can be intellectually located by analysing the nature of the meeting points of the other three. Its value is unmanifest. All life rotates in waking, dreaming and sleeping. We can be in these states anytime. The 4th state is unchanging but

underlying waking, dreaming and sleeping. It also has a signature; a particular style of functioning of the psychology and physiology. This state enriches the other three and it is characterised by unboundedness, pure intelligence, restful alertness, and it is transcendental in nature.

When the 4th state is no longer transcendental it establishes a different character. It co-exists with waking, dreaming and sleeping. This state, the 5th major state of consciousness develops the most refined relative perception. Pure awareness hidden from view in the waking state comes to the conscious mind. It is like having a wide angle lens, one begins to understand what lies outside boundaries. Awareness penetrates deeper values of the object as perception becomes finer and the finest relative value of the object becomes obvious to the subject. This value is hidden in waking, dreaming and sleeping because our vision only falls on the surface value which exhibits its own quality. We see a yellow rose. Less refined perception sees only the yellow while it is the colourless sap that lies at the basis of the yellow in a rose. Seeing only the yellow is right for the waking state but in the 5th state, where unbound awareness is established on the conscious mind and perception is refined, then naturally the value of perception is much deeper and one can evaluate the colourless sap and the surface value.

The 6th state is guided more by feelings; the value of the heart. In this state of consciousness one perceives the supreme relative along with awareness of the absolute self. This level of consciousness develops from the 5th state by engaging in a finer quality of activity guided primarily by the impulse of the heart.

In the 7th state, one experiences a unified consciousness

which perceives everything in terms of the unbounded self. It is to see, as I said earlier, the full value of the object. This state is achieved when the supreme relative value of the 6th spontaneously rises to its infinite value. Objects are then as dear to me as I am to myself, because both are unbounded. Before the 7th state, duality dominates and the object over-shadows the subject. The 7th is less ruled by the senses.

There are seven distinct states because the character of each is different. Each state locates the world according to the ability of perception in that state. Real appreciation of one's surroundings starts when the full value of the object is open to the awareness. When perception is sharper, the object is evaluated in greater value.

It is interesting that physics is at the threshold of discovering a single force responsible for everything. It is significant that the objective and subjective approaches to knowledge now have the basis for agreement in a single unified field theory. Till recently Science had narrowed it down to three natural forces; electro magnetism, radioactivity and nuclear bonding. In a May 1982, *Time* article the discovery of a monopole, which was previously only theorised to exist, appears to substantiate them as manifestations of a single grand force.

Peter Fuller in *Art and Psychoanalysis* seems to me to be discussing the differences between the waking and 7th states when he says,

The beautiful pertains to the sort of experience you get from small, well proportioned objects, ranging from, say, a carved Greek sculpture, to a cut diamond. The sublime is concerned with the experience of phenomena which by their very nature appear as boundless, limitless and formless. Many of these are offered by nature; i.e. water falls, the sea, sunsets, great vistas, or whatever. These

categories, however, are notoriously elusive and overlapping, and as soon as you try to pin them down too precisely, they submerge into each other and disappear altogether. Nonetheless, it is possible to say that the beautiful is concerned with the contemplation of something in its separateness, otherness, and self-contained proportions; whereas the sublime seems to offer a sense of fusion and 'onement' (as Barnett Newman called it) with that which is being contemplated. <sup>13</sup>

He cites Cezanne as containing elements of both. The ultimate must be to express more of the sublime.

I would like to end by talking about perception in terms of dealing with information and relate these different types to different states of consciousness. In *The Function of Art*, Cain suggests there are four basic ways of perceiving:

*Operational*: seeing the world as an instrument for our survival, looking at things only to see if we can use them, e.g. seeing a puddle as an obstacle in our path. Philosophers and psychologists have criticised modern man because his primary orientation to the world has been in terms of manipulative exploitation of objects and situations without any awareness of their inherent beauty.

*Associative*: responding to our perceptions with a series of purely mental reactions, e.g. seeing a puddle and recollecting that it rained, etc. Associative perception is vital in that it permits one to understand the present in terms of the past; however, when it predominates over other levels of perception, it prevents us from enjoying the immediate beauty of our environment. Thus associative can be as reductive and limiting as operational seeing.

*Direct*: Looking openly and fully at things immediately before us, enjoying the marvellous actuality of the thing in itself; for example, looking directly into the miracle of water held in a depression of earth, responding to its size, depth, colour - the world reflected in its mirror-like surface and the watery world beneath. In direct perception, we experience things without concern for their use or relative origins. Spontaneity and independence characterise individuals who enjoy the full value of direct perception. The full potential of direct perception is available only to persons living in the 5th state of consciousness.

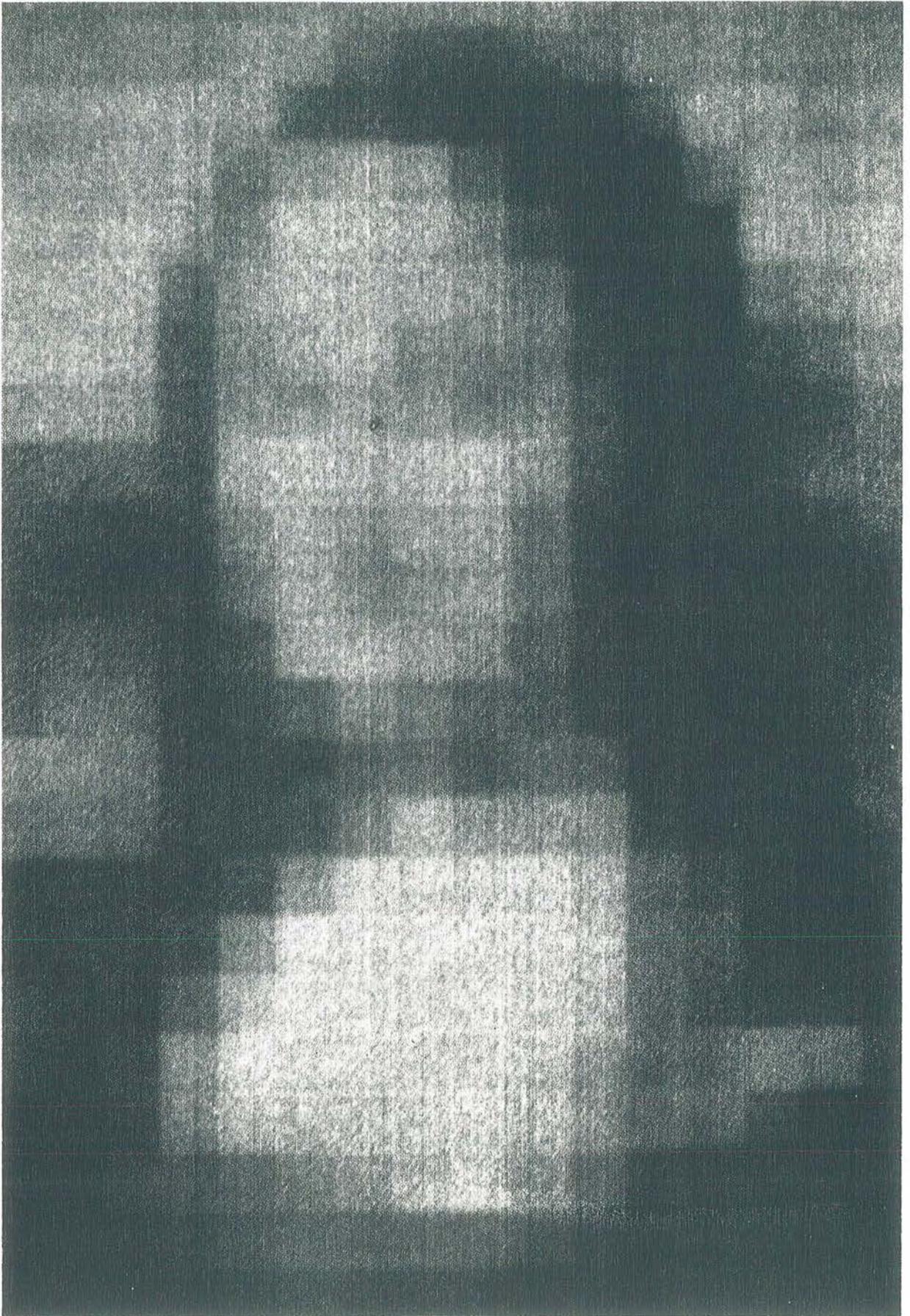
*Liberated*: enjoying not only the full value of direct perception of the objects surface, but also of the subtler levels of its existence. Liberated perception

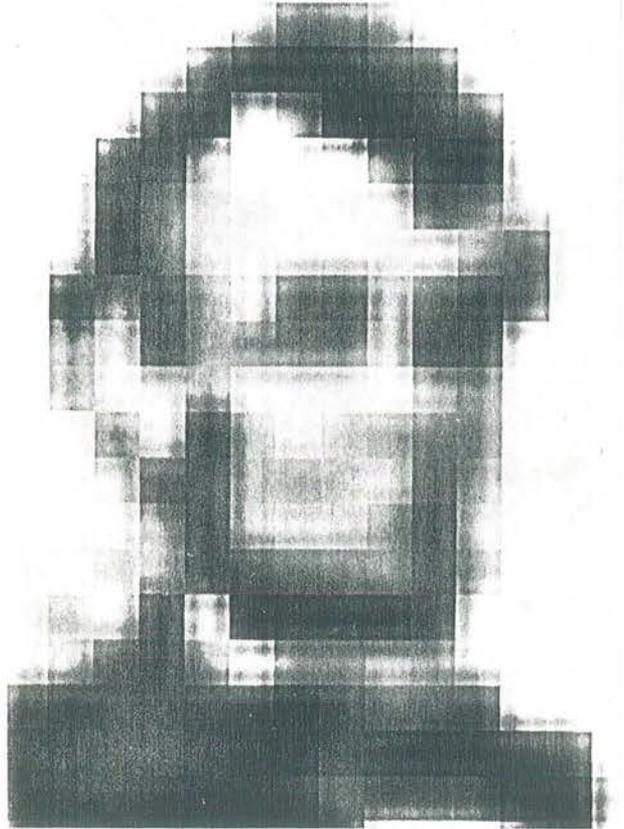
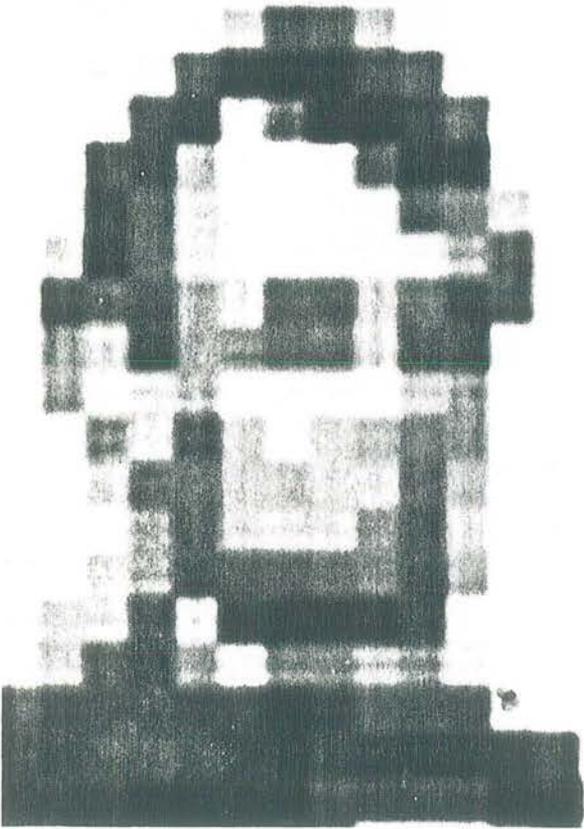
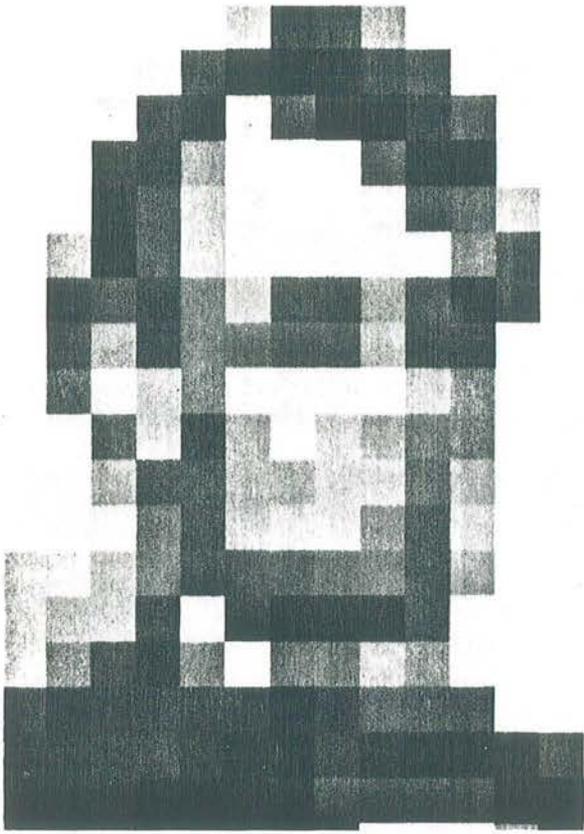
reaches full development in the 7th state, unity consciousness, when the pure field of creative intelligence underlying all existence becomes visible even on the surface of the everyday world. Liberated perception is the soul of all experiencing. In most of our experience, we combine aspects of several of these modes of perception. 14

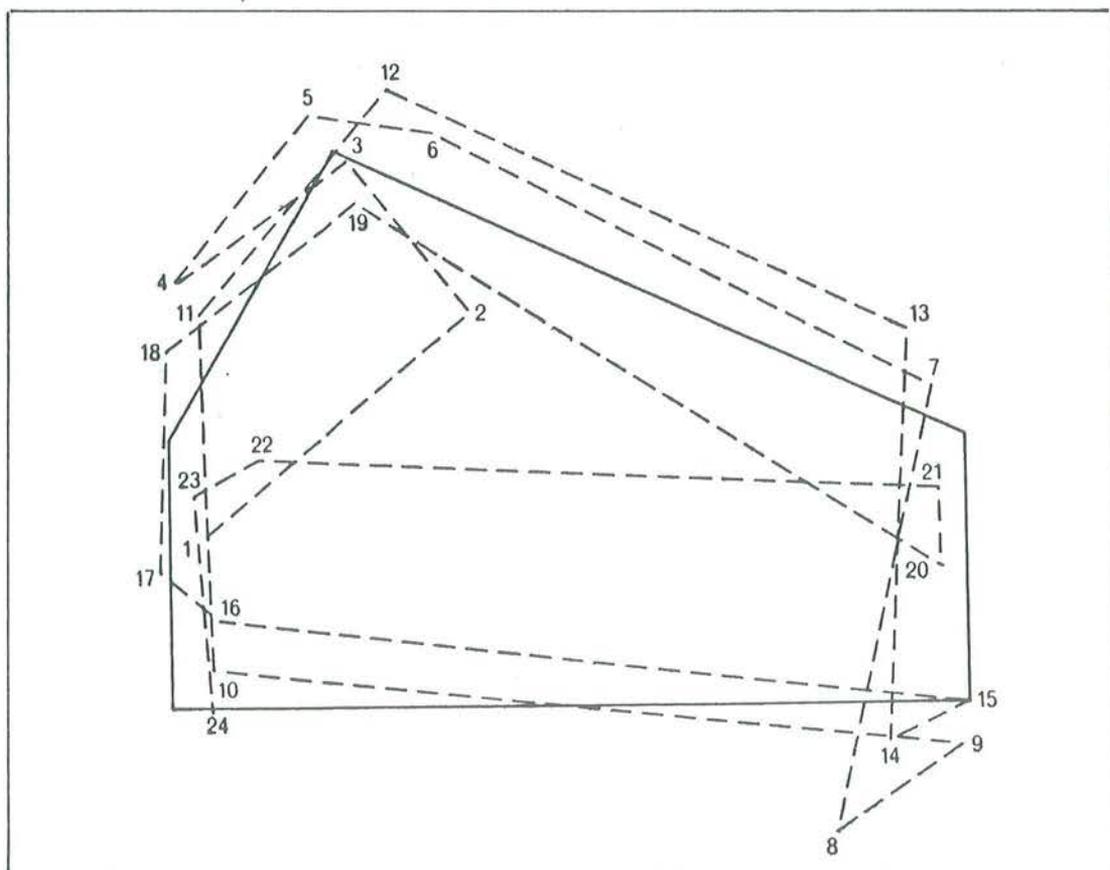
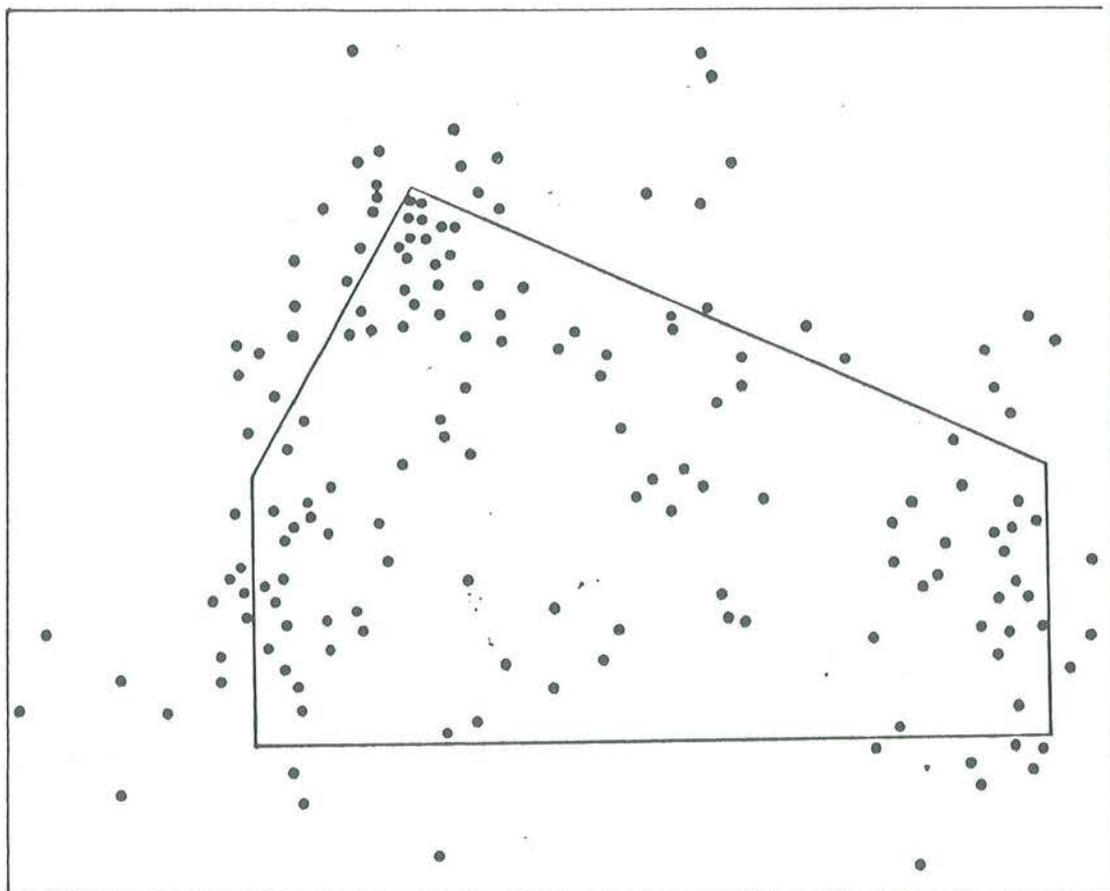
Should the artist opt for the best perception available? I think so. In the same way that technology can expand possibilities, so can liberated perception. It is a matter of developing inner and outer skills. There are certain meditative techniques, i.e. Transcendental Meditation, that have existed for centuries, designed to expand awareness, increase perception and raise the individual to higher states of consciousness in tune with natural law.

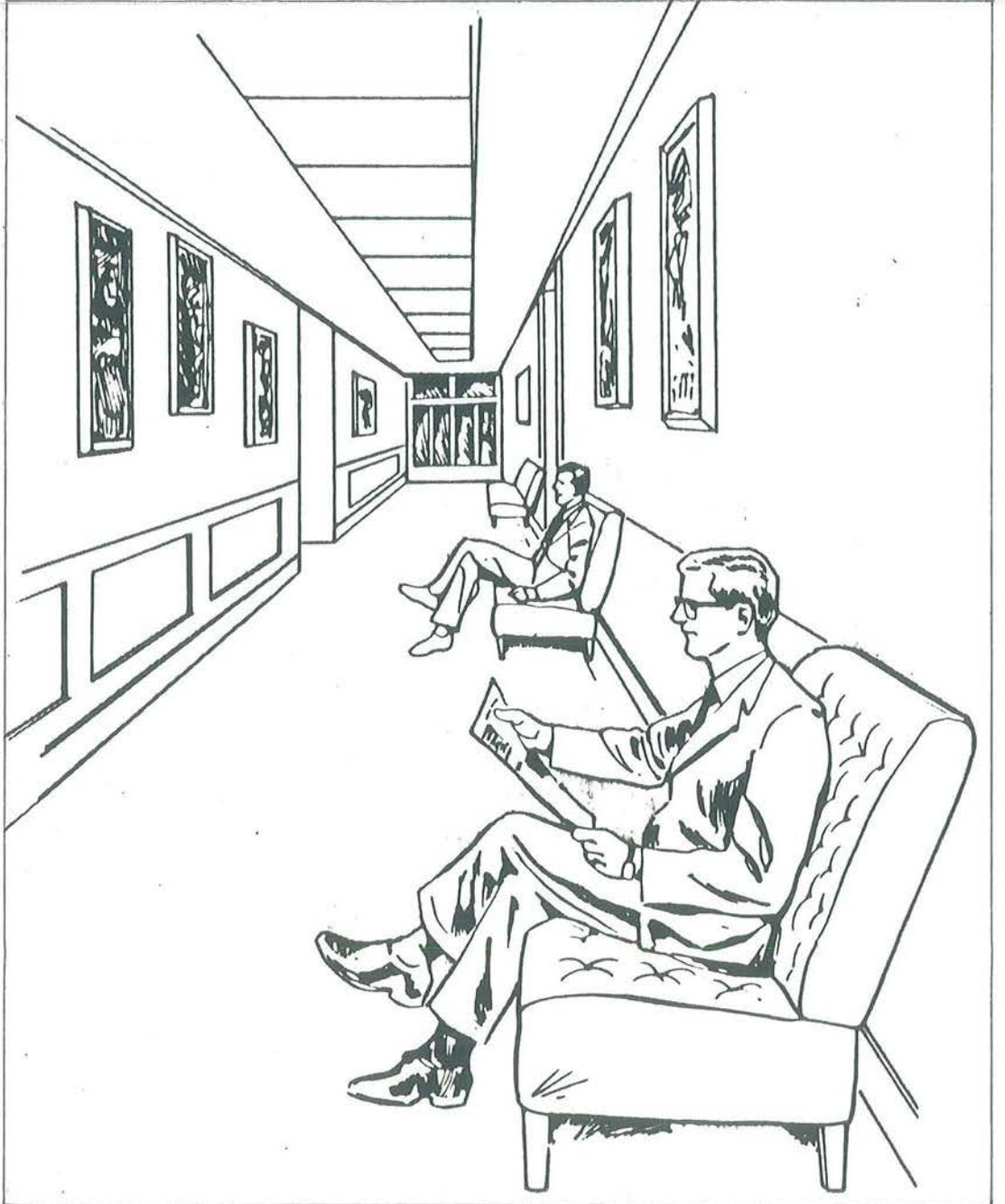
Imagine what it would mean for the artist to live in accord with all the laws of nature. What are the laws of nature? Gravity is a familiar one. If we throw something up in the air, it is bound to return to earth. We have learned to use, or seemingly contradict, the law of gravity by digging up a few materials from the ground and assembling them in such a way that we have been able to fly; to explore other planets even. We have mastered that particular law of nature. Every day we consciously or unconsciously use, and perhaps abuse, laws of nature. We talk of being in tune with nature as frictionless flow; the ability to accomplish anything one desires in the most efficient way. Gerald Ford, when he was president of the U.S., and others, have said that our needs will be best met when we master technology and conquer nature. I believe the artist's needs will be best met when he is master of nature and learns to live with and appreciate technology that grows out of how nature works. Increased perception, optimum perception, can only enhance the abilities of the artist.

FIGURE 1.











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