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SELF

BY

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the Master of Fine Arts degree in the College
of Fine and Applied Arts of the
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

section	page
INTRODUCTION	1
PART ONE. SELF- WRITTEN REPORT	
I. ON SOCIETY AND FREEDOM	6
II. ON TECHNIQUE	9
III. ON LEVITY AND HUMOR	11
IV. ON THE EFFECT OF SOCIETY ON MY WORK	13
V. ON DAY TO DAY LIVING AND MY PAINTING	15
VI. ON STUDYING ONESELF	18
VII. ON THE ATHLETICS OF THE MIND AND BODY	21
VIII. ON SECURITY	23
IX. ON REALITY	26
X. ON SELF	31
XI. ON PURPOSE	44
XII. ON CHANGE AND ACCOUNTABILITY	46
XIII. ON INFLEXIBILITY AND THE INELEXIBLE	49
XIV. ON A LACK OF HUMANISM	52
PART TWO. SELF- PAINTINGS	
I. PAINTING	57

TABLE OF CONTENTS (continued)

section	page
II. PAINTING	58
III. PAINTING	59
IV. PAINTING	60
V. PAINTING	61
VI. PAINTING	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64

PREFACE

To search for the true awareness of oneself is, I feel, a necessary pursuit basic to all persons regardless of their stated goals. Yet many of us make little effort toward this end, and often the effort that is made is merely a surface probe--as if we were afraid of what our search might turn up. Still I feel compelled to probe into myself, to attempt to know what has directed me toward the lifestyle I have chosen, to know what motivates me still in that direction.

I chose to read a number of books and articles, some of which I hoped would aid me in my search; the culmination of which would, I hoped, be a very personal paper dealing with what I consider to be formative factors in my life as a painter and with those attitudes that I have developed that keep me painting. It is primarily for myself that I have done this. I feel my own understanding is essential to painting. My life, my understanding, my painting, my attitudes are all deeply intertwined. I do not find these factors to be separable, and it is this belief which validates the statement of this thesis.

The effort is, of course, not terminal. The very nature of it implies change, as does the fact that this paper can incorporate that probing and research accomplished only during an allotted time of search and writing. No statements are entirely conclusive, for

I will change as will my attitudes. I am sure that at times my written statements will appear to be naive. If so, then I am still naive about many things, and this too is part of the search and discovery.

In my readings I feel I have been successful in discovering writings which relate to my concerns of search. The writings have been especially gratifying in that I have found in them a sense of almost religious comfort, for I was allowed to know and helped to understand those insecurities, frustrations, and consequent movements of persons who have emerged from that same self-awareness search that I am still in the midst of.

I now fear less to be a human being involved with painting, with making mistakes. It is my wish to share my searching and the frailties and strengths revealed by it.

INTRODUCTION

I wake up in the morning or lay down at night and, occasionally, a very strange thing happens to me.

Strange - perhaps only to me -

I begin to think about me as a self.

I am shocked - I tingle, sometimes even shake all over when this strikes.

I begin to analyze what I am, what the meaning of my mind, sight, touch, smell and especially thoughts are.

- FRUSTRATION !! -

I lose my body eventually. I hear no one, see nothing, touch nothing.

- FRIGHT !! -

I am, mentally, removed from what I am as a being- looking back at what I am and not able to see.

- TINGLES AND SHAKES !! -

I become aware, acutely, that I am and that I am not in control - a crossover between a theory of myself and reality seems to happen.¹

¹Intended sentence fragments and grammar faults. This section written as such for effect.

It always seems that if I can maintain this vibrant experience just a little longer I will know something - some undefined truth about myself - but something always seems to keep me from this state; usually a fear or feeling that I am losing the ability to come back and be a concrete body again. The physical feeling is very similar to the total experience of euphoria yet fright that we have when a fever is upon us.

This experience is not new to me. I have had similar experiences for as long as I can remember. The important thing: I can now begin to communicate the feeling to some extent, and from this I have sought to understand myself.

Some confidence seems to be gained in the knowledge that the experience is not unique. I have, for years, feared the reactions of others in discussing the experience, but recently I have come upon a description of the essence of this in the writings of Abraham Maslow. In this writing he describes a very similar occurrence and consequently gave me the reassurance that I am not mad.

While this transcendence of dichotomy can be seen as a usual thing in self-actualizing persons, it can also be seen in most of the rest of us in our most acute moments of integration within the self and between self and the world. In the highest love between man and woman, or parent and child, as the person reaches the ultimate of strength, of self esteem, of individuality, so also does he simultaneously merge with the other, lose self-consciousness and more or less transcend the self and selfishness. The same can happen in the creative moment, in the profound aesthetic experience, in the insight experience, in giving birth to child, in dancing, in athletic experience, and others which I have generalized as peak-experience It becomes impossible to differentiate sharply between the self and the not-self. As the person becomes

integrated so does his world. As he feels good, so does the world look good. And so on.

Observe first of all that this is an empirical statement and not a philosophical or theological one. Anyone can repeat these findings. I am definitely speaking of human experience and not of supernatural ones.

Secondly, observe that this implies a disagreement with various theological statements which imply that transcending the limits of self means spurning or repudiating, or losing the self or the individuality. In the peak experiences of ordinary people and in self actualizing people as well, these are end-products of the development of greater and greater autonomy, of the achievement of the identity; and they are the products of self transcendence, not self-obliteration.

Thirdly, observe that they are transient experiences, and not permanent ones. If this is going into another world, then there is always a coming back to the ordinary world.²

Although clinical and somewhat sterile, this seems to be a pretty close parallel to the experience which I have had. The sterility of it does disturb me in that my experience is so vital and as much a part of what I value as being human that I still am seeking a better way of imparting the feeling. Perhaps in the poetry of Chuang Tzu, the softer more human side of the experience can be felt. This poem is, however, more abstract than the feeling. It is entitled "THE DREAM OF LIFE".

Once upon a time, I, Chuang Tzu,
 dreamt I was a butterfly,
 fluttering hither and thither,
 to all intents and purposes a butterfly.
 I was conscious only of following my
 fancies as a butterfly,
 and was unconscious of my individuality
 as a man.
 Suddenly I awoke,

²Abraham Maslow, "Isomorphic Interrelationships Between Knower and Known," Sign Image Symbol, ed. Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1966), 141.

and there I lay, myself again.
Now I do not know
whither I was then
a man dreaming I was a butterfly,
or whether I am now
a butterfly dreaming I am a man.³

The understanding of myself is the purpose of this thesis.

If some of the material seems to be written by a person set on teaching the reader, it is not intended to be that way. My purpose is to write about myself and in doing so gain a better insight into myself. The experience which I have described and attempted to clarify by the work of other men has created the desire within me to understand myself as myself and to seek out the forces which have created me, as well as the rules which I have created to live by. This seems to be essential to my being a painter and to my paintings.

³Chuang Tzu, "THE DREAM OF LIFE", The Heart Has Its Seasons, ed. Louis M. Savary and Thomas J. O'Connor (New York: Regina Press, 1971), 48.

PART I. SELF-WRITTEN REPORT

I. ON SOCIETY AND FREEDOM

Man is constantly in search of two things which are closely related: happiness (Happiness I define as a peace of mind or as a world in which he may live and prosper. It is peace of mind and body; not a child-like happiness or the type derived from material and physical pleasure, although this may be a by-product of the search for real happiness.) and freedom. Man correlates happiness as being free but immediately begins defining freedom in terms which will make him happy.

Society is a word which seems to deal with a collective consciousness of a group of people. This collective conscious defines happiness for all. In essence, it denies something which is indigenous to man: his individuality.

Man is an individual because he is living a set of circumstances in the society in which he lives which are unique to him. This is coupled with the man's ability, genetic, to utilize what he has experienced. I do not believe man can control his life through his individuality, but he must realize some of the potential of this ability.

Man's individuality is directly subject to the society which defines him, as I have stated. Therefore, freedom has defined him, and he has defined freedom which in itself is a loss of freedom. Freedom is a quality of the mind which when defined is immediately lost. The word is a tool which man uses to express

himself collectively or individually.

7

Freedom should be (and I am breaking a cardinal rule in the beginning by my own defining) something completely outside the control of man. Man should be able to withstand the trauma of having a mind which may comprehend that which is incomprehensible, i.e., not fearing to be undefined. This quality, ideally, should exist within the boundaries of society as there are so many people and so little room that collective consciousness is necessary for man to exist. This is important only in regard to existence. To live man must press his mind to go beyond an imposed limit.

Society has a necessary purpose. It provides laws for the protection of the individual and the group. Its purpose is to provide for the security of man as a physical being that he might then pursue for himself his etheréal person. This pursuit should allow for his advancement beyond the level of sheer existence. Man must be able to push his mind without fear of the loss of that which he needs for physical and mental security.

Yet to allow for man's etheréal pursuit, society itself must have an element of insecurity. The life of man is in constant turmoil from within this advancing process and from society. If it should become too secure it would not allow for man's progress in his search for the undefinable. Therefore, if society is to benefit man it must, in itself, be inconclusive. If there truly is a collective consciousness there should also be a collective freedom of search and thought; in essence, a collective instability.

What I have concluded is that there is a void in man which is beauty; this void is singularly individual and unattainable as

a social grouping. Man, at least, should attempt to place himself within the void which is in turn loosely defined by a neutral and elastic limbo, not unlike the womb of a mother within which he might find something valid for himself.

II. ON TECHNIQUE

I feel, when I have mastered a new method or technique in painting, like the laboratory animal which is subjected to a study by a psychology student. I seek a goal, and when I find it or accomplish it, I hesitate, I analyze and I fear it. Having been taught to do so, I feel like I am provided with a substance as a reward in a test but don't know the value of the product, except for the cessation of the negative stimulus.

I fear the accomplished technique for it may be a sin which will distort the total image which I am seeking. The technique becomes a goal unto itself and may well even override the emotion which I am attempting to display.

When I view another artist's work, I try to look only for the beauty on whatever level the beauty may be directed, but I find myself drawn to his degree of proficiency, his professionalism in handling the materials.

I am constantly tormented with conflict. I refuse to become overwhelmed by the desire for technical perfection but in turn I cannot rid myself of the desire to seek out and perfect new means of relating paint, canvas, and form.

At times I allow emotion to be the dominant factor, believing technique only to be part of a trained habit, and there are times when the reverse is true. In both incidences my work suffers.

The emotional display loses visual meaning which I am seeking to convey. The technically spirited work becomes cold, calculated, and overbearing--a lacking of the heart.

The conflict is like two beasts which are in a struggle for power from within. They (technique versus emotion) generate their own power which drives me. The struggle over me as an observer of myself amid these forces at battle could, perhaps, be the source of my desire to paint and could be the reason that I paint in the manner in which I do. I don't know--I probably do not want to know this as a certainty--I only present this as a thought.

Perhaps there are two types of people: those who live for the creation of something, and those who live from, or as the result of, the creation. It would seem that the two types should live in a happily symbiotic relationship, and yet the relationship seems to be anything but happy--or symbiotic. It often appears that the creators supply the benefits to those who live from the creation by their sheer efforts, while the creators receive much less benefit or understanding in return. Perhaps this is the reason for the often apparent heartlessness of today's society toward the artist.

III. ON LEVITY AND HUMOR

I find it necessary to have fun, to make little or no sense at times, to lose contact with reality. Within me is a clown which I must enjoy. I must break away from the serious nature of my mind.

People must take me seriously, for I am serious, but I must have fun--unadulterated good times, often child-like in nature, unencumbered by the serious. The stress of mental usage gets to me on many days. I search and struggle with my own goals and the outside forces involved with my life. If I can't make fun of myself, my life, and the system of things, then I will surely stop being serious altogether.

I am plagued at times by an overwhelming desire to escape all that surrounds me and leave for the country, to run to the other side of the road. I know this is within me and that I may at any time pursue this. This is good, for then I don't have to run for I know I may.

I need to let down the bondage of thought and of thoughtful responsibility at times, and I do. I drink and revel in the result of the drink. I run from the city to the hills and I love this. I return sometimes to find that the bars and the country are more beautiful than I can control and I stay in the country, mentally if not physically. I need this. It is a part of me.

As long as responsibility is a choice of the responsible, then it is good. If it becomes the responsibility of the outside forces to make me responsible, then I cannot live. I can only be responsible for myself.

IV. ON THE EFFECT OF SOCIETY ON MY WORK

I find it increasingly difficult to produce a piece when the social environment is affecting me in an adverse manner. I must paint for that is what I am about. I must reflect the spirit of the times, and this varies from day to day and from hour to hour. It is very difficult to display in paint what the idea of the piece is to be.

I have developed a skill in handling paint and am constantly trying to expand and improve upon this skill, but on days when circumstances have been created opposing my peace, I can suffer in my control even when the desire to work is intense.

Paintings are the end product, and I emphasize the word produce, of a long effort of energy. The energy begins with what I see and what enters my mind, there to become associated with other experiences from the past. The energy is then transformed into a drive to relieve or expel an equal amount of newly created energy. The end product is the painting. Some days the current of input outweighs the desire to put out. On these days, work is slow. On other days a dynamism of mind and physical energy occurs, and I cannot work at the rapidity with which I feel I must.

If I am depressed by an outside source, it affects my work; literally, it impedes my ability. I have struggled to

overcome this problem and concluded that I cannot, for the outside is a part of my emotions. I therefore must live with, and must put to use, these points in time, either to demonstrate it by canvas and paint, or to seek more input for stimulus to paint. Ultimately, I must make use of everything which happens, physically and emotionally, in order to associate myself with my canvas--a sort of conservation of life and time to gain a maximum use of what occurs to me and for me.

These outside forces or energies which may cause either depression or delight have a very determining effect on color selection and strength or determination in line. Color is vital to a painting. If I am depressed, I find that I may seek to transmit this depression. I may, however, choose to compliment this and go for the bright, strong tones of reds, oranges, and yellows which serve to relieve my tensions. In either case the selection is almost involuntary. My mind seems to be controlled, in some respects, by some deep, underlying, and compelling force which balances me and keeps me from going through extreme agony or uncontrolled happiness. This force guides me in my moods and controls my product. It would seem that this force may be associated with the will for self-preservation which often keeps a person alive and sane in cases where it would seem otherwise impossible.

V. ON DAY TO DAY LIVING AND MY PAINTING

I sat down one day and looked at my work and was appalled by its ugliness. It didn't seem possible that that specific piece could have any connection with my life and my thoughts.

I then began to analyze what had happened and how it could have happened. A strange thought occurred to me--that every day is only real while it is here, and that the days in the past were lived or worked in by someone else. Since that painting this feeling of mine has persisted. I feel that I must force myself to associate today with tomorrow so that when tomorrow comes I may still be happy with that I have done yesterday.

It is a complex idea, but it works for me. If I have the desire to approach a new possibility in paint and form then I must do this, yet I must bear in mind that tomorrow will be affected by this, and that I may insult my sensitivities on the following day by what I do today.

Ultimately, I wish people would try to view their lives in this respect for a moment or two. I believe that each day when I begin to work that I am changed from the day before. Some thoughts, goals, and feelings remain constant for a period of time, but each day I have different sets of emotions and

therefore a different set of priorities from the day before. This is good for me, for every idea that comes upon me may be looked at with this in mind.

I am not saying that I have overcome emotion in using this theory. I have not. If I am broken-hearted, then I will be so. If I am angry, then I will be angry, for these emotions cannot be avoided for me. I still am embarrassed by what has been done poorly, and I still am proud of what has been done well. Perhaps these are constants. I do not know.

I don't wish this statement to be taken as a rule or a concise point, but rather as a possibility because I believe there are at least three possibilities open to man if he finds his life to parallel that which I have mentioned:

1. Man may ultimately control his life as a total unit from day to day, week to week, and year to year: he is always responsible for each action and is always safe in what he is responsible to and for.
2. Man may live each day as a total with each part of it lived as a total unit: he is completely relieved from any responsibility for himself from moment to moment. This would leave him open to any course he may desire; i.e., an uninhibited man.
3. Man may blend the two theories into a nicely balanced total which allows him to keep himself

open to change, but which also provides him stability when it is needed. I suspect this would be a very conscious effort.

I find for myself that rather than use any one of these rules to the exclusion of the others, I use each one of them selfishly, according to what my person is at the time. Some days I feel like a responsible executive-type, carefully manipulating my life as if it were made up of stocks and bonds. On other days I find myself as a small child bent on discovery--always with something new in mind. Since my mind is so prone to change, and since I feel like a different personage from time to time, I find I can only use these rules as flexible restraints to give me some control. I believe there is a unification to this style of living whether it be conscious or unconscious.

VI. ON STUDYING ONESELF

When I read another person's work, I find that I seek only to read that which challenges my mind and ignore that which has only a surface meaning. Reading may be simply for entertainment, but this is another matter and not the type of reading of which I now write.

I have been intimidated by the writings of many learned men and have felt somewhat insignificant in my feeble-mindedness when I read the thoughts which they are conveying. I sometimes wonder at what level I have been placed on the continuum of reasoning and understanding.

Now, I am writing about myself after thinking of what I am. My writing comes out in spurts, hindered by reaction of muscle and pen. The thoughts compound themselves and one subject seems to melt into another. Many relations are complex if related at all. The search goes in so many directions that I find it difficult to keep bounds on it in order that I may write.

After I have relaxed from the search and completed the writing, I return to my paint. My paint is in my head while I write, and my search is continuous when I paint. It is almost like an unrestrained, uncontrolled desire to conserve energy by finding as many directions to go in at the same time within the bounds of one body. I feel tormented while I work

by the strain of this self-imposed discipline, but the product seems to merit the effort. I have found that reactions are beginning to develop in my mind and my body which cause a type of physical and mental fitness which allows me to paint and research at the same time and on the same level, often successfully in both cases.

At points when I relax, allow myself a break, I begin to read what I have written. The context of the writing seems to have been derived by some outside source rather than by me. I feel intimidated by myself, challenged by my own thoughts--much the same as I was challenged by the other authors which first intimidated me. This has a positive effect upon my image of self. I can now feel more confident in my ability to perceive and to communicate on a higher level. I find a greater sense of belonging in an intellectual community. This is stimulating for I have never really felt the equal to many of my peers in other disciplines.

It does, however, offer a disturbing side effect. I find that I am disassociated from much of the writing in that it would seem some outsider has written this. The words are a part of my being and deep essence of myself, but when these thoughts are placed by ink on paper, they lose their stirring emotionality and become concrete, calculated statements. I read much of what I write as though I were discovering a new

author and I challenge myself to understand him. I try to absorb his emotions into my own and a strange cycle is created. These emotions are my own--this frightens me.

VII. ON THE ATHLETICS OF THE MIND AND BODY

My ability to paint sensitively and with dexterity is in direct relation to the well-being of my mind and body. If I feel well physically and mentally (a type of neutrality caused by lack of emotional instability and *physical pain), I may then set about thinking and painting with harmony and balance. I may direct myself to the purpose.

I am not, however, saying that mental and physical anguish is bad. The anguish must, to be meaningful, come from the painting and the act of painting on a physical and mental level. If a color in relation to another color makes me squeeze, then this is just: but if I am sick or hungry, my unease may arise from the outside and give me a false message.

I must work under lights, standing for prolonged periods and using extreme control in executing difficult brush and staining techniques. This is compounded by the need to create mental images of color and form and relate them to one another, and to be responsive to the need for alternations in form and color. If there is to be a total involvement on the part of myself, then there must be a strong and competent physical and mental state.

I must not disregard emotion or physical restraints from the outside. These are sources for inspiration. If I am depressed

then I must paint either in a depressed manner or compliment my depression and alleviate my spirits by painting in a happy spirit of lightheartedness; the reverse is also true.

There is a direct correlation between my well-being and the act of painting. I must strive to balance sources of energy, bad and good, and to allot myself the opportunity of self expression.

VIII. ON SECURITY

As an adult, I am told and have been told that I should emancipate myself from my parents and from my peers in order to seek out a security from myself and from a mate. This would seem to be one of the mores of this society. We seem to look toward the animals--the bear cub which leaves his mother, after a careful training in behavior, to hunt and kill and survive. In the same breath we are told that a man is a social animal and that we have to share one another--a dichotomy.

As a painter, I find that I must be alone with my thoughts and technique most of the time. This causes a wan and melencholy existence at times and I feel very much alone. There is no security in a creation of something new for it is without precedent. I cannot go to a museum or gallery or publication and find someone or something which is in harmony totally with what I do.

The act of painting is a beautiful experience for me which nearly fills my life, but I feel an attachment for my fellow man and must have a place where people know me as flesh and blood--a thinking man. I need reassurance for something which is not art within me, but which makes me a man and lets

me make my art.

When I was a child and life was closing in, I ran to my mother and father in tears (as nearly everyone has). I knew they would try to help me and, most vitally, I knew they were there. I can see no reason for this to stop when a man matures. Beyond all the people of the world and the intense, complicated problems of the world, families are the only ones who can bleed for one of themselves without having to have a complicated explanation.

Problems arise in my life which are so intense and so shattering that it would seem that there is no out but suicide. When this occurs I can conjure up that great feeling of when I was a child and was held by my father or mother and protected. No one can take this inner feeling from me. This remembrance acts now as a point of emotional reassurance which helps me to continue painting in the face of crisis or extreme frustration. Perhaps I am weak for admitting this need, but the weakness is beautiful to me.

Beyond this, I seek out the company and friendship of people who are intensely aware of the problem of the scope of my life as a painter. They are like my family. They know their own fears, and if they are intensely involved with that which they are doing, then they know the pain of insecurity and have the time to listen and provide security for me, as I attempt to do for them.

All of this leads to one very substantial point. I am not a story book hero with the strong-willed power of total removal. I cannot mount my horse, holster my gun, and ride at peace with myself off into the sunset.

IX. ON REALITY

Civilized man has created a man-made reality. By reality, I mean he has created a place for himself, by himself in the universe, denying to some extent that the universe has a controlling effect upon him.

As a creative person, I seek to give civilized man something of my reactions to his civilization and its effect upon me for the use of his civilization. Added to this is my feeling of being apart from his definition of what reality is; therefore, I have an inward feeling of not being completely defined by his reality.

Something of my purpose, then, is to shake the confines of this reality, that I might enter and change these definitions or perhaps obliterate some of them.

The rational part of man attempts constantly to out-power the irrational side of him. It is natural that society can only make rational statements to define man as they are most easily understood and accepted. These rational statements have a universal effect in that each member of society can readily accept them as predominant and incorporate them into their own lifestyle.

The more a creative urge exerts pressure upon this society, the more the society reacts against change. Yet if this pressure is increased by more members of the society becoming aware of the existence of another illogical, untempered portion of themselves which has a right to be examined and utilized, perhaps society's resistance will begin to weaken, and the will to keep constant will change.

I am not stating that a new society and thus a new set of constants will not emerge. This desire for logic is still a balancing force to the illogical, but the logical force must remain flexible enough to allow for this other, less rational force.

I am a painter, producing paintings in 1974. The world about me is filled with machines, objects, and combinations of both along with many persons who share one goal: to have and fulfill a function. The prevalent image or idea of the society is the economy of forces to produce the most for the least and to make the most profit from this. So much is aimed at the reduction of ideas and purposes to a science, and with this reduction each item is carefully filed and organized. The world seems to have little room for investigation and progress that does not offer a definite, solicited product.

All so-called creativity of this nature seems to exist for this single goal of reduction. The creativity within this

society is very often subservient to its goals, and the goals are geared to the productive functioning of society.

The conservative logic is to keep everything functioning and moving forward or upward (vertical movement), the ultimate goal being a constant, smooth advancement at all costs.

The liberal logic allows for some lateral movement from the vertical as long as it remains on certain confines of the movement. The ultimate goal remains the same, that of a constant progression of logic and the development of logic to produce materials and men who are part of this system. The goal appears to be capital gain and the smooth maintenance of a productive society.

Within this struggle of maintenance and direction, I came in. I can see no logic in this logic of controlled advance, for in essence I am illogical. I can see no use to goals of better materials and goods and higher incomes when the mind has no chance to advance beyond the movement of the society.

My direction becomes obvious. I cannot fulfill these requirements for society, and if forced I will surely perish mentally, if not physically. The automaton-like rushing to continue lineal advancement seems illogical to me. It would leave me no time to enjoy and enhance myself (by myself I mean

my mind and its ability to see and become more totally successful in pursuing the goals I seek). This has caused me to rebel. I have to create outside the bounds of society. My art must not have a utilitarian function, and I cannot produce for gains from the outside. My work is not a commodity but rather a living, breathing, changing organism which reflects me and my humanism.

From where I sit atop my own "Olympus", it appears that so many people have lost the essence of why they work and why they create a society and maintain it. Purposes seem to be oriented toward making money and merely maintaining the structure of the present system which in turn magnifies the need for money. People seem to be living to labor and laboring for money which is far removed from the original plan of why we work and why we even have money. We began the system of work and money so that we could have the material goods which would relieve the burden of just existing and replace it with more time to advance ourselves, so that our offsprings' lives would perhaps be more fit to move onward in.

With the existing man-made reality which is dominant today, I can see only a failing of the society to cope and maintain. People cannot completely orient themselves to a totally logical environ aimed at labor and capital gain. Sometime, somewhere, people will begin, en masse, to ask themselves what the real purpose of all this is; when they do,

they will find it hard to explain why they worked constantly, at a labor they despised, for more hours than they had to themselves, to gain an abstract reward of man-made value--money. When this happens, if there is anything to the collective conscious of man and his real need for a society, then the governing body would be quick to adjust to those new values, or some violent reaction would surely follow this overwhelming realization and subsequent output of energy.

X. ON SELF

Today there seems to be a problem, of a severe nature, in being alive and trying to establish an identity. Today we are endowed with a great deal of information from the past which is readily available through education, television, newspapers, and close association with many people from many different areas of the world. All of this is due to improvements in life by advancing technology. We are much more adept at storing and releasing knowledge and ideas than before. This adds to a problem which has always been in the mind of those seeking an identity.

The largest problem which I face is in trying to be honest about the ideas and feelings which I hold to be my own. I seek to be an honest individual in speaking of my individuality. I want my thoughts to be my own, yet related to those about me for communication. I want what I do to be original as well as related to people for understanding.

It has been implied that an individual is an individual as a product of the sum of his experiences. This individuality is created by the fact that no man will undergo the same set of experiences as another; therefore, individuality is normal for man and it is not necessary for a man to make a conscious effort

at establishing his identity.

I must constantly worry that a great deal of what I think and what I do may be too much a product of wills of outside forces. Am I doing this for myself, or am I seeking to satisfy the demands of others? Is what I do truly for myself, or is it what I do for other people to reward me for?

While in school, I have worked and developed at a rate that, most of the time, I feel has been optimum for myself. I have done a great deal of painting, some of which has been liked and some of which has not. I worry constantly whether I am painting for the school or for myself. I try to paint for myself always, but my fear persists. What I paint and how I paint is important to me. What my peers feel is important to me. I must constantly weigh my feelings of importance and try to make sure that I am still Number One. I have a deep-seated need to express myself, and I also have a fear of boring or insulting the sensitivity of those about me.

In my mind, then, the question is: How can I keep all these pressures in their place and retain my honest individuality? How can I be sure that all of this knowledge of the past and the present isn't in total control? How can I be sure I'm painting for myself and not for others and their individualities?

I don't have a pat answer. When I am working and the work is my own, I have a gut feeling of belonging to it. When the work is not mine, it becomes a labor which I don't enjoy.

The feeling in the pit of my body helps me to walk the razor edge and still be myself and communicate. I hope.

I try my best to be honest. Sometimes it hurts, and I have to wipe out all that I have done, for it is not me.

The only things which grow and change in themselves are organisms, whose meanings and purposes are unknown, to be discovered: this means people, other forms of life, and the universe itself in all aspects. Fabricated objects and meanings do not have this property. Growth is a process which can take place only in some kind of interaction or transaction between two different organisms. Thus man living in civilization stifles his own growth and if he is sensitive to this, falls into deep despair.⁴

That interaction between persons is inevitable, that the effect of this interaction is not always visible upon the struggle for true individuality by persons, can indeed plague the mind that is involved with this search. Yet the effects of interaction must be faced. As psychologist Maslow states: "The communication relationship between the person and the world is a dynamic one of mutual forming and lifting-lowering of each other, a process of knowledge: but also a higher order of environment tends to lower it. They make each other more like each other. These notions are also applicable to the interrelations between persons, and should help us to understand how persons help to form each other."⁵

⁴Paul Riesman, "The Eskimo Discovery of Man's Place in the Universe," Sign Image Symbol, ed. Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1966), 227.

⁵Maslow, 143.

Another pertinent thought comes from Lawrence K. Frank, written in an article entitled "The World as a Communication Network."

Another source of confusion over symbolic recognition and use comes from the multiplicity of communication to which we are now exposed. In addition to the many person to person confrontations involving individuals of many different kinds, backgrounds, skills and offices, we are increasingly receiving replicas and reconstructed images and synthetic representations of speech and actual persons and events. Thus we are daily exposed to the synthetic communications coming to us by television, radio, telephone, phonographs, and tape recorders, moving pictures, and the flood of pictures and cartoons in newspapers and magazines, to which we may respond as to actual events and persons. Much as symbols have superceded actuality for human living, so these images and replicas are likewise becoming the major focus of visual and auditory perception as we increasingly accept them and find them often equal, if not superior, to experience of actual persons and events, especially if artistically contrived and sometimes deliberately distorted.⁶

I have thought of the ideal way to demonstrate what the painting is to the painter by placing a series of materials starting with a canvas with an idea sketched in, then a bare canvas, then a pile of wood and role of canvas beside it. The painter lives for the unpainted work. The act of painting is all important to him.

I cannot look back at my work and be satisfied or impressed. I cannot hang my work before myself and look at it as if it were my masterpiece. The only masterpiece I have is in my mind and on the canvas which I am working at.

⁶Lawrence K. Frank, "The World as a Communication Network," Sign Symbol Image, ed. Gyorgy Kepes (New York: George Braziller, 1966), 9.

The future is the most important aspect of what I paint. What I paint is always a state of learning and perfecting, and I cannot stop this. I have little confidence in what I have already made, for the minute that it is done, I have already made half the move toward the next canvas. My painting in the past is only experience and learning--I don't believe this can stop and still maintain the vitality of my work.

Painting is the reason for my paintings. That which I have done may be for others to see what I have done and, perhaps, enjoy what I have learned. I find it difficult to place my paintings outside my studio because they are no longer closely tied to me for I am not working on them. I feel guilty when I show them because I know that there is always a step beyond where they were done and that maybe (and "maybe" is the crux of the statement) there will be something truly great to be found in the future which will really make everything which I have done seem insignificant in comparison.

In facing reality, I must admit to myself that people outside myself must see and judge what I have done at some point. These paintings are of no use to anyone but me unless they are seen, and I cannot feel it a certainty that I will ever have the confidence to bring out what I have done and say that it is ready to be seen.

When I look at another man's work, I wonder what will happen beyond the point of what is already evident. I don't,

as a painter, believe that any painter should be judged either totally good or totally bad from one point in time. I seek only to understand his visual statement of what painting means to him, and I try to enjoy with him the feeling of discovery that must have possessed him from the conception to the very finish of that particular canvas that I am viewing, for certainly the developmental stages of his painting must have been both intriguing and exciting. This is how I would like to be viewed. I realize that it is difficult not to type-cast a person as good or bad on first impression (we are taught to do this by society), but each man who paints does so for a great length of time. He does this to learn for himself and only shows what he has accomplished in order to share what he has seen. A particular painting is not the painter and not the total of what he can do. The only real masterpiece or grand statement is in the next painting.

The artist does not paint for an audience, but for himself; and it is only by truly satisfying himself that he can truly satisfy others An artist does not want to build himself a picture gallery in which to hang his own paintings, in order to enjoy their beauty. He prefers to stow them away in a lumber room, or let other people look at them. To be compelled to look at them himself would be torment. The act of creation once over, the real product of this act is the continued and intensified activity, which has reached a new phase of its development by merely having passed through the old: and the artist now wants to begin painting another picture. The picture which he is about to paint is always going to be his masterpiece; that which he has lately finished is always a disheartening daub; those which he painted

years ago are monuments of a distant youth upon which he looks back with mixed feelings, toleration and complacency, a little admiration and a little contempt.⁷

I have been painting and making pottery for quite a number of years, especially considering the relatively short period of time that I have been alive. Since I chose to be a painter, I have had conflicts from within and without. From within, I have asked myself if I was doing the right thing. Will I be able to make it? Am I good enough? From without I have heard: "You are making a mistake! Artists have no life!" "You will not have all those things which make life 'BEAUTIFUL'." "I can't understand why you want to paint when we need scientists." "You must be rational and face reality. You are a dreamer and an idealist--you can only be hurt!"

For many years I worried about all this. Was I right for myself or for them? Did all those rational ideas really count for life? After studying myself and analyzing the situation in a "rational" way, I discovered that for me all that other people said seemed irrational and that I was indeed doing what was right for me. The question of whether I am good enough has stopped mattering--that will be for someone else to decide. I paint because I must. I cannot guide myself totally by a group of rules set up by society; I cannot be told what I desire, and I cannot organize my life around a structure that is alien to the function of my brain.

⁷R.G. Collingwood, Essays in the Philosophies of Art, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 129-30.

It would seem that nearly all people outside the arts and a great many within are concerned with ordering and controlling everything they do to a rational degree. Fears and prejudice are aimed at anything which may destroy or distort their own definitions. All of these people are seeking patterns in which they may be comfortable--in all respects. It might seem that they are using convenience devices and patterns to allow them time not to think, rather than time to think. They seem to me to deny their humanity.

We are taught to be what we are by society--dependent and yet independent. We are pressed to be rational, to belong, to conform, and to be happy according to the definition of the whole. If the people who have contrived the ideal of what life should be want every man to fit into their mold they must use a different method of teaching to promote this fitting. Much too often society's constant pressuring serves only to destroy the ability to be molded, rather than to enhance it. I was pressed from all sides: pressed to dress well, write well, speak properly, be courteous, have many friends, love my country, and above all succeed. I managed to acquire none of these things for I spent most of my time repelled by someone else telling me what I was to be. I could suggest, then, that if society wants to find its creative people and its contemplative thinkers that the learning experience such as mine would be ideal, for it would serve to drive such persons from its midst. They will be recognizable for they will seem not to fit well into the

system, as indeed they will not.

As a result of these forces I made art. I just could not bring myself to make my mind work for someone else. I used to feel guilty because I could not solve the geometry theorem or remember all the theorems in their proper order. I don't any more. I used to feel simple-minded, a feeling reinforced by my instructors, because I couldn't remember all the molecular weights of the earth's elements. I don't anymore. Thank God that I found that my mind was complicated and workable in its own right, for they almost had me beaten. If I hadn't started plotting abstract ideas in my mind, or if I hadn't dreamed of being someplace else, I surely would have destroyed myself. I was finally able to protect myself in a natural manner, by making human use of what happened to my mind. I think, sometimes, that the system, back then at least, was actually cruel enough to have let me destroy myself. I fear that society would simply have felt rid of some non-functioning machine. I fear as well that this may not have changed for other youths. I worry that the situation may even have worsened.

Again, society is logic. The only way man seems to be able to set up mores or laws is by logic. Is it because he can only agree and communicate things which are simply understood? I am not logic. Logic is rational and controlled by the whole. As far as my making art is concerned, I am logical and controlled in my own way--not society's. As for living in the midst of this

culture with its rationale, I can now survive quite well (for I am a product of its training in part) as long as I know I can paint and change my paintings and progress by my standards and still be able to relate to a few people when I am done. This may be labeled, flatly, I suppose, as an escape role--if so, then the labeler is that from whom I desire to escape.

This seems to be the seed of the spirit which has developed in me and which allows me to work. I have never really stopped looking back and looking around me to see if there has been any change or mellowing of the conditions which started me in this direction. I haven't been able to discern any except for a few fads which have already passed by or threaten to. I have come to the conclusion that this seems to be the way of man. In the broad sense there seems to be two types of people--those who are prudent for the sake of prudence, and those who seek to establish something of their own sake. I cannot adjust to others until I have adjusted to myself.

What makes the artist bitter is the fact that Art is not subordinate to prudence by virtue of their respective objects, as science, for instance, is subordinate to wisdom. As concerns its own object, everything comes under the purview of Art, and Art alone. But as concerns the human subject, nothing comes under Art's purview. Over anything made by the hand of man, Art and Prudence each claim dominion. From the point of view of the poetic, or if you will, working values, Prudence is not competent. From the point of view of human values, and of the moral regulation of the free act, Prudence alone is competent, and there is no limitation upon its right to govern.

When he reproves a work of art, the Prudent Man, standing squarely upon his moral virtue, has the certitude

that he is defending against the Artist a sacred good, the good of man, and he looks upon the Artist as a child or a madman. Perched on his intellectual value, the Artist has the certitude that he is defending a no less sacred good, the good of beauty, and he looks as though he were bearing down on the Prudent Man with the weight of Aristotle's maxim: 'Life proportioned to the intellect is better than life proportioned to man.'⁸

Art, creativity, and non-rational investigation incorporate among themselves a sense of rigidity that the pursuer of these goals must follow in order to truly identify and commune with these goals. This rigidity is that art, the act of creation, the investigation must exist for itself. It cannot be a secondary pursuit. "Art is concerned with the good of the work, not with the good of the man . . . as Thomas Aquinas put it, Art, in this respect, resembles the virtues of the speculative intellect: it causes man to act in a right way, not with regard to the use of man's own free will, and to the rightness of human will, but with regard to rightness of a particular operating power. The good that Art pursues is not the good of the human will, but the good of the very object."⁹ Art, then, the act of creation is not a pastime to be pursued lightly, nor employment undertaken without total commitment. It is, instead, all-encompassing and demanding.

It appears that there is a school of non-scientism that would seek to place rationalism and complete scientism in a perspective

⁸Jaques Maritain, The Responsibility Of The Artist (New York: Charles Scribners and Sons, 1960), 40.

⁹Maritain, 23.

that allows for the growth of non-rational pursuit. Its growth, I fear, is slow, its range limited, and its future effect as yet unknown.

This is one aspect of the great frontal attack upon overconfident and isolated rationalism, verbalism, and scientism that is a gathering force. The general semanticists, the existentialists, the phenomenologists, the Freudians, the Zen Buddhists, the mystics, the Gestalt therapists, the Humanistic psychologists, the Jungians, the self-actualizing psychologists, the Rogerians, the Bergsonian, the "creative" educationalists, and many others, are all helping to point out the limits of language, of abstract thought, of orthodox science. These have been conceived as controllers of the dark, dangerous, and evil depths. But now as we learn steadily that these depths are not only wellsprings of neuroses, but also of health, joy, and creativeness, we begin to speak of the healthy unconscious, of healthy regression, healthy instincts, healthy non-rationality, and healthy intuition. We begin also to desire salvaging of these capacities for ourselves.¹⁰

Scientism vs. non-scientism, logic vs. non-logic, rationalism vs. non-rationalism--all these attitudes we commonly view as being so opposed to each other that we must choose one approach or the other to the complete exclusion of the other. We can find in ourselves little ability to combine aspects of opposing forces in order to integrate the best of each into our personal philosophies. Whether this could ever be accomplished I do not know. I tend to think not, for within this society at least, we are trained to be rigid and straight in our attitudes. To be otherwise would be to waver, and we

¹⁰Maslow, 139.

must not do that at all costs.

Observe also that we have here another example of the profound Western tendency, or perhaps general human tendency to dichotomize, to think that between alternatives or differences, one must choose either one or the other, and that this involves repudiation of the not-chosen, as if one couldn't have both.¹¹

¹¹Ibid.

XI. ON PURPOSE

Many people question me about the meaning of my art. I could tell each of them the real, flat, physical meaning behind each painting, or I could tell each of them a different story about my work. I could be truthful or I could lie. I don't really want to talk about that, for a simple reason. It would guide them too well and they would know too much without searching. I want people to find out for themselves just what a painting tells them. Sometimes I am forced to reveal meaning; a situation which doesn't fare well for them or for me, for it reduces the possibility of the statement and puts pictorial images on a verbal level, one ethereal and undefined and one concrete and conclusive. I do not like the dictatorial atmosphere that this creates.

I want my pieces to exist by and for themselves. If they are only decoration for a person, then that is all they should be for him. They cannot tell a nice, concise story with a simple statement, for that would be insulting for me and would seem insensitive to my mind. I need to feel attached to my work by a psyche-like sense, not a physically direct one, for I am not in direct physical contact with what my mind feels. If a painting must have a meaning for you to be able to enjoy it, then I would suggest inventing one; you then can become your own artist. If you want a meaning from me, then you are

receiving it by reading this. Deep down in the foundation of my work, I have developed symbols to represent my feelings about myself and others and the society which has been made (or perhaps made us). These symbols are mine as a man, not yours, so develop what you will for yourself. This is my request to the viewer of my work. The painting stands for itself as a completed object in my career; for you to see and if you desire, to enjoy.

XII. ON CHANGE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

People fluctuate in their feelings about life, about their opinions of others, and their goals. Some change is due to a greater or more extensive education, some comes from changes in the attitude of society such as adjustments to changes in elements or quantities, and some change, related to the first two and more vital, is through self-analysis. The changes bring a product of new opinions and a new place in life. These fluctuations control the directions which our lives take and require that we remain open to outside and interior influences.

The point of this is that man, no matter what he says or does, should not be judged immediately or permanently on one point in time. He is capable of a complete turn-about in thinking and functioning, and therefore no one meeting with him or his work should be all-encompassing.

I paint according to these rules. If I am happy with the direction and with the possibilities of that direction I will continue with it until I (or some force working upon me) conclude meaningfully that there can be no meaningful conclusion or continuance. Criticism from the outside is not essential to any artist when he begins a new direction, but he may lose himself in search of too selfish a goal and in doing so, fail to keep in correspondence with the outside. However, criticism is

all relative to the time of the critique and the mind's position at that time of both the artist and reviewer. The artist should be receptive, but he must balance this with an awareness of his goals as well as his point of personal development.

Never can we allow ourselves to be destroyed by personal defeat or defeating commentary. If we have problems from within, these problems should be placed in a perspective of place and time; if the problems are from without, then the same is true and is compounded by the fact that outside sources cannot be connected to the heart and soul of the artist. Whatever the case the artist, barring suicide or heart failure, will out. He will accept the outside criticism as well as his own and therefore should seek to gain whatever he can from the negative in order to produce the positive. He must continue searching.

The ultimate realization of this is to look at a lifetime with some respect to time of life, time of work, and the total aspect or implication of work and its acceptance. Point in time is very important to a creative person for he is neither made nor destroyed by the immediate action or response, but rather by the culmination of all these points in time, treating each as a living experience.

I am not, however, implying that the emotion of the moment could or should be overridden for this probably would be dishonest to the soul. People are not automatons. They cannot function without feeling and still remain in touch with one another.

Something can always be gained from anger or sorrow. If a person bleeds for me when I cry, then I am strengthened in my belief that there is someone outside myself which is feeling too. I need to believe man is not unfeeling; that we are of humanity and not just thinking creatures who live only for self-betterment.

The creators, Harry, the shapers, the makers, the begetters, Beethoven, Rembrandt, Dr. Salk, Einstein, Shakespeare, that bunch. It isn't enough to just live. It isn't even enough just to have a good mind, to think clear thought. You have to add something to the sum of humanity's accomplishments, something real, something valuable. You have to give. Mozart. Newton. Columbus. Those who are able to reach into the will of creation, into that hot, boiling chaos of raw energy down there, and pull something out, shape it, make something unique and new out of it.¹²

¹²Robert Silverberg, "Breckenridge and the Continuum," Show Case, ed. Roger Elwood (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 12-13.

XIII. ON FLEXIBILITY AND THE INFLEXIBLE

Man seems to have a natural tendency in what he seeks to understand and retain as a learning experience. He seeks out or makes tangible that which is not material or tangible and labels this as a rule, guidepost, or certainty. I do as well, for this is the nature of what we call learning. One of the things that keeps my love for what I create alive is that it is intangible and undefined as long as I am working on it. That which is tangible is the past, and the experience which the act of painting has left in me is the learning which I may draw upon or not by choice. I need the choice!

The uncertainty of creation, the lack of assurance, the exploring nature of creativity is the crux of what makes me work. I may develop a pattern in which to work out refinements and this pattern may seem to be tangible; i.e., composition, color, but this is for a certainty or security of the past that I may seek something new within the knowledge of something which I have already learned and liked. This is a tool of learning. I like to give myself something certain and then destroy that which makes it work and then attempt to make it work again in a new way.

If something becomes too easy or too contrived it seems to lose the value which I consider to be the humanism of my art.

Sometimes I have to keep on working at something which has already failed for quite awhile before I realize that it is too mechanical or too removed from the uncertainty of what my mind is. This shakes my confidence in myself for then I must wonder if I am truly doing my work from the heart as well as from the mind. Sometimes I have to leave my work for a time and do something which is entirely removed from painting to enable me to see that I am not where I should be.

The important aspect of this intangibility and uncertainty goes beyond my studio and the work of my studio. I find that I cannot use the rules and definitions which seem to be all around me, for I must remain open to a lot of outside, human influences which are not art, but which will affect the way in which I perceive, and thus the way in which I paint. Life has to be as uncertain as the act of creativity for that act of creativity to be a life reflection. If I am defined and comfortable in my definitions and in the definitions imposed upon me by others, then I will paint defined, tangible, and comfortable paintings. Yet the truth is that I enjoy the lack of definition and that when I paint, I paint this into my work. Then I add some definition of the sort that I feel society and myself have imparted to me and which I ultimately rebel against. This definition is important to the painting because it compliments the rebellion of the undefined and enhances the loose quality. The definitions

of society and my mind are important as they cause me to rebel, and this in turn causes me to create that which is intangible. My mind functions as a reaction to this energy which I consider negative at the beginning, but the more I dwell upon the end product I believe that this is a positive type of relationship. I need a source of adversity to create in me the need to be what I am.

XIV. ON A LACK OF HUMANISM

I sometimes wonder why I bother to try to communicate with people outside the profession that I have chosen. Many people are seemingly not concerned with the fact that each person has his own level of sensitivity. I am a part of a generation that has known nothing but automation. We hide behind machines and use them to substitute their qualities for the qualities which we have to relate to one another. We use the computer to bill one another for debts we have incurred. We use the computer to record and send out grades which students have struggled humanly to obtain. We use the telephone to inform one another of bad news and make business arrangements, and at all costs we avoid contact with one another when the contact might arouse emotional responses. People are so indoctrinated by the use of machines as defense mechanisms, we actually fear direct contact with one another and consider the display of emotions to be dishonorable.

What have we become? We create tools that we may not allow ourselves to be human and then rationalize their use as utilitarian. Did you ever try to explain to a computer that you really did take a course? Did you ever have a bank process a check which you dated for the fourteenth of the month on the twelfth, and then accuse you of trying to cash a check with insufficient funds? Have you ever had a collector call you

on the telephone, press you for an overdue bill, and when you have tried to make an appointment with him find out that he is too busy calling other persons to talk to you?

Now we look at a lot of current art and see some pretty offensive work. It seems pretty violent, pretty incongruous. Colors don't work well together. Pictures are either so ugly or so pretty that they are repulsive. People scream that modern art is horrible; the morals of the artist are terrible. They cannot understand what is happening to today's artists, or for that matter to today's youth in general--drugs, alcohol, suicides, riots, discontent. Let them try to get a job with a good education. Let them try to find a job which isn't subservient to the machine or one that isn't created as a result of the machine's indispensibility to man. Let them talk to a person with a good mind and a good education who can't find honorable employment or any employment at all. Depression is everywhere.

If I paint paintings which are calm and relaxing through all this then it is because I need to have an oasis in the din. If I paint disturbing, ugly, badly composed, machine-like paintings, then look around me with my eyes and see what the next fifty years has in store for my life. Is to be a success, to be able to pay all debts, to be a respected member of the community such a terrific goal? Must I be proud of these achievements?

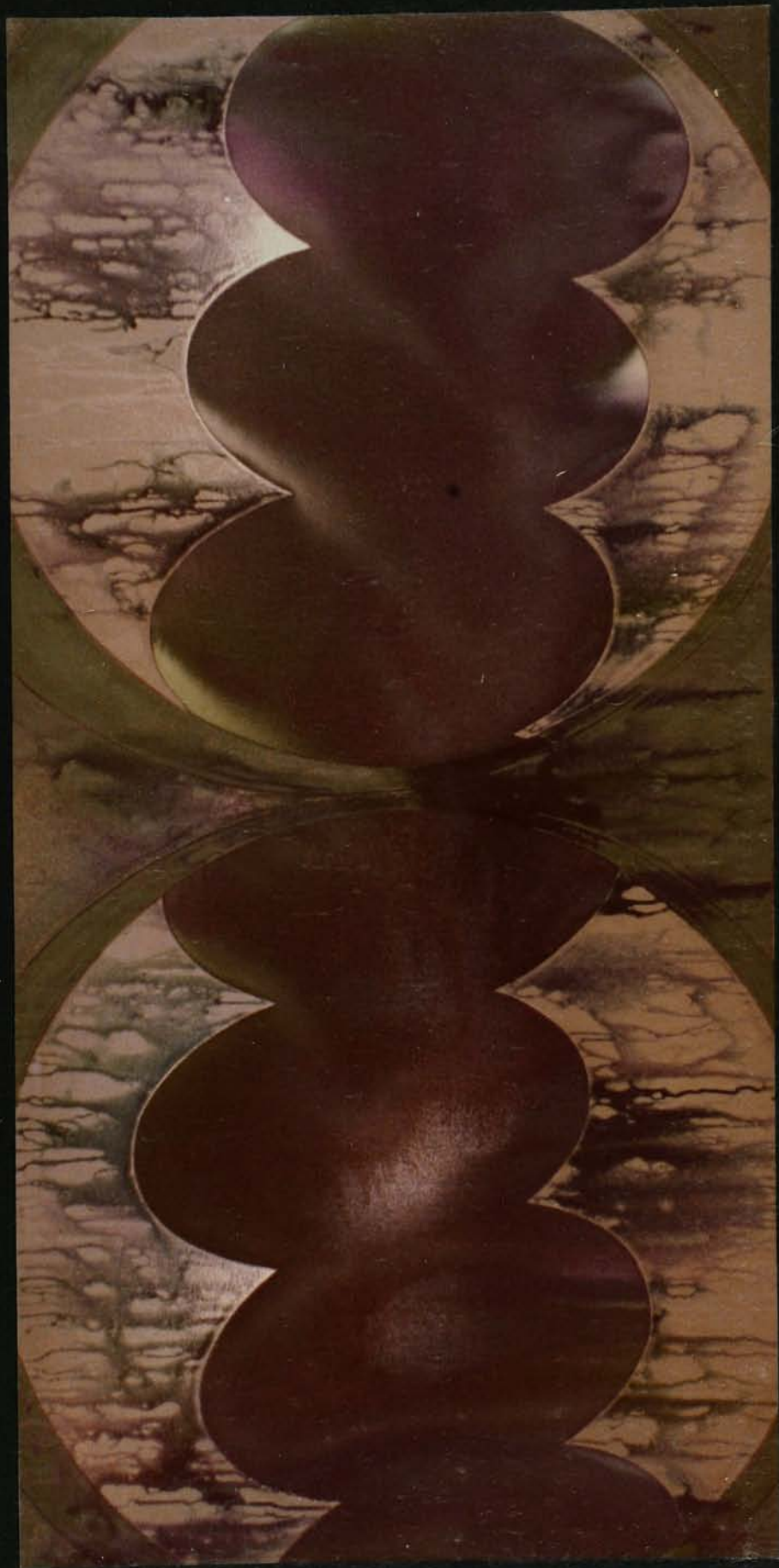
I have to live, so I will be a hypocrite and live what I consider a dishonorable lifestyle by attempting to live within

this chaos! I will continue to paint and make pottery, and listen to people tell me it is too expensive. I'll ask the pardon of the machine that I cannot pay my bills. I will be polite to persons who attack my art. At least I will try. I do not know, however, how long that can last. I am unhappy. I am cynical. I am disgusted with so much I must endure. I find that I have an extremely hard time bringing myself to show my work, or to try to sell my wares. I am very unhappy to exhibit my effort to the structure which supports so much that I cannot believe in.

PART II. SELF-PAINTINGS













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