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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

THE PAINTED PORTRAIT

By

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November 1, 1985

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Fred Meyer and Phil Bornarth for their support in this work, and persistence and generosity as instructors. Thanks to Judd Williams for his assistance in this project. Last, thanks to David Dickinson, for much kindness and encouragement.

PREFACE

This blind universe where atoms accidentally
form human beings and where human beings
accidentally return to atoms...

-Camus¹

...there is something noble, something great,
that cannot be destined for the worms.

-Van Gogh²

For a brief moment, the substance of the universe is tangled within the body of man. Soonafter, it is released, and man becomes universe again.

The creative act, analogous to this ongoing transformation, affirms our connection with everything that has or will exist. At the same time, these acts fulfill the self-conscious need to change the world, to leave a mark -- to assert individual existence.

The portrait depicts a specific individual, anchored in space and time, documenting that person's material existence. Thus, it satisfies both artist and patron's need for existential verification. Concurrently, as a work of art, the portrait suggests the universal, illustrating the brevity and insignificance of individual existence. The irony of this opposition reflects the human dilemma: the justification of self-consciousness and the universal.

All genuine art-works reflect this duality. Thus, they are both beautiful and tragic.

¹ Albert Camus, The Rebel, An Essay on Man in Revolt, trans. Anthony Bower, with a Foreword by Sir Herbert Read (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1956), p.30.

² Vincent Van Gogh, Dear Theo, The Autobiography of Vincent Van Gogh, ed. Irving Stone (New York: The New American Library, Inc., Signet Books, 1969), p.179.

INTRODUCTION

If you want it to look like a man, you've got to
draw his hat on.

-my first grade drawing teacher.

This thesis work originated in the desire to execute a series of portraits, and to investigate the portrait tradition and contemporary artists working within the genre. The original intention was fourfold.

First, the narrow parameters defined in the proposal (i.e. life-size, freestanding portraits), were to provide discipline through the restriction of subject-matter. Such a restriction would allow concentration on materials and technique: namely, how to draw and handle paint. The purpose was not to become 'slick' or 'talented' as an end in itself (the antithesis of making art). Instead, the goal was "pure and... direct translation of my emotions",³ unhampered by technical considerations.

The second motivation for this work was curiosity. How does a portrait become more than straightforward documentation (person-as-object, a SIGN), to signify that which we empathize with on a very basic level (the universal, a SYMBOL)? Obviously, this concern is not specific to portraiture, but pertains to all art.

Third, the thesis is an exploration of the solitary figure, uninfluenced by human interaction, environment, or narrative -- as pure form. I was interested in how contour and form adopt an expressive existence, independent of learned associative figurative connotations.

Fourth, I was anxious to explore a genre which is most prevalent in those societies where individual worth and importance are treasured, and which is fundamentally humanist. While this fact does not necessarily qualify the portrait as 'art', it complements artistic process.

While the appearance of the work has changed drastically -- I have traveled a long way from conventional portraiture -- the underlying motives have remained constant.

³ Jack D. Flam, Matisse on Art (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1978), p.81.

I. EVOLUTION OF THE WORK

"Who are you?" said the caterpillar.
...Alice replied, rather shyly, "I-I hardly know,
sir, just at present - at least I know who I was
when I got up this morning, but I think I must
have changed several times since then."¹

As noted, the paintings have experienced great change. While each intersection brought its own sense of confusion and uncertainty, I have tried to keep working, and to let each painting decide its own direction. To make conscious decision, and to impose direction, is to be unkind to the work.

The first paintings were realist, concerned primarily with attaining likeness, and an exploration of process, illusion, and scale. The method was to imagine a completed portrait, execute a photograph according to the imagined specifications, and painstakingly reproduce that photo. The paintings, approximately five by six feet in size, were worked in successive small areas, each finished before moving to the next. They depict single individuals, isolated within large, shallow, empty or ambiguous space (see illustration 1).

These pieces satisfy the basic criteria that a portrait represents an individual "in such manner that under no circumstances can his identity be confused with someone else." However, process rendered each photograph, rather than sitter, subject of the final piece. Thus, the paintings are actually portraits of inanimate objects, lacking the personality and spirit of the Human Being. This violates a second criteria, accepted by most artists working within the genre, that the portrait depict the "inner individuality of the person."²

Discussing ancient portraiture, Erwin Panofsky describes Egyptian tomb statues as distinct from Greek or Roman. Greek and Roman sculpture provide a holistic depiction of man's physical and spiritual existence. In contrast, Egyptian funerary sculpture,

¹ Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-glass, with a forward by Horace Gregory (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, 1960), p.47.

² James D. Breckenridge, Likeness, A Conceptual History of Ancient Portraiture (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968), p.4.

designed for occupation by the soul of its subject, is intended "not a representation (mimesis) of a living being - body plus soul, the former animated by the later - but a reconstruction of the body alone, waiting for animation."³ Similarly, these paintings attain likeness, but lack soul. They are unsuccessful as portraits.

Other deficiencies were immediately apparent, due to the nature of photography itself,⁴ the process I had developed, and the influence of camera on experience.

For example, properties characteristic to the camera influenced the work in undesirable ways. First, because cameras distort the dynamic relationship between form and space, the experience in a photograph is not sculpted, weighty forms surrounded by deep, vibrant space, but patterned surface -- abbreviated form and space. This fact contributes to the sense of claustrophobic urgency in my first paintings.

In addition, the camera frame imposes rigid, artificial order, while the shutter's spontaneous click binds the photograph to specific time and location -- digitizing reality in a series of fleeting moments, and isolating each from its greater context.

Alfred Stieglitz would argue that photography involves "the arrestation of the fluid elements of existence", and the universal deciphered as the camera focuses "at a timeless moment in flux."⁵ This is sensed in great photographs, for example Stieglitz' portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe, but certainly not in mine! Generally, the nature of the snapshot resists the universal.

The camera records a slice of objective visual reality in its entirety, equally emphasizing a multitude of details. In contrast, when asked why he painted so furiously at twilight, James Whistler explained:

As the light fades and the shadows deepen, all
petty and exacting details vanish, everything trivial
disappears, and I see things as they are in great
strong masses: the buttons are lost, but the garment

³ Ibid., p.7.

⁴ It is important to note that the following is not a critique of photography as an art form, but a discussion of its role in this process.

⁵ Frank Waldo et al., America and Alfred Stieglitz, A Collective Portrait (New York: The Literary Guild, 1943), p.105.

remains; the garment is lost, but the sitter remains;
the sitter is lost, but the shadow remains; the shadow
is lost, but the picture remains.⁶

To transcribe directly from the photograph is to neglect the choice and simplification necessary in art.

Conversely, the photograph's information is also limited. Camera optics are ill-equipped to express the multitude of sensations and emotions associated with visual experience.

Most detrimental was using this tool. A mechanized eye through which the visual world is channeled, the camera obstructs immersion in pure experience. Total immersion is necessary if the painting is to reveal the essence of its subject. According to Henri Matisse:

The characteristics of drawing (and painting)... do not depend on the exact copying of natural forms, not the patient assembling of exact details, but on the profound feeling of the artist before the objects he has chosen, on which his attention is focussed, and the spirit which he has penetrated.⁷

Most important, my art is a bridge to allusive physical and spiritual elements beyond and within myself. It reveals magic and beauty that the utilitarian world denies. It teaches me to see and is sight. The camera edits experience, and therefore is inappropriate for my work.

The working method, described above, inhibited the growth of both my paintings and the painter. First, because the process very quickly became static -- a passive reaction to something which had already occurred (the photograph), rather than sustained interaction between artist, subject, and painting in progress. Second, the piecemeal execution (bringing small, individual areas to completion) injured the internal dialogue and cohesiveness of the whole.

Despite the forementioned limitations, the technique I was evolving (glazing methods, paint and canvas preparation, etc.), facilitated later endeavors. More important, these

⁶ Francis Spalding, Whistler (Oxford, England: Phaidon Press, 1979), p.66.

⁷ Flam, Matisse on Art, p.117.

very confrontational paintings are interesting studies of the relationship of artist, subject, and observer in portraiture, and how scale, proportion, pose, and color influence that relationship. The figures, very close to life-size, are unsettling -- alternatively accessible and hostile. As self-portraits, they provided important personal expression and catharsis, an opening for further work.

This method of working was eventually counterproductive; the photograph was abandoned. Left with no clear direction, I stopped painting, and began to draw extensively.

These exploratory drawings reveal direct, concentrated observation of the figure. The purpose was to project as little of myself into the subject as possible. Consequently, the initial pieces are empirical renderings of contour, form and gesture. This non-aggressive tactic was rewarded as the figure gradually revealed its more elusive aspects: the tensions, harmonies, and overwhelming spirituality inherent in its beautiful masses.

In addition, on very good days, the distinction between myself and subject completely dissolved. This phenomenon is described by Eugen Herrigel: "In the case of archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality."⁸ Sensing this integration was to experience the authority of art, and understand how ego devastates artistic process.

After working on these drawings several weeks, I walked into the studio one hot, breezy morning and heard a faint rustling sound. I looked to six sketches of a dozing model tacked to the wall the day before. Six chests moved slowly in and out. The sound: their soft breathing just prior to awakening. Enchanted by these Galateas, I reluctantly closed the window.

The experience reminded me of childhood -- the tiny mechanized bird in my grandmother's dining room. Vladimir Nabokov describes a similar bird in The Gift:

...(A) stuffed tropical songbird, so astonishingly lifelike that it seemed about to take wing...and, when the big key had been wheedled from the housekeeper Ivonna Ivanovna...and given several tight, vivifying turns, the little Malayan nightingale would open its beak... no, it

⁸ Eugen Herrigel, Zen in the Art of Archery, trans. R.F.C. Hull, with a Foreword by D.T. Suzuki (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1971), p. vi.

would not even open its beak, for something odd had happened to the clockwork mechanism, to some spring or other, which, however, stored up its action for later: the bird would not sing then, but if one forgot about it and a week later happened to walk past its lofty wardrobe-top perch, then some mysterious tremor would suddenly make it emit its magical warbling - and how marvelously, how long it would trill, puffing out its ruffled little breast; it would finish, then on your way out, you would tread on another floorboard and in special response it would utter a final whistle, and grow silent halfway through the note.⁹

Such experiences offer a gift of poetry and purpose to the artist. My excitement in the studio that morning generated a large series of extended charcoal studies.

These studies contain life and vitality missing in the first paintings. Although usually rough, unfinished, and lacking physical resemblance to subject, their simplified forms convey a greater sense of inner individuality and humanity. Free from the materialist imitation of nature, the forms are closer to an "outward expression of inner meaning"¹⁰ -- the essence of their subject.

It is this understanding which directed subsequent work. Confident in the new direction, I resumed painting. The new work was a radical departure from the first pieces.

These paintings, five by six feet, also depict isolated individuals in empty or ambiguous space (see illustrations 2-7). These explore the figurative form. Other elements are increasingly restrained. The use of color and fluctuation of value is limited, in order to minimize expression and illusion extraneous to form. Their language is line.

The decision to pursue this direction was based on the desire to find, according to Keith Vaughan, "an image which renders the experience of a human being without

⁹ Vladimir Nabokov, The Gift, trans. Michael Scammell (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, Wideview/Perigee Books, 1963), pp.23f.

¹⁰ Wassily Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, trans. M.T. H. Sadler (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1977), p.29.

resorting to the classical experience of anatomical paraphrase."¹¹ The decision was also influenced in part by Clive Bell's theory of significant form. It was assumed that submission to the mysterious empathy towards beauty and wholeness of form inhibits the imposition of conscious intent: significance appears at creation. Thus, the subject's essential nature is revealed, providing a more comprehensive depiction than the traditional portrait, with its emphasis on external appearance. For this reason, the concept of likeness was abandoned, despite the success of some artists working within confines of the genre.

Although figures in these paintings are larger, and dominate the canvas more than their predecessors, they do not confront the spectator in a similar way. They are completely self-absorbed within the silence of their environment.

Initially, successful¹² drawings were employed as studies or cartoons for these works. This method was abandoned with the recurrence of a nagging problem. Like the first paintings, these were lifeless parody -- now, however, mimicing a drawing rather than photograph. The pieces are sentimental, precious reproductions of the elusive moment of connection/creation (the artist's treasure), of which each drawing was artifact. As such, the paintings lack the vitality of discovery present in their forebears.¹³

This realization effected a third phase of work. At this time, preparatory studies were abandoned, along with the presumption of final form. Instead, many related drawings were completed, varying pose, model, and angle. The drawings themselves were then manipulated, broken down, reconstructed, over and over again. In this process, visual

¹¹ Edoardo Soprano, Figurative Painting in Europe (Venice, Italy: Off. Tipografica Vic. G. Strocchiero, 1968), no page numbers in text.

¹² Not in the colloquial sense, but "successful" meaning those drawings with forms most eloquent, lively... Which speak directly, of the experience of doing, of the "connection" - with subject and my self.

¹³ It is important to note constant dichotomy between the paintings and drawings throughout this period. As explanation, an overwhelming awe of tradition inhibited exploration in paint similar to that occurring in other medias. This misdirected allegiance to the history of art eventually fell prey to the charm of paint. Vincent Van Gogh provided further encouragement in the statement: "(Someone) told me: 'Painting is drawing in color'; to which I answered: 'Exactly, and drawing in black and white is, in fact, painting in black and white'." (Van Gogh, Dear Theo, p.209).

memory was reinforced and forms internalized, convention and the inessential cast away.

Again, the experience was a sense of complete integration with the subject. Drawing these forms was to physically experience their balance, oppositions, tension, and weight. My own physicality was also unconsciously introduced -- unrelated activities (e.g. swimming, running) and the action of painting, contribute to the final experience of the work. The final drawings are greater than the material sum of their contributors/authors; they incorporate gesture (both the subject's and my own), strength, grace, and emotion.

The decision to pursue this course was influenced by Alfred Stieglitz, whose 1921 exhibition, "A Demonstration of Portraiture" revolutionized the genre. Each portrait in his exhibit consisted of between 2 and 45 prints of all parts and attitudes of the body. Visitors there are said to have "felt themselves in the presence of life itself... and recognized their hidden selves made visible."¹⁴ My work was also inspired by Henri Focillon's assertions regarding the metamorphosis of form.

After many preliminary drawings, it was the spirit of form itself, a daemon, which pulled the paint brush through the motions of execution. This experience is best described quoting Susan Rothenberg. She states: "I (am) just moving my hand on the paper. It (is) like a Ouija board....the body is doing it, not the brain."¹⁵ The spirit of form, its "will to be" corresponds to the organic process. This is materialized and wonderfully illustrated in Michelangelo's last sculptures. It is present in all genuine art works.

The emergent image is conceived in memory, feeling, and observation. It suggests sound and thought. As each figure is fragmented, so is its self-containment. They are increasingly expressive. The final paintings allude to the figure without specific reference (see illustrations 8-12). Despite continuing dependence on external observation, they signal emancipation from objective depiction.

Consistent to previous exploration, but in addition, these paintings exhibit growing interest in line. By that I mean line as record of decisions and perceptions through the form-finding process, as it designates and activates form and space, as expression. It

¹⁴ Waldo et al., America and Alfred Stieglitz, p.117.

¹⁵ Grace Glueck, "Susan Rothenberg: New Outlook for a Visionary Artist," The New York Times Magazine (July 22, 1984), p.16.

is important to note that the intent was to react to form with line, not to impose expression through the latter's manipulation.

Line documents the transformation from approximation to certainty in form making. Drawing parallels the sculpture process, successive marks corresponding to blows of the chisel, leaving only the most essential. In contrast to sculpture, each stage of adjustment and alteration is maintained, marks never fully painted out or erased. These designate perceptual shifts, change of viewpoint, and movement, describing the subject's and my own extended experience. These are the history of process: evolving decision, observation, and emotion throughout the birth of form.

As contour, line isolates form and space. The relationship between these two is turbulent; depending on line quality, it is a stable or unstable boundary. Rudolf Arnheim describes the dynamic nature of form, noting its perceptual and aesthetic existence, which is dependant on the equilibrium of antagonistic forces. He quotes physicist Cyril J. Smith to describe these forces: "Without both the tension (of form) and compression (of space) and the balance between them nothing could exist, for it would either expand to infinity or shrink to nothing."¹⁶ For this reason, line is a locus of energy and meaning in the work.

The musical, calligraphic flow of line is the poetry of dreams, alluding to mysterious meaning and sensation. Its strenuous nature depicts the physical activity of making art, of gesture, and struggle.

Looking back to the first few pieces, I'm amazed at where I've been and where I'm at...

It's too bad if this offends some conventional
idolizers of the human figure. Besides, all they
have to do is to look a little more attentively
into a mirror...What is a face, really? Its own photo?
Its make-up? Or is it a face as painted by such
or such painter? That which is in front? Inside?
Behind? And the rest?...

-Picasso¹⁷

¹⁶ Rudolf Arnheim, "Dynamics and Invariants", Perceiving Artworks, ed. John Fisher (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), p.172.

¹⁷ Dore Ashton, Picasso on Art, A Selection of Views (New York: Penguin Books, 1977), p.110.

II. DISCOVERIES

...nothing more can be attempted than to establish the beginning and the direction of an infinitely long road. The pretension of any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at least, a self-illusion. Perfection can here be obtained by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see.

-Georg Simmel¹⁸

This work has been a good teacher. The best teachers don't provide information, instead nurture inquisitiveness. I am no closer to a sense of understanding or accomplishment than at the onset of the project. However, while not 'successful' in the traditional sense, I have come to understand the nature and complexity of the task. This understanding motivates continued effort.

According to Herbert Read, the "artistic impulse is an impulse of cognition." Man makes art in pursuit of wisdom beyond the restrictions of language and empiricism, both which limit thought and experience.¹⁹

In contrast, Joseph Campbell notes the numerous theological, philosophical, and mythological forms designed by society.²⁰ Because these forms are generally

¹⁸ Carlos Castaneda, The Teachings of Don Juan: A Yaqui Way of Knowledge (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), p.1.

¹⁹ Herbert Read, The Forms of Things Unknown (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1963), p.17.

²⁰ According to Campbell, traditional myths serve four functions: reconciling consciousness with the preconditions of existence ("the brutal bloody facts of life"), formulating an image of the universe which redeems the human consciousness from a sense of guilt in life, maintaining social order, and shaping individuals to the aims and ideals of their social group.

accepted, life is experienced within the context of myth. However, the true artist rejects inherited form. Their works reflect the verity of authentic experience. 21

Resisting convention, learning to see beyond myth, necessitates avoiding/unlearning social and habitual forms, which burrow deep within consciousness. I admire all that is free from artificial structure, for example, Primitive and Medieval art, and the paintings of Masaccio, DeKooning, Miro, Rothko -- It is such freedom I work towards.

Towards this end, I have chosen the figurative form. The further decision to pursue portraiture brought me headlong into a related issue, defined by Robert Storr as:

The legitimacy and cost of violating the integrity of
the figure in a search for its essence...The conflict
between the hope for a transcendent purity of form
and the torment of destroying natural beauty...22

From the very beginning, my work and research indicated that 'appearance' and 'essence' are incompatible. This information led to the conclusion that the colloquial definition of portraiture (i.e. the depiction of physical appearance, inner individuality, and the universal) is internally inconsistent.

This belief was affirmed recently at the Stanford University Museum of Art, where a bronze cast of Auguste Rodin's hand holds a small piece of his sculpture. Next to it are several studies of hands executed by Rodin, also in bronze. The artist's hand is hollow and lifeless next to his works. Even more striking is the artist's torso studies contrasted with the sculpture of Duane Hanson. The latter, actual body casts, exhibiting unparalleled similitude to nature, are inanimate. The former radiate inner life. Comparison verifies Rodin's genius, and the fact that faithfulness to appearance violates truth in the work.

In support of the portrait criteria, some artists have achieved a synthesis of likeness and vitality. But most are unsuccessful -- for example, the aged Frans Hals was bitterly disillusioned regarding his work. Rembrandt Van Rijn ceased painting portraits in later life, despite resulting financial ruin. Both expressed frustration in the

21 Joseph Campbell, "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," Myths, Dreams and Religion, ed. Joseph Campbell (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1970), p.139-173.

22 Robert Storr, "Spooks and Floats", Art In America 71 (May 1983), p.155.

depiction of "man as a human being."²³ Michelangelo refused to paint them.²⁴ Alice Neel disdained the title 'Portrait Painter' -- "I am a collector of souls", she said.²⁵

Continued research prompted further misgivings. First, it was discovered that motivations for portraiture are often antithetical to art. For example, the juxtaposition of subject, objects, and events frequently establish associations promoting religious, sociological, and political myth.²⁶ While these generate wealth and prestige, thus gratify artist and patron, they violate the integrity of art.

The portrait may also support erroneous self images or intellectual constructs. For example, classical and Renaissance portraiture is consistently faithful to an ideal. On a lower level, diplomacy and economics encourage artists to confirm their patron's grandest notions. In contrast, Fairfield Porter notes that art "connects one to matters of fact. It is anti-ideal... It implies no approval, but respect for things as they are."²⁷

The pursuit of likeness, indigenous to portraiture, complimented efforts towards improved technique. It also fulfilled the unconscious, superficial motivation for success (Look what I can do...). In contrast, art does not provide the security of success. To be an artist is to experience constant doubt; the sense of accomplishment is tenuous. However, to understand art's greater potential is to overthrow the materialist allure towards virtuosity. Quoting Paul Gauguin, "It seems to me that just now the lower the genius sinks, the higher the talent rises."²⁸

²³ Max J. Friedlander, Landscape, Portrait, Still Life, Their Origin and Development (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), p.252f.

²⁴ John Pope-Hennessy, The Portrait in the Renaissance (New York: Bollinger Foundation, 1966), p.72.

²⁵ Judith Higgins, "Alice Neel and the Human Comedy", Art News 83 (October 1984), p.70.

²⁶ As illustration: Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's "Odalisque With a Slave" depicting woman as a sexual object, Jacques Louis David's "Death of Marat", glorifying the ideals and violence of the French revolution, and Egyptian portrait sculpture, asserting the divinity and power of the Pharaoh.

²⁷ John Ashbery and Kenworth Moffett, Fairfield Porter (1907-1975), Realist Painter in an Age of Abstraction (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1982), p.9.

²⁸ Paul Gauguin, Paul Gauguin's Intimate Journals, trans. Van Wyck Brooks (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968), p.252.

The portrait dilemma, "the quarrel between significance and illusion,"²⁹ is present in most representational art. This results from insistence on representation as an objective, optical event. Instead, genuine representation depicts emotion, sensation, and understanding affected by subject. In this way, the later paintings are increasingly representational.

When the consequence of work is to promote myth, maintain status quo, or strut technical virtuosity, art is sacrificed. Instead the painting is a document -- of superficial appearance or desire. Painting transcends documentation only as "a visual trace... of the mysteries... of the human spirit."³⁰ This is born in the artist's sincerity, respect, and attentiveness: to art, self, and subject.

In contrast to the tendency towards subjectivism and abstraction in art of the past century, these paintings are consistently derivative. Their forms, though simplified and transformed, are conceived in direct experience of nature. The purpose of this work is not to impose emotion or idea on form, but to experience form, to learn from it, and to express this in each piece. Towards this end, nature/the figure is an unlimited resource.

This interactive process also wards off a lurking sense of isolation. Again, quoting Fairfield Porter: "(Painting)... if a way of making the connection between yourself and everything. You connect yourself to everything that includes yourself in the process of painting."³¹

It is important to note persistent meanings and associations, dictated by relationships within the work, independent of formal elements. These are unintentional, were even resisted, and relate to the mysterious presence found in the combination of certain objects or events in the natural world -- "the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella."³² While increasingly excited by the figure as abstract form, I am now more sensitive to the incredibly complex system of meanings and associations connected with it. These enrich my work and everyday experience, and motivate continued dependence on external reference.

²⁹ Clive Bell, Art, (New York: G.P. Putnam and Sons, 1981), p.26.

³⁰ Catherine Green, Georgette Hasiotis and Sandra Ticen, Robert Motherwell (Buffalo, New York: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 1983).

³¹ John Ashbery, Fairfield Porter, p.60.

³² John Russell, The Meanings of Modern Art, (New York: Harper and Row, 1981), p.196.

This work, and its effect on my growth as a painter is described most eloquently in "The Circular Ruins", by Jorge Luis Borges.³³ The short story begins with a solemn, gray man arriving at a deserted, circular temple recently destroyed by fire. His purpose there was to "dream a man... in minute integrity and insert him into reality." Initial efforts were unsuccessful; the first dreams chaotic and unfocused. Soon after, he recognized a young boy resembling himself in character and appearance among the crowd of his dream, and chose to redeem this boy from his "state of vain appearance and interpolate him into the world of reality."³⁴ However, restlessness and insomnia ensued, and the boy's image, a hallucination, disappeared. The man understood the extreme difficulty of his task.

After resting, he dreamt again - this time of a beating heart - "with minute love he dreamt it... Each night he perceived it with greater clarity. He did not touch it, but limited himself to witnessing it, observing it, perhaps correcting it with his eyes. He perceived it, lived it, from many distances and many angles... (finally touching)... the whole heart, inside and out."³⁵ Continuing this way, it took many years for the man to slowly build the boy's organs.

When the boy was entire the Fire god visited the man, promising to animate the phantom so that "all creatures except Fire itself and the dreamer would believe him to be a man of flesh and blood."³⁶ The boy woke, memory of his creation erased. He traveled to a similar temple downstream to complete an identical rite.

Later, the man was told of a "magic man in a temple of the North who could walk upon fire and not be burned,"³⁷ and remembered the god's words. Soon after, terrible fire swept through the forest, towards him, destroying everything in its path. While his impulse was to flee, the man chose the serenity of death. "He walked into the shreds of flame. But they did not bite into his flesh, they caressed him and engulfed him

³³ Jorge Luis Borges, "The Circular Ruins", *Labyrinths*, ed. Donald A. Yates, James E. Irby (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1964), pp.44-50.

³⁴ Ibid., p.46.

³⁵ Ibid., p.48.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p.49.

without heat or combustion. With relief, with humiliation, with terror, he understood that he too was a mere appearance, dreamt by another."³⁸

Man, boy, and predecessors are artists and their works. They are selfsame; are made, create, and exist simultaneously within the context of endless dream. The dream is art -- the creative act. Fire, a complementary impulse, is painful revelation of the illusion and transience of materialism.

³⁸ Ibid., p.50.



SELF PORTRAIT, 81" x 65", OIL ON CANVAS, 1984



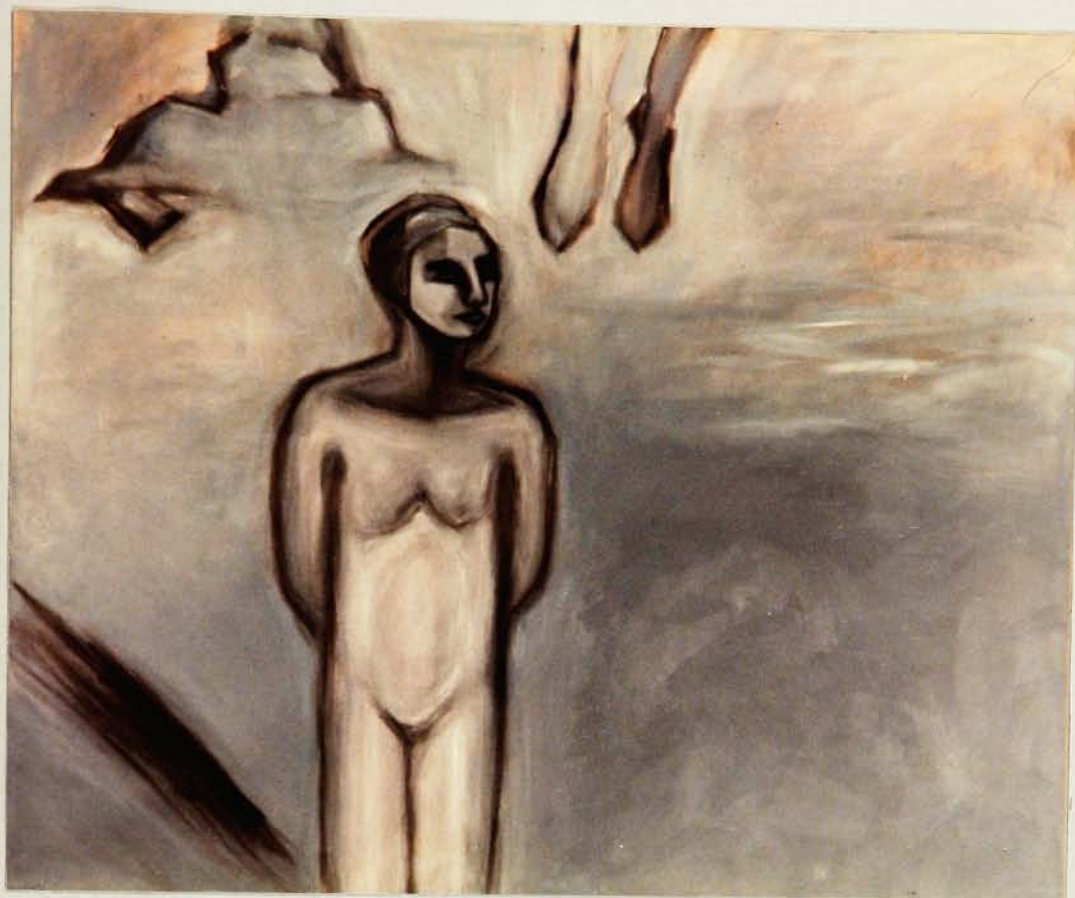
PORTRAIT OF VIC MAGNOTTI, 5' X 6', OIL ON CANVAS, 1984



UNTITLED I, 5' X 6', OIL ON CANVAS, 1984



PORTRAIT OF ANNA STRAUSS, 4' X 6', OIL ON CANVAS, 1984



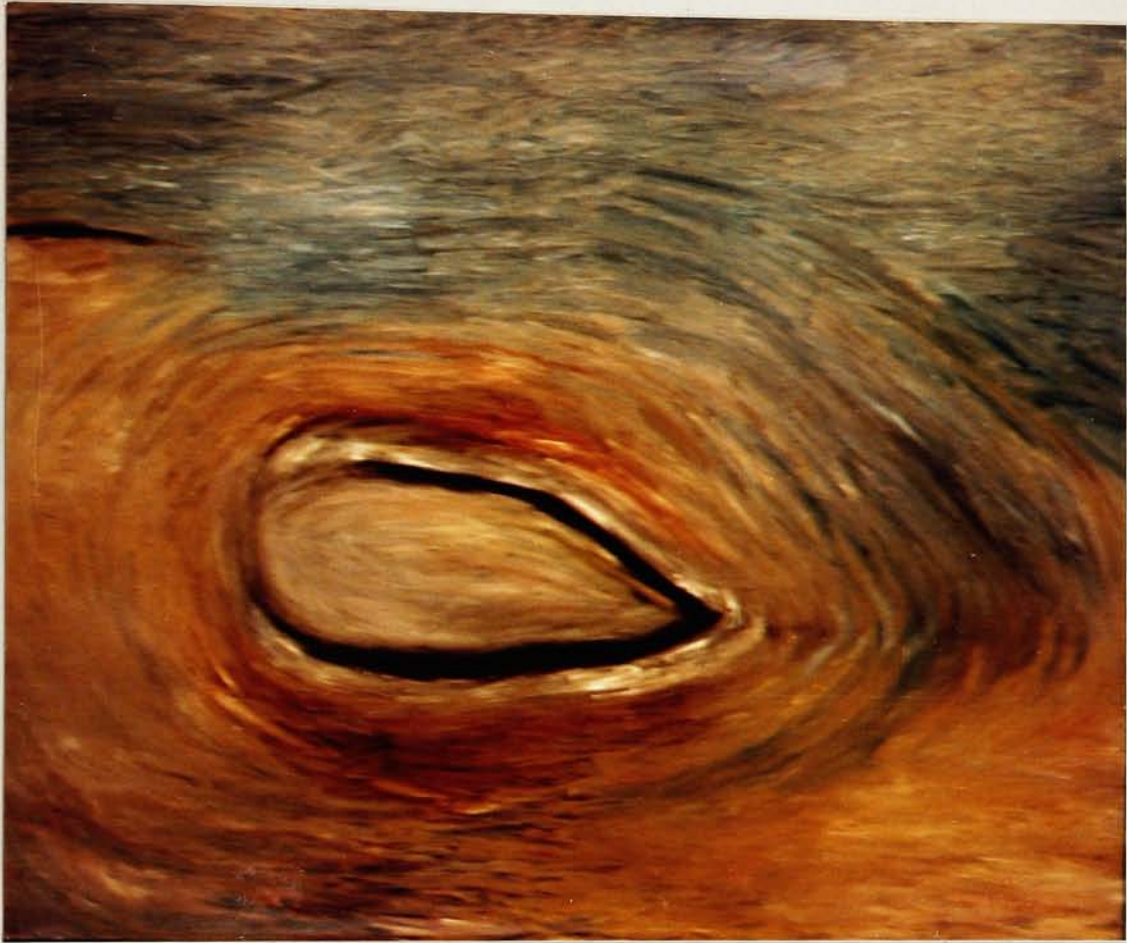
AT GASPE, 5' X 6', OIL ON CANVAS, 1984



UNTITLED II, 6' X 5', OIL ON CANVAS, 1984-85



UNTITLED III, 6' X 5', OIL ON CANVAS, 1985



WHICH TIME SHE CHANTED SNATCHES OF OLD SONGS,
5' X 6', OIL ON CANVAS, 1985



FOR FRIDA, 6' X 5', OIL ON CANVAS, 1985



UNTITLED IV, 24" x 19", OIL ON PAPER, 1985



UNTITLED V, 19" x 24", OIL ON PAPER, 1985



UNTITLED, 19" X 24", OIL ON PAPER, 1985

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