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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

Music and Art / An Analogical Approach

By

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INTRODUCTION

I chose the present direction in my work out of a sincere need to fulfill something deeply personal in my life. When faced with the pressure of producing a body of work I searched long and hard for an answer outside of myself, from the world around me. However, everything I found as a possible undertaking seemed shallow and unimportant. In this agonizing search I re-examined everything I had done up to this point, as well as what art history had to offer.

I questioned every aspect of art searching for the truth, the underlying mystery that determines quality. What is quality and how do we determine that something has substance? How far can personal expression be taken before the intrinsic quality and aesthetic value of a piece is destroyed? I believe whatever one chooses to do, it should be representative of something done well. Craftsmanship should be carried out to enhance the idea, and serve the artist. I also believe that an artist should do something that is important to himself personally. It is something he chooses to do out of an inner need to express himself, not because he is unable to do something else. This requires true honesty with oneself.

I believe in honesty in every aspect of my life as well as my art, therefore I found it impossible to develop any idea that wasn't very close or intimate with my own personality. I've always felt it should be a natural thing, something that would surface because of my own personal growth and interests. In a lecture on modern art Paul Klee stated: "Nothing can be rushed. It must grow, it should grow of itself, and if the time ever comes for that work-then so much the better!"¹

The breakthrough finally occurred when I looked inside

myself for the answer, evaluating my strengths and weaknesses. It occurred to me that I've always been able to express my immediate feelings with music (through improvisation with piano and guitar). But when trying to visually express them it became too literal, too contrived. This thought led me to think towards abstraction as a possible approach.

As I began to develop my visual ideas in paint, I also started to investigate possible relationships between the visual and musical arts. At this time I also took a music literature course with professor Charles Warren which became extremely instrumental toward the growth and evolution of my ideas. The emphasis of this course was to study the musical history of a particular era and explore analogies that existed between the music and art of the period in question. These analogies were similarities in form or style that could be defined in terms that were relevant to both modes of expression. As I worked through these papers I began to notice the paintings changing in ways that became mysteriously linked to my mental investigations. I wasn't aware of these changes while painting, but upon reflection realized I was somehow moving along a path toward something far more substantial than I had started with. I have chosen to include several of these papers in this thesis as I feel that they were as vital a part of the process as the paint itself.

CHAPTER I

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

In order to fully understand the capabilities and limitations of his craft, the artist must have an acute awareness for it's history and the parameters by which it was formed and judged. I believe that any approach toward creating art of an historic stature cannot deny its own history; it must come to terms with that history, embrace it, and then transcend it. In essence, one must totally understand the rules before he can utilize them or in some instances depart from them. As we shall see, Mozart did not invent polyphony, he recapitulated its tradition and brought it to an ultimate development. Paul Klee did not view transparent color interaction as a radical innovation but rather as a part of a tradition in painting which went back to the glazing techniques of the great flemish masters, and even as far back as Leonardo da Vinci.

In my attempt to discover the relationships that exist between music and the visual arts, I have utilized history as both an informant for my work and as an example for my ideas in this thesis. By doing so I feel I have challenged my own passion for combining music and art by testing my observations against already proven masters and their work.

Because of this approach I feel confident expressing my ideas both visually and literally, allowing my work and myself to be put to the test of time.

CHAPTER II

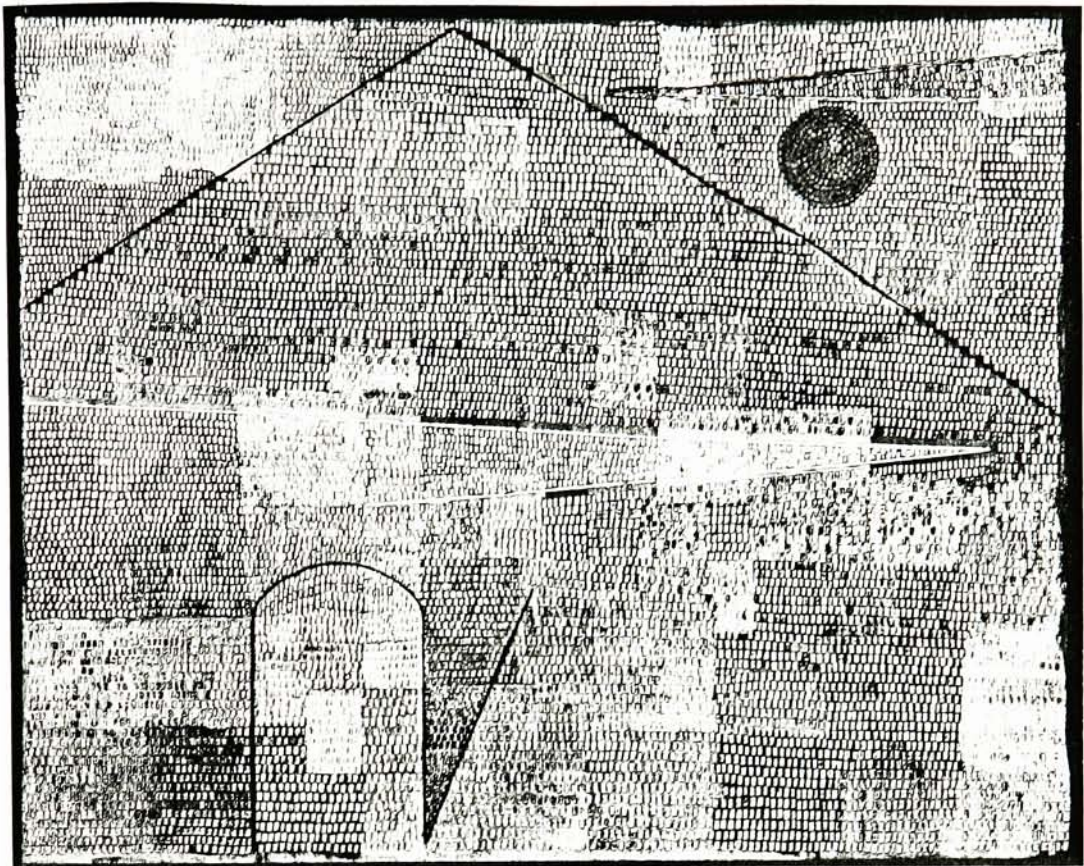
AN ANALOGICAL SURVEY

The analogies which I have attempted to determine between music and painting exist both historically and structurally. Through my research and investigations it has come to my attention that these analogies can take two different forms. An intentional analogy occurs when the artist makes a conscious effort to make the connection between two forms such as Paul Klee's "polyphonic paintings" or my own analogical survey. However, another type of analogy exists where the artist may not be aware of similarities in style or content but is simply reflecting the cultural times in which he exists. The prevailing thoughts and attitudes of that particular time period are absorbed and expressed through his particular medium. We can refer to this as a cultural analogy. I will first develop the idea of an intentional analogy and follow with an analysis of a cultural analogy.

The Intentional Analogy

Paul Klee's Ad Parnassum

One example of an intentional analogy is Paul Klee's attempt at a "higher polyphony" in painting, particularly the work Ad Parnassum (Fig. 1). In this work we see the culmination of a lifelong quest of Klee, who was an accomplished violinist, to make painting as he saw music to be. In other words, a significant artistic expression that is not based on symbolism, narration, representation or specific reference. Klee referred to this condition as a "higher polyphony" and longed for this quality in his painting. He came to see how absolute painting - above



(Fig. 1)

all a painting of pure color composition - might indeed attain something of the condition of music. With the study of non-objective art, particularly the rhythms of Cubism, he discovered components of an aesthetic common ground between modern art and his own musical background, temperament, and attitudes about music.

The title Ad Parnassum is apparently derived from an eighteenth-century treatise on music theory, the Gradus ad Parnassum of Johann Josef Fux. In this context it refers to the ascent from basic fundamentals to the pinnacles of art.

Fux's treatise essentially dealt with an introduction to the principles of counterpoint and polyphonic composition. This concept primarily deals with musical textures in which two or more melodic lines are played or sung simultaneously. In the treatise, Fux created a codification of the study of counterpoint where he established a teaching method for which theorists had long searched for. His greatest contribution lies in the influence that his treatise had on the composers of the Viennese classical school. Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven all learned the fundamental techniques of contrapuntal composition from Gradus ad Parnassum.

Klee, being an accomplished musician himself, fully understood the concepts of polyphony and counterpoint and began to utilize these as a basis for his own visual explorations. He began to realize the validity of incorporating his deep involvement with music into the mainstream of his professional life and thought. With this realization he envisioned the potential of visual art to rival the uncompromised stature he ascribed to past music. He concluded that what would be required to realize such a dream was a structure, a system, an architecture of color, and a majestic synthesis of expression - specifically, the type of synthesis accomplished by Mozart who he considered to be the greatest creative artist to date. During this revelation he asserted: "Polyphonic painting is superior to music in that, here, the time element becomes a

spacial element. The notion of simultaneity stands out even more richly." (1917)²

Klee defined polyphony as the "simultaneity of several independent themes," and sought to make these independent themes interact successfully. In light of this realization he offered the following thought:

There is polyphony in music. In itself the attempt to transpose it into art would offer no special interest. But to gather insights into music through the special character of polyphonic works, to penetrate deep into this cosmic sphere, to issue forth a transformed beholder of art, and then to lurk in waiting for these things in the picture, that is something more. For the simultaneity of several independent themes is something that is possible not only in music; typical things in general do not belong just in one place, but have their roots and organic anchor everywhere and anywhere.³

In Ad Parnassum we see the culmination of a quarter century of investigation and inquiry solidify into a total unified piece. First Klee developed a color theme for the ground of the piece based on the rectangle, an echoe of his existing format. He conceived a gentle theme in blue, on motifs formed of gray, earth browns, and greens, pale, very yellow greens, and several hues of blue. These forms were arranged in a rhythmic sequence according to their color type, leading the viewer's eye throughout the painting in a fluid manner. It was his intention to create a highly dynamic individuality of colors, based on a tonal-dynamic structural rhythm.

In planning this monumental work, Klee did not ignore line as a potential for expression. By taking simple forceful shapes, such as are often found in melodic lines of music, he constructed another pictorial theme, breaking the entire surface of the picture plane into simple geometric shapes, somewhat suggestive of a mountain peak at sunset. By truncating the lines of the "mountain slopes" in Ad Parnassum, he

produced the effect of melodic flow and continuity beyond the limits of what is seen. This masterful use of line became the second stage in his work of living polyphony.

Finally Klee set down the second color theme. Over the entire surface of the painting he painstakingly applied a staccato rhythm of white dots. Then, over each white dot he executed a series of transparent color washes to obtain the desired effect he wanted. With this technique, Klee developed an extremely precise means for the orchestration of colors. With it he masterfully created the vibrant, medium-blue tonal band that sweeps through the center of the picture, dividing the top bright blue tonal band (the "violins," as Klee would say) from the darker values ("cellos") arranged along the picture bottom.

In Ad Parnassum Klee summarized twenty-five years of methodical experiments in music and painting theory to arrive at a truly polyphonic painting; an "absolute" painting. With this work his concept of a "higher polyphony" was finally realized.

My Analogical Inquiries

Paul Klee's explorations and perceptions of "polyphonic painting" had a direct influence on my thinking towards forming an aesthetic for my own work. Not solely by his particular findings or techniques, but by stimulating my interest toward the study of the great masters of contrapuntal composition, particularly Mozart and Beethoven. It was primarily through the study of Mozart and the sonata form, that I began to discover the intrinsic qualities that I believe all great works of music and art must possess.

It is true that the melodies used by Mozart are often delicately charming and deeply moving, but beautiful, suggestive melody in itself makes only pleasing or popular music, not great art.

But by the layering of several independent themes, Mozart

mitigated the personal quality of any individual theme, and, in some way, the various poetic content of those themes were transformed into the absolute content of the whole. I believe in any living work of art, as in any living organism, the whole must be greater than the sum of its parts and through Mozart's "higher polyphony", I find a strong confirmation of this conviction.

In the work of Mozart and other masters, as well as my own painting, it has become increasingly apparent to me that some kind of absolute compositional structure must exist in order to harness a truly expressive color. By this, I am referring to a unification of colors, that together, express one total feeling.

. . . Colours are forces, I said. They must be organized with a view to creating an expressive ensemble. The same as in orchestration; you give one part to an instrument which can also be assumed by another to reinforce the effect.⁴

With this new found "architecture", I found the freedom to express myself with paint in a totally intuitive, uninhibited manner. This allowed me the "musical" approach to painting I had been searching for, where I could intuitively express my immediate feelings through paint, with the same emotion and spontaneity I experience with music.

This led me to a realization on the questions of quality I had been searching for. What determines ultimate quality and how does this quality constitute a masterpiece? I believe it is the combination of intensity and order that characterizes a work worthy of the term masterpiece.

As an example of this declaration, I have included the following case study, where an analogy is drawn between the work of David and Mozart.

David and Mozart

In the second half of the eighteenth century, a new musical style was developing in Vienna, Austria. The

elements of musical technique, such as rhythm, dynamics, tone color, texture, melody, and form were being used in a more flexible manner, a style of great variety and contrast. As a result of this, a new sensitivity of feeling and emotion developed in music. Certainly events of this time did nothing to promote serenity. The trauma of the French Revolution of 1789 had an ominous effect on the attitudes and activities of all of Europe. This turmoil had a tremendous impact on the arts and as a result it did not remain calm or serene. The visual arts were affected much in the same way, as painting began to take on more political content. Jacques Louis David, was one such artist who became politically active. David reworked in his own individual style the Classical and academic traditions. He rebelled against the Rococo as an "artificial taste" and considered Classical art as the imitation of nature in its most beautiful and perfect form. David was also active in the Revolution and served on many political committees.

Although painted in 1784, before the Revolution, David's The Oath of the Horatii (Fig. 2), reflects his politically didactic purpose and his doctrine of the educational power of Classic form, as well as his method of composing the Neo-classical picture.

In many ways the compositional form and expressive quality of The Oath of the Horatii bears a strong resemblance to the first movement of the Piano Concerto in A Major, K 488, written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Of particular interest is the sonata form employed by Mozart in this piece. Here we see a basic compositional device which Mozart used to organize his musical drama. By structuring his music into four basic sections of exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda, Mozart sets up an organizational device that serves as a stimulus for endless possibilities of expression. This sonata form has an "outer form" flexible enough to encompass a great range of different "inner forms", or expressive musical



(Fig. 2)

developments.

In The Oath of the Horatii we see a strong underlying structure or "outer form" contributing to the unity of the piece. David masterfully integrates the figures in their environment by a most simple but effective device: each group is matched by an arcade. The artist confines himself to a few tall people, seen from close at hand and occupying the same plane. We also can see an architecture stripped of all flamboyance, strictly limited to Doric columns without bases and executed in a very low intensity to set off the figures in high relief, yet absorb them to form a powerfully unified whole. Again we see this organizational device providing a strong base for the emotional impact and drama of the figures and story within, or "inner form".

In Mozart's concerto we see an example of a beautifully developed "inner form" as the first and second themes of the exposition are unfolded. Here we see its development through the use of repetition. First one instrument plays the theme, then the next, in an alternating instrumental pattern. This seems to suggest a reaction where one section listens, then answers back in its own voice. This alternation of instruments illustrates Mozart's fine ear for tone color.

This same sort of "inner form" relationship exists in David's painting. Here we see the three Horatius brothers swearing on their swords to live or die for Rome. As they thrust forward in repetitious form, legs spread, one arm forward, we see the reaction of anguish and sorrow of their sisters (Fig. 3). Not only do we see a reaction to the theme or subject matter, but also a strong repetition of form in groups of three. Three arches, three soldiers, etc. . David also clothes all the figures in drapery which adds further to the overall unity of the composition. The theme is expanded upon with admirable force and clarity through the use of contrast. The rigid forms of the men effectively eclipse the soft, curvilinear shapes of the mourning women



(Fig. 3)

in the right background. The courage and patriotism of the men are emphasized over the less heroic emotions of love, sorrow, and despair symbolized by the women.

Mozart also employs a variety of contrasting elements throughout his concerto for expressive purposes. Some of his most dramatic shifts are in rhythm and orchestration where he masterfully emphasizes segments through contrasting textural qualities. His use of solo piano in this concerto particularly establishes dynamic contrasts which create sudden shifts and varieties of texture and tone color. The predominantly isolated sections of piano tend to further solidify the themes inherent in each section.

Upon further examination of the David, tone color is used to draw even more attention to the drama of the oath. A bright red is dispersed throughout the four men to contrast with the subdued color of the architecture and clothing of the women. Not only does this attract our attention toward the main action, but it also changes the space the men are occupying, drawing them closer to the viewer.

David and Mozart both masterfully illustrate the perfect balance between "inner" and "outer" form. I believe it is the combination of intensity and order, existing on the edge between individualism and universality, that characterizes a master and his masterpiece.

My Analogical Inquiries (continued)

Paul Klee's explorations of musical analogies also stimulated my thinking toward a more direct approach of image making. Infact, when I began this series of paintings I approached them in much more literal, methodical sensibilities than the later works. In the earlier work I began to translate elements of music such as harmony, dissonance and rhythm, into a visual realm. As I worked through these observations I also became more aware of compositional devices such as polyphony and the sonata form.

Although I owe much to my observations of classical

composition throughout history, another major influence is my own experiences with music, particularly musical recording. While working in the recording studio I began to realize differences in chamber music (live music) from recorded music. In chamber music sound approaches the listener all at one level. But with recorded music sounds can be assigned different locations in a three-dimensional space through reverb, digital delay units and other technological recording devices. As a result of these observations I began to view music and my painting in more of a landscape sensibility. This thinking carried directly into my painting and I began to push the space around in ways I had never experienced before.

As the paintings progressed, I became much less concerned with literal interpretations and my methods became much more direct and intuitive. Away from the studio I spent long hours reading, writing and gathering intellectual material that I could digest and utilize toward a realization of my ideas. But while working in the studio environment I became much more interested in painting emotionally and intuitively, allowing my intellectual investigations to sink into the reaches of my subconscious. Allowing myself the freedom to "just paint" brought on an interesting change in the work and a new transition into something I felt to be much more substantial. I began to see definite changes in the painting but was unsure as to the exact reasons. In retrospect I see the major influence being my own thinking. I realized that from a realistic standpoint I couldn't make music with paint. Music is music and paint is paint. However, what I could do was study the relationships that exist within each discipline and use these relationships to form my own creations. This gave me the freedom I needed to express myself emotionally, with spontaneity when confronting the canvas, rather than trying to intellectually interpret my observations.

I feel that truth can only become a reality when all elements are present at once. I was approaching the intellectual, universal, and historical elements of design and composition but was lacking the most important aspect of all, the element of human emotion. It was with this accelerated emotionality that the paintings took on a new life and again began to grow. For I feel it is the movement and growth in a work of art that is truly important, much more than the static work itself.

The Cultural Analogy

Although intentional analogies were instrumental in the growth of my ideas, a second form of analogy also contributed to my understanding of the relationships between music and the visual arts. We shall refer to this parallel as a cultural analogy.

A cultural analogy is based upon the premise that an artist may not be aware of the similarities in style or content of his work to other work of that period. Instead, he is simply expressing the prevailing thoughts and attitudes of the particular cultural time in which he exists.

During a conversation with friends, the great French sculptor Auguste Rodin was speaking about the usefulness of artists. While stating his convictions on the subject the great master declared;

No doubt men capable of appreciating very beautiful works of art are rare, and, what is more, art is looked at by a limited number of spectators in museums and even in public places. But the feelings they contain, nonetheless, end up infiltrating the masses. Below the geniuses, in fact, are other artists of lesser talent who pick up and popularize the conceptions of the masters. Writers are influenced by painters as painters are influenced by writers. There is a continual exchange of ideas between all the minds of a generation. Journalists, popular novelists, illustrators, and cartoonists adapt the truths discovered by the powerful intellects for the

multitude. It is like a spiritual flood, like a gush that pours into multiple cascades until it forms the great moving sheet of water that stands for the mentality of a period.⁵

This statement is a clear example of the idea of a cultural influence or analogy.

The following case study is another example of this idea. I have used Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper and Roland de Lassus's Tristis est anima mea as examples of a cultural analogy that existed in the context of the Renaissance period.

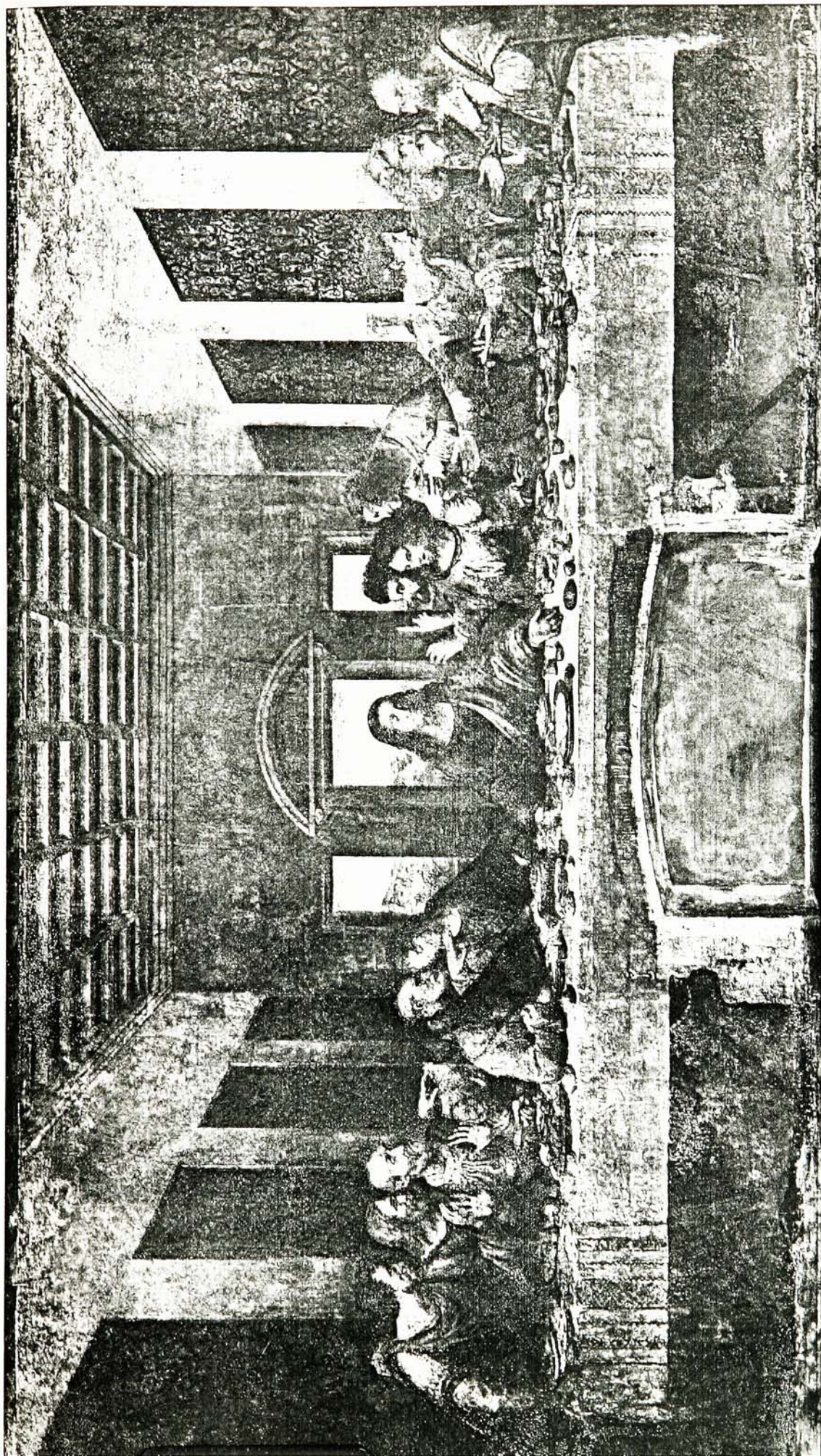
A Renaissance Review

When viewing any art form of the Renaissance era or of any other time period, it is important to evaluate the prevailing thoughts and philosophies of that age. The Renaissance was a time of discovery, of studying the past of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The emphasis now was being placed on man as important, the here and now. This new humanism stressed a devotion toward human feeling and senses. Balance, order, moderation, and dignity were especially prized during this period. The classical ideal of the "golden mean" was held up as a model of human behavior. Some of today's social etiquette go back to the Renaissance era. Gentlemen were counseled to do everything in moderation, to walk and dance gracefully, without abrupt movements, and never to seem overeager, boastful, or aggressive.

This same spirit prevailed in the visual and musical arts as well. Leonardo da Vinci's The Last Supper and Roland de Lassus's motet, Tristis est anima mea both illustrate this thoroughly and at the same time bear strong resemblances between themselves as personal creations expressing this new emphasis toward humanism. In The Last Supper we see an almost evenly balanced picture, with its inevitable yet undramatic focus on Christ sitting quietly at the center of the painting. The figure of Christ dominates the composition not only because

of its central position, but also because of its remarkable passivity standing in sharp contrast to the agitation of the apostles. This same balance and unity of form exists in Lassus's motet. By the use of imitative polyphony, Lassus organized his composition to reflect the Renaissance ideas of simplicity, moderation, and balance. By its very nature, the imitative texture employed by Lassus depends on a perfect balance between multiple voice parts. First one voice begins with a motive specifically designed for the message at hand, soon another voice enters singing the same phrase but at a higher or lower pitch level, then a third and so on. Meanwhile the earlier voices come in with new melodies in such a way as to fit into the scheme without washing out the other parts. Lassus achieves this balance beautifully, coordinating a web of similar textures that remain alive and elegantly unified. This web-like framework can be seen in The Last Supper (Fig. 4), where Da Vinci masterfully weaves his characters in groups of three, two sets on each side of Christ. The apostles are reacting to Christ's words, "One of you is about to betray me." Reactions of anger, fear, and disbelief are all exhibited at once. Still the composition remains balanced as each group plays off of the next to keep the piece moving. For example, the three figures to the far left of Christ are all gesturing back toward him with their hands, this gesture balancing their obvious attention toward the far left figure who still manages to stop the flow any further by exhibiting a direct profile toward Christ. Each group is masterfully orchestrated to weave in and out of the next, overlapping each other in a visual and conclusive "imitative polyphonic texture".

Another strong analogy can be drawn between Lassus's use of rhetoric to create word painting and Da Vinci's use of facial expressions and body language to express the individual feelings of the apostles. In Lassus's motet, we see several areas where he engages the attention of the



(Fig. 4)

audience through a "chase scene" or fuga where a particular idea is repeated and overlapped in succession. For example, at the beginning of the piece we see the title phrase, Tristis est anima mea (Fig. 5), or "sad is my soul" woven together in a graceful harmonic texture which captures our attention melodically and also literally by the repetition of phrasing. Another interesting expressive tool used by Lassus is his use of noema, or homorhythmic textures. In section 4, on the words "nunc videbitis" (Fig. 6), we see an attempt to emphasize a message, this time by means of utilizing the same note values at the same time to produce a strong, direct message of "now you will see". All of these means of expression are utilized by Lassus in an attempt to convey a story much in the same manner as Leonardo does with his expressive figures. He believed that the most successful figures were those which best expressed the passions of the soul through their actions. In The Last Supper we see this conviction masterfully illustrated by the wide range of movement and facial expression in the figures of the apostles. The following is a written description by Leonardo of the apostles seen to the left of Christ:

St. James the Elder draws back from terror, spreads his arms, gazes, his head bent down, like one who imagines that he already sees with his eyes those dreadful things, which he hears with his ears. Thomas appears from behind his shoulder and advancing toward the Saviour, lifts up the forefinger of his right hand towards his forehead. Philip, the third of the group, completes it in a most pleasing manner: he is risen, and bending forward, towards the Master, lays the hands upon his breast, as if distinctly pronouncing: Lord, I am not he- Thou knowest it- Thou seest my pure heart- I am not he!⁶

Here we see a very direct and dramatic attempt on the part of Leonardo to fully express the impact of the situation at hand.

One of the most intriguing innovations of this time is the use of linear perspective to produce the illusion of depth. In music, its counterpart would have to be the utilization of the

LASSUS, MOTET

23. Orlandus Lassus (1532-1594)

Motet, *Tristis est anima mea*

[Note values halved]

Tri - stis - est

sad Tri - stis - est *is* a - *soul* ni - *my* ma me

Tri - stis est a - ni - ma me a, tri -

Tri - stis est a - ni - ma me a,

stis - est a - ni - ma,

a - ni - ma me a, tri - stis

a, tri - stis est a - ni -

stis est a - ni - ma

tri - stis

(Fig. 5)

82

FUGA LASSUS, MOTET

la - te me - cum, et vi - gi - la - te
 vi - gi - la - te me - cum, et vi - gi -
 la - te me *with me* cum, et vi - gi -
 et vi - gi - la - te me - cum,
 te me cum, et vi -
 me *HYPOTYPOSIS (mimic)*
 la - te me - cum, et vi - gi - la - te
 la - te me - cum, et vi - gi - la - te me -
 et vi - gi - la - te me -
 gi - la - te me -
 cum. *ADEMA* nunc vi - de - bi - tis, nunc *mimesis*
 me - cum: nunc vi - de - bi - tis, nunc vi - de - bi - tis, nunc
now you will see
 cum: nunc vi - de - bi - tis, nunc vi - de - bi - tis, nunc
 cum: nunc vi - de - bi - tis, nunc vi - de - bi - tis,
 cum. nunc vi - de - bi - tis nunc -

(Fig. 6)

triad or chord. This innovation pushed the limits of musical expression into new avenues of musical space, creating tonal colors of deep encompassing expression. In The Last Supper, Leonardo uses this technique to bring both drama and order to his composition. As was previously stated, the focal point of the composition is the figure of Christ emphasized by his central position and his passive mood juxtaposed against a very agitated group of apostles. Upon further examination we can see the use of perspective as another means of expressing the importance of the Christ figure. Each diagonal line in the composition leads directly to the central vanishing point, Christ. As the spectator's eye penetrates beyond the table, these diagonal lines lead the viewer back across the patterned panels on the walls to the symmetrically balanced windows. Everything is in perfect balance and expressed vividly. Lassus uses this same sort of depth to develop his motet. Each melody line is sweetly accented and balanced by an accompanying vocal of soprano, alto, tenor, or bass. Although all of these vocal lines describe their own direction and shapes, as Leonardo's describe panels, etc., they all join at specific phrases (noema) to express a strong "vocal point". Even at the end of the motet we see a strong drive to cadence or closing phrase "pro vobis", which means "for you" (Fig. 7). Lassus employs a decorative, melismatic texture to emphasize the final message that all of the sacrifice and suffering Christ takes upon himself is for you, or the good of mankind. Both Leonardo and Lassus express this same basic concept in different personal ways.

By comparing these two great masterpieces of the Renaissance, it becomes quite evident that the artist, past and present, reflects the thoughts and attitudes of the world he inhabits through the manipulation of his particular medium.

LASSUS, MOTET

85

la - ri, et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

la - ri, et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

Sacrificed

ri, et e - go va - dam, im - mo - la -

la - ri, et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

la - ri,

ri, et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

ri, et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

ri, et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

ri et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

et e - go va - dam im - mo - la -

DRIVE TOWARD CADENCE

pro vo - bis.

ri pro vo - bis.

for you

ri pro vo - bis.

ri pro vo - bis.

ri pro vo - bis.

ri pro vo - bis.

(Fig. 7)

CHAPTER III

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

We have seen in the preceding chapters how musical-pictorial parallels and analogue models throughout history have helped form my ideas about the relationships between music and the visual arts. Through these inquiries, I have discovered some fundamental concepts which have aided in my search for a more "musical painting". The following is a description of the way I transform intellectual knowledge into the physical world through the creative process.

As I paint, a performance takes place through a dialogue between myself and the work, where a collaborative introspection arises between the mental and physical world. In order to make the performance complete, I must destroy its remnants to arrive at a much more substantial reality.

I have to prepare myself mentally and physically in order to do battle with my friend, the canvas. In many ways painting has become a performance, a dance of physical intensity where the painting becomes the footprints left behind from the actual performance, or process. I feel this attitude is largely due to the growing size of the canvas as it is now much larger than myself, demanding a total commitment of body and spirit. I must have an uninterrupted period of time in which to operate, much akin to a musical performance or composition. Just as a symphony relies on time as one of its basic elements, so do my paintings as they are becoming more about time periods and rhythm. As the surface is rhythmically worked it becomes evident how important working methods and paint application are to the outcome of the piece.

As the performance progresses a certain dialogue begins to unfold where little separation between myself and the painting exists. Instead a feeling of unity develops where intuition governs, and the action of painting or decision making is diluted. I refer to this as my "just painting mode", where no inhibitions or fears are present and the piece flows into existence. This dialogue exists through very few words, as it communicates through intuitive experiences arising from feelings and emotions, and the freedom to express them.

As I become more involved in the painting, it becomes more apparent that I must destroy the existing image in order to arrive at something I feel to be more substantial. This feeling arises from an inner confidence that I can make the painting much stronger by pushing it to its limits, wherever that may be! During this continuous destruction I've found it important to leave some of the history of the image behind. In this way I feel the piece somehow becomes more substantial. I see this concept similar to the way an archaeologist may look at a land form. As he begins to dissect the form, he discovers prior civilizations and remnants from past experiences. These artifacts begin to speak of the history of that land form and somehow make it that much more substantial. This is the way I view my work. I want it to have a strength and substance that stands the test of time. I want an art as big as life itself.

This struggle with the painting is in many ways a metaphor for the conflict within myself and my own existence. It often seems as though my artwork becomes the strongest when I'm struggling with something personal or traumatic. It's as though my inner struggle gives me something to react to or against.

It was interesting for me to see this same struggle for existence in the lives and work of Beethoven and Delacroix. The following case study is an example of this struggle as it pertains to the creative process and their own artistic expressions.

A Struggle for Existence

In the art of Ludwig van Beethoven and Eugene Delacroix one can see a surge of personal and emotional involvement that not only enhances the impact of their art, but also serves as a biographical documentation of their personal lives. For both men their creations were vessels for their own anxieties and personal feelings. With Beethoven, one shattering event in his life certainly contributed to his emotional and diverse personality: at the age of thirty he began to lose his hearing. This ailment disturbed him to such a degree that he began to isolate himself from society and was never able to sustain a lasting relationship. Infact he wrote in a letter that it was only his art that held him from ending his life. It is this inner turmoil and struggle with his own self-image that seems to radiate from his music. This sense of heroic striving and inner conquest emerge as the dominant forces behind his most famous compositions. It is interesting to note that Delacroix had much the same personal and physical afflictions. He too became increasingly isolated from the public and shied away from marriage, being too intent on keeping liberty in order to devote himself to his work. He had made painting into his only muse, his only mistress, his sole and sufficient passion. Infact, he once wrote that painting, according to Michelangelo, is a jealous mistress: one that requires the whole of a man. Delacroix's physical stature was also troublesome as he had an accident which caused nerve damage to his eyes, so that his work often suffered considerably. He was also stricken with Tubercular Laryngitis which slowly undermined and finally killed him. At the age of forty-five he was almost completely isolated. To regain intensity in his life, he had only himself to fall back on and he too ironically stated that he could only find a reason for existence in his art. Faith in his work had to be sought almost entirely within himself, for with very few exceptions, his paintings encountered nothing but hostility from

a public who saw him as the destroyer of tradition.

With both masters it becomes apparent that fate dealt them cruel obstacles to overcome which seem to be directly transmitted in their work. In fact, the term "fate knocking at the door", can be associated with Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. Over the course of the four movements, the listener seems to experience not just the conquest of fate but a complete demolition of it. In this symphony and in most of Beethoven's work he insists on treating musical contrast not as a source of humor, as Haydn had, but rather as a source of conflict, a confrontation. In works such as his Fifth Symphony, sheer energy and power seem to be the prevailing attitudes. With his use of hammerschlags, atonic rhythms, extreme dissonance, and a seemingly endless variety of motivic development, Beethoven transmits his inner soul into music of great power. Could Beethoven actually be dealing with his own personal struggle with fate in this piece? Apparently the term "fate knocking at the door" originated with the composer himself. In the development process, he saw not merely a stimulating exploration, but also a struggle, a severe struggle, sometimes, a struggle to the death! To Beethoven a recapitulation is more than an occasion of relief and stability, it is a moment of rescue and triumph. It seems as though Beethoven struggles to overcome his own physical malady of deafness by struggling through and conquering his symphony of fate.

This same attitude of confrontation exists in the paintings of Delacroix. Most of his later work deals with man's struggle with nature, a theme inherent with many painters of this era. In works such as The Tiger Hunt of 1854 (Fig. 8), Delacroix pits man against nature involving combats between beasts, and men and beasts. There seems to have been something of the wild beast in Delacroix's deep, instinctive nature- a mixture of nervous quickness and feverish anxiety which emerges in his passion for studying lions and tigers. It is said that he worked furiously once he had his idea, keeping the whole painting



(Fig. 8)

going at once. The fury of his attack upon the canvas matches the fury of his imagination and his subjects. This same energetic process can be seen in the sketchbooks of Beethoven where he vigorously outlines his ideas, with a continual uncompromising refinement. Just as Beethoven shows an intense struggle in his development sections, so does Delacroix as he constantly reintroduces the theme of physical struggle, letting loose all the forces of the combatants, including the rage to kill. Delacroix uses this theme over and over again in various forms in a kind of "visual motivic development". Whether he shows the wild beast at grips with its prey, wild beast with wild beast, wild beast with man, or even man with man, the same motive of confrontation and struggle prevails. In a sense, Beethoven uses his motivic development in the Fifth Symphony to intensify his ideas through several areas of arrival and departure.

In the development or "struggle" section of the first movement, the beginning notes make an immediate modulation which tends to electrify the section. In the bridge he uses a device called fragmentation where he extracts the two middle pitches of the bridge and echoes them between high wind instruments and lower strings. Then he actually breaks them in two and starts echoing a single note. Because of the way he has led up to this point, each of these single half notes is heard as a logical tense outcome of the fragmentation of the bridge theme. He seems to have slashed out his array of tones in an energetic painterly manner, letting this fragmentation exist as individual brushstrokes, where each stroke is an expression of itself as well as contributing to the whole. Delacroix believed in this same energetic, painterly approach to his work. Infact many of his observations on color and technique became the basis for the Impressionist idea of visual color mixing. Delacroix believed that it was more effective not to fuse the brushstrokes, for the viewer would naturally fuse them from a distance. In this manner, the color would gain in energy and freshness thereby

heightening the drama at hand.

With both Beethoven and Delacroix we see a life of disillusionment and personal struggle. What makes the art of these men so powerful and magical? I propose that the answer exists in the very nature of their existence. As man struggles through deep personal pain and turmoil, he becomes more in touch with his emotions, his true inner soul. It is this constant struggle with ones own mortality that constitutes pure, honest, and direct expression. For these two men, their art became a living metaphor for their true struggle for existence.

CHAPTER IV

A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY

The Painting Process

My working process actually developed out of a print-making sensibility. Through intaglio etching, primarily aquatinting, I began to produce a series of improvisations, working the plate and letting the idea arise out of the etching process. As the image developed I became more interested in the subtle nuances that occurred through the layering of marks. I decided to approach painting in this way.

At first the paintings were more about technical considerations such as application, size of format, and developing tools to produce the proper statement. I also began researching the possibility of making musical analogies with the marks. I began thinking in terms of the elements of music such as rhythm, harmony, dissonance, etc., and how I could represent them visually. These images were done in the spring of 1986.

In the fall I began painting with more feeling and scaling up the size of my format considerably, attempting to make the paint speak in more flowing, musical ways. It was at this point that I also began to research all of the relationships between music and the visual arts as they pertain to the creative process.

At this same time I began to paint much differently than I ever had before. I began to work on unstretched canvas, on the floor, working around the painting from all sides. In this way I felt much more at one with the painting as I could move through, and around it with ease.

My first step was to create a color field over the entire surface, this was my mood setter. I thought very much in terms

of orchestration while doing this, as I feel the mood of a song is largely dependent upon the "wall" of string lines usually called orchestration. I thought of this field much in the same manner as tone color is used in an orchestra. Tone color is the intrinsic quality of a particular instrument, which can best be described as bright, warm, brassy, etc.. Just as the classical composer utilizes tone color to express himself musically, so is my quest with the utilization of color. "The painter chooses his colour in the intensity and depth which suit him, as the musician chooses the timbre and intensity of his instruments. Colour does not command drawing, it harmonizes with it."⁷

As I continued working on the floor with scraping devices, I began to pick up unexpected textures from the hardwood floor beneath. These were welcomed surprises and gave me marks and images to react to. Once I realized more what the work was about, I put it on the wall and worked toward a resolution. (Fig. 9), Oceanic Opera , (Fig. 10), Polyphony.

As time went by and the paintings progressed, I began to feel the need for more layers of paint. I also became more concerned with establishing depth within the painting. This concern developed from my observations about the differences between chamber music and recorded music, previously discussed in Chapter II. (Fig. 11), Ostinato, is the result of these newly found concepts.

As I continued working I became more comfortable with the size of the format and the tools I had to employ. The images were becoming more complex and the paint much more raw. It was at this time that I started becoming dissatisfied with the work. I had spent most of my energies concentrating on the textures and layers that were happening on the surface and less with the image as a whole. I now I needed more structure in the pieces but didn't want to start with any preconceived compositional studies that would take away the energy and spontaneity that the paintings currently possessed.

I was also working the format so much that the initial "orchestration" layer I had begun with was becoming completely camouflaged. I started to feel the need to simplify and began glazing over large areas to create more of a structure within the format, (Fig. 12), Main Street Concerto.

Ironically, it was also at this time that I began the first paper in my series of case studies analyzing the relationships between music and the visual arts. Although I wasn't aware of the effects of these inquiries at the time, I now see them as an integral part in the development of my work. The following case study deals with Leonin's Alleluia Pascha nostrum and Chartres cathedral.

Alleluia Pascha nostrum and Chartres cathedral

An advantageous point of departure for an analogical analysis of Leonin's Alleluia Pascha nostrum, and the cathedral at Chartres lies in the basic foundation, or outer forms of both pieces on which all other complexities or inner forms, are structured.

The cantus firmus of Alleluia Pascha nostrum and the architectural plan of Chartres cathedral are both foundations adhering to the tradition of the times. The cantus firmus of the Alleluia is taken from a traditional Gregorian chant, and becomes the "drone" note, or tenor backbone of the piece. The upper voice, or duplum embellishes its surface with melismatic, decorative passages that still contribute rhythmically and harmonically to the piece as a whole, (Figs. 13 & 14). This feature is also an integral part of the grace and unity of Chartres cathedral with its lavish ornamental surfaces of sculpture, stained glass, and royal portals which enhance the structural strength and unity of its outer form, the traditional Greek cross plan, (Fig. 15). In both outer forms, the cantus firmus and the Greek cross plan we see a conformity toward traditions of sacred glorification of Christ and the church itself.

Alleluia Pascha nostrum Gregorian chant
and early polyphony based on it

9

a) *Alleluia Pascha nostrum, plainchant*

[Soloists, then Chorus] [Chorus]
Al-le-lu-ia.

[Soloists]
Pas-cha no-strum im-mo-la-tus est

[Chorus]
Chri-stus.

[Chorus repeats Alleluia]

Gordon A. Anderson, *The Latin Compositions in Fascicules VII and VIII of the Notre Dame Manuscript Wolfenbüttel Helmstadt 1099*, Part II, p. 276. Réproduit avec permission de l'Institut de musique médiévale, Henryville, Ottawa et Binningen.

b) Leonin (fl. 1160–1180), Organum duplum, *Alleluia pascha nostrum*

[Soli]
Al-le-lu

[Soli]
ia

[Soli]
Pas-cha

[Soli]
no-strum

Florence, Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, MS pluteus 29.1, fol. 109, the clausulae are from Anderson, II, 25–26

13

(Fig. 13)

cy Conductus-motet on Leonin's clausula on nostrum

Sopranum
Altum
Tenor

Gau-de-at de vo-ti-o fi-de-li-um; Ver-bum pa-tris in-car-na-tur.
Nostrum.

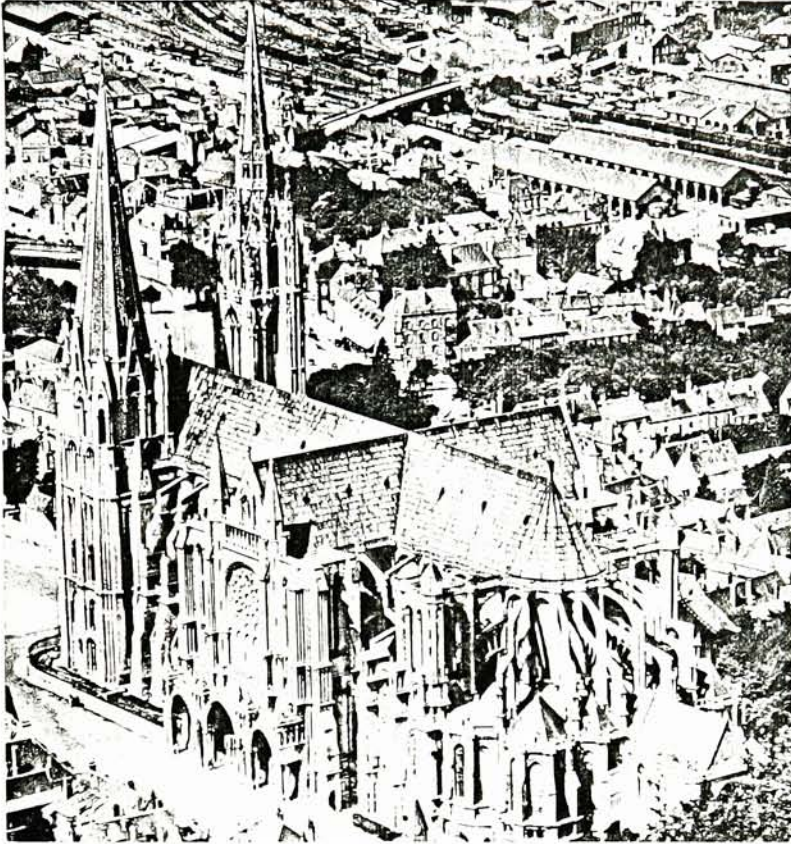
No-va pro-les no-bis da-tur Et no-bis-cum con-ver-sa-tur Sa-lus gen-ti-um. Vi-te pan-dit

o-sti-um, Dum mor-tis sup-pli-ci-um, Pi-e to-le-rat, Mun-di prin-ceps ex-tur-ba-tur.

Dum con-si-de-rat, Quod per mor-tem li-be-ra-tur Qui per-i-e-rat, lu-re su-o

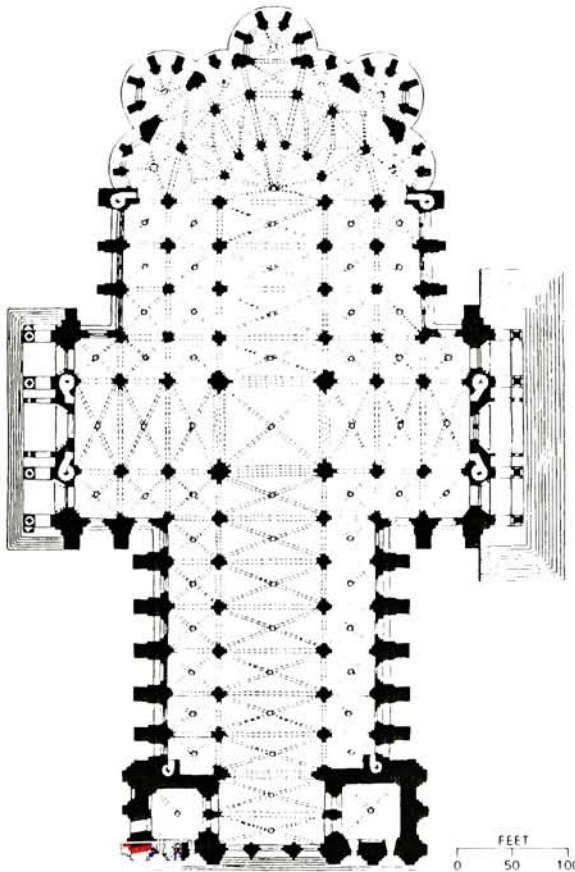
sic pri-va-tur, Dum de-si-de-rat Il-lum si-bi sub-de-re, qui nil com-mi-se-rat.

(Fig. 14)



10-15 Aerial view of Chartres Cathedral, begun 1194.

10-16 Plan of Chartres Cathedral. (After Frankl.)



(Fig. 15)

For it was the role of the music and architecture to smooth the progress of the services and to make them impressive and solemn. As the sunlight filtered through the stained glass of the clerestory, illuminating the interior with a heavenly glow, the music ornamented this angelic feeling with beautiful melodic passages echoing through the interior walls of these monumental arenas of worship. In the cathedral at Chartres, we see the beginnings of a High Gothic style characterized by the pre-conceived concept of flying buttresses as an integral part of the design. These structural devices had been previously used to brace the nave walls at specific points where the major thrusts of the walls were exerted. Similar methods to strengthen the walls of vaulted naves had already been used in Romanesque architecture, but there the buttresses had been concealed under the aisle roofing. Now, however, they are left exposed, as the chevet (east end) of Chartres exhibits. Not only does this innovation add complexity to the design itself, but it eliminates the need for Romanesque walls and permits the construction of a skeletal structure that is self-supporting. Furthermore, this structure now allows for additional adornment of the surfaces with exuberant stained glass compositions which not only embellish the outer form, but also affect the inner forms with raking colored light.

We can see this same constructive spirit at work in the music of Leonin's Alleluia Pascha nostrum, Organum duplum. Here again we see the cantus firmus as a strong structural outer form (flying buttress) bracing the more melismatic duplum (nave walls) with a rhythmic design of low "drone" notes that seem to emanate from the ground, upward, as did the flying buttresses. We can also see the Gothic impulse toward complexity and decoration with the addition of melismatic flourishes on a single syllable as on the syllable "lu" in the first line of the Alleluia. This impulse is shown even more in the elaboration of thought by means of the added Conductus-motet on Leonin's clausula on nostrum. Upon further examination of the flying buttresses of the chevet, one

can see how the lower segments are broken up again into smaller arch shapes repeated in a specific rhythmic sequence. This feature is remarkably comparable to Leonin's motets where he segments the cantus firmus (flying buttress) or tenor, into strictly measured rhythmic patterns; the upper voice, which moves in still a more rapid sequence, likewise takes on a more distinctly rhythmic character. Both parts sing out in a definite rhythmic pattern known as the discant style.

When viewing Leonin's Alleluia Pascha nostrum and Chartres cathedral as entire units in themselves; the similarities in structure, design, and repetition of rhythmic motifs are strikingly similar. These resemblances are obviously the outcome of the cultural ideas and attitudes that were prevalent during that period. This idea of cultural analogies can further be varified by examining the increasing development of the Gothic style as the architecture raced to the sky toward new heights and complexities of adornment and the polyphonic textures and rhythms of musical style became increasingly complex.

The Painting Process (continued)

During this time, I also started a new painting, (Fig. 16), The Metronome. In retrospect, I see this piece as a crucial pivotal point in the direction of my work. Not only had my yearning for increased structure and simplicity started to arise, but I also made a departure from my previous working methods. I started this painting with a vague compositional idea I had sketched below a photograph. I also started the painting on the wall rather than on the floor and I made no color field before starting. I attacked this work with a stronger conviction and rawness than any preceding work, feeling more secure in a somewhat fixed structure. It was also with this painting that the introduction of line began to appear, partly out of a need to structure and separate areas of color, and also for the sake of line itself as a pure and absolute expression in itself. I also became much more direct

with the paint application and began drawing directly on the canvas with paint by scraping areas with a large mason tool. I would see later that this technique would be of the utmost importance toward the development of my last piece.

As I was finishing this work, I began another vertical painting of the same size using the same compositional study, (Fig. 17), The Bridge. I had no fears about the paintings being too much alike, for I knew that once I became totally involved in the work, it would start to speak in ways quite different than the other.

It was also at this time that I composed and recorded the soundtrack that would accompany my paintings. In many ways I feel that this session was crucial toward the development of my thesis presentation and contributed greatly to the final culmination of my ideas. The following is a brief description of that process as it developed.

The Musical Process

During the course of the year I had been experimenting with several musical ideas and sound textures, but it wasn't until early March, along with the painting of The Bridge, that I began the final musical composition for the show. This project was in collaboration with two friends of mine, Dan Page and Tony Granito.

The process actually began many months earlier by discussing my research and ideas, drawing possible analogies and musical parallels. My main concern was to create the appropriate feel and mood that would contribute to the enhancement of the paintings. It was agreed upon that the paintings were most important and the music must serve the painting, not overpower it. This was a difficult task and did not come easy. I was again looking for that edge between intensity and order. How could I keep the music interesting without detracting from the paintings?

There came a point where my counterparts and I disagreed on the degree of complexity and production that should be employed. It was my decision to plunge forward and attack the music with no inhibitions about overproducing, feeling my own attitudes about painting and the creative process beginning to surface. I felt that we must push on, in a sense, destroy the original idea in order to reach a higher reality. Just as a new tool, technique, or color can inspire me to push on in painting, so did the wide variety of sounds and textures created through the computerized keyboards.

In the end we found something I believe to be very fitting for the show. We found the edge of something melodic, yet minimal and simple.

The Painting Process (continued)

As I was working The Bridge I again became unhappy with the work and felt a stronger need to simplify. Ironically, this feeling came to me after I had finished the musical composition that would accompany the paintings. I felt that the music was kept simple and that I had to start pushing this feeling with my paintings. I also began painting while listening to the music, which I believe contributed toward a desire to concentrate more on producing one specific feeling in each piece, rather than interpreting merely intellectual relationships as I sometimes had in the past. The painting was also becoming much more elusive at this time, and I found myself destroying the image repeatedly, in order to unveil the image that undisputedly belonged there.

As I continued working, I found the proportions of the format becoming much more important to me, which gave rise to new line qualities previously unexplored. With this in mind, I produced The Gift, (Fig. 18), the last painting I did before the show. I started this painting three weeks before the opening and totally dedicated all of my energies to this

work alone. As the painting progressed I went through several different images searching for the image that should be there. After the initial layer, the entire painting was executed with a masons tool, applying and then scraping off paint to produce an active surface. Again, through the constant destroying and rediscovering of the underlying image, I produced the painting I was looking for. In retrospect, I feel as if The Bridge and The Gift are the two most substantial works I have done up to this point.

Conclusion

During this thesis experience, I feel I have discovered some important relationships between music and the visual arts as they relate to the creative process and my own personal artistic direction. Although my academic commitments are fulfilled, I feel as though I've just scratched the surface of the direction I am currently pursuing. I look forward to following this vision wherever it may lead.

ENDNOTES

¹Robert L. Herbert, ed., Modern Artists on Art: Ten Unabridged Essays (Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p.91.

²Andrew Kagan, Paul Klee / Art & Music (Cornell University Press, 1983), p.37.

³Kagan, p.54.

⁴Jack D. Flam, Matisse on Art (E.P. Dutton, 1978), p.104.

⁵Paul Gsell, Auguste Rodin, Art: conversations with Paul Gsell (University of California Press, Ltd., 1984), p.108.

⁶Diane Kelder, Pageant of the Renaissance (London: Pall Mall Press, 1969), p.135.

⁷Flam, p.137.

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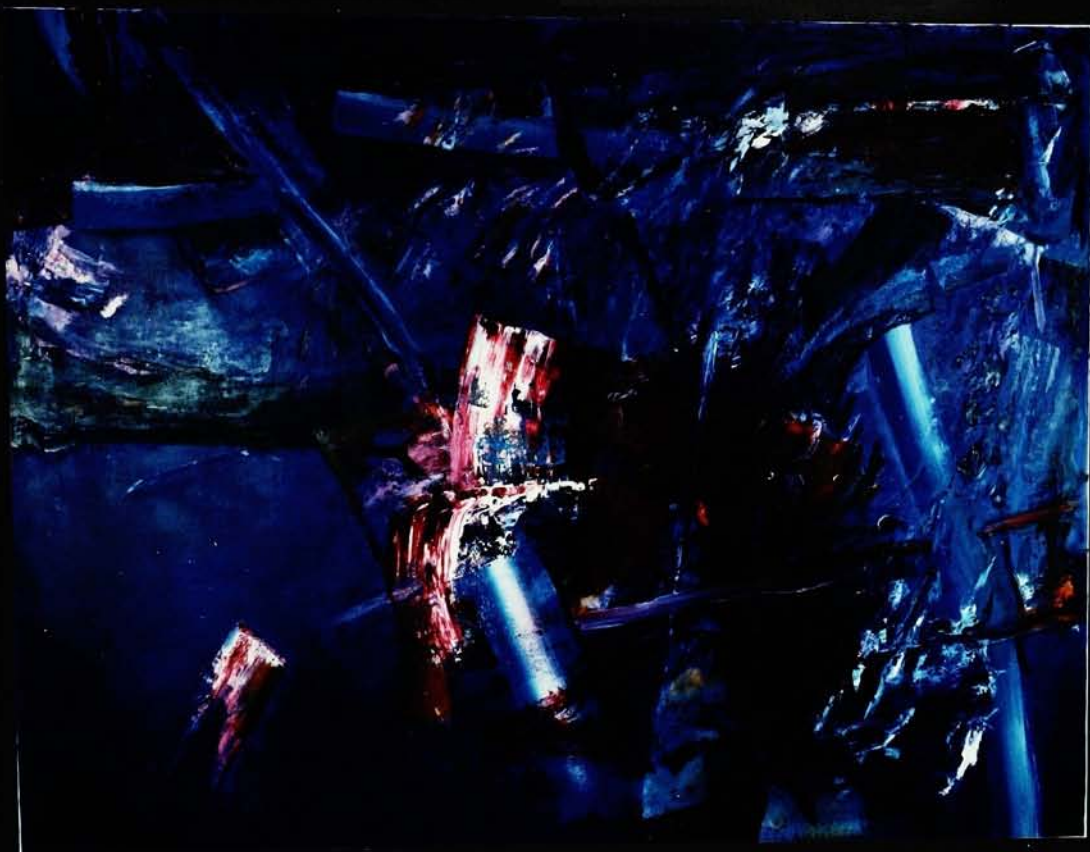
(Fig. 9), Oceanic Opera, Oil

78" x 42", 1986



(Fig. 10), Polyphony, Oil

63" x 52", 1986



(Fig. 11), Ostinato, Oil

77" x 100", 1986



(Fig. 12), Main St. Concerto
Oil,
78" x 117", 1987



(Fig. 16), The Metronome

Oil,

95" x 78", 1987



(Fig. 17), The Bridge, Oil

95" x 78", 1987



(Fig. 18) The Gift, Oil

78" x 115", 1987