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The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1960
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AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE NATURE AND PROBLEMS
OF DECORATIVE PAINTING

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State
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By

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* * * * * * *

The Ohio State University
1960

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The creative act of painting is built up of a series of steps leading toward the solving of personal aesthetic problems. Often there seems to be no particular sequence in the steps pursued toward these ends. One artist may work with a sensitive dependence upon intuitive apprehensions quite impossible of logical analysis; another may follow directions which appear to be so lucidly organized as to obviate any misstep along the way. The creative attitudes of the artists will largely determine the methods they use in their work.

It is difficult for the lay person to understand many of the facets of the creative process and how they are related to studio procedures. It can be even more confusing to the painter who finds himself mired in a morass of conflicting attitudes, perhaps of his own making. The creative indirection which can result from such involvement precludes the achievement of artistic goals.

When a painter finds himself caught in such personal conflict—and many artists do at one time or another—it may help him to clarify his own ends by considering
thoughtfully the nature of his work, the goals toward which he might like to move, to seek for a better understanding of himself and of the relationship of himself to his work. These are all problems which may be solved satisfactorily through continued studio activity, perhaps; and in the long run, that is where the attainment of ultimate solution will be manifest.

However, there is some possibility that a shortcut to greater creative equilibrium may be discovered in the process of intelligent evaluation of self and goals. The meandering path may straighten; directions may be more clearly indicated.

It was the need for this method of "path-finding" which led me to develop the subject of this paper. I had often felt that my creative work suffered from a certain indirection, a scattering of purpose. The insecurity fostered by these feelings tended to hamper effective creative satisfaction, and much of my studio work stumbled needlessly far from the core which seemed most in harmony with my particular area of interest.

The thought and observation which went into this study have, I believe, been beneficial to me and to my work.
The subject considered in the paper, though stemming from a personal problem, is one which may clarify issues which have become obscure to others. I do not believe that my problem is unusual or unique; rather, I hold the opinion that it is a very real problem in most classrooms and in many studios.

There can be no question but that the highly personal nature of the creative process renders objective investigation exceedingly elusive; the validity of conclusions drawn from such an investigation may warrantably be held suspect. With full awareness of the debatable nature of my conclusions, I can only say that for me, at least, they have cleared the way to greater security in my work.

And for urging me into this analysis of the nature and problems of decorative painting, I extend my appreciation most particularly to Dr. James W. Grimes and to Dr. Ross Mooney who have done more than their share in the support of any activity directed toward a happier realization of self in work.
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INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to note how seldom artists have submitted their attitudes toward creative work to the crystalline structure of the written word. Ideas, attitudes and philosophies may be revealed in informal studio conversations; certainly, if weighed in the balance, such oral expressions loom larger than do the written. There are, of course, exceptions to this generalization and they are important exceptions. Van Gogh, in his letters to his brother, revealed much about himself and his painting; Cezanne's personal letters have been published for some time; Delacroix's *Journal* has long been a classic; and Reynold's *Discourses* (dated though they may sometimes seem) are not without value as revealing the mind of an academician. Gauguin, in his writing, revealed the man more than the artist, perhaps, as he spoke with humility of his feelings toward the essence of nature; yet the man is also the artist, and one can be read in the other.

These writings have entered public domain over the brief span of a few generations. Most of them are documents of a private nature—letters, diaries, marginal notations—
often containing incomplete or abbreviated ideas. One cannot search through such illuminating papers without becoming intensely aware of their very subjective nature, of their often patent modesty. These, for the most part, are not the documents of scholars nor were they intended as such. But from this aggregate of writing may be distilled one extremely important factor: the quality of search as a constant preoccupation of the artist. The direction may be different to each. Would this not be expected? Yet the goal, elusive though it may seem, is strikingly the same—that of finding within the artist the powers productive of meaningful works of art.

Within the past quarter century, there has been a sizable amount of writing by painters which moves toward the area of public statement. Periodicals, book publishers, museums and professional organizations have done much to encourage this. Slowly the penumbra of idea, research and critical thinking is expanding despite the difficulties inherent in working with words, a medium usually less felicitous to the painter or sculptor than is his own. Other factors have contributed toward expanding these areas of communication. The greater distribution of critical and
historical studies has had some effect. Most important, perhaps, might be the acceleration of interest and experiment in the fields of philosophy and psychology. These are forces which have heightened an awareness of the interrelationship of the artist and his social and mental environment. Perhaps, too, opportunities for higher education have made the artist more articulate.

That there is value in personal documents such as letters and diaries written by artists unaware that these would eventually be disseminated is evident. But the publication of works by the creative brotherhood who have written with a seriously interested reading public in mind may yet be more worthwhile. Herein lie possibilities for something more than random and fragmentary organization of ideas. The discipline required for verbal analysis of problems attendant to creative activity may eventually lead to a more complete apprehension of man and his relationship to the world he is constantly reshaping. The immediate result may be no more than a question posed; but if there is validity in that question, it may indicate another approach to some area of understanding. The avenue may end in a cul-de-sac. But if the end could be foreseen at all, would
the question need to be framed?

It may prove that any real worth in the words of many creative artists is to be found in the subjective strata of their writing. Perhaps, too, though something may be lost in the process, final interpretations lie in the province of the critic, the philosopher, the psychologist, and the perceptive educator.

I propose, in this paper, to explore some of the problems related to decorative painting. While every attempt will be made to approach the subject as objectively as possible, it would seem best at the outset to confess a deep personal prejudice in favor of the particular manner of painting under scrutiny.

Writing from the viewpoint of a painter, I shall attempt to investigate what I see to be some of the popular misconceptions attached to the word "decorative"; the nature of decorative painting (this with the hope of establishing some clarification of the term); and the raison d'être for work of a decorative nature. These are points which have evolved from questions posed by students of mine in the art history classroom and in the painting laboratory. They are also points which have grown out of experiences
with decorative tendencies in my own work. Perhaps the ex-
ploration of this subject will shed some light on what has
become for me, at least, a complex and somewhat confused
condition.

The paper will contain ideas which, because they
have grown in an atmosphere of subjective analysis of self
and creative work, are highly debatable. Many of these
ideas have grown slowly and over a considerable period of
time. In the formulation of these thoughts, however, I
have tried to be cautioned by a realization that--

Reckless analysis of self will do harm, but
so will the artificial primitivism of the
man who refuses to know how or why he works.
Modern man can, and therefore must, live
with unprecedented self-awareness. Perhaps
the task of living has become more diffi-
cult--but there is no way around it.¹

¹Rudolf Arnheim, Art and Visual Expression, Berke-
ley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954,
pp. vi-vii.
AN EXAMINATION OF TERMINOLOGY

Language sometimes becomes very inexact. This is startlingly evident when we examine the multivarious associations of meaning possible in a loose application of terminology in some areas of aesthetics, art history and art criticism. Popular meanings assigned to certain words lead to semantic difficulties hazardous to unbiased statements of criticism, and prejudices are shaped as misconceptions cluster to engender judgments unintentionally moral in tone. This seems particularly true when professional terminology, based upon trenchant concepts, is accepted into a popular vocabulary and assigned quasi-professional implications. An example of one such word might be "abstract." When used by the uninitiated, it is quite often given a derogatory overtone which tends to dismiss all modern painting too far adrift from the familiar nexus of the academic. Modern becomes "modernistic," and the stature of the word is lost.

Perhaps such transpositions of meaning need not be the concern of the artist or critic working in professional circles. But when he uses a label which might be subject
to erroneous interpretation, the artist or critic should be
cognizant, at the very least, of misunderstandings which
might stem from such use.

Clarification of certain words would tend to miti­
gate the confusion which stems from multiple interpretations
while it would, at the same instant, facilitate more intel­
ligible discussions of certain aspects of painting.

From the last quarter of the nineteenth century,
certain emergent directions in the plastic arts gathered
momentum to become, in this century, dominant forces effec­
ting professional concern in painting. As an increasing
constellation of art work moved from studios into the public
domain of galleries and museums, new vocabularies were struc­
tured to serve the interested, puzzled or outraged audience.
Syntheses were made and "schools" were separated from the
new milieu of creative production. Toward the close of the
first quarter of the twentieth century, one of the direc­
tions of the still nascent creative surge was broadly de­
 fined as Expressionism. The word reflected a general con­
cordance of critical opinion, and the modus operandi it
described achieved a dimension of respectability and accep­
tance.
As early as the turn of the century, Yrjo Hirn wrote that "in order to understand the art impulse as a tendency to creative production we must bring it into connection with some function from the nature of which the specifically artistic qualities may be derived. Such a function is to be found . . . in the activities of emotional expression."¹

Such emphasis upon the emotional, or expressionistic, aspects of painting attracted many protagonists to the exclusion of an appreciation for works characterized by formal elements which were not primarily expressive. And the highly subjective paintings of the new direction often met with cold reception by a public unschooled in the problems confronting the exploring artists. Many artists, perhaps out of sensitivity to public attitudes, separated themselves from the social milieu with words similar to those of the American painter, Walter de Kooning, when he said, "I think, whatever happens, every man works for himself, and he does it on the basis of convincing himself. I force my attitude upon this world, and I have this

right . . . and I think it is wonderful. . . ."\(^2\) Or in the words of David Hare:

> An artist is always lonely. The artist is a man who functions beyond or ahead of his society. In any case seldom within it. I think our problem would seem to be fundamentally psychological. Some feel badly because they are not accepted by the public. We shouldn't be accepted by the public. As soon as we are accepted, we are no longer artists but decorators. Sometimes we think if only we could explain to the public, they would agree with us. They may agree in the course of years. They won't agree now . . . they should not agree now. I think this group activity, this gathering together is a symptom of fear [this with reference to the Artists' Sessions at Studio 35, a roundtable discussion held in New York in 1950]. Possibly you could connect this with the question of mass production. In the sense that in this country there is a feeling that unless you have a large public you are a failure. The public is concerned with the average. I will always be opposed to this conception.\(^3\)

Despite this artistic attitude of isolation, critics and historians, periodicals and museums swung to the defense of the practitioners of the new movement; and gradually more and more of the artists' public began to appreciate


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 10.
and to accept the contributions of contemporary genius. Un-
fortunately, however, the arguments of the defense sometimes
worked to set up certain attitudes which have echoed through
vocabularies of criticism to impinge upon legitimate ter-
minology. Such attitudes have a way of subtly effecting
judgments however moderate in tone; and when the alien in-
trusion goes unmarked, false assumptions may be found in
seemingly impeccable critiques.

It would be quite impossible to determine if any of
the above attitudes have been responsible for the prevail-
ing accretion of prejudice in association with the word
decorative. With the inability of artists and critics to
agree upon a universally acceptable definition of the word,
the motivation for any rejection of the function of decora-
tive elements in painting must remain suspect. This becomes
of particular significance in any consideration of the in-
terrelationship of artist, critic and society. Since the
critic is acknowledged as instrumental to the structuring
of public attitudes and taste; if—as in our present social
order—he is to be accorded authority in a selective pre-
sentation of the creative work of artists to the public,
then words commonly used in evaluative analyses must be
concisely defined. At the very least, the possible interpolation of disparate ideas into critical context must be understood as liable to engender judgments of debatable validity.

Georges Duthuit is revealingly caustic in the expression of his sentiments toward the current slovenly application of decorative. While discussing the work of the French artist, Georges Braque, Duthuit writes:

Thus Braque becomes more and more a "constructor," a word which he loathes. But at the same time he is persistently accused of a too great complaisance towards the deliquescences of the "decorative"—the word having finally lost all manner of meaning, which makes it easier to apply to paintings of a more or less normal type. In current language the meaning of this word is so vague that a painter is not the least wounded when the critics try to crush him with it. The pocket dictionaries carefully evade the difficulty: just as they tell us that a "ghost" is a "phantom," they content themselves with defining "decoration" as "ornamentation." The Romanesque or Byzantine artists distinguished of course between their scrolls of leaves and crossbars, their ornamental friezes, and their madonnas and crucifixes. But if one of them had been told that his effigies, monumental or minute, were decorative, he would not have understood.4

Though not himself a protagonist of the "rhapsodic school of criticism," the contemporary critic, Herbert Read, early fell victim to an irresponsible use of the word when he made the regrettable error of burying decorative in one blunt gesture of dismissal. Nor did he honor the ceremony with a requiem review of a single authentic value which might have attached to the word.

When once we begin to describe an artist's work as decorative, we are really finding excuses for it. To describe a painting as decorative is to imply that it is lacking a certain value which we might call human.\(^5\)

William Hayter, in his introduction to Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, voiced a plea for the reappraisal of aesthetic values conceived in a climate of inadequate terminology. He regrets the blindness which erects a screen before the precise beauty in the work of the Constructivists; and one may read into his statement a corollary plea for a re-evaluation of creative production in the light of a more concisely defined vocabulary.\(^6\)


One needs only to read the brief critiques of exhibitions currently on display in the numerous galleries of New York to find one example after another of aesthetic judgments expressed in terms liable to misinterpretation.

It may be possible that the mainstream of contemporary painting has garnered unto itself the bulk of approbationary acclaim, and that the work of the more decorative painters has been ignored by all but the most discriminating critics. Fashion exists in journalistic circles too.

There can be no question but that the locus of interest will stimulate a gathering of creative energies actively dedicated to the acceptance of certain challenges and directions. The emergence of art styles is verification of such clustering of interest. Whether the development of expressionistic painting has been accelerated by the workings of a favorable critical climate may never be determined. It may be presumed, however, that the "rhapsodic school" has a not inconsiderable influence on both the artist and the public. The social fabric is closely knit; who can unravel the threads?

It is fortunate that the disparaging overtones heard so frequently in connection with decorative painting
are not universal in their application. An increasingly large number of critics and historians are lending their support to artists directly concerned with the decorative aspects of painting. Nevertheless, much damage has and will continue to be done so long as any derogatory residue clings to the word in question.

To clear the word *decorative* from the many untenable implications it has annexed during the past half century, it might be well to examine and clarify those qualities inherent in decorative painting which distinguish it from expressionistic work. Even a summary review of these characteristics may remove the clouds from the real meaning of the word and should be conducive to reestablishing its validity as a concept, should restore the rightful aura of respectability. For unless another idiom is contrived to describe the qualities inferred by a considered use of *decorative*, we cannot discuss with any intelligence the creative contributions of one ever-expanding and dedicated group of contemporary painters.
TENDENTIAL DIRECTIONS IN PAINTING

Even as history is not a record of static phenomena, neither is art regulated by conditions of stasis. It is true that certain stylistic periods in the history of art obtain over relatively longer periods of time than do others for reasons best explained by the social framework of such eras. Similarly, where changes in artistic direction are swift, the causes for such evolution must be sought outside of the studio as well as in it.

Since the slacking of private patronage of the arts from the seventeenth century onwards, the artist has been accountable primarily to himself for the nature of his work. Until this time, concern with the predilections of a patron forced the artist to frame his work within the strictures imposed from outside his studio, and his creative challenge lay, it might be presumed, in balancing his particular talent with his patron's particular taste. The success with which he made this delicate adjustment doubtless contributed in no small measure to his acceptance as an artist by his society. When, for all practical purposes, the tradition of patronage ended, the artist's responsibility to
art *qua* art was bounded only by self-imposed values—judgments which were developed on individual bases subject to change or adjustment in light of experiential data of a highly personal order.

Though easel painting as an important form of art can be traced back to the Renaissance, the bulk of such studio work falls within the span of the last few centuries. It is significant that, as patronage was reduced, easel painting increased until today it is seldom that an artist applies his talent to anything but the canvas square. No longer is he concerned with painting for public consumption, and royal, religious or governmental patronage seldom prescribe his subject matter. Architectural requirements seldom affect the compositional elements of his work. The artist is free to impose his own criteria, to follow his own dictates, to use or abuse his abilities as he wills.

As economic and social forces conspired to release the artist to his own keeping, some of the impact of scientific investigation was beginning to reverberate, if only indirectly, within the walls of his studio. The camera, the science of optics, and even more fundamentally important, the development of psychology toward the close of the
nineteenth century were all to contribute toward a general reshaping of existing modes. Though not necessarily himself a student of modern psychology, the artist—by the beginning of the twentieth century—could scarcely escape the effects of this science which fostered a self-awareness more acute and less generalized than heretofore experienced. As psychology established the awareness of individual personalities, the artist was affected by these theories and freedom of expression was further validated.

It was no doubt inevitable that sooner or later man should attempt to comprehend and represent the subject source of all the images and symbols he creates in his attempt to construct an external reality—that he should attempt to realize and represent the Self. There are two possibilities: to become conscious of what is unique in each individual—his subjectivity; or to become conscious of what is common to all men—their humanity.¹

In the atmosphere of these new freedoms, it is not surprising that an acceleration of experimentation, of research into problems of form, color, light, structure, and all other corollary elements of painting has taken place over the last one hundred years. As respect for

individualism was gradually realized, academic restrictions were overthrown; traditions were scrutinized and accepted or rejected accordingly as they contributed to individual schema. Classical concepts were over-ridden and horizons expanded to embrace forms previously relegated to ethno-logical or other spheres. Primitive, archaic and oriental arts were admitted into the realm of Western aesthetics, and many artists strove to deepen their insight into the expressive and formal attributes of their own work by studying the qualities inherent in exotic forms indigenous to cultures other than their own. The artists of the late nineteenth and beginning twentieth centuries rejected much of the accumulation of past tradition and sought to rediscover the world on their own terms.

Changes came swiftly. The researches of Cezanne and, later, the Cubists into aspects of formal organization and structure—though not concerned with expressive painting of subjective content—nevertheless served to widen the breech in the ramparts of academic tradition. The Impressionists explored the realm of color and bequeathed a new generation of artists the vitality of a vibrant palette. Technical methods, already modified by advocates of "direct
painting" as early as the eighteenth century, were exploded in studio experiments which began to introduce "foreign" materials into the media. Academic realism, having reached a photographic zenith during the nineteenth century, wilted before the vociferous denial of any creative validity in mechanical vision as the artist sought to capture subjective perceptual images. The Expressionist painters (the term was first associated with the German group, Die Brueke, in 1911) produced a violent and overwhelming art as they sought to reveal basic elements of emotional truth—a homogeneous core stripped of all unessential accretion.²

The Fauves, the Constructivists and the neo-Plasticists contributed sensuous syntheses and rhythmic arrangements which deliberately avoided penetration of space or depth within their work. Where they exercised great restraint in transitions from plane to plane within the two-dimensional field of their canvas, they balanced this by animating the surface with reciprocal tensions secured by a felicitous play of color and texture.

¹Goldwater, Primitivism in Modern Art, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938, p. 90.
Threaded through all of these experimental efforts in the creative arts was a general shift from the "world of natural phenomena to a meta-physical realm," a shift which is reflected in an increasing accumulation of abstract and, more recently, non-figurative painting. Though not all artists have abandoned familiar symbols, many are producing "absolute art uncontaminated by reproductive elements from nature."  

Two tendential directions seem to have emerged from this melange of creative experiment which has been gathering momentum since the mid-nineteenth century. Broadly conceived, these directions include within their scope most of the schools or sub-categories identified by the historian and the critic. A summary acknowledgement of some of the more important of these categories has been made above. Doubtless such divisions are valuable to a full appreciation of the major as well as the minor contributions made by individual artists or associated groups of artists working toward common goals. However, the artist himself is

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4Ibid., p. 459.
usually less concerned with his assignment to a particular school than is the authority who placed him there; for the artist is fully aware that the creative continuum of his work may well carry him from pole to pole, from school to school, irrespective of any position he may favor at some given moment.

The first, and perhaps the most important of these tendential directions, was eloquently described by Guillaume Apollinaire, who wrote:

The modern school seems to me the most audacious that has ever been. It has put the question of beauty in itself. It wishes to visualize beauty disengaged from the pleasure which man causes man, and, since the dawning of historic times, no European artist has dared to do that. . . . It is the art of painting new ensembles with elements not borrowed from visual realities, but created entirely by the artist and endowed by him with a powerful reality.\(^5\)

Taken from his Aesthetic Meditations, and written more than twenty-five years ago, these words still speak for the direction in contemporary painting that was developed most acutely in the works of the German Expressionists early in the century—an approach which seems to have been

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 457.
accepted, if modified by individual predilection, into
studio practice by a majority of painters today.

Apollinaire continued, in his writing, to introduce
the concept of the fourth dimension, a term which has found
favor in studio language as indicative of certain intangibles which are difficult to define verbally.

The painters have been led quite naturally, and so to speak by intuition, to preoccupy
themselves with possible new meanings of space. The fourth dimension would be engendered
by the three known dimensions; it would show the immensity of space eternalized in every di-rection at a given moment. It is space itself, the dimension of the infinite: it is this which endows objects with their plasticity. . . .

Greek art had a purely human conception of beauty. It took man as the standard of perfection. The art of the new painters takes the infinite universe as the idea.6

Somewhat the same goals were posited in the words
of Paul Klee when he developed the artist's purpose as that of producing

. . . a free creation of abstracted forms which supercede didactic principles with a new naturalness, the naturalness of work. He produces or participates in the production of works which are indications of the works of God.7

6Ibid., p. 458.

Or again, in the words of Wassily Kandinsky:

"The artist must ignore distinctions between 'recognized' conventions of form, the transitory knowledge and demands of his particular age. He must watch his universal life and hearken to the demands of internal necessity. Then he may safely employ means sanctioned or forbidden by his contemporaries. This is the only way to express the mystical necessity. All means are sacred which are called for by internal necessity. All means are sinful which are not drawn from inner necessity." \(^8\)

And Piet Mondrian jotted in his notebook: "When one does not represent things, a place remains for the divine." \(^9\)

The intangibles noted in the above quotations represent but a few of the verbal attempts at diagnosing the intuitive source which has become the fountainhead for so much of contemporary painting. Whereas, throughout the history of art, the general tendency was one which suppressed traces of individualism in favor of group consciousness, many of the painters of the past few generations have abandoned social conformity in favor of the imperative

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\(^8\)Wassily Kandinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

\(^9\)As quoted in *Time Magazine*, Vol. LXIX, No. 25, p. 68.
demands of self-awareness. Traditional allegiances have been scrapped in this process; and where certain similarities may be traced to a common interest in an expressive exploration of self, universe, cosmos, God—all of the terms connote a creative search for some reality beyond the objectively immediate.

Such an aesthetic apprehension of the world proceeds quite independently of the intellectual apprehension of the world. That is what is so difficult to understand in an age like ours, dominated by philosophy and science.¹⁰

The observations made by these artists suggest the existence of a certain studio attitude. Inasmuch as attitude, or interest, is a prime factor in an artist's approach to his work, the tendential directions in contemporary painting must be traced in part, at least, through an awareness of such basic attitudes. Admittedly, social and ideological prejudices have favored one or another form of creative expression throughout the history of art, and a particular cultural ambient may act to accelerate or impede certain attitudes at any given period. Today, however, the artist—acting as a free agent—should, and usually does,

¹⁰Herbert Read, op. cit., p. 89.
recognize that the axis of choice in the direction of his work lies within himself, that he may postulate working goals in harmony with his personal convictions.

It is exceedingly dangerous, perhaps, to present an hypothesis which proposes the existence of two principal tendential directions in painting when that hypothesis is based, even in part, upon any assumption relative to divergences of human sensibilities and the attitudes shaped therefrom. But the importance of artistic attitudes as effective agents in the nature of studio practice should not be underestimated; and when we read "works which are indications of the works of God," "the only way to express the mystical," "place for the Divine," or--from Picasso--"It is my misfortune, and probably my delight, to use things as my passion tells me," we can scarcely escape acknowledging that these are subjective concepts reflecting certain metaphysical imputations and that these concepts are intrinsic to an understanding of creative operational procedures and goals.

The second tendential direction which may be seen in work issuing from the studios is exemplified in the considered words of Matisse:
Composition is the art of arranging, in a decorative manner, the various elements at the painter’s disposal for the expression of his feelings. In a picture every separate part will be visible and will take up that position, principal or secondary, which suits it best. Everything which has no utility in the picture is for that reason harmful. A work of art must be harmonious in its entirety: every superfluous detail will occupy, in the mind of the spectator, the place of some detail which is essential.  

Here is an attitude which seems to support a considered intellectual organization of the canvas, an attitude which places no particular emphasis on subjective or emotional primacy as fundamental to studio procedures. The hand is the master of the media, and the mind is assigned a first role in the assessment of goals. Unknowns or intangibles are not summoned to foment changes within the corpus of work of artists guided by such attitudes of objectivity. In no way does this suggest that these painters lag the vanguard of experimental work; it simply recognizes that theirs is an approach to painting measured in terms of conscious intellectual controls structured in some strata of the sub-conscious. The ultimate goal of the

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artist, whether his work develops out of one or another of these attitudes, is no less real to him, no less valid because of the philosophy from which it stems. The artist, Gabo, says:

I denominate by the word art the specific and exclusive faculty of man's mind to conceive and represent the world without and the world within him in form and by means of artistically constructed images. Moreover, I maintain that this faculty predominates in all the processes of our mental and physical orientation in this world, it being impossible for our minds to perceive or arrange or act upon our world in any other way but through this construction of an ever-changing and yet coherent chain of events.\(^{12}\)

It would seem, from any survey of contemporary work, that attitudes shaped in the climate which favors introspective assessment are today in the ascendancy. Studio discussions, with increasing frequency, are focused on techniques for penetrating unknowns, for creating new approaches expressive of intuitively apprehended "realities." It is largely a minority group—a group which may or may not be bound up in the creating of a new pictorial language—that brings to the studio a rational or even, it is

sometimes claimed, a materialistic approach.

Among the followers of modern art there is currently a certain prejudice against the accuracy often referred to as 'mechanical.' It is hoped that the mechanical beauty of a Calder mobile, the precision of a Mondrian, that the exactitude of Kandinsky will dissipate this prejudice. It should be obvious that if an artist is unsure, is compelled to be broad, vague in his treatment, and to trust to illusion--precision would betray him. Precision is only attainable by one who is sure.13

The phrases "art of arranging," "artfully constructed images," "precision," and "exactitude" indicate a respect for the willful use of the intellect and suggest that premeditation plays a decisive part in determining procedure and achievement.

Galen, the Greek physician and writer, classified man into four categories: sanguine, choleric, phlegmatic and dynamic. Many centuries later, Jung was to postulate a psychological theory which further subdivided the orientation of man by recognizing inward and outward propensities. The personality classifications of Jung--introvertive and extrovertive--might possibly be read into the basic studio attitudes herein posited.

13Wassily Kandinsky, op. cit.--from the introduction by Stanley William Hayter, p. 18.
Herbert Read sees three ends of art persisting throughout history: the symbolical or votive, the poetic or ideal, and the imitative. He indicates that any of these three may take a materialistic or a transcendental direction, a trend which is determined by the intention of the artist which, though always aesthetic, may proceed by rule rather than by intuition. This intention, or attitude, may be related to basic personality structures with the introvert preferring the transcendental mode and the extrovert favoring what Read describes as materialistic but which might better be identified as rational.\(^\text{14}\)

It does appear that genres of art could be better understood in light of more accurate discrimination between psychological types. Roger Fry, himself recognizing two principal groups of artists—the first as preoccupied with creating a fantasy world, and the second concerned with the contemplation of formal relations—supports his thesis by quoting T. E. Hulme who defined two kinds of art, geometrical and vital, each springing from a certain general

attitude toward the world.\textsuperscript{15}

The human heart is not a machine, guaranteed to mould the feelings into a uniform shape. There is no single way, even no normal way, of representing the world we experience. We experience the world through the subtle medium of a temperment, and if we faithfully represent that experience, we produce something unique, or at any rate, something typical of our temperment . . . and it follows that there is more essential similarity between the same psychological types in different periods than there is between the different psychological types in the same periods. In other words, psychological characteristics are stronger than period characteristics.\textsuperscript{16}

Where the creative activities of an artist are constrained by formulas imposed by his society—whether economic, church or state—the effectiveness of personal attitudes may be less apparent in his work. Even today, we find instances where the domination of an individual or a collective group is so strong that lesser artists are drawn into a genre which they might not otherwise have found compatible.\textsuperscript{17}


\textsuperscript{16}Herbert Read, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 83-84.

\textsuperscript{17}Joan Evans, \textit{Taste and Temperment}, London: Jonathan Cape, 1934, p. 69.
However, work issuing from the studios of leading artists will bear the stamp of particular temperaments; and if we can accept the hypothesis that there are two tenden-tial directions in painting, we may explain it in part, at least, through basic personality differences. Were social and economic strictures more binding than they are today, the artist might be denied the freedom of seeking his expres-sion in directions most felicitous to his character and the directions could well be more obscured than they are.

Further indications of the dichotomy in contemporary creative intention, and hence direction, have been expressed in the attitudes of various artists relative to public con-cern for their work. Here again are evidenced introver-tive and extrovertive concepts which certainly have bearing upon the nature of the work itself. The previously quoted statement of David Hare: "An artist is always lonely. . . . Some feel badly because they are not accepted by the public. . . . We shouldn't be accepted by the public. . . ." contrasts strongly with words voiced by Matisse in a discussion of his own work.

Matisse describes his own creations as 'an art of balance, or purity or serenity devoid of troubling or depressing subject matter, an art which might be for every mental worker,
be he a business man or writer, like an ap­
peasing influence, like a mental soother, some­
thing like a good armchair in which to rest
from physical fatigue.\textsuperscript{18}

To the first of these attitudes may be traced an
urgent search for new symbols expressive of intangibles not
yet accepted into a common vocabulary. In the second may
be read a reliance upon the use of familiar symbols as a
basis for working procedures. The one hopes someday to be
understood; the other assumes understanding in the present.
The sacred and the profane.

It would be unwise to attempt to divide all paint­
ing into two categories on the basis of an hypothesis which
claimed the existence of a \textit{distinct} dichotomy of direction.
The positing of categories tends to imply absolutes--an
implication to which few artists would agree. From a
studio point of view, an acceptable working hypothesis
could only be one which described the two directions as
\textit{tendential}, suggesting by this a loose, open-ended hypo­
thesis constructed as a convenience to analysis of creative
procedure and development.

\textsuperscript{18}Sheldon Cheney, \textit{Expressionism in Art}, New York:
We have, then, these tendential directions: one which is underscored by a belief that things not imitable can be revealed, expressed, presented in another form; the second which is motivated by attitudes which accept or invent formal elements primarily for the purpose of producing visual satisfaction.

If the hypothesis is at all tenable, its support will be found not only in creative attitudes, but also in the work produced in the ambient of such attitudes.

Before attempting even a cursory survey of studio procedures, it would be well to suggest a definitive terminology by which creative achievement may be approached with a minimum of confusion.

The word *Evocative* will be used with reference to painting which, to any considerable degree, places emphasis upon intangibles, mystic meanings and cosmic significance. The word seems apt; the dictionary defines it as *the act of calling forth, as from seclusion*. Thus, *evocative* imputes intuitive and introspective action, a necessary connotation if the term is to be considered appropriate to the tendential direction it has been selected to describe. Though "expressive" might be used instead, "Expressionism"
has been dignified by historians and critics as identifying a specific group of German painters, and the use of any variation of the term is liable to misunderstanding.

Since the term *decorative* is not linked, historically, to any specific group of painters, there seems to be no valid reason for a substitute or alternate word. However, the reader is advised to consider such interpretations of this word as "artfully constructed images," "precision," and "exactitude"—to think of the word as being associated with rationally conceived objectives achieved through a precise control of media.

With these terms--*Evocative* and *Decorative*--in mind, let us turn next to an investigation of creative procedure and achievement in light of the hypothesis tendered herein.
It is not the purpose of this paper to delve deeply into the psychological aspects of the various approaches to painting—the subject is far too complex and would only obscure the simple points I wish to discuss. However, without attempting to explain the "why" in any but a limited fashion, I feel certain of my observations to be of sufficient importance to include in this consideration of decorative and evocative painting.

As a first example, I shall draw upon observations made during my two-year residence in Peru from 1957 to 1959.

In 1531, Spanish invaders completed their conquest of the Inca Empire in South America. The introduction of Catholicism, perhaps the most far-reaching effect of that conquest, began almost immediately. A major part of the religious conversion was accomplished through a wholesale destruction of heathen centers of worship and the supplanting of these with the accoutrements of the Christian church. Lavish Incaic temples were replaced with Catholic edifices which equalled or exceeded in splendor the pagan
temples they succeeded. Painting and sculpture were unbel-
lievably rich in quantity and variation.

To achieve this stupendous accomplishment in re-
ligious reorientation, the relatively few conquistadors
and clergy drew heavily upon the skills of artisans among
the Indian population. Stone carvers covered the soaring
vaults of the new churches with a curious admixture of primi-
tive and baroque design. Indian painters, unable to compre-
hend the accepted significance of the Madonna and Child, saw
the Virgin as a wooden doll-like figure clothed in splendid
raiment, bejeweled and bedizened and altogether earthy in
character.

Yet the sculptors and the painters, understandably
incapable of involvement with a philosophy so foreign and
complex as was the Christian religion, created a lively and
enduring art nevertheless. Their sense for the decorative
found them working in a common language, and it is the
decorative achievement rather than the spiritual achievement
for which they must be remembered. They used their subject
as an armature solely for the support of a richly imaginative
decorative expression.
In contrast, a subject such as a rooster (I select this example because it has long been a favorite of mine) has but minor significance, yet by its very nature it is rich in those elements which can beguile the eye with beauty. The brilliant color, the proud thrust of the body, the play of curves in the tail feathers, the structure of the feathers themselves, the serrated comb, the scaled legs and feet are all delights to the eye and forms which may be rendered in endless variation for their decorative qualities alone.

These are surface aspects of a rooster, and the artist so minded enjoys and uses them quite apart from any regard for the spirit or "essence" of the bird. He edits and alters and emphasizes such decorative elements to create a painting of sensuous appeal, to titillate the eye without necessarily impinging upon the mind.

It is through this preoccupation with surface elements that the decorative painter can and does make his primary contribution to the viewer--for he captures in his work those aspects of design and color and texture which often escape the average eye and imagination. He forces the decorative elements to the foreground, magnifying here
and exaggerating there, until he has accomplished his end of welding those qualities which he found most interesting into a unified whole. He is seldom interested in symbolic association, he has forgotten that the rooster is sometimes assigned a place in Christian iconography; he is caught up in a web of color, line, shape, texture and movement.

All of these components of painting are worked together for the sheer enjoyment of the visual satisfaction they induce despite the fact that they grew out of what may be deemed a rather trivial subject. And the line, color, pattern and movement enchant the eye without pretending to engage the mind in profundities. Somehow, I think that if a decorative painting had a voice, it might say, "Here I am. If you like me, you have accepted into your life one more thing of beauty. If you do not like me, you will not be bothered, I shall not sink into your mind there to linger as a disturbing force seeking to be understood and appreciated." For how could the spangled feathers of a rooster command any but passing attention?

The decorative painter will render the feathers one way this week and another way the next. The form, the subject, is no more than a skeleton upon which the artist
strings the many-faceted jewels of his imagination. The painter does not pretend that this rooster stands for all roosters. He says only, "how beautiful is this rooster, a very personal rooster, a very particular rooster." Today the artist may paint the bird broadly with the glowing colors of stained glass set in a singing curvilinear design. Tomorrow or next week or next year, the artist may again paint a rooster. And in the new painting he may lavish all the care and attention to microscopic detail of the goldsmith, lingering lovingly over each tiny element of the design until the richly worked painting shimmers with the colors and textures of carefully wrought jewelry. And again he will say, "how beautiful is this rooster."

If the artist has been successful, the painting will indeed be beautiful, a painting to enchant one's eye, a gracenote to living. This is not unimportant.

Thus, it may be seen that subject matter for the decorative painter may range from the profound to the trivial—but, and herein lies the factor which looms most important to such a painter—he is more concerned with externals than he is with internals. He enjoys color and line and shape and texture for what these elements are in
themselves and not necessarily for their power to evoke universalities. He is not interpreting life; he is embellishing it.

Since decorative painting need not be concerned with the elements of social or spiritual suggestion, subject matter, per se, seems to be of minor importance. The artist becomes less preoccupied with abstract ideas than he is with surface aspects—line, form, color, texture—and their manipulation. For example, a decorative painter may produce an infinite number of works which are inspired by the same object and that object may be extremely simple and uncomplicated. The artist's imagination cloaks it in beauty.

Meaning, of the kind conveyed in the sonorous music of Bach and the chiaroscuro of Rembrandt, in the stirring horror of Picasso's Guernica, is not usually a problem of the decorative painter. Nor is he interested in probing the inexplicable. His is an intimate concern with the immediate, his eye finds its reward in the color and curl of a dried leaf lying against the pattern of a brick pavement wetly red. Particulars, not universals, are the touchstone of his work.
In part of the above discussion of subject matter in decorative painting, I have dwelt upon what must seem a very mundane theme—a rooster. This was intentional, for it is my belief that the decorative painter finds no subject to be trivial so long as it may be utilized in his work. In other words, since the decorative painter is not bent upon presenting universals, with psychological penetration, with spiritual statement, he can and will utilize the commonplace and familiar in his work. For this reason, the artist who is so oriented will, perhaps, be more obviously influenced by his immediate environment than will a painter whose interests lie outside of the immediate.

The decorative painter looks outward rather than inward and is keenly sensitive to characteristic differences between one environment and another, one thing and another. With an objective eye, he examines the world about him, sees new patterns, new textures and new combinations of color. His design sources do not always spring directly from nature but may just as easily be secondary derivations. As a perceptive observer of his surroundings, the decorative painter is equally sensitive to man's manipulation of nature's materials, and the influence from these observations may
find their way into his work. This has been borne out in my own experience.

On several successive occasions, circumstances have placed me in environments quite alien to that which I knew as home. On each of these occasions, I settled into the new world for a period long enough to permit more than a passing familiarity with the situation. One, India, lay outside the traditions of the Western world; the other, Peru, offered primitive art, Spanish art, and a mixture of the two in amounts which were almost overwhelming to one who had but little exposure to the effulgence of baroque architecture and art. In both these instances, I was thrown into the shadow of art forms which had developed out of conditions and philosophies quite different from my own. Perhaps my limited background prevented my fully appreciating these alien arts in their entirety. Much of the iconography was meaningless. But from the viewpoint of the decorative constituents of the art, the Hindu, the pre-Columbian and the Spanish baroque of Peru all had more to offer than I could assimilate. Yet each contributed to shape my vision, to enlarge my artistic vocabulary. My experience is certainly not unique. It has been shared by all artists
through time as influences flowed from one culture to another in the crosscurrents of war, migration and communication. It is one of the factors present in the development of style, and it is the quickening of this flow which has produced the International school now evident in the arts.

The foregoing discussion of subject matter would seem to indicate that the decorative painter, while not primarily concerned with subject as the most important focus of his work, nevertheless depends initially upon some identifiable source which he manipulates to his own ends. This is not necessarily the case, for the very concern of the decorative painter with color, line, and texture as the predominant elements of his work may find him making excursions into non-figurative areas of painting which are wholly divorced from reality. A line or a shape or a texture need not define an object in order to contribute to visual satisfaction. These elements of painting may be so arranged as to produce aesthetic reactions quite apart from objective association and may be enjoyed without reference to the known or familiar.

Though the decorative painter may begin with a subject, he almost immediately begins to change it, to abstract
those elements which provide him, at the moment, with the
greatest visual satisfaction. I feel that it is visual
satisfaction rather than visual stimulation which the
decorative painter seeks. This is a fine point and probably
a debatable one. It should be explored a bit further, for
it may supply a clue to some of the essential differences
between evocative and decorative painting. Stimulation is
a word which suggests action, and—when painting and viewer
are brought together—indicates the generation of viewer
participation in the creative experience inherent in the
work. It does not necessarily imply that the experience
of participation be a happy one. Indeed, it may be dis­
turbing in the extreme as new experiences can so often be.
Visual satisfaction, on the other hand, suggests less the
act of participation than it does the act of acceptance.
It bears a passive connotation.

So the decorative painter works toward the end of
producing visual satisfaction, toward producing a painting
which demands less viewer participation in an emotional or
intellectual sense than does the work of the evocative
painter. He abstracts from his subject those elements
necessary to this satisfaction, or he organizes
non-figurative elements into an easily comprehended whole. A decorative painter can never be a naturalistic or real-
istic painter, because the direction in which his talents 
move leads, at the very least, to a high degree of abstrac-
tion, often to the completely non-figurative as he concen-
trates upon the materials and techniques with which he 
works. Nor is this surprising, since subject matter in the 
actual or metaphysical sense, is relatively unimportant to 
his goal.

Most work falling within the decorative category 
holds to a shallow depth field. Since decorative painting 
is less an art of suggestion than it is an art of statement, 
the reduction of visual depth in the interest of simplifi-
cation acts also to clarify the statement. It would seem 
that restraint in the suggestion of depth, or space, im-
putes a psychological constraint and acts to limit viewer 
participation and stimulation. Most decorative paintings 
are not invitations to flight, objects which persuade the 
mind to follow the eye beyond the immediate surface into 
explorations of emotional nuances or apprehensions of 
psychological data hitherto unexperienced.
Where much of the current exploratory painting of the evocative school seeks to penetrate further into the concepts of space— or more accurately, perhaps, into the faintly adumbrated universe of human spirit—decorative painting contents itself with the "knowns" and attempts to seduce and please our vision with new ways of viewing the familiar, a familiar which may be associated with some subject or may be an organization of line, color and texture designed solely for the purpose of visual satisfaction.

When David Hare describes the artist as, "a man who functions beyond or ahead of his society," he suggests pioneering into areas as yet unexplored by the bulk of society. The importance of such exploration should not be underestimated. Since evocative painting stimulates man in his search of himself, it can be a prime mover in an exploration of the expanding universe of the human spirit. The evocative painter may be likened to the theoretical physicist, a man working ahead of his time and toward ends which often elude even his own grasp. The artist, like the physicist, may not be fully cognizant of the implications inherent in his own work at the moment. To both men, the immediate process may be wholly experimental and each may, in the
honesty of his own conscience, look upon his work at the end of the day and say, "Where do I go from here?" The unknown is ever uncharted.

The viewer, for this reason, becomes an integral force in the ultimate realization of an evocative work of art. A certain penetration into new areas of the spirit is begun by the artist, and this action must be picked up and carried forward by the viewer. If the qualities in the painting meet compatible qualities in the viewer, the action moves toward developing greater awareness; and, when the partnership is felicitous, clearer understanding of the uncharted areas. The "unknowns" lose something of strangeness and spiritual equilibrium is established, at least for the moment. When and where the felicitous meeting between painting and viewer will come about cannot be predicted. The artist may never know that a partnership has been effected. It is of this which David Hare spoke when he said, "the artist is always lonely."

The qualities within a painting which may be designated as evocative are of a nature which makes it impossible for an artist to "explain" his work. The explanation, if the word may be used at all, lies within the viewer rather
than the artist; it is an explanation which will not submit to verbalization except in most superficial aspects. Were it possible to verbalize the exploratory spiritual discovery and charting, the raison d'être for such art would no longer exist. Unfortunately, the logical mind, and our training and education from birth is directed more or less to this end, is often unwilling to concede that what seems to be a simple and direct spiritual union cannot be translated into words without altering its structure completely.

Millions of paragraphs have been written about painting, about aesthetics. If all the art in the world were suddenly to disappear, the words would lose much of their meaning. But if the words were to be destroyed and the art were to remain, painting would lose none of its ability to form spiritual partnerships with sensitive individuals.

In recent years, intense preoccupation with these non-verbal aspects of painting have continued to push out the horizons of exploratory creative work. The "action" painters who strive for kinesthetic union of self and canvas in the immediate sense are concentrating on intuitive areas of the creative process which, though not before unknown, are now being brought into closer focus. Other
artists are dealing with new concepts of space without dimension on the surface of their canvases. Does this new space penetrate the universe of the spirit? Does the artist decide, or does the viewer? It seems not to be a matter of decision by either the artist or the viewer, but rather a matter of feeling on the part of both—the "mystical necessity," new chords are plucked.

As the evocative painter delves ever more deeply into these "unknowns," it is not unnatural that he frequently moves away from the representative. It is almost inescapable. He finds that he can no longer lean upon familiar symbols, or even upon elements directly abstracted from nature. Where he does use nature as a framework, he may push behind, beyond and around it until the natural form loses its generally accepted character to some newly discovered dimension. Not infrequently, the painting itself may reflect the steps of the impassioned and dedicated research, the tensions of thrust and retreat, of attack and conquest will all be there. This is not always so, of course. In the works of other painters, only the goal is revealed on the canvas surface; beneath it lies buried the wandering creative search which led to final achievement.
But man cannot live with his eyes and mind focused on distant horizons without and within all of the time. The "here and now" of his life must not be neglected, and it is to the "here and now" that the decorative painter makes his contribution. Through his creative work, he produced paintings which do not presume to unlock hidden resources of the spirit but which are created for the single purpose of adding objects of beauty to the human environment. The decorative artist enjoys color, line and texture for their own sake and finds his delight in the arrangement and rearrangement of these elements in countless variation quite apart from any great concern for their power to evoke emotional responses reaching deeper than those engendered by visual pleasure in a very immediate sense.

I feel that it is the artists' basic interest in the "here-now" factor which determines many of the aspects most characteristic to decorative painting. Perhaps, too, this interest in the decorative reflects a certain contentment with and acceptance of status quo as contrasted to the state of mind of the artist who is ever seeking new horizons of expression.
A decorative painting, as before mentioned in this paper, is created to exist as a beautiful object—to be accepted and cherished or to be rejected according to the particular taste and temperament of the viewer. It is, I feel, meant to be enjoyed solely for the particular confluence of line, form, color and texture used in its creation. These are surface qualities, and are usually so arranged that they do not make a strong bid for emotional or intellectual involvement on the part of the viewer. To this end, the decorative painter may eschew subtleties. A line is a line, rather definitely so, and it seldom fades off into a felt rhythm to be picked up and completed by the viewer. Just as the decorative painter usually avoids suggestion of space or depth, qualities which invite numerous interpretations according to the aesthetic response of the viewer, so does he avoid most suggestions of indirection or indecision. His work seldom sweeps the viewer into itself, nor does it invite the spiritual partnership so essential, I feel, to evocative painting.

In general, it may be said that decorative painting is less apt to touch emotional chords within the viewer than is evocative art. There seem to be a number of
arguments to support this belief. Precise manipulation of media requires emotional and intellectual control, and there is often evident a preponderance of intellectual control behind the completed work of the decorative painter. This control may be largely responsible for the absence of strong emotive content in most decorative work.

It would be difficult to find a painting which was thoroughly decorative and yet engendered an overwhelming feeling for the tragic. Tragedy lies deeper than the surface. Decorative painting rests on the surface. It is rarely that a trenchant emotional quality can be wedded to decorative qualities to produce a powerful whole. Although the genius of Picasso effected this unlikely union in the forceful Guernica, more often than not, a heavy dependence upon the decorative will stifle or make ludicrous emotional content. When the eye is caught and held at the surface of the canvas, the spirit is not free to wander within. And since decorative painting seems to presuppose a certain equanimity, an evenness of mind; an intellectual orderliness, it is difficult to associate such balance with either evanescent or sweeping emotional impulses.
The greatest weakness in the murals of Diego Rivera may be traced, I believe, to an unsuccessful alliance of decorative treatment and emotionally pregnant subject. Rivera's compatriot, Orozco, using much the same subject, gave to the world the tragedy and agonies of a people webbed in poverty and revolution. His paintings are entirely devoid of decorative qualities, and their message sounds a clarion note against oppression anywhere.

Decorative qualities may be reflected in the composition or arrangement of lines, colors and textures; they may also be evident in the mechanics of technique. Inasmuch as a great deal of the pleasure experienced by the decorative painter while he works is born in the technical manipulation and possibilities of his media, it is inevitable that his enjoyment of color, paint and texture be translated onto the canvas, often in a very pure form. The decorative painter does not use the canvas as a battleground on which to thresh out his creative problems. His is a gentler approach; he is not at odds with his society; he is not particularly interested in dissecting any universe, without or within. He merely hopes to add something of beauty to the world he knows and likes.
The controlled quality characteristic of most decorative painting grows, I believe, from the creative methodology practiced by the artists so oriented. Always, of course, the work of the artists will vary as individuals do. But when the decorative painter is less preoccupied with the emotional flavor of his work than he is with the surface manipulation and when subject matter becomes of secondary importance, the artist is wholly free to construct his composition, to plan, to organize his work on what might be an entirely intellectual basis should he so desire. A sketch, perhaps spontaneously begun, can be worked and re-worked before transfer to the canvas. Lines can be tightened, rhythms strengthened, color plotted and replotted. Admittedly, there is a certain contrivance in this process, and it is the ingenuousness of this schematic approach which further delineates the character of decorative painting. The considered format of a Piet Mondrian and the charming deliquescences of Miro are related through this controlled invention, a reflection of intellectual and mechanical containment. There is less of the accidental. It is unlikely that the "trial, error, fulfillment" effect found in a painting by de Kooning, for example, will
appear in a finished decorative work.

This foregoing would make it appear that I hold decorative painting to be entirely devoid of emotional flavor. This is not so, for it would be patently impossible to separate the intellectual from the emotional in any activity aimed at achieving creative satisfaction. Satisfaction, itself, implies an emotional response of a certain sort. However, the decorative painter manipulates his media with less passion, perhaps with greater savor for the minute pleasures of the creative process. He may find his satisfaction in the richness of elaborate pattern, as in the work of Matisse, or in boldly handled shape and color, as in the work of Gauguin. His work may be reduced to the purity of the geometric, as with Mondrian, or laden with the intricate surface textures of a Jackson Pollack.

To a certain extent, perhaps, the decorative painter may stand as a bridge between the artistic crafts and the evocative painter. It is not my intention to propose a hierarchy of values in the arts. I cannot honestly believe it is possible to do so. But let us imagine a horizontal disposition of some of the arts with—for example—enameling, stained glass, mosaics, and painting along this line. It
would seem to me that decorative painting might fall between mosaics and evocative painting. In each of these arts is implicit a respect for and use of craftsmanship quite apart from the artistic or aesthetic considerations required to the production of a successfully completed work.

In the first three techniques, the demands of the processes rule out, to a not inconsiderable degree, impulsive emotional approaches to the creative products intended. The execution of a work of art in any one of these media requires thorough pre-planning if the creative achievement is to be worthy of merit. Hence, it might be said that the media forces, in varying amounts depending upon the media, certain mechanical and intellectual controls which may be exercised with little relationship to the emotional facets of the creative experience. The very strictures imposed by the discipline of the media make the first three techniques more suitable to decorative treatment than to uninhibited emotional expression. An examination of Byzantine mosaics, of Gothic stained glass, of Medieval enamels will bear out these conclusions.
Where the same mechanical control—now as a voluntary rather than a technical restraint—is transferred to the less restrictive media of pigment, the creative issue is quite likely to assume decorative characteristics akin to those inherent to the first three techniques. Where the mechanical and intellectual controls are lifted in favor of free emotional expression, the work will gain in emotional efficacy.

Creative experience, to be complete, must represent a sum total of the individual. But individuals are not alike. We have extroverts and introverts, we have preponderantly intellectual beings and those with more sensitive emotional barometers. Certainly the emotionally oriented person is not without intelligence nor the intellectual devoid of emotion. It is a matter of degree. Decorative painting will always have an undeniable if limited emotional quality; evocative painting, however emotionally conceived, will not be without intellectual unity. It is hardly possible to weigh one against the other. Each must be considered on its own merit. Each will find its own adherents.
Some years ago, a fine spring day prompted my taking a senior painting class on an outdoor sketching assignment. The students had been working in the laboratory for several months, and the hint of spring worked its annual magic to produce a conspicuous lethargy in the group. The decision to move out of doors was impromptu, and some studio time had already been dissipated; the short period left precluded any elaborate preparation of materials for the jaunt. I decided to experiment.

A grove of veteran oaks lay not far from the art department, and the students walked with me to this moss-hung woods. I asked them to lie on the ground beneath the hugely sprawling trees, to look up and through the moss which shrouded the almost bare branches that were flung across the limitless sky. Just to lie there and look.

There is a shapelessness about Spanish moss. There is almost no color, or at least the evanescent color shifts and changes momentarily as light fluctuates. A soft wind moved the moss drapery gently and patterns overhead flowed one into another as formlessness melted into formlessness. There was an indescribable feeling of space—space which was a living thing—as the fragile moss alternately veiled
and unveiled the sky beyond, as the sunlight and the wind conspired to melt a shadow here, to wash it there. The effect was hypnotic; one felt suspended in a timeless void. The students were enmeshed in enchantment.

After some time had passed, I asked the students to pick up fragments of moss, to examine them carefully, to separate the fibers. I asked them to look at a twig, a tree—to study particulars. A dried leaf, the color of the sky, the line of a branch, the feel of the wind, the texture of bark and moss. To look, to think, to feel, but not to sketch. Here was a subject for painting. Purely as subject, it held few emotional associations, little intellectual appeal. Seen from the perspective of the prone position, the moss-hung branches created abstract arrangements of pattern against the sky. Nobody whistled "Way Down Upon the Swannee River"!

The following day, my students began paintings based upon this experience. The results were revealing. The subject had become so familiar—through daily contact—that most of them had long ceased to look at it until the excursion of the preceding morning. Now they began paintings each according to what he had seen or felt in the
spring sunlight. As with most classroom work, the paintings fell far short of professional levels, of course; but they did reflect a body of sincere effort to recreate the visual and emotional experiences still fresh in the mind.

One student pulled broad and irregular areas of color across the white of his canvas until a bold composition of grays formed a static patchwork so balanced in color as to force the white of his canvas ground to shimmer brilliantly where it pierced the somber tonal arrangement.

Another student swept his canvas with vigorous movement, swinging across the surface with linear rhythms reminiscent of the wind in the trees. He almost danced at his work as if he were a puppet to some natural force. A third canvas reached into the space beyond, and delicately handled colors were fused and blended to partially obscure the wash of blues over which they lay. The painting seemed to whisper an invitation to loose oneself from worldly bondage. These three paintings made overtures to the viewer through reflections of physical-emotional involvement which began with a given subject, a subject which had been reduced to essentially non-figurative terms in each painting.
A fourth student wiped black paint over his canvas. When this was dry, he layered the black with a heavy white pigment through which he scraped to create a strong tracery of angular lines derived, he said, from the tree branches as seen against the sky. When the white had dried, portions of it were tinted with washes of dull yellows and pale orange. Into these areas were printed—with crumpled paper and frayed match-sticks dipped into paint—a bird-track network of fine lines. This pattern grew from the close study of bits of moss. Some of the interstices were filled with electric bits of color, a random mosaic that nestled like jewels in the web of lines bridging the grid of scribed branches.

The finished effect was entirely unrelated to that of any of the other paintings described except by virtue of the initial problem proposed. The avoidance of depth, the sharply etched pattern, the complete departure from local color—all of these coalesced into a decorative effect far removed from the evocative overtones which characterized the work of the others.

To varying degrees, the paintings of the remaining members of the class fell into much the same schema and were
aligned with either the evocative group or with the decorative example.

As I look back on this experiment, a number of things come to mind. Those students who produced the first three mentioned paintings began, worked, and concluded their problem on the trial-error basis, doing their research, as it were, on the canvas itself. The fourth student evidenced a high amount of pre-planning before he started on the canvas. His method involved a series of related technical processes, each dependent upon and dictated by the step preceding. His whole approach indicated that he had a preliminary and fairly complete idea of the goal toward which he directed. He knew what he hoped to achieve, he planned the technical steps necessary to that achievement, he executed those steps in proper sequence. His actions, therefore, were clearly and carefully controlled from the moment he began to work on the canvas until the painting was completed.

This classroom example demonstrates yet another element differentiating evocative and decorative painting. Though all four of the works described were highly abstract, the first developed from a preoccupation with mass, the
second with movement, the third with space, and the fourth with minutia. The first three stripped the minor details of nature from their work while the fourth built his composition up from those very details. It may well be that an interest and love for detail leads an artist into decorative painting. Instead of the whole being equal to the sum of its parts, the parts are added together to create a whole. The decorative painter may be the accountant of the art world.

Besides forcing an intellectual approach to decorative painting, the exacting demands of craftsmanship impose further restrictions upon free creative expression. I have found—in my own work—that the pre-planning, whether in sketch or in mind, can lead to the development of a rather complete picture of the exact result intended in the finished painting. When this happens, the process of painting becomes anti-climactic, somewhat comparable to unwrapping a package when the contents are already known. There are no surprises, no unexpected and delightful accidents. This can, and it frequently does, steal much creative pleasure from the act of painting. However, it does not mean that a decorative painter never experiences the very special
joys that are the reward of creative activity. His largest pleasure, I believe, comes when a new painting is being initiated, comes during the planning stages. It is a "fly now, pay later" psychology, and the payment for creative flight is sometimes made during a routine completion of a work the conception of which offered the greatest excitement.

It is here where may be found the shoals upon which many decorative painters founder. Routine completion can degenerate into a dry, unrewarding process. If the finished product suffers from a certain anemia, the artist must stand accused of falling short in his payment for creative privileges already enjoyed. Creative involvement from the beginning to the completion of decorative work sometimes spins out into an extremely delicate thread; it may be broken along the way. When this occurs, the work becomes dry, lifeless—a mannered manipulation of pigment quite incapable of producing pleasure since little was experienced in its execution.

For it seems to me—and I speak as an artist—that if there is one thing binding all art through all time into one brotherhood, it is the quality of joy it contains.
This joy may range from the whimsical delight of Klee to the spiritual ecstasy of El Greco. It matters not whether the work is decorative or evocative. It is a quality which has nothing whatsoever to do with subject, materials, technical approach, color, composition, or time. It is the creative life-line extending back into the past and ahead into a future without end. It is the artist in the work.
NOTES ON THE PLATES

PLATES I-V. THE THREE KINGS

The three paintings were conceived as a triptych designed to create a sparkling and rich tapestry of color over a large area. Each painting measures 26 x 48 inches, and together they cover a wall area of 4 x 6-1/2 feet exclusive of the frame. The work was done in oil on tempered masonite. Some decorative detail was added in gold leaf.

This subject was selected because it provided an appropriate foil for the elaborate decorative treatment which I had in mind to use. It was a project that had been planned for at least two years before the paintings were begun, and numerous tentative sketches had been made prior to the final plotting of the composition. The story of Christmas has long interested me as a subject, and I have done many compositions based upon one or another facet of that story.

My interest in the biblical subject is less from the viewpoint of the religious elements involved than it is from the elaborate and almost magical cloaking of time and
tradition. The fairy tale endowment to which the original story has fallen heir lends itself to the exercise of unlimited imagination insofar as decorative accoutrements, composition and interpretation are concerned. It is not the beauty of the story but rather the splendor of the tradition which I attempted to capture in the triptych. The colors were kept light and bright—a radiant combination but with a certain softness becoming to the subject.

Though in separate sections, all three of the paintings were worked together with compositional elements so planned as to be complete within each painting yet at the same time to weave the group of three into a single unit. Often, I find that when a painting is in the planning stage, I tend to visualize it in some setting. This concern has some effect upon the direction of the work. Since *The Three Kings* was to be a relatively large piece of work and of a proportion unsuited to many wall spaces, I realized that it might someday be necessary to split the three panels into individual units. Therefore, it was imperative that each panel be able to stand by itself as a satisfying painting.
To lay out the large composition, I taped a full-scale piece of heavy paper to the wall of my studio. With crayons and chalk, I plotted the larger elements and distribution of light and dark in the panels. The smaller decorative details were largely ignored at this point in the development of the work. Color was not introduced. The geometric designs which run down the sides of the paintings were blocked in roughly with attention to scale rather than detail.

When this preliminary work was completed to my satisfaction, I cut the three sections apart and made such alterations as were necessary to create an effect of completeness within the individual panels. The three sections were then placed together again to determine if the changes had weakened the over-all composition. The process was repeated several times— together, apart and together— until the desired balance was achieved in each instance. Only then did I begin to plan the color disposition. Still working with the crayons and chalk, I blocked the color into the central panel; I realized, of course, that it could be but an approximation of the colors which would appear in the finished oil painting. At this time, I did not
concern myself with the colors to be used in the side panels, for I felt that the center panel would act as a guide to the complete color arrangement of the three sections. This proved to be true.

The basic and undetailed compositions were transferred to the masonite boards, and the center panel was begun. All of the preliminary painting was done thinly with dilute pigment and a broad brush. The work was intentionally kept loose and undefined. Again, scant attention was paid to any refinement in color; in fact, the first colors used were purposely kept crude and raw. My chief concern was to cover the white ground areas quickly while developing the design from an area—or shape—viewpoint. At this stage, I was no longer working with a figure as such but with a series of shapes woven together into a rather static relationship. Over the thinly brushed paint, heavier layers of pigment were applied with a painting knife. Now I was working for color relationship and surface texture. Though not yet involved with decorative details, I was setting up the base for such detail. For this reason, a mental image of the decorative accents had to be kept constantly in mind. When the painting began to reach a
satisfactory conclusion, I moved to the left-hand panel and brought it to about the same point. Then to the right-hand panel. The final work on the large color areas was done on all three panels more or less simultaneously in order that they be fully co-ordinated. Only then did I begin to work on the smaller decorative elements.

The three figures are set, each in its own panel, as simple rectilinear forms distinguished by a minimum of modelling and that only in the hands and faces. The paintings are entirely lacking in depth—colors, values and linear design are kept to an absolute surface. Each panel carries one or two bands of geometric units placed as vertical borders to flank the figure which stretches from top to bottom in the painting. The mosaic-like quality of the decorative bands produces a lively counterpoint to the dignified design of the three figures. This counterpoint is echoed in details on the garments. The decorative units, though based upon geometric shapes, escape any monotony of mechanical repetition by virtue of a contrived irregularity in line and color. Early Paracas textiles in the archaeological museum in Lima suggested this play upon repeated shapes with minor variation. An infinite amount of small
design provides a constantly changing source for visual pleasure without, I feel, impairing the over-all strength of the triptych.

Weaving through the three paintings is a tracery of design picked out in gold leaf. This design in gold brings an ever-shifting movement into the work since any light change picks out a pattern here as it obliterates another there. The problems imposed by this shifting design were considerable, and during the application of the gold, this had to be taken into account in order that the design be in balance at any given time. The gold was applied under lamplight, and the lamp was moved from time to time to supply light from various angles. As the design changed with the angle of the light, I found that occasionally it was necessary to remove some of the gold which had been laid into the paintings under a different light condition. The application of the gold design was, perhaps, the touchiest part of the painting. However, the final effect was so very satisfactory that it was well worth the effort involved. The use of the gold was suggested by early colonial paintings in Peru.
I was less interested in the gold as color than I was in its propensity to pick up and reflect light. The moment to moment shift in design caused by this quality gave an interesting movement to the paintings.

All small details in the three paintings were done with brush, since I found it technically impossible to control the application of paint to tiny areas when I used the painting knife with which larger areas were covered. The three paintings were completed within about forty days of continuous work. Since the three were being produced at more or less the same time, it was not necessary to make provision for drying during the painting process.

The Three Kings are in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Barnes, Lima, Peru.

**PLATES VI-VIII. MADONNA, RED MADONNA**

These two paintings were derived from the same source--primitive painting of the early Cuzco school. For the past twelve years, I have painted a Madonna and Child composition for each Christmas season--to hang in the house for the holidays and to give as an early gift to some friend the next year. So it was with great interest that I saw and
studied the nativities of the Cuzco school of painting. They are everywhere in Peru, compositions handled with a stiff and formal balance and usually executed in dull reds and blues laced with gold. The figures seem divorced from reality in their wooden disregard for normal physical proportions; religious symbols such as the halo, the cross, and the angels are foil for jewel-like and ornate detail.

Somehow, in these paintings I could see my own feeling for religious subject matter expressed—that is, less regard for the spiritual significance than for the fairy tale quality of the subject. The Indian painters seemed to see the Virgin not as a person accorded special spiritual significance but rather as a person set apart by virtue of a multiplicity of tangible riches, jewels and laces and brocades—vestments of wealth rather than spirit. And the naive imagination of the early colonial painters clothes the Virgin in every variety of ornate splendor that their imagination and their contact with the conquistadors could provide. As they did this, they were—in effect—creating their own symbol, a child-like dream of material attainment uncluttered with moral overtones.
The first painting, *Madonna*, is disposed formally on a background which was divided in half vertically into a dark and a light side. I painted one half of the board white and the other black before the composition was developed. Working freely, I laid in the outlines of the figures and the halos across these two areas of dark and light, maintaining a formally balanced arrangement based upon interlocking curves. The only straight lines in the composition occur at the point of central division, in the faint vertical striping in the robe, and in the edge of the cuffs. The halos of the Virgin and the Child were trued with a compass for greater accuracy.

Preliminary painting was done with a painting knife, and all large areas were scumbled in roughly with a rather heavy impasto. Colors were muted in a scheme of dull blues, browns and whites through which the under colors of black and white were permitted to appear. The linear designs on the halos were, in part, scribed back through the still soft pigment to reveal the underpainting. Small details were introduced with a fine watercolor brush. Some gold appears in the decorative units.
I developed the figures of the Virgin and the Child in such a manner as to utilize an abstract arrangement of darks which repeated a duplicate arrangement of lights on either side of the center line. The two faces and the decorative detail bridge the central division to bind the arbitrary counterchange together.

Essentially a very simple painting, the contrivance represented in the value arrangement successfully escapes what might well have become a mannered and trite rendition of an overdone subject. The filigree of gold detail lightens the otherwise dull color scheme while at the same time softening the severe dark and light arrangement. The 20 x 26 inch painting was matted with a medium gray-brown velvet and framed in a simple gold moulding. It is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Emil Willimetz, San Isidro, Peru.

The Red Madonna was commissioned by a long-time resident in Peru. The American family is Catholic, desired a painting with a religious subject, had long been familiar with the colonial art of the country; they wanted a painting which was related to the tradition of the country but which would be a sympathetic addition to their modern home. They definitely did not want the dull and dark colors which
are characteristic to the Cuzco school paintings. Thus, the subject was determined before the painting was begun—but only the subject. The colors, the treatment were left to my discretion.

I divided a narrow vertical panel into uneven horizontal stripes of varying widths. The center stripes were worked together to form a band of brilliant reds, oranges and dark pinks across the board. Similar but narrower bands of deep blues, blue-greens and purples were painted at the top and base of the vertical panel. Each of these areas was worked with many broken layers of paint (as many as twelve layers in some areas) until the colors sang with the richness of stained glass. The juxtaposition of complementary colors worked to stimulate a brilliance which was created in the vibration set up by the action of the colors on one another. This color relationship was intentional, for I wanted the panel to appear to shimmer with an inner light.

The Madonna, the Child, and the flanking angels and birds followed the basic format of colonial composition. I developed them carefully against the background by building the figures and costumes with an extremely fine linear compilation of design units—almost a dictionary of baroque
ornament. Blacks, pinks, golds, and whites were painstakingly knit together into an open tapestry until the figures were separated from the dominating ground of stripes while yet remaining a part of it. The delicate textures and details which cover the entire surface glisten like tesserae. The color is most beautiful.

I matted the 20 x 48 inch panel in black velvet which was edged with a narrow gold frame. A second slim band of gold edges the painting itself and serves as an extension of the painted border which bands the composition. The painting is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Henry J. Kohler, Lima, Peru.

PLATES IX, X. MOCHICA

A long interest in pre-Columbian ceramics was furthered during my two-year residence in Peru. My husband and I made frequent excursions to archeological sites along the coast where we dug in burial grounds for pottery and textiles of the older civilizations. In these two years, we were able to assemble a fair cross-section of craft work from the major periods of the Indian civilizations in Peru. This association with the design of the ancient artisans
led to a series of paintings which reflected my interest. Mochica is one of a group which I did more or less concurrently. It is based upon the beautifully drawn designs found in some of the ceramics of the Mochica, a pre-Columbian society of the coastal area of north Peru. In these early ceramics, the figures were drawn in fine lines executed with the utmost precision. They are somewhat reminiscent of Etruscan drawing in their character and spritelessness.

Perhaps this painting could be looked upon as a "costume piece," yet I tried to make it more than that. I was dealing with source material derived from an ancient civilization about which little is known excepting through the ceramics and textiles of the period. This "unknown" I tried to incorporate into the panel—a quality of partly felt, partly seen. One figure dominates the composition completely. A ragged handling of pigment in a patchy arrangement pierces the otherwise simple, semi-geometric areas in the painting and works a broken pattern over the surface as it half reveals, half conceals the large figure. All background-foreground quality is lost in the elusive pattern created by this manipulation of pigment. Derived
from the colors of the Indian ceramics, the earth tones
hold to creamy or pinkish whites, umbers, siennas, redbrowns, and pure black. These closely related colors are
supplemented with a single light, bright turquoise blue
which is used sparsely to create a rhythmic path through
the somber colors.

The 20 x 48 inch masonite panel was painted entirely
with a painting knife, my favorite tool. It is matted in
rough burlap which seems harmonious with both the subject
and the color. A simple unfinished wood frame completes
the effect. The painting is owned by the artist.

PLATES XI-XIII. BLACK CAT, BLACK LACE

Both of these paintings, I feel, owe a considerable
debt to surrealism although at the time I was doing them, I
was unaware of this fact. In the Black Cat, it is the par
ticular combination of real-unreal which accounts for this
quality; in Black Lace, the distortion of perspective bears
some kinship to surrealistic methods.

The Black Cat was inspired by a domestic situation,
the acquisition of a cage full of birds and a predatory
feline which made daily excursions from the world beyond
our patio wall. The painting was an experiment in combining extreme realism—an almost photographic realism—with flat decorative areas worked for a maximum of textural interest. This approach was engendered by a curiosity as to just how far one could go in developing such a combination.

In the 30 x 36 inch panel, a rigid linear design made by the bars of the cage breaks a large part of the composition into irregular rectangles. The torn posters on the wall and the light-dark pattern in the pavement frame the cat figure which melts against the wall before which it is set. The rather large area given over to the cat was purposefully kept free from any of the geometric design which encircles it—thus the cat dominates the composition, poised and separated from the busy pattern in which it is embraced. This separation seems to create a quality of mystery, a quality which came into the painting quite without my realizing it. The initial problem, that of combining definite and calculated realism with flat, abstract design was, I feel, fairly successfully solved.

As with The Three Kings, the original design for this composition was worked on full scale paper with crayon and chalk. Because I wished to retain a rigid geometry in
the bars of the cage, I stripped the bars on the masonite panel with masking tape when the composition was transferred to that panel. When most of the painting was completed, I pulled the tapes from the surface and carefully painted the bars into the sections which the tapes had protected. Had I not done this, the rough texture of the heavily pigmented surface would have made precision extremely difficult if not impossible. This technique might be held in question by some painters. However, I feel that any means is justifiable so long as it contributes toward achieving the ultimate effect desired.

**Black Cat** is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Barnes, Lima, Peru.

**Black Lace** seems to arrive at a somewhat better solution to much the same general problem encountered in the painting discussed above. As with **Black Cat**, the broad basic forms of the pavement and architecture find their color and texture interest in the surface manipulation of the pigment. In this painting, however, each area is handled so subtly as to color and texture change that the surface of the area is barely broken and hence remains essentially intact as a shape. Absolutely flat, one-color areas
(the black arch and shawl) contrast with areas which represent a gradual build-up in textures which culminate in the intricately worked and delicate lace of the mantilla. There is a quality of quiet refinement in this painting.

All areas are sharply defined and, with the exception of the face, given no modelling. Though perspective lines give some illusion of depth, perhaps, this was not further delineated by color or texture change and so was kept to a minimum.

The vertical division of light and dark created an interesting problem. The weight of the dark area was exaggerated by the commanding position of the large figure; it had to be brought into balance with the smaller adjacent white shape. This balancing was accomplished by using the only bright color in the painting in the upper far left. A clear pink-orange, though used in a small area, effectively pulls the panel into balance. The eye travels from the spidery white flower, up the arm, around and across the head to the small figure in the rear. There it is caught for a moment, picks up again at the line of the black arch and travels down and back to the flower.
Despite the sharply etched design, I feel that the panel itself is extremely subtle, that it indicates far more restraint than is to be found in the Black Cat. The painting is 20 x 48 inches, and the development of a composition which exaggerates this off-beat proportion is not a simple matter. The placement of the large figure violates the usual concept of figure positioning, but the panel seemed satisfactory when completed. I have often found it particularly rewarding to work with panels of odd proportions and enjoy the challenge that they offer.

Black Lace is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. William H. Barnes, Lima, Peru.

PLATES XIV, XV. THREE ROOSTERS

As I worked consistently and extensively every day in the studio in Lima, I gradually became more and more interested in color for its own sake. This painting, Three Roosters, was executed with but one end in mind—that of creating a vivid color experience. The subject, though of secondary importance, was compatible with the basic problem. It was gay, simple, undistracting. I used it merely to break the canvas into abstract units or shapes which could
be saturated with colors and textures aimed primarily at achieving as lively and as vibrant an ensemble of color as the eye could accept.

To enhance the vibrancy of the colors I was using, I troweled the pigment onto the panel with an abandonment which reflected a spontaneity in harmony with the total feeling of the painting. A few small dark areas and a few of white are caught in a pool of flashing complementary colors which, except for the fact that they are more or less confined to semi-geometric areas, seem to be placed haphazardly on the surface of the board. The 20 x 24 inch painting is anything but subtle—the colors and the textures dance across the surface, and the composition receives its movement from this rather than from the lines or areas created by the design of the birds themselves. Three Roosters is owned by the artist.

PLATE XVI. LLAMAS

The subject used for this 30 x 36 inch painting is probably one of the most over-worked in all of Peru—a favorite of every tourist trap in the country. The painting herein reproduced was done in the face of this trashy
backlog and in response to the mute challenge it offered. The form, even the character of this symbol of the Andes—the llama—affords a subject deserving of much more sensitive rendition than it commonly receives. The animals are everywhere in the mountains. They are food, clothing and transportation to the greatest part of the Peruvian population. And they are constantly being degraded by trite or sentimental painters.

The colors used in the painting were derived from the browns and whites of the animals themselves, from the yellow ochres of the barren mountains and the blue of the sierra sky. A schema of soft yellows and grayed browns is cut with bold dark and light forms which were kept as simple and broadly strong as the mountains from which the animals come. Curves, developed from arbitrary anatomical emphasis, create an undulating movement throughout the composition—again, a movement to be found in the mountains themselves. Ropes winding through the composition reinforce the curvilinear design which somehow creates the illusion of a painting much larger than its actual dimension.

The work was done entirely with the painting knife. The textures thus produced were especially compatible with
the introduction of a slight suggestion of fur in some areas.

The three eyes were used to stabilize the swinging movement of the composition. Approximately the same size, the eyes repeat each other but with some variation which was introduced in the interest of diversity.

Llamas is now in the permanent collection of The Art Center, Miraflores, Peru.

PLATE XVII. BOAT BASIN

This painting was developed from hindsight rather than foresight insofar as my usual approach to my work is concerned. Beginning with no idea whatsoever, I swung a network of non-figurative lines—all in one color—over the 30 x 36 inch panel. I let the lines suggest the subject which, because of its non-figurative initiation, never did move very far up the scale toward naturalism.

The experience was an interesting one, but, for me, not a particularly happy one. I found it unsettling to work "blindly" and without a fairly clear idea as to the goal I wished to achieve. For this reason, I feel that the painting has a quality of tightness which may be traced in part,
perhaps, to the fact that when I did get hold of it, I hung on for dear life.

Actually, the painting appears to be better than it is in the black and white photograph included in this paper. This would indicate that the color may be at fault rather than the value scheme or the composition. I am inclined to believe that this is true since in retrospect, I recall that it was the color which was worked and reworked until it finally seemed "all right" but hardly inspired. This difficulty with color undoubtedly grew out of the way the composition was developed in the early stages. When I know my subject, when I have a fairly clear concept of how I wish to treat it, this concept usually includes a mental picture of the color effect I wish to create. Color, thus, is part and parcel of the plan from the beginning. Where this pre-plan did not exist, neither did a preliminary color plot exist.

I suppose that most painters develop personal methods of working, procedures which give— for each— a certain initial security, a premise upon which to begin. This certainly seems to be true for me. Occasionally I will break across these work habits when I feel that they are
conspiring to limit a certain freedom. These digressions will bring, usually, some minor revisions in the habits themselves; and they do forestall any rigid inflexibility. But the products from the periods of digression are usually difficult to evaluate, since they do depart from my norm. Boat Basin belongs in such a group.

The painting is in the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Wolfram Drewes, Lima, Peru.

**PLATES XVIII, XIX. LIME SELLERS, ORGAN GRINDER**

I have grouped these two paintings together because they are closely related in both approach and subject matter. The technique and design used in each grew out of the method used in painting the Red Madonna. As with that work, the background areas of the panels were divided into uneven stripes which extended from the top to the bottom of each panel. None of the lines forming the stripes appear as precise verticals, nor are they parallel to one another. The figures and objects used to create the superimposed designs are extremely simple, almost diagrammatic in their treatment. They serve to lace the stripes together and to give
movement to the compositions. Linear accents and uncomplicated solid shapes are fit into the striped areas in a jigsaw-like relationship which has an almost mechanical precision in its character.

Both of these paintings represent experiments in color relationship. In each, the background is closely keyed in color as well as in value. The colors used were determined by the nature of the subject in each painting.

*Lime Sellers*, a 16 x 24 inch panel, was painted in deep blues, greens and purples. These colors were selected for the mood kinship that they held for the subject. The waif-like character of small children who work patiently all through the day seemed best expressed in a somber schema. A bright lime green provides the only relief to the otherwise dark color arrangement. The figures are set into the background stripes in such a manner as to utilize the vertical lines created by the stripes for part of the anatomical description. Modelling was held to a minimum. The children seem trapped in an ambiguous environment, as indeed they are in actuality. The painting has no particular point of focus; rather, it seems to read uniformly from left to right. This was intentional, since I wished to preserve a quality of
anonymity insofar as the figures were concerned. The children serve only to create a frieze-like design across the masonite panel.

*Lime Sellers* is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Davis, Talara, Peru.

In contrast, the *Organ Grinder* is a gay and crisp composition. Greater value differences give a staccato snap to the rhythm within the picture; sharply defined bits of calligraphy punctuate the composition and heighten the happy mood which is reflected in the bright reds and pinks of the background stripes of color. Areas of pure white are scattered across the face of the design like a whimsical mobile to further reinforce the light mood of the subject itself. While the accents in the *Lime Sellers* were reserved—softened so as not to break the quiescent and subdued mood established by the dark blues and purples which suffuse the painting—the accents in the *Organ Grinder* were kept brittle and clear. Shapes were repeated over and over to suggest the particular quality of the music which is heard daily on every street in Lima.

*Organ Grinder*, a 20 x 26 inch painting, is in the collection of Dr. and Mrs. Wolfram Drewes, Lima, Peru.
PLATES XX-XXIII. WATERMELONS, KITES, ESCAPE

The three paintings here listed were done consecutively and with the same technical method. Innumerable layers of paint were scumbled across the entire board until a pastiche of formless gradations of color blended harmoniously from one side of the board to the other. Some colors were carried across the entire board, others were spotted onto the surface only here and there. In some areas of the background, there may be as many as thirty colors laid one over the other. I worked with a high proportion of quick-drying underpainting white mixed with most of the oil colors. When each layer reached a certain point of dryness but before it was entirely set, I polished it down with the palm of my hand until it took on a satiny gloss. Color transitions were carefully controlled in order that movement and obvious design be held to a minimum. When the background painting was completed, the surface of each board had an almost opalescent quality, a softness of color without form yet not without life.

Over this medley of color and texture were drawn—with precise economy—simple groupings of figures. The
compositions had been carefully planned even before the base painting was begun inasmuch as some of the molulation in each background had to perform compositional functions in the completed arrangement of design.

In *Kites*, a 20 x 48 inch panel, a delicate design created by the figures maintains a tender relationship to the subtle luminosity of the ground. Everywhere, the ground painting breaks through and becomes part of the figure and architectural forms which were derived from the Peruvian countryside. The figures alternately emerge from and blend into the ground upon which they rest—a scene or a mood half-remembered, half-forgotten. It is, perhaps, an idealized rather than a realistic concept.

*Kites* is in the possession of the artist.

*Watermelons* was suggested by a street scene common to Lima at certain seasons of the year. Vendors with push-carts canopied in red plastic supply a ragged populace with slices of the succulent fruit. The sun filters through the plastic canopy to cast a red glow over the cut melons and the cart. In this panel, a concentration of pinky reds in the background behind the cart melts into a montage of pale, fresh greens behind the figures. These colors were suggested
by the melons themselves. As with the figures in *Kites*, the group in this painting emerge only slightly from the background. Bright red melon sections scatter across the composition in a semi-horizontal band to tie the figures and cart together with a happy and lilting rhythm.

*Watermelons*, a 20 x 48 inch painting, is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. William Wilson, Tingo Maria, Peru.

*Escape* represents another excursion into design derived from Mochica ceramics. Though the painting belongs to this group technically, it is unrelated in every other aspect. Here the ground was carefully manipulated to grade from light to dark across the board. The lively, frieze-like design of running figures was executed in a reverse gradation of values to bring the light figure against the dark ground. Greater definition was given the figures than in the two previous paintings. Again, extreme precision marks the carefully detailed design. Scrappy dark and light accents distributed throughout the composition point up the rhythm.

The technical method used in building up these three paintings required the exercise of extreme control as
the figures were worked over the pre-painted background. I found that it was virtually impossible to paint out a "mistake" without seriously impairing the freshness of the multi-layered colors upon which the design rested. While experimenting with this method of paint manipulation, I learned that the completed effect had to be quite well in mind before the final design was placed on the panel. Of the twenty paintings in this group, these three, perhaps, were executed with the most mechanical control. However, and this was important to me, I do not feel that any of the three suffer from the dry tightness which is so often a by-product of rigid precision.

Escape is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Folger Athearns, Lima, Peru.

PLATES XXIV, XXV. DESERT SUMMER, GUANO ISLANDS

A studied review of my painting after a prolonged period of working with problems which exacted a high degree of technical control indicated a need for "loosening" exercises, for--if you will--greater physical participation in the painting process itself. Perhaps I felt that manual and intellectual dexterity had begun to outweigh creative
dexterity; I do believe that it is quite possible for this to happen. The two paintings herein included are from a series which grew out of this analysis. In this series, I worked entirely without preliminary sketches, worked with a more or less loosely formulated idea which did not become fixed in any sense until the paintings were almost completely finished. Unlike Boat Basin, where the work was begun with no idea whatsoever, I did have some mental image—a fluid image—upon which to base the work from the outset. However, I avoided any suggestion of precision, of pre-contrivance—and let the compositions develop quite naturally as the creative experience was extended. The spontaneous application of paint to panel reflects, I feel, something of the pleasurable character of the experience.

A comparison of either of these two paintings with, for instance, the Red Madonna will indicate to what extent this departure from my usual approach to a composition affected the quality of the painting itself.

Desert Summer, a 16 x 24 inch panel, is imbued with a wild, almost desperate quality which emerges from a crescendo of slashing, rapidly executed whirling forms which trap the figure in a jagged and unrelenting grip. This
painting reflects a very personal attitude to desert heat and monotony; I hate it, there is a sort of madness about it which seems inescapable. It is formless, an unseen enemy, a cruel prison. In its very quiet, it is wild.

These things I believe were caught in the painting. It is not a pretty painting. Even the color, though very simple, strengthens the total mood. Hot oranges and pinks spin in a whirl of ochres, red-browns and blacks. The white of the bird and the dress repeat the white heat of the sun and lie like bleached bones against the sandy colors. Clearly, this is not a decorative painting; rather, it is a mood painting—harsh and bitter and uncompromising.

*Desert Summer* is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Richard S. Slater, Bradenton, Florida.

*Guano Islands* represents a rare—for me—excursion into non-figurative composition. However, the idea for the painting came from nature. The mountainous sea coast of Peru has many off-shore islands which are nesting places to thousands of birds. The islands are white with guano, a whiteness which shines brightly against the blue of the sky and water. The coastal mountains of pure sand rise up from the water steeply, and the birds wing their way between the
islands and the narrow beach. The scene creates a color impression which is not easily forgotten. I had seen it many times and was always enchanted by the particular mood it engendered.

While I worked on the painting, Guano Islands, I forgot all about the sea-mountain relationship and concentrated upon the color and rhythmic repetition of swinging forms. The half-defined bird shapes are woven back and forth, in and out of the composition as if to suggest the flight of huge flocks of birds from one point to another. The geography of the scene is tentatively indicated by the use of blue to the left of the panel and sandy brown to the right. Again, the work was done spontaneously and with considerable directness. The composition is created through an almost endless repetition of one swinging form which appears over and over yet always with some variation. The color is fresh and lively; it is in complete harmony with the mood of the painting.

Guano Islands, a 20 x 26 inch panel, is in the possession of the artist.
PLATES XXVI-XXVIII. SHAPES, RED CHAIR

These are the final paintings of the two-year studio interim. Happily, I can honestly state that I feel them to be the best in the entire group. It is difficult to evaluate these two works since they mark a departure from the earlier paintings while, at the same time, they seem to represent a step in the direction of greater creative maturity. However, until this "maturity" is validated in the studio with some consistency, it is impossible to ascertain whether or not my judgment in this respect is correct.

The paintings are both decorative. In this, they retain a link with the work done prior to their inception. But the decorative effect has been achieved with less contrivance, with greater ease and naturalness; the creative thread was not broken as it spun out between the original planning and the final painting. Actually, each painting was conceived and planned with as much care as went into the most exacting of any of the previously discussed work. I made careful sketches of each composition; changes and revisions were made in the drawings until they were felt to be entirely satisfactory. The colors were plotted, and the value arrangements were decided upon. However, I was
determined to retain the directness of approach which characterized Guano Islands and Desert Summer in these last compositions. I think that I was successful. In these two paintings may be found more of the freshness of the initial stage, more of the original "excitement"—a delicate welding of creative and intellectual control which seems to work in perfect balance.

The paintings are simple and direct and unpretentious. From my point of view, they promise much; in them I can read a bit into the future, and I like what I see. Perhaps, as with learning, there are plateaus in creative development. With these two paintings, I seem to have moved to a higher plateau, a plateau as yet unexplored; it is with considerable impatience that I wait to take up the artist's tools again.

Shapes was suggested by the ancient burial grounds at Chancay in Peru. Years of grave-robbing have left the desolate waste covered with bleached bones and fragments of broken pottery crudely decorated with meandering geometric designs.

One day, while at the location for a picnic with the family, my daughter collected together an odd assortment of
bones and shards and laid them out on the sand in random order. As I watched her arranging her treasures, a painting was born. Later, I translated my memory image of this event to a sketch pad. The bones took on abstract shapes; the pottery designs wormed their way up and down the attenuated forms. The colors which I used in the painting were derived less from the objects themselves than from the aura of mystery which the vast and silent cemetery exudes. A strange combination of pale blues, lavenders and whites rests against a dull black-brown ground. A few notes of brilliant magenta shock the design to an unnatural and voiceless life. The viewer feels almost as an intruder.

Shapes, a 30 x 36 inch panel, is in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. William Wilson, Tingo Maria, Peru.

Red Chair, the final painting of the series done while residing in Peru, is a straightforward still-life which achieves drama from the impact of its colors and from a simple but sensitive disposition of vertical and horizontal line and mass. A white table set against a white wall, a black chair and shutters, a few items on the table which range through a series of blues and greens, a grayed yellow sky, and a grayed yellow rush seat on a red chair—nothing
more. I have studied this painting for a long time and still cannot quite place my finger upon what makes it my favorite. The subject is trivial, the color almost primary. Such mood as it possesses is undisturbing. It is decorative, and it is something more.

Perhaps it will only find an "explanation" in my work of the future. Until then, anything which I might write would have--for me, at least--very little worth. And so in this instance, I must let the painting speak for itself.

Red Chair, a 20 x 48 inch panel, is in the possession of the artist.
PLATE III    THE THREE KINGS, #2
PLATE IV  THE THREE KINGS, #3
PLATE V  THE THREE KINGS, #3 (Detail)
PLATE XI

BLACK CAT
PLATE XIX

ORGAN GRINDER
PLATE XX    WATERMELONS
PLATE XXVII

SHAPES (Color Detail)
PLATE XXVIII

RED CHAIR
A BRIEF EVALUATION OF THE STUDIO EXPERIENCE

As I look back over the creative work done after the initial writing on this paper, I cannot help but believe that it benefited greatly from the thought which preceded it. A certain tempering of the original ideas as to the nature and problems of decorative painting was noted, however, at the end of the studio period. Dogmatically extreme views underwent modification during that interim. Perhaps these views had developed, originally, as a defensive mechanism or perhaps they were structured in an effort to create a greater security in my work. Whatever the cause, the effect was one which fostered somewhat of a blindness, an inability to detach myself sufficiently from a finished piece of work to permit objective analysis and criticism of the painting.

The exercise of putting into words ideas which had been little more than extraneous and subjective thought until that time, forced me to bring those thoughts together—to organize them into some coherency. Such organization of thought made it possible to approach my creative work with
a greater concern for the "whys and wherefores," with a more acute ability to see just how the work was actually related to my creative philosophy.

I found, too, that it gave focus to my painting, enabled me to anticipate a sequential development where before a considerable amount of creative energy had been dissipated in random scattering of interest.

It would be difficult to judge exactly to what extent the preliminary thinking affected the creative work, of course; I do believe that it was a very important factor in the studio development which succeeded it.

The two-year studio interval was also a period in which it was possible to devote an unusual amount of time to painting. The concentration, the sustained and unbroken periods of studio activity in themselves acted to accelerate a satisfying advance toward greater creative maturity. Certain creative and technical problems which had troubled me earlier saw satisfactory solution. Color, which had long eluded me, became a cooperative agent. I luxuriated in color; I worked with combinations which I would scarcely have dared use earlier. Brilliance, freshness, clarity—all seemed suddenly to be mine. The excitement of this
achievement was tremendous; a whole new and dazzling world opened to me.

Occasionally, as I worked, I set creative "problems" for myself. These were problems of a diagnostic nature and were undertaken to overcome some weakness or other which seemed in need of correction. One such problem is described in the preceding notes relating to Desert Summer and Guano Islands. Some of the problems were compositional, others had to do with technical development. What the problems were is of little importance here. What is important is the realization that clarification of an idea or ideas makes greater objectivity in one's work a possibility. And with such objectivity comes a heightened ability to see and to solve things which might otherwise have not been noticed.

The act of painting is not sufficient unto itself. It can be, and is, full of pitfalls. Complacency is not the least of these. And if I had any tendency toward a certain complacency in my thinking or in my work, that, above all else, has been thoroughly shattered during the developmental process of the past three years. To lose complacency and to gain a working security is surely to have achieved something of value.
SELECTED READING


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AUTobiography

I, Barbara Warren Ebersole, was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, July 29, 1915. I received my secondary education in the public schools of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and my undergraduate training at Milwaukee State Teachers College, which granted me the Bachelor of Education degree in 1937.

From 1938 through 1940, I was an Instructor in Art at the University of Minnesota. During the period of World War II, I resided in Illinois where I held a position as Radio Instructor with the Army Air Corps.

In 1947 I received the degree Master of Fine Arts from The Ohio State University. While in residence there and while completing the preliminary requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy, I was appointed to successive University scholarships.

In 1949 I became an Instructor in Art at the University of Florida. A Fulbright Scholarship took me to India in 1951. On my return to the University of Florida, I was appointed to the position of Assistant Professor, which position I held until my husband, Robert P. Ebersole,
joined the staff of the art department at the University of Florida.

In the summer of 1957, I returned to The Ohio State University under the auspices of a Ford Foundation grant in Latin American Studies. At the close of the summer, I accompanied my husband to Peru where he held an appointment as Adviser in Design to the Peruvian Government for a two-year-period.

My publications include *Creative Hands*, J. J. Wiley and Sons, 1945 and 1952; and *Fletcher Martin*, The University of Florida Press, 1954. Exhibitions include numerous local, state and regional shows in the mid-west and southeast. Most recently, in July, 1959, I was honored with a one-man exhibition of forty oil paintings at the Art Center, Lima, Peru.