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THE FIGURE–FIELD RELATIONSHIP IN MY PAINTING.

The Ohio State University, Ph.D., 1961
Fine Arts

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THE FIGURE-FIELD RELATIONSHIP IN MY PAINTING

DISSERTATION

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

By

David Marshall Campbell, B.A., M.A.

***

The Ohio State University
1961

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PREFACE

The process of painting, which I have practiced since 1955 when I completed my Master's thesis,¹ may be described as the process of creative transaction. In my Master's thesis I explored the philosophical and operational implications of the creative transaction by asking the questions: What, where, when, why, and who am I painting? The conclusions to these questions are summarized in the following figure.

¹David M. Campbell, "The Condition of the 'Concept' in Painting" (unpublished Master's thesis, School of Fine and Applied Arts, the Ohio State University, 1955).
Fig. 1. The Condition of the 'Concept' in Painting
The diagram shows the operational relationship of stimulus, concept, and intuition as they produce action. The diagram illustrates how we can have two possible operational procedures to the posed questions. The "condition of the concept" determines basically two kinds of action. A concept loaded with sensory impressions produces a simple reaction to the stimulus. Since this reaction has not been consciously synthesized with the creative aspects of the organism, it is essentially uncreative and unproductive. A second kind of action results when the contents of the concept are synthesized with the creative energy present within the organism. This action is creative and productive.

Thus the conclusion I drew in this thesis was that I had to seek not to react to the physical stimulus (symbolized by the red area), but to seek in faith to develop a larger view that would include the fields of creative energy (symbolized by the blue area) that are also present within the human organism. These fields manifest themselves in painting through the kinaesthetic response to a synthesis of both the observed stimuli and the intuited concept of the meaning of the organization of the stimuli. We may refer to this as the transactional process of picture making.
I have practiced this transactional process in the painting operation over a period of years. The paintings exhibited as part of my preliminary examinations, November, 1960, showed some of my further progress. These paintings are illustrated in Figures 2 to 11 on the pages that follow.
Fig. 2. *La Rosa*, May, 1955, Oil on Canvas (52" x 42")

Fig. 3. *Morning Star*, February, 1957, Oil on Canvas (72" x 50")
Fig. 4. Carvel Tefft, Summer, 1957, Oil on Canvas (20x16")

Fig. 5. Gaspé, Summer, 1959, Oil on Canvas (24x18")
Fig. 6. Fall Sycamores, December, 1956, Serigraph (21\(\frac{1}{4}\)\times15\(\frac{1}{4}\)"")

Fig. 7. Oswego, December, 1959, Serigraph (23\times18"")
Fig. 8. *Spring Blossoms*, Spring, 1960, Oil on Canvas (69x43")

Fig. 9. *Blue Weeds*, Spring, 1960, Oil on Canvas (36x30")
Fig. 10. Lewis Bluff, Fall, 1958, Oil on Canvas (38x24")

Fig. 11. Fall Fields, Spring, 1960, Oil on Canvas (66x48")
Based upon the hypothesis established in the Master's thesis, I have produced another group of paintings, since the retrospective exhibition and the general examinations. These recent paintings were all done within a relatively short time (four months). The visual and verbal exposition of the actual process of making this recent group of paintings is the subject of this essay.

Thus while the Master's thesis established the philosophical and operational basis for my painting by examining "The Condition of the 'Concept,'" it is my hope that this doctoral dissertation will illustrate a more specifically operational basis for the making of paintings through an examination of the figure-field relationship in my painting.

I would like to acknowledge with deep gratitude my debt to my doctoral committee. Professor Hoyt Sherman has provided me with a method of making, teaching, and writing about paintings. Dr. James Grimes has been a continuous source of inspiration and guidance for me and Dr. Franklin Ludden has been most helpful in the expression of my ideas. I also wish to thank Dr. Alexander Severino and Dr. John Kinzer for their assistance.
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Table 1. Modes of Formal Expression
INTRODUCTION

The Figure-Field Relationship in My Painting

In order to explain the components of my painting process, I have chosen to use the analogy of the Figure-Field (Ground) relationship in visual phenomenon and pictorial compositional. Gestalt psychologists have formulated the law of Figure and Ground (Field) as follows.

2. **Figure and ground.** A form tends to be a figure set upon a ground, and the figure-ground dichotomy is fundamental to all perception. The simplest form is a figure of undifferentiated quality set upon a ground.²

This general term, Figure-Field, has specific meaning with respect to the visual organization of a painting and will be used as such later in the essay to describe particular visual relationships. For present purposes the Figure-Field relationship can be illustrated as follows.

---

The white figure is seen against the black field. The optical image is a relationship, Figure-Field. In the visual phenomenon, the field creates the figure. I would like to discuss my painting, as the figures, which emerge from the formal educational disciplines, i.e., the formative fields, that have been most important in my education as a painter and personality.

I first wish to present an introductory definition of these disciplines and my understanding of their interrelationship. In Part I of the essay, I will undertake a more thorough discussion of them.
1. Existential Philosophy

Existential Philosophy as conceived and expounded by Søren Kierkegaard has been the broadest and most abstract educational discipline that has helped to create my painting. The two central factors in Kierkegaard's philosophy that have most affected me are, first, the philosophic right to say: in faith, I believe, and second, the Existentialist doctrine of the priority of "existence over essence." Kierkegaard rejects a preconceived system or dogma based upon intellectually distilled "essence" or on a statistical average of past experience.

The refusal to belong to any school of thought, the repudiation of the adequacy of any body of beliefs whatever, and especially of systems, and a marked dissatisfaction with traditional philosophy as superficial, academic, and remote from life--that is the heart of existentialism. ³

The positive aspect of Existentialism is its emphasis upon "existence," the direct apprehension of reality by the individual at each moment of his conscious awareness. I find this Existential notion of reality is one that can be immediately translated into painted shapes and therefore seems to me most suitable as a philosophy for painting.

2. **Art Theory**

Existential Philosophy provides the broad teleological direction for my painting. But it is necessary to seek a more practical understanding of its applications to the visual arts through the discipline of Art History. The nature and potentiality of the artist, his environment and his medium are areas for examination by Art Theory. In this essay I am not concerned with speculative or evaluative, but with analytical Art Theory. Specifically I will draw upon two eminent art theorists to help rationalize and clarify for me the crucial issues involved in the choice of subject matter and in the realization of my specific artistic intention.

The two art theorists are Giulio Carlo Argan, Professor of the History of Art, University of Rome, author of one of the most encyclopedic articles on the theory of visual art, and Rene Huyghe, for many years Curator-in-Chief of Painting at the Louvre, and now Professor of the Psychology of Art, College of France. Huyghe's book, *Ideas and Images in World Art*, is a mature summation of cultured attitudes on art in our time. I will use quotations from both Argan and Huyghe to further articulate my painting process.

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3. Gestalt Psychology.

E. G. Boring in his *History of Experimental Psychology*, a basic textbook in the field, has summarized the findings of the Gestalt School of Psychology in fourteen major Laws of Form. According to Professors Samuel Renshaw and John Kinzer of the Ohio State University, Boring's summary may be taken as an authoritative formulation of the work of such eminent Gestalt psychologists as Wertheimer, Koffka, and Köhler. In my painting process, I have attempted to use the Gestalt Laws of Form as directives for perception and organization of pictorial form. In this essay I will try to relate these directives as employed in the recent painting, *Spring at Fallbrook*. For this exposition I will rely primarily upon diagrams.

4. Visual-Operational Method

Of the four formative disciplines, the one that bears most directly upon the actual practice of painting is what Professor Hoyt L. Sherman of the Ohio State University has described in his manual *Cézanne and Visual Form* as the Visual-Operational Method. Under the instruction of Professors Sherman and James W. Grimes, I have practiced this disciplinary method and will demonstrate the operations of this method in my painting.

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6 Hoyt L. Sherman, *Cézanne and Visual Form* (Ohio State University, 1952).
The Visual-Operational Method and Gestalt Psychology are primarily involved in the organization and execution of painting. Art Theory and the Philosophy of Existentialism are particularly involved in the general teleological aspects of the painting style, and consequently are emphasized in the verbal exposition of my artistic methods.

In the creative transaction of making a painting it must be remembered that the total human organism is engaged. I conceive of the relationship of the four disciplines as illustrated in the following diagram.

Fig. 14. Particular Area of Disciplines Relative to the Transacting Organism
The preceding diagram and following explanation is not intended to imply that the disciplines are solely concerned with the relationship which the illustration presents. Each of the disciplines is integrally related to the whole creative mechanism and the relationship of the mechanism to the outer world, the inner world of the artist's beliefs and purposes, and the evolving paintings. The diagrammed area, however, serves to place the disciplines in approximate graphic relationship.

For further exposition of the relationships diagrammed:

1. My philosophic orientation, i.e., Existentialism, provides a general directive for pictorial intentions, the directive for the "Power" or energy that seeks expression in artistic action.

2. Art Theory influences the choice of subject matter primarily through the influence of my past artistic experience, my conceptions of the nature of painting in relationship to the general philosophic purpose, and the specific outer stimulus.

3. Gestalt Psychology governs the perceptual-conceptual relationship. The appropriate visual stimuli are organized into structures expressive of past experience and Existential purpose.

4. The Visual-Operational Method involved in the
action, i.e., by kinaesthetic response, gives form to the structure in the specific pictorial image created.

In his interpretation of Cezanne's artistic method, Professor Sherman has described the essential factors of the painting process in terms similar to those used in this essay.

Critical to Cezanne's transactional method (and to transaction in general) are three categories of behavior: PAST EXPERIENCE, PURPOSE, and ACTION. PURPOSE functions to determine the type of response to the stimulus. In process, PURPOSE integrates aspects of PAST EXPERIENCE most appropriate to the organization of response. Response to the artifact in process "feeds back," in turn, to cause the artist (Cezanne) to "seek" in the stimulus that which most appropriately fulfills the transaction.

This fulfillment, structured in ACTION, constitutes a new level of realization, a new level of PAST EXPERIENCE. The organism-environment-artifact, i.e., each level or realization creates a new level of awareness. The transactional pattern is fundamental not only to Cezanne's process (aesthetic), but to process in general.

The relationship between Professor Sherman's terms and my own can be seen as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sherman</th>
<th>Campbell</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Spirit, Energy, Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past Experience</td>
<td>Concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Painting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I will use diagrams and other graphic materials to clarify my painting process. From time to time I will

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7 Ibid., p. 19.
Include pertinent quotations from various authors which bear upon the points being demonstrated. In order to explore the painting process developed in my recent work, I will study in detail the two paintings, Spring at Fallbrook, May 3, 1961, oil on canvas, 43½x33" and Spring River, May 31, 1961, oil on canvas, 43½x33". These two paintings represent different modes of my general procedure, painting. There are for me alternate modes of the procedure: A—which proceeds from drawing to painting and B—which reverses the order by proceeding from painting to drawing. Spring at Fallbrook was executed by mode A, first drawing and then painting. Spring River was executed by mode B, first painting and then drawing. I shall further use Spring at Fallbrook to demonstrate the Gestalt Laws of Form. I will discuss each painting separately using the original sketches and photographs of the motif, working sketches made in the studio, photographs of several versions of the oil painting in progress, and the finished oil paintings.

In the conclusion of this essay I will discuss the relative use of the formal procedures I have used in the production of fourteen paintings. These paintings constitute the major part of the final exhibition. In each of the paintings in this exhibition the final figure-field relationship may be seen.
PART I.

The Formative Fields of My Painting

Fig. 15. The Field of My Painting

Having introduced the various formative disciplines which constitute my painting education, I would now like to examine these disciplines more closely.
Rene Huyghe has characterized the profound interest in Existential thought in the following way.

The present-day popularity of existentialism and phenomenology may be accounted for by the fact that these systems reject intellectual comprehension of the world in favor of direct intuitive apprehension. They aim at what might be called "the sensation of being," involving a kind of metaphysical sensory shock.

My predilection for the Existentialist Philosophy derives from its emphasis on the "direct intuitional apprehension" which is based on faith. My experience of the intuitional apprehension has resulted in the action of making my paintings. This productive Existential belief is discussed by Kierkegaard in the formulation of his philosophy. I will attempt to explain the position of faith and the direct intuitional apprehension as stated by Kierkegaard with respect to the creative organism.

Finally the Existential position can be seen at a biological level as will be discussed later.

Kierkegaard states in the Sickness Unto Death:

If the human self had constituted itself, there could be a question only of one form, that of not willing to be one's own self, of willing to get rid of oneself. This formula, i.e., that the self is constituted by another is the

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8 Huyghe, p. 52.
expression for the total dependence of the relation (the self namely), the expression for the fact that the self cannot of itself attain and remain in equilibrium and rest by itself, but only by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation.9

This statement can be translated from the philosophical level to the operational level. I have developed an explanation of the relationship of the external stimuli as perceived by the physical "self" to the direct intuitional apprehension of "Power" as follows:

In the related self, or perceiving organism, the concept is where the external meets the internal. As the body conveys one set of data about the nature of the stimuli—its colored shapes, its smell, its feel, the soul conveys by spirit another set of data—its beauty, its purpose, the mystery of creation. Conceptualization is the abstracting into images, the physical energy that comes through the body, and the spiritual energy that comes through the conscious Center.10

As the concepts which constitute one's self idea of himself become loaded with sense impressions—psychology tells us some nine million per day for the eyes alone—these impressions must be stored or filed in some given order or pattern11 if the organism is not to "dissolve or explode in chaos."

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10Campbell, p. 3.
11Jung's great contribution was in showing that the human psyche strives ceaselessly to achieve a balance, to progress by means of unifying its most diverse tendencies. (Huyghe, p. 331.)
The intellect, drawing upon parallel related concepts, can achieve some degree of organization of the multitudinous sense perceptions. However, the intellect cannot comprehend the workings of inspiration. Inspiration is derived from the non-perceptual sources which we generally refer to as Energy, Spirit, or in the Kierkegaardian sense "Power." The presence of this Power can only be experienced in the conscious mind through belief or faith. It is this "Power which constituted the whole relation." The whole relation includes the physical self, the conceptual self, or the self's idea of himself, the will, and the Power. The whole relation must be consciously reckoned with in order to maintain its organic equilibrium. It is this equilibrium which then structures the order of concepts in our mind and these concepts govern our selection of sensory stimuli from the outer world. In this way the inner Power is related to the outer self. It is when this equilibrium is achieved that the organism experiences qualities of beauty in the sensory world. Beauty is located in a deeper order of human experience than the "eye of the beholder"—it is the equilibrium or harmony of Spirit, mind, and body as the self confronts the outer world.

The biological basis of the experience of beauty is expressed by Sinnott in the Biology of the Spirit.
Life, manifest in organisms, is integrating, purposeful, and creative. We cannot yet explain these qualities, but through them we may gain a clearer spiritual insight into man's nature and his relation to the universe than through intellect alone. If man continually seeks to elevate his goals they can lift him up to heights not dreamed of now. If he debases them he will destroy himself.12

Here is art's great service to the human spirit. The painter, the musician, and the poet bring to its highest expression that same organizing and creative quality the germ of which all life possesses. Just as an organism takes random matter and builds it into a living bodily pattern, so the man of art takes meaningless canvas, paint, and marble, musical sounds, and the more subtle symbols of written and spoken words, and builds them into patterns that catch up a bit of the beauty of nature and interpret it to our spirits. He uses these symbols as a means of communicating his vision of beauty when it cannot be grasped by the intellect but must speak to something deeper in us. The artist's task is to serve thus as intermediary between man and nature by expressing the inborn longing of man's spirit for order and beauty, which is rooted in the very quality of his life, in terms that bring it into harmony with the wider orderliness and beauty in the universe outside.13

For the artist "to serve as intermediary between man and nature by expressing the inborn longing of man's Spirit for order and beauty" fulfills Kierkegaard's "formula" of the self attaining equilibrium "by relating itself to that Power which constituted the whole relation."

13 Ibid., pp. 145-146.
Argan states:

Since man is at the highest level in the hierarchy of creation, the development and transformation of material by human activity appears as the continuation of the creative process, or, within the limitations of human weakness, a reiteration of the divine gesture of creation.\textsuperscript{14}

Thus the philosopher, the biologist, and art theorist agree on this definition of artistic purpose.

By offering his sensations in faith to the creative spirit within, the artist can experience beauty. By giving specific form to this experience of beauty, the artist achieves real existence.

\textsuperscript{14}Argan, 779.
PART I. Section 2.
Field—Art Theory

My Existential painting experience has found its most satisfying rationalization in the Art Theory approach that most emphasizes the role of the artist's personal comprehension of his inner and outer environment through aesthetic action.

Much less satisfying is the view that assigns the dominant artistic influences to chronology and geography. I can't help but share Reinhold Neibuhr's view of these stifling influences of time and place on the individual.

But the community is the frustration as well as the realization of individual life. Its collective egotism is an offense to his conscience; its institutional injustices negate the ideal of justice; and such brotherhood as it achieves is limited by ethnic and geographic boundaries. Historical communities are, in short, more deeply involved in nature and time than the individual who constantly faces an eternity above and at the end of the time process.\(^{15}\)

Thus the view of history and criticism that sees the artist primarily in terms of his historical community will surely not reveal much of significance about my primary concern, the artist himself.

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The most significant (contemporary) art history and criticism is concerned with the subtle levels of the artist's consciousness as they relate to him and his production, as well as its relation to the artistic production of other artists in his own time and in the past. Argan states:

Most of the relationships pointed out in this section between art and philosophic thought have a particular bearing on themes and subjects; but as content cannot be separated from form, either in the process or in the result of the artistic effort, it is apparent that throughout the history of art the indisputably visual value of form has not depended solely on direct visual experience but has been largely conditioned by the significance attributed to visible phenomena as indirect revelations of a vast domain of reality above and beyond the limits of the actual phenomena.17

Herbert Read stresses the need to base aesthetic judgments on the "operative sensibilities."

At the end of many centuries of critical consideration, and in virtue of a vast amount of accumulated wisdom, there seems no avoiding the conclusion, that if we are to keep our aesthetic judgments, whether in poetry, painting or music, clear of all irrelevant facts, then those judgments must be based on the operative sensibilities and on those sensibilities alone. No criticism, that is not a criticism of form in its relation to subject matter has ever advanced any of the arts a single step.18

16 Karl Jaspers speaks of the goal of history: "The goal is taken to be the Manifestation of Being in Man, the perception of being in its depths, that is, the manifestation of the Godhead." (Ibid., pp. 342-343.)

17 Argan, 791.

The role of objective subject matter in an age when such subject matter is highly unpopular is a particularly important theoretical question to me. As representative theorists of art, Argan, Huyghe and Read speak to this subject in the following way. Huyghe notes:

The nineteenth and the twentieth centuries may be indicted before the court of history for two different, and converse, crimes--the former for having succumbed to the temptation of realism, the latter, to the temptation of form. For both realism and form can be justified, in the work, only through their connection with the soul of a creative artist.19

Huyghe notes that nature is only a part of the total transaction which includes nature, the artist's concepts and the final expression of his concepts of nature. It is the artist's personal expression of nature that is most significant to the world. He states:

Our period, however, has one immense fact to its credit: it has liberated the image from misleading entanglements, rediscovered its true purpose—that of direct expression, through the action of its constitutive elements, line and color, on our sensibility, which sets off a nervous shock that arouses emotions and produces states of mind.20

As a rule the finest works are those in which a balance between nature, painting, and the artist is achieved—sometimes by reducing the importance of one of them, sometimes by dint of exalting all three.21

19Huyghe, p. 233.
21Ibid., p. 98.
Both Huyghe and Read state the necessity for expression of a balance in the artist's consciousness of nature and himself.

The consciousness of the artist alternates between the two poles of this tension. One pole may be left unexpressed, and then the artist is wholly realistic, or wholly abstract. But it seems reasonable to suppose that a better balance, if only in the mental personality of the artist, will be achieved by the open expression of both polar extremes of tension.

Somewhere in this psychic shuttle, this alternation of the positive and negative forces of life, freedom intervenes—the freedom to create a new reality. Only on that assumption can we explain any form of evolutionary development in human consciousness, any kind of spiritual growth. A novelty-creating freedom exists by virtue of the intensity generated by aesthetic awareness; an evolutionary advance emerges from the act of expression.22

What Read speaks of as the "evolutionary advance from the act of expression," Sherman's new level of awareness, and Kierkegaard's self related "to the Power which constituted the whole relation," are all ways of saying that the painter achieves a heightened conscious awareness of the Creative Spirit by expressing the synthesis of his inner and outer fields.

In my experience therefore the painter's real subject matter is the patterns of the Spirit as he is aware of them in himself and in the world. It is the painter's job to make these patterns visible. The more

22Read, p. 99.
the artist pays attention to the fields within him, the more he will pay attention to the field outside him. Both inner and outer fields can be synthesized in his work. Thus his work becomes more significant because it participates in a higher order of complexity and organization.

Clarification of the substance of the painter's subject matter is but a small part of the total function of Art Theory, but it is the most significant part in this essay dealing with the field of my painting.
In discussing the "Problems in the Psychology of Art," Kurt Koffka states:

Perception tends towards balance and symmetry; or differently expressed: balance and symmetry are perceptual characteristics of the visual world which will be realized whenever the external conditions allow it; when they do not, unbalance, lack of symmetry, will be experienced as a characteristic of objects or the whole field, together with a felt urge towards better balance—the stimulations which under ordinary circumstances affect our eyes are perfectly haphazard from the point of view of the visual organizations to which they may give rise. The organism does the best it can under the prevailing conditions, and these conditions will not, as a rule, allow it to do a very good job (good, from the point of view of aesthetic harmony). A work of art, on the other hand, is made with that very idea; once completed it serves as a source of stimulation specifically selected for its aesthetic effect.23

This relationship of stimulation to aesthetic effect has been the particular concern of Gestalt Psychology. Field Theory or Gestalt Psychology thus deals with the aspects of physiology that can be measured, i.e., the stimulus and component elements24


24As a result of my own investigation in Dr. Samuel Renshaw's course (Psychology 624, Ohio State University, Winter, 1956), I found that: 75% of visual acuity is a result of 3% of the light of the original visible stimulus on only 6% of the retinal surface translated by the
of perception, as well as the unmeasurable intuition that originates and activates the perceiving human organism. The field of Gestalt Psychology then seems to me the most useful of the psychology schools because of its acknowledgment of the other "unscientific" realms of psychological transaction. These realms can include all of the tenuous areas of the artist's activity—his metaphysical position, his ethnic background, his psychological orientation, and so on, thereby structuring these other levels of consciousness in a rational pattern. Thus the component elements of the artist's fields can then be seen and studied in their actual relationship as they determine the mark that his hand makes.\(^{25}\)

\(24\) (cont.) 128,000,000 nerve cells of each retina into electro-chemical impulses and further abstracted in the midbrain before they reach the cortical area #17 of the brain is indicative of the highly abstract nature of the stimulus impulse. The resultant excitation bears little correlation to the original stimulus. In addition to the abstract physical nature of the stimulus the role of the individual's past experience in his various levels of consciousness can scarcely be examined by the subject himself, let alone the "objective" observer. Thus at our present level of understanding a great deal must be attributed to the phenomenological aspects of the many fields in the organism's inner and outer environment.

\(^{25}\) Huyghe, p. 167.
In addition to the general hypothesis of Gestalt Psychology, I find the fourteen major laws of Gestalten highly applicable to my painting procedure. I will list the fourteen laws and later in my discussion I will show by means of diagrams the relevance of each of these laws of Gestalten to aspects of my own painting process. See pages 70 to 88.

1. **Naturalness of form.** A field tends to become organized and to take on form. Groups tend to form structures, and disconnected units to become connected.

2. **Figure and ground.** A form tends to be a figure set upon a ground, and the figure-ground dichotomy is fundamental to all perception. The simplest form is a figure of undifferentiated quality set upon a ground.

3. **Articulation.** Forms vary from simple to complex in the degree of articulation or differentiation that they possess.

4. **Good and poor forms.** A good form is well articulated and as such tends to impress itself upon the observer, to persist and to recur. A circle is a good form.

5. **Strong and weak forms.** A strong form coheres and resists disintegration by analysis into parts or by fusion with another form.

6. **Open and closed forms.** An open form tends to change toward a certain good form. When a form has assumed stable equilibrium, it has achieved closure. Thus a nearly circular series of dots may achieve closure by being perceived as a circle.

7. **Dynamic basis of form.** A form is a dynamic system or is based upon a dynamic system. Since the dynamic principles operate within the organism, a strong form is that which depends more upon the dynamic properties of the organism than upon the properties of the stimulus. The fact that the organism operates to structure the
perception means that there need be no correspondence between the form of the stimulus and the form of the perception.

8. **Persistence of form.** A form once perceived tends to persist, and to recur when the stimulus situation recurs. The recurrence of part of a previously perceived form tends to reinstate the whole.

9. **Constancy of form.** A form tends to preserve its proper shape, size and color. This is the well-known "constancy phenomenon."

10. **Symmetry of form.** A form tends toward symmetry, balance and proportion. Many of the geometrical "illusions" illustrate this principle.

11. **Integration of similars and adjacents.** Units similar in size, shape and color tend to combine to make better articulated forms.

12. **Meaningfulness of forms.** A form tends to be meaningful and to have objectivity. The more meaningful the form, the stronger it is, the more easily it is perceived, and the longer it tends to persist.

13. **Fusion of forms.** Two forms can fuse, giving rise to a new form; or, in combination, the stronger one may persist, eliminating the weaker. Simple, poorly-articulated forms fuse more easily than complex, good forms. A more meaningful form tends to predominate over a less meaningful one.

14. **Transposition of form.** A form exists independently of its constituent elements and may thus be transposed without change to other elements.26

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26 Boring, pp. 253-255.
PART I. Section 4.
Field—Visual-Operational Method

Argan discusses the relationship between operational procedure and creative expression.

This is further evidence that the artistic process, although it can always be reduced to a matter of technique, is never something merely learned and repeated mechanically but is rather a transcending of a particular procedure in a way that commits the whole personality of the artist, not just his intellectual and executive faculties. Further, the artistic process can become spiritualized only in so far as it departs from a mere elaboration of material to become a mental activity which governs manual operations—in other words, when it is conceived as design, or as a process or method of ideation.\(^\text{27}\)

My experience in painting and teaching has grown out of my training in the Visual-Operational Method. Only in a method that produces visually structured form expressive of intuitive inspiration could I realize my own artistic intentions.

I suppose the most concise way of stating the advantage of the Visual-Operational Method would be that it lets the painter know where and how to put the what (subject matter).

Based in large part upon an operational understanding of Gestalt laws, the Visual-Operational Method

\(^{27}\)Argan, 780.
provides a solution to the problem of where to place the mark. Specific organizational patterns can produce specific psychological responses. An understanding of the psychological and physiological reaction to color, for instance, can therefore provide the artist with tangible means of controlling the emotional response to the painting. The response to the visual relationships is dependent largely upon the physiological structure of the eye. As Professor Sherman has pointed out:

The two types of receptors (rods and cones) effect different responses to light impingement. The function of the rods is to respond to brightness; the function of the cones, to respond to color—and brightness. Optimum color response occurs in the zone of central vision with a "diminishing return" towards the peripheral area.  

The vibrant energy of bright color (the middle range between light and dark values of color) claims the eye's attention.

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28 Sherman, p. 102.
Since the receptors (cones) are in the central area of the retina, the eye naturally focuses on the bright color area while the peripheral rods of the retina sensitive to the more subtle value discriminations are naturally physiologically content with the field (the outskirts of the focal area). The schematic diagram below shows the relationship of the retina to a stimulus of color and value.

Fig. 17. Value, Color Relations of Stimulus to Retina
By relating the central color area to the central figure area of the painting and the value field area to the field of the painting, the painter achieves a physiologically "satisfying" composition.

Fig. 18. Color Figure

Fig. 19. Value Field

Fig. 20. Value Field-Color Figure Relationship
The opposite emotional effect (disturbing) can be achieved by reversing the color-value order to color field, value figure. See Figure 21 below. Here the cone-directed eye seeks to take in the whole colored field and if the canvas is big enough and the spectator close enough, i.e., the stimulus goes beyond his normal form-field, his reaction will be highly stimulating.

Fig. 21. Color Field-Value Figure

The combination of the two basic schemas, i.e., color and value in the figure and color and value in the field, provides a resolution of visual stimuli that is both exciting and controlled. I have referred to

Fig. 22. Color+Value Figure; Color+Value Field
this combination of schemas as the "reversed pattern" in a seminar paper concerned with composition. I made a study of the use of compositional schemas in painting from the Egyptians to Kandinsky. Then I analyzed the schemas of over 400 works by twenty-six twentieth century painters and found that:

while all the compositional schemas previously used in history are utilized, the mixed (color and value) ground, mixed (color and value) figure or reversed pattern is the most widely used in modern painting.  

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29 David M. Campbell, "Composition" (term paper for Dr. Franklin Ludden), the Ohio State University, June 6, 1957.

30 Ibid., p. 11.
The other critical aspect of the painting process most adequately dealt with by the Visual-Operational Method is the how of putting the what. We usually think of the brain as the locus of all our knowing and indeed most art training seeks to articulate this knowledge by the study of such elements as line, volume, texture and intellectually conceived compositional devices.

Modern science and psychology, however, have shown that much of our "knowing" resides in the muscles. We do not have to measure the height of a stair in order to step over it, we do not have to look at our watch in order to keep time while dancing, or determine how many pounds of pressure to apply to the brakes of our speeding car. All these things the muscles know. The Visual-Operational Method is built on the theory that under the proper conditions, the muscles will make the best aesthetic response to the visual stimulus.
In his book, *Drawing by Seeing*, Professor Sherman writes:

As a matter of emphasis, one does not try to draw with unity; rather one tries to see with unity and let the image thus seen become the dominating force in organizing the drawing. If the student consciously works at getting unity in his drawing, the effect will be stilted. If, however, he concentrates on the image and relaxes on the mechanics, the drawing will tend to take on the unity desired. The discipline of creative work in the visual arts, in other words, consists more in ruling out extraneous stimulations to muscular action than in aggressively forcing the charcoal or paint brush here and there on the paper. The body "knows how" to draw, so to speak, if it is but permitted to draw in accordance with the full dictates of the creating image. This means taking the emphasis off the manual manipulations so that the act of drawing can be instrumental rather than primary.

Though sensitivity to optical relations is primary in the initiation of the seeing-and-drawing act, sensitivity to kinesthetic and tactile relations is primary in the process of forming the drawing. A model visually perceived becomes a form to be kinesthetically and tactually organized. Proportions, distances, positions, and shapes originating as visual measurements have to be interpreted and controlled as kinesthetic and tactile measurements.

The best drawing is a kinesthetic expression of the whole body, the fingers, hands and arms alone do not do all the work; the feet, the legs, the muscles of the abdomen—all the motor elements in the body participate. It is important that the body have full freedom to take part in the drawing act.31

In this sense the aesthetic is inherent

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in the kinaesthetic response.

Professor Sherman has explained the aesthetic kinaesthetic phenomenon on an even more basic level.

At a neural level, it may be inferred 
1) that PURPOSE establishes appropriate set; 
2) that given appropriate set (synaptic opening and shutting) is established prior to stimulus impingement; (3) that given the integrated response to stimulus impingement, this specific neural switching initiates a "unified" impulse pattern which in turn determines the appropriate motor act. Once appropriate feeling set is established the "respectful profession" (painting) is automatically achieved. There is no "choice," no "conflict," therefore no awareness of the executive act...the translation is completely unconscious. To summarize, the integrated response... provides a neural field which is a controlling GROUND to direct and define emerging action (FIGURE).32

An "aesthetic" response to one's visual environment can only be learned by a consciously controlled training that gradually develops the visual-kinaesthetic relationship. Once this is understood the student can seek through experience and practice to see and act aesthetically.

One does not achieve a drawing of deep significance for other people by deliberately setting out to produce such a drawing. Rather one first learns how to be true to his own expression possibilities and requirements. If

32 Sherman, Cezanne and Visual Form, pp. 128-129.
It happens that his possibilities and requirements are of a character to harmonize with the possibilities and requirements of other people, then one will achieve something which other people will value. But this is an incidental result and cannot be taken as a primary aim.33

The student develops through practice the ability to feel and respond to what he sees and feels. His muscles charge the mark he makes with his personal signature. That signature, or personal kinaesthetic response, carries with it implicitly and explicitly all the "levels" that exist within the man. Thus he is free to develop his own unique qualities.

Both the where and how of the painting process are answered by the Visual-Operational Method. Color and composition create the visual field. The trained response creates the neural field out of which the figure (my painting process) can emerge. Thus, the Visual-Operational Method can bring forth a highly personal expression that is grounded in a highly impersonal aesthetic criteria.

I have proved to my own satisfaction the validity of the Visual-Operational Method in my own painting. But perhaps looking at it more objectively I have seen the effectiveness of the Visual-Operational Method proved in my teaching. I am constantly amazed at the results

33 Sherman, Drawing by Seeing, p. 12.
that can be attained at every college class level, from seventeen year old freshmen to sixty-five year old graduate students.\textsuperscript{34}

With a minimum of equipment and limited time all these people with and without\textsuperscript{35} previous training have achieved real aesthetic quality in their drawing and painting.

The students found this an inspiring experience but no less so their teacher who gives full credit to the Visual-Operational Method and all that it implies.

\textsuperscript{34}I have also taught adult education classes of retired teachers and classes that included everyone from housewives and their children to professional photographers and have again achieved the same stimulating results with the Visual-Operational Method.

\textsuperscript{35}In fact, the people without previous training respond even more quickly because I don't have to spend time overcoming academic habits.
PART II.

THE FIGURE--MY PAINTING

Fig. 23. The Figure of My Painting
Fig. 24. *Spring at Fallbrook*, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43\(\frac{1}{2}\) x 33")
Fig. 25. Color Photographs of Motif for Spring at Fallbrook (taken at a later date than original sketches)

Fig. 26. Sketches for Spring at Fallbrook

Fig. 27. Spring at Fallbrook, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43x33")
April 28, 1961, was cold and the northwest wind was strong, but at 10 A.M. the day was clear. Since February my freshman class of Art 1 had been trained to draw and paint by means of color slide reproductions of the masterpieces of art, and color slides of nature. Having acquired some confidence and some skill they were anxious to go out into nature to draw and paint. So all twenty-eight students and I got into assorted cars and stationwagons and drove to the college-owned Fallbrook Farm, the one-time county poorhouse, now converted into riding grounds, skiing and skating area, and lodge.
"Three-Mile Creek" cuts through the property and flows to Lake Ontario about four miles to the north. Fallbrook Farm is so named because in a valley behind the horse barns and at the foot of the ski hill, the creek has been dammed, creating a large pond and two waterfalls. This area is surrounded by elm trees and farther down the creek there are many willow trees. Small rolling hills surround the whole valley.

Soon the students had found their various motifs and were concentrating on their work. The once clear sky was by now filled with clouds rapidly blown by the northwest wind.
The clouds appeared a strong blue color in relation to the thin black elm trees with their still very small bright green buds. And the clear icy brown water of the pond flowed over the dam to make yellow-white bubbles in a most interesting pattern. The once brown and grey hills were now almost covered by the new yellow-green and green grass.

I was exhilarated by the fresh wind, the blue clouds, the splash of the water. I could feel the vitality of nature in me and around me—I wanted to record that feeling, that place, that moment.36

Gombrich quotes the pioneering modern landscape painter, John Constable:

"The sound of water escaping from mill-dams, etc., willows, old rotten planks, slimy posts and brickwork, I love these things....I shall never cease to paint such places....painting is with me but another word for feeling, and I associate 'my careless boyhood' with all that lies on the banks of the Stour; those scenes made me a painter."37

36 This is the existential experience—"the sensation of being" or the "metaphysical sensory shock" that seemed to sum up all the meaning of life. There was a realization of eternity, a feeling of "Power which constituted the whole relation," while at the same time a knowing that it would all fade away in a moment. I wanted to keep the feeling, so began the first step of the painting process—the inspiration.

The first thing I tried to record was the movement of the water from the wave-covered pond—now plunging over the concrete dam, then in its sinuous course over rocks and around trees along the jagged banks.

The movement was so complicated that I realized it would take too long to carefully render the shapes and besides I would lose the feeling of flowing movement. So without looking at the page of my drawing pad, but just at the shapes in the motif before me, I began with a pencil to try to feel through my muscles the "gestures," as John Marin calls them, of the water, the dam, the falls, bubbles, bank, hills, bridge, and finally the trees. These gestures produced the first pencil sketch.

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Fig. 30. First Pencil Drawing from Motif, *Spring at Fallbrook*, April 28, 1961 (11\(\frac{1}{2}\)x9")

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All sketches shown are this same size (11\(\frac{1}{2}\)x9") unless otherwise specified.
When I finally looked at my kinaesthetic sketch, I was satisfied that the shapes were adequately expressive of the vitality of my feeling about the motif. The description of the making of this first sketch is an example of part of the Visual-Operational Method in action. My confidence in my kinaesthetic faculties allowed me to make a drawing with a great deal more freedom and originality of shape than any I could have conceived of intellectually.

Huyghe refers to Delacroix's kinaesthetic line:

Delacroix's own contribution lies in implicit elements in the drawing, those which communicate to us his particular vibration, his rhythm. The dynamism of the line, the speed with which it appears to have been drawn, its nervousness leave an indelible impression upon us, awakening in us the emotions that brought the work into being.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{39}Huyghe, p. 245.
But the color of the motif was a very important factor contributing to the total feeling. So I decided to make a watercolor sketch.

Fig. 31. First Watercolor Sketch from Motif, Spring at Fallbrook, April 28, 1961.

First I drew with pencil the shapes of the motif, but this time I paid more attention to my visual rather than kinaesthetic response as I had in the first pencil sketch. In the watercolor sketch I wanted to be sure to get all the color areas recorded. This sketch would then serve as a basis for an oil painting in which I could emphasize any particular aspect that seemed necessary for the expression of my feeling.

In terms of color brilliance and relative size, the most outstanding color area of the motif was the blue clouds so I began by coloring the cloud shapes on my sketch. The bright green of the grass was the second
largest color area so I painted this area next. The purple of the distant hills provided a tertiary color and size area, so this followed the blue and green. The visual interest of the rest of the motif derived from the extreme value (dark and light) contrasts of the dark trees and light sky around the clouds, and dark water and light foam. I began the dark areas with a series of modulations of the color, several greys, browns, blues and purples, finishing some shapes in black.

Most of the light areas I left white to achieve the maximum contrast. I finished with a few spots of light brown and grey which seemed necessary to integrate the wide range between bright color and strong dark values. These last spots also gave a more organic quality to the feeling of nature in the sketch.
One of the most visually interesting and unique areas of shape in the motif was the area of the falls where the waterfall foamed and flowed around the bank and over the rocks. I wanted to make a closer study of this area and because the value contrasts here were the most obvious feature, I decided to use India ink and a pen which could most easily achieve the clarity of shape and dynamic contrasts.

Fig. 32. First Pen and India Ink Sketch from Motif, April 28, 1961

Again as in the first pencil sketch, I drew emphasizing the kinaesthetic quality; however, I was more careful about the position of the shapes since by now I definitely had decided to make an oil painting, and would therefore need more variety of shapes than in either of the two previous sketches.
Finally I decided to photograph parts of the motif to provide even more shapes than the ink sketch, should the need arise.

Fig. 33. Polaroid Photographs of Sections of Motif, April 28, 1961

Between sketches I had been around to see all the students and by the time I was finished, a few who could still stand the cold wind had gathered around to watch the teacher. Their enthusiasm was an added incentive to make the oil painting.
Three days later (May 1, 1961) I began in my studio to prepare for the oil painting. Using the three original sketches made in nature and the four photographs, I made a compositional sketch first with India ink and pen.

As with the first watercolor sketch, I again drew rather carefully in order to include all the most interesting shapes in this new compositional sketch.
From the first watercolor sketch I took the overall composition of shapes. From the ink detail sketch of the falls area, I incorporated the more precise shapes and value pattern. From the photographs I took some of the most visually and kinaesthetically interesting shapes of the trees, placing the shapes in the composition where I thought and felt them necessary to achieve the feeling I wanted.

Then with a wash of middle value ink and a Japanese brush, I painted in the dark areas of the motif. I wanted to see what kind of a pattern the shapes would assume of their own volition before I changed the pattern by addition or subtraction to suit my volition.

At this stage I tried to be as objective as possible in order not to miss some visual aspect of the inspiration and also so as not to get into a formal rut myself by imposing a preconceived pattern. However, in the case of this compositional sketch, the initial value pattern suggested by the motif seemed most satisfactory.
A figure-field pattern that was essentially concentric presented a dark figure area (lower half of sketch) and dark field area (upper half), leaving a light figure (upper half) and light field (lower half).

Fig. 36. Schematic Figure-Field Diagram Over Studio Sketch 1—Composition for Spring at Fallbrook

Fig. 37. Schematic Diagram of Figure-Field Relationship for Studio Sketch 1—Composition

Through the Visual-Operational Method, I have learned the use of the concentric pattern which has now become an integral part of my own work. In the definitive manual of the Visual-Operational Method, *Cezanne and Visual Form*, p. 24, Professor Sherman states:

This concentric pictorial pattern exists both singly and in various combinations in Cezanne's work, and with various degrees of clarity in all of the work of Cezanne's mature period.
Next I made a page of small sketches to test the compositional pattern. Sketch A shows the attempt to try the simple basic value pattern, i.e., Figure 37, Sketch B translates the basic value pattern into colors (at this stage, dark colors simulating the dark value). But the dark colored clouds of Sketch B did not correspond to my original feeling so Sketch C shows the clouds in bright blue, the grass green, the distant hills purple. Then with a charcoal pencil over the wet tempera paint (a rich sensuous combination of materials), I drew the dark shapes—trees, dam, bank of the creek.

The colored cloud shapes of the sketch were so large that I was not sure whether they would fall into the
figure area, or field area, or both. Sketch D shows the color cloud area as figural and this small sketch seemed to sum up all my feelings about the color relationships of the motif.

I tested this pattern on a larger sketch (Sketch E) with more particular shapes made by drawing the shapes first. Again the color composition was satisfying so I decided to test it in the first, full page (11½x9"), full color sketch made in the studio.

Fig. 39. Studio Sketch 3, Spring at Fallbrook, May 1, 1961, Watercolor

This time beginning without previously drawn lines, I applied the large color areas in accordance with the small compositional sketches D and E.
I began with the bright (middle value colors) having learned through past experience that bright colors determine the dominant feeling and therefore should dictate the composition.

The order of the application of the bright colors was according to the relative size of the color areas: the largest—blue, second largest—green, third—purple.
I then applied some of the dark color (brown and purple) in the positions I knew them to be from the first studio compositional sketch. Most of these dark shapes fell within the lower half of the figure area which, combined with the light of the waves, concrete and bubbles, would make a stimulating value-contrast pattern.

Fig. 41. Diagram of Application of Color, Studio Sketch 3, Spring at Fallbrook
(a) Position—value figure, value field
(b) Value order—dark

The organic vitality of the motif suggested to me the necessity for the most decorative of color compositions (see Figure 22). The value figure area could relate to the value field area (tops of trees contrasting with white sky).
By combining the color pattern and the value pattern, the sketch was complete, structurally and emotionally.

Fig. 42. Diagram of Color Application, Studio Sketch 3, Spring at Fallbrook, Combination of Color (Fig. 40) and Value (Fig. 41)

Next on Studio Sketch 3 I articulated some shapes by drawing with the charcoal pencil, followed by painting many of the charcoal shapes with more of the dark colors on my selected scale. Finally, without drawing, I applied some of the light colors directly to the sketch.

I was pleased by the sketch, but academic duties called, and it was not until two days later that I could continue my sketches in preparation for the oil painting.
On May 3 I began another studio watercolor sketch, first drawing all the shapes. Since I had previously resolved the color pattern (Studio Composition Sketches D and E), this time I wanted to modulate the colors to see what the effect would be.

Thus I began by applying the light values of all the colors to the pencil sketch.

Then I applied the bright colors, many overlying the light colors, and finally I put the dark colors over all that had preceded. This sequence (light, middle, dark) allowed a more deliberate control of the color and shape and a richness of color quality because of the transparent overlays of color.
In the sequence of color application, when bright color comes first, there is a tendency to leave white paper between shapes. This sequence, however, tends to avoid the subtle color relationships that can be achieved by immediately juxtaposed color. It was the subtle relationships I was seeking in this Sketch 4.

May 6, 1961, I wanted a more objective test of the sequence of modulated color. So in Studio Sketch 5 I began by painting with the color before I drew.

Fig. 44. Studio Sketch 5, Spring at Fallbrook, Watercolor
(a) Procedural mode--(1) paint (2) draw
(b) Color value order--(1) light (2) middle (3) dark

I painted the light values, then all the larger middle values (excluding thin tree shapes). Next I drew with the charcoal pencil and painted the dark values of all the shapes and finally some middle value articulation ("buds, grass, rocks, waves, etc.").
I had found by past experience that the first marks on the paper (or canvas) determine the character of the painting. In this most recent Sketch 5 the painted shapes imposed a kind of formal geometric quality to the sketch that was not in keeping with the organic quality of the motif. Thus I resolved to begin the oil painting by drawing first so that the unique quality of the motif would be as free as possible.

Having resolved the compositional pattern (Studio Sketch 3), the color sequence (Studio Sketch 4), and the procedural mode (Studio Sketch 4), I felt ready for the final step before painting. This was the mixing and testing of the colors for the oil painting. By trial and error mixtures, I sought and found the colors to correspond to the feelings I had about the motif.

Fig. 45. Studio Sketch 6, Spring at Fallbrook, Oil on Paper (7x5\(\frac{1}{2}\)"")

With a palette knife, I made a small sketch on paper (7x5\(\frac{1}{2}\") with the proposed oil colors. Their juxtaposed and overlaid relations still seemed satisfactory—indeed were exciting; I wanted to begin the large painting.
Spring at Fallbrook

Step 1. With vine charcoal I drew all the shapes I wanted on a canvas stretched 43 1/2 x 33". The three sketches I made in nature of the motif and the photographs and the compositional sketches I had made in the studio provided the visual stimuli for the shapes I selected and drew on the canvas.

Fig. 46. Sketches from Motif and from Studio and Photographs from Motif (Visual Stimuli for Oil Painting), Spring at Fallbrook

Fig. 47. Step 1: Charcoal Drawing on Canvas, May 1, 1961 (43 1/2 x 33"), Spring at Fallbrook
The selection of shapes was partly based upon the knowledge that this first drawing was to provide only general color areas and some articulation. After applying some color I would articulate many more shapes, according to the compositional requirements of the painting.
Step 2. I then applied light turpentine washes with a large (2½") "bright" brush. I used the full range of color—a pale yellow ochre, a burnt umber, and a pale Prussian blue. In the subdued color range I had chosen, brown substituted for red (of the primary range), therefore creating a feeling of totality.

By then, since most of the canvas was covered and ready for a brighter range of color, I applied the bright colors, still using the large brush with much less turpentine than the light wash. But I used enough oil, varnish, and turpentine to cause the color in some areas to wash down from where I had made the brush stroke. This added to the natural organic quality (i.e., dripping clouds) and also served to integrate some color areas. I then applied some of the dark colors with the same brush.
Fig. 49. Spring at Fallbrook, Step 3. Charcoal Drawing Over Oil Color on Canvas (43½"x33"), May 3, 1961

Step 3. With the full range of color on the canvas, I drew and redrew many shapes emphasizing, this time, not shapes of subject matter, but articulation within the already established areas. I turned the canvas on each of its four sides in order to avoid preconceived ideas of the images and to give full reign to the purely compositional requirements of the canvas such as the necessary articulation of the figure area and the clarity of the concentric pattern. See Gestalt laws, pp. 70-88.
After satisfying these compositional requirements by drawing with charcoal, I covered most of the marks with thick paint, applied with a palette knife.

The use of large areas of color applied with a brush in contrast to small shapes applied with a palette knife has proved a most satisfying combination for me. The use of the knife allows a direct and immediate series of marks even with many color changes since the knife can be rapidly cleaned. The brush can cover large areas very quickly, thereby providing a visual unity. The combination of brush and knife has provided me with a module of sorts.

Fig. 50. My "Module"
I worked sometimes from area to area, sometimes from color to color. After another round of drawing to achieve the profuse animation I had felt in the presence of the waves, bubbles, blades of grass, branches, and so on, I covered most of these shapes with paint. The painting showed much of the feeling I had experienced in the presence of the motif. There seemed nothing more to do. I was finished.

Fig. 51. Spring at Fallbrook, May 3, 1961, (43½x33"), Oil on Canvas, Finished Painting

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41 The human mind likes to start with the elementary and to make it progressively more complicated, without, however, losing the thread of the initial unity, until the supreme triumph of a complexity seemingly equal to the very chaos of nature is achieved. (Huyghe, p. 173.)
Three days later I decided to try another version of the same motif, *Spring at Fallbrook*. All the physical materials I used were identical to the first version: same paint, size of canvas, brushes, colors. The only change in the procedure was that instead of drawing first as I had in Version 1, in Version 2 I began by painting without drawing.

Fig. 52. *Spring at Fallbrook*, Version 2, May 6, 1961, Color on Canvas (43½ x 33")

Step 1. In Version 2 I used the same order of color application as with Version 1: light, bright, dark. The shapes of color tended to take on a geometric quality. Many factors could have been responsible for the "stiff" style, such as: (1) the fact that I had satisfied the natural organic feeling in Version 1 and now I wanted a less representational style, (2) the geometric canvas, and (3) the "bright" brush which is geometric.
Fig. 53. Spring at Fallbrook, Version 2, Step 2. May 7, 1961, Charcoal Drawing over Color on Canvas (43½ x 33")

Step 2. After the full range of color (light, middle, dark) was on the canvas, I drew articulating shapes. These too took on a "geometric" style (I assume because of the already established character of the painted shapes).
Fig. 54. *Spring at Fallbrook*, Version 2, Step 3.
May 7, 1961, Paint over Charcoal over Paint,
Oil on Canvas (43½x33")

Step 3. With a palette knife I painted the lines I had drawn. By this time, however, I realized that the geometric character of the shapes did not fit the natural organic quality of the original motif. This new version seemed stiff, too formal—lacking the feeling I wanted. I decided to stop work on Version 2.
A comparison of Versions 1 and 2 shows, in my estimation, the relative "sterility" of the geometric Version 2.

Fig. 55. Spring at Fallbrook, Version 2, May 7, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43½x33")

Fig. 56. Spring at Fallbrook, Version 1, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43½x33")
The following nineteen pages contain diagrams illustrating the application of the fourteen Gestalt laws (see pp. 70-88) to the sketches and finished oil painting, Spring at Fallbrook.
Fig. 57. Diagram--Application of Gestalt Laws 1, 2, 4, 12 to Studio Sketch 1, Spring at Fallbrook

1. **Naturalness of form.** A field tends to become organized and to take on form. Groups tend to form structures, and disconnected units to become connected.

2. **Figure and ground.** A form tends to be a figure set upon a ground, and the figure-ground dichotomy is fundamental to all perception. The simplest form is a figure of undifferentiated quality set upon a ground.

4. **Good and poor forms.** A good form is well articulated and as such tends to impress itself upon the observer, to persist and to recur. A circle is a good form.

12. **Meaningfulness of forms.** A form tends to be meaningful and to have objectivity. The more meaningful the form, the stronger it is, the more easily it is perceived, and the longer it tends to persist.
Fig. 57. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Laws 1, 2, 4, 12 to Studio Sketch 1, 
Spring at Fallbrook

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12. **Meaningfulness of forms.** A form tends to be meaningful and to have objectivity. The more meaningful the form, the stronger it is, the more easily it is perceived, and the longer it tends to persist.
Fig. 58. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Law 3 to Spring at Fallbrook, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43x33")

3. **Articulation.** Forms vary from simple to complex in the degree of articulation or differentiation that they possess.
Fig. 58. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Law 3 to Spring at Fallbrook, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (45x35"

3. Articulation. Forms vary from simple to complex in the degree of articulation or differentiation that they possess.
5. **Strong and weak forms.** A strong form coheres and resists disintegration by analysis into parts or by fusion with another form.

13. **Fusion of forms.** Two forms can fuse, giving rise to a new form; or, in combination, the stronger one may persist, eliminating the weaker. Simple, poorly-articulated forms fuse more easily than complex, good forms. A more meaningful form tends to predominate over a less meaningful one.
5. **Strong and weak forms.** A strong form coheres and resists disintegration by analysis into parts or by fusion with another form.

13. **Fusion of forms.** Two forms can fuse, giving rise to a new form; or, in combination, the stronger one may persist, eliminating the weaker. Simple, poorly-articulated forms fuse more easily than complex, good forms. A more meaningful form tends to predominate over a less meaningful one.
Fig. 60. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Law 6 to *Spring at Fallbrook*, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43 x 33)

6. Open and closed forms. An open form tends to change toward a certain good form. When a form has assumed stable equilibrium, it has achieved closure. Thus a nearly circular series of dots may achieve closure by being perceived as a circle.
6. Open and closed forms. An open form tends to change toward a certain good form. When a form has assumed stable equilibrium, it has achieved closure. Thus a nearly circular series of dots may achieve closure by being perceived as a circle.
7. **Dynamic basis of form.** A form is a dynamic system or is based upon a dynamic system. Since the dynamic principles operate within the organism, a strong form is that which depends more upon the dynamic properties of the organism than upon the properties of the stimulus. The fact that the organism operates to structure the perception means that there need be no correspondence between the form of the stimulus and the form of the perception.

I (organism) put (structured) the moving clouds (stimulus) only (no correspondence between the form of the stimulus and the form of the perception) in the field (perception).
7. **Dynamic basis of form.** A form is a dynamic system or is based upon a dynamic system. Since the dynamic principles operate within the organism, a strong form is that which depends more upon the dynamic properties of the organism than upon the properties of the stimulus. The fact that the organism operates to structure the perception means that there need be no correspondence between the form of the stimulus and the form of the perception.

I (organism) put (structured) the *moving* clouds (stimulus) only (no correspondence between the form of the stimulus and the form of the perception) in the field (perception).
8. **Persistence of form.** A form once perceived tends to persist, and to recur when the stimulus situation recurs. The recurrence of part of a previously perceived form tends to reinstate the whole.

9. **Constancy of form.** A form tends to preserve its proper shape, size and color. This is the well-known "constancy phenomenon."

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Persistence of form and constancy of form are the two Gestalt laws which refer in my case to the concentric pattern of organization.

The concentric pattern is manifest in the works of significant artists other than Cezanne. Pre-Cezanne, the concentric pattern appeared in a variety of forms and with varying degrees of clarity in the works of Da Vinci, Titian, El Greco, Rembrandt, Claude, Poussin, Watteau, Goya, Turner, Ryder and others. Post-Cezanne, the concentric pattern appears in the works of Picasso, Braque, Gris, Marin, Mondrian, and others.43

Figure 62 provides examples of representative works of four of the above listed artists. These are the artists whose work has been most significant to me and I have tried to synthesize their lessons of visual organization into my own painting process.


43 Sherman, Cezanne and Visual Form, p. 69.
Fig. 64. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Law 10 to Spring at Ballbroek, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (454x749)

10. Symmetry of form. A form tends toward symmetry, balance and proportion. Many of the geometrical "illusions" illustrate this principle.
10. **Symmetry of form.** A form tends toward symmetry, balance and proportion. Many of the geometrical "illusions" illustrate this principle.
Fig. 65. Diagram--Application of Gestalt Law 11 to *Spring at Fallbrook*, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (45 x 33)

11. Integration of similars and adjaecants. Units similar in size, shape and color tend to combine to make better articulated forms.
Fig. 65. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Law 11 to Spring at Fallbrook, May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43" x 33")

11. Integration of similars and adjacents. Units similar in size, shape and color tend to combine to make better articulated forms.
Fig. 66. Diagram—Application of Gestalt Law 14 to *Spring at Fallbrook*. May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (45 x 39)

14. Transposition of form. A form exists independently of its constituent elements and may thus be transposed without change to other elements.
Fig. 66. Diagram--Application of Gestalt Law 14 to Spring at Fallbrook. May 3, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43½ x 35½)

14. **Transposition of form.** A form exists independently of its constituent elements and may thus be transposed without change to other elements.
PART II.

Figure--My Painting

B.

Fig. 67. Spring River, May 31, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43\frac{1}{2} \times 33'')
Fig. 68 Oswego River, Spring, 1961 (taken at a later date than original sketches of motif)

Fig. 69. Sketches for Spring River

Fig. 70. Spring River, May 31, 1961, oil on canvas (43½ x 33″)
Spring River

May 13, 1961, was one of the first warm days in Oswego. The sky was clear, and a light wind blew from the west. Again my Saturday morning studio class of freshmen expressed their desire to "go out" to paint so we drove one mile south from the lake on Route 48 to a bluff overlooking the Oswego River.

Most of the trees along the east bank of the river were a bright yellow; a few wild cherry trees were in blossom. We could see many of the city's structures: the Utica Street bridge, the hydroelectric station with its high-tension wires and log dam, some of the now-deserted nineteenth century mills on the river banks, the grain elevators in the harbour, and the large curved dam that held back the river to create a series of locks for the Inland Waterway.
The old brown and grey man and machine-made structures combined with the brilliant blue sky and water and bright yellow and green trees to create a unique relationship of shapes and colors. As soon as all my students were at work, I began to make a watercolor sketch.

First I drew with pencil all the large shapes I wanted to include. The impression of the unique relationships was for me the Existential experience that inspired the painting. I chose from the myriad details of city structure only the most visually interesting shapes, such as an old bell tower, the hydroelectric tower and looping high-tension lines, an old mill whose side was punctured with broken windows, the gentle curve of the dam, and so

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44"Cezanne when confronting his motif had a clear idea of what he wanted to do, and took from nature only what was relevant to this idea...only those elements that fitted his conception." [Bonnard] (Huyghe, p. 104.)
on. Then I painted the shapes on my paper with transparent watercolors. I began with light colors, then bright and finished with a few dark shapes. The feeling of the motif was essentially light, so light colors predominated.

I then decided to make some detailed sketches of some of the more interesting architecture and its relationship to nature, which I did with pen and India ink.

Fig. 72., (a) and (b).
Detail Sketches from Motif, Spring River, May 13, 1961

(a)

(b)
Finally I took some black and white photographs of parts of the motif for the purpose of selecting more shapes, because by now I had decided to make a large oil painting.

Fig. 73. Photograph of Motif, *Spring River*, May 13, 1961

Fig. 74. Studio Sketch 1, May 14, 1961, Pen and Ink—Composition

The next day, May 14, 1961, while I made a compositional sketch with pen and ink, I realized that the color quality of the motif was an even more important factor to the feeling I wanted than the specific shapes.
Thus I did the next sketch (Studio Sketch 2) in watercolor but first I drew because I was not yet familiar with the rather complicated relationship of shapes in the motif. I began with the brightest colors: yellow, green, blue, then brown. Next I drew with a charcoal pencil and painted some dark, and finally some light shapes.

Now I decided to try to forget any particular shapes and, using only the colors of the motif, to make some studies expressive of the energy of spring.

45 [Van Gogh] "Instead of trying to reproduce exactly what is before my eyes, I use color arbitrarily in order to express myself more strongly." (Ibid., p. 92.)
I made four of these abstract expressionist studies, with as free a kinaesthetic application as I could achieve. These sketches were visually exciting but in my estimation not as expressive as the first studio watercolor sketch.

In the studio I made eight more watercolor sketches based on the original watercolor sketch, the detail drawings and the photographs of the motif. I was seeking the most expressive compositional schema and procedural mode: A—(1) draw (2) color or B—(1) color (2) draw.

Fig. 77. Diagram of Compositional Schema for Figure Area of Spring River, Top Half: Figure Color--Bottom Half: Figure Value

The figure area of the motif seemed best shown in a combination of color (top half) and value (bottom half).
I tried coloring the field two ways: (1) top half—value; bottom half—color (2) all color.

Fig. 78 and Fig. 79. Diagrams of Compositional Schema for Field Area of Spring River. A. Top Half—Field Value, Bottom Half—Field Color, B. Field All Color
Of the eight sketches, six were made with totally colored fields. (See Figure 69)

Fig. 80. One of Eight Studio Sketches for Spring River, Watercolor, May 16, 1961

Two of the sketches had fields with color only at the bottom leaving the top for the value contrast of dark towers and lines against a white sky, (i.e., Studio Sketch 2, Figure 75).

As for the procedural modes, they were equally divided: four for the draw-first, color-second mode (A) and four for the color-first, draw-second mode (B).
Neither of these issues of field color or procedural mode had been resolved. Nevertheless I mixed and tried in a small (8½x7") sketch on paper, the oil paint as preparation for the large painting.

Fig. 81. Studio Sketch for Spring River, Oil on Paper, May 21, 1961.

However, one issue had been settled by the eight sketches. This was the decision to begin with the bright middle colors, then to proceed to dark and finally light. For this painting I believed the bright color to be the most important aspect of the painting.
Thus I began the first version of Spring River, on a rather large (55"x43") canvas. Without preliminary drawing I applied large shapes of bright, then dark color. Then I drew some shapes to articulate the large color masses. Next I painted with the palette knife some of the marks (articulating shapes). I felt that the painting was "out of control." It seemed "too wild."

More specifically, the color seemed too bright, and from past experience I realized that to try to subdue the color would result in more formal precision that for Spring River would be just as "out of feeling" as its present state. So I decided to abandon this version and try again on a fresh canvas.
**Version 2**  May 28, 1961

To avoid the lack of control suffered in Version 1, this time I drew the important shapes on the new canvas (43 1/2 x 33"), then proceeded to paint, working as I had planned from the watercolor sketches, from bright to dark to light colors. However, the colors seemed confined by the drawing— the energy of the "spring river" had not been released. I painted Version 2 out with fast-drying white plastic paint.

**Version 3**  May 28, 1961

On the freshly painted-out canvas of Version 2, I began again with large color shapes before drawing. Again the shapes felt "out of control" so without more work I painted the canvas white again.
Fig. 83. *Spring River*, Version 4, May 30, 1961, Oil on Canvas (55\x2145 x 43\x22") (unfinished)

**Version 4** May 30, 1961

Having also repainted with white the large canvas of Version 1, I began Version 4. This time I drew with charcoal as the first step. Then instead of using the color order I had decided upon in the watercolor sketches and had used in Versions 1, 2 and 3, I began now with light colors in an effort to achieve simultaneously the energy and control I sought. As I proceeded to use the bright and finally dark colors, I realized again that while the painting was "in control," the successive modulations of light, middle (bright) and dark colors were too complex to show the energy I felt about the motif.
Fig. 84. *Spring River*, Version 5, May 31, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43½"x33")

On the smaller canvas of Versions 2 and 3, I began with the original color order (bright, light, dark) to *draw with color*. This time everything fell right into place and each shape had the vitality I wanted. Then I drew with charcoal a few marks to articulate the larger colored shapes. Everything still "felt right." Finally I painted most of the charcoal marks.
At first the painting looked unfinished but when I tried to make another mark on it, I couldn't, except to sign my name. Version 5 was finished.

Fig. 85. Spring River, May 31, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43 x 33")
CONCLUSION

Each of the two final oil paintings, *Spring at Fallbrook* and *Spring River*, was the result of each of the two modes of procedure. The procedural mode for *Spring at Fallbrook*, Version 1, was (1) draw and (2) paint. I have designated this procedure as Mode A. The mode of procedure for *Spring River*, Version 5, was paint first and draw second. I have designated this latter procedure as Mode B. In the preliminary watercolor sketches produced in the studio and in the several versions of both oil paintings, I have suggested a dichotomy between the procedural modes A and B.

The procedural dichotomy was a result of the apparent difference in the use of the two modes and media: *i.e.*, painting with relatively large colored shapes, and drawing with relatively small value shapes. However, after the experience of painting *Spring River*, Version 5, I realized that the apparent dichotomy between drawing and painting was fully resolved. When I was painting, I was really drawing with color even though the shapes were large and full. When I drew with lines (small shapes), I was really making large
closures ( ) (shapes) to be painted. Thus the important organizing large shapes could be achieved either way.

The only difference between the two modes was a matter of degree of precision, the line-drawn shapes being a little easier to control, hence a greater emphasis upon a stronger shape quality. *Spring at Fallbrook* called for precise shapes as well as a wide range of color modulation (light to middle to dark). Additional control could also be achieved through the successive color values. The first light wash could be freely splashed on, thereby achieving the desired visual-kinaesthetic unity. But this in turn helped position the bright range without regard to the implied limitation of the original linear definition.

In a painting such as *Spring River*, that called for the freedom and energy of an organization with bright color and without the seeming limitation of linear definition, control came through a more intense concern for the visual kinaesthetic feedback (*i.e.*, more careful first application of bright color).

The bright middle value color was the organizing element. When it went on, the structure and feeling of the painting was established. For me, the bright color tends toward its own freedom, therefore it can be given
full play or let loose at first if a bright, free work is desired or it can be controlled through linear drawing and successive value modulations if a more precise work is desired.

Thus more or less control can be achieved by drawing before (more) or after (less) the first color application.

In addition to the operational conclusion of the two procedural modes I have found that the color value sequence provides further operational conclusions. Whichever of the three values (light, middle, dark) is applied to the paper or canvas first determines the tonality of the painting. For me, the use of the first color of the sequence creates the following results.

- Light makes a light painting.
- Bright makes a bright painting.
- Dark makes a dark painting.

Thus three color sequences are available. However, both the procedural modes and color sequences are subject to further formal variations of expression determined by the compositional schema. The major compositional schema: color figure-value field (Fig. 20) and value figure-color field (Fig. 21) combine to create the popular third schema (Fig. 22), color and value figure - color and value field.
Thus my **basic** formal modes of expression include two procedural modes, three color sequences, and three compositional schemas. This is not an attempt to reduce aesthetic expression to mathematics or a science for one does not attempt to make a mode express a feeling; one first has a feeling for which he can find expression in a mode. Nor is this to suggest the painter or painting must be limited to a basic mode.

Combinations and variations of my basic modes have provided me, to date, at least, with adequate formal expression. In addition to my concern for the formal expression at my present stage of development, I am already aware that I no longer "select" a mode to suit an inspiration; the formal means becomes part of the field structure of the artist's expression. Thus the organized figure--my painting--"emerges."

Examples of the "emerged" figure--my painting--can be seen in the following pages. Preceding the paintings is a chart on which I have recorded the modes of formal expression for each painting. The original material stimulus is presented either through a watercolor sketch (WC), or photograph (P). The finished painting based on the stimulus is also shown with a record of the particular compositional schema, the drawing-painting
procedural order, and finally the color sequence.

It is my hope that all that I have said can be seen in the figure-field relationship in my painting.
Table 1. Modes of Formal Expression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DATE FINISHED</th>
<th>ORIGINAL</th>
<th>SIZE</th>
<th>COMPOSITION</th>
<th>PROCEDURAL MODE</th>
<th>COLOR SEQUENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spring Blossoms</td>
<td>Feb 61</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>27 x 18 ½&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M D L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer 104</td>
<td>Mar 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>43 x 34 ½&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td>L M D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter 104</td>
<td>Mar 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>45 x 33 ½&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
<td>L M D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallbrook Hill</td>
<td>Mar 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>42 ½ x 33 ½&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>L M D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Landscape</td>
<td>Mar 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>48 x 34 ½&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oswego River</td>
<td>Apr 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>43 ½ x 33&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Woods II</td>
<td>26 Apr 61</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>43 ½ x 33&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>L M D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oswego Harbour</td>
<td>25 Apr 61</td>
<td>P &amp; WC</td>
<td>43 ½ x 33&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring/Fallbrook</td>
<td>3 May 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>43 ½ x 33&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>L M D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring River</td>
<td>31 May 61</td>
<td>WC</td>
<td>43 ½ x 33&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morning Star ²²</td>
<td>Feb 57</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>72 x 50&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lewis Bluff ²²</td>
<td>Fall 58</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>38 x 24&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>L M D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Weeds ²²</td>
<td>Spr 60</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>36 x 30&quot;</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B³ M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall Fields ²²</td>
<td>Spr 60</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>66 x 48&quot;</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>M D L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) serigraph
(2) shown in retrospective exhibit, see pages
(3) drew with color
P - photograph
WC - watercolor
S - sketch
A - (1) draw (2) paint
B - (1) paint (2) draw
L - light
M - middle
D - dark
O - oil
Fig. 86. Photograph of Motif for *Spring Blossoms*, Spring, 1958

Fig. 87. *Spring Blossoms*, Spring, 1960, Oil on Canvas (43x69")

Fig. 88. *Spring Blossoms*, February, 1961, Serigraph (27x19")
Fig. 89. Photograph of Motif for *Summer* 104, August, 1960

Fig. 90. *Summer* 104, August, 1960, Watercolor (21½x18")

Fig. 91. *Summer* 104, March, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43x34")
Fig. 92. *Winter 104*, February 9, 1961, Watercolor

Fig. 93. *Winter 104*, March 18, 1961, Oil on Canvas, (45x33")
Fig. 94. Photograph of Motif for Fallbrook Hill (taken Spring, 1961)

Fig. 95. Fallbrook Hill, October 7, 1960, Watercolor

Fig. 96. Fallbrook Hill, March, 1961, Oil on Canvas (42½×33")
Fig. 97. Photograph of Motif for Fall Landscape, (taken Spring, 1961)

Fig. 98. Fall Landscape, Watercolor, Fall, 1960

Fig. 99. Fall Landscape, March, 1961, Oil on Canvas (48x34½"")
Fig. 100. Photograph of Motif for Oswego River, October 4, 1960

Fig. 101. Oswego River, October 4, 1960, Watercolor

Fig. 102. Oswego River, April, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43½ x 33")
Fig. 103. Photograph of Motif for
Winter Woods II, Winter, 1960-61

Fig. 104. Winter Woods II, April 26,
1961, Oil on Canvas (43½ x 33")
Fig. 105. Photograph of Motif for Oswego Harbour, Fall, 1960

Fig. 106. Oswego Harbour, April 25, 1961, Oil on Canvas (43½"x33")
Fig. 107. Photograph of Motif for Lewis Bluff, Fall, 1958

Fig. 108. Lewis Bluff, Fall, 1958, Oil on Canvas (38x24")
Fig. 109. Photograph of Motif for Blue Weeds, Summer, 1959.

Fig. 110. Blue Weeds, Spring, 1960, Oil on Canvas (36x30")
Fig. 111. Photograph of Motif for *Fall Fields*, Fall, 1959

Fig. 112. *Fall Fields*, Spring, 1960, oil on canvas (66x48")
This last painting shown with the sketches from the motif (Ajijic on Lake Chapala, Mexico), together with preliminary sketches for the painting and a stage in the process of the painting formed the basis for my admittance to the candidacy for Doctor of Philosophy in 1955. The painting was not finished until February, 1957.
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