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A series of paintings, drawings, and compositions, oriented toward a fine arts direction in the use of synthetic and mixed media.

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AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Miss Judith Frykman for the Master of Science in Teaching
(Candidate's Name)

Date thesis is presented: April 26, 1966
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Title: A Series of Paintings, Drawings and Compositions,
Oriented Toward a Fine Arts Direction in the Use of Synthetic
and Mixed Media.

Abstract approved: 
(thesis adviser)

The thesis is in the form of a commentary on the development of my work from the beginning of this year. The studies have followed a general pattern of closed to open, or linear to painterly. Numerous changes in attitude towards the basic elements of composition, and their use, have taken place. Among those most frequently mentioned are: line, dark and light, intensity and warm-cool color relationships. In connection with these compositional elements, surface texture, subject matter and various media are discussed. Some consideration is given to conflict between conceptual and media orientations. The effect of this conflict in a teaching situation completes the general outline of the thesis.

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A SERIES OF PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS AND
COMPOSITIONS, ORIENTED TOWARD A
FINE ARTS DIRECTION IN THE USE
OF SYNTHETIC AND MIXED MEDIA

by

MISS JUDITH FRYKMAN

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Art
and the Graduate Council of Portland State College
in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science in Teaching

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Looking back over the work of this year, I see that some ideas have come more clearly into focus. Many things that occurred in comparative isolation in my work at the beginning of this investigation now seem to be forming a more cohesive pattern. The development of my work has seemed to follow a trend from linear to painterly, or closed to open. Previously, I had associated the painterly approach with less accuracy and more spontaneity; however, the converse seems to be true. Thinking in larger elements in order to arrive at generalizations (which are consistent enough to read as a whole, yet variable enough to remain exciting), I have become more and more aware of a highly formalized discipline. This is not to say that my work has become mechanical, but rather that many small decisions made hundreds of times during the process of a painting are taking the place of a few well thought out "packages" linked by a linear configuration and surrounded, in many cases, by unused space. When line and edge no longer can be depended upon to bring order out of chaos, the interaction of color shapes comes to the fore as a primary consideration. The space that the color occupies no longer depends on where the shape is drawn, but rather, where a color has "put down roots" on a visual plane in relation to other color shapes.

For a long time, my ideas concerning color involved a super-imposition of color over a structured canvas. The

"composition" in terms of shape was established first then the color reinforced the composition in a flat sense. Dark and light was the first consideration. This dark distribution, for a long period, was a scattered effort to "balance" the light areas. The dark areas subdivided existing shapes into smaller uniform segments and alternated with middle tones and lights in an overall pattern. Later, the "weight" of value was shifted, with larger areas of light, middle tone, or dark opposed by smaller areas of contrasting value. This made larger and more meaningful shapes begin to function but still in a flat way, without any solution of the relationship of edges created between the darks and lights. Also, the shapes created seemed to carry over definite edge characteristics from the idea of line angles, which had picked up directions consistently in my earlier work. The direction of the viewers eye was being controlled by the edges of shapes rather than by the concentration of dark and light in terms of shape-weight. The work with tissue paper stressed again my dependence upon edge, since the overlaps, in many cases, created a linear pattern rather than a value or color change having any visual consistency. Small shapes were isolated because of their lack of identity with any shape in their similar "color-space" position.

In the work with acrylics, my light-dark emphasis has become progressively less attached to a previously contrived shape. The terms dark and light have become descriptive of a receding contour, rather than of a contained, flat surface which has had

dark and light applied to it decoratively. This is not to say that objects cannot be identified as dark or light, but their value is meaningful only in relation to the value surrounding that area and form a consistent space relationship with other areas in a larger sense.

It is dangerous to discuss a change in attitude concerning value as an isolated thing. This is because it has been accompanied by a similar shift in emphasis upon the importance of intensity and warm-cool color relationships.

In relation to intensity, my thinking has become more and more directed by the position of intensity in space. Since intensity is used so often in establishing near-far relationships at the expense of the more subtle and rewarding use of warm and cool, it is an ingredient in a painting which should be used for its less obvious characteristics. As an element of surprise or interest, intensity can offer a pleasing invitation to a second look at an otherwise too mechanical rendering of an area. However, as the central device of a painting, intensity can become artificial often giving the effect of artificial light on a colorless surface or of a transitory atmospheric condition. Intensity alone cannot, at once, make a strong and subtle statement of volume. By eliminating shrieking intensity, the chances of fragmentation decrease as well as the chances of over emphasis of one device. In assignments concentrating on intensity, I found that I was using it to form a linear pattern moving from shape to shape and to form

large space concepts at the expense of warm-cool variation. High intensity colors can, of course, be either warm or cool, but I was using them in a rather set formula--warms reading as near and cools reading as far. In addition, a high intensity warm, with only a slight amount of cool added (for example, a light red-violet), read on the same plane as a low intensity cool, with a slight amount of warm added (for example, a light blue-violet with a slight amount of yellow-green added). This variation in visual perception guided my thinking more and more as I worked with warm-cool as an expression of depth.

Even in the work with tissue paper, warm-cool, as well as intensity, played a great part in determining the success of the pieces. It was important as an unexpected element used in overlap. For example, an area involving a green-brown overlap might have a surprise factor of red involved in the transition. Without changing the value, the visual richness was increased by the addition of warms to cool areas and vice-versa. This richness cannot occur, however, if these interest areas are sprinkled throughout the painting in a haphazard way. They must be used in connection with their surroundings so that the "surprise elements" are not all on the same visual plane. Some will occur in more subtle ways, others in more obvious situations.

The most important function of warm-cool, however, has come into focus during my work with acrylics and, especially,

in the later assignments of this year.

When given objects to state in space, without the use of drawing to show perspective, warm and cool colors become the determining factor in expressing their three-dimensional quality. Not only could it be used to show an object receding from the viewer's eye parallel to the picture plane, but at an oblique angle as well. In order to accomplish this, a subtle variation from warm to "ice-ice cool" had to be worked out. This did not work well unless careful consideration was given to the smallest differences in the addition of warm and cool to even the most neutral colors. A warm grey, in small quantity surrounded by cool, can jump forward as much as a bright red surrounded by rust browns.

The use of warm and cool was quite significant to me in relation to an assignment involving a hillside and sky. The use of a variation of warm and cool colors (from warm to ice-cool) caused the hill to suddenly recede into the distance. But, at the same time, the importance of subtle variation, within the hill form, made the difference between a design painted on a hill and a series of color spots which were, in effect, a hill. The overlaps can form a secondary contour, as value, intensity, and warm-cool all work together to complete the illusion. The warm-cool depth can be enhanced by making the sky seem to bend forward, (through warmth), as the hill recedes. Intensity and value, used secondarily can contribute interest to an otherwise

"too well planned" painting.

The ideas involved in the hill-form paintings became the basis for additional studies in landscape, which investigated numerous ideas concurrently. The first of these ideas was the over-riding consideration of warm and cool colors occupying a plane in space. In order to isolate the warm-cool problem, emphasis was placed on a relative consistency in the value of the entire canvas--that range being from middle tone to light. By eliminating extreme value contrast and by using more subtle mixtures of warm and cool, the paintings fused as they had not done before.

Less drawing, either initial blocking out with charcoal or brushstrokes suggesting edge, has also added to the importance of warm-cool relationships. Often, the slightest hint of perspective establishes a color in space, contrary to all that has previously been built up. In the early landscapes the carry through of directional lines was still quite evident--forming harsh shape-edges and ridges which seemed paper thin within supposedly volumetric forms. Gradually this has been lessened somewhat, although unfortunately the direction of brushstrokes often times has more to say than warm-cool space. The block-like strokes have been softened, also, in an effort to find organic solutions to internal shape variation.

Intensity has been softened considerably, even though there is an obvious nod to it in the establishing of a near-far

visual situation. Although this could, theoretically, be eliminated, at this point I question the validity of an attempt of this kind. With dark-light in a secondary position, it seems that an "interest area" supplied by intensity, perhaps counter-balanced by slight value changes within certain areas of a painting, is valid. Without some intensity and value interaction, the canvas, although integrated, can appear lifeless--much like a back-drop awaiting a more exciting incident. Perhaps this feeling is brought about because the warm-cool element is still in a state of limbo; it has yet to fully emerge on the canvas. It could also be mentioned that the land forms being used as subject may be responsible for an apparent change in outlook which has not really jelled. If geometric subject matter were introduced, my tendency to become linear in orientation might reappear--intensity and value might completely consume warm-cool space. Hopefully this will not occur because of the challenging nature of my current work, which must be explored at much greater depth before I move toward more complicated subject matter. Eventually the figure, or the city-scape, can be seen as landscape--treated with more visual excitement due to a mature development of warm-cool investigation.

Regarding the application of paint, later experiments have led to a desire to explore surface texture. A richer surface may provide much of the excitement which is now delegated to larger intensity and value contrasts. With smaller brush strokes

and much under-painting, the angular slicing of painted areas, which allows a small but sparkling surprise to emerge, may be the answer. This contrast, nevertheless, should not overshadow the larger warm-cool spatial concept.

In this project, there has been some conflict between conceptual and media orientation. From the previous remarks, it should be evident that compositional problems have been the dominant force in the study undertaken. When working with new media, such as acrylics or various mixtures of materials, often the "gimmick" dictates compositional considerations. Painters may aim at temporary effects in which the material achieves an accidental success due to its own properties. The painter can neither understand nor repeat these accidents. Of course, consideration of the nature of materials is an important element in painting but the painter must use his materials rather than letting them use him. It is true that many new materials suggest their use to the painter as the work progresses. He is truly in command of the situation when "accidents," (today often centered around texture or transparency) are planned. If a constant effort is made to intensify conceptual thinking rather than material-worship (governed sometimes by little more than the laws of nature with the artist as a vehicle), a work of art can be a more meaningful experience to the viewer as well as to its creator.

Another dangerous deification can be that of subject. No matter what the subject may be, (if in fact it appears at all), it must not be the result of a blue-print which could not be changed. A painter seduced by pseudo-psychological goals might completely ignore the heart of the painting problem. The placing of "message" in a primary position without knowledge of technique in the fullest sense produces at best second-rate illustrations. Perhaps one can over-estimate the purely visual effect of a painting which was conceived by an artist struggling with his own technical problems. However, it seems reasonable that if the artist, or more important, if the painting wins the battle, a valid statement has emerged.

This investigation has also produced a change in my attitude toward the teaching of art. One finds, in some cases, a most permissive environment--apparently the result of an inadequate grasp of Dewey's incentive for change. The ideal of guidance and direction has degenerated into chaos. Surprisingly enough, this chaos has often been accepted as a substitute for a creative environment. In the midst of all this, many art educators are teaching what they consider to be the 3 Rs of art, with little room for the change or the challenge offered by new ideas. One characteristic of both these schools of thought is the acceptance of the idea that the more materials a student works with, the greater his "appreciation" of art. Again the widening of concepts and the relaxation of rigid formulas, coupled

with effective guidance, seems a logical antidote to the media-orientation disease.

The following photographs have been selected to show the development of the ideas presented in this report. It is hoped that these studies will illustrate without further commentary the text of this thesis project. The studies appear in the order in which they were completed.















