Portland State University

PDXScholar

Dissertations and Theses

Dissertations and Theses

1990

Snake River : a personal search

Eva Havas Slinker

Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/open_access_etds

Part of the [Art Practice Commons](#), and the [Painting Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Slinker, Eva Havas, "Snake River : a personal search" (1990). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 4138.
<https://doi.org/10.15760/etd.6021>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF Eva Havas Slinker for the
Master of Fine Arts in Painting presented June 6, 1990.

Title: Snake River: A Personal Search

APPROVED BY MEMBERS OF THE THESIS COMMITTEE:

Byron J. Gardner, Chair

Craig G. Cheshire

Robert L. Kasal

Nancy Lindburg

Bruce A. Jensen

This thesis includes twenty landscape paintings,
primarily oil on canvas, inspired by a trip to the Hell's
Canyon Country of the Snake River.

The search for a personal idiom necessitated
introspection, and the visual interpretation of the recalled

experience required that formal issues of painting be synthesized to communicate the essential response to the landscape. The images progress from the depiction of deep space to compositions of the component parts of the landscape: trees, water, and rock.

SNAKE RIVER: A PERSONAL SEARCH

by

EVA HAVAS SLINKER

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS
in
PAINTING

Portland State University
1990

TO THE OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES:

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of Eva
Havas Slinker presented June 6, 1990.

Byron J. Gardner, Chair

Craig G. Cheshire

Robert L. Kasal

Nancy Lindburg

Bruce A. Jensen

APPROVED:

Robert L. Kasal, Chair, Art Department

C. William Savery, Vice Provost, Graduate Studies and Research

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty and staff of the Department of Art at Portland State University for their encouragement and support, especially Robert Kasal, Byron Gardner, and Craig Cheshire.

Also, Claire Kelly-Zimmers receives my gratitude for making the history of art come alive. It is upon the past that we build the future and she has helped me develop awareness and great appreciation of art, past and present.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION	1
To Become a Better Painter	1
II DEVELOPMENT	3
Searching for My Own Voice	3
Finding My Own Spirit	20
Becoming Myself	37
III CONCLUSION	43
Art Equals Life	43
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	50

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1.	Alone and Blue	5
2.	End of the Line	6
3.	Park Block Resident	8
4.	Homeless	9
5.	2 A.M. Check	12
6.	Branding	13
7.	Mustangs	15
8.	Summertime Watercolor	16
9.	My Country	19
10.	Burned Forest	22
11.	My Forest Burning	24
12.	Tryon Basin	26
13.	Tryon Saddle	27
14.	Hell's Canyon Country	29
15.	Elk Hill	31
16.	The Idaho Side	32
17.	Red, White and Blue Rocks	34
18.	Rhythmic Rocks	36
19.	Red, White and Green	39
20.	Rock 'n River	40
21.	White Canyon	42

22.	Snake River	45
23.	Oregon Columns	47
24.	Downspout	48

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

TO BECOME A BETTER PAINTER

My reason for coming to graduate school was to become a better painter.

I've never thought of myself as an introspective sort. That is not to say that I lack a full range of emotions. I love the awestruck highs when there is no one adequate to thank but God. And I have been swept into the chasms of deep depression when the light of life expresses itself in the fear of self imposed death. And I get caught up in the angry thoughts, the responses I should have made when I let the appropriate moment pass and the object of my displeasure walk away not having heard the expression of my feeling. I dislike social confrontation. I'm a fixer. All my life I have tried to fix things for myself and those around me. And that's what I did with my paintings. I tried to make them "right".

When I came into graduate school, I said, "Just tell me what you want, and I'll do it." But if that happened, how could I come to know who I am as an artist and what I have to say? And how could I come to recognize just what of my

years of life and experience I could convey visually? And how was I to do it? These were among the many questions I had as I started my first paintings. They were paintings of the figure academically done from a posed model. I learned about color relationships, the handling of oil paint, and choosing the essence and composition to suit my taste from a pre-arranged set up. I had assumed that figures would be the subject of my thesis work. Figures of humans, domestic animals, livestock, flowers and interior stilllives had been the vocabulary of my prior artwork.

CHAPTER II

DEVELOPMENT

SEARCHING FOR MY OWN VOICE

Each of us must live with a full measure of loneliness that is inescapable, and we must not destroy ourselves with our passion to escape this aloneness (Harrison, 1988).

As I set about searching for my own voice, I looked about me in Portland. The human element that was foreign to my background, and of interest to me, was the homeless people. Around Portland State University are many homeless men, and a few women, their shopping carts piled high with their plastic enshrouded collections. During the autumn months they slept in sheltered alcoves or behind the shrubs at night. By day, they pillaged trash cans, and sat in the sun or they just shuffled down the sidewalks. Some of them seemed to have no awareness of the other human beings who inhabited their out-of-doors domicile; they just pushed their carts from one trash container to the next.

A particularly proud bag lady caught my attention late one rainy afternoon as she and I waited for the traffic light. Although I had been merely curious about the homeless man, the homeless woman touched my heart. I went

back to the studio to paint her with her cart, each enveloped in its plastic rain protection. That other pedestrians and motorists went by her without hint of recognition was significant to me. So I did a dark cold blue painting of her. It is dismal in its overall mid-value to dark tone. The pedestrians are engaged with other activities, allowing them to ignore the homeless person that they pass by. The mood of this painting was ghostly and despondent. The paint application was thin and somewhat transparent. It had a haunting quality that prodded me to search further for subject matter. (See Figure 1.)

I found two men sleeping each night under cover of the Congregational Church, and early in the morning or evening I walked by, making mental pictures. Upon returning to the studio I made sketches. It took several pastel studies before I got that painting onto canvas--a shrouded body laying on a concrete slab before the arched stained glass window with the crown of the empirical church above his belly. The omnipresent shopping cart is to the right side. (See Figure 2.)

A large watercolor of P.S.U.'s resident homeless man, bent and white bearded, his shoes always immense for his small feet, took several pencil sketches and a couple of reference snapshots, taken surreptitiously, to get onto a piece of d'Arches watercolor paper, 36" by 40". He was

Figure 1. Alone and Blue

Figure 2. End of the Line

completely oblivious to his surroundings although he was grateful one day later when I gave him a paper bag full of empty pop bottles to return for cash. (See Figure 3.)

The first oil painting that came all together for me was of two men, sitting at night, outside the supermarket each with a mug of coffee in his hands. The dark palette and short superimposed strokes of paint help to convey a sense of lack of control. The use of palette knife kept me from describing too closely contours of the forms as I tried to capture the feeling of homelessness and futile resignation. And the color upon color and patch work of brush marks made an interesting surface. This piece was, for me, a breakthrough in expressing a feeling within the aspects of a painting. (See Figure 4.)

Having achieved the unity of that painting, I said to myself, "Ah ha, I now have a way of putting paint on canvas that works. Now, I'll paint everything with those same brush strokes." Not so! A different subject needs a different handling and each piece of art work can be an entity unto itself. Whereas the technical handling of the Homeless conveyed the rather depressed mood of that painting, how would I treat a more upbeat and cheerful subject? And how does one go beyond illustration and mere entertainment? These were questions that plagued me and made me question, "what do I want to say, anyway?"

Figure 3. Park Block Resident

Figure 4. Homeless

In observing the homeless people I found that I was shy about getting too close. Had I wanted to paint more of that subject I would have had to put myself on the line and enter into their world in order to portray it better and more in depth. I could not do that. The street people are not a part of my world. My outlook on life is generally more optimistic than dismal and I would rather portray the glory and beauty of living than the dark side of life. I realized that about myself and my art while confronting the issue of the homeless people in Portland.

Still, I knew that I had to respond to something deeply personal and meaningful to me so that I would have the interest to paint it. So I called on my experience as a rancher in Eastern Oregon, and I painted horses in the landscape as well as several other ranch pictures which turned out to be illustrations of work projects. Ranch life holds rich associations for me. It is where I raised my children and learned to know the mystique of being one with the land and livestock.

One of the duties I had to perform during calving and lambing season was the 2 a.m. check. I used to hate that time and prayed then that I would find no new calf or lamb that needed tending. When I recalled the experience of going out in the cold winter night of an Eastern Oregon calving season, I painted a figure carrying a calf to the

warm protection of the barn. It has to do with the responsibility for new life. The rancher, cold and alone, is the shepherd or cattleman. When a frightened heifer abandons her calf, or a calf is weak, it must be cared for. And as uncomfortable as that time of night is, there is huge gratification in saving a life and deep dejection if an animal is missed, or found sick or dead.

In the painting, the lone human, with only a couple of cows of the drop band standing around in the dark outside the barn, gives evidence to the solitary, dependable fortitude of the livestock owner. It is a dark, mostly cold neutral painting, relieved by the hope of light shining out from the barn's interior. One of the subjects which I will pursue in the future paintings is the ever present spectacle of death in raising livestock. It is what one doesn't hear about in the Marlboro commercials pitched by ranch real estate salesman. There is great glory in cheating death of a premature victim. (See Figure 5.)

One painting, which showed the dehorning of a calf, was merely an illustration for about a year. When I finally had the courage to add to it the wild eye of fright and a red spurt of blood at the dehorning site, I got a response of, "It is too hard to look at." "Good," I said to myself--"I'm beginning to put down how I feel about what I'm painting, not just what my eyes see." (See Figure 6.)

Figure 5. 2 A.M. Check

Figure 6. Branding

I like strong color and value contrast, and I work large, and I was determined to portray energy. The painted surfaces of Willem deKooning intrigued me. They seem full of activity with layer upon layer of color and brush stroke. The surfaces look as if they were done quickly, deftly, with courage and conviction. And they are energetic. So I flailed away, with brush flying, canvas on the floor, trying to get the canvas to move. (See Figure 7.)

My small preparatory watercolors, with their brush strokes large relative to the small format, with the blending of colors flowing one into the other, were full of energy. They were spontaneous and unselfconscious. They had energy, and I wanted to get some of that energy into the works on canvas as well as to enlarge the scale of the paintings. (See Figure 8.)

In time I came to realize that I needed to offer the contrast of quiet, in order to show movement. After all, the only movement that can be stimulated by a painting is the viewer's eye movement. I had to find a way to make my work entertain the eye, to challenge the viewer's imagination, and to make him stay around long enough to move his eyes seeing the directions and rhythms that I might set up within a painting.

The subject of landscape was broached to help me pursue a greater abstraction of subject matter. Prior to coming to

Figure 7. Mustangs

Figure 8. Summertime Watercolor

Portland State University I had tried to paint landscapes on location with watercolor, and I had found them to be overwhelming. There was too much information to synthesize, and I always seemed to end up with a mess.

Byron Gardner suggested that I look at the work of Emily Carr, Canadian landscape artist. Her work has much "movement" in it, especially in her later pieces in which swirling lines appeared, in reproduction, to be quickly placed. Reminiscent of Van Gogh, her paintings of the Canadian forests show stylized trees bending to the sweeping currents of air. In her paintings of the coast of British Columbia, water and sky are alive with activity. The North Coast Indian totems are dramatic in their contrasts.

I tried a few landscapes during the first year, but mainly pursued a variety of subjects and experimented with different ways of putting oil paint on canvas. One method was to pre-mix cans of paint and lay the canvas down on the floor, applying paint with a broader brush than I had used before. I found that limiting my palette helped unify my paintings and whether my paint was thinned or mixed for easel painting, I was more successful if I premixed a variety of hues for each painting session.

I investigated acrylic on canvas and did a few pastel drawings and paintings, but as yet, I did not have a clear notion of where I was going with my work. So the

prescription for me for over the summer was to do lots of work, whatever I felt like doing, and to be non-judgmental. "Just come back after the summer with a 'pile of stuff' and we'll see what direction evolves," I was told.

Since I taught a watercolor class during the summer it was natural to get back into that mode. And because watercolor is easily portable, I stayed with it throughout the summer. I did start a few small oil paintings but they ended on the cutting room floor. To me, oil painting is not small. As to the watercolors, the freedom and spontaneity made me feel good and, surprisingly, I liked working smaller than I had been accustomed to prior to this time. I like the push and pull of positive and negative areas created by the brushstrokes. A brushmark line became a shape or form. The more abstract flatness was pleasing to me. Also, I liked adding pastels to watercolor. All in all these summertime watercolors were freeing and exciting. There were seascapes and landscapes with a few demonstration still lifes included. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9. My Country

FINDING MY OWN SPIRIT

Each individual must understand his inner-most spirit and find a means of expression that is in harmony with that spirit, not allowing the imposition of external standards or styles (Dove, 1985).

The experience that afforded me the subject for the series of my thesis work happened just a week prior to the end of the summer period. A horseback trip along the Snake River and up to the high benches included seeing wild game (deer, elk, bear), upland game birds (chukkar, huns), fish (trout, sturgeon, bass), spiders, fall wildflowers, rocks, river, creeks, steep trails, vast vistas and glimpses back into historical ranch sites. Visually, the huge shapes of the basins contrasted with the miniscule shapes of the mountains in the distance. The late summer sun cast deep, densely colored shadows. The colors were crisp and clean, and the whole experience left me awestruck. There was the challenge and fear of being alone and very far from assistance. There was the necessary trust of self, trust of companion and trust of the animals who bore us and our gear. All this enforced the admiration we felt of those individuals who, in times past, have harmonized with and conquered this terrain and who survived in it. If I could but convey something of this feeling of awe on the canvas, I thought, I would be happy.

The other part of the subject of the thesis work came from the forest burning. When I arrived home for the short end-of-the summer visit, the wilderness had been shot through with a lightening storm, and thousands of acres of forest were blackened.

"Hundreds of thousands of acres" sounds enormous, but it is not nearly so huge as when one sees the devastation of such a fire, running from one mountain range to another. This fire came very close to my home. It was just one draw away from the major resort area which is nestled at the edge of the wilderness and it was a frightening threat to me.

First, I painted the view from the edge of the forest. The angles of the trunks of trees and few remaining limbs are stark and unforgiving. I limited my palette to venetian red, black and white and set about trying to show the starkness of the landscape where trees were burned black. The black goes to the ground as the charred remains of the fire snakes through draws and over mountains, leaving unexpected patches of green where it has jumped from one hillside over to the next. (See Figure 10.)

This painting led to a six foot by three foot vertical painting of the energy of the fire itself. Although fire can be white hot, I don't see the representation of the tragedy of the forest burning in bright terms. So it was done in dark tones. It was painted over another start,

Figure 10. Burned Forest

which helped me, I think, skip directly to the feeling I wished to convey without first having to confront a bare white canvas. My original vitality could proceed directly without being diffused by having to do an underpainting. In many cases, henceforth, I found this method to be advantageous. (See Figure 11.)

Most of my energy went into paintings of the Snake River National Recreation Area. I started with a representation of a hillside upon which had been, in my real experience, more elk than I had ever before seen at one time.

I showed the dark hillside, which had been backlit, and tried to give a feeling of distance by contrasting the huge shape with smaller areas of foreground and sky. This first painting came after many watercolor studies which had been derived from large, quick, line drawings of the impressions I remembered from my experience in the canyons, on the river and up on the high breaks. Although I had many photos from which to work, photographs are inadequate to the sense of color and space that I recalled. My vision was much more intense, much deeper than a snapshot can reproduce. Even though I had the sense of awe and wonder about all this, that first painting was pretty tight and rather small scale. I was just getting my feet wet.

Figure 11. My Forest Burning

The next two canvases and were related in that I wished to show the large shapes of the undulating basins above the river on the Oregon side. They are locked in areas with a steep climb up to them from the river on the one side, and another steep climb up to the summit on the other. While in the basins one has a sense of vast, serene quiet, and I tried to achieve that by painting gently modeled forms. These paintings were done with a limited palette. The secondary colors were its basis, to which I added other colors as accents. (See Figures 12 and 13.)

One of the advantages for me in using a limited number of colors was that it kept me from being too flamboyant in my use of what I love the most--COLOR! In order to avoid a chaotic mixture of hues which resulted in paintings that had no real expressive relationship, I was eager to learn to use some discretion in choosing a limited palette.

I asked Craig Cheshire to suggest a choice of colors for these paintings. He offered the suggestion that I use a palette of secondary colors (Cadmium Green, Cadmium Orange and Manganese Violet) along with Burnt Sienna, Dioxazine Violet and Thalo Green. With these colors I could achieve the ambers and golds and greens of those high verdant hillsides which were seen in the early fall. Using the Cadmium Green and Orange could give colors perceived as yellow. Manganese Violet and Burnt Sienna gave red tones.

Figure 12. Tryon Basin

Figure 13. Tryon Saddle

Dioxazine Violet and Thalo Green make blue. Colors are perceived only in relationship to what's around them, so that a given mixture appears very different within various contexts. The number of color mixtures available from a "limited" palette are seemingly unlimited. And the choice of a palette can lend unity and atmosphere to a painting.

Another of the paintings from the first bloom of my experience was a diptych of the mountain ranges which are separated by rivers that flow into the Snake. The mountains are steep-sided, topped with meadows, and they look back toward a range of mountains which lies at a right angle to the draws. A foreground nob makes the space seem even deeper. In this painting I contrasted transparent oils with paint opaquely applied. I had the desire to translate the energy of my watercolors into oils, and I wanted to increase the scale to pay homage to the monumentality of the experience. The diptych related to watercolor in its transparency, but really came alive when the opaque oil paint was added. (See Figure 14.)

In my thinking was the fact that I wished to imply deep space, and I wanted also to keep the integrity of the picture plane. So in another of the deep space paintings, I showed again a huge mountainside, silhouetted against a saturated blue sky with small shapes of river and distant mountains at the lower left. I believe this painting can be

Figure 14. Hell's Canyon Country

read both as a representation of distant space and as space divided into formal planes relative to the picture plane. In this image are rocks to which I gave shape and dimension by applying paint with heavy impasto using a palette knife. Where in my early energy laden paintings of the first year I applied impasto with impunity, here I was learning to apply thick paint moderately to serve a purpose and take advantage of contrast for effect. (See Figure 15.)

My next experiment came by starting a canvas with acrylic paint poured onto a canvas which was on the floor. There was the spontaneity of watery paint running on a tipped canvas and the possibility of wiping off and rewetting it quickly. To that extent the process is quick and exciting and the unexpected opens creative doors. After the application of monochromatic acrylic paint dried, I added some opaque oil paint, judiciously, developing forms, accenting those already in existence. To one small canvas I added paint with a palette knife as well. The spontaneous start turned out to be a rock outcropping jutting up into an opaque blue sky. These pieces were done quickly, with the instant gratification of watercolors. Since then, I have often used the acrylic "open" start method to render a canvas not so naked at the beginning of a painting. In some instances, the acrylic is totally overpainted and disappears from sight. (See Figure 16.)

Figure 15. Elk Hill

Figure 16. The Idaho Side

As I started to consider components of the Snake River experience, I decided to do variations on the basic themes (large vista, trees, rocks and river) and to render them with various formal problems to solve. For example, I started a series of rock paintings. The first, in primary colors, was painted over a used canvas. I was interested in the interlocking and ambiguous figure-ground relationships. So I used black and white to establish a general compositional basis. I wanted to deal with formal space organization, without creating illusionistic space. However, as the painting developed, I lost track of that original idea and with the use of a large brush and pre-mixed cans of red and blue and I painted the canvas quickly and surely. It came together with the painting leading me away from that ambiguous space consideration. (See Figure 17.)

The next in this series of rock paintings came about with the intention of using a very limited range of values. Having completed a series of dark value paintings I wanted to do some lighter ones. On my glass palette I pre-mixed a few colors at a time. I would choose, for instance, a warm and cool color (perhaps Mars Violet and Manganese Blue) and mix a light and a dark version of those colors, sometimes adding one or two modifying colors (Raw Sienna or Viridian Green). Having mixed four or five "puddles" of paint on my

Figure 17. Red, White and Blue Rocks

palette, I would proceed with the painting until I used up those related colors, mixing more of them as was necessary to continue a given session to its conclusion. At ensuing sessions, I would again pre-mix colors, sometimes leaning to the warmer or cooler or lighter or darker tones as I felt the painting required.

I applied paint over the whole canvas, with a "signature" brush stroke, one hue at a time. The composition developed from the brush work. A pitfall for me in this way of working was that I had created shapes with the brushwork that were almost exactly the same. Their size and relationships were monotonous. With the unifying aspect of the overall color, brushwork and value, the shapes needed to be more varied. So I introduced some straight line in contrast to the curvilinear ones already there. Also, I found some new relationships that I could take advantage of to change the sizes and overlappings within the picture. Finally, I think I achieved a painting with an interesting surface treatment, unified color and a more satisfying composition. (See Figure 18.)

Figure 18. Rhythmic Rocks

BECOMING MYSELF

I have noticed some problems with young poets from large cities. They often have a tendency to be up on things, to know what is going on now, and they try to avoid duplication. Consequently they concentrate on being original rather than being themselves. Sometimes they try to lose themselves by becoming one more member of a poetic movement they find fashionable (Hugo, 1986).

As I worked on series of paintings, I found that the first painting of a series was always pretty much "look and put" resulting in a directly representational picture. Afterward, I could get at least one step removed to create a more personal response in a painting. After a painting of "generic" trees in a cartoon-like forest, I pulled up the memory of my forest and painted it with abandon. I portrayed the conifers that grow where I live, and my easy familiarity with their forms and implied movements released me to convey the feeling of being in those woods. Again, by limiting my palette, the formal components of the painting were more spontaneously achieved. The painting has a complementary color scheme and a sharp value contrast. The brightest light comes from the behind the trees' cool dark green branches and interplays with the predominately red painting. If one considers only color and value, space relationships can be read more than one way: Sometimes the green shapes come forward, sometimes the white, although the

overlapping compositional structure leaves little doubt as to what is where. By and large, the paintings of trees allowed me a great deal of latitude in interpretation. The early burned forest painting was greatly abstracted because it illustrated my feeling of horror of my wilderness being destroyed. But its essence was tree form with fire. (See Figure 19.)

After my first investigation of Carr's paintings I had the opportunity to see her work in Vancouver, B.C. I found that they were actually carefully rendered and rather small in size (approximately from 18" x 24" to 24" x 30"). But the scale represented in those mid-sized paintings was often enormous. And the rhythms that she set up had nothing to do with bravado brush work. The colors were the somber shades of the cold north light hues. Seeing them made me realize more acutely that energy could be represented without the frenetic painting of a Willem deKooning. It freed me from "slashing away."

So when it came to the subject of the river itself I could contrast directional exuberant strokes with areas of more quiet, contained brushwork. Where there is more frenetic movement of water, hence brushwork, I found that close value helped unify those areas of the compositions. (See Figure 20.)

Figure 19. Red, White and Green

Figure 20. Rock 'n River

The greatest challenge, I think, has come in trying to portray the deep space in pictures that have actively painted surfaces. The activity tends to obscure a sense of deep space. However, by using devices of overlapping and the contrasts of warm and cool hues, placement of shapes in space remain obvious. I think that paintings that have actively painted surfaces achieve a great unity, and the surfaces entice a viewer to take a second look. The painting can be read from the overall stance, and also can provide interest in the closeup view of component shapes formed by the interrelated brushstrokes of color. I am interested in paint for paint's sake, in trying to utilize the medium for its inherent qualities. Watercolor can flow. Oil paints can be thick and viscose. (See Figure 21.)

Figure 21. White Canyon

CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

ART EQUALS LIFE

And so it comes around, full circle. "Although I respond emotionally," I said, "I'm not necessarily introspective." However, throughout this program I have had to look into myself as an individual so as to look into who I am as a painter. I have been given permission to accept the painter in me who works in the broad scheme of things, leaving the details and geometry to others. While pursuing a more innovative pictorial course, I have been disciplined to work with the formal considerations of making paintings. I have not yet gone nearly as far as I wish to in expressing the essence of my perception and response to nature. But I have found that growth is a process and it is not something that can be circumvented. It must be derived sequentially. The landscapes of the Snake River have provided the arena of that growth for me. It is a country that I love and there is limitless opportunity for visual experience that couples with physical and spiritual awe.

My challenge for the future is to remain open and responsive to life; to get to the essence of my perceptions

ever more keenly; to make my paintings communicate those responses ever more forcefully as I pursue my real motivation which is to portray, visually, the wonder of my world.

Having come into the world of visual art through watercolor, I have found it necessary to change my expectations. Watercolor offers immediate gratification. One is always "almost finished." With oil paint, the process is generally longer, but it offers greater variety. However, I found that I had to get over the anxiety of anticipating a finish to a painting, then finding, yet again, that I had further to go. It took awhile to trust myself and to feel that "if I just keep at it, the painting will turn out all right, so enjoy the doing." (See Figure 22.).

The rock paintings helped me deal with manipulating surface qualities. I learned to make a variety of marks, use the palette knife, and let color interact within an area or over the whole format. The rocks also afforded opportunities for abstraction. I wish to do both direct responses to the landscapes as well as more contemplative interpretations. When I tried to impose a design on my visual response to nature, it seemed to me that the results were self-conscious solutions to conceptual problems--not my natural, perceptual way.

Figure 22. Snake River

And "self-conscious"--what is "self-conscious"? When I am "on automatic," responding to the picture as it develops, when I am not thinking in words, then I think I am not self-conscious. However, if I must go back into a painting because it is obviously not finished, or because something "needs fixing" (my old nemesis), how can I not be self-conscious? Trying to retain the spontaneous activity of the first excitement of a painting is a great challenge. As one brings a painting to its conclusion, I think a major challenge is to keep the piece fresh and unself-conscious. Part of the solution, I think, is to "let go" and let the painting lead the painter. Rather than try to impose a predetermined solution, if I really look and respond to where the painting takes me, it can remain fresh and open with spontaneity. Or if, on the other hand, the painting says, "take care and take time," I will let it lead me to a longer, more penetrating solution.

Another thing that I have come to realize is that I need to leave time between the doing and the judging of my paintings. A recent, quickly executed piece will have an appeal that may override a painting that has been labored over at length. The former must stand the test of time to see if its interest is as enduring as the latter. (See Figures 23 and 24.)

Figure 23. Oregon Columns

Figure 24. Downspout

I know now that I need to respond directly to visual or experiential stimulus. If I don't care intimately about a subject, it is hard for me to make a compelling painting about it. If I do a still life it is because the material in the still life is important to me. The landscape must have special appeal. As the memory of experiencing the landscape fades with the passage of time, I must get back out into the country to renew my enthusiasm.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bartlett, Jennifer. In The Garden, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. 1982.
- Cohn, Sherrye. Arthur Dove, Nature As Symbol, Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press. 1985.
- Gray, Don. Artist's Statement. Exhibit at Buckley Center Gallery, University of Portland, Oregon. Feb.12 - March 9, 1990.
- Harrison, Jim. Dalva. New York, N.Y.: Dutton/Seymour Lawrence. 1988.
- Haskell, Barbara. Arthur Dove, Boston, Mass.: New York Graphic Society, Ltd. 1974.
- Hugo, Richard. The Real West Marginal Way, New York, N.Y.: W. W. Norton & Co. 1986.
- Cohn, Sherrye. Arthur Dove, Nature As Symbol, Ann Arbor, Michigan: U.M.I. Research Press. 1985.
- Marin, John. John Marin by John Marin, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. 1970.
- Shadbolt, Doris. The Art of Emily Carr, Vancouver, B.C.: Douglas and McIntyre, Ltd. 1987.