

Lindenwood University

Digital Commons@Lindenwood University

Theses

Theses & Dissertations

1995

Spiritual Awakenings

Sandra Annette Austin

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/theses>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

Thesis
Au 975
1995

SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS

Sandra Annette Austin, B.A.

A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Art

1995



COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY:

Assistant Professor Elaine Tillinger
Chairperson Department of Art

Assistant Professor Grant Hargate

Associate Professor Hans Levi

DEDICATIONS

To Elaine Tillinger; Professor of Art History and my academic counselor, who saw the potential in me and helped to develop it by expecting only the highest level of excellence in all my endeavors.

To Grant Hargate; Professor of Art, who made me stretch and begin thinking as a painter.

To Hans Levi; Professor of Art, who taught me to be patient with my art.

To John Wehmer; Professor of Art, who inspired me to explore beyond the immediate.

To Judy Richardson; fellow graduate student, who extended her hand in friendship and took me under her wing. Without her help and support, I could not have achieved as much as I have.

To Debra Nicolai, my dearest friend and fellow graduate student, who would not allow me to give into self-doubt or any other negative influence in my life. Her belief in my art sometimes amazed me, but always elated my spirit and kept me going.

To Ann Canale; Professor of English, who has over the years become a friend and shown me a new path to walk on. Thank you for believing in me.

To all those who I am sure have had a profound influence on me and my art over the years, may the Creator smile on you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMITTEE PAGEi
DEDICATION PAGEii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....iii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....iv
INTRODUCTION.....1-5
EXAMINATION OF WORK.....6-17
LIST OF WORK IN EXHIBITION.....18
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....19

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

MORNING FLIGHT.....page 6, figure 1
MURDEROUS MAMMOGRAM.....page 8, figure 2
CELESTIAL FLIGHT.....page 10, figure 3
HUMMINGBIRD.....page 12, figure 4
THE PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT.....page 14, figure 5
MAN 'O WAR.....page 16, figure 6

INTRODUCTION

Albert Einstein once wrote; "The more knowledge we acquire, the more mystery we find...a human being is part of the whole, called by us the universe, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest -- a kind of optical illusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. Nobody is able to achieve this completely, but the striving for such achievement is in itself a part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security."

For many years I have been striving to liberate myself from the confines of conventional thinking, an eternal optimist, hopeful that my purpose on this earth would be revealed through education. Not just academic studies, but spiritual and

conscious effort to understand mankind and his relationship with Mother Earth.

At forty-five years of age, I feel as if I am just beginning to grasp the understanding needed to apply my art towards a purposeful goal. That goal being; to use my work as a mirror of my expanded universe. Perhaps in doing so, I can guide others in a direction of understanding.

I am of Native American descent, and for this reason I have chosen to walk what is known as "The Red Road". I am a student of my peoples' culture, their art and spiritual beliefs. The belief that all things have a spirit; trees, rocks, water, animals and that these spirits cannot be denied even in the representation of their host. Hopefully, some of my work reflects and incorporates these traditional values and beliefs into a contemporary presentation.

My work is spiritual, organic, intellectual and I like to think it is inspiring. It reflects all that the world is, and beyond. Transporting my viewers from the physical plane to a metaphysical one. I am always expectant that the transportation I

extend to my viewer will not be an "optical illusion", but more over a melting of consciousness, between the viewer and myself. Although, not all my work reflects a utopian attitude, I am forever striving to bring a message of understanding to the viewer, even if it is of the simplest nature.

I feel there is a great need for my style of art today, where success is judged on monetary gain, instead of how far a soul has traveled to help others. Personally, I gauge my success by how many souls I can reach and touch introspectively with my work.

Non-objective and abstract art is not always accepted or understood by the majority of the population, but those who allow it, have the opportunity to experience a primal between man, nature and the spirit world. I have been told by many viewers that each individual takes something different away from the piece observed, and that there is an overall sense of joy reflected in my work.

The method I use in my work is natural and has a beauty and harmony which certainly interfaces between man and nature. I feel this grounds man to Mother Earth, and reminds

us to pay close attention to the fine balance we must maintain.

To me, art should have no boundaries, except those that are self-imposed by personal taste. I have seen a solid correlation between art and its active role in society. How art can almost be used as a way to monitor society's growth or reflects its lack of. I have come to understand the importance and need for fresh perspectives in the visual world. Hoping these new viewpoints will motivate society to a higher level of awareness. Art is not just images and colors displayed for decoration, but a strong physical presence that proclaims who we are and the intricate problems that plague the world community. Art is a measuring tool with which to gauge our growth as a species.

For most of my artistic life, I have been a realist. Influences in my work include Jackson Pollock, Helen Frankenthaler, and Paul Jenkins. My interest in this method of painting came from the fascination surrounding the abstract-expressionist, Paul Jenkins' lithograph in Harmon Hall. The flowing colors had a life of their own,

metaphysically speaking. There is a great sense of joy and freedom within the work, something I wanted to try. So for more than a year, for many hours a day, seven days a week, I tried. From oils to acrylic, canvas to different paper surfaces, always experimenting and striving to control the paint. This primarily brushless method of painting taught me to relax and allow the laws of nature (physics and the spirit of the materials) to do the work.

My greatest hope is to be able to bring some pleasure and perhaps even provoke an interest in the viewers' spiritual growth.

Morning Flight (Illustration 1), is a 23" X 29" acrylic on paper, an analogous pallet of yellow, orange, red and titanium white.

A gentle flowing representation of white birds soaring high in the morning sky. This piece was to instill a sense of peace and tranquility in the viewer.

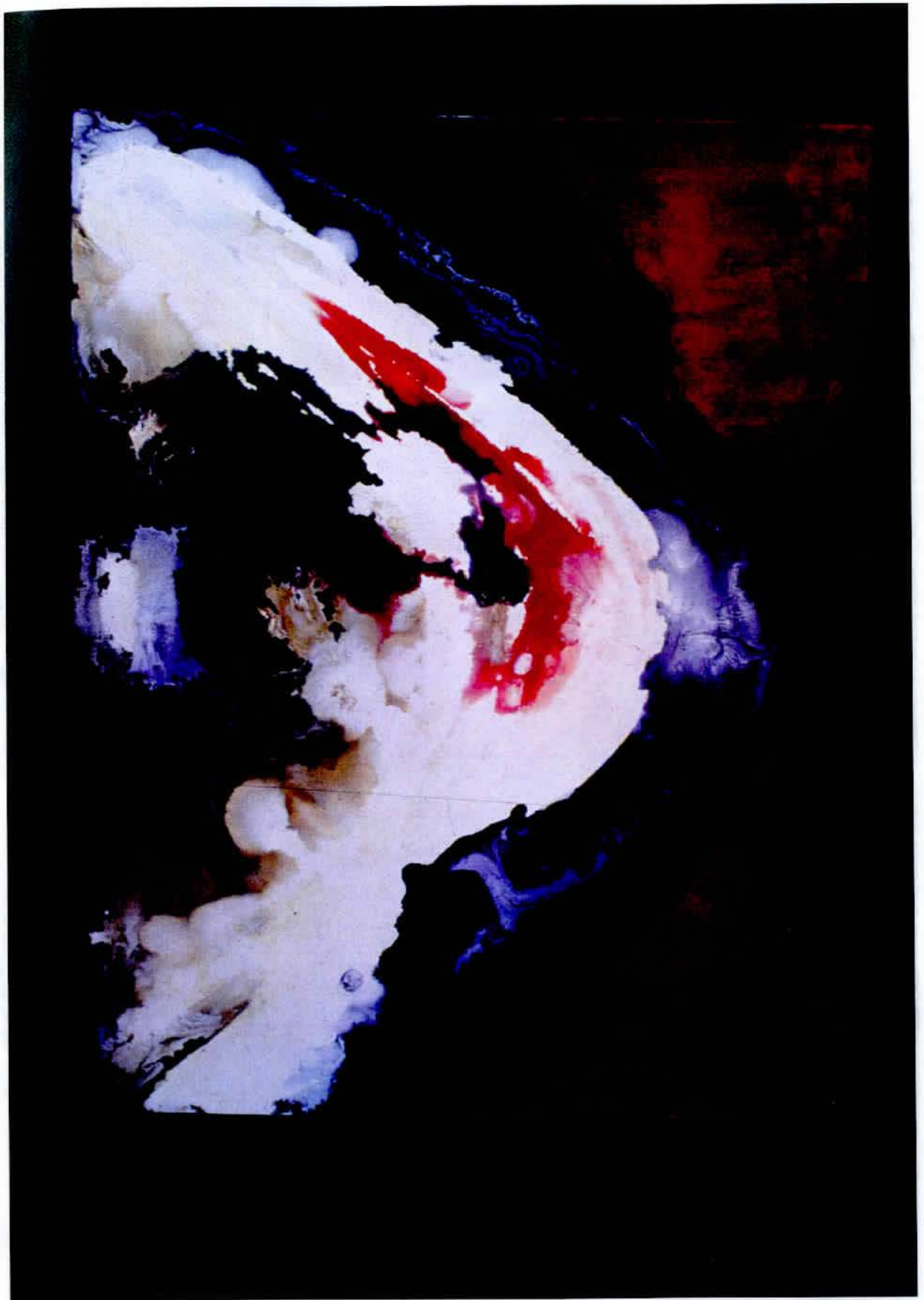


Murderous Mammogram (Illustration 2), a 36" X 48" acrylic on stretched canvas, is an early piece in which a brush was used to apply the paint.

The pallet of red, black, white and yellow ochre, are bright and stark.

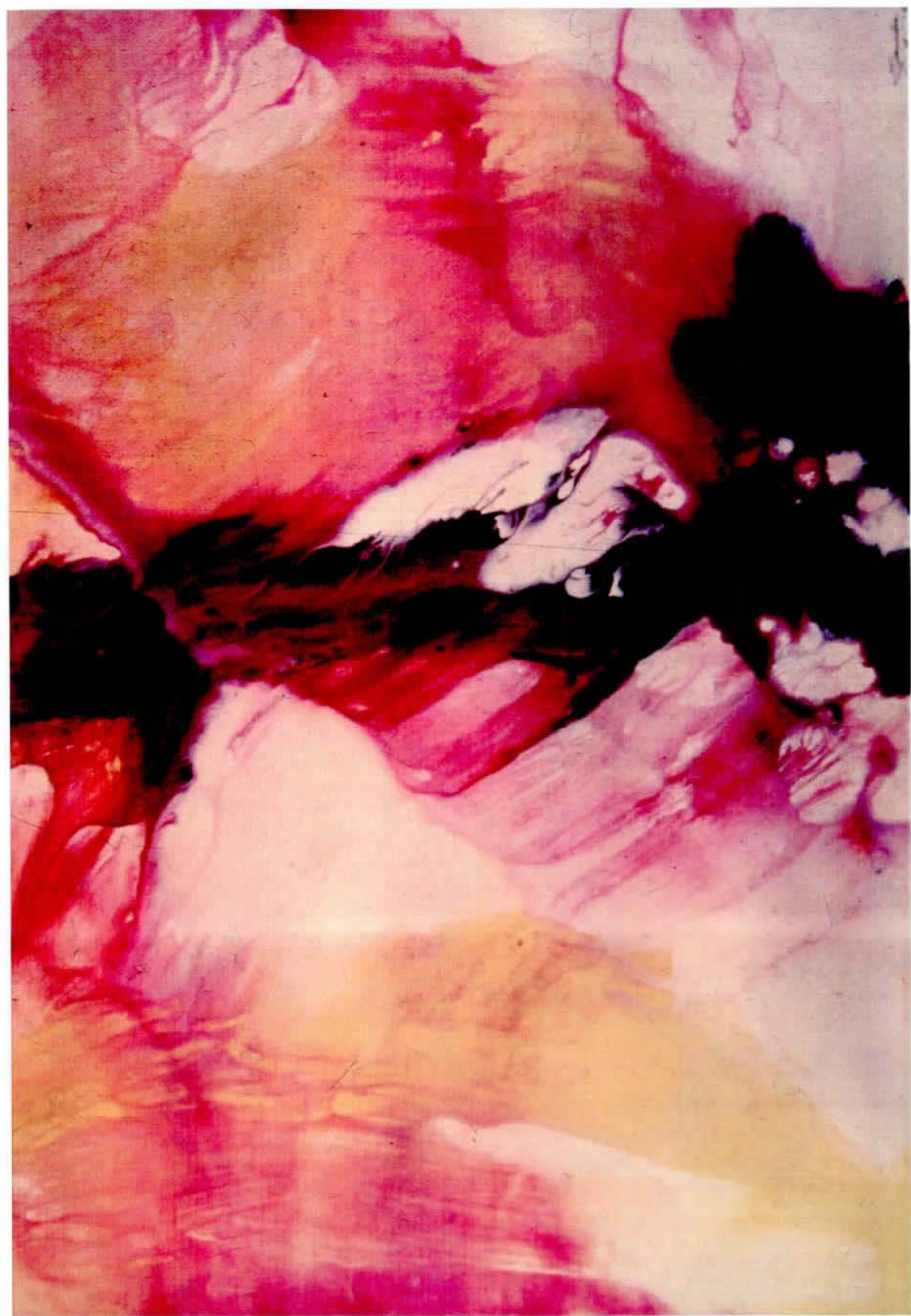
The colors mixed together to form a large white breast, with black and yellow masses inside it. The background and hint of red inside the breast suggest an organic discrepancy, possibly cancer.

This piece had mixed reviews, mainly because of the way it confronted the viewer. It was not intended to be a negative statement, but one of positive affirmation. Forcing people to confront their fears of mortality and raise their awareness of preventive health maintenance of the vessels entrusted to them.



Celestial Flight (Illustration 3), a 23" X 29" acrylic on paper, with a monochromatic pallet. Three colors were applied; titanium white, unbleached titanium, and taperstry wine (a rich burgandy red).

One of my favorite pieces, Celestial Flight brings the richness of the burgandy over the lighter colors in a veiling effect. The veils can be construde as angel wings, accending to a higher level of consciousness.



The Path of Enlightenment (Illustration 4), a 23" X 29" acrylic on paper, is another successful monochromatic painting.

The titanium white background presents a pure negative space on which the dark blue can etch the appearance of complex passages and intersections.

With no beginning and no end, it suggests the way to enlightenment is ongoing and persistent. Many viewers found this piece compelling, once their eyes begin the trek, it is hard for them to break away from finding the end.

This piece was to inspire its' viewers to pursue a path of higher understanding of the universe, for if each individual is pursuing this path, there is no time to judge, harm or otherwise bring hardship to others.



Hummingbird (Illustration 5), is a 12" X 16" acrylic on water color paper. One of my final pieces in this series of work, so far.

The analogous pallet of red, yellow ochre, and unbleached titanium, melt together to form intricate organic shapes of flowers and a hummingbird suspended in mid-air.

This piece is a simple reflection of our connection with Mother Earth, how she feeds us all and asks for little in return.

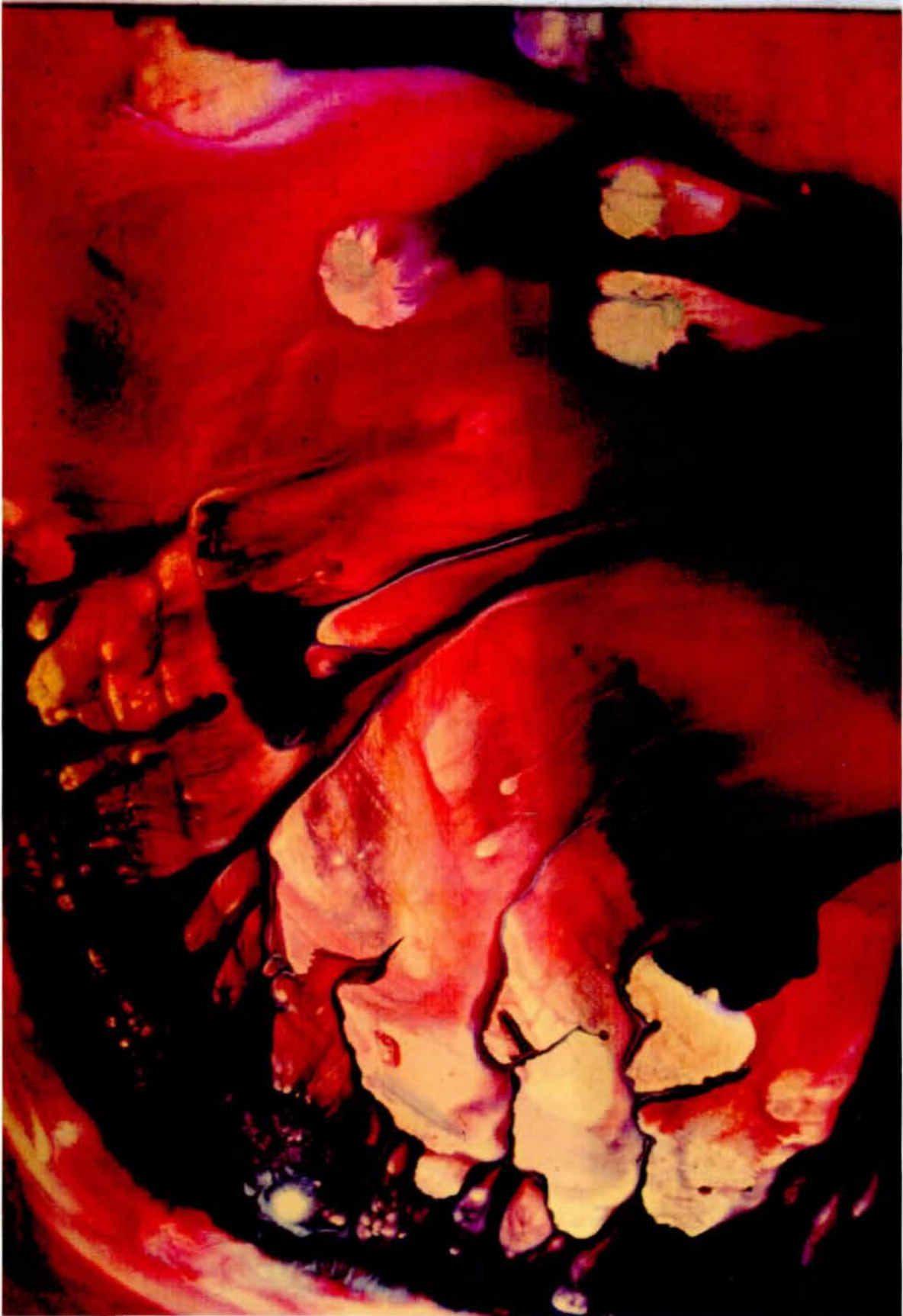




Man 'O War (Illustration 6) is a 18" X 24" acrylic on foamboard. One of the earlier pieces, I was experimenting with different types of paper.

This is another favorite of mine. The image appears to be a dismembered jelly-fish in a sea of red.

A reminder of how fragile life is.



SAUNDRA A. AUSTIN

MASTER OF ART THESIS EXHIBITION

APRIL 29 THROUGH MAY 12, 1995

"BUSTING OUT"

12" x 16"

ACRYLIC/WATER COLOR PAPER

\$250.00

"DAWN OF A NEW DAY"

4' x 4'

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$450.00

"RE-BIRTH OF A NATION"

43" x 43"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$400.00

"CELESTIAL FLIGHT"

23" x 29"

ACRYLIC ON PAPER

\$550.00

"HUMMINGBIRD"

12" x 16"

ACRYLIC ON WATER COLOR PAPER

\$300.00

"SEA SHELL"

12" x 16"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS PAPER

\$300.00

"METAMORPHIC BLUE"

12" x 16"

ACRYLIC ON WATER COLOR PAPER

\$300.00

"MAN 'O WAR"

18" X 24"

ACRYLIC ON FOAM BOARD

\$250.00

"BLUE-YELLOW-GREEN"

30" X 30"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$200.00

"SPLASH"

30" X 48"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$200.00

"DUALITY OF SPIRIT"

23" X 29"

ACRYLIC ON PAPER

\$350.00

"MORNING FLIGHT"

23" X 29"

ACRYLIC ON PAPER

\$200.00

"MURDEROUS MAMMOGRAM"

36" X 48"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$250.00

"FIRE ON THE MOUNTAIN"

24" X 36"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$300.00

"THE PIT"

36" X 36"

OIL ON CANVAS

\$350.00

"GRANDMOTHER'S TEARS"

30' X 30'

OIL ON CANVAS

\$250.00

"AUTUMN SUNRISE"

20" X 30"

ACRYLIC ON ILLUSTRATION BOARD

\$250.00

"THE PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT"

23" X 29"

ACRYLIC ON PAPER

\$350.00

"GHOST DANCERS"

20" X 30"

ACRYLIC ON ILLUSTRATION BOARD

\$200.00

"THE BIG BANG"

36" X 36"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$250.00

"MOONLIGHT ON THE FOREST"

24" X 36"

ACRYLIC ON CANVAS

\$300.00

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1 Albert Einstein, quoted from Center for Respect of Life and Environment , Washington, D.C.: Environmental Public Relations Pamphlet 1988.