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Culminating Project

David R. Johnston

CULMINATING PROJECT:
VERBAL PART

DAVID R. JOHNSTON

FACULTY SPONSORS:
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Dr. Richard Rickert

AUGUST 1, 1977

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, the Lindenwood Colleges.

Unlike many graduate studies where the work is mainly conceptual, theoretical, and not easily displayed in concrete form, my graduate work in Fine Art is primarily concrete, visual and at best, physically experienced. The evidence of my development as a fine artist cannot be adequately expressed in a written or verbal dissertation. Visual forms must be experienced visually. For example, no amount of description can ever replace viewing a movie; the same applies to a blind date--it rarely lives up to a friend's promises. As Joan Mitchell said in a recent interview with QUEST magazine:

> "Artists intuit what they like. An explanation can't really convey the attraction. There is a world of difference between visual and verbal communication." (1)

The major portion of my culminating project, a one-man exhibition, is the most natural and revealing of my graduate study and will best represent my accomplishments during this graduate program. However, to adequately understand these accomplishments, I need to provide the viewer and critic with insights to some personal philosophies on art and background of my academic development at Lindenwood IV.

At the commencement of my graduate program I was overly concerned with the productivity of my Bachelor of

Fine Arts degree in a commercial world while only superficially concerned with the aesthetic value of my art. This is a deterring predicament that has plagued and discouraged fine artists throughout history. The unrecognized works of such great artists as Gauguin and Cezanne are classic examples of society's less than adequate evaluation and financial support of the artist's contribution to mankind. Although society usually recognizes the beauty of the fine arts, it, as a whole, overlooks or minimizes the many years of study, preparation, repetition and development of the artist's abilities to achieve such works. Perhaps it is the dedication under such disheartening circumstances that forces the fine artist to rise above the economical or monetary world. I am not advocating that the artist needs to starve to paint well, but I am saying that an upcoming artist needs to possess enough dedication to survive. For example, now, at the consummation of my program, I am prepared to make the transition from student to artist. I am encouraged primarily with the pleasing and complacent accomplishment of finding direction. My philosophies, ideas and works have matured, and I feel that the sacrifices and commitments needed to become an influential artist in our society are well worth

the effort.

Fine Art should be a conscientious, personal conviction rather like a religion. The artist has to be scrupulous and earnest, never relinquishing his pursuit and thoughts of the arts. One function of a fine artist in society should be that of reflection--not only of himself through his works, but to reflect society itself in his works. It is the artist in a society who echoes society; society without that echo to direct and induce would not be unlike an uncivilized group of people. Society needs its artists, whether visual or verbal, on the sideline to show in their works whenever social conditions get out of proportion. For instance, if the divorce rate reaches fifty two percent, the artist should not depict marriage as an unquestionably happy existence, but should show some of the not-so-enticing-but-real conditions of the institution. If society neglects its senior generation, the artist should depict this. If we are paying an entertainer in Las Vegas eighty thousand dollars a week and in the same state are paying teachers eight thousand dollars a year, the artist should illustrate the lopsided aspect of the situation. I am not advocating that every piece of work a fine artist produces should emphasize some social

or cultural declaration; I would never support any creative confinements. I do feel, though, that a fine artist should put himself, which would include a certain amount of cultural and social reverberation, in all his works. If I have a strong impression whether cultural, social or personal, it influences my work. The fine artist should never copy nature, but should see, feel and express it.

Possibly Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne demonstrated my sentiments on personal expression best in the late nineteenth century when they broke away from the naturalistic art of illusion practiced by the Impressionists. Together they headed the Post-Impressionist movement, the most controversial trend in the history of art. Until this point in time, the main purpose in art, with the few exceptions such as imaginary and decorative works, was to represent or interpret Nature or objects. As with the Impressionists, their main objective was to exactly interpret Nature, with an underlying aim to convey how Nature changes with specific movements in time and light. The Post-Impressionists, although influenced by the Impressionists, moved from the objective art of Naturalism to the subjective art of "self-expression", which led to Cubism, Expressionism, Abstract Art, and all other movements that would either dissect reality or abandon it for pure expression.

Paul Cezanne, for example, was influenced by and had a close association with Manet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissaro, all leaders in the Impressionist movement. Cezanne used his bright colors with small brush strokes, similar to the glimmering technique used by the Impressionists, but he applied his brush strokes to follow carefully laid out structure lines. Cezanne established in his paintings a close relationship between color, rhythm and structure which gave a more solid illusion of dimension and depth than the Impressionistic style. Cezanne's works with objects, as he insisted, were always recognizable, although at the sime time were on the verge of Cubism or abstraction, and can easily be connected to both.

Vincent Van Gogh, on the other hand, was a Post-Impressionist who has been labeled as The Father Of Expressionism. Expressionism, characterized by the distortion of reality to give visual representations to inner emotions, shows up throughout Van Gogh's work. His art, whether depicting Nature, objects, or humans, is saturated with his own subjective feelings. He used line, brilliant colors, rhythm and constantly changing but similar brush strokes to such a personal degree that even an artistic layman can uaually pick out one of his many works with knowledge of only one or two. Vincent Van Gogh was indeed a genius in the artistic world.

Influenced by Van Gogh and his brilliant palette, Paul Gauguin was another influential Post-Impressionist. Gauguin, a successful stockbroker and collector of Impressionist paintings, gave up his business career at age forty in 1883 to turn painter and lead the Bohemian life of an artist. Five years later he fled to Tahiti to escape "education" and hopefully find and release deeper and more primitive instincts. His work excitingly contrasted that of the Impressionists; instead of soft contours and hazy atmosphere, his works offered rigid angularities and hard color surfaces. His personal expressions of the native fears of the Tahitian people are moving. I can almost feel the strange noises of the night in comparison to those of the day in his woodcut "Woman At The River". Whether I'm aesthetically pleased or not with the works of Gauguin, Van Gogh, or Cezanne is not important; their work is, along with the realization that a work of art is anything but a repetition of some object in Nature. The progress that their work displays has influenced artists since (as they themselves were influenced by their artistic predecessors). "To my mind", Cezanne said, "one does not substitute oneself for the past, one merely adds a new link to its chain."

Mary Frank, a contemporary artist, in a recent interview was quoted as saying:

"An artist moves within art's ancient on-going world and becomes a kind of layer in the process." (2)

This idea of continuity with the past interests me. Whether we view ourselves as a layer or a new link to its chain, we must recognize how important the roots of our artistic forefathers are. Too often an artist places emphasis on his "natural" talent and for all practicing purposes forgets that art even has a past. The battles for recognition of style and theory that the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Expressionist and all other movements fought for are as valid today as then. An artist needs his past, his roots to grow.

I have long felt an esoteric connection with my artistic predecessors, which I feel helps make my art interdependent as well as individualistic. For example, with the risk of sounding presumptuous, Rembrandt has always fascinated me. His style, his pen and ink washes, his dark painted surfaces with highlighted portraits have always influenced me. I would pay any amount to have been able to study under him. Van Gogh has been another key-note in my studies, although not at the same level as Rembrandt.

When studying Rembrandt's drawings and paintings, it is as if I would have used the same strokes in a line or highlight; with Van Gogh, it is a connection with his life, his frustrations and his philosophies. As Saul Steinberg phrased the connection in a recent article:

> "One has a special relationship with the loved artists. One is kept honest by them and sometimes works to amaze them." (3)

I feel the artist is kept honest by the past loved artists for they make obvious accomplishments reachable or a constant torment for present day artistic egos. The artist's ego is perhaps his most compelling drive which is not inexpedient, for it incites competition, hence creation and quality. The artistic world is indeed a frustrating world at times.

Artists are plagued by aesthetic sand traps. Some become buried so deep that they never get out and others emerge only after a great deal of pain and work. I was in such a trap when I entered my graduate program. I was not sure where to go or what to do with my art. I felt my talent and ability were sufficient, but I could not decide on subject matter. During my first trimester I became involved in a restoration project at the Second

Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri. The work at the church, although not directly related to my interests in drawing and painting, was involved with stained glass, specifically a stained glass ceiling that had been remodeled so that its existence was completely hidden and previously unknown. I feel the time spent "early" in my program at the church was influential to the advancement of my abilities as a fine artist in several ways. First, by working independently on the restoration, giving several oral and visual presentations to individuals as well as the Lindenwood Stained Glass Class, and verbally documenting the research work on a graduate level as an authoritative figure, I climbed from my undergraduate level of thinking to that of a graduate. Second, it gave me a much needed opportunity to look at my work objectively. Third, this analysis helped formulate the decision to concentrate my second trimester on drawing.

I had some pleasing accomplishments during my first trimester with drawing and silk-screen work. The mastery of the complicated techniques of silk screen printing including the stencil and photographic processes, for example, "Big Truck/Little Girl" in my show, was highly satisfying. Yet, my constant analytical and critical analysis in these fields made such work frustrating.

The decision to devote my second trimester to drawing was an important outcome of my first trimester. I was not seeking solutions in technique and craftsmanship per se, but seeking the motivation for my work. I have long felt that drawing was the foundation of the visual arts. Many people who have thrown themselves impulsively into painting, graphics and other representative forms of visual art seeking solutions to their problems in technique and craftsmanship have awakened disillusioned without having made progress. Not unlike the many hours of practice that goes into a ballerina's performance, a successful artist should never go too long without returning to the basics of drawing.

Drawing has come to be not a foundation, not a nuisance, not a preparatory for a later "finished" work, but a spontaneous, exploratory, creative happening which is a qualifying attribute for any fine art work. This enlightenment was especially important to me; my work was becoming too tight -- not that concern for perfection is not germane in a spontaneous work, but there is just no time. When absorbed in approximately twenty minute poses using models, as ninety percent of my drawing was during the trimester, I had little time to analize technical

problems. I learned to trust, rely and become confident in my aesthetic insight.

Naturally I'm concerned about the images my visual presentations project, yet I can only project an object which I am subjective to. Every new sensation is related to a past experience whether consciously or not. When I first see and study the model, I relate to him/her much the same as meeting a stranger, and that experience in identification with the model along with any other sensual or material attraction or distraction will influence the projected image. The subjective observation is often subconscious. What I consciously see at times is not what I subconsciously feel; and hopefully at times my subconscious will govern my work. I have found that often my most pleasing accomplishments in the visual world have been produced subconsciously, and not recognized as such until after the work was completed. This is especially evident when studying a completed short pose. The subconscious emerges not only in the satisfying technique used in structure and composition, but also in the model's expression which at times is difficult to consciously reproduce. The "logic" of the subconscious, intuitive mind, often differs from and excels that of the conscious; it would be

foolish to ignore and not use it or any other tools available to the artist.

Observation in art should be an accumulative experience of as many of the five senses and as much personal relevance as possible. Too often all senses other than sight are neglected for the obvious surface reasons, in the visual arts. These neglected senses should be used to test and analyze the eye, for reliance on any one sense can occasionally deceive you. An artist would have a difficult time depicting a fire had he never experienced a fire's heat and noise. It would possibly result in being no more than a translucent blending of hues instead of the destructive force it could be. Using as many senses as possible in the observation of the subject can only improve one's art. The artist should take time to know his subject. For instance, even if a person has little or no artistic ability, yet is knowledgeable in a certain field, he can usually still draw an accurate visual image of whatever equipment, tools or objects with which he is familiar. Whatever time and effort the artist expends observing and acquiring knowledge of his subject will be compensated adequately by a more accurate representation.

The artist needs to know and feel something about

his subjects. If all the artist was concerned about was reproducing what he sees, he would be no better than a poor camera. The artist should work on a level at which the camera cannot compete. The camera is a fantastic instrument with the capabilities of reproducing hundreds of images within minutes, yet it has limitations which an artist can use. Personal expression is something that a camera cannot compete with; the artist has the right to do anything he wants to his canvas -- to create whatever effect he wants. He can use distortion, abstraction, medium, composition, or any other element he wishes to incorporate or remove in creating the feeling toward his subject. The artist is the creator of his works, not a realistic reproducer of someone else's creation.

Experimentation, a familiar word to any working artist, is a gospel one for myself. Not unlike a child making up imaginary contests and goals for small physical feats, I set limitations, problems and objectives on different works. One limitation early in my second trimester that vastly improved my drawing as a whole was limiting my drawings to only light and shade studies, totally excluding the use of line. This was a difficult task for me as my drawings were usually direct, quick, and force-

ful -- a process lending itself excellently to the line. The results, although not instantaneously successful, developed far above my expectations and were aesthetically pleasing to me. Two such works produced at this time in my exhibition are titled "Karin-Soft" and "George". Both are short poses working directly with the models. "George" is forceful, direct and at the same time soft and light; this seemingly contradictory analysis was brought about by quick direct renderance of the subject with the handling of the medium, red conte, in a very light, almost delicate way. I was especially happy with the highlighting shadows off the model's neck and left side. In "George", I added a background, implying dark horizontal planes at slightly different heights at each side of the model, forcing the eye to follow the lower closer plane next to the left shoulder to the higher, seemingly farther back plane next to the right shoulder; this technique added to a suggestive roughed in background indicates and developes depth. With "Karin-I", I basically eliminated the background and faded the rearward sections of the chair and model for depth. I found both techniques to be satisfying. In both of these drawings, I utilized the paper as a medium with the conte to develop the forms. The soft-

ness, purity and sensitivity in these works were unequalled by my earlier conte works. The new satisfaction found in my light and shade studies was encouraging although I was not capturing the expressions I wanted. The mood was outstanding, but I was washing some of the personality from the model. To combat this problem, I resorted to the line drawing to express my mood as well as the models.

The line drawing offers freedom, expression and an ease in its technique that few other styles can compete with. Its carefree style, lending itself to an almost unconscious scribble, allowed me at times to become completely absorbed with the model and my impressions of him/her. In such a session, I would never let the pen leave the paper, purposely racing from one section of the paper to the next, capturing every impulse, every feeling -- using every mark, every space and every line to produce the image. One example of this technique in my exhibition is titled "Karin-II". As the observer studies this drawing, he/she will notice how the line is as interesting as the subject. It moves with indecisive rhythm throughout the composition. In one moment the line will circle the highlighted area on the calf of the left leg, and almost immediately after, it triples its weight and darkens the remaining

lower portion. In a rolling, almost slovenly, weak motion, it delicately edges the right arm and shoulder and then lazily climbs into a strong, powerful, angular pattern, to shade the cushion of the chair. The line dances throughout the study in an almost negligent way, allowing tremendous freedom, yet portraying the subject, perhaps more successfully than any of my other works. The line not only offers an occasionally needed freedom to balance some of the more demanding techniques, but offers a solution to the problem of capturing a quick, direct expression.

In contrast to the loose line drawings, I also experimented with some carefully executed tight pen and ink studies. The main objective with these works was to produce a more formal and detailed drawing. The medium of conte and loose line drawings were appropriate for dealing with the quick representation and expression of the model, yet when a model was not involved and time was available, my work naturally became more detailed and the medium changed. Two meticulously detailed works produced during this period are "Watergate" and "The People". Both are in my exhibition. In "Watergate" my objective was to display my feelings about the three key figures in the Congressional Investigation, the two defendants (Hunt and Haldeman) and

one presiding Senator (Irwin). With Hunt, for instance, I felt that his eyes which were framed in his unique, half-rimmed glasses gave him an almost sinister, untrusting look; I emphasize this by drawing only his forehead, eyes, and the heavy glasses, while letting the glasses cast deep, almost revealing shadows across his eyes. In contrast, Haldeman gave me the impression of a teenaged boy appearing in his first traffic court with a fresh haircut and new suit; Haldeman, wearing his red, white and blue tie, a small American flag on his lapel, and a clean, all-American crewcut, presented an almost sinless, trusting look. Haldeman's pretense of virtue, which typified the Nixon Administration, warranted a just spot in the composition. I highlighted this hypocrisy by placing him in the center and giving him an almost pouting, innocent smile. In representing the Congressional side of the hearings, I picked Senator Irwin. I felt that his direct country approach captured America's trust. I drew him in a judicial pose, his heavy eyebrows raised as if in deep thought, and a pencil in hand almost covering his mouth -- a familiar pose to all who watched or saw photos of the hearings. I arranged the three figures diagonally across the paper, overlapping the forms. This helped to build a strong composition.

I used a similar style with my drawing of "The People". This drawing evolved from the photographs by Margaret Bourke-White in her and Erskine Caldwell's book, "You Have Seen Their Faces". I was so impressed by the human depression found in the faces of the poverty-stricken people of the South, that I decided to build my own composition from them. Working with overlapping figures and diagonal shapes, I constructed a strong composition, then added the American flag in the background not only for symbolic reasons, but to add movement and rhythm. Both drawings, although contrasting greatly with my usually freer works, were highly satisfying, especially in their display of draftsmanship.

Perhaps my painting offers still a wider range of contrasts. One style deals with recognizable forms, the other is total abstraction. Two styles so totally different that at times even I have trouble associating them. My works entailing personalities are most alluring to me, and naturally I devoted a great deal of my painting and drawing to them. When one views any amount of my work, he/she will certainly sense this concern for the human form, which for me, has to be recognizable. In my exhibition, the observer will notice two large, unescapable paintings of obviously the same old man. These two works are titled "Uncle Tuffy I"

and "Uncle Tuffy II". With both of these paintings I have captured a great portion of my uncle's personality, and to a considerable extent the way he led his life. As I mentioned earlier, the artist must know as much as possible about his subject in order to give adequate representation to it. I feel that these paintings demonstrate just this concept. My uncle's character was noticeably influential to me while painting these works. He is a humorous, full-of-life individual who has led a generous existence and I feel that these two pieces capture the spirit of this friendly old man. These works were painted in much the same manner as my loose line drawings were executed. In an almost unconscious connection to the model but with a very conscious concern for the painting, I directly applied the paint with heavy, unpolished brush strokes. I was influenced by Cezanne's short, rhythmically applied brush marks as well as Van Gogh's descriptive application of paint. This influence is especially apparent in "Uncle Tuffy II"; the brush strokes curve and move around the face in a compromise between a Van Gogh-type interpretation and my own loose line technique. In "Uncle Tuffy I" the curve on the back of the shirt is extremely important, not only because it initiates a diagonal movement that

brings the eye back into the face, but it expresses the fragile state of old age with his inability to stand straight. This contrasts with the wholesome, happy expression of a man whose painless youth has long departed. In both paintings I used the background to highlight the face, putting lights behind darks and darks behind lights. With "Uncle Tuffy I" I washed the background with various colors watered down to a point of transparency. This technique tends to dull and weaken the background, thus adding additional emphasis to the face and expressive strokes of paint applied there. With "Uncle Tuffy II", I kept the same direct, quick, expressive style used in the face throughout the entire painting. Both techniques brought satisfying results with the background, although I liked the style used in "Uncle Tuffy II" the best. The exclusion of washes tends to leave a brighter picture, helping to keep it fresh.

Still another experiment with washes and direct brush strokes can be seen in my canvas "Missouri Nights". In this painting I started out with a very direct, heavy application of paint, working solely on the background and emphasizing horizontal and vertical planes. At different stages of the painting I added several almost transparent washes also on horizontal and vertical planes, only

wider and longer than the brush marks. These washes helped establish depth and define objects as well as tone down the background. I painted the focal center, the old man, after the background had been completely established, I again stressed the horizontal and vertical shapes. After I completed all the forms in the painting, I once again painted several washes, only this time I covered the entire painting to give it still a greater unity. The result was a compositionally solid painting, all areas covered; a little dim but not unlike an evening light. The expression was not as satisfying as a freer, more direct approach might have been, however I am pleased with the results I obtained using this technique. I intend to work more in this area, possibly expanding and applying the technique to some of my abstracted works.

My abstract paintings converge around a technique of applying paint to canvas that I have termed the "flow style". I developed this approach after becoming acquainted with and influenced by this type of painting in 1974, when Paul Jenkins held his exhibition at The Lindenwood Colleges. Jenkins was very evasive when queried about his methods in achieving his impressive works, and it was not until the following year that I had any success with my own flow technique.

I doubt that my method of applying paint to canvas is strictly identical to Jenkin's, since my work with flow painting has led me past any direct emulation of his work to some interesting innovations of my own.

In my exhibition, I include three works demonstrating as many variations of my flow technique. The first process is the direct flowing method, which is exemplified by the works "Vegetation" and a large, untitled work consisting of a dominant blue area surrounded by a delicate light green area. In these works, I moved the paint around on the canvas while it was submerged in an element not easily mixable with the composition of the paint. I allowed certain areas to mix while keeping others separate during the direction of the flow of paint on the canvas. This control and application of the paint gave me some unusual formations and aesthetically pleasing shapes of color. The second variation of the method can be viewed in a smaller untitled work included in my exhibition. In this piece there is a blue flowing form which is encased by heavy, angular brush marks of white, light blue and brown. This combination of two different applications of paint led me to still another variation, as seen in the large, dark blue abstraction in my show. In this third

variation, I combined the two preceeding methods. First I flowed the paint to an appropriate design as indicated by my first method, and secondly, I added brush strokes to emphasize and highlight areas of the composition. Thirdly, I again flowed the paint, covering and overlapping different areas to add and build to the structure. I achieved greater depth with this process over the other two, although I lost some of the freshness obtained in the other techniques. All three processes fascinated me and I will continue to experiment with them. They offer a creative freedom by not restricting one to any recognizable objects, and also offer an endless amount of color variation. I find them exciting to create as well as to view.

The art world is built on an emotional foundation. It is the artist's emotion that influences his work to such a degree that no two artists ever produce exactly the same descriptive representation of an object. Emotion governs art both visually and productively, and as Mr. Spock of the Starship Enterprise constantly reminds us, "emotion is illogical". The art world is a world of contradiction, even the most steadfast of rules can be found to contain exceptions. It is difficult to discuss this world in any depth without eventually contradicting ones own philosophy, yet

it is a rewarding world. It offers extremes in success or failure that only a few careers can duplicate, not only in the monetary sense but in opportunities for individuality. Few artists can stay depressed after accomplishing a self-satisfying work. Vincent Van Gogh once wrote to his brother, Theo, and said:

> "I am as rich as Croesus, not in money, but rich because I have found in my work something to which I can devote myself with heart and soul, and which gives inspiration and zest to life". (4)

I too feel rich. I feel gifted and anxious to start a career in art. I look back at my graduate studies and see them as not only a learning experience but as a period that has given me the confidence to become the fine artist I am capable of being.

In this verbal portion of my culminating project, I have provided the reader with insights to my philosophies, my development at Lindenwood IV, and some of my artistic styles and techniques. But it must be remembered that any analysis of my art falls short before the ultimate concrete reality of the work itself, and

this paper can only be used as a supplement to actually viewing my exhibition and seeing my work.

David R. Johnston

FOOTNOTES

(1) Matthiessen, Lucas and Margaret Staats, "Genetics of Art, Part II", Quest/77 Magazine, July/August 1977, page 40

(2) Quest/77 Magazine, Page 42

(3) Quest/77 Magazine, Page 39

(4) Irving and Jean Stone, My Life and Love Are One, Boulder; Blue Mountain Arts, 1976, page 56

CATALOGUE FOR EXHIBITION

"Big Truck, Little Girl", (11" x 8½") Photo Silk Screen

"George" (14" x 22") Red Conte

"Karin-I" (22" x 31") Red Conte

"Karin-II" (22¼" x 34¼") Pencil

"Missouri Night" (30" x 47") Acrylic Paint

"People" (14" x 23") Pen and Ink

"Uncle Tuffy I" (24" x 36") Acrylic Paint

"Uncle Tuffy II" (39" x 44") Acrylic Paint

"Untitled" A (42" x 39½") Mixed Medium

"Untitled" B(40" x 24") Mixed Medium

"Untitled" C(39¼" x 47½") Mixed Medium

"Vegetation" (22¼" x 45") Mixed Medium

"Watergate" (17½" x 22½") Pen and Ink

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"An artist moves within art's ancient on-going world and becomes a kind of layer in the process." (2)

This idea of continuity with the past interests me. Whether we view ourselves as a layer or a new link to its chain, we must recognize how important the roots of our artistic forefathers are. Too often an artist places emphasis on his "natural" talent and for all practicing purposes forgets that art even has a past. The battles for recognition of style and theory that the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Expressionist and all other movements fought for are as valid today as then. An artist needs his past, his roots to grow.

I have long felt an esoteric connection with my artistic predecessors, which I feel helps make my art interdependent as well as individualistic. For example, with the risk of sounding presumptuous, Rembrandt has always fascinated me. His style, his pen and ink washes, his dark painted surfaces with highlighted portraits have always influenced me. I would pay any amount to have been able to study under him. Van Gogh has been another key-note in my studies, although not at the same level as Rembrandt.

When studying Rembrandt's drawings and paintings, it is as if I would have used the same strokes in a line or highlight; with Van Gogh, it is a connection with his life, his frustrations and his philosophies. As Saul Steinberg phrased the connection in a recent article:

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Presbyterian Church in St. Louis, Missouri. The work at the church, although not directly related to my interests in drawing and painting, was involved with stained glass, specifically a stained glass ceiling that had been remodeled so that its existence was completely hidden and previously unknown. I feel the time spent "early" in my program at the church was influential to the advancement of my abilities as a fine artist in several ways. First, by working independently on the restoration, giving several oral and visual presentations to individuals as well as the Lindenwood Stained Glass Class, and verbally documenting the research work on a graduate level as an authoritative figure, I climbed from my undergraduate level of thinking to that of a graduate. Second, it gave me a much needed opportunity to look at my work objectively. Third, this analysis helped formulate the decision to concentrate my second trimester on drawing.

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The decision to devote my second trimester to drawing was an important outcome of my first trimester. I was not seeking solutions in technique and craftsmanship per se, but seeking the motivation for my work. I have long felt that drawing was the foundation of the visual arts. Many people who have thrown themselves impulsively into painting, graphics and other representative forms of visual art seeking solutions to their problems in technique and craftsmanship have awakened disillusioned without having made progress. Not unlike the many hours of practice that goes into a ballerina's performance, a successful artist should never go too long without returning to the basics of drawing.

Drawing has come to be not a foundation, not a nuisance, not a preparatory for a later "finished" work, but a spontaneous, exploratory, creative happening which is a qualifying attribute for any fine art work. This enlightenment was especially important to me; my work was becoming too tight -- not that concern for perfection is not germane in a spontaneous work, but there is just no time. When absorbed in approximately twenty minute poses using models, as ninety percent of my drawing was during the trimester, I had little time to analize technical

problems. I learned to trust, rely and become confident in my aesthetic insight.

Naturally I'm concerned about the images my visual presentations project, yet I can only project an object which I am subjective to. Every new sensation is related to a past experience whether consciously or not. When I first see and study the model, I relate to him/her much the same as meeting a stranger, and that experience in identification with the model along with any other sensual or material attraction or distraction will influence the projected image. The subjective observation is often subconscious. What I consciously see at times is not what I subconsciously feel; and hopefully at times my subconscious will govern my work. I have found that often my most pleasing accomplishments in the visual world have been produced subconsciously, and not recognized as such until after the work was completed. This is especially evident when studying a completed short pose. The subconscious emerges not only in the satisfying technique used in structure and composition, but also in the model's expression which at times is difficult to consciously reproduce. The "logic" of the subconscious, intuitive mind, often differs from and excels that of the conscious; it would be

foolish to ignore and not use it or any other tools available to the artist.

Observation in art should be an accumulative experience of as many of the five senses and as much personal relevance as possible. Too often all senses other than sight are neglected for the obvious surface reasons, in the visual arts. These neglected senses should be used to test and analyze the eye, for reliance on any one sense can occasionally deceive you. An artist would have a difficult time depicting a fire had he never experienced a fire's heat and noise. It would possibly result in being no more than a translucent blending of hues instead of the destructive force it could be. Using as many senses as possible in the observation of the subject can only improve one's art. The artist should take time to know his subject. For instance, even if a person has little or no artistic ability, yet is knowledgeable in a certain field, he can usually still draw an accurate visual image of whatever equipment, tools or objects with which he is familiar. Whatever time and effort the artist expends observing and acquiring knowledge of his subject will be compensated adequately by a more accurate representation.

The artist needs to know and feel something about

his subjects. If all the artist was concerned about was reproducing what he sees, he would be no better than a poor camera. The artist should work on a level at which the camera cannot compete. The camera is a fantastic instrument with the capabilities of reproducing hundreds of images within minutes, yet it has limitations which an artist can use. Personal expression is something that a camera cannot compete with; the artist has the right to do anything he wants to his canvas -- to create whatever effect he wants. He can use distortion, abstraction, medium, composition, or any other element he wishes to incorporate or remove in creating the feeling toward his subject. The artist is the creator of his works, not a realistic reproducer of someone else's creation.

Experimentation, a familiar word to any working artist, is a gospel one for myself. Not unlike a child making up imaginary contests and goals for small physical feats, I set limitations, problems and objectives on different works. One limitation early in my second trimester that vastly improved my drawing as a whole was limiting my drawings to only light and shade studies, totally excluding the use of line. This was a difficult task for me as my drawings were usually direct, quick, and force-

ful -- a process lending itself excellently to the line. The results, although not instantaneously successful, developed far above my expectations and were aesthetically pleasing to me. Two such works produced at this time in my exhibition are titled "Karin-Soft" and "George". Both are short poses working directly with the models. "George" is forceful, direct and at the same time soft and light; this seemingly contradictory analysis was brought about by quick direct renderance of the subject with the handling of the medium, red conte, in a very light, almost delicate way. I was especially happy with the highlighting shadows off the model's neck and left side. In "George", I added a background, implying dark horizontal planes at slightly different heights at each side of the model, forcing the eye to follow the lower closer plane next to the left shoulder to the higher, seemingly farther back plane next to the right shoulder; this technique added to a suggestive roughed in background indicates and develops depth. With "Karin-I", I basically eliminated the background and faded the rearward sections of the chair and model for depth. I found both techniques to be satisfying. In both of these drawings, I utilized the paper as a medium with the conte to develop the forms. The soft-

ness, purity and sensitivity in these works were unequalled by my earlier conte works. The new satisfaction found in my light and shade studies was encouraging although I was not capturing the expressions I wanted. The mood was outstanding, but I was washing some of the personality from the model. To combat this problem, I resorted to the line drawing to express my mood as well as the models.

The line drawing offers freedom, expression and an ease in its technique that few other styles can compete with. Its carefree style, lending itself to an almost unconscious scribble, allowed me at times to become completely absorbed with the model and my impressions of him/her. In such a session, I would never let the pen leave the paper, purposely racing from one section of the paper to the next, capturing every impulse, every feeling -- using every mark, every space and every line to produce the image. One example of this technique in my exhibition is titled "Karin-II". As the observer studies this drawing, he/she will notice how the line is as interesting as the subject. It moves with indecisive rhythm throughout the composition. In one moment the line will circle the highlighted area on the calf of the left leg, and almost immediately after, it triples its weight and darkens the remaining

lower portion. In a rolling, almost slovenly, weak motion, it delicately edges the right arm and shoulder and then lazily climbs into a strong, powerful, angular pattern, to shade the cushion of the chair. The line dances throughout the study in an almost negligent way, allowing tremendous freedom, yet portraying the subject, perhaps more successfully than any of my other works. The line not only offers an occasionally needed freedom to balance some of the more demanding techniques, but offers a solution to the problem of capturing a quick, direct expression.

In contrast to the loose line drawings, I also experimented with some carefully executed tight pen and ink studies. The main objective with these works was to produce a more formal and detailed drawing. The medium of conte and loose line drawings were appropriate for dealing with the quick representation and expression of the model, yet when a model was not involved and time was available, my work naturally became more detailed and the medium changed. Two meticulously detailed works produced during this period are "Watergate" and "The People". Both are in my exhibition. In "Watergate" my objective was to display my feelings about the three key figures in the Congressional Investigation, the two defendants (Hunt and Haldeman) and

one presiding Senator (Irwin). With Hunt, for instance, I felt that his eyes which were framed in his unique, half-rimmed glasses gave him an almost sinister, untrusting look; I emphasize this by drawing only his forehead, eyes, and the heavy glasses, while letting the glasses cast deep, almost revealing shadows across his eyes. In contrast, Haldeman gave me the impression of a teenaged boy appearing in his first traffic court with a fresh haircut and new suit; Haldeman, wearing his red, white and blue tie, a small American flag on his lapel, and a clean, all-American crewcut, presented an almost sinless, trusting look. Haldeman's pretense of virtue, which typified the Nixon Administration, warranted a just spot in the composition. I highlighted this hypocrisy by placing him in the center and giving him an almost pouting, innocent smile. In representing the Congressional side of the hearings, I picked Senator Irwin. I felt that his direct country approach captured America's trust. I drew him in a judicial pose, his heavy eyebrows raised as if in deep thought, and a pencil in hand almost covering his mouth -- a familiar pose to all who watched or saw photos of the hearings. I arranged the three figures diagonally across the paper, overlapping the forms. This helped to build a strong composition.

I used a similar style with my drawing of "The People". This drawing evolved from the photographs by Margaret Bourke-White in her and Erskine Caldwell's book, "You Have Seen Their Faces". I was so impressed by the human depression found in the faces of the poverty-stricken people of the South, that I decided to build my own composition from them. Working with overlapping figures and diagonal shapes, I constructed a strong composition, then added the American flag in the background not only for symbolic reasons, but to add movement and rhythm. Both drawings, although contrasting greatly with my usually freer works, were highly satisfying, especially in their display of draftsmanship.

Perhaps my painting offers still a wider range of contrasts. One style deals with recognizable forms, the other is total abstraction. Two styles so totally different that at times even I have trouble associating them. My works entailing personalities are most alluring to me, and naturally I devoted a great deal of my painting and drawing to them. When one views any amount of my work, he/she will certainly sense this concern for the human form, which for me, has to be recognizable. In my exhibition, the observer will notice two large, unescapable paintings of obviously the same old man. These two works are titled "Uncle Tuffy I"

and "Uncle Tuffy II". With both of these paintings I have captured a great portion of my uncle's personality, and to a considerable extent the way he led his life. As I mentioned earlier, the artist must know as much as possible about his subject in order to give adequate representation to it. I feel that these paintings demonstrate just this concept. My uncle's character was noticeably influential to me while painting these works. He is a humorous, full-of-life individual who has led a generous existence and I feel that these two pieces capture the spirit of this friendly old man. These works were painted in much the same manner as my loose line drawings were executed. In an almost unconscious connection to the model but with a very conscious concern for the painting, I directly applied the paint with heavy, unpolished brush strokes. I was influenced by Cezanne's short, rhythmically applied brush marks as well as Van Gogh's descriptive application of paint. This influence is especially apparent in "Uncle Tuffy II"; the brush strokes curve and move around the face in a compromise between a Van Gogh-type interpretation and my own loose line technique. In "Uncle Tuffy I" the curve on the back of the shirt is extremely important, not only because it initiates a diagonal movement that

brings the eye back into the face, but it expresses the fragile state of old age with his inability to stand straight. This contrasts with the wholesome, happy expression of a man whose painless youth has long departed. In both paintings I used the background to highlight the face, putting lights behind darks and darks behind lights. With "Uncle Tuffy I" I washed the background with various colors watered down to a point of transparency. This technique tends to dull and weaken the background, thus adding additional emphasis to the face and expressive strokes of paint applied there. With "Uncle Tuffy II", I kept the same direct, quick, expressive style used in the face throughout the entire painting. Both techniques brought satisfying results with the background, although I liked the style used in "Uncle Tuffy II" the best. The exclusion of washes tends to leave a brighter picture, helping to keep it fresh.

Still another experiment with washes and direct brush strokes can be seen in my canvas "Missouri Nights". In this painting I started out with a very direct, heavy application of paint, working solely on the background and emphasizing horizontal and vertical planes. At different stages of the painting I added several almost transparent washes also on horizontal and vertical planes, only

wider and longer than the brush marks. These washes helped establish depth and define objects as well as tone down the background. I painted the focal center, the old man, after the background had been completely established, I again stressed the horizontal and vertical shapes. After I completed all the forms in the painting, I once again painted several washes, only this time I covered the entire painting to give it still a greater unity. The result was a compositionally solid painting, all areas covered; a little dim but not unlike an evening light. The expression was not as satisfying as a freer, more direct approach might have been, however I am pleased with the results I obtained using this technique. I intend to work more in this area, possibly expanding and applying the technique to some of my abstracted works.

My abstract paintings converge around a technique of applying paint to canvas that I have termed the "flow style". I developed this approach after becoming acquainted with and influenced by this type of painting in 1974, when Paul Jenkins held his exhibition at The Lindenwood Colleges. Jenkins was very evasive when queried about his methods in achieving his impressive works, and it was not until the following year that I had any success with my own flow technique.

I doubt that my method of applying paint to canvas is strictly identical to Jenkin's, since my work with flow painting has led me past any direct emulation of his work to some interesting innovations of my own.

In my exhibition, I include three works demonstrating as many variations of my flow technique. The first process is the direct flowing method, which is exemplified by the works "Vegetation" and a large, untitled work consisting of a dominant blue area surrounded by a delicate light green area. In these works, I moved the paint around on the canvas while it was submerged in an element not easily mixable with the composition of the paint. I allowed certain areas to mix while keeping others separate during the direction of the flow of paint on the canvas. This control and application of the paint gave me some unusual formations and aesthetically pleasing shapes of color. The second variation of the method can be viewed in a smaller untitled work included in my exhibition. In this piece there is a blue flowing form which is encased by heavy, angular brush marks of white, light blue and brown. This combination of two different applications of paint led me to still another variation, as seen in the large, dark blue abstraction in my show. In this third

variation, I combined the two preceeding methods. First I flowed the paint to an appropriate design as indicated by my first method, and secondly, I added brush strokes to emphasize and highlight areas of the composition. Thirdly, I again flowed the paint, covering and overlapping different areas to add and build to the structure. I achieved greater depth with this process over the other two, although I lost some of the freshness obtained in the other techniques. All three processes fascinated me and I will continue to experiment with them. They offer a creative freedom by not restricting one to any recognizable objects, and also offer an endless amount of color variation. I find them exciting to create as well as to view.

The art world is built on an emotional foundation. It is the artist's emotion that influences his work to such a degree that no two artists ever produce exactly the same descriptive representation of an object. Emotion governs art both visually and productively, and as Mr. Spock of the Starship Enterprise constantly reminds us, "emotion is illogical". The art world is a world of contradiction, even the most steadfast of rules can be found to contain exceptions. It is difficult to discuss this world in any depth without eventually contradicting ones own philosophy, yet

it is a rewarding world. It offers extremes in success or failure that only a few careers can duplicate, not only in the monetary sense but in opportunities for individuality. Few artists can stay depressed after accomplishing a self-satisfying work. Vincent Van Gogh once wrote to his brother, Theo, and said:

> "I am as rich as Croesus, not in money, but rich because I have found in my work something to which I can devote myself with heart and soul, and which gives inspiration and zest to life". (4)

I too feel rich. I feel gifted and anxious to start a career in art. I look back at my graduate studies and see them as not only a learning experience but as a period that has given me the confidence to become the fine artist I am capable of being.

In this verbal portion of my culminating project, I have provided the reader with insights to my philosophies, my development at Lindenwood IV, and some of my artistic styles and techniques. But it must be remembered that any analysis of my art falls short before the ultimate concrete reality of the work itself, and

this paper can only be used as a supplement to actually viewing my exhibition and seeing my work.

David R. Johnston

FOOTNOTES

(1) Matthiessen, Lucas and Margaret Staats, "Genetics of Art, Part II", Quest/77 Magazine, July/August 1977, page 40

(2) Quest/77 Magazine, Page 42

(3) Quest/77 Magazine, Page 39

(4) Irving and Jean Stone, My Life and Love Are One, Boulder; Blue Mountain Arts, 1976, page 56

CATALOGUE FOR EXHIBITION

"Big Truck, Little Girl", (11" x 8½") Photo Silk Screen

"George" (14" x 22") Red Conte

"Karin-I" (22" x 31") Red Conte

"Karin-II" (22¼" x 34¼") Pencil

"Missouri Night" (30" x 47") Acrylic Paint

"People" (14" x 23") Pen and Ink

"Uncle Tuffy I" (24" x 36") Acrylic Paint

"Uncle Tuffy II" (39" x 44") Acrylic Paint

"Untitled" A (42" x 39½") Mixed Medium

"Untitled" B (40" x 24") Mixed Medium

"Untitled" C (39¾" x 47½") Mixed Medium

"Vegetation" (22¼" x 45") Mixed Medium

"Watergate" (17½" x 22½") Pen and Ink

CULMINATING PROJECT:
VERBAL PART

DAVID R. JOHNSTON

FACULTY SPONSORS:
John Wehmer
Robert Marti

FACULTY ADMINISTRATOR:
Dr. Richard Rickert

AUGUST 1, 1977

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, the Lindenwood Colleges.

Unlike many graduate studies where the work is mainly conceptual, theoretical, and not easily displayed in concrete form, my graduate work in Fine Art is primarily concrete, visual and at best, physically experienced. The evidence of my development as a fine artist cannot be adequately expressed in a written or verbal dissertation. Visual forms must be experienced visually. For example, no amount of description can ever replace viewing a movie; the same applies to a blind date--it rarely lives up to a friend's promises. As Joan Mitchell said in a recent interview with QUEST magazine:

> "Artist intuit what they like. An explanation can't really convey the attraction. There is a world of difference between visual and verbal communication." (1)

The major portion of my culminating project, a one-man exhibition, is the most natural and revealing of my graduate study and will best represent my accomplishments during this graduate program. However, to adequately understand these accomplishments, I need to provide the viewer and critic with insights to some personal philosophies on art and background of my academic development at Lindenwood IV.

At the commencement of my graduate program I was overly concerned with the productivity of my Bachelor of

Fine Arts degree in a commercial world while only superficially concerned with the aesthetic value of my art. This is a deterring predicament that has plagued and discouraged fine artists throughout history. The unrecognized works of such great artists as Gauguin and Cezanne are classic examples of society's less than adequate evaluation and financial support of the artist's contribution to mankind. Although society usually recognizes the beauty of the fine arts, it, as a whole, overlooks or minimizes the many years of study, preparation, repetition and development of the artist's abilities to achieve such works. Perhaps it is the dedication under such disheartening circumstances that forces the fine artist to rise above the economical or monetary world. I am not advocating that the artist needs to starve to paint well, but I am saying that an upcoming artist needs to possess enough dedication to survive. For example, now, at the consummation of my program, I am prepared to make the transition from student to artist. I am encouraged primarily with the pleasing and complacent accomplishment of finding direction. My philosophies, ideas and works have matured, and I feel that the sacrifices and commitments needed to become an influential artist in our society are well worth

the effort.

Fine Art should be a conscientious, personal conviction rather like a religion. The artist has to be scrupulous and earnest, never relinquishing his pursuit and thoughts of the arts. One function of a fine artist in society should be that of reflection--not only of himself through his works, but to reflect society itself in his works. It is the artist in a society who echoes society; society without that echo to direct and induce would not be unlike an uncivilized group of people. Society needs its artists, whether visual or verbal, on the sideline to show in their works whenever social conditions get out of proportion. For instance, if the divorce rate reaches fifty two percent, the artist should not depict marriage as an unquestionably happy existence, but should show some of the not-so-enticing-but-real conditions of the institution. If society neglects its senior generation, the artist should depict this. If we are paying an entertainer in Las Vegas eighty thousand dollars a week and in the same state are paying teachers eight thousand dollars a year, the artist should illustrate the lopsided aspect of the situation. I am not advocating that every piece of work a fine artist produces should emphasize some social

or cultural declaration; I would never support any creative confinements. I do feel, though, that a fine artist should put himself, which would include a certain amount of cultural and social reverberation, in all his works. If I have a strong impression whether cultural, social or personal, it influences my work. The fine artist should never copy nature, but should see, feel and express it.

Possibly Paul Gauguin, Vincent Van Gogh and Paul Cezanne demonstrated my sentiments on personal expression best in the late nineteenth century when they broke away from the naturalistic art of illusion practiced by the Impressionists. Together they headed the Post-Impressionist movement, the most controversial trend in the history of art. Until this point in time, the main purpose in art, with the few exceptions such as imaginary and decorative works, was to represent or interpret Nature or objects. As with the Impressionists, their main objective was to exactly interpret Nature, with an underlying aim to convey how Nature changes with specific movements in time and light. The Post-Impressionists, although influenced by the Impressionists, moved from the objective art of Naturalism to the subjective art of "self-expression", which led to Cubism, Expressionism, Abstract Art, and all other movements that would either dissect reality or abandon it for pure expression.

Paul Cezanne, for example, was influenced by and had a close association with Manet, Renoir, Sisley and Pissaro, all leaders in the Impressionist movement. Cezanne used his bright colors with small brush strokes, similar to the glimmering technique used by the Impressionists, but he applied his brush strokes to follow carefully laid out structure lines. Cezanne established in his paintings a close relationship between color, rhythm and structure which gave a more solid illusion of dimension and depth than the Impressionistic style. Cezanne's works with objects, as he insisted, were always recognizable, although at the sime time were on the verge of Cubism or abstraction, and can easily be connected to both.

Vincent Van Gogh, on the other hand, was a Post-Impressionist who has been labeled as The Father Of Expressionism. Expressionism, characterized by the distortion of reality to give visual representations to inner emotions, shows up throughout Van Gogh's work. His art, whether depicting Nature, objects, or humans, is saturated with his own subjective feelings. He used line, brilliant colors, rhythm and constantly changing but similar brush strokes to such a personal degree that even an artistic layman can uaually pick out one of his many works with knowledge of only one or two. Vincent Van Gogh was indeed a genius in the artistic world.

Influenced by Van Gogh and his brilliant palette, Paul Gauguin was another influential Post-Impressionist. Gauguin, a successful stockbroker and collector of Impressionist paintings, gave up his business career at age forty in 1883 to turn painter and lead the Bohemian life of an artist. Five years later he fled to Tahiti to escape "education" and hopefully find and release deeper and more primitive instincts. His work excitingly contrasted that of the Impressionists; instead of soft contours and hazy atmosphere, his works offered rigid angularities and hard color surfaces. His personal expressions of the native fears of the Tahitian people are moving. I can almost feel the strange noises of the night in comparison to those of the day in his woodcut "Woman At The River". Whether I'm aesthetically pleased or not with the works of Gauguin, Van Gogh, or Cezanne is not important; their work is, along with the realization that a work of art is anything but a repetition of some object in Nature. The progress that their work displays has influenced artists since (as they themselves were influenced by their artistic predecessors). "To my mind", Cezanne said, "one does not substitute oneself for the past, one merely adds a new link to its chain."

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"An artist moves within art's ancient on-going world and becomes a kind of layer in the process." (2)

This idea of continuity with the past interests me. Whether we view ourselves as a layer or a new link to its chain, we must recognize how important the roots of our artistic forefathers are. Too often an artist places emphasis on his "natural" talent and for all practicing purposes forgets that art even has a past. The battles for recognition of style and theory that the Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, Expressionist and all other movements fought for are as valid today as then. An artist needs his past, his roots to grow.

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Drawing has come to be not a foundation, not a nuisance, not a preparatory for a later "finished" work, but a spontaneous, exploratory, creative happening which is a qualifying attribute for any fine art work. This enlightenment was especially important to me; my work was becoming too tight -- not that concern for perfection is not germane in a spontaneous work, but there is just no time. When absorbed in approximately twenty minute poses using models, as ninety percent of my drawing was during the trimester, I had little time to analize technical

problems. I learned to trust, rely and become confident in my aesthetic insight.

Naturally I'm concerned about the images my visual presentations project, yet I can only project an object which I am subjective to. Every new sensation is related to a past experience whether consciously or not. When I first see and study the model, I relate to him/her much the same as meeting a stranger, and that experience in identification with the model along with any other sensual or material attraction or distraction will influence the projected image. The subjective observation is often subconscious. What I consciously see at times is not what I subconsciously feel; and hopefully at times my subconscious will govern my work. I have found that often my most pleasing accomplishments in the visual world have been produced subconsciously, and not recognized as such until after the work was completed. This is especially evident when studying a completed short pose. The subconscious emerges not only in the satisfying technique used in structure and composition, but also in the model's expression which at times is difficult to consciously reproduce. The "logic" of the subconscious, intuitive mind, often differs from and excels that of the conscious; it would be

foolish to ignore and not use it or any other tools available to the artist.

Observation in art should be an accumulative experience of as many of the five senses and as much personal relevance as possible. Too often all senses other than sight are neglected for the obvious surface reasons, in the visual arts. These neglected senses should be used to test and analyze the eye, for reliance on any one sense can occasionally deceive you. An artist would have a difficult time depicting a fire had he never experienced a fire's heat and noise. It would possibly result in being no more than a translucent blending of hues instead of the destructive force it could be. Using as many senses as possible in the observation of the subject can only improve one's art. The artist should take time to know his subject. For instance, even if a person has little or no artistic ability, yet is knowledgeable in a certain field, he can usually still draw an accurate visual image of whatever equipment, tools or objects with which he is familiar. Whatever time and effort the artist expends observing and acquiring knowledge of his subject will be compensated adequately by a more accurate representation.

The artist needs to know and feel something about

his subjects. If all the artist was concerned about was reproducing what he sees, he would be no better than a poor camera. The artist should work on a level at which the camera cannot compete. The camera is a fantastic instrument with the capabilities of reproducing hundreds of images within minutes, yet it has limitations which an artist can use. Personal expression is something that a camera cannot compete with; the artist has the right to do anything he wants to his canvas -- to create whatever effect he wants. He can use distortion, abstraction, medium, composition, or any other element he wishes to incorporate or remove in creating the feeling toward his subject. The artist is the creator of his works, not a realistic reproducer of someone else's creation.

Experimentation, a familiar word to any working artist, is a gospel one for myself. Not unlike a child making up imaginary contests and goals for small physical feats, I set limitations, problems and objectives on different works. One limitation early in my second trimester that vastly improved my drawing as a whole was limiting my drawings to only light and shade studies, totally excluding the use of line. This was a difficult task for me as my drawings were usually direct, quick, and force-

ful -- a process lending itself excellently to the line. The results, although not instantaneously successful, developed far above my expectations and were aesthetically pleasing to me. Two such works produced at this time in my exhibition are titled "Karin-Soft" and "George". Both are short poses working directly with the models. "George" is forceful, direct and at the same time soft and light; this seemingly contradictory analysis was brought about by quick direct renderance of the subject with the handling of the medium, red conte, in a very light, almost delicate way. I was especially happy with the highlighting shadows off the model's neck and left side. In "George", I added a background, implying dark horizontal planes at slightly different heights at each side of the model, forcing the eye to follow the lower closer plane next to the left shoulder to the higher, seemingly farther back plane next to the right shoulder; this technique added to a suggestive roughed in background indicates and developes depth. With "Karin-I", I basically eliminated the background and faded the rearward sections of the chair and model for depth. I found both techniques to be satisfying. In both of these drawings, I utilized the paper as a medium with the conte to develop the forms. The soft-

ness, purity and sensitivity in these works were unequalled by my earlier conte works. The new satisfaction found in my light and shade studies was encouraging although I was not capturing the expressions I wanted. The mood was outstanding, but I was washing some of the personality from the model. To combat this problem, I resorted to the line drawing to express my mood as well as the models.

The line drawing offers freedom, expression and an ease in its technique that few other styles can compete with. Its carefree style, lending itself to an almost unconscious scribble, allowed me at times to become completely absorbed with the model and my impressions of him/her. In such a session, I would never let the pen leave the paper, purposely racing from one section of the paper to the next, capturing every impulse, every feeling -- using every mark, every space and every line to produce the image. One example of this technique in my exhibition is titled "Karin-II". As the observer studies this drawing, he/she will notice how the line is as interesting as the subject. It moves with indecisive rhythm throughout the composition. In one moment the line will circle the highlighted area on the calf of the left leg, and almost immediately after, it triples its weight and darkens the remaining

lower portion. In a rolling, almost slovenly, weak motion, it delicately edges the right arm and shoulder and then lazily climbs into a strong, powerful, angular pattern, to shade the cushion of the chair. The line dances throughout the study in an almost negligent way, allowing tremendous freedom, yet portraying the subject, perhaps more successfully than any of my other works. The line not only offers an occasionally needed freedom to balance some of the more demanding techniques, but offers a solution to the problem of capturing a quick, direct expression.

In contrast to the loose line drawings, I also experimented with some carefully executed tight pen and ink studies. The main objective with these works was to produce a more formal and detailed drawing. The medium of conte and loose line drawings were appropriate for dealing with the quick representation and expression of the model, yet when a model was not involved and time was available, my work naturally became more detailed and the medium changed. Two meticulously detailed works produced during this period are "Watergate" and "The People". Both are in my exhibition. In "Watergate" my objective was to display my feelings about the three key figures in the Congressional Investigation, the two defendants (Hunt and Haldeman) and

one presiding Senator (Irwin). With Hunt, for instance, I felt that his eyes which were framed in his unique, half-rimmed glasses gave him an almost sinister, untrusting look; I emphasize this by drawing only his forehead, eyes, and the heavy glasses, while letting the glasses cast deep, almost revealing shadows across his eyes. In contrast, Haldeman gave me the impression of a teenaged boy appearing in his first traffic court with a fresh haircut and new suit; Haldeman, wearing his red, white and blue tie, a small American flag on his lapel, and a clean, all-American crewcut, presented an almost sinless, trusting look. Haldeman's pretense of virtue, which typified the Nixon Administration, warranted a just spot in the composition. I highlighted this hypocrisy by placing him in the center and giving him an almost pouting, innocent smile. In representing the Congressional side of the hearings, I picked Senator Irwin. I felt that his direct country approach captured America's trust. I drew him in a judicial pose, his heavy eyebrows raised as if in deep thought, and a pencil in hand almost covering his mouth -- a familiar pose to all who watched or saw photos of the hearings. I arranged the three figures diagonally across the paper, overlapping the forms. This helped to build a strong composition.

I used a similar style with my drawing of "The People". This drawing evolved from the photographs by Margaret Bourke-White in her and Erskine Caldwell's book, "You Have Seen Their Faces". I was so impressed by the human depression found in the faces of the poverty-stricken people of the South, that I decided to build my own composition from them. Working with overlapping figures and diagonal shapes, I constructed a strong composition, then added the American flag in the background not only for symbolic reasons, but to add movement and rhythm. Both drawings, although contrasting greatly with my usually freer works, were highly satisfying, especially in their display of draftsmanship.

Perhaps my painting offers still a wider range of contrasts. One style deals with recognizable forms, the other is total abstraction. Two styles so totally different that at times even I have trouble associating them. My works entailing personalities are most alluring to me, and naturally I devoted a great deal of my painting and drawing to them. When one views any amount of my work, he/she will certainly sense this concern for the human form, which for me, has to be recognizable. In my exhibition, the observer will notice two large, unescapable paintings of obviously the same old man. These two works are titled "Uncle Tuffy I"

and "Uncle Tuffy II". With both of these paintings I have captured a great portion of my uncle's personality, and to a considerable extent the way he led his life. As I mentioned earlier, the artist must know as much as possible about his subject in order to give adequate representation to it. I feel that these paintings demonstrate just this concept. My uncle's character was noticeably influential to me while painting these works. He is a humorous, full-of-life individual who has led a generous existence and I feel that these two pieces capture the spirit of this friendly old man. These works were painted in much the same manner as my loose line drawings were executed. In an almost unconscious connection to the model but with a very conscious concern for the painting, I directly applied the paint with heavy, unpolished brush strokes. I was influenced by Cezanne's short, rhythmically applied brush marks as well as Van Gogh's descriptive application of paint. This influence is especially apparent in "Uncle Tuffy II"; the brush strokes curve and move around the face in a compromise between a Van Gogh-type interpretation and my own loose line technique. In "Uncle Tuffy I" the curve on the back of the shirt is extremely important, not only because it initiates a diagonal movement that

brings the eye back into the face, but it expresses the fragile state of old age with his inability to stand straight. This contrasts with the wholesome, happy expression of a man whose painless youth has long departed. In both paintings I used the background to highlight the face, putting lights behind darks and darks behind lights. With "Uncle Tuffy I" I washed the background with various colors watered down to a point of transparency. This technique tends to dull and weaken the background, thus adding additional emphasis to the face and expressive strokes of paint applied there. With "Uncle Tuffy II", I kept the same direct, quick, expressive style used in the face throughout the entire painting. Both techniques brought satisfying results with the background, although I liked the style used in "Uncle Tuffy II" the best. The exclusion of washes tends to leave a brighter picture, helping to keep it fresh.

Still another experiment with washes and direct brush strokes can be seen in my canvas "Missouri Nights". In this painting I started out with a very direct, heavy application of paint, working solely on the background and emphasizing horizontal and vertical planes. At different stages of the painting I added several almost transparent washes also on horizontal and vertical planes, only

wider and longer than the brush marks. These washes helped establish depth and define objects as well as tone down the background. I painted the focal center, the old man, after the background had been completely established, I again stressed the horizontal and vertical shapes. After I completed all the forms in the painting, I once again painted several washes, only this time I covered the entire painting to give it still a greater unity. The result was a compositionally solid painting, all areas covered; a little dim but not unlike an evening light. The expression was not as satisfying as a freer, more direct approach might have been, however I am pleased with the results I obtained using this technique. I intend to work more in this area, possibly expanding and applying the technique to some of my abstracted works.

My abstract paintings converge around a technique of applying paint to canvas that I have termed the "flow style". I developed this approach after becoming acquainted with and influenced by this type of painting in 1974, when Paul Jenkins held his exhibition at The Lindenwood Colleges. Jenkins was very evasive when queried about his methods in achieving his impressive works, and it was not until the following year that I had any success with my own flow technique.

I doubt that my method of applying paint to canvas is strictly identical to Jenkin's, since my work with flow painting has led me past any direct emulation of his work to some interesting innovations of my own.

In my exhibition, I include three works demonstrating as many variations of my flow technique. The first process is the direct flowing method, which is exemplified by the works "Vegetation" and a large, untitled work consisting of a dominant blue area surrounded by a delicate light green area. In these works, I moved the paint around on the canvas while it was submerged in an element not easily mixable with the composition of the paint. I allowed certain areas to mix while keeping others separate during the direction of the flow of paint on the canvas. This control and application of the paint gave me some unusual formations and aesthetically pleasing shapes of color. The second variation of the method can be viewed in a smaller untitled work included in my exhibition. In this piece there is a blue flowing form which is encased by heavy, angular brush marks of white, light blue and brown. This combination of two different applications of paint led me to still another variation, as seen in the large, dark blue abstraction in my show. In this third

variation, I combined the two preceeding methods. First I flowed the paint to an appropriate design as indicated by my first method, and secondly, I added brush strokes to emphasize and highlight areas of the composition. Thirdly, I again flowed the paint, covering and overlapping different areas to add and build to the structure. I achieved greater depth with this process over the other two, although I lost some of the freshness obtained in the other techniques. All three processes fascinated me and I will continue to experiment with them. They offer a creative freedom by not restricting one to any recognizable objects, and also offer an endless amount of color variation. I find them exciting to create as well as to view.

The art world is built on an emotional foundation. It is the artist's emotion that influences his work to such a degree that no two artists ever produce exactly the same descriptive representation of an object. Emotion governs art both visually and productively, and as Mr. Spock of the Starship Enterprise constantly reminds us, "emotion is illogical". The art world is a world of contradiction, even the most steadfast of rules can be found to contain exceptions. It is difficult to discuss this world in any depth without eventually contradicting ones own philosophy, yet

it is a rewarding world. It offers extremes in success or failure that only a few careers can duplicate, not only in the monetary sense but in opportunities for individuality. Few artists can stay depressed after accomplishing a self-satisfying work. Vincent Van Gogh once wrote to his brother, Theo, and said:

> "I am as rich as Croesus, not in money, but rich because I have found in my work something to which I can devote myself with heart and soul, and which gives inspiration and zest to life". (4)

I too feel rich. I feel gifted and anxious to start a career in art. I look back at my graduate studies and see them as not only a learning experience but as a period that has given me the confidence to become the fine artist I am capable of being.

In this verbal portion of my culminating project, I have provided the reader with insights to my philosophies, my development at Lindenwood IV, and some of my artistic styles and techniques. But it must be remembered that any analysis of my art falls short before the ultimate concrete reality of the work itself, and

this paper can only be used as a supplement to actually viewing my exhibition and seeing my work.

David R. Johnston

FOOTNOTES

(1) Matthiessen, Lucas and Margaret Staats, "Genetics of Art, Part II", Quest/77 Magazine, July/August 1977, page 40

(2) Quest/77 Magazine, Page 42

(3) Quest/77 Magazine, Page 39

(4) Irving and Jean Stone, My Life and Love Are One, Boulder; Blue Mountain Arts, 1976, page 56

CATALOGUE FOR EXHIBITION

"Big Truck, Little Girl", (11" x 8½") Photo Silk Screen

"George" (14" x 22") Red Conte

"Karin-I" (22" x 31") Red Conte

"Karin-II" (22¼" x 34¼") Pencil

"Missouri Night" (30" x 47") Acrylic Paint

"People" (14" x 23") Pen and Ink

"Uncle Tuffy I" (24" x 36") Acrylic Paint

"Uncle Tuffy II" (39" x 44") Acrylic Paint

"Untitled" A (42" x 39½") Mixed Medium

"Untitled" B (40" x 24") Mixed Medium

"Untitled" C (39¼" x 47½") Mixed Medium

"Vegetation" (22¼" x 45") Mixed Medium

"Watergate" (17½" x 22½") Pen and Ink