

A DISCOURSE ON DRAWING

by

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~~P378~~
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P378
S0265



FIGURE, 1960

(Photograph 1)

The purpose of this paper is to examine my artistic endeavors in drawing. I hope to analyse and to interpolate the individualism in my work without this paper becoming a confession of precious thoughts. Coincidental to this personal examination and in order to realize my creative potential I want to understand the relative importance of the forces that have inspired my work. Only then can I commit myself to a more personal and intimate artistic relationship.

I will attempt a selective review of my drawing beginning with a figure drawn in 1960 (Photograph 1). I chose this particular figure drawing because I feel that it is the most successful of all my older works. It is very like At the River, an early painting by Claude Monet. The subject is relaxed and the light is diffused which softens and simplifies the form. There is great economy of work. Notice the lack of detail in the face. The arrangement of light and dark areas is reminiscent of Whistler's approach to geometric composition. The setting is lyrical like his in the way the figure floats and evaporates. The drawing's tipped plane is like VanGogh's perspective although the line is certainly not emotionally expressive like his. This is really an eclectic drawing.

The Modern Era in art has allowed me to gorge myself on the casual attitude toward art that I saw in this period. I don't mean that Modern Work is in any way less than other work, but that it encouraged me to corrupt the media in any way that I chose. The sweep of this liberating aspect of Modern Art was very appealing to me (and to millions of others, too). Here it was not my task to search for new motives, rather, I think that my energies were channeled into making a unique statement disciplined



ROCKS AND BRUSH, 1966

(Photograph 2)



LITHOGRAPH, 1967

(Photograph 3)

by the artists of the 19th and 20th centuries. In retrospect I am able to acknowledge my indebtedness to them. At that time (1960-61) I was somewhat oblivious to their power.

VanGogh, Matisse, and Nolde were among the Moderns important to my further development. In the work of the first two artists mentioned I see distorted form, simple flat color, expressive lines and shortened planes. In the work of a German Expressionist like Nolde all the symbols of VanGogh and Matisse are intensified. Forms are even distorted until they no longer resemble nature. Emphasis is given to strong line and color which are used to express emotional extremes. I see all these qualities in work that I have done.

In 1966 I gave close attention to light and its effects on simple natural objects. Rocks and brush are emphasized by an intense light that I interpreted and which I used in a personal way to heighten my appreciation of these things (Photograph 2). Their solidity is interpreted by the use of hatched and blurred lines and light. I seemed to have been using line as a continuous series of points on butting and overlapping planes. The lines in my drawings possess a quality like the broken edges of pottery. The forms are free moving and flow over the page automatically like those of Kandinsky. In a lithograph of this period there is no solid line either (Photograph 3). Areas are created by groups of wooly lines, thumb smudges, and the juxtapositioning of skinny and fat lines. Tactilly both the rock drawing and the lithograph remind me of deKooning paintings in that they have a worked-in look. Further, the etching ground in the drawing was painted onto the page.



SERIGRAPH, 1966

(Photograph 4)

Color was introduced casually to help indicate volume on the paper's single dimension. I tried to tell all I knew about the weight, feel, and color of rocks, grass, and dirt with a few tools like blue crayon and etching ground rubbed over the page. The intent was surface-centered in order to cause a reaction to the tactility of these tools. I think my lines and smudges retain something of the nature of these objects. They are hard and soft and subject to decay just at the real rocks and grasses are. The drawing destroys the flatness of the surface of the paper and the casual observer would not seek objectivity in it. The drawing does not look like particular rocks or a special kind of grass.

To complete my survey of past work I include a discussion of a serigraph (Photograph 4). This was a very direct statement for me to have made. The influence of Japanese prints is easily seen in the choice of and the flat quality of color. The bush in the upper corner was a vehicle to help arrange the other thick encrusted-looking colors. The black lines are heavy and woody without resembling lovely delicate bamboo or willows. The space is organized Orientally. My use of space has a slightly disquieting decorative aspect. Two things, however, make this serigraph-drawing extraordinary. They are my particular placement of small red and black spots and the careful interpretation of edges on forms. My interest is in a Gorky-like use of line and space that isn't solid and in a line whose broken edge reacts with the relative sterility of a flat ground.

In more current work, I am able to perceive these recurring influences. They are the movement and tactility found in works by German



PENCIL SERIES, 1969

(Photograph 5)



BROWN PAPER DRAWING, 1969

(Photograph 6)

Expressionists like Nolde and Ensor and concern with minimal color as in certain Japanese prints. This year I've been experimenting and discarding ideas that I get as I worked in a attempt to focus my efforts.

The pencil series reflects my great interest in line (Photograph 5). The directness of the glutinous path of the lines must be a hold over from the emotional paintiness found in the work of abstract expressionists like Tworlov, deKooning, and Guston. The automatic quality of the stringy lines seems very like an Oriental calligraphy, too. The colors that I used are limited. In the brown paper drawing the surface color is used to create space when another color laps onto it (Photograph 6). There is no intentionally blended color. Certain mixes do take place subtly as color changes from one area to another. There is no modeling. Color acts to disintegrate the force of the forms in the drawing. Its effects on the objects minimizes and distorts natural forms so one is not able to see them clearly and is able to work over the page in an intuitive way.

Now, though, I feel that I can reject, without twinges of guilt, glamorous tools in favor of ink, crayon, and pencil. Concomitant with this idea I also feel that it is necessary for me to provide myself with a system that does away with approaches that I used in the past. To produce something worthwhile I want to ignore certain "rules". In other words, I don't want my drawings to depend on arrangements of line, space, texture, special shapes, or colored areas, etc. Rather, I am unconcerned with their appearance at all. The only qualities like these that survive in my drawings are those that are submissive to the total unit of



BROWN GRASS

(Photograph 7)



WRITING

(Photograph 8)

work. I only want to become sensitized to the shape of a line, for instance, after I have first been bombarded by the total drawing. Then, these remaining elements may emerge a little less independently, a little more subservient to the mass of the work which is my primary concern. It's true that at the moment that I am drawing I am not really acutely conscious of the forms that I'm creating. It's after working from outside the drawing that I see the color and lines begin to act within the drawing that I feel most successful. The really frustrating thing to have happen is when I deny this and end up with "interesting" shapes, allow my sentiment for line to become rampant, and in general to regress into the comforting womb of old stuff.

Several examples will help illustrate my ideas. In the brown grassy drawing I would like to think that the observer notices the whole picture before becoming involved or searching for some accustomed crutch within the drawing (Photograph 7). If this is a little difficult to do, then I think that the drawing is successful. The next drawing is made from writing (Photograph 8). I want the "permanence" of line to become as ridiculous as a word that is repeated over and over again. The importance of words is their total meaning. The drawing is attempting to exist on this level, too. The elemental force of the third drawing in red and blue crayon lies in its confirmation to the size and shape of the page (Photograph 9). The edge of the page emerges as the more important force in the drawing. The lines take on a new sense.



RED AND BLUE CRAYON

(Photograph 9)

Therefore, to make a truly significant artistic statement I have to rely upon my own creative instincts. My invention is accomplished when forms, color, and lines are used in a manner which doesn't interfere with but which reveals my sensitivity to their existence as independent but cooperative modes of expression.