



Truth in exploration  
by Catherine Wenrich Venable

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Painting  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

It was the purpose of my Thesis experience to structure an approach that sought a freedom of painting consistent only in its adherence to principles of honesty in exploration. Bruce Nauman stated, "The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths." I would add that the intent of the artist should be to reveal truths about events in which the artist is a participant/observer by exploring visually all the elements which make up this experience.

This process begins with a self-examination of the artist as a participant/observer, faithfully recording without an eye to the final conclusion.

It became my overall purpose to record certain events by depicting all the nuances of time, place, and emotions comprising an event without reference to a predisposed result. An event is a generic term within the limitations of language to describe in a nontemporal sense related happenings that are not fixed in place, time, or emotions.

To consciously preplan the painting could limit the work to an illustration of a theme or idea. My purpose was to avoid the trap of preplanning.

Specifically, I purposefully accepted the notion that life is not a series of stand alone tableaux or scenes as in a roll of film, but rather that life is a continuum of interrelated elements in which the action is a composite of ever moving time, geography, emotions, reactions, and viewpoints. In the art of painting, then, life cannot be "stop actioned" as in the Renaissance "window" approach, or by multi viewpointing a stopped action as in the Cubist approach. Nor can life be painted by abstracting an emotional response to an event without visual reference to the geographical and temporal relationships which comprise elements of it. Emotion interpreted without visual reference to the event giving rise to it or to the time frames (plural) comprising this experience is too ambiguous for me. It is the filtering of truth rather than providing a whole revelation. To depict an event the painter must give visual substance to all the elements and show their interrelationships including the artists own participation in it. Thus a faithful depiction is a conglomeration of all the nuances of information experienced and interpreted by the participant/observer artist. I seek a recordation in meaningful form of the subtle interrelationships involved in a total experience: emotionally, temporally, and geographically.

My free play of color introduces emotional responses into the abstract so that they can be depicted with reference to each other element making up the whole. The color forms also allowed me to visually highlight different elements both in a geographic and temporal sense. Finally, free play allows the depiction of contradictions in and among all the elements, particularly when using intense color combinations.

The use of representational forms allows the viewer to abandon the straitjacket of Renaissance and Cubists "freeze frames" without confusing the viewer with non-specific abstractions. I use flat shapes which purposely run countergrain to linear perspective. Thus the viewer is given sign posts of the

territory to be explored without limiting his response to the territory or diverting his attention to the other elements present.

As Cezanne, Picasso, and Kandinsky used multigeographic viewpoints to convey the reality of movement in observation and in the scene observed, I too include movement in my depiction. My works are composites of movement. That which is observed and the participant/ observer/artist both move geographically, emotionally, and temporally. But since these movements are temporally linked in a loose fashion my work links the elements of the event in a loop, not a straight line.

The humor in my work is introduced through "irreverent" imagery and tongue in cheek juxtapositions of color, form, and line. I satirize pretentious high art through an innocent/naive approach to the production of painting itself. I try to entice the viewer into resolving the paradoxes, ambiguities, and other puzzles presented by the work so that he or she might ultimately arrive at an understanding of the truth contained therein.

The outcome of the Thesis experience tended to confirm my approach as valid and productive of meaningful pieces of work. Generally, I was able to escape the tyranny of linear perspective and the restrictive confinement "freeze frame" reality imposes on creative thinking. I was able to maintain representational reference points throughout the work to assist not only myself as the participant/ observer artist, but to give some points of reference to the viewer of the completed work.

Throughout the Thesis experience, I became more successful in avoiding pre-planning a painting. Each painting was the culmination of an exploratory process in which the depiction of the process was as apparent as the depiction of the event. In this way the truths revealed were unplanned, spontaneous, and devoid of manipulation. They became by the very nature of their spontaneity more meaningful.

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY  
Bozeman, Montana

June 1985

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APPROVAL

of a thesis submitted by  
  
Catherine Wenrich Venable

This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

17 May 1985  
Date

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Approved for the Major Department

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Date

Richard [Signature]  
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Approved for the College of Graduate Studies

5-20-85  
Date

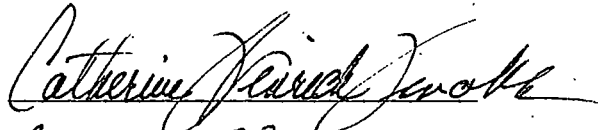
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## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

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## LIST OF SLIDES

1. Crystal Lonliness In Brittle Relief  
108" x 65"
2. The Shade Replied  
108" x 65"
3. A Sunlit Phoenix  
108" x 65"
4. Surreal Evasive Stepping of Familiam Chills  
3' x 4'
5. Clad In White Reclining  
108" x 65"
6. Pale Flowers On The Mantle  
108" x 65"
7. Sanctified In Elysian Fire  
108" x 65"
8. Leaves Thick With Memory  
108" x 65"
9. Uncertain Truths  
108" x 65"
10. Wind of Spices  
108" x 65"
11. Falling As The Silence  
108" x 65"
12. Bend No More In Revery  
22" x 28"
13. Gentle Veiled Eyes  
22" x 28"
14. With Ribbons Streaming  
22" x 28"
15. Return No More  
22" x 28"



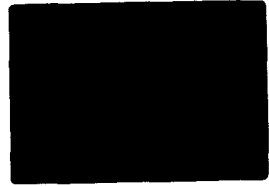
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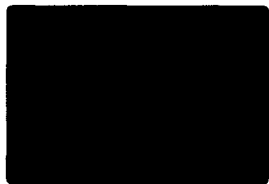
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