



A mirror of man  
by Lawrence Anlow Hayes

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF APPLIED ART  
Montana State University  
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Abstract:

It's a wise man who knows how little he knows". This quotation of Socrates might be said to be the very reason I ventured forth upon this particular phase of my education.

- As a painter who is aware of the need for new conceptual forms for his personal expression in his art I requested and was granted a year's leave-of-absence from my position in the Helena School System, The main problem and its three subsidiary problems which presented themselves to me in the course of my graduate work were as follows: 1. The subordination of any preconceived idea of the finished painting to the actual development of the painting.

2. The enlargement of color concepts.

3. The integration of form with the surrounding area of the canvas.

4. The stabilizing of varied techniques and types of expression to the point where my use of them is the result of directed focus of choice.

The solutions to these problems are not easily isolated from each other but, rather, function in an integral fashion. To achieve these solutions a new awareness of the act of painting and of the painting itself was quite necessary. Through experimentation, reading, discussion, study of paintings and reproductions new channels of thought were opened which helped to lead to the solutions of the problems which presented themselves at this time.

Through the use of a variety of media including lacquer, used as binder and vehicle, tissue -paper, glue, oil-paint, and ink, and by using a number of techniques such as scumbling, over-painting, under-painting, glazing, direct painting, painting wet-in-wet, and collage, I arrived at satisfying solutions to the four problems named above.

A detailed description of methods and materials used in achieving the paintings is included in the main body of the thesis under the illustrations.

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L. A. H.

## ABSTRACT

"It's a wise man who knows how little he knows". This quotation of Socrates might be said to be the very reason I ventured forth upon this particular phase of my education.

As a painter who is aware of the need for new conceptual forms for his personal expression in his art I requested and was granted a year's leave-of-absence from my position in the Helena School System.

The main problem and its three subsidiary problems which presented themselves to me in the course of my graduate work were as follows:

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Through the use of a variety of media including lacquer, used as binder and vehicle, tissue-paper, glue, oil-paint, and ink, and by using a number of techniques such as scumbling, over-painting, under-painting, glazing, direct painting, painting wet-in-wet, and collage, I arrived at satisfying solutions to the four problems named above.

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## INTRODUCTION

To discuss something as personal and intimate as the creative act of painting borders on the impossible, in my opinion. At best, one can only hope to trace influences, direct or indirect, impressions, moods, remembered outlooks, and also one's emotional outlook at the time of the action of creating. The painting, being the product of a particular time in the life of the painter, becomes an anachronism when removed from context by discussion unless of such matters as technique, or social or historical significance.

To me, a good painting needs no explanation. It has its own life because it represents not only the sum of the painter's experiences but also the sum of the accumulated experiences of the painter's society. The man who is a painter does have the opportunity to express his summation of man in his society in visual terms. Often this presentation is not pleasant, but on the obverse side, man is often not pleasant to observe.

What is modern man? Is he headed for oblivion through loss of individuality, or through destructive devices of his own intellect? Has his concept of himself, which has been of such high conceit that he has fashioned the gods in his image, fallen to such a low state that he will willingly walk to this oblivion? I think not! To me, man has all the weaknesses which are attributed to him, but how could he escape them, being man? On the other hand, he, to me, still possesses the grandeur, the nobility of intellect which sets him apart from all other forms of

creation. This, in my opinion, is his redeeming grace.

In much of today's art the concept of man is often confused with the society in which he exists. As a result of this confusion, the representations of man are, to say the least, unflattering. In the field of "Pop Art" not man, but the society of man is exploited for the sake of painting content. Unfortunately, man and his society are inseparable and as a result the inherent qualities of man himself are often lost in the condemnatory representations of his society as seen by some contemporary artists. Their particular representations may contain a partial truth, but, to me, the losses in the concept of man which ensue as a result of the expression of a partial truth of man's society make the cost of this partial truth exorbitant. In other words, to me, man is being regarded too much as a social being, a member of a group, a part of a mass, and not enough as the individual he also is.

Therefore, in my paintings I have attempted to capture what to me is the essence of this grandeur and dignity of man. This same essence is found in the anthropocentric art of past civilizations and even in Prehistoric sculpture of Europe and in the cave-paintings of the Tassili district in Africa. Consider the Venus of Willendorf, the small, ivory Venus of Lascaux, the Frieze of the Archers on Procession Street in ancient Nineveh, the monumental, priest-dictated sculpture and paintings of ancient Egypt, and the free, life-like carvings of Tel-el-Amarna from another period of Egyptian history, the Cretan deities, the idealized man-gods of Greek art, the entire vast parade of man's

conceptions of himself down through the course of his history to current times.

Each painter is highly aware of the work of other painters, either through viewing originals or reproductions, and there are preferences which in turn tend to influence the work of the viewing painter. To isolate these influences in the painter's work is not a simple task. In my own case some of my greatest response has been to the works of Cezanne, Rouault, Picasso, Pollack and de Kooning, and I also wish to include painters of high ability if not universal recognition, men such as Robert DeWeese, and Ric Roletto.

True, my paintings are not always flattering to the human figure and might possibly, at first glance, tend to contradict my prior statement of conviction but to me they each state, in their own way, my concept of the dignity of man.

#### The Solution of the Problems

Visual problems in my image of man are the following:

1. The subordination of any preconceived idea of the finished painting to the actual development of the painting.
2. The enlargement of color concepts.
3. The integration of form with the surrounding area of the canvas.
4. The stabilizing of varied techniques and types of expression to the point where my use of them is the result of directed focus of choice.



In the following explanations of the solutions to these stated problems I should like to offer examples which to me serve as a step-by-step record of my arrival at my present series of paintings. A discussion of the techniques employed will accompany the illustrations.

Because of previous training, I am inclined to be rather formal in my thought processes. Therefore, problem one, the subordination of the preconceived idea of the painting to the actual development of the painting, was perhaps the most difficult for me because it not only involved technique, but also it involved the more intimate aspects of my attitudes toward painting. My greatest mental hurdle in this respect was giving up the preconceived idea of the painting as seen in my mind's-eye and allowing the painting to grow quite naturally out of the action on the canvas. This is not meant to imply that there was no object or goal in mind, but, rather, that the action taking place on the canvas was allowed to suggest the form to employ and exploit in achieving the desired goal. On pages 10 and 11 will be found the first successful attempts at solving this problem. Having the goal in mind of a fairly representational human figure I began marking the canvas using a piece of splintered bamboo which would give a casual, non-rigid line with thin oil paint as the medium. As the paintings evolved, the figures began assuming their growth toward completion. Further illustrations of the solution of this problem will be found on page 12 .

Pursuing problem one still further I began using collage. The material chosen for one of the collage techniques was tissue paper, chosen in a limited range of colors, which would allow for quick application or removal of large areas of color. Oil-paint was used to vary the hue of the tissue and lacquer served as a transparent adhesive. Through the use of under-painting, over-painting, glazing, and scumbling this collage technique was enriched.

In the beginning, the technique employed a minimum of collage and a predominance of oil-paint, (see the illustration on page 13 ). As the technique developed the use of tissue in the collage increased while the use of oil-paint diminished. (See illustrations on pages 14, 15 and 16.) Toward the end of this particular experiment the balance had returned to its original proportions. (See page 17).

Another experiment in collage which proved of great value and interest to me was in working with the used cleaning blotters from the etching department. These particular blotters are used to absorb the excess liquids used in varnishing and cleaning the metal plates before inking them for printing. As a result of this absorption the blotters acquire rich, angular discolorations ranging from a pale gray to a deep umber. Assembled in temporary composition on a wall, affixed by pins, and photographed after each arrangement, this type of collage offers a spontaneous, natural, and literally endless medium for experimentation. After achieving an arrangement which was particularly pleasing to me, the collage was taken from the wall, carefully glued in that arrangement

to a permanent mounting board and then oil-paint mixed with turpentine was used to amplify forms. See page 18 for an illustration of this technique.

Of what value are these particular collage techniques? They obviously are destined to a very short life because of the perishable nature of paper. But when one stops to consider-how important is it to a painting that it should survive into the centuries? Is longevity synonymous with quality? I think not! Leonardo created masterpieces in ice for the amusement of patrons and their dinner guests. Did the fact that they would disappear in a matter of hours make them any less as works of art? No, for they had served their appointed function. The appointed time for communication with the spectator had been fulfilled. This thought is not meant to imply that permanence in a painting is not desirable, but rather, that, to me, permanence is not necessary to the validity of a work of art. Hence, this work in collage has had its main value in assuming the aspects of a type of "instant painting".

The problem of enlargement of color concepts which on the surface presented no great difficulty evolved into a quite complicated study of subtleties lying within the color-wheel. For example, because of previous training, I was accustomed to using the complement in achieving a grayed tone of any hue but through experimenting I evolved a most satisfactory method of graying by using an analogous of one or the other complement. To cite a specific example, in the landscape,

Sun and the Morning, (see page 19) I had the problem of approaching realism with a limited palette. The subject matter would be basically hues of green, tending to range from warm to cool in feeling. Keeping in mind the fact that the entire canvas should be integrated in color and form, I deliberately avoided the use of alizarin crimson which is the perfect complement of the phthalocyanine green which was chosen for the dominant hue and chose instead a cadmium orange to which was added a minute amount of cadmium red. This resulted in a medium value of green which, by the addition of more of the red-orange or more of the green could be manipulated in either direction, to warm or cool, to achieve the desired effect. This particular problem was deliberately kept in an extremely limited range to allow for greater concentration on the color problem.

Further experiments in color were carried on during the entire year and one which proved of great value came about during my work with the colored tissue-paper. Trying various methods of applying the tissue brought subtle variations in the quality of the color of the tissue. I discovered that three methods of adhering the tissue to the canvas produced three distinct types of color character. In the first, both the surface of the canvas and the tissue were painted with lacquer, the bonding medium, producing a rich, transparent color which could combine to the eye with the underlying colors. When white or yellow pigments underlay the tissue a rich luminosity resulted. In the second, the surface of the canvas alone was painted with lacquer and dry tissue laid

in it, producing a translucent color quality which could be employed in modifying areas of underlying color, or in strengthening suggested form. The third method of application consisted in laying dry tissue-paper on a dry canvas area and painting the lacquer on the surface of the applied section of tissue only, producing a rich, opaque, mottled effect. This, when used as the final layer, served to complete the suggested form.

In the integration of form with surrounding area of the canvas I was faced with a problem completely different in nature and yet very closely related to the problem of color concepts as stated above.

In the traditional renaissance concept of the planes of the picture the canvas is viewed with the illusion of depth or recession in mind. This was achieved through the use of aerial-perspective, linear-perspective, and tri-division of the canvas into foreground, middleground, and background. My thought processes or attitudes toward the canvas had to change completely in direction from the depth or receding plane to the picture plane. Linear perspective was employed little, if at all, while form relationships were used to suggest depth as were the super-imposition of the dark values over the light values, the over-lapping of color forms, and the use of form and brush-stroke. (See illustrations on page 20 ).

Both illustrations tend toward the abstract. This allowed complete freedom from subject matter or content which in turn brought about complete freedom for concentration on the immediate problem of integration.

The solution to problem four, the stabilizing of varied techniques and types of expression to the point where my use of them is the result of directed focus of choice, has come about quite naturally as a result of the experiences involved in the solution of the first three problems. Each of the other problems with its accompanying solution provided a base upon which to place the succeeding problem. The enlargement of color concepts by experimentation in the mixing of color, the study of the effect of colors placed in conjunction with each other and the subtle changes wrought in color by various painting techniques such as scumbling, under-painting, collage, etc., led directly into the problem of integration of form with the surrounding area of the canvas. The latter in its turn opened the way for the main problem, the subordination of the preconceived idea of the painting to the development on the canvas. The subsequent solution of this problem created for me a new awareness of the "oneness" or totality of the painting.



Titles --- Figure studies I and II

Palette -- Automotive black (Fig. 1), raw umber (Fig. 2)

Problem - The subordination of the idea to the action of the painting.

Solution - The use of a splintered bamboo stick and thin paint to allow for a more relaxed form interpretation, and allowing the painting to suggest its own direction toward the goal.































