

LIVED EXPERIENCE AND PAINTING

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A painting is the distillation of months of experience, synthesized into an image that is seen in one moment. It is the journal of a profound relationship between a person and the energies through which lives are shaped.



Birth Landscape

*Silent mystery, excitement.
The eye is opening
revealing a fresh doorway
into incarnation.
The challenge of a body
beginning again.*

1983, Gouache, 21" x 28"

Painting and Movement

With each new painting, I find myself exploring a new range of movement. My body, it seems, is far more gifted to venture into the new than are my thoughts. I trust my body because it gives me the feedback of vitality and well-being. From this, I know that it does not lie.

The arrival of a new image in my mind's eye is always a cause for celebration. However, once the excitement over its arrival has settled, there comes a feeling of frustration. This is the realization that the image is beyond my present skills to render. If I wish to fully honor its presence in my life, I must set to work to meet it as a peer. That exploration first expresses as movement: initially incoherent motions which, when repeated, gradually gain definition until finally they "snap in" —they become part of the repertoire of my nervous system and connect in my awareness with already established patterns. With this breakthrough in physical expression comes clearer vision and the ability to paint what previously seemed beyond my means. I paint until I become "blind" again and repeat the process.



Feeling Sense

*There is a vision in my feelings,
There is an eye which is not on
eye, yet sees like an eye.
A tentacle still . . . groping.*

1978, Watercolor. 14" x 20"

Birthing the Content

The image begins to take material form only when new patterns of motion have been established. It may be new movements of the hand, the discovery of a muscle hitherto unused and numb, or a complex release into a new deeper breath. This may express in the curve of a line, the particular hue of a color, or in the compositional unity of the piece. I do not approach the painting from a need for content; the content takes shape from the energy finding physical expression. It is the movement of the energy which settles into the appropriate form. I do not analyze the meaning of the form as it is progressing: I follow a "gut feeling" search for comfort and balance. This brings about the content finally achieved.

Power Tree

*The grey lifeless covering dissolved.
I was touching the essence of myself,
and though I still felt numb,
I stood revealed and the unfolding
could not be stopped.
I was willing to measure my spirit
against its ability to live in a body.*

1980, Gouache, 22" x 15"





Forest

*"Come deeper,"
I hear my feelings call.
"Come deeper, and attempt more!
You must be fearless
on this journey of no return."*

1981, Gouache/ Prismacolor. 22" x 30"

Commitment to the Image

I marvel at the deep intelligence at work in this growth from image through movement to painting. Each image is a prophecy of an essential integration needing to take place. It does not become "alive" in the psyche until it is given complete commitment. It is somewhat like choosing a relationship . . . there are many possibilities, and one must make discriminate choices. When an image has received commitment, it begins its work of bringing new, rich experiences into my daily life. The coherence of these experiences, in hindsight, is truly beyond the realm of coincidences. As the image is developing however, it is much harder to recognize the continuity or even the connection between painting and life events. A painting is therefore an exercise in trust to which scrupulous inner honesty keeps one in tune.

As a painting progresses, different aspects of it become magnified before consciousness, thereby guiding in an orderly fashion what needs to be assessed within oneself. Always, the ability to paint marks the fact that new life has been birthed in the psyche.

The beauty of using an image as a guide for growth is that it keeps my efforts focused through a series of states which would not otherwise be perceived as continuous. The growing unity of the image is a center around which related experiences can be organized, thereby greatly expanding the scope of the synthesis finally attained.
