DOCUMENT BOOK

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St Mary's College of Maryland ART 493: SMP in Studio Art

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Marathon Initial Content Writing Assignment

In my art I was running through the motions of creating art trying to give the work a minimal amount of pre-production cultivation while also making sure to have goals with each individual work that I was creating. Each piece completed during the Marathon has the potential to stand alone but there are also certain through lines that ended up arising in the art works which seem to tie certain pieces together. These ties, due to the nature of the Marathon, seem to be what I am inherently interested in exploring or discussing when creating art. ⁽¹⁾ I am interested in varied renditions of a subject and the ability for each of these different renditions to convey a new meaning or expose a new facet of the same subject. ⁽²⁾ In my work I also focus on the essential characteristics which define the objects and compositions. ⁽³⁾ The relationship between the subject matter and me also seems to be critical to my experience of creating art as well.

Variations in my work are very subtle and mainly consist in changes of line qualities; these variations resulted from a combination of active choices and a desire to allow material to determine some of the outcome of a work. In the monotype portraits these variations were an active choice and related directly to the person whom I was drawing. I have noticed the way different renditions of the same print can convey distinctly different moods and thus different aspects of the same basic image. I wanted to combine this with the way we see many sides of someone we get to know very well. As time goes on and we see this person in different contexts we get to see many varied reproductions of their personality. This seems inherently linked to the process of printmaking, specifically monotypes, because of the way they will

continually look slightly different but can originate from the exact same place. The differences that occur in the end result depend on many changing factors involved in the tangible physical process of creating the plate and in the actual process of printing on paper. This is a similar microcosm for the way our "self" results out of a series of actual occurrences that shape the way we are presented or present ourselves. It becomes inherently interesting then to allow time to pass, both so you can understand a person better, and also so you can understand the process of making multiple renditions of a work that originates from the same source.

This idea of renditions suggests that at the core of something there are essential characteristics of a person or object. These exist completely separate from those aspects and actually exist in those things which never vary. They are the qualities of anything which act as a sort of divining rod for the Id of that person or idea. In visual art these things are those qualities which provide instant recognizability or incur resonation within the viewer. These are also essential elements for a composition and exist as the manner by which a 2-d representation can convey the existence of a 3-d object or even an abstract idea.

The relationship between the subject and artist underlies or more accurately runs parallel to both of these interests. It is where the bases for both the ability to create renditions lie and also creates the ability to hopefully be able to ascertain what the actual essential characteristics of a subject are. The relationship is different than both of these aspects though because it does not actually exist on the page in any tangible manner but does affect the end result. It is something that exists purely in the process of creation and also in the process of viewing. This interest is one that I do not know is possible to convey to a viewer clearly but

when it is strong and well done can leave a taste on the work that is possible to pick up on even if one is not able to discern its nature. In the portraits created I can read much into the variations create because of the fact that I know the sitter well and have seen so many different aspects of them as a person that any shift in facial expression means a world of difference in the coinciding mood.

As a whole the Marathon art served as a well suited springboard from which to dive into the rest of SMP as a whole and begin to see larger themes that I want to explore in my art. The fast pace and relatively unrelated nature of the works created allowed for a wide delving into materials and subjects that helped both expand my experience with creating and also help narrow down which areas I wish to continue further. The feedback received after allowed me to step outside of what I thought or found in my art and see from another point of view and either accept the analysis or advice or not.

Goal Statement: First review period

For this midterm critique I want to explore how we simplify forms and use them as stand-ins to represent ideas about people, objects and locations. The end goal will to be able to use this understanding of forms and their significance to enter into a larger discussion about symbols and icons. Within this section I wanted to start off small and personal so that I could best understand how these transitions into representations occur and how we can instill significance through them. I intend to explore symbols that I encounter in my daily life and scenes that have come to represent something larger to the community that I exist in, namely the St. Mary's community. When representing these scenes and symbols I want to make many different renditions of them and have some be exactly the same, some with only minute variations and others which are total deviations from the original. This will highlight the importance that repetition has in creating icons and also the way repetition can be done through unique ways.

Artist Statement: First review period

My art here is about capturing an internal reaction to an external subject. This reaction is the mechanism by which the subject is internalized and adopted within the viewer. The pieces are abstracted in nature but are based in observation. The observational aspect is vital to the compositions because they inherently relate to the subject specifically. The landscapes serve as a catalyst for the creation of the piece, and the work attempts to convey something larger about the subject matter. The changes within the repetition of the motif also play an important role in getting to the core of the internal reaction. The essential nature of the subject

matter is found within those elements that remain the same between the various works. The creation of multiple renderings becomes necessary to uncover what remains when the context of observation is shifted.

This constant aspect, the essential, is what I am most interested in investigating further in the future. It is what allows an image to resonate upon inspection and gives it meaning beyond simply being pigment applied to a surface. This resonation is of great importance. Art can serve as the go-between upon which the observer becomes more keenly aware that these sub-conscience connections are created in mundane life. In this sense the constructed nature of art can make the observer more able to observe the constructed nature of their life as well.

Goal Statement: Final show

During this second half of the semester I am going to expand my materials used to include water color paints as well as pastels to test the different qualities that new mediums inherently bring to the work. This will hopefully help capture different expressions of the same subject matter and point to the arbitrariness of the forms of representation we agree to use in communication. I also intend to incorporate more of an emphasis on mark making to bring out evidence of the artists hand in the creation of art as an object. I plan on using new methods of taping off sections that will allow me to more fully enter into a dialogue between the landscape and symbols used in communication.

Artist statement: Final show

The art exists as an object, the landscape they depict exists as an idea.

The empty spaces in the pastel compositions prevent the viewer from fully immersing in the visual space while simultaneously allowing them to more fully engage with the materiality of the work. This tension underscores the artificial nature of art while not detracting from art's ability to convey a message that still rings true. The simplification of form comes together to create a composition that is a signifier of the location it depicts. It captures the essential elements of the scene, amplifies them and then projects them through the artist on to paper for the viewer to see. This process is the foundation of communication. Ideas are formed, translated and exchanged through language and pictures for other people to understand. Communication is no more "real" than these landscapes. The work becomes about the essential paradox that exists to facilitate the transfer of ideas between people.

The bodies of work *Black Needle Rush* and *Soundside* are each one location. They present different interpretations of the same subject. The pastels and watercolor work together in showing a diversity of ideas. The translucent colors of the mediums allow each layer to be viewed and it is easier to understand how they affect each other. Each one adds to the next, and the overall effect is a culmination of those layers below.

Studio Visits

Tommy Dahlberg: The discussion focused first on the significance of drawing and hand gestures showing up in the art work, in regards to the pastels. The series of marks on the page appeared to be the most interesting thing happening in the landscapes. The visit occurred before I abandoned the idea of incorporating symbols into the works and so we also discussed the importance of incorporating the symbols into the existing compositions of landscapes. This would be vital to pulling off the incorporation of the two successfully. If the two could work together, like the rabbit-duck, then that could prove very interesting. Ed Ruscha was mentioned to look at, much of my work and ideas are similar to what he is doing. He utilized text on top of pristine landscapes instead of pictographic symbols. This spurred a few works utilizing text which ultimately did not end up in the show but are still of interest to me.

The lasting impact of the conversation was the desire to push accidents and marks of the process further. It could prove interesting to use these accidents as points of departure for future works. The relationship between my own work and the history of landscape in the art world came up due to their non-traditional forms. This became something I focused on more heavily towards the end of the semester, when creating the pieces in the student show.

Diana Boros: Professor Boros works in the political science department and also has written two books about the importance of public spaces within the democratic process and the important role art can play in these public spheres. She largely teaches classes in political philosophy, one specifically about political thought in America. The discussion about the work was spurred by interest in what defines good citizenship, and how the context of American citizenship has shifted over time. This was able to focus in further and talk about the symbols and tools citizens use to communicate with each other. Idea transfer is the basis of how bonds are formed among people and the process of idea transfer is one that is constructed by the people who are communicating. If people have a better process for generating ideas the bonds that result can be better and create stronger connections.

Source to Self:

Cezanne, the Fauves and Wolf Kahn

Influenced by ideas of optics and the Impressionists Cezanne tries to address an issue of perception; refining the representation of this perception through revisiting sites multiple times. In my own work, I also attempt to capture a perception of the landscape which identifies its more essential characteristics. The largest way in which Cezanne's work and theories on art have influenced mine is in his desire to capture something more permanent in nature. He captured this more permanent nature through his implementation of motif, and I have adopted this method for myself. Through the process of returning continually one can view those aspects which do not change with the season or weather; that which remains through transitions is the desired image. A combination of images placed together can represent this essential truth.

Paul Cezanne worked from 1861-1906. His influences included Japonisme, Romanticism, Realism and Impressionism.¹ Important artists to his development included Gustave Courbet, Camille Pissarro and Ambroise Vollard, among others. He worked in the post-Impressionist era, 1880's-1914, and through the Impressionist movement was influenced to shift subject matter and manners of depiction. Cezanne has had a large impact on the

¹ "Paul Cézanne Biography, Art, and Analysis of Works." http://www.theartstory.org/artist-cezanne-paul.htm

development of modernism in general². He incorporated his academic training and a deep understanding of the theories into a new manner of representation. This new manner of representation was akin to the Impressionists and their desire to abandon the values imparted by academic art.³ The Impressionists and Realists had already begun the shift of subject matter to focus on the everyday scenes and people where they lived and worked. Cezanne continued with this and took the way in which this subject matter was depicted and further removed it from traditional forms.

Cezanne also shared in the Impressionist desire to explore the manners of visual perception and an interaction of light and space. A large technical difference between Cezanne and the Impressionists was his tendency to work in the studio rather than en plein air, especially in the early and later part of his career.⁴ Also important was that his perception and execution of space and light was so different from that of the Impressionists that, after an initial joint showing at the Salon des Refuses in 1863, he was rarely shown in conjunction with them again. The ephemerality of their paintings was not good enough for his purposes, instead of capturing light as it exists in the air or between the painter and subject Cezanne was capturing the light as it came out of the subject matter not as it would change throughout the day.⁵

Cezanne bridged the gap between Impressionism and later movements such as Cubism and Fauvism. He created a deliberate sense of paint handling and focused on making form, line

² Cézanne: The Late Work: Essays. (1977). New York. pg. 13

³ *Cézanne: The Late Work: Essays*. (1977). New York. pg. 55-70; The logic of Organized Sensations gives and illustrative description of his theory of art, specifically as it relates to his later works

⁴ Cézanne. Garden City, N.Y.1974.

⁵ Cézanne: The Late Work: Essays. (1977). New York. Pg. 74-5

and color come together to create a plastic object out of a painting, while representing the subject matter in a solid, non-shifting form.⁶ When creating art he visualized the world, and all that made it up, as a combination of three shapes: the cone, sphere and cylinder. Cezanne applied these shapes to fully understand those aspects which do not change and attempted to better understand those static characteristics through the use of motif. His subject matter was widely varied; from still lives, portraiture, figurative works and also landscape. The works of his which I am most interested in, and influenced by are his landscapes.

Within Cezanne's landscapes the motifs of the Chateau Noir and Mont Sainte-Vitoire at Aix are highly observational and also constructed abstractions. In *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from the Bibemus Quarry* (1897) Cezanne has repeated the often depicted mountain from a new vantage point. He has created simplified forms, giving only the most essential details to convey the mountain's peak over the cliffs edge. The desire to create a visual recreation akin to what a camera would see was not of importance to Cezanne, he was after a different sort of reality. He was able to go after this new reality because of the invention of the camera freed artists to pursue new forms of representation. When they no longer had to create art that produced a likeness, artists began to have more expressive goals for art.

The painting of Bibemus features a fundamentally horizontal layout and has clear and simplified delineation of colors and objects. The mountain peak distinguishes itself from the cliff face, the sky and the surrounding foliage through an emphasis on form created by complementary colored sections that result in implied lines. The use of complementary colors also suggests Cezanne's understanding and interest in color theory as it relates to the depiction

⁶ Cézanne: The Late Work: Essays. (1977). New York. Pg. 76-8

of space and how one perceives or interprets that space. He was using color as a tool in and of itself. The painting itself seems solid and sculptural, in opposition to the transient ephemeral work of the Impressionists. This is achieved through the creation of multiple solid planes that reconstruct the static landscape.

Cezanne influenced many artistic movements that followed. He has immeasurably affected the path of modernism through the impact he had on such artists as Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso.⁷ Outside of Cubism, another formative artistic movement he has influenced was the Fauves. Between 1899-1908 they redefined the use of color and placed a premium on the artist's emotional expression of a reaction to the subject matter – whether it is still lives, figurative work or landscape. The artists in this group consist of Henri Matisse, Andre Derain, Raoul Dufy and Maurice de Vlaminck.⁸ These artists began in an art world ready to place a priority on color as a main focus of art. Their trajectory allowed for continued abstraction and a shifting backdrop upon which future artists could expand the manners of perception and representation.

From Cezanne the Fauves took the use of paint to actively construct form with color, and they continued with subject matter of the daily encounters in modern life. Then they added in the emotions of the artist to the constructing mind, through the application of subjective color.⁹ Matisse, for example, intensified the colors and design elements, through his use of pattern, to create more fully cohesive compositions. In his philosophy¹⁰ there is a reflection of

⁷ Cézanne: The Late Work: Essays. (1977). New York. Pg. 176

⁸ "Fauvism." *The Hudson Review.*

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "Matisse -- Notes of a painter" Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas. Pg. 69-75

Cezanne's firmly held belief that every aspect of the composition adds to the overall effect of a work. It is also of note that Matisse is not striving for visual accuracy of objective reality, the same as Cezanne. The reality they both are trying to convey exists outside the tradition of visual replication that had been pursued by academics and more thoroughly rests in a representation that is achieved through alterations, simplifications and additions to what is in front of the artist. The result is a combined effort of the subject and the artist meeting on the page.

This is the same sort of representation, or "realism", that I am trying to create in my own work. This "realism" comes both from observed and my own subjective interaction with the motif, a coastal landscape. There is an inherent interaction taking place which forms at the center of art. A main difference between my work and Fauvism is in the way that I am viewing and organizing that reaction to the subject matter. The origin of my reaction is more inherently constructed in itself. The reaction does not come from some deeper part of my identity or self so much as it comes out of the identity that the society has helped me cultivate.

In Andre Derain's *Fishing Boats, Collioure* (1905) there is a focus on formal qualities of shape, repetition and color. They come together to create a strong painting. The color here is more mimetic in the realm of possibilities for the Fauves but the increased saturation and undeniable abstraction of color from reality is indicative of the ways in which the movement utilized color to further the communication between subject matter, artist, and art itself. The emphasis on the repeated shape of the white sails pulls the viewer through space while the use of color and line break it up. In the same way that color and shape organize the space and lead

the eye through, Derain uses line in a way that creates definition and shape distinct from his use of color but in conjunction with it.

The art of the Fauves differed from that of Cezanne in an important way. The Fauves valued a visual expression of the artist's emotions whereas Cezanne favored a perceptual representation.¹¹ Both concerned their art with exploring new forms and interpretations of space and this is the key difference between them, the Impressionists, and classical or academic art. My relation to the Fauves is more tangential than it is to Cezanne. I appreciate the emphasis the Fauves placed on the artist actively existing within the art work. The way in which they approached and actively addressed the constructed nature of art is important to my process. Art is a result of observation of the natural world and an exploration of the inner emotional world of the artist. It is deployed through subjective use of color and abstracted shapes projected onto a subject, all forms of depiction are inherently abstractions. I also similarly value the importance of color in creating planes within an art piece and in expressing something of value on its own terms.

Coming much later but heavily influenced by the Fauves and important to the work I am doing now is Wolf Kahn. He is connected to the Fauves through a few degrees of separation in through time but the way in which they looked at color is integral to the developments that allowed Wolf Kahn to use color in the way he does. Kahn is creating landscapes out of pastels the same as my work and I also use color similarly to Kahn's method, in that it is used more to convey a sense of the landscape generally than it is used to convey specifics. My process is also

¹¹"Fauvism." *The Hudson Review.*

very similar to the way Kahn works. He begins outside and then finishes the pieces in the studio based off initial sketches and photographs. He also places preeminence on maintaining that observational connection to what he is observing.

While abstraction is present in his work the presence of a horizon or trees or barn always remains. This reminds the viewer that they are looking at an actual location, a reality which exists outside of the artist.

An important distinction between Kahn and Fauvism that he thinks one should not focus heavily on the artist's emotions.¹² They are a building block for the painting but the more you concentrate on factors other than emotional content in your paintings, the better off you are in his mind. Kahn does not state influence from artists such as Matisse or others stating in an interview that the only artists who ever influenced him were Titian and Rembrandt.¹³ Upon looking at his work it is hard not to see the evidence that he is a well-read artist who is approaching his art through the aid of many different artistic movements. Color Field painting for instance has played an important role to create a background for his work. He also shows speaks of the importance of Hans Hoffman who was his teacher in school.¹⁴

In the work *Landscape Lozenges* (2013) Kahn has used abstracted observational color and extremely simplified shapes to convey the sense of the landscape. The piece is on a relatively conventional scale and shows the importance color field painting plays in his work. The color blocking here remains obviously in reference to a landscape but has extremely

 ¹²"Six Decades in Wolf Kahn's Landscape." http:// hyperallergic.com/123620/six-decades-in-wolf-kahns-landscape/
¹³¹³¹³ Wolf Kahn. New York. 1996
¹⁴¹⁴ Wolf Kahn. New York. 1996

simplified the forms and colors so that it is also exists beyond the specific location and time that it is being observed. The building of color in the grass is achieved through layering colors on top of each other in transparent layers. The effect is rich color that is multidimensional and yet the appearance of some of the paper through the image helps it maintain its lightness and again harkens us back to the fact that this is an illusory object.





My own work shows the simplification and abstraction of the landscape similar to Kahn's and the Color Field painters. The use of mark making helps to create the illusion of spatial recession, albeit it a shallow space, along with the high horizon line balanced against the cropped foreground of green vegetation at the water's edge. The importance of marks in my own work is related to Cezanne's valuation of construction of the artwork and heavy brushstroke. I am not attempting to fool the viewer into believing my space nor am I attempting to sell them on a lie of reality. The crispness of marks are still atmospheric in this work, with those that are in the foreground being the easiest to discern and the ones further back and in the sky applied more subtly. The color here is lacking an intensity that is present in both Cezanne's and Kahn's art. Important aspects here for further development of my translation of the landscape on the page is the portrait orientation of the page, the slight incline in the far horizon, and the lightness of the water in the middle of the page.

The orientation of the page changes the shape in which we are interacting with the traditional landscape and is at odds with the largely horizontal layout. The change in the rigidity of the horizon line was an important moment in dealing with a balance between simplification and observation, one in which I was better able to find a balance of simplification that did not reduce the observed into a caricature. The subtleties that come out of direct observation preserve the authenticity of the place. In abstraction these subtleties become defining characteristics in the work.

Works Cited

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Spring, Justin, and Louis Finkelstein. Wolf Kahn. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996. Print.

Annotated Biliography

Agee, William C., and Irving Sandler. *American Vanguards: Graham, Davis, Gorky, De Kooning,* and Their Circle, 1927-1942. Andover, Mass.: Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy; 2011 Print.

This collection is based on a show that travelled in 2012 which featured these artists to show the progressive art that was being created in mid-century America. The complitation of these artists gave a great view of the variety and growth of avant-garde art in the American context. Discussing these pivotal artists provides a springboard for discussion about later movements in American art. These artists became of interest for further reading to better understand the purpose of creating art.

Brion, Marcel. Cézanne. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974. Print.

This work focused more broadly over the full lifetime of the artist, depicting the growth over time that he experienced with his work. It also depicts his work from earlier periods which was important for gaining more context about where Cezanne's work originated from.

Cezanne, Paul, and N.Y. York. *Cézanne: The Late Work : Essays*. New York: Museum of Modern Art ; 1977. Print.

The compilation gathers multiple essays on the artist and places them in one context. The result is that upon inspection the reader can understand the development of the artist's philosophy, the importance of motif in his work and the expansive impact he had on later generations of artists. There is also an extensive collection of reproductions of lesser known works by the artist. The explicit discussion of his landscapes proved very useful to understand these works more in depth.

Grad, Bonnie L., and Sally Michel Avery. Milton Avery. Royal Oak, Mich: Strathcona, 1981. Print.

This book has one of the largest collections of color reproductions of Avery's work. It points out how his work remains both observational and abstracted throughout his later period. Bonnie Lee Grad placed an emphasis on the importance found in the fact that Avery never reached true abstraction and so his work cannot fairly be analyzed in formal terms alone. Avery's work is visually inspiring and his landscapes depicted here were intimately related to the ways in which I have been depicting the landscape.

Hoffman, Katherine, and Georgia Keeffe. *An Enduring Spirit: The Art of Georgia O'Keeffe*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1984. Print.

Hoffman wrote an encompassing and extensive review of O'Keeffe. It encompasses the biographical history of the artist herself littered with quotes that give you a sense of her personality. Also included is a wide review of the critics of O'Keeffe's body of work, in

combination with her own thoughts on her work. It ends with an extensive analysis of multiple paintings and sculptures done by the artist. The extensive inclusions of O'Keeffe's own words in this book provide a wonderful insight into the mind of the artist and her work in itself is uniquely inspiring since she is a prominent female American artist. Her use of simplified forms of recognizable objects is impactful and related to the language we use to recognize ideas.

Waldman, Diane, and NY York. Arshile Gorky: 1904 - 1948, a Retrospective; [catalogue of an Exhibition, 1981 at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum]. New York: Abrams, 1981. Print.

Useful for understanding the character of Arshile Gorky, Waldman's catalogue provides an expansive review of his history and training. Gorky's formative role in the development of lyrical abstraction places him in a position of influence for many artists in the late 20th century.

Harrison, Charles. Art in Theory, 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas. 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003.Print.

Harrison has collected a wonderfully inclusive collection of essay and information of important artists through modern times. This anthology is an essential book for understanding the breadth of the development of art theory in the Euro-American context. It provides very accurate introductions into a plethora of ideas and artists that remain accessible and accurate. I read multiple sections throughout the entirety of the book.

Hills, Patricia. *Stuart Davis*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, in Association with the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1996. Print.

Hills wrote an analysis of Davis' work in regards to the European avant-garde which he was exposed to through the 1913 Armory Show and the influence African-American jazz played on his art. Davis understood forms essential role in communication and how communication could occur across media. Davis came into my radar as he was first influenced by Cezanne and the Cubists. He again came up while researching American artists and Gorky.

Millard, Charles W. "Fauvism." The Hudson Review 29.4: 576-80. Print.

A short and succinct article, the review hits on many of the largest points of Fauvism, which was itself a short lived movement.

Spring, Justin, and Louis Finkelstein. Wolf Kahn. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996. Print.

Kahn is an artist of high affinity for myself and this book provides a good overview of his work, through numerous color plates and a discussion of his process. His subject matter is almost exclusively landscape and his imagery is representationally specific and universal at the same time. This book served to introduce his ideas and influences, clearly and simply. Most of the plates were in color and with work like Kahn's that is vitally important. Overall it was a useful source.

Images

Photographs:







In progress:





Midterm:





Final:









