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Color is the quickest way to the heart

I would rather paint than talk about painting. But over the years I have found myself explaining a lot of painting ideas in words.

At first as a student I was attracted to a lot of art that I did not understand, especially Cezanne and Mondrian. And slowly, after looking again and again at their work, I came to understand it. This process, first being attracted to it and then trying to understand the mystery of the attraction and finally understanding the fundamental structure behind the mystery of the work brought aesthetic fulfillment that filled my soul.

This process never ends and is primary to my creative process. At first as a student I studied naturalism (realism) and after two years changed to abstraction. Why I don't know, I was fascinated with color, but I didn't know anything about it. I was not born a colorist. I imitated art that I admired. This gave me a vehicle for learning the basic rules of color that then allowed me to create visual images with color as the primary

structural element.

When I paint I don't think. I am completely intuitive. The thinking comes after I am finished and only if I surprise myself by doing something new. I think of painting as a metaphor, for my own condition, I am a physical body, and I am a thinking spiritual mind, they are dependent on one another. A painting is first an object and second an image. The physicality of the painting is crucial for the final image. They are interdependent.

A painting is a static image that is created in real time. When we look at a painting, we see everything at the first glance and only with time do we understand what we see. The difference in these two durations of time is interesting. We see first the surface of the painting and then the image. But because of our education, we no longer look at the surface and go directly to the image.

Abstraction asks the viewer to look at the surface, freeing us to discover new images. We as viewers participate in a transformation. In that we choose to look through the picture plane and perceive the image. This is a very willing conceptual process. Through the brush stroke, and compositions of color, we find a connection between the materiality of the surface and the image that is formed in the viewer's mind. If the

composition observes nature's basic principles, the resulting image will have a sense of space that pictorial light will occupy. This gives the painting the qualities that make it art and not decoration.

These fundamental formalist observations about painting are necessary at this time. These last decades for painting have been self analytical, since the function of painting as art is changing; as is the function of art in our society is also changing. Art has become fashionable. Art has become more accessible. Painting is too often storytelling. One does not have to learn how to look at a painting or work of art. And everyone is an equal judge of quality. There is no common criterion for judging quality in art. There are instead only a multiplicity of positions and attitudes toward art.

Abstract paintings or non-referential images allow for expressions of pure visual elements. It is free but not without requiring structure and meaning.

Color and its organization can be anything. But color in itself is not the aim. The aim is to organize the color so that there is a very specific visual experience.

This is accomplished by observing the fundamental principles of color. These principles are the same for realism as well as abstraction. Just as we expect to see an image inside the picture plane of a realist painting, so

should it be for abstraction. But without any reference to nature, all that we see in abstraction are arrangement of colors. Only if this arrangement creates a sense of space in a profound way, does it distinguish itself from the flatness of the wall.

It is essential however that in the composition there is a connection between the picture plane (surface) and the implied spatial experience. Mondrian is an ideal example of this, the surface tension gives the work timeliness and the visual depth gives it timelessness. One should look at Mondrian and not his followers, and of course the actual paintings, not reproductions. This for me is the crux-centre of all painting. It is true for Velazques and Cezanne. These are excellent examples of this long tradition.

My contribution is difficult and not necessary to evaluate, but without those others my work would look different. This is a Formalist way of thinking of art. Formalism is a methodology that considers the visual structure underlying an image and even analyzing what an image is. It is rational, but tries to anticipate emotions and irrationality. Cezanne was rational and emotional, as was Mondrian. This method allows one to use emotion without being a victim of it. Color is very emotional but it needs to be ordered, otherwise it is romantic, sentimental and worse decorative. But when ordered it can touch our very best emotions. This sounds

moralistic and to some degree it is. Harmony and tranquility are better emotions than selfishness and jealousy.

My paintings have evolved for more than 30 years. My earlier work was less clear, less original, less self-aware and less free. By understanding myself and how I work and think, the work now reveals something about growing older. I hope my work cannot be explained.

What I would finally hope to achieve in my work is that the viewer feels a sense of presence. That he or she is standing before this work and feels the moment, the physical moment and all the feelings that come with that. This is an aesthetic moment when existence and meanings come into question. This moment steps away from hierarchy and becomes eternal, for a moment.