

**SOME ASPECTS OF PICTORIAL AND
PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ARTS,
MICHAELIS SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN,
I declare that this Dissertation
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN FINE ARTS.
and that it has not been published before.**

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I declare that this Dissertation is my own work
and that it has not been submitted to any other University.

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Painting J combines the approaches outlined above. The results are analysed and the nature of the similarities and differences between the two modes of working (i.e. from a photograph and from 3-DS) is explored.

In Chapter Three some conclusions are drawn concerning the relationships outlined in the first paragraph of this Introduction.

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CHAPTER ONE:

PHOTO REALISM AND THE SUBMITTED BODY OF WORK:

I. HISTORICAL REVIEW:

Analysing the relationships between 3-DS, a photograph, a painted rendition of 3-DS and of a photograph involves the examination of the notion of painting as a process evolving towards accurate representation and 'pictorial truth'. The development of a scientific basis for image making with theories of perspective and the invention of photography are central to this process.

The accurate translation of reality into two-dimensional equivalents had been a central concern of painters prior to the invention of photography. The enthusiastic reception of photography was an indication of the extent to which it confirmed previous visual commitments of artists, aided by camera obscura. It was thought that photographs would present objective standards by which naturalistic paintings could be judged.¹

The reactions to photography (thoroughly documented by Aaron Scharf)² were varied and often contradictory. Many artists painted over or copied photographs. Others used photographs merely as sketching aids, thus producing paintings directly influenced by photography. Those artists who rejected photography as detrimental to the development of their concerns, argued that photography centred around 'exactness', producing a 'brutal reality' rather than a 'truthful image'. Little time was spent examining photographic distortions or the public's acceptance of them as 'pictorial truth'.

The idea of being aided by the photograph was acceptable and many artists in movements succeeding the invention of photography used photographs or

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were influenced by them - the Impressionists, Pre-Raphaelites and Futurists to mention a few. But the idea of using the mechanical skills of photography, imitating its physical characteristics and presenting this as art was unthinkable. Artists were not ready to relinquish their roles as arbiters of reality.

With Modernism³ the notion of art as a process involving accurate representation of the kind of space that recognizable three-dimensional objects can inhabit, seemed to come to an end. As Suzi Gablik, an American art theoritician and critic, writes:

So much modern art ... obliges us to admit to a truth which does not resemble things - which is without any external model - and may even defy the data of sense experience.⁴

Modernism appeared to proclaim painting as 'image making' a thing of the past. But by the latter half of the sixties art was ripe for a style which not only re-introduced the image but which was inextricably involved with photography. The camera and photograph had achieved absolute currency in every day life. Competition between photography and painting terminated. Henceforth they could co-exist as complementary art forms rather than as rivals.

Pop Art⁵, preceding Photo Realism, not only reintroduced recognizable subject matter but the employment of photographic material in creating art. Although the Photo Realists do not represent a total denial of the artists' right to personal interpretation, direct imitation of the photograph is a predominant element of their work, they do that which would not have been possible a century ago. Painting, having moved away from photography, could return to it with a renewed energy to explore the possibilities once heralded, but regarded as threatening painting territory.

II. PHOTO REALISM:

(a) Realism

The discussion of realism is problematic. Since the mid-19th Century Realism of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), realism as a term has had many connotations which forbid a consistent and explicit meaning. As Linda Nochlin, a leading exponent of Realism, wrote in 1973:

Realism, of course, is a mode of artistic discourse, a style in the largest sense, not, ... a 'discovery' of pre-existing objects out there or a simple 'translation' of ready made reality into art Yet on the whole, realism implies a system of values involving close investigation of particulars, a taste of ordinary experience in a specific time, place and social context ... Realism is more than and different from wilful virtuosity, or the passive reflexivity of the mirror image, however much these may appear as ingredients in realistic work.⁶

Realism in art does not imply a matter of fact representation of appearances of things, but is a 'formal expression of a moral dimension'.⁷

With realism, painting allows for the defining action of a parameter as opposed to a generalised account of actuality.*

In 1968 an exhibition called 'The Art of the Real' at the Museum of Modern Art included works primarily within a Minimalist style.⁸ These works were realistic in that they concentrated on the empirical material properties of the art object. Their realism involved material as opposed to illusionistic properties, dealing with the reality of an art object for the artist.

The Photo Realists choice of, and involvement with, subject matter earns them the title of 'Realists'. They limit themselves to reportage photographs of banal, urban motifs. They retrieve an image although their essential concern is not with the subject matter. A choice of subject matter

*Actuality - fact or state of being actual: realism: something that really is. (Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary, New Edition, W. and R. Chambers Ltd., 1972)

implies approval, but they neither condemn nor condone that which is chosen to be depicted. Their relationship to their subject matter is objective and unemotional. Their emotional involvement lies in the act of painting exquisitely in a restrained and disciplined way and can be compared to the refined expressiveness of a skilled concert musician.

Gerrit Henry, an editor of Art News Magazine, comments:

Finally, we can infer from Super Realist painting that its creators are, at heart, idealists. If reality can no longer be forced to yield up an ideal situation as it once was by classical painters, then unreality will be forced to do the same. In Photo Realism, reality is made to look so overpoweringly real as to make it pure illusion: through the basically magical means of point-for-point precisionist rendering the actual is portrayed as being so real that it doesn't exist. What does exist off the canvas is the mind, which conceived of the idea of the painting of a photograph of reality, in all its intrinsic implausibility. Whereas classical painters through the ages have idealized reality itself, the 'classical' new Realists have totally devalued reality in order vastly to overvalue (in other words, completely abstract) the human brain. Photo Realism is basically not realism at all. More correctly it is the plastic offshoot of today's conceptual arts.⁹

In adopting this attitude they are inextricably bound, through their formal links to preceding trends of thought in painting. They are not concerned with a desire to communicate any meaningful message to society about the nature of the world they live in.

(b) Historical Links of Photo Realism:

Carter Ratcliffe, in his article 'New York; 22 Realists' points out that Pop Art has developed in at least two directions. One of these originated in the 'cultural hysteria' of action painting and happenings, leading to Oldenburg's soft inflated imagery and Warhol's type of erratic silk screen styling. These led to earth works, theatre works and body art. A second direction resulted in the iconic and frozen image, a mechanistic, impersonal mass produced development of the frontal all over image of New York paintings in the fifties.¹⁰ Photo Realism developed in this direction.

The Photo Realists represent a renewed relation between art and the artifacts of modern industry and the mass media. As with Pop Art, their art appears to be based on life but inquires into variations on existing techniques of visual communication. Both Pop Art and Photo Realism employ ready-made imagery and are influenced by the way in which the camera has 'cheapened' the visual image.

Whereas Pop Artists

- (i) sought to point out the vulgarization of the image by endowing it with certain connotations, using emblems of society and advertising the disposability of the image;
- (ii) maintained their subjective relationship to their subject-matter by the 'expressiveness' in which the images were employed, and
- (iii) concerned themselves not with illusion itself.

the Photo Realists

- (i) seek to retrieve the image, reassessing the uniqueness of the commonplace. They also defy the disposability and mass-produced nature of the image, offering instead a notion of craftsmanship;
- (ii) have no objective, unemotional relationship with their subject matter. The image is chosen but once this is done there is little subjective comment from the artist in the way in which the images are employed, they are neither condemned nor condoned, and,
- (iii) there is a concern with the art of illusionist painting and with painting in general, by virtue of the fact that they render the information with great accuracy and attention to detail.

Abstract Expressionism¹¹ introduced the requirement that a painting, being a two-dimensional object composed of pigment on canvas should not

assume a guise of anything other than that. The realism of Pop Art was consistent with the realism of Abstract Expressionism in that the flatness of the image rarely contradicted the flatness of the canvas; and this attitude was secured by the Minimalist school. The requirement that pictorial subject matter remain consistent with the facts of a pictorial object served as a major aesthetic idea linking the Photo Realists to preceding trends in thought in painting.¹² The Photo Realists reproduce photographs which are already two-dimensional, on a flat painted surface.

Such elements as the following stem directly from recent developments in Abstract Art:

- (1) concern with measurement;
 - (2) space and enlargement of scale;
 - (3) the fieldlike flatness of the pictorial surface;
 - (4) the affirmation of the picture as literal fact;
 - (5) the wholeness of the image;
- and (6) the exclusion of expressive brush strokes.

These elements prevent the observer from interpreting the images produced in the Photo Realists' works as the 'real thing'. 'Trompe-l'oeil' is not their aim.

The aspect of Photo Realism which concerns me is their relationship with photography and reality. The use of the photograph as a point of departure is central to the difference between Photo Realism and preceding forms of realisms. It alters the nature of the artist's involvement with his subject matter. The artist's vision of reality is interceded by the photograph. What becomes the issue is the artist's relationship to the photograph.

III SUBJECT MATTER:

(a) Photo Realists

The subject matter of the Photo Realists, as discussed, is not of primary importance. Their main concern is the handling of the photograph, the important choice being to paint the photograph and not what it depicts. They generally avoid evocative images of an emotional or expressive nature, limiting themselves to single subjects (such as horses, automobiles, buildings, signsapes) in order to emphasize their concern with questions of technique.

The choice of photograph is however their point of departure. In choosing photographs they elect to refer to their world. However objective their attitude, their renderings often reveal a fascination with the visual beauty of their pictorial subject matter. It is significant that these painters often narrow down the boundaries of contemporaneity to their own lives, their friends, the space in their own studios, apartments and neighbourhoods.

They zoom in for a close-up vision of an even more restricted fragment of these already circumscribed realms until, at the ultimate limit of reductive intimacy they focus upon such non-significant background areas as underneath the kitchen sink or simply the floorboards of the apartment as a sufficient visual motif for their canvases.¹⁴

(b) Female Photo Realists:

'For the woman realist ... the sense of creative self as a woman may play a greater or lesser role in the formulation of pictorial imagery'.¹⁵

A sense of conscious liberated feminine identification must influence the woman realists of today, because of the articulate and forceful contemporary women's movements. It is questionable to what extent this influences the choices made in the formulation of pictorial imagery.

Linda Nochlin comments that it is difficult to separate unconscious motives from conscious intentions in choosing a realist motif. Does a woman realist choose to depict her living-room floor, The Virgin of the Macarena (Audrey Flack), or mothers and children rather than trucks, motor-cycles and penknives, out of conscious feminist principles, an expression of the unconscious, or because such material is familiar to her and easily available?

She divides women realists into three categories:

- (1) Social Realists,
 - (2) Evocative Realists (where the subject matter has some symbolic value)
- and (3) Literal or 'Thing-in-Itself' Realists (where certain objects are depicted with as little personal overlay as possible) ¹⁶

(c) Realism in the Accompanying Body of Work:

The primary concern in the body of work, as for the Photo Realists, is not the subject matter but the reproduction of the photograph and the theoretical implications of such a choice. Photographic images were employed to pose certain questions about

- (1) picture-making,
 - (2) the nature of the pictorial surface,
 - (3) the combination of studio and Photo Realism
- and (4) the relationships between 3-DS, the photograph, and the painted rendering of these respectively.

The works not based on photographs deal with objects in 3-DS. Only in the case of F and G do these objects have any evocative quality or personal meaning. The evocative nature is unlike that of woman Realists discussed



Plate (i) Oil on Canvas
(120cm x 200cm) 1975



Plate (iii) Drawing on Paper
(60 cm x 65 cm) 1975

Parenthood should not be an exclusively female concern. However, the initial physical involvement (pregnancy, birth, feeding, etc.) of the woman and the inevitable effect of this on the female psyche and socialization largely excludes the male in early stages of parenthood. In the past, female concerns such as these have not generally been given equal credence to (for example) political, ecclesiastical and formal issues. An honest reflection on human experience through the depiction of literal images ensures the generation of a response from an audience which may not generally be confronted with these issues. This is particularly relevant to the three earlier works included. The works accompanying this dissertation subjugate such social concerns for more formal ones, the resulting subject matter is less questioning, depicting youth and age, family scenes, mother and child and still-life compositions of a conventional nature.

CHAPTER TWODISCUSSION AND DOCUMENTATION OF INDIVIDUAL WORKSI INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL COMMENTS:

In this chapter the paintings accompanying this Dissertation are documented and discussed. The discussion intends to clarify the candidate's intentions as manifest in the respective workings on the central theme.

It is difficult to participate in academicism/theorising and creativity simultaneously, as regards the given body of work. The one discipline is a reassessment of the creative act, employing logic and historical justification while the other is its antithesis. Essentially this discussion is a verbal description of a visual process. It parallels that process.

In order to remain true to the central intention of the project, the emotional content of the work remains as an interaction between the work and the spectator. The content (the autobiographical implications) is not explored.

To state why one rejects any aspect of the work seems an easier process than the explaining of the delight in the positive qualities of the work. The destructive critical process, is however, crucial for the creative process. What is unclear is questioned and retained, what is clear has been answered and is rejected. It also seems easier to explain the intellectual aspects of the work than to clarify those aspects in the work which afford delight.

Most of the early works are regarded as failures or somewhat naïve enquiries into the problems. The central relationships were clarified through the analysis of the failures. Each successive painting stands as a criticism of the preceding work.

The paintings are evaluated in terms of the intentions stated. Discussing the works in formal terms may smother the work with theoretical structures

and negate the expressive content. It can become a way of talking around rather than about what is there. But to ask questions about the forms is to inquire of the intention of the work. In answering these questions one performs the critical act.

To avoid repetition, that which was stated in Chapter One and Chapter Three (where conclusions about the body of work in general could be more logically developed) was not repeated in the individual assessments of the works. Where successive works shared common interests, these were also not repeated.

The paintings will be treated individually in order of execution and are labelled A, B, C, ... J for convenience. Each painting will be dealt with as follows:

(i) Motivation and Intention

The intention before execution, what was hoped to be achieved or discovered, will be stated.

(ii) Method and Technique

The method and technique will be outlined.

(iii) Analysis and Conclusions

A critical analysis of each painting will be given in terms of the intention and conclusions drawn with regard to the relationships questioned in the dissertation.



Plate iv



Plate v

II A(a) Motivation and Intention:

In A both sides of the canvas were painted. The two images of the child and great-grandmother would read consistently with the position of the viewer, i.e. the same 'scene' could be viewed from two positions at 180° to each other.

The desired effect was to revise the observer's expectations of the painted surface's boundaries. This was done by extending the picture surface, enabling the observer to read 'around the image', to see what the depicted scene would look like from the reverse side. In reading a painting such a view is not considered or expected. It is usually accepted that the information between the outer edges of the canvas constitutes the painting. By not confirming the observer's expectations, an awareness of a part which assumption plays in reading an image would be brought to notice.

I deduced from experiments quoted in the Appendix¹ that if apes mistake reproductions for reality, perhaps people, freed of the process of 'pre-hending'² would not observe two-dimensional images as distinct from reality as readily as they do. In painting both sides of the canvas perhaps certain three-dimensional properties would be assigned to the painting, resulting in a 'three-dimensional image'.

As the issue in question was not one of style, a method of representation which excluded stylistic modes had to be employed. I felt at the time that working from photographs in a Photo Realist mode would free the painter from past styles of painting. In the translating or reproducing of the photograph there is a sense of 'seeing directly', unhampered by

preconceived notions of how to paint the image. Because of the wide use of the photographic image it is most readily accepted as 'real'. The greatest verisimilitude today can be gained by being true to the photograph, these images being most readily accepted as accurate representations.

(b) Method and Technique:

A series of photographs were taken of a situation (great-grandmother and child) from opposite viewpoints. A number of photographs were selected and the images combined so as to create two images which would give a consistent reading from two view points 180° to each other.

The canvas was stretched over a wooden frame (150 cm x 150 cm) and primed with P.V.A.

The surface area on each side was divided into approximately 10 cm x 10 cm squares by stringing thread across the face of the canvas secured along the edges by pins. The sections of the photographs (8 cm x 8 cm) to be reproduced were divided into a corresponding number of squares by being placed under a grid drawn onto a transparent plastic sheet.

The images were then drawn on the canvases in pencil, copying the photographs square by square, at random. The string and transparency were then removed. The images were painted in oil paint, using flat sable brushes ranging from 0,5 cm to 3 cm, smaller brushes being used for more detailed areas. Refined linseed oil was mixed with the paint to create a suitable consistency for blending the colours.

The painting was not developed as a whole, by building up related elements simultaneously. Instead one form was completed at a time, moving across

the canvas from form to interrelated form, starting with those centrally placed and working outwards. Highlights and dark shadows were added while the paint was still tacky and not completely dry, the paint being worked and left for about 30 minutes to an hour until the necessary consistency was achieved. Areas were rarely reworked after completion.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

In hoping to attribute certain three-dimensional qualities to the painting certain factors were not taken into account.

The assumption was made that our acquired knowledge and ability to 'prehend' are the only factors enabling us to differentiate between 3-DS and the two-dimensional reproduction thereof. This was assumed because animals respond similarly to both convincing reproductions and reality. This phenomenon is not however due to an identical sensory response, but to the fact that animals respond to a recognisable image if it suffices to provide a minimal, biologically significant form.³

The perception of 3-DS is essentially different from the perception of two-dimensional images. Fundamental to this difference is the fact that when we look at flat surfaces, focus does not come into play. Pictures are infinitely ambiguous because they present a flat geometric projection of a three-dimensional reality which may look like a number of possible configurations.⁴ But as Gombrich writes, these ambiguities

will rarely trouble us in life. After all, we experience the real world by moving about it ... we have built-in predictors that tell us how a given shape will change when seen from different angles.⁵

In order to view A from both sides movement is required. The perceptual process involved in this movement is very different from that around objects in reality. No transformation of shape takes place during movement. Two static visions of a two-dimensional surface are read through a single-depth focus on the two opposite sides. The only similarity between the images and reality (3-DS) is that the 'back and front' of the painting is consistent with the 'back and front' of the situation in real life.

Painting the image on both sides of the canvas draws attention to the fact that the canvas is merely a thin, flat film. Because both sides of the canvas show a face and the back of a head, no one side may be termed 'front' or 'back'. A was not attributed with certain three-dimensional qualities; instead the two-dimensional nature of the picture plane was stressed.

The formalist goal of Abstract Expressionism, i.e. that the material facts of the pictorial object remain consistent with the subject matter, is fulfilled in A by the use of photographic source-material⁶ and the increased awareness of the material nature of the painting.

The exercise has as much to do with the revising of notions of composition as with the revising of certain assumptions and expectations concerning the boundaries of a painting. The two views had to be considered simultaneously so as to achieve compositions which would work both independently and when inter-related.

Photographic images were used to avoid questions of style. However, the most interesting element in A is perhaps the areas of abstraction resulting

from the exaggerated scale and overall haziness due to soft focus. The areas of abstraction could have been developed by a more thorough exploration of the possibilities offered by the range of focus in the photographs (as, for example, in the work of Chuck Close).

The scale, the nature of the images, and the manner in which they are painted have an impact on the observer which detracts from questioning the implications of painting on both sides of the canvas. For the reasons stated above the painting failed in terms of the given intentions. The desired tension between the two images, stimulating a revising of the observer's expectations, was not achieved. The exercise should have concentrated more on the expressive possibilities of the work, or else have taken on a more scientific nature, enquiring more obviously into the nature of visual perception and the relationship between 3-D and the two-dimensional image.



Plate (vi) Photograph used in B.



Plate (vii)

III B(a) Motivation and Intention:

In B the intention was to create a work comprising two co-existing paintings which would read as one, the two paintings being contextually linked.

Each would be an extension and illumination of the narrative content of the other, to left and right respectively. As in A, the desired effect was to revise the viewer's expectations of the boundaries of the painted surface. In B this is done not by an attempt to attribute certain three-dimensional qualities to the painting, but by extending the two-dimensional surface on the same plane.

Once again questions posed were not stylistic in nature; therefore a photographic image was employed. In deciding on subject-matter for B the choice had to be such that a sense of broken continuity would be felt in the splitting of the image. For this purpose also, a photographic image seemed most suitable. It could provide a narrative image which when divided would result in two images which would specify a context for each other.

The camera freezes time, revealing specific detail at a unique moment. It offers a neutrality of vision, capturing and isolating single moments as they are, not necessarily as we would like them to be. Such a moment was captured in the photograph copied in B, while simultaneously taking photographs from opposite view points for A.

(b) Method and Technique:

The most suitable photograph from the series taken for A was selected with the given purpose in view. The image was divided in such a way as to result in two paintings which could exist as independent compositions.

Canvas was stretched over two wooden frames (158 cm x 158 cm and 158 cm x 106 cm) and primed with lead-white diluted with turpentine. The images were translated using the same method employed in A. The technique used in painting the images was also the same.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

The resulting effect in terms of revising the observer's expectations of the boundaries of the picture surface, is ambiguous. When seen in the context of the painting as a whole the images in each painting are understood in terms of that whole. When seen individually the literal interpretation of the image is changed. However the dividing line appears to be contained within the whole while dividing the image into two. The paintings do not necessarily appear to extend each other. This is because the figures forming the composition as a whole are inextricably linked in their relationships to each other. The narrative can only be comprehended when seeing the picture as a whole, the narrative element being the most engaging.

Thus, while the expected limits of the painting's boundaries have been extended, a conventional picture space exists containing the subdivision within it. Although the dividing line is well chosen and not disturbing compositionally, there is an undeniable tendency to wonder just why it is there.



Plate (viii)

IV C(a) Motivation and Intention:

While in the process of painting A, the wiping/cleaning of my brushes on the border areas of the picture's surface formed a series of chance marks around the image. This motivated the attempt at a painting which would combine and integrate, though a similar process, formal and spontaneous work procedures.

(b) Method and Technique:

A suitable photograph from the same series used in A and B was chosen for C.

The canvas was stretched over a wooden frame (170 cm x 170 cm) and primed with P.V.A.

The image was translated using the same method as in A and B. The central composition of figures was surrounded by a border (19 cm wide) left around the image for marks made by brushes being wiped. These painterly marks were randomly placed forming a loose, abstract configuration.

The technique used in painting the central image was the same as that used in A and B.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

Using a photograph as source material reinforces the flat nature of the painting's surface.⁷ However, when the image is seen surrounded by the



Plate (ix)



Plate (x)

V D and E(a) Motivation and Intention:

In translating images from 3-DS onto a painted surface, the practical difficulties in using similar subject-matter to that used in A, B and C are obvious. A white plaster-cast of a sculpted head was chosen for the exercise.

(b) Method and Technique:

In the case of both D and E a sheet of cartridge paper (75 cm x 57 cm) was pinned to a drawing board. Accurate preliminary drawings obeying laws of perspective, were done in pencil on the paper (showing the outlines of objects).

The images were then painted over the drawings in oil paint. Oil of turpentine was used as a thinning agent working with flat sable brushes (1 cm to 2 cm wide). Both D and E were developed and expanded as a whole. Thin ground colours were first laid down and lighter and darker areas built up, highlights being added last with dryer paint. Paint was applied in a deliberately loose manner, exploring brush marks and qualities of paint, unlike A, B and C where brushmarks were hidden, painting 'as if it were not'. An attempt was made at naturalistic colour, capturing the whiteness of the cast.

D shows a close-up view of the cast. In E the cast becomes part of the interior, the room itself becomes the still-life.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

As 'copies' these paintings fail. The draughtmanship was accurate but the translation of colour was unsatisfactory. In capturing the whiteness of the cast very few warm colours were used, producing a predominantly cool blue effect. This was because a conscious attempt at rendering the whiteness inhibited a more direct translation of the colours actually seen. What was 'made' on paper did not 'match'⁹ what was seen.

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Plate (xi)



Plate (xii)

VI F and G(a) Motivation and Intention:

F and G, like D and E, are still-lives, but unlike D and E the objects chosen, children's shoes, were to be painted as objectively as possible, avoiding any presence of brushstrokes. The draughtmanship and the colours used were to be as accurate and convincing in their translation of the objects in 3-DS as possible.

(b) Method and Technique:

In the case of both F and G a sheet of cartridge paper (75 cm x 57 cm) was pinned to a drawing board. Accurate preliminary drawings obeying laws of perspective were done in pencil on cartridge paper, showing the outlines of objects.

The images were then painted over the drawings in oil paint. Oil of turpentine was used as a thinning agent, working with small round sable brushes (1 mm to 2 mm wide for the shoes, 1 cm to 2 cm wide for the shadows). The shoes and cushions were completed first and as in A, B and C, a movement occurred across the canvas from form to inter-related form, starting with the shoes. I had anticipated that in working directly from the objects it would not be possible to proceed from form to form, building up the whole (as in A, B and C). However because of the literal nature of the images and the fact that each additional area was related to those areas already painted, a sense of coherence was achieved without building up related elements simultaneously. The shadows were painted last. The paint used for the shadows was mixed with small amounts of oil of turpentine

and refined linseed oil in equal proportions, to create the right consistency for blending the tones and to lengthen the drying process to enable the smooth gradations to be achieved. The oil accounts for the slightly glazed appearance in the areas of the shadows, whereas the shoes and cushions have a matt surface.

Artificial light, casting strong shadows, was used to illuminate the objects. The painted objects were made to look as convincingly like the objects in 3-DS as possible. The use of visible brushstrokes was avoided and changes in tone and colour rendered as the camera would.

F is a close-up of the shoes on a cushion. G shows one shoe and the cushion in the distance.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

The painting of an objective image was not achieved in F and G because of personal choices made; colours, scale and the particular use of pictorial conventions in rendering the space in which the objects exist.

The draughtsmanship is accurate, the drawing based on laws of perspective. It is accurate in that those who understand the notation will derive no false information from the drawing.

The paintings have an evocative quality. They are not expressive in the way that A and C were, where the emotional nature of the subject matter projects outwards, imposing on the observer. Even in F, in the close-up vision of the shoes, the eye moves into the picture, the objects do not confront the observer. The evocative feeling is created by the way in which the shadows are rendered. The intensity of the predominantly cool tones in the shadows gives a 'moody' feeling to these paintings. No complementary colours were used in the shadows.

If, in translating the shadows, the same system of codification used in the rendering of the shoes had been adhered to, the paintings would have had more life (in terms of colour and light). The inconsistency in the treatment of light throughout the painting, was due to the fact that painting the colours of the shadows posed certain problems. It was difficult to 'make' colours on paper which would 'match' the large, flat areas of changing light in the shadows. It is in the 'easiness' of the mood created by the exaggerated blue tones in the shadows, that the painting's weakness lies.

The tactile quality of the brightly coloured shoes is pleasing, and the precise manner in which they are rendered is effectively emphasized by the abstract forms of the loosely flowing, hazy shadows. An attempt at a more consistently 'realistic' image in terms of colour would have enhanced this effect. The exercise would have been more exacting, but the results would have been more successful.



Plate (xiii)

VI H(a) Motivation and Intention:

In H the notion of an objective vision is questioned. Is it possible to transcribe an image from reality onto a two-dimensional surface, or is the process always one of translation?

The only way to affirm the concrete actuality of the subject-matter is to render it with as little personal overlay as possible. For the purpose of a purely descriptive art all that is relevant is visual fact,¹⁰ no supposed meaning of the object can obscure its material presence. To achieve maximum objectivity in rendering the image, interpretation of scale, colour and subject-matter had to be eliminated as far as possible.

Gombrich, in discussing the nature of illusionistic painting, states:

It is an interesting and undeniable fact that many great artists of the past were fascinated by problems of visual truth but none of them can ever have thought that visual truth alone will make a picture into a work of art.¹¹

Does visual truth alone make a picture into a work of art?

In reproducing accurately a randomly chosen piece of newspaper, to what extent has the 'making' and 'matching' Gombrich talks of been reduced to merely 'matching'? To what extent is 'prehension' and knowledge of a learnt vocabulary involved in making a piece of 'tromp-l'oeil' art? In representational painting there is always a difference between the two-dimensional rendering of the object in 3-DS and the object itself. That zone between the practical limitation of imitating accurately objects in 3-DS, and the object itself, comprises the 'aesthetic territory'. In doing H what was being questioned is whether this 'aesthetic territory' is

always present.

In analysing the results of this attempt at visual truth alone, the creation of an objective image, I hoped to answer some of these questions.

(b) Method and Technique:

A piece of torn newspaper was selected to be reproduced. The chosen content comprised an advertisement, a political issue and some 'typical Sunday Tribune scandal'. No particular issue was emphasised. The tearing and folding also served to de-emphasise content which was to be interpreted not as a repository of meaning, but merely as that which it physically is, pigment on paper.

The outlines of the image were traced from the original piece of newspaper in pencil onto the parchment, by placing the newspaper behind the parchment which is translucent. The parchment (75 cm x 57 cm) was pinned to a drawing board and the image painted directly onto the drawing in oil paint. Oil of turpentine was used as a thinning agent, working with small round sable brushes (1 mm to 2 mm wide).

The colour of the newspaper was matched by painting onto a piece of newspaper. The colour of the ink was found to be a combination of equal portions of the blue, red and yellow used in the advertisement of the shoe. The effect of the images shining through from behind was achieved by painting the image in a light tone of the newsprint's colour and glazing over this with several thin layers of oil of turpentine mixed with the colour of the newspaper. The speckled effect of the print in larger black areas such as headline letters was achieved by putting dry white paint on bristles of a

coarse, larger brush and lightly dabbing the letters with this. The small particles of paint deposited were then flattened by hand.

The pieces of masking-tape were copied from pieces of masking tape stuck onto the original piece of newspaper to hold it down, giving a collage effect.

All the lettering was done by brush, with no change in scale.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

In order to minimise translation a flat object was chosen to be reproduced. It has much in common with the real scale and shallow space of the early American 'tromp l'oeil' paintings of postcards, stamps and souvenirs held on the surface by letter racks.¹² Alex Hay's representations of blank sheets of lined paper, cash register sheets and other flat surfaces, are also similar.

A purely descriptive painting of this nature, where all that is relevant is visual fact, has more in common with works done by the Verist Sculptors than with the Photo Realist painters, although they also reproduce on a two-dimensional surface objects which naturally lend themselves to reproduction on a flat surface. K. Levin says of the Verist Sculptors:

Imitation can be repetition, reproduction, or replication, but it can also become pure mimicry. When it does, it is because style is no longer viable: art doesn't suffice. The desire for the absolutely real has unearthed long buried deceptions and illusions, and has led art to define itself once again as imitation. Mimicking the world of appearances, art conceals and protects itself, forewarned of its own extinction, knowing itself to be a delusion. With artifice it assumes the disguise of artlessness, of non-art, of literal reality.¹³

Is H 'pure mimicry' or does it merely assume the 'disguise' of artlessness?

Harold Rosenberg, in discussing the Verist Sculptors, comments:

The interval during which a painting is mistaken for the real thing, or the real thing for a painting, is the triumphant moment of 'tromp l'oeil' art. The artist appears to be as potent as nature, if not superior to it. Almost immediately, though, the spectator's uncertainty is eliminated by his recognition that the counterfeit is counterfeit. Once the illusion is dissolved, what is left is an object that is interesting not as a work of art but as a successful simulation of something that is not art. The major response to it is curiosity: 'How did he do it?' One admires Hanson's 'Businessman' neither as a sculpture nor as a concept but as a technical feat that seems a step in advance of the waxworks museum.¹⁴

Rosenberg's comments summarise the conclusions I came to in answering questions posed above concerning H. To state that what is produced is not a 'work of art' is questionable. Since Duchamp presented his ready-mades, an artist needs do little more than telephone an order through to a factory to produce a 'work of art'. The worth of H, in terms of my development may be questioned. The exercise may seem a trite one, but it was necessary to answer the questions posed at that point in my development empirically. I concluded however, that to extend the notion of objectivity in painting to this extreme, to exclude the dialectic between the object being portayed and the human perception of it, leads to what could be seen as an 'aesthetic cul-de-sac'. In attempting to achieve a 'styleless style', an 'aesthetic territory' was totally excluded, resulting in what could not be described as style at all. As Rosenberg says, in reference this time, of the Photo Realists:

But for art to depend exclusively upon reproducing appearances has the disadvantage that the painting or sculpture conform to the common perception of things.¹⁵

This common perception of things excludes an aesthetic territory. The reference is less applicable to the Photo Realists than to H, as these painters are not involved in pure mimicry. In their works and in A, B and C it would be impossible to mistake the copies of photographs for photographs. Certain choices are made by the artist such as enlarged scale and the particular handling of the photographic surfaces.

H is closer to mere visual truth than the work of the Verist Sculptors, in that neither the newspaper nor the painting of it, has a life of its own. The reality the sculptures present is only partly real. They are only real in appearance. The fact that bodies have life, an ability to move, is not included. This is why the bodies look more life-like in photographic reproductions of the sculptures. Since the photographs are 'stills' and the works themselves are 'stills', the photographs of the works help to draw away their real (not illusory) lifelessness.

The aim in H was to achieve an objective vision, a 'styleless style', a limiting of subjective interpretation. This was achieved, but only because the nature of the exercise allowed it. It was all too easy to imitate something as accessible to reproduction as a piece of newspaper. The relationship between the reproduction and the real thing became a one-to-one relationship which was neither pictorial nor photographic. The intention was realized, but the exercise became a technical concern with accurate reproduction which had less to do with an illusionistic deception in painting reality, than with a surface deception of materials.

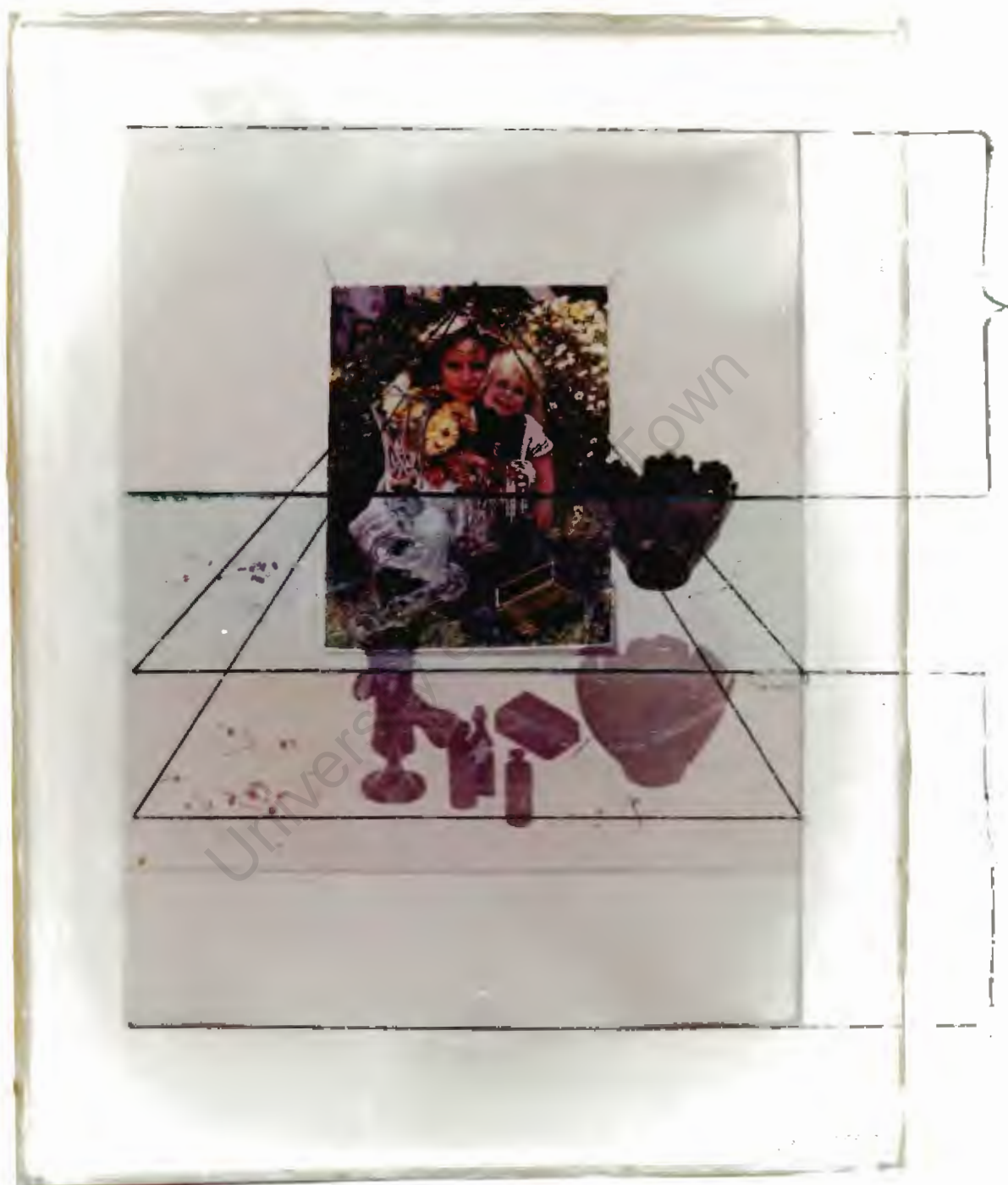


Plate (xiv)



Plate (xv) J (detail) excuse reflections from glass frame - the photograph was taken before light reflected from glass shelf was glazed in.



VIII J(a) Motivation and Intention

In J, the processes of working directly from 3-DS (as in D, E, F and G) and a two-dimensional source (as in A, B, C and H) were combined. A photograph was reproduced as accurately as possible and included in a still-life. Conclusions can be drawn from the result about the relationships between 3-DS, the painted photograph and the painted rendering of reality.

A photograph has no specific size. The scale is elastic, ranging from micro-photographs to billboards. As it was intended that the photograph reproduced in J should look like a 'snapshot', an appropriate scale was chosen and the photograph was reproduced to size. In A, B and C the choice of enlarged scale was a deliberate one. Choosing the 'snapshot' scale in J resulted in a 'trompe-l'oeil' effect similar to that created in the painting of the newspaper in H.

The decision to imitate a photograph within a traditional still-life was a result of the conclusions drawn from H. The exclusion of a personal interpretive vision to the extent present in H took the goal of painting in a 'styleless style' to an extreme in a way which defeats the object of the exercise. To operate in the realm of realist (as in realism) participation, a re-entering of the 'aesthetic territory' was imperative. The aim was not to exclude style, but to achieve a 'styleless style', a concern of realist painters since the Nineteenth Century. The goal in J is visual truth and the painting is descriptive, but numerous choices were made in the conception and execution.

(b) Method and Technique:

The aim was to depict the given still-life as realistically as possible. Practical problems gave rise to a mode of execution which resemble the building of a puzzle, piece by piece.

A preliminary drawing was done in pencil on card pinned to a drawing board, including the objects and the photograph. The image of the photograph was traced onto the card by using tracing paper.

The photograph (24 cm x 19 cm) was painted first, directly onto the drawing. Oil paint was used directly from the tube, working with small round sable brushes (1 mm to 2 mm wide). To enable the most accurate representation, the photograph was painted and studied carefully in daylight from a close range. When seen from a distance of a few metres, the position the still-life was viewed from when seen as a whole, it was impossible to observe enough detail to facilitate an accurate reproduction. When seen from this correct position under the artificial light set up to create the desired shadows, both the light and distance prevent an accurate observation of detail.

The faces were painted first. The separate 'dots' of colour forming the faces were identified and reproduced as separate dots of colour on the card. Once these separate dots of colour were almost dry a light brushing over the surface fused the colours, giving the appearance as a 'whole'. The hair was treated in the same way. The background forms and foliage were treated as even coloured areas. The same process of colour separation was not adhered to.

The photograph was pinned onto the wall after it had been painted and then the objects on the shelf were painted. Again distance and light prevented observation of detail, so an artificial light was directed at the objects and these were painted individually from a close range of about 50 cm.

When painting the shadows on the wall the colour of the shadows was difficult to match. Several attempts resulted in unsatisfactory cool tones. This was caused by an inability to relate to the shadows directly, without relating to the rest of the painting. Eventually I placed the painting on the wall next to the still-life. I then looked through two long paper tubes directing one eye on the wall shadow and one on the painting. It was then easy to find an equivalent in paint to match the colour of the shadow on the wall. The shadows were surprisingly warm, confirming the Impressionists' discovery that shadows are often the complementary colour of the objects casting them.

The smooth surface of the background was achieved by putting down an initial ground layer of paints, rubbing this down with a piece of muslin dipped in oil of turpentine and painting over this in thin layers of paint mixed with oil of turpentine. The mount was treated in the same way, the shadows copied from the mount of another picture pinned to the wall. The light source was not consistent with the light source illuminating the still life, hence creating the illusion of the painting behind the mount being a piece of paper.

(c) Analysis and Conclusions:

Time and motion are arrested in a particular way in the photograph. The light, particular reflections, and juxtaposition of details are seen from a given angle. The photographic image frames and isolates a unique moment. The figures could not be set up in the given pose to be painted, but the photograph of these figures could. The objects depicted in the still-life, the photograph being one of these, are not subject to momentary changes. The nature of the photographic image was emphasized by being placed in the context of the still-life.

In the painted photograph, perspective was arrested from a given angle. The still-life itself was viewed from a specific point. The two angles of vision did not coincide. A tension was created between the frontal, static perspective of the photograph as an object, and the changing appearance of the still-life with the changing position of the artist.

The angle the photograph was viewed from caused a degree of foreshortening. In choosing a photograph for J, the complicated task of foreshortening all the individual elements was eliminated by choosing a picture in which the images were small. The changes in size brought about by seeing the photograph from below would be so minute that they would not be detectable. Therefore an overall adaptation of perspective was not attempted. However, the resulting effect is that the photograph seems to project outwards, to 'jump out' from the wall. The photograph was narrowed towards the top to coincide with the angle of vision, fulfilling the demands of linear perspective. Despite this the eye registers the lack of consistent foreshortening and the angle the photograph is seen from

remains unconvincing and ambiguous.

Because of the manner in which the tones to be used in the shadows were resolved, the band of shadows relates more convincingly to the still-life than the rest of the painting. The shadows form a band or strip which seem unconnected to the rest of the painting. The pins stuck into the wall in this band are painted in a 'trompe-l'oeil' manner and to some extent integrate this area with the painting as a whole.

The camera records images as patches of light across a surface. It does not reproduce the internal space the bodies immediately displace. The resulting effect is of a pattern of light across a surface, displaying the frontal aspect of scenes. The reality produced is a surface reality, the third dimension exists as a conscious deception on a flat surface and cannot be mistaken for real space. In reproducing the photograph in J these spatial qualities were exaggerated (the painted photograph looks flatter than the photograph itself (compare plates xv and xvi)). The photograph in J was not as accurately reproduced as might appear at first glance. Minute changes (minute because of scale and not degree of change) from the original occur throughout the representation. This resulted in ambiguous spatial effects. The painted photograph is less convincing in its illusion of space than the photograph copied, but more convincing in its illusion of space than the surrounding still-life; and is convincing in its imitation of 3-D when seen in the painting as a whole. It is the surfaces of the objects in the still-life which exist as a 'conscious deception on a flat surface'. Linda Nochlin says of Pearlstein:

Pearlstein, who never used photographs but always works from the live model, was 'accused' of relying upon them at a recent panel discussion.... Instead of using photographs, Pearlstein has as far as possible, transformed himself into a camera, and has assimilated many of the characteristics normally associated with photography....¹⁶

The same can be said about the treatment of the objects in J. In rendering the objects the camera's characteristics were (unconsciously) reproduced.

Despite the spatial ambiguities which occur, a deliberate attempt was made to stress the two-dimensional nature of the photograph. The painted photograph casts a slight shadow to the right and below, and the white edge around the photograph differentiates the photograph from its surroundings as a flat plane. If this thin white line around the painted photograph establishes a flat field surrounding and behind the image, signifying its two dimensional nature, the painted white mount serves to create an ambiguity as to what is supposed to appear flat. Kim Levin writes of Malcolm Morley:

With his wide, white-painted borders Morley sealed in the illusion, bracketed it, always bringing the eye back to the surface, never letting it get lost in the illusion of space. With this white border used as a delaying action space was proclaimed as fakery and was neutralized: the blank white edge is a no-man's-land cancelling out the insistent space.¹⁷

The effect of the simulated mount in J is very similar.

There are more connections between J and the work of Stephen Posen, than other Photo Realists. He paints huge one-to-one reproductions of structures made of material draped over boxes, directly from life. His subject-matter is significant only for the formal possibilities it offers. He is interested in the relationship of the forms depicted, to the surface

on which they are arranged to be translated into two-dimensional compositions. These are the concerns of J. His paintings do not, however, create the same sense of ambiguous space present in J. His images project outwards from a flat surface. The objects in J also project from a surface, that is the wall, but they stand separate from the wall, surrounded by space. In Posen's 'Occam's Razor', 1973, an enlarged photograph was included in the composition. There is an option of recognizing the photograph as an object, an image (a series of forms), or for its symbolic content. The ambiguity created by the photograph which can be interpreted as object, space-indicator or symbol is similar in J.

My primary concerns were formal. Despite this formal interest, the most accessible element when relating to J is the content. The composition is structured in a way which undeniably draws attention to the face of the central figure. The surface is divided into four panels. The area of the top panel equals the area of the bottom two, the strip of glass running through the centre of the painting. The objects are cluttered around the figures, forming a triangular formation which rests on the bottom edge of the glass, with the face of the central figure at the apex. This apex is on the line dividing the painting vertically (see transparency over plate xiv). The eyes of the central figure confront the observer directly, whereas the child looks to the side. All these elements emphasize the emotional weight of the central figure. The effect of this figure is as important as the formal awareness that the figure is

- a painted reproduction
- of a photographic reproduction
- within a pictorial surface area
- enclosed and defined by an illusory mount.

Despite the separation of the painting into various bands, there is an integration of the various elements and styles. This is largely due to the fact that any painter develops personal preferences and a particular system of working. The consistency of these selective preferences in any given work will produce a sense of unity. It is essential for an illusionistic painting of reality to have a sense of integration and consistency.

As Gombrich writes:

The picture becomes a picture only if the marks on paper are sorted out by the mind into a consistent and coherent message.¹⁸

In achieving a sense of unity and overall rightness in J the processes of translation from the photograph and from 3-DS were found to be very similar.

- (i) In both instances personal choices were involved in finding solutions in paint to reproduce that being copied.
- (ii) Colour equivalents had to be found. In the translation of colour, the finding of systems of inter-related colours which would match that depicted was the same.
- (iii) The rendering of the photograph in J was as determined by a learned vocabulary, as 'unobjective', as the rendering of 3-DS. There is no exclusion of an 'aesthetic territory' in either case.

The processes of translation are similar but not the same. In painting J some differences were found in painting from the photograph and 3-D.S.

- (i) There are no differences in texture on the surface of a photograph; face and flowers feel and look the same. In the painting of the photograph however, larger areas, such as the face, were made to look textured. When painting the still-life, it was impossible not to become involved in the difference in textures of the objects such as the glass bottles and matchbox.
- (ii) In painting the still-life, the internal depth or space the objects do not immediately displace is related to. As the eye focusses freely on objects everything is rendered in sharp focus. Copying the photograph means copying a flat surface. Peculiarities in depth in the painted photograph in J result from inaccuracies in the translation of objects in and out of focus.

Because of the method of translating the graphic description of the outline of objects in the preliminary drawings, the processes involved in reproduction seemed very different. The outlines in the photograph were traced onto the card, whereas the drawing of the still-life was a trying process of producing drawings accurately based on laws of perspective. The work done by the camera in tracing the photograph, had to be done by the artist in drawing the still-life. This process of 'making' and 'matching' could have been avoided by setting up a transparent grid in front of the still-life, and tracing the outlines shown with a one-eyed stationary vision.

CHAPTER THREE:

CONCLUSIONS:

I PERCEPTION AS A LEARNING PROCESS:

The first prejudice teachers of art appreciation usually have to combat is the belief that artistic excellence is identical with photographic accuracy ... Aesthetics, in other words, has surrendered its claim to be concerned with the problem of representation, the problem of illusion in art. But ... the impression has grown up that illusion, being artistically irrelevant, must also be psychologically simple.¹

The recent advent of Photo Realism encompasses the problem of illusion in art, if only by employing illusionistic methods to make certain conceptual statements about the nature of art.² As such I would not agree with Gombrich's statement that illusion is artistically irrelevant and no longer the concern of aestheticians and painters. That it is psychologically complicated is undeniable. In order to formulate any conclusions concerning the nature of the relationship between 3-DS, the photograph and the painted version of these respectively, it is necessary to enquire into the nature of perception involved in visual representation.

Gombrich states that no mode of perception is primarily an affair of beginning with sense perceptions and constructing the object out of these. Whatever is taken in by the eye is inevitably modified and sometimes completely altered by mental processes in the act of perception. There is no such thing as objective seeing, an 'innocent eye', and hence it is impossible to capture the image on the retina, producing a copy of a determined and fixed original.³ Perception involves a learning process.⁴

Not only is a learning process involved in the reading of pictures and paintings, but also in becoming familiar with objects in the real world.

Aldrich draws a distinction between these two processes, 'prehension' and 'observation', both of which according to him, fall under the category of perception.

Let us call 'observation' the perceptual mode in which material things are realized in physical space. Then the very looking at things will be an incipient awareness of their space properties as fixed by metrical standards and measuring operations. Things seen in this way will have a different structural cast from that of the same things in the aesthetic perception of them. Let us call the latter mode 'prehension'. The aesthetic space of things perceived thus is determined by such characteristics as intensities of values of colour and sound, which ... comprise the medium presented by the material things in question ... Thus prehension is, if you like, an 'impressionistic' way of looking, but still a mode of perception, with the impressions objectively animating the material things - there to be prehend⁵.

'Prehension' thus involves a knowledge of aesthetic vocabularies, a learning process concerning 'aesthetic space', which is determined by formal properties. This accumulated knowledge, he goes on to say, enables one toprehend (1) a material thing as an aesthetic object, and (2) to see 'the thing as something it is not really thought to be'.⁶

To enable the viewer to 'prehend', we can infer that use must be made of information or data already present in the mind. Gombrich sees this process as one of 'making' and 'matching'; the making of a configuration on paper and the matching of it to some object. The 'copying' of reality proceeds through the rhythms of schema and correction.

The schema is not the product of a process of 'abstraction', of a tendency to 'simplify'; it represents the first approximate, loose category which is gradually tightened to fit the form it is to reproduce.⁷

The starting point of a visual record is not knowledge, but a guess conditioned by habit and tradition.

II 3-DS AND THE PAINTED IMAGE:

In the process of 'making' and 'matching' in painting illusionistically, a relationship exists between the painted reality and 3-DS (reality itself), the two being inextricably linked. At any point in the history of illusionistic painting, certain conventions or visual languages have been employed to produce realistic images. The changes involved in formulating these conventions or particular systems of codification determine the particular nature of this relationship in any given work at any given time.

(a) The Role of Style:

What is determined by the choices mentioned above is the style of painting, which constitutes the nature of the relationship in question. To participate in the realm of artistic discourse the employment of a certain style is inevitable. In analysing H the conclusion was drawn that the exclusion of an aesthetic territory resulted in mere mimicry, in mere 're-production', which is interesting not as art, but as forgery. As Gombrich says:

Where the artist has to copy a human product he can of course produce a facsimile which is indistinguishable from the original. The forger of bank notes succeeds only too well in effacing his personality and the limitations of a period style. But what matters to us is that the correct portrait, like the useful map, is an end product on a long road through schema and correction. It is not a faithful record of visual experience but the faithful construction of a relational model.

Neither the subjectivity of vision nor the sway of conventions need lead us to deny that such a model can be constructed to any required degree of accuracy. What is decisive here is clearly the word 'required'.⁸

In discussing H it was decided that it was all too easy to imitate accurately something as accessible to imitation as a flat piece of newspaper. The same attempt at imitation of the still-life in J failed as a faithful record of visual experience because of the nature of translation from 3-DS. Gombrich talks of a forger of bank-notes (already two-dimensional) and not

a forger of landscape or still-life. The exclusion of style, the product of an 'innocent eye', is only possible when transcribing from one two-dimensional surface to another. In relation to photographs this is discussed below on pp 75-76.

In rendering 3-DS on a flat surface, the nature of the activity is one of translation, not transcription. If transcriptions were possible there would be no history of art.⁹ The differences in the representation of reality at different times are not due to fluctuating subjective standards, but to the fact that at any given time a certain system of schemata, a certain style, has more credibility than another in assuming the guise of reality.

Discoveries of new styles result from systematic comparisons of past achievements and new motifs. Painters have been painting 'realistic paintings' for centuries, but in no two periods have the nature of their activities been the same. Painting a picture which looks 'realistic' today is very different from painting a picture which would have looked 'realistic' a hundred years ago. Because of the absolute currency of photographic images, the photographic image, with its particular system of codification, at present looks most 'real.' Paintings executed from photographs are mistakenly seen as being painted from reality. It is the consistency of style and the familiarity of a used vocabulary that convinces the viewer that what he is looking at 'looks real'. Gerrit Henry writes:

At the risk of being redundant, it is as if the most genuinely 'real' works of realist art depended not on accuracy of depiction, but on accuracy of style for their reality.¹⁰

Illusion can be convincing only when the artist's execution fulfills certain expectations in a given context.

Gombrich describes the role of expectation in an anecdote from Pliny, where Parrhasios fooled Zeuxis who had painted grapes so deceptively that birds came to peck at them.

He invited his rival to his studio to show him his own work, and when Zeuxis eagerly tried to lift the curtain from the panel, he found it was not real but painted, after which he had to concede the palm to Parrhasios, who had deceived not only irrational birds, but an artist. In the cool light of reason, Parrhasios's feat is somewhat less admirable. Within the experience of poor Zeuxis, the probability of a curtain's being painted was surely nil. A few strokes of light and shade may therefore have been sufficient to make him 'see' the curtain he expected, all the more so as he was keyed up for the next phase, the picture he wanted to reveal. The 'trompe l'oeil' painters have ever since relied on the mutual reinforcement of illusion and expectation: the painted fly on the panel, the painted letters on letter rack; indeed the most successful trompe l'oeil I have ever seen was on the level of Parrhasios's trick - painting simulating a broken glass pane in front of a picture.¹¹

The mount around the painting in J relies on identical mechanisms of expectation for its successful illusionistic effect, transforming the wall into paper.

(b) Perspective in Pictorial Representation:

The development of scientific perspective is based on the fact that we do not see around objects. Because pictures are two-dimensional translations of 3-DS, they are infinitely ambiguous, but perspective does aim at an accurate equation. There are scientific reasons for this claim to accuracy.

That we do not see around objects during normal binocular vision is not strictly true. Theories of perspective are based on impressions received from one-eyed stationary vision. This distinction between binocular and monocular vision will be explained.

When painting the bottles in front of the photograph for J, I became increasingly aware of the impossibility of seeing the bottles in relation to the photographs without closing one eye. The position of, and reflections on, the

An example of this is demonstrated in a phenomenon I noticed recently. The panelled walls of a theatre receded in steps. (See fig. (i))

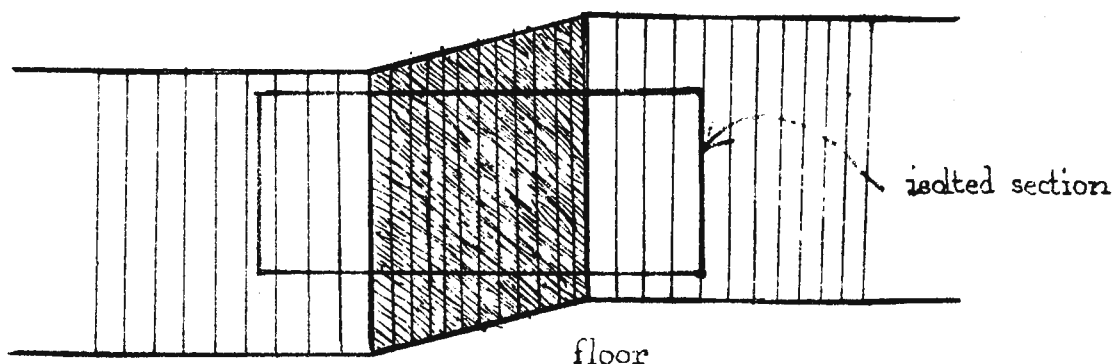


Fig. (i)

When looking at an isolated section of the wall with one eye, the wall appeared flat despite shadows indicating the recession of the panels. Even with the knowledge that there was a change in angle of the wall this change could not be seen. When looking at the same section of wall with both eyes it became impossible not to see the change in direction and depth.

Adelbert Ames Jr.,¹² a former practicing artist, invented examples of 'trompe l'oeil' demonstrating the validity of the development of theories of perspective based on one-eyed stationary vision. The following is one example.

When looking through peepholes (with one eye) at each of three objects in the distance, each time the object looked like a tubular chair. In fact only one view showed a chair of normal shape; another showed an object which assumed the appearance of a chair from only one angle; and the third was a variety of wires extended in front of a backdrop which had a chair seat painted on it.

Because of our familiarity with reality we read into an image that which does not necessarily exist - as long as there is nothing to contradict our

expectation. An accurate two-dimensional rendering of an object seen in this way would be indistinguishable from the three-dimensional object.

The artist's creation of a relational model in dealing with representational painting cannot preclude subjectivity, but is based on objective standards or, as Gombrich describes it, 'correct equations'.¹³

The use of perspectival means to transfer the images in D, E, F, G and J from 3-DS to a two-dimensional surface, was an attempt at a 'correct equation'.

(c) Colour Translation and Internal Relations in Pictorial Representation:

The objective standards mentioned above are limited to graphic description, a copying of the outlines of objects. In the translation of colour a system (like perspective) aiming at a 'correct equation' does not exist.

As John Ruskin writes:

While form is absolute, so that you can say at any moment you draw any line that it is either right or wrong, colour is wholly relative. Every hue throughout¹⁴ your work is altered by every touch you add in other places.

The translation of colour involves the making of a system of tones or colours which suggests the original. The mechanics of certain effects are explored and a convincing comparison discovered. There is no one 'right' way of doing this. It is the ability to infer from relationships and recognize identities across various differences which makes the representation of colour possible.

Even Winston Churchill, quoted by Gombrich in his book Art and Illusion, outlines the problem involved in creating convincing colour relationships in paint to correspond with the scenes or objects depicted:

It would be interesting if some real authority investigated carefully the part which memory plays in painting. We look at the object with an intent regard, then at the palette, and thirdly at the canvas. The canvas receives a message dispatched usually a few seconds before from the natural object. But it has to come through a post office 'en route'. It has been transmitted in code. It has been turned from light into paint. It reaches the canvas a cryptogram. Not until it has been placed in its correct relation to everything else that is on the canvas can it be decyphered, is its meaning apparent, is it translated once more from mere pigment into light.¹⁵

A consistency in the use of a sign system, the correct placing of colours in relation to each other, creates the most illusory image. This was not achieved in J because the method of execution resulted in a division of the painted surface into bands which were not totally integrated. (See pp 52,53).

The reading of a painting demands the acceptance of the painted surface as a series of interrelated elements restricted not only to colour. When looking at the face (in the photograph) in J, the eyes follow the observer, whatever his position. This phenomenon occurs exactly because the elements of the painting are interrelated. As we move, the real world changes and the relationship of things to each other change. But as we move in front of the painting, the painted world does not change. The relationship of things to each other remains the same.

From a front or a side seat in a cinema the distorted images are initially very disturbing. As soon as the eye becomes engrossed in the screen, it compensates for the distortion because of the consistency of the image and interrelated nature of the image.

We are drawn into a three-dimensional world when watching a film. However, if a scene includes another film screen (showing a film) amidst its surroundings, this 'screen within a screen' will appear flat. As with the 'duck-rabbit principle'¹⁶ (See Fig. (ii)) we cannot read two illusions simultaneously. Only one set of interrelated elements can be read at a time. (See p 69).

A similar and unexpected process occurs in J where a photographic representation is seen within a pictorial world. Although the painted photograph looks two-dimensional when seen in isolation (see plate xv), in the context of the painting it gives an illusion of space, making the rest of the painting look flat. When the frame of reference of the painted photograph is extended, the reading of the photograph changes.

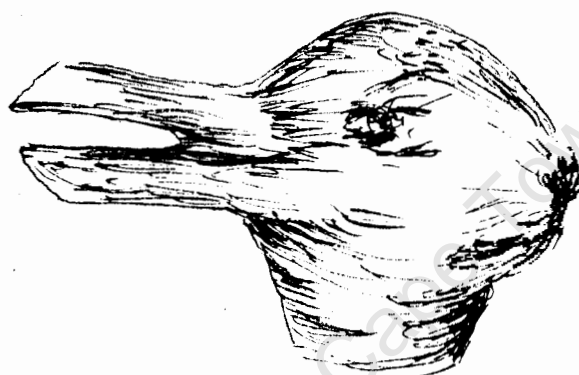


Figure (ii)

III 3-DS AND THE PHOTOGRAPH

Photography confirmed the discoveries of perspective. The camera records the one-eyed stationary vision on which the laws of perspective are based.

Camera vision co-incides with monocular vision in its

- (i) graphic description of the outlines of objects in 3-DS;
- (ii) inability to record depth through means other than focus, and blocking off of objects behind each other;
- (iii) inability to see around objects as in binocular vision;
- (iv) recording of only the frontal aspects of scenes; memory and our knowledge of the world informing us of the positions of objects in space in relation to each other.

In translating images from photographs (A, B, and C) and not 3-DS (D, E, F and G), the camera's reproduction of the frontal aspects of scenes and objects as patches of light removes the problem of rendering an 'internal volume' and the space that the bodies immediately displace. There is no concern with rendering a space which might be termed 'pictorial'.

Where the object is verisimilitude (and not , for example, Cubist or Futurist multiple visions of various aspects of objects) any two-dimensional equivalent of 3-DS can depict only the frontal aspects of scenes. But the camera exaggerates this all-over frontal aspect of scenes. The restriction of depth of field and compression of photographic images is a phenomenon we are all familiar with. As William Dyckes, in Battcock's anthology Super Realism notes:

The general effect of longer focal-length lenses on perspective can be seen in the familiar 'stacked up' look often encountered in arty photos or movies, where distant automobiles seem to be on top of one another instead of one after the other. ¹⁷

The depth created by the camera does not dispel flatness, but co-exists with it. The depth created is obviously an illusion, rather than an illusion of depth.

The monocular and camera vision, although in many ways based on the same principles, are not identical. The points of difference illustrate the particular subjective way in which the camera records images. These images can be unconvincing if the goal is verisimilitude.

With monocular vision the eye can focus freely on any object in view, whereas the camera uses a given range of focus (large or small). Because of the eye's mobility and necessary interest in space values, what is taken in by the eye is often modified by our knowledge and expectations. This makes the appearance of the world more coherent and easier to cope with. For this reason, when looking at a tall building the mind will compensate for the narrowing effect of perspective. The camera records the relative sizes of objects within our field of vision without compensation. This is why the perspective in photographs often appears to be exaggerated. (See Plate xv)

As early as 1850 Delacroix stated that 'the daguerreotype is only a copy ... in some ways false because so exact'.¹⁸

Similarly, we all know that objects in the distance 'look small', but it is surprising to see the real relationships of objects projected onto a two-dimensional plane. Such an experiment can be done by tracing the outlines of a room onto a mirror surface. The sizes of objects in the distance are unexpectedly small. I was fascinated as a child, when sitting in drive-in theatres, to find that the outline of the screen (which appeared enormous 'out there'), when traced onto the car windscreen seemed unbelievably small. The human mind has inbuilt mechanisms which minimise these changes.



Plate (xvii)

In the film's recording of colour there is no trial and error involved, no 'making' and 'matching'. The process is predetermined, one of 'matching', and limited because of this. It is in this limitation that the consistency of the photograph's system of codification lies; and in this consistency lies the success of the illusion.

William Dyckes writes:

Photographs, and especially printed reproductions, have a very weak claim to verisimilitude no matter what the advertisement says. Magazine colour in particular is hopelessly artificial...¹⁹

Because any colour translation is always a translation, it is difficult to judge what is 'artificial' and what 'real'. All colour equivalents in two-dimensional representations are in a sense artificial. Even if the colours in a photograph look 'artificial', as Dyckes describes, the image achieves an illusionistic effect. This is not only because of the accuracy of the graphic description but because of the consistency in the colour system used by the film to reproduce colour relationships.

Despite all the 'subjective' peculiarities of camera vision the photographic image remains illusionistic. Photographic syntax is accepted as visual fact because of the wide use of photography by mass media. Many observers mistake Chuck Close's paintings for renderings not of photographs but of the real thing. Interestingly people have commented that F and G, painted from 3-DS, look like paintings from photographs. Today the photograph is the measuring-yard for realism in two-dimensional reproductions, where realism means the most convincingly illusionistic image.

Photographic images confront us daily, conjuring up a myriad of responses associations and emotions. We see these images in the cinema, on TV, in magazines, newspapers, billboards, reproductions and the inevitable photograph album. Never before has any mode of seeing gained such credibility

and popularity. There is something undeniably seductive about photographs which is inextricably linked to our acceptance of photographs as representations of reality. They reflect our world in a thousand ways, and daily we read through the surface lies and inconsistencies of photographic images to the reality behind them. When we are not reading through the 'lies' we revel in them and explore them.

The form of representation of any period cannot be divorced from the purposes and requirements of the society in which the given style gains validity.

Hence the appropriateness of the Photo Realists' style. The two-dimensional image which for centuries existed only as 'Art' for high and special places, has been explored fully and brought to every man through the crusade of the camera. Photography is all-pervasive and therefore deserves questioning. This has been the task of Pop artists (to some extent), the Photo Realists, and for me is the task of this dissertation. The Photo Realists have made illusion artistically relevant once more.

IV 3-DS AND THE PAINTED PHOTOGRAPH

Photographs give us an illusion of reality. In viewing a painting of a photograph there is the illusion of reality, the illusion of it being a photograph, and the awareness of it as a painting. The use of the photograph is central to the difference between Photo Realism and other forms of realism, and to the difference between the realism of A, B and C, and D, E, F and G.

It is often pointed out that this choice results in an impersonal relationship between the artist and reality.

(The studio-realist) is really interested in the difference between the marks he can make on paper, even though he's trying to be very accurate with it, and the thing itself... He's interested in that difference and I think we're not (we - Photo Realists). We try to eliminate that difference as much as possible and resort to the camera to do it.²⁰

The Photo Realist replaces the artist's personal interpretive vision with the recording of visual fact; he replaces the subjectivity of the artist's eye with the objectivity of the camera's lens.²¹

(Photo Realists) prefer a styleless style ... There are stylistic differences but they are not due to the artist having asserted them, but rather in spite of the artist having tried to suppress them.²²

The photograph intercedes between the subject and the act of describing it and serves to cancel ... emotional response.²³

The fact that they work each section of the painting with equal sized sections can also be seen as an attempt at an impersonal, mechanical rendering.

The artist's relationship with objects in 3-DS (reality) is objectified because of the intercession of the photograph. However this does not preclude subjectivity. The Photo Realist, in a sense, is a studio-realist

who paints objects which happen to be two-dimensional photographs. The relationship with the content of the photograph might be objective but the relationship with the photograph is not.

The differences in painting from a photograph and 3-DS became apparent while working on J. It was found that the process of translating from the photograph was as extensive and comprehensive as that from 3-DS. Reproducing a piece of newspaper was possible because of the elimination of colour translation and gradations of tone. When colour was introduced (J) the painter's personal interpretation came into play.

Painting from photographs frees the artist from past styles of painting only by replacing them with new styles. Individual Photo Realists can be distinguished stylistically (and not only by choice of subject matter), indicating the presence of the artist's individual choices.

Because of the accessibility of the photographic image, Photo Realists are often identified by their choice of subject matter i.e. content. Godard reconciles interests in formal issues with the undeniable presence of content:

Style is just the outside of content and content the inside of style, like the outside and inside of the human body - both go together, they can't be separated.²⁴

It is the fascination with the photograph that distinguishes Photo Realist styles from previous forms of realism. Their concerns are primarily visual, formal, but form cannot be divorced from content.

I have tried to draw attention to the effects on visual perception of the extensive presence of the photographic image, and to stimulate an awareness of the physical and psychological factors which affect the way we see representations and reality.

A P P E N D I X

1. Scharf et al¹ discuss the notion of an 'innocent eye', one that has no visual preconceptions. They looked at subjects with congenital cataracts whose sight was later restored through surgery.

Even after the identification of an object is learned, in a year's time if it is put in another context or its position changed or its colour changed it becomes unidentifiable... the difference between a sphere and a cube was not always perceived ... the 'meanings' of objects are learned.

(D.D. Hebb on the experiments of M. von Sender:
The Organization of Behavior, (1949)

Investigators have also shown (A) 'primitive' people and (B) apes, realistic representations such as photographs. If 'seeing' involves no 'learning' these people and animals should have found the pictures as intelligible as we do. Surprisingly the apes recognised the images whereas the people did not.

(A) Some Experiments with Primitive People quoted in Scharf and Benton's Introduction to Art:
() Lord Avebury in The Origin of Civilization and Primitive Conditions of Man. (1870), notes that on showing a large coloured engraving of an aboriginal Australian to a group of Australians,

One declared it to be a ship, another a kangaroo... not one of a dozen identifying the portrait as having anything to do with himself. A rude drawing ... they can realize.

() Dr. Collingwood, speaking of the Kibablans of Formosa, to whom he showed a copy of the 'Illustrated London News', tells us that he found it impossible to interest them by pointing at the most striking illustrations, which they did not appear to comprehend.

(iii) Denham, in his Travels in Central Africa writes

So also a Kaffir has great difficulty in understanding drawings and perspective ... As to the Bushmen ... they have no idea of perspective, nor of how a curved surface can possibly be represented on a flat page.

(B) Some Experiments with Apes quoted in Scharf and Benton's Introduction to Art

(i) In his book The Mentality of Apes (1925) Wolfgang Köhler describes chimpanzees looking at photographs of their own kind. After looking at them attentively,

one passed a hand over the image apparently to confirm the reality by tactile means ... one chimp responded by extending his hand as a friendly gesture towards the image ... His intension was unmistakable ... he had never before greeted an inanimate object in that way, but only humans or animals.

(ii) Chimpanzees were also shown photographs of bunches of bananas, a stone, a basket (from which they were fed daily) full of fruit and the basket empty.

The results were varied, but Köhler's experiments produced strong evidence that these animals were able to differentiate between images shown, recognizing the objects in them.

The fact that apes more readily associate photographic images with the objects they represent than do humans similarly unfamiliar with photographs, offers some proof that human beings approach new visual information with built-in preconceptions. The unknown tends to be seen in terms of the known. People must even learn to 'read' images as 'true to nature' as photographs.

2. Gombrich² discusses minimal, biologically significant forms which are responded to when recognised.

The merest outline of a cow seems sufficient for a tsetse trap ... Little birds will open their beaks when they see a feeding parent approach the nest, and ... also when they are shown two darkish roundels of different size representing the silhouette of the body of the bird, in its most 'generalized' form ... Certain young fish can even be deceived by two simple dots arranged horizontally, which they take to be the eyes of the mother.

He uses the example of the tsetse trap to illustrate that an 'image' in this biological sense is not

an imitation of an object's external form but an imitation of certain privileged or relevant aspects. The outline of the cow has the biologically significant form, therefore the fly is deceived.

Therefore for the birds to fly at the painting might appear to be 'a sign of a complete "objective" illusion. It is a plausible idea, but a wrong one.

3. Aldrich³ discusses the ability to 'see the thing as something it is not really thought to be' by means of the following figure:

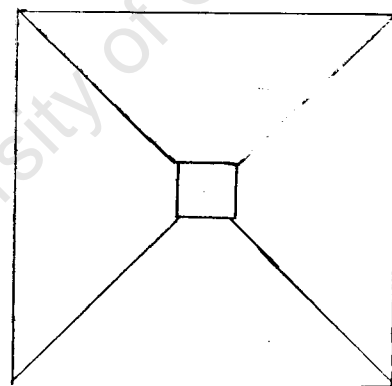
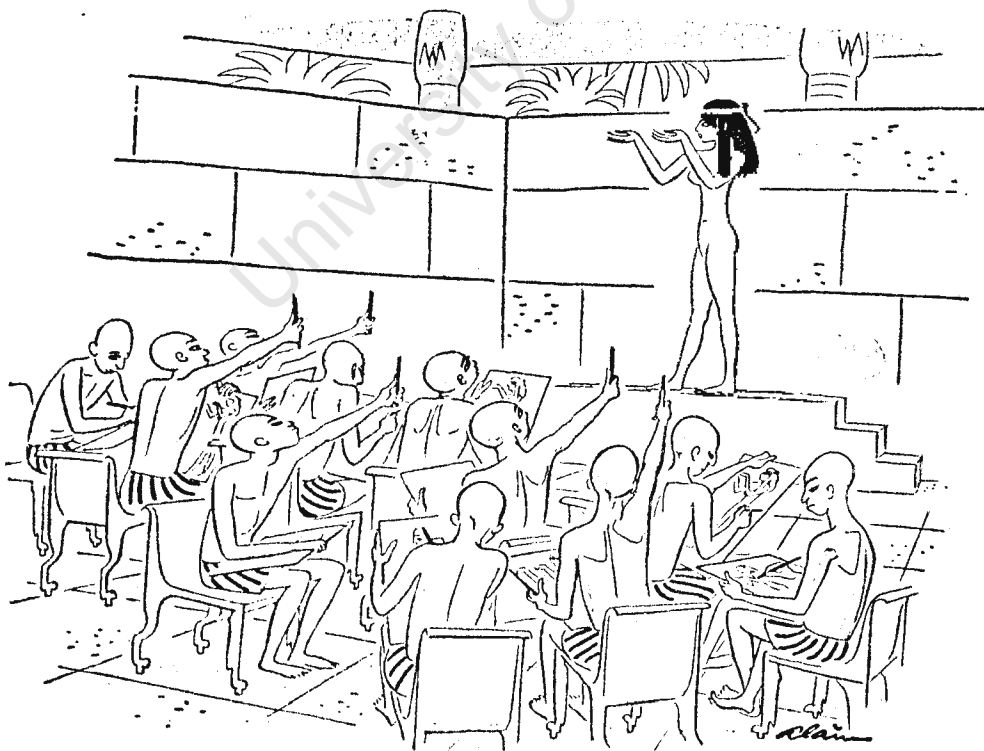


Figure iii

He remarks that it is possible to 'look at this figure' under these five titles:

1. Square suspended in a frame,
 2. Lampshade seen from above,
 3. Lampshade seen from below,
 4. Looking into a tunnel,
- and 5. As an aerial view of a truncated pyramid,



1. Drawing by ALAIN

although 'what is simply there is a figure in printer's ink on white paper, the space values which are indeterminate or not definite without presuppositions or ways of looking'.

4. Gombrich records Leonardo da Vinci discussing the power of 'confused shapes', such as clouds or muddy water, in provoking images of faces and landscapes. He also mentions the trained drawer who acquires a mass of schemata which serves as a support for the representation of his memory images. This 'is another phase in the process of interaction between making and matching. The artist makes a configuration on paper which will suggest an image to him'.⁴
5. Gombrich explains the existence of a history of art.

We see a Chinese landscape here and a Dutch landscape there a Greek head and a seventeenth century portrait. We have come to take such classifications so much for granted that we have almost stopped asking why it is so easy to tell whether a tree was painted by a Chinese or by a Dutch master. If art were only or mainly, an expressive vision of a personal vision, there could be no history of art. We have no reason to assume, as we do, that there must be a family likeness between pictures of trees produced in proximity. We could not count on the fact that the boys in Alain's life class (see figure iv) would produce a typical Egyptian figure. Even less could we hope to detect whether an Egyptian figure was indeed made three thousand years ago or forged yesterday. The art historian's trade rests on the conviction since formulated by Wölfflin that 'not everything is possible in every period'.⁵



1. Drawing by ALAIN

© 1955 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

Figure iv

8. BATTCKOCK, G. Minimal Art,
A Critical Anthology See Introduction p 26
"Minimal style is extremely complex. The artist has to create new notions of scale, space, containment, shape and object. He must reconstruct the relationship between art as object and between object and man. Negative space, architectural enclosure, nature and the mechanical are all concerns of the Minimal artist, and .. become some of the characteristics that unify the movement ... the artist is more immediately involved in daily concerns. Vietnam, technological development, sociology and philosophy are all subjects of immediate importance".
9. HENRY, G. Super Realism p 11.
10. RATCLIFFE, C. 'New York:
22 Realists' p 24.
11. GREENBERG, C. 'Touch and Scale:
Cubism, Pollock,
Newman and Still' p 361.
"If Abstract Expressionism means anything then it means painterliness. In the context of Abstract Expressionism, this term is a description of: 'Loose, rapid handling, or the look of it, masses that blot and fuse instead of shape, that stay distinct, large, conspicuous rhythms; broken colour; uneven saturations or densities of paint, exhibited brush, knife, finger or rag marks ..."
12. BATTCKOCK, G. Super Realism Introduction p XXVIII
13. CHASE, L. Super Realism p 85.
14. NOCHLIN, L. Super Realism p 121.
15. NOCHLIN, L. Super Realism p 65
16. Ibid. pp 66-78 passim
17. Ibid.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

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|-----|-------------------|--|--|
| 1. | SCHARF and BENTON | <u>Introduction to Art</u> | See Appendix No. 1 |
| 2. | ALDRICH, V.C. | <u>Philosophy of Art</u> | See notes p 61. |
| 3. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Meditations on a Hobby Horse</u> | p 6. |
| 4. | Ibid. | | p 157. |
| 5. | Ibid. | | p 157. |
| 6. | See notes | | pp 7,8 |
| 7. | See notes | | pp 7,8 |
| 8. | WOLFFLIN, H. | <u>Principles of Art History; The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art</u> | Wolfflin saw the development of art history in terms of five pairs of polar concepts. The first is the development from linear to painterly. The linear lays stress on the limits of things; the painterly establishes a limitless appearance - there is a lack of definition of edges, passages of paint bleed into one another creating a space apprehended as a 'shifting semblance'. p 15. |
| 9. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Meditations on a Hobby Horse</u> | See notes on p 61. |
| 10. | CHASE, L. | <u>Super Realism</u> | p 81. |
| 11. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Art and Illusion</u> | p 94. |
| 12. | LEVIN, K. | <u>Super Realism</u> | p 177. |
| 13. | LEVIN, K. | <u>Super Realism</u> | p 98 |
| 14. | ROSENBERG, H. | <u>Super Realism</u> | p 138. |
| 15. | Ibid | | |
| 16. | NOCHLIN, L. | <u>Super Realism</u> | p 117. |
| 17. | LEVIN, K. | <u>Super Realism</u> | p 176. |
| 18. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Meditation on a Hobby Horse</u> | p 175 |

NOTESCHAPTER THREE

1. GOMBRICH, E.H. Art and Illusions p 4.
2. See notes p 6.
3. Ibid pp 29-54 passim.
4. SCHARF and BENTON Introduction to Art p 44.
5. ALDRICH, V.C. Philosophy of Art pp 20,21.
6. See Appendix No. 3.
7. GOMBRICH, E.H. Art and Illusion p 64.
8. Ibid. p 78.
9. See Appendix No. 5.
10. HENRY, G. Super Realism p 20
11. GOMBRICH, E.H. Art and Illusion p 173.
12. AMES, A. (Jr.) Art and Illusion pp 209-210 quoted by Gombrich.
13. GOMBRICH, E.H. Art and Illusion p 217
14. RUSKIN, J. Art and Illusion p 226
15. CHURCHILL, W. Art and Illusion p 261.
16. GOMBRICH, E.H. Art and Illusion p 34
 "Take the simple trick drawing which has reached the philosophical seminar from the pages of the humorous weekly, 'Die Fliegenden Blatter'. We cannot experience alternative readings at the same time".
17. DYCKES, W. Super Realism p 154.
18. DELACROIX Art and Photography p 94.
19. DYCKES, W. Super Realism p 158.
20. CHASE, L. Super Realism p 85.
21. Ibid.
22. RAYMOND, H.D. Super Realism p 129.
23. KARP, I. Super Realism p 27.
24. NOCHLIN, L. Super Realism p 125
 Nochlin quotes Jean-Luc Goddard, a modernist film maker.

NOTESAPPENDIX

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|----|----------------------|---|---|
| 1. | SCHARF and
BENTON | <u>Introduction to Art</u> | The various experiments are
described on pp 46-48. |
| 2. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Meditations on a
Hobby Horse</u> | pp 5,6. |
| 3. | ALDRICH, V.C. | <u>Philosophy of Art</u> | pp 20,21. |
| 4. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Art and Illusion</u> | pp 159, 160. |
| 5. | GOMBRICH, E.H. | <u>Art and Illusion</u> | pp 3,4
Figure (iv) is copied from p 2. |

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