

Painting: A Creative Journey

Larry Dinkin



How can an abstract world evolve?

Painting: A Creative Journey

By Larry Dinkin

This book is dedicated to Estelle and Martin Karlin

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Cover: the paintings from left to right are *Self-Portrait*, page 7; *Florida* (cropped on the cover), page 26; and *Wind October 18th*, page 84.

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Preface – Why This Book?

The University of Florida acquired ten of my works of art. Lucinda Lavelli, Dean, and Jennifer Coolidge, Director of Development of the College of the Arts, asked me to lecture at the University about my “creative artistic journey”. As I began preparing for the lecture, it occurred to me that a book like this – featuring 154 selected paintings and illustrations – would be a much better vehicle to describe my creative path. Such a book would allow the reader more time to contemplate the strategies and techniques I developed, while viewing the images. With works in the permanent collections of forty-five prominent museums worldwide, I believe I am eminently qualified to write this book.

Introduction

How can one come to understand the creative artistic process? You can explore creativity in general or follow a particular creative path in depth. This book takes the latter approach: it will take you on a visual journey along my artistic path. As reflected in the three images on the cover of this book, my path went from figurative to landscape to my present body of work, abstract painting. These genres are the pillars of Western fine art. Note that a “creative journey” refers not only to my whole body of work but also to paths taken in the development of individual works. By seeing the many decisions made – from initial vision to the finished work – you will come to understand the logic, and get a sense, of my creative process. Many artists, as well as others engaged in varied creative pursuits, have written firsthand accounts of their endeavors, but few have literally illustrated the creative process with the level of detail you will find in this book. This approach offers the reader a whole other dimension of understanding.

One might question whether focusing on one particular artist’s path is too narrow in scope. But any such limitation is more than offset by the fact that I examine multiple genres – including figurative, landscape and abstract. You will appreciate that many of the concepts and techniques that were developed along my path apply to virtually all paintings. More than just illustrating various strategies and techniques, this book will allow you to explore the creative spirit that energized my vision.

Some paintings and silkscreens studied in this book have more commentary than others, and some have none¹. But seeing this collection of works together will give the reader a greater visual understanding of my journey. By just looking at the images you will see how I “build” paintings. You will appreciate that the visual is what matters most. By analogy, you can find a composer’s explanations illuminating, but nothing compares to being moved by the music and the emotions that it evokes.

What is the audience for this book?

- **Anyone who views the three images on the cover and is compelled to journey through the creative path that brought these paintings to life.** This journey is a lot like following a filmmaker from concept to scripting, casting, filming and editing. Although one would make their own unique film, they would have learned a great deal by seeing how a film is made. I endeavored to demystify the creation of paintings, revealing the creative process “behind the curtain”.
- **Those who are intrigued by the subject of creativity itself.** This book will enable readers to visualize and explore a creative process in depth.
- **Painters, both new and experienced.** They would benefit from traveling the path from figurative to landscape to abstract painting. The book illustrates how paintings are “built” from the initial vision to the finished work. It delves into creative strategies, both instinctive, and intellectual, and answers the question: how can an abstract world be created? There are many well-regarded art instruction books, usually limited to one genre, which demonstrate step-by-step techniques, often resulting in formulaic paintings – the antithesis of creativity. This book, to the contrary, illustrates creative concepts that allow you to build your own unique art. Fifty years ago when I started my artistic journey, I would have immensely appreciated a book like this.
- **People who will find these images visually exciting and simply want to view them.** You can see my art in forty-five museums or just turn these pages. A book like this allows the reader time to gaze and contemplate the art. I welcome you to a visually exciting journey.

All who read this book, for whatever reason, are sure to come away with one lasting impression: creativity is one of the joys of humanity.

¹ Some of the commentary on an image is on the page opposite that image. I suggest that you keep the book open while reading so that these pages can be looked at together.

Background

Larry Dinkin was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1943. When he was five, his family moved to Queens, New York. As a child, he drew cars, trains, and airplanes. But that was no different than what many children were drawing. In his early teens, he would visit a neighbor's house where a copy of a painting, Grant Wood's *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere* was hung. (Readers should Google this image as well as other artists' work referred to in this book. Enjoy.) Dinkin was drawn to this image. He found this picture captivating and charming, like a well-made miniature. It was not a copy of reality – it was a creation. Dinkin's fascination with this image reflects an innate level of visual sensitivity that formed the foundation of his aesthetics¹.

While in high school he would go to the large central library in Queens just to look at art and illustration books. The photographically realistic paintings did not interest him. What he found visually exciting were paintings that were stylistic and possessed energetic calligraphy² such as the works of the illustrator Daniel Schwartz, the oil sketches of Rubens, Rembrandt's drawings and George Bellows' paintings. Within these images, he could see the artist's hand at work and discern how these paintings were constructed. Images, not the text, were his interest. The images were everything.

Later on, Dinkin took a few art courses at Pratt Institute, The School of Visual Arts, and various art classes while attending the City College of New York. Unfortunately, he absorbed little in these classes because he was not committed to painting at that time. He dabbled, producing a few paintings and drawings.

In Dinkin's early twenties, he became interested in photography. The photographs of Alfred Stieglitz, Henri Cartier-Bresson, Ansel Adams, George Hurrell, Horst P. Horst, and Richard Avedon enthralled him. These images absorbed him for hours on end and still do. He purchased a 35mm camera and an assortment of lenses and built a darkroom. Within a few years he realized that to be a photographer who captured scenes such as Cartier-Bresson did, he would have to carry a camera virtually at all times and spend a lifetime looking for images to shoot. He concluded that photography did not suit his personality. Photography is primarily about subject matter and that, for him, meant visual limitations. He needed to be in a studio, by himself, and imagine, construct, and "build" the image. Although he uses the phrase "construct and build," which requires planning and designing, Dinkin understood that the sine qua non for creating a work of art is vision. As this book progresses, it will illustrate how he developed his vision. Painting was to be his form of self-expression.

Over the next fifty years, he went on to achieve both critical and commercial success. Forty-five prominent museums worldwide, including the White House, have acquired his work for their permanent collections. The names and locations of the museums, as well as a list of retrospectives and solo museum exhibitions, can be found in the Curriculum Vitae, page 105, as well as on larrydinkin.com.

Why Painting – Why Oil Paints?

Why is painting such a powerful medium of visual creativity? It is because painting allows for a personal vision, limited only by imagination and executed with brush strokes that are uniquely individual. When painting, one's vision moves from the soul, through the fingers, onto the painting surface. How human, how spiritual.

Although a majority of the concepts in this book would apply to acrylic, watercolor and other painting mediums, oil paints are my primary vehicle – and the book's main focus. Oil paints are the most versatile of mediums. They have the greatest range of colors in the form of transparent glazes³ as well as textured impastos (thick layers of textured paint.) Slow drying allows for the blending or the movement of paint, deliberately or on its own. Mistakes can be scraped away or covered by opaque paint allowing for the creation of new passages. The fluidity of paint and the ease with which it yields to the manipulation of the brush or palette knife make it a perfect medium for creativity.

1 Most people have varying degrees of innate sensitivity that can be developed and enhanced.

2 As the term is used in painting: individual and unique patterns, strokes and textures made with a brush or palette knife, similar to one's personal handwriting style.

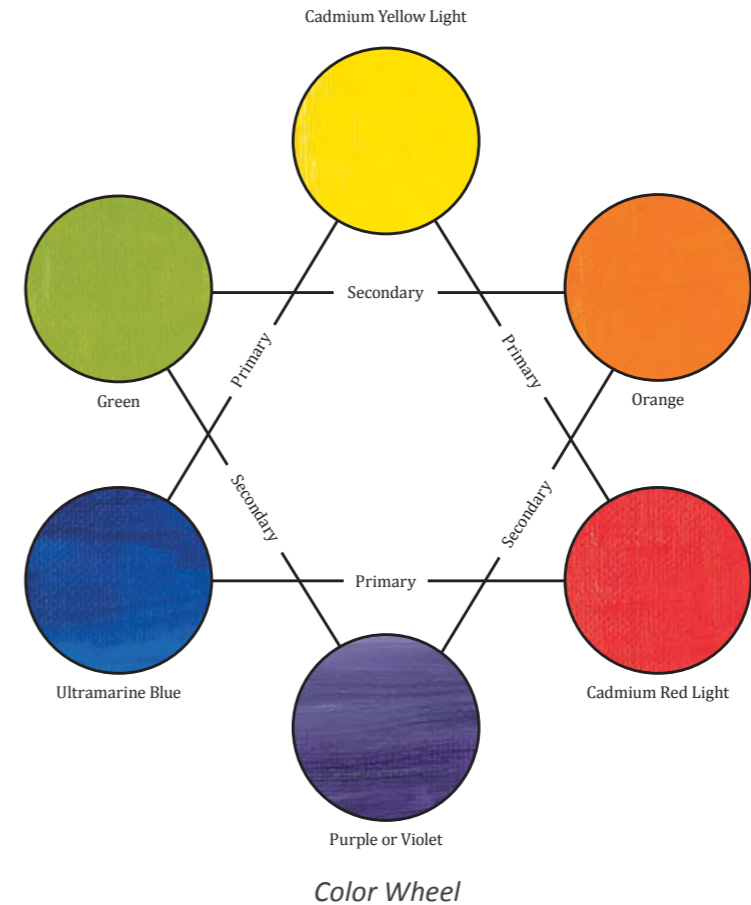
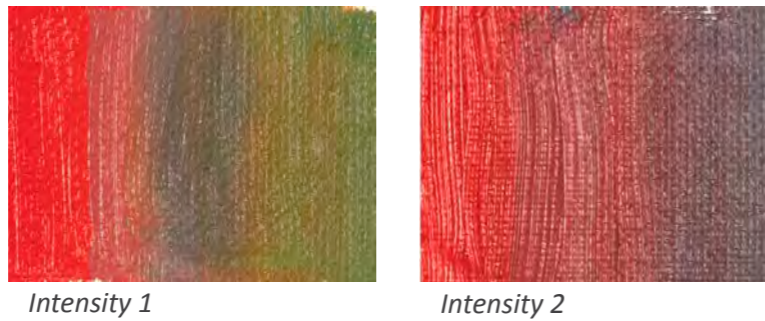
3 Glazes: transparent colors that are mixed with a medium (an oil that holds the pigments together) to form a transparent film of color that is painted over a light base.

The effect is similar to that of a white surface covered by stained glass.

Painting Basics

Before we visit the first painting, let's go over some basics. Those who are familiar with these concepts may nonetheless find it helpful to review them. I will try to be concise and visual. There are three primary colors (Yellow, Red, Blue), which, when combined, form three secondary colors (Orange, Green, Purple or Violet). See the *Color Wheel* below. Note that virtually all individual colors have warm and cool versions. For example, Cadmium Red is a warm red and Alizarin Crimson is a cool red (*Warm and Cool Red*). It is important to understand the following terminology:

- *Color* or *Hue* is the name of the color, e.g. Red, Green, Blue, etc.
- A *Complementary* color is a color that is opposite one another on the color wheel. Putting complementary colors next to each other intensifies both. As an example, see below, *Complementary: Yellow and Purple*.
- *Value* or *Tone* is the lightness or darkness of a color or object.
- *Intensity* or *Saturation* is the brightness or dullness of a color. The most intense colors come directly from the paint tube, which can be dulled by adding a complementary color. For example, adding green to red (*Intensity 1*). Another way to reduce a color's intensity is to add gray to the color, thus dulling it (*Intensity 2*).



Note: all paintings are painted with oil paints on linen unless otherwise indicated.

Starting Point

In my mid-twenties, I purchased the book *The Technique of Portrait Painting* by Frederic Taubes. He advocated a simple earth color palette and, of course, white.¹

Taubes' palette² (below) is *Venetian Red*, *Yellow Ochre*, *Burnt Umber*, and *Ultramarine Blue*, which is a cool³ contrast to the warm⁴ earth colors. These earth colors are more harmonious with each other than intense/saturated colors, which makes them easier to control. Over time, I expanded my palette to include many additional and more intense colors.⁵

- These earth colors are a muted version of the primary colors: Red, Yellow (Burnt Umber is a dark yellow), and Blue.
- Secondary colors that are also muted are created by a mixture of Yellow Ochre and Ultramarine Blue, producing warm and cool subtle greens. Venetian Red and Yellow Ochre make oranges, and Ultramarine Blue and Venetian Red create purples.
- Mixing Ultramarine Blue and Burnt Umber yields beautiful *Cool & Warm Grays*. These grays can present an effective contrast within the more colorful passages, enlivening them. Colors can be mixed with various grays to reduce their intensity. This gives the illusion that the objects are in the distant background.
- Light is achieved by adding white with Yellow Ochre to the surface color⁶ of an object. Ultramarine Blue is added to various colors to create cool shadows and shade.



Venetian Red



Yellow Ochre



Burnt Umber



Ultramarine Blue



Cool & Warm Grays

It is imperative to understand that value (lightness or darkness of a color or object) is the key to structuring images that look correct or real. Value can be a range of grays, from dark to light, such as a black and white photograph that looks real even though there is no color. If the value of an image is not accurate, the addition of color will not save it. By controlling the light, color, intensity, and value, I now had a foundation that I could build upon.

Note that reference material concerning brushes, mediums, palette knives, painting surfaces, etc. and how to use them can be found on page 100, paragraph six.

- 1 Titanium White is an opaque white with great covering power. It is also superior for lightening colors.
- 2 The lightened areas on the bottom of the color samples are tints (white is added).
- 3 Cool colors usually have a bluish or gray cast, such as late afternoon shadows.
- 4 Warm colors usually have a yellow or orange cast, like sunlight on the surface of objects.
- 5 Intense colors are strong colors such as cadmium red and cadmium yellow.
- 6 Surface colors are the colors of the objects themselves, e.g. green grass, red brick.



Plate 1 *Self Portrait* 1973 29.5 x 26 in.



fig. 1

Figurative Painting

Self-Portrait (Plate 1) I decided to paint a self-portrait. The subject was at hand. This would be a good test to see if the painting could replicate reality; a portrait has to match the subject. In addition to testing my draftsmanship, the goal was to create the illusion of space with a figure, not just an illustration of a person.

My first concern was the staging/designing of the scene. There would be three levels of depth. Virtually every painting I have done has the illusion of depth; elements are placed in a three-dimensional space. The front edge of the table located on the bottom right corner would be closest to the viewer. The subject is placed in the middle ground, and the wall is the background. I balanced the table with the doorframe on the left.

Using photographs and a mirror, my features were outlined onto a primed¹ linen surface, then I drew the table and closet door. One light source dramatically defines the three-dimensional shapes. Using the earth palette with Ultramarine Blue, over the next few days my likeness and essence were captured on this minimalist background. I colored the table and the shadow underneath it with contrasting green and red. This enlivened the dullness or muddiness of the earth colors (*fig. 1*). When finished, I knew I could paint what I could see and “build” a painting, giving me confidence and enthusiasm.

1 Primed: the painting surface, e.g. linen, cotton, wood, or Masonite, is covered with one or two layers of gesso or oil/alkyd paint that is designed to absorb and accept the oil paint.

One can purchase linen or cotton already primed.



Plate 2 *Artist's Mother* c.1974 11 x 9 in.

Over the next several years, I painted a series of figurative paintings including several portraits. *Artist's Mother* (Plate 2) is dedicated to my mother, who said, "You can become whatever you want." In many ways this became my truth.

Some may ask: Why paint when you could take a photograph? My answer – as exemplified by this painting: The human soul, mind, and hand put life into the painted figure in a way that a photograph, which is mechanical, cannot.

At the painting's left side, where her cheek meets the background, the face is blended, implying the soft flesh. Alizarin Crimson, a cool transparent red, was added to my palette and used to paint her blouse and shadow areas of her lips. This thin, smooth, transparent glaze on the blouse contrasts with the more textured, opaque paint in the light areas of her face, hair, and sections of the background. Contrasting colors and textures bring out their full beauty and liveliness.



Plate 3 *Man in L. I. C.* 1975 18.25 x 16.25 in.

*Man in L. I. C.*¹ (Plate 3) has a structure/design and palette similar to my self-portrait (page 7): three layers of depth (man, wall, and building), on a simple background (the sky). The building in the background is rotated, exposing its three-dimensional form echoing the man's dimensionality. The most intense colors are found in the tie and collar that enliven the shadow area. It is another example of how a simple earth palette with ultramarine blue can have contrasting splashes of glowing colors. The richest colors are in the shade where the light of the sun cannot wash out their intensity. Sculpted textures reveal themselves in the light areas of the painting.

Colors were added to my palette over time, which allowed me to learn the visual effect of each new color before adding the next color. It is fun to play with new colors, especially when mixing them on the palette with the other colors, various mediums, and white.

¹ L. I. C. is an abbreviation for Long Island City, New York.



Plate 4 *Michael* c. 1976 13 x 19 in.

Michael (Plate 4) was painted fast and loose: wet paint over wet paint (alla prima). *Michael* is expressionistic¹ with the energetic brushwork capturing his intense, emotional persona. The best portraits are subtle caricatures.

¹ Expressionistic: the subject is distorted (subtly, in the case of Michael) for emotional effect or mood.



Plate 5 *The Baker* 1979 50 x 42 in.



fig. 2

The Baker (Plate 5) was also painted alla prima. A look of pathos captured his personality (*fig. 2*).



Plate 6 *Woman with Coat* 1982 14 x 11 in.

Woman with Coat (Plate 6) is cropped, similar to a photograph, which gives it a modern sensibility.



Plate 7 *Beach* 1980 33 x 35.75 in.

Beach (Plate 7) features several figures in a complex arrangement. The viewer is guided through the group and around the picture. The little girl invites you into the painting. The woman on the left with her foot slightly off the ground creates the anticipation of movement – a subtle tension.

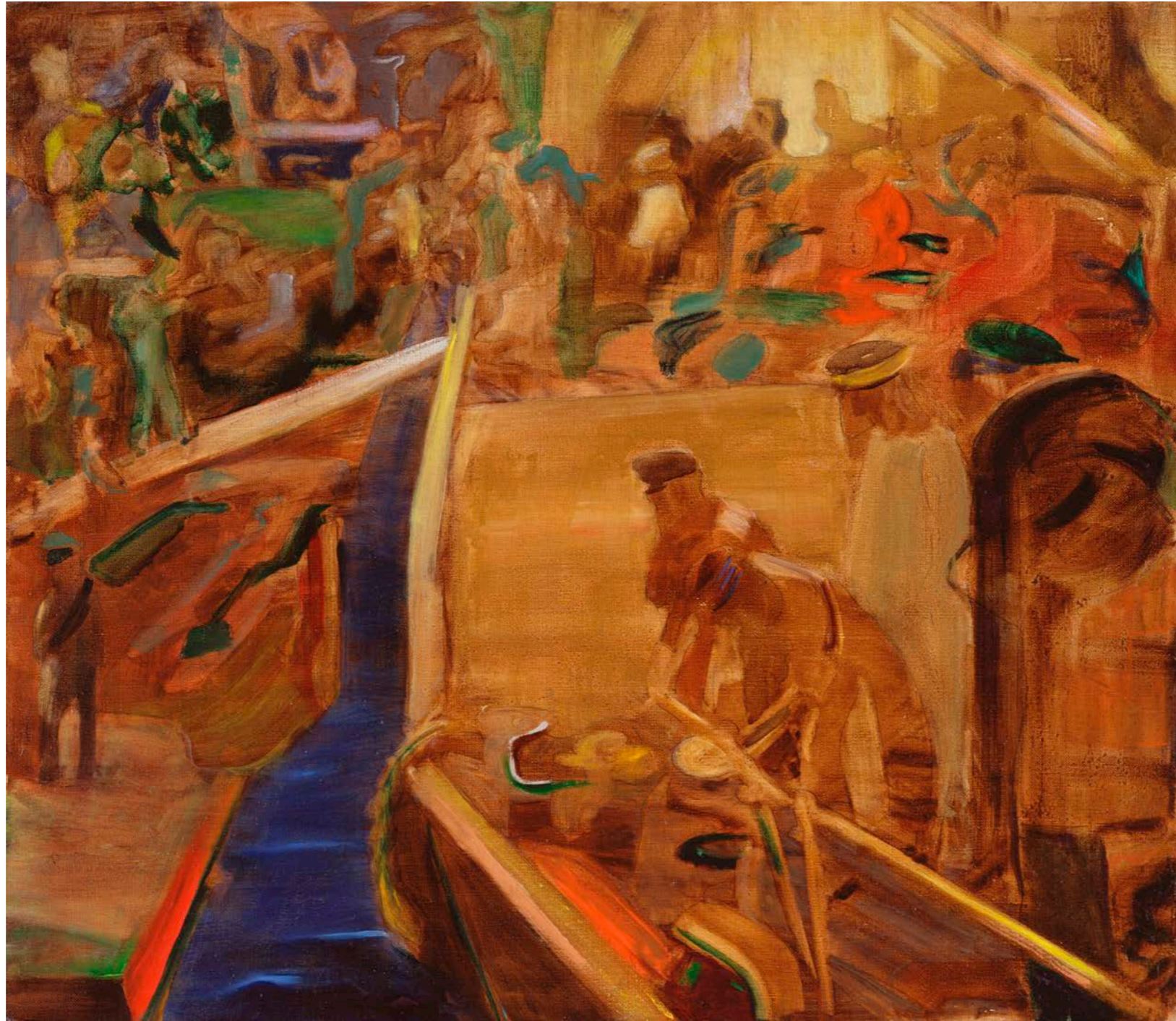


Plate 8 *Spirit at the River* 1980 29 x33 in.



fig. 3

Spirit at the River (Plate 8) was a total departure stylistically from any of my previous figurative works. The animated, abstract figures seem to be bubbling up from the paint. Figure **D** in *fig. 3* has a suggestion of spirituality that would appear in later paintings. The palette has expanded: the warm, intense Cadmium Red at **G** and Gold paint at **F** bring the foreground forward creating a path for the river that allows one to float into the painting.

The design is dynamic¹ with its diagonal thrusts at **A**, **B** and **C**. The gangplank at **A** unites the two parts of the image that are divided by the river. The cylindrical element (**E**) has volume that implies dimensionality throughout the picture. Design is the dominant feature, which is the basic foundation of my later works, particularly the abstract paintings. If I paint figurative work in the future, I may move in the direction of *Spirit at the River*.

1 Dynamic: energetic, vibrant, forceful, active, lively. Movement as literal or compositional.

Landscapes and Interiors

Within my figurative oeuvre, I experimented with portraiture, alla prima techniques, and more complex figure arrangements while expanding my palette – always experimenting. At this point, I felt landscapes and interior scenes would offer a greater range of designs, colors and lighting situations, which would allow me to be more creative and unique. The source material for landscapes and interiors are a combination of photographs I took and sketches I made.



Plate 9 *Cornerstone* 1983 26 x 28 in.

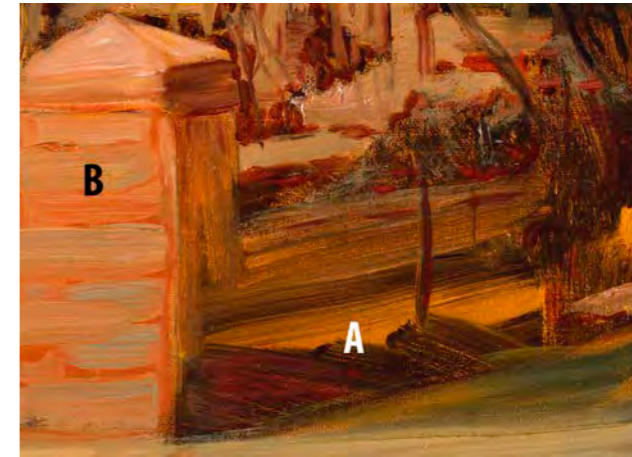


fig. 4

Cornerstone (Plate 9) In virtually all my paintings, amorphous forms (nature) are contrasted with man-made objects (structure). In this instance the foliage versus the building, stonework, and fence. Even though elements – shapes, textures, values, and colors – can be contrasted with one another, they can also be balanced in equilibrium. In addition to my Earth palette, cadmium red was used on the fence on the left; purple and cadmium orange, cooled with ultramarine blue, was used in the shadow on the lower right (*fig. 4, A*). The cornerstone was not just colored; the paint was applied like plaster to “build” a textured cornerstone (*fig. 4, B*).



Plate 10 *Alley with Cool Green Shadow* 1989 30 x 38 in.



fig. 5

My interest is in creating beauty within the painting rather than copying a beautiful scene. *Alley with Cool Green Shadow* (Plate 10) is just an alley between buildings with overgrown foliage. Typical of a scene you may have passed hundreds of times without taking note. How can a mundane scene be developed into a harmonious landscape with dramatic color, light, and shadow contrasts? My palette had expanded with the addition of intense colors, allowing me to amplify the contrasting greens and reds. Sunlit areas are united with a warm glow. (Squint at sunlit surfaces in nature and see how similar they are in value and color to each other.) The beauty, intensity, and saturation of the local surface colors are found in the shade and shadows, which is noted in *fig 5*. The shadow section of the green roof (A) is an intense/saturated cool green; the warm, light green area above (B) is bleached and muted by the sunlight. The red brick in shadow (C) has more intense/saturated red than the sunlit, brick surface at D. Gray shadows makes a painting look muddy and lifeless. If you squint, you will see that E, B, and D are closer to one another in value and color than their shadow counterparts. The sunlit areas are in the same warm light, which unites them.



fig. 6



fig. 7

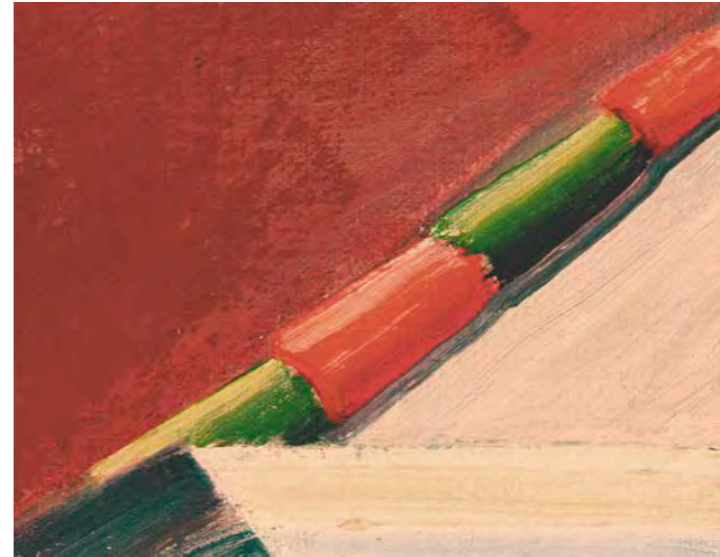


fig. 8

The simplified building structures are a foil for the wild foliage. The lit vertical stems, in *fig. 6*, are spotlighted and take center stage. The beauty is not in their forms – these are weeds and stumps – the beauty is in the warm, glowing light. These radiant stems are the jewel in the crown. The windows became settings for some of my first abstract passages (*fig. 7*). *Fig. 8*, tucked away in the upper right-hand corner, in the outer regions, presents the most vibrant and brilliant contrasting reds and greens to be discovered in the painting.

Vision and *Taste* fundamentally determine what I create, add, change or eliminate in a picture. (Most people have taste and can develop vision.) Before starting a painting, I envision how it will look and turn that vision into a preliminary sketch. Reacting to the painting as it develops, I adjust my vision. For many of these adjustments, I rely on my taste. In a simplified way, this is the same process one employs when, for example, matching a shirt with pants, socks, belt, shoes, etc. Of course, these clothing choices are less complicated than painting decisions. Unlike clothing, the objects in a painting do not exist but have to be created. The more creative decisions one makes, the easier it becomes to make these decisions and that leads to more refined taste. Without vision and taste, you are on a rudderless ship.

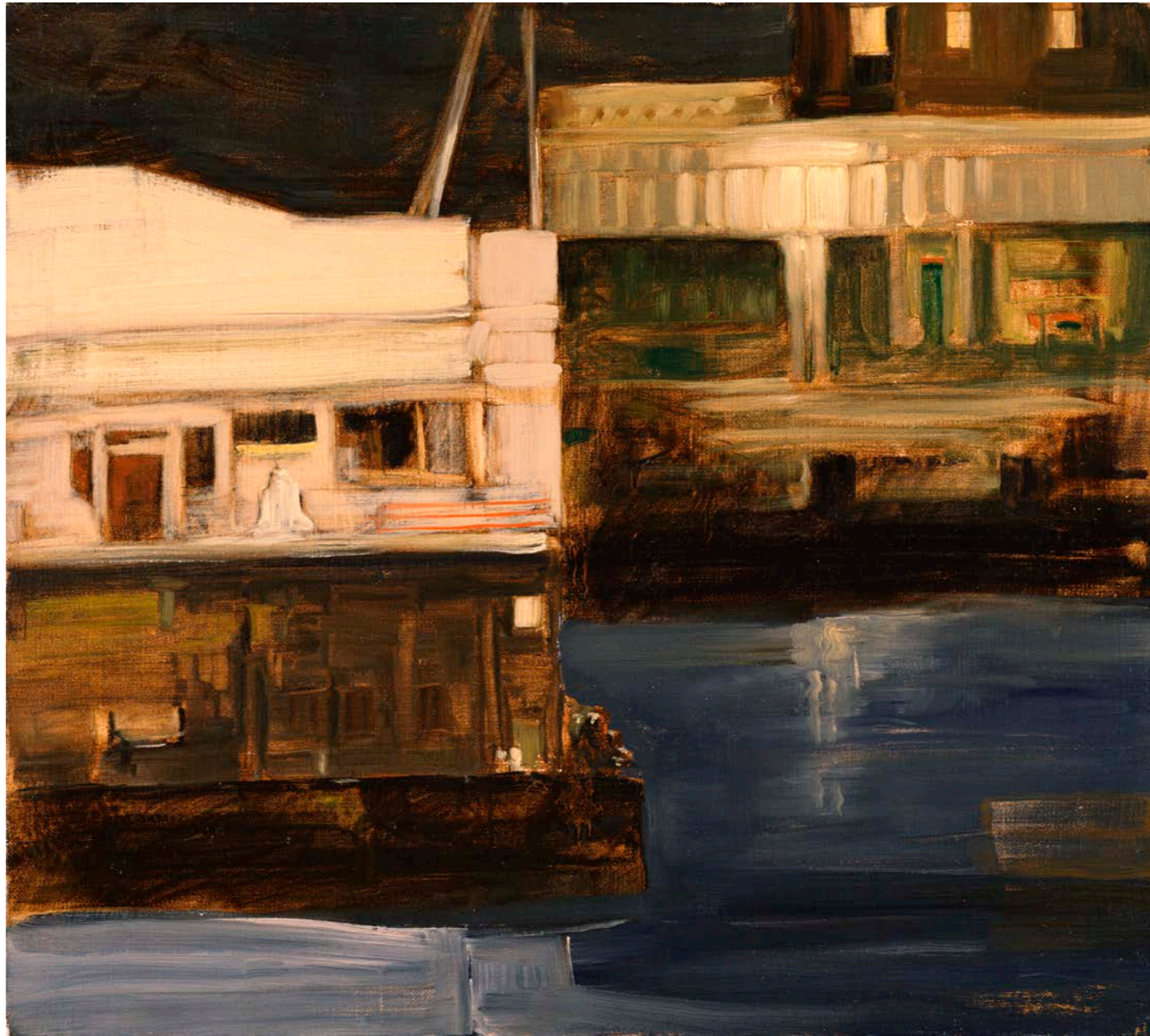


Plate 11 *Harbor Night* 1981 18 x 20 in.

Harbor Night (Plate 11) The shimmering night light and the texture of the water drew me to this scene. *Harbor Night* contrasts with most of my other landscapes in virtually all its elements, i.e. light, subject matter, and composition. I push myself to avoid painting images that are too similar to one another. It's more fun to explore new territory; how else can you grow? Experimentation became the engine of my creativity.



Plate 12 *Path of Light* 1989 30 x 38 in.



fig. 9



fig. 10



fig. 11

I came upon a scene of brilliant sunlight: sharp and strong, pouring over a building. It reflected off the ground and penetrated the foliage. How was this effect captured in the painting *Path of Light* (page 22)? A scene/design was created to dramatize the focus of the picture – the light. In reality (see the top left of the painting) the sun is behind the building, which puts the side of the building facing us in the shade (fig. 9). But, in the painting, to dramatize by exaggeration, the effect of strong sunlight spilling over and around the roof, I illuminated the shaded side of the building, particularly at A (fig. 10). This amplified the impact of the dazzling sunlight.

The dark shadow (C) in fig. 12, by contrast, allows the lighted areas around it to glow. The light penetrates the foliage making parts of them translucent (D). One could feel the textures of the plants and trees and see the light sparkle on their surfaces (B).

Placing similar elements apart unites and balances the picture. The gray plant holder (fig. 12, E) is balanced by another planter on the left (F). They are painted differently to give variety to these similar items. The leaf cutting across the path, lower right in the picture, (fig. 12, 1) blocks the viewer from leaving the painting and points to the right side, bringing the viewer back into the picture. Fig. 11 is a close up of that leaf.



fig. 12



fig. 13



fig. 14

Fig. 13 could stand alone as a painting which incorporates a variety of painting techniques. The Gs are unmixed, thick textured grays applied with a palette knife. H is wet paint on top of wet paint that blends and fuses the foliage together. J and I are thin glazes of transparent colors that contrast with the thick textured paint. The paint is applied at K to give the appearance of stucco or brick. The dots of light (L) make the plant sparkle with reflected highlights.

In fig. 14, letting the paint drip¹ simulates nature creating the vines. More and more I let the paint move freely and accept or reject the results.

¹ I mixed the paint with a medium that allowed the paint to flow freely while the paint surface was held vertically. Later, under *Painting Notes* (page 100, paragraph 6), I recommend a book that discusses various mediums and their properties.



Plate 13 *Interior Desert* c. 1984 20 x 20 in.

I envisioned an interior with a view of a landscape; this was the genesis of the painting *Interior Desert* (Plate 13). The scene is recognizable yet incorporates many semi-abstract elements. The diagonal line right above the polished floor makes the painting dynamic. The column brings the viewer up to the ceiling; then along the ceiling and down the right side to begin the journey anew. Outside the window, the dry desert contrasts with the floor's mirrored surface.



Plate 14 *Florida* 1991 30 x 44 in.



fig. 15

How could the painting *Florida* (Plate 14) avoid becoming an illustration of a particular building surrounded by trees? The building, a structural element, became a simplified box design containing hints of details where the roof meets the sides and did not require windows or doors. If all the details of the building had been painted, the picture would have become a mere illustration and the otherworldliness of the image would have been destroyed. The building contrasts with the amorphous natural foliage. The darkened sky in the upper right corner adds a note of drama. I did not try to illustrate particular species of trees or bushes but constructed tree architectures to suit the design of the painting. Of course, these trees share the same basic design elements of trees and shrubs found in nature. Objects do not have to be technically accurate, just visually acceptable – “it just looks right.”

Nature has vivid, bright, lively colors. To capture nature’s vividness, parts of the branches were painted in an unnatural orange that contrasts and vibrates against the cool, blue sky – see *fig. 15*. With the same logic, notes of bright red were added, which are enlivened against the greens (see finished painting, page 26). Trees with leaves were contrasted with bare trees. A picture with overall harmony and contrasting elements is a necessary key to a visually interesting painting.



Plate 15 *Room with Green Chair* 1993 13 x18.8 in.

Room with Green Chair (Plate 15) was painted after I had already moved on to more abstract work. Why? Because I simply yearned to paint this “portrait” of a room and needed a break from the difficulties of abstract painting with its multitude of decisions. Similar to the blending technique that was employed in *Artist’s Mother* (page 8), which gave softness to her cheek, the edge of the bed covering in the foreground is blended, giving the illusion of rounded softness of a blanket, which contrasts with the solidity of the bed’s end board. Blue is almost exclusively a cool color, but all colors have warm and cool versions.¹ Note the cool blue in the shadows (Ultramarine Blue) and the warm blue (Phthalo Blue with white) in the lighted areas of the couch. The green chair comes alive among its supporting furniture.

1 To see a variety of warm and cool versions of colors, see Daylight Palette (page 101).

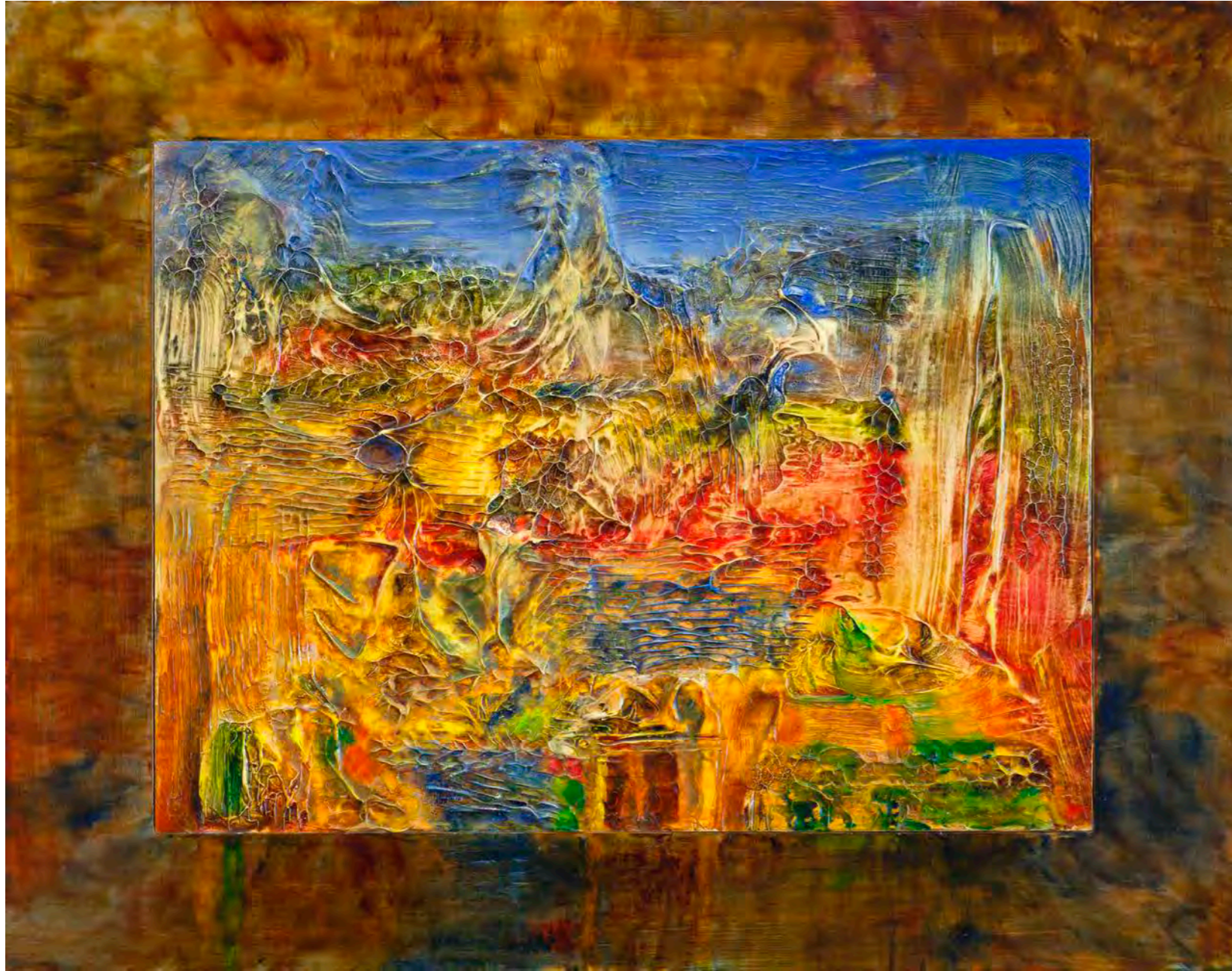


Plate 16 *Land of Ancient Dreams* 2012 16 x 19 in.

Land of Ancient Dreams (Plate 16) was one of the few landscapes I painted after 1992. This painting was begun without a preconceived vision or preparatory sketch, which is unusual for me. The first step was sculpting textures using molding paste in a free-flowing, spontaneous manner on a hard panel. Next, a layer of transparent paint was glazed over the dried molding paste, and I began to see an Asian landscape emerge, which pushed the picture in that direction. Responding to the amorphous forms just painted, I created a contrasting structure on the bottom center and around it I added ponds above and to the left of it. This process is similar to that of a fiction writer whose characters react to one another, thus changing the plot. The frame is part of the painting and subtly reflects the image of the structure and pond at the bottom center of the picture, giving the frame a mirrored, still-wet feel.



Plate 17 *Pacific Light* 1988 23.25 x 31.5

The objects in the foreground and middle ground of *Pacific Light* (Plate 17) are not arresting in themselves. However, when placed in front of the sky and the Pacific Ocean and covered with warm, late afternoon light, the scene develops a romantic glow. I am a romantic; I love beauty.



Plate 18 *Liner at Sea* 1988 4 x 5.25 in.

My studio faced the sea. *Liner at Sea* (Plate 18) is only four inches high. In the sky, and particularly in the sea, the paint is applied thickly, giving the appearance of a colored relief sculpture. The weight of the waves is balanced by the mass of the muted orange building.



Plate 19 7 PM 1989 29.5 x 42 in.

Landscape painting gave me the freedom to paint a great variety of subjects, existing or imagined. With few exceptions, I painted scenes or combined scenes that were mundane and would not be considered beautiful, but I endeavored to create the beauty. Although pleased with my figurative and landscape paintings, I felt a need to create a more original vision, that had not been seen before. I do not mean to imply that figurative and landscape painting cannot be unique and original. Neo Rauch and Francis Bacon are examples of figurative painters who have created exciting and innovative works. J. M. W. Turner's late visionary, dreamlike landscapes and seascapes came from his imagination.

A New Path: Abstract Painting

For this new path, my paintings had to be original, visually exciting, and beautiful. What is beauty? It is balance and harmony; colors, shapes and forms that are visually pleasing. Some view beauty with suspicion and feel that beauty and profundity are incompatible. I do not agree. While styles may change, profound beauty endures. Since beauty is primarily visual, my paintings and silkscreens define my aesthetic.



Plate 20 *Landscape of Structure from a Dream* 1992 36.25 x 40 in.



fig. 16

Landscape of Structure from a Dream (Plate 20) was a turning point for me: it combines both realistic and abstract forms. From this point forward, with a few exceptions, I did not go back to traditional landscapes but created my own universe. This painting opened new visions with unlimited possibilities that were thrilling and challenging. It was to be my path forward and summed up what I had previously done.

Like other complex paintings, it contains paintings within paintings. *Fig. 16* has all the essentials of a complete painting: a wide range of colors, light, shade, and a variety of forms and textures in an organized design. (The painting *Landscape of Structure from a Dream* was the genesis of the silkscreen of the same name. I will discuss the relationship between the paintings and their silkscreen counterparts in the *Silkscreen* chapter.)



Plate 21 *Landscape of Dark Festivals* 1993 24 x 36 in.



fig. 17



fig. 18

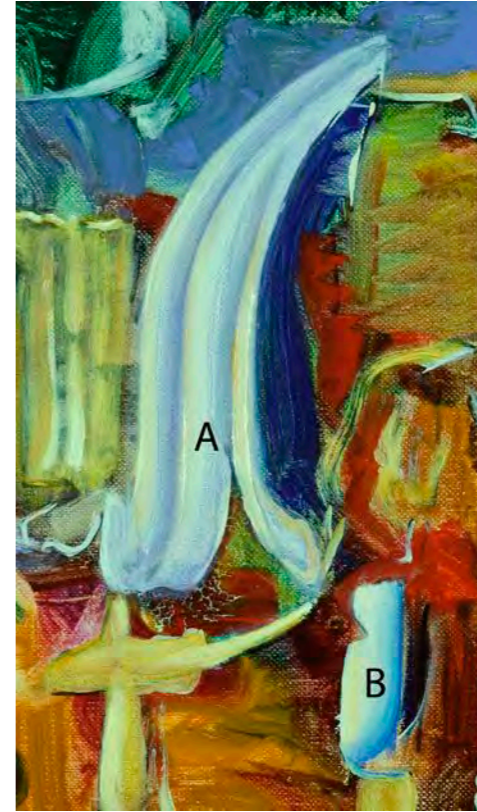


fig. 19

Landscape of Dark Festivals (Plate 21) was my entrance into the realm of abstract painting. The derivative aspect of the work became subordinate to a universe no longer tethered to an objective reality. I describe this new body of work as “Non-objective Realism.” Although these paintings are constructed with abstract elements, they produce a visual reality with dimension: depth, form, and structure. Other elements that contribute to this reality are light, texture, complexity, color, mood, atmosphere and orientation (there is an “up and down” in these abstract-like landscape paintings). This reality has no need for identifiable objects such as cars, chairs, and buildings that have been painted innumerable times and reflect a particular era and style. Thus, the timelessness of these abstract images. The term “Non-objective Realism” more accurately describes the work than “abstract” alone does.

A magazine photo (fig. 17) was my starting point for the painting. I prefer reference images (sketches, photos and objects that I refer to when creating a design for a new painting) to be gray, allowing me to envision my own color scheme. After I completed a loose underpainting¹, I then painted my version of the structure from the magazine photo that became fig. 18, C (located at the lower right of the finished painting). The amorphous shapes around the structure set the mood and style for the rest of the painting with all the other elements supporting it. Structural forms (for example, fig. 18, C) were used sparingly as accents; otherwise, they would have invaded the lyrical mood.

In fig. 19, A felt isolated, so B was designed and colored to echo and balance A, similar to balancing a rose with another bright flower in a floral arrangement. If you were to look at the completed painting and covered up B and then uncovered B, you would see the effect just described. Echoing and balancing are concepts that are employed throughout my work, but they have to be done in a visually stimulating manner, not just as an exact duplication. *Landscape of Dark Festivals* is a symphony of lyrical, amorphous forms that are teeming and bubbling with life.

¹ My basic underpainting method is to draw the outline of a design on a canvas or panel. Taking into account the design outline, the underpainting is energetically painted with transparent and semi-transparent colors. An example is *Blue Wall, underpainting* (page 41, fig. 22).

My palette had expanded from the original four colors, used to create the self-portrait (page 7), to over twenty colors. Colors are not just beautiful; they have jobs. They create light, shadow, atmosphere, depth and mood. The colors and lyrical forms inhabit a three-dimensional space where bright, warm colors come forward and cool colors recede (Plate 21, page 36).

There was no need to duplicate reality – I was totally free. But total freedom has its challenges. While painting a conventional landscape, I had a road map; now, I was in uncharted territory. Scenes and objects were no longer copied but had to be created. Metaphorically, I was a fiction writer staring at a blank page. I was creating, evolving my unique vision.

Wanting to expand my vision within the realm of Non-objective Realism, my goal was to produce paintings that contrasted with what I had recently created. By way of illustration, *Landscape of Dark Festivals* (page 36) is primarily composed of lyrical, amorphous, free-flowing forms with bright cadmium colors in the foreground; it is the essence of a romantic dreamlike landscape. But *Blue Wall* (next page) contrasts significantly with *Landscape of Dark Festivals* in that it is composed of structural, man-made-like elements which are used to build the image, and is painted with a more subdued, cooler palette.

In *Blue Wall* (page 39), as with most of my abstract works, creativity encompasses the combining of related and non-related images to forge a new unique image. The visual stimuli of these images were the springboard for my vision. I made three-dimensional models by combining sketches I drew, photographs I had taken, pictures from magazines, books, the internet, and TV, et al. The three-dimensional models were lit with various lighting arrangements. These models evolved into newer models, with new lighting schemes, until a visually exciting image presented itself. The final model was transformed into a sketch in values of gray (as an example, see *fig. 28*, page 47), and then converted into a line drawing (*fig. 20*, page 41) that was transferred onto a linen canvas. The line drawing became an armature on which to construct the painting.

An underpainting (*fig. 22*, page 41) was created with an expanded palette which became the foundation of *Blue Wall*. The painting surface was laid on a table to prevent the paint from dripping and I “danced” around it, covering the canvas with glazes of transparent and semi-transparent colors that were thinned with diluted medium,¹ making the paint more transparent. How are colors chosen for the underpainting? I look at the colors on my palette and “feel” what color I want in the area I am painting. Also, colors have their jobs. Generally, warm, bright colors advance the picture plane to the front; cool, less intense colors push objects into the distance. Knowing that the colors are performing their jobs, the underpainting is done quickly; there is little time to over-intellectualize the color scheme, so I act intuitively while keeping my original vision in mind. A color is put down: if it looks right, I apply the next color. If I do not like the effect of the color, I wipe it away and use a different color. To keep the underpainting energetic, I use large brushes² and cover the entire surface in a few hours with quick, vigorous brush strokes (*underpainting, fig. 22*). The energy becomes frozen in place as the paint dries. If I had applied the glazes slowly and carefully, the underpainting would be stultified and not have the energy that is fundamental to the work. The underpainting is kept light so that in the future glazes can be applied over the underpainting, darkening the shadow areas with intense colors, similar to watercolor technique.

The paintings in progress are photographed at various stages and put away for a while to gain perspective, to see it fresh. Later, after further contemplation, I react to the combination of my original vision and the unfinished painting. Drawing with colored pastel pencils over a photographic printout of the work allows you to visualize various changes, edits and additions. You can be braver experimenting on a printout rather than on the painting itself. Sometimes changes that work on the printout do not translate well into the painting, but you usually get a direction or at least you now know what not to do.

While the painting is drying, I frequently work on other paintings. Psychologically, the more paintings I am involved with, the less precious each one becomes, so that I don't resist making changes. Changes have to be made in areas that are not working for the sake of the painting as a whole, no matter how fond you are of a particular section. You may try to rationalize your not wanting to make a change, but in the end having a section of the painting that does not work will bother you. Don't be afraid to destroy a section you are fond of; if you created it once, you can do it again and next time possibly better. Also, looking at the painting through a mirror gives it a new perspective that is helpful in evaluating the work.

1 In the underpainting I use a fifty percent mixture of medium and Gamsol, odorless turpentine (less toxic than regular turpentine), which dilutes the medium, making the paint act more like water color paints. A diluted medium in the underpainting makes the painting more archival. (See “fat over lean” in the *Painting Notes* section, page 102, top paragraph.)

2 Large brushes create a bold energetic sweep, while brush marks from small brushes look halfhearted and lack energy. Covering an area with one large brush stroke is, generally, more aesthetically pleasing than a lot of smaller brush strokes. It looks as if the one, large stroke was made to fit the area.



Plate 22 *Blue Wall* 2007 61.5 x 63.4 in.

A lot of what I concern myself with is problem solving. Looking at *underpainting* (fig. 22), you can see that the picture was unbalanced. It is sliding to the lower left; a solution was “engineered.” A heavy-duty spike was fashioned to prevent the picture from sliding. The spike would be located at **Y**, in the *underpainting* (fig. 22), and would have an industrial, substantial feel that looks sturdy enough to prevent the image from sliding. This spike is an important element and required the level of finish seen in fig. 21. A light red, three-dimensional platform was built, to be located along the black line under **Z** in the *underpainting* (fig. 22), that would bring the viewer up and back into the picture after the spike stops the viewer’s downward eye movement (see the finished painting, page 39). The solidity of the red platform is a counterpoint to the razor-thin, two-dimensional blue wall (**W**) seen in the finished work. The design of the picture aids the viewer’s movement around the painting.

The area **X** in the *underpainting* (fig. 22) had no structure and did not relate to the rest of the painting; it was transformed into area **A** in fig. 23. **A** was painted with the same “material” as seen on the right edge (**B**), uniting both areas. Instead of just copying **B**, **A** was made the mirror image of **B**, bookending these two elements.

Textures create a visceral reality. Various paint textures combined with the weave of the linen can create the illusion of surfaces consisting of different materials (fig. 23); this is more apparent when viewing the painting in person.¹ The curtain in area **1** has a feel of fabric that is formed by applying the paint thin enough to let the weave of the linen show through. The column **2** is painted impasto in the light area, and glazes in the shade, giving the column a solid, cylindrical form. Element **3** uses the texture of the linen to contrast it with the column. The verticality of the surfaces and the movement from dark to light in section **4** create a shimmering effect, differentiating it from other elements.

No surface, including a flat surface, should have only one color or value, but should be painted with varying colors and values (light and dark colors). In reality, all surfaces, even flat surfaces, are illuminated with changing values and colors of light.

What is my “thought” process for determining what to add or change in a painting that is in progress? These decisions are a hybrid of an intellectual and an intuitive process.

Intellectual: “I have a problem; I will solve it by doing such and such.”

Intuitive: “I like the way this looks; I don’t like the way that looks.”

It is hard to separate an idea from a sense or feeling, and it is not necessary to do so. At times, when confronted with a problem, logic is used; at other times, it’s just a “sense” of what I want to see. When evaluating a section, judge how it will look in the painting as a whole. Will the section be harmonious with the rest of the painting’s color, value, mood, rhythm, design, etc.? Does it look as if it belongs in the same atmosphere? Overall, the image needs to be harmonious, but to make the painting dynamic, contrast is required. I add a few disharmonious sections as counterpoints to the overall harmony. One can contemplate these adjustments, but the results will not be known until they are painted. If they are visually satisfactory, great. If not, try another solution. It’s all a step forward.

1. The effect of the various textures in *Blue Wall* can be seen more clearly in the original painting. It is in the permanent collection of the Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, Georgia.

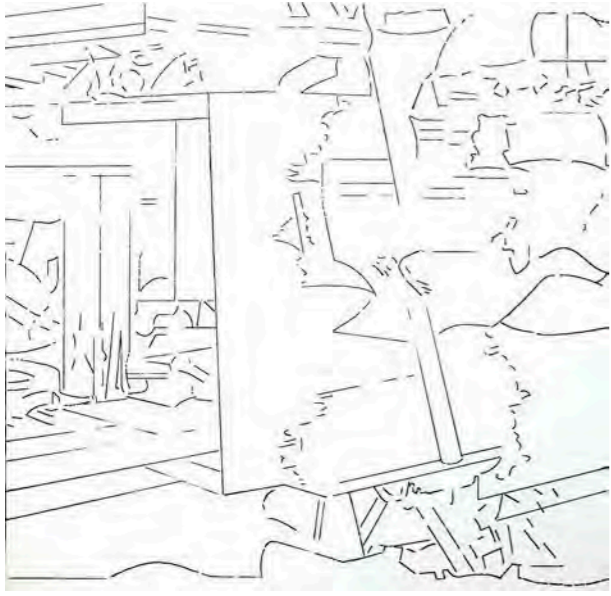


fig. 20, line drawing

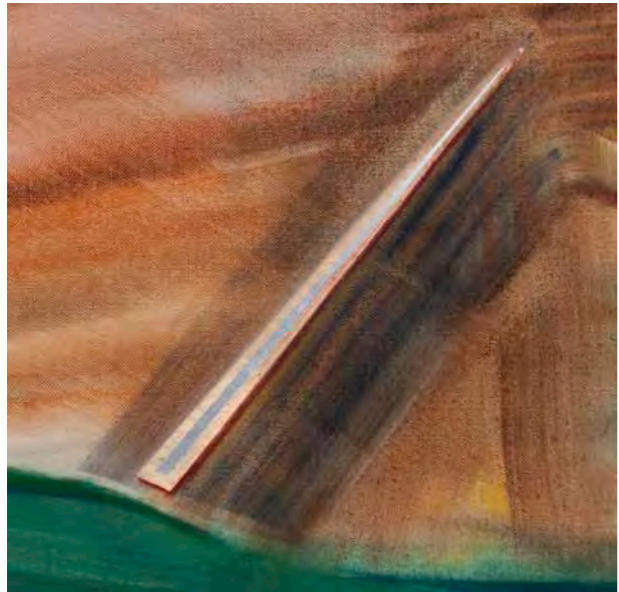


fig. 21

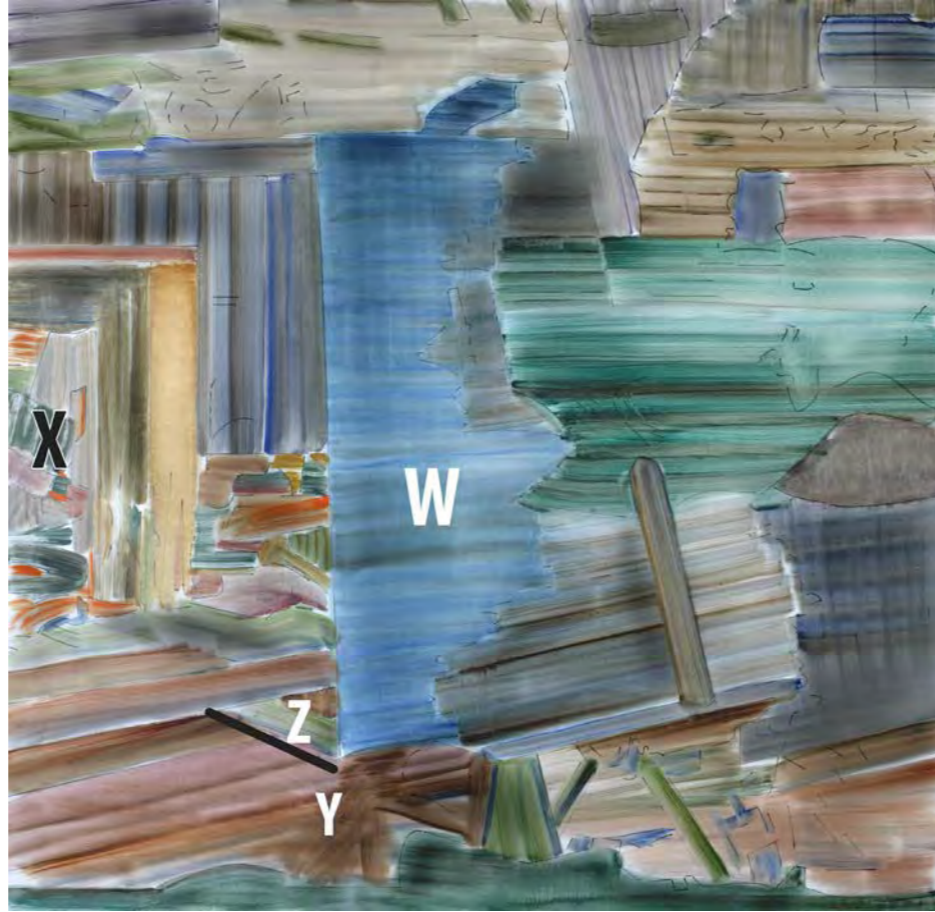


fig. 22, underpainting



fig. 23



In my studio at an early stage of *Blue Wall* (page 39). Note the color charts in the background. I made charts of all the colors I use, with white added (a tint) to a portion of each color swatch to see the effect of lightening the colors. Also, charts are made with colors that are thinned with medium forming transparent¹ glazes. Even opaque colors can become transparent if diluted with enough medium. I recommend making these charts, which will not only be a reference tool but will help you feel how these colors look and react as tints and glazes. It's inspiring to work with these beautiful colors.

1 Which colors are transparent or semi-transparent? This information can be found on the tube of paint or on the manufacturer's website.

When you use the colors it will become obvious which colors are transparent.



Plate 23 *The Magic of Estelle* c. 1995 oil on panel 9 x 8.25 in.

This small painting, *The Magic of Estelle* (Plate 23), was painted alla prima: wet paint on top of wet paint, without stopping. It is spontaneous: free and instinctive with energetic calligraphy and bold contrasting colors.

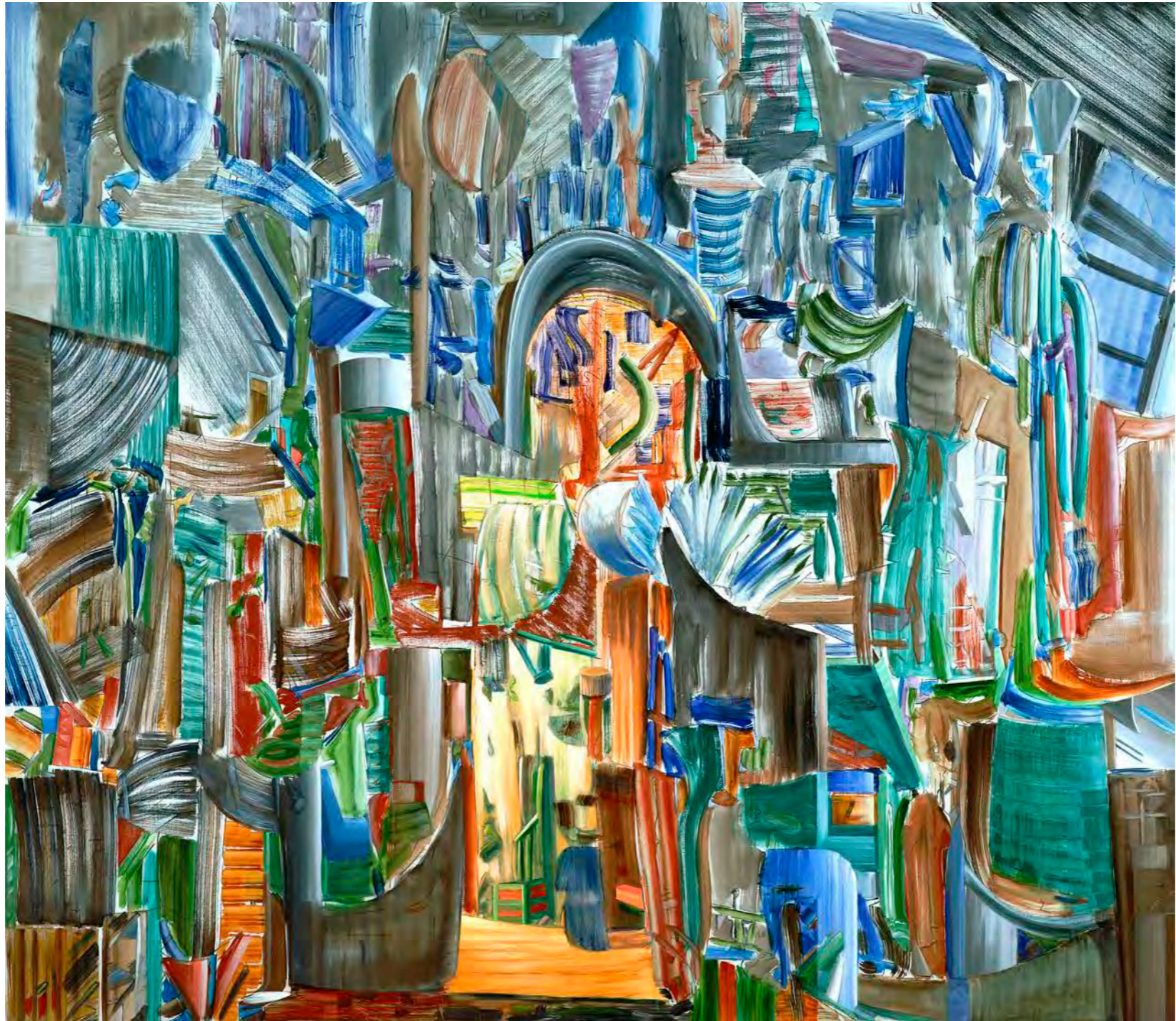


Plate 24 *Stage Setting for the Opera Blue Note* 2002 68 x 78.25 in.



fig. 24 underpainting



fig. 25

Stage Setting for the Opera Blue Note (Plate 24) is my largest painting. Size is determined by the complexity of the picture; the more complex, the larger the picture should be. Size in and of itself is not always a virtue. You can see a variety of intense colors, particularly blues. Note the continued evolution from the subdued earth palette. Although complex, the underpainting (fig. 24) was done quickly and energetically. Contemplating the *underpainting*, the object **A** began to vaguely resemble a robed spiritual figure. I decided to put this figure in a stage setting: **B** would be the stage (the shadow underneath the stage makes it three-dimensional), and **C** would be the vaulted ceiling over the stage. A throne was made for the figure (fig. 25, **D**) and the “stage” would be lit with warm light to highlight and bring it forward into the foreground. Contrasting the stage’s warm light, the remainder of the painting is in cool light, particularly towards the top, making the upper portion recede and establish the background. The initial vision did not contemplate a figure, throne or stage setting, but these additions were in response to the underpainting. They seem improbable, yet appear inevitable in the finished work. Elements that evolve out of the work appear, and are, integrated into the image, thus avoiding the impression that they were added on.

Sometimes you have to go “too far” with a change to see that it will not work; you then can dial the change back. Sections of the underpainting were covered over, but in some of these areas the results were not satisfactory. The unsatisfactory paint layers were therefore removed, before they dried, exposing the original underpainting. This resulted in an aesthetically pleasing contrast between the transparent underpainting and the opaque “over painting.”

You have to be the judge of your own work. While you are painting, you cannot ask others to evaluate each step along the way. You have to be the world’s expert on your own body of work. Of course, after you are satisfied that the painting is finished, you can get other people’s reactions. Many times during the painting process you will feel it is not working – “it’s a mess” – but if you struggle through these difficult periods the results can be a more dynamic work. You will gain confidence and knowledge fighting through situations that seem hopeless. (This advice can be applied to many endeavors.)

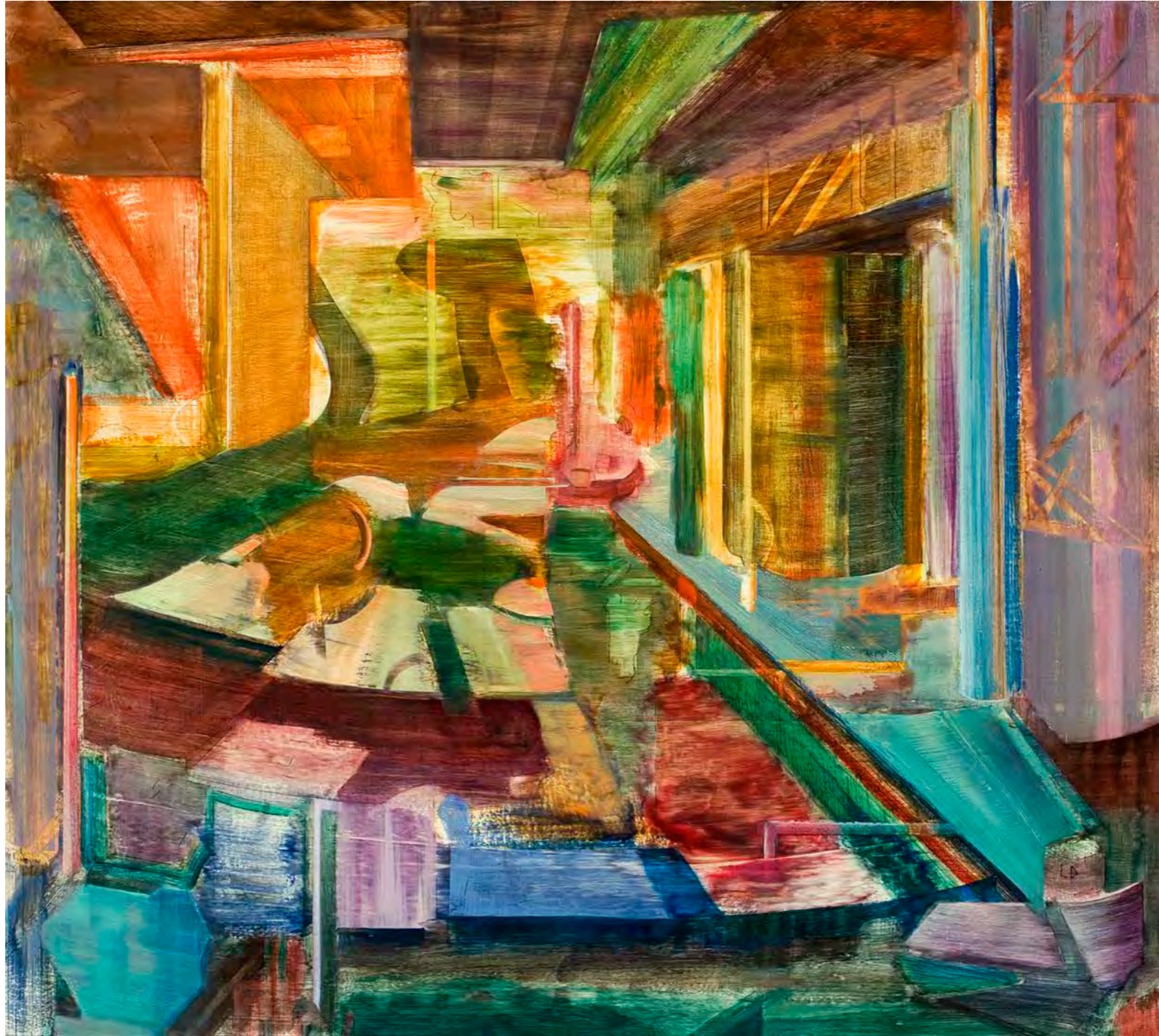


Plate 25 *Bosch's Room* 2008 oil on panel 30.5 x 36 in.

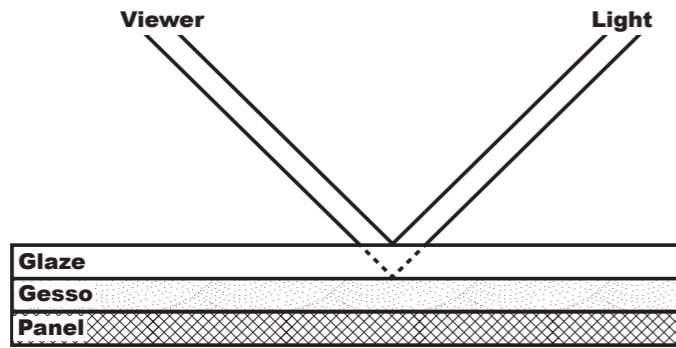


fig. 26 Glaze diagram

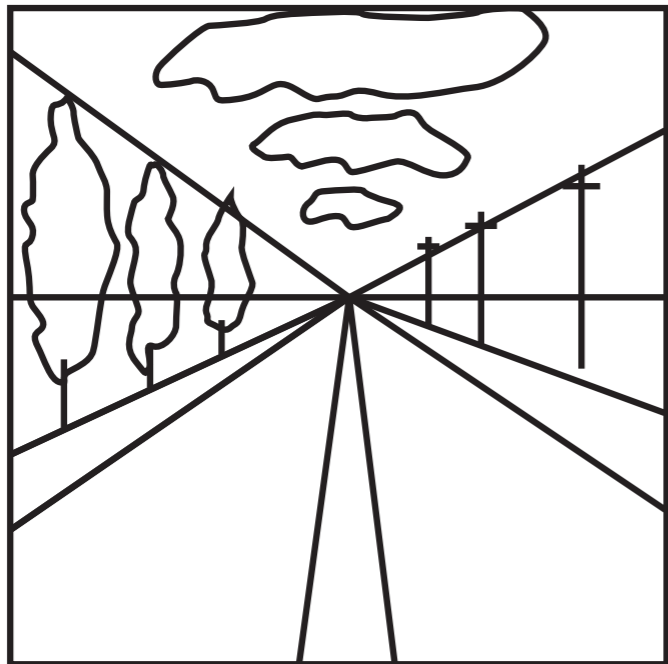


fig. 27 Linear perspective diagram

Bosch's Room (Plate 25) From time to time, over several years, I had been playing with a design that eventually became *Bosch's Room*. I enjoy spending time creating designs for new paintings. A unique, alluring design is fundamental to a successful painting.

I visualized an interior, a great hall, vast in its depth with rounded columns and surfaces held together with structural elements. The next paragraphs describe the process used to realize this visualization.

After combining preliminary drawings, I made a charcoal sketch (fig. 28) that enabled me to visualize the architecture of the image three-dimensionally. Once satisfied with the sketch, I made a line drawing (fig. 29) and transferred it onto the painting surface. It is important that the line drawing has balance, rhythm and movement, and that it works as a design on its own.

The painting surface was a wood panel covered with four layers of gesso and sanded so that the surface became extra smooth. When oil paint is applied over the gesso as a glaze, it creates a smooth stained-glass-like surface that is lit by light shining directly onto the paint surface. Also, the glaze is illuminated from below by light reflecting off the white gesso that shines up through the transparent colored glaze, giving it a jeweled aspect (*Glaze diagram*, fig. 26). The contrasts of glazes with the opaque, textured passages amplify the beauty of both.



fig. 28 sketch

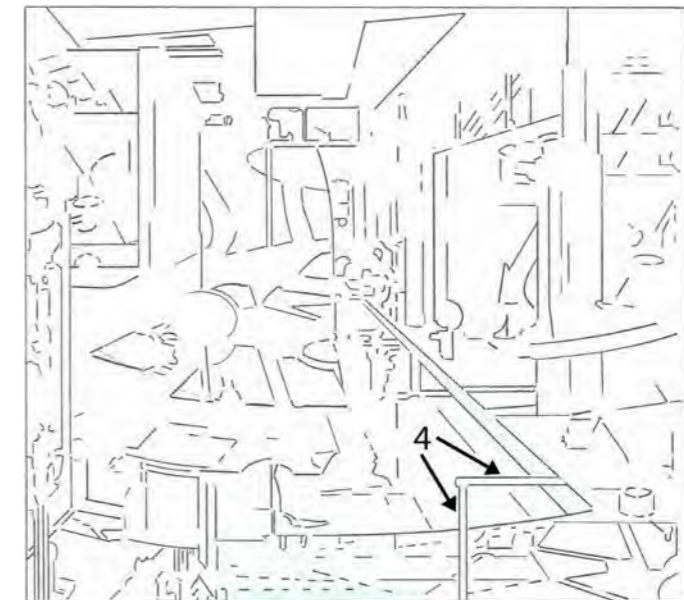


fig. 29 line drawing

Linear perspective (a form of perspective where parallel lines converge, giving the illusion of depth and distance) was employed to create the illusion of vast depth. As an illustration, see *Linear perspective*, fig. 27. The *line drawing* (fig. 29) is also an example of linear perspective.



fig. 30 underpainting

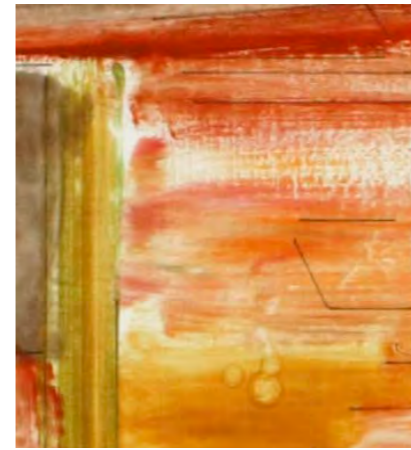


fig. 31



fig. 32



fig. 33

How were converging lines added to the underpainting to aid in the creation of depth? In *underpainting* (fig. 30) a wall and ceiling were created at A. Where they meet, a joint or line was formed that is aimed at a distant vanishing point, creating a linear perspective. See fig. 31 before, and then fig. 32 after the formation of the joint/line. In fig. 32, note the textural differences between the ceiling and the wall that is covered with a fabric texture. Details like this enhance reality.

There was a concern with this very forced perspective¹ design that the viewer would become visually stuck in the depths at the back of the hall. To solve this problem, warm colors were used in the distance that brought the distance forward. Also, most foreground elements were painted with cool colors that pushed them back visually, compressing the space, counterbalancing the forced perspective. This push-pull creates an exciting visual paradox.

Elements were created throughout the painting that accentuate circular motion (*underpainting*, B, fig. 30) like a record spinning on a turntable propelling the viewer around and through the picture. Also, paint was applied in a manner that made the surface of the objects grainy, similar to a high wind moving wet paint in a circular motion (fig. 33).

1 Forced Perspective is a technique that employs optical illusion to make objects appear further than they are.



fig. 34

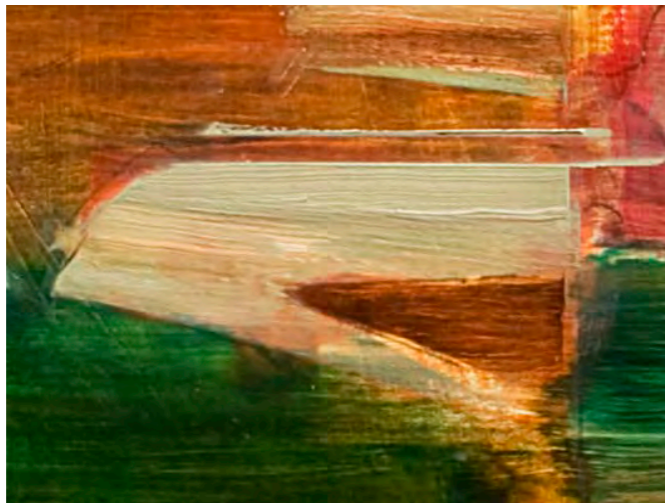


fig. 35



fig. 36

The top edge of the object at *underpainting, C, fig. 30* (indicated by the arrow) was sliding down to the right, unbalancing the painting (see close up, *fig. 34*). So I made the edge horizontal (*fig. 35*). Now the top edge of the object in the finished painting (page 46) is parallel to the top and bottom of the picture frame. It stabilizes the image, which is a counterbalance to the circular motion. Note the textural enhancements (*fig. 35*).

The railing (*line drawing, 4, fig. 29, page 47*) would have blocked the viewer's entrance into the picture. To prevent this, the vertical part of the railing was placed behind a surface and the horizontal portion was made transparent, as you can see in the detail of the finished work (*fig. 36*). With the railing no longer an impediment, the viewer can enter the great hall.

These are all significant edits to *Bosch's Room*, but they represent just a fraction of the decisions that were part of the actual creative process. Each painting has its set of issues, and inventive solutions have to be tailored to that painting. We should not lose sight that what matters most is whether the painting is visually exciting.



Plate 26 *Untitled 3* 2004 54.75 x 70 in.



fig. 37



fig. 38



fig. 39



fig. 40

Untitled 3 (page 50) is my most complex painting. Complexity that is orderly is inherently beautiful. There are pictures within pictures (*figures 37, 38, 39, 40*) that, most importantly, fit together and work as a unified whole. A painting is not a collection of details; its scenes are building blocks that fit into the overall design. One can visually move over the surface, then into tunnels and rooms that populate the finished painting (*Untitled 3*, page 50).



fig. 41 underpainting

Although it is tempting to move in close to a picture to see the individual scenes, it is best to first step back and absorb it as a whole. It's like when you come upon a beautifully landscaped garden: you can either run up to a group of lovely blossoms or take in the whole splendid vista – and then only later move in to observe the individual flowers.

Before starting a painting, a lot of time must be spent visualizing the overall design. Once the design is transferred to the canvas, it becomes a blueprint that allows for improvisation while staying on course. The design is similar to a plot that becomes the indispensable spine holding a story together.

Because this painting was so complex, a technique was used to create the underpainting (see *fig. 41*) which was different from that used for most of my other paintings. Instead of painting the underpainting directly with glazes, large areas were first painted with a textured white impasto. The plan was to cover these textured areas with glazes, allowing me to deal separately with the design, the textural issues and then color. This is similar to the technique used by many artists such as the French painter Ingres, who painted his subject in light grays (Grisaille) that were then painted over with a colored glaze.

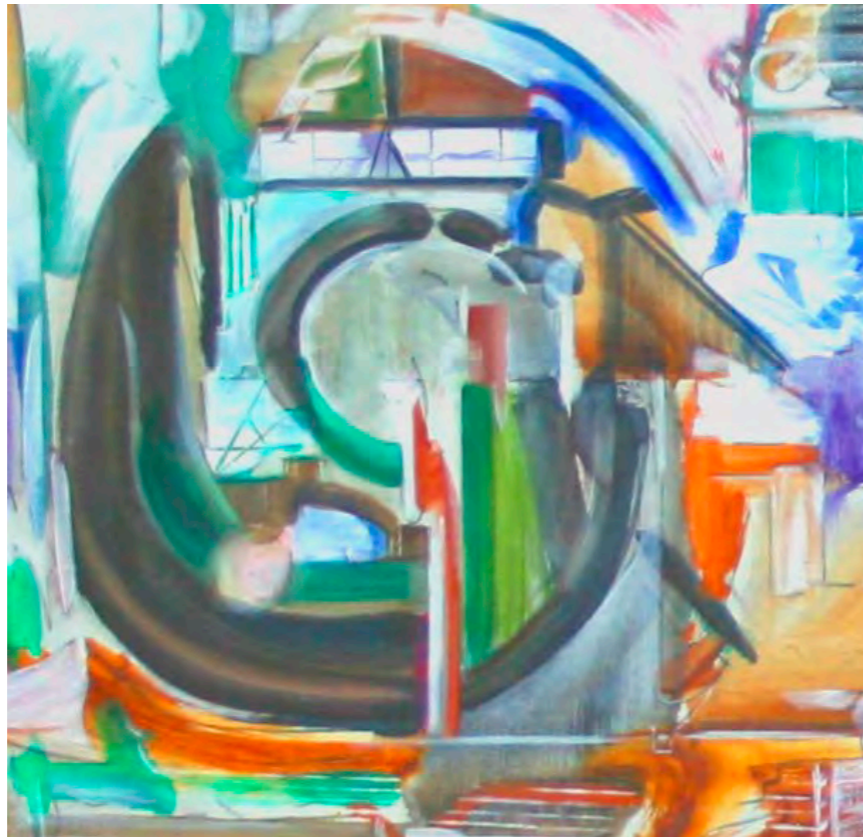


fig. 42

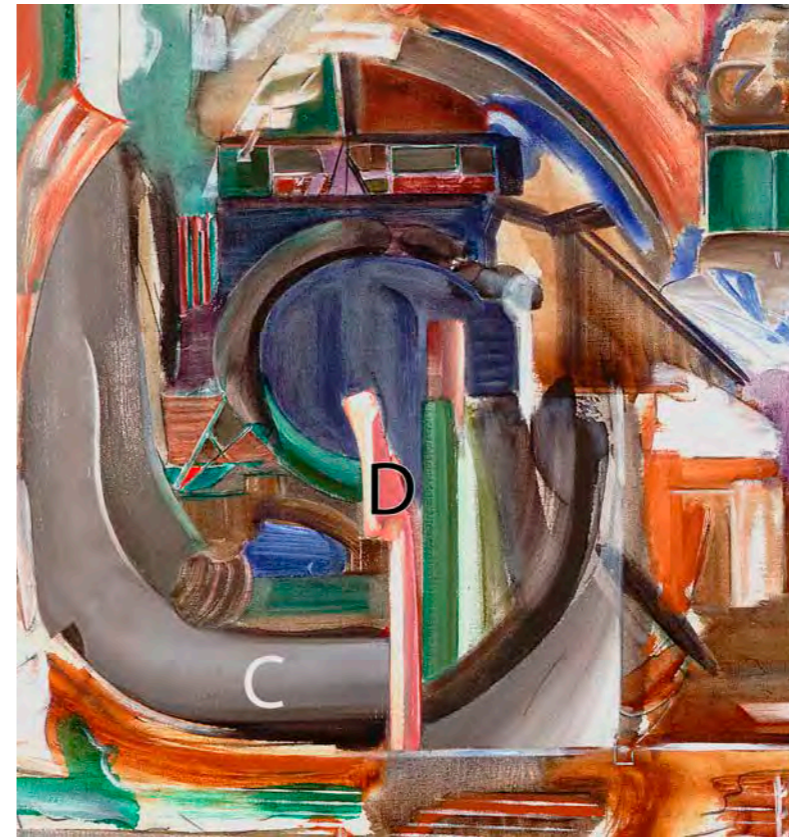


fig. 43

One of the key elements that keep the individual dioramas locked into the painting is that they are set fast in a three-dimensional landscape. This is accomplished by making the foreground, the bottom area of the painting, warmer with more contrasting, intense colors and values – bringing it forward. The background, the top portion of the painting, has less contrast and is grayer¹, moving it back into space (see the finished painting, page 50). There are diagonal thrusts **1** & **2** (*underpainting*, fig. 41) that act as supports to hold fast and unite the disparate parts.

The orange area (*underpainting A*, fig. 41) was left uncovered as the painting progressed, forcing me to balance this intense orange with other strong colors throughout the painting, which enlivened the image.

Underpainting B (fig. 41) is a vortex that was drawing my vision in and prevented me from moving around the painting. What was the solution? The vortex at fig. 42 (a close up of the underpainting) was modified, resulting in fig. 43. **C** was lightened and brought forward, making the vortex smaller, while **D** was made more substantial, blocking the entrance to the vortex. Most importantly, on the right side of the painting, colorful, three-dimensional forms were created, pulling the viewer away from the vortex. Note the additional details from fig. 42 to fig. 43. A compilation of details is typical of realism.

Fig. 38 (page 51) looks like a topographical view of a planted field (**E**) that gives the impression of being on top of the painting instead of being in the painting. This was remedied by placing a rectangular object (**F**) in front of **E** that pushed it back into the painting.

There is a shimmering light on the textured, shaded side of the structure **G** (fig. 39), bathing it in the glow of reflected radiance. Textures on textures, details within details bring a painting to life.

¹ Objects in the distance are lighter and grayer because they are filtered by particles in the air.



Plate 27 *Urban Tilt* 2004 64 x 70 in.

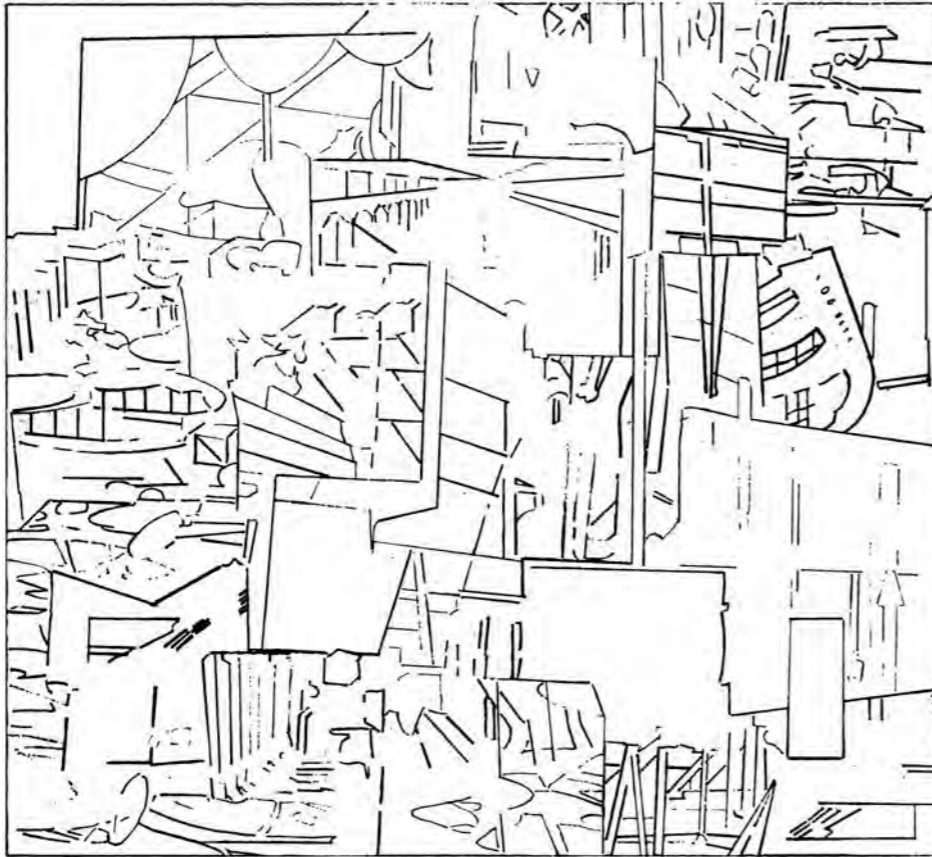


fig. 44 line drawing



fig. 45 underpainting 1

I have chosen to analyze *Urban Tilt* (Plate 27) because it encapsulates many of the issues encountered in creating paintings. The design was composed of structural elements that were translated into a line drawing (fig. 44). After transferring the line drawing onto a canvas, *underpainting 1*, fig. 45, was painted. It did not have the structure and tone that I envisioned; so *underpainting 2* (page 56) was created, which did feel more structural and urban. But many issues still had to be resolved.



fig. 46 underpainting 2

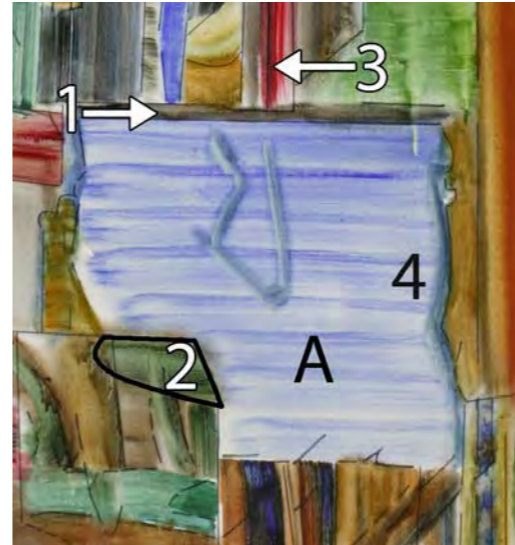


fig. 47



fig. 48

A in *underpainting 2* (fig. 46) resembles a piece of formed “blue glass” which was dropped on top of the underpainting and was not integrated or harmonious with it. When an element does not work with the image as a whole, you should remove the element. Or, more interestingly, you can modify the element as well as the other components of the painting to make the inharmonious element – in this case, the blue glass – fit. Often, if this battle to integrate a dissonant element is successful, it results in a more dramatic and dynamic painting that retains the energy of the struggle.

Therefore, I needed a way to lock the blue glass into the picture. Fig. 47 is a close-up of the blue glass in the underpainting; the dark horizontal line at 1 became a partial metal frame, a piece of hardware, that was painted in front of the blue glass, holding it in place. This can be seen in the finished painting detail (fig. 48). The area around 2 (outlined with a black line, fig. 47) was darkened, giving it a dimensional shadow that placed it in front of the blue glass. The vertical form at 3 was extended down and over the top of the metal frame (1) pinning down both the frame and the blue glass. Darkening the blue glass put it in the same light as the rest of the painting, but I lit the right side, at 4, making the blue glass three-dimensional. Finally, I added 5, fig. 48, a three-dimensional light green object that is clearly in front of the blue glass.

The result of all of these changes is illustrated in fig. 48. Using colors similar to those of the blue glass on other elements around the image tied it into the picture. Furthering the integration of the blue glass is the depth and dimensionality of the complete scene that places it within the same space/atmosphere as the other elements in the painting. This battle to integrate blue glass, to pull it into the painting, results in a dynamic tension that brings the work to life. “It’s alive”
– Dr. Frankenstein.

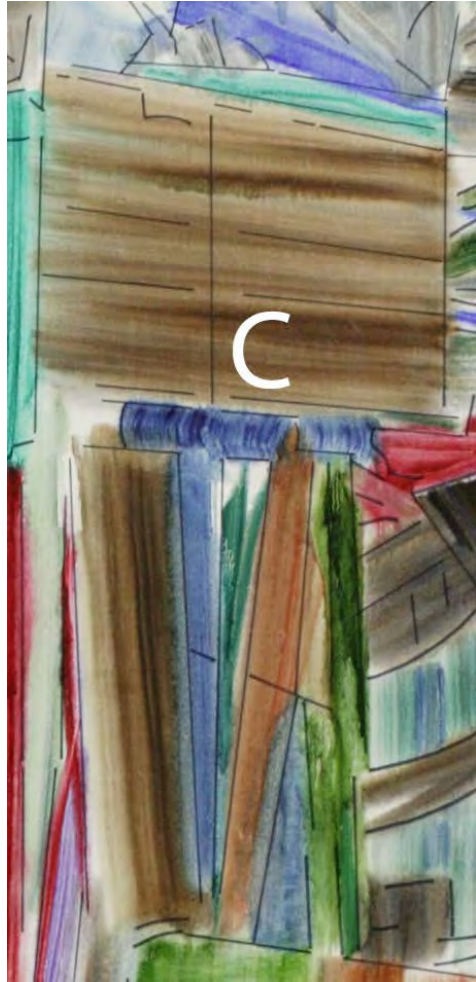


fig 49 (from underpainting)

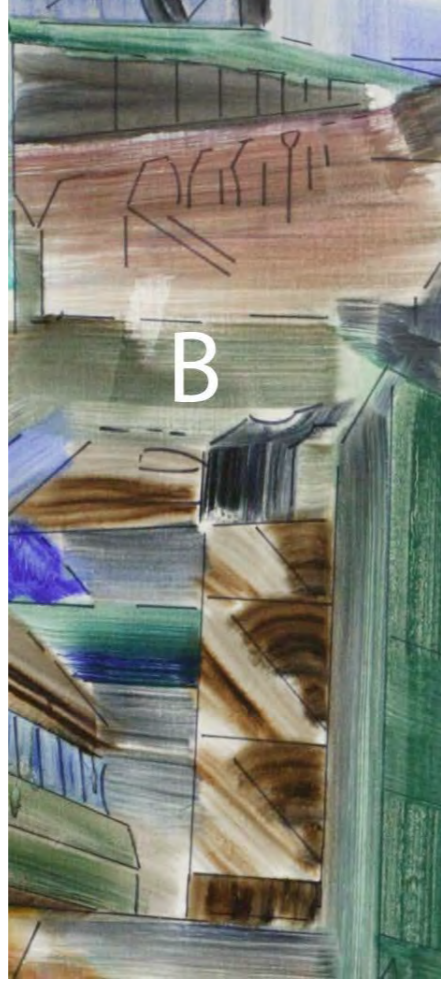


fig. 50 (from underpainting)



fig. 51 (from finished painting)

(The letters referred to in this paragraph – C and B – can be located in *underpainting 2, fig. 46, page 56*, as well as in the *figures* above.) *Fig. 49* (a detail from the underpainting) looked like random brush strokes that were not harmonious with, and did not have the same structural elements as, the rest of the picture – they didn't fit. My solution was to take another area of the painting, *fig. 50*, modify it, and cover *fig. 49* with the modified version, resulting in *fig. 51*. Not only was *fig. 49* covered by *fig. 51*, but *fig. 51* also mirrors *fig. 50*, uniting both sections. What was done to *fig. 50* to change it into *fig 51* and not make it an exact duplicate?

- 6, the arches were reversed and made solid.
- 7, a wall was sculptured adding an element of texture and dimension.
- 8, a wall was created to give this area dimensionality.

Also, D and E (*underpainting 2, fig. 46*) were to become three-dimensional “rooms” lit by sunlight.

All of these changes can be seen in the completed painting (page 54).



Plate 28 *Blue Light* 2010 oil on panel 31.5 x 37 in.



fig. 52 sketch



fig. 53 line drawing

Blue Light (Plate 28) Usually, my preliminary sketches are shades of gray, but the sketch (fig. 52) for *Blue Light* combined gray with some purple accents, magazine images and an actual lit blue light bulb (A, fig. 52). Don't limit your experimenting with source materials, particularly in the early stages of creativity. I made changes from the sketch to *line drawing* (fig. 53): 1, 2 and 3 lines are horizontal, and 4 and 5 are vertical lines paralleling the borders of the picture, thus anchoring major elements of the painting, stabilizing the image. It is a technique that I employed in previous paintings and as with most techniques craftsmanship and precision are important. There is no virtue in sloppiness. Note how the parallel lines in *line drawing* (fig. 53) are parallel to the picture's borders and not off by a few degrees. By way of analogy, if the angles of a room are not precise you are left with the feeling that it is not well constructed.



fig. 54 underpainting

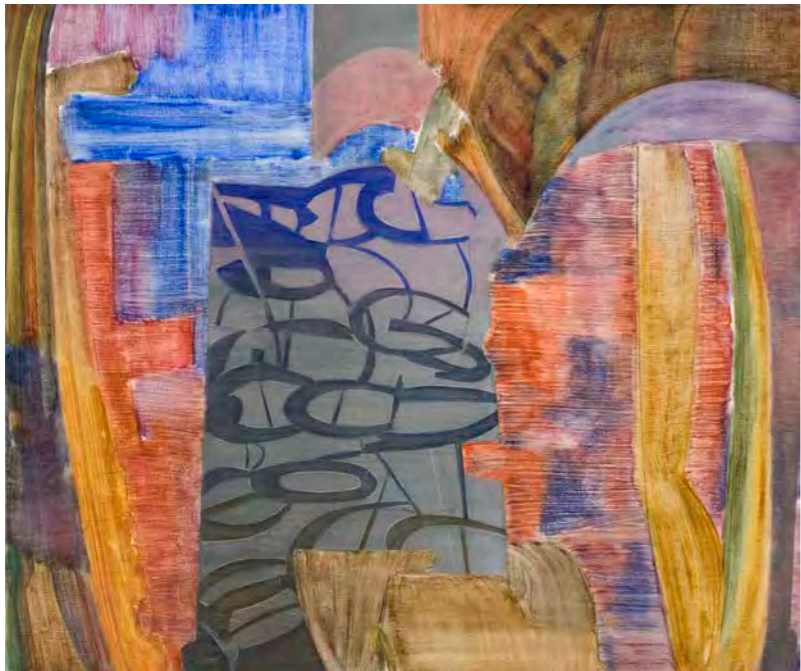


fig. 55

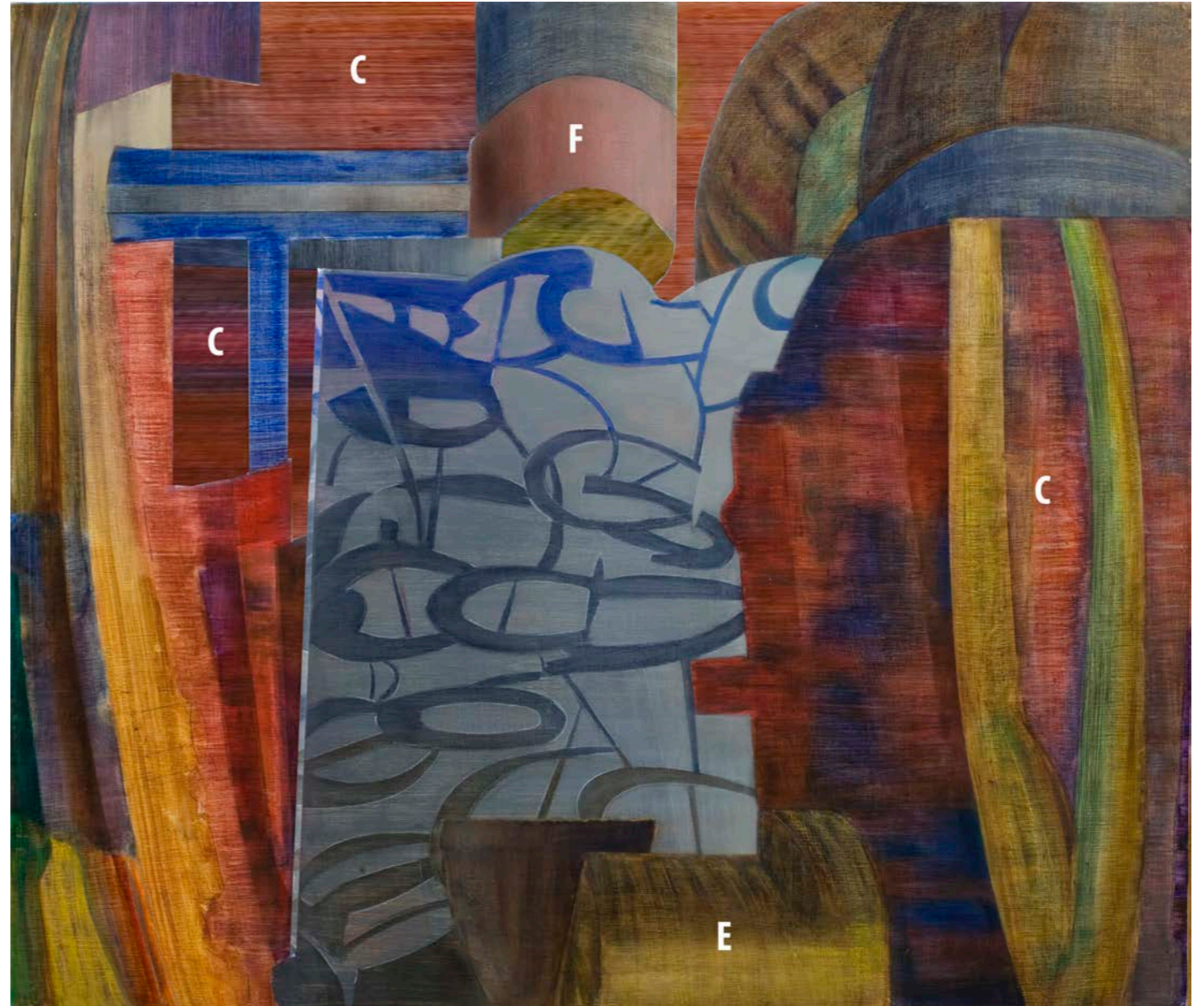


fig. 56

You can follow the progress from *underpainting*, fig. 54 to fig. 55. Fig. 56 is almost the completed painting, but the right side looks more massive, heavier than the left, throwing off the balance. How could I balance the picture? The solution is explained and illustrated on page 61.



fig. 57

To correct this imbalance the left side was given more dimensionality, to create the illusion of more mass (weight). This was needed to balance it with the right side. *Fig. 57* was changed to *fig. 58* in the following manner:

- **A** was lightened and warmed, which moved it forward.
- **B** became a channel with depth.
- **1** became the side of **2** giving the object dimensionality and weight.
- **2** was lightened and warmed (Indian Yellow), bringing it forward.
- **3** was moved forward.
- **4** became a deep shadow creating depth.

Also, in *fig. 58*, the forms are elegant, moving gracefully from the bottom to the top of the image in the finished work.

To unite the image, a horizontal, cylindrical shape at the bottom (*Fig. 56, E*, page 60) is reiterated and balanced by **F**, a vertical cylinder at the top. Also, note the horizontal grain at the **Cs** and in other areas, uniting these areas. This type of detailed texture is certainly more beautiful than a plain solid surface. In the finished picture, the center gray area and the lit blue light “bulb” (*fig. 52, A*, page 59) contrast with the warm, dark, rich colors that are reminiscent of Rembrandt’s earth color palette.



fig. 58

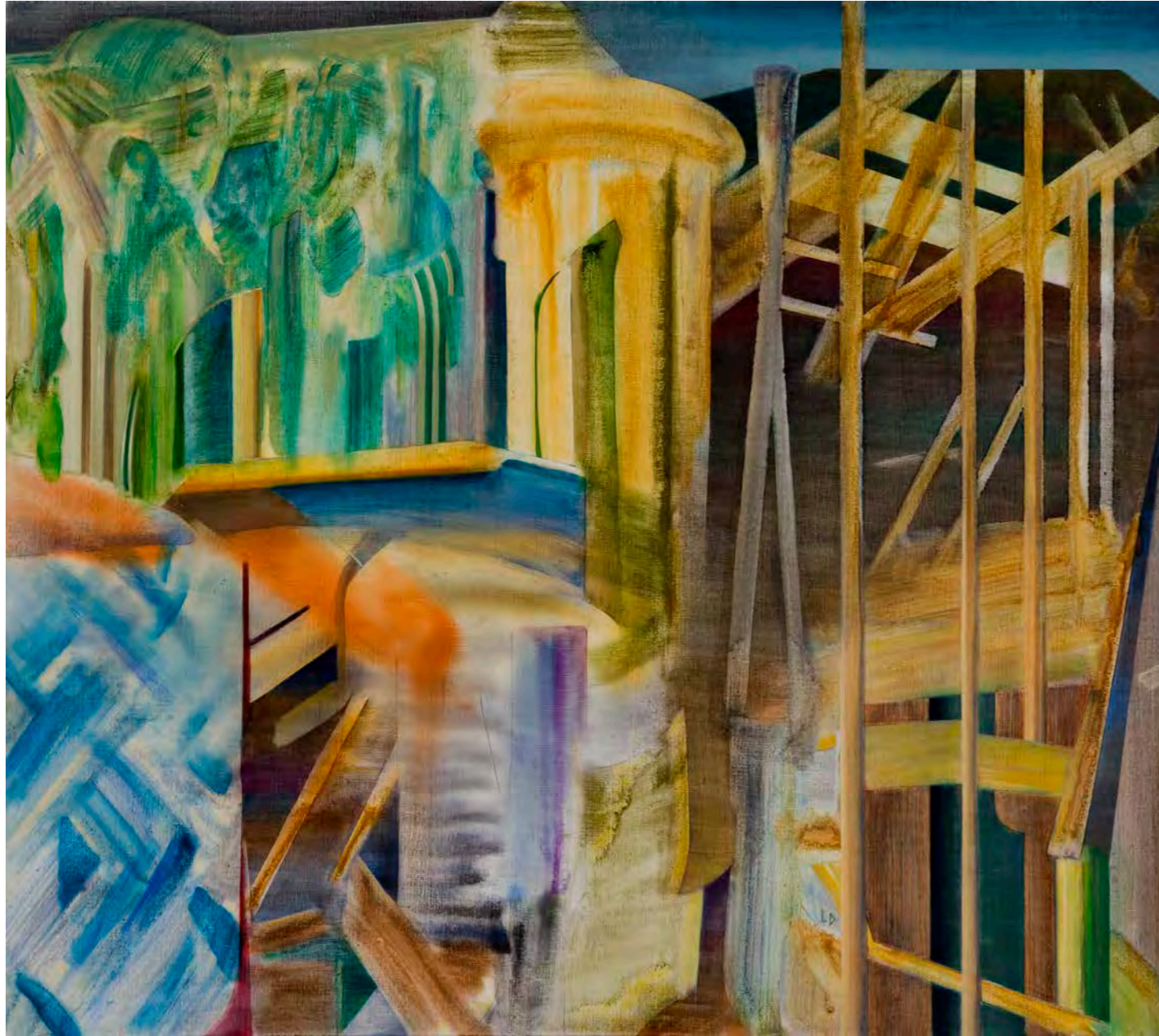


Plate 29 *Temple* 2006 37.5 x 42 in.

Temple (Plate 29) After playing with various design concepts, I developed a sketch that was translated into a line drawing (fig. 59) and then transferred onto the painting surface. Next, *underpainting 1* (fig. 60) was painted; it was too dark, did not excite me and did not have visual magic. So I painted another underpainting, *underpainting 2* (fig. 61) that had a lighter, airier feel and became the foundation for the finished work. In fig. 62 the structure behind **A** formed the essence of an ancient temple ruin, around which I could build the painting. The sections **B**, **C**, **D** and **E** were antithetical to one another: they did not look as though they belonged in the same picture. How could a three-dimensional space be created that would unite and hold these disparate sections together? The bullet points that follow explain how fig. 62 became *Temple*, as you can see in the finished painting, above.

- Darkened and cooled areas **1** and the **2s**, creating space and depth behind the structures.
- Darkened the right side of **4** and lit the left side, forming a cylinder that gave it volume¹.
- Redesigned area **3s** to allow entrance behind all of the structures, like a door to the back stage.
- The shadow at **5** brought **6**, the edge of a “stage,” forward creating a foreground – another level of dimensionality.

In this newly created three-dimensional space, details **B**, **C**, **D**, and **E** are united in the same atmosphere. There was tension between these details: but now these inharmonious elements have become harmonious.

There is enough ambiguity to allow the viewer to ask: Is it a temple? Is it real?

¹ If any part of a picture has volume it implies three-dimensionality throughout the image.

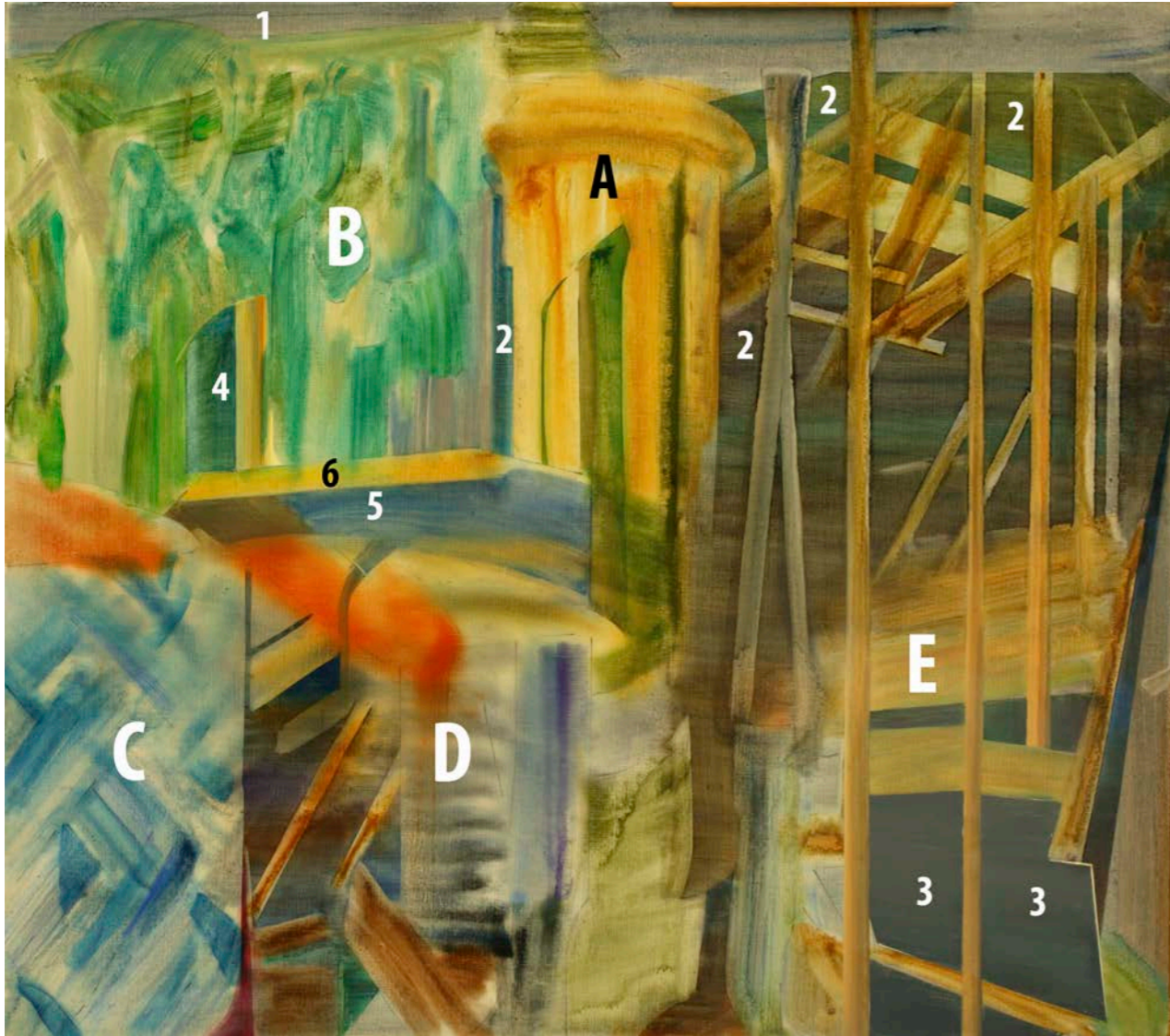


fig. 62

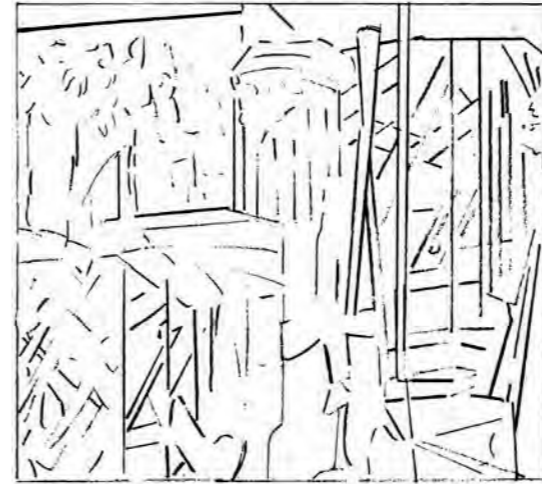


fig. 59 line drawing



fig. 60 underpainting 1



fig. 61 underpainting 2

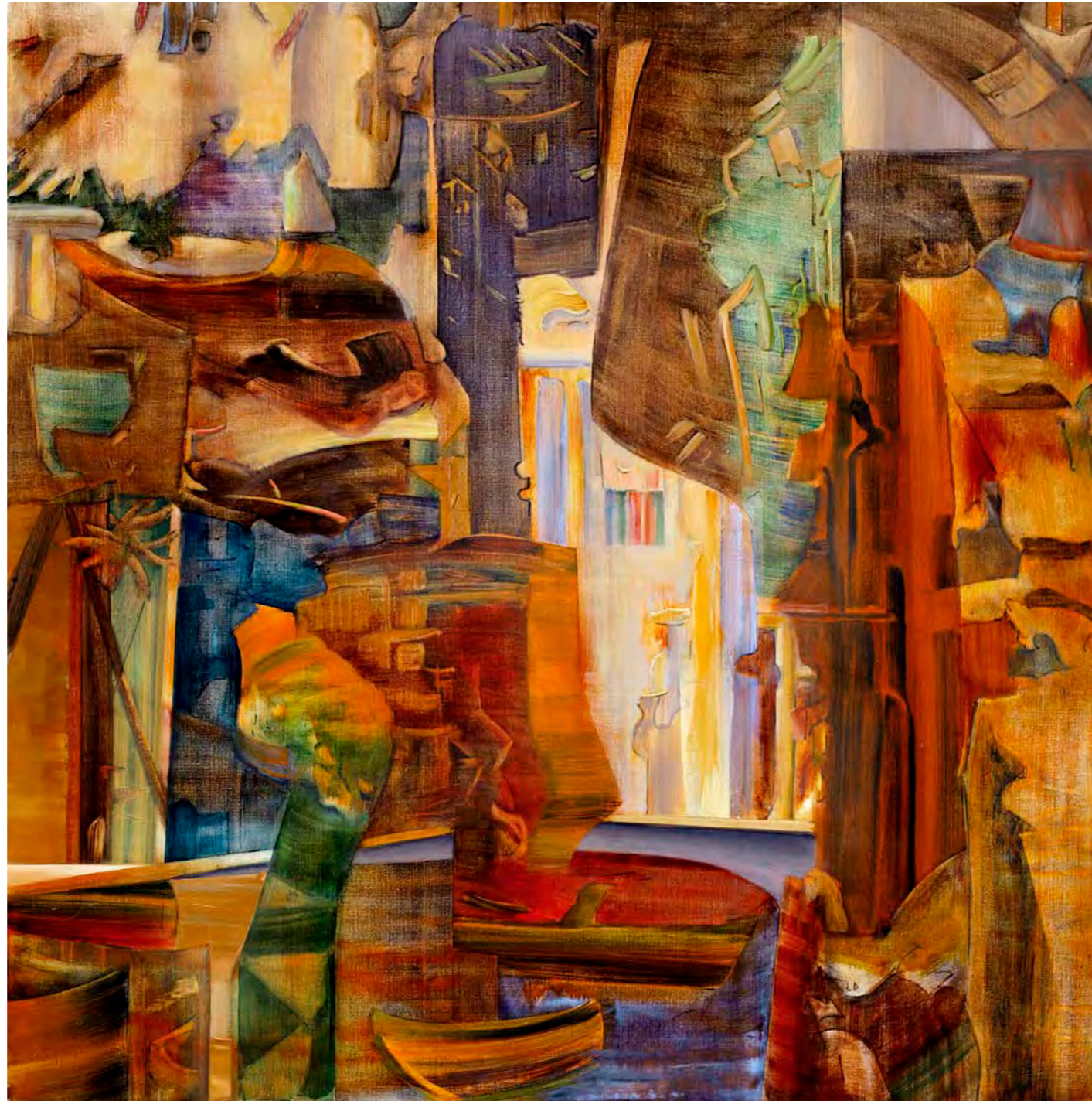


Plate 30 *Venetian Spirit* 2007 36 x 36.5 in.



fig. 62a

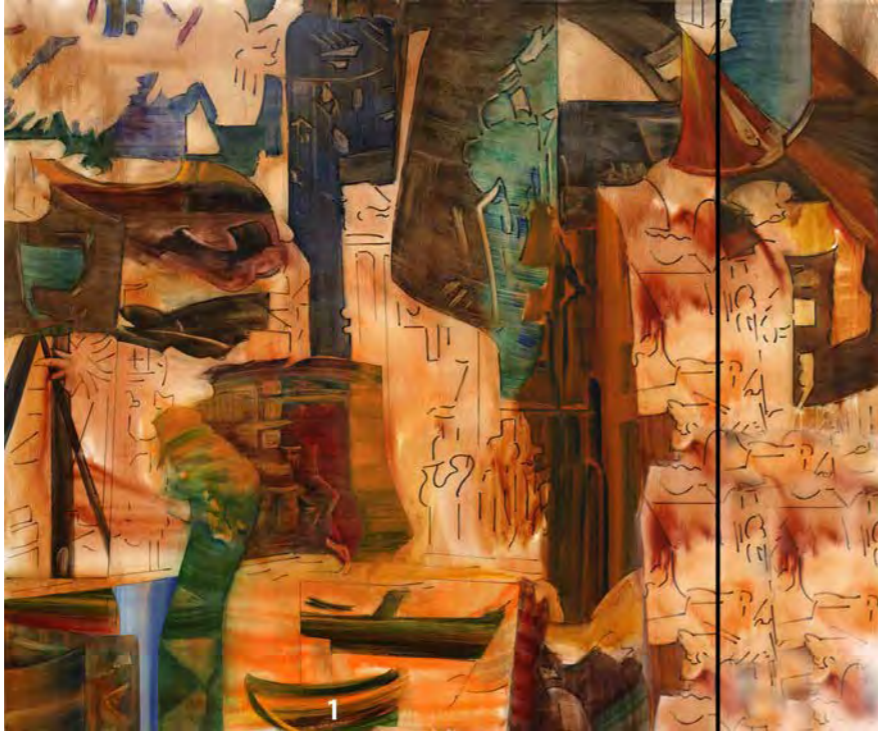


fig. 63 underpainting



fig. 64

Venetian Spirit (Plate 30) I was intrigued with the initial design concept but had no notion that Spirits or Venus would emerge. The underpainting (Fig. 63) had transparent, warm earth colors that would become the light areas, and the darker colors became the cool shadows. The colors and design evoked a sense of Venice and a boat appeared as if by magic (1, fig. 63) that I placed in a canal created for it (close-up of the boat, fig. 62a). After seeing the “boat” it is hard to imagine that it appeared serendipitously, but it did. These things happen when you paint freely. I felt that the right side of the underpainting did not contribute to the vision that I was forming in my mind’s eye. So I covered part of the right side of the underpainting up to the black line (fig. 63) and looked at the uncovered side. Since I now had no desire to add back the covered portion, I cropped the underpainting to the right of the black line.

In fig. 64 the image becomes warm and sumptuous with cool blue shadow accents. The cool orange (A) glows within the shade and its radiance is amplified by the contrasting surrounding blue, its complementary color. C becomes a Venetian artifact. D is a structural element, a bridge over the canal, and contrasts with the amorphous forms. Is B human or does it evolve into Saintliness? The scene is infused with daylight and texture. I hope you will find *Venetian Spirit* a visually rewarding journey.



Plate 31 *Diagonal* 2012 oil on panel 35.5 x 37.5 in.

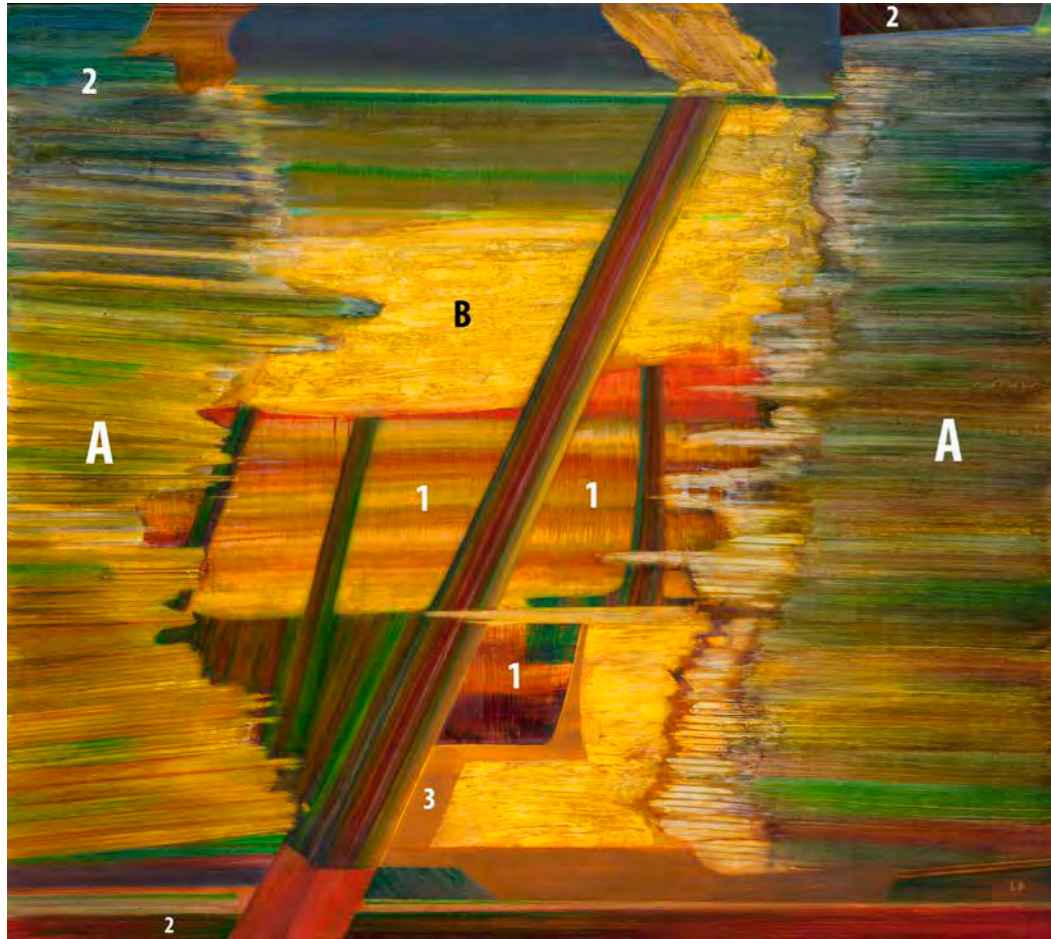


fig. 65

The colors of *Diagonal* (Plate 31) are a result of an experimental palette. The primary colors of this palette (*Palette 2*) are *Indian Yellow*, *Alizarin Crimson*, and *Ultramarine Blue*¹; all are intense, transparent colors.

At the *As* (fig. 65), combinations of these primary colors were applied over a textured white underpainting. Note the textures in the painting: a rake shaped device was used to create the parallel ridges at the *As*; the texture of *B* was set up with a palette knife. Areas of the smooth, glazed underpainting were left uncovered, and show through at the *1s* & *2s* resulting in textural contrasts. Other colors were added: for example, *Yellow Ochre* (*3*) becomes the luminous shadow of the bright yellow that is tangential to it. The image became a scene lit with intense mystical light.

The impression that I wanted to create was that the painting was ripped open (the *As* were parted, fig. 65), exposing an inner world.



Brown



Red



Green



Ultramarine Blue



Alizarin Crimson



Indian Yellow

Palette 2

¹ Red (or orange/red) is a mixture of Indian Yellow and Alizarin Crimson; Green is a mixture of Indian Yellow and Ultramarine Blue; and Brown is a mixture of Indian Yellow, Alizarin Crimson and Ultramarine Blue.



Plate 32 *Chasm* 2002 49 x 64.12 in.



fig. 66 underpainting

Chasm (Plate 32) How could a relatively flat underpainting become a “living” three-dimensional landscape? In *underpainting*, fig. 66, the platform was extended from **A** to **B**, uniting the image, as seen in the finished painting (page 68). I put three-dimensional, geometric objects at **C** to create dimensionality and foster a feeling that you could walk into and behind the painting. **D** became a detailed design element that aids in the illusion of “realism.” **E** became a metallic object that is twisted and lit in a way that adds dimension to the upper half of the painting. Structural elements that contrast with the amorphous forms are added at **G**. **F** is a counterpoint to the rest of the picture: a transparent, delicate design motif. A gap was left, a Chasm, between **A** and **B** in the foreground platform that creates an entrance into the painting.

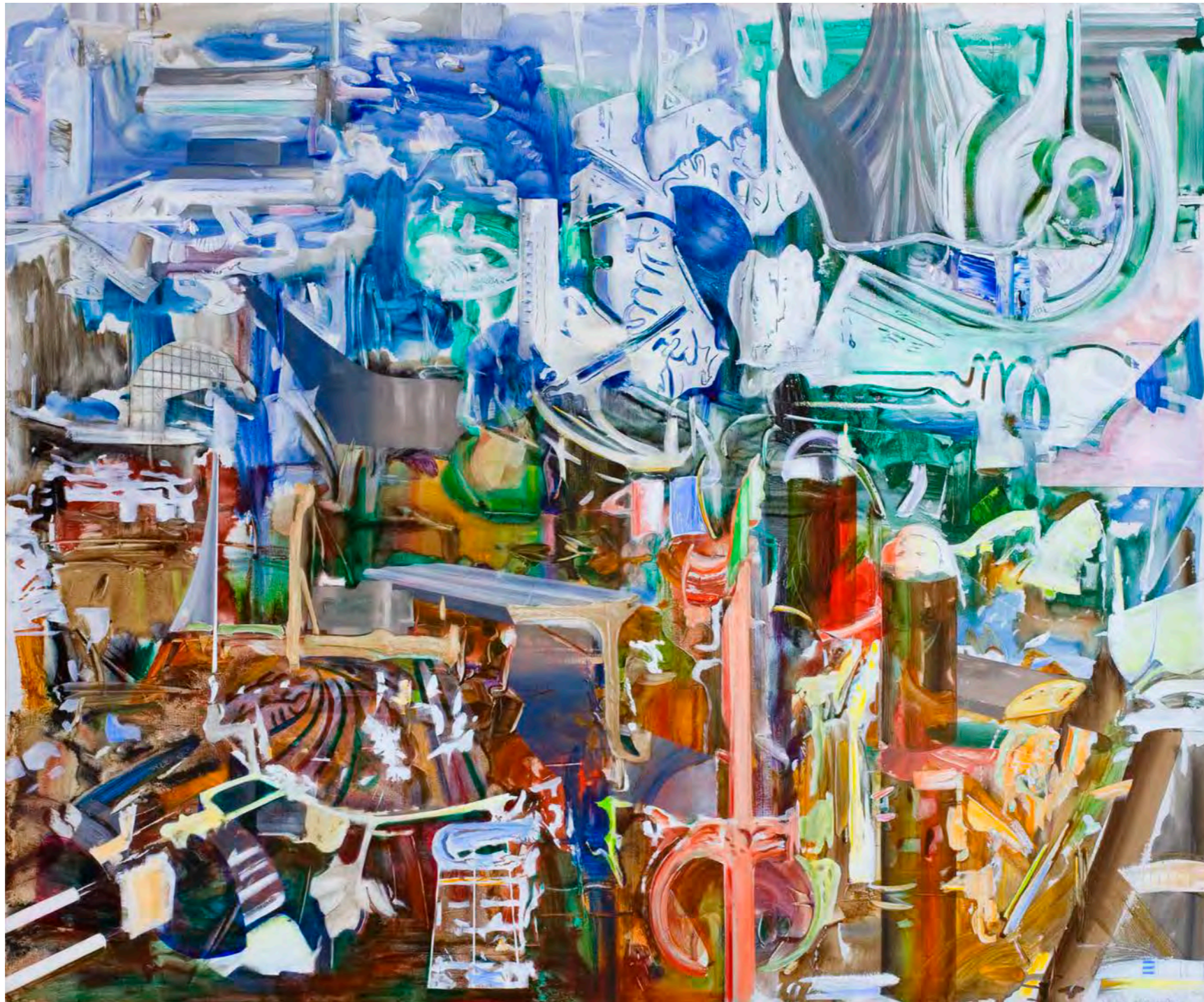


Plate 33 *Fragile Light* 2002 58 x 70 in.

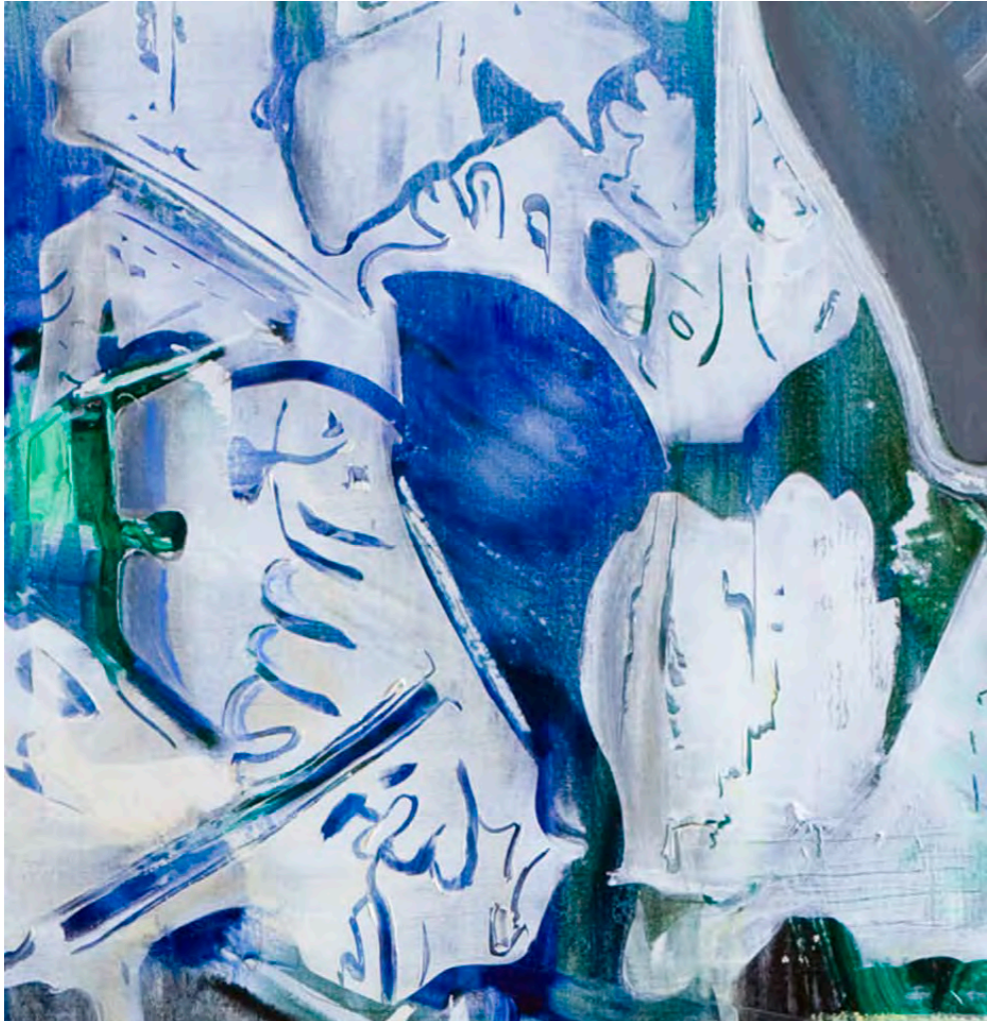


fig. 67



fig. 68

Fragile Light (Plate 33) There are two areas of this image (*figures 67, 68*) which required techniques that were developed for this painting. The white, fragile, thin glass-like elements are translucent (*fig. 67*). White oil paints, particularly Titanium White, are opaque, but there is a white that is less opaque: Zinc White. Mixing Zinc White with medium makes it semi-transparent. This paint was used to create the translucent images that were painted over the blue background that tints the white glass.

In *fig. 68*, there are colored glass-like forms that are placed in front of various objects. The images behind these glass-like forms were distorted to give the effect of rounded glass uniting the glass elements.

The lesson to be learned: solutions have to be found or invented to meet the demands of each individual painting. Vision is a precursor to technical solutions in most endeavors.



Plate 34 *Chamber* 2008 oil on panel 33.8 x 38 in.



fig. 69 line drawing

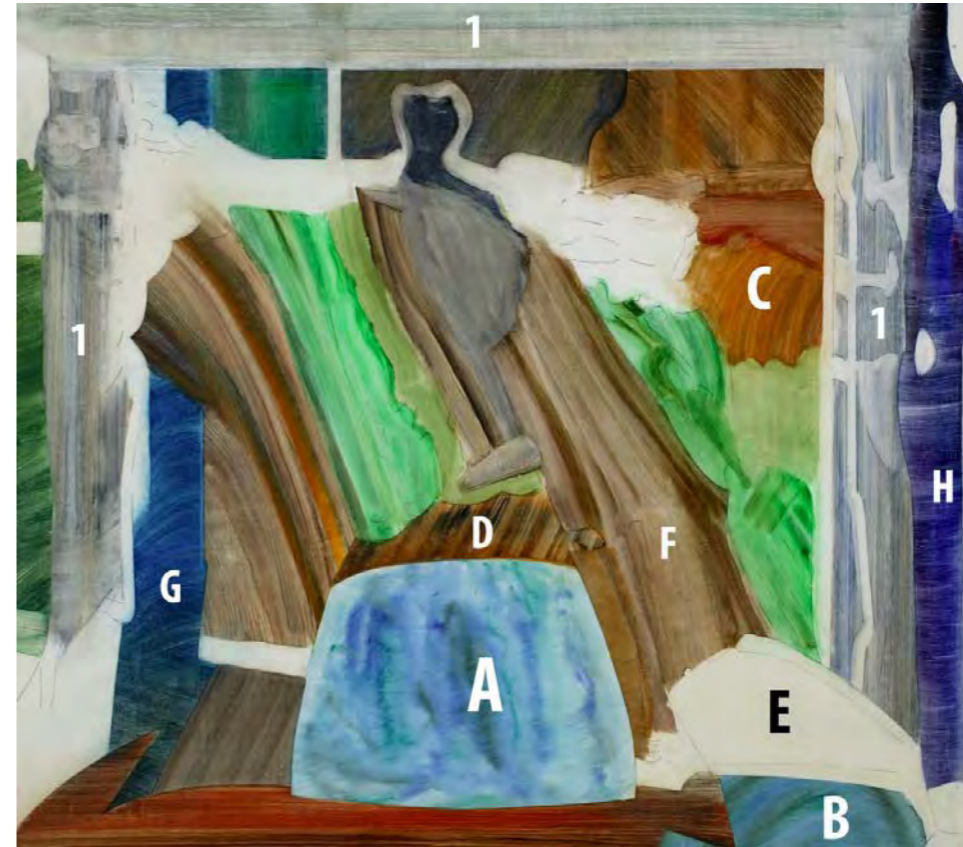


fig. 70 underpainting

Chamber (Plate 34) A “ghost-like” specter evolved from the *line drawing* (fig. 69) to the *underpainting* (fig. 70) to the completed image (page 72). The core of the picture is “a Spirit atop a marble throne in its sumptuous ‘chamber.’” At **A**, in the *underpainting*, fig. 70, a viscous mixture of medium, transparent blue and cool green oil paints, was poured, which dried into the substance of marble; it was as if I drizzled liquid marble (see finished painting, page 72). **B** introduces marble in the foreground and ushers the viewer into the painting. The picture was sliding to the lower right; **D** and **C** are counterbalancing thrusts pointing to the lower left in the finished painting, stabilizing the image. **E** becomes a continuation of **F**, brought forward by a textured, warmer and lighter structure. Because of their similar cylindrical form, grain and color, **G** and **H** bookend the painting, holding the chamber together both structurally and visually. In addition, the three - sided gray “frame,” indicated by the 1s, walls in the Chamber.

Although not harboring a conscious goal to introduce spirituality into my work, a spiritual quality has evolved seemingly of its own volition; images of spirits have presented themselves. (I have had mystical/spiritual episodes. One time, I was painting so intently I was not aware of my existence and felt myself floating above the ground. It was quite pleasurable.)



Plate 35 *East* 2010 oil on panel 37 x 40 in.



fig. 71



fig. 73

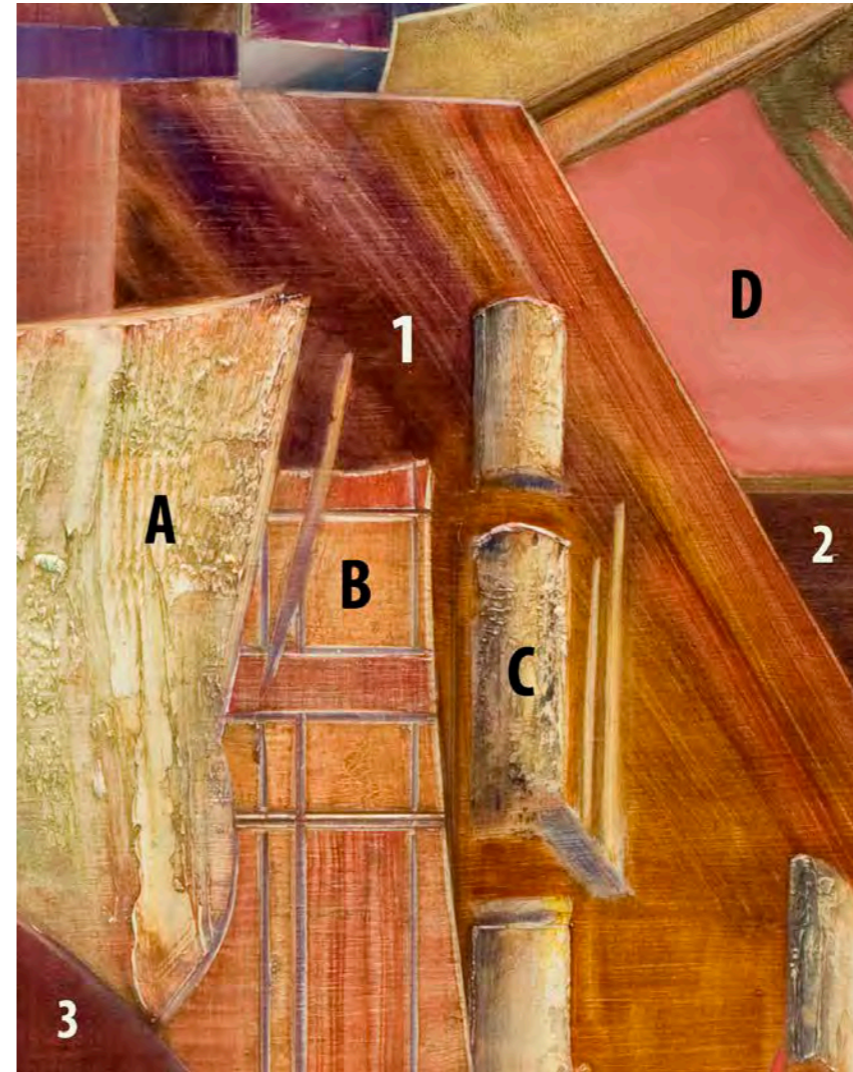


fig. 72

East (Plate 35) is an array of textured objects that were the building blocks for an edifice that is carefully balanced, with the precision of a fine mechanical mechanism. The structure is bathed in sunlight with cool shadows that are aglow with intense, radiant colors (fig. 71, **G, R**). Fig. 72, **1, 2, 3** are thin glazes that contrast with the diversely textured impasto passages (**A, B, C, D**). The warm blue in fig. 73 shines like a hard, lustrous mineral against the receding grayish colors in the upper left of the picture. The rounded form in the bottom right corner of the finished painting brings the foreground closer to the viewer.

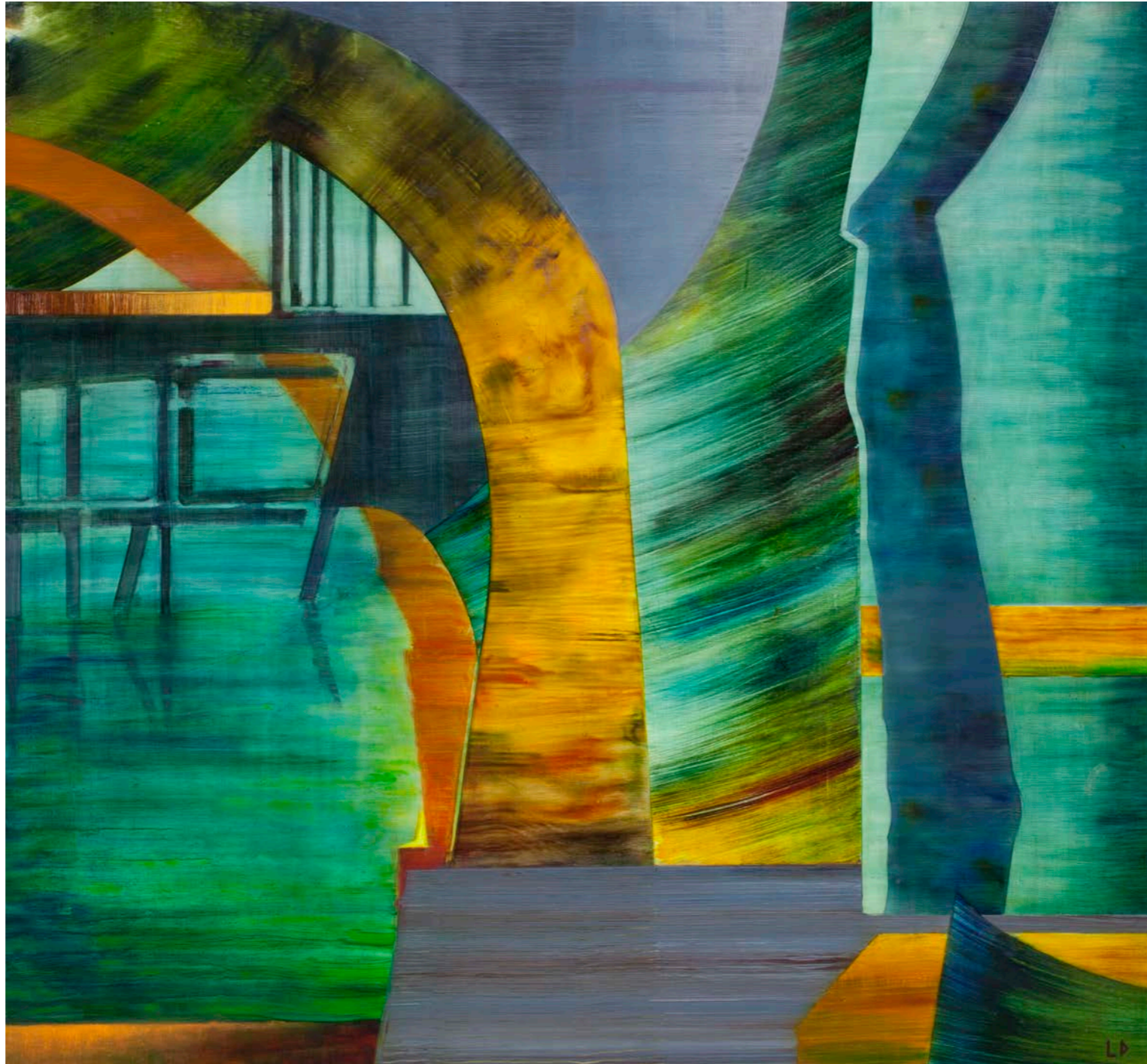


Plate 36 *River Light* 2013 oil on panel 33.5 x 36.25 in.



fig. 74 underpainting

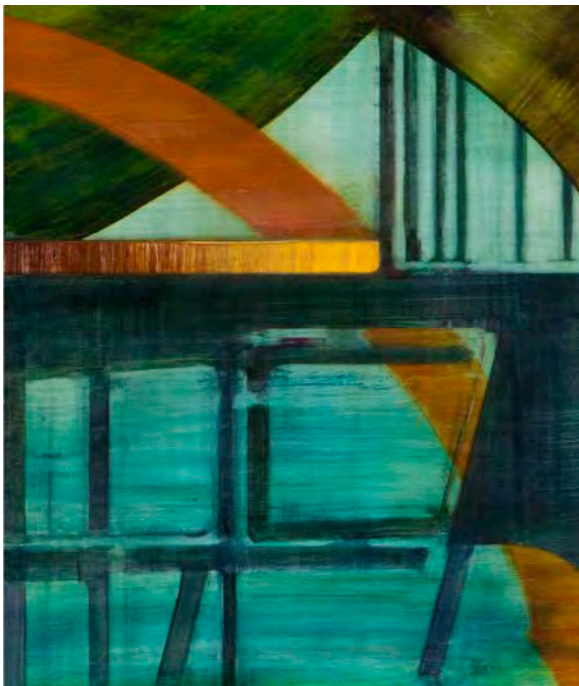


fig. 76



fig. 75

River Light (Plate 36) In *underpainting* (fig. 74) A became a sumptuous, golden, “living” form that the painting was built around. It is so powerful and alive; how could it be caged so it would not vault from the picture?

- 1 (fig. 75), with its intense colors, is balanced by other areas of matching color and calligraphy (2, 3 and 4).
- 6 was darkened and cooled, pushing it back into the shade; 5 was made brighter than 1, which had the effect of relatively reducing the intensity of 1, thus keeping it from jumping out of the picture.
- 4a is in front of 6 (a continuation of 1), pinning 6 back into the picture.
- 1 is mounted on 7, which anchors it and blocks it from pouring off the painting.
- All these tactics encased the brilliant, syrupy element (1). 7 and 8 balance each other and their cool gray, cement-like texture is a counterpoint to the amorphous, warm, intense organic forms. In fig. 76, there are contrasting structural elements that are divergent from the amorphous forms. The flowing warm, rich central element (1) sets the mood, which is supported by all the other aspects of the painting, whether harmonious or contrasting.



Plate 37 *Edge of Civilization* 2001 44 x 44.75 in.



fig. 77



fig. 78

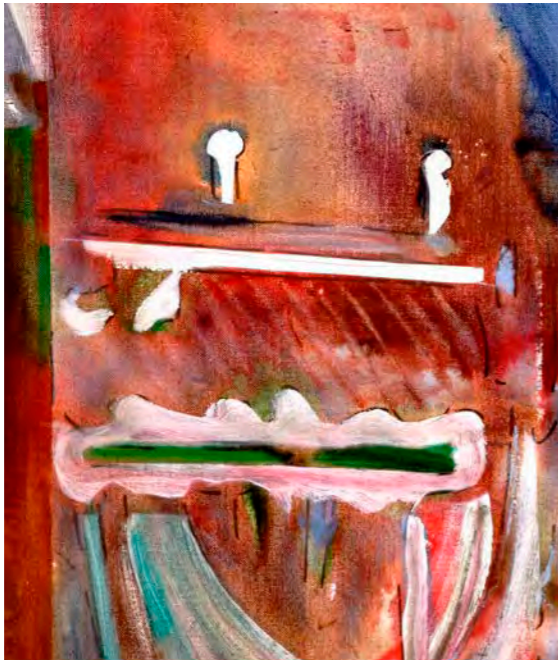


fig. 79



fig. 80



fig. 81

After I had begun *Edge of Civilization* (page 78), creatures started to populate the painting. In *fig. 77*, a gargoyle presented itself; I added the eyeball. It was at this point that I moved in the direction of a light-hearted Gothic vision. In the bottom half of the picture are hard-edged structures that represent civilization, which contrasts with the primitive creatures, some of whom seem to appear from the clouds, such as *fig. 78*, a fish-like creature whose painted surface suggests the fleshiness of a sea-born animal. *Fig. 79* is the personification of a mask with a distorted mouth. See how a primitive claw moves into the image from the right (*fig. 80*). Wings (*fig. 81*) and other creatures roam at the “edge of civilization.” Whimsical, why not?

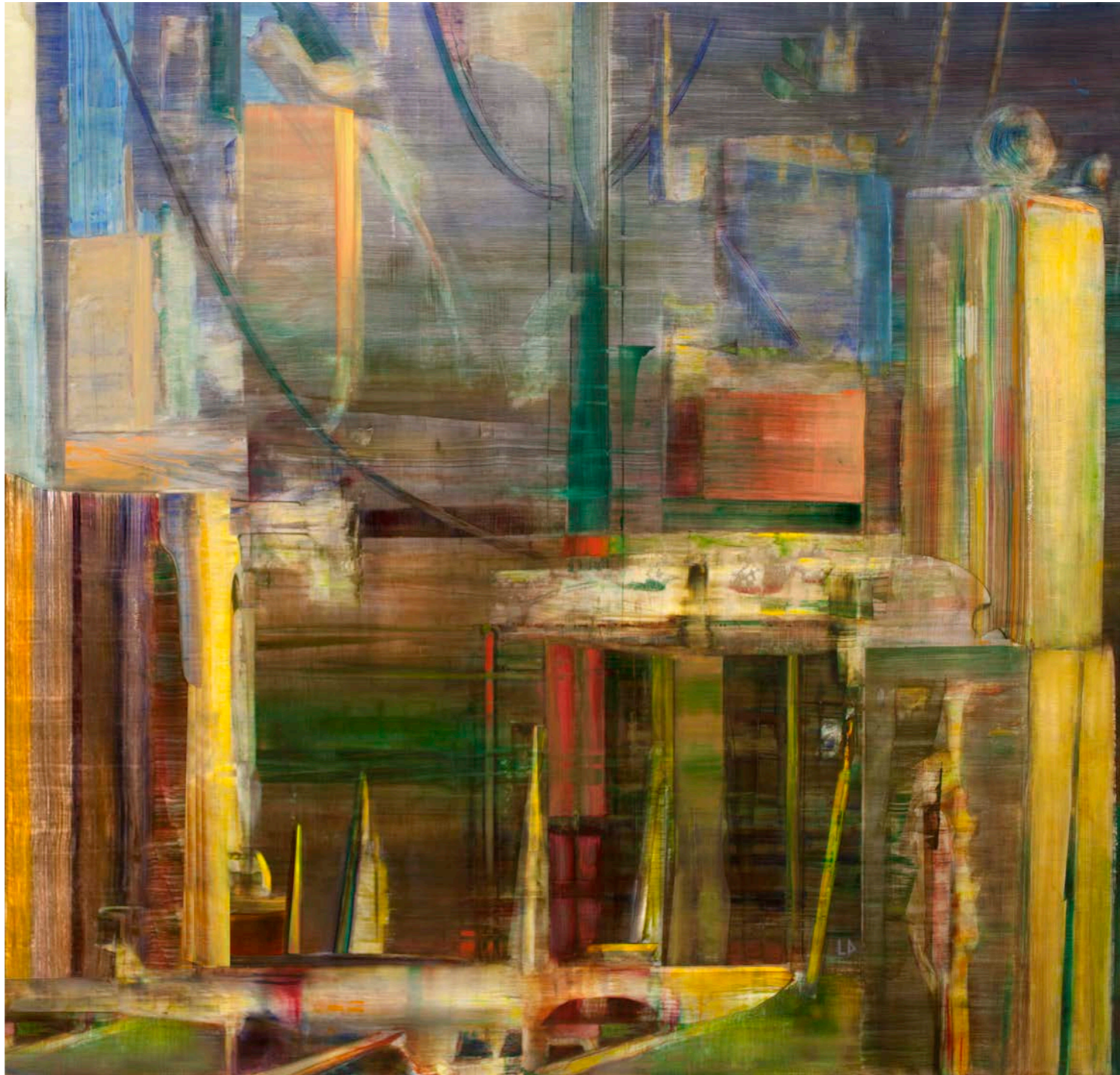


Plate 38 *Untitled 4* 2015 oil on aluminum 39.25 x 41 in.

Untitled 4 (Plate 38) is an urbanized painting on aluminum. The aluminum has a reflective sheen that is not obtainable with other painting surfaces and imparts an inner glow that can be seen through transparent glazes. This effect is most evident in the upper left quarter of the picture. (It is much more apparent when viewed in person.) When the paint is applied and manipulated on the ultra-smooth surface of the aluminum, it leaves marks: patterns, brush strokes, and textures that are particular to aluminum (*fig. 82*). Even if the paint were applied in the same manner as on other smooth surfaces, such as wood that has a sanded coating of gesso, the resultant marks would be different.¹ The painting surface becomes an important variable that influences all other aspects of the painting.

¹ The aluminum does not absorb the paint as a gesso surface would, thus creating different effects. (Lightly sanding the aluminum helps the paint adhere to it more effectively.)

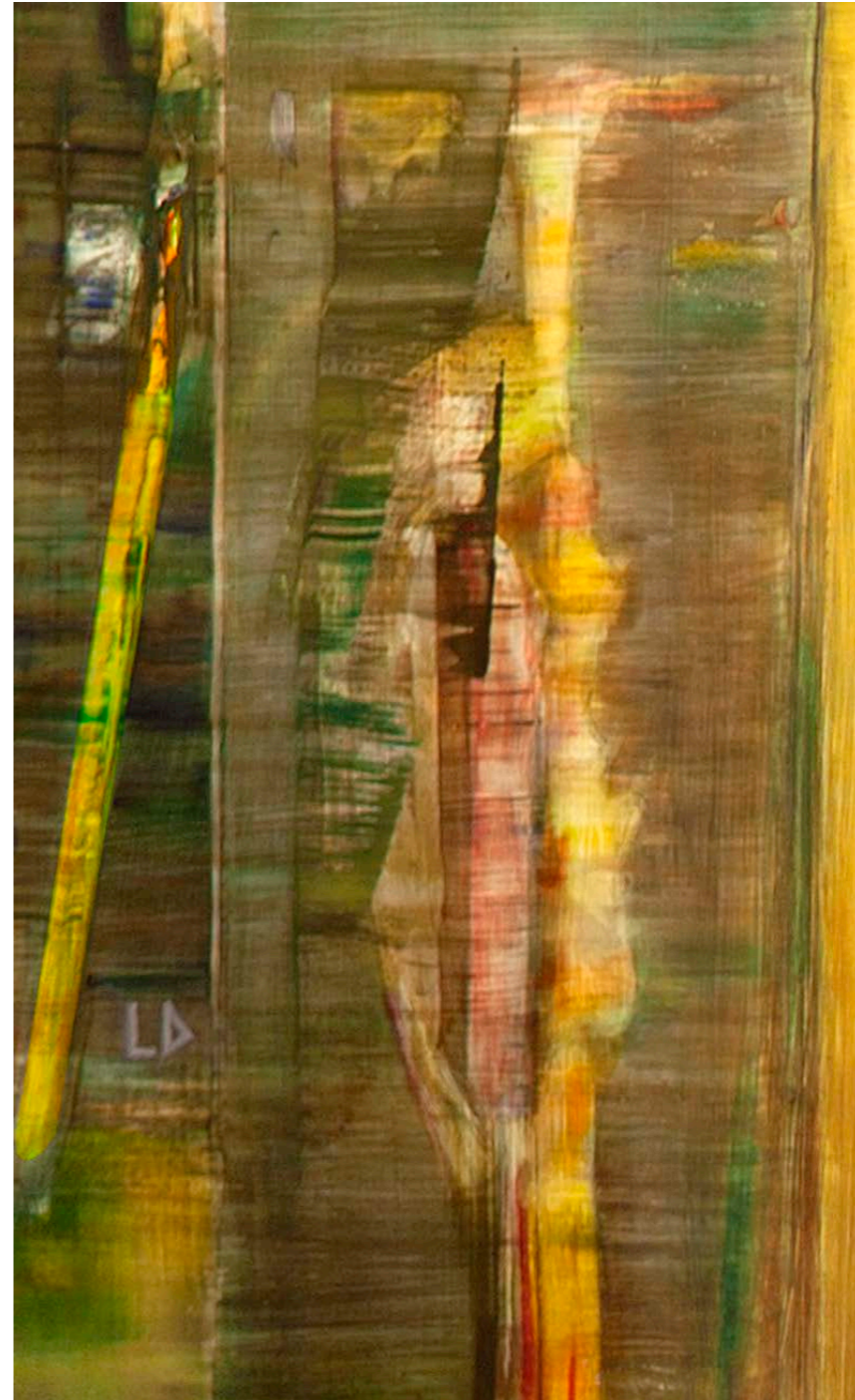


fig. 82



Plate 39 *Blue Steps* 2015 oil on aluminum 32.5 x 34 in.



fig. 83



fig. 84

Blue Steps (Plate 39) is also painted on aluminum. The viewer can journey from the warm lower foreground to the upper cool blue elements. There are many circuitous routes over structures, through rooms, and up ramps while sight-seeing all journey long – sights that can be seen only in this alternate reality. The journey can begin at *fig. 83*.

Fig. 84 glows like the energetic heat below the surface of the earth. Creating nature is more fulfilling than copying her.



Plate 40 *Wind October 18th 2015* 53.75 x 57 in.



fig. 85



fig. 86

Wind October 18th (Plate 40) is the end point, for now, of my creative journey from figurative to landscape to abstract painting – Non-objective Realism. Within the image are *figures 85, 86, 87, and 88*.

In one sense, this painting came naturally because it summed up all that went before. *Wind October 18th* is a “creation” of nature that is profoundly personal yet strives to be universally compelling.

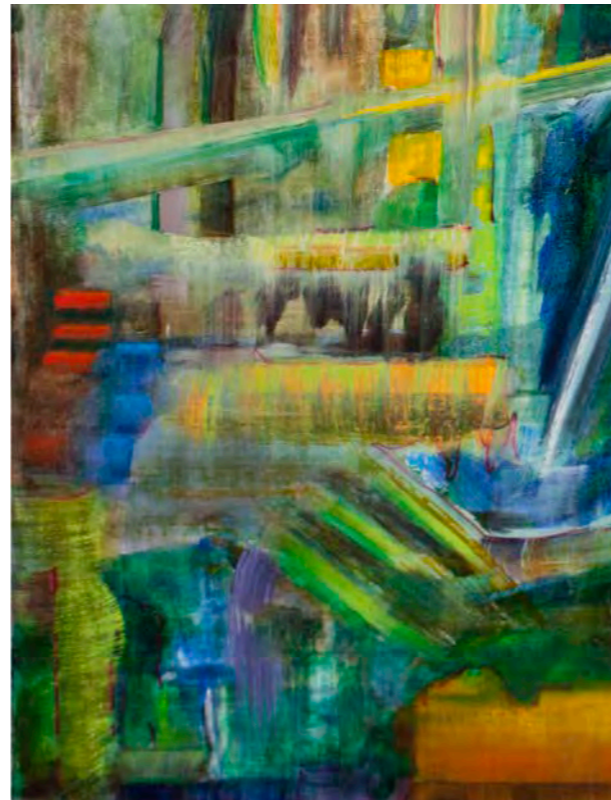


fig. 87



fig. 88



Plate 41



Plate 42



Plate 43

Experiment in Three Dimensions - Sculpture

Experimentation is the engine of creation. While creating abstract paintings, I usually build a three-dimensional sculpture that will become the foundation for the design of the painting. Now the sculpture, itself, becomes the finished object of art (Plate 42). Note that it can only be viewed from the front, similar to a Hollywood set. In Plate 43, you see the three-dimensional sculpture illuminated with a strong light from behind and a dimmer light on the front, producing a mysterious, dramatic effect – *Film Noir* lighting. The sculpture was then “painted” with warm and cool colored lights (Plate 41) resulting in a limited, but elegant, harmonious color range. I have not pursued sculpture of this type as an artistic end in itself, but perhaps in the future I will.

Silkscreens¹

The challenge of transforming a creative work in a given medium into something equally compelling in another has intrigued artists throughout the centuries. The process of translation requires a profound understanding of the vocabulary of both forms of expression and the creative ability to imbue the new work with its own intrinsic value. The visual examination, in this book, of the relationship between paintings and silkscreen prints will focus on the interpretive process.

Painting is a laboratory for constructing the architecture of the image in which the essential give and take between artist and painting dictates the flow of ideas. Silkscreen has quite the opposite set of properties. This ancient stencil-based medium lacks the plasticity of painting, and its unforgiving nature renders it a more common instrument of refinement, purification, and reproduction. Unlike the improvisational choreography inherent in painting, most of the creative decisions in the making of a silkscreen print take place before any of the colors touch the paper. The completed silkscreen is complex – layers on top of layers, each one carefully built upon the preceding layer.

My collaboration with master printmaker Alexander Heinrici, founder of Fine Art Printing (page 89: Heinrici, left; Dinkin, center) begins with my selecting a painting that will serve as inspiration and architecture for the silkscreen edition. After the goals and processes are discussed in great detail, five or so screens or stencils are worked out and then hand cut. The largest and lightest areas are printed first, then gradually darker values are printed over the previously applied lighter layers. A myriad of new colors are created within the overlapping intersections of the transparent layers. The results of this initial phase of the printing process are then evaluated (See *Silkscreen notes*², page 90). To indicate what modifications are needed, I paint directly on the silkscreen proof, adjusting the image while responding to what has occurred on the paper, both planned and unplanned.

Allowing the work to speak is an essential part of the interpretive process. The refinements that are made are incorporated into the evolving image; more screens are cut, and more patterns are printed, some with textural elements added. Once again the results inspire further alteration of the initial idea. The cycle is repeated until 80 to 90³ screens have been cut and printed. This unprecedented number of screens, combined with the use of transparent oil inks, creates a vibrant calligraphy that describes space and form in a composition of lusciously rendered motifs. It is also important to note that the true measure of accomplishment is that each painting or print is able to stand alone on its own terms and speak eloquently in its own vocabulary. In this regard, I endeavored to have the two bodies of work, either side-by-side or alone, take you on a visual journey.

1 A silkscreen is a printing technique that forces ink through a mesh-based stencil onto the receptive surface.

2 This silkscreen note is just an example of the instructions that are prepared for the next print layers. I would not recommend deciphering these notes because they are not general principles. But if you would like to knock yourself out: D = dark and L = light.

3 Most silkscreens are printed with a half dozen screens; over 80 screens are used in my silkscreens in order to achieve a vast range of colors.





As discussed on page 88, a half dozen or so screens are printed, each a progression on the one before it. Then I ponder them and following that paint directly on the last silkscreen the changes to be incorporated. Also, I write notes on a printed photocopy of the sample silkscreen (see above illustration). Another half dozen screens are printed and the process is repeated until 80 to 90 screens have been printed.

Both *Urban Tilt: Paint to Silkscreen* (Plate 44, page 91) and *Dark Festivals: Paint to Silkscreen* (Plate 45, page 91) show a detail of a painting (on the left) that was translated into a silkscreen (on the right). Passages are blended in the painted detail, creating an atmospheric quality; the silkscreen detail is graphic with sharp, crisp lines and more intense color – it pops. There is no reproductive medium that has the range and luminosity of silkscreens printed with oil inks.



Plate 44



Plate 45



Plate 46

Within my Abstract (Non-objective Realism) oeuvre, *Interior Landscape* (silkscreen, 1999, edition of 160, 36 x 46 in.) (Plate 46) touches the boundary of a “realistic” recognizable image; all my other silkscreens are more abstract.



Plate 47

Landscape with Francis Bacon Room (silkscreen, 1999, edition of 160, 33.2 x 47 in.) (Plate 47)



fig. 89

Spinning Glass, Early Stage 1 (silkscreen) (*fig. 89*) is light and covers almost the entire picture. Approximately eighty additional screens – layers upon layers, additional shapes, colors, textures, and calligraphy – bring the vision into existence.



fig. 90

Spinning Glass, Early Stage 2 (silkscreen) (*fig. 90*) More screens are printed, with more colors covering existing colors, creating new colors that darken the silkscreen.



fig. 91

Spinning Glass, Middle Stage (silkscreen) (*fig. 91*) Still more screens are printed until the silkscreen is completed. See page 97.



Plate 48

Spinning Glass (finished silk-screen, 2005, edition of 120, 41 x 46 in.) (Plate 48) Whirling glass elements populate and energize the silk-screen; they are held in check with structural forms.



Plate 49

Night (silkscreen, 2001, edition of 140, 41.5 x 49.7 in.) (Plate 49) The three-dimensional forms in the bottom center and left add depth to a colored night scene of glowing objects.



Plate 50

Turandot (silkscreen, 2005, edition of 120, 42 x 45.5 in.) (Plate 50) A great Oriental fan is presented on a stage, evoking an operatic quality. *Turandot*, a Puccini opera, comes to mind. The Suzhou Museum, Jiangsu, China, acquired this silkscreen, a rare acquisition of Western art.

Painting Notes

In summary, designs are created, altered, combined and recombined until an image emerges that becomes the foundation for the painting. The final version of the design is made into a three-dimensional sketch, then into a line drawing that is transferred to the painting surface. Using the line drawing as a guide, I create an underpainting by moving around the painting surface applying paint with energetic brush strokes. Mindful of the original design and reacting to the underpainting, I paint structural elements over the underpainting that lock in the painting's energy. The painting is "built" by reacting to the previously painted layers. The work takes on a life of its own: its essence presents itself and propels the work forward to the final vision. There are many false turns to be navigated and problems to be solved. The struggle itself becomes part of the painting. The improbable becomes inevitable. That is the magic.

Writers need to read; painters need to absorb paintings. In my early thirties, while in Italy, I bought about fifty reasonably priced art books which were written in Italian. Only the images interested me. Countless hours were spent looking at these books. I loved the sumptuous colors of Velázquez, the energetic calligraphy of Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings, the perfection of Vermeer's designs, the vision and spirituality of Fra Angelico, all of Turner... In a mysterious, unconscious way, my artistic soul became infused with these images. I never consciously borrowed techniques from these painters. What drove me was reacting to my own work, and as I progressed, techniques and solutions were invented to resolve the issues encountered. Painters can use ideas from various artists or use any device that helps them achieve their vision. Vermeer used a camera obscura¹ to project an image that he traced onto his canvas. He still had to paint the painting.

The more unique the painting, the smaller its initial audience. When I paint figurative and landscapes paintings, virtually everyone understood and liked them. When I created my abstract work, I lost some of my audience, but the new work garnered more enthusiasm. When one has commercial success with a particular style, it takes courage to change and grow. It is also tempting to paint the "in" style; most of us want to have a successful painting career. To fulfill your potential as a painter you have to paint what you want to see; you are the audience. Only in this way can you progress.

I have illustrated my approaches to design. It is the foundation of my painting. There are many design templates or rules; my inclination is to be uninhibited by design formulas. If you are looking for a basic design strategy, visualize a seesaw with the fulcrum in the center of the picture: a big object is on one side and two smaller objects are on the opposite side, counterbalancing the larger weight. The same logic can apply to balancing colors, shapes, textures or any elements in the picture. Try to avoid putting the center of interest or the horizon in the center of the painting (portraits can be an exception to this rule).

Names of paintings are significant. I usually name the work after it is completed. The following ingredients went into naming *Stage Setting for the Opera Blue Note* (page 44): there is a platform or a stage, with a "figure," under a high dome, that is dramatically lit, which elicits an operatic tone. The phrase "Blue Note" has a double meaning: there are blue colored notes throughout the image, and the painting's operatic impression is that of a musical note. I named *Landscape with Francis Bacon Room* (page 93) after a section of the picture that had the feeling of a room painted in the style of Francis Bacon (see upper left corner). The name is also a tribute to Francis Bacon. *Untitled (1, 2, etc.)* is used when no name seems appropriate.

There is a book which has very useful information about specific brands of oil paints, types of brushes, mediums, varnishes, painting surfaces, etc.: *The Oil Painting Book: Materials & Techniques for Today's Artists* (Watson – Guptill) by Bill Creevy. I recommend it. It not only covers those topics but also illustrates traditional and non-traditional painting techniques. There are many videos (DVDs) that can be ordered on the Internet that show how to paint particular subjects: landscapes, portraits, still lifes, etc., using various techniques. (However, I have not found any DVDs that are specific to abstract painting.) I find these videos interesting, even entertaining, but it takes unusual stamina to watch someone paint for a few hours.

Don't be afraid of wasting paint. If you try to put just the minimum amount of paint on your palette, you will have to stop painting, put out more paint and remix it to get the color you need; this will stop your momentum. If the paint is too expensive, paint smaller paintings.

¹ Camera Obscura: a darkened room with a small aperture that projects objects from outside the room into a painting surface, in the room, allowing the objects to be traced.



There are many exciting palettes. *Daylight Palette* (above and to the left) is designed to replicate daylight. In the top row are the cool colors that are used in the shadow areas. *Ultramarine Blue*, *Alizarin Crimson* and *Phthalo Green* are transparent colors that can be used for glazing; *Burnt Umber* and *Yellow Ochre* (yellow in shade) are opaque and usually have texture.

The warm colors are used in the lighted areas. The three cadmium colors are intense, and along with *Venetian Red*, are opaque. *Sap Green* (the color of foliage), and *Phthalo Blue* (blue in daylight) are transparent glazing colors, and when mixed with *Titanium White* they become opaque and lose their intensity. (On this palette, *Titanium White* was added to the bottom of *Burnt Umber*, *Venetian Red* and *Cadmium Red Light*.) The colors of the Palette can be combined to create an infinite variety of colors. Over time, one becomes sensitized to colors: one not only sees the colors but can also “feel” them. Aren’t these colors beautiful?

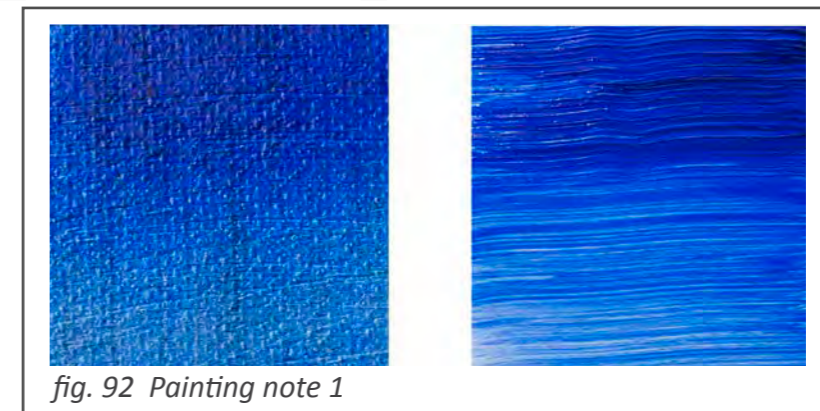


fig. 92 *Painting note 1*

Painting note 1 (fig. 92): blue glaze on linen or cotton canvas shows the effect of the weave (left). Applying the same glaze onto a smooth surface such as wood (primed and sanded), Masonite or aluminum retains the brush strokes (right).

Oil paintings executed with proper techniques can last many hundreds of years – and beyond. The fundamental principle of oil painting is “fat” (paint mixed with medium) over “lean” (paint without or with a small amount of medium or medium diluted with turpentine¹)².

How do I create the illusion of light and shadow? The areas to be lit are painted with thick, textured³ (impasto), warm colors. Shadows are painted with smooth, cool colored, transparent glazes. The result is warm sunlight and contrasting cool shadows and shade. Alternately, experiments with cool light and warm shadows work to good effect, particularly with portraits. It should be noted, that there are many painters who paint with only thick (impasto) paint, without any glazes, with great success; Van Gogh is a prime example. For me, this approach does not take full advantage of the range of oil color techniques available. It’s a matter of taste.

There are various paint mediums with characteristics that affect the painting such as viscosity⁴ and gloss levels⁵.

Usually, my paintings are framed with neutral gray, floating edge frames that are free from any style that would indicate a particular era. This type of frame contributes to the timelessness of the images in addition to separating the image from its surroundings. Also, such a frame better protects the actual painting, since it doesn’t come into contact with it. See *frame detail*, fig. 93.

My website is *larrydinkin.com*. There one can see paintings and silkscreens that are not in this book. (Be aware that computer screens distort colors; the newer displays are more accurate.) On the website, there is a video (approximately five minutes in length) which illustrates the process of transforming a painting into a silkscreen. In addition to images of paintings and silkscreens, there are articles and reviews and a list of forty-five prominent museums worldwide that have acquired my work for their permanent collections, including the White House (see Curriculum Vitae, page 105).

A painting is usually successful when you see one that you have not seen for a while, and you are surprised how satisfying it looks—it’s a nice revelation.

To acquire Dinkin silkscreens and paintings, please go to *larrydinkin.com*.



Fig. 93 frame detail

1 Use odorless turpentine in a well-ventilated studio.

2 The bottom (lean) layer of paint will dry faster than the top (fat) layer, which will prevent the paint from cracking.

3 The textured paint creates facets that reflect light, which make the colors lighter and more intense.

4 Viscosity: when various mediums are mixed with the paint it affects the amount of resistance to the movement of paint, from watery (little resistant) that levels the paint surface, eliminating brush strokes (good for glazing); to mediums with high resistance to movement where the brush and palette knife marks are retained (needed to create textures).

I recommend that you use only one type of medium for a given painting. There are general mediums that work well for glazes as well as impastos such as Galkyd medium from Gamblin Artist Oil Colors or Liquin from Winsor & Newton. Both are relatively fast drying and result in a beautiful glossy finish.

5 The amount of reflection or shininess imparted from the medium or varnish. Low gloss level is dull, while high gloss level reflects light and is shiny.

Artist's Statement

Images depict a personal universe – distilled landscapes bound by their own reality. They strive for the flickering ambiguity of paint to dreamy vision, held fast within a structure that is both descriptive and dimensional.

Your Path

You have seen the path that I used to create my art, but you will have to create your own path. Of course, you can use any of the concepts that I use and combine them with your ideas. There are many paths to creativity.

Do not wait for inspiration. Just make yourself start: put down some paint, react, gain momentum – and now you are on your way.

Appendix I – Another Perspective

It may be informative to see my work from another point of view. The following are excerpts from two reviews that describe my art by Donald Kuspit¹, one of America's most distinguished art critics. (The complete articles can be found on the website *larrydinkin.com*):

“Dinkin begins to build his abstract paradise in earnest—hits his abstract stride—in the nineties. *Landscape of Structure of a Dream* [page 34], 1992, ‘launched him,’ as he says. It was rapidly followed by some works that can only be described as abstract dream landscapes. There is an operatic spirit to them, as *Stage Setting for the Opera Blue Note*, 2002 [page 44], and *Turandot*, 2005 [page 99], make clear. (Some of the works exist both as paintings and silkscreens, others as one or the other.) Dinkin stages his forms—often richly textured patches of saturated color, and his stages become more and more crowded. As they do, the abstract forms seem to acquire an uncanny reality—they are hyper-realized, as it were, that is they have such an intense presence that they appear to be three-dimensional objects, however conspicuously two-dimensional—which is why Dinkin has called himself a ‘non-objective realist.’ *Urban Tilt*, 2004 [page 54], conveys the crowded excitement of the city—there are echoes of Léger’s high-tech cityscape, but Dinkin’s city is more of a ‘booming buzzing confusion’ than Léger’s, and also, paradoxically, more ingeniously organized—and *Landscape of Dark Festivals*, 1998 [ca. 1993] [page 36] is a distant echo of his early painterly nature works, but more wildly crowded and aggressively expressionistic than those comparatively sedate backyard or front yard scenes. A similar turbulence—or is it extravagance?—appears in many other works, but it is always contained, as *Bosch’s Room*, 2007 [page 46], shows, suggesting that Dinkin always has space under control, however, uncontrolled and formless his gestures seem. Clearly Dinkin’s paintings have a ‘Venetian Spirit,’ to refer to the title of one of them.”

“In *Bosch’s Room* [page 46] it sucks us into an immense space—more of a baroque temple than a room—and is always dangerously inviting.”

“However much the outside world has become a distant echo in Dinkin’s abstract landscapes, its headlong energy still informs them. That worldly energy subliminally fuels Dinkin’s aesthetics as much as the psychic energy evident in his paintings.”

“Kandinsky remarked that the creation of a convincing mood by exclusively abstract means was proof of artistic quality. Dinkin’s work does so, even as it conveys the atmospheric particulars of a place.”

“His [Dinkin’s] abstractions are charged with seductive energy—at their most libidinally urgent.” [I immediately showed this to my wife.]

“Dinkin’s abstract paintings are a precarious balance of abrupt explosions of uncontainable gestural energy and soothing, stabilizing structure, which seem to transcend the painterly marks that constitute it. The best abstract paintings manage this doubleness with deceptive ease: this simultaneous sense of equilibrium and disequilibrium...Dinkin’s recent abstractions achieve this complex magic.”

¹ Donald Kuspit is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History and Philosophy at the State University of New York and has written numerous articles, essays, and books, most recently *The End of Art* and *A Critical History of Twentieth Century Art*. Kuspit’s reviews are from the 2008 issue of *Art of the Times* and 2000 issue of *Fine Art* magazines

Larry Dinkin
Born Brooklyn, New York, 1943
Pratt Institute
School of Visual Arts
City College of New York, minor in art

Solo Exhibitions

2008 Naples Museum of Art, *Larry Dinkin: A Retrospective*, Florida
2007 Lyman Allyn Art Museum, Connecticut
2006 Dayton Art Institute, Ohio
2005 Flint Institute of Arts, Michigan
2002 Westwood Gallery, New York
2001 Gallery Stendhal, New York
2000 Gallery Moos, Toronto
1999 Gallery Stendhal, New York
1988 Jamaica Plain Art Center, Massachusetts

Select Group Exhibitions

2012 Flint Institute of Arts, Flint Michigan. *Abstract Expressionism: Then and Now*
(FIA acquired *Urban Tilt*, a work featured in the exhibition, for their permanent collection.)
2006 Lighthouse Center for the Arts, Tequesta, Florida
2004 511 Gallery (formerly Miller/Geisler Gallery), New York
2001 Gallery Stendhal, New York
2000 Gallery Stendhal, New York
2000 Art Company, Ohio
2000 Expo, New York
1999 Gallery Stendhal, New York
1999 Artwalk, Puck Building, New York

Bibliography

Art of the Times, Fall 2008, review of Retrospective by Donald Kuspit
Art Daily, August 2006

Art News, April 2006
Art of the Times, October 2005, Feature Article
Art of the Times, October 2004, Feature Article
Palm Beach Daily News, May 2004, Front Page
Elements Magazine, Winter Issue 2003, Feature Article
Fine Art Magazine, Spring 2002, Essay by Constance Schwartz, Director and Chief
Curator of Nassau County Museum of Art
Studio & Gallery, March/April 2001, Critique by Ed McCormack
Fine Art Magazine, Millennium Issue, essay by Donald Kuspit
Newsday, Feature article, 1994

Museum Collections

Appleton Museum of Art, Ocala, Florida
Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art, Cedar Rapids, Iowa
Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, Colorado Springs, Colorado
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, Georgia
Columbia Museum of Art, Columbia, South Carolina
Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Winter Park, Florida
Danforth Museum of Art, Framingham, Massachusetts
Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio
Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, Delaware
Figge Art Museum, Davenport, Iowa
Flint Institute of Art, Flint, Michigan
Florida Atlantic University College of Education, Boca Raton, Florida
Fort Wayne Museum of Art, Fort Wayne, Indiana
Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, Georgia
Gulf Coast Museum of Art, Largo, Florida
Lighthouse Center for the Arts, Tequesta, Florida
Lyman Allyn Art Museum, New London, Connecticut
Mazovian Museum, Plock, Poland
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi
Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, Alabama
Museum of Arts & Sciences, Daytona, Florida
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Texas
Museum of Florida Art, formerly known as DeLand Museum of Art, DeLand, Florida

Naples Museum of Art, Naples, Florida
National Museum of Fine Arts, Valletta, Malta
New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina
Norton Sculpture Garden, West Palm Beach, Florida
Ogunquit Museum of American Art, Ogunquit, Maine
Orlando Museum of Art, Orlando, Florida
Palm Beach Institute of Contemporary Art, Lake Worth, Florida
Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida
San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, California
Suzhou Museum, Suzhou, Jiangsu, China
Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, Florida
Tweed Museum of Art, Duluth, Minnesota
Tufts University Art Galleries, Medford, Massachusetts
University of New Hampshire, the Paul Creative Arts Center, Durham, New Hampshire
Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, Utah
Vero Beach Museum of Art, Vero Beach, Florida
Vieques Museum, Puerto Rican Institute of Culture, Vieques, Puerto Rico
Worcester Museum of Art, Worcester, Massachusetts
Zimmerli Art Museum at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey

Selected Collections

The White House, Washington, D.C.
Hospice (48 States)
Mercedes Benz Corporation, New York
Federation of Protestant Welfare Agency, New York
Alzheimer's Foundation, New York
Greek Embassy, New York (work on display for Olympics)
Integrated Environmental Technologies, Inc., Washington
University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida

Selected Awards

Nassau County Art League Juried Exhibit
Clio Award

Glossary

- **Aesthetics** Principles concerning the appreciation and nature of beauty, particularly in art.
- **Alla Prime** Layers of wet paint are applied on top of previously painted layers of wet paint.
- **Armature** A framework of wires that a sculpture is built upon, similar to a skeleton.
- **Calligraphy** As the term is used in painting: individual and unique patterns, strokes and textures made with a brush or palette knife, similar to one's personal handwriting style.
- **Camera Obscura** A darkened room with a small aperture that projects objects from outside the room onto a painting surface in the room, allowing the objects to be traced.
- **Canvas** A generic term for a cloth painting surface, usually cotton or linen (which is superior to cotton, but more expensive). Also, there are synthetic "canvases," but their weave is mechanical.
- **Complementary Color** A color that is opposite it on the color wheel; complementary colors next to each other intensify both. (See Color Wheel, page 5.)
- **Cool Colors** Usually have a bluish or gray cast such as late afternoon shadows.
- **Detail** A small section of an image.
- **Dynamic** Movement within the composition: energetic, vibrant, forceful, active, lively.
- **Expressionistic** The subject is distorted for emotional effect or mood.
- **Fat** Paint with a lot of medium.
- **Floating Edge Frame** A frame that allows for a gap between the art and the frame so that the frame does not cover and damage any of the art (see page 102).
- **Forced Perspective** A technique that employs optical illusion to make objects appear further than they are.
- **Genres** Categories of art such as figurative, landscape, and abstract painting.

- **Gesso** A plaster-like substance used as a surface for painting.
- **Glazes** Transparent colors that are mixed with a medium (an oil that holds the pigments together) to form a transparent film of color that is painted over a light base. The effect is similar to a white surface covered by stained glass. (For an illustrated cross-section of a glaze, see *fig. 26*, page 47.)
- **Gloss level** The amount of reflection or shininess imparted from the medium or varnish. Low gloss level is dull, while high gloss level reflects light and is shiny.
- **Grisaille** A light gray image that is covered with a layer of transparent colors (a glaze).
- **Harmonious (Harmony)** Colors, shapes, and forms that are visually pleasing together.
- **Hue** The name of the color, e.g. red, green, blue, etc. Also known as color.
- **Impastos** Thick layers of textured paint.
- **Inharmonious** Contrasts with harmonious colors, shapes and forms that are not pleasing together.
- **Intense Colors** Strong, vivid, saturated colors such as cadmium red and cadmium yellow.
- **Intensity** The brightness or dullness of a color. Also known as **Saturation**. The most intense colors come directly from the paint tube and can be dulled by adding a complementary color or gray.
- **Lean** Paint with little or no medium.
- **Linear Perspective** A form of perspective where parallel lines converge giving the illusion of depth and distance. (See page 47.)
- **Local Surface Colors** The colors of the objects themselves, e.g. green grass, red brick. Also known as **Surface Colors**.
- **Marks** Patterns, strokes and textures made with a brush or palette knife.
- **Medium(s)** Oil that holds the color pigments together and has various levels of the following characteristics: viscosity, gloss, drying times, and cohesion (between the medium and the paint).
- **Oeuvre** Body of work.

- **Passage** A section of a painting or silkscreen.
- **Primed** The painting surface, e.g. linen, cotton, wood, or Masonite, is covered with one or two layers of gesso or oil/alkyd paint that is designed to absorb and accept the oil paint.
- **Saturation** See **Intensity**.
- **Silkscreen** A printing technique that forces ink through a mesh-based stencil onto the receptive surface.
- **Surface Colors** See **Local Surface Colors**.
- **Taste** A personal pattern of an individual's aesthetic preferences, influenced by culture.
- **Tint** White is added to a color.
- **Titanium White** An opaque white with great covering power. It is also superior for lightening colors.
- **Tone** Also known as **Value** is the lightness or darkness of a color or object.
- **Underpainting Method (Dinkin's)** An outline of the design is drawn on a canvas or panel. Following Dinkin, one would, while taking the design outline into account, energetically paint over the design with transparent and/or semi-transparent colors blended with a fifty percent mixture of medium and turpentine, preferably odorless turpentine.
- **Value** See **Tone**.
- **Viscosity** Various mediums are mixed with the paint, affecting the amount of resistance to the movement of paint. The results range from watery paint (little resistance) which levels the paint surface, eliminating brush strokes (good for glazing), to paint with high resistance to movement, where the brush and palette knife marks are retained; the thickness is needed to create texture. (I recommend that you use only one type of medium for a given painting. There are mediums that work well for glazes as well as impastos, such as Galkyd medium, from Gambling Artist Oil Colors, or Liquin, from Winsor & Newton. Both are relatively fast drying and result in a beautiful glossy finish.)
- **Vision** Seeing the image in the mind's eye before it is made into an artistic piece.
- **Warm colors** Usually have a red or yellow cast, like sunlight on surface objects.

Acclaim from art museum directors for *Painting: A Creative Journey*.

“*Painting: A Creative Journey* by Larry Dinkin is a welcome addition to the shelf list of both guides to painting and the creative thinking process, by an accomplished and acclaimed contemporary painter.

Visual, practical, and intellectual – an amazing combination of three distinct, vital elements that comprise the art of painting. Larry Dinkin has created a book that can be used as an essential guide to the craft of painting or as an overview of how he approaches the art of composition and color. In this lavishly illustrated volume, Dinkin takes the reader from drawing to underpainting to completion.

In an overview of his career, Dinkin provides a clear and extensive look at his growth from a representational painter of figurative and landscape works to an abstract painter who uses the dynamics of color in the manner of Hans Hofmann to create brilliant works filled with motion and life. Whether for artists looking to improve their art or interested connoisseurs working to better understand the creative process, *Painting: A Creative Journey* makes for great reading and an enlightening visual journey.”

Alex Nyerges, Director and Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

“*Painting: A Creative Journey* reveals Larry Dinkin’s passionate and meticulous approach from figurative to landscape to abstract painting. In this book, Dinkin offers more than a simple “how-to” as he interweaves detailed instructions with autobiographical asides and insights into his creative process. By literally peeling back the layers of paint, the artist guides the reader step-by-step through multiple illustrations and diagrams. The result is a process book which is easy to follow yet, at the same time, demystifies the ‘creative journey.’”

John Henry, Executive Director, Flint Institute of Arts

“A thought-provoking and exciting look into the mind and work of an accomplished painter and printmaker. Dinkin not only presents a personal exploration into the genesis of his own colorful contemporary work, but he also presents a crystal-clear précis into the genres of painting and printmaking.

The work is both an intellectual and personal journey into the world of an American abstract master. Dinkin’s pedagogy is educational at the same time that it is an exhilarating look into his visually stimulating aesthetic. It offers a rare glimpse into the world of an American artist who shares his perspective and techniques in a number of thoughtful chapters all illustrated with the colorful and decorative paintings and works on paper that have helped to create his accomplished career.”

Gary R. Libby, art historian, author, critic and Director Emeritus of the Museum of Arts and Sciences, Daytona Beach, Florida.

“Not only are Larry Dinkin’s truly fascinating, deftly executed and intricately planned artworks presented in exquisite reproductions, but also his highly professional techniques are expertly explained. Having followed Dinkin’s amazing mid-life but fresh art career since its inception, it is most gratifying to see his progress as an artist continue to ever higher planes. All of us who are enamored of Larry Dinkin’s artwork are eager to experience his next phase as he continues to grow into an internationally recognized art world talent.”

David Miller, former director of the Boca Raton Museum of Art and previous board president of the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens as well as a curator and author.

“It was a pleasure to read Larry Dinkin’s *Painting: a Creative Journey* as I compared his analysis of his work with our recently acquired Dinkin painting, *Turandot*, 2005. In accessible prose accompanied by over 150 images, Dinkin provides us the tools to understand his creative intent and process. Dinkin analyzes his visually exciting paintings from the representational to the abstract and, along the way, we experience his creative journey.”

Steven High, Director, The John & Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida

