

A LOOK AT GRADUATE PAINTING

Lee Chesney

Graduate painting is used here as a characteristic graduate program in art since it is usually larger and sometimes — though not necessarily — better developed than programs in other studios. The reader is invited to substitute "printmaker," "sculptor," "ceramist," etc., with no resulting distortion of truth.

The rationale for the existence — within the university framework of advance study — of a studio art leading to a graduate, terminal degree, or Master of Fine Arts, is not elusive once one accepts the logic of housing there any of the visual, performing or fine arts (commonly called, the creative arts). Proponents of liberal arts or general education objectives usually support the undergraduate art studios on the grounds of their supposedly humanizing effect, and the possibility of their aiding in the upgrading of the general cultural awareness on campus. Genuine support for graduate level programs in art is less-than-enthusiastic, with the result that such programs are usually understaffed, underfunded, and poorly-housed. Quite possibly, a portion of the responsibility for such a state of affairs rests with those who direct and teach such programs and who believe in their intrinsic value — but who have not spoken out. What specific educational needs a graduate program in studio art might satisfy, and what educational or career expectations might be held by incoming candidates are — surprisingly — not unanimously agreed upon by art faculty who are not associated with the graduate program itself; so, little wonder that a haziness prevails among the non-art faculty.

Student Expectations

Those on the painting faculty working directly with graduate students of various levels of experience are familiar with several types of student expectations. These vary, but may be separated into five distinct categories: (1) *Those seeking a haven from military service.* Since the Selective Service threat of the Viet Nam War years has passed into history, graduate programs everywhere have shed some faint-hearted candidates — and painting was no exception. (2) *Those who enter graduate programs without*

specific planning. There are still a few students who move quickly from undergraduate to graduate programs as a matter of course (pun intended) — often without any clear objectives. (3) *Those lacking real professional ambitions.* There are always a few peripheral students with no real professional ambitions, who, in another time, might have been considered "seekers of cultural enlightenment," and who seem to be serious but are neither particularly gifted nor dedicated students. (The sum of the aforementioned, however, makes but a small percentage of the normal contingent of graduate painters.) (4) *Those preparing for teaching positions.* Some graduates enter the program and retain, throughout its duration, the expectation of preparing themselves for teaching either on the college or university level. (5) *Those with less clearly defined vocational objectives.* The largest group remains, however, those whose goal is "professional development." Of this group, some will move toward college-level teaching as a preferred post-graduate employment possibility, while others — especially in urban programs — will never give teaching serious thought, intent on settling for doing menial, undemanding jobs until their own painting brings them critical attention and compensation.

It may be concluded that many graduate painting students seem to realize, perhaps instinctively, that graduate art programs within the university framework constitute the only remaining advanced training available to a young artist, now that professional academies have either adopted university-type programs or abandoned graduate studies altogether. Moreover, private tutoring is difficult — if not impossible — to arrange, especially on an advanced level; and is chancey, at best. For the serious student intent on advanced work, the MFA program in the university art department (or, academy) is the only game in town. These are reasons why it is so very important for those faculty devoted to graduate art studies to make a concerted effort to enlighten their colleagues and administration concerning the true nature of the program and its circumstances, and enlist support in efforts at bettering studio conditions for the students, balancing teacher loads for the faculty, and creating exchange and visiting faculty provisions.

The Artist: A Definition

It is not the intent here, in a discussion of a graduate painting program, to discuss definitions of art, *per se*, but suffice it to say that art and painting are known to be many things and have many faces. Nevertheless, one erroneous notion might well be dispelled before graduate teaching problems are discussed. Hard work, long hours, and repeated effort are definite requirements for artistic development; practice as simple repetition is of limited use. In other words, painting is more than practiced manipulation. More is required of the artist than the practiced execution of a smooth hook shot, a lightning-fast curve ball, or a blistering backhand. The artist is not the goose who lays a golden egg, and then lays another just like it . . . and another . . . and so on. The growth of the young artist includes conceptual development and the examination of ideas, critical cultivation of feeling, conditioned intuition, technical knowledge and skill, and the ability to coherently present all of these areas in an attempt to achieve a deeper meaning of a lasting character. WHAT, WHEN, HOW, and especially WHY are what the program is all about — and these become defined anew in every face-to-face meeting between graduate student and painting teacher. The process of teaching young artists about art is as organic and fluid as the process of art-making itself.

Where To Begin

In teaching graduate painting there are three useful and basic propositions, or, perhaps, assumptions is a more accurate term, which are rooted in practical reality more than logic. Most graduate faculty in painting implicitly acknowledge such assumptions; their concern resting mainly on the degree to which each may be accurately applied to any individual student. These assumptions are:

- Each graduate painting student who survives the graduate faculty screening process is presumed to possess a strong creative potential ready for development.
- Each graduate painting student is serious about his work, his development, and expects to devote his lifetime to continuing self-development.
- Each graduate painting student is already strongly motivated and is already aware, to some degree, of the nature of his own creative impulses.

Experience tells us these assumptions, admittedly optimistic, have validity in most instances; but, more importantly, the value of these assumptions lies in their

usefulness to the instructor rather than in their degree of accuracy as applied to each student. They are psychologically valuable to the instructor; and, if they are not absolutely true in any given situation, tend to become true as the student learns of the instructor's expectations and faith. And, finally, such assumptions *need* to be true, in order that an open, creative approach to teaching the graduate student is both a natural and logical process.

In any discussion of a natural, logical approach to graduate teaching, it is well to keep in mind that the goal is to encourage the individual student to develop along the lines of his natural strengths and urges. There is no ideal image of the consummate artist; only an idealized silhouette against which each student is asked to measure himself. The teaching of graduate painting, then, is a process through which some of the strengths and secrets of the student-artist are uncovered and used to provide insight into the complex nature of the creative process; this allows the student-artist to plug into that process in a fruitful and rewarding fashion. Such graduate guidance should not be uncommon. After all, the chief difference between the artist-student and the artist-teacher is one of degree, not kind: inexperience compared to experience, developed sensibilities, and intellectual and emotional disciplines.

Unlike undergraduate painting instruction which characteristically emphasizes information transmission and skill acquisition, a strong graduate program will set the focus on more abstract levels of consideration — even while requiring increased attention to specifics, greater depth conceptually, intellectually and emotionally, as well as greater knowledge and manual facility. Graduate students must learn to recognize and deal with the nature of the creative process, of lasting commitment, of conviction and true discipline, of the responsibility of the artist to society, and of the responsibility of the artist to himself.

The young artist engaged in a graduate program is expected — and would insist anyway — to perform with increasing improvement on technical, professional and esthetic levels. In addition, however, the key concern to the faculty is the matter of student growth. Growth is understood to contain inherently expanded implications in terms of self-awareness. Growth implies an essential self-awareness which includes a realistic appraisal of true strengths, actual weaknesses (not supposed), natural inclinations, response levels, etc. It includes an awareness of the creative process, its nature and what it entails. All this is in and about art, of techniques and material

manipulations. This requires some self-understanding as a starting point and the willingness to increase this understanding even when it must embrace aspects not flattering to the ego. When properly done there is nothing self-indulgent or narcissistic about the hard examination necessary to begin a self-development program which is truly the nature of a graduate program in creative fields. A basic honesty is necessary to see what one is before dealing with the matter of where one could or should go in his creative work. Since every artist must ultimately teach and lead himself, an insistence on this process within the graduate experience is simply a basic training in preparation for that inevitability.

Learning Environment

The conditions and circumstances found conducive to rapid, healthy development vary in particulars from institution to institution but, in general, feature certain considerations:

- Several graduate faculty, often of divergent attitudes, are usually simultaneously assigned to the teaching of graduate painting. In addition, voluntary consultation between students and other unassigned faculty is encouraged. Less and less is the whole program placed in the hands, however capable, of one faculty member. (A one-faculty program is a program in name only.)
- Students are provided studio spaces on campus. These are too often minimal — but, in time of declining budgets must suffice. Graduate students are expected to spend every available hour working in this studio.
- Visiting artists are invited for varying periods of residence to increase the variety of professional contact and, most importantly, to reinforce a broader frame of reference, a context larger than the institution or the locale.
- Finally, and quite significantly, the graduate students themselves are selected — often recruited — with an eye to a broad distribution of attitude and background as well as artistic promise.

In other words, determined efforts are made to provide not so much "instruction" as occurs in typical undergraduate classes but a learning/living situation more properly called an environment which offers something of a parallel to the worldly working situation of the artist. As much as possible, this environment should offer diversity, freedom and an optimum opportunity for expanded understanding and growth. Within this situation each graduate student should be able to come to grips with essential problems in modern painting and determine his

own interest and relationship to them. For consultation, advice, critical review or discussion there are those several faculty (assigned on load) readily available for periodic contact.

The importance of establishing such an environmental situation for the graduate student in painting is that each student must face, individually, his own position in relation to actual problems in painting, must make his own assessments, arrive at his own decisions and take responsibility for those decisions. The student must determine his own direction. Since there is no class, there can be no assigned class project, a routine which keeps the student-artist functioning within specified limits. Above all, the student must face the inevitability and necessity of recapitulation and reassessment as a natural, essential part of the rhythm of creative advance. The student must come to grips with the reality of the need to develop a personal rhythm of intuitive surge and reflective analysis. From such experience emerge self-reliant young artists with some idea of who they are, what they believe in and some understanding of the nature and diversity of options available to them.

The period of graduate study is a critical period during which significant and oftentimes astonishing transformation occurs. It is a maxim that growth requires change. Of course, an artist must undergo some change in order to grow, and for student-artists at the graduate stage of development the outward manifestations of change may appear striking. Apart from the observable aspects indicating change, the less noticeable adjustments are frequently the more significant since they are usually concerned with matters on which future development will be based. In other words, growth requires extended experience (to "extend experience" one must venture forth and be open to possibilities). This introduces an element of chance in which the outcome is anything but predictable. Some experiences, then, will derive from unsuccessful attempts as well as successful ones. The graduate must learn to deal with failed efforts and recognize their value (which is often greater) as well as weigh the value of successful attempts, since the real importance lies in the experience; and the experience is directly related to the ambitiousness and appropriateness of the attempt, rather than to its success or failure.

As undergraduates, students have been accustomed to functioning within prescribed limits rather than in a situation with only self-imposed limits. When students follow directions in painting suggested by their instructors, or concentrate on problems presented to them, two results



"Bird Fishing" An oil painting by Mary Bonic. Photo by Terri D. Morris.

are apt to occur. First, the student is inclined to invest less of himself; that is, he identifies less with his own painting. Second, the student finds his efforts are customarily compared not with his own past efforts but with others in the class engaged in the same painting assignment. Thus, the student learns to operate within a situation relating himself and his efforts to others and finding his relationship to his own efforts an unintensified experience. At this point he may well know — unless he simply senses it — that his painting experiences are not as intense and not as personal as they could be.

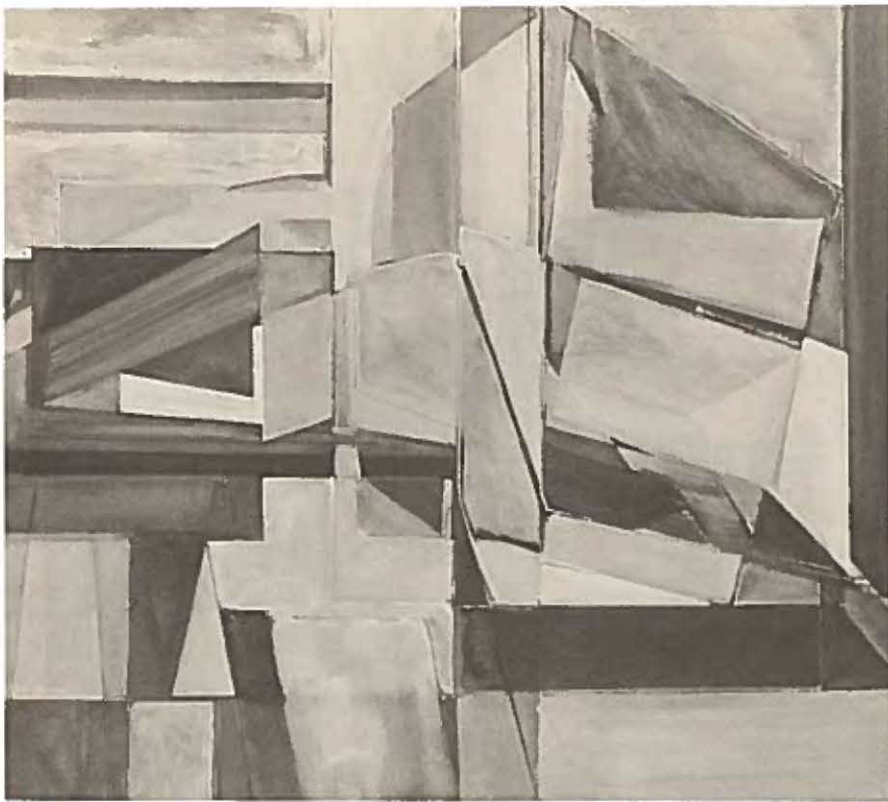
While the conditions of undergraduate painting instruction are not everywhere as described, when they are not it is usually because the individual instructor avoids the "class assignment" or "project" approach, and insists on considerable attention to individual instruction on a one-to-one basis. Class sizes, which seem to creep larger and larger each year, make attempts to maintain much one-to-one contact increasingly difficult and less likely.

One popular misconception among laymen seems to be that the teaching of painting on any or all levels consists chiefly, if not exclusively, of the instructor passing among the forest of easels dropping technical gems to naturally gifted students who, but for the lack of technical expertise, would at this very moment be painting like mature masters. Would that this were true! If so, then painting instructors could function as laboratory watchdogs — making certain that the equipment is well treated and that students remember to put fat paint mixtures over lean and never the opposite. Something like remembering to add the acid to the water. Alas, such is not the case. The truth of the matter is that an entirely different situation pertains.

Even on the undergraduate level the situation differs. The forest of easels is present; but the instructor, aside from group lectures or group critiques, tries to deal with each student individually, making "house calls" and spending time in private discussion with each student.

On the graduate level, each painting student occupies private studio space and receives individual contact from two or more instructors of the student's own choosing. This one-to-one relationship occurs, at a minimum, either weekly or every other week and lasts from one to three hours per session. During these discussions, the intentions and values of the student are examined, along with the problems encountered in his current canvases, the success and appropriateness of the solutions and the suggestions derived from those experiences as to what new considerations or directions might prove more pertinent. Underlying concepts are discussed, with attention to historical antecedents and current movements, if indicated by either the work or by the student's remarks. All this takes place for each student in his own studio each visit, or as often as student development makes such depth of approach useful. It seems obvious that a graduate painting student, under these circumstances, can move forward as rapidly as his own efforts and assimilation rate permit.

The graduate painting faculty places high regard on the importance of leading the student in his development of values, convictions and a deepening sense of commitment. Each faculty member makes his own individualized efforts to help the student bring the depth of his feeling into a workable painting language. Here are many choices and the student must be encouraged to examine the possibilities carefully. Essentially, each student must be assisted in



"Untitled" An oil painting by Noreen Naughton. Photo by Terri D. Morris.

coming to realize his individual, peculiar combination of intellectual, emotional and spiritual strengths and to develop a workable, useful balance. By the very nature of the process, such a balance of factors can only be personal and exclusive to the particular student.

Important to the concept of graduate development is the concern and insistence that each student should be pushed to the maximum; that is, each student should be extended beyond the point where he can comfortably and easily go. To accomplish this, graduate faculty must possess some insight and ability to assess accurately the nature of the student's potential as well as deftness in the handling of the uncertainty sure to materialize when he is pushed into unfamiliar territory. It is at this point that the student-artist's ego is most apt to feel challenged. The situation calls for the utmost in skillfully exercised tact, diplomacy and firmness so that the student rendered unsure will not retreat to the comfortable, wellworn groove. To function in this manner, graduate faculty do require some special qualities; it is necessary to assess each student's creative potential, capacity for growth, rate of assimilation (of experiences and ideas as well as information), and to do so with sensitivity and sympathetic insight but with clarity unclouded by personal feelings. Naturally, faculty members will not always agree in their estimations of qualities and potentials; it is not essential that they do for mutual respect permits divergent convictions about students to guide differing faculty side by side. It is the student who stands to gain from such unhomogenized treatment; he is compelled to handle differing views of his value scale, convictions, potential and progress, and, of necessity, becomes stronger because of the process.

Uniqueness

Rather curiously, in view of both faculty and student concern and attention to the individualization of the student's studio efforts, there is an area of frequent misunderstanding. Early in their visual education, students come to know, admire and eventually to seek — sometimes frantically — something referred to as a "personal" quality. This is a way of indicating the existence of an identifiable individual uniqueness. Of course every artist in or out of the university, young or old, student or faculty values uniqueness. Misunderstanding may emerge during a student's efforts to demonstrate uniqueness. Since there is no absolute definition of uniqueness applicable across-the-board, there is no certain test to be applied to a student or his work to determine the amount of uniqueness contained as one might test for blood sugar or albumen. Faculty are on the alert for indications of truly personal characteristics and qualities seemingly indigenous to that student's nature. Discussions and critiques invariably revolve around precisely these aspects of the student's work. Every effort is made by faculty to show where natural tendencies manifest themselves and where the brittle shell of acquired vision, mannerism and cliché-thinking remain.

The student's view of uniqueness tends to be more limited and precious. Understood as a "personal" quality it is revered; but, at the same time, combined with other vague and often misleading notions of what the quality is or how it is achieved. Yet, it is zealously protected. There is, for example, confusion about learned skills and information acquired in early training which later, when the sources have long been forgotten, are treated as evidence of innate, hence, "personal," tendencies. This

protection of "personal" qualities is understandable and the underlying impulse is simply the creative person's instinct for survival. So the impulse should not be attacked; rather the cause of the confusion ferreted out and eliminated.

A typical example is the student who, at some earlier stage of education, was lauded for his "personal" color scheme, his "powerful" drawing, his "sensitive" delineations, and so on. With some students, such comments freeze them in their tracks and, as in a movie still-shot, they do not move again for fear of losing that cherished "personal" attribute; they rehearse and repeat that which elicited such observations and brought the accompanying approval. Such students require more time in which to redevelop an understanding of the true nature of uniqueness as indigenous to each person and releasable only through a deeper understanding of one's true nature and the effortful removal of manneristic veneers which conceal it.

It is essential to clear away this obstacle early for it stands directly in the path of the student's openness of mind, which is a primary requisite for further development. For some faculty this may be a major undertaking, for one has to preserve, in the student, the sense of self-esteem and confidence in his creative potential while at the same time remove the cataract.

Focus

Another very basic area of confusion — and frequent source of misunderstanding — is that of focus. In their contact with faculty, student-artists show great concern for what they consider "support" (while faculty are watchful for signs of student "commitment"). Many students outwardly appear self-reliant, serious and strongly involved in their work. Beneath the exterior, one finds unsureness — about the students' ability, especially in comparison to others; about this thing called "dedication" and all its implications; about whether they can or want to make the necessary effort and sacrifice beyond a reasonable point. In short, they are assailed by doubts which are only intermittently subdued. What they really seek — even more than advice, constructive criticism, illumination from an instructor's momentary brilliance of perception or insight — is, simply, "support." Students, even graduate students, need endless reassurance, and emotional and psychological support in developing the necessary understanding and strength to make possible a real and lasting commitment. Inner confidence comes gradually and is based on experience and proven

achievement. Time and effort have no substitute as prerequisites, and, as such, a certain amount of uncertainty will probably continue as a basic condition for young artists.

The view from the faculty bench is somewhat different. Painting faculty are looking for early signs of a real and lasting commitment on the part of students and a courageous willingness to venture forth from the comfortable confines of concept and attitude. The artist-teacher looks for indications of genuine receptivity to suggestion and constructive critical evaluations, and is disappointed by the student's disposition toward "picture making" or product emphasis (more golden eggs) at the expense of extended experience. Combined with the self-indulgence of "picture making" is an exaggerated regard for "finished" work. Paintings are not actually the purpose of but the by-products of creative efforts. Once completed, they are more useful to others than to the artist responsible for their creation, since they serve him no important purpose once he is through working on them. Paintings offer arenas of opportunity for work, study, challenge, testing and reflection. Once completed, the paintings are but mute testimony to past efforts as the artist takes on new experiences in further work.

Faculty, too, are disappointed by those few students, usually young (at least in attitude) who give behavioral evidence of attempting to manipulate faculty, maneuvering situations and rules to their advantage and, generally, to put course grades and credits ahead of actual growth. The dismay arises not from the human aspect of such behavior but from the realization that energy, effort and imagination devoted to such social instruments could have been invested in their own creative work and development. Disappointment is amplified because such student activity so clearly reveals a lack of basic understanding as to the true nature of their work as artists. As long as students continue to play the school game of outwitting regulations in a campaign to obtain a degree quickly and easily they miss the meaning of the graduate painting program and fail to make full use of the biggest creative source, the faculty.

Performance Evaluation and Criteria

Throughout the duration of the program, from the first registration to the final thesis, one problem plagues all faculty and programs: what are the criteria of performance and how is the progress of a graduate student in painting to be determined? Any formula for measuring performance levels in a creative field must reconcile, in some

fashion, the student's openness of mind, receptivity and willingness to explore unfamiliar terrain with an evaluation of the actual works of art produced. The latter should be viewed both as works in their own right, subject to whatever agreed upon standards of performance the faculty may muster, and as indicators (apart from their value as art works) of student development, progress and growth. It may be easily understood that these are two very different ways of looking at the same painting. It is quite possible for an art work to register promisingly in regard to development because of attitudes apparent in the work, the absence of clichés, the appearance of new areas of investigation, et cetera. At the same time, the particular piece may not be totally successful and able to hold its own outside the student's studio. Conversely, a student stubbornly resistant to experiment or trial may give every indication of an unreceptive mind and yet produce very presentable, finished-looking canvases. In fact, close-minded students very often produce finished-looking work, in part, no doubt, because they operate well within accustomed boundaries where there is little unpredictability of outcome, little chance of gross failure. Where there is no gamble there is also no opportunity for the big discovery.

Under the above circumstances, insistence on specific criteria of painting performance becomes difficult. In the performing arts, the musicians, dancers and actors interpret the creation of someone else's imaginations; in the field of painting, where it is not logical to do so, there are also product-oriented evaluators who lean more toward interpretive views of painting and seem to emphasize stylistic canons.

Therefore, in painting, the evaluation of a graduate student's development and nature of his achievement on canvas is complex. Out of respect for the individuality of approach and growth rate of each student, painting performance evaluations take on a subjective character. This is not an admission of weakness; it would truly be if painting were a field permitting the application of uniform criteria. As it stands, the issue is not objectivity but fairness and equality of treatment for each student. Faculty must regard the efforts, methods, trials and accumulated canvases with equal and sympathetic detachment, endeavoring to ascertain (whether solitarily or in concert) a fair measurement of each student's growth, degree and level of achievement.

Termination

In due time, every student arrives at a termination point in

his program. Except for occasional voluntary withdrawals and a few discontinuations through faculty recommendations most graduate painting students will advance to the point of graduation. Exact determination as to when graduation should take place for any given student may vary from program to program. Since all programs have a minimum time in residence (2 to 3 years) and a minimum number of units (48 to 66) these minima may be tacitly considered both by students and faculty as indications of the conclusion of the course of study. One attitude of some currency is this conveyor-belt approach which puts an incoming student on the belt and as soon as he has completed the minimum requirements — more or less without regard for growth or performance factors unless there is blatant student inadequacy — he moves through and out in the shortest possible time. This provides room for incoming students at a predictable rate. In general, a faculty subscribing to the conveyor-belt approach philosophy tend to use the performance evaluation approach largely unmodified by growth and developmental considerations. Their argument is one of two: if the student is a good one and performing well let us graduate the person to make room for others; if the student is not one of the better ones probably no more development could be expected even with additional residency anyway, so let us graduate the person to make room for others. In either event, the belt moves on, the students move out and more arrive to take their places — confident that they, too, will depart on schedule.

The conveyor-belt attitude is related to two conditions: (1) It is compatible with expansionist attitudes (popular in the post-war 50s) as it permits enlargement as well as fluidity of programs without requiring hard decisions or comparative judgments by faculty, and (2) it is compatible with faculty who prefer to avoid value judgments concerning student growth and development. It becomes a matter of letting the system solve the problem of determining whether a student is ready and prepared to leave. Under this policy, faculty remain somewhat anonymous, a little helpless to impede the "belt," and, since a student is merely detained or dropped from the program, faculty also avoid student criticism.

With shrinking budgets and all programs gradually being brought under review (with reductions a probable result), the present would seem an appropriate time to reassess the desirability, efficacy, in fact the necessity of faculty evaluations of the progress of individual students and the decision, one by one, as to *when* and *how* the graduate experience should terminate either by awarding

of a degree or other alternative.

Some balance of attitude, growth and performance surely ought to make a workable (meaning qualitative and flexible) criterion for such decisions. Graduate painting, apart from representing student progress, should also be coherent and eloquent in its own right — making a completed statement, expression or fully articulated idea. When this point is reached, the award of the degree is a logical, inevitable next step.

Long-range Objectives

Much more significant than the painting achievements during the period of the graduate program residency is the foundation laid for the long career to follow. Obligatory in any creative field is the understanding of the sources of creativity and the kinds of stimuli which serve to initiate the process. Every artist should have some understanding of the nature of his own creative process, how to induce it and extend its energy. Equally intangible, but equally important, is the value system gradually acquired (wittingly or unwittingly) by each artist. A graduate program should provide ample opportunity for students to examine and consciously reconsider matters of possible or probable importance to them or their work. In fact, the development of a sound value scale is one of the important achievements of graduate experience; and because it is a slow, time consuming process requiring thought and repeated trials it cannot be successfully rushed. It is a true measure of growth. Arriving at a sound and useful value scale requires sufficient assimilation time, and the recognition of this fact is a major reason behind the increase across the nation of three-year programs.

By the time a student is ready to depart the graduate painting program, he should have acquired a deepening sense of commitment to his pursuit, a real spirit of dedication, a comprehension of the integrity of the artist and what is entailed in maintaining integrity in the painting. There must be, on the part of the student, a readiness to assume full responsibility for his continued self-development because a process already begun is unending. Each artist, if he were to extend his growth, must become his own teacher. Of all the indicators painting faculty have at their disposal to ascertain the appropriate moment for graduating the student and ending his formal education, it is when the student appears prepared artistically and psychologically to take on wholly the responsibility of self teaching.

In many fields of higher education, instructors attempt to go through and beyond the subject matter in efforts to

shape students as human beings even as students seek more than subject expertise. Little imagination is required to see that in the field of painting students quite naturally resolve identity issues and learn to focus on positive forces. Who is to say, then, that even the least promising student — so far as painting itself is concerned — is, in fact, a complete failure from a different point of view?

Nevertheless, the thrust of a graduate painting program is painting. To an artist the very term "painting" is charged with implications of dimensional meaning from craft, technique and materials through formal and visual goals to associative and referential aspects and even to a purer plasticity and philosophy. Painting becomes whatever the painter is capable of making of it and is rewarding and memorable as experience depending on the eloquence and vision of the artist.

Whatever else it is, painting is a process of discovery. To discover, one must have the opportunity to come upon the unexpected. The measure of the artist's creativity lies in how he sets the stage and places the forces in motion which will enable him to avoid the familiar, the predetermined, the comfortable. The process by which he accomplishes this (from the first move throughout the search) is crucial, inevitably personal and unavoidably creative. The discipline to recognize the essentials of the process and to reject the easy and superficial versions, to insist on developing one's own (and therefore natural) process, *however slowly or painfully*, is a gradual acquisition testing the wisdom and the character of the artist.

Perhaps the most difficult thing to do — even to recognize — is to realize that the overwhelming task is not to *make* the painting, but to *make oneself function in a creative way* so that a painting can emerge. To generate an understanding and embrace of this principle in a graduate painting student is the fulfillment of the most basic goal.

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