

A SERIES OF PAINTINGS, LITHOGRAPHS AND MOSAICS

BY

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A TERMINAL PROJECT

Presented to the School of Architecture and  
Allied Arts and the Graduate School of the  
University of Oregon in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Fine Arts

June 1954

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## THE PAINTINGS

### Watercolors

For me transparent watercolor seems a natural medium. There are many aspects of it that appeal to me: its cleanliness, directness and clarity. It has potentialities of drawing which I admire and lends itself to a rapid inquiry not so evident in other media. The character of the brushwork can be seen, in fact is difficult to hide, and it can be given full use in the painting. With its combined characteristics of drawing and painting, and with the added charm of its directness, watercolor has been for me a most beneficial medium, and it is most certainly in it that I have come nearest to achieving what is for me some manifestation of that spirit I would like to achieve - a spirit of directness inspired by an immediate response to some aspect of whatever I have observed. As I have used it, watercolor has had the character of a medium for studies, a role for which it is well adapted. It can have the authority of a record of a thing observed and as such more often than not, reflects an atmosphere of confronting the situation itself.

However, despite its comparatively simple handling, watercolor has not always proved to be the easiest medium

for me. Though it has great latitude, its limitation became evident before I had made too many excursions into using it. Flashy and somewhat accidental effects could be achieved, and certainly I am not averse to a certain number of accidents happening in my painting, as long as they do not hinder my attempt to find in paint some equivalent for what I might have observed in my subject. In fact I often stumble onto material that I am able to use as a result of the accidental, but accidental effects are not the central reason for my painting.

In watercolor, as with no other medium that I know, the first sally is the most important. Unless one is to resort to all sorts of dodges, his first material put down must have some fair approximation of his intended final effect. This then offers certain limitations which I feel must be observed. The lightest object must not be covered or else only scrubbing or use of body color must be resorted to. The value of the area must be closely approximated, else the final washes will produce a dulling of the original as it is built. Thus I feel that I must make a rapid and quite definite decision about one aspect of the subject. Whereas I might decide on its color and leave out its relative intensity or value, I could possibly arrive at a kind of happy result, but the decision would have to be faultless in every respect as one local color out of key or place or value would belie the total and I would have to paint an-

other kind of picture, decidedly divorced from the material from which I purported to be painting. I prefer to work in such a way that leaves me the most room to make adjustments in value, color and intensity as well as shape, size and direction. To do this I usually begin a painting by observing the relative value of the material to be included. With this firmly established I proceed to paint, placing the color in the area where it seems to belong, attempting to approximate some aspect of what I see with the palette I have, whether it be highly limited or one rich in all the colors I can gather. Sometimes the color areas overlap to produce grays; sometimes they stay clear and bright. By keeping the value of an area well in mind I can have freedom to vary the color, and intensity and perhaps arrive at an approximation in paint of what I have seen, this with a directness and, when I am successful, with such a spirit in the brush work that the painting process itself will have a kind of character of its own. Though this may seem a method, I do not believe it has produced a manner.

The variety in the watercolors to follow may help to demonstrate in a somewhat chronological way the variety that resulted in my attempts to produce in paint some fair approximation of those things which have interested me.

As I look back at the earlier paintings they certainly seem "tighter" than the later ones. The loosening up has

surely come with a greater confidence and perhaps with a keener sense of observation, and certainly with a greater head-hand cooperation that results from having made a great number of paintings. It is my hope that with each painting I will have been able to approach it in such a way, as a study, that the succeeding ones will benefit from the ones I have painted before.









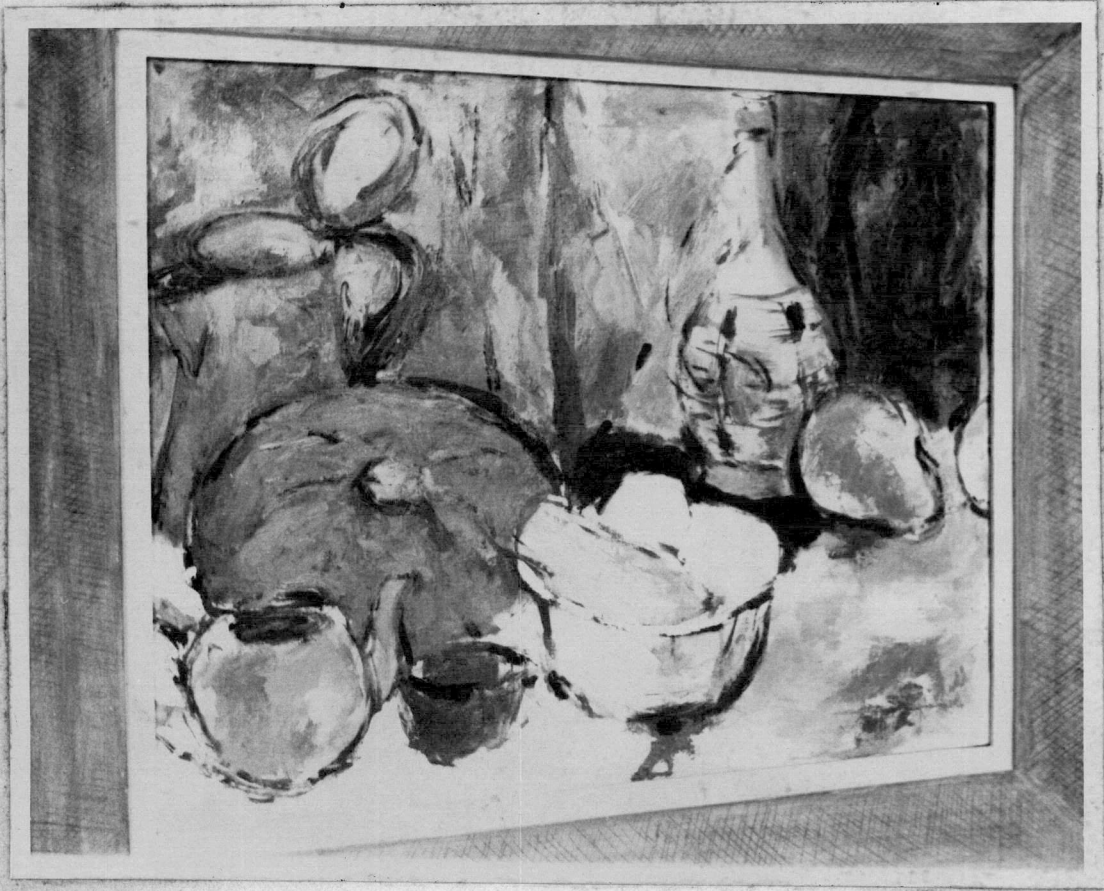


## Oils

The fluid quality of watercolor certainly points a way of working in oil, a medium which I have fought and found unpleasant. The resinous painting media, dirty rags, overloaded supply list, the difficulty of application and removal, and the general building up which denies a rapid realization of an immediate idea have made this medium one with which I was totally unprepared to cope. In it the word "problem" certainly has a use. The stretch of the canvas, its ground, the paint itself, are to be reckoned with, and their peculiarities avoided only at the risk of disaster.

To deal with its problems and at the same time leave myself the possibilities of producing an immediate kind of painting, lacking in labored fumbling which results in a filled-up look, I have tried to approach painting in oils much as I approach watercolors. In a watercolor, for expediency and convenience, I paint around the paper, using the color loaded on the brush where it appears to occur in the subject. In watercolors this distribution has a dual effect: its placement aids in unifying the painting and can be used in drawing by being placed in a definite relationship to some particular spot, on the object, be-

tween it and its background (outline) or on its background. This distribution allows one color to dry before another is washed over it, preserving the clarity of the color, and producing clear color in the overlapping areas. This color application in washes has certainly aided in my appreciation of oils as a medium. However, I realize that when I am working with an oil medium I am not working with watercolors, that there are possibilities in it that are denied the other. The movement from thin to thick in most paintings I admire has a kind of immediacy that provides an approximation to that freshness I like in many drawings. This variety once achieved is easily lost, especially in a small canvas, and the finishing up, especially of detail, often results in a loss of a feeling of unity or tone. Isolation and emphasis cannot but deny any hope for the kind of unity that is predicated upon the assumption that the total painting is important. This pitfall requires a constant removal, scraping and opening up of areas overpainted or painted in such an unpleasant way, whether in manner of application, color, value or intensity in order to maintain the freshness and openness that I prefer in my painting. Paraphrasing Whistler I would say that while there is canvas there is hope.





## THE DRAWINGS

The longer I work in either painting medium the more conscious I become of the powerful influence drawing has upon them. In watercolors it is most evident, as I have said, since the actual drawing is done with the color in the painting process, but in using oil the problem of preserving the original material put down is a real one and one must be at pains to preserve it. By working directly in such a way that each color serves a dual function, both as color and drawing, more of the spontaneity and immediacy of the watercolor and drawing can be preserved in the painting. Corrections can be made more easily as they will not destroy a finish upon which an aberration will be noticed. With an open manner of application so handled that though it may seem casual is actually quite deliberate, the response to an immediate decision, the drawing in a painting can be given emphasis I now feel it deserves.

At the beginning of the project I was not as concerned with drawing. However, as a result of my two years work, especially that of the past few months, I have come to think that I should have called the project a Series of Drawings, Paintings, Lithographs and Mosaics, for it is the factor of drawing that holds the key to my understanding the fundamen-

tal similarities and differences among them.

In drawing, both line and wash and combination, I find that the actual limitations of the medium give me great freedom. Once color is added new problems arise which restrict rather than free. In watercolors I feel freest with one or two colors; in lithography, while I like some colored prints, I prefer the monochromes because my resources are tried in the limitation to push the monochromatic range as far as I can in approximating color. This is one reason for the limited number of colored prints in my project. In the oils there are few which are not dominated in some way by one color. This limitation brings freedom rather than restriction, calling upon my resourcefulness to do what I can with what I have, and forces me to explore the possibilities of the material at hand rather than making use of the most obvious aspect of the full range of an unlimited number of colors.

Thus I feel that drawing, with its simplicity and limitations, has offered the challenge in the meeting of which I have been able to gain insight into the possibilities of other media.







## THE LITHOGRAPHS

Lithography, like watercolors, seems to be a natural medium for me. I like it for several reasons that I am aware of, but I am sure that it is the happy balance between the art and craft that keeps the medium a constant challenge. I could, as many have done, concern myself with only the craft, and could possibly find enough challenge to keep me busy through a happy lifetime. Or I could possibly be the artist and blindly ignore the craft. It seems to me that this would be not just unfortunate but literally disastrous as I would surely end with a lost drawing and hurt feelings.

The limitations of the craft are stimulating rather than limiting, once they are understood and worked with rather than against.

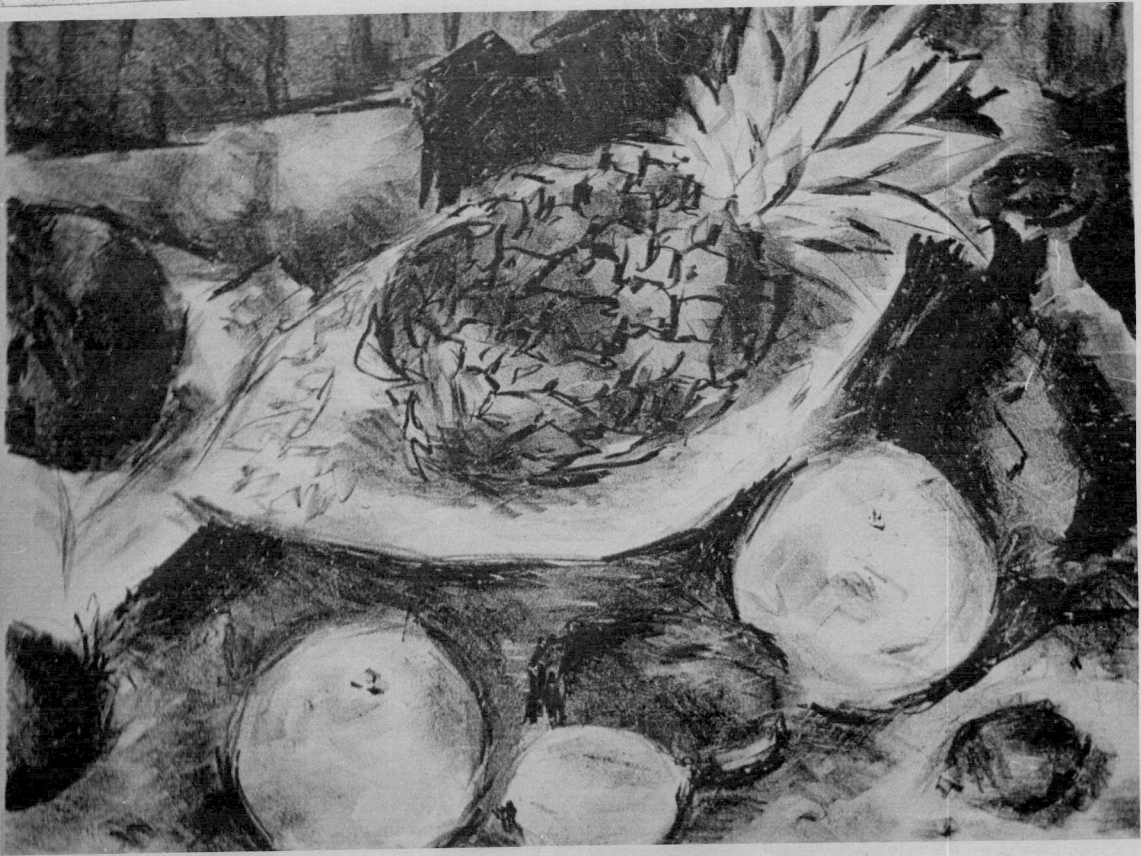
Grinding stones is hard work, but it must be done correctly or else a bad print or no print at all will come of the drawing. As in watercolor, in a sense what is done first will leave a tell-tale mark on the final product. In fact, drawing on a stone has many characteristics akin to watercoloring: it is a built-up process, whites must be preserved, hesitancy is hard to hide, and mistakes are hard to correct. Once they are down, though not completely irrevocable, the first tones will affect the final drawing.

Though, in a watercolor the darkest dark may be put in with confidence, to do this on a stone provides a kind of obstacle to all the tones to be put down later, as any put over it will do nothing more than smear it or create a kind of shadow or halo around it. I have found it expedient to work from light tones and build up to dark ones as with water color, though my inclination is to be in haste to get the darks and in doing so get a mottled effect where the rapid drawing picks up bits of crayon, baring the stone to the effects of the acid.

In few respects can the craft be denied. Learning the fundamentals of it may never make a lithographer of me but the knowledge of them is certainly the ingredient by which I may make a good lithograph, without which the original intention I might have had would probably be hopelessly, irredeemably lost.







## THE MOSAICS

I believe that mosaic has excellent possibilities as a medium for making further study of those things that interest me. It provides a great range of color, but unlike paint, the value, intensity, and hue of each color are constant. In fact, to achieve variety with this limitation is one of the problems in the medium. The problem of scale, which haunts one constantly in painting and lithography, is automatically taken care of by the very physical shape and size of the tesserae. But monotony can result and once a scale is set, I feel almost immediately that a variety must be produced somehow. I have tried to achieve this by various means. A color broken by varying the shapes in it takes on one kind of variety, but by turning to what I have tried in other media I used the idea of holding a value and varying the color. This seems to have been the major method employed by the mosaicist of the Byzantine. In this manner one can establish a color climate in one area and while it is dominated by one hue, others can be introduced to heighten, clash with or complement the color area.

I am quite aware that I have not done as much work in it to make more than the most tentative statements about mosaic. In fact, I have done so little that my appetite for

it has been whetted and what I have done merely a tantalizing hors d'oeuvre that promises better things to come. The endless possibilities of combining "found things" with made and bought things to get a variety in the tesserae could hardly be other than exciting. The craft of doing it has its own challenges and, as with lithography, is part of the charm of the medium.

To get a maximum of flexibility I have worked on paper, moving the tesserae around to suit myself. This has given me the greatest freedom of movement of any method I know, a bit akin, somewhat, to the placement of the color spot in painting, except that the tesserae can be more easily moved than the color spot which must be scrubbed out or scraped off.

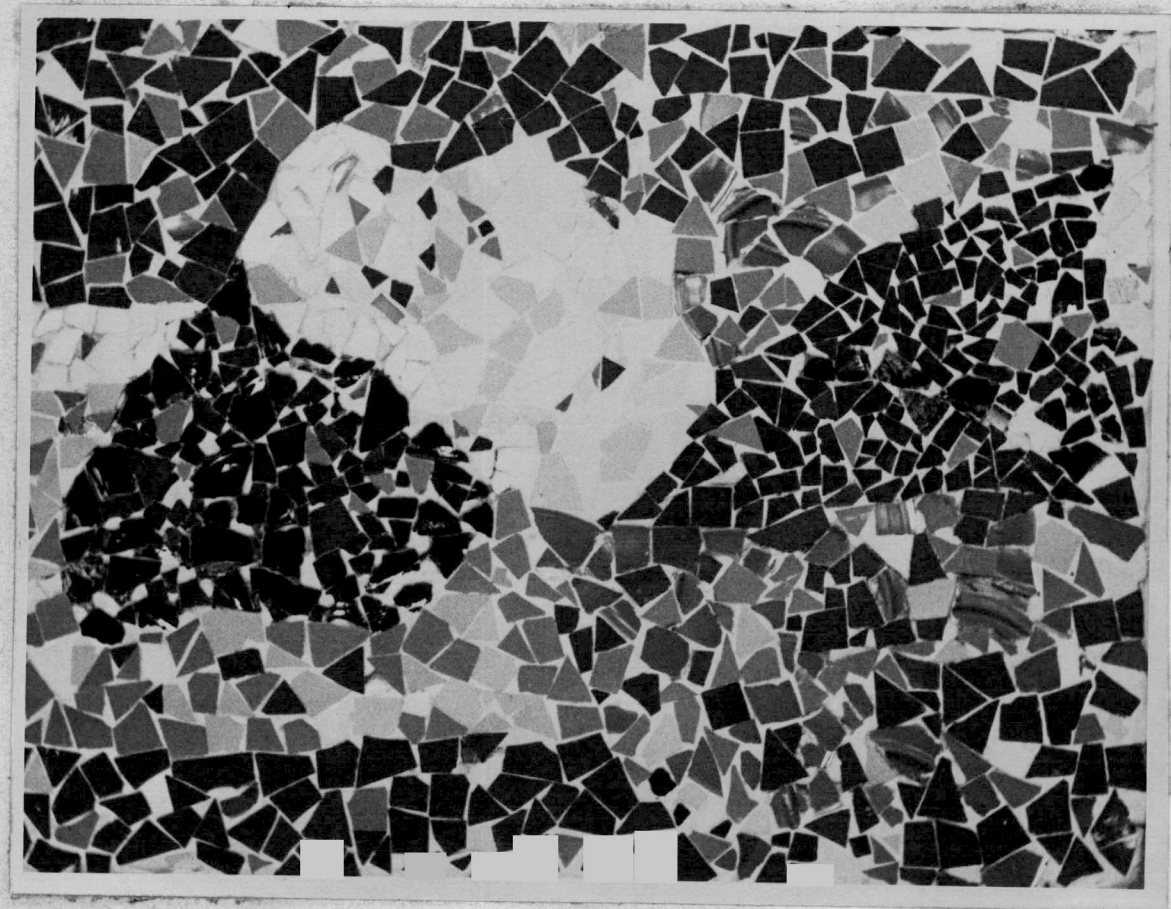
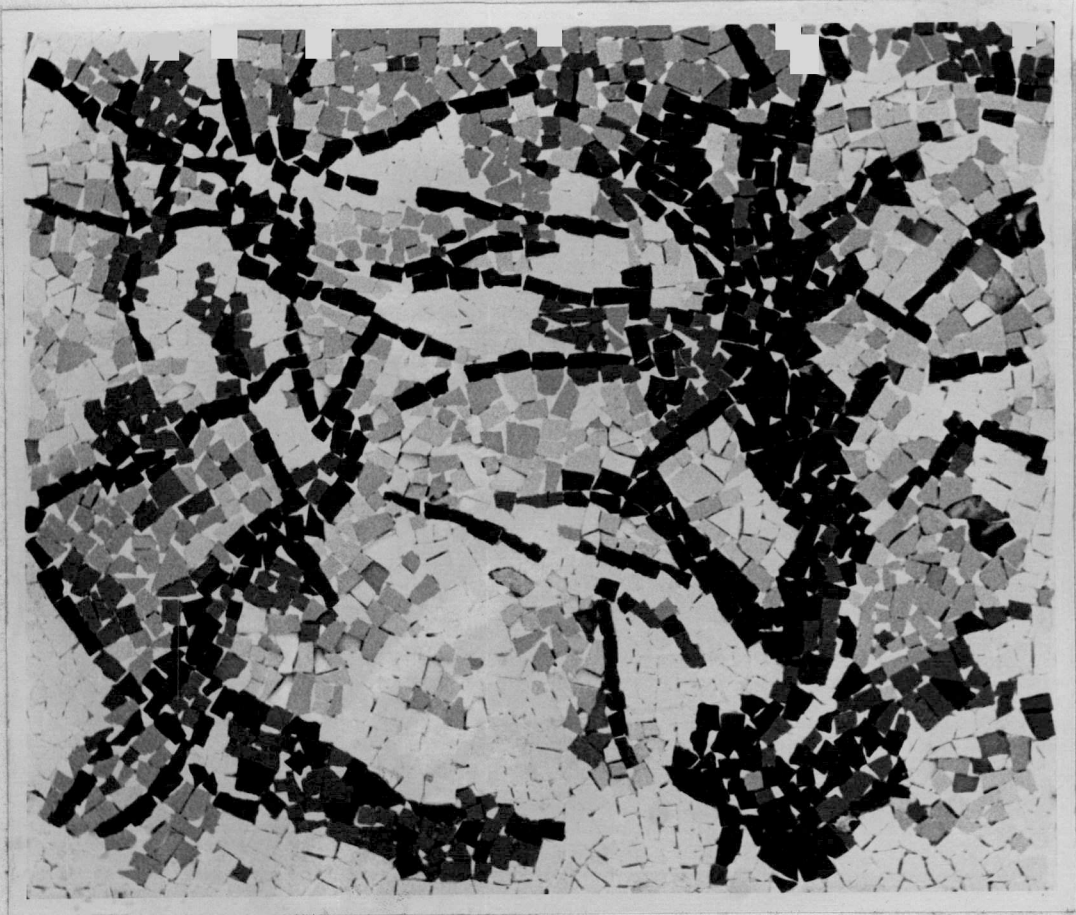
In painting one can overlook the problem of scale: relative sizes of brush stroke, relationship of color area to color area, or brush stroke and color area to the total painting, but to overlook scale in mosaic is literally impossible since each color spot has a very palpable physical existence and any effective change is the result of a major physical effort on the part of the mosaicist. It is especially in respect to scale that my work in mosaic has influenced my attitude in painting and drawing. I feel that the scale of my work in the other media has been more consciously manipulated as the result of my having to be most conscious of scale in mosaic.



I have not been as careful as one might be in observing the results of white spaces in my watercolors, drawings or lithographs. Often they were simply left over, only to compete with whatever white object I might be trying to paint. The object would then take on a kind of left-over, unpainted look and the white of it function as a part of the other unpainted areas which float behind all the colors.

In mosaic the white shape cannot be ignored since it has to be built just as any other color. I worked from a rather open watercolor in order to compare the attitude one might take in another medium with that taken when the watercolor was made. In doing the watercolor I was determined to keep the painting as open as possible, and to use a minimum of building-up. As I had no white shape to retain as an object, I felt justified in leaving the unpainted areas for the color to work against. In working from the watercolor in mosaic I was made very aware of the actual shape of the white areas since they had to be built in the mosaic, rather than left as they were in the watercolor.

In mosaic the function of the drawing becomes very clear. Hopes of preserving a direction by having a change of value or color along a given axis or direction will be dashed unless the tesserae are carefully kept in their original positions. If the drawing is to be picked up with a line, that line must be built and has the peculiarly mosaic quality of three dimensional actuality.



## Watercolors







*Handwritten text, likely a label or description of the specimen.*

Lithographs



Typed by

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