AN INVESTIGATION OF SERIAL PAINTING

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The purpose of this thesis was to follow a given subject from its inception on a rectangular surface through a series of paintings to a point where the shapes and forms of the original painting culminated in a shaped surface. Each painting except the first one in the series would contain less of the subject than the preceding.

Four series of paintings were executed for use in investigating the possibilities of achieving seriality in this study. The first series, entitled "On a Sunday Afternoon," was a two-painting series. Series II consisted of five paintings. The five paintings, with a sailboat as the subject, were based on a pencil drawing executed several months prior to the initiation of the thesis work. The subject for Series III was a still life. Four paintings were executed for this series. These paintings were based on one of twenty-five paintings of fruits and vegetables executed at an earlier time. The subject for Series IV was a sunrise and consisted of six works. However, only three of the six pieces are discussed in the study. The last of the three pieces of this series reached the desired conclusion of a fully shaped surface.

During the development of the four series, certain sequential steps were noted:
1. Sketches were made of the first series to see how the process of serialization could best be achieved.

2. The two paintings of Series I were executed in hard-edge technique to maintain a clear visual image of the subject. This technique was maintained throughout the other series.

3. The theme was established for Series I and infra-structures selected.

4. Guidelines A and B were formulated (A, to develop a painting that would delineate the subject clearly; B, to develop a second painting, or third or more, which would enlarge and simplify certain shapes and forms of the first painting).

5. Sketches were made for the second series, infra-structures were selected, and paintings were executed.

6. Guideline C, stating that shapes and forms of the previous painting could be used to suggest a shaped surface, was formulated during the execution of Series II.

7. Themes were established and infra-structures selected for Series III and IV, and the paintings were executed. All three guidelines could be clearly tested in Series III and IV.

8. All four series were analyzed, beginning with Series I and working up to Series IV. The analysis process required as its final step in each series the viewing of the series as a whole or macro-structure.

This report concludes that serial painting may develop from a traditional rectangular surface into a fully-shaped surface.
AN INVESTIGATION OF SERIAL PAINTING

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Denton, Texas
August, 1972
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Serial forms are produced by an indivisible process that links the internal structure of a work to that of other works within a whole. Seriality is identified by a particular inter-relationship of forms. While a series may have any number of works, as a precondition of seriality it must have at least two.

Though often painted in sets, that is, in a limited number that satisfies a given condition, serial paintings are capable of infinite expansions, as this study will show. There is no limit to the number of works in a series other than that determined by the artist. Once created, a series may be kept open and added to periodically. A series can be interrupted at any point, re-entered later, or continued and extended indefinitely.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this thesis was to follow a given subject from its inception on a rectangular surface through a series of

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1 John Koplans, "Serial Imagery," Artforum, VII, No. 2 (October, 1968), 67. (The number of paintings, for instance, in Albers' series, "Homage to the Square," is not known; it is an endless series to which he continuously adds. In comparison, all of Stella's black series are known; it is a closed series delimited by a set number. Until Stella had exhausted for himself the possible variations within this series, however, the numerical boundary was not fixed. Noland's "Target" series was similarly not preconditioned by a known quantity in advance. On the other hand, Stella's series of eccentric geometric paintings of 1966 were pre-planned, the quantities having been fixed at the outset and then adhered to.)
paintings to a point where the shapes and forms of the original painting culminated in a shaped surface. Each painting except the first one in the series would contain less quantity or area of the subject than the preceding. The technique of using a telephoto lens to move into and to enlarge specific, desired aspects of a subject is analogous to the selection and reduction of the shapes and forms of a given painting as they progressed in the series. This telephoto effect best describes the concept that initiated this study.

To achieve the serial effect, the following guidelines were formulated:

A. The first painting would use simplified shapes to describe the subject. There would be little or no change of value or color intensity within the individual shapes.

B. In a second painting (or third, or more), certain shapes and forms of the first painting would be enlarged and further simplified.

C. The process of simplification and subtraction would eventually develop into a shaped surface.

Definition of Terms

1. Shape is defined for this study as the use of a line to enclose an area. This enclosed area is a shape. "Shape can also be created by masses which exist as areas of color or of dark and light."

2. Series is "a number of things produced as a related group." 

3. Form is used in this study to mean, (a) bulk, mass, volume, and solid, and (b) the organization of shape, size, value, and color which creates form.

4. Hard-edge painting is a painting technique in which shapes are clearly and sharply defined, often in a simple, austere design. It is a technique used frequently for geometric abstraction.

5. Exterior is the outside edge of a shape or form—that part of a shape or form that is located on the outside or framing edge of the painting. For the purposes of this study, "exterior" and "exposed edge" are synonymous.

6. Interior is the inside edge of a shape or form—that part of a shape or form that is located on the inside of the painting. Generally, the inside edges of the shapes and forms are side-by-side or overlap each other.

7. Structure, for the purpose of this paper, is "the total of independent parts in a definite pattern of organization." 

8. Infra-structures are the individual paintings in a given series. They are also the individual shapes and forms that constitute a painting.


9. **Macro-structure** is all the paintings in a series viewed together as one unit. It is also the sum of all the shapes and forms that constitute a painting in any given series.

10. **Shaped surface** in this study is (a) a two-dimensional surface that has an irregular edge, (b) a surface that retains its traditional rectangular shape, but the surface itself undulates and resembles relief sculpture, or (c) a mixture of the first two, which is the same as sculptural form.

**Procedure and Plan of the Study**

Four series of paintings were executed for use in investigating the possibilities of achieving seriality in this study.

The first series, entitled "On a Sunday Afternoon," was a two-painting series (see Plates 1 and 2, Series I).

Series II consisted of five paintings (see Plates 1 through 5, Series II). The five paintings, with a sailboat as the subject, were based on a pencil drawing executed several months prior to the initiation of the thesis work.

The subject for Series III (see Plates 1 through 4, Series III) was a still life. Four paintings were executed for this series. These paintings were based on one of twenty-five paintings of fruits and vegetables executed at an earlier time.

The subject for Series IV (see Plates 1 through 3, Series IV) was a sunrise. Two paintings and one piece of sculpture were chosen to be included in this series. These pieces were chosen from six works originally executed in this series. As this study will show, these three pieces arrive at the desired conclusion.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED SERIAL PAINTING

Central to serial painting is the concept of "macro-structure." This concept is understood in terms of relational order, but not in terms of distance, number, or magnitude. The following example will make this relationship clear.

If the number one is combined with a comma and given the status of a self-contained unit (representing a single painting), and repeated thus,

1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,

all the units are interchangeable. The units are presented lineally and without hierarchy of order; each unit is similar and each is of equal importance. In the same manner, the macro-structure of the series is self-evident irrespective of the number of works in the series.

Equally essential to serial form is the consistency of the postulates, that is, that no two contradictory proportions can be deduced from any collocation of units. Hence, if the units are positioned irregularly,

1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,

the rhythms may vary but the macro-structure of each subgroup is identical to that of the whole.

Thus, the macro-structure is not dependent on interval or distance. Each unit remains interchangeable and has the same

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2 Ibid. (Interestingly enough, the logic of syntax common to Western languages does not permit the cataloging of simultaneously important entities in a non-hierarchical order. In Western usage, ideas or objects are invariably enumerated in ordinal sequence: (1), (2), etc. The Chinese, on the other hand, prefix equally important items (1), (1), (1), etc.)
rank as the others without disturbing the continuity of the macro-structure. This interchangeability of the units and their lack of formal order can be understood more clearly if the units are arranged symmetrically as follows:

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1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,
1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,
1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,
1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,
1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1,
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Such an arrangement, which can be read up and down, diagonally, or back and forth in any direction, demonstrates the capacity of serial structures to interact and to reinforce each other's qualities. The artist's intentions can be more fully understood when the individual serial work is seen within the context of its set. Consequently, each work within a series is of equal importance. It is part of a whole, and its qualities are more meaningful when seen in context than when seen in isolation.

This concept does not mean that serial painting or sculpture lacks autonomy. Each single work in a series must be complete in itself and may be shown in isolation. Furthermore, in some series the appearance of the paintings, if they are exhibited as a set, will be affected by the sequence in which they are hung. This is true in the work of Albers. "Albers is so precise in his handling of color . . . that the emphasis and tonality of his paintings are subject to considerable variation according to their juxtaposition."  

^3Ibid.
In mathematics there seem to be at least four possible serial forms. The Dedekind-Cantor theory of variables, by Edward V. Huntington, states,

With regard to the existence of first and last elements, all series may be divided into four groups: (1) those that have neither a first nor a last element; (2) those that have a first element, but no last; (3) those that have a last element, but no first; and (4) those that have both a first and a last.4

The implications of definitions (1) and (4) may be illustrated with Gertrude Stein's serial poem, "Rose is a rose, is a rose."5 As Miss Stein relates in her autobiography, she made a monogram of the poem, which she used on her note paper:6

\[ \text{A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose} \]

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4Koplans, op. cit., 69.
5Gertrude Stein, Geography and Plays (Boston, 1922).
In this form, the poem has a first and a last member, whether it is written in a line or designed as an emblem, and would fall under definition (4) above. Yet in discussing the poem, Miss Stein either deliberately or inadvertently misquotes herself and renders the poem "... a rose is a rose is a rose is a rose." If "is" is added to either end of this revised form and the poem recast as an emblem, the perimeters of the structure are sufficiently altered to make the difference critical. The poem then conforms to definition (1) and in duration becomes similar in structure to a continuum—that is, nonlinear. (It is also perfectly symmetrical in the disposition of its parts, having seven letters or spaces in each quadrant.)

It can be said that the first use of serial painting in recent years is shared by two artists, Ad Reinhardt and Yves Klein. Klein's serial painting, begun about 1957, is marked by the systematic use of one canvas size and one grainy textured color. "The similarity of color, together with the low textural level of organically clustered paint grain, while it slowed down scan, was insufficient to defeat an inherent tendency toward inert uniformity." Reinhardt's use of serial painting is more important for a number of reasons. Reinhardt's use of serial painting is earlier than Klein's. Reinhardt's serial forms imply

7Ibid.
8Koplans, op. cit., 69.
9Ibid.
the use of structure. As far back as 1955, Reinhardt used a structural principle, a series of symmetrically positioned forms that repeated the framing edge. At times he united four square canvases to form a larger square.

Reinhardt is a key figure in the evolution of serial painting in the United States. "What Reinhardt set into motion was the idea of a network of choices and limitations which were preformed but not logically apparent on the surface of the picture or within the whole series." Reinhardt's work shows that once the formal links are established in a series, it becomes difficult to achieve a difference, that is, to give each painting a positive identity without creating an order or becoming redundant.

It was Frank Stella who made the first moves to exploit serial dispositions of a higher order. . . . Stella (in his first series in 1959) employed black, with a linear element tracking across the picture plane. These lines were formed by leaving ragged edges of unpainted ground between the abutting areas of black. Stella reversed Reinhardt's process of paint application; instead of making an image and then painting over it, allowing it to bleed through, Stella obliterated most of the ground and left the unpainted parts to form the image. In this way he obtained a greater fusion of image and facture, without leaving a time-trace. By varying the linear image, he asserted the individual identity of each painting within the overall system.

It is important to note that the organization of Stella's paintings begins at the center and spreads outward by use of various kinds of symmetry. In the paintings executed for this

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10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
thesis, the organization of the paintings begins as a whole and moves toward the center. In other words, they go in the opposite direction of Stella's series. Instead of using the framing edge as the unifying structural principle, Stella took the basic design and extended it beyond the framing edge by "(1) making the stretcher bar equal in thickness to the internal design, and (2) repeating the ground color with the unpainted portion of canvas that covered the stretcher bar."¹²

Music, poetry, and dance, by their characteristics of form, can only move forward in time. It is impossible to listen to music, read a poem, or dance backwards. By means of serial painting, Monet, Albers, Klein, and Reinhardt were able to establish the possibility of making time relative and reversing its flow. But it was Stella who began a dialogue of non-sequential possibilities of serial forms that led to a new understanding of serial painting.

Stella's major achievement was the discovery that the artist was unable to regress to a more primitive spatial notion as long as his system was maintained.

In Stella's series, the same shape may be repeated in different colors while altering the initial shape at the same time. Stella found that the possible distributions, which are central to serial order, can be varied at will.

In much the same way, Willgenstein stated that "Language is a 'game', the rules of which we have to make up as we go

¹²Ibid.
along." Serial painting presents no limiting rules but those that are made up at the discretion of the artist to suit his purpose.

Noland and Louis also worked with serial painting but found that, although it is quite systematic, it does permit unknown variables. Anton Ehrenzweig has pointed out that

... the artist obviously cannot anticipate all the possible moves that are open according to the rules which he is still making up, but he can handle open structures with blurred frontiers which will be drawn with proper precision only in the unknowable future.\(^4\)

An important fact that must be noted in serial painting is that the exhibition space becomes a component. Only when the paintings are exhibited in a set do the designs and shaped surfaces of the paintings begin to operate with one another. By permitting the paintings to interact with the wall space and the wall space to interact with the shaped surfaces, another quality is added to the system. This causes the exhibition space and the painting to interact with each other. The wall emphasizes the interior shapes and amplifies the exterior shape.

Central to serial painting is the controlling influence of the macro-structure, within which a high degree of randomness is possible. Applying this principle to the use of color in serial painting, the artist needs only to maintain the same family of colors in order to find a great degree of freedom. Macro-structure in this use refers to the totality of the design elements


that are used in a given series which is conceived as a whole. The freedom achieved relates to the infra-structures that are contained within the macro-structure and make up the parts of the whole. For example, one of the series in this study is based on a ship. The parts of the ship are sub-divided as the series continues. In this case, the ship and its negative spaces are the macro-structure, while the parts of the ship are the infra-structure.

The result of this system of control by a macro-structure ... is that ... color can be fully orchestrated. The intervals, cadence, and textures of the colors begin to assert themselves in a form similar to music, with the individual colors vibrating and resonating. Unlike music, color need not be read forward (linearly) but can be scanned from any point in any direction.15

It is important to note at this point the contribution of Andy Warhol to serial imagery. Warhol's series of helium-filled floating aluminum pillows which change position and relationship to one another with the slightest movement of air

... represents the most perfect visual analogy of a continuum the human mind has conceived: identical, manufactured objects remorselessly stamped out by a machine, which when filled with gas and clustered within a space, become more organic in their relationships than the interweaving strands of a Pollock painting.16

Serial painting is not concerned with the creation of a singular work of art but with the process of creating. Process is not a closed system but can be entered into at any point.

15Koplans, op. cit., 69.
16Ibid.
CHAPTER III

ANALYSIS OF SERIES

The following sequential steps were made in the course of the study.

1. Sketches were made of the first series to see how the process of serialization could best be achieved.

2. The two paintings of Series I were executed in hard-edge technique to maintain a clear visual image of the subject.

3. The theme was established for Series I and infra-structures selected.

4. Guidelines A and B were formulated.

5. Sketches were made for the second series, infra-structures were selected, and paintings were executed.

6. Guideline C was formulated during the execution of Series II.

7. Themes were established and infra-structures selected for Series III and IV, and the paintings were executed. All three guidelines could be clearly tested in Series III and IV.

8. All four series were analyzed, beginning with Series I and working up to Series IV.

9. The analysis process required as its final step in each series the viewing of the series as a whole or macro-structure.

10. Finally, summaries were made and specific conclusions were possible.
Analysis of Series I

The first series, "On a Sunday Afternoon," represented the first experiments with the process of serial painting. The subject matter of the first series was four scenes experienced in rapid succession and thus appearing to be superimposed one on top of the other. Several sketches were made superimposing the four scenes. From the sketches, the design that best described the visual experience was selected, and the painting was started. A hard-edge technique was used so that the shapes and forms could be easily identified and also to maintain a consistency of shape and form in the following paintings in the series. Thus, if a shape were to be altered to some degree in each painting, its development could be more easily followed using a hard-edge technique.

As the painting developed, those shapes and forms (infrastructures) around and including the center of interest began to emerge as a unified structure, thus suggesting a shaped surface for the second painting.

Several sketches were made of the selected shapes and forms. A great degree of freedom was employed in arrangement and design. The sketches explored the possibilities of using the exposed edges of the selected shapes as the edge of the painting.

In this second painting, the exposed edge of the selected shapes became the edge or outside perimeter of the painting. This approach led directly to the creation of a shaped surface.
The shapes were enlarged and simplified, and the theme was maintained.

It is important to point out here that the paintings for Series I were executed intuitively and were not intellectually conceived. The first series formed the base for the thesis proposed, and two of the guidelines (A and B) followed from this beginning point.

Analysis of Series II

Using the two guidelines, a second series of paintings was started. The subject of the second series was a sailboat. A conscious attempt was made to clearly identify the subject in the first painting of the second series. It is important to recall at this point that in previous serial work, particularly the work of Stella, the painting was developed outward from the center. In Series II, however, the selected shapes began with the limitations of the rectangular surface and moved inward toward the center of the painting. It will be seen in subsequent paintings of the series that they moved even closer toward the center and were enlarged to a considerable degree.

Upon completion of the first painting, which established the sailboat theme of the series, the second step in the process was begun. In developing the second painting, selected shapes and forms of the first painting were enlarged and simplified (guideline B). At this point, consideration was given to the idea of allowing the selected shapes to suggest the shape of a surface for a third painting of the series (guideline C).
As in the first painting of the series, painting two of this series was painted on the traditional rectangular shape. The selected shapes were enlarged and allowed to touch the framing edge in a somewhat arbitrary manner.

Satisfied that the second painting met the requirements of the second guideline, the third step in the process was begun. The selection of the shapes and forms for painting three in this series was governed by the desire to maintain the original interrelationships of shapes in the two previous paintings of Series II. Because of this desire, the selected shapes and forms were not given an adequate amount of freedom to suggest a shaped surface. Consequently, the selected shapes (infra-structures) were merely transported intact, with little alteration of size or basic shape, to a prepared, shaped surface which had been designed on the basis of the selected shapes. (The infra-structures that are placed on the preconceived shaped surface do nothing more than define the shape in the same way as they do in painting two of this series.) Thus, guideline C was not arrived at successfully (see Plates 2 and 3, Series II).

A second major problem with painting three of the second series was technical. The material chosen for the shaped surface was plywood. A flat piece of plywood was used in Series I and, because of a limited number of cuts, worked well (see Plate 2, Series I). With the sailboat series, however, several cuts had to be made. It was discovered that when using a saber saw, the edge of the plywood splintered and resulted in an uneven painting surface. It was also learned that plywood did
not support the small isolated areas of the design. The iso-
lated shapes broke off under the slightest pressure. Still
another fact learned was that the plywood, unless treated, would
warp. Thus it was decided that plywood was not a good material
for the study.

Since the results of the third painting in Series II had
not been satisfactory, a more successful conclusion was attempted.
Returning to the second painting of the series, the shapes and
forms were re-selected and developed in a fourth painting that
would enlarge and simplify the selected shapes and forms accord-
ing to guideline B (see Plate 4, Series II).

The selection of the shapes and forms for the fourth paint-
ing was governed by two factors involving shape. First, shapes
had to be chosen which could be consistently enlarged and still
maintain an aesthetic relationship to one another and to the se-
ries as a whole. Second, it had to be decided which shapes re-
quired the least amount of rearrangement on the picture plane.
A great deal of rearranging of shapes would cause the painting
to lose aesthetic relationships which were desirable to maintain.

The shapes and forms of painting four were considerably
enlarged and thus satisfied the requirements of guideline B.
Stella's serial painting, as mentioned earlier, starts from the
center and moves out. In painting four of the second series,
there was a sense of "moving into" the painting, that is, of
moving from the outer edge toward the center of the painting
(see Plate 4, Series II).
Satisfied that painting four followed the guidelines of B, the next step—creating a shaped surface—was begun (guideline C).

Based on the results of Series I and of painting three in Series II, the second shaped surface executed for this study was affected by several factors that had to be considered. They were,

1. Because of the difficulty in cutting very small, detailed shapes which often broke off, only the larger shapes in the painting would be considered.

2. Whether or not the large shapes being considered would be able to hold together physically on or near the center of the painting while their exposed edges became the framing edge of the painting had to be considered.

3. The exposed edges of the shapes selected would become the framing edge of the painting to create a unified contour for a shaped surface.

4. All the selected shapes had to relate to one another as desired.

During the process of selecting shapes and forms for painting five of Series II, several sketches were made. Having had success in enlarging the selected shapes on the fourth painting, the same approach was used. Further, because the shapes were enlarged, painting four had achieved a better composition. After selecting the mast, sail, roof of the deck house, and porthole because these shapes were the ones that would more
nearly bring the results hoped for, painting five was started, based on the preliminary sketches.

Quarter-inch tempered masonite was used instead of plywood. This material has the flat surface of plywood but lends itself more readily to cutting with less danger of breaking. When covered with gesso, it provides an excellent painting surface.

As work proceeded on painting five, it became clear that the exposed edges of the selected shapes created a total unifying design that related to the interior edges of the shapes as well, causing both the interior and the exterior (framing edge of the shaped surface) of the painting to function as a whole (see Plate 5, Series II). Upon completion of the shaped surface, it was felt that the requirements of guideline C had been achieved.

In viewing Series II as a macro-structure, it is necessary to dwell more fully on reasons for the comparatively little success of paintings two and three of the series. These reasons may be determined as follows:

1. The enlargement of the shapes in painting two was not sufficient to permit the planned manipulation. The scale, in other words, had not been changed from painting one to painting two in any significant way.

2. As a result of the failure to change scale, the exposed edges of the shapes in painting three did not sufficiently relate to the interior edges of the same shapes or other shapes
in the painting, and thus the contour of the shaped surface did not function as desired. It was also realized that entering into the center of the painting and creating voids resulted in the relationships not being realized in the form desired. The shapes remained isolated and failed to achieve the desired relationships to be later accomplished in painting five of the series.

Analysis of Series III

A series of a still life was executed for Series III. Two apples, a jug, a head of lettuce, a white table, and a striped cloth were used as the subjects for compositional sketches. Shape relationship was particularly important because of the various other changes that would be made during the series. The organic shapes of the fruit and vegetable offered interesting variations to the geometric shapes of the table, jug, and the striped cloth.

The first painting of the third series (see Plate 1, Series III) was executed so that it answered the requirements of guideline A. This was achieved in part by rendering the subject in a hard-edge technique. This technique clearly defined each shape which made finding a composition for a second painting that much easier; Also, there was an attempt to limit the degree of perspective in the painting. The purpose was to be able to move toward the center of the painting and enlarge the shapes without having to do a great deal of manipulation of depth.
Satisfied with the results of painting one, it was studied to see which shapes could be selected to answer guideline B, which called for enlargement and simplification of the selected shapes of the first painting of the series.

As it turned out, all the shapes from painting one of the series were used. The shapes were merely enlarged almost four times the size of the original shapes and were extended to the edge of the canvas, which was not much larger than the canvas for painting one of this series.

The same family of colors was maintained, thus assuring that, while the shapes lost their original identity as apples, lettuce, and jug on a table, they still existed as yellow, green, red, ochre, and white shapes. The loss of their identity resulted when each shape was so enlarged that only fractions of the original shape could be shown.

Since the subject matter theme of the shapes was altered from the first to the second painting, a third painting was planned for exploring the random possibilities of working with merely the abstract shapes. It is important to note that this was the first series in which the subject matter theme had been altered; but at the same time, a certain unity was maintained by the use of colors common to both paintings.

Reverting briefly to information covered in Chapters I and II, it is remembered that since there are no boundaries implicit to serial painting, the paintings of a series are capable of infinite expansion. Once established, a series may be kept open
and added to periodically. Further, a series may be cut off at any point, re-entered later, or continued and extended indefinitely. Such expansion was achieved in Series III by (1) first starting at the edges and then moving toward the center, allowing the selected shapes then to grow out from the center in much the same way practiced by Stella; and (2) further enlarging the shapes and allowing them to create their own relationships, unlimited by the controlling factor of maintaining a continuation of identifiable subject matter from the first painting in the series.

This approach altered the shapes so that they created relationships that could not be predetermined but could be designed only as they evolved (see Plate III, Series III). Satisfied that this painting achieved the requirements of guideline B, a fourth painting in the series was planned to meet the requirements of guideline C. Because the visual consistency of subject matter had been altered in the course of the series thus far, the shapes were free to be arranged in almost any appealing design. As for the shaped surface, it also was free to develop, unlimited by a subject matter connection to any other of the previous paintings in the series.

The arrangement of the shapes and forms in painting four of the series was governed by what was believed to be good composition. The freely-evolving shapes achieved in the painting could have allowed Series III to continue indefinitely. As a result, Series III illustrates the series that Huntington
described as "those that have a first element, but no last." Consequently, Series III was terminated with painting four, but this does not necessarily mean that the series might not be re-entered later.

Looking at Series III as a unit (see Plates 1 through 4, Series III), it is possible to see that a given series may be developed even though the subject matter theme is altered. Color, however, was used as a unifying factor. While value changes were made, the same family of colors was maintained throughout the series. Too, the shapes, while considerably enlarged, maintained a certain similarity that added to the consistency of the series.

Analysis of Series IV

The subject for Series IV was a sunrise. As in the other series, the first painting was executed in a hard-edge technique. Upon completion, the first painting was carefully studied, and it was found that the bottom half (that portion of the painting concerned with the sea and the beach) suggested movement in terms of a revolving cylinder (see Plate 1, Series IV). The white wavy lines of the sea were extended horizontally in the center of the lower half of the painting, causing them to appear to move closer to the viewer. The same white wavy lines above the central area, however, were not extended horizontally as much as those in the

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central area; thus, they created the impression that they were receding from the viewer. Several sketches were made to determine how this suggestion of movement could be turned into a shaped surface. The design for the second painting of Series IV was governed simultaneously by guidelines B and C, because the suggestion of movement indicated the need for a shaped surface. The selected shapes were enlarged according to guideline B and given a shaped surface according to guideline C.

Up to this point in working with serial painting, the physical movement of shapes had not been considered. However, the kinetic potential inherent in this subject matter was obvious and could provide an opportunity for the series to develop in a creative manner. Since the suggestion of movement appeared as a rotating cylinder, a cylinder was painted in the same manner as the sea in painting one (see Plates 1 and 2, Series IV). The sky and sun were placed above the drum and attached to either side of a base at the bottom of the drum by two narrow framing strips. A handle was then attached to the side of the drum so that the movement could be realized by turning the handle.

A more abstract design was suggested by the shapes in the two paintings of this series. It is also important to note that, unlike Series III (the still life theme), Series IV employed the visual consistency of the sea and sun as a design factor.

The serrated edge of the sun shape was carried to the third piece of Series IV. A round disk of aluminum, fifteen inches in diameter and three-eights of an inch thick, was used. Because a
separation seemed desirable in the design, a strip of plexiglass three-eights of an inch thick and fifteen inches long was cut in a shape suggestive of sea waves. The plexiglass shape was inserted between the two pieces of the aluminum disk, which had been cut in half. Because the shape alone was designed to be perceived, careful consideration was given to the base. The disk, thus, was raised on two aluminum rods that were attached to a wooden base (see Plate 3, Series IV).

On completion of Series IV, it was felt that a simple abstract shape had evolved. Further, the shape satisfied the requirements of guideline C in that it used the shapes of the previous painting (Plate 2, Series IV) to suggest a shaped surface.

In viewing Series IV as a unit, the success achieved was due to the strong visual consistency of shape, theme, and color. Series IV, it will be noted, concluded with a larger number of shaped than non-shaped surfaces (see Plates 1 through 3, Series IV). Further, because of considerable changes in size, shape, and material, each painting was able to exist independently of the series and thus could be perceived as a separate entity.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis was to follow a given subject from its inception on a rectangular surface through a series of paintings to a point where the shapes and forms of the original painting culminated in a shaped surface. Each painting except the first one in the series would contain less quantity or area of the subject than the preceding.

It was discovered in Series I that a hard-edge painting technique was the best approach to use, because if a shape were to be altered to some degree in each painting, its development could be more easily followed using a hard-edge technique. It was learned from painting two of Series I that if the exposed edge of the selected shapes became the edge of the painting, these shapes would lead directly to the creation of a shaped surface.

Series I not only defined the problem more clearly, but it also led to the formulation of guidelines A and B (A, to develop a painting that clearly defined the subject; B, to develop a second painting which would enlarge and simplify certain shapes and forms of the first painting).

Acquired from Series II was the fact that if too much concern was placed on maintaining the original interrelationships
of shapes, the selected shapes and forms would not have an ade-
quate amount of freedom to suggest a shaped surface (see Plates
1, 2, and 3, Series II).

It became apparent in Series II that plywood was not a
good material for this study. When using a saber saw, the edge
of the plywood splintered and resulted in an uneven painting
surface. It was also learned that plywood did not support the
small isolated areas of the design. The isolated shapes broke
off under the slightest pressure.

This series also showed that it was best to work with only
the larger shapes in the series while trying to find a shaped
surface, because

1. There would be no small shapes to break off.

2. The larger shapes were able to hold together physically
on or near the center of the painting while their exterior edges
became the framing edge of the painting.

3. The outside edge of the larger shapes created a more
unified contour for a shaped surface.

It was discovered in Series III that by limiting the degree
of perspective in the paintings, it was easier to move toward the
center of the paintings and enlarge the shapes without having to
do a great deal of manipulation of depth.

This series also showed that if the original shapes were
considerably enlarged on a second painting surface approximately
the same size as the first surface, the shapes would lose their
visual identity. By maintaining the same family of colors, a
certain consistency between the first and second paintings in the series was achieved. This approach also led to working with more abstract shapes and forms, which created their own relationships and suggested unique shaped surfaces. It is also important to note that it was learned from Series III that a series may be developed even though the subject matter theme is altered.

It was shown in Series IV that guidelines B and C could be successfully combined in one painting. Because of the suggestion of movement in painting one of Series IV, the selected shapes of painting two were enlarged according to guideline B and given a shaped character according to guideline C. It is also interesting to note that success with Series IV is due in part to the strong visual consistency of shape, theme, and color. Further, because of considerable changes in size, shape, and material, each painting in Series IV was able to exist independently of the series and thus could be perceived as a separate entity.

The use of serial painting raises a number of issues. Serial forms very easily reveal the complexity of the artist's decision-making process.

The crucial factor is the choice of realm, that each painting fits within the chosen structure; that is, whether the postulates of each painting are consistent with the others and in such a way that no two contradictory positions can be deduced within a series.

Central to the work of serial artists is the endeavor that has marked art since the earliest time: the attempt to describe with the structure of art our perception of the space we inhabit. This undertaking informs all art; each generation of artists refines, explores, augments
or completely restructures our intellectual, psychological, and perceptual awareness of the human spatial domain.¹

Serial painting is a highly systematic, yet flexible, process of production because of its high degree of specialization and its narrow focus on a single issue. Further, serial painting continuously affirms the power and continuity of the creative process.

Plate 1, Series II
Plate 2, Series II
Plate 4, Series II
Plate 5, Series II
Plate 1, Series III
Plate 2, Series III
Plate 3, Series III
Plate 4, Series III
Plate 2, Series IV
Plate 3, Series IV
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