

SUBJECT-MATTER, CONTENT, AND THE PRIMACY OF FORM

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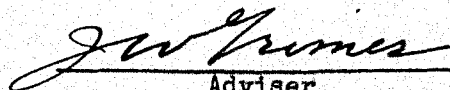
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This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my
father - Jules Schwarz.

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INTRODUCTION

The young American painter cannot afford to accept his freedom casually. Although he can perform uncompromised by the kind of restrictions that plagued painters of other generations, he has certain grave responsibilities to consider and choices to make. He is free, but freedom presupposes choice; the more freedom, the more choice. The young painter is alternatively threatened and inspired by the achievements of his recent past. He feels himself unique and yet finds himself proselytized by those stylistic movements that seek validity in the community of numbers. He is bombarded by an unprecedented variety of esthetic programs and techniques, and wonders whether his way is with a group or properly alone.

The young painter is not only free, but is also sophisticated. More likely than not, he is a graduate of one, two, or more institutions of higher learning. He has been exposed to the great ideas and has been encouraged to criticize and to speculate. His intellectual processes have been conditioned by history and sharpened by philosophical method. He has visited countless museums and galleries and this appreciative experience is multiplied a hundredfold by his familiarity with periodicals and the various forms of photographic reproduction.

Freedom, sophistication, and ambition, however, may be a mixed blessing to the young painter. He has all of the peripheral conditions that make painting possible, but may overlook, therefore, the essential condition that makes significant painting likely. Whether one calls this condition purpose, direction, or discipline; what is meant is a profound motivation that seeks realization through an appropriate creative procedure.

Many of those whose duty it is to examine and shape contemporary directions are disturbed by what is alleged to be a lack of profound purpose in much of our recent painting.¹ They recognize that the young painter has an unprecedented opportunity to achieve significance, but assert that he has been unable or unwilling to produce works of enduring value. They argue that meaning has been sacrificed to our time's concern with stylistic novelty and technical display, and that the young painter, tantalized by the prospect of early success, has become a victim of his freedom and ingenuity.

The charge that much contemporary painting lacks meaning is non sequitur. All works of art, good or bad, have meaning. What is really argued is that the meanings of many contemporary

¹ This position has been taken by some of our most distinguished journalist-critics; e.g. Aline Saarinen and Stuart Preston, by the philosopher-critic Herbert Read, and by the historian-critic Allen Weller. The author assumes that many others have similar positions, but he cites these as examples.

paintings, assuming they have meaning, are, in some way, inferior to the meanings of established works. This criticism may or may not be justified, but judgement cannot be made unless what is meant by meaning is clarified. The two terms conventionally used to describe meaning in art are subject-matter and content. Therefore, any discussion of meaning in art depends upon the usage of these terms.

The written portion of this dissertation gives an opportunity to examine these critical terms in the context of the contemporary situation in painting and further to examine the relationship of subject-matter and content to form. The attempt will be made to ascertain not whether there is meaning in contemporary painting, but rather whether the terms subject-matter and content may be used properly to describe the types of meanings that do exist. Certain conclusions will be developed in regard to these terms and their usages. This accomplished the initial question as to the young painter's requirements will be considered.

The problem of the young painter obviously holds more than a theoretical interest for the author. It is his problem. Throughout this discussion is an appreciation of the young painter's predicament. Particularly in the second chapter and in the conclusion certain findings are presented relative to the young painter's situation that may have more than a merely personal utility. The conclusions arrived at may not lend themselves to a rigorous

philosophical analysis. It is not necessary or proper that they should. A painter's emphasis is on the description of what can be experientially corroborated as operationally effective and the concern in this writing is to communicate findings in a manner appropriate to the investigation. The character of the first chapter will be impersonal because the nature of the problem is to make critical distinctions between terms that have a general art historical reference and a philosophical application. The second chapter and the conclusion deal with the act of painting (act of forming) with emphasis given to this artist's painting process. Discussion here is necessarily less than objective.

The conclusion of this paper is a summary of the problems discussed. It has, however, an additional and more important function for it is, in effect, an introduction to the substance of my dissertation - the group of paintings reproduced here. The paintings represent work done during the current year. They are the culmination of investigations carried on in the seven years of my graduate study. They all evidence my concern with the combined problems of subject-matter and form, and, it is hoped, may exemplify and perhaps verify the written position. Besides this, they are paintings and have, therefore, a status independent of illustrative addenda. They are to be judged as works of art.

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECT-MATTER AND CONTENT

The problem of this chapter is to make certain fundamental distinctions between the critical terms subject-matter and content. These terms have been employed traditionally to analyze levels of meaning in works of art. The contemporary concern with meaning in art and the evident confusion over what is meant by meaning in art makes desirable an examination of these critical terms in regard to their precise usage in the analysis of contemporary art in general and contemporary painting in particular. Although we are not interested in the common or general usage of dictionary definitions, it is convenient to begin here and then go on to the more specialized senses of the words in question. We will, therefore, begin with the definitions of subject-matter and content as found in the 1951 edition of Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary.

Webster defines subject-matter as "matter presented for consideration in statement or discussion; subject of thought or study." It can be seen that the key idea here is "matter presented for discussion," etc. The key words are presented and consideration. Implicit in this definition is the choice, either a priori or during the developmental process, of theme, scheme or motive -

the subject-matter idea, created by, or at least accepted by, the expositor which he will develop according to his own way for the purpose of presentation and consideration. To go a step further, subject-matter may be understood to be that part of a presentation which is its thematic¹ beginning and, conditioned by development, its thematic conclusion.

The subject-matter idea is chosen and, although its initial character may be amplified or distorted, its essential character is maintained through and by the process of development. This is not to deny the fact that in a discourse or a painting the doer may begin with no overt program in mind. He may wait for ideas (thematic, schematic or motivational) to present themselves out of process. Nonetheless at some point in time and process, he selects to develop what for him is and will be the work's particular theme. This choice, whenever it occurs, is the choice of subject-matter and this kind of choosing is the constant companion of the creative process.

We have thus far stated that subject-matter presupposes choice, that this choice is of a thematic, schematic or motivational kind, that the choice of theme may be made either prior to or during the developmental process, and that the ultimate purpose of

¹ Thematic as used here is equivalent to schematic or motivational. The choice of the word thematic is arbitrary.

the subject-matter choice is presentation and consideration. This last condition of subject-matter, that of presentation and consideration, postulates that the consequences of subject-matter are public rather than private; i.e., presentation and consideration presupposes inspection and evaluation by an audience. This last condition of subject-matter specifies, then, that it (subject-matter) "make itself known" through and by presentation, and that consideration of it depends upon its presence as explicitly given.²

If confronted by Murillo's "Ascension of the Virgin," we see a configuration which is identified by the mind's concepts as woman and more particularly as Virgin, that is by those in whose experience there are concepts of Christianity. The identification of woman or Virgin is no different from, let us say, the identification of blueness or hardness or coldness. In each case there is something explicitly given which, by custom and experience, is named a particular something.

In painting, subject-matter is explicitly given to perceptual experience; i.e., what has been chosen and developed as

² The terms explicitly given and implicitly given will be used throughout this discussion. Their meanings should become clear in the contexts in which they are used. The reader may wish to consult Mind and the World Order and An Analysis of Knowledge and Valuation by C. I. Lewis for the special philosophical implications of the term given. In lieu of that, may I suggest that by given is meant an a priori determination of that which is presented to our senses.

theme is given to perception and its processes of identification, description and evaluation. Theoretically then, the subject-matter of a particular painting ought to be apparent to any given perceiver. Actually, however, the degree to which a given perceiver is able to identify and describe what, as subject-matter, is given to his perception depends upon his ability (past experience) to apprehend what is before him. Men differ as to the degree and quality of their apprehension, but subject-matter as explicitly given is not limited by human diversity. What may be limited is a particular subject-matter identification. In Murillo's "Ascension of the Virgin," the majority of men will readily identify the configuration as the figure of a woman and more specifically as the Virgin. Some men, however, may not be able to recognize the more profound subject-matter aspects as, for example, the implications of Catholic iconography. This is not to say that the subject-matter was not explicitly given to perception, but rather that a perceiver may lack the necessary experience and sophistication with which to make an identification. There are, therefore, levels of subject-matter identification and description. The extent to which a given perceiver is able to apprehend subject-matter depends upon the depth of his own experience and consequently the degree of his familiarity with the subject-matter in question.

In painting, the subject-matter idea or theme may be as rigidly representational or as illustrational as in the painting

by Murillo or as un-representational of "outward appearance" as, for example, in a painting by Franz Kline. Too often the term subject-matter is applied only to those configurations that "resemble" objects of our common sense or to the narrative cliché. The boundaries of the subject-matter idea or theme are as limitless as man's own ability to ideate. Franz Kline's black calligraphic marks on a white ground may or may not be non-representational. Whether they are or not is unimportant. What is important is that there are configurations and that these configurations are explicitly given in the artifact and to our senses. Whatever they may become in the individual experiences of men; however symbolic, portentous or empty they may become in content experiences - these configurations, as clearly apparent and explicitly given, are the subject-matter of Franz Kline. If such configurations, no matter how abstracted or distorted they may be, have referential or associational value and what is represented is not clear to a given perceiver, then that perceiver lacks the necessary experiential equipment with which to make an identification. If the configuration presents nothing but its form or shape, color and texture and the like, then the perceiver has but to recognize it as such.

This interchangeability of subject-matter and form is important not only in regard to so-called non-representational works of art, but in regard to all works of art, particularly those of the

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The last hundred years has seen the painting process grow from that of a craft concerned with compromising the various pictorial elements to a process concerned with the integrity and coincidence of the pictorial elements. More and more subject-matter has become the manifestation of form and material rather than something essentially foreign to their requirements and potentialities. Particularly from the time of Delacroix to "action painting," we find not only an increase in freedom of choice and handling of subject-matter, but also, and more important, an intensification of desire to make it a part of the painting process rather than something essentially apart from it.

Subject-matter in painting, then, is theme chosen and developed for the purpose of presentation and consideration. It is explicitly given to the act of perception, but identification, description and evaluation of it depends upon the perceiver's ability to recognize what is presented. Subject-matter in painting may range from objective representation to non-representation and encompasses the various intermediate levels between these extremes.

Of the various definitions of content in Webster, two pertain directly to our inquiry. The first, that content (pl.) is "the topics or matter treated in a document or the like" is curiously similar to the definition of subject-matter above. It

can be dispensed with if we assume that the two terms (subject-matter and content) refer to different things. If we do not so assume there is no point in continuing except to say that if there are differences in meaning they are so delicate as to preclude special analysis. But Webster's second definition answers the dilemma by stating that content is "the sum and substance; the gist, as of a discourse; hence (the) essential meaning." Needless to say the key words here are "sum and substance" and "essential meaning."

The "sum and substance" of a work of art is its entirety, its whole. Content in this sense is not and cannot be a part of the work of art for it is the work of art, or more precisely is a word used to describe, if that is possible, the total qualities, effects and ramifications of the work of art. But content is also in Webster's words the work's "essential meaning." This additional definition causes a special problem for he first defines content as the whole and then defines it as a part of that whole. It would seem that Webster uses the term in two distinct and alternate ways. Is content merely another word for the totality of the work of art and the experience it engenders, or does content refer to a special element of the work or to a special category of the art experience?

Let us try to clarify the issue. "Essential meaning" presupposes other meanings; less essential, less fundamental.

If this is true, Webster's definition assumes that in a work of art, for example, there are a variety of meanings the most essential of which he labels as content. The only alternative to this is the possibility that Webster is not talking about a particularly crucial meaning apart from the subsidiary ones, but is talking about the complex of meanings which en masse give to the work of art its special significance. But if this is what he means we are back to the initial definition of content as "sum and substance," as totality. Actually it is evident that by "essential meaning" Webster is trying to isolate, let us say from the work of art, some element or complex of elements that is the special ingredient of the work of art; its raison d'être and its ultimate significance.

We are left with Webster's definition of content as "essential meaning" expanded by us to include our slightly more specific preliminary definition of content as the work of art's special ingredient, its raison d'être, and its ultimate significance. But obviously we cannot dismiss the matter here. We must ask and, for the purpose of this paper, attempt to answer several further questions. Is content, like subject-matter and form, explicitly "given" in the artifact? If so, can it, like subject-matter and form, be specified and described? If it is explicitly given and if it cannot be specified and described, how are we to know it? If it is decided that content resides elsewhere that "in" the artifact,

where is its location? Does its location mediate between the givenness of the artifact and the experience the perceiver brings to esthetic contemplation? If so, and given a particular artifact, does content change with the perceiver and with time? If content is not an interactive experience, does it exist only in the perceiving mind? Assuming we can satisfactorily answer the above questions relative to the location of the phenomenon, it remains for us to define it.

The first three questions revolve around the possibility that content, like subject matter and form, is explicitly given. An answer that even approximates logical acceptability must depend upon the concept explicit. If a thing is given, it is either explicitly or implicitly given. For a thing to be explicitly given, it must be, in Webster's words, "distinctly stated and clearly developed; with all its elements apparent." If content cannot satisfy these requirements, it cannot be said to be explicitly given. If content were "distinctly stated and clearly developed, etc.," we would be able to perceive it as such. That we do not do so is certainly sufficient cause for us to drop the proposition as contrary to the mass of human experience and the language we use to give that experience significance.

The last four questions ask, if content is not explicitly given in the artifact, is it exclusively a category of the mind or, on the other hand, does content mediate between the mind and the artifact being then dependent upon both for its meaning? The

proposition that content is exclusively a category of the mind specifies that while the mind can confront an artifact, the mind remains perfectly insulated against every sensory and ideational assault from without. The artifact, in this case, would then act as a "blank tablet" upon which the mind could project its own configurations and its own meanings. If content were exclusively a property of the mind, the artifact could not even have a catalytic or trigger function. If this were the case then not only would the significance of artifacts be in jeopardy, but all knowledge and experience as well. But this proposition, as before, contradicts what we know to be true. We know that knowledge and experience is the product of the mind's intercourse with what is external to it. We know that the mind's processes are exposed to the data of sense, and we know that the mind organizes and conceptualizes what it finds in the outside world in addition to bringing its own purposes and meanings to bear. To suggest that only in the realm of the art experience does the mind isolate and insulate itself is to talk nonsense.

We are left with the third alternative, which is - if content exists at all it must mediate between what is given in the artifact and what the perceiving mind brings to the experience. The mind brings to the esthetic experience an ability to perceive what is given to sense, and therefore explicitly given. The mind brings, in addition, the mass of its own conceptualized past experience

and the ability to arrange what is new and fresh within its own vast system. And finally the mind brings to the esthetic experience a propensity for making judgements, interpretations, and evaluations relative to its past experience and purposes. The artifact has three objective properties which are its material, its form, and its subject-matter. These three constituents are explicitly given to the perceiver. But, in addition, the artifact may be said to possess elements which are implicitly given. That which is implicit is, in Webster's words, "involved in the nature or being of something, though not shown, expressed or realized; virtual or potential; as the oak is implicit in the acorn." Something, then, that is implicitly given is a potentiality for further development. A potentiality or latency that requires the germinating energy of another element.

Content, then, if it exists at all, must, as far as we can judge, mediate between the artifact and the perceiver; i.e., content is the phenomenon sponsored by what is implicitly given in the artifact and by man's mental processes and needs. Thus the location of content should be clear, but we have yet to identify it and we have yet to answer the important question which asks, does content change with the perceiver and with time?

To define content we must arbitrarily break it up into its two constituent parts. First, that which in the artifact is implicitly given can only be the effect of what is explicitly given; namely either form, subject-matter, material or a combination

of these elements. Second, what the particular perceiving mind brings to the art experience is unknown and, at least for the present, unknowable. Let us consider whether we can properly say more. What is implicitly given, as merely latent, can only be the product of an explicit or objective element or a combination of these elements. It must be, in its latent stage, the product of what it is "attached" to; those explicitly given elements which comprise, if you will, the maternal responsibility for its growth.

In regard to the perceiving mind - we can repeat what particular minds have reported about their content experiences and, if we know enough about them, we can speculate as to the essential stuff which made their minds function. We can, in addition, examine our own mental processes and perhaps come to meaningful conclusions about what we ourselves have brought to art experiences. And we can opine, using what others have said and what we feel to be true, as to what minds ought to contribute, but we do not know and cannot know what an individual mind does, as a matter of fact, bring to the content potentiality of a given artifact.

Accepting errors in sensory physiological mechanisms, individuals do "see" alike; i.e., given sense data, people with normal sensory equipment will recognize the same set of sensory qualities, but how these sense data will be organized and used depends ultimately upon the uniqueness of the individual perceiver.

With so complex a set of data as an artifact provides, it can be said that people generally will see as a community what is explicitly given, but what is implicitly given requires a kind of fabrication to which each mind gives its own design and its own meaning.

The content experience of a twentieth century man contemplating a Rembrandt portrait will be different from that of a seventeenth century Dutch burgher not only because here are two different and unique people, but because here are two different and unique points in history. If minds are different from one another at the same point in history, they are necessarily more separate at different points in time. The artifact, it is true, remains constant as do its explicitly given elements, but since what is implicitly given depends upon the perceiver as the catalytic agent giving it fruition, and since any one perceiver is separate from all others by reason of his unique past experience, meanings and purposes; any and all content experiences are directly relative to the particular human participant.

The question which asks whether content changes with the individual and with time has been answered positively. It is perhaps the most important point, yet it needs very little amplification beyond what has already been said. We should add, however, that the argument rests on the uniqueness and delitescence of individual experience. Time simply adds another devisive factor.

Content in painting, then, has been defined as an interactive experience mediating between, and caused by, what is implicitly given in the artifact and what the mind brings to the esthetic experience. What is implicitly given is a potentiality that finds realization through the agency of a particular mind's experience, purposes, and meanings. The content experience is relative, therefore, to the perceiver and to time.

Subject-matter has been defined as "that part of a presentation which is its thematic beginning and, conditioned by development, its thematic conclusion." Subject-matter, as opposed to content, was further defined as an explicitly given element; i.e., as an element "in" the work of art rather than in the perceiving mind or mediating between what is implicitly given in the artifact and what the perceiving mind brings to esthetic contemplation. The levels of subject-matter identification as well as the kinds or types of subject-matter treatment have been noted. Subject-matter, in contrast to content, is susceptible to the tests of identification and description, and has, therefore, an objective status approximating those of material and form.

CHAPTER 2

THE PRIMACY OF FORM

Form in painting may be defined as a configurational variation on a subject-matter theme. It is the presentational part of a painting for it is the embodiment of a subject-matter idea. It is the corporeality of an idea either perceptually or conceptually caused. Form and subject-matter have, then, a necessary inter-relationship. Subject-matter is the cause of which form is the effect.

The painter, in choosing a subject-matter idea, selects an idea "open"¹ to the process of forming both in respect to the degree to which the idea is already "closed,"² prior to the painting of it, and to the kind³ of idea chosen. Having done this, he relegates the subject-matter idea to the legislative control of the forming

¹ open as potential, appropriate; lending itself to development. An "open" subject-matter idea is, then, appropriate to the particular painter and his time and lends itself to, or is appropriate for, the processes of formal development and presentation.

² closed as determined and developed a priori. A "closed" subject-matter idea limits, if not usurps, the processes of formal development.

³ The reference here is to the openness of the subject-matter idea; i.e., its degree of appropriateness to the particular painter and his time. Certain kinds of subject-matter ideas may be foreign, irrelevant, or anachronistic. For example, it is doubtful whether most contemporary painters could do more than affect a treatment of the Last Judgement or the Creation.

process. His idea will not be lost thereby, but developed and realized according to the demands of esthetic form. An unformed or ill-formed subject-matter idea is not art. At best it is only potentially so. A particular subject-matter idea will have only as much meaning as its phenomenal presentation (form). The discipline of subject-matter, then, is to make it serve the discipline of form. This is what is meant by the primacy of form.

Form, like subject-matter, is explicitly given to perception, but like subject-matter, the identification, description, and evaluation of form depends upon the perceiver's ability to apprehend and value what is presented. In the main, the "art lover" is "object-directed"⁴ or concerned with content experiences. He values form only as the raiment of common sense objects that he can identify and content experiences that he wants to help fabricate. He considers form to be merely utilitarian. Many cognoscenti, including painters, similarly derogate the role of form by confusing it with academic arrangement and pleasant pattern.

Form is not the garment of an idea, but is rather the embodiment and presentation of an idea. Form is neither academic arrangement nor pleasant pattern for both of these presentational

⁴ A psychological term referring to man's concern with objects of common sense and their utilities; e.g., a tree will not be considered as a potentially esthetic shape, but will be valued in terms of its location in a three-dimensional environment, and its usefulness as providing shade, hazel-nuts, and the like.

solutions conform to a priori norms or standards whose genesis is, at best, taste and, at worst, misconception. Form is not a solitary quality for each formal solution is unique. What is not unique, however, are the elements that comprise pictorial form. These are, if you will, given to man by his processes of perception.

Painting to be, "is to be perceived." What is perceived is an idea ordered, unified, and structured by and for man's perceptual requirements and needs. A painting is esthetic to the degree that is gratifies these needs.

This position is, I believe, consistent with that of Professor Sherman as developed in his Drawing by Seeing⁵ and Cézanne and Visual Form⁶ in that it gives priority to the role of form in the creative and appreciative processes. It differs from, or, is an extension of, his position in that considerable attention is here given to the role of subject-matter as necessary to the significant functioning of the creative as well as the appreciative process. Professor Sherman's emphasis is on the "phenomenally given" of nature as transformed into the "phenomenally given" of

⁵ Hoyt L. Sherman, Drawing by Seeing; New York; Hinds, Hayden and Eldredge, 1947.

⁶ _____, Cézanne and Visual Form; Columbus, Ohio: The Visual Demonstration Center, The Institute for Research in Vision of the Ohio State University, 1952.

the painted surface. I would simply add the conceptually given subject-matter element. In either case, whether subject-matter is perceptually or conceptually given it becomes phenomenally given or explicitly given in the artifact. It becomes so by and through its presentational configuration (form) which is open to specification, analysis, and evaluation.

Explicit in Professor Sherman's position is his belief that the ultimate criterion in both art education and analysis is form and its explicability. Affirming this does not mean, as some of his critics have suggested, that for him the art experience is simply the perception of formal arrangement. It means only that form is what should be and can be talked about. As has been said I believe subject-matter too can be talked about as an explicitly given element, and what is more important as the logical link between form and content. Both Professor Sherman's position and mine accept content as the conclusion of the art experience, but exclude it from scholarly discussion because of its relativity to the particular perceiver and consequently its ineffability.

In Cézanne and Visual Form⁷ Professor Sherman has defined form as follows:

1. Form in painting (art) is a configurational abstraction, the principles of which are developed in terms of the structure of perception. This configurational abstraction is referred to as visual form.

⁷ Ibid., p. 4.

2. The fundamental characteristic of visual form in art is apparent unity, also referred to as perceptual unity, equilibrium, harmony. A given art form is said to possess perceptual unity when its component elements (shape, contrast, etc.) are so established in space as to create an apparent unity through their mutual relationships. This unity is a VISUAL FIELD STRUCTURE, which may be thought of as analagous to field structures of other physical phenomena (magnetic, electronic, biological, etc.)

There are two key ideas in the first definition. First, that regardless of the extent to which a particular configuration has conventional or symbolic references or meanings it has, as form, a certain independence from those references or meanings, that is to say that form is not limited or governed by its subject-matter genesis. It is an abstraction and therefore a re-presentation of that which initiated its process. Second, that the principles of form are concomitant to the principles of perception, that is what is to be "seen" must be constructed according to the physiological-psychological mechanism that "sees." In regard to the second definition only this much need be said. By his use of the term "apparent unity," Professor Sherman is emphasizing the phenomenal rather than the logical or mechanical unity of visual form. This last is important because it asserts that visual form is different from, not in degree but in kind, the forms, for example, of object-directed experience and mathematical equation. Thus, Professor Sherman rejects such a priori determinations of form as "the beauty of nature" (with the methodology of foreshortening,

linear and aerial perspective, symmetry and the like) and the pattern made to conform to certain stylistic norms.

In a "VISUAL FIELD STRUCTURE" the component elements (shapes of particular position, size and contrast (value and hue) become identifiable, through mutuality of relationship, with certain perceptual principles such as overlay, coincidence of edge, closure, and the like. The business of the creative, as well as the appreciative, process is to "pay attention" to these phenomenal relationships rather than to fixate on subject-matter meanings or private content experience.

Professor Sherman has quite properly and profoundly put the esthetic emphasis where it belongs - on form. To put it elsewhere is to contradict the phenomenal nature of the art expression and experience. To say this does not contradict what has already been said in regard to the efficacy of subject-matter. To repeat - a particular subject-matter will have only as much meaning (for the artist as well as the perceiver) as its phenomenal presentation.

I have said before that subject-matter is the constant companion of the creative process. This should be extended to include the appreciative process as well. The painter and the perceiver, however, need not "pay attention" to subject-matter because it is constantly given to attention. Subject-matter has a certain indefatigability which form does not. What we pay attention to

is dependent upon our purposes, and our purposes, in large part, determine the kind and quality of our experience. If, as a painter, my purpose is to paint a particular image and only incidentally a picture, I may achieve this. If, on the other hand, my purpose is to paint a picture and incidentally an image, I may achieve this. The question is not whether subject-matter is important. This has been established. The question is, rather, how to make subject-matter presentationally significant. The answer is to condition it by and through form; i.e., to understand the phenomenal relationship that is form and to act according to its legislation.

The act of forming requires constant sacrifice. What must be sacrificed are those tangential concerns that tend to distract the painter from his given purpose. Subject-matter ideas imposed upon the artist by his own romantic attachment to them, stylistic and technical mannerisms must be subordinated to the demands of phenomenal form. Only through and because of visual form will the painter's subject-matter idea, style, and technique achieve distinction.

CONCLUSION

This paper has been an attempt to formulate and present certain conclusions arrived at through seven years of graduate study. The paper is both an introduction to my paintings and an outline of a philosophical issue of wide current interest and more than current importance. Essentially, the problem concerns the extent and kind of communicability of contemporary painting. That contemporary paintings have meanings has been affirmed - we have, however, only alluded to the types of meanings present. The paper has concentrated rather on the language we use to describe meanings that we find or help fabricate. Thus, the critical terms subject-matter and content have been examined in order to test their efficacy and appropriateness in regard to the creation and analysis of the painting of our time.

Further, the attempt has been made to suggest the implications and connections of subject-matter and content to form. The primacy of form has been offered as a personal, though not necessarily unique, solution. Form has been discussed as an abstract configuration the principles of which are concomitant to the physiological-psychological mechanism that perceives. In this connection, the author has stressed the commonality between the creative and appreciative processes.

The past seven years of my graduate study has enabled me to develop both a philosophy of art and a way of painting. These disciplines have mutuality for my philosophy provides a criterion for esthetic judgement and my process provides the methods instrumental to esthetic attainment. The fifteen paintings reproduced here exemplify my philosophical position and demonstrate my painting process. They evidence my concern with subject-matter and form, and may substantiate my painter's purpose which is to form and inform simultaneously. This is my ultimate goal and challenge, and as such it permits and presupposes continued growth.

The young painter has a certain autonomy to develop according to his gifts and precepts. He has to make choices appropriate to his purposes and direction. Entirely too much emphasis has been placed by our culture on performance and precosity, and, as a consequence, the young painter has been persuaded to concentrate on "being" rather than "becoming"; a factor which may explain why much of our recent painting is premature, if not slight. If the young painter sets his goals higher than he thinks he, at the moment, can achieve, he may risk failure, but is less likely to embrace mediocrity.

The young painter must, in a sense, create himself while producing a series of paintings. He must realize his own personality and acknowledge its worth. He must be humble before the colossi of the past without being intimidated by their achieve-

ments. He must study and work, and above all he must learn the form of his art and, with patience and devotion, give himself to its discipline. He must also learn the difference between desiring recognition and soliciting it.

This dissertation represents the conclusion of my graduate work. More importantly, it marks the beginning of my career as a professional painter. I trust that my work will justify the patience, intelligence, and artistry of the men with whom it has been my good fortune to "see" and to study the art of painting.

The following plates are photographs of fifteen paintings submitted as part of this dissertation.

An exhibition of these paintings was held in the Ohio Union Terrace Lounge from May 12, 1957 through June 5, 1957.



Plate 1. Mother and Child (1956) 36" x 48"



Plate II. Bullfighter. 31x x 36"



Plate III. Quintet 48" X 60"

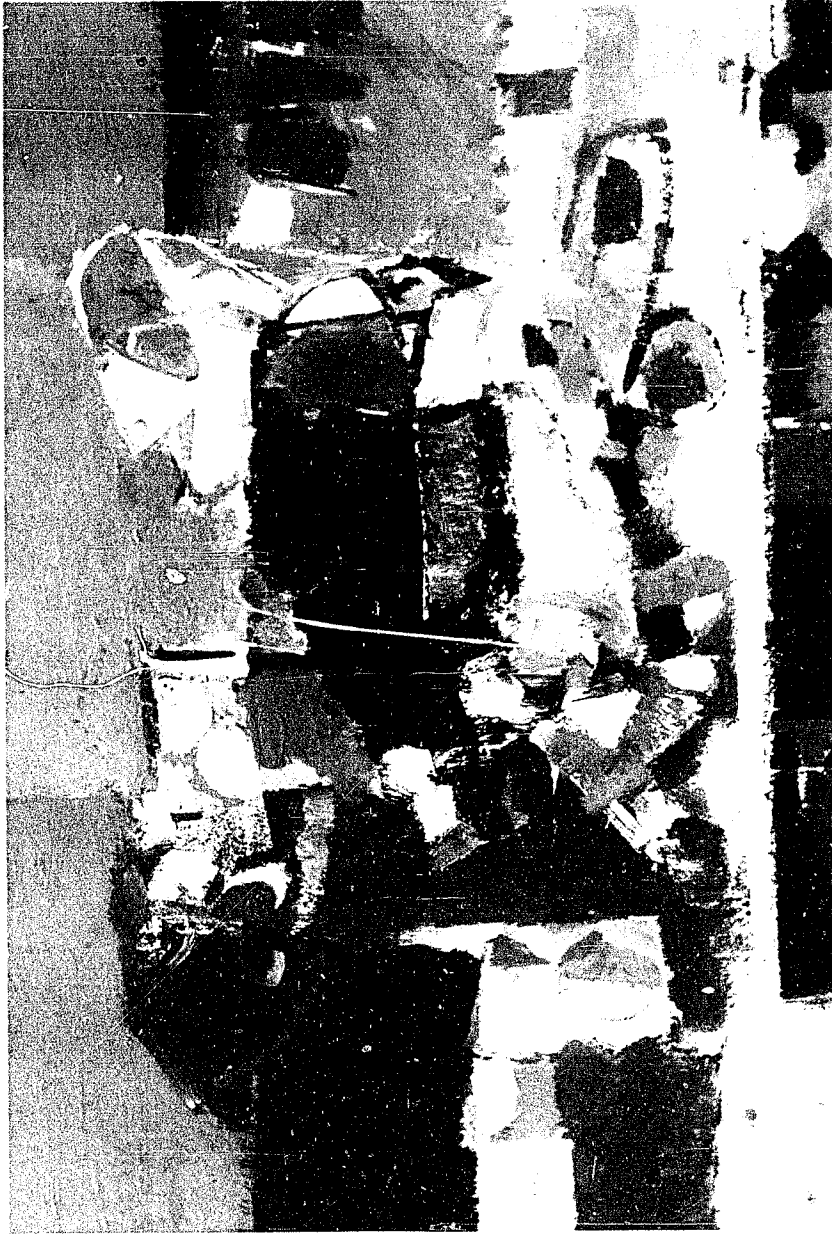


Plate IV. Blue Still Life 26" X 40"

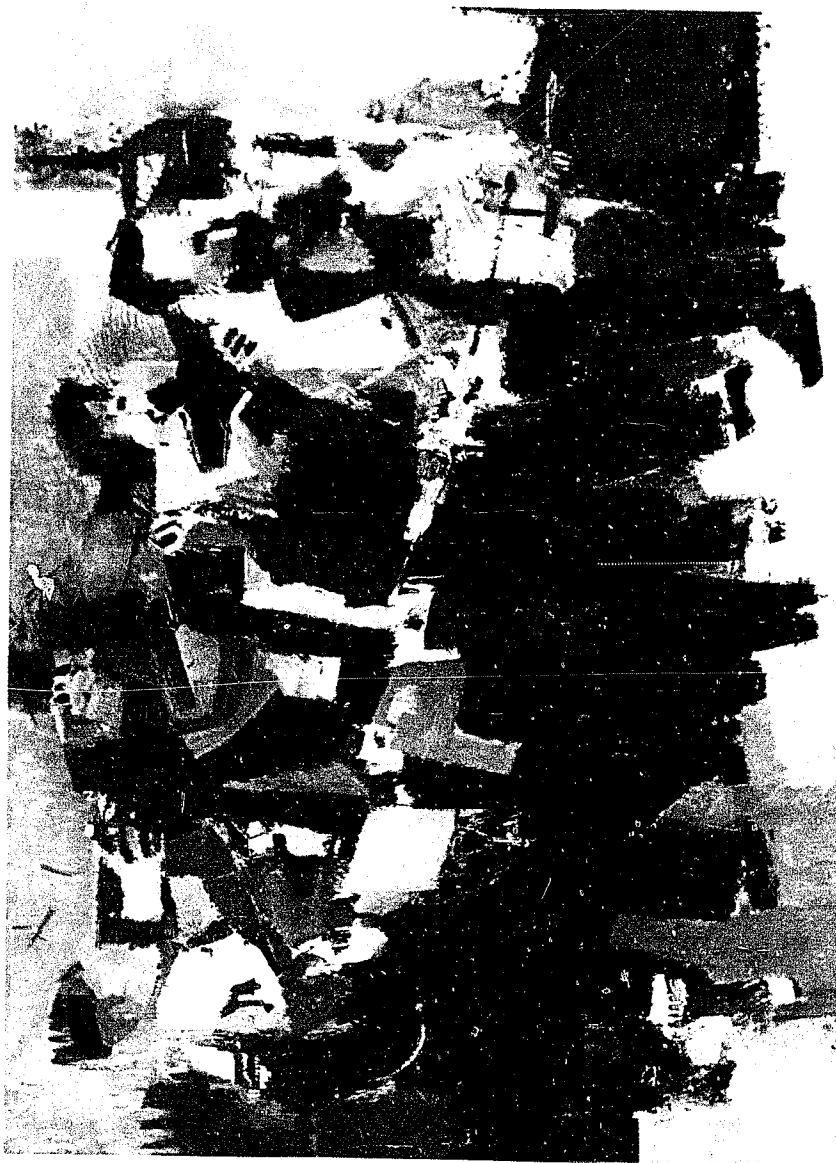


Plate V. Quartet 32½" X 44"



Plate VI. Two Beers 25½" X 33½"

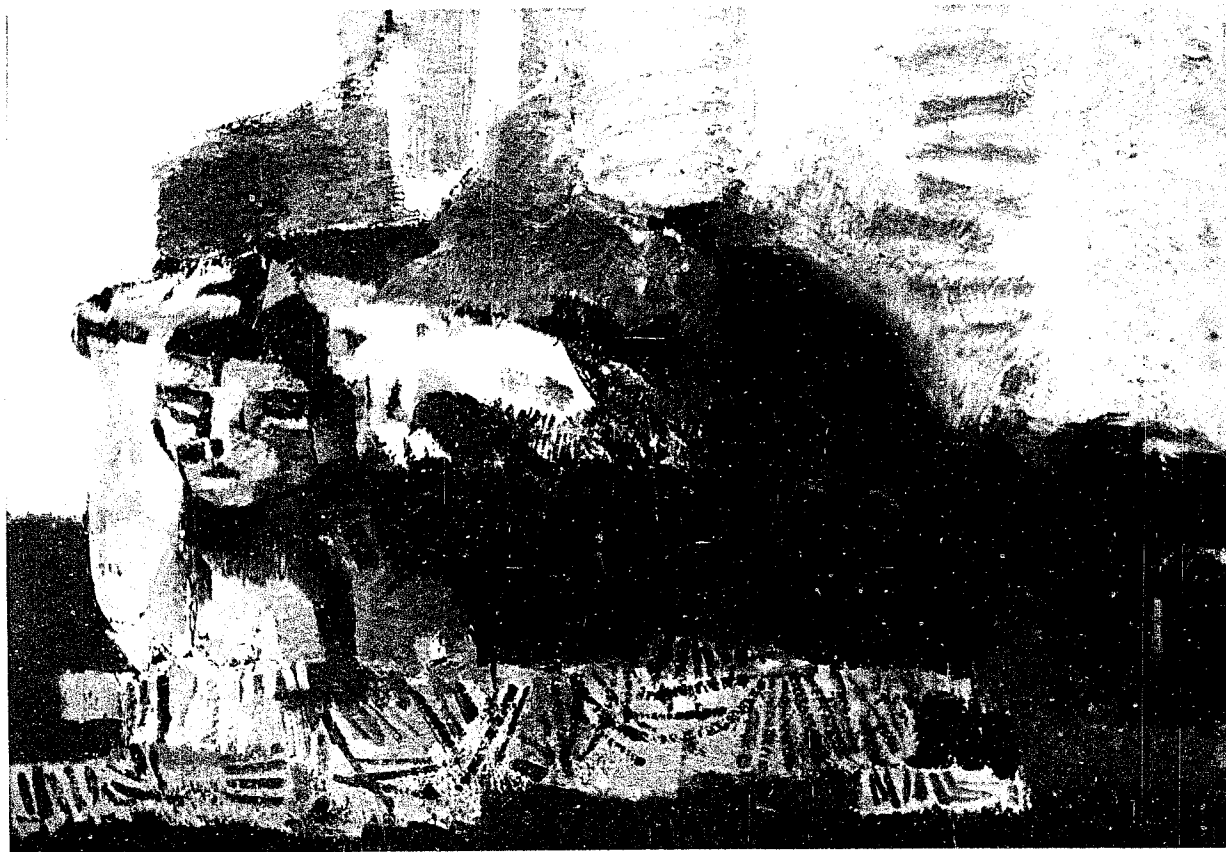


Plate VII. Brown Nude 36" X 48"



Plate IX. Waitress 36" X 48"

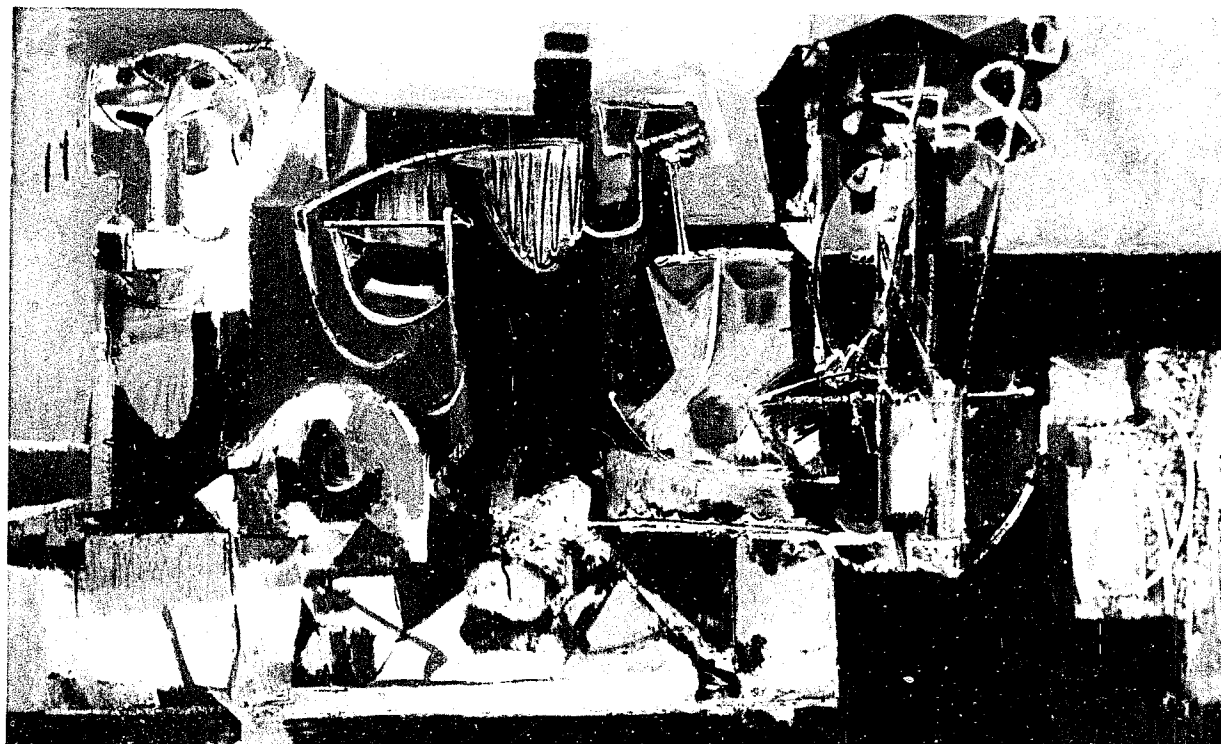


Plate VIII. Still Life with Greek Cast 30"X 48"

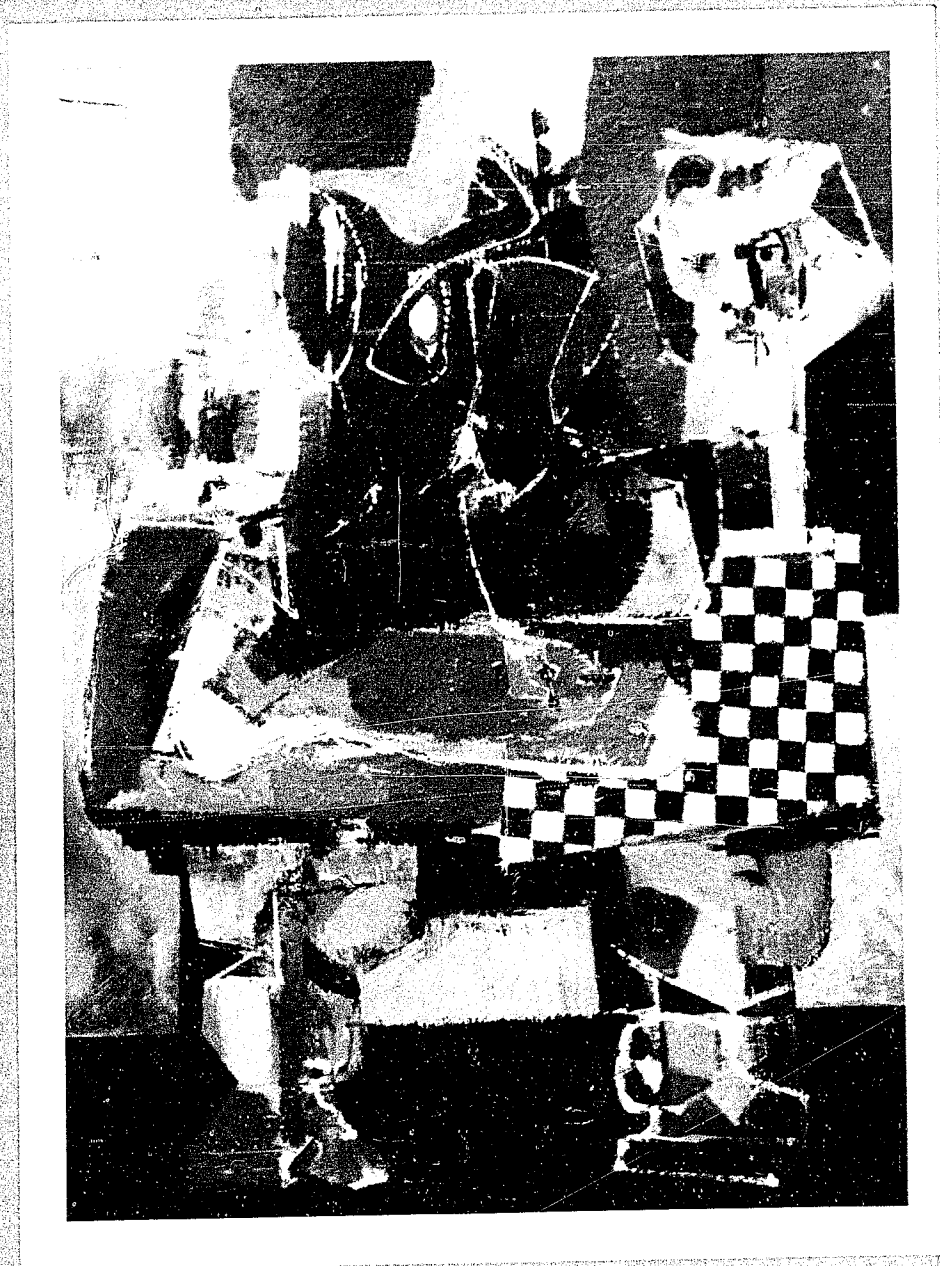


Plate X. Red Still Life 36"X48"

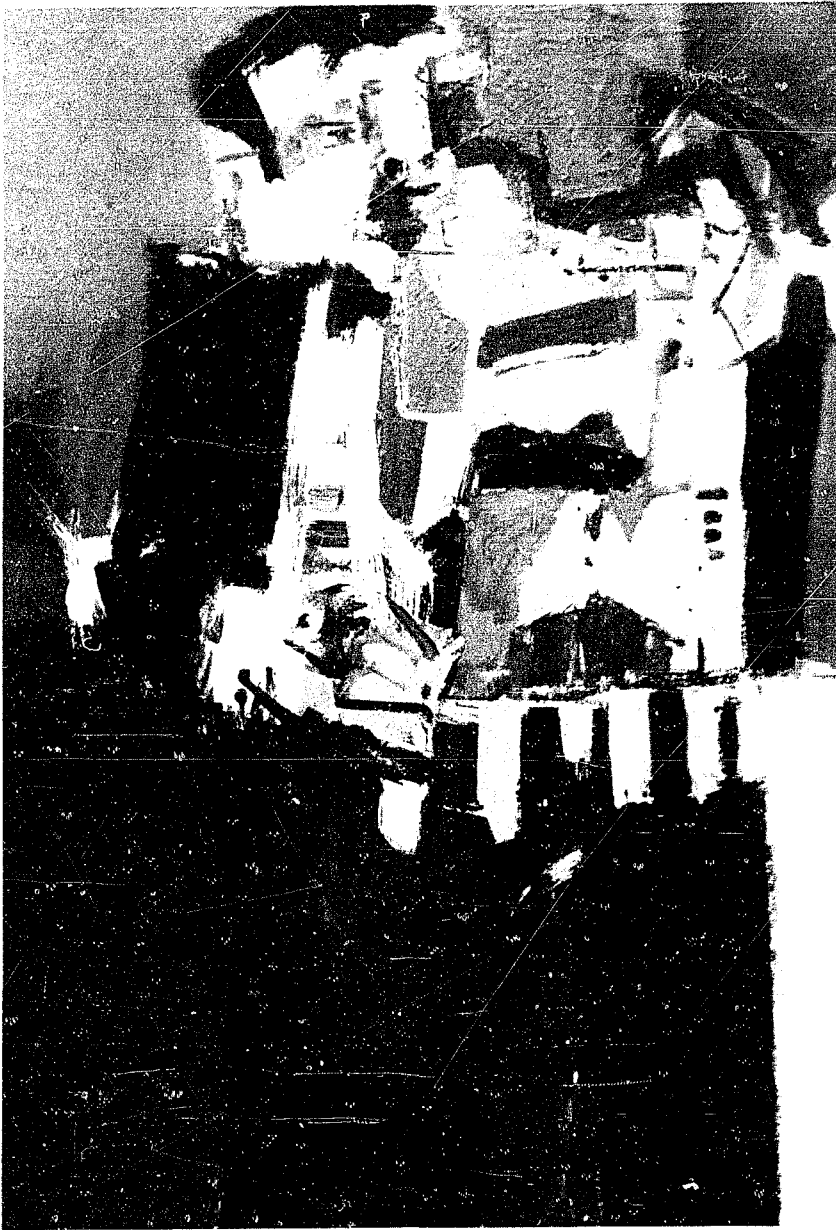


Plate XI. Violinist 32½" x 44"





Plate XII. Stripper 29½" X 48"



Plate XIII. Landscape in Browns 26 1/2" X 35"



Plate XIV. Funeral 20" X 36"



Plate XV. Mother and Child (1957) 28"X 30"

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I, Joseph Edmund Schwarz, was born in Hartford, Connecticut, May 13, 1929. I received my secondary school education in the public schools of West Hartford, Connecticut, and my undergraduate training at Ohio Wesleyan University, which granted me the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1950. From the University of Illinois, I received the Master of Fine Arts degree in 1952. While in residence there, I was a teaching assistant. In September, 1952, I was appointed Instructor of Drawing and Art History in the School of Fine and Applied Arts at The Ohio State University. I held this position for five years while completing the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy.