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This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of The University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

On My Development as a Painter Since 1971

Title

David Glenn Hines

Candidate

Art

Department

David T. Donaldson

Dean

July 14, 1977

Date

Committee

Robert M. Ellis

Chairman

W. H. Bayl

Walter W. Dallas

Howard D. Klee

ON MY DEVELOPMENT AS A PAINTER SINCE 1971

BY

DAVID GLENN HINES

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Art
in the Graduate School of
The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

August, 1977

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III

ON MY DEVELOPMENT AS A PAINTER SINCE 1971

BY

David Glenn Hines

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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By painting in a representational style, I have become more aware of the way in which I relate visually to the world around me. Exploring this relationship has provided me with a physical and mental activity by which I can establish a self-identity compatible with my personality and intellectual capacities. It also gives me the means to provide a worthwhile experience for many other people. I have explored these interests through a style which is traditional yet still seems to me to offer contemporary challenges. By taking attention away from the painting as art object and putting it on the world re-created within the painting, I hope to awaken in the viewer insights that I have acquired in carefully exploring the perception of objects so familiar to us as to be normally taken for granted.

For the past several years I have examined in detail my visual perceptive processes. I have particularly concentrated my attention on the perception of forms in space, situated close enough to be observed in full stereoscopic detail. I have deliberately limited my goals to specific problems involving reproducing the appearances of the world around me. I have searched for particular insights which would enable me to more fully grasp the unity of myself as a perceiving system and the systems of sensory data which define the objective world I see. I have learned that I see by building up a picture in my mind from information transmitted through my eyes, and that seeing is made clearer by appropriate intellectual approaches.

My paintings are records of my imaged grasp of the visually perceived world, made intelligible by analytic observation. They are about intelligence, perceiving: the human apparatus of consciousness.

By painting, I become less of a stranger to myself. Painting eases the burden of my self-consciousness because it is a tool by which I can expand that awkward self-consciousness into self awareness, giving me the means to satisfy an evolving curiosity about myself as a unique individual and my relation to the world around me.

Painting is a practical activity that allows me to make the fullest use of myself as a reasoning and intuitive personality. By painting in a representational style, I can explore very specifically the relationship between myself, the medium and the objective world. It is a spatial blueprint, built up within a mental space that I explore in most of my paintings and drawings. Paint is an ideal medium for me to concretize, test, and measure the mental process by which I perceive and conceptualize the visual structure of the world around me.

From meditating on my involvement with this structure, I have acquired a great wonder at the mere fact of existence as it manifests itself according to my capacity to be aware.

When I began studying painting in 1971, I had one foremost goal in mind, and that was to produce an art of high quality that would be as true to my understanding of myself - my potentials as well as my limitations - as possible. During the preceding years, I had come to a reassessment of my identity, of the way in which I considered myself. It had become necessary for me to understand more about myself, to be more objective about myself. The question of my adolescence, "Who am I?" had become "What am I?". I concentrated on observing how every moment of contact with the world around me created a "package" of interacting systems that was myself and more than myself; that I was in fact the fluid constituency of these mechanically interacting systems. By reflecting on myself in this way, many of the values I had assumed about life dropped away. I learned about the practical virtue of intellectual humility. I discovered the need for a conscientious ascertaining of truth and a tenacious attempt at understanding. Life in many respects became less gratifying, but I found myself becoming more curious about it, more filled with wonder.

I tried to approach painting with the same objectivity with which I attempted to approach myself. To produce an art of quality, I believed that it would be necessary to search out strong justifications for painting and to build my art on those. I was afraid that if the reasons for producing art were to become trivial, it would lead to a trivial art. I concluded that a justifiable painting would be one that would stand as a revelation of personal and universal truths. The

justifications I sought were two-fold. The first was highly personal, viz. that painting would have to be a tool by which I could truly understand more about myself. The second was objective and historical: I wanted my art to have a value in the context of modern styles. Working to realize and unite these two aims has been the guiding motive behind my studies. Yet I also wanted an art with which a wide cross section of the population could identify. I didn't necessarily want an optimistic art nor a pessimistic art, but rather one that would place us accurately in the physical universe of which we are a part. I wanted the viewer to experience my own meditations on this involvement. To facilitate this experience for the viewer, I attempted to achieve an exact and detailed representation in my paintings. This attempt to achieve extreme detail was done in order to involve the viewer at levels beyond what he may be immediately conscious of yet still be perceptively sensitive to. It was also an attention getting device, inviting the viewer to concentrate on the objects in the painting rather than on the paintings as objects, getting him past the picture plane as quickly and as effortlessly as possible.

The simplest approach to my goal of uniting the aims discussed above seemed to me to lie in making as factual an exploration of my perceptual interaction with the visible world around me as was possible. I wanted to gain knowledge of the logic of vision. I also wanted to gain further insight into my personal tastes, the tastes I have inherited from growing up in a non art-conscious household, familiar only with simple woodland scenes and pretty sunsets. The pleasure I take in the subtle color schemes of my still lifes may come from my responses to the beautiful sunsets I have experienced growing up here in

New Mexico. I do feel certain that the very lucid vision I seek to represent derives from the clarity with which forms appear in this thin dry air, flooded with light so much of the year around.

Working representationally seemed most amenable to my goals. Not only did it seem to me to offer the most complete training ground for learning the vocabulary of painting, but it also seemed to me to offer the greatest scope of self realization and personal growth. I also chose to work representationally, however, because I felt that representational art could offer challenging new stylistic possibilities. In my search for justifications, I found that I had to seek new reasons for painting representationally, but that an art manifesting these reasons could be vital. The most obvious approach to justifying a new representational art seemed to me to lie in the representation of challenging new subject matter presented with an objectivity approaching that of the camera. My idea was not to challenge the camera but rather to discover what kind of camera a human being can be, how my perceptual recording is similar to and differs from the mechanical recording of a camera and film. My search involved using "modern" subject matter such as freeways and the interior of refrigerators. At this time - in 1975 - I was working fairly large, and I was having trouble controlling the paint surface on such a large scale. Robert Ellis suggested that I concentrate on small paintings to simplify my approach and clarify the problems. I did this, and the results have been satisfying. My work since that time has acquired a direction and coherence that has made me aware of many of the things I am discussing in this thesis.

The spatial calculations by which I conceptualize visual structures

are in terms of shapes of values and color, measured on a yardstick of light relationships from white to black and a chromatic spectrum from yellow to yellow-green. I also attempt to achieve a sense of tactility by precisely focusing on the surfaces of the objects I look at. I attempt to "feel" the form and space which my vision seems only to imply. I do this to know the object and the space it occupies as completely as possible, and to be able to calculate proportions more exactly. In a sense, I carefully bend my mind around the planes that I describe, measuring and connecting the plane I am exploring with the previous planes stored in my memory.

By painting simple objects, I have become accustomed to seeing forms in a way appropriate to translating them on a two dimensional surface. This involves seeing an object both in its general shape and in detail. I have arranged strong light sources on most of these objects, sometimes using two or more light sources of warm and cold colors to enrich the design. I do not paint from photographs because photographs do not allow me to explore my stereoscopic vision, nor the experience of tactility discussed above. Yet as I mentioned previously, I am influenced by the objectivity of the camera, and attempt to achieve a comparable objectivity in recording my own perceptions.

Unless I do a detailed drawing on the panel first, most of the first hours of a painting are spent determining the shapes with only an approximation of colors and values. Once I feel the drawing is precise, I search for the "limiting factor." This always involves the relationship between color and value. An example of a limiting factor would be where a low value color (for example, blue) is in strong light,

a high value situation. It is a limiting factor because of the limitations of pigment to duplicate the appearance of real light. In this example, I would adjust the value of the blue so that I had maximum high value with minimum loss of hue intensity. Once I am satisfied that I have achieved this, it determines the adjustments I make to every other color in the painting.

Many of the objects I paint are chosen to maximize the challenge of limiting factors. This is also true of the conditions of illumination in which I put them. Thus, I often choose objects of low-value colors and flood them with strong light. This forces me to achieve clarity through very subtle yet precise value gradations within a limited value scale, avoiding extremes of light and dark. I am especially at pains to avoid placing the objects against backgrounds of low illumination. This would give me the widest range of values to work with and would make the challenge too easy and the painting (in my opinion) trite and visually boring.

My paintings are attempts to arrive at conclusions about the identities of objects. They are really paintings of the thoughts of objects inasmuch as they are attempts to concretize the identities of objects in terms restricted to my visual perception of them. They are attempts to clarify these identities. This view of objects is separate from the habitual utilitarian concepts by which we normally relate to them. It is more the phenomenological view of an object's essential "thing-ness", intuited by our minds as the object manifests itself in consciousness.

I enforce the presence of many of the objects I paint by placing

them in the center of the picture on a smooth surface of ambiguous dimensions. The space surrounding the objects isolates them from the world outside the painting, helping me to create a separate world, focusing attention on the objects alone. Against the ambiguities of the surface they rest on, I attempt to re-create the experience of perceiving these objects in their unique appearances. This is the essential experience that I wish to bring the viewer to - a meditative reflection on his own perceptual involvement with the visible world.

DAVID HINES
STUDIO WALL W/ PLATE GLASS

o/c
l. 28" x h. 22"



1977

APR 7707

26

DAVID HINES
OBJECTS ON MIRROR

o/c
pencil l. 28" x h. 13"



1977

APR 7701

27

DAVID HINES
LIGHT BULBS

o/c
MASONITE l. 20" x h. 17"

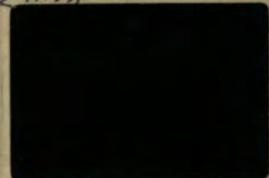


1977

MAY 7706

DAVID HINES
DRESS ON STUDIO WALL

o/c
l. 72" x h. 48"



1977

MAY 7706

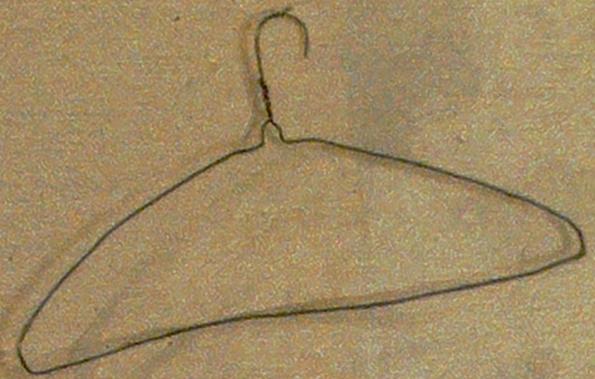
DAVID HINES
STILL LIFE W/ PLATE GLASS

o/c
MASONITE l. 11" x h. 8"

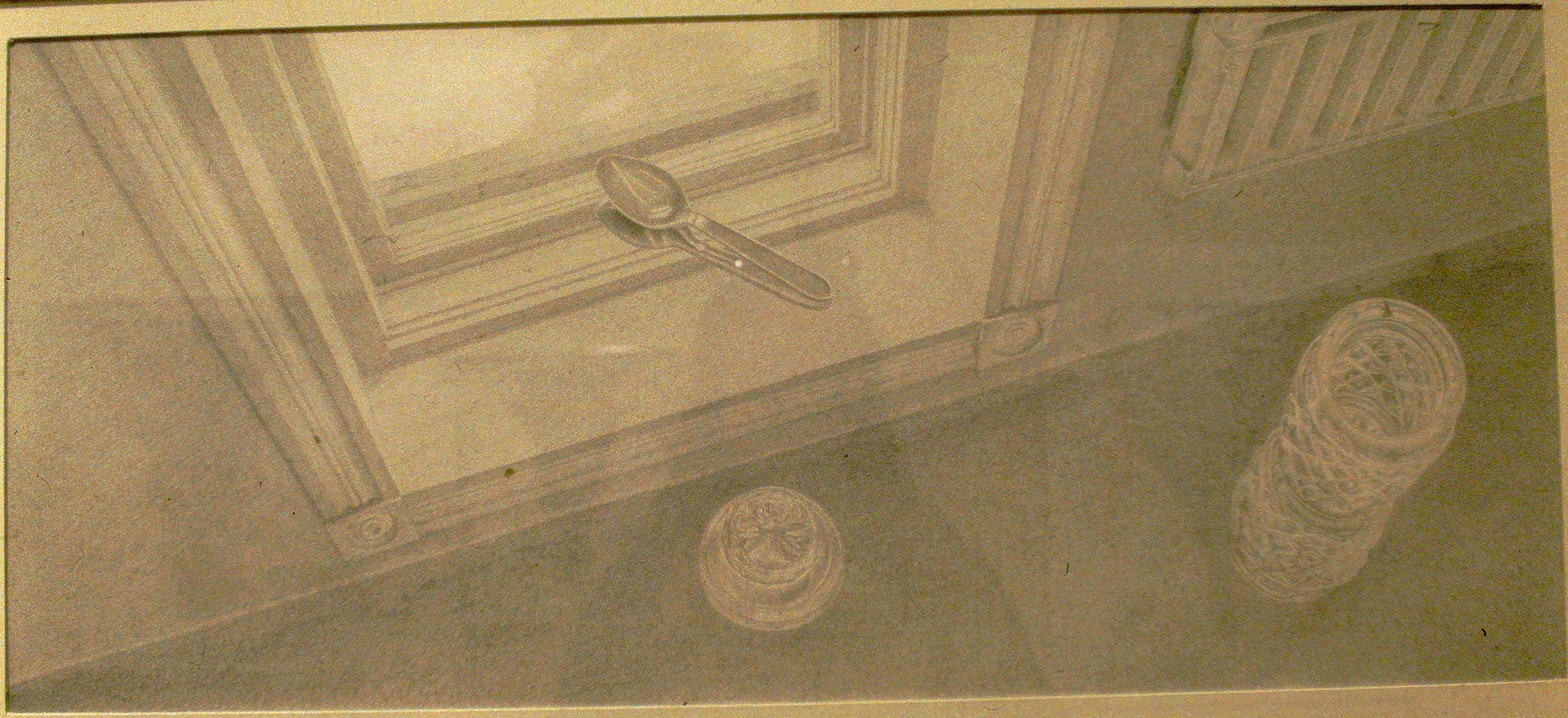


1976

MAY 7706



DAVID H.
STUDIO
OIL ON





DAVID HINES
Two LIGHTS.
OIL ON MASON





DAV
SE
On