

When and Where Paint as Matter Matters

Cynthia Chapman's painting, *Like Passing Ships*, 2009, Oil on Canvas, 48" x 48", reminds me of something that Roald Nasgaard [1] brought to my attention. And, it is a specific paradigm that is perceived through the notion of "action as event."* Yes, it is the paradigm as a painted pattern outlining the boundary of an event in the time and space of the observer's immediate but transitory existence. But, for sure, the experience of the experiencer* is not fixed and deterministic but is ever changing like a river that we have stepped into and out of only to re-enter if we choose to*. Yes, its part of our nature to return to things and reconsider and absorb them at a latter date. We do this with a host of things like with returning to our favorite books, paintings, films, music, and videos.

Yes, but the challenge is that there is a few possible ways of analyzing the aesthetic order that Chapman's recent paintings reaffirm. One such possible interpretation is that with Chapman's *Like Passing Ships* the format of the colour presentation implies a perceptual model of distancing. Like things passing in and out view, perceptible to being less so, faint through to being strong. Thus, we see lighter tones in contrast to the darker tones. And, this, in turn, suggests that things are seen at marked but different distances within one framework the narrow but formal space of the painted surface of the canvas. This narrow abstract space of the surface of the painting differentiates between things seen a far and from up close. Yes, but are seen in relation to one another in a vertically stacked panorama in relation to the perpendicular* that suggests a repetition of movement. This added dimension of movement brings to mind what Walter Klepac [2] brought to my attention regarding the notion that a painting can have "no paraphrasable content."* Meaning, that viewer's can't get a literal fix on what it is they are looking at. This means, viewers can only know some things in relation to the whole at any given time. Yes, viewers are subject to coping with the limit of the boundary defined by the visual elements contained within the whole. Such can only be comprehended and absorbed within the circumstance of the viewer's time-based experience as observers. The degree of which involves the idea that the viewer's perception is relative to their actively generating their position of observation*.

Yes, heavy weight* paintings that function like this are, for the most part, difficult for most viewers to get a grip on. But, this painter has brought to viewers the expression of an art form imparting the emotional value of having an open heart and mind that are informed by a trusting nature. [And, in the 1970s the terms honest and direct were, commonly, fallen back on to describe works of art that called upon viewer's critical sensibilities.] Additionally, her preoccupation with totalities is familiar, accept, in this case, has been adapted to the issues and concerns of a contemporary abstract painter. You could say, it is like an, updated, but Modernized Mandela* squared. All of which indicates an artistic, but psychic process that moves through to this artist's self-identification with the autonomy of abstract painting*. Thus providing an example of a preferred way of being in the world. Yes, it all points to the necessity of holding on to being a real person doing real things in the world that matters; has significance for others.

Yes, her painting affords to herself and viewers alike the fundamental means of bringing order to thought that without our having to work with would otherwise ensue and or implicate us in a chaotic, disorganized, meaningless, impoverished existence. After all, I think it is safe to say that most prefer to and realize it's important to find out through a plan of action how and why we need to make sense out of life. And, that is what the painting of the scope and dimension of Chapman demonstrates to us. Yes, there is more to painting than having a pretty picture on the wall. Oh yes, great paintings offer to us the means to make sense out of things. Happily, some artists and viewers can come together in a harmonious understanding and appreciation of the nature of a subjective but rational experience of art that takes us into the world: beyond. Where and when we can discover the difference between the two questions: "What is a painting?" by contrast to "When is a painting a painting?"*

Well, there's a possibility that a painting is a painting when painters create a painting as a container for an unconscious projection. Meaning, that an unconscious projection is a sign of knowledge being accepted by an individual at the unconscious level that was not previously understood or appreciated at the conscious level. The form that unconscious projection takes on may feel like a harpoon piercing an individual's heart. It may take many years for an individual to come to terms with the significance of such a psychic phenomenon. And, a possible interpretative example may come by the way of Vincent van Gogh's *Church at Auvers 1890, Oil on Canvas 74 cm x 94 cm*, located in the Musée d'Orsay, Paris. [In the 1970s it was located in the Small Louver in Paris, France.] With this painting you will notice that the technique, and, the yellowish-green colours that the artist applied to the outer structure of the church are the same as the earth upon which it was placed in the picture. This may, very well, be a symbolization of a feminine archetype. Such is reaffirmed by the fact that the garbs of catholic priests share the same signification being that of the mother church. All in all, this may point to the notion that a painting can be a container symbolizing an unconscious feminine archetype [5]. In my estimation Vincent's love of painting propelled him towards the extreme upper limits of expressing and/or defining a fundamental but underlying principle so essential to the distillation of the essence of modernist painting. Such had, coincidentally, placed him in the avant-garde.

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But, before an individual can get to the level wherein he/she can acknowledge and appreciate the possibility that a painting can be a container for an unconscious projection the gods will demand that he/she do their homework. Yes, for sure, the gods are all the living and dead great artists. Without a doubt, their responsibility is to protect the dragon that in turn protects the treasure – knowledge - of the collective unconscious. And, if any one attempts to enter into this dimension without first having paid their dues they may, very well, be turned away. Such a denial may be presented to individuals in the way of a

set of symptoms that has the effect of restricting them through to possibly paralyzing them. Such may result in dizziness, a fainting spell, and/or the sensation of their sight being impaired in the short term. For example, this type of psychosomatic sickness may happen to a person when they, unwittingly, without being prepared, try to enter into the Delacroix Room at the Louver in Paris, France. Yes, when an individual acts without knowing what they are doing it will be a curse. And, this is applicable even if men or women are unconsciously innocent. That will not excuse either of them. Consequently, an attempt to view the works of art of a great artist such as Eugène Ferdinand Victor Delacroix may, very well, result in the gods picking on those who are not aware of their transgression(s). Yes, rightly so. Because, it may take artists a long time to work through to being able achieve the rank that we identify with being a first ringer. [6]

Before closing, I would like to discuss my commercial exhibition entitled, *Paintings and Objects 1992* held at the Christopher Cutts Gallery in Toronto, Ontario, Canada: wherein a peculiar emotional experience came over me when I as installing the works exhibited in that show. And, after reflection, through to a few days latter, I came to the conclusion that I had come face to face with the intimacy mirrored in my approach to the making of my art. From this, I reasoned this to be, as Don Judd pointed out, that my preferential method of approach to the making of my art was a very personal matter: and, still is to this day. Furthermore, without a doubt, this insight had confirmed who and what I am as an artist. Such an affirmation, to be sure, may only be enjoyed a few times in the course of an artists' life. For example, when I was making the *Mass Plain Black Paintings 1976-77*, while working and living in London, Ontario, I experienced an overwhelming revelation that came in the way of feeling that a great weight had been lifted off my shoulders. I have intuited that such an epiphany was the consequence of my having made an intuitive leap in the development of my art making. Thus, such knowledge has compelled me to take on the attitude that it is necessary, as a matter of course, to always maintain the role of defining what a work of art is. Such a strategy has propelled me, through thick and thin, to move from one level of art making through to the next, over the last forty years. Furthermore, I believe that Cynthia Chapman may, very well, prove to be an artist of similar caliber. Yes, she has the capacity to take on the world reality needed to surmount the issues that we recognize as having significance for present day abstract painting. * In the words of Lamanna, Cynthia Chapman could, very well, prove to be what he described as a fast runner. [7]

Ron Martin © Tuesday, September 9, 2011. Approximately: 10: 41 AM
2,290 Words. Unedited.

Footnote Notes:

1. Roald Nasgaard is a contemporary art historian living and working in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
2. Walter Klepac is a contemporary art critic living and working in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
3. Google Cynthia Chapman.com to see reproductions of her paintings.
4. Google Ron Moore Gallery Artists. Then click on Gallery Artists to view the paintings of Cynthia Chapman.
See the example: *Like Passing Ships, 2009, Oil on Canvas 48" x 48"*.
5. Ron Martin's recounting and interpretation of the meaning of his experience of Vincent van Gogh's painting, entitled, *Church at Auvers 1890*. Then, installed at the Small Louver in Paris, France. This took place in the year 1971.

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6. Ron Martin has gone through such a process of initiation.
And, it was Donald Judd 1928-1994 the American Minimalist Sculptor who applied the term first ringer to
Distinguish or delineate the best artists.
7. Carmen Lamanna of the Carmen Lamanna Gallery Program 1961-1991 described the best artists as being the fastest runners. And, it is interesting to note that it is typical of strong feeling intuitive action oriented artists to move like a fast running comet or asteroid in the time and space of our cultural existence and, gobble everything up in its path without thinking about it. This is the danger that comes along with being a fast runner?

Notes:

- * This source of this quote comes through the formula of an idea brought to my attention by Roald Nasgaard.
- * A reference to the Greek Philosopher Heraclites, 5th century BCE

- * An accentuated but vertically stacked panorama of the painting plane predisposes the orientation of viewer's role as participants.
- * The critical source of this concept comes through the Contemporary Art Critic, Wallter Klepac.
- * See Ron Martin's Artist's Statement, Solo Exhibition March/April 2011, *All in One Series*. The Christopher Cutts Gallery. Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- * The phrase "The Experience of the Experiencer" is a concept that Ron Martin intuited through his series of watercolors named his *Table of Contents*, and, also through his *World Paintings*. These works date from 1969 through to 1973. And, he latter discovered in the 1980s through his reading of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery catalogue, entitled *Abstract Experessionism, The Critical Development that Barnett Newman had come to the same realization through his painting activity*.
- * The term 'Heavy Weight' was in the 1970s a generally accepted way of describing the toughest work. Yes, works of art not easily dealt with by viewers. Yes, art that was the most demanding of spectators.
- * This essay cannot be in part or wholly reproduced, copied, photo copied, Xeroxed, and/or quoted without the written consent of its author. These restrictions especially apply to the academic community. In short, any expropriation of this text will result in legal action.
- * Ron Martin referred to his *Geometric Paintings* of the 1980s as being like Squared Mandela's.
- * The author reserves the right to exercise a degree of doubt.
- * For better or worse: the author of this essay has intentionally declined having this text professionally edited.
- * The idea of the viewer's perception being relative to their position of observation is applicable to Ron Martin's *World Paintings* dating from 1971through to 1973.

* The author of this text would like to make it clear that the form of this text is not antidotal. In part, the psychic phenomenon discussed in this text has to do with understanding the significance of what it means to be an artist.

* It is not enough to be ambitious. Ideally, artists should be responsible for what they are doing at every conceivable level. That is why this text is intentionally directed, in particular, to the attention of artists.

End.