



PAINTINGS Book 1. With writing about painting.



All the paintings in the book were painted outside.

Francis Bacon once said: "Since the camera, painting has tried to deepen the game of representation". Painting was always, until the camera, a matter of portraying people, animals, places or the stories that connected them. The medieval church depended particularly on images to pass on the Christian story to the illiterate. There were of course great differences, great aesthetic differences lying across the basic intention of portraying. However, with the advent of the camera, painting became more selfconscious about representation, and in my view what was

remarkable in the 20th century was the enormous extension of the grammar and vocabulary of representation. Imagination must work on an initial stimulus: so thus; "at night, imagining some fear, how easily is a bush supposed a bear", so the magic of pictorial representation lies in how little is needed to "suppose" the "bush a bear" So what did painting do that bettered the camera, or at least, made it still necessary? Did it portray more profoundly, or fully in the sense of including an interpretation and a lived response? In the face of the camera, the Impressionists were an interesting case. On the one hand their paintings seem to borrow the casual and unpretentious

ordinariness of the new snap-shot view, while boldly, in the dabbing, cumulative nature of the marks, not try to hide the fact that they were paint marks and not in competition with photographic "likeness", and this in some magical way seems to trump the camera, (Pissarro's famous view down on to rainy streets), because the incompleteness of the marks, by some odd paradox, seemed to be all the more suggestive of what we see. They are eloquent in their shorthand lack of detail: something that maybe better approximates to our hasty glancing at the world. But whatever the case, in the face of the camera, painting felt it should be more interesting, more profound:



detail of 110 x 110 cms. Summer thunde storm coming.

and it was hoped that a painting might even have a better claim to the term "realistic"; as Bacon once did when speaking of a wave that he was painting and which he wished to be more wave-like than the waves of "mere illustration". Other painters after Impressionism went further "to deepen the game", as Bacon put it, and to counter photography's seemingly triumphant exactitude of "catching,"what is really there", and to give painting a more radical role (Expressionism, Cubism etc). Another pathway taken was that of abstract art which left representation, in toto to the camera and cunningly asserted that artists painted hidden realities!! For me, Abstract

painting is painting that is denying itself the "deep game". What interests humans is humans and the world we live in. We want response, interpretation, opinion, judgement. An abstract image that mysteriously says "I am what you want to make of me", gives up an important entry into the psyche. The endless justifying analogy made to music in order to claim that "pure" form and colour can communicate just as music's abstractions do, doesn't convince. Music is sequential and exploits relationships of key, with the order, emphasis of notes, chosen by the composer. Colour, form and decorated pattern can be pleasing or not but they have a much more limited effect than the mysteriously

possessing effect of music's controlled sequence, and which incidentally brain scans confirm. The composer twists this sequence of melody, harmony and rhythm into some formal pattern so that a majority of listeners will find themselves in a similar territory of feeling and response and in music's discipline of sequence, the composer steadily shepherds the listener's response. Its degree of focus and steady accumulation is quite different to the chaos of an abstract painting, and the haphazard way we scan all paintings; and abstraction is in the end meaningless because mysteriously too vague. For a painter, representation (in one or other of its myriad forms), is what narrows down and



focuses what otherwise would be too vague. It allows the artist, through reference to known things, to shepherd the viewer through his "deepening game" of oblique, metaphoric marks to new interpretation and meaning.- Picasso's figure drawing / painting and sculpture are marvellous examples of this expressive **obliquity**. Take the case of landscape painting. Landscape painting is elegiac: it seems to portray time. It commemorates what so conditions our lives: weather, the rise and fall of seasons, heat and cold, time of day, the passing of time itself. We also find nature and all the fugitive effects of day and season beautiful. In fact, the best landscape photos are those which have caught the most "emotional" effects of light or season.

A most important point for us alive now is that the evolutionary conditioning of our long prehistory, from which modern life so far removes us, must still affect us and you could say that it is still written in our DNA, and maybe for this reason hospital patients, it has been found, get better quicker when surrounded by trees or plants, and most striking of all, in a research by Beijing university, it was found that adolescents brought up with a significant exposure to nature were 7 times more likely to make successful lives in work and study. They found that what they called this "nature deficit" had effects on health and mental well being, and that 2/3 of Chinese under 30 to suffer from these negative effects.

The act of painting outside is interestingly matter-of-fact. Some wonder that "painting outside must be very relaxing".

Well yes and no. For a start, you are very busy and the constant change of focus and view from scene to painting palette is tiring, and often not very comfortable with a large board on your knees, then the weather and temperature, and for some strange reason, outside I seem to be impelled to paint quickly, and all this makes it a rather hectic activity. Besides these practicalities, there is the constant foggy worry that the painting is about to slide away from you because of one's continual uncertainty as to where one is going! The activity is full of hairpin bends, and as with a driver on such a road, that is what keeps the adrenalin flowing. Painting is an anxious business and you are driving by the seat of your pants, and then "damn", it begins to rain which sometime helps but usually you must wait with the painting turned upside down. (There are a number of paintings in this book showing the help from the rain!). One tends to paint from painting to painting, as if across stepping stones, and maybe one day's painting suggests another time of day in which to retry to "get" or capture that picture that you had tantalisingly seen, coming and going amorously out of both the raw material of the scene and the intentional pictorial effects in your mind. Sometimes you are so disappointed that you have "lost" it and you abandon a painting that may turn out to have interesting potential, and the next day you have a new start to discover the will o the wisp, "it". So one's preferred painting scenes are like traps that you might visit from time to time to see if they have caught game. You try and anticipate what this or that scene might render





. detail from 90 x 90cms: "From meadow gate towards Sean".

up as an effective painting in certain weather, season, or time of day, and what quality of paper would best suit. Although you always have a vague "idea", this initial vague plan, gets changed into something quite other during the course of the endless process of adjustments, as one goes from mark to mark. So in this general chaos, you have to be alert if you are not to lose a painting as you go; either through lack of the right concentration or by reason of a too inflexible prior "intention". Sometimes you just let happen what will happen and save the original intention for another day! So as you paint, you are on the look out for the emergence of something "like".

You could say that music or painting provoke feelings and responses that are mutable - never specific, though despite this, they tend to have by common consent, a focus on certain areas of human response. All we can say rather lamely is that a piece of music by say Hummel seems inconsequential compared to his contemporary Beethoven, whose music seems enormous with a significance captured within its sounds. Thinking of Hummel, all art forms are unforgiving masters, and relative failure awaits most of us. A person begins fairly early to try his hand in creating forms that please himself and maybe others, but to also gain a livelihood

from it may turn out to be impossible, so one goes on, despite difficulties, making the art just for the sake of the thing itself. Through that continual process of trying to make an image that you find, if not convincing, at least less unconvincing, a painter builds up what some call a style which is in fact a rather haphazard bricolage of procedures and habitual solutions. As one paints from picture to picture, one builds up a pi where we are certain that "it" has eluded us.ctorial language which, in a stuttering way, slowly edges us towards what seems to less inadequately say "something": we are not sure what, but certainly there are some paintings which are eloquent and poetic, and



some are dumb! As you go on, you exercise judgement and adjustment to what has been made and see what it is that you want the image to give off, almost like a scent from the flower of the represented "motif". In this slow accumulation of trial and error, certain procedures seem effective but in ways that one could never put into words and besides, the artist remains very bound to the simple handicraft of the endeavour, while edging towards some vague "it" of significance!

We want to MAKE something poetic; something that is worth the trouble of making, and which gives off something poetic. "Poetic" seems a useful word to describe what a landscape painting gives us. It's a representation, but also a symbolism of something more. Painting is a very particular form of metaphor. So Constable's paintings are both Suffolk and an indefinable elegiac something. It is this combination of portraying a real natural effect with a parallel emotional charge that a painting's mark-metaphors toil towards. Over time, the painter builds up a personal vocabulary of pictorial preferences which have a poetic undertow. He finds out what combinations seem to catch that quasi meaning or "scent". The marks, in their colour, form and rhythm are part of his drawing and his drawing **out**. What makes representational painting interesting (whatever the form of that representation), in contrast to "Abstract" art, is that the marks have a double role of portraying the world and of giving more by means of all the aesthetic effects available: rhythm, pattern, light-dark contrast, abbreviation, elision, emphasis, amalgamation, simplification, exaggeration, transposition; and all the tactile, sensual effects of water colour's suffusions of colour in water or oil paints smoothness or impasto. And all these devices must still adequately represent, while creating those oblique effects which make a painting interesting and poetic: all that which we should correctly call its "abstractions".! All representational painting is **already** abstract in the sense that paint and its marks are made to stand for the represented "real". The marks are abstractions because they are symbolic substitutes for the thing itself and for our responses to it; and since the marks are subordinated to this representational role, the abstractions peculiar to all painting can be READ because the represented things act as interpretative



detail of Snowy Winter sunset. See later page for whole painting.

key: (unlike those of "Abstract" art, where marks are merely and bombastically themselves: abstract abstractions!). So then, all these rhetorical devices of painting that I listed above, are servants of communication and of adequate representation, and in my view what was remarkable in 20th century painting was the enormous extension of the grammar and vocabulary of representation. Imagination must work on an initial stimulus: so thus; "at night, imagining some fear, how easily is a bush supposed a bear", and in a similar fashion, the magic of pictorial representation lies in the way we weave by oblique signs, significance into the familiar represented world that we know and for the most part, love. A final interesting point. There is a great difference between finishing a painting indoors and painting outside: as if by being outside one could, Shaman-like, conjure a presence into paint that was more than physical. So amongst a painter's dots, dabs, drips, dribbles, strokes, smudges and squiggles, a tiny thread of "something" may get wound into the handicraft of it. It is a stumbling and uncertain matter, and although the goal seems to be always receding and nothing made well enough, that in the grand scheme of things hardly matters; it's worth doing for its own sake: a thankful scribble to the world of; "I was here". But always, in discussing matters of painting, there is always a risk of seeming pretentious, since one's own poor daubs may seem to be claiming some sort of unjustified company with the "mighty dead"!

Here are some thoughts about "drawing". Drawing is a term that acts like a crossroads for thinking about painting in general. As I have just said, both little and big painters occupy the same arena and what "drawing" is, remains a question that anyone who either practices or likes painting is interested in. "Drawing" is a term that seems to have kept itself pretty much unchanged despite all the changes to art that occurred in the 20th century. Painting and sculpture extended enormously the scope of representation, yet drawing remains like a maiden aunt, behind the times; disenfranchised, kept apart, though despite it all, like the maiden aunt, deferred to! This thought came after reading a review by a well-known art critic of the Guardian, (Boyd) who, writing of Bacon and Sutherland could write, "Sutherland, unlike Bacon, could draw"!



Boyd wrote: "Bacon likened Sutherland's great portraits to "Time magazine covers", which Boyd thought merited his judgement that it was "a mean spirited slur that might have had more weight if there were any evidence that Bacon could come near to Sutherland's ability to draw" (!!). He went on: "Bacon's steady denigration of those artists that possessed this immense graphic gift is revealing". Strange polemic because in my opinion, the critic is guilty of that very vice. The various "distortions" of drawing in a Picasso, Matisse or Bacon are often considered **deviations** from representation and "correct drawing", and are often given the very unsatisfactory term "abstractions". Maybe we shouldn't use the term "distortion" either, as also giving a hostage to conventional thinking's limiting views on representation and "drawing". The point is that drawing as a term has to be enlarged to describe the extended forms of representation that were discovered by artists in the 20th century - "those compounds strange", (see the sonnet on a later page) and clearly we cannot leave drawing unaffected by that new aesthetics which Bacon called with a not very revealing metaphor, "deepening the game". The Guardian critic used the term "drawing " as if it were the bottom line which separates the men from the boys: as if saying, "well in painting artists get away with fudging, but drawing is drawing!" It's as if in Bacon's case, the paintings were less categorically skilful; whereas, "Sutherland could really draw", as indeed people often say of some artists. In a related way people continue to talk of "representational" as if it were a self-evident bottom line, like "able to draw". A pencil "draws". We are familiar with this notion that drawing is a matter of down to earth pencil, but in fact all marks, including those of the pencil are "abstractions" on which, properly speaking, all representation depends. The way "abstraction" was used in such a mystifying way by the prophets of "Abstraction" has had the effect of blocking us from making an enlarged definition of representation in painting or sculpture, which like "drawing" have been left with an old and narrow definition. The fact is that the late 19th - 20th century saw a marvellous extension (and recovery) of the means of representation, and representation, like "drawing" is much wider than is often allowed, and much that is gobbled up by "abstraction" is better viewed as an extended representation: those "compounds strange." Coloured marks in paintings must be



said to "draw" - they construct the image. They **delineate**, though that is a confusing term: in a painting each mark depends on the others: the delineation is everywhere. This is the way Cezanne, with his carefully cumulative touches, taught us to extend the notion of drawing. You could say that his actual "drawings" were very similar in their "touche" to his painting; and vice versa: that accumulating overlay of contours around "objects". Everything was "drawing". A brush mark may be pointed or wedge shaped, and so also "drawing". If it's a pointed brush stroke, we can assimilate its marks more easily to the notion of "drawing", but a broad mark is also drawing: like all marks, it sits within its surrounding marks, and is made sense of by them. The sepia brush drawing of a sleeping woman by Rembrandt is a famous example of how the rapidity of the marks made by the drawing hand are integral to its effect: a kind of oxymoron occurs; the speed of the drawing of the sleeping woman seems to emphasise the contrary stillness of the sleeper's steady breathing. If we think of coloured marks, as "drawing", then we suddenly realise that while coloured marks have conquered a wide freedom, poor "drawing" has been kept on an oddly circumscribed remit in our minds- as is shown by the Guardian critic. When I am "painting" with only a single black or sepia ink, that makes it a immediately more plausible to call it a drawing and here in a reversal, it is around "painting" that I feel I must put inverted commas. "Drawing" is the very important missing link. It is a term that is especially important to redefine in Cezanne, Cubism, Picasso and Bacon. We are used to thinking of both drawings and paintings of the human figure as being "drawn". The figure, the "outline" is **delineated** by pencil or brush, but I think that the series of paintings that Bacon did as variations on the lost Van Gogh self portrait of himself on the road to Tarracon, show in what way we should relocate the concept of drawing. (In the "Frosty day. Sunset", the painting is made up of a mass of overlaying stabbed dashes where these dabs create a kind of rhythm and counter-pointing, "flickering" "design", but yet these "abstractions" are disciplined by their subordinated job of representing bare twigs, catching the paling, late afternoon winter sun. However, abstract design (=non representational **pattern**), exists in architecture but also in representational painting where it can be a most important element!



We respond to the harmonies of architecture and of Islamic or Celtic decoration. Cubism, despite the over metaphysical, philosophical depth claimed for it, also uses "design" and pattern, but it seems that because of the vestiges of image (body, face, still life objects, guitar, etc), the "abstract" design of it ,amalgamates with the image, as if such images that refer us to real life, chime so strongly with us that we make something symbolic and interpretative out of that which in mere abstract painting remains merely pattern: the representational image digests as it were, the "abstractions". (As with the "Frosty day" twigs painting or this detail above of clouds). In Cubism, drawing is determined by a wished for harmony, pattern and design. At it's most interesting, these "abstract" constituents work as metaphor and /or counterpoint. Drawing in cubism includes the obliquity of design and abstract harmonies, yet the still present figure or face or still life referent is that which localises and specifies the "abstractions", much as the witty titles are so vital in "reading" Paul Klee's drawings and paintings. Keeping in mind this sort of obliquity and metaphor, consider what exactly is "drawing" in these Bacon homages to Van Gogh on the road to Tarracon and how it sits with that Guardian critic's view of "drawing". Of course an adequate description of drawing would include the function that empty white paper/canvas has. When I say that Cezanne's "drawn" paint marks tentatively build the forms, I might more vulgarly say, his use of the drawing convention of "shading" is used in order to create three dimensionality. But he also uses blank canvas to draw. There's a similar question around the function of the left-showing brick coloured "ground" in Constable's canvases which also are integral to the total effect and for which he refused the academy's request to "finish" (ie fill in) the gaps! There is an odd paradox that if you are interested in, as it were, the "grammar" of representation, then abstraction is a term you must unwrap!). Such gaps are a sort of drawing, so if we don't attempt to integrate all forms of "drawing" in a single aesthetic, we will go on contradicting ourselves and be running two aesthetics: one for "representation" and one for "abstraction". So the matter that needs better analysis is the meeting point of such vaguely used terms as "drawing", "distortion", "abstraction", "expressionistic". (All of them seeming to require inverted commas,.



All drawing and painting in the strictest terms is abstract; that is, partial and merely symbolic, but we shouldn't put a fence around some certain supposedly central "representation" and just lazily call a wandering away from it: "abstractions" or "distortions", because when better viewed, they are in fact the integral means of the extended boundaries of "representation" and of "good drawing", and which I take Bacon meant in speaking of "deepening the game". So a "twisted" and "distorted" Bacon figure, or a Picasso reassembled human form is redefining "representation", in a way which could not be carried out if we stuck with that journalist's idea behind the phrase, "Sutherland could really draw". In any big exhibition of Bacon such as that at Tate Britain, we have to decide whether the paintings are successful in the attempt to reach parts of our psyche that other versions of representations (drawing?) don't reach, or whether we think that they remain just arbitrary and thus, meaningless- "distortions". As another enlightening example of "deepening the game", I think of the relationship of the Impressionist paintings to the camera. On the one hand their picture angle had very much the ordinariness of the snap shot, yet clearly, (given the initial derision they encountered) the painters were doing something the camera didn't and couldn't do. Yet we now see their pictures and their use of broken colour as representational in a way which humiliates the plodding camera, and in fact "represents" more effectively than it. In the conversations between Bacon and Sylvester there are various moments when the conversation falls back on a metaphor that ends rather than extends the argument. So that moment when Bacon says that after the camera the artist has to "deepen the game" might continue so as to add needed detail to the vague metaphor since the it is left by Bacon as if sufficient and self explanatory! But it is not the best of descriptions since it makes the eventual painted image to seem like the outcome of an intended **puzzle** which is then to be worked out: like a brain teaser. Surely new artistic expression is **necessary** - it grows out of the interests, attitudes and feelings and consideration of what will best communicate to the viewer.

A painter wants to make an effective engine of expression - something he and others will find richly suggestive: that's to say, the "abstractions" (which all painting possesses) will seem suggestive and effective. Once more let's return to Bacon's homage to Van Gogh - those variant figures of the artist with his easel trudging along the road to Tarragon. In all of those paintings, the figure of Van Gogh is at best "scribbled", yet how "well drawn" I would like to say they are - despite their being so "rudimentary" or "distorted". So here we have representation and drawing in a quite new guise, yet one wouldn't want it to be any different. Of course like any one element in a painting, any detail "works" or doesn't work according to all the other surrounding elements of that painting. We could say that it all depends on the total economy of the whole painting's "abstractions". Consider the description accompanying a leaflet accompanying that Bacon series (Homage to Van Gogh) of variants on the Tarragon painting; . The way that the writer makes the connection between the shredded "scribbled" midday sun's shadow and a communicated feeling: "The artist seems to be both tired of his shadow and trailing fragments of it"! So then this image is surely a realism that reaches parts that others do not! If there are "distortions", then they are **graphic subtleties** because they deliver such a load of significant **meaning**. If we value the paintings of both Picasso and Bacon, then we must admit that theirs is a totally **adequate** draughtsmanship. The drawing uses, to quote the Shakespeare sonnet, "compounds strange" and it reaches parts like "Guinness" in the advert "that other beers", (or in our case, other "realisms"), "don't reach". In that Tate leaflet the critic bravely pin points the "meanings" that emerge from the **technical practicalities** of the representation. "The artist seems to be both tired of his shadow and trailing fragments of it". Marvellous! That seems fine criticism and art criticism usually lacks the ability to describe the emotional content of technical aspects of "representation"; the "compounds strange". Here, the rudimentary quality of Bacon's "drawing" constitutes what literary criticism usefully refers to as the "ambiguities" that a form of representation sets in motion and in Van Gogh's lost original painting, it is very clear that what some might lazily call "abstractions" or distortions, are in fact technical devices of

suggestive "drawing", though not drawing as is generally understood. In paintings, often "marks" are an oblique sort of "drawing". Some of the drawn marks work a little like counter-point in music: they are entwined with the representation. However, unlike the abstractionist who claims similarities with music and what he thinks (mistakenly) are its "pure abstractions", I think all painted marks have to pass the test of representation, but there just doesn't seem to be an adequate language to describe such oblique, (and could we say "metaphoric"?) drawing, which has been as it were, the submerged aspect of all drawing and an important strand of so called representational painting. That particular question of oblique representation is the heart of Bacon's or Picasso's paintings and the phrase: "deepen the game". I've always remembered the Herbert Reid use of the word "Haptic" in his book, "Education through art", on children's art. It describes a gestural expressivity: the immediate physicality of gesture - a sort of primitive urlanguage, similar in ways to those English monosyllabic verbs that seem to so literally imitate the sounds - drip, drop, slap, hush, crush, munch, crunch etc. These words are mimetic. Reid's whole system of classification of children's art "types" are seen as a mimesis of character and a rerun of all art history. The stylistic obliquities of each category of child art "types", communicates different feelings towards the depicted world, just as do, we feel, the historical phases of world art; so that all are "right" and none "wrong". What art criticism lacks is a sufficiently practiced and shared vocabulary of terms that would help us to read the ambiguities of contradiction, agreement and dissonance in such paintings as these by Bacon. Nor is Bacon's own concept of "deepening the game" any more useful. (One sees why Hobbes thought that metaphors should not be employed in history writing because they confuse an argument!). "Deepen the game" is given in the conversations with Sylvester, as a sort of shrugging off of further argument " - as Hobbes might have described such a dependence on metaphor. Consider those figures of Picassos' 1930's "bathers" that seem to reach parts that other "drawing" does not reach! Neither Picasso nor Bacon just deepen a mere puzzle "game", but they give us another realism! Look at the famous painting by Pissarro of Paris carriages under the rain seen from a 1st or 2nd floor window.

By dabs of accumulated "drawing", Pissarro creates an image that quite trumps the camera image at its own supposed excellence in showing us "reality". So what kind of drawing would the Guardian critic call that? Now it seems to me that in this matter (as is often the case), certain conventions are so deep rooted as to have become invisible and so not noticed because now seemingly "natural" and self-evidently "correct". What is a good drawing"? What does it do? Think of those strange conventions of shading and contour. How easily we read them off and so we object to being disturbed by newer conventions. We shouldn't be so sure that we can promote Sutherland over Bacon for his draughtsmanship. At a certain point in the conversations between Bacon and Sylvester, Bacon speaks of his attempts to create an adequate image of a wave that would not just be "illustrational", as he dismissively terms it, but might, as he terms it in another context, "communicate across the nervous system". That is a better metaphor than "deepening the game". In a way, it's the same cry as this in one of Shakespeare's sonnets:

"Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
So far from variation and quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new found methods and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same
And keep invention in a notèd weed",
As often in the sonnets, this is self-mocking: "barren of new pride", "new found methods and compounds strange": but it seems a similar idea to that of Bacon, looking for his new way to paint "wave" as never before painted; to make it seem fresh as "wave" had never been before.

Another useful phrase of Francis Bacon was, "the armature of the real". You could state the case for the importance of the armature of the real like this: when a viewer can locate what is being represented, then the artist can call up and then redirect the personal experience of that viewer by means of the myriad, oblique divergence of his marks: all those, in themselves un-meaning signs, those dots, dashes, lines, smudges, impasto, colour, pattern; and it is all these which feed back to give the "armature of the real" its meaning.

In a letter to his brother, Van Gogh gave this motivation for painting as: "an act of gratitude that I have walked this earth for 30 years". That's why we love Van Gogh and queue snake round museums. There is also a beautiful poem by Robert Louis Stevenson that well expresses a similar motivation. (see last pages). "The incomparable pomp of eve", "cloud galleons", "leaping sun, glancing rain", the "intricate device of days and seasons", and maybe painting outside is an attempt, Shaman-like, to catch a presence of nature rather than just "make art" of it. But it is hard to find much of this homage or thanks to the world for that "cheerful and changeful page", in the art of the last 60 years. These days, representational painting is not very central. Art has got cooler and colder and painting has almost disappeared from schools and art schools. Now conceptual art or "installations" hold sway: (a sort of hybrid of rudimentary philosophy/sociology and static theatrical presentations which resemble the frozen poses of 18th century "attitudes"). The mysterious aspect of music and painting is that they can seem to magically "say" something, though we could not say what; and all by means of a language of marks or notes, that unlike words have no carried over meanings. So a landscape painting must be made of marks that sufficiently represent the world that we know independent of painting: that is; what we might term the clever art tricks must not obstruct this adequate reference, otherwise the communicative connection will lapse into design and uncomprehended "abstraction" and we lose such things as "glancing rain" or "leaping sun", which by the way, are so present in Constable, the Impressionists or Van Gogh. We "everyday" painters can't get near the "mighty dead", but the motivation may be the same. You want a landscape to emanate a little of "day's declining splendour" or God's "cheerful and changeful page" with its device of "days and seasons"; to jog attention to "the earth our heritage", and perhaps to echo the gentle reminders of Ancient Greek funeral stones! "Pause traveller: I too once breathed the air".



detail of 110 x 110 cms painting on later page.

"What is art"? Why is it that some people "waste so much time" on something unnecessary or why generally, does society (though ambivalently) lay great store by it; either in schools - though that is fading fast - or as a barely comprehended "profession"; though at least it wins some (bewildered) respect because of the enormous sums that some of it earns? It is a hard question. Human kind needs to eat, to sleep, to protect itself against the many hostilities of nature and like all nature, is impelled to ensure its own procreated continuance, but art?! Why art? It's a question more modestly to consider as "entertainment", since many spend as much as 5 hours a day watching TV's "story art" of soaps. However, if we ask the hard question: "Imagine that this or that artist, musician, writer had never lived to pass on their now famous work, would your life feel the emptier"? Yes that concentrates the mind! Maybe the matter which the question addresses is more understandable and more manageable if subsumed into the general question of language. How different would our experience of the world be without that enlarging lens of our common language which enables us to focus on and share that world; both with and from others? (And similarly the countless customs and practices that make up a national culture: that too is a ground of common communication). Language and custom allows a two way sharing, and maybe it is language and custom that as it were "averages" experience, so that experience becomes less personal and individual and more something held "in common". The common coinage of a language, along with the culture's unstated attitudes, extends us all as it were, mutually; and *pari passu*. Take the language case of metaphor in the following passage, which mixes sensory and abstract categories.

"O sleep, nature's soft nurse, how have I affrighted thee
That thou no more will weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness".

I think that "there be magic" in such metaphor and that painting's marks tries to do what "steep", "senses" and "forgetfulness" are doing here.



Detail of Hawthorns. 100 x 100 cms on later page.

"Sleep" is the word that stands for a common, infinitely repeated and similar experience, but the figuration of a nurse bending to close eyes (as is done for those just died) followed by the reference to a totally different common experience in the verb "steep", whose meaning is the capillary action of a liquid that mounts into an absorbing dry cloth and used here as a metaphor for the over-powering, all possessing need for sleep and which the poet cleverly also chooses since the rhyme makes "steep" enforce "sleep"! A unique image but built of those common counters of daily experience and the language for it. Such poetic language use seems to chime as fitting with our experience and be at the same time illuminating and enlarging of that experience, like the ripples out across water from a thrown stone. I don't think that art "reveals" any so called spiritual dimension but in some essential way, that is difficult to explain, it gives us a representational simulcra of physical/mental reality that fuses a representational figuration with an interpretive superimposition and it works cumulatively - like language. So works by a Giotto, Shakespeare, Beethoven, or Van Gogh, make vibrate our memories of known life along with an enormous expansion of them that somehow (!) the art work's ripples set in motion! The exclamation "beautiful" is just our apologetic single word that stands for all a work of art stirs from the depths, up onto the surface of our minds. Because of this aspect of art being able to chord heterogeneous strands of our experience in a multiple singularity, (as for example does metaphor), it makes some artists appear to have some sort of shamanistic power to plumb depths otherwise hidden.

"For Orpheus' lute was strung with poets' sinews
Whose golden touch could soften steel and stone,
Make tigers tame and huge Leviathans
Forsake unsounded deeps to dance on sands"



detail.

Language and the arts are the great amalgamator, magnifier and trans-substantiator. All of our experience is coloured with such personal individual hues because all our memories are a continuously shifting kaleidoscope of superimposition of our one experience upon another, yet somehow the shamanistic touches of Orpheus' lute seem to set us all chiming together, and Shakespeare points out- immodestly (!), that it is the sinews of **poets** that make Orpheus' lute capable of such miracles!

Landscape painting should be enthusiastic, participatory, evocative, incarnating, celebratory, pantheistic-empathetic, even religious in a shamanistic way. A family member may suddenly wonder at a relation's artistic endeavours and ask, in the face of not much success; "what is he trying to do". The arts hold out this promise-mirage, to its humblest workers, that some day they will succeed in "saying something worthwhile"! Meanwhile we scribble or paint in spare hours really for its own sake or it would be too disappointing! Some maybe dream of actually making money from the activity but many just paint, or write diaries and journals to themselves as part of that **seriousness towards life** of wanting to understand the puzzle - and secondarily maybe to enlighten or to please others. That seriousness to life is well expressed in this of Schiller: "Each individual (regardless of art) carries in her or himself the potentiality to unify in themselves all that is ideally ascribed to a full humanity". Beautiful. Most of us that attempt any art find ourselves in the uncomfortable company of the "mighty dead", but that is not through any mad competitiveness, because the art of anyone, great or small, is always primarily a conversation with themselves about the world out there and as I said, an act of seriousness. After all, both life and death are too enormous to be passed over lightly!

These three details show all the liberties available to representational painting; the sheer joy de vivre that meaningful metaphorical paint can loose! These two details are of hawthorn trees before the wood, below the big meadow gate: how necessary it seems to place where the hawthorns were. Landscape painting is a celebration of place. That is why paintings should have a dishevelled quality, as if the place could not be completely tidied into "art"! That is also why I like dishevelled brush marks and "scribble". Here on the right you can make out



under the trees, the fresh nettles of spring. Every place has its specificity and it is respecting that which gives a landscape that pathos of loved, known place. After all, we are **particular** with experience and time's traces and that is what a painting celebrates: a kind of thanks to place. That truly is what painting has been for me. I so dislike painting that is just showing off its "sprezzatura" and arty brilliance. The "explosive" gratulation of these two details is a response to the expansive jubilation of hawthorn blossom in early June. Paint serves that.





To borrow Prospero's words, language, music, art "calls forth" the lightning interactions of life's experiences, as in this passage which shows to what extent our individual experience is felt as common through the communising vesture of language. Music, poetry and art try to imitate the shaman's art of Prospero. After all, language even at the level of "the thunder rumbled, and the lightning flashed" does "call forth" the thing!

"..... with whose aid
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimm'd
The noontide sun, call'd forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war.....". All arts are languages of communication. They are not just cordoned off "aesthetics"; they in some way describe life.
Hawthorns before wood. 100 x 100 cms





What is a painting? What does it do that can make it worthwhile? The artist Kandinsky pondering the same question, wrote an essay/pamphlet; "Concerning the Spiritual in Art". (the German, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* is much less dualistic since "Geist" means also intelligence in German. However "spiritual" does catch Kandinsky's claim for a special sphere). For a long time art was considered a "spiritual" undertaking and the spiritual as being the chief lymph of art: that which the art work brought to light. But it is so vague a word. What is spiritual? Where is it? I think that it was an unhelpful upside down formulation. I think all the arts are highly **corporeal**: they celebrate the being-aliveness and the body sensations and anxieties of being alive. Novels and plays deal with the bric-a-brac of daily life which literary works test, bringing certain virtues and vices to light. They explore the vicissitudes of life. They are explorations of life's quandaries. Art and music are less obviously about anything. If we give such high sounding justification for literary works, what is left to art and music? Music is the most different. It deals in the abstract, "meaningless" sounds of instruments that play, (sometimes- scores), and whose sounds, if they have a meaning, are ones that cannot be translated into self evident "meanings" and remain what they are - sounds.

Here is another comic descriptions of music's unfathomable power from **Much ado about nothing** about the strings of instruments. "Is it not strange that sheep's guts could hail souls out of men's bodies?" "Strange" indeed, for music does provokes profound thoughts and feelings without the help of words or clear meanings. Opposite: and above, details of paintings 100 x 75 cms. Whole paintings on next pages





detail of large Tom's bank 110 x 110 cms.

For the most part Art History deals with figurative painting and sculpture but even there, what has interested most are the intangible effects that the image carries beyond the mere image and its reference to "real life": all that we mean with the exclamation, "beautiful". In fact the invention of photography has made the **more** evident what painting and sculpture are NOT. A painting binds to an image an interpretative addition. So a landscape painting represents a "scene", but also mood, feeling, response, co-involvement, a mimesis of physical presence so that the viewer has a sensory participation that might have been felt in that imaged situation, moment or place. So in the first two large paintings in the book, there is a scene that though recognisably related to a photo of that place, also contain a mood, a feeling that you could call elegiac. The heart of Painting lies in how so much human psyche gets tangled into the represented thing or the mere physical paint; (or the mere notes of music). There are three instances that come to mind that might locate the problem better. At one point in his conversations with the art critic David Sylvester, Francis Bacon is talking of wanting to paint a wave so wave-like that it would out-do what he depisingly calls (mocking Graham Sutherland), "mere illustration". So here Bacon is indicating a sort of representation that despite being not representational/illustrational", seems a much **fuller** representation of wave -as **we** feel it. Interesting paradox. Keeping this idea in mind, think of a painting by Van Gogh. There is a similar push towards an extra dimension in his representations: think of his twisting cypresses or corn field and swirling clouds which seem to transform the scene into a nature permeated by a pantheistic force, either of nature or infused into it, making us interpret it in some "spiritual" way; (though "psychological" is less dualistic since painting is really **body/mind** provoking). In similar vein, Fuseli remarked that when standing in front of a Constable landscape, he felt he needed to be holding an umbrella, to protect him from the fast approaching rain clouds. These are three examples of a physical, painterly emphasis or exaggeration given to the representation which we feel as a powerful interpretative force. Music works on us by rhythm, key variation, tempo changes, and the



progressive unfolding of melodies and harmonies or volume of sound: all controlled by the musician's intentions, written or otherwise. We are subject to dramatic surprise, false anticipation. The body-effects of the intervals of major/ minor 3rds, 5ths or octaves have more intrinsic leverage on the brain than the vocabulary of the painter whose image must be taken in, all at once and chaotically. A painting is all-over-simultaneous, and the image is scanned back and forth - almost randomly. The marks are read **into** in the search for meaning. So for example, with watercolours, a brush mark that contains a very limited amount of wet colour will be dry and sparse and can then be easily overlaid with a second dry colour, building up a sort of flicker which adds vibrancy to the image which, if say it pictures an "April day", we will then **read** the paint as a metaphor for that vigorous body participation which such days provoke; just as Fusili remarked over the scumbled oil paint that Constable used for his moving, rain laden clouds: motionless movement! A kind of physical ventriloquism! Likewise music holds us through implicit physical involvement; expectations fulfilled or blocked in harmonic progressions, falling or rising melodies, rhythmic imitations of dance or march and so we experience body tensions of all sorts under the musician's totally controlled sequences. But painting is a whole; instantaneous, and it has to be like an exclamation and that word we lamely use, "beautiful", is an **exclamation** which acknowledges that something has passed across our inner view: that "spiritual" of Kandinsky, or better, our memory recognition of such things.

Snow on moors. detail of 90 x 90 cms.





Opposite. Tom's bank. 110 x 110 cms. Two details.



It is worth considering better the literary term "metaphor" and why, in relation to painting, it is so enlightening when used to understand some of the "rhetoric" of painting. First consider the importance of pattern to humans. Hardly surprising when one realises how pattern and coherent form underlie all natural phenomena. We can hardly make anything without wanting to make it "beautiful"; that is to say, to give it a steady, stable state. In fact the most convincing argument of "abstract art" is the ubiquity of pattern. Think of Viking boats and metal work, Celtic, Saxon book decorations where pattern dominated the "figure", or Islamic art and architecture which, denied depiction of the figure, made all it could of pattern. In representational painting there is much patterning that would not be discernible to a photo of the actual scene represented. However there is a difference to the pattern of abstract paintings. Think what would be lost if a representation were just turned upside down, and were enjoyed as mere "abstract art". No crows in the sky! Within the economy of a representational painting, the rhythms and patterns work as metaphors: like metaphor they work indirectly. Look at these two paintings of Tom's bank 1 and 2. There is an obvious patterning at work - working as a metaphor for quietness and composure, despite the approaching rain already beginning to splash into the stream and it is this which lies behind the elegiac feeling that both paintings communicate. 115 x 110 cms.





Tom's bank. 110 x 110cms.

There is an implied slow movement in the dominating clouds, and also the nettles seem immobile and the marks for the leaves are not directional as tends to happen under the force of diagonalising wind. There are no strong contrasts that sun and shadow would make for. The brush marks are varied with some faster scribble in the clouds and stream. There is a lot of patterning and that gives a detached, contained feeling. Now look by contrast at the next page where the watercolour of the same scene, is painted with a quite different "rhetoric". Here there is much less detail. There are diagonal blocks of contrasting light and dark colour that give a jubilatory pattern and energy to the image. In painting/drawing, the trace of the hand's movement in creating the image is what strongly affects the psychological/corporal effect on the body/mind of the viewer. To borrow Bacon's phrase, it is the "armature of the real" that allows all the painterly rhetoric to locate itself in some focused area of feeling. Look at the different "rhythms" of the two paintings on this and previous page and then those two on the next. Rhythm is a term from music but it is an important element in painting's effects, where it is integral to pattern. Rhythm is a word that fits the "tempo" of painted marks - all "counterpointed" by the colour given them. 115 x 110 cms.

This detail below of Keith's barn, shows the beauty of water based paint: its wet, brilliance . In the "winter sunset" the sheer brilliance of wet fusing watercolour stands as metaphor for that moment of "brightness falls from the sky", after the sun's setting. Look at that red crayon of the horizon , "bleeding" its "sun" hue into the wet "sky" and the intermingling of the wet colours. while here on the right is the excited chiaroscuro of summer light and shadows on water. The painting has rhythms and "tempi" and the interspersing bright white reinforces the "brio" of such leaf reflections in a stream in summer shadows. Incidentally, speaking of my use of musical terms; painting, despite all the significant enlargement of representation in the 20th century has invented little extra terminology with which to describe the rhetoric of painterly effects. That is why art criticism is so poor; often floundering with irrelevant, extraneous matters because it lacks any common base of terminology, and at best turns to music for terminology.

In the painting opposite, the obvious speed with which the image has been made and the summary short-hand marks is a sort of metaphor for that almost participatory migration into the landscape that such winter evenings provoke in us; as if we breathed with the sky. I think painting, like music carries over a magical superstition of unity towards the world which re-imagines an ancient **all** for which we feel a dim nostalgia: "the ancient language of the earth". Above 75 x 55 cms, and opposite 110 x 110 cms.





In the two details on this page, there are two types of rhythm. In the top one, the April wood is represented by perfunctory "tree trunks", that are interspersed with "fresh green grass" and "shadows". There are dabs standing for fresh new plant growth. You could say that "illustration" has been sacrificed to pattern and rhythm. Abstract art makes great claims for pure colour, but here what might be falsely termed "abstraction", is still doing a job of representation.

In the lower detail here, the rhythms lie in the way the colours are just placed next to each other with paper left white. Since this also occurs in the sky for "bright clouds", it gives the Spring scene lightness and delicacy. The grass and purple shadow are not naturalistic but within the declared "landscape", such limited drawing is still sufficiently decipherable for the schematic drawing to remain descriptive and yet the painting still benefit from the under-cover "abstractions", which are in fact "representations"! These nondescript marks here on the right can yet be descriptive of response as well as thing - in this case that response we have to the delicacy and born-again feel of spring days.

However, the painting needs more definition in the stream. In the lower detail there is a tension and the marks have a coherence and relation between themselves. The stream at present is not sharp enough.
110 x 110 cms



Wood and Hill in Spring. Detail.



Wood and Hill in Spring. Detail. 100 x 100 cms.



If you look at these 4 details of paintings you can see the **plausibility** of abstract art. In these details, without the "distractions" of the whole representation, it's true that there are all sorts of pleasing pattern and "touche", dexterity and panache in the manuality and impact of the brush strokes, but those are in themselves a dead end. Better if they were a key to interpretation for the viewer of that world common to us all and therefore in some degree "interpretations", translations: a key you could say to the decipherment of the artist's intuitions and "intentions" about our common world within these very obliquely "realistic" marks. The obvious eloquence of the marks, the implied energy, the effectiveness of their contrast and rhythms and their limited illustrational imitation (because they are aiming at something more); all these are not "abstract" but directed at finding that "wave more wave than wave"; a search for that visual mark, (fancy talk: "tache") that might be the **correlative** of the "thing". In those conversations between Sylvester and Bacon; what the new "wave" might be is left hanging: possibly Bacon expands on it by saying he wanted painting, to communicate along the nervous system rather than the mind, and certainly I have always thought that painting, like those "make-you-want-to-dance" rhythms of Bach, was a **haptic, corporal** art. That's why I think it helps to use the verbal term "metaphor". A metaphor is in poetry and everyday usage (eg. "to see red"), made of appropriate inappropriateness.





(Anger doesn't "see" red, but we know what is meant. Incidentally all the immediacy and living quality of Shakespeare's poetry lies in those lightning strikes of metaphorical synthesis: "precious friends hid in death's dateless night". Again for lack of better vocabulary, one turns to music and the word harmony. A non-abstract painting represents some aspect of reality - as we know it. But it is always a man-made object and in making anything we want it to have harmony and internal relationship. In the detail here to the left, the rain bearing cloud is made to "break" with its tearing, broken strokes of rough paint. It's a sort of manual mimicry, imitational of the strong sensations that such a day occasions in our body's anticipations, but the marks though not realistic are metaphoric or, abstract-representational. Similarly in the detail of "Hawthorns", here on the left, the strong sunlight, shadows and fresh grass, and the bright blossom of the hawthorn is imaged with strong but rough "sforzandos" of paint mark. The person viewing the marks should feel his body jump! Landscape painting should refresh us to a body-felt nature that is still vaguely (and maybe unhappily) remembered in our DNA which our long evolution as Hunter-gatherers has left in us. All these examples are the metaphors of painting or oblique representation that Bacon's was trying to describe in his "wave", a wave more wave than any made as mere wave "illustration": a new hieroglyph that might contain a shamanistic all! Four details of 110 x110 cms

This is another page of details to show how the "pleasures" of pure shape and colour and "tache" already exist in representational painting, modestly, with no intrinsic, non-referential justification.- Here the marks are subservient to trying to conjure up the world and our experience of it. The formalities of all 4 are conditioned by the "scene" with the one opposite more formal and harmonious. Look at the white crayon here to the right. It is both implied "cloud" and "graffiti", just as is the mauve crayon here below, "sun brightness", "pure tache", as well as enhancing colour contrast to the green.





Here on the left is another case of eloquent "graffiti" white paper left between colours and which tries to imitate the effect of bright light. In terms of pattern and balance, the painting detail here to the left is more stable than the other three. The wedges of colour have more of pattern and less of the haphazard drawing of the other three. It represents a section of stream, where the ripple parallel line effect of water is heightened and formalised into steady pattern. This is partly justified by what is represented - rippling current in water. The white paper acts as white ripples of light in the varying degrees of transparency in the water - colour is overlaid with crayon "ripples". However, it needs more work because the marks are too detached from description; the balance has not been found.



All these 8 details are also determined by that larger whole that they are representing, though in themselves they may seem very "abstract". Some people in fact are so habituated to such non representational painting that they are snobbish towards a whole representational painting: "oh, I see, its just a landscape". The following two pages show more details, where, whatever the marks seem to be in themselves, they should be subservient to the whole representation that they are part of. All 4 details are of 110 x 110 cms paintings.



At first glance the painting on the left looks fairly easy to read as a spring scene. Rowan blossom and stream, but the details show how much oblique, pure mark there is in the "drawing" and on which the painting depends for certain effects. (see detail below). In a more slavish realism, the colour blocks would be merged and would not have the strong impact of sharp separateness, nor the blossom on the top detail have the "brio" and "sforzandos" of its dots and contrasts. In representation, Bacon's "deepen the game" is understood better in the



indirect, oblique ways we get "likeness". In this painting, the colour areas have their own dignity and double status as "colour" and "thing". Something important about colour in such a painting: the colours may not be in themselves "realistic" but what matters then is that there should be a realistic sense of their correct proportionality and relationship and still be convincing echoes of the thing itself, and yet also (as in the detail below), have a parallel, autonomous conviction and reinforcing "beauty".
100 x 100 cms





This is a good example of the possible obliquities of representation where colour mark and manual expression have a freedom that is still disciplined by the representation. This is what I mean when using such a musical term as counterpoint. Francis Bacon was right, (as are "abstractionists" or graffitiists- to a more limited degree than they think!) that marks can have a visceral, non logical effect on us; "along the nervous system". This is another painting that needs more work

in building up this totality of indirect all-over "drawing" and those areas of incompletely drawn drawing; as it were! You can see how this detail works at that level better than in certain areas in this painting which seem by comparison weak; not as effective in their "obliqueness". I think it was this indirect form of drawing that appealed to Bacon and which he admired in Picasso's metaphoric marks and his metamorphic figures. 110 x 110 cms.





What is visible in this detail of a large painting - 95 x 95 cms - is what is helping to communicate that effect when light breaks through the barred clouds, making some of them lighter. Again the light and dark of sun and shadows is also seen on the barred ribs on the fields. There is some childish downward crayon lines to imitate the downwards light that comes in shafts between the clouds. This painting throws into evidence an important aspect of painting:

size in relation to the space around the viewer. Look at this detail where the viewing is close up and where we can enjoy the physical presence and patina of the paint marks. When we step back from the 1 metre painting, it is too small. We have heard people say - "you need to step back", but sometimes I wish I could paint so large (as in Rothko's abstracts), that it would be impossible to step back and one would so remain as dominated by the marks as in this detail.





This is 75 x 55 cms. It is a rough windy day on Dartmoor. You can see how the windy clouds and their rough bare white paper is echoed in other parts where the dry brush marks have left under the brush-mark, dry and rough areas of partially painted paper. The coarse, fast, dry brush marks that leave unpainted white paper, can be read as paint metaphors for that sort of windy "sforzando" day.

On the opposite page one can see the special effects of brush and sepia ink "drawing". Here too, the left-white spaces help to delineate the drawn marks and are an important aspect of the painting's rhythms. Also smaller areas of remaining white paper seem less intensely white than larger areas. (see clouds), and all together give the painting its rhythms. 100 x 85 cms.





The brushmarks here are big enough that even as the whole painting is looked at, there is still a strong physical impact in the brush marks. The barn, hillside tree, the icicles and the rooks in the fading evening light, allow the colours to effect a sort of counterpoint of melancholy mood. Look at the detail of the icicles, the brown water and the two blues of snow and greeny water. These have a strong emotional weight which derives from the mood of the late evening scene and the general simplified large brush strokes of the painting. I couldn't imagine painting that



didn't have this option to convey such light and space as that declared by those clouds and homeward flying rooks! Nor could I imagine not painting this outside, as the cold evening slowly closes in on me and you have to quickly find the adequate marks for something so beautiful and passing. For this reason, even the most energetic, jubilatory landscape paintings have an elegiac tone: time passing: something they can share with photographs - that quality of a caught moment, stopped; here but gone! 110 x 105 cms





This is a sky building up to snow. Watercolour or acrylic much diluted gets the maximum help from the "tooth" of the paper. You can see here how the "sized" paper rejects the less loaded brush strokes, thus giving those brilliant scumbles of alternating untouched paper and paint. The yellowing sky is echoed in the stream with its complementary reds and the green of the solitary holly bush. The bare hazel branches stretch up in parallel with the clouds' physical, stretching effect and on the branches are left a few remnant leaves and a blackbird contemplates the scene.



Winter afternoon. Snow coming. 95 x 90 cms. You could say that the whole painting imitates those stark calligraphies of winter snow scenes where branches are like the lead divisions of stained glass. There is a slight dulling of detail as the light blocking clouds seems to announce coming snow.

If Japanese Hokusai could write the following, we ordinary painters have even more cause to be modest - despite our enthusiasm!

"From the age of 6 I had a mania for drawing the shapes of things. When I was 50 I had published a universe of designs. But all I have done before the the age of 70 is not worth bothering with. At 75 I'll have learned something of the pattern of nature, of animals, of plants, of trees, birds, fish and insects. When I am 80 you will see real progress. At 90 I shall have cut my way deeply into the mystery of life itself. At 100, I shall be a marvelous artist. At 110, everything I create; a dot, a line, will jump to life as never before. To all of you who are going to live as long as I do, I promise to keep my word. I am writing this in my old age. I used to call myself Hokusai, but today I sign my self 'The Old Man Mad About Drawing.'" Hokusai well describes the always receding goal. "At 90 I shall have cut my way deeply into the mystery of life itself", is only self irony at his own temerity, but what a lovely, serious illusary aim: "every dot, and line, will jump to life as never before". If only!





I'm sure that in galleries, I have more or less seen this detail on the right in other guises as a stand alone "abstract". The painting on the right, which is 40 times the size of the detail, represents an April day. The reason for showing these details is that in a photo of a 100cm painting one can miss the detail of the attempt to find new hieroglyphs for the effect on us of such a day - before spring has really arrived in the north. At this point in the year, the grey trunks, the old brown leaves and the fresh new green are in an in-between period. In the detail you can see the mixture of twigs, thin shadows and the odd fresh leaves. But such April days are dominated by blustery skies, which I think are so well described in these lines:

"How this spring of love resembles
th'uncertain glory of an April day
That now shows all his beauty to the sun
And by and by, a cloud takes all away".

How can we find the adequate marks for such things of the world? Again, those ironic words of Hokusai: "every dot, and line, will jump to life as never before". Marvellous ideal for painting; strong in its loyalty to the world out there!
110 x 110 cms.







This is a good example of the aesthetic spin-offs of monochrome - black/grey or sepia gradations. The varying shades of the monochrome, especially this sepia colour have their own particular mood. If you think about it, it is a considerable "abstraction"; it's just that we are used to it. It is hard to explain the peculiar pleasure in monochrome painting and its emotional effects. One thing is clear: the whites have a special brilliance of "light" and the monochrome gives a harmony to the whole. Another strangeness of monochrome sepia is how well



the lighter shades are seen as sun illumination: look at the centre section on the left for example. Also we respond to the flicker of white spaces across the painting with its echoing rhythms of invigorating energy and physical participation - just as rhythms work on us in music. But in a painting such responses are most full when given off by the constraints of a representation of such a reality. In monochrome painting there is a similar beauty to that of black and white photos: "noble" in their simplicity and distancing effect. 100 x 90 cms.





105 x 100cms.

Rowan tree in Autumn.

The colour of a painting may be much more intense than the scene itself but it still has to keep some proportionality between whatever colours are used. Of course the reason for such a "transposition" into another key of colour is its emotional force. In landscape painting it is the legibility of the "place" that makes such obliquities also comprehensible.



When the viewer has been so located, they may enjoy these indirect, "painterly" matters as evocative; more suggestive- as we find poetry fuller, wider, more inclusive than prose. In painting it is often the short hand and seeming hieroglyph that strikes us. A classic of this sort is the Sleeping woman, sepia brush drawing of Rembrandt where the very "less" is somehow "more", and the obvious speed at which the drawn mark was made, seems paradoxically suggestive of the utter immobility of the sleeper. That is an example of obliquity in representation. 110 x 110 cms







This detail recalls the argument made on a previous page about size and how this 110 square painting would have all the more force if it were 6 times as big so that one was forced to encounter the details as here when we zoom the image. See how when we look close up we see the details of paint mark and yellow crayon of light on grass that we miss when we "step back". For that reason - and not just through an habituation to "abstract pure colour and mark" - the details please

more than the whole mere image, yet, and this is so important, they depend on that whole "place". A point about the abstract graffiti of "marks". I think the "poetry" of the oblique marks we invent for **representation** have more interest to us than mere shapes or mere colour, because we after all, spend our whole lives expecting meaning! We search for paint marks that get at the heart of what is affecting: the blue light / shadow of nettles, the crayon of light! 120 x 120 cm.

There are paintings that one wants to keep in order to plumb the depths of the secret which they seem to have discovered - though difficult to name. In the 2 paintings of "Large pool", one is a detail with figures maybe too declared, but both done at the same time. In both there are the clouds, trees, reflections, and the 4 children playing and because the "scene" has set the expectations, the painting's "abstractions" can satisfy as relevant expression and response to such a scene. The painting is made of marks that interfuse their "representations", and this mis-representation is a symbolic transposition, trying to make a "visionary" image of summer, and children playing. The rounded clouds and trees and the reflections seem to gain by the very summary quality of the "drawing", a **general** truthfulness.

We've said before that art criticism limps along using musical terms for lack of anything more apposite. So how are we to get nearer to understanding Bacon's "wave", more wave than wave? In that Guardian article, the critic (Boyd) condemned Bacon for being beastly about Graham Sutherland who Bacon had defined as a mere "illustrator", to which the critic replied that (unlike Bacon), Sutherland could "draw". In Picasso or Bacon it would be better to think of their "distorted" drawing as an integral aspect of drawing in general.

The fact is that between Bacon's dismissal of Sutherland's mere illustration and my vague term "oblique" representation, there is no descriptive language available.



Large pool. Painting 1. 90 x 75 cms.



Large pool. Detail of Painting 2.

Both paintings, as you can see better in this detail, exploit the texture of the paper. It has a lot of rough "tooth" so that a dry brush or crayon leaves declevities of white, untouched paper. The black crayon's curves are common to clouds and the boughs of the trees. These two are good examples of drawing that is of a generalising sort. When you cut out all the over fanciful talk, Cubism was doing such simplifying pattern-making, though with other aesthetic intentions. 80 x 65 cms





In the painting opposite winter (detail, here right) the small curved brush marks are only "obliquely" descriptive of twigs and the same sign is used also for the blue, red and white in the sky and the white is both clouds and snow covered twigs. They are overlaid on the diagonals of the long clouds. As with the painting on the next page, these non illustrational marks are part of the physical exuberance. There are several, "abstract" -(or I'd prefer "metaphoric") white slashes in the sky standing for snow. Winter detail. Up stream from the slab rock.



This is the same scene in autumn and shows a similar exuberant brushmark handwriting.
75 x 55 cms. Acrylic





Towards Keith's barn. Stream and twigs against the setting sun. 110 x 110 cms.

This painting represents the glitter of the setting winter sun on the twigs of hazels. The clouds being a mackerel sky, that too has a similar pattern to that of the twigs. The sun is given more light and spreads its light down over the intertwining trees. The landscape thus offers a scene that permits this interlacing pattern of twigs that share in the sun's halo effect. It is a particularly beautiful winter moment and the painter just has to patiently build up an adequate mimicry of this shining magnificence. You feel that there is a frost coming tonight! I asked, "What is a painting", or more specifically, a landscape painting. Here are some lines from Book II of Wordsworth's

"Prelude": "..., listening to notes that are the ghostly language of the ancient earth, Or make their dim abode in distant winds. ".....a visionary power shadowy exultation" I think landscape painting is inevitably, at best, "visionary"-nostalgic for a connection to the world which in some sense, no longer exists. I think it should possess a pantheistic religious quality; what Wordsworth calls a "shadowy exultation" that is physical as well as "visionary". Some people call this "Romantic", but that hides more than it illuminates, though that historical movement did express their unease. As it becomes ever more clear how much humans are changing the planet - perhaps

fatally, landscape painting stirs an ancient nostalgia for that world of the "Hunter gatherer", that went to create the DNA that we still carry, in some sense, homeless. ", listening to notes that are the ghostly language of the ancient earth, Or make their dim abode in distant winds". In February 2018 Andrea Mechelli of King's college London, reported that birdsong could boost mental well being for 4 hours! So, as as many species are suffering massively falling numbers, we should enjoy their song. "Going, going, gone"! (The Amazon is reported as having shrunk 20%.) "The ghostly language of the ancient earth", cannot be laughed off as "Romantic nostalgia".





Towards Keith's barn. Snow and moors in winter sun. 110 x 110 cms

In this painting of the snow on the evening moors, the dry energetic brushmarks are what give the painting its jubilatory exclamation. It is a good example of drawing that can pull into itself so much on condition that the "armature of the real" will be there to centre the marks. Here in this bright snow scene of the moors, the bright "snow colours" are put on with a dry, sparse brush so that while remaining "strong", energetic marks, they could be overlaid by other enriching, optically fusing dry brush marks of colour and these scribbled parallel marks are like haptic body metaphors that stand for the physical exultation so well described in these lines from Stevenson's poem, "The House Beautiful":

**"And when snowbright, the moor expands
How shall your children clap their hands"**

Representational painting has so many marvellous tricks of "abstraction" to harness in celebration of this observation with which Stevenson closes his poem. **"To make this earth our heritage God's bright and intricate device
A cheerful and a changeful page Of days and seasons doth suffice".**

What can a landscape painter do but also clap his hands - and still search hopefully for the adequate hieroglyph that alas, still couldn't sum it!



You could say that a lot of romantic poetry relocated "religious" feeling to nature; and Spinoza was influential in replacing the out-there God, with the force of life and matter: *natura naturans*. Pantheism is not really Spinoza but an undercover reappearance of a God agency! A scientist will see at work in the universe, the haphazard, though "rational" and causative evolution from neutron stars to eventual life ; not dualistic "spirit". All life must find a *modus vivendi* with its context and surrounding dangers - otherwise, like 99% of all ever existing creatures, it will go extinct. **That** is the story! Trying to understand the "self", or worrying about some God's intentions are both a foggy business. Much more enabling is to try to understand the world, and that is the "Enlightenment" attitude of scientific curiosity. The Pantheist still sees God/spirit in the world - well, that is at least an improvement on other Gods! Perhaps we are confused by simple words. The German language avoids our Latinate dualism ("spirit" body/ matter) with a word "Geist" that means, yes our "Ghost"/spirit, but also intelligence. Spinoza's nature was not so much infused with "spirit" as with the intelligent order that underlies the universe. "Everything is holy" ;, not in the sense of created by God, but because we are logically inclined to perceive that we **share** in the pathos of all life: it has, after all, taken us billions of years to all get here! That's enough to make it "holy"! That kind of respect is sometimes considered a religious-non-religion: a rather unnecessary retention of the term, because we wrongly lay our "religious" or honouring feelings at God's feet, whereas we should more appropriately respect the mystery of all life that has brought us to the "bank and shoal of time". Then "environmentalism" is not some "green fad", but a Red Indian-like respect for that which sustains us all. Spinoza tried to humble our relationship with the world. We are not God's ultimate or highest creation, but part of the Geist/intelligence/spirit/matter that makes up what is still the unfathomable universe. So it turns out that what we attempt to describe with the word "pantheism" is only the attempted readjustment of a mistake. It simply reminds us that scientific curiosity or artists' celebration of the world are a simply an extra participation in what we already partake of: "Everything is

holy" only because "everything is one"!

Here are some brief passages from Wordsworth's early work, "The Prelude", that in celebrating the growing mind of the child he once was, are a beautiful illustration of Spinoza's apparent "pantheism". (The quotations are from the first more "pantheist" version of the Prelude, especially the first 2 books, which before Wordsworth substituted more "God" for "nature" into the text - are his best work).

"While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth--and with what motion moved the clouds!

".....a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters coloured by impending clouds".

"....We scampered homeward. Oh ye rocks and streams
And that still spirit, shed from the evening air".

"....I loved the sun
For this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The Western mountains touch his setting orb"

".....gathering as it seemed
Through every hairbreadth in that field of light
New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers".

Of course the world is beautiful and you will never make an adequate painting or description of it. But whatever "art" we make of it, must at least express an adequate praise and not just show off its arty brilliance. On the turn-over page, "Leaning Blackthorn", is the same tree as before seen. Part of the emotive content of this painting derives from its more stately, static marks and the over all harmony of the small mark drawing. In the painting opposite of the fallen tree, the left-white "draws" the branches of a Rowan tree and reflections in the water. 100 x 80 110 x 110 cms.





On the page opposite. 110 x 110 cms . Blackthorn in April. This on the right has an "eclat" that comes from the strong contrasting colour and brush stroke. The white of the blossom is also as it were "shared" by all the left over white paper that lies between the brush marks across the whole painting and this gives vibrancy. This is one of the characteristics of watercolour on white paper. The paper left white, vibrates its brilliance influentially on the adjacent colours. It is also a good example of what I mean by drawing that has an effect on us



by implication. The blackthorn with its still visible twigs of April shows its sparse early blossom. The sky's clouds echo the "pattern" of the twigs and the just beginning nettles also echo this rhythm of small brush marks. The colour of the painting with its muted green and grey, along with the overall "twig" patterning, and sedate, sympathetic brushstrokes, (unlike that above), seems to give the painting an elegiac mood. That mood is overwhelmingly dependent on those stately but menacing clouds whose grey so harmonises with the blackthorn







This is a good example of how when there is enough given of the "real" referent - the barn on the hill on a bright winter evening - other things can **indirectly** help the whole image. In this painting there is a fair amount of "design", as seen in the detail above. Where the branches cross the water or bank, they leave segments visible between - almost as with lead in stained glass windows, except that here the enclosing "leading" is the left-over white paper, and which left "unnaturalistically" white has an indirectly representational effect on the colours: white paper gives brilliance and enhances the colours just as does the "black" leading in

stained glass windows. In water colours and acrylics the white paper seems to enforce the colours and in these schematic sections of the painting, they still have representational value, "branches", and are steadied by the powerful barn and horizon and that after-glow of the sunset sky behind the barn. In acrylic or watercolour the white left in-between or visible in brightness under the colours is held steady by the "armature of the real".

The appropriate inappropriateness of such passages lie in the way their unlikeness is rescued and placed by that **real** and are almost like counterpoint in music where one

melody enhances the other; or like orchestration, where say the sudden incursion of a horn at a certain point transforms the whole. 110 x 110 cms.





This detail is a good place for us to consider further what I mean by metaphor in a painting. Look at the sky in the whole painting and here in the detail. No sky would have those orange-brown squiggles in it. Is that an example of what Boyd the art critic of the Guardian would call "bad drawing"? Furthermore, the fields under snow are hardly realistic, but this rough drawing has a compensation in that the whole scene seems more menacingly empty and hostile and the red of the Holly berries is not very festive. Snow is beginning to fall in the distant sky and hill and the brown dots are partly last leaves and partly first snow flakes. Bacon was fascinated by the indirect visceral effect of non-representational-representational paint: the way it creeps up behind you! A useful doubt: has this painting become too "symbolic" rather than real - lost its ordinariness? The same doubt about the following painting. They are both 110 x 110 cms.





This painting has the "abstract" quality that comes from monochrome, though here a little extra colour adds to the grey and sepia that seems to suit such a snow scene. Here on the right there is a special pattern pleasure in the ink and crayon rendering of the stream's current. Look how eloquently the yellow "speaks" on the top rocks. What do these yellow blobs represent? In an abstract, the answer would be "nothing" but here it is a "something": is it leaf or snow? Look at the influential sky with its falling "leaves/snow".



It is interesting that the doubt expressed on the previous page can be made here too; is this too, over symbolised? Yet the artifice of the monochrome ink and crayon and the very limited colour seems to make this painting more convincing. We are used to the artifice of monochrome in representation and don't notice the artifice of it! But on this matter, at one point in talking to Sylvester, Bacon thought that often what seemed most satisfactorily to "represent" was a highly "artificial" image. Maybe that paradox is another word for my "oblique". 110 x 110 cms.





The detail above shows the pleasures of finding appropriate indirect means of representation. There was a high white cloud, which I have given this long stripe shape as being more suitably exclamatory than the round cloud! The moors have that shadowed blue that contrasts with one last illuminated high field. The detail on the right is full of sharply contrasting colour marks which also exclaim the bright darkness of such an evening. The painting has that haptic quality of body participation: something we also enjoy when we run in such a landscape. The detail of the river shows the contrasts in its shadows. 100 x 95 cms







All three of these paintings of the leaning Blackthorn, done at the same time, show the special beauty of watercolour and the emotional power of its interfusings. Colours seep into each other and the paper's whiteness is so exclamatory. Because of the overall white-brightness, all is unified into one expression; the dark blue nettles under the tree, the blossom, the clouds. We become what we experience: accumulating all!





In this one you can see a different effect of the more sharply delineated brushmarks: like jabbing exclamation marks, expressing energy and pleasure. The white paper of the "blossom" and that left between the stabbing brush strokes lie "unnaturally" parallel, as if representing "force". That you could say is the grammar of its metaphor: the painting correlative that "stands for" the "real", symbolically. Landscape painting should never drown what is being

evoked by mere painterly "sprezzatura" and flourish. The art must lie in that strange interfusion of evoked thing and feeling. For me it is almost inevitable that good landscape painting has a pathos: of place and time. Some artists despise "scene painting", but without specific place, landscape is just egotistical. In these paintings of a slanting blackthorn, so much of the effect lies in the merging colour or the impetus of the brushmarks: their respective "drawing". 110 x 75 cms.





This painting in contrast to the previous makes more use of the merging effects of "too much" wetness on the paper. In fact if you look at the whole painting you can see that it was lightly raining but I managed to keep enough of the white paper intact for the "blossom" areas. The running together colours have a strong emotional effect: maybe a case of what Bacon was wanting to communicate "along the nervous system". The blue "nettles" under the tree have been

reinforced with more colour into what had been previously lighter, because rain-soaked areas. In the previous painting of this tree, the white paper of the "blossom" and the white paper left between the stabbing brush strokes lie "unnaturally" parallel as if representing "force". That too has the grammar of its metaphor: that is to say, the painting correlative that "stands for" the "real", symbolically in its watery, wet interfusings. These last three paintings are 75 x 110 cms





I think that the 20th century's "inventions" liberated painting and allowed representation to be enriched with "new found methods and compounds strange". Here in the details, the crayon and marks have an indirect, oblique beauty which yet are servants to the image of winter snow at sunset; or at least that is what one hopes to have found: some marks that seem to refresh what we think we know. So the black crayon marks though representing not very carefully "drawn", twigs, have in compensation a feeling and swing that is still sufficiently, "branch", and have



rhythmic role, with the touches of yellow "borrowed" as it were from the same sun colour. You can also see the importance of the "tooth" of the rough paper in these details, which tends to stutter the colour. A point about colour and its expressive force - what some call its abstract/autonomous force. This is a snow scene and the blue of the shadows or the effulgence of the sun has been heightened and dotted across the surface. Yet these exaggerations are determined by wanting to portray the feelings that such a scene and moment of the day arouse in us. "Ah"! 90 x 80 cms







This, like the previous painting is a good example of, as it were, the microcosms of a painting: the small details of its "oblique drawing", that yet makes up the whole: "Winter Afternoon" and the "drawing" that works by indirections. It is these marks that have an indirect communication and try by oblique ways to "represent" not just a place but the **wonderfulness** of such a winter evening. 100 x 100 cms



Both paintings are 75 x 55 cms. They both use slashing brush strokes as signs standing for that late winter evening brightness. Paint used very dry can imitate the build up of crayon "hatching" to make optical mixes rather than the water-mixed colour of usual watercolour technique. The manual force of the slashes is what communicates the exclamatory beauty of such moments of the day and so I imagine doing a Rothko size painting (4 x 5 metres) that "Rothkoed" and "Pollocked", not with mysterious "colour" or mere dribbles and splashes



for their own sake but as homage and servant of such jubilatory moments, and all the marks too big to stand back from! On the opposite page is a painting (75 x 55 cms) which is an example of painting that pushes a realistic seeming "scene" into a short hand symbolic hyroglyph. Look at the left top corner. The arcs of yellow are not "illustrational", nor is the sudden demarcation of curved black crayon that bends over the tree. The hill under that tree is left white to "represent" snow and most of the tree "signs" on the middle and right side are perfunctory





One of the things that might help us to understand Bacon's search for "more-wave -than-wave" is the notion of abbreviation in painting; "abstraction" is again, not the helpful word. In the details opposite, you can see that the white passages are not properly descriptive but they work as "abbreviated drawing", they are exaggerated version of light reflected in water. They interrupt a too easy "reading". I have used the term the "economy" of a painting, meaning the function of

parts within the whole. The more minimal some parts are, the more attention can be given to others. The blue crayon "shadows" along the stream and the yellow "leaf" crayon under the trees are also abbreviations whose very summariness is part of their effectiveness. In a painting that is well anchored in that "armature" of the "real", the Chinese motto can be seen at work; "Less means more". In the details you can see the abbreviations of the crayon marks.



Those reduced, "pure" crayon lines have a gravitational descriptive power within the whole, despite their "abstraction". Look particularly at the lower detail. Within representational painting, colour can, within limits, act with a certain independence, and this then makes emotional additions that are integrated into the whole painting by the centring power of the "read" place and hour. Within an intended mood of a painting, simplified rendering can have emotional effects: a subsidiary arm, as it were of representation - which is not as all-visual as one might carelessly think.. There are many such simplifications in this painting which are saved from mere "design-abstraction" by the represented place or scene. The blue line over that peaty water in the lower detail, does curve like current in water and then in its "simplification" (in line and colour) has its own beauty that then feeds back into the imaged scene to reinforce a kind of body involvement through its exaggeration. Often when a painting is described, there is too much emphasis on visual aspects - obvious enough, but when Bacon referred to paint, "communicating along the nervous system" he was trying to highlight the way effective painting seems to somehow provoke a body participation. Think of music a moment. How "haptic" - body, is the movement of Beethoven's music and the brush marks of Van Gogh. That seems also to be the secret of Picasso's power over us: its body-mimicry. 100 x 95 cms.





There is a complicated and interesting central aesthetic fact. The way an additional mark, (but important to stress, within the representational context), can have such an effect on us. You can call it a non-representational mark that yet because of the whole "representation", is read as if it WERE also representational. A right handed person makes a mark most easily, leaning to the right - as in long-hand writing. This painting is made up of right leaning panels of colour separated by the white of the paper. The clouds are also seen to be moving (leaning) in the same inclination towards the right.



There is very little "drawing" delineation of the trees - leaves, branches. The sky shows an obviously windy day. A large influence on this is the exaggerated swooping cloud in the top left corner. There is a rowan tree in flower, beside the stream and there are various curved non representational crayon marks of yellow standing for...? I think they and the various other "displaced" references to the "real" are part of the oblique way the marks work in the painting. I think in their indirect non drawing they help understand that quest of Bacon's for metaphorical marks that were not just "illustrational".



This is a painting that primarily depends on the simple physical fact of the paper surface. As you can clearly see, it is a very absorbent paper which however leaves the stain marks of some initial brushmarks. In water painting, this is an important tool. In these two details you enjoy these very physical factors. The sky had a lot of coloured water put on but still allowing those stripes which try to simulate the pulsing of such a moment just after sunset in summer when the sky and landscape seems to release the stored up energy of the departing sun.



You can also see the effects of simplification which are sometimes far too facilely called abstractions. All painting must simplify or almost like language, categorise: "here is bright field", "Here is pulsating sky". This represents the summer evening some time after the sun has set. The hills seem imbued with light so the partial fusing of the wet colours seems an appropriate metaphor for that suffusing light. As you can see here on the right in the detail, the dried edges of paint contour the edges of the trees while the stream's water spreads and fuses. 90 x 85 cms



These two are good examples of that white paper "eclat" which I have referred to. The top painting was rained on so that the islands of white were not dripped on but over the rest, the excess water smudged and ran into each other in a way that seems so suitable a metaphor, or "sign" for effulgent light. As you look at the image, it is as if your body mimicked the smudging movement of the suffusing colour/light.

There has been no rain fallen on the lower painting. All the left over white spaces remain and the smudging and over wetness is more fully intentional and it is that which gives the painting its "eclat". In the painting there is a lot of diagonal rhythms - the vineyards, the streaks of high clouds and the converging rows of fruit trees. These you could say are constituents of the scene but the marks work to communicate a sense of physical exuberance - the emotional burden you could call it of the painting; particularly in the suffused semi circle of "hill/sun shape" in the middle.

One can just make out the roof of the farm without it being too intrusive.

All four of the paintings on these pages show that special emotional weight that watercolour carries: the way its brilliance and fusings excite us bodily and how suitable all that is to the representation of landscape and light: such a poetic medium!

These four are 75 x 55 cms.





Watercolour is so sheer, so bright, so interfusing in its seeping and mingling. Here are represented the same scene as the two on the previous page, with the same roof of the farmhouse "Il Piov", but you can see the difference that the absence of white makes and how the merging, simplified blocks of colour mimic that throbbing after-effect of light, when the sun has set and all things seem to exhale the light and warmth received from the sun during the day. The lower painting uses the wetness of the paint marks which interfuse to represent that cold winter suffusing evening air. Below, there was obviously a winter evening's mackerel sky but that is more indicated in a reductive short hand in the left corner which echoes the diagonals of the stream edge. The four diagonals meet at the point of maximum sky brilliance: that effulgence of the just-set sun with its yellow halo. There are important "imitations" of "illumination" in the dry paint at various places on the painting. An observation on "Abstraction". People have become so habituated to the mere patternness of abstract painting that they feel more comfortable with mere "pattern" in any painting! There's no objection to pattern, for it is an important aesthetic tool of representation - in its fullest metaphoric gamut, where pattern can have "content"! On the next page are 4 details which can be imagined as 4 "abstracts". Odd that some people dismiss the whole paintings and prefer the little derivations! Nice little abstracts! The large sepia is 110 x 110 cms.







This is a painting of the stream. There are the rudimentary "berry" marks to represent the Rowen trees and their berries. The rocks are distinguishable, but the whole painting is really subordinate to the "eloquent" quality of the marks; though besides being marks they are "of something"! There are arching brush marks across the top of the painting, only indicated as equal bands of curved colour over which the "berries" are painted with a wet mark that seeps into those other

"trees" but the sheerness of this watercolour is really made by the accidental marks of rain falling on the paper that evening! This much is true: marks - think of good and bad graffiti - can be more or less "beautiful". Here the dots of rain on the colours are like Christmas lights but what one could call the "eloquence" of the marks is given wings by our feelings towards the world: a stream in autumn with rain falling! Previous and opposite page 110 x110 cms.. This, 75 x55.



This is another painting of the light effects at sunset. The sun is to the right, illuminating the wood on the left. In the front are the wild garlic plants of May, whose whiteness spreads up into the twigs and branches of a small dead tree. The moors in the evening light are painted simply as are the illuminated trees on the left : painted as simple, reduced "shapes". The point of this "abstraction" is to convey the relaxed composure of the evening: its full-filled

absorption of light, while the right-inclining diagonal sky-strokes echoes the similarly inclining shadows in the woods and stream. The light of such an evening is a saturated gold and often has a special pulsating power. The garlic flowers, the white sparkle of the reflections and branches are only lightly tied by drawing. The simplified wedges of trees on the left, allow larger areas of colour to be juxtaposed. 95 x 85 cms.

These four watercolours and next page are 75 x 55 cms. They all use the effect of white paper between the paint marks of watercolour to both increase the brilliance of colour and that energetic participation in the scene. The lower painting opposite has very little drawing and the delineating white, only separates the colour strokes, yet one can easily see how much their absence would negatively affect the whole. These white spaces are also an integral part of the drawing in the paintings. This matter of the effect of paper or "ground" showing through a painting brings to mind Constable and the Royal Academy. One year, submitting a painting for the annual show, the Academy sent a painting back because it was "unfinished"! Constable used to "prime" his canvases with a russet under colour and would leave traces of it showing across the painting. He was making use of that effect of flickering contrast - not of white but red which is a colour contrast to the general green of his paintings. It intensified the greens, but was considered by the Academy, too non illustrational!

I have mentioned this as also an important element of drawing. A paintbrush draws just as much as does a pen or pencil and in the case here of these frequent, busy brush strokes, both the white and the colour are actively drawing and delineating. Then they are also carrying out that subsidiary expressive job of conveying energy and exclamation. The two pale ones were done in Italy at Ceraino: above Verona.







Often a particular scene lends itself to repeated painting and variation, where one day's painting suggests another attempt. This was autumn with Rowan berries in autumn. The "berries" are painted as whole lozenge areas. The painting on the right has a brighter feel because of the little specks of white paper left. You could say that both show the sheer brilliance of watercolour on white paper: its peculiar graffiti.



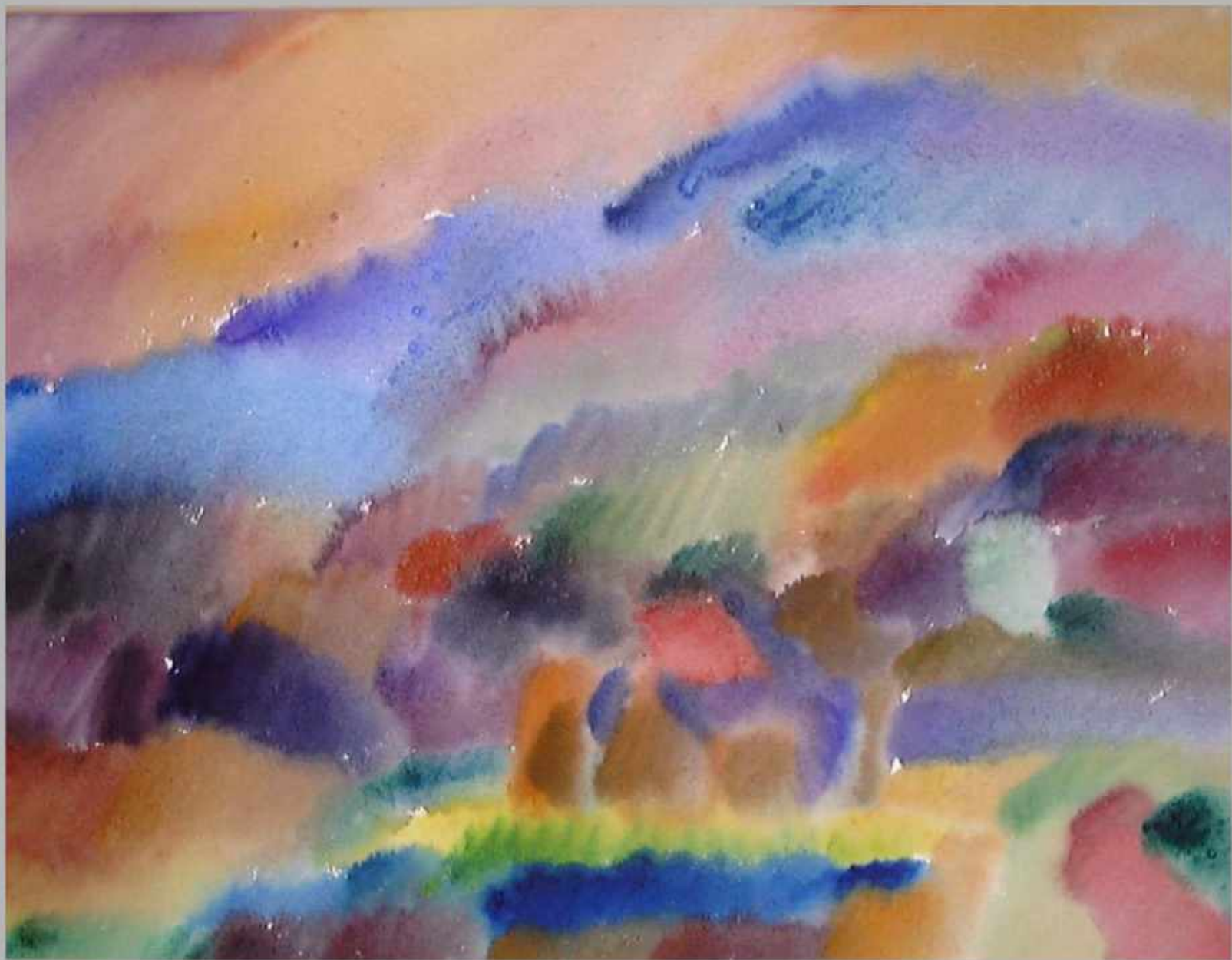


Here is visible a peculiar beauty that results when you can get rain to cooperate in creating a painting! The rained-on fusings of the colours is also a suitable metaphor for representing such a misty, rainy scene and the reflected light on the water. Painting opposite: the diagonal movement of the hand with fairly dry brush has left visible similar striations of white paper as that on this page. This enhances the colour and the bright "eclat" of the watercolour. Both are 75 x 55 cms.





Dorset. Little Bredy. Raining. 18 x 15 inches
The next six paintings are 75 x 55 cms, and were done in Italy in
intense sunset light.





In the painting on the right, the rain has begun to seriously dissolve the painting's "drawing". The rained-on areas are beginning to run and only some last remnants of dry (and therefore still white) paper remain. Most of the drawn catkins have gone, leaving just their ghostly ochre remains so the white splinters of paper work as a sort of "catkin". Most of the fence has dissolved, yet would you want to tidy up the painting? No wonder Bacon so liked "accident"? The autumn vines above seem to show how a painting can truthfully exaggerate! Both, 75 x 55 cms.





How very beautiful is watercolour as a medium and how dependent on the particular "tooth" of the many types of paper. Here you can almost feel the taugtness of the sized paper that slightly resists the water and in this case of the time after sunset, how those interblending colours speak as metaphor for the evening's light and its majestic fusings of the fading light. 45 x 40 cms. In the painting opposite, of the steep hillside of vines, the watercolour has a simiar effect though with more drawing. 80 x 80 cms.





Little Bredy and Powerstock. Dorset. 45 x 40 cms.

Both of these are very dependent on the intrinsic quality of watercolour and watercolour paper for their imitation of the effects of light, though you might have to add; "indirect imitations".









In this painting there is a rather different use of white paper. It is shown between the slashing brush strokes. There was no snow that day but it doesn't matter since in November the white paper has suggestions of snow. However in this painting, the white paper is that which the excited slashing strokes **leave** and which defines the marks. I have always painted fast; it's as if by painting all in a swoop one could almost do the impossible: to paint an expostulation which

the thing itself seems to exclaim as it shows itself. All interesting painting is strongly subjective: a personal response, though I have always distrusted the painting that I'd call virtuoso-egotistical, because merely "eloquent" marks seem to forget the muddy scene itself, which is **not** a "painting". In this painting you can see how the expressive speed and diagonality of the "handwriting" of the marks is a form of metaphor for "wind" or breath.



Maybe it is too easy to talk of "oblique" or "metaphoric" representation. They are just suggestive words, because what is it that determines whether these marks are not just mere abstract, irrelevant, unaffecting patterning!? Each case is specific. Here, someone might ask, what is the status, or role of the slashing marks? We are used to crayon "shading" over an image; it's a familiar convention. Here shading has gone beyond the described things and has covered the

surface without being accompanied by much of the drawing that it would normally arise from. I should try to better justify the "metaphor" word I use for the "shading" convention. I think that the slashing, "shading" is working as a sort of "spirit that moves through all things"; standing for wind and the light of a winter evening. Looking at the detail you can see the physical exuberance of the contiguous strokes of colour: that's the sort of evening it was. 85 x 70



Here is an interesting quote, translated from Hartmut Boehme's "Natur und Subjekt". It tries to explain that "primitivist" element in all art - an attempt to reconnect us with what is severed, and being primitive, retains a unity of world-involved-body. Isn't that what Boehme/Adorno are referring back to here with the word "sacred"? Maybe, if we ignore the money aspect that impresses people about "art's value", is it not this primitivist aspect to art that makes it a nonsense within the present, where at best it's seen as a sort of irresponsible "play"? And yet the German poet Schiller wrote a pamphlet/"letters" "On the Aesthetic

education of mankind". Odd idealism, which perhaps Boehme/Adorno again here take up in this observation. *"For as long as human life and nature were held together in a culture of the sacred, it was seen as self-evident that nature possessed an aesthetic quality. Modern times have broken that tradition in establishing the technological era. In these modern times, art is almost the only medium in which the aesthetic vision of nature lives on. Today art is as Adorno noted, an echo of that silence in which nature "speaks". In images of loss or absence, art keeps alive that knowledge that has been lost as we regard nature as just another free time*

consumption. That nature, that once was thought in some way to "speak" to us is now only conserved through the metaphorical and encrypted images of art, and it is there, in this untranslatable work of remembrance that there is conserved the "language" of nature. If today we try and recover this special language, it cannot be just as a nostalgic recreation but in a newly conceived idea of the aesthetic of nature that could become a new norm and element of political-human life". However, that last hope is simply stated as an unclothed wish. It holds interesting echoes of Schiller's idea of art as "education" of a prepolitical human. 80 x 70 cms.





Rothko's very large paintings are "beautiful" for the dull pulsating absorbing quality of their colour. Watercolour has that quality. The white paper gives added brilliance to the deep colours. Here it seems to represent well that moment of saturated, imbued colour after sunset. And an added quality is given to the colours by their wetness - their seeping into and interflusing. See how the blue horizon on the right is leaking into the sky, being both "trees along the horizon",

but also as appropriate metaphor for the absorbing brightness of the sky. In the right hand painting there are also passages of leaking paint that seem to explode outwards. In both paintings, there are less wet marks which leave striations of manual movement which in the context of pulsating glow of that moment after sunset becomes what I have called an appropriate though oblique representation: an other way than "illustration" with which to represent the thing out there.





This is a painting that very much depends on the beauty of the watercolour medium. The sheer colours on white paper (the odd, important specks of white left to enhance the colours). At a certain point it began to dot with rain which like the left over white paper gives a flickering brilliance to the colours. The time was an evening in November. The leaves of the vines are autumnal and the rain has put too much water onto some areas of skyline, though suitably fitting

for the mist. The grass and nettles in the foreground are painted without detail so as to get the maximum force out of the dark green and blue and natural variation of the unrepresented weeds is given more simply by the rain drops which seem to add the missing detail. In the painting opposite there is also this additional beauty that is given by the accidental, very light rain occurring at a certain moment. 75 x 55 cms



You can see where just a few little islands of white have remained dry and therefore resisted the general merging of colours. The intended white of the Hawthorn blossom has been "spoilt" rather beautifully by the rain, because it has just "saved" a few specks of brilliant white. The painting illustrates an aspect of image making much mentioned by Bacon: the role of accident or rather we should add, a just-controlled sort of accident where you **hope** to make use of a situation

with its own program! That water-seeping quality of watercolours here makes a merging image that seems to suit that day's misty, foggy fine rain, with its wet cowparsley beneath the tree. The sky's soaking has its own graffiti beauty of accidental mark which is always enhanced by that rain, especially when found to be also suitable! See the next page for similarly cooperative rain!
75 x 55 cms. Hawthorns before the wood.





Only the white paper fragments have not been rained on, so they seem to stand for the brighter areas of hawthorn blossom while the dirtier smudged areas seem to stand for the less illuminated blossom'.

The simple purity of such a scene seems to be specially catchable by water colour used at its simplest. What texture there is, is appropriately given by sections where the water has frozen. (Opposite page, sky corner, bracken in a field and grey water). If you look at the bottom detail you can see how the simplicity that watercolour makes possible, is emotionally affecting: its "abstractions" are then in fact better called purifications and hold what we often feel about snow, certainly at first waking to see its transformations. Whatever our age, we conserve a wonder at snow's transformations of the familiar sight. In the close up of the stream, the simplifications of watercolour are much better representations than a fuller realism might be.

This and previous page 75 x 55 cms.





This was a late June evening with that intense, absorbed colour of a fine day closing. It also illustrates the varying balance between detail and generalisation in representation. We could say that here the generalisation lies in the way that the landscape has been "reduced" to broad adjacent areas of colour which summarise the details: rocks or the odd trees and branches are briefly indicated. The aesthetic benefit of this is that the whole resembles that suffusing after sunset glow and the way that when the sun has gone, things merge and soften their contours: the water softened "branches" of crayon. 95 x 90 cms.







November evening looking up to Guarene, Alba. Italy. Two watercolours. 45 x 50 cms.

Schiller's letters "On the Aesthetic education of humankind" seems to express an exaggerated expectation of art just in the title. Perhaps an easier definition of what art might do is this of Blake: "If the doors of perception were cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. But man has closed himself up, till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern." "Cavern" seems a little dramatic but if put simply as - cleansing our perceptions from staleness and the common-place and from our presumptions about what we think we know, it is not a bad description of the role of art. Art should throw the cards in the air

and upturn the expected and the tired norm; it makes us reassess what is real-unreal.

From a state of healthy openness and experiment, words and social forms have a tendency to sink back into tired and lazy self-evidences and so we become unable to discriminate or have independent judgement - we become a little less **free**. It's as if art were an arena where all is up for grabs because its freedom is impervious to any control (other than its own easily growing weeds of a new common place)! Without a guillotine to enforce it, art simply asks, "Have you noticed this", "Have you thought of that"? "Does this make you see/feel/think

differently"? It sketches a, "This might be". Not for nothing do we speak of **playing** music and enacting **plays**. Art is the **play** of intelligence across experience. That's why Schiller placed "**play**" at the centre of his aesthetic theorising. And despite this mere "play", think how much poorer existence would be without it - either seeing it or making it - at whatever level of competence or final "product".

"Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a notted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did proceed?



This is another example of the "eclat" of white paper, but here it is not part of the rhythms of mark as are those of the painting of the Blackthorn where both the brush strokes and the white spaces "drew" and held an expressive weight. Here the white space is chaotic and leaves the paint marks as unfashioned blocks of colour. It's as if the brilliant, blinding brightness of the sun were situated in the white spaces but the colour of the scene does not suffer, as in reality, that whitening out by the sun's light, into which we are looking: that is to say, colours should look much paler. So this painting is another good example of the expressive width available, once Bacon's "armature of the real" has been sufficiently declared. Not only is the white around the sun, (which is all that a painter has to symbolise "bright sun"), but also the "meaningless" whites around the blocks of colour, are integral to the whole painting's celebration of that late afternoon's blinding winter brightness. 100 x 100 cms.







This detail is a good example of the rhythms of simplification. The colour is left as blocks surrounded by a defining white, but the simplifications and ordering give the whole image an upward spring to the image: like the dotted notes in music. Also the psychological force of yellow has been borrowed from the autumn leaves and is

even present in the edging of the clouds. In fact the whole painting could be improved on by even more regularity and order; of the kind that can be seen in the stream section immediately to the right of the dark tree trunk. That "false" edging gives a stained glass solidity to the image. 100 x 100 cms.



Here there are two details from different but similar paintings. Both show what I call the sub-plot of a painting. That is, once the "real" (say the barn and the childish sun shape) is well declared, the paint does a supporting role in which its metaphors, rhythms, and vocabulary of marks support the whole image in a form of variation and dance. The sun has been delineated as I say, childishly; since we cannot usually see its roundness because it is so bright, yet as children do, we can draw it "as it is": round! What I meant by the simile of a sub-plot to the "real" of the round sun, is seen in this detail. The moors sun and barn are overlaid with scatterings of marks that try to simulate the haphazard seeming bright and dark of twigs in strong light which both shadows and illuminates. Now abstract art points out an obvious fact: we can find certain marks pretty, or eloquent - in the way that in Chinese calligraphy, a master was admired for the utter **rightness** of his hieroglyphs. But a difference with the Chinese symbols is that the marks mean a "word", unlike the marks of our graffittiists or abstractionists. The calligraphists mastery and eloquence is part of what I have called the sub-plot. If you look at the lower detail, you can see how paint on rough "toothed" paper provokes a physical participation. This little detail shows the beauty of the abstract sub plot of "pure paint", but here it is subservient to showing; water, sunlight, winter, dales, rocks, current, sky, twigs, moors: that which chimes with memory and loved existence. 100 x 100 cms.





The autumn painting opposite is 110 x 110 cms, so even the details are too small. In these details, as with the previous, you can enjoy the "oblique" rendering of parts as still subservient to the late summer evening as the sun is goes down: that moment when colours have such a chiaroscuro brilliance. This is a painting I particularly like for its oblique force and exclamation: so much oblique detail that you could say works as microcosmic details of support. Look at the lower detail. It almost seems a sufficient **micro** painting, self sufficient within the whole image: almost a premonition of coming winter within late summer: the slashing sky of contrasting blue and yellow green, the scattering of brown leaves, the aggressive roughness of its "touche", as if it were a painting of menacing winter wind as well as the exclaiming brightness of the sun. In such painting done outside, the beauty of the place and light give an excitement and wonder which somehow entangles itself with the tracing hand. Then the little that one does succeed in capturing disappoints with the ensuing awareness of just how much more one might have succeeded in saying! "Maybe next time", one hopes.









In this painting, the unpainted white paper has a less ordered role as "drawing". Unlike the paintings with strong directional drawing, this one seems chaotic. In what you could call its "scribble", there is however a sort of indirect "drawing". You could say that the painting is trying to see how much oblique "drawing" a painting can bear, before it collapses but where the whole effect is dependent on these short-hand abbreviations or obliquities: its squiggles!

In the two monochrome paintings following this, the "drawing" is less all-over and emphasises the filligree boniness of winter branches and the similar patterns of the rippling water. The edging of the clouds in the following sepia painting echoes the water ripples. That previously quoted passage of Boehme/Adorno is relevant. In the following two 110 x 110 cms monochromes, the rhythms are what constitute the Shamanistic primitivism to which Adorno refers and the illusion of mimicing it that is encouraged in the out doors painter.











In the previous grey monochrome, the bare winter trunks and twigs justify the filligree drawing but clearly I am using that as an excuse to push further the patterning of the scene with the stream's sympathetic rippling. This patterning is also emphasised by the "artificiality" of painting in just diluted black ink. I think all landscape should be a vehicle of feeling and for which rhythm and pattern are aids of expression. Opposite, Autumn Rowan berries and fallen tree. The marks made with a similar sized brush try to create a harmony and rhythm



100 x 100 cms





As ever, it is the details that make us think of the claims of Abstract Art. You could imagine the painting on the right as an Abstract where it justifies itself by pattern, rhythm and colour, but to me it is that blackbird and the frost still not melted during the day which makes the painting instead, a celebration of the beauty that we do not make. However the scene itself did not possess the order of the painting because painting - at least in this, is like music in that it deals in harmony, rhythm and, despite its immobility, tempi. 110 x110 cms.



If you look at the picture close up, you can see how this painting (100cm square) is made up of little marks whose twig rhythm could progress to an endlessly microcosmic particularity - millions of small touches imitating that which the eye can't distinguish. Also the rays of the sun and its varying illumination on the twigs and branches is a theme that can be infinitely enriched with loaded detail. What would be the adequate marks to represent the cold and the brittle winter sun without warmth with that blackbird on its twig, observant of the scene?





Here the "rhythms" have a different justification of realism. The late sun through the trees, the flashes of brightness in the ripples, the berries on the rowan tree, and its lower grey branches; all in some way justify the wedged shaped marks which make up the rhythm in this painting. It represents that moment of the disappearing sun which with a sideways light creates such contrast of light and dark. Who could bother to stand in a "studio" concocting "patterns", when

there is outside, all this to sit before and maybe with luck, catch a shadow of!? What would be the point of such coloured marks if they signified nothing of the world, but instead presumptuously presumed to contain an autonomous meaning: especially that bogus "spiritual" meaning! Here it is our memories of such moments for which the painter tries to find an adequate paint correlative, so that we MAY say - "beautiful", which is another word for love or true! 110x110



On the previous page there was a more formal pattern to the marks. In this painting the colour was put on very watery and a flicking motion was used. I light heartedly thought of it as a "Jackson Pollock" effect: scribble/spatter! The colours have run into each other making them suffuse and merge and give additional motion to the trace of the swift movement of the hand that you can see in the two details and in this flowing stream, so that in the end, the "Pollock" effect is in fact a realism of representation! - catching the motions of the current! Maybe the sky to some extent fails: is it too static?

With the ready mixed liquid, diluted colour, you can paint very quickly and this is integral to this sort of painting where the over-wet brush strokes have to be controlled - but the "planned" accidental effects can accompany the swift hand movement. Both of these details show the representational task done by these "accidental" collisions. The suffusions of wet watercolour are part of its realism; in the sense that those intrinsic qualities of the medium can become indirect forms of representation: either of the scene or of our psychological response to it.

On the question of size and how critical it is to an image; this is another example of how looking at the close-up detail of the marks one can imagine how magnificent would be the impact of this at 4 x 3 metres!
115 x 115 cms.





I have never liked the way the word abstract is used. All painting after all is abstract in the sense that it has to make artificial signs for something in the real world. The marks of what is known as Abstract art however are granted a special status. These combinations of abstract marks (why not simply call them marks) are said to signify - what is often termed spiritual values and often as in the case of Kandinsky with his essay, "Concerning the spiritual in art", the false analogy to music is made, since we all accept that music's "meaningless" sounds DO seem to definitely **mean** something though we could never say exactly what they mean. But can immobile, pure mark-painting? Let's return to the case of representational art. The chief thing to keep in mind is that the 20th century saw an enormous extension in the language of representation. In such painting, all marks, of whatever sort are as it were, sucked into the overall image-of-the-world in the painting. These marks - (remembering that all art by definition is "abstract"), have some chance of being comprehended, given what Bacon called "the armature of the real". That is the interesting arena. **A note.** Van Gogh wrote to Emile Bernard to "beware of the siren voices of abstraction", by which Van Gogh meant not our abstraction but that over facile reduction of the world into not strenuously observed shape and colour, and which is careless of how much of the observed world it does or doesn't catch. He went on, "it may be feasible after a life time of hand to hand struggle with the motif, but beware, old boy; it is enchanted ground". You could say that Van Gogh was referring to that tendency to let painting descend into mere pattern making and use of forms emptied of content or connection to the "motif", but which are beautiful - (another unhelpful term!). What we now mean by Abstract art is that squiggles, sashes, shapes, smudges, smears, dots, dashes etc can by some vague "abstract" presumption, approach music. But music is sequential and tonal and can sequence and at varying tempi. None of this is possible in painting. A painting is an all-at-once thing, whose looking is arbitrary and chaotic compared to music.

We started with Bacon's search for a wave sign that is so wave-like as

to trump the wave of mere "illustration". If we call marks in a representational painting "abstract" too easily and nonchalantly, we will never understand what is entailed in that quest of Bacon's for the wave more wave. What Van Gogh was referring to in his "hand to hand struggle with the motif", was that strenuous effort to find convincing and original correlatives of paint for the world /our experience of it, **out there:** to find new hieroglyphs for **experienced** things. That is quite different to the invention of self-referential shapes, patterns and colours of abstract art and the great presumption that they can be discoverers of some hidden "spiritual reality". To my mind abstract art presumes to something supposedly self-evident and then forgets that nothing has been proved. "**Spiritual**" is one of those short circuiting words that tendentiously asserts what it has **not** demonstrated. "We know what we mean don't we"; and just as easily are parallels to music asserted as self-evident. In toto, the 20th century discovered, or better rediscovered, abandoned conventions of representation. In this long series of novelty, the commercial art world discovered a kind of express fashion-chain of the "new". Just being new was its own justification and the new was concocted at ever greater speed; as if it were shoe fashion. That I think has more or less killed painting. What we have now is the gauge of "newness", and that is all. It is a fetishism of "form" and novelty.

I have insisted on the word metaphor because it bridges to a wished for loyalty to that single unity: content-form: **significant form**, form not in itself but because it is a "deepen the game" between **referent and thing** which Bacon alluded to. In the case of the "seeing red" metaphor; red is being used appropriately because we intuit the hidden reference to red as a high impact colour; of the blood of injury or wounding, or blood-shot angry eyes. It's this multiplicity of levels in metaphor that make it so comprehensible: "Was the **hope drunk** wherewith you **dressed yourself** and does it **sleep** now to look so **pale**"! In the painter's hieroglyphs, there can be a metaphoric surprise and to which Bacon was referring in his tussle with "wave": the image that might have a high charge of revelation and unexpectedness, as if through the indissoluble, combinatory image, the artist could better nail down the reality being alluded to.



Bacon once said that he wanted a painting to be perceptible along the nervous system, as if there were a more direct route to communication than through meaning. This little oil painting done very long ago shows the nature of oil paint and therefore of the particular expressive potential of any particular medium. Each medium has its gamut and its own specially available sub-plot to what is depicted.

Here that smearing, fat quality of oil paint is so rich and seems to capture the atmosphere of such a hot June day, with nettles in the deep shadows of a midday sun, under the hawthorn tree in flower. The nature of oil paint and the way it leaves a thick trail behind the brush, makes that striping in the sky so expressive of the exuding heat. Whereas in water-based paints the white of the paper between and under the transparent paint seems a metaphor for purity, oil paint and its smearing, dragged up mixed colour has a haptic, body sensuality as if it pictured the sensations exuded from the body. Suitable for such a hot day in June!





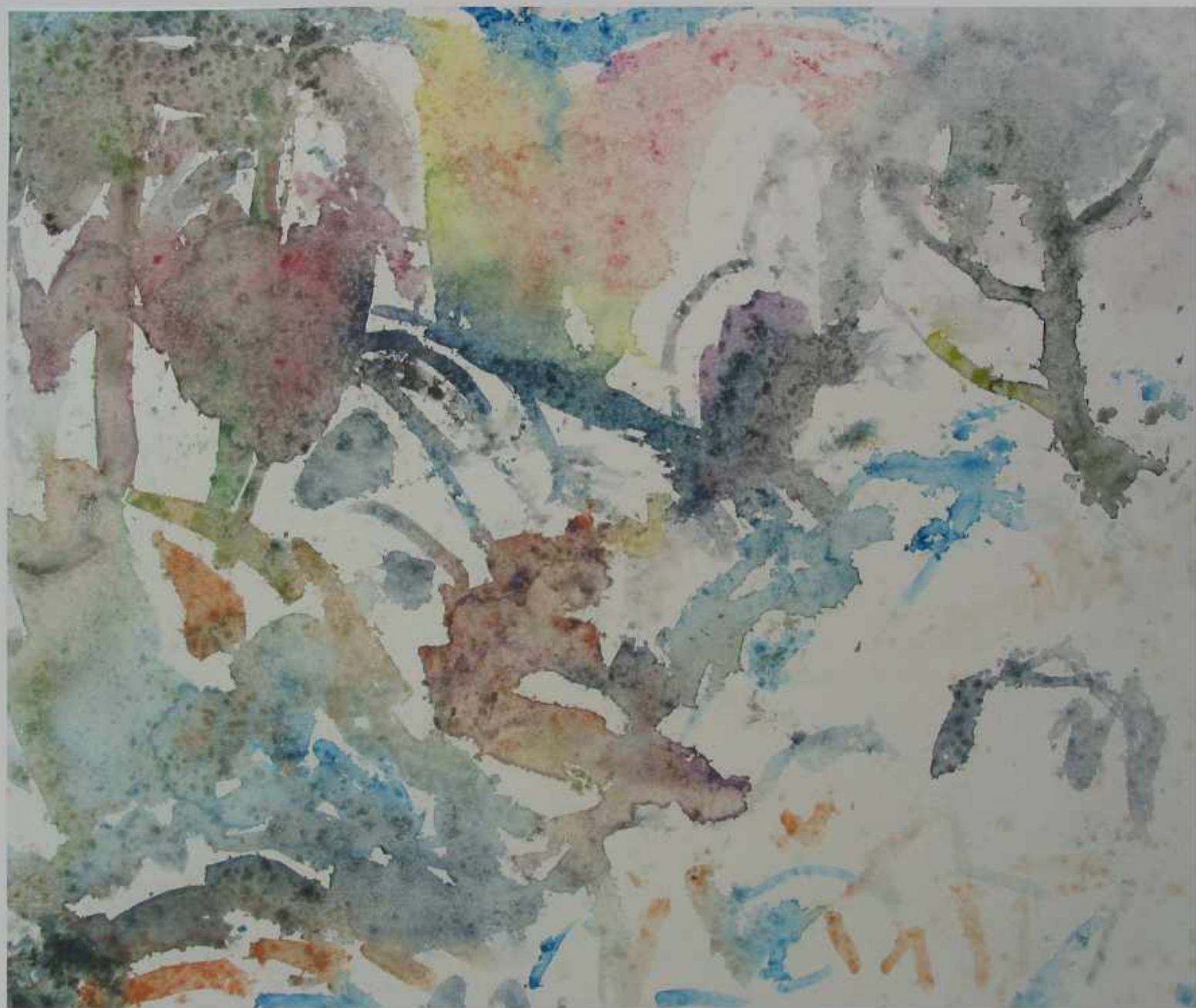


So long has gone by since doing these two small oil paintings. It is such an eloquent plastic medium, I almost regret this (self denying?) dedication to the water mediums of watercolours and acrylic! The way the colour catches up others as if by the entrails. It certainly has a different emotional undertow to water medium with its purity and transparency! Maybe I should do versions of the water paintings in fat oil paint!





Here however are two small watercolours that make a counter argument! This was a snowy day; you can see snow on the paintings. They are both very simplified. You can make out the shape of a stream, trees with snow and sky distinguishable. Here is a very different physicality to the previous oil paintings. Here you see the snow stains of the flakes pooling the colour as they strike. The "snow" is just the left white paper.

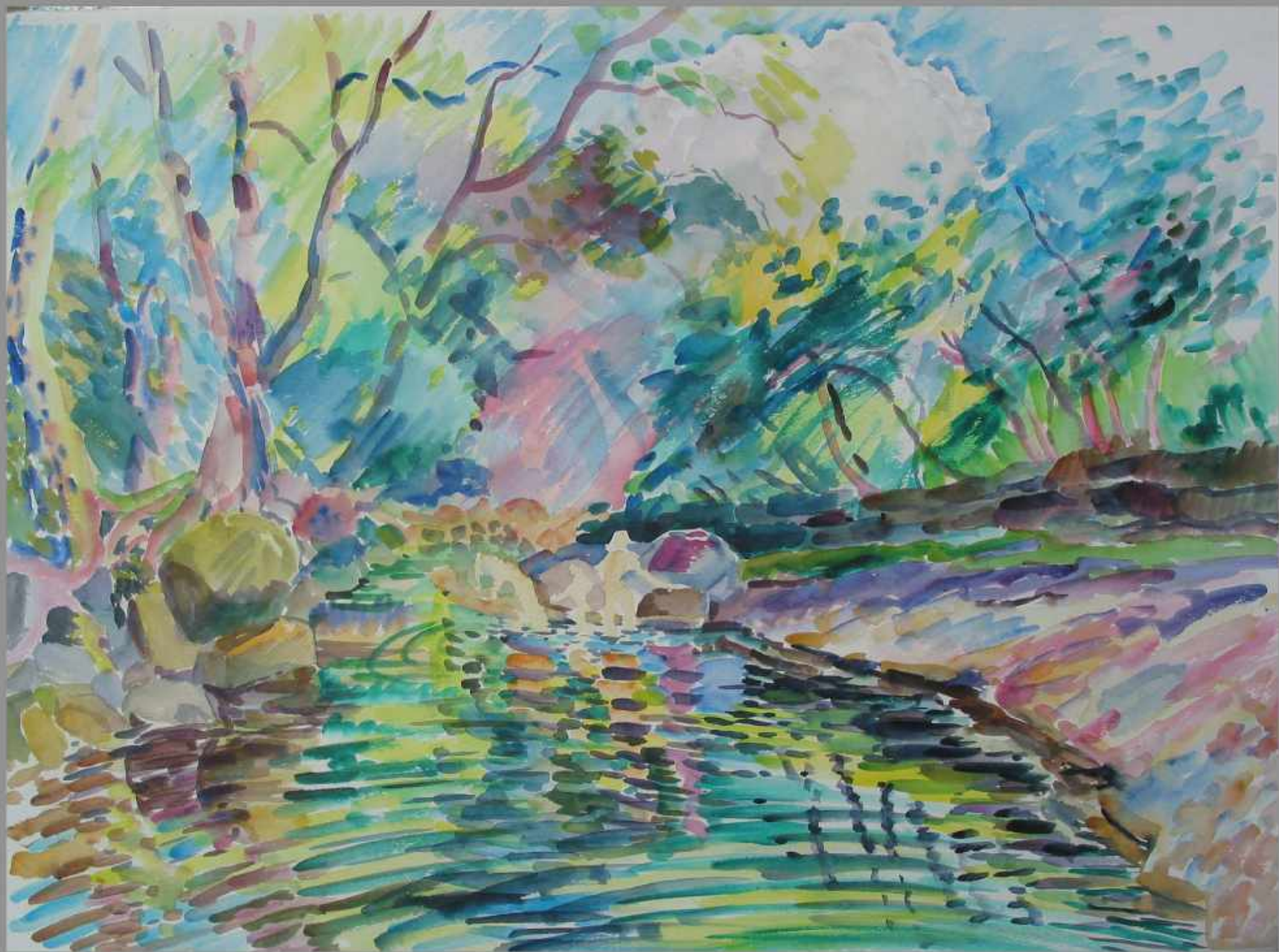




This was a portrait of Eddy writing. Giving him several extra legs seemed suitable to his "emprisoning intellectual life"! One window has **night** beyond it to stand for Eddy's metaphysical interest in "La Notte" and the other window opens on **day** to symbolise his search for clear answers to dark questions! His overhead light is jokingly giving him a halo of the saintly, monastic intellectual. The dark ornate mirror represents his "deep thoughts"! The hunched figure also

looks like him! Opposite is a painting of a painting by a Danish painter-friend, with Ida's favorite objects for her paintings which she frequently used in "variations". Behind the objects is one of her paintings and the empty chair, open window and wind-moved curtains try to suggest her absence, since at the time I painted it, she had recently died, barely 30. Yes, painting is just another of our futile **in memoriam** against pitiless, obliterating time! Both 75 x 55 cms.







Paintings with figures. Figures always set up a vaguely sensed "narrative". However, children playing is one of the most neutral, except that there is pathos in that too, since, as with photos - a moment is caught as if time were stopped and the present beached, and ever-lasting. The two following small "figure" pictures set up expectations of a different sort. Both of these on this page are 75 x 55 cms.







!10 x 110 cms. Wood in spring Rowan blossom and stream. Crayon on Acrylic.

The following painting. Acrylic and crayon. 110 x 110 cms. Late summer windy day.









This is another painting that should be painted so large that it were not be possible to step back from, because if it were as huge as say a Rothko, a viewer would be forced to stay embroiled in its close up haptic physicality - and maybe that is what Bacon meant by a painting assaulting the nervous system - getting at us viscerally through its assaulting markings. This and previous are 110 x 110 cms.









Both are 85 x 75 cms. They too bring to mind the title of a book by Hannah Arendt: "For love of the world". Here it's the exuberance of a windy April day, "that now shows all his beauty to the sun and by and by, a cloud takes all away". Beautiful. What would be the point of standing in a studio and pulling out of one's entrails some tired abstract form that merely presumes to "say something" pretentiously "spiritual"? The job of landscape painting, simply out of "love of the world", is to exclaim: "Beautiful"! Small "art" though it may be.





This is a painting of a blackthorn in April with thunder clouds and lightning and a sudden shaft of blustery rain in that unreliable month for farmers in the Dales during lambing. The fact of using a single colour, sepia or black is a convention so habitual that we hardly noticed its "falsity". But that is potentially true for all visual conventions in representation. In a sense though, a painter is good or bad to the degree that he invents new "ways of seeing". Listen to this self-grumble of Shakespeare in sonnet 76.

**"Why is my verse so barren of new pride,
So far from variation or quick change?
Why with the time do I not glance aside
To new found methods and to compounds strange
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed?"**

That seems such a perfect expression of that restless search that we started with; Bacon's search for a form and mark that might more perfectly encypher "wave", not for novelty's sake but to reveal to our (preconceiving?) experience, something more; that had never occurred to us. Shakespeare in this extract puts it with a modesty typical of the sonnets, "new pride" but the "invention" was in order to avoid the "noted weed" of tired habit. Instead to make fresh and new. For the book which Hannah Arendt wrote at the end of her life, she gave the title; "For love of the world"; that messy world that she had inhabited. If only one could find the marks that would properly encypher that love of the world! If painting is done with what musicians term "brio", maybe that gets a little near to it: the energy of our participation! The sepia ink marks in the detail make me think that maybe one day I can do a sepia drawing that could be like that resistant frictive sound of an impetuous bow striking the strings of a cello! 110 x 110 cms













Every landscape painting that wants to catch something of the "scene", has all sorts of decisions at forks in the road to make. This evening was one of those typical Dales sunsets where the sun has managed very little to shift the frost of the previous night. The fields remain blue with frost but the late sun is yellow and making the twigs that it illuminates, white. You want to paint the twigs but the sun is

shining them into paleness. The sun seems to shine in both round and straight shafts. To catch a little of the evening's magnificence I wanted to give all the marks some unifying rhythm. Perhaps the painting could be enriched by a host of further marks of sunlight on the scene. Imagine this detail enriched further. As always that barn and horizon sets the tone.
This and previous are 95 x 90 cms.





I have already mentioned Hannah Arendt's late book, "For love of the world". That well describes what landscape painting encourages us to express - somehow. Look at the shadow on the distant middle hill with the cheerfully skudding clouds above. Representational painting doesn't just give you the mnemonic reminder of such a day; it can bind into the image, love of the world: here that lovely fleeting shadow running over the moor, the foreground little spots of shadow and sun across the hawthorns and in the grass, the dandelion globes of May.





These are two "doodles", 10 inches square. Both were "finished" into "landscape" images after just making meaningless "brush marks". The one opposite is supposed to indicate a stormy skyline against a horizon with fields below. On the left are two "lightning flashes". Above is a steep hillside stream going down to the sea. Both show how suggestive marks can be.





In this, the water medium is used to create that smudged, snow-coming sky. Stronger colours have been touched into the wet sky so as to seep. These darker marks also stand sublimely for snow falling; as do also the little spaces of white still showing amidst the larger snow-soft suffusing sky. There is a limited amount of black crayon for "bare branches" and "rocks", but maybe it needs slightly more such "drawing". In such a scene of wide space, it is irresistible to put

into that "sky" some space-describing rooks. Keith's barn on the horizon looks already to have snow falling around it and the sky has that strangely coloured aspect of coming snow, though it is also so dull in colour. The mystery of painting lies, as in all art, in the way the mark, note or word, in their sudden unexpectedness, seems so meaningful and "right". The lower part of the painting seems too perfunctory. It needs attention. 110 x 110 cms.





Evening moors and stream. Acrylic and crayon. 130 x 130 cms. These layers of blue are as peaceful as the moors themselves look in the setting light. The red crayon mark and yellow paint stand for touches of sunlight. There is an odd paradox. You could say that only in a representational painting, where much is easily readable, does the pleasure in the abstract "marks" and transparent layers of paint become decypherable, and thus have those indirectly sensed meanings that metaphors contain and abstract art only **presumes** to have. 115 x 120 cms





This is a good example of the insufficiency of this size of photo for a painting 100 x 100 cms. The paint of the detail seems so much more physically exciting than the whole whose detail is lost by being 40 times reduced. The detail above shows to what extent paint marks can function as what I call an oblique "sub-plot" of **indirect** description. By that I mean that these little squares of chiaroscuro contrast are

not obviously illustrational. They are "indirect" in the sense that although in some sense they imitate the light/dark of evening sun through leaves, at the same time they have their own "graffiti" excitement: those transparent blues against the yellow/orange which despite what I describe as almost their aesthetic autonomy, must in the end, also conjure up such an evening of splendour.





A landscape painting is both scene and that artificial thing, a **painting**. This is a painting of a frosty morning, when the over-all frost tends to flatten differences on the fields. In the stream there is the same simplification, trying to give the image a spare bareness.
110 x 110 cms





The watercolour is very wet and the colours have merged, which imitates well that last evening light. The little specks of white paper give sparkle to the colours though in themselves they are not what Bacon might have called disparagingly, "illustrational". Here the underlying metaphor is that wet intermingling paint is read as a representation for the sunset's dilution of colour distinctions with its closing brightness.





In this painting the watercolour has been put on very dry so that the paper which is rough and pitted, conserves the white between the marking pigment. With its obvious traces of hand movement, this is another **physical** painting. Is that what Bacon was meaning with his metaphor, "visceral"? This you could say is watercolour borrowing effects that are made with crayon's "shading" marks. 75 x 85 cms.





Monochrome painting, as with black and white photography, can highlight the rhythms in an image. The whites of blossom and stream's current harmonise. 110 x 110 cms. Rowan tree in blossom.





This painting is done coarsely. In the sky, the parallel perpendicular strokes are both snow falling and that seeming wealth of colour we seem to see in a sky of coming snow and when there is a strange optical effect of shimmer in the sky. In the detail you can see the pleasures of the quick stroked-in colours where the white paper is snow or water and also that which allows the colour marks to, "be themselves". 100 x 100









Both this and the previous painting are 110 x 110 cms and as the details show, have similarities to a type of painting that was once popular called "Taschism", which taking a lesson from Chinese calligraphy, supposedly communicated "visual excitement" through such eloquent marks. I for my part prefer the Chinese letters which actually mean something. In these two details however there is, I grant some sort of graffiti disturbance but here at least it is trying to represent the "excitement" of rain bearing clouds! These two details do



represent an important aspect of landscape painting - particularly that sometimes shamanistic relationship with the weather and place for the "outside" painter. I find Chinese Calligraphy fascinating in respect to landscape painting because a Chinese hirogyph, by long assciation is as near to the thing itself as language gets. It is an anagogue, a symbol that is also so physically in its "drawing", the thing itself in the sense that the shape of the "cloud" letter in Chinese is so intrinsically CLOUD to a Chinese "reader". Landscape painters want to conjure up IT!





Here the trees, the stream banks and clouds have been given a weight by being reduced to large simplified shapes. (This is seen in these details). Such simplification allows the colour that is zoned into large uninterrupted areas to have a maximum emotional effect and make the gathering summer storm sky to be more dramatic: the light contours of suggestive thunder and lightning above the distant moors are almost schematic, and the upward pulses in the sky help give an electric effect of charged clouds. The hawthorn, the cloud's edging, its reflection in the



water and garlic plants are the only areas still white. 110 x 110





The detail shows the sensual character of dry overlaid paint and its suggestions of three dimensional depth. In this painting the acrylic has a very similar impasto effect to oil paint, whereas in most of the paintings in the book, the acrylic is used very diluted and therefore is as transparent as watercolour. In bad painting there is an almost promiscuous use made of this dry "scumble" effect of a dry colour brushed over dry previous paint. Superficial painting can't resist that scumble. It can be as blank as make-up! Too mechanical. 90 x 90 cms.









In this painting I tried to find ways of catching that sheer evening light when everything seems to exhale the sunlight received, by means of slashes of vertical brush strokes. The left side of the stream still has the last rays of the sun illuminating the trees. The odd mark of red gives an enhancing colour contrast brightness to the greens. This detail on the left for me is an absolute proof of the "abstract" beauties of colour and mark BUT that they are **most** powerfully abstract and psychologically affecting when used as oblique metaphoric conjurings of the



world, which is what really matters to us, and which it hurts us to think we must one day leave, or which, collectively we may destroy. The silly painted marks are never adequate. I should have liked to find the hieroglyphs of such an evening light and its calm exuberance! Painting is a way of saying: "beautiful" inadequately! Landscape painting should never drown what is being evoked by mere painterly "sprezzatura" and flourish. The art must lie in the way the paint somehow seems to intelligibly fuse the thing and provoked response. Acrylic. 95 x 95 cms.





This is a painting of that sudden break through of light from behind clouds. But how do you paint light? I've left the white paper on the hill side with a hint of yellow here and there on the painting. The white around the left top clouds declares the setting of the sun behind the clouds' edging of white. The white is also "falsely" left between the colour blocks as this gives brightness to the colours. Had there been more "drawing" that rhythmic brightness of the marks would have been lost. Also those rough blocks in some way echo the light/dark



contrasts of that moment. The colour areas around the white "sunlight" have been thinned out (rather than whitened), to imitate the glare of the bright illumination of a direct facing sun. This painting also shows how the stark blocks of colour with little defining drawing, have a strong physical impact and give the painting a vigorous physicality which is enhanced by the paper left white between the blocks. Possibly the whites in the stream should be given more directional current. 100 x 100 cms.





I tried to make this as free as possible, "scribbling" the painting quickly, and using crayon over the paint marks. Possibly there should be more chiaroscuro in the bottom half of the shadowed trees and stream. As with the "primitive" paintings of children, the imperfect roundness of the "sun" circle seems to emphasise its real roundness, and it is that suitably body-"haptic" imperfection that stands for the body involvement in such exciting moment of almost-sunset!

The swinging "counterpoint" of crayon marks is a non-realism which however aids the subjective identification with the scene. Is that what Bacon meant by "wave more wave" than a mere "illustration"? Of course, in my case, how I describe my intention is disappointed by the inadequacy of my hieroglyphs!
110 x 110 cms.





Moors from Big Meadow gate. Acrylic and crayon. 75 x 55 cms. This is another example of the kind of brush marks that commonly strut their stuff as "Abstract painting". Here they should do the modest job of calling up and celebrating the feelings in the lines of the poem on the next page of this book: "And when show bright the moor expands,
How shall your children clap their hands". Beautiful!



The House Beautiful.

**A naked house, a naked moor
A shivering pool before the door
A garden bare of flowers and fruit
And poplars at the garden foot
Such is the place that I live in
Bleak without and bare within**

**Yet shall your ragged moor receive
The incomparable pomp of eve
And the cold glories of the dawn
Behind your shivering trees be drawn**

**And when the wind from place to place
Doth the unmoored cloud galleons chase
Your garden gloom and gleam again
With leaping sun with glancing rain**

**Here shall the wizard moon ascend
The heavens at the crimson end
Of day's declining splendour
Here the army of the stars appear.**

**The neighbour hollows, dry or wet
Spring shall with tender flowers be set
And oft the morning muser see
Larks rising from the broomy lea**

**And every fairy wheel and thread
Of cobwebs, dew bediamonded
When daisies go shall winter time
Silver the simple grass with rime**

**Autumnal frosts enchant the pool
And make the cart ruts beautiful
And when snow bright, the moor expands
How shall your children clap their hands**

**To make this earth our heritage
A cheerful and a changeful page
God's bright and intricate device
Of days and seasons doth suffice**

Robert Louis Stevenson



This is an evening painting in spring. As mostly is the case, a detail shows something that is important. The paint marks and colours help to define the image of the world out there but at the same time those marks have as it were an undertow and can set in motion a sub-plot of feelings through what we can call the graffiti- eloquence that is not abstract. In such a painting, with so strong a gravitational pull given by its representation - spring, evening light, clouds, stream,- the marks have a double role - the scene and something more. In both details you can see the quick hand movement: what you could call the excited exclamation of it. You could say that I am trying to combine marks that are representational and also "abstract"; but which I prefer to term "obliquely symbolic". By the way, it is interesting that whereas those two words will cause perplexity, most people have, by now been bullied into just nodding the head at such a use of the term "abstract". "Ah yes, he means that hidden significance that the "abstract" possesses". (80 years of high priced abstracts have won for them cowed agreement about the "values" and "significance" that they supposedly possess)! What we do know is that some curtain and furniture cloth has pleasing patterns printed on them. In what more does an abstract distinguish itself? Does it in fact pretend to more? Can "pure colour" and "pure form", unattached to representing, really behave like music? Unbelievable assertion.

100 x 100 cms. Acrylic.







This and following are 110 x 110 cms. Sepia ink and brush. There is such pleasure in painting English skies with their scurring clouds, their coming rain and their implied bracing wind. They are symbols of life's physical joy. Now!
The same can be said for the following two sepias . In those there just had to be rooks that fill the sky and describe its space! 115 x 115 cms.









Here is Alan's farmyard and on the other side, a painting of Alan and Josie's farmhouse and of Tom, (then only three) in our garden. That farm yard and farm house! Happiness is often an indirect creature. One is happy not necessarily because of what we are doing or what is happening to us, but occurs thanks to a steady background circumstance: just so: Alan and Josie across the road! With that changed, and no longer Alan working his long days, the paintings in this book, many done long ago, seem the sadder! 75 x 55 cms.







This is a painting that really should have been done in oil paint so as to be a weak homage to Constable. The falling drops of rain should be visible with their impact rings. - Impelling thought: how did it ever come about that painting should shut the door on the world and eek out its piddling indoor abstractions of "pure colour"? A mystery when such days can at least be palely called forth? One can understand why Constable only thought himself painting when he was standing before a 6 foot canvas. It becomes embracing of the viewer; it forces us outside - as Fusili observed - feeling himself outside under Constable's rain threatening skies. Looking at the top detail, I wish that I were there by the stream with a 3 metre paper on which to scribble, splodge, smudge, smear and pile up, a body-involved image of such a day - its vigorous tactility and sensory capture of the body! Is landscape, and the painting of it, just a so-distant echo of our once free lives as hunter gatherers? No wonder the images are elegiac! You remember this of Adorno. *That nature, that once was thought in some way to "speak" to us, is now only conserved through the metaphorical and encrypted images of art, and it is there in this untranslatable work of remembrance that there is conserved the "language" of nature.* This is 95 x 90 cms. On the next page are details of 8 skies. "And when the wind from place to place Doth the unmoored cloud galleons chase, Your garden gloom and gleam again With leaping sun and glancing rain".







