

PAININGS AND FILE BOX  
ARE AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION

AT

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY,  
MONTREAL, QUEBEC.  
H3G 1M8

A PAINTER'S FILE BOX

Paul James Langdon

A THESIS  
in  
The Faculty  
of  
FINE ARTS

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Fine Arts at  
Concordia University  
Montréal, Québec, Canada

April, 1975

© Paul James Langdon 1975

**ABSTRACT**

**Paul James Langdon**

**A PAINTER'S FILE BOX**

This thesis is a personal documentation of artistic change and growth in painting experiences. It also demonstrates how a system of personal inquiry can develop and exist in one's own creative process.

The format is a written document and file box in which information is chronologically indexed and colour coded.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to express my gratitude to  
Hélène Gagné, Graeme Chalmers, Gerome  
Krause and Alfred Pinsky for their support  
and understanding. Thank you.

## A Painter's File Box

The current outrage developing over art critic Clement Greenberg's altering of the surface finish of some of David Smith's sculptures reintroduces the argument of artistic intention versus aesthetic choice. Until recently, Smith's sculptures, including Greenberg's alterations, stood as successful pieces of modern American sculpture. The present disillusionment is over the integrity of these aesthetic judgements imposed by Greenberg and that they were completed after Smith's death.

There may be strong criticism for Greenberg's actions but should there be any criticism over the validity of the presently existing sculptures?

This controversy stimulated me into questioning the process an artist follows in creating his product. It seems to be a result of many direct and indirect influences on himself as an artist and as a person. The relative success of the product reflects the artist's ability to select and integrate the influences of his environment with the development of his imagery.

This thesis is a personal documentation of artistic decision making and the influences that lead to those decisions in my personal work.

2

The body of work produced consists of seventeen canvases painted over a period of ten months. These seventeen works were painted in two series. The first consisted of nine paintings and traced the development of raw ideas to a maturing image. It was at this point that I consulted "people" in my life to get reactions. These "people" have been categorized into three loose groupings. The first group are friends - people with little exposure to art, but who give sincere and sensitive reactions. The second group is made up of student and teaching colleagues - people who are involved in art and more articulate in relating to visual imagery. The third group consists of my two painting instructors - people from whom I received two articulate, experienced, incisive viewpoints. The range of influences vary from being emotionally supportive to stimulating a development of new constructs for imagery.

Concurrently there have been many influences from the media. The things I saw and read seemed to concern the image of the artist. His identity in the structured situation of a middle class University and home life. The more involved I became with creating a specific image the more insecure I began to feel as to the real intention of my imagery. Many thoughts and emotions seemed to result from an involvement with this imagery and grow more intense as the process developed. After a few painting sessions I sat down and recorded what was happening. When trying to express a rational intention of the process, it was overpowered by a stream of conscious imagery that gave clues to a deeper conflict. A struggle to identify what I was as an artist and

what an artist was accomplishing in the reality of existence as a producer of objects.

After recording reactions and personal feelings, a format was needed to retrieve and correlate this information with the image development of the paintings. A filing system using chronological and colour coding was best suited.

First the paintings were numbered No. 1 to No. 16 and professional slides were made of each work.

White cards with black ink were used to record the data of each painting under the headings of Image Development, Strengths and Weaknesses.

Separating each painting category was a blue card with blue ink titled Transition. This card noted the theoretical changes in the image under the heading Realizations.

After paintings No. 9 and No. 16 opinions were solicited and noted under the headings Reaction of Friends (red tab, red ink on white cards), Reaction of Colleagues (green tab, green ink on white cards), and Reaction of Instructors (blue tab, blue ink on white cards). Also in this section are two more categories. Artist and Art (orange tab, orange ink on white cards) concerns self identity and the painting image and New Directions (clear tab, black ink on white cards) which outlines future aesthetic decisions.

The filing system allows you to relate back to a specific slide or combinations of slides or to follow a specific aspect of the image development.

This thesis was intended not only to be a personal record of artistic change and growth but also to show how a system of personal inquiry can develop and exist in one's own creative process.