

Cubism and After: Departures

Transcript

Ian's Intro. (Standing by Cubist Picture)

"Television keeps me in touch with the shapes and sounds of the modern age. Modern painting - the sort of work I do - is related directly and indirectly to the new situations in which man finds himself. Science has given us so many new images, from outer space to the microscopic view. In a different but parallel way, artists are exploring new ways of analysing nature.

Things have been changing very quickly since the beginning of the century. The first great movement - Cubism - set out to analyse and reconstruct the appearance of nature; to look at in a new way. It was a marvellous great break through."

I used to paint in this way. In a painting like this I would start with a piece of nature and try to break it down. In this

case it was a plaster cast of a Greek sculpture.

Ian's Painting Sequence: 1st Stage

My own work is changing but I still require an object as a centre of focus. At the moment I am using this anatomical figure. It has organic structure but it's more mechanical than an actual sculpture. I have it beside me all the time but I don't make any preliminary drawings. I often begin, as here, with the new canvas on the floor. I have worked out in my mind all I want to do but when I begin I am interested in the painting developing itself and the surprises I might get from it.

I try to use colour in a systematic way - as a kind of symbolism, almost mechanically. Even if I were to use a spray-gun the mark made would still be a personal one.

To vary the form and density of the colour I sometimes cover parts of the canvas with cut-out

shapes. These are arbitrary and simple, but I can use them to manipulate and control the areas of colour on the canvas.

At the time I am working I try to remain open and aware of the potential in the picture. There is a constant inter-action between its development and my reactions to it.

Ian at Canvas. 2nd Stage of Painting Sequence:

At a later stage I put the canvas on an easel and paint in the conventional way. Here I am building up fragmentary areas of colour. These areas of colour serve as keys to different references in the painting: in much the way as a biologist would use a stain on his specimen to indicate specific cell forms in micro-photography.

I know my paintings have an ambiguous, fluid element. People tend to read figurative elements into whatever they see and I like that. I think it's right that one should read one thing into a

picture at one time and have a different response at another.

Ian's Painting Seq: 3rd Stage

In the final stages of work on a painting I often use a broader technique.

I think there are kinds of play one can make on forms, not in the sense of a doodle - but a serious kind of play - a task which one can impose on various forms seen in nature, or in the geometry of a picture.

When a painting is coming along well I often work on it right into the night.

The important thing is getting the relationships of colour and mass right. You have to experiment constantly.

Kate in Kitchen Seq.

My wife was an art student and often talks to me about my paintings. I don't think this necessarily affects the way I work but it is encouraging to know that someone is sympathetic to

the progress of my work and to what I am trying to achieve. Painting can be a lonely business - it's a kind of research and exploration in which you are continually feeling your way.

Kate and Ian Looking at Easel

(Kate and Ian discussing painting. end of Kate's commentary fades and Ian continues:-)

It's only after you have transformed the image on to the canvas that you discover its affinity with reality - with the images of the modern world.

Outside Shop Window

I like the complexities and shapes of modern things. I think this is the most exciting age ever.

MUSIC & MONTAGE SEQ. OF MODERN IMAGES

Ian's Drawings

I don't want to put these shapes

down literally. The camera can do this much better. I never draw directly from life. But by making signs and marks on paper I discover how important they can be. There is still a necessity to look at things very closely, but in a more dynamic way, and always in connection with the artist himself. It's a "looking in" as well as a "looking out". The drawing may turn out to have a resemblance to some organic form, but this is irrelevant to its creation as a drawing. That's one reason why I like to keep my surroundings free of clutter. The things in my studio are here for a functional purpose. It would be distracting to be surrounded by lots of objects, when in my work I am seeking an essential simplification.

MUSIC OVER PAINTING

Pan Across Pictures

Conventional figurative painting is no longer possible. Portrait painting, painting with a social message, is dead. Instead there

is this exciting new breakthrough.

Looking at Pictures

A painting is a discovery about nature, and the artist must develop an idea about how nature can change. This goes beyond training. He has to assimilate, or reveal, images which are already there.

End Sequence

"I think the thing is to try and discover the latent possibilities of creation. One makes a thing and finds out about it afterwards."