

ARTIST SUMMARY STATEMENT

Note: "**Latwahn**" is a Mesquite Indian word whose definition cannot be separated.

It means *both love and pain*.

A summary follows of the lineage from "Latwahn", painting, acrylic/mixed media canvas, dated 1975 – to the Playground Series; Caravan Series, Kali Poem series, and recent Diptychs and Triptychs. These works were begun in 1985 and are all ongoing series.

I have been interested in creating a balance of tensions and a sense of duality in my painting, while at the same time developing a new, deep atmospheric space. Throughout the continuum of my painting since 1973, this is always reflected as my concern; and I would hope it is my specific forte as a painter. For the past 35+ years, my paintings, drawings, and collages have a common thread of this philosophical intention, and various painterly devices are used in order to achieve this amorphous space. In the 1972 Corcoran Gallery of Art catalogue of "Five Washington Artists", I wrote a statement for the Chief Curator and Assistant Director, Jane Livingston, which was for reference material. I thought extremely long and hard to make this statement deeply meaningful, cogent and long-lasting. This statement still stands:

"My painting is working within tensions of paradox, ambiguity, duality, and contradiction. It is not on one side or the other; it is those polarities united. This is the totality and the fullness. The meaning cannot be expressed in words alone; it is a feeling, a sense, an experience, a joy, an idea."

To this end, my paintings involved in achieving ambiguous colors and contradictions of space by juxtaposing the motion of line against the stability of shape, and using these lines to achieve "aliveness" and punch the rest of the picture plane into infinitely deep, recessive space.

Always I have been interested in the inter-relationship of other art forms and painting, and particularly music and dance (which I studied seriously for 17 years). This music and dance influence is present in the gesture of painting, and, in a broad arena, evoked in the philosophical "spiritual" content of the painting. Because of their painterliness and spiritual content, I was influenced by the Abstract Expressionist generation of painters and still find my heritage and belief system in this period.

In 1978 "The Playground Series" of paintings developed from a longtime desire to do something from Matisse's paper cutouts, which I greatly admire and have considered one of the last great innovations in art. These - together with an interest in Braque's paper collages, Motherwell's collages, Stella's "Indian Birds", paintings by Frankenthaler, Pollock, and Rothko - were all merging sources of inspiration. This "Playground Series" is collaged/pieced paintings of painted canvas applied to painted canvas, utilizing and exploring various drawing materials into the painting. The freedom of drawing with paint by this process is exciting and liberating to me. Through this process of collaging illusionary self-created pieces, a new illusion of color space emerged. It becomes a tension of being both the "illusion" and the "reality". I always strive for this polarity and ambiguity. The process allows many different techniques such as: expanding color-mixing, juxtapositions, expressive surface plays, mixing the random with the ordered, complete spontaneity to extreme analytical, forming several levels of spatial contradictions - continuously in a process of affirming and denying themselves. This duality again.

The "Playground Series" which are usually very large, shaped, and unstretched canvases evolved over 6 years into the "Caravan Series" - stretched, collaged paintings. Though more conventional - as they were stretched paintings - the problem I was working on was to integrate these pieced elements fully into the

canvas surface. They were used as a spatial device to manipulate the new space I wanted to create. They were of it and yet not of it. From this period on, I worked toward an ability to be able to draw with the paint more -- to reach this spontaneity of drawing more directly, rather than through the pieced element, and to get more looseness, and yet command, of the paint. These paintings led to the presently "inevitable" series entitled "The Kali Poem Series" (over 93 paintings). But I use the word "inevitable" advisedly as this continuum was only learned in hindsight. I was somehow compelled to do these paintings, and it very much seemed, even against my will. For the first time in my work it was not out of a joy but from some other place, some other sphere. They just seemed to appear. I accepted them somehow not as the invited guests to a dinner party, but as someone a friend had brought along. I knew they had a meaning but it took awhile for me to know what it was.

And the answer was in my favorite poem which reads:

KALI POEM

Help Us to Be the Always Hopeful

Gardeners of the Spirit

Who Know that Without Darkness

Nothing Comes to Birth

As Without Light

Nothing Flowers

In these "Kali Poem" paintings I am trying to achieve more directness in drawing and paint quality with this sense of duality and deep atmospheric space. The same thread of the influence of music and dance appears, since for the past couple of years in addition to studying music and dance, I have added the exploration of Oriental music and dance and Oriental philosophy. It is an exploration to incorporate a sense of Eastern aesthetics and content into contemporary abstract expressionist painting and content.

Subsequently, due to a serious wrist injury, I created several sequential, accordion-style small "Kali Poem" books which further developed the idea of time and sequence. It exhibits variations of time and sequence that exist in music and dance. I am pleased that one of these books is in the permanent collection of The National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and my painted books were included in exhibitions in the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. Since painting the books, I have been developing many screens, diptychs, and triptychs incorporating a different and more complex aspect of *time and sequence*.

I am working to broaden abstract painting from a rigid and static state. I want to create a *dialogue* between the individual paintings, a dialogue sometimes understandable and harmonious, and at other times jarring, chaotic, confusing: a new kind of communication, a new way of seeing. Their arrangements are not arbitrary. They cannot easily be perceived.

I continue to explore what I believe is a very innovative and important, unexplored dimension in painting.

written by Ann Purcell 1985/updated 2008/May 2009/December 2009