

# 'The Trees Have Grown So, Since You Went Away'

Wallon Lake, July 4: Back again to a place called home to the big window framed with cedar; near again to the insistent rhythm of waves and water, to the gull's cry—the very rigging song.

Now at another season's beginning, we are newly aware of how the years come on space and how what is left of life grows sweeter and more satisfying. Meanwhile, our security in Nature's inflexible laws deepens and undergirds each day's living.

As we turn in at the familiar lane, we are amazed once more at the evidence of another year's growing. Here a burst of sunlight falls before we enter the shaded forest.

Aggressive wild flowers like wild geranium, cinquefoil, Queen Anne's lace and oxeye daisy crowd the lane's shoulders; hardy grasses, clovers and the sturdy bracken fern are ever encroaching upon its shady margins.

Here the children of our summer household have learned to know the neat looks and tidy ways of the cedar waxing who sometimes comes to call. The mumps now reach a height of some 20 feet, about the maximum for its kind.

Other trees have made a corresponding growth. The "chauras" or the balsam fir in the nearby swamp tower over their fellows and the limbs of the young sugar maple and white cedar seedlings which we planted a scant 10 years ago to hide the scars of the old fireplace foundation, now brush the window pane overhead.

Of their kind, these plants are saprophytes, returning dead material to the living cycle.

Each year the moss on the many moldering logs grows deeper and greener, and more species of these ancient soil-making plants appear, their minute spores borne from one nook where by every vagrant wind.

Seems that you no sooner learn to like modern art, the French Impressionist or even Picasso, and they are on some new kick. How does a neophyte viewer keep up with the new trends? How does he look at a picture that seems hopelessly incomprehensible?

There are two aspects of a painting; the technical side and the aesthetic or story side. The technical side consists of the rules and principles the artist follows. (Future columns will examine the philosophic side.)

Understanding the technical structure of an art work often gives a key to the meaning of the piece. A basic design course teaches those fundamentals that are the backbone of a picture. Pictures are made up of various shapes (visual representation), lines and color. A few pictures are the exception to this rule. The black on black picture with only a little variation in the black show the artist trying to see how much he can accomplish with how little.

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THE MORE PRECARIOUS and improbable the artist's balance of the visual elements of a picture, the more exciting the composition becomes. Like a miscellaneous pyramid of circus tumblers, this dramatic balance heightens the effect.

You might try diagramming the balance of a few pictures to see what sort of mood the artist's balancing act creates.

Use cutout pieces of colored paper to represent the major color areas. If your result doesn't balance, then the artist was balancing more than color. He may have been balancing textures or line patterns as well.

IN OUR absence, death and decay, always a part of life, have taken their seasonal toll. The old yellow birch in our parking area, has finally lost its battle with life.

Long the dismay of the impatient visitors whose car was long to make a safe turn within the limits set by its curling bark, it will now have to be cut.

"Matter cannot be lost," says the lane, a tall dead snag, all that is left of a once great hemlock, has been decorated with a fine display of yellow birch shelf fungus (Polyporus lucidulus).

CHILDREN and artists like to draw pictures on its top-pored underlaid surface while the spores are born and ripen. Like many another

NOW IN the morning light, your scribe has made her first pilgrimage of the season along a favorite woodland trail to see a paper birch whose growth she has followed over the years.

One of the tallest and straightest of its kind, it could reach its present height of some 70 feet only in a dense forest where it needed to reach for the life-giving light.

Northern Michigan is Indian Country, and the red man knew the usefulness of the paper birch long before the white man called it beautiful. With his bark he covered the frame of his wigwam and his canoe; if he made his pail, his cloak, his umbrella.

LET'S CONCENTRATE on just one of these technical devices. Every picture has some sort of balance. There is an equal amount of visual weight on each side of an imaginary center line. A vase of flowers in the middle of a canvas ranges from tranquil and serene to boring.

But it is natural to put the center of interest in the middle. So the artist strives for a sort of balance that keeps your eye traveling around within the frame but not resting placidly in the middle.

He can balance a tiny bright spot with a huge muted area. Like

WHAT IF YOU HAVE diagrammed a picture, and it still doesn't balance? This may be another case of the artist purposely defying the rules for the sake of impact. A picture that is too "heavy" on one side would have an unsettled effect on the viewer. One's eye automatically tries to balance the picture.

The artist, a wily magician with a huge bag of tricks, uses your eye to create his effects. You can either refuse to play (I know what I like, and I don't like THAT) or you can go along with the performance and have a good time.

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MOST PERSISTENT are the countless seedlings of birch and hemlock, of beech and maple which reaching out for light and growing space have in so short a time almost obliterated our invading wheel tracks.

This beech-maple forest association has remained untouched since the big trees were lumbered before the turn of the century. Consequently the great boles of fallen giants are everywhere evident.

Carpenter ants, working on the many dead snags, make a restricted habitat for the shy and vanishing pileated woodpecker.

There probably will always be both private and public patronage," suggests Iglehart. "But it seems likely that in the public or community patronage will be the more important."

PLINY and Plutarch agree that the famed bores of Numa Pompilius, written 700 years before the time of Christ, were of birch bark.

"The trees have grown so, since you went away."

Back to the main trend. These lines, shapes and colors are manipulated by balance, repetition, texture, rhythm, emphasis, contrast and more.

YOUR DIAGRAM, if you started with a representational picture, may look like an abstraction now that you have changed it to simple color areas. This is the basis of abstraction—simplifying forms down to their basic essence.

WHEN FIRST we came to live on the shores of Wallon Lake 14 years ago, the clump of speckled alder along the shoreline was no larger than a Christmas tree. Now in the circle cast by its shade we often have our lunch or a picnic supper.

Iglehart says art patrons have always exercised a responsibility which belongs to power. "As the pharaohs and princes and dictators pass, without regret, into history, their responsibilities become our own," he says. "We take pride in our ability to govern better than they. We should someday be able to take pride in giving better encouragement to man in his expression of art."

THE MUSEUM'S INTEREST is directly attributable to the sense of democratic responsibility. They not only house the treasures of the past, but also educate the community, and they often purchase the work of the contemporary artist."

Because it looks like a broad hazy band to the naked eye, its true nature has always been a riddle to man. Over the centuries it has been thought to be a pathway, a glistening river, a heavenly snake or, according to an old Indian legend, dust picked up by a buffalo and horse racing across the sky.

"BUT TELESCOPES show it to be made up of millions of stars, star clusters, star clouds, bright nebulae and dark dust clouds."

It is unusually bright in the summer because "we are located midway between the center and edge of our galaxy, and in the summer night sky we are looking toward its farther border and therefore through a greater number of stars than during the winter."

NOTICEABLE in the Milky Way is Cygnus (the Swan) and Aquila (the Eagle) with its bright star Altair. Just above and to the left of Aquila are two small constellations, Sagitta and Delphinus. Sagitta resembles an arrow, and Delphinus (the Dolphin) or Job's Coffin is composed of four stars in a diamond shaped figure.

"Toward the southeastern horizon," Professor Leach notes, "one comes to Sagittarius (the Archer), one of the finest of the summer figures. This Archer with his bow outstretched is aiming at shafts at the flaming red heart of the Scorpion, Antares, lying just to the west of Sagittarius."

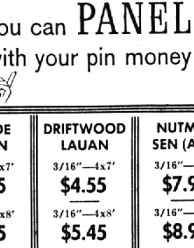
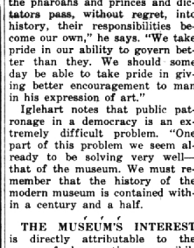
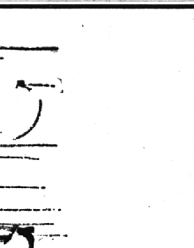
Artist Robert A. Thom (second from left) of Birmingham, who is doing "A History of Michigan in Paintings" for Michigan Bell, shows officers and men of the USS De Soto County what they look like on canvas. A week ago when Thom was in Erie, Pa., doing research work for his latest painting, "Perry's Victory on Lake Erie," twelve members of the De Soto County crew posed for him as Capt. Perry and his men on a replica of

Perry's ship, The Niagara, at Erie. When the De Soto County arrived at Cobo Hall in Detroit on its tour of the Great Lakes, Thom thanked his sailor models and showed them the partially finished painting. Lt. Richard L. Chirnside, (left), executive officer of the ship, posed as Capt. Perry for artist Thom. After the painting is finished, Thom has promised to send reproductions to each of the Navy men who passed for him.

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Mrs. Frehe

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## Art Work Buyers Not Always Rich, Says U-M Artist

The man who buys art works today often is not a man of great wealth who is building a collection as a monument to himself, but a man of more modest means who buys out of love and interest, says Robert Iglehart, chairman of the University of Michigan department of art.

"There probably will always be both private and public patronage," suggests Iglehart. "But it seems likely that in the public or community patronage will be the more important."

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