

**“My Own Place, My Own Name”  
Figuration, Abstraction and the Tragic in the Art of Stephen Greene**

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Alan E. London, PhD

University of Pittsburgh, 2021

This monographic study of the work of the American artist and teacher Stephen Greene (1917-1999) establishes his place within the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-Century art world conflict between the adherents of figuration and abstraction, respectively, reflected in, among other sources, the 1953 publication of the artists' journal *Reality*. Over the decade from 1953 to 1963, Greene, who considered himself a “tragic” painter, transformed his art from representational to abstract, while resisting throughout those years and for the rest of his life any identification with either school. Using evidence drawn from critical reaction, artistic influences, visual analysis and Greene's own writings, the dissertation charts the course of Greene's artistic development and argues both that the seeds of abstraction were present even in the earliest work and that elements of symbolic figuration enlivened even the latest.



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## Preface

When faced in 2013 with my application for art history graduate study—unusual in that it was submitted by a 68-year-old soon-to-be retiree—Kirk Savage and Josh Ellenbogen gamely agreed to give me a chance. I am grateful to them and to rest of the Pitt History of Art and Architecture faculty who have shaped my thinking about art and made the graduate school experience so satisfying for me, especially Shirin Fozi, Jennifer Josten, Barbara McCloskey, Chris Nygren, Terry Smith, Alex Taylor and Frank Toker. I sincerely appreciate the willingness of David Marshall and Marshall Price to join Professors Savage, McCloskey and Taylor on my dissertation committee and the excellent guidance each committee member has provided.

For their help and attentiveness to my requests and inquiries for this dissertation project on the art of Stephen Greene, I am grateful to the following museum people: Elizabeth Tufts Brown and Hannah Turpin at the Carnegie Museum of Art; Michele Wong and Noah Landfield at NYU's Grey Gallery of Art; Jeff Richmond-Moll and Sarina Rousso at the Georgia Museum of Art; Rebecca Tilghman and Tony Askin at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; David Miller, Carrie Springer, Lawrence Hernandez and Micah Musheno at the Whitney Museum; Mitra Abbaspour, Calvin Brown, Molly Gibbons and Laura Giles at the Princeton Museum of Art; Clare Rogan, Benjamin Colman and Carrie Segal at the Detroit Institute of Arts; Amy Torbert and Jessica Rahmer at St. Louis Art Museum; Hayley Ash and Antoin Sharkey at Tate; Pat McCormick at the Butler Institute of Art; Heather Anne Hales and Kevin Montague at the Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University; Howell Perkins at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Alba Fernández-Keys and Caitlin Downey at the Indianapolis Art Museum; Indira Abiskaroon at the Guggenheim Museum; Joni Kinsey and Alice Phillips at the University of Iowa and Sarah Luko at its art museum; Britta Traub at the Norton Simon Museum; Hannah Mandell at Bard College Museum of Art; Diana Thompson at the National Academy of Design; David Rozelle at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and Tiffany Wang at Hauser & Wirth. The patience and good advice of Linda Hicks, Karoline Swiontek, John Fudrow, Jonah McAllister-Erickson and Abby Fite, all at Pitt, are much appreciated.

Stephen Greene's cousin, Joy Schumacher, and his friend and advocate, Karen Wilkin, graciously shared their recollections with me in separate fascinating interviews. I also benefitted

from conversations with people who knew Greene in their role as his dealer: Nina Nielsen of the Nielsen Gallery; Margo Hudson of Victoria Munroe Fine Art; Susan Lager Jaffe, who worked at William Zierler; and, especially, the Jason McCoy Gallery's Stephen Cadwalader, who genially spent a long day with me in a storage warehouse unwrapping, viewing, discussing and rewrapping paintings. Within an interesting correspondence occasioned by his curating a 2019 exhibition at the American Academy in Rome, Peter Benson Miller thoughtfully provided me with important materials about Greene's experiences there seventy years earlier. My friend and fellow student Allison McCann generously reviewed and copied materials from the Getty Archive that were otherwise inaccessible to me. Others to whom I am grateful for their varied contributions to the project are Daniel Reich, Kevin Sloan, Luciano Cheles, Eliza Rathbone, George Shackelford, Don Quaintance, Richard James Porter, Anita Toney, Mark Brock, Kevin Burford and Daniel Flatley.

Close family members—children Sara and Daniel, sister Andrea, siblings-in-law Ken, Elaine and Chuck—have been consistently interested and supportive. Countless hours (over many years) of enjoyable conversation with my friend and college roommate Bob Silberman, as well as periodic visits with him and his dear wife, Nancy Netzer, to museums and galleries, have been indispensable in shaping my taste and thinking about art. Discussions with my friend and former partner Larry Flatley about our respective writing projects have been diverting and rewarding.

One of the great delights of this project was spending hours on the phone with the artist and teacher Anthony Apesos as we viewed on our respective screens the same images of Greene's work. Tony (who decades ago made several visits to Greene in his studio) was more than generous with his time and knowledge as he engagingly guided me, sometimes stroke by stroke, through his fascinating insights on how Greene made his art. I am grateful.

Before deciding on a single-artist monograph for this project, I contemplated dealing with three artists who had been involved with Reality—Greene, Karl Knaths and Joseph Solman. I rather quickly gave up on Knaths, as there was no identifiable guardian of his legacy to talk to. Solman did have such a guardian, however, in his son, the journalist and PBS commentator Paul Solman, who had already written and produced engrossing materials about his father. Paul enthusiastically welcomed my inquiries and graciously opened his Waltham, Massachusetts home, collection and archive to me over a two-day visit, preceded and followed up by numerous phone calls and emails, all of which I enjoyed and appreciate.



There are many reasons for my wholehearted gratitude to Alison de Lima Greene, of which a partial list is: her warmth in greeting my initial proposal to write about her father; her extensive, thoughtful preparations for my fruitful visit with her in Houston and subsequent phone conversations; her patience in responding—fulsomely, pertinently and graciously—to my never-ending email questions over the course of more than two years; her kind introductions to people with whom she thought (correctly) I'd be interested in connecting; and what I think must have been her intentional decision to refrain from any effort to control the direction of the project. Alison was the essential informant and I could not have hoped for one more supportive and devoted, yet clear-eyed. It's been an honor and a singular pleasure to share this meaningful experience with her.

Finally, in addition to proficiently editing successive dissertation drafts, my wife, Elaine, has been lovingly unstinting in her encouragement and unselfishly benevolent in her support of my graduate study. As always, she has been my inspiration.

## Introduction

This dissertation is a study of the work and life of the artist and teacher Stephen Greene (1917-1999), an American painter who was celebrated in his lifetime but who has fallen outside of present-day discourse. Greene was part of a generation of artists who negotiated, in assorted individual ways, the treacherous mid-20<sup>th</sup>-Century intersections of figuration and abstraction. He brought a profound humanism to a career that spanned six decades.

As Marshall Price has written, the long decade immediately following the end of World War II was one of significant artistic achievement in the United States, as artists took “divergent aesthetic paths in reaction to the dominance of Abstract Expressionism, laying the foundation for a plurality of styles that proliferated in the ensuing years.”<sup>1</sup> Charting one such path, Stephen Greene, after an extended crisis of artistic confidence, took inspiration from a January 1959 Clement Greenberg lecture to complete a gradual, but intense, change in his painting style from the mournful Renaissance-inspired figuration of his first years as an artist to a kind of refashioned color-field approach—an approach that he refined, but never abandoned, over his remaining four decades. Yet only five years before the Greenberg lecture, in 1953, Greene had signed on to a manifesto published in the first of three annual issues of the artists’ journal *Reality*, a publication whose often-strident artist-authored essays in favor of “human qualities in painting” were generally received as an attack on the hegemony of non-representational abstraction in American art.<sup>2</sup> The story of *Reality*, by illuminating the conditions of artistic production and the social and political roles of artists and artworks in the United States at mid-century, provides art historical context for the development of Greene’s art over the first two decades of his career, from 1942, when he got his first of two degrees in art from the University of Iowa, to 1963, the year of his single-artist retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery.

In propounding the manifesto that introduced their journal, styled simply as a “Statement,” the editors of *Reality*, including, among other artists, Raphael Soyer, Edward Hopper, Henry Varnum Poor, Isabel Bishop, Joseph Solman, and Jack Levine, identified “humanism” as a core value for art. The Statement insisted that “texture and accident, like color, design, and all the other elements of painting, are only the means to a larger end, which is the depiction of man and his world” and complained that “[t]oday, mere textural novelty is being presented by a dominant group

of museum officials, dealers, and publicity men as the unique manifestation of the artistic intuition.”<sup>3</sup>

The words *figuration* and *figurative* do not appear prominently in the first issue of *Reality*. Robert Slifkin has written that the term was seldom used, at least in art historical writing, to describe a mode of art making before the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century. Prior to the 1950s, the word most commonly used in conceptual contrast to *abstract* art was *representational* art; sometimes, *modernist* was contrasted with *realist*. With the entry of Abstract Expressionism into the American canon, “*figurative* came to be commonly understood as the formal and ontological antithesis of *abstract*.”<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, although Slifkin referred to the word’s “vexatious connotations in art historical parlance” and although the parameters of what Greene himself meant when he called himself a “figure painter” were not always clear, I have used the words *figuration* and *abstraction* and their variants to frame the primary theme of this dissertation.

Stephen Greene died in 1999, just two months after the death of his cherished and devoted wife of forty-five years, Sigrid de Lima. In their respective compendious obituaries from their respective sides of the Atlantic, art critics Roberta Smith in the *New York Times* and Adrian Dannatt in the *Independent* each quoted from the artist’s own description of the aesthetic and intellectual *coup de foudre* that changed his painting profoundly.<sup>5</sup> The source of the quote was a 1997 interview, two years before Greene died, with George Melrod for the magazine *Art and Antiques*. In that interview Greene spotlighted the impact on his art of the Greenberg lecture he had heard forty years earlier, especially Greenberg’s extensive treatment of Barnett Newman, for whose art Greene had immense respect: “I had chills running down my spine....It was like a bad movie ....[Afterward,] I couldn’t draw the figure like I used to.”<sup>6</sup>

But while the transformation of Greene’s art from anguished figuration to lyrical but disorienting abstraction may have seemed to the artist himself, in retrospect late in life, like a thunderclap, the change is better seen as an emotionally turbulent transition lasting the better part of the decade that followed Greene’s endorsement of the *Reality* Manifesto in 1953. Happily for the art historian, a 1963 retrospective at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the critical commentary on that exhibition, and on other exhibitions, are an accessible guide to Greene’s transformational process. In his transition, and beyond it into the years of his mature style, Greene tried to evade or contest any definitive distinction between figuration and abstraction in his art, resisting categorization or identification with any particular group or school of artists.

The gradual shift in Greene's art elucidates not only the diversity but also the fragility of the concerns that led the leaders of the *Reality* effort to undertake their project in the first place. Like a number of his fellow figural artists who had signed on to the *Reality* manifesto, Stephen Greene in his early thirties faced a crises of confidence as initial success waned and inspiration dwindled; unlike some of the manifesto signers, who kept doing what they'd been doing in the style they'd been doing it, Greene redefined his art. In doing so—all the while maintaining the tragic sense that was his life-long philosophical stance on what it means to be human—Greene achieved a freedom that broke down distinctions between living and creating.

A question that looms over the arc of Greene's career as an artist is whether his public insistence that he was neither a figure painter nor an abstract painter is meaningful to understanding the production and reception of his art. The premise of that question suggests an ambiguity that was a hallmark of Greene's painting and a self-consciousness that was a hallmark of his persona. Put another way, an essential inquiry for this project is this: Was Stephen Greene able to put into artistic practice the values expressed in the pages of *Reality* and at the same time take continuing inspiration from Barnett Newman's ardent apologia for abstraction? Greene was not the typical Manifesto signer, but his art and its motivations interrogate the ideas behind *Reality* perhaps better than those of the most mimetic among them. As well, the details of Greene's life as a painter can shed light on several other issues raised in *Reality*, including the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century version of the dealer-critic system, the role of museums in the last decades before institutional critique, the impact of the popular press, and the place of teaching.

With those inquiries as a foundation, this dissertation is in the nature of a monograph based on research covering Greene's career as an artist, focusing on artistic influences, self-definition, critical reaction (both contemporaneous and subsequent), facture and visual analysis. As such, it fits within the "life-and-work model," as analyzed and historically traced, from Vasari onward, by Gabriele Guercio in his 2006 book, *Art as Existence: The Artist's Monograph and its Project*.<sup>7</sup> The dissertation thus attempts to respond to the "who" question, as well as the formalist "how" and the symbolist "what." The life-and-work model, with its emphasis on "someoneness" and singularity, is particularly appropriate for a study of Greene and his art, in light of his oft-stated insistence on his own singularity as an artist, a stance captured in his published statement, "I desire my own place, my own name."<sup>8</sup> Those words expressed an aspiration important enough for Greene's life and art that they title this project.

Over the centuries, Guercio found, the life-and-work model “presented the artist both as an individual empirically linked to a body of work through historical facts and as a personality created solely by the body of work.”<sup>9</sup> Inherent in the artist’s monograph is the idea of the “oeuvre” and the related desires to conceive the artist’s production as a whole and to see the artist within the web of relationships among his individual works, what one of Guercio’s reviewers called “a virtual constellation of works spanning space and time and held together by memory, cross-references, and formal rhymes.”<sup>10</sup> Guercio proposed that if, as the Romantics claimed, artistic work is “subjectivity in process...then the oeuvre offers a montage of that process in the history of an artist.”<sup>11</sup> There can be no clear sense of an oeuvre until the artist’s activity is completed, which is the case with Greene, who was making art until his death in 1999. Guercio maintains that the life-and-work model can, notwithstanding a chronological and linear organization, conjure up “transfers, reversals, and stratifications of forms in time,” the kind of incident frequently found in Greene’s art, as hopefully will be elucidated herein.

In this adaptation of the life-and-work model to Stephen Greene and his artistic production, the most abundant evidence utilized is published critical reception, supplemented by visual analysis (often by necessity using digital reproductions but sometimes based on viewing in person) and further supplemented, importantly, by invaluable recollections and insights generously shared by Alison de Lima Greene, Stephen Greene’s daughter (and the Isabel Brown Wilson Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston), and, to a lesser extent, by other people who knew him. Much of the treatment is formal, both because much of the critical evidence is formal and because that is my (modernist, I guess) predisposition. Although Greene had emotional problems—he began seeing a psychiatrist at a relatively early age and was in analysis for extended periods—this paper does not purport to use a Freudian or other psychology-based methodology and only occasionally speculates on how Greene may have felt about a particular event or review.<sup>12</sup> Ethnic issues arise, but this paper does not, except infrequently with respect to certain motifs in the paintings, attempt to treat Greene as a specifically Jewish painter. Greene came into contact, sometimes close contact, with some very interesting people—H. W. Janson, Perry Rathbone, Lukas Foss, Jean Stafford, Bernard Perlin, Robert Motherwell, Barnett Newman, Michael Fried, Barbara Rose, Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, and Jasper Johns among them, and Philip Guston and Frank Stella most of all—and from time to time the text veers away from Greene’s story to treat some particularly arresting tangent, such as battles in the

University of Iowa art department in the 1940s. Although Greene was not personally involved in the publication of *Reality* (except for signing the Statement), the journal's history and the issues it raises were the path that eventually led me to him and to this dissertation's primary research questions about him. The goal of the *Reality* artists was to illuminate and celebrate the "human qualities in painting." Correspondingly, Guercio wrote that the artist's monograph "interprets what it is to be human relative to artistic creation."<sup>13</sup> The case of Stephen Greene reaffirms how making art can be an authentically human way of life.

In 2021, Stephen Greene's art is little known and arguably undervalued. There is essentially no ongoing art historical discourse about the work and since the early 1960s no published consideration of it has exceeded a few pages in length. This is unfortunate, but not surprising. Although Greene struggled with, and resolved for himself, one of the transcendent confrontations in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century American art, the resolution itself has not been considered historically momentous in the way that, say, the resolutions achieved by his friends Philip Guston and Frank Stella proved to be. Roberta Smith wrote in Greene's obituary that while his mature style "did not achieve genuine formal originality, it was an impressively complex fusion: unfailingly intelligent, sure of touch and gorgeous of color."<sup>14</sup> The lack of a discourse presents a challenge to the art historian akin to the one Leo Steinberg described as facing critics: to find an ideal combination of empathy and appraisal. That achievement, Steinberg wrote, "lies beyond individual sensibility; the capacity to experience all works in accord with their inward objectives and at the same time against external standards" requires a kind of collective judgment into which many kinds of insights have been absorbed.<sup>15</sup> In my own case, appraisal is in danger of being overtaken by empathy, not least because of the very absence of a discourse, both during Greene's later life and after. There is a singular emotional quality in his painting and in his devotion to making art that, for me, has both rewarded and flowed from extended attention. Having lived an authentic painter's life, Greene deserves a discourse and his artistic production deserves a catalogue raisonn  . If the investigations reported in this paper help lead to additional scholarly exploration of Stephen Greene's art, then my project will have had a benefit outside my own satisfaction in pursuing and completing it.

## 1.0 Changing Schools, Changing Names

**From the Bronx to Iowa.** Stephen Greene was born on September 19, 1917 in New York City, the son of William (called “Willy”) Goldstein and Hannah Goldie (called “Gussie”) Shelasky Goldstein, young Jewish immigrants from southeastern Poland who met one another after arriving in the United States. Greene’s early childhood was on Madison Street in the densely packed tenements of the Lower East Side of Manhattan, surrounded by extended family and speaking only Yiddish until he was five or six years old, then moving frequently with his family to various New York neighborhoods, often in the Bronx and usually with extended family in the same house or close by. Greene’s parents made their journeys to America roughly contemporaneously with—and probably in conditions like those chronicled in—Alfred Stieglitz’s famous photograph, *The Steerage* (1907). The look and feel of the Lower East Side in which they settled and began to raise their children was captured in Ashcan School paintings like John Sloan’s *Hairdresser’s Window* (Wadsworth Atheneum, 1907) and, especially, George Bellows’s *The Cliff Dwellers* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1913). The neighborhood in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is even more familiar today from historic, but widely reproduced, black and white photographs in which, as the historian Hasia Diner has written, viewers can observe

...people teeming out of doors, milling about, pressing into each other, with little regard for privacy or personal space. The men and women rush about, crowding and shoving. They shop from pushcarts, bending over these rickety outdoor emporiums and critically inspecting the merchandise—squeezing, touching, tugging, and probing...The buildings in these scenes...are tall and narrow....They, like the immigrant Jews who live in them, aggressively push into each other, leaving no room for lawns and trees and open skies. Laundry flaps about on lines, waving in the air with an intensity matched only by the pace and passion of the people on the streets below.<sup>16</sup>

Stephen had one sibling, an older sister named Frances. Their father was a garment industry tailor who occasionally, and unsuccessfully, tried to operate his own shop; their mother worked outside the home from time to time, sometimes in her father’s butcher shop.<sup>17</sup> (Photos 1 and 2 are family photos from about 1919 and 1932.) Stephen’s mother doted on him and he was her favorite; years later he joked that he was an only child, which was hard on his sister.<sup>18</sup> Greene’s parents and, especially, his grandparents were devout and observant Jews, maintaining a kosher

house and dutifully keeping the Sabbath. In an oral history interview with Dorothy Seckler for the Archives of American Art, Greene remembered that as a child living in a succession of Jewish neighborhoods he thought of himself more as Jewish than as American.<sup>19</sup>

The young Stephen loved the Old Testament bible stories that his father told him at bedtime, but he hated *cheder* (Hebrew school), which he attended from the age of five, finding it boring to read aloud (and to follow along as others read aloud) without understanding the meaning of the words he was reading. He told Seckler he remembered, from when he was about six, “my grandfather running out of [his] store because he had heard that I hadn’t gone to the class. He picked me up by the seat of my trousers and carried me through the street. I was sort of thrashing my arms around as if I were trying to swim. That was my first big embarrassing moment.”<sup>20</sup> Greene’s recollections of tedium, humiliation and corporal punishment echo the literary evocation of the *cheder* experience by immigrant and second-generation Jewish writers as disparate as Henry Roth, Isaac Bashevis Singer, Saul Bellow and Cynthia Ozick. The tedium continued with bar mitzvah preparation, which Greene found excruciating—although he certainly was not the first or last twelve-year old to find the process trying.<sup>21</sup> As he grew toward adulthood, Greene seemed generally not to have relished his Jewish identity. Although in later years (according to his daughter) he took pride in his ethnicity, he remembered that in his teens and early twenties “it was very difficult being Jewish.”<sup>22</sup> In response to personal encounters with anti-Semitism, and perhaps seeking assimilation by rejecting the insularity of immigrant family life, Stephen, as a young man, at some point in the late 1930s, changed his name—indeed changed both his names—from “Sol Goldstein” to “Stephen Greene.”

It was not unusual in the 1920s, the 1930s, and especially the war and post-war years of the 1940s for Jewish men (and sometimes women) in America to change their surnames as one strategy to cope with what Hasia Diner has described as “the all-too-real-limitations they faced” as Jews in a mostly non-Jewish country where anti-Semitic stereotypes were widely accepted and restrictions were common.<sup>23</sup> Although Sol/Stephen would appear to fit what historian Kirsten Fermaglich has described as one of the classic images of Jewish name-changers in American film and fiction—the young, single man “seeking to escape his Jewish past”—such men were not the only people who hoped to “shed the ethnic markers that disadvantaged them in American society” by taking ordinary, unmarked names that would go more or less unnoticed.<sup>24</sup> In her 2018 book, *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America*, Fermaglich



combined quantitative reporting on thousands of name-change petitions in New York with qualitative anecdotal evidence of the impact of name changes on individual and communal Jewish life. She found that while some name-changers wanted to “pass” as non-Jewish and erase their religious and cultural ties, many more hoped to “cover,” that is, to manage their stigmatized identities so they would cause less damage while still maintaining some level, often complicated, of Jewish relationships and identities. It is clear from Sol Goldstein’s official name change petition, filed with the Civil Court of New York, Bronx Division, in July 1940, that he had already been using the name Stephen Greene for more than two years, including in employment, education and art exhibitions.<sup>25</sup> Stephen’s name change hurt his father’s feelings, but there were complications; Willy’s original surname in Poland was Zephka, changed by an official at Ellis Island, so Goldstein wasn’t really the family name. Alison Greene wrote that “I am sure in my father’s eyes it was a label meaning ‘Jewish.’”<sup>26</sup> Whatever the original motivation for his name change may have been, the voluble Greene could not change the identifying impact of his accent; he once told the art historian Judith Bookbinder that “I could never pass for anything but Jewish. I say one word, and they say, ‘New York Jewish.’”<sup>27</sup> (For additional theories about name changing, see text following Note 70.)

Stephen recalled his childhood as lonely, but not particularly unhappy. He went to eight schools in three years, was very shy and thought of himself as “a loner from the day I was born.” He read omnivorously, listened to the radio and enjoyed occasionally attending the theater (both Yiddish and English productions) and, somewhat later, dance recitals, including “one of the first Cunningham/Cage things.”<sup>28</sup> Greene’s parents (illustrating what Deborah Dash Moore called the disparity between the “constricting poverty and the spiritual breadth” of the Jewish immigrant experience) encouraged their son’s love of music and literature, passions that continued all his life; Mahler and Mann were Greene’s particular favorites in those respective art forms.<sup>29</sup>

The young Greene showed drawing talent early and soon developed, in parallel with his own graphic activity, a more general interest in art. In high school he was the head of the illustration club. Greene’s recollections, as shared in letters and oral history interviews, can be seen to support the generalization by the social critic Irving Howe (Greene’s near-contemporary and fellow name-changer) that the eastern European Jewish immigrant milieu “had very little to offer by way of a commanding tradition in painting and sculpture.... To become a painter was in a crucial sense to cut oneself off from the Jewish community.”<sup>30</sup> Escaping from his Bronx

neighborhood, if only for a few hours at a time, as a high school student, Stephen visited the Metropolitan Museum of Art and some Manhattan galleries, although early on the “rich and plush” aura of most galleries intimidated him. He had an early memory of, and later was particularly influenced by, a “Flemish or North German” Crucifixion from the Met, on a long, narrow horizontal panel, which he found “very moving and tortured.”<sup>31</sup> By the end of high school he knew something about Modigliani, Chagall, Picasso and Mondrian. After high school graduation Greene got an assortment of part-time jobs and tuition scholarships, studying for successive years at the National Academy School of Fine Arts (1936-37), the Art Students’ League (1937-38) and the Richmond Division of the College of William and Mary (1938), all of which he disliked.<sup>32</sup>

In his 1968 oral history interview, Greene recalls those three years of art school in terms suggesting that ages nineteen through twenty-one were a period of frustration, desolation and even self-pity. At the National Academy,

...you had to start out working from casts in hard charcoal measuring. I just didn't believe in it. I just didn't know what to do. I think that's when I just started wandering around the streets. If I had money I'd go to the movies or if I would draw the cast I would draw it in ink or pencil. By the end of the first year I think everyone in the class had been promoted at least to casts in full....So I was left behind. And I went home and wept because, you know, I did want their approval and I didn't know what to do.<sup>33</sup>

Stephen seemed to do better in life drawing class, but hated painting class, where the instructor insisted on contests among students to see who could get closest to the look of a still life of “dirty gray old pewter and tired fruit.” Eventually, Greene got a work scholarship to the Art Students’ League and left the Academy. At the League, his teacher was the Russian-born immigrant painter Morris Kantor (1896-1974), who had been a student of Robert Henri and was, during the 1930s, according to Hilton Kramer, “very much in the limelight...wherever American painting was taken seriously. (Duncan Phillips once organized an exhibition of American painting called ‘From Eakins to Kantor’).”<sup>34</sup> Greene liked the “lively people” in Kantor’s class and may have enjoyed the class itself, but he had almost no money and no paint and Kantor insisted that “‘You must next week take your palette knife and use a lot of paint and make a still life.’ I did it and I hated him for God knows how long because I used up practically all the paints I could afford. And I’ve always been a thin painter. I think one of the reasons I paint thinly was because of the initial experience with paint and canvas.”<sup>35</sup> While at the League, Greene became interested in

attending college; he heard about a bachelor of fine arts program at the College of William and Mary's Richmond Division and got a tuition scholarship, working in the college kitchen for meals. "I was able to live on around three dollars a week," he remembered.

During his art school and Virginia years, Greene's anxiety about his art seems to have been intertwined with his anxiety about his place in the world. Again, he told Dorothy Seckler:

...So when I first started moving out I felt like a foreigner, but not quite a foreigner because I couldn't say I came from anywhere. Although my parents were born in Poland, being Jewish they really didn't have any—you don't think of them as Polish either.... And since I moved constantly I never had a sense of place or belonging. Like originally I didn't feel that I was American. And when I went to the League I didn't like American painting particularly. So [German artist Max] Beckmann meant a great deal to me because I could respond to him. And I think a lot of that response had to do with like I've never responded to a thing because it was the best painting. I responded because it meant the most to me.<sup>36</sup>

Irving Howe's written memories of his own sense of alienation as a young man in the East Bronx (where Greene also lived, although there is no indication that they knew each other) are reminiscent of Greene's oral ones, suggesting that such feelings may be seen to have been, in part, cultural. In 1961, a few years before Greene's oral history interview, Howe wrote that during the 1930s, for his friends and himself,

...New York did not really exist for us as a city, a defined place we felt to be our own. Too many barriers intervened, too many kinds of anxiety....New York was the embodiment of that alien world which every boy raised in a Jewish immigrant home had been taught, whether he realized it or not, to look upon with suspicion. It was "their" city in ways that one's parents could hardly have explained, and hardly needed to....<sup>37</sup>

Dissatisfied with the academic quality of the William and Mary B. F. A. program and intimidated by the outright anti-Semitism he encountered there, Greene was intrigued by a long article in *Life* magazine that described the vibrant cultural atmosphere in the fine arts department of the University of Iowa in Iowa City. "It seems that on every front porch someone was composing," Greene told Dorothy Seckler. "And inside someone was writing a book. People were painting pictures. And it sounded fine. The tuition there was about \$55 a month. I think I just went and then sort of forced my family somehow or other to pay for it."<sup>38</sup> That article, pivotal for Greene, must certainly have been "The Flowering of the Valley; Iowa Trains Creative Artists," in the June 5, 1939, issue of *Life*, featuring multiple photos of student musicians, actors, sculptors,

poets and stage designers joining those that Greene mentioned. The “Valley” of the article’s title is the Mississippi Valley, stretching 1,500 miles “from Pittsburgh to Yellowstone” and “the home of real American culture.” Using rhetorical synecdoche with a tone that verges on boosterism, the article describes a “flowering” of the arts in the Valley and invokes Twain, Dreiser, Lewis, Sandburg, Masters, Wood, Curry and Benton as “just the budding....If you seek the foremost center of the artistic groundswell in the Valley, you will find it at the School of Fine Arts of the University of Iowa.”<sup>39</sup> *Life*’s news that the Iowa School of Fine Arts, in contrast to the fine arts departments of places like Yale and Harvard, believed that students should “learn by doing,” that resident practitioners like Grant Wood (pictured twice in the article) were there to advise, and that a mural or an easel painting could qualify as a master’s thesis, must have been welcome and appealing to Greene, who had hated the rigidity and boredom of his earlier training with casts and still lifes, just as he had hated the boredom and rigidity of childhood *cheder*.<sup>40</sup>

Greene arrived in Iowa City in 1939 during an extended period of internal turmoil within the University’s art department, centering on the personal antipathy between its most famous faculty member, Grant Wood, who had been teaching at the University since 1934, and the department’s chairman, Lester Longman, a Princeton-trained art historian with specialties in Spanish medieval art and modern criticism, who had joined the department as chairman in 1936. An Iowa faculty member, art historian Joni Kinsey, has chronicled the tempestuous scene that Greene unknowingly entered as an undergraduate and has identified a crucial question that flowed from it: who would control American art and art education at mid-century?<sup>41</sup> Whether or not Greene was oblivious to the momentous wrangling swirling around him during his years in Iowa City, it would be helpful to identify any impact these arguments and their proponents may have had on Greene’s art, especially the influence of two other players in the intra-departmental drama, H. W. Janson and Philip Guston, who were significant, to varying degrees, in Greene’s development as an artist.

Kinsey has described how Wood and Longman, with “very different taste, principles and points of view...persistently undermined each other’s efforts.”<sup>42</sup> Longman rejected what he called Wood’s atelier method of art training and was determined to mold the university’s art program using his own template for progressive art education, in furtherance of which Longman, in 1938, combined Iowa’s departments of art history and graphic and plastic arts into a single Department of Art.<sup>43</sup> As a self-described champion of internationalist avant-garde modernism, Longman was

antagonistic to Wood's Regionalism, with its reactionary and detailed glorification of local culture. Conversely, Longman epitomized "the aesthete bohemianism that Wood despised."<sup>44</sup> Kinsey has claimed that Longman was jealous of Wood's fame and national stature, of his election in 1935 to the National Academy of Design, of his honorary doctorates received in 1936-37, and of his pride of place in the 1939 *Life* article, which didn't mention Longman at all. All of these irritants, Kinsey added (unsurprisingly taking Wood's side in a lecture celebrating the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth), "surely played on [Longman's] own insecurities at having landed in the hinterlands of Iowa after a promising early career in the prestigious eastern universities."<sup>45</sup> By the spring of 1940, the hostility between Wood and Longman had grown so intense that Wood threatened to resign. The university administrators did not want to lose their most famous professor and granted Wood a leave of absence for the 1940/41 academic year (Greene's second at Iowa) to "cool off."<sup>46</sup>

Stephen Greene's contact with Wood was brief, but unhappy. In the 1968 oral history interview, the subject of Wood came up as Dorothy Seckler tried to pursue Greene's comments about his lack of engagement, as a young man, with American art:

**DS:** But you hadn't liked American painting because that didn't seem to you to relate to the modern world as you felt it?

**SG:** No, it didn't seem to relate to anything that meant much to me.

**DS:** Somebody like Grant Wood would have not even -

**SG:** No, because I wasn't interested in things like detail. Grant Wood was there [at Iowa] and they placed me in his class and I immediately left his class. I'd rather stop painting than be in his class. I hated what he did. I hated what he stood for.

**DS:** You hated the tightness of it?

**SG:** I thought it was stupid. And I still think it's stupid. I think it's backward painting.

**DS:** You thought it was a kind of literal provincial idea of painting?

**SG:** Yes. I thought it was sort of dull. Very dull. And I think it's like - you see, whatever story thing I used - see my basic idea was - which connects with why I didn't like American painting, was I wanted someone to look at a painting and be deeply moved.

The class referred to must have been in 1939-40, Greene's first year. While not as elucidating as one might have hoped, Greene's recollections of Wood's painting and teaching are consistent with (and perhaps—although there is no evidence for this speculation—influenced by) Longman's objections both to Wood's subject matter and to his pedagogical ideas, which were inflexibly based on his own painting practices. Students, even those who enjoyed Wood's classes, reported on the tedious preparations he required of students before they were permitted to actually paint. "Wood began classes with an assignment to make a line drawing, followed in turn by a diagram reworking that drawing, and a value study in charcoal and chalk on brown paper. Only after these preliminary steps could they proceed to painting."<sup>47</sup> Such tedium would have been no more appealing to Greene than working from casts at the National Academy.<sup>48</sup> And Greene told another interviewer that he particularly objected to Wood's requirement of drawing from photographs.<sup>49</sup>

Wood's absence during the 1940-41 academic year, Greene's second, gave Longman the opportunity to move forward with his efforts to reshape the Iowa art department with congenial, like-minded colleagues. He had, in 1938, already hired Horst Woldemar Janson (later famous as H. W. Janson), who had received a master's degree in art history from Harvard that year and was a former student of Erwin Panofsky at the University of Hamburg. Janson, whose family was Lutheran and of Baltic German stock, voluntarily left Germany in 1935 in response to deteriorating conditions for students under the Nazi regime, joining a number of other gentile and Jewish scholars (including Panofsky) who fled Europe for the United States.<sup>50</sup> To replace Wood during his sabbatical year, Longman engaged the German-American printmaker Emil Ganso and the American painter Fletcher Martin. Ganso died a few months after arriving in Iowa, but Martin, in his one year on campus, had a significant impact on the department's teaching, as the "masculine emphasis" presented by Martin's muscled persona and by the sometimes brutal subjects of his art—his painting of brawling longshoremen *Trouble in Frisco* (1938), for example, had recently been purchased by MoMA—signaled a clear departure from Wood's style and subject matter.<sup>51</sup>

With support from Janson, from Martin and, briefly, from Ganso, Longman accelerated his campaign to disparage Regionalism in general and Wood in particular. The men spoke at length to a *Time* magazine reporter who came to Iowa City to investigate some insulting rumors about Wood: that Wood used photos because he could not draw, that students painted Wood's pictures, and, most seriously at the time, that Wood was homosexual.<sup>52</sup> *Time* never published an article on

the rumors, but Longman got the University to pursue its own investigation of the charges against Wood.<sup>53</sup>

Longman had an opportunity to disparage Regionalism from a national platform in 1940, when he became editor of the CAA journal *Parnassus* (predecessor of the *Art Journal*). In his first editorial, entitled “Better American Art,” Longman published an inflammatory polemic that warned against the danger of commercial exploitation by artists of populist subject matter, what he called the “communazi” fashion that had triumphed in Germany and the Soviet Union and had gained a foothold in the United States.<sup>54</sup> Longman also included some tangential observations in his editorial, one of which, if it had been expressed in the classroom, could have had an impact on Greene’s work of the next decade. “It is reasonable and probably desirable,” Longman opined, “for American painters to go back to the principles of the late Gothic or the early or high Renaissance...”<sup>55</sup> Greene thus had his department chairman’s approval, whether implied or directly stated, for his choice of aesthetic inspiration.

Wood returned to the University campus in the fall of 1941, around the same time as Janson left for a position at Washington University in St. Louis and as Philip Guston arrived as Longman’s newest hire. The administration had agreed to a complex arrangement in which Wood would keep his campus studio and conduct his teaching separately, as a parallel department, no longer under Longman’s supervision or control. However, within a month Wood fell ill with pancreatic cancer, before the compromise could be tested.<sup>56</sup> He died early in 1942.

Aside from his disdain for Wood, Greene seemed generally satisfied with the Iowa art program. “There were a lot of very good things about the school,” he told Dorothy Seckler in his oral history interview. But he was unimpressed by Iowa City as a place to live and, not surprisingly for one who “was a loner from the day I was born,” he was grievously lonely there. Greene shared his impressions with Dore Ashton, which she quoted in the 1990 update of her 1976 book on Philip Guston:

Iowa City, which had been labeled in a long article by *Life* magazine as “the Athens of America”...was anything but that. Other than some spots on the campus, it was a small, somewhat shabby-looking tasteless midwestern town, isolated. We had students who had never seen a single exhibition of any import. We had a gallery but it had no shows that I can remember. I remember walking on the railroad tracks late at night in sheer desperate loneliness and the need to walk someplace else. In the middle of all this Philip was a “missionary” as an artist, simply by being a true artist.<sup>57</sup>

Guston was by far the most important person in Greene's life at Iowa, but Greene had already accomplished a lot in the two years before Guston arrived. By January, 1940, just a few months after his arrival in Iowa City, one of Greene's paintings was chosen to travel to Des Moines, Omaha and other Midwestern cities in an "All Iowa" exhibition, organized by Cornell College of Mt. Vernon.<sup>58</sup> Among the other works in this exhibition was a painting by Greene's classmate Byron Burford, whose mentor was Grant Wood and who eventually taught painting at the University for four decades, becoming known nationally for his depictions of circus performers.<sup>59</sup> I have found no record of the title or a description of Greene's painting in this exhibition, but it might well have been the portrait of a woman with a serious mien looking down and to her right (Figure 1) that is one of the five Greene works currently owned the University of Iowa's Stanley Museum of Art. This small undated painting in tempera is listed in the museum's records as *Head*, but it is really more of a bust. The University acquired the painting in 1947 as a gift from Dr. Clarence Van Epps, the founder of the Neurology Department of the University's Medical School and an arts patron.<sup>60</sup> A photograph in the University's Frederick Kent Collection (Figure 2) suggests that by the 1950s this early Greene painting was hanging next to a large stone fireplace in the North Lounge of the Iowa Memorial Union.<sup>61</sup>

A year later, in January 1941, Greene won the Gardner Cowles gold medal for the best work in the Iowa City invitational section of an art exhibition that would travel to seven Iowa cities. The winning painting, of which a photograph was included in the *Des Moines Register* story announcing the award, was a half-length oil on canvas portrait of a young woman with bare shoulders and a somewhat revealing drapery, to which the University museum gave the title *Girl with a Pink Dress* (Figure 3).<sup>62</sup> The five jurors who chose Greene's painting as the best in the show were Emil Ganso and Fletcher Martin (both described by the *Register* as "famed" artists), a local art teacher, a local arts patron and Dr. Clarence Van Epps.<sup>63</sup> The jurors may have been responding to what seems to have been Greene's empathic skill at conveying, through a downward gaze and closed body language, a sense of the model's embarrassment. The presence of Ganso and Martin on the jury for an exhibition with entries from a number of other students (most of them graduate students), as well as from faculty members at the University and other colleges, is strong evidence that Greene's work was well regarded in Longman's department even before Guston arrived. Once again, Dr. Van Epps donated the painting it to the University in 1947 and thus must have purchased it from the artist, making the good doctor Greene's first patron.<sup>64</sup>



**Paragon and Pal: The Significance of Philip Guston.** The third Stephen Greene painting donated to the University Art Museum by Van Epps in 1947 was an untitled work from 1944, subtitled in the museum's digital library as "man with right hand to mouth" (Figure 4).<sup>65</sup> The museum's internal object list adds to that description an intriguing parenthetical question: "(portrait of Philip Guston?)."<sup>66</sup> Photographs of Guston in Dore Ashton's book and in the 2016 reprinting of Guston's daughter Musa Mayer's memoir suggest some physical similarities: the sloping forehead, the prominent upwardly tilted chin, the aquiline nose, the healthy but slightly rigid ectomorphic posture, the taller-than-average height emphasized, in the painting's two-thirds view, by a long neck and arms.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, the portrait has the look of a very young man and Guston had to have been between twenty-eight and thirty-three when Greene painted it. Further, the hesitant look of the eyes and eyebrows and the closed body language—one hand partially covering his mouth, the other in his pocket—seem inconsistent with Greene's own descriptions, quoted by Ashton, of Guston's impressive physical appearance and self-confidence (although the hand is a large, strong one and the look may be thoughtful rather than tentative or may even reflect the artist's own presentiment more than the subject's).<sup>68</sup> An argument that Greene's painting simply doesn't look enough like the real-life Guston, as captured in photos of the period, to be a representation of him might be countered by referring to Guston's own self-portrait of 1944 (Figure 5), which does not bear much resemblance to those photographs either. It is worth noting, too, that Guston in his self-portrait has his hand to his face. In any case, Greene's painting is an arresting one and evidences his proficiency as an artist; there's an intriguing sense of a captured moment in a longer story and the way the subject's billowing shirt emphasizes and contrasts with his tight-fitting sweater and lean physique demonstrates (at least from reproductions) virtuoso painting and drawing. The reproductions also suggest a faint cross form within the background behind the subject's head, anticipating a central motif of Greene's work of a few years later.

Guston was about to turn twenty-eight years old when he came to the Iowa Art Department as a visiting artist in 1941, as Greene was entering his final undergraduate year at twenty-four and America was debating whether to enter World War II. In what must be read as colloquially decorous understatement, Greene told Dorothy Seckler in their oral history interview that he and Guston "became very closely acquainted." They were in physically close proximity two additional times: 1944-45, again in Iowa City, when Greene got his master of arts degree (after which Greene

left to teach at Indiana University and Guston left to teach at Washington University in St. Louis); and 1946-47, when both were teaching at Washington University.

Greene and Guston had similar family backgrounds (both Jews who had changed their surname—the same surname—ostensibly to discourage ethnic identification), but their life experiences had been very different. Guston was born in Montreal, the youngest of seven children of a Jewish immigrant couple from Odessa named Goldstein. The Yiddish-speaking family was poor and, seeking a warmer climate and better financial opportunity, moved to Los Angeles when Philip was six. But Philip's father could find work only as a junkman and, after some years of despair, committed suicide. Musa Mayer has written that "it was my father, then ten or eleven, who found his father, the body hanging from a rope thrown over the rafter of a shed."<sup>69</sup>

The woeful story of Guston's father introduces another theoretical interpretation of both his and Greene's surname changes. In her 1998 dissertation about Boston figural expressionism, Judith Bookbinder noted that many Jews in the 1930s, wanting to assimilate and succeed in American society, changed their names and then, perhaps out of guilt, hid their decision. Bookbinder recounted a story that Greene had told her in 1996, about an incident in 1945 when Guston and his wife Musa came to New York from St. Louis for his first New York opening and hoped to see Greene, whom they understood would be in New York visiting his family (away from Iowa City, where he was still a student). Bookbinder quoted Greene telling the story:

He [Guston] told me, "We were going crazy. We knew you were staying with your parents, and we called every Greene in the Bronx." I was too embarrassed to tell him that I had changed my name. Then one day in St Louis, I was at Guston's apartment, and I was looking at some of his earliest paintings. I said, "why are they signed Goldstein?" He said, "that was my name." I said, "mine too."<sup>70</sup>

(It was to contrast himself to Guston, who grew up in Canada and California, that Greene commented that his own New York accent instantly identified him as Jewish (see text at Note 27).)

Writers such as Daniel Bell and Neal Gabler have discussed the tensions often experienced between Jewish immigrant fathers and their sons. Bell, in his essay "Reflections on Jewish Identity," wrote:

...For the bulk of Jewish immigrants...anxiety was translated into the struggle between fathers and sons....it was the sons who left home, and the very boundaries of the culture came into question—the repudiation of the synagogue, the flight from the parents' language, the rejection of their authority, all of it intensified by the fact that both fathers and sons were living in a strange land.<sup>71</sup>

Gabler, in his book *Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, described a “patrimony of failure” shared by his subjects, the founders of Hollywood studios, most of whom “...had *luftmenshen* for fathers, men who shuttled from one job to another, from one place to another....One hesitates getting too Oedipal here, but the evidence certainly supports the view that these sons, embittered by their fathers’ failures, launched a war against their own pasts—a patricide, one could say, against everything their father represented.”<sup>72</sup> These analyses are, in many respects, inapplicable to both Guston and Greene, but there are elements that fit each of their cases. Greene told Seckler that his father, a tailor, mostly worked for others and never succeeded in his periodic attempts to operate his own shop. The family was often poor, moved frequently and sometimes had to move in with relatives when they couldn’t make the rent.<sup>73</sup> Greene’s cousin Joy Schumacher described Willy Goldstein as a somewhat weak person in comparison to Gussie, his strong-willed wife.<sup>74</sup> Alison Greene expressed the impressions that her father was taught by Gussie to be ashamed of Willy’s lack of success and that Willy was a dreamer who wasn’t really cut out to be a family man.<sup>75</sup> Greene’s painted portrayals of his father in *Family Portrait* (Figure 47) and *The Return* (Figure 54) seem to confirm these observations, suggesting in his father a kind of downcast alienation.<sup>76</sup> It makes sense that it would be harder for a man to change his surname if he were proud of his father than if he were not.

Like Greene, Guston showed an early aptitude for drawing, which his mother encouraged by buying him a year-long correspondence course in cartooning. But after his initial excitement with new tools and techniques, Guston grew bored with “lessons in cross-hatching, ‘how to draw,’ etc., and gave up the course after about three lessons.”<sup>77</sup> Guston attended Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles, where he became close friends with Jackson Pollock and Reuben Kadish. Guston and Pollock were expelled from the school for distributing pamphlets satirizing the school’s English department and other protest activities. Pollock later returned to finish high school, but Guston never did. Guston soon won a scholarship to Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles, where he met his future wife, but, again like Greene, he was frustrated by the required drawing from casts and other strict regimens of traditional art school training and soon abandoned his scholarship.<sup>78</sup>

After so abruptly cutting his formal education short, Guston set about seriously to educate himself as a painter and a student of painting and to make contacts that supported his autodidacticism. He worked as a film extra (where he met Fletcher Martin, who would later

recommend him to Longman as Martin's own replacement at Iowa) and as a clerk in the avant-garde bookshop in whose gallery he had his first single-artist show. Through his friend Kadish, Guston met the post-surrealist painter Lorser Feitelson, who soon became a mentor.<sup>79</sup> One detects in Guston's first fully realized painting, *Mother and Child* (Figure 6), painted in 1930 when he was seventeen and exhibited at LACMA in 1933, the influence of Feitelson's work of the 1920s (for example, *The Fountain* of 1923 and *Peasant Mother and Infant* of 1927) and, as Harry Cooper and Alison Greene discussed in their 2020 volume *Philip Guston Now*, the influences of Picasso, de Chirico and Max Ernst.<sup>80</sup> Supplementing Guston's nighttime home study of reproductions in library books of Italian renaissance paintings, which he copied fervidly, Feitelson brought Guston to the collection of Walter and Louise Arensberg, where, for the first time, Guston "could study a wide assortment of Cubist, Dada, and Surrealist works firsthand in circumstances to which few...ever had access."<sup>81</sup> In quick succession, Guston: became politically active with the John Reed Club; painted his first depiction of Ku Klux Klansmen for an exhibition devoted to the Scottsboro Boys trial; watched Orozco work on the *Prometheus* mural at Pomona College; travelled with Kadish to Moralia, Mexico where they painted a large mural, *The Struggle Against Terrorism*, under the patronage of David Alfaro Siqueiros; painted a mural for the ILGWU in California; joined the mural division of the WPA (the occasion for changing his surname, a decision he regretted later); moved to New York, where he reconnected with Pollock and became friends with the likes of Stuart Davis, Gorky and de Kooning; married Musa McKim (in 1937); and completed several important murals, including at the Queensbridge Houses and at the 1939 New York World's Fair.<sup>82</sup> As Robert Storr has written of Guston, "[h]is was a very fast start...It is hard if not impossible to think of a single artist of his circle who underwent a more rapid or far-flung training."<sup>83</sup> When Guston arrived in Iowa City, he was a famous artist.

In contrast, Stephen Greene's start was slow. Even by 1945, the year he received his M.A. degree after seven years of training, he "could not finish a painting.... I knew I wanted to be a painter but I couldn't conceive how I'd ever make a painting. I was in an absolute state of terror. What would I paint? How would I paint?"<sup>84</sup> But with Guston as a close-at-hand exemplar of what a painter could be, Greene overcame his terror. He began not only to finish paintings, but also to exhibit and sell them. Within five years, by 1950, Greene, too, was famous.

Greene seems to have recognized upon first meeting him that the charismatic Guston could be a paragon of artistic authenticity. He recalled in a letter to Dore Ashton that Guston was

...a man of great stature by personality and by his obvious desire to be a great painter....a 'missionary' as an artist, simply by being a true artist....He was a remarkable looking man in the sense of looking as if he had just stepped out of a Piero painting....I, as well as the other students, was involved with the romance of the artist, highly sensitized, romantic, giving but finally leaving you as well as himself alone.<sup>85</sup>

Greene's reference to Piero is intriguing, but not surprising. Many pages of art history have been written describing Guston's career-long fascination with Italian art in general and Piero in particular, culminating in his 1973 post-modern painting *Pantheon*, in which a small primed but blank canvas waits on an easel, a bare light bulb illuminates the "night studio," and Piero's printed name shares the painted spotlight with those of Masaccio, Giotto, Tiepolo and de Chirico.<sup>86</sup> Guston began looking at reproductions of Piero's works in his teens, later recalling that "Feitelson showed me Piero della Francesca for the first time. He opened up the Renaissance for me."<sup>87</sup> Guston himself published an essay about Piero, "Piero della Francesca: The Impossibility of Painting" in the May 1965 issue of *Art News*, the editorial introduction to which reported that Guston had tacked copies of two Piero masterpieces, *The Baptism of Christ* and *The Flagellation of Christ*, to his kitchen walls over the years and that he thought about and wrote the short essay over a period of eighteen months "in order to formulate something of what they mean to him and to his crisis-bound vision of modern art."<sup>88</sup> (A few years later, Guston confirmed to a group of students that he kept the reproductions in the kitchen "because I want to look at them when I have eggs and coffee in the morning or my drinks at night."<sup>89</sup>) Guston's concise but open-ended assessment of Piero in the short essay could be the theme of a scholarly treatise: "He is so remote from other masters; without their 'completeness' of personality. A different fervor, grave and delicate, moves in the daylight of his pictures. Without our familiar passions, he is like a visitor to the earth, reflecting on distances, gravity and positions of essential forms."<sup>90</sup> Guston's thoughtful impression of Piero aligns with Greene's thoughtful impression of Guston—namely, Greene's sense that Guston was a person both engaged and disengaged, intimate and remote, "giving but finally leaving you as well as himself alone." That Greene could find meaningful and appealing such a juxtaposition of intimacy and remoteness, even from oneself, might not be unexpected from one who spent years in analysis.<sup>91</sup>

It seems unlikely that comparing Guston to a Piero figure occurred to Greene when they first met in 1941, although Greene could certainly have studied Italian Renaissance painters by then, perhaps in courses with Longman or Janson. And Ashton's extensive treatment of how

Guston “in his twenties” formed his vision of Piero—in whose works Greene said Guston saw “the mysterious relationship of forms”—appears to have been based in large part on Greene’s recollections of their conversations, which, if Guston was indeed in his twenties, must have occurred during their first year together in Iowa City.<sup>92</sup> But irrespective of when Greene may have first formulated the simile, the question arises as to which figure or figures from a Piero painting he may have had in mind. The least interesting speculation would be that Greene was thinking of a “generic” Piero figure, whether anonymous or not, one of those innumerable men with good symmetrical posture and a calm, impassive mien who are among the “essential forms” in the frozen mystery of a Piero painting. Or maybe Greene had fixed on one of the dignified figures whom Guston in 1965 described as the “large block of the discourses to the right” in the *Flagellation*, disengaged from the “disturbance” happening, “as if a memory,” in the far indoor distance.<sup>93</sup> But my hunch is that Greene was comparing Guston to a more important figure—the figure of the risen Christ in Piero’s fresco painting of *The Resurrection*. In that great work, Christ, with banner in hand and facing the viewer directly, steps resolutely from the tomb. The sleeping Roman soldiers are painted as if seen from below and are pressed up close to the picture plane, giving the impression that Christ, with his pecs and abs taut and his foot planted firmly on the wall, is close enough to continue stepping—as Greene’s recollected Guston has “just stepped”—out of the painting.<sup>94</sup> Far-fetched? Maybe, but Greene cared about this particular Piero masterpiece enough to cite, in 1975 notes to Dore Ashton, the reaction Albert Camus had to it. Ashton did not quote Camus as Greene had suggested she do, but Musa Mayer did: “As he emerges from the tomb, the risen Christ of Piero della Francesca has no human expression on his face—only a fierce and soulless grandeur that I cannot help taking for a resolve to live. For the wise man, like the idiot, expresses little.”<sup>95</sup>

For the lonely, homesick Greene in Iowa City, Guston was more important as a boon companion and quintessential artist than as a teacher. Greene told Dorothy Seckler:

...I think he had some influence on me in the beginning. But I think a lot of it had to do with the idea that for the first time I really knew an artist, and certainly the first time I knew a painter at close hand. We'd drink together. We'd talk sometimes until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. Or I'd go over to his house and have dinner there with them....I saw a great deal of him. It was a rather close relationship I think for about 20 years. Now we don't see each other.<sup>96</sup>

Greene's oral history interview with Seckler occurred in 1968, almost a decade after his art had left figuration behind and more than two decades after his years with Guston in Iowa City and St. Louis. Greene's bitterness in 1968 that his long friendship with the older artist seemed to be over was premature, as two letters from Guston written in the last years before his death in 1980 suggest that the friendship revived in the 1970s, with great affection on both sides. On April 24, 1978, Guston apologized for missing the opening of a Greene exhibition because he was teaching in Boston, promised to make it into the city soon to see the show and was "certain that it will be a huge success!!" After a rueful few sentences about this health and his need for a heart operation, Guston closed with "For the moment, my love to you and Sigrid."<sup>97</sup> Eighteen months later, on October 1, 1979, Guston wrote asking Greene to "[p]lease forgive my long silence after several of your most moving letters! They meant a lot to me — more than a lot! I have had a second heart attack...." He wrote of seeing Greene at an upcoming opening of Guston's own recent work: "I hope I can see you—call McKee [Guston's gallery] and say when you are able or have the time to meet for tea – coffee or whatever. You are so good to write to me."<sup>98</sup>

Perhaps it was just Greene's mood on the day of the oral history interview in 1968—Alison Greene has told me that she doesn't think the interview transcript, some of which reads like a jeremiad, gives a wholly accurate impression of his personality or ideas—but Greene seemed to regret Guston's (and thus his own) lack of attention in the 1940s to the theory and facture of abstract art of that time.

...All the time I was in school I learned certain things but I always feel that I never quite studied with anybody. Not even with Philip Guston. With Philip it was that I was with him as a person....But I don't know what I learned from him as a painter at that point, if anything, specifically about paintings or ideas.... And I think maybe I have suffered from this that I didn't come in contact with anybody who had anything to say about the 20th century. So although Philip became at a certain point a mover - if a late one - in abstraction I don't remember in those years that he had anything of the slightest interest to say about anybody painting anything. Whatever interest he had in Beckmann was a limited one. What he would always talk about was Piero, Uccello and his personal life. He used to talk about Pollock but it was always of Pollock as a man of the time, not about what he did....I can't recall any conversation about anything having to do with really contemporary issues.<sup>99</sup>

Greene certainly missed at least a few opportunities to latch onto abstract practice in the early 1940s and even before. His teacher at the Art Students' League, Morris Kantor (1896-1974), had

painted near-abstract cubist works in the 1920s and might have inspired Greene in that direction, although by the '30s, when he was teaching Greene, Kantor's painting was mostly representational, a kind of New York regionalism.<sup>100</sup> Greene told Dore Ashton that his time with Kantor was "hardly a profound experience."<sup>101</sup> And in the summer of 1941, before his last undergraduate year at Iowa and before Guston's arrival there, Greene traveled to Taxco, Mexico, where he met and "spent a good deal of time" with Robert Motherwell, Kurt Seligmann and Roberto Matta, a cast of characters whose experiences at that very time and place were an important event in the later history of Abstract Expressionism.<sup>102</sup> Matta and Motherwell, the latter new to painting, had just met, and over the course of the summer the Chilean painter provided what Motherwell called a "ten-year education in surrealism."<sup>103</sup> When Matta showed Greene his automatic drawings, Stephen was "somewhat intrigued, bewildered and was totally out of that important moment in history and as I developed along another line the regret is only for the wish for having had a worthwhile awareness."<sup>104</sup>

Some art historians, including Janson, have disagreed with Greene's 1968 recollection of Guston's relative lack of interest in Max Beckmann (1884-1950), and in his later long letter to Dore Ashton Greene partially contradicted his own earlier testimony. Robert Storr, for example, has said that "[f]or Guston, Beckmann was the 'man to beat' just as Picasso had been for Pollock and de Kooning. Indeed many of Guston's canvases of the mid- to late-1940s amount to brilliant variations on Beckmann's dense allegorical tableaux."<sup>105</sup> Guston himself, answering a question after a talk at the Yale Summer School of Music and Art in 1974, said: "You know, I used to be very interested in Beckmann in the forties. I used to love him, adored him. I guess I was influenced in some way. And again I'm very interested in Beckman. Max Beckmann. He's made a place, and it's very important to make a place."<sup>106</sup> Perhaps Greene attributed disinterest to Guston in order to contrast with his own early and continuing attraction to Beckmann, recalling that in his teens he clipped photographs of Beckmann's paintings from newspapers and remembering the first Beckmann work he ever saw, *The Old Actress* (now at the Met), which was exhibited at MoMA in 1931, 1932 and 1935.<sup>107</sup> Greene met Beckmann several times and visited with Beckmann's widow in the years after his death in 1950. As will be discussed below, Beckmann's influence on Greene's paintings of 1946 and subsequent years was profound.<sup>108</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no journals or letters from the mid-1940s in Greene's papers in the Archives of American Art or in Alison Greene's archive that provide contemporaneous



evidence of Greene's thinking about his own art and Guston's. His 1968 evaluation is inconsistent, in tone if not in substance, with his admiration, as expressed in 1975, for Guston as a teacher who created for students what Greene called "a world that was urgent, sensitive, and very much in the great tradition of 'man as artist.'"<sup>109</sup> Greene's caviling is also inconsistent with what he can be expected to have known about Guston's artistic motivations at the time of their friendship in Iowa. Greene may have been aware, perhaps in 1941-42 but certainly when he returned to Iowa City in 1944 after two years in New York working as a department store window trimmer, that an avant-garde was beginning to form around Guston's friends Pollock and de Kooning, as well as others. Greene may even have known that, as Michael Leja has described, several New York gallerists and critics beginning in 1944 took steps to introduce publicly the idea that a new movement was appearing.<sup>110</sup> Guston had experienced the contentious turmoil of the New York art world, with its incessant arguments about politics and aesthetics and, as Musa Mayer has written, he deliberately chose to seclude himself, moving first a hundred miles to Woodstock and then a thousand miles to Iowa City. "He was to do this repeatedly during his career," Mayer explained, "particularly at those moments when external pressures were mounting and internal confusion was at its highest."<sup>111</sup> Guston must have understood, whether consciously or unconsciously, that he needed to work through his interest in symbolism and form by focusing on the figure rather than on abstraction, and Iowa was the ideal situation to do it.

Longman's rejection of Regionalism did not mean a rejection of figuration. In the Iowa Art Department, both faculty and students were, in Greene's words, interested in an art "in which the human figure was the central image, and perhaps it was also central to the core of meaning intended."<sup>112</sup> The figural emphasis in Greene's work extended to his student efforts in printmaking, perhaps supervised by Ganso. Two of Greene's early portrait etchings, Figure 7, were acquired by Lester Longman and were donated in 2012 to the University Art Museum by Longman's son, Stanley, in memory of his parents.<sup>113</sup> In his own work, Ganso made many prints and paintings of voluptuous nudes; Greene's 1941 print, *Two Women* (Figure 8), is a curious amalgam of "pin-up art" and near-cartoon social realism. The work, printed in green ink, was collected by Carl Zigrosser, curator of prints at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and is now owned by that museum.<sup>114</sup>

Greene observed and participated in Guston's focus on the figure in study, classes and painting. Together, and with Janson's guidance, the two men discovered the Northern

Renaissance, pouring over reproductions of expressionist works by Michael Pacher, Matthias Grünewald and Hugo Van der Goes—the last a particular favorite of Greene, who also loved Michael Wolgemut and Rueland Frueauf (he doesn’t specify the Elder or the Younger for Frueauf).<sup>115</sup> Guston tried hard in his classes “to reconcile fifteenth-century artists with Picasso, Braque, and Leger” and “spurred students to study the formal values in different modes of painting.”<sup>116</sup> His introduction of nude models to his painting classes was innovative for the Iowa art department. In the period between his two great paintings of the early to mid-1940s, *Martial Memory* (1941) and *If This Be Not I* (1945), both of which are complicated, ambiguous arrangements full of masquerading figures and symbols, Guston painted several more straightforward single-figure paintings, sometimes using graduate students as models. One of these, *Sentimental Moment* (1944) (Figure 9) won the \$1,000 first prize in the Carnegie Institute’s annual exhibition the following year.<sup>117</sup> The painting was reproduced on a full page in a three-page color spread on Guston in the May 27, 1946 issue of *Life* magazine. The article reported that some critics disliked the painting and Guston himself agreed, calling it “too literal.”<sup>118</sup> (Looking at the painting, one thinks of Raphael Soyer or maybe Henry Varnum Poor.) Greene, who would get his own solo spread in *Life* in 1950, was also doing single-figure work in the early ‘40s, represented by his three paintings in the University’s art museum. His untitled and undated ink and wash drawing of a woman (Figure 10) from Alison de Lima Greene’s archive, which Ms Greene believes her father made as a student using a studio model, may relate to Guston’s *Sentimental Moment*. The model does not appear to be the same in the two works (although the shapes of the faces are similar) and the moods and postures are different (pensive, with inward gaze and gently cupped hands in the Guston vs. determined, with chin up and hand sturdily on hip in the Greene), but in both the rather solid three-quarter-length female figure fills the shallow space of the picture, with even a small amount of cropping or near-cropping to emphasize the solitary focus on body and mind. For the viewer of each work, there is nothing to distract from contemplating the subject’s thoughts and emotions.

The art historian Michael Shapiro has identified *Sanctuary* (1944)(Figure 11) as “perhaps the tenderest” of Guston’s single figure paintings from the 1940s.<sup>119</sup> *Sanctuary*’s subject, a pajama-clad young man lying on a bed, with a moonlit Iowa City streetscape beyond, is of particular interest because Stephen Greene posed for the painting. Although *Sanctuary* has been included in several exhibitions over the years, it now resides in a private collection and is not

available for viewing except in photographs. Happily, though, at least three art historians have looked hard at the work and, in visual analyses, they have generally agreed on Guston's technique: H. H. Arnason, writing in the catalogue for a 1962 Guston exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum, found the color, in "deep reds and greens," to be much richer than in Guston's slightly earlier works, with the figure "modeled in color and light and shadow in a manner suggestive of the Venetian Renaissance;" Dore Ashton described the painting as "a complex composition....emphatically in the painterly tradition, with a flutter of half-tones animating the surfaces of skin and cloth and sky;" and Michael Shapiro, in the catalogue for a 1997 exhibition of Guston's work from the 1940s, wrote that "[w]ith its richly dappled surface, the picture is painted as delicately as the sensibility that it attempts to convey."<sup>120</sup> While these three commentators all seem to have found *Sanctuary* sensuously and lyrically painted, their reactions to the work's expressive narrative vary. For Arnason, the reclining figure "...stares out at the spectator with an expression of haunting melancholy which carries the withdrawn expression of the figures in [Guston's 1941] *Martial Memory* to the point of romantic nostalgia."<sup>121</sup> Ashton describes the figure as "in a state of reverie, his face cast in deep shadow and all but masked by his hand."<sup>122</sup> Shapiro finds intense drama in the scene: "...a sleeper appears startled into consciousness. He is wide eyed, his left arm raised to his head, his pink-and-white striped pajamas opened to reveal his chest and the medallion he wears around his neck. His orange blanket, bedsheets, and pajamas are in disarray from a restless night."<sup>123</sup>

The extent of Greene's involvement with *Sanctuary* has been the subject of some curatorial controversy. Arnason's impression of the subject's melancholia certainly reflects Greene's emotional state in Iowa City, as he himself described it, and seems to better fit the figure's body language and posture than does Shapiro's idea of an abrupt awakening. But Shapiro's perception of a restless night echoes Guston's own commentary on the painting in a talk to students at the Yale Summer School of Music and Art in 1973: "...I think mainly I wanted a certain kind of business going on with the folds of the blanket, a sort of restless thing....And I just wanted that feeling of moonlight coming in to a young man sleeping in the bed and having tossed a lot, which you can see by his legs sticking out of the pajama at that corner and so on."<sup>124</sup> In a lecture at a 2017 symposium on Guston at the University of Iowa, Kathleen A. Edwards, Senior Curator at the University's Museum of Art, argued that there was no real model for *Sanctuary*, citing Greene's note to Dore Ashton to the effect that he had posed only once, briefly, for the painting when it was

nearly completed, and Guston's own note to Ashton in which the artist wrote, somewhat cryptically: "Think *Sanctuary* (boy in pajamas) autobiographical."<sup>125</sup> Edwards also argued that a 1946 painting, *Reclining Figures* (Figure 12), by Iowa student Byron Burford, suggests that both Guston and Burford referenced the same clothed male studio model lying on a bed.<sup>126</sup>

While the Guston and Burford figures can be seen to share a physiognomy, which in turn resembles the young Greene (as in, for example, his 1945 self-portrait now at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Figure 13), nevertheless there are dating problems with Edwards's argument, as well as inconsistent, if not contradictory, evidence against it. First, Guston drew a study for *Sanctuary*, which he dated 1942. That drawing (Figure 14) is clearly a source for the painting, although there is present in the drawing the suggestion of an adult arm (Shapiro called it "parentlike") that does not appear in the painting and the rumpled quality of the bedclothes is more forceful in Guston's masterful employment of oil paint than in the drawing. Second, Guston made clear, speaking to Yale Summer School students in 1972 and 1973, that Greene posed for both the drawing and the painting, as Guston shouted out to an audience member when the painting was on the screen, "David Pease, you know your old friend Steve Greene posed for that?," to which Professor Pease replied "I know. He told me."<sup>127</sup> Guston also told students, somewhat confusingly, "[s]o I did drawings of Steve Greene, but I didn't paint from them. I just worked with the drawings."<sup>128</sup> (Guston also pointed out to the Yale students that the painting includes what he called, in a reference to the wartime history of the work, a "dog tag"—Shapiro called it a medallion. Greene himself may well have worn—as indeed the author wore—a *mezuzah* or other religious charm around his neck in the 1940s, as many of the figures in his paintings, including self-portraits within paintings, wear round medallions on neck chains or straps. There is a vulnerability implied by a thin chain against flesh, suggesting a way of depicting (or eliciting) tenderness that corresponds to the locket and chain device in *Sentimental Moment*.)

Byron Burford received his B.F.A. degree in 1942 (the same year as did Greene) and then promptly joined the military, returning to Iowa City only after the end of World War II to get an M.F.A. in 1947, with *Reclining Figures* as part of his Master's thesis.<sup>129</sup> Both Greene and Guston, of course, left Iowa City for good in 1945 and *Sanctuary* had been completed in 1944. Thus, Kathleen Edwards's theory—that *Sanctuary* and *Reclining Figures* were based on the same studio model—could prove true only if Burford made a study for *Reclining Figures* (or the painting itself) in 1942, with Stephen Greene as his model.

In her Archives of American Art oral history, the painter and printmaker Gussie Du Jardin recalled Greene in ways that vaguely confirm his feelings of lonely isolation and shed light on his teachers' stylistic influence on him. Du Jardin was graduate student at Iowa and was in Guston's painting class with Greene when the latter was an undergraduate. She told her interviewer:

...I didn't much care for my major professor, Philip Guston, because he had a very strong influence, and people started painting small Philip Gustons. The painter Stephen Greene was in our class. In fact, we had a large class with many people that later made quite a name for themselves... Stephen Greene had been Solomon Goldberg [sic] the year before, and there was another Jewish boy from New York that just hated Steve Greene. That he would have denied his Jewishness. As easily as he threw away his background, he could throw away a type of painting. He was doing Fletcher Martins the first week of class, and very quickly switched to Philip Guston... And I immediately was so determined I would not do a Philip Guston....<sup>130</sup>

**Master's Thesis Mystery.** In 1945, as his master's thesis, the capstone of his education in the Iowa Art Department, Greene made *A Mural for the Iowa Union Commemorating the Pre-Flight School* (see Figure 15). This mural project was enigmatic on several levels and was the first of at least two mysteries in Greene's art—and in the photographic evidence of that art—during the eventful half-decade from 1945 to 1950.

Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, as part of the enormous nationwide buildup of the United States military's air forces, thousands of recruits were enrolled in schools for instruction to be pilots. In Iowa City, on the grounds of the University, the U. S. Navy opened one of its "Pre-Flight Schools," which concentrated on initial ground training for future pilots.<sup>131</sup> Faculty and students in the Art Department assisted in the Pre-Flight School's training activities by creating visual aids and instructional materials, as well as public relations drawings and posters.<sup>132</sup>

The stated purpose of Greene's mural, as identified in its title, was, however, not instructional but commemorative. By April 1945, when the mural-as-thesis was submitted, Germany's defeat was seen as inevitable and Japan's as highly likely. It would have been anticipated that the operations of the Pre-Flight School would soon be discontinued, perhaps triggering the idea of commissioning a mural to remember the school's presence on campus. The large wall spaces of the Iowa Memorial Union already housed several murals and mural painting

had been an important element of the art curriculum at the University since Grant Wood's arrival in 1934, continuing as a focus under Longman through the 1940s (with Guston bringing the experience gained in his Mexico and California mural projects) and at least into the 1950s.<sup>133</sup> Figure 18 is a photograph of an Art Department mural studio in the early '40s and Figure 19 shows one of the Iowa Union murals *in situ*. The studio photo suggests that Iowa students painted their murals—even the large ones—on canvas or other support, rather than directly onto walls.

Greene's mural most likely no longer exists. A search of the Art Department's "thesis rental gallery," which houses an inventory of decades of masters' projects available for lending to University faculty for their offices and public spaces, turned up empty.<sup>134</sup> Accordingly, it is particularly frustrating that, in the scant three-page written portion of his thesis, Greene failed to provide some basic information that an art historian or cataloguer would find helpful, such as the dimensions of the mural (although thirty years later he remembered it as smaller than five feet square), the material of the support (presumably canvas), and the medium (presumably oil paint, but he had also worked in tempera). Greene also did not disclose whether he chose the general theme of the mural himself or it was assigned to him as a commission, writing only that the "opportunity" to do the commemorative mural was "most welcome."<sup>135</sup> He did, however, describe what he identified as "The Problem," the artistic challenge he faced in the mural project:

Until recently I had tended to work in terms of single isolated figures. To do a mural immediately posed the problem of necessarily dealing with a more complex world. This implies the use of many figures, an understanding of environmental background, and a resultant unity of the two. Arriving at a plastic conclusion on such a level would not necessarily make my understanding and capability as a painter more profound but more complex, and complexity as an aspect of painting is something I would like to develop further.<sup>136</sup>

Greene wrote in his "Analysis" that he visited and made sketches of various training activities of the Pre-Flight School, such as "survival, swimming and gymnastics." He had no particular composition in mind when he began sketching, but eventually organized and assimilated the material and, "for the sake of a well-knit composition and psychologically sound relationship," found it necessary to eliminate many of the activities he had recorded in sketches.<sup>137</sup>

"Plate I" of the thesis (Figure 15), a single black and white photograph of what must have been a painting in colors, is of poor quality, but it is possible to identify the activities Greene chose to include in his mural. The figure in the upper right, in gym shorts and a tee-shirt, is climbing a

rope suspended from the ceiling, while the man in the lower right, wearing a striped, collarless long-sleeved shirt, is engaged in a grip strengthening exercise. The other three figures, in various stages of undress, appear to be in a locker room or shower room—the rear-most toweling off vigorously with arms akimbo, the center figure, with back to the viewer, pulling his shirt on and the man in the foreground perhaps hitching up his trousers or tying a drawstring at his waist.

Greene wrote that he did not try to paint an “objective illustration” of what might be “generally discerned” in a Pre-Flight School’s subject matter, but rather that his primary concern was “objectifying an abstract pattern of interesting shapes suggested by the subject matter, and enforcing that pattern with a strong sense of reality in terms of light, textures, and a certain amount of realistic handling of forms.”<sup>138</sup> Thus, as his long career as a student ended, Greene was thinking theoretically about issues of abstraction and objectivity, issues perhaps even more subtle than those surrounding the *Reality* Manifesto years later. There is a tension suggested by the goal of “objectifying an abstract pattern,” a process-oriented tension that Greene would call upon for two decades as he refused to consider himself either an abstract or a figurative painter. With only a poor-quality photograph to look at, it is impossible to evaluate Greene’s success in his handling of light, textures and forms. But what he was aiming for may well have been what H. W. Janson had in 1942 called the “true meaning of the much abused term ‘abstraction,’—to re-produce, rather than to record, one’s visual experience so as to give it a more permanent significance.”<sup>139</sup>

Greene also wrote in his “Analysis” that he tried to achieve an “underlying sustained mood...of mystery” in the mural, mystery “not in the melodramatic sense, but a mystery of forms upon which light impresses a psychological importance.”<sup>140</sup> (A cynic might demur that the sign fragment at the right edge of the mural verges on melodrama.) Again, without the work itself, or at least a good reproduction, at hand, it is not only difficult to evaluate whether an elevated mood of mystery has been created but also problematic to decide how the idea of light impressing a psychological importance upon forms can be comprehensible. Greene explains that

[g]estures which are ordinary ones in the course of an exercise or game seemed to parallel those of many gestures in Renaissance painting, so that a basketball player in the act of looking up and preparing himself to catch the basketball unconsciously gives vent to a gesture similar to that of many figures in the Baroque period.<sup>141</sup>

It must be said that in this analysis Greene not only engages in some opaque diction but also—while paying homage to the centuries old art that would long inspire him and that would,

beginning in 1946, have a direct connection with his painting—sells short the more contemporaneous influences that must have guided him in composing and painting his mural, the work of Guston and, less discernably, of Beckmann. Notwithstanding Greene’s protestations to Dorothy Seckler in 1968 (noted above) that he was not influenced by Guston’s style or ideas about art, the pictorial organization of the stacked and overlapping cadet figures pressed close to the picture plane in Greene’s mural calls to mind, for example, the composition of boy soldiers and their implements in Guston’s *Martial Memory* of 1941 (Figure 20). Janson published ideas about Guston’s work that Greene was likely to have heard in a Janson lecture or from Guston himself before undertaking the Pre-Flight School mural. Janson described, in a 1942 article that Greene may well have read, how in *Martial Memory* Guston no longer saw space

...merely as a negative entity, as a shapeless void that became visible only when interspersed with solid bodies; now, however, he began to understand... that this concept applied only to space in nature, while pictorial space could be charged with as much formal value as the plastic volumes themselves. In...*Martial Memory*, there prevails the same strict organization of space that may be found within a complex machine, except that it is determined not by mechanical laws but by the impulses of living forms. It is the power of this ordered, rhythmic space that brings the shifting images of observed reality into meaningful relationship on the picture plane and thus transfuses them with the painter’s equivalent of poetic truth.<sup>142</sup>

In writing about his mural, Greene seems to have adapted Janson’s (and thus Guston’s) ideas about pictorial space, adding concerns about light and replacing invocations of poetry with the kind of references to psychology that were typical of his thinking in succeeding years. (“Psychology” for Greene included emotion; he told Seckler that he wanted the viewers of his paintings to be “deeply moved.”) In his thesis analysis, Greene summarized that “[m]y intent in this mural was to arrive at a successful integration of plastic and human qualities,” a goal Greene shared with Guston as the latter was explicated by Janson.

On a more mundane level of potential influence, Greene’s mural depicted a scene that Guston had already painted, in a genial 1943 watercolor (Figure 21). Details like the wall tiles and doorways make clear that the subject matter of the two works was the same room seen from the same point of view and some of the figures, especially the young men putting on their shirts in the left foreground, were almost identically posed and placed within the composition. Greene’s mural, however, eschewed the bare-assed exhibitionism in which Guston playfully engaged. Guston painted several other scenes of Pre-Flight School training; Greene probably did, too, although only



one survivor has been found—a 1944 pencil, ink and crayon drawing of a single figure engaged in a clothes-inflation drill (Figure 22) in the collection of the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Andover Academy. Guston’s multi-figure pencil and crayon illustration of that drill (Figure 23) was a primer on how the activity was performed. Greene’s drawing, its subject’s arms stretched wide as if floating—or hanging—on a cross, evokes the emotions the drill might have elicited in the performer.

In an effort to adhere at least partially to a qualitative methodology, the remaining discussion of Greene’s Pre-Flight School mural reflects the progress of research about it and the reader’s indulgence is begged. In July, 2019, Alison Greene graciously forwarded to me a document that the art historian and curator Harry Cooper had sent to her after he found it in the Dore Ashton Papers at the Archives of American Art. It was a long letter, dated January 29, 1973, that Greene wrote from Rome (where he was teaching at the Tyler School of Art) to Ashton in response to her inquiries about Philip Guston for a book she was working on. (The book was eventually published in 1976 as *Yes, But....A Critical Study of Philip Guston* and expanded and republished in 1990 as simply *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, the version cited frequently in this dissertation.) Prior to receiving a copy of the 1973 letter, I was troubled by a mystery involving Greene’s mural that seemed more pointedly confounding, if not more theoretically challenging, than the mystery of “light impressing psychological importance on forms” that Greene hoped to create. Alison Greene has in her archives a photograph (Figure 16) showing a painting that she has never seen and assumes no longer exists. The right side of the painting appears to be identical to the right side of Greene’s mural, as reproduced in the photo appended to the written portion of his thesis. But the left side is wholly different, with four clothed figures replacing the three naked ones. The young man in the foreground is holding a compass and an angle ruler, with a protractor and other geometry tools on a table next to him. The activities of the other three figures, one wearing what appears to be a military beret, are ambiguous, with one man possibly shoving the face of another, who holds a stick or rod (or maybe a gun barrel) in his hand, the kind of implement many of Greene’s later figures hold. The mural’s perspective, reinforced by a receding row of pendant light fixtures, has been replaced by what appears to be a blank wall and a window framing the distant gabled steeple of St. Wenceslas Church in Iowa City, the same landmark Guston used in the background of *Sanctuary*.<sup>143</sup>

Alison Greene told me at our first meeting that she did not know for sure who made the painting in her photograph. (Neither she nor I had yet seen the thesis mural photo). She thought Guston might have painted it, saying that if her father was the artist, then he had been “looking very hard at Guston’s work.”<sup>144</sup> As a curator of modern art and a Guston scholar herself, Ms Greene’s initial reaction to her photograph was convincing evidence of Guston’s influence on Greene’s work in the mid-1940s, despite Greene’s own denial of that influence. When the connection between the two photos was established in our conversations, Ms Greene recalled no mention by her father of ever having done a mural, raising a question in her mind of whether the thesis photo may just show a study, rather than a full-size mural. Arguing against this hunch was the impression, gleaned from a check in the University library catalog of other theses by University of Iowa painters in 1945, that three oil paintings or six gouaches was the standard content, suggesting that a single study would not have been sufficient.

Regardless of the size of the painting (or paintings), the mystery of the two photos begged for a solution. One possibility was that there were two separate paintings on two separate supports, the right side of one having been meticulously copied from the right side of the other. While the photos’ small sizes may have masked slight differences, I believed that visual examination, even on this small scale, established that, in the case of the rope climber and the wrist strengthener, I was looking at two different photographs of the same paint on the same canvas. Another possibility was that Alison Greene’s photo was the result of a collage; perhaps Greene took a photo of another painting—his own or maybe even Guston’s—then collaged it to a photo of his thesis painting and then took another photo of the collage. This might have been a nice keepsake for self-amusement or a humorous in-joke, but seemed implausible as an explanation. A more likely interpretation was that Greene painted over the left side of the painting, perhaps on his own motion or perhaps responding to comments from faculty, fellow students or even the Pre-Flight School itself. If there was a repainting, it seemed more likely that the version in Alison Greene’s photo was painted first, as the locker room scene ended up in the thesis as deposited in the University Library. I speculated, wildly as it turned out, that among the opinions of artist or viewer leading to repainting might have been that including nude as well as clothed figures proved mastery of various techniques, or that the table of geometry tools in the foreground was awkwardly painted, or that an incipient fracas among cadet comrades, although interesting as narrative, was inconsistent with the idea of military solidarity, or that the view of the church spire out the window

was just the kind of detail-oriented melodrama that Greene associated with Wood and wanted to avoid.

Then I read the full 1973 letter from Greene to Ashton. Almost at the end of the letter, in “supplementary notes to the questions,” Greene wrote:

I remember that early in 1945 perhaps 10 days before I was to hand in work (a large painting, funny now because it was undoubtedly less than five by five feet) I was at work in the school studio one night and got stuck, real stuck and I just wanted to get out of school and was trying to do it in a hurry. I phoned Philip around 10 P.M.; he came over and worked on it (the painting) until 2:30 in the morning. Most of the painting disappeared and I was somewhat upset and to this day remain profoundly grateful because I know that such a connection with another painter is almost an impossibility...and it is missed.<sup>145</sup>

So, the mystery was solved. Greene (or Guston) must have snapped a photo of the painting before Guston began revising it, a photo Greene kept for the rest of his life. I was shocked at what seemed, in 2019, to be akin to an honor code violation, even recognizing the dangers of applying current ethical standards to events occurring seventy-five years before. Certainly there are reports of some teachers marking up or revising their students’ work in the years around mid-century—Hans Hofmann, for example, was noted for reworking sections of student drawings or ripping them up and repositioning the elements.<sup>146</sup> Greene’s master’s project was styled as a mural, and murals were, after all, often collaborative ventures; even though Greene is not known to have previously worked on one, he knew of Guston’s history of collaboration with Kadish in Los Angeles and with Kadish and Langsner at Morelia, Mexico.<sup>147</sup> Although Ashton, in her book, quoted extensively from Greene’s letter, she did not refer to the incident, perhaps viewing it as at least embarrassing both to Greene, who was a family friend, and to Guston. Greene himself may have felt guilty at the time, but he describes being only “somewhat upset” (perhaps at the thought that Longman and the rest of his committee might recognize Guston’s hand) and, at least by 1973, any queasiness was submerged in his internalization of the incident as signifying the best in his relationship with Guston and as a melancholic marker of both loneliness and communality within his self-image as a painter.

## 2.0 A Tragic Painter

**The First Empty Crosses.** With his Iowa master's degree in hand, Stephen Greene immediately began his life-long teaching career, taking a job as an instructor of painting at Indiana University and, fourteen months later, joining Guston on the art faculty at Washington University in St. Louis, which had a sophisticated art community with a fine museum and encouraging collectors. Even in those early positions, the seriousness and impact he brought to teaching young artists was apparent, as was his sense of propriety in dealing with students. For example, in a 2015 interview with Ira Goldberg of the Art Students League, the painter Cornelia Foss (daughter of art historian Otto Brendel, then at Indiana) described how Greene, seventy years earlier, had adapted his pedagogy only slightly for a young teen-age girl:

CF: Stephen Greene turned out to be the teacher I was assigned to, and he was great; however, he said, "Cornelia, I'm taking you in the class, but there are a couple of provisions here: you are never to turn your head and look left. You just go straight over to your bench over there and sit down over in that corner of the room." I said, "Why? Am I going to be turned into a pillar of salt?" He said, "No, that's where the nude model is." I thought that was the funniest thing I ever heard. But he thought for a twelve-year-old child it wasn't right.

IG: Well, you know, Stephen always had an air of being very serious. His manner was very formal.

CF: I admire that; teaching art is a serious matter. Also it's good for the students to realize that you don't have to look like an artist to be one. At any rate, I adored him, even though he made my life hell in the beginning. He gave me Holbein books and said, "Copy these." Every day he would walk by and look at my work and say, "Oh my God, how am I going to show this to your father?"

IG: That must have put a lot of pressure on you.

CF: I was doing copies with red conté crayon. The first day I arrived I had come with newsprint. Steve said, "Cornelia, this won't do. You have to have enough self-respect to use good materials. I don't want to see any cheap junk." He was absolutely right.<sup>148</sup>

Illustrative of Greene's impact on students is a December, 1949, article in the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* about a Missouri state art show held a couple years after Greene left Washington University to return to New York:

A popular diversion at the Missouri Exhibition opening, among those who looked, at the show instead of each other, was the tracing of influences. Recurrent in the conversation were the names of Beckmann, Conway in various phases, Philip Guston, Milovich, Stephen Greene and other strong teachers. Indeed, as soon as one enters the main gallery it is noteworthy, in view of how long Greene has been gone and how briefly he was here, just how persistent and distinct is his effect on younger painters of this area.<sup>149</sup>

During his stints in Bloomington and St. Louis, Greene created a series of well-received paintings that used New Testament themes and late medieval stylistic references to express his psychological and philosophical outlook on life after World War II and its Holocaust—an Existentialist view of man's experience in the world as tragic and futile. These haunting paintings, mostly made from 1946 to 1948 and extending into the early 1950s, attracted critical, commercial and even scholarly attention, bringing Greene a level of public recognition that he never achieved again. Inspired formally by the figural masterpieces of Van der Goes, Pontormo, Beckmann and Guston, Greene in these paintings abstracted and simplified the human figure—accompanying it by only a few symbolic props and removing it from recognizable physical surroundings—to embody nothing but intellectualized emotional suffering.

As the war in Europe was coming to a close, Greene was profoundly distressed by the news of atrocities in the Nazi death camps. Although *The New Republic* published an early report titled “The Massacre of the Jews” in December 1942, American newspapers did not begin publishing eyewitness accounts, such as those from Auschwitz escapees, until late 1944.<sup>150</sup> Both Greene and Guston were deeply affected by the newspaper reports and newsreels and they struggled, emotionally and artistically, to deal with the horrific revelations. Greene later told Dore Ashton that it was a “tortured period” in both of their lives, remembering that “[w]e had times when at 12 or 1 in the morning the two of us would sit in his car and let bus after bus go by and very often we had tales of woe to tell about ourselves.”<sup>151</sup> Guston recalled that the two of them saw films about the concentration camps and that “much of our talk was about the holocaust and how to allegorize it.” Guston said he was “searching for the plastic condition, where the compressed forms and spaces themselves express my feeling about the holocaust.” In Guston's paintings from 1945

through 1947, Ashton's analysis found "allusions to punishment by crucifixion, by quartering, or by hanging upside-down—never explicit but nevertheless unmistakable."<sup>152</sup> Greene, on the other hand, wanted to be a "tragic" painter, and his Crucifixion allusions were unambiguous. He chose elements of the story of the Passion of Christ, a narrative readily recognizable and commonly understood, to communicate his reaction to the War and the Holocaust and to convey his conviction about the tragic fate of man in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:

In the forties I was obsessed in my life as well as my work (there is no separation) by the massacre of the Jews in Europe. This led me to reinterpret the story of Christ, particularly the events centering around the Crucifixion. Christ is no longer the central figure and torturers are equally involved and the tragedy was theirs as well. No one is saved.<sup>153</sup>

The frequent treatment of the theme of tragedy in discussions of American art in the 1940s and early '50s has been seen generally to suggest pessimism about the fate of Western civilization during and in the years following World War II.<sup>154</sup> Greene was in New York, between his two stints in Iowa, in 1943 and probably read the statement by Mark Rothko and Adolph Gottlieb published as a letter to the editor in *The New York Times* on June 13 of that year: "There is no such thing as good painting about nothing. We assert that the subject is crucial and only that subject-matter is valid which is tragic and timeless."<sup>155</sup> Six years later, the *New York Times* published, on page 1 of the Sunday entertainment section on February 27, 1949, an excerpt titled "Tragedy and the Common Man" from Arthur Miller's preface to *Death of a Salesman*, which had just premiered on Broadway.<sup>156</sup> Consistent with the theme of the play, Miller argued that high rank or nobility of character was no longer necessary for tragic drama and that "the commonest of men" may take on tragic stature in the "battle to secure his rightful place in the world." In passages particularly relevant to Greene's paintings of the period, Miller distinguished tragedy from pathos:

There is a misconception...that tragedy is of necessity allied to pessimism.... The possibility of victory must be there in tragedy. Where pathos rules, where pathos is finally derived, a character has fought a battle he could not possibly have won. The pathetic is achieved when the protagonist is... incapable of grappling with a much superior force. Pathos truly is the mode for the pessimist.<sup>157</sup>

Once again, Greene was in New York in February 1949 (he didn't leave for Rome until late summer) and, with his intense interest in drama, was likely to have both seen Miller's play and read his *Times* piece. In Greene's own essay, "The Tragic Sense in Modern Art," published in 1962 when his transition to abstraction was essentially complete, his treatment of tragedy as it

relates to the average man is consistent with Miller's. Greene wrote that the noble heroes of Greek tragic drama had been replaced—that “the new myth lies in the fragments of Everyman's existence....We have finally replaced the heroes of the past and taken the stage ourselves.”<sup>158</sup> But one can ask whether the paintings of the late 1940s, which are about to be reviewed at length, can be considered to express and elicit a pathetic rather than, or in addition to, a tragic sense. Using Miller's formulation, it can be argued that, despite Greene's characterization of his biblically-themed paintings as tragic, one looks in vain in them for recognizable tragic heroes amidst the pathos. It may be too facile to propose but, by the end of the life-and-work study of Stephen Greene's art, it might turn out that the common man of tragic stature, the man who battled “to secure his rightful place in the world,”—his own place, his own name—was Greene himself.

Greene was not the first Jewish painter to use Crucifixion imagery in response to Nazi atrocities and the horrors of World War II. For example, Marc Chagall (1887-1985), whose paintings Greene already knew in his teens, used the trope often, most famously in his *White Crucifixion* (in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago and reproduced on its website), painted in 1938 in response to the *Kristallnacht* pogrom. This was the first in a series of Chagall's syncretic works that portrayed the crucified Jesus as a Jewish martyr and vividly drew the public's attention to the persecution of European Jews in the 1930s, identifying the Nazis with Christ's tormentors.<sup>159</sup> Chagall replaced the loincloth with a tallit, the crown of thorns with a headcloth, and the traditional mourning angels with three bearded patriarchs and a matriarch in identifiably Jewish garb.<sup>160</sup> The critic Harold Rosenberg wrote that in this work and his other Crucifixions painted during this “tragic period,” Chagall “depicts a world flying apart in chaos, houses overturned, ships sinking, Jews fleeing in every direction. The crucified one is a Jew, not the Son of God, but the human victim of violence.”<sup>161</sup> Mark Godfrey has reported that Chagall's use of Crucifixion imagery was widely discussed, even before *White Crucifixion* was exhibited at a Chagall show which ran from April 9 to June 23, 1946, at the Museum of Modern Art and from October 24 to December 15, 1946, at the Art Institute of Chicago.<sup>162</sup> Greene may well have seen it at either location.<sup>163</sup>

The American Jewish artist Abraham Rattner (1895-1978), forced to return to the United States in 1940 after living for several decades in France, was appalled by the apathy, irresponsibility and isolationism he initially found among Americans as Nazi Germany overran Europe. In response, Rattner began a series of Crucifixion compositions with political overtones

in which, according to the art historian and critic Piri Halasz, “Christ was a suffering Jew who personified the entirety of modern humanity being tortured and extirpated by the war.”<sup>164</sup> Rattner also felt he was expressing his own childhood and adulthood experiences of anti-Semitism through paintings like *Descent From the Cross* (1942), of which he said “it is myself that is on the cross, though I am attempting to express a universal theme – man’s inhumanity to man...the Crucifixion is me because I’ve suffered so much.”<sup>165</sup>

One of these paintings, *And Darkness Fell Over All the Land* (unlocated after its sale at auction in 2004 but still, as of October 2020, reproduced online), is of particular interest because Greene may well have seen it or at least a widely available color reproduction of it. Referring to Rattner’s own notes on the painting, Halasz wrote that:

...[T]he broken figure of Jesus hangs distorted and misshapen as a symbol of “the purity of soul as opposed to the physical.” Christ’s halo and the small sun in the upper left-hand corner emphasize purity, while the candles...represent hope that even in the darkest of times mankind will renew its faith and ideals. The menacing row of faces in the foreground...are meant to symbolize both the spectators at the Crucifixion and modern man, bestial, in the case of the enemy or, in the case of Rattner’s fellow Americans, still apathetic. Claiming center stage they separate Christ from the viewer and suggest a desolate moment.<sup>166</sup>

Rattner’s work came to the attention of Samuel Kootz, an advertising executive who became an art dealer, as Kootz was organizing an experimental exhibition of contemporary art which opened in January, 1942, at Macy’s Department Store. Rattner contributed several paintings, including *Darkness Fell Over All the Land*, to the Macy’s show, which also included works by Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, Arshile Gorky and dozens of others, and Kootz reproduced *Darkness Fell* on the cover of his 1943 book, *New Frontiers of American Painting*.<sup>167</sup> Stephen Greene was still a student in Iowa City during the spring of 1942, but he may have seen the Macy’s show when he returned to New York during that year and he most likely saw some other Rattner Crucifixion paintings as well as Kootz’s book cover while he was working in the city during 1943, as the book was widely read and attracted the attention of the MoMA, which put Kootz on its advisory board. Rattner’s concentration on symbolism previewed Greene’s similar focus; although their messages were different in their level of pessimism, the two artists used Crucifixion imagery to communicate those messages in similar ways.

Robert Cozzolino has pointed out that in the years before, during and after World War II a number of other American artists, both Jewish and non-Jewish, invoked the events of the Passion



and other New Testament stories to respond to issues of global human suffering, including some who are sometimes described, as is Greene, as “magic realists”—George Tooker, Philip Evergood, Henry Koerner and Jules Kirschenbaum. Cozzolino’s citation of Mieke Bal’s observation that “visual images by their nature not only translate but also overwrite the narratives they illustrate,” producing new narratives that “have the capacity to represent and critically engage the old” is as applicable to Greene’s work of the late 1940s and early 1950s as it is to that of other Jewish artists like Evergood, Koerner and Kirschenbaum.<sup>168</sup>

Jennifer Josten has written about Mathias Goeritz’s 1951 designs for twelve different versions of a sculpture called *Salvador de Auschwitz*, which “unites the body of Jesus and the form of the cross in a continuous linear form,” as the artist’s memorial to the victims of the Holocaust.<sup>169</sup> Goeritz, who was neither a Jew nor a practicing Christian, was born in Germany in 1915, left there in 1941, and ten years later desired, through invocation of crucifixion imagery, to “publicly (albeit belatedly) demonstrate his opposition” to the horrors of the Nazi regime.<sup>170</sup>

It should be noted that, as Ziva Amishai-Maisels has described, some Jews found the use of Crucifixion imagery by artists responding to the Holocaust to be highly disturbing, considering it sacrilegious to portray the “innocent victim in the guise of the religious symbol of his persecutor” and to invoke “the historical event for which the Jews were blamed and because of which they were repeatedly persecuted.”<sup>171</sup> *Reality* editor Jack Levine put it bluntly: “I am not one of the Jews who takes an enlightened, liberal attitude about Jesus. Christ on the Cross is to me a symbol of Jewish persecution and nothing more, and I refuse to celebrate it.”<sup>172</sup> Perhaps Stephen Greene shared a bit of Levine’s unease about painting the crucified Christ, as Greene’s program removed Jesus as the central actor in the Passion story and the actual Crucifixion is always either in the near future or in the near past. Although he painted some Depositions, Greene’s crosses were always empty.

Among the first of Greene’s reinterpretations of the events of the Passion was his oil painting *Disorder and Early Sorrow*, its title taken from the novella by Thomas Mann, one of the artist’s favorite authors.<sup>173</sup> A jury that included Greene’s former instructor, Fletcher Martin, accepted this painting into the 1946 annual exhibition of Indiana artists at the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis, where it won the \$200 second place prize and garnered this enthusiastic review from a newspaper art critic:

Among paintings, “Disorder and Early Sorrow,” by Stephen Greene,

seemed to me the outstanding work. It is a strange and disturbing picture of the Crucifixion, with three red crosses against a deep blue sky, and a group of old and young people arguing about the meaning of Christ's martyrdom. Greene's picture, beautiful in its saturated color and deeply touching in its psychological penetration, is renewed proof that religious art is again in the ascendancy. The biggest prize...was won by another religious painting, "The Crucifixion," by Harry Davis, Jr., far more academic in its Tintoretto-like handling of the theme than Greene's picture, which has the freshness of a picture based on inner experience, rather than artistic tradition."<sup>174</sup>

Another newspaper art critic, Lucille E. Morehouse, expanded the physical description of the work while wondering about its meaning:

Stephen Greene...has designed symbolically and has intensified the symbolism through use of keenly contrasting color in his "Disorder and Early Sorrow"...Whether you regard the two floating figures near the three red crosses as angels, coming to bring devastated war countries back to normal conditions, or whether they seem to be diabolical creatures seeking to wreak more destruction, and just what part is played by the five pink-skinned men in the foreground—well, it's about the most undecipherable example of modernism in the whole Hoosier show...."<sup>175</sup>

These exhibition reviews are important evidence of what this painting looked like, as it has not been located and the exhibition catalogue includes only a poor quality black and white photograph of it (Figure 24), with no indication of its dimensions. However, there are four extant Greene works also completed in 1946—one owned by a museum and three recently sold at auction—which, together with the missing *Disorder and Early Sorrow*, give a good sense of the artist's first effort to reinterpret the Crucifixion story to reveal the plight of modern man. The four existing works may have been studies for, or, more likely, variations on, the missing work. Had Ms Morehouse been familiar, as Greene must have been, with reproductions of Giotto's *Lamentation*, from the fresco cycle at the Arena Chapel in Padua, she would have recognized the probable source of the "floating figures" image and been able to decipher the iconography of Greene's painting (i.e., angels), if not his intended deeper meaning.<sup>176</sup>

In February, 1946, Greene submitted his oil painting *The Sign* (Figure 25) to the Fifth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Paintings at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond. Of the 237 works that the jury (chaired by future *Reality* editor Henry Varnum Poor and including "Statement" signers Louis Bosa and Karl Zerbe) accepted for the exhibition, seven paintings, including Greene's and Philip Guston's 1943 portrait, *The Sculptor*, were selected for

purchase by the Virginia Museum.<sup>177</sup> *The Sign* features parts of the three red crosses of *Disorder*, but this time against a stormy red background rather than a deep blue sky, and it portrays four, rather than *Disorder*'s five, discoursing men, one of whom, in blue headgear evoking both Van Eyck and Pontorno, grieves as he holds the crumpled superscript of the title, which had been, or would soon have been, placed above the cross of Jesus. In *Lamentation* (Figure 27), the most naturalistic and primitively perspectival of the related 1946 paintings, Greene arranged two red crosses in silhouette against undifferentiated pink rock and a stormy blue sky through which one of the angelic apparitions from *Disorder and Early Sorrow* flies again. The three lamenting figures are highly individualized—a grieving, lightly bearded man in a bright yellow coat and elaborate yellow turban, a more impassive bald child and, unusually for Greene, a woman, probably the Virgin or the Magdalen, with hands held high, expressing painful sorrow and emphasizing the verticality of the support.

The provenance of the three recently auctioned paintings—*Lamentation*, *The Mourners* (Figure 26), and another *Disorder and Early Sorrow* (sometimes referred to here as *Disorder II*) (Figure 28)—introduces Greene's first dealer, R. Kirk Askew, Jr., a Harvard-trained protégé of art historian Paul Sachs and the owner of Durlacher Brothers of London and New York. The Manhattan brownstone home of Askew and his wealthy wife Constance at 166 E. 61<sup>st</sup> Street was “virtually the crossroads for the American avant-garde, or what some have called the upper-class bohemia,” and their Sunday at-home salons attracted writers, musicians, stage directors, actors, critics, poets, curators and what their friend, the composer Virgil Thomson, called “whole bunches” of painters.<sup>178</sup> Beginning in the 1930s, the Askew salon, more than any other in New York, embraced the modernist agenda of the Museum of Modern Art; according to Philip Johnson “you *happened*” at the Askews.<sup>179</sup> Both intellectually dynamic and sexually diverse, an Askew gathering was, Johnson noted, a “concatenation...of Harvard and homosexuals and modernism as a creed.”<sup>180</sup> Lincoln Kirstein remarked that at the Askews, “everybody knew everybody was sleeping with everybody...and nobody talked about it.”<sup>181</sup> Through Durlacher Bros., in the late 1930s and through the '40s and into the '50s, Askew placed important Old Master drawings and paintings with museums and collectors in Europe and the United States. By the early 1940s, and especially after World War II, Askew represented living artists, including, at various times, Pavel Tchelitchew, Cady Wells, Walter Stuempfig, Walter Quirt, Edward Melcarth, Kurt Seligmann, Leonid Berman, Hyman Bloom, Peter Blume, Carlyle Brown, James W. Fosburgh, and Walter

Stein. The list suggests that Askew had a taste for what is sometimes called “magic realism” in painting and, as will be discussed, Greene was sometimes described as one of its practitioners.

The correspondence between Kirk Askew and Stephen Greene contained in Askew’s papers at the Archives of American Art provides the best evidence of Greene’s artistic productivity and emotional state during the late 1940s. Although Askew began to represent Greene only in 1946, they seem to have known each other for some time prior to that. In a letter dated September 24, 1946, confirming the financial arrangements of their dealer-artist relationship, Askew told Greene: “I cannot tell you how happy I am to have the drawings and pictures here and to be able to work for you in regard to them. After all these years of being interested, it’s so really exciting to find something coming off.”<sup>182</sup>

Greene’s letters to Askew, paradoxically often apprehensive and insecure in tone while reporting on successes, attest to the personal emotional turmoil that combined with distress about the Holocaust to engender the sense of affliction and anxiety expressed in the paintings of the mid- to late 1940s. For example, on April 6, 1946, Greene wrote:

...Henry Hope has given me a commission painting a small daughter of his. I begin that in a few weeks. I’m hardly a portrait painter and am scared to hell at the job. Too, Laurent wants to buy a painting of mine for the Hamilton Easter Field collection. I believe he is executor of the Field estate. Maybe it’s just a friendly gesture more than anything else. I don’t now [*sic*]. Painting instead of making life easier for me, keeps me in a dreadful state most of the time.<sup>183</sup>

Relaying the news of the purchase award from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Greene told Askew: “...It was quite a surprise. I guess it’s rather nice being in a museum collection but I’m afraid it doesn’t solve any painting problems. It might make me a little less psychopathically unsure of myself.”<sup>184</sup> And soon after arriving in St. Louis in the fall of 1946 to begin his teaching at Washington University, Greene reported to Askew:

I finished my third painting since arriving here, one is but a 9” – 12” and the other two are medium sized. I am not certain how well I am doing. I paint all day, every day but the business of painting I am beginning to find is the sort of thing that keeps one guessing and on edge. I should have four or five finished paintings by the end of the month....Your taking me on at the gallery is perhaps the best thing that has happened to me so far. I hope that I can turn into a worthwhile painter.<sup>185</sup>

Three decades after the fact, the art historian and critic Martica Sawin spoke with Greene about his paintings of the mid- to late 1940s and summarized the mix of emotions and sensibilities

that underlay them: “Tormented by memories of early deprivation and morbid fears, by guilt feelings and anxieties over his health, suffering from isolation and encounters with anti-Semitism...the artist invested general images of anguish from the scenes of Christ's passion with an intensity born of personal suffering.”<sup>186</sup>

*The Mourners* was chosen by the Whitney Museum for its 1946 Annual Exhibition of Contemporary American Painting and was subsequently sold by Durlacher to Otto Spaeth, an industrialist and the vice-president of the Whitney. The painting was subsequently auctioned twice, in 1955 at Parke-Bernet Galleries and in 2017 at Parke-Bernet's successor, Sotheby's. *Disorder II* was sold at auction in May, 2017, at O'Gallerie in Portland, Oregon, which listed the provenance as “by descent from Kirk Askew, owner of Durlacher Brothers Gallery in Manhattan.”<sup>187</sup> In a letter dated February 8, 1947, Askew told Greene “that small picture, ‘Disorder and Early Sorrow’ has been sent to the Albright Art Gallery in Buffalo. Keep your fingers crossed. Let's hope they keep it.”<sup>188</sup> Apparently the Albright sent the subject painting (most likely *Disorder II*, at 9in. x 18 in.) back to Durlacher's and the Askews kept it in the family. Durlacher's sold *Lamentation* to Hollis MacLure Baker, chairman of Baker Furniture of Grand Rapids, Michigan.<sup>189</sup> It was subsequently owned by at least two antiques dealers in Grand Rapids before being auctioned at Bonhams, New York in 2019.<sup>190</sup>

In *The Mourners*, three red crosses appear again against a dark blue sky, this time, as in *Lamentation*, with a single floating apparition, just as amorphous as the pair of them in the missing *Disorder*. Greene here used a horizon line, an element he would rarely repeat in his biblical themed paintings, and one that seems, to my eye, to have forced a rather awkward perspective, with the INRI superscript ambiguously hovering in the air or lying crumpled on the ground. The mourning figures were to become familiar types in Greene's work of the late 1940s: bald or nearly bald men, anonymous but individuated, with loose fitting, collarless and often layered clothing that could be read as modern or ancient, sometimes striped in vibrant colors but otherwise somberly austere. Their postures and hand gestures here are more melodramatically expressive and blatantly narrative than in subsequent works, evincing, from left to right, prayer, pain and bereavement. Unlike the figures in *The Sign* and *Disorder II*, who are engaged with each other physically and emotionally, the *Mourners* mourn privately, lined up in a row and separated from each other by an indeterminate amount of unstructured space that negates the communal quality of their grief, although not the grief itself.<sup>191</sup> In portraying individual figures grieving severally upon the same

event and in the same location, Greene may have been inspired by *The Death of the Virgin*, by the 15<sup>th</sup>-Century Flemish painter Hugo van der Goes (Figure 29), a painting Greene later identified as “the single work that most influenced me,” although he knew it only from black-and-white reproductions.<sup>192</sup> Within the van der Goes work, Greene particularly loved the way none of the apostles looks at any other or at the Virgin, although two of them visually engage the viewer, as two of the figures in *The Mourners* also do, albeit tentatively.<sup>193</sup> In his ensuing biblical works, Greene avoided the choppiness and unresolved space of *The Mourners* and the quasi-naturalism of *The Sign* and *Disorder II* by adapting a formal tactic used by painters he admired from van der Goes to Pontormo to Beckmann to Guston: occlusion.

Greene was not the only student of art and art history to notice and find affecting the diverging visual foci and unified meditational focus of the actors in the van der Goes *Death of the Virgin* and the resulting incipient abstraction of the natural toward the supernatural, the rational toward the irrational. Bernhard Ridderbos, in a 2007 essay, provided a compendium of such art historical reactions to the painting, including Max J. Friedländer’s 1926 opinion that “[i]n the master’s imagination, human compassion prevailed in such a degree that he sacrific[ed]...unity of space...to his desire to let the chorus of grief sound forth, plainly, loudly, movingly, with many voices,” and Hubert von Einem’s conclusion in 1942 (roughly contemporaneous with Greene’s study) that the painting’s “combination of suggestions of space with a dissolution of space...resulted into an irrationality of space.”<sup>194</sup> In 1953, perhaps a decade after the van der Goes painting first influenced Greene’s work, Erwin Panofsky wrote that space in *The Death of the Virgin* had ceased to be rational and “[l]ight, color and expression also convey a sense of irrationality.” Ridderbos paraphrased Friedrich Winkler’s 1964 description of the “disquiet” of the van der Goes painting—a mood equally manifest in the Greene works that it influenced—caused by “the diverging directions in the grouping of the apostles and increased by the variety in which their hands are shown....”<sup>195</sup> In 1974, when Greene had long since become an “abstract” painter and had already spoken with Dorothy Seckler about his debt to van der Goes, the art historian Colin Thompson was struck by aspects of *The Death of the Virgin* that must, in the mid-1940s, have set Greene on the artistic course toward his mature style. Ridderbos quoted observations by Thompson that underscore Greene’s aesthetic intelligence in adapting the lessons of van der Goes to his own biblical-themed work of the late 1940s and early ‘50s. For example, the scene in the van der Goes painting contains “no more than a bare description of floorboards

and bedhead, a lamp, a book, a rosary and a candle whose flame sheds no light.”<sup>196</sup> Greene, too, used virtually no backgrounds; his few props function as both symbols and narration and his candles are unlit. Thompson thought that the flat, linear quality of the heads and hands of the van der Goes figures suggested a drawing and that the draperies of their clothing “form an abstract sequence of colour which induces the unearthly atmosphere of the whole scene.”<sup>197</sup> Critics often commented on the debt Greene’s paintings owed to his sensitive draftsmanship, especially in the somewhat flattened and elongated figures, and his color choices were hardly mimetic. Finally, Thompson attributed the accomplishment of ultimate meaning in *The Death of the Virgin* to the very effect that Greene so loved about the painting, remarking that “Hugo understood the apocryphal story as having only a symbolic reality, and the formal conventions he uses are perfectly suited to the expression of this idea. The apostles in their strangely theatrical attitudes see neither each other nor the Virgin herself at whose bed they kneel.”<sup>198</sup>

**The First One-Person Show.** By October of 1946, the reaction to Greene’s work from Durlacher’s clients and other viewers was highly positive and Askew decided that the artist deserved his first one-person show, writing: “I must say, everyone I show the drawings and paintings to react very strongly and are full of admiration. Keep at it and we shall have a wonderful exhibition.”<sup>199</sup> Greene did indeed continue working, despite his anxiety and insecurity, producing a number of additional paintings for the exhibition, which opened on April 29, 1947 and ran through May 24. The show exhibited fifteen paintings from 1946 and 1947, as well as a group of twenty-five drawings, many of which had been previously sold.<sup>200</sup> Current locations and reproductions have not been found for seven of the exhibited paintings, of which three were listed as loans. (One of the unlocated, unillustrated paintings must have been a small one—*Nicodemus*, sold shortly before the show to the composer and conductor Leonard Bernstein, who, Greene recalled, negotiated the asking price of \$90 down to \$50 because “he had a lot of expenses coming up.”)<sup>201</sup> In addition to *The Sign* and *Disorder and Early Sorrow II*, both described above, reproductions and provenance are available for: *The Deposition* (Figure 30), purchased for \$500 by St. Louis newspaperman Joseph Pulitzer, Jr. and now usually on view at the St. Louis Art Museum; *The Raising of Lazarus* (Figure 31), purchased for \$225 and lent by department store executive Sidney Shoenberg, who donated it to SLAM, which deaccessioned it in a Skinner

auction in early 2018; *The Flagellators* (Figure 32), purchased for \$275 and lent by SLAM, where it still resides; *St. Sebastian* (Figure 33), purchased for \$125 and lent by Perry Rathbone, then the director of the City Art Museum of St. Louis (now SLAM), and now owned by his daughter, Eliza Rathbone; *Christ and the Money Changers* (Figure 34), purchased (with the purchase price paid in installments) by the surrealist painter Kurt Seligmann (who was represented by Askew), now unlocated; and *Carrying the Cross* (Figure 35), purchased for \$375 by Chicago businessman Earle Ludgin and now, after auction in 2019, unlocated.<sup>202</sup> These sales prices may seem low by 2021 standards, but were actually quite decent for an emerging artist at the time.

On March 20, 1947, a month before the opening, Askew excitedly and “in haste” wrote to Greene that “[t]hree oils are arriving from the framer in an hour or two and I framed a fourth, ‘St. Sebastian,’ this morning. It is going to be a handsome show.”<sup>203</sup> Indeed, it must have been a fine-looking exhibition, with Greene’s distinctive mix of dry but vibrant color, elegant drawing and taut spatial organization. At the same time, viewers must have found it affecting (or perhaps, for some, rebarbative) to behold the anguished gestures and dolorous faces of Greene’s *dramatis personae* and thereby to experience the record of his intellectual and emotional anxieties arrayed on the walls of the fashionable 57<sup>th</sup> Street gallery.

Abandoning the blue skies and horizon lines of *The Mourners* and the unlocated *Disorder*, Greene used the same flat scumbling technique for the backgrounds of all the exhibition paintings, rendering irrelevant any distinction between outdoors and indoors and creating shallow, claustrophobic spaces in which the action is pushed forward to the picture plane. In *The Deposition*, *Lazarus*, *The Flagellators* and *Christ and the Money Changers*, those backgrounds were painted in fiery oranges and reds, while in *Carrying the Cross*, the “surface is scumbled pink paint, with flickering highlights of yellow, green, and orange....[an] aesthetically pleasing technique [which] contrasts with the horror of the scene.”<sup>204</sup> The three red crosses of *The Mourners* have morphed, in some of the exhibition paintings, into vertical posts and sometimes prison-like bars (even if vivid purple ones, as in *The Flagellators*), often cropped and sometimes connected by horizontal members of the same thickness, creating cruciform shapes. Greene later wrote that “[i]n my first works...I usually divided the canvas with cross forms” and he told Dorothy Seckler that Mondrian’s work partly led him to this strategy.<sup>205</sup> In some of the 1946-47 paintings, the horizontals also suggest three-dimensional space, but Greene used multiple vanishing points to temper that suggestion and create disconcerting constructions; in *Lazarus*, for



example, the hints of perspective seem like intentional false starts. Only in the near-single figure *St. Sebastian* is the space almost naturalistic, with the unfortunate result that the saint seems confined less in a cell or coffin than in a phone booth. In most of the paintings, the horizontal and vertical posts, sometimes occluding the figures and sometimes occluded by them, organize the pictorial space and allow the disjointedly suffering figures (echoing the van der Goes apostles) to cohere into a unified and impactful, if irrational, design. In some of the paintings, notably *Carrying the Cross*, raised arms (and, in the case of Christ, a raised elbow) reinforce the vertical contrast with the horizontally arrayed figures.

Greene used occlusion inconsistently to organize his figures. In *The Flagellators*, for example, the stiffly outlined men are physically as well as emotionally separated and the inanimate posts do the work of unifying, while in *The Deposition* the prayerful, sharp-elbowed figure with his back to the viewer occludes no fewer than five others, including the body of Christ, and a ladder, creating a powerful, if traditional, passage of painting. The way Greene in these paintings used verticals, horizontals and occlusion to organize pictorial space is reminiscent of Guston's similar strategy in *The Porch* (Figure 36) of 1946-47 and in *The Porch II* (Figure 37) of 1947, painted at a time when Guston and Greene were together in St. Louis. Alison de Lima Greene has explained how both her father and Guston were inspired by the forms of Pietro Lorenzetti's *Descent from the Cross* (Figure 38) at Assisi (see Note 152). And Greene in his oral history interview confirmed that both Guston and he were influenced by Beckmann's works, such as *Family Picture* of 1920 (now in MoMA's collection and reproduced on its website), which they could have seen at MoMA any time after 1935, and *The Dream* of 1921 (owned by the St. Louis Art Museum and reproduced on its website), which didn't arrive in the U. S. until 1949 but which may have been available in photographs. Greene said he liked the way Beckmann would "crowd things." In *Family Picture*, Beckmann used diagonals, with a bit of occlusion, to unify the row of separated introspective individuals and create the kind of hallucinatory effect that Greene, too, aimed to achieve.<sup>206</sup> In *The Dream* occlusion is rampant, creating a "vertical jumble" of figures in which a man without hands stands precariously on the strong vertical of a ladder and a blind beggar plays two instruments, symbols that Greene used frequently in the late 1940s.<sup>207</sup>

Greene included the figure of Jesus himself in four of the exhibition paintings, wearing the crown of thorns in three of them (including, following medieval sources and Beckmann, *The Deposition*), but never, as has been noted above, pictured on the cross. He is the only figure that

has hair and in *The Flagellators* comes close to traditional depiction—bare-chested, with a noticeable beard, lost in his own sorrowful thoughts, but strangely looping the end of the thin rope tied around his neck through his claw-like fingers and around his wrist, perhaps a reference to the Jewish ritual of *tefillin* (see text following Note 292). Christ's face and body are, however, partially obscured by the brightly striped clothing of the figure to his right; as Greene himself said (see text at Note 225), Christ is not central to this or any of the other paintings. Greene's Jesus is not identifiably Jewish, like those of Chagall or Rattner, and the viewer, whether Christian or Jewish, is offered little opportunity for particular emotional engagement with him. Even in *The Deposition*, Christ's body is primarily a prop. In contrast to the tenderness with which the body is treated in Greene's beloved Lorenzetti fresco, here it is but dead weight, a physical burden added to the emotional and intellectual burdens borne distractedly by the living. In distilling such a dual meaning Greene may have been influenced by reproductions of Jacobo Pontormo's famous *Deposition from the Cross* altarpiece (Figure 39) in Florence's Santa Felicità, a 16<sup>th</sup>-Century painting Greene is known to have greatly admired.<sup>208</sup> There is more movement in the swirling Mannerist dance of Pontormo's version of the event than in the frozen but terpsichorean tableau vivant of Greene's, but the paintings share a formal figurative structure.

Greene himself described his use of props, or tools, as symbols. He wrote later that "I have always felt the need as an artist to introduce both objective and subjective aspects of reality in my paintings, especially in the form of signs or symbols of the mystery and of the passion of human life."<sup>209</sup> The ladder is a double symbol—of futile upward striving and of the grievous pain of the Crucifixion. Ropes, wires and rods abound in the exhibition paintings, but "they have the ineffectual quality of toys."<sup>210</sup> Unlike the useful rope and rod in Greene's thesis mural, these tools are useless, ineffective to relieve suffering. The snake-like thong of Christ's whip is twisted around its handle and cannot reach the *Money Changers*. The man who has successfully fetched the INRI sign in *The Deposition* is nevertheless entrapped between the rungs, like prison bars, of his ladder. The black rods wielded by *The Flagellators* are so short that the men are clearly punishing not Christ but themselves, thereby contrasting with the longer weapons in Guston's *Martial Memory* and, more importantly, expressing Greene's primary theme in these paintings: "man's final isolation, man suffering not so much for others but for himself and his own sense of incompleteness. My concept of man is essentially a tragic one. It is derived from the idea that man is inherently and originally good and that he subsequently falls into evil."<sup>211</sup> One can

postulate that Greene's anxious, pessimistic temperament made him more attuned to this conception of human life than other people may have been. As Miguel de Unamuno, whom Greene would honor in the title of a painting, wrote: "the tragic sense of life...does not so much flow from ideas as determine them."<sup>212</sup>

Greene confirmed his idea as to the meaning of *The Flagellators* in an exchange of correspondence with Perry Rathbone, then the director of the St. Louis museum, which had just acquired the painting, writing: "I wonder if the title of the painting that the museum took could be 'Flagelators' [sic] rather than 'Flagelation.' The former seems a little closer to the psychological intention of the painting."<sup>213</sup> Rathbone replied that he would be "very glad" to honor Greene's request, adding: "Although I think you will agree that titles are not too important, I readily understand the subtle difference between the two appellations in this particular case."<sup>214</sup>

Greene explained that the tormented human figures in these paintings were part of his symbol system, too, writing that "...my fascination with the theatre led me to invent a cast of symbolic personages who were depicted on the two-dimensional 'stage' of a painting."<sup>215</sup> The tragic action on those "stages" was well described by Greene's former teacher, H. W. Janson:

The behavior of the figures in such pictures as *The Flagellators* or *Christ and the Money Changers* might be likened to that of the inmates of some strange, nightmarish insane asylum, victims of a religious mania that compels them to re-enact these scenes over and over again. Each is the prisoner of his own mysterious impulses, so that they are hardly aware of one another's presence.<sup>216</sup>

Because he wanted them to symbolize conditions common to all humanity, Greene's figures are anonymously uniform in several ways: they are all men, they are generally the same age (with the occasional senior citizen), and they have generally the same unremarkable, unathletic body-type, clothed in simple garments unidentifiable with any particular historical period. Accordingly, Greene maintained the artistic interest of the figures by their stiff, highly mannered gestures and postures. Hands are most important; spider-like, they seem balletic and arthritic at the same time, as Greene painted uniformly long, thin fingers into a multitude of expressive poses. While their biblical contexts make the paintings accessible to beholders, it is his figures' hands that narrate Greene's emotional messages and metaphysical arguments. Similarly, uniformly bald heads with uniformly furrowed brows (baldness for Greene signifying sterility) are held in a wide assortment of expressive positions.<sup>217</sup> Unsmiling mouths are closed or occasionally slightly open, but shoulders and elbows are variously and expressively disposed. And yet, despite their gesturing,

the men remain, as another commentator has noted, "...hopeless and helpless. They feel with gesture but their gesture is immobile: it is a paralyzed force."<sup>218</sup>

The mood and message of agonized desolation in the exhibition pictures contrast with the color choices Greene made in painting them. The vivid backgrounds enhance the vibrant yellows, pinks, purples and greens of the figures' simple collarless, buttonless clothing—dry and fresco-like but, at the same time, brilliant. And the stripes! About half the figures wear striped tee-shirts, both short and long-sleeved, usually under contrastingly colored unisex jackets or smocks, with notched cut-outs at the neck to frame the stripes. In medieval paintings the devil was often portrayed in stripes—the “devil’s cloth”—and Western culture “has long continued to dress its slaves and servants, its crew members and convicts in stripes.”<sup>219</sup> Greene himself, as well as Alison Greene and several commentators, made the connection between stripes and prison garb (although Greene insisted that he was not trying to invoke the Holocaust in any tangible way and that his figures symbolized man as prisoner of his own tragic condition). While the association with prisoners is inarguable, I would propose two additional, and wholly speculative, rationales for Greene’s stripes. First, he could have found stripes to be fun, and challenging, to paint. Thinking of Tiepolo and Veronese, Greene could have indulged in stripes to display his technical proficiency as a painter, offsetting his oft-expressed insecurity. In *The Deposition* and *The Tormentors*, some of the stripes on a single shirt are of varying widths in somewhat intricate arrangements—hardly prison garb. Second, the stripes might have been autobiographical. In the middle years of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, little boys wore collarless jerseys with colorful stripes. I remember mine, if only from photos; Greene might well have remembered his, too, especially as his painted likeness wore one in a mysterious photograph that appeared in *Life* in 1950 (discussed in the text following Note 270). There is another autobiographical element in these paintings, as well: the charm or amulet worn around the neck on a chain or string (see text following Note 127, relating to the dog tag in Guston’s *Sanctuary*). The Marian/Magdalen figure in *Lamentation*, the ladder-bound man in *The Deposition*, and the middle figure in *The Flagellators* all wear one, as does one of the figures in *Disorder II* and as does, importantly, the self-portrait contained in Greene’s *The Return* of 1950 (Figure 54).

Greene’s use of color provoked an interesting critical metaphor in a review of a 1948 three-artist exhibition of the paintings of Greene, his friend Walter Stuempfig, and the surrealist William Fett. The reviewer, Howard Derrickson, wrote that “[l]acking Stuempfig’s textural variation,

Greene apparently infinitely modulates color within a narrow range, maintaining one's interest in the surface in surprising fashion, somewhat as Alexander Pope produces unexpected diversity within the confines of the heroic couplet...."<sup>220</sup>

The critic Emily Genauer (who later won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism) gave Greene contemporary recognition by including a reproduction and analysis of *The Deposition* in her 1948 book, *Best of Art*. Summarizing both Greene's intention as to meaning and his aesthetic achievement, Genauer wrote that Greene used religious themes

...as vehicles for expressing his social awareness. He makes his religious pictures as trenchant, potent commentaries on the world of today as the ubiquitous pictures of bread lines were during the depression thirties....[t]he agonized, supplicating mourners....[a]nguished by injustice, crushed by grief and imprisoned by the flourishing forces of evil...are the sufferers, today as two thousand years ago....And it is their tragedy that Greene is painting in this plea for good will which is also a brilliant, austere composed, near abstract composition of fine draftsmanship and delicate color. This is the artist's singular quality, that he is able to take a familiar theme, give it a timely application, pour into it torrents of emotional intensity, and at the same time manipulate it into an exquisitely formal pictorial structure.<sup>221</sup>

**Critical Reception: Psychological Impact vs. Formal Structure.** Greene's first one-person show and its paintings got a generally positive and sympathetic reception, although his own reaction remained diffident and prone to fishing for compliments. On May 5, 1947, upon returning to St. Louis after the opening, he wrote to Askew: "Thank you for the show. I do hope I can do some better painting from now on."<sup>222</sup> Less than two weeks later he wrote again wrote "Thank-you for the show. You couldn't have been more decent. I shall try to broaden my scope from here on and try to be a somewhat better painter."<sup>223</sup> Nevertheless, a number of paintings and drawings were sold shortly before, during and after the exhibition, including to Greene's important patrons Joseph Pulitzer, Earle Ludgin and Perry Rathbone, all of whom continued to support the artist with purchases and enthusiasm after the show. Rathbone, who was the director of the St. Louis Art Museum and later of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was especially important to Greene. In a letter to Askew in February, 1947, Greene wrote that "Perry Rathbone seemed interested in the St. Sebastian. He asked what the price would be. Although it is best that you decide final prices, I mentioned that it would probably be around \$125. Should he want it, could it be sold for less? I

hope so. Rathbone has been encouraging and I'm most grateful."<sup>224</sup> Rathbone was more than a patron for Greene; he was also a mentor. In 1952, looking back over the prior five years, Greene wrote that

...the encouragement of Mr. Perry Rathbone was of great help toward the formulation within me of a sense of my own work. In speaking of my work in...1947, Mr. Rathbone made, for me, the most authentic comment on my work: "Greene's painting presents the tormentors...as isolated and suffering individuals who in their cruelty are actually inflicting torment upon themselves. Christ, the victim, assumes a secondary role as a sorrowing and compassionate bystander."<sup>225</sup>

There were a few published reviews of the show in newspapers and magazines. In the *New York Times*, Edward Alden Jewell wrote a composite article in which he reviewed several exhibitions, including two devoted to Mondrian and van Doesburg, respectively, dealing with Greene as follows:

Stephen Greene, in his first show at the Durlacher, runs through a category of conventional religious themes, in handling which, however, he makes a sharp cleavage indeed with precedent. The design base is as austere as that sponsored by Doesburg and Mondrian: a system of sparsely used uprights and horizontals. The figures with their shaven egg-shaped heads, and vaguely in modern dress, are altogether unorthodox. The color, rather light, contrives effective harmonies. All of this painting may or may not be esteemed mannered; in any event the artist appears engrossed uniquely in matters of style.<sup>226</sup>

The last sentence of this rather perfunctory and ambivalent review is ambiguous—is Jewell claiming that Greene's style is unique (and therefore noteworthy) or that Greene cares only about style, to the detriment of meaning (thus missing the artist's point)? A reproduction of *The Raising of Lazarus* accompanied Jewell's article.

Jon Stroup, whose review in *Town & Country* was illustrated with a photograph of *Carrying the Cross*, was more enthusiastic and more analytical:

...At the tail end of a tired art season it is refreshing to come upon the fine, fresh talent of a new acquaintance. I refer to Stephen Greene....His figures, precisely placed, amid sparse architectural details, perform their tasks not as they would in real life, but as dancers might, who heighten each gesture to ensure its full kinaesthetic effect on the audience. In this respect Greene's figures are comparable to those in certain Romanesque murals. In style, however, he is closer to the Italian Primitives, or to get nearer home, to Ben Shahn, even though his figures resemble ones we have seen in the work of German Expressionists. I should say that his paintings combine the

pervasive, violent intensity of the German vision as manifested in the art of Grünewald or Beckmann, for example, with the formality of the Italian Primitives. Teutonic intensity has been refined by Italian precision to reappear crystallized in the angle of a head, the bend of an arm, the articulation of fingers, or in the subtle relationship of one color to another.<sup>227</sup>

Stroup's dancer simile is interesting, but the idea of kinesthesia is somewhat inconsistent with the frozen, stock-still feeling suggested by the apt word "crystallized" in his last sentence, the "paralyzed force" noted above. In his comparison of Greene with Shahn, Stroup may have been thinking not about Shahn's murals but about a painting like his *Reconstruction* of 1945, which had been acquired by the Whitney in 1946 and is reproduced on the museum's website. The figures in the Shahn work, with their raised-arm gestures, resemble formally some of the Greene paintings, but Shahn's mood of optimism in the wake of wartime destruction is one that Greene could not share

Stroup was not the only critic to invoke Shahn when evaluating Greene's early work. The MoMA curator and benefactor James Thrall Soby, in a September, 1947 article for *Harper's Bazaar*, expanded the analysis of a connection between the two artists and hit upon a succinct statement of how Greene fit within the figuration/abstraction dynamic in the years before *Reality*:

One of the most promising developments in recent American art is the use of extreme realism in conjunction with broad, abstract tension of design, derived as often from the mid-fifteenth-century of static balance—especially Piero della Francesca and Uccello—as from Picasso, Klee and other artists of our own period. The tendency sounds eclectic, as does nearly every new approach to art until someone makes it work. Ben Shahn has done precisely this for more than fifteen years, and now has attracted an impressive young recruit in Stephen Greene (b. 1918). Of course there is danger as well as promise in this direction, for the Renaissance can smother its modern disciples with quotations, and it is no easy task to inject realism into the very arteries of twentieth-century abstraction. But Shahn has long since succeeded superbly, and there is every indication that Greene, like Shahn, will acquire a protective toughness of mind. He begins to do so in *The Deposition* (color plate).<sup>228</sup>

Soby reproduced the quoted passage verbatim in his 1948 book *Contemporary Painters*, published by MoMA.<sup>229</sup> Greene could have been expected to be delighted with the influential Soby's imprimatur, but it appears that he wasn't. Two decades later, in his oral history conversation with Dorothy Seckler, Greene groused:

I remember one remark that offended me a great deal. Very briefly around 1946 there were a few Ben Shahn's I liked. And then when Soby's

book came out just as I started painting and I was showing what I had done I was put down as a follower, as one of the most gifted followers of Ben Shahn. I never read the book. I just went through the ceiling. I think basically I've never had anything to do with Ben Shahn. I think he liked Sienese painting. And I like Sienese painting. He had a heart and eye, everybody does. I think he liked dry paint. I like dry paint. That was all.<sup>230</sup>

Greene seems to have disliked the idea of being anyone's "follower," an antipathy that expanded into insistence on being his "own man" and resistance to identification with any particular school or style of painting. Years later, he wrote in *Art in America*: "...I do not want to consider myself as an 'ex-figure painter' for the same reasons that I would not want to think of myself as another 'abstract painter.' I am making something else, something more involved than these classifications imply. I desire my own place, my own name."<sup>231</sup>

But what if Greene, who may not have read Soby's book but certainly would have read the identical words in Soby's article, misconstrued the meaning of "attracted a recruit." Soby did not use the word "follower," did not suggest that Greene was somehow Shahn's acolyte, and seemed to be describing stylistic similarity, not personal fealty. Further, it is hard to reconcile Greene's pique about Soby's characterization of him in relation to Shahn with the treatment of that relationship in the highly complimentary article written by H. W. Janson. Greene had excitedly announced to Askew in April 1947, just after the exhibition's opening, that Janson had been asked to write an article about him for the *Magazine of Art*, and he frantically requested Askew to help organize photos of paintings and drawings to send to Janson, who was under some time pressure to begin writing.<sup>232</sup> Janson wrote as if he had interviewed Greene for the article (which he may have done) and attributed to Greene a number of ideas that a cynical reader (like the author) might think were less Greene's than Janson's own. But in his remarks about Shahn, Janson was either conveying Greene's expressed beliefs or prevaricating. After reciting Greene's interest in 15<sup>th</sup>-Century painting and his admiration for Beckmann, Guston, Jack Levine and Karl Zerbe, Janson concluded: "But the painter with whose imaginative world he feels the closest sympathy is Ben Shahn; no one else, he believes, has succeeded so completely in charging the everyday aspects of contemporary life with the evocative power of symbols. This Greene acknowledges as his own ultimate goal."<sup>233</sup>

It was important to Janson's argument that he identify Greene's artistic antecessors, as Greene's career to that point functioned as a case study on a subject of continuing interest to Janson as a pedagogue—the importance of art history and art historians to the student artist.<sup>234</sup> The most



“perplexing difficulty” facing the contemporary artist, Janson wrote at the beginning of the article, is that “he no longer finds himself born into a firmly established supra-personal tradition of style that could provide him with a well-defined artistic ancestry and the necessary sense of direction.” Formal art school training cannot provide a substitute, but the “storehouse of the past,” accessible through the work of art historians, can.

...Among this welter of material, [the young painter] may eventually locate his artistic forbears and thus gradually discover his own identity. As a possible solution to his problem, this procedure is far from certain: there is danger that, like the victims of the Minotaur, he may lose himself in the maze of the past and never return to the world of today. On the other hand, he may emerge into artistic adulthood, with a style and purpose of his own. Stephen Greene, the young American painter whose work appears on these pages, represents a particularly striking instance of this general evolutionary pattern.<sup>235</sup>

Janson then proceeded to recite Greene’s biography, remarking that “[t]here is nothing remarkable, then, about Greene’s career except the opportunities he did *not* have. Among these, the fact that he has never been to Europe is surprising, since his style would seem to presuppose a familiarity with certain old and modern masters whose major works are still on the other side of the Atlantic.” That familiarity, Janson noted, pressing his point, came from Greene’s study of art in reproduction and his experiences at museums and exhibitions, all of which “enabled him to discover his elective affinities with artists past and present” and “gave him a sense of participating in an imaginative world more universal than his own.”<sup>236</sup>

Some of Janson’s fluent descriptions of Greene’s art are quoted above at Note 216. Similarly cogent is Janson’s elucidation of how, in paintings like *The Flagellators* and *Christ and the Money Changers* (both of which were reproduced in the article), Greene linked meaning to spatial organization: “This air of futility permeates even the picture space itself: a curiously bleak, stereometric maze of shifting floor levels, thin, prison-like bars and invisible barriers.”<sup>237</sup> But the most important way in which Janson’s analysis differed from that of Greene’s other reviewers was Janson’s recognition that psychological impact was the artist’s primary goal and that formal structure was subservient to it.

When Stephen Greene speaks of his particular favorites, the Sienese masters and the late Gothic northern painters, he never fails to point out what he regards as their most disquieting quality: the conjunction of delicacy and terror. This feeling of terror...derives...from the inner conflict, the spiritual crisis that pervades these pictures. In these troubled

souls...Greene recognized the image of Modern Man, oppressed by similar fears of impending doom. But where, he asked, are the scriptures to warn us of the apocalyptic spectacle of Hiroshima, where the theology to give meaning to the hell of Maidanek and Oswieczin? For him the great predicament of our time, the reality behind reality, is that we must face these dark forces without the spiritual resources embodied in the faith of the past.<sup>238</sup>

Janson thus may be seen to have connected Greene with the post-war intellectual and cultural phenomenon that Michael Leja later called Modern Man Discourse, the “interaction of complex forces and drives, the site of the conflicts at the source of modern tragedies” that had emerged in the United States in the wake of the calamities that had “plagued humanity...the unprecedented levels of cruelty and irrationality” that humans had just displayed.<sup>239</sup> Leja argued that Modern Man Discourse was central to the development of Abstract Expressionism in the late ‘40s and early ‘50s. It is interesting to speculate about whether Janson was prescient in identifying Greene with that discourse five years before the artist’s first forays into abstraction and a decade before his full commitment to his own brand of non-mimetic art. Did Janson see in Greene and his art a propensity that the artist himself had not yet recognized? Or did Janson at least recognize, by 1948, the potential power of newly prominent abstract art movements eventually to beguile even a signer of the *Reality* manifesto?

**“They All Mourn Themselves.”** Right after the opening of the 1947 show, Greene promised Askew to “broaden my scope.” He initially fulfilled that commitment, tentatively, by adding new symbols to his paintings and manipulating beholder responses with increasingly morbid depictions. In *The Burial* (Figure 40), painted in 1947, Greene lightened and softened his colors to a dry chalkiness, gave the *Lazarus* coffin a lid and made the resulting cruciform shape a dominant compositional element. He replaced the short rods of torture with a mourner’s candle (invoking van der Goes) and added to his array of symbolic implements a new motif—the crutch, a symbol he would continue to use for decades even as his art became almost exclusively non-representational. Most importantly, the figures were now crippled—legless from below the thigh and disfigured into incompleteness. Among all of the 1947 exhibition paintings for which images are available, only one figure—trapped on the ladder in *The Deposition*—was shown completely, without cropping. In *The Burial*, the third figure, probably blind, was cropped, but the maimed

figures are ironically and disconcertingly “whole.” Beholders, if they survived the initial shock at the pitilessly macabre depictions, could decide for themselves whether the figures had lost their legs or never had them. Beholders could also decide whether the figure in the coffin was intended to be alive or a corpse—a 1963 *Time* article referred to a “living cadaver.”<sup>240</sup> The philosopher Jerome Ashmore considered the figure to be a corpse, which “Greene endows...with ability to gesture and so augments his de-lineation of men: men are like corpses that have the ability to gesture.”<sup>241</sup> But Greene himself disagreed; in an undated (but clearly years later) commentary he sent to Durlachers he wrote:

This is not about any actual burial or death but of that death in life which we begin experiencing early. An attempt to formalize a sense of the thin line between life and death, sanity and insanity, feeling and the inability to feel. The figure in the coffin with hand to mouth almost seems to hold back a scream, and I remember intending that. It would not be a scream due to any physical pain but rather the pain of recognition, the pain of knowledge. The Burial is basically about an awareness of incapability, resultant despair, and mourning (man holding candle).<sup>242</sup>

Arthur Miller’s definitional comparison of tragedy and pathos, quoted in the text at Note 157, suggests itself in Greene’s own description of his painting.

Greene painted a variation on the symbolic themes of *The Burial* in *Limbo* (Figure 41), also from 1947. He doubled the crutches, gave the central figure only one missing leg and replaced the coffin with a crisply dug grave. The perspectival naturalism of the grave seems awkward to me, disrupting Greene’s progress toward increasingly abstract spatial organization and perhaps explaining *Limbo*’s relative absence from exhibitions and the critical literature. *The Burial*, on the other hand, became one of Greene’s better-known early paintings. It was purchased by the Whitney Museum in 1949, just after it was included in Greene’s second single-artist show at Durlacher Bros., and was reproduced and analyzed in the 1980 Whitney book *The Figurative Tradition*. Noting that the painting had illustrated the 1950 *Life* article about Greene, and quoting Greene’s statement that the figures, in their agony and futility, were intended as metaphors for man’s isolation and sense of his own incompleteness, Patricia Hills wrote that “[i]n the mid-1950s, the museum-going public, largely middle class and similarly affected by the cultural climate, found such confessions authentic and the critical interpretations of the mass media persuasive.”<sup>243</sup>

Commentators on Greene’s paintings from the late 1940s sometimes identified them with Existentialism. Jerome Ashmore wrote in 1958 that Greene’s viewpoint in his early painting

“includes many of the components which occur in the contemporary philosophical movement known as existentialism....One of the best summaries of the meaning of existentialism is Heidegger’s sentence: ‘We are existence, without essence’....As a thing of existence we have three aspects: temporality, anguish, and death. All three emanate from Greene’s figures and compositions.”<sup>244</sup> Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler included *The Burial* and two other Greene works in a 1982 exhibition, *Realism and Realities*, at the Rutgers Art Museum and, in the catalogue, discussed Existentialism in connection with Greene and several of the other artists whose work was shown, including Bernard Perlin, George Tooker, Robert Vickrey, Jared French, Abraham Rattner and Henry Koerner. They interviewed Greene for the piece and wrote:

Greene felt strongly existentialist, without having read Camus and Sartre (he read them later)...When presented with the proposition that artists cannot really be considered existentialists if they have not read the literature, Stephen Greene responded bluntly: “Nonsense!” Greene’s case is itself a telling one. When confronted with an artist who had nightmares of being chased by Nazis, and painted a crucified-artist image such as *The Shadow* [Figure 52], it does not seem necessary for the artist to have read Kierkegaard.<sup>245</sup>

They might also have mentioned that *The Stranger* by Camus was translated into English only in 1946 and Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* was not available in English until ten years later; as Ann Fulton has written, in the United States even most professional philosophers first learned about Existentialism in the late 1940s and early ‘50s by reading accounts in popular newspapers and magazines.<sup>246</sup> Jed Perl has argued that in existentialist discourse the artist was often presented as someone “whose fiercely solitary experience gave him an especially intense understanding of the human condition” and that Existentialism “gave new voice to the old romantic necessity of going it alone.”<sup>247</sup> These ideas, whether absorbed or intuitive, became ingrained in Greene’s self-perception.

During the summer of 1947 Greene completed his year in St. Louis and moved back to New York to take a job teaching painting at the Parsons School of Design. Unfortunately for the art historian, Greene and Askew no longer needed to write letters and there is no comparably good source for information about Greene’s practice from that point through his second one-person show at Durlacher Bros. in March, 1949. Similarly, there is no comparably authentic chronicle of Greene’s emotional and social life during the period from his return to New York at age 30 in 1947

until he left for his second residency in Rome in 1952. There is evidence, though, that it was an eventful period for Greene artistically and personally.

For a man who always considered himself a loner, Greene seems to have had many friends during this time, including his supervisor at the Parsons School, the designer Van Day Truex. Later correspondence with Askew suggests that Greene became friendly with several Askew artists, including Walter Stuempfig, Edward Melcarth and Gray Foy. Greene and Foy met when drawings by each were featured in one of Askew's group shows and, in 1948, Greene made a pencil drawing portrait of the handsome Foy, adding the simple inscription "For Gray" (Figure 42). Around the time of this drawing, Foy began his life-long relationship with Leo Lerman, the writer, man-about-town, and editor at various times of *Vogue*, *Vanity Fair* and *Playbill*. Greene shared Lerman's interest in the glittering theater world of the era and Lerman, who was supportive of Greene's work, must have introduced him to some of its denizens. In subsequent years, Lerman became the Greenses' closest family friend and took seriously his selection by Stephen and Sigrid as their daughter Alison's godfather, sometimes treating the young girl to Broadway matinees and lunch at the Russian Tea Room.<sup>248</sup> Alison remembers the "spectacular" Christmas parties that Lerman and Foy threw at their "very grand" apartment in the Osborne, diagonally across from Carnegie Hall at the corner of 57<sup>th</sup> Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue.<sup>249</sup> Lerman's journals record Sigrid de Lima and Stephen Greene near the top of the invitation list for an "Early Twelfth Night Party" on January 4, 1964, at a prior apartment on Lexington Avenue. Some of the hundred-plus names on the list evidence the social and cultural world to which Greene's friendship with Lerman and Foy gave him access: Joan Sutherland and Richard Bonyng, Leontyne Price, Leonard Bernstein, Rudolf Nureyev, Diana and Lionel Trilling, Kitty Carlisle Hart, Katie and Zero Mostel, Lillian Hellman, Gloria Steinem, Helen Frankenthaler, Robert Motherwell, Theodorus Stamos, and various Newhouses of Condé Nast.<sup>250</sup>

Greene's cousin Joy Schumacher, who when interviewed for this project was old enough to remember the late '40s and early '50s, seemed to recall that Stephen had at least one or two live-in girlfriends during that period, causing some consternation among a few older family members, and that at least one of the girlfriends was in show business.<sup>251</sup> Alison Greene, who wasn't alive at the time but whose information is probably more accurate, advised that her father had a flirtation with the singer and actress Judy Holiday when they were both very young, but it wasn't serious. On the other hand, Alison confirms her father's "passionate affair" with the sophisticated and

“devastatingly attractive” jazz singer Anita Ellis during this period, noting that although they probably didn’t actually live together, they were “very open that they were a couple” and “by all accounts” a glamorous one. Ellis—a Jewish Canadian a few years younger than Greene—was already a divorcée when they met. She had danced as a young girl in movies with Judy Garland, had done radio shows for Red Skelton and Jack Carson, had her own show for a while, and was best known for dubbing songs for non-singing movie actresses, like “Put the Blame on Mame” for Rita Hayworth in *Gilda* (1946) and “Naughty But Nice” for Vera-Allen in *The Belle of New York* (1952).<sup>252</sup> Ellis suffered from intense and debilitating stage fright that curtailed her career and took her to an analyst “four or five times a week for three years,” probably including during the time she and Greene were together.<sup>253</sup> It seems fair to speculate that Ellis’s emotional problems created in her a certain sense of vulnerability that Greene found appealing. Greene and Ellis broke up before his second trip to Rome in 1952, but remained good friends. After her second marriage in 1960, Ellis was, like Lerman and Foy, another of Greene’s friends from his bachelorhood who became a focus of the Greens’ social life as young marrieds. Ellis told an interviewer that “I had gotten to know a lot of the painters—Stephen Greene and Helen Frankenthaler and Andy Warhol, when he was just starting—and they began coming to dinner, and sometimes a hundred people would eat my paella and mussels in wine. Jasper Johns and Larry Rivers and Frank Stella would come...”<sup>254</sup>

Another of Greene’s close female friends was the writer Jean Stafford, whom he probably met in the late ‘40s, between her divorce from the poet Robert Lowell and her marriage to the second of her three husbands.<sup>255</sup> Stafford, described as physically and emotionally fragile and socially insecure, had checked herself into a psychiatric hospital after the end of her marriage to Lowell, who was said to have physically abused her.<sup>256</sup> Her name (first name only) appears frequently in the Askew-Greene correspondence, suggesting that both men knew her well. Greene’s references to Stafford are particularly empathetic; while it is unknown whether they had any romantic involvement, Greene told Askew that “I think of her often.”<sup>257</sup> It seems clear that Stafford shared with Anita Ellis a vulnerability and complexity of personality that attracted Greene. For many years after Stephen and Sigrid’s marriage, the Greene family remained friendly with Stafford, who had by then won a Pulitzer Prize for her short stories, and they visited her often at her house in East Hampton.<sup>258</sup>

Greene's 1949 solo exhibition at Durlacher's was more varied stylistically than the earlier one. In addition to *The Burial* and *Limbo*, the 1949 offering included three works that were painted in (or around) 1947 and thus recalled the works in the earlier show: *Mourning (Five Figures with Candles)* (Figure 43), lent by Dr. Emile Gordon Stoloff, *Resurrection* (Figure 44), lent by Earle Ludgin and *Figures at the Foot of the Cross* (Figure 45), lent by the Wadsworth Atheneum. The provenance of these three works is interesting and indicates the various degrees of personal relationship Greene had with his patrons. The Wadsworth Atheneum bought *Figures at the Foot of the Cross* directly from Durlacher Bros. in 1948, a year after it was painted and a year before it was exhibited. The Askew-Greene correspondence suggests that the museum took months to pay for it, which worried Greene. Earle and Mary Ludgin were Chicago collectors who had at least three Greene works in their collection, described by *Life* magazine in 1952 as the largest collection of American art in Chicago.<sup>259</sup> The *Life* article, "Chicago's Fabulous Collectors," illustrates the section on the Ludgins with photos of them in their home surrounded by their pictures (including a shot of Mr. Ludgin sitting at his desk with a large, colorful Rattner work, *A Place Called Golgotha*, directly behind him and a photo of Mrs. Ludgin at the piano gazing at a group of paintings that included a large black-and-white deKooning) and with reproductions of several works, including the Greene *Resurrection*, a Max Weber study of two rabbis and a self-portrait by Raphael Soyer, one of their first purchases.<sup>260</sup> The Ludgins gave *Resurrection* to the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, which lists it as "undated," although it is clear to me that it is from 1946 or '47. The collectors lent Greene's *Carrying the Cross*, together with a different Rattner and paintings by Loren MacIver, Alton Pickens and George Tooker (the disturbingly brilliant *Children and Spastics*), to the Art Institute of Chicago for that museum's 60<sup>th</sup> Annual American Exhibition in 1951.<sup>261</sup> Visitors to that show could also see Philip Guston's *If This Be Not I* and works by *Reality* manifesto signers Philip Evergood, Xavier Gonzalez, Edward Hopper (*August in the City*), Joseph Hirsch, Karl Knaths, Joseph Lasker, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Jack Levine (*Reception in Miami*), Reginald Marsh, Edward Melcarth, Honoré Sharrer (*Tribute to the American Working People*), Moses Soyer and Anthony Toney.

There is no indication that Greene had any personal relationship with the Ludgins, but he did have more than casual contact with Stoloff. Dr. Emile Gordon Stoloff was, during World War II, an Army major and chief of neuropsychiatry in the Army Medical Corps. Stoloff wrote an extensive, and uncomplimentary, report evaluating the medical and emotional condition of Joe

DiMaggio, then a soldier, that has been a topic of periodic interest in the popular press and online.<sup>262</sup> Dr. Stoloff and his wife bought other Greene works, including *The Shadow*, discussed *infra* in the text at Note 286. Although they donated some of their art to museums (e.g., a Guatemalan headscarf to the Met Costume Institute, a Walter Stuempfig painting (probably purchased from Askew, who was Stuempfig's dealer) to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, and *The Shadow* to the Whitney), they must have sold *Mourning*, as the Carnegie purchased it in 1982 with A. W. Mellon Acquisition Endowment funds. Apparently, Dr. Stoloff lent money to Greene at some point (or returned some work to Durlacher's for credit), as Greene in 1954 asked Askew to show Stoloff a self-portrait that Greene proposed to expunge the debt. In a November 1952 letter to Askew, Greene said of Stoloff: "I carry about great respect and affection for him."<sup>263</sup>

*Mourning*, now owned by the Carnegie Museum of Art, is the work that convinced me to focus on Greene for this dissertation. Adapting Guston's description of Piero, Greene's painting evinces, for me, a certain "fervor, grave and delicate." It is somehow less angst-ridden than the paintings in the 1947 show, while still mournfully tragic. The gestures, while still balletic, seem less aggressively mannered, and the colors have modulated and are somehow right for the doleful sorrow Greene wanted to project (although the green striped shirt of the rear-most figure, when viewed in person, is almost neon in its contrasting intensity, suggesting a Barnett Newman "zip"). The faint trace of perspective in the upper frame of the empty screen does nothing to detract from the nearly abstract spatial organization. And while Greene once again followed his van der Goes inspiration, painting the figures as failing to look at one another, he did convey their woeful communion close-up with tight cropping and extensive occlusion.<sup>264</sup>

The works in the 1949 show that most clearly showed Greene's broadened scope (and of which images are available) were *The Doll* (Figure 46) and *Family Portrait* (Figure 47). *The Doll*, with its naturalistic cast shadow and depiction of a female figure, was an anomaly, in style if not in meaning, within Greene's work of the mid- to late 1940s and he left no clues about his motivation for painting it.<sup>265</sup> Perhaps he was inspired by the surrealist work of his fellow Durlacher artist Kurt Seligmann, who had purchased *Christ and the Money Changers* and whose paintings often featured twisted or bloated forms that resembled articulated dolls. Or Seligmann may have introduced Greene to the strange and often morbid dolls of the German surrealist photographer and painter Hans Bellmer. (Greene's *Doll*, however, despite its gentle dismemberment, is far lovelier than typical works by those artists.) Or perhaps Greene, tired of



all the flat, formless clothing in which he had dressed his anonymous mourners, wanted to show his chops by painting elaborate drapery. Howard Devree, the *New York Times* reviewer of the 1949 Durlacher show, singled out the painting for just that skill, writing that “[i]n simple richness of color and in beauty of treatment of drapery ‘The Doll’ is a memorable picture,” and choosing a photo of the work to illustrate his review.<sup>266</sup> Devree opined that, in this and other works in the exhibition, a “new tenderness...a Rouault-like spirit of compassion has come through, superseding the somewhat morbid earlier preoccupation with crippled subjects.” Perhaps Devree failed to notice that several of the fingers of the figure are wholly or partially missing, a subtle—and easier for some viewers to look at—continuation of the theme of human incompleteness symbolized by missing arms or legs in Greene’s earlier paintings.<sup>267</sup>

Ironically, it was the stylistically aberrant *The Doll* that introduced Stephen Greene’s art to the general public, not only to New Yorkers in the 1949 *New York Times* illustration, but also to readers nationwide in *Life* magazine a year later. In 1950, *Life* was enthusiastic about covering developments in the sphere of art and, perhaps anticipating the major exhibition of contemporary American art to be held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (see text at Note 313), the magazine published in its March 20 issue a ten-page article headed “19 Young Americans,” reproducing in color paintings by nineteen “exceptionally promising” American artists younger than thirty-six years of age, chosen from 450 nominations by art world professionals.<sup>268</sup> Greene was one of the nineteen and *The Doll* was reproduced, together with works by Honoré Sharrer and Greene’s friend and fellow Askew artist Edward Melcarth, on a page headlined “They Still Paint the Human Figure.” (This contrasted with the headline “Abstract Approach Has Various Uses,” under which were grouped seven artists, including Hedda Sterne and Theodoros Stamos.) Greene’s image was accompanied by the following straightforward caption: “The Doll, by Stephen Green, is painted with lifelike features. Yet the human effect is shattered by the separation of arms, producing a haunting and provocative result.”<sup>269</sup>

More provocative and haunting, at least to me, is the photograph of Greene that joins those of the other “19 Young Americans” on the last page of the article (Figure 49). Although photo credits are not listed in the article, it is known that the photographer was Alfred Eisenstaedt. The story goes that before the photo session the always dapper Greene was excited to pose for the great photographer and dressed up in a suit, shirt and tie. Eisenstaedt was after a different look for a young artist and shone his bright lights on Greene until, sweating (as evidenced by the damp

forehead), the painter removed first his jacket and then his tie, yielding the look Eisenstaedt wanted. In the photo, Greene, in sharp focus, stands in front of a somewhat blurred painting that appears to be a self-portrait posed (with a closed posture of right hand grasping left arm) in front of his own painting, *Mourning (Five Figures with Candles)*. This painting within a painting within a photo is a second visual mystery in Greene's oeuvre, joining the Iowa master's thesis puzzler. Alison Greene told me that the *Life* photo had befuddled her for years; she had no idea how her father accomplished it and, as she did not discover the photo until after he died, could never ask him.<sup>270</sup> The secret could be some sort of collage, perhaps a painted self-portrait (wearing the kind of striped jersey discussed in the text following Note 219) over a photo of *Mourning*. Or maybe an over-painted photo of Greene placed in front of the painting. Or maybe some trick with mirrors. The problem with these explanations is that the painting in the background is not—or at least not exactly—the painting now in the Carnegie Museum. In the *Life* photo, the outstretched arm of the figure in the lower left of the painting does not seem to be occluded by the shoulder of the next figure, but in the painting they do overlap. I hazard the guess that there were, and maybe still are, two paintings—the first resting in storage at the Carnegie, the second a self-portrait in which Greene copied *Mourning* as the setting, but in the copying either accidentally or intentionally allowed at least one tiny difference from the original. The incident makes at least one thing clear: in making the self-portrait available for this most important photo shoot of his life, Greene evidenced an astute awareness of marketing opportunities (reminiscent of Barnett Newman's poses with his paintings) that was not characteristic of, or at least not obvious at, other times in his artistic career.<sup>271</sup>

*Family Portrait* is a very different kind of departure from Greene's previous work. It is overtly and unflinchingly autobiographical and Greene wrote a key to the meaning of the pictorial elements.<sup>272</sup> According to the artist himself the painting "depicts the state of the dual personality of the painter-son. The symbols used come from my own private experience, but they are intended to have a more general meaning." The crutch symbolized Greene's relationship with his parents (stronger with his mother than with his father), the mirror signified his turning "from the family to self-searching and introspection." The clothes-tree, "through a private occurrence," became a torture symbol; the easel and screen defined the setting as an artist's studio, "emphasizing that this is a portrait seen through the eyes of the son." Greene hardly needed to stress that the easel could be interpreted "on various levels...simply as part of the setting...[or] a suggested symbol of a cross

because of its position behind the painter.” Greene’s write-up tells us everything, but at the same time tells us nothing. Only in one sentence did he hint at the emotional strife the painting portrayed: “The upraised arm of the mother is a gesture suppressing a possible cry of recognition and despair resulting from the family relationship.” Alison Greene told me that her father’s parents “had a disastrous marriage,” that Gussie was disappointed in Willy’s lack of financial success (especially compared to that of her entrepreneurial bothers), that Willy apparently “chased skirts” and that the couple separated for periods of time.<sup>273</sup> In addition, when Stephen, well into his late twenties, determined that he would get his own apartment and permanently leave home, Gussie became nearly hysterical and made the leave-taking difficult, administering a heavy dose of stereotypical Jewish mother guilt. Years later, Greene treated the incident lightly, comparing his mother’s disapprobation to Shelly Winters’s comedically melodramatic histrionics in the 1976 movie *Next Stop, Greenwich Village*.<sup>274</sup> But the distress portrayed in the painting must have been real; Gussie had “lost” her husband and now was “losing” her adored son.

Greene told Dorothy Seckler in 1968 that in retrospect he was “not very happy about” having painted *Family Portrait*.<sup>275</sup> John S. Newberry, Jr., an arts patron and the curator of graphic art at the Detroit Institute of Art, purchased the painting and donated it to the museum.<sup>276</sup> Newberry commissioned Greene to paint his portrait and also bought some of the artist’s drawings, the former and many of the latter now also in the DIA’s collection.

While *Family Portrait*, with its naturalistic shadow and perspectival suggestion of space, may be seen as a moment of increased realism in Greene’s work, at least one critic saw it somewhat differently, treating the painting as an exemplar of the relevance of abstraction for figural painting at midcentury and thus underscoring a central theme of this dissertation. The painting had been exhibited in the 1948 Whitney annual, a large exhibition with 160 artists represented and some works that would become iconic, like Edward Hopper’s *Nighthawks* and Paul Cadmus’s *Playground*. Howard Devree’s *New York Times* review mentioned only about eighteen of them, some only in passing, but his sentence about Greene was his most substantive and a reproduction of *Family Portrait*, alongside one of *Duck Flight* by Karl Knaths, illustrated the review. Devree wrote that *Family Portrait*, “beautiful in its blue-green-yellow harmony, illustrates how abstractly based our outstanding realism has become, if one compares it with the Knaths “*Duck Flight*.”<sup>277</sup> *Family Portrait* was not mentioned in Devree’s review of Greene’s 1949 show at Durlacher’s, but, in light of this earlier evaluation of the painting, Devree must certainly have had it in mind when

he wrote of Greene's "growing interest in abstract space division with consequent strengthening of his work."<sup>278</sup> (Figure 50 recreates the juxtaposition of the Knaths and Greene reproductions as they illustrated the *New York Times* review of the Whitney show. Knaths originally signed the *Reality* Manifesto, but subsequently criticized some of the articles in the first issue of the journal and withdrew his support.)

In October, 1950, seven months after the "19 Young Americans" article, *Life* gave Greene solo recognition in his own two-page spread titled "The Sad Men, They All Mourn Themselves" (Figure 51). The two-paragraph text was richly and colorfully illustrated with reproductions of four of Greene's paintings, two with hot orange grounds (*The Deposition* and *Christ and the Moneychangers*) and two with cooler green grounds (*The Burial* and *Family Portrait*), as well as a small Eisenstaedt headshot of the artist. As this was signal recognition for Greene and his work in a widely read national publication, it is worth quoting the text in full:

While studying art at the University of Iowa, Stephen Greene got the highest accolade an art student can get: his own fellow students used to buy his work, paying as much as \$12 cash for a painting. Now 32, Greene—who was one of the 19 painters...is counted highly successful in the fiercely competitive world of modern art. Nearly everything he paints in his careful, painful way is bought almost immediately by important collectors and museums.

Greene's canvases are not ingratiating. Peopled by sad, mannikinlike [*sic*] men, they have a strained and morbid cast. Many of them are based on religious subjects. Greene does not call himself a religious man but, because biblical stories are universally recognized and easily understood, he used them to communicate his own feelings on the state of modern man—a state Greene considers to be chaotic and insecure. Dramatic and highly individual, Greene's paintings try to express, he says, "not despair about man, but a profound respect for his attempts to find his salvation."<sup>279</sup>

The captions of the photographs generally comport with Greene's own commentary on the paintings they reproduce and with the critical responses to those paintings, adding a few details such as the idea that the son in *Family Portrait* "discards [the] symbolic crutch of dependency." But the reference to "salvation" at the end of the text of the article, even though ostensibly in a quote from Greene, and the references to "faith" in the captions to *The Burial* and *The Deposition*, seem inconsistent with the artist's agnostic and Existentialist outlook on life and may reflect *Life*'s editorial predisposition. Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler included a veiled criticism of the *Life*

article in the catalogue for the 1982 exhibition *Realism and Realities*, which included *The Burial* and two other Greene works, noting that while *The Burial*, a “spare and frightening” painting, “might suggest salvation to some,” Greene had told the authors that the work had nothing to do with salvation, but rather “represents hell on earth.”<sup>280</sup> Greene was annoyed for years about *Life*’s reference to “salvation” and, nineteen years later in correspondence with a Tate official about a later painting, denied ever using the word (see text at Note 537).

**A Detour Toward Naturalism.** In the spring of 1949, around the time of the second Durlacher Bros. one-person show, Stephen Greene applied for, and won, a Rome Prize Fellowship, allowing him to spend a year living and making art at the American Academy in Rome. Finally he would get to see in person the art of the past that had for so long, in reproduction, inspired him. Finally he would be able to paint and draw full time, without the distracting pressures of teaching. He would live and take meals in a community of artists and intellectuals, not just painters and sculptors, but writers, composers, and historians—a situation even more desirable for Greene, as a lover of music and literature, than the one that *Life*, ten years earlier, had ballyhooed about Iowa City. It promised to be a superbly fulfilling experience for Greene, but his health—both physical and emotional—failed him.

The troubles began early on. After failing to communicate with Askew for an unusually long time after arriving in Rome, Greene wrote a long letter, of which the following is a small part:

Kirk, it is hardly true that I don’t like Rome. Rome is very exciting in many ways. As soon as the boat sailed, I went into a wild depression that has taken an over-long time to abate. I was disgusted with myself and I didn’t want to write you any of the dreary details. I must learn to overcome private difficulties without turning to anyone for sympathy....I’m never going to be a particularly joyous person and I must build up a better reserve than I had last year. I miss having a place to live, my teaching job, and as for my private necessities, I don’t know Kirk; I’m just lost and hurt. The most important matter in this is it not getting in the way of working well and intelligently.<sup>281</sup>

That handwritten letter was dated July 27, 1949. Greene promised that he would write more often. The next item in the Greene Folder of the Askew Papers is a telegram dated September 5, 1949 to Askew from Laurance Roberts, the director of the program at the American Academy in Rome: “HAVE CABLED ACADEMY OFFICE AND GREENE FAMILY STEPHEN

CRITICALLY ILL TODAY DOUBLE PNEUMONIA DOCTOR FEELS ADVISABLE FAMILY MEMBER SHOULD COME IF POSSIBLE.”

Greene described to Seckler what seems to have been an emotional as well as physical breakdown and the way he responded to it in his art:

Oh, in Europe I just sort of went crazy. I didn't sleep much. I wandered around till 5 o'clock in the morning. I had worked very hard to become a painter and to show. I suddenly found myself in a foreign place. And I bought canvas there and it was the wrong canvas and the paint went through. Everything seemed to go wrong. I had sort of loss of nerve.... And then I got wildly ill. There was something wrong with my lungs and I was close to death. They were so sure I was dying that they sent for my family. That was a rather scary time. My mother got there - I think they went through their life savings in about two weeks - they got there with a lung surgeon, his nurse-wife, and my brother-in-law.... And so when I got a little better, the doctor asked me if I would prefer to go home rather than staying there. Well then I came home. I had taken leave from my job. So I had no job....

And I think that psychologically I had undergone a very bad experience. And so suddenly from someone who had been known I became unknown. It was like everything I had sort of worked for for a long time was rather difficult. I was very depressed. And so I had to start off like an invalid almost. I'd put something in front and almost trace it, fill it in. I wasn't sure whether I'd ever be able to paint. So I painted this picture. It's called *The Shadow*.<sup>282</sup>

Greene's general description of the seriousness of his illness was confirmed in a long report by Director Roberts in the files of the American Academy in Rome. It appears from the report that Greene's mother, but not his father, made the trip to Rome with Stephen's brother-in-law and that the lung surgeon was based in Rome. Roberts listed an interesting mix of people who visited and supported Greene during his illness, including: Van Day Truex, at the time the director of the Parsons School of Design, where Greene had worked before coming to Rome; painter and collector James Whitney Fosburgh (a fellow Durlacher artist who later chaired Jacqueline Kennedy's committee to improve the White House paintings collection); harpsichordist and musicologist Ralph Kirkpatrick; and artist and Rome Prize recipient Bernard Perlin, who gave Greene at least one pep talk as he began to recover. It had been Perlin who first insisted, when his friend Greene was already quite ill, that a doctor be brought in. Perlin also reported to Roberts that Greene had talked of dying in Rome.<sup>283</sup>

Greene may well have been conflating two or more time periods in his 1968 remark about having been “known” before going to Rome and then, after his return in late 1949, “unknown,” as his prominence just a few months later, after the “19 Young Americans” article appeared, had never been greater. Greene often brought up the theme of public recognition and its absence. He remarked later in his life that he had been famous twice (presumably in 1950 and during his 1963 Corcoran retrospective) and wished he could be famous again.<sup>284</sup> And, of course, he wrote that he wanted “my own name.”<sup>285</sup>

The painting that Greene identified as the first product of his post-Rome, “post-fame” depression, *The Shadow* (Figure 52) of 1950, has become, in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, perhaps his best-known, or at least his most frequently exhibited, work. Greene created in this painting variations on several themes from his earlier paintings. An armless skeleton is crucified on a painter’s studio easel. The skeleton is rendered incomplete by cropping, as well as by dismemberment, and its skeletal left leg leans against the scumbled grey-green wall. The cast shadow of the title (and, naturalistically, of the easel and the leg bone) echoes that of *The Doll*. Greene spoke dismissively about this work in his oral history interview:

Well, you know, it's a setup. But it's a very simple form....And in retrospect I certainly am not very happy about it. You know, it's very morbid and I think subject matter can be murderous because no painting is worth anything unless it's formally exciting in some kind of very different way. So I think this is just some sort of - you see when anything gets so straightly autobiographical and not much else, no matter what anybody else might see, I just don't like the picture....And I find it's just a curio out of my existence.<sup>286</sup>

Dr. Emile Stoloff, who had previously bought *Mourning* (now in the Carnegie Museum of Art), purchased *The Shadow* and eventually donated it to the Whitney, where it was included in, *inter alia*, the 1975 exhibition “An American Dream World: Romantic Realism 1930-1955,” the 2010 exhibition “Collecting Biennials” and the year-long (2016-2017) exhibition “Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney’s Collection.” The 1975 exhibition presented works found to represent a sensibility concerned with the psychological associations arising from changing the context of symbolic subject matter, a sensibility that for the curators included artists identified with Magic Realism, Surrealism and Symbolic Realism. If Greene were to be included in any of these categories, it might best be the last, named by Lincoln Kirstein to encompass work collected for a show he organized in 1950 for artists he favored like Jared French, George Tooker and Henry

Koerner, a show that, however, didn't include Greene.<sup>287</sup> In a review in *Fortune* of the 2010 exhibition, which included highlights from past Whitney biennials, Sarah Wolff wrote:

There are a few also-rans in Collecting Biennials. The painters Peter Blume and Stephen Greene both worked during the height of American postwar modernism and had been included in several of the museum's annual shows, though their names aren't very recognizable anymore. Blume's painting "Man of Sorrows" (1951)....feels fresh in its ability to self-reference and to perplex the viewer.

Greene's painting "The Shadow" (1950) is quieter and less obvious. A human skeleton lies against an easel, casting a shadow on the mint green wall behind it. The color palate is reminiscent of a Fra Angelico fresco and the composition feels as carefully arranged as a Chardin still life. The Shadow is a visual palate-cleanser before the bombast of nearby works in the same gallery.<sup>288</sup>

Finally, a photo that appears on the museum's tumblr.com site (Figure 53) captures the painting's reception in the latest of those exhibitions by one young beholder. The Whitney's online caption to the photo reads, in part:

...Greene himself wasn't very pleased with the painting [quoting his oral history interview]....But the work bears witness to the crucial role of figurative approaches after WWII, despite the rise of abstract painting. While portraiture seemed hopelessly outmoded to some, other artists like Greene sought refuge in representing themselves and others.<sup>289</sup>

The theme expressed in that caption relates to the theme of a summer 2019 exhibition at the American Academy in Rome titled *The Academic Body*, about the transformation of the body in the work of Rome Prize Fellows and artists associated with the American Academy in Rome from 1894 to the present. The exhibition organizers requested the Whitney to lend *The Shadow* "for the way that it exemplifies the profound crisis facing figurative painting and the Academic tradition following the Second World War."<sup>290</sup> One of the curators, Guston scholar Peter Benson Miller, wrote in the exhibition essay that *The Shadow*

...recalls at the same time both the artist's own close encounter with death and the utter exhaustion of the academic practice of life drawing. During the Renaissance, the skeleton, together with the *écorché*, or the flayed body, represented the artist's mastery of human anatomy, an essential ingredient for the depiction of the nude heroic male figure. In Domenico del Barbiere's *Two Flayed Men and their Skeletons*, the two figures seen from front and back, one of them wearing a laurel wreath, might be poets or even Caesar, characters in a lofty narrative drawn from history or poetry.



In contrast, Greene's hapless skeleton slumps against the easel, deprived of the élan of his counterparts in Barbieri's engraving. As a moody critique of academic conventions, Greene's painting is closer in spirit to the series of satirical paintings by James Ensor in which he used skeletons to explore the miseries of human existence, including the challenges faced by artists. In 1889, Ensor depicted himself as a skeleton, an examination of the artist's mortality akin to the autobiographical aspects in *The Shadow*.<sup>291</sup>

Although Greene seems to have regretted, in retrospect, the autobiographical character of *Family Portrait* and *The Shadow*, nevertheless, soon after completing the latter, he once again drew on his own life for a family narrative in *The Return* (Figure 54). Here the three actors in *Family Portrait* have reappeared, with new emotions expressed by old symbols. The father, now less angry, has risen from his chair and grasps his own prop, a claw hammer. The mother's despair has yielded to acquiescent mourning; she holds the candle delicately but awkwardly, as if it could break as the son has broken. The artist son, missing both his right leg below the thigh and his left foot, is perched precariously on a ladder, his pose recalling *The Deposition*. Wearing the round amulet seen so often in Greene's earlier paintings, he has been haphazardly wrapped in bandages which, echoing the earlier *Raising of Lazarus*, he seems to be unwrapping as he "returns" from deathly illness. But Greene would have rejected that analysis, as he commented in 1976 that "[t]he bandages, I had hoped, as well as the maimed limbs, signify a psychological state rather than a physical one."<sup>292</sup> Greene was despondent that he had failed as an artist in Rome. Although the artist's commentary did not acknowledge it, the painting itself may have been a guilty and apologetic expression both of appreciation to his parents for their support during his illness in Rome and of acceptance of the family relationships and traditions he had portrayed himself discarding in *Family Portrait*. To that end, the bandages may also be seen to evoke the leather straps used by Jewish men daily to wrap one of the *tefillin* or phylacteries, the small, black boxes containing Hebrew prayers, around their arms and hands. Greene told Dorothy Seckler that his father followed the tradition of using *tefillin* and that although Greene had them, he "almost never" used them. Could he, in his psychologically maimed state, have symbolically embraced the paternal tradition in *The Return*? If so, the painting suggests that his father did not embrace him in return.

Peter Benson Miller, in his essay for the Rome exhibition, supplementing his treatment of *The Shadow*, presents a fascinating, if somewhat implausible, reading of *The Return*, proposing that in the painting Greene

...underlines the faltering classical tradition. His own torso, with its truncated limbs, echoes that of the Belvedere Torso, one of the most celebrated antique statues in the Vatican collection, one long admired by artists. In bringing the torso back to life as an amputee, Greene parodies the slavish habit of copying the original. Like Guston, Greene loathed his experience in art school, expressing antipathy for endless working from casts.<sup>293</sup>

Kirk Askew, perhaps recognizing *The Return* as a recapitulation of Greene's subject matter, symbology and formal devices to that point in time, bought the painting and then, in 1962, long after Greene left Durlacher's, donated it to the Tate Gallery in London.<sup>294</sup> Alex Taylor has written that the gallery's acceptance of the gift, along with other substantially contemporaneous acquisitions of works by painters less well known than some American artists whose work Tate did not yet own, should be viewed as evidence of Director John Rothenstein's "persistently plural understanding of post-war American art."<sup>295</sup> Greene himself recognized the work as something of a summa, with references both backward and forward, and is quoted in the Tate catalog entry as explaining in 1976 that:

The two forms, one on the left, the other on the right are not "doors". They were forms I used from screens I had in my studio but more to the fact is that they are uprights and the picture is put together somewhat like a crucifixion, which often has the three uprights (crosses). As much as have been the formal changes in my work, my basic subject matter is always the crucifixion, not so much in the Christian sense but in the humanistic one divorced from religion.<sup>296</sup>

As is often the case with Greene's testimony, this comment invites more questions, such as whether the father's claw hammer would be used to drive nails into, or—evoking the compassion of Joseph of Arimathaea—remove them from, the implied crosses. More obvious, though, is the issue of whether Greene, without the blatancy of Rattner's statement, intended finally to put a figure—himself—on a cross, here in the guise of the ladder. To say that Greene *identified* with Christ on the cross would go too far, and the embarrassment about the painting he expressed, years later, in correspondence with a Tate official (see text at Note 537) may flow from the possibility of that interpretation. But the intense and complicated suffering the artist experienced in his illness and failures in Rome must have made the fusion of crucifixion imagery with a self-portrait seem appropriate and even inevitable.

*The Return* became the third public relations coup for Greene in 1950, joining the two *Life* articles, when it was selected for the major exhibition *American Painting Today* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was also the beginning of a new color world for Greene, the last before the disruptive change of the mid-1950s. Greene kept meaning and mood substantially consistent with the earlier biblical scenes but transformed his colors. Richly saturated greens and oranges were replaced by an overriding pale, chalky blue-gray, dry and milky at the same time. Skin tones became a ghostly, desiccated grayish cream. Forms remained sharp, but the lightened, unsaturated colors blended. Ashmore observed that in the paintings of this period color had been “drained” and what was left was “only a reminder of what went before.”<sup>297</sup> Greene used this muted palette in *The Return* and in a series of paintings he made in New York before going back to Rome in 1952: *The Flagellators*, a/k/a (in museum records) *The Flagellation* (Figure 56), *The Kiss of Judas* (Figure 57) and *Massacre of the Innocents* (Figure 61).

A significant portion of Tate’s online catalogue entry for *The Return* deals with the painting’s color and finish and the facture that achieved it, citing Greene’s 1968 interview with Dorothy Seckler in which he

...discussed his dislike of the “greasiness” of oils and described his search for a method that would produce a “very quiet, very matte, dry” finish....The artist achieved this by mixing white casein, a milk protein-based paint, with his oils and turpentine. Greene recalled that his initial experiments resulted in the paint curdling, and that although certain combinations achieved the desired effect, the paint began to behave in unusual ways: “So then I made a mixture of 4 parts Demar, 2 parts unthickened linseed oil glazing medium, 2 to 4 parts turpentine. And I found you could do that. It gave a certain kind of clarity. It wasn’t as dry as fresco, but it was dry. Then I finally gave that up because...the paint physically started opening up.”<sup>298</sup>

The author of the Tate catalogue entry may or may not have noticed—but in either event did not mention—that the physical condition of the painting in 2019 evidenced the facture problems Greene described in 1968. Although invisible in online photographs and hard to see from even a few feet away in person, my close inspection of the painting revealed small areas where mixed colors appear to have separated or blistered (see Figure 55). Inspection of *Massacre of the Innocents*, whose palette and finish are similar to those of *The Return* but which was painted at least a year later, disclosed no similar impairment of the painted surface, suggesting that Greene had by 1952 solved, at least with respect to his chalky blue-gray phase, his facture problems.

As I have argued above, Greene's painting from 1946 to mid-1949 (with some exceptions, such as *Family Portrait*) showed a gradual evolution toward a kind of figural abstraction. The "blue-gray" paintings of 1950 to '52—*The Flagellators*, *The Kiss of Judas* and *The Massacre of the Innocents*—suggest more than just a change in color scheme; they represent a reversal, albeit temporary, of that evolution, or at least a hiatus in it. For example, while verticals remain important, the lances and axes of *Kiss* and *Massacre* do not structure the pictorial space and the open screens of *The Flagellators* have been painted in a naturalistic two-point perspective. The flagellator behind Christ recalls the realistic wrist exercise of the Pre-Flight School mural. The figure behind Judas in *Kiss* is naturalistically muscled. In both *Kiss* and *Flagellators*, the figure of Christ is undeniably the central focus of the work, both narratively and structurally, contrary to Greene's statements that his Christs function as bystanders, thereby abstracting the biblical stories. Unlike the timeless studies of unchanging emotion that Greene created in his earlier works, in which something has already happened or might eventually happen, *The Kiss of Judas* recreates a unique moment in biblical time. The primary actors are wholly absorbed in the event, even though one of the legionnaires and two anonymous bystanders forthrightly and theatrically address the viewer. Further, the dominant line in *Kiss* is not vertical, as in earlier works, but diagonal, from the kiss itself downward along Christ's arm to his grasp of Judas's hand. There is nothing abstract, nothing gestural, about those clasped hands; they make the painting effective because they are so realistic, so tactile and so believable.

*The Massacre of the Innocents* is another example of Greene's detour toward naturalism and narrative, although arguably a less successful one. The rocky background of *Massacre* was perhaps intended to establish mood, but it verges on scenery for the first time in Greene's oeuvre. Gestures, when they occur, have become less mannered and therefore more naturalistic. The wave of the one-armed, one-footed baby boy on his mother's shoulders (autobiographical? a Christ reference?) is perhaps an exception and is particularly frightful (Figure 60). Despite their vulnerable nakedness, the women of *Massacre* somehow do not convey emotion with the same impact as the anonymous, genderlessly clothed men of earlier pictures. Greene insisted that he did not intend to illustrate the Holocaust and he seemingly could not bring himself to show the actual act of massacre, but it is hard for the beholder, when facing a painting of naked women, mutilated children and armed soldiers, not to make the connection to Holocaust horror in the absence of another pictorial statement about humanity's existential condition in the post-war world. The

emotional ambivalence of the painting is underscored by an impression, inferred from a study drawing (Figure 61), that Greene considered portraying somewhat closer and more violent physical contact between soldiers and victims.

Relying mostly on color for his analysis, Ashmore commented about these “blue-gray” paintings, made in what he calls Greene’s “second interval,” that the “surface suggests a mute and haunted world.” Another beholder might disagree, at least with respect to their implied sonic component. The three illustrated paintings seem hectic, of the moment and, in the case of *The Kiss of Judas*, with its clang of armor and sound of horn, almost raucous. Notwithstanding the flat, mottled backgrounds of these paintings, by making them Greene became, for the time being, a painter of relatively naturalistic narratives.

*Flagellators*, *Kiss* and *Massacre* were all displayed in Durlacher’s 1952 solo exhibition of Greene’s work. This time the *New York Times* reviewer was Stuart Preston, whose reaction to the paintings was decidedly mixed. He called the paintings Greene’s “most ambitious work” to that date and found the artist courageous in having chosen to depict,

...with moving seriousness, some of the more poignant scenes of Christ’s passion. By now Greene’s technique is sufficiently assured and sensitive to be up to what he will. Color is cool and milky, paler than before; paint handling is clean, calm and sweet, and the drawing, though limp when compared to the sketches, is still quite capable of realizing his intentions.<sup>299</sup>

So far, so good. But Greene must have fallen into another “wild depression,” or at least serious frustration at the failure to understand his goals, when he read the rest of Preston’s evaluation:

The fundamental weakness of this work resides in the artist’s imagination being simply inadequate to the exalted tasks that it has been set. Such a subject as “The Flagellation” requires its dramatization to be far less subjective than Greene’s; far more responsive to the widely disparate characters of the beings involved; far less inert with respect to the action. An air of suffering and resignation, though appropriate to the Christ, becomes senseless when given to the executioner and leads to a uniform glumness when also enveloping the other characters. It cannot, of course, be ruled out that Greene may be aiming at a new and entirely mystical interpretation of these events; but, in any case, the tragic note remains insufficiently varied and insufficiently profound. Quite apart from this, and deserving of lengthy investigation, is the admirably learned pictorial architecture displayed here.<sup>300</sup>

Perhaps Preston had not read reviews of the earlier paintings and Greene's own statements, in *Life* and elsewhere, about his goals and intentions, a failure which would not have been inappropriate for a critic charged with coming to his own evaluative opinion. Or perhaps Preston had read them, as he certainly saw the prior shows and as his comment about a new interpretation might imply, but, if so, he wasn't buying it. Would he have had the same critical response to the paintings of 1947, '48 and '49? I would argue, speculatively, that Greene's return to a degree of naturalism in *The Flagellators* and the other blue-gray works invited the very kind of response that Preston came to. When the figures and setting become less abstract, the beholder wants more drama and more relatable emotion. Even Preston's dismissively positive send-off fits into this argument: the critic seemed concerned not with formal issues of pictorial space but with representational questions of "pictorial architecture."

*Flagellators*, *Kiss of Judas* and *Massacre* are all in museums and two of them have accompanying ink studies or sketches. When Dr. and Mrs. Emile Stoloff bought *The Kiss of Judas* (promptly lending it to the 1952 Carnegie International), they also acquired thirteen ink studies for it (one of which is reproduced as Figure 58). The Stoloffs kept the painting and drawings for about a decade and then gave them to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The painting has rarely been on view. The prominent Met (and before that MoMA) curator William Lieberman apparently liked *Kiss* and often called for it to be brought to him as he was planning exhibitions, but he almost always ended up sending the painting back to storage.<sup>301</sup> The painting and Greene's study drawings for it were exhibited together at least once, at a 1984 show to mark the opening of the newly renovated art building at Lehman College in the Bronx, for which all the works were provided by the Met. The titular theme of the exhibition was *Relationships*, in this case between an artist's drawings and the final painting or sculpture. The New York Times reviewer, commenting on the "stark realism" of Greene's work, thought that the studies "resemble old master drawings," and found the painting "an astounding throwback; it might be from the Renaissance but for the shorn Christ who resembles Vincent Van Gogh."<sup>302</sup>

The Durlacher Bros. records show that *Massacre of the Innocents* was purchased by a Kansas City collector, S. K. Gorman, but his wife was unhappy with it and insisted on returning it. Eventually Kirk Askew bought it back and donated it to the Princeton University Art Museum in 1959.<sup>303</sup> At about the same time, Greene, who was finishing his appointment as artist-in-residence at Princeton, donated seven ink sketches for the painting to the museum, of which four

are reproduced in Figure 62. The study drawings (especially those for *Massacre*, which were admired by Edgar Wind in Rome in 1953) provide an opportunity to compare Greene's quick sketches and more elaborate studies with his finished drawings, several of which are reproduced as Figures 10, 13, 22, 65 and 66.<sup>304</sup>

From childhood, Greene loved to draw and both his drawings and his paintings attest to his drawing skill. All his exhibitions at Durlacher Bros. included groups of drawings and he also showed in various group drawing exhibitions over the years, getting good notices for drawings as well as for paintings. In his review of Greene's 1949 one-man-show, Howard Devree wrote that "from the first his draftsmanship has been beyond caviling" and a New York Times review of a group drawing show praised Greene's "fragile flower studies."<sup>305</sup> As has been noted, I do not accept all aspects of Jerome Ashmore's analysis of Greene's work. But, having spent a couple of hours with Greene's drawings in his daughter's collection (especially an evocative sketchbook made in Naples in 1953, extracts from which are reproduced in Figure 67),<sup>306</sup> I have no quarrel with Ashmore's paean to Greene's drawing. Ashmore enthusiastically praised Greene's

...maintenance of exceptionally high competence in drawing. From an early age Greene has felt and yielded to a constant inclination to draw. One of the masters who first fascinated him was Leonardo; later he was impressed strongly by Degas and Pontormo.... His craftsmanship places an extremely sound foundation under all of his paintings. His full drawings are well composed, delicate, and lively. They are fresh, fluid, free, full of feeling and indicate a great command of suggestion by omission. His line radiates grace and vitality. It seems to be drawn neither slowly nor rapidly in itself but rather to follow a tempo set by the subject matter. Green also is linearly fertile. Whatever the subject matter dictates, a line arises to obey. Without ever being "studied," he captures life, communicates both character and idea, and, when rendering a head or a figure, delineates both the focusing self of the moment and the enduring self of the life span with a control that seems effortless.<sup>307</sup>

One of Greene's delicate botanical drawings, *Grasses and Twigs* (Figure 65), now at the Wadsworth Atheneum, validates Ashmore's appraisal, at least with respect to delicacy, fluidity and grace. Its style is reminiscent of the naturalistic drawings of Greene's friend, Gray Foy, which, in turn, in their "self-effacing modesty" invoke, for Robert Pincus-Witten, Albrecht Durer's treatment of grasses.<sup>308</sup> *Grasses and Twigs* was among the twenty-two drawings on offer at the solo exhibition that Askew gave Greene at Durlacher's in 1952. Stuart Preston, in the *New York Times*, was enthusiastic about the drawings in the show, in contrast to his mixed opinion, quoted

above, of the paintings: "...pen-and-ink figure studies, instantaneous, adroit and brimming over with human feeling. No difference of opinion here between mind, eye and hand."<sup>309</sup>



### 3.0 *Reality* And The Figuration/Abstraction Divide At Mid-Century

The year 1950, with its two flattering *Life* articles, was an auspicious one for Stephen Greene's career as an artist. A series of more public events during that same year illustrates the post-war decade of art-world turmoil from which the artists' journal *Reality* emerged and to which, this dissertation argues, Greene responded in his art. In March, Raphael Soyer sent postcards proposing a meeting of artists at Del Pezzo Restaurant in midtown Manhattan "to discuss the changing and confusing art situation of the moment, to try to understand the abrupt ascendancy of abstraction and non-representationalism and their wholehearted promulgation by museums, art dealers and critics."<sup>310</sup> About ten people showed up, including Edward Hopper, Henry Varnum Poor, Sol Wilson, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Ben Shahn, Leon Kroll, Joseph Hirsch, Philip Evergood, and Soyer himself, a group with widely varying political and social views and aesthetic practices but with shared concerns about the state of the art world and their place in it.<sup>311</sup> According to Poor, the assembled artists found it pleasant to "sit around a table and talk about what we believed in as painters and of what we found wrong with the world," so they continued to meet and the group continued to grow as Soyer and some of his colleagues continued their low-key but insistent proselytizing on behalf of "art with a humanist core".<sup>312</sup> The journal had a long gestation period; the first issue, headed by its manifesto-like Statement, wasn't published until 1953.

Meanwhile, in January 1950, the Metropolitan Museum of Art had announced a nationwide competitive exhibition, to be conducted by its newly formed American Art Department and to be titled *American Painting Today*, with regional juries composed almost exclusively of artists. In April, some twenty-two thousand letters announcing the terms of the exhibition, with entry forms, were sent out to artists across the United States.<sup>313</sup> In May, the Met received a letter signed by eighteen painters and ten sculptors calling for all "advanced artists" to boycott the "monster national exhibition" and charging that the choice of conservative jurors proved the Met's "hostility to advanced art."<sup>314</sup> The idea of a letter had been proposed, at the end of the legendary three-day conference of avant-garde artists at Studio 35 in New York, by Adolph Gottlieb, who drafted it in consultation with Barnett Newman, Robert Motherwell and Ad Reinhardt. It was Newman who hand-delivered the letter to the museum.<sup>315</sup>

In the ensuing multi-month brouhaha, *Life* published in January, 1951, its famous posed photo of fifteen of the Abstract Expressionist artists who had signed the open boycott letter. Their scowls (Rothko), glowers (Pollock), glares (DeKooning) and mere solemnity (the rest) were no doubt intended to convey the seriousness with which these “Irascibles” (as they were nicknamed by the New York *Herald Tribune*) took their collective remonstrance. The idea of group action is important here, as art historians have disagreed about the extent to which “advanced” artists, at least in New York, constituted a collectivity. In contrast to the views of Michael Leja and Serge Guilbaut about concerted undertaking, the authors of *Art Since 1900* stressed the boycott as an instance of the New York School artists banding together publicly to “show collective muscle in the face of a shared enemy.”<sup>316</sup> In what is arguably a display of reciprocal paranoia, the planning, publication and defense of *Reality* can be seen as similar collective action, similarly motivated.

In 1950, though, individual action by artists who would eventually sign the *Reality* manifesto was more widely publicized than was their collective action. Karl Knaths won first prize (\$3500) in the American Painting Competition for his *Basket Bouquet* (now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art). Yasuo Kuniyoshi and Joseph Hirsch, both of whom attended Soyer’s first meeting, won third prize (\$1500) and fourth prize (\$1000), respectively. The Irascibles photograph appeared on page 34 of the January 15, 1951 issue of *Life*. Opposite it, on page 35, the Knaths painting, reproduced in color, led an article with the heading: “The Metropolitan and Modern Art – Amid Brickbats and bouquets the museum holds its first U. S. painting competition.” The caption described Knaths as “veteran abstractionist of Provincetown, Mass., who picked lilacs from sand dunes, painted them in geometric patches of lavender.” On subsequent pages the Kuniyoshi and Hirsch paintings were also reproduced; the caption for Hirsch’s *Nine Men* (now in the Smithsonian American Art Museum) noted that it “was the only non-abstraction given award. He painted men as if he were behind basin mirror looking at them.”<sup>317</sup> (The whole last page of the four-page *Life* spread was given over to a color photograph of a modernist urban scene by the artist Arthur Osver, who went on to be the best man at Stephen Greene’s wedding in Rome.<sup>318</sup>) The captions and reproductions (especially of Kuniyoshi’s highly accessible *Fish Kite*) suggest that readers may have felt confused about the meaning of “abstraction,” a confusion possibly engendered by the needs of the popular press to reduce concepts to shorthand.

In 1950, *Life* was keen to chronicle developments in the art world. Perhaps anticipating the Met exhibition, the magazine published in its March 20 issue the “19 Young Americans” article (see text around Note 268) anointing as “exceptionally promising” nineteen American artists under the age of thirty-six.<sup>319</sup> Six of the nineteen artists featured in the article—Stephen Greene, Edward Melcarth, Howard Warshaw, Bernard Perlin, Honoré Sharrer and Joseph Lasker—signed on to the *Reality* Statement three years later. The editors also selected two of the soon-to-be Irascibles—Theodoros Stamos and Hedda Sterne. (As described above in the text at Note 279, Greene received solo recognition seven months later when *Life* gave him his own two-page spread under the heading “The Sad Men, They All Mourn Themselves.”)<sup>320</sup>

The Irascibles and their supporters were probably unimpressed by, and maybe resentful of, the *Life* editors’ judgments about art. Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg, the leading champions of New York School artists, detested what they saw as a burgeoning consumer society in the United States and reviled the “lowbrow and middle-brow kitsch it gave rise to...a vulgar and shallow popular culture” disseminated by radio, television, movies and mass-circulation magazines like *Life*.<sup>321</sup> Greenberg’s focus on the formal purity and art historical continuity of each successive and progressive avant-garde movement and Rosenberg’s championing of “action painting” as an urgent struggle for artistic self-definition were both accompanied by their dismissive references to most representational American art. But while Soyer, Shahn, Poor, Hopper, Joseph Solman, Jack Levine, Isabel Bishop and the other opinion leaders of the *Reality* group were fully aware of Greenberg’s and Rosenberg’s theories and were fully capable of evaluating and responding to them, an artist in post-war America did not have to be a brainy intellectual to comprehend and be troubled or offended by their message. For example, the gravamen of Greenberg’s short 1948 essay “The Crisis of the Easel Picture,” while couched in some difficult terminology, was basically straightforward: that the new “decentralized,” “polyphonic” pictures that he admired (such as those of Jackson Pollock and Mark Tobey) came very close to wallpaper patterns that could be repeated indefinitely, but that applying the “all-over” style to an easel picture resulted in “fatal ambiguity.”<sup>322</sup> This conclusion must have been disheartening to scores of people who, during the late 1930s, had worked in the WPA Art Project’s Easel Division (the activities of which were summarized by Solman for a book of memoirs of WPA artists) and who continued to paint pictures small enough to be hung on a living room wall.<sup>323</sup> The artist George Biddle summarized in his journal Raphael Soyer’s lament about the state of the

arts: “He was very depressed. God knows, I am myself. Both of us feel—most of the finest artists of my generation, modern or traditional, feel—that the present moment is one of chaos, chicanery and double-talk in the art world. There are no valid standards. Perhaps all of this is a reflection of the chaos of the world.”<sup>324</sup>

Another event in the eventful year 1950 that must have troubled the artists who became the *Reality* group was Robert Motherwell’s paper, presented at a College Art Association conference, in which he introduced the term “the School of New York” to define the Irascibles and like-minded artists. Motherwell’s claim for the preeminence of abstraction was breathtaking:

Indeed, one might say that specifically modern painting, and particularly its more abstract manifestations, differs from all other art in this, its subject-matter is just art itself, what is art and what is not. The work of every modern artist is a criticism of all other art, past and present; that is its taking off place. The protest that many of us, who belong to the School of New York, recently signed against the monster exhibition of American art that the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is to shortly hold revolved around the question, not of having an exhibition of modern American art, but of who in fact is a modern American artist.<sup>325</sup>

So, people were to understand from Motherwell that the subject matter of the New York School artists was to decide, through their own art, just what was art and just who were artists. And it made sense that many representational artists would take abstractionist polemic personally; at one point in his paper Motherwell switched from his general, if incisive, exposition to an admittedly *ad hominem* sortie against Ben Shahn:

...Here I must interject an example. A year or so ago I had what amounted to a public duel with the leading Communist modern artist in America in a forum held under the auspices of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. He, of course, insisted that my art had no content, that it was decorative and good to taste, like a wedding cake. I remarked, of course, that every art has a content, only the content of some art is more subtle. But the hostility on my part against him was not that he was a Communist, but that his art contains none of the quality that would seem to me to make one legitimately in rebellion against our society as it is now organized, that is to say, none of the feeling for real humanity, for its capacity for self-realization. Instead his art seems to me to be cold, empty, mechanical, and alienated from the world....<sup>326</sup>

(Interestingly, in view of their mutual antagonism, the tastes of Motherwell and Shahn were similar enough that in 1952 they each provided an enthusiastic letter of recommendation supporting Cy Twombly’s application for a museum fellowship to travel in Europe.)<sup>327</sup>

By the time Soyer's group first got together in 1950, the abstract artist Ad Reinhardt's cartoon "How to Look at Modern Art," published in the leftist daily newspaper *PM* in 1946, had become a memorable statement of the "notion that realist painting is no longer viable and that abstraction is the sole valid form of artistic expression."<sup>328</sup> On Reinhardt's tree (which was inspired by an earlier cartoon tree drawn by Miguel Covarrubias for *Vanity Fair* and also recalled Alfred Barr's various charts), artists' names were inscribed on leaves growing from branches arranged by the relative understandability of the artists' works to viewers; the healthy limbs on the far left represent the most challenging—and therefore most advanced—art, while the dying ones on the right stand for the easiest and most familiar work.<sup>329</sup> Cemetery markers naming Poor, Kroll and Reginald Marsh are crowded below the tree in a cornfield "where no demand is made on you" and the leaves naming Statement signers Sloan, Soyer, Kuniyoshi, Bishop, William Gropper and Ernest Fiene cling to the weakest branch, weighted down by traditional painting genres. Fourteen additional *Reality* artists—among them Hopper, Evergood, Charles Burchfield, and Milton Avery—show up on branches that are slightly healthier, but still extensions of the large limb that is ready to crack. Only two *Reality* Statement signers—Joseph Solman and Karl Knaths—join the likes of Rothko, Gottlieb, Gorky and Pollack [*sic*] on the vigorous, stimulating left side of the tree. In his caption, Reinhardt cautions his reader to "[b]e especially careful of those curious schools situated on that overloaded section of the tree, which somehow think of themselves as being both abstract and pictorial (as if they could be both today)." This warning and its snide parenthetical can be seen as a challenge which, as will be discussed, Greene eventually, at least in his publicly expressed self-image, rejected.

After their first enjoyable get-together at Del Pezzo, Soyer's group continued to meet at the restaurant monthly, with more artists participating. Soyer acted as unofficial chairman, if only to keep everyone from speaking at once.<sup>330</sup> After a year of monthly meetings, some members of the group—especially Henry Poor and Ben Shahn—felt the need to accomplish something tangible by at least making their complaints public. They decided to send a letter to art patrons, critics and museum executives soliciting support for the group's goals. Shahn composed a draft which Poor sent to his friend, the well-connected collector and patron Alice Garrett, who thought Shahn's effort was overly long, redundant and too political, "always harking back to Sacco and Vanzetti."<sup>331</sup> In its final form, the letter, probably reflecting Garrett's suggestions, anticipated the published manifesto of following year and read, in part:

The work of the members of this group is very diverse in style and point of view, but our common ground is a respect for and love of the Object; for the human qualities in painting; for the Image. We are all, in the common use of the work, objective painters.

While we have no quarrel with any point of view in painting, we deplore the influences that work toward the dehumanizing of painting and claim finality for any limited point of view. We deplore all influences of fashions or overemphasis that unduly mold or restrict the freedom of the artist. We feel that many museums, through their position of power in the art world and through selection and emphasis, are consciously or unconsciously curtailing this freedom. They are becoming dictators of fashions and trends. These influences, we feel, are harmful, and we will work to restore art to its freedom and dignity as a vital language of communication.<sup>332</sup>

The letter was signed by thirty artists, but it's not clear how widely it was circulated, if at all.<sup>333</sup> Garrett had cautioned Poor that "You have no idea of the power of the people you are attacking" and advised that the only way for the group to make headway with the Museum of Modern Art was to meet with and cultivate the trustees and committee chairmen of the museum. These were people whom Garrett knew. She undertook to arrange a reception for the purpose but became ill and died before it could be accomplished; for several months the artists' project languished.<sup>334</sup>

Early in 1952, after Del Pezzo refused to continue reserving a room because the artists hadn't been ordering enough drinks, the group began to meet in artists' studios, usually Joe Solman's or Sol Wilson's.<sup>335</sup> Attendance at the sessions grew as new members joined and the group soon resolved to publicize and promote their cause by drafting another statement of their concerns to be signed by members of the group, by writing a letter specifically to the Museum of Modern Art, which they viewed as their primary adversary, and, eventually, by publishing a journal of their opinions about art.

The Statement, with its insistent tone, disputatious rhetoric, and eventual wide distribution, deserves to be called a manifesto. Certainly, Poor was responsible for much of the wording, but the conciliatory mood of the earlier letter on the group's behalf was supplanted by more belligerent denunciations that may well have been favored by Shahn, Levine, Solman and other members who had been accustomed to leftist political argumentation. Indeed, one can imagine the last paragraph in a publication of the Artist's Union, of which Solman had been an officer, and its message

reflected a particular concern of Shahn that critics and gallerists were responsible for stimulating dissention between abstractionists and figural artists that wouldn't have been as severe otherwise.<sup>336</sup> The text of the Statement, signed by forty-seven artists, was as follows:

A group of artists have joined together to discuss their problems. The work of the members of this group is highly diverse in style and conception. Their kinship is a respect and love for the human qualities in painting. The following statement represents their concerted opinion.

All art is an expression of human experience. All the possibilities of art must be explored to broaden its expression. We nevertheless believe that texture and accident, like color, design, and all the other elements of painting, are only the means to a larger end, which is the depiction of man and his world. Today, mere textural novelty is being presented by a dominant group of museum officials, dealers, and publicity men as the unique manifestation of the artistic intuition. This arbitrary exploitation of a single phase of painting encourages a contempt for the taste and intelligence of the public. We are asked to believe that art is for the future, that only an inner circle is capable of judging contemporary painting, that everybody else must take it on faith. These theories are fixed in a ritual jargon equally incomprehensible to artist and layman. This jargon is particularly confusing to young artists, many of whom are led to accept the excitation of texture and color as the true end of art, even to equate disorder with creation. The dogmatic repetition of these views has produced in the whole world of art an atmosphere of irresponsibility, snobbery and ignorance.

We say, in the words of Delacroix: "The men of our profession deny to the fabricators of theories the right to thus dabble in our domain and at our expense." We believe that art cannot become the property of an esoteric cult. We reaffirm the right of the artist to the control of his profession. We will work to restore to art its freedom and dignity as a living language.<sup>337</sup>

Poor's placatory approach is once again apparent in the group's letter to the Museum of Modern Art, quoting the Museum's published statement about the value of "diversity" in modern art, but the accusations against the Museum could not be fully camouflaged, as indicated in the following excerpt. The full text of the letter was later published in the first issue of *Reality*.

...We have noted that abstract and non-objective art, both perfectly legitimate and worthy forms of expression, are in the way of becoming an academy carrying an esthetic weight.

...We find that we have made this common observation, that the Museum of Modern Art is coming to be more and more identified in the public eye with abstract and non-objective art.

....The greater number of our group have what might be termed the “humanist” outlook. That being our bent and our belief, we are acutely aware of the fast-spreading doctrine that non-objectivism has achieved some sort of esthetic finality that precludes all other forms of expression. This belief appears to pervade the schools, the museums, criticism, and as a result has a highly restrictive influence upon young artists.

We feel that this particular dogma stems very largely from the Modern Museum and its unquestioned influence throughout the country, that it is not due to an intentional slanting of exhibitions or publications, but is rather a matter of imbalance and emphasis.

....In light of the very admirable statement of policy quoted above, it would appear desirable that the non-abstract forms of art be given the same serious and scholarly consideration that the Museum has extended to abstract art recently, and to all forms of modern art in times past.<sup>338</sup>

The letter ended with a request for a conference that “might help resolve some of the problems and principles involved here.”

MoMA directors agreed to meet twice with Soyer, Poor and their colleagues (including, for at least one of the meetings, Shahn, Jacob Lawrence, and Joseph Hirsch), but the conferences did not go well from the artists’ point of view. The museum officials rejected the charge that they were giving too much attention to non-objective art and pointed out that there were plenty of other museums where people could see representational work. The atmosphere at the second meeting deteriorated when Ben Shahn called the Eames chairs that were prominently exhibited in the museum at the time “ashtrays!”<sup>339</sup> The museum officials were probably already disinclined to accommodate Shahn and his colleagues; although MoMA had supported Shahn during the 1930s and ‘40s with publicity and prominent inclusion in several major exhibitions, including a solo retrospective in 1947, the relationship between museum and artist “soured” after the Motherwell/Shahn squabble.<sup>340</sup>

Frustrated, the artists decided that the best way to fight back against what they perceived as unfair treatment by MoMA and other champions of non-objective art was to go public in a journal of their opinions on the subject. A volunteer editorial committee coalesced to organize publication of the journal, with Henry Varnum Poor, Edward Hopper, Raphael Soyer, Sol Wilson, Joseph Solman, Isabel Bishop, Jack Levine, and Alexander Dobkin as members and Poor acting as chairman. The editors had widely varying social and economic backgrounds. The contrast



between Poor and Levine is one example, the incongruity of Hopper and Soyer another. Biographical blurbs about the editors, which can illuminate their individual perspectives on, and their collective intentions for, their journal, have been appended hereto as Annex A, so as not to break the narrative flow.

Several of the *Reality* editors had known each other for years—Soyer and Wilson were at art school together and had neighboring studios; Poor and Hopper were close friends and worked together trying to straighten out the affairs of the Rehn Gallery when it fell on hard times; Levine wrote that in the 1940s “the Soyer brothers were like family to me;” and Soyer had been introduced to Hopper at the Whitney Studio Club as early as 1926.<sup>341</sup> But most of the collaborators were new to one another; Bishop later claimed that she had never met Soyer before receiving his post card invitation to a Del Pezzo gathering the next day, although she certainly knew of him and their studios were in the same neighborhood.<sup>342</sup> One expects that it took some self-control in the service of a shared goal to keep divergent personalities from disrupting editorial progress. Solman was, according to Michael Kimmelman, “tartly opinionated, but generous and essentially optimistic.”<sup>343</sup> Biographers variously (as summarized by Erika Doss) saw the pessimistic Hopper as “taciturn and aloof, a ‘depressive personality,’....socially awkward: tall, stiff, direct, cerebral, and distrustful, with little aptitude for small talk.”<sup>344</sup> The impression one gets from reading about Soyer is that he was shy, insular, soft-spoken, introverted but quietly charismatic, ambitious, self-reflexive, empathic and compassionate, but disinclined to flatter his sitters and colleagues. Poor’s biographer, Richard Porter, described the artist as a natural leader, both strong and gentle, a “great big, gentle bear with sparkling eyes,” sophisticated and urbane, with “a fondness for clothes and a well-set table” (usually with his own ceramics).<sup>345</sup> Bishop displayed, according to James Ellis, a “noble bearing,” a “seemingly innate standoffishness,” a “drive to succeed” and a “disturbing capacity for condescension,” all qualities that may have landed Bishop on Jo Hopper’s personal enemies list.<sup>346</sup> Milton Brown described Levine as “remarkably articulate...possessed of a wry wit that can impale a quarry’s cant and hypocrisy with epigrammatic felicity, a mocking humor that he sometimes turns rather disarmingly on himself.”<sup>347</sup> As if to prove the point, Levine himself wrote, in the same book: “I think I really am an outsider. I am a little dog that goes the wrong way—under the hoop....And let the avant-garde go hang. As far as I’m concerned, I want to remain the mean little man I always was.”<sup>348</sup>

The disparate personalities probably added to the editors' enjoyment of their deliberations; recalling their editorial sessions years later, Bishop said "I loved those meetings because I loved those people!"<sup>349</sup> Although Hopper and Solman had never met before the planning meetings for *Reality*, they had a history. In April 1936, the Whitney Museum's Second Biennial of Watercolors and Pastels included Hopper's watercolor *House on Pamet River* (1934), which the museum had purchased for \$750. Solman reviewed the exhibition for *Art Front* magazine, saying of the painting only that "Hopper included four gables on his country house making the total number of shadows four." In a 1992 article about Hopper, Andrew Hemingway described Solman's sentence as "the only left jibe at Hopper I've come across...[and] utterly damning in its succinctness and suggestion of boredom."<sup>350</sup> While researching her 1995 *Intimate Biography* of Hopper, Gail Levin interviewed Solman, who recalled his impression that Hopper's manner "smacked of the 'New England Yankee'." Soon after they first met, Solman, amazed and amused to hear in conversation that Hopper never took taxis, blurted out: "I have the idea that you like Emerson," to which Hopper replied, tersely: "Read him every day."<sup>351</sup>

It is likely that the name of the journal, "Reality," was proposed by Henry Varnum Poor, who was, in Raphael Soyer's phrase, the "prime mover" of the editorial effort.<sup>352</sup> In 1946 Poor had co-founded the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and, in the preface to its first brochure, summarized the school's purpose and philosophy. The idea of "reality," with a lower case "r," encapsulated Poor's artistic and educational principles, as he stated them in the first brochure for the Skowhegan School, of which he was one of the founders:

Painting in America is now in a very fluid and experimental and rapidly changing period...But in whatever direction painting swings, it always returns to reality as the one vital, original, and creative source. Whatever the modes or fashions of the moment may be, beautiful drawing and fine painting continue as the always fresh and permanent qualities, never outmoded for very long.

In our time the meaning and purpose of a school of art should be to keep these permanent qualities—sound drawing and painting and craftsmanship—clear and unobscured. If reality is taught and understood in its deepest sense, it is much farther away from imitative and academic formulas than is any shallow following of a mode. When students look at other paintings with more reverence than they study reality, then we are on the sure road to the academic, although it may be in a new guise....<sup>353</sup>

Isabel Bishop didn't care for the name, telling an interviewer years later that "I always felt that the word 'Reality' was wrong, and that wasn't the right name, because, what do you mean 'Reality?'" Jack Levine suggested, but they wouldn't do it, to call it 'From the Horse's Mouth'."<sup>354</sup> (Levine's proposal was an allusion to Joyce Cary's 1944 novel, *The Horse's Mouth*, told from the point of view of a reprobate painter, thought to be Augustus John.<sup>355</sup> Levine's objection to using the word "reality" may have stemmed in part from reading, in Lionel Trilling's 1950 essay *Reality in America*, Trilling's trenchantly straightforward critique of V. L. Parrington's concept of "reality" as applied to works of art in his dated but widely read book *Main Currents in American Thought*.<sup>356</sup>)

Ben Shahn did not participate in the editorial committee, withdrew from the artists' group before publication of the journal and elected not to sign the Statement that he had had such an important role in drafting. In reflecting years later on Shahn's departure, Raphael Soyer identified two interrelated causes: fear of alienating the Museum of Modern Art and fear of persecution by McCarthyite red-baiters in Congress and elsewhere.

We were accused of being communist in those days. Those were the McCarthy times....They accused as all and they threatened us...the art magazines and even the Museum of Modern Art, and some people who were very anxious to be members of this group—of the Reality group—seceded. Some people got scared and left the group....Ben Shahn, who was one of the most eager people, wrote me a card, 'Oh, Raphael, sure I'll come, it's about time that we should get together.' And then the moment that we got this letter from the Museum of Modern Art—it was sent to me, by the way, with a messenger, a threatening letter—Ben Shahn left, and I got a telegram in the middle of the night from Abe Rattner that he didn't want to have anything to do with the group any more since he had heard from the Museum of Modern Art, and so on...The threat was that they would not be in the good graces of the Museum of Modern Art, and to be in the good graces of the Museum of Modern Art was very important to a man like Ben Shahn, very important to a man like Abe Rattner and to some others. To a man like Edward Hopper it didn't matter—he was very honest and very staunch.<sup>357</sup>

Julia Tatiana Bailey, in her essay in *Modern American Art at Tate 1945-1980* on Shahn's 1956 London lecture, "Realism Reconsidered," described the long relationship between Shahn and MoMA, making clear that, even after the dust-up over *Reality*, the museum in the mid-1950s and later continued to support Shahn and include him in exhibitions both in New York and internationally, with Alfred Barr defending him for his anti-Soviet, albeit leftist, political and

aesthetic views at a time when other left-leaning artists were becoming increasingly marginalized at the museum.<sup>358</sup> Although Bailey discussed Shahn's participation in *Reality*, she did not focus on his withdrawal from the group and thus offered no support for any speculation that the museum was, as may be inferred from Soyer's comment, rewarding Shahn for removing his name from what MoMA viewed as an attack on its ethics and fairmindedness.

In the present context, the ironic strangeness of McCarthyism's treatment of modern art and artists is suggested by the fact that Shahn, Soyer, Motherwell and MoMA were all identified as subversives and Communist sympathizers, or worse, by Representative George A. Dondero in his infamous August 16, 1949, speech on the floor of Congress titled "Modern Art Shackled to Communism," in which, naming those names and many others, he promised to "trace for you a main artery from the black heart of the isms of the Russian Revolution to the very heart of art in America."<sup>359</sup>

Soon after *Reality* was published, the Museum of Modern Art wrote and distributed to the press a three-page "Open Letter to Reality," defending itself against *Reality*'s charges by asking readers to look at its record and pointing out, *inter alia*, that "[o]f the 44 champions of 'humanism' and 'reality' who charge the museum with 'imbalance,' 18 are already represented in the museum's collection and well over half have been shown in its exhibitions—in many cases repeatedly, for the list includes a number of the most talented American painters."<sup>360</sup> The letter, signed by René d'Harnoncourt, Alfred Barr and Andrew Ritchie and published in full in *Art News*, repeated the museum's declared policy about diversity in art (which some of the *Reality* articles charged had not been followed) and concluded, in a tone that could variously be described as condescending, arrogant, sarcastic, and, using Soyer's word, threatening:

...And, in a friendly spirit, may we remind the publishers of "Reality" that even as noble a word as "humanism" has recently been converted into a mask for several varieties of dogmatic intolerance. Many artists of the "Reality" group are doubtless unaware of this.

As for the museum—umpires are not infallible but we try to call them as we see them.<sup>361</sup>

Alfred Barr was more blunt in a private letter delivered by messenger to Raphael Soyer, advising him that the *Reality* group would likely be suspected, if not overtly accused, of being Communists. Barr argued that because the Soviet government had been effective in suppressing non-objective art and artists in the countries of the Soviet bloc and in decreeing that only hyper-

realistic art (Socialist Realism) was acceptable, then all “humanist” art in the United States could be seen as having been inspired, if not secretly encouraged, by the Soviet example.<sup>362</sup> Barr had made a related argument a few months earlier in his December 14, 1952 opinion piece in the *New York Times*, “Is Modern Art Communistic?”, in which he described at length the suppression of modern (especially abstract) art in the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany and the characteristics of the officially sanctioned art of those totalitarian societies. He concluded the long and scholarly article:

It is obvious that those who equate modern art with totalitarianism are ignorant of the facts. To call modern art communistic is bizarre as well as very damaging to modern artists; yet it is an accusation frequently made. Most people are merely expressing a common dislike by means of a common prejudice. But this is a point of view which is encouraged by the more reckless and resentful academic artists and their political mouthpieces in Congress and elsewhere. It was given voice in..., in..., and in the well-coached speeches of Representative George A. Dondero of Michigan....<sup>363</sup>

The gravamen of Barr’s warning to the *Reality* artists does not follow logically from his *New York Times* argument, but the worry about inadvertently encouraging a common foe is discernible in both. On the other hand, Bailey cites a private letter from Barr to a friend that suggests that Barr really did believe that some of the *Reality* leaders and Statement signers were in league with Communist organizations: “...in private, Barr railed against the group as ‘party-liners (hence the emphasis on reality and humanism)’ and naïve fellow travellers ‘unaware of the political and ideological motivations’ of many of the others.”<sup>364</sup> Barr could certainly have seen the publication of *Reality* as “reckless” and the Statement signers as “resentful” (although hardly “academic”) and accordingly, notwithstanding the leftist politics of many of them, found them as threatening to MoMA’s interests as he found those artists who supported Dondero and believed his Communist conspiracy theories.<sup>365</sup>

A similar attitude was expressed by Alfred Frankfurter, the editor of *Art News*, in an editorial titled “The New Iconoclasts,” which dealt mostly with ongoing efforts, opposed by Frankfurter, to remove Anton Refregier’s murals from the Rincon Annex Post Office in San Francisco because of their alleged pro-Communist content. In the editorial Frankfurter mentioned another incident of iconoclasm, a proposal to remove Leon Kroll’s murals in the Indiana State House. Veering off topic, Frankfurter wrote that “Mr. Kroll, however, wants to do a little destroying on his own, along with his friends,” identifying Kroll as a signer of the *Reality*

Statement. (Refregier was also a signer but was not so identified in the editorial.) After averring that the critics attacked in *Reality* were chiefly those who wrote for *Art News*, Frankfurter quoted Poor's statement about the signers that "it is easier to state what we are against than what we are for" and continued:

No doubt of that; what they are consistently against is the same thing the Moscow critics of "decadent bourgeois unintelligibility and anti-humanism" are against. We welcome *Reality* to the hard life of publishing an art journal, but at this early stage we would like to go on record that in its case we are not going in for the Voltaire stuff, about "disagreeing with every word you say but we'll defend to the death your right to say it." This time we disagree in advance and we prefer not to do a Voltaire to defend our own attackers from the McCarthys or Donderos, if and when the moment to do so arrives.<sup>366</sup>

In their own editorial in the second issue of *Reality* in 1954, the editors expressed their understandable outrage at Frankfurter's stance: "Mr. Frankfurter owes a public apology to his readers and to us."<sup>367</sup>

The first issue of *Reality* was a slim eight pages. The Statement and a legible four column list of its signers filled page 1 (see Note 333 for the list). Below the signers' list was the information that "One of the last acts of John Sloan before his death was to join the group." Page 2 comprised the letter to MoMA, a list of the editorial committee, a congratulatory letter from Statement signer Charles Burchfield and a short announcement about an exhibition in France that focused on "humanism in art." The issue's lead article was "Painting is Being Talked to Death," in which Henry Varnum Poor complained at length about painters, especially young ones, being "browbeaten" by art critics into offering "as many complicated ideas, as many fuzzy words in explanation of their own paintings, as the critics us" and about critics "asking painting to be what it is not...[p]ainting is asked to be music, or poetry, or dynamics, or atomic research, or geometry, or psychoanalysis." Not surprisingly, in light of his pedagogical ideas about "reality" described above, Poor objected to the importance given by critics and some painters to the idea of painting expressing an "inner-reality...[f]or an artist's business is not to paint pictures of his own complicated insides. The whole growth of man is a growth in the ability to see and comprehend something outside and beyond himself, to understand himself through an understanding of his fellow and of the world."<sup>368</sup>

Poor's frequent references to his own confusion and his insistence on replacing obscurity with simplicity gave his essay an anti-intellectual and reactionary tone that provided fodder for negative criticism in editorials—especially a long and disparaging one in the June 1953 issue of *Art Digest* titled “The Language of Reaction: ‘Reality’”—and letters to various editors. In contrast, Honoré Sharrer (one of Stephen Greene's confrères in *Life*'s “19 Young Americans” cohort and the second youngest Statement signer), in the issue's second major article, “Humanism in Art,” was able to make some of the same points as Poor did but with a more scholarly and forward-looking flavor. Her thesis was:

The lack of humanism in abstract and non-objective art stems, it seems to me, from its preoccupation with the mechanization of our time, rather than with the implications of this mechanization for men. The machine, the city, speed, astronomical and microscopic infinitudes, the splitting of the atom, seem the essence of modernity to the abstract painter. But what is more significantly modern is that this mechanization is slowly changing the social relationships of people, opening the way for an unprecedented measure of human freedom and dignity.<sup>369</sup>

Jack Levine's article “Man Is the Center,” covering a full page plus a half-column, was abridged from a speech he gave the year before at a MoMA symposium, “Modern Artists on Artists of the Past” and was, in my view, the best written piece in *Reality*'s first issue. Like the mood of his paintings, Levine's writing style was slightly offbeat, as he spoke of his “driving need to see man as the central integrity of thought, rather than his magnified tissues or the worlds outside his own.” And like the wit in his paintings, Levine's satirical sarcasm was precisely targeted, metaphorically rich and no doubt offensive to many of his readers: “We have no respite from puerile self-utterances in recent painting exhibitions, all rendered in the abstract, a Rorschach of neuroses, epilepsies, compulsive fetichisms [sic] and whatnot. It's less interesting than might be the psychoanalytical case history of an Easter Bunny.” Unlike most of the contributors to *Reality*, Levine was able to communicate his motivation as an artist, using the example of a specific painting: “I should like to paint a narrative because it is possible for adolescents to buy marihuana and cocaine on our streets with the connivance and the complacency of the powers-that-be. Consequently, I am at work on a painting of a ‘Gangster Funeral.’”<sup>370</sup> To illustrate his theme of the importance of narrative in painting, Levine, in a charmingly curmudgeonly tone, admitted his envy of dramatists and librettists as he described how he decided what his personages would wear, how many grieving “widows” would be pictured (two—one in furs, the other “very, very

shapely”), and what a conversation between the deceased lying in his coffin and each of the mourners might have been like.<sup>371</sup> *Reality* readers were able to evaluate Levine’s claims about narrative for themselves, as *Gangster Funeral* was purchased by the Whitney Museum in the year of the journal’s publication. The Art Digest editorial and several other commentators denigrated *Reality* as merely sour grapes about the financial impact of abstract art on traditional figurative work. Nevertheless, while the publicity that Levine’s article gave *Gangster Funeral* may not have been directly responsible for the Whitney sale, it could not have hurt.

Although Ben Shahn withdrew from the effort, the first issue of *Reality* included a short excerpt from one of his previously published pamphlets on the theme of art’s relationship to man and his humanity. On the same page was Poor’s recitation of “How This Group Began.” The next full page was given over to “Speaking in Strange Tongues” by Maurice Grosser, whose strategy (repeated in articles for the second and third annual issues of *Reality* in 1954 and ’55) was to compile extracts from reviews of abstract art with little connecting comment but with the clear intention that the reviews would ridicule themselves. Grosser said what he thought at the end of the piece, though:

The pattern of these reviews is fairly clear. If the reviewer is concise, reserved, disdainful or apologetic, it can be assumed that the picture he describes presents a recognizable image. If, on the other hand, he writes advertising copy, composes a prose poem, if he tells you what to feel or what he himself feels about the work, if he lets his hair down and his adjectives fly, the picture in question is Non-Objective. All this seems to be natural enough. If a picture to be reported on is about nothing, the description the reviewer makes of it must necessarily fill the void.<sup>372</sup>

It must be admitted that Grosser’s gently sarcastic description fits more than a few of the critical reviews of Stephen Greene’s work, beginning around 1960 and continuing into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, that are cited or quoted in the later pages of this dissertation.

The first issue of *Reality* concluded short “Statements by Four Artists.” Louis Bouché wrote about love as the artist’s motivation and its implication of “self-abnegation” rather than self-indulgence. Alexander Dobkin reminded the reader of Michelangelo’s statement that the highest object for art is man. Joseph Solman used the “Emperor has no clothes” metaphor to lambaste avant-gardism. And Edward Hopper intelligently contrasted imagination and invention, denying that abstraction had a monopoly on the artist’s inner life:



Great art is the outward expression of an inner life in the artist, and this inner life will result in his personal visions of the world. No amount of skillful invention can replace the essential element of imagination. One of the weaknesses of much abstract painting is the attempt to substitute the inventions of the intellect for a pristine imaginative conception.<sup>373</sup>

The first issue of *Reality* engendered dozens of letters pro and con to the editors and to various art publications. Soyer later wrote that "we did not foresee the furor, the furious reaction our little publication would arouse."<sup>374</sup> Several of the Statement signers disassociated themselves with various positions expressed in the Statement and withdrew their support—some, like Karl Knaths and Howard Warshaw, publicly and others, like Karl Zerbe, in private.<sup>375</sup> The editors published two more issues, in 1954 and 1955, and then, having determined that "we'd had our say," discontinued the enterprise. In a memoir, Soyer wrote: "Looking back, it amuses me to think how long it took for us artists to come together, to get to know one another, to air our views on art and events, and finally to produce, once a year, those three slim issues of *Reality*."<sup>376</sup>

## 4.0 Toward Abstraction

**Stephen Greene's Return to Rome.** In 1952, the American Academy in Rome gave Greene a second chance and he gratefully returned as a fellow in the fall of that year. The Academy invited him to stay for a second year and by the time he returned to New York in 1954 he was a married man and on the verge of becoming a different kind of painter. The two years in Rome were eventful and Greene's correspondence with Askew chronicled the ebbs and flows of his artistic, social and emotional life at the Academy. Greene himself, in a published article a few years later, described this period as catastrophic: "This for me was a time of crisis. In 1953 and 1954, while living in Rome, I became dissatisfied with everything I was doing. The one large picture I worked on for almost a year, I subsequently destroyed."<sup>377</sup> *Time* magazine, quoting those words in a 1963 review and dramatizing them further with references to trauma and struggle, made the artist's cheerless account a part of the larger public record. But Greene's letters to Askew of this period, while they confirm some real changes in how Greene was thinking about painting as well as some artistic disappointments and false starts, also make clear that both artist and dealer were pleased with much of the work of this period and that Greene, at least for someone who described himself as not a "particularly joyful person," enjoyed himself a lot in Italy.

The Greene-Askew correspondence does not overtly indicate tension between dealer and artist in the months before Greene's departure for Rome, but a note Greene wrote to Edith Gregor Halpert of the Downtown Gallery in May, 1952, suggests not only tension between Greene and Askew but also a temporary rupture in their relationship. In the first paragraph of the note, Greene thanked Mrs. Halpert for what seems to have been a cordial evening they had spent discussing (and possibly attending, although it isn't clear) a speech by Jack Levine at an unnamed museum and politely asked her to send him a transcript of the speech if it was available. In the second paragraph Greene rather abruptly announced that:

I left Durlacher's last week. Breaking away from any long standing relationship is difficult. I cannot be happy about this but it was an act necessary to possibly growing further as a man and as a painter.

I leave for Europe early in September. Upon my return, I hope that I may have paintings and drawings showing some maturity and worth. If so, I trust that you will be free to look at them.<sup>378</sup>

It seems clear from the lack of background information in the letter that Halpert was aware that Greene was having problems with Askew. What is not clear, even at this writing, is what those problems were. What is also not clear is whether either Halpert or Greene was contemplating her gallery's undertaking to represent him, joining the likes of Stuart Davis, Charles Sheeler, Max Weber, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Ben Shahn and Jack Levine in her stable of American painters. Halpert replied warmly, advising that she would be leaving for vacation three weeks later and that she hoped to see him before he left for Europe, concluding: "Do drop in when you have time."<sup>379</sup>

Greene's first letter to Askew from Rome, October 8, 1952, begins auspiciously, "It has been most good returning to the Academy," and proceeds to list all the fine paintings and other sights he'd seen in London, Paris and Venice on the way, adding "there is so much to tell, I must write you more often." Anticipating developments in his painting years later, Greene describes his room at the Academy, "on the top floor, which is fine to see what is probably the most remarkable thing about Rome—the ever shifting changes of light. Part of the city is grey, then sudden shafts of light, a complex shifting of values happening simultaneously." On October 28, he reported that he had finally seen the Lorenzetti frescoes in Assisi that he and Guston had so admired together and confirmed how much they had meant to his painting up to that point: "the Lorenzettis were incredible...all about what concerns me for so long but also delicate in color and powerful in its passion about how people deeply moved move and twist their bodies."

Although Greene occasionally complained about the "institutional" quality of life at the Academy and did not feel wholly comfortable with the cocktail parties and constant socializing many of the fellows favored, he did forge some satisfying friendships with people there, including Lukas and Cornelia Foss (the latter had been Greene's student when she was a teen-ager in Bloomington), Allen and Caroline Tate, Edgar Wind, fellow painters Arthur Osver and Steve Raffo, and Greene's "good friend" William Styron. Greene also enjoyed getting together with friends and patrons from the United States on their visits to Rome, including Joseph Pulitzer, John Newberry, Perry Rathbone, Leo Lerman, the Philadelphia curator and collector Henry McIlhenny, the composer Alexi Haieff, and fellow Askew artists Walter Stuempfig and *Reality* signer Edward Melcarth. Styron wrote to his *Paris Review* colleague, Peter Matthiessen, describing Greene as "a painter who is by reputation the hottest young artist in America" and proposed to both Matthiessen and Greene that their soon-to-be inaugurated magazine include a Greene drawings portfolio in a

future issue. Greene liked the idea and wrote to Askew several months later that he would use either Trastevere or a biblical subject as the theme, but the engagement was never finalized.<sup>380</sup>

Greene seems to have been able to step outside himself and the Academy hothouse sufficiently to keep up with political news, writing to Askew on June 16, 1953, that “it was rather sad to see Mrs. Luce attempt to influence Italian votes. The anti-American feeling is strong enough in Europe.” Greene’s comment came a few days after an Italian election campaign during which the committed anti-communist Clare Booth Luce, President Eisenhower’s appointee as the new United States Ambassador to Italy, gave a Milan speech threatening that if Italian voters were to fall “unhappy victim to the wiles of totalitarianism of the Right or the Left, there would follow—logically and tragically—grave consequences for this intimate and warm cooperation we now enjoy.”<sup>381</sup> The speech was immediately and widely condemned as “arrogant interference” in Italian affairs and probably backfired, as leftist parties increased their power in the election. President Eisenhower himself wrote to Luce that “every report from Italy bears evidence of an increasing resentment toward us....”<sup>382</sup> Both the tepidity of Greene’s language (“rather sad” suggests a lack of enthusiasm or emotion) and the widespread nature of negative reaction to the Luce speech preclude much reliance on Greene’s comment as evidence of his political beliefs. Indeed, the record reveals few indications of Greene’s politics or his activity in support of them. Alison Greene confirmed that her father was attracted to leftist causes in the 1930s and attended some meetings in Greenwich Village, but was quickly disillusioned and was never a Communist Party member or even a functioning fellow traveler. While he was not averse to signing on to statements of position that could have been viewed as controversial, such as anti-Vietnam War petitions in the 1960s and even the *Reality* Manifesto, there is no real basis for describing Greene as politically active. And even if Greene did object to Luce’s political positions, he would have been unlikely to criticize too aggressively, in a letter to the talkative Askew, the wife of the publisher of *Life*, the magazine that had treated him so well just a few years before.

On the other hand, Greene was not reluctant to associate with people who were well-known leftists, like Lillian Hellman, with whom, in Rome in 1953, he had an affair.<sup>383</sup> Hellman, a successful playwright and screenwriter, had testified the previous year before the House Un-American Activities Committee, famously invoking the Fifth Amendment and “naming no names.” Hellman and Greene were first introduced in letters from a mutual friend, Durlacher artist James Whitney Fosburgh.<sup>384</sup> Hellman had arrived in Europe hoping to escape further political

embroilment and she wrote to him, pleading that she knew no one in Rome.<sup>385</sup> The Hellman/Greene affair was described by Joan Mellen in her 1996 book about Hellman's long-term relationship with Dashiell Hammett, the details apparently based entirely on Mellen's interview with Greene in 1993. Because Mellen combined quotes from Greene, including quotes from Greene quoting Hellman forty years before, with the author's own unquoted attributions as to the principals' motivations, avoidance of quadruple hearsay on the subject of their sexual relationship requires a lengthy quotation from Mellen's book, set out in this footnote.<sup>386</sup>

Greene must have had a good memory at age seventy-five, as he shared with Mellen sundry everyday details of his and Hellman's time together: taking Hellman to his friend Bill Styron's wedding; upsetting her when he exclaimed, one evening at the foot of the Spanish Steps after she'd been inexpertly treated by her hairdresser, "Good God! What did you do to your hair?"; asking her whether Dashiell Hammett had been a Communist and why she had never married him; and frightening her when he mentioned in public that a relative of his had been a Communist, as she feared the room was bugged and that she would be called to testify again.<sup>387</sup>

Greene told Mellen that Hellman had "the warmest, most welcome smile of anyone he had ever known" and that he found her "a touching figure, charming, intellectually exciting....She was never boring and she could make of any small thing, even a cup of coffee, as special occasion....The richness of her personality—warm, outgoing, caring—was apparent." Greene was attracted, too, by an air of vulnerability that accompanied Hellman, much as he had been with Anita Ellis and Jean Stafford.<sup>388</sup>

Upon returning to the United States, Hellman purchased from Kirk Askew's gallery, for \$275, Greene's painting called *The Wall*. According to Mellen, the subject matter is a man holding a woman's breast "like a piece of fruit," but that description is inconsistent with a photo of the painting (or one with the same name) that Greene sent to Askew from Rome. Mellen maintains that Hellman tried to "sustain a romantic fantasy" about Greene and announced to her former husband, Arthur Kober, that "I have finally found the man I want to marry."<sup>389</sup> But Greene had already met Sigrid de Lima, to whom he would be married by the end of 1953.

In his letters to Askew, Greene never mentioned signing on to the 1953 *Reality* manifesto. Although there is no solid evidence, his connection to the journal's leaders was probably Jack Levine, who was a good friend of the Durlacher artist Hyman Bloom.<sup>390</sup> In one of his letters to Askew, Greene said he looked forward to a planned exhibition at the Whitney of work by Levine

and Bloom, adding “[t]hey are the two painters in America I feel closest to and often deeply admire.”<sup>391</sup> And Greene had discussed his admiration for Levine’s ideas and work with Levine’s dealer, Edith Gregor Halpert.<sup>392</sup> Greene was teaching at the Parsons School in 1951 and early 1952, as discussions among the *Reality* group were underway, and probably knew a number of the participants. Certainly, several of *Life*’s “19 Young Americans”—Melcarth (who was Greene’s friend from the early Durlacher days), Perlin (who had helped Stephen during his illness in Rome), Lasker, Sharrer and Warshaw, in addition to Greene—signed the *Reality* Statement. It would have been consistent with Raphael Soyer’s recruitment techniques simply to send postcards to all nineteen of the artists (other than Stamos and Sterne, who were among the “Irascibles”).

In his correspondence with Askew, Greene periodically expressed uncertainty and insecurity about his painting, or was reticent to communicate much of anything about how he was working. On December 6, 1952, he wrote “I feel a need for a richer way of expressing things and yet know that to talk of it before it actually shows on canvas is inadvisable.” A month later, on January 9, 1953, (in a letter he misdated 1952) he wrote:

...Finally Kirk I feel a bit more free to talk explicitly about work. First, I believe it is coming along, not easily but with hope and some good results are beginning to be evident. An inner intensity that I have been sitting on for too long a while is almost coming out. I work steadily and devote most of my time, working and thinking, to it....I believe that I have begun to be a bit richer and less afraid in handling a brush. But we will see.

Greene gave a more detailed account of his intellectual and emotional thinking about the progress of his work two weeks later, in a letter dated January 28, 1953, that included photographs of four paintings he was in the process of completing and would soon send off to New York:

The use of color is no longer as held back as in the last three years and in some areas the paint is somewhat richer. However, what concerns me most is that the core of these things, incomplete as they are, is not sufficiently strong. In an attempt to enlargen [sic] my scope because in part I am now aware of greater complexities than previously, I hope that I don’t scatter myself. I worked for quite awhile on a small but complicated “Crucifixion” but after almost finishing it found that it was a “false” experience, what had been the only way I could paint a few years back was in repetition, a mannerism, externally overdependent on a part of the Renaissance. So then I abandoned it. However I do have a few preparatory sketches for it that I am saving for you. These were better. Subjects I have used before still haunt me only if I am to use them again, it must be with a freshness and a real sense of immediacy. I believe that I see more and after I go through doing one painting after another, the work will show if there is

any worth in this. Should these few photographs suggest anything to you that you would like to write me about, it would be most good to have your reaction.

This letter evidences the crisis of confidence that Greene described years later in his article “A Case in Point” and may refer to the painting he said in his oral history interview he worked on for eight or nine months before destroying. But it also makes clear that, coincidentally around the time the *Reality* editors were getting ready to publish, Greene knew he needed to find a new way to paint and to think about painting. While the letter announced something far short of an epiphany, it did mark the beginning of Greene’s transition to abstraction.

The preparatory sketches Greene referred to in the January 28 letter are almost certainly now in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, notwithstanding the fact that the Detroit drawings (Figure 63 and Figure 64) are dated August, 1953, and one is inscribed to John Newberry. The sketches provide clues as to what Greene may have found “false” about the painting he abandoned. Although there is some ambiguity between the two drawings, in one of them the identifiable figure of Christ was shown, for the first (and last) time in Greene’s work, physically on the cross and in the other the figure on the cross (or, possibly, at the foot of the cross) is both female and, like so many of Greene’s figures including his self-portrait in *The Return*, deprived of full limbs. For Greene, recognizable crucifixion imagery had become artistically and emotionally exhausted.

In his letters to Askew from Rome during 1953, Greene’s descriptions of frustration, self-doubt and insecurity in his painting alternated with expressions of confidence and near enthusiasm, often after seeing some particularly inspiring work art. In August of 1953 Greene visited Pisa and on the 27<sup>th</sup> wrote to Askew of his exhilaration at seeing the fresco *The Triumph of Death*, which he described as by Orcagna, but which is now thought to be by Francesco Traini or Buonamico Buffalmacco (Figure 68): “...It is a haunting and powerful picture. On the lower right of the picture there is a sort of tapestry-like scene of Paradise which is formal, delicate and doubly beautiful and profound in relation to the horrors of death. For me this was perhaps the most important picture I have yet seen here, mainly it is what I feel closest to.” The frescoes of the Camposanto Monumentale cemetery were severely damaged in a wartime explosion and had been removed for restoration, probably explaining why Greene wrote that he saw *The Triumph of Death* in a Pisa museum.<sup>393</sup> Accordingly, it’s impossible to guess just what portion of the work Greene

saw; he might even have seen the underdrawings, which were removed and displayed separately.<sup>394</sup> In any event, one can theorize, highly subjectively, that the appearance of the fresco, with its surface mottled by large areas of bare wall and scattered incidents of vivid color and delicate geometry, remained in Greene's aesthetic memory and inspired his paintings of the 1970s and beyond, such as *Fermata* of 1977 (Figure 69) and *Sentinel No. 5* of 1991 (Figure 70).

In the same August 27, 1953 letter, Greene wrote that "I feel a little richer and more open when I work and perhaps we shall have some worthwhile things to show for this before I leave Rome." In this guarded optimism, he was perhaps anticipating Askew's evaluation of two paintings he had shipped to Durlacher's from Rome: *Performance* (Figure 71) and *The Studio* (Figure 72). Unfortunately, no color reproduction of either of these paintings has been found and each of their whereabouts is unknown. *Performance* reprises figures and symbols from Greene's earlier work. The legless man from *The Burial*, now also armless, is balanced on stilt-like crutches, with bandages looking even more like phylacteries than in *The Return*. The "stage" Greene described as the metaphoric setting for his earlier paintings is now mimetically portrayed, with the maimed figure at center stage flanked by a partially draped nude woman from *The Massacre of the Innocents* and a man gesturing oratorically from a lotus position.<sup>395</sup> In the orchestra pit, a horn player from *The Kiss of Judas* waits to sound a note and an older man, hand to his mouth, clings to the top of a ladder. In *The Studio*, Greene used the simplest one-point perspective and painted no living figures, only a skeleton (not clearly a human one) hanging from a ring inside a wardrobe-like booth with an open door and a bone on the floor. On a screen to the beholder's left is a clock above and a lace-like decorative motif below, the latter perhaps inspired by the Pisa fresco (although the timing doesn't quite work out unless Greene waited a while to describe the fresco after seeing it). Reacting, Askew showered both paintings with praise, writing on August 28, 1953 that they were "absolutely splendid, very compelling, very intense" and complimenting their color and atmosphere. But in each case Askew leavened his enthusiasm with a criticism. He thought the composition of *Performance* was "slightly overcrowded" and in *The Studio* he found "the skeleton in the closet somewhat arbitrary and obvious in relation to the rest of the picture. It seems to me that you could have accomplished this same idea without resorting to such a commonplace motif." Although Askew described both of these criticisms as "minor," it seems to me, admittedly without any real sense of the paintings because of the lack of color reproduction, that both



comments were devastating and went to the heart of what Askew must have thought was happening with Greene's painting: that it was getting stale and needed a new approach.

But some responses to *Performance* were more positive. Edith Gregor Halpert's Downtown Gallery included it in a group show, the Whitney Museum exhibited it twice, in 1953 and 1954, and critics found it interesting for a variety of reasons. Greene had received an invitation to submit a painting for inclusion in the 1953 Whitney Annual and he wanted to propose either *Performance* or *The Studio*. Askew couldn't decide which he thought would be more likely to be accepted and eventually asked a Whitney curator to choose. *Performance* was selected for the exhibition and also for another Whitney show, *The New Decade: 35 American Painters and Sculptors*, in the catalogue of which the painting was reproduced. Reviewing the 1953 Whitney Annual in *The New Yorker*, Robert Coates wrote: "I was surprised, too, to see how alive and inventive the Surrealists continue to be. I'll just cite, as a sort of sampling, Kay Sage's 'Third Paragraph,' Stephen Greene's 'The Performance and....'"<sup>396</sup> Askew, in an understandable huff, remarked in his letter to Greene that Coates "seems to think you are a Surrealist," the dealer no doubt thinking that the reviewer's unfamiliarity with his artist's work vitiated the critical praise. Coates saw *The Studio*, too, and in his short *New Yorker* review of a group exhibition at Downtown Gallery in early 1954, called the painting "enigmatic but evocative" and identified it as one he especially admired.<sup>397</sup> Jerome Ashmore viewed *Performance* as a good summary of the existential themes in Greene's painting to that date:

*Performance*...depicts man as the unfinished organism marooned in his own incapacities: held up by sticks, bound in thongs, involved with ladders he does not climb, trumpets he cannot blow, and physical nature he cannot see; one figure thinks of something above himself, but is unable to rise from the level he is on to seek it; not only is he unable to seek it, he also is unable either to look toward it or stand erect to approach it. The painting starkly symbolizes the horrifying gap between human qualifications and human objectives.<sup>398</sup>

Greene took Askew's criticism of *The Studio* into account when describing, for the catalogue of a 1955 exhibition at the University of Illinois in which the painting appeared (and was illustrated), his motivations for the work, asserting that the "obviousness" that Askew found unappealing was part of his intention:

The Studio is a picture that I did in Rome and I recall my interest in returning to an earlier subject of mine, the skeleton, and seeing it with an altered emotion. It was also of interest to me to see the banal idea of the

skeleton in the closet as a disturbing comment on the Life and Death theme with the clockface on the screen used as a Time symbol. However, I most wanted the picture to be a 'painted experience' rather than an illustration of a mood or an idea.<sup>399</sup>

The term "illustration" must have been a loaded one in 1955 and, in rejecting not only "illustration" but also "mood" and meaning, Greene may have been trying to align himself with New York School thinking. He must have realized that "illustration" and "symbol" are overlapping ideas and that in the Illinois statement he could be seen as casting aside the essence of a decade of his painting. As he wrote later, in the context of becoming dissatisfied "with everything I was doing" while living in Rome, "...[t]o turn away from anything that was a scene rather than a presence became important."<sup>400</sup> That turning away began happening in 1953 and certainly continued into 1954, but in the last months of '53 there was a distraction.

**Marriage and Mosaics.** The subject of marriage was on Greene's mind while he was in Rome. When, in February, 1953, Askew advised him of the wedding plans of two couples he knew, Greene replied that "I wish I could join [them] in similar plans." A few months later, in a letter of 10 July 1953, he wrote to Askew: "I have heard that Hyman Bloom is to be married. This is really marrying time. For an unmarried man, I do have the strongest belief in that powerful necessity." Then, prophetically, in a letter to Askew on October 29, 1953, in addition to the report that he had had an appendectomy that kept him from working for several weeks, Greene wrote: "[t]he new group is now here at the Academy. There is one girl (writer) who is attractive and particularly good to be with, her name is Sigrid de Lima." Askew would have been forgiven for not taking this introduction too seriously, as Greene's next sentence was: "It is hard to be with a lady writer and not think of Jean."<sup>401</sup> The reference is to Jean Stafford.

Greene and de Lima had a mutual acquaintance in her former boyfriend, the writer William Styron, who apparently thought his two friends would get along and alerted them to one another. On November 12, 1953, Greene was at his most upbeat, writing: "[a]ll is well and I am steadily at work. I now seem to be able to concentrate more fully than at any previous time at the Academy. I hope to send you six canvases sometime next month." Greene's energy and ebullience came from more than improved health after removal of an enlarged appendix. Styron had been right in his judgment that Greene and de Lima would get along well, and by late November they were

engaged, with a wedding planned for Christmas Eve at the Campidoglio in Rome. Fellow painter Arthur Osver would serve as witness and best man. (Photo 3 was taken at the wedding.) Askew good-naturedly chastised his artist for keeping him in the dark, writing on December 2, 1953: “Well, that is a wonderful piece of news. I do think you could have told me about Miss De Lima. You know how diseased I am with curiosity....I can’t tell you how happy I am about it. You know what an ardent supporter I am of the marital status.” Greene complied on December 9 with “a few essential facts” about Sigrid.

Sigrid is four years younger than I, a few inches shorter and wonderfully attractive. She is serious and an immensely gifted writer. Her third book (Scribners) [*Carnival By the Sea*] will be out in February and I shall send you a copy. Incidentally, it is dedicated to me....Sigrid was born in New York. Her mother lives in the City and works for the New School for Social Research. The name de Lima is Spanish. The important news is that we are happy together.

And Sigrid and Stephen remained happy together, devoted to each other for forty-five years until they died, she first and he two months later, in 1999.

Sigrid de Lima’s family background was less conventional than Stephen Greene’s. Her mother, Agnes de Lima (1887-1974), was born in New Jersey to a conservative banking family of Sephardi Jews that had emigrated from Curaçao. Influenced by the liberal Progressive Era ideas she encountered at Vassar College, from which she graduated in 1908, Agnes became an activist in a variety of reform movements, especially those involving labor and education.<sup>402</sup> After moving to New York, Agnes earned a master’s degree in social work, worked as the lead writer on education for *The New Republic*, contributed to *The Nation* and other publications, and, in 1924, collected her writings into a well-regarded book, *Our Enemy the Child*, the first of her several published works on progressive education.<sup>403</sup> Around 1920, Agnes began an affair with Alvin Saunders Johnson (1874-1971), an economist who was a co-founder and the first director of the New School for Social Research. Johnson was married when he and Agnes met and he did not leave his wife, Edith, after the birth of his and Agnes’s daughter, Sigrid. Johnson acknowledged his paternity, although not officially, and contributed to Sigrid’s upbringing.<sup>404</sup> Edith Johnson, who shared with Agnes de Lima an interest in educational innovations and was herself a pioneer in home schooling, knew that her husband was Sigrid’s father and received Agnes and Sigrid as regular visitors to the Johnson home, without, however, allowing Johnson’s other children to know the full truth until they were adults.<sup>405</sup> After Agnes and Johnson broke up, Agnes married for a

few years before divorcing and moving with Sigrid to Mexico and then to California. Returning to New York when Sigrid was sixteen, Agnes became the head of the publicity office at the New School, was active in the school's administration from 1940 to 1960 and remained a confidant of Johnson on both personal and school matters.<sup>406</sup> Alison Greene reported that both her grandmother, Agnes, and her grandfather, Alvin, liked Stephen Greene, and that he was fond of them in return.<sup>407</sup>

Around the time of Stephen's romance with Anita Ellis, Sigrid was involved in an intimate friendship with William Styron, who wrote about their relationship in an autobiographical essay about composing *Lie Down in Darkness*, the novel he dedicated to Sigrid. Styron described his writer's block and impecuniousness at a certain point in 1949, with little to eat and no decent place to live, and his rescue by the de Limas, mother and daughter.<sup>408</sup> Styron's biographer, James West, wrote that Styron described his situation in the de Lima house as "...almost sinfully comfortable." Styron and Sigrid were "good friends," cooking together and, after supper listening to music or playing chess or word games. They discussed their novels and read to one other from their work in progress. "There was only a little romance involved: chiefly they seem to have felt affection and respect for each other and to have been quite companionable."<sup>409</sup>

Stephen and Sigrid's honeymoon to Tunisia turned out to be one of the two events that Greene pointed to as inspiration for how he could accomplish, artistically, the turning away from his prior work. Rome had given him light; Tunis gave him color. Years later, he recalled:

In 1954 I was in Tunisia and was particularly moved by the sight of Sidi-Bou-Said, a town not far from Tunis. The blue Mediterranean is at the base of the town, each house is white and all doors, balconies and shutters are cerulean blue. I think of this incredibly saturated blue color as space, as atmosphere, but I would not want to use it to illustrate a particular place. There is always a difference between what may be an artist's initial inspiration and how he makes use of it.<sup>410</sup>

As will be discussed, Greene painted a series of blue pictures around 1960, among his first major works of close to "pure" abstraction.

The other inspirational event in Greene's transition was his discovery in Rome of early Christian mosaics. He had an expert guide in Meyer Schapiro, whom he accompanied as they studied the mosaics with binoculars.<sup>411</sup> Greene wrote that he was "greatly stimulated" by these early works and in his painting "shapes began to dissolve. For a while the figure became part of an overall mosaic."<sup>412</sup> Discussing Greene as one of several American artists whose styles changed

during their stays in Rome, William L. Vance, in his book *American's Rome*, recalled Greene's remark that as an artist he felt the need "to turn away from anything that was a scene rather than a presence." Vance asked: "Could it have been the superabundance of 'scene' in Rome—both in its reality and in its art—that actually encouraged the turn away from imitation in any traditional sense?"<sup>413</sup> Vance recalled, too, what he saw as Greene's obsession with "fragmentation," citing Dore Ashton's quotation of Greene's comment, reacting to the van der Goes *Death of the Virgin*, that "...fragmentation of an event is a clue to contemporary thinking."<sup>414</sup> Vance does not develop a hypothesis that Greene expanded the idea of fragmented emotional responses into a material fragmentation of colors and brushstrokes on canvas, but the thought, even if unsupported by evidence, is intriguing. One can speculate that notions of fragmentation and mosaic were among the aesthetic ideas that Greene discussed with Sigrid de Lima during the early years of their marriage, as she was writing her best-known novel, *Praise a Fine Day*, published in 1959 and dedicated to her husband. Early on in the story, the narrator, a young married male artist, recalls walking along a crowded city street one evening when he noticed and began to follow a long-legged young girl he thought might be a dancer. Upon realizing that she knew he was following her, he turned aside.

...I certainly had no designs on her, I merely liked her walk and had arbitrarily detached that quality from the rest of her person.

And yet what does any artist do except lop off the parts that appeal to him and have meaning to him from the great, blooming, buzzing blur of reality. We cannot encompass it all. Our life isn't long enough, for one thing. And frail canvas rots and tears and burns and fades and falls to dust where no hand locks and secures, so we are forced to be circumspect in what we bequeath to posterity.<sup>415</sup>

Greene's "mosaic" paintings, made from 1955 through about 1958, were important but ill-fated steps in his odyssey toward abstraction and inspired some of the most highly charged critical comment on any of his work. Before discussing them, several loose ends, including both the Rome sojourn and the Askew relationship, need to be wrapped up.

Correspondence between Greene and Askew grew less frequent as 1954 progressed. Now married to an intelligent and sympathetic woman, Greene no longer needed a confidante. In his last letter from Rome on June 6, 1954, after a long trip with Sigrid to Spain and Provence, Greene wrote: "For all the good that has occurred here, I am glad to be leaving the Academy. Finally, it

is an esoteric place and all that is worthwhile and larger is outside. This is my last experience with any form of academic living en masse.”

Stephen and Sigrid returned to New York in August, 1954, and moved into the de Lima house in Valley Cottage. On November 18 of that year, Greene wrote the following to Askew:

Dear Kirk:

This is a hard letter for me to write but I believe that I’ve come to the decision that I should withdraw from Durlacher Brothers. From our discussions of yesterday I know that our worlds of appreciation are at great variance but I would not wish you to think that my decision is hasty or that it has been dictated by any particular occurrence. I am aware and appreciative of all that you have done for me but that at the present time that to function well I must make a change.

Sigrid will phone this morning to make whatever arrangements that are necessary for the delivery of my work to Mrs. De Lima, 282 West 4<sup>th</sup> St., New York City.

I should hate to think that there should be any bitterness between us and I shall always wish you and Durlachers well.

Cordially,

Although Greene rejected the idea that any particular “occurrence” caused him to fire Askew as his dealer, there must have been an argument and it seems to have been aesthetic. Perhaps Askew’s reaction to Greene’s turn toward a “mosaic” mode was negative and Greene could not tolerate anything but total supportiveness from his dealer, especially after so many years of Askew’s fervent encouragement. Perhaps Greene felt that Askew’s tastes were too traditional; his next dealer, Grace Borgenicht, represented abstract painters like Jimmy Ernst and Ilya Bolotowsky, as well as more figural artists like Milton Avery and Leonard Baskin.<sup>416</sup> (Of course, Askew was no fuddy-duddy, as his representation of the likes of Kurt Seligmann, Peter Blume, Hyman Bloom and Walter Quirt attested.) One assumes that Sigrid would have had input into Stephen’s decision, or at least supported it, although, again, there is no evidence of her feelings on the matter. Greene wrote to Edith Gregor Halpert about his move on December 21, 1954, thanking her for her encouragement and support (as her gallery would lend two of his paintings to the 1955 Whitney show, *The New Decade*) and writing, of the Borgenicht Gallery, “there is an air of alertness there and they were enthusiastic about my work. I am happy about this move.”<sup>417</sup>

It is also possible that Greene's motivation was, at least in part, financial, as during 1954 he was in discussions with representatives of *Life* about a project that was more commercial than his work had been to that point. Alex Taylor kindly pointed out a memorandum dated September 21, 1954, from Francis Brennan, who was, at the time, artistic advisor to Henry Luce, editor in chief of *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*.<sup>418</sup> Brennan and his colleagues (assumedly including Luce) contemplated engaging artists to make "cartoons" for *Life*, not "dictionary definition" cartoons but "rich, profound graphic commentary as close to Art as we can get....this larger definition suggests the grand graphic moralizing and satire of such masters as Blake, Daumier, Doré, Forain, Goya, Grosz, Hogarth, Kollwitz, Rowlandson, Veber."<sup>419</sup> Brennan wrote that he had been talking with three artists who were enthusiastic and "ready to go as soon as we push Button A." One of the three was Stephen Greene, whom Brennan described in the memo as follows:

Steve Greene is a more "famous" artist than [illustrator and typeface designer Warren] Chappel. Indeed, as I have said before, he is one of the finest draftsmen in the country. He has firm convictions, but whether they will emerge as "readable" graphic ideas remains to be seen. He's been in Rome for two years, so he's still seeing things from there. A touch mythological, but he will sharpen up. As in all cases, sharpness will emerge only in the course of the work. Incidentally, Steve is now teaching three days a week in Brooklyn, but doubtless he would rather draw for LIFE."<sup>420</sup>

A note in Brennan's file shows that Greene received \$200 "for sketches received on cartoon project."<sup>421</sup> There is no indication that the project was ever realized, at least with Greene as a participating cartoonist. Askew might well have objected to one of his artists becoming associated with such a mercantile enterprise.

In November 1955, Greene's new dealer, Grace Borgenicht, gave him a solo exhibition of drawings and "recent paintings," including at least a few paintings in which, as Greene wrote later, "the figure became part of an overall mosaic." The titles of the paintings suggest that Greene was still involved with Biblical subject matter, some from the Old Testament, some from the New—*Judas*, *Lazarus*, *Saul and David*, *Joseph and his Brothers*, *Descent from Cross* (a/k/a *The Deposition*). Once again, no color reproduction of any of these works has been located (except for the somewhat later Cain and Abel, discussed below), but a couple of poor black and white photos and some instances of detailed written description give some idea of what they looked like. Stuart Preston, who had deprecated Greene's creativity and rejected his artistic approach in his review of the 1952 show, now wrote that "a remarkable change" had come over Greene's work since his stay

in Rome. "Time has softened the crudities of once jerky compositions, and the over-plaintive air of his figures has now been reduced and merged into a more generalized grief which involves the spectator as well as the artist."<sup>422</sup> (Greene may not have realized until 1955 just how much Preston had hated his then recent work in 1952.) Preston assumed, correctly, that Greene in Europe had closely studied the "old masters" and learned from their use of "purely physical, discreetly rhetorical gestures to enforce meaning" and their "full, not token, investigation of anatomy." Preston declared *The Deposition* (Figure 73) to be the best picture in the exhibition. Basically it represents a living human figure lifting down a corpse, Preston wrote, "but what dramatic contrasts are then built up between the blurred, other-worldly face of Christ and the actual agony of the bereft Apostle; between Christ's long limp arm, consoling even in death, and the clutching, prayerful hands of one who has to face the world without the living presence."<sup>423</sup> Greene may have appreciated this praise, but he must have realized that Preston had increased the beholder's share of the painting to a level approaching, say, seventy-five percent, as there is nothing to suggest that the artist's new approach to laying paint on canvas was accompanied by a change of intention in using Passion imagery. Greene would have recognized appreciatively that the "dramatic contrasts" Preston described without attributing methodology had to have been achieved with color, the "predominant, surprising sky-blues" which, Preston writes, may symbolize hope. But Preston found the color in the other exhibition paintings "less satisfactory, too glaring for the subtleties intended....The sunny, milky colors...create an impression of lightness that is really at variance with their somber character." In his tag line, Preston redeems Greene somewhat, again applauding the artist's drawings as "Rembrandtesque, graphic and emotional."<sup>424</sup>

Jerome Ashmore reiterated Preston's take on *The Deposition*, commenting on the "unexpected" sky blue and finding that the painting has "an encouraging aura and tends to invite the inference that man may live again by love."<sup>425</sup> But, again, there is little to suggest that Greene had changed his basic outlook on life or that, even if he had done so, he had intentionally reflected such a change in this painting. One can speculate that a happy marriage softened his existential angst, but the evidence (including a recorded talk to students and faculty at the Skowhegan School in 1958) suggests that he was much more interested in changes in the means of the paintings of this period than in any changes in their message.<sup>426</sup> The blue is more the blue of the Tunisian sea and sky than the blue of hope. In Greene's 1962 essay "The Tragic Sense in Modern Art," he reiterated that he was, and had always been, a "tragic painter," noting that "in my own work, the



tragic sense informs the entire image.” The word “love” is used only once in the essay: “Man, who is also capable of the love of life and the good acts of life, falls into disgrace when he faces himself and, dying, is robbed of immortality. This is the fall of man. Our high estate is our possibilities which we tragically cannot fulfill.”<sup>427</sup> This attitude remained inconsistent with Preston’s and Ashmore’s attributions.

These disagreements with some of Ashmore’s and Preston’s views of *The Deposition* should not be taken as denying that an important change was happening to Greene’s paintings of the period 1954 to 1956. There was a change, but it related not to his view of the human condition but to his view of how to express that condition by the manipulation of paint, the choice and disposition of color, and the organization of the painted surface. The beholder would still have a share, but Greene, the artist, would be in control. The art historian Hellmut Wohl, in an article for the *College Art Journal* specifically about these paintings, observed that Greene

...sought to give the world of his paintings, to a greater degree than before, its own identity and mystery by diffusing it with an intense, searing light. The predominant color became a brilliant, hot orange. Modeling was achieved in strokes of bright greenish-blues as well as by extensions of the orange tonality to browns, reds and yellows. The continuity of the figure was broken up, its relief became harsher and less rounded, and its new anatomy of small strokes of paint was embedded in the light-filled atmosphere. Emotions that had been recorded through facial expressions, gestures and spatial devices in the early works were released with controlled radiance within this atmosphere, and attached themselves to the figures. In this way Greene induced the beholder to become inevitably drawn into the realm of the picture.<sup>428</sup>

The sources of these colors and their arrangement have appeared before in the story of Greene’s art and its sources: the strong orange backgrounds of the 1947 *Deposition* and its mates; the vivid but varied blues of Tunisian sea, sky and shutters; the ever-shifting Roman light; the scattered hues of early Christian mosaics; the mottled surface of the Pisan *Triumph of Death*. The once dominant impression, from crisp outlines and occlusion, that paintings had been “drawn” now, in Greene’s work of the mid-1950s, receded.

One can speculatively try to locate Greene’s motivations for the change in style of his mid-’50s paintings within then-existing trends in formalist thinking about art. The acknowledged inspiration of the Roman mosaics he saw with Schapiro and his stated desire to minimize a scenic sense by melding figure and ground suggest that Greene, whether consciously or not, was

beginning to embrace the 20<sup>th</sup>-Century formalist “doctrine” that advanced painting “aspires towards an ever-tightening synthesis of its design elements.”<sup>429</sup> Leo Steinberg criticized this doctrine in his 1972 essay “Other Criteria” but nevertheless described it succinctly: in traditional painting, four formal elements—line, shape, color, and light—could be thought about and experienced as distinct and separate, but by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century (or earlier), according to Steinberg, formalist critics argued that

...the test of significantly advanced painting will be the progressive obliteration of these distinctions. The most successful picture will so synthesize the means of design that line will be no longer separable from shape, nor shape from color, nor color from light. A working criterion, easily memorized and applied. It tells you not necessarily which picture is best, but which is in line to promote the overall aspiration of Painting—this alignment being a *sine qua non* of historic importance.<sup>430</sup>

Both Greene’s own writing about the “mosaic” paintings and critics’ reactions to them suggest that he was at least thinking about signing on, if tardily, to this “doctrine” without naming it, a conclusion confirmed by looking at the paintings themselves. Had Steinberg considered them in the 1968 lecture from which his essay was adapted, he would have certainly concluded that, applying the criterion, they did not represent the most “advanced” painting of their moment, as progress “towards utter homogeneity of the elements of design” was “celebrating its latest historical denouement in the triumph of color field painting.”<sup>431</sup>

Hellmut Wohl, who was teaching art history at Yale when his 1959 article on Greene was published, appeared to have lived for a time with one of Greene’s “mosaic” paintings, *Saul and David* (1954). Greene chose that work to illustrate (in a black and white photo) his 1961 essay for *Art in America*, “A Case in Point,” where the painting is listed as belonging to the “Collection of Mrs. Hellmut Wohl.” The Wohls must have sold or donated it to Cheekwood, the Tennessee Fine Arts Center, in Nashville (one of the sites for Greene’s 1963 Corcoran Retrospective), as a 1964 newspaper article notes that it was owned by that institution and that Greene valued it as his “most significant painting” of the period of his life during which it was painted.<sup>432</sup> In his *College Art Journal* article, Wohl mentioned neither *Saul and David* nor his family’s ownership of a work made by Greene. The painting was exhibited in the 1963 Retrospective and it is reproduced (with a caption reading “*David and Saul*”), again in black and white, in the exhibition catalogue.

The most accessible example (in the sense of commentary and color photography) of this new, light-infused world of Greene’s paintings—I wondered about Wohl’s use of “diffusing”

rather than “infusing”—is *Cain and Abel* of 1956 (Figure 76), which since shortly after it was finished has been owned by the Indiana University Art Museum. For a change, Greene painted the setting of the action as a landscape, a shift that Ashmore thought was an important addition to Greene’s career-long exposition of the human condition. What happens, the philosopher Ashmore saw Greene as asking, “when man goes outdoors or, symbolically, outside of the self-confinement” of the earlier biblical-themed paintings. “The outcome,” Ashmore continued, “is murder. When kept within himself, man is helpless; let outside of himself, or allowed to express himself, he murders his brother.”<sup>433</sup> Greene did not paint the landscape of *Cain and Abel* as a particular piece of scenery but rather, as Ashmore saw it, “more like a universe in itself, another world come out of the horizon.”<sup>434</sup> In the lower section of the painting, the ground seems to open up in an ominous chasm or grave of red and purple. (This effect is suggested in a study drawing (Figure 77), now at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, although the drawing can also be read to suggest that Greene originally contemplated setting the scene indoors, with the murderous brother’s ominous shadow cast onto a wall.) Stuart Preston described Greene’s color in the painting as “Bonnardesque,” a comparison that makes sense when viewing, for example, the left side of Bonnard’s late painting *Nude in a Bathtub* (c. 1940-46) at the Carnegie Museum of Art.<sup>435</sup> For the art historian Wohl, the opposition of complementary colors in *Cain and Abel* generates “an intense tropical heat, while the imagery of the picture evokes exotic lushness as much as a volcanic conflagration” over which, Howard Devree observed, in a reaction somewhat different from Wohl’s, “a hazy impersonal orb looks down from an impassive sky.”<sup>436</sup> Devree did agree, though, with Wohl and Ashmore about Greene’s dire vision in *Cain and Abel*: “There are tragic forces at work...and an inescapable sense of conflict.”<sup>437</sup> And, according to Wohl, Greene added a provocative twist to the biblical drama, transposing the brothers’ roles: it is Abel who is guilty, standing upright, “while the convulsed figure prostrated before him, tortured and imploring, is Cain.”<sup>438</sup> In Greene’s oft-expressed personal vision of the human condition, the torturer suffers as tragically as the victim, and “no one is saved.” In *Cain and Abel*, Greene painted the “fall of man” that he later evoked in his 1962 essay, man facing himself, dying.

Professor Wohl saw in *Cain and Abel*, when compared to Greene’s then recent works, “a tendency to solidify the atmosphere by means of broader, more energetic brushstrokes and a thicker, more sensuous application of paint,” a practice which, as Wohl noted, Greene carried over to several paintings executed in early 1957.”<sup>439</sup> One of those paintings is *The Studio* (a/k/a *Studio*)

(Figures 78 and 79) (again suggesting the confusion of Greene's duplicative titles), which I was fortunate to see in Alison Greene's home.<sup>440</sup> In this densely painted work, the figures remain discernable but figural outlines have substantially dissolved, aided by a more limited palette of complementary oranges and blues cut by large areas of cream and white. The easel (or perhaps it is a screen), this time not really a prop, divides the picture vertically, consistent with Greene's practice. But, to my mind, the vertical element does not function to organize the picture spatially, probably, once again, because it was painted in perspective. A better way to express this concern may be to observe that the melding and interpenetration of figures and background in *The Studio* renders the vertical element unnecessary or even awkwardly disruptive. The most interesting element in the painting is the large studio sink on the left, its whiteness emerging slowly and ominously, like a hallucination or, as Wohl perceived, "a creature charged with a monstrous and contagious vitality."<sup>441</sup>

*Cain and Abel* and *The Studio* were exhibited at a single-artist show at Grace Borgenicht Gallery in 1958, but not in his Corcoran retrospective in 1963. Three other works from the Borgenicht show that were included in the retrospective, probably as representative of Greene's "mosaic" period, are *Flagellation* (Figures 80 and 81), *The Fall* (Figure 82) and *Homage à Abel Sanchez* (Figures 83 and 84). I have seen all three, the first in Alison Greene's home in Houston and the others at a storage facility in New York City rented by the Stephen Greene Foundation; none of them was ever sold.

In *Flagellation*, Greene reprised an old theme, using the familiar thin rods as instruments of torture. The autobiographical bandages of *The Return* reappear. In one of Greene's last painted examples of corporeal mimesis, the victim's strong clenched fist near the bottom of the painting duplicates and reinforces the intensity of the flagellator's strong gripping fist near the top. As figures and ground overrun each other in, once again, a palette of complementary blues and oranges, faces are barely discernable, but the violence inflicted by the figure on the left and the regret that tortures the figure on the right are palpable. The colors are symbolic, as Dore Ashton confirmed, blue for infinity and orange for man's passion, colors that "already act mysteriously on the retina as only abstract, or non-local color can."<sup>442</sup>

Greene's gravitation toward abstraction accelerated in *The Fall*, where he made the relationship between the figures less explicit than in *Flagellation* or *Cain and Abel*. Shapes were more clearly outlined against contrasting background colors, but the shapes now appeared only

vaguely human. Colors became less vivid, with greys and browns now predominating and brighter colors relegated (but dramatically) to small incidents, a strategy that Greene continued for the rest of his painting life. Although some of the larger areas retain a mottled, scumbled quality, Greene refined the mosaic idea with small identifiably geometric forms—rectangles, crescents and the occasional triangle—in discrete groups scattered around the surface. The idea of “the fall” was an element of Greene’s tragic vision and he expressed it both in writing (see text following Note 556) and in paintings. Wohl’s reading of the way Greene expressed that idea in *The Fall* was “a monstrous, fallen figure bows down in supplication before its fiendish executioner.”<sup>443</sup> And according to Wohl, the content of both *The Fall* and *Cain and Abel* dealt with “the avenger, the torturer, as the object of sympathy and love.” I would argue that Wohl, in his reference to “love,” went too far, imposing, as did Preston and Ashmore, a Christian religious predisposition on a Jewish artist. The idea of sympathy for the torturer and the tragedy of his existence, however, had been central to Greene’s thinking and painting since at least 1945.

Looking back at Greene’s history in a 1983 article for *Arts Magazine*, his friend John Yau wrote that what “mars” the artist’s paintings from the 1940s and early ‘50s is “their insistence. As existential allegories they leave no room for the imagination (ours or the artist’s) to enter the painting.” Yau found that the “early conflict between pessimism and humanism, despair and desire” was, even in 1983, still a central element of Greene’s approach to his art, even with the removal of “concrete images of suffering.” Yau described a slow evolution in Greene’s art that began, tentatively, as early as 1953 and still continued as Yau wrote, gradually transforming “a confrontational and insistent mode to a speculative and allusive one.” Abstraction, Yau concluded, was a way for Greene to “release his imagination.”<sup>444</sup>

**Painting at Valley Cottage, Painting at Princeton.** Before proceeding to consider *Homage à Abel Sanchez* and its mixed, but vehement, critical reception, it is helpful to bring Greene’s biography up to the date of the 1958 Grace Borgenicht Gallery solo exhibition in which that painting was first shown. After Stephen and Sigrid returned from Rome in 1954, they moved into her family home, a pre-Revolutionary War place (see **Photo 5**), originally an inn, in the Rockland County hamlet of Valley Cottage, New York, northwest of Nyack and about five miles from what would become, the following year, the western portal of the Tappan Zee Bridge.<sup>445</sup>

Greene returned to teaching at Parsons School of Design, where he stayed until he was appointed to a position as the first painter-in-residence at Princeton University. The Greenses' only child, Alison, was born on October 17, 1956, shortly after Stephen began his stint at Princeton. The Grace Borgenicht Gallery gave him one-person shows in 1955, 1957 and 1958. Ms Borgenicht thought highly enough of his work that she hung one of his paintings in her living room, next to one by Milton Avery, and posed sitting beneath it for a 1958 photo spread about her apartment in the *New York Times*.<sup>446</sup> Greene had received similar notice in 1957, when his drawing, *Seated Youth*, was pictured (partially) in a Vogue spread picturing the art collection of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr. The drawing was in the Pulitzer's piano room, surrounded by two Picassos, an African Bakota mask and drawings by Roger de la Fresnaye and Juan Gris.<sup>447</sup> Greene was among the 29 nominees for the six 1956 \$1000 artist grants from the National Institute of Arts and Letters and had a painting included in the exhibition of the nominees' work, but he did not win.<sup>448</sup> Meanwhile, Sigrid continued writing, publishing the positively reviewed novel *Carnival by the Sea* in 1954 and working her best known piece, *Praise a Fine Day*, which drew on the couple's experiences in Rome, was dedicated to Stephen, and was published in 1959.<sup>449</sup>

According to Greene's obituary in the New York Times, admirers of his work "sometimes lamented that he tended to be characterized as 'Philip Guston's student and Frank Stella's teacher.'"<sup>450</sup> Greene's friendship with Stella, which was just as important as, and lasted longer than, his friendship with Guston, began at Princeton. Stella had painted seriously as a teenager at Phillips Andover Academy, studying with the painters Patrick and Maud Morgan, who were students and friends of Hans Hofmann. When he got to Princeton, Stella found that it had no for-credit art classes, so he became a medieval history major and, with his friend Darby Bannard, painted in a studio alongside young art history faculty member William Seitz (later a MoMA curator and a University of Virginia professor), who had written his Princeton dissertation on six abstract artists, including Hofmann. With important help from Alfred Barr, Seitz convinced the Princeton administration to institute a painter-in-residence program, to include for-credit, but ungraded, studio courses in painting and drawing. Greene began his three-year term as the first occupant of the residency in 1956, as Stella began his junior year.<sup>451</sup> Michael Fried, who was a class behind Stella as an undergraduate, described in *Art and Objecthood* something about the Greene's relationship with Stella, Bannard and Fried himself:

...Greene at once recognized Stella's genius, and they became close. In my junior year I too took Greene's course, but what mattered to me even more than the practical experience of making abstract pictures was my participation, at first mainly as a listener, in conversations with Stella, Bannard, and Greene about recent painting in New York and about modern art generally. Greene was up to date on developments in New York and encouraged his students to make the one-hour train trip to Manhattan to visit art galleries.<sup>452</sup>

Brief excerpts from a 2003 interview transcript with Stella reinforce the impression, obtained from YouTube videos of interviews and question-and-answer sessions, that he is reticent to express opinions about other people:

H: What was your first impression of Steve?

F: I didn't really have any real impression, I liked him and everything....

H: So, what did he teach you about the New York scene or about his experience? Did he relay that to you at all? Was he mentoring you at that point?

F: I already had very strong ideas about what I liked. There wasn't any real conflict, it wasn't a matter of that he didn't like Ben Shahn any more than I did.... In fact, the only place that we crossed in any significant way was that he hated Op Art and I didn't actually think Op Art was that bad. But it was an interesting take, because I would sort of quote unquote like the abstract qualities of Op Art and he would say that is bullshit....

H: Can you tell me a little bit of his personality? His character?

F: It's hard, because I'm not good at description. He was tremendously outgoing and very friendly and really went out with the students. He was a little bit touchy, but everyone was. But outside of that, at Princeton he was pretty good, he just blurted everything out, whatever came into his mind it was right there, nothing was very much considered. He was pretty much off the cuff.

H: How did your friendship with him change over the decades?

F: I would say that it never changed much at all. We really were friends and he was very supportive all the time, and he was actually very supportive when you'd think I wouldn't need support, but it really was important.<sup>453</sup>

Their friendship was so important to both men that Stella and his first wife, Barbara Rose, asked Sigrid and Stephen to act as godparents to both of their children, born in 1962 and 1966. Alison Greene remembers that her parents "did a lot of looking after the kids," especially after Stella and Rose separated in 1969.<sup>454</sup>

Adam Weinberg, in an essay in the catalog of the Whitney Museum's 2015 Frank Stella Retrospective that was, assumedly, based on communication with Stella, both filled in some details and suggested the crux of Stella's relationship with Greene (although Weinberg slightly mischaracterized the extent of Greene's commitment to figurative painting in 1956 and misleadingly referred to Greene as a student of Grant Wood as well as of Guston):

On the surface, no one would seem to be a less likely mentor for Stella than Stephen Greene....He was firmly committed to figurative painting. He had a passion for the Renaissance tradition, and was devoted to painting religious subjects out of a desire to evoke "the tragic" in modern-day painting...It is surprising that Stella, weaned on abstract painting, would have affinity for Greene and his approach to art. However, like Patrick Morgan, Greene viewed his students as equals. As he said, "I sat on them, but everybody serious was treated like a painter. We've been all working out something"...With his students, Greene was tough but nurturing—"each [was] allowed to find his best mode of artistic expression." The seriousness of Greene's approach impressed Stella, much as Stella's seriousness must have impressed Greene. Both artists were locked in a common enterprise: discovering the subject of the modern painter. Greene, like Morgan, fervently believed in pursuing one's own ideas and not following the herd....This attitude must have greatly encouraged Stella's already independent cast of mind, an attitude...that would be critical in the making of his groundbreaking paintings in 1959.<sup>455</sup>

During Greene's first months at Princeton, articles in the *Daily Princetonian* and the *Princeton Alumni Weekly* about his courses emphasized the earnest intensity of his Princeton undertaking. The *Daily* posed the question "can a gentleman be an artist and an artist a gentleman? Or is the Princeton man too tweedy and refined to dabble in greasepaints and chalk?"<sup>456</sup> The article reported Greene's reply, to the effect that practical instruction in painting and drawing has a place in the broad education a school like Princeton offers, although he was "quick to admit" that some people disagreed, quoting him: "There are some people who ask me very politely 'what are you doing here?'....And then there are others who warn me not to get too serious about this thing and 'don't try to make an art school. Princeton does not make artists.'"<sup>457</sup> The *Alumni Weekly* picked up the story, quoting Greene from the same interview:

After all, why should I take a frivolous attitude toward teaching art? I don't think the University should bother spending money teaching hobbies—you can take a correspondence course if you want to learn a hobby. I feel I can offer them more than that....These courses are a practical attempt at going through the creative process. Some people are falling on their faces—others are coming through excitingly.<sup>458</sup>



Over his years as the University's painter-in-residence, Greene organized a number of shows of his students' work, both on campus and in independent galleries in Princeton and in New York. About a small student show early on, in the fall of 1956, Greene noted excitedly that Stella, "probably the most gifted student I've had in eleven years of teaching," had sold a painting to a local gallery for \$20. The title Greene chose for a 1958 student exhibition, "Freedom of Expression," indicates his approach to teaching or his reaction to the results or both. In the *Daily Princetonian* review of the show, Thomas Carnicelli (the chairman of the *Nassau Lit*) wrote: "It is to the credit of art instructor Stephen Greene that he has allowed his students full freedom of expression while inducing in them a real concern for artistic control."<sup>459</sup>

During 1958 Princeton was also the scene of a major scandal when twenty-three students failed to receive any bids from the seventeen campus eating clubs. More than half of them were Jews, and fifteen Jewish students signed a statement charging religious and ethnic discrimination. The controversy was reported nationally—the *New York Post* ran the headline "How It Feels to Be an Outcast at Princeton."<sup>460</sup> If he remembered his student days in Virginia and Iowa, Greene must have commiserated, but there is no indication that he felt particularly alienated during his Princeton years. On the contrary, he was actively involved in the university's cultural life. For example, he organized a multi-event arts festival in 1956-57 and in May, 1959, participated on a panel discussion on "The Creative Arts in a University" with the writer Kingsley Amis and the composer Milton Babbitt.<sup>461</sup>

It appears that Greene treated his students at Parsons and, later, at Columbia and the Tyler School with the same kind of respect Weinberg described him as showing to the Princeton men. Certainly, Greene's experience with Stella at Princeton must have been very satisfying and even inspiring for him. It is hard to know if Greene ever received the same satisfaction from his experience with other students. Teaching was important to him financially; he once admitted that "out of the 49 years I have shown, there may have been two in which I could live off my work."<sup>462</sup> Reviewing a Stella retrospective in 2015, Peter Schjeldahl, art critic of *The New Yorker*, wrote that Stella's "good fortune in mentors followed him to Princeton, where he was encouraged by Stephen Greene, a minor painter and legendary teacher."<sup>463</sup> There is anecdotal evidence of Greene's impact on some of his other students over the years, a sampling of which is described in the text beginning after Note 597.<sup>464</sup>

There were moments of tension between the student Stella and the teacher Greene, beginning early on, when Greene brought in a model for a life drawing exercise and Stella rebelled, scrawling “I can’t draw” on his pad.<sup>465</sup> A 2006 article in the Princeton Alumni Magazine quotes Stella’s recollection of his initial experience with Greene, who, Stella said

...taught in the traditional method. You brought in a model, you draw the model, and after you do it for a while you can paint. But I was kind of an annoying student. I didn’t want to paint from the model. I just wanted to make paintings. So after a while [Greene] gave up and said, ‘You’re incorrigible. Just go ahead and make the paintings and forget about an art class.’<sup>466</sup>

Stella’s reaction to Greene’s teaching methods recalls Greene’s to Grant Wood’s, perhaps partially explaining Greene’s acquiescence to his brilliant, if unruly, student’s demands.

In 2011, Stella made an intriguing comment about Greene as his teacher during a public question-and-answer session in Toledo, Ohio, in response to an audience question at the end of the session about Greene’s influence on him. The question came out of the blue, as Stella hadn’t mentioned Greene before, and Stella spoke for several minutes about how Greene was “basically my teacher and my mentor for quite some time,” about how he thought Greene was influenced by “mainly Hofmann and everybody,” and about how Greene’s painting changed during Stella’s years at Princeton and became

...quite beautiful. So, Steve was important, not so much as a teacher, although we did a lot of things, that were, I don’t know, would probably seem grotesque, um, in student-teacher relationships, but part of the thing is that when you’re doing something and you’re both involved in what you’re doing, you get, probably, in some ways too close. But the main point would be that through Steve I was introduced to people in New York, while I was still a student at Princeton....”<sup>467</sup>

Greene in his oral history interview made a similar comment about being “too close” to Guston. It is not clear whether Stella is referring to a particular incident, but there is a story that Stella was annoyed, if not outraged, and refused to speak to Greene for days when Greene painted what amounted to graffiti on one of Stella’s unfinished works in his studio. William Rubin, in his 1970 MoMA book about Stella, confirmed the incident, introducing it by describing how Stella was very taken by the repetitive nature of Jasper Johns’s flag paintings at Johns’s first New York one-person show in 1958 and, upon his return to the Princeton studio, Stella translated the Johns style into his own work in a way that aggravated Greene.<sup>468</sup> Greene himself told the story during

a colloquium at N.Y.U. in 1995 or '96 titled "The Content of Abstract Art," moderated by Irving Sandler and including as participants Jack Tworkov, Robert Morris, Robert Murray and Greene:

...I wish that somebody would once give Jasper Johns credit for the initial thing of the stripes and again and again Frank was painting stripes with a rectangle when he was a student....I remember one night coming in and there was a huge 8 foot or 9 foot unprimed canvas and I was so annoyed that anyone that gifted would worry that much about Jasper with [without?] being able to do something else about it. I remember just instinctively putting a brush in a can of paint and writing 'God Bless America' on it.<sup>469</sup>

After confirming the details with Darby Bannard and Stella himself, Megan Luke has reported that the paint Greene used was blue (the brush charged with paint thinner) and that the temporarily defaced canvas was *Perfect Day for Banana Fish*, a title suggested by J. D. Salinger's short story "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," which Stella had read and admired.<sup>470</sup> Greene's recollection of size was correct; the oil on canvas painting measures 76 1/4 x 102 3/4 inches. The work was chosen by Stella to hang at the entrance to his large 2016/17 retrospective in Ft. Lauderdale, was listed in 2006 as in the artist's collection and, as of this writing, is reproduced on the website of the New York dealer Peter Freeman Inc.<sup>471</sup> In 1995 Stella's friend and biographer Sidney Guberman, who was also a student in Greene's painting class, wrote of the incident that "Greene says it was an impulse that he still regrets and that he never doubted for a second Stella's sincerity and commitment."<sup>472</sup>

One finds no acknowledgment by Greene or Stella that one of them had any stylistic, as opposed to motivational, influence on the other. In contrast, Stella has occasionally given a teacher specific credit, as in a 2017 interview with Adrianna Campbell when, on the subject of "weightedness" in his irregular polygons and later works, Stella said "My teacher always told me to keep it heavy on top." In response to Campbell's question: "Yes? Which one?" Stella replied "William Seitz. He would say that painting should always have the weight at the top, then you work your way down."<sup>473</sup>

While there was little or no obvious formal influence of Greene or Stella on the other, there must have been spiritual and emotional impact. "My father didn't teach Frank how to paint, but how to live," Alison Greene told me.<sup>474</sup> Greene remained a fervid supporter and proponent of Stella's art, especially early on, in the late 1950s and 1960s, at a time when his own work was rapidly changing. For example, in the late '50s, Richard Meier, recently graduated from Cornell's architecture program, was taking an evening painting course at The New School from Greene, who

sensed that the two brilliant young men would get along and introduced them. In a 2018 interview Meier recalled: “After class, Frank and Steven [sic] and I would go out and have a beer together and we became friends. One day Steven said to me, ‘I don’t know why you are in class, you should just go out and paint.’” Meier’s apartment was too small to work in, so Stella shared his studio and the two cemented a close friendship and collaboration of, at this writing, more than sixty years.<sup>475</sup>

Around the same time, Greene convinced Walter Hopps, then a co-owner (with Irving Blum) of the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles (which he had co-founded with Edward Kienholz), to meet Stella and look at his paintings, a meeting that soon resulted in Ferus exhibiting Stella’s work. Hopps had met Greene through David Herbert, an art dealer. Hopps’s description of the meeting in *The New Yorker* is, despite several factual errors, interesting both for how Greene promoted Stella and for Hopps’s impression of Greene:

Herbert was...representing an imagist artist called Stephen Greene, whose work I knew from art magazines back in the forties and fifties. After the war, he’d painted some dark, lumpy, body-like things, missing arms and legs, a kind of grotesque Philip Pearlstein. Now he had moved into Abstract Expressionism....I made an appointment to meet him at the Art Students League. He was an intense, nervous kind of man, surprised to see that I was younger than he was, but we hit it off....I took several of his drawings on consignment; I liked the work and I liked him. While we were talking, he told me that he’d been privately teaching a graduate student from Princeton called Frank Stella. He said, “He’s very bright and he’s very shy and nothing’s happened with him yet, but I know it will. He has a studio in New York now, and I bet you’d be interested in what he’s doing. I’m not sure I understand it myself, but I think you should see it”....[O]n the strength of Greene’s recommendation, I went to meet Stella at his studio.<sup>476</sup>

At least one further Greene introduction was important to Stella: when the film maker Emile de Antonio, a friend of Stephen and Sigrid’s, visited them in Princeton in the spring of 1957, Stephen spoke “glowingly” of Stella. After Stella moved to New York in 1958, de Antonio became his friend and helped him find a gallery.<sup>477</sup> Stella figures prominently in de Antonio’s 1973 film *Painters Painting*, an unscientific viewing of which leaves the impression that Stella competes with de Kooning, Newman and Johns for de Antonio’s largest allocation of screen time.<sup>478</sup>

Greene was among the artists whose responses to a questionnaire were published in *Art in America* in 1967. The questions, propounded under the title “Sensibility of the Sixties” by contributing editor Barbara Rose (Stella’s wife at the time) and the critic Irving Sandler, included

“Is there the same split between the avant garde and the public as formerly? How has this relationship changed?”<sup>479</sup> Greene’s answer is typically provocative, not least in inviting the inference that he was proud of his early identification of Stella’s “genius” and his own role in Stella’s success:

There is not the same split between the avant garde and the public as formerly, but which public do you mean? At the time of the Museum of Modern Art exhibition in which Stella had a room (December 1959), I cannot remember being able to convince a single artist that it was work of any importance or that it was even “painting.” At the very time it was being ridiculed, it had been accepted by both the Museum and Leo Castelli as work of importance. Guston still ridicules the work, as did Motherwell as recently as a year ago.<sup>480</sup>

During Greene’s Princeton years, notably in 1957, there were changes in the facture of his paintings, initially in his refinement of the mosaic-like deployment of paint in *Flagellation* and, especially, *The Fall*. This tendency continued in the increasingly solid blocks of dark color in *Homage à Abel Sanchez* (Figure 83) the last important work of the “mosaic” period before it ended with the delayed eruption of Tunisian-inspired blue. The title of this painting refers to the 1917 short novel, *Abel Sánchez: The History of a Passion*, by Miguel de Unamuno, a modern retelling of the biblical story that Greene had recently explored in *The Fall* and *Cain and Abel*. Unlike his earlier citation of a literary title, *Disorder and Early Sorrow*, more than a decade before, Greene’s allusion to Unamuno’s work invites speculation about whether the *homage* is to the character, the book or the tragedy engendered by overwhelming envy that is the novel’s theme. Greene did not suggest an answer, but he did identify the importance of the painting in the formal progress of his art toward increasing abstraction. His own typewritten notes for a 1967 slide-accompanied lecture to the Detroit Watercolor Society read:

Homage a Abel Sanchez    An entire change starts    still using  
stories from the Bible in this case the Cain & Abel theme (Unamuno’s Short  
story) but the look of things the actual shapes start losing its relationship to  
the external measurement and look of the form.<sup>481</sup>

There is only one figure in *Homage à Abel Sanchez*—perhaps, but not necessarily, a corpse—placed almost touching the lower edge of the painting, its arms incomplete like so many of Greene’s figures, with grey strips over its face and body suggesting, once again, bandages. As in the earlier painting on the same theme, Hellmut Wohl insisted that this is the body of Cain, not

Abel, without explaining how that conclusion made sense when seen in light of Unamuno's narrative. In the novel, the character Abel Sánchez is a successful, popular and well-adjusted artist; his friend Joaquin Monegro (the Cain character) is a physician, ill-at-ease and consumed by debilitating envy of Sánchez, elucidations of which fill the novel. Midway in the narrative, Sánchez proposes to create a painting of the biblical murder of his namesake by Cain. When the painting is complete, Joaquin hosts a banquet celebrating his friend's artistic achievement and presents a short address praising the artist's capturing of Cain's tragic nature:

His voice sobbed at times. The audience was overcome, sensing glimpsing the epic struggle between a soul and its demon.

“And look at the face of Cain,” said Joaquin as he slowly released his searing words, “of tragic Cain, the nomadic farmer, the first person in the world to found a city, the father of industry, of envy and of civic life. Look at it! Look at the affection, the compassion, the love for that unfortunate man with which it is portrayed. Poor Cain! Our Abel Sánchez admires Cain like Milton admired Satan. He's in love with his Cain as Milton was with Satan, because to admire is to love and to love is to pity. Our Abel has felt all the misery, all the undeserved misfortune of the man who killed the first Abel, of the man who brought, according to Biblical legend, death into the world. Our Abel enables us to understand the guilt of Cain, for guilt it was, and to pity him and to love him. This painting is an act of love!”<sup>482</sup>

Greene, the “tragic painter,” like Unamuno, the philosopher and author of *Tragic Sense of Life*, pushed back against conventional dichotomies of good and evil, of guilt and innocence.

The fuzziness of the swathes of browns and greys over the upper half of *Homage à Abel Sanchez* are evident in person, not caused by an out-of-focus photo. Greene used this blurring technique frequently in his later work, often to contrast with adjacent crisply painted elements, as in *Fermata #9* of 1977, Figure 124. The relatively light-colored vertical in the right center of the painting may be the murder weapon. The small, bright yellow rectangle reinforces the dark, haunting mood of the rest of the composition, again a technique Greene used continually in later work. Wohl must have been referring to the yellow element in his impression that “[s]udden light permeates the darkness, but remains foreboding and mysterious.”<sup>483</sup> *Homage* was Greene's latest painting that Wohl saw before writing his 1959 essay and he was wholly captivated by it, writing for a sophisticated readership in the *College Art Journal* that

...the fallen figure is truly, as Sartre has said of one of Picasso's Harlequins, “emotion become flesh, emotion which the flesh has absorbed

as the blotter absorbs ink, and emotion which is unrecognizable, lost, strange to itself, scattered to the four corners of space and yet present to itself”....*Homage à Abel Sanchez* is Greene’s most accomplished picture to date. The handling of paint, the structure of the composition and the formal control of imagery are sure and strong. Its order, finality and potency give it the stature of a major achievement in American painting today.<sup>484</sup>

Howard Devree in the New York Times was less sympathetic to the painting, referring to its “frugal still life and drab brownish background.”<sup>485</sup>

Wohl’s quotation of Sartre brings into focus an important element of Greene’s self-image and thus his artistic persona as it was developing through the 1950s—he was an expressionist—but not, he insisted to *Time* in 1963, an Abstract Expressionist.<sup>486</sup> The concept of expressionism is sufficiently slippery, though, that it is sometimes hard to reconcile the various ways in which the term has been applied to Greene and his art. Greene told Dorothy Seckler in his oral history interview that he identified with Hyman Bloom, whom he described as expressionist in the sense of stressing subjectivity rather than representation in painting.<sup>487</sup> Judith Bookbinder, a scholar of Bloom, as well as of Jack Levine, David Aronson and the other “Boston Figurative Expressionists,” wrote that “Greene’s Existential struggle of the postwar years was resolved in his later abstract works, which still retain an Expressionist sense of color and the structure of verticals and horizontals derived from Beckmann’s spatial organization....Greene linked his figurative and abstract painting through the form and orientation of Germanic Expressionism.”<sup>488</sup>

The gallery notes to one of Greene’s paintings in the Norton Simon Museum state: “Greene shared the Abstract Expressionist sensibility that the act of painting revealed one’s innermost feelings and, therefore, art could touch an emotional core within the viewer.”<sup>489</sup> In 1983 the Bard College Art Center presented the group exhibition “Distinct Visions, Expressionist Sensibilities, Elaine deKooning, Stephen Greene, Grace Hartigan.” Martica Sawin wrote that “The sustaining core of Stephen Greene’s work, which has made him a significant artist for nearly three decades, lies in the combination of the expressionist urgency of his imagery with the full comprehension of an abstract vocabulary.”<sup>490</sup> Jerome Ashmore, writing in 1958, argued that “Greene has now become quasi-expressionistic, painting his own emotional experience of the same world he saw earlier but leaving behind the illustrative explicitness.”<sup>491</sup> And Greene himself, quoted in MoMA’s annotated checklist for a 1959 drawing exhibition that included his *Garden of Eden Series, No. 8*

(1958), cautioned, after noting the symbolism of the various shapes in the drawing: “However, these pictures are not meant to be read but seen with the intuitive compassion that I made them.”<sup>492</sup>

Without acknowledging Hellmut Wohl’s esteem for *Homage à Abel Sanchez*, Greene’s former student Michael Fried vigorously disagreed with Wohl’s assessment, evaluating the painting as a “richly problematic” one that exposed “the most serious flaw in Greene’s artistic equipment.”<sup>493</sup> Fried’s critique appeared in his 1963 *Arts Magazine* review of Greene’s Corcoran retrospective, and will be dealt with at length below, after a few more of the relevant paintings have been described and the impact on Greene of Fried’s mentor, Clement Greenberg, has been explored.

**...Like a Bad Movie.** Recall that Greene, late in his life, using metaphorical references to spinal chills and a bad movie, attributed his definitive abandonment of the figure—and his concomitant adoption of non-figural abstraction as the dominant mode of his painting—to a lecture by Clement Greenberg about Barnett Newman (see text at Note 6). Although Greene did not identify the lecture except by the date “around 1957,” he was most likely referring to one that occurred in January, 1959, namely, the sixth of a series of the Christian Gauss Seminars in Criticism that Greenberg was invited to conduct on the Princeton campus.<sup>494</sup> The prestigious Gauss Seminars were lectures followed by discussion open only to faculty and invited guests. Michael Fried, who as a Princeton undergraduate had already met, and ingratiated himself with, Greenberg, recalled years later that the Gauss lectures were closed to undergraduates, but that Greenberg had arranged for Stella, Darby Bannard and Fried to be admitted, writing that:

I wish I could remember more about the content of Greenberg’s sessions; my impression is that they weren’t well-received, both because Greenberg’s dogmatic and humorless cast of mind chilled discussion from the start and because his refusal to use slides (on the grounds that they misrepresented the works they ostensibly reproduced) meant that his audience had no way of visualizing what he was talking about.”<sup>495</sup>

Greenberg’s notes for the sixth Gauss lecture—really more of a script, typed but with extensive handwritten edits that nevertheless retain an essay-like structure of full sentences and paragraphs—are archived in his papers at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles.<sup>496</sup> One of Greenberg’s biographers, Florence Rubinfeld, had the impression that Greenberg’s other commitments interfered with his preparations for the Gauss Seminars, “about which he appeared



somewhat embarrassed.” Greenberg never allowed the lectures to be published and declined to make the manuscripts available to Rubinfeld for her book.<sup>497</sup>

For more than half of the lecture, Greenberg recounted his view of the history of advanced art in Europe and America in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, emphasizing Cubism as the formative artistic movement. He began with a series of conceptual statements whose import Greene must have evaluated in relation to his own art:

The traditional conception of the format of a picture is that of a receptacle. To elicit a sculptural illusion from a flat surface, the painter hollows it out. The final moment in the creation of a picture under this conception is its sealing in, the imposition of its surface like a lid fitted to the frame. Between surface and frame the matter of the picture is contained. The Cubists did not abandon this approach, but they stretched it nearly to the point of inversion, especially in the collage. The picture began to contain itself, began to identify its matter with the surface and frame, and become almost but not quite nothing but receptacle—now that representation and illusion functioned, within the hair’s-breadth depth of the literal surface, as aspects of flatness, and now that the longitudinals and latitudinals of the frame intersected and determined the tautened space between them at every point.<sup>498</sup>

There is no evidence that Greene had thought about his work as Cubist, although he was conscious from an early date of a debt to Mondrian and he must have been interested during the lecture in Greenberg’s treatment of Mondrian as the artist who, with “unconscious conservatism,” halted and consolidated the “revolution” that Picasso and Braque had begun “by extending to the full certain, but not all, of its implications.” Rather, what is striking about the impact Greenberg’s introductory remarks may have had on Greene is the reflexivity inherent in the phrase “the picture began to contain itself.” In Greene’s first published statement after 1958, his 1961 *Art in America* essay “A Case in Point,” he used a similar reflexive locution to describe his “crisis” in Rome: “At one point, I had to do away with any formal reference to Renaissance painting in my work. I began to want the painting to refer back to itself, to its own space.”<sup>499</sup> Greenberg’s idea of a painting’s reflexivity may well have clarified for Greene—and given him a rhetorical device to express—the feelings and intellectual postulations that accelerated the journey toward abstraction on which he was proceeding in 1958.

As the lecture continued, Greenberg seemed to have mostly assumed his audience’s familiarity with the elements of Analytical and Synthetic Cubism and he credited de Kooning with achieving a synthesis of the two that “remains a milestone in the evolution of Cubism.” He

described how Matta's Surrealist art influenced the "Late Cubism" of Arshile Gorky (one of Greene's favorite modern artists), emboldening Gorky to "introduce sudden discontinuities and jumps in the solid or fluid continuum of Cubist space." (Greene's painting of the late 1960s, and beyond, is full of its own discontinuities and jumps, but it is unlikely that any debt Greene owed to Gorky would have required intermediation by Greenberg.) Greenberg introduced the key questions of color and abstraction tentatively at first, noting that Miró was the only Late Cubist before the late 1940s who "used color as more than tint" and recounting how both in the United States and in Europe

...it had been found necessary to depart from the schematically representational approach to which Picasso still adheres and go over into abstraction or quasi-abstraction in order to render Cubism a more flexible instrument...[B]ut the importance of the factor of abstractness should nevertheless not be exaggerated. Dubuffet, for example, is not abstract yet his Late Cubism is further away from Picasso than de K.[ooning]'s Late Cubism is at its most abstract.<sup>500</sup>

When Greenberg got to Pollock, his treatment confirmed just how "interactional" (as opposed, in 21<sup>st</sup>-Century critical discourse, to "transactional") the critic's organization of knowledge could be: "Looking back, I see Pollock synthesizing the means of Gorky, which he also anticipated in part, with those of de Kooning, of Miró, of the Picasso of the 30's, of the early Kandinsky, and of Masson. And beneath all this were also the examples in paint-handling and chiaroscuro he had gotten from Siqueiros..." Upon hearing this, Greene may have felt sympathy for the recently deceased Pollock, who, Greene might have expected, would have agreed with him when he said, in 1961, "I desire my own place, my own name." Greene probably didn't think of the last paragraph of the *Reality* Manifesto, quoting the words of Delacroix denying "to the fabricators of theories the right to thus dabble in our domain," but he could have.

Although Greene must have found interesting the first half of Greenberg's lecture, which ended with a long discussion of how Pollock's various phases intersected with Cubism, it was the second half, dealing with Barnett Newman and the other Color Field painters, that most likely truly shocked, inspired and changed him. Greenberg intoned:

Pollock had a kind of Pisgah view of a land beyond Cubism and actually went some way into it, but it took more resources than he had as a colorist to penetrate further. That has been left to three Americans all of whom are almost ten years older than Pollock would be now. In point of logical development, the issue of color had been left an open one since

Matisse. Now, instead of turning on whether color could create illusion as convincingly as sculptural shading could, the issue turned on whether it could create a flatness as organically pictorial as that achieved by the light and dark patterning of Cubism. Matisse, continuing Cézanne's color as the Cubists had continued his drawing and modeling, left this issue rather open when, in his greatest works...he used flat grays, whites, and especially blacks to stiffen his other colors. But as it developed, for him too, that pictorial clarity, design, order, and unity could be saved only on or very near the surface, it also developed for him that flat color could best assert itself in large, enveloping tracts and through the contrast of such tracts. The moment one began to cut up and complicate flat shapes, as in Synthetic Cubism, the force and fullness of color was lost in checker-work.<sup>501</sup>

This comment by Greenberg may well have been the “bad movie” of Greene's memory. Would *Cain and Abel*, *Flagellation* and *The Studio* (1957) not be viewed by Greenberg precisely as “checker-work,” especially as the “checkers” of mosaic were Greene's inspiration for painting them? Of course, in *The Fall* and *Homage à Abel Sanchez*, and in another 1957 work, the triptych *Paradise* (discussed below), Greene was already moving away from an overall mosaic look toward larger and larger blocks of flat (if scumbled) color. Indeed, one might speculate that Greene may have heard, and been impacted by, some earlier Greenberg lecture that previewed the themes repeated in the Gauss Seminar. That scenario is unlikely, though. Rather, it makes sense that Greene had seen in the mosaic paintings just the aesthetic problems that Greenberg identified in the Princeton session and had already moved toward a correction in his large tracts of grays, browns, and especially, beginning with *Paradise*, blues.

Greenberg proceeded to focus on the painters he called the “true continuers” of Matisse: Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and Clyfford Still, all of whom were influenced by Hans Hofmann. All three of them (but not Hofmann) made very large pictures, and Greenberg introduced the question of color through the issue of scale. Scale was required to “blanket the spectator's field of vision [because] color could flood forward only where it seemed to have limitless room in which to expand” and where colors in the picture's environment, like the wall on which it hung, did not “intervene too soon.” What is absolutely essential to the art of Newman and the others, Greenberg continued, is “warmth and even heat” of color, thrusting the surface of the painting forward “into counter-illusion.” It was precisely to obliterate the light and dark contrasts of Cubism that Newman, Rothko and Still followed Hofmann in restoring color as a main factor in abstract

painting. Greenberg pronounced Newman's move—to play off against each other different shades of the same warm color—as the

most radical of our time...because it threatens the very principles of pictorial statement as such, which all depend on some sort of express contrast, whether of purer color or value. Newman's red on red, black on black and white on white throw visual perception into doubt and by doing so question the last and absolutely indispensable norm or convention of pictorial art. From this questioning itself springs some of the success of Newman's art, which in the end re-affirms and confirms the omnipotence of the eye by insinuation rather than declarative statement. But here I venture on dangerous ground.<sup>502</sup>

If Greenberg's denunciation of "checkerwork" was the bad movie of Greene's late-in-life memory, then the "dangerous ground" of questioning pictorial art may have been the spine chiller. Greene often expressed his admiration for Newman and even connected his own frequent use of vertical elements to divide the canvas to Newman's practice. In the Gauss lecture, Greenberg elaborated on Newman's vertical stripes, without using Newman's own term for them, "zips," but explaining that they could be understood as "parodies" of the vertical edges of the frame, "intending to destroy them as limiting elements by bringing them inside the picture in order to abstract rather than repeat them."

Hearing and understanding Greenberg's intellectually challenging exegesis of Newman's art as radical and avant-garde must have prompted, or at least encouraged, Greene to embrace Newman as an exemplar of intelligent and inventive art-making. Martica Sawin, after interviewing Greene, confirmed that around the time of the Greenberg lecture Greene began to comprehend color as form, absorbing from Newman's works how space could be divided through color. Greene told Sawin:

I discovered how crucial a line moving across a space could be. In a lot of pictures I will use a bar of color and create a drama of space expanding. In the painting *White Light* (Guggenheim Museum, 1961) the debt to Newman is particularly apparent in the almost vertical blue/white division. While in the beginning drawing defined all the shapes, by 1961 color defines space and form.<sup>503</sup>

*White Light* was included in the exhibition "American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists," presented at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1961. Apparently, Greene liked being called an "Abstract Imagist," even though, or maybe because, the term never caught on. In his catalogue Introduction, the exhibition curator, H. H. Arnason, attempted to carve out a niche

for “Abstract Imagists,” after undercutting his own effort by noting that “the word ‘Imagists’ is used as a gloss and criticism of the phrase ‘Abstract Expressionists.’ It has significance solely in the context of this exhibition.”<sup>504</sup> Arnason wrote that his exhibition included several “experiments in the creation of an abstract image,” all of which had a “sense of an event, a symbol, or an abstract interior or landscape.” Greene’s painting was listed among them, along with works of Enrico Donati, Paul Jenkins, William Ronald and Edward Dugmore. According to Arnason, Greene “combines large, regular color shapes with little, ambiguous objects that are rooted in his continuing interest in the presentation of the figure.”<sup>505</sup> (Figure 101, the best image the Guggenheim Museum could provide of *White Light*, does not do the work justice. Because of the plexiglass that covers the painting in the Guggenheim storage facility, my own photos, including the central detail reproduced in Figure 102, don’t either.)

Greene also had a personal connection with Newman and told Sawin he was “deeply moved by Newman’s work.” Greene told Sawin that after what he felt was a spiritual experience of viewing Newman’s *Stations of the Cross—Lema Sabachthani*, Greene “asked him about the religiosity in his work and he said, yes, it was there (but we were both drinking).”<sup>506</sup> It is hard, though, to imagine Newman relating to a form as obviously representational, at least in the context of Greene’s other work of 1961, as the altar in *White Light*. It is hard, too, to conceive of Newman acknowledging any debt to Greene, or to Chagall or Rattner, for helping, a decade or more earlier, to create a cultural environment in which a Jewish artist could use the Passion narrative as a vehicle for expressing a personal vision. And it would be dangerous to speculate, without evidence, on the psychology of Greene’s reaction to Newman and his painting—to postulate, for example, that Greene saw in Newman a father figure (or, better, in light of the twelve year age difference, an older brother or rabbi figure) or an alter ego who achieved in 1950s and ‘60s abstraction a perfect consummation of what Greene had begun in his spare 1940s figuration. Whatever the psychological impetus, Greene, like other “younger visionary artists,” felt the significant impact of what Harry F. Gaugh described as Newman’s “unflinching ethical standard, against which both the artist and the viewer must measure their personal *raisons d’etre*.”<sup>507</sup>

As Greenberg began to wind up what must have been a rather long talk (the last handwritten words on his script were “But I think I have gone far enough by now”), he discussed claims by various artists that Newman was “trying to make the continuation of painting impossible” and more broadly based fears that all norms in painting were under threat, including a “fear for the

frame.” It is not clear whether Greenberg was thinking about fears of the kind expressed by the contributors to *Reality*, or by practitioners of “advanced art” who believed Newman had gone too far, or by both. But, in any event, Greenberg used the concept of those claims to introduce, without specifically naming it, the idea of color field painting, to bring his history to the then present moment and, it could be argued, to provide guidelines for what Greene’s painting would—and also would not—become, not immediately in 1958, but in the decades thereafter. Greenberg’s typescript indicates that he said:

What seems...on the way to becoming the major expression of the fear for the frame lies in the growing practice...of leaving wide stretches of the picture empty or rather to act as empty, and of huddling the so-to-speak positive incidents of the picture either away from the frame or right next to it....The use of wide empty expanses—though it would be more accurate to call them negative rather than empty—connotes a threat to the frame at the same time as an answer to that threat. It means approaching the picture as a free field instead of as a limited one—that is, instead of as a receptacle. This is the direction in which I see a good deal of the most ambitious painting of very recent times tending, and here too scale is necessary. But in the final analysis a different issue arises than that of threatening or rescuing essential norms. Ambitious and enterprising painting today combines not against the norms of painting as such, but rather against the norms of easel painting as such. This is not, however, or it is not yet in favor, of the mural. Some intermediate genre seems to be emerging, a sort of panel painting (and I don’t mean wood panel) in which for the first time perhaps all the elements that used to belong to decorative as distinct from pictorial art transcend themselves in a new monumentality such as has before now seldom been associated with the pictorial.<sup>508</sup>

In a painting like *Approach*, of 1962 (Figure 103), Greene adapted Greenberg’s general descriptive template for advanced or “ambitious” painting at the end of the ‘50s: there is a wide stretch of a relatively dark color, acting as emptiness; the incidents of positive interest cluster (but perhaps don’t “huddle”) near two sides of the frame and are cropped in a way that suggests that the blue field extends indefinitely; and, at 84 x 84 inches, the painting approaches monumentality. What Greene’s paintings of the 1960s and beyond did not do, however, was to qualify for inclusion in what Greenberg, in his essay accompanying a 1964 exhibition at LACMA, termed “Post Painterly Abstraction.”<sup>509</sup> Greene insisted, from 1958 until the end of his life, on a personal iconography, on gesture and incident, on a variety of painted effects, on autographical drawing within paintings, on eschewing anonymity and crisp linearity—in short on remaining painterly. In this Greene would develop in parallel with, but never really among, painters who remained loyal

to the expressionist goals of the Abstract Expressionist movement, like his old friend and best man from Rome, Arthur Osver.<sup>510</sup>

Nevertheless, Greene also insisted, in a vein similar to that of the last paragraph of the *Reality Manifesto*, that Newman's own statements about his art should be accepted and taken at face value. At the N.Y.U. colloquium referred to above, Greene had a confrontational colloquy (of which just a sampling is quoted in the footnote) with the older painter Jack Tworkov about the title of Newman's "Stations of the Cross" during which Tworkov's insistence that titles of artworks are irrelevant to meaning prompted Greene to fulminate that "this business of denying the basis of a man's thought, which keeps coming up, to me is horrifying. Both as an artist and as respect for another artist in terms of integrity of someone else's work."<sup>511</sup> Perhaps it was his championing of the aims and accomplishments of other artists, rather than any particular element of his technique or facture, that led to Greene's reputation as a "painter's painter."

Although Greenberg had a major impact on Greene, there seems to have been no reciprocity in even a minor way. The two men may have known each other well enough for Greene to have access to Greenberg's address (which he probably gave Michael Fried, enabling Fried to start that relationship), but Greenberg must not have known, or remembered, anything about Greene's work or background when he wrote, in 1960, that "over the last hundred years artists have not been heard talking about Van Eyck or Van der Goes as they have talked about Giotto and Masaccio and Piero."<sup>512</sup> The section on Greene in Baur's catalogue for the 1955 Whitney show, *The New Decade: 35 American Painters and Sculptors*, which Greenberg would certainly have seen, included a quote from Greene about his longstanding interest in van der Goes, an idea Greene repeated in 1961 in his article "A Case in Point."<sup>513</sup>

**Paradise.** Greene's major work of 1957, *Paradise (Triptych)*, (Figure 85) suggests that the artist had anticipated the lessons of Greenberg's Gauss lecture, so that the shock Greene felt at Greenberg's presentation may have been, at least partially, one of recognition. Had Greenberg been aware of *Paradise*, he could have used it in his Gauss lecture to illustrate the announcement of a new kind of "panel painting," somewhere between a mural and an easel picture, with a wide area of "empty" space and incidents of interest clustered near the edges. In his notes for a talk to the Detroit Watercolor Society in 1967, Greene confirmed that *Paradise* was "a breakthrough for

me...the idea of a vast continuing space and the blue expanse...its size (130" width) takes on a dominance."<sup>514</sup> An undated typewritten sheet about the triptych makes clear that Greene had a specific symbolic program for the work, based once again in the Biblical story of the Fall in the Garden of Eden:

“Paradise” ..... the total image is hallucinatory, a hallucination of evil occurring amidst a sense of wonder..... although symbols are used, their meanings must be mainly felt rather than read.....

Central Panel ..... essentially this is the expulsion, tragic in intent...Adam’s shape is almost that of a fallen angle....the pervasive blue is an old and simple symbol for a sense of heaven.....

Left Panel ..... the main shape is a monolith, this is meant to be the serpent panel and the monolith relates to the idea of a powerful devouring upright serpent....the haunted feel of the above rather than any literal look of a serpent.....the round shape on top is in part apple shape becoming moon shape or small sun, the apple becoming a sort of distant, strange and pervasive light.

Right Panel.....the upside down head, severed arms are the crucified man.....using the fall of man in Eden as a foretelling of crucifixions.<sup>515</sup>

I am grateful to the curators and preparators at the Loeb Art Center at New York University for setting up the triptych just for me to view and photograph. As can be seen in the photo, the lighting in the Loeb workroom was not ideal. Because of inconsistencies between the typed descriptive sheet, on the one hand, and markings on the backs of the paintings and other evidence in their files, on the other, the Loeb staff and I were unsure of the order in which the panels were intended be arranged. For example, the largest panel is described as “central panel,” but a photo in the museum files shows that at some point in time the largest panel was actually installed at N.Y.U. on the viewer’s left (Figure 88). There are also inconsistencies in the dating of the painting; the catalog of Greene’s 1963 Corcoran retrospective and various items in the Greene archive list 1957 as its date, but the records of the Grey Gallery of Art at N. Y. U. attribute it to 1958.

I was surprised by the triptych when I saw it, as I had read Greene’s description of his enchantment with the saturated cerulean blue of his Tunisian honeymoon and was not expecting the somewhat washed-out mix of (to me) conflicting blues—some warmer, scumbled over a red ground, some cooler, layered over greys or greens—that I perceived. But scrolling through internet



photos of Sidi-Bou-Said suggested that Greene may have been remembering (but not trying to replicate) how the uniform vivid blue of shutters, balconies and doors differed from, and rendered less vivid, the dissimilar blues of sea and sky. Or he may have been thinking of the subtle variations in the monumental color fields of Rothko and Newman. Dore Ashton provided helpful information about the facture of the triptych, writing in the catalogue for Greene's 1963 Retrospective that the blues were "laid on with a light touch, plane over plane, so that the wafting inner light is dispersed through the three panels as a continuum."<sup>516</sup>

Greene's typewritten program for *Paradise* raises a difficult interpretive problem for students of his post-1957 painting. How could the viewer or art historian comply with Greene's requirement that "although symbols are used, their meanings must be mainly felt, rather than read" when the very statement of that requirement is followed immediately by a statement of how to read the painting? Did Greene mean that a painting's title should structure the beholder's feeling about, or arising from, the painting? Must the viewer have mastered the painting, finding an emotional bottom line or take-away? Were viewers to look to their unconscious or historians to psychoanalytic theory in order to feel or discover meaning without reading it? But Greene did not think of himself, and his commentators did not think of him, as one of the Surrealist painters, although he acknowledged "links" to them.<sup>517</sup> Nor did Greene seem to have been a particularly active participant (despite possible ideological affinity) in what Michael Leja described as "modern man discourse," which might have suggested what he was getting at. At best, Greene's instruction for viewers of *Paradise* was a paradox; at worst, it was an impossibility.

Greene began a series of more normally sized, vividly saturated blue paintings with *Foreshadowing* of 1958 (Figure 89). The human figure—a female form in a coffin, perhaps with missing limbs, or, in Alison Greene's opinion, a woman seated on a large chair or throne, visibly pregnant—is more recognizable than in the previous few paintings, and *Foreshadowing* both recalls the sad men of the late 1940s paintings and retains something of the feel of the mosaic experiments of the early '50s, all suggesting that it was painted before the Greenberg lecture. The olive green shape descending from the top of the painting seems menacing, even devouring the mint green shape behind it. *Sphinx*, of 1959 (Figure 90) is a set of variations on blue, its strong verticals echoing Newman, and its biomorphic (but flattened) kidney shape introducing a motif that Greene would continue to use for decades. Recognizable figures, one of them bandaged, and a cruciform shape return to Greene's work in *Pietà*, of 1959 (Figure 91), for which Greene's title

signals his meaning. Here large tracts of somber gray and a large blob of loosely painted orange have overpowered the Mediterranean blue. It would have been out of character for Greene to intend the orange as a halo, but the placement requires that such symbolism be considered. It is not clear whether Greene made *Pietà* before Greenberg's sixth Gauss lecture or after it, but the painting seems to be the painter's last depiction of whole and easily recognizable, if abstracted, human figures.

**Toward a Retrospective.** Greene identified 1960 as the time when he belatedly used the Tunisian blue that he had stored in his color memory since his and Sigrid's honeymoon. Unfortunately, neither a location nor a color reproduction has been found for the painting *Sidi-bou-Said*, which, given its title, must have been the most authentic recreation of that memory and was exhibited at, and probably sold for the offering price of \$1500 from, the Sixty-Fourth American Exhibition of Paintings and Sculpture at the Art Institute of Chicago. A black and white photo of the painting (Figure 92) suggests that its formal organization resembled that of *Le Ciel Amoureux*, discussed below. The photograph of *Heilige Nacht* (Figure 93), of 1960, suggests that Greene made its blue particularly shimmering and both tempered and emphasized its strong Newmanesque verticals with subtle organic extensions.

In the same year, 1961, that *Sidi-bou-Said* was exhibited in Chicago, Greene's *Le Ciel Amoureux* (Figure 94), another of his 1960 blue paintings, was one of a number of works chosen by MoMA director René d'Harnoncourt and curator William Seitz (Greene's former colleague at Princeton) to represent the United States in the VI Bienal do Museu de Arte Moderna in Sao Paulo, Brazil, at the time the largest art exhibition in the Western Hemisphere. The MoMA officials selected paintings by Robert Motherwell, sculpture by Reuben Nakian, large woodcuts by Leonard Baskin, and a group show of eleven artists illustrating the "great diversity of styles in recent work by Americans." Seitz chose two works by each of the group show artists to showcase that diversity, including figural paintings by Leon Golub and Richard Diebenkorn, geometric abstractions by Ellsworth Kelly and Burgoyne Diller, experimental construction by Lee Bontecou and "abstract expressionist" paintings by Sonia Gechtoff, Richard Pousette-Dart and Stephen Greene.<sup>518</sup> The biennial exhibition catalogue noted that Greene had for a long time been a painter of anguished or religious themes, but in his latest work he had made abstract paintings of vast

spaces, “sensual and optimistic” at the same time, with bright reds and yellows and “ethereal blues.”<sup>519</sup> The catalogue contrasted Greene’s move to abstraction with Diebenkorn’s career arc to that date, from an important West Coast abstract artist to one who applied his prior techniques to thoughtful but disquieting landscapes, still lives and isolated people.<sup>520</sup> Of course, Diebenkorn returned to abstract painting later in his life. The issue of how much Greene returned to figuration, or of whether he ever entirely left it, is a theme of this project.

*Le Ciel Amoureux* is owned by the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, whose website describes the work as presenting “an intricate fusion of painterly, subject-oriented composition and Color Field painting” and identifies the Tunisian honeymoon as inspiration for the “lush” Mediterranean blue that “occupies most of the canvas in one velvety-smooth field.” The author of the museum’s description goes on to speculate (perhaps influenced by the Sao Paulo catalogue) about the impact the painting could have on the viewer and about the artist’s motivation:

It gives an impression of overt optimism. The threatening form at left, suggestive of the gaping jaws of a predatory animal, is the counterpoint, figuratively and pictorially, and one wonders if it symbolizes the transitory nature of love and happiness. Greene shared the Abstract Expressionist sensibility that the act of painting revealed one’s innermost feelings and, therefore, art could touch an emotional core within the viewer.<sup>521</sup>

At the time of the Sao Paulo exhibition, *Le Ciel Amoureux* was owned by Col. Edwin Janss, who donated it to the museum a few years later. The other Greene painting that Seitz chose for Sao Paulo was *Encounter*, at that point still in the possession of the Staempfli Gallery, reproduced in color to illustrate Greene’s 1961 statement in “A Case in Point,” and two years later included in Greene’s Corcoran retrospective. The color reproduction suggests that the color palette of *Encounter*, unlike the vibrant blues of *Le Ciel Amoureux*, was a more somber mix of greys and blacks, with narrow bars of reds and a vertical slash of orange. Its whereabouts are unknown.

In 1961 Greene began teaching at Columbia University (having taught at the Art Students League and Pratt Institute after the end of his appointment at Princeton) and had his first one-person exhibition at the George Staempfli Gallery. Greene had great respect for Grace Borgenicht, his dealer since the mid-1950s, but wanted to be identified with what he viewed as the urban, sophisticated Upper East Side Galleries and the accepted art world. He saw himself as a classicist, not a radical.<sup>522</sup> The Staempfli Gallery began operations in only 1959, but quickly became the highest profile dealer Greene was ever associated with.

It was also in 1961 that *Art in America* chose the gradual shift in Greene's painting as a vehicle to present, "in microcosm, many aspects of the development of American art during the past 15 years." The magazine proposed that Greene's personal statement could illuminate the approach to painting of many of the "important artists of the present generation," naming Rothko, Guston, Kline, and De Kooning, all of whom, like Greene,

...owe a visible debt to Pollock, in that he liberated their styles, but each plainly demonstrates a powerful individuality. This assertive individuality distinguishes the painter of mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century America from most of his predecessors, and it is this that has established the American artist in his prominent position in world painting.<sup>523</sup>

Quoting Greene's personal statement at some length provides context for the frequent snippets of it that appear elsewhere in this paper. The statement both suggests what may have impelled the Corcoran Gallery to organize its Stephen Greene retrospective and gives a sense of how intensely self-analytical and self-referential Greene was:

The figure appears from time to time in my present work but in a different manner and is not easily recognizable. This does not mean that I am less interested in making human contact in painting, or that the passion has gone underground. I now want the painting itself to be the passion rather than to illustrate it.

I changed and shifted the forms in my work not out of a desire to become completely something else, but to see anew what I am about. I do not want to become the victim of my own myths. New possibilities must be allowed to occur.

Often, in our century, the image can emerge during the act of painting itself. Incidentally, this private image the painter can hope will have public meaning, but to presuppose what and where one's public may be is to court official art. Official art is easy to classify and I do not want to consider myself as an "ex-figure painter" for the same reasons that I would not want to think of myself as another "abstract painter."

I am making something else, something more involved than these classifications imply. I desire my own place, my own name.<sup>524</sup>

Greene's reference to *myths* suggests that, in his self-fashioning, he was both differentiating himself from and associating himself with the Abstract Expressionists. In constructing a model of his own individual agency, Greene acknowledged but did not embrace a relationship with the power center that those painters and their supporters constituted. Fifteen

years before Greene's statement, in 1946, Rothko had referred to himself and his friends as a small "band of myth-makers."<sup>525</sup> Like them, Greene was interested both in mythic archetypes as subject matter (and to avoid victimization he was turning away from overt reference) and the artist's own mythic practice. Like them, too, he was interested in affecting the beholder's emotions. In 1943, Gottlieb, Rothko and Newman had stressed that "[n]o possible set of notes can explain our paintings. Their explanation must come out of a consummated experience between picture and onlooker."<sup>526</sup> Greene frequently reiterated the point of the second sentence, but his explanations for *Paradise* and his statement in *A Case In Point* itself suggest that the voluble Greene had trouble fully accepting the idea of withholding artist's "notes."

In *Altar* (Figure 95), of 1961, Greene continued the color field approach of broad areas of flat color, but a somber gray replaced the vivid blues of 1960. Unlike most of the titles he assigned to the paintings of this period (for example, *Encounter*, *Sentinel*, *White Light*, *Departure*, *Approach*, *Night Light*, *Vigil*, *Night*, *Chasm*, and *Combat*, all exhibited at the Corcoran in 1963), *Altar* (also in the Corcoran show) insists on instructing the viewer as to what is represented by its central shapes (although the meaning of the tall shapes to the viewer's left is unclear—perhaps a figure, another altar or just shapes). Alison Greene, in a short essay accompanying a 2016 exhibition of her father's "1960s Abstractions," commented on the significance of his titles, noting that the frequent use of "Night" (e.g., *Green Night*) and "Light" (e.g., *Grey Light*) can be seen to "map the liminal territories Greene sought to chart and fix in place." She added that titles evoking activity, like *Vigil*, *The Ladder* and *Descent*, while they can have an allegorical dimension, might also be seen as "metaphors for studio practice, the daily effort to conquer the canvas."<sup>527</sup> Such an approach to a painting like *Combat* (Figure 99), of 1963, might not convince a viewer to discard a first impression of phallic and, more literally in view of the title, martial imagery.

Three paintings of 1962 and 1963, *Vigil* (Figure 96), *Chasm* (Figure 97), and *The Ladder* (Figure 98), can be considered together. In these works, Greene continued to make his primary blues "velvety smooth," but the blue forms became much smaller, contrasting with wider fields of dull gray and muddy brown. Large areas of red or mauve were loosely and roughly painted, with the large brush strokes of thin washes clearly visible. Bright, almost neon, colors were confined to thin filaments or small dabs, reprising the glimpses of striped shirts under the smocks of the "Sad Men" of the 1940s. The paintings are basically square, but, as usual for Greene, he made the movement mostly vertical. From his inventory of memories of previous paintings, Greene added

the occasional bone shape, ladder fragment or crutch, now slightly but intentionally incongruous in the painted context.

Several of the paintings of the early 1960s were analyzed in reviews of the Corcoran retrospective. Barbara Rose, writing in *Art International*, wrote that the blue pictures, especially *White Light* and *Sidi-Bou-Said*, were Greene's "happiest moment." Less successful, Rose thought, were more recent paintings like *Vigil* and *Combat*, in which the artist appeared

...wary of a too easy gorgeousness. Their colors are deliberately harsh and muted, tending toward the neutral and greyed out. In the severity and subtlety of their color relationships, which give in neither to Matisse nor to Rothko, I find them admirable, but in contrast to the blue paintings, they seem crowded, lacking in unity, and hence anecdotal.<sup>528</sup>

Rose also complimented Greene on his ability to keep his paint surface looking fresh, except in the most recent paintings in the Retrospective, whose "low-keyed harmonies" showed a "tendency to drabness." Although one should never be surprised by critical integrity, it does seem odd that Barbara Rose, who, with Frank Stella, had chosen Stephen and Sigrid as their children's godparents, would be so blunt in expressing publicly and for the record her negative reaction to some of Greene's work. (Marshall Price suggested to me that I wouldn't be surprised by Ms Rose's candor if I knew her.) History has not recorded the artist's reaction to Rose's review.

Jean M. White, a staff reporter for the Washington Post, walked with the artist through the installation at the Corcoran and, along the way, he repeated to her his mantra: "I really don't believe that I am an abstractionist...I use specific symbols and images. These can't be thought of as figures either. I'm really neither an abstractionist nor a figure painter."<sup>529</sup> After its run at the Corcoran, the Retrospective moved to Minneapolis, then to Kalamazoo, then to Nashville, then to the Staempfli Gallery on East 77<sup>th</sup> Street in New York, which by this time had become Greene's dealer. The New York Times reviewer, Brian O'Doherty, saw it there and waxed rhapsodic, headlining his review "Stephen Greene, Perfectionist."<sup>530</sup> Because O'Doherty was (and is) well-respected, in his various alter egos, as an NEA executive and conceptual artist, as well as an art critic, and because his occasional negative critical assessments (of Frank Stella's early work, for example) prove that he was not an easy mark, and because his short but resonant review may have been the source for later commentators' classifying Greene as a "painter's painter," the review is worth quoting almost in full:<sup>531</sup>

Stephen Greene...makes the word "artist" take on its fullest meaning. His style is one of the most perfect in American art, utilizing all the skills of a consummate picture maker.

Seductive though his pictures are, they have never been content to indulge in mere sensation. When his works are at their most exquisite they are charged with a symbolic angst in its acutest existence.

Thus the muffled forms and silent encounters of his paintings are ghostly simulacrum of anxieties and anatomies perilously suspended. Kidney forms kink around skeins; needles pierce fields of color with an almost physical sensation and swell finally to bladders; scarlets blurt out until other calming colors gradually draw them back.

The impression is of a febrile sensibility, constantly absorbing the shocks at its nerve endings by totally sophisticated means. Mr. Greene is a perfectionist with a marvelous obsessive flaw that keeps him continually on the move, a connoisseur of sensations continually wounding the exquisite. It is a very self-conscious art, perfect in form, painfully sensitive, reminiscent of some French symbolist poets'.<sup>532</sup>

If O'Doherty's observations did not ring so true and did not so observantly and succinctly capture Greene's personality as well as his art, a cynical reader might wonder whether the review was intended as a send-up of overblown art critical writing, ripe for quotation in a Maurice Grosser-type spoof. O'Doherty's admiration for Greene, though, was genuine, and is consistent with a tendency to sincere boosterism of a person who left jobs as art critic and editor of *Art in America* to become an influential senior staffer at the National Endowment for the Arts.

The idea of "symbolist angst" mentioned by O'Doherty had been developed more fully by Dore Ashton, O'Doherty's predecessor at the *New York Times*, in the Introduction to the catalog of Greene's Corcoran Retrospective.<sup>533</sup> Ashton perceived in Greene elements in common with other "born symbolists"—concern with the possible meanings of hallucinations or visions and faith in the idea that "what is mediated in the imagination will inevitably yield itself in the work."<sup>534</sup> While Ashton both mentioned the Existentialist currents in Greene's art and interspersed quotes from his writings and interviews, she organized the catalogue Introduction not around the artist's words but around developments in the arc of his symbolism, from the early works of stylized figures symbolically imprisoned in the late 1940s and early '50s to the provocatively ambiguous symbols of the late '50s and early '60s: "sexual organs, gaping mouths...fixated eyes...brought together with the remnants of Greene's former symbology."<sup>535</sup> Not surprisingly, Ashton did not

share Barbara Rose's complaint about the color palette of the painting *Vigil* (Figure 96) and used it as an example of Greene's late symbolism. The forked shape in what Ashton called the foreground "is at once a crutch, a reminder of the snake in paradise, a bone. But it is no more one thing than the other." (The shape immediately calls to mind *The Performance*, where it functioned as a grimly stilt-like crutch.) And, Ashton continued, the dominating arching forms resemble pincers, recalling both instruments of torture and Greene's preoccupation with "the voracious maw, the hopper which grinds man's dream so fine that only the artist can piece it together." Greene's "taste for the dream world, his attraction to the marvelous and the terrible, his passion for the equivocal," were all, Ashton concluded, characteristic of the symbolist temperament.<sup>536</sup>

Greene himself referred to *Vigil* as "representative of my work in the sixties at its best" and offered it to the Tate in London as a donation. Ronald Alley, Keeper of the Modern Collection at Tate, sent inquiries to Greene in 1963, 1969 and 1976 as he was updating the museum's official catalogue description of Greene's *The Return*, which Kirk Askew had donated in 1961. No record was found of a reply from the artist to the 1963 inquiry. In 1969, Alley sent a "provisional draft" write-up which apparently included the last line in the 1950 *Life* article about the artist, quoting him as trying in his paintings to express "not despair about man but a profound respect for his attempts to find his salvation." Greene replied politely, but with a hint of the touchiness that Frank Stella described.

Dear Mr. Alley:

Thank you for your letter re. *The Return*....There is so little to say about it except that it is a family portrait: father, son, mother and very much the work of a young man. The quotation from Life Magazine caused me embarrassment [sic] at the time it came out as it still does now. I never then thought about "salvation" and do not now and I could never had [sic] said what Life said I did. I therefore think it best that any such heavy handed ideas be left unmentioned.

I would so deeply like to be represented at the Tate by a more recent, more gifted work and if it would ever interest the Tate I would like to give the Gallery as a gift from the artist the best recent work that I have in my possession....

I trust that the above offer is not a too forward one.<sup>537</sup>

Alley graciously invited Greene to send photographs of the work he proposed to donate, assuring him that his offer would be presented to the Tate Board of Trustees but cautioning that



they sometimes didn't accept such gifts. Alley also provided some tips on how the artist could make the gift to a British institution and still get a tax benefit as if he were donating to a U. S. museum. Greene selected *Vigil* and sent slides, but the board voted not to accept the donation. In conveying the decision, Alley wrote "May I say how sorry I am personally to disappoint you over this."<sup>538</sup> Apparently Greene didn't hold a grudge. When Alley tried again, in 1976, with more pointed questions about the source of the conflict depicted in *The Return* and the meanings of its details, Greene replied with a fulsome description of his illness in Rome in 1949 and his intended symbology, the substance of which is discussed in the text at Note 292. Alley quoted the reply at length in his 1981 Tate Gallery catalogue and Tate's current online summary of the painting contains several quotations from it.<sup>539</sup>

**The Judgment of Fried.** O'Doherty's review of the Retrospective must have been gratifying to Greene, but it wasn't published until May, 1964, when the exhibition reached New York, about a year after the run at the Corcoran and the disappointment of a negative evaluation by Michael Fried, Greene's former student at Princeton. Fried's review of the exhibition is, to my mind, brilliant, patronizing and, at one or two points, analytically unfair. Fried began by announcing the importance of the work exhibited and of his own critique of it, in each case both to the state of American painting in the early 1960s and, anachronistically, to the themes of this dissertation as they stretched back to the time of *Reality*:

The crucial problem raised by Stephen Greene's work is this: can a painter today make paintings which are meant to express a particular mood or attitude toward reality and which yet manage to satisfy the imperious and rather restricting demands of a sensibility trained on the abstract painting of the past twenty-five years? The sensibility in question is neither mine alone nor a mere generalization. On the contrary, evidence in the paintings themselves, especially those painted from 1957 on, suggests that it is at least partly Greene's as well.<sup>540</sup>

Fried introduced at the outset what can be seen, only partially cynically, as the thrust of his critique: after six or seven years of painting, Greene wanted a change; he knew where he wanted to go, but he didn't know how to get there, mostly because he didn't know how to be, or didn't want to be, a synthetic cubist painter. Fried argued that the same initial problem "lies at or near the heart of Gorky's achievement," but Gorky succeeded in solving it "by way of a variant of

Synthetic Cubism practiced in New York among advanced painters” in the 1930s and ‘40s. Not so, according to Fried, in Greene’s early paintings that showed only a “minimal awareness” of Cubism. The point, Fried continued, “is not so much whether these first paintings were good or bad, but rather that the internal consistency of style and expressive intention which they achieve is brought off at the price of a formal hermeticism in regard to what seems in retrospect to have been the modernist painting of the moment.” But, Fried’s reader asks him, can you blame Greene for not knowing in the mid- to late 1940s that by 1953 or ’54 he would be ready for a change? Fried himself seemed to partially concede the point, but then ignored it, racing to his evaluative conclusion:

And this in turn might or might not provide grounds for a dogmatic evaluation of the paintings: it would require extensive theoretical discussion, beyond the scope of the present essay, to justify a stand one way or the other. But it is undeniable, I think, that Green’s lack of grounding in Cubist practice is at least partly responsible for the enormous difficulties he seems to have encountered once he made up his mind to move away from his first manner.<sup>541</sup>

The paintings with which Fried found most fault included *Flagellation* (Figure 80) and *Homage à Abel Sanchez* (Figure 83). Fried quoted at length Greene’s personal statement in “A Case in Point” and, with a sharp eye for his opponent’s weakness, focused on the sentence “I began to want the painting to refer back to itself, to its own space.” Fried insisted that such a notion “inevitably calls up the reflexive internal structural logic of Synthetic Cubism,” a logic that would have required a radical plastic reorganization of the figures that Greene, with his effort to marry figure and background by the use of broken colors, did not accomplish or even attempt. In addition, Fried found that the paintings lacked unity, “[t]here is on one hand the image and on the other the surface pattern, and although the colors that create the latter are always consonant with the expressive content of the former there is no principle of formal coherence that unites the two.” Fried then proceeded to contemplate repainting the “richly problematic” *Abel Sanchez*, an image which, Fried suggests,

...might have been rendered in terms of Cubist logic without loss of feeling and with an immense gain in internal consistency....Instead, in an effort to lose and keep the figure at the same time, Green has simply abstracted from it to a more or less easily readable prone shape. In paintings such as this and *Foreshadowing* (1959) [Figure 89], one senses Greene feeling his way—in accordance with the new demands made by his sensibility—toward a more abstract kind of image, but without the aid of a

generally applicable principle of abstraction. This last point is important: just this lack is the most serious flaw in Greene's artistic equipment. At any rate it underlies the radical inconsistency of these two paintings, in which the absence of such a principle allows him to preserve the figure relatively intact compared to the rest of what is on the canvas.<sup>542</sup>

In light of the offense given by supercilious phrases like "feeling his way," "radical inconsistency," and, especially, "artistic equipment," it is painful to admit that Fried was right. I have seen both *Abel Sanchez* and *Flagellation* in person, although not under the best gallery conditions, and confess to having found them unsatisfying by reason of the inconsistency Fried referred to in the last quoted sentence. More compellingly, in the introduction to the Retrospective catalogue, Ashton allowed that

...*Homage à Abel Sanchez* while not successful in the abstraction of the figure is a transitional painting of importance....[T]he theme is expounded in terms of a twilight atmosphere, painted thinly—a groundplane of orange overwashed with misty grays—signifying the tragedy in stronger emotional terms than the prone figure alone could.<sup>543</sup>

How ironic it would be if Fried took his cue directly from Ashton's admission, against her painter's interest, in the exhibition catalogue itself.

But Fried more likely took his cue from elsewhere—from Greenberg, certainly, and from whatever else caused him to be preoccupied, around 1963, with the idea of Cubism in the context of other painters, too. For example, a month before publication of his review of Greene's Retrospective, Fried's review for *Art International* of a Hans Hofmann show included the following: "In large measure Hofmann's self-awareness is an awareness of the achievements and implications of Cubism and of more or less Cubist painting among the first American Abstract Expressionists." Fried next quoted a more complicated statement by Greenberg to basically the same effect and illustrated the force of Greenberg's remarks with an extended comparison of Hofmann with Kandinsky, in which Hofmann's paintings emerged as superior because they were "informed" by an awareness of Cubism.<sup>544</sup> However, just a year later, again in *Art International*, Fried wrote that the best then-current painting was harder to characterize than new painting of any time in the previous one hundred years, both because of artists' emphasis on color (to the exclusion of questions of representation, illusionism, brushwork and value contrast) and because "the formal terminology evolved to describe Cubist and post-Cubist painting begins here to reach the farthest limits of its usefulness." Fried provided as examples the work of Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland,

Jules Olitski and Frank Stella, for whom “awareness of Cubism functions at most as a kind of negative check to keep them from giving in to the spatial tensions and modes of notions of Cubism itself.”<sup>545</sup> Furthermore, Fried repeated the point regarding limits of usefulness in his 1965 essay “Three American Painters: Noland, Olitski, Stella,” this time applying it to Pollock, with respect to certain of whose most successful pictures “the formal issues at stake... cannot be characterized in Cubist terms.” Indeed, according to Fried, there is “no more fundamental task confronting the formal critic today than the evolution and refinement of a post-Cubist critical vocabulary adequate to the job of defining the formal preoccupations of modernist painting since Pollock.”<sup>546</sup> While Fried would doubtless have said in 1965 that Greene’s was not the kind of advanced, or maybe even modernist, painting for which Cubist terminology was no longer useful, nevertheless, as even Fried himself seemed to recognize in the musings referred to below, there was a certain unfairness in so fiercely subjecting Greene’s paintings to evaluative criteria that only a short while later Fried himself found irrelevant to the work of various of Greene’s contemporaries.

Returning to the review of the Greene Retrospective, Fried moved from his condemnation of *Abel Sanchez* to a somewhat more positive reaction to *Heilige Nacht* (Figure 84) and *Sidi-bou-Said* (Figure 83), where he found a level of internal consistency similar to that in Greene’s paintings of the 1940s, with simple but metaphorically suggestive shapes and paint with a dry but luminous quality.

In the context of what one gathers are Greene’s aspirations these are successful paintings. But it is hard to avoid remarking how the status of the picture plane—perhaps the most crucial single issue in modernist painting—is left ambiguous....Further, the two-dimensional relation of shapes to one another is not dictated by a lucid and self-evident formal logic so much as by a kind of thinking that one associates with the arrangement of, say, still-life elements in representational painting.<sup>547</sup>

Fried agreed with Greene that the latter was neither an “ex-figure painter” nor an “abstract painter,” but suggested that the artist’s attitude and its fruition in his paintings inevitably led to experienced beholders of modernist painting finding “even his best work formally equivocal.” At that point, Fried stopped short to engage in an interesting soliloquy on unsolved philosophical problems faced by critics of modernist art, with the subtle implication that Greenberg, by then Fried’s mentor, should already have solved them. Fried’s musing began with the admission “It may be objected in turn that such a judgment would entail the application to Greene’s work of an

aesthetic he does not subscribe to, and I'm not sure what the answer to this is...." Fried found the problem to be an extremely difficult one to deal with,

...not only because there has been no serious discussion of the philosophical grounds on which the aesthetic of modernist painting ultimately rests—this on the assumption that such grounds actually exist—but also because Greene's recent work continually partakes of the idiom of modernist painting without, as it were, being concerned with its grammar. This may or may not amount to a negative criticism of the works themselves....<sup>548</sup>

Whatever comfort Greene may have taken from Fried's comment that his critique of the paintings was not necessarily negative would have certainly been nullified by the charge that they were ungrammatical. More importantly, regarding the ambiguity Fried found in the status of Greene's picture plane, the artist's own musings on that subject in his oral history conversation with Dorothy Seckler as they looked at his *Biograph* drawings (see text after Note 575) confirmed that by 1968 such ambiguity had become intentional, or at least mindfully contemplated, as a mode of expression.

Fried spent very little time discussing "meaning" in Greene's work, as he was "inclined to leave the elucidation of this vision [of the world] to commentators such as Miss Dore Ashton," but, mentioning Existentialism, he did spin out a comparison of Greene and Francis Bacon, in which Greene came across as more honest and less facile than the English painter. Fried found some similarities in the ways the two painters used Crucifixion imagery. Greene's ideas on the subject have been discussed above (see, e.g., text at Note 153); Bacon's thoughts were referred to and quoted by his biographer, Michael Peppiatt: "Having played such a central role in European art, the Crucifixion was, he allowed, a useful construct, a 'marvellous armature on which to hang all kinds of thoughts and feelings'."<sup>549</sup>

Fried's final paragraph may have been an effort to counteract a possible impression of disloyalty toward his former instructor, as he praised Greene's paint-handling, compositional unity, strong and "deeply personal" color, and

...an image that is at once clearly described and ambiguously moving. In his best paintings that ambiguity enters only after the thing has been described, not in the handling of the paint itself; and in light of the temptations offered by Abstract Expressionist practice this evinces considerable courage.<sup>550</sup>

Then Fried pulled back, writing that there was not much point in offering an assessment of Greene's work as a whole or of individual paintings. Possibly, Fried wrote in conclusion, "I have over-emphasized certain formal questions. But if I have done so it is because I am convinced of their importance, and because the expressive aspects of Greene's sensitive, intelligent paintings tend to take care of themselves."<sup>551</sup>

I asked Alison Greene, who was a little girl of six when Fried's review was published, if she knew, from later discussion with her father, how he reacted to it. She initially replied, simply: "It hurt his feelings."<sup>552</sup> But in later correspondence she reported that her father and Fried maintained a friendship for many years after the review and that "Michael sent my father almost every book he published with a warm note as well—as I recall, my father particularly liked Michael's *Absorption and Theatricality*."<sup>553</sup>

Disappointment, and probably humiliation, at his former student's specialist critique must have been tempered for Greene by the wide circulation of *Time*'s short, but laudatory and sympathetic, review of the Retrospective. Its title, "Painter of Presences," referred to one of several quotations from the artist's utterances (most of which have been quoted above) that the article tied to elements of his biography: "To turn away from anything that was a scene rather than a presence became important."<sup>554</sup> One of the works mentioned in the article was *Departure*, (Figure 100), among the blue paintings of 1961. The anonymous author of the article foretold what would be a recurring motif in Greene's art from that point forward, anatomical references enmeshed in non-figural space: "a dismembered, bony elbow reminiscent of his maimed early figures, but now serving as one of the presences, like intruders into a tranquil world, that sweep in from the painting's edges to perform a ritual in the center." And the final sentence of the article captured Greene, quoted at the time of his Retrospective, modulating his personal vision as well as changing the look of his pictures, in each case toward increasing ambiguity: "Though Greene's late oils are flamboyant with color, the dark side persists in black maws that gape open in his canvases. 'There is always something terrible happening in a beautiful world. But everything is not all black—and if it's not all black, it's not a total tragedy.'"<sup>555</sup>

The idea of tragedy was very much on Greene's mind in the late '50s and early '60s. In 1962 his essay "The Tragic Sense in Modern Art," perhaps his most erudite, if somewhat disjointed, piece of writing, was published in the book *From Sophocles to Picasso: The Present-day Vitality of the Classical Tradition*, the record of a 1958 conference sponsored by

the American Council of Learned Societies and held at the University of Indiana. As a participant in the conference and the book, Greene was in prestigious scholarly company, including: as organizer and editor, Whitney Oates, chairman of the classics department at Princeton, where Greene had been teaching; Eric Havelock, chairman of the classics departments at Harvard and then Yale; Otto Brendel, art history professor at Columbia and before that at Indiana University (and father of Cornelia Brendel Foss, who had been Greene's student in Bloomington and, with her husband Lukas, Greene's friend in Rome); H. D. F. Kitto, the translator of the works of Sophocles and author of the famous book, *The Greeks*, which introduced the baby boomer generation of high school and college students (including the author) to Greek literature and thought; and Roger Sessions, composer and teacher, whose opera *Montezuma* was just being completed.<sup>556</sup>

Given the conference theme of "present-day vitality," Greene may have shocked, or at least disappointed, his listeners and readers as he began by assuring them that twentieth-century art had repudiated the classical tradition, its forms, its myths, and its concentration on nature, perfect truth and canons of beauty.

...What, according to the Greek mode, would have been considered disproportion and disorder now underlie our images. We do not commence with a unity which is ideal or express ourselves in terms of concrete experience. We begin with the fragment, and the importance of fragmentation is not lost when the work is completed. The concept of the classical style as "idealistic" and of classical art as representing a better world of ethically and aesthetically superior beings is foreign to us.<sup>557</sup>

While not completely antithetical to the *Reality* Statement, Greene's tone and focus in the beginning part of his essay were certainly inconsistent with it. With its emphasis on fragmentation, the conference presentation with which the essay originated was an important marker in Greene's transition not only to abstraction, but to his own abstractionist mode. The Bloomington conference in January 1958 was—a full year before Greenberg's Gauss lecture on Barnett Newman—a key piece of evidence in the questioning of Greene's own "chills down the spine" explanation for becoming an abstract artist.<sup>558</sup>

After negating any vitality of the classical tradition in 1958's art and describing Greek iconography as unimportant to his own work, Greene identified what was essential to him in Greek art: the tragic sense in Greek drama. He wrote that the self-consciousness, self-observation, and

self-criticism that derive from the Greek tradition enable the “philosophical problem of the worth of life” to continue to be “a dominant theme of art in the twentieth century.”<sup>559</sup> After commenting on the classically tragic themes in the stories of Oedipus and Antigone, Greene asked “...what remains of the tragic sense in twentieth-century art?” and answered “[t]he new myth lies in the fragments of Everyman’s existence, the fragments of his imagination, his irrationality, his unconscious, his violence, and his absurdity...Our tragic sense derives from a sense of man with or without his image.” Greene wove into his disquisition references to Picasso, Rouault, Giacometti, Franz Kline, De Kooning, Beckmann and Pollock as he worked to tie abstract painting into the tragic sense:

A successful abstract painting conjures up a world, not one seen but a felt experience that at times can convey a concept of tragedy...Many painters have turned away from the image of man. This separation implies a statement on man’s condition. It took more than the advent of the camera, Freud, and Cubism to diminish the importance of the image of man in painting. Nor is it a question of outmoded, threadbare realism or naturalism. These can no longer be tolerated and even a created image of man is more than most painters today can bear. This is in part due to the removal of the concept of the hero; we question God and immortality, and our motives are increasingly suspect. The Greeks gave us our heroes, Christianity, our saints, and we have given ourselves, ourselves.<sup>560</sup>

The reader of Greene’s last sentence may have been reminded of what Newman said in 1948: “Instead of making cathedrals out of Christ, man or ‘life,’ we are making it out of ourselves....”<sup>561</sup> What would artists like Soyer, Hopper and Bishop have thought had they heard one of their *Reality* Statement signatories refer to “out-moded, threadbare realism?” Unless such language was hyperbole employed merely for effect (which is not inconceivable), the Bloomington conference presentation suggests the intellectual and emotional turmoil Greene must have been experiencing for some time by the beginning of 1957, the year he painted *The Fall*, *Homage à Abel Sanchez* and *Paradise*. Called upon, unfamiliarly, to speak as a representative of the universe of modern American artists, Greene chose the rhetoric of Motherwell and Rosenberg in *Possibilities* rather than the rhetoric of Poor and Levine in *Reality*. Had this been Greene’s final statement on the subject, the question—whether he was able to put into artistic practice the values expressed in the pages of *Reality* and at the same time be inspired by the aesthetic of Newman via Greenberg—could well have been answered “no.”



**The Rest of the 1960s: Geometry and Biographs.** Michael Fried paid little attention to the latest paintings in the Retrospective, those of 1962 and '63, except for the insulting turn-of-phrase that they partook of the “idiom of modernist painting without...being concerned with its grammar.” Two of those paintings, *Vigil* (Figure 96) and *The Ladder* (Figure 98) have been covered in detail above but are reprised here, with reference to a review of a 2016 exhibition at Jason McCoy Gallery of Greene’s abstract paintings from the first years of the 1960s. That review, by Natasha Seaman in the online journal *Hyperallergic*, presented a 21<sup>st</sup>-Century reaction to Greene’s art using language more colorful and evocative than even the most positive 20<sup>th</sup>-Century reviews. Seaman saw as a strength a certain lack of formal coherence that Fried had insisted was a weakness. Of the paintings, Seaman wondered

...[w]here to start in describing one? For instance, in “Vigil” (1962), one might begin where the eye is drawn — like a teenager’s to the word “sex” on a page of *Catcher in the Rye* — to the bright vermillion dot in the left center. Or perhaps with the orange bar on the far left, or the patch of yellow on the far right — but there is no logical place to proceed next. Go from bottom layer to top, then, starting with the unprimed canvas, which still peeps through in a few places but is mostly covered by a brown wash overlain by green, or displaced by a swatch of aqua. Except where it’s red. Or tan. Or pink.<sup>562</sup>

Refreshingly, in Seaman’s beholding of these pictures, the forms—created by color—have as much agency as does the painter; they are the actors on the painting’s stage. The forms are the content. Hers was a reception Stephen Greene would have approved. Seaman reminded the reader that Greene was a figurative painter until the mid-1950s, but that by the time of the works in question he had rejected not only referents outside the painting but also any narrative about facture, including the order in which areas of paint were applied to the support. Seaman found no “coherent sense of cause and effect” in the interaction of the formal elements of the paintings; the forms didn’t feel arbitrary to her, but they did just seem to show up, “each a universe in itself.” And yet, for Seaman, the forms in the paintings “can’t seem to leave one another alone: they penetrate, glide, rub, reach, displace, encroach, agitate, slice, blot, lean, dissolve, wedge, bridge, drape, embed....”<sup>563</sup>

Seaman’s action verb-laden insistence on the agency of Greene’s abstract forms invites the participation of her reader/holder, too, in a way that more technical specificity might not;

asking oneself, for example, which bars of color penetrate and which agitate, or which muddy blobs encroach and which embed, enhances one's engagement with the painting. But Seaman did provide, as Fried and others did not, some insight about Greene's facture, about how he made the pictures look the way they do:

There are very few areas...where the painterly effect is left to chance; brushstrokes are highly controlled, even when artfully clumsy. Most common is a kind of scrubby mark, the brush not fully saturated with paint, that reveals the layer beneath and almost — but not quite — comes up to the borders of its form....Much of the variety of color is created like this, through the overlapping and intermingling of layers, whether wet on wet or through glazes or scumbles. Almost all of the paintings have a zone of détente: an area where a smoothly applied single hue contrasts with the complexity of the surrounding earth tones, providing the eye with the simple, velvety satisfaction of color on canvas. Greene is also pleasantly addicted to a particular shade of orange, like heated iron, that burns in distinct spots (as in "Vigil") or is compressed into intense bars.<sup>564</sup>

Seaman acknowledged that Greene's abstract paintings of the early 1960s, made more than fifty years before she was reviewing them, had "old-school ambitions," but she insisted that they "do not feel dated. Each painting creates a singular experience, one that roots the viewer in the moment of viewing and evokes the moment of creation — each brushstroke feels deeply considered and invites consideration. The exhibition as a whole...doesn't so much take you back in time, but out of time in a way that makes you sad to leave."<sup>565</sup>

Later in the decade, Greene began to make paintings, such as *Circle* (Figure 105) of 1964 and *Edifice* (Figure 108) of 1965, in which the forms related to each other in a more controlled and orderly way, creating an impression that they were "drawn" with an emphasis on line and on rememberable, if not necessarily representational, shapes. Consistent with its title, Greene organized *Circle* centripetally and concentrically, with biomorphic forms hinting at sexuality—the large brown form on the right perhaps womblike, the kidney-shaped forms perhaps ovarian or embryonic, the white and red areas on the left perhaps phallic and even ejaculatory. The photographic details of this work can illustrate some of the painting moves Greene made on his canvases to get them to look the way they do, as explained to me by the painter (and Leslie University painting professor) Anthony Apesos, who, as a college friend of Alison Greene and frequent visitor to Valley Cottage, knew Stephen Greene well. My half-dozen multi-hour telephone conversations with Apesos—during which we looked at the same images on our

respective monitors and he generously shared his impressions about facture and more—were indispensable in my effort to discern the web of relationships among individual works that Gabriele Guercio saw as a hallmark of the life-and-work model for an artist’s monograph. Having Tony’s impressions of Greene’s facture was particularly helpful to me in trying to understand the post-1960 work because, as Frank Stella confirmed, Greene was notorious for not allowing anyone to watch him work in his studio and there are thus no first-hand reports of his painting praxis.<sup>566</sup> Greene probably would not have participated in his friend Emile de Antonio’s documentary *Painters Painting* even if he’d been invited and, unfortunately, he was never included (as was, for example, the comparably under-the-radar Joseph Solman) in the *Art News* “Artist Paints a Picture” series.<sup>567</sup>

Apesos suggested that the kidney shapes in *Circle* were created as relatively simple turpentine washes with nothing under them but the oil-primed canvas, noting that Greene usually purchased his canvas already primed with an oil-based primer.<sup>568</sup> The lightness of the bright blue below the kidney forms is attributable to the canvas showing through. The upper left of the painting, shown in the Figure 106 detail, is a more complex and worked-over area. Apesos thinks Greene first marked where the (eventually) red “sausage” areas would be, then put down some brown around them, then the thin yellow arc, then more brown, and then filled the blank area with alizarin crimson, most of which he quickly wiped away with a rag, leaving the weave of the canvas visible and creating, when viewed from a distance, a glowing effect. Most of the time Greene’s canvas was linen, which, because its threads are not perfect tubes, has a more uneven and interesting grid (as seen in the photographic detail) than the more regular and mechanical cotton canvas. Figure 106 also illustrates two different kinds of transition between colors, in this case a light creamy brown and a medium brown; to the right of the yellow and orange dot Greene used a wet-on-dry transition, while to the left of and above the dot he used wet-on-wet, mixing the colors directly on the surface of the painting and achieving a hazier effect. Apesos commented on how Figure 107 proves that these paintings could not have been done quickly; the partially wiped stripe of red, overlapped by bright orange and then by real white, in turn overlapped by greyish-brown, then a warmer brown and finally by an area of pinkish-brown to the viewer’s left, each was painted wet-on-dry, requiring Greene to wait until each color dried (or, more properly, hardened) before moving to the next one.<sup>569</sup>

In *Edifice*, with its lightened and softened palette, its template-inspired curves and its four almost perfectly drawn triangles, the shadow of a ladder floats away from the geometry as an elongated crutch (or bone) supports a man-made object—possibly a magnifying glass. *Edifice*, which is in storage with most of the rest of the Whitney Museum’s collection, marked the beginning of a practice Greene continued for the rest of his life: the inclusion of drawn or traced representations of manufactured objects or human body parts in his otherwise abstract paintings. Here were muffled echoes of the props and personages of his figural paintings from previous decades. The colors of *Edifice* are mostly pale and seem lightly applied but, fortified with fabricated chalk, are fully opaque, leaving no trace of the linen canvas weave. A photographic detail, Figure 109, illustrates the velvety matte surface Greene obtained by adding the fabricated chalk to his oils. Three years later, in his oral history interview, he spoke at length about his experiments with materials to eliminate the “greasiness” of oil paint. *The Return* and Tate’s related catalogue note chronicle one such attempt, with mixed results, that is accessible in the collection of a major museum; *Edifice* is another, this time wholly successful. In his oral history interview, Greene said that *Edifice* “basically looks as if it were painted in about two days. Actually, I worked on it for a year and a half.”<sup>570</sup>

Geometry and a sense of drafting were even more prevalent in a series of drawings, titled *Biograph*, that Greene made in the later 1960s and that, importantly, announced his aspirations for what became defining attributes of his art over the rest of his life. These drawings were a turning point in Greene’s practice. Up to that point his drawings had mostly functioned as preparatory studies for, or variations on, paintings, but now drawings would be works unto themselves, often produced in series and almost always taking the size of the paper as a given, introducing a consistent horizontality that Alison Greene identified in conversation as liberating and exciting for her father. There is a feeling of precision and intentionality in the *Biograph* drawings, almost as if the artist were charting a map or engineering a machine. Within the spacious emptiness of these large mixed media works, Greene juxtaposed forms that Barbara Rose called “mechanomorphic” with anatomical and other biomorphic elements that impart “evocative clues to psychological content.”<sup>571</sup> The progress of the artist’s hand and the beholder’s eye as they move among the various incidents that comprise the subject matter of each of these drawings seems both purposeful and picaresque. In a short *New York Times* review of the drawings when first shown at the Zierler Gallery, Hilton Kramer found the “amalgam” of the mechanistic and the biomorphic to be

“curious...because the ideas in them are not new, yet are realized in a very fresh and delicate manner.” Kramer detected a certain tentativeness in the work, conjecturing that Greene was perhaps uncertain “whether to press its imagery more emphatically in the direction of mechanistic abstraction and thus avoid the pitfalls of surrealism, or to sustain the balance in its current volatile state. In any event, this is interesting work.”<sup>572</sup>

In *Biograph 24* (Figure 110) of 1967, the vestigial ladder and the crisp magnifying glass of *Edifice* reappeared, perhaps—consistent with the series title—biographically. The viewer can only conjecture about the meaning of whatever is magnified under the glass (the author, a male about twenty-five years older at this writing than Greene was when the drawing was made, thought of the lateral lobes of the prostate gland), but careful observation of the drawing in person (at Victoria Munroe Fine Art in New York) proved that the perfect circle of the glass, whatever it magnified, was meticulously collaged, with the pinhole of the compass point at the center just visible in Figure 111. Also consistently with the ambiguous intimacy of the biographical theme, the artist signed the drawing twice—once in his usual legible script at the lower left and once as a red thumbprint just left of center, about one third of the way from the top of the drawing. Colors are vivid but sparing, confined to small bars or trapezoids, a bright green square competing in smallishness with a tangerine dot. The ungeometric, colorless, lightly-drawn anatomical form in the center of the drawing (an arm? a jaw? some other appendage or bone?) could have been at home in a Francis Bacon painting.

There are plenty of biographical elements in the other works of the series and in drawings made in the succeeding few years, as well. The “drawings within a drawing” of *Biograph 7* (Figure 112), from 1968, could be interpreted as sketches, either in progress or recently completed, tacked to a wall in the artist’s studio, with the smudge perhaps commemorating a false start. The passage in the lower right corner of the drawing could have been an effort to escape flatness by invoking sculpture—an elaborately designed clip or clothespin-like fastener supporting a complicated construction at a right angle to a wall. In the drawing *Untitled* (Figure 113), also from 1968, the beholder’s eye is first drawn to the complex arrangement of wheels and pulleys in the center, especially a bright crimson off-kilter variation on the yin and yang symbol within one of the circles. If this assemblage was biographical, it was a biography of the artist’s imagination. But the simply drawn (or maybe traced) chart-like still life of glass beakers, tubes, flasks and funnels toward the upper right depicted the everyday circumstances of Greene’s life as an artist. David Miller, a

preparator at the Whitney who patiently and enthusiastically showed me that museum's Greenes in storage, recalled the time when he and his girlfriend helped his friend Alison Greene disassemble her father's studio after his death and found a number of such glass vessels among the well-organized equipment and artist's accoutrements.<sup>573</sup> Five years after the *Biographs*, in drawings like *S.#6* (Figure 114), from 1973, Greene was still using some, but only some, of the same mixed media techniques; the organization was still primarily linear, but the painted color washes were looser and freer, with little shape and few bounding lines. Collage reappeared; a rectangle of paper, on which Greene, perhaps looking down at himself as a model, drew a wide foot, a leg, a small portion of belly and a penis, was pasted to the main support and then partially outlined in pencil (Figure 115). The circular area behind the penis could have been considered a halo; if so, the little collaged element could conceivably have hinted at the meaning of the many juxtapositions of bars and circles in Greene's art. One can be more confident that this drawing evidences two developments in Greene's work that continued in paintings and drawings alike for years thereafter: he placed many of the most interesting incidents at the edges of the sheet, with a corresponding relative emptiness at the center, and he inserted a simple, and even roughly drawn "x," at the top center. The "x" is a cross. In 1966, nearly a decade after his last mimetic pictures of crosses, Greene said "I have been a painter of crosses for twenty years...."<sup>574</sup>

Promotional material for a 2017 exhibition of Greene's drawings at Victoria Munroe Fine Art in New York included the following summary of the artist's drawing practice in the mid-'60s and the early '70s:

With a methodical approach that preserves reverie, Greene plots his action across the paper like a cartographer. Deploying bursts of color, subtle collage, deliberate smudges, and a heavy reliance on line to choreograph images within images, the invention of each composition is transparent. The mechanics of making a drawing become clear and include notations, cuneiform hieroglyphs, details of anatomical drawing, devices of measurement, and turning wheels of instruments.<sup>575</sup>

Transparency, certainly. But also intimately scaled mystery. And the exquisitely rendered unease which one feels in all of Greene's work, from the mid-1940s forward. Never during my study of Greene's *oeuvre* did I feel closer to the artist's hand and spirit than in the physical presence of the *Biograph* drawings.

The preceding paragraphs chronicling critical reactions to and speculations about the *Biograph* series need to be compared with Greene's own synchronic thinking about them. A

longish conversation about the drawings during his oral history interview with Dorothy Seckler suggests that beholder impressions and artist intentions are compatible but not congruent. The transcript makes clear how Greene thought about the *Biograph* drawings: he was pleased with them, wanted viewers to enjoy actively engaging with them, and, crucially, saw the conceptual format of the drawings as a kind of paradigm for his next campaign of painting. Greene was showing Seckler black and white photos of the drawings as he described them and it is frustrating not to be able to pair his commentary with the particular works he had at hand. Hopefully, though, enough of the drawings have been reproduced here to make sense of his exegesis, a portion of which is set out in the footnotes with highlights extracted below:

**SG:** ...I want to show you, Dorothy, my drawings done in 1968....A lot of these are done with rulers... Now here's sort of a bone, a pelvis. And here's a finger.

**DS:** It's fascinating.

**SG:** And here's....these sort of mouth-like things become a mathematical formula and then suddenly fan out. Here's a piece of musical notation - right? And...here again I literally use the street map - right?

**DS:** Yes. Part of the map.

**SG:** Then part of a bone. Part of a weather indication. Music. Spotting of like dots. And then it's like a mechanical drawing which really isn't mechanical in a lot of ways. This is a crucifix thing. This is a ladder thing. Right?

**DS:** Yes.

**SG:** And some way or other you have a map and the map is a riddle. Do you see what I mean? So that actually what I think is happening is that I have discovered certain spatial things and...what I'm hoping for now is sort of wild play on subject matter....As with my first pictures and until fairly recently most of my pictures were seen as a whole. I don't know whether I can do this in painting - like these things I'm looking at you can focus on this spot even though the paper is only 29 inches and you have to travel, and you stop here, and you move here. Then you're like on a street sign in this finger thing. And yet it has nothing to do with illustration. It's not quite a crucifix. It's not quite a machine. And the imagery seems fairly sparse - right? A certain kind of mechanical means but it's not mechanical in sensibility....Well, you know what it is. Maybe it's conceit. As I've grown older I think I'm a more complex creature and so that although I think I was one of the first painters - I know Newman did it in his way and later

on I did it in another way, using larger action pictures where around 1960 there's a large area of one color and one little spot of something and nothing else. And now I'm just trying to work with an idea, you know.

**DS:** It's very sparse and yet it's very full. It's one complete image too.

**SG:** Yes. And you move like this. And I may never be able to do it but what I'm trying to move to is—I think practically all of Western painting has been meant to be seen as an entity. I mean even, say, like an Olitski expands but you still can take it all in in spite of that. Even a Pollock. You know so much has been talked about keeping the picture plane or some people have been going in - right?

**DS:** Yes.

**SG:** Recently. But it's almost time I think - like until we - maybe it's beginning to destroy the whole idea (quote) "picture". Do you know what I mean? So in some ways this doesn't exist for me.

**DS:** It's a different way of taking the thing psychologically. You perceive it differently.

**SG:** Yes. You know, I originally thought I did 31. Actually I did more and I kept 31. I had hoped that the gallery would show all of them but they showed 10. But I thought of it like - being as I say I'm subject-ridden even from a formal thing - it's like you had a space and you took a walk and you hesitated and a certain memory and then a certain specific. Now I don't mean by this just a literal walk or an illustration. But it had to do with as your mind moves and some parts become conscious and some parts become unconscious in some way trying to find a kind of tapestry of behavior in drawing. So whether I'll be able to do it in painting - I'll show you a few paintings so you'll know what I mean.

**DS:** The frame becomes a very different - it functions in a very different way. It's almost as if you don't refer to it too much. You really are moving around through the space.

**SG:** And you're not working *in* the space. Do you know what I mean? My feeling is that it's not a framed area, say, a 1960 picture.

**DS:** It's not held in, no.

**SG:** It's not held in so you move up to here, right? And it allows you to walk this mile by tracing that line for yourself. Right? Then you move up and you go from a smooth line to a nervous line. And well, my



intention is in all of these that the things are very definite. It should be a surprise and it's almost a mathematical thing but suddenly you see a bone shape.

**DS:** Yes.

**SG:** Or like a street map and there's a finger mark. Or then this is just a dot of color which you could only see as that dot against this. It takes on a kind of mysterious space meaning. Do you see what I mean?

The sense of disquietude and insecurity about his painting prospects that pervaded Greene's letters to Kirk Askew two decades before was thus still evident in the maturity of middle age, at a time (around 1968) when he left his somewhat rocky tenure at Columbia and began his twenty-year teaching career at the Tyler School of Art of Temple University in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania.<sup>576</sup> He needn't have worried; in the 1970s and into the 1980s, Greene achieved the goals—as to form and subject matter—for his subsequent painting that he had set in the *Biograph* drawings. A preliminary bit of evidence—there is more in the next chapter—comes from a review of Greene's mid-70s paintings by Judith E. Stein in *Art in America*, describing Greene's line as a significant compositional factor that “functions as a controlling funicular cable, transporting us above and across the variegated textures of pigmented terrain.”<sup>577</sup> Thus, while the *Biograph* series can be seen as the first time Greene gave himself permission to make drawings as independent works of art, rather than as studies for—or after—paintings, the *Biographs* also established a kind of personal template for facture, meaning and impact that made the paintings of the rest of Greene's life unmistakably his own.

Judith Stein's metaphor inspires a speculative digression on how, if Greene's work had occasioned more of a discourse, his treatment of line in the *Biograph* drawings and the paintings that presaged them (like *Edifice*) or followed them might have fit into art historical theories of the 1960s and after. Michael Fried's quotable conclusion that one of Pollock's achievements (and that of his follower Morris Louis) was “the liberation of line from the task of figuration” resonates with respect to the plotted diagonals and other “smooth” lines that stitch together discontinuous units into the “tapestry of behavior” Greene envisioned.<sup>578</sup> But even though (to invoke Rosalind Krauss's application of Peirce's index/icon/symbol trichotomy and apply it to a *Biograph* “tapestry” as a system of signs) Greene used line (and smudge and thumbprint) mostly indexically, to trace the process of making and beholding, he nevertheless insisted in the same

works on retaining line as icon to describe figural contours, thereby creating, or coding, symbolic meaning for himself and the beholder.<sup>579</sup> Had Krauss or one of the readers of “Notes on the Index” seen *Biograph 7, Untitled* or *R.#6*, might they initially have been reminded of *Dust Breeding*, Man Ray’s 1920 photograph of dust that had accumulated over months on Duchamp’s *Large Glass*, illustrated in Part 1 of Krauss’s essay “Notes on the Index” and on the websites of several museums that have prints of it, like the Met, the Guggenheim and the High Museum of Art. After all, the *Large Glass* was, as Krauss explained, autobiographical and thus, one assumes, the Man Ray photograph can be seen as a biography, like the Greene drawings’ (auto)biography of his artistic practice to date. And while Greene, like the Constructivists discussed by Benjamin Buchloh, used mechanical drawing tools (compass, French curve, and ruler but not Newman’s masking tape) that, when introduced by Rodchenko “had been banned from artistic drawing for centuries,” Greene never permitted the lines created with those tools to become, as the Constructivist line became, fully divorced from the artist’s “creative, expressive, or skillful hand.”<sup>580</sup>

## 5.0 Refiguring Abstraction

**Pedagogy and Personal Life.** Before continuing the chronicle of Greene's art over his last three decades, it would be well to pause to consider his domestic life, his persona and his teaching. The de Lima/Greene house at the corner of Kings Highway and Storms Road in Valley Cottage, Rockland County, less than thirty miles from the Columbia campus via the Palisades Parkway and the George Washington Bridge (Stephen's preferred route), was a pre-Revolutionary War structure in a hilly, wooded district, quaint and semi-rural, that had gradually become suburban after the opening of the Tappan Zee Bridge in 1955. Alison Greene recalled that the house, once called Wisteria Cottage for the vines that grew on a huge old sycamore tree in the narrow space between the house and the road, had a second floor sleeping porch and beautifully proportioned rooms, a "charming place to grow up." Sigrid had her writing studio in a sunny annex to the side porch, looking out on the informal flower garden.<sup>581</sup> Stephen's studio was in a separate building, formerly a small barn, to which he had added a north facing window in the early '60s and a storage area in the '80s. It was far enough from the house (perhaps 200 feet) that Sigrid rang a bell to announce lunch until a phone was installed in later years. There was a large bed of daylilies outside the door to the studio. From the reports of several visitors, the studio was immaculate—the myriad brushes totally clean and neatly arranged in jars, the paintings and equipment stored neatly and seemingly efficiently. David Miller, who helped dismantle the studio after Greene's death, recalls a large collection of phonograph records, both jazz and classical. He also recalls a sizeable assortment of wooden coat hangers. Mr. Miller wrote that he felt very much at home in the studio, as if it were his own. Although not a large space, "it was a very complete environment."<sup>582</sup>

When the Greenes moved into the Valley Cottage house, they found many kindred spirits among the loosely knit community of artists and writers who had also made their homes in Rockland County, including Jasper Johns and "Irascible" Richard Pousette-Dart. The writer Harvey Swados and his wife Bette, an editor, were immediate neighbors and close friends through much of the 1960s. Other close friends of the Greenes included artist Eugene Powell and his wife Neva (an educator), printmaker Sylvia Roth, MoMA curator Mildred Constantine, and mystery writer Dorothy Davis and her husband, actor Harry Davis.<sup>583</sup> Greene participated in a figure

drawing group organized by the painter and teacher Mercedes Matter in Manhattan in the late 1950s; the group continued meeting for more than a decade, with attendees from time to time like Philip Pearlstein, Philip Guston, Alex Katz, Yvonne Jacquette, Sidney Tillim and Jack Tworkov.<sup>584</sup> At one point during the 1960s, Greene was “thrilled to the core” to get an invitation to participate in one of Allan Kaprow’s Happenings, but he found that the event wasn’t as improvisational as expected, as Kaprow instructed him to sit on top of a ladder and intone “Steve, Steve” from time to time.<sup>585</sup> At least Kaprow was familiar with Greene’s symbology.

Sigrid de Lima was an excellent cook and the Greenes frequently had guests for lunch or dinner. (Whether there were guests or not, their custom was a cocktail before, and wine with, dinner.) Sometimes the guests were Stephen’s students, sometimes close family friends, including art world friends like Dore Ashton, Barbara Rose, Martica Sawin and John Yau. The painter Anne Poor (step-daughter of *Reality* editor Henry Varnum Poor) was a life-long friend and often shared the Greenes’ Thanksgiving dinner. Other times, they entertained more notable, or soon to be notable, personages. On one memorable occasion, around 1959 or 1960, Emile de Antonio brought Andy Warhol with him. At the time Warhol was not yet famous and was interested in meeting well known people and making drawings of their feet. De Antonio had asked in advance if Greene would consent to have his foot drawn, which Stephen agreed to with some amusement. Warhol also drew Alison’s foot, and that of her doll. Sigrid thought it was rather silly and didn’t participate.<sup>586</sup>

Robert Storr recalled a lunch at which the Greenes’ friend Jasper Johns, who lived about ten miles up the Hudson in Stony Point, was another guest. Storr described “a long afternoon in lively conversation with Steve and Jasper. As usual Steve was the most animated person at the table and Jasper the most careful with his words, though his manifest affection for Steve resulted in his being by his own standards quite talkative.”<sup>587</sup>

Greene’s animation was but a part of his complicated persona. He loved to talk, especially about himself, but his volubility masked his essential shyness, confirmed frequently in his letters to Kirk Askew from Iowa and Rome. In the small catalogue of the 2003 memorial exhibition at the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Andover Academy, Karen Wilkin described Greene as “a combination of intensity, reticence, and anxiety.”<sup>588</sup> She commended his “boundless generosity as a friend” and noted his “notable self-deprecation.” Wilkin told me a story that highlighted both the latter trait and his eagerness to look and act the way he thought an important

New York artist should look and act: making fun of himself, Greene would recite the tale of how once, when he announced to a waiter in the Oak Room at the Plaza, “I’ll have my usual Armagnac, please” the waiter replied, “Sir, we have never had Armagnac on the menu in the Oak Room.”<sup>589</sup> Greene told that sort of embarrassing story about himself, Wilkin added, so that no one else would do so.

On the subject of reticence, Alison Greene said that her father would endlessly advocate for other people, but rarely for himself. Once Jasper Johns came to the opening of a Greene exhibition and brought Christian Gelhar, the director of the Basel Art Museum, along. When Johns introduced Gelhar to Greene, the latter politely said “how do you do” and went to talk to someone else. Johns collared him later, saying “Steve, when I introduce you to the director of a museum, don’t walk off and talk to someone else.”<sup>590</sup> One of Greene’s dealers, Nina Nielsen, told me that Greene was “diplomatic,” meaning, she admitted, that he was not good at promoting himself.<sup>591</sup>

Greene spoke with what he himself identified, in his oral history interview, as a New York Jewish accent, a verdict confirmed by sound recordings. Listening to a recorded talk Greene gave to students and faculty at the Skowhegan School when he was on the faculty there in the summer of 1958, I was struck by similarities in cadence, intonation and other verbal habits between Greene’s speaking style and that of Clement Greenberg, observed on assorted recordings unrelated to Greene. Both of them interspersed their presentations with phrases like “do you see what I mean” or “do you understand my point,” perhaps in response to quizzical looks from audience members. Both of them tended to become combative with questioners, frequently interrupting or protesting “I never said that.” Beyond speaking style, Greene seemed willing—and eager—to go on record expressing his own critical judgments about the work of artists past and present, although as an artist and teacher he seemed less condescending and more open than the professional critic Greenberg was to the contrary opinions of others. Expressing a bit of his philosophy of teaching to the Skowhegan students, Greene urged that the passion and authenticity with which they embraced particular art was more important than the style or subject of the art itself. Invoking his own regretful analysis of his own experience—that his teachers never really taught him anything—Greene told the students that he hoped, in the ordinary course of their interest in painting,

...you are aware and open enough and true enough to yourself that you will find things that have special meaning to you, that you can be haunted by them, that will come up in your work. Teachers can’t go around like doctors and say “what you need is a little bit of late 15th century” or

“archaic Greece would be right for you” or “the last de Kooning will get you started.” This can’t work that way.<sup>592</sup>

Greene’s mix of compassion and prickliness that one hears in the Skowhegan tapes was noted in an Archives of American Art oral history interview of a fellow faculty member from that summer, the painter Rackstraw Downes, by James McElhinney, who had been a student there during another summer.

MR. DOWNES: ....do you remember Stephen Greene, the painter?

MR. MCELHINNEY: He was my drawing teacher at Tyler.

MR. DOWNES: Oh, was he really? Well, he was there the summer I was there. We didn't get along very well and suddenly in the middle of the summer he said, 'You guys are getting under my skin. That lake—that lake, it's getting into my painting.' [Laughs.]

MR. MCELHINNEY: [Laughs.]

MR. DOWNES: He was quite indignant, you know? He thought that he was the abstract painter on—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Right.

MR. DOWNES: —the team there and—[laughs]—he wouldn't—

MR. MCELHINNEY: He was a sweet guy on another level.

MR. DOWNES: Oh, yeah. I knew—his daughter was very nice—is very nice. She's in Houston. I saw her quite a lot when I used to go to Galveston every winter.

MR. MCELHINNEY: So that must have been an interesting—who was—who else was there that year?

MR. DOWNES: Sidney Simon was the sculptor—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MR. DOWNES: —and Sidney and Steven got along very well. It was an age—age gap and there was one—a woman called Arlene Slavin—

MR. MCELHINNEY: Yes.

MR. DOWNES: —who—you know her? She was there and John Button was there and Button, Slavin, and I always voted together against Sidney and Steven....<sup>593</sup>

The title of a 1966 article in *The Columbia Owl* describes a state of affairs that the author undertook to correct: “Artist-Teacher Greene: Famous in Galleries; Unknown at CU.”<sup>594</sup> In doing so, the article discloses a number of personal details: Greene was of “medium height,” his complexion was “exceedingly ruddy,” and during the interview he smoked a succession of Malabar Whiffs Cigarillos. (Greene was also a three-pack-a-day smoker of Chesterfield unfiltered cigarettes until 1990, when he went cold-turkey after a doctor advised him that smoking could damage his vision.) Perhaps Greene was partially to blame for his anonymity at the university, as the article quotes him saying “I like teaching at Columbia. The students are bright and the school is in New York and when you’re through with your classes you go home.” In Greene’s case in 1966, that drive was in his 1960 white Hillman Minx. Of his relationship with students, the article reports that “usually he has a large grin on his face, even when giving devastating criticisms of his students’ work. Greene is not an easy teacher to please and he does not let anyone settle for anything less than he thinks they are capable of. However, he is so friendly, engaging, and open that most student know better than to take any criticisms personally.”<sup>595</sup> Even in his early years of teaching in New York, Greene was tough but motivating. The noted abstract painter Ronnie Landfield recalled: “I showed my work to Stephen Greene who was my instructor at the Art Students League and who visited my studio downtown. Stephen Greene was harshly critical of my paintings – he said that I needed to find my own voice. I was determined to take his advice and do something new and original in painting.”<sup>596</sup>

Greene’s quotes in the *Owl* piece give a sense of his attitude of resigned disappointment in his career to that point (he was not yet fifty years old) and of the self-deprecation that Wilkin identified: “Looking back on his life, Professor Greene says, ‘It’s not all I wanted it to be, but it has often been very wonderful as well as very painful. It’s very hard wanting to be as wonderful an artist as you can be without expecting too much from the world. You’re bound to have disappointments in yourself, in your capacity, and in the world. It is part of growing up.’”<sup>597</sup>

Greene’s mentorship was important to many of his Columbia art students and he made lasting friendships with several of them, including Porfirio DiDonna, Andrew Jansons, Jill Viney, and Joyce Kozloff. Viney recalled that the MFA Program at Columbia

...cloistered a dozen students in an old women's hospital at 110<sup>th</sup> Street and Amsterdam....Central in my memories of those years was Stephen Greene, artist and teacher. In any class or studio visit, Greene's low-key presence transmitted a steadfast belief in the honesty of an art work. No category or dogma mattered; he dealt directly with a student and his/her work. The development of the student's idea and how well an artwork expressed it helped open a direction for each artist. Being part of that dialogue was Stephen Greene's greatest teaching skill.<sup>598</sup>

Joyce Kozloff's memories were not so positive: "I remember struggling in Stephen Greene's drawing class—never really knowing what he wanted; how to draw on demand, without a given "subject" or model."<sup>599</sup>

Porfirio DiDonna, one of Greene's grad students, was a beloved painter who died of a brain tumor at age 44. The Boston gallerist Nina Nielsen told me that Greene considered Frank Stella and DiDonna to be the best students he ever had.<sup>600</sup> In his contribution to a compendium of memorial tributes to DiDonna published in 1987, the year after his death, Greene wrote:

While working with Porfirio at Columbia, his paintings had their own identity. Only in the literal sense was he a student. What he may have learned was through the act of making paintings, not studies, not exercises...[After Porfirio left Columbia] the talk was rarely about anything other than painting. One day after lunch we were walking down Canal Street. He mentioned being somewhat at a loss in comprehending a mutual friend, a splendid painter, who confided to Porfirio that at times while painting thought of himself as God. He asked me if I ever felt that way, adding that he never did, and what did I think? My quick, honest reply was that our friend was lucky, and that I envied him. Porfirio had a modesty that was linked with a deep faith in the validity, the spirit of a work of art....For at least two decades my feelings for Porfirio have centered on a strong sense of respect for him as an artist....In the most true sense, he was a religious man whose faith centered on creating a formal order that is lit with a mysterious quality of life.<sup>601</sup>

Greene's tribute tells as much about the author as about the subject.

Greene's relationship with the Tyler School of Art was by far the longest of his teaching career. The school's location in Elkins Park, just outside Philadelphia, required a long commute, but the inconvenience seemed worth it as Tyler, with facilities more spacious than those of the New York schools, was considered among the very best places in the country to study painting and to teach it. The Tyler administration compensated Greene relatively well and allowed him to teach on two successive days so that he could make just one round-trip each week, usually leaving Valley Cottage on Tuesday morning and returning on Wednesday evening after staying overnight



in a rented room within a larger apartment.<sup>602</sup> After Greene had been on the Tyler faculty for a few years, including two at the Rome extension, the school gave him a retrospective comprising paintings and drawings made between 1963 and 1973, all from his dealer at the time, the William Zierler Gallery.

The recollections of several Tyler students attest to the inspiration Greene provided as a teacher and role model who was able to look seriously at a student's work, identify what they were particularly good at and suggest that they pull it out and make it what their work was about. The representational artist Kevin Sloan, whom Greene taught as an undergraduate in 1981-83, gave some insight into Greene's approach to critiques, writing that:

I was only vaguely aware of him and his work when I applied to Tyler but he had a profound impact on my work which continues to this day. I found Stephen to be one of the more passionate and tender teachers I've ever had. He always approached a critique of one's work with compassion. He seemed to start from a feeling place rather than an intellectual stance in discussing the work....Critiques were done as a group as I recall. He made the point that we were to discuss the work as it was—to avoid comments like “I wish it were more this or less that.”...Stephen had a lasting impact on the way I approach art making, how I look and feel in front of artworks and how I approach critiques and dealing with students. He seemed so genuinely committed to the life of an artist....<sup>603</sup>

In response to my question, occasioned by Greene's *Banana Fish* incident with Stella, Sloan said he didn't recall Greene making any marks on his paintings, but that Stanley Whitney, who also taught at Tyler, often made corrections or suggestions on student work.<sup>604</sup>

Daniel Reich, who is the curator and education director of the St. Louis Holocaust Museum and, as a college student in painting at the University of Illinois, spent his junior year abroad at the Tyler School's Rome extension while Greene was posted there, shared a memory that reinforces the seriousness Greene demanded of students and of himself as a teacher. Reich had been painting figuratively but was tending toward abstraction, which Greene encouraged, as he thought Reich's attempts to capture mythological scenes were inauthentic. At one point Reich drew a likeness of the Three Graces on the canvas, then painted over most of the lines creating what looked like an abstract work. When Greene responded affirmatively to the painting, to the effect that Reich had “broken through,” Reich pointed out the drawing at the base of the painting and explained his figurative intention. Greene, Reich recalled, was “not amused. He rolled his eyes and got really furious at me. He thought I had tried to trick him, which I had.”<sup>605</sup> Notwithstanding the incident,

Reich did move seriously into abstraction before switching to art history, kept in touch with Greene from time to time and eventually curated a small exhibition of Greene's work at the St. Louis Art Museum (see text following Note 672). To complete the portrait, Reich also noted that Greene was not among the more popular instructors at Tyler Rome when Reich was there (the popular ones were younger) and that a number of students who did not connect with Greene made mostly unsuccessful efforts to get out of his classes.<sup>606</sup>

The self-styled provocative figural painter Lisa Yuskavage forged a rewardingly intense student-teacher bond with Greene at Tyler in 1983-84. She recalled that when she returned from Rome for her senior year

...I had heard lots of stories about Stephen...that he was tough and that he was an abstract painter and...wasn't going to like my work. (I was very influenced by Degas.) People said that he didn't like women, he didn't like women painters and he wasn't going to remember my name. I was born an optimist...and I just walked up to him and I said, "Hi, I'm Lisa Yuskavage....I was told you that you're not going to remember my name"....So the next time I saw him I said, "What's my name?"....And of course he remembered my name, because I made a big joke about it. I always had a very jolly relationship with him... and he was immediately very kind to me....he always made me feel like I was a real painter. And he treated me like I was a real painter, he didn't ever talk down to me. I never had one hint of him being a misogynist; he just treated me as a wonderful and marvelous young painter....And I really learned to trust myself because of him.<sup>607</sup>

Yuskavage remained close to Stephen and Sigrid and visited them in Valley Cottage after leaving Tyler. She was especially grateful for a weekend of their caring support—"almost like grandparents"—when, after graduating from Tyler, she was "traumatized" by her first semester of graduate school at Yale.<sup>608</sup> In response to an interviewer's question about how Greene's personality related to his art, Yuskavage replied: "He was melancholic, and when you're melancholic you're...not afraid of the human subjects of passion and suffering. He struck me as someone who could cry easily, although I never really saw him—well, he cried once on the phone when his wife died."<sup>609</sup>

Two of Greene's Tyler students (one from the early 1980s, the other from the early 1970s) mentioned an underlying sadness they noticed in him, echoing Yuskavage's observation of melancholy. Both had reached out to Greene years later and met him occasionally in New York.

Kevin Sloan, replying to my “cold call” inquiry to his website inviting memories of Greene, wrote, *inter alia*, in an email:

There were times he [Greene] would seem to be almost moved to tears. I think back to his face and I remember wet and kind of sad eyes. It wouldn't surprise me if he was moved to tears in front of art, it was that important to him. There was a sorrow underneath his tender surface and I feel it may have come from his feeling of being "left behind" in the New York art world....I think he felt a little bit dismissed by the powers that be. After all, he grew up with many of the greats of the AbEx period in New York. He recalled the turmoil of that time when figuration was being dismissed and one had to choose figuration or abstraction which I think was not easy for him. In fact, I think he battled with that all his life.<sup>610</sup>

Dan Reich, in a telephone interview, said he had found Greene to be engaging and recalled that Greene loved to talk and make connections. Greene was proud that he was a “painter’s painter,” that other significant artists knew and respected him, but recognized and regretted that he hadn’t received the recognition he felt his abilities warranted. Reich did not find Greene to be depressive but remembered that he was “not particularly happy” either, always talking about a past that somehow seemed better than the present.<sup>611</sup>

Greene himself frequently described in letters and interviews his feelings, before his marriage, of loneliness, of fear and of “not fitting in” and how those feelings related to his work. When Karen Wilkin noted in conversation with Greene’s good friend, the painter Jake Berthot, that Greene’s manner was a “combination of intensity, reticence and anxiety,” Berthot, replied: “That’s it. And that could describe his work, too.”<sup>612</sup>

**The 1970s: Newly Lush Color After Revisiting Rome.** At about the same time as Greene left Columbia for the Tyler School, he also changed dealers, from George Staempfli’s gallery to William Zierler’s. The Staempfli Gallery had done a fine job of managing Greene’s career, promoting his work and placing it with institutions as well as private collectors, but Greene found the atmosphere there to be chilly and his primary contact person to be unsympathetic.<sup>613</sup> In one particularly upsetting incident, a newspaper had printed a photograph of one of Greene’s works in a Staempfli exhibition incorrectly, turning it ninety degrees. The Staempfli staff insisted on likewise hanging the work on the gallery wall sideways, to match how it appeared in the newspaper. Greene was incensed.<sup>614</sup>

In Greene's post-*Biograph* quest for a "wild play on subject matter," a "tapestry of behavior" in his painting as the 1970s began, he revised, but did not abandon, some of his mid-1960s moves. In *Violet Light* of 1969 (Figure 116), donated to the Carnegie Museum of Art by Greene's subsequent dealer, Marilyn Pearl Loesberg, the *Edifice*-like geometry of curves and ruler-straight lines reappears, but the forms are blown apart from each other and scattered over the canvas, in *Biograph* fashion. The beholder's eye is drawn first to the long arc and near-trapezoid of vivid, flat cadmium orange that punctuate the soft grayish violets of the painting's title, but soon roams to incidents that invoke earlier works: a wishbone, a bodily organ in a protective sac, a partially disassembled crutch. A result, and maybe a goal, of this scattering is that some of the most interesting areas of *Violet Light* show up at or near its edges. The thin but energetic horizontal striations along two-thirds of the top edge of the painting (Figure 117) are less for framing than for suggesting that the layers could continue piling up beyond the frame. In another intriguing stack of marks (Figure 118)—this one vertical with some curving forms—thin washes of black and tan and more opaque areas of orange and cream cushion a small strip of the work's most jewel-like (but nevertheless dry) namesake violet.

Anthony Apesos has pointed out that in works like *Violet Light* Greene was concerned with manipulating shapes and incidents two-dimensionally and, unlike many artists, including, with apologies to Greenberg, many abstract artists who followed Hans Hofmann's notion of push-and-pull, Greene was not deliberately trying to create space. But he did not reject the sense of a third dimension when it happened by coincidence, as a by-product of basically two-dimensional manipulation.<sup>615</sup> For example, the very thin black arc in the top left corner of *Violet Light*, backed by a two-tone grey shadowy form and impeding a small rush of fluid white, is positively sculptural.

The art historian and artist William Seitz, the Princeton PhD graduate and junior faculty member who had convinced the university to create the artist-in-residence position first filled by Greene, died in 1974, at age sixty, after a career as a MoMA curator, Brandeis University professor and museum director, and University of Virginia professor.<sup>616</sup> The Princeton Art Museum organized a 1977 memorial exhibition honoring Seitz's contributions to American art scholarship and featuring works by a number of his former students, colleagues and friends, including Greene, Stella, Darby Bannard, George Segal, Richard Anuszkiewicz, Will Barnet, Sam Gilliam, Milton Resnick and, with trenchant portraits of Seitz and his wife, Irma, Alice Neel.<sup>617</sup> Many of the artists donated their exhibited work to the museum to form the William C. Seitz Collection; Greene


contributed his painting *Recall* (Figure 119), made in Rome during Greene's 1972-74 tenure teaching at the Tyler School of Art's extension there. In *Recall*, the picaresque linear geometry of *Edifice* and *Violet Light* remains dominant, but with fewer figural incidents and more dense, luxuriant color. Greene filled the center of the painting with large areas of uninterrupted scumbling, creating a glowing Rothko-like effect. Even more than in *Violet Light*, the excitement in *Recall* clings to the edges. On the right and top edges (Figure 120), Greene inserted narrow, very dark border areas that seem to disappear against the shadowbox frame, leaving the viewer to wonder if the artist was paying elusive, maybe unconscious, homage to Stella by subtly creating a shaped canvas. Toward the left and lower edges (Figures 121 and 122), Greene used white and outlines of charcoal to accentuate some vivid, opaque jewel-like hues, but kept the viewer (and himself?) off-balance with disruptive washes of primary red and blue.

Tony Apesos told a story about a time when he showed Greene some of his own work and there was one painting that Greene liked more than any other—it had a figure cropped to the side, really squeezed to the edge, with a big empty space in the middle and a figure in the distance. It was a realistic figural picture, the kind Apesos makes, but compositionally it had a lot of “Greene-ish elements” to it. Greene had admired in that particular work of Tony's what Tony admired in Greene's—how the edges are so interesting. In a lot of paintings, Apesos added, “if you crop them, it doesn't hurt that much, but you can't crop a Greene painting. The edges are often the most important part.” In answer to the question of why Greene did this, Apesos said it proves that Greene was acknowledging the whole surface and visual field of the painting and that he thought of the painting as an object rather than as a window or a space. He was decorating the surface, but even when space was created in the painting by the manipulation of decorative elements, Greene undermined that space by creating what were almost framing elements at the edges, thus including the frame inside the painting and clarifying the painting as an object. Very Greenbergian, we concluded.<sup>618</sup>

Alison Greene thinks of *Fermata #1* (Figure 123), painted in 1977, as one of her father's quintessential 1970s paintings. She wrote in an email:

The “Fermata” series came out of my father's renewed interest in Renaissance and Baroque painting sparked by our two years in Rome, 1972 – 74, during which time he taught at the Tyler School of Art's Rome extension. We had an apartment just outside the old north gate of the city, a rambling place with a big terrace overlooking the Tiber, and his studio

was there as well. His palette got richer and warmer during that period, and then blossomed with those purples...on his return.<sup>619</sup>

*Recall*, painted in Rome, attests that Greene's colors had certainly grown rich and warm in Italy, but those of *Fermata #1*, its opulent purples charged with flashes of electric crimson, are even more sumptuous. The title refers in part to the musical "fermata" notation that looks like this:  and appears in the top left of the painting. Greene used the image over an "X" throughout the *Fermata* series. He had previously employed it, both with and without the "X," in several of the *Biograph* drawings (see Figure 110). In Italian, "*fermata*" means "stop" and, Alison Greene recalls, "all over Rome you see bus-stop signs that say '*Fermata*'—but I think for my father it meant more like 'pause' or 'end'—a suggestion of mortality in his paintings." Indeed, in musical notation the fermata notation denotes that the note (or rest) over which it appears should be prolonged (for an unspecified length of time) beyond the normal duration its note value would indicate. The ambiguous quality of the notation's instruction, requiring the performer or conductor to exercise artistic judgment, fits well into the concept of a beholder's open-ended path-plotting within a given set of marks that Greene aimed for in the *Biograph* drawings and hoped for in the paintings he was contemplating in 1968, when he discussed the *Biograph* series with Seckler.

In several of the *Fermata* paintings, Greene traced a household tool onto the painted canvas in red or white paint or chalk. In *Fermata #9* (Figure 102A), he traced a pair of pliers; in *#1* it was a bypass pruner. Of the traced tool in *Fermata #1* Alison Greene wrote: "I always assume that this was an indirect reference to the instruments of the Passion (i.e., the pliers used to remove the nails after the Crucifixion). On the other hand, the painting is so luscious (and so sexy) that my instinct is that the painting is not just about the end of life, but about both tragedy and transcendence."<sup>620</sup>

The "fermata with X" might be seen as a second signature on paintings of the *Fermata* series. In *#9*, Apesos has guessed that it was made by first putting down a layer of brown, then painting the notations in white, then taking a very soft brush and dragging it across the white paint (but not the map-charting vertical white line) to give the marks a sense of evanescence. On the other hand, the vivid yellow and black pincer form near the top edge (Figure 125) could well have been made by just squeezing paint out of the tube directly onto the surface. The blue area in the center is more intense in some places, less intense in others. To make it, Apesos opined, Greene started with thin washes everywhere, then followed with layer upon layer of opaque paint. The

resulting passage of painting is what some critics might call “brushy,” but when I first saw the work in person, at a gallery in Santa Fe, I could not help calling it “messy,” in the sense that one could apply that term to a painting by Franz Kline or Michael Goldberg (for each of whom Greene had little patience).<sup>621</sup> The center portion of *Fermata #9* struck me as about as slapdash as a Greene painting ever gets and I found its haphazardness disappointing and even disquieting. Tony Apesos agreed with me on the messiness—messier, he said, than you would expect from Greene—but not necessarily on the disappointment or disquiet, and he suggested that one of the things Greene was seeking in his painting, especially when working in a series, was to make each one tellingly different from the others, as in the theme and variations form in music. A lot of painting is thinking about process, and Greene might have thought to himself, “let’s preserve this moment in the process,” even if the moment was “messy.”<sup>622</sup>

There is, of course, an alternative more elegant than “messiness” for explaining a beholder’s disquiet at *Fermata #9*. Robert Slifkin analyzed the work of another artist in terms that seem apt for the brushy blue center (but not the other elements) of Greene’s painting, describing the other artist “bundling his...sensitive brushstrokes of the same color into amorphous, ambiguous forms typically floating in the center of the canvas, investing the image with substantiality or ‘corporality’....Yet because the...brushstrokes never cohere into delimited forms or geometrically stable shapes...a sense of apprehensive uncertainty fills the work.”<sup>623</sup> The paintings Slifkin described were a series called *The Actors* (one of which is Figure 104), abstractions made in 1960-62 by Philip Guston. It was rare for Greene’s brushstrokes to fail to cohere into delimited forms or a smooth ground, a rarity that exacerbates uneasiness in response to a mode somehow “wrong” for Greene, even if right for Guston.

Critical reaction to Stephen Greene’s painting and drawing of the late 1960s and the 1970s was generally positive and generally consistent in presenting his artistic biography. Almost universally, critics identified the serious themes of his earlier figural work, his non-alignment with groups of artists and with trends in art, his ability in drawing, and his emphasis on color. The art historian and curator Judith Stein’s 1976 review (also quoted above) of a solo exhibition at Zierler Gallery is typical:

...Although Greene left the figure behind in the 1950s, his work has retained veiled references to a pained, personal mythology which has led some to view him as a Symbolist. Yet when we admire his power as a colorist and his skill as a draftsman, Greene seems closer to a mannerist

esthetic than to anything else. Like many of those 16<sup>th</sup>-century painters, Greene cannot live without ambiguity and contradiction. There is an enigmatic substructure of thought in his work, and the older he gets, the more devious (his own description) he becomes....This new group of paintings reveals Greene working at full strength, invigorated and reinforced in his preference for “off” color, mysterious allusion and controlled bravura by the rich visual resources of Rome.<sup>624</sup>

The review implies that the reviewer interviewed the artist before writing it and Greene may well have invited alignment with the mannerists (not as offensive to him as alignment with Abstract Expressionists or color field painters would have been) by sharing with Stein his fascination with Pontormo. Her reference to symbolism may be to O’Doherty’s 1964 review (see text at Note 532) or Ashton’s essay for Greene’s 1963 Corcoran Retrospective (see text at Note 533). Greene himself appeared to reaffirm his symbolist affinities when, during his last decade, he included the name of Gustav Moreau in the titles of a number of paintings. Greene may have rejected identification and classification with his contemporaries, as when he wrote in 1963 “I desire my own place, my own name,” but acknowledging the inspiration of artists of the past was essential to his art.

Hilton Kramer, in his short 1975 *New York Times* review of what must have been the same Zierler exhibition as Stein covered, had a somewhat different subjective response as a beholder and a less effusive writing style, but the evaluation was consistent: “There is a lovely quality of soft, milky light in these paintings that evoke without exactly describing the effects of mist and fog on the contours of seascape and landscape...the atmosphere is dusky, and the mood is contemplative. One has the sense here of a painter basking in the pleasures of fond visual memories and recaptured emotions.”<sup>625</sup> Greene probably did not reject Kramer’s positive take on the paintings because they reminded the critic of nature, but it is likely that the painter’s own inspirational visual memories were of art, including his own, not of scenery. Kramer similarly referred to quality of light and to “intimations” of landscape, as well as cityscape, in his review of the paintings in Greene’s 1971 Zierler show, but the critic found that “nothing is made explicit here except the artist’s taste for beautiful effects” and came away with the impression of “a painter of intelligence and sensibility looking for a proper object to lavish his sizeable gifts upon.”<sup>626</sup>

Kramer’s predecessor as chief art critic at the *Times*, John Canaday, reviewing the retrospective *25 Years of Drawing* that Zierler gave Greene in 1972, opined that “[t]here are very few artists today who could put on an equally impressive exhibition in this most demanding



medium.”<sup>627</sup> Canaday described the gradual move from the “great tradition of the Italian Renaissance” to the most recent “constructivist with mild surreal overtones” work, including from the *Biograph* series, concluding that

...in spite of the complete success of the conversion, one is left with the feeling that Mr. Greene abandoned an area in which he was very special for one in which he is one of many first-rate practitioners. Numerous young artists can draw as well—technically—as Mr. Greene did at the beginning of his career, but virtually none are gifted with his indefinable expressive power into the bargain. And as things are going now, the latest work has a slightly *retardataire* flavor in contrast with the sustained immediacy of his drawings of 25 years ago.”<sup>628</sup>

While Canaday found the expressive quality of Greene’s drawings to be “indefinable,” Barbara Rose, in her short essay in Zieler’s exhibition brochure, tried to define it with reference both to emotional content and to facture, noting that the “fluid contours” of old master drawing gave way in Greene’s drawings to “a nervous expressionist use of the pen to fill the sheet with rapidly executed, abruptly discontinuous groups of figures” and in the brush drawings, “...this anguished, expressionist quality becomes even more paramount; ink passages bleed together, and figures are more and more summarily executed....”<sup>629</sup>

Canaday’s contrasting descriptions of Greene’s early figural drawings as still fresh and his recent abstract work as outdated may have reflected the way the critic was thinking more generally about American art in the early 1970s, toward the end of his controversial tenure at the *Times*. Earlier in 1972, Canaday had reviewed in one article separate exhibitions of works by Jack Tworkov and Gregory Gillespie that allowed him to provide “a thumbnail summary of what’s going on in painting in New York today.”<sup>630</sup> For Canaday, Tworkov represented the “old guard...who are refining and developing abstract painting at a time when it has lost momentum and much of its audience.” Gillespie, on the other hand, stood for young realists not aligned with any movement or school “who have never lost faith in figurative art and...are going forward as if the figurative tradition had never been interrupted.”<sup>631</sup> One senses Canaday’s regret that Greene had not retained a similar loyalty to figuration.

Reviewing the same 1972 Zieler drawings show for *Artforum*, the artist and critic Bruce Boice reacted badly to the mix of styles, wondering why, if Greene was so interested in his then current drawing mode, he would want to include so much “blatantly derivative” material and suggesting that “if Old-Master-derived drawings were acceptable right now, [Greene] would ditch

the new drawings in a minute.” Boice snidely uncovered a lot of art historical content in the *Biograph* and related series, suggesting a stylistic synthesis of Lissitzky-like constructivism, the diagrammatic and smudge elements of Rauschenberg, Picabia’s machine abstractions and an occasional bone fragment “which, if it is necessary to the documentation of the synthesis, could be said to represent conventional figure drawing.”<sup>632</sup> So much for the *Biograph* series as an essential signpost in the progress of Greene’s oeuvre! It’s perhaps not surprising, though, that Boice, who made conceptual abstractions that looked very unlike Greene’s work, was skeptical of the latter’s efforts; in a review two years later, also in *Artforum*, Roberta Smith found that in Boice’s work the “the conceptual framework is constantly subverted by the visual results” and the artist’s “self-consciousness seems too complete.”<sup>633</sup>

**The 1980s: A Darkening Palette, a Prematurely Late Style.** In 1980, almost forty-five years after he studied as a teen-ager at the art school of the National Academy of Design, Stephen Greene was elected to membership as a National Academician. Marshall Price, under the heading “Better Late than Never” within his catalogue essay for the 2007 exhibition “The Abstract Impulse: Fifty Years of Abstraction at the National Academy, 1956-2006,” described decades of the Academy’s obscurantist opposition to the increasingly dominant currents of abstraction in American art and its tardy 1980 embrace of artists who worked in abstract modes. Greene’s fellow electees that year included Willem de Kooning, James Brooks, Milton Resnick, Vaclav Vytlacil, and, each in the year of his death, Hale Woodruff and Philip Guston. Serendipitously for this project’s narrative, Raphael Soyer served on the small Membership Committee that nominated the group.<sup>634</sup>

Greene’s diploma presentation to the Academy, as he advanced in 1982 from associate to senior member status, was the painting *Night* (Figures 126 and 127). The work is impactful and energetic enough that Price chose to reproduce a large portion of it on the cover of the exhibition catalogue. Regrettably, as *Night* is not among the one hundred works from the National Academy’s collection that are touring the United States in 2020 and the Academy no longer has its own exhibition space, the painting is not available for viewing—a shame, as it appears to have many arresting incidents. Greene created what might be taken, given the title, as a dreamscape, perforating the inky grey-brown ground with his familiar linear diagonals and arcs in bright

primary and secondary colors (but no green) and inserting what might be trails of comets (or hieroglyphics or mappings) near the lower right corner. Perhaps most intriguing is the torqued and swirling space-creating object in the right center, somehow recalling a segment of a column (or crankshaft) borrowed from the lap of a de Chirico *manichino*. The painting won a gold medal at the Academy's 138<sup>th</sup> Annual Exhibition.<sup>635</sup>

Greene continued in the 1980s to make paintings and drawings in series with titles like *Apparition* and *Enigma*, conveying the sense of mystery that many critics (and perhaps the artist himself) found in them, and like *Gardens of the Night* and *Expulsion*, reprising the Edenic themes that had been prevalent in the transitional mosaic pictures of the 1950s and in early abstractions like the *Paradise* triptych. Alison Greene's favorite among her father's 1980s paintings is *Expulsion #4* (Figure 128), of 1984, which hangs in her Houston living room. Tony Apesos told me he saw two ribs and a radius and ulna. He was certainly right about the forearm bones; Greene may even have traced the figure from his collection of printed anatomy studies and figure drawing manuals, a sampling of which, bearing evidence of other tracings and frequent studio use, is reproduced on Figure 132. I am not so sure, though, about the ribs, which were probably drawn freehand, with outlines then partially scratched off or covered over, and which seem to have morphed, tentatively here and more clearly in other 1980s paintings, from bones into forms resembling the stamens of the daylilies that flowered in profusion on the sunny hillside outside the door to Greene's studio in Valley Cottage.<sup>636</sup> Figure 129 demonstrates the juxtaposition in *Expulsion #4* of a single bold and unmistakable movement of the artist's hand with more subtly layered areas of crisp and blurred paint. Figure 130 shows another of Greene's glowing bars, harking back to *Circle* and beyond. Greene created his own brand of color field painting with the successive layering, wiping, layering, and wiping of the area shown on Figure 131. Sometimes the wiping was accomplished with a squeegee.

Another 1984 work in the series, *Expulsion #13* (Figure 133), was purchased by Frank Stella from a Jason McCoy Gallery 2006 posthumous exhibition of paintings of the last two decades of Greene's life. Stella promptly donated it to the Whitney Museum. In one of the essays for the McCoy exhibition, the artist and critic Joe Fyfe wrote of the painting that "the halting sinuosity of the broken curves and flashes of luminous folds are subservient to the dark symbology of the painting's fiery oranges and crimsons."<sup>637</sup> I confess that I don't find Fyfe's evaluative prioritizing of color over shape very helpful and the curves don't seem, for Greene, particularly

sinuous or broken. But the reference to “folds” does introduce the idea—somewhat inconsistent with a point made earlier (see text around Note 615) in a colloquy with Tony Apesos—that Greene in *Expulsion #13* may have been intentionally creating three-dimensional space, rather than just allowing space to happen as a byproduct of surface manipulation. The symmetrically prominent grey arcs backed by that fiery orange—pale grey on the left, darker grey on the right—create a kind of proscenium arch, functioning almost like a *repoussoir*, intentionally framing a shadowy void through which the painting’s incidents, especially one that is now more sea anemone or daylily stamen than bones, seem to float on either side of an implied Newmanesque vertical. After so many paintings where the formal organization, following the *Biograph* drawings, seemed intentionally meandering, Greene returned in *Expulsion #13* to a centripetal arrangement.

Greene’s atypical formal organization in *Expulsion #13*’s does not render the facture of its details, for which Tony Apesos was a guide, any less interesting. The strange yellow and black oval at the top center (Figure 134) might have been put on the surface directly from the tube; Greene probably painted a black oval first, then wiped it out, then applied the yellow from the tube and then carefully removed some of it with a small brush. Similarly, he could have applied the cadmium red medium in Figure 135 directly from the tube and then run a brush over it. Before the red went down, he most likely painted an area of heavy grey impasto, then applied orange thinly, then blue horizontally with a large flat brush. The blue may have been first applied while the orange was still wet, so that the colors mixed atomically, then additional blue was applied wet on dry. The yellow arched streaks in Figure 136 reminded Apesos of a move Jasper Johns sometimes made by putting a block of wood on the canvas and sweeping it across diagonally. The white streaks in Figure 137 may have been similarly created, and the small orange dabs on the worm-like stamen and petal forms conjure up recollections of Greene’s 1950s mosaic paintings. In Figure 138, it is unlikely that Greene intended to honor the Hungarian flag—an Italian flag turned on its side and elongated would be more likely—but the area of drips is an instructive example of how Greene carefully controlled his facture. He mixed rusty orange oil paint with turpentine to create a drip effect, but he wasn’t happy with the drips as they first appeared and so, with a brush, added small amounts of white paint to narrow the rivulets into a little delta at the bottom edge. He used a little more white to the right of the dripped area to camouflage the manipulation. The whole incident looks like an accident, but it was the result of a series of choices that must have combined intuition with intention. Finally, in Figure 139, the blue and purplish

area on the right is an example of Greene's wet on wet painting, blue first then purple horizontally. The mottled opaque look contrasts with the thinly wiped verticals to the left. And the double red slash is probably one more example of paint applied directly from the tube and then manipulated, with a sculptural impact that is unusual for Greene, who favored thin paint and whose surfaces were almost always flat. It is interesting to speculate on whether the thin dark shadows that reinforce the three-dimensional effect in the photograph are black paint sure-handedly applied or actual shadows cast by the red paint itself.<sup>638</sup>

Stephen Greene began the decade of the 1980s, as he had the long 1970s, with several series of mixed media works on paper. Despite the ample utilization of oil paint, these works were generally referred to as drawings. For their support Greene used an Arches paperboard, a fairly rigid and strong cardboard with a fine-art rag paper fused to one side. He taped the edges and laid down a primer that made it possible to work in oil without destroying the paper. All of these drawings are 22 x 30 inches; unlike his treatment of canvas, Greene never trimmed his paper before using it.<sup>639</sup> The first of these series was called *Inquisitions*, a title that reflected the dark, muted color palette and macabre imagery of the works and, at the same time, suggested the probing experimentation with materials Greene embarked on as he made them. As Alison Greene noted, in creating the *Inquisitions* drawings her father used every kind of medium and technique he had at his command, from brushed oil paint to aerosol sprays, from tracing to drawing free-hand with oil sticks, from applying pulverized charcoal and pastel onto the surface to scratching back down into wet paint. An unnumbered *Inquisitions* (Figure 140), of 1981, is organized formally in a walk-amongst-the-incidents way similar to the *Biograph* drawings, but the aesthetic experience is wholly different. Precise geometry and pristine colors have given way to murky, heavily built-up areas, the somber grays not really relieved by hints of equally sinister pink. Using carbon paper to achieve a shiny, eerie black, Greene traced the partial skull onto an area that looks like *papier-mâché*, but isn't (Figure 141). Rather, Greene may have made it by pressing a rectangular piece of paper down onto a wet white-painted area of the same size and then, after just the right amount of time, lifting the paper off so that suction created a "kissed" or reticulated look, another trace of the artist's process. The technique, similar to stamping, may have been inspired by a move de Kooning was reported to have made.<sup>640</sup> The detail shows how rough and active the surface is, sometimes matte and sometimes shiny, making the surface "object-like" in itself. For the bones, the vestigial arithmetic, and the blatant but still delicate cross, Greene alternated between drawing

(with oil stick or brush) and scratching down into paint. The lower area of the work to the viewer's left illustrates the variety of the paint's color, thickness and opacity; Greene superimposed at least three different layers of color on one another, all within a narrow range of pinkish-gray and greenish-gray, yielding a different effect in each small area but a consistent mood everywhere. While in the *Inquisitions* series, as in his paintings of the same period, Greene was mostly concerned with manipulating materials and surface rather than with creating space, there is also a sense of murky but penetrable atmosphere not encountered in the paintings, no matter how dark. To use an old saw, beholders might feel as if they could stick their hands right into the picture.

In *Inquisitions #1* (Figure 142), also of 1981, Greene used larger areas of more varied color but still retained a gloomy and disquieting miasma. In this dusty environment, the ubiquitous bar/sausage shape does not glow nearly as intensely as in the paintings, although the elongated tongs are menacingly vivid. The carbon paper skull, this time a side view, was once again traced onto a reticulated surface. The daylily remnant began to resemble mangy stenciled tulips. The amorphously smudged ribcage in the upper right corner got its own border, once again suggesting collage without employing it. Tony Apesos told the story that when he and his then wife, Carolyn, on a visit to Valley Cottage (where they had previously seen other of Greene's works), first saw the *Inquisitions* series, they were struck not only by the dark mood but also by the experimentation, the use of familiar imagery in new ways and the unfamiliar carelessness with materials. Taken aback, they whispered to each other, worrying about his health, "it must be his late style."<sup>641</sup> As friends, they were gratified that Greene continued painting for almost twenty years thereafter, mostly in a more colorful, optimistic mode.

Two years later, in the *Gardens of the Night* series, including #7 (Figure 143) of 1983, Greene retained much of the familiar iconography of the *Inquisitions* drawings and some of his earlier work (the skull, the glowing bar, the empty oval, the strange plant—with a leaf this time—but no obvious bones). In this drawing, though, the mood was enlivened by a red Newmanesque "zip," by a fantasia on contrasting blacks, from shiny to matte, and by energetic swirls that previewed *Expulsion #13* of a year later. Once again, a beholder who saw as collage the bordered fragment with a traced skull motif would be fooled. Alison Greene told me that her father really did not have a "collage aesthetic," notwithstanding his occasional use of it in the earlier *Biograph* series. She believes, rather, that in these 1980s drawings and elsewhere Greene took inspiration from Robert Rauschenberg and his transfer techniques, such as those Rauschenberg used in his

*Dante* drawings of 1958-60.<sup>642</sup> In that series, illustrating the thirty-four cantos of Dante's *Inferno*, Rauschenberg combined his own watercolors and drawings with images transferred with a chemical solvent from glossy magazine reproductions.<sup>643</sup> Images of the *Dante* series are viewable on the MoMA website. Consistent with Greene's view of himself as a classicist rather than a radical, his drawings of the early '80s look far less revolutionary than Rauschenberg's of twenty-some years before. Similarly, if one were to analyze the smudged ribcage in *Inquisitions #1* as having been inspired by Rauschenberg's famous erasure of a de Kooning drawing, one would have to admit that, for an artist, effacing their own drawing is less innovative than erasing someone else's. If Greene was indeed motivated by Rauschenberg's transfers, one gets the sense it was inspiration of an art historical kind, in which appealing images and processes enter an artist's consciousness or subconsciousness to be accessed and used in the artist's unique way weeks or decades later—not so different from how Greene was inspired by Beckmann or Pontormo or van der Goes.

Tony Apesos is another expert who has proposed that Greene's artistic practice can be evaluated with reference to Rauschenberg's, specifically as Rauschenberg's was analyzed by Leo Steinberg, in the latter's well-known essay "Other Criteria," using the construct of a "flatbed picture plane." The relevant portion of the essay was published in *Artforum* in March 1972, but the essay was based on a lecture Steinberg gave at the MoMA earlier, in March 1968. It is not known whether Greene attended this lecture, but it is noteworthy that the date of his oral history interview was June 8, 1968, that he was in the process of working on the *Biograph* drawings at the time, and that he spent extended minutes showing those drawings to the interviewer, Dorothy Seckler. Further, while Steinberg's ideas may have had an impact on Greene as he made the *Biograph* and *Inquisitions* series and the works that followed each of them, Greene certainly did not need Steinberg in order to know and appreciate Rauschenberg's work of the 1950s and may have been inspired by the elements of Rauschenberg's practice that Steinberg discussed without ever knowing of Steinberg's discussion.

"Other Criteria" was a "position paper aimed at Greenbergian orthodoxy."<sup>644</sup> Steinberg rejected the concept of "flatness" as an inadequate descriptor for painting beginning around 1960, arguing that

...the word "flat" is too stale and remote for the respective sensations touched off by the visionary color...of Morris Louis...and the bedrock pictographs of Dubuffet. Nor need flatness be an end product at

all—as Jasper Johns demonstrated in the mid-1950’s, when his first *Flags* and *Targets* relegated the whole maintenance problem of flatness to “subject matter.” However atmospheric his brushwork or play of tonalities, the depicted subject ensured that the image stayed flat. So then one discovers that there are recognizable entities, from flags even to female nudes, which can actually promote the sensation of flatness.

This discovery is still fairly recent....It demands consideration of subject and content, and, above all, of how the artist’s pictorial surface tilts into the space of the viewer’s imagination.

I borrow the term [flatbed picture plane] from the flatbed printing press....And I propose to use the word to describe the characteristic picture plane of the 1960’s—a pictorial surface whose angulation with respect to the human posture is the precondition of its changed content.<sup>645</sup>

Steinberg proceeded to describe how from Renaissance painting through Cubism and Abstract Expressionism there continued to exist a conception of the picture as representing a “worldspace which reads on the picture plane in correspondence with the erect human posture...[and] affirms verticality as its essential condition.” Even Rothko, Newman and Pollock were, according to Steinberg, still “nature painters,” making works that acknowledge the “same gravitational force to which our being in nature is subject.” But, Steinberg argued, that all changed with Rauschenberg. While one could still hang Rauschenberg’s paintings on a wall, like tacking up maps or architectural plans, they no longer “simulate vertical fields but opaque flatbed horizontals. They no more depend on a head-to-toe correspondence with human posture than a newspaper does.”<sup>646</sup> Steinberg then laid out the history of Rauschenberg’s work in the 1950s and ‘60s to support his case; much of what Rauschenberg was doing with fabrics, photos, growing grass, chairs, pillows and the rest of his mostly man-made objects was wholly unlike Greene’s practice and as to originality their respective visions not comparable. But revisiting Greene’s oral history tour through his map-like *Biograph* drawings and recalling the reappearance of representations of fragmented but recognizable objects in the *Biograph* drawings and the insertion of traced tools, bones and musical notations into the *Fermata* paintings, one begins to think that Steinberg’s idea of horizontality of the picture plane—with its analogies to maps and newspapers—can indeed be useful in evaluating Greene’s process and that, despite Canaday’s complaint that the art was “retardataire,” Greene can be seen to have been at least partially in tune



with what was (at least in Steinberg's view) new in American art of the 1960s, the 1970s and beyond.

But care must be taken not to push this idea too far. Steinberg wrote that what he had in mind was "the psychic address of the image, its special mode of imaginative confrontation," and that he tended "to regard the tilt of the picture plane from vertical to horizontal as expressive of the most radical shift in the subject matter of art, the shift from nature to culture."<sup>647</sup> Greene's subject matter, though, was not nature or culture (in the sense Steinberg was using the terms) or even being in nature or being in culture, but, throughout his painting life, philosophy—that is, simply being. Thus the importance of any tilt to horizontality in Greene's art, although intended to impact the beholder's experience by the kind of imaginative confrontation through which Greene led Seckler, was essentially formal. In the *Fermata* paintings of the 1970s, Greene rotated that most vertically oriented motif, the cross, by forty-five degrees into a horizontally oriented "x." But by the 1980s he sometimes reverted to verticality, as, for example, in the proscenium arch of *Expulsion #13* and the red "zip" of *Gardens of the Night #7*, and just before he died, in 1999, he was able to write, for the brochure of his last exhibition, the "how a vertical divides the space from top to bottom, from my earliest works to the present, is as much subject matter as overt reference to the known world."<sup>648</sup> Steinberg also wrote that what Rauschenberg "invented above all was...a pictorial surface that let the world in again....The flatbed picture plane lends itself to any content that does not evoke a prior optical event....Insofar as the flatbed picture plane accommodates recognizable objects, it presents them as man-made things of universally familiar character."<sup>649</sup> Greene by 1970 had let the world of objects back into his art as, for example, he traced a pair of pliers onto the surface of a painting, flattening it, but he would never have embedded an actual object into a work of art, as Rauschenberg did. Greene never gave up the idea of his imagination in the service of painting rather than of cultural criticism, never gave up the idea of objects as symbols as well as objects, and never gave up the idea of drawing upon and creating visual memory.

In 1982, Greene served for a semester as the Milton Avery Distinguished Visiting Professor of the Arts at Bard College, up the Hudson in Dutchess County, New York. His predecessor in that post was Elaine deKooning and his successor was Grace Hartigan. During March through May, 1983, the three artists were given a joint exhibition at the college titled *Distinct Visions, Expressionist Sensibilities* and they all participated in an evening of conversations moderated by

Dore Ashton. Unfortunately, Bard's records of the event are sparse and the only Greene work they show to have been exhibited was the mixed media drawing *R#1* (1973).

One of the most engaging critical commentaries during the 1980s on Greene's art was a sympathetic, intelligent and fair-minded 1983 essay in *Arts Magazine* by the poet and art critic, John Yau. The occasion for the essay was Yau's viewing at the Marilyn Pearl Gallery of a series of oil on canvas paintings titled, like the drawings of the same period discussed above, *Gardens of the Night*. Yau found one painting in the series, #5 (Figure 144), now at the Princeton Art Museum, to be "as mysterious, eerie, and disquieting as the Shroud of Turin," and chose it to illustrate the article. Yau's Parnassian description of Greene's facture ties into what the critic sees as the artist's unwavering attitude toward the fate of humankind:

...Recent series of paintings such as *Gardens of the Night* have that faded yet luminous look we associate with the early Renaissance and Byzantine paintings....Greene is not only still a pessimistic humanist, but he is also a religious artist. The visual dislocations caused by his suggestion of shifting planes, atmospheric and foreboding fields, disruptive lines, and imaginary spaces are disquieting and allusive. They suggest an insolvable conflict without ever telling a story.<sup>650</sup>

It was not possible during a storage facility visit to move *Gardens of the Night* #5 to a level better for photography, but hopefully the details reproduced in Figures 145 and 146 will illustrate Yau's observations as a beholder. For example, Figure 145 is perhaps the best close-up example of Greene's scumbling of all those that are assembled in the attached illustrations and reinforces Yau's distinction between facture and impact:

...The predominant colors....are not naturalistic in their reference...The surface can be scumbled to the point where it resembles an X-ray, scraped so that various layers of delicately applied color are revealed, atmospheric or thin and brushy. It is as if these paintings are palimpsests. Yet rather than building up layer after layer, they seem to have been scraped down to what is finally irremovable—an atmospheric field of ghostly images. They might look as if they have been around a long time, but they do not remind one of antiques. What is unnerving in fact is their freshness.

...Most often the lines come in from the sides, pressing one might say with an emotional urgency toward the center....An atmospheric ground of dark colors can be both activated and disrupted by a thick squiggle of bright color. In their bone-like outlines, the drawing suggests that these paintings are a reliquary.<sup>651</sup>

Ambiguity reigns even in the chalk-like white figure in the corner of Figure 146; is what was traced yet another common tool—a wrench, perhaps—or an assemblage of bone? In either case, Greene’s fragmented shapes suggested to Yau “an intense, inescapable isolation.” Like Tony and Carolyn Apesos in their *sotto voce* reaction to Greene’s contemporaneous drawings, Yau saw the *Gardens of the Night* paintings as “late work,” concluding that Greene at age 65 was

...clearly producing some of the strongest paintings of his career. What they confront is Greene’s own past and future. If the specter of death hangs over these paintings, then one should be reminded of the late triumphs of such independently minded artists as Philip Guston, Wallace Stevens, and Beethoven....It is in their company that Stephen Greene belongs.<sup>652</sup>

John Yau, like Tony and Carolyn Apesos, was a friend of the Greens and, also like them, was certainly happy as it developed that Stephen had more than another decade and a half of painting left in him. And in much of the work of those succeeding years beholders, and maybe Greene himself, could find relief from the mostly somber palette and disquieted mood that had long reflected the artist’s pervasive pessimism.

Marshall Price, in his essay for a 2008 exhibition of Greene’s 1980s paintings, saw something different in some of those works from what Yau in 1983 and Fyfe in 2006 had seen. While admitting that notions of human suffering and tragedy continued to have important role in Greene’s work, Price, harvesting meaning from form, found that works like *Apparition # 3* (Figure 147) and *Apparition #11* (Figure 148), both of 1986, revealed

...humanism’s “other side” in which conception, evolution, and redemption are suggested by the welling forms....sweeping curves, and small totems of embryonic, life-affirming character....Greene builds his composition around a central motif with circular embracing contours. Fluid areas of neutral tones are punctuated with colorful slashes and numerous gestural layers of color that keep literal representation at bay. While not entirely sanguine, these paintings provide a hint of the artist’s incubatory optimism.<sup>653</sup>

Writing for the same exhibition, Robert Storr commented on the vertical bifurcation of many of the exhibited paintings (only rarely, as in the illustrated works, at mid-center) and on how the major abstract elements of the composition lean toward or away from the divide, “or arc and curl in relation to it, adding to the tension that it imposes while sending currents through the washes that lap up against it like eddies against a breakwater.”<sup>654</sup> Looking back over Greene’s work beginning in 1960, one can see how Storr’s aqueous metaphor would have been apt through the

course of the artist's abstract painting. Storr proposed that "the clear delineation of an ear in Apparition No. 11 with all its anomalous Neo-Dada qualities in an abstraction of this kind," especially in the context of the painting's title, suggests that Greene himself was "uncertain of what [the exhibited] paintings represented or how stable and substantial the image really was."<sup>655</sup>

Relevant to Neo-Dadaism is the idea that Greene took inspiration not only from Rauschenberg, but also from Jasper Johns. In the mid-1980s, Johns introduced Greene to the idea of using Mylar (or similar plastic film or polyester sheet) as a support for painting and drawing in order to create an effect different from that of canvas or paper. Because the Mylar has a smooth, non-absorbent surface, the ink or paint sat on the paper and, Greene found through experimentation, pooled up in interesting ways. Johns once said in an interview that he liked using the material because "it is difficult to tell from the finished drawing what gestures were used to produce it...it removes itself from my touch."<sup>656</sup> It is unlikely that Greene, the traditionalist, would have found that reasoning artistically or emotionally appealing; he was flexible enough to remain curious about new media and new ways of applying paint to a support and to consider new ideas from the likes of Rauschenberg and Johns, as well as from his own students, but he always adapted them to harmonize with his own values—indeed, his own way of life—as a painter.

In 1984 Greene created a series of untitled mixed media drawings on Mylar, eleven of which are in the collection of the Munson Williams Proctor Arts Institute. Figure 149 reproduces one of them. As described in the text below at Note 659, six years later Greene returned to Mylar, this time as a support for oil paint, with a series that introduces the new challenges and continuing achievements of the 1990s.

In his 2008 exhibition essay, Marshall Price referred to Greene's own essay on the "Tragic Sense in Modern Art" in appraising a painting from the artist's *Prometheus* series of 1981 where Greene was inspired by the Greek myth's timeless themes of "betrayal, punishment, and suffering." Price found that Greene

...worked as a visual alchemist distilling the elements of a narrative to treat its broader universal themes in an abstract idiom. It proves that long after Greene had removed the figure from his work in the late 1950s, his interest in and compassion for human travails remained constant. Even more important for him, however, was the need to transcend the constraints of literal representation in order to communicate motifs of unassailable humanism.<sup>657</sup>

It was that humanism that allowed Greene to remain comfortable with the values of *Reality*, even as he had been painting abstractly for decades.

Price ended his essay on Greene's paintings of the 1980s with insights that anticipated and inspired a theme of this dissertation: "These paintings are neither abstract nor representational but seem to reside in a visual purgatory, an ambiguous place where categorization is transcended and oppositional forces of the Dionysian and Apollonian, representation and abstraction, tragedy and ecstasy coexist."<sup>658</sup> These aspirations, not Michael Fried's assumptions, turned out to be the real "goals of Stephen Greene."

**The 1990s: Valedictories.** Greene continued to make paintings and drawings throughout the decade of the 1990s until his death in 1999, two months after the death of his wife of 45 years, Sigrid de Lima. *Untitled #6* (Figure 150) part of a 1991 series titled *For Tampa*, referring to the Graphicstudio at the University of South Florida in Tampa, where Greene had experimented with new techniques, is notable both for his return to Mylar as a support and for the central image of a stark and simply drawn eye surrounded by red paint. Leisurely speculation about the possible symbolic meaning of the motif was preempted by Alison Greene's disclosure that around this time her father was diagnosed with macular degeneration in one eye and lost a great deal of his sight in it. He was "terrified" that it would spread to the other eye, but it did not. There is no question for Alison that the eye in *Untitled #6*, and images of eyes in several other works, including paintings on canvas, made during the early 1990s, arose from the "fear of blindness, which of course then got caught up with my father's need for his paintings to witness/record the beauty and tragedy of our lives."<sup>659</sup>

During the 1990s, at the urging of one of his dealers, Victoria Munroe, whose gallery space was limited, Greene began to make small oil paintings, many of whose titles included reference to gardens. A lovely example is *The Garden at Dusk* (Figure 151), painted in 1995 and only twelve by twelve inches. Greene had come to enjoy the initial challenge of painting on a small scale; one would not know from the photo that this was a small painting, as it has as much in it as do Greene's larger ones. Tony Apesos said the painting reminded him of the vertical personages in early works by Rothko; he didn't further identify those works but may have been thinking of Rothkos like *Archaic Fantasy* of 1945 or the figural *Underground Fantasy* of 1940, both at the National Gallery

of Art. Tony and I spent some phone time together looking at photographs of *The Garden at Dusk* and he shared at some length his thoughts about how Greene might have made it. The painting hangs in Alison Greene's home and its palette is a subtle mix of greys and flesh tones, with energizing areas of orangey rose and medicinal green and thin but sculptural incisions into the wet grey paint. Apesos was impressed by the transitions from the scrubbed-in turpentine wash in the top center to the thick impasto on either side, with heightened color at the points where the transitions occur. On the left side of the painting, to the left of the vertical light grey "zip," Greene probably first put a dab of white paint onto the gessoed surface, then layered on some brown, then brushed on a turpentine mix, creating the drip effect (Figure 152). Greene knew that dripping would happen, but he didn't know just how it would happen. Apesos and I argued a little about the technique used for the arched incisions in the upper right (Figure 153); I thought the parallel curves must have been made using some implement (maybe a painter's comb, a wood-graining tool or an equal spacing divider, all of which he had in his studio), but Tony insisted that Greene had the drafting skill to accomplish them free hand and that indeed they were scratched in individually, perhaps with the back end of a brush, a fine palette knife or the bottom of a paint tube.<sup>660</sup> The arcs were echoed to the left, but it appears that this time they were painted with a fine brush, buttressing Tony's argument. The archeological and hieroglyphic marks toward the center recall, if in a more tightly packed arrangement, some incidents in the *Biograph* drawings. Like all of Greene's work from the 1970s on, Apesos opined, *The Garden at Dusk* was the result of a series of aesthetic choices, "one after another after another." The artist was not working from a drawing and probably not from an overall preconceived idea; there was no concept or model he was trying to match. It was just a matter of mark and response, mark and response. "It takes courage," Apesos, a figurative painter, said, "to work this way. How do you know when you might go too far. It looks good—dare I make another mark?"<sup>661</sup>

In other small and smallish paintings of the '90s—Alison Greene thinks of them as "a concentrated (both in scale and intention) investigation of painting....sonnets, if you will"—Greene for inspiration drew imaginatively on his literary knowledge and his life-long sophisticated and inspired beholding of art. In the horizontal painting *Pleasure Dome* (Figure 154), one of a series (all with the same title) evoking Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem *Kubla Khan*, Greene organized the composition tightly with a succession of darkly gleaming vertical striations that look like a polished compression of pink, blue and purple lapis lazuli and other rare minerals. Joe Fyfe,

in a catalogue essay, called the striations *furrows*, but *chasms* might better reflect the imagery of the Coleridge poem and the artist's wizardly transmutation of scale.<sup>662</sup> Mindful that Greene, often with his wife Sigrid's guidance, usually chose his titles after the paintings were completed, and mindful, too, of Alison Greene's repeated caveat that her father was resistant to the fixity of meaning that symbolism implied, one still cannot help wondering if *Pleasure Dome*'s glowing green ribbon might have been the poem's "sacred river" that "ran through caverns measureless to man." Another in the series, *Pleasure Dome #16* (Figure 155) of 1994, is notable for the spider web of fine lines meticulously incised in the center, the altar form reprised from decades earlier and a French curve most likely traced from one of the drafting tools cherished in Greene's studio. (Greene may have been inspired by Frank Stella's use of French curves as templates for works like the former student's *Exotic Bird* series of the mid-1970s.) In their respective essays for Jason McCoy Gallery's 2006 exhibition, also titled "Pleasure Dome," of paintings and drawings made during Greene's last two decades, both Fyfe and Stephanie Buhmann succumbed, as have I, to the temptation of tying meaning to title. Fyfe proposed that "Pleasure Dome" also refers to the artist's studio, while for Buhmann the title "in retrospect becomes both a reference to the erotic undertones humming within Greene's abstractions and a metaphor for the arch that spans his reservoir of work."<sup>663</sup>

More important than Coleridge as an aesthetic touchstone for Greene's art of the 1990s was the French painter Gustave Moreau (1826-1898). Greene made a series of paintings called *Moreau's Garden* and used the French painter's name in the titles of other works, too, like *Moreau's Lover* (Figure 156). No other artist, living or dead, was overtly honored in this way within Greene's *oeuvre*. What was the attraction? For Tim Keane, writing in 2016 in *Hyperallergic*, "Moreau's pictures seem fueled by a sort of erogenous Catholic mysticism."<sup>664</sup> Greene's art is often sensual or even, as Buhmann noted, erotic, but not erogenous; Greene had a religious temperament, but it was far from Catholic; and Greene's work is mysterious, but not really mystical. So what was the connection? Greene must have been familiar from a young age with Moreau's famous painting *Oedipus and the Sphinx* of 1864, which had hung in the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1920 (and is reproduced on the Met's website). The subject of that painting is Greek myth rather than the biblical stories that interested Greene, and while the young painter might have noticed the fig tree and snake from the Eden story and the gruesome

body parts of the Sphinx's victims scattered around the bottom of Moreau's painting, those links hardly seem compelling.

Alison Greene's answer to the question was this: what her father wanted, and got, from Moreau was color. She remembered visiting with him the Musée Gustave Moreau in Paris which houses a huge collection of work that Moreau bequeathed to the French nation. It wasn't so much about reading the subject matter, she said, but rather "those wonderful pulsing colors pushing up against each other, the transparency, the layering, the radiance, and the mystery" that appealed so profoundly to him.<sup>665</sup> Comparing the palettes of, for example, *Pleasure Dome* and *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, even allowing for the vagaries of digital color reproduction, suggests an affinity, at least to me. The same can be said for *Moreau's Garden #15* (Figure 157), with its subterranean tones, although one doesn't find anything as exuberant as the tactile, high-key pinks and reds of Moreau's *Garden #17* (Figure 158) as one looks through reproductions of Moreau's art, underscoring Alison Greene's warning not to make too much of the titles of these works.

The question remains, though, as to why and how Greene so connected with Moreau's painting in the first place. Although Moreau was mostly ignored by the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-Century American art world, at least when compared to his contemporaries like Courbet and to his students Rouault and Matisse, in 1961-62 the Museum of Modern Art and the Art Institute of Chicago included him in a major exhibition devoted to three long dead French artists—the famous Odilon Redon, the almost unknown Rodolphe Bresdin and Moreau himself.<sup>666</sup> The Moreau portion of the exhibition was organized, and the corresponding chapter of the extensive catalogue was written, by Stephen Greene's friend, colleague and supporter, Dore Ashton. In 1962 Ashton began teaching art history at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, where Greene was already on the faculty.<sup>667</sup> Also in 1962, Ashton wrote the catalogue essay for Greene's Corcoran Retrospective, which opened in March 1963. Much of that essay is devoted to Ashton's argument that Greene was a "born symbolist" and her recitation of how he used symbols over the arc of his painting from the mid-1940s onward to the date of the Retrospective. In her Moreau catalogue chapter, Ashton dealt with the intricate definitional questions involved in classifying Moreau as a symbolist painter, so symbolism had clearly been on her mind when she wrote her Greene piece. It is unthinkable that Greene would not have seen MoMA's Moreau exhibition, implausible that he would not have at least read (if not purchased) Ashton's co-authored catalogue and unlikely that he would not have discussed Moreau with her. Reading the essay, Greene would have recognized qualities in



Moreau, as Ashton described him, that he would have found appealing and may have seen in himself, as the following extracts suggest:

Moreau was a fervent dissenter from all conventionalized views of painting (p. 109).

His inexplicable "abstractions" are as much a reflection of the questions posed by the Romantic generation as are his theatrical presentations of myth and legend. His technical experiments, "discovered" by abstract expressionist artists who find his textures, hectic linear interlaces and strange concordances of color so close to their own, grew as much from Romantic theory milled in his peculiar imagination as did the few large, obsessively detailed "finished" paintings publicly exhibited (p. 109).

Moreau fit easily into the Romantic conception of the artist, for he was above all an "aristocrat" of art, unwilling to make the least concession to bourgeois taste and willing to suffer the consequences. Gautier's 1856 manifesto...may have reflected Moreau's own feelings at the time: "We believe in the autonomy of art; art for us is not the means but the end....we have never been able to understand the separation of idea and form" (p. 112).

Man for Moreau...was epitomized by the Artist. Art was an exalted ideal to which the artist sacrificed everything. It was a sustained dream, a struggle to envision some transcending synthesis of all human emotion and thought (p. 114).

It is in the watercolors, and a few of the oil sketches, that Moreau's intuition of the plastic use of abstraction is best revealed....In them he could relinquish his lexicon of assigned symbols in favor of floating cosmic visions so nearly like the visions of today's abstract painters. Detail surrenders to the generality; allegory to mystery; representation to suggestion. The very characteristics that Manet reproached Moreau for ("I have a lively sympathy for him, but he is taking a bad road . . . He takes us back to the incomprehensible, while we wish that everything be understood") are the elements which bring Moreau close to the contemporary sensibility (pp. 126,132).

Scraping, impasto, clotting, threading, dragged brush and linear fury: audacious and unprecedented means toward an increasingly abstract end....Moreau's need to express the themes in terms of matter itself predominates. Horizons, perspective recessions vanish. Color—Moreau's favorite reds, deep blues and greens—is set free and used to express sentiments inspired indirectly by the motif (p. 132).<sup>668</sup>

The hypothesis here—it's not really an argument—is that the relationship between Greene and Ashton and the brilliance and relevance of her critical scholarship, especially in correlating Moreau to American abstraction of the mid-century moment, disposed Greene to embrace Moreau's work not only aesthetically (which he unquestionably did) but also intellectually and emotionally, both in New York and, especially, later when he saw it in Paris. (Alison Greene said that when she visited the Musée Gustave Moreau with her father in 1985, it was “a pilgrimage to see an artist he already loved.”)<sup>669</sup> It would have been particularly appealing to Greene that Ashton was an expert in the work of, *inter alia*, three painters: Philip Guston, Stephen Greene and Gustave Moreau.

It would not have been inconsistent with Greene's frequent return to themes and motifs over the span of his painting life for him to have waited thirty years to acknowledge, at least in titles, his beguilement by Moreau. Perhaps by then Greene's internalization of Moreau's aesthetic made the intimacy of newly introduced small pictures seem like a particularly apt format for invoking Moreau's name. And perhaps Greene was feeling something like what Moreau himself described as the universally relevant theme of *Oedipus and the Sphinx*, the moment when “a man of mature years wrestles with the enigma of life.”<sup>670</sup> Finally, perhaps Greene, in his later years, took comfort in Moreau's words to his student Rouault, as quoted by Ashton, “Solitude, happy obscurity in the face of the incomprehension of people who defend the formulas of success, all that has its good side.”<sup>671</sup>

During the last ten years of Greene's life, his work was shown at several gallery exhibitions and two solo museum shows. Marilyn Pearl, his beloved New York gallerist since 1976, in 1989 gave him his last exhibition at her gallery before closing it and retiring to California. During the '90s his work was shown at the Ruth Bachofner Gallery in Santa Monica, the Nielsen Gallery in Boston, the Corr Contemporary Gallery in London, the Victoria Munroe Gallery in Boston and New York's Upper East Side, and at his primary dealer from the mid-'90s on, David Beitzel Gallery, in New York's Soho.<sup>672</sup>

From October 1989 to mid-January 1990, the St. Louis Art Museum presented a small exhibition titled *Stephen Greene: Images of Suffering and Salvation*. The curator, Daniel Reich, worked in the education department of the museum, had been a student of Greene's at the Tyler School extension in Rome in the early 1970s and had seen Greene periodically in the interim. The exhibition comprised the three Greene works from the late 1940s then in SLAM's collection: *The*

*Deposition, The Flagellators* and *The Raising of Lazarus*, as well as *Carrying the Cross*, originally from the Ludgin collection, and one of Greene's abstract works, the title of which the museum does not have a record. The Carnegie Museum of Art agreed to lend its beautiful *Mourning (Five Figures with Candles)* to the show, but, for reasons not explained in the archives of either SLAM or the Carnegie, the work never came to St. Louis. The exhibition's opening was a joyous event for Stephen and Sigrid, not least because the married St. Louis artists Ernestine Betsberg and Arthur Osver, who had been at the Greenes' Roman wedding, attended. Dan Reich recalled that the four old friends were delighted to be together (emotions captured in Photo 7) and happily reminisced for hours about old times riding motorcycles, drinking and otherwise cavorting around Rome.<sup>673</sup>

In the fall of 1999, the University Gallery at University of Massachusetts Lowell presented the solo exhibition *Stephen Greene Recent Paintings*. The illustrated small catalogue, which included a rare photo of the interior of Greene's studio (Photo 9), disclosed in very small print that the exhibition was presented as part of "'Beat Attitudes,' the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Beat literature symposium and celebration of the arts at the University of Massachusetts Lowell in conjunction with the 'Lowell Celebrates Kerouac!' Festival." A few of the several contributors to the catalogue did their best to tie the subjects of exhibition and festival together. Greene's former Tyler colleague Stephen Smalley repeated a reminiscence "of the glory years of Abstract Expressionism and the Beat Generation" that Greene had shared of once spotting Kerouac at the Cedar Tavern and thinking him "ruined and magnificent at the same time." This, Smalley gamely wrote, was a "memorable and poetic" description of a "titanic figure at the heart of volcanic change in the literary arts. Stephen Greene has lived with and through seismic changes in the visual arts over sixty years yet remains unruined by time, and magnificent in his role as the artist who so splendidly applies paint to paper and canvas, day after day, year after year."<sup>674</sup> In his own artist's contribution, Greene acknowledged the generational propinquity, mined his familiarity with Kerouac's writing to identify a common habit and movingly summarized his own life-long outlook as an artist that Kerouac might or might not have shared:

I didn't know Kerouac on a personal basis but I think we were part of the same moment in America. One thing that was always important was to be able to walk around cities....I love to measure with my footsteps the mystery of things seen at night. The wanderer here is a solitary being, solitary in choices as a painter. What remains vital is the sense of your own statement. It is not a reissuance of what you already have. A sense of

yearning persists and what you work and pray for is a vision that is uniquely yours.<sup>675</sup>

The most fulsomely reviewed gallery shows of the decade were at the David Beitzel Gallery in 1996 and 1999, respectively, the former exhibiting only works from the previous five years and the latter a kind of mini-retrospective. In 1996, the *New York Times*, in this case in the person of Michael Kimmelman, was still paying attention to Greene, if somewhat wistfully, in a short, but positive review:

These sure and elegant abstractions prove that Stephen Greene, at 77, remains a considerable painter. In them, dark areas meet light, scratched and scrubbed patches are next to liquefied forms, and sharply delineated shapes next to aqueous ones. Somehow Mr. Greene manages to piece all this together in fluid configurations that look intuitive, idiosyncratic and altogether right....

What to make of his imagery? Perhaps nothing in particular, except that it demonstrates a cool passion for painting and consummate ease on Mr. Greene's part. This show is a pleasure.<sup>676</sup>

The 1999 Beitzel show included works from as early as the mid-1950s, like *The Rack* (1953) and the mosaic paintings *Flagellation* (Figure 80) and *The Fall* (Figure 82), and as late as 1998, like the curiously titled *The Confrontation of Light*. Writing in *Artforum*, Barry Schwabsky remarked what while Greene had often been called an Abstract Expressionist, the selection of paintings in the exhibition showed that he was “nothing of the sort,” an abstractionist, yes, but not an expressionist because he had never focused on “either gestural liberty, ideographic signs, or the all over field....[He] is as unconcerned with the strivings after myth, mysticism, and the sublime that characterized his older contemporaries as he is immune to the repudiation of symbolic, nonvisual meaning typical of the generation of abstractionists that followed his.”<sup>677</sup> Greene must have been delighted that he had continued to successfully avoid being pigeonholed. And, in light of his fascination with Moreau, Greene would not have minded Schwabsky's reprise of O'Doherty's invocation of symbolist poetry (or the inferable slap at Fried's critique of *Abel Sanchez*) in his effort to define Greene's abstraction:

Abstraction here means the distillation of a sequence of mundane perceptions into a distinct but stylized entity—not through an analysis of the motif into discrete, recombinant signs, as in early Cubism, but through a process of substitutions or transpositions: by metaphor rather than metonymy. The result of this metamorphosis no longer resembles its source

yet somehow retains its perfume, like the Mallarmean object whose efficiency lies in being unnamed, the flower “absent from all bouquets.” This is essentially a symbolist idea....”<sup>678</sup>

Greene would also have been pleased with Schwabsky’s idea of “a distinct but stylized entity” as a more descriptive way of referring to the “image” that H. H. Arnason postulated in his 1961 Guggenheim exhibition Introduction as the defining element of an “abstract imagist,” the term Greene preferred to apply to himself (see text at Note 504).

Writing of the paintings of the 1980s and early to mid-1990s in the exhibition, including examples from the *Expulsion* and *Pleasure Dome* series, Schwabsky commented on the predominant “deliquescent darkness” that Greene achieved by saturating his deep grays and browns with red. The critic commented, too, on how the paintings, “for all the broad, open passages they accommodate, can feel so laden, their contents so compressed and compacted, yet without becoming airless or claustrophobic....this shadowy substance is comforting and seductive, and the bright hues that flash out from it like signal flares are hair-raising.” Finally, Schwabsky reached the paintings of the late ‘90s, when Greene had lightened everything up, the palette “achingly pale” and the paint even thinner and more watery than before. The newest works were “not brighter so much as possessed of an immaterial radiance that’s harder to localize.”<sup>679</sup>

While he was making small paintings during the mid-‘90s, Greene was not doing any drawings. In his last year, though, he made a gorgeous series of mixed media on paper works called *Labyrinth* (Figures 159 through 162) of which “immaterial radiance” was the defining impression. These valedictory works are owned by the Addison Gallery of Art at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts and were presented there in 2003 in the memorial exhibition *Stephen Greene: Painter and Mentor*, in connection with which the Stephen Greene Foundation donated them to that gallery. The *Boston Globe*’s reviewer, Cate McQuaid, said of the series, “Brush stroke has given way to painting so soft it’s often just a luminous mist of tones. Out of that mist, like hail, dart fragile gestures in pencil and pen that pit their frenetic energy against the serene, joyful quality of the paint.”<sup>680</sup> One recalls when viewing these last works Greene’s statement to Dorothy Seckler in his 1968 oral history interview: “I could never make a vehement brush stroke. It’s not in my mind.”<sup>681</sup> Karen Wilkin, who knew Greene well, wrote in the Addison exhibition catalogue that in creating the *Labyrinth* series the artist “brought to bear everything he knew about touch, surface, line, image, and more. He appears to have mined the furthest, most

poetic, and perhaps darkest reaches of his experience.”<sup>682</sup> The contrasting receptions suggested by “joyful” and “darkest reaches” are not necessarily inconsistent when considered in the context of Stephen Greene’s intense, complex and, to the end, even tragic vision.

In the *Labyrinth* series, the figural and material echoes of a lifetime of painting and drawing are muted, but palpable. I have probably identified only a portion of them. There are thin diagonal bars or “zips” throughout the series, but they float in space rather than dividing it. In *Labyrinth* #2 (Figure 160), Greene sprinkled sand or ground charcoal on one area of the surface and then painted over it, giving the area a lunar quality similar to the *Inquisitions* series of the early 1980s. In *Labyrinth* #5 (Figure 161), he intentionally included an area of turpentine drip then, as he did in *Expulsion* #13, manipulated the drips after the fact to get the look he wanted. Greene’s imagery was often sensual, but rarely overtly so, and thus the clear outline in the lower left of #1 (Figure 159) of the heads of a man and woman kissing is surprising. There also seems to be an Edenic serpent, from the *Paradise* triptych and elsewhere, on the right edge of #1. Finally, in *Labyrinth* #13 (Figure 162), the ubiquitous ladder of the 1940s and ‘50s has shown up again; leaning against it is a nude male figure, with his head thrown back (a mirror image of the figure at the bottom of *Mourning (Five Figures with Candles)* and his arms either bent or, more likely, severed at the elbows, a variation on figures in *The Burial*, *Performance*, and *Massacre of the Innocents*. Greene also included in #13 a couple of stunted daylily stamens, a macular degeneration-inspired eye from earlier in the ‘90s, a vestigial skeletal ribcage remembering the full one in *The Shadow*, some outlined letters recalling a Jasper Johns work and, in the upper left, overlapping profiles of two laughing faces. As he had been doing since at least the *Biograph* drawings, Greene in these last works appropriated into his abstraction, retrospectively, figurative images and painted events from his earlier production, building meaning by “forging associative chains of reference and analogy.”<sup>683</sup>

There are sixteen *Labyrinth* drawings in total; all of them were exhibited in the memorial exhibition in 2003. The second half of the exhibition comprised early and mature works by each of six of Greene’s students and friends: Jake Berthot, Porfirio DiDonna, Cornelia Foss, Andrew Jansons, Frank Stella, and Lisa Yuskavage.<sup>684</sup> The show, Cate McQuaid wrote, celebrated Greene’s ability

...to send his ego packing in the service of art and education...The great variety on view in this second half of the exhibit attests to Greene’s openness as a teacher...Greene taught painters who would develop

important visions of their own...Greene's influence is the aesthetic thread that ties these artists together, but Greene was such a versatile painter he offered students different strengths. To all of them he offered the guidance to develop their own....<sup>685</sup>

During the last decade of his life, Greene made an artist's statement for a gallery single artist show in Santa Monica, California, that summarizes, in his own words, the answer that this study of his life and works has, hopefully, suggested to the question posed at its beginning, slightly rephrased as: Was Greene able to put into practice the values expressed in the pages of *Reality* (like humanism and the necessity of subject matter) and at the same time take inspiration from Barnett Newman and other non-representational artists whose work he enjoyed and admired? Greene, always insistent that form can generate meaning, wrote:

I have always wanted to achieve a profoundly moving image, to make of paint and canvas a visual fact worth dealing with on many levels. Art does set up a particular world and the one that suits my vision of what I see, know, deals with the dark side of experience as well as its enchantment and pleasures. In art, our hopes and desires shape our visions of fulfillment for [far?] more than the actual experiences that we may have. My use of color and light that is mysterious is of an interior perception. My formal stance is very much involved with an underlying structure that is insistent to the life of the work. I remain subject ridden and how a vertical divides the space from top to bottom, from my earliest works to the present, is as much subject matter as overt reference to the known world. I prefer to make paintings that are sufficiently individual to be granted their own place.<sup>686</sup>

He might have added: "...And my own name."

## Appendix A Biographies of *Reality* Editorial Committee Members

Henry Varnum Poor (1887-1970), a ceramicist as well as a painter, grew up in a well-to-do family in Kansas City, although they were not as rich as the family of his great-uncle, also named Henry Varnum Poor, the founder of the predecessor of Standard & Poor's bond rating agency. Poor the artist graduated from Stanford and taught art there before being drafted into the army during World War I. He was an establishment figure, a former member of the U. S. Commission of Fine Arts and a founder in 1946 of the Skowhegan School. In 1936, as part of a group of artists organized by George Biddle, Poor painted a set of murals at the headquarters building of the U. S. Justice Department on the theme of the activities of the department itself.<sup>687</sup> During World War II, Poor served as civilian head of the War Art Unit under the aegis of the Corps of Engineers.<sup>688</sup>

Jack Levine (1915-2010), the eighth and youngest child of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, was born and grew up in Boston, where his father had a small shoe repair shop. In his early teens, Levine, with his friend Hyman Bloom, studied with the painter, collector and Harvard art professor Denman Ross, who paid each youth \$12 a week so they would not be forced to get jobs to help family finances.<sup>689</sup> Levine was part of a group known as the Boston figurative expressionists and, according to his obituary in the New York Times, he "specialized in satiric tableaux and sharp social commentary" directed at "plutocrats, crooked politicians and human folly."<sup>690</sup> Levine's 1937 work *The Feast of Pure Reason*, a triple portrait of a politician, a police officer and a capitalist with "bloated faces oozing malice" was acquired by the Museum of Modern Art, whose trustees, concerned about offending principal donors, vehemently debated whether to exhibit it.<sup>691</sup> Levine spent World War II as an Army clerk on a remote South Atlantic island.<sup>692</sup>

Edward Hopper (1882-1967) was born into a middle-class Baptist family with pre-Revolutionary War roots in the Hudson Valley town of Nyack, New York. Although he was not religious, Hopper was puritanical and frugal, with right-wing leanings, a conservative Republican all his life.<sup>693</sup> Gail Levin, in *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, cites numerous instances from his wife, Jo Hopper's, diary of "the Hoppers' passionate antagonism to Roosevelt and the New Deal," although Edward was loathe to express his political feelings publicly.<sup>694</sup> Hopper's friend (and Reality Statement signer) Charles Burchfield, reviewing the Whitney Museum's 1950



Hopper retrospective exhibition for *Art News*, wrote “the simplicity of his work, its economy of means, its avoidance of ingratiating decoration all seems to stem directly from his almost ascetic makeup.”<sup>695</sup> James Thrall Soby ended his positive review of the Whitney retrospective with the observation that *Nighthawks* (1942) was “but one of numerous pictures...in which plastic discipline combines with a strong and tearless romanticism to dignify homely reality.”<sup>696</sup>

At age twelve, Raphael Soyer (1899-1987) immigrated from southern Russia with his parents, his twin brother Moses and his younger brother Isaac. They settled in a poor neighborhood of the Bronx, but the parents were intellectuals and encouraged their sons to pursue art. After studying at several art schools, Raphael joined the Whitney Studio Club and soon sold several works to the Whitney collection.<sup>697</sup> Encouraged by his politically active wife, Rebecca, and his artist friend Nicolai Cikovsky, Soyer began attending the leftist John Reed Club and subsequently became a Communist Party member.<sup>698</sup> He also spent time in the W.P.A. Federal Art Project, part of the New Deal apparatus that Hopper despised.<sup>699</sup> Soyer later wrote that the John Reed Club “helped me to acquire a progressive world view, but I did not let it change my art, which never became politically slanted....I did not paint so-called class-conscious pictures.”<sup>700</sup> Indeed, Andrew Hemingway cites critiques from assorted leftist observers that Soyer’s work in the ‘30s was not sufficiently proletarian.<sup>701</sup> On the other hand, as the catalogue for the Whitney Museum’s 2009 exhibition “Modern Life, Edward Hopper and His Time” points out, Soyer’s “humanitarian ethos and political consciousness” are expressed in paintings like *Office Girls* (1936), in which the purposeful and, despite the Depression, optimistic mien of three “modern” young women contrasts with the sad, haggard face of the homeless older man who observes them.<sup>702</sup>

Isabel Bishop (1902-1988) told an interviewer that at age sixteen she was relieved when, financed by a wealthy cousin, her disinterested and unstable parents—her father was a secondary school educator dissatisfied with the turns of his career—sent her off to New York to study illustration at the New York School of Applied Design for Women. She soon transferred to the Art Students League, where she received “classical” training from Kenneth Hays Miller and Guy Pène du Bois, who disliked each other but both became friends and mentors to Bishop.<sup>703</sup> In her early twenties, she rented a studio near Union Square, in Manhattan, where she became identified with Miller, Soyer, Reginald Marsh, Edward Laning and others in a group later called the “Fourteenth Street School” of figurative artists.<sup>704</sup> In 1934, Bishop married a successful physician and moved her residence to the fashionable Riverdale neighborhood in the North Bronx, but she

continued to commute daily to Union Square. The neighborhood's office workers, business people and bums, all immersed in their daily activities, were the abiding subjects of her paintings and prints—early on in studies of individual gestures or interactions of couples and small groups, then later in her persistent efforts to capture the movement of crowds through the streets. In a biographical chapter, Eleanor Munro described Bishop as “a Feminist and a Suffragette, with an independent mind and a taste for writing,” and as “one of those militant anti-Christian religionists of the early twentieth century” whose opinions “sometimes clashed with those of her churchgoing Episcopalian husband.”<sup>705</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin's treatment of Bishop in their famous 1976 catalogue was more nuanced on the subject of the artist's feminism: “[t]hough not consciously working from a feminist point of view, the vigor and strength of Bishop's vision is revealed in her women.”<sup>706</sup>

Sol Wilson and Alexander Dobkin are today the least well-known of the *Reality* editors. Wilson (1893-1974) was born in Poland, the son of a lithographer in whose shop he got his first exposure to making art. At age fifteen, Wilson immigrated to the United States and found work as a doll-face painter, a jewelry polisher, a photographer developer and retoucher, and a monitor at the National Academy of Design.<sup>707</sup> He studied at Cooper Union, at the National Academy (where life-drawing classmates were Raphael Soyer, Ben Shahn and Meyer Schapiro), and at the Ferrer School with George Bellows and Robert Henri.<sup>708</sup> A long-time leftist, Wilson was a member of the John Reed Club and taught at its art school and the successor American Artists School, where one of his students was Jacob Lawrence.<sup>709</sup> Wilson then taught for many years at the Art Students League and several other schools, where he urged his students to look at Courbet, Corot and especially Albert Pinkham Ryder.<sup>710</sup> Wilson and his wife, Dora, spent their early summers in Maine and later ones in Provincetown, where he became known as an “expressive realist with a tendency toward romanticizing - on the somewhat somber side - man's contest with nature.”<sup>711</sup> He painted dark seas and darker skies. During the 1930s Wilson painted several office murals for the Treasury Department Section of Painting and Sculpture and in the 1940s and '50s he won a number of competition prizes around the United States. Wilson hosted many of the *Reality* meetings at his centrally located studio.

Not many facts about Alexander Dobkin (1908-1975) have made it into accessible sources. He authored books on simplified figure drawing and illustrated popular novels. While reproductions of his work online suggest that much of it was mawkishly unsophisticated, he does

have a nice modernist still-life woodcut in the National Gallery and he gave a portrait of his wife to the MoMA, which included it in a portrait exhibition in 1973.

Joseph Solman (1909-2008) deserves a more fulsome biographical treatment than those of the other *Reality* editors for a couple of related reasons. First, Solman had more editorial experience and organizational know-how than the rest of the group, had published a number of reviews in various periodicals and been identified artistically with modernist abstraction. The second reason relates to the modest history of this dissertation project. For more than a year of researching, conceptualizing and beginning to write, I had the idea that it would be a double artistic biography of two *Reality* Statement signers who probably didn't know each other well, if at all: Joe Solman and Stephen Greene. It seemed to me that the antipodal arcs of their respective careers as painters—Solman's gradually away from abstraction, Greene's gradually toward it—could be an overriding theme for the project, or could at least suggest a research question. In each painter's life the progress seemed subtle, thoughtful, uneven and intriguing. And each artist had a living child who was both the world's expert on the father's art and enthusiastic about my interest in him. It must be said, though, that neither offspring had ever heard of the other's father and each seemed disinclined to endorse my proposed pairing. Paul Solman, an economist and television commentator, was an intelligently energetic booster for his father, having filmed father-son interviews and presented a moving (but not oversentimental) Father's Day tribute in his weekly NPR News slot shortly after Joe's death, but Paul seemed uninspired by Greene's story. And after she checked Solman out, Alison Greene's expert curatorial view was, in effect, that while I might be able to force something serviceable out of the comparison, basically the two artists had nothing in common. I eventually came to agree with that judgment; certainly their personalities were dissimilar and their views of other artists—Barnett Newman, for example, whom Greene revered and Solman derided—differed markedly. Dore Ashton admired both of them, though.

Solman seems to have had an opinion about almost every aesthetic subject, opinions that were strongly held and strongly expressed. His dislike of almost all social realist and American Scene painting was matched by his disdain for most New York School work. A mostly self-taught artist and self-educated intellectual, Solman confidently held his own in various collaborations and confrontations with the likes of Meyer Schapiro and Harold Rosenberg. His views about modern American art were far more complex than the simple binary of abstraction vs. representation propounded by some of his *Reality* colleagues, but his hot-blooded rhetoric sometimes belied the

subtlety of his thinking. The unfolding of Solman's career as an artist, painting people-less urban street scenes, then studio still lifes, then portraits—always with elements of distortion and his characteristic “bent-wire” line—did not necessarily match the progress of his career as a writer, editor and art critic. Solman was said to have thought big thoughts and painted small corners. Sometimes those thoughts are a bit difficult to pin down, as in an entry in his unpublished journal where he wrote: “I try to nudge reality towards mystery.... What I mean when I speak about overtones of mystery are not amorphous forms floating like a desolate ship minus mast or mooring, but shapes summoned from reality.”<sup>712</sup> The reader trying to conjure up what Solman had in mind as “amorphous forms” might think of Rothko, but Solman admired Rothko (they were friends and colleagues in The Ten in the 1930s) and loved Rothko's late work.<sup>713</sup> Solman, all at the same time, admired the mature Rothko, sneered sarcastically at Pollock in *Reality* and excoriated Barnett Newman whenever he had the chance. Perhaps a mix of personal and artistic relationships played a part. As Bram Dijkstra wrote, “Solman anticipated – and probably helped inspire – the internal luminescence of Mark Rothko's color abstractions of the fifties.”<sup>714</sup>

Three-year old Joseph Solman and his parents immigrated to the United States from Vitebsk, Russia (Chagall's home town) in 1912 (six years before Chagall founded there, with Lissitzky and Malevich, the revolutionary and influential People's Art School).<sup>715</sup> The Solmans settled in the village of Jamaica, Queens, New York. Young Joe began drawing before he could walk, showed artistic promise as a schoolboy, and by age thirteen was certain, in his own mind, that he was going to be a painter. He enrolled at the National Academy of Design in 1926, but soon found its climate too conservative and left to study on his own. (One wonders how he would have fared at the People's Art School had his family stayed in Vitebsk). With a succession of night jobs, Solman was able to rent a Manhattan studio and spent his days painting and roaming galleries and museums, searching for inspiration and guidance. By 1932, his small gouaches of streets, alleys and railroad yards, incorporating “lessons learned from Cubism, Klee and Rouault,” were displayed at a Washington Square gallery, and his work was accepted for exhibition, juried by Reginald Marsh and Guy Pène du Bois, at the well-known Village Jumble Shop, from which Solman made several sales.<sup>716</sup> Dijkstra found that Solman in the early 1930s developed a “superbly idiosyncratic emphasis on deep color pulsating with organic tensions—as if even his shadows were infused with a preternatural luminescence.”<sup>717</sup>

Shortly after his marriage to Ruth Romanofsky, an N.Y.U. journalism student, in 1933, and with the Depression at its height, Solman joined the W.P.A. Arts Project, happy to have the \$21.50 a week the federal government was paying artists to paint at their easels.<sup>718</sup> Because they found themselves with a common employer which itself was continually threatened with funding cutbacks and restrictions, W.P.A. artists organized the Artists' Union to advocate for their interests and beliefs. Other groups, like the American Artists' Congress, were forming around the same time, and, although he did not join the Communist Party USA, Solman became interested in leftist causes, enjoyed socializing with other artists, and was active in the Artists' Union. Solman recalled of this period: "All of a sudden we came out of our holes, our lofts, our attics, our garrets, and began to be conscious of the world, you know, and maybe it gave us a sense of zip and strength and pep, I don't know what..."<sup>719</sup>

Several one-person shows in 1934 helped to consolidate Solman's status as a promising artist, but the formative year was 1935, when he was one of the important organizers of the group known as "The Ten," or, somewhat later, the "Ten Whitney Dissenters." The other original members of the group were Ben-Zion, Ilya Bolotowsky, Adolph Gottlieb, Louis Harris, Jacob Kufeld, Mark Rothko, Louis Schanker, and Nahum Tchacbasov. Rather than viewing and critiquing each other's paintings at their frequent meetings, the group focused on getting their work exhibited and publicized and those efforts had some success; with the help of their dealers, they even scored an exhibition in Paris.<sup>720</sup> Art critic Theodore Wolff wrote that in response to the opposing mid-1930s camps of regionalism, leftist social realism and European-inspired pure abstraction, The Ten advocated a more diverse approach, seeking an art that combined "a social consciousness with an Abstract Expressionistic heritage, thus saving art from merely propaganda on the one hand, or mere formalism on the other."<sup>721</sup>

Solman became a spokesman for this approach as he burst into the leadership ranks of the Artists' Union. The trigger event was a cartoon, published in the union's magazine *Art Front*, which caricatured abstract artists as Don Quixote, tilting at an abstraction. Solman was offended by the cartoon and, supported by several of his colleagues in The Ten, he penned a letter—in the nature of a manifesto—to the Union leadership criticizing *Art Front's* emphasis on social realism. When Solman read his letter aloud at a Union meeting held in October, 1935, he "got a big round of applause" and was elected to the *Art Front* editorial board on the spot.<sup>722</sup> Solman's letter and its arguments presage the message of the *Reality Statement* almost twenty years later. In 1936,

Solman became editor-in-chief of *Art Front*, replacing Stuart Davis and serving in the position for a single eventful year. As editor, Solman changed the publication from a union newsletter that featured political cartoons (but good ones, by artists like Gropper, Grosz, and Shahn) to a real art journal, with expanded exhibition reviews, reproductions of drawings by Leger and Noguchi, photographs by Berenice Abbott and essays (often in side-by-side debate format) by Meyer Schapiro, Harold Rosenberg and Lincoln Kirstein.<sup>723</sup> Solman's pithy articles and reviews for *Art Front* and later publications continued to espouse the catholic themes of the 1935 letter, although by the time of his contributions to *Reality* he could be vituperative in his criticism of some members of the New York School (notably Barnett Newman).

In the mid- to late 1930s Solman painted everyday scenes of New York neighborhoods and streets—empty lots, store fronts, hanging signs, and subway cars, rather than gleaming skyscrapers, verdant parks or long vistas. If human figures appear in these works at all, they are small, and seldom hold the viewer's eye for long. It is the garbage cans, cellar doors, fire escapes, coal bins and subway kiosks that are expressive.

During the 1940s, Solman moved his point of view from outdoors to indoors, focusing on portraits and still lifes, especially interior scenes of his basement studio, with its sparse furnishings and its wide bank of gridded windows over a low poured concrete sill. He painted the studio many times into the 1950s; there are versions in the Whitney Museum, the Hirshhorn Museum and the Phillips Collection (Duncan Phillips gave Solman a one man show in 1949), among other public places, and in several private collections. One of the best is in Paul Solman's living room, *Chairs and Broom* from 1951 (Figure 163). In some areas of this painting, Solman's technique is a careful, smooth layering of closely related colors. Rothko comes to mind; indeed, I saw an untitled 1954 work by Rothko at the Yale Art Gallery the day before I saw *Chairs and Broom*, and can confirm Dijkstra's observation about a similar sense of internal luminescence, although one cannot be sure who was influencing whom between the two friends and fellow acolytes of Milton Avery.

An *Arts Magazine* article summarized Solman's development, in comparison to that of his colleagues in The Ten, this way:

While Rothko and Gottlieb explored Greek myths and anthropology in search of universal symbols, Solman regarded his own studio...and painted a personal set of symbols, of a humble, household universality. It was a Chardin-like turning away from an academy of neo-

classicism, hybrid with anthropology and abstraction in its contemporary American version....Then, after he had reached a certain point of fulfillment in painting the objects in his world, Solman was moved to paint its *dramatis personae*.<sup>724</sup>

Solman had many artist friends, including Avery, De Kooning, Kainen, Walkowitz, and the abstract artists Rosalind Bengelsdorf Browne and her husband Byron Browne, both founding members of the Abstract American Artists organization. Solman painted a portrait of each of the Brownes in a style that is hard to categorize; it is not “natural,” imitative or conventional, (sometimes skin colors are far from naturalistic, echoing the background wall covering), but it is also certainly not caricature. In Solman’s portrait of Rosalind (owned by Chatham University and, as of 2017, stored in a closet), her eyes are enlarged, but not grotesquely so. Her neck is elongated, but not so aggressively as in many of Solman’s other portraits. Portraits by Schiele, Kokoschka (whom Solman admired), and Alice Neel (who was Solman’s friend and the beneficiary of his support in the Artists’ Union) come to mind, but Solman does not twist his sitters into uncomfortable-looking positions.<sup>725</sup> Perhaps the best descriptor is “interpretive,” especially when comparing the oil portraits to Solman’s many “subway portraits,” which he drew with his quick, sure hand on newsprint or racing forms on his way to and from his work as a clerk at racetracks outside New York City and then colored with watercolor or gouache back at his studio. The unsuspecting sitters of these sketches are more “types” to be recognized and catalogued than individuals to be illuminated, but Solman respected even these incognizant subjects and the results are charmingly evocative; I am fortunate to have an example (Figure 164) that reminds me of my paternal grandfather.

## Appendix B Figures



**Figure 1 Stephen Greene, Head, c. 1939-42. Tempera, 13 9/16 x 11 1/2 inches. The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, gift of Dr. Clarence Van Epps (1947.21). All works by Stephen Greene © Estate of Stephen Greene.**





**Figure 2 Frederick W. Kent, Studying in the Iowa Memorial Union, University of Iowa, 1950s?, c. 1950-59. Still image. University of Iowa Libraries, University Archives, Frederick W. Kent Collection of Photographs, 1866-2000. (detail included)**

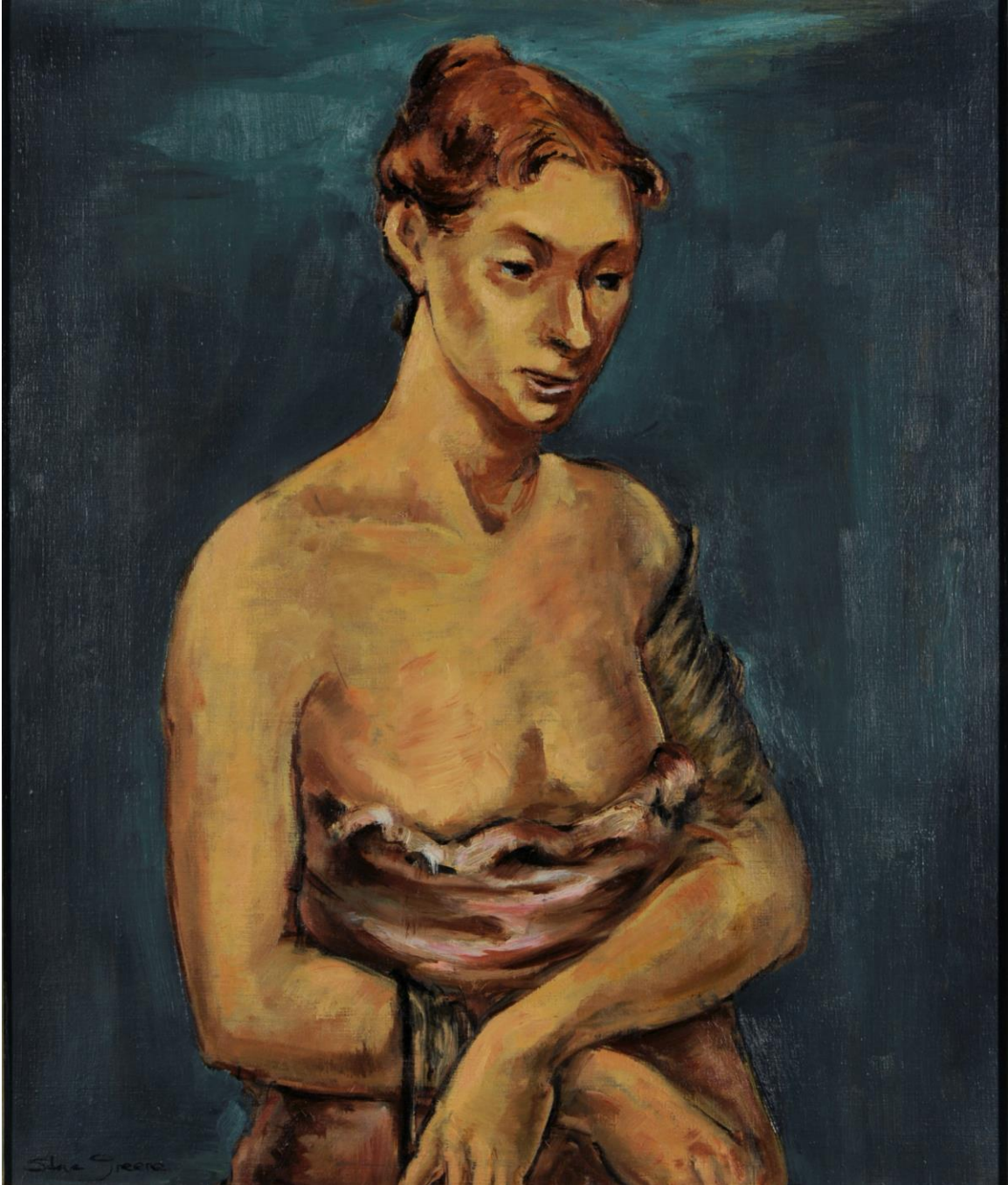
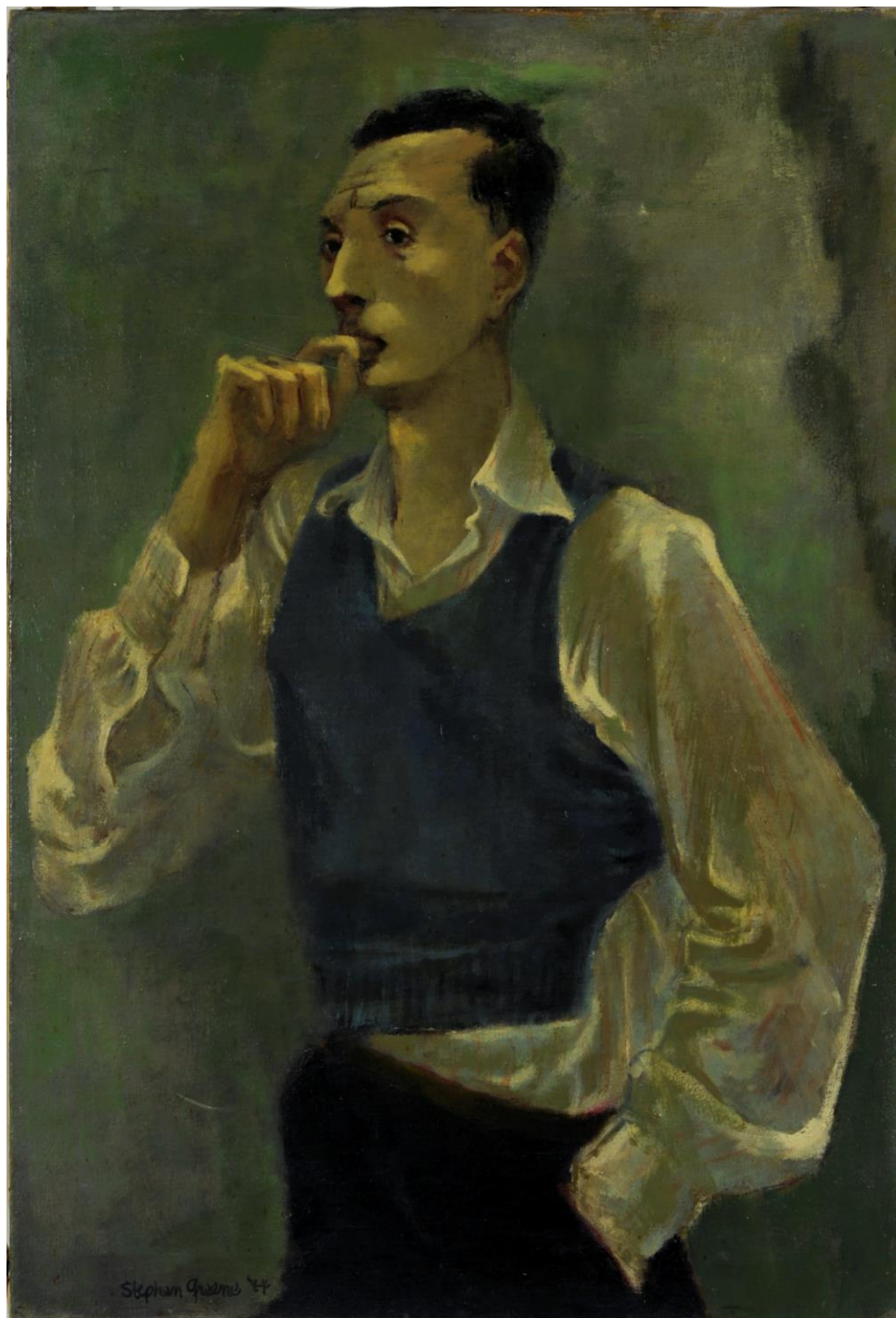


Figure 3 Stephen Greene, *Girl with a Pink Dress*, c. 1940. Oil on canvas, 33 x 29 in.



**Figure 4 Stephen Greene, *Untitled (Man with right hand to mouth, portrait of Philip Guston?)*, 1944. Oil on canvas, 32 x 21 7/8 in. The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, gift of Dr. Clarence Van Epps.**

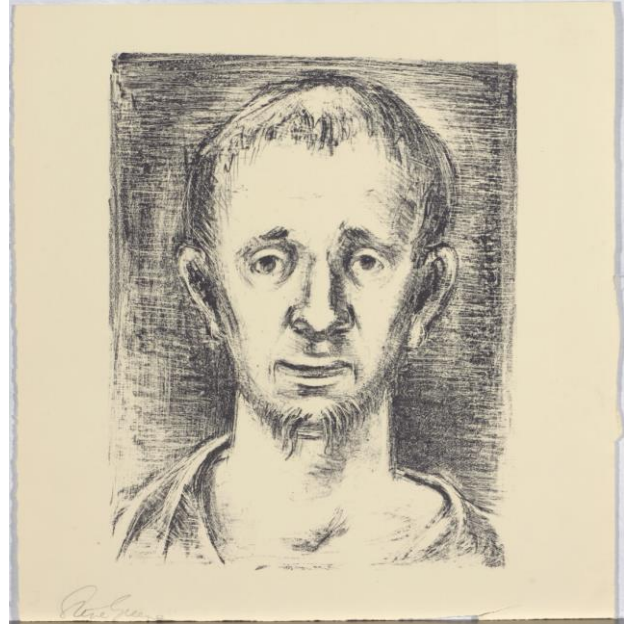




**Figure 5 Philip Guston, Self-Portrait, 1944. Oil on canvas, 26 x 18 in. Private collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



**Figure 6 Philip Guston, Mother and Child, c. 1930. Oil on canvas, 40 x 30 in. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



**Figure 7 Stephen Greene, Two Portraits, c. 1939-42. The University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, Gifts in memory of Lester and Florence Longman from Stanley and Ruth Longman. left, Portrait of a Woman, Etching, 8 x 5 7/8 inches; right, Portrait of a Man, Etching, 11 1/2 x 11 3/4 inches.**



**Figure 8 Stephen Greene, Two Women, 1941. Color lithograph, printed in green ink, 11 7/8 x 9 3/4 inches. Philadelphia Museum of Art, Acc. No. 1982-10-322, Purchased with the Lola Downin Peck Fund from the Carl and Laura Zigrosser Collection.**





**Figure 9 Philip Guston, Sentimental Moment, 1944. Oil on canvas, 46 1/4 x 26 in. Private collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**





**Figure 10** Stephen Greene, untitled, c. 1939-45. Ink and wash on paper, approx. 6 1/2 x 7 3/4. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene.



**Figure 11 Philip Guston, Sanctuary, 1944. Oil on canvas, 22 1/8 x 35 7/8. Private collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



**Figure 12 Byron Burford, Reclining Figures, 1946-47. Oil on canvas. Private collection.**



**Figure 13 Stephen Greene, Self-Portrait, 1945. Graphite on paper, 11 1/2 x 8 1/2 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. R. Kirk Askew, Jr., 1968 (68.189.1).**





**Figure 14 Philip Guston, Study for Sanctuary, 1942. Lithographic crayon on paper, 14 1/4 x 22 5/8 in.  
Private collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



Figure 15 Stephen Greene, A Mural for the Iowa Memorial Union Commemorating the Pre-Flight School, 1945. Oil on canvas (?), size unknown. Whereabouts unknown. Photo is Plate I of M. A. thesis, School of Art, University of Iowa, 1945.





**Figure 16** Stephen Greene, *Untitled*, c. 1944-45. Oil on canvas (?), size unknown. Whereabouts unknown.  
Photo from the collection of Alison de Lima Greene.

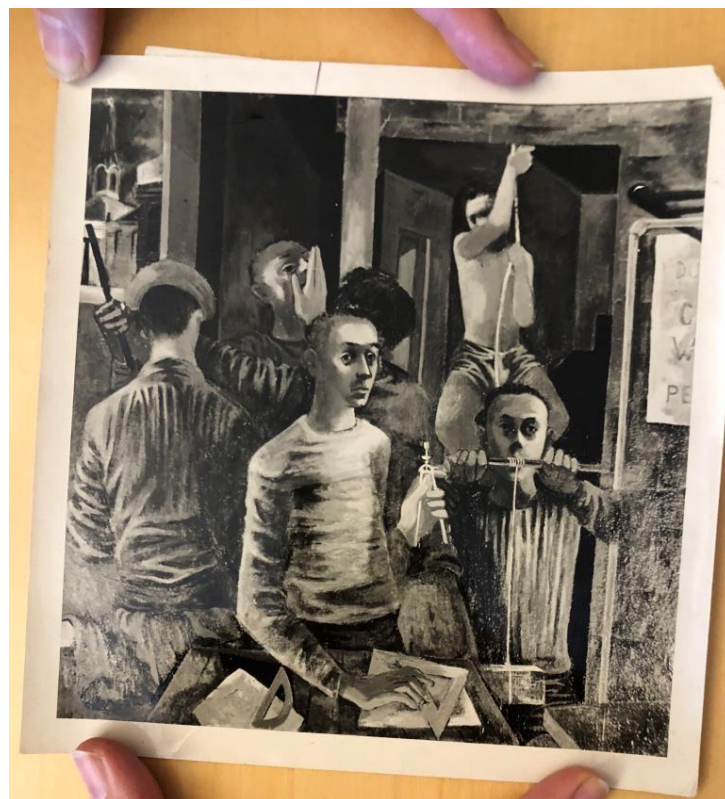
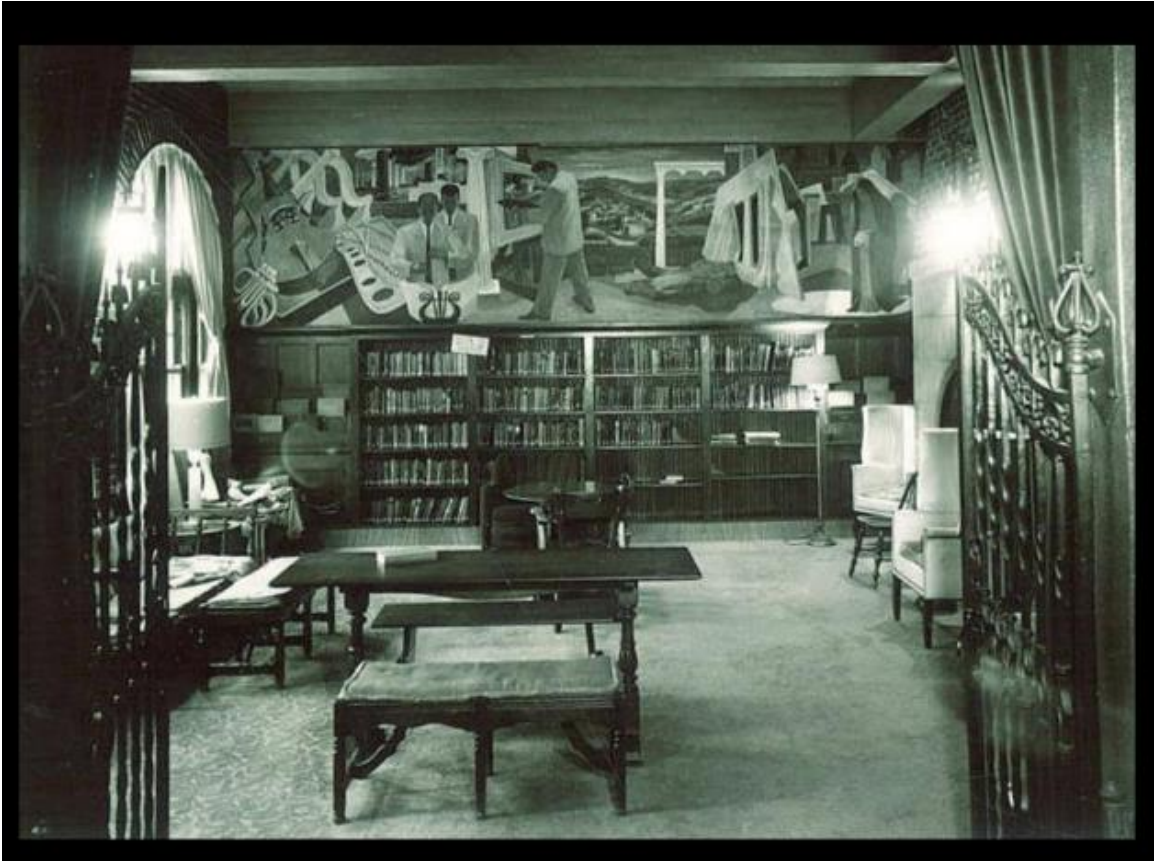


Figure 17 Comparison of Figure 15 (above) and Figure 16 (below)

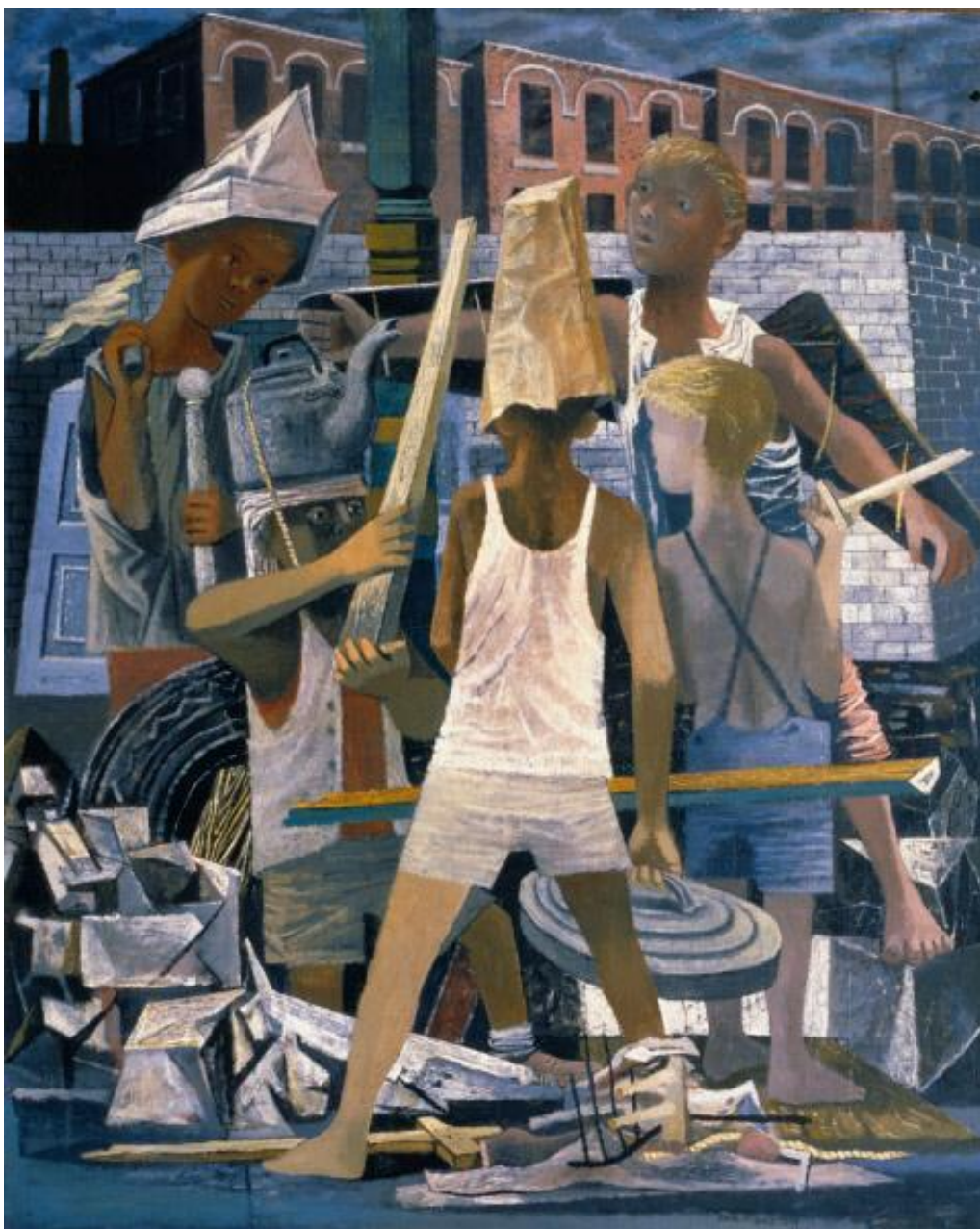


**Figure 18 Frederick W. Kent, Mural Studio, University of Iowa, c. 1940-43. Still image. University of Iowa Libraries, University Archives, Frederick W. Kent Collection of Photographs, 1866-2000.**





**Figure 19** Photographer unknown, Mural in the Iowa Memorial Union Reading Room, c. 1945. Photograph. Special Collections, University of Iowa.



**Figure 20 Philip Guston, *Martial Memory*, 1941. Oil on canvas, 40 1/8 x 32 1/4 in. St. Louis Art Museum, Eliza McMillan Trust. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



**Figure 21 Philip Guston, Locker Room (Navy Pre-Flight Training), 1943. Watercolor and ink on paper, 30 x 40 in. Private Collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**





**Figure 22 Stephen Greene, Preflight Training, 1944. Pen, ink, crayon, pencil on wove paper, 13 1/16 x 18 13/16 in. Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts, museum purchase, 1949.11.**



**Figure 23 Philip Guston, Clothes Inflation Drill (Navy Pre-Flight Training), 1943. Pencil and crayon on paper, 22 1/2 x 29 in. Private collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**





38      DISORDER AND EARLY SORROW  
    STEPHEN GREENE  
*Board of Directors' Prize*

**Figure 24 Stephen Greene, Disorder and Early Sorrow, 1946 (not located). As illustrated in the catalogue for the Thirty-ninth Annual Exhibition of Works by Indiana Artists, John Herron Art Museum, Indianapolis, April 27 – June 2, 1946.**

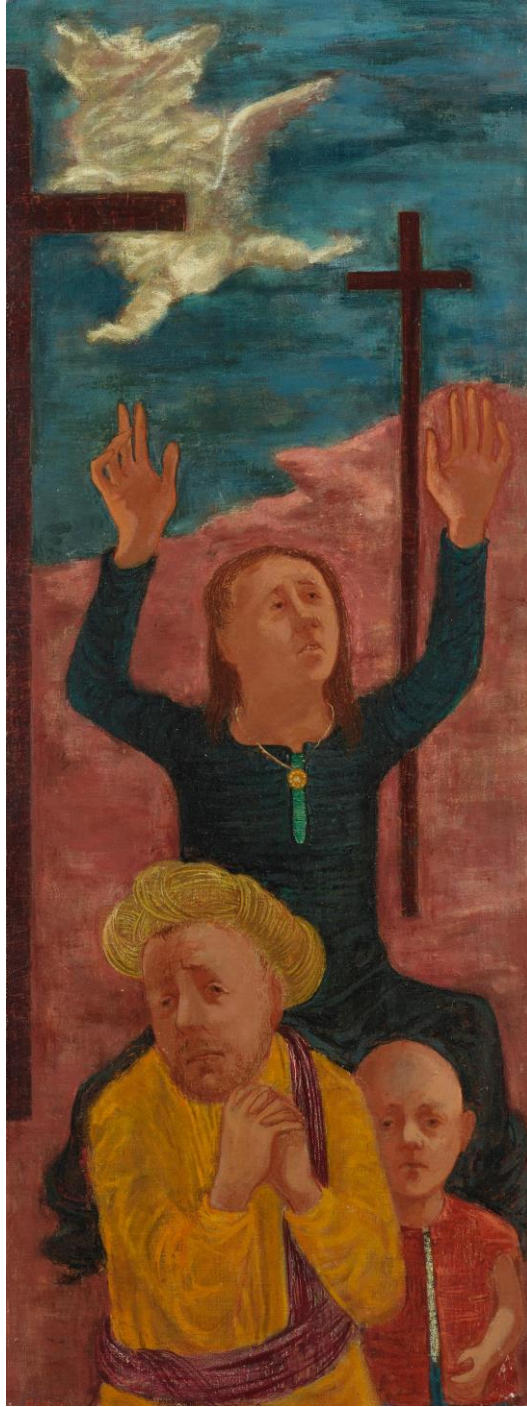


Figure 25 Stephen Greene, *The Sign*, 1945 or 1946. Oil on canvas, 11 x 29 in. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, John Barton Payne Fund, obj. no. 46.9.3. Photo: David Stover. ©Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.



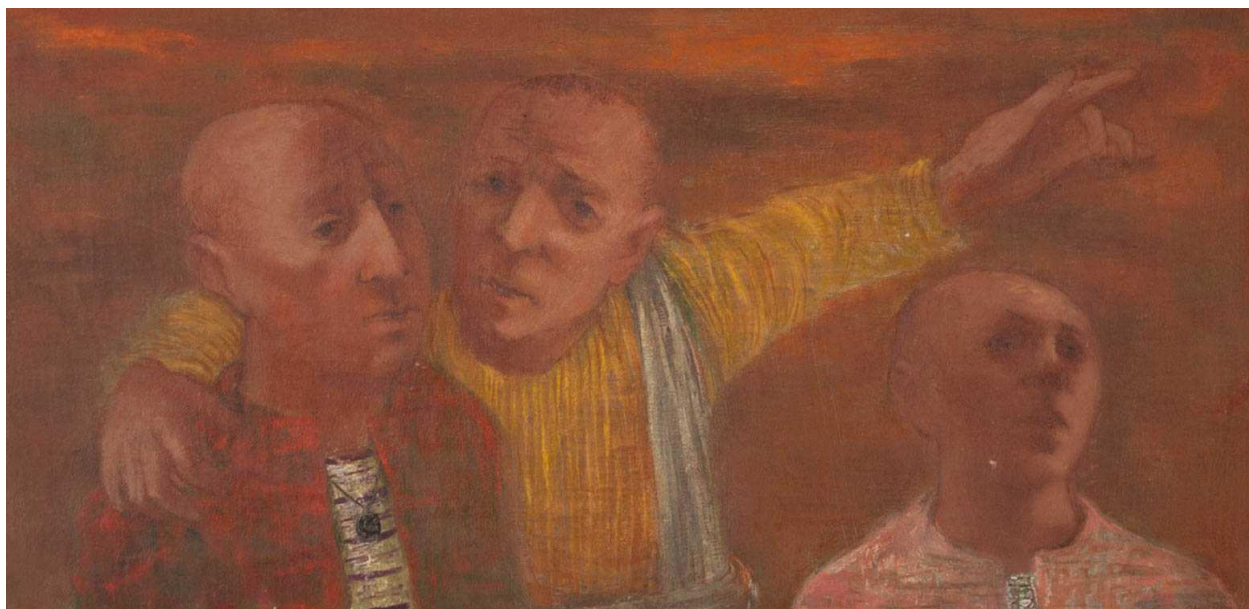
Figure 26 Stephen Greene, *The Mourners*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 20 x 30 in. Private collection [?].





**Figure 27 Stephen Greene, *Lamentation*, c. 1946. Oil on canvas, 29 x 11 1/4in. Location unknown (auctioned 19 November 2019 at Bonhams, New York).**





**Figure 28** Stephen Greene, *Disorder and Early Sorrow*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 9 x 18 in. Private collection [?].



**Figure 29** Hugo van der Goes, *Death of the Virgin*, c. 1472–80. Oil on panel, 147.8cm x 122.5cm.  
Groeningemuseum, Bruges.





**Figure 30** Stephen Greene, *The Deposition*, 1947. Oil on canvas, 59 1/4 x 33 7/8 in. St. Louis Art Museum, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., ob. no. 529:1957. Photo © St. Louis Art Museum.



**Figure 31** Stephen Greene, *The Raising of Lazarus, aka Lazarus*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 29 3/4 x 25 in.  
Location unknown (auctioned 26 January 2018 at Skinner Auction; deaccessioned by St. Louis Art Museum,  
gift of Sydney Shoenberg).





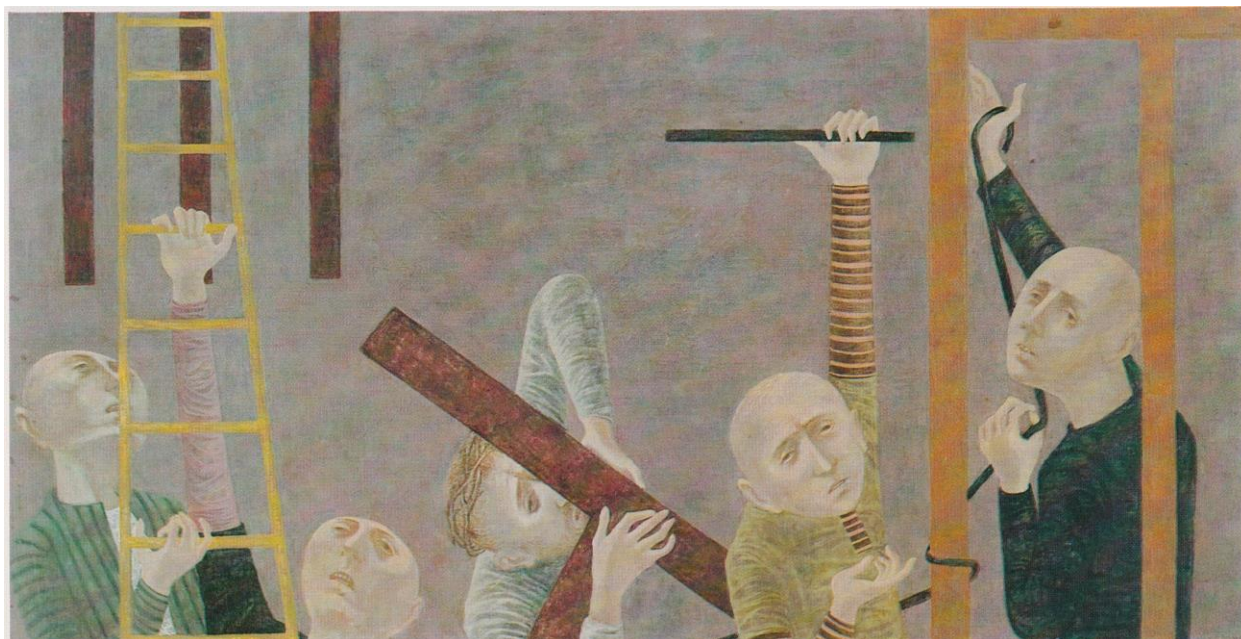
**Figure 32** Stephen Greene, *The Flagellators*, 1946. Oil on canvas, 21 7/8 x 43 in. St. Louis Art Museum, Eliza McMillan Trust, ob. no. 206:1946. Photo © St. Louis Art Museum.



**Figure 33 Stephen Greene, St. Sebastian, c. 1946. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Collection of Eliza Rathbone. Photo by and courtesy of Ms Rathbone.**



**Figure 34 Stephen Greene, Christ and the Money Changers, 1946. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Location unknown; formerly in the collection of Kurt Seligmann.**



**Figure 35 Stephen Greene, Carrying the Cross, 1946 or 1947. Oil on canvas, dimensions unknown. Location unknown; formerly in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Earle Ludgin, Chicago.**





**Figure 36 Philip Guston, *The Porch*, 1946-47. Oil on canvas, 58 1/8 x 36 inches. Krannert Art Museum, University of Illinois Purchase through the Festival of Arts Purchase Fund, ob. no. 1948-10-1. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**





**Figure 37 Philip Guston, *The Porch II*, 1947. Oil on canvas, 62 1/2 x43 inches. Munson-Williams-Procter Arts Institute, Museum purchase, ob. no. 48.26. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



**Figure 38** Pietro Lorenzetti, *Deposition from the Cross*, ca. 1316-19. Fresco and tempera. Southeast corner of left transept, Lower Church of San Francisco, Assisi.





**Figure 39** Jacobo Pontormo, *Deposition From the Cross*, 1528. Oil on canvas, 123 x 76 inches. Altarpiece, Church of Santa Felicità, Florence.

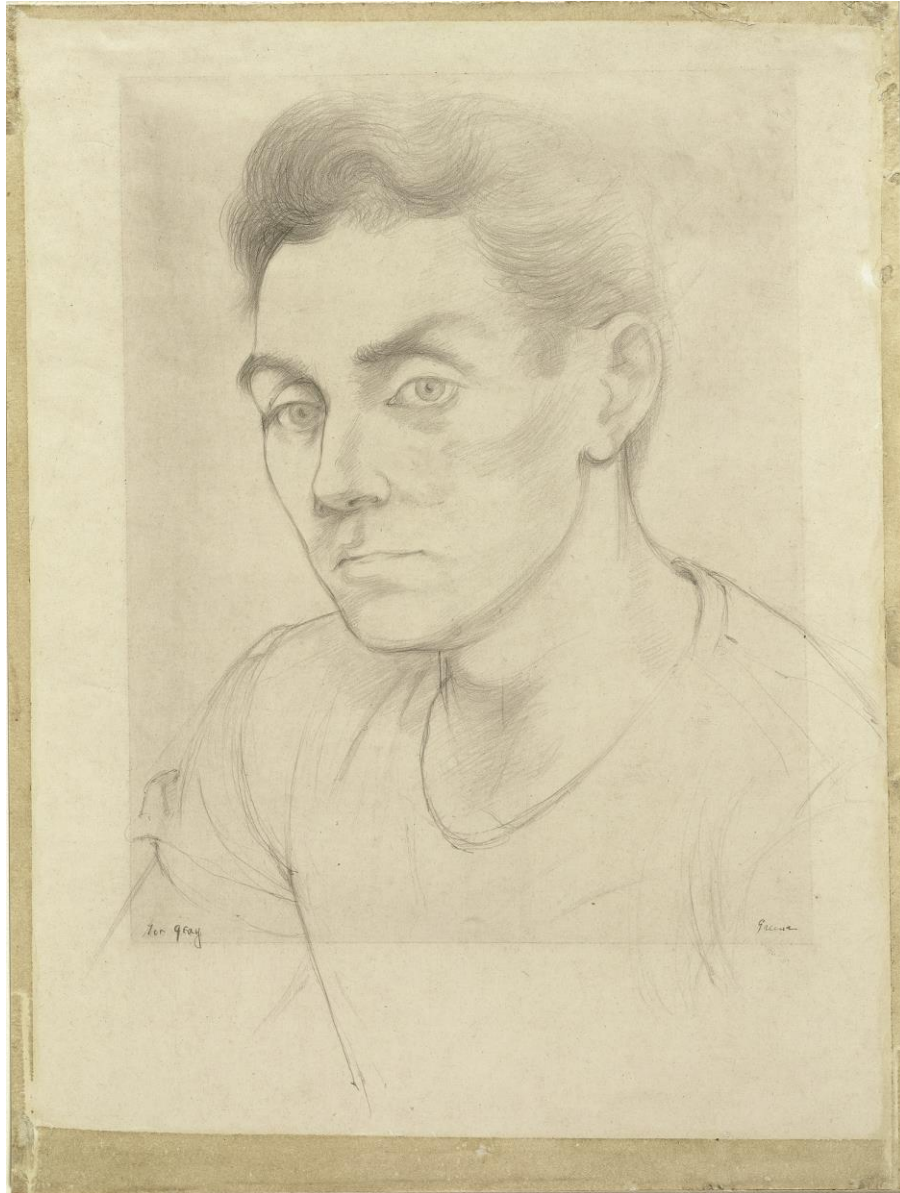


**Figure 40 Stephen Greene, *The Burial*, 1947. Oil on linen, 42 x 55 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, acc. no. 49.16 (detail below).**



**Figure 41 Stephen Greene, *Limbo*, 1947. Oil on canvas, 41 x 54 3/4 inches. Vassar College, Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Gift of Rosalie Thorne McKenna, Class of 1940, 1982.30.**





**Figure 42 Stephen Greene, Portrait of Gray Foy, c. 1948. Graphite on paper, 9 x 7 inches. Private collection (courtesy of Don Quaintance).**



**Figure 43 Stephen Greene, Mourning (Five Figures with Candles), 1947. Oil on canvas, 29 x 23 1/4 inches.  
Carnegie Museum of Art, A. W. Mellon Acquisition Endowment Fund, acc. no. 82.25.**



**Figure 44 Stephen Greene, Resurrection, c. 1947. Oil on canvas, 40 x 13 inches. Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Gift of Mary and Earle Ludgin Collection, 1982.55.**





**Figure 45** Stephen Greene, *Figures at the Foot of the Cross*, 1947. Oil on canvas, 31 x 16 inches. Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund, Obj. ID 1940:400.



**Figure 46 Stephen Greene, *The Doll*, c. 1948. Oil on canvas, 23 1/4 x 39 1/2 inches. Location unknown. (Sold at auction, May 4, 2013, Roland NY, Glen Cove, New York.)**



Figure 47 Stephen Greene, *Family Portrait*, c. 1948. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches. Detroit Institute of Art, Gift of John S. Newberry, Jr., Acc. No. 48.396.

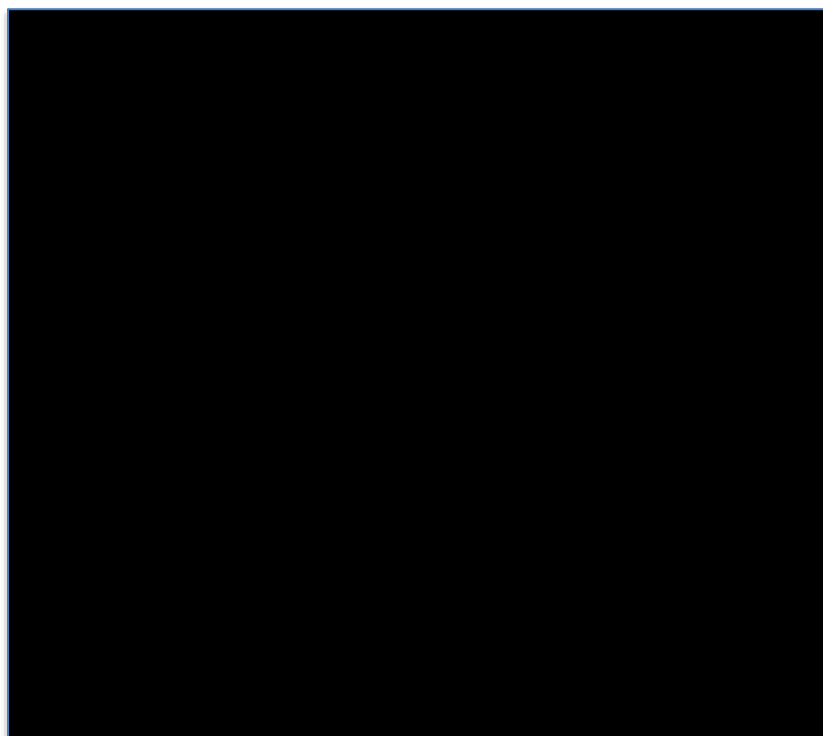


Figure 48 Page 93 from “19 Young Americans,” Life, 20 March 1950. (Available via [Google Books](#).)



**Figure 49** Alfred Eisenstaedt, photograph of Stephen Greene used in “19 Young Americans,” 1950.





**Figure 50 (l.) Karl Knaths, *Duck Flight*, 1948. Oil and ink on linen, 40 1/8 x 30 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, purchase 49.18. (r.) Stephen Greene, *Family Portrait*, c. 1948. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches. Detroit Institute of Art, Gift of John S. Newberry**



**Figure 51** Life Magazine, October 23, 1950, pages 64-65 (Available via [Google Books](#))



**Figure 52 Stephen Greene, *The Shadow*, 1950. Oil on linen, 54 1/8 x 34 1/16 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, gift of Dr. and Mrs. Emile Gordon Stoloff, acc. no. 61.16.**

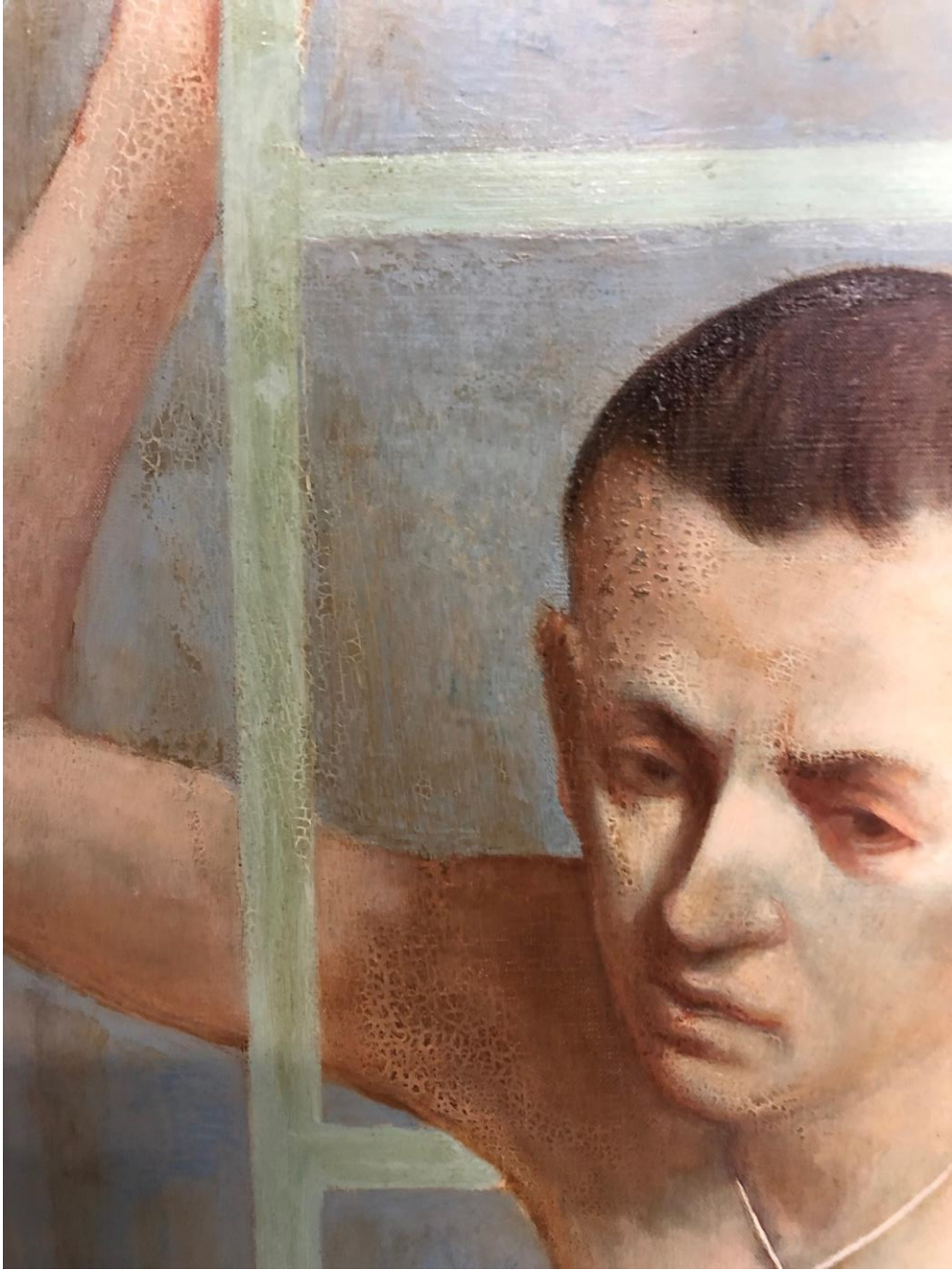




Figure 53 Whitney Museum, “A young visitor and her companion contemplate Stephen Greene’s *The Shadow*.” <http://whitneymuseum.tumblr.com/post/151513283519/a-young-visitor-and-her-companion-contemplate> accessed 18 January 2019.



**Figure 54 Stephen Greene, *The Return*, 1950. Oil on canvas, 1318 x 838 millimeters. Tate Gallery, Presented by R. Kirk Askew, Jnr through the Friends of the Tate Gallery, 1962m ref. T00526.**



**Figure 55 Detail of Figure 54 (photo by the author).**



**Figure 56 Stephen Greene, *The Flagellation* (a/k/a *The Flagellators*), 1951. Oil on unprimed canvas, 90 x 40 inches. The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Gift of the Westport Fund, obj. no. 51-40.**





**Figure 57** Stephen Greene, *The Kiss of Judas*, 1951. Oil on canvas, 63 3/4 x 40 inches. Metropolitan Museum of Art , Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Emile Gordon Stoloff, Acc. No. 63.190.1.



**Figure 58 Stephen Greene, Study for The Kiss of Judas, c. 1951. Ink on tracing paper, 8 x 5 7/8 inches.  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Emile Gordon Stoloff, Acc No. 63.190.12.**



**Figure 59 Stephen Greene, Massacre of the Innocents, 1952. Oil on canvas, 60 x 45 1/4. Princeton University Art Museum, Gift of R. Kirk Askew, Jr., 1959. (Photo by the author in situ at Princeton storage facility.)**





**Figure 60 Detail of Figure 59.**

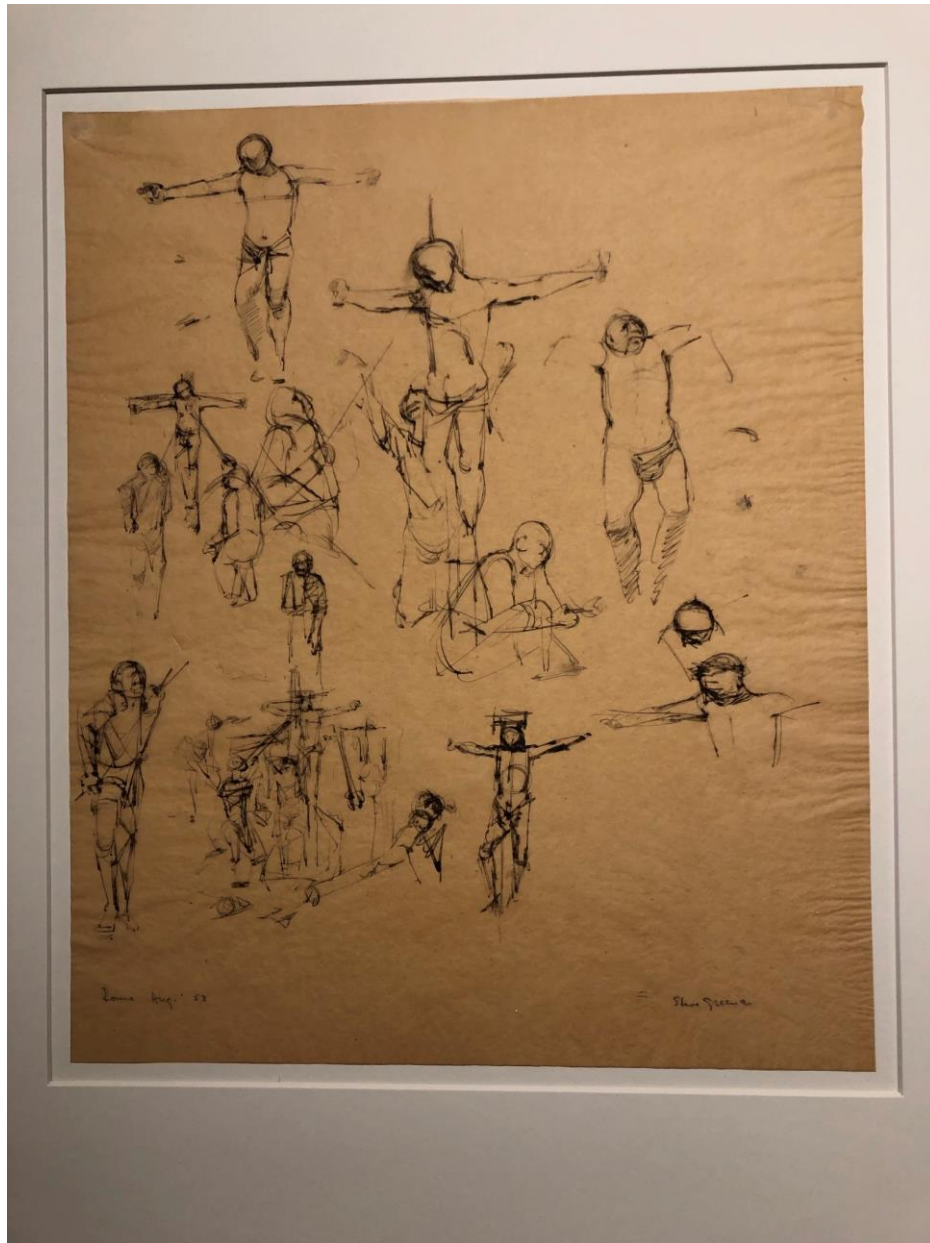




**Figure 61 Stephen Greene, Massacre of the Innocents, c. 1952, (study for or after Figure 59). Wash on linen (?), 5  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Collection of the author.**

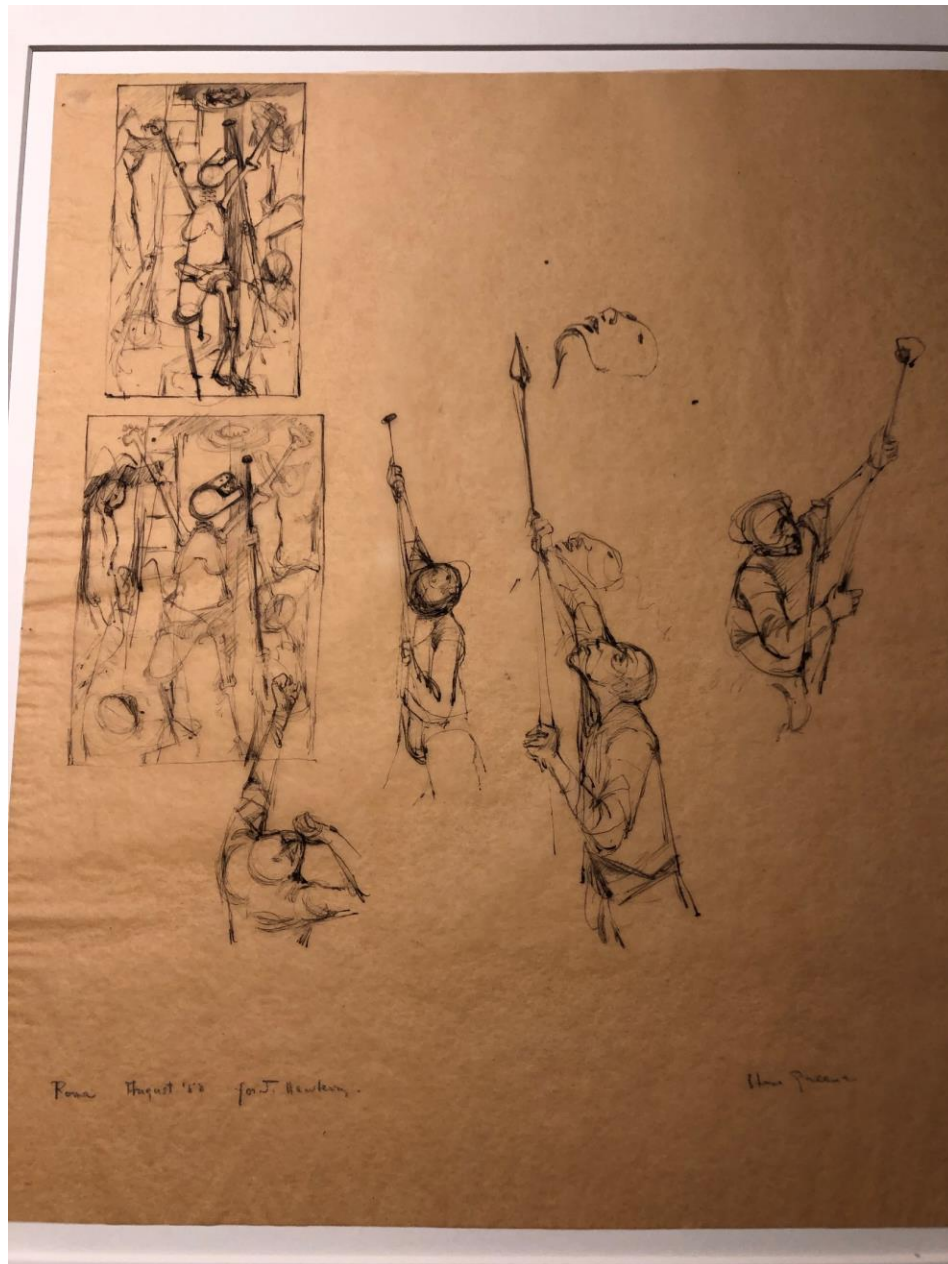


**Figure 62** Stephen Greene, *Sketches for Massacre of the Innocents*, c. 1952. Ink on paper, approx. 11 3/8 x 9 1/8 each. Princeton University Art Museum, gifts of the artist, 1959.



**Figure 63 Stephen Greene, Crucifixion Studies I, 1953. Pen, ink on tracing paper, 15 ½ x 12 7/8 inches.  
Detroit Institute of Arts. Bequest of John S. Newberry, acc. no. 65-118.**

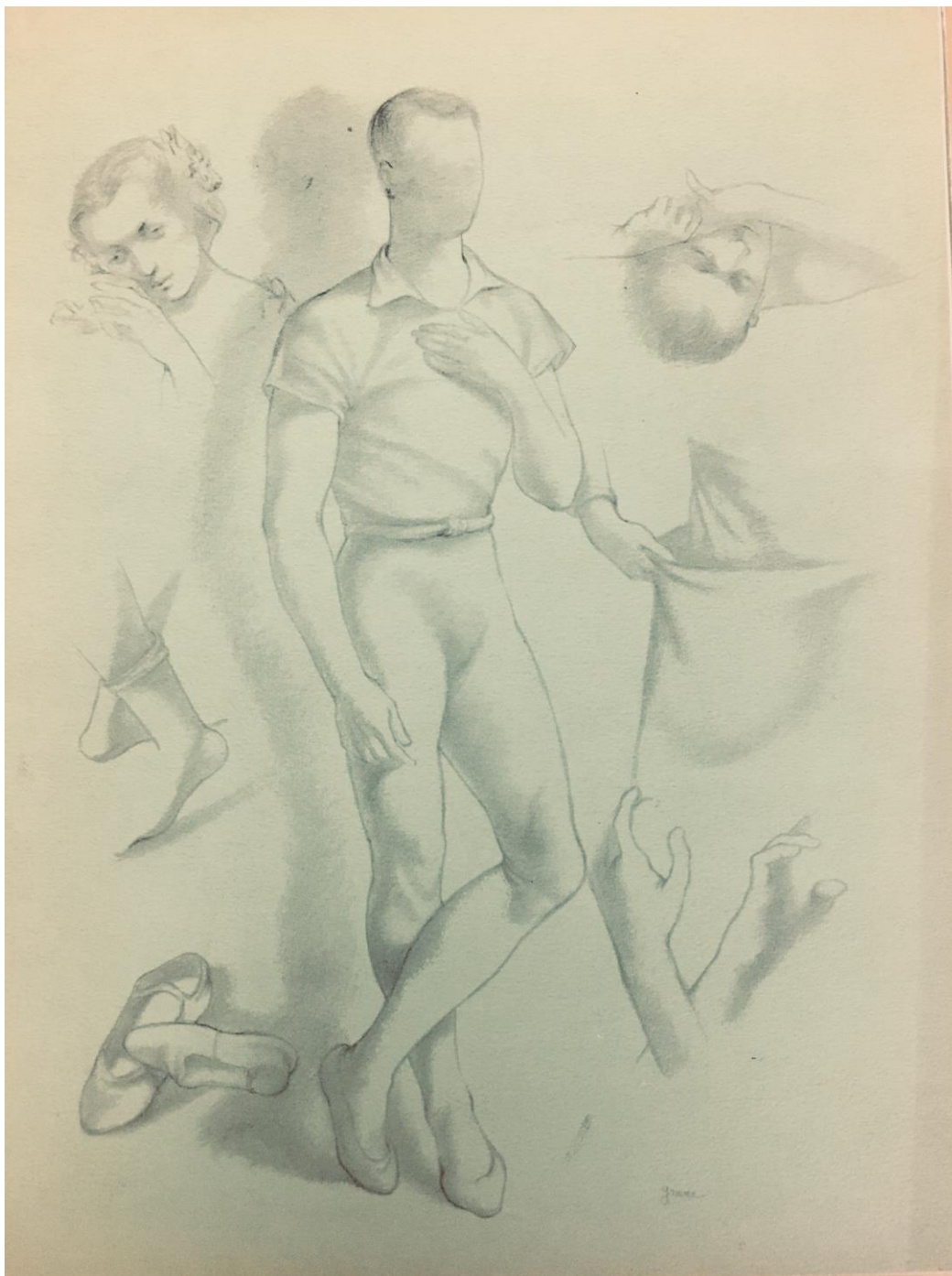




**Figure 64 Stephen Greene, Crucifixion Studies II, 1953. Pen, ink on tracing paper, 14  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 12  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches.  
 Detroit Institute of Arts. Bequest of John S. Newberry, acc. no. 65-119.**

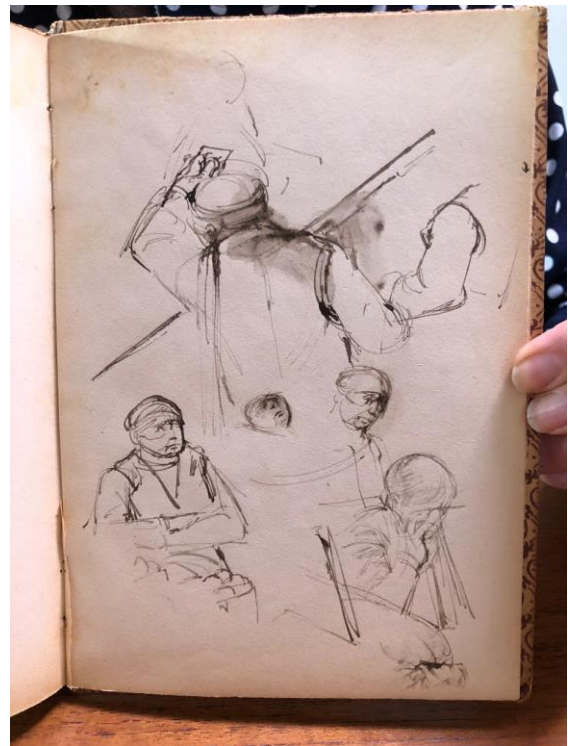


**Figure 65 Stephen Greene, Grasses and Twigs, before 1953. Pen and sepia wash on paper, 13 3/4 x 10 3/4. Wadsworth Atheneum, Gift of Henry E. Schnakenberg, Obj. ID 1952.186.**



**Figure 66 Stephen Greene, Cover of Ballet Theatre Foundation Annual Report, 1951. Reproduction of graphite (?) on paper. Original drawing from Paul Rosenberg private collection, courtesy of Alison de Lima Greene.**





**Figure 67 Stephen Greene, Naples March 9 – 17th 1953, Sketchbook details. Mixed media.**





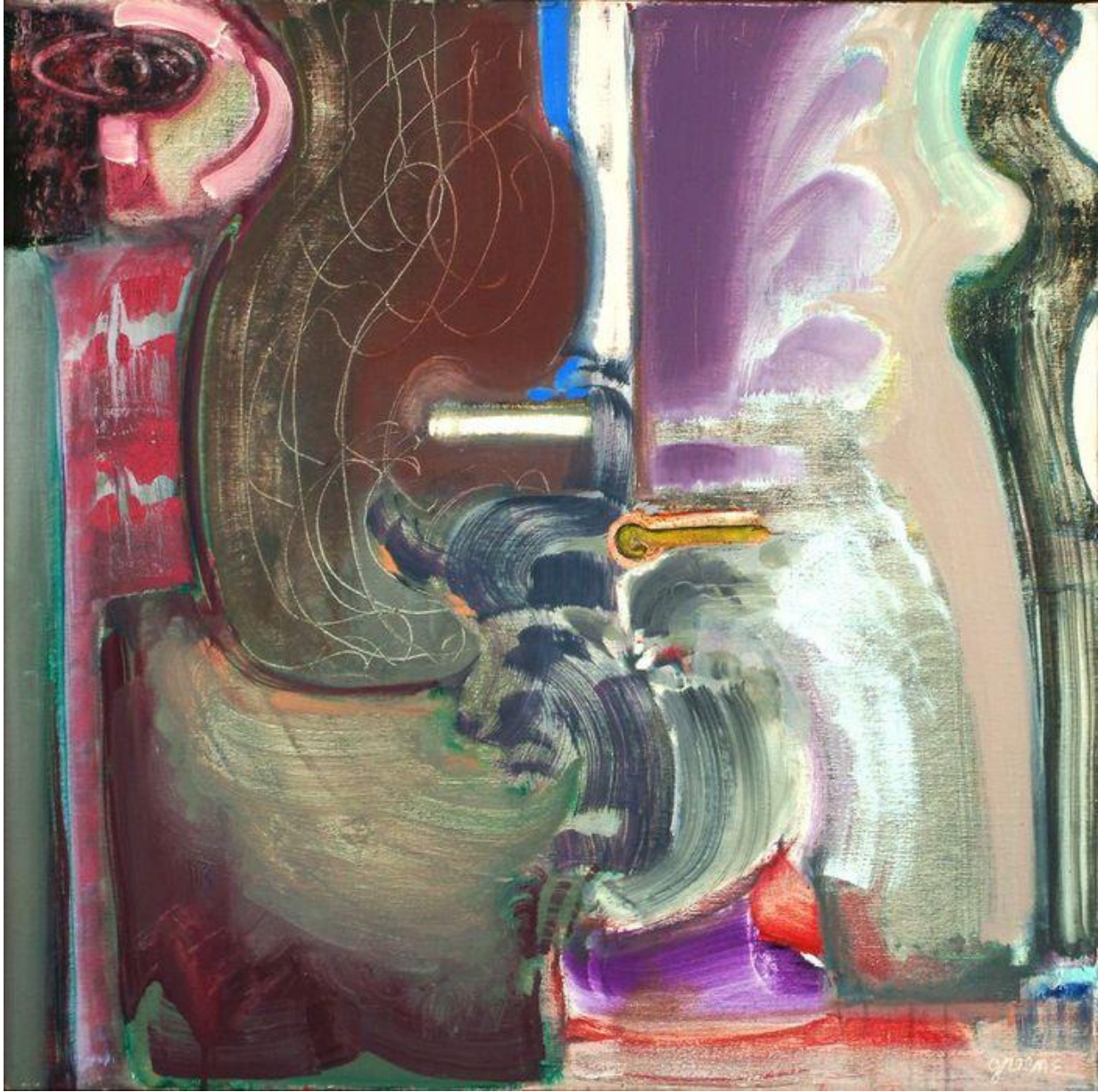
**Figure 68** Francesco Traini or Buonamico Buffalmacco (previously attributed to Andrea Orcagna), *The Triumph of Death*, c. 1333-36. Fresco. Camposanto Monumentale, Pisa, Italy.

<http://ctl.w3.uvm.edu/omeka/exhibits/show/plague/tuscany/tus-triumphofdeath> (with detail).



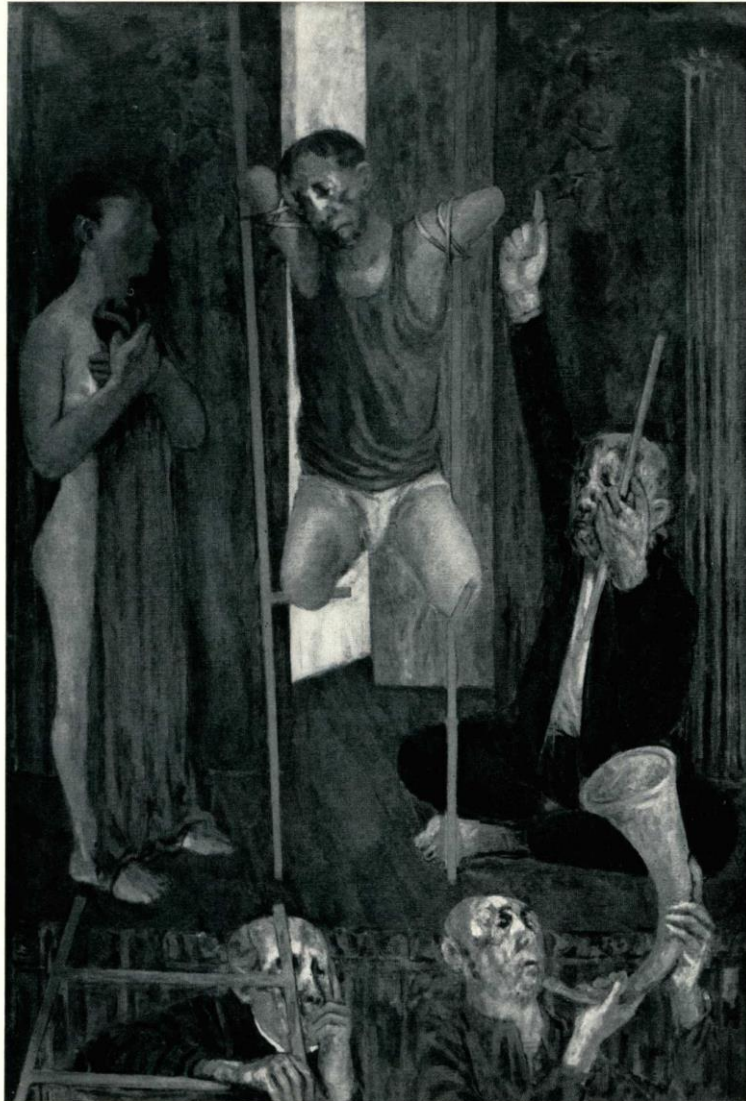


**Figure 69 Stephen Greene, *Fermata #9*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches. Peyton Wright Gallery, Santa Fe, New Mexico.**



**Figure 70** Stephen Greene, *Sentinel No. 5*, 1991. Oil on canvas, 32 x 32 inches. Jason McCoy Gallery, New York.





**Greene:** *The Performance*. 1952-53. Oil. 59 ¼ x 39 ½. The Downtown Gallery.

37

**Figure 71** Stephen Greene, *Performance*, 1953. Oil on canvas, dimensions and current location unknown. Image from John I. H. Baur, ed., *The New Decade: 35 American Painters and Sculptors*, 1955 exhibition catalog (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1956).



THE STUDIO

Stephen Greene

**Figure 72 Stephen Greene, The Studio, 1953. Oil on canvas, dimension and current location unknown.**



**Figure 73 Stephen Greene, *The Deposition* (a/k/a *Descent From Cross*), 1955. Dimensions and location unknown. From Jerome Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," *Criticism* 1:2 (1959), 156.**



Figure 1.  
*The Deposition*, 1947.

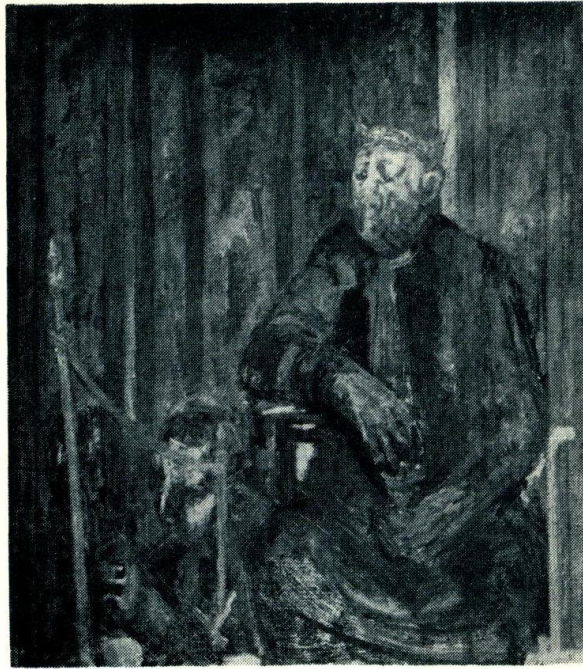
Grace Borgenicht Gallery



Figure 2.  
*The Deposition*, 1955.

Section of Mr. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr.

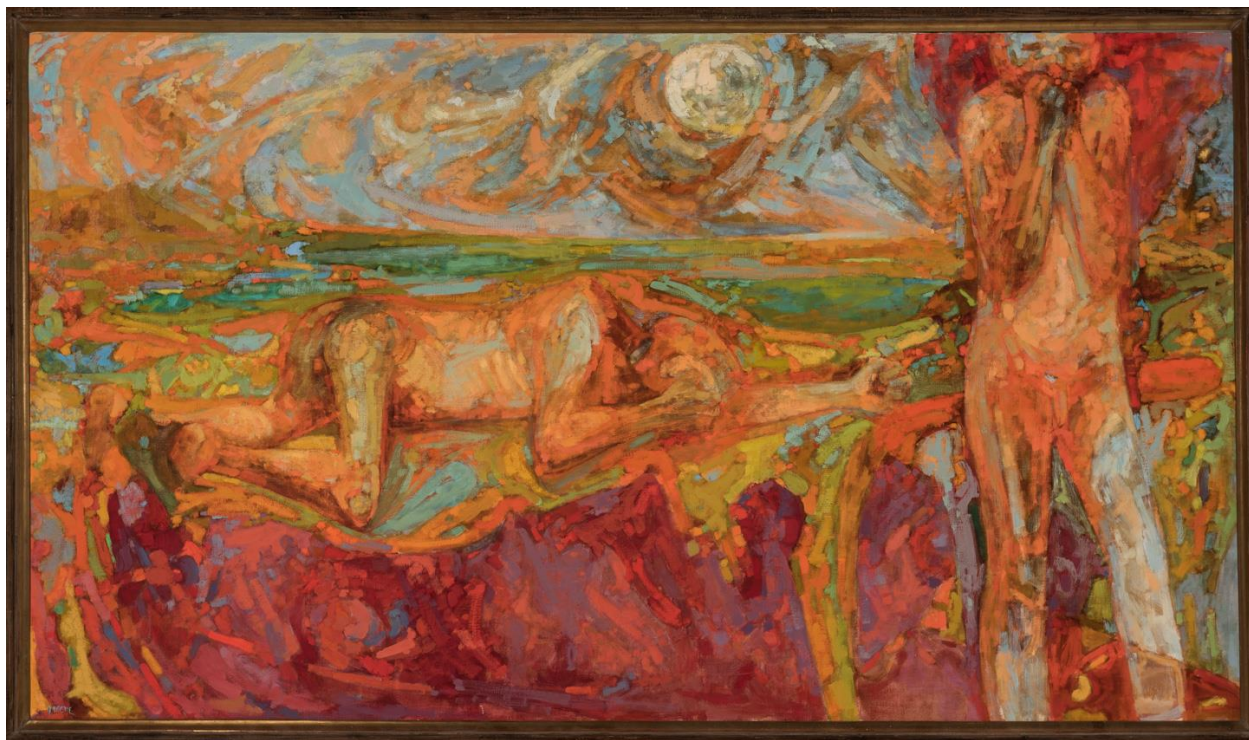
Figure 74 Page 156 from Jerome Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," *Criticism* 1:2 (1959).



*Stephen Greene: Saul and David, 1954.  
Collection of Mrs. Hellmut Wohl.*

**Figure 75 Stephen Greene, Saul and David, 1954. Oil on canvas, 30 ½ x 25 ½ inches. Location unconfirmed, previously the collections of Mrs. Hellmut Wohl and Tennessee Fine Arts Center.**





**Figure 76 Stephen Greene, *Cain and Abel*, 1956. Oil on canvas, 40 9/16 x 69 1/16 inches. Eskenazi Museum of Art, Indiana University, Gift of James and Marvelle Adams in honor of William Low Bryan, 57.30. (detail included).**





**Figure 77 Stephen Greene, Cain and Abel, 1955. Ink and wash on buff paper, 11 7/8 x 15 1/2 inches.  
Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, acc. No. 1980.25, gift of William Innis Homer.**



**Figure 78 Stephen Greene, *The Studio*, 1957. Oil on canvas. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene. (photo by the author, through plastic sheeting.)**

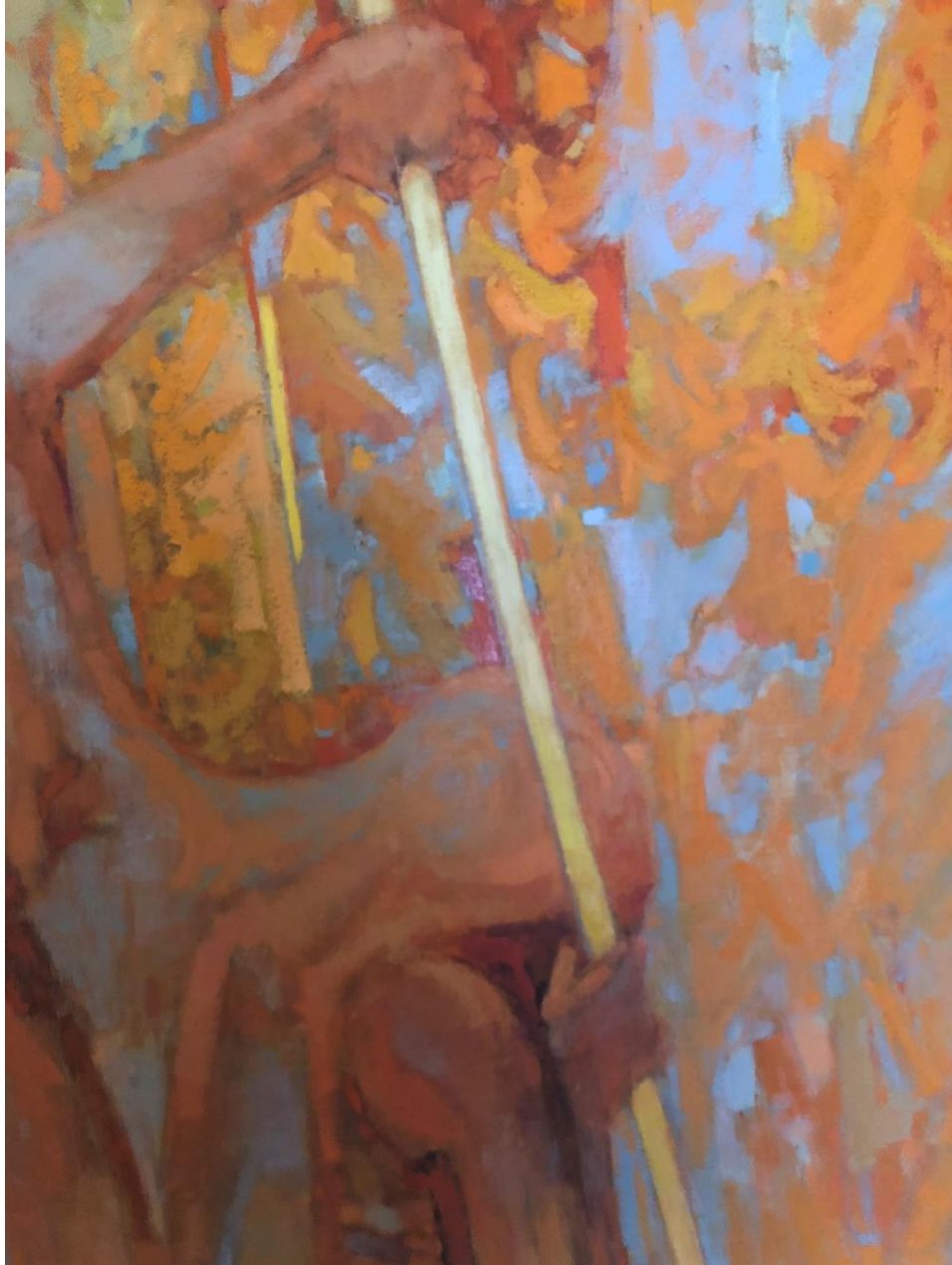


**Figure 79** Stephen Greene, *The Studio*, 1957. Oil on canvas. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene. (Photo by the author, through plastic sheeting.)





**Figure 80 Stephen Greene, Flagellation, 1957. Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 inches. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene. (Photo by the author.)**



**Figure 81 Detail of Figure 80.**



**Figure 82 Stephen Greene, *The Fall*, 1957. Oil on canvas, 69 x 50 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation, New York.**





**Figure 83 Stephen Greene, *Homage à Abel Sanchez*, 1957. Oil on canvas, 50 x 64 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation, New York.**

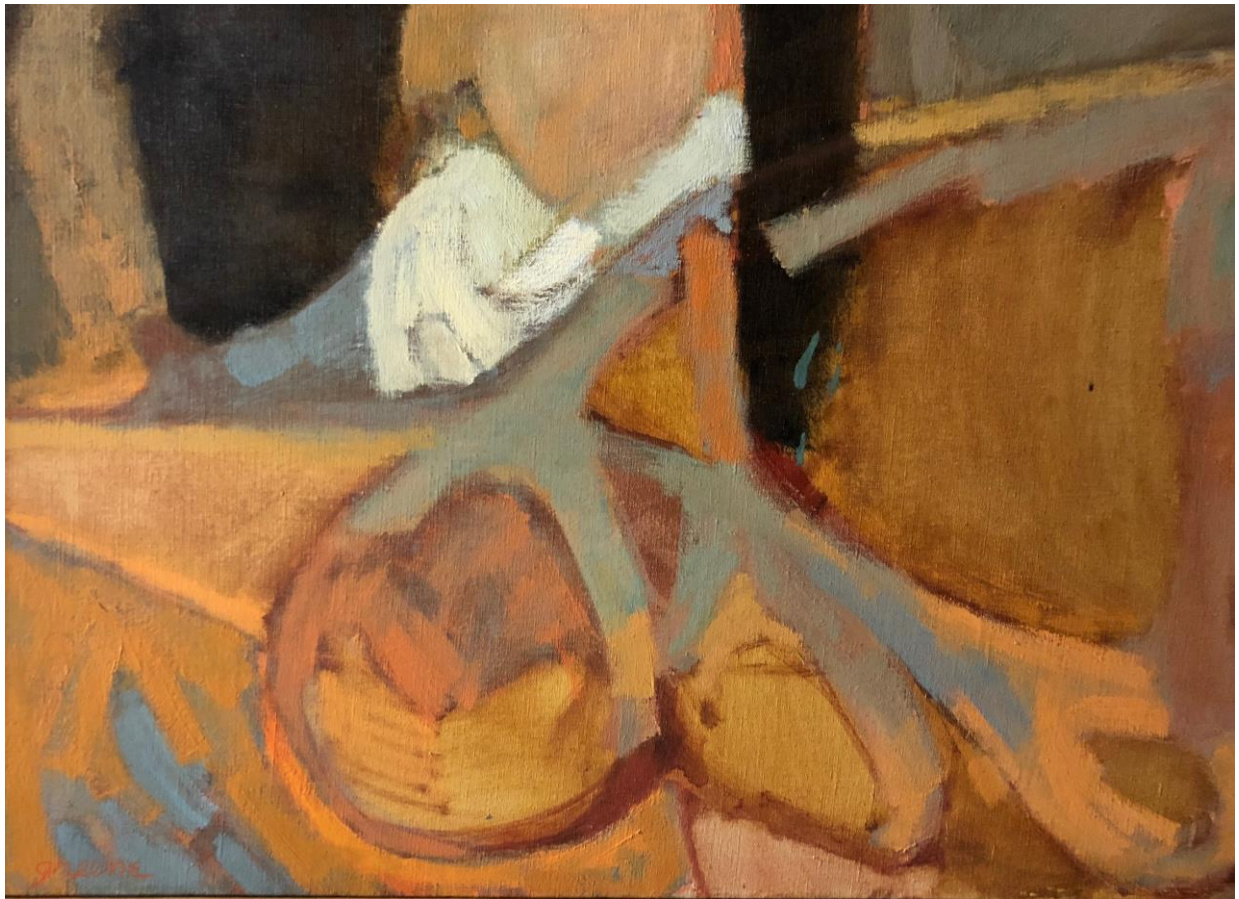


Figure 84 Details of Figure 83.





**Figure 85 Stephen Greene, *Paradise* (Triptych), c. 1957. Oil on canvas, 40 x 80, 50 x 80 and 40 x 80 inches. Grey Art Gallery, New York University Art Collection. (Photo by the author.)**



**Figure 86 Detail of Figure 85.**



**Figure 87** Detail of Figure 85.



**Figure 88 Undated photograph of Steven Greene, Paradise (Triptych) (1957) on the campus of New York University. Records of Grey Art Gallery.**





**Figure 89 Stephen Greene, Foreshadowing, 1958. Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches. Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Gilmore, ob. no 1966/7.2.**

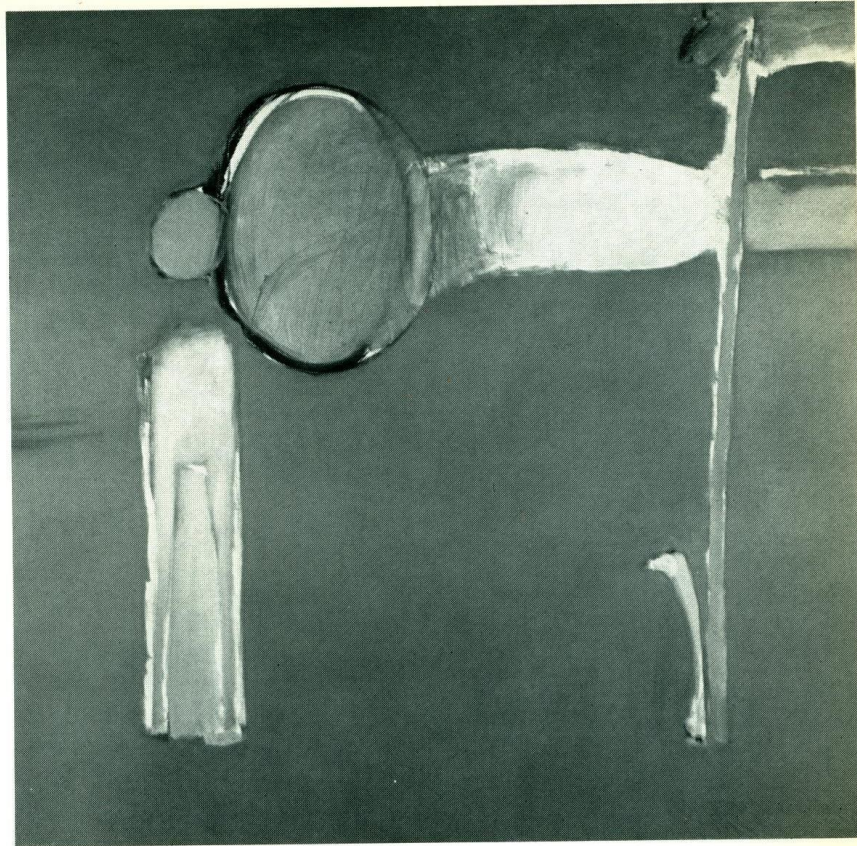


**Figure 90** Stephen Greene, *Sphinx*, 1959. Oil on canvas, 43 3/4 x 37. Private collection.



**Figure 91 Stephen Greene, Pietà, 1959. Oil on canvas, 70 x 47 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation, New York.**





*Sidi-bou-Said*. 1960. 68 × 68 inches.

**Figure 92 Stephen Greene, black and white photo of *Sidi-bou-Said*.**





**Figure 93 Stephen Greene, Heilige Nacht, 1960. Oil on canvas, 60 x 47 inches. Location unknown (sold at Wechsler's Auctioneers and Appraisers, auction date 12/04/2015).**



**Figure 94 Stephen Greene, *Le Ciel Amoureux*, 1960. Oil on canvas, 68 x 68 inches. Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, Gift of Mr. Edwin Janss, Jr., Acc. No. P.1964.14.**



**Figure 95 Stephen Greene, Altar, 1961. Oil on canvas, 58 x 68 inches. The Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts, Stanford University, Gift of Mr. William C. Janss, 1964.112.**



**Figure 96** Stephen Greene, *Vigil*, 1962. Oil on canvas, 68 x 80 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation, New York.



**Figure 97 Stephen Greene, Chasm, 1962. Oil on canvas, 80 x 60 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation.**





**Figure 98 Stephen Greene, *The Ladder*, 1963. Oil on canvas, 58 x 58 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation.**



**Figure 99 Stephen Greene, Combat, 1963. Oil on canvas, 68 x 72 inches. The Stephen Greene Foundation.**





**Figure 100 Stephen Greene, *Departure*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 68 x 72 inches. Location unknown. Previously property of High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Sold at auction, Sotheby's, June 12, 2014, to benefit future acquisitions.**



**Figure 101 Stephen Greene, *White Light*, 1961. Oil on canvas, 65 x 65 inches. The Solomon B. Guggenheim Museum.**



**Figure 102 Detail of Figure 101.**



**Figure 103 Stephen Greene, Approach, 1962. Oil on canvas, 84 x 84 inches. Osuna Art & Antiques Ltd., Kensington, Maryland.**



**Figure 104 Philip Guston, The Actors VI, 1962. Oil on board on Masonite, 29 ½ x39 ½ inches. Private collection. © Estate of Philip Guston, courtesy Hauser & Wirth.**



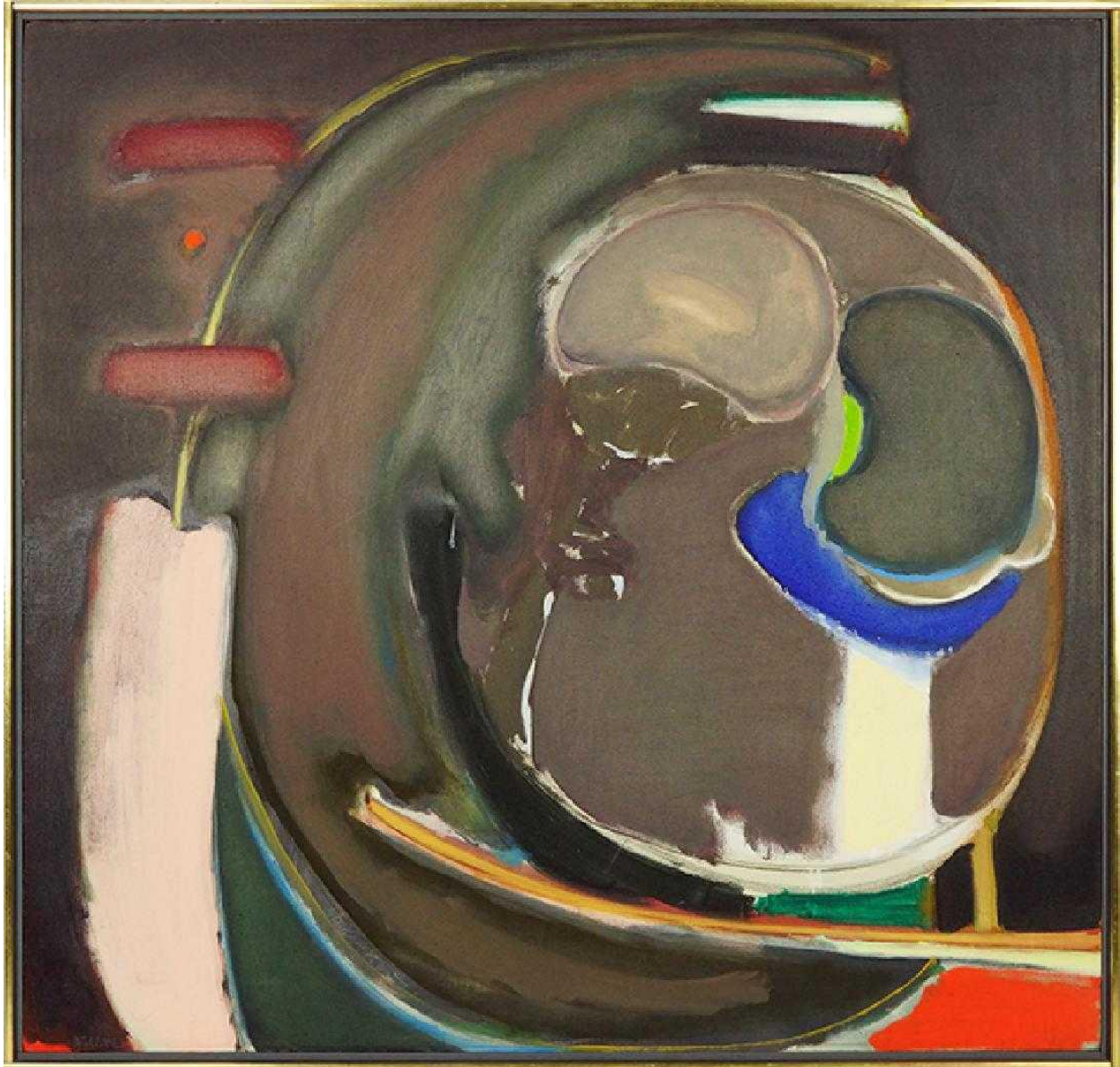


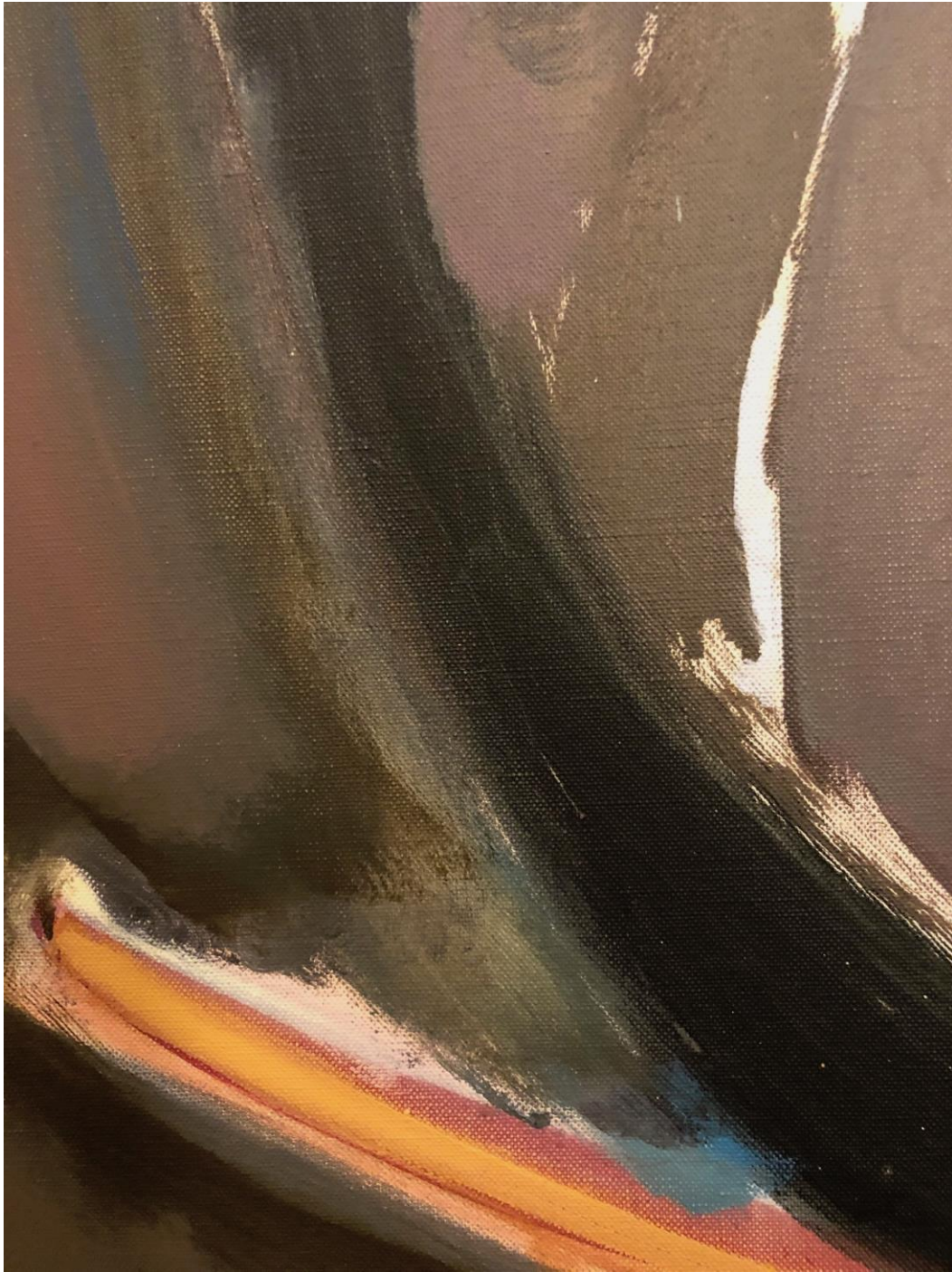
Figure 105 Stephen Greene, Circle, 1964. Oil on canvas, 35 x 37 inches. Collection of the author.





**Figure 106 Detail of Figure 105 (actual size of area shown is approximately 12 x 9 inches).**





**Figure 107 Detail of Figure 105 (actual size of area show is approximately 10 x 7.5 inches).**

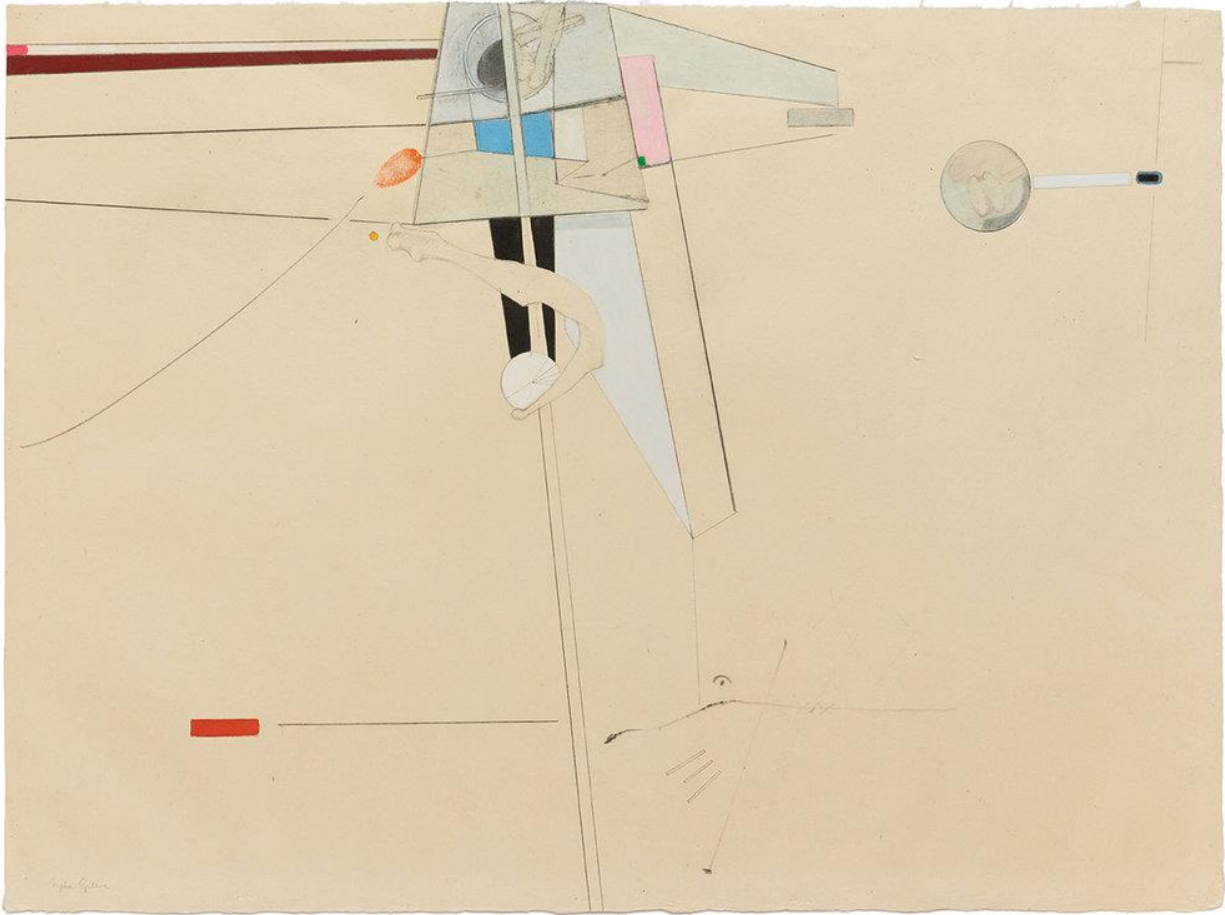


**Figure 108 Stephen Greene, *Edifice*, 1965. Oil and fabricated chalk on linen, 68 x 68 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, Gift of Mrs. William W. McPeak in memory of William W. McPeak, Acc. No. 66.000 (photo by author at Whitney Museum storage facility, New York, NY).**

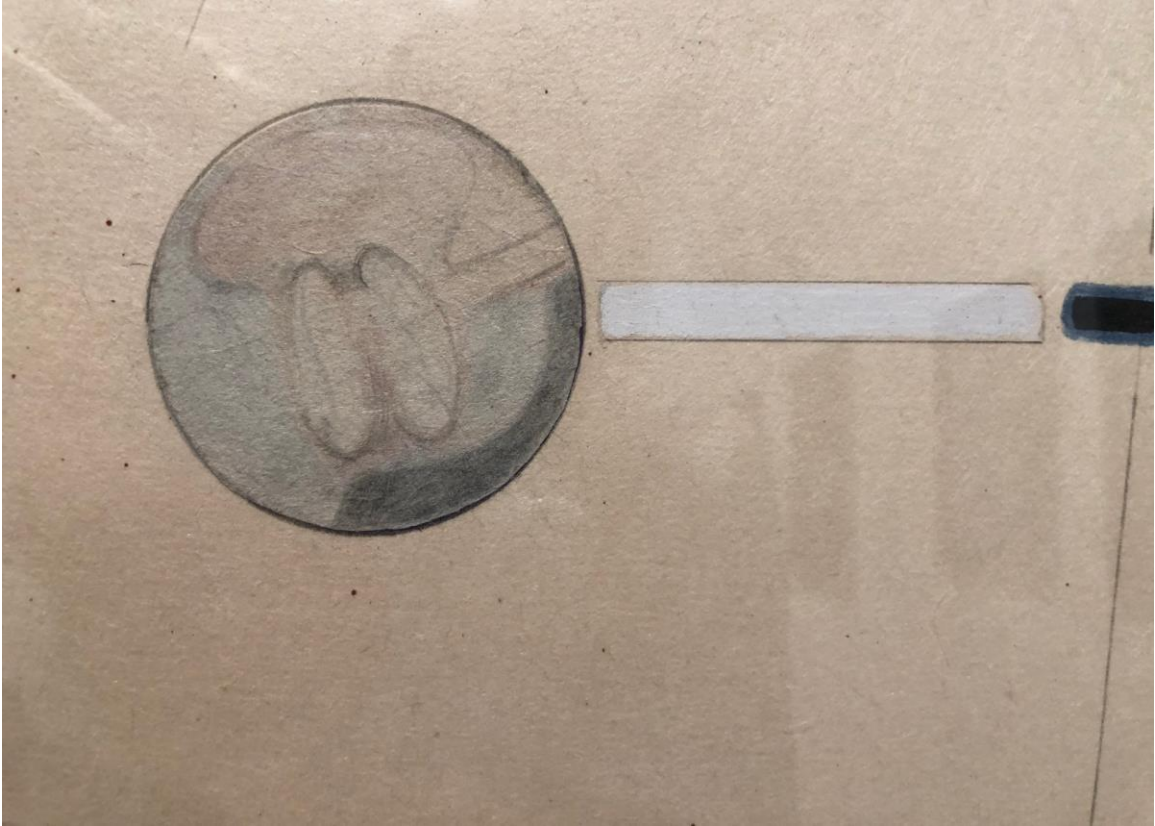


**Figure 109 Detail of Figure 108.**

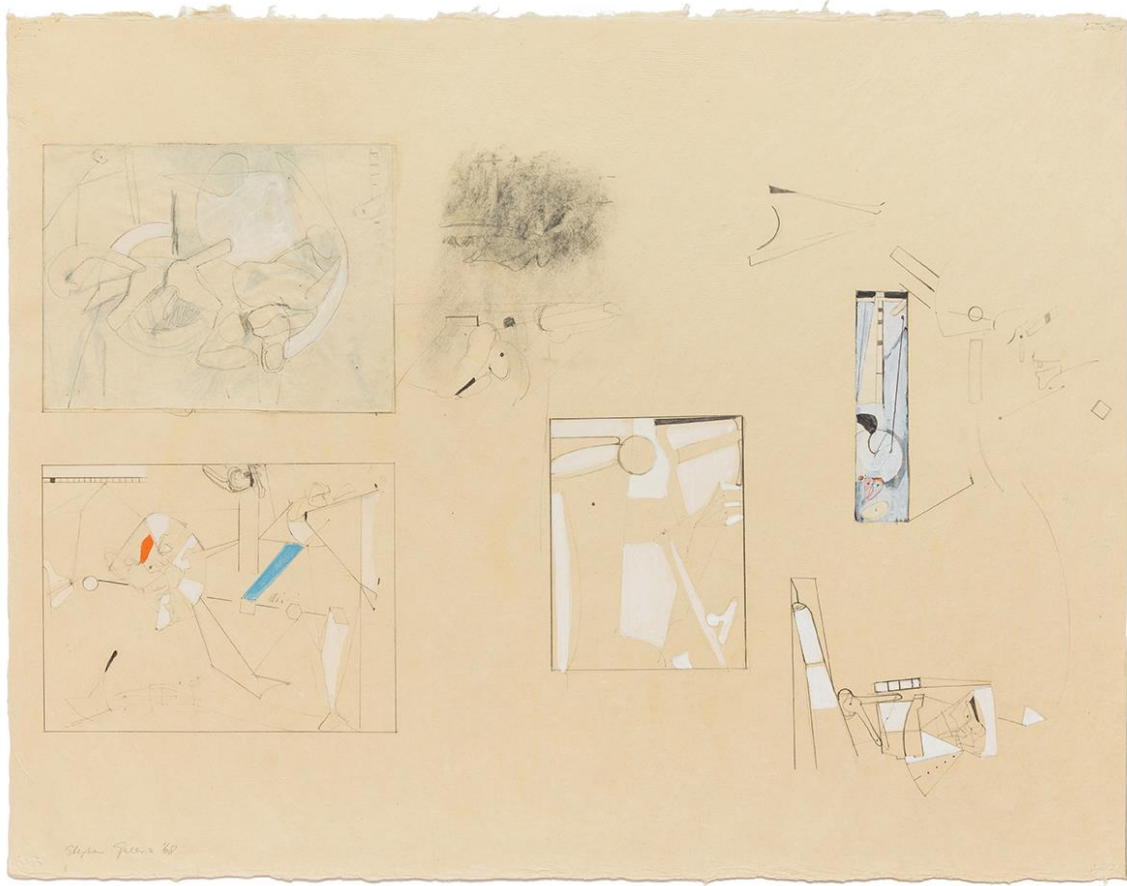




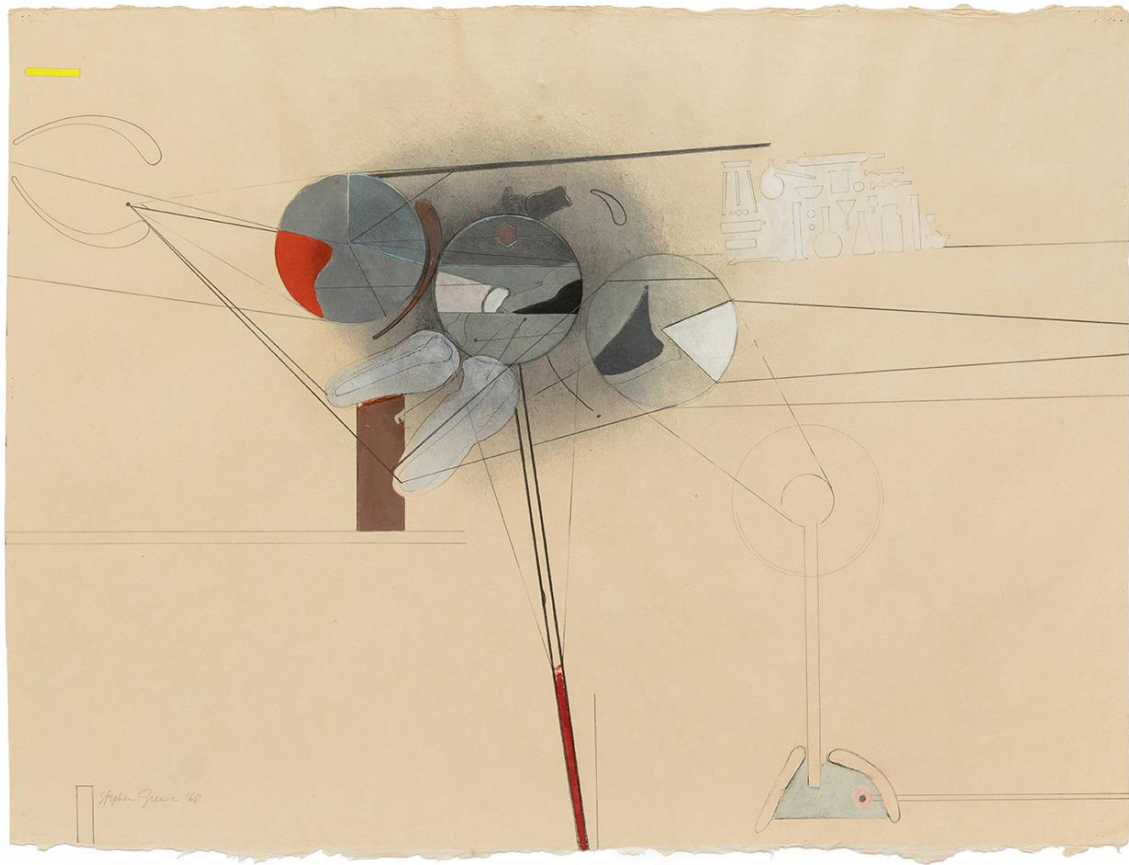
**Figure 110 Stephen Greene, *Biograph 24*, 1967. Mixed media on paper, 21 1/8 x 29 5/8 inches. Victoria Munroe Fine Art, New York (The Stephen Greene Foundation).**



**Figure 111 Detail of Figure 110.**

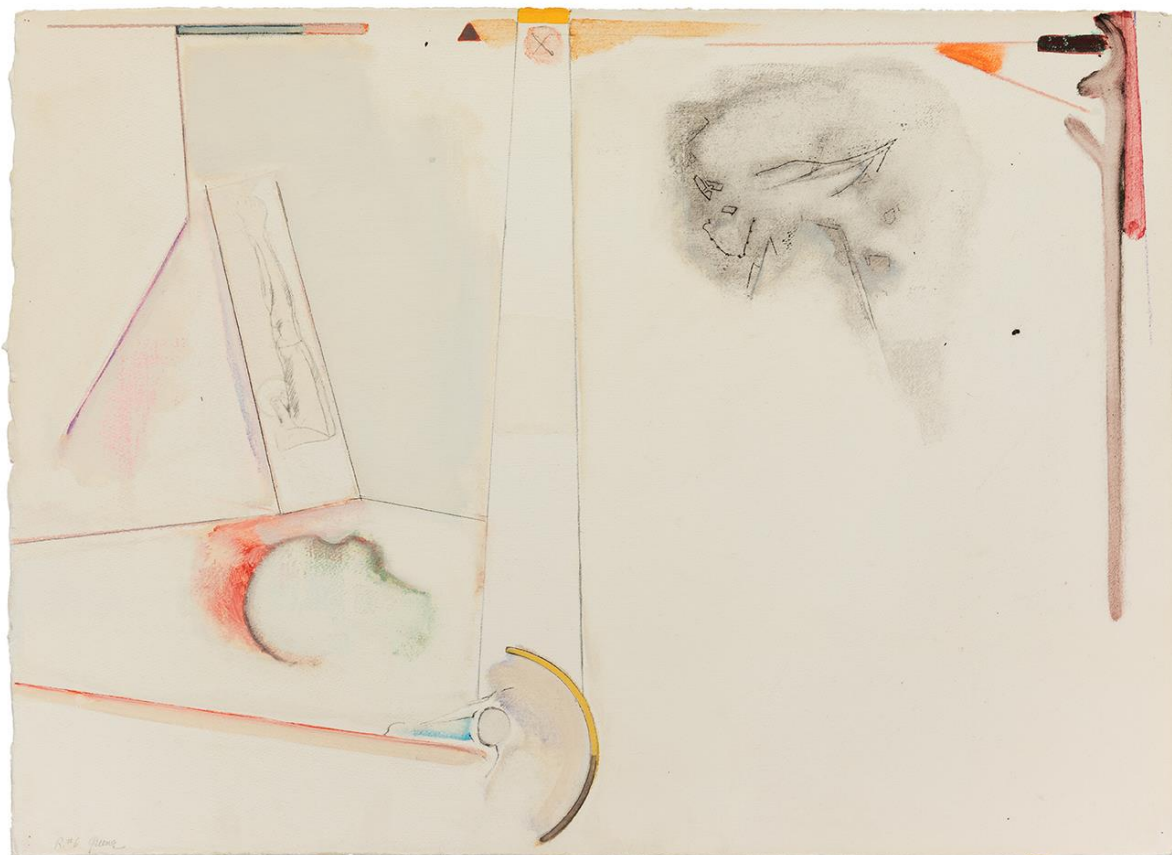


**Figure 112 Stephen Greene, *Biograph 7*, 1968. Mixed media on paper, 21 1/4 x 27 5/8 inches. Victoria Munroe Fine Art, New York (The Stephen Greene Foundation).**



**Figure 113 Stephen Greene, Untitled, 1968, mixed media on paper, 21 1/4 x 28 5/8 inches. Victoria Munroe Fine Art, New York (The Stephen Greene Foundation).**





**Figure 114 Stephen Greene, R.#6, 1973. Mixed media on paper, 22 x 30 inches. Victoria Munroe Fine Art, New York (The Stephen Greene Foundation).**



**Figure 115 Detail of Figure 114. [Note: the shadow in the lower portion of the photo is an unavoidable reflection on the glass protective covering and is not in the drawing.]**

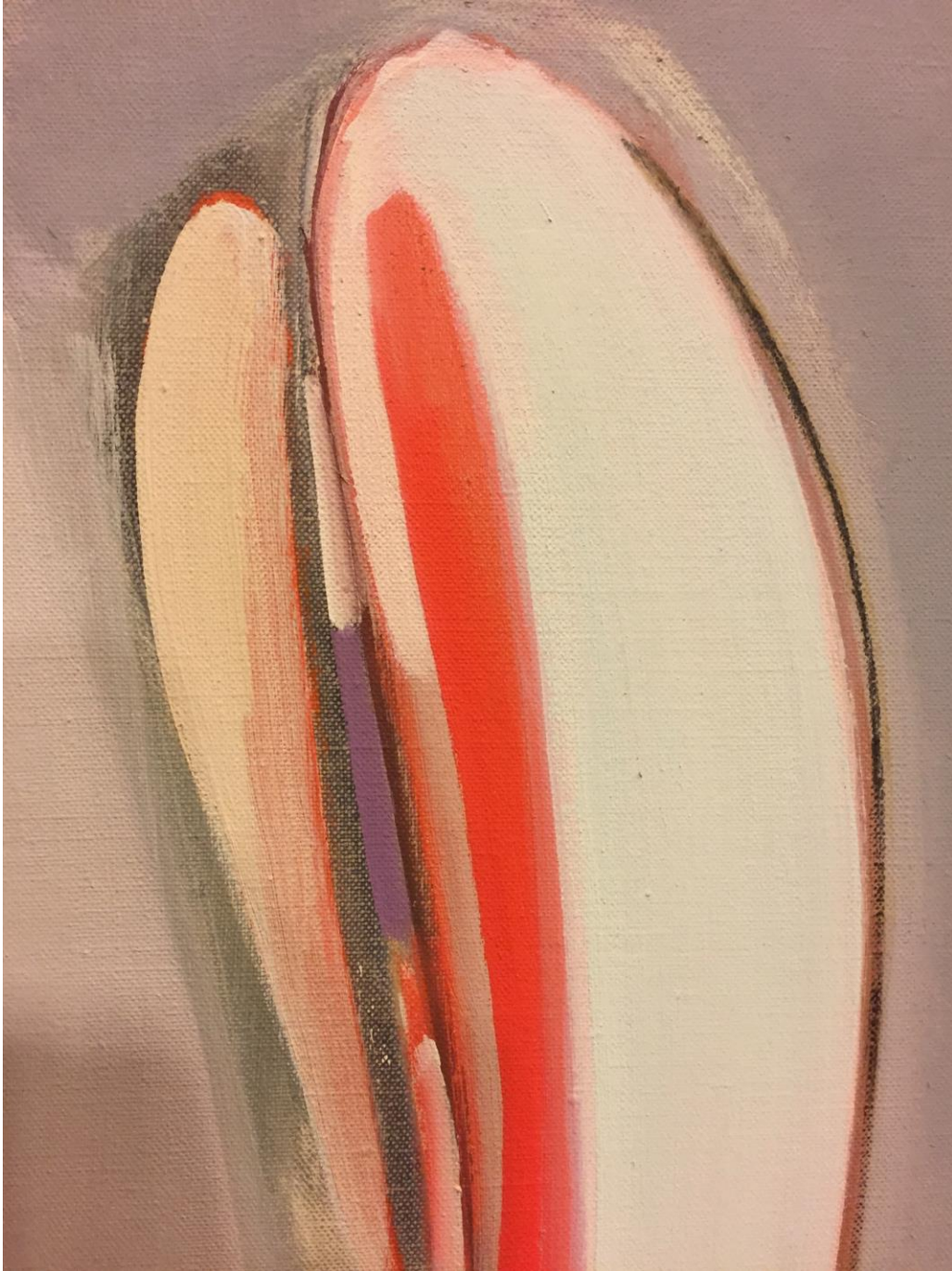


**Figure 116 Stephen Greene, *Violet Light*, 1969. Oil on canvas, 55 x 50 1/8 inches. Carnegie Museum of Art, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Alan Loesberg, acc. no. 83.95. (Photo by the author during viewing in the Carnegie Museum of Art library.)**



**Figure 117 Detail of Figure 116.**





**Figure 118 Detail of Figure 116.**



**Figure 119 Stephen Greene, *Recall*, 1972-74. Oil and charcoal on canvas, 64  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 64  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches. Princeton University Art Museum, gift of the artist in memory of William C. Seitz, Graduate School Class of 1955, obj. no. 1976-31. (Photo by the author during viewing in the Princeton Art Museum storage area.)**

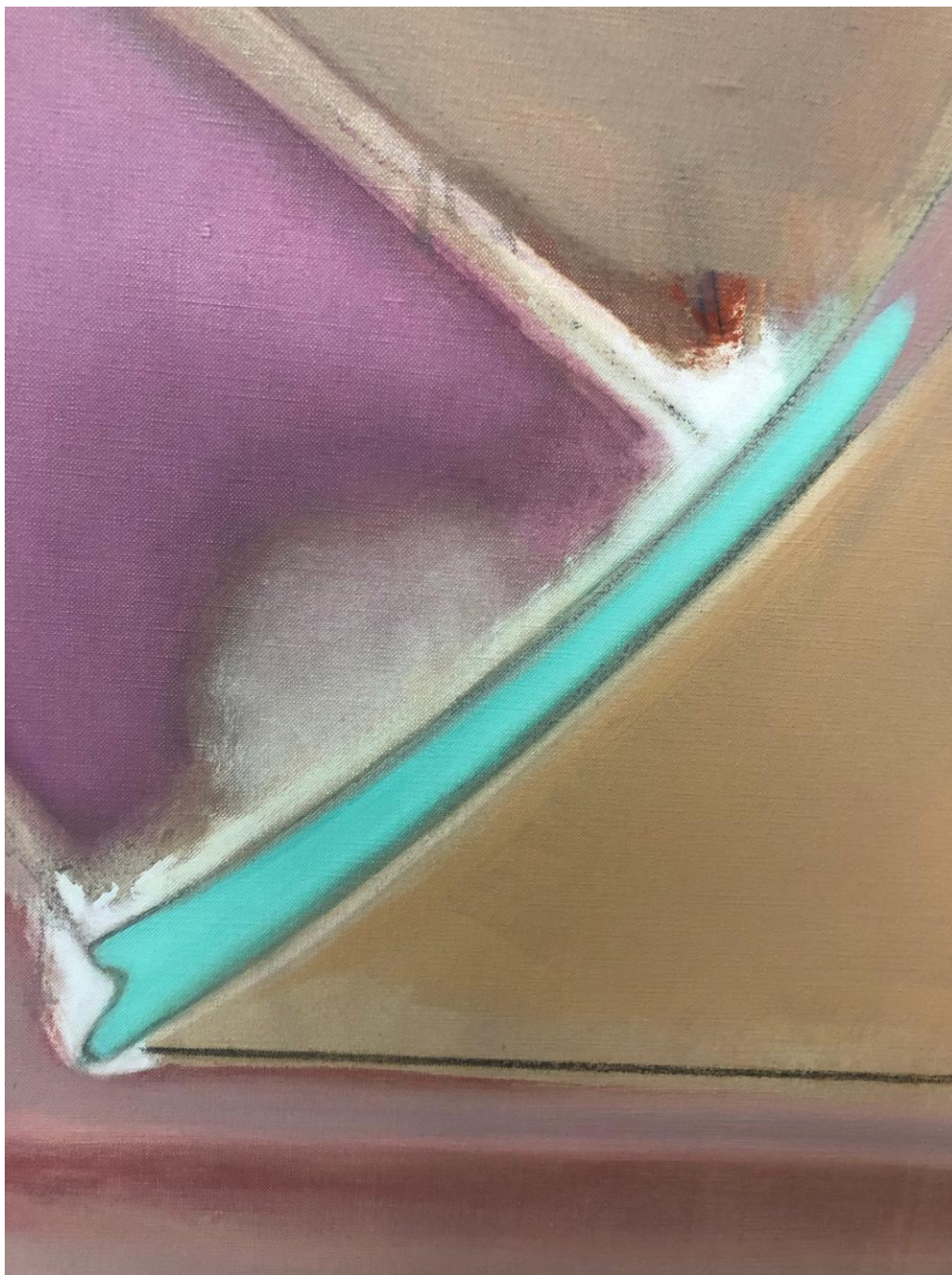


**Figure 120 Detail of Figure 119.**





**Figure 121 Detail of Figure 119.**



**Figure 122 Detail of Figure 119.**





**Figure 123 Stephen Greene, *Fermata #1*, 1977. Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches. Raymond Stainback Collection, Houston, Texas.**

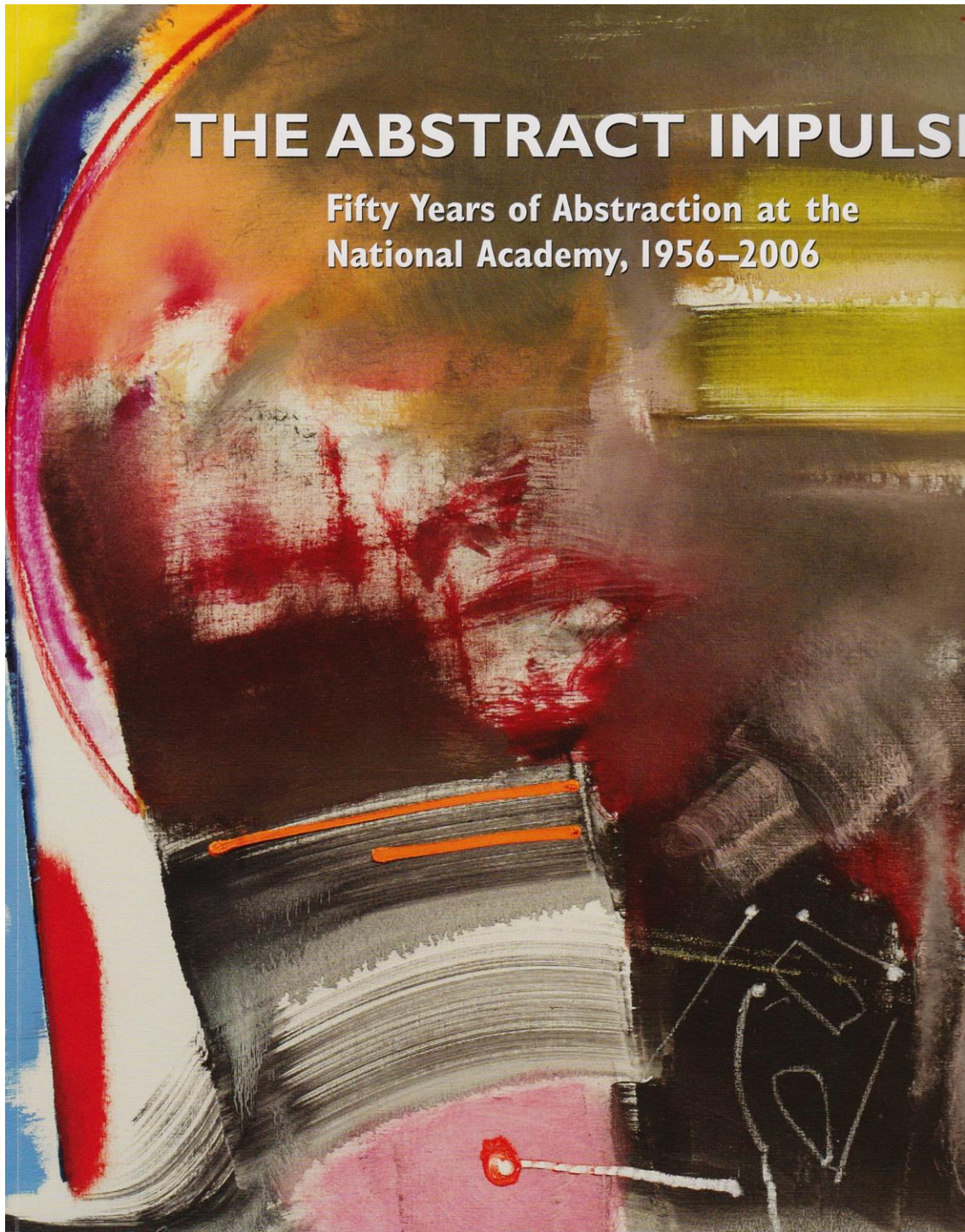


**Figure 124 Stephen Greene, Fermata #9, 1977. Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches. Location unknown. (In August 2018, viewed at Peyton Wright Gallery, Santa Fe, NM.)**



Figure 125 Detail of Figure 125. (Photo by the author during viewing in Santa Fe, NM.)





**Figure 126** Portion of cover, Marshall N. Price, *The Abstract Impulse: Fifty Years of Abstraction at the National Academy, 1956—2006* (New York: National Academy of Design, 2007), showing detail of Stephen Greene, *Night*, 1982.





Figure 127 Stephen Greene, *Night*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 30 1/8 x 30 1/8 inches. National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts, diploma presentation of the artist.





**Figure 128 Stephen Greene, *Expulsion #4*, 1984. Oil on canvas, 60 x 44 inches. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene, Houston.**



**Figure 129 Detail of Figure 128.**





**Figure 130 Detail of Figure 128.**



**Figure 131 Detail of Figure 128.**

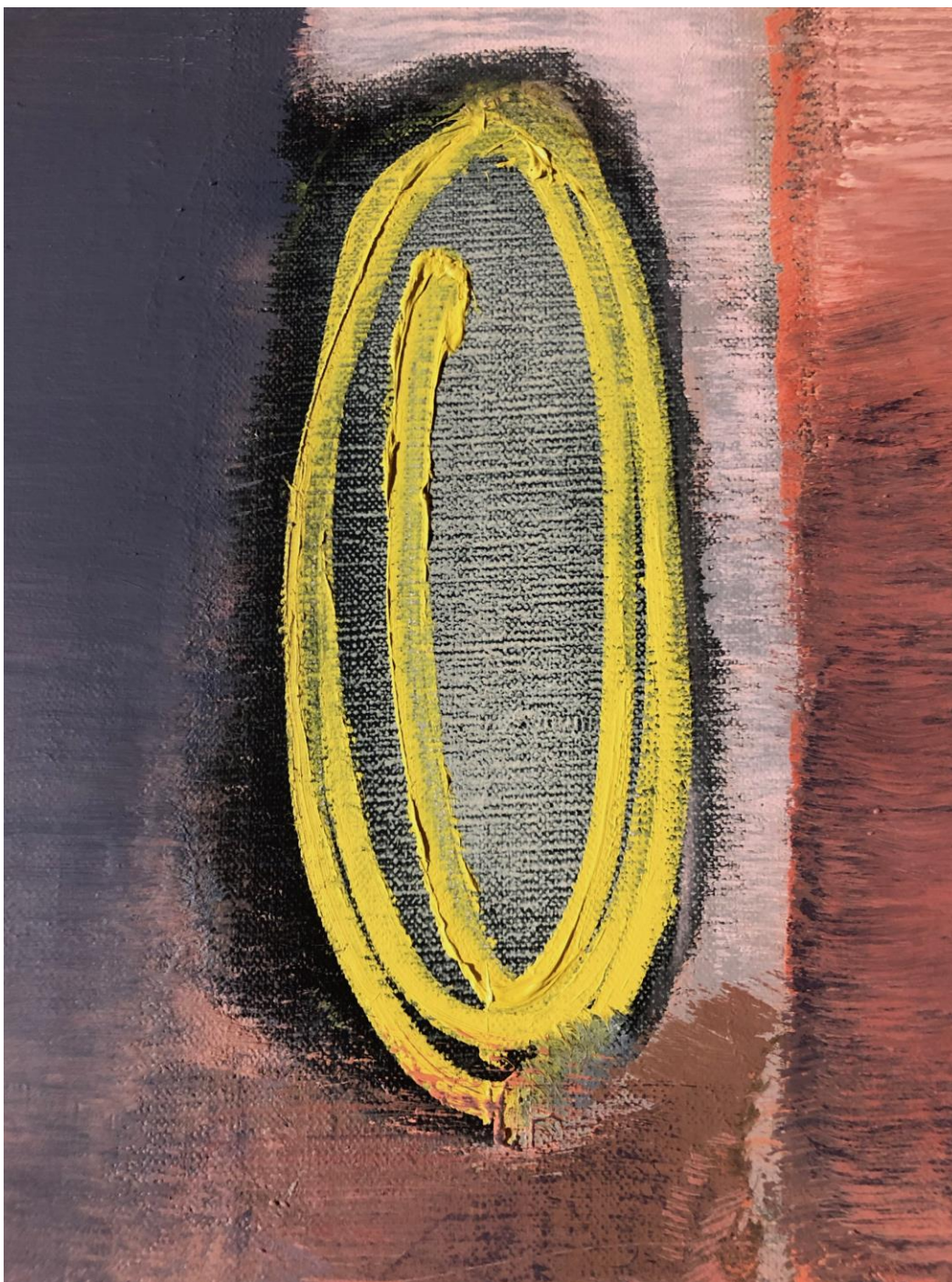






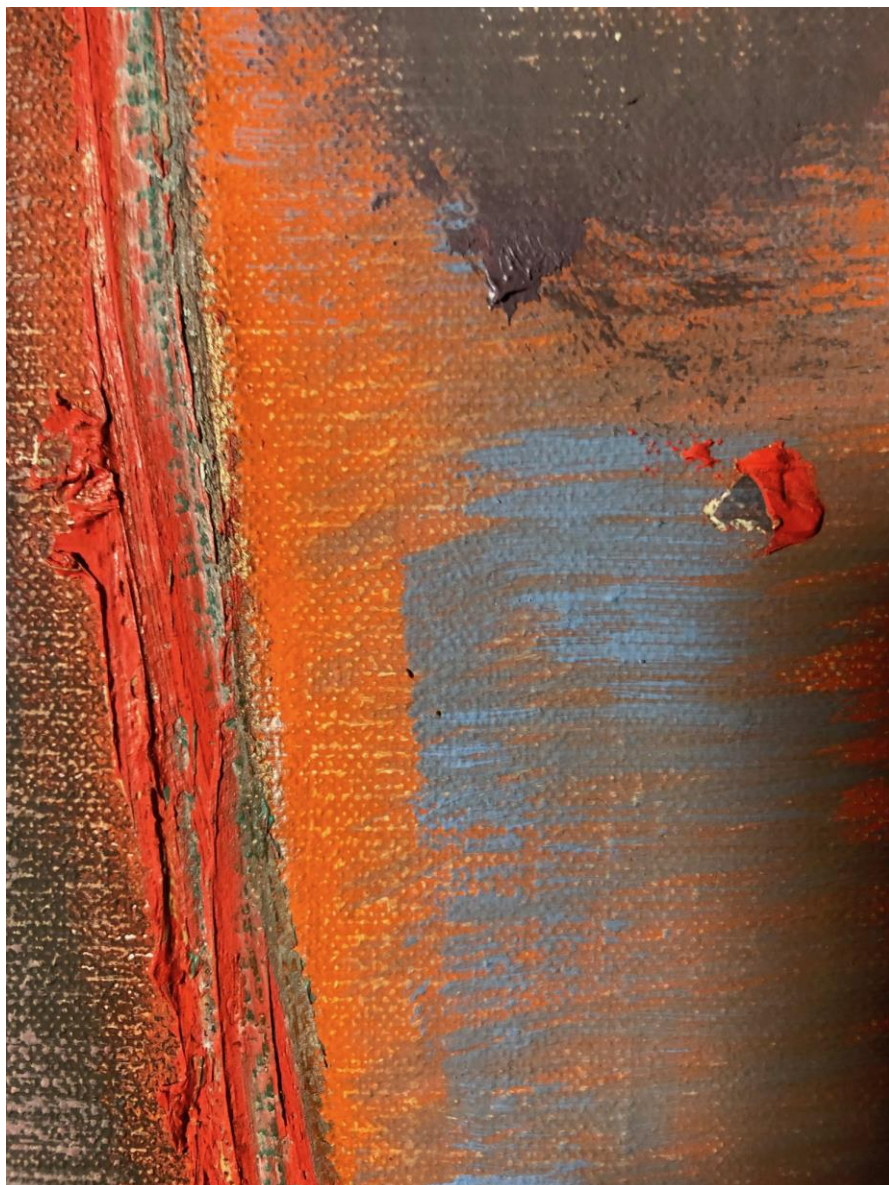
**Figure 133 Stephen Greene, *Expulsion #13*, 1984. Oil on linen, 60 x 60 inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, acc no. 2006-131, Gift of Frank Stella. (Photo by the author while viewing at Whitney Museum storage facility, New York.)**



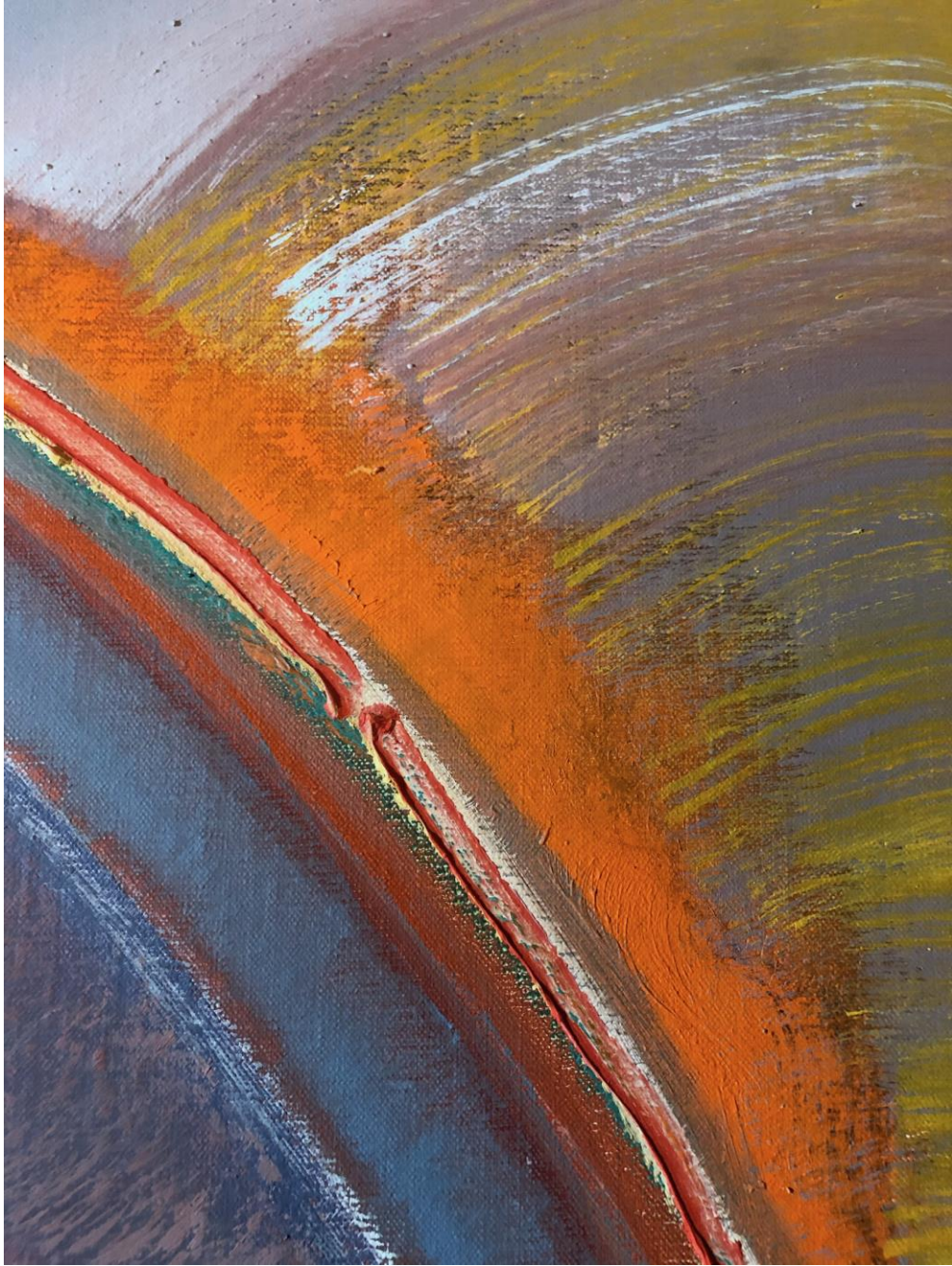


**Figure 134 Detail of Figure 133.**



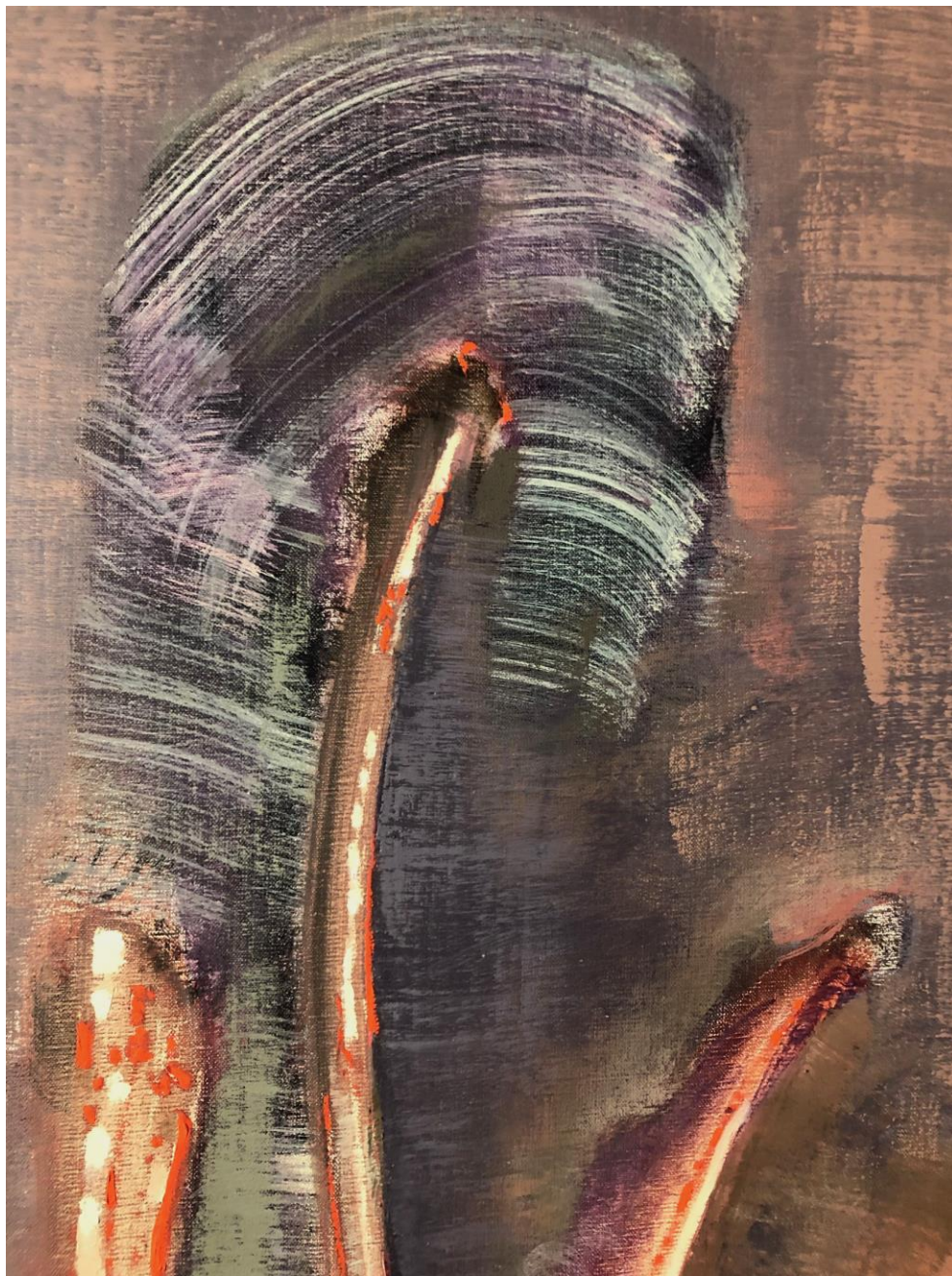


**Figure 135 Detail of Figure 133.**



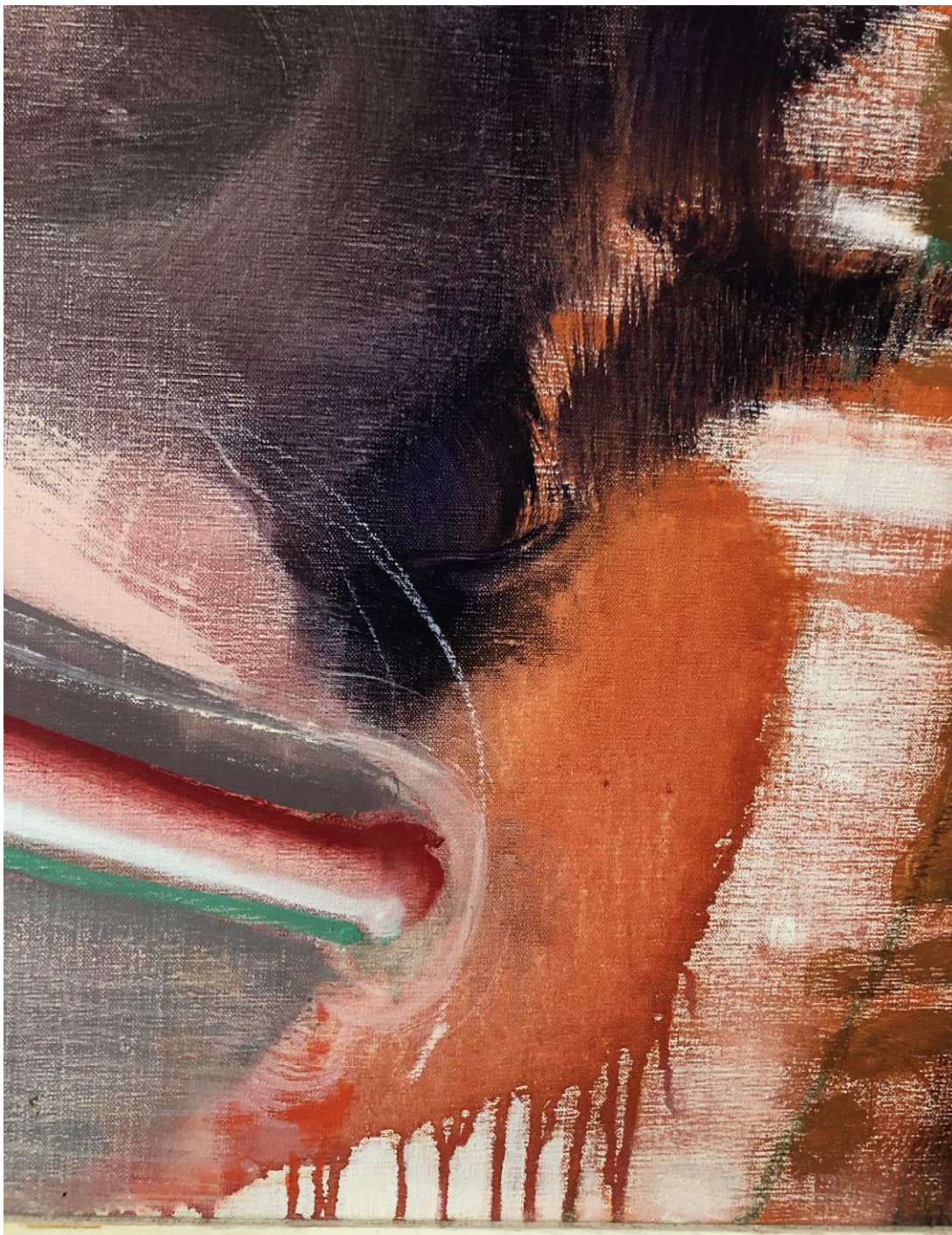
**Figure 136 Detail of Figure 133.**





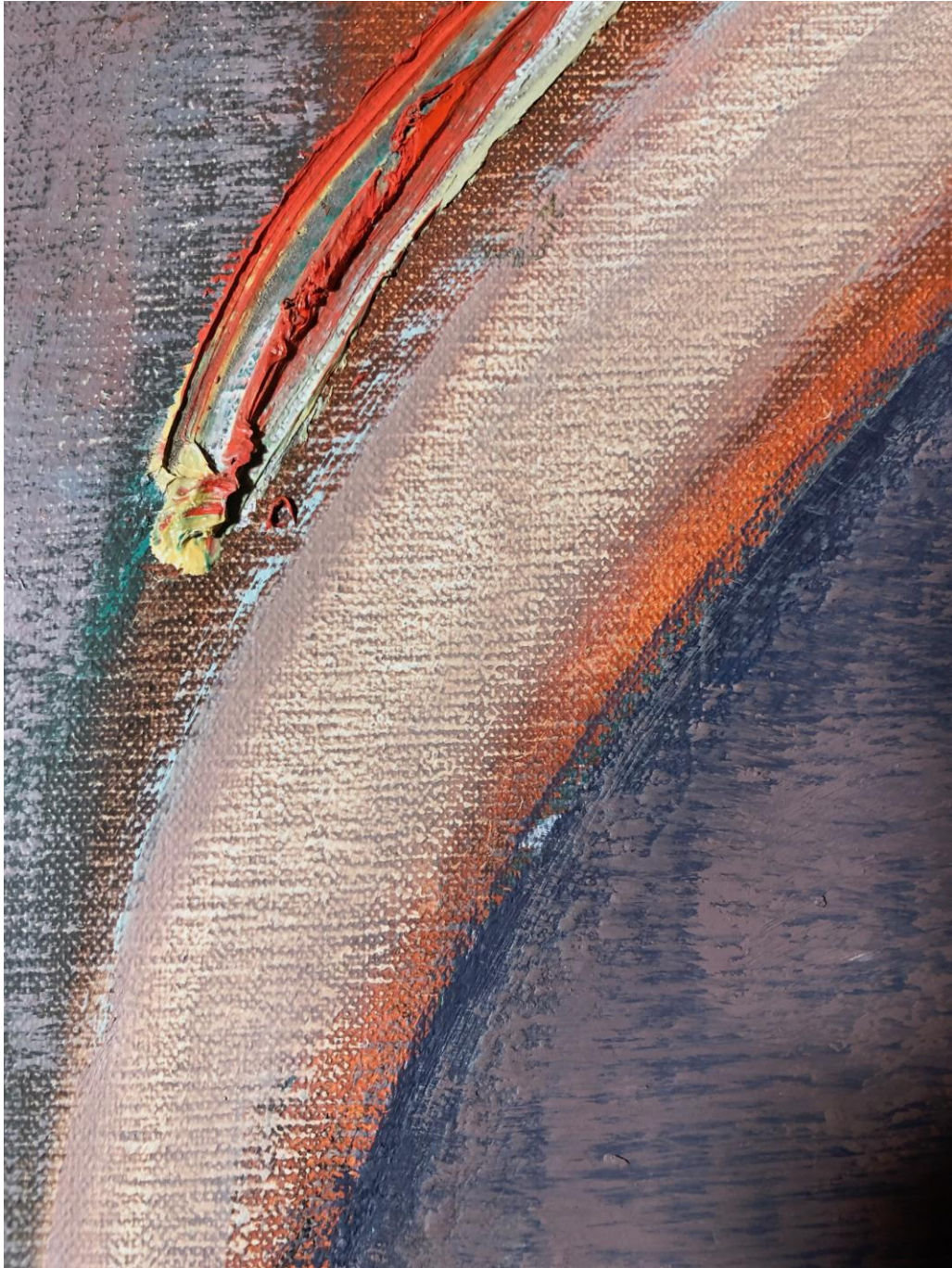
**Figure 137** Detail of Figure 133.





**Figure 138 Detail of Figure 133.**





**Figure 139 Detail Stephen Greene, *Expulsion #13*, 1984.**



**Figure 140 Stephen Greene, *Inquisitions*, 1981. Mixed media and oil on paperboard, 22 x 30 inches.  
Collection of Alison de Lima Greene, Houston.**





**Figure 141 Detail, Stephen Greene, Inquisitions, 1981.**



**Figure 142 Stephen Greene, Inquisitions #1, 1981. Mixed media and oil on paperboard, 22 x 30 inches.  
Collection of Alison de Lima Greene, Houston.**





**Figure 143 Stephen Greene, Gardens of the Night #7, 1983. Mixed media and oil on paperboard, 22 x 30 inches. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene, Houston.**



**Figure 144 Stephen Greene, *Gardens of the Night #5*, 1982. Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches. Princeton University Art Museum, gift of Dr. John Burger, obj. no. y1994-90.**





Figure 145 Detail of Figure 144.



Figure 146 Detail of Figure 144.





Figure 147 Stephen Greene, Apparition #3, 1986. Oil on canvas, 36 x 36 inches.



**Figure 148** Stephen Greene, *Apparition #11*, 1986. Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 inches.



**Figure 149 Stephen Greene, Untitled, 1984. Mixed Media on mylar, 30 x 22 inches. Munson-Williams-Procter Arts Institute, ob. no. 2012.12.2, gift of Lisbeth and Jason McCoy.**



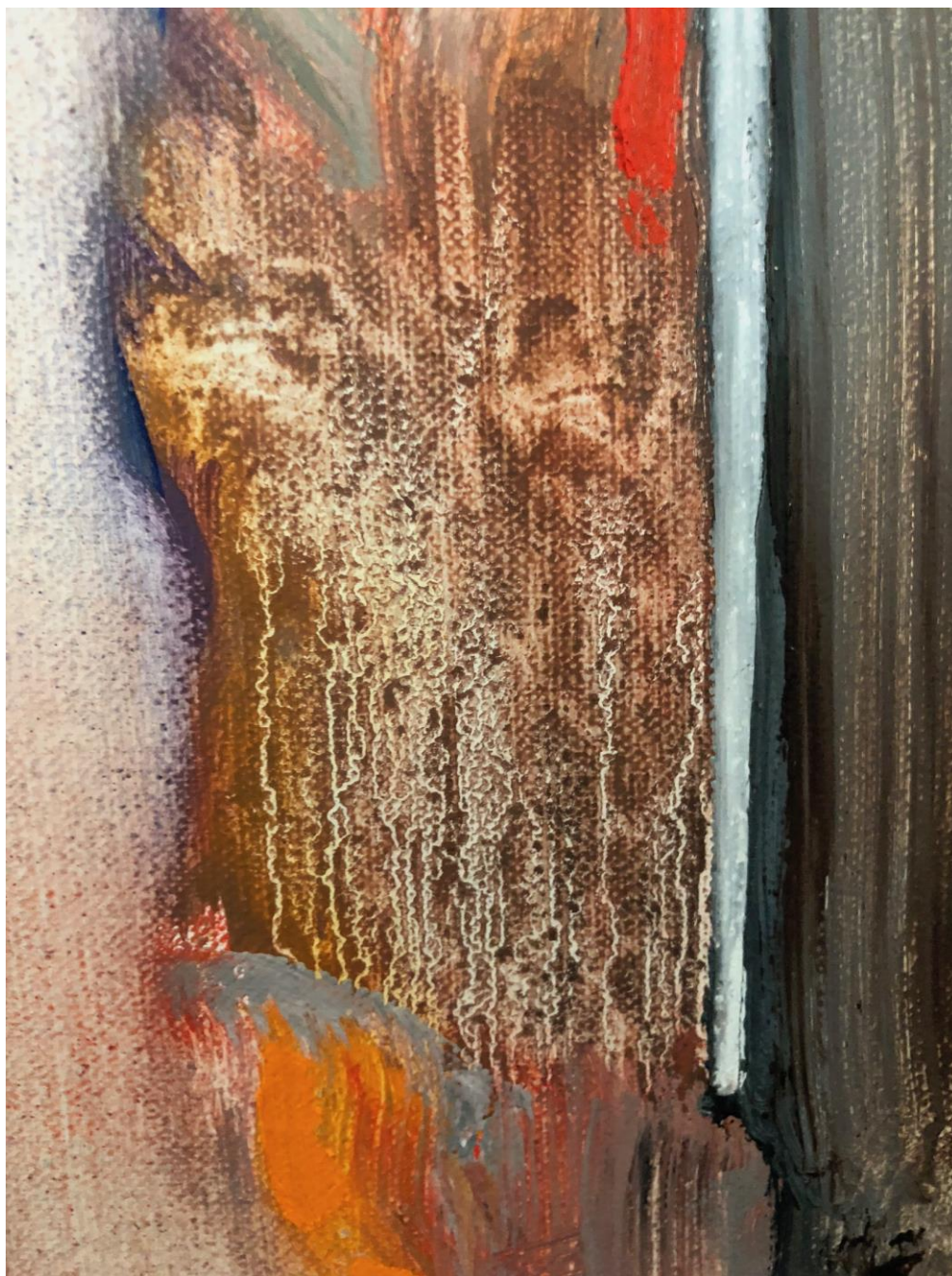
**Figure 150** Stephen Greene, *Untitled #6 [from For Tampa]*, 1991. Oil on mylar, dimensions unknown. Tang Teaching Museum of Skidmore College, gift of Anne and Arthur Goldstein, acc. no. 2017.32.1.





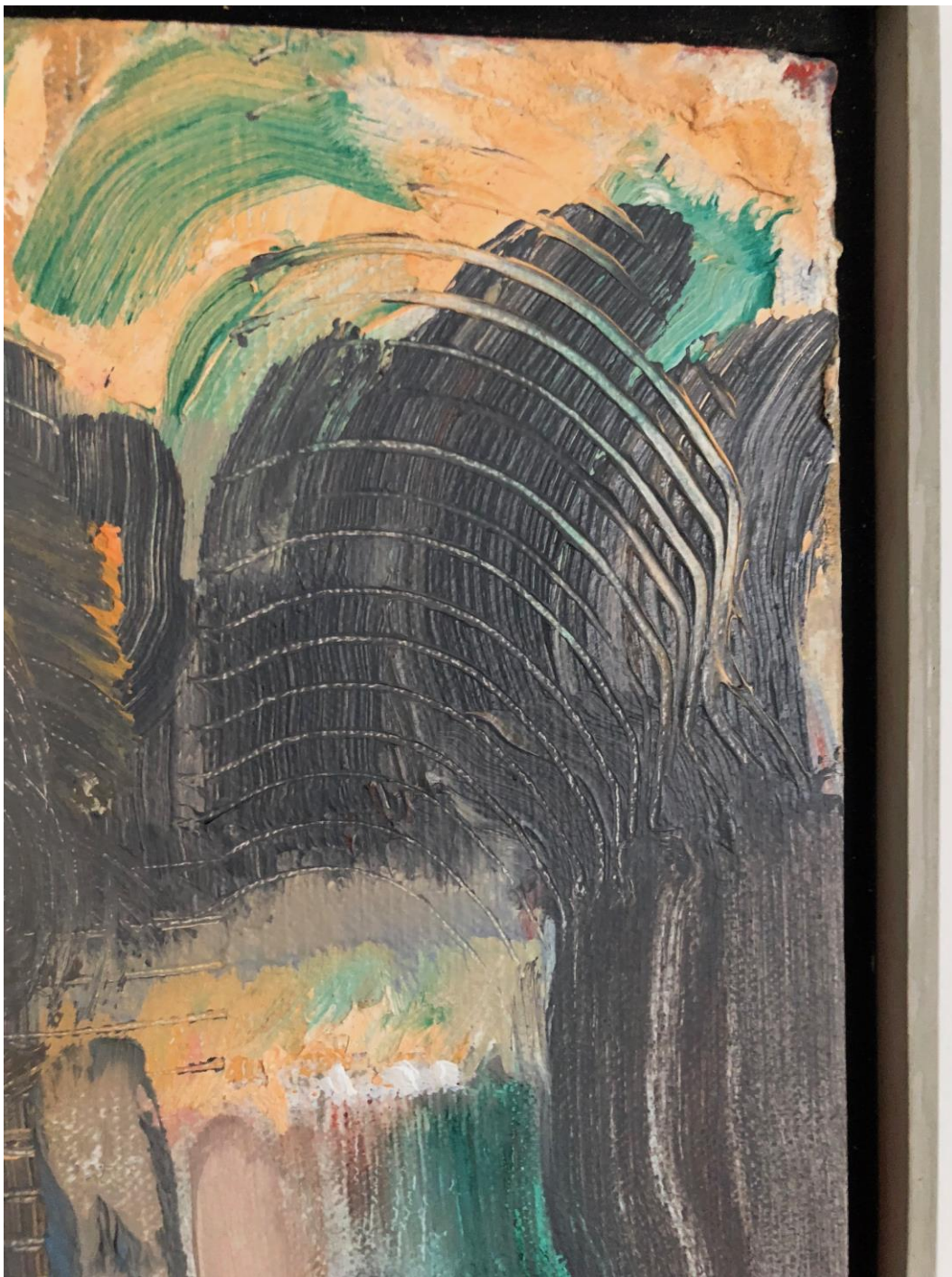
**Figure 151 Stephen Greene, *The Garden at Dusk*, 1995. Oil on canvas, 12 x 12 inches. Collection of Alison de Lima Greene, Houston.**



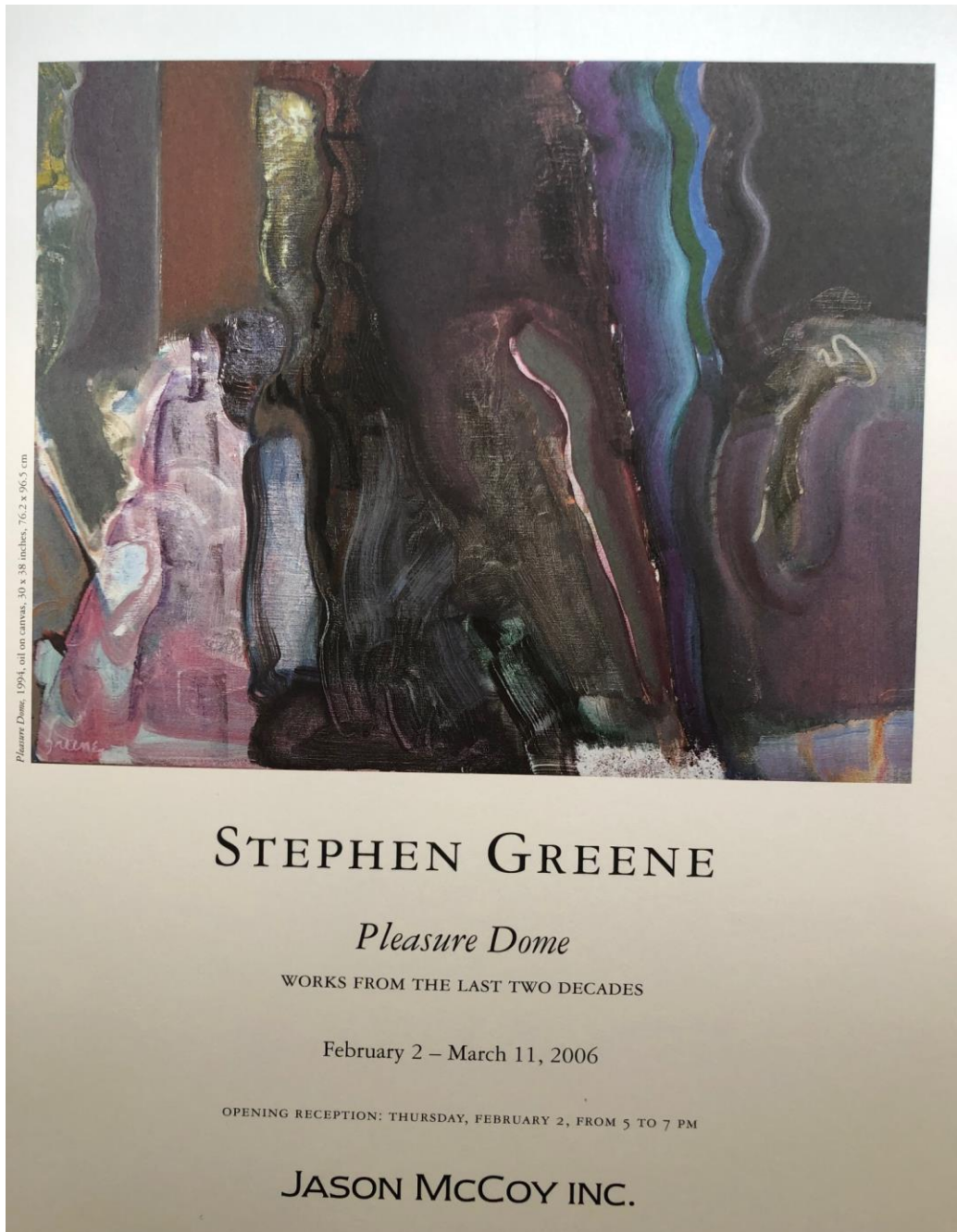


**Figure 152 Detail of Figure 151.**





**Figure 153 Detail of Figure 151.**



**Figure 154** Stephen Greene, *Pleasure Dome*, 1994. Oil on canvas, 30 x 38 inches. Reproduced on the catalogue for the exhibition at Jason McCoy Inc., February 2 - March 11, 2006.





**Figure 155 Stephen Greene, *Pleasure Dome #16*, 1994. Oil on linen, 22 x 32 inches. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Gift of The Stephen Greene Foundation in honor of George T. M. Shackelford, Acc. No. 2001.868.**



**Figure 156 Stephen Greene, Moreau's Lover, 1994. Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 inches. Location unknown.**





**Figure 157** Stephen Greene, *Moreau's Garden #15*, c. 1995. Oil on canvas, 15 x 15 inches. Estate of Stephen Greene.





**Figure 158 Stephen Greene, Moreau's Garden #17, 1995. Oil on canvas, 15 x 15 inches. Estate of Stephen Greene.**





**Figure 159 Stephen Greene, Labyrinth #1, 1999. Mixed media on paper, 22½ x 30 inches. Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, Gift of The Stephen Greene Foundation in honor of Frank Stella, 2003:47.**



**Figure 160 Stephen Greene, *Labyrinth #2*, 1999. Mixed media on paper, 22½ x 30 inches. Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, Gift of The Stephen Greene Foundation in honor of Frank Stella, 2003:48.**



**Figure 161 Stephen Greene, Labyrinth #5, 1999. Mixed media on paper, 22½ x 30 inches. Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, Gift of The Stephen Greene Foundation in honor of Frank Stella, 2003:51.**



**Figure 162 Stephen Greene, Labyrinth #13, 1999. Mixed media on paper, 22½ x 30¾ inches. Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, Gift of The Stephen Greene Foundation in honor of Frank Stella, 2003:55.**





**Figure 163 Joseph Solman, Chairs and Broom, 1951. Oil on canvas, 28 x 50 inches. Collection of Paul Solman, Waltham, Massachusetts.**



Figure 164 Joseph Solman, *Untitled (subway rider)*, c. 1960s. Marker and watercolor, 13 x 10 inches.  
Collection of the author.





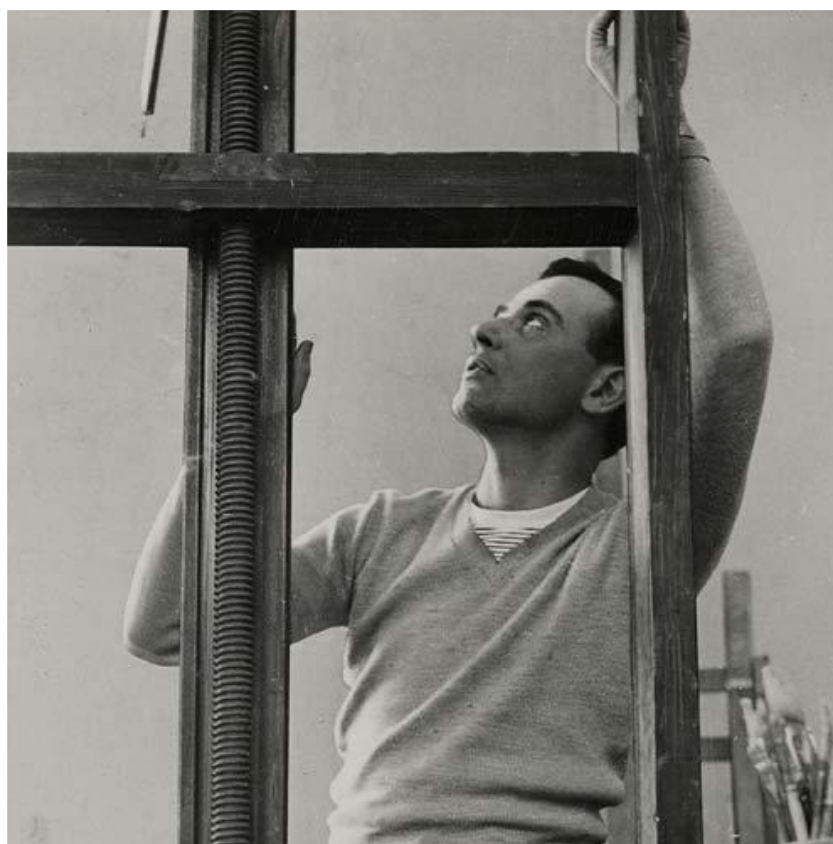
**Figure 165 Photo 1. Stephen Greene, his mother Gussie Shelasky Goldstein and his sister Frances Goldstein (later Lyman), c. 1919. Alison de Lima Greene Archive, Houston.**



**Figure 166 Photo 2. Top, Stephen Greene, his sister Frances, and their parents, William (“Willy”) and Gussie Goldstein, at a family wedding, c. 1932. Below, Stephen’s maternal grandparents, Hyman Shmalazer Shelasky and Freda Gittel Shelasky, are seated to the bride’s right.**



**Figure 167 Photo 3. Wedding of Sigrid de Lima and Stephen Greene, Rome, December 24, 1954. Alison de Lima Greene Archive, Houston.**



**Figure 168 Photo 4. Stephen Greene in his studio, c. 1950. Alison de Lima Greene Archive, Houston.**



**Figure 169 Photo 5. De Lima/Greene house, Valley Cottage, New York (approaching from the studio).**

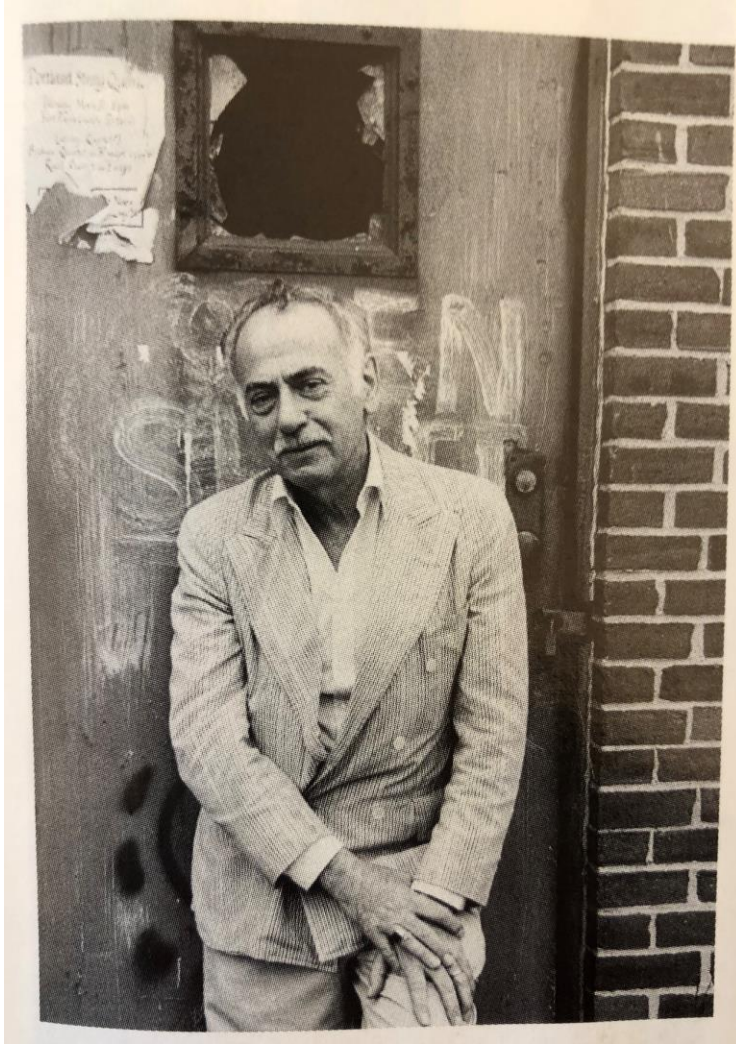


**Figure 170 Photo 6. Stephen Greene at the Art Students League, c. 1961 Alison de Lima Greene Archive, Houston.**



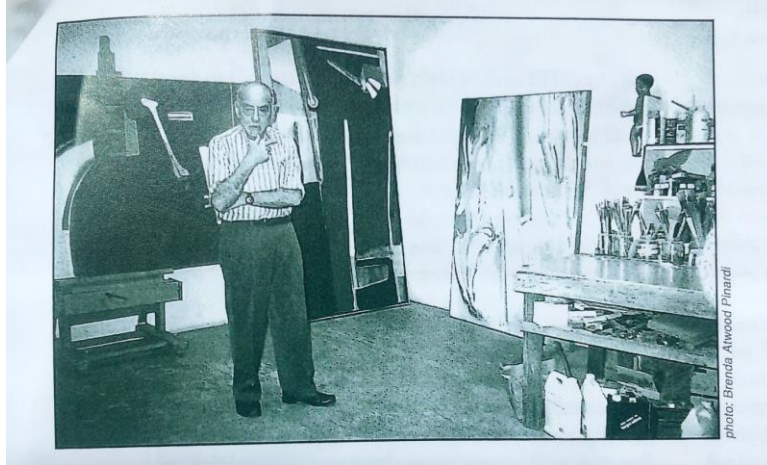


**Figure 171 Photo 7. l.to r. Arthur Osver, Sigrid de Lima, Stephen Greene, and Ernestine Betsberg Osver, at the exhibition *Stephen Greene: Images of Suffering & Salvation*, St. Louis Art Museum, 1989. Alison de Lima Greene Archive, Houston.**



**Figure 172 Photo 8. Photo of Stephen Greene, illustrating George Melrod, “The Fame Game,” *Art and Antiques*, Vol. 20, Summer 1997, 77.**





**Figure 173 Photo 9. Stephen Greene in his studio, Valley Cottage, New York, 1999. Photo by Brenda Atwood Pinardi from the catalogue of the exhibition Stephen Greene Recent Paintings, October 1 - November 3, 1999, University Gallery at UMass Lowell**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Marshall N. Price, *The Abstract Impulse: Fifty Years of Abstraction at the National Academy, 1956-2006* (New York: National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts, 2007), 15.

<sup>2</sup>“Statement,” *Reality, A Journal of Artists’ Opinions*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1953), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Slifkin, *Out of Time: Philip Guston and the Refiguration of Postwar American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Roberta Smith, “Stephen Greene, 82, Painter with Distinctive Abstract Style,” *New York Times*, November 29, 1999; Adrian Dannatt, “Obituaries: Stephen Greene,” *Independent*, December 10, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> George Melrod, “The Fame Game,” *Art and Antiques*, Vol. 20, Summer 1997, 77. **72-79** Melrod’s article included Greene among five featured under-recognized “survivors of the art world’s fickle state of grace” who, ignoring trends, were still “going strong.”

<sup>7</sup> Gabriele Guercio, *Art as Existence: The Artist’s Monograph and Its Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006). For a helpful methodological citation of Guercio’s book applied to scholarship about an artist who lived more than four centuries before Stephen Greene, see the Introduction to Christopher J. Nygren, *Titian’s Icons* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2020), 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Greene, “A Case in Point,” *Art in America* 49 (1961), 84.

<sup>9</sup> Guercio, *Art as Existence*,” 6.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher S. Wood, “Subject to Debate: Christopher S. Wood on Gabriele Guercio and Joachim Pissarro,” *Artforum International*, Vol. 45 no. 2 (Oct. 2006), 77.

<sup>11</sup> Guercio, *Art as Existence*,” 96.

<sup>12</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018, Houston, Texas; American Academy in Rome files, New York, copy of a letter from Laurence Roberts (no addressee) dated September 6, 1949.

<sup>13</sup> Guercio, *Art as Existence*,” 3.

<sup>14</sup> Roberta Smith, “Stephen Greene, 82, Painter with Distinctive Abstract Style.”

<sup>15</sup> Leo Steinberg, “Other Criteria,” in *Other Criteria: Confrontations with Twentieth Century Art* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972, republished with new Preface, University of Chicago Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>16</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Greene, Oral History Interview by Dorothy Seckler, June 8, 1968, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Joy Schumacher, conversation with the author, Detroit, Michigan (July 17, 2019). (I am grateful to Alison Greene for putting me in touch with Mrs. Schumacher, who was Stephen Greene’s first cousin.)

<sup>18</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 28 July 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 4 August 2019

<sup>22</sup> Ibid; Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>23</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *The Jews of the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 223; Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry since World War II* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Kirsten Fermaglich, *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 25-6.

<sup>25</sup> I am grateful to Alison Greene for sharing, in an email of 28 July 2019, the details of this petition, including the fact that her father’s brother-in-law, Sid Lyman, acted as his lawyer in the proceeding.

<sup>26</sup> Alison Greene, email to the author, 28 July 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Bookbinder, “Figurative Expressionism in Boston and its Germanic Cultural Affinities: An Alternative Modernist Discourse on Art and Identity,” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1998), 422.

<sup>28</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>29</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 67; Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 582-83. (Howe had changed his surname, from Horenstein, at about the same time as Greene changed his.) Howe continued:

To speak of an artistic style in terms of a defining culture is to speak of a rather lengthy process in which influences settle and cohere, traditions are slowly formed, and a chain of kinships and associations is gradually created. Precisely all this was absent and, indeed, impossible in the immigrant milieu....To become an avant-garde painter meant to become an avant-garde Jew: a figure apart, perhaps torn away, undertaking a journey of dispersion more radical than that of most other Jews. Jewish subjects could be returned to, as in some instances they were—but returned to after, and perhaps only after, the Jewish artists had gone through the experience, at once alienating and liberating, of an apprenticeship as “universal” painters. (583)

<sup>31</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview. Although Greene remembered this work as a black painting, it may have been *The Crucifixion, with St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Margaret of Antioch*, a mid-14<sup>th</sup>-Century tapestry (linen, wool and silk, approx. 2 ft. 8 in. x 5 ft. 8 in.) with a dark azure ground that, at least in the Met’s online photograph, reads black.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Hilton Kramer, “Morris Kantor: A Passion for Painting,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1974, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Irving Howe, “New York in the Thirties: Some Fragments of Memory,” *Dissent*, vol. 8, no. 3, Summer 1961, reproduced in Neil Jumonville, ed., *The New York Intellectuals Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 27.

<sup>38</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>39</sup> “The Flowering of the Valley; Iowa trains creative artists,” *Life*, June 5, 1939, 54-58.

<sup>40</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>41</sup> Professor Kinsey’s scholarship on this subject includes the following:

Joni L. Kinsey, “Cultivating Iowa: An Introduction to Grant Wood,” in *Grant Wood’s Studio: Birthplace of American Gothic*, Jane C. Milosch, ed. (Munich: Prestel, 2005);

Joni L. Kinsey, "Modernism Ascendant: The Contested History of Modern Art at the University of Iowa," in *New Forms: The Avant Garde Meets the American Scene, 1939-1949*, Kathleen A. Edwards, ed. (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013);

Joni L. Kinsey, "Philip Guston and H. W. Janson: Modernism at the University of Iowa and Beyond" (lecture, "Philip Guston and Iowa" symposium, University of Iowa Museum of Art, October 21, 2017).

[https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjxu625-PfdAhUEheAKHW9aCB8QFjABegQIBRAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fuiowa.edu%2Fuiowa\\_events%2F1%2F&usg=AOvVaw0FuJ\\_tjWtXl8OVNPE3SKj](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjxu625-PfdAhUEheAKHW9aCB8QFjABegQIBRAB&url=https%3A%2F%2Fuiowa.edu%2Fuiowa_events%2F1%2F&usg=AOvVaw0FuJ_tjWtXl8OVNPE3SKj) (accessed February 25, 2019).

Joni L. Kinsey, "Grant Wood at 125" (lecture, University of Iowa Museum of Art, February 12, 2016). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHZTlj9AVp0> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>42</sup> Kinsey, "Philip Guston and H. W. Janson," 3.

<sup>43</sup> Lauren Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens: The Regional Work of Art in the New Deal Era* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 19.

<sup>44</sup> Kinsey, "Grant Wood at 125."

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Kinsey, "Philip Guston and H. W. Janson," 3.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>48</sup> Greene, Oral history interview.

<sup>49</sup> Martica Sawin, "Stephen Greene's Recent Painting," *Arts Magazine*, (Oct. 1975), 83.

<sup>50</sup> Elizabeth Sears and Charlotte Schoell-Glass, "An Émigré Art Historian and America: H. W. Janson," *The Art Bulletin* 95, no. 2 (June 2013): 191.

<sup>51</sup> Kinsey, "Philip Guston and H. W. Janson," 2, 21. A gendered visual analysis of respective works by Fletcher Martin and Grant Wood might find, ironically, that *Trouble in Frisco*, with its circular arrangement of lithe bodies in which one longshoreman revealingly pulls off the other's t-shirt, might be seen as more overtly homoerotic than, say, Wood's *Spring Turning*, in which R. Tripp Evans found a representation of upturned male buttocks (R. Tripp Evans, *Grant Wood: A Life* (New York: Knopf, 2010), 240). This is not intended to suggest anything about Martin's sexuality, as he was married five times, had an affair with the actress Sylvia Sidney and painted women as sensuously as he painted men.

<sup>52</sup> Kinsey, "Cultivating Iowa," 29. Earl Harper, the Director of the School of Fine Arts and Longman's immediate supervisor, warned Longman not to speak to the magazine, but Longman

ignored the warning and met with the *Time* reporter for two hours, inviting Janson and Martin to join the conversation. Wood accused Martin of starting the rumors, but Martin denied it and the source was never definitively identified. In Longman's official written statement to *Time*, he rejected the accusations against Wood and maintained that Wood was a valued faculty member in the department. But Longman ended his statement with innuendo: "You see, therefore, that Mr. Wood's personal persuasions have nothing whatever to do with our granting his leave of absence." (Kinsey, "Cultivating Iowa," 29)

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Kinsey reports that shortly after meeting with the *Time* reporter Longman, pursuing the University's investigation, "gleefully solicited written opinions about Wood's artistic abilities from nearly twenty art historians and critics throughout the country, all carefully chosen for their dislike of Wood's work." One of Longman's solicitations, in a letter dated November 22, 1940, went to Meyer Schapiro:

The Art Department at the University of Iowa considers Grant Wood a very mediocre painter. Since certain members of the administration can't understand how a professional judgment could differ from popular acclaim, I am having to get the opinions of a few authorities to present to the administration. I would appreciate it very much if you would write me a fairly complete statement of your views as one of the outstanding art historians and critics in the country.

The tone and substance of Longman's letter to Schapiro support Kinsey's somewhat unsympathetic assessment of Longman's motives and methods. Schapiro's gently derisive reply, however, casts some doubt on the proposition that the recipients of Longman's solicitations were carefully chosen:

I should be very glad to write a letter to the administration to state my opinion about Grant Wood as a painter, if the administration requested it. Of his competence as a teacher, of course, I would have nothing to say. [Administrator (Farris Wahbeh?), "Grant Wood's Last Laugh," *On Archiving Schapiro* (blog), July 2, 2009, <https://blogs.cul.columbia.edu/schapiro/2009/07/02/grant-woods-last-laugh/> (accessed February 25, 2019).

Similarly, Lauren Kroiz reports that Alfred Barr's reply to Longman's inquiry was "surprisingly positive. He noted that he would be happy to have Wood's *American Gothic* or *Daughters of the Revolution* at MoMA....Barr considered Wood's technical shortcomings as a deliberate formal choice that made his painting modern." (Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens*, 86)

Some manifestations of the tensions in the Iowa Art Department during Greene's tenure as a student might appear to be just local academic politics. Janson claimed, for example, that in 1939 or '40 he had been temporarily fired, at the insistence of Wood's allies, for "polluting" the minds of students "with pernicious, alien ideas" when he led them on a field trip to see a Picasso exhibition in Chicago, about which they were so enthusiastic that they organized a beaux arts ball "with costumes and decorations à la Picasso." (H. W. Janson, "Artists and Art Historians," *Art Journal* 33, no. 4 (summer 1974), 334) Janson first shared this memory decades later, in his



keynote speech at the 1974 annual meeting of the College Art Association. Befitting his prominence in the art world and the composition of his audience, Janson chose as his theme a perennially vexing issue: “the relation of artists to art historians (or vice versa), inside and outside the CAA.” But Janson saw fit, even in the context of an important speech before a large, broad audience, to resuscitate 1940s political arguments and denigrate Wood and Regionalism once more, reminding his listeners to “keep in mind that in those days the State University of Iowa was a hotbed of political and artistic isolationism, with Grant Wood, the artist-in-residence, as its patron saint.” (Janson, “Artists and Art Historians,” 334)

<sup>54</sup> Lester Longman, “Better American Art,” *Parnassus* 12, no. 6 (Oct., 1940), 5. Conflating the dangers of Nazi political aggression with the dangers of “fascist” art, Longman wrote that “true art, like true democracy, is on the defensive....It is time for its defenders to attack” the dominance of reactionary art, the “sentimental, popular, photographic, propagandistic drivel, glorifying sunsets, forests, naked Aryans, big families, popular heroes, and homely scenes.” Longman admitted that Thomas Hart Benton had recently begun to understand the dangers Longman warned of and that Benton’s painting had improved as a result, but the editorial pointedly made no mention of Wood.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>56</sup> Kroiz, *Cultivating Citizens*, 73.

<sup>57</sup> Dore Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 52,

<sup>58</sup> “Several I. C. Artists Will Exhibit Works in Traveling Art Show,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen* (Iowa City, Iowa), January 16, 1940, 7.

<sup>59</sup> “Byron Burford, Artist of Circus Life, Dies at 90,” *New York Times*, June 26, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/arts/byron-burford-90-american-figurative-artist-dies.html> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>60</sup> University of Iowa Museum of Art Digital Collection, <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/uima/id/11448/rec/2> (accessed February 25, 2019) ;

“A History of the University of Iowa Department of Neurology,” (2018) <https://medicine.uiowa.edu/neurology/about-us/history> (accessed February 25, 2019). The Art Museum was not established until 1969, so the original gift was most likely to the School of Fine Arts.

<sup>61</sup> Frederick W. Kent, “Studying in the Iowa Memorial Union, the University of Iowa, 1950s?,” (photograph, 1950/59), Frederick W. Kent Collection of Photographs, file name bldgs77-0046.jpg. <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/ictcs/id/17503/rec/430> (accessed February 25, 2019) .

<sup>62</sup> University of Iowa Museum of Art Digital Collection, <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/uima/id/11447/rec/1> (accessed February 25, 2-19).

<sup>63</sup> “Greene Painting Is Given Award; Best Work of Art in Iowa City Exhibit,” *Des Moines Register*, January 12, 1941, 15; “60 Artists in Iowa Exhibit; Enter Works in Honorary Exhibition Opening Today,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen* (Iowa City, Iowa), Jan. 9, 1941, 13.

<sup>64</sup> In addition to the three Stephen Greene paintings, Dr. Clarence Van Epps donated at least 26 other works to the University, most of them upon his retirement in 1947 and many of those by artists with a University connection, including: two drawings by Grant Wood; oil paintings by Marvin Cone and Edwin Bruns, both Cedar Rapids Regionalists and friends of Wood; a watercolor and a striking oil shipwreck (*Home From the Sea*) by Fletcher Martin; four works by Emil Ganso, all from the 1920s and ‘30s, suggesting that Van Epps may have bought them from Ganso’s estate; a painting by Donald M. Anderson, who overlapped with Greene as a student at Iowa and who later published two popular books on design; works on paper by the WPA artist James Lechay and the master printmaker Mauricio Lasansky, both of whom in 1945 began long teaching careers at the University of Iowa; a print by *Reality* editor Isabel Bishop; and, most notably, Philip Guston’s 1944 painting of his wife and daughter, *The Young Mother*. Joni Kinsey has reported that Van Epps invited Lester Longman to make specific choices from the doctor’s collection, one of which was the Guston painting (“Philip Guston and H. W. Janson,” 28).

<sup>65</sup> University of Iowa Museum of Art Digital Collection, <http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/uima/id/22975/rec/13> (accessed February 25, 2019). The museum’s digital library website lists this work as “undated,” but the date 1944 appears clearly next to the artist’s signature in the lower left of the painting.

<sup>66</sup> Email from Sarah Luko, Assistant Registrar of University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, October 18, 2018.

<sup>67</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 17, 36, 67; Musa Mayer, *Night Studio: A Memoir of Philip Guston* (Munich: Sieveking Verlag, 2016), 21, 31, 48, 49, 55, 73.

<sup>68</sup> Ashton, *ibid.*, 52.

<sup>69</sup> Mayer, *Night Studio*, 19.

<sup>70</sup> Bookbinder, “Figurative Expressionism in Boston and its Germanic Cultural Affinities: An Alternative Modernist Discourse on Art and Identity,” 422.

<sup>71</sup> Daniel Bell, “Reflections on Jewish Identity,” *Commentary* (June 1961) <https://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/reflections-on-jewish-identity> (accessed February 21, 2019).

<sup>72</sup> Neal Gabler, *Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 4.

<sup>73</sup> Greene, Oral history interview.

<sup>74</sup> Joy Schumacher, conversation with the author, Detroit, Michigan (July 17, 2019).

<sup>75</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 28 July 2019.

<sup>76</sup> Greene portrayed Willy less as downcast than as perplexed in the 1947 pencil drawing *Artist's Father*, which was exhibited decades later in a Zierler Gallery retrospective of Greene's drawings that was favorably reviewed by John Canaday in the *Times* (see text at Note 628). The drawing was sold at auction in 2020 and is now in the author's collection. The drawing can be viewed at <https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.invaluable.com%2Fauction-lot%2Fstephen-greene-american-1917-1999-artists-father-92a-c-b3842899e1&data=04%7C01%7Cael50%40pitt.edu%7C9313b143ece44d1ddd1e08d89d5da394%7C9ef9f489e0a04eeb87cc3a526112fd0d%7C1%7C0%7C637432372792626381%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6IklhaWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=BmCjNsB3nrAY25CBmiorHnntaQtCY4x8xDFN%2Bvw0aUA%3D&reserved=0>.

<sup>77</sup> Mayer, *Night Studio*, 19, quoting Guston.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 22; Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, "The Artist as Performer: Philip Guston's Early Work," *Arts Magazine*, 63, no. 3 (November 1988), 55.

<sup>80</sup> Harry Cooper, Mark Godfrey, Alison de Lima Greene and Kate Nesin, *Philip Guston Now* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2020) 10, 182. The noted Feitelson works, among many others, are reproduced on a website dedicated to the artist, <https://www.lorserfeitelson.com/earlywork> (accessed October 31, 2020).

<sup>81</sup> Robert Storr, "Preface: P. G. All in All," in Peter Benson Miller, ed., *Go Figure! New Perspectives on Guston* (New York: New York Review of Books and American Academy in Rome, 2014), 8; Ashton, *ibid.*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> Storr, *ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>85</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 52.

<sup>86</sup> Mayer, *Night Studio*, 275. On Guston's devotion to Piero see, for example, Ashton, *ibid.*, 146-151, and two essays in Miller, ed., *Go Figure! New Perspectives on Guston*: Bill Berkson, "The Story Goes: Guston, Piero, and Their Followers" and Ara H. Merjian, "Guston's Italian Badness."

See also Luciano Cheles, "A Century-Old Passion: Piero della Francesca in America," in Luciano Cheles, ed., *Milton Glaser nella città di Piero* (Sansepolcro: Sbandieratori di Sansepolcro, 2007) (typescript provided by Professor Cheles in possession of the author). Interestingly, Cheles finds many more quotations from Piero in works by Grant Wood (including *American Gothic*) than in paintings by Guston. See Luciano Cheles, "The Italian Renaissance in American Gothic: Grant Wood and Piero della Francesca," *American Art*, Spring 2016. <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/686551> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>87</sup> de Lima Greene, "The Artist as Performer," 55

<sup>88</sup> Philip Guston, "Piero della Francesca: The Impossibility of Painting," *Art News*, May 1965, 38-39.

<sup>89</sup> Philip Guston, "On Piero della Francesca," in *Collected Writings, Lectures, and Conversations*, Clark Coolidge, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 140.

<sup>90</sup> Guston, "Piero della Francesca: The Impossibility of Painting," 38.

<sup>91</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018.

<sup>92</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 146.

<sup>93</sup> Guston, "Piero della Francesca: The Impossibility of Painting," 39.

<sup>94</sup> Elements of this familiar visual analysis are ubiquitous and appear, with variations, in popular online sites, including those of Khan Academy, <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/renaissance-reformation/early-renaissance1/painting-in-florence/a/piero-della-francesca-resurrection> (accessed February 25, 2019); and The Art Story, <https://www.theartstory.org/artist-della-francesca-piero-artworks.htm> (accessed February 25, 2019). Alison Greene has noted that Guston saw himself reflected in the features of two figures that have been traditionally described as self-portraits by Piero, including the sleeping soldier in the *Resurrection* (Alison de Lima Greene, "The Mask and the Lie of Art," in Cooper et al., eds., *Philip Guston Now*, 243) and thus disagrees with my far-fetched speculation.

<sup>95</sup> Mayer, *Night Studio*, 344, citing Albert Camus, *Selected Essays and Notebooks*. The quote is from the essay "Le desert," one of Camus's set of essays *Noces*. The original reads: "Rien d'heureux n'est peint sur son visage—mais seulement une grandeur farouche et sans âme que je ne puis m'empêcher de prendre pour une résolution à vivre. Car le sage comme l'idiot exprime très peu."

<sup>96</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>97</sup> Philip Guston, letter to Stephen Greene, 24 April 1978, Irving Sandler Papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, box 10, folder 12. The reference to Sigrid is to Greene's wife, Sigrid de Lima.

<sup>98</sup> Philip Guston, letter to Stephen Greene, 1 October 1979, Irving Sandler Papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, box 10, folder 12. Greene sent both letters to Sandler in connection with research the latter was doing on Guston. Alison Greene (email correspondence with the author, 6 February 2021) recalls that Guston was pleased by Greene's enthusiasm for the former's figurative paintings after the Marlborough show, that the two men were more than cordial when the Greene family visited Guston in Woodstock in 1974, and that Guston spoke at Tyler School of Art at Greene's invitation not long afterward.

<sup>99</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview; Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018.

<sup>100</sup> Smithsonian American Art Museum artist page for Morris Kantor, <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/morris-kantor-2544>, accessed August 28, 2019. This webpage compares Kantor's *Synthetic Arrangement* (1922) and his well-known *Baseball at Night* (1934) to illustrate his diverse body of work.

<sup>101</sup> Stephen Greene, letter to Dore Ashton, 29 January 1973, Dore Ashton Papers, circa 1928-2014, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>102</sup> See Ellen G. Landau, "Robert Motherwell among the Surrealists," *Archives of American Art Journal* 56 no. 2 (Fall 2017), 4-25. As mentioned below, later in the 1940s Seligmann bought one of Greene's paintings from Durlacher Bros., their mutual dealer.

<sup>103</sup> Irving Sandler, *A Sweeper-Up After Artists* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 90.

<sup>104</sup> Greene, letter to Ashton, 29 January 1973, Dore Ashton Papers.

<sup>105</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview; Robert Storr, "Philip Guston: Hilarious and Horrifying," *New York Review of Books* (March 8, 2015) <https://www.nybooks-com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/daily/2015/03/08/guston-hilarious-and-horrifying/> (accessed February 21, 2019). For additional treatment of Guston's engagement with Beckmann's work, see, e.g.: Christoph Schreier, "Guston and Central Europe: On Germany's Response to Guston's Work," in Miller, ed., *Go Figure! New Perspectives on Guston*, 122-23; Chuck Close, Sue Behrends Frank, Peter Benson Miller, "Guston's Late Work: A Conversation," in Miller, ed., *Go Figure! New Perspectives on Guston*, 143; H. W. Janson, "Max Beckmann in America," *Magazine of Art* 44 (March 1951): 92; de Lima Greene, "The Artist as Performer," 57-58; and Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 64-65.

<sup>106</sup> Philip Guston, "On Drawing," in *Collected Writings, Lectures, and Conversations*, Clark Coolidge, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press) 2011), 266.

<sup>107</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview; Metropolitan Museum of Art website, *The Old Actress*, exhibition history, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/644093>, (accessed October 26, 2018).

<sup>108</sup> In addition to formal influences, Greene must have responded to extra-aesthetic elements in Beckmann's painting, including what Hilton Kramer later described as Beckmann's "response to history and a meditation on the spiritual role of the artist in the dark labyrinth of the historical process which is unequalled in the work of any other modern painter." On this subject, Kramer contrasted Beckmann and Picasso:

...Compare "Guernica" to the great triptychs and allegorical paintings of Beckmann's later years and you see the difference between an artist registering his intense moral indignation over an obscene political atrocity and an artist confronting the complex role of the artist himself in the crisis of modern history. When it came to a political subject, Picasso refused to implicate the artist as a historical actor....In Beckman, the artist is not exempt from the tragedy he depicts. (Hilton Kramer, "Max Beckman: 'The Quality of Pulsating Life'," *New York Times*, 23 November 1969, D27.)

<sup>109</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 53.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism – Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 20 et seq.

<sup>111</sup> Mayer, *Night Studio*, 51.

<sup>112</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 53.

<sup>113</sup> Records of the University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art, "SMA Checklist," copy provided by Sarah Luko, Assistant Registrar, in email to author, October 18, 2018.

<sup>114</sup> Website of Philadelphia Museum of Art, <http://www.philamuseum.org/collections/permanent/75364.html?mulR=1946642345> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>115</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview; Ashton *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 65.

<sup>116</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 53.

<sup>117</sup> *Sentimental Moment* was for many years owned by IBM International Foundation and, as part of the Art in Embassies Program, was on loan to the American Embassy in Montevideo, Uruguay. It was included in several other exhibitions. The work sold at Christie's in 2005 for \$54,000. Christie's website, <https://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/philip-guston-1913-1980-sentimental-moment-4593453-details.aspx> (accessed October 28, 2018).

<sup>118</sup> "Philip Guston: Carnegie Winner's Art is Abstract and Symbolic," *Life*, May 27, 1946, 90-92.

<sup>119</sup> Michael Shapiro, *Philip Guston: Working Through the Forties*, catalogue of an exhibition held at University of Iowa Museum of Art, January 25—March 16, 1997, Greenville County Museum of Art, April 9—June 29, 1997, and Muson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art, November 15, 1997—January 4, 1998 (Iowa City: University of Iowa Museum of Art, 1997), 8.



<sup>120</sup> Philip Guston and H. H. Arnason, *Philip Guston*, catalogue of an exhibition held at the Guggenheim Museum, May 2—July 1, 1962, (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1962), 15; Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 64; Shapiro, *Philip Guston: Working Through the Forties*, 8.

<sup>121</sup> Guston and Arnason, *Philip Guston*, 15.

<sup>122</sup> Ashton, *A Critical Study of Philip Guston*, 63.

<sup>123</sup> Shapiro, *Philip Guston: Working Through the Forties*, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Philip Guston, Transcript of a talk at Yale Summer School of Music and Art, 1973, *Collected Writings, Lectures, and Conversations*, Clark Coolidge, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 213.

<sup>125</sup> Kathleen A. Edwards, “Philip Guston and the World War II Years at Iowa,” (lecture, “Philip Guston and Iowa” symposium, University of Iowa Museum of Art, October 21, 2017), 11. <https://uima.uiowa.edu/events/symposium-philip-guston-and-iowa> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 12

<sup>127</sup> Philip Guston, Transcript of a talk at Yale Summer School of Music and Art, 1972, *Collected Writings, Lectures, and Conversations*, Clark Coolidge, ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 151. The painter David Pease was a faculty colleague of Stephen Greene at the Tyler School of Art, Temple University.

<sup>128</sup> Guston, Transcript of a talk at Yale Summer School of Music and Art 1973, *Collected Writings*, 213.

<sup>129</sup> Dennis Hevesi, “Byron Burford, Artist of Circus Life, Dies at 90,” *New York Times*, June 26, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/27/arts/byron-burford-90-american-figurative-artist-dies.html> (accessed February 25, 2018).

<sup>130</sup> Gussie Du Jardin, Oral History Interview by Sharon Rohlfen Udall, October 11, 1983, transcript, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>131</sup> Edwards, “Philip Guston and the World War II Years at Iowa,” 15.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> Kinsey, “Philip Guston and H. W. Janson,” 7.

<sup>134</sup> Alice M. Phillips (Curator, Office of Visual Materials, School of Art & Art History, University of Iowa), e-mail messages to author, June 21, 2018, and July 31, 2018. Dr. Phillips advises that the thesis rental gallery has a record of the mural, but there is no accession number or photo in the database, suggesting a relatively early disappearance.

<sup>135</sup> Stephen Greene, "A Mural for the Iowa Memorial Union Commemorating the Pre-Flight School" (master's thesis, University of Iowa, 1945), 1.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> H. W. Janson, "'Martial Memory' by Philip Guston and American Painting Today," *Bulletin of the City Art Museum of St. Louis*, Vol. 27, No. 3/4 (Dec. 1942), 40. [https://www.jstor.org/pitt.idm.oclc.org/stable/40714662?seq=7#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/pitt.idm.oclc.org/stable/40714662?seq=7#metadata_info_tab_contents) (accessed Nov. 24, 2018).

<sup>140</sup> Greene, "A Mural for the Iowa Memorial Union," 3.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Janson, "'Martial Memory' by Philip Guston and American Painting Today," 39-40.

<sup>143</sup> Edwards, "Philip Guston and the World War II Years at Iowa," 12.

<sup>144</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018.

<sup>145</sup> Greene, letter to Ashton, 29 January 1973, Dore Ashton Papers.

<sup>146</sup> Deborah Forman, "Hans Hofmann in Provincetown 1935-1966," <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/9aa/9aa616.htm> (accessed August 30, 2019).

<sup>147</sup> Al Boime, "Breaking Open the Wall: The Morelia Mural of Guston, Kadish and Langsner," *The Burlington Magazine* 150 no. 1264 (July 2008), 452-459.

<sup>148</sup> Ira Goldberg, "Cornelia Foss: An Interview," *Linea: The Artist's Voice*, July 6, 2015. [www.asllinea.org/cornelia-foss-an-interview](http://www.asllinea.org/cornelia-foss-an-interview) (accessed February 25, 2019). Ms Foss must have been slightly mistaken about her age when Greene taught her, as she was born in 1931 and the lessons must have occurred in Bloomington (her father taught at Indiana University) in 1945 or 1946.

<sup>149</sup> Howard Derrickson, "Art and Artists; State Show Sidelight," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, December 18, 1949, 68.

<sup>150</sup> Hillary Kelly, "The Article That Told the World About the Holocaust," *The New Republic*, July 22, 2014 <https://newrepublic.com/article/118800/first-american-report-holocaust> (accessed February 25, 2018); "History UnFolded: U. S. Newspapers and the Holocaust," *Pittsburgh Post-*

Gazette, April 11, 2018 <https://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/thedigs/2018/04/11/history-unfolded-american-newspapers-holocaust/> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>151</sup> Ashton, A Critical Study of Philip Guston, 73-74.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid. Alison de Lima Greene, in her *Arts Magazine* essay about Guston, proposed that at least once he painted a more explicit Crucifixion scene, a deposition. The work has long been presumed destroyed, but it can be seen in the background of photographs taken of Guston in his studio. She explains that “cruciform images dominate the upper left corner and two heads in the lower center echo that of Mary’s embrace of Christ in Pietro Lorenzetti’s *Descent from the Cross*. (de Lima Greene, “The Artist as Performer,” 58.) Ms Greene told me that both Guston and her father loved the Lorenzetti painting. “It was chiefly through Philip that my father’s love of Italian art was nurtured—they poured over the same images from Renaissance murals and panel paintings very carefully I gather. In particular there was a Pietro Lorenzetti “Descent from the Cross” fresco in Assisi that they both responded to powerfully—my father had a black and white reproduction of this painting that he told me Philip had given him. He said that they both loved how Christ’s face and Mary’s meet. You can easily see how this painting is echoed in my father’s work. In Guston’s you see it in the cruciform imagery and very tight juxtapositions in his 1946-47 paintings leading up to *The Porch*.” (Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author, October 11, 2018.) Specifically with respect to *The Porch* and the Holocaust, Ms Greene in her recent essay in *Philip Guston Now* described how Guston used as a source for the painting a photo obtained by Joseph Pulitzer, Jr., publisher of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (and later Greene’s patron), on Pulitzer’s visit in April 1945 to the then recently liberated Buchenwald concentration camp. (Alison de Lima Greene, “The Mask and the Life of Art,” in Cooper et al., *Philip Guston Now*, 188.)

<sup>153</sup> Quoted in John I. H. Baur, *The New Decade* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1955), 38.

<sup>154</sup> Robert Slifkin, *Out of Time*, 150.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Arthur Miller, “Tragedy and the Common Man,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1949, Sec. 2, p. 1.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Stephen Greene, “The Tragic Sense in Modern Art,” in Whitney J. Oates, ed., *From Sophocles To Picasso: The Present-day Vitality of the Classical Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 166.

<sup>159</sup> Website of the Art Institute of Chicago, “White Crucifixion,” <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/59426/white-crucifixion>, (accessed December 23, 2018). Chagall’s wartime Crucifixions have been the subject of extensive scholarship, including: Susan Tumarkin Goodman, *Chagall: Love, War, and Exile* [catalogue, Jewish Museum, New York]

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Ziva Amishai-Maisels, “Chagall’s *White Crucifixion*,” *Museum Studies, Art Institute of Chicago* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1991), 138–53; and Larry Silver, “Chagall’s Stained-Glass Syncretism,” *Ars Judaica The Bar Ilan Journal of Jewish Art*, 12 (2016): 111-134.

<sup>160</sup> Website of the Art Institute of Chicago, “White Crucifixion,”

<sup>161</sup> Harold Rosenberg, “Chagall: Jewish Modernist Master” *Jewish Frontier*, April 1945, 26-33, quoted in Mark Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>162</sup> Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust*, 64.

<sup>163</sup> For example, Greene wrote in a letter to his dealer that he was contemplating a trip to New York in late April, 1946. (Stephen Greene to R. Kirk Askew, Jr., 6 April 1946, box 1, folder 8, R. Kirk Askew Papers, 1942-1958, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>164</sup> Pilar Halasz, “Abraham Rattner: Rebel with a Cause,” *Archives of American Art Journal* 32, no. 3 (1992), 26.

<sup>165</sup> Matthew Baigell, *Jewish Art in America: An Introduction* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2007), 79.

<sup>166</sup> Halasz, “Abraham Rattner,” 27. The work referred to is reproduced at <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/abraham-rattner-abstract-oil-canvas-779-c-o0787dohv5#> (accessed 31 October 2020).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.; Malcolm Goldstein, *Landscape with Figures: A History of Art Dealing in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 240. Kootz’s book, *New Frontiers in American Painting*, was one of the first to examine the emerging Abstract Expressionist movement, although Kootz did not use that term and a few years later coined the name “The Intersubjectives” to refer to artists he eventually represented, like Robert Motherwell, William Baziotes, Hans Hofmann and Adolph Gottlieb, as well as to Pollock, Rothko, et al. (Historical Note to Kootz Gallery records, 1923-1966, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.)

<sup>168</sup> Robert Cozzolino, “Between Paradise and Purgatory: George Tooker’s Modern Icons,” website of Accademia.edu, [https://www.academia.edu/26292877/Between\\_Paradise\\_and\\_Purgatory\\_George\\_Tookers\\_modern\\_icons](https://www.academia.edu/26292877/Between_Paradise_and_Purgatory_George_Tookers_modern_icons) (accessed 11 January 2021).

<sup>169</sup> Jennifer Josten, Mathias Goeritz: *Modernist Art and Architecture in Cold War Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 76.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ziva Amishai-Maisels, *Depiction and Interpretation: The Influence of the Holocaust on the Visual Arts* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1993), 178.

<sup>172</sup> Steven Robert Frankel, ed., *Jack Levine* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 134.

<sup>173</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author, 16 October 2018 and 6 February 2021. Ms Greene suggested that her father responded to the Mann story because it “so poignantly expressed regret at the passage of time,” citing Mann’s comment through the character Dr. Cornelius as one that would have resonated with him: “The past is immortalized; that is to say, it is dead; and death is the root of all godliness and all abiding significance.”

<sup>174</sup> Justus Bier, “Work by Hoosiers,” *The Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Kentucky), May 19, 1946, 29.

<sup>175</sup> Lucille E. Morehouse, “Painting by Harry Davis Jr. Wins Artist’s Show Prize,” *The Indianapolis Star*, April 28, 1946, 65.

<sup>176</sup> I am grateful to Christopher Nygren for helping me avoid duplicating Ms Morehouse’s oversight by leading me to Giotto. If printed confirmation of the iconography is needed, there is Andrew Ladis, *Giotto’s O: Narrative, Figuration, and Pictorial Ingenuity in the Arena Chapel* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 138. When by coincidence Chris and I visited the Westmoreland Museum of American Art at the same time one day, we noted another mid-20<sup>th</sup>-Century use of the grieving angels image in Bob Thompson’s painting *Descent from the Cross* (1963), on temporary loan from the Smithsonian American Art Museum to. <https://americanart.si.edu/artwork/descent-cross-24043> (accessed 29 August 2020). And Greene was not the first American-Jewish artist of the 1940s to make a Giottesque allusion to swarming angels, as the WPA mural and easel artist Mitchell Siporin (1910-1976) included a trio of them in his *Dream of the Good Life* (1941). Greene may have seen the Siporin painting, whose subject matter was less overtly biblical and whose angels were jollier than Greene’s, at a 1942 MoMA exhibition, *Americans 1942: Nineteen Artists from Nine States* (catalogue edited by Dorothy Miller). The Siporin work was up for auction at Swann Auction Galleries in early 2021. [https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/96588987\\_mitchell-siporin-1910-1976-dream-of-the-good-life](https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/96588987_mitchell-siporin-1910-1976-dream-of-the-good-life) (accessed 16 January 2021).

<sup>177</sup> Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, catalogue of *The Fifth Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary American Paintings*, March 30—April 25, 1946.

<sup>178</sup> Anthony Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 219; “R. Kirk Askew Jr., of Durlacher, 70,” obituary, *New York Times*, April 1, 1974, 34.

<sup>179</sup> Donald Albrecht, “The High Bohemia of 1930s Manhattan,” in David A. Hanks, ed., *Partners in Design: Alfred M. Barr, Jr. and Philip Johnson* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2015), 64.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. Askew was bisexual and “maintained scrupulously discrete relationships with men” while maintaining what Virgil Thomson called “a queer marriage.” (Tommasini, *Virgil Thomson: Composer on the Aisle*, 219, 225.)

<sup>182</sup> R. Kirk Askew, Jr., to Stephen Greene, 24 September 1946, box 1, folder 8, R. Kirk Askew Papers, 1942-1958, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. Further evidence that Greene and Askew knew each other well by 1946 is Greene’s oddly intimate report in a letter of April 6 of that year (from the Askew Papers) that he had a short vacation from teaching at Indiana University coming up but wasn’t sure if he would return to New York for it—“[t]he only possibly urgent matter is the old sex act but that doesn’t seem sufficiently important at the moment.”

<sup>183</sup> Greene to Askew, 6 April 1946, Askew Papers. Henry Hope (1905-1989) was an art historian who was chairman of the Fine Arts Department at Indiana University from 1941 to 1968 (and thus Greene’s boss there) and the founding director of the University Art Museum (Biographical note, Henry R. Hope Papers, Indiana University Archives [http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/view?doc.view=entire\\_text&docId=InU-Ar-VAC0945](http://webapp1.dlib.indiana.edu/findingaids/view?doc.view=entire_text&docId=InU-Ar-VAC0945) (accessed February 25, 2019)) . Robert Laurent (1890-1970) was a French-born sculptor and professor in the IU art faculty. Hamilton Easter Field (1873-1922) was a well-to-do artist, collector, and benefactor of struggling artists. Field was Laurent’s “lifelong friend, second father, and teacher” (website, Smithsonian American Art Museum, <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/robert-laurent-2824> (accessed February 25, 2019)). When Field died in 1922, he left his entire estate to Laurent, who subsequently founded the Hamilton Easter Field Foundation to continue Field’s benefactions. Greene’s reference to Laurent by only his surname suggests that Askew knew Laurent.

<sup>184</sup> Greene to Askew, 6 March 1946, Askew Papers.

<sup>185</sup> Greene to Askew, 12 September 1946, Askew Papers.

<sup>186</sup> Martica Sawin, “Stephen Greene’s Recent Paintings,” *Arts Magazine* 50 (October 1975), 83.

<sup>187</sup> Website of O’Gallerie, Portland, Oregon, catalogue of May 1-2, 2017 Estate and Collection Auction. [http://www.ogallerie.com/auctions/2017-05/index\\_9.shtml](http://www.ogallerie.com/auctions/2017-05/index_9.shtml) (accessed 25 February 25, 2019).

<sup>188</sup> Askew to Greene, 8 February 1947, Askew Papers.

<sup>189</sup> “Account of Durlacher Bros. with Stephen Greene April 11, 1947,” Askew Papers.

<sup>190</sup> Austin C. Christian, Grand Rapids, MI, email correspondence with the author and Alison de Lima Greene, 20-22 April 2019.

<sup>191</sup> During the writing of this paragraph and the rest of this section, I forgot (I swear!) that in his oral history interview Greene showed Dorothy Seckler a photo or slide of *The Mourners* and called it “unsuccessful.” He mentioned that he’d submitted it to a show in the Midwest but seems to



have forgotten that it was chosen for exhibition at the Whitney. Rereading the artist's own evaluation boosted my self-confidence.

<sup>192</sup> Stephen Green, "A Case in Point," 84; Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>193</sup> Greene, "A Case in Point," 84.

<sup>194</sup> Bernhard Ridderbos, "Hugo van der Goes's 'Death of the Virgin' and the Modern Devotion: An Analysis of a Creative Process," *Oud Holland* 120, no. 1/2 (2007), 1-30, 3. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42712226> (Accessed April 19, 2020).

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Askew to Greene, 23 October 1946, Askew Papers.

<sup>200</sup> "6 St. Louisans in Carroll-Knight Contemporary Painting Display," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 4 May 1947, 84.

<sup>201</sup> "Artist=Teacher Greene: Famous in Galleries, Unknown at CU," *The Columbia Owl*, 13 April 1966 (photocopy in Greene Papers).

<sup>202</sup> Checklist of Stephen Greene exhibition at Durlacher Bros., 29 April – 24 May, 1947, Stephen Greene Papers. Various accounts of Durlacher Bros. with Stephen Greene, dated 11 April 1947, 8 December 1947, 16 March 1948, 19 June 1948, Askew Papers.

<sup>203</sup> Askew to Greene, 20 March 1947, Askew Papers. Eliza Rathbone believes that the frame of *St. Sebastian* shown in Figure s33 is the original frame and, therefore, probably the one Askew referred to in his letter (Eliza Rathbone, email to the author, 22 July 2018).

<sup>204</sup> Greta Berman and Jeffrey Wechsler, *Realism and Realities: The Other Side of American Painting 1940-1960* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1981), 75.

<sup>205</sup> Stephen Greene, "Aspects of Reality in My Paintings," *Leonardo* 6, no. 3 (Summer, 1973), 239. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1572644> (accessed 25 February 2019).

<sup>206</sup> Greene, "Aspects of Reality in My Paintings," 239

<sup>207</sup> St. Louis Art Museum, website statement on Max Beckman, *The Dream*, <https://www.slam.org/collection/objects/13428/> (accessed 25 February 2019).

- <sup>208</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 8 April 2020. Mr. Apesos, an artist and art teacher, was a Vassar classmate of Alison Greene and a Greene family friend.
- <sup>209</sup> Greene, “Aspects of Reality in My Paintings,” 239; Greene, Oral History Interview.
- <sup>210</sup> H. W. Janson, “Stephen Greene,” *Magazine of Art* 41, no. 4 (April 1948), 131.
- <sup>211</sup> Quoted in Baur, *The New Decade*, 38.
- <sup>212</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Tragic Sense of Life*, J. E. Crawford Flitch, trans. (New York: Dover, 1954), Project Gutenberg EBook #14636 (2005). [No page numbers; quote is in fourth paragraph from the end of part I.] [www.gutenberg.org/files/14636/14636-h/14636-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14636/14636-h/14636-h.htm) (accessed 21 July 2020).
- <sup>213</sup> Stephen Greene, letter to Perry Rathbone, 19 December 1946. Records of the St. Louis Art Museum.
- <sup>214</sup> Perry Rathbone, letter to Stephen Greene, 21 December 1946. Records of the St. Louis Art Museum.
- <sup>215</sup> Greene, “Aspects of Reality in My Paintings,” 239.
- <sup>216</sup> Janson, “Stephen Greene,” 131.
- <sup>217</sup> Greene’s intention that baldness, at least in *The Deposition*, symbolized sterility is made clear in an undated write-up titled “Four Paintings” from close to the end of the Askew papers in which Greene describes his intentions as to various elements of each work. The other paintings described are *Family Portrait*, *The Burial* and *Christ and the Money Changers*.
- <sup>218</sup> Jerome Ashmore, “Stephen Greene: Three Intervals,” *Criticism* 1, no. 2 (1959), 156.
- <sup>219</sup> Michel Pastoureau, *The Devil’s Cloth: A History of Stripes and Striped Fabric*, trans. Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), book jacket.
- <sup>220</sup> Howard Derrickson, “Art and Artists—Stuempfig, Fett, Greene Show,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 31 October 1948, 68.
- <sup>221</sup> Emily Genauer, *Best of Art* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1948), 114, 116.
- <sup>222</sup> Greene to Askew, 5 May, 1947, Askew Papers.
- <sup>223</sup> Greene to Askew, 17 May, 1947, Askew Papers.
- <sup>224</sup> Greene to Askew, 22 February 1947, Askew Papers.
- <sup>225</sup> Greene, Statement (1952), Askew Papers.

<sup>226</sup> Edward Alden Jewell, “Art and Censorship—Recent Developments Rouse Opposition—Boston Artists—Work by Modernists,” *New York Times*, 4 May 1947, X10.

<sup>227</sup> Jon Stroup, “Time Out,” *Town & Country*, May 1947, 64.

<https://search-proquest-com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/docview/2133384862/401A43FB444A4A70PQ/3?accountid=14709>  
(accessed 25 February 2019).

<sup>228</sup> James Thrall Soby, “The Younger American Artists,” *Harper’s Bazaar*, September 1947, 270. Soby’s reference to Greene’s birthdate as 1918 was wrong; Greene was born in 1917, but for some years claimed, for unclear reasons, to have been born a year later.

<sup>229</sup> James Thrall Soby, *Contemporary Painters* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1048), 84.

<sup>230</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview

<sup>231</sup> Stephen Greene, “A Case in Point,” *Art In America*, 49 (1961), 84 .

<sup>232</sup> Greene to Askew, 5 May 1947, Askew Papers. As it turned out, Janson’s article didn’t appear until April of 1948.

<sup>233</sup> Janson, “Stephen Greene,” 131.

<sup>234</sup> Janson’s beliefs were expounded in his 1974 speech referred to in the last paragraph of Note 53, of which the following is an excerpt that relates to claims made by Greene (for example in the statement to Dorothy Seckler, “Although I went to school for seven years in some ways, with the exception of Philip, I had no teachers”) and generalizes the point Janson made in the *Magazine of Art* article:

...I got along well with my students [at Iowa] even though these consisted almost entirely of future BFA’s and MFA’s. Some of them turned out to be artists of importance in later years, and we are still friends....The young artist today achieves his own identity by *choosing* his artistic ancestors rather than by following faithfully his master’s footsteps....Now the artist-in-training, of course, does not look at the vast menu of works of art at his disposal today with the eyes of the art historian. His approach is necessarily personal, indeed egocentric. And that is as it should be, I think. I have long believed that a work of art makes two demands on posterity: to be interpreted and to be misinterpreted....[E]ver since classical antiquity the highest praise that could be bestowed on an artist was the claim that “he had no teacher,” implying that he invented, or rather reinvented, art from scratch. But we know that this cannot be so; the most that can ever be claimed of an artist is that he had no formal training, but that is not to say that his art comes from nowhere outside himself. We know that even such an artist has learned from looking at other works of art. Art, in other words, always comes from art, although this is not to deny the importance of other

factors as well—social, political, religious, psychological, and so forth. It is these factors that determine which works of art the artist-in-training chooses to misinterpret for his own benefit, and *how* he misinterprets them. (Janson, “Artists and Art Historians,” 334)

<sup>235</sup> Janson, “Stephen Greene,” 129

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>239</sup> Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism – Subjectivity and Painting in the 1940s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 258; Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 381.

<sup>240</sup> “Painter of Presences,” *Time*, 12 April 1963, 102.

<sup>241</sup> Jerome Ashmore, “Existentialist Themes in Stephen Greene: A Philosopher’s Analysis of his Early Paintings,” 17 *College Art Journal* No. 2 (Winter, 1958), 165. <sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>

<sup>242</sup> Stephen Greene, undated write-up titled “Four Paintings,” Askew papers.

<sup>243</sup> Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, *The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art: Paintings and Sculpture from the Permanent Collection* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1980), 116. *Life* magazine’s treatment of modern art, and its goal of educating its readership about it, is discussed by Bradford Collins in an essay cited in Note 269.

<sup>244</sup> Jerome Ashmore, “Existentialist Themes in Stephen Greene,” 161, 170.

<sup>245</sup> Berman and Wechsler, *Realism and Realities*, 73, 91.

<sup>246</sup> Ann Fulton, *Apostles of Sartre: Existentialism in America 1945-1963* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1999), 21.

<sup>247</sup> Jed Perl, *New Art City* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 214.

<sup>248</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author, 13 April 2020.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> Leo Lerman, *The Grand Surprise: The Journals of Leo Lerman*, Stephen Pascal, ed., (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 266-7.

- <sup>251</sup> Joy Schumacher, conversation with the author, Detroit, Michigan (July 17, 2019).
- <sup>252</sup> Whitney Balliett, "Profiles: Coming Out Again (Anita Ellis)," *The New Yorker* July 31, 1978, 35-45, 44.
- <sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.
- <sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>255</sup> David Roberts, "Jean & Joe: The Stafford-Liebling Marriage," *The American Scholar*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Summer, 1988), 373.
- <sup>256</sup> Jean A. Oljala, "Jean Stafford (1915-1979)," encyclopedia.com <https://www.encyclopedia.com/women/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/stafford-jean-1915-1979> (accessed 27 May 2020).
- <sup>257</sup> Greene to Askew, 29 October 1953, Askew Papers.
- <sup>258</sup> Alison Greene, email to the author, 17 May 2020.
- <sup>259</sup> "Chicago's Fabulous Collectors," *Life*, 27 October 1952, 90-102.
- <sup>260</sup> The title of the Rattner work was not included in the *Life* article but was confirmed by a black and white reproduction in Halasz, "Abraham Rattner: Rebel With a Cause," 31, which describes the work as in the collection of the Vatican Museums.
- <sup>261</sup> *Carrying the Cross* was auctioned at Bonhams, New York, on 22 May 2019. The auction offering literature states that the Ludgins gifted it to the unidentified "present owner" in 1981. As the painting was included in the exhibition "Realism, Figurative Painting and the Chicago Viewpoint: Selections from the Collection," 20 July - 25 August 1991, at the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, it is clear that the MCA was the Ludgins' donee and the auction sale was a deaccessioning.
- <sup>262</sup> See, e.g., "Say It Ain't So, Sergeant Joe: Army Doctors Criticized DiMaggio's 'defective attitude,'" *The Smoking Gun*, August 3, 2010, <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/documents/celebrity/say-it-aint-so-sergeant-joe>, (accessed January 13, 2019).
- <sup>263</sup> Greene to Askew, April 24, 1954 and November 19, 1952, Askew Papers.
- <sup>264</sup> The parenthetical in the title of *Mourning*, "(Five Figures With Candles)," was not used in the Durlacher Bros. 1949 show or in the dealer's other records and was probably added by the Carnegie or by the Marilyn Pearl Gallery in New York, from (or through) which the museum bought it. Elizabeth Tufts Brown, CMOA associate registrar, told me when I viewed the painting on July 25, 2017, that the museum's records indicate that it has never been exhibited in the museum. However, that is inconsistent with a letter in the museum's files dated November 8,

1983, from Marilyn Pearl to John Lane, the museum's director, in which Ms Pearl states how pleased she was, on a recent visit to the Carnegie, to see the painting hanging there.

<sup>265</sup> There does not appear to be a record in the Askew Papers of the dimensions, the date or price of sale, or the identity of any purchaser for *The Doll*.

<sup>266</sup> Howard Devree, "A Stress on Space: Growing Tendency Noted in American Art," *New York Times*, 6 March 1949, X9.

<sup>267</sup> Devree wrote in his exhibition review that Greene "puts forward new and pertinent claims to recognition." Unfortunately, I have to date not located an image of the painting *The Mocking of Christ*, which Devree saw as a good example of Greene's "growing interest in abstract space division with consequent strengthening of his work." This gap is surprising, especially as the painting was bought by the important Philadelphia collector Henry McIlhenny (Durlacher Brothers account records in Askew Papers; C. H. Bonte, "McIlhenny Art Collection On Exhibition at Museum, *Philadelphia Inquirer* 22 May 1949).

<sup>268</sup> "19 Young Americans," *Life*, 20 March 1950, 82. Six of the nineteen artists featured in the article—Stephen Greene, Edward Melcarth, Howard Warshaw, Bernard Perlin, Honoré Sharrer and Joseph Lasker—signed on to the *Reality* Statement three years later. Also selected by the editors were two of the soon-to-be Irascibles—Theodoros Stamos and Hedda Sterne.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., 89. The *Life* article is discussed in a study of the magazine's important and influential coverage of modern art, Bradford R. Collins, "Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-51: A Historiographic Study of a Late Bohemian Enterprise, *The Art Bulletin* 73:2 (June 1991), 283-308. Professor Collins's essay also describes *Life*'s "Round Table on Modern Art" held at MoMA in the fall of 1948. Among the "fifteen distinguished critics and connoisseurs" the magazine brought together "to clarify the strong art of today" were Clement Greenberg, Meyer Schapiro, Kirk Askew, H. W. Janson and James Thrall Soby, all of whom were important in varying ways and at varying times in Greene's career. One could, without evidence, speculate on whether any of these connections, especially with Askew and Janson, might have led to Greene's inclusion among the 19 Young Americans, as it appears from Collins's essay that the magazine's editors made the final choices.

<sup>270</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 1 October 2017.

<sup>271</sup> On Newman, see Michael Schreyach, "Exposing Creation: Portraits of Newman and His Paintings," Tate website, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/in-focus/adam/portraits-of-newman> (accessed February 25, 2019). In their small portraits in the *Life* spread, a few of the other young artists seem to be standing in front of art works; Honoré Sharrer, for example, in a photo by W. Eugene Smith, poses in front of the central panel (in progress) of her important work *Tribute to the American Working People*. (Margalit Fox, "Honoré Sharrer, a Realist Painter, Dies at 88," *New York Times*, 12 May 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/13/arts/13sharrer.html>. (accessed 4 December 2020.)



<sup>272</sup> Stephen Greene, “Four Paintings,” undated and unpublished typewritten essay included in the Askew Papers. The portion of that document relating to *Family Portrait* is also included in the Registrar’s files at the Detroit Institute of Arts.

<sup>273</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, emails to the author, 8 January 2019 and 28 July 2019.

<sup>274</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 28 July 2019.

<sup>275</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>276</sup> “John Newberry, Arts Patron, Dies: First Chairman of National Council of the Met Opera, *New York Times*, 25 October 1964, 88.

<sup>277</sup> Howard Devree, “By Groups and Singly: The Whitney and Other—Kuhn and Osver,” *New York Times* 14 November 1948, X9.

<sup>278</sup> Devree, “A Stress on Space.”

<sup>279</sup> “The Sad Men: They All Mourn Themselves,” *Life*, 23 October 1950, 64.

<sup>280</sup> Berman and Wechsler, *Realism and Realities*, 73.

<sup>281</sup> Greene to Askew, 27 July 1949, Askew Papers.

<sup>282</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>283</sup> American Academy in Rome files, New York, copy of a letter from Laurance Roberts (no addressee) dated September 6, 1949. A copy of this letter was graciously provided to me by Peter Benson Miller of the AAR. Alison Greene supplemented this information by noting that the family thought Greene’s brother-in-law, a lawyer, was best equipped to handle crises and that he brought with him penicillin that was not readily available yet in Italy and probably saved Greene’s life (email correspondence with the author, 6 February 2021).

<sup>284</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018.

<sup>285</sup> Greene, “A Case In Point,” 84.

<sup>286</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>287</sup> Berman and Wechsler, *Realism and Realities*, 89. Philip Eliasoph, on page 26 of his book *Robert Vickrey: The Magic of Realism* (Hudson Hills, 2009), refers to Berman and Wechsler’s Rutgers exhibition and includes Greene on a list of “magic realist” painters that also included Tooker, Koerner, Vickrey and French.

<sup>288</sup> Sarah Wolff, “The Whitney’s Greatest Hits,” *Forbes*, 6 February 2010, <https://www.forbes.com/2010/02/05/whitney-biennial-museums-american-art-review-opinions-contributors-sarah-wolff.html#35894118458e>

<sup>289</sup> Whitney Museum, “A young visitor and her companion contemplate Stephen Greene’s *The Shadow*.” <http://whitneymuseum.tumblr.com/post/151513283519/a-young-visitor-and-her-companion-contemplate> (accessed 18 January 2019).

<sup>290</sup> Peter Benson Miller, email correspondence with the author, 16 January 2019.

<sup>291</sup> Peter Benson Miller, “Stephen Greene, *The Shadow* 1950” in Mark Robins and Peter Benson Miller, eds., *The Academic Body*, exh. cat., American Academy in Rome, May 23 – July 13, 2019, 92.

<sup>292</sup> Quoted in Ronald Alley, *Catalogue of the Tate Gallery’s Collection of Modern Art other than Works by British Artists*, London, 1981, itself quoted in Tate Gallery website, catalogue entry for Stephen Greene, *The Return*, [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/greene-the-return-t00526](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/greene-the-return-t00526) (accessed 19 January 2019).

<sup>293</sup> Miller, “Stephen Greene, *The Shadow* 1950,” 92. Mr. Miller, to whom I was introduced by Alison Greene, gave me the opportunity to comment on a draft of this essay and I was happy to provide a few minor suggestions with respect to biographical details. I did not share my doubts about attributing to Greene much interest in parody or satire.

<sup>294</sup> A letter dated November 1, 1950, provides a glimpse of Askew and Greene’s business relationship.

Dear Stephen,

I am trying to straighten everything out on my return from London, so I have made out your account. I note there is a balance due me which can be completely obliterated by my buying *The Return*, which I am consequently doing. I do hope this is agreeable to you. Hereafter I am anxious whenever I make an advance to at that time take a picture for the advance rather than carrying the advance forward. In regard to *The Return*, of course, if it should get a reward at the Museum show, this would go to you, but, since the picture belongs to me, on its sale proceeds would go to me. The price of the picture is \$750, so, according to our contract, I have put on your receipts \$375 for the picture, which as you can see, leaves only a balance due me of \$2.13.

Affectionately yours,

The Museum show referred to was the Metropolitan Museum’s *American Painting Today*. Perhaps Greene would not have viewed Askew’s behavior in this matter as devious, although it could have been expected that one of his patrons would have found *The Return* interesting enough to buy, netting Greene an extra \$175.

<sup>295</sup> Alex Taylor, “John Rothenstein and American Art,” *Modern American Art at Tate 1945–1980*, Tate Research Publication, 201

<https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/modern-american-art-at-tate/essays/john-rothenstein-american-art> (accessed 11 May 2020).

<sup>296</sup> Alley, Catalogue Entry for *The Return*.

<sup>297</sup> Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," 155.

<sup>298</sup> Tate Gallery website, catalogue entry for Stephen Greene, *The Return*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/greene-the-return-t00526> (accessed 9 May 2020).

<sup>299</sup> Stuart Preston, "By Four and Singly," *New York Times*, March 2, 1952, X13.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Tony Askin, conversation with the author (New York), 24 September 2019.

<sup>302</sup> William Zimmer, "Art; Show Looks at Link Between Drawings and Finished Work," *New York Times*, 2 December 1984, Sect. 11, p. 32.

<sup>303</sup> Askew to Greene, 1 July 1953, Askew Papers.

<sup>304</sup> Greene to Askew, 10 July 1953, Askew Papers.

<sup>305</sup> Devree, "A Stress on Space;" "Variety of Modes in Art Galleries: Busy Week Sees Diversified Display Move into City – Drawing at Durlacher," *New York Times*, 6 May 1949, 23.

<sup>306</sup> This sketchbook was exhibited in *Golden Years of American Drawings 1905-1956*, at the Brooklyn Museum, January 22 to March 17, 1957.

<sup>307</sup> Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," 155.

<sup>308</sup> Robert Pincus-Witten, "Gray Foy: Known and Unknown," *The Brooklyn Rail*, September 2018, <https://brooklynrail.org/2018/09/art/Gray-Foy-Known-and-Unknown> (accessed 29 June 2020).

<sup>309</sup> Preston, "By Four and Singly."

<sup>310</sup> Monroe Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," unpublished typewritten manuscript, c. 1975, 329. I am grateful to Dr. Richard James Porter, whose Penn State dissertation was about Poor's paintings and who graciously provided me with a link to an electronic copy of this manuscript, which had been provided to him by Dr. Caroline Hannah, associate curator at Bard Graduate Center, whose Bard dissertation also was on Poor. Stearns was, according to his *New York Times* obituary (December 31, 1987, <https://www.nytimes.com/1987/12/31/obituaries/monroe-m-stearns-74-a-teacher-and-writer.html>) a teacher, writer (including of children's books about art) and editor. Stearns wrote that he knew Poor for the fifteen years prior to the latter's death in 1970 and that he had extensive access to recollections of Poor's widow, family members, and friends (including

Raphael Soyer), as well as the extensive documentation of Poor's art and life. Stearns's research materials for his Poor project are in the Archives of American Art (Monroe Stearns research papers on Henry Varnum Poor, 1938-1975). However, citations to Stearns's sources are rarely included in the manuscript.

<sup>311</sup> Henry Varnum Poor, "How This Group Began," *Reality*, Vol. 1, No.1 (1953), 6. On the subject of varying political views among the group members, Barbara McCloskey, in her study of George Grosz's years in the United States, identifies several of them who had supported Henry Wallace against both Truman and Dewey for president in 1948. Barbara McCloskey, *The Exile of George Grosz* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015) 210, n. 117.

<sup>312</sup> Barbara McCloskey has noted that Joseph Hirsch used the phrase "art with a humanist core" in a letter (one of at least two) inviting George Grosz to a meeting of the group and that Grosz wrote, but never sent, a letter to Soyer expressing his solidarity with their cause. Hirsch told Grosz that invitations had also been issued to Sydney Kaufmann, Charles Sheeler, Julian Levi, and Franklin Watkins (none of whom eventually signed the *Reality* Statement) and to Robert Gwathmey and Edward Hopper (who were signers). McCloskey, *The Exile of George Grosz*, 132-33.

<sup>313</sup> Robert Beverly Hale, "A Report on American Painting Today – 1950," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* (1951)  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/pubs/bulletins/1/pdf/3257446.pdf.bannered.pdf> .

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Sandler, *A Sweeper-Up After Artists: A Memoir*, 28.

<sup>316</sup> Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and David Joselit, *Art Since 1900*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Thames & Hudson, 2011), 380. See also, Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art: Abstract Expressionism, Freedom, and the Cold War*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983) and Michael Leja, *Reframing Abstract Expressionism*.

<sup>317</sup> "The Metropolitan and Modern Art," *Life*, January 15, 1951, 35.  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=20sEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA35&lpg=PA35&dq=basket+bouquet+karl+knaths&source=bl&ots=0LnMuR4h34&sig=ms4rr739sVkyAiRiJ6Jill-sKY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj-ndW0ls7ZAhXCqFkKHSyAMkQ6AEIYTAL#v=onepage&q=basket%20bouquet%20karl%20knaths&f=false> (accessed March 1, 2018).

<sup>318</sup> Conversation with Alison de Lima Greene, January 24, 2018.

<sup>319</sup> "19 Young Americans," *Life*, March 20, 1950, 82.

<sup>320</sup> "The Sad Men, They All Mourn Themselves," *Life*, October 23, 1950, 64

<sup>321</sup> Irving Sandler, "Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg: Convergences and Divergences," in Norman L. Kleeblatt, ed., *Action/Abstraction: Pollock, de Kooning, and American Art, 1940-1976* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 123-24.

<sup>322</sup> Clement Greenberg, "The Crisis of the Easel Picture," *Partisan Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1948), 481-484.

<sup>323</sup> Joseph Solman, "The Easel Division of the WPA Art Projects," in Francis V. O'Connor, ed., *The New Deal Art Projects, an Anthology of Memoirs* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972).

<sup>324</sup> Quoted in Andrew Ladis, "George Biddle, Raphael Soyer and the Genius with a Thousand Faces," 2003. Originally published by the Georgia Museum of Art. <http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/5aa/5aa326.htm> (accessed 1 September 2020).

<sup>325</sup> Robert Motherwell, "The New York School" (1950), in *The Writings of Robert Motherwell*, Dore Ashton, ed., (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 95.

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 96.

<sup>327</sup> Kirk Varnedoe, *Cy Twombly: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), 16.

<sup>328</sup> Henry Adams, "The Family Tree of Modern Art and Ad Reinhardt," *Archives of American Art Journal*, Vol. 52, No. 3/4, 68. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43155520>

<sup>329</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>330</sup> Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," 330.

<sup>331</sup> Richard James Porter, "Henry Varnum Poor, 1887-1970: A Biography and Study of His Paintings" (PhD. Diss., Pennsylvania State University 1983), 253. Shahn's drafting of the letter is also discussed in Julia Tatiana Bailey, "'Realism Reconsidered': Ben Shahn In London, 1956," in *Modern American Art at Tate 1945-1980*, Tate Research Publication, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/modern-american-art-at-tate/essays/realism-reconsidered> (accessed 7 July 2020).

<sup>332</sup> Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," 331. Gail Levin, in her book *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 444, cites Jo Hopper's diary entry for October 9, 1951 to the effect that Poor and his daughter came to tea at the Hoppers and brought a copy of the letter.

<sup>333</sup> *Ibid.*, 332. The signers of the 1951 letter who subsequently signed the 1953 Statement were Isabel Bishop, Nicolai Cikovsky, Joseph de Martini, Guy Pène DuBois, Philip Evergood, Ernest Fiene, Joseph Floch, Xavier Gonzales, William Gropper, Chaim Gross, Robert Gwathmey, Joseph Hirsch, Edward Hopper, Leon Kroll, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Sidney Laufman, Jacob Lawrence, Jack Levine, Reginald Marsh, Sigmund Menkes, Henry Varnum Poor, Moses Soyer, Raphael Soyer,

and Sol Wilson. Letter signers who did not sign the later Statement were Sam Adler, Peter Blume, Hans Jelinek, Abraham Rattner, Ben Shahn, and Eugene Speicher.

<sup>334</sup> Porter, "Henry Varnum Poor, 1887-1970," 253.

<sup>335</sup> Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," 333.

<sup>336</sup> Bernarda Bryson Shahn, *Ben Shahn* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1972), 65.

<sup>337</sup> *Reality*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (1953), 1. The names of the Statement signers were listed alphabetically in four columns below the text. They were: Milton Avery, Isabel Bishop, Aaron Bohrod, Louis Bosa, Louis Bouché, Charles Burchfield, Nicolai Cikovsky, Gladys Rockmore Davis, Joseph De Martini, Alexander Dobkin, Guy Pène du Bois, Philip Evergood, Ernest Fience, Joseph Floch, Xavier Gonzalez, Dorothea Greenbaum, Stephen Greene, William Gropper, Chaim Gross, Robert Gwathmey, Joseph Hirsch, Edward Hopper, Karl Knaths, Leon Kroll, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Joe Lasker, Sidney Laufman, Jacob Lawrence, Jack Levine, Oronzio Maldarelli, Reginald Marsh, Henry Mattson, Edward Melcarth, Paul Mommer, Sigmund Menkes, Henry Varnum Poor, Anton Refregier, Honoré Sharrer, Joseph Solman, Moses Soyer, Raphael Soyer, William Thon, Anthony Toney, Howard Warshaw, Sol Wilson, and Karl Zerbe. Printed in italics below the columns was: "One of the last acts of John Sloan before his death was to join the Group."

<sup>338</sup> Raphael Soyer et al., undated letter to René d'Harnoncourt, Museum of Modern Art, quoted in *Reality, A Journal of Artists' Opinions*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (Spring 1953), 2.

<sup>339</sup> Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," 333.

<sup>340</sup> Julia Tatiana Bailey, "'Realism Reconsidered': Ben Shahn in London, 1956."

<sup>341</sup> Raphael Soyer, Oral History Interview with Milton Brown, May 13-June 1, 1981, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution; Porter, "Henry Varnum Poor," 252; Jack Levine, *Jack Levine* (New York: Rizzoli, 1989), 34; Ellis, "The Fourteenth Street School," 233.

<sup>342</sup> Barbaralee Diamonstein, *Inside New York's Art World* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), 51.

<sup>343</sup> Michael Kimmelman, "Art and Architecture: At 90, a Veteran Remembers it All," *New York Times*, January 31, 1999, Section 2, p. 33.

<sup>344</sup> Erika Doss, "Hopper's Cool: Modernism and Emotional Restraint," *American Art* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2015), 10.

<sup>345</sup> Porter, "Henry Varnum Poor, 1887-1970," 14-15.

<sup>346</sup> Ellis, "The Fourteenth Street School," 436, 439; Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 459.

<sup>347</sup> Milton Brown, "Introduction," in Levine, *Jack Levine*, 9.



<sup>348</sup> Levine, *Jack Levine*, 127.

<sup>349</sup> Sheldon Reich, "Introduction," *Isabel Bishop* (Tucson: University of Arizona Museum of Art, 1964), 33.

<sup>350</sup> Andrew Hemingway, "To 'Personalize the Rainpipe': The Critical Mythology of Edward Hopper," *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 17 (1992), 398.

<sup>351</sup> Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 457.

<sup>352</sup> Raphael Soyer, *Diary of an Artist* (Washington: New Republic Books, 1977), 230.

<sup>353</sup> Porter, "Henry Varnum Poor, 1887-1970," 237.

<sup>354</sup> Sheldon Reich, "Introduction," 33.

<sup>355</sup> Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," 339.

<sup>356</sup> Lionel Trilling, "Reality in America (1950), in Neil Jumonville, ed., *The New York Intellectuals Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 163-178. It is, however, hard to imagine that if Levine had read the following excerpt aloud to the editorial committee they would have accepted "Reality" as the title of their journal:

Parrington does not often deal with abstract philosophical ideas, but whenever he approaches a work of art we are made aware of the metaphysics on which his aesthetics is based. There exists, he believes, a thing called *reality*; it is one and immutable, it is wholly external, it is irreducible. Men's minds may waver, but reality is always reliable, always the same, always easily to be known. And the artist's relation to reality he conceives as a simple one. Reality being fixed and given, the artists has but to let it pass through him, he is the lens in the first diagram of an elementary book on optics: Fig. 1, Reality; Fig. 2, Artist; Fig. 1', Work of Art. Figs. 1 and 1' are normally in virtual correspondence with each other. Sometimes the artist spoils this ideal relation by "turning away from" reality. This results in certain fantastic works, unreal and ultimately useless. (166)

Trilling's identification of the unequalled influence of Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927) on conceptions of American culture in the 1930s and '40s can be extended by my own experience; the three volumes were a primary text in my high school history classes in the early 1960s.

<sup>357</sup> Diamonstein, *Inside New York's Art World*, 376-7. Soyer may have had his time-line confused in this recollection, as it isn't clear whether there was more than one "threatening" letter from Barr. If Soyer was remembering the letter that Barr sent him after the publication of *Reality*, it's clear that Shahn had already left the group before publication.

<sup>358</sup> Julia Tatiana Bailey, "'Realism Reconsidered': Ben Shahn in London, 1956."

<sup>359</sup> George A. Dondero, Speech in House of Representatives, August 16, 1949, transcript reproduced in [www.greg.org/archive/2017/04/17/better-read-013-modern-art-shackled-to-communism-by-congressman-george-dondero.html](http://www.greg.org/archive/2017/04/17/better-read-013-modern-art-shackled-to-communism-by-congressman-george-dondero.html) (accessed 10 July 2020).

<sup>360</sup> René d'Harnoncourt et al., "An Open Letter to Reality," *Art Digest*, May 1, 1953, 3.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Stearns, "Henry Varnum Poor," 343.

<sup>363</sup> Alfred H. Barr, Jr., "Is Modern Art Communistic?," *New York Times*, 14 December 1952, SM22.

<sup>364</sup> Julia Tatiana Bailey, "'Realism Reconsidered': Ben Shahn in London, 1956."

<sup>365</sup> For a discussion of the art world supporters of Dondero, see Jane de Hart Mathews, "Art and Politics in Cold War America" (1976), in Francis Frascina, ed., *Pollock and After: The Critical Debate*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 154-180, especially 162-168.

<sup>366</sup> Editorial, "The New Iconoclasts," *Art News*, Vol. 52, no. 4 (June-July-August 1953), 17. Andrew Hemingway, in his *Artists on the Left*, wrote that "Frankfurter's conception of the modern was expansive" and that he

...pilloried Dondero and vehemently rejected Communist accusations that [*Art News*] was an instrument of the State Department. He also refused attempts by the Museum of Modern Art to equate avant-garde art with democratic values....None the less, it is symptomatic of Cold War liberalism that in 1954 Frankfurter named US artists whose work was shown in an international art exhibition in Warsaw and accused them of "implicitly endorsing the totalitarian persecution of all art except Soviet-sanctioned social realism (331).

However, as estimable as I find *Artists on the Left*, I believe that Hemingway mischaracterized Frankfurter's remarks about *Reality* when he wrote "Frankfurter associated Reality with a Soviet-type critique of abstraction, but declined to attack it to avoid any association with 'the McCarthys or Donderos'" (239).

<sup>367</sup> Editorial, "The Response to Reality," *Reality*, No. 2 (Spring 1954), 2. (No volume number was indicated.)

<sup>368</sup> Henry Varnum Poor, "Painting is Being Talked to Death," *Reality*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (1953), 3.

<sup>369</sup> Honoré Sharrer, "Humanism in Art," *Reality*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (1953), 4.

<sup>370</sup> Jack Levine, "Man is the Center," *Reality*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (1953), 5.

<sup>371</sup> Perhaps to avoid derogating from the overall seriousness of his message by going a little too far, Levine did not include in the *Reality* abridgement the following thought from the speech: "...I want the painting as a comedy. It must not be a tragedy. I will show the corpse, but the emphasis could be on the embalming." Frank Getlein, *Jack Levine* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1966), 20.

<sup>372</sup> Maurice Grosser, "Speaking in Strange Tongues," *Reality*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (1953), 7.

<sup>373</sup> "Statements by Four Artists," *Reality*, Vol. 1, issue 1 (1953), 8.

<sup>374</sup> Raphael Soyer, in "Six Who Knew Hopper," *Art Journal*, Vol. 41, no. 2 (Summer 1981), 131.

<sup>375</sup> Letters from Knaths and Warshaw withdrawing support were published in the August, 1953 issue of *Art Digest*.

<sup>376</sup> Soyer, *Self-Revelment*, 80. Memory of the *Reality* journal lives on, too, in art itself, thanks to Statement signer Aaron Bohrod's inclusion of a nailed-up folded copy in his trompe l'oeil painting *Objects on a Barrel* (1954). The painting, part of the Schoen Collection of Magic Realism, is reproduced and described by Jeffrey Richmond-Moll on page 44 of his catalog essay for the exhibition *Extra Ordinary: Magic, Mystery, and Imagination in American Realism*, at the Georgia Museum of Art from February 27-June 13, 2021.

<sup>377</sup> Greene, "A Case in Point," 84.

<sup>378</sup> Stephen Greene to Edith Gregor Halpert, 7 May 1952, Edith Gregor Halpert Papers, Downtown Gallery records, 1824-1974, Series 2: Artist Files, A-Z. Reel 5548, Frame 31: Greene, Stephen, undated, 1952-1954, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, [www.aaa.si.edu/assets/images/collectionsonline/downgall/fullsize/AAA\\_downgall\\_457410](http://www.aaa.si.edu/assets/images/collectionsonline/downgall/fullsize/AAA_downgall_457410) (accessed March 30, 2020).

<sup>379</sup> Edith Gregor Halpert to Stephen Greene, 20 May 1952, Edith Gregor Halpert Papers.

<sup>380</sup> William Styron letter to Peter Matthiessen, 10 October 1952, private collection; Greene to Askew, 10 July 1953, Askew Papers.

<sup>381</sup> Anne Colamosca, "Clare Booth Luce, from Broadway to the Cold War," *Jacobin*, 11 March 2020, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2020/03/clare-booth-luce-italy-communist-party> (accessed 30 April 2020).

<sup>382</sup> Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Joan Mellen, Hellman and Hammett: The Legendary Passion of Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 309-10.

<sup>384</sup> Greene to Askew, 27 April 1953, Askew Papers.

<sup>385</sup> Mellen, *Hellman and Hammett*, 309-10.

<sup>386</sup> Ibid. Mellen wrote:

At thirty-six, Greene was young, handsome, and talented. He was a Jew from the Lower East Side of New York, just coming into his own as a painter. Lily, her face ravaged at forty-eight, was a worldly woman, a Broadway celebrity. She smoked one cigarette after another; he rushed to light them. She made him feel as if she wanted him to succeed, and he allowed himself to be seduced.

Later someone told him, "The trouble with Lillian is that she wanted to be a beautiful woman and wasn't," and Greene concluded that it was true. Greene told her he had been involved with another woman for a year before he came to Rome and now missed her.

"Who was she?" Lily demanded. Greene told her the name: Anita Ellis, a fine singer.

"Well, she can't be anybody if I haven't heard of her," Lily said. In the sexual wars, Lily could never win. To demonstrate her sexual desirability, and to urge from him a response, she criticized Greene for his lack of ardor. "I'm used to having my men very romantic in the morning," she told him. She enumerated her many sexual conquests. But Greene found this approach less than attractive. She was aroused, she wanted him, but he could summon no great passion; he wanted to sleep with a young woman. And yet he loved her. (When Greene was seventy-five years old he discovered: "I still love her.")

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> Ibid.

<sup>389</sup> Ibid.

<sup>390</sup> Bookbinder, *Boston Modern*, 271.

<sup>391</sup> Greene to Askew, 12 November 1953, Askew Papers.

<sup>392</sup> Stephen Greene to Edith Gregor Halpert, 7 May 1952, Edith Gregor Halpert Papers.

<sup>393</sup> Robert M. Edsel, *Saving Italy: The Race to Rescue a Nation's Treasures from the Nazis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013), 182 et seq.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> For an example of the "stage" metaphor, see Greene, "Aspects of Reality in My Paintings," 239.

<sup>396</sup> Robert Coates, “The Art Galleries, Whitney Annual,” *The New Yorker*, 31 October 1953, 85.

<sup>397</sup> Robert Coates, “The Art Galleries, American and International,” *The New Yorker* 20 February 1954, 83.

<sup>398</sup> Ashmore, “Stephen Greene: Three Intervals,” 157.

<sup>399</sup> *Contemporary American Painting and Sculpture*, catalogue of exhibition at the University of Illinois, Urbana, February 27 – April 3, 1955, 203.

<sup>400</sup> Stephen Greene,

<sup>401</sup> Greene to Askew, 29 October 1953, Askew Papers.

<sup>402</sup> Agnes Szanyi, “Agnes de Lima,” *Histories of the New School*, <http://newschoolhistories.org/people/agnes-de-lima/> (accessed 22 April 2020).

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 23 December 2019. In her history of the New School, Judith Friedlander writes that Agnes de Lima fully endorsed Alvin Johnson’s failure to official recognize his paternity of Sigrid, on whose birth certificate Agnes had identified the Scottish folklorist Andrew Lang as the father, despite the fact the Lang had been dead for nine years. Friedlander quotes Alison Greene:

That was a family joke.... When my grandmother went to the hospital to deliver my mother, she didn’t want to reveal who the father was. So, on my mother’s birth certificate (which is public record) she said it was Andrew Lang, who was famous for collecting various volumes of Fairy Tales (in other words, a fictional/fairy tale “father”). However, the fact that she named my mother “Sigrid” with its Nordic connotations points pretty directly to my mother’s heritage.

Judith Friedlander, *A Light in Dark Times: The New School for Social Research and its University in Exile* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 80.

<sup>405</sup> Friedlander, *A Light in Dark Times*, 79-80.

<sup>406</sup> Szanyi, “Agnes de Lima.”

<sup>407</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 23 December 2019.

<sup>408</sup> William Styron, *My Generation: Collected Nonfiction* (New York: Random House, 2015). On page 367, Styron wrote:

But salvation from all my dammed-up torment came soon in the form of two loving friends I had met earlier in the city. Sigrid de Lima, a writer who had also been in [New School writing teacher

Hiram] Haydn's class, and her mother, Agnes, recognized my plight and invited me to live in their fine old rambling house up the Hudson in the hills behind Nyack. There, in an atmosphere of faith and affection and charity (an ambience which I plainly needed and whose benison I have never been able to repay), I collected my wits and with a now-or-never spirit set forth to capture the beast which had so long eluded me.

<sup>409</sup> James L. W. West III, *William Styron, A Life* (New York: Random House 1998), 179.

<sup>410</sup> Greene, "Aspects of Reality in My Paintings," 239.

<sup>411</sup> Sawin, "Stephen Greene's Recent Paintings," 84.

<sup>412</sup> Greene, "A Case in Point," 84.

<sup>413</sup> William L. Vance, *America's Rome, Volume Two, Catholic and Contemporary Rome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 433.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.; Dore Ashton, "Introduction," catalogue accompanying *Stephen Greene: A Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., March 14 – April 14, 1963, University of Minnesota Gallery, Minneapolis, June 18 – August 23, 1963, Art Center: Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, November 12 – December 29, 1963, Tennessee Fine Arts Center, Nashville, February 1 – March 1, 1964, and Staempfli Gallery, New York, April 1964.

<sup>415</sup> Sigrid de Lima, *Praise a Fine Day* (New York: Random House, 1959), 5.

<sup>416</sup> Roberta Smith, "Grace Borgenicht Brandt, 86, New York Art Dealer, Dies," *New York Times*, July 21, 2001, A13.

<sup>417</sup> Stephen Greene to Edith Gregor Halpert, 21 December 1954, Edith Gregor Halpert Papers, Downtown Gallery records, 1824-1974, Series 2: Artist Files, A-Z. Reel 5548, Frame 28: Greene, Stephen, undated, 1952-1954, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, [www.aaa.si.edu/assets/images/collectionsonline/downgall/fullsize/AAA\\_downgall\\_457410](http://www.aaa.si.edu/assets/images/collectionsonline/downgall/fullsize/AAA_downgall_457410) (accessed February 18, 2019).

<sup>418</sup> "Francis Brennan, 82, Retired Art Director," *New York Times*, December 11, 1992, D19.

<sup>419</sup> Francis Edwin Brennan Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Box 18, Folder 2 (*Life*, Correspondence with artists, 1954-1956).

<sup>420</sup> Ibid.

<sup>421</sup> Ibid.

<sup>422</sup> Stuart Preston, "Among Current Shows," *New York Times*, November 27, 1955, 156.

<sup>423</sup> Ibid.



<sup>424</sup> Ibid.

<sup>425</sup> Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," 157.

<sup>426</sup> Stephen Greene, sound recording (two cd's) of lecture and question and answer session at Skowhegan School, summer 1958, Alison de Lima Greene archive.

<sup>427</sup> Stephen Greene, "The Tragic Sense in Modern Art," 168.

<sup>428</sup> Hellmut Wohl, "Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene," *College Art Journal* 18:2 (Winter, 1959), 131.

<sup>429</sup> Leo Steinberg, "Other Criteria," 78.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid.

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> Clara Hieronymus, "Docents' Lecture Stirs Wide Cheekwood Interest," *The Tennessean*, 16 February 1964, 36.

<sup>433</sup> Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," 157.

<sup>434</sup> Ashmore, "Stephen Greene: Three Intervals," 157. Ashmore ratcheted his rhetoric up several notches as he continued, on page 158, describing his impression of the meaning of the "universe" in *Cain and Abel*:

...It is something in another order of time, a supernatural place with a primordial fragrance. The dominant color is a fiery orange that contains a gamut of heat from tones with a low glow to ones whose temperatures seemingly would melt stone. The entire canvas is a holocaust that cries through a universe. Unlike Munch's cry, which was his own voice, Greene's cry comes simultaneously from all mankind. In one light Cain and Abel is a record of man's psychic self being seared by the tensions of the contemporary world.

<sup>435</sup> S. P. (Stuart Preston), "About Art and Artists," *New York Times*, October 17, 1956, 40. The Bonnard work is reproduced on the Carnegie Museum of Art's website, <https://collection.cmoa.org/objects/51619113-31b2-4418-9d63-6ef4767882ee> (assessed 31 October 2020). While no specific reference by Greene to Bonnard's impact has turned up, the French painter has been found by critics like Hilton Kramer to have influenced other American modernists, like Milton Avery, Fairfield Porter, Nell Blaine and even Mark Rothko. Hilton Kramer, "Pierre Bonnard at MoMA: Ok to Like Him Again?" *Observer*, 13 July 1998, <https://observer.com/1998/07/pierre-bonnard-at-moma-ok-to-like-him-again/> (accessed 31 October 2020).

<sup>436</sup> Wohl, "Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene," 131; Howard Devree, "Mystery in Art: Five New Shows Deal in Life's Enigmas," *New York Times*, February 2, 1958, X10.

<sup>437</sup> Devree, "Mystery in Art."

<sup>438</sup> Wohl, "Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene," 131.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>440</sup> Although Alison was extremely gracious and accommodating over two solid days of talking to me and showing me her father's work and archive, she was understandably reluctant to remove the plastic protective sheeting over this large painting and I didn't press it, with the result that the photos (Figures 72a and b) are compromised.

<sup>441</sup> Wohl, "Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene," 132.

<sup>442</sup> Dore Ashton, "Introduction," catalogue accompanying *Stephen Greene: A Retrospective Exhibition of Paintings and Drawings*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., March 14 – April 14, 1963, University of Minnesota Gallery, Minneapolis, June 18 – August 23, 1963, Art Center: Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, November 12 – December 29, 1963, Tennessee Fine Arts Center, Nashville, February 1 – March 1, 1964, and Staempfli Gallery, New York, April 1964.

<sup>443</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>444</sup> John Yau, "Luminous Shrouds: The Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene," *Arts Magazine*, Vol. 58, no. 3 (November 1983), 84.

<sup>445</sup> Sigrid de Lima, *Praise a Fine Day* (New York: Random House, 1959), "About the Author," following 179.

<sup>446</sup> "Art Works Contribute Blend of Color and Pattern to Home Décor," *New York Times*, June 25, 1958, 22.

<sup>447</sup> "Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Pulitzer, Jr. Live With a Growing Art Collection," *Vogue*, May 1, 1957, 160.

<sup>448</sup> Howard Devree, "National Institute Presents Work by Candidates for Six \$1,000 Grants," *New York Times*, March 2, 1956, 20.

<sup>449</sup> "Sigrid de Lima, 77, Whimsical Novelist of the 50s," *New York Times*, September 25, 1999, B7; Adrian Dannatt, "Obituaries: Stephen Greene," *Independent*, December 10, 1999;

<sup>450</sup> Smith, "Stephen Greene, 82, Painter with Distinctive Abstract Style."

<sup>451</sup> Adam D. Weinberg, “The End Depends Upon the Beginning,” in Michael Auping, *Frank Stella: A Retrospective*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 6; Frank Stella, unpublished interview by Hrag Vartanian, September 12, 2003, transcript courtesy of Alison de Lima Greene.

<sup>452</sup> Michael Fried, “An Introduction to My Art Criticism,” in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3.

<sup>453</sup> Frank Stella, unpublished interview by Hrag Vartanian, September 12, 2003.

<sup>454</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email communication with the author, February 1, 2019.

<sup>455</sup> Weinberg, “The End Depends Upon the Beginning,” 6-7.

<sup>456</sup> William H. Greider, “Can Nassau Gentleman Play with Paints? Creative Arts’ Greene is Convinced He Can,” *Daily Princetonian*, 7 December 1956.

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Anthony E. Neville, “Painting Program,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, 8 March 1957, 13.

<sup>459</sup> Bonnie Clearwater, “Frank Stella: Experiment and Change,” Gallery Guide to exhibition at NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, November 12, 2017 to July 8, 2018. <https://nsuartsuemuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Frank-Stella-Gallery-Guide.pdf> (accessed 11 May 2020); Mike Fried, “On Campus,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, October 25, 1957, 10. [https://books.google.com/books?id=UxJbAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA93-IA12&lpg=PA93-IA12&dq=thomas+carnicelli+princeton&source=bl&ots=Gk-q4Tuavt&sig=ACfuU3U0pX0JD1dKTbVlkEcKgPFMYNF3wLg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjLmvCHtKzpAhWlg-AKHAofA\\_4Q6AEwAHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=thomas%20carnicelli%20princeton&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=UxJbAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA93-IA12&lpg=PA93-IA12&dq=thomas+carnicelli+princeton&source=bl&ots=Gk-q4Tuavt&sig=ACfuU3U0pX0JD1dKTbVlkEcKgPFMYNF3wLg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjLmvCHtKzpAhWlg-AKHAofA_4Q6AEwAHoECAkQAQ#v=onepage&q=thomas%20carnicelli%20princeton&f=false) (accessed 11 May 2020).

<sup>460</sup> Edward S. Shapiro, *A Time For Healing: American Jewry Since World War II* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 96.

<sup>461</sup> *Daily Princetonian*, 12 May 1959.

<sup>462</sup> Dannatt, “Obituaries: Stephen Greene.”

<sup>463</sup> Peter Schjeldahl, “Big Ideas: A Frank Stella Retrospective,” *The New Yorker* November 9, 2015, [www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/09/big-ideas-the-art-world-peter-schjeldahl](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/09/big-ideas-the-art-world-peter-schjeldahl) (accessed February 20, 2019).

<sup>464</sup> For example, Greene’s feedback had an impact on the painter Ronnie Landfield:

At sixteen I rented my first loft at 6 Bleecker Street near the Bowery....My abstract expressionist oil paintings took on hard-edges and

large painterly shapes. I was determined to develop good work habits, discipline, and become a successful and serious artist. I showed my work to Stephen Greene who was my instructor at the Art Students League and who visited my studio downtown. Stephen Greene was harshly critical of my paintings – he said that I needed to find my own voice. I was determined to take his advice and do something new and original in painting. (Quoted on the Findlay Galleries website, [http://www.findlaygalleries.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/eCat\\_Landfield.pdf](http://www.findlaygalleries.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/eCat_Landfield.pdf) (accessed February 20, 2019).

<sup>465</sup> Megan R. Luke, “Objecting to Things,” in Harry Cooper and Megan R. Luke, *Frank Stella 1958* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 47.

<sup>466</sup> Mark F. Bernstein, “Frank Stella’s 1958,” *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, November 8, 2006. [http://www.princeton.edu/~paw/archive\\_new/PAW06-07/04-1108/features\\_stella.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~paw/archive_new/PAW06-07/04-1108/features_stella.html) (accessed May 5, 2020).

<sup>467</sup> Videotape of Toledo Museum of Art, Masters Series, “An Evening with Frank Stella,” on April 7, 2011, published April 26, 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9qL6XVtPZM> (accessed February 23, 2019).

<sup>468</sup> William S. Rubin, *Frank Stella* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970), 12.

<sup>469</sup> Transcript of colloquium “The Content of Abstract Art,” New York University, November 17, 1966, moderated by Irving Harry Sandler, with participants Jack Tworkov, Robert Morris, Robert Murray, and Stephen Greene, Irving Sandler Papers, circa 1944-2007, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 26; Audiotape of the same event, Howard Somers Conant Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

<sup>470</sup> Luke, “Objecting to Things,” 47; Sidney Guberman, *Frank Stella: An Illustrated Biography* (New York: Rizzoli, 1995), 27. Stella’s painting, *Perfect Day for Banana Fish*, is reproduced at <https://ocula.com/art-galleries/spruth-magers/artworks/frank-stella/perfect-day-for-banana-fish/> (accessed 31 October 2020).

<sup>471</sup> Anne Tschida, “Frank Stella’s Experiments Changed American Art. See Them in Fort Lauderdale,” *Miami Herald*, December 21, 2017, <https://www.miamiherald.com/entertainment/visual-arts/article191089234.html> (accessed May 5, 2020); Clearwater, “Frank Stella: Experiment and Change,” Website of Peter Freeman Inc., <https://www.peterfreemaninc.com/artists/frank-stella/featured-works> (accessed May 5, 2020).

<sup>472</sup> Guberman, *Frank Stella: An Illustrated Biography*, 27.

<sup>473</sup> Frank Stella and Adrianna Campbell, “Interview,” in Adrianna Campbell, Kate Nesin, Lucas Blalock and Terry Richardson, *Frank Stella* (New York: Phaidon, 2017), 26.

<sup>474</sup> Alison Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>475</sup> Guberman, *Frank Stella: An Illustrated Biography*, 42; Hillary Latos, “Celebrated Architect and Artist Richard Meier,” *Resident*, March 2018, 45. <http://residentpublications.com/richard-meier/> (accessed May 9, 2020).

<sup>476</sup> Walter Hopps, Deborah Treisman, and Anne Doran, “When Walter Hopps Met Andy Warhol and Frank Stella,” *The New Yorker*, June 5, 2017. <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/when-walter-hopps-met-andy-warhol-and-frank-stella> (accessed February 10, 2019).

<sup>477</sup> Douglas Kellner and Dan Steible, eds., *Emile de Antonio: A Reader* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>478</sup> Guberman, *Frank Stella: An Illustrated Biography*, 73. The film can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eiKYMEaEbRU> (accessed 9 May 2020).

<sup>479</sup> Barbara Rose and Irving Sandler, “Sensibility of the Sixties,” *Art In America* 55 (January-February 1967), 44.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>481</sup> Typewritten notes for Detroit Watercolor Society, 1967, Stephen Greene Papers, 1945-1969, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (partial microfilm reel).

<sup>482</sup> Miguel de Unamuno, *Abel Sánchez* (1917), John Macklin, trans. (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2009), 103.

<sup>483</sup> Wohl, “Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene,” 135.

<sup>484</sup> Wohl, “Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene,” 134.

<sup>485</sup> Devree, “Mystery in Art.”

<sup>486</sup> “Painter of Presences,” *Time*, 12 April 1963, 102.

<sup>487</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>488</sup> Judith Bookbinder, “Figurative Expressionism in Boston and its Germanic Cultural Affinities: An Alternative Modernist Discourse on Art and Identity,” (PhD diss., Boston University, 1998), 422.

<sup>489</sup> Norton Simon Museum, Object description for Stephen Greene, *Le Ciel Amoureux*, 1960. <https://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/P.1964.14> (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>490</sup> Sawin, “Stephen Greene’s Recent Painting,” 83.

<sup>491</sup> Ashmore, "Existentialist Themes in Stephen Greene," 160.

<sup>492</sup> Museum of Modern Art, Annotated Checklist for the exhibition *Drawings, Watercolors, Collages: New Acquisitions*, July 15 – October 4, 1959.

<sup>493</sup> Michael Fried, "The Goals of Stephen Greene," *Arts Magazine* 37 (May 1963), 23-24.     **22-27**

<sup>494</sup> Alice Goldfarb Marquis, *Art Czar: The Rise and Fall of Clement Greenberg* (Boston: MFA Publications, 2006), 165-66.

<sup>495</sup> Fried, "An Introduction to My Art Criticism," 4.

<sup>496</sup> Clement Greenberg, hand-edited typescript for Gauss seminar #6, Clement Greenberg papers, 1928-1995, 950085, box 25, folder 7, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. I am grateful to Allison McCann for obtaining and scanning this document for me and for perusing Greenberg's notes for his other Gauss lectures to confirm that the sixth was the only one in which Newman was discussed.

<sup>497</sup> Florence Rubenfeld, *Clement Greenberg: A Life* (New York: Scribner, 1997), 215. Another biographer, Alice Goldfarb Marquis, wrote that Greenberg's pattern for the last five of the six Gauss lectures was "...a late start and frantic last-minute revisions. His method was to prepare a handwritten version, then expand it into a typed text, and finally, as H-hour neared, to pummel and chop it ruthlessly with insertions and deletions." Marquis, *Art Czar*, 166. Marquis's description may be overly poetic, as Greenberg's script, at least for the sixth lecture, while not calligraphically elegant, is wholly legible, marked up with an editor's precision.

<sup>498</sup> Greenberg, typescript for Gauss seminar #6, 1.

<sup>499</sup> Greene, "A Case in Point," 84.

<sup>500</sup> Greenberg, typescript for Gauss seminar #6, 9.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24.

<sup>503</sup> Sawin, "Stephen Greene's Recent Painting," 84.

<sup>504</sup> H. H. Arnason, *American Abstract Expressionists and Imagists* (New York: Solomon R Guggenheim Museum, 1961), 13; Brenda Atwood Pinardi, contribution to catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene Recent Paintings*, 1 October - 3 November 1999, University Gallery at UMass Lowell, 9.

<sup>505</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.



<sup>506</sup> Sawin, “Stephen Greene’s Recent Painting,” 84.

<sup>507</sup> Quoted in Collins, “Life Magazine and the Abstract Expressionists, 1948-51,” 307. Alison Greene stressed the importance of her father’s connection to Newman and that Greene was “hugely impressed” by Newman’s “kindness and open personality. He told me that he was enormously touched when Annalee Newman came up to him not long after Newman died and told him how much Bernie like his paintings. In general, while critics like Greenberg were very dogmatic, most really good artists are more open to one another’s work—my my father could be moved by the almost pure abstraction of Newman, and Newman could admire my father’s sense of color.” (email correspondence with the author, 6 February 2021).

<sup>508</sup> Greenberg, typescript for Gauss seminar #6, 28-30

<sup>509</sup> See Clement Greenberg, “Post Painterly Abstraction,” in John O’Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. IV, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 192-197.

<sup>510</sup> See, e.g., Chris Shields, “Arthur Osver: The Inner Landscape,” *Art and Antiques*, May 2009, 22.

<sup>511</sup> Transcript of colloquium “The Content of Abstract Art,” New York University, November 17, 1966; Audiotape of the same event. The transcript has been corrected in several respects to reflect the audiotape. The excerpt referred to in the text is:

**Tworckov:** I refuse to look at titles of pictures. I don’t pay attention to them. They are to me simply a means of identifying pictures.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Greene:** The reason I disagree with Jack is that certainly you know de Kooning’s work. It’s so obvious all you have to do is open up a little book or two and you can make a long exact history year after year from the 30s through the 40s through the Pink Angels, one thing after another with studies of the figure, paintings of the figure, Picassoid figures through the 40s, through the 50s and to 1966....so there has been a long tradition and I don’t think it would be an erroneous title to call any of them “Woman.” It is just that simple-minded.

**Tworckov:** You could call any one of Pollock’s “Landscape.”

**Greene:** If you like, but de Kooning calls it “Woman.” I keep on saying let’s show a little respect to the stated intentions of the artist whether he succeeds or not....I have been a painter of crosses for twenty years, so obviously I will be in a position to see certain things in Newman and I think his calling it that was totally in keeping with what he has been about. I remember something Betty Parsons said of the first show in 1951—however it may strike one and I’m not saying it is a profound remark—but it has to do with something that was not just a formal thing, but a great huge painting

and at the lower section there was a dividing line of color and she said, in a marvelous voice, “and that is the line between life and death.” It could be just a remark, but it was a loaded one and one that I never forgot. I think that as I kept going back to look at the paintings, they [probably referring the *Stations of the Cross* at the Guggenheim] were a spiritual experience...profoundly moving in terms of how Newman paints those paintings.

Apparently Joseph Solman participated, a few weeks earlier, in another in this series of N. Y. U. colloquia. It would have been interesting to hear Solman, who had nothing but disdain for Newman, battling with Greene on the subject of Newman’s art.

On the subject of titles, it should be noted that the positions of both Greene and Tworkov, at least with regard to titles of works by artists other than themselves, might be too simplistic for some art historians. For example, Mark Godfrey explicates the complexities surrounding titles of works by Newman (especially *Stations of the Cross*) and by Stella in his book *Abstraction and the Holocaust*. Disappointingly for present purposes, Godfrey’s fascinating essay on Stella’s *Polish Village* series, which he quotes Stella as saying was “about the destruction of an entire culture” through the destruction of synagogues, does not mention Greene as Stella’s mentor. (Godfrey, *Abstraction and the Holocaust*, 79-112.)

<sup>512</sup> Fried, “An Introduction to My Art Criticism,” 3; Clement Greenberg, “The Early Flemish Masters,” in O’Brian, ed., *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, Vol. IV, 101-2, quoted in Robert Cozzolino, “Medieval/Modern Gothic Impulses In American Modernism,” [https://www.academia.edu/13994567/Medieval\\_Modern\\_Gothic\\_Impulses\\_in\\_American\\_Modernism](https://www.academia.edu/13994567/Medieval_Modern_Gothic_Impulses_in_American_Modernism) (accessed February 10, 2019).

<sup>513</sup> Baur, *The New Decade*, 38.

<sup>514</sup> Stephen Greene, typewritten notes for Detroit Watercolor Society, 1967, Stephen Greene Papers.

<sup>515</sup> Stephen Greene, untitled typewritten notes on *Paradise*, Stephen Greene Papers.

<sup>516</sup> Ashton, “Introduction.”

<sup>517</sup> Greene, “Aspects of Reality in My Paintings,” 240.

<sup>518</sup> Norton Simon Museum, website description of Stephen Greene, *Le Ciel Amoureux*, [www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/P.1964.14](http://www.nortonsimon.org/art/detail/P.1964.14); Press Release no. 69, June 21, 1961, Museum of Modern Art, [www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press\\_archives/2858/releases/MOMA\\_1961\\_0073\\_69.pdf](http://www.moma.org/momaorg/shared/pdfs/docs/press_archives/2858/releases/MOMA_1961_0073_69.pdf) (both accessed 11 February 2019).

<sup>519</sup> *Catálogo Geral*, VI Bienal de São Paulo, Museo de Arte Moderna (1961), 198. <https://issuu.com/bienal/docs/namee9c394> (accessed 2 May 2020). The Portuguese text of the entry on Greene reads as follows:

Stephen Greene, ao contrário de Diebenkorn, foi durante muito tempo um pintor de temas angustiados ou religiosos, mas em suas últimas obras tem feito uma pintura abstrata, ao mesmo tempo sensual e otimista, com brilhantes vermelhos e amarelos e etéreos azuis, de extesos espaços.

<sup>520</sup> Ibid.

<sup>521</sup> Norton Simon Museum, website description of Stephen Greene, *Le Ciel Amoureux*.

<sup>522</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>523</sup> Greene, “A Case in Point,” 84.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> Quoted in materials for the exhibition “Myth-Making: Abstract Expressionist Painting from the United States,” Tate Liverpool, 10 March 1992 - 10 January 1993. <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/myth-making-abstract-expressionist-painting-united-states> (accessed 13 August 2020).

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> Alison Greene, “Stephen Greene: 1960s Abstractions in Context,” in exhibition catalogue the exhibition *Stephen Greene: 1960s Abstractions*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, March 3 – April 30, 2016.

<sup>528</sup> Barbara Rose, “Stephen Greene: A Retrospective Exhibition,” *Art International*, VII/4, April 25, 1963, 50-51.

<sup>529</sup> Jean M. White, “Artist Greene Gazes Inward at Corcoran,” *Washington Post*, March 15, 1963, C4.

<sup>530</sup> Brian O’Doherty, “Art: Stephen Greene, Perfectionist: His Paintings, Charged with Anxiety, on View,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1964, 22.

<sup>531</sup> See, e.g., Brian O’Doherty, “Stella and Hesse: Dispatches from the Sixties,” (1991) in Brian O’Doherty, *Collected Essays* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 211-221; Bill Ivey, *Arts, Inc.: How Greed and Neglect Have Destroyed Our Cultural Rights* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 247-249.

<sup>532</sup> O’Doherty, “Art: Stephen Greene, Perfectionist: His Paintings, Charged with Anxiety, on View.”

<sup>533</sup> Ashton was fired from the *Times* in 1960, for (according the *The Art Story*) “her continually favorable stance toward Abstract Expressionism, which conflicted with the anti-modernist views of *Times* staffer John Canaday. In 1963, the years of the Greene Corcoran Retrospective, the College Art Association awarded Ashton the Frank Jewett Mather Award in art criticism. <https://www.theartstory.org/critic-ashton-dore.htm> (accessed February 11, 2019).

<sup>534</sup> Ashton, “Introduction.”

<sup>535</sup> Ibid.

<sup>536</sup> Ibid.

<sup>537</sup> Stephen Greene to Ronald Alley, 26 February 1969. Tate Archive catalogue and acquisition files for Stephen Greene, London U. K.

<sup>538</sup> Ronald Alley to Stephen Greene, 30 April 1969. Tate Archive catalogue and acquisition files for Stephen Greene, London U. K.

<sup>539</sup> Tate Gallery website, catalogue entry for Stephen Greene, *The Return*. <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/greene-the-return-t00526> (accessed 9 May 2020).

<sup>540</sup> Fried, “The Goals of Stephen Greene,” 22.

<sup>541</sup> Ibid.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 23-4.

<sup>543</sup> Ashton, “Introduction.”

<sup>544</sup> Michael Fried, “New York Letter,” *Art International* 7, (April 25, 1963), 54.

<sup>545</sup> Michael Fried, “New York Letter,” *Art International* 8, (May, 1964), 40. **40-43**

<sup>546</sup> Michael Fried, “Three American Painters: Kenneth Noland, Jules Olitski, Frank Stella,” catalog essay for exhibition of the same name at Fogg Art Museum, April 21 – May 30, 1965, reproduced in Fried, *Art and Objecthood*, 223.

<sup>547</sup> Fried, “The Goals of Stephen Greene,” 24.

<sup>548</sup> Ibid.

<sup>549</sup> Michael Peppiatt, *Francis Bacon: Anatomy of an Enigma* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1996), 98.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>551</sup> Ibid.

<sup>552</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, conversation with the author, January 24 and 25, 2018.

<sup>553</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author and Stephen Moonie, 28 July 2020.

<sup>554</sup> “Painter of Presences,” *Time*, 12 April 1963, 102.

<sup>555</sup> Ibid.

<sup>556</sup> Whitney J. Oates, ed., *From Sophocles To Picasso: The Present-day Vitality of the Classical Tradition* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962).

<sup>557</sup> Stephen Greene, “The Tragic Sense in Modern Art,” 164.

<sup>558</sup> As to date of conference only: Harry C. Rutledge, *The Guernica Bull: Studies in the Classical Tradition in the Twentieth Century* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1989, 2008) 127, n. 15.

<sup>559</sup> Stephen Greene, “The Tragic Sense in Modern Art,” 165.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid., 167-68.

<sup>561</sup> Barnett Newman, “The Sublime is Now,” in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1984), 553.

<sup>562</sup> Natasha Seaman, “Out of Time: Stephen Greene’s 1960s Abstractions,” *Hyperallergic*, [www.hyperallergic.com/290916/out-of-time-stephen-greene-1960-abstractions](http://www.hyperallergic.com/290916/out-of-time-stephen-greene-1960-abstractions) (accessed 25 February 2019).

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Ibid.

<sup>566</sup> Frank Stella, unpublished interview by Hrag Vartanian, September 12, 2003.

<sup>567</sup> Dorothy Seckler, “Joseph Solman Paints a Picture,” *Art News*, Vol. 50 no.4 (June-July-August 1951), 42-46.

<sup>568</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 10 April 2020.

<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

<sup>570</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>571</sup> Barbara Rose, "The Drawings of Stephen Greene," exhibition catalogue essay for Stephen Greene, 25 Years of Drawing: 1947-1972, December 2 – December 30, 1972, William Zierler Inc., New York.

<sup>572</sup> Hilton Kramer, "Sculpture: Caricatures That Won't Make You Smile," New York Times, 2 December 1967, 32.

<sup>573</sup> David Miller, email correspondence with the author, 26 September and 1 October, 2019.

<sup>574</sup> Transcript of colloquium "The Content of Abstract Art," New York University, 17 November 1966.

<sup>575</sup> Victoria Munroe Fine Art, exhibition essay for Stephen Greene: Drawings, 1967-74, April 13 – June 10, 2017, [www.victoriamunroefineart.com/stephen-green-drawings-1967-74](http://www.victoriamunroefineart.com/stephen-green-drawings-1967-74) (accessed February 25, 2019).

<sup>576</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email conversation with the author, 26 March 2020 (as to evaluation of Columbia teaching tenure only).

<sup>577</sup> Judith Stein, "Stephen Greene at Zierler," *Art In America*, March/April 1976, 105.

<sup>578</sup> Fried, "Three American Painters," 229.

<sup>579</sup> Rosalind Krauss, "Notes on the Index: Seventies Art in America, Parts 1 and 2, in *October*, Vol. 3 (Spring 1977), 68-81, and Vol. 4 (Autumn 1977), 58-67.

<sup>580</sup> Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avantgarde," (1986), in *Formalism and Historicity* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 2015), 353.

<sup>581</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 28 June 2020.

<sup>582</sup> David Miller, email correspondence with the author, 1 October, 2019.

<sup>583</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email to the author, 28 July 2020.

<sup>584</sup> Biography of Philip Pearlstein on his website, <https://philippearlstein.com/about/bio/> (accessed 20 August 2020).

<sup>585</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>586</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author, 17 May 2020.



<sup>587</sup> Robert Storr, “A Light That Did Not Fail—A Source That Never Ran Dry,” accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene, 1917-1999*, Jason McCoy Gallery, September 12 - October 18, 2008. [www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp](http://www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp) [link not operable as of 27 June 2020]

<sup>588</sup> Karen Wilkin, “Remembering Stephen Greene,” in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene: Painter and Mentor*, Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, 20 September 2003 - 4 January 2004, 7.

<sup>589</sup> Karen Wilkin, interview with the author, 23 September 2019.

<sup>590</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>591</sup> Nina Nielsen, telephone conversation with the author, 28 July 2020.

<sup>592</sup> Stephen Greene, audio recording, Skowhegan School lecture, 1958.

<sup>593</sup> Oral history interview with Rackstraw Downes, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (10-11 April 2016).

<sup>594</sup> Henry Luhrman, “Artist-Teacher Greene: Famous in Galleries, Unknown at CU,” *The Columbia Owl*, 13 April 1966, p. 8.

<sup>595</sup> Ibid.

<sup>596</sup> Website of Findlay Galleries, artist biography of Ronnie Landfield, [https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.findlaygalleries.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2016%2F11%2FecCat\\_Landfield.pdf&data=02%7C01%7Cael50%40pitt.edu%7C2a03037de3f74323b50208d7d3f7abcd%7C9ef9f489e0a04eeb87cc3a526112fd0d%7C1%7C0%7C637210933021004453&sdata=ykEsdDkCY0dTHLjQLSRGa2fKGutTyT4uG9QxLk2gyQ4%3D&reserved=0](https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.findlaygalleries.com%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2016%2F11%2FecCat_Landfield.pdf&data=02%7C01%7Cael50%40pitt.edu%7C2a03037de3f74323b50208d7d3f7abcd%7C9ef9f489e0a04eeb87cc3a526112fd0d%7C1%7C0%7C637210933021004453&sdata=ykEsdDkCY0dTHLjQLSRGa2fKGutTyT4uG9QxLk2gyQ4%3D&reserved=0) (accessed 2 August 2020).

<sup>597</sup> Ibid.

<sup>598</sup> Jill Viney statement, Columbia Visual Arts Alumni Archive website, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arts/varchive/viney/index.html> (accessed 22 July 2020).

<sup>599</sup> Joyce Kozloff statement, Columbia Visual Arts Alumni Archive website, <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/arts/varchive/kozloff/index.html> (accessed 20 February 2019).

<sup>600</sup> Nina Nielsen, telephone conversation with the author, 28 July 2020.

<sup>601</sup> Stephen Greene, testimonial in John Yau, ed., “A Tribute to Porfirio DiDonna,” *Sulfur* 1987:19, p. 50. <https://search-proquest-com.pitt.idm.oclc.org/docview/871111286/fulltextPDF/7971D8614B0B46DDPQ/2?accountid=14709#0> (accessed 28 July 2020).

<sup>602</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>603</sup> Kevin Sloan, email correspondence with the author, 1 and 5 March 2020.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

<sup>605</sup> Daniel Reich, telephone conversation with the author, 20 June 2020.

<sup>606</sup> Ibid.

<sup>607</sup> Lisa Yuskavage, unpublished transcript of interview with Hrag Vartanian, 2003, courtesy of Alison Greene. As to the intimations of misogyny referenced by Yuskavage, Greene did have a reputation for paying more attention to male students than to women, for which Alison Greene speculatively identified two possible reasons: the pervasive sexism of the times and Greene's distaste for the "shenanigans" of other male faculty members who slept with students, which he thought was beyond the pale. Her suspicion was that if Greene had a very attractive twenty-year old female student in front of him, he could have, out of a sense of decency or propriety, shut down a bit (conversation with the author, 26 March 2020). Anthony Apesos related to the author conversations with Greene in which the latter made clear his contempt for sexual conduct by faculty involving students.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> Kevin Sloan, email to the author, 1 March 2020. Sloan shared a specific recollection in a follow-up email of 5 March 2020:

Once, a few of us students...and Stephen went out for dinner and a few drinks which was very rare....Driving around, there was a silly moment when we decided we needed a traffic cone - the orange thing, so decided to pull over and take it. He was kind of tipsy and found this all very amusing. We were having a great time and by the end of the night we dropped him off and his eyes were welled with tears and I remember him saying something to the effect of "enjoy this time". It's the kind of thing an elder says from the vantage point of years passed and perhaps some regret. I've never forgotten that.

<sup>611</sup> Daniel Reich, telephone interview with the author, 20 June 2020.

<sup>612</sup> Wilkin, "Remembering Stephen Greene," 7.

<sup>613</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>614</sup> Ibid. Alison Greene did not identify the person at Staempfli Gallery whom Greene found offputting, but I have guessed that it was Phillip A. Bruno (b. 1930), the co-director, who moved to Marlborough Gallery when Staempfli closed and is a noted collector.

- <sup>615</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 28 May 2020.
- <sup>616</sup> “William C. Seitz, Art Scholar, Dies,” *New York Times*, 28 October 1974.
- <sup>617</sup> Hilton Kramer, “Art View,” *New York Times*, March 13, 1977.
- <sup>618</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 18 April 2020.
- <sup>619</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author, 19 February 2019.
- <sup>620</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>621</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.
- <sup>622</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 10 April 2020.
- <sup>623</sup> Robert Slifkin, *Out of Time: Philip Guston and the Refiguration of Postwar American Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 148.
- <sup>624</sup> Judith Stein, “Stephen Greene at Zierler,” 105.
- <sup>625</sup> Hilton Kramer, “Art: Works by Marsden Hartley,” *New York Times*, 25 October 1975, 23.
- <sup>626</sup> Hilton Kramer, “Drawings by Nesbitt: A Retrospective,” *New York Times*, 6 November 1971, 27.
- <sup>627</sup> John Canaday, “Art: Enlarged Detail as a Picture,” *New York Times*, 9 December 1972, 31.
- <sup>628</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>629</sup> Barbara Rose, “The Drawings of Stephen Greene,” in the catalogue accompanying the exhibition “Stephen Greene 25 Years of Drawing: 1947-1972,” William Zierler Inc., 2 - 30 December 1972.
- <sup>630</sup> John Canaday, “In 2 Shows, a Thumbnail Summary,” *New York Times*, 22 April 1972, 29.
- <sup>631</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>632</sup> Bruce Boice, “Stephen Greene,” *Artforum International*, Vol. 11, no. 7 (March 1973), 92.
- <sup>633</sup> Roberta Smith, “Bruce Boice,” *Artforum International*, March 1972, 79.
- <sup>634</sup> Marshall N. Price, *The Abstract Impulse: Fifty Years of Abstraction at the National Academy, 1956-2006* (New York: National Academy Museum and School of Fine Arts, 2007), 21.

<sup>635</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>636</sup> Alison Greene, email correspondence with the author, 28 June 2020 (as to daylilies only).

<sup>637</sup> Joe Fyfe, "Stephen Greene: 1917-1999," accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene: Pleasure Dome—Works from the Last Two Decades*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, February 2-March 11, 2006. [www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp](http://www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp) [link not operable as of 2/21/19]

<sup>638</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 18 April 2020. Most, but not all, of the observations in the paragraph came originally from Apesos.

<sup>639</sup> Alison Greene, email correspondence with the author, 10 May 2020.

<sup>640</sup> Thomas B. Hess, "In de Kooning's Studio," *Vogue*, Vol. 168, iss.4 (April 1, 1978), 236-237.

<sup>641</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 18 April 2020.

<sup>642</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>643</sup> Website of Robert Rauschenberg Foundation,  
<http://www.rauschenbergfoundation.org/art/series/dante-drawing> (accessed 18 June 2020).

<sup>644</sup> Tom Folland, "Robert Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration," *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 92, no. 4 (December 2010), 356.

<sup>645</sup> Steinberg, "Other Criteria," 82.

<sup>646</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>647</sup> Ibid.

<sup>648</sup> Stephen Greene, catalogue statement for "Stephen Greene: Recent Paintings," 1 October - 3 November 1999, University Gallery at UMass Lowell, 3.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>650</sup> Yau, "Luminous Shrouds: The Recent Paintings of Stephen Greene," 84.

<sup>651</sup> Ibid.

<sup>652</sup> Ibid.

<sup>653</sup> Marshall N. Price, "Between Narrative and Mystery," accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene, 1917-1999*, Jason McCoy Gallery, September 12 - October 18, 2008. [www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp](http://www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp) [link not operable as of 27 June 2020]

<sup>654</sup> Robert Storr, “A Light That Did Not Fail—A Source That Never Ran Dry.”

<sup>655</sup> Ibid.

<sup>656</sup> Quoted in John Yau, “Jasper Johns Ink on Plastic,” *The Brooklyn Rail*, July 2010. <https://brooklynrail.org/2010/06/artseen/jasper-johns-ink-on-plastic> (accessed 28 June 2020).

<sup>657</sup> Marshall Price, “Between Narrative and Mystery.”

<sup>658</sup> Marshall Price, “Between Narrative and Mystery.”

<sup>659</sup> Alison Greene, email correspondence with the author, 28 June 2020.

<sup>660</sup> Alison Greene, email correspondence with the author, 5 July 2020 (as to the equal spacing divider only).

<sup>661</sup> Anthony Apesos, telephone conversation with the author, 10 April 2020.

<sup>662</sup> Joe Fyfe, “Stephen Greene: 1917-1999.”

<sup>663</sup> Stephanie Buhmann, “Preserving the Riddle of Life,” accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene: Pleasure Dome—Works from the Last Two Decades*, Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, February 2-March 11, 2006. [www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp](http://www.jasonmccoyinc.com/artists-temp) [link not operable as of 2/21/19]

<sup>664</sup> Tim Keane, “Paint is the Language of God: The Gospel According to Gustave Moreau,” *Hyperallergic*, March 26, 2016. <https://hyperallergic.com/285470/paint-is-the-language-of-god-the-gospel-according-to-gustave-moreau/> (accessed 1 July 2020).

<sup>665</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>666</sup> The MoMA/AIC exhibition was an important event in what Hilton Kramer, ten years later in a review of a Puvis de Chavannes show, called the “merry, necrophiliac course” of the “disinterment of Symbolist painting.” (Hilton Kramer, “Rediscovering Puvis de Chavannes,” in *The Age of the Avant-Garde: An Art Chronicle of 1956-1972*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 60.

<sup>667</sup> “Dore Ashton,” *The Art Story*, <https://www.theartstory.org/critic/ashton-dore/> (accessed 2 July 2020).

<sup>668</sup> Dore Ashton, “Gustave Moreau,” in John Rewald, ed., *Odilon Redon, Gustave Moreau, Rodolphe Bresdin* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1961), pages as noted in text. [https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma\\_catalogue\\_3419\\_300062233.pdf?\\_ga=2.172703396.605316242.1593718253-1198174187.1593192568](https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_catalogue_3419_300062233.pdf?_ga=2.172703396.605316242.1593718253-1198174187.1593192568) (accessed 2 July 2020).

<sup>669</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, email correspondence with the author, 4 July 2020 and 15 February 2021.

<sup>670</sup> Geneviève Lacambre, *Gustave Moreau Between Epic and Dream* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 78.

<sup>671</sup> Ashton, "Gustave Moreau," 144.

<sup>672</sup> Alison de Lima Greene, telephone conversation with the author, 26 March 2020.

<sup>673</sup> Daniel Reich, telephone conversation with the author, 20 June 2020.

<sup>674</sup> Stephen F. Smalley, contribution to catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene Recent Paintings*, 1 October - 3 November 1999, University Gallery at UMass Lowell, 8.

<sup>675</sup> Stephen Greene, contribution to catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene Recent Paintings*, 1 October - 3 November 1999, University Gallery at UMass Lowell, 4.

<sup>676</sup> Michael Kimmelman, "Art in Review, Stephen Greene, David Beitzel Gallery," *New York Times*, 12 January 1996, C31.

<sup>677</sup> Barry Schwabsky, "Stephen Greene, David Beitzel Gallery," *Artforum*, March 1999, 114.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-15.

<sup>679</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>680</sup> Cate McQuaid, 2003, *Boston Globe*, quoted in the Addison Gallery of Art's entry "Object Results" for Stephen Greene, *Labyrinth #1*, 1999, <http://accessaddison.andover.edu/objects-1/info?query=Exhibition%3D%223169%22&page=13> (accessed 6 July 2020).

<sup>681</sup> Greene, Oral History Interview.

<sup>682</sup> Karen Wilkin, "Remembering Stephen Greene."

<sup>683</sup> Slifkin, *Out of Time*, 6. As this study concludes, it is well to recognize the possibility of a somewhat different point of view from mine in assessing the totality of Greene's work. Hypothetically, such questioning could echo John Canaday's 1960 prescient evaluation of Philip Guston, made a decade before Guston's return to figuration in the Marlborough Gallery show:

Guston's progress has been steadily into a more and more inner world, but I wonder whether he has not reached a core of such secrecy that what he now paints is meaningless except as the latest stage in the retrospective exhibition that is in our minds when we respond to his work today. I find it hard to believe that from what must be a cul-de-sac he will not turn toward a more generally communicative way of painting, so that a single picture may again stand alone...rather than depending on what has gone before. (John Canaday, "Their Separate Ways: Jack Levine and Philip Guston," in Canaday, *Embattled Critic - Views on Modern Art*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1962), 140).



<sup>684</sup> Catalogue accompanying the exhibition *Stephen Greene: Painter and Mentor*, Addison Gallery of American Art, Andover, Massachusetts, 20 September 2003 - 4 January 2004.

<sup>685</sup> Cate McQuaid, "Painter's Mastery of Color Frames Wide-ranging Exhibit," *Boston Globe*, 28 November 2003.

<sup>686</sup> Quoted in the website Revolvvy.com, <https://www.revolvvy.com/page/Stephen-Greene-%28artist%29> (accessed 21 February 2019).

<sup>687</sup> Daniel Grant, "Poor's No Pauper," *Artnet Magazine* (2011) <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/grant/henry-varnum-poor-8-9-11.asp>, accessed 15 September 2019.

<sup>688</sup> Porter, "Henry Varnum Poor," 241.

<sup>689</sup> Judith Bookbinder, *Boston Modern: Figurative Expressionism as Alternative Modernism* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 63, 74.

<sup>690</sup> William Grimes, "Jack Levine, a Painter who Twinned Realism and Satire, Dies at 95," *New York Times*, November 9, 2010.

<sup>691</sup> Ibid.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>693</sup> Annie Proulx, "Only the Lonely," *The Guardian*, 7 May 2004, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2004/may/08/art>

<sup>694</sup> Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 288, 331

<sup>695</sup> Quoted in Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography*, 424.

<sup>696</sup> James Thrall Soby, "Arrested Time By Edward Hopper," *Saturday Review* 33 no. 9 (4 March 1950), 43.

<sup>697</sup> Andrew Hemingway, *Artists on the Left: American Artists and the Communist Movement 1926-1956* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 68.

<sup>698</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>699</sup> Jacob Kainen, "Foreward," in Sylvan Cole, Jr., ed., *Raphael Soyer, Fifty Years of Printmaking 1917-1967* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1967), viii.

<sup>700</sup> Raphael Soyer, *Self-Revelment: A Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1967), 72.

<sup>701</sup> Hemingway, *Artists on the Left*, 70-73.

<sup>702</sup> Barbara Haskell in collaboration with Ortrud Westheider, *Modern Life. Edward Hopper and His Time* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 2009), 166.

<sup>703</sup> Eleanor Munro, *Originals: American Women Artists* (New York: Da Capo Press, 2000), 145-49

<sup>704</sup> Ellen Wiley Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), xxxiv et seq.

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<sup>706</sup> Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists: 1550-1950* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 325.

<sup>707</sup> Website of Julie Heller Gallery, Provincetown, Massachusetts, "Sol Wilson," <https://www.juliehellergallery.com/sol-wilson> (accessed October 3, 2019).

<sup>708</sup> James Walter Ellis, "The Fourteenth Street School," (PhD. Diss., Case Western Reserve University, 2003), 218.

<sup>709</sup> Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "The American Artists School: Radical Heritage and Social Content Art," *Archives of American Art Journal* 26, No. 4 (1986), 17-23, 21; Patricia Hills, *Painting Harlem Modern: The Art of Jacob Lawrence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 35.

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<sup>713</sup> Oral history interview with Joseph Solman, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution (May 6-8, 1981).

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<sup>715</sup> Angela Lampe, ed., Chagall, Lissitzky, Malevich: The Russian Avant-garde in Vitebsk (1918-1922) (Munich: Prestel, 2018), 13.

<sup>716</sup> Theodore F. Wolff, "Introduction," in Abe Lerner, ed., *Joseph Solman* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1995), 6.

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<sup>718</sup> Wolff, "Introduction," 7.

<sup>719</sup> Marlene Park, "City and Country in the 1930s: A Study of New Deal Murals in New York," *Art Journal*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Autumn, 1979), 37.

<sup>720</sup> Isabelle Dervaux, "Avant-Garde in New York, 1935-39: The Ten," (PhD. diss., New York University, 1992), 47-50.

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<sup>722</sup> Francine Tyler, *Artists Respond to the Great Depression and the Threat of Fascism: The New York Artists' Union and its Magazine "Art Front" (1934-1937)* (PhD. Diss., New York University, 1991), 182.

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