

The Progress of Three Horizons



Three Horizons, acrylic, 60 x 24 in.

I look around. The things I see that interest me, I sketch, photograph, or store in memory. I don't always know at the moment why something intrigues me, but I think those that do, strike strong emotions, visual sensations, and a sense of change, of the chaos and order of life.

Three Horizons started as a study. Only about one in ten paintings starts as a study, for reasons I don't know. As usual when starting a work, I looked through some recent sketchbooks and my collection of images, to see what fascinated me. On my desk was a folder of images I had captured, and from those I picked a satellite image of a planet in which some of the information had "dropped out." Next, I found a sketch of a figure that I was using in another painting. This sensuous figure seemed to fit at the top, removed from the commonplace moment. Finally, I found

a sketch of flowers in a glass vase. What drew me to the sketch, I think, were life and eventual death frozen in time, solid and liquid, transparency and mystery.



Image that started the work

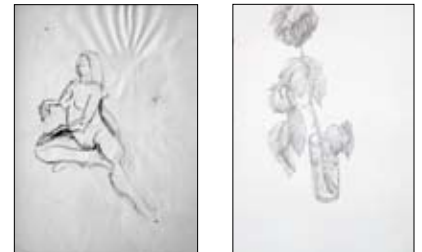


Figure and flowers sources



Sketches going into Study



Study underway.

To begin painting the study, I used a grey, because I felt the connections among the three objects were soft and gentle rather than jarring. Strangely enough, everything was painted without much problem or change. Usually, the challenge of getting something right, or a sudden inspiration changes the color, or shape, or position—or whole concept—of a work.

When I started the painting, it took a different path. I was inspired to make the piece very tall, so a viewer would experience the flower and vase at eye level, then see the other objects at the edge of perception. This would resemble a moment in life, with its subtle connections to other experiences. Since the idea was now somewhat sensual, the color and technique of the ground became warmer, more flesh-colored, and brushy. However, as I started on the figure's face, based a previous sketch I'd made, I began to turn away from the sensual, and move toward the idealistic. I don't know exactly why; perhaps the more idealistic spiced up the contrast between the moment and the eternal. The figure took on more elegant proportions. I modeled the face on a classical Renaissance face of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. The arid planet with the information drop-out became the earth with a blue halo.

Although the original images had interested me, the three into which they evolved and the connecting color and texture now fell into place. Of course there were changes as I painted, little joys of technique or ideas, but the final piece, although different from the original idea, still had that feel of a moment in life, fleeting, able to be seen in many ways, deeply beautiful.



Study finished



Early sketch for face



Inspiration for final face.