

“life is a dream that is already over

*Jack Kerouac*

In this painting I am not concerned with real space, place or time. What is painted exists only as a collection of memories assembled by imagination for the purpose of expressing visual thoughts in a paint medium. For a starting point I look to Van Gogh to assist in establishing a compositional structure from which to begin structuring my painting.



From Van Gogh I take the idea of the lane, the placements of the two buildings, the diagonal of the foreground tree, the triangular shape of the middle ground trees and the diagonals that occur in the landscape of the foreground through the middle ground.



In the initial drawing you see the similarities to the Van Gogh composition but the flatness of the terrain is immediately replaced by a constant flow of memories of driving along country lanes and roads seeing space compressed between rolling hills. In this structure I remove the figurative images of Van Gogh's and replace them with my own memory images which for me gives it a constant dream image. The major feature of the composition is the lane which merges into the road in the middle ground. Influenced by the poetry of Frederic Holderlin I think of the road not only as a passageway into the painting but a vehicle of space and time. It pre-exists your presence and continues long after your time. It becomes a metaphor for life's destinations known and unknown. Like life it begins in darkness passing through windows of light to end in darkness. The road leads you to the awareness of isolation by the lone farmhouse. It is only through consciousness that we become aware of our own isolation and separateness or apart from others. The large family farm house is in contrast to the more modern implement/machine building on the left and represents a separation of time. The once self-sustaining family farming operations of the past have become the economic commodity farm of the present which works not with but in opposition to nature. The house with its softer light and earthly-toned shadows visually recedes as it recedes from memory. Many of the limbs of the dead foreground tree either point or begin to surround the house while the newer building becomes more prominent in light to form the present in opposition to the past.

Nature is used to create tension in the painting. It has the temporary appearance of quiet and calm soon to be engulfed by storm. The clouds casting shadows on the

ground add to the turbulent waves of the advancing storm through the rolling cultivated fields. The dead tree in the foreground sets up another conflict with the thriving green cultivated crop which becomes a conflict between man and nature. The tree representing nature in the conflict does not fare well against the chemical assault necessary to sustain today's genetically modified crops. What destroys nature will more than likely destroy us as well. To state this opinion visually I place a rattlesnake wrapped around a corn stalk in the right foreground. The symbol of the snake is not for the farmer who is also a victim of the large multinational corporation that controls and profits from the crop's production. The serpent is a symbol of what is proud, selfish and greedy. Christian mystic Jacob Boehme describes the serpent as 'that false being who loves to take material shape in pride...the one who allows the poor to suffer starvation while he sets his heart upon temporal wealth and amasses possessions.' At the base of the tree peace lilies were chosen for their detoxifying qualities and for their common name which is what man and nature needs... a peaceful coexistence.

I draw on one more symbol to emphasize this is nothing more than a dialog in my mind. To the painting I add the nocturnal rabbit which is sometimes used as a symbol for the dream and the unconscious mind. These marks and strokes on the canvas represent reflection and remembrances' that create the reality found only in the dream or within the window frame of a painting. To expose the reality of a painting is to expose the material the paint is laid upon. The road begins at the origins of the painting by revealing the toned canvas base which quickly transitions into paint on its surface. It is to say this is a painting you have just entered and it

contains its own reality between its conflicting parallel borders.

