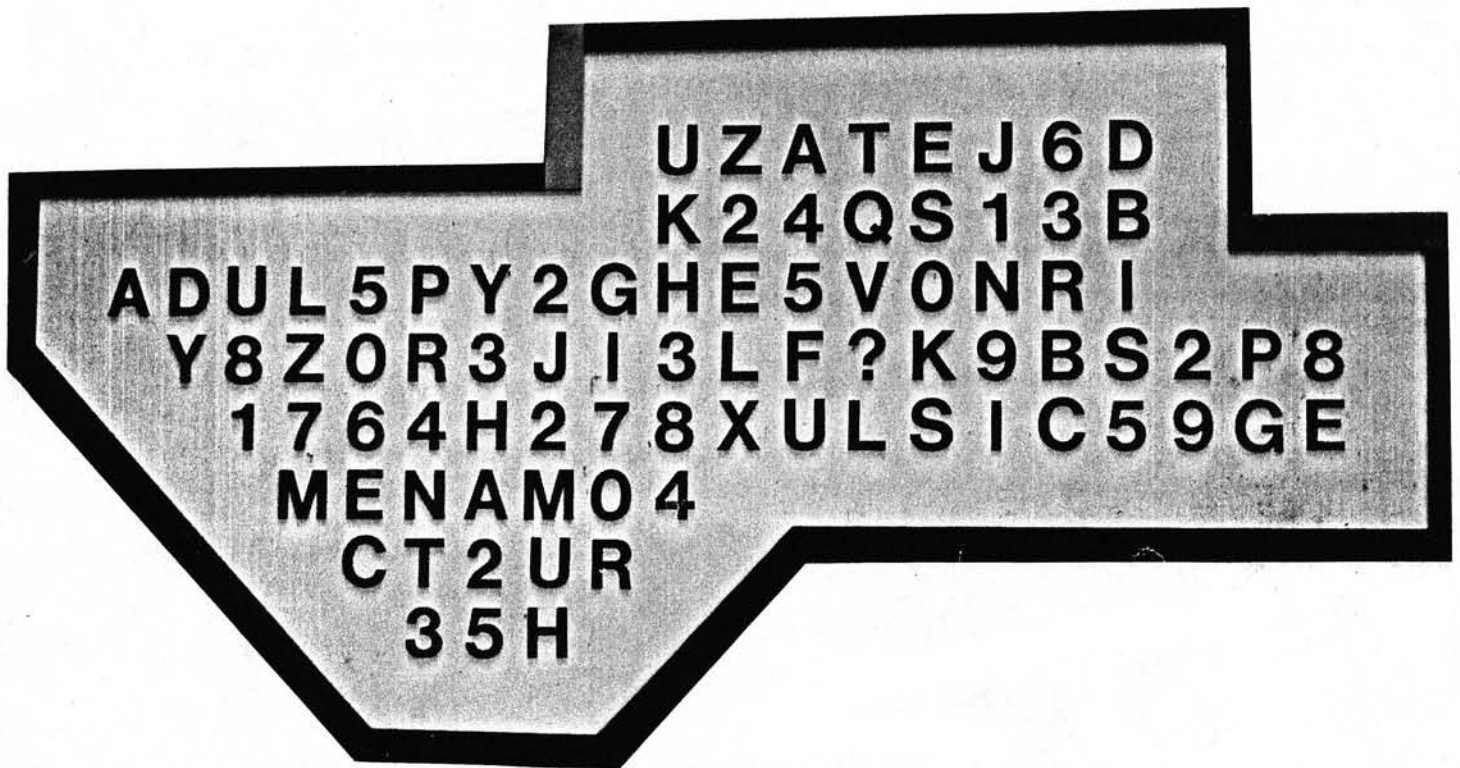
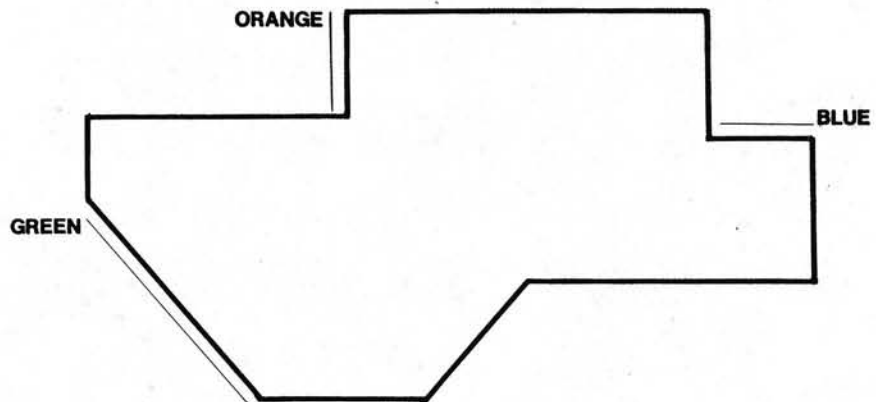


GOING TO THE MARKET performed by Peg Shirley



LEGEND



GUY de COINTET

THE PORTRAIT REVIEW

He mused over his bowl of soup, pushing the letters around in the red sunrise in a vain attempt to make meaningful words from the porridge string together to form a sentence. It amused him, the activity of forming chance words from an alphabet that did not provide conveniently the necessary set of vowels and consonants. Each attempt at language continuity was soon meshed among a hodgepodge of too many "b's". The luxury of nourishment made it apparent, the soup would soon be cooled and he would stop the play to finish the particles and broth. But with each spoonful the puzzlement would surface and float about the rim of the spoon gravitating to the center as it reached his lips. The muse continued to mystify him with what he felt was a message hidden there. He soon realized the message hidden there was of his own making and another connoisseur with the same bowl of literature would find his own.

George Miller

It would be pleasant to identify and place in perspective the source of visual abstraction at the point when its consequence failed to provide content aside from a purely decorative motif based in literal abstraction. As the categories that defined clearly the separation of the plastic arts began to merge with other aspects of creative activity, the hybrid involved more than just simply a homogenous entity. The consequence touched on a multiple of sensibilities. New materials and convenient communication had provided a repertoire of image combinations that defy stable linear limitations. Especially the kind of limitations provided by the convenience of a painting or the bulk in sculpture. Philosophy, physicality and sensory information has placed a demand on content that draws from each of the areas but whose complexity is in the information conveyed and the subtleties of communication. Philosophy, image, and style then must deal with a multiplicity that is capable of touching with a number of conceptual as well as sensory elements. In an environment that is able to provide melodrama, information and philosophy at the touch of a switch places a strain on anything with linear overtones. The safest position then for the artist is in the area of visual abstraction where definitions, values and principles are easily defined but still have the pretense of representing the artists as a private visionary. The implication of this is already beginning to become clear as the artist starts to search for and incorporate content beyond the stable visual image, and the number of decorative motifs begins to surface as the struggle becomes more poignant. From the first kandinski abstractions there was the belief that the essences of the abstract had literary parallels. This represented a fascination with the mind's ability to abstract to form another reality as real and vital as the one from which it was created. Within the same period the machinery that would tie together mankind and challenge this notion of the poetry was already becoming evident. In order to become involved in these areas of sensory duplexes, a consciousness must be developed of their multiplicity as a cohesive image with compartmental

structure. Each compartment based in one and more affecting areas. Compartmental structure is not a new idea in the visual arts, as it has been applied to painting, and it is not strictly in this specific use that it is being applied here. In the specific painting use of the term it applies to the approximation of differing elements held together simply by their close approximation in location. But in a multi-sensory environment the idea is extended into a conceptual arena that includes not only a context for visual placement but also a sensitivity to the physical environment and social interaction. It implies that self-expression as a form for communicating entails a complex of knowledge that only a little is represented by the relationship of image and symbol, and style will not expose the multiplicity of experience.

If multiplicity is accurate as a descriptive dilemma it becomes easier to understand why painters in particular and sculptors incidentally have difficulty dealing with content that is not simply the propagation of the purely decorative abstract sensibility. But to use multiplicity as a style requires an allowance for ambiguity. An ambiguity based in the enigma of symbols and language in the promotion of information and its communication. The information explosion that accompanied the development of our communication technology has had the curious effect of focusing attention on the relationship between language (spoken and read) and image. The combination of these elements provides a repetition and continuity that is directly related to the story/narrative of image as it is related to the theatrical and melodramatic. There is a historical parallel between the Roman Classical principles and the Hellenistic period and what we see occurring now in the transfer from the universal premise (classical) to the specific nature of emotional content. As the contemporary artists tire of the absolutes the pursuit of meaning is forced on a primary source to convey emotive content. This accounts for the theatrical atmosphere that surrounds a great deal of contemporary art. In the theater genre, there is an atmosphere dependent on the contact between the actor/actress and the audience. It

is a quality of presence that delineates the receiver'ship of information and its hierarchical stance as primary information as opposed to secondary information. In contemporary society there is little opportunity of receiving information first hand. This has in some ways undermined some of the charm and positive power of first hand witness. It is in this theater atmosphere that multiplicity is taken as a cue to a captive sensibility. There are the objects (furniture), the dialogue (content), plot (context) and stage (image). Within this structural manipulation of the senses is an aesthetic distance that is dependent on and based in confrontation and presence. The consequence in theater is a linear logic based in literature, but when applied to the stable limitations of the plastic arts there is an ambiguity created by the absence of the theatrical context. Without category guides in which the sensory confrontation is held in check, the ambiguity becomes a result of the process. The stable nature of the art object does not by nature duplicate the theater presence and therefore has the tendency to either become static or conceptually elusive.

There is a quality in this ambiguity that creates an enigma when it successfully creates a presence. It is characterized as knowledge that is not understood but elusively recognized. A foreign language has this quality. The letters and numbers as language symbols seem almost understandable without actually imparting any real meaning/content but the form is quite evident and although unreadable it is recognizable as being familiar. Spanish has a structural familiarity that allows us the comfort of at least recognizing certain word structures that have parallels in English, thereby providing a key to the entire sentence. There is also a quality represented by an unfamiliar foreign language that has to do with strictly a visual image. When the language symbol makes no pretence to linear language, the symbol becomes an icon or more precisely an abstraction. But with language, as noted, whether the letters are structurally familiar as in the English language or unfamiliar as in Russian, there still remains a common

underlining recognition that is a pre-tense to the conversion of thought into communication.

Multiplicity of experience, ambiguity of influence, and the theatrical narrative are all elements that are touched on in the work of Guy de Cointet. He refers to the body of his work as paintings with the added quality of performance. The performed paintings have a presence that touches on the romantic notion that not all lives content must be revealed to exist as experience but when it is, the mystery must not be torn from the substance of experience for fear that the sparkle will dull.

There are, as indicated, a number of levels that must be dealt with in a sequence that will reveal comprehensively the entirety of the work. For the purpose of clarity, I will deal with only one work; "Going To The Market".

Guy begins with a preconceived shape, designed angularly but within structural possibilities. Once the shape has been defined, letters and numbers are laid out in vertical and horizontal manner that represents a familiar cross-word puzzle pattern. Each letter and number is carefully spaced. At times the letters become connected not by spacing but by the accident of forming a word. The aesthetics having been decided, a story is constructed using the letters or words or number combinations that had been formed to fit the configuration. Not all letters number or possible word combinations are used, leaving a surplus of possibilities either to continue the story with new story variations or just to let a concerned spectator create an addition. The unused letters without the benefit of performance makes the paintings appear un-cipherable but the allowance of the surplus is an indication that the constructed story is not an end in itself but merely one aspect of a continuing process. There is no Rosetta Stone, once the story is revealed there is no key (language) that will de-cipher the next piece. Thus the entire piece becomes a cipher, not in its attempts to unravel in explicit terms itself, but as a code that represents the process by which it was created. The story "Going To The Market" is revealed through the performance and is created from the letters layed-out. What letters are used are put into script form and a professional actor or actress is hired to perform the painting. The acting of the painting is done with the same

dramatics as a scripted play.

As the actress begins, the story starts with a party where ROZ (in the painting its spelled ZOR) comes to the conclusion that there is a strain in her relationship with ADUL (38 year old man from UK United Kingdom) so she decides to leave the party. On leaving the party she heads toward the river on a dark road. The river is indicated by that part of the frame and is painted black. ADUL feeling some remorse also leaves the party to go home. The actress in pointing this out gestures to the bottom of the frame. ADUL, his mind pre-occupied with thoughts of ROZ plunges deep into a forrest covered with vines. This is indicated by the left side of the frame that is painted green. Because it is very dark, ADUL is only able to drive 35 miles an hour (35H). As he approaches the end of the forrest his mind wonders back to thoughts of ROZ and he mistakingly makes a right turn towards the market (VONS market) instead of left towards home. ADULS error goes unnoticed as he is struck by the beauty of an orange SUNRISE. This is indicated by the part of the frame that is painted orange. Meantime Roz is not without problems herself having reached the river she has managed to fall in but luckily she is sighted by two men (MEN) who pull her from the water. Just as she is helped from the water ADUL, still thinking of ROZ rounds the corner in his car and sights ROZ being helped. There eyes meet and they are re-united. End of performance. Thus the story is revealed but more importantly the process of creating the story is revealed. The method of creating romantic melodrama that has both theatrical presence and ambiguity in experience, has the tendance to take on soap opera elements, punctuate this by assigning literary meaning to color (orange—Sunrise) and the primitive association of word and symbol appear simplistic. But, this is not the effect created by "Going To The Market", from beginning to end the unrevealed simplicity of the story has an aura of complexity by the intimidating abstraction of letters. But once the story is revealed it appears so simple that the mind is relieved of the burden of the complexity. This moment of relief allows the mind to touch a childlike vision of self-discovery. It is a familiar process that is reminiscent of novelty matchbooks. Where an image is hidden within landscape and only after careful study does the image appear. Once the

"hidden image" is discovered it is easily found again. This analogy only describes the effect of a process and only points out the delicate nature and balance that Guy impresses on his work. The process involved in working these elements represent an homogeneous entity of various sensibilities. It is only because of this quality that the work is able to incorporate so many levels from conceptual to visual successfully.

Its difficult to describe this sensitive representation of process, simply because the total effect of Guys work is not an object observed and understood. When a child lies down on the ground and stares at the clouds, searching for familiar images it is an act that fascinates the mind and represents an empirical faith in romance and dreams. This is exactly the quality that Guy shares with us. He tells the story he sees but leaves the process open and accessible to others. This represents a tremendous duplication of the ambiguity that is present in life as each of us defines, alters, and changes the meaning of language to fit the expressive moment.

We understand now but will we understand later, this is not a concern of Guys but demonstrates the fragile breath of poetry for the delicacy of living. It is a quality that is unassuming and does not intrude upon the harsh speculation of daily survival, but reminds us the mind must at some point stop to breath of reason and allow the freshness of vision to dream.

Beyond the delicacy of this poetry is the process that re-instates the balance between the romantic narrative and the power of visual integrity. Within the quiet quality of Guys work is the assumption that all human experience as expression must be allowed an ambiguity at least as intense as the experience. But when revealed it must be as simple as insight is when the catharsis has ebbed, the mind relaxed, it recognizes the obvious.

There is in Guys work a complex but subtle quality that deals directly with the levels of multiplicity as experience. He provides presence with thought and at the same time creates an enigma based in our suspicion of things not understood but with which we are attracted to because of our faith in logic and reason. Just as the child stares at the clouds and dreams of things there, we with crowded mind must also not forget the simple pleasures of reading the clouds.



GOING TO THE MARKET performed by Peg Shirley

Photographs by Helene Gaillet



The PORTRAIT REVIEW is owned and distributed by Gerard Brane and George Miller, Suite 14- 1914 South Vermont Ave. - Los Angeles - Calif. 90007. Manuscript material submitted will be handled with care but the publisher assumes no responsibility for it. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by return postage and return envelope.

All enquiries into manuscript publication of artists should be directed to George Miller c/o THE PORTRAIT REVIEW; Suite 14- 1914 South Vermont, Los Angeles, California 90007.

All subscriptions and contributions should be sent to THE PORTRAIT REVIEW Suite 14, 1914 South Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, Calif. 90007