

Birds of Mars Digest

Number Twenty-one

February 2024



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Comments

[24-22] Plans for Next Paintings
Pencil on Paper, 11x.5 inches

In early February I took another look at the series of 12x12 inch paintings from 2021 that I still had in my studio. I determined that some of them are actually unfinished, and I felt encouraged to work on them some more. These paintings include the following: 07-Hemingway Typing, 08-Sylvia Plath, 26-Test Palette, 29-Glaze Study, 30-Under the Bridge, 38-Color Wheel 3, and an unnumbered Sylvia Plath. I wrote out my thoughts about each painting, and considered what my plan of action was to be. I then gave myself an indefinite time period to complete this since I wanted to proceed deliberately. Previously I had considered these paintings finished, and would have never painted over them, but now that I was creating a new art philosophy I was allowing myself to do just this.

[24-23] Design for Color Key 2
Pencil on paper, 11x8.5

As written about previously I had decided that I wasn't going to exhibit [24-14] Color Key with the other paintings at the Woodstar, because it no longer matched the design sensibility of the group. I also didn't want to alter it, because I liked the fact that it documented the colors I was using at the time—how I was mixing them. I wanted to document those hues by having that information within the painting itself. Plus I liked how it looked—it had some lettering that looked as if maybe it was made using a stencil. So I kept that painting for myself, and worked on a design for the new color key painting—one intended to be exhibited with some of the other paintings from the group. It ended up being what look like stripes.

[24-24] Color Key 2
Acrylic on canvas, 12x12 inches
Repurposed canvas [2021-26 Test Palette]

This painting is simply a key to the colors used in the group of music paintings. A key to which color represents which note. It is also an investigation into these colors. I could have arranged them differently. Here they are in the order as they appear on the keys of the piano.



[24-25] Color Wheel 3
Acrylic on canvas, 12x12 inches
Continued canvas [2021-38 Color Wheel 3]

This is a canvas which I began back in 2021 as the third of a series of color studies which I was making at the time. This painting doesn't seem to be mentioned in any previous Digests. It was numbered on the back—"November #38". Along with the un-numbered 'Letters' painting it appears to be the last of the group of thirty-nine 12x12 inch paintings from 2021. Shortly thereafter I began a new group of paintings—the "8x10 series.

Working on this painting was at first just using the form that was already there, and adding colors from my newly established palette. I had a good method now for mixing the paints and a way of setting up my palette.

As I was working on this painting I felt that it would look more interesting if there was some dimensionality so I began a study [24-31]. Over the course of a few days I worked on the painting and the study continually modifying both until the painting began to look how I had envisioned it. This was an interesting process for me. Usually I make the study and then work on the painting and it either looks

good or it doesn't, and then that is the end of the painting. But now I was going back to the original study—the drawing on paper—and changing that. I kept going back and forth, and over a few weeks, with a lot of time spent looking at the unfinished painting trying to figure out how to improve it. This process continued over a week or two until it was done.

At the time I was reading a book about M. C. Escher and I started thinking in terms of impossible dimensions, which this painting has some elements of. Eventually I had finished it—I couldn't think of anything else to do.



[24-26] Music for Creativity
Piano improvisations in a modern style.
22 min. 49 sec.

I have hundreds of recordings of me playing piano from the past five plus years. These are the artifacts of a practice routine which I fell into at some point. I somehow got into the habit of recording myself playing piano—usually improvising around an idea, or practicing certain chord changes or chord progressions. Then I would listen to that a few times over the course of a few days. Then I would make a new recording and listen to that one. I'd end up with ten to twenty hours a week of recordings. Then I would move on to a new musical concept I wanted to investigate. I'm not sure what to do with all of those recordings, because within them are some real gems, but to listen through all of it would be near impossible. I've mostly forgotten where the parts I'd want to develop are; I didn't notate anything. I'm estimating that it is around 700—1000 hours of piano recordings, and probably another 300 hours of the saxophone.

This recording is one that I wanted to put online because it relates to the paintings I was making at the time. It is called "Music for Creativity". I have personally found that this music is good for stimulating creativity. It is based upon my studies in Thorough Bass, the musical language of the Baroque. The music is a musical interpretation of [24-12] The Expanded Key of C.



(24-27] What is Poetry? Part One Process...Practice
QVGA Documentary
30 min. 38 sec.

This is the first part of an ongoing documentary I am making with poets. In this part each poet reads one of their poems, and they share their thoughts relating to how they create their poems. The featured poets are Michael Favala Goldman reading “Enough”, Howie Faerstein reading “False Spring—Unaccountable”, Tommy Twilite reading his poem “Oswald”, and LD Green presenting “Land of the Lonely”.

[24-28, 24-29, 24-30] Letter Studies/Templates
pencil/ink on card, 7x5 inches

These are heavy cards, archival quality. They are usually used as backings for small framed artworks, but I like to use them to make art on—I have many hundreds of these ‘small works’. These ones were made mostly to measure out letters for some of the January music paintings. One of them has things written on both sides, while the other two are repurposed cards, and have some older ‘art’ on the backs. I almost threw these away because they no longer have a purpose since I’ll just make a new one for a new painting, but I decided to keep them since I find them interesting to look at. I have a paper bag labeled 2024 and I will put them in there with some of the unusual sized artworks I’ve already made this year. This is part of my philosophy—keep all the art from any year together so I can move it around quicker and it’s already organized.

[24-35] Snowy Day
Acrylic on canvas, 12x12 inches

This painting is based on a photo I once took. I've made a few paintings based on this image over the years. I was working on it, and it seemed finished, so I quickly exhibited it with a very affordable price.



[24-40] Grid Studies, Folder A

Pencil on paper, 11x8.5"

Studies for paintings using 1x1 centimeter grid.

The idea of creating these grid studies is a result of applying some of the principles of my developing art philosophy. Since I was now listing all artworks I created in the artwork index in the Digests, I wanted a different place for that which I had previously listed separately—the drawing sheets—which in this case are grid studies. Since there are usually so many of these I noticed and realized that it was and would make the artwork list confusing to include them there (as I had been doing in January and this month until now). About the same time I started working with a grid—primarily for making studies for specific paintings. I was developing an expanding ‘grid theory’. It seemed like a good idea to create a separate folder for these studies so they would all be in one place.

Initially these were just using a pencil (graphite), but then I started working with color pencil as well, and was encouraged by some of the results. I decided to assemble a group of color pencils based on the palette I had created for the music paintings. These aren’t necessarily ever considered ‘finished’.

- i Angle Degrees
- ii Flowers, Barons
- iii Woodstar Cupcake
- iv Woodstar Cupcake
- v Bottles, Glasses
- vi Glass, Chess Pieces
- vii Twist Bottle Cap
- viii Woodstar Front, Fire Hydrant, Person

This list continues in Birds of Mars Digest Number 22.