7-8-1991

Passionate hours

Douglas E. Taylor

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Recommended Citation
A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Fine and Applied Arts
in Candidacy for the Degree of
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

PASSIONATE HOURS

By
Douglas E. Taylor

July 8, 1991
Advisor: Ed Miller  
Date: 8. 3. 91  

Associate Advisor: Judd Williams  
Date: 3/Aug/91  

Associate Advisor: Tina Lent  
Date: 5/Aug/1991  

Special Assistant to the Dean for Graduate Affairs: Phil Bornath  
Date: 8/9/91  

Dean, College of Fine and Applied Arts: Peter Giopulos  
Date: 8/13/91  

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Date: 5/Aug/91
INTRODUCTION

This is the written document to accompany the thesis project Passionate Hours (ill. 11). The project consists of five paintings arranged into a U-shaped configuration with one large panel in the center and two smaller panels on each side. The paintings are predominantly in primary colors and depict scenes from the Passion of Christ interspersed with scenes from the Old Testament. The panels present a nightmarish vision due to the expressive style with which I painted the figures. In the following pages, I will explain the meaning of the paintings, the theology behind them, and the process of their creation. I divided this explanation into four parts: "Events of the Passion", "Doctrine Concerning the Passion", "Process", and finally Passionate Hours. "Events of the Passion" consists mostly of quotations from the Gospel according to Matthew recording the events of the Passion. As the project is about the Passion, I felt that the reader should know the scriptural sources. Throughout the passages, though, I have included explanations of some of the people and their motives. I have also put into bold type the passages which I used in the paintings. Concerning the bold type, the reader may note that the quotations recorded here are not the same as what are on the paintings. That is because of the different versions used. I used the King James version in the paintings, but, for the sake of clarity, I used the New International version here in the written part of the
project. In "Doctrine Concerning the Passion," I shall briefly explain of the theology behind the crucifixion of Christ. This is very important because I'm not simply discussing the beliefs of a certain Western subculture, I'm discussing my beliefs about the significance of the Passion. Had I not been a Christian, I almost certainly would not have done this thesis. These paintings came forth from my faith in my Lord Christ Jesus. Later in the thesis I will often mention the emotion of the work. "Doctrine" attempts to explain why I feel so strongly towards my Savior and thus, the painting. The section entitled "Process" is actually divided into three parts. In the first part I discuss how I got started on the project. In the second part, I reveal what I researched to prepare for the project and how the gained knowledge was actually applied. In the third part, I discuss the process of creating the paintings themselves. Finally, in *Passionate Hours*, also in three parts, I observe and analyze the paintings' content, characteristics, and the materials used.
THE EVENTS OF THE PASSION

In this section I shall briefly show what Jesus was saying that made him so unpopular. Then I will use the Gospel with some explanations to show the sequence of events of the Passion of Christ Jesus and briefly give some historical backgrounds of the relevant people. As the thesis is about the Passion, I feel that the reader should be familiar with the scriptural text as there are so many misconceptions about the Passion.

[Jesus] went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the vineyard so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one they also beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.

"Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.'"

...[then] teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. (Luke 20:9-16a, 19)

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you to do. But do not do what
they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

"Everything they do is done for men to see: They... love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the market place and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill, and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law--justice, mercy, and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat and swallow a camel... You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! ... You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but inside they are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. (Matthew 23:1-6,23-27)

Jesus spent about three years preaching, working miracles and getting involved with increasingly bitter arguments with the "Pharisees and teachers of the law." The above quote was spoken a few days before his execution, not surprisingly. Jesus seldom started these incidents. More often than not, the instigators were the Jewish leaders who were trying to "trap Jesus by his words," thereby giving them something which they could use to discredit Jesus. Some times, though, they were simply complaining, more or less sincerely, about the way he was doing things. A typical example:

On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over
and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity." Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God.

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, [the Pharisees taught that virtually nothing was to be done on the Sabbath, the Day of Rest] the synagogue rulers said to the people, "There are six days of work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath."

The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing. (Luke 13: 10-17)

W. E. Vine gives the following information about the Pharisees:

The Pharisees...appear...in the latter half of the second century B.C., though they represent tendencies traceable much earlier in Jewish history....the [Pharisees], whose fundamental principle was complete separation from non-Jewish elements, were the strictly legal party among the Jews, and were ultimately the more popular and influential party. In their zeal for the law they almost defied it and their attitude became merely external, formal, and mechanical. They laid stress, not upon the righteousness of an action, but upon its formal correctness. Consequently their opposition to Christ was inevitable; His manner of life and teaching was essentially a condemnation of theirs; hence his denunciation of them. (Vine 863)

The reason for these arguments was, simply put, jealousy. They were now ready to kill Jesus to get back what he was taking from them. Jesus had a devoted following, literally millions
of admirers, and people all over the region were talking about him. In short, Jesus had prestige, fame, and honor; all while making them look like fools. Jesus had not been preaching for very long before the Pharisees were holding counsel on ways to do away with him. The single biggest obstacle to accomplishing this was the people; they were all convinced that, at the very least, he was a prophet sent from God and at the very worst (from the Pharisees point of view) he was God himself, come to deliver them from the Romans.

In 47 B.C. Julius Caesar gave...the right of appeal to Caesar to all Jews. Furthermore, they received freedom from military service, and were given the right to meet and assemble together according to their own customs and laws.

In 37 B.C. Herod the Great, by the aid of Roman troops, deposed the last Asmonian prince [the Asmonians had ruled Palestine since 165 B.C.] and became the nominal sovereign of the Jews, subject to Rome. He betrayed his people to the Romans, fostered immorality, cultivated alien customs, encouraged mistrust, corrupted the priesthood [not the same body of people as the Pharisees] and massacred many nobles. This loss of temporal power drove the Jews to a state of pride over the past and made them rebellious...against the Romans. Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers became more esteemed than priests and Levites. (Dake "Between the Testaments" 930)

The Pharisees apparently felt that they could sway people's opinions against Christ if they could have some time with them without him around. To do this, they essentially needed to kidnap him while nobody was looking, or at least not that many people. The job of swaying public opinion was apparently not as difficult as might be assumed. By the third year of Jesus' ministry, Jesus
had already been teaching some very odd lessons and had proven to most people that he was not going to oust the Romans. Perhaps all the Pharisees needed was some time to play off of the disillusionment. That chance to address the people without Jesus around came through the person of Judas Iscariot. It was he who told the Pharisees where they could find Jesus nearly alone. The Gospel according to John records that Judas became indignant because a woman poured expensive perfume on Jesus' feet, not because of the waste, which was the reason he gave, but because he was greedy and wanted to sell the perfume to make some money. Matthew records the same event and adds:

...[Then] one of the twelve--the one called Judas Iscariot--went to the chief priests and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over. (Matthew 26: 14-16)

There are a surprising number of misconceptions about Judas. Many authors, playwrights, theologians, and others have speculated or even claimed to know why Judas betrayed Jesus and the answers have typically leaned towards an impassioned but misled patriot. Some have claimed that he was disillusioned with Christ. Some have suggested that Judas, by turning him over to the Pharisees hoped that that would force Jesus' hand; he would have to call down the powers of heaven to save himself, thereby proving he was sent from God. But, the fact of the matter is that the Bible gives no specific reason for the act and Jesus
Christ himself, who is always swift to forgive, gave the very gravest of condemnations to the "one who would betray the [Christ]." The point is, the Bible gives no indication that Judas was trying to act for the good of anyone other than himself. Any other suggestion to the contrary is mostly conjecture. We get only one hint that Judas may have been up to something other than getting more money. Early in chapter twenty seven of the Gospel according to Matthew, Judas, when "he saw that Jesus was condemned" tried to return the money to the priests. When they refused to accept it, he went out and hung himself. Whether he expected Jesus would be let off or saved or whether he had a change of heart, we simply don't know. All we do know is that by the time Judas repented, it was too late; Jesus was already condemned.

Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled...
The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death. But they did not find any though many false witnesses came forward. (Matthew 26: 57, 59-60a)

The Sanhedrin was the rough equivalent to our Supreme Court. It tried all of the most important cases and heard appeals from lower courts. It consisted of seventy one of the most important religious leaders of Israel (Dake "St. Matthew" 31).

Then the high priest stood up and said to Jesus,
"Are you not going to answer? What is the testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent.

The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the son of God."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the mighty one and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need anymore witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death (bold mine)," they answered.

Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. Others slapped him and said, "Prophesy to us, Christ. Who hit you?" (Matthew 26: 62-68)

What makes this trial even more ironic and tragic is that they all knew what Jesus had done and most of them had probably even seen him work miracles and heard him teach. What is more, they probably all knew that if their Scriptures were true, then this man had to have been sent from God and everything he was saying was true.

Early in the morning, all the chief priests and the elders of the people came to the decision to put Jesus to death. They bound him, led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. (Matthew 27:1-2)

"Pontius Pilate was the sixth Roman procurator of Judea... His arbitrary administration nearly drove the Jews to insurrection on two or three occasions." After a number of disturbances and near insurrections, he was sent to Rome to answer charges being brought against him and soon afterwards,
killed himself. (Smith 519)

...Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"
"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.
When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him,
"Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge--to the great amazement of the governor.
(Matthew 27:11-14)

Pilate knew what was going on. According to Matthew, "he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him." He did not want to put an innocent man to death, so he did what he probably thought would settle the matter forthrightly. Every year at this time he released a prisoner of the Jew's choice. This year he narrowed the choice to two -- Jesus or Barabbas. Barabbas was being held for robbery and murder during an insurrection. (Smith 76)

So when the crowds had gathered, Pilate asked them, "Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus, who is called Christ."
But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and to have Jesus executed. (Matthew 27: 17, 20)

Logically, it would seem that the crowd that hailed Jesus "king of the Jews" a week ago would leap at the opportunity to have him released from prison. Why the priests were able to turn the crowd so easily is a mystery. Perhaps they had already given up on him. Perhaps the priests were excellent orators. Perhaps
Barabbas was a hero in the eyes of the Jews. But, whatever the reason, the choice was made.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.

Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own cloths on him. Then they led him away to crucify him. (Matthew 27:24-31)
DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE PASSION

This section is an attempt to explain the significance of the Passion to Christians and thus to the paintings. These paintings are not just anyone's assessment of the Passion. I am a born-again Christian and this project is an observance of the events that formed the cornerstone of my faith in my Lord, Christ Jesus. Thus, to understand the significance of the paintings to me, one needs to understand (at least to some extent) the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus.

I will begin with the Old Testament as some of the best explanations of the Passion were given long before it even took place. The passage below was written in Palestine by Isaiah about 792-722 B.C. (Dake "Notes on Isaiah" 730) Isaiah was a prophet, one of many who would decry the wickedness of the time, predict the doom that was coming because of that wickedness and prophesy of a time when the Lord himself would come to set things straight.

Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of the lord been revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender shoot,
and like a root out of dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering.
Like one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:1-6) [as appears in the New International Version of the Bible]

Isaiah is speaking about the Lord. He describes Jesus' physical appearance by saying what he was not, namely, anything remarkable to look at. He then describes people's reaction to his suffering; people despised him, thinking he had been struck down by God. Then he says why God afflicted him so. He suffered for our wrong-doings. Isaiah understood that Christ's sacrifice of himself would be the true sacrifice to pay for the sins of the world, both past and future. When Isaiah says "our iniquities" he is speaking for the human race.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer,
and though you [meaning God] make his life a guilt offering,
he will see his offspring and prolong his days
and the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)

In other words, God damned Jesus temporarily so that we might not have to be. It was the Lord's will that he suffer in our place. This is just one example of the prophecies about Christ Jesus. Prophesies of the life of Christ fill the Old
Testament, all of which ultimately point to the salvation that would come through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Until that time, Israel had to continuously pay for the sins of the nation by the blood of sheep and oxen. Below is the commandment concerning the guilt offering, spoken of earlier. This is just one of the many different sacrifices that had to be offered.

The Lord said to Moses: "When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the Lord's holy things, he is to bring to the Lord as penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering. He must make restitution for what he has failed to do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priests, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven. (Leviticus 5: 14-16)

The Jews understood that the ultimate cost of sin was death and that the only way to be forgiven of a sin against the Lord was for something else to be burned in the sinner's place, usually an animal. The "sinner" would bring the appropriate animal to the priests who would kill it and burn some or all of it on the altar, depending on what type of offering it was, and then ask the Lord to forgive that person. That person would then be forgiven--of that particular sin. When that person sinned again, he would have to again enter the sanctuary and have another animal sacrificed to cover that sin. Furthermore, every year, the high priest would, after numerous sacrifices had been
made, enter the most sacred part of the sanctuary (called the Most Holy Place) and ask the Lord to forgive the nation of Israel for the many sins which had not been covered that year by the proper sacrifices.

...[but] Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9: 24-28)

This is from the letter to the Hebrews which was probably written by Paul from his prison cell in Rome about 68 A.D. (Dake "Notes on Hebrews" 256) The above passage talks about the role Christ's crucifixion played in the heavenly scheme of things and if it seems a bit enigmatic, that's understandable. To summarize and explain, Christ is both the priest offering the sacrifice to God and the sacrifice being offered; he offered himself as sacrifice. The crucifixion of Christ is the sacrifice which I am talking about. By sacrificing himself, Christ saves us from the wrath of God by paying for our sins. Because I have accepted Christ Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I am no longer under God's judgment. Christ's death assures me of that. Because
he was resurrected from the dead, I know that he will carry me beyond death to be in heaven with him. I love my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ because of what he did for me through his death and because of the hope he gives me by his resurrection. The love and the hope is what fired the inspiration for this painting. Even though this painting depicts hatred and violence, I was only able to paint that by standing in the peace that the Lord gives me.
PROCESS

I have been painting for many years, but have turned to overtly religious subject matter only during the past year or so. Being raised in the deep south, I was always uncomfortably aware of the presence of religion (especially Protestantism) and its insistence on uniformity. This presence showed itself through the vast number of religious programs on the mass media, the churches which seemed to be on every corner, the billboards, signs, bumper stickers and, of course, all the people who were in some way associated with it all. I myself was (and still am) born again and was brought up in a religious home as were most of my friends. Yet, in spite of my close association with religion, I still refused to do any religious art work. There was simply so much that was either overly sentimental or just plain kitsch. I felt there was no way I could do any serious work in that kind of environment.

Moving up to Rochester got me out of that environment. The people I have met here were either brought up Catholic, but no longer practiced the faith, or simply had little to do with religion at all. I found that to be liberating. In this collegiate environment I could freely talk about my particular beliefs and there were very few kitsch religious images to annoy me.

What got me pointed towards the actual thesis was a simple color sketch that I did towards the end of the winter quarter
of 1990 (ill 1). At the time, I was still working on the Corporate Windows suite, but was beginning to look for a new direction to work in (ill 2). During this time, I was producing a lot of sketches of ideas I had. One of them was an idea from two places, a combination of a Biblical event and a serigraph I had seen done while at high school. The latter was a whole square made up of small portraits, like what you get from a studio when your portrait is made. Each picture had a small amount of crimson paint smeared across it which progressively spread until the final picture was a small square of red. I was thinking of creating several identical images of Christ's back then adding progressively more red to each one. With some help, that one sketch was enough to get me started on the new direction I had been looking for.

The help came from Lawrence Williams. I had actually put the sketch aside, thinking it to be an eventual dead-end, but he strongly encouraged me to pursue the idea. I think one of the aspects he saw in that sketch was something that had been formerly missing in my previous work: spontaneity. The sketch was not overly concerned with formal aesthetic considerations and, since it was just a sketch, I was not afraid to let a little feeling show. For my own part, I was, as I have already stated, ready to try something else, so I began what is now called The Flogging (ill 3), which was a far cry from the Corporate Windows. The Flogging was still pretty conservative both in presentation and in style, but it was a breakthrough for me.
The colors were blended over the whole piece; outlines and specific areas were no longer necessary. Furthermore, this was no longer a generic person in a particular kind of place as in Corporate Windows. Place was no longer important. All emphasis was now on the figure. Furthermore, these figures were not just anyone, these were specific people recognizable even without their faces shown. One of those figures was Christ himself, a person very dear to me. This piece was completed in the spring of 1990, but it established the general direction, content-wise, of my thesis.

I spent the summer of 1990 researching three main areas: 1) iconography; 2) altar pieces; 3) modern work with religious content or similar styles or concerns. I will treat each one separately and discuss how each affected the development of the thesis.

Iconography was the topic most researched, and conversely, least used. I think there are two main reasons for this: style and use. The style I was working with was increasingly loose and personal. The marks and strokes were thrown onto the canvas in whatever manner I happened to want. Traditional iconography, on the other hand, dictates regulation or sameness, that is, control and uniformity. Iconography was a language to be read and understood. It was to be clear and legible. Thus, the use determined the style and determined for me that I could not use traditional iconography. I simply felt that that much control would not be in the spirit of the thesis. But, as the piece
progressed, I did want to direct the viewer's thoughts to some extent. Icons did that several hundred years ago in Europe. As there really is no iconographic system in late twentieth-century America, the English language would have to do. Therefore I incorporated sentences using quotes from the King James version of the Bible about the trial of Jesus. Unlike iconography which was to clarify and teach doctrine, these sentences would serve only to direct the viewer's thoughts and add life to the characters seen. This was a conscious decision. Very early on, I decided that there was no way I could get Christian doctrine across strictly with the paintings and that's really not what they were about. The thesis paintings were as much my personal look at the events leading up to the crucifixion of Christ as they were simply presenting it to others. Even if people didn't know that this was the Passion they were looking at, they would understand that they were looking at violence put upon a man and have some idea why.

The idea to use text actually came from Tina Lent. Her concern was that to most viewers today, anything even slightly removed from the most traditional of images (namely, the crucifix) was going to be lost on them. Images drawn from what is, artistically, such obscure sources would certainly mean little to viewers who had no idea what they referred to. In the past, iconography had been one of the tools used to help clarify the picture. Another tool had been actual text, typically either on a scroll overhead or words actually coming out of
the speaker's mouth. In pointing this out to me, she had directed me to the best option I could have chosen. I felt that I really could not teach people about the Passion in a few paintings, but, text could give some direction to the viewer. While they might not know that that was Caiaphas pronouncing that Jesus was guilty, they would know that someone was about to be executed, and probably unjustly. Right away I began experimenting with different forms of text to use with or in the final thesis (ill 4).

As for the altarpiece, I studied the Isenheim Altarpiece at length because it so graphically shows the violence upon Christ's body (ill 5). That kind of power was what I wanted to give to my paintings. The paintings of the altarpiece had, even in their careful renderings, an incredible vitality and life. To my knowledge, none of the images directly influenced my paintings, rather, it was their strength, indeed, their brutality that I wanted to capture.

Another source of powerful imagery came from such artists as James Ensor and Max Beckmann (ill 6,7). There are certain similarities that cannot be denied, and I did indeed look at the Expressionists carefully. The difference was the intent. Their use of certain Biblical events were, more often than not, metaphors for what they saw happening in Germany during the 1920's and '30's (Barron 31). My thesis, on the other hand, was not a metaphor for anything other than the principles which derived from the actions depicted. Perhaps even more importantly,
Christ in Agony, Ensor (Ensor)
Illustration #6
Descent from the Cross, Beckmann (Lackner)
Illustration #7
the audiences of 1920's Germany probably had at least some idea what the artist was "getting at." My works would probably be interpreted in many different ways with violence being the only common denominator.

There are, though, two modern artists who had works that deeply influenced me. Frances Bacon's *Pope Valentine* (ill 8) and the sketches of faces done by Giacometti (ill 9). I was drawn to the styles they used to depict facial expressions. Bacon caught the motion of a scream and the raw emotion that came with it. Giacometti's faces made from simple lines formed people that looked as mindless as zombies. Early on, that portrayal of violence and thoughtlessness was something I knew I wanted to capture.

By the end of August, 1990, I had studied Christian iconography, the Passion as recorded in the Gospels, the Isenheim Altarpiece and other relevant paintings, and had some vague images dancing about in my head. I remembered a friend in Tennessee who produced small paintings to work out problems of color and composition. I felt the same technique would work to clarify what I wanted to do for my thesis. I produced twelve small color sketches that depicted both the Passion, as well as some Old Testament scenes (ill 10). In traditional iconography, Old Testament events and prophets were often used to explain New Testament doctrine (Grabar 146). I felt such a tactic could be useful to me as I was thinking a lot about Christ as the sacrifice to end all sacrifices. Thus, along with
Illustration #8
292. Trois têtes, 1962

Illustration #9 (Giacometti)
the images of the passion were images of the ancient Levitical sacrifices, that is, the sacrificial rituals of the ancient Hebrews. Even if viewers didn't know what they were about, I felt the images would still add to the drama of the piece.

One very important aspect of the research was the almost stark absence in art of the most crucial group in the Passion besides Christ himself--the Pharisees. As quoted above, they were the ones responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. The Romans, acting under Pilate, were just responding to the pressure from the Pharisees. Yet, if I were to base my knowledge of the Passion solely on the works of art that have been created about it, I wouldn't know that the Sanhedrin even existed. Furthermore, I couldn't find a reason explaining why. While it is certainly possible that I simply didn't dig deeply enough, I nevertheless felt that my research had been thorough enough to show that few historians, if any, even knew they were missing, let alone offer up an explanation for their absence from all western art.

This was an extremely important discovery. Early on I wanted to create images of Caiaphas ripping his garment and of the priests beating Jesus. I also wanted the works to have strong ties with the vast amount of western Medieval art that is concerned with the Passion, but, there was nothing to tie in with as far as Caiaphas and his entourage were concerned. That essentially meant that I would have to choose between the Pharisees or art history. I chose the Pharisees. The potential strength and emotion of these images were too great to give
up or compromise because of art historical tradition. This, coupled with the absence of traditional iconography for the scene, led me to completely abandon art historical precedents. In the past I had based my paintings on formal aesthetic concerns and interests in art history. The thesis, on the other hand, would have to be guided first and foremost by how I felt.

About the use of emotion in these works: this wasn't really a completely conscious decision. It sprang from my own feelings about the Passion and was encouraged by my abandonment of traditional precedent. Emotion began to show in the earliest works and, with the encouragement of the faculty, I let my feelings dictate, to a large extent, what the final painting would look like. This allowed me to strip away virtually all of the additions that somehow got into the more traditional images of the life of Christ. My paintings centered on the drama and nothing else: no servants, no court jesters, and no patrons of the artist. The lack of traditional costuming and clearly defined background also helped to bring the viewer's attention to the expressions and the actions, the text, and the emotions of the works.

After I completed the twelve small works, the actual thesis developed very quickly (albeit partly out of necessity). I made many sketches from models for references with positions and proportions. I created a few test pieces to further develop the style and text type I would use for the actual thesis (ill 4). I decided on the number and size shortly thereafter. From
there, I developed the piece to the best of my satisfaction with the time that was allowed.
PASSIONATE HOURS

I have divided this section into three parts. In the first part I shall discuss the materials used for Passionate Hours. In the second part I shall discuss the work as a whole, and the third part will be an explanation of each individual painting.

As for the materials, most of the paintings consist of oil paints thinly scrubbed onto unstretched canvas with brushes. I did this repeatedly over all the paintings to achieve, for lack of a better term, the best or most pronounced color. If there are not enough coats of paint on the canvas, the paintings tend to look washed out or weak. I sometimes used sand paper in areas where the paint became too thick. Since I applied the paint in thin coats, having paint that was too thick in some areas would look out of place and sloppy. I used raw cotton duck, about sixty inches high. Paintings A, B, D, and E were about forty five inches long and painting C was about 144 inches long (ill 12). I used oil pastels and graphite in the hands and faces to help create the features and to shade the paint in those areas. I usually applied the pastels and graphite thickly then spread and smoothed them with my fingers or scrubbed them into the surrounding paint with a brush with either paint or thinner on it. I used thinner extensively; the mixture consisted of one part turpentine and one part Liquin, a glazing medium made by Winsor and Newton.

How to do the text, though, presented me with a bit of
a puzzler. After a number of experiments, I decided that the best option would be to use quotes taken directly from the King James version in a san-serif style of letter. The King James was used simply because I felt it looked best in large, black letters on canvas. The way the letters were put on the canvas was also very important. They could not look as if they had been added on as an afterthought, they needed to be in among the layers of paints and pastels. I found that the best method for doing that was to create the letters of several layers of oil pastels scrubbed over with thinners between the layers of paint. Unfortunately, the size of the work made this virtually impossible to accomplish; the pastel sticks simply ran out too quickly. The breakthrough came from a friend who let me use her paint sticks. Paint sticks are similar to big sticks of oil pastels. They were exactly what I needed. Paint sticks allowed me to lay down so much color that I could scrub the pastel into the surrounding paint without completely losing the text. Doing this repeatedly made them an integral part of the work. The words fade in and out of the other parts of the paintings, but are always visible and forceful. The black lines were done the same way as the letters and serve three different functions. They help to direct the text on the paintings to the figures who are saying them. They visually connect paintings A and E to B and D, respectively. The also activate some of the less active spaces in the paintings.

The ghoulish faces and skeletal hands are, naturally, to
bring the viewer into making no mistake about the intentions of these people. There were also, if I may be so informal, just a lot of fun to do. All the images of people are both simplified and exaggerated. This concentrates further on the intent of the characters and is a part of the expressiveness of the style I was using. I wanted them to be charged with a certain cruel, disconcerting power. To give a more accurate representation would, I felt, take too much time and sacrifice too much of the spontaneity I was putting into the project. Emotions seldom have the patience for analysis.

The way I have created almost stock characters have lead some people to view these as anti-Semitic works. I never intended them to be viewed that way, though at this point there is little I can do to prevent that or any other interpretation. The Passion is not about the Jews' cruelty to Christ, but about humanity's cruelty to Christ. To put it more bluntly, we all possess the ability to do cruel and neglectful acts. If we had been there at that time, we surely would have been either with the many who were screaming for Jesus' crucifixion or with the few who abandoned him in his hour of greatest need.

That sentiment is strongly implied by the U-shaped arrangement. The project was set up like a room with one wall missing. As the viewer walked in to observe the paintings, paintings A and B were one the left, painting C in front and paintings D and E were on the right. By walking into the space, the viewer becomes one of the spectators involved with the
action—the action takes place all around the viewer and he is in the center of it. I decided upon this arrangement during the summer of 1990, long before I had actually started the painting. At the time it was for a much more practical, and perhaps arrogant, reason. Simply put, I did not want my works mixed in, as it were, with the other students' works. At the time I was unaware of the effect that the U-shaped configuration could have on the viewer, but I was sure that not isolating my works in any way would severely detract from the power of them. The works were not mounted or framed in any way; they were tacked right onto the wall. While everyone I consulted agreed that the U-shaped configuration was a good idea, nobody could agree on what the best method of presentation would be. I decided that as the paintings were so harsh and unrefined, tacking the unstretched paintings to the wall would be in the best spirit of the paintings.

I made the paintings even more disturbing by largely reducing the colors to just the primary colors: red, yellow and blue. Furthermore, none of the colors exactly fit any of the others, rather like three notes, none of which are in tune to the other two. Again, this was a function of both the discomfort I was creating and of the spontaneity of the works.

The yellow is something of an abstraction from my experiences in Mexico. For several summers I worked with a missionary group in Juarez, Mexico, which is just across the border from El Paso. It is in the middle of the desert and from
about 10:00 A.M. to about 6:00 P.M. the glare from the intense light, the dust from all the traffic on unpaved roads, and the innumerable tire fires that burned throughout the city, turned almost everything into an intense yellow-gray. That glaring light made the poverty and the filth seem that much more desperate and gritty. It was that glaring quality I wanted to convey, as well as its association with unpleasantness. That is why the first trial of Jesus, on the paintings A and E, have the yellow background even though the trial actually took place at night. That spacious yellow background is disquieting in itself and also keeps the action from happening in any specific place, forcing the viewer to concentrate on the action. The peoples' yellow skin makes them look as if they don't have any blood in their veins, adding to their inhumanity.

The blue is an enigma to me. It is, of course, suitable for the sky in paintings B and D, but as for the robes, all I know is that it just seemed the appropriate color, mostly for the sake of the visual unity of the whole project. It might possibly have come from my recollection of Renaissance works showing Mary in a blue robe. That would certainly be ironic as the Pharisees, though they very much wanted to be seen as pure, were anything but.

The red is used largely for the blood seen in paintings A and C and for the slabs of meat in paintings B and D. The use of red completes, as it were, the use of primary colors and the viewers knowledge (to my satisfaction). The use of red
establishes to the viewers that they are looking at an act of violence committed in hatred.

The paintings were placed according to visual impact, not in chronological order. If placed chronologically, they would be arranged, from left to right, in the following order: D, B, E, A, C. Instead, I used a visual order: yellow--blue, blue--red, yellow--blue, blue--red, yellow--blue. By displaying them this way, I made the project into a unified whole that could be examined and thought of as a whole.

I named the work relatively quickly. The title is a combination of two titles I wanted to use: something about the final hours before the crucifixion and something about the Passion. Thus, Passionate Hours. I gave only one title to the whole project, rather than to each painting, because I had, and still do, think of the project as one painting rather than five paintings.

Paintings D and E were the first ones I began to work on. The bearded one in the center of painting E is Caiaphas rending his garment as he declares Jesus guilty of blasphemy. The two lower down are some of the Sanhedrin, seen here declaring the punishment. Painting D has the text from the figures on painting E superimposed across a scene of a slab of meat being burned on the altar. This is the sacrifice that the Jewish priests had to perform that I spoke of in "Doctrine Concerning the Passion." Juxtaposing Old and New Testament images was commonly done during the Middle ages to help explain Christian doctrine.
I used the same ploy not to explain doctrine but in the hope that the viewer would get some sense of sacrifice. Unfortunately, I don't think that happened. I believe that to most viewers, the burning slabs of meat are little more than strange, i.e. grisly, scenes for placing the text on.

Paintings A and B have a similar format to E and D, that is, a scene from the Passion next to a sacrificial scene with text. Painting A is from the first trial of Jesus. It portrays the same three men seen in painting E, representing the whole Sanhedrin, beating and mocking Jesus, the blindfolded one in the center. Painting B is a close-up, as it were, of painting D, the sacrifice.

Painting C shows the Pharisees, representing the Jews, pressing Pilate to crucify Jesus. Pilate, the one whose face can be seen, is declaring that he is not responsible and is washing his hands while the Pharisees, the ones standing around him, are accepting the responsibility. In the background, on the lower right of the painting are the Roman soldiers beating Christ. Painting C differs from the rest in its lack of an accompanying sacrifice painting. Thus, the text is superimposed right across the figures in the foreground. This break from the others is to help the project become a unified whole, for it creates the visual rhythm I noted above. At the same time, its greater size creates more interest for the whole project. As painting C has more people and more of each person shown than the other paintings, the overall lack of the traditional
traditional trappings typically found in paintings of the Passion becomes more apparent. Painting C exemplifies this and the way the most important person of the Passion is almost absent from the whole project. Jesus Christ appears in only two paintings and both times he is obscured by the action around him. I did this because, again putting Scriptures before art tradition, that's exactly what happens in the Gospels. Throughout each one, Jesus is the focal point until the end, when the Passion takes place. Then the action suddenly shifts from what Jesus is doing to what everyone around him is doing. Furthermore, Jesus' face is never seen in the project. This is for two reasons: the Bible never says what he looked like and I didn't want people to think it did, tradition notwithstanding.

One final word about the painting. I have a difficult time trying to objectively declare whether the work was successful or not. Perhaps one of the ways to judge that is to compare peoples' reactions to how I had hoped they would react. Early in the year after viewing my color sketches, Ed Miller once asked me whether I wanted to "convince the viewer or victimize them." Apparently he could see where I was headed even before I could. After a moments thought, I told him I wanted to victimize them. Though the answer was a bit tongue-in-cheek, I really don't think I've backed away from that. The more I worked, the more hateful the work became. I thought about how people resent, often violently, someone who is standing up for goodness and against corruption and negligence. If peoples'
reactions are any indication, then I believe I have accomplished two thirds of my goal. I tried to portray blind hatred and extreme violence as well as a sense of the sacrifice that was made. The most common responses I received were such words as "powerful ... disturbing .... frightening." Weeks after the show had come down, people were still telling me how powerful, disturbing, and frightening the works were. Not surprisingly, Christians who viewed the work immediately understood what was going on, but as far as I could tell, everyone else saw only violence and hatred.
After [Jesus'] suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

After he had [spoken to them] he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:3,9-11)
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