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Ann-Bridget Clarke

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Everywhere is Somewhere

by

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Some things belong in an envelope, some in a book, and some in a painting. Art enters into most aspects of life: activities, ideas, thoughts, and seeing. Objects surround us and can be used as subject matter. It is possible to use these items in commenting upon and documenting life. Personal messages are conveyed through objects represented in artwork. Maps, which are common objects, are sources for my paintings. The paintings become a means of personal expression.

The maps I choose to work with pertain to places where I live or travel to and most maps have specific personal meaning. Beyond my own insights into these objects, the works acquire their own meaning and nature. Wassily Kandinsky, a prominent figure in the development of non-objective art, called this the "inner need." A personal visual vocabulary of forms unfolds as each painting develops. All the works are different and contain unique forms.

It is necessary to have variety. Variety and change produce a thinking, feeling, seeing, and understanding human. Knowledge and enrichment are attained through diversity in life. Meeting new people, exploring new places, the change of seasons, and change in the daily routine helps to enrich life. Awareness of any changes
in our environment demonstrates the importance that even the smallest change adds variety, excitement, and stimulation. This is valid not only in daily life, but in the making of paintings. To work in different sizes, new colors and materials, to use various objects and forms, produce stimulation. Change and variation are essential.

My research centers on the development and design of cities and Kandinsky's theories on form. The significant factor in both city design and Kandinsky's forms is variation. Even though there are attempts to categorize the forms of cities, it is not entirely possible. Every city has a different form due to factors such as population, industry, and geography. Each city is unique. It is important to have changes within the city, too. Placement of parks, highways, etc., helps to motivate and stimulate the inhabitants.

Kandinsky also believed that variety is significant in the forms that he originated, developed, and worked with. In his paintings and woodcuts, the forms were independent and dependent. The forms relate to each other, yet each is its own self. Not all forms belong together and one form does not satisfy all situations. Variations in life and variations of forms are essential in our daily life.

What is form? Form is the organization and design of an object. The designs of forms are infinite. If they
were not infinite, the creative vitality that is inherent in producing various forms would not exist. A form consists of at least one edge or contour. The edge may be organically shaped or straight, etc. Form is a structure. It may be flat or dimensional and may be internally and externally visible.

Form seen externally, is a boundary line; seen internally, it is also content, and formal harmony, like color harmony, rests on the principle of inner necessity, regardless of whether the form is the outline of an object, is abstract, or is something between the two.¹

Once a form is created, the background is of importance because of the ground-object relationship. The background can, however, become part of a form through positive and negative reversal and through blending open sides of a form into the background or into another shape. Form limits an object, but design is limitless. Any object or idea can produce different forms. Simple, basic elements construct all forms, even the most intricate and complex form. "There is no figure in the world, however complex, spontaneous, or even comic, which cannot be gradually simplified, until broken down into its basic components: line and point."² A form can be any size, shape, color, or position. Form is its own self; its own entity; authentic, not imitative. Form gives an illusion of another world.
Each person sees and understands all objects differently. The wealth of shapes and forms can vary. Within the numerous forms, their relationship to each other is essential.

Placement of forms is significant not only to the execution of a work, but to the relationship of each element to the other elements. Each form relates to others as well as to the whole work. In a completed work, each element has its own purpose and function. In the organization of a work, every form has a significant and functional place in the composition. No form is a function of others, all are developed separately and made to unite and work together as a whole. The importance lies in being able to know that the form satisfies yourself, your eye, your principles. The sensation comes only from within yourself, you are content with the decision. This satisfaction is not only in art. It enters into the design of a room, the clothes one wears, the people one associates with. There is a desire to be complete and certain.

"Every form has its own meaning. Every man creates his
meaning and form and goal." This is a deeper drive into the spirit. It is to know and to live with one's inner being, the spirit, the soul. The creation of personal forms is the outward expression of the spirit. Intuition, logic, and judgement enter into the relationship of forms to each other as well as the relationship to the complete work.

It matters not whether the form is personal, national, stylistic, whether or not it stands within the contemporary mainstream, whether it is related to a few or to many forms, or whether it is unique or not, etc. etc.; but the most important point in the question of form is whether or not it springs from the inner necessity. The forms must transcend from a spiritual expression to a physical expression. The artist is a sender, a creator of a meaning. The painting is the message and the viewer may or may not receive the message. A work must be capable of existing on its own without explanation. It has its own life; it provokes enjoyment or dissatisfaction.

Lend your ears to music, open your eyes to painting. And...stop thinking! Just ask yourself whether the work has enabled you to 'walk about' in a hitherto unknown world. If the answer is yes, what more do you want. The question is not whether one likes or dislikes a work for it to have achieved its purpose, but whether it has allowed the viewer to see a different world: the spiritual world of a painting and its life. Every artist has a
message to convey. This comes from his inner voice and need.

Kandinsky pursued an idea. That idea was the expression and research of the "inner need." "The phrase 'inner need' means primarily the impulse felt by the artist for spiritual expression." Kandinsky analyzed and presented in books, essays, letters, and paintings his search for his "inner need." Through his forms, Kandinsky explored his spiritual being. His forms were chosen from within. They were his personal visual vocabulary. Each was unique and had its own meaning and spirit. To Kandinsky "every form in the world says something." No matter how complex the forms are, they can be dissected into points and lines which are the basic elements of any form. Each of his forms varies and none are exactly alike in any of his works. Each point, circle, line, color, etc., has its own function and purpose. Points and lines are freed from practical uses and become independent entities. It was Kandinsky's intuition, judgement, and logic that created and positioned each form. In some works, if one line was not present the visual harmony of the whole would be unbalanced. It is Kandinsky's decision, as it is with every artist, to place forms where they seem to compositionally work together and satisfy his/her inner need. All forms are equal. Each has its specific duty to perform for the work to be complete.
What must be remembered is that...all forms--beautiful or ugly, evocative or esoteric, concise or elaborate--have an equal right to existence. As early as 1912 Kandinsky had insisted that the artist can use any form whatsoever in order to express himself, and that he must refrain from seeking salvation in one particular form.9

There is no one perfect form. Every artist chooses different subject matter to work with and even sees the same subject matter differently. The creative spirit is reflected in the different forms and the forms reflect the creative spirit. Painting consists of ever-changing forms and one cannot rely on only one form. Variation, even the smallest change, is characteristic of life and individuals. This makes each person unique and is to be enjoyed. Variation is exciting in life as well as in art.

During the period when Kandinsky taught and painted at the Bauhaus, he became more analytical and critical about his work. The arrangement of forms and space were studied.

Forms became steadily more rigid and geometrical, until evolving into the strictly ascetic style that characterized his Bauhaus work: structured compositions where plastic play of the forms is directly invested with the creative emotion, and where the feeling lies much more in the relationship and spacing than in the forms themselves.10

Kandinsky's forms become clear and concise. The forms penetrate into his inner world. They are mystical, fanciful,
imaginative, and irrational. The forms extend beyond normal clarity and reasoning. They are superior to our daily lives. Each has its own character, personality, and existence. Kandinsky created each individual form to fulfill its own purpose. Each form constantly upholds itself throughout the whole work to resolve and complete the composition. The organization of the individual parts develops into a unity: a completed work.

Kandinsky concerns himself with the interdependence of all the parts of a work. Composition involves two requirements: "(1) the composition of the whole painting, and (2) the modification of the various individual forms and their subordination to the whole." Works are satisfying when a balance is achieved through form and color. The combination of the points and lines give a work excitement, balance, and order. Each element is necessary for the whole work to be harmonious. Each contained form becomes articulated only when it is seen as part of the whole to which it belongs. Every form is different even when it appears in other areas. The success or failure of a form depends upon the whole work that it occupies. Kandinsky searched for a variety of forms and at the same time for a unifying order.

In my research concerning cities, I have found that each city is unique in its growth patterns and spacing. Due to population, geography, climate, water supply, etc.,
both rural and urban areas are distinguishable from each other. Each city has its own requirements, needs, and geographical qualities. There are theories that attempt to analyze the space and development of each city; therefore, to place each city into certain groups. Categorization of cities is impossible because each is exceptional and irregular in its growth. There are five major spatial theories which deal with the design, growth, space, and organizational patterns of cities and rural areas.

The first theory is the Star Theory. Cities develop out from a center area along transportation lines. A star shape is formed. The areas surrounding the end points of the star are normally inhabited first. Eventually, the inner areas fill in. The Star Theory is determined by transportation methods; therefore, it is common in cities with mass transportation.

The Concentric-Zone Theory states that cities develop in a series of five major concentric circles or ovals. The inner zone is a central business district. The second zone is a transition zone. This is followed by an area for workingmen's homes. Fourth is a middle class zone and fifth is the commuter's zone. Sometimes a sixth zone of agricultural areas are within a commuting range. Lastly, there is the rural area.

The Sector Theory describes residential movement.
It divides the city into pie-shaped sections. This theory reveals consistently changing residential areas. The higher residential areas move further out of the city core as faster transportation lines and building areas extend. Some people move out of an area because they are moving up; some people move out of an area to move up. It is possible for high rent areas to return to the city center. The once high rent areas become medium rent areas and new people move in. The Sector Theory deals with economic factors.

The Denisty-Gradient Theory\textsuperscript{15} states that the density of a city declines with the distance from the city center. Eventually though, the density in the city center falls and rises in the suburbs. Thus, it causes a city to grow and expand.

Finally, there is the Polynuclear Theory,\textsuperscript{16} a natural approach. Cities develop various centers for business, industry, and residents. Each is of equal importance. A business district requires worker housing; residential areas need industrial centers. The locations of the centers cannot be predicted by planning. They arise due to certain requirements. The activities of each requires special facilities. Each of these theories limits itself and therefore cannot include all cities.

Several of the theories have been criticized and proven too specific to encompass all cities. For instance,
11. 

the Concentric-Zone Theory cannot include circular or oval shaped cities because the lines are arbitrary. Most cities tend to have irregular outlines, not strict geometric forms. Most of the theories do not consider the natural formations of the land. "There is no universal pattern...nor even an 'ideal' type."¹⁷ Cities cannot be categorized and made to fit into any specific theory of development or trend.

The Surface Feature Approach¹⁸ is probably the best approach because it states what 'is', not a system. The Surface Feature Approach states that the irregular outlines of cities stem from growth factors, private land ownership, and development. Cities are formed and change by water, highways, and railroads. This approach is broad enough to include most cities and takes into account the natural land formations, as well as city planning.

The Surface Feature Approach and the Polynuclear Theory consider the natural development that is inherent in cities. Without the organic forms any area, no matter how well planned, will be dull and monotonous for the resident as well as for the visitor. Originality and liveliness are important factors in cities. Vitality, in the form of a city, functions as a means of enrichment. Certain designs of cities require forms that integrate with the character of the city. A large, fast-pace community needs free-flowing highway forms. A pedestrian city calls for variety in the shapes of blocks to hold the interest
of pedestrians. Circles, fountains, diagonal blocks are used to achieve variety. For instance, diagonal streets create angular blocks and intersections in downtown Washington D.C. This is one example in which the monotony of the gridiron city is relieved by the changes. A balance is required between the buildings, bridges, roads, open park areas, and waterways. Integration of all the activities of a city is essential for complete interaction within the area. Organic elements and mechanically planned elements must synthesize. "In this way richness and variety can be established in the city, and through the cumulative effect of various kinds of association with the different parts of the city, its citizens may build up loyalty to it." It is evident that man needs variation and contrast in life for stimulation. New sensations make us more receptive, active, and aware of our life. It seems that most city-dwellers long for the country and country-dwellers long for the city. It is a drive for a happy medium. A well-planned and organized city can accommodate both. There is a demand for more spacious, greener, and sunnier cities. A city planner should be able to bring the city and country into a closer relationship. European cities, with their growth spread out over many centuries, generally present "a more alternative type of urban settlement than can be found in the United States; more varieties of internal adaption, of spacial patterning, of architectural
structure, and of change." In European cities one finds that movement within a city is easier. It is interesting to go to an unknown city and find that most of the activities are at the core of the city which is easily accessible by the roads that lead directly to the core. I have found this true in Rome, Vienna, Brugges, Athens, and other cities where I have traveled.

The mixture of the different theories applies to many of the older, well-established areas. Twelfth century through twentieth century centers have grown together to form single large communities. No theory can be applied to European cities. They are a mixture of different theories because they have grown and developed in a natural way over many centuries. In the center of older established cities, classical architecture and modern architecture exist side by side in harmony. The variety in architecture adds a spark of excitement to the city as well as to each building. Contrasts are necessary. "Vienna has grown in a polynuclear fashion, mingling residential, business and industrial uses....Rome exhibits both sector and zonal patterns..."21

Cities in the United States seem to have either no center or so many centers that it is hard to move within a city. Adding to this confusion, there are usually many suburbs. "The building of cities is one of man's greatest achievements. The form of his city always has been and
always will be a pitiless indicator of the state of civilization." Rapid growth in American cities has caused enormous complexity and confusion. Hasty industrialization and advanced technology changed cities prematurely. There were few well-established city centers before the expansion. Confusion grew into cities. These cities have developed further into megalopolises, especially on the East coast. Most American cities lack character and have lost touch with people. The city is no longer a container for activities but a string of activities with very little concern for architecture, planning, space, and design.

I speak of the great necessity to recover through every man's education the lost quality of understanding and creating form.

Think of those essential imponderables, apparent in cities and towns of bygone cultures, which still have the power to move us emotionally today, though they are obsolete from the point of view of practical use. These imponderables characterize what is missing in the concept of our present communities, namely, that unity of order and spirit which is forever significant, visibly expressed in space and design.

We are now concerned with revitalizing downtown areas such as in downtown Rochester. The human element must be a dominant factor in our rebuilding. We must utilize our knowledge of older, established cities to improve what we have and to produce liveable communities for our
present-day society. In our fast-moving society, we have expanded beyond our means and good intentions. We must realize the need to redevelop, reform, and renew our centers of activities in a manner which embraces our culture. No other culture's progress would satisfy our lifestyles. We must appreciate once again the wealth of our own backyards. "As the old Greek said, 'The city teaches the man.'"\textsuperscript{24}

Connections can be drawn between Kandinsky's theories of forms and city plans. One major idea of forms and cities is that a whole can be broken down into parts. These elements have a unique function and are all part of the whole. Each city has distinct independent areas for certain activities. There is a division of labor relative to each area. Yet, every area is dependent upon the others and the whole produces a livable community.

To be well-balanced in itself, the basic unit requires working places for its inhabitants in separate business and industrial segments, as well as its own local administration, a shopping center and facilities for education, recreation, and worship. Not one of these should be forgotten for housing alone—a mere conglomeration of people—does not create an organic community.\textsuperscript{25}

The city is an independent variable in our world. A city contains most activities for living. The elaborate parts of the community are dependent upon the whole city. Housing cannot stand alone, nor could a church. All the parts must work together. This creates a balanced whole.
This is similar to Kandinsky's basic design. The parts each are independent as well as dependent upon the others. The whole is dependent and independent upon the parts and itself.

There is also a need for contrasts of opposites in the designs of cities and the design of art. The use of complimentary colors is one example in painting. Another example is the variety of forms for stimulation. This is also evident in the design of cities. The relationship of spaces to one another is important in a city's design. All activities and viewpoints of a work and a city must be considered. Repetitive city blocks need a break-up of space. The use of smaller blocks, different shaped blocks or diagonals stops the monotony. Open areas of grass and recreational areas interrupt the continuous rows of buildings. Once again, variety is significant. Within cities, architecture and art should be encouraged so the community will see the importance of art and architecture in our daily lives. This is an important ideal of the Bauhaus; synthesis of the arts and synthesis of art and daily life. What applies to architecture and Fine Arts equally applies to the design of things that relate to everyday use such as graphics, ceramics, metalwork, etc. Cities are works of art. The balance of open spaces, buildings, streets, and the whole must all work together in harmony.

If we know how to look, the world we live in contains
activities and objects that can be used for subject matter or are art forms. By removing the everyday object from its normal place and using it in new situations, the artist opens the eyes of people to see new and exciting forms. Everyday objects are sources for subject matter and inspiration. In my paintings, I have chosen to work with maps, a very common and well-known object to most people. It seems to me that maps are taken for granted, as are most objects. I take a fresh look at mundane items and give them a new image and a life of their own.

Throughout my life, I have traveled and lived in various places. Along with memories, I accumulate memora-bilia from these places. I have found in the past few years that my awareness of what the objects are and where they come from renews images, emotions, and memories. I love to travel and experience various places, people, and situations. The items cause an awareness that resurfaces in my memory. I have now started to collect small, common yet meaningful items as well as maps for my work. Two things have arisen: (1) I am more aware of collecting objects, and (2) I have begun to document my life.

The wonder of collecting is that you are constantly in training to look for that added dimension that you identify with. That kind of energy search is very living. I have learned more through my collections,...than any formal training could give me.
Objects that one collects have vibrations, and they can usurp you....Artists are born collectors.26

Maps appear to be one of the few items that people save consciously or unconsciously. Most people have maps stored in forgotten places. When found, they recall memories. Looking at maps, one sees lines, circles, information, addresses, telephone numbers, and itinerary routes drawn onto the paper. The mind floods with memories and fantasy.

I began working with maps in a round-about way. I sketched intersections of walkways and paths. In looking for more forms, I turned to aerial photographs of highway intersections, land formations, and city patterns. It was form that interested me. I then introduced maps that related to places that I have lived or places I have traveled to. I am aware of the special meaning that each map contains. Personal importance and form became one. Each has a personal memory, reason or dream related to it.

"The point is, you take that material and stamp on it your own consciousness."27 I searched through my 'junk places' and found that I had saved many maps, especially those that related to the time I spent in Europe. I had not saved the maps for any special intention. They had been unconsciously collected. Now I can put my 'stamp' onto the maps; they are mine. More and more maps came from friends and various sources.
There is always at least one map of every place, no matter how small or reclusive. In the days of discovery, man's first actions were to mark and map out trails for future reference. Everywhere is somewhere. Mapmaking is an art in itself. My works pertain to printed maps which are commonly used. My concerns have centered on the forms and designs inherent in each map. Attention is called to the beauty of the forms. Maps show various forms: tourist routes, highways, parks, roads, city streets, county lines, boundry lines, architectural blueprints, etc. An infinite variety of maps exist. I attempt to find as many maps of different places as I can. Variety is significant and is emphasized. My artwork documents my beliefs and my life.

Beyond the documentation and straightforward usage of maps, I am concerned with the unusual use of these everyday objects. Taking maps out of their normal, rational place of use and employing them as subject matter causes the maps to extend beyond their customary purpose. They transcend into an aesthetic object. They assume a new importance and have a life of their own.

If it were understood...that when you do things this way, you are really bringing them to life. You know that you nursed them, and you enhance them, ...and you know you have given them an ultimate life, a spiritual life that surpasses the life they were created for. That lonely, lowly object is not used any more for what it was--a useful
object. It transcends the third dimension and it too arrives beyond.28

It is interesting to watch people go and look at the map in a painting. Sometimes they point to a particular place or form. Sometimes they question the whereabouts of something. The map can be used for its original purpose as well as being used for enjoyment as an aesthetic object in a painting. Once I have chosen the map, the designs and forms are in response to it. It no longer is a map for directions and information. The map becomes a motif and a starting point for the rest of the painting. It assumes a different responsibility and the entire work becomes a visual vocabulary of forms.

The forms in my paintings are derived from the specific map that has been chosen. The conception of individual forms and the overall design are worked out in quick black and white sketches and drawings. I trace the certain forms and designs from the map and sketch them onto the canvas or paper. The designs are repeated and revised; they are gradually evolving forms. Each is a simple form consisting of points and lines, grouped in divisions of space. Then I reconstruct them into a whole. Various placements and alterations appear to change the forms. They each seem different. By this method, I find my form and content are synthesized. "A form without content is dead; it is not a hand but an empty glove."29
In these beginning steps, the overall composition must work for the finished piece to be satisfying. Minor changes can be made later, but the total conception must be organized from the beginning.

Each element has its own character and a personality evolves as the painting grows. All the parts relate to the dignity of the whole composition. Placement of these parts is subjective and satisfies my eye, my sense of design, rhythm, and movement. It satisfies what Kandinsky calls the "inner need" or the impulse for expression. The rules of design have been absorbed and are now used with my innate, natural sense of design. Varying not only the sizes of my works but also the size of the maps and each form sets up new problems to be solved in each work. This difference always makes me aware of not only what I am accomplishing, but what are new and distinct solutions. Design is regarded as a primary factor in all my work.

In the planning of the works, I consider the relationship of each form to itself, others, and the whole. The forms are altered for different relationships and solutions. I want each to be unique and special. Along with the forms, space is extremely important to the design in the works and the relationship needs to be harmonious. Even though space is balanced, it can be assymetrical and unusual. Large simplified areas are places of rest for the more detailed complex areas of
forms. Large areas add strength to the composition. They also add variety and movement to each work. Movement changes easily if a form is placed in a certain position or in a large spatial area. I find it exciting to see how the spatial geometry of the composition can work in a unique way. Tensions are set up and relieved by the larger areas. Sometimes there is a contrast between the organic forms and the rigid forms of the maps. Even though there is ambiguity and contrast, the forms relate to each other. They are derived from the same content. Placement and movement aid in the unity of the whole. Vibrant placement is essential. Variety reinforces excitement.

Color is another important design factor in my work. Along with my forms, my colors are limited and simplified for strength and clarification. One sees the simple first, then the complex. Purely painted forms and local color intensify the design. "Clean painter" applies to my work. Each element and form has a pure, distinct shape and color. My colors are primarily subjective even though the colored maps dictate a few of the colors. This enables the map to work with the rest of the painting. I want the map to be part of the work, not an obstruction. The palette I select relates to basic color theory such as primary colors, secondary colors, complimentary colors, etc. In studying Kandinsky's works, he applies triads and primary
colors; he utilizes basic color theory. There are derivations of each, but the color is selected because of its relation to the other colors and the form it pertains to. He is also concerned with the psychological effect of different colored shapes and forms. Certain colors create different moods and responses. Most of all, Kandinsky's color combinations are fun and exciting. This is a significant factor in painting. Paintings are to be enjoyed. Color and form should produce a lively, energetic, rich, beautiful, and strong painting. Color is stimulating and it increases variety in a work. Free colors and free forms are combined in endless ways to energize a work.

My painting deals with fantasy, art, and design. The recalling and renewing of memories as well as the personal reasons for each work enters into the realm of fantasy. Once I have chosen a map, it becomes an aesthetic object which enters into the realm of art. Design is my next concern. I have begun to tap my pictorial mind. The works are structural, delicate, logical, and careful. The forms interlock and are extensions of the content. Beyond the pure forms that are derived from the maps, I change and alter the forms so that they satisfy my sense of design. It is my judgement and intuition, as it is with all artists, to produce and place forms where they best relate to the harmony of the whole work. One has the right to modify and change any form. It is at this
point that the forms become a special, personal vocabulary. My works attempt to be fun, playful, and clear: a choreography of forms. They need no explanation; they can exist on their own. They can, I hope, endure.

In the future, my works will not only document my life, but become statements about my life, personal experiences, and thoughts. The paintings will contain more objects; the objects I choose to use. This series of paintings are only a step in the development of my work and my life. Changes are anticipated. Change and variety are constant and enriching.
Footnotes


6 LaCoste, p. 92.


9 LaCoste, p. 84.

10 Ibid., p. 24.

11 Grohman, p. 89.


Ibid., pp. 150-151.


Bacon, p. 13.


25. Gropius, p. 139.


27. Ibid., p. 170.

28. Ibid., p. 83.

29. LaCoste, p. 61.
Bibliography


Paintings

1. "Skytop, Pennsylvania"
   Oil
   60x60 in.

2. "Downtown Washington, D.C."
   Oil
   48x72 in.

3. "Venice"
   Oil
   48x72 in.

   Guoache
   28x36 in.

5. "Mauthauser, Munich: 1978"
   Guoache
   20x28 in.

6. "Ireland: 1970"
   Guoache
   28x36 in.

7. "Paleohora, Crete: 1978"
   Guoache
   28x36 in.

   Guoache
   11x14 in.