

Art: Oils by Jack Tworikov

Tenderness Is an Abiding Quality in His Abstractions at Stable Gallery

By DORE ASHTON

IF tenderness is an abiding quality in Jack Tworikov's paintings it is because he has determinedly strained out the evidence of struggle and destructions in his painting process. His oils at the Stable Gallery, 924 Seventh Avenue, are soft in color, marked by the delicate feathery touch that has characterized his painting for years, yet buttressed with firm structures. Softness, tenderness are qualities arrived at after months of rumination, repainting and rephrasing.

By nature a dream-prone man who speaks haltingly, as though, always listening inwardly Tworikov has spent the better part of his adult life reflecting about painting, sifting history for the unchanging relationships in art. Like other painters of his generation (he was born in 1900) he has moved steadily toward abstraction, but never a gratuitous or themeless abstraction.

"I had no struggle about abstraction," he says. "In my early days, it is true, I painted portraits and still-lives and avoided imitating School of Paris abstraction. That was because I felt I hadn't shared their particular experiences." But he was always an admirer of Cézanne, who, he contends, "finally expressed everything through paint and color alone."

His purpose in painting abstractions was first of all to express equivalent energies to those in nature. "If there is a feeling of a figure in my work, I don't mind. I'm trying, in that case, to make an analogy to the figure," he explains. Secondly, he wanted to project his "theme," or subject. "Every painter has a subject whether or not there are objects in his paintings," he says. He feels that painting is a matter of discovering the relationship between man's deepest experiences and myth. "A painter is reliving all the things that Homer or Dante are about." The entire history of man is part of the painter's legacy, and it may be refashioned in his manner, he believes.

This germane philosophic attitude has tempered Tworikov's painting—an art of nuance and suggestion. Even in terms of technique it appears, for Tworikov's respect for the history of painting is seen in his own carefully organized surfaces, graded colors shaded off into a shimmer of light, and use of distinct strokes. His cosmic reverie is

carried in the tapering colors: mists of pale yellow, pink, white fading into infinity.

Tworikov has sublimated accidents and violence in his painting. In every canvas exhibited there is an apparent will to equilibrium expressed in insistent horizontal and vertical forms, and in the balance of border to center. And, most important, in the contrasts of color, the salient force in his painting. For every intense area of color there is a corresponding nuance, a toned-down passage that restrains the energy of more vivid hues.

Paintings in the show range in date from 1954 to 1957 but there are several groupings within the period. For example, "The Father" of 1954—a hieratic apparition, a floating orange figure, smooth and slightly blurred as if seen through a glass (perhaps the metaphorical glass of time or history)—is closely related to "Prophet" of 1955, a flowing, abstracted image of a similar apparition.

The latter painting is in turn related to several paintings of 1956. In these, Tworikov has used a kind of horizontal armature on which form is strung. His "Watergame" is suspended on two slightly diagonal beams with top and bottom firmly indicated. Over this anchored structure flow streams of mauve, red, pink, shot through with blue. There are cross-currents, extremely sensitive passages of pure painting, but they are always checked and balanced by the firm basic structure.

In the earliest painting on view, Tworikov's signal delicacy in terms of color and brushwork is achieved in close, light ocher tonalities, worked together in nearly even surfaces and smoothed into unity. But in one of the most recent works, a corresponding unity is reached by more complex means: "Blue Cradle" is stroked broadly in parts, finely in other areas. As in several of the paintings, its basic composition consists of a horizontal band with vertical sentinels piercing into pale borders at top and bottom. Within the deep expanse of blue, violet undertones are glimpsed. In this painting with its gentle heave, its evanescent horizons, Tworikov has suggested the weight of the ocean, and with it the weight of memory, myth, and all the timeless associations connected with the sea.