

STUDIO DIARY

the goetemann
mahler
paintings

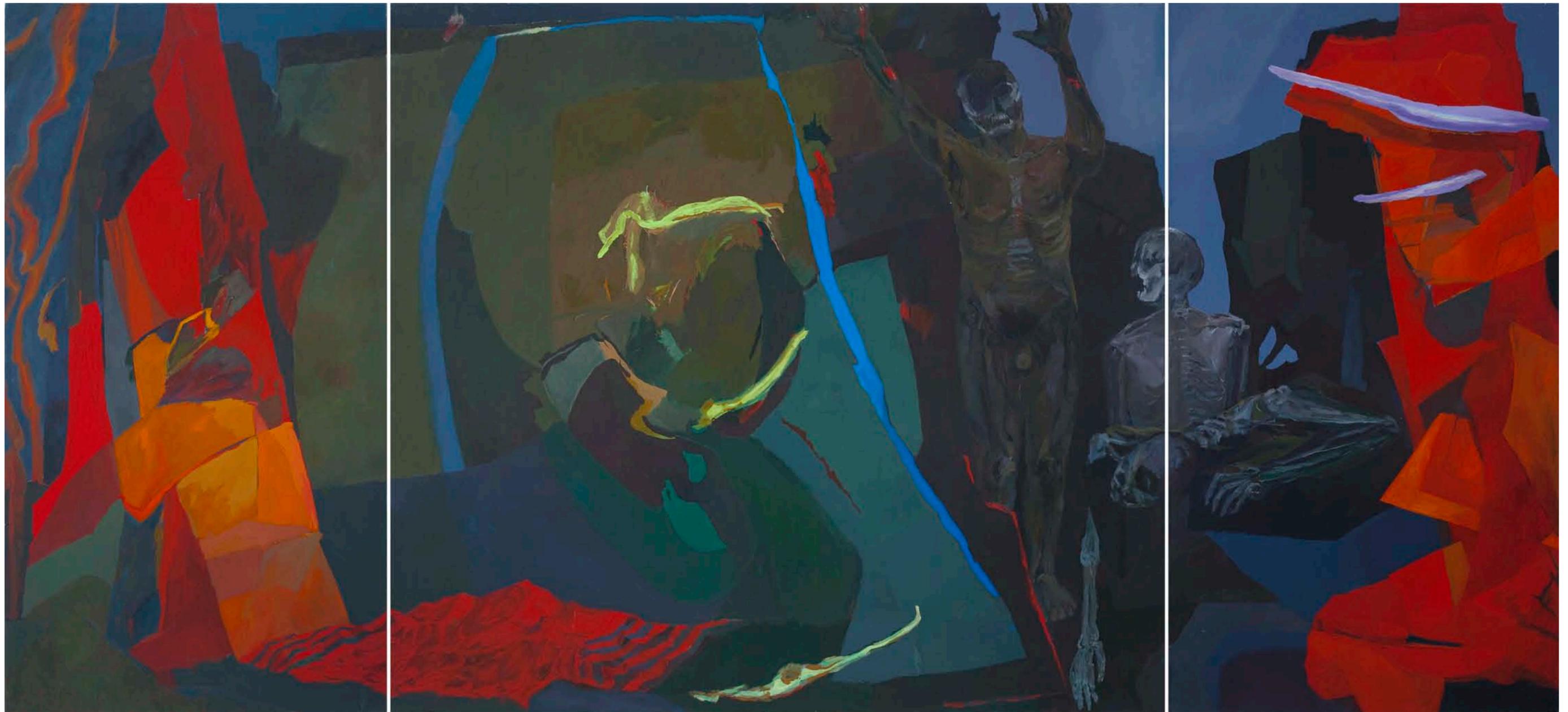
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Design and layout by Leslie D. Bartlett

Process to Narrative

Movement 1



The material used in this exhibit was not originally intended to be art or displayed in public. Rather, it is a personal diary which records what happened in my studio as I embarked on this project. For various reasons, I have decided to make some of it public.

Much of what happened in the studio was remarkable. I prayed for guidance and received more than intuitive glimpses into problems and solutions. While I have no musical training, only ears and a desire to listen and feel, I could see the musical passages from which the paintings derived. And somehow, over a span of five and one half years, I was able to keep focus. Seeing the whole kept me from getting lost in the parts and I was able to move ahead confidently.

But more was involved than focused inspiration or confident ability. What happened in the ten minutes it took to make this First Computer Sketch (Fig. 1-1) could only have come by graceful intervention. Form merged with content and all the seeds of the final outcome were present: monumental power, corporal matter, the struggle for

spiritual freedom and forces of good resolve. These forces are first embodied in the mass of a monumental trapezoid form. Later, I came to see this form as a truncated pyramid and liked it even more because it was like an equilateral triangle of the Trinity with the Godhead cut off. This view made it corporal, the antithesis of the spiritual.

When the contour of this form gave up its mass and became linear, it changed metamorphically from a corporal to a spiritual symbol (Fig. 1-2). It took another two years of work before this happened and before I realized the depth of the first computer expression. The truncated pyramid or the Chai form became the compositional foundation for the center panel of each Movement (Fig. 1-2).



Figure 1-1. First Computer Sketch.

A merger of form and content presenting the key components of the final outcome.



Figure 1-2. Early Stage of the Chai in Movement 4.

A metamorphic change in the meaning of the form from the corporal to the spiritual.

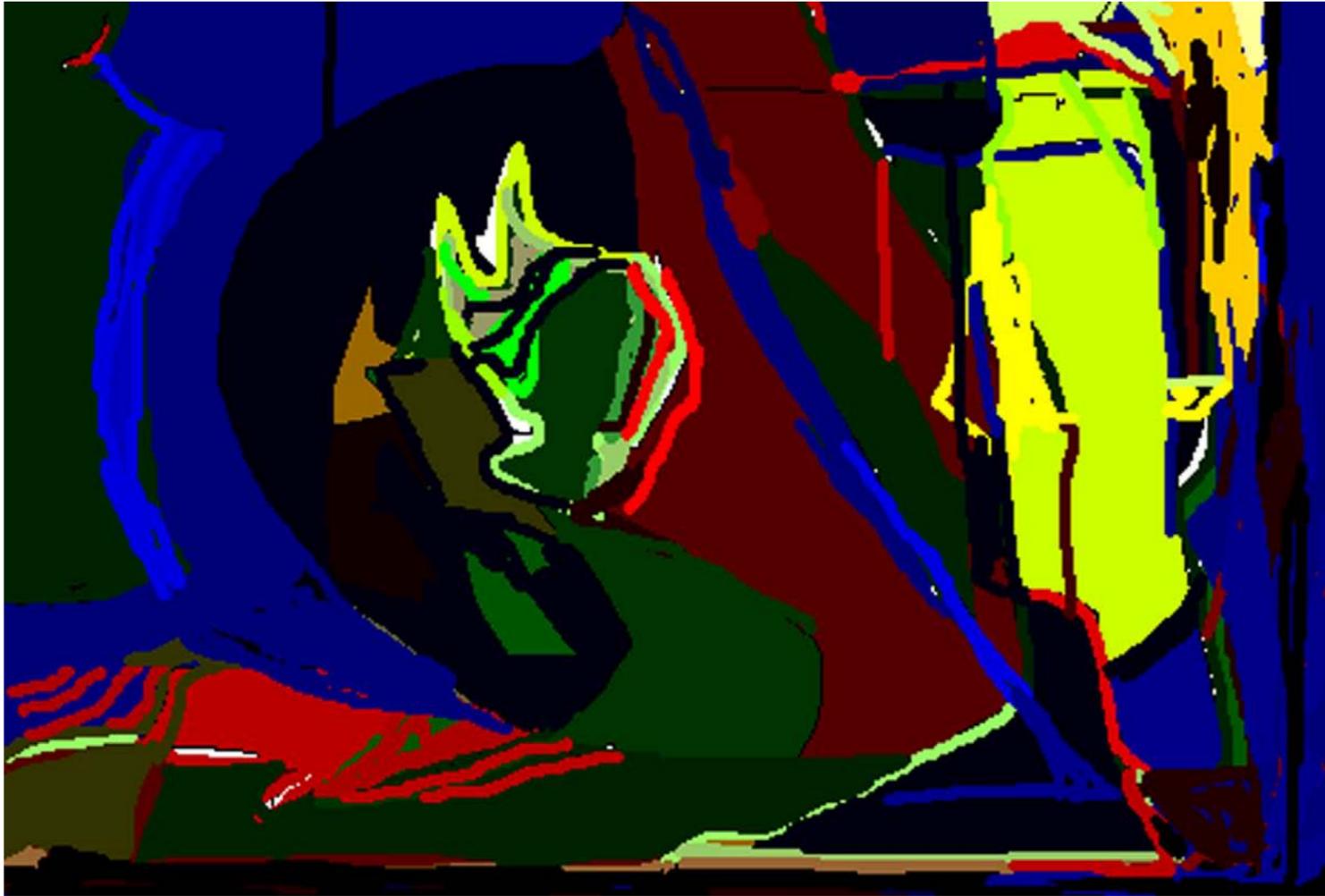


Figure I-4. Computer sketch of Movement I (MI), [Center Panel with a Predella panel below.] Originally I planned Predella panels for M1, M3, M5a, and M5c, but abandoned the idea after completing the first one.

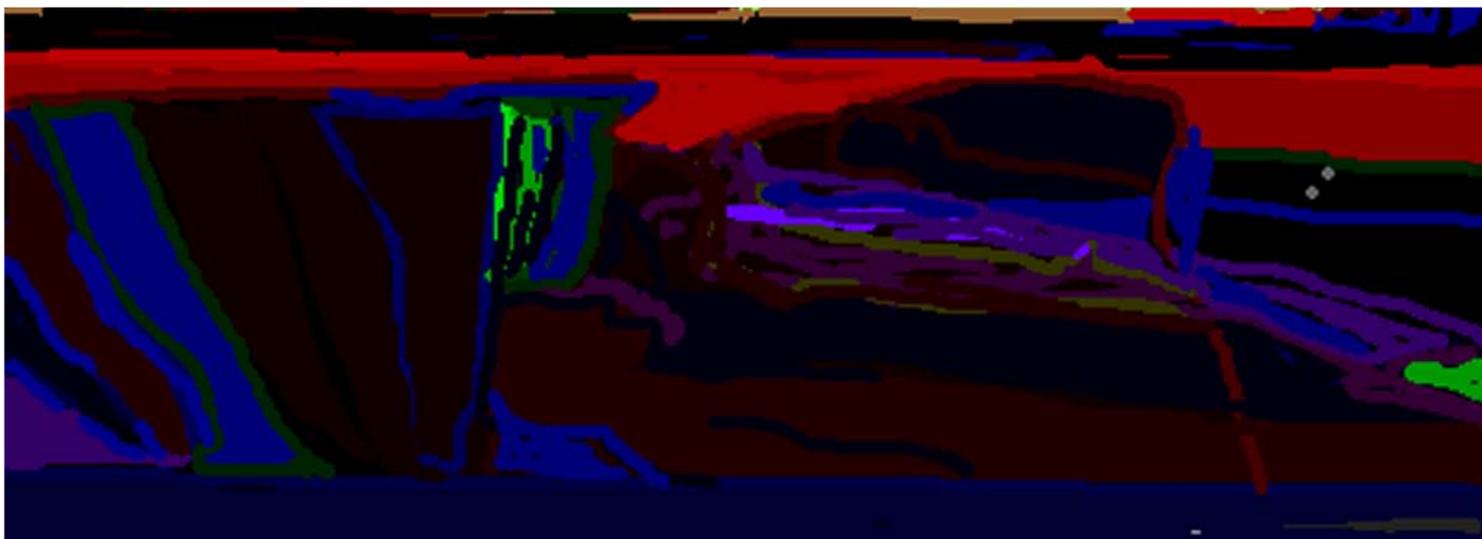


Figure I-5. Hans Von Bulow in a State of Transition.

“Hans Von Bulow, an important conductor, and a man Mahler admired greatly, offered a harsh criticism of Mahler’s work. The sting was so great it put Mahler into a four year funk. Ironically, at Von Bulow’s funeral mass,



a resurrectional piece of music was played which filled Mahler with insight and enabled him to complete his Symphony in short order. While anecdotal, the story led me to make the painting called “Von Bulow In a State of Transition.” I have exhibited the Movement both with and without this predella panel.”

Figure I-6. Developmental sketches of the center and right panels.

A development of the first sketch which refines the center section (Scream of Anguish), adds a shroud-like or prayer cloth form (red), expands the Pastoral and Resurrection themes into the right panel. On the extreme right is my first response to the descending chords which end Movement I.

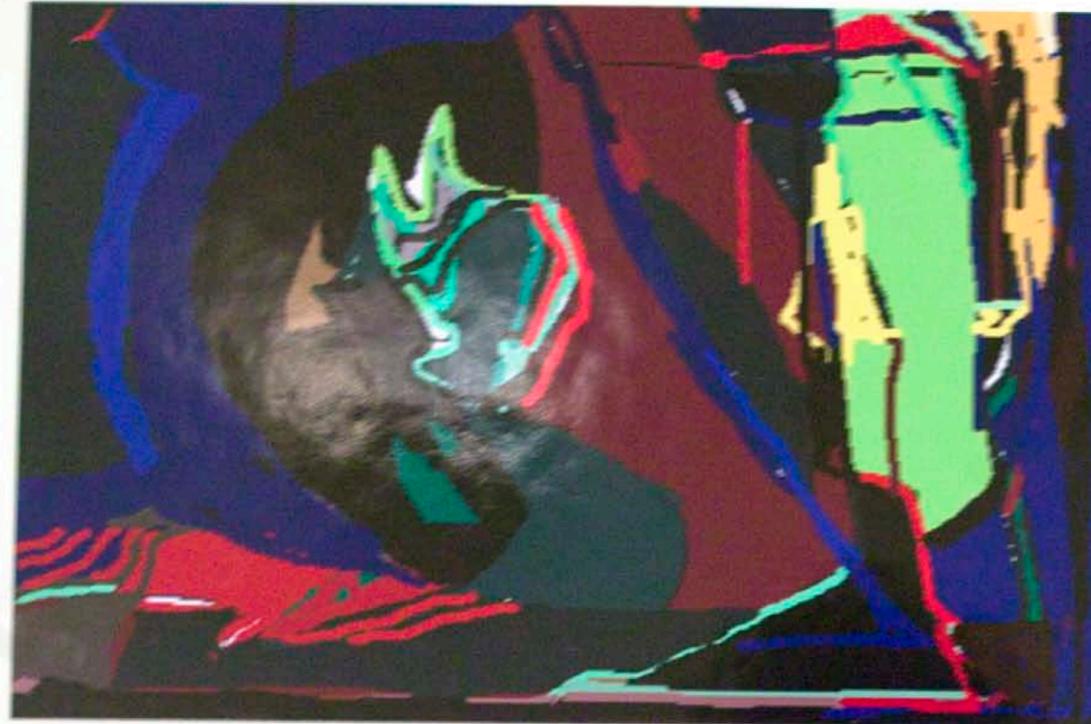
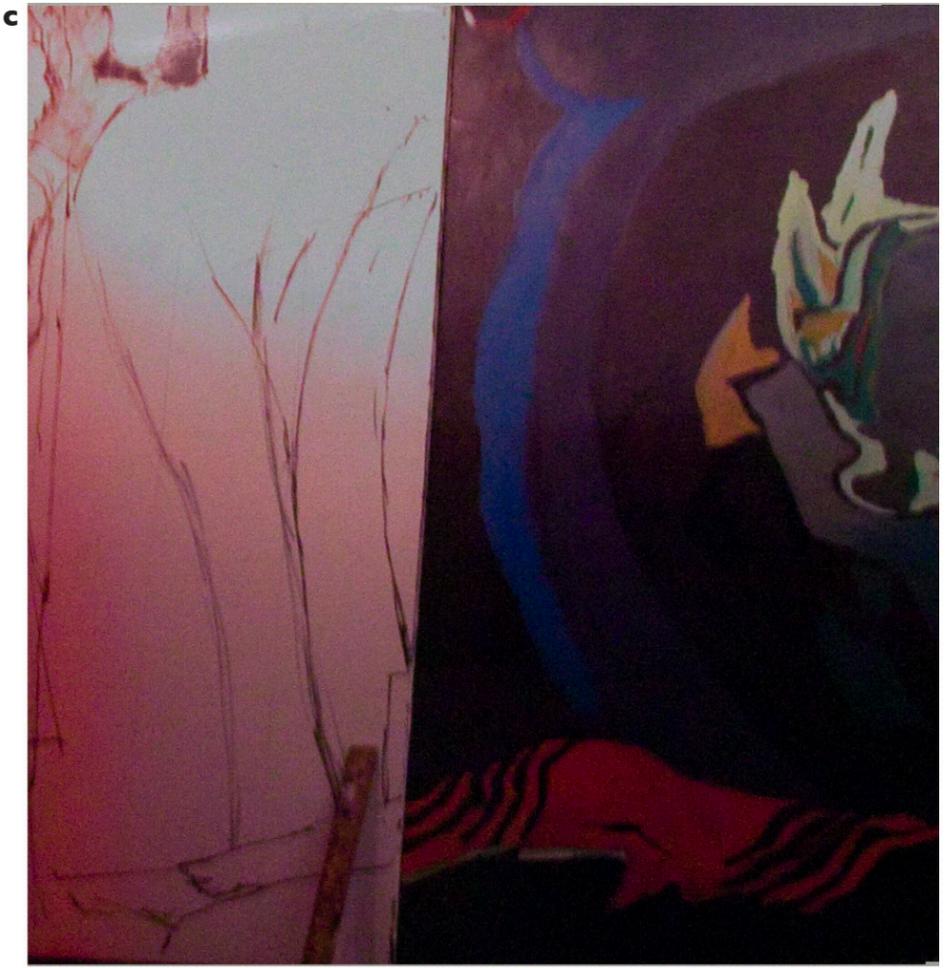
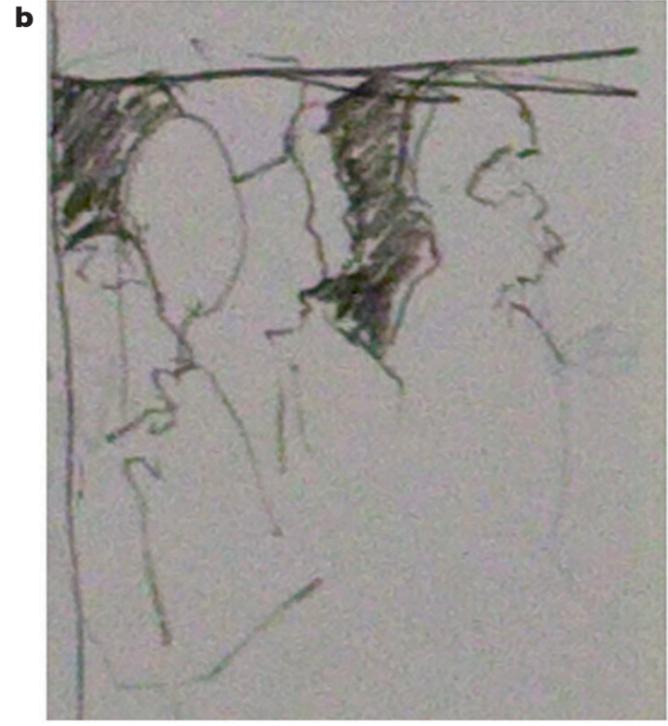


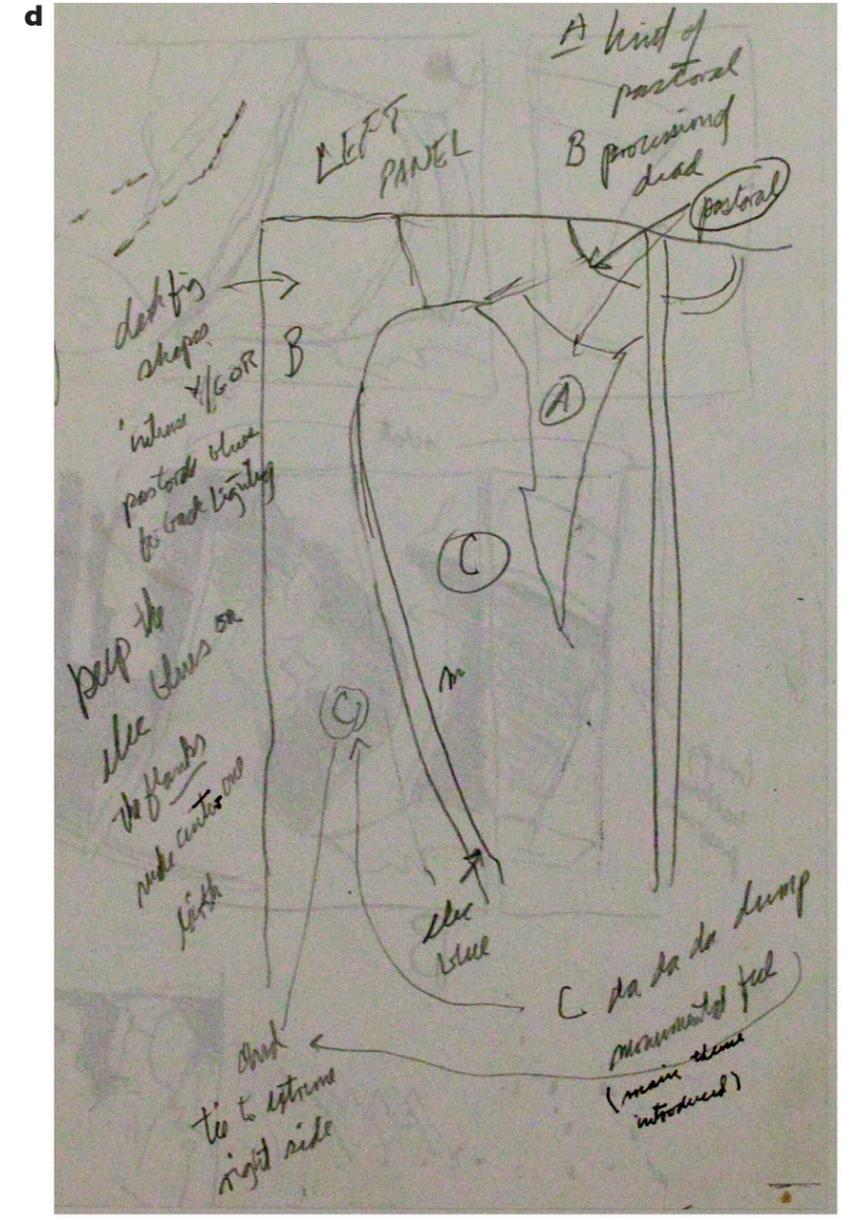
Figure I-7. Developmental sketches of the center and left panels.

By using a repetition of diagonal lines, I extended the center panel outward toward the left. This left-leaning set of forms expanded and emphasized the earthy component while separating it from the spiritual content of the Resurrection theme in the right panel.





- KEY
- a. Left-leaning extension of the center panel trapezoid.
 - b. Drawing of the Elders who witness the Judgment.
 - c. Elders are positioned in upper left corner but other forms are decidedly vertical and suggest the Tower idea.
 - d. The Tower of rising vertical forms with references to the musical themes.



[The "da da dum" scheme was very helpful in identifying motifs and how they built musically and visually.]

Figure 1-8. Alternative possibilities for the form and content of the left panel.
 The question being addressed in these images is, "Should the content utilize the figure and thereby relate to the Dies Irae (Day of Judgment) or should it present more abstractly a towering ascent to the First Theme of the Symphony?"

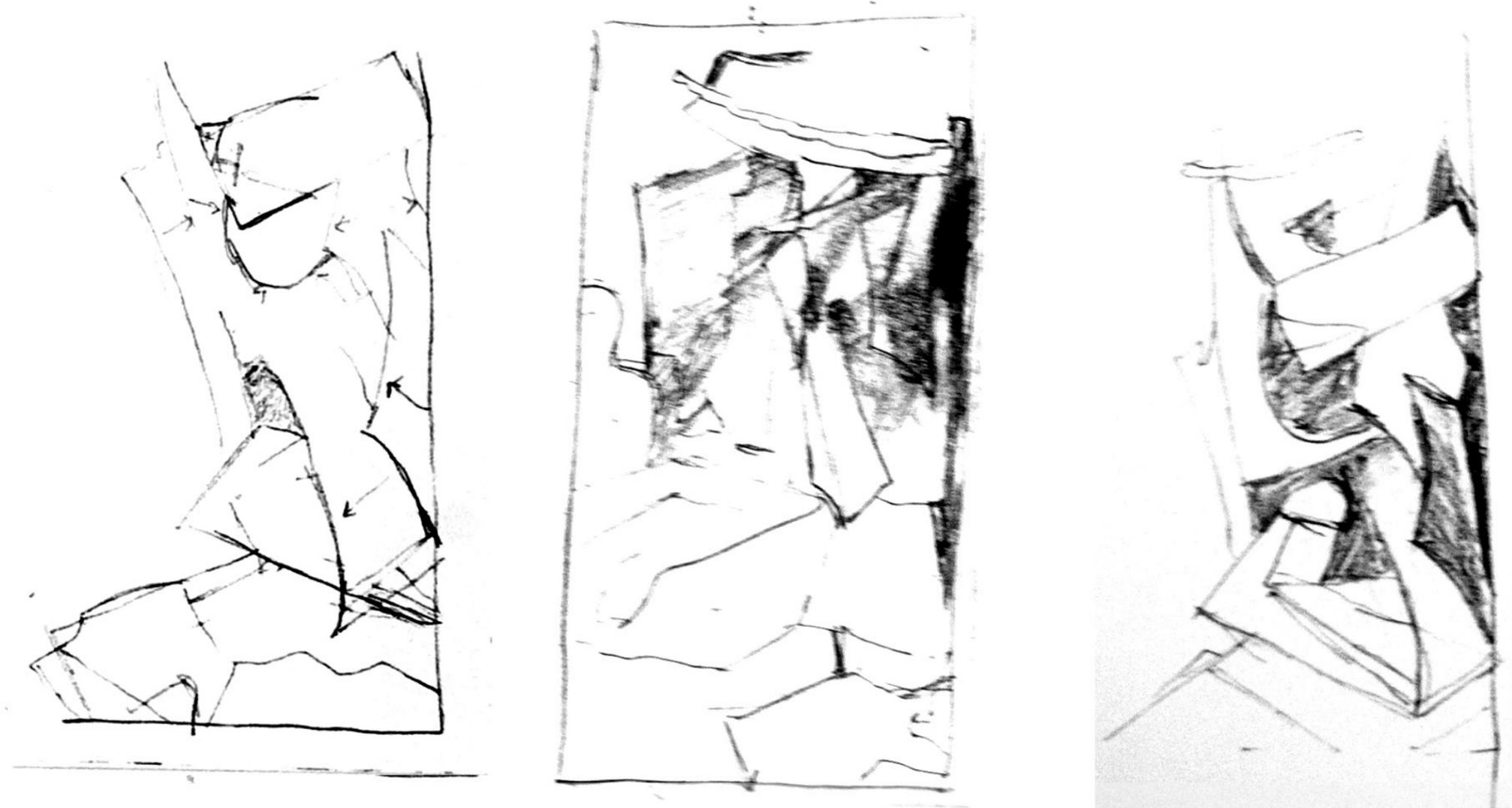


Figure I-9. Three Tower Studies.

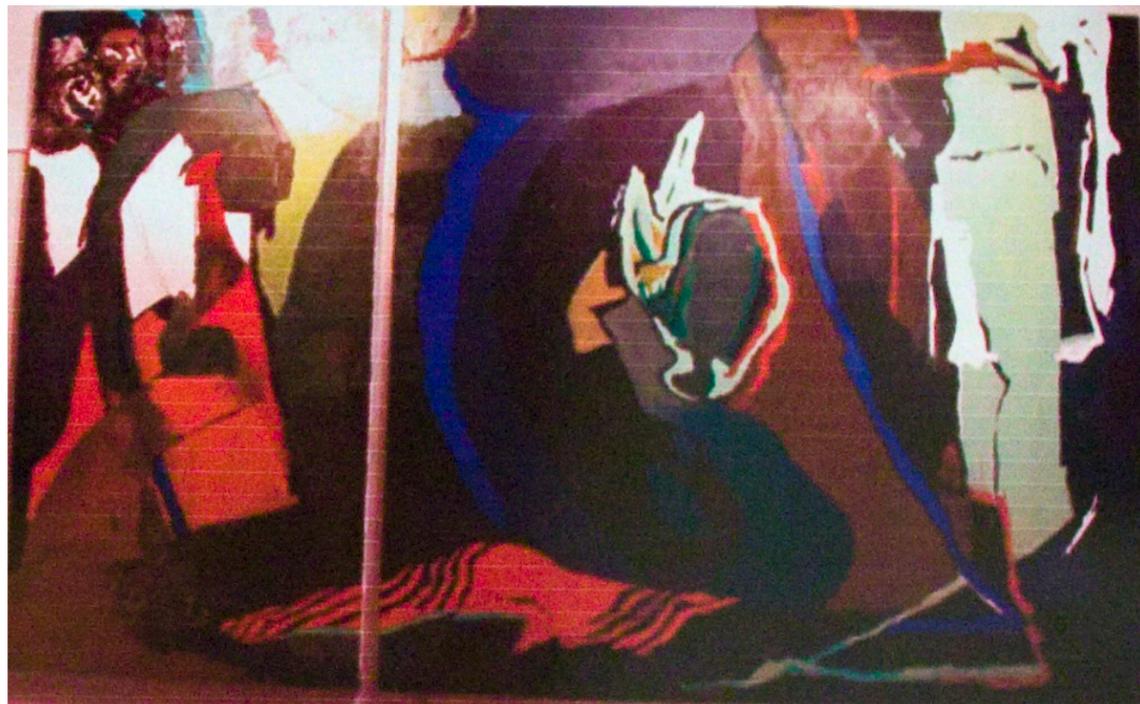


Figure I-10. Figure or Tower? ; Realism or Abstraction?

The left panel shows clearly the struggle between figure and tower. While the faces of the Elders are presented expressionistically, their robes are presented as abstract forms organized vertically.

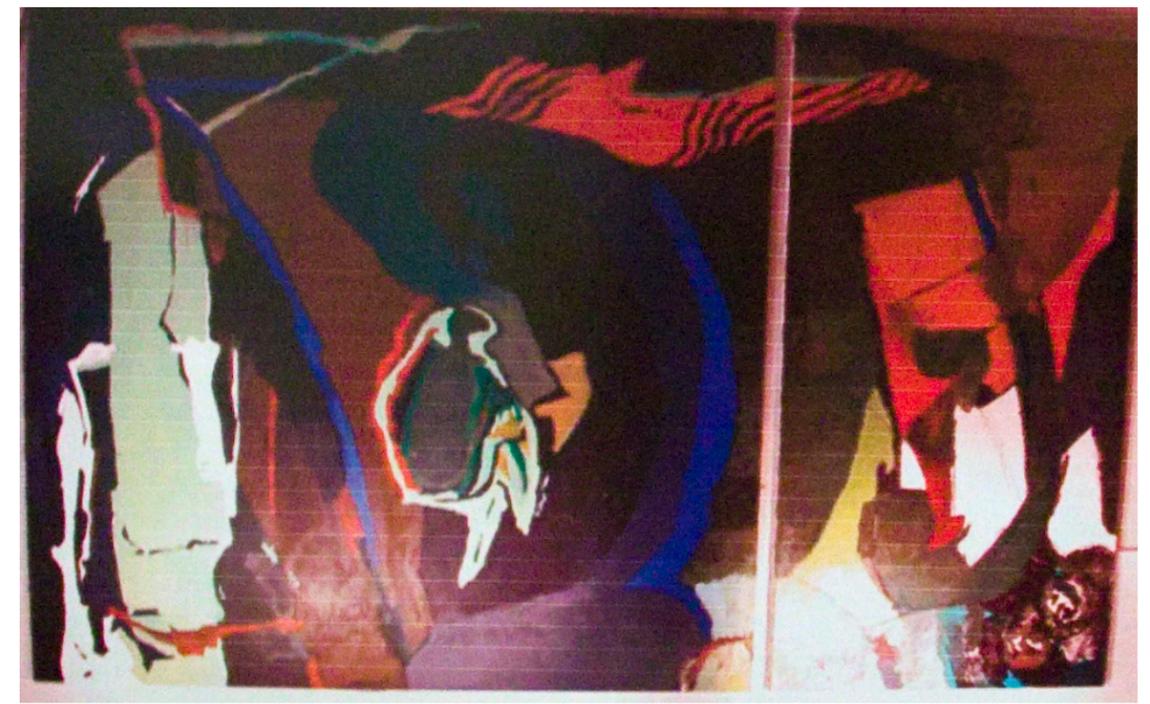


Figure I-11. The Role of Chance

Seeing the painting upside down was accidental but the resulting ideas helped me decide the Figure/Tower issue, and focused my attention on the center and right panels.

The prayer cloth, now at the top and moving in a suspended way to the right, suggested how I might treat the lavender colored Yearning Motif in the completed right panel. The Elders' robes now suggested the descending tower of forms which ultimately concluded Movement I.

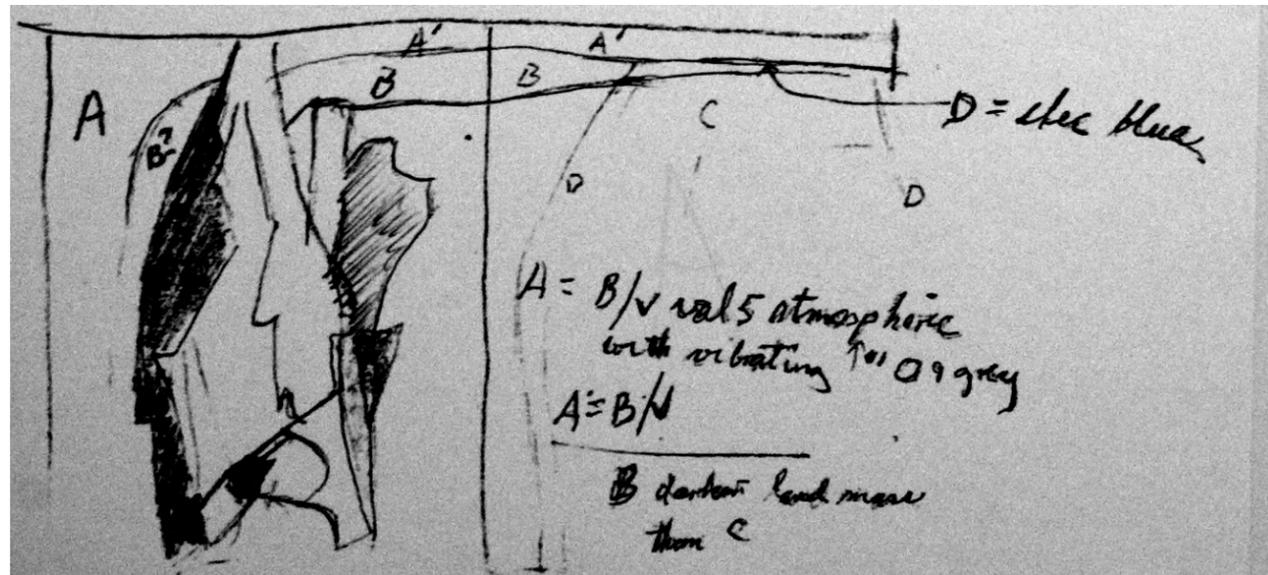


Figure I-12A.

A choice was made in the left panel, to keep the diagonal unification but drop any figurative suggestions of the Dies Irae in favor of a tower of chords which introduce the Movement. Even with this choice the composition went through several revisions before the final image emerged.

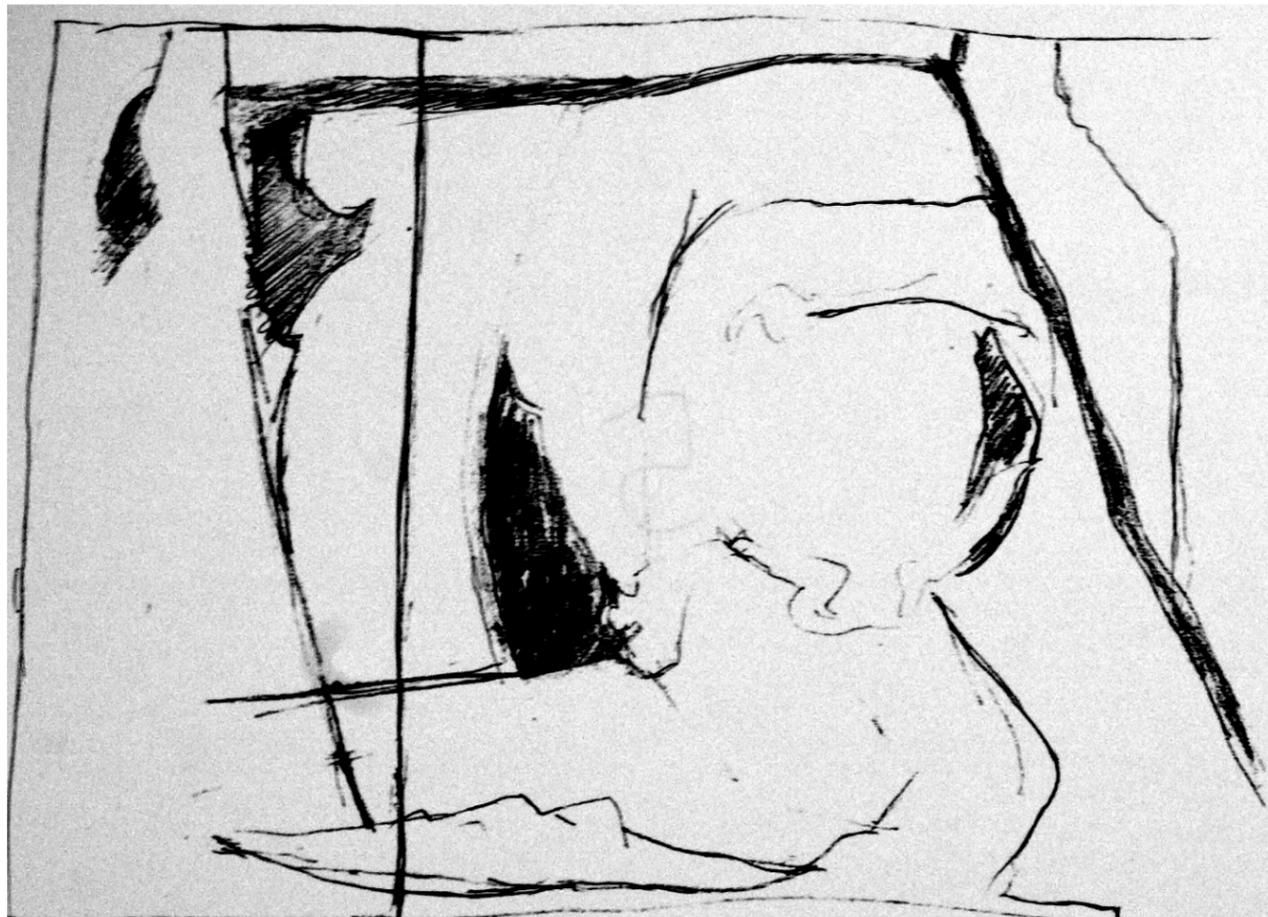


Figure I-12B.

I have always liked this sketch. I see it as “elegantly refined,” because it has monumental clarity, unity and earthly mass. Everything about it is corporal.



Figure I-12C.

Completed Left and Right Panels for Movement I.



Figure I-13.
Even though choosing an abstract language of tower-like forms was correct in expressing the facts and feeling of the music, the desire to include the figure still remained.



Figure I-15.
This image shows the result of an explosive painting session in which I committed to the male figure (Orant) and two skeleton figures. Evidence would indicate tentativeness to the commitment judging by the multiple heads and their positions and sizes. One of the heads has large innocent eyes and pleasant color. Another superimposed looking down and to the left is more menacing. Also note the position for the arms and hands which changed several times.

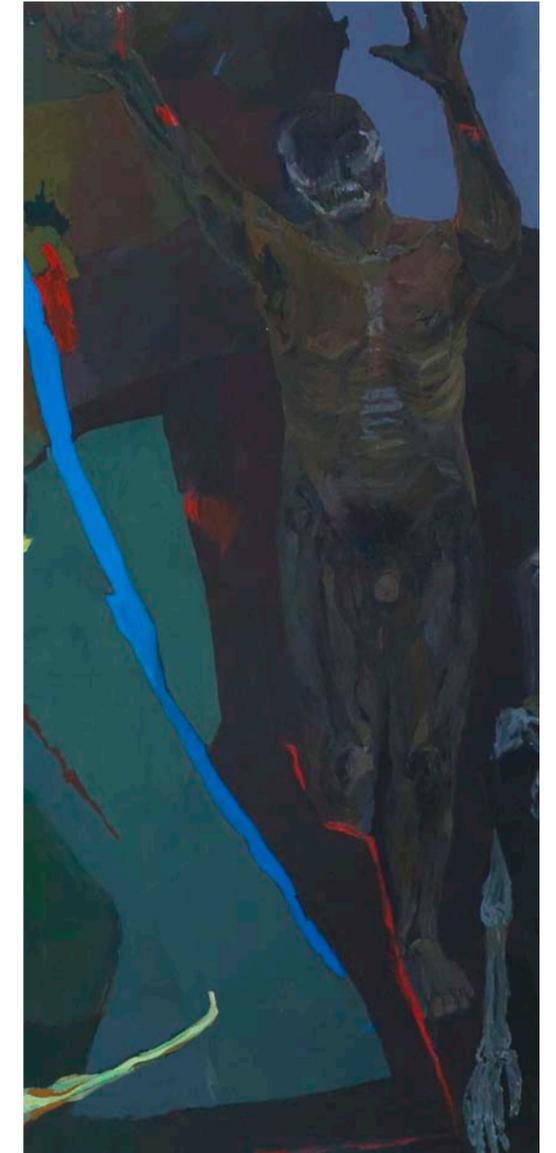


Figure I-14.
The figure may be me or everyman. I came to see it as an "Orant," (a Christian symbol of a teacher/leader found in 4th century Catacomb Art. As a male the Orant symbolizes Faith: as female, the Church. Christ, in his human nature may be considered an Orant. In Eastern religions the figure would be called an Avatar.

OVERVIEW TO MOVEMENT 2

Perhaps more than any of the other movements, this composition comes closest to being structured like the music itself. The subject matter relates to “happy memories” of the life of a deceased person. These memories are presented as a theme which relies on a delicate waltz-like motif to make the point. The theme appears three times. On either side of its second appearance, a darker theme presents itself. It is the angst driven motif which pervaded Movement One. A struggle for dominance persists between the themes and for a time it is uncertain which theme will prevail. The uncertainty is resolved when theme one is heard for the third time in some distant and higher plane.

Movement 2



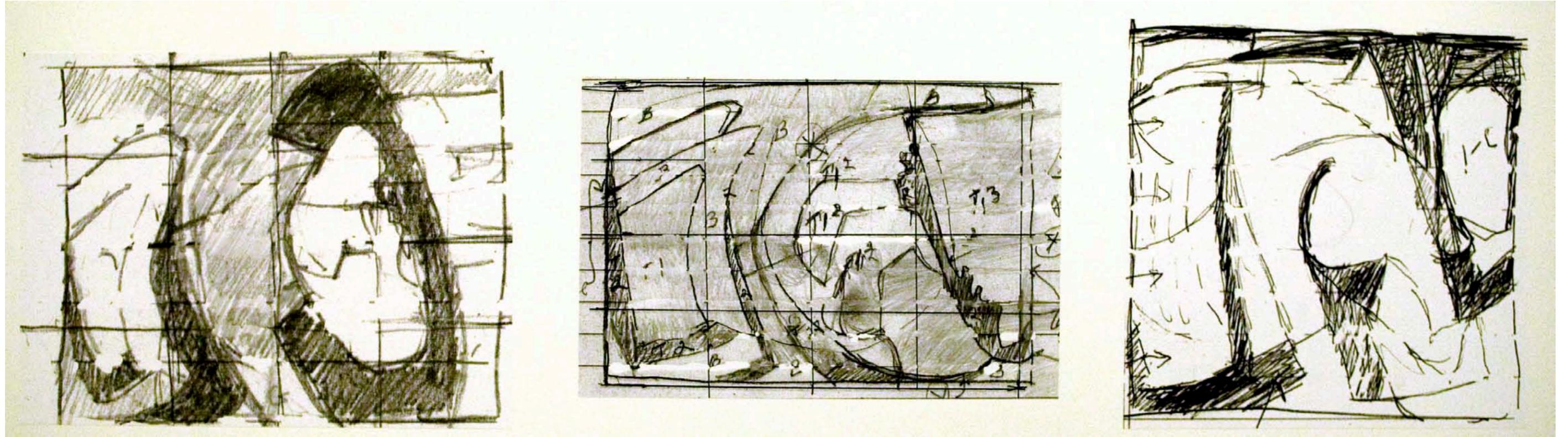


Figure 2-1.

These three drawings show compositional possibilities for presenting the two themes and their opposing tensions.



Figure 2-2.

This painting at this stage of development shows the components of the two themes and suggests the iridescent and luminous qualities I associated with Theme I. The painting will provide a base of evidence for the “memories.” That is, in the final painting, traces of this work will be seen along the edges of shapes and as the color base for transparent overlays of other hues. In this way each will recall the past as memories do.

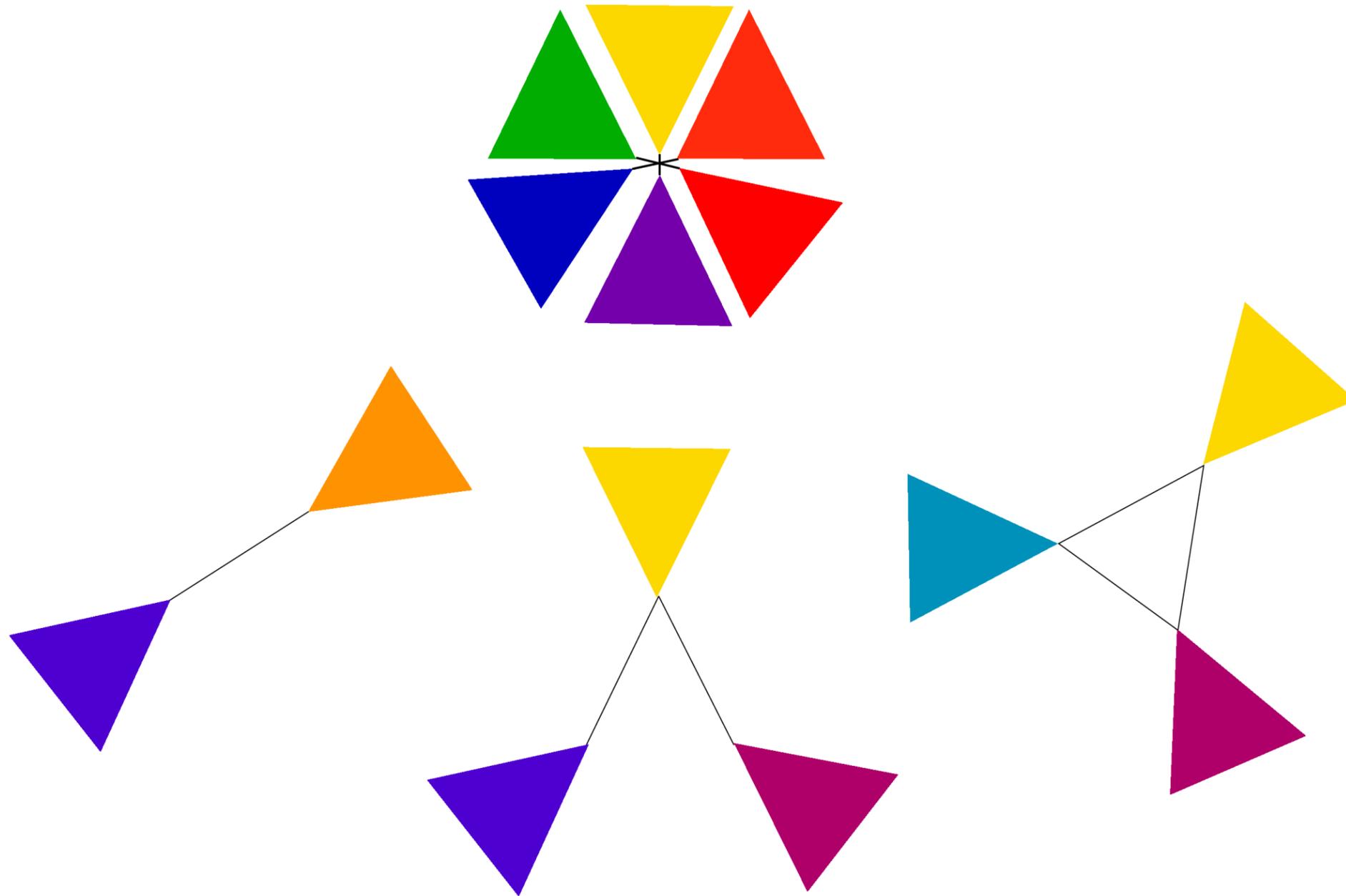


Figure 2-3.

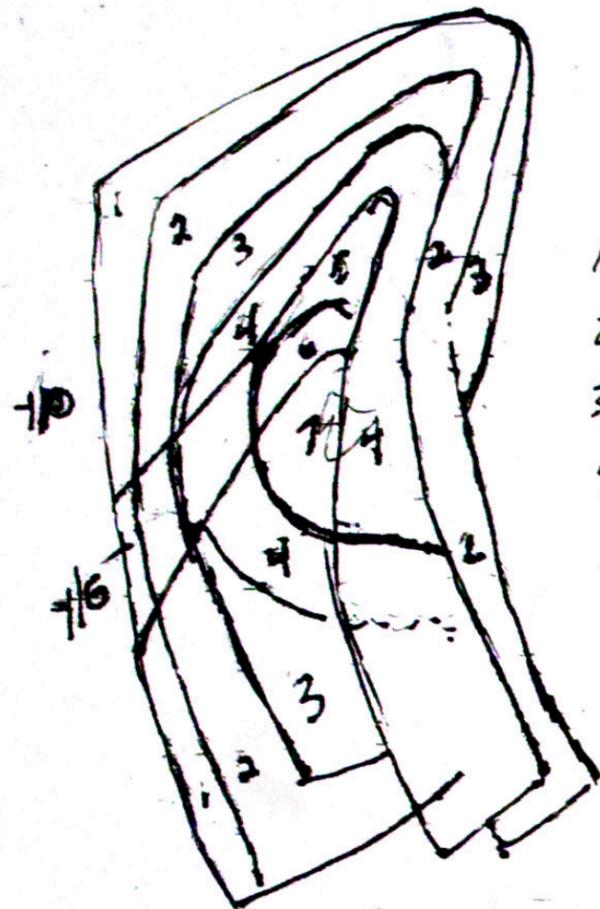
Color can be structured to produce different moods. These in turn can be used to present ideas about content. For example, on a standard color wheel there are three structures which lend themselves to communicating the feeling and the content of this Movement. The first is the intermediate triad of yellow orange, red violet and blue green. As seen in the painting, these hues do seem to produce the "happy" qualities of Theme 1 but hinder the affect of the darker Theme 2.

Yellow orange and blue violet, a complementary structure of opposite hues, seems to hit the problem head-on. However, the third possibility, the split complementary structure of yellow, red violet and blue violet does also. Furthermore it offers the atmospheric qualities of red violet which are not contained in the complementary structure of yellow orange and blue violet. I chose to work with the split complementary structure.



Figure 2-4.

In these two images I worked to decrease the space between the boundaries of Themes IA and IB so that I could increase the area available for Theme IC. The poor quality of color printing gave me ideas about the mood which could be presented.



- 1 either 7/10 is a 7/10 - v
- 2 yellow over the 0
- 3 is is (7/100) paint 1st
4. 7 7/10 paint 2nd
- 5 a little more yellowed 6
- 6 cadmium yellow
- 7 yellow like circle in center

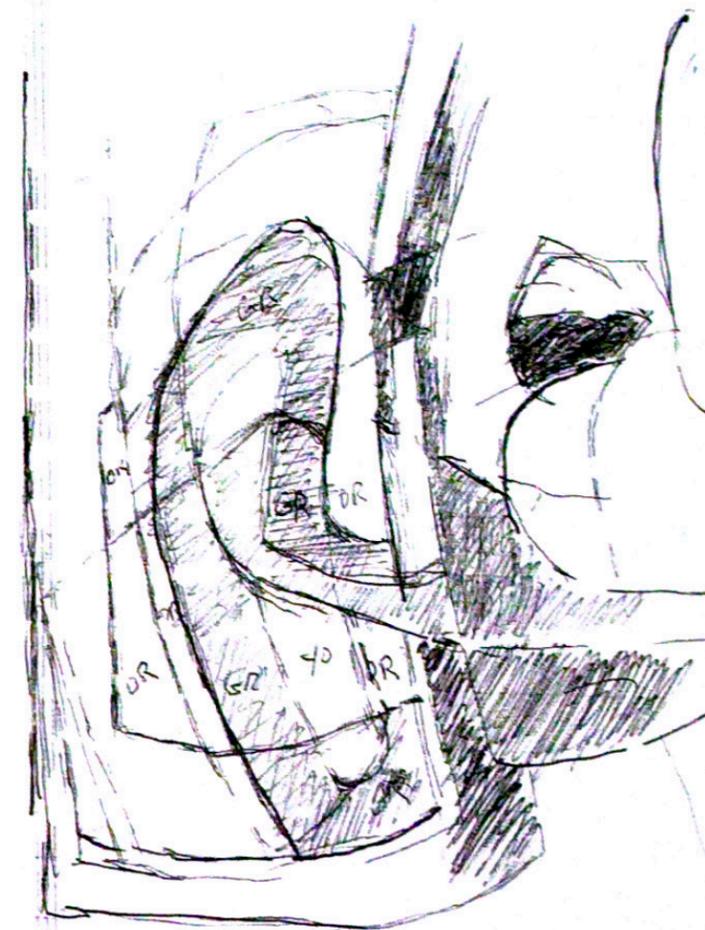
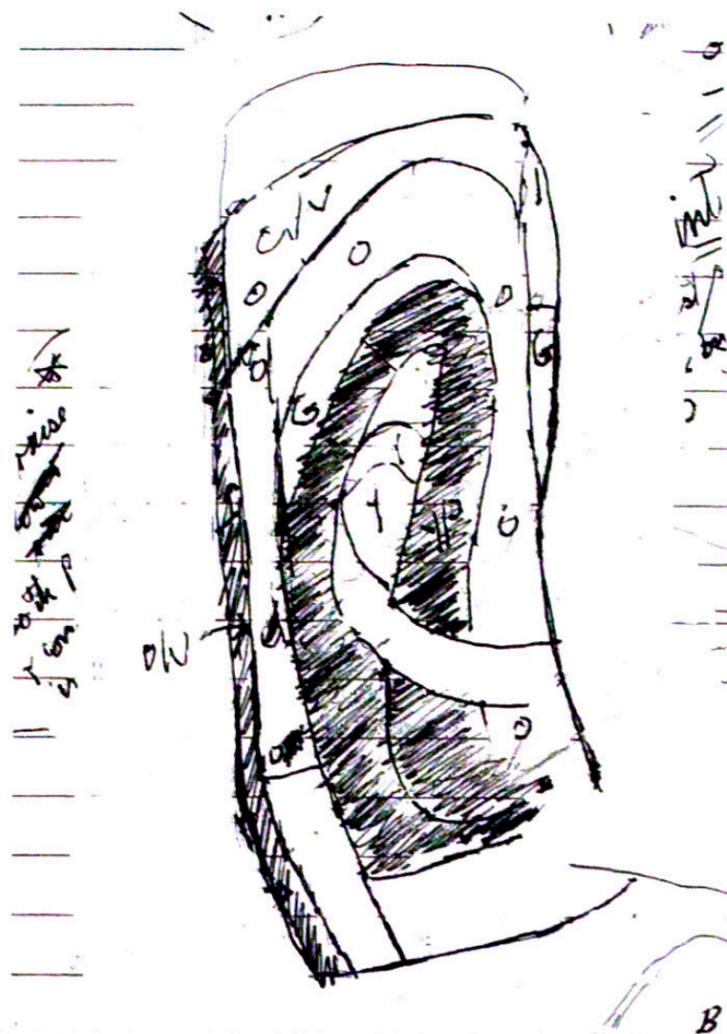


Figure 2-5. Typical Examples of My Critical Analysis.

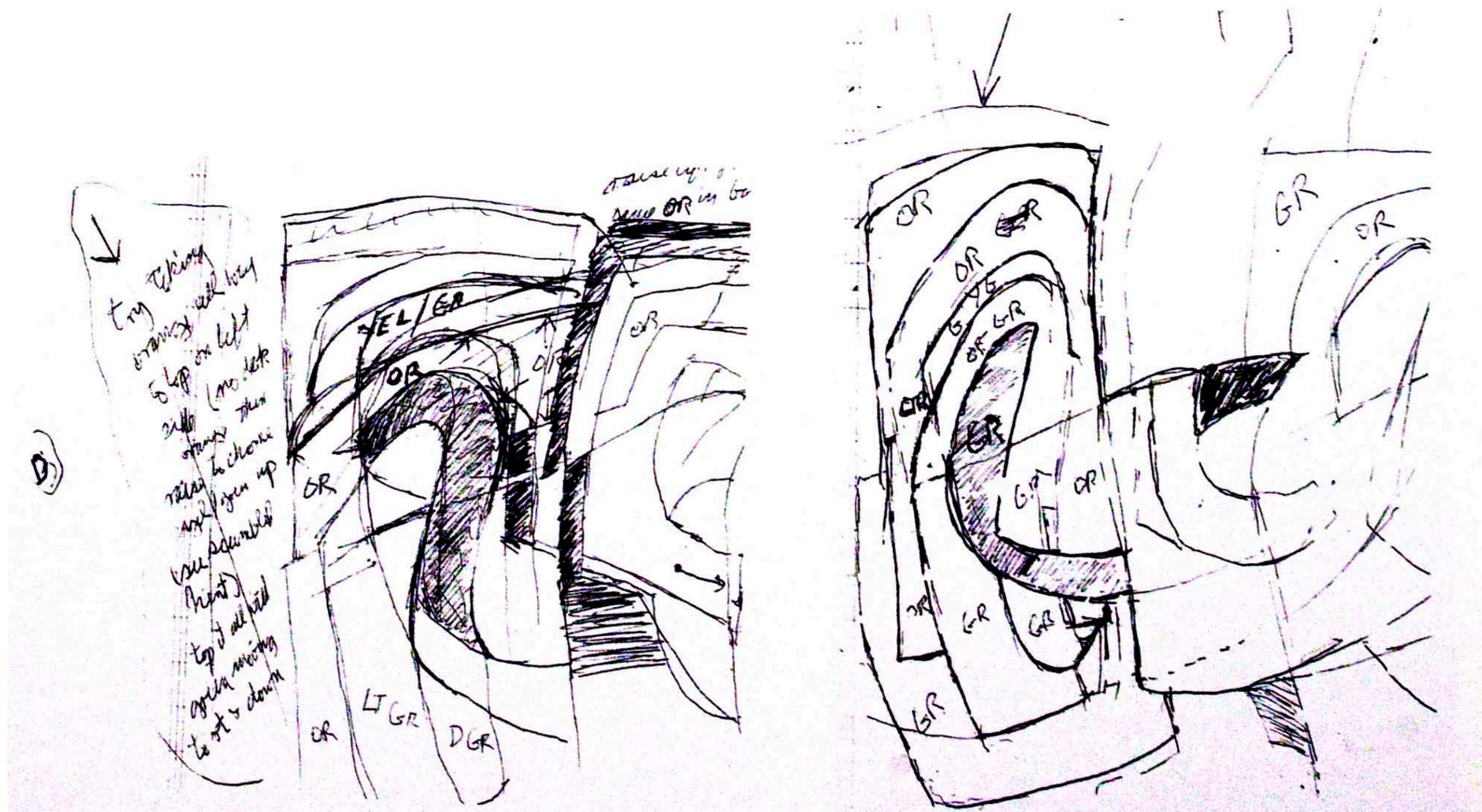


Figure 2-7.

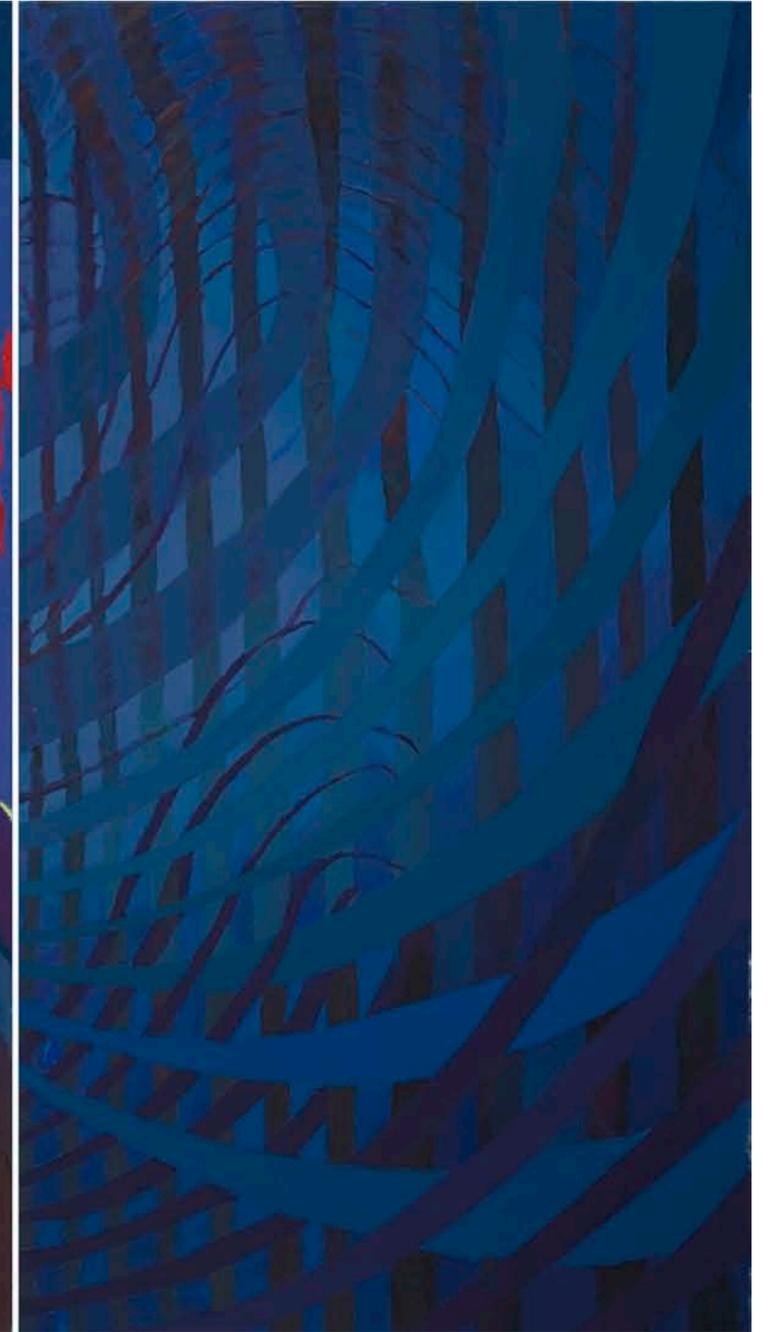
Considerable time was spent developing series of sweeping arcs to convey the rhythm and lilting gestures of the dance theme. The interactive nature of their color properties came to play an important role in the meaning of the painting namely, the iridescence of the forms expands them beyond their physical limits. In this way their spirit subverts their material limitation and the restricting efforts of the darker forms of Theme 2.

After completing Movement 1 I next painted Movement 3. In it three patterns of concentric circles scaled to the sound burst from the timpani. Boom, ba Boom, baboom! The world of happy memories is caught in an implosion of distorted images seen as if through a concave lens. The quick tempo functions like rapidly moving flood waters taking one into an environment of interactive color.

This was my first awareness of the important role that color would play in the series of paintings. In Movement One, I used contrasts of light and dark values, of bright and dull intensities, with the result being a feeling of outward expression. Here, in Movement Three, the opposite is true. Contrasts exist but they are contrasts of hues themselves and their temperatures. The intensity and value of the hues are virtually the same. The effect of this kind of control is a sense of luminosity and luster. The subtle beauty of the effect adds irony to the uncertainty of a meaningless world.

From this generalized environment arises the culminating motif of the Movement, the Scream of Anguish. This is Mahler's expression of an existential melt-down, a moment of utter despair. It is followed quickly by an orchestration of gong-like sounds which quiet the soul and lead into Movement Four.

Movement 3



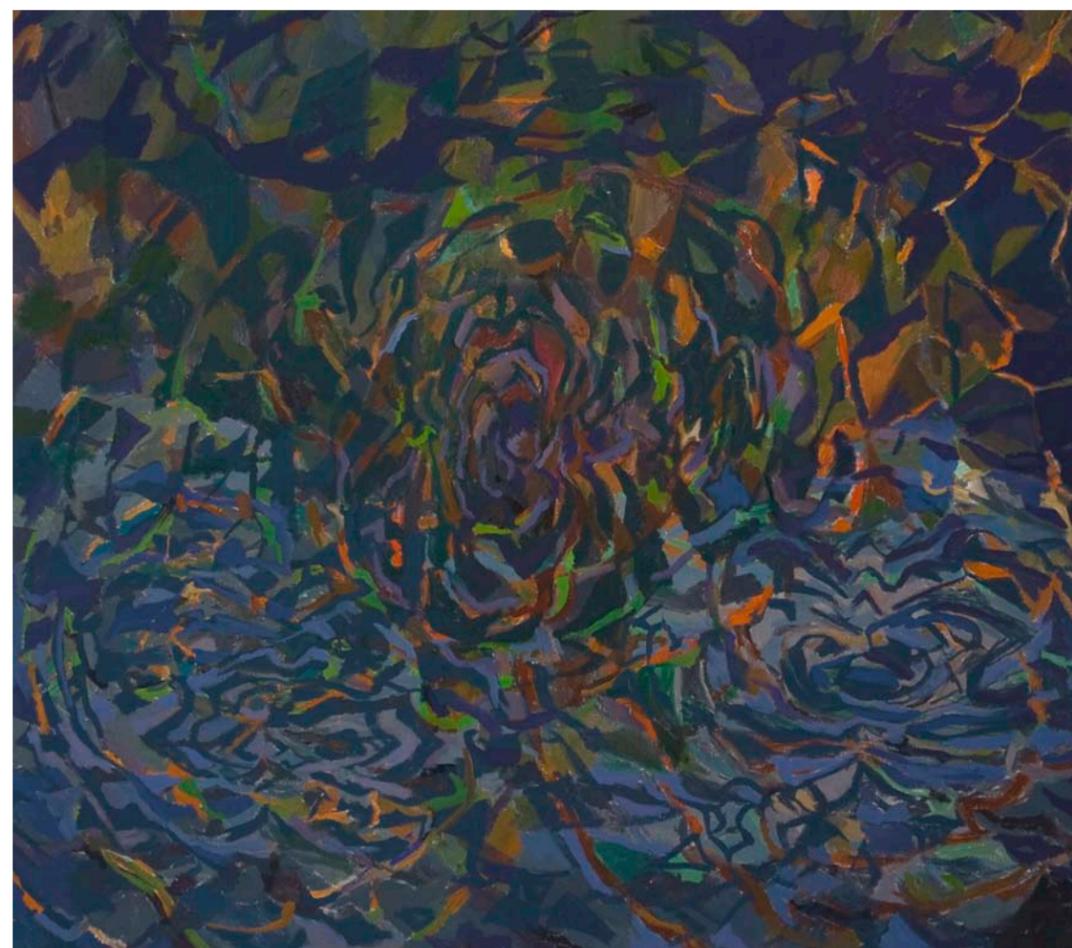
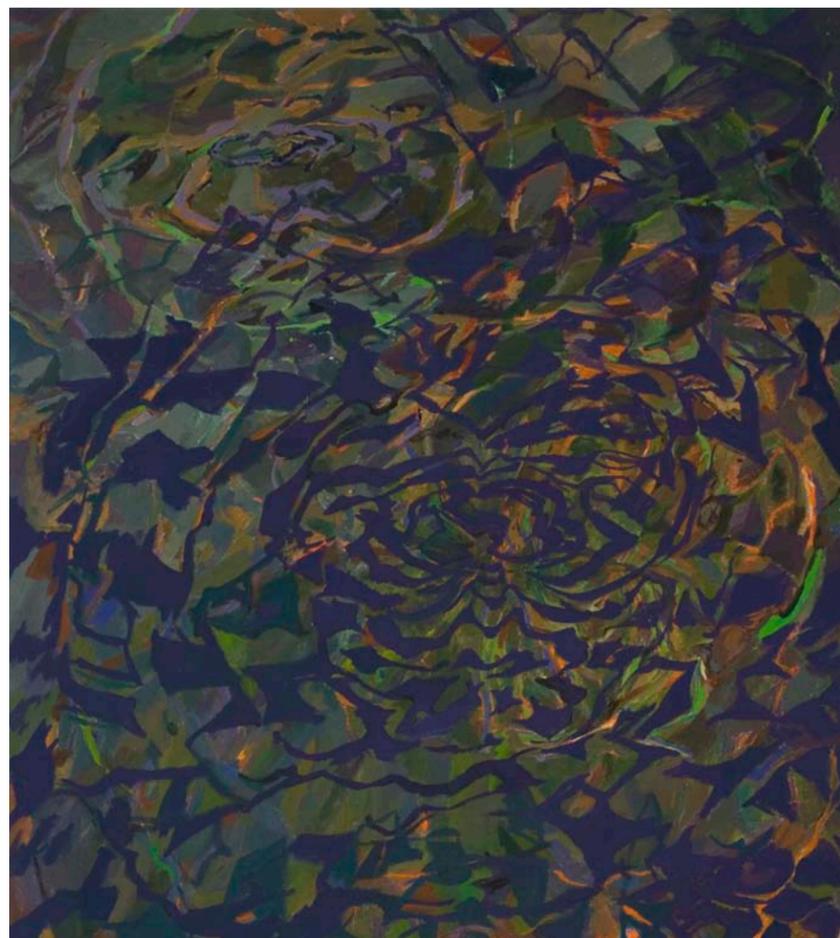


Figure 3-1. Timpani Bursts.

The vibrating hollowness of the timpani is accentuated by the treatment of form. Two patterns juxtaposed, one linear and of solid color, the other planar and of broken sub-shapes, vie for foreground position.

Their spatial reversal occurs in fairly rapid order thus creating the effect of vibration. By extension, and psychologically, this nervous quaking contributes to feelings of instability which might result in anguish.

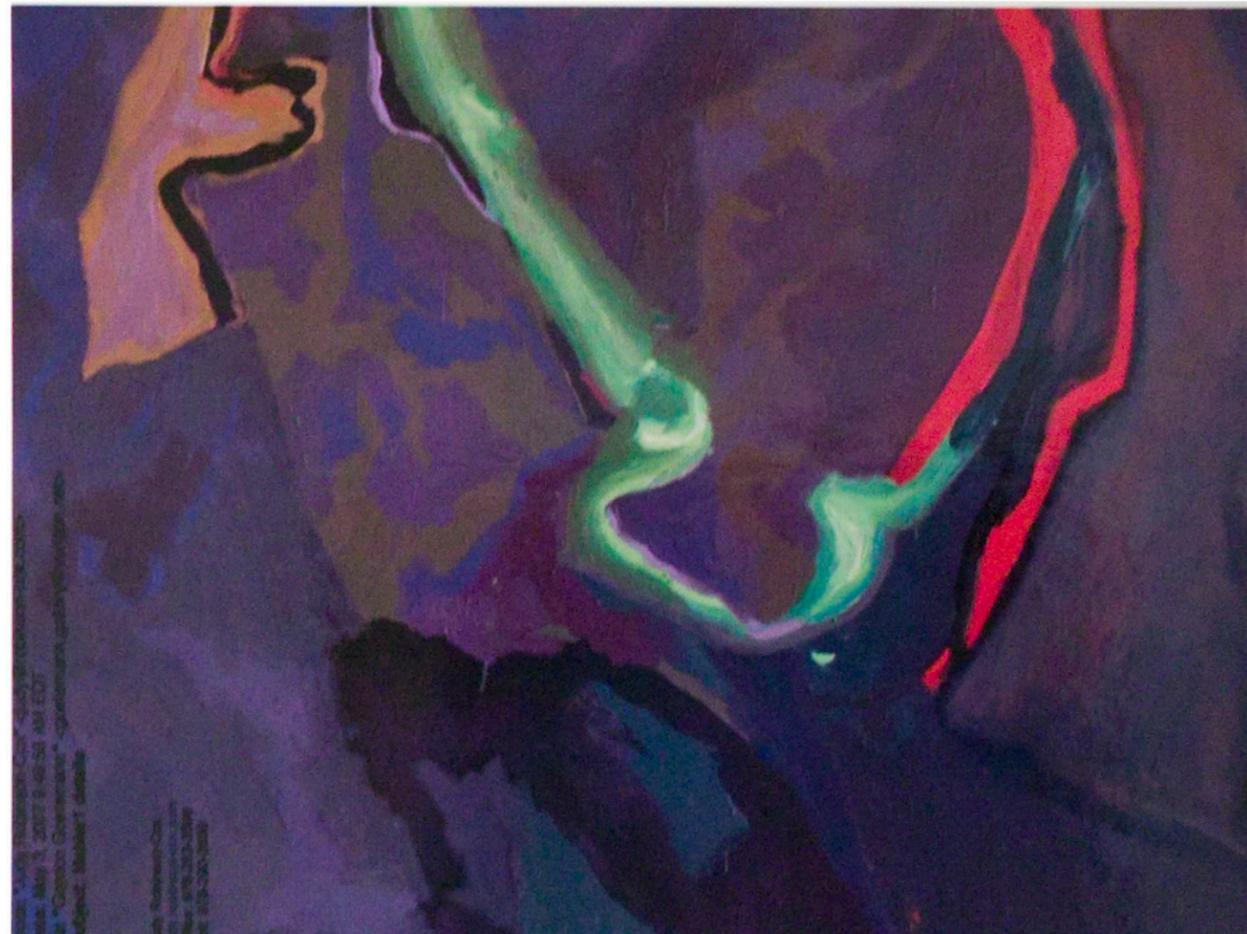
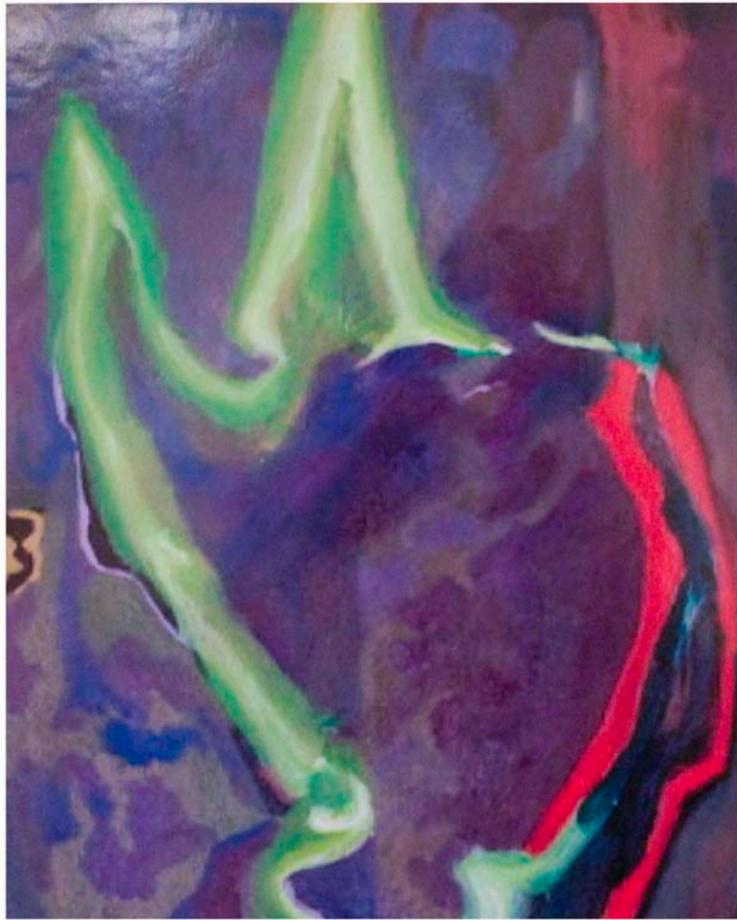


Figure 3-2. Scream of Anguish Details.

To describe the tension existing in the world Mahler used the analogy of schools of small fish flitting here and there without intent. Everything seems to be atrophying in a downward spiral and one screams in reaction to the senseless decay.

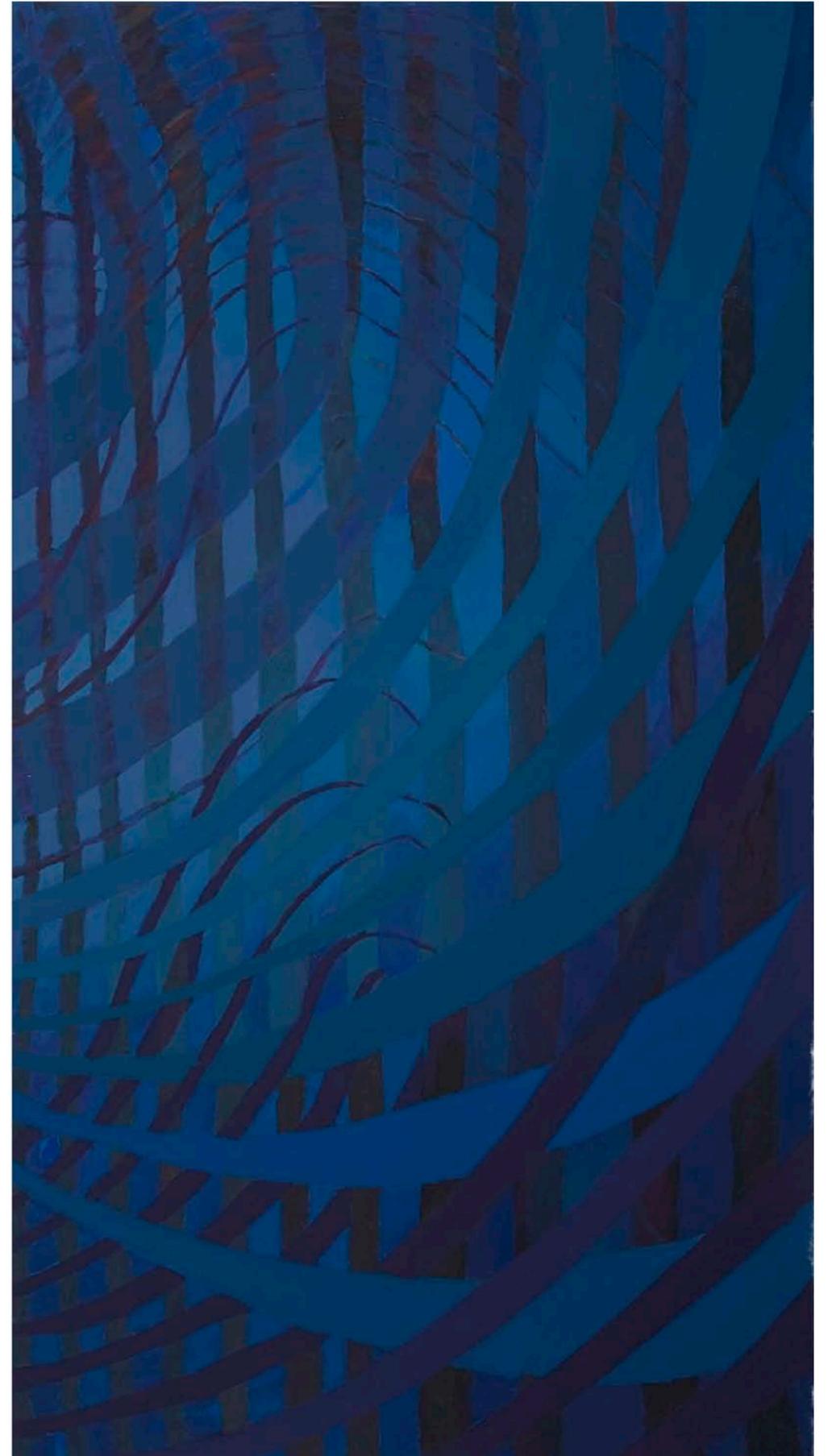


Figure 3-3. Gong.
The subtle reverberations of the “Gong” quiet the soul
and prepare it for Movement 4.

From Narrative to Allegory

The composition I made for Movement I used a truncated pyramidal form to communicate the monumental solidarity of the earth and to symbolize all of corporal matter. The form became a foundation for subsequent paintings. It is present here in Movement 4 as well. However, it has undergone a meaningful transformation. No longer is it massive; now it is linear. No longer does it personify corporal matter or signify man's entrapment; now it signifies the spiritual and the liberated. In this more calligraphic form it looks like the letter "Chai" in a Hebrew alphabet. Chai means life.

The Chai symbol is repeated twice in a way which suggests an arched pathway leading to eternal life. An angel appears and tries to turn back those who are on the path. Their responses are that they are from God and will return to God and that God will light their way to eternal life.

Primal light is a unifying force for faithful believers. It attracts, it empowers and it sustains all people of faith.

My painting attempts to show this power and unification by interweaving three symbols of world religions: the mandala of Hinduism, the Hebrew symbol for life for Judaism and the equilateral triangle for Christian Trinity.

Movement 4



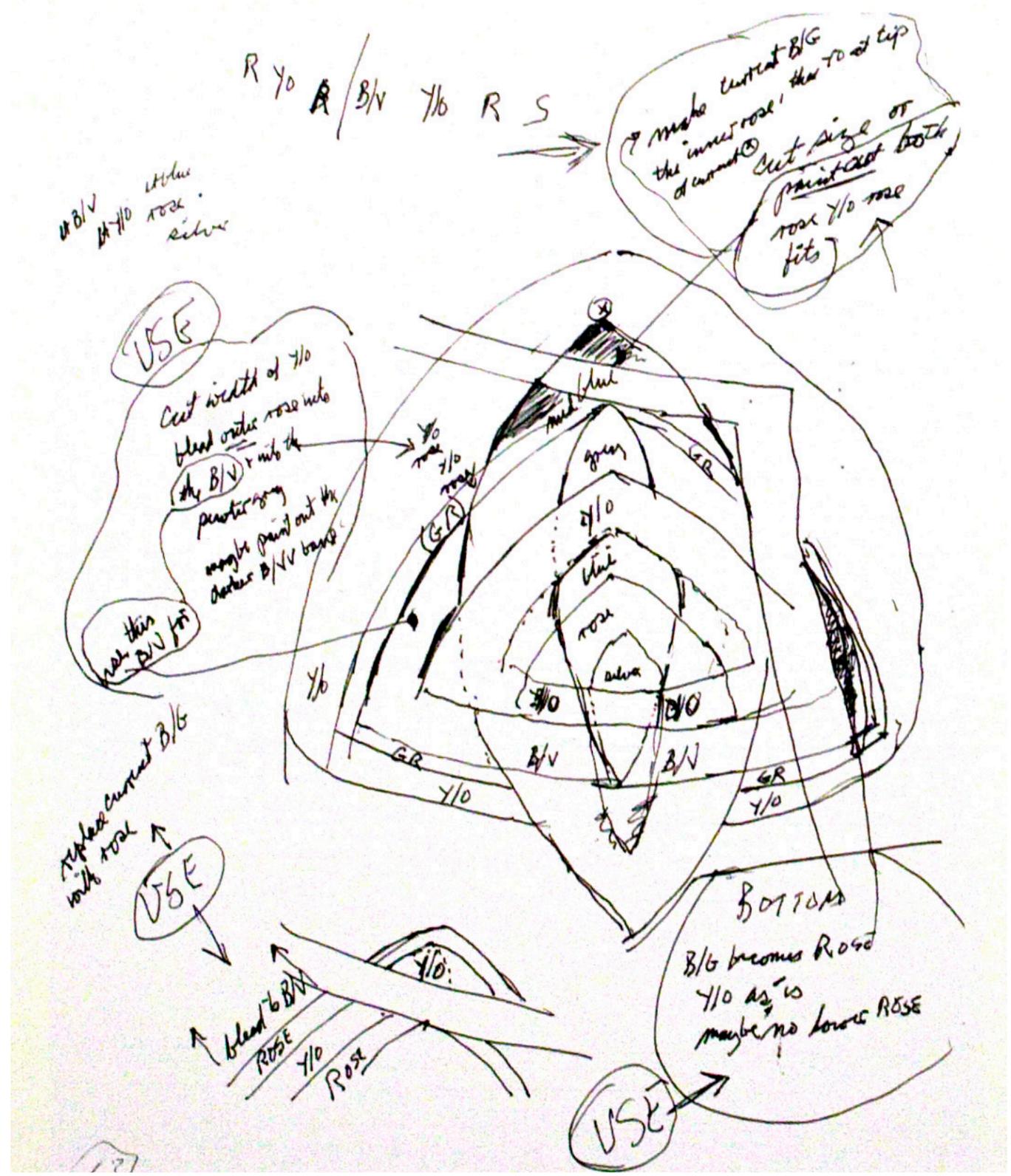


Figure 4-1. Three computer sketches for Movement 4.



Figure 4-3. Symmetry and Equality

My composition is asymmetrical. The Chai, for example is higher on the left than the right, thinner and thicker on the right than on the left. The double legs of the Chai on the left do not have a counterpart within the triangular area on the right. Yet if I were to achieve a sense of unity and the sameness I would have to achieve a sense of symmetry in the composition. So the issue I faced was how to get a sense of balance by modulation of hue properties related to the size and the visual weight variables of the forms.



DDALL

ink? into it
 get rid of green & diminish color contrast

see ① { modulate the color & value of the B/V (with over transparency of 6) in color & atmosphere like > }
 see ② spread the Y/O out over & mixed until it meets with equal value the Y/O inside & the B/V outside (use same method as in the Y/O ① in central area) see ④; see ⑤

③ as the B/V moves down ward have it become what it currently is now (no change)

④ maybe the B/G ② have (or more intense) become the outer edge of the modulated inside new color >

Y/O (with darker transparency) meets the new B/BV
 B/BV modulates to the B/G
 the modulated Y/O seems to PASS BEHIND the above like

⑤ Y/O gets lighter as it moves right/inward from its intense center & gets darker until it is same value & intensity of the outside B/V

make increased with more R/V (like foot 2)
 make the B/V just behind foot 2 the color of the stream left comm-berant

Figure 4-4. This page of notes and diagrams illustrate the issues and solutions to the problem of making something asymmetrical appear to be symmetrical.

Movement 5A



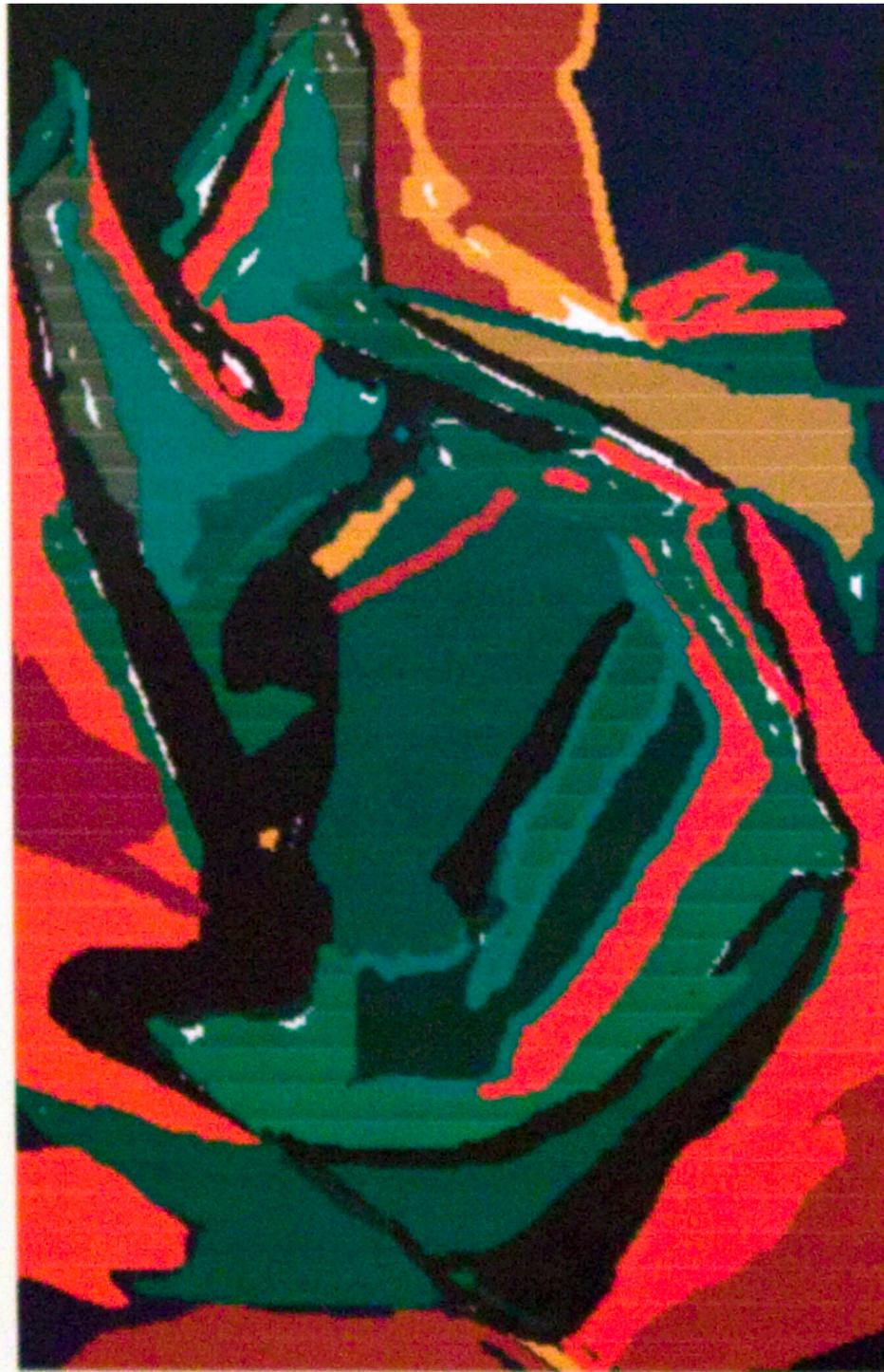


Figure 5-1.

The simplicity and unified mood of Movement Four are shattered by the blaring cacophonous sound of sheer terror. The anguish of Movement Three is raised to the superlative here.

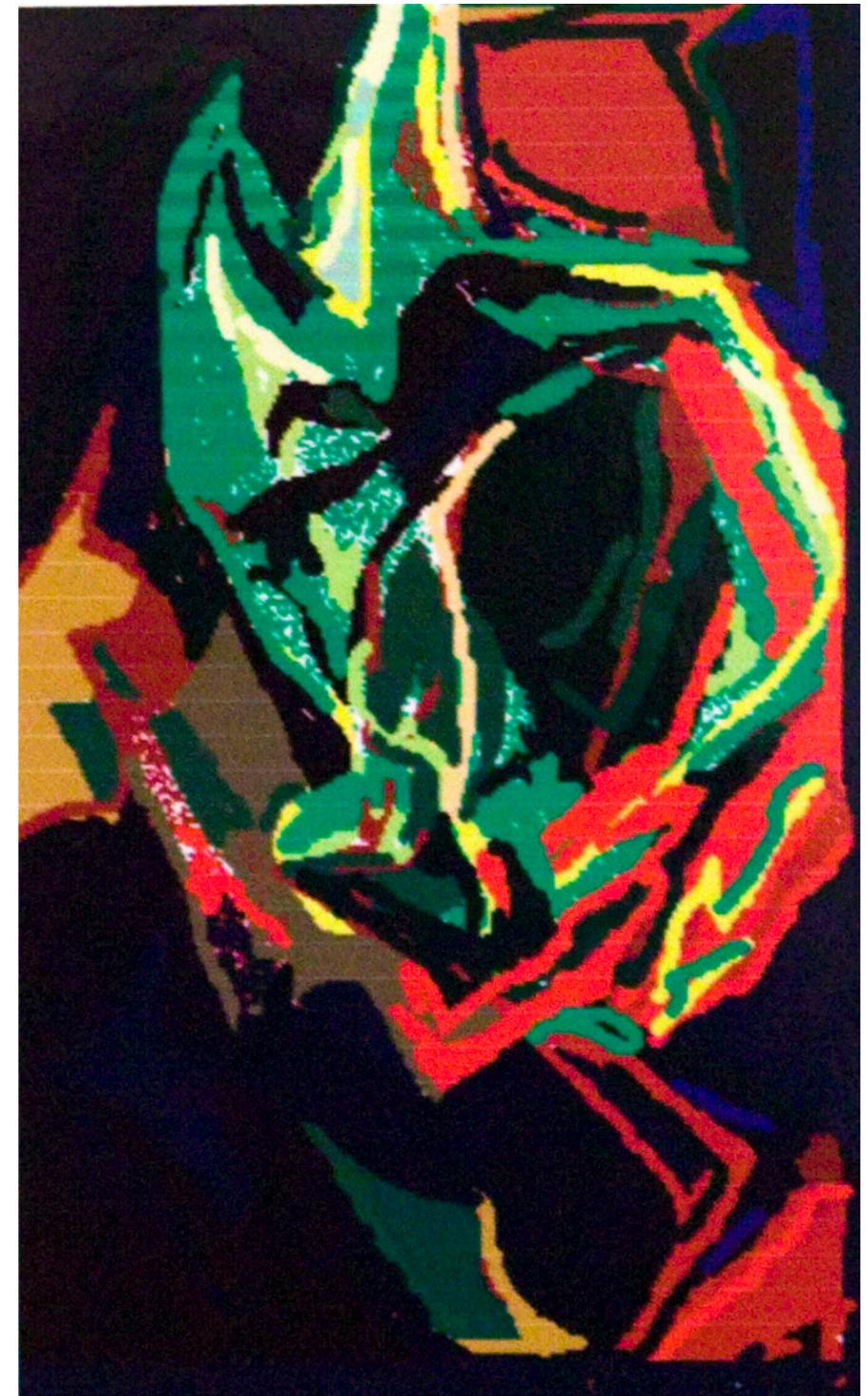


Figure 5-2.

Having forms burst the boundaries intended to contain them is an effective way to startle and suggests power, but it is not enough to convey the depth of the emotion terror. The suggestion of a vortex or channel in which one moves out from a deep void of darkness into intensely explosive color is more effective.



Figure 5-3.

From terror Mahler switches the mood to one of awakening. It is serious, ponderous and fearful. We see its development in the center panel of the triptych and the left side of Movement 5B.



Figure 5-4. Left Side 5B

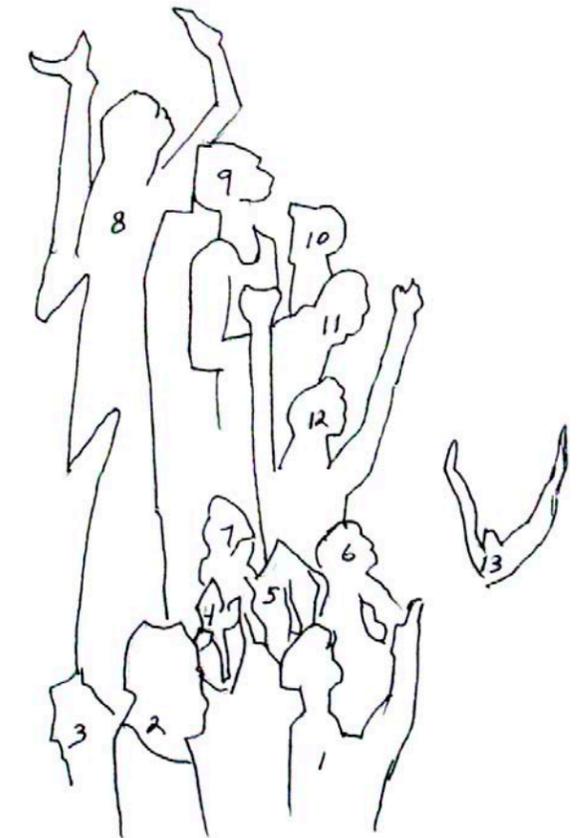


Figure 5-5. Representatives of types and classes of souls moving toward judgment

1. South Pacific noble woman (New Guinea)
2. A Cardinal of the Church
3. A fighter
4. Spirit Mask worn by one who "gets it"
5. Two-faced people and the silly buffoons
6. A Tinker
7. A holy woman (modest)
8. A queen (avatar, orant, symbol of the Church)
9. A regal aristocrat (who dresses for every occasion)
- 10... A surreal self worshiper
11. A. Roman
12. A youth (transported by the romance of the moment - (Delecroix)
13. The Bird of Death



Figure 5-6.

I was equally wide-ranging in how I worked technically and stylistically. I made drawings and began painting figures in the direct Secessionist (expressionist) style of Mahler's era. Other figures came by using Surrealist "automatic writing" techniques as a means to tap the sub-conscious or by using the equivocal forms of Synthetic Cubism.

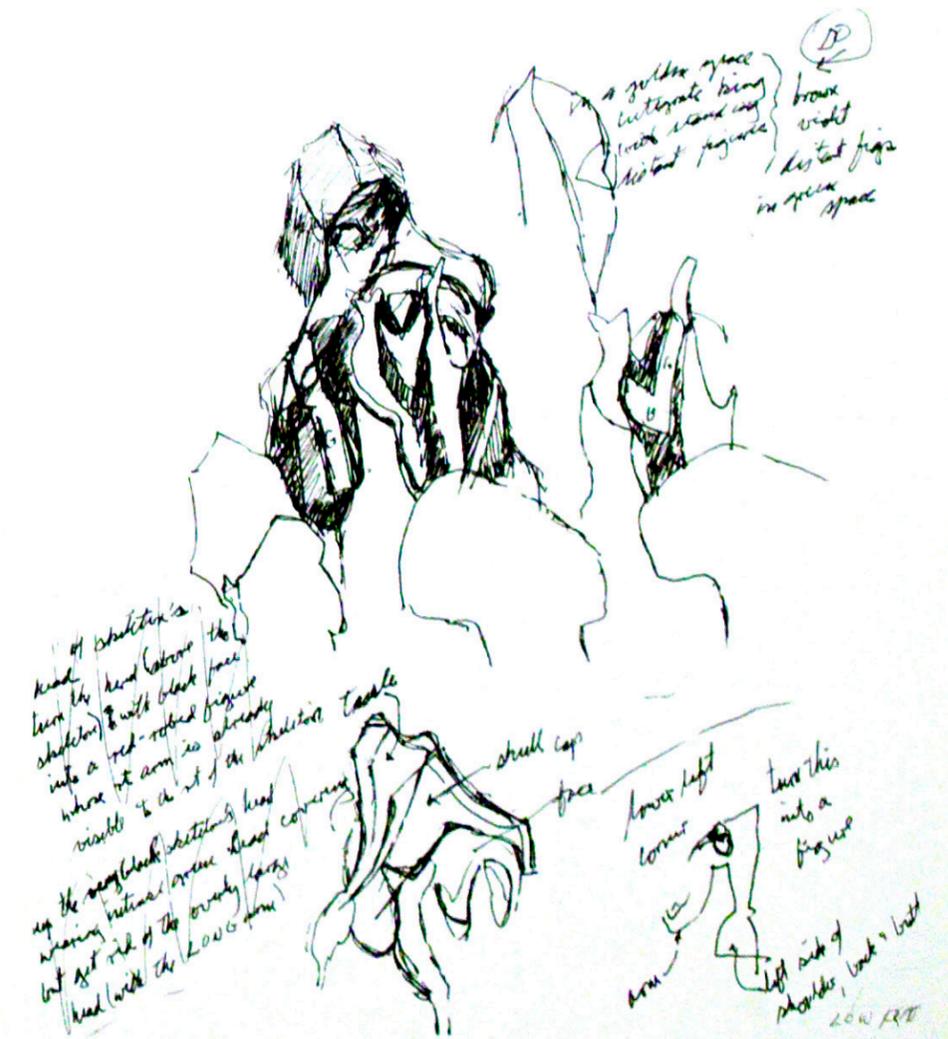
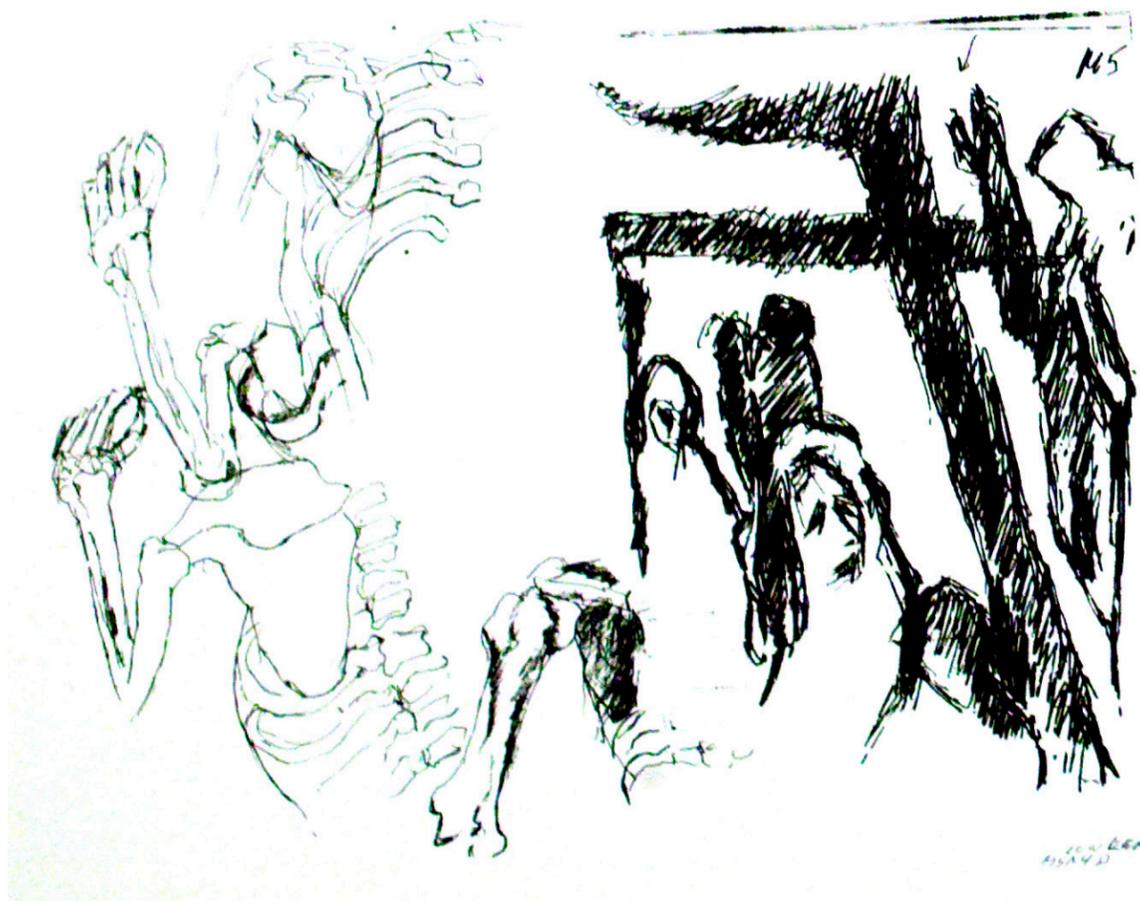


Figure 5-7. Whether for reasons of awe or terror the souls marching become aware that the time for ultimate decision is at hand. They pleas for mercy as the Dies Irae is played again with awesome power and dramatic effects.

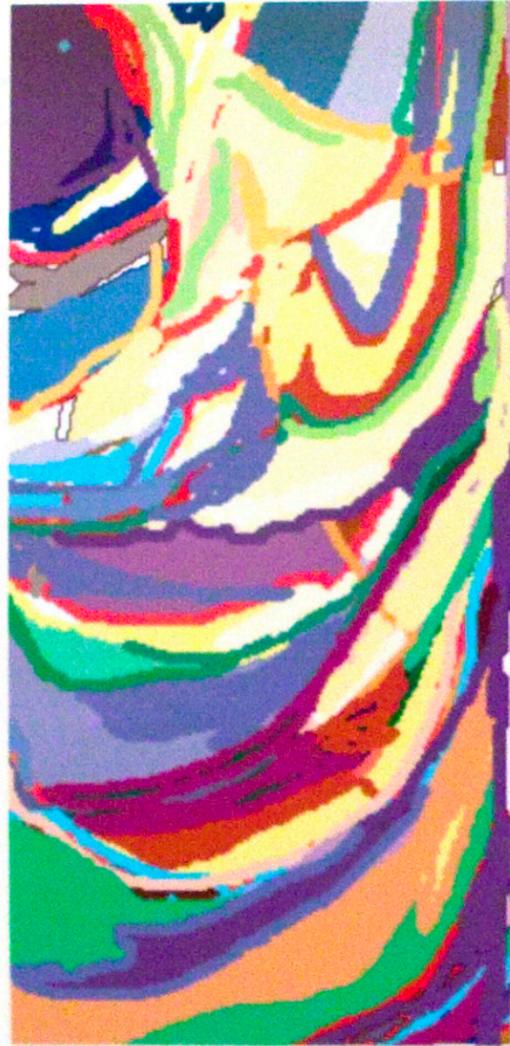
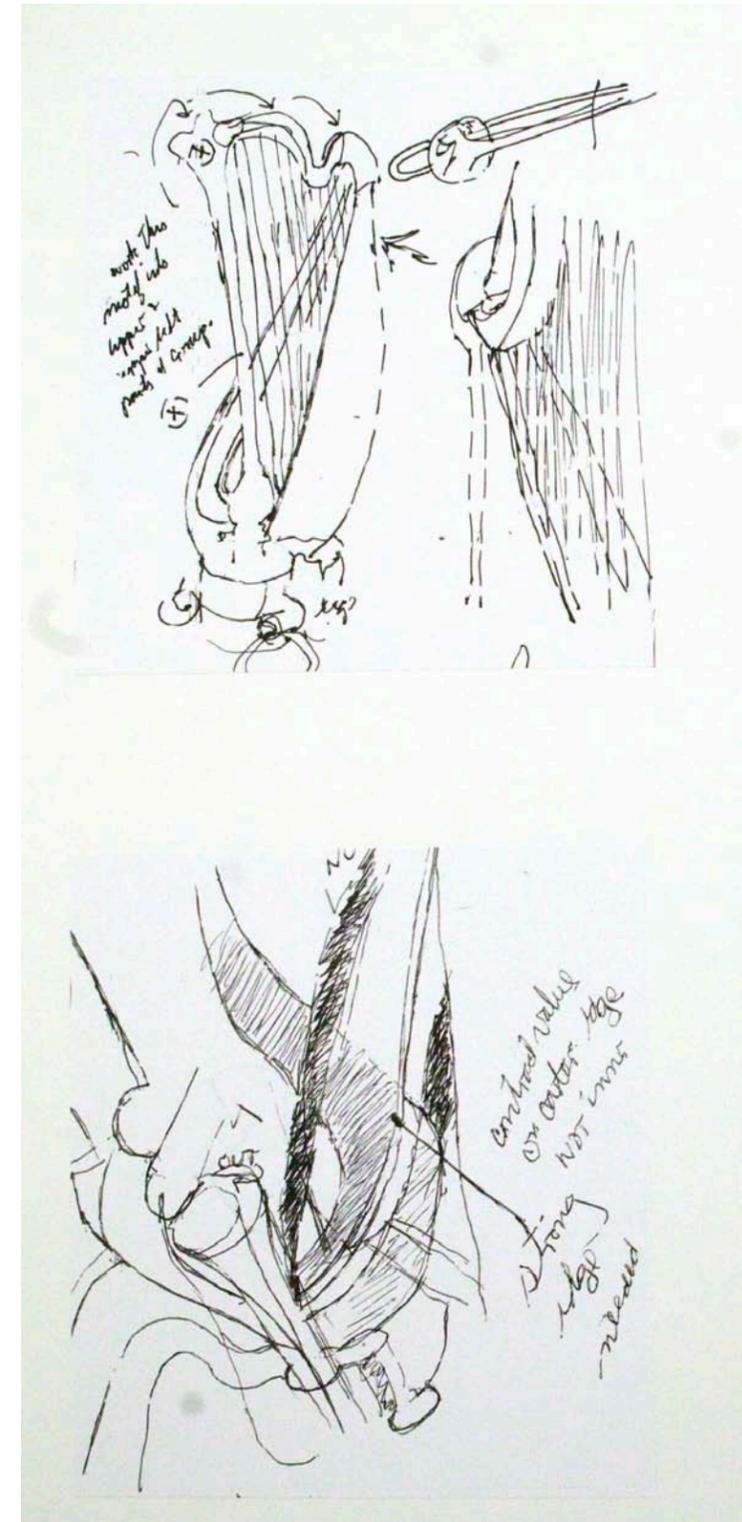
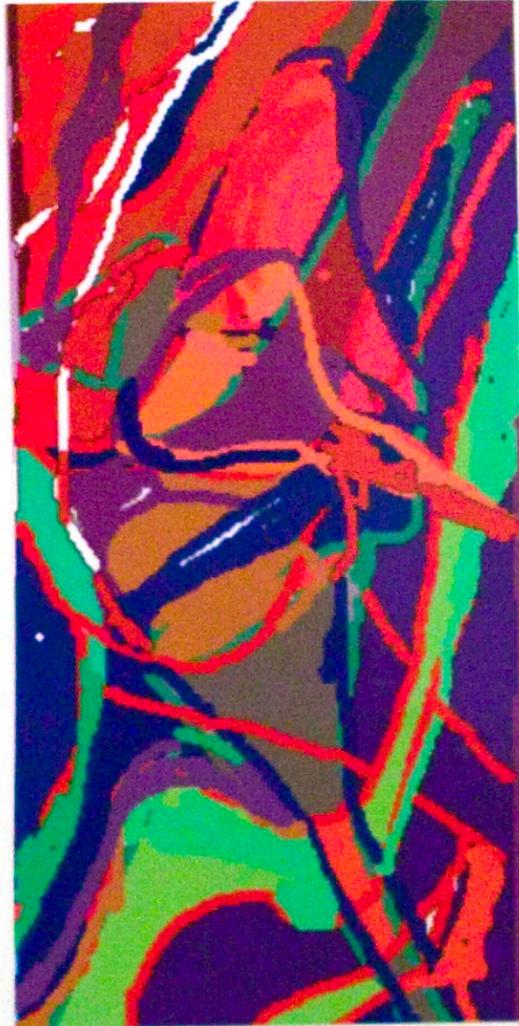


Figure 5-8.

At this juncture, to advance the narrative, I had several options. Initially I considered the Dies Irae flanked by “The Great Call,” and the “Horns of the Apocalypse.” In both, the brass instruments dominate but are played against a harp and languid strings. As the theme of “Pleading” enters, it is tied structurally to six emphatic notes played on the harp. These are contrasted to the brass which plays various tunes and tempos.

Figure 5-9.

I began to develop a composition based on this information and was well into it when I realized that I was painting the specific instruments, not their sounds, and certainly not the content “Pleading.”



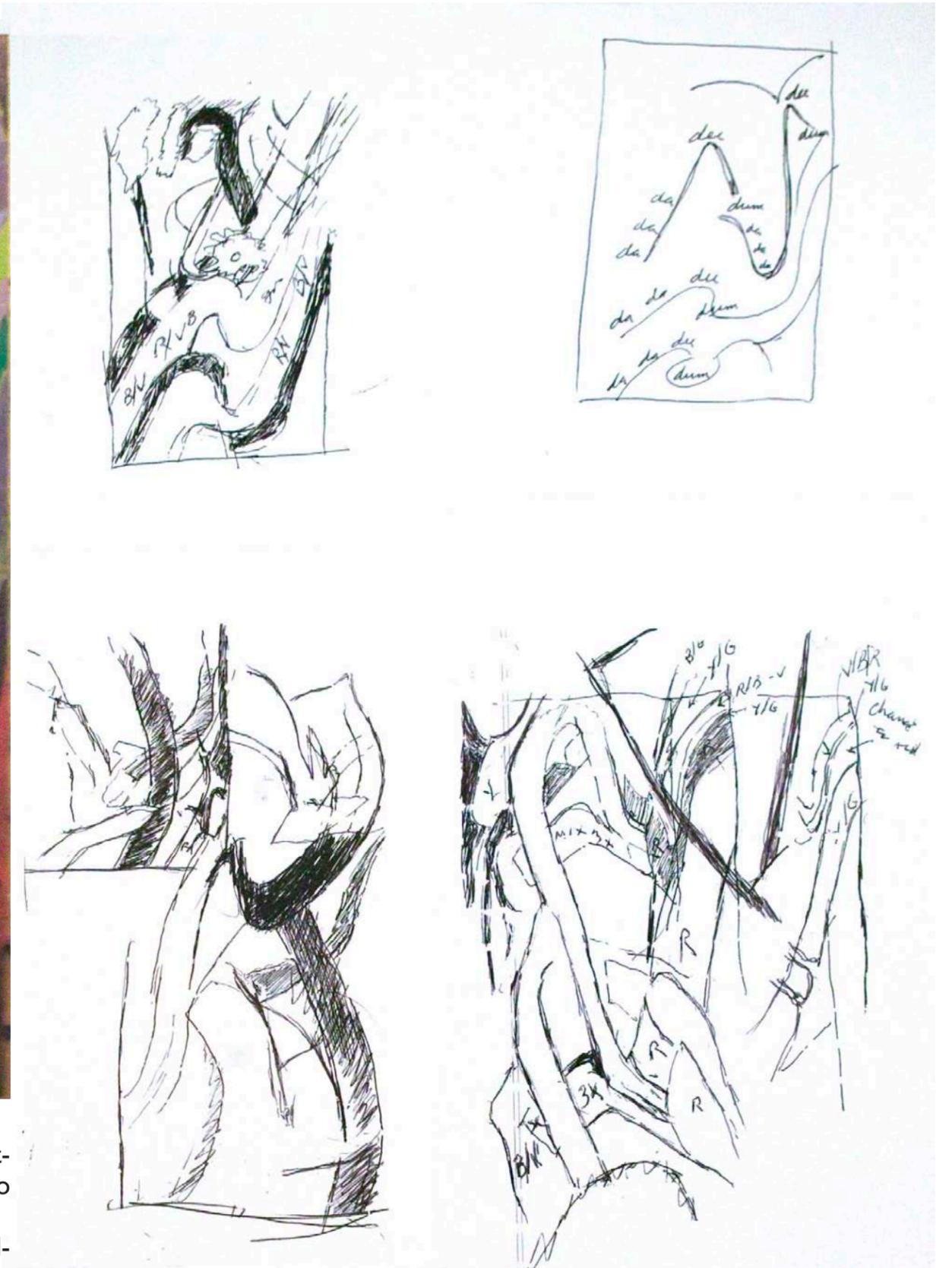
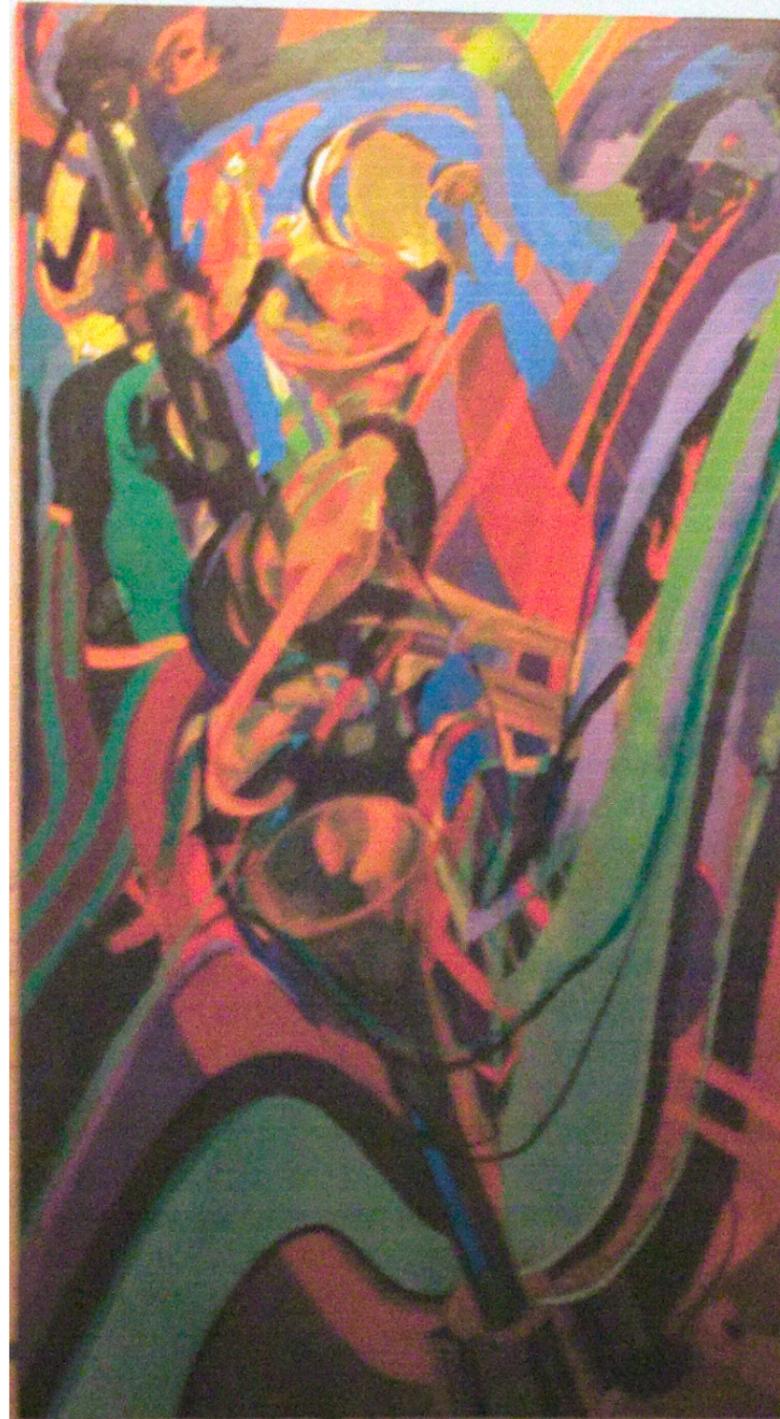


Figure 5-10.

These works show my effort to correct this problem. I diagrammed the motifs suggesting their patterns of ascent, descent and duration. As they built upward into increasing emotional tension, so too did I try to build and weave their visual formal equivalents.

Here, just who is pleading, is taken to be every soul ever born. Later I will suggest another possibility which radically changes the meaning and sequence of the Movement.

Movement 5β





Figure 5-11.

My idea for the composition of this painting was to select a pattern of prominent colored shapes complementary in hues (yellow/orange) which moved the pattern either left to right, or right to left. At the start, their size and number would be large and appear dense. As the pattern moved toward the opposite side these features would diminish and their hues and intensities would move toward duller grays.





Figure 5-12.

Toward the center then, where the patterns crossed, a neutrality would occur which would be neither positive or negative, corporal or spiritual, and would therefore symbolize the silence of a nether world. The middle sketch shows a pattern of grays forming in the center of the composition. In the right hand sketch I pursued the “cross-over” idea in a lighter valued and more intense color scheme.

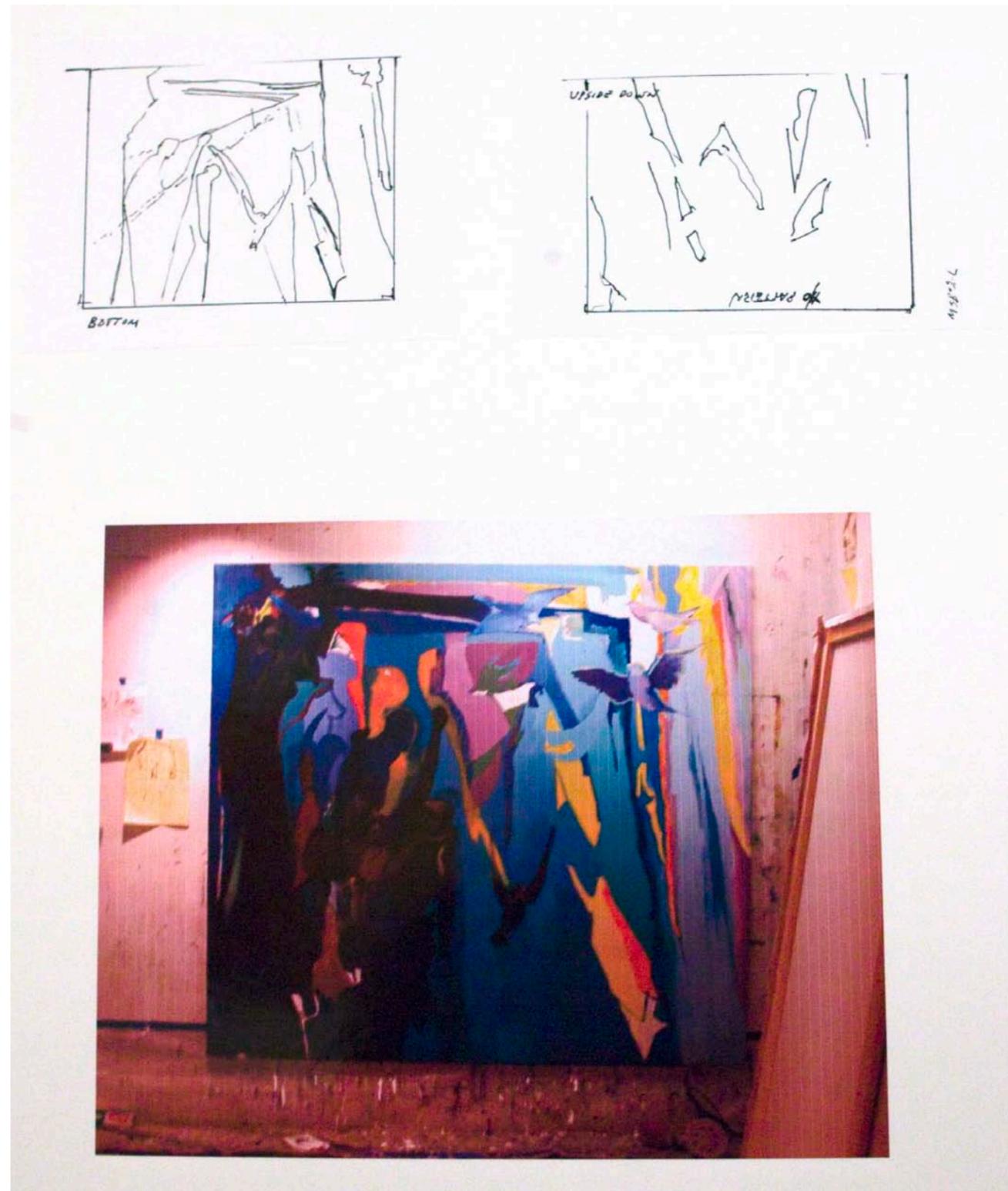
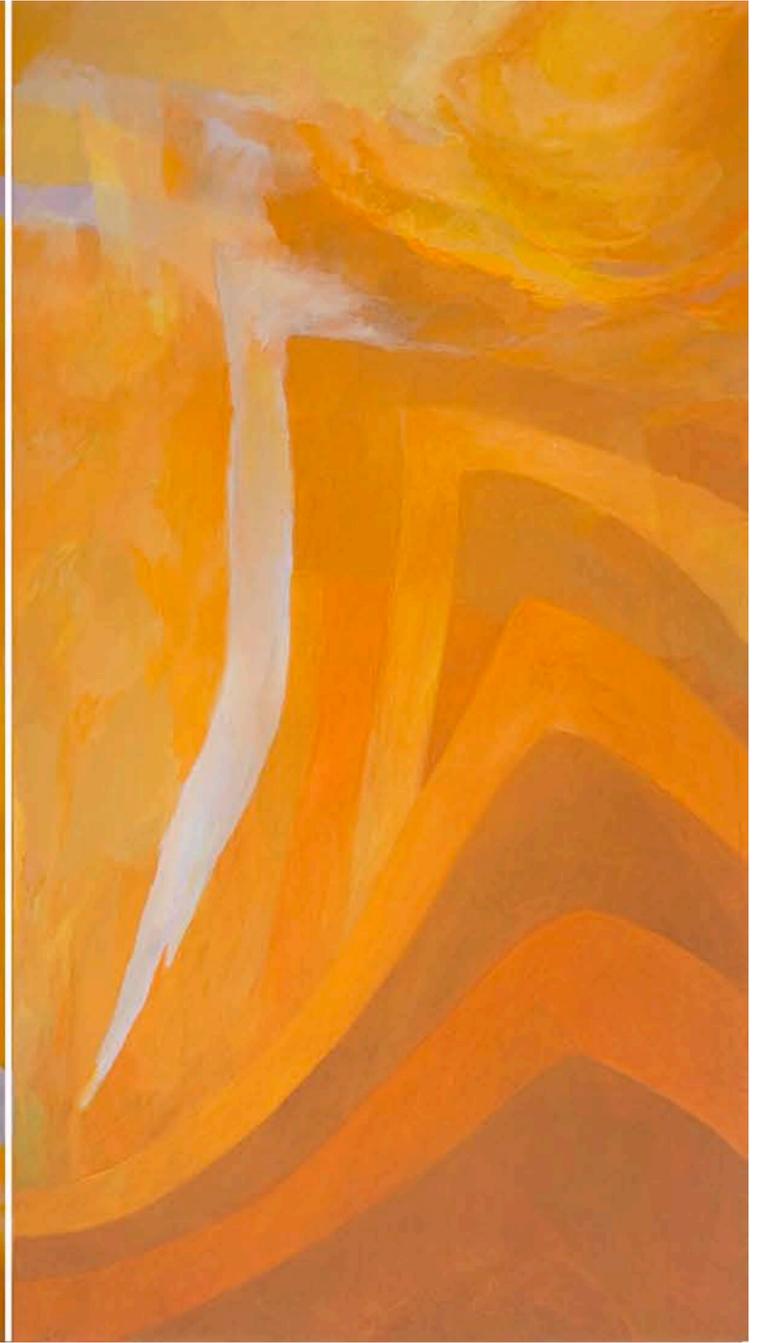


Figure 5-13.

The computer sketch worked well enough that I used it to start this painting. In developing the work I considered what the composition had to offer upside down as well as normally (a good test of its organic qualities).

Movement 5C



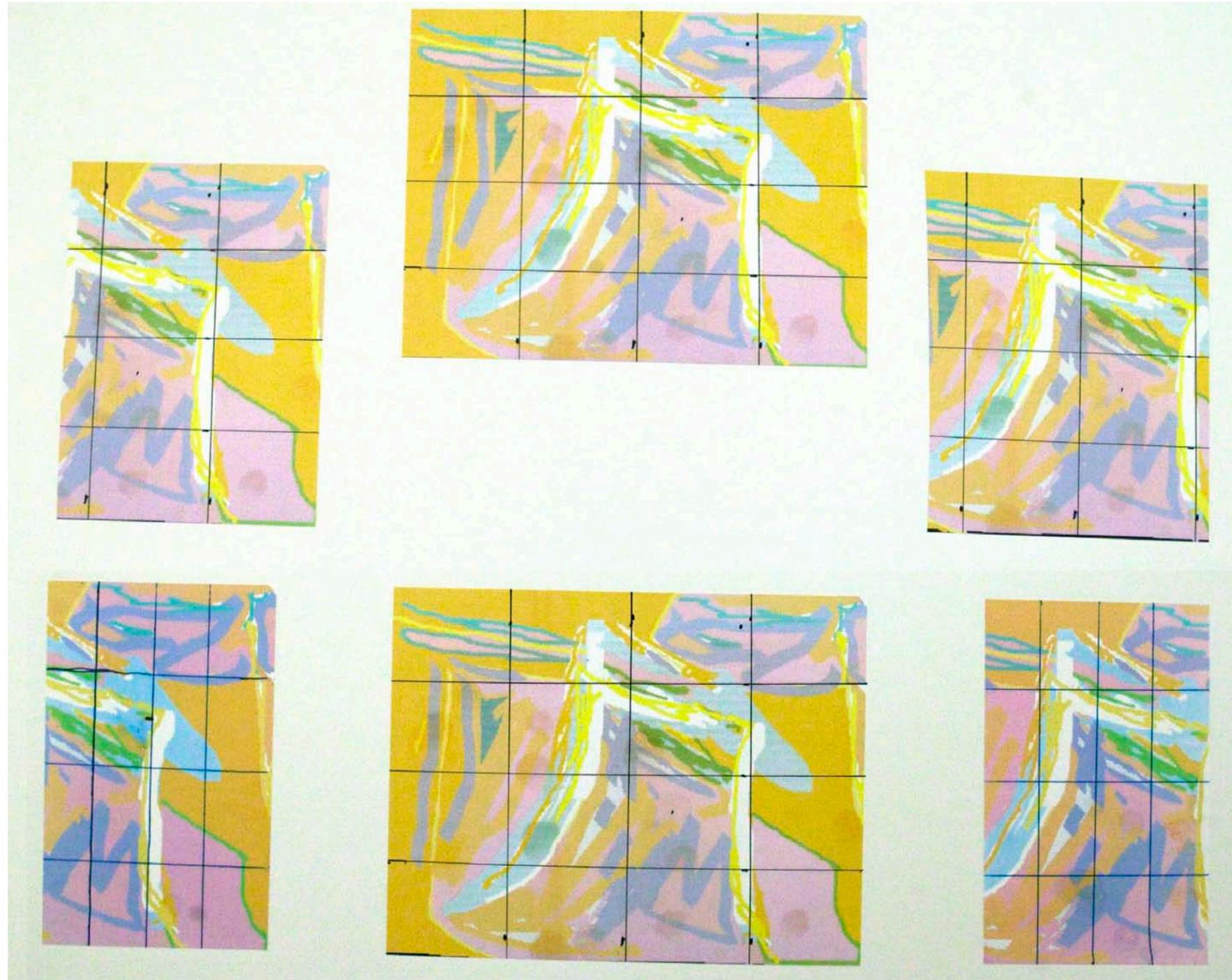


Figure 5-14.

My plan for the organization of Movement 5C was simple. It involved three considerations. First, to have the compositions of the two side panels come from within the center panel. Second, to use the Chai (life) motif repeatedly to suggest infinity and eternity. Third, to compose forms in accord with the music/text. Thus I have the left panel rise, the center panel soar, and the right panel descend with awesome monumentality.

I found these considerations addressed in these computer-generated images and I used them in the paintings I focused on subtle refinements of size and placement relationships of forms. I was also concerned with building a rich paint surface while at the same time using glazing techniques to simulate an ethereal atmosphere.

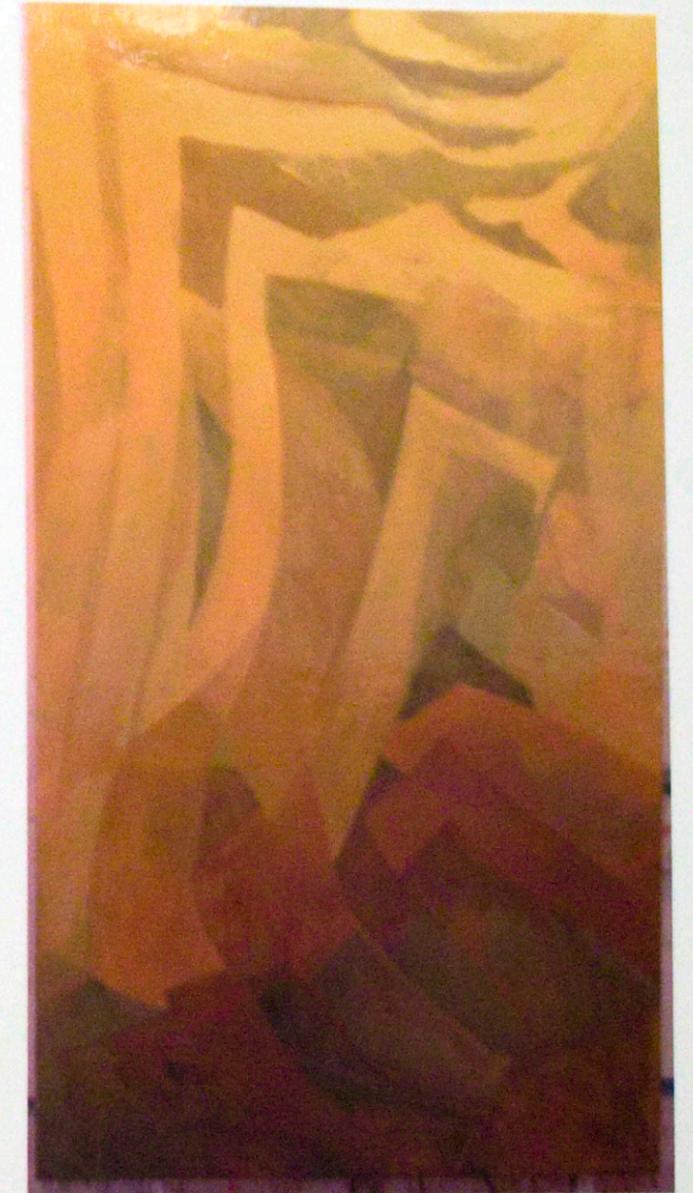
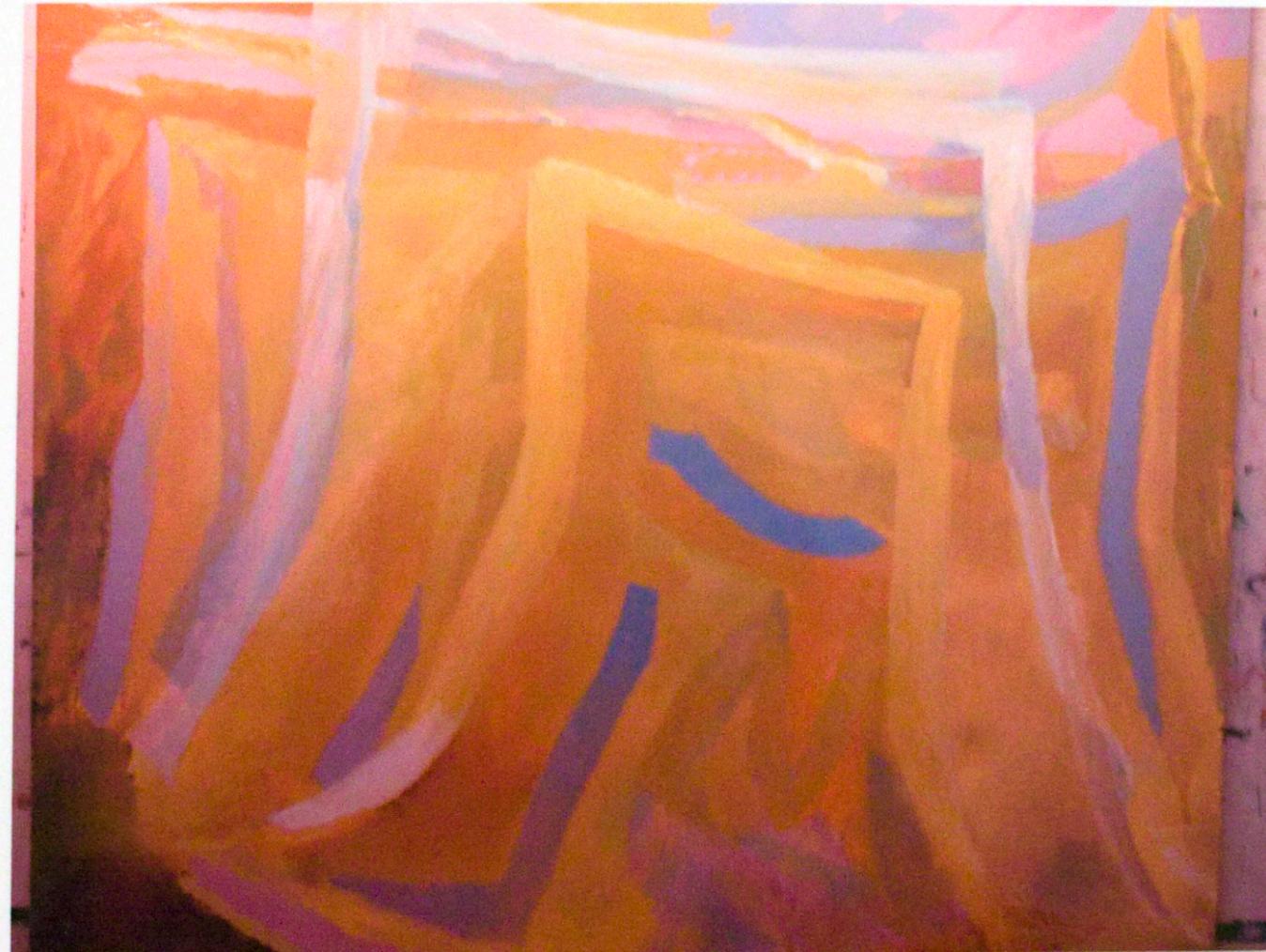
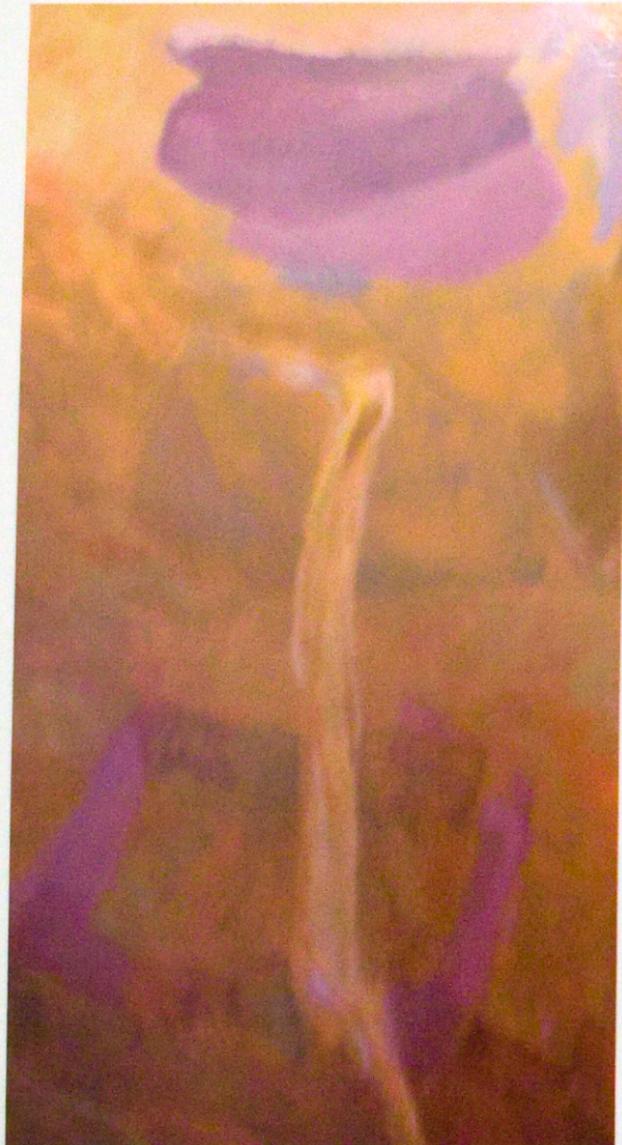
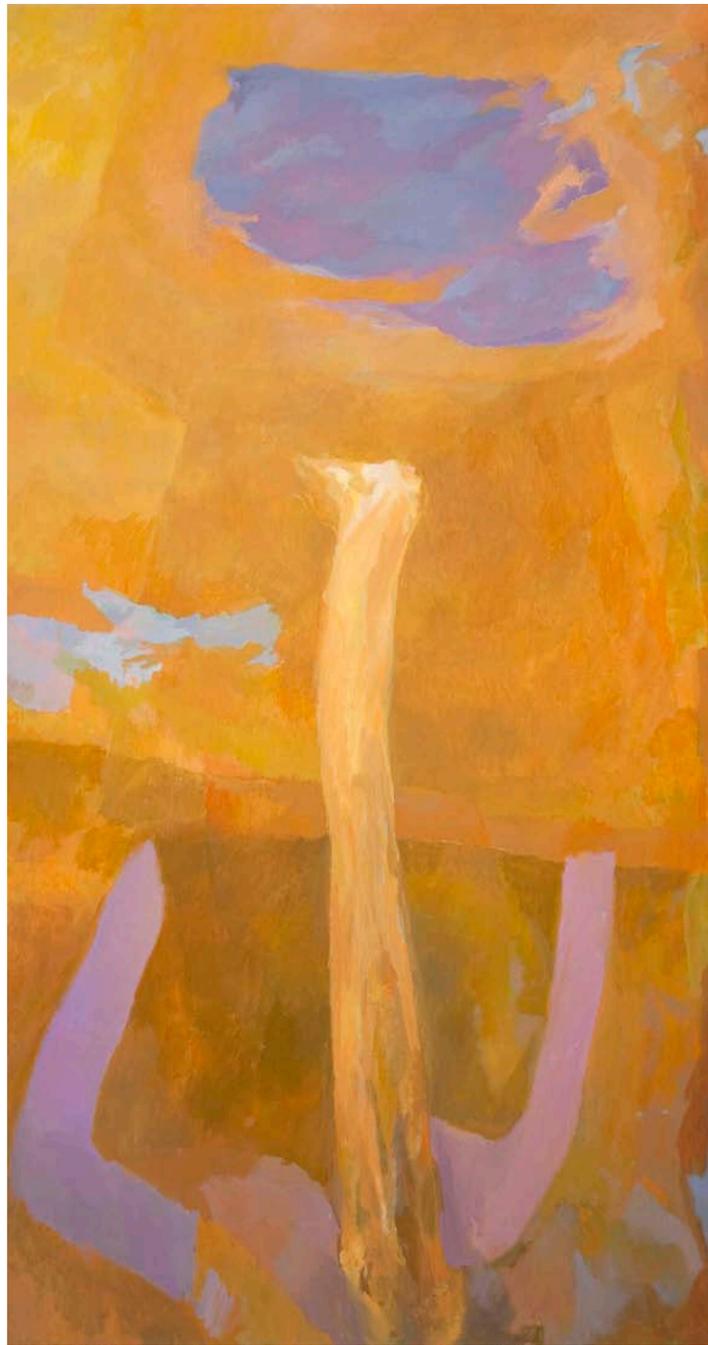


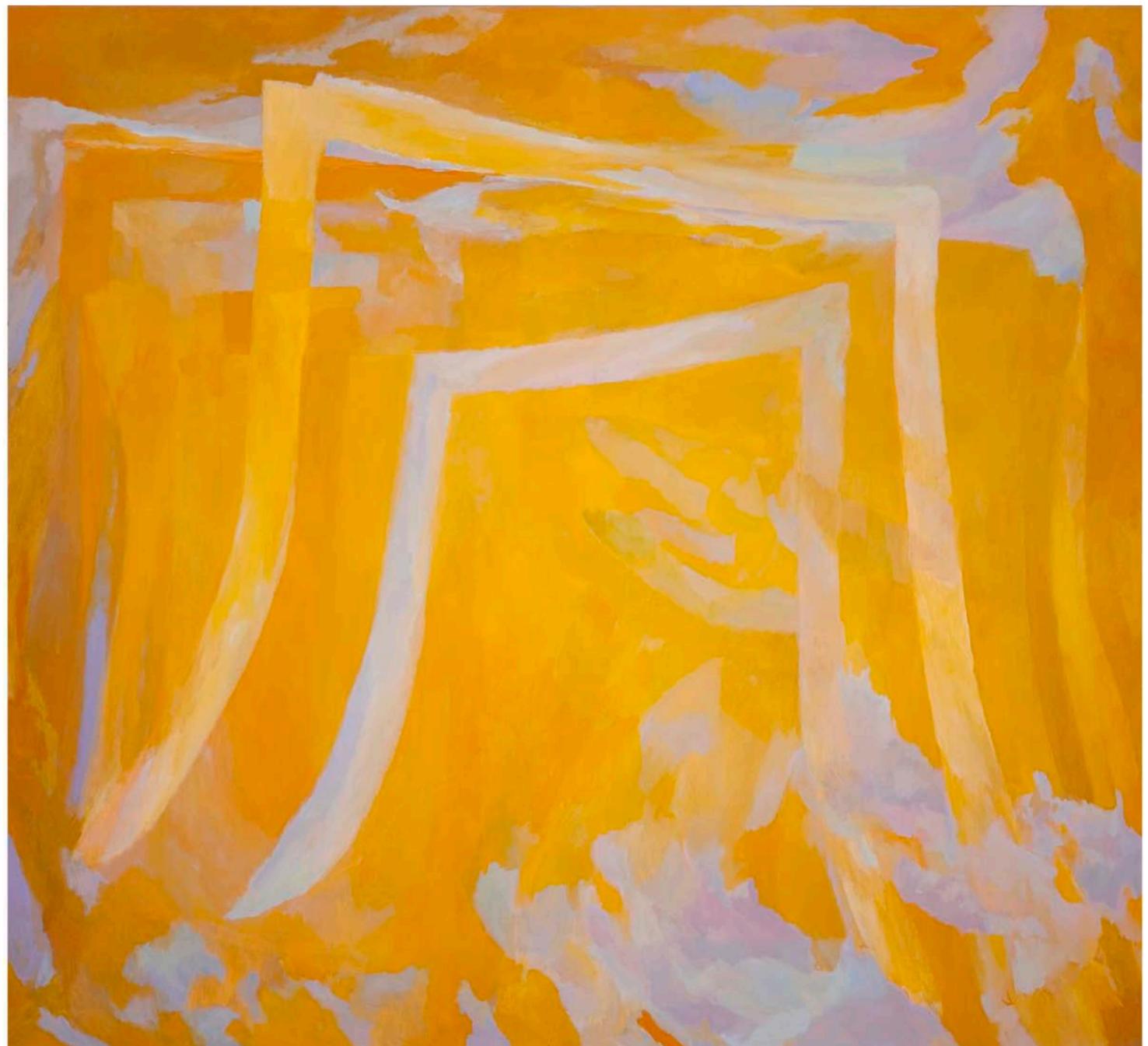
Figure 5-15.

The Symphony began with an ascending tower of chords and it ended with a descending tower of chords. In all other respects the first and fifth Movements are extreme opposites. Movement One is dominated by existential angst and entrapment. There is not the slightest hint of the world's social struggles, psychological angst or theological differences in Movement Five. It is pure and infinite euphoria.



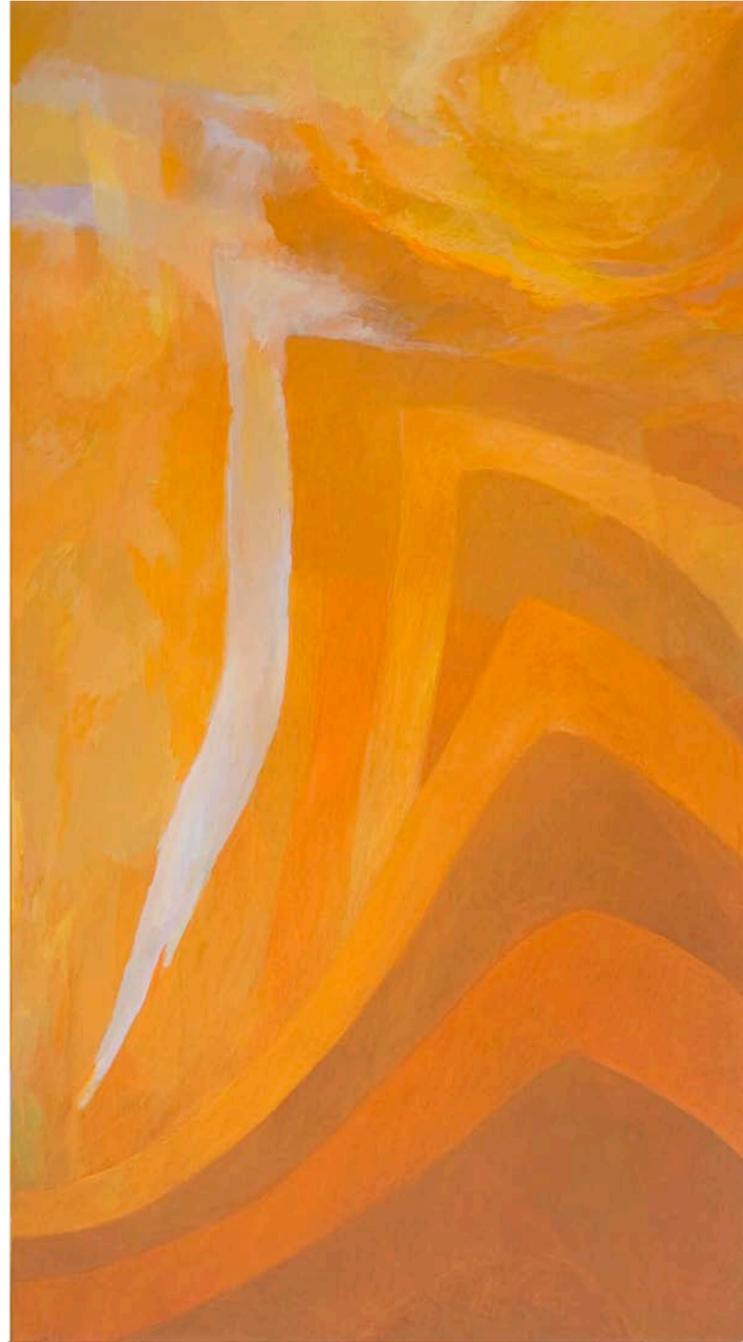
Rise again, yea thou wilt rise again,
My heart, in the twinkling of an eye!
What thou hast fought for
Shall lead thee to God!

With wings which I have won me,
in loves fierce striving,
I shall soar upwards
To the light to which no eye has soared.



With wings, which I have won me,
I shall soar upwards
I shall die, to live!

Rise again, yea, thou shalt rise again,
Mu dust, after short rest!
Immortal life!
He who called thee will grant thee.



By an overwhelming gift of love all of humanity is graced with God's eternal presence in their consciousness,