

MIRIAM MOSS

REPORT ON SABBATICAL LEAVE 1965 - 1966

I. CREATIVE PRODUCTIVITY

A. Today "EXPERIMENTATION" is the word for the creative artist. Time and freedom to become involved in evolving and maturing ideas, designs and paintings are necessary for the artist to enrich his background, and to come up with a new and individual statement of finished art works. Half of the time of my Sabbatical Leave was employed in the following activities:

1. Drawing
2. Designing
3. Painting

The new Acrylic Synthetic Paints were selected as a special kind of medium for exploring their possibilities in painting. In the various materials in the art field there is a correlation between discovery of a new physical medium and the rise of a new form of expression. Each substance or element employed in painting characterizes its own methods of handling, its own range, its own unique surfaces, etc. These potentials for creativity in the Polymere Paints, an acrylic paint, were experimented with and developed into various styles, which resulted in several paintings.

4. Enameling

Enameling is one of the oldest and most rewarding of all craft media. A wealth of styles and techniques for enameling is available as this craft as an art form has endured throughout many past cultures. Today artist-craftsmen are finding contemporary treatments with new exciting approaches for this age old craft. By experimenting in various techniques through combinations of materials and styles, I completed many enamel-art works, both plates and wall plaques.

5. Framing

Framing is an integral and vitally important factor in the proper display of paintings and wall plaques. I spent much thought and time in finding appropriate and

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original treatment for mats and frames for each of my original creations.

a. Mats

1. Hard woods
2. Papers
3. Fabrics, materials

b. Frames

1. Remodeling antique frames
2. Constructing frames from wood, metal
3. Painting, staining, gold-leafing

II. TRAVEL

A. Travel in Mexico and Guatemala

1. Traveling to and studying important historical sites.
2. Interviewing prominent authorities on art, archeology, customs, contemporary life, etc.
3. Researching the past as related to the meaningfulness of the present cultures in Mexico and Guatemala.
4. Photographing over 1000 colored slides.
5. Taping many conversations, sounds and music.

B. Staging two one hour programs synchronizing the colored slides and dialogue with a musical background.

1. Comparing similar aspects of Meso-American Cultures with those of Eastern and Western Civilizations as expressed in their art and architecture.
2. Pre-Cortesian art heritage and its influences on contemporary arts and crafts.

III. APPLICATION. Things learned and experienced during my Sabbatical Leave applicable to my teaching at Mount San Antonio College.

A. Two basic requirements are necessary for an inspirational art teacher:

1. The ability and "know-how" to create.
 - a. Understanding of creativity; physically, psychologically.
 - b. Experiencing the processes of creativity personally.
 - c. Appreciation and understanding of other artist's original expressions.

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2. The ability to teach in the creative field.
 - a. Knowledge of the creative process in the specific field of art.
 - b. Understanding of the individual's development of expressions in art.
 - c. Inspiration as a teacher to the beginning artist.

3. Students, faculty and others who see and hear the slides-tape programs will share my experiences and the knowledge I acquired in travel.

I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all who were instrumental in giving me the advantage of enjoying the Sabbatical Leave from Mount San Antonio College. The time was divided into two areas of interest. Creative growth in painting and enameling and travel to Mexico and Guatemala. Upon returning from traveling, three programs were developed from tapes and colored slides.

The aim of an artist -teacher is to develop his own creativity so that in turn, he will be better qualified to stimulate and help the creative growth of his students. The time was provided for me to accomplish much in the way of experimenting with drawing, designs, paintings and enamelings, and to advance my creative ability through expanding with new materials and techniques.

A resumé of my activities follows:

Four months were devoted to the creative artistic part of my Sabbatical Leave. Two media were used, Acrylic Paints and Enamels on copper. Acrylic paints were selected because of the many new possibilities that they offer, such as, the opaque quality of oil paints, the transparent possibilities that water colors provide and a new modeling emulsion that gives a textured surface or design element to the surface of the painting. Contemporary painters and designers are beginning to use this medium in their art work. After many experiments to discover the possibilities of these new synthetic materials, I created several paintings. The basic concept of these creative expressions, was to graphically portray an emotional attitude through color, shapes and movement in space. This resulted through much contemplation, experimentation and personal interpretation. An artist by actually saturating his thoughts through research and exploration arrives at a personal response to the subject. He can then paint intuitively and give a visual statement of his attitude and feelings for that subject. This was my approach and final development in several paintings.

Enameling on copper was another medium that I wished to investigate more in depth, especially since I teach enameling projects in my design classes. The possibilities of enameling is of wide range. Not only are there both transparent and opaque colors, but texture, such as scraffito, etching, and collage. All of these avenues of approach were used as basis of exploration in technique and expression. Subject matter such as birds, plants, human forms as well as non-objective shapes were used in design, as images for the enameling. Not only were rectangles and square shapes in copper used, circular plate shapes were employed also to provide new backgrounds for design. Many wall placques, some composed of two or more smaller pieces of copper and plates were completed.

Framing became a challenge. Appropriate as well as original framing was desired. Mats as well as frames were experimented with to suit each art work. By visiting second-hand and antique shops, I found several beautiful old frames that worked out handsomely with the contemporary enamels. The frames had to be restored and cut to fit each piece of enamel. Mats were used, such as Oriental papers, wall paper, fabrics, suede accents around the frames, etc. Several beautiful pieces of hard-woods were purchased to provide frames as well as backgrounds for the enamels.

By following through these projects from their original conception to the completed art work, including the framing, was a very basic and valid art experience. Enriching my own background in appreciation and understanding as an artist, this experience gave me depth of concept of the creative approach as an art teacher. Which will be of inestimable value to my teaching activities in the future.

The second phase of my Sabbatical Leave was devoted to travel in Mexico and Guatemala. In preparation for this trip I studied Spanish at Night School for two years. English is spoken at most of the shops and hotels in the larger cities, but this is not true in many cases in the smaller shops and towns. So being able to communicate in Spanish was most valuable. I spent two months in travel in Mexico and Guatemala. My primary interest in travel was to learn about the art heritage of the Meso-American people, the reasons why these art expressions were developed, their arts and crafts and finally how all this background influenced the contemporary art field of our neighbors to the south.

I left Los Angeles by plane on December 13, 1965 and flew to Mexico City. My tape recorder and camera were taken along to record the visual and verbal experiences while traveling in all these exciting places. I spent several weeks in Mexico city visiting many Historical Sites , Museums, Art Galleries, both historical and contemporary. The Most beautiful and well organized museum I have ever had the advantage in all of my travels in the Near East , Europe and the Orient, to visit is the Museo Nacional de Antropología in Mexico City. I must have spent a week going through it taking colored slides, taping the well trained guides accounts of the art objects and in general enjoying the whole set up and educational possibilities afforded the visitor. A trip to Oaxaca was taken from Mexico City. We spent five days there taking in all the Culture of the Zapatecs. Oaxaca is most delightful as it is not so sophisticated and modern. I enjoyed visiting the native market and the old woman, Doña Rosa whose pottery is as famous as Maria in New Mexico , U. S. A. Having taught ceramics and having thrown many pots on the wheel, gave me an excellent background for observing the very primitive approach that Doña Rosa employed to create her beautiful ceramics.

I visited two art schools in Oaxaca. The Art School of Oaxaca was devoted to Contemporary design and painting similar to that taught in most art schools in Los Angeles, including Mt. San Antonio. The second school was one sponsored by the State Government of Oaxaca. This was for the training and development of the indigenous arts and crafts of that area. An old monastery and church were rebuilt to board and train the local children, mainly boys from twelve to eighteen years old in the crafts of weaving, dyeing yarn, making ceramic pieces of all shapes, painting them with colored slip and glazing them, jewelry making and other skills related to their crafts of that section of Mexico. This program was free to the students. The work accomplished by these young people was of a high quality.

Another trip out of Mexico City was to Tula north of the City. Tula is the original home of the Toltecs who invaded other sections of Mexico and made their contribution in other areas. The feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl, the God of the Sun and the Morning Star of Venus is one of the most notable. In fact one of their Kings was called Quetzalcoatl and after vanishing one day with the prophecy that he would return to rule again lead to the Accepting Cortéz as the returning ruler. The pyramid and ruins along with the museum proved most interesting.

I then flew to Merida, Yucatán in the eastern part of Mexico. The Mayans and Toltecs have left many pyramids, buildings, Ball Courts, sculpture there to investigate. The most interesting was Chichén Itzá. Here was located the largest Pelote Court and the Senote or Well in which children and women were sacrificed to the Rain God Tlaloc.

One of the most unusual sites in Merida was the Indian Monument which was created by one man showing scenes from the whole history of Mexico, Pre-Columbian, Colonial, and Contemporary. Unfortunately the art work of Sculpture was of a very poor aesthetic standard. The University of Yucatán founded by the Jesuits in the 16th century and now a State University had a small art department of rather dated art instruction.

Other ruins of the Mayans, Itsás and Toltecs that had interesting buildings were Kabáh, Uxmal, and Labná. These were primarily Temples, Pyramids and other religious structures. In some the Chinese influence in design was noted. Decorative designs were beautiful on most of the buildings. All of which had religious significance.

My next flight was to Guatemala. This city proved to be a very clean and modern city. The Mayan city of Tikal is the best example of the Classic Mayan period. The only entrance to this jungle ruin is by plane. Besides extensive ruins of temples and Stellas, there is a fine small museum there of great interest to anyone studying the ancient ceramics and design motifs. This of course was of great value to me. Another side trip from Guatemala City was the one to the very primitive Chichicastenango. There the custom of burning incense on the steps of the Cathedral of Chichicastenango was a most spectacular sight. There is a native market there also that has many lovely hand woven items and jewelry. I bought several necklaces of Indian design that can be used with modern clothes here.

From Guatemala City I flew back to Los Angeles. Upon returning from my travels and for the next three months I reviewed all of my

experiences, over 1000 colored slides, notes and tapes and decided to make three programs of synchronized slides, tapes and music. By reading many books on Mexican Cultures I chose the following three divisions :
1. Cultural Background of Religion, Social and Economic Forces ; 2. The Architecture, Sculpture and Painting from Pre-Columbian times through Contemporary Period; 3. The People and their Customs. Each of these 3 were divided into many sub-sections. Comments with accurate information and description was compiled to develop each theme. This was all taped and along with inserts of many of the Guide's accounts at the historical sites and at museums in Mexico, the verbal account synchronized with music and the colored slides . The compiling of slides, tapes and a story sequence was also a creative work in drama, music and use of visual material. The taping of the descriptions of each slide was quite an experience in public speaking for me. This being the first attempt at recording my voice.

In reviewing all the variety of activities engaged in during my Sabbatical Leave, I can certainly say that my life has been enriched as an individual and in background as a teacher. All of which would not have been possible without the precious time given me by Mt San Antonio College.

¡Muchas gracias Señores!

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