



Here, at Perce on the coast of the Gaspé peninsula, the beach is crowded from morning till evening with the young and the old, the rich and the poor, all searching for the raw agates washed in by the tide. These are small stones whose generally dull appearance is fully compensated for by the flashes of light they cast, sometimes only fleetingly, when viewed from a particular angle. But who knows what special ingredient carried within these flashes of light immediately catches one's eye and so sets in motion the eager quest and the pleasure experienced anew each time a glance is intercepted! This fever is quite different from that for gold or oil, since in the case of the agate the found object is no longer a means but an end (the seekers' passion is unsullied by any afterthought of profit: a few of them, it is true, talk of mounting a stone in a piece of jewelry, but in the majority of cases even this limited ambition is absent). This leads me to think that we are present here at the source of one of the commonest and most urgent of human desires, which is, indeed, nothing less than the desire to expand its consciousness through art. Even though the result of such expansion may seem indistinguishable from the commonplace.

The image described in this passage is superb to me. Here a diverse cross-section of humanity who may never again share any social context congregate purposefully. Yet who in this group can truly articulate this purpose? What is the reason for the hypnotic fascination that draws them to the flashes of light within these dull stones? How liberating to know that no verbal solution would truly justify this quality of response! There is "just something" about the qualities of the stones which stimulates these varied people to a common undefinable quest.

Reflecting on my own process in painting brings this scene to mind. Like the masses on the beach at Perce I may find myself compelled by something-- an object, a space, a gesture-- whose attraction exists independent of any association or purpose other than the expression of its essential quality or the quality of its relationship to its surroundings or situations. An untrimmed bush towering over the barrier of a fence in bright sunlight displays glorious independence. Chaotic patterns in the lights and shadows of foliage reveal a lush sensuality. Even the most mundane inanimate object can reveal a kind of spirit-- the sinister quality of dull black rubber rain shoes, or the nobility of a yellow plastic raincoat courageously expressing its form through distorted by hanging.

I have no doubt that these little "discoveries" (my personal versions of the agate, as it were) have some symbolic significance to me. They seem to evoke various icons of inner meaning, for when I "find" one of these images, the sensation is not merely one of recognition but one of memory or *déjà-vu*. What I "find" in the external world has a mysterious counterpart or metaphor in my internal world. The contact of external and internal, like the spark that jumps between hand and object on a day charged with electrical energy, creates a reaction-- a "fever" to make something out of it-- to fix it on canvas in new terms. These terms are mediated by the image, the medium, and my imagination. I am most affected by art which evokes a similar response or connection to the visual events which initially stimulate me to paint. I am moved by the simple monumentality of Giotto and Piero, and by the gentle humility of Memling and Van Eyck.

The intent of this statement is to articulate my predisposition to painting from visual experience, a process which for me is more *intuitive* than intellectual. Motivated by the poignancy of particular events, the process generates what André Breton describes as the "conviction that nothing is in vain, that everything that can be contemplated speaks a meaningful language which can be understood when human emotion acts as interpreter."