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## **Selections by Aaron Bohrod of his paintings.**

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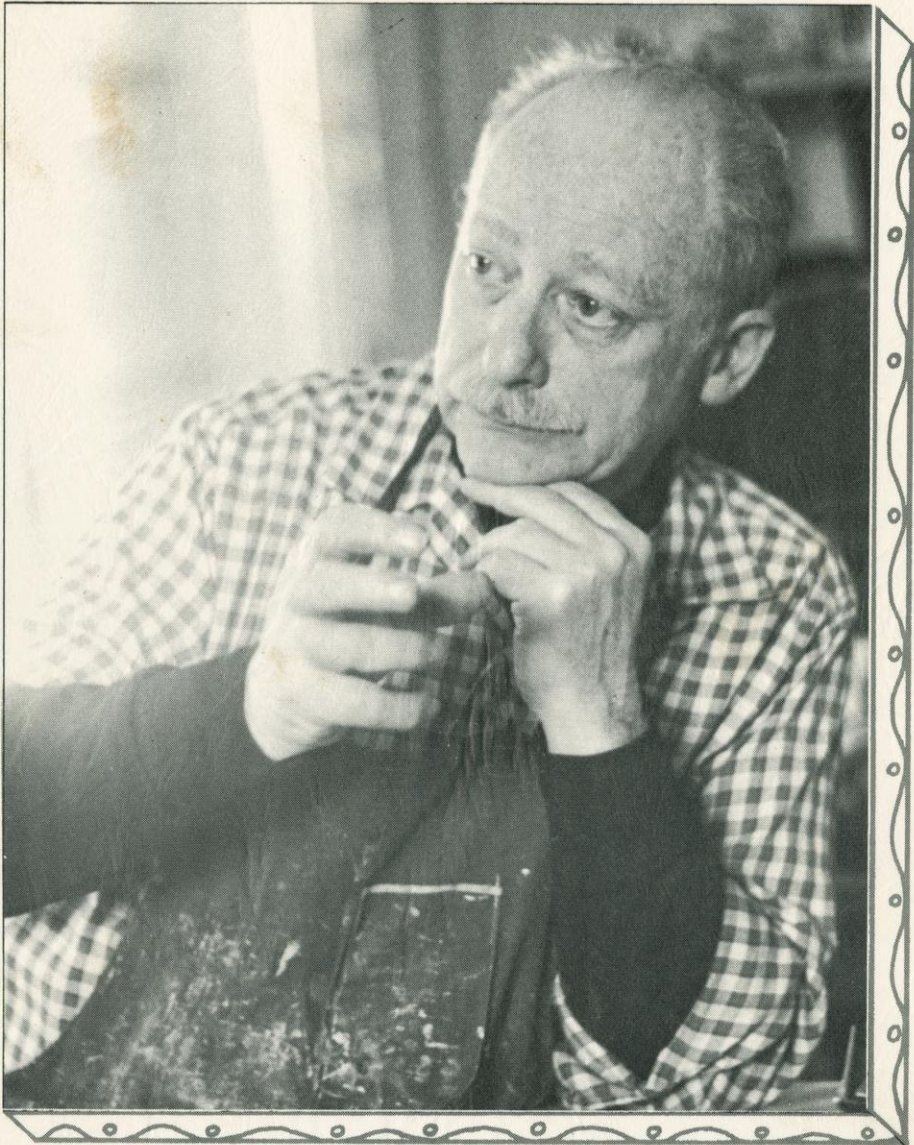
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# Selections

FSS  
759.1  
SeL



by  
**Aaron Bohrod**  
**of His Paintings**

MM!

Mary Lou Peterson, Coordinator  
Local Materials, ESEA — Title III  
545 W. Dayton St.  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

# SELECTIONS BY AARON BOHROD OF HIS PAINTINGS

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Duplicate Copies Available From  
Visual Education Consultants, Inc.  
P.O. Box 52, Madison, Wisconsin  
53701

The work presented or reported herein was performed pursuant to a grant from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

## OBJECTIVES

Students need to develop greater awareness of their community. The main objective of the Bohrod slides and tape is to promote this awareness through viewing and listening to a local artist's view of his environment as expressed in his lifetime of artistic creations. Through the Bohrod Art Set, the theme "Look Closely At Your Surroundings" is emphasized.

The general objectives are listed below:

- To introduce Aaron Bohrod and his paintings to the students.
- To develop an awareness in the students of Bohrod's realistic style and an appreciation for the details used in his paintings.
- To look closely at the techniques and materials used in Bohrod's paintings; to gain an appreciation for the use of color, texture, and selection of objects for the still life paintings.
- To explore the creative possibilities of these different styles by having the student paint his own still life using objects from his surroundings.

## A SUGGESTED USE FOR MATERIALS

Preview entire set of materials before using.

### First Class Period

Using background information about Aaron Bohrod, introduce the students to the artist. This brief introduction should allow ample time for discussion and questions about the artist and his paintings.

X Select a few of the paintings on the filmstrip and have the students react to and ask questions about them. List the questions the students ask using: "The Artist's Mother" — frame 5, "Boats and Floats" — frame 26, "Galloping Ghost" — frame 24, and "Elvehjem" — frames 45-47. Questions similar to the following may be asked: What different colors has he used for the sky? How does he choose his objects for still life? Does each object stand for some meaning in the still life pictures? Where does he sign his name in his paintings?

### Second Class Period

View the filmstrip and listen to the tape.

### Third Class Period

Have the students respond to questions on the transparency or worksheet by looking at the following frames:

- meaning of objects in still life painting "Lincoln Portrait" close-ups (frames 28, 29, 30)
- use of shadows to give a three-dimensional reality - "Animal Kingdom" (frames 31-34), "Eastern Orthodox" (frames 39-43)
- changes of subject, mood, colors, texture and details:  
Chicago street scene - "Chicago Street" (frame 6)  
War paintings - "Rendova Rendezvous" (frame 22)  
Place paintings - "Ice Fishing" (frame 25)  
Still Life - "Bed Of Leaves" (frames 35-38)

### Follow-up Activities

1. Collect newspaper and magazine clippings about this and other artists in the community.
2. Try a sketch, watercolor, or painting in the still life style.

### Additional Instructional Materials Available

- Many excellent books on artists, art, history, and appreciation are listed in the "Art Education Bibliography" published by Madison's Curriculum Department in 1966.
- Filmstrips and records about "Famous Artists at Work" can be obtained from the Assistant Curriculum Director of Art, Curriculum Department, Madison Public Schools, Madison, Wisconsin.
- A Decade Of Still Life, written by Aaron Bohrod, 1966, is available in most elementary libraries.

# INTRODUCTION TO AARON BOHROD EXHIBIT (MADISON ART CENTER)

November 29 — December 31, 1966

by JOHN LLOYD TAYLOR

It is with considerable pride that we present this retrospective exhibition of the work of Aaron Bohrod, certainly the most important trompe-l'oeil painter of our time, and one of the most distinguished artists of the American scene from the mid-1930's. To show fully the development and the rather unusual transitions that span his past thirty-seven years of intense productivity, one hundred eighteen paintings, twenty drawings, and sixteen prints have been collected for this exhibition. At least one work was selected to represent each of those years, beginning with 1929, while he was an art student in New York, to 1966 with a painting completed as recently as a month ago. Somewhat more than one-half of the works are from the post-1953 still life period as it is our belief that an artist's most recent work is in many ways his most significant.

Aaron Bohrod was born in 1907, on Chicago's West Side, the son of a Russian 'emigre' grocer. After one year at the Art Institute of Chicago where he began his art studies, he went to New York to study under John Sloan at the Art Student's League. The effects of both Chicago and Sloan were to shape the first twenty years of his career as an artist. In 1929, he returned to his native city and within a few years had gained prominence as Chicago's singularly most important artist for his satires on <sup>Chicago's</sup> streets and her people. What Sloan was to New York, Bohrod was to Chicago — the portrayer of the shabbier side of city life. Ramshackle buildings, desolate streets, and the people of a depression era are expressed in both bright and slushy colors with a profound emotion that depicts the entire character of his subject matter. Of equal stature to his Chicago paintings are the street scenes of small, mid-western towns; Carbondale and Peoria, Illinois are no less dramatically the objects of his sharp observations. By the 1940's Bohrod had earned a reputation as one of the finest watercolor and gouache painters in America. During the Second World War, he worked as an artist-correspondent in the European and Pacific theatres for the U.S. Engineers and later for Life magazine. His countless paintings and drawings poignantly comment on both victor and vanquished, stunningly portraying the universal tragedy and futility of war. There can be little doubt that he ranks as the greatest American artist of World War II.

*most art experts agree*

The transition in most artists' work is generally from the representational to the more abstract, from the more tightly and studiously controlled composition to one of greater looseness and spontaneity. In Bohrod's work the opposite has occurred. His early paintings are marked by a considerable degree of spontaneous feeling and simplicity of form. With the exception of a single venture into complete abstraction in 1933, his style became progressively more structured through rigid control of his forms, and by the late thirties he began developing a flair for detailed and precise rendering of his subject matter. In 1953, while working from a series of drawings he had made that summer of the rocky shores of Lake Superior, he became aware that the paintings were lacking a certain quality of incisiveness suggested by the sketches. Using pebbles and stones as models for the rocks and boulders in his sketches, he experienced



a way of seeing the actual character of his subject that he had not previously realized. His task was to reconstruct the object on a two-dimensional surface in a manner so as to suggest the very essence and feel of the real object — the trompe-l'oeil (fool the eye) technique. This marked the beginning of his so-called Magic Realism, still-life style, and he has to this day remained its chief exponent.

The fascination of Bohrod's still-life painting has many manifestations. For some it is the extraordinary craftsmanship that allows him to give a three-dimensional effect to an object as a two-dimensional surface. For others it is the highly complex symbolism of Magic Realism that is sometimes obvious, sometimes baffling, always thought provoking. For yet others it is the sheer enjoyment of seeing well composed paintings. No matter what the reaction, however, one cannot help but respond to a common denominator, if it may so be termed, consistent in all of his paintings — an acutely observant sensitivity to the object.

Aaron Bohrod's place in the history of twentieth century American art has thrice been established: as a social realist, as a war artist, and as a still-life painter. With the latter, he departed from the main-stream movements of modern art for a style in which he could say what he wanted to say in a manner of his own choosing. And this is, after all, what is really important in the end.

The following background information about Aaron Bohrod is reprinted with permission of the copyright owners, The Regents of the University of Wisconsin, from Aaron Bohrod, A Decade of Still Life, 1966, The University of Wisconsin Press.

## INTRODUCTION

I was born on the near west side of Chicago on November 21, 1907. As a child of three or four, I found the first outlet for my eternally gnawing bug of art expression — filling countless 2¢ plain yellow paper pads with all kinds of pencil scratchings. My mother used to tell me that all she needed to assure my contribution to domestic tranquility was to provide me with such a tablet. Faithfully, both sides of each sheet were filled with small-scale aesthetic evidence of, perhaps, better things to come. I wish some of these documents of presumed talent had been preserved. I suppose that some of my childish scrawls were imitative of a calligraphic, continuous line bird which was my Bessarabian-born father's sole achievement in the plastic arts and which my brother Milton and my sisters Anne and Lillian also attempted to reproduce. I recall that on transparent chewing-gum wrappers I first traced the comic-strip characters of the day, and later with growing confidence copied them. The coloring book or two which came my way was filled in with shadings of gray pencil tones instead of the usual colored wax crayons, which had not yet been discovered by my family.

## Abstraction

In one of the early years, 1933, I think I must have produced several hundred full-scale works. Most of my subjects were, of course, the sometimes teeming and sometimes bleak streets of Chicago. But also into my work I put views of the city beaches and the burlesque theatre, where I did some post-graduate life study, park landscapes, figures, interiors, and even experiments in abstract

painting. Later I was to decry the emptiness of the abstract form. But I could not publicly proclaim this fault without having experimented in the idiom to see what it might have held in promise for my own development.

Landscape Near Chicago 1939 1934

One cannot have at once spontaneity and precise order. Conscious order was what I was after and in its favor I set aside the alluring splash and flow of runny pigment. One of the works in the hard-boiled vein was "Landscape Near Chicago," a Skokie Valley setting which was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. A Chicago newspaper with mild indignation reproduced the painting under the heading "New York's view of Chicago." The few bristling protests the notice evoked neither deterred nor specifically encouraged additional investigation of the city's auto graveyards and other unprepossessing places. These were simply some of the unlovely subjects that interested me. I have felt that intrinsic beauty in a subject is a handicap when the artist selects a motif for his work. What can an artist really say about a beautiful sunset that would improve on nature; about a brand new, shining automobile; about a newly completed chunk of modern architecture? It is probably incorrect to say that no artist under any set of circumstances can use these motifs well, but it is fair to say that, unlike those things affectionately or mercilessly touched by time, the brisk, the new, and the beautiful are not very likely subjects for the artist.

Oakdale Avenue at Night 1940

Another subject which proved dangerously successful was, in my case, the artificially illuminated night scene. For a time the neon-lighted street was a compelling interest. These neon nocturnes, with streets and people bathed in pink and green glow and with the strange light sometimes reflected on wet

pavement, exacted my own prolonged attention and met with a public response which for the first time could be described as eager. After Life magazine had published (in 1941) a color story on my nighttime oils, wherein they pigeonholed me in a compartment where I had little competition and then characterized me as "America's No. 1 painter of neon lights," the demand for these works as relayed by the New York gallery became so great that I feared long continuance would lead to the sterile business of order-filling. I called a halt to the inclination before I felt that I had said the last word on the subject.

Reflection on a Shop Window 1918 1941

Another vein of recurrent interest which I struck was the antique-shop window. With landscape or opposing street window pane, I depicted jumbled bric-a-brac in a kind of come-and-go of fascinating color, now realizing, now vaguely suggesting the elusive beauty of these sometimes junky objects. In a way these paintings stand as forerunner to my present work, though I did not then think to let the objects serve in a symbolic sense.

Rendova Rendezvous 1917 1943

The war brought many opportunities to me as an artist. The opportunity to share in part, at least, the life of the fighting soldier and to gain close insight into the miseries and the occasional glories of combat made possible the basic understanding essential to pictorial interpretation.

. . . . .

The island of New Caledonia, and especially the little metropolis of Noumea, was a colorful place. However, the artist-war correspondent, like his writer counterpart, quickly learns to gauge the value of his surroundings by the degree

of the heat of war, and New Caledonia was not a violently threatened area. After a decent interval we moved on to some of the Solomon Islands, then to a stay in Guadalcanal, which had been almost entirely cleared of Japanese. Here we awaited participation in the movement into new, enemy-occupied territory. This, for me, proved to be the invasion of Rendova Island across from the Japanese airfield in Munda. The experience resulted in camera records and sketches which provided some dramatic evidence of the dank, wet, miserable struggle to remain alive while inflicting as much damage as possible on the enemy. On returning to New Caledonia and while I was excitedly working up my material into form for delivery to Washington, we received disturbing news from home. The very modest financial allotment for the support of the War Arts Unit had not escaped the scrutiny of an obscure congressman, who made a twenty-four hour name for himself by having it struck out of the vast appropriations that admittedly incorporated millions in waste. Our fears that we'd be stranded in the Pacific, or at least be subject to immediate recall, were ended when Life magazine and some other periodicals made offers to most of the civilian artists in the units scattered over all the war theatres to continue their work for them . . . I chose the offer from Life. If no other immediate change took place, I enjoyed the prestige of precise attachment to a famed magazine as war correspondent instead of to the anomalous government service in which I had worked.

. . . . .

When Life in December, 1943, published one of its first big essays on the war, illustrated in color by its far-flung artists, the piece, written by John Hersey and entitled "Experience by Battle," contained a solid collection of the paintings I had done on the invasion of Rendova.

### Military Necessity

This was painted in the European theatre of war while I continued working for Life.

### Ice Fishing On Lake Mendota

Since I was primarily a "place" painter, in starting my work in Wisconsin I felt it would be expected that I look well at the state's countryside. This was my own inclination in the fall of 1948. Until much of the material that I had sketched out west was exhausted, I alternated the materials with Wisconsin subject matter. Then I plunged into an extensive investigation of Wisconsin's beauty. I think I still chose material that put ruggedness and maybe bittersweet sadness above scenic beauty. The towns, villages, and the Wisconsin countryside offered inexhaustible material for the artist.

### A Lincoln Portrait

It was not until I did "A Lincoln Portrait" that I established the idea of painting all the elements in my works in almost exactly the same scale as the objects themselves. Always, though, I have allowed myself liberties so that reduction, enlargement, or other distortions are parts of the flexible means I employ whenever necessary.

### Everyman

Symbolism does not always motivate these compositions. There are times when color harmony or textural contrasts set off notions of compositional thought. Always, however, I have demanded from myself a core of meaning. This may be obvious, or conversely so subtle that I cannot myself be certain of all the

implications involved. It is embarrassing and dangerous for the artist to be very reluctant to put my finger on every last element in one of my paintings and justify its use by scoring its intention.

#### SUMMARY

I once wrote about one level of my painting that I demand "expression within a realistic framework, with the reality carried to so intense a degree that it becomes almost fantasy, and a subject painted with such unashamed skill that a conviction of truth evokes beauty." While the clear ingredients for speculation are always present in my paintings, how they are put together, or whether meaning can be extracted at all from them, varies considerably with the character and degree of sympathy of the spectator. Apart from the obvious or elusive meanings in my work, I would hopefully wish the sympathetic spectator to respond to a pleasure-giving quality in a painting. Once I credited the persistence of my efforts in meticulously worked still life to a desire to demonstrate aesthetic work in a form at the opposite pole from the abstraction that was almost officially designated as the way the artist should be working in the middle of the twentieth century. The protest aspects of this intention have long since evaporated. They have been replaced by a genuine love for, and a passionate involvement in, this way of expression.

. . . . .

Some of my friends tell me that still life has too constricted a scope. They urge me to move on to something else. I find I cannot agree. Of course, every form has its limits, but within these limits there is an infinite array of subjects on which to comment. I can comment on time and the world in which we live, on man

as reflected by the things man makes and lives with, on life and on death. Physical changes or extraneous events may force a halt to these particular aesthetic proceedings. When my eyes fail and my feet flatten and my hand loses its steadiness, I will probably rationalize a reason for painting in another way. But ideas still abound. And since the required physical resources, though diminishing, are yet reliant, I hope I may be forgiven for saying there is still life in the old boy.

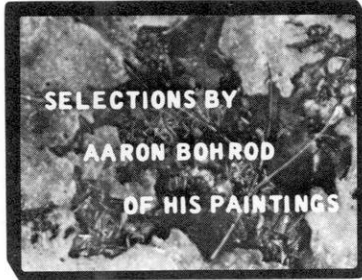
**SPECIAL NOTE:**

Please do not judge the quality of the beautiful full-color pictures in the Filmstrip by the appearance of the black-and-white photos in this Guide! Obviously, there is no comparison between full-color and black and white pictures.

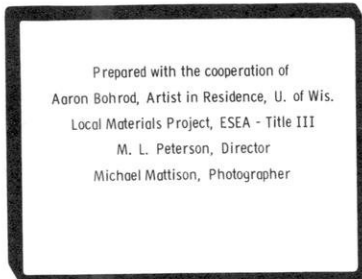




**1** Musical Background.  
(Suggested time allowed — 4 seconds)



**2** Musical Background.  
(Suggested time allowed — 4 seconds)



**3** Musical Background.  
(Suggested time allowed — 6 seconds)



**4** This is Aaron Bohrod in his studio near Lake Monona. He was born on the west side of Chicago on November 21, 1907. As a child of three or four, he found the first outlet for his art expression filling yellow paper pads with all kinds of pencil scratchings.

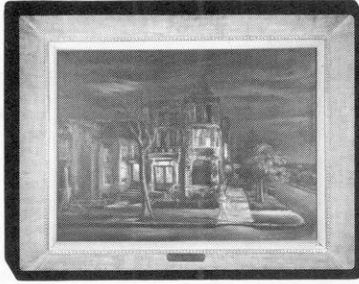


**5** His mother used to tell him that all she needed to assure his contribution to a quiet home was to provide him with such a tablet.



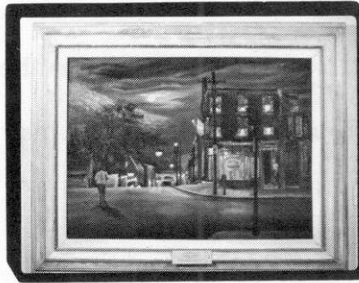
**6**

In the early years, he produced several hundred full-scale works. Most of his subjects were of the sometimes busy and sometimes quiet streets of Chicago.



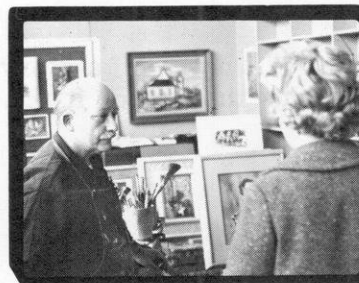
**7**

A subject which proved dangerously successful was the artificially illuminated night scene. After Life magazine had published a story on Bohrod's nighttime oils and called him "America's #1 Painter of Neon Lights," . . .



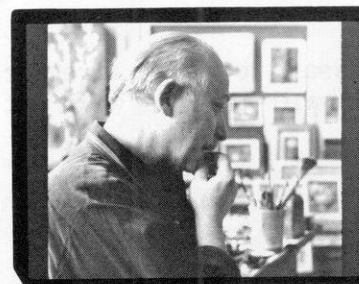
**8**

. . . the demand for these works became so great that he feared it would lead to the business of order-filling. He called a stop to this kind of painting.



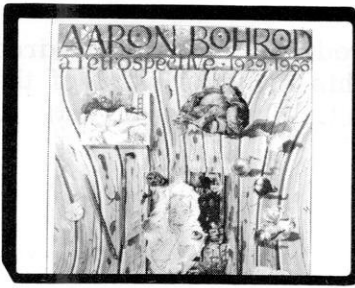
**9**

"Mr. Bohrod, slides of your paintings have been viewed by students in several Madison Schools. After viewing this set several times, the following questions were asked by the students: 'Where do your ideas come from for your paintings?'"



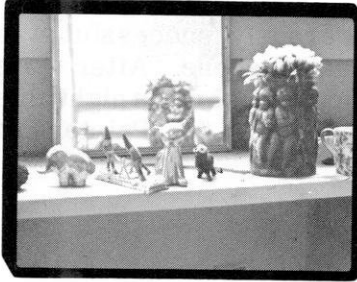
**10**

"Ideas for paintings are very easy to come by, they seem to float in the air and all that is required is for the artist to pluck them out of the air."



**11**

"This poster that we are looking at represents some of the ideas that I have from time to time worked with. There are such things as landscape sketches, figure sketches which I have used in some of my earlier paintings, and there are also some of what is called still life objects which I have used in some of the paintings that I am now occupied with.



**12**

"Some of the things represent things that I have on my shelf or that are in very common view . . .



**13**

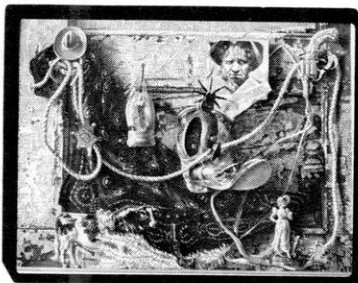
". . . and very often a picture idea comes from the combination of several of these objects.

(Note Bohrod's reflection painted on the shiny elephant.)



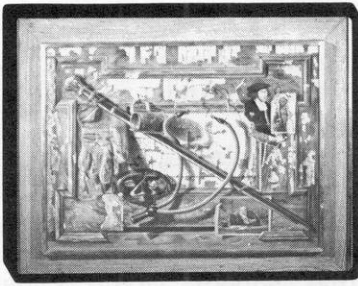
**14**

"Once in a while, though, I do get a notion of a story picture idea and I think of the theme for it . . .



**15**

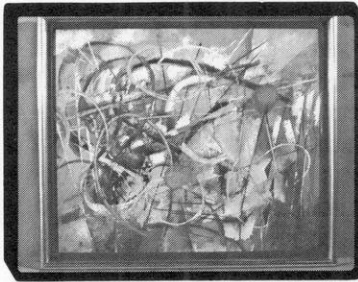
". . . then it becomes necessary to gather together the still life objects, which will tend to work out the theme in the painting."



16

"Many students felt that Everyman was like their story pictures. I can read this picture from left to right, with a cane for the richman, glove for the poorman, tin cup for the beggarman, mask for the thief, and so on. Have you used this idea for many other paintings?"

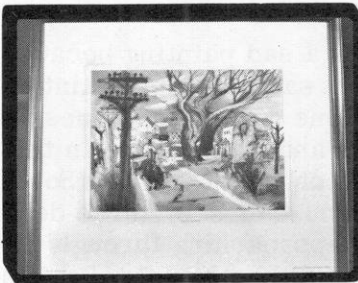
"I have used the idea, but not too frequently, because there aren't many subjects which are translatable in this particular rebus fashion, but I think the person who asked this question was very clever in that they were able to see how these symbols were translated in my Everyman theme. Not everybody seems to be able to see that kind of thing in paintings or in my paintings and sometimes I regret it, although it isn't absolutely necessary to analyze every painting to see what the basic literary thought was."



17

"Where did you get the idea for Abstraction?"

"This is another painting that I did quite a few years ago and young artists are notorious for painting the kind of pictures that seems to be very popular at the moment. Many people were experimenting with abstract painting then, so I felt it necessary to try my own hand at it."



18

"In Road in Peoria, did you paint this scene while looking at the road and the house?"

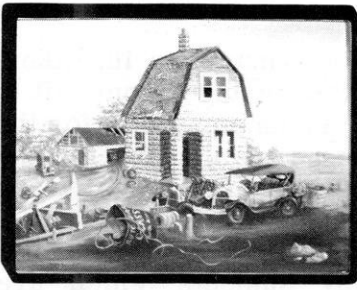
"This was another work that I did on the basis of enlarging and extending a pencil sketch, which I made on the exact spot. I think that while I was working on my drawing, I hadn't thought of it previously, but a horse and cart did pass by and I incorporated them in the drawing, and . . .



19

". . . in this detail of the complete composition, that we are looking at now, you can see the way the watercolor paint was used on my watercolor paper. Here, I was very much interested in technical things, and I enjoyed, quite a lot, the combination of black india ink and transparent and opaque watercolors. It's very interesting to see what happens, when on a wet ground a line that's dipped into india ink

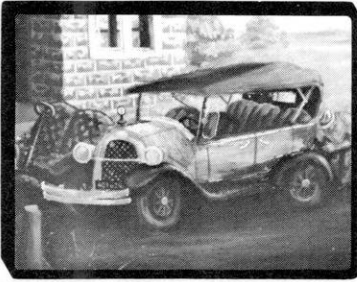
is drawn through it; there is a kind of blurred flurry that looks very exciting on the surface of the painting, and that's one of the kinds of things that I think a young artist especially enjoys very much in his work."



**20**

“A student wondered how you named your pictures, and why you called this picture, Landscape Near Chicago.”

“At the time I did this painting in oil, Landscape Near Chicago, I was pretty much a place painter. The exact spot that I made my sketch in was in Skokie, Illinois, and that, of course is outside of Chicago. I was afraid very much that nobody would know exactly where Skokie was, but everybody seems to know where Chicago is, so that I called my painting for identification, Landscape Near Chicago.”



**21**

“Here, the detail we look at is of a different kind from the Road In Peoria, which was a kind of wet watercolor paint. This is an oil on a gesso surface and, because of the materials involved, it is a kind of richer way of working. I used to paint what was called an under-painting, where I got all my material down on the gesso panel, then allowed the painting to rest a bit and finally glazed the painting

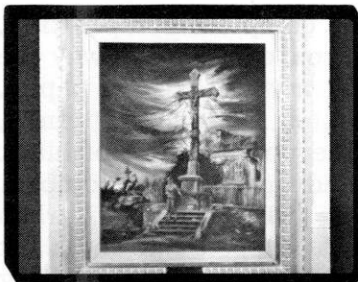
with transparent oil colors, which lay over the under-painting.”



**22**

“Do you feel that Rendova Rendezvous is a sad picture?”

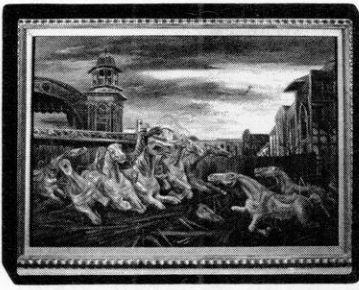
“Yes, I agree that it is a sad painting because it's about war and war is always sad. This is a painting I did when I was working for one of the magazines as an artist war correspondent, and it was done in this little island of Rendova, which is out in the South Pacific area. It shows, as you can see, three dead Japanese soldiers and a couple of American soldiers are approaching through the woods. This is one of a rather large series of paintings I did both in the Pacific and in the European war theatre, as part of my work as artist war correspondent.



**23**

“I think this might be called another sad picture in that the title Military Necessity demonstrates how it becomes necessary to do some rather bad things for the sake of getting the war over with. Here, some American Signal Corps men use the crucifix as an upstanding telephone pole. It was just considered to be an advantage that happened to stand there and these communication wires were

strung over the piece of sculpture without regard to the desecration that was involved in that act.”



**24**

“In Galloping Ghosts, why did you paint the horse as a ghost?”

“This was a subject that I came across in Chicago when an old amusement park on the south side called White City was being torn down to make way for a new housing project. Here, an old merry-go-round was strewn with the horses that were old and faded, and the horses looked to me like galloping ghosts because the movements in the horses were still suggested.”



**25**

“Ice Fishing is a favorite scene. How did you paint such an unusual sky?”

“I have always been interested in the use of a rather dramatic sky in combination with a winter scene. The contrasts between a white snowy hill or a snow-laden tree against a rather dark sky has always been the kind of thing that I’ve come to when I’ve been confronted with the task of doing a winter landscape. This is a painting I did on Lake Mendota, and it was a painting that might not have occurred to me to do, but I was commissioned to do such a work on the playtime aspect and ice fishing, of course, is a famous sport in our state and this was the subject that I chose for this particular project.”



**26**

“A student wonders whether Boats and Floats was painted in Wisconsin and why the clouds are shaped the way they are in the painting?”

“Yes, this painting was done in Wisconsin near Ashland. I was making some rather radical departures from the actual look of things and I was putting strong shapes in my foreground. Therefore, I thought it was necessary to alter the cloud shapes so that I would have a consistent entity that is everything in the whole composition might possibly be made to go with everything else in the composition.”

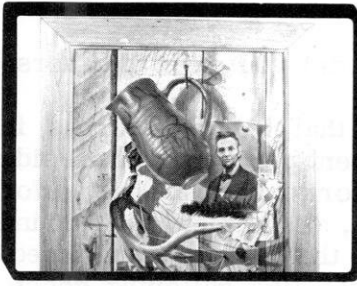


**27**

“Reflection on a Shop Window looks like your still life painting. How did you first think of painting still life?”

“Today, I am very much involved in using still life objects with the idea of making them stand for sometimes some other things. That is a kind of symbolic approach to the still life object, but at the time I did this particular painting that idea hadn’t occurred to me, and I was after a different mood in my work. You may notice that I was very careful to reflect the houses on a street opposite to the window in my composition, so that the whole thing becomes a kind of blend of architecture and the still life objects.”

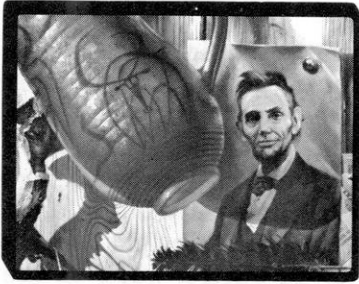
(Painting photographed with permission from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, G. A. Hearn Fund)



**28**

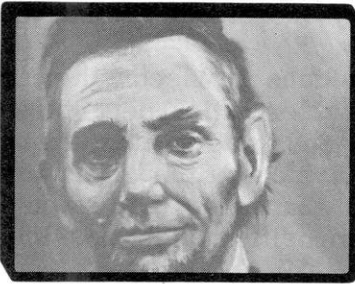
“A Lincoln Portrait was a favorite of many of the students in Madison. How did you choose the objects for this picture?”

“A Lincoln Portrait was actually one of the very first paintings I did in my still life vein. I tried to find objects that might go together and tell a kind of story and I selected the idea of objects that would surround and echo the idea of the Lincoln Portrait itself.



**29**

“In the details that we can look at you can see the texture of a vase that accompanies the portrait and here I used one of the vases that I did in cooperation with Carlton Ball, a well-known ceramic artist. I was experimenting with the use of many textured objects, which would tend to make a rather interesting variation in my paintings.



**30**

“In the final detail, that we see where the Lincoln head is greatly enlarged, I think you see some of the actual texture of the painting, which isn't apparent on view of the painting itself, because this is a greatly enlarged section of the entire composition. I think it's always interesting to look very closely at portions of an artist's work to see in which manner he actually put the pigment onto his canvas.”



**31**

“In Animal Kingdom, how did you make the horse so shiny?”

“The horse required a good deal of trial and error to see how I could reflect the shiny texture of the painted iron horse so that it had almost as much brilliance as the actual object did. I looked at the horse very closely and I examined the source of the light, what portions of the horse's body were being reflected by the highest highlight and which portions of the horse were in relative shadow, and I tried to get that feeling into the painting.”

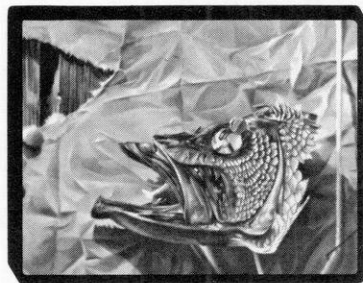


**32**

“The butterflies and eggshell look like the real objects. Did this come from looking at the real things?”

“Yes, this is part of the artist’s problem of examining all the materials that he is concerned with and trying to determine the differences among these objects, and it was part of my problem to have the softness of butterfly wings contrasted with the kind of brittleness of the eggshell, and in turn that was

considerably different from the shiny metallic surface of the horse.



**33**

“The detail of the fish, too, shows a kind of texture which wasn’t used in other portions of the painting, and here I very meticulously tried to get the scales on the head of this dried-out fish, and I think that it gave me the opportunity to get some welcome variety in this rather complicated painting.”



**34**

“Why did you place the hand in Bed of Leaves?”

“This is a composition that contains mostly dead objects, dried out leaves that can be seen on a forest floor. Within this general composition, I placed a hand out of which comes some glowing, live flowers as a kind of contrasting element of life. I think this kept the painting from being too pessimistic and sad a picture.



**35**

“The hand, of course, is a symbol of life even though it is a hand which seems to have been battered a little bit. The fingers of the doll’s arm, which I used as a symbol of the hand, is worn at the fingertips as you can see, but still it’s an element of hope in this particular composition.”

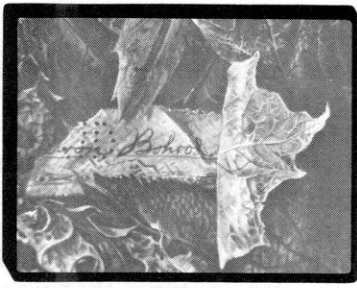


**36**

“A student wondered, do you always hide your name in different places in the painting?”

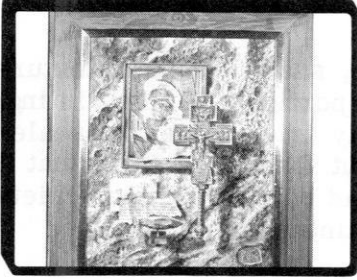
“I’m not so sure that I’m that modest about hiding my name. I know that I place it in different parts of the composition as the needs of the composition dictates. Here, in the Bed of Leaves painting . . .





**37**

“ . . . I signed my name on the corner of an old cancelled check and it is, I think, a little hidden as though it had fallen to the ground rather carelessly and in inspecting what that particular patch of ground contained, the signature was revealed among the other objects.”



**38**

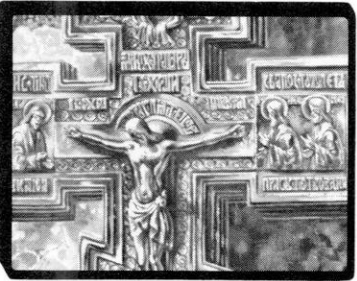
“How long did it take to paint the Eastern Orthodox?”

“The painting Eastern Orthodox is one of my moderate-size paintings. It measures, I think, about 16 inches wide and 20 inches high, and for a painting of about that size I usually have to work about one month. That is 30 full days of enjoyable painting.



**39**

“This painting was one of a series of pictures that I did that were related to the principal religions of the United States. I did this series a few years ago, and this particular work gathered together many of the symbols of the Eastern Orthodox Church, so that a certain historical story was being related.



**40**

“The cross used in the composition was a cross that came from a Russian source, but it contains the characteristic Greek raised lettering that is used throughout the Eastern Orthodox religion.



**41**

“The icon, that is the painting that was used here, actually came from a Greek mosaic and every little square slab of porcelain that was used in the composition was painted and, of course, it tended to reflect a kind of work that was used quite extensively in the Eastern Orthodox tradition.



**42**

“On this detail, where the lettering could be read if you were acquainted with either the Russian language or the Eskimo language. This section depicts a view of one of the Bibles that was used in Sitka, Alaska, where the Russian missionaries established Eastern Orthodox Churches, and the right-hand column is the text in Russian and I think for almost the first time there was a translation into an Eskimo language, left-hand side of the column behind the crude Eskimo

and that appears on the carving of a fish.”



**43**

“How did you choose the animals for the Glass Menagerie?”

“When I thought of the idea for this still life, which comes from a very well-known play, that is the title comes from a play by Tennessee Williams, I looked around for glass animals that I could put together as though they were on a shelf or tabletop. I tried to get as much variety in color and shape as

I could possibly gather together, and I went scouting around for some of the objects. Some of them I had in my own possession, others I found at the Museum of the Historical Society, where they sometimes allowed me to rummage around and see if I could find objects that I could put into my paintings.



**44**

“In doing this painting, a kind of symbolic portrait of the late President of the University, Conrad Elvehjem, I selected certain things that would tend to comment on the very important life he lived.



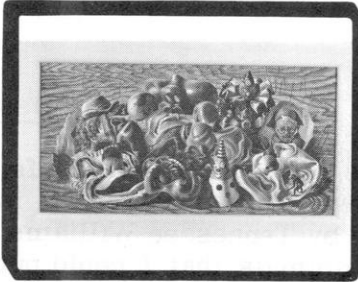
**45**

“Up in the upper left-hand corner, there’s a symbol of the Elvehjem Art Center in which Dr. Elvehjem was very much concerned and interested. Behind the portrait itself is a plaque which contains some Norwegian rosemaling and that, of course, relates to Dr. Elvehjem’s background. The Winged Victory Statuette comes from the Lasker Award, which is a very famous prize that goes to very few scientists in the country.



**46**

“Of course, there is that famous translation of his name, which some people find very difficult to pronounce and the use of the “L” and the “V” and the “M” tend to make it easy for people to say his name.



**47**

“This painting started out to be a composition that I thought I might call A Thousand Clowns, but then when I considered that it might take me years and years to paint a thousand clowns, I decided to settle on A Dozen Clowns and it was difficult even then to piece out enough different kinds of clowns so that by the time I got over on the right-hand side, I decided to include myself as one of the dozen clowns

and I pinned a kind of self-portrait picture above the silhouette of a clown's head.



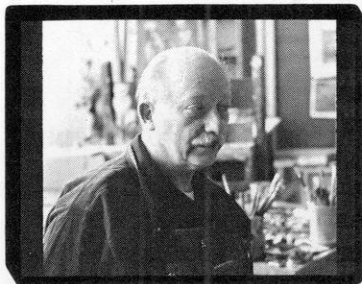
**48**

“In this painting, The Muse, which implies the inspiration for the artist, I used a head in the lower part of the composition, which is the self-portrait of a kind of brother artist. The artist in question is the very famous Rembrandt and, of course, he's not around to object to the collaboration to which I put his portraits in this particular connection.



**49**

“It's rather hard to say, which of my paintings are favorites or which of all the work that I've done is exactly my favorite. I think it's like some of your teachers who would hesitate very much in saying which is her favorite pupil or even your parents who would not say which one of their children pleased them most.



**50**

"The artist spends quite a lot of time with each of his works and in a way they're all his favorites and sometimes they seem to be all his disappointments. I think the artist is one of the worst people in the world to look at his own work and choose among them as to success or failures because he has a different reaction to his own work than other people, and in most cases other people are more

successful as being critics of the artist's work than the artist himself."



**51**

Musical Conclusion.

#### SELECTIONS BY AARON BOHROD OF HIS PAINTINGS 1929 — 1966

Paintings that were part of the Bohrod exhibit November 22 — December 31, 1966 are listed with information as to date completed, type of paintings, size and present owner. Paintings not identified were photographed at Mr. Bohrod's studio while he was working on them.

- Frame 5 The Artist's Mother, 1931 (Oil on composition board) 18 x 14  
Mr. & Mrs. Arthur B. Adams, Beloit, Wisconsin.
- Frame 6 Chicago Street in Winter, 1939 (Gouache on cardboard) 18 x 27  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.
- Frame 7 Oakdale Avenue at Night, 1940 (Oil on gesso panel) 21 x 28  
The Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.
- Frame 8 Wilmington Evening, 1942 (Oil on gesso panel) 24 x 32  
The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
- Frame 11 Poster for the Exhibit.
- Frame 16 Everyman, 1960 (Oil on gesso panel) 24 x 32  
Lent by the Artist.

- Frame 17 Abstraction, 1933 (Oil in presswood panel) 10 x 12  
Lent by the Artist.
- Frames 18 — 19  
Road in Peoria, 1933 (Watercolor and gouache on white wove paper)  
12 x 15, The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois  
Watson F. Blair Purchase Prize.
- Frames 20 — 21  
Landscape Near Chicago, 1934 (Oil on gesso panel) 24 x 32  
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, New York.
- Frame 22 Rendova Rendezvous, 1943 (Oil on gesso panel) 17 x 23  
Army Historical Collection, Washington, D.C.
- Frame 23 Military Necessity, 1944 (Oil on gesso panel) 23 x 19  
Army Historical Collection of World War II Art.
- Frame 24 Galloping Ghosts, 1945 (Oil on gesso panel) 20 x 36  
Collection of Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Hoffman  
Kansas City, Missouri.
- Frame 25 Ice Fishing, Lake Mendota, 1949 (Oil on gesso panel) 18 x 24  
Milwaukee Art Center Collection, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Frame 26 Boats and Floats, 1953 (Oil on gesso panel) 18 x 24  
Harry E. Gurvey, Chicago, Illinois.
- Frame 27 Reflection on a Shop Window, 1941 (Oil on gesso panel) 18 x 24  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, G. A. Hearn Fund.
- Frames 28 — 30  
A Lincoln Portrait, 1954 (Oil on gesso panel) 20 x 16  
Professor & Mrs. Harry Steenbock, Madison, Wisconsin.
- Frames 31 — 34  
Animal Kingdom, 1955 (Oil on gesso panel) 16 x 20  
John Nelson Bergstrom Art Center, Neenah, Wisconsin.
- Frames 35 — 38  
Bed of Leaves, 1956 (Oil on gesso panel) 20 x 16  
Mr. & Mrs. Stanley Brock, Mequon, Wisconsin.
- Frame 44 A Glass Menagerie, 1962 (Oil on gesso panel) 12 x 14  
Richard P. Ariagno, M.D., Winnetka, Illinois.
- Frames 45 — 47  
Conrad A. Elvehjem, 1963 (Oil on gesso panel) 16 x 12  
Collection of the Wisconsin Union, University of Wisconsin.
- Frame 48 A Dozen Clowns, 1966 (Oil on gesso panel) 15 x 25  
Lent by Artist.

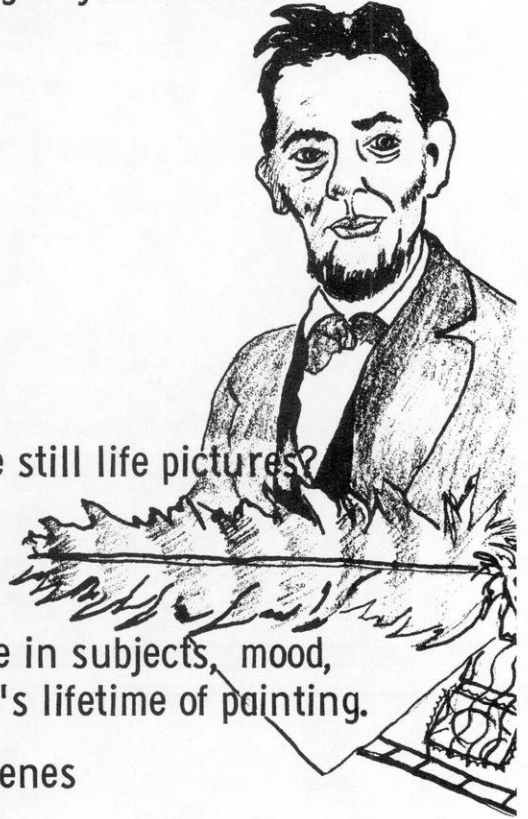
What objects would you use to tell a story about Lincoln?

In a "Lincoln Portrait", what meaning do you think the following objects have:

Lincoln's picture

feather

letters



Why are the shadows important in the still life pictures?

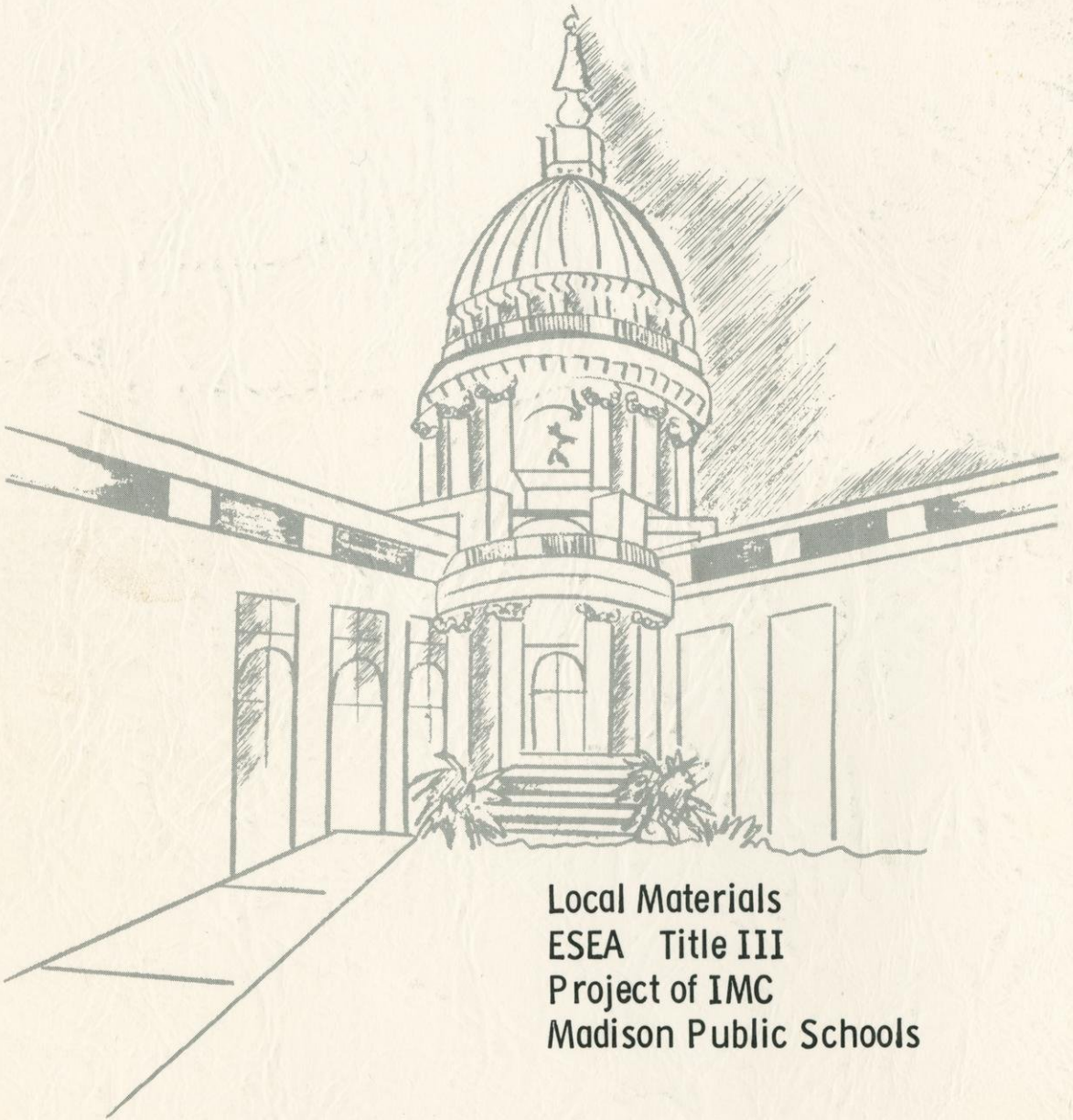
Describe the changes that you can see in subjects, mood, colors, texture and details in Bohrod's lifetime of painting.

- Early paintings of Chicago scenes
- War paintings
- Place paintings of Wisconsin's landscape
- Present still life paintings









**Local Materials  
ESEA Title III  
Project of IMC  
Madison Public Schools**

