



HEVELONE:

showed up in class on Tuesday, and I said, "Professor, I did your assignment. I could show the results, but I destroyed all of it." He said, "Well, that's always your prerogative. But it's also my prerogative to flunk you." It sort of was a catharsis for me. It made me realize, I've got to find a different way of doing this.

That started my journey into expressionism. I became aware of the work of Georges Rouault, a French expressionist painter, who's meant a lot to me. There was a major retrospective of his work, by the way, here at BC [at the McMullen Museum] a few years back. Stephen Schloesser was the curator. That Rouault retrospective was one of the best shows of his work I've ever seen. Anyway, Rouault was a major influence and then Max Beckmann, a German expressionist. Those two painters had the biggest impact on me. They introduced me to a whole new way of depicting form, which involved a greater violence, frankly.

MCGUIRE: You mentioned in your book, [co-written with G. Walter Hansen] that what drives you to paint is a desire to express meaning about the human experience that can't be expressed through words. For you, what is it about painting that can express that, where words fail?

HERMAN: I don't know if I have a really articulate answer for you. I think we all live our lives both subconsciously and super-unconsciously. We live outside of verbal packaging all the time, every day, 24 hours a day, including our dream life. We are talking creatures though, so we like to talk. We have this way of interacting with each other that's highly nuanced with language, with verbal language. But we all know, if you really stop to think about it for just a few minutes, you can't possibly put into words even an iota of what you experience in a 24-hour period.

One of the famous books that drove this home to me was *Ulysses* by James Joyce, in which the entire novel is one day. It takes place in one day. Words are just



incredibly clumsy at expressing nuance of light and space and texture and emotional vibration, even intellectual fantasy. It's almost impossible to put into words. That's why poets take words in any given language and they literally pound them, so they break open and start to bleed daylight. That's actually a stolen line from a Canadian songwriter [Bruce Cockburn] who says, "Got to kick the darkness until it bleeds daylight."

but Judaism – is this emphasis on the goodness of the body, the goodness of the creation of the physical world. It says at the beginning of the Bible, God created, and he said it was good. Then when he created us, he said, “Hmm, that’s very good.”

MCGUIRE: What’s your experience of giving up control of your paintings and welcoming the viewer to be the judge of your work?

HERMAN: I don’t really think of it as judge so much as mutually participate in a conversation. I don’t know about you, but I don’t particularly love conversations in which I feel someone’s judging me. There’s a whole critical culture out there that thinks that that’s the job of the critics – to be the judge. I think they’re deeply mistaken. The job of the critic is to be basically an interpreter and someone who is making the work available to other people. A really good critic submits to the work. They don’t operate on the work like on a patient. I invite people into the dialogue because I’m not interested in making art if it’s just for me.

Philosophically, and even emotionally and psychologically, I’m predisposed to be really curious about what someone else sees when I make something. I want to see what they pick up on. If they have responded to some of the things that I’ve buried in the work – so far I have not met too many people who have spent the time, taken the time to unpack the whole thing.

One of the gambles that we all make as artists, poets, composers, painters, whatever, is that an unborn generation may some day excavate the work to get to all the different layers that are buried there. I’m genuinely authentically curious to hear what other people see and how they interpret my work. Oftentimes, I’m surprised and enlightened by what other people see because I do feel like I am a servant of the work. As I was saying earlier when you asked me what’s your process like, and it’s like you disappear

when you’re painting. You have to exit the studio and let the painting come into being. Part of what happens in that process is things get communicated through you that are bigger than you are.

When a really responsive viewer comes along and encounters your work and declares what they see, then you start to

