

ROBERT YOUNG / Painting and the Struggle for the Whole Self



Robert Young, *Movie Stuff*, 1987
Oil on linen, 30" x 30", private collection

In ways that I do not pretend to understand fully painting deals with issues that seem to me to count in our benighted time—freedom, autonomy, fairness, love.

—Andrew Forge, *Painting and the Struggle for the Whole Self* (1975)

The main thread which runs throughout the whole of Klee's theory is the search for quality, namely the search for one's own absolute authenticity. . . . to reduce progressively, the conglomeration of quantitative phenomena to the point of that irreducible and immutable minimum, which in fact represents quality.

—Giulio Argan, *Paul Klee: The Thinking Eye* (1961)

The real crux of Sartre's ethical vision is undoubtedly the notion of authenticity. . . . For by authentic existence he means nothing other than that courage whereby a man consents to bear the burdens of freedom. Man is the creature whose nature it is to be "for" himself: he must find ways of "making" himself, for he is radically free and is, therefore, his own great project.

—Nathan A. Scott, *The Unquiet Vision: Mirrors of Man in Existentialism* (1969)

I wanted to stress two aspects that are always present in my work and which I feel should be contained in all human action: both the solemnity of the self-determination of one's own life and one's own gestures as well as the modesty of our own actions at all times.

—Werner Schade, *Joseph Beuys: Early Drawings* (1992)

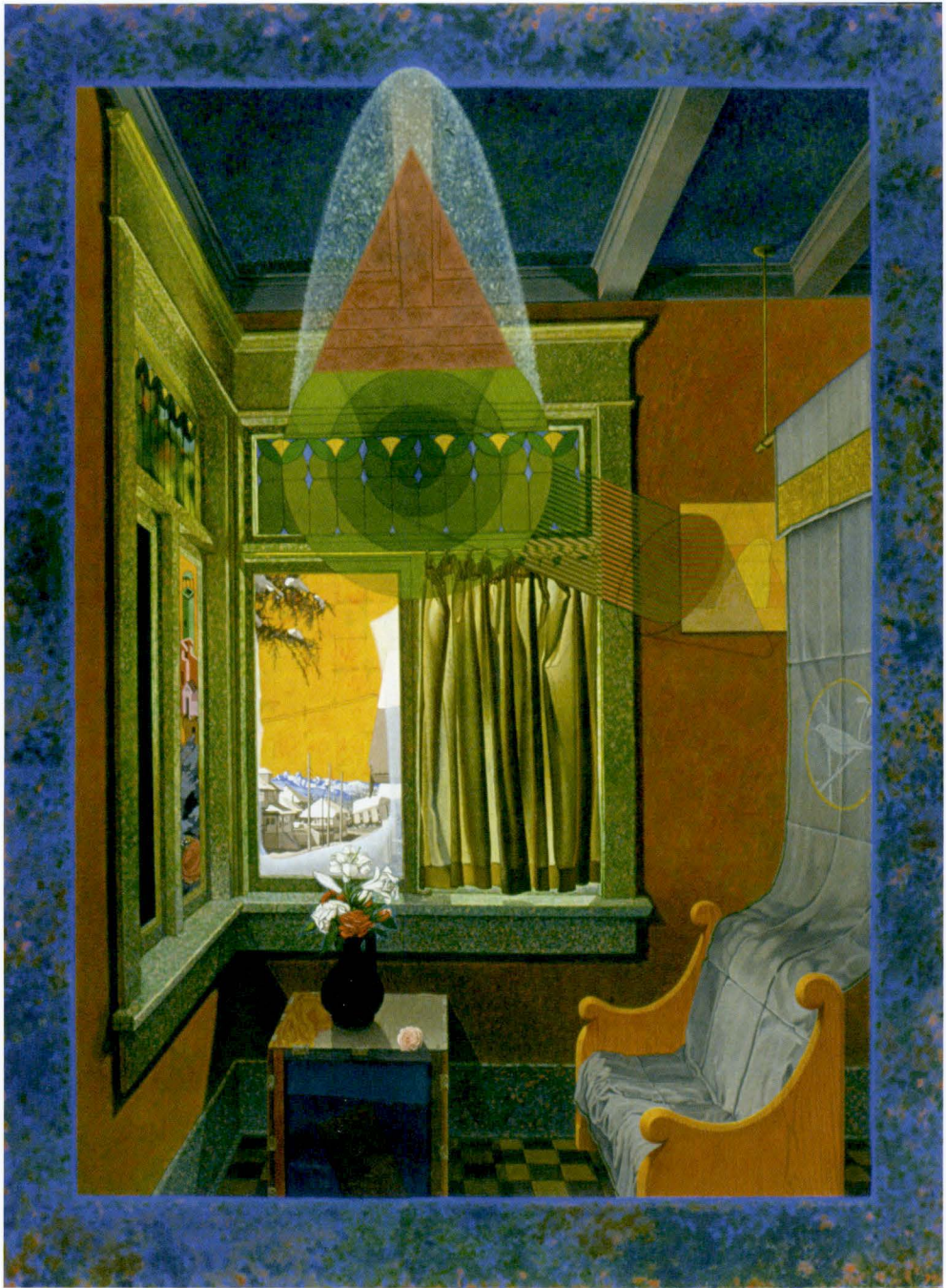
Plotinus had to have this kind of being in mind when, trying to define the freedom and the will of the one, he explained that we cannot say that "it happened to be thus," but only that "it is as it is, without being master of its own being" and that "it does not remain below itself, but makes use of itself as it is" and that it is not thus by necessity, in the sense that it could not be otherwise, but because "thus is best." Perhaps the only way to understand this free use of the self . . . is to think of it as being a *habitus*, an *ethos*. Being engendered from one's own manner of being is, in effect, the very definition of habit (this is why the Greeks spoke of a second nature): *That manner is ethical that does not befall us and does not found us but engenders us*. And this being engendered from one's own manner is the only happiness really possible for human beings.

—Georgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (1990)

Quotations assembled by Robert Young.



Robert Young, *Errant Knight*, 1966
Etching, 14.25" x 6", collection of the artist



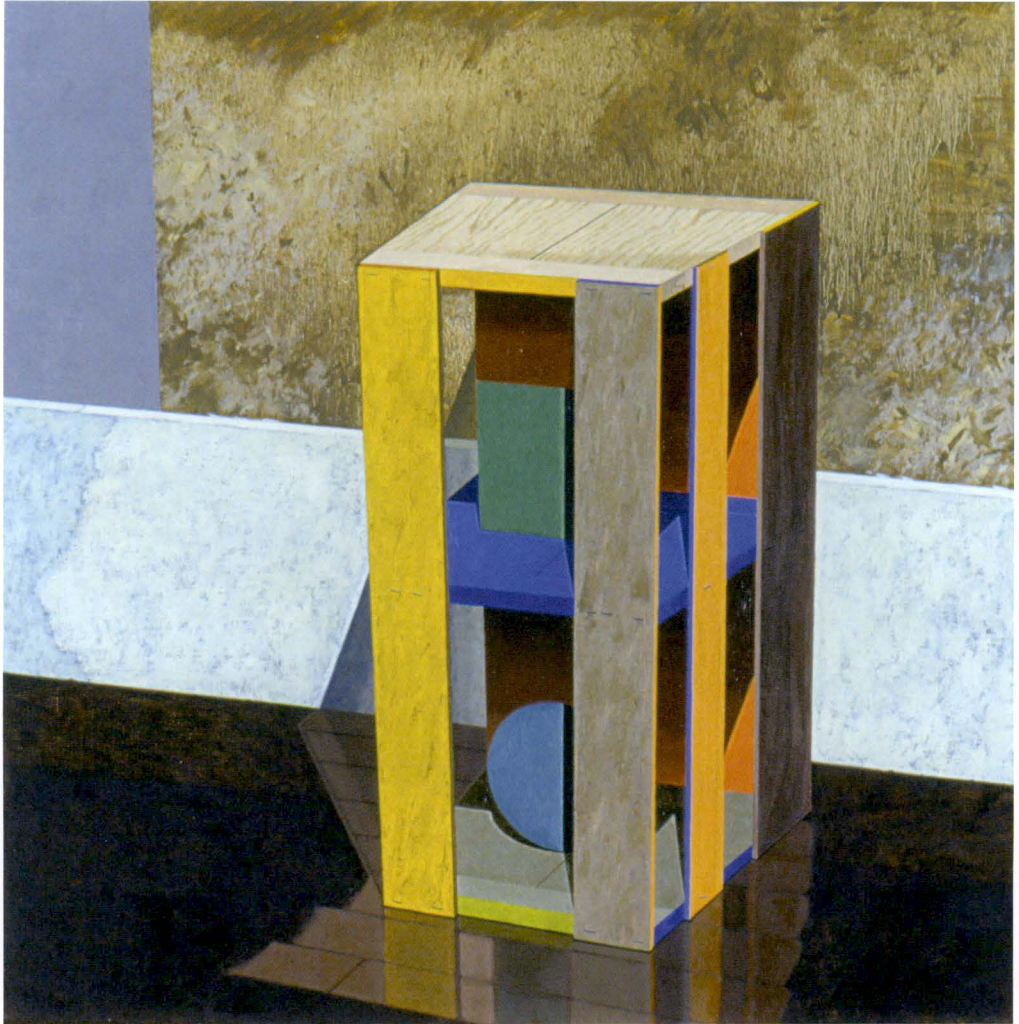
Robert Young, *Incidence of a Cone in a Quiet Dwelling*, 1997
Oil on linen, 61" x 46", private collection, Vancouver



Robert Young, *Harunobu Window*, 2004
Watercolour and gouache on paper, 31.55" x 21.5", private collection, Vancouver



Robert Young, *Sheldrake's Chair*, 1983
Oil on linen, 60" x 44", private collection



Robert Young, *Green Grocer Mandala*, 1992
Oil on linen, 30" x 30", collection of Farshad Moradian



Robert Young, *Quotidian View*, 2009

Watercolour and gouache on paper, 22" x 30", collection of Burnaby Art Gallery



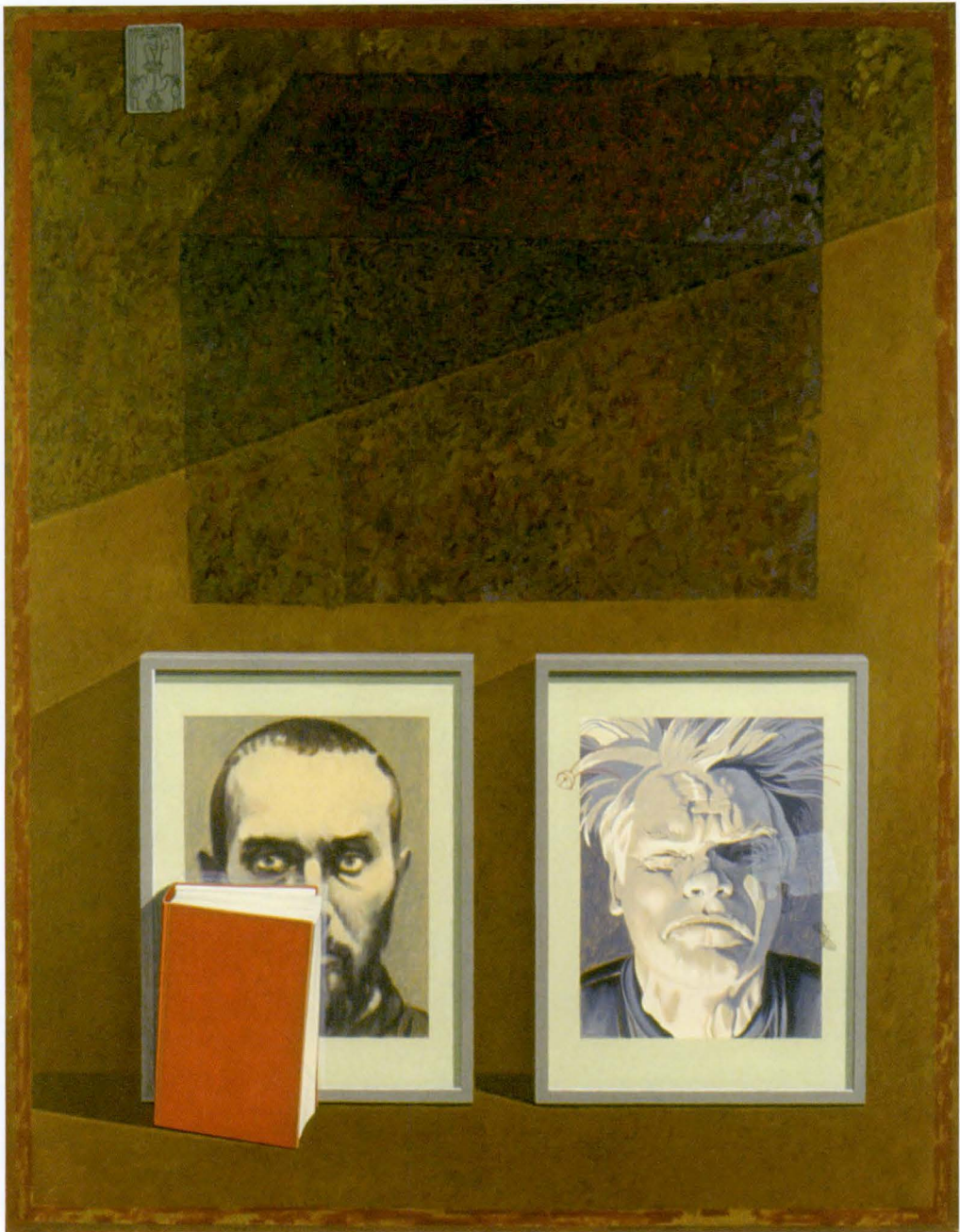
Robert Young, *Lacunarian Picture*, work in progress
Acrylic and egg tempera on linen, 60" x 48", collection of the artist



Robert Young, *The Persistence of Style*, 1979
Oil on linen, 60" x 44", private collection



Robert Young, *Korai II*, 1979
Oil on linen, 70" x 50", private collection



Robert Young, *Picture Book*, 1989
Oil on masonite, 54" x 42", private collection