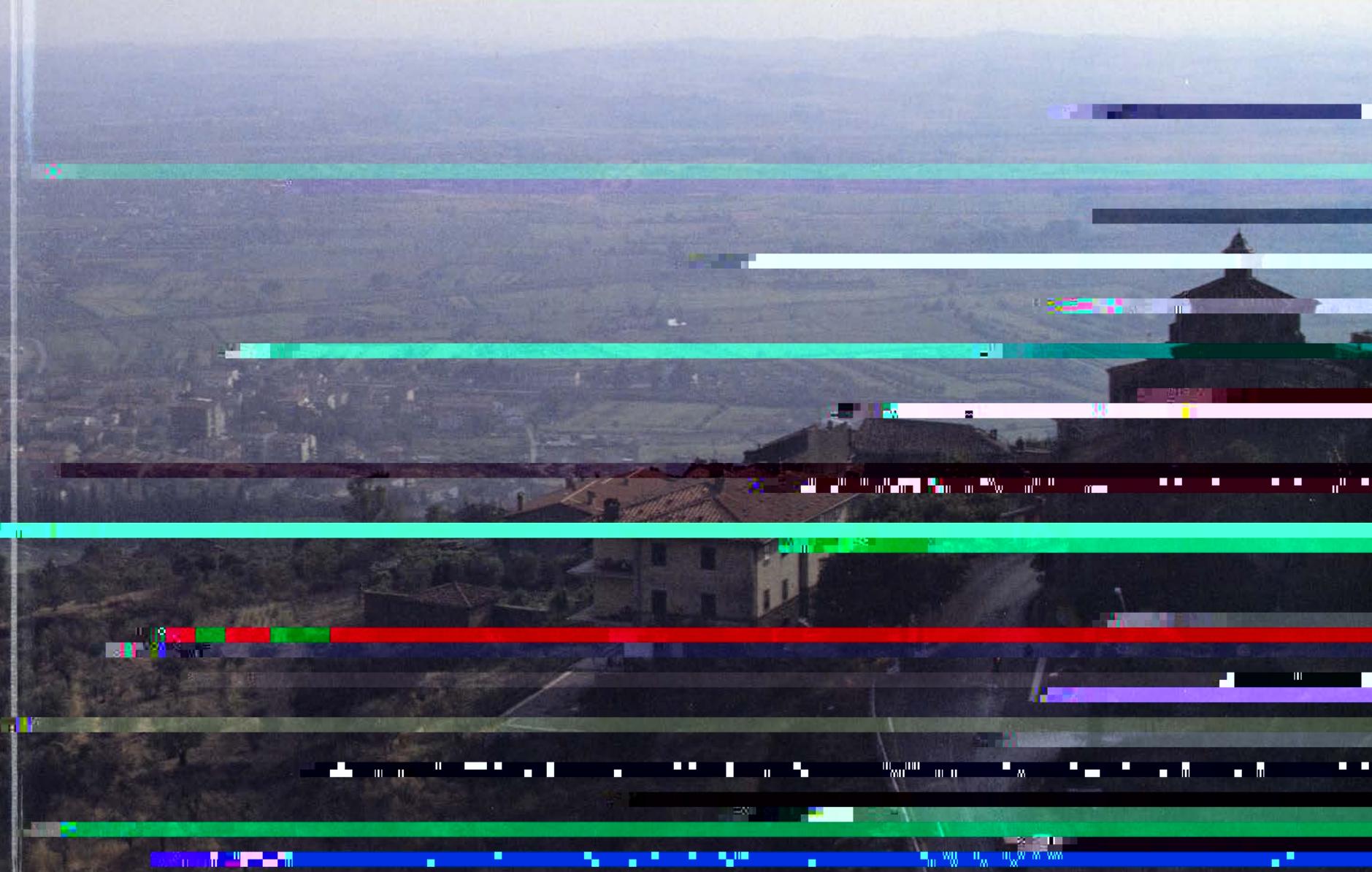


THE TUSCAN LANDSCAPE

OPEN





THE FUSION AND
OF ENTHUSIASM

OF ENTHUSIASM



THE THIS GIANT

PICTURES OF HEROES

—, —,

Stanley Grand

Two-Edged Life

Sordoni Art Galleries

Wilkes University

Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania

March 2-April 1

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THE TUSCAN LANDSCAPES OF RICHARD UPTON

STANLEY I GRAND

Wilkes University

An old man dressed in a dusty black robe walks slowly up a long, winding, inclining road that overlooks a broad and fertile valley. Behind him stands a *ma media* castle, the Urtei, which at 2,100 feet above sea level is the highest point in Central Italy. In the distance San Cristoforo en route to the top of Monte San Egizio, the rocky ridge on which the city clings, bypasses Gino Severini's mosaic *Stations of the Cross*. Now, on this summer morning before sunrise, the distant panoramic rolling hills, glowing from the summer heat, Lake Trasimeno, which Hannibal's invading troops turned red with Legionaries' blood in 217 B.C., the summers at the root of the Apennines. In the middle distance lie the demarcated fields, olive trees with their darkening, ripening fruit, umbrella pines and the stately cypress blossoms. The whitewashed walls and ceramic roofs of the Tuscan farm buildings appear like geometric punctuations in the landscape. Above, the weather cumulus clouds drift by in an azure sky, while below the roads radiate outward from

the ancient town walls—reminders that Cortona, a former Etruscan citadel, still stands over where Richard Upton paints on a small, masonite panel, looks over the artist's shoulder and then back at the landscape.

Since his initial visit to Cortona in 1962, Richard Upton has returned every year, excepting only 1964 and 1977, to paint there. As in his earlier work, he uses identical 8 x 10 inch panels, which he carries with him to the studio in the annexe visiting quarters of a convent run by nuns. A strong element of ritual informs this series, which Upton acknowledges directly by retelling

the floor before him. Five components of Upton's ongoing cycle—the annual return to the saline lake, the small-scale painting format, the acceptance even embracing of a single subject—have assumed the unmistakable language. The paintings link to the life

rosary beads, become a matter for contemplation. The delineation of boundaries is an essential component of this spiritual quest. He has observed that "the machines have to have boundaries but they also have to change to evolve over time," since he believes that truth itself changes. "The machine might have to change because change is the only fear trait. The very act of seeing boundaries causes them to change while simultaneously revealing new possibilities. To explore all the possibilities, the protean permutations requires a prolonged relationship and commitment like that which [Upton] has made to painting the countryside of Cortona. But his commitment is really inward.

In appropriate settings, the layers of time overlay each other like palimpsests; he sees himself akin to an excavator, an archaeologist, who slowly removes the obfuscating surface in order to reveal what lies beneath the clean cultivated surface. Excavation, whether archaeological or spiritual, is a dangerous process, full of danger as the layers are removed and primary atavistic forces are revealed. In a country noted for its adherence to the Catholic faith, Upton is in search of lost spiritual qualities, who went underground like the pirates in *Alice*, *Rice's* novels or, better, in the short stories of H. P. Lovecraft.

As Upton's understanding of place has deepened, the artist has undergone a change from works that clearly fit into the idealized, classic Italian tradition [Fig. 1]. Describing the morphology of *cnaoS* [Fig. 22], describing the evolution of his Italian paintings, Upton has observed that initially they were concerned with "observing, analyzing,

looking, they were perceiving quickly [the paintings] came to lose about seeing."

Still he never allows what he knows to predominate over what he sees; indeed, he continues to work *put-in* in front of the motif. A painter's eye is a painter's eye, and Upton's eye is a painter's eye. He says, "I'm not sure if my paintings between the mind and the eye and the eye, Nonetheless, if I have to trust one when I'm working, it's the eye, because it's an informed eye. The tension between representation and abstraction, in other words, is essential to understanding Upton's *Cortona* landscape series. Unlike

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whatever the shifts in method, the commitment to investigate the meaning of landscape has remained the same.

1. *duMoli*, 1982 and 1983, both reflect the Italian landscape tradition as it was known to the artist, which has had a strong influence on him. The basic concept of nature, as Vallo, Colonna, Torace, and Vigna, portrays a concept of nature carefully hewn for the benefit of man. Indeed, the present day view of Monte Sant' Egidio corresponds closely with one described by the Epicurean poet Lucretius: "In the upper and joyous vineyards, and a green stream divides to run in between high dark divisions, so ordered and

1. All quotations are from a conversation between the artist and author on June 14, 1995.

interspersed with pleasant fruits, and fenced by, planting them all about, and the like; and so on. In painting No. 83-7 [No. 2], we have a sense of a specific place observed. (Upton leaves his paintings untitled) referring to assign an impersonal number that records each painting's year of creation and position within the series. Not only are the gentle transitions, brushwork and local color are used descriptively to delineate the scene, but the objects are treated rationally with a single controlling perspective. The painting is atmospheric with the suggestion of air interposed between the eye and distant fields. A rigorous geometry orders the painting, imposing a grid-like structure on the composition.

Historically, the classic Italian landscape tradition represented a marked and decided break with the preceding model. In the medieval landscape, as Kenneth Clark reminds us in his pioneering study *Landscape into Art*, symbolic and religious meaning encased each object. Landscape consisted of arranging these symbolic objects rather than depicting light and space. The break with this theocentric view coincided with the rise of mercantile cities during the late Middle Ages and the shift away from ecclesiastical and feudal economy.² In the earliest modern landscapes, Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *The Effects of Good Government in the Country* (1338–1339), figures in an urban, political setting—The Palazzo Pubblico or town hall in Siena, a short drive from Cortona.

Upton's initial acceptance of a rational perspective is his ultimate subversion of it. It is a subversive process, like a gradual descent into darkness, a closing in, a journey into the subconscious. As the pictorial and emotional

bands between earth and sky gives way [No. 10], the eliminated from the scene. We are also informed that the Italian paintings "began with sky and land but the horizon line continually rose as the land ascended into the session, 't' sky; it's seeing'—it's the sky that abrogated—as heaven and earth—and creating a relationship between the two."³

The struggle to retain the balance between the traditional aspects of earth and sky is evident in Upton's later work; he relinquishes the traditional forms of composition, as is evident in his paintings and drawings from Ireland.

"In 1969, darker chthonian forces appear to take over

[Fig. 15]. Up top, left, this tendency has holding on to a semblance of structure, but below, the dark imports imposed order on the scene. The artist begins to employ an organizing grid, and highways that spread outward from the center that is Cortona. Nevertheless the painter begins increasingly to assume pinwheel compositions that spin or gyrate around a dark point in the composition, like a small airplane auguring into the ground."

On quavering lament that things can fall apart, the centre cannot hold. Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world." —Pubblico

Dionysus, the god of revelry, orgies against order, a riot of brushwork and color seeks to overwhelm the linear

that moves us."

The artist's subversion of the rational Italian of Southern landscape might be seen as an embrace of the alternate, Northern tradition where ominous, threatening mists frequently hang in the thick branches of the dark piney forests of his wild, romantic, fantastic tradition—

2. Lucretius, *Titus Lucretius Carus on the Nature of Things*, trans. Thomas Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1929), pp. 198–199.

with its grotesque elements, varieties of distortion, abrupt angles and mystery—is the antithesis of class. And this, perhaps, is the core of what is so disconcerting about Upton's treatment of the Cortona countryside. Man is no longer the measure of all things; light, reason, beauty, and truth have been banished from painting. This is nothing of Empfindsamkeit, lost confidence in progress and in science, or whatever makes them speak so clearly to our time.

Upton's paintings in Cortona, like those of his contemporaries, are part of an American tradition that reaches back to the Colonial era. Initially artists like Balthasar Denner, Singleton Copley went to Italy to become *part of it* in the Grand Manner. Visits to Rome and Florence, facilitating access to their wealth of antique sculpture and Renaissance-Baroque paintings—were a necessary component in the education of such assiduous history painters as Copley. Classicism increasingly gave way to Romanticism during the nineteenth century, artists and writers such as Nathaniel Hawthorne—one thinks of "The Marble Faun"—found in Italy's ruins and long civilization new meanings and expressive elements lacking in their young homeland. As Modernism developed, the focus shifted to the more pastoral, Arcadian landscapes of the south, reflective of modern life. Paris and its environs replaced Italy as the preferred European destination for artists.

Upton's return to Italy reflects a characteristic habit of going his own way.

In sum, the artist's work is a study in the organic and rational traditions of painting. It begins with the subject until the parts fall out and lie scattered on the floor. Not only does Upton confound expectations by his choice of the subject, but he does so as well by a number of other areas of large scale, surfaces, brushwork, color, and pictorial space.

The style of Upton's paintings may initially seem dazzling, even provocative. Confused with mystery, jaded by paint, they seem closer to the jeweler's workshop than to the later works [246, 301] referred to as "the son of chamber

music." The artist's desire to express a sense of grandeur appropriate to nature's scope, sweep, and range.

Upton's paintings, however, on a small scale willfully rejects a view prevalent during

Robert Motherwell's mordant, dismissive remarks on pictures all over Europe for tourists. Yet, the twofold triumph of American painting and foreign policy that

for decades by choice of subject has allowed the artist to exert the human, as well as the divine, in his art. Thus, in a recent remark, private. Noting that many artists are "asleep," he believes in "making beautiful, meditative or quiet," he be-

Look at my garden: I prefer it to my house because it's smaller and more intimate, but very complicated, a dia-

logue between me and the plants. Upton, however, goes back to his student days

Dated August 20, 1965
...Modern Art, 1965: 67

father showed up at the end of the summer and, after a fruitless struggle to force Richard to bring his paintings into the family station wagon, demanded to know why his son had such big paintings. Subsequently, during a painting sabbatical in the Delaware Water Gap, Richard explored this question, but now did so within the parameters of the ecological movement.

In the 1960s, largely environmental values were juxtaposed against "greed" or "greedy capitalism," to use a formulation from the period. What had been viewed as idealized representations of nature as a festal document of beauty and exploitation, was coming into disrepute. Within the art world, the movement was a certain widely shared interest in a "return to the land." A desire to escape from the excesses of materialism, attracted large numbers of young people during these years. Richard Upton, a young artist in this era, and his work retains traces of the attitudes we associate with the emergent counter-culture.

One concept from that period that has become an important benchmark is "question authority." A rallying cry in the 1960s, this phrase reflected an attitude toward religion, money, sexual norms, political systems, gender, race, and the workplace. One concern of widespread question was that of authority was that the critical hegemony of Clement Greenberg's formalist aesthetic came under attack. Pop artists like Andy Warhol employed irony and kitsch to dethrone the high seriousness of the Abstract Expressionists. Other artists, like Richard Upton, questioned the assumptions that seriousness required large scale and that quality was most likely to be found in abstraction. In this context, Upton sought to explore the expressive potentialities in figurative and, generally and specifically, in landscapes.

In addition to scale, Upton's brushwork and palette likewise subvert conventional notions of landscape. We

have an oxymoronic relationship between the scale of the cyclone and the size of painter's marks.

His fascination with the cyclone is reflected in his expressive palette.

Curved quarter moons or commas, jarring angles, topographic dashes; blursly zig-zags; agitated squiggles, and

his paint-on with a palette knife, in homage to the skillful stucco work he's admired.

1991. *Upton, copied from Motherwell*, oil on canvas, 12 x 12 inches.

contrasting thick and thin paint, and falling.

his cyclone might include the art of the management of the shadows cast by the raised edges of paint.

His love of scale, color, texture, and composition are allusions to his conversations with Robert Motherwell.

thickly applied, juicy paint appeals directly to our meaty eye; but the clash of saturated colors, the sharp edges, the abruptness of the boundaries, the

abruptness of the transitions, the sharpness of the

abstractionists speak directly to us because . . . Any red is rooted in blood, glass, wine, hunters' caps, and a thousand other concrete phenomena. Otherwise we should have no feeling toward red or redness . . . and it would be useless to talk about it.

For that reason, I think that abstraction is obviously unnatural.

4. Robert Motherwell, "Beyond the Aesthetic," *Design* 33, no. 8 (April 1946): 15.

Upton does maintain that his palette changes with the visit in response to seasonal and rainfall variations.

Upton's palette changes, however, do not merely reflect meteorological phenomena. Rather, they reflect emotion as well. The shift, in 1993, from a predominantly red/green palette to one characterized by an exuberant yellow represents a coming to terms with his loss over the death of his mother earlier that year.³⁶ Upton, 36 at the time, had just moved to New Mexico, where he now resides. A painting from 1993, *Marigold*, which is part of a series of wall panels that accompanied *Richard Upton: Ten Years of Landscapes*, which opened at the James A. Michener Art Museum in December 2000,³⁷

One day he [Upton] ran into a nun (in the convent of St. Francis) who needed help digging a flower bed, so he grabbed a pick and shovel and set about the task. When he had finished, to his surprise the sister returned with a box full of marigolds, his mother's favorite flower. He remembered that his mother had carefully collected and saved marigold seeds for next year's planting. This experience gave him the creative energy that had been frozen by grief, and he produced a series of paintings dominated by the marigold colors of orange, yellow and green. Throughout the summer, while he made the paintings, he continued to tend

Finally, Upton's pictorial space, which uses similar vanishing points, directly contradicts the mode developed by Poussin and other landscape tradition. Instead of receding parallel planes linked by a perspective framework, Upton substitutes a Chinese-like, inverted perspective, in which the planes do not meet at the same point or the other. Rather than being ordered according to the laws

5. In wall panels that accompanied *Richard Upton: Ten Years of Landscapes*, which opened at the James A. Michener Art Museum in December 2000.

of linear perspective which would make the forms appear larger than those more distant, the relative scale of the forms is modified by the artist's choice. Not only does this way of organizing pictorial space undermine the strict mathematical basis of recession, but it also serves to activate, while simultaneously flattening, the composition. This characteristic clearly differentiates the landscapes of late modernism from those of the

space, represents a way of thinking about drawing. (This is not to say that Upton rejects drawing, for the fact just the opposite is true: "drawing is fundamental for me now, in a preparatory way or as a ritual for painting, but

it may be more important in painting than in drawing." This statement may be an example of the artist's self-delusion, but it nevertheless points therefore to the specific character of Upton's painting, converging on a vanishing point and a vanishing point, and so on, in a series of parallel planes that are not related to the space of the viewer. The artist's

and more emotive approach to the space of the viewer is evident in earlier, more representational paintings, such as 837 [No.

837] (1983), in which Upton transforms a landscape concept by transforming a bar in order to track its progress across the sky. Like the clouds, the artist and the

of perpetual flux. Despite the movement of the clouds, the artist's position is static, standing; one recalls Plato's critique of painting as an imperfect approximation of reality, and the ideal realm carried from the celestial realms to the physical. Upton

paintings is that it's about *Being*, *giving Being*. It's not about the representation of something outside the painting since that would require that it look like the prototype which is presented again.⁶ Perhaps naturally, by concentrating on the painting's "Being" or, as Bill Berkson observed, on "the 'real' of the paint," Upton is able to capture "the look of the place [Cortona]—in [its] various aspects."⁷

How Upton looks or sees is an integral part of his working method. In conversation he has said that he waits for some aspect of the landscape to strike him, for example the curve of a hill, the play of shadows, or the cliff face of a ravine. Sitting in front of the landscape, he seeks to empty his mind of conscious thought to attain a state of receptivity to the personality of the subject. Almost ritualistically, he begins by laying down a number of strokes building upon what he's set down. Like an actor and chorus, statement and response, each mark participates in an organically developing dialogue with every other mark. This surrealist, Jungian approach is Upton's pathway into his unconscious mind, and the resultant painting represents, on one level, his struggle to impose order on the accidental, the random, and the chaotic. At times, as in 91-3 [No. 26], a rational grid emerges and order is restored; other times, as in 92-1 [No. 35], Upton's surfaces seem closer to Aesculapian nests of frenzied snakes. Regardless of the final outcome, this approach to painting ensures that the surface never becomes a mere collection of virtuoso brushwork, of painterly flourishes, cut off from the underlying content.

6. Bill Berkson correspondence to Richard Upton dated 22 February 1994. Copy in possession of the author.

Upton's revery, reveries and brushwork, color, and pictorial space seem almost mannerist. Like the great *seicento* Italian Mannerists and their sophisticated patrons, he knows the rules of the language of art. And he likes to delight in playing with the rules. Yet his intent is anything but mannerist; rather he seeks to revitalize an art that had become a "closed system that reproduced itself." By *opening* a closed world up, he can vitalize the *language* of the picture. Ultimately Upton is concerned long ago from Hans Hofmann, whose legacy he knew from Breuer, that "the artist must be a poet." His art has more to do with understanding the relationship between the formal and the expressive.

ing Upton's Anglo-Italian parentage, it is interesting that this opposition of the expressive and the formal is also the defining difference between the picturesque, colorful English and the logical, symmetrical, architectural Italian. He believes in unchanging essences existing in the midst of constant change. His quest for essences, for the immutable, has led him to the conviction that the only true way to paint is to paint from the inside. William Faulkner, the Southern historian, said, "The surface/subsurface, thick/thin, red/green, order/disorder, Northern/Southern, have nothing to do with painting." Upton's paintings prove this to be true. By means of abstraction, he transforms the seen, the visual or the physical into an inwardly experienced affirmation, a personal truth, a modern redemption.

RICHARD ORION'S CODE: LANDSCAPES

Fred Licht

Collezione Poggiali, Cavigliano, Verbania

In the early 1430s, Fra Angelico moved from Florence to Cortona. Looking down toward Lake Trasimeno from the vanishing point of his monastery he decided to capture the magnificent view in a painting. Thus the first topographically recognizable landscape was created and a new epoch, the epoch of landscape painting, began. The view captured by Fra Angelico served as background for a scene of the *Visitation*, a subject emblematic of man's ability to recognize and worship forces that are greater than he. In 1922, Richard Hutton, having moved to Cortona under very different circumstances, became subject to a similar "Visitation." He too, expressed himself in terms of landscape.

It is easy enough to say "landscape." It is not quite so easy to define the premises, the opportunities, the difficulties and the satisfactions of this very peculiar subject matter that we today accept as a reality, of course although it was actually one of the last conquests of Western civilization.

Figure 1. Big still-life paintings centered on a human figure from medieval times as applied to modern art clearly visible in silhouette form. This defines their shape and character. By transferring that silhouette to paper or canvas, the artist automatically captures their appearance and a good deal of their characteristic essence. The outline of a human figure or an animal also gives the artist another fundamental characteristic of all objects: its center. With periphery and center firmly in evidence, the artist can continue his composition, inventing figures and still-life objects to the storm of his imagination. He can, if he wishes, paint his picture of the surface or wrinkled landscape, observe it, paint his picture of the landscape, or, on the other hand, is characterized by endless extent. It has no self-contained limit, it has no fixed, fixed center; consequently, it does not submit to a frame. Figure and still-life painting by having external limitations are

which also has clear cut coordinates, a center, and a periphery. To reconcile limitless, centerless landscape to a limited canvas which is, in effect, indefinitely perceived by the eye is one of the most complicated undertakings known to art.

Unlike his colleagues in Cortona, Upton had the advantage of having had rich experience of twentieth-century abstract painting. Abstraction is germinal to landscape, for it, too, has no objectively perceptible dimensions or co-ordinates. The artist must furnish them in accordance to his intuition; and it is not just fortuitous happenstance that during the forties and fifties (when some resembled it between abstraction and the real world was still preferred by the public and even by advanced critics) abstract painting was often discussed in terms of landscape.

Another peculiarity of landscape painting so obvious that it is usually forgotten is constituted by the need to reconcile the near and the far. For the true landscape painter, the soil underfoot and the distant horizon are of equal importance. Yet they belong to two completely different modes of perception. The earth on which we tread is palpably concrete. It is always in contact with touch, smell, taste and— if only it has a sufficiently fine ear—hearing as well as sight. It is evanescent and fugitive.

After Fra Angelico's epochal deed of describing and

scaping gradually developed in two very divergent traditions. (Warning: like all simplifications, this division into two major categories of development must be taken with great many grains of salt. In view of the present exhibition, it serves only as a sketchy background to the cultural forces of which it is drawn.) Both traditions date back to the fifteenth century. In Italy, Fra Angelico's *Cortona* continues as something that is comforting, beatific,

oriental, and essentially Italianic continues to predominate.

This promise of safety and security is reflected in the innocence in their environment. Though no longer Garden of Eden, the Earth still reverberates with the memory of Paradise. For, like the first man and woman, the human race with a seemingly infinitely distant vanishing point, never allows one to feel lost or menaced by the immense and

boundless vistas he sets before us. Human co-operation and

landscape represents the world.

But the basic idea of safety and security is

developed to its highest peak. In the seventeenth century

Annibale Carracci and Domenichino enlarge upon this

ideal in their idealized landscape paintings.

and go beyond the veneer of safety and security to endow landscape with monumental grandeur. Land-

scape is seen as an analogue to the clearly understandable architecture of the universe. Poussin, for example,

basing themselves on their Italian predecessors, perfect

this to a point as to introduce it into the mainstream

of European painting.

Surprisingly few of these idealized

landscapes have survived to our day.

In the Netherlands and in the German speaking

territories, a very different response to the problem of

full expressive maturity in Rubens, Rembrandt, Ruisdael,

Friedrich Gropius Blaue, and Nolde. This difference lies

in the personality of the artist.

A tragic note prevails. Man is an intruder in the

world, under constant threat or exile, forever threatened

and persecuted.

man's place in the world is

markedly darker.

tion. If one looks for artists who act as mediators between these disparate traditions one can do better than trace Antonello da Messina in Italy and Konrad Witz in Switzerland who start from opposite directions but are capable, each in his own highly idiosyncratic way, of reconciling cultural opposites.

American landscape painting of the nineteenth century grows to maturity in constant dialogue between the two major traditions even though at first the Classical vein (Cole, Bingham) tends to dominate. With Eakins, a more objective, independent view of the landscape begins to entrance. Dispassionate distance from both earlier traditions makes itself felt. Neither new England nor southern lyricism is tolerated by Eakins. The same can be said, though with totally different aesthetic results, of French Impressionism.

But American landscape painting does not tell the whole story of American attitudes towards the arts towards landscape. For under Cole's classicizing tendencies, Fitz Hugh Lane's privatizing of landscape and Eakins's steely, setting down of visible realities, there is another, quite different experience, unlike anything to be found in landscape description in any other nation, which may be best looked for in Upton Sinclair's *Wealth and Want*, rather than in American painting of the same epoch.

This strange new note is unlike the southern tradition, in that it does not admit of any logical structure that makes one feel protected. It is unlike the Cole tradition, in that it does not threaten to overwhelm and annihilate the human race. It is unlike the northern tradition, in that it does not threaten to overwhelm and annihilate space. Instead, the experience of the quintessential American landscape is one of an immense indifference that eludes all human faculties. It is landscape before the act of Creation! William Cullen Bryant comes closest to it in the opening chapter of *A Myrrion* (the narrator traveling at night through the Nebraska plains speaks):

"In Illinois of Illinois, if there was a road, I had not made it out in the faintest light. There was nothing but water, hard country at all, but the material country, which countries are made. I had the feeling that we were left behind, that we had got over the world."

Early, this is a landscape that can scarcely be translated into painting because it lies beyond translation. It is no wonder, then, that the first, thatsvaughn, experience of landscape in Europe were represented on canvas before the camera. The great photographers of the thirties who photographed views of the dustbowl or of other abandoned stretches of America are among in having produced visual evidence of the majestic

abstraction of a truly American landscape, last painted by Thomas Hart Benton.

How then does Upton's landscape painting relate to this? How does he conform to or rebel against its traditions? How does he expand its repertoire and possibilities?

Upton's landscape painting, like his other paintings, has developed with great skill the endless modulations of Utopianously uncolored scenes in compositional motifs. Along with Upton's text, it becomes self-evident that

the modernist avant-garde, from Cézanne to Abstract Expressionism, His loyalty to a highly disinterested and sober vision and his respect for the objectivity of the painter's brushes, and his contempt for the subjective and aesthetic esthetic

Some critics have been inclined to see in Upton's work a frequently supercilious criticism of earlier forms of art (as happens in certain manifestations of Pop Art, Minimalism etc.). Others, and Upton is among them, have found ways of using their deeper knowledge of and their respect for the past as an integral part of their creative methods. It is by this means, I believe, that Upton has managed to legitimate the practice of landscape painting in a new and thoroughly contemporary key. Not that he is alone in doing so. William Congdon, for instance, or Seymour Remenick has, each in a specifically individual manner, worked in the same direction. For Upton and for the other artists bent on using the fullness of their knowledge of the past to serve contemporary purposes, the revolution wrought by modern abstraction has been of infinite value.

Or their understanding of abstraction assures almost liberty of invention and expression while it simultaneously imposes an extremely rigorous discipline bent on avoiding frivolous license. Take Upton's brushwork, for instance. If I may be permitted to use a term from music criticism, then I would have to say that

the texture of his painting is like a musical score. It is a work of art in itself; it has an independent, non-descriptive, calligraphic and textural meaning without ever limiting itself to a representational function. It is a continuous continuity of surface that looks directly to the finished work, without sacrificing the expressive nature of each individual stroke. Upton's brushwork, like that of his artist predecessors are keenly aware of the whole range of expressive values inherent in brush work from Masaccio to Rembrandt, Rousseau's *Grandvulland* and all the way to Manet, Cézanne, and Picasso. He has learned how to use this awareness of a constantly changing situation of brushwork to serve their own individual needs.

Upton's Cortona landscape can be thought of as a modern synthesis of the two extremes of

compositional devices clearly indicates the artist's allegiance to a more traditional way of painting. This allows him to fully realize the expressive nature of these pastose strokes which carefully informs Upton's composition. It is essential to the entire edifice. At the same time, the urgency with which he sets them down, the charge that moves in quite a different direction than the brushwork, gives it an ever-changing, elusive character of the old master's oil painting.

Most astonishing of all is how Upton turns the painting to bear on his reinterpretation of the craft. The canvas, a structured composition suggests modernity, the daringly small format signals "fragments" à la Kuisdael's and Friedrich's landscapes, with their tragic vision of a world so large and unrelated that it fizzles the human presence. A sense of comprehension—create an undertone that binds the Cortona landscapes together. By subtly composing the enduring, logical structure of what he sees with the elements held, Upton manages to express the complex nature of landscape and its ability to console us at the same time that it overwhelms and engulfs us.

Another mystery, another effect: one can... ...them? whether a series of random blots connects

the landscape with its changing light, the restorative nature of our sight, allows us to observe only fragments which delineate

In the end it is the mysteriously indefinable nature of a painting that determines the character and worth of an artist's work. The unanswerable question raised by Upton's paintings are as important in this regard as anything that can be logically affirmed. Here are some of the enigmas

one of us is bound to draw up a very different list of his own.

1. There is an immediate suggestion of light in Upton's landscapes. Sometimes concentrated, sometimes diffuse, intense or muted. But there is never a hint of a light source, no legible shadows that indicate where the light is coming from. This gives his landscapes a breathtaking suspense. Light, the most fugitive element of landscape, is here endowed with timeless, intangible qualities.

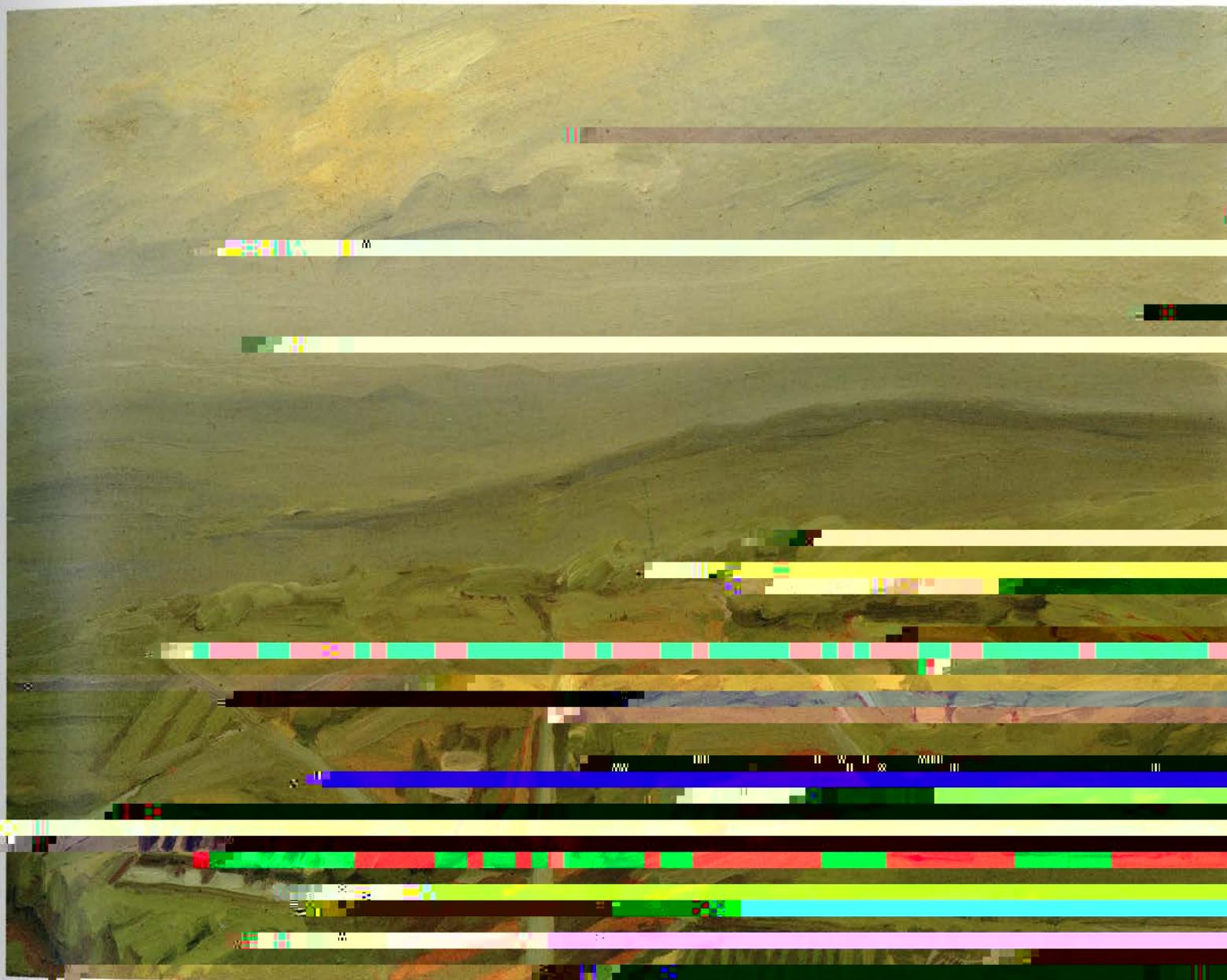
2. For all of Upton's love of Cortona, the city, though an integral part of the Tuscan landscape, never appears in his paintings and yet seems to exert a spell over the paintings.

enjoy the skill and the exuberance of the brush's adventure. Brian's pictures from close up. The place is just right when we step back to a distance from the picture that is clearly indicated by the artist.

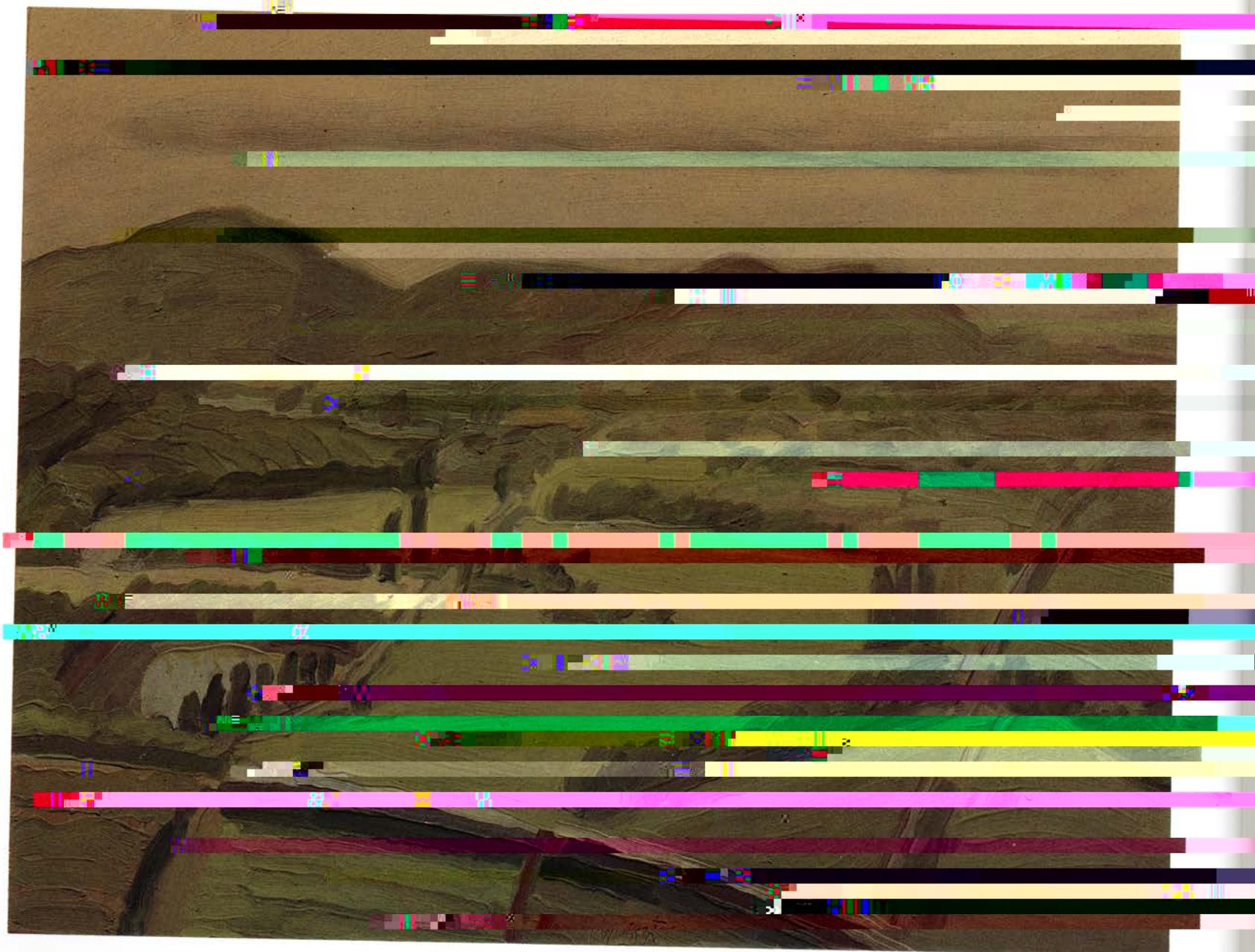
case, even when we stand at a distance the sensation is one of extreme proximity to his landscape, while at close range we retain a definite impression of the stability of his

landscape space. The primitive and potent magic of "proto" reigns over these paintings. Fragment metamorphoses into totality. Dürer's *Räsenstück* unleashes a similar creation. In calling up Dürer, I do not imply any comparison whatever. I merely mean to illustrate the same phe-

4. Some paintings—and they are frequently the most serenely modest, deeply moving ones—summon up inner memories of music. For my own part, I cannot look at Upton's Cortona landscapes without hearing the last phrases of Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde*: "Ewig. Ewig."



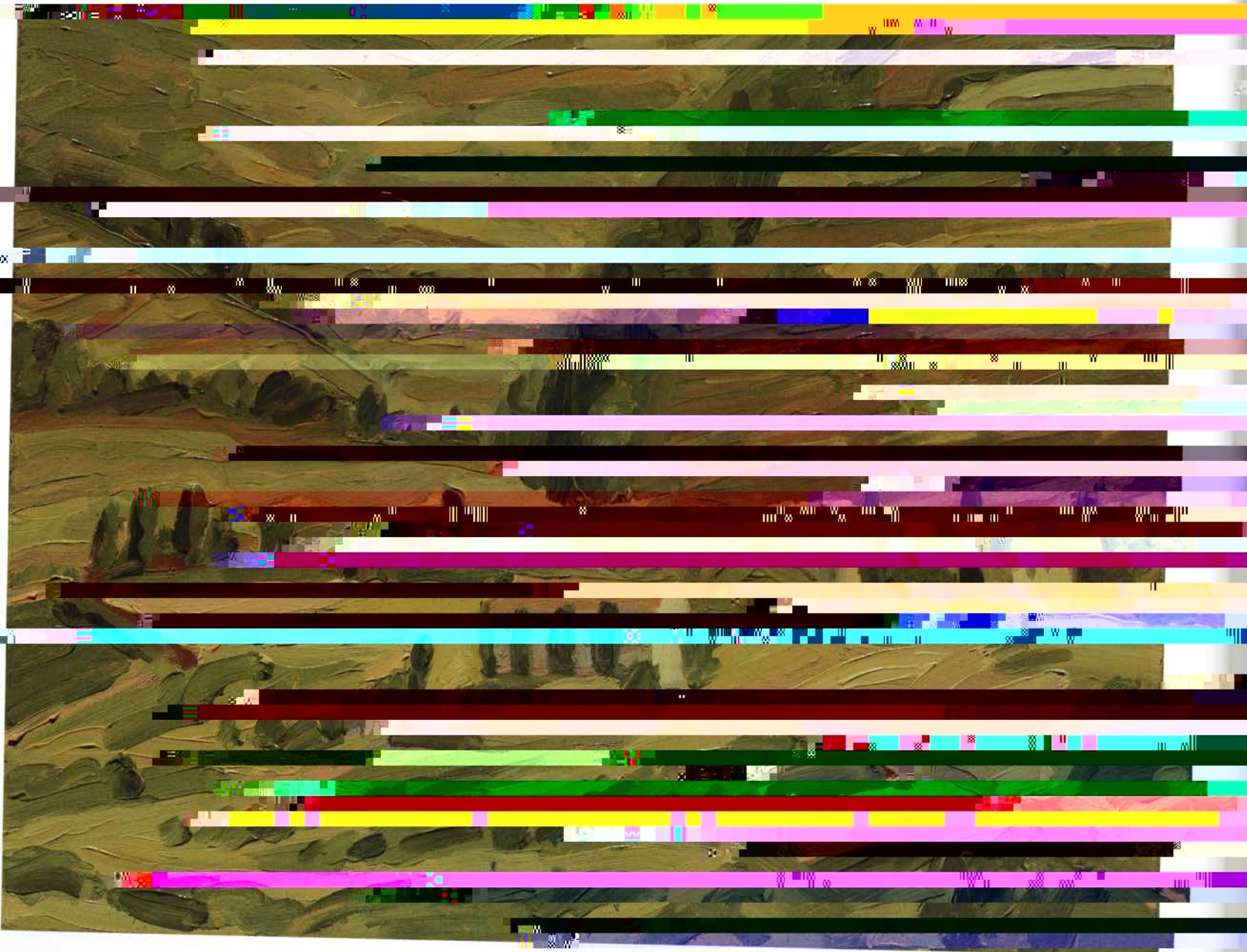
1 Untitled/Cortona, 1982
(P82-9)



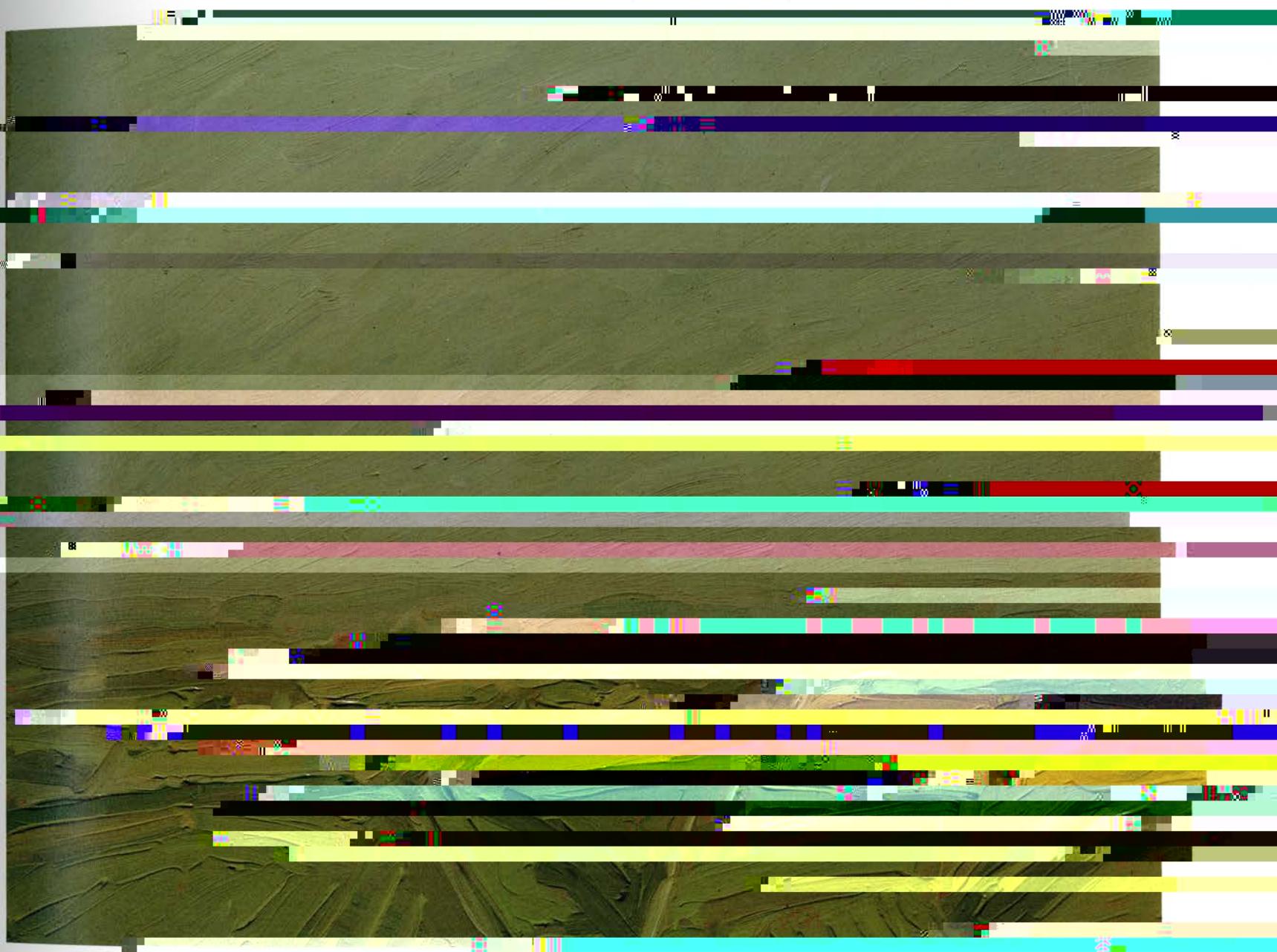
2 Untitled Artist, 1983
(P83-)



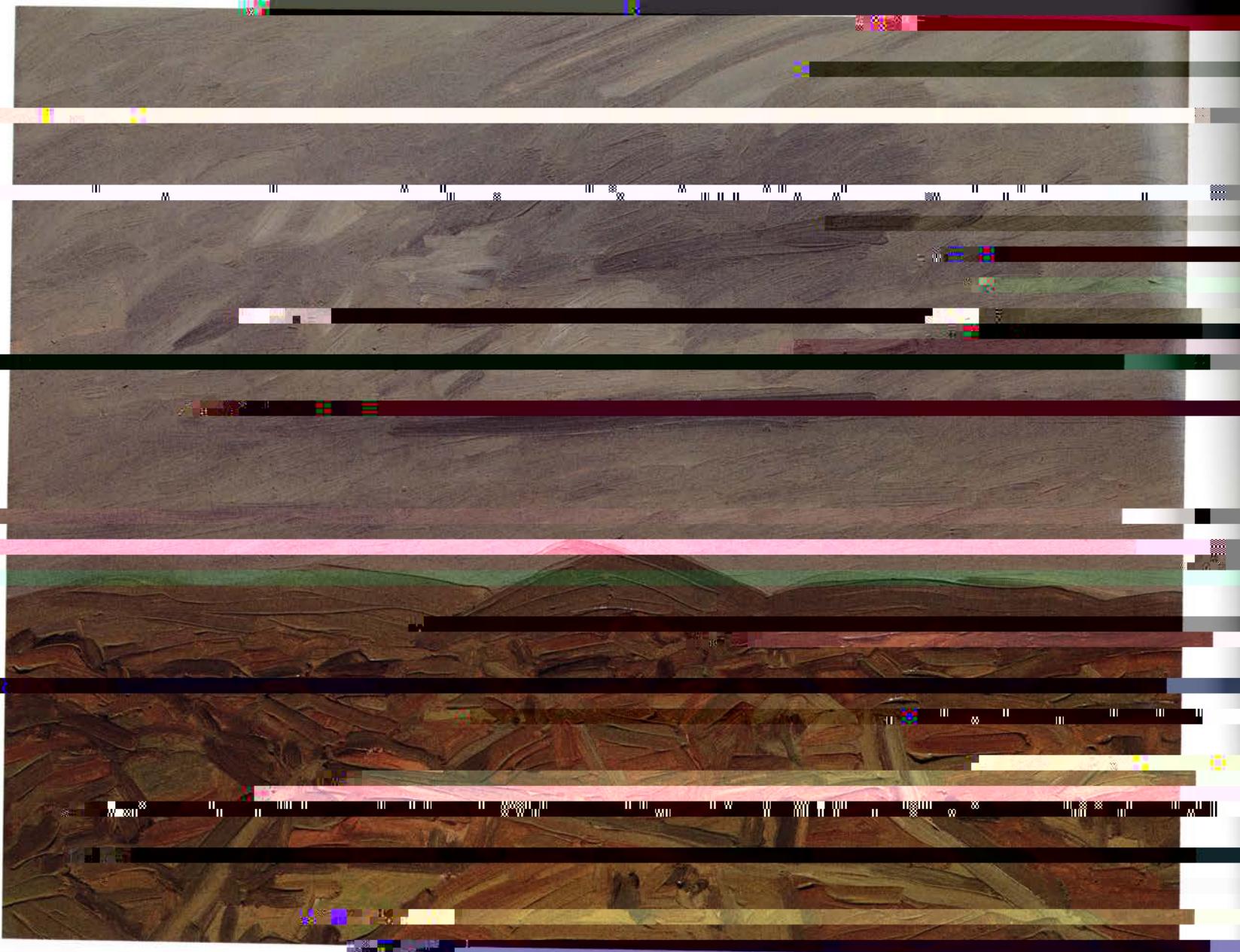
3 Untitled, 1980
(P22-12)



5 Untitled
(P85-9)



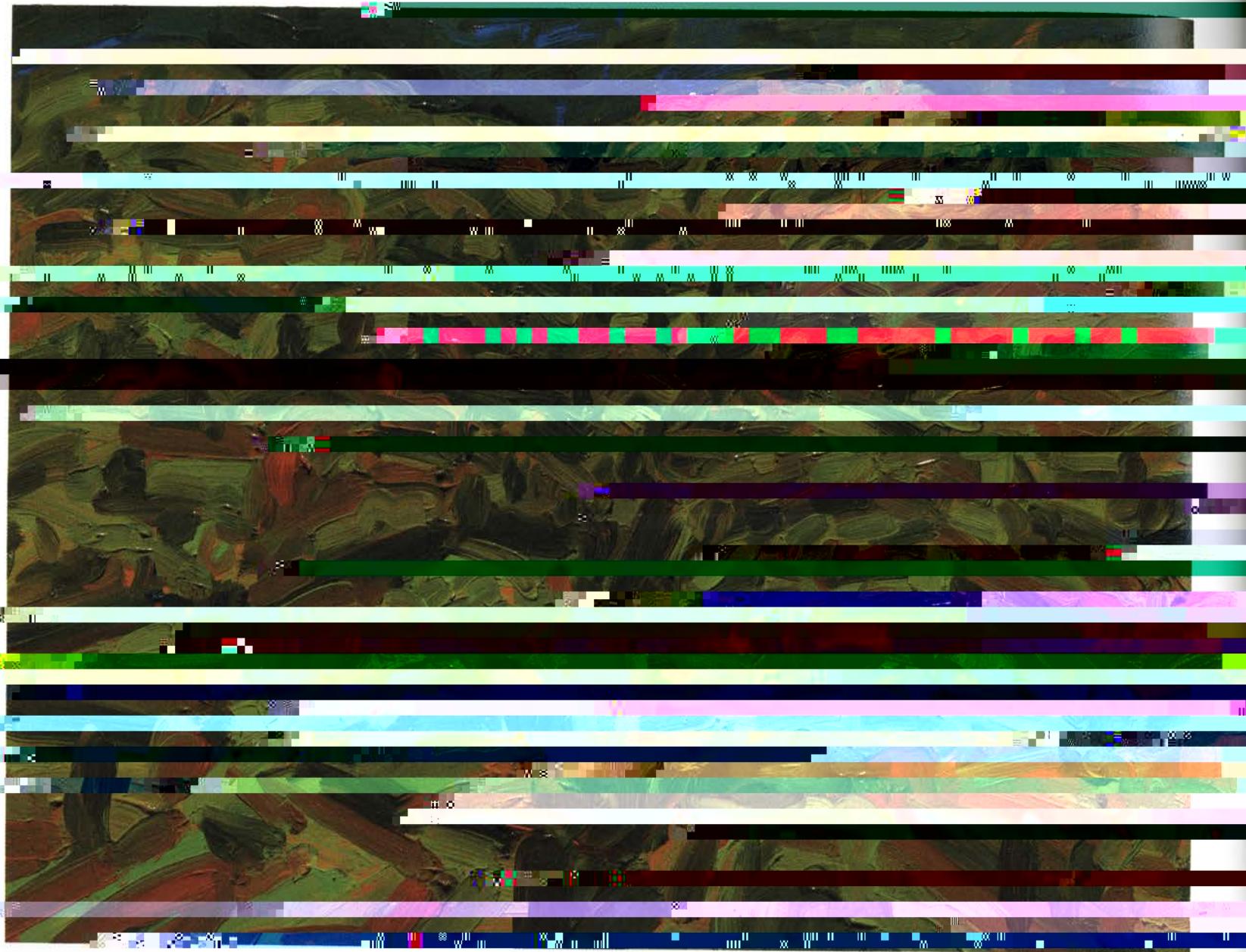
8 Unitreia/Cortona, 1982
(P85-18)



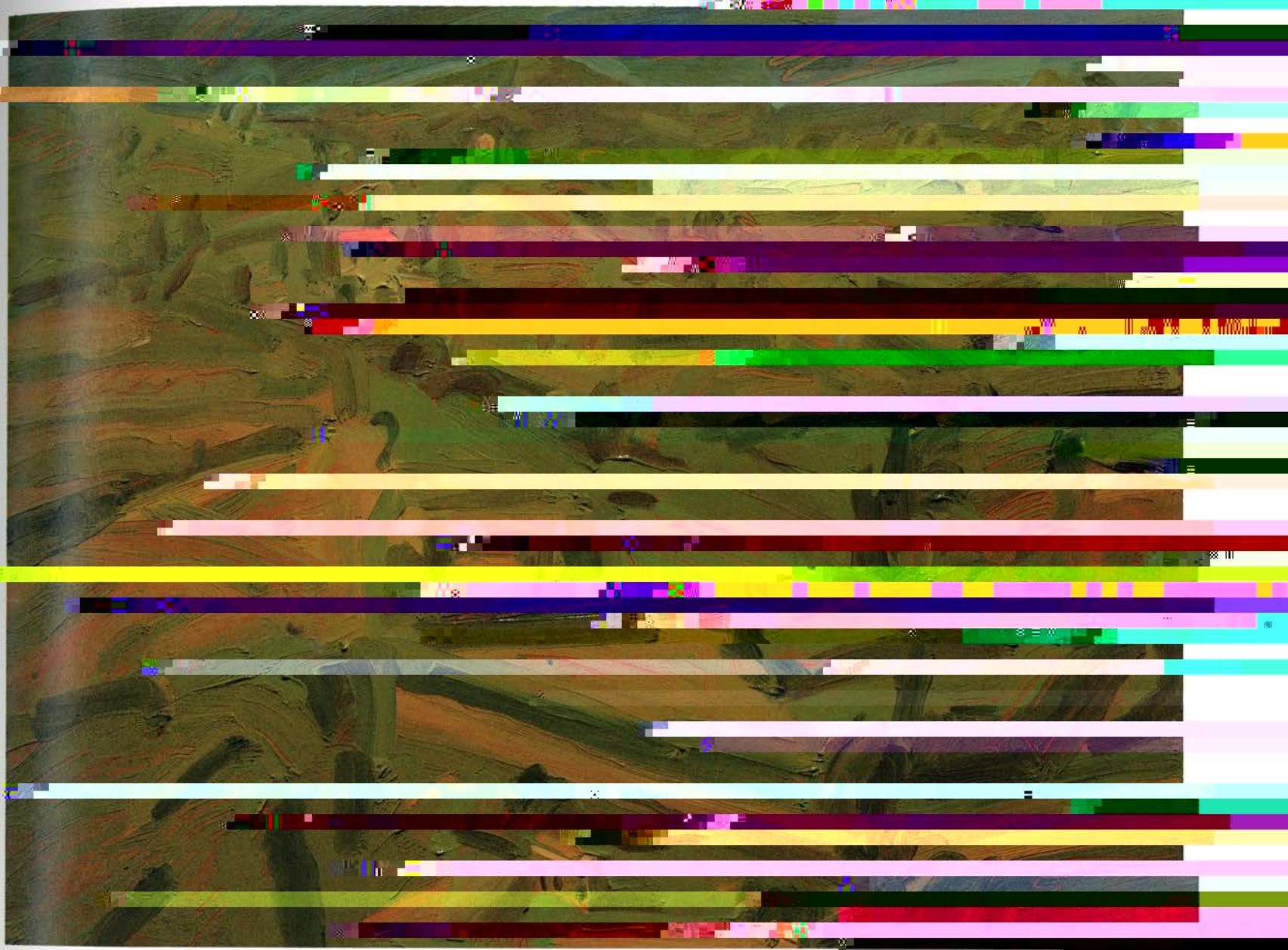
10 Untitled/Cortona 1986
(P86-1F)



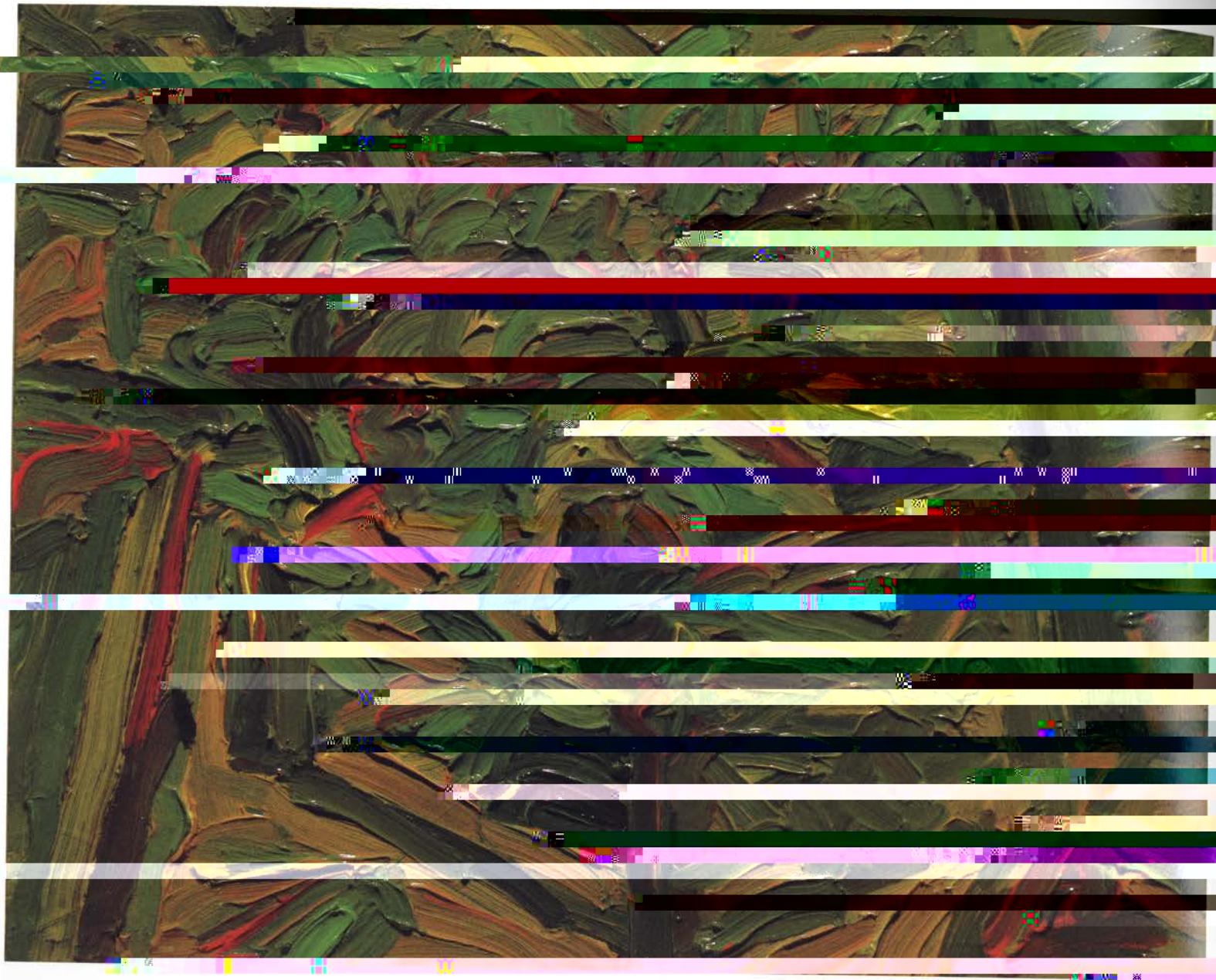
12 Untitled/Cortona, 1987
(P87-8)



13 Untitled/Correspondence
(P88-1)



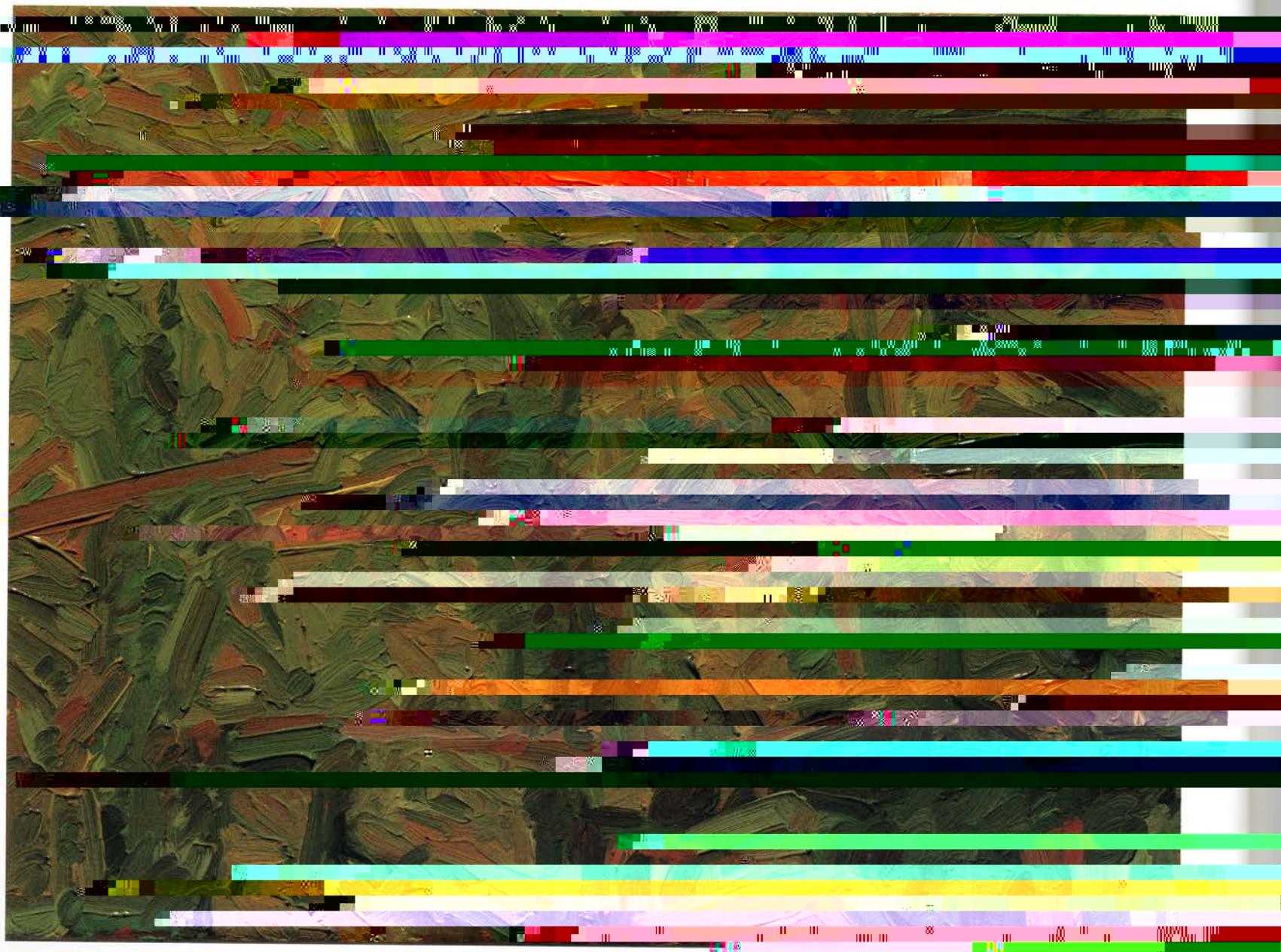
14 Untitled/Cortona, 1022
(P8077), 01



15 Untitled/Cortona
(P89-24)



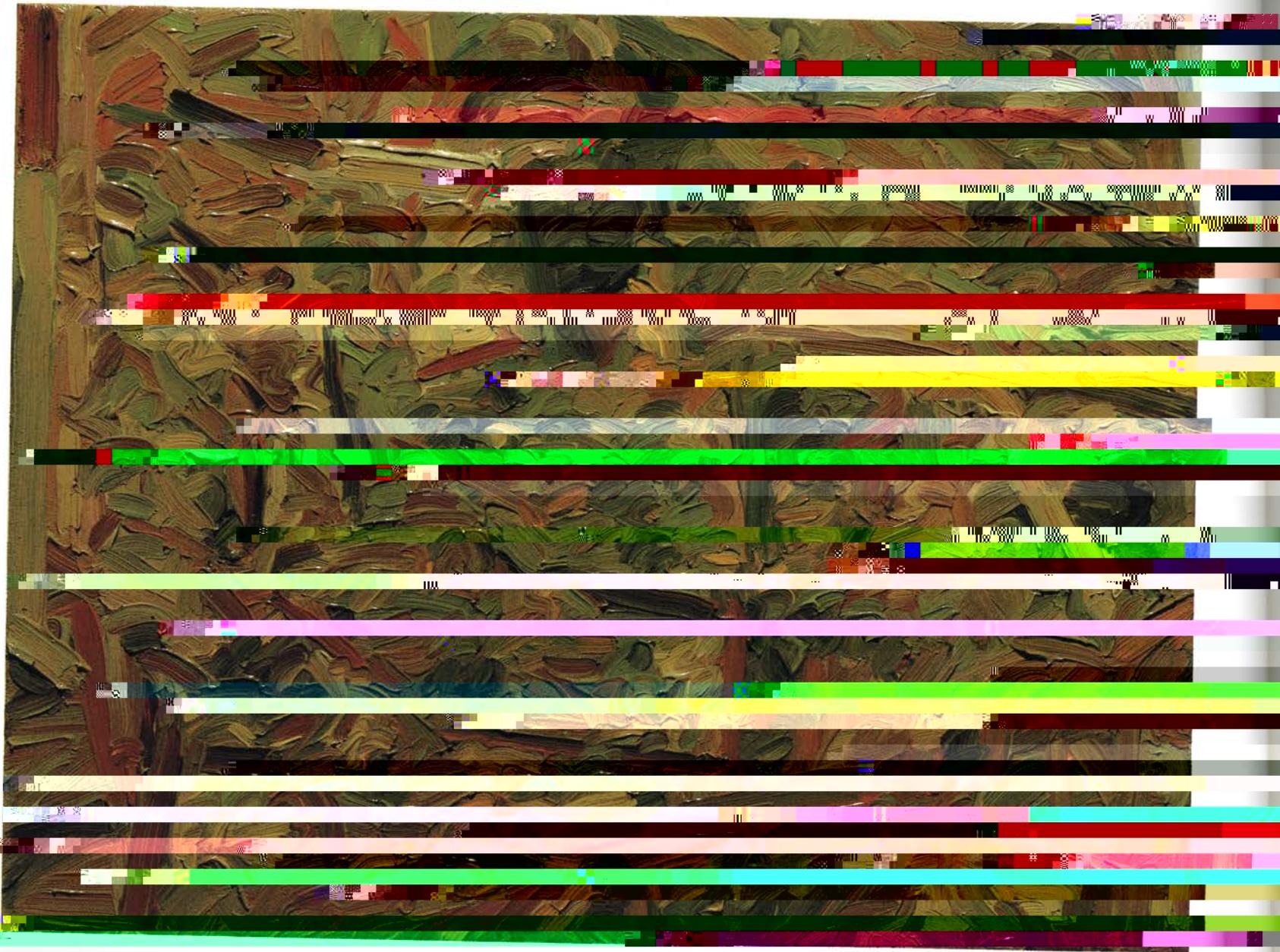
16 Jumia, Corona, 1996
(P90-4)



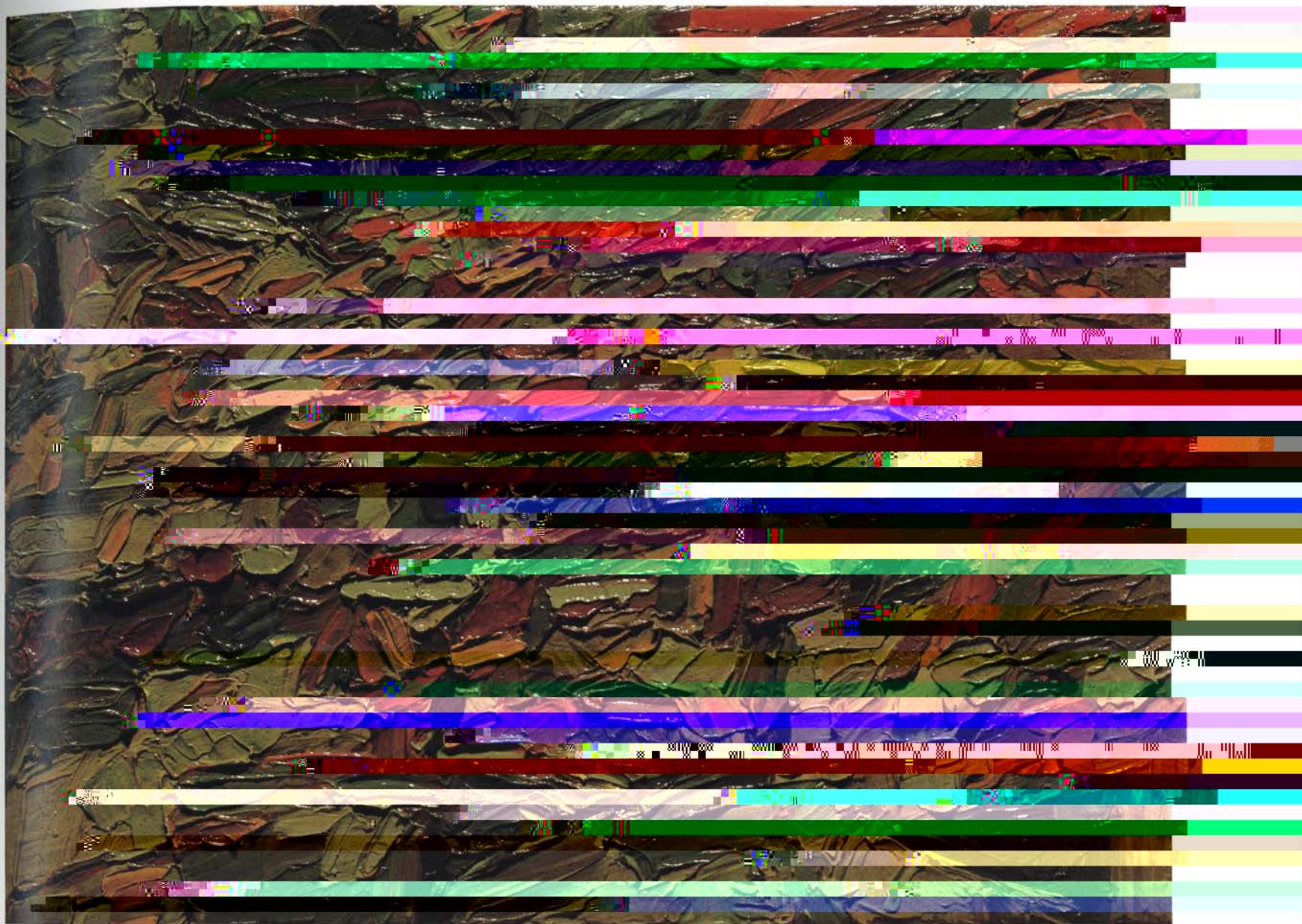
21 Untitled/Cortona, 1990
(P90-13)



23 Unitled/Color
(2008)



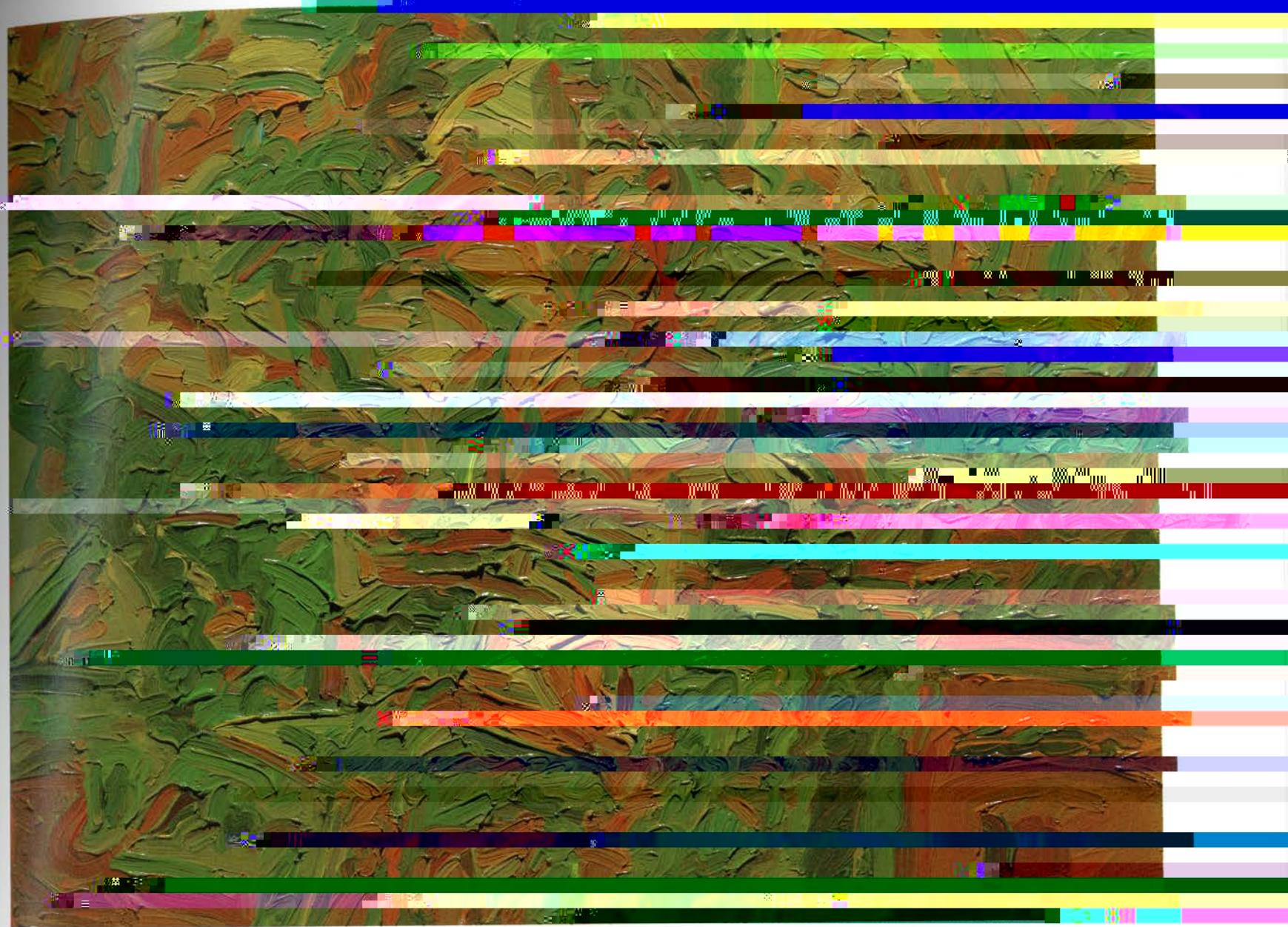
26 Untitled/Cortesia, 1991
(P91-3)



■ 1.Untitled/Cortona, 1991
(P91-32)



33 Untitled/Cortona, 1992
(P92-13)



34 Untitled/Cortona, 1992

© 1992



36 Untitled/Cortona, 1993
(P93-3)



38 Untitled/Cortona, 1993
(P93-10)



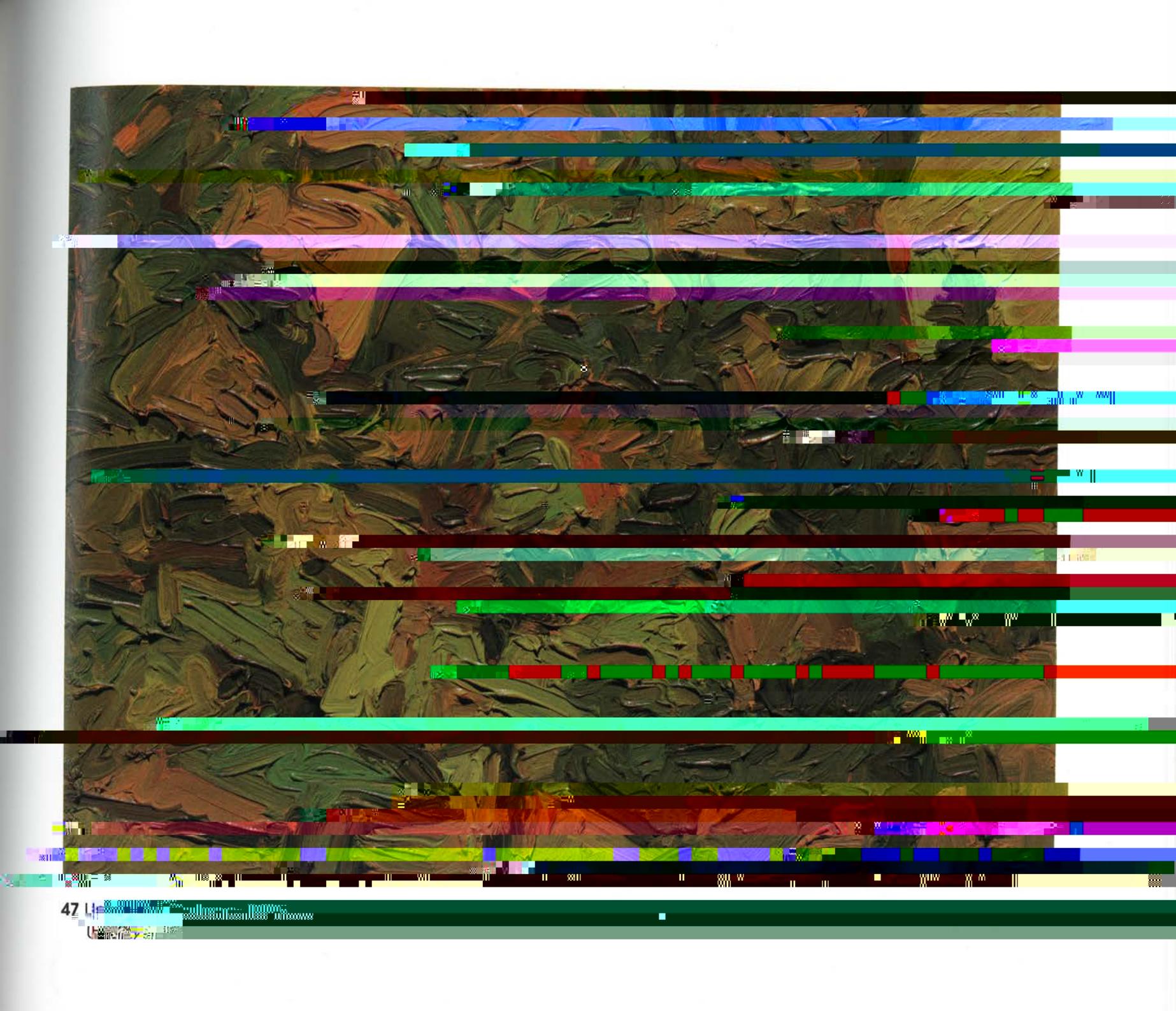
42 Untitled/Cortona, 1993
(P93-24)



45 Untitled/Cortona, 1995
(P95-6)



46 Untitled/Collage 1995
(P95-7)





49 Untitled/Cortona, 1995

(P.S.)

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Note: All the paintings in the exhibition are oil on canvas, with the possible exception of Catalogue Number 23.

Frame size for each is 16 1/2 x 20 1/2 inches. This symbol (<) indicates painting is unframed.

1. Untitled/Cortona 1982< [P82-9]	8. Untitled/Cortona 1985< [P85-18]	15. Untitled/Cortona 1989 [P89-1]	22. Untitled/Cortona 1990< [P90-17]
2. Untitled/Cortona 1983< [P83-7]	9. Untitled/Cortona 1985 [P85-19]	16. Untitled/Cortona 1990< [P90-21]	23. Untitled/Cortona 1990< [P90-22]
3. Untitled/Cortona 1983< [P83-13]	10. Untitled/Cortona 1986< [P86-15]	17. Untitled/Cortona 1990 [P90-5]	24. Untitled/Cortona 1990 [P90-23]
4. Untitled/Cortona 1985 [P85-7]	11. Untitled/Cortona 1987 [P87-7]	18. Untitled/Cortona 1990 [P90-6]	25. Untitled/Cortona 1991 [P91-1]
5. Untitled/Cortona 1985 [P85-9]	12. Untitled/Cortona 1988< [P88-1]	19. Untitled/Cortona 1990 [P90-9]	26. Untitled/Cortona 1991 [P91-2]
6. Untitled/Cortona 1985 [P85-11]	13. Untitled/Cortona 1988< [P88-1]	20. Untitled/Cortona 1990 [P90-11]	27. Untitled/Cortona 1991 [P91-5]
7. Untitled/Cortona 1985 [P85-14]	14. Untitled/Cortona 1989< [P88-19]	21. Untitled/Cortona 1990< [P90-13]	28. Untitled/Cortona 1991 [P91-14]

29. Untitled/Cortona
1991
[P91-15]
30. Untitled/Cortona
1991
[P91-31]
31. Untitled/Cortona
1991<
[P91-32]
32. Untitled/Cortona
1992
[P92-10]
33. Untitled/Cortona
1992<
[P92-14]
34. Untitled/Cortona
1992<
[P92-15]
35. Untitled/Cortona
1993
[P93-1]
36. Untitled/Cortona
1993
[P93-2]
37. Untitled/Cortona
1993<
[P93-10]
38. Untitled/Cortona
1993
[P93-12]
39. Untitled/Cortona
1993
[P93-16]
40. Untitled/Cortona
1993
[P93-22]
41. Untitled/Cortona
1995
[P95-6]
42. Untitled/Cortona
1995
[P95-7]
43. Untitled/Cortona
1995
[P95-8]
44. Untitled/Cortona
1995
[P95-14]
45. Untitled/Cortona
1995<
[P95-16]

RICHARD UPTON

Born: Hartford, Connecticut

Resides: Saugerties, New York

RECENT EXHIBITIONS

1997

Schenkman Art Gallery, Wilkes University, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, "The Turn of the Century: Paintings by Richard Upton"

1992

Cortona, Italy, "The Italian Landscapes of Richard Upton," published in *Il Corintha*

1996

National Academy of Design, New York City, "Collection Update: Recent Acquisitions"

1991

Everson Museum of Art, Syracuse, New York, "Savvy Rhythms," "The Chronicles of Richard Upton"

1990

Conde Nast Collection, New York City, "Paintings"

1990

Krannert Art Museum, Champaign, Illinois, "The Turn of the Century"

1994

Philadelphia Art Alliance, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, "Ireland, Ireland, Images of Nomads"

1990

The Grey Art Gallery and Study Center, New York University, "The Century, the Century"

1993

James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania, "Richard Upton: Ten Years of Italian Landscapes"

1989

Twenty Years of Artists at Cortona, Italy, "Richard Upton"

SELECTED LITERATURE

- American Cultural Center. *Jean-Jacques Gravure Americaine*. Exhibition brochure, Paris, 1971.
- Ancient Art. "Surrogates" (August 1, 1991).
- Boyers, Robert. "The Attack on Value in 20th-Century Art." *The History of European Ideas* 11 (1980).
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- Galerie Mansart. "L'estampe au Musée Denon à la Bibliothèque Nationale." Exhibition checklist, Paris, 1978.
- Gaugh, Harry F. "Richard Upton: New Work, New Prints." Exhibition brochure, Denison University, Granville, Ohio, 1971.
- Georgia Museum of Art. *City on a Hill: Twenty Years of Artists at Cortona*. Exhibition catalogue, Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, 1984.
- History of Art. "Indiana Makers Invitational." Exhibition catalogue, Indiana Museum of Art, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1988.
- Kalamazoo. "Indiana Makers Invitational." Exhibition brochure, Kalamazoo, 1988.
- Ley, Joel Corcos, and George E. H. Huler. "Richard Upton/The Salamovka Series." *Folk Art from Oklahoma City*. Oklahoma City Art Center, Oklahoma City, 1974.
- Minnesota Museum of Arts. "American Drawings USA." Exhibition brochure, Minneapolis, 1969.
- Moore College of Art. "American Drawings." Exhibition brochure, Philadelphia, 1988.
- Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "Upton Retrospective Exhibition." Exhibition catalogue, Elvehjem Art Center, University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1977.
- Musée Denon, "Sept graveurs un sculpteur de médailles." Exhibition brochure, Chalon-sur-Saône, France, 1975.
- Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. "Richard Upton." Exhibition catalogue, Kansas City, Missouri, 1961.
- Schmeckebier, Laurence. "Portfolios by Richard Upton." Exhibition catalogue, Davison Art Center, Yves Le Mouel, Middlebury, Connecticut, 1989.

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Shapiro, David. *Richard Upton: New Drawings, Ireland and Italy.* Exhibition catalogue, forthcoming.
- Silver, Kenneth E. "Richard Upton at the Michigan Art Museum." *Michigan Art Review* 1, no. 1 (1990): 1–10.
- Sozanski, Edward J. "Paintings Demonstrating Landscape in the Landscapes of the Century." Catalogue brochure, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, 1990.
- Sozanski, Edward J. "The Arts and Richard Upton: Ten Years of Italian Landscapes." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (March 11, 1994).
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- Tucker, Paul. *Richard Upton and the Rhetoric of Landscape.* New York, 1991.
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- Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Estampes, Paris
- Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island
- Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York
- Museum of American Art, New Britain, Connecticut
- National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.
- Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts

HONORS AND AWARDS

Academician, National Academy of Design, 1995

Ballinglen Arts Foundation, 1995, 1996

Richard A. Florsheim Foundation, 1991

Artists for Environment Foundation, or ACEA, 1972–1973

Fulbright Grant, Paris, 1964–1965

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First and foremost we would like to thank Richard Opto for his total commitment to this project. He has taken an active role in this exhibition at every stage of its development. Not only has he met with us many times and on several occasions to show and discuss his work, but he has also assisted in financing the project by creating an original lithograph, which was printed by master printer Eileen Fazio at the Kugler's University Center Print and Paper under the direction of Judith V. Bradfsky.

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We thank Fred Licht, Curator at the Cello Kugler Collection, Venice, who managed to find time in his research projects but also kindly provided

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