

THESIS
PANORAMIC SPACE AND LANDSCAPE

Submitted By

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Dept. of Art

In Partial Fulfillment
For the Degree
Master of Fine Arts

Colorado State University
Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring, 1980

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Spring 19 80

WE HEREBY RECOMMENDED THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION

BY JAY W. JENSEN

ENTITLED PANORAMIC SPACE AND LANDSCAPE

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Committee on Graduate Work

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS
PANORAMIC SPACE IN LANDSCAPE

This body of work represents for me as much a personal odyssey as an aesthetic one. I proposed to deal with panoramic landscapes whose sources were western. In the process of working on this theme, I have taken some paths that have led to some unexpected ends. However, I feel these ends evolved gradually and logically and are, in the final analysis, consistent with my original proposal. If I have learned anything during the past three years, it is that no idea an artist may have for a body of work can evolve according to a predetermined course.

I have arranged the show in an order that is roughly chronological. The Landscapes I, II and III were executed during a period when the environment of Colorado was still very new and alien to me. I do not wish to assign any particular mood to these three pieces nor do I wish to establish any link directly to these prints with my emotional state at the time. When I was working these images, it wasn't my intention in infuse them with any particular mood. Yet in retrospect, they are romantic and do contain an element of forboding that perhaps reflects an uneasiness with my new surroundings.

Formally and technically speaking, these prints represent an exploration of intaglio's great potential for creating rich surfaces and textures. The density of black ink, which cannot be duplicated by any other medium, and the embossing action of the press are

characteristics of the art that lend themselves naturally to dramatic, highly textured images. Although I feel that these prints are consistent with my proposal (they are, to me, obviously panoramic) and personal, I recognize that such an attitude toward printmaking was prevalent during the late forties and fifties of this century. Through these prints, I felt I was tagging base with a rich tradition in intaglio printmaking.

The execution of the Landscapes I, II and III required the time consuming process of working the plate with all the tools at the printmaker's disposal: the burin, acid, burnisher and scraper. Really working the plate is an enjoyable activity; it sensitizes you to the metal. However, as a change of pace, I started a small, copper plate where I used line etch exclusively. All the effort was put in the initial drawing of the image through the hard ground. This plate, titled Winter Light on the Foothills, suggested a series of prints that would provide an interesting contrast to the numbered landscapes, yet remain within the scope of my proposal.

Of course, the scale and technique of the Winter Light on the Foothills harkens back to the far older tradition of the earliest etches. But the treatment of light in this print and of the whole series is different from the first series described. Clearly, this series comprised of the Great Ridge, the Great Meadow, Winter Light in addition to the Winter Light on the Foothills does not possess the drama of the earlier one. Light here does not originate from a particular source i.e., the sun or sky. Instead these prints

have an overall illumination that is hopefully suggestive of the brilliance and pervasiveness of western light.

This series of small etchings indicated a coming to terms with the new environment. The attention given to the obvious sublime-romantic qualities of the western landscape has been redirected to more intimate and I believe poetic concerns. Both series are related in that they depict vast sweeps of land. But the radical change of scale and limited technical means of the latter reflects a less alienated emotional response to this area of the world. With the change in my emotional response towards the west came a change in attitude to intaglio techniques. As indicated earlier the ink and the rich surfaces obtainable intaglio had a near hypnotic effect on me. In the execution of these small etchings I was awakened to the delicate, silvery values and textures that are just as unique to the medium as the rich darks. Despite these technical differences, I feel there is a relationship between the two series on the technical level. Whereas the surface of the plates in the Landscapes I, II and III were worked very meticulously, I channeled that meticulous energy to the initial drawing with the needle in the latter series.

After I had completed the small etchings, I felt no desire to return to the method of working and vision of the early large prints, yet desired to work large again. As a slight degression, I would like to mention that I like working small or fairly large. There is an immediate impact in scale at either extreme; the former, not surprisingly, lends intimacy which when coupled with a panorama, as I had done, afforded

what I feel was an interesting juxtaposition; the later, because of sheer size, allows the artist to create a feeling of monumentality quite easily. In an approach similar to the small etchings I wanted to reverse the format size and type of imagery relationship from what you would expect. Hence, the branch motif which occupies the last third of the show. I had chosen a natural object found literally everywhere in the American west and greatly enlarged it. The enlargement of such an object, usually unnoticed by us, permitted me to focus on its' fragile delicacy creating a sort of panorama within a small, hidden world. Desiccated Life, the first print in this new direction, does suggest a panorama in the usual sense, but it is subdued, almost impressionistic.

The Desiccated Life represents for me a turning point in emotional response toward the west as well as an aesthetic change. I found mountains to be too beautiful, too spectacular; they became almost a cliché for the west. It is the plains, the dried remains of dead vegetation and the cold brilliance of western light that intrigues me now. With this last series of prints, I believe, there is a quality of acceptance and harmony with my surroundings.

As evidenced by the print Desiccated Life, mountains played a greatly diminished role within my aesthetic ideas. An attempt to allow the white of the paper i.e., the unworked areas of the plate to evoke a spatial recession was used with only a few delicate marks to direct the eye upwards and backwards. In Sécheresse,

any indication of a horizon line is absent. Space is abstract. The fragile drawing that floats behind the branch in Desiccated Life assumes an equal role with the entanglement and fragmentation of branches in Sécheresse. Thus, the hidden panorama of the branch within a remnant of a vast panorama has been reduced in Secheresse to a panorama purely of the miniscule.

If Desiccated Life can be viewed as a turning point, then Sécheresse marks a culmination. The idea of a panorama has assumed a more personal and rarefied meaning in both prints, but particularly in Sécheresse. I feel that other, related elements in the earlier prints have evolved to more personal dimensions along with the basic theme, especially light. Comparing the numbered landscapes with the small etchings, the treatment of light changed significantly. The Desiccated Life and Sécheresse pursues the effect of an overall illumination, first suggested in the small etchings, even further. Lastly, the use of texture, handled coarsely and densely in the earlier numbered landscapes, evolved to a more delicate and fragile state.

Perhaps in the broadest sense, this last series can be viewed as an interpretation and acceptance of the western landscape by a personality whose emotional ties are rooted in the east. The quality of entanglement in these prints, the focusing of attention on the minute and intimate seem, to me, eastern, yet through their scale and quality of light firmly lodged in the visual experience of western terrain.

Eastern has also taken on some oriental connotations. The vertical format of these two prints indicates an oriental influence in itself. It is more pronounced in the two lithographs, Frémissement and Herbe Folle, where there is only an abstract suggestion of a ground, a typical, oriental device. Even some of the titles strike me, in retrospect, as having oriental origins. Désiccated Life, Sécheresse (dryness) suggests that in death there is life, that in an all encompassing sphere of being, a life and death principle play equal roles. However, I would hasten to add that such philosophical musings were not consciously in my thoughts during the execution of these prints.

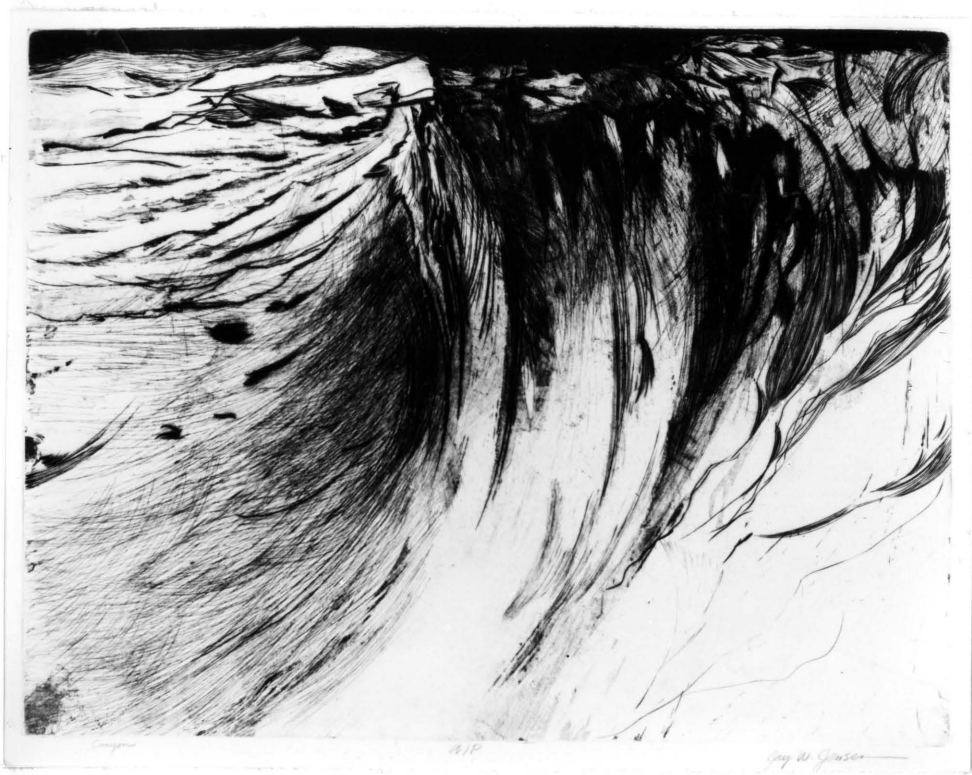
In the opening paragraph of this abstract I stated that during the course of my thesis work I followed some unexpected paths. Although the earlier works fits more neatly within a definition of panorama, I think it is vitally important that the use of such a theme evolve into a very personal direction. And although I feel the later work to be stronger than the earlier series, those early prints help illustrate the development of the panorama as an idea.

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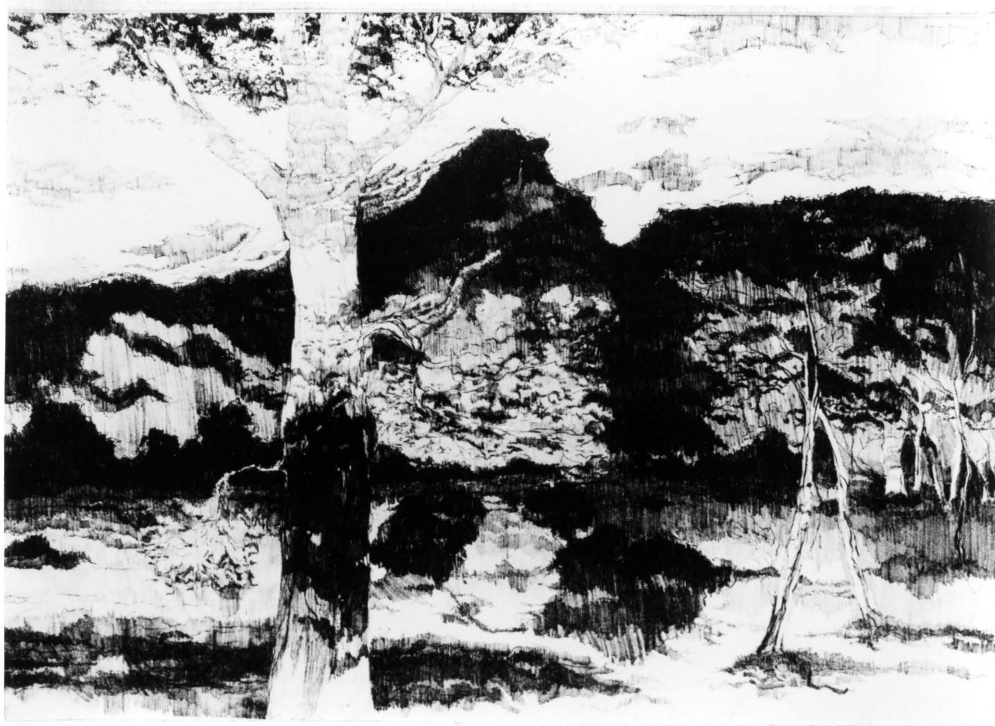
Documentation 1
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DOCUMENTATION

1. Canyon, Intaglio, 23 3/4" X 10 1/2".



2. Untitled Landscape, Lithograph, 19 7/8" X 14 3/4".



3. Landscape I, Intaglio, 23" X 18".



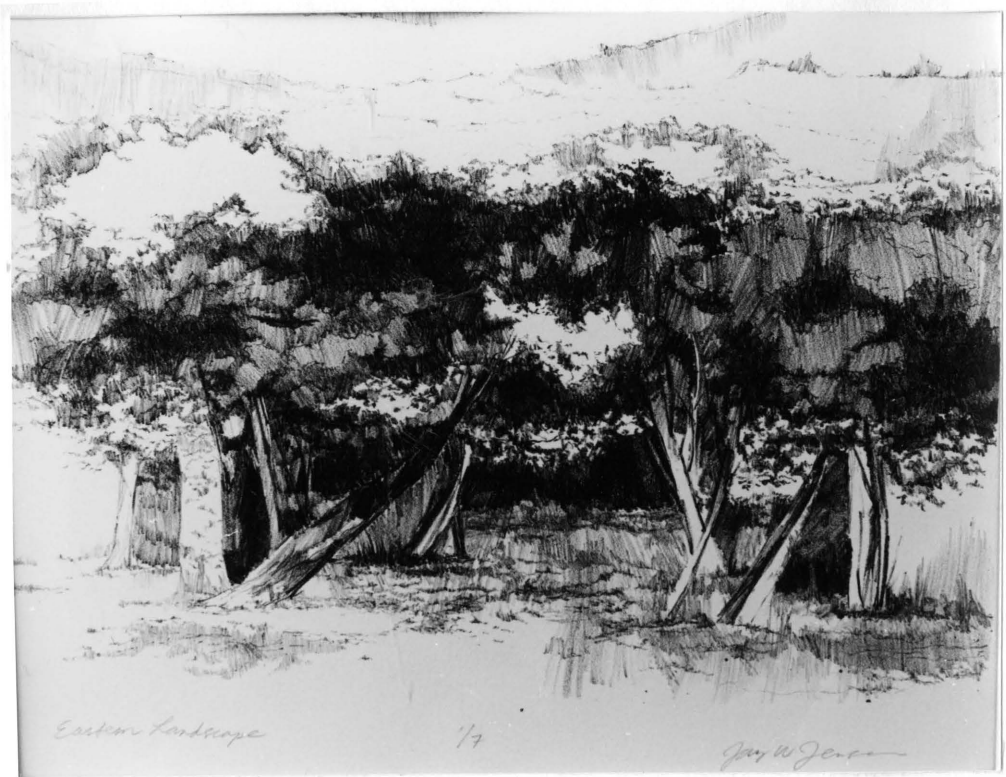
4. Landscape II, Intaglio, 24" X 20".



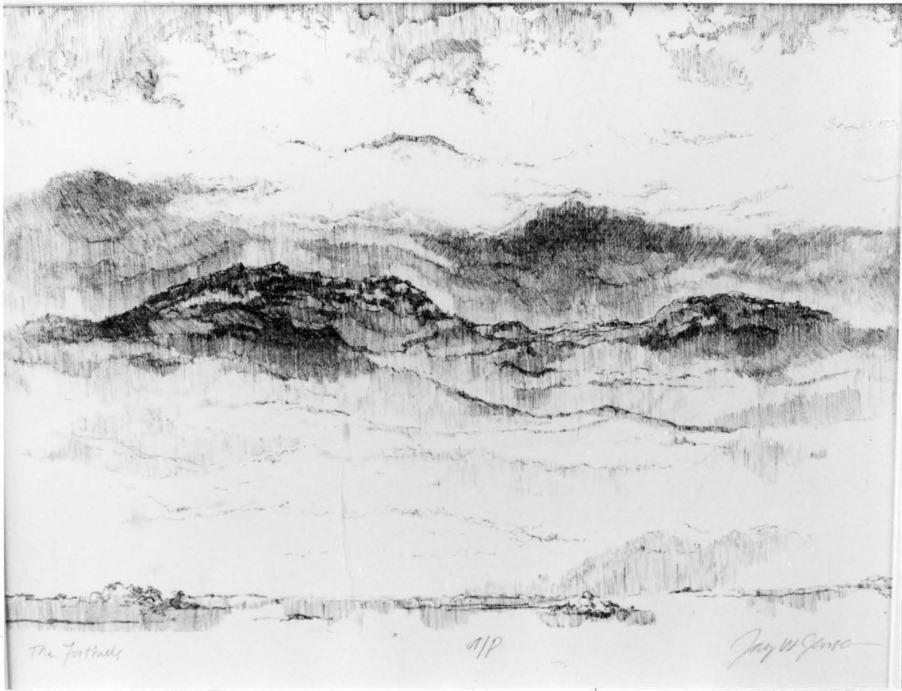
5. Landscape III, Intaglio, 36" X 24".



6. Eastern Landscape, Lithograph, 12" X 9".



7. Foothills, Lithograph, 11 7/8" X 8 3/4".



8. Horsetooth Landscape, Intaglio, 23 3/4" X 18".



9. The Great Ridge, Intalio, 15" X 11 1/4".



10. Winter Light on the Foothills, 11 3/4" x 7 1/2".



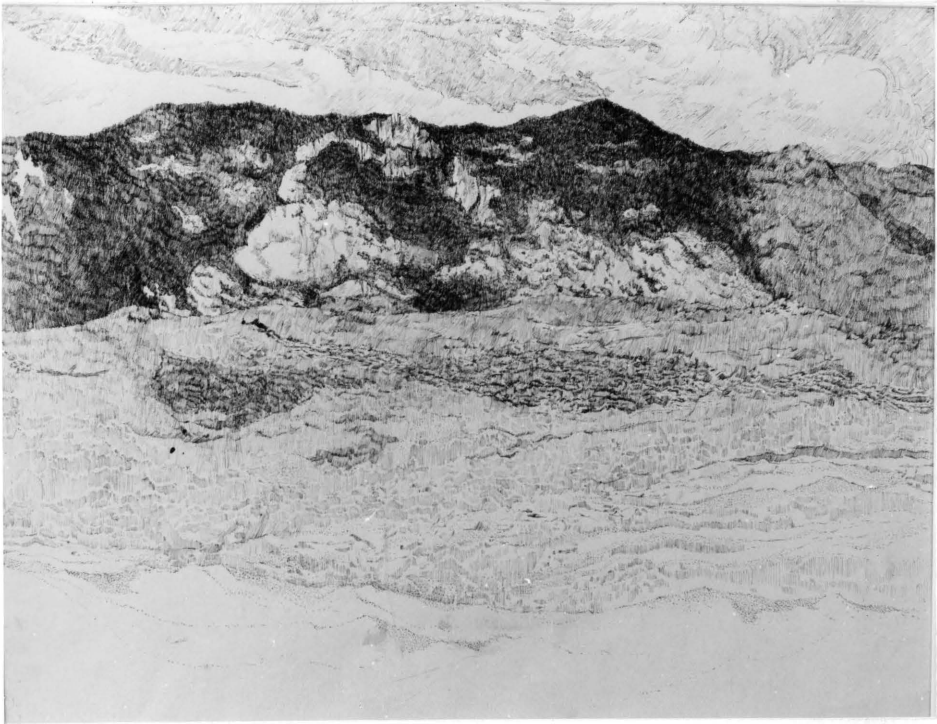
11. Winter Light, Intaglio, 11 3/4" X 9".



12. Great Meadow, Intaglio, 23 3/4" X 6".



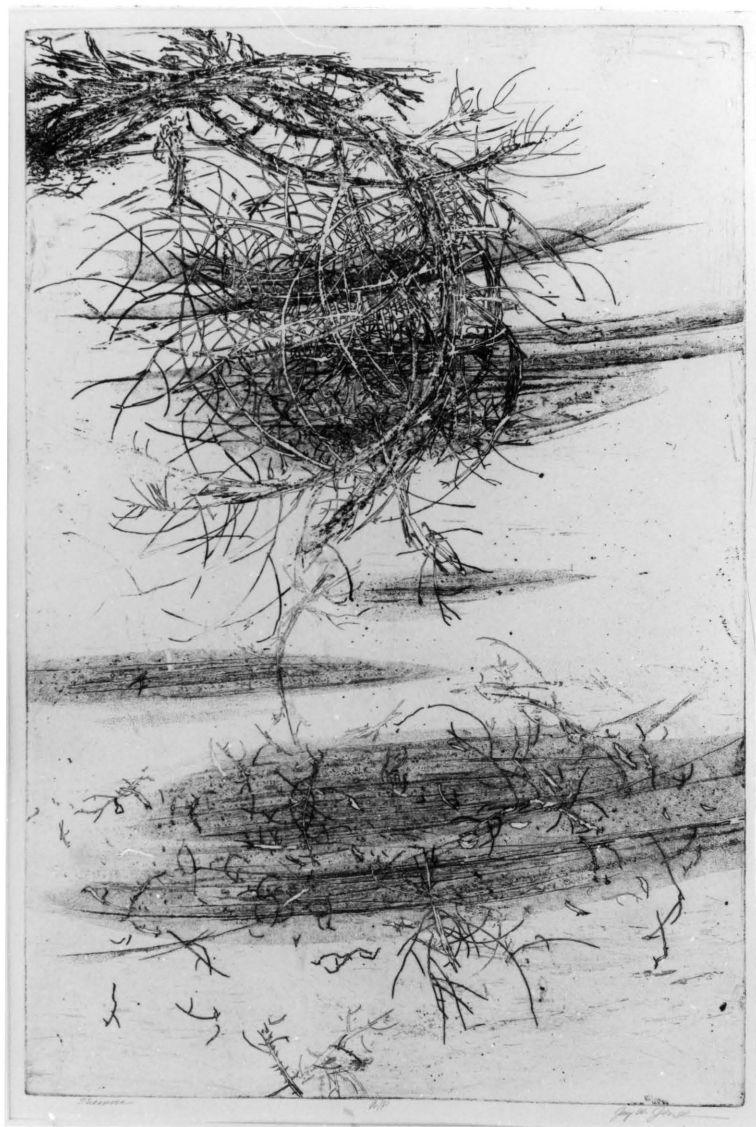
13. Untitled, Pen and Ink, 24" X 21".



14. Desiccated Life, Intaglio, 36" X 24".



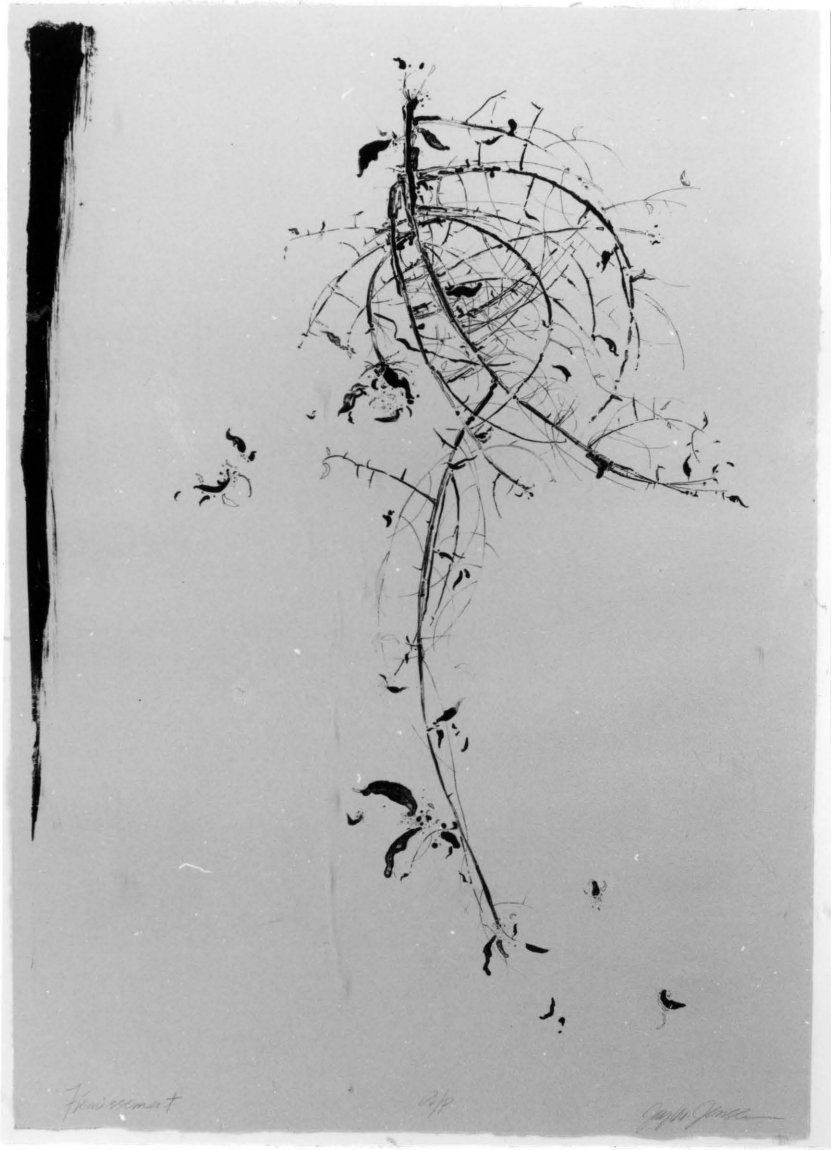
15. Sécheresse, Intaglio, 36" X 24".



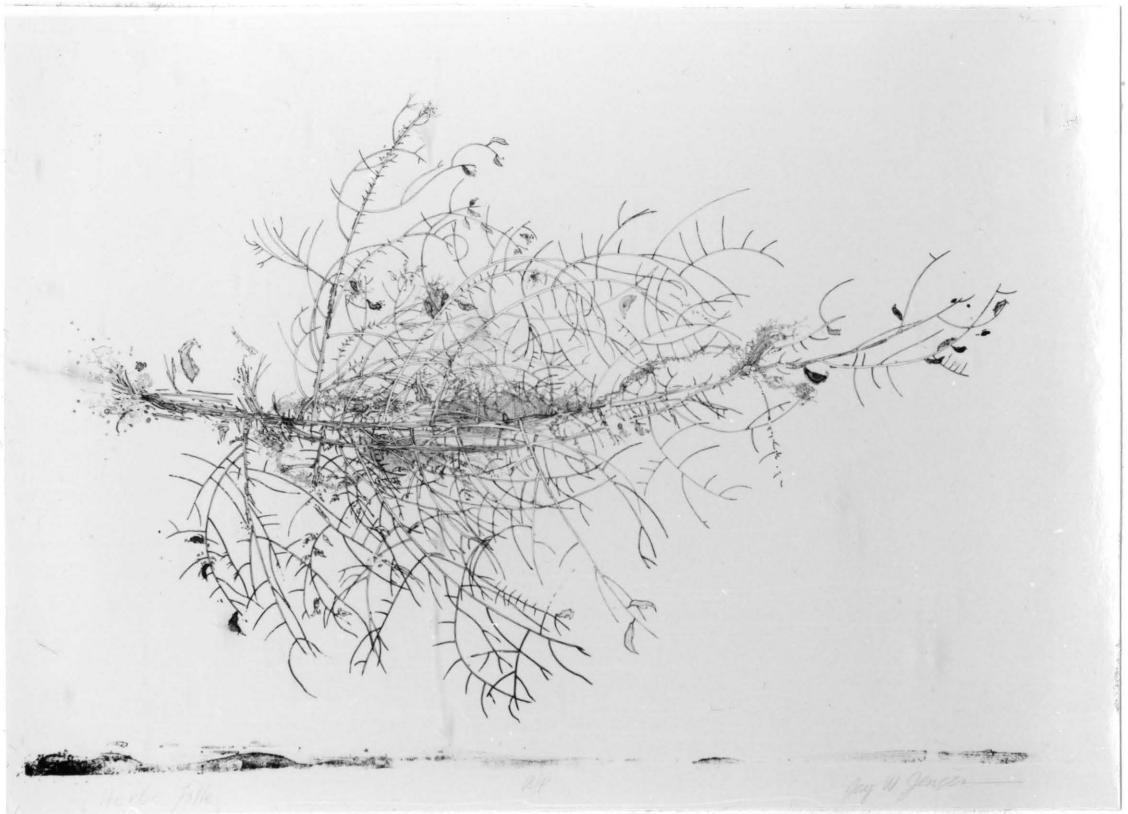
16. Untitled, Pen and Ink, 24" X 21".



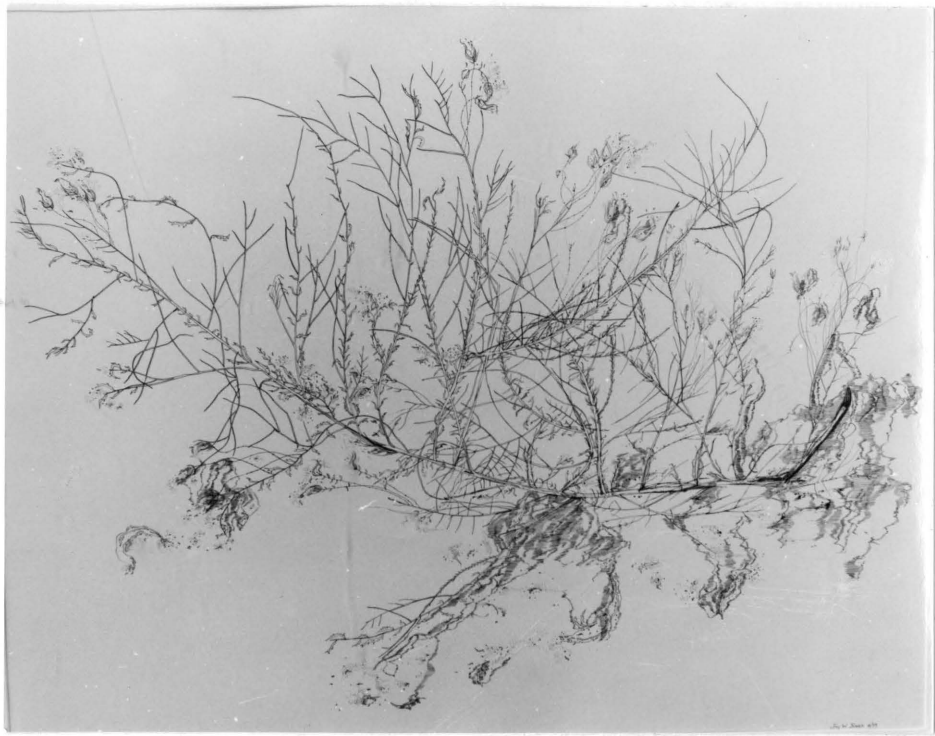
17. Frémissement, Lithograph, 32" X 24".



18. Herbe Folle, Lithograph, 32" X 24".



19. Untitled, Pen and Ink, 29 3/4" X 24 3/4".



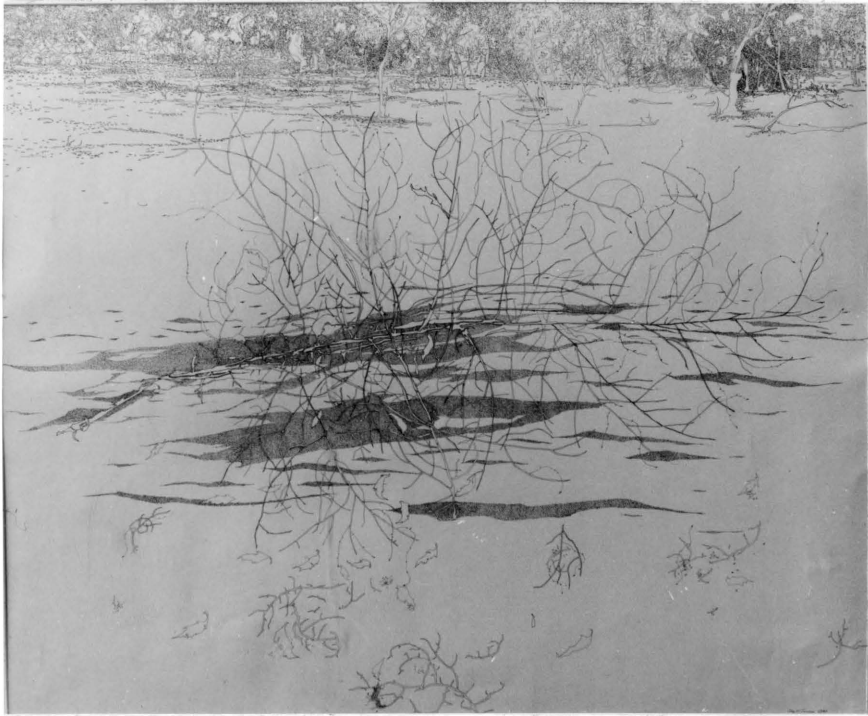
20. Untitled, Oil, 36" X 24".



21. Untitled, Oil, 48" X 36".



22. Untitled, Pen and Ink, 31" X 25".



23. Untitled, Oil, 60" X 48".



APPENDIX

PANORAMIC LANDSCAPE AND SPACE

I propose my thesis exhibition to be an exploration of the panorama using the western terrain as the source for my ideas. For anyone who has spent his life in the east, the land forms and vast space of the west appear completely alien. Nowhere in the east can one experience the enormity of the earth that is a daily occurrence of life in the west.

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Spring, 1979