

Statement 1979

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In 1954, after having studied in Italy, I returned to America, from the landscape of Italy to that of the hill country of central Texas. The remarkable light of Italy and that of Texas, so different yet each so mystical, produced within me a sense for precision and a thirst for detail.

The landscape of Texas is sparse; objects take on a clarity and a remoteness.

There is a magic moment in the fall after weeks of intense dry heat when the Blue Northern comes down across the northern plains. Temperatures drop fifty degrees within minutes and the air becomes cool and crystal clear; the shadows deepen. It is also a time when you can run after armadillos.

Now, armadillos appear to be hard, but in fact they are soft and they shed tears when you catch them by the tail; so you let them go.

There are a lot of things you let go of in Texas. You let go of old visions and old romances; you let go of city-states and northern broodings. But, in letting go, other things and other moods are captured, such as the meaning of isolated objects, of void spaces. You capture the horizontal and you capture a flatness, a flatness which impregnates your thoughts and fills you with an anticipation—an anticipation of the solemnity of detail and of construction.

You capture the knowledge that the slightest degree in change of temperature affects the softness and the hardness of lead and consequently the pressure and weight to be applied to a pencil and to a sheet of paper. Texas is for pruning and for cutting; and for polishing.

Now, to precisely polish internal thoughts an atmosphere of a particular kind is needed.

In my own case I was fortunate because I was with spirited students, solid friends, a special wife; and a specific landscape.

We caught the armadillo, but we let him go.