



Autumn's Lament & License



Depicting the vivid hues of the season without descending into showiness is a matter of design.

BY JERRY N. WEISS

LEFT: Clark Greenwood Voorhees, one of the founders of the Old Lyme Artists' Colony in Connecticut, is the grandfather of Janet Fish. Voorhees discovered the summer resort that became an artists' colony while bicycling. ***Arrive at Sunny Ridge*** (date; oil on canvas, 28x36) shows the effect of full sunlight on autumn foliage.

Photograph by Nancy Pinney; courtesy of The Cooley Gallery

AUTUMN SEEMS DESIGNED for painters who follow nature's dictates but also like to indulge a sweet tooth for exuberant color. It's then, the artist Wolf Kahn wrote, that "no one can quarrel with one's use of orange, since it is sanctioned by actual occurrence in nature" The colors offered by an American autumn—alongside orange are vivid yellow, red, green and violet—strike notes that can be either gaudy or stunning. It's up to the painter to select the right chords.

The season moves quickly, its palette transformed each day. There is none of the stagnant forgiveness of July; to begin a landscape in mid-October and return a week later means starting over with a new canvas.

Around here (New England) autumn peaks about two-thirds of the way through October, though the particulars, depending upon rainfall and temperature, are different each year. What hasn't changed is our interest in the display. In 1894 a writer for *Scribner's Magazine* noted the tourist traffic to Massachusetts, prompted by the fall colors: "... one of the recognized subjects of conversation is the degree of brilliancy that the leaves may have obtained in any particular year, and one says that the coloring is 'poor this year' or 'good this year,' as one might speak of a crop or vintage."

All of which brings us to the current topic: the business of painting a spectacular subject, without the painting itself suffering the unfor-

RIGHT TOP: By seeing trees as a series of shapes unified by common values, I was able to focus on the silhouettes of foliage against the sky in *Hickory At Ashlawn Farms* (date; oil on canvas, 18x24) by Jerry N. Weiss.

Photograph by Nancy Pinney



RIGHT BOTTOM: This painting's subject is the same grove of trees that comprise the foreground in *Hickory at Ashlawn Farms*, here isolated for an increased sense of grandeur in *October* (date; oil on canvas, 30x48) by Jerry N. Weiss.

Photograph by Nancy Pinney

