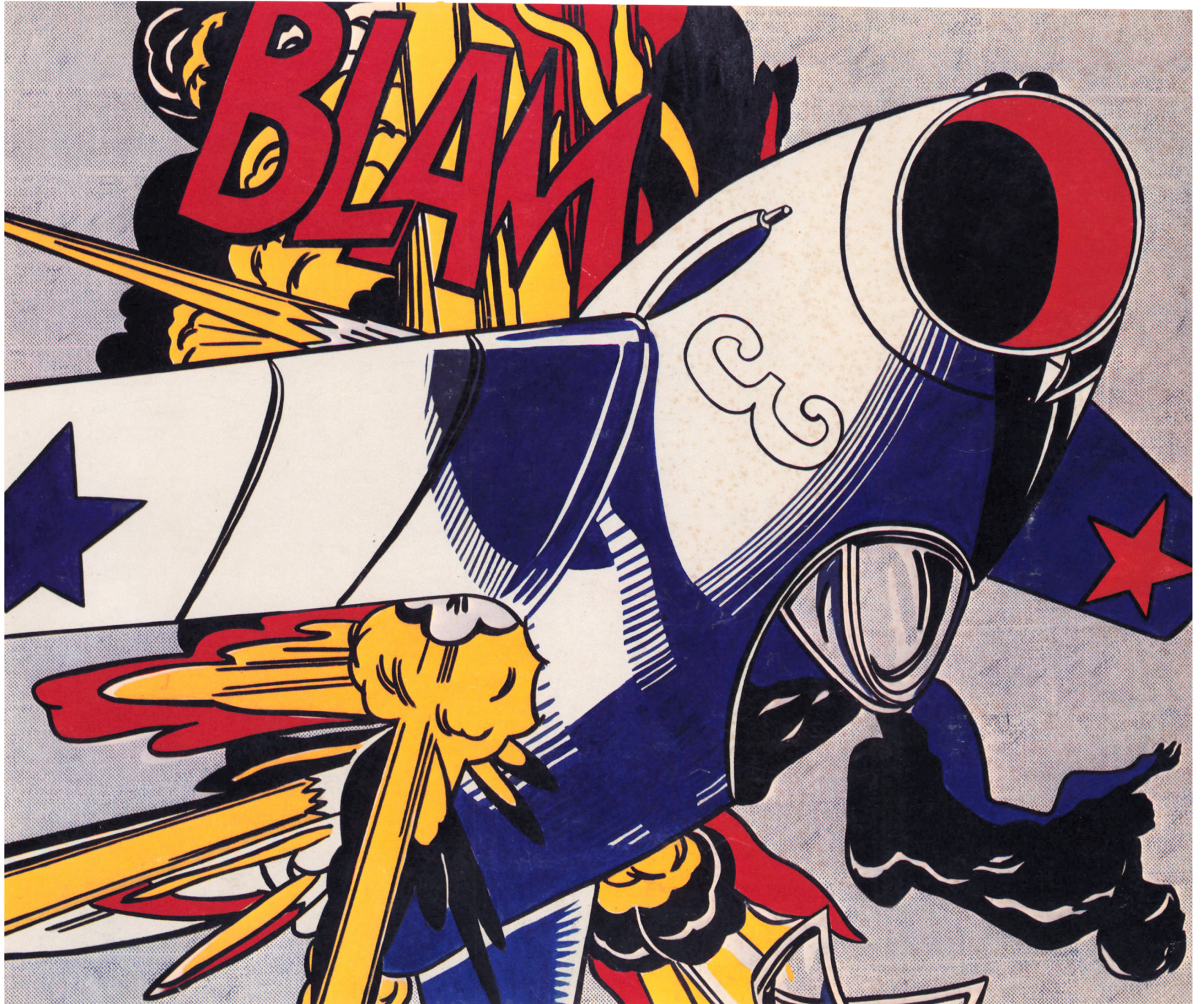


Richard
Brown
Baker
Collects!



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Richard Brown Baker Collects!

**A selection of contemporary art
from the Richard Brown Baker Collection**

April 24–June 22, 1975
Yale University Art Gallery
New Haven, Connecticut

Cover: Roy Lichtenstein, *Blam*, 1962

Frontispiece: Richard Brown Baker
at the Yale University Art Gallery,
November, 1974
Photograph by William B. Carter

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Introduction

Richard Brown Baker is an extraordinary collector. He has great energy and taste; he is courageous and confident, proud of his accomplishments yet modest about his abilities. He collects for all of the right reasons — for the challenge, for the visual pleasure, for the discipline of doing something well — and for none of the wrong ones. His constant aim is “to buy the work of the living, the young and unestablished,” while his method is to “get there first and decide promptly.”

Richard has been doing both of these things with marked success since 1955, when he first became a serious collector of contemporary art. By September 1974, he had bought nine hundred and eight objects, and he still possesses virtually all of these. Thus, one of his strongest qualities is tenacity, demonstrable in many ways, and shown here particularly clearly: once he makes his decision, he sticks by it. He enjoys having “done well,” having bought some of the major masters of contemporary art at the right time, when there were few buyers; but he also retains his loyalty to works of art which today’s critic quickly passes by, and he knows that another generation (or even another group of students) may well find different successes and different failures among his objects.

A self-styled “New England Puritan” who grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, Baker graduated from Yale College in the class of 1935 (this exhibition thus celebrating his fortieth reunion), and like so many products of Yale he can trace his acquisitive urge to an undergraduate interest in English and in book-collecting. After Yale, he took a degree in international affairs at Oxford and became successively newspaperman, secretary to the American Ambassador in Madrid, research analyst in the Office of Strategic Services and then the State Department. Retiring from the bureaucratic life, he moved to New York in the early fifties and began collecting. Yet his clear-cut identity as a collector is of relatively recent vintage: as late as 1960 he listed himself as an “abstract painter” in his Yale *Quarter Century Record*, and indeed he had studied seriously at the Art Students League with Morris Kantor and then with Hans Hofmann at Provincetown.

He has described his occupation as “idiosyncratic wants systematically met,” and this is accurate. Every acquisition is carefully recorded in his Accession List, beginning with #1.1941.1, an Adolf Dehn watercolor, and coming up to #908.1974.71, a drawing by Michael Robbins (the number showing that this was the nine hundred and eighth addition to the collection, and the seventy-first in 1974). In addition, the story of many acquisitions — his reasoning, his excitement, his doubts — is chronicled in the collector’s Diaries for each year.

These records are invaluable for the historian who studies the taste of the collector, the rise and fall of galleries, or the swift changes in the art market. Yet they do not make it any easier to select an exhibition from the Baker Collection, for in fact they prove that any number of exhibitions could be drawn from those holdings. In the early stages of our course, many possibilities were discussed and eventually rejected: we could have shown various movements in depth, from abstract expressionism or color abstraction to realism or pop; we could have concentrated on prints or drawings, or limited ourselves to acquisitions of the last five years, or the first five. In the end, we agreed simply to select an exhibition based on excellence, Baker’s own criterion. Nationality is irrelevant in modern art (though most of the objects selected were created in or near New York), and so it was not a factor in our choice. Where possible, we emulate the collector’s own practice by including several examples by a given artist (as with Hofmann, Lichtenstein, Dine, and so on). The works of art stand for themselves: like the collector, we sought the best, and — following his lead again — we let our eyes wander over every object, of every date and style, holding no brief for any single, exclusive view of contemporary art. How else to reflect the taste of a collector who appreciates the elegant tones of a Ben Nicholson, the crashing power of a Franz Kline, the original vision of a Roy Lichtenstein, the subtle strength of an Agnes Martin?

This has been a course in museum work as well as in contemporary art, and my own role was more that of moderator than instructor. The class decided on the selection (in this one case violating Baker's own abhorrence of acquisition by committee); we tried to allow for the idiosyncratic by giving each member the right to choose one object without any vote, no matter how violent the objection of the others. The choice — of sixty objects — which I think is excellent — is that of the students: the opinions of both the collector and the teacher were considered politely, but often rejected — and there are a great many fine works of art which await another occasion to be shown at Yale!

The design and make-up of the catalogue were again decided by the class, and it was agreed to treat the objects in two different ways: some are considered in thematic essays, while others are treated in catalogue entries of several hundred words. The essays demonstrate a variety of critical methods: Susan Casteras' piece, for example, deals in depth with one painting we all admire, Jackson Pollock's *Arabesque*, while Molly Nesbit has considered several works by Roy Lichtenstein. Carol Ockman and John Klein write about two major movements, abstract expressionism and pop art, from the collector's point of view, while Leo Rubinien has applied the eye of the photographer to recent photo-realist painting. Finally, Ken Silver and Mark Savitt have written provocative essays, the former adopting something of the Greenberg-Fried methodology to take a new view of color field painting, while the latter presents a highly original thesis on the contemporary artist as shaman figure, or witch doctor, in our society.

In contrast, the shorter catalogue entries focus directly and visually on individual objects. Each writer chose the pieces that he or she wanted to treat, and chose the method as well. We agreed to minimize scholarly baggage (extensive biographies or exhibition histories) in favor of *looking hard* and trying to place each object in context of its time and the artist's oeuvre — a kind of succinct, analytic writing no less demanding than the creation of more speculative essays.

Almost uniquely among collectors, Richard Brown Baker does not go back to make up for the things he has failed to collect; thus we have again tried to suggest his own philosophy by omitting major painters of whom he owns only minor examples (de Kooning or Frankenthaler, for example). The keynote to Richard Brown Baker's collection is its honesty: it is forthright, committed, and it takes chances. In our catalogue, we have tried to follow the collector's lead.

Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr.
Curator of American Painting and Sculpture

Acknowledgments

This exhibition is the result of a course taken in the fall of 1974 by the twelve students whose names are listed on page twelve; this group included four Yale undergraduates, seven graduate students in the history of art, and one graduate student in photography. All performed with skill and dedication; they worked well together, and thus our project was a rewarding experience from beginning to end.

What made our joint effort totally pleasurable, of course, was the extraordinary cooperation of Richard Brown Baker. His good humor never flagged during the countless visits to his New York apartment, when we invaded his privacy, ransacked his collection, and searched his records and his memory. To this great collector and great gentleman we owe our most profound thanks.

We are indebted to Andrew C. Ritchie, Director Emeritus, whose perspicacity led him to show part of the Baker collection at Yale in 1963, thus laying the groundwork for a close relationship between the collector and this museum. Moreover, Alan Shestack, the Director, has encouraged the planning of this exhibition from its earliest stages; we are all grateful for his support and his trust.

Many artists, dealers, and critics have kindly responded to our inquiries. We acknowledge particularly the aid of Brooke Alexander, Lawrence Alloway, Leo Castelli, André Emmerich, Henry Geldzahler, David Herbert, Sidney Janis, Ivan Karp, Betty Parsons, Lee Krasner Pollock and the Marlborough Gallery, and Barbara Toll.

This undertaking could only have succeeded with the skillful help of many people at Yale. We are indebted particularly to Fernande Ross, Registrar, and Gale R. Thompson, Assistant Registrar; to Robert Soule, Superintendent, and his staff; to John Caldwell for editing and Stephen Glassman for installation design; to Galina Gorokhoff, Denise D'Avella, and particularly to Joseph Szaszfai, who is responsible for all of the photographs in the catalogue. Susan Casteras, Assistant to the Director, has been indispensable in overseeing every aspect of the project. Finally, we thank Thomas Strong and Fenna Bouhuys, who designed the catalogue, and Greer Allen, University Printer, who guided its production.

T.E.S., Jr.

Catalogue of the Exhibition

Baeder, John (b. 1938) Fig. 40
Highway Diner 1973
 Oil on Canvas, 42½" x 66½"
 Signed on stretcher:
 "Highway Diner/John Baeder Jan. 1973"
 Provenance: Hundred Acres Gallery, New York, March 1973

Beal, Jack (b. 1931) Fig. 42
Nude on Chaise Longue 1968
 Oil on canvas, 60" x 66"
 Signed upper right: "Jack Beal"
 Provenance: Allan Frumkin Gallery, New York,
 May 1968

Bechtle, Robert (b. 1932) Fig. 41
'64 Valiant 1971
 Oil on canvas, 48" x 69"
 Signed lower right: "R B 71"
 Provenance: O. K. Harris Gallery, New York,
 December 1971

Blomquist, Gunilla (b. 1943) Fig. 45
Hammarberg, Jorgen (b. 1941)
Wrench 1973
 Graphite on paper, 40" x 28¼"
 Signed and dated on bottom:
 "Gunilla Blomquist Jorgen Hammarberg 1973"
 Provenance: Hundred Acres Gallery, New York, March 1974

Brainard, Joe (b. 1942) Fig. 33
Page of Saints II 1966
 Paper collage with gouache, 20½" x 15"
 Provenance: Landau-Alan Gallery, New York, April 1969

Brainard, Joe (b. 1942) Fig. 34
Pansies III 1969
 Paper collage with watercolor and ink, 14" x 11"
 Provenance: Landau-Alan Gallery, New York, March 1969

Calder, Alexander (b. 1898) Fig. 11
A Mobile with Stabile Tail 1947
 Painted steel, 28" high x 52" maximum horizontal extension
 Signed: "CA"
 Provenance: David Herbert Gallery, New York, May 1960

Cottingham, Robert (b. 1935) Fig. 38
Facade 1970
 Oil on canvas, 78" x 78"
 Provenance: O. K. Harris Gallery, September 1970

Davis, Gene (b. 1920) Fig. 49
Pale Susan 1966
 Acrylic on canvas, 45" x 45"
 Inscribed on reverse: "Pale Susan/Gene Davis/1966";
 also "Powder Puff Rumble"
 Provenance: Fischbach Gallery, New York, October 1967

Diebenkorn, Richard (b. 1922) Fig. 43
Woman in Chaise 1965
 Crayon and gouache on paper, 17" x 12½"
 Signed and dated lower left: "RD 65"
 Provenance: Poindexter Gallery, New York, December 1968

Dine, Jim (b. 1935) Fig. 16
Bronté 1959
 Gouache on paper, diameter 14½"
 Provenance: Purchased from the artist, June 1960

Dine, Jim (b. 1935) Fig. 15
Green Lips 1961
 Oil on canvas, 57" diameter
 Inscribed on reverse: "Jim Dine/1961/Green Lips"
 Provenance: Purchased from the artist, April 1961

Dine, Jim (b. 1935) Fig. 28
Red Robe #2 1964
 Oil and collage on canvas, 84" x 60"
 Provenance: Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, November 1964

Dine, Jim (b. 1935) Fig. 17
Slanted Face 1959
 Gouache on paper, 18½" x 17¾"
 Signed lower left: "Jim Dine"
 Provenance: Purchased from the artist, June 1960

di Suvero, Mark (b. 1933) Fig. 12
Untitled 1963
 Welded steel, 18½" x 15"
 Provenance: Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York, January 1971
 (through the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design,
 "Art for Your Collection")

Dubuffet, Jean (b. 1901) Fig. 5
Paysage d'hiver avec Deux Chiens 1954
 Oil on canvas, 35" x 45½"
 Signed upper right: "J. Dubuffet, 54"
 Provenance: Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York, December 1955

Dubuffet, Jean (b. 1901) Fig. 6
Untitled Drawing 1960
 Ink and wash on paper, 11¼" x 9¼"
 Signed upper left: "J. D. juin 60"
 Provenance: Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York, July 1960

Goings, Ralph (b. 1928) Fig. 37
Olympia Truck 1972
 Watercolor, 9" x 12½"
 Signed lower right: "Ralph Goings 72"
 and lower left: "Olympia Truck"
 Provenance: O. K. Harris Gallery, New York, June 1972

Hockney, David (b. 1937) Fig. 44
Peter Resting with Clothes On - St. Tropez 1969
 Pen and ink on paper, 14" x 17"
 Inscribed and signed bottom left:
 "Peter St. Tropez/DH/1969"
 Provenance: André Emmerich Gallery, New York, April 1969

Hofmann, Hans (1880-1966) Fig. 8
Fortissimo 1956
 Oil on canvas, 60" x 52"
 Signed lower right: "hans hofmann"
 Provenance: Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York, January 1957

Hofmann, Hans (1880–1966) Fig. 9
The Pond 1958
 Oil on canvas, 40" x 50"
 Signed and dated lower right: "hans hofmann 58"
 Provenance: Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York, April 1959

Hofmann, Hans (1880–1966) Fig. 7
Provincetown 1942
 India ink on paper, 14" x 17"
 Signed and dated lower right: "H H UI 24 42"
 Provenance: Gift of the artist to
 Richard Brown Baker, April 1960

Indiana, Robert (b. 1928) Fig. 23
The American Eat 1962
 Frottage in conté crayon, 25" x 19"
 Inscribed across bottom: "The American Eat
 Robert Indiana 1962 February 1962"
 Provenance: Purchased from the artist, February 1962

Jiminez, Luis (b. 1940) Fig. 35
Cyclist 1969
 Fiberglass and epoxy, 47" high x 78" long
 Provenance: James Graham & Sons Gallery, New York,
 March 1969

Johns, Jasper (b. 1930) Fig. 14
The Small Figure 3 1960
 Oil on canvas, 9-1/16" x 6 1/8"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, March 1960

Kline, Franz (1910–1962) Fig. 10
Wanamaker Block 1955
 Oil on canvas, 78 1/2" x 71"
 Provenance: Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, March 1956

Lichtenstein, Roy (b. 1923) Fig. 21
Blam 1962
 Oil on canvas, 68" x 80"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, January 1962

Lichtenstein, Roy (b. 1923) Fig. 22
Jet Pilot 1962
 Pencil and frottage, 22" x 23 3/8"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, May 1963

Lichtenstein, Roy (b. 1923) Fig. 19
Thinking of Him 1963
 Magna on canvas, 68" x 68"
 Signed on verso.
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, December 1963

Lichtenstein, Roy (b. 1923) Fig. 20
Washing Machine 1961
 Oil on canvas, 56 1/2" x 68 1/2"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, November 1961

Louis, Morris (1912–1962) Fig. 53
Illumination 1962
 Plastic paint on canvas, 83" x 12"
 Provenance: André Emmerich Gallery, New York, March 1963

Marca-Relli, Conrad (b. 1913) Fig. 4
The Vestibule 1954
 Canvas collage on canvas mounted on board, 49 1/8" x 41 1/8"
 Signed on verso: "Marca Relli"
 Provenance: Stable Gallery, New York, November 1956

Martin, Agnes (b. 1911) Fig. 59
Journey I 1966
 Ink on paper 8 7/8" x 8 7/8"
 Provenance: Robert Elkon Gallery, New York, December 1966

Morris, Robert (b. 1931) Fig. 57
Slab with Ruler 1964
 Wood and lead, 22" x 13 1/4"
 Signed on verso: "R. MORRIS/1964"
 Provenance: Green Gallery, New York, February 1964

Motherwell, Robert (b. 1915) Fig. 2
Blue with China Ink—Homage to John Cage 1946
 Painting and collage, 40" x 31"
 Provenance: Samuel Kootz Gallery, New York, April 1955

Nevelson, Louise (b. 1899) Fig. 27
Boxed Being 1957
 Wood painted black, 35" x 7 1/2" x 4"
 Inscribed (scratched) on top: "Nevelson"
 Provenance: Grand Central Moderns, New York, March 1958

Nicholson, Ben (b. 1894) Fig. 3
Nov. 1955 (Deep Persian Lilac) 1955
 Oil on canvas, 29 1/2" x 26 1/2"
 Inscribed on overlap of canvas: "Ben Nicholson/Nov 55
 (Deep Persian Lilac)"
 Provenance: Durlacher Brothers Gallery, New York,
 September 1956

Noland, Kenneth (b. 1924) Fig. 52
*Mercury (Ray Parker's Green in the Shadow
 of Red)* 1963
 Acrylic resin paint on canvas, 69 3/4" x 69 3/4"
 Signed on verso: Ray Parker's/Green in the
 Shadow of Red/1963/Mercury"
 Provenance: André Emmerich Gallery, New York,
 April 1964; Gift of Richard Brown Baker to
 the Yale University Art Gallery, 1974

Noland, Kenneth (b. 1924) Fig. 47
Rhyme 1960
 Signed on verso: "Kenneth Noland/Rhyme/1960"
 Plastic paint on canvas, 84" x 84"
 Provenance: André Emmerich Gallery, New York, March 1961

Novros, David (b. 1941) Fig. 51
No Title #4 1973
 Oil on canvas, 3 panels 84" x 115 1/2" overall
 Provenance: Bykert Gallery, New York, April 1973

Olitski, Jules (b. 1922) Fig. 48
Queen of Sheba Breast 1963
 Acrylic on canvas, 81½" x 78"
 Provenance: Poindexter Gallery, New York, October 1963

Pollock, Jackson (1912–1956) Fig. 1
Arabesque 1948
 Oil on canvas, 37¼" x 117¼"
 Signed bottom center: "Jackson Pollock"
 Provenance: Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, December 1955

Poons, Larry (b. 1937) Fig. 50
Untitled 1974
 Acrylic on canvas, 78" x 50½"
 Signed on verso: "L. Poons 1974"
 Provenance: Knoedler Contemporary Art, New York, October 1974

Rauschenberg, Robert (b. 1925) Fig. 13
Interior 2 1958
 Mixed media on two canvases, 40" x 24"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, March 1960

Rosenquist, James (b. 1933) Fig. 24
Sitting Around Screaming 1962
 Oil on canvas, 40" x 34"
 Inscribed on reverse: "James Rosenquist
Sitting Around Screaming 34" x 40" 1962"
 Provenance: Green Gallery, New York, January 1962

Salt, John (b. 1937) Fig. 39
Wreck with Pitchfork 1972
 Watercolor, 12½" x 19"
 Provenance: O. K. Harris Gallery, New York, March 1973

Samaras, Lucas (b. 1936) Fig. 31
Chicken Wire Box #4 1972
 Painted wire mesh, 15" x 11¾" x 9"
 Provenance: Pace Gallery, New York, November 1972

Samaras, Lucas (b. 1936) Fig. 32
Photo-Transformation 1974
 SX 70 Polaroid, 3" x 3"
 Inscribed: Several times across top of image "Lucas"
 (script signature)
 Provenance: Pace Gallery, New York, March 1974

Samaras, Lucas (b. 1936) Fig. 30
Untitled (Quadruple Spiral Target) 1963
 Pin construction, pins and wool on wood, 15¾" x 11½" x 2¾"
 Inscribed on reverse: "Lucas Samaras"
 Provenance: Green Gallery, New York, November 1963

Smith, Richard (b. 1931) Fig. 18
McCall's 1960
 Oil on canvas, 84" x 90"
 Provenance: Green Gallery, New York, March 1961

Stella, Frank (b. 1936) Fig. 60
The First Post-Cubist Collage 1959
 Ink on asbestos tape on board, 20½" x 20¼"
 Signed on verso:
 "STELLA 1959/THE FIRST POST-CUBIST/COLLAGES/366 W. B'way"
 Provenance: Art Lending Service, MOMA, New York, June 1963

Stella, Frank (b. 1936) Fig. 54
Tetuan 1963
 Colored pencil on paper, 6¾" x 6¾"
 Signed on verso: "Stella/'63"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, May 1963

Tuttle, Richard (b. 1941) Fig. 58
Drawing for Sculpture 1964
 Watercolor on paper, 11" x 14"
 Signed lower right: "Drawing for Sculpture 1964/R. Tuttle"
 Provenance: Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, September 1965

Tuttle, Richard (b. 1941) Fig. 55
Fountain 1965
 Shaped painted plywood (8 parts), ca. 1" x 40" x 40"
 Inscribed on underside portion: "Fountain 1965 R. Tuttle"
 Provenance: Betty Parsons Gallery, New York, September 1965

Twombly, Cy (b. 1929) Fig. 56
Untitled 1967
 Oil and crayon on canvas, 79" x 104"
 Provenance: Castelli Gallery, New York, October 1967

Warhol, Andy (b. 1928) Fig. 29
Early Electric Chair 1964
 Silkscreen on canvas, 24" x 28"
 Provenance: Stable Gallery, New York, Castelli Gallery, New York, April 1965

Weber, Idelle Fig. 36
Boston Lettuce 1974
 Oil on canvas, 45" x 64¾"
 Signed lower right (on box): "I. WEBER 74 ©"
 Provenance: Hundred Acres Gallery, New York, June 1974

Wesselmann, Tom (b. 1931) Fig. 25
Little SL No. 10 1963
 Mixed media, 10¾" x 16"
 Signed on verso: "Wesselmann"
 Provenance: Green Gallery, New York, December 1963

Wesselmann, Tom (b. 1931) Fig. 26
Study for Most Beautiful Foot (67-11) 1967
 Oil on canvas, 7¾" x 10½"
 Signed on top edge of canvas: "Wesselmann"
 Provenance: Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, November 1968

Wujcik, Theo (b. 1946) Fig. 46
Ed Moses 1973
 Silverpoint on paper, 21" x 26" (sight)
 Signed and dated lower right
 (on figure's shoulder): "Theo Wujcik 73"
 Provenance: Brooke Alexander, Inc., New York, August 1973

**An exhibition organized by
the following Yale students**

Susan B. Bandelin 1g
Susan P. Casteras 3g
John R. Klein '75
Catherine C. Lorraine '75
Anne McCauley 3g
Margaret S. Nesbit 1g
Carol Ockman 2g
Leo H. Rubinfiel 1g
Mark A. Savitt '76
Kenneth E. Silver 2g
William R. Slaughter '75
Carol L. Troyen 3g

Bibliography

Bibliography of Previous Exhibitions of the Richard Brown Baker Collection

Paintings Since 1945: A Collection in the Making Lent by Richard Brown Baker. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (March 18–April 19, 1959.)

Contemporary Americans Selected from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. Staten Island Museum, New York (February 21–April 17, 1960.)

Eighty Works from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (March 12–April 16, 1961.)

Contemporary Drawings from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. Drew University, Madison, New Jersey (February 18–March 18, 1962.)

The Richard Brown Baker Collection of Contemporary Art. Jewett Arts Center of Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts (May 5–May 26, 1963.)

Two Modern Collectors: Susan Morse Hilles and Richard Brown Baker. Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven (May 23–September 1, 1963.)

Watercolors, Drawings, and Collages from the Collection of Richard Brown Baker. Festival of the Arts, University of Rhode Island, Administration Building, Kingston (April 26–May 15, 1964.)

Paintings and Constructions of the 1960's–Selected from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (October 2–October 25, 1964.)

Art of the 50's and 60's–Selections from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. The Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, Connecticut (April 25–July 5, 1965.)

A Point of View: Selected Paintings and Drawings from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. University Art Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan (December 16, 1966–January 28, 1967.)

The Last Twenty Years in Contemporary Painting: Selections from the Collection of Richard Brown Baker. Art History Gallery, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee (February 20–March 17, 1967.)

Mid-Twentieth Century Drawings and Collages: A Selection from the Collection of Richard Brown Baker. University of South Florida, Tampa (March 7–April 6, 1967.)

Selections from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. Art Gallery, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana (January 5–February 23, 1969.)

A Selection of 30 Paintings from the Collection of Richard Brown Baker. University of South Florida, Tampa (March 6–April 4, 1969.)

Small Works. Selections from the Richard Brown Baker Collection of Contemporary Art. Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (April 5–May 6, 1973.)

A Selection of American and European Paintings from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. San Francisco Museum of Art (September 14–November 11, 1973) and Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (December 7, 1973–January 27, 1974.)

Prints by Contemporary Artists Selected from the Richard Brown Baker Collection. Meadow Brook Art Gallery, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan (September 29–October 27, 1974) and the Newark Museum (December 5, 1974–January 26, 1975.)

Arabesque: Its History as an Object

by Susan P. Casteras

Jackson Pollock's *Arabesque* is one of the most frequently illustrated and exhibited of all the works of art in Richard Brown Baker's vast collection, having been seen in at least fourteen exhibitions, including the major Pollock retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art in 1967. Its history as a creation by Pollock and as a purchase by Baker reveals a great deal about the artist, the painting, and the collector and thus merits careful analysis.

Reminiscences by Betty Parsons, successor to Peggy Guggenheim as Pollock's dealer, confirm that *Arabesque* was painted at Pollock's farmhouse in Springs, Long Island, undoubtedly on the floor of the same barn where so many of his masterpieces were created. Evidently one of his favorite paintings, it held a prominent place in his living room, and both of his dealers from the fifties — Parsons and Sidney Janis — distinctly remember Pollock's liking this work.¹ The original name conferred by the artist was *Number 13, 1948*; *Arabesque* was probably the title given by one of the artist's friends (he often invited a group in to participate in the naming process).² After its completion sometime in 1948, the painting must have remained at the artist's East Hampton residence the rest of that year, since it was first exhibited at the Betty Parsons Gallery (then situated at 15 East 57th Street) in *Jackson Pollock — Recent Paintings* from January 24 through February 12 of 1949.

Twenty-six numbered works (some with descriptive titles) — eleven done on paper and fifteen on canvas — comprised this one-man show. Although there was no catalogue written for this exhibition, Parsons Gallery files incorrectly record the dimensions (39" x 118" instead of the actual size of 37" x 117") but unmistakably verify *Arabesque's* identity with the following description — "horizontal, white and black, Indian red canvas."³



1 **Jackson Pollock**
Arabesque, 1948
Oil on canvas, 37¼" x 117¼"



Reviews of this 1949 exhibition were mixed and ranged from open derision to Greenbergian adulation. *Time* reproduced *Number Eleven* and chided the artist's creations for resembling "a child's contour map of the Battle of Gettysburg."⁴ Emily Genauer of the *New York World-Telegram*, Sam Hunter in the *New York Times*, and Paul Mocsanyi in the *United Press Red Letter* cautiously tempered their criticism with varying degrees of awareness of the extent of Pollock's pictorial achievements. Elaine de Kooning's brief mention of the exhibition in *Art News* marked the first time a sympathetic reaction to the artist appeared in that magazine.⁵ Clement Greenberg, who had championed Pollock since 1943, predictably hailed the artist's "astounding progress" and his sublime technique.

The only painting which was consistently singled out for acclaim was *Number One, 1948*, which the Museum of Modern Art purchased two years later. Like other impressive works in this exhibition, such as *White Cockatoo* (Number 24, 1948) and *Summertime* (Number 9, 1948), *Arabesque* remained relatively anonymous in the minds of critics. Only Greenberg bothered to include *Arabesque* in a list of several outstanding works at the gallery:

There were other things . . . which manifested a greater openness of design than before — that came off quite as conclusively as "Number One," but the general quality that emerged from such pictures as the one with the black cut-out shapes — "Number Two" — that hung next to it, and from Numbers "Six," "Seven," "Eleven," "Thirteen," "Eighteen," and especially "Nineteen" seem more than enough to justify the claim that Pollock is a major painter of our time.⁶ (emphasis mine.)

Although Greenberg was the sole critic to mention *Arabesque*, Parsons remembers that "when it was at the gallery, *Arabesque* was greatly admired and people often inquired about what its asking price was. . . . I was the first to show big paintings in America and to show them on snow-white walls; *Number 13, 1948* was on a white wall and sustained a strong visual effect."⁷

The most expensive painting in this Parsons Gallery exhibition was also the critics' favorite, *Number 1, 1948*, for which the asking price was three thousand dollars. Five paintings were priced between \$1500 and \$1800 and *Arabesque, Number Seven, Number 25*, and *White Cockatoo* cost \$1200. Several smaller canvases cost between \$750 and \$900; the remaining majority of works (mostly on paper) fell within the \$200 to \$400 range. Nine out of the twenty-six works in this exhibition were sold by its closing date.⁸ For at least one collector of Pollock's work, this show served as a turning point; Alfonso Ossorio, whose own art had been exhibited at the Parsons Gallery since 1941, made what has been called "the most important purchase from the show: *Number Five*, a particularly rich 8' x 4' vertical panel."⁹ Not liking Pollock's paintings until this 1949 show, Ossorio, who later became a friend of the Pollocks and a collector of art by both Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner Pollock, noted, "Here was a man who had pulled together, existentialized all the traditions of the past — contemplative and active — a man who had gone beyond Picasso."¹⁰

Arabesque remained at the Parsons Gallery (presumably on the racks) through November 14, 1949; within a year of its exhibition it returned to Pollock's residence, perhaps to reclaim its coveted spot over the living room sofa.¹¹ It stayed at the farmhouse until Sidney Janis became Pollock's dealer and probably came to the Janis gallery sometime within the period 1952–54. It was there by the time of the exhibition *15 Years of Jackson Pollock* in November through December of 1955.

As Richard Brown Baker has recorded, Pollock's frieze-like painting almost failed to find its way into his collection:

Until I saw "Arabesque" I had not felt any urge to get a Pollock. Indeed I remember looking earlier at a modest-sized Pollock drip oil in the Art Lending Service of the Museum of Modern Art, where it could be purchased for five or six hundred dollars, and mentally rejecting it as below the quality I aspired to in my collection. At the Sidney Janis Gallery, I had, the preceding January bought a small oil by the Chilean painter, Matta, from David Herbert of Mr. Janis' staff. Then I had run into David Herbert in San Francisco at Gump's, where he sold me a Boddhidharma, so that he was accustomed to think of me as a purchaser. On taking leave of him after looking at the Pollock retrospective, I remarked casually, "I think I'd rather acquire a major de Kooning than a Pollock." (. . . At the end of 1955 Pollock seemed in New York a waning star, while de Kooning was the new hero of avant-garde circles.) David Herbert no sooner heard me express a preference for de Kooning than he said impulsively, "There's a picture in the

racks that you must see, and I even know the price of it." He almost pulled me into the inner room, where he produced Pollock's "Arabesque." The moment I saw it I was enchanted. Here was a Pollock that I really did like. I am quick to make up my mind about pictures and rarely reverse my judgment. Except for the Turner, I hadn't ever paid so much (and there was no price reduction to be had), but it was a large picture, the largest I had ever bought, and Pollock's name was at the forefront of the movement. He was one of the few abstractionists about whom I had ever heard even before I reached New York. It seemed to me an unquestioned opportunity and I took it.¹²

It was not simply his original intention of considering a work by de Kooning that nearly squelched the possibility of this acquisition. After Baker saw and bought *Arabesque* on December 1, 1955, some grave misgivings about potential conservation problems arose in his mind. That very evening he dined at the home of an art teacher friend and collector of early American landscape paintings. A stranger at this party announced himself to be a collector of abstract art and promptly volunteered his opinion that Pollock's canvases would succumb to rapid physical deterioration. Alarmed by this diagnosis, Baker persuaded his host and a

museum director to accompany him the next day to investigate this matter at the Janis Gallery. As Baker recalled this meeting,

We demanded an inspection of "Arabesque" by a restorer who should report upon its durability, and when my friends pointed out that "Arabesque" was indeed unstretched (Pollock had probably laid the canvas on the ground to drip paint it and had never bothered to fix it to wooden supports), we obtained Mr. Janis' agreement to have it stretched under the supervision of the artist. Mr. Janis said he had never faced a situation quite like this. He offered to return my money. My art teacher friend was in favor of this, but I found myself too enamoured of "Arabesque" to give it up. Seeing that I was genuinely attached to the painting and not just trying to get out of a deal I regretted, Mr. Janis said soothingly, "After all, Pollock is still a young man. If this painting does disintegrate as rapidly as your restorer friend claims, we can always get Pollock to replace it with another."¹³

Arabesque was then stretched and re-signed by Pollock; Sidney Janis himself sent a reassuring letter to Baker:

Mr. [Anthony] Riportella, who is long familiar with Pollock's work, finds that the canvas on which Pollock paints is properly sized, and he assures us that the pigment and canvas as it now stands will outlive all of us. There has never been a question in my mind that Pollock's work would not stand up; in fact the paintings in the exhibition dating 1937, 1938, and 1941 are just as fresh today as they ever were, and I dare say will remain so for another generation or more. The question which trou-

bled you relative to the possibility of his oils effecting [sic] his canvas adversely, Mr. Riportella says this cannot happen to the painting you purchased (nor to the others in the show). We hope that this report relieves you of the feeling of insecurity your friend gave you.¹⁴

In this letter Pollock's dealer at this time not only reveals his faith in the professional techniques of the artist, but in an anecdote he relates at the end of the letter about a Picasso collage he bought twenty-eight years earlier, he also perceptively projects an air of confidence about the future market value of Pollock's art: "I hope you are as fortunate investment-wise with your Pollock."¹⁵

His apprehensions quelled, Baker paid the \$2500 price and contentedly hung the painting in his New York apartment. Four months after the purchase he accidentally met Pollock and his wife, the artist Lee Krasner. In a diary entry of April 9, 1956, Baker recounts their introduction, which ironically occurred at the opening of a de Kooning exhibition in New York City:

David [Herbert] suddenly presented me to a heavy set man with a short beard . . . who was looking intently at the paintings with his wife. The man had a rather . . . closed look, as if he were grim and inaccessible. They were Mr. and Mrs. Jackson Pollock. Mrs. Pollock

acknowledged the introduction, but her husband uttered not a word. David explained that I was the possessor of a Pollock painting, which he described. This aroused Mrs. Pollock's interest, but still the painter did not speak. I imagine his mind was on the de Kooning paintings and he had no desire whatsoever to interrupt his reflections by being gracious to a stranger. Mrs. Pollock informed me that they used to have my painting over the sofa in their living room. To ingratiate myself with the artist I told them that Alan Davie had seen this painting, admired it and spoke of its having "elegance in the best sense." The compliment stirred Mr. Pollock

beyond a monosyllable. He informed me that they had met the Davies, but, he said, unfortunately at that time they had not seen his work. David Herbert asked if, after he did see it, he had liked it. Pollock said yes, he did like it. The Pollocks then drifted off to another room. Later, as they departed, Mrs. Pollock politely paused to say good-bye to me. Mr. Pollock was kind enough to follow her lead and also say good-bye.¹⁶

This was the only time the collector ever saw Pollock; Baker never visited the artist's studio or established any pattern of patronage or friendship with him.¹⁷

Despite the attention which *Arabesque* had received, it was not included in the exhibition, *15 Years of Jackson Pollock*, (November 28–December 31, 1955) that the collector visited on December 1 of that year.¹⁸ Sidney Janis recalls that there were essentially two main reasons for *Arabesque*'s exclusion from this show: "The amount of paintings outdistanced the wall space, or rather our wall space clearly proved inadequate for our appetites. At that time the gallery consisted of only two rooms and was too small. . . . However, *Arabesque* was certainly an important painting, important enough for us to want to include it in our twenty-fifth anniversary exhibition."¹⁹ An equally significant second reason focused on "the fact that we had a few other scroll paintings in the show very similar in size and style and a decision based on these similarities and the space problem had to be made."²⁰ A third variable mentioned by this dealer was that "Pollock himself selected the contents of the show; and although I know he liked *Arabesque* very much, I don't otherwise know why he didn't choose the painting for the show."²¹

Baker bought *Arabesque* just three days after the Pollock show opened at the Janis Gallery; his purchase could therefore not have been affected by the critical reviews of the exhibition. He bought it simply because he liked it. Nonetheless, it is interesting to examine the context of critical reaction as well as the financial success (in terms of sales) engendered by this early winter show. Generally, reviewers hailed the show — Leo Steinberg in *The Arts*, Amy Robinson in *Art News*, Robert M. Coates in the *New Yorker*, B. H. Friedman in *Art In America*, Stuart Preston's mixed blessings in the *New York Times*, all ranged from respectful to exuberant admiration for Pollock's now-acknowledged masterpieces.²² *Time*, while publishing selective excerpts of reviews of this show in its art essay, nonetheless preserved its usual snide and condescending attitude towards the artist and his revolutionary achievements.²³

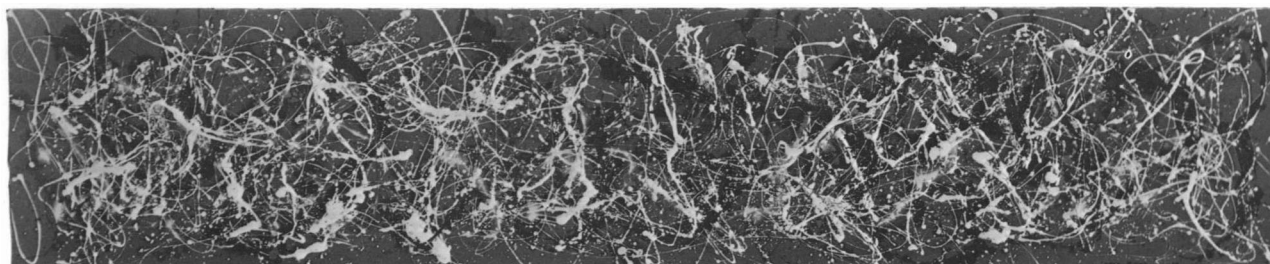


Jackson Pollock, *Number 1*, 1948, oil on canvas, 58" x 104". Collection: Museum of Modern Art, N.Y. (not in exhibition)

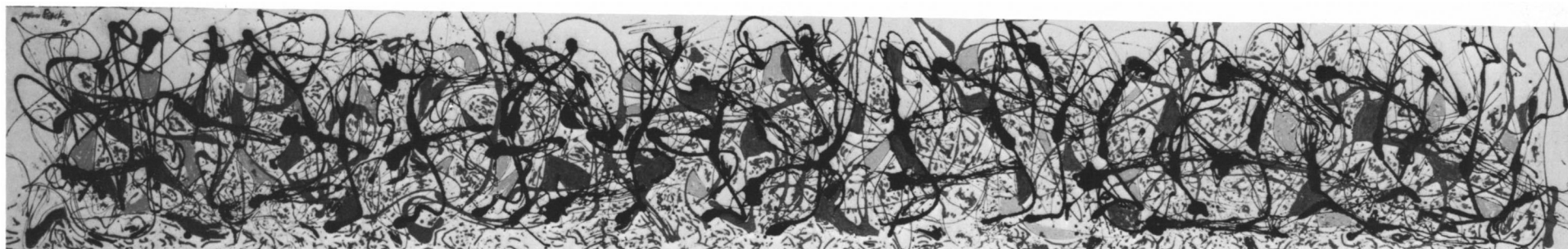
Of the eight paintings for sale in *15 Years of Jackson Pollock*, a total of four were sold at an average price of \$3500.²⁴ This 50% rate of purchase was an improvement over the sales from the previous two Pollock shows at the Janis Gallery – 3 out of 11 in the 1952 show and 4 out of 10 in the 1954 show found immediate buyers. Interestingly, in the six years since its exhibition, the price of this painting had only doubled, a modest increase given the span of time and the increment in Pollock's reputation.²⁵

Stylistically, *Arabesque* clearly fell within Pollock's great period (1947–1950), that of the all-over drip paintings.²⁶ Describing the characteristics of *Number 1, 1948*, Frank O'Hara wrote that this work is classical "in all its comprehensive, masterful, and pristine use of his passions, classical in its cool, ultimate beauty, and classical in that it is characterized especially by an attention to form with the general effect of regularity, simplicity, balance, proportion and controlled emotion."²⁷

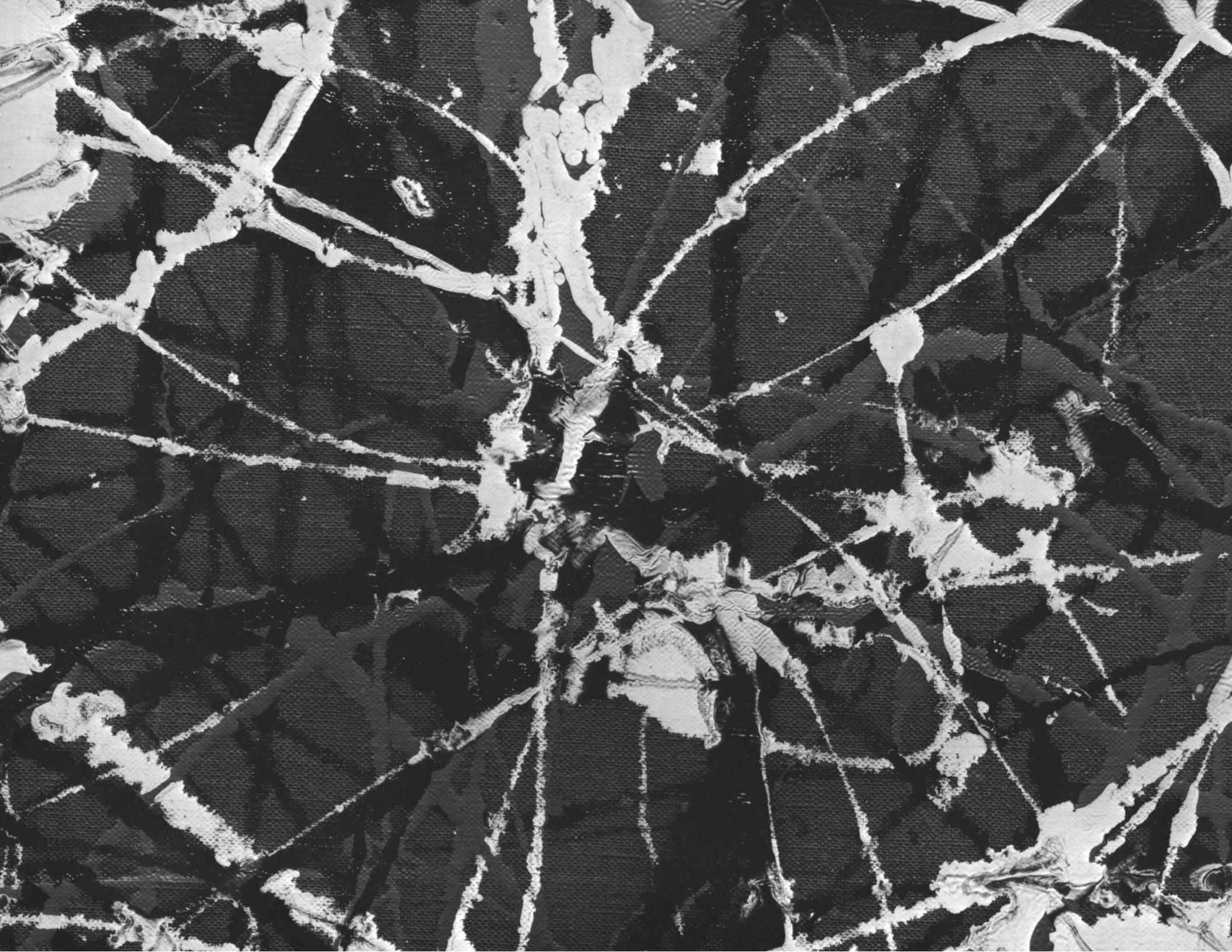
In this painting, warm, henna-brown paint stained into the primed canvas²⁸ creates a restrained background atmosphere on the surface. Using several implements – notably a brush loaded with paint, a pointed stick, and perhaps even a basting syringe – as well as simply pouring the paint onto the canvas, Pollock controls the dripping with long, sweeping gestures which produce seemingly endless loops or skeins of color. The actual color range remains subdued and restricted, with gray, black, and white overlapping (without colliding) on the rust surface. Three cans of paint containing these colors were probably used almost simultaneously, since in some portions of the canvas black



Jackson Pollock, *Summertime*, 1948, oil on canvas, 33¼" x 218½". Collection: Lee Krasner Pollock, courtesy of Marlborough Gallery (not in exhibition)



Jackson Pollock, *No. 2*, 1949, oil on canvas, 38½" x 309½". Collection: Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute, Utica, N.Y. (not in exhibition)



paint is dripped first with white or gray lines intersecting; and in other areas, the gray or white paint is overlaid with interlacing strands. Usually these individual colors are allowed to dry before a new intersecting layer is applied, although in some places the merging of two or more colors produces gentle blurring. A detail of one such area reveals this characteristic layering of strands of color as well as one congealed spot where a denser amount of pigment has created a three-dimensional effect. These irregularities do not, however, diminish the filigreed lyricism of the painting. There is no clustering phenomenon; the gestures and the patterns of paint move fluidly and rhythmically. Unlike other canvases by Pollock in which nearly every inch seems to be covered with suffocatingly dense impasto or pigment, *Arabesque* is filled with floating lines that interweave in an open atmosphere. The canvas itself becomes a passive field of action on which line and the act of painting itself interact. Painted with the immediacy of drawing, *Arabesque* generates a powerful visual energy which is generated by the loops of color which shuttle back and forth throughout the canvas.

Friedman maintains that in 1949 "even to New York's relatively sophisticated art viewers, such 'mural friezes' as *Summertime*, *White Cockatoo*, and *Arabesque* were shocking in scale and shape as well as image."²⁹ The immense length of these works was provocative because of the way it assaulted the traditional notion of easel painting. The scale is that of the painter's body, for it is his bodily energies which propel him around the canvas, dripping, splattering, and flinging paint in sometimes violent, sometimes lyrical movements. Other than this common attribute of size, however, the "mural friezes" done in 1948 are quite different from one another.

White Cockatoo, for example, although it also contains a rust background, utilizes line to define contours which are filled in with color and suggest a degree of figuration on the painted field.³⁰ In *Arabesque* however, there are no solids or voids, no contrasts of positive or negative space — there is only one unbroken and rhythmic continuity in which line functions nonfiguratively and autonomously. The filled-in areas of red, white, blue, and black paint in *White Cockatoo* produce unmistakable visual emphases, but in *Arabesque* all areas of the canvas are treated equally — it is the overall design which matters. In *Number 25*, 1948, quite similar in size to *Arabesque* and again on brown canvas, the optical field is more densely covered, more impenetrable than the airy transparency and freedom of *Arabesque* or *Summertime*. The latter work, however, echoes the use of contour-creating lines and the resulting clotted or impeded movement characteristic of *White Cockatoo* and absent in *Arabesque*.

Perhaps the painting closest in spirit to Baker's purchase is *Number 2*, 1949 which, although it utilizes duco and aluminum paints instead of the simple industrial enamels of *Arabesque*, nonetheless shares an affinity with the earlier painting in the space-filling harmony it engenders. Both paintings are uncrowded and generate lines which surge and suspend themselves without becoming chaotic. In both, loops of white paint swing back and forth almost magically from an unseen centrifugal force; without endangering the spatial boundaries of the frame, they thus reinforce a sense of self-contained unity.

Arabesque's title, while no analogue or verbal equivalent, perhaps provides some final reasons for its power as a "mural frieze." Its name seems to correspond instinctively to numerous physical processes which occur both in dancing and in this painting. The line is clearly improvised by Pollock and is frequently repeated in rhythmic steps, visible, for example, in the way that the rounded gestures of the artist create irregular ellipses of white paint which echo throughout the painting. The speed of the line varies — sometimes with a crescendo or a decline, other times interwoven or effortlessly suspended with another color. The rate at which paint is dripped differs accordingly: some lines seem more relaxed and graceful, while others, such as the inwardly twirling and looping configurations, appear more urgent. As if on a stage, the dance remains self-contained and disciplined at the same time it is overwhelmingly free; the choreography weaves back and forth continuously and naturally thins out at the edges. The very stance of the artist — nearly dancing around the canvas at times and expressively and intuitively releasing the paint with ballet-like precision, becomes simultaneously an actual movement and conceptually a symbol for the power and meaning of the painting.

Footnotes

- 1 Interview with Betty Parsons, November 11, 1974, and interview with Sidney Janis, November 19, 1974.
- 2 *Number 13, 1948* does not necessarily indicate any designated order within a sequence of production; Pollock was known to dispense arbitrary and achronological numbers routinely to his paintings of a particular year. Francis V. O'Connor, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967), p. 45.
- 3 From typescript records of *Jackson Pollock—Recent Paintings*, January 24–February 12, 1949, courtesy of the Betty Parsons Gallery.
- 4 As quoted in O'Connor, *Pollock*, p. 46.
- 5 As quoted *ibid.*, pp. 46–47, and in B. H. Friedman, *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1972), pp. 128–129.
- 6 Clement Greenberg, untitled art review, *Nation* (February 19, 1949), p. 221.
- 7 Interview with Betty Parsons, November 11, 1974.
- 8 Prices and descriptions from unpaginated typescript records of *Jackson Pollock — Recent Paintings*, courtesy of the Betty Parsons Gallery. The second 1949 show at this gallery, which was held there from November 21–December 10, was even more financially successful. According to Friedman (*Pollock*, p. 142), "This was Pollock's only show that sold well, virtually out, though still at low prices."
- 9 Friedman, *Pollock*, p. 129.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 As verified by Betty Parsons in an interview of November 11, 1974, and by the April 9, 1956, diary entry of Richard Brown Baker.
- 12 Richard Brown Baker, "Notes on the Formation of My Collection," *Art International* 7 (September 20, 1961), p. 42. As the first Pollock show at the Parsons Gallery had been a revelation to Ossorio, so *Arabesque* similarly proved to be for Baker, who said in an interview of November 20, 1974: "This painting was the first work by Pollock I ever saw that I genuinely liked; it was a breakthrough in my appreciation of his talent. I had seen Pollock before (although I don't remember exactly when) and my conceptions of him were also somewhat derived from journalistic portrayals of him as an *enfant terrible*."
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 Sidney Janis to Richard Brown Baker, December 8, 1955. In retrospect, however, Baker's objections are not wholly invalid, since a few of Pollock's paintings have noticeably disintegrated in certain areas and have created other condition problems. The condition of *Arabesque*, however, remains stable at the present.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 April 9, 1956, diary entry of Richard Brown Baker.
- 17 Interview with Richard Brown Baker, November 20, 1974.
- 18 As the title indicates, this exhibition of sixteen paintings functioned almost as a small retrospective, with such canvases as *The Flame* (1937), *Gothic* (1944), *The Totem: Lesson II* (1945), *White Cockatoo* (1948), *Out of the Web* (1949), and *Autumn Rhythm* (1950) prominently displayed on the walls and ceilings. Earlier works — fourteen in number — dramatically overpowered the small total of two paintings from the current season — *White Light* (1954) and *Search* (1955).
- 19 Interview with Sidney Janis, November 19, 1974.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *Ibid.*
- 22 As quoted from reviews appearing in O'Connor, *Pollock*, pp. 48–49.
- 23 As quoted in Friedman, *Pollock*, pp. 210–212.
- 24 Confirmed in an interview with Sidney Janis, November 19, 1974.
- 25 The \$2500 Baker paid for *Arabesque* in 1955 indeed proved to be the great investment Janis had hoped it might become in his early letter to Baker on the subject of the painting's condition.
- 26 This view is espoused by Frank O'Hara, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: George Braziller, 1959), p. 24, and by Michael Fried, "Jackson Pollock," *Artforum* 4 (September 1965), p. 14.
- 27 O'Hara, *Pollock*, p. 24.
- 28 Friedman (*Pollock*, p. 150) erroneously states that *Arabesque* is done "on a commercially prepared ground." He also points out on the same page that for a mural commission Pollock received in 1950 for the Geller House in Lawrence, Long Island, one stipulation was made: "that the ground color be as close as possible to the rust tone of *Arabesque*."
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 128.

Exhibitions

Jackson Pollock — Recent Paintings, January 24–February 12, 1949, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York City.

Signed in Paint — A Loan Exhibition of Paintings Covering Six Centuries of European and American Art, February–March 1957, Rochester Memorial Art Gallery, Rochester, New York.

Paintings since 1945: A Collection in the Making — Lent by Richard Brown Baker, March 18–April 19, 1959, Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art.

Initial Exhibition, October 5–31, 1959, David Herbert Gallery, New York City. (No. 13 in exhibition)

Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture Collected by Yale Alumni, May 19–June 20, 1960, Yale University Art Gallery. (No. 139 in exhibition)

Eighty Works from the Richard Brown Baker Collection, March 12–April 16, 1961, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minn.

Continuity and Change: 45 American Abstract Painters and Sculptors, April 12–May 27, 1962, Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Conn. (No. 118 in exhibition)

The Richard Brown Baker Collection of Contemporary Art, May 5–May 26, 1963, Jewett Arts Center, Wellesley College, Wellesley, Mass.

Jackson Pollock, Marlborough–Gerson Gallery, January–February 1964, New York City.

Four Centuries of American Masterpieces, Spring 1964, Gallery of the Better Living Center, New York World's Fair. (No. 36 in exhibition)

American Contemporary Painting of 2 Decades, October 1966–June 1967, traveling exhibition of the International Council of the Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

Jackson Pollock, April 5–June 4, 1967, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

Jackson Pollock, July 19–September 3, 1967, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California.

Olympic Games Art Festival, October 1–November 30, 1968, Mexico City, Mexico (International Art Program of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Washington, D.C.). (No. 10 in exhibition)

25th Anniversary Exhibition—Part II, March 13–April 13, 1974, Sidney Janis Gallery, New York.

Reproductions (in chronological order of exhibitions and publications)

Paintings since 1945: A Collection in the Making — Lent by Richard Brown Baker, March 18–April 19, 1959, Rhode Island School of Design Museum of Art, on cover.

Initial Exhibition, October 5–31, 1959, David Herbert Gallery, p. 1.

Paintings, Drawings, and Sculpture Collected by Yale Alumni, May 19–June 26, 1960, Yale University Art Gallery, p. 132.

Eighty Works from the Richard Brown Baker Collection, March 12–April 16, 1961, Walker Art Center, p. 6.

"Art: The Unreal World," *Time*, April 13, 1962, pp. 96–97.

"Art Hunting in Darkest World's Fair," *Art News* 63 (June 1964), p. 35.

Four Centuries of American Masterpieces, introduction by Donelson F. Hoopes, Gallery of the Better Living Center, unnumbered page.

Jackson Pollock, Francis V. O'Connor (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1967), p. 98.

25th Anniversary Exhibit—Part II, March 13–April 13, 1974, Sidney Janis Gallery (New York, 1974). (No. 55 in exhibition)

2 **Robert Motherwell**

Blue with China Ink – Homage to John Cage,
1946

Painting and collage, 40" x 31"

Robert Motherwell is above all the master of collage. He has carried this medium (sometimes called "papier collé," meaning the application of paper and material to a flat surface) beyond the inventions of Picasso and Schwitters to a point of classical perfection. He is also a painter and printmaker of extraordinary achievement, and he must be considered – with Pollock and de Kooning – a founder of abstract expressionism; yet for some reason, ironically perhaps because he is also a highly literate writer and teacher, he has never gained the widespread critical recognition that his accomplishment merits.

Born in Aberdeen, Washington, Motherwell grew up on the West Coast but has lived most of his mature life in or near New York City. During the early forties he became acquainted with the great European painters then gathering in New York, including Marcel Duchamp, Piet Mondrian, and the surrealists Matta and Ernst: ever since then, his work has combined a "European" sense of elegance and careful composition with the inventive energy of action painting. These traits are all found in the superb collage in the Baker collection, *Blue with China Ink – Homage to John Cage*, created in 1946 just as the New York School was coming to maturity. This work is thus transitional between what E. A. Carmean, Jr.,¹ calls "the figural collages" of 1944 and 1945 and "the analytical collages" of 1946–48. Both in quality and structure it is closely related to the collage entitled *Mallarmé's Swan* (1944–47, Cleveland Museum of Art), about which Edward B. Henning has written: "The civilized restraint of this work contrasts with the more impassioned approach of the 'action painters' on the one hand, and the associations of the colors and forms removed it from the 'purist' school of abstraction on the other."²

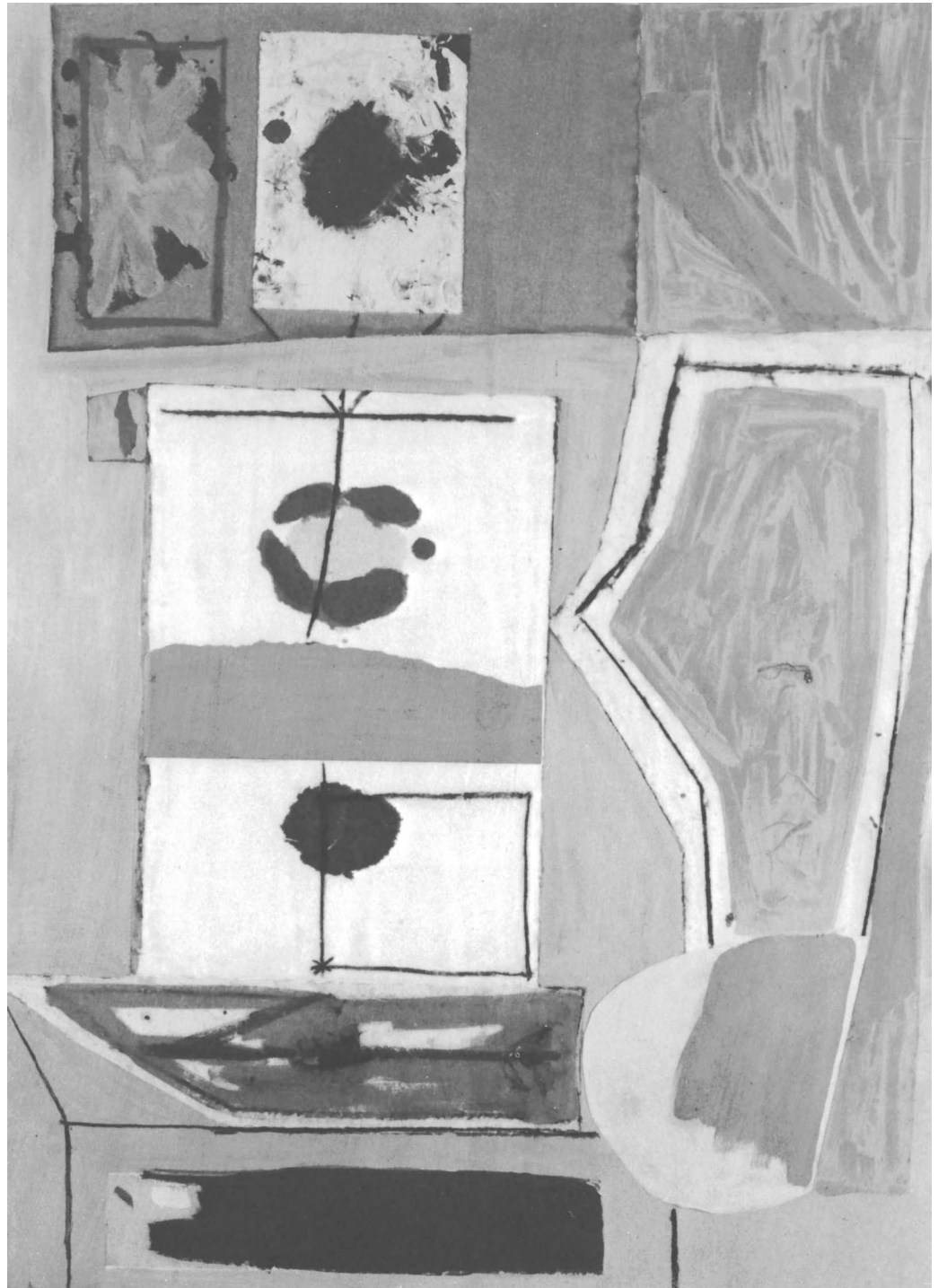
The cut and painted shapes of *Blue with China Ink* are laid out carefully on an analytical cubist structure, while the colors – particularly the dominant "Gauloise blue," the richly painted tans, and the pink oval to the lower right – remind one of Matisse. Motherwell uses *gesture*, like de Kooning and Pollock, and he also reminds one of the artist's presence in the "handmade quality" of the torn and pasted forms and the wavering, graffiti-like line which separates them. The humanism of the work is reinforced in its dedication to John Cage (b. 1912), the American musician whose innovations in dance, composition, and the visual arts have had such great impact upon New York painters including Johns, Rauschenberg, and Motherwell himself. Nevertheless, dominant in the composition is a sense of rational structure, an ordering of sensual, visual materials.³

T.E.S., Jr.

1 E. A. Carmean, Jr., *The Collages of Robert Motherwell* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1972–73).

2 Quoted *ibid.*, p. 18.

3 The fullest discussions of Motherwell's career are found in *Robert Motherwell* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1965) and *Robert Motherwell: Bilder und Collagen 1967–1970* (Galerie im Erker, St. Gallen, Switzerland).



3 **Ben Nicholson**

Nov. 1955 (Deep Persian Lilac), 1955
Oil on canvas, 29½" x 26½"

Ben Nicholson is regarded along with Henry Moore as one of the foremost British practitioners of abstract art in this century. Though the son of William Nicholson, a noted painter and member of the Royal Academy, his own formal training in art was limited to three and a half terms at the Slade School in 1910–11. His style of painting has been influenced over the years through contact with such diverse strains of abstract art as the cubism of Picasso and the mature style of Piet Mondrian.¹ Since the 1930s, Nicholson's art has been a classicizing rather than a romantic one, concerned with the creation of a planar space often based upon a natural still-life or interior scene in the cubist manner. His aim is not the expression of "the illusion of immense distance but of a . . . shallower though more highly organized space, of expression through organization rather than suggestion."²

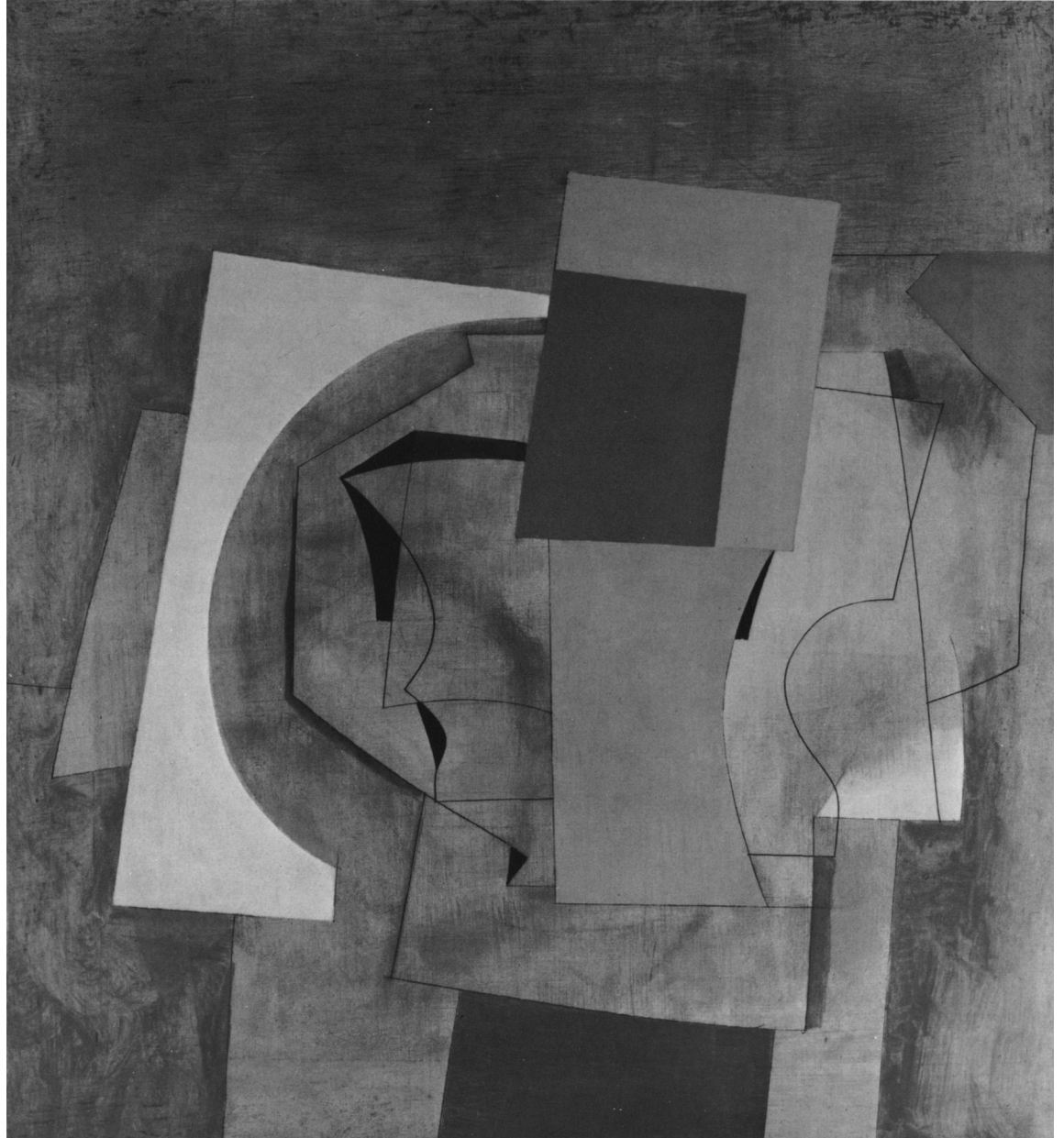
Nowhere are these concerns more clearly expressed than in his famous white and colored reliefs in which circles or rectangles are presented on literally different spatial levels. In *Nov. 1955 (Deep Persian Lilac)* there is no collage or literal relief of this sort and the impression of a planar space is illusory; yet the impression of such a space remains exact. The use of a graffito technique (in the absence of a more explicit sculpture) which lends precision to the line, the choice and placement of color (especially the persian lilac) which succeeds in firmly holding its plane, and the occasional, subtle implication of shadow or overlay are sufficient to create "a space-idea sharply limited in extent but admirably suitable as a setting for rhythmic and formal relationships of the utmost precision and power."³

W.R.S.

1 Nicholson visited Picasso's studio in 1920 and Mondrian's in 1934.

2 David Baxandall, *Ben Nicholson* (London: Methuen, 1962), n. p.

3 Ibid.



4 **Conrad Marca-Relli**

The Vestibule, 1954

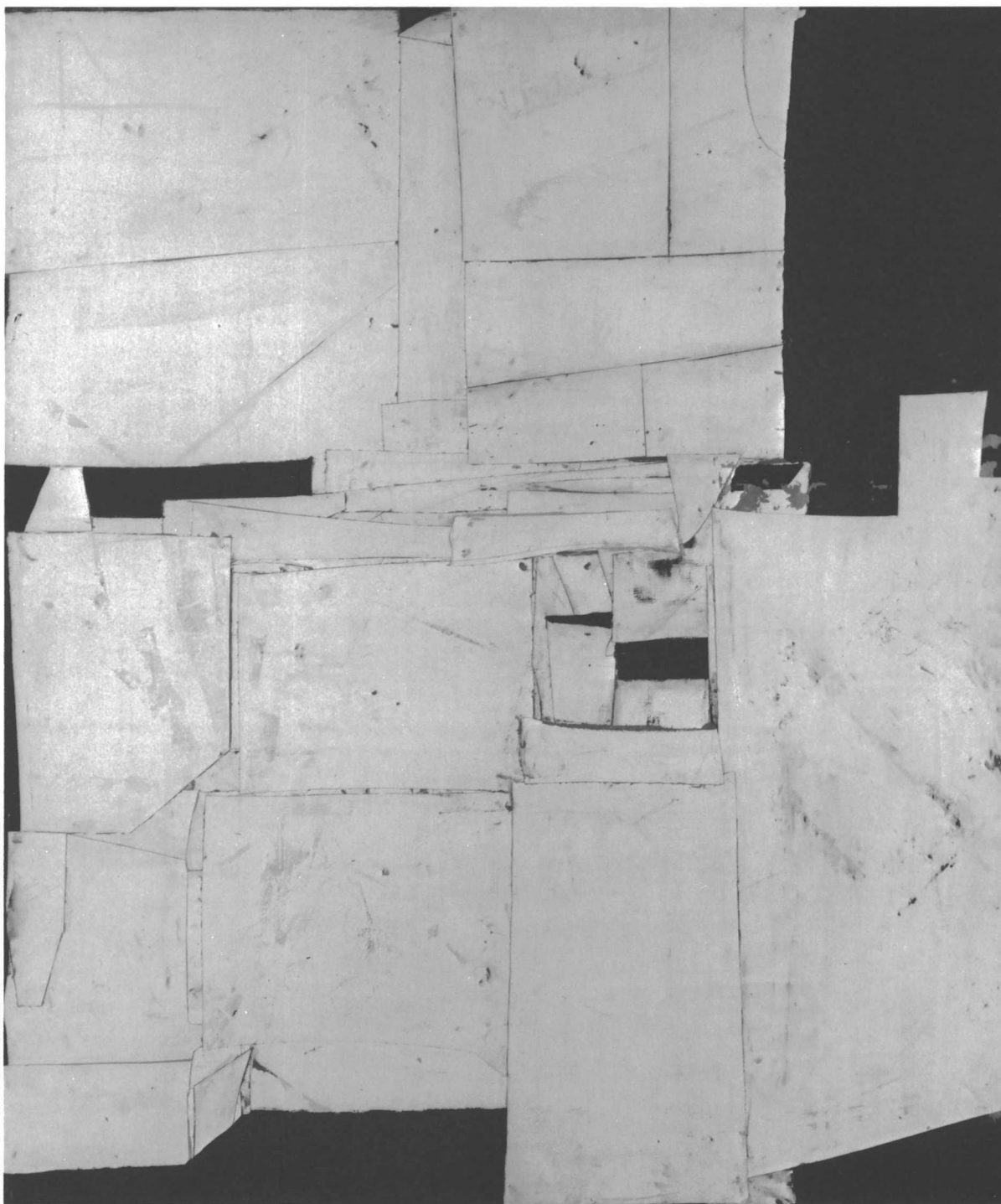
Canvas collage on canvas mounted on board,
49½" x 41½"

Marca-Relli's reputation is based largely on his use of collage to produce large-scale, complex works. His exploration of this medium dates from a trip to Mexico in 1953 when, after running out of paint, he began to paste together pieces of canvas and paper to simulate the pronounced linear quality of adobe architecture. His preoccupation with architecture, already apparent in his painting of the forties, attests to a persistent commitment to structural clarity. This architectonic focus, explicit in *The Vestibule*, is also implicit in the predominantly figural compositions of 1953–56, in which Marca-Relli sought "the architecture of the figure," and in his later narrative works, which are attempts to construct "the architecture of an event."¹ The essentially vertical-horizontal arrangement of the large collage components brings an order to the composition. The calculated splotches of paint and the shiny surface suggest the careful, introspective (perhaps second-hand) nature of the abstract expressionist style in which he worked.

Marca-Relli's decidedly cubist palette — in this work predominantly whites and blacks as well as ochres and grays — is characteristic of his work of the early fifties: colors are purposely subdued to emphasize the surface plane. In addition to furnishing the plastic equivalent of volume in architecture, collage allows Marca-Relli to express the literal, tangible qualities of *matière* without compromising the essential flatness and underlying structure of the composition.

C.O.

¹ Marca-Relli, as quoted by William C. Agee, *Marca-Relli* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1967), pp. 13, 17.



5 **Jean Dubuffet**

Paysage d'hiver avec Deux Chiens, 1954
Oil on canvas, 35" x 45½"



Since his reemergence into the professional art world in 1944,¹ the French artist Jean Dubuffet has continued to explore the primitive, spontaneous art-making process in which Renaissance perspective and illusionistic modeling are disregarded in favor of a more immediate recording of the essential, remembered qualities of an object. Before his discovery of the simplified color and nonrepresentational lines of his Hourloupe series in 1962, Dubuffet's stylistic shifts were based on the exploitation of aggressive media such as sand, leaves, or thick impasto, and methods such as scraping, rubbing, or gluing. In spite of his ever-changing involvement with the craft or *matière* of artistic production, his goals have remained consistent with those of French writers from Rousseau to Baudelaire: to place himself in the position of the child, the savage, or the insane individual — with one who is in direct contact with his emotions and oblivious to the humbug ideas of beauty, rationality, or propriety.

6 Jean Dubuffet

Untitled Drawing, 1960

Ink and wash on paper, 11¼" x 9¼"

The thickly painted *Paysage d'hiver avec Deux Chiens* revives the techniques used in Dubuffet's 1949 *Paysages grotesques* and, more recently, in his 1953 *Pâtes battues*. Writing on this and other paintings produced between October and December, 1954, Dubuffet recalls that "j'abandonnai . . . tout emploi des peintures laquées et revins aux couleurs à l'huile ordinaire avec emploi assez généreux du blanc de zinc en pâte. Je cessai . . . de me servir de pinceaux, n'utilisant plus que spatules et couteaux. . . . Ces peintures étaient d'humeur joyeuse."² Scraping through a buttery white impasto to an underlying burgundy ground, Dubuffet sets off his wide-eyed canine couple from an energetic ochre, yellow, red, and white landscape which preserves some sense of a horizon line and a bluish sky. His textural activation of the surface, choice of subject, and drawing of the animals, which is based on their known components rather than the visual perception of their anatomy, are all expressions of his rejection of traditional artistic conventions in favor of an amusing yet sympathetic "sign" for "dogness."

Dubuffet's *Untitled Drawing* of 1960 shows the interest in varied surface textures, caricatural expressions, and free-flowing linearity that characterizes *Paysage* and his work as a whole. Consciously looking like a giant doodle produced by the unconscious processes so valued by the surrealists, this drawing is a careful imitation of the naive artistic productions which Dubuffet was first exposed to in 1923, when he was given a copy of Prinzhorn's *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken*.³ The oversized head, stick legs, profile view, irregular contours, and scribbled background must be seen as learned anti-art techniques which have become incorporated into Dubuffet's repertoire and reappear in his 1961 lithograph-montage *Personnage au Chapeau*. As a modern romantic longing for an unattainable state of innocence, Dubuffet reveals his civilized, Western sensibility in his subtle play of wash and ink on scraped and unscraped paper, and can never really escape the fact that he, unlike the savage, is familiar with other modes of image-making and must remain a "poseur" in his own endeavors.

A. McC.

1 Peter Selz, *The Work of Jean Dubuffet* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), p. 9.

2 Jean Dubuffet, "Memoire sur le développement de mes travaux à partir de 1952," *Jean Dubuffet* (Paris: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, 1960), p. 162.

3 *Jean Dubuffet* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1973), p. 17.

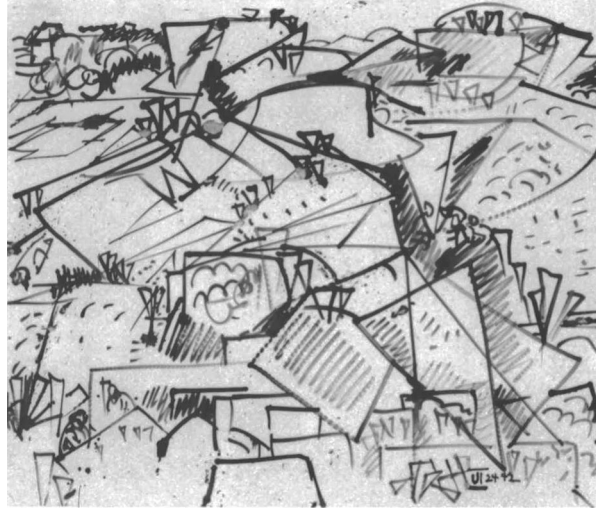


7 **Hans Hofmann**
Provincetown, 1942
India ink on paper, 14" x 17"

Mr. Baker was acquainted with Hofmann, and in 1958 attended the final session of his famous school. This drawing was selected (in the presence of the artist and his wife Miz) from a portfolio of work done in 1942. The gift happily coincided with Mr. Baker's growing interest in drawings, for in the same period he acquired small works on paper by Motherwell, Kline, de Kooning, Al Leslie, Jack Tworkov, and many others.

This drawing is one of a series done in the early forties at Provincetown, Massachusetts, his long-time headquarters. In it, a brush is whipped and dragged across the sheet to create a highly energetic near-abstract. This is a forceful, moving work which demonstrates both Hofmann's allegiance to cubist principles and his role in the formative stages of abstract expressionism. Hofmann was a prolific draftsman all of his life; indeed, his first one-man show in America was one of drawings, at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, in 1931.

C.C.L.



8 **Hans Hofmann**
Fortissimo, 1956
Oil on canvas, 60" x 52"

Like Mondrian and Kandinsky, the two contemporaries whom he respected most, Hofmann based his art on a disciplined total philosophy. Hofmann was a master of vigorous, expressive gesture and color, and he hated art which descended to the anecdotal or sentimental. Painting was for him "forming with color."¹ He was constantly concerned with the reality of the two-dimensional picture plane, and he used the term "push and pull" to describe what he considered the necessary simultaneous play of flatness and depth on the painting's surface. By varying color values and mixing flat areas with rich impasto, Hofmann creates a field of planes which advances then recedes, evoking a feeling of natural ebb and flow. The artist describes the process of constructing a painting in musical terms: "Thirds, fourths, fifths. . . . We make an octave . . . blue here, you look for another blue . . . yellow starts here, one here, the eyes are permanently guided in a rhythm, each color has its own rhythm. In the end this leads to the recreation of forms."²

Fortissimo is primarily a study in reds, as the artist presents many variations of that hue at the bottom and then through the center of his composition. As a secondary theme, he takes green (the complementary of red) and develops it also, from a dark blue-green to an acid yellow-green. Cool whites and blues act as more neutral areas, providing a ground for the exploding energy of Hofmann's strokes with brush and palette-knife.

C.C.L.

1 William C. Seitz, *Hans Hofmann* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1963), p. 46.

2 Frederick S. Wight, *Hans Hofmann* (Berkeley, California, 1957), p. 49.



- 9 **Hans Hofmann**
The Pond, 1958
Oil on canvas, 40" x 50"

Hans Hofmann was one of the great teachers of the twentieth century, influencing several generations of young artists. He opened his first school in Munich in 1914 to "clarify the then entirely new pictorial approach,"¹ and it is said of him that he has done more to make abstract art comprehensible to the public than any other individual.² Arriving in Paris from Munich in 1904 he became friendly with Braque, Picasso, Matisse, Delaunay, and Gris, and for ten years remained there at the center of modern painting. He taught at the summer school of the University of California at Berkeley in 1930, and returned to America several times during the following years. His wife's letters describing the rise of Nazism convinced him to remain in this country and he became an American citizen in 1941. Hofmann operated schools in New York and Provincetown, Massachusetts, each summer from 1933 until 1958, when he stopped teaching to devote himself full-time to his painting.

The Pond was created in 1958, and thus heralded the beginning of Hofmann's most productive period — one which ended only upon his death in 1966. This is one of the artist's most poetic works, one which gives a sense of care of creation. Luminous, dark reds, blues, and greens make up a dense, encrusted surface, and surround flat green pools of color in the center. There is little use of palette knife here, and the heavily brushed and worked quality gives overall unity. The signature is smaller than in *Fortissimo*, but the artist has added equally personal, autobiographic touches in the triumphant gesture of pure yellow paint which punctuates the surface, seemingly expressing a final joy of creation.

C.C.L.

1 Sam Hunter, *Hans Hofmann*, (New York: Abrams, 2nd. ed., 1963) p. 12.

2 Ibid., p. 1.



- 10 **Franz Kline**
Wanamaker Block, 1955
Oil on canvas, 78½" x 71"

Franz Kline, a major figure of the gestural tradition of abstract expressionism, moved to New York in 1938 after studying in Boston and London. His early works reflect the American social realist tradition, depicting lively street scenes in Brooklyn and Greenwich Village. Although his mature works, of which *Wanamaker Block* is a powerful example, are nonfigurative, they too represent his exuberant reaction to New York. The broad, slashing strokes across his canvases have been compared to "heavy steel girders silhouetted against the New York sky."¹ The title of the painting also refers to New York: it commemorates the 1954 closing of Wanamaker's department store, which was located in Kline's neighborhood in Greenwich Village.

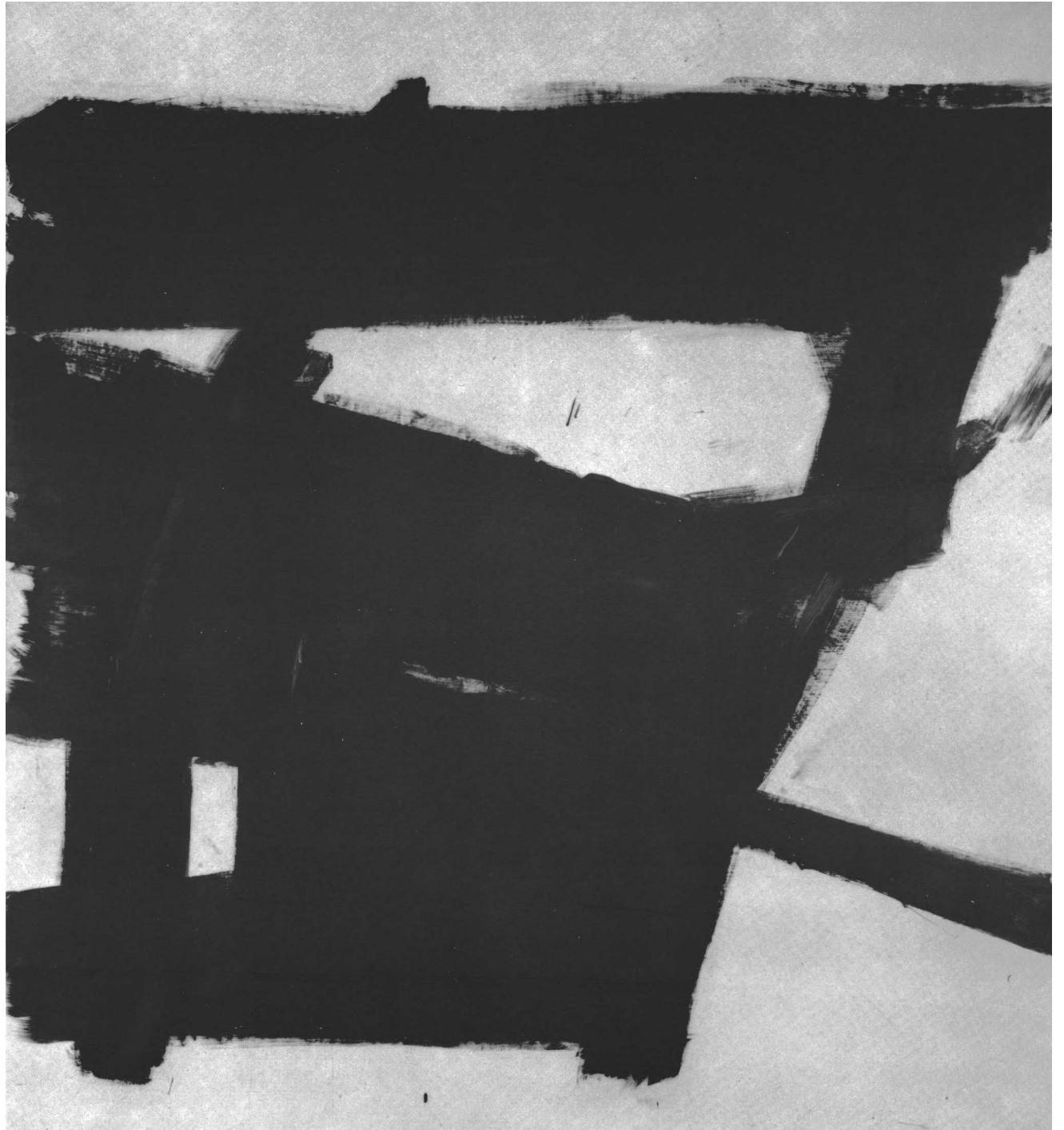
Wanamaker Block was painted at the height of Kline's black and white period. Like Pollock and de Kooning, he reduced color in order to concentrate on line and structure. Although Kline's earliest black and white paintings are small and tentative, the aggressive energy of his gestural strokes led to the enlargement of his canvases. By the time of *Wanamaker Block*, Kline was making monumental paintings on huge surfaces in black enamel with a housepainter's brush.

The black and white abstract forms of *Wanamaker Block* and other paintings of the mid-fifties are often compared to Oriental calligraphy, but in fact the energy and movement of Kline's gestures seem antithetical to the soft, disciplined rhythms of calligraphy. Kline himself stated: "The Oriental idea of space is an infinite space; it is not painted space, and . . . mine is. . . . Calligraphy is writing, and I'm not writing. People sometimes think I take a white canvas and paint a black sign on it, but this is not true! I paint the white as well as the black, and the white is just as important."²

C.L.T.

1 John Gordon, *Franz Kline* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1968), p. 9.

2 Franz Kline, as quoted in Irving Sandler, *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York: Praeger, 1970), p. 245.



The Acceptance of an American Vanguard: Richard Brown Baker and Abstract Expressionism in the Fifties

by Carol Ockman

When Richard Brown Baker moved from Washington, D. C., to New York in 1952, he regarded himself as a collector, although he then owned only fifteen works. Ranging from watercolors by Adolf Dehn, Robert Gates, and Raoul Dufy to a Gauguin woodcut, an etching by Goya, and oils by Bernice Cross and Louis Eilshemius, these did not foreshadow the prodigious interest in contemporary abstract art he formed several years later.¹

In 1955 Baker bought thirty-two contemporary works. There are several reasons for this activity, among them the fact that he had given up his job at the Office of Strategic Services and was able to devote more of his time to collecting. In the process he had begun to appreciate abstract painting, having become acquainted with the New York galleries; he had also seen the "New Decade" shows, which were concurrent exhibitions of contemporary art at the Museum of Modern Art (showing Europeans) and the Whitney (which exhibited Americans). These shows indeed suggested the "formula" which Baker imposed on his collection beginning in 1955.

I decided that I would henceforth concentrate on the new post-war art, the art created since 1945, because I shared Franz Bader's view that it was more exciting, helpful and challenging to buy the work of the living, the young, the unestablished. I decided to ignore the artists (for price reasons) whose reputations had been achieved in pre-war years.

However much I might admire Braque, Picasso, Miró, Soutine, etc., I could not afford their work. I even eliminated the older generation of Americans from consideration: better to buy a major oil by Franz Kline, for instance, whose work was cheap because nobody then bought it, than a watercolor by the aged John Marin whose prices I thought beyond my reach.²

Baker's acquisitions during the remainder of the decade — including works by Theodor Werner, Enrico Donati, Jackson Pollock, Felix Pasilis, Franz Kline, Kumi Sugai, William Ronald, Hans Hofmann, Ilya Bolotowsky, Conrad Marca-Relli, Jean Dubuffet, Nathan Oliveira, Pierre Soulages, and Georges Mathieu — all conform to the guideline adopted in 1955. As this list indicates, the majority of Baker's purchases were in the abstract expressionist style which dominated the decade.

Many of these artists were neither unknowns nor newcomers to the art world; they were "unestablished" commercially but several had long-established critical reputations. Yet none of their works, even by artists like Pollock who had the largest reputations, were consistently commanding high prices until the last years of the fifties or early sixties. The top price which Baker paid for a painting during this decade was \$5200 for Hofmann's *The Pond* in 1959, just before the artist's prices rose spectacularly. This expenditure was a notable exception in Baker's collecting during these years; only a few objects cost more than \$2000, and most were bought for less than \$1000.

The time lag between critical acclaim and financial success which characterized the career of many of the American abstract expressionists played a crucial role in Baker's acquisition of several works which have proved to be his most important purchases of the fifties. These are Pollock's *Arabesque* acquired in 1955 for \$2500, Kline's *Wanamaker Block* acquired in 1956 for \$2000, both from the Sidney Janis Gallery, and four paintings by Hofmann — *Carafe*, *Composition*, *Fortissimo*, and *The Pond*, acquired from the Kootz Gallery in 1955, 1956, 1957, and 1959 respectively for about \$11,000 altogether. *Arabesque* is an intensely lyrical painting (in the all-over drip style for which Pollock is best known) from the limited oeuvre of an artist who has ranked as a cultural hero for over a decade. *Wanamaker Block* is one of the most dynamic examples of Kline's most powerful manner, that of the black and white abstractions. And, not only did Baker acquire *The Pond*, a superb example of Hofmann's mastery of color and form in its concomitant brilliance and delicacy, but three other paintings by this artist as well.

Baker's purchases revealed astonishing foresight. The prices of these artists' works skyrocketed within the next few years. By 1960 the demand for Pollock's and Kline's works mirrored widespread critical acclaim for their achievements, thus ending the time lag between critical and financial success. Paintings by Hofmann, whose reputation was still in critical limbo,³ were selling for \$14,000 only a year after Baker acquired *The Pond* for less than half that sum.⁴

An examination of the New York gallery world of the fifties with special emphasis on Pollock, Kline, and Hofmann⁵ and Baker's role as a collector within this world reveals the general reticence of the buying public toward avant-garde American art and its predilection instead for twentieth-century French art. These factors significantly contributed to the disparity between critical and commercial success.

In the late forties and early fifties there were few galleries in New York — perhaps no more than fifteen⁶ — which exhibited serious contemporary art. Most of these were clustered on 57th Street, and the fact that Baker lived on East 56th Street during the first six years of his residence in New York facilitated his gallery-going. His acquaintance with the galleries was slight until 1954,⁷ at which time José Guerrero introduced him to the galleries of Samuel Kootz and Catharine Viviano. In the mid-fifties, however, Baker began to frequent all the galleries regularly — “no matter how bad.” The fact that there were few galleries is a direct reflection of the small demand for contemporary art during the fifties. Conversely, the fact that Baker now attends only about one quarter of the gallery exhibitions, despite an even greater zeal for collecting, attests to the mushrooming of contemporary galleries.

It is significant that only a few of these early galleries represented exclusively twentieth-century artists and fewer still primarily Americans. Two notable exceptions were the Betty Parsons Gallery and the Egan Gallery; yet neither was able to secure high prices or consistent sales for its artists in the late forties and early fifties.

Betty Parsons established her gallery in 1946. She had already been organizing exhibitions of contemporary American art for six years, first as partner of the Wakefield Bookstore, where she exhibited such artists as Alfonso Ossorio (1941,

1943), Joseph Cornell (1942), Saul Steinberg (1943), and Adolph Gottlieb (1944), and then as director of the Mortimer Brandt Gallery, where she gave one-man shows to John Graham, Hedda Sterne, Theodore Stamos, Hans Hofmann, Mark Rothko, and Ad Reinhardt, among others. Brandt's decision to drop contemporary art in 1946 because he was “pleased by the critical success” but “disappointed at the financial ledger”⁸ seems to have had no effect on Parsons, who has always exhibited contemporary art.



Pierre Soulages, 3 Feb. 55, 1955, oil on canvas.
Richard Brown Baker Collection (not in exhibition)

In 1947, when Parsons succeeded Peggy Guggenheim as Pollock's dealer, Pollock had already won the support of a highly influential coterie of art world personalities. Writing about Pollock's first one-man show at her Art of This Century Gallery in 1943, Peggy Guggenheim succinctly lists the persons whose immediate critical acclaim and continued support were crucial to the growth of Pollock's reputation.

The introduction to the catalogue was written by James Johnson Sweeney, who helped a lot to further Pollock's career. . . . Clement Greenberg, the critic, also came to the fore and championed Pollock as the greatest painter of our time. Alfred Barr bought the “She Wolf,” one of the best paintings in the show, Dr. Morley asked for the show in her San Francisco Museum, and bought the “Guardians of the Secret.”⁹

Despite the endorsement of such art aficionados and the serious, if not always enthusiastic, coverage by popular critics like Robert Coates of the *New Yorker* and Edward Alden Jewell of the *New York Times*, Pollock sold very few pictures in the five consecutive shows he had at Art of This Century. This lack of commercial appeal made him something of a liability, and when Betty Parsons finally agreed to act as his dealer, it was only with the stipulation that Peggy Guggenheim continue paying Pollock's monthly stipend of \$300.¹⁰

In the course of four years Parsons gave Pollock five one-man shows, only one of which sold well (that of November 21–December 10, 1949). However, the majority of the works sold were purchased for \$200 or \$300, while the larger and costlier works often went back on the racks.¹¹ During these years Pollock was also given a great deal of exposure abroad, for much of which Peggy Guggenheim was personally responsible. In addition to exhibiting her own collection (including six Pollocks) at the Venice Biennale of 1948 and again at La Strozzi in Florence in 1949 (with ten Pollocks), she secured first one-man shows for him in Venice (Museo Correr, 1950), Milan (Galleria d'arte del Naviglio, 1950), and Paris (Studio Paul Facchetti, 1952). Pollock's reputation in this country also continued to grow while he was at Parsons: there were new champions of Pollock from the art world; his show at Betty Parsons in 1950, notwithstanding unspectacular sales (twelve out of thirty-six works sold, six at \$300, three at \$850, one at \$600, one at \$800, and one very large one at \$2350)¹² was ranked third to Marin's and Giacometti's first and second in the *Art News* annual listing of the top ten one-man shows of the year;¹³ *Time* and *Life* both featured articles on Pollock for the first time in 1947 and 1949 respectively. Yet in 1950, in spite of this continuing critical notice, Pollock was forced to barter a painting for his grocery bill.¹⁴

Although he knew of Pollock before moving to New York, Baker does not recall exactly when he first saw Pollock's work. He remembers, however, that he initially disliked it, with the result that he felt little urge to acquire a Pollock until he saw *Arabesque* in 1955. Similarly, Baker recalls that he thought the first painting by Kline he saw – which he described as the "insect-like black and white painting" now in the Museum of Modern Art's collection (*Chief*) was "terrible."

Kline did not have his first one-man show until 1950, when he exhibited his black and white abstractions at the Egan Gallery. Like Pollock, Kline's acceptance by the art world was quick and lasting. Of Kline's second show at the Egan Gallery the following year, a reviewer for *Art News* wrote: "Franz Kline has in two years achieved a well-deserved 'succès d'estime' both here and in Japan," and in 1952 the same magazine published a six page illustrated article entitled "Kline Paints a Picture." In each of these years an issue of *Bokubi*, a Tokyo magazine, was devoted almost exclusively to Kline's work. Despite success in America and Japan, Kline's sales were few and his prices low (in 1950 they ranged from \$100 to 1000; in 1952, from \$100 to 1200).¹⁵

Charles Egan, Kline's first dealer, opened his gallery in 1945, shortly before Betty Parsons, and like her, his previous experience involved organizing numerous exhibitions of contemporary art. The unreadiness of the buying public to purchase the new American art was intensified by Egan's decidedly unbusinesslike conduct.¹⁶ De Kooning, whose first one-man show attracted an overflow of representatives from the press and museums, left the Egan Gallery for Janis in 1951 because of poor sales; Kline followed suit in 1955, after his third and last one-man show at the Egan Gallery in 1954.

In May 1955, just before Kline transferred to the Sidney Janis Gallery, Egan offered Baker an early Kline for approximately \$700. Although Baker was increasingly aware of the enthusiasm felt for Kline in artists' circles, primarily due to the impact of his work at the "New Decade" shows, and despite Egan's advice that Kline's prices at Janis would undoubtedly be more expensive, Baker passed up the purchase because his funds were low. The fact that Pollock's and Kline's prices did go up at the Sidney Janis Gallery but did not place their works in a price bracket beyond Baker's reach reflects the buying public's continued reluctance to purchase American abstract expressionist works. In sharp contrast to the limited commercial appeal of the paintings of these American works, avant-garde French art was immensely popular among American collectors in the mid-fifties.

By the forties the belief in French aesthetic supremacy was so strong in the New York art world that French art overshadowed American art completely, relegating it to an inferior position. In light of this preference for French art¹⁷ the sales records of the abstract expressionists up to the late fifties are more comprehensible. The fact that the two galleries in which they ultimately achieved financial success – the Sidney Janis and Kootz Galleries – concurrently and consistently exhibited avant-garde French art also acquires additional meaning; the sales from French art enabled the dealers to support their American artists.

Sidney Janis established his gallery in 1948 and during its first two years exhibited almost exclusively European modern masters. The sales from the gallery's first two one-man shows — of Léger in 1948 and Kandinsky in 1949 — reflect the hostility of the buying public toward avant-garde art in general; two paintings were sold from the Léger show and none from the Kandinsky show. However, by the gallery's third year of operation, Janis was making a profit from his sales of Europeans.¹⁸ His growing reputation for business acumen was a powerful drawing card to several of the abstract expressionists who were discontented with their sales records in other galleries; thus, de Kooning and Kline left Egan for Janis in 1951 and 1955. Pollock and Rothko similarly left Parsons to join Janis in 1952 and 1954.

The inclusion of these avant-garde American artists in a gallery which was exhibiting and selling works by modern Europeans may in itself have made them slightly more acceptable to a reluctant buying public. If it did not, the two opening shows of the gallery's third season — "Challenge and Defy: Extreme Examples by XX Century Artists, French & American" and "Young Painters in the U.S. & France"¹⁹ — which comprised works by avant-garde painters of both countries — provided the opportunity for collectors to evaluate the comparative worth of avant-garde French and American art. The buying public remained singularly unimpressed by the American works, for none of them sold.

Pollock had five one-man shows at the Sidney Janis Gallery and his prices progressed in the following manner: a painting approximately 40" x 120" sold for \$2000 in 1952, \$3500 in 1955 (the year in which Baker purchased *Arabesque*), \$7500 in 1957 (the year after Pollock's death) and \$10,000 in 1958. Kline also had five one-man shows at Janis, the last a memorial exhibition in 1963. The sales records from the first three exhibitions dramatically illustrate the full-blown international recognition of the abstract expressionists which occurred at the end of the decade. From the first show in 1956 Baker purchased *Wanamaker Block* for \$2000. In 1959 a work of similar dimensions was priced at about \$3500. Half of the works were purchased from the first show and approximately one-third from the second. In 1960, however, when a comparable painting was priced at \$9500, all fifteen works were purchased immediately.²⁰

Unlike Janis, when Samuel Kootz opened his gallery in 1945, he already represented several abstract expressionists and was an avowed crusader for their acceptance by a larger public. Motherwell, Baziotes, Gottlieb, Holty, and Browne comprised the original group Kootz represented, to which Hofmann was added in 1946. Two of Kootz's most impressive attempts to promote the new American art were his 1949 pioneer show entitled "The Intrасubjectives" — which presented works by de Kooning, Pollock, Gorky, Reinhardt, Rothko, Gottlieb, Hofmann, Motherwell, Baziotes, Graves, Tobey, and Tomlin — and his innovative series of New Talent shows. The first of these, assembled by Clement Greenberg and Meyer Schapiro in 1950, gave Kline his first New York exposure. Although Kootz lost money on the Americans for ten years, the Picasso exhibition he presented in 1947, the artist's first postwar exhibition in America, constituted an enormous financial success.²¹

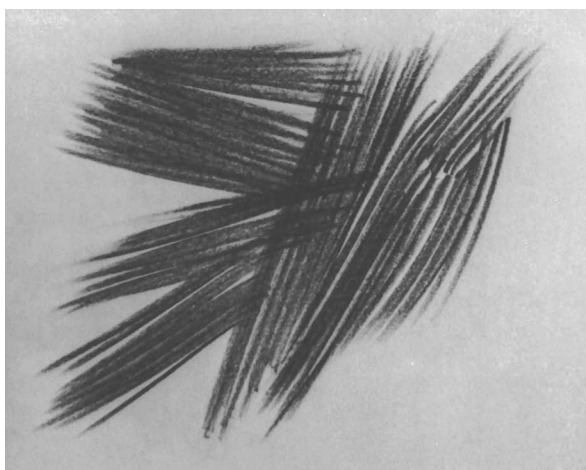
In addition to employing his profits from the sale of Picasso's and Léger's works on behalf of his American artists, Kootz devised a way to create a buying public for the American works by capitalizing on the reigning preference for French art:

One of the things that I always felt was that the major buyer in American painting, not painting by Americans specifically but paintings, was the American with money who had been in the habit of buying the French impressionists, the postimpressionists, the cubists, and so forth; the important thing to me was how to enlist these people in buying Americans. One way I felt it could be accomplished was to take men from France who I thought had equal capabilities with the Americans I was handling. And in 1949 I made my discovery of Soulages and Mathieu. . . . In 1953 I put them under contract to the gallery because I felt that these men were individualists in France . . . who could by their very French being attract my French customers who by coming to the gallery would be led into my American buying. This actually proved a fact . . . the very customers who were interested in Soulages and Mathieu became my customers for my American men.²²

In a sense Baker fit the pattern Kootz describes; his purchase of a painting by Mathieu from Kootz did precede the purchase of his first Hofmann, and he bought his two Soulages paintings from Kootz before he acquired his Kline from Janis (Soulages' 3 Feb. 55, 1955). Yet Kootz specifically mentions Baker as "one of the first younger collectors to buy (the Americans). People like Ben Heller were not even aware of what was going on at that time. He came into the picture after everything was well-established. Scull the same way." Unlike most of the other young collectors however, who "disappeared," according to Kootz, Baker became a confirmed collector.²³ His purchases of the next several years from the Kootz Gallery — among them a Motherwell collage, the two paintings by Soulages and one by Dubuffet, three more paintings by Hofmann and another by Mathieu — reveal a concurrent interest in contemporary French and American abstraction.

In the mid-fifties such dual interest was extremely rare. Not only did the French modern masters attract an American buying public prior to the abstract expressionists in this country, but so did their French counterparts.²⁴ At the end of the fifties, however, the dominance of the French abstract expressionists ended dramatically. This drastic change in American taste was triggered by a new realization: that the American works embodied qualities basic to the American experience. Freedom and dynamism, the very attributes once attacked as too extreme, were lauded at the expense of the French works whose attention to finish and structural unity now caused them to be dismissed as mannered. Suddenly, the high quality of American art was recognized by the buying public and its status rapidly eclipsed the eminence of contemporary French art.

When asked about the popularity of the French abstract expressionists in New York during the fifties, Janis recently remarked that "ever since de Staël, Dubuffet and Giacometti, there has been nothing happening in Paris."²⁵ Castelli described Hartung, Soulages, and Yves Klein as "very mannered," adding that "there have been no strong European painters since Miro, Giacometti, and Dubuffet."²⁶ (See Hartung's pastel *P. 58-43*, 1958.) Parson's description of the disparity reveals her preference in a less disparaging manner: "Europeans live in walled-in cities" and hence their paintings are "all enclosed. Americans burst out. An expanding world comes out of America; Pollock is an expanding world; Rothko is an expanding world, Still is an expanding world; they were not raised in walled cities."²⁷



Hans Hartung, *P.58-43*, 1958, pastel on paper.
Richard Brown Baker Collection (not in exhibition)

Within the history of the ascendancy of abstract expressionism, Baker played a timely and supportive role. With his original intention of buying "the work of the living, the young, and the unestablished," he combined an appreciation of both French and American contemporary art. He trusted his own taste implicitly and took frequent risks, purchasing diverse works by artists whose critical success preceded their financial success. Disregarding prevailing preferences for French art, he amassed an extensive collection based on intelligent, personal criteria.

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, all information about Richard Brown Baker and his collection is based on conversations with the collector (September 23, October 18, November 20, December 2, 1974) and his accessions list.
- 2 Richard Brown Baker, "Notes on the Formation of My Collection," *Art International* 7 (September 20, 1961), p. 41
- 3 Baker has mentioned that Alfred Barr, James Johnson Sweeney, and Dorothy Miller, among others, disliked Hofmann's work. Compared to other abstract expressionist masters, Hofmann is grossly underrepresented at the Museum of Modern Art.
- 4 Samuel Kootz, interview with John D. Morse, March 2, 1960, Archives of American Arts.
- 5 I have chosen not to treat Hofmann's career in the galleries in the same detail as those of Pollock and Kline. This is primarily because of space limitations and, secondly, because the emphasis on his importance as a teacher overshadowed his achievements as a painter for many years. As a result, his critical acclaim and commercial success are linked more closely in time than those of the other abstract expressionists and do not conform — as Pollock's and Kline's do — to the more general pattern in the careers of the abstract expressionists which involves a greater time lag between critical and commercial success.
- 6 Statement by Betty Parsons in "New York Galleries," *Arts* 45 (April 1971), p. 54.

- 7 Baker states that prior to this date he knew only a few galleries, primarily those of Sidney Janis and Betty Parsons.
- 8 Aline B. Luochheim, "Betty Parsons: Her Gallery, Her Influence," *Vogue*, October 1, 1951, p. 196.
- 9 Peggy Guggenheim quoted in Dore Ashton, *The New York School* (New York: Viking Press, 1972), p. 153.
- 10 B. H. Friedman, *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 116.
- 11 Betty Parsons Gallery files.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 "The Year's Best: 1950," *Art News* 49 (January 1951), p. 42.
- 14 Friedman, *Pollock*, pp. 104, 132.
- 15 *Art News* 50 (December 1951) and 51 (December 1952).
- 16 In *The New York School*, p. 168, Dore Ashton explains that he allegedly did not observe regular business hours and frequently potential clients arrived to find the gallery closed.
- 17 In an article for *Partisan Review* of January–February 1952, Clement Greenberg expressed his frustration at this unquestioning presumption of French superiority which continued to blind the art world to Pollock's achievement:

"If Pollock were a Frenchman, I feel sure that there would be no need by now to call attention to my own objectivity in praising him. People would already be calling him "maître" and speculating in his pictures. Here in this country the museum directors, the collectors, and the newspaper critics will go on for a long time — out of fear if not out of incompetence — refusing to believe that we have at last produced the best painter of a whole generation; and they will go on believing everything but their own eyes."

In an introductory statement to the 1964 Rhode Island School of Design exhibition catalogue of his collection, Baker recounts that in about 1956 a New York art professional of European background counseled him against purchasing a major painting by Kline because Kline, while discussed locally, was still unknown in Paris.

- 18 "Profile on Sidney Janis," *New Yorker*, November 12, 1960, p. 81.
- 19 Organized by Leo Castelli, the latter show paired Pollock with Lanscoy, Kline with Soulages, de Kooning with Dubuffet, Rothko with de Staël, and Gorky with Matta.
- 20 Courtesy of the Sidney Janis Gallery.
- 21 Interview with Samuel Kootz, October 30, 1974.
- 22 Samuel Kootz, interview with Dorothy Seckler, April 13, 1964, Archives of American Art.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Works by Mathieu, whose first one-man show in the United States occurred only in 1952 at the Stable Gallery, and those by Soulages, whose first New York one-man show was at the Kootz Gallery in 1954, sold immediately and consistently from the time that Kootz first exhibited them.
- 25 Interview with Sidney Janis, October 26, 1974.
- 26 Interview with Leo Castelli, October 30, 1974.
- 27 Interview with Betty Parsons, November 15, 1974.

11 **Alexander Calder**

A Mobile with Stable Tail, 1947

Painted steel, 28" high x 52" maximum horizontal extension

In his preface to a 1931 Calder exhibition the French artist Fernand Léger wrote: "Before these new works, transparent, objective, exact, I think of Satie, Mondrian, Marcel Duchamp, Brancusi, Arp . . . Calder is of that line. He is an American 100%. Satie and Duchamp look 100% French. Yet we meet."¹ Calder, whose mother was a painter and whose father and grandfather were sculptors, was trained as a mechanical engineer. However, he discovered his calling only in the early 1920s when he enrolled in the school of the New York Art Student's League in 1923, and then three years later traveled to Paris.

In 1920 the constructivist sculptor Naum Gabo, who was in Paris by 1922, had written in his Realistic (Constructivist) Manifesto, "we construct our work as the engineer constructs his bridges, as the mathematician his formula of the orbits . . . we affirm in these arts a new element of the kinetic rhythms as the basic form of our perception of real time."² Perhaps responding to this, Calder in 1928 experimented with mechanized movement, taking the flat planes, primary colors, and nonsymmetrical balance he had noted in Mondrian's studio that year and putting them in motion — "I thought at the time how fine it would be if everything *there* moved."³

Calder had also met Miro in 1928 and realized that his "basic sympathies lay in the direction of Miro's abstract surrealism based on organic forms, rather than in the direction of Mondrian's pure plastic geometry."⁴ He added biomorphic forms inspired by Miro and Arp to the geometric ones of Mondrian, abandoning constructivist mechanization in favor of chance movement and rhythms. These biomorphic forms also appear in his representations of arrested movement — stables — which, although powerful and energetic, are balanced delicately on the ground, their movement seemingly imminent.

Works such as *A Mobile with Stable Tail* represent a culmination within Calder's oeuvre, a wedding of two disparate aesthetics — one based on motion, the other on arrested motion. Thomas Messer wrote of these mobile-stables, "The hybrid combination, then, results from a fusion that brings into play a balanced ensemble of interpenetrated static and kinetic components . . . The early strive toward motion and the subsequent reassertion of repose are finally resolved in complete mechanical and visual harmony."⁵

The majority of Calder's interrelated sculptures of the 1940s and 1950s were on a small or medium scale; in the 1960s, however, the scale increases, climaxing in monumental outdoor mobile-stables. Whatever their size, Calder's mobile-stables have in common a combination of the mass and energy of the static stable base and the delicacy of the playful mobile it supports. *A Mobile with Stable Tail* is no exception; the stable base stands securely like a tree trunk from which the mobile branches, its petal-like primary-colored appendages, are delicately set in motion by the slightest movement. The fragile mobile, asymmetrically jutting off to one side, is balanced by its stable base and by the purity of its primary colors.

S.B.B.

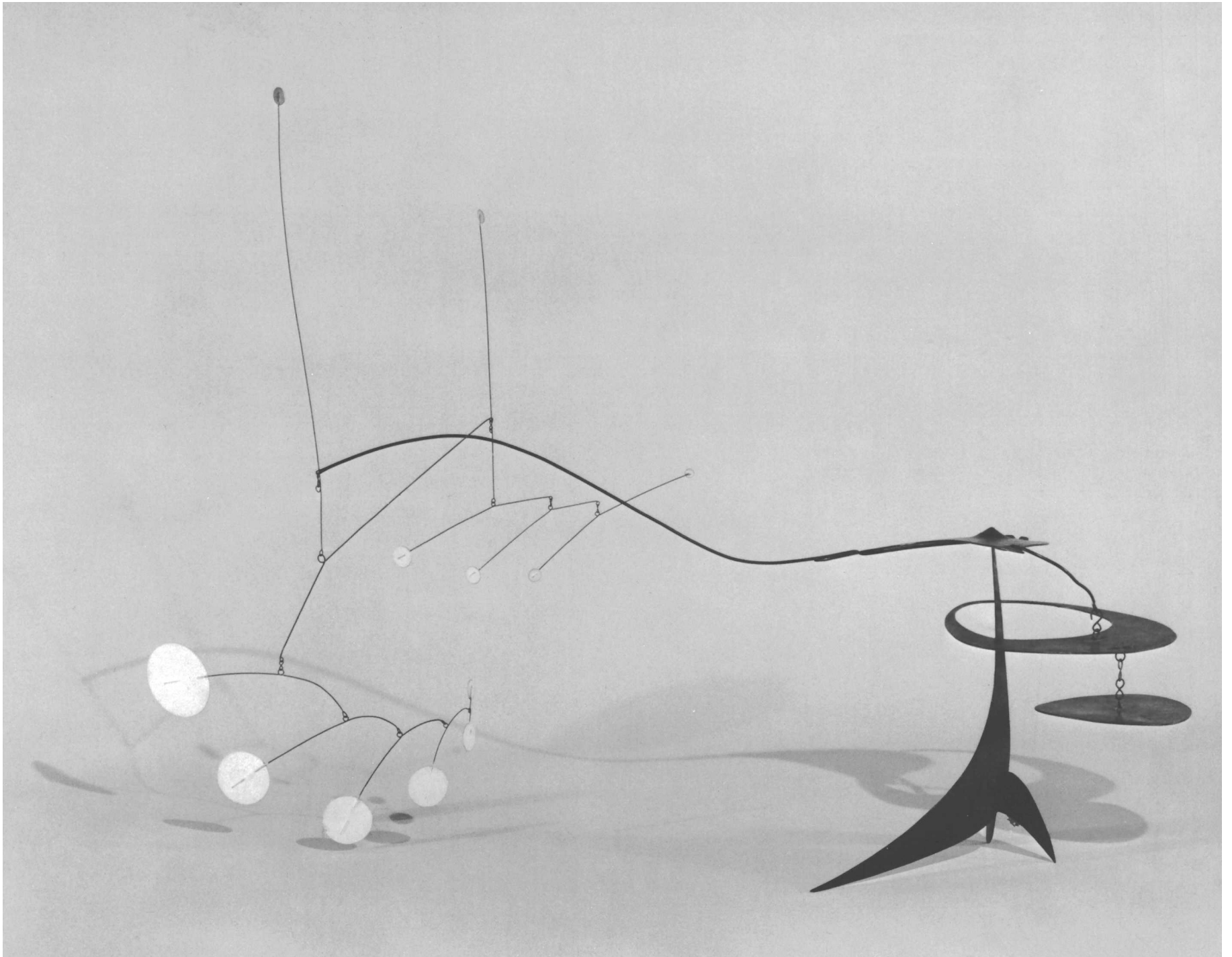
1 Alexander Calder (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1962), p. 10. These "new works" were Calder's mechanized sculptures, christened mobiles in 1931 by Marcel Duchamp; the following year Hans Arp named Calder's static works stables. Calder has always traveled back and forth between France and Connecticut, maintaining residences in both places.

2 Quoted in Bernice Rose, *A Salute to Alexander Calder* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1969), p. 8.

3 Ibid.

4 H. H. Arnason, *Calder* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1966), p. 47.

5 Thomas M. Messer, *Alexander Calder: A Retrospective Exhibition* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1964), p. 17.



- 12 **Mark di Suvero**
Untitled, 1963
Welded Steel, 18½" x 15"

Mark di Suvero is known primarily for his large outdoor constructions in wood and metal and for his social concern, notably his protest against the Vietnam War,¹ his participation in the communal Park Place Gallery (1963–67), and his construction of playgrounds and toys.² Small-scale sculptures, while not as well known, do occur frequently within his oeuvre. Although the small works are independent of the large ones, and of each other, they share aesthetic concerns with balance, unity/separateness, cohesion, and stability:

Di Suvero's structures, no matter how large, no matter how extended, or how subject to the pressure of free-hanging components, are self-contained objects. They present images of internal cohesion and solidity. . . . At another level, the structure dissolves into images of separate beams, boards, poles, and wires. . . . Each part reveals itself independently — visually through placement, and functionally, as it works toward structural stability. . . . [They] are unified by an organic reciprocity.³

The viewer initially sees this sculpture as a cohesive unit, additive, yet solid; a closer inspection reveals the actual physical separateness of the upper element. The addition of a balanced or moving element is common in di Suvero's small and large works, such as *For Peace* (Pasadena Art Museum, 1970) in which a movable upper beam has been described as "a form of traditional kinetism, or a witty variant of architectural stability" — a description also applicable to Mr. Baker's sculpture.⁴

Unlike the larger works, this sculpture has a base; this is frequent in the "smaller works, whose traditionally expressionist intent is often signaled by a return to the sculptural base, whereas larger pieces always expand beyond the base."⁵ The intent of *Untitled* may be similar to that behind di Suvero's toys, which he is said to have designed to contain "training potential for nausea-conditioning (vertigo) — the prime condition of an esthetic approach to modern life."⁶ Indeed, the top part recalls a tight-rope walker precariously balanced on the wire, holding a long pole or standing with outstretched arms. The top piece does keep its balance, but can be effortlessly lifted off by the viewer.

S.B.B.

1 He has refused to exhibit in the United States as a protest against the war; he contributed to the antiwar *Los Angeles Tower of Peace*, 1966.

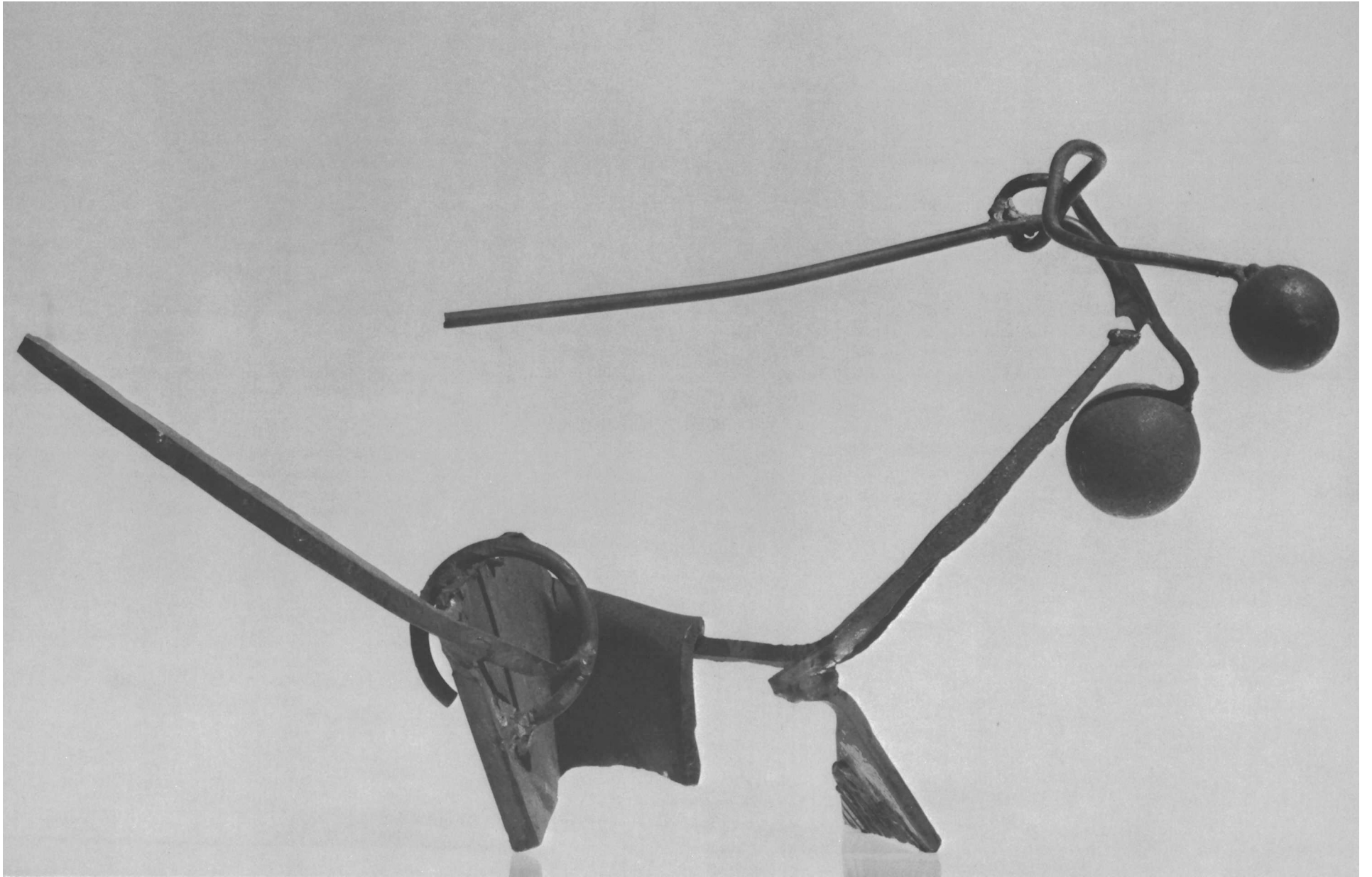
2 See Carter Ratcliff, "Mark di Suvero," *Artforum* 11 (November 1972), pp. 31–42. The article was occasioned by an exhibition of di Suvero's sculpture organized by the Stedelijk van Abbe-museum, Eindhoven, Holland, 1972.

3 Ibid., pp. 36, 38.

4 Ibid., p. 39.

5 Ibid., p. 36.

6 Ibid., p. 42.



13 **Robert Rauschenberg**
Interior 2, 1958
Mixed media on two canvases, 40" x 24"

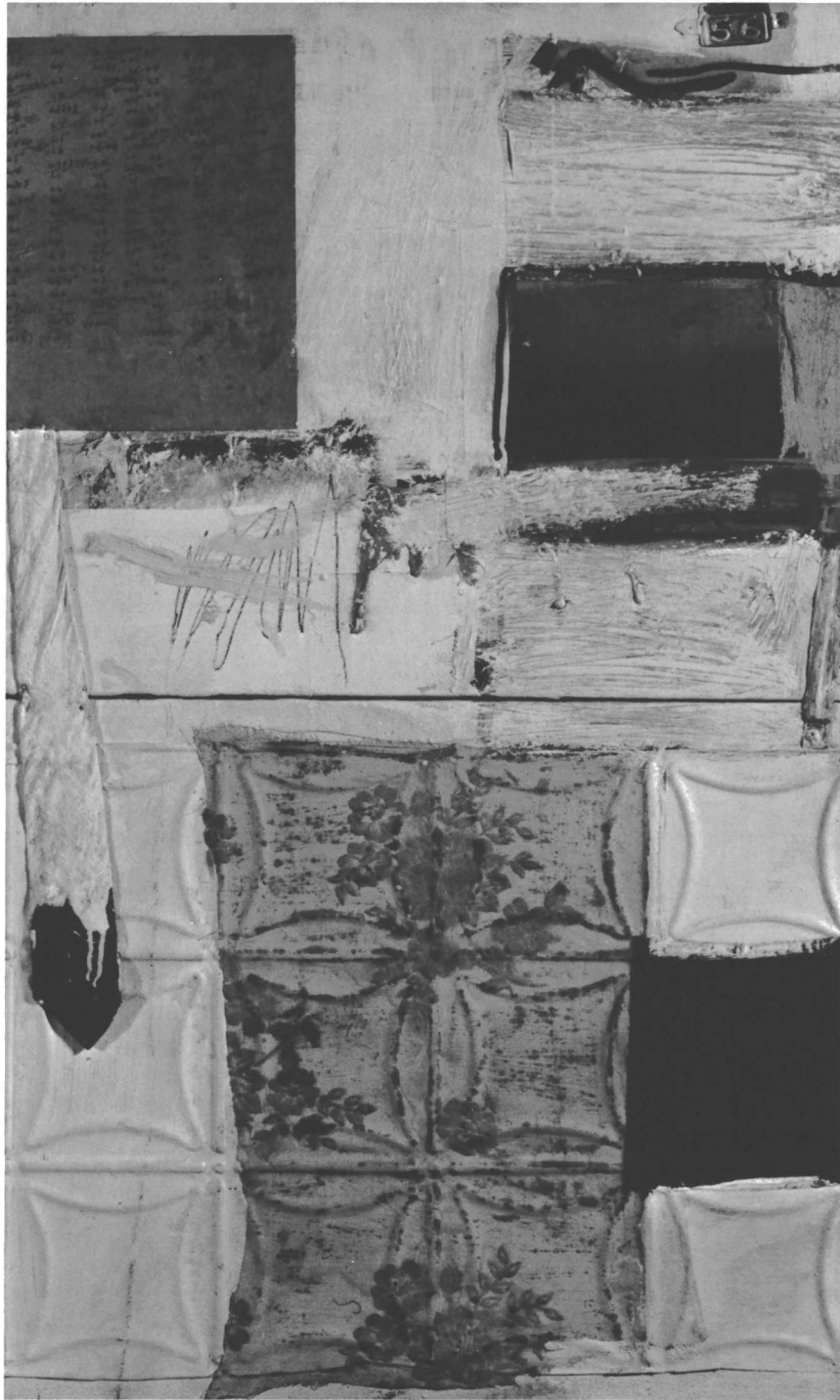
Compared to other combine paintings such as *Bed*, *Odalisk*, or *Winter Pool*, Robert Rauschenberg's *Interior 2* is an intimate work whose cubistic mixture of low-relief objects and paint recalls the tasteful collages of Kurt Schwitters and the piece-meal decor of a low-income apartment. Rauschenberg's built-up fragments of colored fabric, ceiling tiles, clippings of blue block letters, and a magazine illustration are united by a chalky white housepaint, which weaves its way over and under objects so that sculptural form (or real life) struggles against surface (or painted artifice). Using two of the most physically assertive objects in the work literally to tie and bracket the two canvases together, Rauschenberg, like his forerunners Picasso and Duchamp, delights in denying the visual integrity of his materials and places them in new contexts which obscure their previous functions.

The dialectic between parts and whole, meaning and form, and clarity and confusion is the essential concern of this collage. Just as the numerical sequences on the brown sheet of paper on the upper left do not fit into an obvious mathematical formula, the entire collage seems to give information and then to negate it: the twelve square tiles and the ragged-edged fabrics bespeak an underlying geometry, but the white paint intrudes to confuse the boundaries or even the existence of forms. The horizontal white strokes on the upper right overlay a red netting, which in turn disguises a fuzzy photograph, which, upon closer examination, emerges merely as a nondescript stone wall in a barren landscape. In the area beside the gray plaid tie, a piece of white painted paper covered with pencil marks, which continue down the length of the combine, overlaps a purple fabric swatch, which is covered with white paint and green and ochre oil pigment. While this complexity is in part a result of Rauschenberg's empirical working method, it satisfies one of his expressed artistic goals, which is "to make a surface which invited a constant change of focus and an examination of detail" or unfolds in time as does music.¹

Although the materials incorporated into Rauschenberg's combines have traditionally been classified as junk, they must be seen as more than the arbitrary collections of a wastebasket. Each fragment is imbued with a sense of nostalgia, or past usefulness, and of worn dullness, which gives it a rarity and history diametrically opposed to the cleanliness and repetition of assembly-line products. Reflecting the relative poverty and antiestablishment stance that characterized his life after his return to New York from Italy in 1953 and his move to Pearl Street (where Jasper Johns also lived),² Rauschenberg's choice of objects is a personal declaration of the beautiful as much as a renunciation of Madison Avenue's claim that anything over two years old is hopelessly out of style and not worth preserving in our American society.

A.McC.

1 G.R. Swenson, "Rauschenberg Paints a Picture," *Art News* 62 (April, 1963), p. 45.
2 For a more complete biography of Rauschenberg, see Calvin Tomkins, *Ahead of the Game: Four Versions of the Avant-Garde* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1968) and Alan Solomon, *Robert Rauschenberg* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1963).



- 14 **Jasper Johns**
The Small Figure 3, 1960
Oil on canvas, 9-1/16" x 6 1/8"

Jasper Johns was one of the few American artists of the 1950s to use the painterly qualities and flat picture plane of abstract expressionism in a move toward reality. He chose certain standardized, two-dimensional images such as the American flag, a target, a number or series of numbers, and a map of the United States, "things which are seen and not looked at, not examined, and . . . have clearly defined areas which could be measured and transferred to canvas."¹ Thus the actual subject of the painting is the conception and the brushstroke itself, which contrasts with the linear sharpness of the image.²

The numbers are the most interesting and complex of Johns's images because numbers are only symbols of abstractions and cannot be considered as "objects" in themselves. Yet Johns treats them as objects in paintings such as *The Small Figure 3*, where an illusion of an object in space is created, then denied because the tonal values do not correspond to inferred spatial relationships; for example, blacks may be read as both surface and shadow. Although *The Small Figure 3* shares these objectives with other paintings in Johns's oeuvre, it has one unusual feature: both sides of the canvas are painted. This may be seen as an example of the questions that Johns raises about the traditional conceptions of restricting the painting to the two-dimensional picture plane.

Johns came to New York in 1952; within three years he had settled on most of the motifs which were to become his trademarks, and shortly thereafter he became one of the most influential of contemporary artists. Because of his use of common images, he was once considered by many critics to be a pop artist, but recent critical perspective has confirmed his persistent denial of this label, and makes clear his position as forerunner to that movement.³ Johns' debt to Duchamp is clear, as is his own role in having established much of the vocabulary and many of the formal problems which advanced artists have been exploring for the past two decades.

J.R.K.

1 Jasper Johns, quoted in Max Kozloff, *Jasper Johns* (New York: Abrams, 1969), p. 15.

2 Henry Geldzahler, "Numbers in Time: Two American Paintings," *The Metropolitan Museum Bulletin*, n.s. 23 (April 1965), p. 298.

3 G. R. Swenson, interviewer, "What Is Pop Art?," *Art News* 62 (February 1964), p. 43.



recto



verso

- 15 **Jim Dine**
Green Lips, 1961
Oil on canvas, 57" diameter

Jim Dine was born in 1935 in Cincinnati, Ohio, and studied art at the University of Cincinnati and the Boston Museum School. At the time of his arrival in New York in 1959, the art being produced there was in a stage of transition. The abstract expressionist movement was dying out and the pop movement had not yet blossomed. It is perfectly appropriate then that Dine's work — picking up upon the world of visual pun and irony discovered by Duchamp and carried on by Johns and Rauschenberg — has in many ways bridged the gap between those two schools. Dine's is a personal art which, never completely rejecting the abstract expressionist love of paint, explores with consistent vitality and unpretentiousness the distinctions between fact and illusion, animating common objects to discover meanings dormant in them. Though he has often been considered a pop artist, Dine rejects that label. "Pop is concerned with exteriors," he explains; "I'm concerned with interiors when I use objects, I see them as a vocabulary of feelings. I can spend a lot of time with objects, and they leave me as satisfied as a good meal. I don't think pop artists feel that way."¹

Green Lips is an early example in Dine's work of a pop-Duchampean contextual disorientation which takes an ordinary object and, by placing it in a fine art context, endows it with extraordinary connotative power. Here, one of the tender parts of the human body has been removed and isolated: one does not know whether to laugh or cry as the lips are mounted on a target-like surface, painted a clammy green in ironic contrast to the complementary red they have in life.

W.R.S.

¹ Jim Dine, quoted in John Gordon, *Jim Dine* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970), n. p.



- 16 **Jim Dine**
Bronté, 1959
Gouache on paper, diameter 14½"



These two remarkable drawings come from a large series of works on paper which Dine executed in 1959. Dine is still close to abstract expressionism here: both his technique and his subjects relate him closely to de Kooning and as well to such West Coast artists as David Park. *Bronté* is drawn mostly with transparent washes on an irregularly cut piece of light brown wrapping paper; it is a gentle work whose reds, greens, and blues blend together to create a pale, romantic image. (It should be noted that both "Bronté" and "Slanted Face" are titles assigned by Mr. Baker, rather than the artist.) In contrast, *Slanted Face* makes use of an energetic, complex technique to make an anguished human expression. Dine's washes here are opaque; and the soft white paper has been rubbed, erased, peeled, and folded: the drawing looks as if it has been attacked, as if the result were accidental rather than purposeful.

17 **Jim Dine**
Slanted Face, 1959
Gouache on paper, 18½" x 17¾"

Dine's early interest in graphic techniques, illustrated in these drawings, has of course grown over the years: he is now acknowledged to be a master printmaker and draftsman, and his drawings continue to demonstrate a sensuous quality of line and brushwork, a concern with texture and particularly with collage, and indeed a sense of craft that sets him apart from the mainstream of pop art.

C. L.



Pop Art and Its Audience

by John R. Klein

With the purchase of Roy Lichtenstein's *Washing Machine* in 1961, Richard Brown Baker distinguished himself as one of a small group of early collectors of pop art.¹ His interest and that of a few others² played a vital role in the "explosion" of pop art upon the New York art world. Together, dealers and collectors brought the work of such artists as Roy Lichtenstein, James Rosenquist, Andy Warhol, Robert Indiana, Tom Wesselmann, and Claes Oldenburg to public attention. Many critics of the time, however, felt that pop art had no right to call itself art and that the phenomenon would prove to be inconsequential.³

When abstract expressionism had reached a height of critical popularity in the late 1950s, some observers perceived that the style had become stale and mannered and believed that a more realistic art would follow. Thus, the Museum of Modern Art held a popular exhibition called "New Images of Man" in 1959; most paintings and sculptures represented the human figure by means of a painterly, abstract expressionist idiom. This was the form that the return to representation was expected to take.

However, the most important "realism" that occurred during the late fifties was the work of Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns, which constituted a quite different and unexpected step in the move away from abstraction. In retrospect, the use of common images, photographs, and actual objects in paintings seems to form a logical transition between action painting and pop, but when these men exhibited in the late 1950s, many people saw their work as outrageous "anti-art." A few critics, however, felt that these paintings were an intelligent alternative to the slashing brushwork of abstract expressionism.⁴ The return to recognizable imagery was well under way, seemingly to result in a new realism which would maintain the personal, introspective qualities of abstract expressionism. The realistic content of pop art was thus expected theoretically, but the form it took came as a tremendous shock to most dealers, collectors, and critics of the period.

Abstract expressionism nevertheless contributed a great deal to the climate surrounding the emergence of pop art, though the intentions of the two styles are antithetical. The "Triumph of American Painting," in Irving Sandler's phrase, gave American abstract painters of the forties unprecedented confidence in their ability to produce significant art on a new large scale. The abstract expressionists had a sense of integrity and mission; with encouragement from a small avant-garde of critics, dealers, and collectors, they developed an original style and format which made New York the world's art center. Their art was a hard-won accomplishment, the product of great faith and prodigious personal commitment.

At first, pop art seemed a betrayal of this tradition. The vulgar world of advertising, industry, and consumer products was not considered appropriate subject matter, and it was some time before pop art's precedents were pointed out in the works of such varying figures as Duchamp, Léger, Stuart Davis, and Gerald Murphy. In addition, pop seemed to be "easy" art that required little creativity or care on the artist's part. Critics were offended both by pop's similarity to commercial art and by the substitution of seemingly mechanical treatment for the individuality of the artist's hand. It is significant that the first pop artists to be appreciated — Jim Dine, Wayne Thibaud, George Segal, Marisol, Claes Oldenburg — were those whose work had certain characteristics, including a degree of painterliness, empathy with the subject, and autobiographical content, which made clear the link with abstract expressionism.

A smaller number of collectors and critics found the machinelike smoothness of pop art an interesting change from what they felt was the excessive aestheticism and emotionalism of the abstract painting of the forties and fifties. The paintings of Pollock, Kline, Newman, and Still were extremely individual statements from unique personalities, and the viewer was obliged to respond personally to participate in the aesthetic. To the public, this art was largely incomprehensible; to collectors, the purchase of a painting entailed a personal commitment which many were neither willing nor able to make.

Pop art, on the other hand, had a quick popular audience. Its images were bold and immediately comprehensible to a vast number of people. Pop art was about American life, its consumption, its advertising, its obsessions and public displays. Despite its recognizable imagery, however, pop was as difficult to accept as "art" as the thrown and spilled paint of the forties had been. The public again found art to be laughable, while pop's many serious critics resented its vulgarity and the apparent criticism of solid American values. Perhaps more important, many collectors and advocates of abstract expressionism were offended by the idea that there could be a new style and an avant-garde which they did not understand. Others who interpreted pop art as a glorification of the American way of life lavished fatuous praise that was as distorted as the most negative criticism.⁵ In the face of this widespread confusion, it seems remarkable that, as early as 1961, collectors such as Mr. Baker could accept pop art as art and judge it on aesthetic grounds.⁶

The most important role that abstract expressionism played in the emergence of pop art was not, however, an aesthetic one. The ultimate acceptance of abstract expressionism contributed much to a growing interest in American art, resulting in an expansion of the art market and the increased application of marketing techniques to the promotion of fine art. Color reproductions of works of art were becoming more widespread, and the relentless advance of printed and especially electronic media immediately transmitted visual knowledge of New York art to the rest of the country and throughout the world.

At the heart of this network were the commercial galleries, which usually represented the first step in the public life of a work of art. In his book *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970*, Henry Geldzahler discusses the position of the commercial galleries in the 1940s:

The galleries play more than an amusing social role in the history of the period, they have served as school, forum, and news transmitter to the community interested in the complex course art has taken. The dealer who is alert to quality, who has committed himself early and clearly to the new art, has risked ego, prestige, and money, and must finally be considered a minor cultural hero.⁷

Geldzahler points here to a development which snowballed in the 1960s, when a far greater number of artists and dealers in New York competed for public attention and patronage. Barbara Rose describes this situation:

Like movie stars, artists emerge from obscurity into the limelight through the help of an intermediary, usually someone whose experience enables him to recognize quality in the unknown and untested. These are the middlemen of the art world. Their role is like that of the film producer or theatrical impresario. Usually they are art dealers who, if sufficiently convinced of the merits of new work, are in a position to give it a public viewing.⁸

This shift in the dealer's role from courageous friend of the artist to audacious impresario seems symptomatic of the trend toward the commercialization of art in the 1960s.

Important here is the fact that the early 1960s were halcyon days for the American economy. There was money to be spent on art, whether as an investment, a mark of status, or for pleasure, and supply met the demand. Of course, the pop artists could not have anticipated their favorable reception by collectors and the interest of the press and public, but their use of commercial images seems more than coincidental. As the phenomenon of art was increasingly a business proposition, with appropriate promotion and sales techniques, so the content and then the form of art ironically evolved into a reflection of that world of consumption and media worship. Pop neither glorified nor condemned its subjects; rather, in Roy Lichtenstein's words:

Pop art looks out into the world; it appears to accept its environment, which is not good or bad, but different — another state of mind.

'How can you like exploitation?' 'How can you like the complete mechanization of work? How can you like bad art?' I have to answer that I accept it as being there, in the world.⁹

In an editorial in the November 1963 issue of *Art News*, Thomas B. Hess, a champion of abstract expressionism, addressed himself to the relationship between pop art and its audience. In response to allegations by some critics that pop artists did not "transform" their subject matter when they used images from comic books, billboards, and magazines,¹⁰ Hess proposed that the transformation was in fact theatrical rather than pictorial. Thus the crucial step occurred when the pop artist selected his subject, called it *art*, and then exhibited it in a gallery or museum. Hess compared the viewer reaction to pop art to the role of the audience in the theater:

The presence of a big audience is essential to complete a theatrical transformation. It is impossible to conceive of a pop painting being produced until some plans are laid for its exhibition. Without its public reaction, the art object remains a fragment.¹¹

This contention that pop art relied on the reaction of its audience to be successful was an extremely perceptive one, but Hess saw that as a negative attribute, asking, "If the only transformation that takes place in Pop art is theatrical (i.e., non-pictorial), is it Art?"¹² He was concerned that an art which depended so much on the quality of its audience would constitute nothing more than fadism and believed that pop art was simply an apt response to a particular cultural situation; like news, it would quickly lose its timeliness.

In the context of theater, an important preface to pop art in New York were the happenings of Oldenburg, Jim Dine, Allan Kaprow, and others. These were largely improvisational theatrical events, and Thomas Hess correctly related the element of theater in the happenings to the "theatrical transformation" mechanism of pop art. Several other characteristics of happenings held significance for pop art. Most happenings were nonverbal; communication was accomplished through hand-printed signs and object manipulation. The participants in many happenings wore masks, further suppressing human individuality. These impersonal qualities found more permanent expression in the pop paintings which followed.

However, the subjects of pop art are not abstract, but are objects of everyday use, and as such may be seen as extensions of human beings. Thus Lichtenstein's comics are elaborate, sterilized fantasies, Wesselmann's constructions are images of the packaged American home, and Oldenburg's objects are the fast-food items and sugary temptations so ubiquitous in this country. Rosenquist's billboard images and Indiana's emblems represent the garish landscape which has replaced natural scenery along our highways. When images of human beings occur in pop painting, they are either faceless and thus become objects, as Wesselmann's nudes, or they function as icons only; Warhol's movie stars, known only through their roles and the mythologies that surround them, are hollow and lifeless.

In fact, only the audience of pop art can bring its cool and static forms to life. The viewer reacts according to how he sees himself in the world, and the reactions taken together form a composite picture of man's attitude toward himself and the urban environment. The reaction of the viewer, by revealing his attitude toward the material world, animates his extensions; thus the role of the audience is essential to the completion of the artistic statement. In retrospect, both violent attacks and overblown praise were necessary to complete the context of the pop image, and only after this theatrical content had been accepted as "being there, in the world," could the critics accept the pictorial image as given, and see it on its own terms.

What, finally, is the lasting value of pop art? The battle over its validity as art no longer rages with the force it had in the early 1960s, and its internal energy has waned. Pop art, appropriate in its cultural context, was also very much of its time in formal terms, as John Russell and Suzi Gablik have pointed out in *Pop Art Redefined*.¹³ It shares with the best contemporaneous hard-edge abstraction a tendency toward unmixed colors, flat, even surfaces and nonobjective forms on an increased scale. Like the best abstract painting, that pop art will endure which uses these qualities in the service of lasting form, satisfying in its directness and beauty, commenting both on American art and American culture.

- 1 Mr. Baker bought the painting in November when Ivan Karp showed him several Lichtenstein pictures at the Castelli Gallery, two months before Lichtenstein's first one-man show there.
- 2 Some of these collectors are Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine, Robert C. Scull, Philip Johnson, and Harry Abrams.
- 3 These critics include Max Kozloff, Thomas Hess, and Sidney Tillim.
- 4 Alfred Barr, Jr., and Max Kozloff.
- 5 Examples of the extremes are: Ivan Karp, "Anti-Sensibility Painting," *Artforum* 2 (September 1963), pp. 26-27; and Max Kozloff, "'Pop' Culture, Metaphysical Disgust, and the New Vulgarians," *Art International* 6 (March 1962), pp. 34-36.
- 6 For example, *Washing Machine* appealed to Mr. Baker because of its simple, inward-directed composition, and he envisioned *Blam* as a contrasting companion piece, forceful and outward-moving.
- 7 Henry Geldzahler, *New York Painting and Sculpture: 1940-1970* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1969), p. 30.
- 8 Barbara Rose, "Art Talent Scouts," *Art in America* 52 (August 1964), pp. 18-19.
- 9 Roy Lichtenstein, interview with G. R. Swenson, *Art News* 62 (November 1963), p. 25.
- 10 Notably Erle Loran, who scored Roy Lichtenstein for "copying" a schematic diagram from his book *Cézanne's Composition*.
- 11 Thomas B. Hess, "Pop and Public," *Art News* 62 (November 1963) pp. 23, 59-60.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 13 John Russell and Suzi Gablik, *Pop Art Redefined*. (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 10.

18 **Richard Smith**
McCall's, 1960
Oil on canvas, 84" x 90"

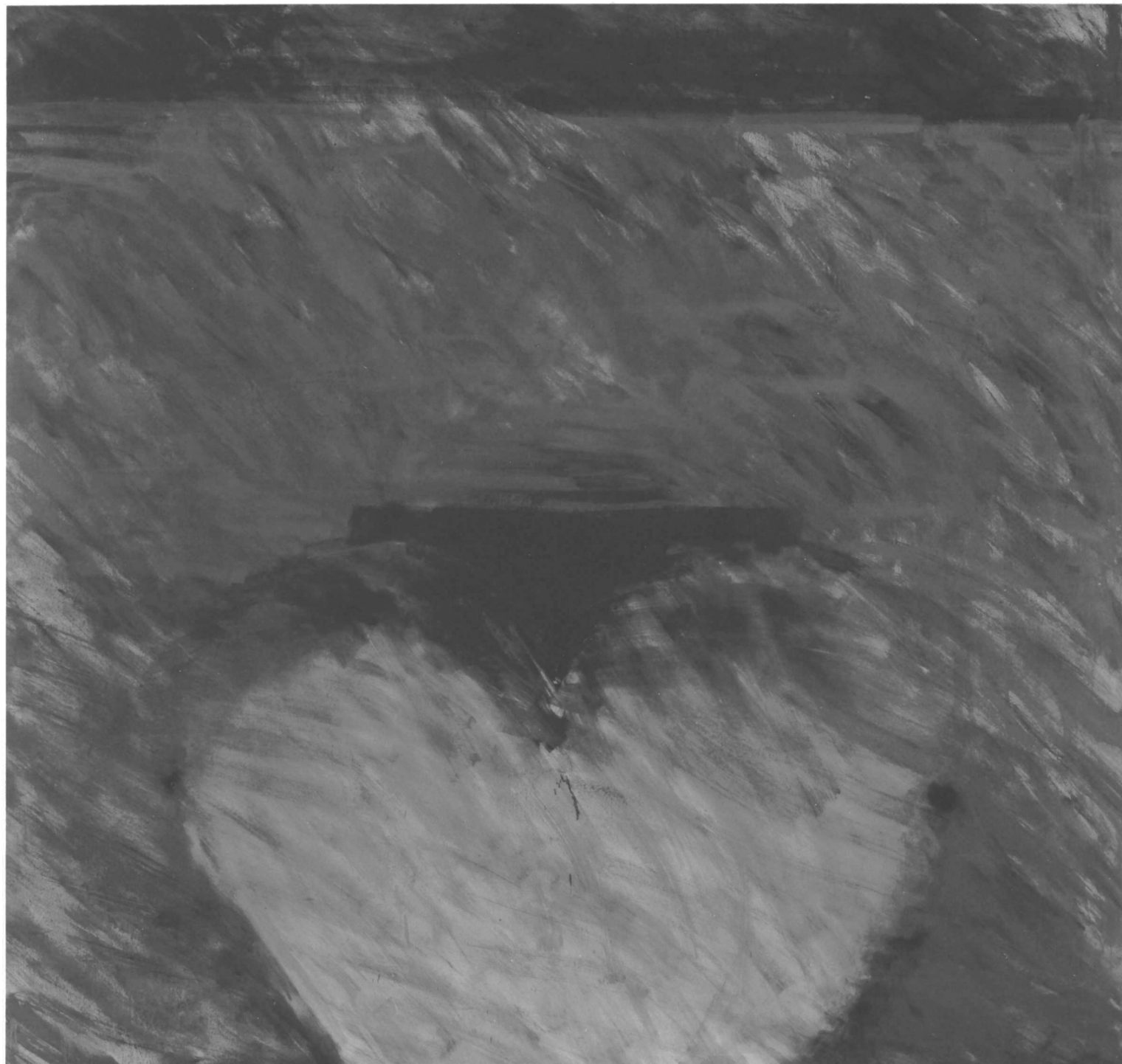
By depicting a generalized popular symbol in a controlled, abstract expressionist style, the British artist Richard Smith stands midway between what were to become two major artistic trends of the 1960s — lyrical abstraction and pop art. He was one of the students of the Royal College of Art who, under the influence of Lawrence Alloway, Reyner Banham, and the New York School, originated British pop art during the late fifties.¹

McCall's, which was produced during Smith's first stay in the United States from 1959-61, is based on a well-known feminine or romantic symbol which probably appeared in the woman's magazine of the same name, but has been transformed into a thinly painted, lipstick red heart rising into a complementary emerald green ground. The "prettyfied" colors, like the subject itself, derive from American commercial color printing; as Smith himself wrote, "I would like to consider color photography as it appears in 'Harper's Bazaar,' 'Vogue,' and other sophisticated products of the mass media. Color photography has made a very complex world. It is a fantasy world, for the color is heightened and the view highly edited, but what is left makes a whole."² Influenced by Rothko's floating, transparent color areas but maintaining an overall diagonal brushstroke which softens the contours and removes the image from reality, Smith uses magazine ads as the starting point for his experiments with large-scale, reductionist color areas.

Although he states that "my interest is not in the message so much as in the method,"³ Smith's writings on movies and clothing in the Royal College of Art magazine *The Ark*, his admiration for Marshall McLuhan, and his consistent choice of cigarette or cosmetic ads as the subjects of his paintings (*Kent*, 1962, *Package*, 1962, *Revlon*, 1961) imply an equal fascination with the material products of an abundant, consumer-oriented economy. His use of a heart, which predates Jim Dine's exploitation of that symbol, grows out of his desire not of "bringing painting to the people but of bringing more of the spectator to art."⁴ Reflecting McLuhan's view of the arts as "the most valuable means of insight into the real direction of our own collective purposes" and "a primary means of social orientation and self-criticism,"⁵ Smith relies on our recognition of the original context of his fragmented subject to open the lines of communication between the artist and society and thus forces us to reconsider both the image and the way that the media act on our consciousness.⁶

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1 Bernard Denvir, "A Double Reality — The Work and Career of Richard Smith," *Art International* 14 (Summer 1970), pp. 78-79.
2 Richard Smith, "That Pink," *Gazette* (No. 2, 1961), p. 3. Smith's interest in color photography resulted in a series of works named after magazines, including *Town and Country*, which is also in Mr. Baker's collection.
3 Denvir, "A Double Reality," p. 81.
4 Michael Compton, *Pop Art* (Feltham, N.Y.: Hamlyn, 1970), p. 160.
5 Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride* (New York: Vanguard, 1951), p. 87.
6 Smith's works after 1963 have been characterized by a gradual reduction of popular imagery and an exploration of three-dimensional form through shaped canvases. His most recent paintings were on exhibit in November 1974 at the O. K. Harris Gallery.



Roy Lichtenstein: Birth of a Style, 1961-1963

by Margaret S. Nesbit

Roy Lichtenstein has made his mark in art history as the man who paints comic strips, or, more accurately, as the man who makes art out of comic strips. The distinction is crucial. The picture — be it the comic strip, the advertisement, or the Cézanne — becomes nothing less than a socko image in Lichtenstein's work: during the one-two punch the viewer is made to sustain not only the shock of the monumentalized cliché but also the visual impact of a tightly constructed aesthetic fact. Ultimately these two aspects of Lichtenstein's image are, of course, indissoluble; Lichtenstein's hallmark, the Ben Day dot,¹ works both as a piece of kitsch and as a pictorial element of considerable importance, especially in a painting like *Thinking of Him* of 1963. Lichtenstein had not always painted in such an idiom, however, and when he hit upon the comic strip style in 1961, he did not immediately realize its potential. Consequently, although the basic ingredients of the style — banal subject matter, the play with the conventions of half-tone reproduction, holistic composition, and primary color — were present almost from the first, Lichtenstein's early work shows him experimenting with themes and techniques. One need only compare *Thinking of Him* with the *Washing Machine*, painted in 1961, to see his progress.²

Lichtenstein quickly became a sixties succès de scandale because of these paintings, but he was no newcomer to the art world.³ He had spent the previous decade in Ohio and upstate New York, studying, teaching, and working intermittently as an engineering draftsman; his work, moving first in the direction of light-hearted American history painting, had by 1960 shifted into the camp of abstract expressionism. In 1960 he moved to New Jersey in order to accept a teaching position at Rutgers, remaining there until 1964, when he resigned so that he could devote all of his time to painting. Although Lichtenstein had exhibited in New York during the fifties, his new paintings of 1961 prompted immediate critical attention and subsequent notoriety. In 1962 he had a one-man show at the Leo Castelli Gallery⁴ and was included in "The New Paintings of Common Objects" exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum. *Time* and *Newsweek*, not to mention the art magazines, saw fit to review his work. During 1963 he had four one-man shows and was part of the "Six Painters and the Object" exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. That same year his translation of Erle Loran's compositional diagram of Cézanne's *Portrait of Madame Cézanne* provoked an avalanche of controversy when Mr. Loran voiced his indignation in an article entitled "Pop Artists or Copy Cats?" which appeared in the October issue of *Art News*. And in January 1964 *Life* magazine featured his work in an article replete with color illustrations but coyly entitled "Is He the Worst Artist in the U.S.?"

19 **Roy Lichtenstein**
Thinking of Him, 1963
Magna on canvas, 68" x 68"

Naturally, given all this excitement, Lichtenstein was sought out for numerous interviews; in 1963 he made the following observations about his new paintings:

In the summer of 1961 I made a complete break into my current work. . . . I am not sure what particularly influenced the change, especially as I have always had this interest in a purely American mythological matter. . . . Using cartoon subject matter in my later painting, some of which I was getting from bubble gum wrappers, eventually led to simulating the same technique as in the originals. The early ones were of animated cartoons, Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, and Popeye, but then I shifted into the style of cartoon books with a more serious content such as "Armed Forces at War" and "Teen Romance." . . . Although I recognize their [Johns' and Rauschenberg's] great influence now, I wasn't as aware at that time. I was more aware of the Happenings of Oldenburg, Dine, Whitman, and Kaprow. I knew Kaprow well; we were colleagues at Rutgers. I didn't see many Happenings, but they seemed concerned with the American industrial scene. They also brought up in my mind the whole question of the object and merchandising.

It was very difficult not to be seduced by the nuances of "good painting." The important thing, however, is not the technique but the unity of vision within the painter himself. Then you don't have to worry if everything you "know" will be in the painting. . . . I want my images to be as critical, as threatening, and as insistent as possible. [About what?] As visual objects, as painting — not as critical commentaries about the world. Of course this



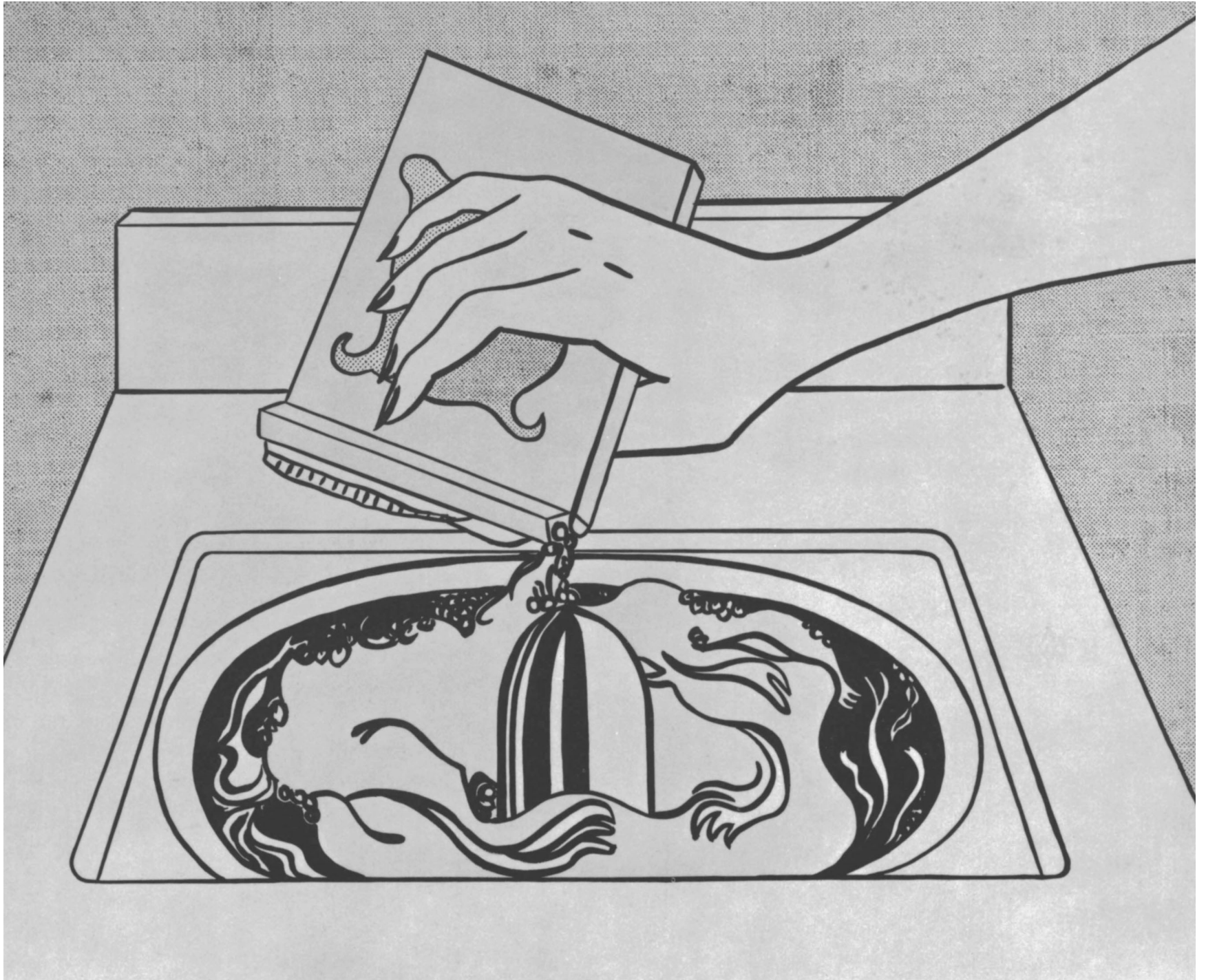
is all in retrospect. At the beginning I wasn't sure exactly what I was doing, but I was very excited about, and interested in, the highly emotional content yet detached, impersonal handling of love, hate, war, etc., in these cartoon images. . . . The closer my work is to the original, the more threatening and critical the content. However, my work is entirely transformed in that my purpose and perception are entirely different.⁵

The fact of the common vulgar comic strip proved to be a major stumbling block for those of Lichtenstein's critics who wanted to know what his pictures are about. Program pure and simple is not possible in these paintings. Lichtenstein steers clear of the Scylla and Charybdis of interpretation: neither celebration nor satire are to be construed from these representatives of True Love, War, Commerce, and Art. Instead we have ambivalence, as Lichtenstein himself has pointed out.⁶

Although others had worked with comic strips — a sampling would include Andy Warhol, Mel Ramos, Jasper Johns, and Philip Pearlstein — Lichtenstein came to the comic strip imagery on his own.⁷ His use of the comic strip distinguishes itself from theirs on three counts: first, he presents a single-frame subject free from painterly obfuscation; secondly, with a few early exceptions, he avoids the celebrities of the comic book world; thirdly, his choice of comic book types, the romances and the battle pieces, reflects what were thought to be the current tendencies in comic book literature.

If the critics of American culture had not looked at comic strips for so long a time with the sightless eyes of Orphan Annie, they might have noticed the steady drift of a once vigorous comic art into an earnest but deadly seriousness. More and more comic strips of recent years have taken upon themselves the pre-packaged, sentiment-filled, solution-attached problems that line the American road of life. A sizable portion of today's American newspaper comic strip section is no longer comic; many of our funnies are no longer funny. With the drift of the comic strips into the domain of daytime radio and TV, American popular arts can now offer soap opera from cradle to grave.

So lamented a writer for *The American Scholar*. The intrusion of the Cold War was another frequent complaint.⁸ Lichtenstein was not blind to the possibilities of this new seriousness. He proceeded to make high (that is, serious) art out of the serious comics. He drew upon the crises of life common to us all, crises which when played out on the comic strip stage seem at once terribly significant and incredibly boring. The advertising subjects belong to the same Ben Day world — the cast of characters in these melodramatic sagas would be equally at home demonstrating the latest oven cleaner. But when Lichtenstein makes art from comic strips, he does not merely ape the banality of the printed page, he quite literally reforms it. What seems to cater to the masses actually offers further blandishments for the aesthete.



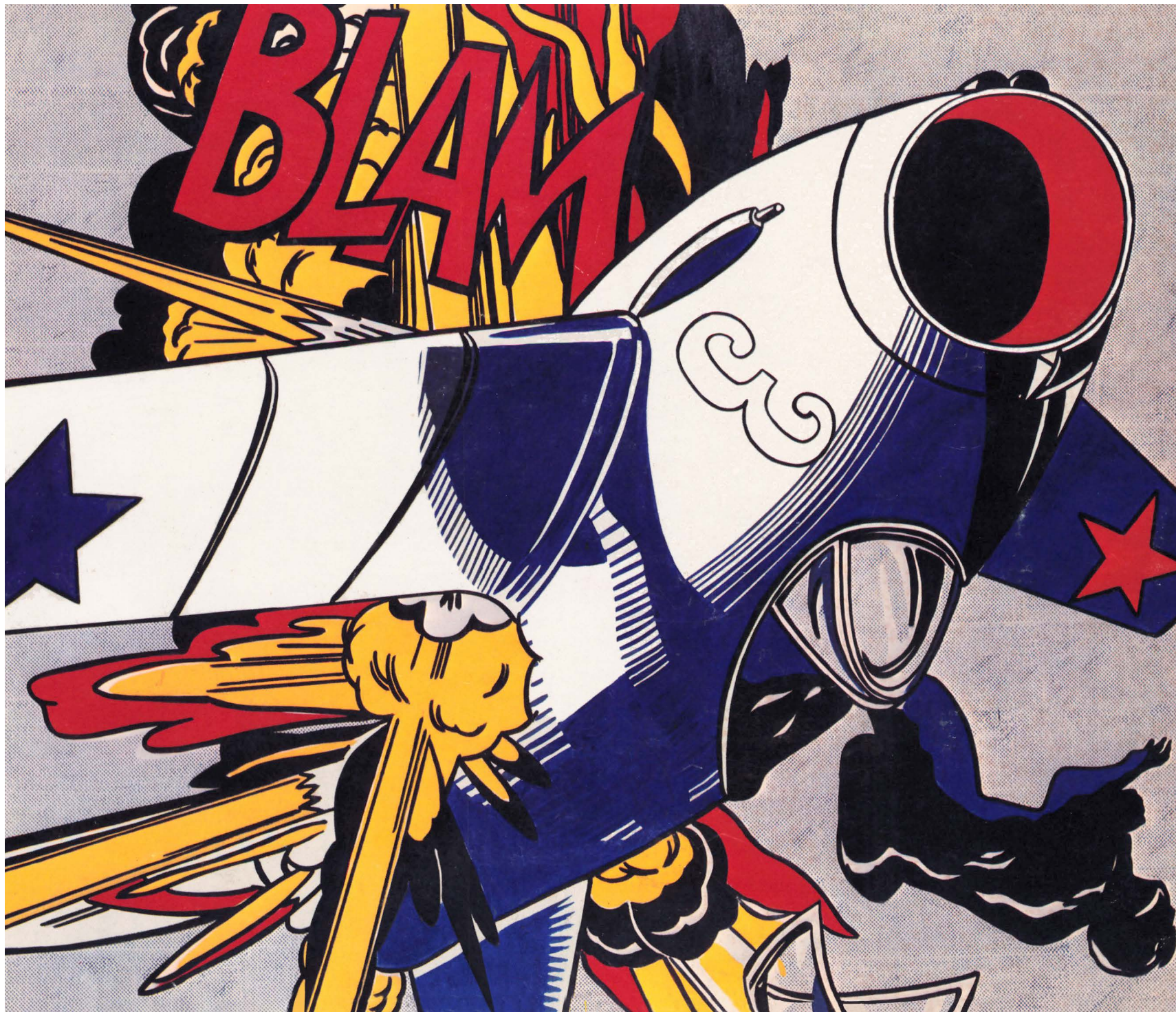
To see *Blam*, painted in 1962, next to its comic book source is to see how a Lichtenstein painting is "critically transformed."⁹ Lichtenstein, it should be emphasized, does not exactly transfer the comic strip to the canvas; the comic strip is but the starting point. Turning the image on its side, Lichtenstein edits his source, the commercially printed reproduction, in order to make it correspond more closely to his notion of the socko image. Lichtenstein consolidates in the interests of two-dimensional design. The resulting composition reduces the given narrative simply to the moment of impact, thereby elevating it to stereotypic heights — and depriving us of the thrill of victory. The point of impact then determines the center point, which generates the various outward thrusts of the composition. (Form is content is form in a Lichtenstein painting.) The naturalistic softening and tonal integration suggested by the blanket of Ben Day dot pattern in the comic strip are negated in the painting by relegating the Ben Day dots to the sky, by the forceful contrasts of flat saturated color, and by the powerful combination of hard flame and machine forms. Yet, with characteristic irony, the apparently slick and highly finished painting reveals evidence of the artist's hand. The solid forms are not bounded by an absolutely hard edge; now and then one notices a linear flourish; the Ben Day dots have not lost a hand-crafted look, blotting, fading, not always aligned.

- 21 **Roy Lichtenstein**
Blam, 1962
Oil on canvas, 68" x 80"



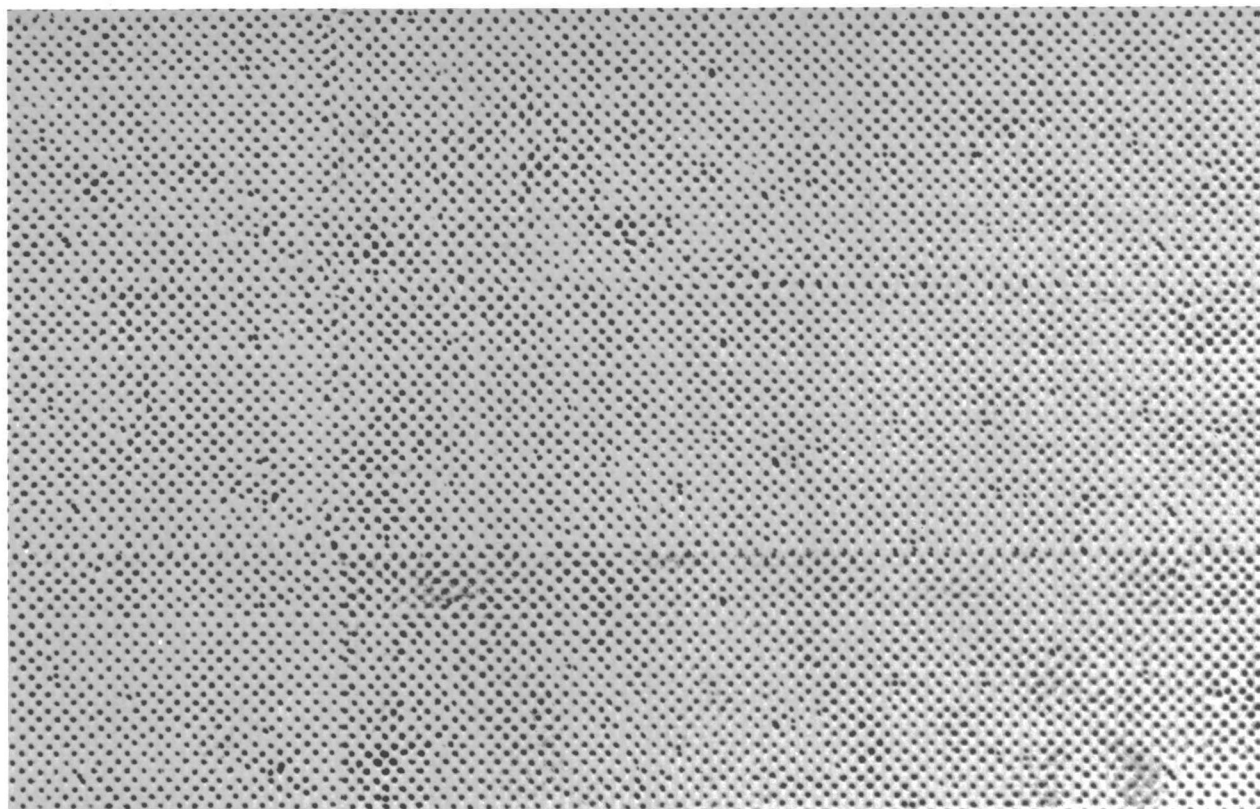
Source of *Blam*, comic book, c. 1961 (detail). Courtesy of Lawrence Alloway

The willful and occasionally undisciplined Ben Day dot foils any attempt to portray Lichtenstein as singlemindedly in quest of the machined look. Nonetheless, Lichtenstein's stylistic development is characterized by the extent to which any direct evidence of the artist's human presence has been removed. Beginning with his new paintings of 1961, Lichtenstein isolates the Ben Day dot, a relatively inconspicuous technique of commercial reproduction, but instead of borrowing wholesale the Ben Day principle of image making, he presents pictorial equivalents for it. Now the Ben Day dot is but one of the network of dots used in cheap, half-tone reproduction, such as newspaper photographs and comic books. In newspaper photographs the image emerges from a grouping of differently toned dots and although the individual dots can still be seen, the en masse result makes the picture. In comic books the dots color rather than define the image, but they still function as a group. At first Lichtenstein exploits the en masse effect of the Ben Day field, although, even more so than in the comic books, his Ben Day pattern merely provides background rather than supporting or defining the image. This begins Lichtenstein's many experiments with the Ben Day dot in his paintings of the early sixties, experiments, however, which are closely related to his experiments with technique.

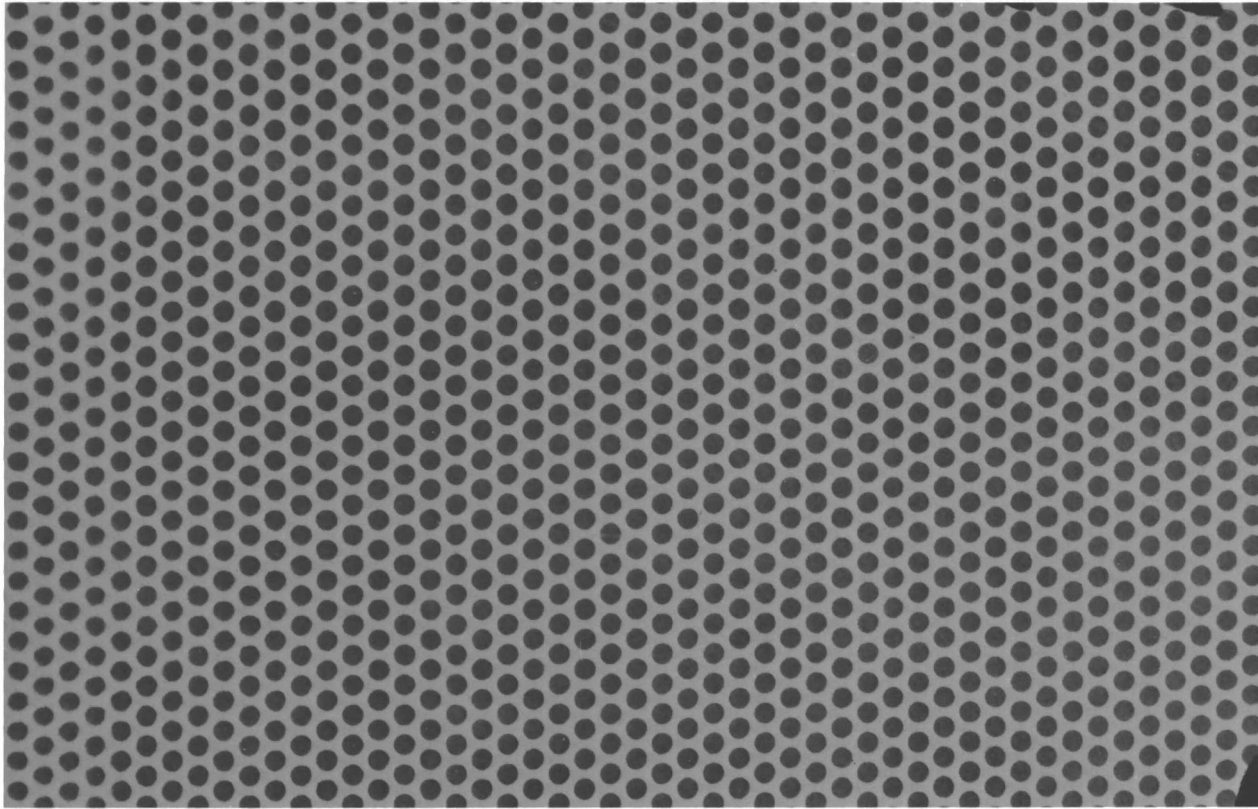


In the *Washing Machine* (see detail), the banding and blotting in the background is related to Lichtenstein's stencil, as are the extraordinary Ben Day dots — small, close, spirited, and various. (*Blam* would be another example of this.) In drawings such as "Jet Pilot," frottage — rubbing a piece of paper against, in this case, a window screen to produce an even pattern of dots — is used to effect greater order. During 1963 Lichtenstein further disciplined his technical means when he adopted a larger Ben Day dot, a less claustrophobic stencil pattern, Magna color, and the projection technique whereby an overhead projector was used to transfer a sketch to the canvas. *Thinking of Him* (see detail) becomes virtually a progress report. The stencil pattern has been revised so as to give the individual dot greater formal autonomy and to avoid banding and blotting; the pattern in "her" lips is not a different stencil but the Ben Day stencil applied twice. If the individual dot does not command all of our attention, neither is it still an insignificant part of a mass. In the interests of maximum clarity, legibility, and simplification, everything, even the lowly Ben Day dot, has its rightful place. No longer does one find accidental drips of yellow in the background.

Much of the rhetoric surrounding Lichtenstein's own appraisal of his work involves "perceptual unity" or "unity of vision" rather than any deep analysis of his subject matter. His attention to perceptual unity was undoubtedly the result of his study at Ohio State with Hoyt Sherman, as witness the artist's remarks during an interview in 1963:



Detail of *Washing Machine*



Detail of *Thinking of Him*

The ideas of Professor Hoyt Sherman on perception were my earliest important influence and still affect my ideas of visual unity. [Perception?] Yes. Organized perception is what art is all about. [He taught you how to look?] Yes. He taught me how to go about learning to look. [At what?] At what doesn't have anything to do with it. It is a process. It has nothing to do with any external form the painting takes; it has to do with a way of building a unified pattern of seeing.¹⁰

Adherence to the dictum of perceptual unity, was, Hoyt Sherman felt, a common denominator for the great painted monuments of art history. He developed a method for teaching this way of seeing to beginning art students and published a book on the subject in 1947, *Drawing by Seeing*.¹¹ By means of lantern slides, simple shapes were projected for 1/10 of a second before the student, after which he was to record the design as completely as his memory allowed. The difficulty of the problems and the length of exposure time to the model were gradually increased, so that by the end of the course, the student could competently handle problems of perspective and life drawing without previous formal training in either. Subject matter was relatively unimportant; what counted was the organization of the picture into a coherent whole manifesting perceptual unity. The differences between the design problems at the beginning and at the end of this training were summarized by Hoyt Sherman in chart form (on page 71).¹²

22 **Roy Lichtenstein**
Jet Pilot, 1962
Pencil and frottage, 22" x 23½"



If one scans the column which outlines the resources Hoyt Sherman allowed his beginning students, certain parallels with Lichtenstein's comic strip style emerge. The comic strip pictures are made from the simplest of means: the reproduced image, primary color, broad simplified shapes devoid of volume. Some of the paintings in 1961 are constructed with outline alone. Later, in 1963, his own projection technique enabled him literally to capture the image (an intermediate drawing between the comic strip source and the final painting) on the canvas before him. Hence Lichtenstein can state that the trick is not to be seduced by "good painting," by what has traditionally been considered good painting. In an effort to avoid stating "what you know," in other words, to get away from the complexities and conventions of past art, particularly abstract expressionism, he requires an artistic *tabula rasa*. And at the same time that he goes back to basics, he reworks the despicable comic strip. In converting the basic and despicable comic strip (which includes the Ben Day dot) into a viable pictorial form, Lichtenstein goes on to make high, albeit avant-garde, art. While Lichtenstein would have us believe him to be a copycat and a relative beginner, he reinvents the look of painting.

During the early sixties, Lichtenstein built his art upon contradictory positions:¹³ clichéd and insightful, mundane and momentous, hackneyed and inventive, crude and sophisticated, all contained by the socko image without any loss of pictorial punch, all woven so tightly together as to confuse our criteria for evaluating art. By maintaining the fiction of artless simplicity in these paintings, Lichtenstein effects a remarkably artful tour de force. Consider, for example, the *Washing Machine*, *Blam*, and *Thinking of Him*.

Element	At the Beginning	Before the End
Location of the work	In the studio	Outdoors, wherever necessary
Lighting of the studio	Complete darkness	Full normal light
Media used	Charcoal, lecturer's crayon	Paints, four colors
Forms used as models	Lantern slides	Landscapes, nudes
Nature of the shapes	Sample, elongated shapes	Varied, full range
Size of the shapes	Roughly uniform	Varied, full range
Number of shapes	Three or four	Unlimited
Pattern of shapes	Simple, large, plain	Complex, varied, subtle
Exposure of light on forms	One tenth of a second	Sustained
Element	At the Beginning	Before the End
Range of tones	Black on white	Varied, full range
Range of color	Black or white	Varied, full range
No. of dimensions in form	Two dimensional	Multi-dimensional
Distance from forms	Far away (55 ft)	Close (10 ft) or as far as needed
Angle of vision	Normal	Unusually wide, demanding
Center of focus	Constant center of screen	Free and self-selected
Kinesthetic stimulation	Music continuously	Music not used
Talk about art	Never done	Done with individual cases

1 The Ben Day process of photoengraving was invented in 1879 by Benjamin Day, a New York newspaper engraver. The process "utilizes a series of celluloid screens bearing raised images of dot and line patterns. The screen surface is covered with a waxy ink and the ink is transferred, by pressure and rolling, to prepared portions of a metal plate. By selecting different screen patterns for transfer to different parts of the image, a mechanically produced halftone image is rendered. The ink image is reinforced with powerful resins and the plate etched." *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica-Macropaedia* 14 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Co., 1974), p. 302.

2 Indispensable for any study of Lichtenstein are Diane Waldman's monographs, *Roy Lichtenstein* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) and *Roy Lichtenstein: Drawings and Prints* (New York: Bianchini, 1969). Equally valuable is the collection of interviews and critical essays edited by John Coplans in his *Roy Lichtenstein* (New York: Praeger, 1972).

3 Coplans, *Lichtenstein*, pp. 30-47, provides a detailed chronology of Lichtenstein's life and stylistic development.

4 *Washing Machine* and *Blam* were part of Lichtenstein's first one-man show at the Castelli Gallery in February 1962, although both had already been purchased by Richard Brown Baker.

5 John Coplans, "An Interview with Roy Lichtenstein," *Artforum* 2 (October, 1963), reprinted in Coplans, *Lichtenstein*, pp. 51-52.

6 See, for example, Lichtenstein as quoted in John Klein's essay, p. 58.

7 J. C. Siegfried, "Spirit of the Comics," *Art and Artists* 4 (December, 1969), pp. 18-21, discusses the use of the comic strip in recent art and cites many examples.

8 Kenneth Eble, "Our Serious Comics," *The American Scholar* 28 (Winter, 1958-59), p. 61. Concerning the Cold War in the comic strips, see "Comic Battlefront," *Time*, March 2, 1962, pp. 39-40.

9 Lawrence Alloway first published the source for *Blam* in his article, "On Style: An Examination of Roy Lichtenstein's Development, Despite a New Monograph on the Artist," *Artforum* 10 (March, 1972), p. 53. The information about the comic strip source was obtained directly from the artist by Alloway.

10 Quoted by G. R. Swenson, *Art News* 62 (November, 1963), reprinted in Coplans, *Lichtenstein*, p. 53.

11 Hoyt Sherman, *Drawing by Seeing* (New York: Hinds, Hayden and Eldredge, 1947).

12 *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

13 Richard Morphet in his catalogue essay for the exhibition of Lichtenstein's work at the Tate Gallery, London, in January-February 1968, has also discussed contradiction as it pertains to all of Lichtenstein's paintings from the sixties. Reprinted in Coplans, *Lichtenstein*, pp. 147-164.

- 23 **Robert Indiana**
The American Eat, 1962
Frottage in conté crayon, 25" x 19"

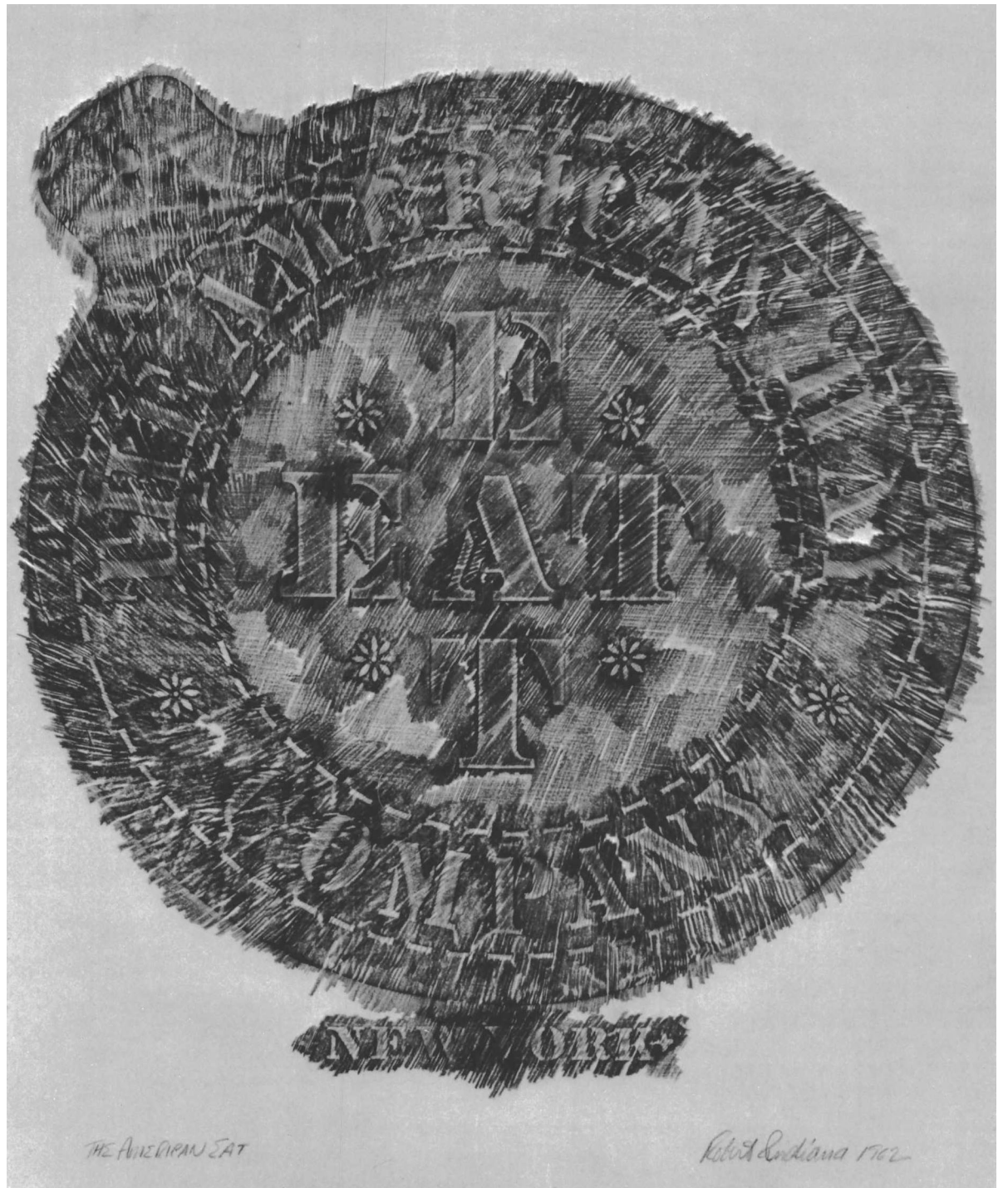
This drawing is one of a series of similar images made by Indiana in the early 1960s. Their starting point was a nineteenth-century brass stencil for the American Hay Company that Indiana found in his studio, a deserted warehouse in Lower Manhattan.¹ Indiana placed paper over the stencil, then rubbed over the surface with a pencil, or waxy crayon as here. The center design (usually containing the word "Eat") and the place name below the circle are added from other stencils. Sometimes the letters on the outer ring are altered — for example, from "hay" to "way" or "ham"; later drawings use other commercial logos either found or invented by Indiana. This drawing is one of the first in the series and is quite close to the form of the original stencil, even retaining the handle at the upper left.

The American Eat contains the basic ingredients of Indiana's style: simple words, all mundane and characteristically American (the "Eat" in the center evokes a diner's flashing neon sign), drawn in bold Roman type and inscribed in geometric forms. These drawings reveal Indiana's distance from the pop art movement with which he is usually associated. Although an intermediate object has been used to create the design, the sensuous, modulated surface of the drawing indicates careful handcrafting. And unlike the Brillo boxes or other commercial designs borrowed by pop artists, Indiana's logos are not contemporary, but are meant to symbolize the history of his environment in Lower Manhattan and of American trade in general.²

C. L. T

1 Indiana himself identifies his source: "The commercial brass stencils found in the deserted lofts — of numbers, of sail names, of the names of 19th century companies (THE AMERICAN GAS WORKS) became the matrix and substance of my painting and drawing. So then did all things weave together." Indiana, as quoted in *Stankiewicz and Indiana* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1963), n. p.

2 John W. McCoubrey, *Robert Indiana* (Philadelphia: Institute of Contemporary Art of the University of Pennsylvania, 1968), p. 23.



24 **James Rosenquist**
Sitting Around Screaming, 1962
Oil on canvas, 40" x 34"

James Rosenquist, like Lichtenstein and Warhol, emerged in the early sixties as a major figure identified with pop art because of his use of techniques and subject matter drawn from popular culture. In opposition to the previous generation of abstract expressionist painters, Rosenquist's work denies gestural handling and emphasizes the evocative content of the image. The former billboard painter explains, "the style I use was gained by doing outdoor commercial work as hard and as fast as I could. My techniques for me are still anti-style. I have an idea what I want to do, what it will look like when I want it finished — in between is just a hell of a lot of work."¹

Although much smaller than the wall-size works Rosenquist painted while living in his loft in Lower Manhattan's artistic community at Coenties Slip, *Sitting Around Screaming*, is stylistically similar. The huge close-up of a woman's face is on a much larger scale than either the newspaper ad grisaille of the lampshade, overlapping from above, or the disembodied image of a seated woman's crossed legs, overlapping from below. The physical separation of the three image fragments foreshadows the multipanel environmental works which Rosenquist would produce in the later sixties. The painting exhibits the artist's surrealist intention to juxtapose incongruous elements² in a composite space which owes more to synthetic cubism than to the illusionistic space of Dali or Magritte. The mixed modes of presentation (vertical vs. horizontal alignment, grisaille vs. chromatic range) although divergent from the blatant images of pop, are typical of Rosenquist's work.

The work addresses itself to the viewer in a bawdy, humorous manner. Rosenquist plays the sweeping curve of the blue skirt and the elliptical shape of the inside of the lampshade viewed from beneath against the slit through which one sees the face. This sneering voyeurism brings out the eroticism of the toothpaste ad smile.

The invitation to participate in the creative experience extended by Rosenquist's later works that feature reflective aluminum panels whose position within the artwork can be changed by the spectator is already apparent in *Sitting Around Screaming*. By forcing the viewer to peer through a slit and encouraging him to link the three fragments, Rosenquist demands an active, perceptive spectator.

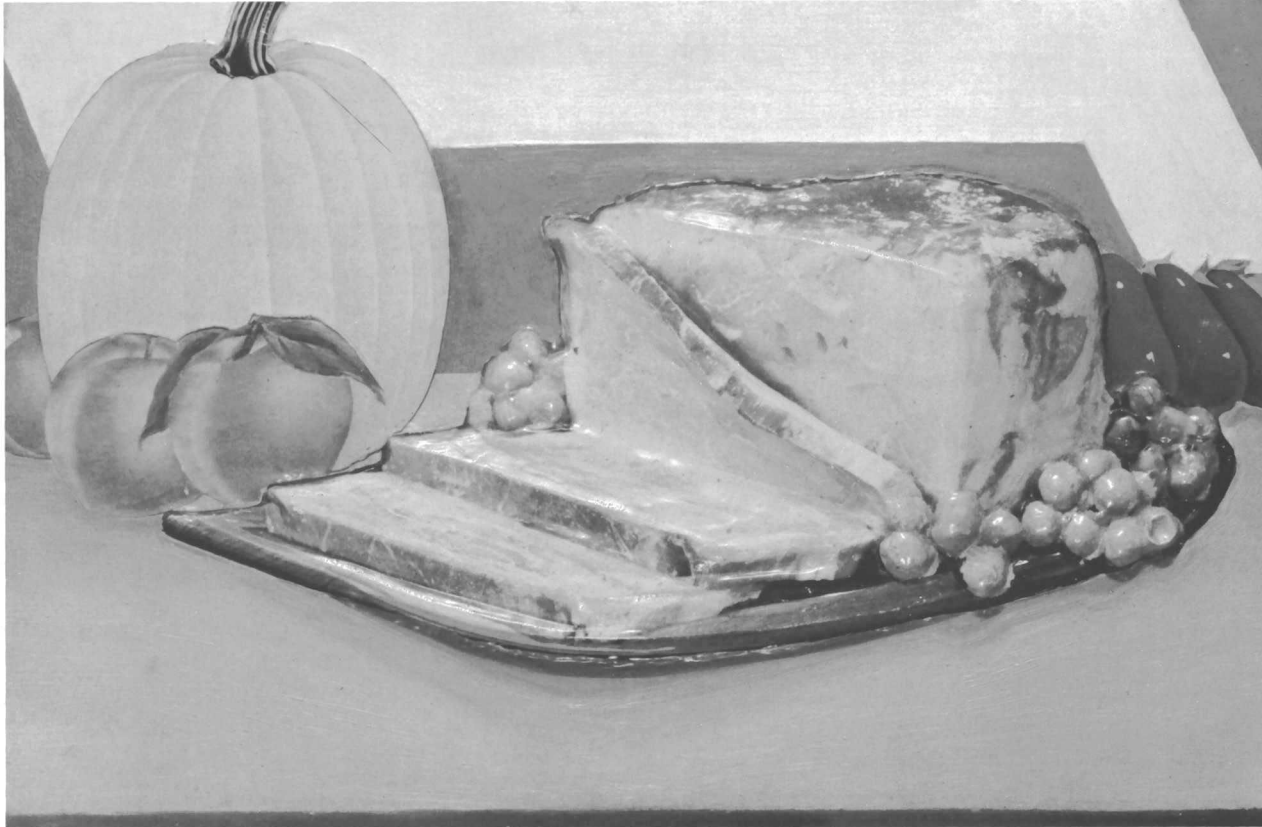
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¹ James Rosenquist, as quoted in Marcia Tucker, *James Rosenquist* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972), p. 12.

² "When I use a combination of fragments of things, the fragments or objects or real things are caustic to one another, and the title is also caustic to the fragments. James Rosenquist interviewed by G. R. Swenson, quoted in John Russell and Suzi Gablik, *Pop Art Redefined* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 111.



25 **Tom Wesselmann**
Little SL No. 10, 1963
Mixed media, 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 16"



Born in Cincinnati in 1931, Tom Wesselmann studied at the Cincinnati Art Academy and then at Cooper Union in New York during the late fifties. As a student he was naturally caught up in the excitement of abstract expressionism, but by the time of his graduation from Cooper Union in 1959, he had become convinced that "de Kooning had already said it all"¹ with regard to that style. He then began to explore the use of familiar objects of popular culture that were to become the stock-in-trade of a new and instantly notorious style. However, Wesselmann's commitment to an abstract formalism never waned, unlike Warhol and others whose primary point was satiric. He is concerned not so much with the nature of the society that produces objects of mass culture as with the physical nature and visual quality of those objects.

In the early sixties Wesselmann proposed for himself a number of specific formal objectives to govern the compositional organization of these new images: "1) Keep the picture plane in front of the canvas plane . . . get the painting as close to you as possible. 2) A painting must be competitive . . . dynamic. All colors must advance . . . 3) Keep space shallow or deny it altogether."² All of these objectives are operating principles for the Wesselmann still lifes in the Baker collection.

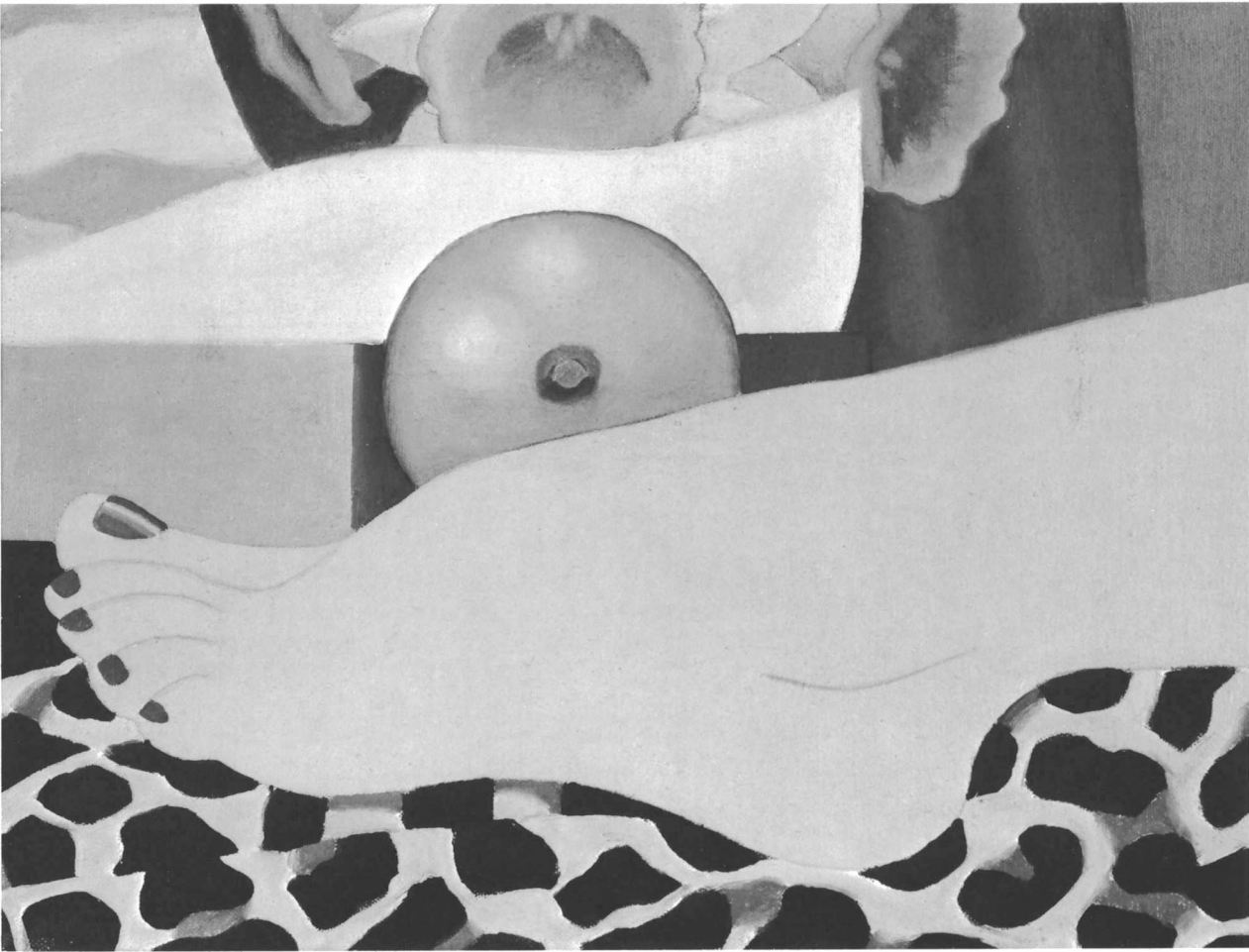
26 **Tom Wesselmann**
Study for Most Beautiful Foot (67-11), 1967
Oil on canvas, 77⁄8" x 10½"

In *Little SL No. 10* a plate of ham is depicted in physical relief in order to "keep the picture plane in front of the canvas plane." Such an unexpected solution dramatically serves to diminish aesthetic as well as literal distance between object and viewer. Pictorial space is kept shallow, as perspective clues (such as the horizon line) are obscured, and color is aggressive and dynamic. In *Study for Most Beautiful Foot* of four years later, a similar shallow, aggressive composition is achieved. That the furry material at the bottom of this canvas seems to be attached to the surface plane, and that the shape of the foot projects forcefully in front of that material, serves to push the image forward. In each of these paintings the artist's concern is with the study and exploration of abstract form — the shape of a rounded heel is repeated and transformed in an orange and a flower as the curve of a foot is echoed in an ambiguous white form above. Using assemblage and traditional media, stressing formal values while using the most common subjects, Wesselmann remains one of the ablest innovators of pop art.

W. R. S.

1 Thomas H. Garver, *Tom Wesselmann: Early Still Lives, 1962-1964*, (Balboa, California: Newport Harbor Art Museum, 1971), n. p.

2 Ibid.



Shamanistic Aspects of Some Recent Art

by Mark A. Savitt

Artists, as beings who professionally exhibit their sensitivity to both the mundane world around them and the spiritual realm of forms and ideas, tend to function as sensors of the inner life of the community. In this sense both Gauguin's use of the flat areas of bright color found in South Seas native art and Picasso's inclusion of the angular features and composite poses of African art reflect the underlying malaise in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century European culture as well as a desire to return to primitive simplicity. Yet, since these experiments remain on an essentially formal level, they cannot be thought of as reaching into the depth of the primitive art impulse in order to reconnect art to the life of the community on a level that would be curative.

In primitive societies, art is not alienated from the functioning of the community. A figure who serves as a preserver of the community's psychic balance is the shaman. Mircea Eliade describes him as "a magician and medicine man; he is believed to cure, like all doctors and to perform miracles of the fakir type, like all magicians whether primitive or modern. But beyond this he is also a psychopomp, and he may be a priest, mystic and poet."¹ Emmanuel Anati explains how as an artist, the shaman serves as intermediary between man and the mystical forces. "Among hunting people, the shaman is the center, the brain of the community. He is also the artist, the medium interpreting the depth of the soul and the one who regulates relations between the human group and the supernatural forces."² The basic art impulse itself is connected with shamanism in an important recent study of Paleolithic art by Andreas Lommel. The author writes, "The separation which the early hunter made between soul and matter led to artistic representation. The spiritual content of shamanism, which is an attempt to make capital of the recognized or desired separation between body and soul, is thus to be regarded as responsible for the beginnings of art."³

In the catalogue essay for an exhibition held at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1947, Barnett Newman informs the reader, "Spontaneous and emerging from several points, there has arisen during the war years a new force in American painting that is the modern counterpart of the primitive art impulse."⁴ He mentions the Kwakiutl artist painting on a hide an abstract shape which is "real rather than a formal 'abstraction' of a visual fact," because it was "directed by a ritualistic will towards metaphysical understanding."⁵ He goes on to explain, "The basis of an aesthetic act is the pure idea."⁶ Although this was a major step, the ideograph is still a depiction of an idea instead of the idea itself. One looks to Jackson Pollock as the artist who would make the leap into shamanism.

Newman's interest in Indians was shared by Pollock. In his famous statement in *Possibilities I*, Pollock explained that he preferred laying his canvas on the floor "since this way I can walk around it, work from the four sides and literally be in the painting. This is akin to the method of the Indian sand painters of the West."⁷ The series of running arcs, mostly white and silver, along the bottom edge of the work, bringing one's eyes back into the center of activity, reveals *Arabesque* to be the record of a dance-like series of full-bodied gestures around the canvas. The accumulation of large running blobs, small dot-like drips, and furiously moving thin lines attests to the intensity of the artist's involvement in his work.

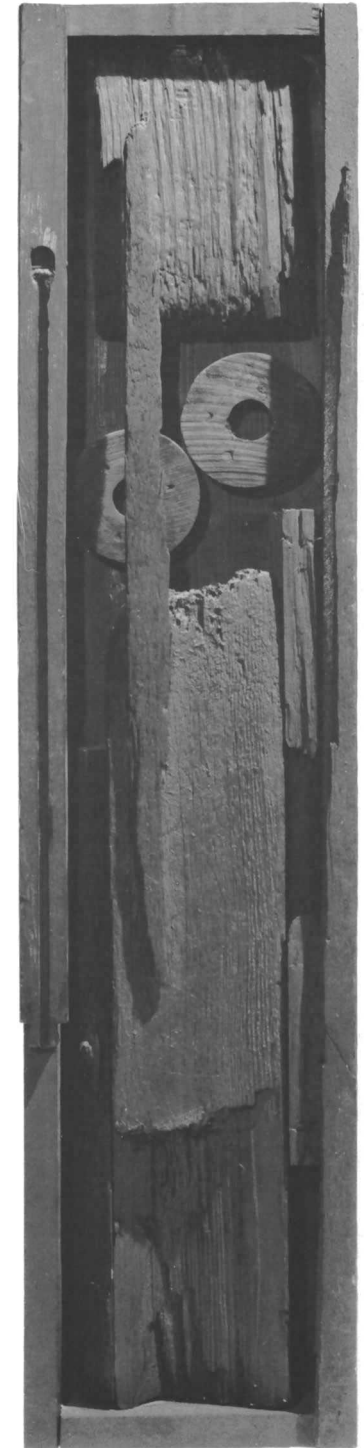
27 **Louise Nevelson**
Boxed Being, 1957
 Wood painted black, 35" x 7½" x 4"

Pollock continued his explanation: "When I am in my painting, I'm not aware of what I'm doing. It is only after a sort of 'get acquainted' period that I see what I have been about. I have no fears about making changes, destroying the image, etc., because the painting has a life of its own. I try to let it come through."⁸ Pollock articulates the trance-like intensity of action involved in the creation of his works. When he is *in* his painting, he is out of himself and therefore ecstatic. In defining shamanism, Eliade arrives at the equation, "Shamanism = technique of ecstasy."⁹ It is the ability of the shaman to master this technique which makes him the exemplary figure of the tribe. Eliade suggests, "Shamans do not differ from other members of the collectivity by their quest for the sacred — which is normal and universal human behavior — but by their capacity for ecstatic experience, which, for the most part, is equivalent to a vocation."¹⁰

Although he does not advocate the position, Eliade informs one that in the anthropological literature on shamanism, a number of scholars have, "sought to draw major conclusions . . . from the fact that . . . the 'call' that determines a shaman's career appears to be conditioned by his psychopathic condition."¹¹ Gondatti's research among the Volguls, whose shamans are subject to epileptic seizures,¹² and Shirokogoroff's descriptions of the hysteroid crises of Tungu shamans¹³ are among the examples. In this respect, Pollock's own psychopathology, his problems with alcoholism and depression¹⁴ become especially interesting. The plight of his suffering affords him metaphysical understanding. Eliade explains, "Like the sick man, the religious man is projected onto a vital plane that shows him the fundamental data of human existence, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world."¹⁵

Louise Nevelson's background is in some ways similar to Pollock's. They both traveled a long way before settling in New York (Pollock coming from Cody, Wyoming, and Nevelson from Kiev, Russia). Their early backgrounds included working for the great Mexican mural painters and experience in the Works Project Administration in the thirties. Pollock's interest in sand painting is paralleled by Nevelson's zoo- and anthropomorphic stone and terra-cotta figures of the early forties which exhibit her interest in Pre-Columbian and American Indian culture. In describing her reaction to African sculpture, Nevelson relates, "I immediately identified with the power" and speaks of being fed energy by primitive sculpture.¹⁶

Boxed Being is typical of Nevelson's best-known works. It is composed of wooden pieces, previously used as spools and furniture parts, which are organized into a vertical box framework and painted black. The attenuation of the box, echoed by the stalagmite and stalactite pieces framing the inner contents, as well as the stacking of the elements, emphasizes the verticality of the piece. This relatively early nature work is still anthropomorphic. A block-like head hovers over the two breast-like spools which are supported by the blocky mass of the lower body portion. Both the form and the material of the work evoke the archetypal image of the cosmic world-tree which grows at the center of the world and connects the three cosmic zones — underworld, earth, and heaven.¹⁷ The overall blackness of the work invites one to experience the depths of darkness and shadow. In



describing an exhibit of similar pieces, Kenneth Sawyer remarked, "To step into a room with Nevelson's black pieces is in a very real sense, to step into the heart of midnight."¹⁸ Georges Mathieu (in the catalogue of her first one-woman show in Paris) categorized her work in stating, "L'oeuvre de Nevelson apparaît en cela comme la plus chthonienne qui soit."¹⁹ The black is identified with "la Terre," and Mathieu goes on to note, "Chthon personnifie la terre féconde et ésotériquement, le noir signifie changement d'état."²⁰

The works function as references to the shaman's journey to the underworld. Eliade explains, sanctified by his initiation and furnished with his guardian spirits, the shaman is the only human being able to challenge the danger and venture into a mystical geography."²¹ As psychopomp, one of his functions is to bring the souls of the recently dead to the underworld.

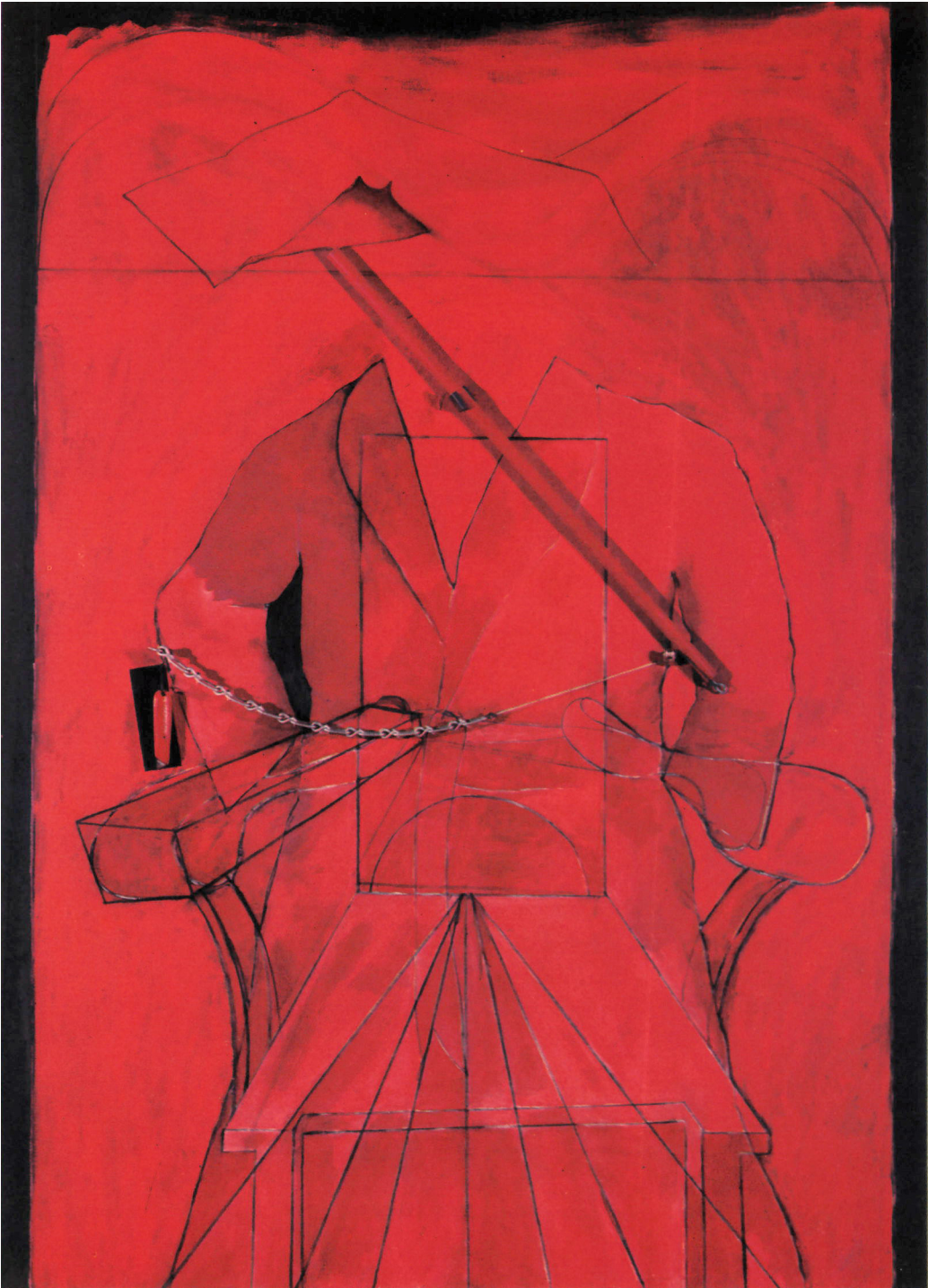
Other realms of the mystic geography traversed by the shaman are revealed to the spectator by the sculptress. Although not as numerous as her black walls, boxes, and totems, a number of similar constructions were painted by Nevelson uniformly white or gold. These works, often bearing titles containing the words *dawn* and *wedding*, evoke the shaman's journeys to the celestial spheres. Particularly interesting is the conflation with marriage since it is not unusual for the shaman to be assisted in his labors by a celestial bride.²² In a similar manner, Nevelson's transparent plexiglass constructions of the late sixties evoke the magic quartz crystals used by shamans (especially in Northern Borneo) to discover the patient's soul.²³

As a natural outgrowth of the dancelike gestural tradition of Pollock's abstract expressionist style, in the late fifties and early sixties, a number of artists, following the lead of Allan Kaprow, investigated the possibilities of merging art and life by creating a nonliterary genre of theatrical spectacle, the happening. These works which often made use of particularly urban materials, appeared chaotic but were actually well rehearsed assaults on the audience. By abandoning a sense of psychological individuality of the performers to emphasize instead repeated patterns of movement and to keynote the accumulating presence of objects, the works achieve a ritualistic density. Susan Sontag perceives "a kind of gestural stutter, or . . . slow motion, to convey a sense of the arrest of time."²⁴ Thus, profane time is abolished and the artist-shaman performers invite the spectators to join them and participate in a ritualized mythic time.²⁵

Although he is often exhibited and discussed within the context of pop art (because of his inclusion of banal subject matter — shoes, tools, bathroom fixtures) Jim Dine fits perhaps more easily into this transitional phase of late abstract expressionism. In looking back on the five happenings he produced between 1959 and 1965, Dine has commented, "They were so personal and so much related to acting out one's life rather than art."²⁶ Yet even his more traditional easel paintings and assemblages are often wrought with autobiographical references not unrelated to his performance pieces. The costumes worn by Dine in *The Smiling Workman* ("I was all in red with a big black mouth."²⁷) and in the *Vaudeville Show* ("I came out with a red suit on."²⁸) relate to the central image of his very important painting, *Red Robe #2* (1964). The red paint spilled down the side of the flats in the later happening reinforces the relationship by displaying a similar interest in the texture and shocking immediacy of red paint.

28 **Jim Dine**
Red Robe #2, 1964
Oil and collage on canvas, 84" x 60"

This painting-assemblage of 1964 is extremely interesting from a shamanistic viewpoint. The self-portrait²⁹ aspect of the work (which includes a high school class ring marked Walnut Hill, 1953), together with the absence of a human figure, abundance of thick blood-red tones, the appearance of a hook and ripped out segment of canvas where the neck would be, the mournful black border, and the red painted mat knife (complete with uncovered blade) seems to suggest a scene of incredible violence, indeed a dismemberment. In discussing a number of initiatory ecstasies and visions of the Yakut shamans, Eliade concludes, "In all these examples we find the central theme of an initiatory ceremony, dismemberment of the neophyte's body and renewal of his organs, ritual death followed by resurrection."³⁰ This reading is strengthened by the winglike forms in the upper section of *Red Robe #2*, which suggest shamanic flight. Also significant is the sense of transparency; the outline of the chair is seen through the robe. Seven (a magical number) orthogonal lines drawn from the bottom of the canvas converge in the center at the back of the chair seat, at a point which would correspond to the placement of the genitals (i.e. theme of regeneration) of the robe's (missing) inhabitant. It was with decided humor and possibly some significance that in response to the question, "Do you feel that you could be a more complete artist if you could come back from the dead?," Dine replied, "I'm already back."³¹



The shaman's costume itself constitutes a religious hierophany and cosmography. The heavy chain, knife, and baton hanging from the Dine robe are perhaps analogous to the iron disks essential to the shaman's costume. Like the thirty to fifty pounds of metal hanging from the robes of a Yakut medicine man, the appendages of the Dine robe would turn a dance into an "infernal saraband" when set into motion.³²

Warhol, the artist most strongly identified with American pop art, evolved a style in which all traces of the artist's presence through gestural handling of pigment would be denied. *The Electric Chair* features an image taken from a newsphoto and transferred to a canvas, previously uniformly covered by yellow paint applied with rollers, by means of a photochemical silk-screen process. The artist is distanced from the work by a series of removes. Indeed his assistants, notably Brigid Polk, often perform the mechanics of squeezing the ink through the screen, after having previously chosen the color of the background.³³ Warhol does assume responsibility for the creation of the work primarily by conceiving the project as well as by acknowledging the object and overseeing its production.

Even in the context of cool, his work nevertheless operates shamanistically. The repetition involved in the repeated production of the work (Rainer Crone's catalog of Warhol's work lists fifty-five items as belonging to the electric chair series³⁴) recalls the reenactments of ritual activities involved in shamanistic seances. The artist's famous glazed expression accompanied by a whispered "Hi" is the cool equivalent to the shaman's ecstatic trance.

The image in itself implies a ritual. The chair, shrouded in the murky smudged black dot grid created by the silk-screen process, commands the ambiguous space surrounding it; the sign demanding silence visible on the right suggests a ceremonial silence. The chair, after all, is used in an official state ceremony in which a criminal is sacrificed for the good of the community. Warhol himself alluded to a note of archaicism in the image when he stated that the work was created after he had read in the papers that the state of California had banned the use of the chair.³⁵

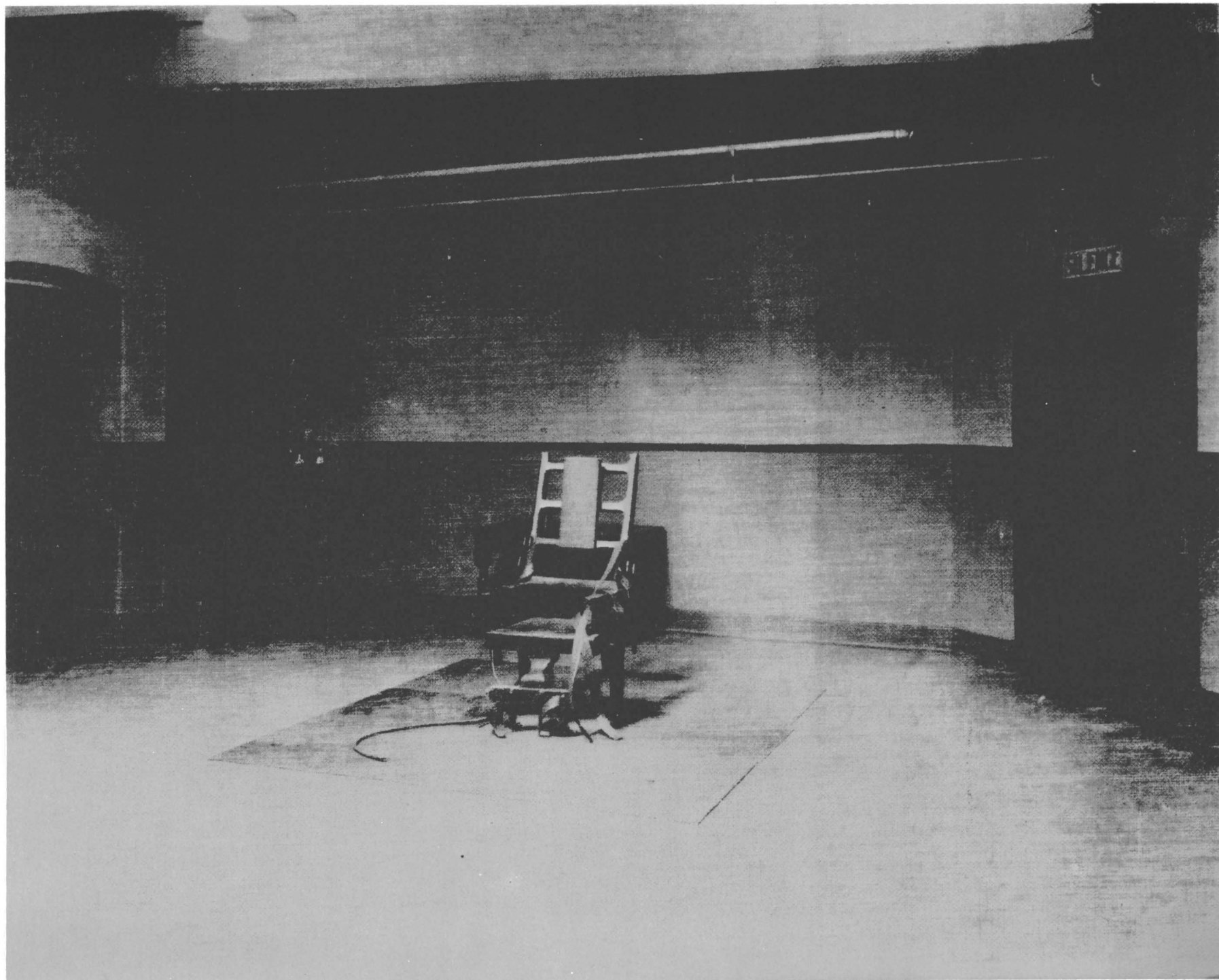
The displacement from self, evident in the production of the image and in the buried shamanistic implications within it, are mirrored by the redistribution of shamanic actions among Warhol's entourage. Among the Yurak, it is the shaman's drum which makes possible the ecstatic experience.³⁶ Dancing, among the Altains, is used to reproduce the shaman's ecstatic journey to the sky.³⁷ In this context, the elements of Warhol's multimedia experiments at "The Exploding Plastic Inevitable" in New York, Gerard Malanga's frenzied whip dance, the eardrum piercing sounds of the Velvet Underground band, and the psychedelic light-show accompaniment take on shamanistic ritual overtones.³⁸

29 **Andy Warhol**
Early Electric Chair, 1964
Silkscreen on canvas, 24" x 28"

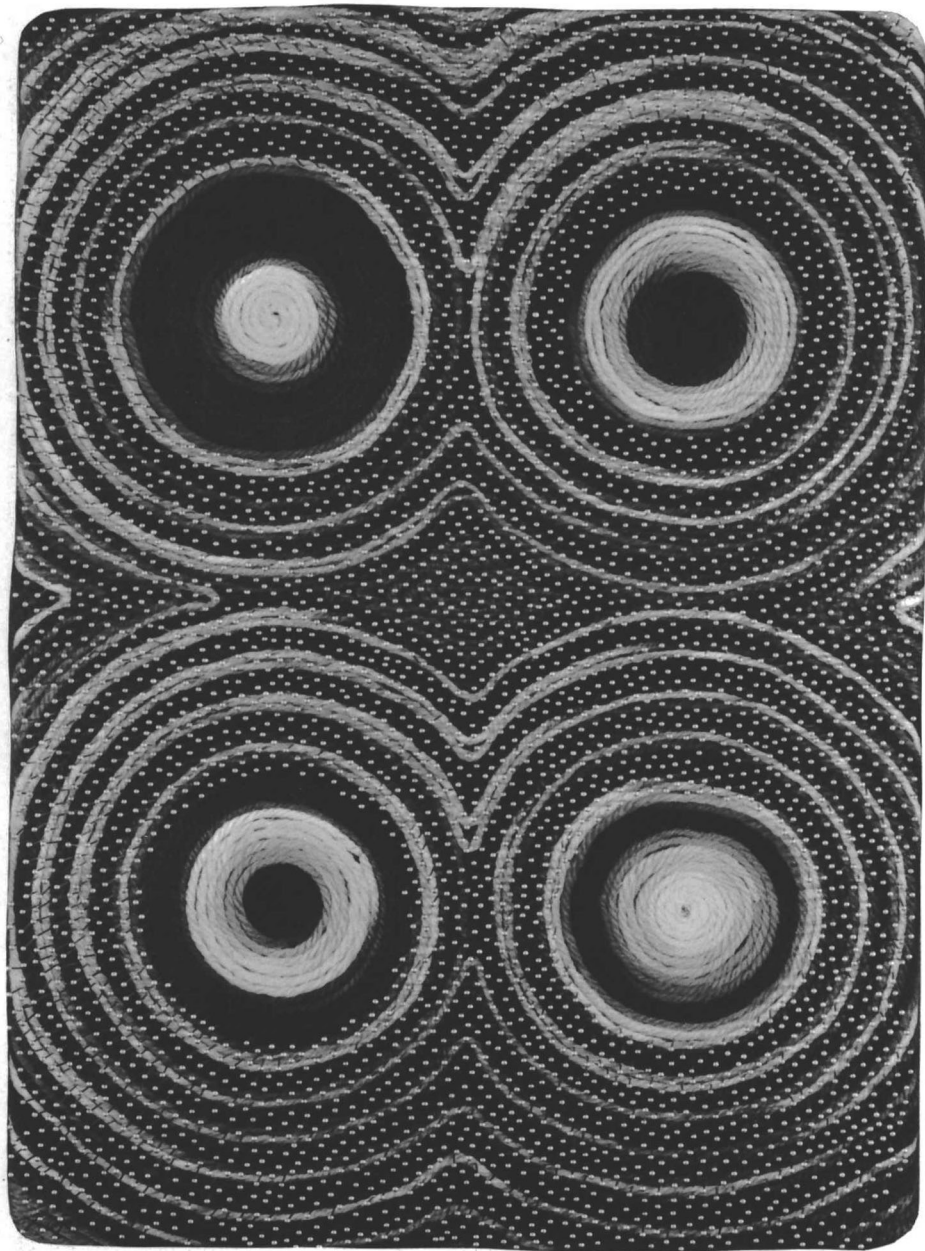
An artist more aware than most of his shamanistic role is Lucas Samaras. While on the one hand he explains, "Although I use materials in my works that are often the delectables of the fetishist, I am not making fetishes," he qualifies this with the statement, "On the other hand all art can be fetishistic."³⁹ He goes on to claim, "I suppose my work approaches primitive art . . . When I think of primitive I think of sculpture . . . the use of organic materials. SUBSTANCES."⁴⁰

As an undergraduate at Rutgers (1955-59), Samaras was in close contact with Allan Kaprow, then chairman of the art department. Although Samaras did not script any happenings himself, he participated in many, including Oldenberg's *Photo Death* (1961), in which he wore what appears to be a mock ceremonial headdress.

The oeuvre of Samaras is in many ways an autobiographical continuum. His exhibition of his New Jersey bedroom,⁴¹ the inclusion of an "Auto-interview," autobiographical stories, and autophotographs in his book *Samaras Album*,⁴² and the narcissistic indulgence of his film, *Self*⁴³ bear this out.



30 **Lucas Samaras**
Untitled (Quadruple Spiral Target), 1963
 Pin construction, pins and wool on wood
 15¾" x 11½" x 2¾"



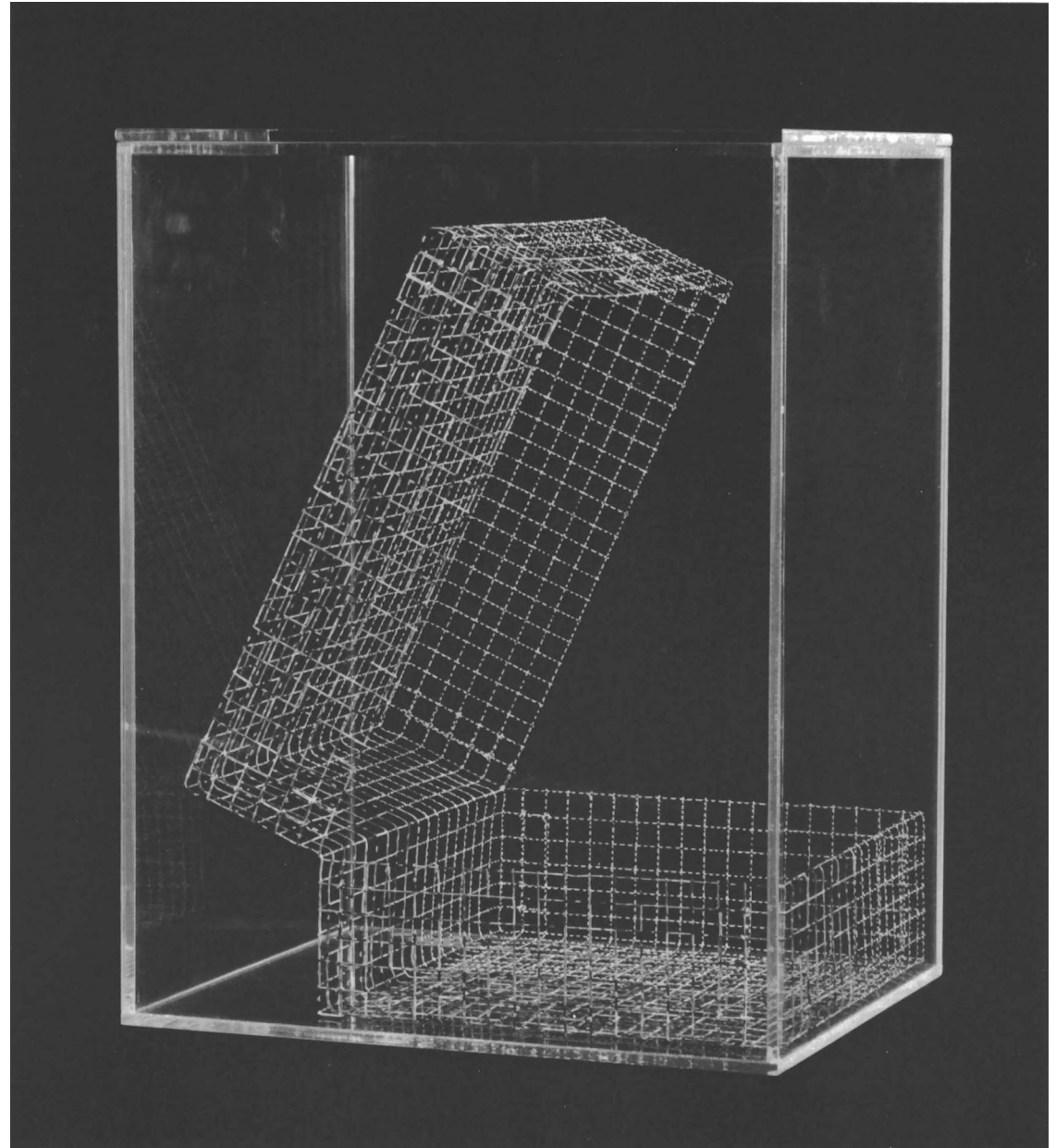
Even the seemingly anonymous pin construction, *Untitled (Quadruple Spiral Target)* of 1963, bears an element of self-reference in its compositional similarity to the artist's ink drawing of the previous year, *Untitled (Four Fingerprints)*.⁴⁴ The process of constructing the work, involving the repetitions of concentric loopings of colored yarn, the careful and laborious placement of a multitude of pins, as well as making sharp distinctions between the pin-less central whirls (and sides of the boxlike construction) and the pin-covered surrounding regions, recalls the repeated simple chants and the separation of spaces in rituals. Although in this work, the sharp ends of the pins face away from the spectator they recall the dismemberment-fantasy-producing elements of pins and razor blades facing out at the spectator found in a number of other works by Samaras.

The rainbow hues of the yarn, found again on the left side of his *Chicken Wire Box #4* (1972) and in the woolen scarf draped shawl-like over the artist's shoulders in the *Phototransformation* (1974), are evocative in a shamanistic context. In the initiation of the medicine man in the Forrest River region of Australia, the master assuming the form of a skeleton ascends with the candidate on the back of a rainbow serpent. Eliade remarks, "As to the rainbow, a considerable number of peoples are known to see in it the bridge connecting earth and sky, and especially the bridge of the gods."⁴⁵

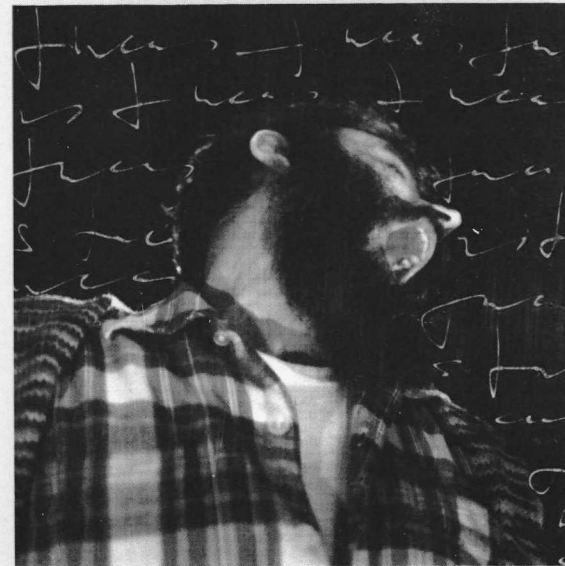
31 **Lucas Samaras**
Chicken Wire Box #4, 1972
Painted wire mesh
15" x 11¾" x 9"

The theme of ascension is apparent in the ladder-like gridwork of the delicate wire box. Although the work is diminutive in size, the additive detail of the colorful (left) and black (right) dots on the white mesh, added to the soaring angle of the lid, gives a sense of infinite expansion.⁴⁶ The difference in size between the lid and the bottom section can be related to the mystic geography of the Turko-Tatars for whom "The sky is also conceived as a lid; sometimes it is not perfectly fitted to the edges of the earth, and the great winds blow in through the crack."⁴⁷

X-ray imagery, appearing in many of Samaras' works, including a drawing in the collection of Mr. Baker⁴⁸ (featuring two x-ray views of a hand) and on the front and back covers of the Whitney catalogue⁴⁹ (showing the artist's skull, front and rear views), relates to the ability gained by Eskimo shamans during their initiation trials to see themselves as skeletons. Eliade explains the depth-meaning of this when he states, "To reduce oneself to the skeleton condition is equivalent to re-entering the womb of this primordial life, that is, to a complete renewal, a mystical rebirth."⁵⁰



The artist's most complete revelation of himself as a shaman figure is to be found in his series of photographs, the Autophotographs of 1969-71 and the Phototransformations of 1974. The complete privacy afforded by the use of Polaroids allowed Samaras to create a form of self-portraiture richly activating polymorphous fantasies. Familiar themes of dismemberment are evoked (an image features a lighted candle, placed phallically between the artist's legs, attacked by a knife and fork).⁵¹ Especially interesting are the number of images (all in *Samaras Album*) alluding to transvestitism (Samaras in a variety of wigs and prissy poses) and narcissistic homosexuality (through superimposition, the artist makes love to himself). Similar themes are to be found in Warhol's films featuring transvestite "superstars" Mario Montez, Candy Darling, and Holly Woodlawn, as well as in his silk-screen *Marilyn* series.⁵² Dine's happening, *Car Crash*, featured a female performer in male attire and vice-versa. As well as an affront to bourgeois morality and an activation of infantile fantasies (if not personal preferences?) these images function shamanistically. Among the Araucanians, shamanism was once the exclusive prerogative of sexual inverts. Among the Chukchee, most shamans are homosexual and frequently take husbands. Even the heterosexual shamans of this tribe are obliged by their spirit guides to dress as women.⁵³ Eliade explains the metaphysical underpinnings of ritual androgyny among the Sea Dyak of Northern Borneo by stating, "As for the bisexuality and impotence of *basir*, they arise from the fact that these priest shamans are regarded as the intermediaries between the two cosmological planes — earth and sky — and also from the fact that they combine in their own person the feminine element (earth) and the masculine element (sky)."⁵⁴



The Phototransformation exhibited here has a black background on which the artist's first name is repeated a number of times.⁵⁵ This acts as a chant to accompany the central image of the artist leaning back from the picture plane, tilting his head, and growling. The intense patch of red light on his throat, the unusual pose, and the abstract background convey a sense of ecstatic trance, the characterizing quality of shamanism. In discussing the fundamental significance of ecstasy, Eliade describes its function as providing man with a glimpse of the ultimate reality. He explains that "it is through ecstasy that man fully realizes his situation in the world and his final destiny. We could almost speak of an archetype of 'gaining existential consciousness.'"⁵⁶ The artist-shaman is therefore a key figure in the community as an exemplary guide aiding to define *being*.

- 1 Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 4.
- 2 Emmanuel Anati, Review of *Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art* by Andreas Lommel, in *Archaeology* 24 (January 1971), p. 67.
- 3 Andreas Lommel, *Shamanism: The Beginnings of Art* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p. 147.
- 4 Barnett Newman, "The Ideographic Picture," reprinted in *Tracks: A Journal of Artists' Writings* 1 (November 1974), p. 42.
- 5 Ibid., p. 41.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Jackson Pollock, as quoted in Frank O'Hara, *Jackson Pollock* (New York: George Braziller, 1959), pp. 31-32.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 4.
- 10 Ibid., p. 107.
- 11 Ibid., p. 14.
- 12 Ibid., p. 15.
- 13 Ibid., p. 17.
- 14 For a discussion of Pollock's illness and (Jungian) treatment by Dr. Henderson, see B. H. Friedman, *Jackson Pollock: Energy Made Visible* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), pp. 39-45.
- 15 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 27.
- 16 Louise Nevelson, quoted by Arnold B. Glimcher, *Louise Nevelson* (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 21.
- 17 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 37n, pp. 269-274.
- 18 Kenneth Sawyer, *Nevelson* (New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961), n. p.
- 19 Georges Mathieu, *Exposition de Louise Nevelson, Sculpteur* (Paris: Galerie Daniel Cordier, 1960), n. p.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 182.
- 22 Ibid., p. 77.
- 23 Ibid., p. 350.
- 24 Susan Sontag, "Happenings: An Art of Radical Juxtaposition," in *Against Interpretation* (New York: Delta, 1967), p. 187.
- 25 See Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return or Cosmos and History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954), pp. 35-36.
- 26 Jim Dine, "A Statement," in Michael Kirby, ed., *Happenings* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., 1966), p. 187. Dine's happenings include, 1959, *The Smiling Workman*, Judson Gallery; 1960, *Car Crash*, *Jim Dine's Vaudeville*, and *The Shining Bed*, all at the Reuben Gallery; and 1965, *Natural History (The Dreams)* at First New York Theatre Rally.
- 27 Ibid., p. 185.
- 28 Ibid., p. 186.
- 29 Reinforced by a number of other works, including, *Red Robe and Hatchet (Self-Portrait)*, 1964, in John Gordon, *Jim Dine* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970), no. 66; *Self-Portrait in Zinc and Acid*, 1964, etching, in *Jim Dine: Complete Graphics* (Berlin: Galerie Mikro, 1970), no. 25; *Eleven Part Self-Portrait (Red Pony)*, 1965, lithograph, *ibid.*, no. 27.
- 30 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 38.
- 31 Jim Dine, interviewed by Ken Koch, "Test in Art," *Art News* 50 (October, 1966), pp. 56-57.
- 32 Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 148-149.
- 33 Interview with Andy Warhol and Brigid Polk, in Emil DeAntonio's film, *Painter's Painting*.

- 34 Rainer Crone, *Andy Warhol* (New York: Praeger, 1970), pp. 299-301, nos. 331-386. (Mr. Baker's is no 337.) Works produced in 1963 were of various sizes. All works in series produced in 1965 (nos. 342-372) were 22" x 28". All works produced in 1967 (nos. 373-386) were 54" x 74".
- 35 Warhol and Polk, in *Painter's Painting*.
- 36 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 174.
- 37 Ibid., p. 175.
- 38 For a slanted but nevertheless evocative phenomenological description of a performance, see Stephen Koch, *Stargazer: Andy Warhol's World and His Films* (New York: Praeger, 1973), pp. 70-73.
- 39 Lucas Samaras, "A Statement," in Lawrence Alloway, *Samaras: Selected Works, 1960-1966* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1966), p. 40.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Reconstructed and installed at the Green Gallery, New York, 1964.
- 42 *Samaras Album* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1971).
- 43 *Self*, written and directed by Lucas Samaras, photographed and edited by Kim Levin.
- 44 Gordon, *Dine*, no. 127.
- 45 Eliade, *Shamanism*, pp. 131-33.
- 46 For Samaras' comments on the relativity of size, see Samaras, "Cornell Size", *Arts 41* (May, 1967), p. 47.
- 47 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 260.
- 48 *Large Drawing #26*, 1966, ink and pencil on paper, 17" x 14".
- 49 Samaras, *Lucas Samaras* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1972).
- 50 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 63.

- 51 Samaras, *Samaras*, reproduces *Untitled* (Autophotograph) with candle along with a statement on the process from *Samaras Album*. Other images from series referred to (all untitled) are found in *Samaras Album*.
- 52 In describing *Marilyn*, Peter Gidal points out, "Apart from everything else, with her hair unnaturally fitted like a wig, Marilyn looks like a transvestite. The proximity of woman to man and man to woman points to our essential bisexuality." *Andy Warhol: Films and Paintings* (London, Studio Vista, 1971), pp. 58-60.



Andy Warhol, *Marilyn*, 1967, silkscreen (not in exhibition)

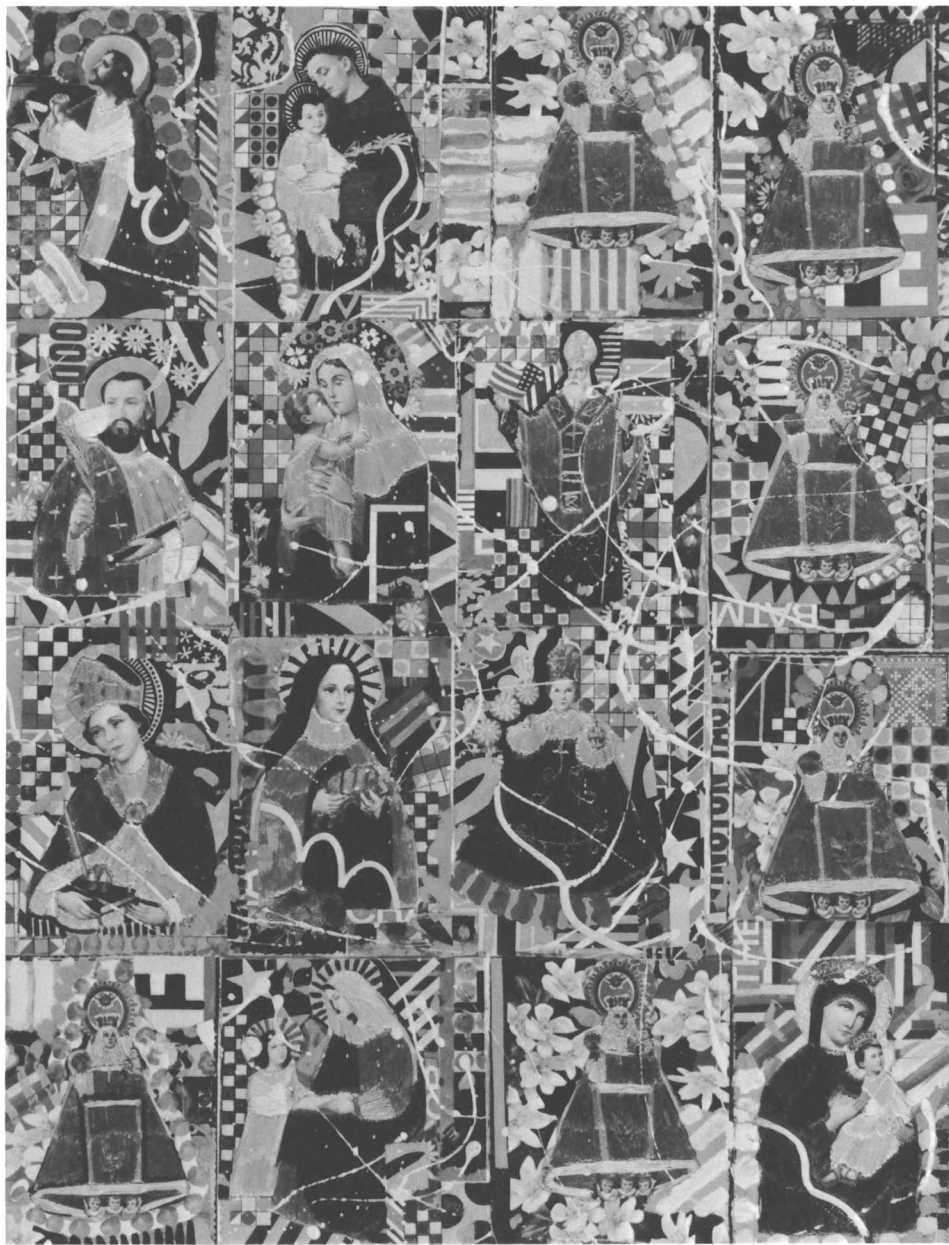
- 53 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 125.
- 54 Ibid., p. 352.
- 55 The signature compares exactly with that on a similar black ground found on the cover of Arnold Glimcher, *Lucas Samaras Photo-Transformations* (New York: Pace Gallery, 1974).
- 56 Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 394.

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33 **Joe Brainard**

Page of Saints II, 1966

Paper collage with gouache, 20½" x 15"



After collaborating on an underground literary magazine and doing department store ads for a local newspaper, Joe Brainard moved from Tulsa, Oklahoma, to New York in 1961 with only his high school diploma, his admiration for beat generation heroes like Ginsberg, Kerouac, de Kooning, and Pollock, and his hometown friendship with the poet Ron Padgett, whose enrollment in Columbia prompted the move. Absorbed into the active subculture of antiestablishment poetry readings and antiart happenings, Brainard contributed to magazines like *C*, *Mother*, and *East Village Other*, illustrated books by his friends, did some free-lance advertising, and at the age of twenty-three had his first one-man show at the Alan Gallery.¹ Like the works of other members of the emerging pop art movement, his initial collages and assemblages focused on the unappreciated, everyday object, but consisted of sparkling glass, rhinestone, and plastic items, often of Puerto Rican, Catholic origin, which were characterized by an overblown garishness and yet a primitive beauty.

In *Page of Saints II*, Brainard preserves the religious references of his three-dimensional works of the previous year but uses collage in order to contrast the sincerely honored, embroidered icons with fragments of abstract color, letters, and floral

34 **Joe Brainard**
Pansies III, 1969
 Paper collage with watercolor and ink, 14" x 11"

papers. Borrowing the idea of repetition from other artists like Warhol, Brainard takes the already established dichotomy between the sentimental, softly modelled, printed faces of the holy figures and the glistening, brightly colored threads as the basis for his own multilayered play of wrapping papers and Day-Glo paints. While the entire surface is an explosion of colors and textures, closer scrutiny shows that the same checkerboard patterns, thin strips of colored paper, and lettering (the white-on-blue letters "The Batman Craze" appear in at least six of the rectangles) have been scattered throughout the collage. Relying on his infallible sense of color and two-dimensional design, Brainard sensitively alters his appliqués so that the original paper daisy aureoles surrounding every saint are at times overlaid with paint or other paper cut-outs and the varied sizes and internal constituents of the sixteen rectangles deny the fact that six underlying saints are identical.

Brainard's selection of popular religious imagery as the basis of *Page of Saints II* reflects neither a criticism of nor belief in the accouterments of Spanish Catholicism. Rather, he approaches these mass-produced but sacred objects with a child-like love of glittering things that are appealing on a gut, sensory level. The quality of naïveté, which flavors his choppy, sincere prose style and causes him to write phrases like "I bought a big blue and white marble which pleased me more than any of the paintings we saw,"² can be seen as part of his and other modern artists' rejection of artificial civilization and snob culture. Although he violates the sacred image by plastering it with pieces of paper and dripping it with paint, Brainard allows only tiny drops to besmirk the faces of the saints and imitates the innocent child who colors in his parents' books to make them prettier but realizes that certain things should not be touched.

Pansies III, a later work which more strongly shows the influence of Warhol's *Flowers* from 1964-65, lacks the religious references of *Page of Saints II* and relies on the subtle layering of cut-out paper forms to distinguish it from greeting card or wrapping paper designs. No longer using a found image, Brainard methodically paints each orange, purple, red, yellow, and magenta pansy so that no two flowers are exactly alike; yet their combination results in an overall wall of color. Personally fond of flowers³ and making them the subjects of numerous gouaches and collages from 1967 to the present, Brainard unashamedly presents the simplified blossoms as an evenly perceived bouquet whose role is to make the viewer happy rather than tempt him with ideas about art-making or contemporary life.

A. McC.

- 1 Mr. Baker also owns *Necklace* (1964), an ornate, bejeweled assemblage which was purchased from this show in January 1965.
- 2 Joe Brainard, "Sunday March 29th," *Selected Writings* (New York: Kulchur Foundation, 1971), p. 51.
- 3 "Trees," *ibid.*, p. 37.



35 **Luis Jimenez**
Cyclist, 1969
Fiberglass and epoxy, 47" high x 78" long

"A motorcyclist merges with his machine in an orgy of tires and goggles," wrote one reviewer in response to Luis Jimenez's *Cyclist* on the occasion of the artist's first one-man show in New York at the Graham Gallery in 1969.¹ Actually this *Cyclist* — merely a boy and his motorcycle, literally inseparable, blue and grey, speeding down the open road — shows Jimenez at his most restrained.² He usually opts for more exuberant displays of glaring vulgarity, often big plastic girlie sculpture compatible with the aesthetic ideals of Las Vegas, Disneyland, Barbie Doll, and Big Boy. In this respect, Jimenez, a Chicano from El Paso, betrays his origins: his art is unabashedly Texan. His work has taken him from the University of Texas to Ciudad University to assisting the sculptor Seymour Lipton in New York in 1966. Although his artistic lineage may be traced back to Lachaise, one should discuss Jimenez in the context of the plastic, carney here and now, for Jimenez sees his art as something more than the formal rendition of the female nude or pneumatic figures. His intentions are decidedly humanistic:

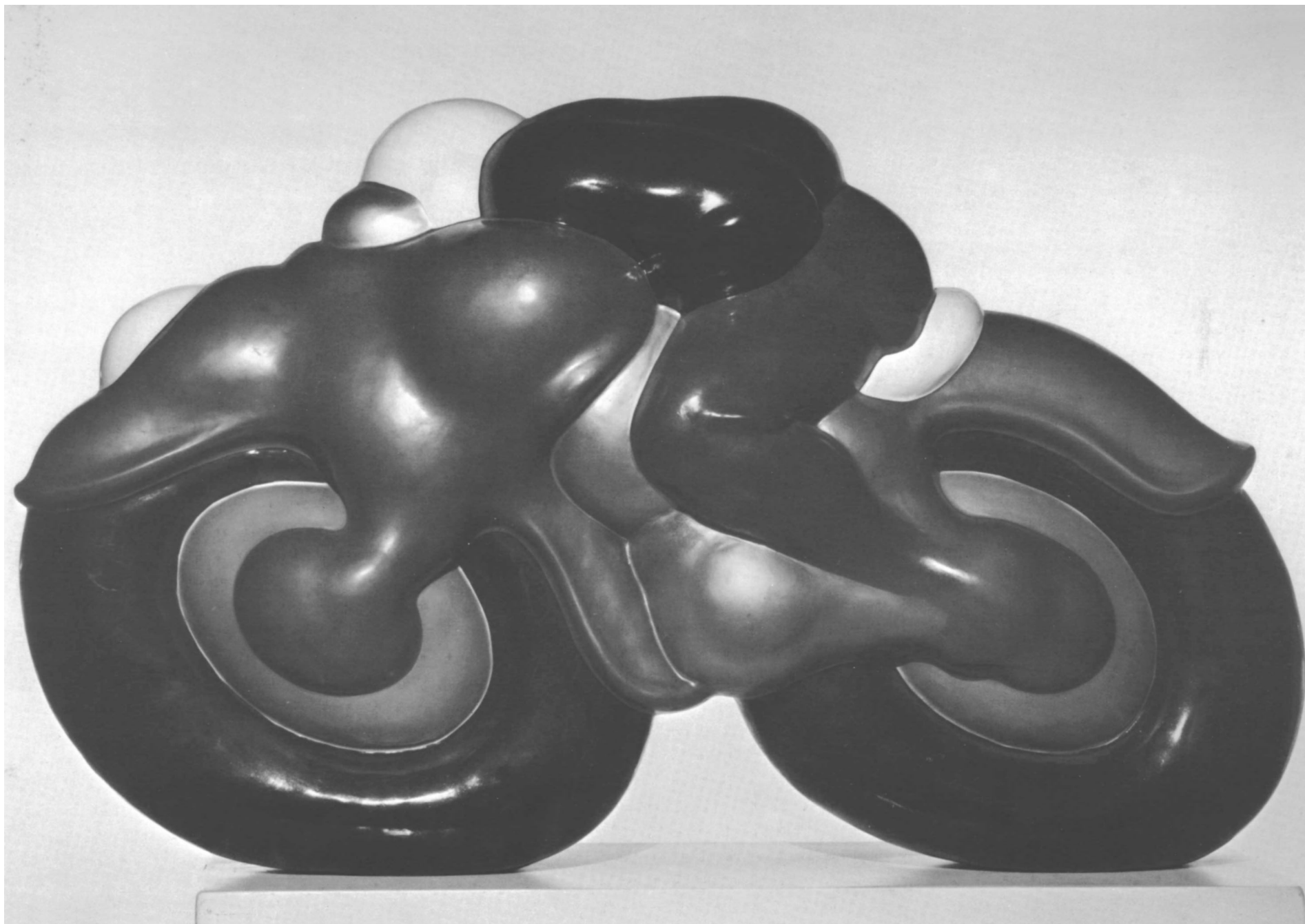
Art must function on many levels, not just one or two. The mechanics — color, form, etc., are important ingredients of art, but should not become ends in themselves. Art must relate to people. The most negated element or level in art now is the human one. Art should in some way make a person more aware, give him insight "to where he's at" and in some way reflect what it is like to be living in these times and in this place.³

M. S. N.

1 K. L., "Luis Jimenez", *Art News* 68 (April 1969), p. 16.

2 There is, however, a drawing of the same subject, also in the Richard Brown Baker collection.

3 Artist's statement as printed in *Luis Jimenez*, (New York: Graham Gallery, 1969), p. 4.



36 **Idelle Weber**
Boston Lettuce, 1974
Oil on canvas, 46" x 66"

Idelle Weber was born in Chicago, studied in Los Angeles, and has painted since the 1950s. She began with a realistic style of figure painting, but by the early sixties had associated herself with the pop artists in making pictures presenting silhouettes of people, surrounded by dots, reminiscent of Lichtenstein's comic strip canvases. In the late sixties she began to work in a more literal mode, concerning herself with specific aspects of the urban landscape such as neighborhood fruit stands and grocery stores and often including much of each shop's architecture as well as its merchandise. *Boston Lettuce* is the earliest major example of a new stage in her art: vegetable and fruit boxes are viewed among heaps of garbage and are isolated and placed with careful reference to the pictures' edges.

The paint-peeled arch which spans the upper half of Weber's *Boston Lettuce* is reminiscent of a stage and implies a sardonic tableau vivant. In this way the painting maintains continuity of content with Weber's earlier, more expansive, fruit stand pictures, since both a fruit stand and a hypothetical theatre set are platforms on which objects are put on public display. The "stage" also mimics the realistic painting's function of proffering material to a viewer. Weber's painting differs from those of the other photo-realists in that it does not insist on an ironic juxtaposition of a mundane object and the picture's ability to monumentalize. A garbage heap is potentially a sarcastic subject; yet the artist's meticulous arrangement of the boxes as well as her higher than normal point of view make the vignette a gentle, sympathetic consideration of objects whose forms may mean more than their literal content. A momentary if deliberate glance at its subject rather than a transformation of it, Weber's painting is free to be both handsome and witty when her colleagues' are sometimes hobbled by contradictions between their subject and form. It is for this reason that Ellen Lubell writes of Weber's "fondness for her subjects" and Barbara Toll of 100 Acres Gallery calls her the "warmest" of the photo-realists.

L. H. R.



Laconic Literalism

by Leo H. Rubinfien

Like intelligent art generally, the photo-realists' style aspires to articulate the exquisiteness or irony of experience while avowing awareness of painting's illusory nature. When we respond to the photo-realists' work as if it meant a priori to satirize our society's artifacts or as if artists invented it — conveniently for art historians — specifically to contradict the modernist tradition proposed by formalist criticism,¹ we unfairly ignore its complexity. At its best the style deliberately discusses both its subject matter and the paradox of literal representation; when mediocre, photo-realist painting resorts to devices which sentimentalize or pointlessly formalize its subject matter. Deceived by the verisimilitude of this type of painting as it has been by the same quality in photography, criticism has sought from photo-realism more content than the style can provide. For the working artist, it is never so clear whether a language is devised in order to picture the world in a certain way or whether a certain aspect of the world is turned to because it will submit to the constriction of a particular language. The range of photo-realism contains overtly satirical caricatures, like Malcolm Morley's horse-show painting whose characters exude the meretricious delight of television ad archetypes, as well as untendentious lyrics like Richard Estes' street scenes which hope to give us "nothing but impartial midday falling on commonplace, perhaps half-repulsive objects which are really the beloved ideas made flesh."²

This exhibition includes six photo-realist paintings whose attitudes toward the quotidian world fall at points between Estes' and Morley's; the subjects of three are automobiles, while two present city facades. These standard photo-realist motifs, which have also been among the concerns of the best twentieth-century photography, are exploited at different levels of poetic sophistication by each of the six painters: within the Baker group we can see the motifs expand to contain implications about the problem of photo-realist seeing and its place in tradition, and we can also see paintings fail to take their subjects outside their own facticity. We learn that beloved ideas are not intrinsic in shiny or rotting automobiles but are imputed to them with difficulty by artists under convention's pressure only for the sake of a construct which is fictional. Photo-realism shares with photography not only motifs but also important aspects of the process of seeing our common landscape and putting it into pictorial form. The precedents and problems of photography illuminate the photo-realist project and offer a measure for the style's current complexity and sophistication.

The photo-realist painter's central aesthetic problem is the need to overcome, undermine, or somehow infuse with meaning the profusion of detail the camera manufactures everywhere; photographers share the problem but have confronted it differently.³ Max Kozloff explained recently what photographers have known for years, that photography and painting exist at opposite ends of a hypothetical spectrum of mimetic conventions which are employed to approximate in the image what we ambiguously call experience.⁴ The painter constructs from nothing, attaching piece by piece until he arrives at a stylized contrivance we can understand and relate to the world we know. Because painting preceded photography

37 **Ralph Goings**
Olympia Truck, 1972
Watercolor, 9" x 12½"

and for so long strove through its piecemeal working process to acquire the lens's natural descriptive refinement, we seldom realize that the camera burdens the artist with a superreal abundance of material which he must wrestle into a simplified, intelligible form lest his picture relax into a phlegmatic, distinctionless mirroring of objects. The photo-realist canvas addresses the problems of both media, but the genre's allegiance is to painting even if its working source is the photograph. While the style must first of all struggle with the camera's mechanical consumption of facts, it has at hand the constructive devices of painting which are not available to the photographer. The style must reduce the plethora, but it can also superimpose upon it fancy's transformation.

Each of the photo-realist painters in Baker's collection works from photographs, either by drawing on a surface on which a slide is projected or by using a photographic print as a guide for freehand drawing. In some cases the painter's intentionality intervenes between the prototype photograph and the final painting. In others the painter faithfully follows a photograph in which an obvious departure from conventional seeing already exists.

Ralph Goings's cars and trucks (see *Olympia Truck*, 1972), as purely literally rendered as they appear to be, typify the painting's divergence from its model in their purity. While a camera's rapacious responsiveness to detail consumes every scratch, stain, frayed edge, or mark of a subject's age, every Goings car is a pristine car. Like





38 **Robert Cottingham**
Facade, 1970
Oil on canvas, 78" x 78"

the grinning girl in Rosenquist's *F-111*, Goings' subjects are attributed an unreal, idealized cleanness. When one of his cars or trucks is backlit, its side in shadow is brightened in a way the camera cannot effect; these objects' dark sides, which would begin to look dismal in a photograph, continue smiling. In their other colors also, Goings' paintings relinquish their initial commitment to the convention of faithful description; all his subjects are assigned the heightened Ektachrome hue of merchandise rendered rosier than life to inspire the buyer.

Robert Cottingham⁶ (see *Facade*, 1970), escapes the camera's literalism without substantially departing from his working photograph. The picture which, enlarged and transposed, becomes his painting is made from a sharp angle with a telephoto lens which collapses perspective in a way the normal eye does not. His facade pictures all appear as disproportionately limited sections of large building fronts we expect to see more of. Cottingham's distortive angle, his close cropping, and his zeroing in on detail all monumentalize a subject which, if explicitly shown, could easily appear undistinguished or bland.

It is finally only of incidental interest whether a painter breaks from the camera's convention before or after taking the photograph he uses as his model. Richard Estes, who copies faithfully from a combination of several photographs, emphasizes that the camera's image is always only a guide. Such an assertion does not mean to attribute to the photo-realist more intentional control than he has; whether in subtle or obvious ways, each of the photo-realist painters struggles with the photograph in order to generate the painting. John Salt (see *Wreck with Pitchfork*, 1972)⁷ disguises the photograph's stern exactness behind a minutely grained, multicolored, patternless veil.



40 **John Baeder**
Highway Diner, 1973
Oil on canvas, 42½" x 66½"



John Baeder's⁸ painting, as in his *Highway Diner* of 1973, turns to photography's own convention, the stylizing reduction of monochrome. It points out that photo-realism has otherwise stepped into territory left vacant by photography's major artists, who have generally avoided working in color. (Photographers have had at least two reasons for this abstention: their own contention with their lenses' literalism, and the assumption engendered by the arrival of black-and-white techniques prior to those of color photography, that the color image is the province of painting. In "febrile rivalry"⁹ with painters from the start, photographers have guarded their medium's idiosyncrasies.)

With this contest between content and form in mind, it is clear that the subjects the photo-realists choose are functional in solving and avoiding the problems of literal painting. As objects which submit easily to an ironic interplay between the banal fact and the impulse to monumentalize, they help the photo-realist painter's effort to show artistic self-consciousness through his literalism. Still, criticism has insisted that the painting of cars, trucks, trailers, and urban commercial landscapes is meant satirically or as a romantic embrace of the vulgar. Both photo-realism's reference to pop art and artists' and intellectuals' regular abhorrence of the artificats of mass culture encourage this quick interpretation. Photo-realism at its most

- 41 **Robert Bechtle**
'64 Valiant, 1971
Oil on canvas, 48" x 69"

sophisticated is in fact sardonic but is not satiric. In Ralph Goings' *Olympia Truck* and Robert Bechtle's¹⁰ '64 Valiant the painters create two kinds of irony by making their landscapes and vehicles prettier than life; the truck's and car's cleanness contradicts the expectations the painting initially gives the viewer. It is not incongruous to see a pristine truck in a common supermarket parking lot, but when the entire lot is full of shiny cars and itself looks like an automobile showroom, we realize that a joke is being made — not at the expense of the beer truck or Valiant but at our own sluggishness in admitting that the realistic painting does not equal the vehicle but is an autonomous, contrived entity. The second kind of irony in these pictures begins to comment on their subjects; their exaggerated prettiness makes reference to the doctored lusciousness of advertising photographs. In this manner the Goings and Bechtle paintings are similar to Lichtenstein's comic strips. They are images of hyperbolic images; by monumentalizing those banal symbols (the ad or comic) which pretend to extraordinary, romantic significance they parody both the symbol and the vacuity of its subject. Yet Goings equivocates where Lichtenstein is assertive. Whatever parody of advertising's imagery Goings' painting contains through resemblance, its descriptive fineness suggests too serious a love of painting the naturally seen for it to be utterly estranged or sarcastic. Goings' picture contains both satire and its antithesis then, a paradox



which is implied by the abstract reflections on the beer truck's polished silver side; these avow, or at least suggest, homage to the great abstract precedents in American painting. Locating a quotation

from the sober aestheticism of abstract expressionism inside the most banal objects of our environment metaphors the dual attitudes of the whole painting toward both subject and tradition.



Eugène Atget, *Cour-Rue de Valence*, 1922. Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., Abbott-Levy Collection, partial gift of Shirley C. Burden (not in exhibition)

If Goings and Bechtle manage to demonstrate the self-consciousness of their art through their paintings' own workings, John Salt, Robert Cottingham, and John Baeder stop short, contending just with their medium's intrinsic problem. In a well-known Cottingham painting,¹¹ we are shown a fragment of a movie marquee filling most of the frame with the word "Art." With grandiloquent irony the ostentatious marquee equates kitsch signmaking and a realist painting genre which aspires to be serious art. The picture identifies itself with its subject, a hilarious contrivance when involved in an exchange of the values of fine painting. (In another context we might see the marquee as a fine example of popular craftsmanship.) This is the closest Cottingham's art comes to showing self-consciousness; it usually concludes as ornament, only giving arbitrary form to facades by collapsing their perspective and isolating their details.

In John Salt's watercolor, *Wreck with Pitchfork*, it is more difficult still to find any ironic consciousness of style behind the aura of patternless color which suffuses the scene. Unless this superimposed atmosphere is to be seen as absurdly juxtaposed against the decaying automobile, it seems the painter is romanticizing the car. Salt's car itself, in retirement and decaying amid an overgrowth of weeds, is an object of easy nostalgia for the past made visible through a picturesque effect.

Baeder's painting is devoted to nostalgic expression. Painted in 1973 it shows us an art deco style diner behind 1940s cars. Susan Sontag has accused photographs of functioning on the nostalgia they always evoke for the recent past (and for the present by making it appear prematurely past); by the "surrealist bluff" of isolating fragments of the world yet showing them in clear detail, she says, we are deceived to think that the deracinated people and landscapes in photographs have actually receded naturally into history's anonymous flow when they have actually been uprooted for the picture's purpose.¹² Recent photographers have invented means of avoiding the pitfall of fictionalized history, but Baeder seems to volunteer his painting for it. The diner is rendered as shiny and new as photo-realist technique can make a metal object, yet it predates by fifteen years the new cars which surround it. Extirpated from their regular contexts, these objects can only be seen with a wistful eye: the whole painting is a planned anachronism in the spirit of several atavistic trends in contemporary popular culture. Like the snapshot it mimics, the black-and-white painting longs for the past; it also looks away from the other members of its genre, in which strong use of color is characteristic.

The photo-realist subjects we have been discussing, the automobile and facade, are not new to realistic art but were major concerns of photography as early as Atget's pictures of the 1920s. The outcome of these concerns is different in photography than it is in photo-realism, and the difference again points out that photo-realism's heart belongs to painting even though its primary aesthetic problems are photographic. In the huge, encompassing scope of Atget's art the car, like other machines which are sometimes crude and recognizable, sometimes modern and mysterious, takes part in the photographer's vast game of analogies and contrasts.¹³ While opulent and penurious, natural and manufactured objects are all analogized on Atget's terms, the camera's stubborn literalism retains every subject's own nuances, and through these, every subject's individuality. The meaning common to all the pictures is perceived in each picture. The photographs of Walker Evans and Robert Frank,¹⁴ which have employed the same motifs, also root a comprehensive vision in the details of particular subjects. The photographer adopts the camera because he is intrigued with the project of locating ideas in things, and his relationship to the multitude of them is always respectful, if passionate, exploration.

No such encompassing idea emerges from any photo-realist's trucks, trailers, or facades. The most complex of the Baker photo-realist paintings, Goings' *Olympia Truck*, demonstrates through its various references an equivocal, ambiguous conception of realist style's relationship to the world, to the question of whether the style manifests perception or only arranges icons. The style mutely monumentalizes objects but never penetrates them, and this ambivalence shows through; the subtleties of Goings' paintings are ultimately superficial.

Tod Papageorge's recent photograph, *Santa Fe, New Mexico*, 1973, of a truck, wall, and clouds stands in appropriate contrast to photo-realist paintings with similar motifs. Like Goings' imposition of a metaphoric reflection on his truck's side, Papageorge's truck and wall mimic brilliant clouds. But the coincidence of truck, wall, and clouds here is fortuitous, and the picture is a lyric which responds to this peculiar, ahistorical event. The photograph offers no reason for the concurrence it shows, but the reason for turning the camera to it is clear. The picture does not stolidly proffer a mute object to bewilder us or play with the irony of the act of monumentalizing. It pretends to be an exact description of an inexplicable but intriguing allegorical event, and the picture unfolds the event's intricacy concisely and with precision. While it is carefully deliberated, any signs of the labor of seeing in this picture are concealed; it does not appear to be an artificial or symbolic juxtaposition — form suffuses and is hidden in content.

The suggestion that photo-realism extends from pop art's concern with mass culture's paraphernalia is convincing, but the most significant lesson the style has learned from the work of Warhol, Lichtenstein, and Rosenquist is not mere interest in artifacts from the landscape of banality but the monumentalizing of them. John Fraser comments that pop artists generally ignored the car as a motif although most other artifacts which occupy

the same place in American life have been pop art subjects.¹⁵ A look at Atget, Evans, Frank, and contemporary photographers shows photography's recurrent attention to it and suggests that the photo-realists borrowed subjects from photography when they borrowed part of this form. Unlike photography but like pop art, the photo-realist makes his subject conspicuous and bold but neglects its intricacies. It is presented in an

ingenuous way that gives it more importance than it might claim in the real world. The result is the silent irony of bewilderment before an undefinable mass. Photo-realism has restricted itself to still life and portraiture probably in order to maintain this irony; painting activity would admit ambiguities, would make subjects changing entities which could not be sardonically inflated.

Photo-realism is so much a current event that it is difficult to guess what in painting's progression prompted so literal a style just now. Its imagery and attitudes refer to pop art and photography, and it struggles with photography's formal problems. Yet it is a hybrid style, without the lyrical exactness of photography or pop art's sardonic exchange of the symbols of kitsch for the symbols of art. William Seitz concludes the best essay to date on photo-realism¹⁶ by hailing it as a romantic embrace of paradox, a straightforward celebration of a landscape complex and contradictory. But to encompass complexity it is necessary to articulate complexity, and the photo-realists come only as close to articulation as does the camera's unmediated, literal transcription. On the side of the style is the monumentality of large scale and color, tools unavailable to or unsought by photographers: stepping into this space unoccupied by photography, photo-realism looks more directly at the physical world than pop art but not as closely as photography. Without careful insight into the world of light on surface it retreats into unexplaining presentation which, when strong, mimics its own ability to be bold. The style might be seen as parodying the plight of any contemporary realism, but it is too optimistic in its preciousness to contain so general a rejection. In the attempt to reconcile the boldness and monumentality of recent painting with the exquisite precision of pure literalism, the photo-realist's response to the world is embarrassed, laconic, and opinionless.



Tod Papageorge, *Santa Fe, New Mexico*, 1973. Courtesy of the artist (not in exhibition)

- 1 Recent essays in which these ideas appear include: James K. Monte, *22 Realists* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970); William Seitz, "The Real and the Artificial: Painting of the New Environment," *Art in America* 60 (November-December, 1972), pp. 58-72; Linda Nochlin, *Realism Now* (Poughkeepsie, N.Y.: Vassar College, 1968); Ivan Karp, "Rent is the Only Reality or the Hotel Instead of the Hymn," *Arts* 46 (December 1971), pp. 47-51.
- 2 George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*. (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 394.
- 3 John Szarkowski writes, "The ability to produce pictures richly complex in their description would seem to be intrinsic to photography; indeed this characteristic might almost be considered a simple fact of the medium. Nevertheless, much of the best energy of photographers during the last seventy years has been dedicated to the task of thinning out the rank growth of information that the camera records if left to its own devices, in favor of pictures which have been — for lack of a better word — simpler. . . . In photography the formal issue might be stated as this: how much of the camera's miraculous descriptive power is the photographer capable of handling? Or, how much complexity can he make simple? Or, conversely, how much diversity must he sacrifice for the sake of order?" *Looking at Photographs* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), p. 188.
- 4 Max Kozloff, "The Territory of Photography," *Artforum*. 13 (November 1974), pp. 64-65.
- 5 Ralph Goings was born in 1928 in Corning, California, and now works in Sacramento. He is known for his expertise in realistic rendering of cars and trucks in oils and watercolors. He has participated in new realist group exhibits since 1969 and is represented by the O. K. Harris Gallery in New York.
- 6 Robert Cottingham, born in 1935 in Brooklyn, studied advertising art at Pratt Institute and worked as an illustrator before beginning in the photo-realist genre. Prior to painting the closely cropped facades for which he is well known, he painted houses and single, isolated objects. Living now in London, he had his first New York show at the O. K. Harris Gallery in 1971.
- 7 John Salt was born in Birmingham, England, in 1937 and studied at the Birmingham College of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art. He is known for watercolors and for oil paintings executed with an airbrush; his subjects are exclusively cars. His first New York show was held at Zabriskie Gallery in 1969 and he is now represented by O. K. Harris.
- 8 John Baeder was born in South Bend, Indiana, in 1938 and studied at Auburn University. Living now in New York he makes paintings of old diners from postcards and from photographs he travels to take himself. No signs of modern life appear in most of his paintings, whose subjects generally date from the 1930s and 1940s. His first New York show was held at the Hundred Acres Gallery in 1972.
- 9 Susan Sontag, "The Beauty Treatment," *New York Review of Books* 21 (November 28, 1974), p. 36.
- 10 Robert Bechtle was born in San Francisco in 1932 and currently works in Berkeley, California. He studied at California College of Arts and Crafts and has participated in major group exhibitions of new realists since 1967. He works primarily in acrylics and is known for scenes with cars and California suburban landscapes. He is represented by O. K. Harris.
- 11 Robert Cottingham, *Art*. 1970, collection Dr. and Mrs. Ivan C. Karp.
- 12 Susan Sontag, "Shooting America," *New York Review of Books* 21 (April 18, 1974), pp. 22-24.
- 13 For a discussion of this and other aspects of Atget's oeuvre, see John Fraser, "Atget and the City," *Studio International* 182 (December 1971), pp. 231-246.
- 14 See John Szarkowski, ed., *Walker Evans* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1971) and Robert Frank, *The Americans* (New York: Grossman, 1969).
- 15 John Fraser, "Photography and the City," *Yale Review* 59 (Winter 1970), p. 230.
- 16 Seitz, "The Real and the Artificial," p. 72.

42 **Jack Beal**
Nude on Chaise Longue, 1968
Oil on canvas, 60" x 66"

Jack Beal is usually characterized as a mainstream new realist, operating in neither a reactionary (academic or neotraditional) nor a radical (photo-realist) style.¹ Since 1965 Beal has painted a geometrically simplified, partially abstract world of nudes and furniture; most recently, however, in his table series, Beal has eliminated the figure altogether, moving even closer to the geometric abstraction of hard-edge color field painters.

Nude on Chaise Longue represents a transition in Beal's style between the more cluttered nude and furniture paintings of 1965-67 and the figureless table paintings dating from 1969. Here his subject is still the nude and furniture, painted with an economy of color and detail; the result emphasizes spatial and color relationships rather than the opulence of the various objects and fabrics evident in earlier paintings such as *Danae I*.² In *Nude on Chaise Longue*, Beal contrasts the intense warm orange flesh of the nude and redwood chaise frame with the equally intense cool green pillows and blue iron back support of the chaise, repeating the contrast in the green and blue lines on the orange and purplish floor.

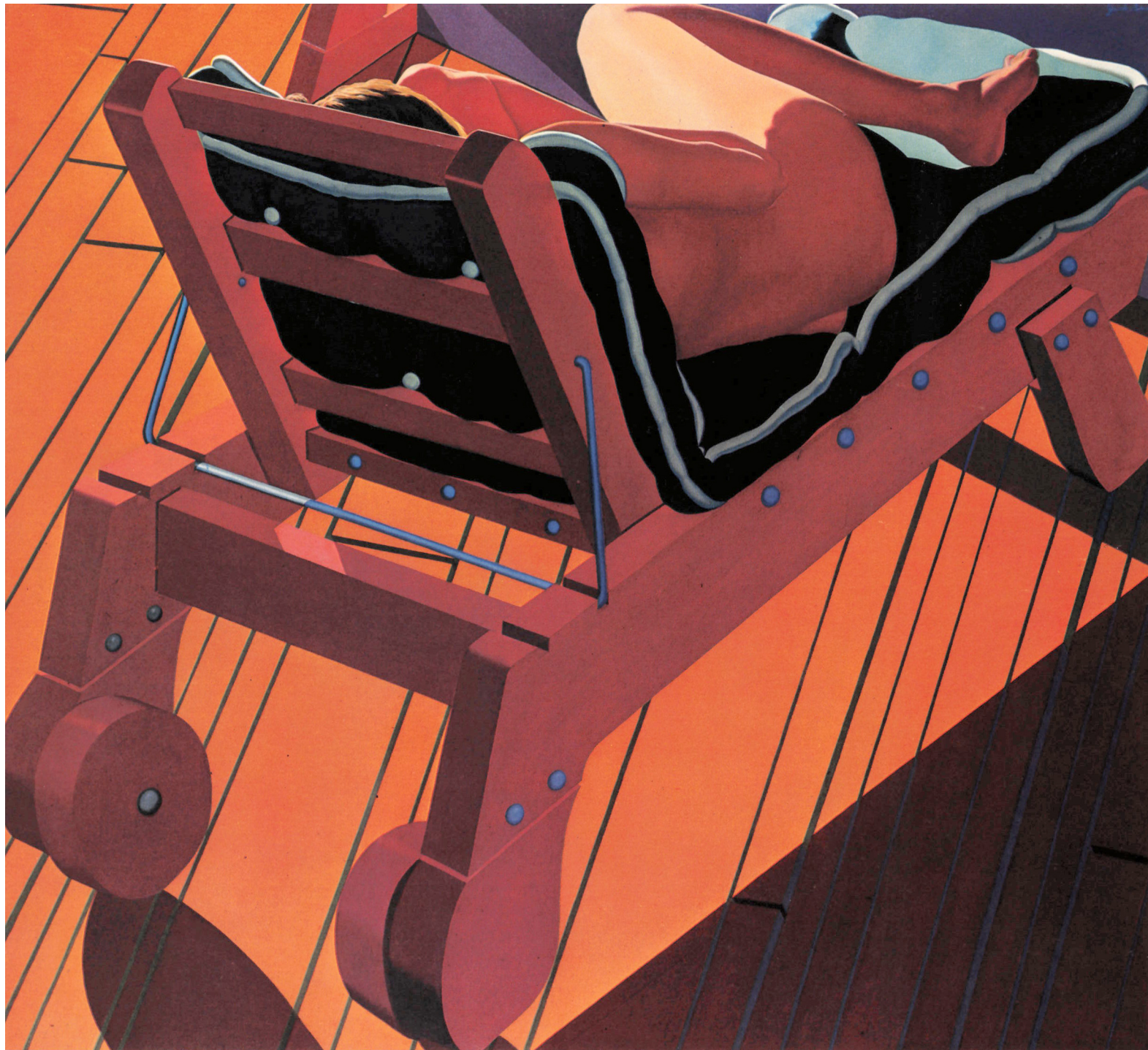
The viewer is not distracted by brushstroke or texture, yet at the same time is very much aware of the presence of the artist's hand — his meticulous craftsmanship — in the sleekly rendered surfaces. Although we are not distracted by texture, Beal again makes us aware of his presence by not completely hiding his brushstroke, for painterly touches are distinguishable on the nude's shoulder and on the pillow beneath her foot.

One is equally conscious of Beal's careful manipulation of viewpoint; he creates an antiillusionistic space by tilting the floor, diagonally foreshortening the objects, working with diagonal and curved lines rather than with horizontals and verticals. The realistically observed female nude rests somewhat comfortably in this artificially manipulated space which is at the same time both compelling and disquieting.

S. B. B.

1 Hilton Kramer, in the *New York Times*, quoted in Gerrit Henry, "The Real Thing," *Art International* 16 (Summer 1972), p. 87.

2 See Peter Schjeldahl, "The Meaning of Jack Beal," *Jack Beal: A Loan Exhibition* (Richmond: Virginia Museum, 1973), no. 8.



43 **Richard Diebenkorn**

Woman in Chaise, 1965

Crayon and gouache on paper, 17" x 12½"

Richard Diebenkorn's work combines a tendency towards abstract expressionism with a decidedly West Coast loyalty to the figurative; the resulting style is a loose, painterly realism. Born in Oregon and educated in Northern California,¹ Diebenkorn began his artistic career painting vivid abstractions but could not totally abandon the figure. One critic interprets this as indicating Diebenkorn's "willingness to face the painter's prime problem: to make an illusion on canvas that is reality in itself."²

Whatever his reasons, Diebenkorn has remained faithful to an abstract expressionist painterliness, and his energetic technique is also evident in his drawings.³ He often uses charcoal — rubbed and smeared — blunt-tipped pencils and crayons, gouache, or a combination of these media, applied in brisk, animated strokes. For all the apparent verve of execution, however, the underlying geometric structure — often composed of parallel diagonals and verticals — gives the drawings a fixed quality.

The composition of *Woman in Chaise* is based on such a structure of parallel diagonals and verticals. The woman and chaise extend diagonally across the paper from lower right to upper left, with the woman's navel in the center of the composition. The viewer looks first at the drawing at the lower right corner, moving around the jerky but controlled contour of the woman and chaise. The figure is isolated not only physically, but also psychologically; her caustic stare defies and denies entrance into the realm of her thoughts or personality.

In spite of the potential of these strong diagonals to create a sense of depth, the figure is kept on the surface of the drawing by devices both technical — the attention-holding quality of the actual crayon and brushstrokes — and compositional — the parallel verticals of the pillow edges and stripes and the vertical armrests. The geometry of the drawing is, however, always master of the seemingly improvised crayon and brushstrokes.

S. B. B.

1 Diebenkorn's first one-man exhibition was at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, San Francisco, in 1948. He has had subsequent exhibitions at various West Coast galleries and museums, including one at the Los Angeles County Museum in 1969. His shows in New York have been primarily at the Poindexter Gallery, beginning in 1956.

2 Dore Ashton, "New York Report," *Kunstwerk* 17 (January 1964), p. 27. Subsequent to Ms. Ashton's article, Diebenkorn has returned to a geometric abstraction, notably in the Ocean Park series.

3 See *Drawings by Richard Diebenkorn* (Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford University, 1965).



44 **David Hockney**

Peter Resting with Clothes On – St. Tropez, 1969
Pen and ink on paper, 14" x 17"

Although associated with British pop art which emerged in 1961 at the Royal College of Art student exhibition "Young Contemporaries,"¹ Hockney claimed in 1962 "I am not a pop artist."² The misunderstanding came from Hockney's occasional use of motifs from popular culture, from graffiti and children's drawings. He, however, also draws on a variety of past styles such as Egyptian art, nineteenth-century French art, German expressionism, Italian surrealism, dada, and cubism, painting and drawing "what I like, when I like and where I like . . . landscapes of foreign lands, beautiful people, love, propaganda and major incidents (of my own life)."³

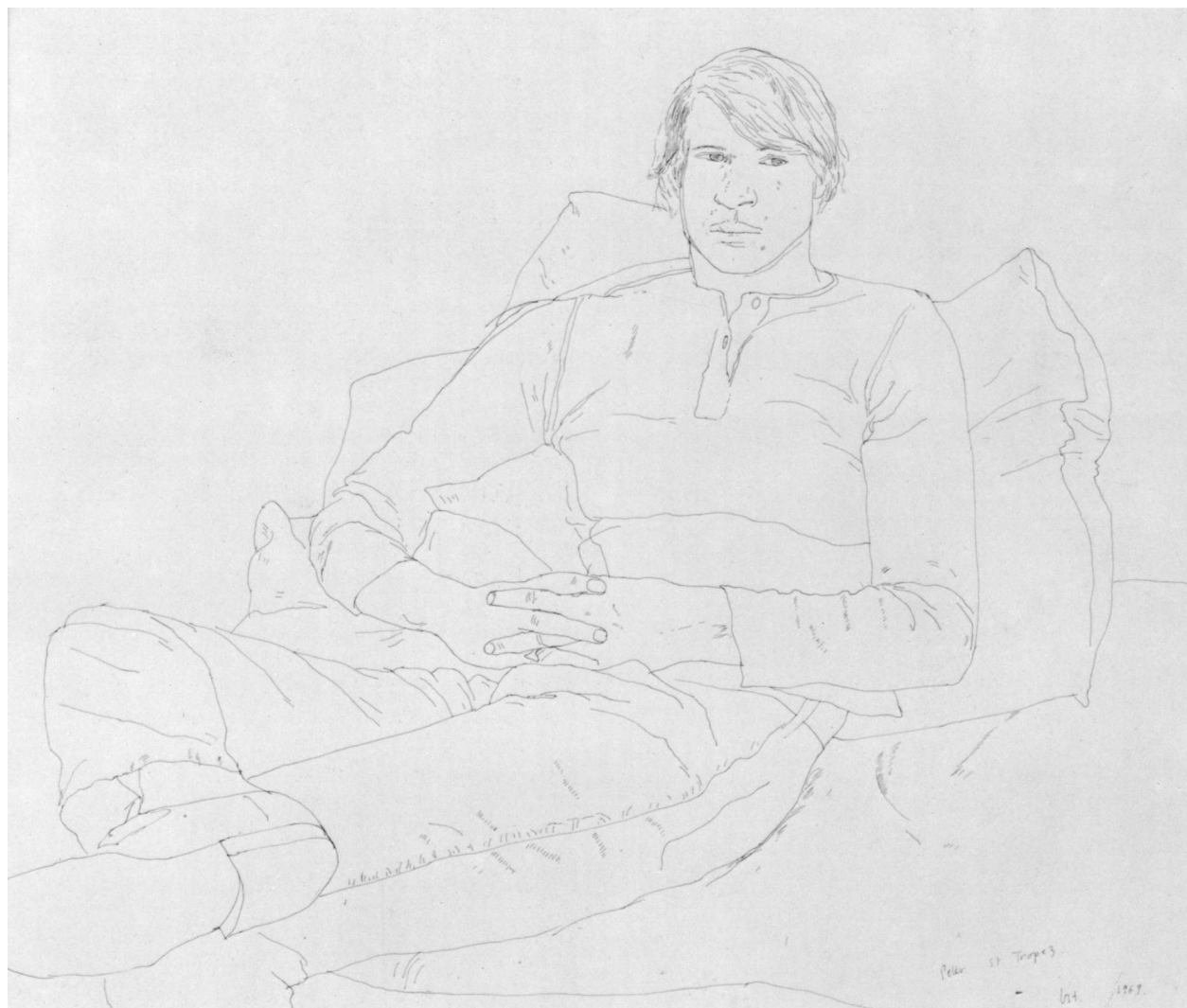
In the portraits of his friends, e.g., *Peter Resting with Clothes On*, Hockney recalls his British heritage, for like the Pre-Raphaelites, Hockney chooses his friends as subjects – the haunting poignancy of a Pre-Raphaelite portrait, without its romantic sentimentality. And, like Rossetti, one face often looks out from his portraits – Peter Schlesinger. Peter appears in at least eighteen portraits from 1966 on, the place always noted – "Albergo La Flora, Rome," "Santa Monica," "Hotel Regina, Venice," "Grand Hotel, Vittel," etc. With an expressive line and little descriptive shading, Hockney presents a sensitive and observant image, a private image, labeled as a photograph in a scrapbook – "Peter St. Tropez 1969."

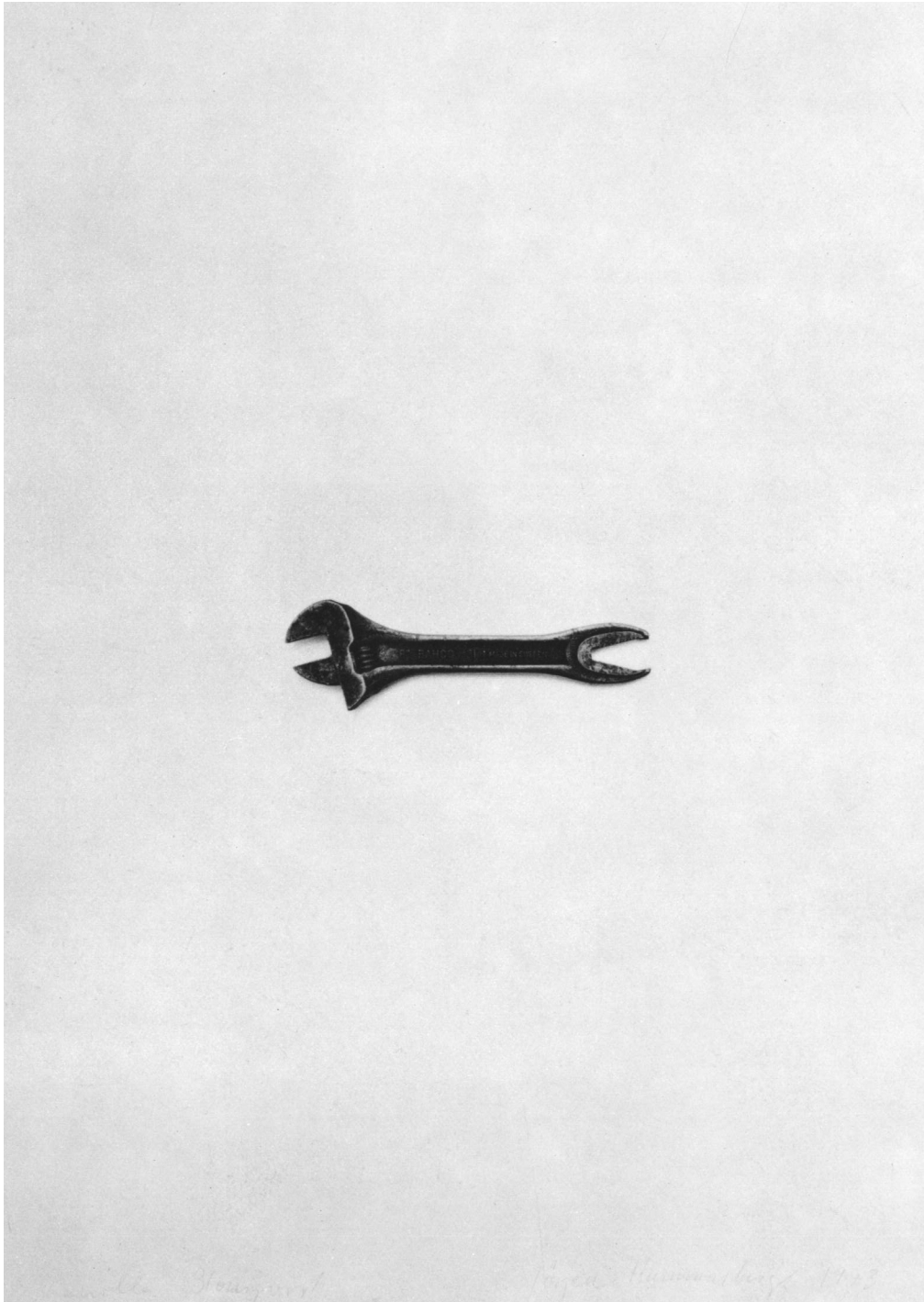
S. B. B.

1 Lawrence Alloway, "The Development of British Pop," in Lucy R. Lippard, *Pop Art* (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 53.

2 *David Hockney: Paintings, Prints and Drawings, 1960-1970* (London: Lund Humphries, 1970), p. 28.

3 John Loring, "David Hockney Drawings," *Arts Magazine* 49 (November 1974), p. 66.





- 45 **Gunilla Blomquist**
Jorgen Hammarberg
Wrench, 1973
Graphite on paper, 40" x 28¼"

Blomquist and Hammarberg are two artists with a unique approach to artistic collaboration. In 1968 these young Swedish artists teamed up to produce painstakingly executed images of single objects. They work simultaneously on the same drawing, facing each other across a table with one of them always working upside down, and constantly drawing over each other's work. Blomquist and Hammarberg were given a "one-man" show in 1973 in New York at the Hundred Acres Gallery which included *Wrench*, and similar drawings of a torn-off button, a teacup, some interiors, and a close-up of two heads. One result of their painstaking method is that the surfaces of all their drawings have the same smooth, impersonal, opaque quality seen in *Wrench*. Their subject matter is selected from photographs found in newspapers and magazines. The object is then isolated in the center of a large space, where it dominates by the power of its plasticity and precise rendering. The isolation heightens the sense of abstraction and creates a surreal, somewhat disquieting effect, with the image becoming almost photographic.

Both educated at the Royal Swedish Academy of Art, Blomquist and Hammarberg have had works exhibited in museums and galleries throughout Sweden. Besides their show at Hundred Acres last year, their work has been seen in the Glen Gallery in California and the Indianapolis Museum.

C. C. L.

46 **Theo Wujcik**
Ed Moses, 1973
Silverpoint on paper, 21" x 26" (sight)

Ed Moses, the subject of this delicate drawing, is an abstract painter and draftsman from California. His works are often compared to New York conceptual painting, but the soft earth colors Moses uses make the images personal and romantic.¹ It is the latter quality that Theo Wujcik has attempted to evoke in his portrait, through silvery tones and delicate line.

It is likely that Wujcik met Moses at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles, where both had a fellowship in 1968. Moses was an artist-fellow at the workshop, creating designs for lithographs to be executed by the printer-trainees. Wujcik, who now designs and prints his own lithographs, may have worked with Moses while a printer-trainee at Tamarind.

Wujcik works primarily in graphic media and teaches lithography at the University of South Florida. Many of his works are portraits of other artists: James Rosenquist and Edward Ruscha are among his subjects. Some of the earlier portraits are caricatures or subjective interpretations of his sitters. Recently, however, Wujcik has become more interested in realistic observation. In this drawing, careful rendering of facial features provides an interesting counterpoint to the monumentalization of the figure created by silhouetting it against a blank, abstract ground.

C. L. T.

¹ Peter Plagens, "Ed Moses: The Problems of Regionalism," *Artforum* 10 (March 1972), pp. 83-85. Moses paints varyingly spaced horizontal stripes composed of overlapping linear strands. According to Plagens, his works are involved with the ambivalence between the painting as object and what is on its surface, a characteristic of much New York painting.



- 47 **Kenneth Noland**
Rhyme, 1960
Plastic paint on canvas, 84" x 84"

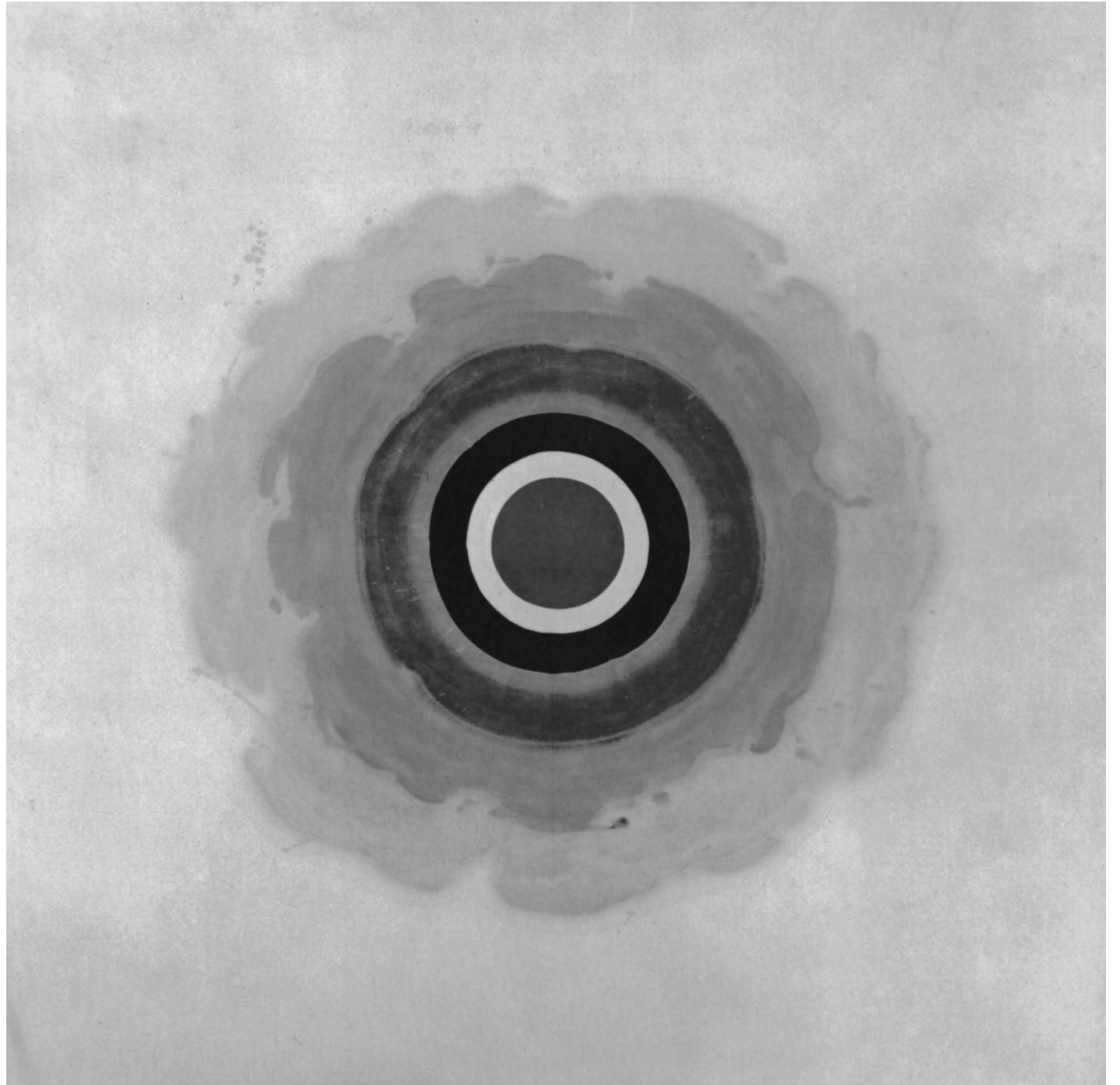
Born in Asheville, North Carolina, Noland attended Black Mountain College there and studied with Ossip Zadkine in Paris in 1948-49. During the 1950s he worked in Washington, D.C., where near the end of that decade he became recognized along with Morris Louis as one of the leaders of the "Washington Color School."¹ Both Noland and Louis adopted from the work of Helen Frankenthaler the technique of staining acrylic paint into unprimed canvas in an attempt to liberate color from the gestural physicality of abstract expressionism. By uniting pigment with the fabric of the canvas and thereby producing an even, weightless texture over the entire surface, a Pollock-like alloverness is preserved, and the colors are allowed to express themselves on a single plane with unprecedented strength and vitality.

Nowhere are these qualities more clearly felt than in the painting *Rhyme* of 1960. The powerfully saturated red in the center of the composition interacts with the less saturated orange and blues on the same spatial level because of the unbroken continuity of the surface plane. Even the bare canvas and the wispy halo produced by the seepage of the binder around the outermost ring are activated as vital parts of the composition. Moreover, the structure of the composition plays an important role in producing a nonillusory planar format in which color may be felt directly. The concentric rings of *Rhyme* do not behave as shapes — distinct, bounded entities — but as pure color devoid of forms. Unlike Louis, who generally painted on unsized canvas, Noland "broke through to his mature style only when (in his words) he 'discovered the center' of the canvas;"² he began to radiate images symmetrically around the geographic center of the picture, thereby relating the internal structure of the composition deductively to the literal nature of the picture support. Such a deductive manner of compositional organization is part of Noland's continuing search for a set of intrinsically credible formal constraints through which color ideas may be expressed simply and directly.

W. R. S.

1 Clement Greenberg, "Louis and Noland," *Art International* 4, No. 5 (May 25, 1960), p. 26.

2 Michael Fried, *Kenneth Noland*, (New York: Jewish Museum, 1965), n. p.



- 48 **Jules Olitski**
Queen of Sheba Breast, 1963
Acrylic on canvas, 81½" x 78"

Queen of Sheba Breast, produced in response to Morris Louis' and Kenneth Noland's stain pictures of the late fifties, represents a crucial step in Olitski's development toward the color field, spray paintings that he began in 1965. Rejecting the dense, relief surfaces of his 1959 paintings, Olitski initially placed rounded forms against black backgrounds but discovered that colors soaked into unprimed canvas and surrounded by white "breathing" spaces identified with rather than floated in front of the ground. The intensity and textural differences between the colored forms and the surrounding canvas in *Queen of Sheba Breast* and other 1963 works such as *Born in Snovsk* or *Fatal Plunge Lady* still caused the shaped object to be more interesting than the color with which it was composed. By the following year, however, Olitski had expanded his stained color areas so that the biomorphic forms appear only at the edges to prevent the visual flow from extending beyond the stretcher.

The relative conservatism of *Queen of Sheba Breast* is identifiable both in its reliance on a reduced palette of saturated blue, green, orange, and opaque pink and in its carefully drawn, musically spaced color intervals. In addition to his expressed interest in the backgrounds of Miro's paintings,¹ Olitski shares Miro's predilection for curvilinear, organic shapes but is equally concerned with the irregular areas between his colors. By reworking the edges of his forms and subtly shifting the central green area downward and to the right, Olitski establishes a movement from cool to hot which is halted by the smaller but more intense rose trapezoid and glowing orange circle.

Taking advantage of the natural directionality of gravity and reading, Olitski evokes cosmic images of a central nucleus or sun radiating out to tiny satellites floating in the lower right corner of the canvas. The title *Queen of Sheba Breast*, however, is a humorous recognition of other organic associations with the circular forms. In fact, it is not too far-fetched to see the titles of Olitski's works in 1963-64 as indicators of his shift in painting techniques: the 1963 titles are suggested by the shapes themselves, whereas the 1964 titles (*Flaubert Red*, *Tin Lizzie Green*, etc.) more often derive from color associations.

A. McC.

1 Kenworth Moffett, "Jules Olitski and the State of the Easel Picture" *Arts* 47 (March 1973), p. 46.



- 49 **Gene Davis**
Pale Susan, 1966
Acrylic on canvas, 45" x 45"

Born in Washington, D.C., in 1920, Gene Davis was employed as a journalist during the 1940s and began his career as a painter in the early fifties without any formal training in art. During the fifties he experimented with various abstract expressionist styles including Pollock-like drips, heavy impasto, collage, and even proto-pop comic strips before arriving at the format of colored vertical stripes that has been characteristic of his work since 1959.

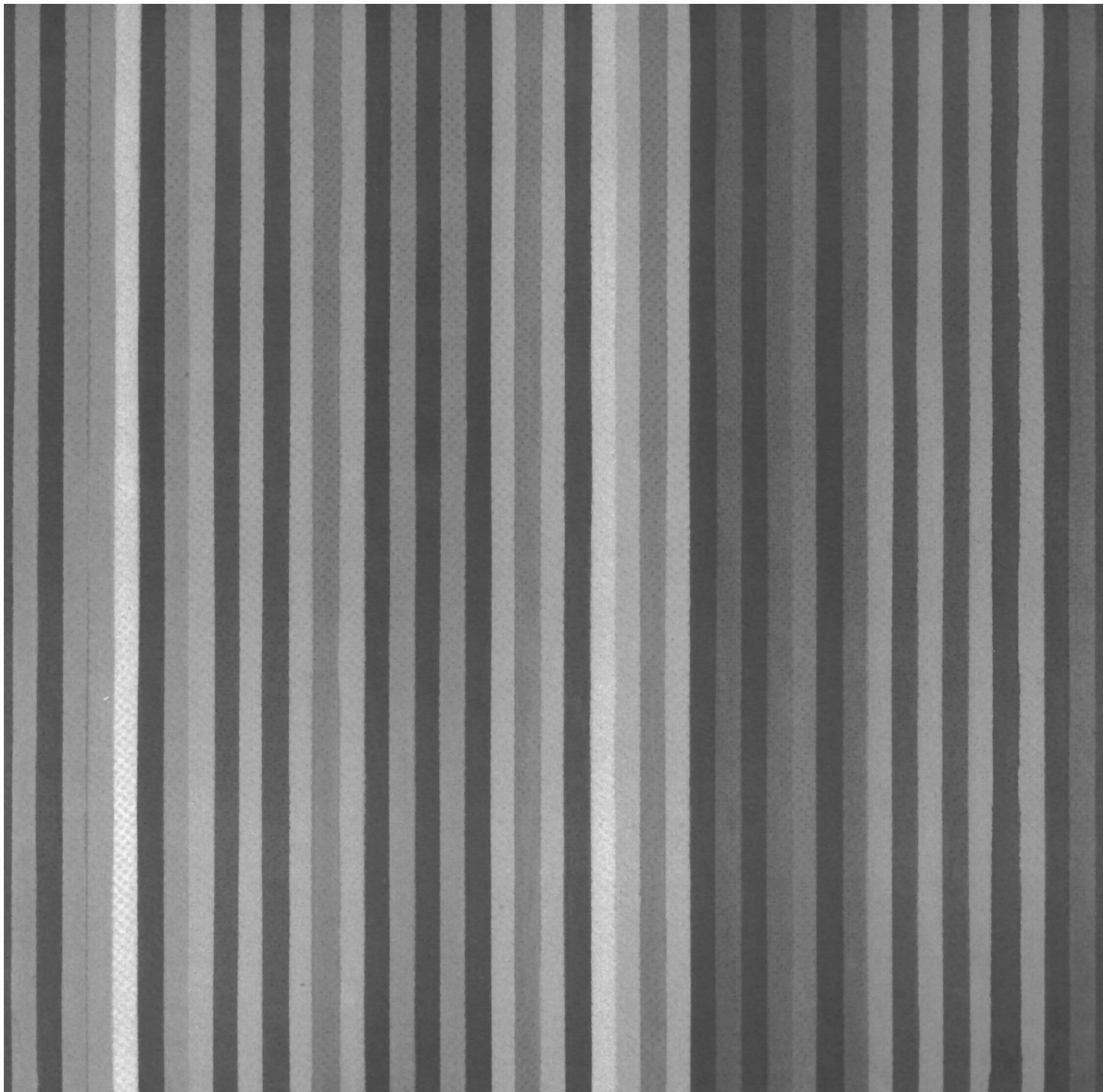
Using a technique of staining acrylic paint into unprimed canvas, Davis has been associated with the painters Ken Noland and Morris Louis as a member of the "Washington Color School." He is quick to assert, however, that his use of the stripe format predates that of Noland and Louis — his own first stripe painting was done in 1958 — and instead acknowledges Barnett Newman (perhaps misreading Newman's intentions) as his chief inspiration in this regard.¹

"There is no simpler way to divide up a canvas," Davis explains, "than with straight lines at equal intervals. This enables the viewer more than in most paintings, to forget the structure and see the color for itself."² Yet by his own admission, Davis is concerned as much with the idea of interval and rhythm as he is with color. In *Pale Susan* this concern with structure and composition is implicit. Though the bands are of equal width and cover the entire canvas, they tend to organize themselves into distinct clusters as a result of the repetition of certain colors and the sequential reading encouraged by their verticality. Here, the organization remains subservient to the individual color choices as different colors interact with the dominant motifs of pink, blue, yellow, mauve, and turquoise in the way that a melody plays against a progression of chords. In Davis' more recent work such structural concerns become explicit as the width of the stripes and the amount of bare canvas that is allowed to show through are varied.

W. R. S.

1 Jacob Kainen, "Gene Davis and the Art of Color Interval," *Art International* 10, No. 10 (December 20, 1966), p. 31.

2 Gerald Nordland, "Gene Davis Paints a Picture," *Art News* 65, No. 2 (April 1966), p. 47.



50 **Larry Poons**
Untitled, 1974
Acrylic on canvas, 78" x 50½"

Larry Poons' *Untitled* — one of Richard Brown Baker's most recent acquisitions — is an example of the tactile style Poons has been exploring and developing in the 1970s which is quite different in appearance from his optical dots and ellipses of the sixties. These paintings, created by throwing a viscous mixture of aquatex and gel against an upright canvas, have inspired various references to impressionism, with their "Renoir-like iridescence,"¹ their "delicacy and intensity which suggest Vuillard and Monet,"² like "lily pads in a storm . . . a tough-guy evocation of Monet."³ The colors of *Untitled*, however, are not pure and fresh, but on the contrary, a rather murky mixture of gray-mauves and gray-greens, not floating and shimmering on the surface, but slowly oozing down it like lukewarm tar or sun-melted wax crayons curdling here, melting again there in their wearisome peregrination down the canvas. "I like thickness. I like texture," Poons says, indeed admitting, "I realize that I'm kind of overloading it."⁴

One critic writes, "For Poons establishing surface is the first concern. . . . Although the surface is made in layers . . . the lumps and thickened drips of pigment showing through from below, and the occasional use of milky over-glazing all help to keep it together."⁵ Thus, there is a pragmatic continuity in Poons' work of the sixties and seventies, for in the earlier work he was also concerned with establishing surface by the perceptual effects of the vibrating dots and ellipses, playing with each other and with the background. In one case the means is optical, in the other tactile, but the end is the same.

S. B. B.

1 Laurie Anderson, "Reviews," *Arts Magazine* 47 (November 1972), p. 71.

2 J. A. (John Ashbery), "Reviews and Previews," *Art News* 70 (January 1972), p. 22.

3 Carter Ratcliff, "Reviews," *Artforum* 11 (January 1973), p. 82.

4 Phyllis Tuchman, "An Interview with Larry Poons," *Artforum* 9 (December 1970), p. 49.

5 John Elderfield, "Painterliness Redefined," *Art International* 17 (April 1973), p. 39.



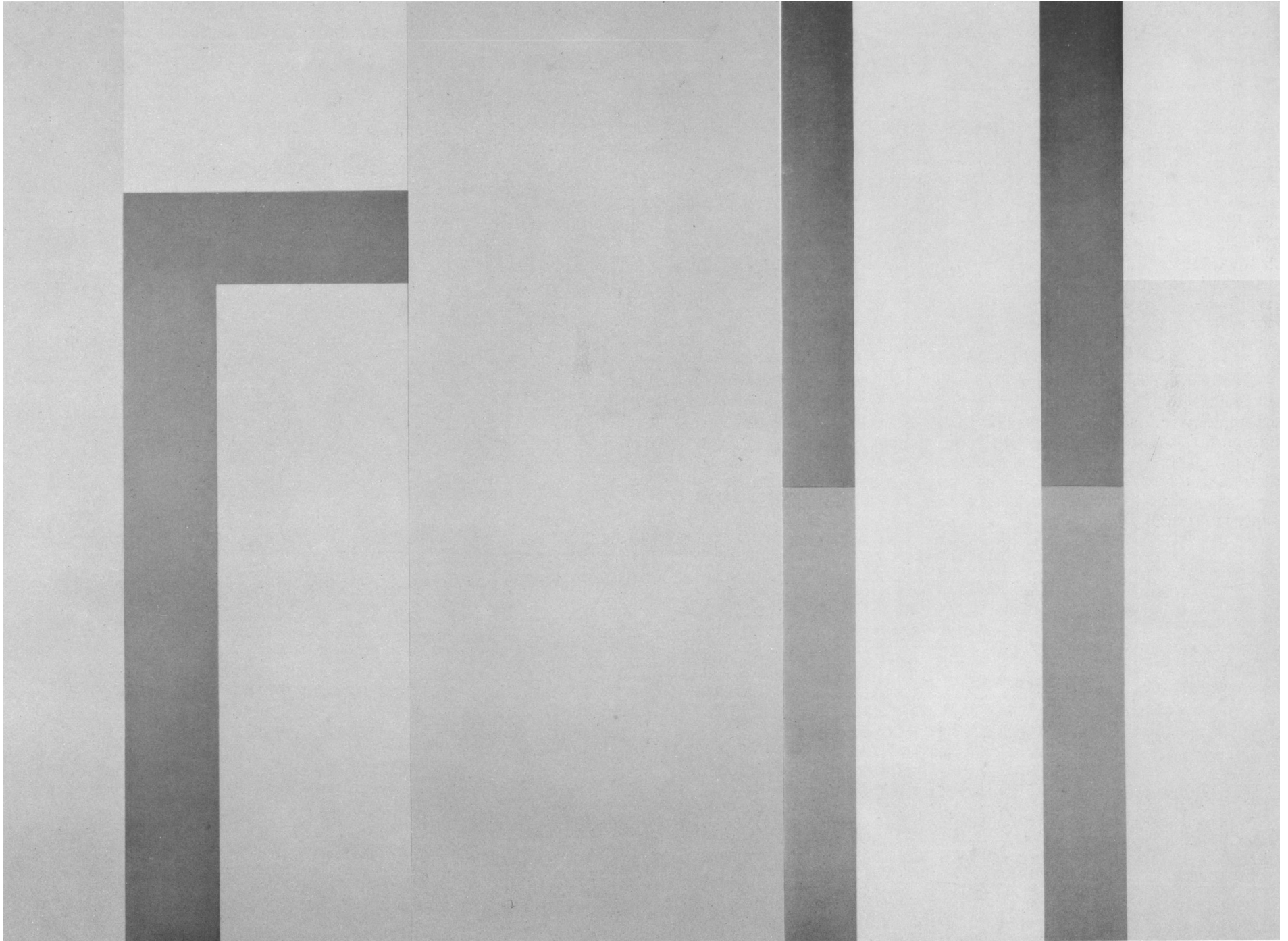
- 51 **David Novros**
No Title #4, 1973
Oil on canvas, 3 panels 84" x 115½" overall

Born in Los Angeles in 1941, David Novros studied at the University of California and briefly at Yale. In his first one-man show in 1966 he exhibited paintings from the years 1964-66 each of which consisted of several canvases of similar though irregular shape. The units were not modular, varying in size and shape within each painting, but rather explored relationships among a family of similar and autonomous forms. Although it was Frank Stella who was the first to exploit shaped canvases of this nature, these pieces differed fundamentally in intention from Stella's work of about the same period in that they encouraged a figure-ground reading between the canvas and the wall. Stella's paintings were intended to end at the framing edge, but Novros' incorporated the wall as ground. This distinction continued in Novros' work of the later sixties, though the materials with which he was then working — acrylic lacquer on fiberglass — encouraged a flatter (though still sculptural) reading.

In Novros' most recent work, of which *No Title #4* is an example, the artist has made two important changes to eliminate this sculptural impression: He works with the traditional oil on canvas, and, more importantly, though the paintings are still composed of several panels, he maintains a closed rectangular format overall, filling in, as it were, the spaces between the units of his earlier paintings and no longer allowing the wall to interact as ground. The result is an object almost totally devoid of spatial illusion. The composition, which in this case consists entirely of interlocking Ls and rectangles, avoids any implication of overlap and is carefully worked out so that no section recedes or dissolves into a separate plane. Color is a dominant concern, which contributes to the painting's planar integrity as the nature of the palette — a narrow and personal one tending towards close-valued, chalky, fresco-like hues — encourages an even reading of surface, almost imitating the impression of fresco. The precise and complicated cadences of greens, pinks, blues, and stone colors that are held by the shapes produce not a pretty picture but one that is quietly evocative.

W. R. S.

See also: Alexandra C. Anderson, "Review of Exhibitions," *Art in America* 61 (May-June 1973), pp. 99-101.



Before Conceptual Art

by Kenneth E. Silver

Using the term conceptual to speak about the work of a number of contemporary artists is perhaps misleading. We might understand conceptual art as, more simply, the re-introduction of verbal language into the realm of visual art-making. The artist Mel Bochner declared the separate but interdependent functions of the verbal idea and the visual fact when he stated that "Formalist art is predicated on a congruency between form and content. Any artist who considers this dichotomy either irreconcilable or desirable is no longer interested in formal relationships."¹ Yet verbal ideas did not reenter the visual arts as a sudden decision to reject the purely retinal, nor solely through the work of Duchamp, Johns, and the pop artists. Rather, we find in looking back at the last fifteen years of American art that a language coefficient had long been affecting the product of visual artists as seemingly remote from verbal concerns as the color-field painters. That work (the late paintings of Morris Louis, the early sixties work of Frank Stella and Kenneth Noland), which had expunged literature as a coordinate of illusionistic space was already using the structure of language (discrete symbols, progression in time, compositional predictability) as a model for antiillusionistic painting.

In color-field works such as Morris Louis' *Illumination* of 1962 and Kenneth Noland's *Mercury (Ray Parker's Green in the Shadow of Red)* of 1963, internal formal interests begin to give way to a contextual, or verbal, reading. To be sure, Noland's chevron, in which bands of yellow, orange, red, and tan are juxtaposed, and Louis' multi-colored stripes, are works about color to the extent that any quality of an object must be considered as part of its content. Yet, if we turn back to the early criticism of these works, we already experience the disassociation of form and content which Bochner will insist upon as a generating principle almost a decade later. Clement Greenberg, in his famous essay "After Abstract Expressionism," wrote:

What is the ultimate source of value or quality in art? And the worked-out answer appears to be: not skill, training, or anything else having to do with execution or performance, but conception alone. Culture or taste may be a necessary condition of conception, but the latter is alone decisive.²

52 Kenneth Noland

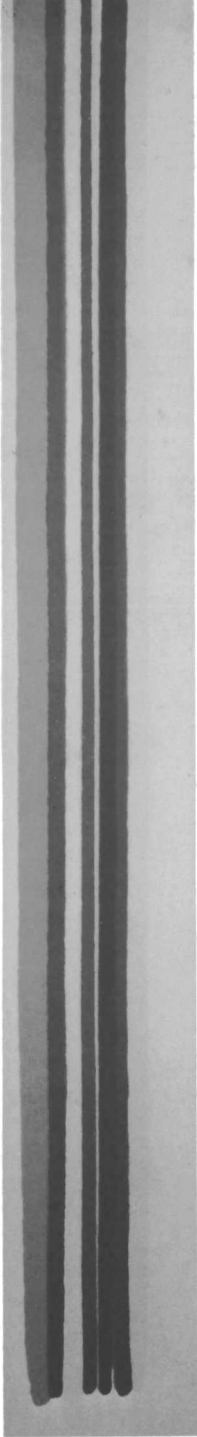
Mercury (Ray Parker's Green in the Shadow of Red), 1963

Acrylic resin paint on canvas, 69 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 69 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

While he would take a critical about-face within the next ten years,³ in 1962 Greenberg perceived conception, the process of forming ideas or abstractions, as the non-visible content of the new color painting. In other words, there was something about the formal qualities of the color-field paintings which made the work's internal relationships less relevant than the particulars of its genesis. For Greenberg, at least, simple format and unmodulated color were refreshing after what he termed the "turgidities of Abstract Expressionism."⁴ The use of the word "turgidities" is significant. If we are to give Pollock and de Kooning their due, we must not accuse them of misusing language; their art was the very denial of clear, public language in favor of a deeply personal interior monologue. Plainly, Greenberg's model for clarity was not clear emotions, but clear verbal language, to wit, simple exposition of visual ideas. If, in addition to *Illumination* and *Mercury*, we take Frank Stella's small black and yellow drawing of 1963, *Tetuan*, as typical of the new pictures to which Greenberg was alluding, we cannot help but notice the striped configuration which they all share. Of the significance of that configuration Michael Fried has said,

One experiences the stripes as in some important sense intentional, as issuing from distinctly human and not just natural action. They are wholly abstract embodiments or correlates of human will or impulse — specifically the human will or impulse to draw, to make one's mark.⁵



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- 53 **Morris Louis**
Illumination, 1962
Plastic paint on canvas, 83" x 12"

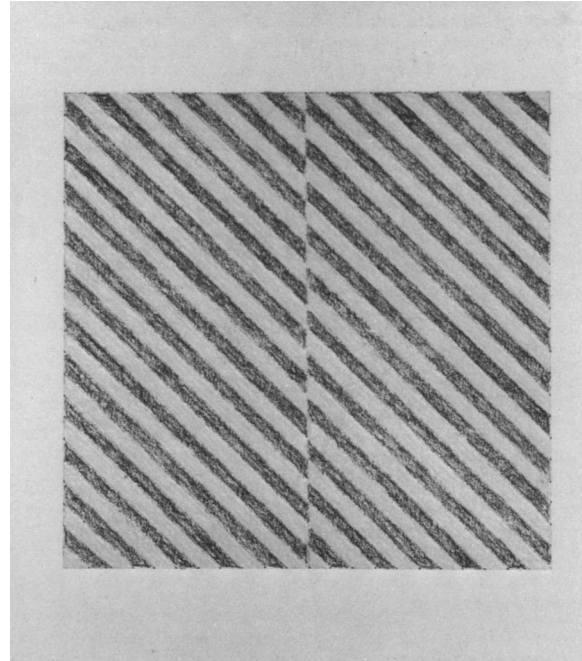
Nonetheless, the stripes, particularly in the context of post-abstract expressionism, are far more intentional (intellectual) than natural (biological): the residue of human action is secondary to the working of the human mind. The repetition and alternation of a single motif from which the stripe results is the model for predictability, and as such mediates against its own internal, formal interest. As verbal language is predictive, thus providing man with his unique edge on physical reality, so the stripes of Louis, Noland, and Stella bespeak conceptual structuring before the fact. If in some sense the dense web of Pollock's drip paintings and the great gestural strokes of Kline's pictures are metaphors for the natural and momentary, then the stripe is the metaphor for the intellectual and the transcendence of the moment.⁶ Louis' colored stripes are only "abstract embodiments of a human will to draw" if one is, as it were, withdrawing from illusionism; in their "distinctly human" and intentional qualities, the stripes are, rather, wholly abstract embodiments of the human will to make symbols, to reorder and predict experience in a nongestural language. It may be for this reason that Fried found himself discussing only the composition of Noland's paintings, with the explanation that "structure, rather than color, bears the brunt of Noland's modernist ambitions."⁷ Furthermore, it was Fried who consistently made use of the linguistic model to help explain the works of the color-field painters:

I want to put forward an account of what seems to me the development of pictorial structure in Noland's work since the late 1950s . . . I will in effect be pointing out an aspect of the work roughly analogous to that of syntax in a verbal language: an aspect, that is, which has to do with how the colored elements in Noland's paintings are juxtaposed to one another with the result that they make sense, and which, if grasped, may increase the likelihood that a spectator not actively hostile to Noland's paintings will come to experience them as the powerful emotional statements I believe they are.⁸

In fact, Fried does not by the end of the essay show that the colored elements in Noland's paintings "make sense," and even apologizes for the omission: "I am of course aware that my decision not to try to cope with Noland's color means that the account that I have given of his development is seriously incomplete."⁹ Rather, the point is that *Mercury* is impossible to construe as an emotional color-statement unless we are willing to invoke late-nineteenth-century symbolist formulas which might prove that red, yellow, orange, and tan convey specific emotional states. What is roughly analogous to syntax in a verbal language in Noland's paintings is how the shapes (targets, chevrons, stripes, etc.) unfold and modify each other in a serial progression. While Fried could not make use of his syntactic analogue in discussing the specifics of color, he more precisely used the analogy in discussing composition, when he said, "individual series tend to mark significant alterations of pictorial structure; in the linguistic analogy touched on earlier they signify related

transformations of syntax in the interest of saying something new (or perhaps in the interest of saying something at all)."¹⁰ As the sentence reveals itself in time (noun to verb to object) and is entirely dependent upon the temporal development for its meaning, so the progression between and within the series of targets, chevrons, and stripes is essential to the meaning of Noland's oeuvre.

Having reduced the discrete visual language element, the individual painting, to a predictable configuration, it is not surprising that what emerged was extremely close to verbal symbols. As Robert Rosenblum said of Stella's famous shaped canvases which he executed simultaneously with *Tetuan*, "the shapes unbalanced completely the sense of an enclosed area of pictorial illusion. Instead the stretchers defined open rectilinear forms — a Greek cross, a U, a T, an H — that were extracted from patterns in the black pictures."¹¹ It is as if verbal language, denied access to the visual arts by the limits of modernism, were making itself felt mimetically. Even Morris Louis, whose "Unfurled" paintings (multicolored rivulets of paint descending the canvas from the sides) seem the embodiment of some primitive "will to paint," was thinking linguistically when he called those works *Alpha Gamma*, *Beta*, *Sigma*, after letters in the Greek alphabet. For all the discussion of internal pictorial subtleties which color-field paintings engendered, there is little question that their lack of visual ambiguity, their ability to speak plainly, was far more innovative and striking than the supposed distinctions between the illusionistic and antiillusionistic qualities. Yet, deprived of internal incident and demanding a contextual reading, the color-field work became indistinguishable from its criticism; the visual and the verbal became necessarily coexistent. While "the sense of historical necessity that had been part of



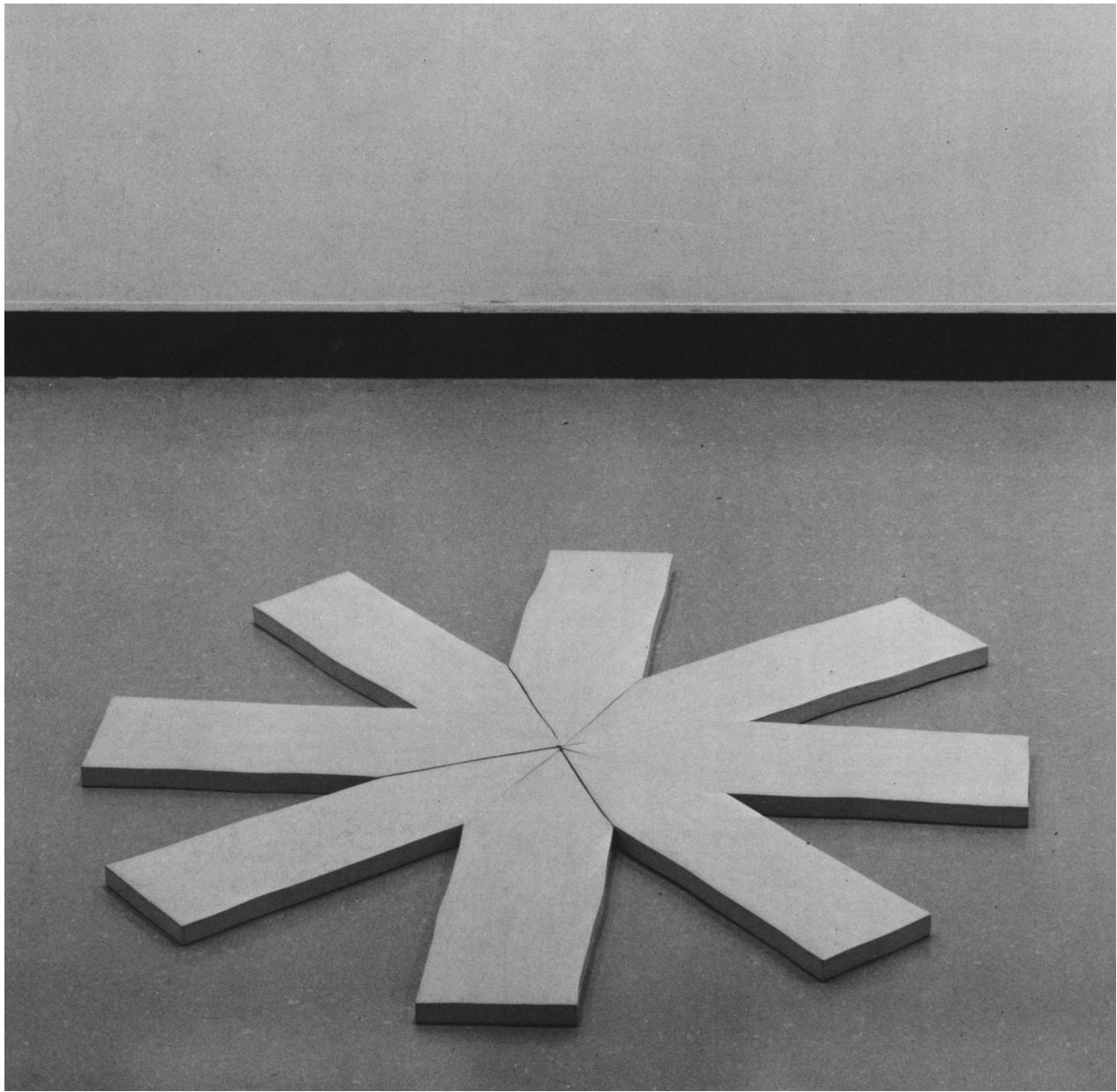
the content or meaning of formalist painting"¹² was soon revealed as a self-serving tautology, the coupling of object and verbal language equivalent had established itself, we might even say, as a style. The result was that, as Robert Morris said, "A flooding pluralism — from Conceptualism to body art to all kinds of performance and documentation — surged over the intricate system of necessary historical locks, past reservoirs, deep channels, and rights of way,"¹³ which, by "converting the critical into the active,"¹⁴ made verbal prediction a concomitant of all formal realization. We find this verbal factor, the consciousness of art as language, appearing with ever-increasing pace as the sixties progressed; the conceptualism which had been implicit in the structure and artist-critic relationship of color-field painting became explicit in the work of a number of other artists.

In the case of Richard Tuttle, who had his first one-man show at the Betty Parsons Gallery in 1965, the structural model is still that of the color painters. *Fountain*, an eight-pronged, flat, gray, three-dimensional asterisk, was one of the floor pieces which accompanied his wall pieces in the Parsons show. One critic said of the work:

Richard Tuttle, young New York-based painter-sculptor, is a recent addition to the ranks of those who lead painting along a primrose path into neither painting nor sculpture. These flat, wooden, smoothly-painted objects . . . he calls "paintings". One can see them as single, married, or in groups. Their color is drearily functional — but for what? — like the color of a corridor in a modern elementary school — that is, deliberately non-threatening, grayed, soothing and dull.¹⁵

Fountain closely resembles Frank Stella's shaped canvases, particularly a work like his yellow, star-shaped *Plant City* of 1964. Retaining Stella's simplified and emblematic shape, Tuttle has replaced the bright coloring with a "drearily functional" gray. The answer to the critic's question, "but for what?" may be found in his color analogy. For Tuttle has set up an equation between the title, or name, of his work, *Fountain*, and the radiating lines of his sculpture, as the two other floor pieces in the show, *Flower* and *Fire* had established similarly literal relationships between visual symbol and verbal signifier. The work is, then, as the critic had rightly sensed, an elementary lesson in making symbols, in linking language to visual phenomena. That the work refers to the process of

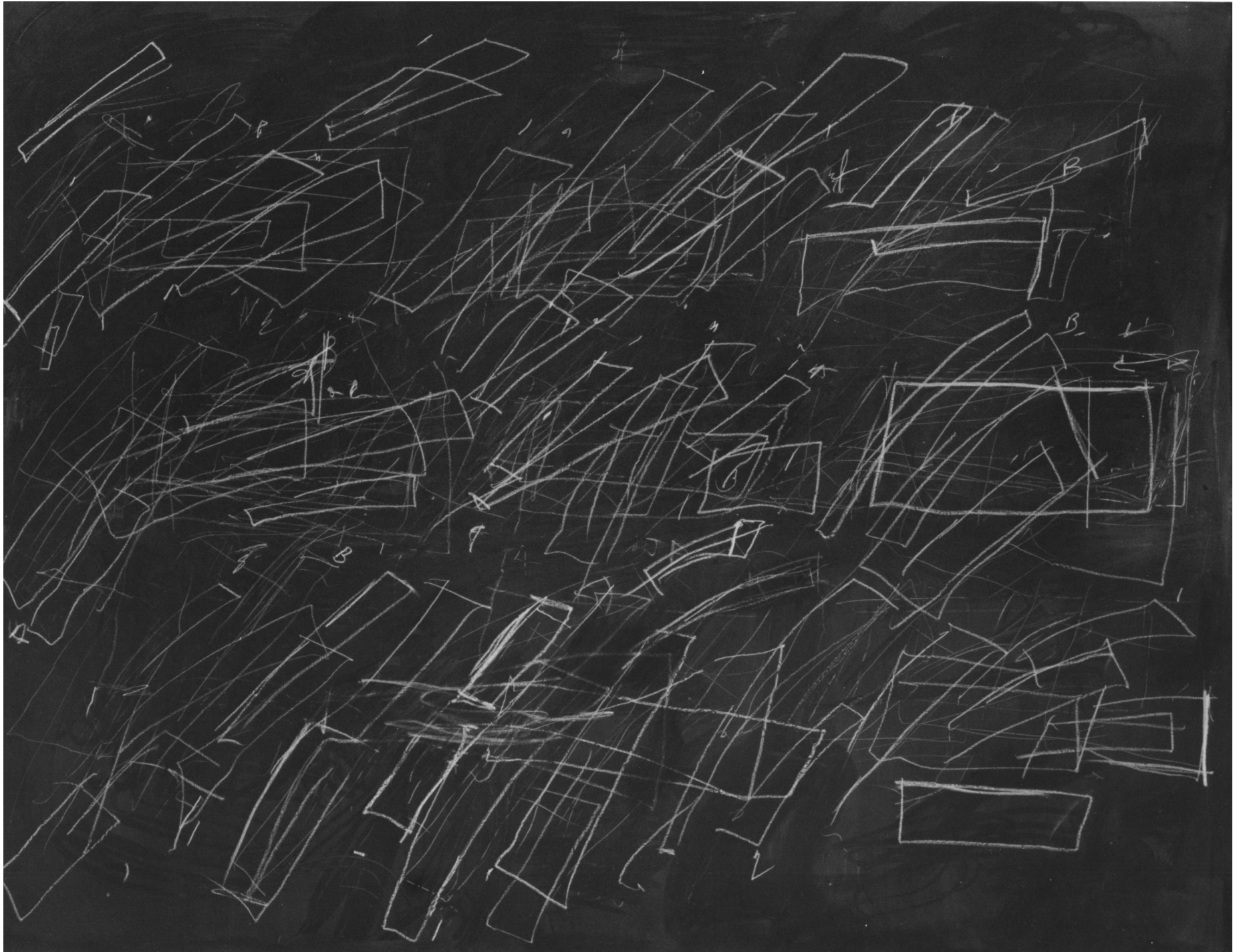
55 **Richard Tuttle**
Fountain, 1965
Shaped painted plywood (8 parts),
ca. 1" x 40" x 40"



56 **Cy Twombly**
Untitled, 1967
Oil and crayon on canvas, 79" x 104"

creating and learning visual language rather than to symbolic systems as a fait accompli is implied in the fact that the pieces must be put together, assembled, in order that they form a symbolic integrity. The deliberately handmade look of *Fountain*, with its radiating lines of unequal size and less-than-straight edges, may be seen as a deliberately "human" response to Stella's immaculate and shining symbols.

Cy Twombly's huge *Untitled* blackboard painting of 1967, like *Fountain*, has as its point of reference the experience of learning about visual and verbal language. Here, of course, the classroom analogy is more than simply suggested. Another gray work which appeared in the wake of color-field painting, Twombly's blackboard has pictorial antecedents which are pre-color-field, i.e. the works of Jasper Johns. Like Johns' American flags and *Painted Bronze* Ballantine Beer cans of 1960 Twombly makes illusionistic space coincide with the real space of his work. The Johnsian irony is carried even further as the scratches and scrawls of abstract expressionism are reincarnated in the real (i.e. illusionistic) markings on a blackboard, as if Greenberg's "homeless representation"¹⁶ had come home. If Tuttle's interest is that we recognize the progressive steps in the process of symbol formation, Twombly offers instead a slice-of-life: a blackboard displaying, simultaneously, hours' worth of equation and diagram construction. Small numbers and letters, barely legible, are scattered among the maze of chalk lines. Like the political history student who enters a classroom and stares at the incomprehensible scrawl left by the seminar in elementary particle physics, we realize that what is precise and lucid language for one is an expressionist jumble of sensation to another. Twombly demonstrates that what we see is a function of what we learn to decipher.

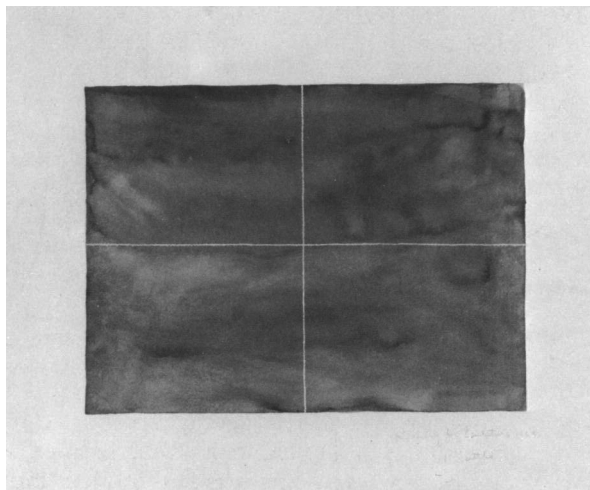


57 **Robert Morris**
Slab with Ruler, 1964
Wood and lead, 22" x 13¼"



Slab with Ruler, Robert Morris' lead wall construction of 1964, occupies much the same position between painting and sculpture as does Tuttle's *Fountain*. But, this fence-sitting between categories is not a question of visual ambiguity; there is nothing visually disturbing about the low relief of either *Fountain* or *Slab with Ruler*. Any problem or incongruity arises only when we try to discuss these works in the verbal categories which are available to us. And this lack of conformation between visual experience and verbal language is willful: it was Tuttle's decision to call his three-dimensional works "paintings" that led the critic to feel that he was being led down the "primrose path into neither painting nor sculpture," as though the violation of the long-established verbal categories for the visual arts was nothing less than a diabolical act. (Similarly, Tuttle's *Drawing for Sculpture* of 1964 displays no three-dimensional illusionism; it is a flat, red plane divided into quadrants.) As Morris himself said, "As formal permutations within the classical modes of painting and sculpture reached the saturation point of critical inquisition their imminent transcendency had been for some time in the program."¹⁷ It was, of course, Marcel Duchamp who in 1917 by simply transposing the urinal from the context of mundane bodily functions to that of art (in changing the adjective from functional to artistic) first made us aware of the extent to which our visual ideas are dependent upon our verbal classifications. Morris' baldly stated precedents for *Slab with Ruler* are generally Duchampian (particularly the *Three Standard Stoppages* of 1913-14) and precisely Jasper Johns' *Paintings with Ruler and Grey* of 1960. Morris' ruler also has distinct iconographic links to Tuttle's childlike *Fountain* and Twombly's blackboard. For this is not a sophisticated instrument of measurement and calculation, but the same six-inch ruler given to school children for their first forays into visual conceptualization; as such it is an almost anthropological tool from the history of measurement. Here, the ruler is

- 58 **Richard Tuttle**
Drawing for Sculpture, 1964
 Watercolor on paper, 11" x 14"



embedded in what may be a metaphor for pure physical reality, the gray "slab" — a nondescript, malleable mass — whose irregularities of surface are in marked contrast to the straight little stick, the symbol and tool for comparison. The seemingly insignificant mathematical symbols, the small digits on the ruler, will be the means of ordering all visual reality.

Agnes Martin's well-ruled page, *Journey I*, of 1966, might be an uncolored sketch for Noland's contemporary stripe paintings. Yet, while the configuration is not unlike the familiar color-field stripes, Martin's refusal to color her statement is indicative of the more conceptual emphasis of her work. Lawrence Alloway said:

Martin's works thrive in the absence of opticality. Obviously they are visible, but they function without the rhetorical devices of the painting which seems most to resemble hers. Opticality is the property ascribed to Clement Greenberg-approved painters, the supposed special province of painting as opposed to sculpture or drawing.¹⁸

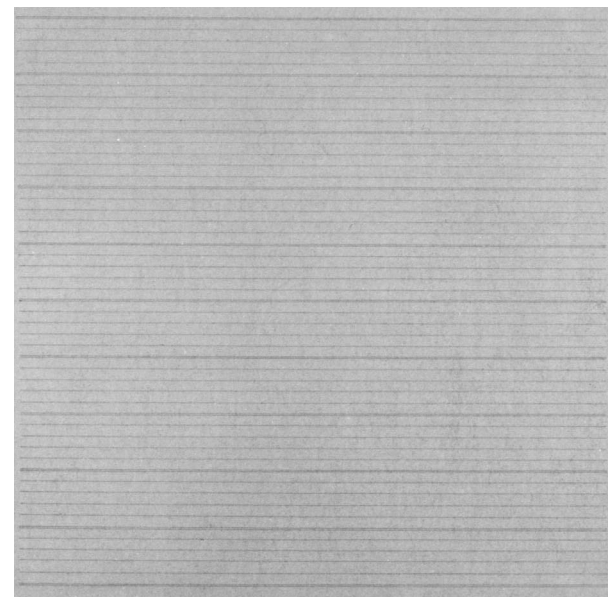
The intentional low profile which works such as *Journey I* maintain is, in the manner of Tuttle and Morris, a response to the lushness of color-field painting, although Martin, like Tuttle, makes use of configurations similar to those of her more colorful contemporaries. Again it is Frank Stella whose work offers the closest parallels to Martin's. He had been ruling off space in methodical fashion (as for instance the small work *First Post-Cubist Collage* of 1959) from about the same time that Martin began to use the grid pattern for her paintings and drawings. A comparison may be made between the serial progression of grids and stripes, which marks Martin's production in the sixties, to the schematic arrangement of the inflectional form of the verb. In this conjugation of a basic visual motif, her work has affinities with the serial progressions of Louis, Noland, and Stella. Furthermore, her means of rendering *Journey I*, ink on paper, has intimate associations with the act of writing, and like verbal language, Martin's entire oeuvre may be seen as a putting-forth of an unillusionistic, symbolic language which might parallel phenomena. As, for example, a short poem by Martin,¹⁹

The underside of the leaf
Cool in shadow
Sublimely unemphatic
Smiling of innocence

The frailest stems
Quivering in light
Bend and Break
In Silence

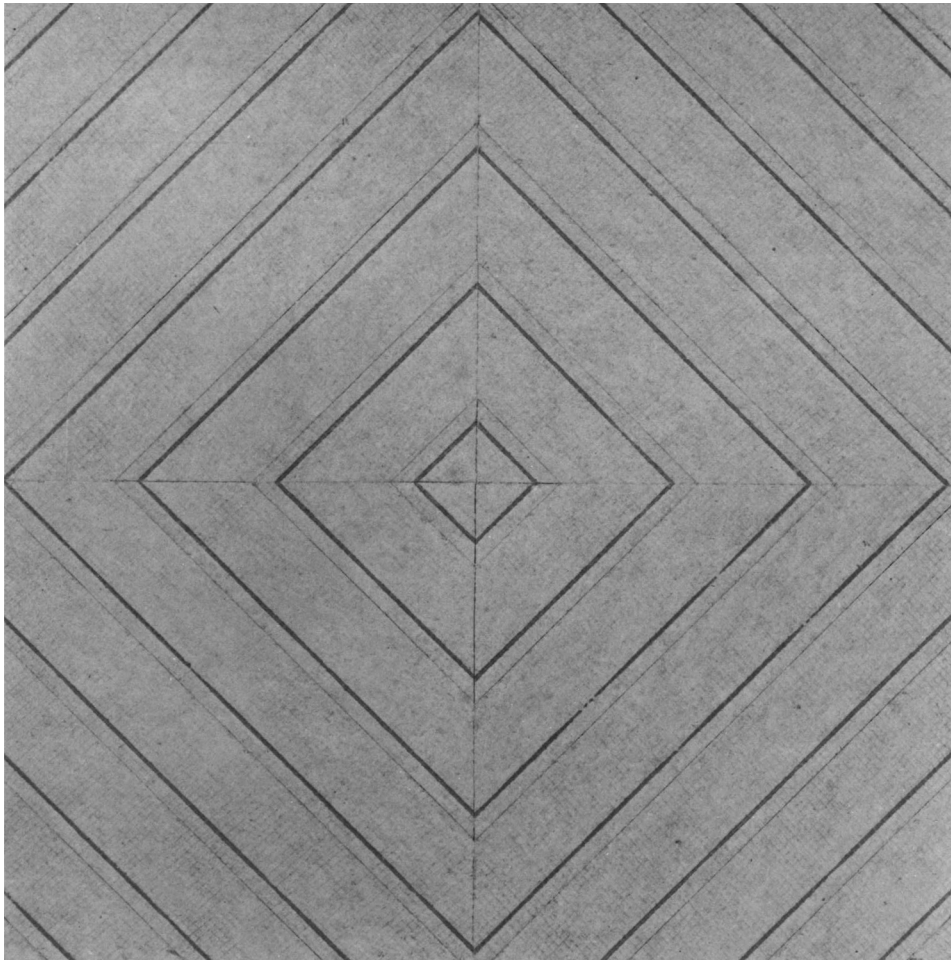
and her comment upon it, that, "This poem, like the paintings, is not really about nature. It is not what is seen. It is what is known forever in the mind."²⁰

- 59 **Agnes Martin**
Journey I, 1966
 Ink on paper, 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ " x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ "



This idea, that what is known forever in the mind is not, in fact, the equivalent of what is seen, or even felt, means that for a number of contemporary artists the visual arts cannot in any sense be "expressive." This loss of faith in the assumptions which underlay abstract expressionism was a basic tenet of the color-field painters. The process by which verbal language reentered abstract painting as both a structural model and in the form of nonvisual, verbal commentary was succinctly described by Mel Bochner when he said, "Suppression of internal relations concerns opened the way for the involvement with ideas beyond the concentricity of objects."²¹ What happened after abstract expressionism then is also what happened before conceptual art. As Clement Greenberg predicted in 1962, "conception . . . is alone decisive."

60 **Frank Stella**
The First Post-Cubist Collage, 1959
Ink on asbestos tape on board, 20½" x 20¼"



- 1 Mel Bochner, "Excerpts from Speculation (1967-1970)," *Artforum* 8 (May 1970), reprinted in Ursula Meyer, *Conceptual Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton 1972), p. 54. I have taken the liberty of removing a parenthesis which appears around the words "or desirable" in Meyer, and which made the sentence grammatically incorrect. It read: "Any artist who considers this dichotomy either irreconcilable (or desirable) is no longer interested in formal relationships."

2 Clement Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," *Art International* 6 (October 1962), p. 30.
- 3 Rosalind Krauss in "A View of Modernism," *Artforum* 11 (September 1972), p. 51, said that "Greenberg still sees 'modernism' as not exactly 'coterminous with formalism,' but he does argue now, that formalism must set the terms of 'modernism,' that technical preoccupations 'must be (modernism's) essential, defining side, at least in the case of painting and sculpture,'" and cites Greenberg, "The Necessity of Formalism," *New Literary History* 2 (1971-1972), p. 174.

4 Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," p. 32.

5 Michael Fried, *Morris Louis* (New York: Abrams, 1970), p. 35.

6 This invocation of the traditional romanticism/classicism polarity seems particularly apt in the light of a subsequent classical bias on the part of more conceptually oriented artists, as for example Dorothea Rockburne's use of the Golden Section, Hanne Darboven's and Marion Merz's number series, Jan Dibbets' use of angles of vision.

7 Michael Fried, *Three American Painters* (Cambridge, Mass.: Fogg Art Museum, 1965), p. 24; a slightly revised version of the same text appeared as the introductory essay to *Kenneth Noland* (New York: Jewish Museum, 1965).

8 Fried, *Noland* (pages not numbered; second page).

9 *Ibid.*, (last page).

10 Fried, *Three American Painters*, p. 46.

11 Robert Rosenblum, *Frank Stella* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 25.

12 Krauss, "A View of Modernism," p. 50.

13 Robert Morris, "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide," *Artforum* 11 (February 1973), p. 44.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

15 L. C. (Lawrence Campbell), "Reviews and Previews," *Art News* 64 (September 1965), p. 11.

16 Greenberg, "After Abstract Expressionism," p. 25, explains, "By this I mean a plastic and descriptive painterliness that is applied to abstract ends but continues to suggest representational ones."

17 Morris, "Some Splashes in the Ebb Tide," p. 44.

18 Lawrence Alloway, "Agnes Martin," *Artforum* 11 (April 1973), pp. 32-33.

19 Agnes Martin, unpublished notes, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, cited *ibid.*, p. 36.

20 *Ibid.*

21 Bochner, "Excerpts from Speculation (1967-1970)," p. 54.

