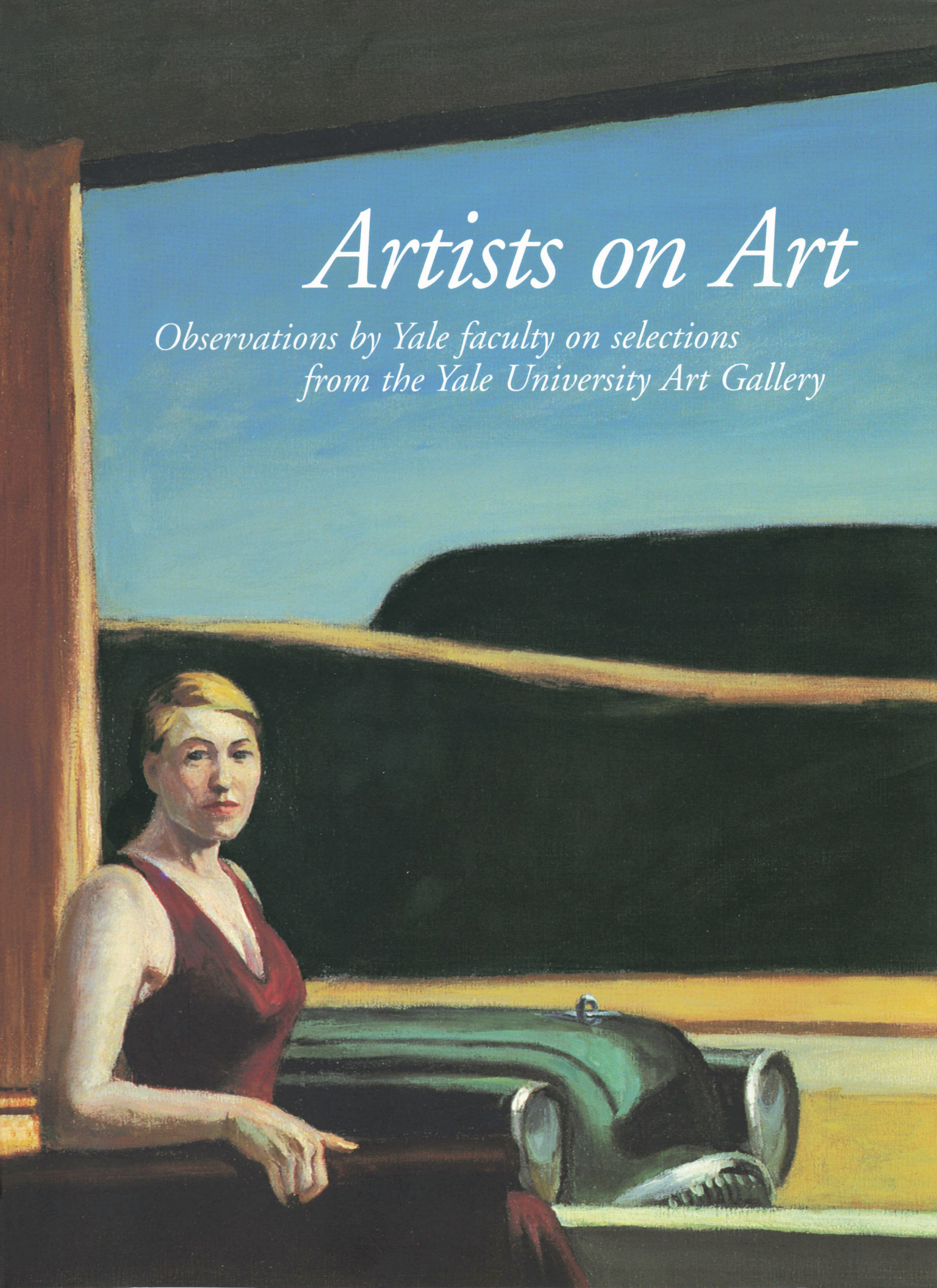


# *Artists on Art*

*Observations by Yale faculty on selections  
from the Yale University Art Gallery*





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# *Artists on Art*

Observations by Yale faculty on selections  
from the Yale University Art Gallery

Based on a series of talks  
conceived and edited  
by Daphne Anderson Deeds



Cover: Detail of *Rooms by the Sea*, 1951, by Edward Hopper

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# Preface

One of the great rewards of running a university art museum is to realize the elusive goal of producing interdisciplinary programming. Happily, when I assumed the directorship in September 1998, the *Artists on Art* lecture series was well established and attracting new audiences from many Yale departments and a loyal segment of the New Haven community.

*Artists on Art* enlisted faculty artists from eight academic disciplines who chose works of art from the Yale Art Gallery's permanent holdings and shared insights informed by their own creative efforts. These twenty-one contributors include some of Yale's most illustrious scholars, who discussed their selections with refreshing clarity, wisdom, and humor. Their insights reveal valuable information about each work of art as well as the distinct personalities and expertise of each speaker. Together their thoughts suggest the enormous potential that a university museum can inspire within the diversity of its academic and public communities.

The *Artists on Art* project was conceived and developed by Daphne Deeds, Curator of Exhibitions and Programs, in her effort to bring the great minds and creative spirits of the Yale faculty into closer contact with the Gallery's collections. Many of these distinguished professors, though all artists themselves, initially felt reluctant to speak publicly about the collection. Daphne often needed to reassure them that their observations and thoughts would be of great interest to the Yale Art Gallery's audience. Others relished the opportunity to consider art works that relate to their own creative endeavors. In accepting the challenge to speak about their selections they helped to establish new connections between Yale departments and the museum. Daphne thoughtfully envisioned this book as an edited document of the informal talks. The result is a vivid record of the artist's eye.

Jock Reynolds  
The Henry J. Heinz II Director



# Introduction

The university art museum is a complex institution. It functions as an entity within the larger museum profession, and it is intimately associated with academia. Its collections are fundamental to the practice of art and the study of art history, while they enhance the lives of countless other viewers within and beyond the university. With all these identities, the university museum thrives today as a cultural anchor of the campus and the surrounding community. The Yale University Art Gallery is a prime example of such an institution. Its very location in close proximity to Yale colleges and academic centers suggests intimate interdepartmental dialogues. During recent decades scholarship has increasingly spawned new associations with the visual arts and related subjects, and the Yale Art Gallery is an ideal home for these exchanges.

*Artists on Art* is a project that confirms the tremendous potential for interdisciplinary thinking that all university art museums command. Conceived as both an informal lecture series and an associated book to document the talks, *Artists on Art* began as an open invitation to Yale faculty who are practicing artists. Each speaker was asked to select a work of art in the permanent collection that relates to their own creative efforts. From the fall of 1996 to the spring of 1999, professors who are also poets, novelists, lighting designers, costume designers, musicians, composers, architects, critics, photographers, graphic designers and painters generously agreed to speak publicly in the exhibition galleries adjacent to their chosen subject. These talks were recorded and transcribed, and the salient observations that comprise this volume were extracted from those transcriptions. In order to provide balance and variety, twenty-one entries were prepared in conjunction with twenty-five color reproductions. The verbatim excerpts are presented in the chronology of the lecture series. A concerned effort was made to retain the singular “voice” of each speaker, complete with colloquialisms and

exclamations. Many of these creative contributors departed from their primary areas of expertise to offer fresh observations about museum masterpieces. Their perceptions comprise an on-going conversation that extends over time to include the original audience, the reader and the work of art. This collaborative process suggests the wealth of information corresponding disciplines can impart through the matrix of the university museum.

Throughout the *Artists on Art* lecture series I enjoyed the generous and open-minded spirit with which these illustrious members of the Yale faculty embraced the project. Their willingness to become involved in this new program made the entire series a great success. I appreciate Jock Reynolds' enlightened support of this publication as an indication of the great potential for interdisciplinary programs at the Yale Art Gallery. During the five semesters of lectures Linda Jerolmon, Programs Coordinator, was an invaluable colleague as inevitable scheduling complexities unfolded. Sharon King's precise transcriptions from the audio tapes and Ali Peterson's astute copy editing skills were essential to the final manuscript. I am especially grateful to Nathan Garland for his sensitive graphic design and collegial support. The realization of the *Artists on Art* lectures and the subsequent publication has been both a professional and a personal pleasure.

Daphne A. Deeds  
Curator of Exhibitions and Programs



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Edward Hopper  
American, 1882–1967

*Rooms by the Sea, 1951*

Oil on canvas  
29 × 40 1/8 inches (73.7 × 101.9 cm)  
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903  
1961.18.29

*Richard Benson, Dean of the Yale University School of Art  
and Professor of Photography; printer and photographer*

Richard Benson began teaching at Yale in 1979 and has been the Dean since 1996. Born in Newport, Rhode Island, he graduated from St. George's School in 1961 and briefly attended Brown University. Benson also studied at the U.S. Navy Optical Repair School in Great Lakes, Illinois, and at the Art Student's League in New York. Among his numerous accomplishments, Professor Benson has both authored and worked on the production and printing of many books, including *A Maritime Album*, (with John Szarkowski), *Lay this Laurel, The American Monument*, and *The Work of Atget*. He is the recipient of numerous awards and grants including a MacArthur Foundation Award and two John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowships.

I love this painting because it's made of light. When I first saw it I was amazed. It seemed to me that Hopper was like a photographer making pictures out of light. He once said, "Those painters who seek a pattern of painting that does not involve representation seem to me to be avoiding the exciting and interesting issues." This was his way of saying the world is more interesting than the inside of our minds, which is something that I deeply believe because I make my things literally out of the world. Hopper also said, "When I make a painting, I reluctantly surrender my vision to the thing made." When I first understood this statement it just knocked me right off my feet, because that's the problem in art. The artist knows just what he's seeing and he has the job of turning his ideas into a physical object. But the thing he makes never matches the vision, because as he produces the piece of art, reality intrudes. Painters spend their lives representing the world and trying to put a little poetry into it, and they have huge struggles about representation.

Before I saw Hopper's work, these ideas caused tremendous problems for me because they seemed inconsistent with the way a photographer should work. The camera is in effect a net and the negative is a great broad thing the net catches. The photographer goes out in the world, picks up the camera net and throws it, it covers a space and grabs it, pulls it back and there's a picture. With this procedure, there is no room for Hopper's poetic vision to take place, so I got confused. How can I see my vision being turned into the thing I make by simply grabbing light? I decided that the vision could be generated and put in physical form during the printing of the photograph. When I make a photograph, I go into the darkroom with the negative and put it up against a piece of paper. I turn a light on, develop it, and it's a finished picture. But there are other ways I can make a picture. I realized that if I break the procedure of printing into a series of discreet steps, I could guide the photograph to a place that would be impossible while working in the dark. If I make pictures on a printing press in a lighted room, then I have more options. I can let the thing I'm making educate me as I am making it. I can gradually move the picture toward my vision.

One of the differences between *Rooms by the Sea* and a photograph is that Hopper chose everything in the picture. Hopper was sixty-nine when he made this painting, so he couldn't have maneuvered a step deep enough to get out of this room. He played with the step to accommodate the work. Another strange element is the sea. The size of the waves and the size of the ripples are wrong for the size of the room. Hopper has made this view of a pair of rooms as though it's through the wide-angle lens of a camera, but when he comes to the sea, it's as though he used a narrow angle that makes everything big. He's put a nineteenth-century photograph of the sea outside the doorway of a mid-twentieth-century photograph of two rooms.

The fundamental problem with photography is that there is no distinction between objects in the world, so in order to make art the photographer has to make distinctions between myriad equivalent things. But Hopper only includes what he wants. My whole career as a photographer has been intimately tied with the notion of making my photographs in a series of steps, and taking pleasure in discriminating the differences. I try to make a photograph the way a painter makes a painting.





Florine Stettheimer  
American, 1871–1944

*Christmas, n.d.*

Oil on canvas  
60 1/16 × 40 inches (152.6 × 101.6 cm)  
Gift of the estate of Ettie Stettheimer  
1956.26.1

*Sheila de Bretteville, Professor and Director of Graduate Studies  
in Graphic Design; graphic designer*

Professor de Bretteville received her Bachelor of Arts from Columbia University, Barnard College in art history and her Master of Fine Arts from Yale University School of Art. Her site-specific works involve local communities in the expression of their history. Her public art projects include *Omoide no Shotokyo*, a project in downtown Los Angeles representing a history of a Japanese-American neighborhood; and a project that she completed for the New York City subway system, focusing on the large Dominican population and the successive waves of people who have lived near the 207th street station. Included in her numerous works in print graphics are *Life in L.A.* and *She*, both included in the Special Collections of fine press editions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Professor de Bretteville has also produced award-winning publication designs such as *The Photography of Dorothy Norman*.

Last night I had a dream. In my dream, I took the voice of a curator, and explained why Florine's paintings were not exhibited at the Yale Art Gallery. I, the curator, said, "She's so unique that she really needs her own wall. We simply don't have a wall right now big enough to accommodate how wonderfully unique she is. There is nobody before or after her like her. Until we have that wall, we're protecting her in the basement." The status of being relegated to the basement, away from view, is a major part of how we look at Florine's work. *Christmas* suggests issues of how the public and private come together, the painting's relationship to the modern, and the public's attitude toward the feminine. These questions come up because this woman painted this way, but also because her paintings are rarely on view. Every time there is a resurgence of interest in her, we briefly see her work. And yet, where is she again? Back in the basement. In my dream I made excuses for curators who hide her.

All of Florine's paintings are absolutely radiant. Light emanates from this painting. It's in every single color. She mixes white in her pink, she mixes white in her yellow. She puts white into everything. The bright light is absolutely everywhere. It's fantastic that she transformed a Christmas tree into yellow — a yellow Christmas tree! There's no way a dark green Christmas tree was going to be in a Florine Stettheimer painting. She never painted from nature. It's a strange combination of very deep but flat space, tilted toward the viewer. All the elements of the painting are vastly out of scale. They're organized hierarchically — large grisaille figures and reappearing elfin skaters. Florine's work is entirely autobiographical. She is almost always in her paintings even if her body is not depicted. Here is Florine in her ermine cape like a flamboyant feathered clown. She's looking out and she invites you in. She holds a flower. Often the flower would stand for herself, her mother, or her two sisters. This might be one of her sisters, Ettie or Carrie, with ringed eyes, and reddish hair. And here is an effete policeman, with his legs crossed, looking very elegant, leaning against his equally elegant legs-crossed horse. I don't think this painting has much to do with any kind of religious Christmas. It's more of a secular Christmas. All the parts of the canvas are filled with her spirit. I think she painted pleasure. Anything that was disagreeable was left out.

The notion of the frilly, light, and frothy as feminine is not something that art critics will say is serious, when, in fact, it's just as serious as anything else. Florine was marginalized by this limited understanding of what is feminine, and she is successively marginalized no matter how visible she gets. That marginalization rests on a stereotype of femininity related to her color choices, and how representational painting was considered unsophisticated at the height of modernism. Florine's narrative style is related to illustration of that era and may have played some role in diminishing her star. And there is the social stigma of being wealthy during the Depression. There's a whole other bleak world outside of this painting, but it's not her world. But I don't think that is what hurt her. What hurt her was not playing in the marketplace, and attitudes toward the modern. The modern I inherited from my teachers was a modern of simplicity and leaving everything out except the essential. This is not a girl who leaves anything out.

*de Bretteville on Stettheimer*







Jean-Baptiste-Edouard  
Delaune  
French, 1848–1912

*A Reconnaissance, 1876*

Oil on canvas  
6 × 78 3/8 inches (116.8 × 199.1 cm)  
Gift of Ruxton Love, Jr., B.A. 1925  
1969.87c

From 1987 to 1997, John Hull was Associate Professor of Painting and Printmaking at Yale School of Art. Currently Professor Hull is Chair of the Department of Visual Arts and Professor of Painting and Drawing at the University of Colorado at Denver. His work has been exhibited nationally since 1981, including solo exhibitions at Tatischeff Gallery, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and Grace Borgenicht Gallery; Kohn-Turner Gallery in Los Angeles; the J.B. Speed Museum; and the Nancy Lurie Gallery in Chicago, and may be found in the permanent collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Israel Museum, the New Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Yale University Art Gallery. Professor Hull has received four National Endowment for the Arts Fellowships, a Maryland Arts Council Visual Artist Fellowship, and the Achievement Award in 1995 from American Artist Magazine for Acrylic Painting. Since 1995, Mr. Hull has served as the Director of the Art Division at the Yale Summer School of Music and Art at Norfolk, Connecticut.

*John Hull, Associate Professor of Painting and Printmaking; painter*

Raymond Chandler's theory of literature is one that I ascribe to painting. Whenever you have a problem with plot or character development in a story or a book, you have a man come into the room with a gun. And if it's a big problem, you make it a big gun. So, if there is a soldier in a painting, I look at it, and I think it's good. In fact, I'll look at it so much that I might steal a figure from the picture and put it in one of my paintings.

This painting was made in 1876 when Delaune was twenty-eight years old. It is a scene from the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, which Delaune served as a member of the general staff when he was twenty-one years old. He didn't fight, but he saw a lot of battles. The Franco-Prussian war lasted only a year. The French were humiliated in defeat by an extraordinary but small German principality, the Prussians. This painting is about the disappointment he felt and that his nation felt about this degrading defeat. He's trying to find a way to tell us about French courage and individual moments of heroism.

Delaune was a student of the history painter Meissonnier at the end of the Napoleonic era when the tradition of naturalism in painting was being supplanted by the camera. The camera had been around for a while, but photographic images weren't readily available to the general public before about 1860. After 1860, the public begins to see reality in a new way — through the lens of the camera. So Delaune's generation of artists was confronted with this new technology. Suddenly painting was not only about the subject, but it was also about the viewer. Though Delaune accepted the reality of the camera, the difficulty he faced was balancing that new reality with the conventions of painting he learned from Meissonnier.

After the war, Delaune spent many years photographing battlefield sites. The painting shows a reconnaissance group that has taken over a town after a cavalry engagement. We can tell that it's a cavalry engagement because there's a horse in the scene. And there is a German rather than a French soldier. This group of figures was probably posed entirely in the studio. Delaune had a wonderful studio. It was so large that he could have an actual cavalryman on his horse in the studio. The light on these figures is really quite different from the light on the rest of the painting, because this is a work of projected fantasy. The landscape is essentially a backdrop to support the foreground activity.

There are a lot of wonderful passages of painting here. I see the artist's touch, whether the paint was soft, if there was a lot of paint on the brush or not much paint. All that's there. That touch is attached to vision as well, so that when I'm looking at the painting, I'm re-experiencing the artist in the studio confronted with the terrific problem of his subject. Ultimately the subject of any painting is the individual artist.





Hieronymus Bosch  
Dutch, ca. 1450–1516

*Fragment from Ship of Fools,*  
ca. 1500–1515

Oil on wood  
14 1/8 × 12 3/8 inches (35.9 × 31.4 cm)  
The Rabinowitz Collection  
Gift of Hannah D. and Louis M. Rabinowitz  
1959.15.22

Ronald Jones was Critic in Sculpture from 1989 to 1997. He is currently Chair of the Visual Arts Division at Columbia University. Professor Jones received his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Huntington College, his Masters of Fine Arts degree from the University of South Carolina, and his Doctorate from Ohio University, Athens. Among his solo exhibitions are several shows at Metro Pictures in New York City and an exhibit at the Linda Cathcart Gallery in Los Angeles. Professor Jones's work for group exhibitions include "AIDS and Democracy," a Group Material installation, DIA Art Foundation; "A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation," the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; "Viewpoints Towards the 90s: Three Artists from Metro Pictures Part II," Seibu Contemporary Art Gallery, Tokyo; and "Mind over Matter: Concept and Object," The Whitney Museum, New York. As a critic, Professor Jones has published numerous articles on sculpture.

*Ronald Jones, Critic in Sculpture; sculptor*

Some scholars refer to this as the "New Haven Fragment." Other scholars refer to it as the "Allegory of Gluttony and Lust." As it turns out, gluttony and lust are two subjects I know a great deal about, so I feel at home with this painting. It is a vivid illustration of the difficulty of coming to some conclusion about the interpretation of a work by Hieronymus Bosch, but it's also a particularly interesting example of the difficulty of interpretation in general. The search for original meaning, the reconstruction or the reassembly of original meaning is the idea that makes this an important painting today. Though the museum's title is *Fragment from Ship of Fools*, it's actually a fragment of a triptych. So, what we're really looking at is a piece of a piece.

In 1494, Sebastian Brandt published his poem, "Ship of Fools." It was enormously popular during Bosch's lifetime, so it's likely that he knew the poem. What we see is an odd-shaped boat, and in the boat there are a monk and two nuns carousing with a bunch of peasants. They are singing to one another, but they are also taking bites out of a sort of hanging pancake. If we look at this image and remind ourselves of one passage of Brandt's poem, "He who sets foot in that boat will sail laughing and sing to hell," then the painting is a fair description of Brandt's poem. There are other reasons why we would think of this as the Ship of Fools. Most scholars pin the theme on the character of the fool who sits on the rigging of the boat in the lower portion of the panel. He's wearing a fool's costume, he has jackass ears, and he's carrying a little staff crowned with his own likeness. On the other hand, the boat itself doesn't look at all like the Ship of Fools. In fact, the mast of the boat is really a tree. So, complications of interpretation begin to come into place. One of the functions of the practice of art history is to try to arrive at some kind of original meaning or original intention of the painting by the artist. In terms of the iconography, we see the mast, which is really a tree. The monk and two nuns singing to one another remind us of the typical, iconographical Middle Ages practice of two singing lovers in a Medieval garden. They make music as a prelude to making love. And they correspond to the two figures in our fragment who sit in a tent and drink wine.

There are elements here that remind us of lust and gluttony, not only the amorousness between these two characters, but the cherries on their plate. Cherries in conventional iconography are the fruit of paradise. So, that makes sense for the Ship of Fools interpretation, but at the same time, in Bosch's famous painting of the seven deadly sins, he uses cherries as a prop for seduction. This scene may not be about paradise, but about sexual conquest. On the other hand, there's the pancake they're eating,







*...that's what interests me —  
why this painting might  
be important to us now,  
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created than answers given.*

an empty jar on a stick, and a man vomiting — all of these images could point toward gluttony. The nude swimmers are not only gluttonous, but they're lustful at the same time, as they come along shipside to grab more to eat.

Then there is the fellow who looks like he's trying to get a goose, or maybe a chicken or a duck. We can consider various barnyard animals, but not one of them actually aligns itself with the painting. If it were a chicken, it would mean one thing; if it were a swan, it would mean something else. And there's a little face. It's not clear if it's an owl, a carnival mask, or a skull. And finally, one of the most confusing elements is the flag with a crescent moon.

The pot-bellied guy riding the barrel of wine, being shoved by nude swimmers below also carries a branch or kind of small tree, so he mimics the boat above. That is a configuration that brings to mind the ideas of lust and gluttony. Just below them you see a guy headed out of the water to get his clothes that are hung on the tree, but he has a meat pie on his head which is obscuring his vision, so he can't find his clothes. He's caught in a perpetual state of lust.

Some scholars refer to the couple in the tent as engaged in a kind of courtly love. Well, maybe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but I think we can say that if you have a man and a woman in a tent drinking wine around 1495, it's just this side of fornication. So, it's pretty clear it's something more explicit. Finally, the key that Bosch does give us is the two shoes in front of their tent. Now, those shoes, in middle Dutch, would be called *stilliggen*, and they emphasize what's actually going on between that couple, because if you translate *stilliggen* into English it comes out something like "furtive steps." That brings us back to the nun and the monk. This painting was made on the brink of the Reformation, so the idea of laity and clergy engaging in hanky-panky would have been an unacceptable subject.

We could probably conclude from all of this that what we have is a picture of the *Ship of Fools*, but if it is, it's certainly not a conventional picture rendering of the subject, because with Sebastian Brandt's poem there are other discrepancies that have to be resolved. We have a monk and a nun who have allowed the ship of the church to drift, being led by lust and gluttony, not only to their destruction, but to our peril, because they're involved in all this delinquent behavior instead of looking out for the salvation of our souls. So what you see is a condemnation of the clergy's lifestyle at the time.

*We see a boat full of  
lunatics who have decided  
to give themselves  
up to lust and gluttony.*

That seems like a fairly satisfactory explanation. But it's not complete by any stretch of the imagination. And that's what interests me — why this painting might be important to us now, because more questions are created than answers given. In fact, what we might have here is not the "Ship of Fools" at all, but simply a very pessimistic view of humanity. A view absent of will, self-will, self-determination, absent of intellect, absent of any kind of moral compass or religious guidance. This pessimistic view of humanity is led by a kind of lunacy depicted in the flag. We see a boat full of lunatics who have decided to give themselves up to lust and gluttony.

I propose that this painting can be used as a lens through which to look back on our own culture. Every incomplete answer we come up with might actually be a testament to Bosch's abilities at the construction of ambiguity, at the construction of a picture that becomes almost impossible to interpret because it is so self-contradictory. As we drift through this period after Modernism, it seems to me that there are greater and greater slippages between the signifier and the signified. They don't necessarily fuse in any complete way. That's part of the way that our culture understands itself. So maybe we're asking all the wrong questions of Bosch. Maybe his intention was to create a painting that is very clear in terms of its iconographic program, but it is as much unclear. Bosch turns us all into a ship of fools, if we think we've actually arrived in a port about which we can feel confident.

Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot  
French, 1796–1875

*The Harbor of La Rochelle*, 1851

Oil on canvas

19 7/8 × 28 1/4 inches (50.5 × 71.8)

Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903

1961.18.14

*William Bailey, Kingman Brewster Professor Emeritus of Painting; painter*

William Bailey began teaching at Yale in 1956 and, except for seven years at Indiana University, he remained at Yale until he became professor emeritus in 1995. In 1975–76, he served as the Dean of the School of Art and was named Kingman Brewster Professor in 1979. Since 1973 he has spent part of each year working in Umbria. His work is in many public collections including the Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, and the Yale University Art Gallery. The most recent exhibitions of his work have been held at the Robert Miller Gallery in New York, Alpha Gallery in Boston, and Galleria Il Gabbiano in Rome. In 1986, Mr. Bailey was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1992, President Bush appointed him to a six-year term on the National Council on the Arts. He is the subject of two monographs: the first, by Mark Strand, was published by Harry N. Abrams in 1987; the second, by John Hollander and Giuliano Bruganti, was published by Rizzoli International in 1991.

We seem to be more and more literal when looking at art. This is a painting that is, that exists. It's not about anything else. It's about looking. It's about the art of painting. I think this is a great painting. But it's not my favorite Corot because it's very developed and pondered. One of the things that I admire most about Corot was that moment when he stopped and lifted his brush when things were clicking and things were right. Corot, of all painters, is one for whom that touch is so important. Even a painting that's very finished like this has shifting grays, all the pearly color, so subtle, and yet, such a strong and clear structure. It's not a wishy-washy painting. It's too accessible for some of us today because we look at landscape like this and dismiss it and say, oh, yes, it's a very nice painting, harbor, pretty reflections, clouds, so on and so forth. To me it's far more than that. I'd like you to look at it not with a shifting focus from object to object, but with a more open focus to the whole world of the painting. Let those tones and that light reveal themselves slowly. Don't know immediately what it is. Experience it the way you would a new place. Because each painting is a new place in many ways. It's all a fiction before nature, finding an order that makes us see this place, that transforms pieces of paint into this light, into this space.





Joseph Stella  
American, 1877–1946

*Brooklyn Bridge*, 1919–20

Oil on canvas  
64  $\frac{7}{16}$  × 76  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (214.5 × 184 cm)  
Gift of Collection Societe Anonyme  
1941.690

A native of New Haven, Langdon Hammer has been a member of the Yale faculty since 1987. Professor Hammer received his Bachelor of Arts summa cum laude in 1980 and his Doctorate in 1989, both from Yale. He has written about poetry for the *Nation*, the *New York Times*, *American Literary History*, *Raritan* and the *Yale Review*. Professor Hammer is the author of *Hart Crane and Allen Tate: Janus-Faced Modernism*, and he is the co-editor of *O My Land, My Friends: The Selected Letters of Hart Crane*.

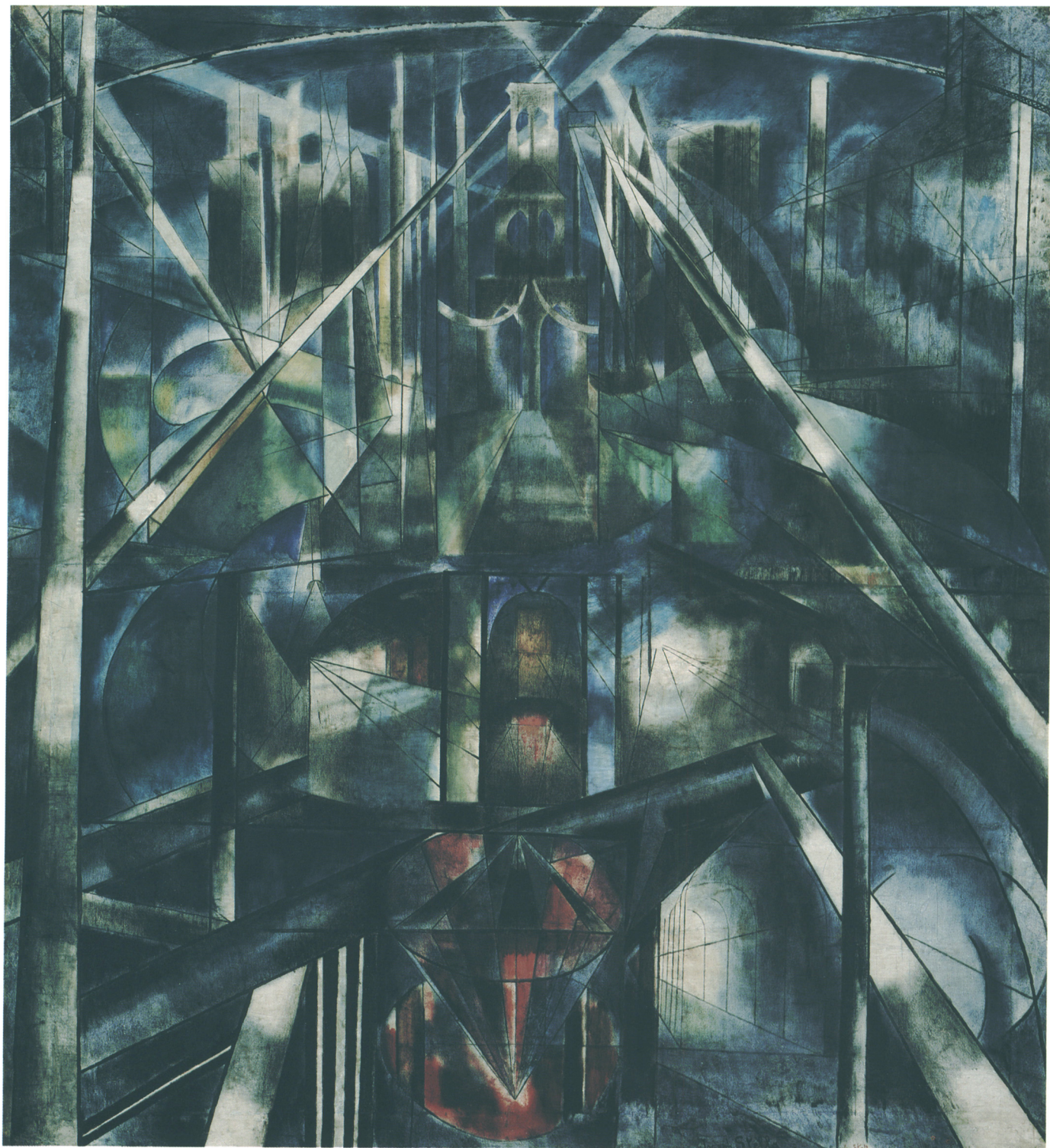
*Langdon Hammer, Associate Professor of English; essayist*

Joseph Stella and the poet Hart Crane are creators of two masterworks of American Modernism. This painting by Stella is one of them, and it's one of the real treasures of this museum. Crane's epic poem, "the Bridge," is the other masterpiece. There is no actual connection of influence between these two works. The connection is really a coincidence, a kind of historical accident that culture sometimes produces. In this case, two artists working in different media seized a shared approach to an object yet with no awareness of the other's work. The last part of Crane's poem, the stanza called "Atlantis," can be understood as a kind of reading of this painting, which he hadn't seen, and Stella's painting could be used as an illustration for Crane's poem. In fact, we have a letter that Crane wrote to Stella in 1929 in which Crane asks Stella the favor of using this painting as the frontispiece for "The Bridge" as Crane neared publication. He says, "I should like permission to use your painting of the bridge as a frontispiece to a long poem I have been busy on for the last three years," (in fact, he had been working on it for seven), "called 'The Bridge.' It is a remarkable coincidence that I should, years later, have discovered that another person, by whom I mean you, should have had the same sentiments regarding the Brooklyn Bridge which inspired the main theme and pattern of my poem." Both Stella and Crane created commentaries in their work on America and modernity. Both attempt to say what modernity means in America, and both do so by coming to terms with a central symbol of the modern world, that is, the Brooklyn Bridge.

Modernity is something revolutionary. It destroys old things. It makes the past go away, including the artistic systems of representation by which we know the past. What kind of world is modernity making? Does it only drive things apart? Where are we going as a nation, as a people? These are questions Crane's poem asks. I think it's the same set of questions that interested Stella. The greatness of this painting and Crane's poem has to do with the complexity of the answers that each artist produces — their shared ability to preserve the ambiguity of their cultural moment.

How does Stella see Modernity? The center of the painting is a series of thresholds by which we move both up and through two powerful diagonals that cross at the top center of the painting. There are vertical lines framing the massive canvas on either side as if to stabilize it. In addition, there is a clearly articulated line through the middle of the work that seems to divide the painting almost into two precise halves. The sense of a work that is cut in half and has some sort of doubleness is very important to Stella's imagery. In the lower half of the canvas we see tunnel-like structures going off in different directions. These powerful lines seem to create a structure of promise, solidity, and strength, drawing on the architectural forms of the Brooklyn Bridge itself. When one encounters the work, studies it, moves close to it, what one finds is not so much stasis as motion, not so much solid colors, but fragmented and shimmering planes. One finds a world in radical flux. The painting has a great dispersed and chaotic energy upon which this larger structure of instability has been imposed. The energy has a lot to do with its vertiginous perspectives.





*Is this in fact an image of transcendence, a sublime encounter with a new form of the Holy? Or is it a frightening picture, a picture of terror and vertigo?*

Crane and Stella are both interested in the question of how one represents a world dominated by the theory of relativity, and how one can represent time. And that's one way to understand Stella's interest in multiple perspectives. Different temporal moments are here collapsed into a single image. Stella's experimental play with perspectival illusion seems to be related to his overall interest in ambiguity, a feeling of doubleness that is central to what he is evoking here. He's interested in introducing us to a non-naturalistic light. It's certainly not daylight. It's perhaps a kind of moonlight, fluorescent light, an electric light, a light that comes from no obvious source, a light that doesn't warm you, a light that doesn't very well illuminate what it shines upon, and a light that isn't so much a beam as a kind of flicker over the whole. Where does this light come from? What is the relationship between the lower half of the canvas and the upper half? How do we resolve the various kinds of illusionistic play, asymmetry, and doubleness in the painting? Is this in fact an image of transcendence, a sublime encounter with a new form of the Holy? Or is it a frightening picture, a picture of terror and vertigo? I think that it is a picture of both terror and transcendence. Stella himself wrote, "Many nights I stood on the bridge and in the middle, alone, lost, a defenseless prey to the surrounding swarming darkness crushed by the mountainous, black impenetrability of the skyscrapers." And yet he says he "felt deeply moved, as if on the threshold of a new religion or in the presence of a new divinity."

Crane provides us with some answers to those questions about the painting. He was much younger than Stella, but they were both in New York during this period. Around 1922, 1923, Crane began thinking about a poem that he wished to call "The Bridge." He was interested in the bridge in an abstract way as a symbol for something he wished to achieve in poetry. His poem, like Stella's painting, would draw on European avant-garde sources. Both artists saw the bridge as a symbol for modern America and for historical transport to a Promised Land that was central to American history. Crane's poem proposed to be an epic work. He was thinking about a larger problem in American culture, that is, how to integrate the divergent strands of modern American culture into a common, unified structure. The Brooklyn Bridge appears in the introduction of Crane's poem, and in the final section of the poem when he imagines in modern America the return of the Greek city of myth sunk from view in the Atlantic. In all of this, Crane saw the bridge as a new religious symbol for a people whose traditional religious symbols had ceased to integrate, direct and

*In Stella's comments it's clear that his experience of the bridge is one of potential dehumanization.*

organize the culture. "Through the bound cable strands, the arching path upward, veering with light, the flight of strings, taut miles of shuttering moonlight syncopate the whispered rush telepathy of wires, up the index of night, granite and steel, transparent meshes, feckless the gleaming stays, sibylline voices flicker, wavering the stream as though a god were issue of the strings." Crane is interested in the effects of a multiplicity, how he might hold together many parts of speech, many images in one utterance.

In Crane's poem, the bridge is evoked specifically at midnight. This is, I think, also the time of the painting. Midnight, that moment at which one day turns into another, where one age could be felt moving into another. This is the kind of temporal transition and junction that both Stella and Crane are interested in. The drilling of the bridge and the metaphorical associations that were part of the construction of the bridge fascinated Crane. In order to join Manhattan and Brooklyn, two worlds, the past and the future, you had to first go down deep, and people had to die to build the structure that would carry you across. In Stella's comments it's clear that his experience of the bridge is one of potential dehumanization. The massive, architectural structure is a fearful place to be. He speaks of feeling in the middle, alone, defenseless, and crushed. Stella and Crane are interested in converting this situation in which an isolated human being has a sublime encounter with historical and architectural structures that can give shape and meaning to us and, in fact hold us up.

Thomas Eakins  
American, 1844–1916

*William Rush Carving His Allegorical Figure  
of the Schuylkill River, study 1876*

Oil on canvas on composition board

20 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> × 24 inches (51.3 × 61cm)

Collection of Mary C. and James W. Fosburgh, B.A. 1933, M.A. 1935

1979.14.5

*John Hollander, Sterling Professor of English; poet*

John Hollander has taught numerous courses related to art and literature during his time at Yale. He has published seventeen books of poems including *Selected Poetry*, and most recently, *Figurehead* in 1999. He is also the author of eight critical works, among them *The Gazer's Spirit*, which is concerned with poems addressed to works of art, *The Work of Poetry*, and *The Figure of Echo*. Professor Hollander has written extensively on contemporary art in the permanent collection of the Yale University Art Gallery. Among his many honors are the Bollingen prize in poetry and a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship.

This is an oil sketch, or a first thought for a painting done in 1877. It is a fictional study of an actual early nineteenth century event, as construed and constructed by Eakins. William Rush, who lived from 1752 to 1833, was in Eakins's words, "a celebrated sculptor and ship carver of Philadelphia," whose works "were finished in wood and consisted of figureheads and scrolls for vessels, ornamented statues and tobacco signs." When Philadelphia established its waterworks to supply Schuylkill water to the inhabitants, Rush, then a member of the Water Committee of the Philadelphia City Council, was asked to carve a statue to commemorate the inauguration of the system. This is Eakins's own catalog description: "The suitable statue carved in 1809 was an allegorical figure of the river, a standing draped female holding up a bittern, a bird loving and much frequenting the quiet wooded river of those days, the wavelets of the wind-sheltered stream are shown in the delicate thin drapery after the manner of the French artist of that day."

There is an implicit reverse Pygmalion story here. The model posing is holding a book. The carved figure would not be holding a book, but a carved bittern, (an aquatic bird). Notice that the carved and living figures are interestingly aligned, as though the sculptor was looking through his carving to the living model, although his gaze is looking down. The sculptor is at work and is more sketchily represented than anything else in the painting, save for a not terribly readable bit of cast-off clothing the model had been wearing, and another carved figure. And then we have the carved figure itself. There is no gaze in this painting: nobody is looking at anybody else. The sculptor is at a moment of looking past what he's done, to the model behind the sculpture, thus establishing a narrative moment. And there's a parallel spatial recession from model to carved representation to maker, like a shadow relationship or visual echo of the model and her representation. It is the model who is more highly lit and dramatically defined, more palpably represented as mass and volume.

In this painting what we have is a place of work rather than a monumental or mythologized scene. The statue when completed was painted white to look like marble and installed in Center Square, which at the time was right at the middle of the water distribution system designed by the federal architect Benjamin Latrobe. There is great significance in this scene for Eakins. He is painting a sculptor at work, not a





*There is an implicit reverse  
Pygmalion story here.*

painter, which is interesting in terms of the artistic problem of representing a painter painting as opposed to a sculptor carving. What about the lighting, and the space around the figures? Each of Eakins's options would present a very different painting from this one.

For a model, Rush used a young woman named Louisa, who was the daughter of one of the members of the Water Committee. There's no evidence that she posed in the nude, although the older woman in the painting, which was probably modeled by the girl's mother, would have been present for propriety's sake, whether she was dressed or not. The whole question of who models for artists is very interesting historically and crucial for Eakins at this moment. That Eakins chose to represent the nude model in a realistic context is important. Also, he didn't like to use professional models, but rather, as was frequently the case in the later nineteenth century, art students were models. Eakins's attitude toward nude models provoked some controversy at the Philadelphia Academy.

The significance of this scene for Eakins is fourfold. First, he is painting an artist at work, a sculptor, not a painter, and he's working from an amateur, not a professional model. Eakins didn't like to use professionals because of his program of extreme naturalism, or what some people have called his scientific realism. Second, he was at war with the Academy for a decade. Eakins started teaching just about the time he was working on this painting, and immediately some trouble broke out. The years 1876 to 1877 were the beginning of a period of controversy over the use of naked models for making nude figures in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Third, in 1896 he was fired because he insisted on using nude models, and on doing what all art schools do today, which is to use art students themselves as models. Finally, he's making a work of art that transcends the interests of the average viewer.

When I became interested in this painting, I didn't know its history. The consequence of my brooding about it is the following poem, which concerns the gaze that reverts from model, to carving, from artist to model and from study to finished painting. I was thinking of cycles and recirculation, about the allegorical figure of the river, the notional water and remembered water and the actual water at the end of the cycle. And I was thinking about shadows, shadows that mean any kind of representation, not just a cast shadow, but a painting of an image in a mirror.

*A Statue of Something*

The great wooden figure of the river is finished, and yellow  
And brown shadows attach themselves to the interior  
Of the sculptor's studio, where he stands holding the hand  
Of the short, naked lady as she steps down from her platform.  
He is leading his model out into interpretation,  
Life after art, re-engagement with a world whose shadows  
Are insubstantial and always full of motion.  
They are like the surface of water on the river  
In which the model will swim, rejoining a broken  
Circle of representations dancing in the sunlight,  
Given a common substance by their chorus of shadows.  
Presiding wood, fresh water, unpainted flesh,  
On which the inland waves flash with an excitement  
Beyond mere grandeur, more fragile than the language of shadow  
With which, for example, a painter might make his own  
Late afternoon representations to the spirit of figures,  
Showing all this, what it had been about.

*Blue Wine*, copyright 1979, by John Hollander

Edwin Austin Abbey  
American 1852–1911

*Richard, Duke of Gloucester  
and the Lady Anne, 1896*

Oil on canvas  
52 ½ × 104 ¼ inches (133.4 × 264.8 cm)  
Edwin Austin Abbey Memorial Collection  
1937.2224

Lawrence Manley has taught at Yale since 1976. He specializes in literature of the Renaissance and has chaired Yale's unique Ph.D. program in Renaissance Studies. A recipient of a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and the René Wellek Prize of the American Comparative Literature Association, he has written extensively on literary responses to the city and has offered seminars on this subject in the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute. His books include *Convention, 1500–1750* and *Literature and Culture in Early Modern London*, as well as an anthology, *London in the Age of Shakespeare*. He regularly lectures on Shakespeare at Yale, and he is currently researching the relationship between the personnel and the plays in the repertory of the acting companies.

*Lawrence Manley, Professor of English, novelist*

Abbey's painting represents an intersection between pictorial and stage traditions, and it is an intersection that goes both ways interestingly. The tradition of theatrical performance, like the tradition of the visual arts, is one that is geared to the grand scale, the large, formal, lavish spectacle. In the nineteenth century the stage is like a diorama; it's a three-sided picture box into which you look to see visual stimulation and historical exactitude in Victorian costuming.

The scene depicted here comes from Shakespeare's "Richard III." It is the second scene of the play, when Richard, Duke of Gloucester, whose brother has recently come to the throne as a result of war, begins a plot to seize the crown. Part of his plot is to propose marriage to the Lady Anne. Richard has murdered her husband Edward, Prince of England. He has also murdered her father-in-law, the legitimate King Henry VI. Richard proposes marriage to the widow of the man he murdered, and he chooses as the occasion of the proposal the burial procession of Henry VI. Before the scene is over he persuades Anne to put a betrothal ring on her finger and receives her promise of marriage. As soon as Anne leaves the stage, Richard turns to the audience to gloat over what he has accomplished, with a famous pair of lines from the epigraph that Abbey included with the painting, "was ever woman in this humor wooed, was ever woman in this humor won." Then he adds one more line, "I'll have her, but I will not keep her long." Indeed, we only see Anne briefly later in the play, and we discover that she is no longer able to sleep at night because of her husband's own timorous dreams. Finally, we learn that Richard has had Anne murdered. She makes her last appearance at the end of the play as a ghost in Richard's tent who has come to curse him just moments before he dies at the Battle of Bosworth.

Richard III is Shakespeare's first great charismatic character, his first great wooer of the audience. Richard began his career supposedly by lingering sullenly in his mother's womb for two years before coming to term with a full set of teeth, shoulder-length hair, withered arm, and a hunched back. Having thus discommoded his mother, he proceeds to murder his way through the English Royal House, murdering King Henry VI, King Henry's son, Prince Edward, murdering his own brother the Duke of Clarence, murdering his two nephews, the sons of his brother Edward, murdering his wife, Anne, murdering his associate and accomplice, the Duke of Buckingham, murdering the Lord Chancellor of England, the Duke of Hastings. By the end of the play so heinous are Richard's crimes that his murder by Henry Richmond, the Earl of Tudor, is considered to be an act of providence. No one is sorry to see him go. A few phrases that apply to Richard in the course of the play are an elfish mark aboard a rutting hog, a fowl swine, a wretched, bloody and usurping bore, a lump of fowl deformity. Anne calls him a hedgehog, a poisonous hunchback toad, a minister of Hell, a son of Hell, a devil. What is remarkable is not the villainy but how Shakespeare turns that villainy into one of the greatest roles of all time. The character of Richard dominates the play. He has 1100 lines. He takes the audience into his confidence. He speaks to them in soliloquy and he tells them what he is going to do. In other words, Richard is an actor with all of the actor's deception, charm, charisma, and narcissism.





Thomas Eakins  
American, 1844–1916

*The Veteran*, probably 1885

Oil on canvas  
22 ¼ × 22 inches (56.5 × 38.1 cm)  
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903  
1961.18.20

Robert Stone, *Rosencrantz Writer in Residence and Adjunct Professor of English*; novelist

Robert Stone has taught at Yale since 1994. A member of the Academy of Arts and Letters, Robert Stone's articles, essays, and book reviews have appeared in the *New York Times*, Harper's, the *Atlantic*, *Esquire*, *Playboy*, *Life*, the *Village Voice* and the *New York Review of Books*. He is the author of several novels, including *A Hall of Mirrors*, *Dog Soldiers*, *A Flag for Sunrise* and *Damascus Gate*. Professor Stone's publications also include short stories such as "Helping," reprinted in *Best American Short Stories 1988* and in *Best American Short Stories of the Eighties*; and non-fiction work such as *Images of War*, a collection of short essays on the Vietnam War. Robert Stone has been the recipient of numerous awards. Stone's novel, *A Flag for Sunrise*, was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the American Book Award, and the PEN/Faulkner award, and received the Los Angeles Times Book Award in 1982. Professor Stone has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Guggenheim Foundation, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

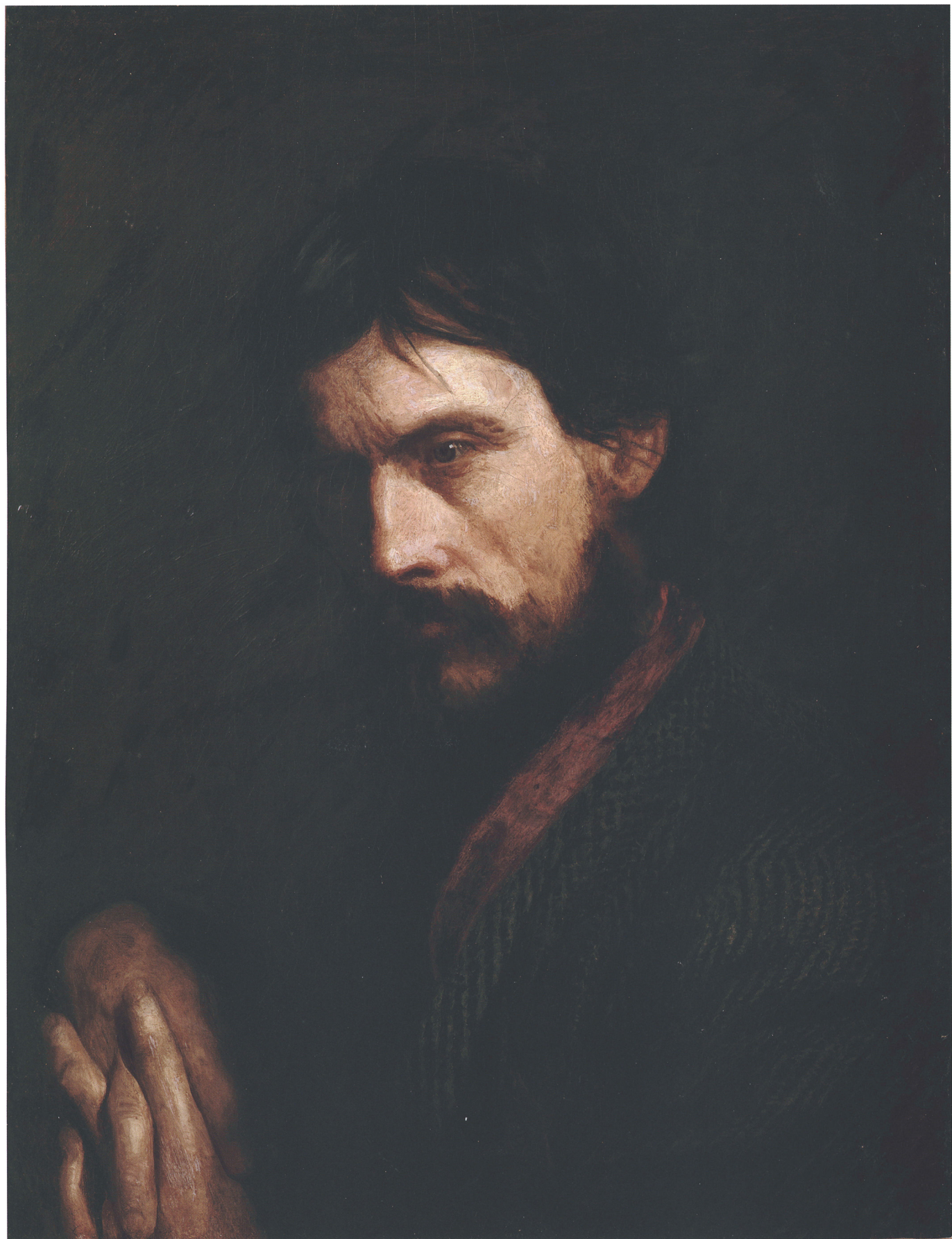
At the beginning of his life Eakins is a rough contemporary of Emerson, and at the far end of his life he's a rough contemporary of Stephen Crane. Particularly in this picture of George Reynolds, you can see the way he bridges and incorporates that aspect of America that is embodied by both Emerson and Crane. If we want to try to understand what Eakins was driving at, it's worth referring to Emerson's philosophy of self-reliance. He had a certain vision of democracy that is particular to him though not altogether different from Whitman's, regarding the possibilities for greatness and for heroism within the ordinary individual. Emerson looked within himself and bade people look within themselves for those areas in which in their small way, they might bring to bear something heroic.

Crane, as we know from *The Red Badge of Courage*, gives us the character of Henry Fleming. Henry Fleming, the boy who is called upon to fight the Civil War as George Reynolds was, initially resists the possibility that he is able to cope with something like a war. But then in that strange, rather bloody-handed vitalist mode that prevailed at the time Crane wrote, Henry Fleming finds within himself the capacity to do what he has to do — to fight the war. Some years after writing *The Red Badge of Courage*, Crane wrote a story that was also called "The Veteran", about Henry Fleming looking back at the war and his recollection of it. Fleming had to live out in his own private way that personal heroism Emerson conceived. To Whitman, simply being was heroic. Everyone was a hero.

Eakins was establishing the idea in art of a private greatness. What Eakins attempted under the influence of Emerson, in this newly created, constantly changing America, was to isolate the private, obscure individual in his moment of greatness. Here, George Reynolds has survived something that he is completely unable to communicate to anyone. In the Civil War when sergeants took the men up into the line for the first time, they would say, "All right boys, today you're going to see the elephant." The elephant was in mid-nineteenth century America the most exotic thing imaginable. Barnum Circus would carry an elephant from small rural American town to small rural American town, and it would be a great thing for the boys to line up on a Saturday afternoon and see the elephant. Well, what the elephant was telling these untraveled, unsophisticated young men in the Union and Confederate Armies was they were about to see something that no one in their families or anyone they knew had seen the like of. George Reynolds is a man who has seen the elephant.

Eakins saw in Reynolds what came to be called in Vietnam "the 500 yard stare." That's what George Reynolds has here — he's seen things that he can never describe. He is in his small way a very special man, although he is a very obscure man. He isn't represented in the heroic mode. He's represented simply as a man who has seen something formidable. We can see what Reynolds has seen in his face — that expression and its considerable psychological depth. He's an unfamiliar presence in American art. There's a heroism about him and at the same time he speaks an anti-heroism. He really does stand in for us. He is us at war. He's seen the elephant. He is in possession of dreadful secrets that we cannot speak.





Edward Hopper  
American, 1882–1967

*Sunlight in a Cafeteria, 1958*

Oil on canvas  
40 ¼ × 60 ⅞ inches (102.2 × 152.7 cm)  
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903  
1961.18.31

Bryan Wolf started teaching at Yale in 1975 as an acting instructor and is currently the Chair of the American Studies Program and a Professor of American Studies and English. Professor Wolf has served on the Publications Committee of Yale University Press and on the Advisory Board of the *Yale Journal of Criticism*. He is the author of *Romantic Re-Vision: Culture and Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century American Painting and Literature* and most recently, *The Invention of Seeing: Vermeer, Painting, Modernity*. Professor Wolf has received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, and the William Clyde DeVane Medal for Distinguished Scholarship and Teaching in Yale College, Yale Chapter, Phi Beta Kappa. He also has received several A. Whitney Griswold Fund Awards which he used to study the work of Caspar David Freidrich, Vermeer, and seventeenth-century Dutch painting.

*Bryan Wolf, Chair of the American Studies Program  
and Professor of American Studies and English; poet*

It is clear to me this is an image saturated with issues of death. It's Hopper's meditation on painting, which is a process of arresting death. And it is mixed in with feelings of eros and desire and isolation and loneliness that all get built into what it means to paint, to fill the void. And for me, in the writing of the poem, what I felt was most important was to catch the sense of defying death as an absurd act, as an effort to scream into an empty nest and in that process try to redeem it. But, secondly I wanted to capture a sense of impotence. This is a poem about the deep sense of the impotence of the painter. And that sense of impotence in the painting for me tied into the sense of impotence when someone who is close to you dies. Finally, in the following poem, Lora was a friend of mine who took her own life, and Jo is Edward Hopper's wife and frequent model for the women in his paintings.

*"Sunlight in a Cafeteria (Edward Hopper)"*

The room is filled with ghosts  
and sunshine. It stinks of  
death: the guillotine of light,  
cutting in from the left, and  
those gray table slabs, more mortuarial than not. What  
exactly is it that they want?

Lora is dead.  
A note left the name and  
address of the kennel where  
her dog awaited her return.  
I have sat with her at cafés  
like this. Even the light  
is yellow. I didn't hear  
the ghosts, screaming  
at the top of their airless  
lungs. Between drags on her  
cigarette, Lora laughed too  
often for me to notice  
the tide of yellow air  
caressing her nostrils,  
creeping up around her eyes,  
suffocating her, until  
you phoned to say that  
Lora is dead.





What a miscarriage: Lora's death,  
and the two of them there, playing  
at living, she like some trumped up  
Vermeer (the light always slants  
in from the left), and he the  
coy hunter, gazing her way,  
while also staring beyond her  
to where the window should be,  
but isn't. His body betrays him:  
the rigid hand, like a crab's pincer,  
inches her way, it's puny white tip  
hardly up to the task, while  
his coat and shoulders face  
elsewhere, anywhere,  
but fleshwards.

Suppose for a moment  
a different hand:  
not his but Hopper's,  
tense before the canvas.  
poised to strike it's fag  
brush across a blank slate,  
a *tabula rasa* of death and  
dinner and art. Each table  
another canvas, each canvas  
another death, each brush  
stroke a hopeless piss  
into the void, until the frame intercedes,  
a contraption of wood  
and guilt that stops  
the funereal progression,  
pressing chaos into form  
like the ending of  
some B-rate movie.

That's why Jo is there:  
to prove that pigment  
makes a difference.  
Her garish hair protests  
the harshness of flat forms,  
the insatiable demand that  
canvases make, when, like a  
theater flat, or a blank wall,  
or a woman, they insist on  
being filled.



Eros and  
thanatos battle here,  
but not in ways that we might  
expect. This is not a  
painting about desire, or  
loneliness, or the American  
century. This is a painting  
about what painting cannot  
do. It cannot stanch the  
void, and it cannot  
bear its own impotence,  
and so it stares blankly  
at a woman and hopes  
that somewhere in the  
narrative of arrested love  
it can hide its shame,  
cop a plea, by feigning  
something more than  
illusion.

Hopper hated the modernists,  
or said he did, and yet  
what is that trapezoid  
wall if not a tribute  
to abstraction and  
Vermeer, and who is  
Jo, if not an allegory  
of figuration, a sensual  
mark upon an empty wall,  
a way for Hopper to mark  
off his territory, like a  
dog lifting his leg, until  
the stream of flowing  
color fills the void, or  
the wall, or a cafeteria  
on a sunlit day, with  
the odor of life.

I miss you, Lora,  
and lack the language  
for leaving my mark,  
but ghostly markings  
linger yet in the air and  
in the effort we make  
to swim an endless sea  
of smoke and yellow days.  
And when we drown or  
float below the surface,  
we know at least this:  
that two people sat  
in an empty room and  
made the blank walls sing.

Henry Fuseli  
Swiss, 1741–1825

*Mother and Child:  
An Allegorical Subject*, ca. 1785–1790

Oil on canvas  
39 7/8 × 50 inches (101.3 × 127 cm)  
University Purchase, Associates in Fine Arts Fund  
1958.65

*Richard Lalli, Associate Professor of Music; baritone*

Richard Lalli received his early musical training at the Interlochen Arts Academy and Oberlin Conservatory. In 1978, he entered the Yale School of Music where he earned the Doctoral of Musical Arts degree. He has taught at Yale since 1981. Currently, Professor Lalli teaches graduate level courses in hearing and analysis, and an undergraduate seminar for singers. His recent seasons include two solo recitals in London's Wigmore Hall, a recital of American art and popular songs at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., a recital of rare Schubert at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, two recitals at the Spoleto Festival U.S.A., and a concert at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. As a pianist and chamber music enthusiast, Mr. Lalli performs frequently with various ensembles and recently founded Old Music New Haven, a group ensemble specializing in works of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. With pianist Gary Chapman, Professor Lalli has released three compact discs of Tin Pan Alley classics; their fourth will accompany Yale Press's *Classic American Popular Song* by Allen Forte.

I chose this painting on purely emotional grounds. Fuseli, like any true-blue Romantic, intended to arouse feelings of the sublime through fear and terror. In the late 1700s, artists, as well as composers and writers specialized in macabre imagery. This “allegorical scene” depicts a mother who has sacrificed her life for her child. Fuseli has frozen this dramatic moment and thrusts us into the sublime — a place of intense feelings, of heightened awareness, of fear and terror. The exact identity of the mother is unclear. There are no obvious mythological sources here. Fuseli was married at the age of forty-five, one year before executing this work. Prior to his marriage he had been plagued by the romantic interests of Mary Wollstonecraft, who, after passing time in France recovering from his rejection, returned to London, married, bore a daughter, and died in childbirth. We can only imagine the possible connection.

Fuseli's work reminds us of three important contemporaneous musical developments. In the 1770s we have the six Sturm und Drang (storm and stress) symphonies by Joseph Haydn. Strong emotional contrasts, minor keys, and dark underlying modalities characterized these works. In the 1760s, German operatic composers developed *obbligato recitative*, a device through which the orchestra accompanies and illustrates the singer's text with sighs, thunderbolts, tremolos, and explosions. And dramatic ballets were flourishing; one can trace the influence of Gluck's ballets of the 1760s on Mozart's 1791 *Don Giovanni*, a very dark work, indeed. There are parallels in literature: the *melodrama*, a poetic text spoken to a musical accompaniment, was invented by Rousseau and popularized by Goethe in 1778–79. At exactly this time Goethe purchased a number of Fuseli's portraits and sketches which show the influence of Piranese, whose fantastic drawings of Roman prisons and ruins conjured up the world of dreams and the subconscious. Fuseli was single-handedly responsible for bringing this brand of Italian mannerism to London, the land of the gothic novel, first introduced by Walpole in 1764.

It is curious to note that the child in our painting might just be Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, who grew up to create one of the greatest gothic characters of all time — Frankenstein.



Claude Monet  
French, 1840–1926

*Port Donnant, Belle-Ile, 1887*

Oil on canvas  
25 ½ × 32 inches (64.8 × 81.3 cm)  
Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon, B.A. 1929  
1983.7.10

Martin Bresnick was recently named the winner of the Charles Ives Living Award presented by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In addition to the Charles Ives Living prize, Professor Bresnick has received first-prize awards for composition, numerous fellowships and grants, as well as awards for teaching excellence. At the School of Music, he serves as coordinator of the composition department and as director of the New Music New Haven concert series. Bresnick's compositions include orchestral works, chamber music, choral music and works for digital synthesizer. Professor Bresnick's orchestral works have been performed in concerts throughout the United States. He has also written music for films; two of these, *Arthur & Lillie* (1975) and *The Day After Trinity* (1981) were nominated for Academy Awards in the documentary category.

*Martin Bresnick, Adjunct Professor of Composition; composer*

Music is an art whose medium is temporal. Its meanings come about through symbolic and emotional expansions of time. Music lives in that world that is passing, that moment of now which is here but which is instantly gone, replaced by ever returning nows. And here is Monet going with all claws out for the now. The passage of time itself is the central subject of this painting. Music consists of vibrations passing by our eardrums in certain patterns and those vibrations and patterns can be shown to be very concrete phenomena. Musical intervals can be measured in ratios and in frequencies. But music is also extremely abstract.

I was made dizzy by how amazed I am by this painting. I was knocked over when I realized that Monet had seen this moment and he could convey it to me. It's a strange combination of the absolutely momentary and the absolutely eternal. Momentary in the sense that the light passed at that time of day across that seacoast scene and is unique to that moment. This is what Monet saw when he saw that moment. So it's Monet I see. It's the landscape of his mind as he stares at this image. There's a human solidarity that we share on this planet and that's the meaning and the beauty of this painting for me. I now see landscape as some momentary but long temporal moment. This painting is about the pathos of transformation, and Monet's desperation to capture what he saw, his experience of that scene. He took this time, this very special moment and elaborated it. I think of myself also as a composer who engages and elaborates those moments, and makes a location for you to contemplate the transience of everything that is and everything that will be.





Willem de Kooning  
American, born Holland,  
1904–1997

*Untitled XIII, 1975*

Oil on canvas  
87 ¼ × 77 inches (221.6 × 195.6 cm)  
The Katharine Ordway Collection  
1980.12.7

Kathryn Alexander has been a member of the Yale faculty since 1996. She has also taught at the School of Music at the University of Oregon, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and for the Music Department at Dartmouth College. Professor Alexander is an author, lecturer, and composer. Her commissioned works include, *TRIO NEOS* Culture/Rockefeller commission, Baylor University Wind Ensemble commission and The Women's Philharmonic/National Endowment for the Arts commission. Professor Alexander was the Women's Philharmonic Orchestral Readings Project Winner, and she has also received many awards and grants, including the ASCAP Special Award and composer's fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Kathryn Alexander, Assistant Professor of Composition and Music Theory; composer*

When I began composing, I developed a process of associating my composition with other kinds of art — a poem, a novel, a sculpture, or a painting, as an impetus to move into the compositional space. I am an organic composer, meaning that most of the time I'm starting with cell material, my very smallest ideas, and I create a structure through the process of relating those ideas together. The overall hierarchy of the piece of music evolves out of the smaller constructions I make.

I took a photograph of this de Kooning and digitized it into a computer to start my compositional explorations. As I traveled through the image of the painting, I found myself drawn to its contours. I used those shapes to generate musical color. I used the little white space in the middle as an origination sound. The relationships between the contours change the sound, then they get grouped in the mix. In a computer music studio I can explore interior space and deal with the inner characteristics of sound, or I can create generated synthetic sound, using pixel data. If I played all the pixels available in this painting, it would be very noisy, because there's a lot of graphic information. Each pixel and its contours has some pitch data, because they register on a grid of X, which is temporality, and Y, which is pitch. I measured the beginning and end of every line to establish the frequency, and the relationship between those two numbers. With those ratios I created scales and harmonics. Next I applied an interesting technique called granular synthesis which allows me to pull a sound apart and stretch it. I can grab a few milliseconds of a sound and actually stretch it apart and hear the harmonic content of the sound spread out over time instead of compacted into a single note. Changes in the image shape affect changes in pitch and timbre. You can actually hear all those little contours affecting the sound. It's just fascinating to me to have this little snippet and then pull it apart and hear everything that's inside of it.







Ernest Lawson  
American, 1873–1939

*Harlem River Scene*, n.d.

Oil on canvas  
20 ¼ × 24 ⅛ inches (51.4 × 61.3 cm)  
Gift of Arthur G. Altschul, B.A. 1943  
1976.124.2

Mr. Duffy joined the Yale faculty in 1982, after having taught music courses at the Hartford Conservatory, the University of Connecticut, the Auburn Maximum Security Correctional Facility, and Cornell University. Recordings and performances of Mr. Duffy's music include those by the Cayuga Chamber Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic, the San Jose Symphony and numerous college and university bands and wind ensembles. He has served as president of the New England College Band Association, editor of the college Band Directors National Association Journal, president of the Eastern Division of CBDNA, publicity co-chair for the World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles, president of Connecticut Composers Incorporated, chairman of the Connecticut Music Educators Association Professional Affairs committee, and a member of the American Composers Alliance and BMI.

*Thomas Duffy, Associate Dean of Yale University School of Music  
and Director of Bands; composer and conductor*

As far back as Scriabin, composers have toyed with the idea that there's a common denominator between color and music. Scriabin proposed a color organ, whereby he could hit a key, and that musical frequency could trigger the projection of the color of the same frequency so you could watch a piece of music being played. Like Scriabin, I want to explore the relationship between form, harmony, melody, rhythm, as it relates to an impressionist painter's manipulations of pigments. When viewing a subject from a distance, the eye compacts microdata into whole forms. If you look at a portion of the same view at close range, it comprises dots and small smears of color, which when strategically placed give the impression of being opaque. In the world of sound, the big picture is the experience of the theme, melody. From a distance, the ear screens out other sounds so that you can focus on music in three areas, foreground, middle ground, and background, just as you do with a painting. You can hear the melody, but at the same time you can hear the bass line, while you hear the harmony, and you decide which of these, foreground, middle ground, or backgrounds you're going to focus on.

With the impressionist technique, the brush stroke known as a daub or dot is the smallest unit capable of carrying pigment. These daubs are carefully placed to generate an impression of form. The largest color dots are found primarily in the upper part of this painting. They represent leaves, and because they're placed far apart, they suggest transparency, but all the daubs together create an opaque surface. You can see through the trees, back to the shoreline. The equivalent in music would be to strike a note, thereby defining a space between it and the next note that's transparent or there is no space and it's opaque. What you have is a simple melody. The composer provides harmony in the background. The chords in the background are divided into their own melodies. Then the second melody comes in. Up close it's a series of dots, and then you have to find your focal point, and the dots give up their individual identity and contribute to the harmonic background. The third part is smears made with the longer strokes of the brush. I'm particularly interested in the borders that delineate form. There is a spot in each of these borders where pigments blend. I tried to find one solid line in this painting that was not affected or infected by another color, and I couldn't do it. I fill in the melody line so that what would normally take one beat takes a beat and a half. And I continue on to the next note, and each one moves into the territory of the note before and after by half the length of the note that's coming. So I keep the rhythm of the melody intact, but I use the harmony to make the sound "blur." The harmony moves before the melody note does and the melody moves and creates the form. But it's the background that is unstable.

That's how I translate these brush strokes into musical affects. The typical *sonata allegro* form consists of three parts: an exposition in which you hear theme one and theme two, then a development section, and then a recapitulation. At the end of all this development you come back to the first two themes presented in the original key. That form was in place for two hundred years. I try to take a painting and align it with my own musical processes — brush strokes, smears, dots and the big picture — to create a chromatic composition.

*Duffy on Lawson*





Edward Hopper  
American, 1882–1967

*Rooms for Tourists, 1945*

Oil on canvas  
30 ¼ × 42 ⅛ inches (76.8 × 107.0 cm)  
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903  
1961.18.29

Jennifer Tipton lights for theater, dance and opera. Her theater includes work for Broadway and regional companies, such as the Yale Repertory Theater, for which she lit Brecht's *Galileo* among others since 1981. Her work in dance includes the lighting for pieces by Twyla Tharp, Jerome Robbins, and Paul Taylor. Professor Tipton's opera lighting includes the Glyndebourne Festival in England, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera Company. Recently, she has begun working in collaboration with artists such as Rona Pondick and Robert Gober to light their installations. She also has collaborated with the choreographer Dana Tai Soon Burgess, and the sculptor, John Dreyfuss, on a piece that was performed at the Corcoran Gallery in Washington, D.C.

*Jennifer Tipton, Associate Professor and Lighting Design Advisor*

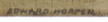
As a theater artist, I am interested in trying to present two viewpoints simultaneously: reality and illusion. My own art is in four dimensions, because it is light in the actual space, and it happens in time. But the eye is easily led to misconception because it's very hard to remember light. I am drawn to Hopper's acceptance of the challenge of presenting two dimensions in three, of presenting an inner story within an outer frame. Time is also something that I feel very strongly in Hopper paintings. He freezes a tiny instant and implies that the next moment the sun can change, and the person can enter or exit the room. So his universe is made of these instants, these quantum moments and their continuity.

Hopper is a painter who stands right on that line between abstraction and representation. In *Rooms for Tourists* it's night, it's clear. We see the cozy warm rooms, and yet there's a distinct feeling that these rooms are all separate. What intrigues me most about this painting is the outside light, not the inside light, however. The night sky is quite dark. There is a dark shadow outside, and yet the facade is in light. Light enables us to see the facade, but we can't tell what the source is. There is no implied moon. Perhaps there is a moon and the night sky is dark for other reasons. Street light would not be that high, and it would be warmer as well. There are little bits and pieces of light that come out into the yard from inside. The facade is lit in a very mysterious way. It stands out as a singular rectangle.

This painting seems to be the beginning of Hopper's sensing that he can use light that doesn't necessarily come from a particular place. Hopper for the most part works with an implied single source of light. It is clear that he uses light in a way that theater lighting designers use light, not realistically, but for the purpose of the moment. There's definitely the sense of the traveler here. Each of these rooms has a warm and cozy light, but we know that each shelters someone who is away from home, family, and friends. It's as though they are members of different tribes that have come together but have no contact with each other.

The same sense of loneliness is present in *Western Motel*. Because of the luggage, the implication is that the woman is a traveler. The color comes in pairs: the green of the room and the car; the red of the furniture and the dress, the yellow of her hair and the light fixture. The light and shadow work as variations on that color. The way the woman looks at me or doesn't look at me, as the painting includes me and leaves me out. I feel a strong sense of the aloneness. But the fields of color are quite





Edward Hopper  
American, 1882–1967

*Western Motel, 1957*

Oil on canvas  
29 × 40 1/8 inches (73.7 × 101.9 cm)  
Bequest of Stephen Carlton Clark, B.A. 1903  
1961.18.32

*Hopper is a painter who stands right on that line between abstraction and representation.*

beautiful, almost luscious. I've been in many motel rooms and I know that very few motel rooms look like that. Hopper dwells on the duality of being alone and being in a place that is foreign and uncomfortable, and yet having your senses titillated. It makes you super aware. It makes your senses more sensitive. Meanwhile the shapes are compelling. You're looking at rectangles and trapezoids and lines that organize the surface in a way that calls attention to the fact that it is a flat canvas, that it has two dimensions, even though it's representing three dimensions.

*Sunlight in a Cafeteria* is one of Hopper's paintings that I respond to the least. I feel my own presence in this painting, standing outside looking in or perhaps wishing I were inside. The woman seems to be looking at me, drawing me in. I am participating with the painting. I am made very aware that so much is unreal. The architecture is not real. The perspective does not show us a real room. The light is not real. I am called to the flatness of the building across the street. Because there are two people, I'm able to make a story, which leaves me out even more. Hopper captures what I call the "dis-ease" of the modern world and yet, there's something attractive about it. I feel it somehow in my mouth, in my glands. Having multiple perspective points for different parts of the painting, and yet having one source of light, creates an extraordinary tension, because with one source of light, we assume one perspective. This "dis-ease" comes from having it shift right in front of us. It is an extraordinary expression of our lives.





Marcel Duchamp  
French, 1887–1968

*Boite-en-Valise*, 1943

Leather valise containing 150 miniature replicas and color reproductions of works by Duchamp  
16 × 14 3⁄8 × 4 inches (41 × 37.8 × 10.5 cm)  
Gift from the estate of Katherine S. Dreier  
1953.6.6

Elizabeth Diamond is a resident of the Yale Repertory Theatre and she has taught at the Yale School of Drama since 1992. Her productions at the Repertory Theatre include Seamus Henry's *The Cure at Troy*, George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs. Warren's Profession*, Charles Ludlam's *Le Bourgeois Avant Garde*, Moliere's *School for Wives*, Suzan Lori Parks' *The American Play*, and Parks' *The Death of The Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World*. Professor Diamond has won the Obie Award and the Connecticut Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Direction. She has served as Artistic Associate of the Women's Project and as Resident Director of New Dramatists in New York. Ms. Diamond is currently the Senior Artistic Advisor of the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue at Harvard University. Her production of Racine's *Phedre* launched the twentieth anniversary season of the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge this year.

*Elizabeth Diamond, Assistant Professor of Directing; director*

That Duchamp was funny is undeniable. But comedy, as is said in the theater *ad nauseum*, is very serious business. It seems to me that this *Boite* and Duchamp's entire life in art is an attempt, at once playful and serious, to live gracefully in a world without God, in a random universe, in the middle of a world war. How can one stay above politics? How can an artist transport and conserve works that are not so much objects as ideas? These were urgent questions for Duchamp. The *Boite* is a fantastic manifestation of a deeply serious, yet essentially comic philosophical and practical life project: to seek a reconciliation of opposites, not by solving them, but by allowing them to coexist.

The *Valise* on the one hand is an obsessive, egomaniacal project of conserving and immortalizing his own work, while at the same time being an absurdly modest and humble proposition. Is it an original or a copy? Was the original an original? Can a copy be an original? The joke is certainly on us and our little binary minds, who at the end of the century still can't accept that our world is saturated with ambiguity. It is touching to realize that this passionate man so determined to be dispassionate and above the fray, who declared himself utterly apolitical, began this work two years after the burning of the Reichstag and completed it in the nick of time, leaving France with his handy valise. His entire life's work has been shrunk to this little thing he can carry around, like a traveling salesman. It's made of very cheap, mundane stuff—copies of copies, approximations of approximations, tiny cardboard and paper duplicates that have been packed into this little overnight bag.

For me, this exquisite, crude box is a kind of great comic action cleverly disguised as a cheap bit. Great because like all great comedy, it is redemptive; it believes in life. It's Duchamp's handy dandy portable retrospective. He can set it up on any street corner. With characteristic generosity and self-deprecation, Marcel Duchamp seems with *Boite-en-Valise* to direct most of his laughter at himself. He's reduced a life's work to a nicely portable little purse, but the imaginative life it contains is vast. Jokes give way to jokes inside the box. A low-key, concentrated pleasure is obtained, like that given by a very beautifully made little toy.





Reginald Marsh  
American, 1898–1954

*Coney Island Beach, 1934*

Egg tempera on board  
35  $\frac{3}{8}$  × 39  $\frac{5}{8}$  inches (90.5 × 100.6 cm)  
Gift of Mrs. Reginald Marsh  
1963.22

Catherine Sheehy has been a member of the Yale School of Music faculty since 1994. Professor Sheehy received both her doctorate and masters degrees in dramaturgy and dramatic criticism from the Yale School of Drama. Professor Sheehy has also been the Associate Editor of *American Theatre* magazine and the Managing Editor of *Theater* magazine. She has worked with Joseph Chaikin and the Open Theater on their international tour of *Terminal* in 1996 and as the Festival Dramaturg at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. Professor Sheehy has authored numerous publications and has served as the Resident Dramaturg for the Yale Repertory Theatre since 1994.

*Catherine Sheehy, Assistant Professor of Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism; dramaturg*

The first time that Dr. Henry Jekyll looks in the mirror and sees Edward Hyde, he sees a smaller creature, a distillation of all the evil in him, and yet he has to admit that he recognizes himself. When Jekyll looks in the mirror, he feels “a leap of welcome.” When I came upon Reginald Marsh’s *Coney Island Beach* I felt that leap of welcome, that palpable feeling when I recognized something of myself in this picture. It congealed for me one of my favorite pieces of dramatic literature, the Hecht and Fowler play, *The Great Magoo*, which probably is what led me to dramaturgy — the interest in the mechanics, the gears and cogs of how dramatic literature functions.

The thing that makes Americans American is the ability to comprehend and embody contradiction. A cockeyed optimism and deep, dark inky cynicism live together in the American spirit. There’s great joy and there’s great horror in this painting. There’s the tenderness of mother and son. There are jaunty boys with their great shows of muscle beach strength. And then there’s this curious woman with the glasses. You know, the studious girl on her Sunday off and she gets to go down to Coney Island. Was she standing all by herself when forty million people finally decided to join her, and suddenly she’s very modest? This painting has it all. It has the pleasure, it has the pain. It has the innocence, and it has the darkness. The clouds are not white, they are a sort of gray. It’s a dingy kind of place, and yet there’s enormous affection from the artist for the subject.

It was a great time to be a journalist in New York. You had Ben Hecht and Charles McCarthy, George Kaufman and Edna Ferber, Dorothy Parker, Dawn Powell, Frank Crowninshield, and Franklin P. Adams. The city was alive. And the first art to





*A cockeyed optimism  
and deep, dark inky  
cynicism live together  
in the American spirit.*

make full use of the powerful changes in the American language was journalism. At this time most journalists were also playwrights. Some of them, like Reginald Marsh, were illustrators. He graduated from Yale in 1920 and he became an illustrator for the *New Yorker*.

We've all heard of *Front Page*, the Hecht and McArthur definitive opus. I went to find *Front Page* at Sterling Library and right next to it on the shelf was *The Great Magoo*. It actually has a long ornate title: *A Lovesick Charade in Three Acts and Something Like Eight Scenes Recounting the Didos of Two Young and Amorous Souls Who Nearly Perished When They Weren't in the Hay Together*. A bit further into the book you find that Ben Hecht and Jean Fowler placed an advertisement the day before the play was to open, November 28, 1932, and ran it in all the New York papers. (And that was a lot of papers.) It says, "Despite the multitude of eccentric comedians, whisky tenors, trained animals, dancing tootsies, stooges, ragtime bands and lighting effects which Billy Rose has injected into the proceedings, our opus, *The Great Magoo*, opening tomorrow night, was composed in the vein of the classics, a drama full of passion and bird calls, something like Romeo and Juliet. P.S. The authors, both on the verge of bankruptcy, will be interested spectators." When you come to the next page, you understand why this play is a lost classic. The scene is laid for the first half of the play. Hecht and Fowler describe it:

*This painting has it all.  
It has the pleasure, it has the  
pain. It has the innocence,  
and it has the darkness.*

“Seven o’clock on a summer evening in Coney Island. This is a very childish play. Here the voters come in quest of enchantment. Note to the director and producer of our work: Such supers as are hired to saunter across the stage during this scene as representatives of the pleasure-seeking public were stunned and had a far away look. Their mouths are slightly open. They have the certain cynical stare. They bristle with the consciousness they are going to be cheated the minute they part with a dime. We see the Dance of All Nations concession. This is a low building with a great deal of provocative art across its face. A few stairs lead up to a platform in front of the structure. We see another educational exhibit, a canvas structure inside which Leviathan, the mightiest whale ever captured, lies awaiting the attention of the public. The entrance to this concession is off-stage. Beyond these two structures, Coney Island rattles and tinkles like a monotonous toy — the roller coasters, ferris wheels, candy towers and hoopla razz-matazz. It’s down at the heel, a howling little fairy land makes a background to which we hope our scenic artist will do justice. If he does, the scene will look rather charming and remind us of our youth, naive, the lower classes and life undaunted.”

That’s a perfect description of the tawdriness and magic Reginald Marsh has grasped in his “Coney Island Beach.”

Lan Ying  
Chinese, 1585–ca. 1664

Anonymous  
(attributed to Jin Kan)

### *Autumn Landscape, 1653*

Ink and color on silk, hanging scroll  
76 ½ × 19 ¼ inches (194.3 × 48.9 cm)  
Anonymous gift in honor of Nelson Wu  
1967.75

### *Landscape*

Inscription by Jin Kan dated to 1664  
Ink and silk, hanging scroll  
101 ½ × 40 ⅞ inches  
Gift of Lawrason Riggs, B.A. 1910  
1930.30

Ming Cho Lee has been a member of the Yale faculty at the School of Drama since 1968 and has been co-chair of the Design Program since 1979. Among other distinguished positions, he serves on the Board of Directors of the Pan Asian Repertory Theatre, Chen and Dancers and the Asian American Arts Center. He has done set designs for productions on and off-broadway, for dance, regional theatre and opera, including work for the New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and the operas of Buenos Aires, Germany, and San Francisco. Professor Lee has been the recipient of countless awards for his designs, including a Tony Award for *K2*, the New York City's Mayor's Award for Arts and Culture, the Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for *Traveler in the Dark*, and an Obie Award for Sustained Achievement. He has also received fellowships and grants such as the Guggenheim Fellowship and the Distinguished Artist Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Theatre Program.

*Ming Cho Lee, Professor of Design and Scene Design Adviser; set designer*

Recently I went to see *The Marriage of Figaro*. The music, staging, design, costume design, lighting design, was super. But I felt vaguely dissatisfied. It did not give me anything new. I felt the approach was unadventurous. Now, isn't seeing a Mozart opera good enough? After all, it is sublime music. In a way, that performance was a perfect museum piece, and yet somehow it didn't quite come alive as a human experience, as something that changed me after seeing the production.

I have similarly been a little bit bored by art objects. If I come to the museum, I pick out some paintings, like the abstract expressionist works, and I take a look at Hopper, but somehow, even with the greatest respect, for me they don't connect with any kind of human experience. I may be a philistine, but so be it. I feel that traditional Chinese painting, the vocabulary, the method, the expression in Chinese painting, however great, is uneasy and unable to connect with contemporary life in China today. If you go to China, you see that life is tough. But the place is fascinating. There's so much to look at, it's teeming with life and people. It's unbelievable. But these paintings seem only to refer to the Ching Dynasty.

There were two dynasties in China when foreigners reigned. One is the Ming Dynasty, when the Mongolians invaded. Then the Manchurians came to China and became the Ching Dynasty. The Ching Dynasty overthrew the Ming Dynasty. *Autumn Landscape*, by Lan Ying, dated 1653, is early Ching Dynasty. Chinese painting is an appreciation for and connection with nature. It is without perspective, which makes it something that is not realistic. The Chinese have reduced nature to a series of codified brush strokes. There are huge tall rocks, and there's a little scholar fisherman who fishes with great patience who has a strong connection with nature. If you look at one of the trees, all the leaves are little ovals adhering to a diagonal. The Chinese have been copying nature, and re-realizing it through the ages. Chinese landscape painting is an appreciation of older painters and earlier styles.

This other painting is called *Landscape* and it is actually an homage to an earlier painting. According to Jin Kan's seven word poem in four lines, the painting refers to a period of unrest. A person in the pavilion is looking out, at one with nature. There is a little house down below, and there are some people inside. It is all about scholarly life in isolation with nature, a sense of escape, of being a hermit. The painting refers to a re-creation of an earlier poem and the artist enjoying the calligraphy.

Once I studied painting with a fairly well-known Chinese landscape painter. I was considered one of his disciples. We spent most of our time together looking at older work, getting a real sense of connection with it before copying it. I would spend the morning with my teacher, looking at him draw or paint, and then he would give me a small assignment. I remember my teacher actually smoked opium, and he hardly got out of the house — so the whole history of Chinese landscape painting was in that studio room. As a disciple, I got a glimpse of that history. I'd practice little brush strokes. One stroke for pine trees, little needle strokes. Put them together, and lo and behold, you have are great tree!







Frank Stella  
American, b. 1936

*Coney Island*, 1958

Oil on canvas  
85 ¼ × 78 ¾ inches (216.5 × 200.0 cm)  
Gift of Larom B. Munson, B.A., 1951  
1971.38

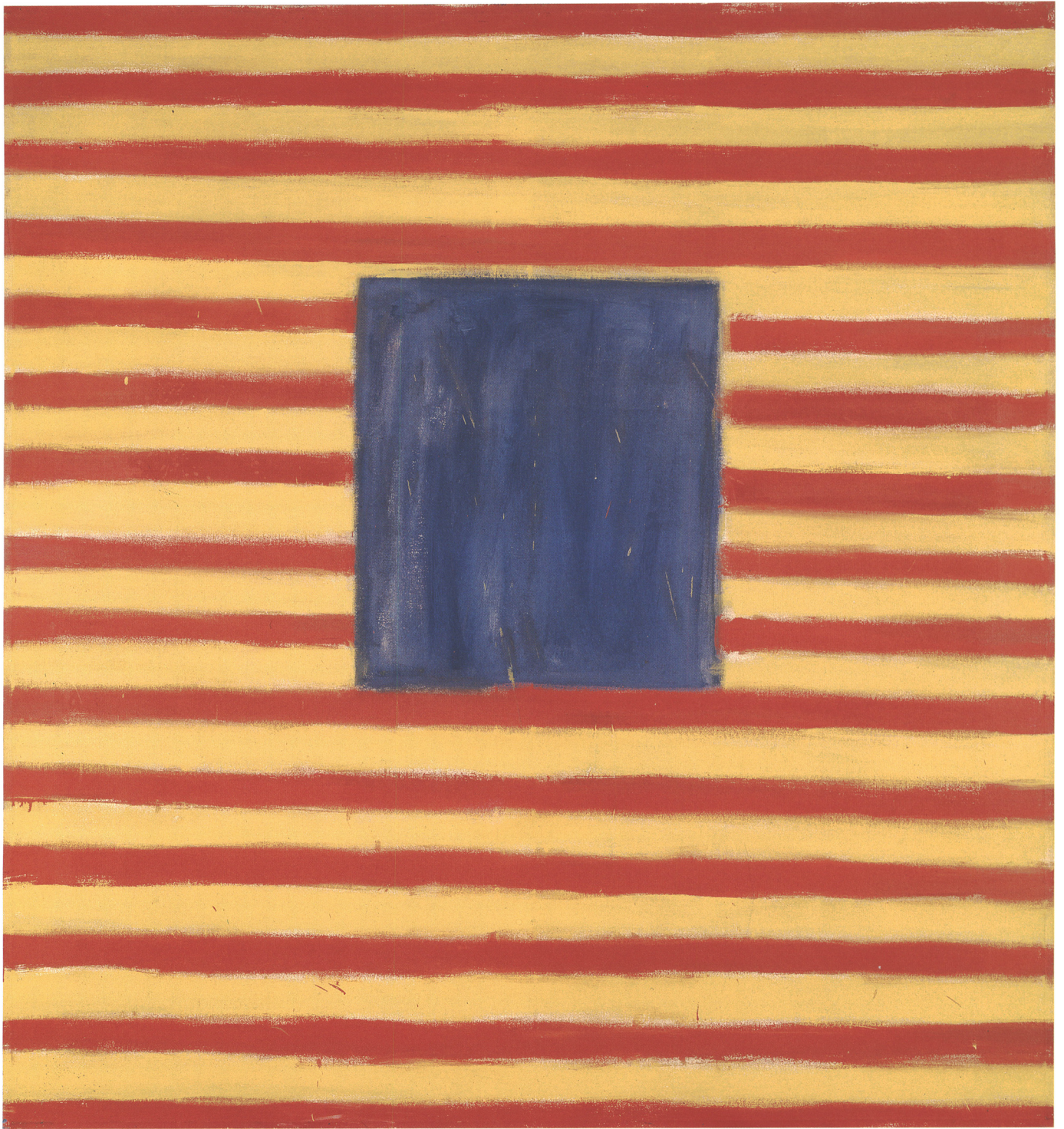
Edgar Heap-of-Birds has been an Associate Professor at the University of Oklahoma since 1989. His solo exhibitions include *Fish and Trees*, *Is What Is*, *Claim Your Color*, a retrospective exhibition at the Lawrence Art Center that traveled to the Walker Art Center and the San Jose Museum of Art, and *Heh No Wah Maun Stun He Dun, What Makes a Man* at Matt's Gallery in London, the Galveston Art Center in Texas, Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, and the American Indian Community House Gallery in New York City. His group exhibitions include *16 Songs/Issues of Personal Assessment and Indigenous Renewal* and *Native Streams*. Edgar Heap-of-Birds is also an author, lecturer, panelist, and member of various committees. He has received the National Award for Meritorious Contributions to American Art and Culture, Mid-Western Region, Association of American Cultures; the Presidential International Travel Fellowship for Australia given by the University of Oklahoma; and awards in painting from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as an inter-disciplinary Arts Fellowship Program funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Edgar Heap-Of-Birds, Visiting Associate Professor of Painting; painter*

This painting goes back a long time for me. I often work with language, and recently I wrote some words about how I feel about this painting: “structure, symbol, design, image, vanity, commercialism, life, earth, natural world, meaning, source, and the width of support.” From those words I come to this painting, and I think about how it was described to me when I was in painting class twenty years ago as an undergraduate at the University of Kansas. Stella’s observation that this painting deals with the width of its own support, that the form is inherent to the painting, is very important.

The artist comes to painting to generate his own imagination on the canvas. So the blank canvas is often intimidating. As a painter you face the blankness every time you go to your studio. It’s a very difficult thing to do, to walk into that blank world and try to address something. In the case of this painting by Stella, I was really impressed that he took the time to examine the structure of the canvas and reflect that on the surface. That’s an important part of the process of dealing with a symbol — to examine it in the immediate context of your life, rather than always making up a fantasy about it. It was important that he saw the edge of the canvas, put it on the front, and thus he established a relationship with the painting’s structure.

I was in design for a while, and I saw how commercial ventures take this kind of observation and put it into a logo. But the odd thing was that no one knew where the image came from. They thought it was an image, first of all — they didn’t think it was a structure. People do things with images, but they don’t think about the origin of the image, what’s the structure behind the image. Later, the image becomes a piece of vanity, like a decoration. I feel strongly that we have a lot of images that are very important and they shouldn’t be merely decorative. They have meaning. If you extend this notion further into the natural world, everything in the world has a meaning. And if you go out into the natural world, you find the plants, the seasons, the animals, the weather, the wind, the water. You have to be aware that the tides go out everyday, they’re moving. It’s not just water. I think it’s really important to



*...the idea behind the structure is what makes it appealing to the viewer*

look further than the simple image and look deeper into where things come from. That's what Stella's painting exemplified when I was a young student. It was an important source for me. How do I create an image I believe in, that has some kind of reference, some kind of structure, not just a decorative form? Because the artist reflected on the structure, it became a very solid visual image.

I worked with that same kind of concept myself for a long time, trying to experiment and decide how can I find my own image. I actually worked for a time with geometrical stripes and forms that were reflected in Oklahoma and Kansas prairies, where the land is so flat that you've got just two things, you've got land and sky. You have a very vertical, horizontal kind of form like this. That really helped me to generate an image that I believed in.

So, you find the structure, you observe the structure and then it starts to filter into what you're doing. Just to be living and walking and swimming and observing the natural world, the source, gets into the work, and then it becomes the art, it becomes the painting. And hopefully, because of my commitment to the natural world, the fish, the trees, sitting on the red rock, being out there, whether it's rainy or 10 degrees or 100 degrees, I am comfortable in that place. That commitment is communicated to the viewer. Not that you'll recognize the trees or you'll recognize the stretcher bar here, but that that's what is truly propelling the image, it's not just a decorative



*...it's not easy to know what  
you would replace chaos with*

form. The idea behind the structure is what makes it appealing to the viewer. That's always the approach I want to foster as an artist, and that's what I talk about with students: trying to get to their life source to find what they believe in and what they are experiencing. Translate that into the work and hopefully it will resonate to the viewer.

We all need something to celebrate. We need a reaffirmation. My public art is hypercritical of the history of this country and politics and race relations and class structure. Why do you want to say things? What would you replace it with? What are the positive aspects of life? That's where this painting comes in. This painting has that balance, to give us a celebratory image: the brightness of it, the warmth of it, warm yellow, warm blue is comforting. You can have a critical voice, and that's easy, really. There are so many things to criticize, but when you're asked to hold up your hand and provide a solution, the hands go down very quickly because it's not easy to know what you would replace chaos with. I think that's why painting can be very positive for everyone.

Peter Paul Rubens  
Flemish, 1577–1640

*Hero and Leander*, ca. 1605–06

Oil on canvas  
37  $\frac{3}{4}$  × 50  $\frac{3}{8}$  inches (95.9 × 128 cm)  
Gift of Susan Morse Hilles  
1962.25

After studying physics and architecture at M.I.T., Professor Bloomer received his B.F.A. and M.F.A degrees in sculpture from Yale. For five years he was an instructor at Carnegie Institute of Technology, and a frequent critic at the University of California in Los Angeles and the University of Texas in Austin. Professor Bloomer's professional work focuses on sculpture and large scale architectural ornament. Major public art projects include the tree-domes for the New Orleans World Exposition, roof ornaments of Harold Washington Library in Chicago, and a large tracery for the Ronald Reagan National Airport. He has also designed light fixtures for Central Park and several university campuses. Professor Bloomer's work can be seen in the permanent collections of the Hirshhorn Museum, the Avery Architectural Archive at Columbia University, and the Yale University Art Gallery. His scholarship includes *Ornament: Rhythm and Metamorphosis* and principal authorship, with Charles Moore, of *Body, Memory and Architecture*.

*Kent Bloomer, Professor of Architectural Design; architect*

Ornament is a subject that's been debased recently, but, in fact, it's one of the highest and noblest of arts if it's understood correctly. I've concentrated on the history of ornament and it's great accomplishments, from antiquity through ancient Greece and the Middle Ages. I've tried to bring ornament back into the contemporary world through the design of everything from streetlights to rooftops of buildings to a center of a new town with colonnades and fountains.

I've always loved this Baroque carving of space. This is an absolutely fantastic space. I would love to be there. The first thing that one encounters in this painting is a vortex that we can enter so we are taken right inside this painting, inside this room made of space. It's definitely an interior, with monsters coming out from waves. But there's nothing architectural in the sense of walls or a normal understanding of edges that really allows us to see this thing. The figures, the water, and the foam are illuminated from a source that is completely enigmatic. That source is not clear. It's a depiction of fantastic light. It's not moonlight, it's not sunlight. It's not any kind of perspectival light that's been put in there to consistently illuminate the objects.

When one looks at this painting, one leaves this world and enters a virtual world. Even though it's terrifying, it's not beautiful. It's a sublime world full of these curious shapes, apparitions, and incredible motions. Do you see the spirals that keep winding out of this system, these expressions of raw energy? I'm fascinated with being in a space so rich in figural phenomena — little plumes that are gathered together and controlled by the brilliance of Rubens.

Let's take the position that what's going on here can also be a thoroughly abstract rendition — that the things I have been talking about would be visible and be experienced without the figures and without the water in the background and so on. Of course, this was done in a period of history when figures were used in paintings. So, the thing that we call abstract painting was not practiced the way it's practiced today. Why then do there have to be figures at all? And is it important that this is a Greek myth of a drowning person and an attempt at rescue with all of the spirits? I would



*When one looks at this painting, one leaves this world and enters a virtual world.*

say that it is, but it's of secondary importance. Does the presence of this story in anyway diminish it's abstract power? Are the abstract qualities of being in a vortex or the corporeal feeling of being in this special room with light and fury and water and spirals diminished by the myth? The argument that abstraction is somehow polluted or compromised if you put representational narration in it is a falsehood. Clement Greenberg and other great critics argued fervently that if we just looked at the paint and looked at the space we could get to a real essence, and that if you put something representational in, you confuse the viewer, and deprive the viewer of experiencing this special world. I don't think that's true. There's no form we know that is as complex as the human figure. When we think of our own bodies, we think of motions that are absolutely incredible — turning, stretching, diving, pulling — motions that are extremely hard to draw or represent. I see these figures as providing the same kind of energy that these waves and spirals are introducing into the picture. They add to the levels of torsion. If you go to a ballet and you sit in the balcony, and look at a ballet from above, it's just a series of wonderful spirals and intersections of forms. The kind, by the way, that you see a lot of in great ornament.

We still haven't gotten down to the narrative of the drowning. Suppose it's true that the figures turning and twisting add to our sense of space, or sense of rotation, do we still need the story of a drowning person? I would say, yes, why not? In my mind, the more information a great artist can marshal in one image, the better the image is. So representational pieces are extremely important, whether you see them as we would see pure geometry or whether we see them in terms of life and death. These figures are adding more to the picture.



*This is an unsanitized  
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In the final analysis, I don't think that argument of abstraction versus representation is legitimate. Others will say, with abstraction you can reach essences that you can't with representation. I say put them all in, they're all part of what's in our minds and our worlds. We do see things from a representational and corporeal standpoint, and we understand things from a narrative and historical standpoint. So why not put it all together? This is why I like ornament, because it adds dimensions to a building that when removed the building doesn't have. I think we've taken a lot out of our architecture by removing ornament, by taking the statuary and the rich encrustations off of buildings. Why can't we represent our world more richly? Why strip it down and sanitize it? This is an unsanitized painting. It has love and death and vicerality and sexuality and the human body all thrown into this very abstract vortex.

Piet Mondrian  
Dutch, 1872–1944

*Composition, 1929*

Oil on canvas  
19 15/16 × 19 13/16 inches (50.6 × 50.2 cm)  
Gift of Collection Societe Anonyme  
1941.603

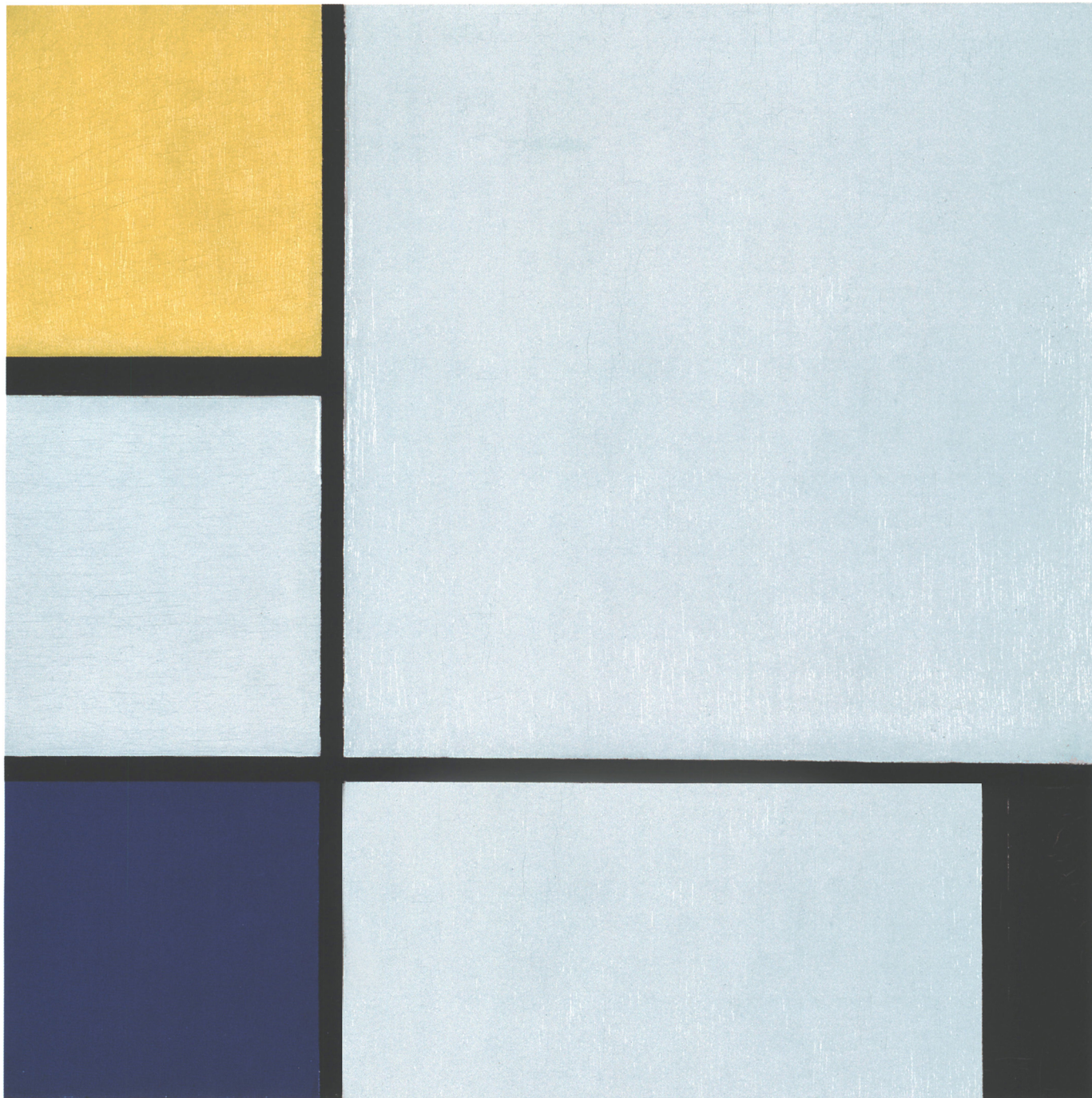
Cesar Pelli, principal, Cesar Pelli and Associates, was born in Argentina where he earned a Diploma in Architecture from the University of Tucuman. He worked in the offices of Eero Saarinen, serving as Project designer for several projects including Morse and Stiles Colleges at Yale University. Before becoming the Dean of the Yale School of Architecture and founding Cesar Pelli and Associates, he designed several award-winning projects, including the Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles, California; and the United States Embassy in Tokyo. While Mr. Pelli resigned as Dean in 1984, he continues to lecture on architecture. He has written extensively on architectural issues. Seven books and several issues of professional journals are dedicated to his designs and theories. He has received seven Honorary Degrees and over 100 awards for design excellence. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) awarded Mr. Pelli the 1995 *Gold Medal*, which recognizes a lifetime of distinguished achievement and outstanding contributions.

*Cesar Pelli, Critic of Architectural Design; architect*

I have chosen three paintings representing three different moments in art to illuminate some aspects of the art of architecture. They are Mondrian's *Composition*, Holbein's *A Hanseatic Merchant*, and a thirteenth century *Lamentation*, by a follower of the Berlinghieri. Modern painting has had a great effect on twentieth century architecture and on the way architects see themselves. Early in this century painters redefined what being an artist means. This redefinition suits painting very well, but it does not suit architecture. We can see in Mondrian's *Composition* forms used by architects practicing right now. Mondrian taught us much, and he also had a profound effect on the mythology of what art means. In the late nineteenth century some critics prophesized the end of painting. Instead, painting transformed itself. Much of contemporary art can be seen as a celebration of that transformation.

Perhaps the dominant painters of this century were Picasso and Matisse, but if Mondrian had not existed, art in the twentieth century would have taken a very different course. For me, he is the first artist able to make paintings without representation, or reference to nature, but with meaning and transcending mere decoration. I admire Mondrian, and I can learn from his aesthetic insights. He's one of my heroes of the twentieth century. But I don't have to work like Mondrian. It's not necessary for my art.

Holbein is one of the earliest portrait painters. *A Hanseatic Merchant* is a portrait of a wealthy but common man of 1532. Merchants commissioned Holbein to make their likenesses, usually with very utilitarian purposes. A portrait such as this would be sent to someone with whom the sitter was doing business. Holbein also went to the continent to paint potential wife candidates for Henry VIII, and those portraits helped the King decide whom he would marry. Artists of Holbein's era, like architects today, worked on commissions. They could not use painting to criticize the monarchy or to make social or philosophical comments. They had to paint their commissioners as they were (or perhaps a little more handsome than they were), but still very recognizable, and at the same time they made art if they had the talent. Just like architects today, Holbein fashioned the required product, and also tried to make art. I don't find anything lacking in a Holbein painting. The fact that he was not free to paint what he wanted did not really affect the heart of the art. This Hanseatic merchant had the good sense of commissioning Holbein to paint his likeness and not the painter down the street who could have done it for half the money. We should thank him for the gift he left us. So, I'm glad that we can see his face and say thank you.



Hans Holbein the Younger  
German, 1497/98–1543

*A Hanseatic Merchant, 1538*

Oil on panel  
19 ½ × 15 ⅜ inches (49.6 × 39 cm)  
Gift of Charles S. Payson, B.A. 1921  
1977.187

*...if Mondrian had not  
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century would have taken a  
very different course*

*Lamentation*, by an associate of the Berlinghieri, must have been part of an early Stations of the Cross sequence. Of course, Stations of the Cross represent the path of Jesus from the judgment by Pontius Pilate to Calvary, His crucifixion and resurrection. For a Christian, who believes that Jesus suffered death to redeem us, there is a deep emotional relationship to this painting at a level perhaps deeper than art. Stations of the Cross painters were usually anonymous, and they were told not only what to paint, but also the size of the painting and its location on the wall. The canons of the church often dictated the colors that the painters could use. The gold sky in this painting was probably required by the church.

Medieval painters were considerably less free than Renaissance painters like Holbein — at least Holbein could choose which commissions to take, which not to take. He worked for the king, but was a relatively free agent. During the Middle Ages, the respect accorded to art was primarily determined by its subject matter. Usually, art was restricted to those subjects that represented God, the actions of God, his acts, or his agents, such as saints, angels, bishops or kings. By the Renaissance, painters started to paint other things, like pagan myths, Hanseatic merchants, or themselves. I believe Albrecht Durer was the first painter to do his self-portrait. The artist was an artisan employed by the church. And yet, the very fact that we even know the name Berlinghieri represents a change in society's view of the artist. Berlinghieri may have been a name associated with a town or an area, and probably not the name of an individual. Only a few hundred years before, the name of the artist was unknown, if not irrelevant. But what is extraordinary is that this is still sublime art. I find it delightful that he made the cross into this blue "Y". (He must have known that his paintings were going to end up at the Yale Art Gallery.) In his time, just to transform the cross into a blue "Y" and put it right in the middle of the painting must have been an act of strong conviction and creativity. After considering this painting, one can only conclude that artistic freedom is not an essential component for producing great art. This is painting in the service of the Church. We can call it education or indoctrination, but these paintings were very useful objects. They taught key moments in the passion of Jesus Christ. It was literacy for those who could not read.





Associate of the Berlinghieri  
Italian, active ca. 1225–75

*Scene from the Passion:  
Lamentation*, ca. 1250

Egg tempera on panel linen reinforced under gesso  
14 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>8</sub> × 14 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>16</sub> inches (37.2 × 36 cm)  
University Purchase from James Jackson Jarves  
1871.1.C

*...one can only conclude  
that artistic freedom  
is not an essential component  
for producing great art*

This painting had a very useful function, which was not separate from its aesthetic value. Architects still work in this manner. We still provide for real functions as we strive to produce a work of art. There is no separation between the function and the art of a building.

In our century, artists paint on speculation hoping for a future sale. Paintings can be sold, resold, and collected. They may gain in value, making for good investments. A painting first belongs to the painter. Buildings do not belong to the architect. The *Lamentation* or any painting of the Stations of the Cross did not belong to the painter. From the very beginning it belonged to the Church. The artist was simply providing a service. But still, the art is fully satisfying, rich, complex, and moving. The change from this extremely limited freedom to the full freedom of painters today is phenomenal, but is it progress? To be progress, paintings today would have to be consistently more moving than the *Lamentation*. I find this panel painting at the Yale Art Gallery richer and more satisfying than most paintings produced today. So, clearly, the constraints some artists have to work with are not necessarily detrimental to the art. The art world has accepted that Mondrian represents an ideal model of the artist. My point is that Mondrian reflects the unique conditions of painting in the twentieth century. The model does not apply to architects who are far from a free, full creative expression. We still work on commission to fashion a useful product. We collaborate with others in our design and our work is not built by us. We may be far from pure creative expression. But if we have the talent and the purpose we can still produce great works of art.





Designed by Nathan Garland and set in Adobe Garamond.  
Printed by Hull on paper that is free of acids, dioxins, and chlorine.



