## Piet Mondrian, 1872-1944

Yve-Alain Bois ... [et al., conception and general editor, Angelica Zander Rudenstine]

Author

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PIET MONDRIAN

Although Mondrian is generally recognized for his powerful influence on twentieth-century art, architecture and design, his achievement as a painter has been underestimated.

This comprehensive monograph traces
Mondrian's career, from his early Dutch
landscapes at the turn of the century to the
dazzlingly rhythmic compositions he painted in
New York at the end of his life.

In this volume, his identity as a modern artist is addressed in detail. While the continuity within his entire evolution is fully explored, particular attention is paid to moments of dramatic change: his discovery of modernism and later of cubism; his struggle toward abstraction; his invention of the "neoplastic" style for which he is best known; and his dynamic development of that style from the 1930s until the end of his career.

An emphasis on Mondrian's pictorial development also involves an emphasis on his working process. While this volume stresses the modernity of Mondrian's work, it demonstrates, especially in its presentation of his unfinished works, that Mondrian's abstract art was far from mathematical, either in its origins or in its expression; rather, it was the product of a highly intuitive mind and hand, gradually working toward carefully modulated but far from measurable compositional solutions. In the present volume, the texture and autograph surface of each work are taken into account, and Mondrian's original framing decisions have been recorded and reproduced, often for the first time.

Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of Mondrian's death, this monumental study is published on the occasion of the most comprehensive exhibition ever undertaken of the work of this great twentieth-century pioneer.

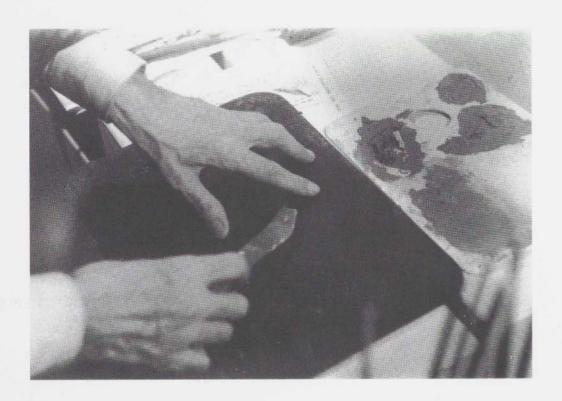
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#### Piet MONDRIAN

1872-1944



Mondrian's hands and palette, New York, c. 1943. Photograph by Fritz Glarner.

1872-1944

## Piet MONDRIAN

YVE-ALAIN BOIS

JOOP JOOSTEN

ANGELICA ZANDER RUDENSTINE

HANS JANSSEN

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## Contents

Lenders	ΧI
Foreword	XIII
Acknowledgments	XV
Introduction	XVII
Chronology Joop Joosten with Angelica Zander Rudenstine	21
Catalogue Joop Joosten with Angelica Zander Rudenstine	87
The Iconoclast Yve-Alain Bois	313
Learning from Experience Hans Janssen	373
Exhibitions	389
Literature	393

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### Foreword

The influence of Piet Mondrian has been extraordinary. It is, therefore, particularly surprising that his work remains so little examined and that his legacy as a painter is still so imperfectly understood. *Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944* is the first comprehensive presentation of this artist's work in more than twenty years; the last significant exhibition of Mondrian's work was organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 1971.

The present exhibition, which marks the fiftieth anniversary of Mondrian's death, demonstrates more completely than ever before the fecundity of his art, the procedures that engendered it, and the transformations it underwent. By revealing the continuity of Mondrian's achievement, the exhibition offers an unprecedented opportunity to assess critically his essential contribution to the art of our time.

This landmark undertaking is a collaboration between the Haags Gemeente-museum, which possesses the most extensive collection of Mondrian's paintings in the world, with particular strength in his earlier works; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., which assumed primary administrative responsibility for its organization; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, which houses the greatest collection of Mondrian's abstract paintings in the United States. For the first time in recent years the Gemeentemuseum has allowed its paintings to travel; The Museum of Modern Art has committed numerous works from its own collection; and essential paintings and drawings have been lent from museums and private collections in Europe, the United States, and Japan. We are deeply grateful to all these lenders, who are listed elsewhere in this volume, for their extraordinary generosity.

The curatorial organization of the exhibition and this accompanying publication have also been international collaborations. Both have been put together by a team of scholars composed of Angelica Zander Rudenstine, guest curator for the National Gallery of Art and the project's guiding force; Yve-Alain Bois, Joseph Pulitzer, Jr. Professor of Modern Art at Harvard University; Joop Joosten, author of the forthcoming catalogue raisonné of Mondrian's cubist and neo-plastic works; Hans Janssen, curator of the modern collection, the Haags Gemeentemuseum; and John Elderfield, chief curator at large, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. We are deeply indebted to their dedication, expertise, and not least their powers of persuasion in conceiving and carrying out such an extremely complicated project. The entire team was ably assisted by Harry Cooper at the National Gallery of Art, who served as a collaborator in

every sense, contributing scholarly knowledge, judgment, and critical insight, as well as unusually effective administrative support.

During the last twenty years, considerable progress has been made in Mondrian scholarship, and the curatorial team has profited from various contributions. It must be said, however, that this exhibition could never have been attempted without the patient and systematic research on Mondrian's cubist and abstract oeuvre that has been carried out over more than two decades by Joop Joosten. Conducted in preparation for his forthcoming catalogue raisonné, written with Robert Welsh, Joosten's research has provided a far more comprehensive picture of the artist's mature career than was ever available in the past. As such, it has been essential to the selection process. His decision to share the results of his research in advance of the publication of his catalogue afforded the opportunity for the reevaluation of Mondrian's achievement that is presented here.

Hans Locher, *Director*, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague
Earl A. Powell III, *Director*, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Richard E. Oldenburg, *Director*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

## Acknowledgments

We wish to express our deep appreciation to all those who have contributed to the success of this exhibition. First and foremost, we are indebted to the lenders, without whom this project would not have been possible. We are truly grateful to the directors and staffs in public institutions as well as to private collectors whose thoughtful understanding of our particular aims led them to part with their prized possessions for a long period of time. We owe special thanks to those who made multiple loans, especially the Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, whose director, Evert van Straaten, recognizing the unique character of the exhibition, agreed to lend the museum's most important works to all three venues.

Rudi Fuchs and Hans Locher, the former and current directors of the Haags Gemeentemuseum; Earl A. Powell III, director of the National Gallery of Art; and Richard E. Oldenburg, director of The Museum of Modern Art, have supported the exhibition and enabled their staffs to be actively involved in all aspects of its organization.

Several other colleagues have contributed in important ways. Robert P. Welsh's groundbreaking exhibition of 1966 (Toronto, Philadephia, The Hague) with its forceful emphasis on the artist's early work, as well as his subsequent research on other aspects of Mondrian's career, has benefitted all scholars. For this exhibition he generously offered us the results of his most recent unpublished research on the early life and career of Mondrian. The titles and chronology of catalogue numbers 1 through 29, as well as much of the information included in those entries, derive from his portion of the forthcoming catalogue raisonné.

We have been especially fortunate in the collaboration of several conservators and conservation scientists on both sides of the Atlantic who have worked with us to learn more about Mondrian's technique, materials, and methods; the condition of his canvases; and those technical factors that have a bearing upon our understanding of the artist's aesthetic intention. Foremost among those who have contributed both time and expertise with unusual generosity is Paul Pfister of Zurich. Others whose research and insights have been important to us are Mervin Richard and Jay Krueger of the National Gallery of Art; James Coddington, Anny Aviram, and Eugena Ordonez of The Museum of Modern Art; Jan Venema, Wietse van den Noort, and Kees Bitter of the Haags Gemeentemuseum; J. H. van der Werf (whose research has been supported by Christie's Amsterdam); Professor J. R. J. van Asperen de Boer; Lucy Belloli of The

Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Carol Mancusi-Ungaro of The Menil Collection, Houston, Texas; and Suzanne P. Penn of the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

We are grateful to the Mondrian/Holtzman Trust, in particular Sue Davidson Lowe, trustee, and Marianne B. Kilby, counsel, who have been supportive from the beginning. Special assistance was also given by Dr. Paul Rudolf Jolles, Bern; Dr. Konrad Oberhuber, Graphische Sammlung Albertina, Vienna; Suzanne Pagé, Musée National d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; John Sailer, Ulysses Gallery, New York; Carl E. Schorske, Princeton, New Jersey; Dieter Schwartz, Kunstmuseum Winterthur; Annely Juda, London; David Nash, Sotheby's New York; David Findlay and Frank Giraud, Christie's New York; Sachiko Hibiya, Christie's Japan Ltd.; and A. Tarika, Paris.

The catalogue was sensitively designed by Walter Nikkels and published by Leonardo Arte of Gruppo Mondadori under the able leadership of Giuseppe Lamastra, with Stefano Peccatori and Marisa Inzaghi.

Many people contributed to this project and deserve our thanks. At the Haags Gemeentemuseum, Cees List, director's deputy for commercial and external affairs, served as project manager of the exhibition; valuable additional guidance and assistance was provided by Hans Buurman, administrative manager, and Franz Kaiser, deputy director for exhibitions; Peter Couvée organized the photography and reproduction rights for the entire exhibition; Peter Lorié and his staff assumed the complex task of assembling the works for the opening in The Hague; Gerrit Jan de Rook handled information and public relations; Nini Jonker assumed responsibility for the educational materials; Wilfried van den Elshout coordinated sales; Leon van Zee handled security; Gracia Lebbink, the museum's consultant for design, oversaw the design for the installation.

At the National Gallery of Art, D. Dodge Thompson, Naomi R. Remes, and Stephanie Fick were responsible for all of the complex organizational and administrative details. Lauren Cluverius in the registrar's office oversaw the shipping of the works; Gaillard Ravenel, Mark Leithauser, and Gordon Anson designed and installed the exhibition; Mary Yakush and Susan Higman collaborated with Leonardo Arte on the editing of the English language edition of the catalogue; Sara Sanders-Buell coordinated visual resources. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of Mark Rosenthal, curator of twentieth-century art; Nancy Breuer, associate general counsel; and Elizabeth A. C. Perry, corporate affairs officer.

At The Museum of Modern Art, the assistance provided by Sharon Dec, assistant to the chief curator at large, and Christel Hollevoet, research assistant, was indispensable. James Snyder, deputy director for planning and program support; Mary Anisi, executive secretary; Richard L. Palmer, coordinator of exhibitions; and Eleni Cocordas, associate coordinator of exhibitions, provided organizational and administrative guidance. Jerome Neuner oversaw the design and installation of the exhibition, while Diane Farynyk, registrar, and Ramona Bannayan, associate registrar, have the formidable task of returning all of the works to their owners. Osa Brown, director of publications, and Kirk Varnedoe, chief curator, painting and sculpture, gave valuable assistance and support.

Angelica Zander Rudenstine, with Yve-Alain Bois, Joop Joosten, Hans Janssen, John Elderfield

## Introduction

Mondrian's importance to the history of twentieth-century art has, in general, been underestimated, and his work, in many respects, misunderstood.

This exhibition, the most comprehensive ever undertaken, differs in several important ways from previous retrospectives. Following Mondrian's own view of his career, as expressed in his writings starting in 1917, we have chosen to emphasize his identity as a modern artist. More than half of his total oeuvre actually dates from the period 1890-1907, but the prolific and often gifted work of these earlier years belongs, fundamentally, to an aesthetic formed in the nineteenth century. It was only after 1908 that he began to absorb various modern movements from neo-impressionism to fauvism, and his major achievements as a modern artist only began to emerge after his exposure to cubism in 1911. We have chosen to explore his full development from this moment forward – his achievement in abstraction, including the steps leading to that achievement, and the continuing evolution of his abstract style until the time of his death.

Thus, our presentation of works from the early "naturalistic" period is highly selective. For the same reason, our treatment of his brief symbolist period and his related interest in theosophy, which has been extensively examined, is limited.

Mondrian regarded the years between 1908 and 1912 as transitional. We have emphasized both the serial aspect of his work during this period and the autodidactic process by which he absorbed various modernist styles. We have given considerable attention to the cubist years, which so clearly mark the beginning of his identity as a twentieth-century master. While this phase, and within it especially the *Trees* series of 1911-1913, has been viewed by some as a steady, almost linear, progression from naturalism to abstraction, we have chosen to explore its extraordinary diversity and complexity.

To trace Mondrian's evolution following his assimilation of cubism, we have assembled the majority of drawings that led to *Compositie 10 in zwart wit* of 1915 (better known as *Pier and Ocean*) as well as some of the church facade drawings on which *Composition 1916* is based. The juxtaposition of these drawings and paintings affords the opportunity to follow Mondrian's thought process as he moves toward abstraction. And the extraordinary pace of his evolution from 1917 to 1919 – the period during which he reached "pure" abstraction in painting and laid the foundation for neo-plasticism – is also fully represented in the exhibition.

Our major focus, however, is on Mondrian's neo-plasticism, the style for which he is best known and which he initiated at the end of 1920. The first neo-plastic campaign (1920-1922) is represented by no fewer than twenty-three works. The series of sixteen extant diamond paintings, spanning his whole abstract career from 1918 to 1944, is represented almost in its entirety.

The mid- to late 1920s, a period underrepresented here but of great importance, is now difficult to present accurately. A substantial number of the works produced between 1925 and 1928 were lost during the war; of those which survive, some of the best are in less than optimal condition.

The most significant aspect of this exhibition, however, lies in its presentation of work from the 1930s and 1940s. There are two main reasons for our decision to include almost half of Mondrian's finished canvases of this period. First, after the invention of what Mondrian called the "double line" in 1932, which led to a total rethinking of many of his aesthetic assumptions, this became the most dynamic period in his career. In order to fully measure the consequences of this moment, we have marked the conclusion of the classic period with a key series of works (from 1929 to 1932), each of which is based on the same compositional scheme; this series is all the more stunning in that the first "double-line" painting, as well as many others produced in the subsequent three years, were based on the same compositional type. His evolution can be traced from one canvas to the next, and, in the process, one can reach an understanding of how an abstract painting by Mondrian is conceived and how it functions. Second, we believe that Mondrian's work of the 1930s and 1940s has been underestimated, not only in terms of its intrinsic quality, but also in terms of the light it sheds on the continuity of his entire development.

In all previous exhibitions, apart from that presented at The Museum of Modern Art in 1945, the period after 1932 has been barely touched upon – the artist's career being taken up again only in 1941, the final phase of the New York period. This has given rise to the impression that Mondrian's art underwent a sharp and sudden transformation after his arrival in America in 1940, largely attributable to his reaction to the Manhattan skyline, to the neon lights, to the "boogie-woogie" of his new urban experience. Although Mondrian himself tended to emphasize the dynamism of his New York canvases, he would have rejected such a "naturalistic" interpretation. His work remained consistently abstract, and the renewed freedom of his last works must be seen as having evolved naturally out of the previous decade of continuous labor. It is this continuity, among other things, that we have tried to demonstrate for the first time. Thus, the emphasis of this exhibition is not only on the abstract work: it is on the dynamic development of his oeuvre.

An emphasis on Mondrian's pictorial development also involves an emphasis on his working process, and this exhibition (except in The Hague) includes a section devoted specifically to unfinished works that illuminate this issue. Our concern has been to stress the modernity of Mondrian's work; but in so doing, we have inevitably confronted a problem of perception that developed out of this very modernity. Mondrian's early partisans praised his work as a blueprint for modern architecture or typography, as "formal experimentation" destined to be "applied" in various fields; and his neo-

plastic work has often been characterized (admiringly) as that of a geometric designer. The artist himself, perhaps against his better judgment, even lent some support to this argument. As becomes especially clear from this selection of unfinished works, Mondrian's abstract art was far from geometric or mathematical in its origins or its expression; rather, it was the product of a highly intuitive mind and hand, gradually working toward carefully modulated but far from measurable compositional solutions.

The misreading of Mondrian's abstract work as a form of design has had other serious consequences. Composition and design seemed paramount (and imitable); meanwhile the "facture," the painterly subtlety of surface differentiation, was generally overlooked. In addition, Mondrian's consistent preoccupation with the entire extent of the picture plane, with the relationship of each compositional element to the outer edge of the canvas and hence to the frame, has rarely been taken into account. As a result, some works have been restretched and the outer edges of compositions drastically altered in the process; frames and subframes have been lost and replaced. Moreover, restoration of problematic surfaces has frequently been undertaken without sufficient sensitivity to the preservation of the artist's own hand.

In selecting works, therefore, we have concentrated on the texture and autograph surface of each, convinced as we are that this is a crucial measure of quality. Mondrian's original framing decisions have been recorded and reproduced wherever possible. Our hope, therefore, is that the collection of works presented on this occasion will result in a deepened respect for Mondrian's subtle achievement as a painter.

Angelica Zander Rudenstine Yve-Alain Bois Joop Joosten Hans Janssen John Elderfield

Towards the True Vision of Reality (1941), page one of Mondrian's preliminary draft.

Born in Holland 1872, dimensfront, Jears did painting, conducted by my father (ama) teur) and my uncle (painter) and became plomes for school and high - school teaching Then I came to amoberdams art academic and worked there three years. Ofherwards I continued to be realish. I prefered to paint landscaps, houses, etc. by gray dam. The atmosphere by its density the partieu zitys of things and the great lines accentive them selved. I & sketched by moonlight - cows lying down or Staying inantiable on Dutch's flat meadows to hates particular moumer flowers, not ensembles I did like to paint but one flower at ones as picture. But of was pushed by my enviconment to paint also Things in ordinary vioion, to make even portets with likewass - so I made a lot of bad works. However, by doing also & houses with their dead windows then But not as comentist: I saw with realist

Chronology

## Chronology

Joop Joosten with Angelica Zander Rudenstine

Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan is born in Amersfoort to Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan (1839-1921) and Johanna Christina de Kok (1839-1909), who had married three years earlier in The Hague. Siblings include a sister Christien (1870-1939) and three brothers, Willem (1874-1945), Louis (1877-1943), and Carel (1880-1956). His grandfather was a barber, perfumer, and wigmaker in The Hague; when he died, Frits (1853-1932), one of the artist's uncles, took over this shop.

Mondrian's father is principal and teacher at a Protestant elementary school in Amersfoort. Active in Protestant politics and the struggle for denominational education, he designs lithographs and mobilizes local opinion, working closely with Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), head of the anti-revolutionary party. He belongs to

the Dutch Reformed Church, into which his children are baptized.

1880

With Kuyper's help, Mondriaan Sr. becomes headmaster of the School for Christian National Education, a Protestant primary school in Winterswijk, which his son at-

tends.

1884

Mondrian lessons.

After six years of primary school, decides to complete two supplemental years of primary education rather than enter secondary school.

Completes school at age fourteen and, under his father's guidance, begins work towards a diploma for teaching freehand drawing in the primary grades. Around this time his Uncle Frits begins to paint seriously, mostly landscapes in the Hague school style. He occasionally visits Winterswijk from The Hague and gives

DECEMBER

Earns the primary diploma on 11 December and proceeds to the secondary diploma in freehand drawing and perspective, which will qualify him to enter the Rijksacademie van Beeldende Kunsten (State Academy of Fine Arts). Teaches drawing at his father's school. Occasionally visits Jan Braet von Ueberfeldt (1807-1894), a well-known art teacher and author of a book on drawing from nature and the principles of perspective (published 1866), who had retired in nearby Doetinchem and possesses a collection of paintings and reproductions which Mondrian studies.

[1872/89]

1886

1889

- First recorded exhibition: a still life and a drawing of a farm scene are shown at a triennial exhibition of works by living artists in The Hague. They receive a favorable review.
- 1892

#### FEBRUARY

Following initial rejection, receives a royal grant to continue his study of painting, which is renewed the following year.

#### APRIL

Shows four still life paintings and the farm scene drawing in Utrecht at the exhibition of the artists' association Kunstliefde, which he had joined. Exhibits at Kunstliefde through the 1890s and beyond (1892-1893, 1897-1898, 1900, 1909), generally showing still lifes.

#### SEPTEMBER

Obtains the secondary teaching diploma and moves to Amsterdam, living with the Wormser family, friends of his father, above their Dutch Reformed bookstore. This will be the first of many residences, most doubling as studios, in and around Amsterdam over the next twenty years. Joins Kuyper's congregation, which had dissented in 1886 from the main branch of the Dutch Reformed Church, to which Mondrian's father remains faithful.

#### OCTOBER

Registers at the Rijksacademie, where painting is taught by Nicolaas van der Waay (1855-1936) and drawing by C. L. Dake (1857-1918). Will generally receive good marks.

#### DECEMBER

Rik N. Roland Holst (1868-1938) mounts a van Gogh exhibition in the Kunstzaal Panorama, Amsterdam, emphasizing the late (French) works.

#### 1893

Registers for a second full year of study at the Rijksacademie.

#### DECEMBER-JANUARY

OCTOBER

Paints a large, semicircular Christian allegory, *Thy Word is Truth*, for the twentieth anniversary of his father's school.

#### 1894

Third year of study at the Rijksacademie (evening drawing class only).

#### 1895

Throughout these and later years, helps support himself by copying paintings at the Rijksmuseum, giving private lessons, making bacteriological drawings, painting decorative tiles, designing book plates, producing portraits on commission, and occasionally selling a landscape painting. Artists copied include B. J. Blommers (1845-1914), P. J. C. Gabriel (1828-1903), Cornelis Kruseman (1797-1857), Nicolaes Maes (1634-1693), Willem Maris (1844-1910), P. van der Velde (1837-1915), Jan Kieft (1798-1870), Frans Hals (1584-1666; from a copy), and Jan Steen (1626-1679). Years later, in his first major essay, he will praise Steen as going beyond "depiction" towards "determination."

APRIL

Moves into his own apartment behind the newly constructed Rijksmuseum.

SEPTEMBER

The Stedelijk Museum opens with a permanent collection of late Hague school paintings as well as some Barbizon landscapes and examples of French realism, reflecting the outlook of Amsterdam dealers and collectors in the nineties.

1896

1897

Additional year of evening drawing classes.

JANUARY

Moves to Watergraafsmeer, a southeastern suburb of Amsterdam. Exhibits in Amsterdam for the first time at two artists' associations. Arti et Amicitiae, which he had joined in 1894, generally holds a spring and a fall exhibition in their building on the Rokin; St. Lucas, established by Rijksacademie students in 1881, then made professional in 1891, holds an annual exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum. Shows recent work in all three exhibitions virtually every year until 1910.

DECEMBER

Moves back to Amsterdam.

1898

Often visits his family home in Winterswijk in these years, painting the cottages and farms, streets and townspeople. About this time he draws the half-timbered Weavers' House opposite his parents' home (cat. 3) and Jacobskerk, behind it (cat. 1).

MAY-JUNE

Fails the entrance examination for the Dutch Prix de Rome competition because of his unsatisfactory drawing of a male nude.

AUGUST

Applies for the position of drawing teacher at a school in Enschede.

SEPTEMBER

Commissioned to design four wooden relief panels for the pulpit of the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam.

DECEMBER

Moves to Albert Cuypstraat in the Pijp, a district near the Rijksmuseum and the academy known for its student and bohemian character. Almost all of his subsequent Amsterdam residences will be in this area.

1899

Paints an allegorical ceiling with the Four Seasons as cherubs for the home of an Amsterdam physician, Dr. Abraham van de Velde.

1900

Paints the landscape of Amsterdam and environs for most of this decade (cats. 4-11), often along the Gein River, with painter-friend Simon Maris (1873-1935), Arnold M. Gorter (1866-1933), and others. They frequent the riverside cafe de Vink.

SUMMER

Probably this summer, short visit to Cornwall with Hannah Crabb (they had exchanged

[1895/1900]

English and drawing lessons). III with pneumonia on his return, convalesces in Winterswijk.

#### SEPTEMBER

Meets Albert van den Briel (1881-1971), a forestry student who will become a close friend. A fund of the Arti et Amicitiae purchases the watercolor *House on the River Gein*, and will continue to buy works over the next six years.

#### DECEMBER

Donates the watercolor *Chrysanthemum* as part of a collective gift from Arti et Amicitiae to Queen Wilhelmina on the occasion of her wedding.

#### 1901

JANUARY

Arti et Amicitiae hosts a small exhibition, including paintings by Monet, Pissarro, Renoir, and Sisley, and six sculptures by Medardo Rosso. It travels to Rotterdam and The Hague.

#### FEBRUARY

Designs a commemorative print for the wedding of the Queen, as does Mondriaan Sr.

#### MARCH-APRIL

His parents, Christien, and Carel move to Arnhem. His father, having resigned his position in Winterswijk, works as a private teacher.

#### MAY-JUNE

Passes the entrance exam for the Prix de Rome competition, but his first round entry – a painting of a male nude (Blok 36) and two paintings of biblical themes – is rejected with harsh criticism.

#### SUMMER

Brief trip to Spain with Maris probably this summer.

#### 1903

MAY

Officially registered as living in Watergraafsmeer with his brothers Louis and Carel, who had moved there the previous year.

#### AUGUST

Spends several days with van den Briel in Nistelrode, exploring the Brabant countryside. On his return to Amsterdam, prepares for a move to the Brabant, selling some belongings and paintings.

#### SEPTEMBER

Shows two paintings at an exhibition of works by living artists held every four years at the Stedelijk Museum.

#### 1904

JANUARY

Seeking calm and relief from personal tensions, moves to Uden in the Brabant. Sees van den Briel often, especially on weekends, when the two discuss religious questions and spend time among the local peasants.

#### FEBRUARY

An Amsterdam gallery mounts a retrospective of the Dutch painter Jan Toorop (18591928), including his recent pointillist works, and in April a second exhibition is held
at another gallery.

#### MAY

Submits a Nistelrode motif, The Hearth, to St. Lucas.

[1900/04]

#### MID-YEAR

Becomes a member, until 1907, of the recently elected board of St. Lucas, with responsibility for the archive and library. The fund of Arti et Amicitiae purchases the watercolor *On the River Gein*.

#### JUNE

Van den Briel is transferred to De Esbeek, south of Tilburg, where Mondrian visits him.

#### JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Returns to Amsterdam, moving into the attic of the St. Lucas building.

#### JULY

Shows a still life at an exhibition of works by living Dutch artists held every four years in Arnhem

#### JULY-AUGUST

The Stedelijk Museum holds a large van Gogh retrospective, organized by Theo van Gogh's widow, Jo van Gogh-Bonger, with emphasis on his French work.

#### 1905-1906

1905

Becomes acquainted with the painter Albert G. Hulshoff Pol (1883-1957) and his family, who have a farm in the village of Oele in eastern Holland.

#### 1906

His still life shown at the Arti et Amicitiae spring painting show wins a prize of 250 guilders, and his drawing *Evening* is purchased by the Arti et Amicitiae fund after the fall drawing show.

#### WINTER 1906-1907

Stays in Oele with the Pols, continuing the series of evening landscapes he had started the previous year.

#### 1907

At the Rijksacademie, Jan Sluyters (1881-1957) exhibits the work he produced after winning the Prix de Rome. Noting the influence of Kees van Dongen (1877-1968) and French fauvism, the jury withdraws his stipend, causing an uproar in Amsterdam.

#### APRIL

St. Lucas refuses to exhibit Sluyters' work. Conrad Kickert (1882-1965), a new reviewer for the daily newspaper *De Telegraaf*, criticizes the decision.

#### SUMMER

Stays in Oele. In Amsterdam, exhibitions of works by Toorop at the Sierkunst Gallery, van Dongen at the C. M. van Gogh Gallery, and Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918) at St. Lucas.

#### SEPTEMBER

Shows the painting Farm at the Stedelijk quadrennial exhibition. Kickert defends Sluyters, whose Bal de Nuit has been refused, as well as Mondrian and van Dongen, whose works have been poorly hung there.

#### DECEMBER

Mondrian's portrait and a brief biographical statement appear in *Onze moderne Meesters* by F. J. Lurasco.

#### 1908

#### MAY

St. Lucas presents a large selection of post-1900 work by Toorop as well as paintings by Sluyters and Mondrian. Kickert hails a new sensibility in his review for *Onze* 

[1904/08]



Fig. 1
Portrait of Mondrian from
Lurasco's Onze moderne Meesters,
1907. Photograph by Jac. Vetter.

Kunst; their style of late divisionism is soon labeled luminism.

#### SEPTEMBER

Van Gogh retrospective mounted by the C. M. van Gogh Gallery, again emphasizing his French work.

Visits Domburg for about two weeks, this time with Dutch painter Kees Spoor (1867-1928). Toorop is there as unofficial leader of a colony of avant-garde artists, and introduces Mondrian to neo-impressionism. He also encounters the esoteric religious thought of Helena P. Blavatsky, who founded the Theosophical Society in 1875; Rudolph Steiner, who will found the dissenting Anthroposophical Society in 1913; and probably the Catholic mystic Edouard Schuré, whose very popular Les Grands Initiés had been translated into Dutch the previous year. For the next two years, Mondrian develops his divisionist and fauvist style by concentrating on four Domburg motifs: the Domburg church, the Westkapelle lighthouse, the dunes, and the sea (cats.17-24, 27).

1909

JANUARY

Death of his mother on 8 January.

With Spoor and Sluyters, shows an extensive survey of recent and early work at the Stedelijk Museum, including *Trees on the Gein: Moonrise* (cat. 11), *Bos (Woods); Woods near Oele* (cat. 12), *Molen (Mill); Mill in Sunlight* (cat. 13), *Avond (Evening); Red Tree* (cat. 15), and *Trees on the Banks of the Gein* (Ott. 192), demonstrating his break with naturalism. A critic notes that his work is shown in "rough, barely planed, white wooden frames."

Later in the month, Toorop, who reportedly was asked by Spoor and others to exhibit with them at the Stedelijk, shows recent divisionist work with Arti et Amicitiae.

Later this year the Larense Kunsthandel in Amsterdam gives Toorop a retrospective, and in April he leaves Amsterdam, where he had moved several years earlier, for health reasons.

[1908/09]



Fig. 2 Mondrian in the living area of his studio before he repainted it, Sarphatipark 42. Photograph by R. Drektraan.

APRIL

Exhibits at the Kunstliefde in Utrecht for the last time, showing two watercolors.

MAY

Joins the Dutch Theosophical Society.

On 29 May, in the weekly newspaper *De Controleur*, the pro-modernist critic and writer Israël Querido (1872-1932) publishes a brief study of Mondrian, the third part of an article prompted by the Stedelijk exhibition (see cat.28).

JUNE

Returns to Domburg, where he writes a response to the draft that Querido has sent him of a continuation of his article. Van den Briel visits for three weeks and is present when Mondrian paints *Sea after Sunset* (cat. 19).

JULY-AUGUST

Shows Molen (Mill); Mill in Sunlight (cat. 13), Bos (Woods); Woods near Oele (cat. 12), Dying Chrysanthemum (Ott. 178; see cat. 26, fig. a), and Trees on the Banks of the Gein (Ott. 192) at the Belgian artists' association Doe Stil Voort in Brussels. His submission to the Arnhem quadrennial exhibition is rejected.

OCTOBER

On 29 October Querido publishes Mondrian's response in lieu of the second installment of his own article on the painter. In this, his first published statement of artistic principles, Mondrian clarifies the subject of his painting *Devotion* (Ott. 194), which he thought Querido had interpreted too literally, and his relation to the occult.

DECEMBER

Paintings by Cézanne from the collection of Cornelis Hoogendijk (1866-1911) are on view in the Rijksmuseum with paintings by van Gogh.

1909-1910

Paints the floor and wainscoting of his studio black and the walls and furniture white.

[1909/10]

Shows fourteen works at St. Lucas (24 April-1 June), including *Avond (Evening); Red Tree* (cat. 15), probably *Zomer, Duin in Zeeland (Summer, Dune in Zeeland); Dune VI* (cat. 27), and two watercolors, *Tiger Lily* (private collection) and *Amaryllis* (cat. 26), both sold to "H. N." His submission is regarded as the most modern.

JUNE

Subscribes to the new journal *De Eenheid: weekblad voor maatschappelijke en geestelijke stromingen* (Unity: A Weekly Journal of Social and Spiritual Trends).

JULY

Becomes a member of the Société des Artistes Indépendants in Paris on 10 July.

AUGUST

Shows eight works at Doe Stil Voort in Brussels. From late August to mid-October stays in Domburg with Spoor. His entry to the Salon d'Automne in Paris is rejected.

NOVEMBER

Organized by Kickert, a new artists' association called the Moderne Kunst Kring is established with Toorop as chairman, Kickert as secretary, and Mondrian and Sluyters as committee members. Leo Gestel (1881-1941) is also a member. Autumn exhibitions with foreign guests such as Matisse and Rudolf Levy (1875-c.1941) are considered.

1911

- JANUARY
- Shows two works at the twentieth exhibition of the Société des Amis des Arts in Nantes, France.

APRIL

Shows *Soleil* at the Salon des Indépendants in Paris (21 April-13 June) together with works by Kickert and the Dutch painter Lodewijk Schelfhout (1881-1943), who share a Paris address.

MAY

Three of twenty-one paintings by van Dongen are removed just prior to a St. Lucas opening.

EARLY SUMMER

Visits Paris for ten days in mid-June; possibly sees the Indépendants and retrieves his picture.

JULY

Stays for a short time in Veere, near Domburg. Shows three works in the first exhibition of Domburg colony artists, organized by Toorop. Returns to Amsterdam to make copies in the Rijksmuseum.

SEPTEMBER

Back in Zeeland, works on *Still Life with Gingerpot I* (cat. 29), which does not satisfy him, and some "trees," probably including *Gray Tree* (cat. 30) and its study, which do.

OCTOBER

Returns to Amsterdam and helps judge submissions to the first Moderne Kunst Kring show (Stedelijk Museum, 6 October-5 November), which includes twenty-eight Cézannes from the Hoogendijk Collection, works by Braque and Picasso from 1908 to early 1909 – the first examples of early cubism to be shown in Holland – and

[1910/11]



Fig. 3 Mondrian and Greta Heijbroek, 1911. Photographer unknown.

paintings by André Derain, Raoul Dufy, and Henri Le Fauconnier. Mondrian shows six works, including *Molen (Mill); Red Mill at Domburg* (cat. 28), *Zomer, Duin in Zeeland (Summer, Dune in Zeeland); Dune VI* (cat. 27), *Church at Domburg* (Ott. 242), *Dune Landscape* (Ott. 232), and the triptych *Evolution* (Ott. 245), his only overtly theosophical work. Various critics attribute the angular planes of the latter to the influence of cubism. Dake, Mondrian's former drawing instructor, writes a reactionary review for *De Telegraaf*.

#### FALL

Prepares to move to Paris, returning the gingerpot used in his *Still Life with Gingerpot* / (cat. 29) to van den Briel.

#### DECEMBER

Informs the Amsterdam registry on 20 December that Paris will be his new place of residence. Most likely moves early the next year, after spending Christmas with his family as usual.

1912 MARCH

Shows three works in the Salon des Indépendants: Dans le jardin, Dans le forêt, and La fruitière (all presently unidentified). They hang with works by Albert Gleizes, Le Fauconnier, Fernand Léger, and Jean Metzinger in a room dubbed "the kingdom of the cubists" by André Salmon. Salmon writes that Mondrian "practices cubism blindly, in complete ignorance of the law of volumes, and his inspiration comes from van Dongen!" The catalogue lists him as "Pierre Mondrian," and thereafter, in all non-Dutch contexts, he retains the spelling of his last name with one "a."

Lives at 33 avenue du Maine, the studio building near the Gare Montparnasse into which Schelfhout and Kickert had moved the previous summer. In a letter from this address, Mondrian writes that he almost married Greta Heijbroek (1884-1964) the previous fall, but "fortunately I realized in time that it was only an illusion, all that prettiness."

[1911/12]



Fig. 4
Piet Mondrian, 1912, from his copying pass for the Musée du Louvre.

#### MAY

Registers as an alien in Paris on 11 May. Lives at 26 rue du Départ, a newly finished studio building on a street recently extended between the boulevard Edgar-Quinet and the avenue du Maine. Schelfhout and Kickert move with him. The Mexican painter Diego Rivera (1886-1957) is his neighbor and becomes a close friend.

Shows one drawing at the Cologne Sonderbund (25 May-30 September). Four other Dutch artists living in Paris are also represented: Petrus Alma (1886-1969), Otto van Rees (1884-1957), Schelfhout, and Jan Verhoeven.

JUNE

Obtains a copying pass for the Musée du Louvre on 1 June.

#### JULY-AUGUST

Shows *In den tuin*, clearly the work listed as *Dans le jardin* at the Indépendants in March, at an exhibition of living Dutch artists in Nijmegen (1 July-2 September). Toorop, one of the organizers of the exhibition, hails the work as Mondrian's first step in the direction of cubism.

On 21 July visits the Netherlands for a month, spending the first week with his father in Arnhem, the second and third in Domburg, and the last in Amsterdam.

Shows only earlier luminist work at the second exhibition of the Domburg artists' colony (28 July-19 August). While in Domburg, paints "The Sea" (cat. 32) as well as a landscape (Ott. 253) and a painting of dunes (lost).

In Amsterdam begins a still life that he finishes only after returning to Paris at the end of August, Still Life with Gingerpot II (cat. 34).

#### SEPTEMBER

Paints Bloeiende bomen (Flowering Trees) (cat. 36), Bloeiende appelboom (Flowering Appletree) (cat. 35), and "The Trees" (cat. 37), all based on Domburg motifs. Sends the works to Amsterdam at the end of the month with Still Life with Gingerpot II (cat. 34) for the second exhibition of the Moderne Kunst Kring.

#### OCTOBER

Travels from Paris to judge the Moderne Kunst Kring show (Stedelijk Museum, 6 October-7 November). At Kickert's direction, Le Fauconnier and Gauguin are featured, with paintings from the previous year by Picasso, Braque, and Léger, as well as work by Metzinger, Auguste Herbin, Maurice de Vlaminck, and others. In addition to the four works he has just executed in Paris, Mondrian shows three from Domburg, including "The Sea" (cat. 32). Three pictures, including Bloeiende bomen (Flowering Trees) (cat. 36) and "The Trees" (cat. 37), are purchased, and Bloeiende appelboom (Flowering Appletree) (cat. 35) is later acquired by Kickert.

During this short visit to Holland, meets the aspiring pianist and composer Jaap van Domselaer (1890-1960) through a mutual acquaintance, Katinka Hannaert, and will find the musician hotel accommodations in Paris for the winter.

#### WINTER

Van Domselaer later recalls that during his stay, Mondrian continues to paint trees deriving from Dutch motifs despite his urban surroundings.

#### MARCH 19-MAY 18

Shows three paintings at the Salon des Indépendants, hung beside works by Alma, Schelfhout, van Rees, and Jacoba van Heemskerk (1876-1923). Guillaume Apollinaire writes: "Mondrian descends from the cubists, but does not imitate them. He seems above all to have been influenced by Picasso, but his personality remains entirely his own. His trees and his portrait of a woman reveal a sensitive intellect. This cubism – very abstract – follows a different path from that apparently taken by Braque and Picasso, whose investigations of materials are at present so interesting."

#### LATER JULY

Shows a painting that must be Composition No. II (cat. 49), as well as Trees (unknown), in the exhibition Toorop, Schelfhout, und die Niederländer organized by Hans Goltz at his Salon der neuen Kunst in Munich (16-c. 31 July). Returns to the Netherlands to work for several weeks, copying in the Rijksmuseum and probably spending time in Domburg.

#### SEPTEMBER 20-DECEMBER 1

Participates in the Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon organized by Herwarth Walden (1878-1942) at Galerie Der Sturm in Berlin. The two paintings, *Gemälde No. I* (possibly cat. 51) and *Gemälde No. II*, constitute a change in subject – trees have yielded to facades and roofs seen from his atelier – and also inaugurate a system of neutral, numerical titles he will maintain until the 1940s.

#### NOVEMBER 7-DECEMBER 8

Because four works are currently in exhibitions (two at the Berlin Herbstsalon, two others in a second German exhibition), he must send less recent work to the third Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition: *Tableau No. 1* (cat. 50), *Tableau No. 2* (cat. 48), *Tableau No. 3* (cat. 45), and *Tableau No. 4* (cat. 40). These show in reverse order the four stages of a development towards greater abstraction during the first half of the year. *Tableau No. 1* and *Tableau No. 3* are purchased by H. P. Bremmer (1871-1956), the art teacher and adviser of the collector Helene Kröller-Müller (1869-1939) – the

[1912/13]

1913

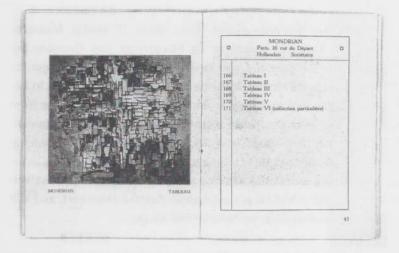


Fig. 5
Two pages from the catalogue of the Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition, Amsterdam, 1913, showing *Tableau No. 2* (cat. 48).

first work for Kröller-Müller and the second for himself. Due to Kickert's change of course, Picasso and Braque are not represented.

At the request of the editors of the journal *Theosofia*, writes a long article about art and theosophy which is, however, considered "too revolutionary" for publication, as he will write to Schelfhout.

1914

#### JANUARY

Grants Bremmer permission to reproduce the two works he had just purchased in his monthly publication *Beeldende Kunst*, marking the beginning of a fruitful relationship. Sends a detailed explanation of his intentions – "construction of lines and color combinations on a flat surface with a view to visualizing *general beauty* as consciously as possible" – which also underscores his debt to Picasso.

## FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 29

Shows three works in the exhibition Werke moderner Pariser Künstler at the Kunstsalon Wolfsberg in Zurich, and four works in Moderni Umeni (Modern Art) assembled by Alexandre Mercereau at the Manes Society in Prague.

## MARCH-APRIL

Shows *Tableau No. I* (cat. **52**) and *Tableau No. 2* (cat. **53**) at the thirtieth Salon des Indépendants in Paris (1 March-30 April). The bronze-colored frames of these works are flush with the surface of the canvas. Apollinaire and Salmon both mention Mondrian briefly.

## MAY

Informs Bremmer that he would like to continue working on the paintings he submitted to the Indépendants; later tells Schelfhout that he was not really satisfied with them (see also November 1915).

The motifs of walls bearing traces of apartments demolished by the extension of the rue du Départ, as well as advertising signs, become more clearly visible in his work: for example, Composition No. VI (cat. 56), Composition in Oval with Color Planes 1

[1913/14]

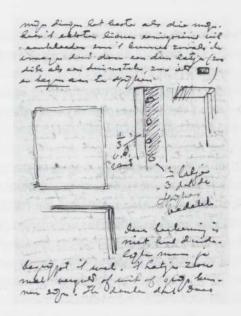


Fig. 6
Page of a letter from Mondrian to
J. J. P. Oud, 31 March 1921, with
sketches of frames showing setback wooden strip (top right),
Fondation Custodia, Institut
Néerlandais, Paris.

(cat. 57), and Composition in Oval with Color Planes 2 (cat. 58).

On 7 May writes to Schelfhout that he has not seen Kickert for nine months and no longer associates with Le Fauconnier, reflecting the fact that Mondrian and Schelfhout had both parted with Kickert over personal and artistic issues.

#### MID-JUNE

Bremmer's influence helps secure Mondrian's first one-man show at Kunsthandel Walrecht, a gallery in The Hague. The sixteen works sent from Paris are numbered "Composition I" through "XVI" in no particular sequence (cats. 40, 48, 49, 51-54, and 56). They include everything he has produced since late 1912 except three works sold previously. Six works are sold: one to Kröller-Müller, two to Bremmer, and three to the Reverend H. van Assendelft (1875-1928), an acquaintance of Bremmer who had purchased work by Kandinsky. Also probably sends *Composition with Color Planes* (cat. 55), sold soon thereafter to the Rotterdam collector Griettie Smith-van Stolk. For the most recent works (including cats. 54-56), Mondrian for the first time used a frame made from four narrow strips of wood set back from the canvas.

## JULY

Returns to Holland on 25 July to visit his father in Arnhem and friends in Amsterdam, and possibly also in Domburg.

## AUGUST

Stranded in Holland at the outbreak of World War I, has difficulty finding space in which to live and work.

## LATE SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER

After spending a week in Arnhem, followed by a stay with his brothers in Amsterdam and Laren, goes to Domburg. Hosted by friends the first week, he then lives alone for several weeks in the house of an old acquaintance, W. C. (Bine) de Sitter (1876-1958), allowing him to work. The Parisian subjects are abandoned, and Domburg motifs are studied in three series of increasingly abstract drawings – the facade of the Domburg church tower, the sea with high horizon, and the sea with pier beneath

a starry sky (cats. **59-69**). There is also one tree often mistaken for a facade (Ott. 242<sup>5</sup>). Fills his sketchbooks with notes about art, life, and theosophy.

#### **NOVEMBER-DECEMBER**

Probably lives with his brothers in Amsterdam, producing commissioned portraits and copies to cover expenses that include quarterly rent payments throughout the war to maintain his Paris studio.

Finds temporary lodging in the De Linden house in Laren, southeast of Amsterdam, where Hannaert runs a pension during the summer months. Becomes acquainted with Maaike Middelkoop (1893-1979), fiancée of van Domselaer, recently settled in Laren. When the summer guests return, Mondrian and Middelkoop move into rooms in the attic of van Domselaer's nearby house. Mondrian works at a small studio a twenty-minute walk away and takes meals at De Linden. Often travels to Amsterdam to make copies in the Rijksmuseum.

## JANUARY-FEBRUARY

- Shows twenty-five works (eleven paintings dated from 1908 to 1912 and fourteen from 1913 and 1914) at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, together with Alma and Le Fauconnier (31 January-28 February). All had been included in the one-man exhibition at Walrecht's except *Tableau No. 3* (cat. 45), loaned by Bremmer. In March the exhibition travels to Pictura, an artists' association in Groningen.
- Elaborates his Domburg drawings in a number of studies (cats.67-69) conceived as preparatory for paintings. With all the copying he must do to earn a living, as well as the project of turning his notes on art into a book, he is only able to finish one picture in 1915, Compositie 10 in zwart wit (Composition 10 in Black and White) (cat.70), and one the next year, Composition 1916 (cat.71).

## JULY-AUGUST

Meets and has discussions with the former Catholic priest Mathieu Schoenmaekers (1875-1944), who lives in Laren and has developed a blend of theosophy and Christianity called Christosophy, as well as the literati Jan Greshoff (1888-1971), Martinus Nijhoff (1894-1953), and Adriaan Roland Holst (1888-1976). Also becomes familiar with the writings of the Dutch philosopher G. J. P. J. Bolland (1854-1922), a follower and popularizer of Hegel.

## SEPTEMBER

- Becomes acquainted with the Amsterdam real estate agent Salomon B. Slijper (1884-1971), one of the guests at De Linden that summer, who notices Mondrian's pictures hanging in Hannaert's guest house and soon begins buying the artist's earlier work. Through him, Mondrian receives commissions to copy his own work. Believes his book to be nearly complete.
- Evening visits with Slijper to the Hotel Hamdorff in Laren, where a string orchestra offers a variety of music, including newly popular ragtime, for open-air dancing. His enthusiasm and style earn him the nickname "dancing Madonna."

## OCTOBER

Shows two new "black and white" works – a drawing and Compositie 10 in zwart wit (Composition 10 in Black and White) (cat. 70) – and nine works from the Walrecht

[1914/15]

1915

show (including cats. 40, 52, 54, and 56) in a private exhibition organized by Schelfhout at the Stedelijk Museum (3-25 October), in which Sluyters, Gestel, Le Fauconnier, and the architect J. C. van Epen (1880-1960) also participate. This exhibition is in opposition to Kickert's reorganized Moderne Kunst Kring. On the opening day Bremmer buys *Compositie 10 in zwart wit* for Kröller-Müller.

Writes the Dutch artist and critic Theo van Doesburg (1883-1931) in apparent response to a request for pictures. Explains that he can only send photographs because the pictures are all hanging in the Stedelijk Museum. Encloses a photograph of a study of the Domburg church facade (now lost) that he had made for the Queen Elisabeth Album (a gift from Dutch and Flemish artists to the queen of Belgium), and discusses it at length. It will be reproduced in the July 1918 issue of *De Stijl* (see cat. 72, fig. c). Having learned of the Amsterdam exhibition from Mondrian's reply, van Doesburg writes a review of the show in *De Eenheid* praising *Compositie 10 in zwart wit*. Continues corresponding with van Doesburg for some time, mainly about the latter's need for slides to illustrate his lectures on the development of modern painting.

#### NOVEMBER

Writes van Doesburg on 20 November that the closed rectangular shapes in Composition No. IV (cat. 54), which had been reproduced in Elsevier's Geïllustreerd Maandschrift, are "too absolute." Van Doesburg suggests establishing a new journal, but Mondrian believes that it is premature since they know almost no one who "really makes art in our manner," and that van Doesburg's articles in De Eenheid are sufficient for the time being.

1916

Publication of van Domselaer's suite of seven piano pieces, *Proeven van Stijlkunst* (Experiments in Style), partly inspired by Mondrian's work.

## JANUARY

Writes to Bremmer on 5 January approving of his characterization of *Compositie 10 in zwart wit* as having "a Christmas mood," but only "if one understands the Christmas idea in a really abstract way...rest, balance, and predominance of the spiritual."

## FEBRUARY

Van Doesburg visits Laren on 6 February to meet Mondrian, who introduces him to van Domselaer, Schoenmaekers, and Alma.

## MARCH

Shows four works at the second exhibition of the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring (11 March-2 April), a new artists' association that holds annual exhibitions at the Stedelijk Museum: three cubist works from the Walrecht show and the new Composition 1916 (cat. 71). Although most of the work shown is alien to him, he accepts membership in order to gain access to their regular exhibitions.

His friend Willem Steenhoff (1863-1932), assistant director of the Rijksmuseum, urges Bremmer to provide Mondrian with a monthly allowance of 50 guilders. Bremmer

[1915/16]

agrees on condition that the painter give him four works of medium size each year, which Bremmer can then sell.

#### APRIL

In his letter of thanks for the first monthly payment, informs Bremmer that for the past year and a half he has been writing his ideas about art: all art is good; his own is merely the result of what has been done, and yet points toward the spirit of the coming age. On 13 April, the Dutch painter Bart van der Leck (1876-1958) is registered in Laren as coming from The Hague, where he executed design commissions for the Kröller-Müller company. In Laren, he will receive a monthly allowance from Helene Kröller-Müller in return for paintings. Mondrian will have regular discussions with him about pictorial problems.

#### MAY

Working on a new painting in black and white, which will become *Compositie in lijn* (Composition in Line) of 1917 (cat. 72).

#### JUNE

Kröller-Müller purchases the 1913 painting Composition No. XI (Ott. 262).

#### JULY

Sends Bremmer (and van Doesburg) a photograph of the first state of *Compositie in lijn*, and compares it favorably to the photograph of the church facade drawing sent the previous year to van Doesburg, which now seems too "particular."

#### AUGUST-DECEMBER

Despite Bremmer's support, still unable to focus entirely on his painting, and also spends much time writing. Influenced by van der Leck's color, he later writes: "although still figurative, [van der Leck] paints in solid planes and pure colors. My basically cubist technique, still more or less pictorial, came under the influence of his [more] precise technique."

## NOVEMBER

When the newly married van Domselaers, with whom Mondrian had been living, move to Amsterdam on 1 November, Mondrian rents a room which has space for a studio. Towards the end of the year, he and van Domselaer disagree about the respective directions of their work.

## 1917

## JANUARY

Reads the introduction to his book at an evening meeting of the Laren lodge of the Theosophical Association. Van Assendelft and van der Leck offer constructive criticism.

Bremmer lends thirteen works from his collection to the Rijksmuseum, including Mondrian's *Tableau No. 3* (cat. 45).

Begins reworking *Compositie in lijn*, which he had considered finished the previous June, making the background whiter and the lines flatter under the influence of van der Leck. Hopes to exhibit it along with four small works at the next exhibition of the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring. By March, wishes he had simply started a fresh canvas.

## MAY

Has only three new works to show at the third exhibition of the Hollandsche

[1916/17]

Kunstenaarskring (5-28 May): Compositie in lijn (cat. 72, fig. a), Compositie in kleur A (Composition in Color A) (Ott. 298), and Compositie in kleur B (Composition in Color B) (cat. 73). The first is purchased by Kröller-Müller, the other two by Bremmer, who immediately sells them to her.

Having gone over the entire text with van der Leck and written an introduction, his book is finished. Now expresses complete faith in van Doesburg and supports his plans for a new journal; contemplates publishing his book in it chapter by chapter. This leads to an intensive correspondence with van Doesburg that continues until 1922. On 17 May suggests to van Doesburg that Picasso, Severini, and Schoenmaekers be invited to join the journal, and Kandinsky is also considered. However, Mondrian has distanced himself from Schoenmaekers and will write later in the year to van Doesburg that Blavatsky was the important source of philosophical ideas.

In the company of Slijper, meets the Dutch critic and composer Paul F. Sanders (1891-1986) sometime this spring. They discuss modern music and its relation to painting several times over the coming year.

#### JULY

Works on new paintings and believes he is making definite progress, but still does much commercial work.

#### AUGUST

Receives proofs with editorial corrections by van Doesburg of his first submission to the new journal *De Stijl*, and sends van Doesburg his comments.

Finishes the first in a new series of works, a gouache *Composition with Color Planes* (Ott. 302), and sends van Doesburg a photograph of it in early September. Feels that he has made a breakthrough and the "great search" is over, but still must do commercial work, primarily copies of his own paintings.

## NOVEMBER

At the beginning of the month the first issue of *De Stijl* appears, with the introduction to his book-in-installments, "New Plastic in Painting." Its twelve chapters will appear over the coming year, with a supplement in the December 1918 issue.

## DECEMBER

Kröller-Müller buys the 1913 Composition No. 1 (Trees) (Ott. 259).

# JANU

On 8 January, after the Hungarian painter Vilmos Huszár (1884-1960) sent him a photograph of his 1917 Hamer en Zaag (Hammer and Saw), writes to van Doesburg that its technique of interweaving does not integrate figure and ground any better than does his own work.

## MARCH

Shows eight works at the fourth exhibition of the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring (16 March-7 April). Writes Bremmer that they represent a new solution to the problem of uniting figure and ground – different from van der Leck's use of a flat ground. All the work goes to Bremmer, who sells three paintings to Kröller-Müller (Seuphor 427 and two lost works) and four to collectors among his students (cats. 74, 75, 76, 77). He keeps the first work of the series, the gouache (Ott. 302), for himself.

[1917/18]

1918

Bremmer doubles Mondrian's allowance.

#### LATE MAY-EARLY JUNE

Begins work on a picture "all in diamonds" (cat. 78), as he writes to van Doesburg. In the same letter, contemplates the use of diagonals if not combined with lines at any other angle, and expresses uncertainty about van der Leck's method (see cat. 78, fig. a). During a visit on 7 June from Huszár and the Dutch architect Robert van't Hoff (1887-1979), discovers that Huszár has also been working independently with a regular division of the canvas. Writes to van Doesburg on 13 June that, in contrast to Huszár, "I rework that division a lot."

NOVEMBER

End of World War I.

1919

#### JANUARY

Works on twelve pictures, some in black and white, and a major new submission to *De Stijl* in the form of what he calls a "trialogue." On 3 January writes to van Doesburg that "I never talk to [van der Leck] about De Stijl any more...after I discovered he was not sympathetic to it."

#### FEBRUARY

"Dialogue on Neo-Plasticism," probably started in late 1918, appears in this and the next issue of *De Stijl*. Shows five works, at least two (possibly three or four) hung as diamonds, in the fifth exhibition of the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring (22 February-23 March). Three go to Bremmer, who sells two to Kröller-Müller in September – *Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge)* (cat. 80) and *Composition with Grid 7 (Lozenge)* (cat. 82) – and keeps *Composition with Grid 6* (cat. 81). In a letter of 13 February to van Doesburg, who generally criticized impure color as "tone" and "sentiment," Mondrian defends his use of "muted colors" in these paintings as a temporary expedient.

## APRIL

Bremmer reduces Mondrian's allowance to the original 50 guilders per month, informing him it will be the final year and that he does not require any more works. Mondrian hopes to finish five new works before his planned return to Paris in June, including the "reconstruction of a starry sky...without a given in nature," as he writes to van Doesburg on 18 April, referring to Composition with Grid 8; Checkerboard with Dark Colors (cat. 83). In the same letter, defends the possibility of regular division. Apparently only three pictures were completed, all so-called checkerboard compositions and all acquired by Slijper (cats. 83, 84; the third is lost).

## JUNE

Leaves Laren to stay with friends in Amsterdam in anticipation of his departure for Paris. Visits van Doesburg in Leiden. Between June 1919 and August 1920, "Natural Reality and Abstract Reality: A Trialogue (While Strolling from the Country to the City)," appears in *De Stijl*. Written in the form of a Socratic discussion between a "layman," a "naturalistic painter," and an "abstract-realist painter" (Mondrian's persona) as they contemplate various scenes, the "trialogue" is clearly Mondrian's attempt to find an accessible and persuasive presentation of his ideas.

[1918/19]

On 22 June leaves the Netherlands for the last time and returns to Paris. Finding his old studio at 26 rue du Départ occupied by the Belgian painter Tour Donas (1885-1967), moves into the vacant studio Kickert had occupied briefly in 1912 in the same building.

Visits the Picasso exhibition at Léonce Rosenberg's (1879-1947) Galerie de "l'Effort Moderne." Hopes to exhibit in the gallery, whose physical space and cubist orientation appeal to him. Bremmer informs him in person that he will have to terminate the allowance at year's end (four months early) and offers a monthly sum of 150 French francs until then.

#### AUGUST

Works on two new paintings, in which he is "trying [to achieve] something different" and avoid the repetitiveness of his recent work, as he writes to van Doesburg.

#### SEPTEMBER

After seeing a reproduction in black and white of *Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge)* (cat. 80) in the August issue of *De Stijl*, writes to van Doesburg on 6 September, agreeing that there is "still some 'repetition' in it."

#### OCTOBER

Postcard to van Doesburg dated 11 October: "not all lines must always be equally dark. I think you are right. Now again I do not always stick to the regular division."

A large sale: at the end of the month, sends Slijper all his remaining naturalist work and the earlier cubist work, which he had left behind in Paris in 1914; also Composition in Oval with Color Planes 1 and 2 (cats. 57, 58), which he had finished just after shipping his recent output to The Hague for the Walrecht show in June 1914. The purchase was made while Mondrian was still in Holland, and the money helps him settle in Paris.

## NOVEMBER

Moves to a new studio at 5 rue de Coulmiers on 1 November, leaving Kickert and his wife, who had returned to Paris in the fall and to whom he had given his bedroom, to occupy the studio. Begins to create a neo-plastic interior by attaching pieces of cardboard painted in primary colors, gray, and white to the walls of his studio and similarly painting the furniture. This prompts him to write "Z's Studio," the last and by far the longest scene of his "trialogue," which will appear in *De Stijl* between March and August 1920. On 22 November, suggests to van Doesburg that *De Stijl* reprint an article by the Italian futurist writer and painter F. T. Marinetti (1876-1944).

## DECEMBER

After several months, decides he has completed *Composition A* (cat. 85), the first painting finished in Paris, which he prefers to all his previous work. He is working on five related smaller paintings.

## 1920 JANUARY

Having forgotten about the notice from Bremmer, the termination of his allowance on 1 January creates financial difficulties. Gets to know Willem Stieltjes (1887-1966), a Dutch engineer living in Paris, and his wife Tonia (1881-1932), who show great interest in his work and ideas and soon become friends. On 3 January, informs the Dutch architect J. J. P. Oud (1890-1963), a collaborator on *De Stijl* and friend of van Doesburg since 1916, that he would like to meet him.

[1919/20]

#### **FEBRUARY**

Still has no work ready for the Salon des Indépendants. Promises to show van Doesburg a piece about the "Mouvement de Dada" when he comes to stay with him. Has Slijper send *Composition with Grid 8; Checkerboard with Dark Colors* (cat. 83) to the sixth exhibition of the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring (21 February-21 March).

#### MARCH

Hosts van Doesburg until 10 March. The two attend dada soirées and probably meet Marinetti, and Mondrian writes "Les Grands Boulevards," a short prose piece partly inspired by dada and futurist literary experiments, which is published in *De nieuwe Amsterdammer* (27 March and 5 April). During this time, they also enjoy a visit from Rosenberg.

Exhibition of the artists' association La Section d'Or at the Galerie la Boétie, Paris, to which van Doesburg becomes Dutch representative.

Following van Doesburg's departure, makes several changes in *Composition A* (cat. 85) incorporating results of the smaller paintings.

#### APRIL

Signed by van Doesburg, Mondrian, and the Dutch poet Anthony Kok (1882-1969), a manifesto on literature appears in the April issue of *De Stijl*. The journal's interest in dadaism is also evident in articles by van Doesburg, publishing under the pen name I. K. Bonset.

Writes an essay about dance (now lost), which he considers revolutionary. On 12 April completes his second experimental prose piece, "Little Restaurant – Palm Sunday," which is rejected by *De nieuwe Amsterdammer*.

#### MAY

In the first week two crates of finished and unfinished paintings prepared by Mondrian before he left Holland arrive in Paris. *Composition A* (cat. 85) is now finished (the lines took longer than expected) and the small paintings are reworked by the end of the month. He will send three works – *Composition A*, *Composition B* (Ott. 319), and *Composition C* (cat. 86) – to Holland for a Section d'Or exhibition organized by van Doesburg; three others were intended for a Section d'Or exhibition in Belgium but were not sent.

Interviewed in his studio on 23 May by the journalist W. F. A. Roëll for the Hague daily Het Vaderland (9 July issue). According to Roëll, Mondrian entitled one of his new works "Foxtrot."

Rosenberg offers to rent Mondrian his space for a one-man show, which Mondrian declines as being too great a financial risk.

## JUNE

After consulting with Mondrian, Slijper lends Composition in Oval with Color Planes 1 of 1914 (cat. 57) and a now-lost Checkerboard Composition of 1919 to the exhibition Modern Dutch Art at the Public Art Galleries, Brighton, England (9 June-July). Starts writing a piece about literature (now lost). Makes a large sketch on paper, possibly Study for Tableau I (cat. 167), to try out a composition before buying the necessary stretchers for the canvas.

On 12 June writes van Doesburg in reference to the latter's Composition XVIII, an ar-

rangement of three separately framed paintings: "Remember that...the center should not be moved, but eliminated, removed....When you only put the center outside the canvas, it still remains one canvas; your canvas then becomes only a piece of a larger canvas, doesn't it?"

Organized by van Doesburg, La Section d'Or – Paris. Kubisten en Neo-Kubisten is held at the Rotterdamsche Kunstkring (20 June-4 July), then travels to The Hague, Arnhem, and Amsterdam, closing at the Stedelijk Museum on 7 November. Of Mondrian's three works, Composition C (cat. 86) is purchased by Alma while the exhibition is in progress, and Composition A (cat. 85) is bought by Kok in February 1921. Oud takes Composition B (Ott. 319) on consignment. The paintings are hung unframed, as Mondrian intended.

#### JULY

M. Ritsema van Eck, a student friend from Amsterdam who has lived in France for years, helps Mondrian produce a French summary of his first essay for publication by Rosenberg. Van Doesburg inquires about the possibility of having the text printed and bound in the Netherlands. Mondrian suggests the titles "Néoplastique dans les arts" or "Une nouvelle expression plastique."

## AUGUST 5-25

Oud and his wife visit from Rotterdam, where he is municipal architect; he and Mondrian become quite close and begin an intensive correspondence. Oud will actively promote the sale of Mondrian's work in the Netherlands.

#### SEPTEMBER

Designs a new cover for *De Stijl*. Writes to van Doesburg that "equilibrium can exist with dissonants," contrary to more traditional theories of color harmony and balance.

## OCTOBER

Works on a new group of paintings; he regards the compositions as an improvement.

DECEMBER

Hopes to have thirty paintings ready by the spring.

JANUARY

Rosenberg invites Mondrian to take part in a group show in April.

## FEBRUARY

At the beginning of the month *Le Néo-Plasticisme*. *Principe Général de l'Equivalence Plastique* (a French summary of Mondrian's first essay) is published by Rosenberg's gallery. Mondrian later recalls that he raised 900 francs to finance the printing. Van Doesburg assumes responsibility for its sale in Holland, and the February issue of *De Stijl* publishes excerpts.

Death of his father on 10 February.

Reports that the new work is much stronger.

## MARCH 28-APRIL 9

Van Doesburg and his future wife Petro ("Nelly") van Moorsel (1899-1975) are in Paris and see Mondrian. They will visit the south of France, then move to Weimar, where van Doesburg will offer a rival curriculum to that of the Bauhaus before returning to Paris in the spring of 1923.

[1920/21]

1921

- Shows five works again unframed in the exhibition known as "Les Maîtres du Cubisme" at Rosenberg's gallery, a large show which includes Picasso, Braque, Gris, Léger, Severini, and various lesser cubists (5-25 May). Bremmer buys Composition with Yellow, Blue, Black, Red, and Gray (cat. 89) for Kröller-Müller. The exhibition also includes Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray (cat. 92), which is later purchased by Slijper.
  - The Dutch painter Charley Toorop (1891-1955), daughter of Jan Toorop, buys Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue (Ott. 325). Mondrian had met her in Domburg and helped her find an apartment the previous November when she moved to Paris.

#### JUNE

Attends a concert of the "Bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens" at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées presented by the Italian futurist painter and musician Luigi Russolo (17-24 June). Following an introductory lecture by Marinetti, the concert features the "intonarumori" (bruiteurs or noisemakers) designed by Luigi playing the mixed compositions (half noise instruments, half regular orchestra) of his brother Antonio. Writes van Doesburg that he is unable to purchase an "electric" instrument himself due to lack of funds.

#### JULY ?

Sends van Doesburg the first of two essays on futurist music, jazz, and social dancing: "I half owe this music bombshell to Oud, who took me to various 'jazzbands' – I think in that way I came to see clearly through the old mess."

## AUGUST

- "The 'Italian Futurists' Bruiteurs' and 'The New' in Music" appears in *De Stijl* in this month's issue and the next.
- Oud's lecture "Over de toekomstige Bouwkunst en hare mogelijkheden," given in February in Rotterdam, is published in the *Bouwkundig Weekblad*, and Oud sends Mondrian a copy. It mentions cubism rather than neo-plasticism as a model, and prompts an often argumentative correspondence with Mondrian over the next year concerning the relative ability of current painting and architecture to realize experimental principles.
- Oud's Rotterdam colleague Th. K. van Lohuizen (d. 1956), encouraged by Oud to buy a Mondrian painting, comes to meet him.

## SEPTEMBER

Offers Slijper one of the two canvases he has just finished, *Tableau I* (cat. 96) and *Tableau II* (cat. 97).

## OCTOBER

Rosenberg selects nine recent works to buy, including Tableau I (cat. 90), Tableau No. III (cat. 93), Lozenge Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red, and Gray (cat. 95), and Composition with Red, Blue, Black, Yellow, and Gray (cat. 94), paying an advance of 500 francs. On 19 October Kröller-Müller (through Bremmer) buys a 1920 work from Rosenberg at an Amsterdam auction house.

Returns on 22 October to 26 rue du Départ, where he occupies the larger studio of the

Stieltjes, who are returning to Holland. Will remain there until 1936. In view of Rosenberg's offer, feels he can afford the move to a more expensive studio.

#### OCTOBER 29-NOVEMBER 19

Rosenberg shows the nine works in the exhibition Quelques Aspects Nouveaux de la Tradition.

#### NOVEMBER

- Having failed to sell any work, Rosenberg withdraws his commitment, returns the nine works, and requests reimbursement of the advance, less 300 francs from the single October sale. Feeling financially squeezed and discouraged, briefly considers giving up painting and moving to the south of France, where van Eck has offered him work on his farm. Mondrian declines and remains in Paris, where van Eck pays his first rent.
- On 3 November, van Doesburg writes an explosive letter to Oud, who had rejected his color designs for the facade of the Spangen Housing Block in Rotterdam, on which they were collaborating, effectively ending Oud's membership in De Stijl. Mondrian unsuccessfully attempts to reconcile them.

#### DECEMBER

Executes two drawings of flowers for Slijper, who hopes to improve Mondrian's financial situation. Recovers from his depression and resumes his abstract work.

#### JANUARY

"Neo-Plasticism and Its Realization in Music," a follow-up to the article of August-September 1921 (on which he has been working since then), appears in the January-February issue of *De Stijl*.

#### FEBRUARY

Flower drawings requested by Slijper stimulate similar requests from visitors. Realizing this will alleviate his financial problems, Mondrian makes another drawing of a flower for 100 francs, but insists on the separation between this and his neo-plastic work, which he refuses to adapt to the increasingly conservative market.

## MARCH

- Second one-man show (4 March): organized by Slijper, a retrospective in honor of his fiftieth birthday opens as part of the annual Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum. The association mounts the show despite Mondrian's earlier resignation. Mondrian himself submits three works: *Tableau III (Oval Composition)* of 1914 (Ott. 282) and *Tableau I* and *II* of 1921 (cats. 96, 97).
- The March and May issues of *De Stijl* print Mondrian's essay "The Realization of Neo-Plasticism in the Distant Future and in Contemporary Architecture (Architecture Understood as Our Entire [Nonnatural] Environment)," on which he had been working since mid-1921 as a result of his polemic with Oud.

Reports that his work has undergone compositional changes.

In the Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant of 23 March, the Parisian correspondent publishes a detailed report concerning a visit to Mondrian's studio several days earlier, in which the artist reportedly praised Léger as "one of the leading younger men today."

Several friends and admirers, including Alma, Slijper, the Stieltjes, and Steenhoff, de-

[1921/22]

1922

cide to cover a quarter of Mondrian's studio rent for a period of two years, in return for which he will donate one work a year to a public collection. The first year's choice is *Tableau III (Oval Composition)* (Ott. 282), but the donation proposed to the Rijksmuseum on 20 April is promptly declined by new director F. Schmidt Degener on the grounds that the Stedelijk Museum is the appropriate venue for contemporary art.

#### APRIL

- La Vie des Lettres et des Arts publishes a French translation made by Mondrian with the help of van Eck of his first article about music, which appeared the previous August and September in De Stijl.
- Stimulated in part by his brother Carel's conversion to Roman Catholicism and ensuing aversion to abstract art, Mondrian contemplates an article he calls "Neo-Plasticism as the Basis for a New Life," undoubtedly the first idea for what will become "The New Art The New Life" (1931).
- Kok visits and buys two paintings, Composition with Large Red Plane, Gray-Blue, Yellow, Black, and Blue (cat. 102) and Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Blue-White (cat. 106), which are not completed until the end of the year.

#### MAY

- Reports that a painting intended for Oud, Composition with Red, Blue, Yellow, Black, and Gray (cat. 103), and one intended for van Lohuizen, Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, Black, and Gray (cat. 105), will soon be ready. Probably in response to the alarming news about Mondrian's finances, Kröller-Müller buys Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black (cat. 100), which is just finished.
- On 25 May writes to van Doesburg complaining about his introduction of the dynamic element of time in his lecture "Der Wille zum Stil," published in *De Stijl* V, 2-3.
- By the end of the month reports he is doing better financially, due in part to sales of his flower studies.

## AUGUST

- Writes to Oud on 1 August that further discussion is useless; also complains to him, unaware of van Doesburg's pen name, that there is "too much Bonset" in *De Stijl*, despite the value of a dada element. By the end of the month, abandons Oud as a De Stijl compatriot (as van Doesburg had done a year before), but not as a friend.
- In response to a letter from van Doesburg in Germany, in which he wrote that he and Nelly were tap-dancing, Mondrian informs him that he is dancing the shimmy.
- La Vie des Lettres et des Arts publishes Mondrian's French translation of his second article about music, which had appeared in De Stijl in January.

## SEPTEMBER

In Vienna, *Uj Müvészek Könyve | Buch Neuer Künstler* appears, edited by Lajos Kassák (1887-1967) and László Moholy-Nagy (1895-1946) in close cooperation with the Hungarian avant-garde journal *MA*. It reprints Mondrian paintings previously illustrated in *De Stijl* and devotes considerable attention to the movement.

## OCTOBER

On behalf of the group assembled the previous March, Alma offers *Tableau III* (refused by the Rijksmuseum) to the Stedelijk for a period of three years. The Amsterdam

City Council accepts the loan. (The painting will remain at the museum and is donated to the permanent collection in 1966.)

#### DECEMBER

Confident that he can earn enough with his flower paintings to remain in Paris and maintain his studio despite the growing public aversion to abstraction.

#### JANUARY

Takes advantage of the unexpected success of his flowers to raise their price to about 25 guilders, and devotes more effort to them.

#### MAY

- Following a dada performance tour of Holland with Huszár and Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948), the van Doesburgs settle in Paris at the beginning of the month, taking a studio on rue du Moulin Vert after staying with Mondrian for a few days. As Nelly will recall, the three spend many evenings together in Paris in the next years, dancing at the Jockey Club or Bal-Bullier, watching the well-known Fratellini clowns at the Cirque Médrano, and participating in the cafe life of Montparnasse.
- Mondrian shows three pictures, including the 1921 *Tableau I* (cat. 90) and the 1922 *Tableau 2* (cat. 99), at the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung* in Berlin (19 May-17 September). It is the only time that all the regular contributors to *De Stijl* are represented in a single exhibition. Sells two works.
- On 20 May, on behalf of the group assembled in March 1922, Slijper offers the Stedelijk Museum a second painting, *Mill* a "commercial" work, c. 1917 from his own collection.

#### JULY

In "Neue Gestaltung in der Musik. Möglichkeiten des Grammophons," which appears in *Der Sturm*, Moholy-Nagy refers approvingly to Mondrian's first essay about music, which appeared in German translation in the March issue of *De Stijl*.

## SEPTEMBER

Renews contact and friendship with Oud.

Survives by producing flower paintings, having neglected his other work for months, but takes comfort in his neo-plastic achievement to date. His brief essay "Is Painting Inferior to Architecture?" appears in *De Stijl* VI, 5.

## OCTOBER

Merz, the dadaist journal edited by Schwitters in Hanover, publishes Mondrian's short essay "Neo-Plasticism" (in Dutch) written in August. The van Doesburgs once again stay with Mondrian from 15 October to 14 November, at the time of the exhibition Les Architectes du Groupe "de Styl" held in Rosenberg's Galerie de "l'Effort Moderne."

Inspired to begin a large abstract work, possibly the Lozenge Composition with Red, Black, Blue, and Yellow (cat. 109).

## NOVEMBER

Expecting a portrait commission from Holland, but has little interest in it. The Werkstatt für Druckgraphik of the Bauhaus in Dessau produces a color lithograph after *Tableau I* (cat. 90), published the following year in Adolf Behne's *Der Sieg der Farbe*.

[1922/23]

1923



Fig. 7 Nelly van Doesburg, Mondrian, and Hannah Höch in van Doesburg's studio, Clamart, 1924. Photographer unknown.

Sells his 1922 Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray (cat. 107) to Oud and another work, probably Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue (Ott. 373), to Til Brugman (1888-1958) in The Hague.

## DECEMBER

After a short trip to Weimar, the van Doesburgs stay with Mondrian from 6 December until the end of January.

#### 1924

## JANUARY

On 22 January sends "Down with Traditional Harmony" (in French) to Enrico Prampolini (1894-1956) for his futurist journal *Noi*, which ceased publication before the article was printed. Mondrian and Prampolini will become friends in Paris in 1925.

## FEBRUARY

On 1 February, the van Doesburgs move into a studio in Clamart, outside Paris, which Mondrian helped them find. On her first visit to Paris, in this year, the German artist Hannah Höch (1889-1978) meets Mondrian in this studio.

The *Bulletin de "l'Effort Moderne,"* a monthly publication of Rosenberg's gallery, prints brief statements by six artists in answer to the question, "Où va la peinture moderne?" Mondrian writes that "Neo-Plasticism is preparing its [painting's] end."

Early in the year, Cesar Domela (1900-1992), Dutch painter and graphic artist, meets

Mondrian and van Doesburg and joins De Stijl. Relationship with van Doesburg,
now living in Paris, deteriorates. Agrees to have several texts translated into
German for Moholy-Nagy's Bauhausbücher series.

## MARCH

Unable to finish a canvas for the Salon des Indépendants – possibly the one begun the previous October – due to the financial need to produce flower paintings.

"[Not] Blown by the Wind" (De Stijl VI, 6-7) condemns the avant-garde's so-called return to order: "if buyers demand naturalistic art, then the artist can use his techni-

[1923/24]

cal skills to produce it, but [it remains] *distinct* from his own true work." Van Doesburg adds an editorial disclaimer to this remark. "No Axiom but the Plastic Principle," dated 1923 but included in the same issue, emphasizes the "immutable" nature of neo-plastic doctrine. Owing to the growing friction with van Doesburg, these will be Mondrian's last contributions to *De Stijl* (except for the special 1932 van Doesburg memorial issue).

Shows two pictures in the large exhibition *L'architecture et les arts qui s'y rattachent* at the Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture in Paris, which includes a reprise of the 1923 Rosenberg show but, unlike the original, gains considerable attention for De Stijl (22 March-30 April).

MAY

Repaints his studio and the small front room.

#### JULY-AUGUST

Hans (Jean) Arp (1887-1966) and El Lissitzky (1890-1941) contact him while assembling their book, *Kunst-Ismen*. Sophie Küppers (1891-19??), Lissitzky's future wife, suggests to Mondrian that she sell his work on consignment in Germany. By year's end, three of four works he provided are purchased, one by Alexander Dorner (1893-1957) for the Landesmuseum in Hanover, where it will be shown in December.

#### AUGUST

Declines a commission arranged through van Doesburg to paint an interior, owing to the low fee. Writes to van Doesburg that their personal, not ideological, differences have become acute: "As long as we corresponded with one another, everything was fine"

"The Arts and the Beauty of Our Tangible Surroundings" appears in the informal quarterly *Manomêtre*, published in Lyons by Emile Malespine. Mondrian laments that "new materials [e.g., reinforced concrete] are badly used," and concludes that only painting, "the freest art," can present "the new beauty."

## SEPTEMBER 11-OCTOBER 10

Shows two paintings of 1921 and 1923, both consigned to Brugman in The Hague, in the Internationale Kunstausstellung, Vienna.

## OCTOBER

On 17 October Roëll reports in *Het Vaderland* on his most recent visit to Mondrian's studio, four years after the first, under the title "Neo-Plasticism in Painting, Architecture, Music, Literature."

## NOVEMBER

Mondrian's "The Evolution of Humanity is the Evolution of Art" (in French), published by the *Bulletin de "l'Effort Moderne,"* elaborates the idea put forth in previous issues by Dr. Hélan Jaworsky that humanity is in the seventeenth year of its evolution to adulthood.

## DECEMBER

Lissitzky reports to Küppers that "the Mondrian-van Doesburg affair has proven to be nasty."

FEBRUARY

Meets Arthur Müller-Lehning (b.1899), a Dutch anarcho-syndicalist writer who has just

[1924/25]

1925



Fig. 8
At the Exposition des Arts
Decoratifs, Paris, May 1925 (from
left): Tieske Vantongerloo,
Paul F. Sanders, Lucia MoholyNagy, László Moholy-Nagy,
Mondrian, Georges Vantongerloo.
Photographer unknown.

settled in Paris. The two are introduced by Bart de Ligt (1883-1938), a leading Dutch pacifist, who had purchased a painting from Mondrian in 1922.

#### MARCH

German sales allow him to return to abstract work on a regular basis, although he must tell Oud he will have nothing new ready for an exhibition proposed by Oud.

#### APRIL

With the help of Oud and Slijper, the newly formed Rotterdamsche Kring shows fourteen works by Mondrian from 1912 to 1922. Meets Michel Seuphor (b. 1901), a poetcritic and Mondrian's future friend and biographer, who moved to Paris in March. Küppers asks for more work: he will send twelve paintings to Dresden in June.

Informs van Doesburg that he wants no further contact with him.

## MAY

Sends, among other works, the Lozenge Composition with Red, Black, Blue, and Yellow (cat. 109) to an exhibition of the Dutch artists' association De Onafhankelijken (The Independents) at the Stedelijk Museum (24 May-1 June), where he will show the next three years and in 1932. Because of damage suffered during installation, the lozenge painting is replaced with two earlier works, including the 1922 Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, and Black (cat. 104). Late in the month, Küppers visits Paris to organize an exhibition of Mondrian, Léger, Man Ray, and others planned for December.

## SPRING

Paul Sanders, having moved to Paris the previous summer for his sabbatical from the journal *Het Volk*, where he is art editor, often visits the nearby rue du Départ studio. While Sanders helps him recover from the flu, Mondrian discusses the great possibilities of radio and phonographic reproduction, jazz and electronic music with the more conservative critic. Before his return to Amsterdam, Sanders asks his brother Martijn to buy a painting in order to help Mondrian financially. On receiving the

money, Mondrian decides the amount is excessive and sends two paintings: the 1922 Composition with Blue, Black, Yellow, and Red (cat. 98) and the 1921 Composition with Red, Yellow, Black, Blue, and Gray (private collection).

#### JUNE

Van Doesburg informs Kok that his relationship with Mondrian is over. Belgian artist and founding member of *De Stijl* Georges Vantongerloo (1886-1965) and his wife visit Mondrian for several weeks. With his help, the studio walls are repainted, this time up to the ceiling. Following Vantongerloo's departure, will continue refashioning his studio by arranging colored squares on the walls and easels. Growing interest in his studio interior as a work of art, especially from abroad.

#### AUGUST

In Het Vaderland on 4 August, Mondrian comments not unfavorably on the Dutch pavilion at the Exposition des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, which represents the Amsterdam school style of architecture rather than De Stijl work. Rebuked by van Doesburg, he continues refusing to sign a protest petition which van Doesburg had circulated earlier and then deposited at the Austrian pavilion. Van Doesburg strikes his name from the list of De Stijl collaborators.

Van Doesburg writes Domela on 27 August that he is making paintings with diagonal lines "in opposition to the 'construction terrestre' of dominating horizontal and vertical." He may also begin reorienting lozenge paintings to produce diagonal elements at this time. Domela responds the next month that he too has been experimenting independently with diagonals.

#### SEPTEMBER

At the instigation of Küppers, the Dresden gallery Kühl and Kühn holds an exhibition of works by Mondrian and Man Ray. Mondrian exhibits twelve works, seven recent and five recently reworked, including (in the latter category) *Tableau No. III* (cat. 93) and the lozenge-shaped *Tableau No. IV* (cat. 108). Two paintings are sold. Encouraged, hopes that he might be able to concentrate on abstract work and discontinue the flower studies.

## FALL

Attends Josephine Baker's debut in the Rêvue Nègre at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées sometime between September and November.

## OCTOBER

"The Neo-Plastic Architecture of the Future" appears in a De Stijl issue of L'Architecture Vivante, an elegant quarterly edited by the progressive architect Jean Badovici. Mondrian writes, "The new beauty will be realized only by the artist collaborating with the engineer..." and not by the architect.

## NOVEMBER

After many delays, Piet Mondrian. Neue Gestaltung. Neoplastizismus. Nieuwe Beelding (Bauhausbuch no. 5) appears. It translates all his major writings from the first half of the decade: "Le Néo-Plasticisme" (1920) and four subsequent articles dealing with music and architecture.

Visited by Basel architect Hannes Meyer (1889-1954), who invites him to contribute to *ABC*, the avant-garde journal edited by Meyer and Mart Stam (1899-1986), a Dutch architect living in Switzerland.



Fig. 9
Theo van Doesburg in front of
Mondrian's Composition with Blue,
Yellow, Red, and Gray, 1922
(Ott. 338), The Judith Rothschild
Foundation. From the Romanian
journal Periszkop 1, 4 (1925).
Photographer unknown.

#### DECEMBER

Meets Stam in December during his brief residence in Paris.

Shows two paintings in L'Art d'aujourd'hui (1-21 December), an exhibition of mostly late cubist work organized by Etienne de Beaumont and the Polish artist Victor-Yanaga Poznansky as a reply to the Arts Décoratifs show: the lozenge-shaped Tableau No. I (cat. 110) and Composition with Black and Gray (Ott. 356), which is bought by Vicomte Charles de Noailles. Among other works, van Doesburg shows Contra-Composition XVI in Dissonants, a 1925 work with diagonals. Several other De Stijl artists are included, and Christian Zervos (1889-1970), Picasso's friend and future biographer, reviews the group negatively in the inaugural issue of his handsome Cahiers d'Art.

## 1926

## JANUARY

Accepts a commission to design the interior of a study in the Dresden home of Ida Bienert, a wealthy collector of modern art who had purchased work by Mondrian following the Kühl and Kühn show. Completes the drawings before March, but the project, his only design effort outside his own studio, is never realized.

Friedrich Bienert, son of Ida, buys the lozenge-shaped *Tableau No. I* (cat. 110). His wife, Gret Palucca (1902-1993), a dancer and protégée of Mary Wigman, hangs it in her dance studio, which pleases Mondrian (see cat. 110, fig. a).

The Kühl and Kühn exhibition of Mondrian and Man Ray is reconstituted at the Galerie Goltz, Munich, with added work by Lissitzky.

Early in the year, Paul Delbo takes three photographs of the studio interior. The Swiss journal *Das Werk* publishes one in July and a second is reproduced in *De Telegraaf* on 12 September.

## FEBRUARY

French painter Felix Del Marle (1889-1952) reviews the *L'Art d'aujourd'hui* exhibition with high praise in the short-lived Lille journal *Vouloir* (vol. 18), of which he has just

[1925/26]



Fig. 10
Mondrian's studio, 26 rue du
Départ, 1926, showing (from left)
Composition with Grid, 1918
(Ott. 311), private collection;
Composition No. VI (cat. 87); and
Pier and Ocean 5 (cat. 67).
Photograph by Paul Delbo.

become art editor. He and his wife visit the studio and persuade Mondrian to write an article. Mondrian is also at work on a piece for *Cahiers d'Art*.

### MARCH

Beginning this month, "Le Néo-Plasticisme" (1920) is reprinted in installments over nine issues of the *Bulletin de "l'Effort Moderne*," which had originally published it in 1921.

"L'Art Purement Abstrait" appears in *Vouloir* (vol. 19). To Mondrian's temporary chagrin, Del Marle changes the title to "Art: Pureté + Abstraction," reproduces *Lozenge Composition with Red, Black, Blue, and Yellow* (cat. 109) on the wrong corner, and juxtaposes an article by van Doesburg. Mondrian's piece employs van Doesburg's term "counter-composition," while van Doesburg's makes no mention of the diagonal. The article attracts the attention of French painter and sculptor Jean Gorin (1899-1981) and a fruitful correspondence with Mondrian begins.

The Lozenge Composition with Red, Black, Blue, and Yellow (cat. 109), which had been damaged the previous May, is repaired by Mondrian and sent to Mr. E. H. E. L. Cabos of Rotterdam, who will purchase it.

The second issue of ABC prints Mondrian's brief statement "Painting and Its Practical Realization" (in German).

## APRII

At the suggestion of American sculptor and designer Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965) and Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968), the American collector Katherine S. Dreier (1877-1952) visits Mondrian to select work for the *International Exhibition of Modern Art* to be shown at the Brooklyn Museum under the auspices of her Société Anonyme. Mondrian agrees to lend two paintings, which he sends the next month.

## APRIL-MAY

In De Stijl, van Doesburg publishes "Painting: From Composition to Counter-Composition," in which he opposes the horizontal-vertical orientation of the natural

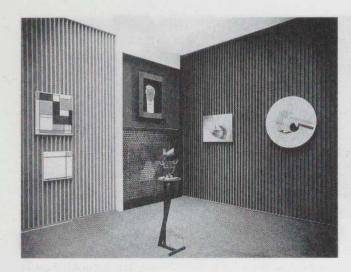


Fig. 11
Installation view, Raum für konstruktive Kunst designed by El Lissitzky, Dresden, 1926, showing at left (top) Tableau No. II, 1921-1925 (Ott. 351), private collection, and a work destroyed by the Nazis.

world and architecture to the diagonals of his paintings, which express a countervailing spiritual development.

#### MAY

Sends several new paintings to the Kühl gallery in Dresden; one to the *Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung* (21 May-30 August); and two, *Schilderij No. 1* (cat. 111) and a lost work (see January 1928), to the annual exhibition of De Onafhankelijken in the Stedelijk Museum (22 May-20 June). These last are then sent to Küppers in Germany.

In this month Del Marle requests another article for *Vouloir*, apparently on the subject of art and the larger environment. In addition, sometime this year Müller-Lehning invites him to collaborate in the creation of a progressive, interdisciplinary journal, which Mondrian persuades Oud and later Vantongerloo to join. In light of both requests, Mondrian begins work on an article about "neo-plasticism and society," as he writes to Oud on 22 May. Probably composed in French and then translated into Dutch, the writing and editing take all year.

## JUNI

Makes a maquette for the stage design of Seuphor's play *L'Ephémère est éternel*, to be staged in Lyons in November on the initiative of Malespine. Envisions a production in which the actors are audible but remain invisible behind three interchangeable screens, one for each act, of a boxlike neo-plastic set. The Donjon company goes bankrupt while the play is still in rehearsal.

Shows four works at the *Internationale Kunstausstellung* in Dresden (10 June-10 October). Two of them hang in the *Raum für konstruktive Kunst*, an exhibition space designed by Lissitzky. Seuphor introduces Mondrian to the photographer André Kertész (1894-1985), who has recently moved to Paris from Budapest.

## SUMMER

The Vantongerloos stay with Mondrian again - longer than expected owing to the ill-

ness of Vantongerloo's wife. They pass the time learning the Charleston and listening to the gramophone Vantongerloo brought with him. Later this year Mondrian closes a letter to Del Marle in which he mentions this visit with the phrase "Vive le 'Charleston'!"

#### AUGUST

Van Doesburg publishes "Painting and Plastic Art" in *De Stijl*, a "manifesto fragment" in which he inaugurates "elementarism" – referring to his oblique compositions – as the historical successor to Mondrian's "neo-plasticism."

#### SEPTEMBER

- In Cahiers d'Art, responds to Zervos' interpretation of neo-plasticism in his review of the L'Art d'aujourd'hui exhibition in the December 1925 issue. Given the difficult relationships between many De Stijl contributors, Mondrian's brief history, "Neo-Plastic Expression in Painting" (in French), is surprisingly inclusive.
- In an account (surely once again by Roëll) of a visit to Mondrian's studio published in De Telegraaf on 12 September, the artist reportedly discusses, among other things, his set design for Seuphor and his passion for Josephine Baker's dancing, adding: "If the ban on the Charleston [in Holland] is enforced, it will be a reason for me never to return."

#### NOVEMBER

Mondrian's first showing in the United States: Dreier's International Exhibition of Modern Art opens at the Brooklyn Museum (19 November-9 January). Mondrian shows Tableau I (cat. 112) and a second work (now lost), which Dreier retitles Clarification I and II. Dreier sells the second painting the following June; the first remains in her collection. Her book Modern Art, written for the exhibition, names Mondrian, Rembrandt, and van Gogh as the three Dutch masters.

## DECEMBER

- Summarizes his theoretical principles in response to a poll of *De Stijl* contributors taken by Del Marle for a planned, but unpublished, issue of *Vouloir* on neo-plasticism and elementarism.
- French architect Robert Mallet-Stevens (1886-1945) and designer Pierre Chareau (1883-1950) express interest in his work; the former requests photographs of Mondrian's set design for a lecture on stage scenery.

## 1927 JANUARY

- Vouloir 25, an issue devoted to "L'Ambiance," publishes Mondrian's "Le Home la Rue la Cité," illustrated with his designs for the Bienert room; the Dutch version, "Neo-Plasticisme. De Woning De Straat De Stad," appears just before in the first issue of Lehning's Internationale Revue i 10. Rebuts van Doesburg's accusations of the past August that neo-plasticism is "classical" in its horizontals and verticals, arguing that traditional painting and architecture rely on the oblique. Van Doesburg responds in the same issue of Vouloir by reprinting his "Notes on Monumental Art" of 1918.
- Invites the German painter Willi Baumeister (1889-1955), who is exhibiting in the Galerie d'Art Contemporain in Paris, to visit.
  - Dreier's International Exhibition of Modern Art is now at the Anderson Galleries in

[1926/27]

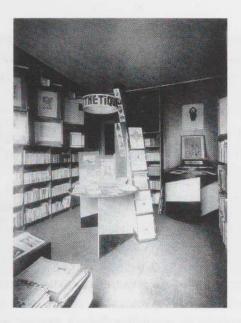


Fig. 12
Installation view, bookstoregallery L'Esthétique, Paris, 1927,
showing (top) Composition with
Red, Blue, and Gray, 1927 (Ott. 379),
private collection, and
Composition No. III, 1927
(Ott. 374), private collection.

New York (25 January-5 February).

Shows fourteen works from the past four years (including cat. 93), submitted by Küppers and the Kühl gallery, at the exhibition *Wege und Richtungen der Abstrakten Malerei in Europa*, Städtische Kunsthalle, Mannheim (30 January-27 March).

#### MARCH

Exhibits approximately twenty works during a meeting of De Klomp, an association of Dutch artists living in Paris. Many pictures are damaged when the room is cleared (12 March), so he is unable to accept an invitation to display his work in the avantgarde bookstore-gallery L'Esthétique, founded and designed by the Russian painter Evsa Model (1901-1976) in 1926.

## APRIL

Exhibits three restored paintings at the fifth Salon des Tuileries, opening 11 April, where he will also show the next year and in 1934. A number of restored paintings are shown at L'Esthétique starting 16 April.

## MAY

At the beginning of the month sends eight works out on consignment: four to the Kühl gallery in Dresden, four to Oud in Rotterdam. Oud keeps one painting for himself and sells *Composition with Black, Red, and Gray* (cat. 113) to René Trousselot, the Rotterdam cheese merchant for whom he had redesigned a villa. By year's end he sells a third work, *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue* (Ott. 376), to J. I. de Jonge van Ellemeet, head of the Rotterdam Municipal Housing Service, where Oud works; the fourth, *Composition No. III* (cat. 114), is purchased by Charley Toorop in February 1929.

Shows two works in the thirtieth exhibition of De Onafhankelijken at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (21 May-19 June).

#### JUNE

Publishes several lines in *i 10*, together with other artists, in response to its April article "Painting and Photography" by Ernst Kállai, editor of the Bauhaus journal. First U.S. sale (see November 1926).

#### JULY

- The Dutch journal *Maandblad voor Beeldende Kunsten* carries a well-illustrated article about Mondrian and his work by Dutch journalist Henry van Loon (1885-1942), who is living in Paris.
- In *De Stijl*, van Doesburg publishes the continuation of his "manifesto fragment" of the previous year, in which elementarism is considered a "strict correction" of neoplastic ideas and their "dogmatic and short-sighted application."

#### AUGUST

- Reports to Del Marle on 25 August that he has spent more than two months reworking his studio interior and was compelled to write an article as a result. Also mentions a bigger article about "Man and Society," which must be delayed (see October 1931).
- Writes Oud on 27 August that he is working on an article about jazz and the neo-plastic approach to color in architecture.

#### DECEMBER

- Denies van Doesburg's request for a contribution to the tenth anniversary issue of *De Stijl* because of the latter's "high-handed improvement (?) of neo-plasticism" in the July issue, and formally resigns from the journal.
- "Jazz and Neo-Plastic" appears in the December issue of *i 10*. In an unusually lyrical celebration of the jazz orchestra, the nightclub, and the Charleston, Mondrian articulates a new conception of "free" and "open" rhythm.

## 1928 JANUARY

Two works, one belonging to the museum and one on loan from Küppers, are included in the *Raum der Abstrakten* designed by Lissitzky in the Landesmuseum, Hanover. (The paintings will be destroyed by the Nazis in 1936.) Photographs of the room are published in all the main German journals on modern art.

## FEBRUARY

- Ten works dating from 1912-1927 (including cats. 34, 40, 83, 84, 86, 114, and possibly 96), all from Dutch collections, are shown at the exhibition A. S. B. Architectuur, Schilderkunst en Beeldhouwkunst a survey of Dutch avant-garde currents selected by a prominent group of young artists and architects (Stedelijk Museum, 4 February-1 March).
- Shows several works at the Galerie Jeanne Bucher in Paris together with drawings by Nico Eekman (1889-1973), a Belgian-Dutch artist living in Paris who had given Mondrian French lessons in Laren (20 February-1 March). Sells one work to Chareau.

## MARCH

Has nothing available for the De Onafhankelijken exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum. Alma lends the 1920 *Composition C* (cat. 86); Oud lends the 1927 *Composition No. III* (cat. 114), which he still has on consignment. Both were just shown in the *A. S. B.* exhibition.

[1927/28]

Works hard on new canvases for the sixth Salon des Tuileries.

#### APRIL

Two works exhibited in the Dutch section of the sixteenth Biennale di Venezia: the Stedelijk's *Tableau III (Composition in Oval)* of 1914 (Ott. 282) and Slijper's *Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray* (cat. 92) of 1921. His only showing at the Biennale during his lifetime.

The architect Alfred Roth (b. 1903) from Zurich, who is working for several months at the firm of Le Corbusier and Jeanneret in Paris, brings Trousselot's *Composition with Black, Red, and Gray* (cat. 113) to Mondrian for restoration. In the visits that follow, the two become greatly interested in one another's work.

#### MAY

Shows four new works, including *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Ott. 382), at the sixth Salon des Tuileries. This is the first work to be placed on a wide recessed frame, which is painted the color of aluminum.

Designs a *Tableau-poème* (Ott. 383) integrating the text of a poem by Seuphor into a neo-plastic composition for an exhibition of such works organized by the French painter A. J. Clergé in the Café Terminus, Paris.

#### JULY

With Roth, visits a number of houses designed by Le Corbusier, including the Stein home in Garches. Stam, who is staying with Mondrian, accompanies them.

Reworks the neo-plastic decor of his studio, living room, and kitchen.

#### SEPTEMBER

During their two-week stay in Paris, Küppers and Lissitzky visit Mondrian; all three see more Le Corbusier buildings. On her return journey Küppers sells another painting, which she had on consignment, to the Museum Folkwang, Essen (destroyed by the Nazis after 1937). On 25 September writes to Oud that he benefitted greatly from a treatment given by a masseur from India.

Sells the 1927 Composition No. I (cat. 116) to the Swiss cultural and architectural historian Sigfried Giedion (1888-1968) and his wife Carola Giedion-Welcker (1893-1979), a writer on contemporary art, who visit him in Paris.

Reports he is beginning to work in earnest on a book about art, life, and society (see October 1931).

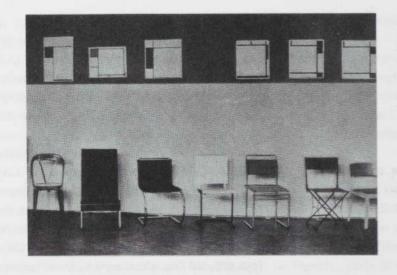
## 1929 MARCH

Stam, who has been working under Ernst May at the Frankfurt Bauamt, arranges for Mondrian to show nineteen paintings – all his unsold work in Germany together with recent work from Paris – in an exhibition of modern chair design entitled *Der Stuhl* at the Kunstgewerbemuseum, Frankfurt (10-31 March). Léger, Gris, and Baumeister are also represented. Stam buys the most recent work, *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue* (Ott. 375), his co-worker Werner Moser (1896-1970) of Zurich buys the 1927 *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue* (Ott. 371), and Ferdinand Kramer of Frankfurt, also a colleague of Stam, buys another painting (now lost).

While uncertain about his chances for selling in Frankfurt, accepts a commission for two flower paintings.

[1928/29]





## APRIL

Seuphor brings the Uruguayan painter Joaquin Torres-García (1874-1949) to Mondrian's studio. Torres-García had just met Seuphor in an exhibition of work by the German painter Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart (1899-1962) at the bookstoregallery Povolozky in Paris.

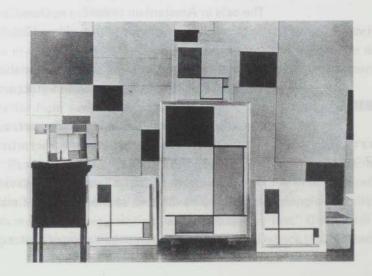
#### MAY

Friendship with van Doesburg is renewed. Van Doesburg writes in his diary: "In spite of the differences, a more profound friendship has now become possible."

## JULY

Sends two paintings to Dreier in New York, one of which – Composition in a Square (Ott. 389) – she had recently purchased at the studio. The other, Composition (cat. 118), is presented to her by Mondrian as he had promised after news of his first U.S. sale.

Fig. 14
Mondrian's 26 rue du Départ
studio, summer 1929, including
(from left) the maquette for
L'Ephémère est éternel, 1926;
Composition with Red, Yellow, and
Blue, 1929 (Ott. 390), Stedelijk
Museum, Amsterdam;
Composition with Red, Blue, and
Yellow, 1928 (Ott. 382), private
collection; Composition No. I (cat.
123); and top, Composition No. II
(cat. 122). Photographer unknown.



[1929]

Works hard on paintings for three exhibitions in October.

#### SEPTEMBER

After Roth expresses interest in buying a work, Mondrian gives him a choice between a more "spiritual" painting in blue and yellow and a more "realistic" one also including a predominant red plane. Roth chooses the latter and sends an advance.

#### OCTOBER

Shows four works in an exhibition of abstract art organized by Nelly van Doesburg, *E. S. A. C. Expositions Sélectes d'Art Contemporain*, at the Stedelijk Museum (1-31 October), which travels to the Hague artists' association Pulchri Studio (10 December-5 January). Between these venues the four works are in the second *A. S. B.* exhibition, Stedelijk Museum (2 November-2 December). All four works find homes. The architect Charles Karsten (1904-1979) wants to buy *Composition No. II* (cat. 122), but this was sought by Dirk Hannema (1895-1984), director of the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam, on behalf of a group of donors assembled by Oud; Karsten instead obtains *Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue* (Ott. 390). *Composition No. I* (cat. 123) is purchased in December by Dr. R. J. Harrenstein and his wife An Harrenstein-Schräder, who is the sister of Truus Schröder-Schräder, patron-occupant of the Utrecht house built by the Dutch architect-designer and loyal De Stijl collaborator Gerrit Rietveld (1888-1964). The following year Mondrian gives the fourth painting, *Composition No. III* (cat. 121), to Seuphor.

Shows five paintings at *Abstrakte und Surrealistische Malerei und Plastik*, organized for the Kunsthaus Zürich by Sigfried Giedion (6 October-3 November). It then travels to the artists' association Die Juryfreien in Munich as *Wege abstrakter Malerei* (17 December-15 January). The works include the lozenge-shaped *Composition IV;* Fox Trot A (cat. 120), Composition III (Ott. 386), and Giedion's 1927 work (cat. 116).

Written at Giedion's request, his article "Pure Abstract Art" appears in the 26 October *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (in German) in connection with the Zurich exhibition.

Shows one work at the *Exposició d'Art Modern. Nacional i Estranger*, Galeries Dalmau, Barcelona, opening on 30 October.

The sale in Amsterdam of the E. van Dam Collection includes six early Mondrians, one of which is bought for 1,350 guilders (Ott. 185).

## NOVEMBER

Notifies van Doesburg that he will not exhibit with any defined group, but would participate in general exhibitions of abstract art.

## 1930

## JANUARY

The first – and last – issue of *Art Concret*, a magazine published by van Doesburg as the charter of a new group of abstract artists, appears on 30 January.

## FEBRUARY

On his way from Zurich to Sweden, Roth picks up his *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Ott. 397), which Mondrian has finished this year.

## MARCH

Cercle et Carré, a new association of abstract artists founded by Seuphor and Torres-

García, publishes on 15 March the first issue of its eponymous journal, which includes a brief text by Mondrian written in free verse.

Writes "Le Cubisme et la Néo-plastique" in response to an article in *L'intransigeant* by French writer and publisher E. Tériade. Dated 25 March, Mondrian's lengthy refutation of Tériade's criticism of abstract art after cubism is rejected by *L'intransigeant*, but will appear in modified form the following January in *Cahiers d'Art* as Mondrian's answer to a poll of artists taken by Zervos concerning objections to abstraction.

#### APRIL 18-MAY 1

Shows two pictures, Composition II (cat. 125) and Composition No. I (cat. 124), and the Tableau-poème (Ott. 383) at the first exhibition of Cercle et Carré at Galerie 23 in Paris. The second issue of Cercle et Carré, which serves as exhibition catalogue, publishes an abbreviated version of Mondrian's latest article, "Realist and Superrealist Art (Morphoplastic and Neo-Plastic)" (in French), parts of which will also appear in Palet (1931), an anthology of writings by modern Dutch artists edited by Paul Citroen.

#### JUNE

The collector Hilla Rebay (1890-1967) visits Mondrian with Moholy-Nagy and buys Composition No. I (cat. 124). Although working to expand the Guggenheim's collection and possible museum, Rebay buys this painting "for myself, for nobody will like it."

Meets the architect Walter Gropius (1883-1969) during the Ausstellung des Deutschen Werkbundes, part of the Salon des Artistes Décorateurs in the Grand Palais, Paris, and attends the reception given by the Werkbund at the German Embassy for a large group of prominent avant-garde artists and architects.

To muster financial support for Mondrian, a lottery is organized by Gropius, Giedion, Moholy-Nagy, and Arp with the proceeds going to purchase a painting from Mondrian as the prize.

## AUGUST

Henry Russell Hitchcock, the architectural historian, purchases the 1929 painting *Composition No. II* (cat. 119) from the artist (through Oud) for the American architect Philip Johnson (b. 1906).

Shows two paintings, including the *Composition II* (cat. 125) exhibited earlier this year at Cercle et Carré, at the exhibition *AC* (Art Concret) in Stockholm organized by Otto Carlsund (1897-1948) and Jean Hélion (1904-1987), both members of the Art Concret circle around van Doesburg (19 August-30 September).

A hostile letter from van Doesburg to Seuphor regarding Cercle et Carré prompts Mondrian to sever relations with van Doesburg once again.

## SEPTEMBER

Kiesler, in Paris from mid-August until mid-September, introduces Mondrian to Alexander Calder (1889-1976), who is also in Paris at the time. Inspired by the studio, Calder suggests the idea of making the colored rectangles oscillate, to which Mondrian replies that his paintings are "already very fast." Calder will later recall, referring to his mobiles, that "this one visit gave me a shock that started things."

#### OCTOBER

Shows two works at *Produktion Paris 1930* organized by Arp and Giedion at the Kunstsalon Wolfsberg in Zurich (8 October-15 November), a sequel to the 1929 *Abstrakte und Surrealistische Malerei und Plastik. Composition No. I* (cat. 126) is bought by the Zurich collectors Emil (1892-1973) and Clara (1894-1969) Friedrich-Jezler. The other is *Composition II with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Ott. 388).

Informs Slijper that he has no time to paint flowers or do similar work.

Two of the paintings shown in Zurich and Munich the previous year are purchased by Dreier and sent to her in New York as "Fox Trot A" and "Fox Trot B." The former (cat. 120), which needed some retouching, he dates 1930.

## 1931

#### JANUARY

The two works sent to Dreier the previous October are shown at the Special Exhibition Presented by The Société Anonyme, which she organized for the opening of the New School for Social Research in New York (1 January-10 February). Instead of Fox Trot A and Fox Trot B, she retitles them "Simplification I" and "Simplification II" in the catalogue. The show travels to the Buffalo Fine Arts Academy (18 February-8 March).

The lottery drawing organized the previous summer takes place on 10 January in Mondrian's studio, with Arp and his wife Sophie Taeuber-Arp (1889-1943) as well as Lehning and Charley Toorop present. Twenty-five people have purchased lots – five less than expected. The prize, *Composition with Yellow* (cat. 127), is won by the German graphic designer Jan Tschichold (1902-1974).

In mid-January Roth settles in Zurich and contacts the Mondrian owners in the city: his colleague Moser, the Friedrich-Jezlers, and the Giedions. Roth and Giedion occasionally exchange works as temporary loans.

Johnson's painting (cat. 119) is on view in the exhibition *Landscape Painting* at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut (20 January-9 February).

The January issue of *Cahiers d'Art* publishes Mondrian's "answer" to four objections to abstract art (see March 1930).

## FEBRUARY

Joins Abstraction-Création, a new association established by Arp, Giacometti, Hélion, Herbin, Vantongerloo, and van Doesburg. Drawing members from Art Concret and Cercle et Carré (both defunct), it will soon represent a broad range of abstract artists in many countries.

MARCH 7

Theo van Doesburg dies of a heart attack in Davos, Switzerland.

## APRIL

Writes a paragraph about fashion in response to a poll by a French publication.

At Oud's request writes an obituary for van Doesburg for a special final issue of *De Stijl*.

Joins regular meetings at the Café Voltaire with Robert (1885-1941) and Sonia (1885-1979) Delaunay, the Arps, and Seuphor, among others.

Shows two works, Composition No. II (cat. 129) and Composition No. I (cat. 130), in the exhibition L'Art Vivant en Europe organized by the association L'Art Vivant at the

Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (25 April-24 May).

YAN

Giedion buys a second work from Mondrian, the 1930 Composition No. II (cat. 129).

JUNE 11-30

Shows three works in the first exhibition of the Association "1940" at the Galerie de la Renaissance in Paris, where many Abstraction-Création members are represented. As the catalogue titles indicate, two works are without color, *Composition en blanc et noir I* (Ott. 399) and *II* (cat. 128); *Composition in Colors* (Ott. 402) is the third painting shown.

#### AUGUST

In response to Giedion's proposal for a conference on contemporary museum design, submits an outline (in French) in which galleries showing the progress of modern art to abstraction culminate in a neo-plastic interior that serves as lecture hall, restaurant, and jazz bar.

The Utrecht division of the Nederlandsch Kunstverbond, a private association founded in 1922 to help artists in financial distress, selects Mondrian's *Lozenge Composition with Two Black Lines* (cat. 131), then unfinished, to buy and donate to the city of Hilversum on the occasion of the opening of its new town hall. The architect Willem M. Dudok approves, and Mondrian receives a partial advance payment.

#### OCTOBER

Sven Backlund (1889-1953), a sociologist from Göteborg, visits Mondrian at the suggestion of Roth. In an article written following his return to Sweden, he introduces Mondrian's art and ideas to the readers of the journal *Hyresgäten*, which he edits.

Finishes the work intended for Hilversum, but owing to bureaucratic delays and slow-drying paint it is not purchased and sent until December. Mondrian asks Slijper for "ten guilders or more" to tide him over and agrees to copy his *Mill on the Water* or *Duivendrecht Farm* for him.

Puts the finishing touches on the book he has been working on since the end of 1928 entitled "Art and Life: The New Art – The New Life (The Culture of Pure Relationships)." Seuphor helps him with his French. In its search for models of "equivalent mutual relationships," the text ranges from Buddhist-derived theories of breathing to "true socialism" to the traffic pattern around the Place de l'Opera. The manuscript is signed in December and several copies are circulated, but no publisher is found. The next year Backlund agrees to write a foreword. Mondrian continues to revise the manuscript for the rest of the decade, apparently also producing an English translation, now lost, from the French original.

## NOVEMBER

A 1929 painting (Ott. 388) is included in a group of forty-two works by living Dutch artists purchased by a Dutch commission and presented to the Prins Paul Museum in Belgrade.

Rejects proposals from Holland that he celebrate his approaching sixtieth birthday with an exhibition, citing, among other reasons, his lack of available work.

Hoping to overcome recurrent fatigue and respiratory infections, he switches to a vegetarian, salt-free diet.

Composition No. II (cat. 119), the painting purchased by Johnson, is included in the exhibition Abstraction organized by the Harvard Society for Contemporary Art in Cambridge, Massachusetts (30 November-13 December).

1932

#### JANUARY

The gift of Lozenge Composition with Two Black Lines (cat. 131) is accepted by the Hilversum City Council. It is hung temporarily in Dudok's study and later in the Town Hall wedding room.

Sends two paintings, including *Composition No. I* (cat. 130), to the second exhibition of the Association "1940" held in the Parc des Expositions (15 January-1 February). Zervos reviews his submission favorably in *Cahiers d'Art*, and at his request Mondrian lends the 1931 work illustrated in the review, *Composition with Yellow and Blue* (Ott. 404), for display at the editorial offices of the journal.

The final issue of *De Stijl*, dedicated to van Doesburg, appears with Mondrian's homage, dated April 1931.

#### **FEBRUARY**

Shows two works in an exhibition sponsored by the Rotterdam artists' association De Branding in the Rotterdam branch of the department store De Bijenkorf.

#### MARCH

Exhibits the two works just shown in Rotterdam at the twentieth anniversary exhibition of De Onafhankelijken at the Stedelijk Museum (5 March-5 April); owing to his long residence in Paris, Mondrian exhibits as a foreign guest. When the show closes, Charles Karsten takes the works on consignment. Composition in White and Black I (Ott. 399) is promptly purchased by Karsten's father. Composition in Colors (Ott. 402) will be sold to Vordemberge-Gildewart after he settles in Holland in 1938.

Receives many congratulations, flowers, and press notices on his sixtieth birthday. A group of prominent Dutch architects led by van Doesburg's former assistant Cornelis van Eesteren (1897-1988), Karsten, and Charley Toorop raise money to buy a painting from Mondrian for a museum.

## APRIL

Shows the 1920 Composition No. VI (cat. 87) and Composition No. I (cat. 130) at an exhibition of twentieth-century French painting at the Stedelijk Museum, organized by the Dutch journalist Roëll, who lives in Paris (9 April-2 May).

The first yearbook of Abstraction-Création, edited by Hélion, publishes Mondrian's brief statement "Le Néo-Plasticisme" and reproduces two of his works, as well as two paintings by the British artist Marlow Moss (1890-1958) that adhere to Mondrian's visual vocabulary but include doubled lines. Mondrian sponsors Moss for membership in Abstraction-Création in this year.

## **MAY 27-JUNE 10**

Shows four works in an exhibition of contemporary Dutch art organized by two fellow Dutch-Parisian artists at Galerie Zak in Paris, in response to the exhibition of modern French art held the previous month at the Stedelijk. His submission includes his first composition with a double line, Composition B (cat. 135), as well as Composition A (cat. 132) and Composition C (cat. 133).

#### JUNE

- American dealer Sidney Janis (1895-1989) visits Mondrian and buys *Composition with Red and Blue* (Ott. 413), still unfinished, which Mondrian sends him the following year. Janis had first seen the artist's work at the Cercle et Carré inaugural exhibition, April 1930.
- In its summer exhibition The Museum of Modern Art in New York shows the painting owned by Johnson, *Composition No. II* (cat. 119).
- Writes an introduction (in French) to "my little book" ("The New Art The New Life") for "people [who] do not understand why a painter should concern himself with the laws of life," as he explains to van Eesteren.

#### JULY

The Amsterdam gallery Huinck en Scherjon shows, in addition to a cubist work, two of the paintings displayed in May at the Galerie Zak, Composition B and Composition C. Charles Karsten Sr. buys the latter and presents it to van Eesteren. The Basel collectors Oskar and Annie Müller-Widmann, friends of Arp whom he had introduced to Mondrian, buy the former in September.

## OCTOBER

Reports further experimentation with doubling lines, enabling him to deemphasize black, which had been troubling him, and thus achieve greater brightness (see *Composition with Yellow and Double Line*, cat. 136).

#### DECEMBER

The Friedrich-Jezlers buy their second work, *Composition A* (cat. 132), which had been shown at Galerie Zak.

## 1933

Proceeds from several sales allow him to work intensively all year on altering his compositional structure in view of the double line. His only publication is a brief statement for the second Abstraction-Création yearbook, edited by Herbin, a dense account of the mutual relationship between "figurative representation" and "artistic expression" that characterizes all art. It is illustrated with two paintings from 1932.

## JANUARY 20

Writes to Gorin that he has finally received another, "more moderate" letter from Moss explaining her theory of the double line, but that he does not understand and has asked for further explanation. In the same letter, in evident response to the alternative neo-plasticisms of Domela, Moss, and Gorin, speaks of the need to elaborate the pure neo-plastic idea with "sub-compositions (complications)," a rubric under which he also includes his own work.

## APRIL

Closing of the Bauhaus in Berlin by the Nazis.

## MAY

The American collector Albert E. Gallatin (1881-1952) is introduced to Mondrian by Hélion and visits the studio. He buys the 1932 painting *Composition with Yellow and Blue* (Ott. 409) for his "Gallery" in the New York University building on Washington Square, where it had opened in 1927. (It later becomes The Museum of Living Art.)

The picture is illustrated in Gallatin's catalogue at the end of the year.

JUNE

- Rudolf Graber (1902-1971) of Wohnbedarf AG (a modern furniture company in Zurich he had founded with Giedion and Moser), buys Composition D with Red, Yellow, and Blue (Ott. 408) to hang in the company display rooms.
- Arp introduces the Zurich artist Max Bill (b. 1908) to Mondrian, who shows him the new catalogue of the Bienert Collection in Dresden the last publication about modern art to appear in pre-war Germany.

SEPTEMBER

Joseph Goebbels establishes the Reichskulturkammer to monitor artistic expression in Germany. Widespread dismissals of avant-garde artists from teaching positions begin.

NOVEMBER

- Karsten asks him to send a painting intended for his colleague, architect Ben Merkelbach (1901-1961), to Amsterdam: Composition with Yellow and Blue (Ott. 411).
- Lozenge Composition with Four Yellow Lines (cat. 138) is presented to the Haags Gemeentemuseum by the group of friends that had assembled in March 1932 to purchase a work.
- In answer to the question "What do you want to express in your work?" posed for the third Abstraction-Création yearbook, simply writes, "Nothing other than what every artist seeks: to express harmony through the equivalence of relationships of lines, colors, and planes. But only in the clearest and strongest way."

JANUARY?

In a letter to Gorin, discusses the "double" line for virtually the only time: "You speak of the double line and say that it causes symmetry. I disagree because there is only one 'line,' just as with your grooves [sketch of the type of wide line incised in Gorin's reliefs]. In my latest work the double line widens into a plane, and yet remains more of a line.... In any case, with grooves you don't make a simple line either! And neither do I with my different thicknesses [sketch of a thin vertical and thick horizontal line]."

APRIL

Meets Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), Ben Nicholson (1894-1982), and Winifred Nicholson (1893-1981). The first two had joined Abstraction-Création a year earlier at the suggestion of Hélion. Winifred spends the winter in Paris and will do so until 1938, remaining in close contact with Mondrian throughout the decade.

MAY

- On his return to New York, the American designer Eugene Lux takes two works with him on consignment, *Composition in Black and White* (Ott. 414) and *Composition with Blue and Yellow* (Ott. 397bis).
- Encouraged by Robert Delaunay but with reluctance, shows two works at the twelfth Salon des Tuileries, *Composition with Blue and White* (Ott. 434) and *Composition with Red and Black* (Ott. 428 destroyed). Afterwards he continues to work on the two paintings.

[1933/34]

1934



Fig. 15
Mondrian in his 26 rue du Départ studio, June 1934, with (left)
Composition A with Yellow, 1935
(Ott. 418), private collection;
(right) Composition gris-rouge
(cat. 141); and (top) the first state of Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue (cat. 139). Photograph by A. E. Gallatin.

Sells a third painting, *Composition with Colored Square* (Ott. 415 – destroyed) to the Friedrich-Jezlers in Zurich.

#### JUNI

On his second visit, Gallatin takes two photographs of the artist in his studio.

Dreier's Fox Trot B (Ott. 386) and Janis' Composition with Blue and Red (Ott. 413) are included in the summer exhibition assembled by James Johnson Sweeney (1900-1986) at the University of Chicago's Renaissance Society (20 June-20 August). In his book Plastic Redirections in 20th Century Painting, which appears simultaneously with the show, Sweeney discusses Mondrian and illustrates the 1921 Composition in Gray, Blue, Yellow, and Red (Ott. 330) that he recently purchased from Rosenberg in Paris.

## AUGUST

Registers with the Caisse du Syndicat des Artistes en Chomâge, an organization to aid artists left unemployed by the depression, and receives 86 francs for two weeks, enabling him to proceed with his work.

## SEPTEMBER

Lux sells one of the two works he took on consignment, Composition with Blue and Yellow (Ott. 397bis), to Kiesler in New York.

## OCTOBER

During a tour of Europe Sweeney visits Mondrian in his studio and expresses his interest in buying a work from him.

## NOVEMBER

Reports that he expects to have about twenty new works ready by March 1935, and hopes to exhibit twelve large paintings in the United States with the help of Lux and Sweeney.

On 9 or 10 November attends a concert by Louis Armstrong at the Salle Pleyel, reacting with disappointment to "a conception already passé" but approving of Arm-

strong's own style of playing "with straight lines," as he writes to Gorin.

Janis lends *Composition with Blue and Red* (Ott. 413) to the Museum of Modern Art's fiftieth anniversary exhibition (20 November to 20 January).

## DECEMBER

- Meets the young American artist Harry Holtzman (1912-1987), who had come to Paris the previous month specifically to meet Mondrian after seeing his work in New York, and a friendship quickly develops.
- Finishes an article, "The True Value of Oppositions in Life and Art," intended for Axis, a new quarterly review of abstract art edited by Myfanwy Evans and connected to a group of the same name. Winifred Nicholson translates it from French into English, but it is not accepted for publication.
- Cahiers d'Art illustrates "La Réalité dans la peinture" by Hélion with a full-page reproduction of Composition blanc-bleu (cat. 142).

1935

## FEBRUARY

Rheumatic pains in his feet and back prevent him from working. Great effort required to finish three works to be shown in Lucerne at the exhibition *these, antithese, synthese*, a survey of postcubist Paris art movements organized by the Swiss artist Hans Erni for the new Kunstmuseum (24 February-31 March). His submissions include *Composition with Yellow* (Ott. 418) and *Composition No. I* (Ott. 434).

## MARCH-APRIL

- Writes his brother Carel on 2 March describing a scientific diet that he is following developed by Dr. Howard Haye. The 1933 edition of Haye's *Medical Millennium*, inscribed by Hélion, was one of the few books Mondrian kept.
- Falls seriously ill but is slowly nursed back to health by Frida Simon, an old friend from Holland who had come to visit him. Resumes contact with his friends in later April, but will not paint for months. Reports work on a new book as well as an article about painting and architecture (these fragments are lost). Also improving "The New Art The New Life."
- An exhibition of the Sidney Janis collection at the Arts Club in Chicago includes his work by Mondrian (4-25 April).
- At the end of April, Cahiers d'Art publishes Mondrian's point-by-point response, together with those of other artists, to some doubts Zervos had posed about the direction of recent art.

## MAY

- Sweeney buys *Composition with Yellow* (Ott. 418), which he had admired during his October 1934 visit. Winifred Nicholson buys the 1932 *Composition with Yellow and Double Line* (cat. 136), the only pre-1934 work which is then still available.
- At the opening of its new building on 29 May, the Haags Gemeentemuseum shows six works by Mondrian: Summer Night of 1906-1907 (Ott. 177) and Composition in Gray-Yellow of 1913 (Ott. 271), both on loan from Jos. H. Gosschalk; Avond (Evening); Red Tree of 1908 (cat. 15), purchased from the Tak van Poortvliet Collection in 1933; Bloeiende appelboom (Flowering Appletree) of 1912 (cat. 35) and Brabantse heide, c. 1908 (Ott. 190), both donated by Kickert in 1934; and Lozenge Composition with Four Yellow Lines of 1933 (cat. 138), with which van Doesburg's

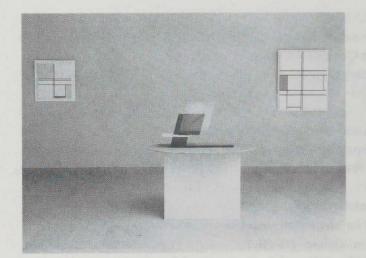


Fig. 16

Abstract Art exhibition, Hartford, 1935, showing (left) Composition gris-rouge (cat. 141), and (right) Composition blanc-bleu (cat. 142).

1925 Counter-Composition of Dissonants, acquired in 1934, can now be juxtaposed in the permanent collection.

#### JUNE

Still does not feel well enough to resume painting, but is writing.

On 11 June, twenty-nine members of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) – including Gropius, Giedion, José Luis Sert, Moser, Stam, van Eesteren, and Karsten – who have assembled in Amsterdam for an exhibition of modern urban design at the Stedelijk Museum, send Mondrian an expression of affection signed by each of them.

On a tour of Europe to prepare the exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* at the Museum of Modern Art the following year, Director Alfred H. Barr Jr. (1902-1981) and his wife Margaret Scolari visit Mondrian during the last week of June.

## JULY

A. Everett Austin (1900-1957), director of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut, visits Mondrian to discuss submissions to an exhibition in the fall and a possible purchase.

## SEPTEMBER

Resumes painting, completing four unfinished works of 1934 for the exhibition in Hartford, and exploring new directions.

## OCTOBER 22-NOVEMBER 17

Shows four works, including *Composition with Blue and Yellow* (Ott. 422), *Composition No. III blanc-jaune* (*Composition No. III White-Yellow*) (first state of cat. 139), and *Composition blanc-bleu* (cat. 142, which will be purchased by the museum the following year), in the exhibition *Abstract Art* at the Wadsworth Atheneum, along with work by Domela and sculptors Naum Gabo (1890-1977) and Antoine Pevsner (1886-1962).

#### DECEMBER

- The American artist and critic George L. K. Morris (1905-1975), introduced to Mondrian by Hélion, buys *Composition with Blue* (cat. 143).
- Learns that the rue du Départ studio building will be demolished for an expansion of the Gare Montparnasse.

1936

#### JANUARY 3-25

The Hartford *Abstract Art* show is on view at the Arts Club in Chicago. The president of the club buys *Composition gris-rouge* (cat. **141**), which she donates to the Chicago Art Institute in 1949.

#### **FEBRUARY**

- Shows three works at the exhibition *Abstract & Concrete*, organized by Nicolete Gray, an English art historian he had met through Winifred Nicholson, in collaboration with the journal *Axis* in Oxford (15-22 February): *Composition C* (cat. 140), *Composition B* with Red (Ott. 416), and the first state of *Composition with Blue and White* (Ott. 434), all of 1934. The show travels to the School of Architecture in Liverpool (opens 2 March), Alex Reid & Lefevre in London (opens 15 April), and Gordon Fraser's Gallery in Cambridge (28 May-13 June).
- Barr's exhibition *Cubism and Abstract Art* opens at the Museum of Modern Art on 26 February with nine works by Mondrian. Six dating from 1913-1919 are loaned by Kröller-Müller (cats. 50, 70, 82; Ott. 262, 259, 298); the seventh is Sweeney's 1921 picture (Ott. 330); the eighth, Dreier's 1926 lozenge (cat. 112); the ninth is the 1935 state of *Composition No. III blanc-jaune (Composition No. III White-Yellow)* (cat. 139), which had also been in the Hartford exhibition. The exhibition closes 12 April, then travels to seven cities in the United States until May 1937. In the accompanying book, *Cubism and Abstract Art*, which also serves as the catalogue, Barr devotes a chapter to Mondrian and De Stijl.

#### MARCH

- At the suggestion of Hélion, the New York dealer F. Valentine Dudensing offers to represent Mondrian in America. He accepts and sends two works, including the revised Composition with Blue and White (Ott. 434) of 1934-1936, which is sold that summer to the American collector Walter P. Chrysler Jr., and Composition No. II of 1934-1936 (Ott. 428), which is sold in 1938 to Mrs. Charles H. Russell of New York.
- Moves into new quarters in the studio building at 278 boulevard Raspail on 20 March. Paints it completely white and soon applies planes of color to the walls.

# APRIL

- Helen Sutherland, a friend of Gray and the Nicholsons, buys Composition B with Red at the London venue of the Abstract & Concrete exhibition. At the same time, the interior design firm of Duncan Miller, Ltd., mounts Modern Pictures for Modern Rooms, in which Mondrian exhibits two small works including Composition with Red (Ott. 426), which will be bought in November by the architect Leslie Martin through Ben Nicholson.
- The Hollywood collector Walter C. Arensberg (1878-1954) asks to be sent photographs of two older works and a new one. He buys Composition with Grid 4 (Lozenge) of 1919 (cat. 79) and Composition with Yellow of 1936 (Ott. 429); he will give both to the Philadelphia Museum in 1950.

[1935/36]



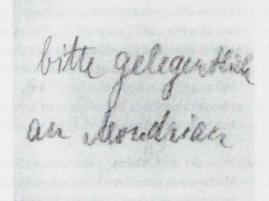


Fig. 17
Mondrian in his 278 boulevard
Raspail studio, 1936, with
Composition with Yellow, 1936
(Ott. 429), Philadelphia Museum of
Art. Photograph by Kurt
Schwitters.

#### JUNI

Morris is in Paris as a participant in *Five Contemporary American Concretionists*, the opening of which Mondrian attends. He buys the not-yet-finished *Composition en blanc, noir et rouge* (cat. 147) at Mondrian's studio on behalf of the Advisory Committee of the Museum of Modern Art, where it is sent in December.

## AUGUST-SEPTEMBER

Reports to Winifred Nicholson that he is again making compositional changes. At the request of Ben Nicholson begins writing an article in which he hopes to clarify the "confusion of the modern movement," as he writes to Winifred on 4 September (see July 1937).

#### OCTOBER

Sells the painting *Composition with Blue and Yellow* (Ott. 422), which has returned from the United States (Hartford and Chicago), to Winifred Nicholson and her sister-in-law Nan Roberts.

At the end of the month sends three more paintings to Dudensing. Composition B (cat. 145) is sold almost immediately to Gallatin; Composition C (cat. 146) is bought in 1938 by Mrs. George Henry Warren of New York; and Composition A (cat. 144) remains unsold and is later returned to Mondrian.

## NOVEMBER

Gray buys *Composition C* (cat. 140) for herself from the exhibition *Abstract & Concrete*. Finishes three paintings for the exhibition *konstruktivisten* in Basel.

## JANUARY

The Arts Club of Chicago exhibits the Walter P. Chrysler Jr. Collection (8-31 January), including Mondrian's 1934-1936 *Composition with Blue and White* (Ott. 434).

Shows eighteen paintings in the exhibition *konstruktivisten*, the first of three shows devoted to abstract art at the Kunsthalle, Basel (16 January-14 February). Fourteen of the eighteen works derive from collections in Switzerland (including cats. 77, 90,

[1936/37]

1937

116, 126, 127, 129, 132, 135, and 137); the 1930 painting *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Seuphor 522) is loaned by Arp in Paris; and Mondrian himself submits three works – the 1930 *Composition II* (cat. 125) and two 1936 paintings, *Composition in White, Red, and Blue* (Ott. 431) and *Composition III with Blue and Yellow* (Ott. 427). Of these two last-named works, the former is bought by the Swiss collector Felix Witzinger, who had been introduced to the artist by the Arps in late 1936 and saw the painting then; the latter is acquired by the Emanuel Hoffmann-Stiftung for the Kunstmuseum Basel.

#### **FEBRUARY 10-MARCH 7**

At the exhibition New Acquisitions: Gifts of the Advisory Committee, The Museum of Modern Art shows works selected by Morris, including Mondrian's Composition en blanc, noir et rouge (cat. 147). In this work, Mondrian for the first time replaces the strip frame with a simple ribbon of tape, recessed slightly from the surface of the painting, running along all four edges of the canvas. The New York Times reproduces the picture prominently with the review of the exhibition by E. A. Jewell, who is able to say little more about the work of Mondrian, Hélion, Arp, Miró, and the American painter John Ferren (1905-1970) than that "it is art."

#### MARCH

Works throughout the spring and summer on an exhibition originally planned for the spring by Dudensing, which is postponed to the fall and then canceled. Five 1937 paintings were probably intended for this exhibition. They carry unusual inscriptions on the reverse: "Opposition de lignes, de rouge et jaune" (cat. 148), "Rythme de lignes droites" (cat. 152), "Composition de lignes et couleur" (cat. 149), "Composition of Red, Blue, and White" (cat. 157), and "Composition of Red, Blue, Yellow, and White" (Ott. 445). Another characteristic of these works is that the narrow, recessed strip frame is now consistently replaced by the recessed ribbon of tape.

Complains to Ben Nicholson about the absence of the Arps, Gorin, Moss, and Vantongerloo from a list of prospective participants in a Constructive Art exhibition Nicholson is planning, and makes his participation contingent on certain inclusions. Neither the Arps nor Mondrian participate in the show, held at the London Gallery in July.

## JULY

Having been accepted the previous December and translated from French into English, his two-part essay "Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art" is now included with five reproductions in *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, a volume of artists' writings edited by Martin, Gabo, and Ben Nicholson. The book appears during the *Constructive Art* show.

In *The New York Times Magazine* of 18 July, Jewell presents neo-plasticism as one of the main directions of abstract art, reproducing *Composition en blanc, noir et rouge* (cat. 147).

On 19 July the Nazi-organized exhibition *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) opens in Munich. Mondrian – mistakenly believed to be a German artist – is represented by a 1923 painting from the Landesmuseum in Hanover and a 1928 painting from the Museum Folkwang, Essen (both destroyed).

Exhibits two new paintings in *Origines et développement de L'Art International Indépendant*, organized by Christian and Yvonne Zervos, at the Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris (30 July-31 October). This show is in reaction to the official exhibition *Les Maîtres de L'Art Indépendant*, part of the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques, which has excluded the avant-garde.

#### AUGUST

As he had done in 1927, van Loon publicizes Mondrian in Holland, this time in *Het Hollandsche Weekblad* on 28 August.

#### SEPTEMBER

Shows the 1930 Composition II (cat. 125) in the exhibition Liniens Sammenslutning: Efter-Expressionisme, Abstrakt Kunst, Neoplasticisme, Surrealisme, organized by the editors of the Danish avant-garde journal Liniens in Copenhagen (1-13 September).

#### OCTOBER

The Detroit Institute of Arts exhibits the Walter P. Chrysler Jr. Collection, which includes his 1934-1936 painting (Ott. 434).

In *transition* (no. 26), a review of avant-garde arts written in English and edited by Eugène Jolas in Paris, Sweeney publishes three statements by Mondrian (translated from the French) with a reproduction of the 1936 *Composition en blanc, noir et rouge* (cat. 147).

In his book Abstract Art: The Idea and the Spirit of Modern Art (in Japanese), Sabura Hasegawa surveys the development of Mondrian's work.

#### JANUARY

Writes Holtzman on 13 January that he is planning a "real modern aesthetic school" as an alternative to the New Bauhaus in Chicago, referring to the illustrated lecture notes he will work on this year but never complete, "The Necessity for a New Teaching in Art, Architecture, and Industry" (in English). Alberto Sartoris, introduced to Mondrian's work by Seuphor, devotes a short article to him in the Italian journal Campo grafico.

### APRIL

Shows four paintings in the exhibition *Abstracte Kunst* at the Stedelijk Museum organized by new curator W. J. H. Sandberg (1897-1984) and Nelly van Doesburg (2-24 April). Included are the two works seen the previous year at the Jeu de Paume and *Composition de lignes et couleur, III* (cat. 149), which is sold the next month through Ben Nicholson to J. R. Marcus Brumwell in London. The catalogue, in addition to contributions by Gorin, Giedion, and Kandinsky, includes his essay "Art without Subject Matter" (in Dutch), dated March 1938.

#### JUNE

Reports that for the past two months he has been working on "my little book."

Through Winifred Nicholson, sells a small 1937 painting, *Composition with Yellow and Blue* (Ott. 436), to the English pianist Vera Moore, who lives in Paris.

# JUNE-JULY

Sends the 1937 Composition No. II with Red and Blue (Ott. 439) on consignment to Ben Nicholson, to whom he will later present it before leaving London.

[1937/38]

1938

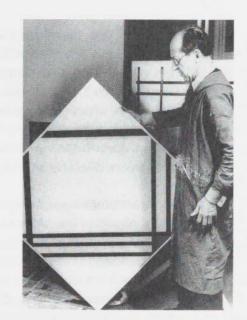


Fig. 18
Mondrian in his 353 East 56th
Street studio, 1943, holding *Picture*No. III (cat. 153), with *Place de la*Concorde (cat. 156) behind him.
Photograph by Fritz Glarner.

#### AUGUST

Werk, a Swiss journal of design and architecture, publishes responses by Mondrian, Bill, Gabo, Pevsner, Kandinsky, and Vantongerloo to a previous diatribe by its editor against the "weariness" of abstraction. Mondrian's statement (in German, translated from French) insists repeatedly on "dynamic rhythm" and is illustrated with the first state of Rythme de lignes droites (Rhythm of Straight Lines) (cat. 152, fig. a), captioned "Rhythm of Lines and Colors."

Reports satisfaction with the Picture No. III (cat. 153).

In his *Histoire de l'Art contemporain*, published by *Cahiers d'Art*, Zervos devotes a brief chapter to neo-plasticism.

# SEPTEMBER

On 7 September, sends letters to Holtzman, Kiesler, and Jean Xceron (1890-1967, a painting colleague from Abstraction-Création) asking for an invitation to America so that he can flee the coming war. He also asks Ben Nicholson for an invitation to England, which will be an easier move, avoiding a return to Holland and facilitating his eventual emigration to New York or even Chicago, where there is the possibility of a post at Moholy-Nagy's New Bauhaus. Has also written to Vera Moore for an invitation to England, even though he knows her only slightly. Nicholson responds first, and on 21 September, with the help of Gabo who arranges a hotel room, Mondrian leaves for London accompanied by Winifred Nicholson. Takes only an easel (which he must leave on the ship), canvas, paintings (including finished and unfinished work), and a suitcase. He gives most of his phonograph records and their box to Maud van Loon, wife of Henry van Loon, to whom he also sells his other easel.

After some time at the Ormonde Hotel, moves into 60 Parkhill Road in Hampstead, behind which runs a mall of buildings with studios, including those of Nicholson (in Mondrian's backyard), Hepworth (just beyond), and Naum and Miriam Gabo (a few

blocks away), all of whom help Mondrian settle and give him necessities (Gabo a robe and slippers, Nicholson a bed). The Hampstead circle also includes the writer Herbert Read, the sculptor Henry Moore, and the painter Paul Nash. Before moving in, has everything painted white.

#### OCTOBER

As soon as he is settled, has the large paintings, portable gramophone with twelve records, and a trunk of manuscripts sent to him as planned. Reports his health has improved and the "spiritual surrounding" is better in England. His good spirits are reflected in several postcards to Carel with scenes from the Disney film *Snow White*, released the previous February, and a long letter in which he compares his helpful neighbors to the dwarves and also mentions owning the soundtrack recording.

Late in the month he begins a large canvas, working on a tabletop set on trestles. In the absence of an easel, he props the painting up on a stool against the wall to look at it.

#### DECEMBER

Holtzman begins sending Mondrian a monthly allowance until early 1940, ostensibly because he wants to buy a painting. Mondrian writes Holtzman that he wants to send him a large work, one meter square, and that three more will also be ready early the next year, two of them reworked Paris paintings.

### 1939

#### JANUARY 18-FEBRUARY 11

Shows two paintings, including *Composition No. I* (cat. 154) and probably *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Ott. 445), in the "Constructive Art" section of the exhibition *Living Art in England* organized by the Belgian surrealist emigré E. L. T. Mesens (1903-1971) at the London Gallery. Begins reworking two large paintings from Paris: *Composition No. I* (cat. 154) and *Composition No. 4* (cat. 155).

#### MAY

Shows two works, the first state of *Composition No. 4* (cat. 155) and *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Ott. 445), in the exhibition *Abstract and Concrete Art* organized by Peggy Guggenheim (1896-1979) at her London gallery Guggenheim Jeune (10-27 May). It travels to the Galerie de Beaune, Paris, in June.

On 11 May The Museum of Modern Art inaugurates its new building on 53rd Street with the exhibition *Art in Our Time*, including *Composition en blanc, noir et rouge* of 1936 (cat. 147).

#### JUNE-JULY

Shows three works in the survey of abstract art organized by Nelly van Doesburg and Frédo Sidès, *Réalités Nouvelles, Renaissance Plastique*, Galerie Charpentier, Paris (30 June-15 July): *Composition No. 4* (cat. 155), *Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow* (Ott. 445), and *Composition of Red, Blue, and White* (cat. 157). Gorin, Delaunay, Vantongerloo, and van Doesburg are among the other artists represented.

#### SEPTEMBER

England declares war on 3 September. Ben Nicholson and Hepworth entreat him to

[1938/39]

leave London and join them in Cornwall, where they have just fled. Holtzman writes from New York insisting that he come, sending money and promising to find lodgings. Mondrian feels unable to move anywhere, citing the expense and difficulty. An unproductive period.

#### NOVEMBER

- Guggenheim buys *Composition No. I* (cat. **154**) for the modern art museum she wants to open in London with Read as director. Delaying the delivery some weeks, Mondrian retouches and alters the work, possibly removing the gray plane in the upper left corner.
- Gallatin mounts an exhibition of seven works by Mondrian in his Gallery of Living Art, including four works in his possession: the 1936 *Composition B* (cat. 145), the 1932 *Composition with Blue and Yellow* (Ott. 409), the 1937 *Opposition de lignes, de rouge et jaune, No. I* (cat. 148), and the 1926 *Schilderij No. 1* (cat. 111). Also shown are *Composition No. II* of 1934-1936 from the collection of Mrs. Charles Russell; *Composition with Blue* (cat. 143) of 1935 belonging to Morris; and *Composition C* (cat. 146) of 1936 from the collection of Mrs. George H. Warren. All four of Gallatin's works are illustrated in the catalogue of the Gallatin collection edited by Morris, which appears the following March.

## 1940

#### **FEBRUARY**

- Robert H. M. Ody, a friend of Ben Nicholson, buys the 1939 painting *Composition of Red, Blue, Yellow* (Ott. 445).
- Begins a new essay "by impulse of the actual world situation, an article to make clear that art shows the evil of Nazi and Communist conceptions." This piece, the eventual first section of "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life," which he will delete after the U.S.S.R. becomes an ally in July 1941, is finished by the end of March. (This and all subsequent writings will be in English.)

## MAY

The German invasion of Holland on 10 May and the Dutch surrender five days later shock him deeply, and he worries increasingly about the possible bombardment of London. The Museum of Modern Art's 1936 Composition en blanc, noir et rouge (cat. 147) is shown as part of Masterpieces of Dutch Art, an exhibition of mostly seventeenth- and some nineteenth-century paintings at the Grand Rapids Art Gallery, Michigan.

#### JUNE

Morris informs him that he wants to publish "Art Shows the Evil..." in *Partisan Review*, of which he is editor. After Ody checks the English, sends a copy immediately. The shock of the fall of Paris (14 June) and the surrender of France (22 June) bring his work to a halt for the rest of his time in London. On 26 June has his Dutch passport stamped with exemption from military service and permission to leave the country.

# AUGUST

With Holtzman's help receives an American visa. As soon as he gets a place in the Dutch immigration quota, packs his paintings and sends them to America.

#### SEPTEMBER

On the morning of 9 September, two days after the blitz begins, a bomb hits the other

side of Parkhill Road several houses away, breaking his windows and thus forcing him to leave. For the rest of his time in London lives at the Ormonde Hotel. On 13 September writes farewell letters to Ben Nicholson, Hepworth, and Winifred Nicholson. Boards ship in Liverpool on 21 September, but due to the blitz does not sail until two days later.

#### OCTOBER

Arrives in New York on Thursday, 3 October. Holtzman is waiting at the pier and takes him to the Beekman Tower on East 49th Street, where Mondrian spends his first few days. Knowing his passion for jazz, Holtzman almost immediately plays him some recordings of boogie-woogie music, a rhythmically propulsive form of piano blues then enjoying a popular revival, which Mondrian, Holtzman will recall, finds "Enormous, enormous!"

Holtzman takes Mondrian to his summer home in the Berkshires to recuperate from the journey, then finds him an apartment on the third floor of 353 East 56th Street, on the corner of First Avenue. Holtzman will pay the rent and buy him a bed and, after Mondrian resists for several months, a record player. Mondrian still refuses a telephone. The two will see each other very often. Gives Holtzman a copy of "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life." By 17 October, has made a sketch for a new painting, *New York* (cat. 163), and orders canvas and materials the next day so that he can begin to paint by 22 October.

#### NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

By whitewashing and adding color panels to the walls, reestablishes his habitual environment. Begins a second painting, *New York City* (cat. 164). With Holtzman's help completes the now rather long essay he started in London, but will withdraw it from *Partisan Review* when Morris suggests cuts, and it is not published until 1945 (see below).

Receives the baggage, paintings, and roll of drawings he had sent from London. He and Léger are asked to join the American Abstract Artists on 30 November.

#### JANUARY-FEBRUARY

Accepts the invitation of the American Abstract Artists on 3 January. Mondrian will pay his dues and attend meetings. Enjoys a party held for him and Léger at the home of Morris and his wife, the artist Suzy Frelinghuysen, in late January or early February.

Shows New York (cat. 163), at that point painted entirely with black lines, in the fifth annual exhibition of the American Abstract Artists at the Riverside Museum in New York (9-23 February).

#### MARCH

Under the heading "Lines and Rectangles," *The New Yorker* of 1 March recounts a visit to his studio, describing him as "probably the only painter who hasn't drawn a curved line in twenty years" and emphasizing his eccentricity and reclusiveness. "Although he loves jazz, he has been hardly anywhere. He has a collection of boogie-woogie records which he plays, often dancing around the room to their accompaniment all by himself."

Although his health is still not perfect, an invitation from Dudensing to hold an exhibi-

[1940/41]

1941



Fig. 19
At the opening of the Masters of Abstract Art exhibition, New York, 1 April 1942 (from left): Burgoyne Diller, Fritz Glarner, Carl Holty, Mondrian, Charmion von Wiegand. Photographer unknown.

tion in his gallery in October prompts him to revise the work sent from London, adding more color and movement, and to finish the first state of *New York City* (cat. 164) by removing a red plane and adding red and blue lines to the yellows, as he writes to Holtzman. Also tells Holtzman that *New York* (cat. 163) will be ready after changes, but that two others in the series are still in tape – referring here to the sticky paper tape of varying widths and colors manufactured by Dennison that he has begun to use.

#### APRIL

The art critic and painter Charmion von Wiegand (c. 1898-1983), who has heard about Mondrian and wants to write an article about him for the magazine *Living Age*, visits on 22 April with an introduction from Carl Holty (1900-1973), a younger painter and friend from Abstraction-Création whose work Mondrian admires. Mondrian takes her through the apartment, showing her examples of early as well as recent work. He explains that he works "intuitively" and that the color-rectangle decor is meant to be "cheerful." Gives her a brief, handwritten statement about his life and work that he has prepared for her visit. She edits this on her own initiative, and he is so happy with the results that he persuades her to edit other texts with his help, translate them into English, and publish them as a book ("Dialogue on Neo-Plasticism" of 1919, "The True Value of Oppositions in Life and Art" of 1934). Lively correspondence begins, with Mondrian sending supplements to his first notes. Von Wiegand also makes frequent visits, during which Mondrian painstakingly studies her translations, dictionary in hand.

Holtzman, for his part, helps Mondrian rework "The New Art – The New Life." At the end of the month, Mondrian prepares "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life," which he is now calling "Oppression and Freedom in Art," in response to a request from the American painter Fritz Glarner (1899-1972) for a text to be read on Mondrian's behalf next season at The Museum of Modern Art.



Fig. 20 Mondrian with his gramophone, 1943. Photograph by Fritz Glarner.

#### JUNE

Johnson donates Composition No. II (cat. 119) to the Museum of Modern Art.

On 5 June, Von Wiegand visits for the second time, noting a new picture taped up "like a mummy....made entirely of colored lines." They rework the autobiographical statement, and he also shows her "Oppression and Freedom in Art." Mondrian has a sore throat. Soon after, Von Wiegand gives Mondrian a party, where he meets Stuart Davis (1894-1964), with whom Mondrian will spend an evening playing and discussing jazz records.

### SUMMER

Has started to frequent the Café Society Downtown, a Greenwich village club opened in 1938 and patronized by an integrated group of left-wing intellectuals, artists, and public figures, where the main attraction is the "boogie-woogie trio" of pianists Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Pete Johnson, whose music Mondrian has on records. Also patronizes the uptown branch on East 58th Street, opened in 1940, where Lee Krasner remembers dancing with him at a party organized by Holtzman. Von Wiegand recalls Mondrian becoming upset on the dance floor when the music switches from boogie-woogie to jazz: "Let's sit down. I hear melody."

#### JULY 4

Reminded of the London blitz by the sound of Independence Day festivities, he is prompted to make his own blackout curtains.

SEPTEMBER 22

Applies for American citizenship, accompanied by Holty.

#### OCTOBER

Holty helps him mount several 1914-1915 drawings on Homosote panels for the exhibition at Dudensing's Valentine Gallery, which has now been postponed until January 1942.

Dreier donates the collection of The Société Anonyme, including three paintings by



Fig. 21
Mondrian in his 353 East 56th
Street studio, fall 1941, with
(clockwise from top right) first
state of New York City (cat. 164),
first state of Composition No. 4
(cat. 155), Composition No. 12
(cat. 150), Composition No. 8
(cat. 159), and intermediate state
of Boogie Woogie; New York
(cat. 163). Photograph by Emery
Muscetra.

Mondrian (cat. 120; Ott. 386, 389) to the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven. The collection is installed permanently in January 1942.

#### NOVEMBER

Decision, edited by Klaus Mann, prints an article by Janis on Mondrian, Léger, Max Ernst, and Matta entitled "School of Paris comes to U.S.," for which Janis interviewed Mondrian and had Emery Muscetra photograph his studio, probably that fall. The photo of New York (cat. 163), although in black and white, clearly indicates that three colored lines had been added.

## DECEMBER

The Japanese attack Pearl Harbor on 7 December.

In an article on "Twelve Artists in U.S. Exile," the magazine *Fortune* refers to his great influence on architecture and design and reproduces the 1936 *Composition en blanc, noir et rouge* (cat. 147).

Gradually enters the social life of the New York art world, receiving visits from old friends, including Moholy-Nagy, Giedion, Hélion, Xceron, Sweeney, Gallatin, Calder, Ernst, Glarner, Hans Richter (1888-1976), and Edgar Varèse (1883-1965). Attends

Ernst, Glarner, Hans Richter (1888-1976), and Edgar Varèse (1883-1965). Attends Richter's monthly cocktail parties, where André Breton, Duchamp, Léger, and other exiled artists can be found.

## JANUARY-FEBRUARY

One-man exhibition at the Valentine Gallery (19 January-7 February), to which Mondrian gives a retrospective character by including earlier work he still owns: three flower studies, a 1912 cubist-style painting of a eucalyptus and its preparatory study, three Parisian facade paintings of 1914, five drawings of 1914-1915 (including cats. 65, 67-69), a 1919 grid composition, and one painting of the 1920s (cat. 93). Mondrian revised eleven works from the period 1934-1940, giving them a double date (including cats. 150-151, 155, 159-162). Two works originated entirely in New York,

1942

[1941/42]

one titled *Boogie Woogie* (shown a year earlier at American Abstract Artists as *New York* – cat. 163) and the other titled *New York City* (cat. 164). Five works find buyers: Guggenheim (cat. 68); The Museum of Modern Art (cat. 67); Dreier (cat. 160); Mary E. Johnston, a Proctor and Gamble heiress whom von Wiegand had introduced to Mondrian (cat. 163); and Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd (cat. 159).

"Towards the True Vision of Reality," the autobiographical sketch with which von Wiegand had helped, is published by the gallery in connection with the exhibition. Mondrian accidentally backdates some events in his life by two years, just as he has done with several paintings in the show.

On 23 January, Balcomb Greene reads Mondrian's "Oppression and Freedom in Art" at the Nierendorf Gallery, next to the Valentine Gallery. This is the second in a series of "Informal Evenings" organized by the American Abstract Artists (probably the same event which Glarner had mentioned to Mondrian the previous spring, but relocated from The Museum of Modern Art), and it attracts an overflow crowd.

#### MARCH

Von Wiegand writes to Mondrian that his process of relentless reworking is often upsetting to her until she sees the further results of his "creative destruction."

#### MARCH-MAY

A busy season for Mondrian includes five New York exhibitions:

(1) A painting in an exhibition of fourteen *Artists in Exile* at the Pierre Matisse Gallery in New York (3-28 March).

(2) Several works in the sixth annual exhibition of the American Abstract Artists at the Fine Arts Gallery in New York (9-23 March).

(3) Shows with Léger and Amedée Ozenfant in the exhibition *Abstract Painting* by 25 American Artists at the Museum of Living Art at New York University.

(4) Two works in The Museum of Modern Art's *New Acquisitions and Extended Loans* (25 March-3 May) – a drawing purchased in January, *Pier and Ocean 5* (cat. 67), and the painting (cat. 119) donated by Johnson.

(5) Composition No. 5 of 1939-1942 (Ott. 451) included in the exhibition of fifty-eight Masters of Abstract Art, an American Red Cross benefit at Helena Rubinstein's New Art Center in New York (1 April-15 May). The catalogue for the Rubinstein show, edited by Stephen C. Lion and von Wiegand, includes, among many statements, Mondrian's new essay "Pure Plastic Art," a fragment of which will also be published by Samuel M. Kootz in his New Frontiers in American Painting (1943).

Two works he sold in England (Ott. 426; cat. 149) are shown in the exhibition *New Movements in Art: Contemporary Work in England* at the London Museum, Lancaster House (18 March-9 May).

His seventieth birthday is noted in at least two Dutch and three Swiss newspapers with reviews of his work. The article written by Bill in the Swiss daily *Nationalzeitung* appears at the end of the year in Dutch in the progressive architectural journal *De 8 en opbouw*.

The 15 March issue of *Art Digest* reviews the Pierre Matisse show and publishes a photograph by George Platt Lynes (taken from the catalogue) showing Mondrian as one of the group of refugee artists.





#### APRIL

Sweeney begins to interview and correspond with Mondrian, collecting material for a book on the artist.

Mondrian's will of 16 April designates Harry Holtzman as sole heir.

#### MAY

Publication of Guggenheim's *Art of This Century*, which includes Mondrian's short essay "Abstract Art" dated November 1941. She gets Brentano's bookstore to publicize it by installing one painting each by Mondrian and Ernst in their window.

Arnold Newman writes Mondrian hoping to include him in a series of portrait photographs of New York artists. Several will be taken soon thereafter.

## JUNE

Robert Motherwell, in his "Notes on Mondrian & Chirico" in the June issue of *V.V.V.*, criticizes Mondrian's abstract work from the Valentine show as hyperrational and dehumanizing, but nonetheless finds a "concrete poetry" in Mondrian's single contribution (Ott. 451) to *Masters of Abstract Art*, which makes the other works seem "dull and grey" by comparison.

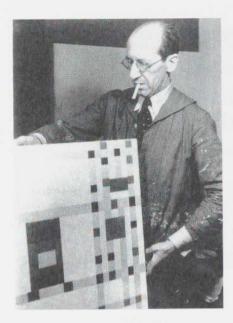
Having put aside three unfinished paintings of the *New York City* series (including cat. **184**), continues work on a large diamond-shaped composition with colored lines – the beginning of *Victory Boogie Woogie* (cat. **166**); the first state is recorded by von Wiegand in a 13 June sketch. Also begins a large, square composition that will become *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (cat. **165**). The two paintings occupy all his attention; he has no time left for writing, generally sleeping late and working into the night, as is his habit.

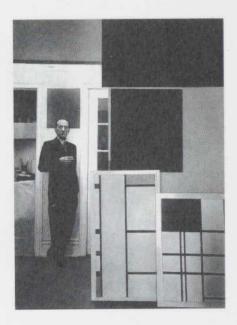
#### SEPTEMBER

The Dutch-American digest *Knickerbocker Weekly*, published by the Netherlands Information Bureau in New York, prints a short biographical sketch of Mondrian by H. Felix Kraus in which he is called "one of the most famous Dutch painters today."



Fig. 24
Portrait of Mondrian, 1942, by
Arnold Newman, showing (left)
Composition with Red, Yellow, and
Blue (cat. 139) and (right)
Composition No. 7, 1937-1942
(Ott. 452), Munson-WilliamsProctor Institute Museum of Art,
Utica. © 1980 Arnold Newman.





#### OCTOBER

Von Wiegand notes in her diary that the solid lines in both *Broadway Boogie Woogie* and *Victory Boogie Woogie* have given way to staccato bands composed of small blocks, both colored and gray. Mondrian proceeds to fill the white areas between the lines with similarly colored planes of various sizes.

The opening of Guggenheim's museum/gallery Art of This Century on West 57th Street, with an interior designed by Kiesler, receives national attention. Mondrian is represented by a facade drawing of 1914 (Seuphor 361), an ocean drawing of 1915 (cat. 68), and the 1939 *Composition No. I* (cat. 154).

#### WINTER

A photo taken by Glarner about this time shows Mondrian posing as if to put a finishing brushstroke to *Victory Boogie Woogie*: its tapes have been translated into paint.

# 1943 JANUARY

An exhibition touring various U.S. cities organized by the Netherlands Information Bureau in New York, *Modern Dutch Art: 14 Paintings by Vincent van Gogh and Work by Contemporary Dutch Artists*, includes his *Composition No. 7* of 1937-1942 (Ott. 452).

## FEBRUARY 2

Opening of a Stuart Davis exhibition at Edith Halpert's Downtown Gallery. Learning that boogie-woogie will be played, Mondrian invites Janis and they both attend. The "swing session," which Davis recalls included Duke Ellington, W. C. Handy, Mildred Bailey, and Pete Johnson, is mentioned in several reviews.

#### MARCH

Shows two paintings at Art of This Century in an exhibition entitled 15 Early and 15 Late Paintings (comparing an early and a late work by fifteen artists), organized by Ernst's son Jimmy (13 March-17 April).

[1942/43]

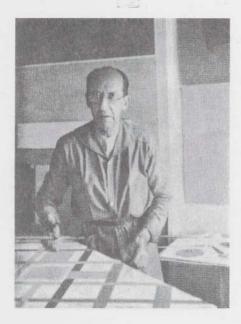


Fig. 25 Mondrian with painted state of Victory Boogie Woogie, late 1942. Photograph by Fritz Glarner.

Shows the 1912 "The Trees" (cat. 37) at Unity in Diversity: An Exhibition and a Contest at the Nierendorf Gallery (14 March-3 April).

Participates in the seventh annual exhibition of the American Abstract Artists held at the Riverside Museum, New York (15 March-25 April).

Mondrian's second one-man show at the Valentine Gallery (22 March-30 April). It is smaller than the first and coincides with the exhibition of the sculptor Maria Martins, wife of the Brazilian ambassador. He shows six paintings: an entirely new Broadway Boogie Woogie (cat. 165); four earlier paintings reworked in New York, including Place de la Concorde (cat. 156) and Trafalgar Square (cat. 158) – both of which he may have renamed for the show; and the 1938 Picture No. III (cat. 153). Broadway Boogie Woogie is purchased by Martins and donated to The Museum of Modern Art almost immediately. Press notices are reserved by comparison with those for the first show.

#### APRII

Broadway Boogie Woogie is illustrated in an article in View by Paul Bowles, "The Jazz Ear": "Mondrian's painting can be fully appreciated only if seen in connection with the playing of a boogie-woogie record, an experience which Mr. Dudensing of the Valentine Gallery offers to those interested."

Finishes what will prove to be his last essay, "A New Realism," written for an eponymous anthology to be published by the American Abstract Artists. It will not appear until 1946, by which time the essay has been published in the collection edited by Holtzman (see 1945 below).

#### MAY

Sales of his work allow him to afford a larger apartment in the center of town.

Arranges to take over the top-floor apartment at 15 East 59th Street occupied by
Boris Margo and Jan Gelb, painters he met through Holtzman.

On 11 May, at the request of Guggenheim, he joins her, Barr, Duchamp, Sweeney,

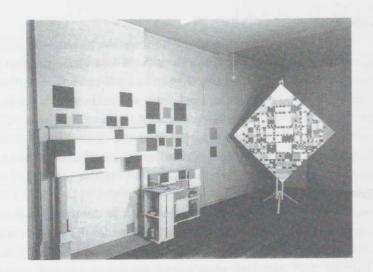


Fig. 26 Mondrian's 15 East 59th Street studio after his death, showing *Victory Boogie Woogie* (cat. 166). Photograph by Fritz Glarner.

Howard Putzel, and James Thrall Soby on the jury of her first *Spring Salon for Young Artists* at Art of This Century (18 May-26 June). Jackson Pollock's *Stenographic Figure* (1942), which Guggenheim dismisses, draws his notice as "the most exciting painting that I have seen in a long, long time, here or in Europe," as Jimmy Ernst will recall. Guggenheim recalls that "Mondrian was a frequent visitor [to the gallery], and always brought his paintings wrapped up in white paper."

#### JUNE

Janis organizes an exhibition of the self-taught figurative painter Morris Hirschfield at the Museum of Modern Art. Mondrian attends the opening and praises the work.

#### **JULY 28-SEPTEMBER 26**

The Museum of Modern Art shows *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (cat. 165) in the exhibition *New Acquisitions*, with accompanying comment by Barr in a press release. Clement Greenberg will call the work "something a little less than a masterpiece" (*The Nation*, 9 October). A week later in the following issue, he corrects a mistaken color indication in his review and adds that "the picture improves tremendously on a second view." Holty will recall that, on seeing the picture in the museum, Mondrian feels that there is too much yellow.

#### SEPTEMBER

In the fall issue of *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, von Wiegand publishes "The Meaning of Mondrian."

#### OCTOBER

Moves into the new apartment, having had it entirely whitewashed in advance. The first weeks are spent applying color planes to the walls and installing furniture he has made from fruit crates, stretchers, and other bits of wood. He is now closer to the galleries as well as to Central Park, where he enjoys walking with Glarner. Continues work on *Victory Boogie Woogie*, apparently his only painting in progress.

- Von Wiegand introduces the journalist and collector Ella Winter to Mondrian. She buys *Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Red* (cat. **151**) and one of the chrysanthemum pictures from the exhibition of January 1942.
- On 7 December, the exhibition *Artists for Victory* opens at the Metropolitan Museum, including many members of American Abstract Artists but not Mondrian. At about this time, Seuphor will recall, he begins to receive a monthly retainer of 200 dollars to consult with a manufacturer of women's handbags to whom Dudensing has introduced him.

1944

#### JANUARY

- Observing Mondrian on 10 January at work on *Victory Boogie Woogie*, von Wiegand notes that "he had painted the white in and it had that luminous, living quality of the original conception on a new level of development." When Janis visits the studio at about this time, the painting is again nearing a finished state. Mondrian asks him whether the lower left central section needs more work.
- During a visit on 17 January, tells von Wiegand that *Victory Boogie Woogie* is "all right except the very top," which requires reworking.
- Two works, *Tableau No. III* (cat. 93) and a painting dated 1935-1942, are in the exhibition *School of Paris: Abstract Paintings* at the Valentine Gallery (17 January-26 February).
- Dines with Holtzman on 19 January. The two have lately been discussing plans for an ideal nightclub. There is also a dinner about this time at von Wiegand's with Holty and Davis, after which Holty comes up to see the painting and stays into the morning, leaving Mondrian still at work at 4:00 a.m.
- Holtzman visits on 20 or 21 January and sees the painting in basically its final taped state: "Now I have only to paint it," Mondrian remarks.
- On 23 January Glarner finds Mondrian has a bad cold but nothing more. The architect Sert, who lives in the same building, drops by, finding Mondrian sick but working on *Victory Boogie Woogie* in his pajamas. Complaining of bronchitis, Mondrian declines Richter's invitation to a party at his nearby apartment on the 25th.
- Glarner, one of Mondrian's devoted New York friends who has known him since the late 1920s, finds him deathly ill on 26 January. Holtzman arrives and notifies Mondrian's doctor, Max Trubek, who diagnoses a serious case of pneumonia. He is taken to Murray Hill Hospital at 30 East 40th Street. After the doctor is called, von Wiegand arrives and is struck by the "radical change" in *Victory Boogie Woogie*, which had been nearly devoid of tapes on 17 January but is "now covered once again with small tapes and looked as though he'd been working on it in fever and with great intensity. It had a more dynamic quality and there seemed to be more little squares in various colors." Thus between 17 and 23 January he had reworked the nearly finished *Victory Boogie Woogie*, "broken away from all those straight lines and opened the entire surface again."
- In the evening of 31 January his health declines precipitously. Holtzman, Glarner, Richter, Sweeney, and Von Wiegand are all at the hospital.

Mondrian dies in the early morning of 1 February.

A memorial service is held on 3 February at the Universal Chapel at Lexington Avenue and 52nd Street. The speakers include Barr and Ton Elink Schuurman, the Dutch consul general. The ceremony is attended by some two hundred persons, including the emigré artists Alexander Archipenko, Herbert Bayer, Marc Chagall, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Jean Hélion, Frederick Kiesler, Moïse Kisling, Fernand Léger, Matta, László Moholy-Nagy, Amedée Ozenfant, Hans Richter, and Kurt Seligman, and the American artists Peter Blume, Ilya Bolotowsky, Alexander Calder, Burgoyne Diller, Suzy Frelinghuysen, Fritz Glarner, Carl Holty, Harry Holtzman, Ibram Lassaw, George L. K. Morris, Robert Motherwell, Charles Shaw, Charmion von Wiegand, and Abraham Walkowitz. Others include Valentine Dudensing, Katherine Dreier, Albert Gallatin, Sigfried Giedion, Clement Greenberg, Peggy Guggenheim, Sam Kootz, Julien Levy, Henry McBride, Karl Nierendorf, Dwight MacDonald, Hilla Rebay, Meyer Schapiro, James Johnson Sweeney, and James Thrall Soby. The artist is buried in Cypress Hill Cemetery.

His death is reported in *The New York Herald Tribune* (2 February), *The New York Times* (2 February), *The New York Sun* (5 February, by Henry McBride), *Knickerbocker Weekly* (14 February, by Jay Bradley and Max Ernst), *The Nation* (4 March, by Greenberg), *Partisan Review* (spring issue, by Sweeney), and *Art Chronicle* (spring issue, also Sweeney), and in the Dutch press by the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and *Het Volk* of 10 February. Carola Giedion-Welcker writes an extensive obituary in the April issue of the Swiss journal *Werk*.

New York City (cat. 164) is shown at the exhibition Abstract and Surrealist Art in the United States, organized by Janis for the Cincinnati Museum of Art (8 February-3 March). It travels to Denver, Seattle, Santa Barbara, and San Francisco.

#### MARCH

Ten works from the period 1927-1936 are included in the exhibition *konkrete kunst* at the Kunsthalle, Basel (18 March-16 April).

Composition No. 1 (cat. 124) is included in the exhibition Ivory Black in Modern Painting at the Pierre Matisse Gallery, New York (21 March-15 April).

After meticulously measuring, documenting, photographing, and filming Mondrian's apartment with Glarner, Holtzman opens the studio to the public on 22 March. He grants permission for Fernand Fonssagrives to take several photographs of a fashion model posing in the studio (published in the June issue of *Town and Country*). Holtzman also finds a folder of miscellaneous notes dating from 1938 to 1944, which he will edit and publish as part of the collected writings in 1986.

The American Abstract Artists include *Composition with Blue* (cat. 143) in their eighth annual exhibition at the Mortimer Brandt Gallery, New York (27 March-8 April).

## APRIL 15

The New Yorker includes an interview with Holtzman prompted by the opening of the atelier.

Andrew C. Ritchie of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo acquires *Composition No. 11* (cat. **162**) of 1940-1942 for the museum.

#### JANUARY

Vogue includes Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue (cat. 139) of 1935-1942 in a series of fashion photographs with art backdrops. Harriet Janis, the wife of Sidney Janis, publishes "Notes on Piet Mondrian" in Arts & Architecture.

#### MARCH

- European Artists in America at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York includes Composition No. 10 (cat. 161) of 1939-1942 (13 March-11 April).
- Retrospective memorial exhibition opens at the Museum of Modern Art (21 March-31 May). The *Museum of Modern Art Bulletin* includes an overview by Sweeney based on his interviews and correspondence with the artist.
- Piet Mondrian: Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art (1937) and Other Essays (1941-1943), a volume edited by Holtzman in Motherwell's Documents of Modern Art series, reprints all of Mondrian's essays that have appeared in English.

#### JULY

Life publishes seven color reproductions from the Museum of Modern Art retrospective.

#### AUGUST

A brief notice in *Art News*, "Mondrian Makes the Mode," illustrates a dress from a fall collection inspired by Mondrian, noting "the sudden popularization of the purest, the most austere abstractionist of our day."

#### OCTOBER

A committee is formed in Amsterdam (Alma, van Eesteren, Karsten, Sandberg, Slijper, Stam, Charley Toorop, and Vordemberge-Gildewart) to organize a memorial exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum (6 November-16 December 1946). It subsequently travels to the Kunsthalle, Basel.

[1944/45]

1945

# Catalogue

## NOTE TO THE READER

Each catalogue entry contains the following categories of information.

#### Title

Many of Mondrian's works have more than one legitimate title. This is a result of his practice, begun in September 1913, of assigning consecutive numerical or alphabetical titles to works submitted to the same exhibition, and then renumbering works for each new exhibition. (For example, cat. 48 was entitled *Tableau No. 2* for a November 1913 exhibition; for an exhibition six months later, Mondrian changed the title to *Composition No. VII.*)

At the top of each entry all titles are listed, separated by semicolons and distinguished as follows:

Original titles (inscribed by the artist on the reverse of the painting, mentioned in his notes or correspondence, or published in a catalogue or list of an exhibition to which he personally submitted works) appear in uppercase type, with the earliest title listed first.

Titles believed to be original, but not definitively documented as such, appear in quotation marks.

Descriptive titles, known from popular use or newly assigned for this exhibition, appear in upper- and lowercase type.

When a title is mentioned anywhere in the catalogue other than at the top of an entry, only the first of Mondrian's titles is given, followed, in a few cases, by its better known descriptive title. Where no original title exists, a descriptive title assigned for this exhibition is used.

#### Date

Assigned dates represent the year in which work on the painting was completed. A range of dates indicates either two distinct campaigns of work (for canvases begun in Europe and finished in New York), or relatively continuous work (for paintings begun in New York).

#### State

A painting is considered to have a first state if there is evidence that Mondrian regarded the work as finished at that time. The second (final) state is assigned a range of dates if Mondrian inscribed such dates on the canvas; otherwise, it is given a single date. In catalogue texts, the second state title is used unless the first state of the work is specifically discussed.

#### Dimensions

Measurements of the unframed work are in centimeters, followed by inches in parentheses, with height preceding width. For the lozenge compositions (square canvases hung on a point), dimensions are for adjacent sides, followed by vertical axis. Where the lozenge shape is irregular, slightly different measurements of the two axes are recorded.

#### Condition and Framing

The condition of the work or its frame is mentioned only in those cases where conservation work or extensive study has been undertaken in preparation for this exhibition. If a work is known to have been restored or mounted by the artist, this is noted.

Mondrian's method of framing changed at various points during his career. His surviving frames are all reproduced in this catalogue (often for the first time) and described briefly. Where a good approximation of the original has been constructed, it is noted and illustrated. Reliable documentation of a lost original frame is provided when known.

# Inscriptions

The artist's signatures, dates, and other inscriptions on the front and back of the work are recorded.

#### Provenance

Much of the provenance information reflects the extensive

research of Robert Welsh and Joop Joosten, as well as facts obtained from the lenders by Angelica Z. Rudenstine and other members of the curatorial team.

#### Discussion

Text is limited largely to quotations from Mondrian's correspondence and writings; reviews are cited if they shed light on the contemporary reception of the artist's work. For Mondrian's voluminous published writing, see *The New Art – The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian*, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (Boston, 1986); and Robert Welsh and Joop Joosten, *Two Mondrian Sketchbooks: 1912-1914* (The Hague and Amsterdam, 1969).

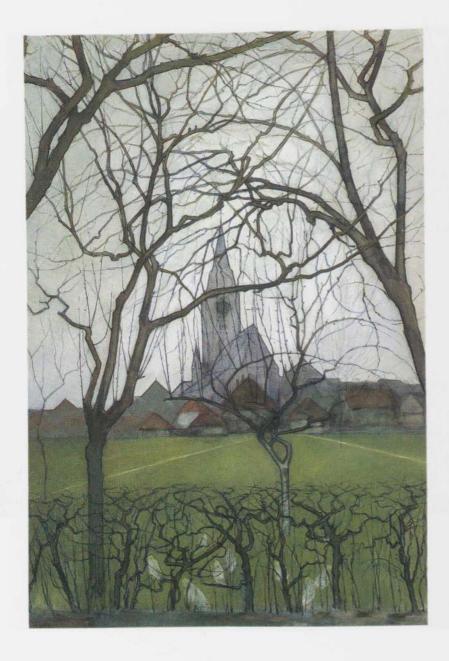
#### Exhibitions

For each entry, virtually all exhibitions that took place during the artist's lifetime are cited, with exhibition numbers and sales prices provided when known. Titles in exhibition catalogues or lists are included when they represent the first use of that title by the artist, or the first use of a descriptive title that later gained wide acceptance. Citations of exhibitions since Mondrian's death are limited to important monographic exhibitions and significant or first showings of a work as part of a public or private collection. Exhibitions are cited by city and year in which the show opened. For traveling exhibitions, subsequent venues are noted in the entry only if a separate catalogue or exhibition list was published. Complete information appears under *Exhibitions*, pp. 389-392.

#### Literature

Citations are selective and emphasize early publications and those sources, including catalogues of exhibitions, auctions, and permanent collections, that contribute to the understanding of the work of art.

The three basic catalogues of Mondrian's work are cited throughout: Michel Seuphor, *Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* (New York, London, Amsterdam, 1956); Maria Grazia Ottolenghi, *L'opera completa di Mondrian* (Milan, 1974); and Cor Blok, *Piet Mondriaan. Een catalogus van zijn werk in Nederlands openbaar bezit* (Amsterdam, 1974). Works not included in this exhibition are identified by Ottolenghi (Ott.) numbers where possible. Complete references for abbreviated sources appear under *Literature*, pp. 393-399.



# 1 DORPSKERK (Village Church); Jacobskerk, Winterswijk early 1898

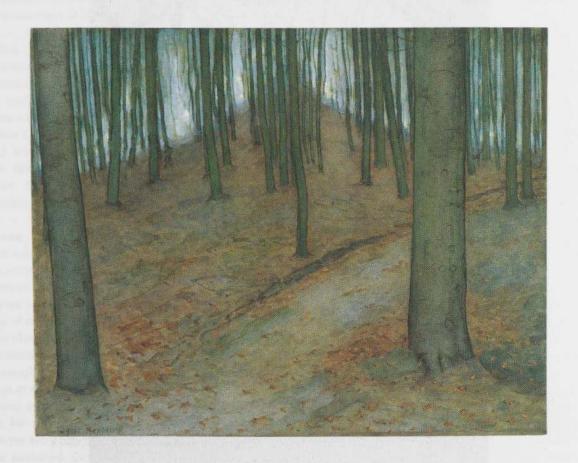
Watercolor and gouache on paper,  $75 \times 50 (291/2 \times 195/8)$ 

Signed lower left: PIET MONDRIAAN Inscribed on the reverse:
And the branches of the young saplings / rejoiced / soaring to meet the others that hung down / from the tall trees / quietly in the grey sky and below / the silent green expanse – / And the church rose high above the village. M (trans. Henkels 1987)

Provenance: Dr. L. B. Lindeboom, Amsterdam, c. 1910-1933; Mrs. M. P. Harrenstein-Lindeboom, 1933-1965; Miss W. Lindeboom, 1965-1993; Heirs of Miss Lindeboom, on long-term loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1898, no. 90, "Dorpskerk" (fl. 200); Amsterdam 1899, no. 64 (fl. 100); Amsterdam 1922, no. 172, "Landschap met Kerk."

Literature: Kalff 1898; Welsh 1966b, 44; Welsh 1977a, 32-35; Henkels 1979, 52-53; Blotkamp 1982, 16-17; Henkels 1987, 161.

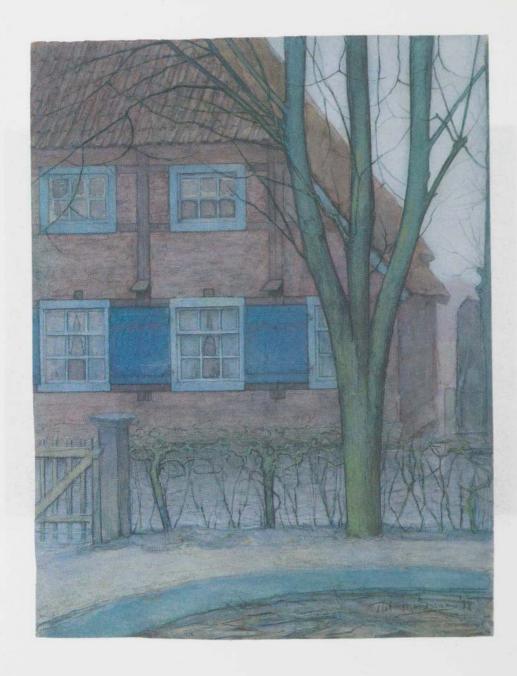
Lender: Private collection, Amsterdam The Reformed Church at Winterswijk could be seen directly from the back garden of Mondrian's home (Welsh 1966b). The family did not worship there, but attended another Calvinist church. One drawing and one etching are known, dating from this year and showing the church from the same vantage point. In his review of 5 June 1898, Kalff responded to an essential element in the watercolor when he drew attention to its "mass of tree branches thrown together like spiders' feet."



# 2 Beech Forest c. 1898-1899

Watercolor and gouache on paper, 45.3 x 56.7 (17.7/8 x 22.3/8)
Signed lower left: PIET MONDRIAAN
Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T58-1971).
Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 9; Tokyo 1987, no. 6.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 64; Ragghianti 1962, 98; Blok 1974, no. 13; Welsh 1977a, 96, 97.
Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

At the end of October 1919, when Mondrian was living in Paris, he sent a large crate of works to his friend S. B. Slijper in Blaricum. It contained all of the early naturalist and cubist work still in his possession, purchased in toto from Mondrian by Slijper while the artist was still in Holland. In a letter to Slijper dated 1 September 1919, he wrote: "I have had your pictures...ready for a long time now, with everything signed, and am waiting for the crate so that I can send them to you. There are more than I thought I still had...and just a few of them are being sent without stretchers." Mondrian clearly added signatures to a significant number of his works at this time, probably at Slijper's request. In another letter, referring to the fact that there were more paintings in the shipment than he had anticipated, he suggested that Slijper might even want to sell some of them if he felt that he could not keep them all.



# 3 The Weavers' House, Winterswijk 1899

Pastel, black chalk, and watercolor on cream wove paper, 71.1 x 54.3 (28 x 21 3/8)

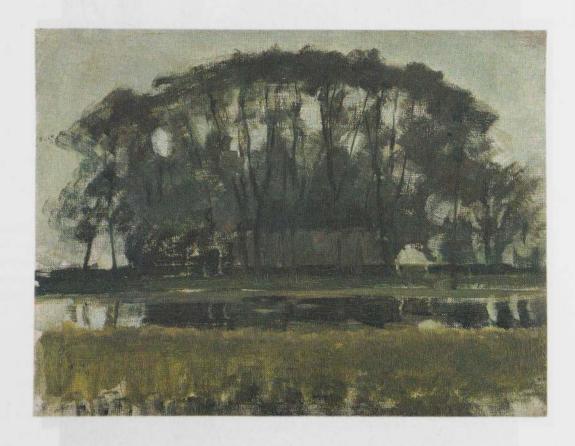
Signed and dated lower right: Piet Mondriaan '99

Provenance: Muller collection, Laren; Private collection, New Zealand; E. V. Thaw & Co., New York, c. 1960-1967 (acquired at auction, John Cordy, Ltd., Auckland, New Zealand).

Literature: Henkels 1979, 47-48.
Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]

The "wevershuis," which contained a textile mill, was located directly across the street from Mondrian's home (Henkels 1979). He made a small sketch of the corner of the building (private collection, Amsterdam) and developed it into the present finished gouache. After completion, he carefully trimmed all four sides, demonstrating the importance he always attached to the specific cropping of each image.



# 4 Geinrust Farm c. 1900-1902

Oil on canvas, 30 x 39.7 cm (11 3/4 x 15 5/8) The canvas was lined and placed on a new stretcher at an unknown date.

Provenance: Dr. J. F. S. Esser, Amsterdam, c. 1913-c. 1946. Exhibitions: Paris 1969, no. 8. Literature: Ottolenghi 1974, no. 140; Welsh 1977a, 85-87; Welsh 1994, 132. Lender: Private collection This farm on the Gein, which appears in fifteen of Mondrian's landscapes, has been identified as Geinrust, located at Gein West 28 (Welsh 1994). In most of these pictures, the house, which was located only a few hundred yards from the cafe de Vink on the south side of the Gein, is seen from across the river, more or less hidden behind a screen of trees.



# 5 Geinrust Farm with High Horizon c. 1905-1906

Black chalk and pastel on laid paper, 46.2 x 62.0 (18 1/4 x 24 3/8)
Signed lower right: Piet Mondriaan Provenance: Private collection
Literature: Welsh 1977a, 85-87.
Lender: Private collection



# 6 Geinrust Farm: Close View c. 1905-1906

Charcoal, chalk, and pastel on brownish paper, 47.8 x 60.3 (18 7/8 x 23 3/4) Signed lower right: PIET MONDRIAAN.

Provenance: Mr. J. P. Smid,
Amsterdam; Ralph Goldenberg,
Chicago; B. C. Holland Gallery,
Chicago; purchased from B. C.
Holland Gallery, 1978, by The Art
Institute of Chicago
(inv. no. 1978.462).

Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 19. Literature: Welsh 1977a, 85-87; Bois 1982, 27-28.

Lender: The Art Institute of Chicago, Brewer Woods Fund

[Washington and New York only]



# 7 Geinrust Farm in Watery Landscape c. 1906

Watercolor, chalk, and pastel on gray paper, 48.5 x 67 (19 1/8 x 26 3/8) Signed lower right: Piet Mondriaan. Provenance: 1913, Gift of J. Krol to Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem (inv. no.455). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1994,

no. 49.

Literature: Blok 1974, no.92; Bois 1982, 27-28; Welsh 1994, 132, 136, no.49.

Lender: Frans Halsmuseum, Haarlem

[Washington and New York only]



# 8 Geinrust Farm in the Mist c. 1906-1907

Oil on canvas, 32.5 x 42.5 (12 5/8 x 16 7/8) Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAAN Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 122-1971). Exhibitions: Tokyo 1987, no. 44; Amsterdam 1994, no. 50. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 181; Ragghianti 1962, 80, 96, 111, 375; Blok 1968, no. 56; Blok 1974, no. 122; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 159; Bois 1982, 27-28; Champa 1985, 10-11; Welsh 1994, 132, 137. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

Formerly identified as *Mist on the Amstel*, the composition clearly indicates that the picture belongs to the series of Gein riverscapes (Welsh 1994).



# 9 Evening on the Gein with Isolated Tree c. 1907-early 1908

Oil on canvas, 65 x 86 (25 5/8 x 33 3/4)
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by A. P. van den Briel,
probably by December 1911;
Gift of van den Briel, 1956,
Haags Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. 28-1956).
Exhibitions: New York 1971, no. 17;
Paris 1983, no. 161.
Literature: Loosjes-Terpstra 1959,
50; Blok 1974, no. 103; Ottolenghi
1974, no. 101.
Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum,
The Hague



# 10 Riverscape with Pink and Yellow-Green Sky c. 1907-1908

Oil on canvas, 75 x 120 (29 1/2 x 47 1/4)
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum,
1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971,
Haags Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. 111-1971).

Exhibitions: The Hague 1966, no. 33; Berlin 1968, no. 8; Paris 1969, no. 10; New York 1971, no. 20; Bern 1972, no. 24; Paris 1983, no. 165; Tokyo 1987, no. 50.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 208; Ragghianti 1962, 27, 105; Blok 1968, no. 42; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 51; Blok 1974, no. 139; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 153; Henkels 1987, 37.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 11 Trees on the Gein: Moonrise 1908

Oil on canvas, 79 x 92.5 (31 1/8 x 36 3/8) Provenance: Acquired from the artist by A. P. van den Briel, probably by December 1911; Gift of van den Briel, 1956, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 59-1956).

Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1909; The Hague 1955, no. 13; Zurich 1955, no. 5; London 1955, no. 4; Toronto 1966, no. 34; The Hague 1966, no. 36; Paris 1969, no. 4; New York 1971, no. 22; Bern 1972, no. 27.

Literature: (?) Lapidoth 1909; Seuphor 1956, no.50; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 50; Welsh 1966b, 74; Jaffé 1970, 76-77; Blok 1974, no.142; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 171. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

[The Hague only]



# 12 BOS (Woods); Woods near Oele 1908

Oil on canvas, 128 x 158 (50 3/8 x 62 1/8) Signed lower right:

PIET MONDRIAAN

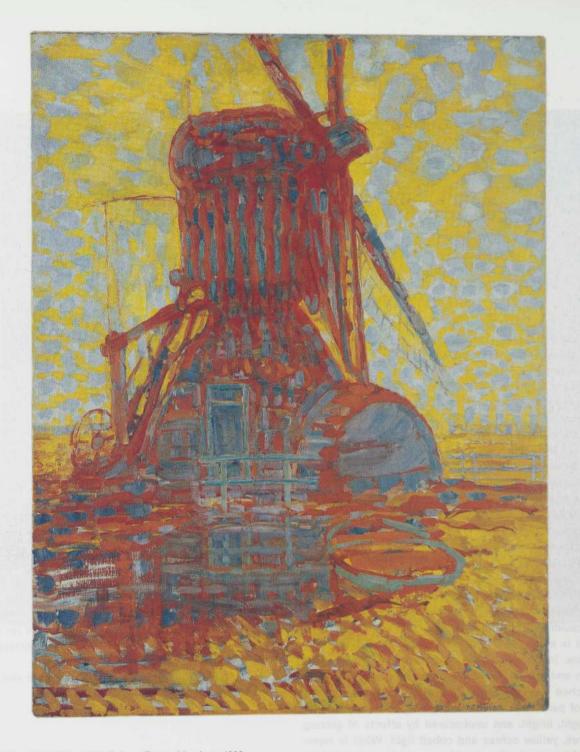
Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 126-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1909;
Brussels 1909, no. 78, "BoschBois"; Rotterdam 1915, no. 44,
"Bosch, 1911" (fl. 300);
Amsterdam 1922, no. 193, "Bosch
met ondergaande zon";
Amsterdam 1946, no. 29; Basel
1947, no. 49; New York 1953b, no. 5;
The Hague 1955, no. 35; Zurich
1955, no. 20; London 1955, no. 12;

Rome 1956, no. 4; Toronto 1966, no. 51; The Hague 1966, no. 54; Berlin 1968, no. 12; Paris 1969, no. 15; New York 1971, no. 23; Bern 1972, no. 21.

Literature: Kickert 1909, 98; Querido 1909; Wolf 1915, 251; Seuphor 1956, no. 192; James 1957, 36; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 53,77; Ragghianti 1962, 96, 117, 128; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 9-10; Jaffé 1970, 21, 22, 78, 80; Blok 1974, no. 159; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 200; Henkels 1980, 243.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 13 MOLEN (Mill); Mill in Sunlight 1908

Oil on canvas, 114 x 87 (44 7/8 x 30 1/4) Signed lower right: PIET MONDRIAAN.

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 130-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1909; Brussels 1909, no. 79, "Molen-Moulin"; Amsterdam 1922, no. 187, "Molen in de zon"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 30; Basel 1947, no. 48; New York 1953b, no. 15; The Hague 1955, no. 36; Zurich 1955, no. 35; London 1955, no. 14; Rome 1956, no. 5; New York 1957a, no. 5; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 53; The Hague 1966, no. 56; Berlin 1968, no. 15; Paris 1969, no. 18; New York 1971, no. 27; Bern 1972, no. 23; Tokyo 1987, no. 6.

Literature: Lapidoth 1909; Kickert 1909, 98; Kalff 1909; Querido 1909; Hana 1924, repr. as suppl., 15 June 1924; Seuphor 1956, no. 325; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 55, 59; Blok 1962, 37; Ragghianti 1962, 100, 104, 117, 125, 128, 132; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 10; Jaffé 1970, 22, 82, 96; Blok 1974, no. 166; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 201; Welsh 1994, 146.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

continued >

Fig. a Windmill on the Winkel near Abcoude, c. 1905 (now destroyed). Photograph by C. Steenburgh, 1908.

Mill in Sunlight drew considerable critical comment at the 1909 Amsterdam exhibition (Welsh 1994). Kalff professed total bewilderment: "concerning...a red-blue-yellow mill...l grasp nothing." Lapidoth found himself similarly at a loss: "a mill dripping with blood [seen] against a yellow sky with holes as in a Swiss cheese." Meanwhile, Conrad Kickert (1892-1965), the art critic of De Telegraaf, who was already a supporter of Mondrian's work and who began his review with grudging admiration for some of the recent landscapes, was clearly startled by Mondrian's radical handling of color in the Mill: "I cannot feel anything for a light purple and bright vermillion mill brushed on against a cadmium yellow sky divided into planes."

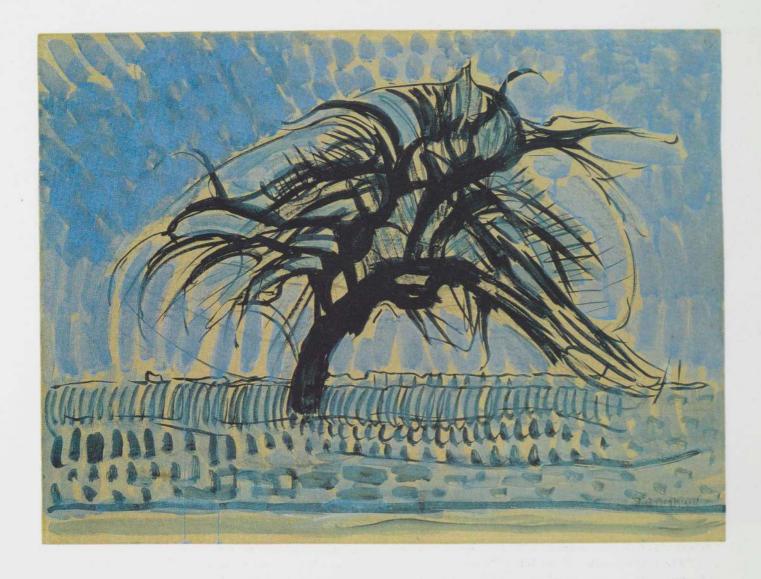
Among the critics, only Israël Querido responded with eloquent enthusiasm to Mondrian's radiant new palette and his personal interpretation of a postimpressionist language: "Another canvas hangs before you, with a mill in sunlight. You have never seen anything as murderous in color. It is a flaming cauldron. The contours of the mill are bleeding red, and there is a scorching yellow. It is streaming blood. The gold-yellow, Indian yellow, and cadmium light with radiant vermillion and orange, bristle as a single rain of color from the scorched heavens. There are glowing flakes, burning patches of paint, fermented, shot through with ultramarine violets, light, bright, and unobscured by effects of glazing. Red ochres, yellow ochres and cobalt light. What is represented? A summer's day, out-of-doors in burning heat. Yet again Mondrian wished to paint, not the mill as a beautiful mill, not its color, not the sky, the light, the trees, or the atmosphere, as beautiful trees, beautiful sky color, but the moment of sensation of the height of the glowing day. Color thus [given] with a feverish enhancement of glowing: no tones, not the slightest effort [to produce] softening and soothing optical effects; everything, but everything, is in the service of a hymn to the sun, the resounding blaze of summer



light, the whirlpools of color from summer daylight, ferocious and vehement, in the face of which, stunned and blinded, you slam your eyes shut. But enter into this explosion of lightning, this setting ablaze of the earth, this crackling of fiery flames from the hellishly corrosive glow of the sunlit day."

Querido ended his review with a contemptuous attack on the much more conventional "impressionist" Hague school style of Willem Maris. (The full texts of these reviews were generously provided by Robert Welsh, in correspondence with the authors, April 1994.)

Welsh (1994) identified this picture with the site shown in the photograph, fig.  ${\bf a}$ .



# 14 Blue Tree c. 1908

Tempera on cardboard,
75.5 x 99.5 (29 3/4 x 39 1/8)
Signed lower right:
PIET MONDRIAAN.
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by Conrad Kickert,
c. 1909-1911; Gift of Kickert, 1934,
Haags Gemeentemuseum

(inv. no. T99-1934). Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1909; Amsterdam 1922, no. 186, "Boom"; The Hague 1955, no. 53; Zurich 1955, no. 47; London 1955, no. 18; Rome 1956, no. 14; Berlin 1968,

no. 19; Paris 1969, no. 23; Bern 1972,

no. 41; Tokyo 1987, no. 60. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 284; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 81; Menna 1962, 87, 95; Ragghianti 1962, 115, 125, 126, 375; Blok 1974, no. 165; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 224. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague In addition to *Avond (Evening); Red Tree* (cat. 15) and the present work, both of which were undoubtedly painted in his studio, Mondrian made two drawings after nature (Seuphor 279 and Ott. 2061) and two painted versions (Ott. 223 and Ott. 225) of the same tree.

Conrad Kickert acquired *Blue Tree* at a time when he was a strong supporter of Mondrian's work. By the mid teens, however, he began to develop a certain hostility towards it.



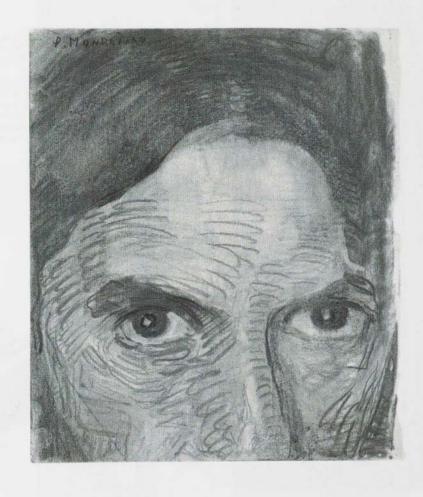
# 15 AVOND (Evening); Red Tree 1908

Oil on canvas, 70 x 99 (27 1/2 x 39)
Signed lower left: PM [monogram]
Provenance: Mrs. Marie Tak van
Poortvliet, 1910-1915 (?);
purchased from Mrs. van
Poortvliet, 1933, Haags
Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. 17-1933).
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1909:

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1909;
Amsterdam 1910, no. 482, "Avond"
(fl. 500); Brussels 1910, no. 69,
"Avond-Soir"; Amsterdam 1946,
no. 52; Basel 1947, no. 41; New York
1951, no. 1; The Hague 1955, no. 54;
Zurich 1955, no. 41; London 1955,
no. 19; Rome 1956, no. 15; Toronto
1966, no. 54; The Hague 1966, no. 57;
Berlin 1968, no. 14; Paris 1969,
no. 20; New York 1971, no. 32;

Bern 1972, no. 31.
Literature: Lapidoth 1909; Wolf 1910; Henkel 1910; Wolf 1911a; van Gelder 1934, 116; Verburg 1952, 13; Blom 1955, 8; Seuphor 1956, no. 283; James 1957, 34; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 77, 81, 126, 156; Blok 1962, 37; Welsh 1966b, 112; Blok 1968, 22, 31; Jaffé 1970, 23, 84, 102; Blok 1974, no. 163; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 206.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 16 Self-Portrait: Eyes c. 1908-1909

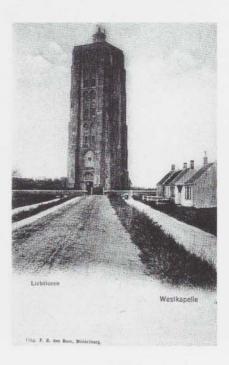
Charcoal on paper,
30 x 25.5 (11 3/4 x 10)
Signed upper left: P. MONDRIAAN.
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum,
1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971,
Haags Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. T52-1971).
Exhibitions: Toronto 1966, no. 50b;
The Hague 1966, no. 53c;
Tokyo 1987, no. 56.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 288;
Blok 1974, no. 158; Henkels 1980,
248-250.
Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum,

The Hague



Fig. a
The lighthouse at Westkapelle.
Photographer and date unknown.

Fig. **b**Lighthouse at Westkapelle, 1909, ink, chalk, and gouache on paper, 30 x 24.5 cm,
Haags Gemeentemuseum,
The Hague.

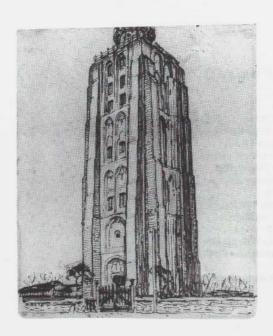


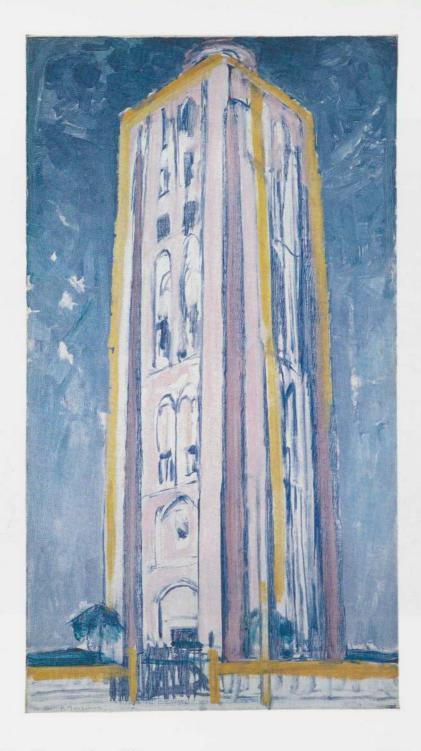
# 17 Lighthouse at Westkapelle c. late 1908-1909

Oil on canvas, 71 x 52 (28 x 20 1/2)
Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAAN.
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum,
1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971,
Haags Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. 127-1971).
Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1922,

Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1922, no. 199 or 200, "Toren in Westkapelle"; The Hague 1955, no. 37; Zurich 1955, no. 27; Paris 1969, no. 28.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 312; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 77; Blok 1962, 37; Ragghianti 1962, 98; Jaffé 1970, 80, 86; Blok 1974, no. 160; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 211; Blotkamp 1982, 20-21. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague





# 18 Lighthouse at Westkapelle c. 1909

Oil on canvas, 135 x 75 (53 1/8 x 29 1/2)
Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAAN.
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum,
1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971,
Haags Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. 143-1971).
Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1922,
no. 199 or 200, "Toren in
Westkapelle"; Amsterdam 1946,
no. 38; Basel 1947, no. 44;
The Hague 1955, no. 50; Zurich
1955, no. 34; London 1955, no. 13;
Tokyo 1987, no. 75.
Literature: Hana 1924, 605, 606.

Literature: Hana 1924, 605, 606, repr. 605; Verburg 1952, 13; Seuphor 1956, no. 272; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 77; Jaffé 1970, 90; Blok 1974, no. 186; Ottolenghi 1974, no.210; Blotkamp 1982, 20-21. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague Mondrian returned to the subject of the lighthouse at Westkapelle several times. A finished drawing, probably executed in the studio and based on now lost sketchbook drawings, may have provided the source for several of the painted versions (see cat. 17, figs. a and b). Blok suggests a wide range of possible dates for these works, but it seems unlikely that any of them postdate 1910 (Welsh, in correspondence, February 1994).



# 19 Sea after Sunset 1909

Oil on cardboard mounted on panel, 62.5 x 74.5 (24 5/8 x 29 1/4) Signed lower left: Piet MONDRIAAN. Provenance: Acquired from the artist by A. P. van den Briel by December 1911; Gift of van den Briel, 1963, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 47-1963). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 41;

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 4' The Hague 1955, no. 38; Zurich 1955, no. 21; London 1955, no. 15; Paris 1969, no. 21; New York 1971, no. 35; Bern 1972, no. 33.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 278; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 77, 79, 318; Blok 1974, no. 177; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 213. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague Mondrian met Albert P. van den Briel, a forestry student, in 1900, and they became close friends. Van den Briel visited him in Domburg for three weeks in June of 1909 and was present when Mondrian painted this work. "The sea (Domburg) was painted from the 'Hooge Hil' [a promontory overlooking the sea] very late in the day, when it was already getting dark. I was there and I saw it emerging in the growing darkness." (Letter from A. P. van den Briel to R. W. D. Oxenaar, 13 January 1955, quoted in Blok 1974, 179.)



## 20 Seascape 1909

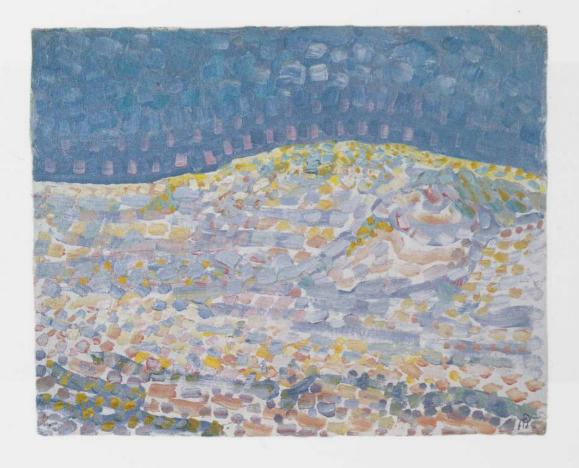
Oil on cardboard,  $34.5 \times 50.5$  (13 1/2 × 19 7/8) Signed lower right: P. MONDRIAAN. Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 132-1971). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 192, "Zee (schets)"; The Hague 1955, no. 41; Zurich 1955, no. 30; Rome 1956, no. 7; Paris 1969, no. 22. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 281; Blok 1974, no. 180; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 215; Ragghianti 1962, 100, 110, 112. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 21 Dune I 1909

Oil on cardboard, 30 x 40 (11 3/4 x 15 3/4) Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAAN. Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 133-1971). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, "Duin (schets)" (one of nos. 188-191, all "Collectie Slijper, Blaricum"); Berlin 1968, no. 17; New York 1971, no. 36; Bern 1972, no. 32. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 205; Blok 1974, no. 179; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 217. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

The series of dunes that appeared in the 1922 Amsterdam retrospective exhibition was executed during the summer of 1909 at Domburg. The sequence in which they were completed is not certain, and the numerical designations (first given to these works by Blok in 1974) are used here for purposes of identification only.



## 22 Dune II 1909

Oil on canvas, 37.5 x 46.5 (14 3/4 x 18 1/4) Signed lower right: PM [monogram] Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 134-1971). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, nos. 188-191 (see cat.21); Berlin 1968, no. 18; Paris 1969, no. 25; New York 1971, no. 37; Bern 1972, no. 34; Tokyo 1987, no. 64. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 309; Jaffé 1970, 88, 92; Blok 1974, no. 171; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 218. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



## 23 Dune IV 1909

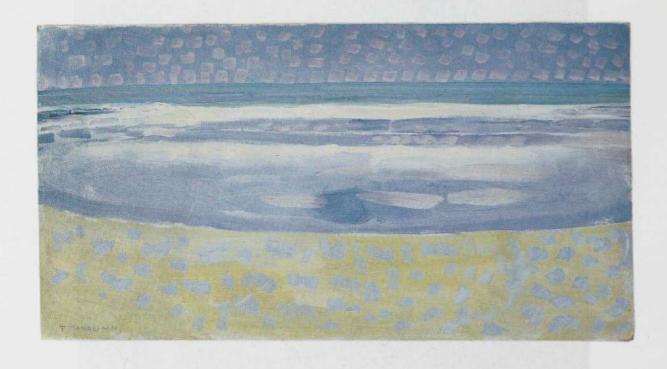
Oil on cardboard, 33 x 46 (13 x 18 1/8) Signed lower right: P. MONDRIAAN. Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 144-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, nos. 188-191 (see cat. 21); The Hague 1955, no. 40; Zurich 1955, no. 29; London 1955, no. 23; New York 1957b.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 269; Blok 1974, no. 202; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 227.

no.227. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

[The Hague and Washington only]



# 24 Sea towards Sunset 1909

Oil on cardboard, 41 x 76 (16 1/8 x 29 7/8)

Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAAN.

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 131-1971).

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 270; Ragghianti 1962, 96, 103, 111; Blok 1974, no. 176; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 214.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



### 25 Tiger Lily 1909

Chalk and charcoal on paper, 35 x 44 (13 3/4 x 17 1/4)

Signed lower left: Piet Mondriaan [Welsh has suggested in correspondence that this signature was added by Esser, as with several works that he owned.]

Signed lower right: PM [monogram]

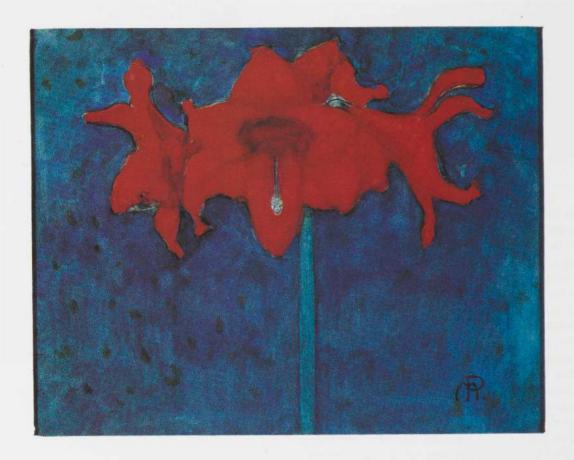
Provenance: (?) Dr. J. F. S. Esser, Amsterdam, acquired c. 1909-1911; van Dam; S. B. Slijper, Blaricum (acquired at auction, Frederik Muller, Amsterdam, 29 October 1929, no. 43); Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T122-1971).

Exhibitions: Tokyo 1987, no. 106.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 191, "Amaryllis" (an incorrect title deriving from Slijper's 1956 inventory); Blok 1974, no. 198; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 161, "Amarilli."

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

The watercolor version (presently in the collection of Mrs. A. C. H. W. Smid-Verlee), almost certainly followed this initial, highly finished drawing. In October 1909, Mondrian showed a "Lelie" in the Arti et Amicitiae exhibition of drawings, possibly the present work. In the following year, the watercolor was shown at St. Lucas together with Amaryllis (cat. 26), and both were purchased at that time.



# 26 AMARYLLIS 1910

Watercolor on paper,
39 x 49 (15 3/8 x 19 3/8)
Signed lower right: PM [monogram]
Provenance: Purchased from the
spring 1910 St. Lucas exhibition
by "H. N."; Mrs. A. C. H. W. SmidVerlee, Amsterdam, 1958.
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1910,
no. 490, "Amarilles" (fl. 75);
Toronto 1966, no. 56; The Hague
1966, no. 59; New York 1971, no. 43;
Amsterdam 1994, no. 63.
Literature: Sweeney 1945, 3-4;
Welsh 1966b, 115; Welsh 1994, 150.
Lender: A. C. H. W. Smid-Verlee

continued>

Fig. a

Dying Chrysanthemum, 1908, oil on canvas, 84.5 x 54 cm,

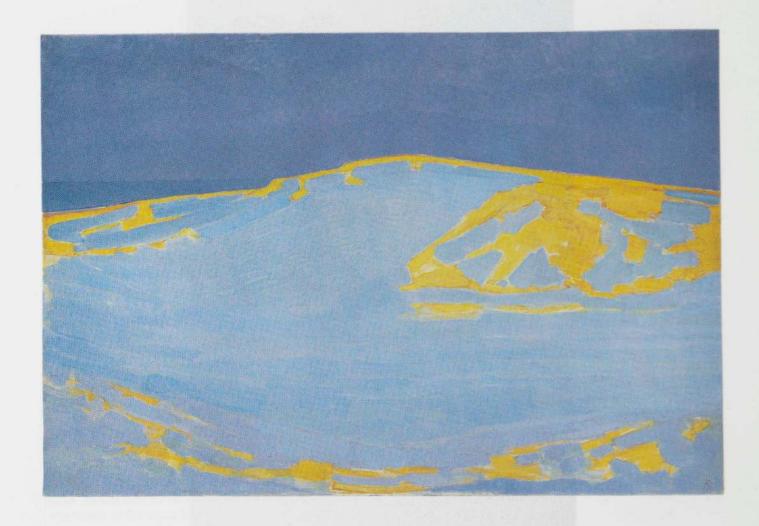
Haags Gemeentemuseum,

The Hague.

In his 1945 essay on Mondrian, James Johnson Sweeney drew attention to the stylistic break that occurred between Mondrian's flower paintings of 1907-1908, such as the famous Dying Chrysanthemum (fig. a), in which there is an evocation of symbolist anthropomorphism, and the starker restraint of the Amaryllis and the Arum Lily (Haags Gemeentemuseum). In a letter of February 1915 to the critic Augusta de Meester-Obreen (1866-1953), Mondrian himself drew attention to this distinction and to his clear aim to restrict the emotional content in the flower paintings: "Emotion is more outward than spirit. Spirit constructs, composes; emotion expresses mood and the like. Spirit constructs most purely, with the simplest line and the most basic color. The more basic the color, the more inward: the more pure. I do not neglect color, but wish precisely to make it as intense as possible. I do not neglect line, but rather want its strongest expression....Concerning what it is you say we see in a flower: you are surprised that I dissect its tender beauty and transform it into vertical and horizontal lines.... But it is not my aim to express this tender beauty. Whatever we experience in the flower as beauty - that does not come from the deepest part of its being; its form and its color is beauty, to be sure, but not the deepest beauty.

"I too find the flower beautiful in its outward appearance: but a deeper beauty lies concealed within. I did not know how to express this when I painted the withered chrysanthemum with the long stem. I expressed it through emotion – human, perhaps even an already universal human emotion. I later found *too much* human emotion in this work, and painted a blue flower *differently*. The latter remained staring stiffly; it already suggested more of the immutable." (Holtzman and James 1986, 15-16)



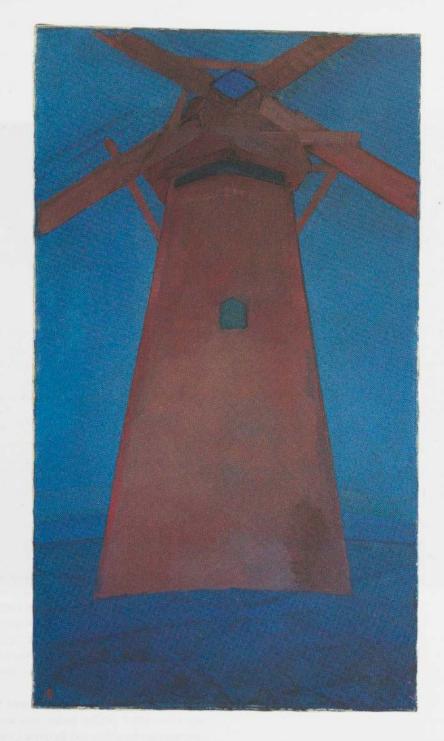


# 27 ZOMER, DUIN IN ZEELAND (Summer, Dune in Zeeland); Dune VI c. 1910

Oil on canvas, 134 x 195 (52 3/4 x 76 3/4) Signed lower right: PM [monogram] Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 145-1971); placed on long-term loan, 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1910, no. 479, "Zomer, duin in Zeeland" (fl. 1,000); Amsterdam 1911, no. 94, "Duin"; Amsterdam 1922, no. 194; Amsterdam 1946, no. 43; The Hague 1955, no. 62; Zurich 1955, no. 45. Literature: Wolf 1911b, 51; Saalborn 1911, 74-77; Blom 1955, 5; Seuphor 1956, no. 306; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 151; Blok 1962, 38; Jaffé 1970, 92; Blok 1974, no. 204; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 229.

Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



# 28 MOLEN (Mill); Red Mill at Domburg 1911

Oil on canvas, 150 x 86 (59 1/8 x 33 7/8) Signed lower left: PM [monogram] Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 147-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1911, no. 95, "Molen"; Amsterdam 1922, no. 196; Amsterdam 1946, no. 44; The Hague 1955, no. 64; Zurich 1955, no. 42; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 59; The Hague 1966, no. 62; New York 1971, no. 45; Bern 1972, no. 43. Literature: Wolf 1911b, 51; Saalborn

Literature: Wolf 1911b, 51; Saalborr 1911, 74-77; Veth 1922, 288; James 1957, 34-60; Seuphor 1956, no. 293; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 151, 152; Blok 1962, 38; Ragghianti 1962, 103, 130; Jaffé 1970, 22, 24, 96; Blok 1974, no. 206; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 243. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague In his "trialogue" of 1919-1920, Mondrian sets scene 4 before "a windmill seen at very close range; dark, sharply silhouetted against the clear night sky; its arms, at rest, forming a cross." The "abstract-realist painter," Z – the persona of Mondrian himself – eloquently outlines the problems of representation which preoccupied Mondrian in 1911. It must be borne in mind that his analysis, written almost a decade later, constitutes a retrospective view which is, in part, a critique:

"Indeed, I find this windmill very beautiful. Particularly now that we are too close to it to view it in normal perspective and therefore cannot see it or draw it normally. From here, it is very difficult merely to reproduce what one sees: one must dare to attempt a freer mode of representation. In my early work, I tried repeatedly to represent things seen close up, precisely because of the grandeur they then assume. At that time (to return to this windmill), I was particularly struck by the cross formed by its arms. Now, however, I perceive the perpendicular in everything, and the arms of the windmill are no more beautiful to me than anything else. Seen plastically, they actually have a disadvantage. We naturally attribute a particular, rather literary connotation to the shape of the cross, especially when it is in an upright position. However, the cross form is constantly destroyed in the New Plastic .... The sky is pure, but so is the mill! Visually, it appears as merely dark and lacking color. But gradations of light and dark paint are inadequate to convey a full impression of the mill and the sky, as I frequently found....The blue calls for another color to oppose it ... I found it satisfactory to paint the mill red against the blue."

The scene concludes with a striking exchange between the "naturalistic painter," X, and Mondrian's alter ego, Z, in which the latter's development into neo-plasticism is explained:

"X: But to return to the windmill, if you found it satisfactory to exaggerate the color, why didn't you continue to work that way, why did you discard all forms?"

"Z: Because otherwise, *objects as such* would have remained in the painting – and then the plastic expression would not be *exclusively plastic*. When the 'object' dominates, it always limits the emotion of beauty....*That is why the object had to be discarded from the plastic*."



# 29 Still Life with Gingerpot I 1911

Oil on canvas,

65.5 x 75 (25 3/4 x 29 1/2)
On the tacking margin of the canvas there is a trace of bronze-colored paint deriving from a method of framing that Mondrian used in 1914: a narrow strip of wood was attached to the stretcher and the canvas projected from it; the set-back strip and projecting tacking margin were painted the same bronze color.
Most of the bronze paint has been lost from the tacking margins.

Signed lower right: P MONDRIAN
[The signature closely resembles
that which Mondrian added to the
works he sent to Slijper in 1919.
After his move to Paris in

December 1911, he generally spelled his name with one "a," recognizing that the French and other foreigners were unaccustomed to the "aa"; when sending works to Holland, however, he frequently reverted to the Dutch spelling (and always did so in correspondence with Dutch people). This was not an entirely consistent practice, as is clear from the present example.]

Provenance: Acquired by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, by 1922; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 154-1971); placed on long-term loan, 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 205, "Stilleven met gemberpot (schets)"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 5; Amsterdam 1946, no. 48; Basel 1947, no. 40; New York 1949, no. 1; The Hague 1955, no. 71; Zurich 1955, no. 51; London 1955, no. 30; Rome 1956, no. 21; Toronto 1966, no. 63; The Hague 1966, no. 67; Berlin 1968, no. 24; Paris 1969, no. 30; Tokyo 1987, no. 80.

Literature: Hana 1924, 635-636, repr., "Stilleven I"; Jaffé 1956, 41; Seuphor 1956, no. 365; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 155; Welsh 1966b, 126; Pleynet 1969, 24-25; Le Bot 1973, 146-147; Jaffé 1970, 98; Joosten 1971, 56; Blok 1974, 41, no. 214; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 246; Kruskopf 1976, 115-116; Weyergraf 1979, 38-40; Champa 1985, 24-25. Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

In a letter of late September 1911, probably referring to this work, Mondrian wrote to Mies Elout-Drabbe: "The still life is not yet what I want it to be."



### 30 Gray Tree 1911

Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 107.5 (30 7/8 x 42 3/8) Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAN [added in July 1919, prior to shipment to Slijper]

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 156-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 207, "Boom"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 7; Amsterdam 1946, no. 53; Basel 1947, no. 38; New York 1951, no. 2, "Gray Tree"; The Hague 1955, no. 74; Zurich 1955, no. 56; London 1955, no. 21; Rome 1956, no. 24; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 66; The Hague 1966, no. 72; Berlin 1968, no. 27; Paris 1969, no. 37; New York 1971, no. 53; Bern 1972, no. 49; Tokyo 1987, no. 82.

Literature: Hana 1924, 606, repr. 607, "Appelboom"; Jaffé 1956, 41-42; Seuphor 1956, no. 335; James 1957, 36; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 155-156; Welsh 1966b, 132; Jaffé 1970, 102; Blok 1974, 34, 40-41, no. 218; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 249; Welsh 1980, 45-46; Champa 1985, 26-28.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague In a letter of late September 1911, Mondrian wrote to Mies Elout-Drabbe, "I am not dissatisfied with my work, especially the trees." It is probable that he was referring to *Gray Tree* and to a drawing that preceded it (Ott. 248), as well as to other works in the series.



## 31 Landscape with Trees 1912

Oil on canvas,
120 x 100 (47 1/4 x 39 3/8)
Signed lower right: P. MONDRIAN
On reverse of canvas: Mondrian
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum,
1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971,
Haags Gemeentemuseum
(inv. no. 151-1971).
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922,
no. 203, "Compositie op een

no. 203, "Compositie op een landschap"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 3; Amsterdam 1946, no. 59; Basel 1947, no. 36; New York 1953b, no. 17; The Hague 1955, no. 70; Zurich 1955, no. 54; London 1955, no. 28; Rome 1956, no. 20; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 64; The Hague 1966, no. 70; Berlin 1968, no. 23; Tokyo 1987, no. 78. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 344; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 157-158; Welsh 1966b, 128; Blok 1964, 25-26; Joosten 1971, 56; Blok 1974, 34-35, 40, no. 212; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 252. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

[The Hague only]



#### 32 "The Sea" 1912

Oil on canvas, 82.5 x 92 (32 1/2 x 36 1/4) Restretched in the 1960s. Provenance: Fritz Meyer-Fierz, Zurich, before 1914-1917; Heirs of Meyer-Fierz, 1917, Basel. Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1912, no. 160, "Marine (esquisse)" (in all probability the present work); New York 1949, no. 8, "The Sea"; New York 1953b, no. 21. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 369; Rosenblum 1961, 237; Ragghianti 1962, 138, 144, 236; Joosten 1968, 210; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 257. Lender: Private collection, Switzerland

During the summer of 1912, Mondrian left Paris for a month's visit to Holland. During the two weeks that he spent in Domburg, he made this painting as well as a landscape (Ott. 253) and a painting of dunes (lost).

In a letter from Paris to Kickert and his wife, postmarked 26 August 1912, Mondrian reported that Miss Bine de Sitter had recently purchased a "tree" (cat. 36). He lamented the fact that she had preferred this to the more recently completed "sea," which he felt was far superior and not much more expensive. He wondered whether it would take ten years to sell the "sea."



# 33 Forest 1912

Black chalk on paper, 73 x 63 (28 3/4 x 24 3/4) Signed lower right: P. MONDRIAAN [added in July 1919, prior to shipment to Slijper] Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; purchased from Slijper, 1958, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T63-1958). Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 88; Baltimore 1981, no. 97; Tokyo 1987, Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 327; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 153; Welsh 1966b, 134; Blok 1974, 34, no. 216; Welsh 1980, 45; Bois 1982, 30. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum,

The Hague

This work probably dates from Mondrian's summer visit to Domburg (see "*The Sea*," cat. **32**). The central motif of this drawing provided the compositional basis for "*The Trees*" (cat. **37**), also of 1912.



# 34 Still Life with Gingerpot II 1912

Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 120 (36 x 47 1/4) The original frame, which was flush with the canvas surface, was painted bronze, leaving a bronze line marking all four edges of the canvas. When the original stretcher was replaced with a larger one sometime after 1964, the canvas surface was enlarged and the bronze line became visible on the surface of the work. Two other 1912 works (cats. 35, 36) sent by Mondrian to the 1912 Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition were similarly framed. Almost all of the subsequent cubist paintings had frames which overlapped the surface of the canvas.

Signed lower right: MONDRIAN [added in July 1919, prior to shipment to Slijper.]

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 155-1971); placed on longterm loan, 1976, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1912, no. 156, "Nature morte" (translation probably by Kickert); Amsterdam 1922, no. 206, "Stilleven met gemberpot"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 6; Amsterdam 1928a, no. 87; Amsterdam 1946, no. 49; Basel 1947, no. 39; New York 1949, no. 2; The Hague 1955, no. 72; Zurich 1955, no. 60; London 1955, no. 31; Rome 1956, no. 22; New York 1957b; Berlin 1968, no. 25; Paris 1969, no. 35; New York 1971, no. 50; Bern 1972, no. 48; Tokyo 1987, no. 81.

Literature: Hana 1924, 636-637, repr., "Stilleven II"; Jaffé 1956, 41; Seuphor 1956, no. 366; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 155; Joosten 1968, 210; Jaffé 1970, 100; Joosten 1971, 58; Blok 1974, 34, 39, 41, no. 215; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 247; Kruskopf 1976, 115-116; Weyergraf 1979, 4; Bois 1982, 29.

Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

This still life was started in Amsterdam and completed in Paris. In a letter to Conrad Kickert and his wife postmarked Paris, 26 August 1912, Mondrian expressed his satisfaction with the progress he had made: "The still life will, I believe, be good."



# 35 BLOEIENDE APPELBOOM (Flowering Appletree) 1912

Oil on canvas, 78.5 x 107.5 (31 x 42)
The original frame, which was flush with the canvas surface, was painted bronze, leaving a bronze line marking all four edges of the canvas. In about 1972, when the original stretcher was extended approximately 1 cm by the addition of four strips of wood, the bronze line became visible on the surface of the work. On the stretcher, a label inscribed in

On the stretcher, a label inscribed in Mondrian's hand: "Bloeiende appelboom" / P. Mondrian. Nr. 3 / Paris. (4 st.) / rue du Départ 26. Provenance: Conrad Kickert, Paris,

Provenance: Conrad Kickert, Paris 1913-1934; Gift of Kickert, 1934, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. (87-34) 55-1934). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1912, no. 158, "Pommier à fleurs" (translation probably by Kickert); Amsterdam 1946, no. 54, "bloeiende appelboom N.3"; Basel 1947, no. 37; New York 1951, no. 9; The Hague 1955, no. 76; Zurich 1955, no. 56; London 1955, no. 22; Rome 1956, no. 25; New York 1957b; Berlin 1968, no. 28; Paris 1969, no. 38; Bern 1972, no. 51; Tokyo 1987, no. 85.

Literature: Hana 1924, 606-608; Jaffé 1956, 41-42; Seuphor 1956, no. 345; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 155, 287; Welsh 1966b, 132; Blok 1968, 35, 36, 134; Joosten 1971, 58; Blok 1974, 34, 40-41, 182, no. 219; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 255; Kruskopf 1976, 117; Welsh 1977b, 9-10; Welsh 1980, 45-46. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 36 BLOEIENDE BOMEN (Flowering Trees) 1912

Oil on canvas, 60 x 85 (23 5/8 x 33 1/2)
The traces of bronze marking the edges of the painting derive from the original bronze-colored frame, which was flush with the surface of the canvas. This framing device was recorded in a photograph taken on the occasion of the 1946 Amsterdam exhibition.

On reverse, inscribed on a label in Mondrian's hand: "Bloeiende Boomen" / P. Mondrian. No. 4 / Paris 4 st / rue du Départ 26

Provenance: Bine de Sitter, Domburg, 1912; given by de Sitter to Mrs. Mies Elout-Drabbe, Domburg, 1912(?)-1949; Kunsthandel G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar, The Hague, 1949-1958; Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, New York, 1958-1969; Judith Rothschild, New York, 1969-1993.

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1912, no. 159, "Arbres en fleurs" (translation probably by Kickert); Amsterdam 1946, no. 55, "bloeiende boom N.4"; New York 1951, no. 8; The Hague 1955, no. 75; New York 1971, no. 51.

Literature: Steenhoff 1912, 147; Plasschaert 1923, repr.; Hana 1924, 637-638, repr.; Jaffé 1956, 41-42; Seuphor 1956, no. 367; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 153-154; Welsh 1966b, 134; Joosten 1971, 58; Blok 1974, 34, 39; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 256; Joosten 1980a, 66-67. Lender: The Judith Rothschild Foundation

continued >

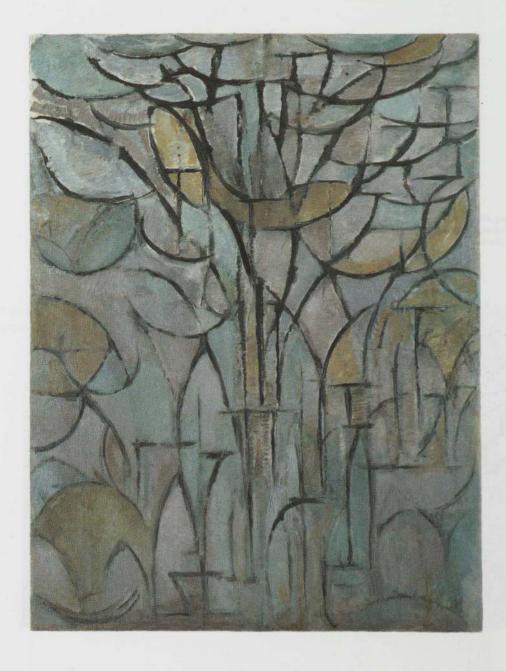
Cat. 36 (continued)

Fig. a
Trees, 1912, charcoal on paper
(Sketchbook IV, 2 verso),
17.7 x 12.4 cm, private collection.

On 8 March 1924, Mondrian wrote to Slijper that "those flowering trees were bought at the time, for f 200-250, by a friend of Mrs. Elout Drabbe, who was given the painting as a present. The painting is in Domburg."

Mondrian's sketchbook drawings of trees can frequently be closely linked to his paintings. In the present case, a charcoal drawing in Sketchbook IV, (fig. a) throws striking light on his transformation of the trees (their recessional lines in the drawing suggesting the rows of an orchard) and his development of the composition as a whole.





## 37 "The Trees" 1912

Oil on canvas, 94 x 69.8 (37 x 27 1/2) Lined and restretched before 1961. Provenance: (?) Willem Beffie, Amsterdam and Brooklyn, New York, 1912-c. 1943; Nierendorf Gallery, New York, c. 1943-1945/46; Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 1945/46-(?); G. David Thompson, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1959-1961; The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (inv. no. 61.1). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1912, no. 157, "Arbres" (in all probability the present work); New York 1943a, no. 26, "The Trees"; New

York 1945b, no. 14; New York 1949, no. 3; Basel 1964, no. 30; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 39; Washington 1965, no. 29; Toronto 1966, no. 67; The Hague 1966, no. 74; Berlin 1968, no. 30; Paris 1969, no. 39; New York 1971, no. 52; Bern 1972, no. 50.
Literature: Huebner 1922, 65; Seuphor 1956, no. 347; Welsh 1966b, 134; Joosten 1971, 57; Blok 1974, 34, 39, 182, no. 221; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 258; Joosten 1980a, 66-67; Bois 1982, 30.
Lender: The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Patrons Art Fund, 1961



### 38 Composition Trees I 1912

Oil on canvas, 81 x 62 (31 7/8 x 24 3/8) Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAN [added in July 1919, prior to shipment to Slijper]

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 157-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 60; The Hague 1955, no. 77; Zurich 1955, no. 55; Stuttgart 1980, no. 90; Baltimore 1981, no. 99; Tokyo 1987, no. 87.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 350; Joosten 1971, 58; Blok 1974, 39, 40, 182, no. 221; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 267; Joosten 1980a, 66-67; Welsh 1980, 45-46; Bois 1982, 30. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

Fig. a
Trees, 1912, pencil on paper
(Sketchbook IV, 1 recto),
17.3 x 12.4 cm, private collection.

Mondrian's 1912 sketches of trees (such as fig. a) certainly provided the sources for *Composition Trees I*.



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# 39 Composition Trees II c. 1912-1913

Oil on canvas, 98 x 65 (38 5/8 x 25 5/8) Signed lower right: MONDRIAN [added in July 1919, prior to shipment to Slijper]

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 158-1971).

Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1922, no. 208, "Compositie op bomen"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 61; Basel 1947, no. 35; New York 1953b, no. 20; The Hague 1955, no. 78; Zurich 1955, no. 57; Venice 1956, no. 6; Rome 1956, no. 26; New York 1957b; New York 1971, no. 54; Bern 1972, no. 52; Tokyo 1987, no. 88.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 351;

Blok 1968, 36; Joosten 1971, 58; Blok 1974, 39, 40, 182, no. 222; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 268; Joosten 1980a, 66-67; Welsh 1980, 45-46; Bois 1982, 30.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 40 TABLEAU NO. 4; COMPOSITION NO. VIII; COMPOSITIE 3 1913

Oil on canvas, 95 x 80 (37 3/8 x 31 1/2) The bronze-colored line that encloses the composition along much of all four sides derives from bronze color used on the original frame, constructed to overlap the canvas. Similar lines are to be found on most of the works of this period that have lost their original frames (see below, cat. 48, fig. a). The lines indicate Mondrian's intentional cropping of the composition on all four sides, achieved by the placement of the frame.

Signed lower right: MONDRIAN Inscribed on reverse upper left: MONDRIAN

upper right: Tableau No.4[crossed out] lower right: Compositie 3 P Mondriaan on center bar of stretcher: COMPOSITION NO. VIII. MONDRIAN

Provenance: P. M. Broekmans, Amsterdam, (?)-1922; auction, A. Mak, Amsterdam, 24 January 1922; S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1922-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 159-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1913, no. 169, "Tableau IV"; The Hague 1914, "Composition No. VIII";

Rotterdam 1915, no. 56, "Compositie C" (fl. 150); Amsterdam 1915, no. 109, "Compositie III in kleur" (fl. 200); Amsterdam 1922, no. 209, "Compositie op boomen"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 10; Amsterdam 1928a, no. 88; Amsterdam 1946, no. 63; Basel 1947, no. 33; New York 1951, no. 7; The Hague 1955, no. 81; Zurich 1955, no. 59; Rome 1956, no. 28; New York 1957a, no. 9; New York 1957b; Berlin 1968, no. 31; Paris 1969, no. 40; Tokyo 1987, no. 90; New York 1988, no. 19.

Literature: Mak 1922, no. 179 (fl. 100); Hana 1924, 606-608, 638, repr. 608;

Circle 1937, repr. 40; Seuphor 1956, no. 349; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 158-160; Rosenblum 1961, 237; Welsh 1966b, 140; Lohse 1966, 130; Blok 1968, 36, 45; Jaffé 1970, 106; Joosten 1971, 58; Blok 1974, 39, no. 229; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 260; Weyergraf 1979, 41-43. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum,

The Hague

[The Hague only]

Fig. a
Recto of *Tree* (study),
pencil on sketchbook sheet.



### 41 Tree (study) 1913

Pencil on paper (Sketchbook IV, 3 verso), 17.5 x 12.3 (6 7/8 x 4 7/8) (fig. a: recto) Signed lower right: PM [dating from New York period] Provenance: Estate of the artist, 1944; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Marlborough Fine Art, London, 1962-1987; purchased 1987, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T 57-1987). Exhibitions: New York 1945b, no. 13; Stuttgart 1980, no. 77 recto; Baltimore 1981; no. 87. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 332; Joosten 1980a, 67, 68. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

This drawing and the two that follow (cats. 42, 43) are among the sketches that constituted the starting point for both "The Tree A" (cat. 44) and Tableau No. 3 (cat. 45).

### 42 Tree (study) 1913

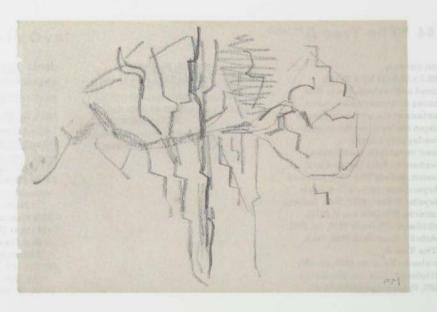
Pencil on paper (Sketchbook IV, 4), 12.4 x 17.8 (4 7/8 x 7) Signed lower right: PM [dating from New York period] Provenance: Estate of the artist, 1944; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Marlborough Fine Art, London, 1962-1980; purchased 1980, The British Museum, London (inv. no. 1980-6-28-9). Exhibitions: New York 1945b, no. 13; Stuttgart 1980, no. 78. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 333; Joosten 1980a, 67, 68. Lender: Trustees of The British Museum

#### 43 Tree (study) 1913

Pencil on paper (Sketchbook IV, 5), 13.4 x 17.8 (5 1/4 x 7) Signed lower right: PM [dating from New York period] Provenance: Estate of the artist, 1944; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Marlborough Fine Art, London, 1962-1987; purchased 1987, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T 51-1987). Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 79; Baltimore 1981, no. 88. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 336; Joosten 1980a, 67, 68. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague









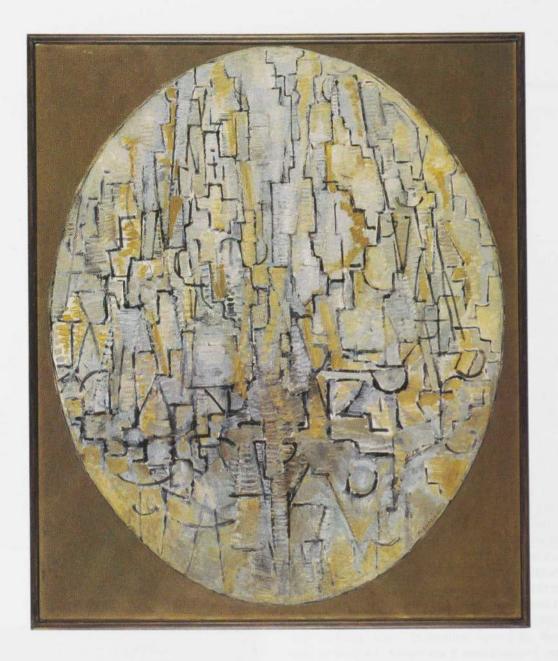
### 44 "The Tree A" 1913

Oil on canvas, 100.5 x 67.5 (39 1/2 x 26 5/8) Lined and restretched c. 1954; traces of bronze color on the surface of the canvas near the edges derive from the original, overlapping frame.

Signed lower left: MONDRIAN
Provenance: Fritz Meyer-Fierz,
Zurich, before 1914-1917; Heirs of
Meyer-Fierz, 1917-1977; Galerie
Beyeler, Basel, 1977; Tate Gallery,
London, 1977 (inv. no. T. 2211).

Exhibitions: (?) Paris 1913, no. 2135, "Arbre"; New York 1949, no. 6, "The Tree A."

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 368; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 263; Welsh 1980, 45; Joosten 1980a, 66-67; Alley 1981, 533; Bois 1982, 30. Lender: Tate Gallery, purchased 1977 Janis' use of the title "The Tree A" in his 1949 exhibition – characteristic of Mondrian's system rather than of Janis' own titling methods – undoubtedly derives from an inscription by Mondrian on the (now lost) original stretcher. The "A" in the title in turn suggests that this may well have been the painting shown in the 1913 Indépendants, where the first of Mondrian's three submissions was listed in the catalogue as "Arbre."



# 45 TABLEAU NO.3; Composition in Oval 1913

Oil on canvas, 94 x 78 (37 x 30 3/4)
The unpainted tacking margins indicate that the work originally had an overlapping frame. This would have been similar in color to the bronze-colored painted area of the canvas that surrounds the oval. In about 1980, the picture was placed in a new overlapping frame.

Signed lower right (within the oval):
MONDRIAN.
On the reverse
upper left: MONDRIAN
upper right: TABLEAU
NO.3

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1913-1956 (on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1917-1950); purchased from Bremmer, 1956, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (inv no. A 6043).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1913, no. 168, "Tableau III"; Rotterdam 1915, no. 52, "Compositie"; The Hague 1950, no. 68, "Compositie in ovaal"; The Hague 1955, no. 82; Zurich 1955, no. 62; London 1955, no. 29; Basel 1964, no. 31; Toronto 1966, no. 70; Paris 1969, no. 45.

Literature: Wilmon-Vervaerdt 1913, repr. 84; Steenhoff 1913, repr.; Wolf 1915, repr. 251; Rijksmuseum 1918, suppl. 26; Seuphor 1956, no. 373; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 158-160, 289; Welsh 1966b, 140; Blok 1968, 36; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Jaffé 1970, 108; Welsh 1971, 50; Joosten 1971, 58-59; Blok 1974, 39, 40, 41, no. 231; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 269; Welsh 1980, 45-46; Joosten 1980a, 66-67; Vink 1987, 44.

Lender: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

continued >

Mondrian's earliest opportunity to see cubist pictures by Braque and Picasso came in the autumn of 1911: a few of their 1908-1909 works were shown in Amsterdam at the first Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition. Starting in the spring of 1910, both Braque and Picasso began to use an oval format with some frequency; however, Mondrian probably did not see examples until he served on the jury of the second Moderne Kunst Kring (October-November 1912), in which Picasso's L'homme à la pipe was shown. It undoubtedly influenced Mondrian's own thinking. Unlike Picasso and Braque, Mondrian never used an oval stretcher and canvas; rather, he painted his oval compositions on a rectangular canvas, filling in the area reserved around the oval with an unmodulated color (see cats. 57, 58). In this connection, it is interesting to note that installation photographs of the 1912 Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition show that Picasso's L'homme à la pipe was also set into a rectangular frame (fig. a).

In January 1917, Bremmer lent thirteen works from his own collection to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam. Mondrian was represented only by the present picture, and in a letter to van Assendelft, dated 19 February 1917, he wrote: "Alma told me that my oval (Bremmer collection) looks good in the Rijksmuseum. I haven't seen it yet myself. It's good to hear that this older work holds its own."

Fig. a
Installation view, Picasso section,
Moderne Kunst Kring, Stedelijk
Museum, Amsterdam, 1912,
showing (from second from left)
L'homme à la pipe, 1911, Kimbell
Art Museum, Fort Worth; Les deux
frères, 1906, Kunstmuseum Basel;
and Joueur de mandoline, 1911,
Beyeler Collection, Basel.





# 46 Study of Trees I c. 1912-1913

Black chalk on paper, 65 x 89 (25 5/8 x 35 1/8) Signed lower right: P. MONDRIAAN

Signed lower right: P. MONDRIAAN
[added in July 1919, prior to
shipment to Slijper]

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; purchased from S. B. Slijper, 1958, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T65-1958).

Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 56; Baltimore 1981, no. 68; Tokyo 1987, no. 86.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 328; Welsh 1966b, 138; Blok 1974, 34, no. 220; Rudenstine 1976, 569; Welsh 1980, 45-46.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



## 47 Study of Trees II 1913

Charcoal on paper, 65.5 x 87.5 (25 3/4 x 34 1/2) Signed lower left: P. MONDRIAAN [added in July 1919, prior to shipment to Slijper] Provenance: Acquired by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; purchased from Slijper, 1958, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T64-1958).

Exhibitions: Toronto 1966, no. 69; The Hague 1966, no. 76; Stuttgart 1980, no. 57; Baltimore 1981, no. 69; Tokyo 1987, no. 92.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 329; Welsh 1966b, 138; Joosten 1971, 60; Blok 1974, no. 232; Rudenstine 1976, 569; Welsh 1980, 45. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague This drawing was made in Mondrian's Paris studio, and is clearly based on *Study of Trees I* (cat. 46). Both drawings provided a starting point for *Tableau No. 2* (cat. 48).



## 48 TABLEAU NO. 2; COMPOSITION NO. VII 1913

Oil on canvas, 104.5 x 113.5 (41 1/8 x 44 5/8) Signed lower left: MONDRIAN Inscribed on reverse of canvas, upper left: MONDRIAN on reverse of canvas upper right: TABLEAU No.2 [crossed out] on top stretcher bar: COMPOSITION. N:VII. MONDRIAN. HAUT

Provenance: H. van Assendelft, Gouda, 1914-1928 (acquired through Walrecht, The Hague); J. van Assendelft-Hoos, Gouda, 1928-1947; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, 1947-1949; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1949 (inv. no. 746); Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (inv. no. 49.1228).

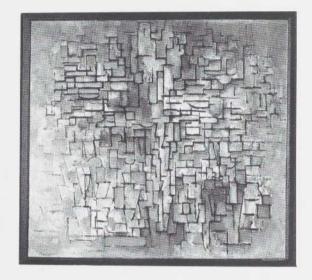
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1913, no. 167, "Tableau II," repr.; Prague 1914, no. 75 (Kr. 550); The Hague 1914, "Composition No. VII"; Rotterdam 1915, no. 58, "Composition E"; Rotterdam 1932, no. 43; New York 1949; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 42; Washington 1965, no. 75; Berlin 1968, no. 32; Paris 1969, no. 42; New York 1971, no. 56.

Literature: Wilmon-Vervaerdt 1913, 86; Wolf 1915, 252; Seuphor 1956, 100-101, no. 374; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 158-160, 161; Blok 1964, 26, 29; Welsh 1966b, 138, 140; Joosten 1971, 59-60, 62; Welsh 1973, 50; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 270; Rudenstine 1976, 568-571. Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

continued)

Fig. a
Tableau No. 2 with original frame,
1950.

The bronze-colored line, which frames the composition along much of all four sides, 7/16" from the edge of the canvas, derives from the color used on the original overlapping frame. A 1950 photograph of the work shows the original frame still in place (fig. a). Along the top edge, traces of the bronze-colored line suggest that the picture had by this time slightly slipped within the frame. Otherwise, the photograph clearly demonstrates the way in which Mondrian intended the outer edges of the composition to be defined. (See Chronology, fig. 5, for a more precise indication of the original.)





# 49 COMPOSITION NO. II; Composition in Line and Color 1913

Oil on canvas, 88 x 115 (34 5/8 x 45 1/4)
Traces of bronze color marking
the edges of the composition
indicate an original frame flush
with the surface of the canvas.

Signed and dated lower right:
MONDRIAN. 1913
On upper bar of stretcher:
COMPOSITION. – No. II. –
MONDRIAN. HAUT.

Provenance: Helene Kröller-Müller, The Hague, 1914-1928; Kröller-Müller Stichting, The Hague, 1928-1937; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo, 1938 (inv. no.530-14).

Exhibitions: (?) Munich 1913; Prague 1914, no. 73 (Kr. 900); The Hague 1914, "Composition No. II"; Düsseldorf 1928, no. 351; Amsterdam 1946, no. 67; Basel 1947, no. 31; New York 1951, no. 11. Literature: Bremmer 1917, no. 258, "Compositie in lijn en kleur"; Seuphor 1956, no. 377; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 160-162; Welsh 1973, 50; Blok 1974, 40, 41, no. 236; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 272. Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



# 50 TABLEAU NO.1; Composition in Line and Color 1913

Oil on canvas, 96 x 64 (37 3/4 x 25 1/4)
Traces of bronze color along the edges of the composition indicate an original overlapping frame.

Signed lower right: MONDRIAN.
Inscribed on reverse:
MONDRIAN.
TABLEAU. No. 1.

Provenance: Helene Kröller-Müller, The Hague, 1913-1928; Kröller-Müller Stichting, The Hague, 1928-1937; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (inv. no.531-13).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1913, no. 166, "Tableau I"; Düsseldorf 1928, no. 352; New York 1936, no. 180, repr.; Amsterdam 1946, no. 66; Basel 1947, no. 31; The Hague 1955, no. 83; Zurich 1955, no. 63; London 1955, no. 32; Rome 1956, no. 29; New York 1971, no. 57; Bern 1972, no. 54.

Literature: Bremmer 1917, no. 259, "Compositie in lijn en kleur"; Barr 1936, 141; Seuphor 1956, no. 375; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 158-160, 161; Golding 1959, 40; Welsh 1966b, 142; Joosten 1971, 59-60; Blok 1974, 39-40, 41, no. 233; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 273.

Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



# 51 GEMÄLDE NO. I; COMPOSITION NO. XII 1913

Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 91 (25 x 35 7/8)
Traces of bronze color along the edges of the composition indicate an original overlapping frame.

Signed and dated lower right:

MONDRIAN

1913 [probably added by
Bremmer]
Inscribed on reverse,
left: nom: P. Mondrian
right: titre: [crossed out]
Gemälde No. I. [crossed out]
on upper bar of stretcher:
COMPOSITION No. XII - HAUT MONDRIAN.

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1914-1950; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, 1950; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1950-1954; Edgar J. Kaufmann Jr., New York, 1954-1989; sold at auction, Sotheby's, New York, 15 November 1989, no. 12.

Exhibitions: (?) Berlin 1913, no. 295, "Gemälde 1"; The Hague 1914, "Composition No. XII"; The Hague 1950, no. 69; New York 1951, no. 10, "Facade in Tan and Gray"; Zurich 1955, no. 64, "fassade in braun und grau"; London 1955, no. 34.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 376; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 274; Joosten 1980a, 67.

Lender: Private collection

Starting with this painting and *Composition XV in Yellow* and *Gray* (Ott. 271), Mondrian departs from the subject of trees and focuses instead upon facades, roofs, and other views from his studio in the rue du Départ.



# 52 TABLEAU NO. I; COMPOSITION NO. I; COMPOSITIE 7 1914

Oil on canvas, 120 x 100 (47 1/4 x 39 3/8) Traces of bronze color marking the edges of the composition indicate an original frame flush with the surface of the canvas. This frame has been reconstructed (1994).

This frame has been reconstructed (1994).

Signed and dated lower center: MONDRIAN. 1914.
Inscribed on reverse: P. MONDRIAN titre: TABLEAU N: I. [crossed out] Compositie 7.
P. Mondrian Inscribed on canvas turnover: COMPOSITION No. I [crossed out] en HAUT on center stretcher bar: MONDRIAN

Provenance: C. G. Hannaert, Laren, 1915; Kunsthandel G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar, The Hague, c. 1951-1958; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1958; Sir Edward and Lady Hulton, London, 1958-1983; Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas, 1983 (inv. no. AG 83.1).

Exhibitions: Paris 1914, no. 2340, "Tableau"; The Hague 1914, "Composition No.1"; Rotterdam 1915, no. 61, "Compositie H" (fl. 200); Amsterdam 1915, no. 113, "Compositie VII in kleur"; The Hague 1955, no. 85; Basel 1964, no. 33; New York 1971, no. 66; Bern 1972, no. 57.
Literature: Wolf 1915, 251; Seuphor

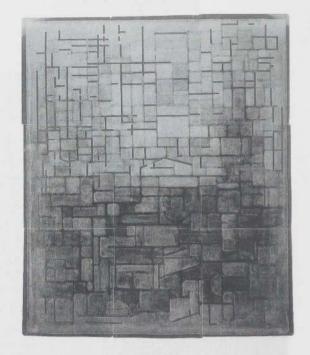
1956, no. 408; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 160-161; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 279; Joosten 1980a, 66-68; Pillsbury and Jordan 1985, 420. Lender: Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Gift of the Burnett-Tandy Foundation in memory of Anne Burnett Tandy, 1983

Fig. a X-radiograph of *Tableau No. I* with schematic diagram of principal pentimenti.

In a letter dated 5 May 1914 concerning his imminent oneman exhibition at the Walrecht gallery in The Hague, Mondrian wrote to Bremmer: "Would it be soon enough if the works arrive in The Hague at the end of this month? The 24th or 25th of May, for example? Because I want to work some more on those [that have returned] from the Indépendants." A few weeks later, on 7 June 1914, he wrote to Schelfhout about the experience of the Indépendants: "Here at this year's Indépendants I was not really happy. But since then my work has been making good progress."

X-rays reveal that the composition was initially much more explicitly divided into smaller squares and rectangles (fig. a). Mondrian was clearly not happy with this, as he indicated in his letters of May and June, and his reworking resulted in an opening up of the forms. (See also below, cat. 54.)

For critical response to the first exhibition of this work, see below, cat. 53.





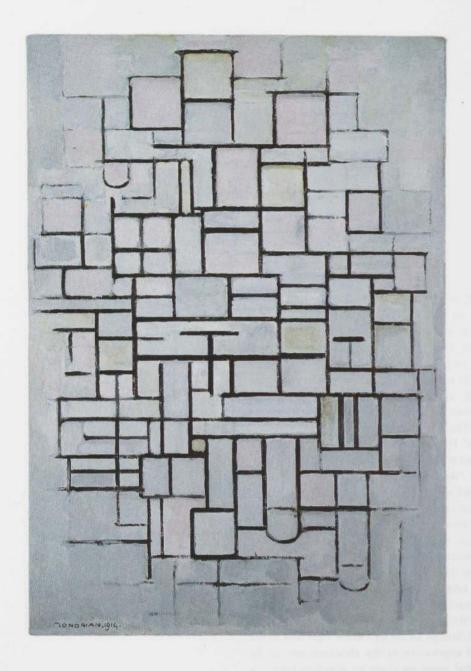
# 53 TABLEAU NO. 2; COMPOSITION NO. V 1914

Oil on canvas, 55 x 85.5 (21 5/8 x 33 5/8) Restretched at an unknown date. Signed and dated lower left: MONDRIAN, 1914 Inscribed on reverse of canvas: P.MONDRIAN titre [crossed out] Tableau No.2[crossed out] on upper bar of original stretcher: COMPOSITION - No. V HAUT Provenance: H. van Assendelft, Gouda, 1914-1928; J. van Assendelft-Hoos, Gouda, 1928c. 1950; E. Polak, Amsterdam, and Suzanne Feigel, Basel, c. 1950-1951; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1951-1967; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967 (inv. no. 633.67).

Exhibitions: Paris 1914, no. 2341, "Tableau"; The Hague 1914, "Composition No. V"; Rotterdam 1915, no. 63, "Compositie J"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 77; New York 1953b, no. 22, "Facade No. 5"; New York 1957b; New York 1957a, no. 10; New York 1957b; New York 1963, no. 18; New York 1971, no. 58; Bern 1972, no. 56; New York 1980, no. 10.
Literature: Faust 1914, 403; Wolf

Literature: Faust 1914, 403; Wolf 1915, 251; Modern Artists 1950, repr. 43; Seuphor 1956, no. 406; Rubin 1972, 26, 194-195; Blok 1974, 40; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 281; Joosten 1980a, 67; Blotkamp 1982, 23.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, 1967 In his March 1914 review of the Salon des Indépendants, Leo Faust responded perceptively to Mondrian's submission, although exaggerating the geometric basis of the composition: "Somewhat less simple in composition, but still extremely original in conception, are the paintings by Piet Mondrian, which at first glance resemble maps or labyrinths. In dark green paint on a grey ground, the painter, using a ruler, drew horizontal and vertical lines from one side of the canvas to the other, only occasionally leaving a small square open; he drew the horizontal lines twice as close to one another as the vertical ones. Moreover, in two or three instances the straight line becomes a somewhat hesitant little segment of a circle."



# 54 COMPOSITION NO. IV; COMPOSITIE 6 1914

Oil on canvas, 88 x 61 (34 5/8 x 24)

The 0.5 cm wide bronze-colored line on the tacking margin derives from the original narrow set-back strip frame; the present strip frame is a reconstruction.

Signed and dated lower left:
MONDRIAN. 1914.
Inscribed on upper bar of
stretcher: COMPOSITION N IV
HAUT
on center bar: MONDRIAN

on reverse of canvas:

Compositie 6 P. Mondriaan
Provenance: C. G. Hannaert, Laren,
c. 1915-before 1922; S. B. Slijper,
Blaricum, before 1922-1971;
Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags
Gemeentemuseum

(inv. no. 161-1971). Exhibitions: The Hague 1914, "Composition No. IV"; Rotterdam 1915, no. 62, "Compositie I" (fl. 150); Amsterdam 1915, no. 112, "Compositie VI in kleur"; Amsterdam 1922, no. 211; Rotterdam 1925, no. 8; Amsterdam 1946, no. 76a; The Hague 1955, no. 84; Zurich 1955, no. 69; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 75; The Hague 1966, no. 82; Berlin 1968, no. 34; Paris 1969, no.51; Tokyo 1987, no.93; New York 1988, no. 20. Literature: De Meester-Obreen 1915, repr. 397; Haesaerts 1929, repr. 330;

Seuphor 1956, no. 407; Loosjes-

Terpstra 1959, 160-162; Joosten 1971, 60-61; Blok 1974, 40, 41, no. 237; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 283; Kruskopf 1976, 120-121; Carmean 1979, 19-21; van Dam 1990, 341-343. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

continued)

In the spring of 1915, at the time of his Rotterdam exhibition, the critic Augusta de Meester-Obreen was asked by the monthly *Elsevier's* to write an article about Mondrian. She made contact with the artist and asked him several questions, to which he gave detailed answers in a letter, now lost. The content is to some extent included by Obreen in her article. In a second, surviving letter to her dated August 1915, Mondrian offered an explanation of the source of the present painting: "The [composition] with blocks was inspired by buildings." He also refers to his correspondence with her in a letter to van Doesburg written after 20 November 1915: "Au fond she doesn't understand my aims....I corresponded with her at the time and she has dealt with the matter rather fairly."

But in a letter to van Doesburg dated 20 November 1915, Mondrian attempted to correct what he felt was van Doesburg's own misunderstanding of the nature of this painting: "As for the dogmatic..., you didn't understand me, because I was too brief, too incomplete. In my book I describe everything clearly. You understand that I pay no attention to what people think. But I am convinced that we (and I include myself, even though as far as I know I am one of the artists who is most expressive of the absolute) are so far from the absolute that when we make an absolute form, we realize that this form has something dogmatic about it. In short, the absolute must be realized relatively for the time being. I found that my closed rectangular form was too absolute [for the viewer]; thus, also for me. [The resolution of] that will be possible, and will come later." In a subsequent letter (undated) to van Doesburg, Mondrian specifically referred to the 1915 reproduction in Elsevier's as an illustration of his point concerning "closed rectangular form."

Despite these reservations, Mondrian was clearly content to have these works shown in 1922, and expressed this in a letter to Slijper of that February: "I find the abstract paintings from Paris very good. I mean also the one you acquired by exchange with Mrs. Hannaert."



# 55 Composition with Color Planes 1914

Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 65 (36 x 25 5/8)
Set-back strip frame vertically
crosscut, repainted; traces of
bronze color on the tacking
margin of the canvas indicate the
original color of the strip frame.

Signed and dated lower left: MONDRIAN. 1914.

Provenance: G. Smith-van Stolk,
Rotterdam, 1914-(?); Jon N.
Streep, Amsterdam and
New York, c. 1949; Sidney Janis
Gallery, New York, c. 1949-c. 1950;
Maurice E. Culberg, Chicago,
c. 1950; Mrs. Arthur C. Rosenberg,
Chicago; Richard L. Feigen,
New York and Chicago, (?)-1967;
Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1969;
Private collection, 1969.

Exhibitions: (?) The Hague 1914; Rotterdam 1915, no. 53, "Compositie"; New York 1949, no. 10; Berlin 1968, no. 35; New York 1971, no. 67; Bern 1972, no. 60.

Literature: Wolf 1915, 251; Seuphor 1956, no. 413; Welsh 1966b, 148; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 285; Champa 1985, 33-35.

Lender: Kunsthaus Zürich on behalf of a private collector In a letter dated 27 September 1914, once again focusing on his financial condition, Mondrian wrote to van Assendelft: "If it then turns out that I have to pay the rent [for the studio in Paris], I will write to you again asking you to send me what you can spare at that point. Otherwise I don't need it yet, because I sold another painting to a lady." Given the date of the letter, the "lady" (G. Smith-van Stolk) must have purchased the work from the Walrecht exhibition, although there is no record of its inclusion: unlike the other sixteen works exhibited, it bears no corresponding number on the reverse, suggesting that it was included at the last minute.



## 56 COMPOSITION NO. VI; COMPOSITIE 9; Blue Facade 1914

95.2 x 67.5 (37 1/2 x 26 5/8)

After 1971, the original stretcher and set-back, bronze-colored

and set-back, bronze-colored strip frame were removed; the work was lined, placed on a masonite panel, and varnished. In 1994, the masonite panel, lining, and varnish were removed and a new set-back strip frame was constructed.

Signed lower right: MONDRIAN
Inscribed on turnover of canvas
along top:
COMPOSITION. No. VI.
MONDRIAN. [crossed out]
on reverse of canvas:
HAUT.
COMPOSITIE 9
P.Mondriaan

Provenance: Jon N. Streep,
Amsterdam and New York,
c. 1950; Sidney Janis Gallery,
New York, c. 1950-1951; John L.
Senior, Jr., New York, 1951-1956;
Sidney Janis Gallery, New York,
1956-1957; The Museum of Modern
Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Armand
P. Bartos, 1957-1989; Ernst Beyeler,
Basel (acquired at auction,
Sotheby's, New York,
15 November 1989, no. 53).
Exhibitions: The Haque 1914.

Exhibitions: The Hague 1914,
"Composition VI"; Rotterdam
1915, no.65, "Compositie L"
(fl. 100); Amsterdam 1915,
"Compositie IX in kleur" (fl. 200);
New York 1951, "Blue Facade";
Zurich 1955, no.68; New York
1957a, no.11; Toronto 1966, no.74;

The Hague 1966, no. 81; Paris 1969, no. 46.

Literature: Wolf 1915, 251; Seuphor 1956, no. 372; Welsh 1966b, 148; Joosten 1968, 214; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Jaffé 1970, 112; Joosten 1971, 62; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 278; Kruskopf 1976, 120; Joosten 1980a, 66-68.

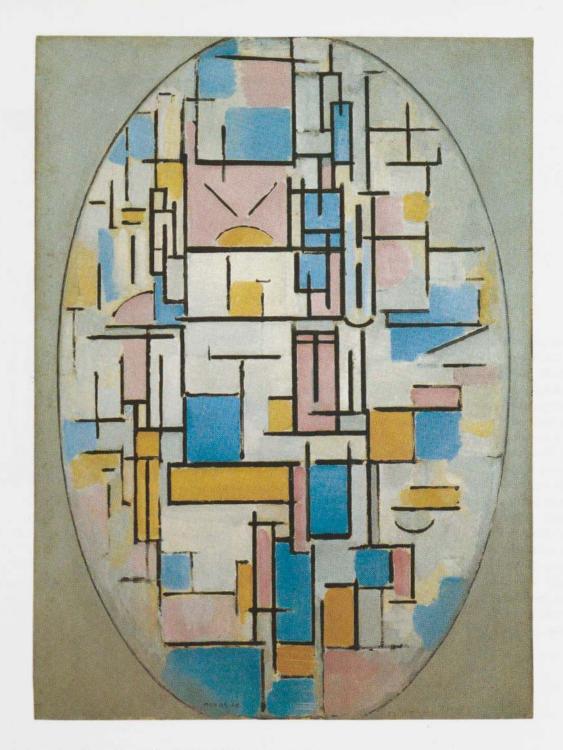
Lender: Collection Beyeler, Basel

Fig. a
Partially demolished building
("Blue Facade"), 1914, pencil on
paper (Sketchbook II, 43),
17.2 x 10.5 cm,
Haags Gemeentemuseum,
The Hague.

This painting was among the works sent by Mondrian to The Hague for the Walrecht exhibition, which opened in mid-June. In a letter to Schelfhout dated 7 June 1914, in which Mondrian spoke at length about his financial difficulties as well as the complex struggles in his work, he added: "Among the works [I have sent] there is only one recent sketch. But I have sent 15 paintings, which I think is a good number for this period." This "sketch" must be the present work.

This painting is based upon a series of sketches made by Mondrian of the lateral facades of Paris buildings, often bearing traces of the walls of demolished residential buildings. At least seven drawings in a Paris sketchbook of c. 1912-1914 show this subject from several angles (Welsh 1966b). The particular wall from which the present painting derives was probably located on the 1908 extension of the rue du Départ. The sketch most closely identified with the present work includes color notes, several of which, with the letter "B," indicate those areas of the canvas that are painted blue (fig. a).





# 57 Composition in Oval with Color Planes 1 1914

Oil on canvas, 107.5 x 79 (42 3/8 x 31 1/8) The bronze-colored line on the tacking margin derives from the original narrow set-back strip frame.

Signed lower left (within oval): MONDRIAN

Provenance: S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919-1949; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1949-1950; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1950 (inv. no. 14.50).

Exhibitions: Brighton 1920, no. 148, "Composition"; Amsterdam 1922, no. 212 or 213; (?) Rotterdam 1925, no.9 (or cat. 58); (?) Amsterdam 1928a, no. 90 (or cat. 58); Amsterdam 1946, no. 68; Basel

1947, no. 30; New York 1949, no. 12; Berlin 1968, no. 36; Paris 1969, no. 47; Madrid 1982, no. 47.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 380; Lohse 1966, 131; Joosten 1971, 62-63; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 277; Kruskopf 1976, 120.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Purchase, 1950

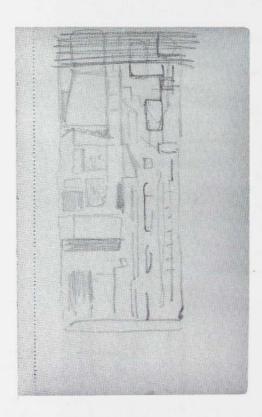


Fig. a
Partially demolished building
(Seen through a window?), 1914,
pencil on paper (Sketchbook II, 46),
17.2 x 11 cm,
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York, Gift, David Finn and
Maurice Kaplan, 1981.

The composition is based on a preliminary sketch (fig. **a**) and on the drawing *Side Facade* (fig. **b**).

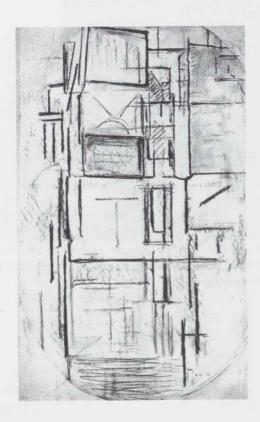


Fig. b
Side Facade, 1914, charcoal on
paper mounted on Homosote,
104.2 x 61.6 cm,
Marlborough Gallery, New York.



## 58 Composition in Oval with Color Planes 2 1914

Oil on canvas,

113 x 84.5 (44 1/2 x 33 1/4)

The 0.5 cm bronze-colored line on the tacking margin derives from the original narrow set-back strip frame; the present strip frame is a reconstruction.

Signed lower left (within oval): MONDRIAN.

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 160-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 212 or 213, "Compositie"; (?) Rotterdam 1925, no. 9 (or cat. 57); (?) Amsterdam 1928a, no. 90 (or cat. 57); Amsterdam 1946, h.c.; The Hague 1955, no. 86; Zurich 1955, no. 67; London 1955, no. 33; Toronto 1966, no. 73; The Hague 1966, no. 80; Berlin 1968, no. 33; Paris 1969, no. 45; Bern 1972, no. 58.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 412; Loosjes-Terpstra 1959, 160-162; Welsh 1966b, 144, 146; Hofmann 1970, 121; Joosten 1971, 62-63; Blok 1974, no. 238; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 284; Kruskopf 1976, 118-119; Joosten 1980a, 66; Welsh 1980, 45; Bois 1982, 30; Blotkamp 1982, 20,

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

[The Hague only]

The composition can be directly traced to the drawing Facade (fig. a), which in turn is based on a motif visible in a postcard view (fig. b).

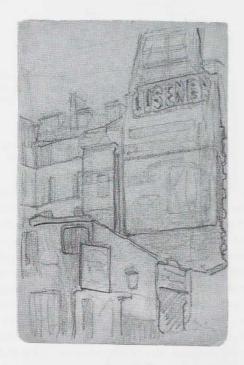
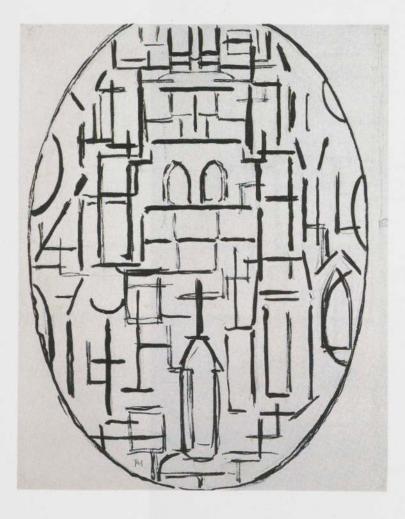


Fig. a
Facade, 1914, pencil on paper
(Sketchbook VI, 2), 23.7 x 15.4 cm,
private collection.



Fig. **b**Postcard view of rue du Départ at
the intersection with boulevard
Edgar-Quinet, c. 1910.



59 Church Facade 1 1914

Pencil, charcoal, and ink on paper, 63 x 50 (24 3/4 x 19 5/8)

Signed lower left (within oval in black chalk): PM [monogram probably not added until 1917, see Blok 1964]

Provenance: S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T127-1971).

(inv. no. 1127-1971). Exhibitions: Paris 1969, no. 50; New York 1971, no. 61; Bern 1972, no. 63; Stuttgart 1980, no. 100; Baltimore 1981, no. 110; Tokyo 1987, no. 94.

Literature: van Doesburg 1918, 110-111, repr. 109; Seuphor 1956, no. 387; Rosenblum 1961, 238; Blok 1964, 33, note 39; Welsh 1966b, 160; Joosten 1973a, 55; Blok 1974, 51, no. 240; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 242²; Kruskopf 1976, 121; Weyergraf 1979, 40; Welsh 1980, 48-49; Bois 1982, 32; Ringbom 1986, 146.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague Fig. a
Church at Domburg, 1909,
ink on paper, 41.5 x 28 cm,
Haags Gemeentemuseum,
The Hague.

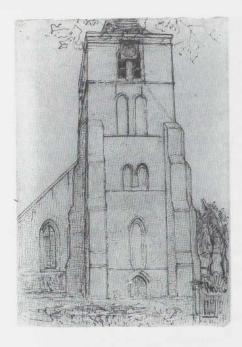
Fig. **b**The church at Domburg, 1956.
Photographer unknown.

Mondrian's return to Holland in the summer of 1914 and his confinement there until the end of World War I marked an abrupt change both in his life and in his art. During the autumn of 1914, he returned to Domburg for a few weeks, and until the beginning of 1916, he concentrated exclusively on three motifs that had already absorbed him between 1908 and 1910: the facade of the little church at Domburg, the sea, and the piers extending into the sea. He explored each of these motifs in a series of sketches and drawings and in two paintings: Compositie 10 in zwart wit (Composition 10 in Black and White) (cat. 70) and Composition 1916 (cat. 71). They were the only two paintings Mondrian produced during 1915-1916.

Mondrian's work on this group of interrelated paintings and drawings was to be of prime importance for the development of his abstract style. Here the opposition of vertical and horizontal, initially explored in 1911-1912, was developed further. This in turn led him to a concern with the abolition of the figure-ground relationship – his nearly exclusive focus from 1917 to 1919, and an essential component of his pictorial program until the end of his life.

Mondrian sent the present drawing to van Doesburg for reproduction in *De Stijl* I, 9 (July 1918), together with a second one, now lost (see cat. **72**, fig. **c**). In a postcard dated 26 June 1918, he wrote: "Herewith two photographs! One is virtually a sketch from nature. The other, a more advanced stage of abstraction. It might be interesting to present both of them." On 4 July 1918, referring to the same two drawings, he wrote: "...I made the other one slightly earlier (in late 1914) in Domburg (virtually from nature). Just call them 'Composition' or 'Composition and Nature Drawing' or 'Composition I and II,' whatever you think. I don't number my drawings consecutively."

In the case of his many sketches of the Domburg church facade (fig. a), Mondrian took certain liberties with the architecture, as comparison with a photograph of the motif reveals (fig. b), but the important architectural lineaments of the building are still discernible.





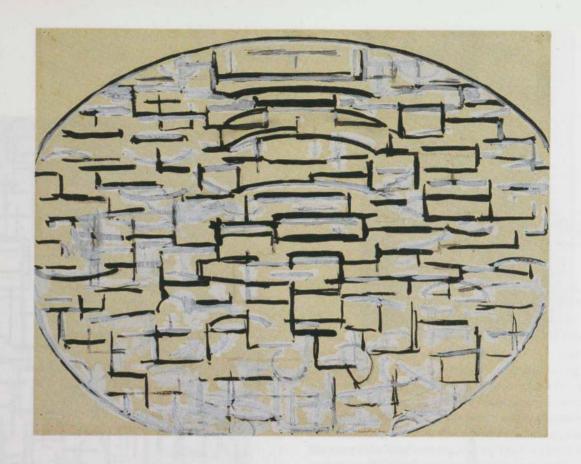


# 60 Church Facade 2 1914

Charcoal and ink on paper,
62.5 x 38 (24 5/8 x 15)
Glued onto chipboard after 1944.
Signed and dated lower center:
PM 14 [in New York handwriting]
Provenance: Estate of the artist;
Harry Holtzman, New York,
1944-1963; Sidney Janis Gallery,
New York, 1963; James H. and
Lillian Clark, Dallas, 1963-1993;
Janie C. Lee Master Drawings,
Dallas/New York, 1993.
Exhibitions: New York 1963, no. 42;
Santa Barbara 1965, no. 45;
New York 1971, no. 62.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 400; Welsh 1966b, 160; Joosten 1973a, 55; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 242³; Weyergraf 1979, 40; Bois 1982, 32. Lender: Private collection

This is one of a group of works that remained undated until 1941, by which time Mondrian was living in New York. They were mostly dated when he was preparing for his 1942 exhibition at the Valentine Gallery, and by that time, three decades after the drawings had been made, he had mistaken the date of his first journey to Paris as 1910 instead of 1912. Thus, some of the drawings are dated earlier than he intended – three years earlier in the case of cat. 69, one year in the case of cats. 67 and 68. Scholars concur that this was a genuine error rather than a conscious attempt to antedate his work.



## 61 Ocean 1 1914

Ink and gouache on paper,
49.5 x 63 (19 1/2 x 24 3/4)
The paper was glued to
hardboard at an unknown date,
which has probably contributed
to the darkening of the primary
support.

Signed lower center: Piet Mondrian [probably added in 1932]

Provenance: Gerard Hordijk, Paris and New York, 1932(?)-c. 1945; Stephan C. Lion, New York, c. 1945; Harry Holtzman, New York and Lyme, c. 1945-1964; Marlborough-Gerson Inc., New York, and Marlborough Fine Art Ltd., London, 1964-1970; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1970 (inv. no. NMB 1992).

Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 96; Baltimore 1981, no. 107.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 382; Joosten 1973a, 55; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 286; Moderna Museet 1976, 171; Welsh 1980, 48; Bois 1982, 31-32.

Lender: Moderna Museet, Stockholm

#### 62 Ocean 3 1914

Charcoal on paper, 50.5 x 63 (19 7/8 x 24 3/4) Signed and dated lower right (within oval): PM '14

Provenance: Gerard J. Koekkoek, Hilversum, c. 1918-1956; C. Koekkoek-Terwiel, 1956-1964; G. N. Zijlstra, Hilversum, 1964-1968; Brook Street Gallery, London, 1968; Jorge Coumandari, Santiago, (?)-1975; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung, 1975 (inv. no. C 75/2509).

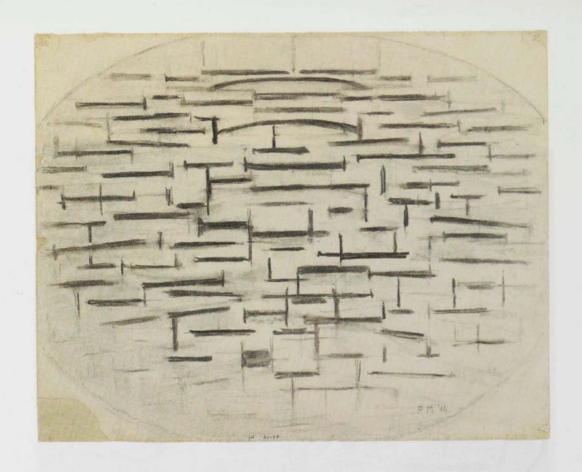
Exhibitions: Stuttgart 1980, no. 95; Baltimore 1981, no. 106; Madrid 1982, no. 46.

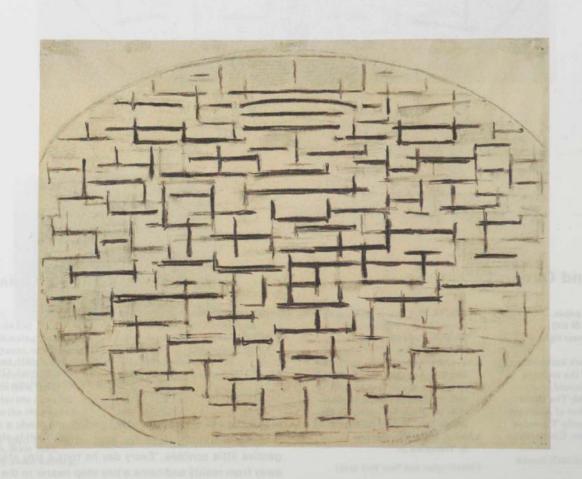
Literature: Welsh 1980, 48; Blotkamp 1982, 24-25; Bois 1982, 31-32; Gauss 1984, 345. Lender: Graphische Sammlung der Staatsgalerie Stuttgart

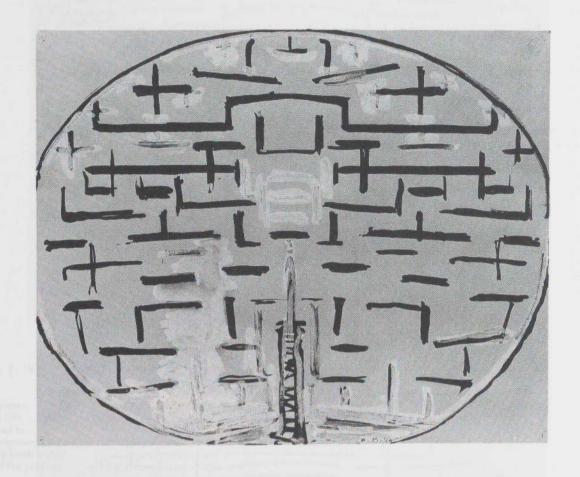
## 63 Ocean 4 1914

Charcoal on paper,
50.4 x 62.6 (19 7/8 x 24 5/8)
Signed lower center in pencil
(within oval): PIET MONDRIAN
Provenance: Galerie d'Art
Moderne, Basel, (?)-1949;
Théodore Bally, Montreux,
1949-1977; Eberhard Kornfeld,
Bern, 1977.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 385;
Joosten 1973a, 55; Blotkamp 1982,

24; Bois 1982, 31-32. Lender: Collection E. W. Kornfeld,







#### 64 Pier and Ocean 1 1914

Ink and gouache on paper, 50.2 x 62.9 (19 3/4 x 24 3/4)
Signed and dated lower right (inside oval):
P.M. '14 [in New York handwriting]
Provenance: Gift of the artist to Charmion von Wiegand,
New York, 1941-1948; The Miller
Company Collection of Abstract
Art, Burton and Emily Tremaine
Collection, Meriden, Connecticut,

Exhibitions: Hartford 1947; Zurich

1955, no. 70; London 1955, no. 35; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 43; Washington 1965, no. 30; Hartford 1984.

Literature: Hammacher 1947, 233-234; Seuphor 1956, no. 395; Welsh 1966b, 156; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Joosten 1973a, 55; Blok 1974, 51; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 288; Welsh 1980, 48-49; Bois 1982, 31-32.

Lender: Mr. & Mrs. Burton G. Tremaine Jr.

[Washington and New York only]

A. M. Hammacher reported a conversation with Mies Elout-Drabbe in which she described strolling with Mondrian on the beach in Domburg in the fall of 1914: "On a walk beside the ocean, late in the evening, under a radiant, starry sky, he

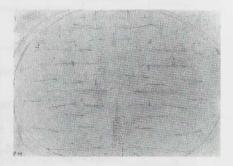
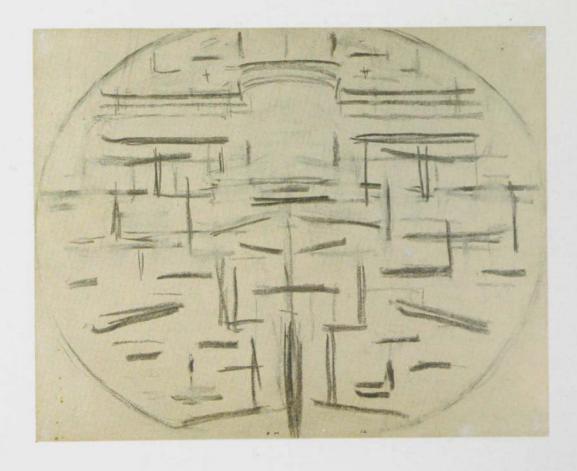


Fig. a
Pier and Ocean, 1914, pencil on
paper (Sketchbook I, 57),
11.4 x 15.8 cm, private collection.

took a tiny sketchbook out of his pocket and made a scribbled drawing of a starry night. For days he worked over that suggestive little scribble. 'Every day he took a tiny step further away from reality and came a tiny step nearer to the spiritual evocation of it.'' It is very likely that Drabbe is referring to the drawing in Sketchbook I, page 57 (fig. a), and that *Pier and Ocean 1* represents the first stage of the ensuing process of reworking which she describes.



## 65 Pier and Ocean 3 1914

Charcoal on paper, 50.5 x 63 (19 7/8 x 24 3/4) In late 1941 the drawing was glued to a Homosote panel, which was removed at an unknown date.

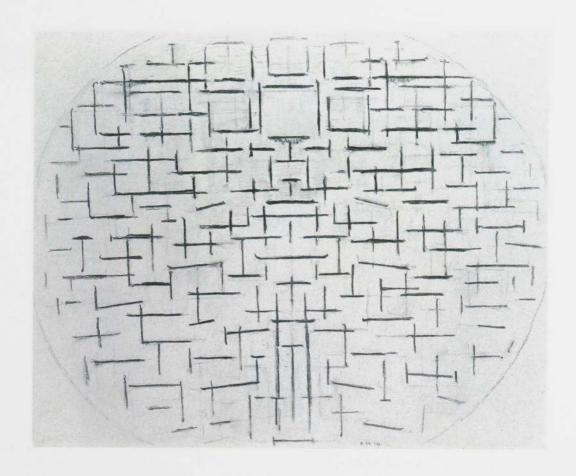
Signed and dated lower center (in ink): PM 14 [in New York handwriting, after the drawing was mounted on the Homosote panel]

Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1963; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1963.

Exhibitions: New York 1942a, no. 23; New York 1963, no. 44; Basel 1964, no. 36; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 44; Washington 1965, no. 31; New York 1971, no. 65; Bern 1972, no. 62. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 396; Welsh 1966b, 156; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Joosten 1973a, 55; Blok 1974, 51; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 289²; Bois 1982, 31-32.

Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]

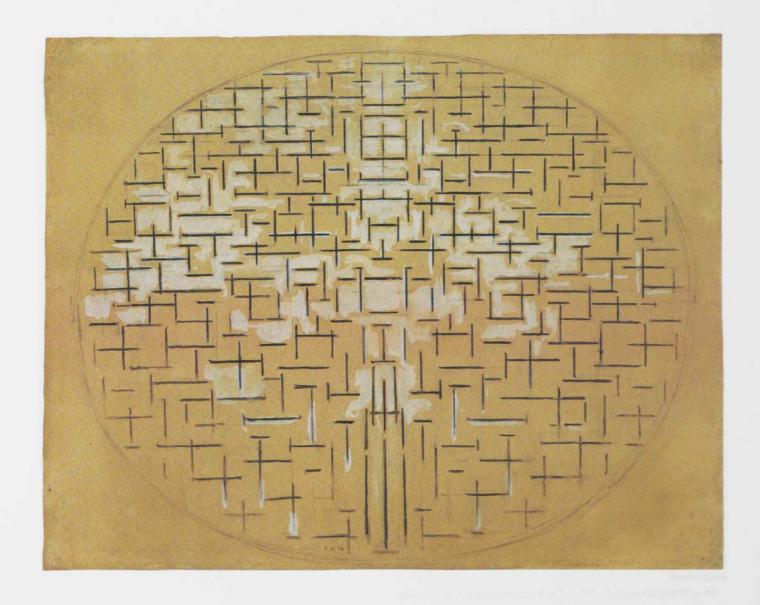


## 66 Pier and Ocean 4 1914

Charcoal on paper, 50 x 63 (19 5/8 x 24 3/4)
Signed and dated lower right (inside oval in charcoal): P M 14
Provenance: Jo D. A. Steijling, Laren, c. 1918; S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, by 1957-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. T128-1971).
Exhibitions: New York 1957b;
Toronto 1966, no. 79b; The Hague

Toronto 1966, no. 79b; The Hague 1966, no. 86; Paris 1969, no. 49; New York 1971, no. 64; Bern 1972, no. 62; Stuttgart 1980, no. 99; Baltimore 1981, no. 109; Tokyo 1987, no. 95.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 397; Welsh 1966b, 156; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Joosten 1973a, 55; Blok 1974, 51, no. 241; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 289<sup>3</sup>; Kruskopf 1976, 122; Welsh 1980, 48-49; Bois 1982, 31-32. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



# 67 Pier and Ocean 5; "Zee en Sterrenlucht" (Sea and Starry Sky) 1915

Charcoal and gouache on paper, 87.9 x 111.7 (34 5/8 x 44) Glued in late 1941 onto Homosote panel, which was removed in 1968.

Signed and dated lower center: P M '14 [in New York handwriting, added after the drawing was mounted on the Homosote panel; see cat.60 concerning date]

Provenance: Purchased from the artist in 1942 through the Valentine Gallery by The Museum of Modern Art, New York (inv. no. 34.42).

Exhibitions: New York 1942a, no. 24, "Pier and Ocean – 1914"; New York 1942b; New York 1945b, no. 18. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 398; Welsh 1966b, 156; Lohse 1966, 131-135; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Hofmann 1969, 46; Joosten 1973a, 55; Blok 1974, 51; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 287; Bois 1982, 31-32; van Dam 1990, 342.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Mrs. Simon Guggenheim Fund

continued >

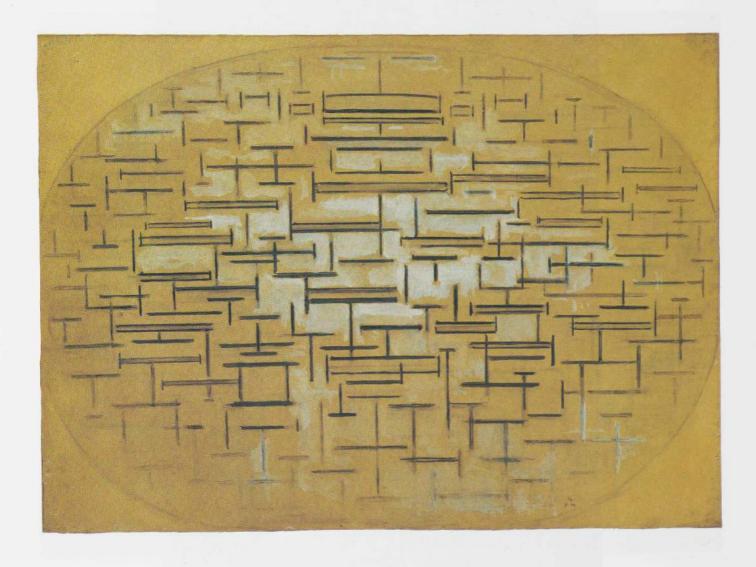
Cat. 67 (continued)

The present drawing was completed before the 1915 painting *Compositie 10 in zwart wit (Composition 10 in Black and White)* (cat. **70**); the two works are closely related both in composition and in scale.

It is interesting to note that each of the three series of 1914-1916 culminated in just such a large-scale drawing, probably intended as the stage immediately preparatory to painting, although no painting resulted from the "ocean" series.

Two documents establish the clear connection which existed in Mondrian's mind between this drawing and the sketch (cat. 64, fig. a). First, in a letter to de Meester-Obreen dated August 1915, Mondrian wrote: "The composition with small lines was a starry sky with sea beneath it – (at the lower center a pier)." Second, a photograph of the drawing bears an undated inscription in Mondrian's hand: "Sea and starry sky / (on the pier [last two words crossed out] the beach at Domburg) / bottom / Please return photograph to Mondriaan" (Museum of Modern Art archives, gift of Harry Holtzman).

In a 1926 photograph of the Paris studio by Paul Delbo, the drawing, attached with thumbtacks to a support hanging above the stove, is visible (see Chronology, fig. 10).



# 68 Ocean 5 1915

Charcoal and gouache on paper, 87.6 x 120.3 (34 1/2 x 47 3/8); in late 1941 glued on Homosote panel. The highly acidic Homosote, combined with heavy glue, contributed to the deterioration and darkening of the primary support; the Homosote was successfully removed in 1985, and the drawing was remounted.

the drawing was remounted.
Signed and dated lower right
(inside oval):
'14

P M [in New York, after mounting on Homosote; see cat.60 concerning date]

Provenance: Purchased from the artist, 1942, through the Valentine Gallery by Peggy Guggenheim, New York and Venice; Peggy Guggenheim Foundation, Venice, 1968-1976; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation) (inv. no. 76.2553 PG 38).

Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam, 1915, no. 117, "Compositie XI (teekening) in zwart wit (n.t.k. [not for sale])"; New York 1942a, no. 25, "Ocean-1914"; New York 1942c; New York 1945b, no. 17.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 392; von Wiegand 1943, 67; Joosten 1973a, 55; Bois 1982, 31-32; Rudenstine 1986, 555-560; van Dam 1990, 342.

Lender: Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation)

[Washington and New York only]

In October 1915, Mondrian showed one drawing in a group exhibition in Amsterdam. It is impossible to be certain that it was the Peggy Guggenheim work, but two contemporary sources suggest the possibility. In a review published in *De Kunst*, 16 October 1915, N. H. Wolf refers to a "...drawing (in black and white) with dominant horizontal black lines on a white background." In a letter to De Meester-Obreen of August 1915, first published by W. H. K. van Dam (1990), Mondrian noted that "the third [composition] is a rolling sea with a very high horizon (hardly any sky)." Taken together, these two comments apply more convincingly to the present drawing than to any of the other "ocean" drawings.



# 69 Church Facade 6 1915

Charcoal on paper, 99 x 63.4 (39 x 25) Glued in late 1941 onto Homosote panel, which was successfully removed in 1968.

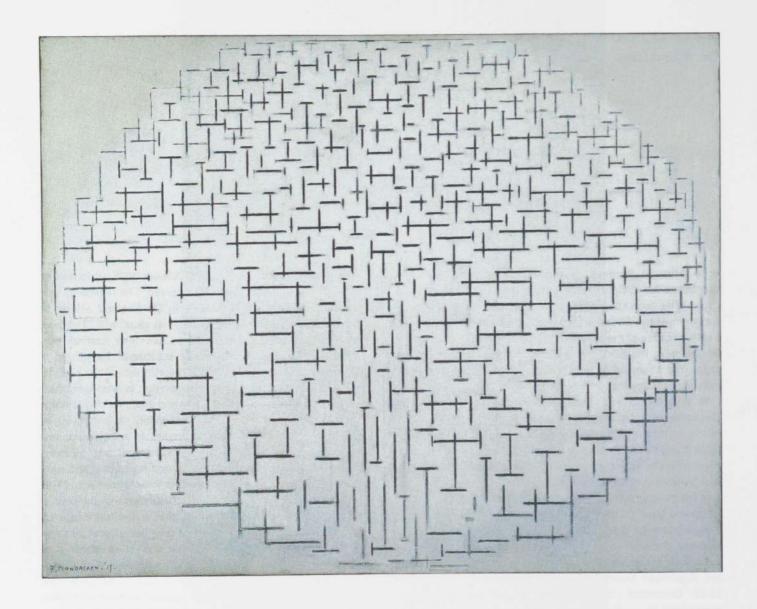
Signed and dated lower right: PM 12 [in New York handwriting]

Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York 1944-1964; Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York, 1964; Joan and Lester Avnet, New York, 1964-1978; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1978 (inv. no. 137.78).

Exhibitions: New York 1942a, no. 28, "Building – 1912"; New York 1945b, no. 16; Stuttgart 1980, no. 102.

Literature: Frost 1942, repr. 129, "Building facade"; Seuphor 1956, no. 401; Seitz 1956, 43-45; Welsh 1966b, 160; Joosten 1973a, 55; Ottolenghi 1974, 242<sup>4</sup>; Welsh 1980, 48-51; Bois 1982, 31-33; Clay 1982, n.p.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Joan and Lester Avnet Collection



# 70 COMPOSITIE 10 IN ZWART WIT (Composition 10 in Black and White); Pier and Ocean 1915

----- DE -- 400 /22 4 /2 -- 42 4 /2)

Oil on canvas, 85 x 108 (33 1/2 x 42 1/2) Signed and dated lower left: P. MONDRIAAN. '15

On reverse left: Compositie 10 On reverse right: P. Mondriaan

Provenance: Helene Kröller-Müller, 1915-1928; Kröller-Müller Stichting, The Hague, 1928-1937; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (inv. no. 532-15).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1915, no. 116, "Compositie X (schilderij) in zwart wit" (fl. 300); Düsseldorf 1928, no. 353, "Weihnachtsstimmung"; New York 1936, no. 181; New York 1951, no. 15; London 1955, no. 36; Toronto 1966, no. 79a.

Literature: van Doesburg 1915;

Bremmer 1916, 106-107, "Lijnencompositie"; Bremmer 1917, 39, "Kerststemming"; van Doesburg 1919b, 186-187; Kröller-Müller 1925, 218; von Wiegand 1943, 66-67; Moholy-Nagy 1947, 141; Jaffé 1956, 43; Seuphor 1956, no. 415; Welsh 1966b, 156; Smith 1966, 15-16; Joosten 1968, 268-269; Welsh and Joosten 1969, 12; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1969, 201-202; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1970, 203-204; Joosten 1971, 63; Welsh 1973, 50, 53; Joosten 1973a, 55; Blok 1974, 51, 52, 54, 185, no. 242; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 289; Kruskopf 1976, 122-123; Welsh 1977b, 11, 13-16; Schapiro 1978, 247-248; Welsh 1980, 48-49; Bois 1982,

31-32, 42; Blotkamp 1982, 24, 26; Hoek 1982, 60-61. Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

continued>

Cat. 70 (continued)

In a letter to Bremmer dated 4 October 1915, Mondrian expressed his delight that he intended to buy this picture: "Your offer to purchase my painting pleased me very much for two reasons. Firstly, because you made the offer, and secondly, because of the financial implications. So I am happy to let you have the work. My original intention was to do it in *color*, but I ran out of time, and I actually found that it expresses exactly what was intended.'

In a letter to van Doesburg, written in November or December of the same year concerning the Amsterdam exhibition, he again noted his satisfaction with this painting: "I think it expresses the abstract-real (as I call my work) in the most effective way at *this* time. If it becomes too absolute, it is, I believe, unintelligible for people of our time. If you feel that the photograph captures something of this work, then by all means keep it. I have more of them."

In a letter to Bremmer dated 5 January 1916, Mondrian seemed to caution against the attribution of specific meaning or content to his work of this period. He had heard about the Algemeen Kunstcongres (Amsterdam Concertgebouw, 21-22 December 1915), during which one participant questioned the critic's description of this painting as conveying a Christmas mood: "In retrospect I am sorry that I didn't attend...the conference....I would have enjoyed telling [the questioner] that what the picture meant – in the normal sense of representation – was not the point, and that you were right in describing one of my works as [conveying] a Christmas feeling.... If one visualizes the idea of Christmas in a totally abstract way, one visualizes peace, balance, the predominance of the spiritual, etc. That must have been what you meant..."

Mondrian's submission to the October 1915 exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum was well received. The review by van Doesburg published 6 November in De Eenheid offered a perceptive analysis of Compositie 10 in zwart wit: "The task Mondrian set himself...is most successfully carried out. Spiritually, this work is more important than all the others. It conveys the impression of Peace; the stillness of the soul. In his methodical construction, 'becoming' is stronger than 'being.' This is a purely artistic phenomenon, for Art is not a 'being' but a 'becoming.' This 'becoming' is portrayed in black and white....Restricting his means to a minimum, and then conveying such a pure artistic statement with no more than white paint on a white canvas and horizontal and perpendicular lines, is an extraordinary achievement. [The painting] should, however, hang completely on its own.... Mondrian is conscious of the fact that a line has acquired profound significance. A line on its own has almost become a work of art, and one can no longer treat it as casually as one could when art concerned itself with depicting things seen. The white canvas is so solemn. Each extraneous line, each misplaced line, each color applied without sufficient care and respect, can destroy the whole, that is to say, the spirit."

Following the publication of this important review, Mondrian and van Doesburg's friendship began to develop, first through correspondence and then in person.



# 71 Composition 1916 1916

Oil on canvas with wood strip nailed to bottom edge,

119 x 75.1 (46 7/8 x 29 5/8), including

1.2 (7/16) wood strip.
The original frame is lost, but a photograph taken during the Amsterdam 1946 exhibition shows a double strip frame apparently attached to a wider subframe (fig. a). In addition, a strip of wood about 1.2 cm wide (now lost) was attached to the top of the canvas but remained unpainted, whereas the lower strip was integrated into the composition. It seems likely that the original function of both strips was to facilitate the mounting of the painting upon the

Signed and dated on wood strip, lower left: P.Mondriaan. '16 [apostrophe and "6" extending upward onto the canvas]

Provenance: H. van Assendelft, Gouda, 1916-1928; Mrs. Jacoba van Assendelft-Hoos, Gouda, 1928-1947; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, 1947-1948; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1948-1949; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1949 (inv. no. 49.1229).

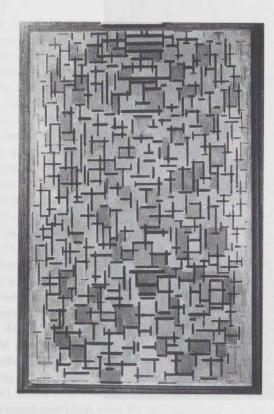
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1916, "Compositie"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 78; Basel 1947, no. 28; New York 1949, no. 13; New York 1957b; New York 1963, no. 19; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 49; Toronto 1966, no. 80; The Hague 1966, no. 88; New York 1971, no. 69; Bern 1972, no. 66; Baltimore 1981, no. 115.

Literature: Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (22 March 1916); Steenhoff 1916; Huebner 1922, repr. upside down; Seuphor 1956, no. 424; Welsh 1966b, 160; Joosten 1971, 64; Welsh 1973a, 53; Joosten 1973, 55, 57-58; Blok 1974, 51, 52; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 291; Kruskopf 1976, 123-124; Rudenstine 1976, 575-579; Joosten 1977, 183-185; Welsh 1980, 49-51; Blotkamp 1982, 26-27; Bois 1982, 31, 32-33; Champa 1985, 41-46.

Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

continued >

Fig. a
Composition 1916 at the 1946
retrospective, Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam, showing original
frame.

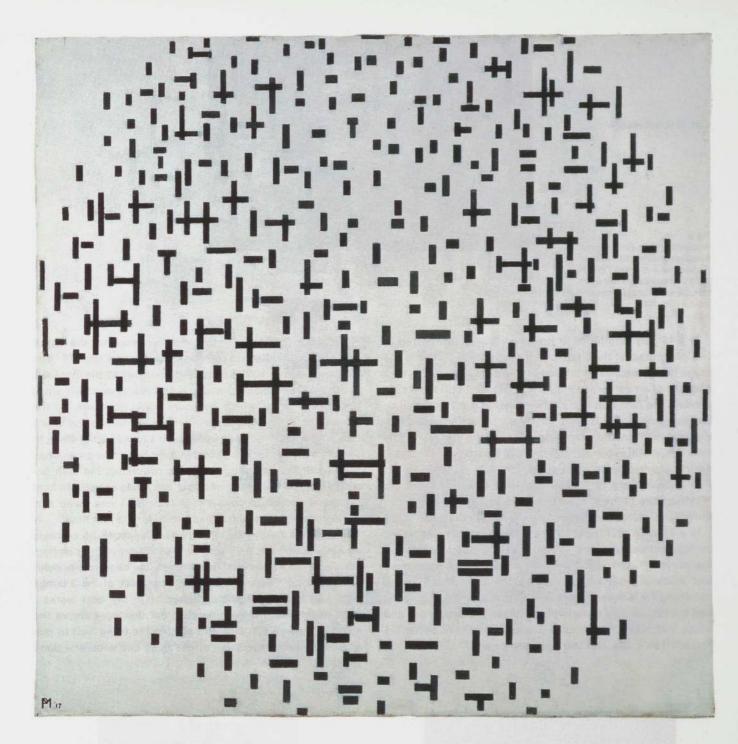


The present work derived from a series of studies of the Domburg church facade, beginning with the 1914 ink drawing (cat. 59) (Blok 1964, 104). Reviews of the 1916 Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring drew particular attention to this new work. In the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* of 22 March 1916, an anonymous reviewer wrote: "When one emerges from the main room and is suddenly confronted with the colorful composition by Piet Mondriaan, one might certainly be put off by

these lines and blocks of color. However, if one stands at a distance,...and sees the picture surrounded by the wallpaper, the sofa, the floor, the *portières*, all in light and dark brown, and the wall space flanked by...dark canvases..., there is a brilliance of bright color in this composition like that of sunlight on flowers. There is a beautiful overflow of tones in the picture, the effect of which is enhanced because the canvas is placed upon the frame rather than within it. With this framing device, Mondriaan proves that he is concerned with the decorative whole – something which has been in doubt for some time. His color, too, has become richer, purer, more spiritual – that is to say, not the little color planes themselves, but the whole, seen from a distance and taken in at a glance."

In the 1 April Nieuwe Amsterdammer, Willem Steenhoff wrote: "Finally...I should mention the submission of the individualistic, modest Mondriaan. Here is a new work by him – a composition, as he calls it – developed from the same conceptual basis but with a new color scheme. It radiates more brilliantly than the others, and is also more full of movement, yet less intense. For me, the importance of Mondrian's current work lies more in its disposition of color than in its placement of form. The purely compositional element does not have great significance, although I admit that in their total effect the vertical and horizontal lines interact in such a way that the whole becomes a melodious ensemble."

Mondrian's concern about the placement and lighting of his work, and his confidence in the quality of *Composition 1916*, are suggested in a note to Slijper written sometime after April 1916: "I have now hung that last piece (which I had exhibited at the Holl[andsche] K[unst] K[ring]) in a place that is less brightly lit, and it now strikes me once again as outstanding. You should really see it when you are here."



# 72 COMPOSITIE IN LIJN (Composition in Line) 1916 [first state] 1917 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 108 x 108 (42 1/2 x 42 1/2) Lined; original frame lost (see photograph fig. a, which indicates either set-back strips or a narrow

subframe).
Signed and dated lower left:
PM [monogram] 17
Inscribed on stretcher:
Compositie in lijn. P. Mondriaan.

Provenance: Helene Kröller-Müller, The Hague, 1917-1928; Kröller-Müller Stichting, The Hague, 1928-1937; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (inv. no. 533-17).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1917, no. 45, "Compositie in lijn"; Düsseldorf 1928, no. 354; Amsterdam 1946, no. 79; Basel 1947, no. 27; New York 1949, no. 15; The Hague 1955, no. 91; Venice 1956, no. 10; Rome 1956, no. 31; New York 1971, no. 70; Bern 1972, no. 67.

Literature: van Doesburg 1917, repr. (first state); Bremmer 1918, 47-48, repr. 32, "Lijncompositie"; Bremmer 1921, 75; Lissitzky and Arp 1925, 12, repr. 53 (first state); De Stijl VII, 79-84 (1927), repr. 36; Seuphor 1956, no. 426; James 1957, 36, repr. 5; Joosten 1968, 322-325, repr. 323 (first state); Jaffé 1970, 35, 124, repr. 125; Joosten 1971, 64; Welsh 1973, 53; Joosten 1977, 56; Blok 1974, 51, 52, 186, no. 259; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 296; Kruskopf 1976, 122-123; Joosten 1977, 185;

Schapiro 1978, 248-254; Hoek 1982, 60-62; Blotkamp 1982, 26-27; Bois 1982, 33-34, 42; Blotkamp 1984, 17-20. Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum,

In several letters of 1916-1917, Mondrian indicated that he was struggling towards a new stage in his evolution. *Compositie in lijn* clearly played a major role in this, and Mondrian often referred to the problems he was trying to resolve as he worked on it.

In a 7 May 1916 letter to van Assendelft, he wrote, "This summer the black and white will most likely be ready: the delay occurred because once again I found myself in a transition with my work, and only now will I be able to make a complete black and white in the new form." continued

Cat. 72 (continued)

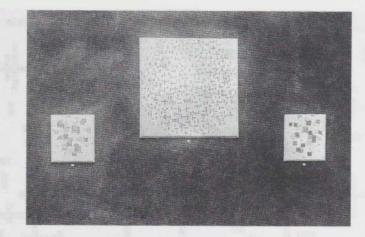


Fig. a
Installation view, Hollandsche
Kunstenaarskring, 1917, showing
Compositie in lijn (cat. 72) with
(left) Compositie in kleur B
(cat. 73) and (right) Compositie in
kleur A (Ott. 298).

In a 15 July 1916 letter to Bremmer, Mondrian referred to two photographs: the first was of *Compositie in lijn* at the stage it had reached in the summer of 1916 (fig. **b**); the second was of an earlier work, now lost (fig. **c**): "Therefore I am sending you herewith two photographs: a. is my latest work, and in my opinion it is more advanced, more universal in its expression, than the preceding ones. Photo b. is of some time ago, it still expresses too much of a particular direction, a particular 'elevation' so to speak, I think."

In a 25 January 1917 letter, he wrote to van Assendelft: "Furthermore I took that black and white one in hand, made the ground whiter and made some changes in the lines."

In a 7 March 1917 letter to Bremmer, Mondrian elaborated on his continuing efforts to find a solution as he reworked the canvas: "...this year I worked and explored a great deal, and much of what I had done had to be changed. I was searching for a purer expression: that is why nothing satisfied me yet....Also, I completely reworked the large black and white, which I regret because it would have been better if I had left it as it was, and started a new canvas."

In a 4 May 1917 letter to Bremmer, he described the installation of the painting in the Amsterdam show (fig. a): "The exhibition opens next Saturday (tomorrow) at the Stedelijk Museum. I am showing a white and black, and two small paintings in color, which are yours if you like them. At the moment I have nothing better. Perhaps you will go and take a look, and I will then hear from you if I should send them to you after the exhibition. Unfortunately, the white ground has cracked in places owing to all the reworking, but also because it would not dry: it was cold, and I was not able to heat the place enough. Also, perhaps because I was using zinc white instead of Cremnitz [lead] white for the first time."

Finally, in a 7 July 1917 letter to van Doesburg, he expressed satisfaction not only with the resolution of the painting, but also with its installation between the two smaller color compositions: "Herewith the glass negative of the 3 things Frits van Hengelaar photographed....[I]n my next works I want to introduce something else, but this work shows the spiritual so well etc. etc.; and placing the three next to one another is quite expressive of one thing and another – don't you think?"

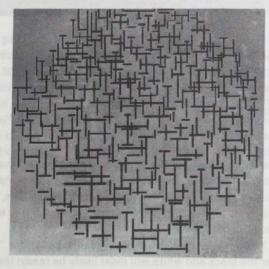
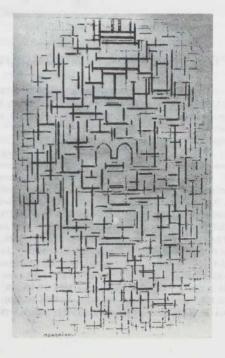
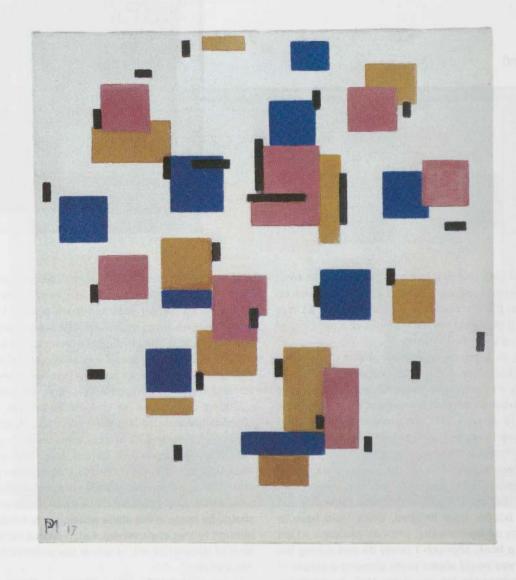


Fig. b First state (1916) of Compositie in lijn.

Fig. c Church Facade, 1915, charcoal on paper?, dimensions and location unknown. Reproduced in *De Stijl* I, 9 (July 1918), 109.





# 73 COMPOSITIE IN KLEUR B (Composition in Color B) 1917

Oil on canvas, 50 x 44.7 (19 5/8 x 17 5/8) The original frame is lost (see cat.72, fig. a, which indicates either a set-back strip frame or a narrow subframe).

Signed and dated lower left: PM [monogram] '17 Inscribed on turnover of the canvas: Compositie in kleur. B. P. Mondriaan.

P. Mondrian.

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer,
The Hague, 1917; Helene KröllerMüller, The Hague, 1917-1928;
Kröller-Müller Stichting,
The Hague, 1928-1937;
Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller,
Otterlo (inv. no. 535-17).

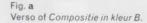
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1917, no. 47, "Compositie in kleur B"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 81; Basel 1947, no. 26; New York 1949, no. 14; The Hague 1955, no. 92; Zurich 1955, no. 71; London 1955, no. 37; Venice 1956, no. 9; Rome 1956, no. 32; Toronto 1966, no. 82; The Hague 1966, no. 90; Berlin 1968, no. 38; Paris 1969, no. 56; New York 1971, no. 71; Bern 1972, no. 68.

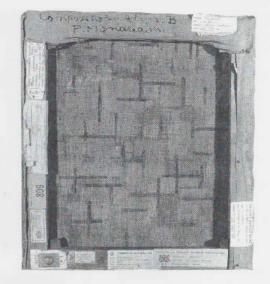
Literature: Bremmer 1921, 75,
"Compositie in kleur"; Seuphor
1956, no. 433; Blok 1964, 29-30;
Joosten 1968, 322-325;
Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1969,
203-204; Rijksmuseum KröllerMüller 1970, 205-206; Hofmann 1970,
57, 67; Joosten 1971, 65-66; Welsh

1973, 53; Joosten 1973a, 55, 56; Blok 1974, 51, 52, 54, 57, no. 261; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 297; Kruskopf 1976, 125-126; Welsh 1976, 84; Weyergraf 1979, 44, 47; Blotkamp 1984, 17-20. Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

continued)

Cat. 73 (continued)





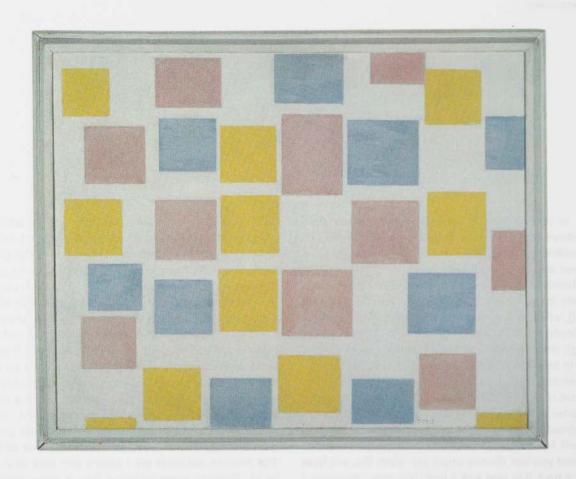
On the reverse of both this painting and *Compositie in kleur* A (Ott. 298), horizontal and vertical lines are visible which do not correspond to the compositions on the front (fig. a). It is possible that they represent the early stages of a painting of c. 1915-1916 that remained unfinished.

While working on Compositie in kleur A and Compositie in kleur B, Mondrian was once again forced to undertake commercial work for economic reasons, although he was also able to continue to develop his current work. In a letter to Bremmer on 16 January 1917, he wrote: "As you know, I was commissioned to do two portraits, 500 guilders for the two, and I couldn't refuse: these are the kinds of assignments that give me [financial] freedom for my [main] work. There was no time pressure, so I concentrated first on my own things, including four small ones for you. Now these four are well under way, but far from finished, since I did have to spend a lot of time on the portraits, and - as you know - I am also working on a book, although I rarely do this during the day....I wonder if you would object to my showing a couple of things which are intended for you at the Holl. Kunstenaars Kring, probably opening in March. So far I only have my black and white painting for the exhibition [cat. 72], which you have already seen at my place, and I would like to add two small ones (which are certainly reserved for you, though you can of course change them for others if you wish); I would naturally not offer these for sale." Bremmer apparently agreed to this plan, since Compositie in kleur A and Compositie in kleur B were indeed shown at the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring, which did not open until 5 May. As for the other two paintings Mondrian mentions, they were never completed and no trace of them remains, but undoubtedly they were closely related to the present painting.

Mondrian was engaged in a considerable struggle at this time with certain problems in his work: "...this year I worked and explored a great deal, and much of what I had done had to be changed. I was searching for a purer expression: that is why nothing satisfied me....I now seem to have reestablished a more integrated mode of expression, and I am telling you this now since I have completely finished a small canvas for you and am rather pleased with it. More will follow soon."

During the course of the exhibition, on 16 May 1917, Mondrian responded to a letter from van Doesburg concerning the lighting and its effect on his work: "...your judgment is, I think, accurate. As to the blue, you are also right. Although the light in the Stedelijk does seem to change the color values. In my (too small) studio, the effect was different. This is only a technical question: I believe that my work should be made in the place where it is to hang, and in direct relation to that environment. I also regard my work as a new form of decorative art, in which the pictorial fuses with the decorative...."

In his 1917 article, "New Plastic in Painting," Mondrian expands upon this idea: "Although the new plastic appears to have given up all technique, its technique has actually become so important that the colors must be painted in the precise place where the work is to be seen. Only then can the effect of the colors and the relationships be precise, for they are interdependent with the entire architecture; and the architecture in turn must harmonize completely with the work."



#### 74 Composition with Color Planes 2 1917

Oil on canvas, 48 x 61.5 (18 7/8 x 24 1/4) Lined and restretched in 1966; original double-molded, overlapping frame with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 17 Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1918-(?); G. Smith-van Stolk, Rotterdam; A. P. van Hoey Smith, Rotterdam, (?)-1936; Gift of A. P. van Hoey Smith, 1936, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam (inv. no. 1543).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1918; The Hague 1955, no. 93, "Compositie met kleurvlakjes, 1917"; Zurich 1955, no. 72; Rome

1956, no. 33; Berlin 1968, no. 37; Paris 1969, no. 55.

Literature: Museum Boymans 1937, 77, no. 819, "Compositie"; Seuphor 1956, no. 429; Jaffé 1956, 44; Joosten 1968, 325-326; Joosten 1973a, 56; Blok 1974, 51-52, 54, 57, 187, no. 263; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 300; Joosten 1977, 185.

Lender: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam

continued)

In letters to various friends between July 1917 and April 1918, Mondrian referred to the progress he was making on his compositions with color planes; the need to make a living, however, was a perpetual distraction.

On September 5, he wrote to van Assendelft: "I am rather pleased with the watercolor [Composition with Color Planes 1, Ott. 302], which is a considerable comfort, since my work goes so slowly: the great search is over now (at least for the time being), which means that I can steadily rework various canvases, in between all the other things I have to do."

On 8 January 1918 to van Doesburg: "In between the things I have to do in order to earn my living, I am managing to make faster progress with my new work."

On 6 February 1918, he wrote to Bremmer: "At the end of March I will have finished several things which I want to send you and you can choose which you want. You will have six then – 4 from this year and 2 from last year....However, I would like to show things at the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring (as I did last year)." And on February 27, he continued: "I have received word that the Kunstenaarskring will open already on March 16. I think I had better not offer anything for sale, since I shall only finish 8, and 6 of them will

be for you....The 7th is the watercolor...and the 8th is a larger work in gray and yellow....These eight represent a new stage, in which I have found a better solution for color planes and background. As I was working, I found that *in my case*, color planes on a flat plane do not create unity. With van der Leck this does indeed happen, but he works differently after all."

By 9 April he was clearly responding to a letter in which van Doesburg had offered both positive and critical reactions to the recent color plane compositions: "I agree with some of the things you wrote, but others not. I do not agree that gray, sharp planes would create *tone* [possibly referring here to cat. 76]. And moreover, you should see the [whole group of] exhibited work as an evolution. Yet, in spite of shortcomings, I found each work in itself quite good. I, too, liked the large one the best, and I shall continue on that path. The lines do not close off, I assure you; they only appear to do so. Perhaps some technical flaw is responsible for creating that impression."

The "large" work to which Mondrian refers here is one of three in the series that are now lost. His insistence that "the lines do not close off" probably arises from a concern that lines not be perceived as delimiting planes or forms.



# 75 COMPOSITIE NO.3; Composition with Color Planes 3 1917

Oil on canvas, 48 x 61 (18 7/8 x 24) Lined. The original doublemolded, overlapping frame and the stretcher were replaced in 1971.

Signed and dated lower left: PM 17 [over PM monogram] Inscribed by the artist on the upper stretcher bar (and on part on the now-invisible canvas turnover):

Piet Mondriaan Compositie No.3. Provenance: H. P. Bremmer,

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer,
The Hague, 1918; Louis Eikendal
and Baroness H. A. Eikendal-van
Heerdt, c. 1918-1949; Kunsthandel
G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar,
The Hague, 1949; Haags
Gemeentemuseum,

1949 (inv. no. 31-1949).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1918, no. 63, "Compositie III"; The Hague 1955, no. 94, "Compositie No.3 met kleurvlakjes"; Zurich 1955, no. 73; London 1955, no. 38; Rome 1956, no. 34; Toronto 1966, no. 83; The Hague 1966, no. 91; Paris 1969, no. 54; New York 1971, no. 73; Bern 1972, no. 70; Tokyo 1987, no. 112; New York 1988, no. 23.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 428; Jaffé 1956, 44; Wijsenbeek 1962, 39; Welsh 1966b, 164; Blok 1968, 46, 139, 145; Joosten 1968, 325-326; Pleynet 1969, 32; Joosten 1973a, 56; Blok 1974, 51-52, 54, 57, 186-187, no. 262; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 299; Clair 1978, 61; Weyergraf 1979, 44. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

[The Hague only]



#### 76 COMPOSITIE NO.5; Composition with Color Planes 5 1917

Oil on canvas, 49 x 61 (19 1/4 x 24)
The original, double-molded,
overlapping frame survived until
at least 1955 (fig. a), but has since
been replaced, as has the
stretcher.

Signed and dated lower center: PM 17

Inscribed on upper bar of original stretcher: Piet Mondriaan Compositie N.5 [recorded by Joosten, early 1980s; Museum of Modern Art archives records this inscription as: Piet Mondrian Composition N:V]

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1918; J. D. Waller, Driebergen, 1918-1937; Heirs of J. D. Waller, 1937-c. 1946; J. D. Waller, Geneva, c. 1946-1965; Harold Diamond, New York, 1965; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1965-1966; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1966-1967; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967 (inv. no. 1774.67).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1918, no. 65, "Compositie V"; The Hague 1955, h.c.; Basel 1964, no. 35; New York 1980, no. 11; Madrid 1982, no. 48.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 430; Joosten 1968, 325-326; Rubin 1972, 26, 27, 195; Joosten 1973a, 85; Blok 1974, 51-52, 54, 57; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 301; Kruskopf 1976, 125.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, 1967

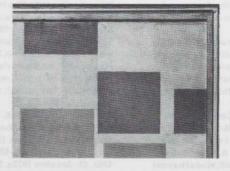
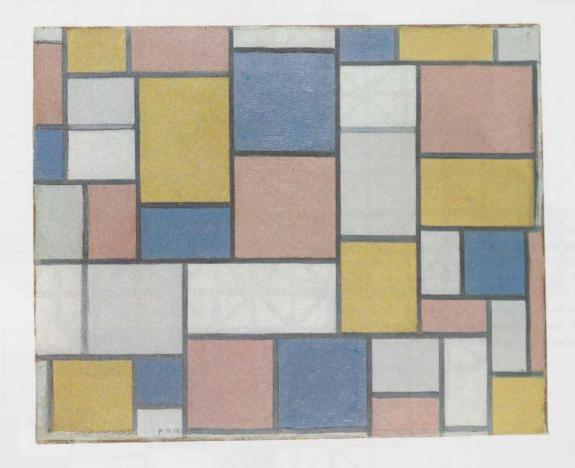


Fig. a
Detail of *Compositie No. 5*, before 1955, showing original frame.



# $77\,$ Composition with Color Planes and Gray Lines 1 $^{1918}$

Oil on canvas, 49 x 60.5 (19 1/4 x 23 7/8) Lined and restretched The original, double-molded overlapping frame is lost (see photograph in van Doesburg

1919a, 89)

Signed and dated lower left: PM 18 Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1918-before 1937; Dr. Gerbrand Dekker, Meilen, before 1937-1950; Max Bill, Switzerland, 1950.

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1918; Basel 1937, no. 42; New York 1951, no. 17; The Hague 1955, no. 96; Zurich 1955, no. 75; Toronto 1966, no. 84; The Hague 1966, no. 93; Berlin 1968, no. 39; New York 1971, no. 75; Bern 1972, no. 72; Madrid 1982, no. 49. Literature: van Doesburg 1919a, 89; Hana 1924, 638-639, repr.; Seuphor 1956, no. 441; Welsh 1966b, 166; Jaffé 1970, 126; Blok 1974, 52, 57; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 307; Weyergraf 1979, 22, 23; Hoek 1982, 65-66.

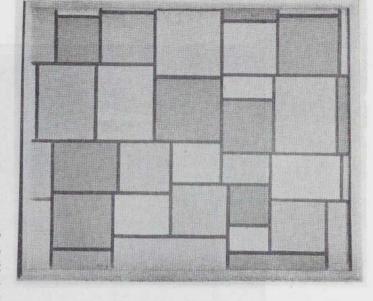
Lender: Max Bill, Switzerland

continued>

Cat. 77 (continued)

Fig. a
Composition with Color Planes
and Gray Lines, 1918, dimensions
and location unknown. Photograph
from De Stijl II, 5 (March 1919),
enclosed plate IX.

For Mondrian's comments on this painting and others that he sent to the 1918 Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring, see above (cats. 74-76). He drew attention in particular to the fact that this type of composition represented a new stage in his development of the relationship between color planes and ground. In this painting and two others dating from the same period, the field is divided by an explicit *irregular* grid. The two other works, now lost, were purchased by Helene Kröller-Müller from the 1918 exhibition (figs. a and b).



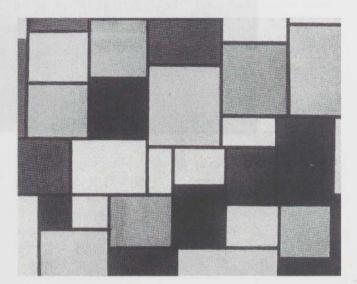
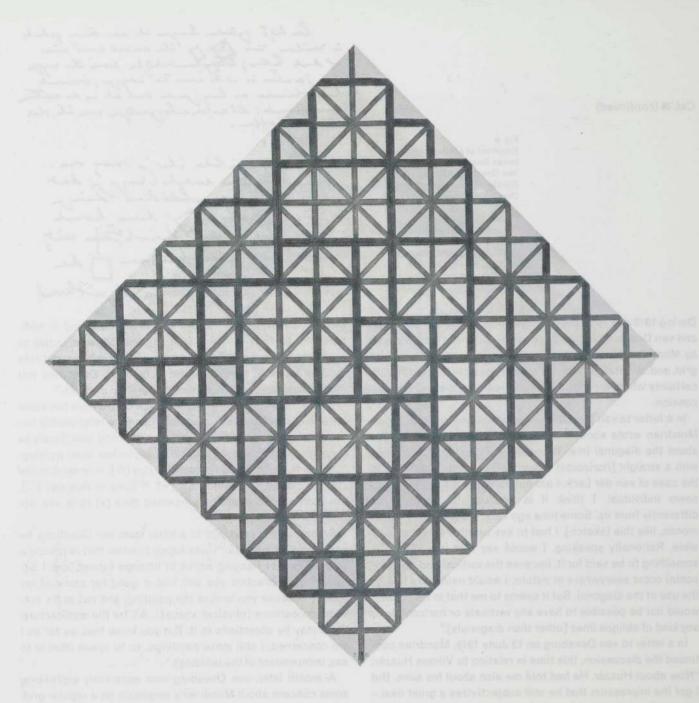


Fig. b
Composition with Color Planes
and Gray Lines, 1918, dimensions
and location unknown. Photograph
originally in Vilmos Huszár
collection.



### 78 Composition with Grid 1 (Lozenge) 1918

Oil on canvas, 84.5 x 84.5 (33 1/4 x 33 1/4); vertical axis, 121 (47 5/8) Signed and dated lower center: P 18 M

Provenance: A. P. van den Briel, De Meern, after 1926-1956; Gift of van den Briel, 1956, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 78-1956).

Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1919, no. 214 (or cat. 79); Amsterdam 1946, no. 85; Basel 1947, no. 25; The Hague 1955, no. 97; Zurich 1955, no. 76; London 1955, no. 40; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 85; The Hague 1966, no. 94.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 438; Welsh 1966b, 168; Welsh 1973, 53; Joosten 1973a, 57; Joosten 1973b, 222; Blok 1974, 54, 58, no. 266; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 305; Kruskopf 1976, 127-128; Welsh 1977b, 16-17, 21; Carmean 1979, 23-27, 91; Blotkamp 1979, 33-39; Clay 1982, n.p.; Hoek 1982, 66, 68-70.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

continued>

Cat. 78 (continued)

Fig. a
Fragment of a letter from Mondrian
to van Doesburg, April or May 1918,
Van Doesburg Archive,
Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische
Documentatie, The Hague.

Fig. b
Fragment of a letter (probably the same as fig. a) from Mondrian to van Doesburg, Van Doesburg Archive, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague.

During 1918 and 1919, the correspondence between Mondrian and van Doesburg focuses upon many different issues posed by Mondrian's lozenge compositions: color, use of a regular grid, and orientation. It is not always possible to identify with certainty which lozenge painting or paintings are under discussion.

In a letter to van Doesburg dated April or May 1918 (fig. a), Mondrian wrote about the diagonal: "I also agree with you about the diagonal line. Whenever it occurs in conjunction with a straight [horizontal or vertical] line, I do not like it. In the case of van der Leck, I am not sure. But his works do not seem individual. I think it is because he works quite differently from us. Some time ago I started a work all in diamonds, like this [sketch]. I had to see whether this was possible. Rationally speaking, I would say that it is. There is something to be said for it, because the vertical and the horizontal occur everywhere in nature. I would neutralize this by the use of the diagonal. But it seems to me that in that case it would not be possible to have any verticals or horizontals or any kind of oblique lines [other than diagonals]."

In a letter to van Doesburg on 13 June 1918, Mondrian continued the discussion, this time in relation to Vilmos Huszár: "Now about Huszár. He had told me also about his aims. But I got the impression that he still subjectivizes a great deal – on a mathematical basis, to be sure, but with relative expression. That is quite possible, I think, because the rhythm continually subjectivizes, even when the division is a pure relationship. I happened to be working on something which I showed to Huszár and which he liked. It was also based on a regular division, although without my knowing about him. But I keep reworking that division a great deal, and I think it will look different from Huszár's work. How Huszár carries this out now – to my mind, everything, depends on that....

"As for this *pure proportion*, I think that when one talks about that *in art* it is already a foregone conclusion that that cannot be a pure mathematical proportion."

In apparent contradiction to the ideas expressed in his letter of 16 May 1917 (see cat. 73), he wrote to van Doesburg on 13 February 1919: "You must bear in mind that my works are intended as paintings, that is to say, they constitute an expression in and of themselves, not part of a building.

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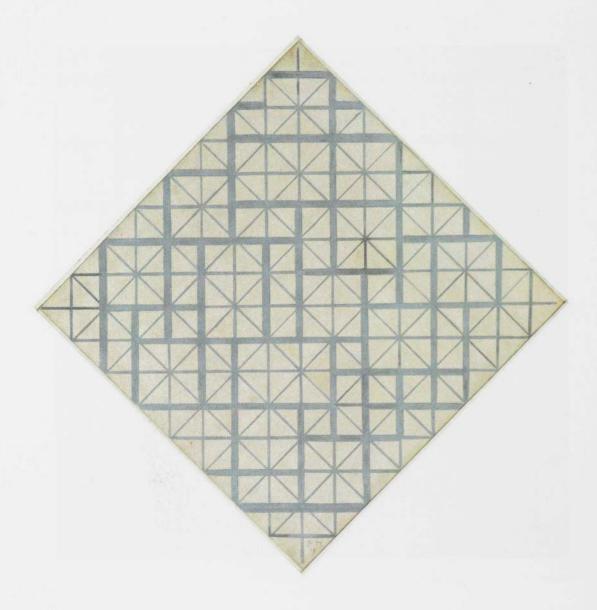
composition juich 2 without

Moreover, they were produced in a small room, and in addition, I am for the time being using muted colors, adjusting to the present-day environment and world. This does not rule out the fact that I would prefer pure color. Otherwise you might think that I am contradicting myself in my work."

In a textual fragment which may well derive from the same letter (fig. b), Mondrian elaborated upon the relationship between painting and architecture, now referring specifically to the lozenge-shaped canvases on which he has been working: "...I now hang several paintings like this  $[\diamondsuit]$ : in order that the composition is presented thus [+]. If hung in this way  $[\Box]$ , the composition would be presented thus [x] (à la van der Leck, for example)."

Presumably in response to a letter from van Doesburg, he wrote on 3 March 1919: "I was happy to know that in principle you approve of hanging works in lozenge format, and I believe that in practice you will find it good for some of my things; because you look at the painting, and not at its outward appearance [physical shape]....As for the architecture, there may be objections to it. But you know that, as far as I am concerned, I still make paintings, so to speak (that is to say, independent of the building)."

A month later, van Doesburg was apparently expressing some concern about Mondrian's emphasis on a regular grid, and Mondrian responded on 18 April 1919: "I can understand your objections to various things. It is true that with regular division, one incurs the risk of repetition. But this repetition can be overcome through contrast. Anything can become a system, irregular division as well as regular: it all depends on how it is resolved. If I compare that painting of mine which is now reproduced in De Stijl [cat. 77, fig. a] with, for example, the lozenge-shaped one that you (as well as I) think is the best, then I can see clearly that the latter is better in every respect. It is possible that the planes should vary more in size, but in this case it does not seem to me a disadvantage. I arrived at this working method gradually, as you can see from the photographs I sent you last year. The work you just reproduced provides the precise transition to regular division. I think everyone should decide for himself in these matters....The main thing is to adhere to basic principles."



# 79 Composition with Grid 4 (Lozenge) 1919

Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 (23 5/8 x 23 5/8); axis (irregular), 85 - 84.5 (33 1/2 - 33 1/4) Crosscut set-back strip frame.

Signed and dated lower center: PM 19

Provenance: Louise and Walter C. Arensberg, Hollywood, 1937-1950; Gift of Louise and Walter C. Arensberg, 1950, Philadelphia Museum of Art, (inv. no. 50-134-151).

Exhibitions: (?) Amsterdam 1919, no. 214 (or cat. 78); New York 1945b, no. 19; Chicago 1949, no. 157; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 52; Berlin 1968, no. 42; New York 1971, no. 78. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 445; Welsh 1966b, 168; Lohse 1966, 134-135; Joosten 1973a, 57; Blok 1974, 54; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 308; Kruskopf 1976, 127-128; Carmean 1979, 23-29; Blotkamp 1979, 33-39; Weyergraf 1979, 23; Welsh 1980, 50-51; Hoek 1982, 66, 68-70.

Lender: Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

[Washington and New York only]



#### 80 Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge) 1919

Oil on canvas, 60 x 60 (23 5/8 x 23 5/8); vertical axis, 84.5 (33 1/4) Signed and dated lower center:

Signed and dated lower center: PM '19

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1919; Helene Kröller-Müller, The Hague, 1919-1928; Kröller-Müller Stichting, The Hague, 1928-1937; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (inv. no. 536.00).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1919; Amsterdam 1946, no. 84; Basel 1947, no. 24; The Hague 1955, no. 99; Zurich 1955, no. 80; London 1955, no. 41; Venice 1956, no. 13; Rome 1956, no. 35; New York 1957b; Basel 1964, no. 37a; Toronto 1966, no. 86b; New York 1971, no. 79; Bern 1972, no. 75.

Literature: *De Stijl* II, 10 (August 1919), repr.; van Doesburg 1920b, repr. 4, "Kompositie A"; Bremmer 1921, 76; Seuphor 1956, no. 446; Lohse 1966, 134-135; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1969, 204; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1970, 206; Joosten 1973a, 57; Blok 1974, 54, 58, no. 267; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 309; Carmean 1979, 23-29, 92; Blotkamp 1979, 33-39; Weyergraf 1979, 23; Hoek 1982, 61, 66, 68-70. Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo

Referring to the August 1919 black-and-white reproduction of this painting in *De Stijl*, Mondrian wrote to van Doesburg on 6 September: "I think the reproduction is excellent. I also now agree with what you wrote at the time – that there was still some 'repetition' in it. In the original, there was far less [repetition], surely owing to the color intensities."



## 81 Composition with Grid 6 1919

Oil on canvas, 49 x 49 (19 1/4 x 19 1/4)
Signed and dated lower right: PM 19
Provenance: H. P. Bremmer,
The Hague, 1919-c. 1950;
Kunsthandel G. J. Nieuwenhuizen
Segaar, The Hague, c. 1950;
E. Polak, Amsterdam, c. 1950;
Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach,
Neuilly-sur-Seine, c. 1950-1968;
Gift of Marguerite ArpHagenbach, 1968, Kunstmuseum
Basel (inv. no. G 1968.87).
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1919:

Basel (inv. no. G 1968.87).
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1919;
New York 1951, no. 19; The Hague
1955, no. 98; Zurich 1955, no. 79;
Basel 1964, no. 37; Paris 1969,
no. 61; New York 1971, no. 77;
Bern 1972, no. 74.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 444;

[The Hague and New York only]

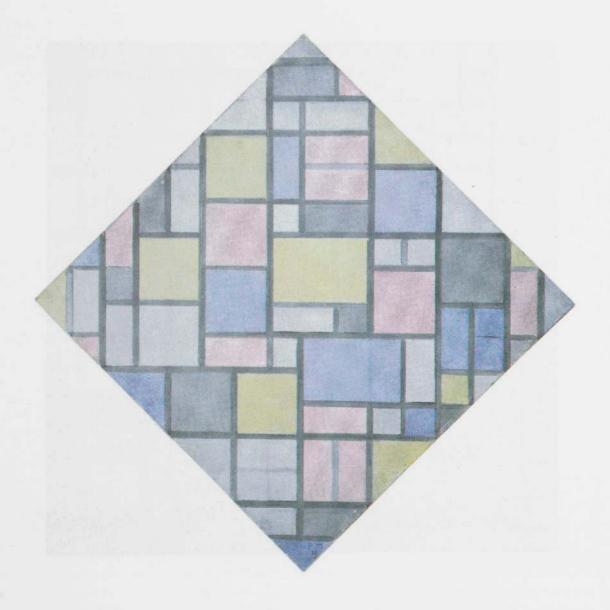
Ottolenghi 1974, no. 314;

Hoek 1982, 66, 68. Lender: Öffentliche Kunst-

Hagenbach 1968

Joosten 1973a, 57; Blok 1974, 54;

sammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum. Donation Marguerite Arp-



#### 82 Composition with Grid 7 (Lozenge) 1919

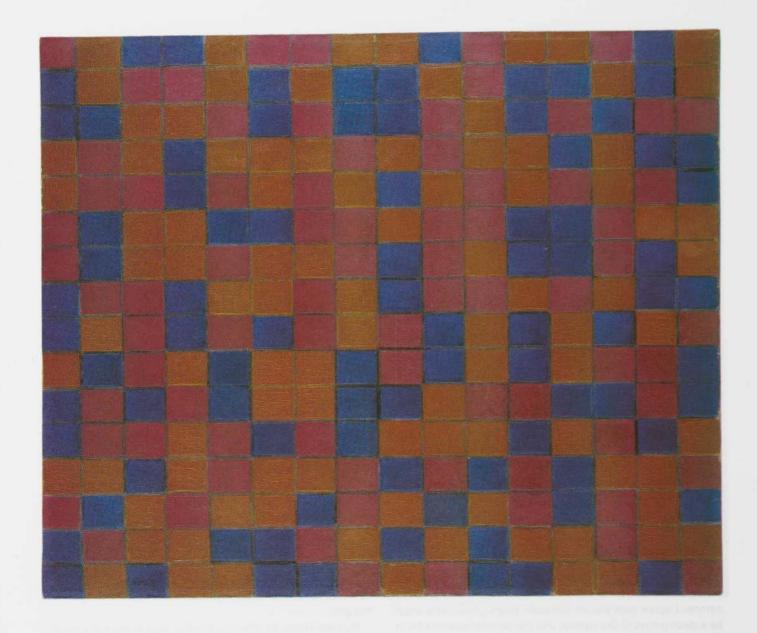
Oil on canvas, 48.9 x 49 (19 1/4 x 19 1/4); axis (irregular), 68.5 - 69 (27 - 27 1/8) The original set-back crosscut strip frame is lost.

Signed and dated lowercenter: PM 19

Provenance: H. P. Bremmer, The Hague, 1919; Helene Kröller-Müller, The Hague, 1919-1928; Kröller-Müller Stichting, The Hague, 1928-1937; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller, Otterlo (inv. no. 1310-00).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1919; New York 1936, no. 189; Amsterdam 1946, no. 83; New York 1957b; Berlin 1968, no. 40; New York

1971, no. 80; Bern 1972, no. 76. Literature: De Stijl III, 4 (February 1920), repr., framed, "Kompositie B"; van Doesburg 1920a, repr.; G. (Zeitschrift für Elementare Gestaltung) 3 (June 1924), repr. 33; Bremmer 1915, repr.; Seuphor 1956, no. 447; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1969, 204-205; Rijksmuseum Kröller-Müller 1970, 206-207; Joosten 1973a, 57; Blok 1974, 54, 58, no. 268; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 310; Carmean 1979, 23-29, 93; Blotkamp 1979, 33-39; Hoek 1982, 66, 68-70. Lender: Kröller-Müller Museum, Otterlo



# 83 Composition with Grid 8; Checkerboard with Dark Colors 1919

Oil on canvas, 84 x 102 (33 1/8 x 40 1/8)
The original frame (now lost)
overlapped the canvas and sloped
downward from the picture plane.

Signed and dated lower left: PM. '19 Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 168-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1920a, no. 67, "Compositie"; Amsterdam 1922, no. 215 (or 216), "Compositie"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 11, "sterrenhemel"; Amsterdam 1928a, no. 91, "Compositie"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 87, "compositie" donkere kleurvlakken (dambord indeling)"; New York 1953b, no. 24; The Hague 1955, no. 101; Zurich 1955, no. 78; Venice 1956, no. 11; Rome 1956, no. 37; New York 1957b; The Hague 1966, no. 95b; New York 1971, no. 82.

Literature: Wagenaar 1920; Niehaus 1920; Hana 1924, 604-605; Seuphor 1956, no. 443; Ragghianti 1962, 294-295; Welsh 1966b, 172; Jaffé 1970, 130; Joosten 1973a, 58-59; Blok 1974, 54, 58, no. 270; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 313; Joosten 1977, 185; Weyergraf 1979, 25; Hoek 1982, 61, 65, 66-67

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

continued)

Cat. 83 (continued)

Wal je Schroft and Jan maat. Dit is mel and heffir an otal like in maat. Dit is mel and heffir an otal it is meleted. Maar I kan melet it is het netwerk to veel dontinue.

Fragment of a letter from Mondrian to van Doesburg, 21 August 1919, Van Doesburg Archive, Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague.

Mondrian's submission to the 1920 Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring exhibition elicited two brief comments about this painting. In the *Leeuwarder Courant*, Wagenaar wrote: "At the furthest remove from what we would normally think of as a painting is the work by Piet Mondriaan from Paris. It is identified as 'composition,' and represents a kind of tile slab of small brown, red, and blue squares."

In *De Telegraaf*, Niehaus wrote: "Mondriaan also continues, with all the power and greatness that single-mindedness can give, along his earlier path, which leads to isolation. His blue and gold painting is of a passive, quiet beauty that reduces us, too, to silence. I must only note that from this extreme specialization no viable school can develop."

In a letter of 18 April 1919 to van Doesburg, in which Mondrian had already discussed the issue of regularity of division (see cat. 78), he continued with a discussion of the "checkerboard" paintings, reemphasizing the necessity of adhering to basic principles: "The same applies to the question of whether or not nature should be taken as a point of departure. It seems to me that your definition is rather narrow. I agree with you on the main point - that there must be a destruction of the natural and the reconstruction of it in accordance with the spiritual; but let us interpret rather broadly. After all, the natural does not require a specific form of representation. At the moment I am working on something which is a reconstruction of a starry sky, and yet it is without a given in nature. So he who says one should start from a given in nature can be just as right as he who says one should not: I only want to emphasize how dangerous it is to adopt a system. In the long run, I don't think you will have any objection to my working method, anyway."

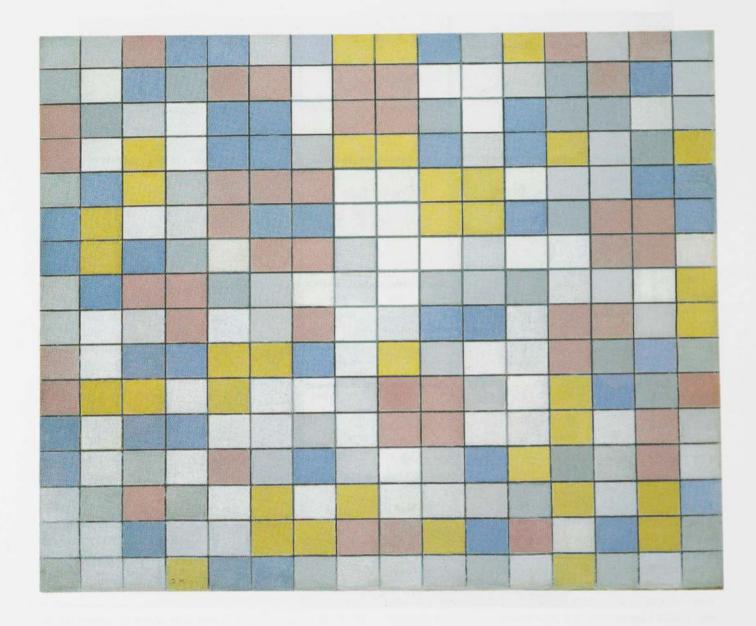
The evidence for identifying Composition with Grid 8; Checkerboard with Dark Colors as the work under discussion in this part of the letter is provided by a subsequent letter (1 August) to van Doesburg, in which Mondrian referred to a photograph of the painting he would send shortly, adding "a starry sky is exactly what inspired me to make it."

Van Doesburg's concerns about the dangers of regularity were obviously expressed in his letters to Mondrian. They also occur in a letter he wrote to J. J. P. Oud on 24 June 1919: "....[Mondrian's] most recent works are without composition. The division of the surface is in one measure. That is to say, ordinary rectangles of equal size. Contrast is only achieved through color. I think that this conflicts somewhat with his theory of the abolition of position and measure. This is equality of position and measure."

In response to what must have been similar criticism, Mondrian wrote to van Doesburg on 21 August 1919 (fig. a): "What you write about these works [first sketch]: abolition of position and measure. This [approach] is justified, because I worked in this manner [second sketch]. However, it is possible that the grid is still too prominent."

With these two contrasting sketches, Mondrian suggests how subtle variations are intended to mitigate the rigidity of the grid.

Herman Hana, an artist and critic, was Mondrian's neighbor for some months in Laren in 1915, and they became good friends. In his 1924 monographic article on the artist, he drew a parallel between the cloud forms in Mondrian's *Mill in the Evening*, c. 1916 (Ott. 294), which he reproduced, and the checkerboard compositions – perhaps the present (dark) version in particular, since the windmill painting was an evening view: "The fleecy clouds – a predilection of Mondrian – float around there in wooly unconsciousness. How could they ever suspect they are the prototypes of the master's famous 'checkerboard' blocks?" This is the first reference to the title which was subsequently widely adopted.



# 84 Composition with Grid 9; Checkerboard with Light Colors 1919

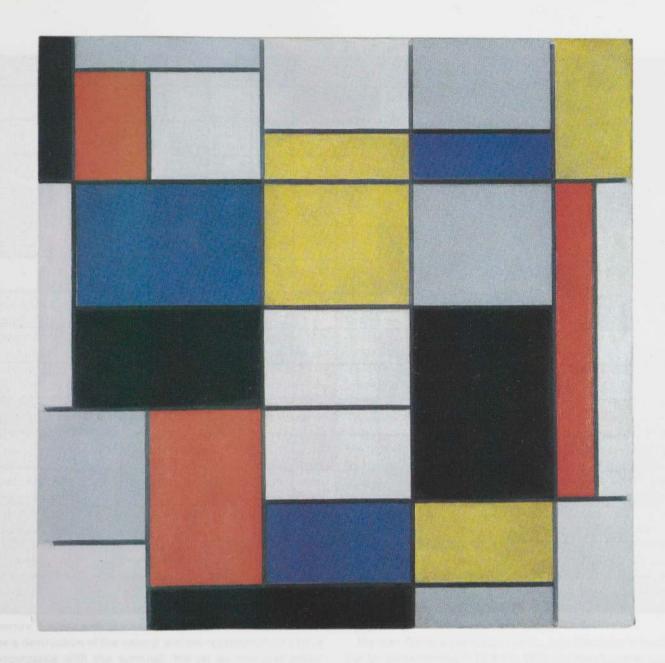
Oil on canvas, 86 x 106 (33 7/8 x 41 3/4)
The original frame (now lost)
overlapped the canvas and sloped
downward from the picture plane.
Signed and dated lower left: PM '19

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by S. B. Slijper, Blaricum, 1919-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 167-1971).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 216 (or 215), "Compositie"; Rotterdam 1925, no. 12; Amsterdam 1928a, no. 92, "Compositie"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 86, "Compositie" lichte kleurvlakken (dambord indeling)"; Basel 1947, no. 23; The Hague 1955, no. 100; Zurich 1955, no. 77; London 1955, no. 39; Venice 1956, no. 12; Rome 1956, no. 36; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 87; The Hague 1966, no. 95a; Berlin 1968, no. 41; Paris 1969, no. 62; New York 1971, no. 81; Bern 1972, no. 77.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 442; Lohse 1966, 132; Welsh 1966b, 172; Joosten 1973a, 57-58; Blok 1974, 54, 58, no. 269; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 312; Joosten 1977, 185; Clair 1978, 61; Weyergraf 1979, 25; Hoek 1982, 65, 66-67.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



#### 85 COMPOSITION A; Composition with Black, Red, Gray, Yellow, and Blue 1920

Oil on canvas, 91.5 x 92 (36 x 36 1/4) Lined at an unknown date. Provenance: Anthony Kok, Tilburg, 1921-c. 1949; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, c. 1949-1950; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1950-1952; Nelson A. Rockefeller, New York, 1952-1971; Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York, 1971-1972; Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, 1972 (inv. no. 5519)

Exhibitions: Rotterdam 1920, no. 34, "Composition A" (unframed) (Ffr. 3,300); Amsterdam 1920b, no. 40 (unframed); New York 1949, no. 20; New York 1951, no. 20. Literature: De Stijl IV, 2 (February

1921), color repr. 22; Merz 6 (October 1923), repr. 50; Kemény 1924, repr. 245; Seuphor 1956, no. 448; Welsh 1966b, 174; Bucarelli 1973, 120-121, 149; Blok 1974, 54; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 315; Kruskopf 1976, 129; Hoek 1982, 70-73. Lender: Galleria Nazionale d'Arte

Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome

[The Hague and Washington only]

Just as his return to Holland in 1914 had marked a major shift in Mondrian's art, his definitive departure for Paris in June 1919 was followed by a radical transformation. This painting and the other works produced during 1920 (including cats. 86-88) testify to the gradual process by which Mondrian abandoned both the modular grid and the color gradations of his 1918-1919 works. This process finally found its resolution in Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue, and Gray (cat.88), the first genuinely neo-plastic picture. From that moment until his arrival in New York in 1940, Mondrian's pictorial vocabulary was reduced to a handful of elements: planes of pure primary colors, planes of "non-color" (white, black, or gray), and black lines. The difficult task Mondrian set for himself in these works was to endow each of the elements with maximum intensity while combining them in a nonhierarchical whole. For Mondrian, establishing this delicate equilibrium meant discovering the universal laws of art, and of a future society in which art would be absorbed into life itself.

In November 1919, Mondrian moved into a studio on the rue de Coulmiers, bringing with him this painting, on which he had already been working for some months. In a letter to van Doesburg dated 4 December 1919, he expressed great satisfaction with the work: "I have now made a painting that pleases me more that all my previous work....It has been a long quest....I would love to send you a photograph of it right away, but I shall leave it alone for a while before applying the final coat, and see how it holds up."

He continued for some months to rework certain portions of the composition, and on 20 March wrote to van Doesburg, who had recently visited: "I had just got that large work right. I made that blue square on the right and changed that yellow one on the left to white; I painted over the gray, the black and the white. I wish you could have seen it like this."

On 4 May, he wrote to van Doesburg that he felt the work was finally finished: "Among other things, the lines took me a very long time. On Sunday the Stieltjes saw it and were en-

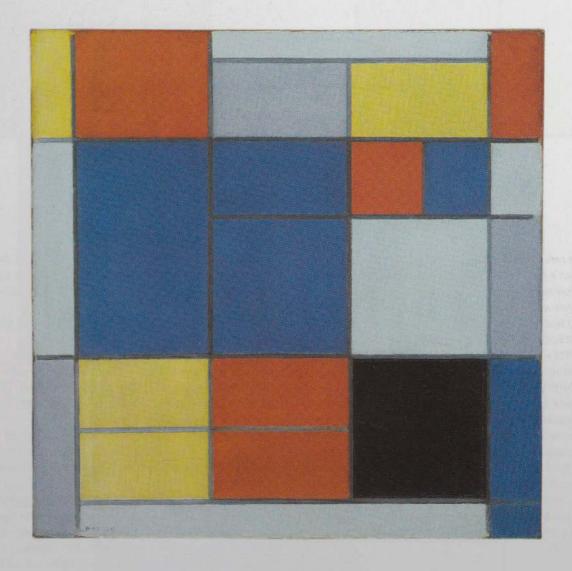
thusiastic about it. I myself also think it is good, but now the other, smaller works look much less significant by comparison. I must bring them up to the same point, and in fact I am already working on that."

On 16 May, he wrote to van Doesburg and his second wife, Lena Millius, about sending this painting with two small ones to Holland for the 1920 Rotterdam exhibition. He was clearly anxious to know what van Doesburg would think of it now that it had been considerably altered. Mondrian intentionally sent the paintings unframed and wanted them hung in that form.

Once again the issue of light and its effect on color concerned him: "When I saw the old one [present picture] next to the new ones, the former seemed more subdued in color. This large painting must have a lot of light, but I am sure Does [van Doesburg] will understand that when he hangs it."

His concern for these issues was expressed again in a 30 June 1920 letter: "Here in the studio, in the dim light, I also found the red in the large painting too intense in juxtaposition with the others. But in a strong light, it is so beautifully dissolved, and the Stieltjes and [the painter Th.] Hellesen thought that I must leave it as it was. Otherwise I would have changed it. Also, I am not absolutely sure that it ought to be so totally homogeneous. In theory it should be, but in practice doesn't it imply something other than what we would intend?"

In a letter to Oud of 15 March 1921 (and an earlier one to van Doesburg of 10 February), his anxiety about money and a possible sale were expressed once again: "I haven't heard anything about the sale of the large canvas about which he [van Doesburg] wrote me, and since I need money badly I am writing to let you know that you could have it for less." By 18 March, Anthony Kok had decided to buy the picture, and Mondrian wrote to him gratefully on that date: "I agree entirely with your price. I am glad that my picture means something to you, and in return you are making it possible for me to continue with my work for a while."



# 86 COMPOSITION C; Composition with Yellow, Red, Blue-Gray,

Blue, and Black 1920

Oil on canvas, 60 x 61 (23 5/8 x 24) Lined and mounted on panel at an unknown date.

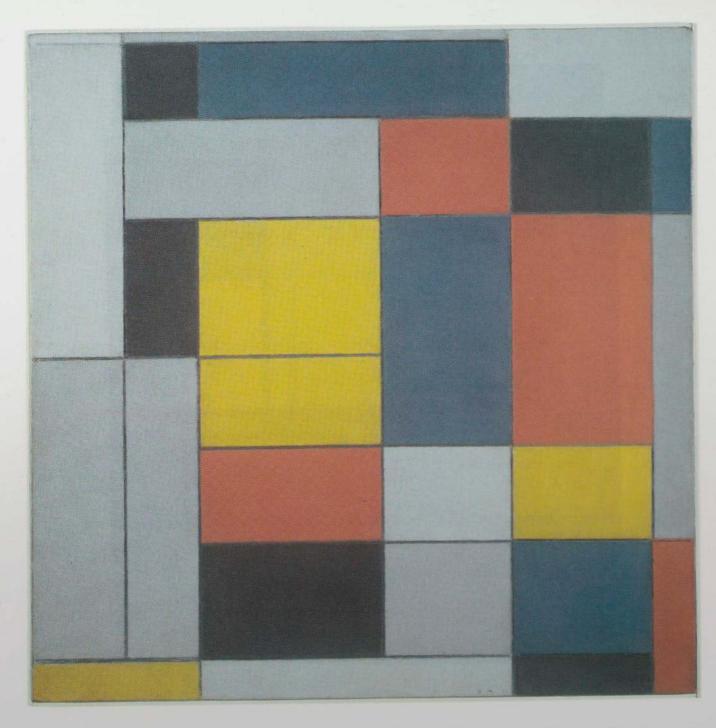
Signed and dated lower left: PM 20 On original stretcher: Composition C Piet Mondrian On upper turnover of canvas: HAUT

Provenance: Petrus Alma, Amsterdam, 1920-c. 1947; Herbert Tannenbaum, Amsterdam, c. 1947-1948; Kleemann Galleries, New York, 1948; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1948 (inv. no. 257.48).

Exhibitions: Rotterdam 1920, no. 36, "Composition C" (unframed) (Ffr. 1,500); Amsterdam 1920b, no. 42; (?) Amsterdam 1922, no. 220 (Ffr. 800); Amsterdam 1928a, no. 93 (fl. 300); Amsterdam 1928b, no. 363 (fl. 300); Amsterdam 1946, no. 90; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 54; Washington 1965, no. 37.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 451; Blok 1974, 54, 58; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 318; Joosten 1977, 185; Hoek 1982, 70-73.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Acquired through the Lillie P. Bliss Bequest, 1948 Mondrian's letters indicate that his financial difficulties were still a preoccupation. He was grateful that Alma was interested in buying this picture, and commented in a letter of 30 June 1920 to van Doesburg: "How strange that he always remains so devoted to my work." He was clearly disappointed that Alma was the only buyer at the 1920 exhibition *La Section d'Or*, and was also troubled by the fact that the exhibition was poorly lighted in Rotterdam, adding: "these pictures must really have a lot of light" (letter to Slijper, 4 August 1920).



# 87 COMPOSITION NO. VI; COMPOSITION NO. II; Composition with Black, Blue, Red, Yellow, and Gray 1920

Oil on canvas,

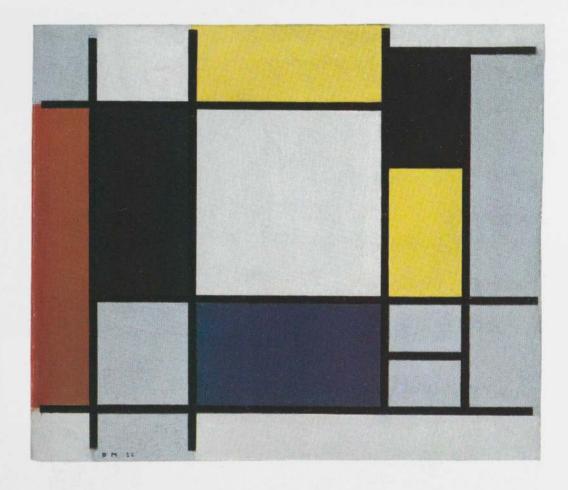
100.5 x 101 (39 1/2 x 39 3/4)

Signed and dated lower right: PM 20 On horizontal center stretcher bar:

P. MONDRIAN N: VI [crossed out; the exhibition for which Mondrian assigned this number to the painting has not been identified]
On vertical center stretcher bar:
Composition N: II
On upper turnover of canvas:

Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1964; Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York, 1964-1967; Tate Gallery, London, 1967 (inv. no. T.915). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1932a, no. 176, "Compositie I [sic]"; New York 1945b, no. 21; New York 1949, no. 18; New York 1953b, no. 25; New York 1957a, no. 11; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 53; Berlin 1968, no. 43; Paris 1969, no. 63; New York 1971, no. 85; Bern 1972, no. 81. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 449; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 316; Alley 1981, 533-535; Hoek 1982, 70-73. Lender: Tate Gallery, purchased

The picture can be seen (unframed) in a 1926 photograph of the Paris studio by Paul Delbo (see Chronology, fig. 10).



## 88 Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue, and Gray 1920

An overlapping frame, added by Peter Alma and subsequently lost, was reconstructed in the early 1980s.

Signed and dated lower left: PM '20 Provenance: Peter Alma and Brecht Alma-Willemse (wedding present from the artist, 11 May 1922), 1922-1938; Brecht van den Muijzenberg-Willemse, Amsterdam, 1938-1960;

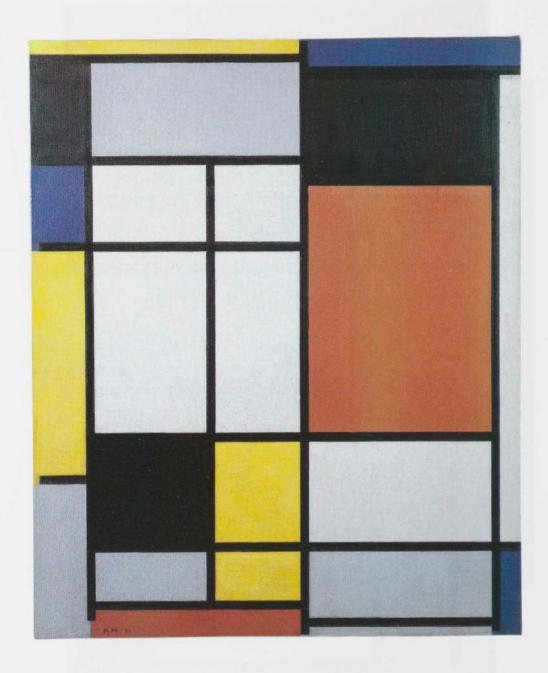
51.5 x 60 (20 1/4 x 23 5/8)

Oil on canvas,

Amsterdam, 1960 (inv. no. A 9864). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 222, "Compositie" (Ffr. 800); Amsterdam 1946, no. 91; Basel 1947, no. 21; The Hague 1955,

Stedelijk Museum,

no. 103; Zurich 1955, no. 82; Venice 1956, no. 14; Rome 1956, no. 38; Paris 1969, no. 64. Literature: Barr 1952, 8, 10; Seuphor 1956, no. 453; Blok 1974, 58, no. 271; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 321; Joosten 1977, 185; Joosten 1980b, 19-22. Lender: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam



# 89 Composition with Yellow, Blue, Black, Red, and Gray 1921

Oil on canvas, 88.5 x 72.5 (34 7/8 x 28 1/2) Lined at an unknown date. Signed and dated lower left: PM '21

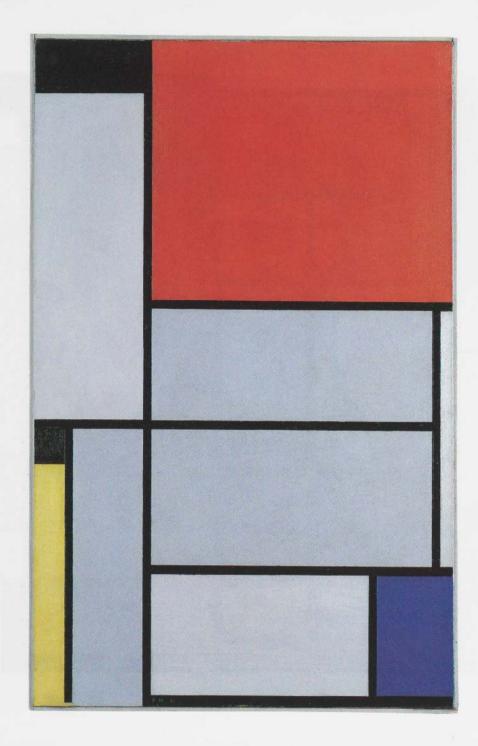
On upper stretcher bar: HAUT On center stretcher bar: P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Helene Kröller-Müller,
The Hague (through
H. P. Bremmer, through Galerie de
"l'Effort Moderne"), 1921-1939;
A. G. Kröller, Hoenderloo,
1939-1941; Heirs of A. G. Kröller,
1941-1953; Kunsthandel Huinck &
Scherjon, Amsterdam, 1953;
K. A. Legat-Ehrlich, The Hague
and New York, 1953-1968; Jon
N. Streep, New York, 1968-1969;
Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1969-1970;

Jacques Koerfer, Bern and Ascona, 1970-1990; Stephen Mazoh & Co., Inc., New York, 1990.

Exhibitions: Paris 1921a (exhibited unframed); New York 1971, no. 90; Bern 1972, no. 82.

Literature: George 1921, repr. 1036; Kassák and Moholy-Nagy 1922, n.p. repr.; Bulletin de "l'Effort Moderne" 1, 1 (January 1924) (installation photograph of Paris 1921a exhibition); Ozenfant and Jeanneret 1925, repr. 159; Bremmer 1925, 6; Seuphor 1956, no. 454; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 324; Green 1976, 121. Lender: Stephen Mazoh & Co., Inc.



#### 90 TABLEAU I; Composition with Black, Red, Gray, Yellow, and Blue 1921

Oil on canvas, 96.5 x 60.5 (38 x 23 3/4) Signed and dated lower center: PM 21

On reverse: HAUT

On upper stretcher bar: composi [crossed out] TABLEAU I On center stretcher bar: P. MONDRIAN PARIS.

26 rue du Départ

Provenance: Graf und Gräfin von Kielmannsegg, Weimar, Krefeld, and Aftersteg, 1923-1937; Oskar and Annie Müller-Widmann, Basel, 1937-1965; E. Grigoleit-Müller, Basel, 1965; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1965-1967; Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne, 1967-1976; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 1976 (inv. no. 76/3195).

Exhibitions: Paris 1921b (unframed); Berlin 1923, h.c.; Basel 1937, no. 43; Basel 1947, no. 20; Zurich 1955, no. 85; Basel 1964, no. 39; Berlin 1968, no. 47; Paris 1969, no. 69.

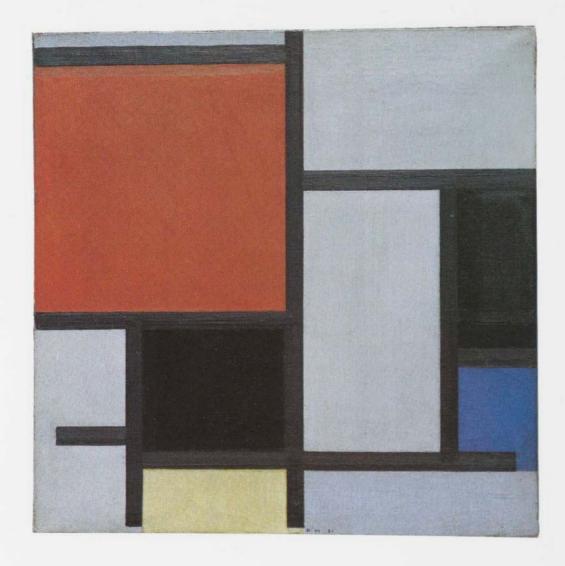
Literature: Behne 1922-1924, color repr. 39; Behne 1925, color repr.; Schmalenbach 1950, 118; Seuphor 1956, no. 463; Welsh 1966b, 182; Weiss 1974, 138; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 335; Welsh 1980, 52; Ruhrberg

Lender: Museum Ludwig, Cologne

[Washington only]

The appearance of Tableau I and two other works (including Tableau 2, cat. 99) at the Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung of 1923 had a considerable impact. Mondrian received a report from Oud, and on 12 November he replied: "I was also pleased to hear what Lissitzky and Moholy-Nagy had to say about my work in Berlin. I also heard that it was very much admired among a small circle."

Adolf Behne immediately decided to make a color lithograph of the painting, which was produced by the Bauhaus in Dessau for Behne's Der Sieg der Farbe (1924). The lithograph was also sold in a separate edition. The success in Germany meant a great deal to Mondrian, and he reported with satisfaction to Slijper, "I was very successful in Germany and sold all three canvases, one even for 900 francs, which is a great deal for Germany, you know."



# 91 Composition with Red Plane, Black, Blue, Yellow, and Gray 1921

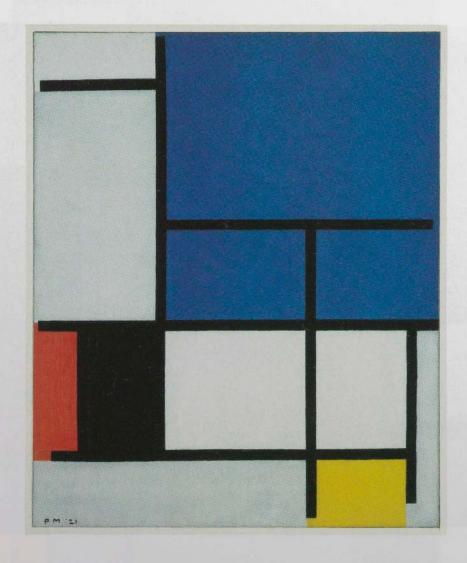
Oil on canvas, 48 x 48 (18 7/8 x 18 7/8) Tacking edges painted gray. Signed and dated lower center: PM 21

Provenance: Sold by the artist to a Belgian musician, killed during World War II (letter from Nelly van Doesburg to H. and N. Rothschild, 25 March 1955); Nelly van Doesburg, Paris, before 1951-1955; Herbert and Nannette Rothschild, Kitchawan and New York, 1955-1969; Judith Rothschild, New York, 1969-1993.

Exhibitions: Santa Barbara 1965, no. 55; Washington 1965, no. 38; Providence 1966, no. 110; Paris 1969, no. 66.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 466;

Jaffé 1970, 134; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 323; Champa 1985, 93. Lender: The Judith Rothschild Foundation



## 92 Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray 1921

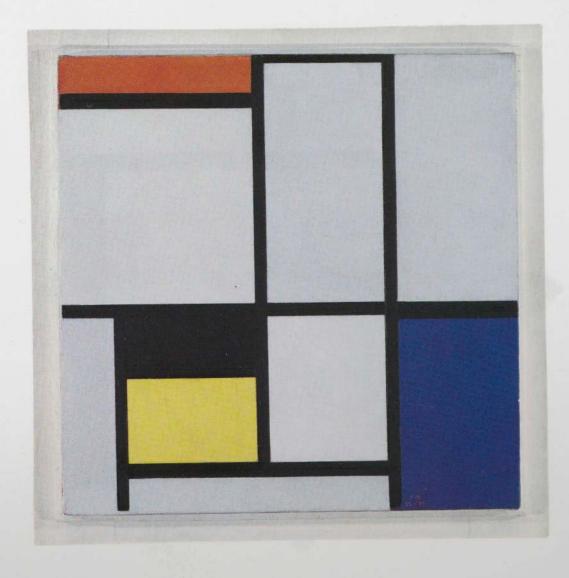
Oil on canvas, 60.5 x 50 (23 3/4 x 19 5/8) Signed and dated lower left: PM '21 On remnant of original stretcher: P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: S. B. Slijper,
Blaricum, c. 1921-1950; Sidney
Janis Gallery, New York,
1950-1954; John L. Senior, Jr., New
York, c. 1954-1956; M. Knoedler and
Co., 1956; Sidney Janis Gallery,
New York, 1956; Ira Haupt,
New York, 1956-1961; Sidney Janis
Gallery, New York (bought at
auction, Parke-Bernet, New York,
13 January 1965, no. 40), 1961;
James H. and Lillian Clark,
Dallas, 1961-1984; Dallas Museum
of Art (inv. no. 1984 200 FA).

Exhibitions: Paris 1921a (unframed); Venice 1928, no. 35; Amsterdam 1946, no. 92; Santa Barbara 1965 (Dallas only), no. 58a; Washington 1965, no. 39; New York 1971, no. 91.

Literature: Bulletin de "l'Effort Moderne" 1, 1 (January 1924) (installation photograph of Paris 1921a); Seuphor 1956, no. 461; Welsh 1966b, 194; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 329.

Lender: Dallas Museum of Art, Foundation for the Arts Collection, gift of Mrs. James H. Clark



# 93 TABLEAU NO. III; COMPOSITION NO. 14; Composition with Red,

Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray 1921 [first state] 1921-1925 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 49 x 49 (19 1/4 x 19 1/4) Set-back strip frame, crosscut horizontally; subframe crosscut vertically, constructed in New York for the 1942 exhibition. Signed and dated lower right:

22-25 [changed from 21-25] On reverse of subframe upper

left: No.14 Provenance: Consigned to Sophie Küppers, Hanover and Dresden, 1925; consigned by Sophie Küppers to Kunstausstellung Kühl, 1927; Valentine Gallery/ Mrs. Valentine Dudensing, New York, 1942-1946; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D. C., 1946 (inv. no. 1376).

Exhibitions: Paris 1921b (unframed); Dresden 1925, "Tableau N:III"; Munich 1926; Mannheim 1927, no. 251 (DM 400); New York 1942a, no. 14; New York 1944a, no. 18; New York 1945b, no. 23; Washington 1986.

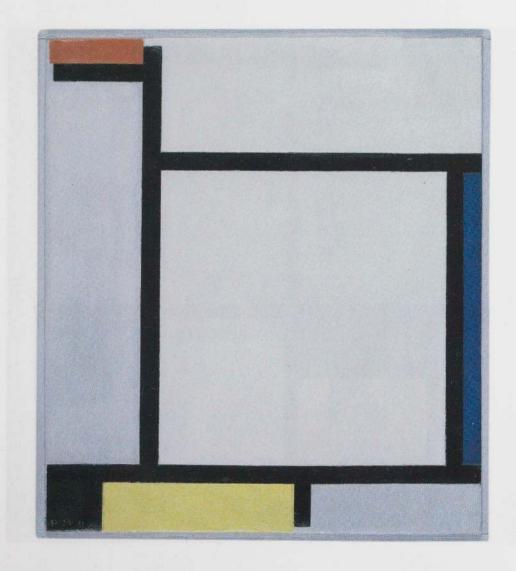
Literature: Magazine of Art 39 (March 1946), repr. 122; Phillips Collection 1952, 70.

Lender: The Phillips Collection, Washington, D. C.

[Washington and New York only]

Mondrian considered the painting complete in 1921, adding a signature. (No reproduction of this state survives.) In the first half of 1925, he reworked this and four other paintings, including Tableau No. IV (cat. 108), before sending them to Dresden for exhibition. At that point he added the 1925 date to four of them.

In June 1925, he sent these five and seven recent works to Sophie Küppers in Dresden; she then arranged to have them all exhibited at Kühl and Kühn. He kept a careful pictorial record of the submissions, including titles, on a sketchbook sheet (repr. Holtzman and James 1986, fig. 173); the Phillips picture is clearly identifiable as "N:III." After its exhibition in Germany, its history cannot be documented until it was lent by Mrs. Valentine Dudensing to the 1945 Museum of Modern Art exhibition.

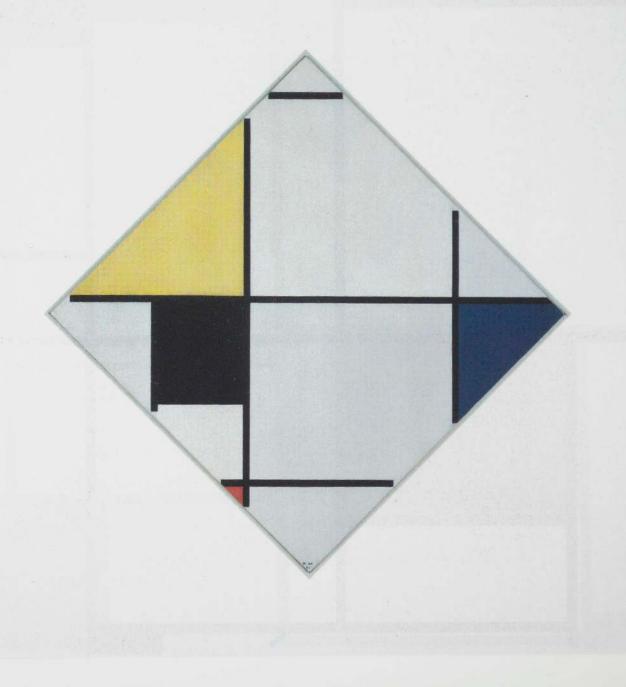


# 94 Composition with Red, Blue, Black, Yellow, and Gray 1921

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum,

Oil on canvas, 39.5 x 35 (15 1/2 x 13 3/4) Set-back gray-blue strip frame crosscut horizontally. Signed and dated lower left: PM 21 Provenance: S. B. Slijper, Laren, 1921-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 170-1971). Exhibitions: Paris 1921b (unframed); The Hague 1955, no. 105; Zurich 1955, no. 83; Venice 1956, no. 15; Rome 1956, no. 40; Paris 1969, no. 70; Tokyo 1987, 113. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 464; Butor 1961, 119-122; Blok 1974, 66, no. 274; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 332; Weyergraf 1979, 27; Champa 1985, 93; Melse 1989, 19-21.

The Hague



# 95 Lozenge Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red, and Gray 1921

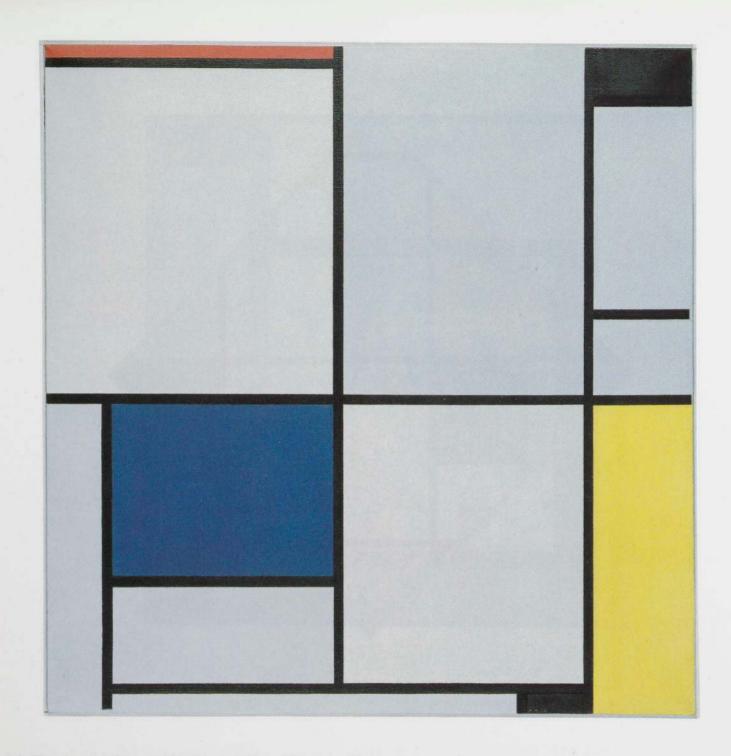
Oil on canvas, 60.1 x 60.1 (23 5/8 x 23 5/8); vertical axis, 84.5 (33 1/4) Set-back blue-gray crosscut strip frame.

Signed and dated lower center: PM 21

Provenance: Jaap and Maaike van Domselaer, Bergen, c. 1921-1940/45; John Rädecker, Groet, 1940/45-c. 1948; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, c. 1948-1951; John L. Senior, Jr., New York, 1951-1956; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1956-1957; The Art Institute, Chicago, 1957 (inv. no.57.307).

Exhibitions: Paris 1921b (unframed); Amsterdam 1946, no. 110; Basel 1947, no. 13; New York 1951, no. 21; Washington 1979, no. 5. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 465; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 336; Carmean 1979, 29-32, 101; Weyergraf 1979, 32. Lender: The Art Institute of

Chicago. Gift of Edgar Kaufmann, Jr., 1957. 307 At the end of 1921, Mondrian's financial difficulties became severe. His friend, the composer Jaap van Domselaer, purchased this picture, and Mondrian, in a letter to Oud on 28 December 1921, commented: "My friend Dr. van Eck helped me with the first rent payment (luckily, he can do it now) and van Domselaer (who no longer shares my ideas at all, but still likes my work and is buying something from me) has sent me 200 francs. So once again I shall have to try to live on private sales."



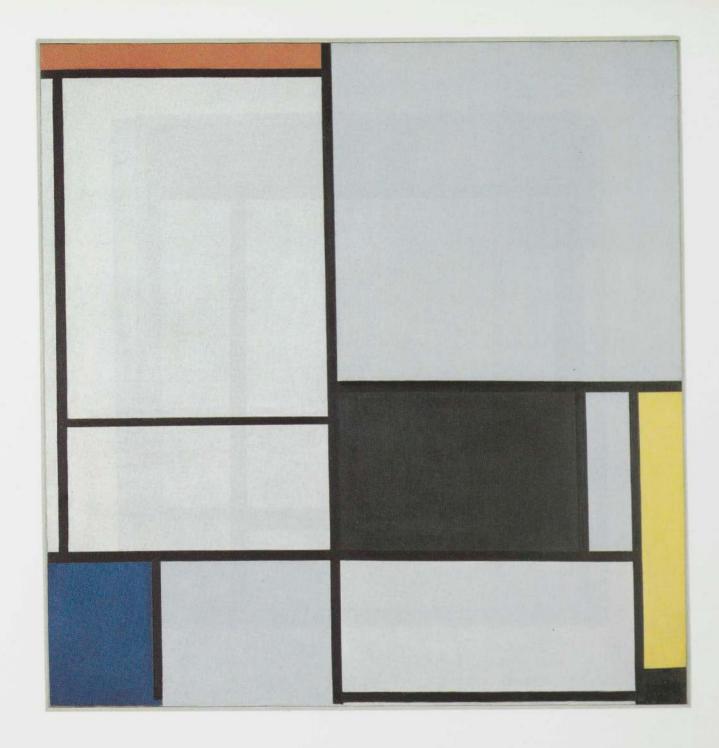
#### 96 TABLEAU I; Composition with Red, Black, Blue, and Yellow 1921

Oil on canvas,
103 x 100 (40 1/2 x 39 3/8)
Set-back strip frame, probably
not original
Signed and dated lower right: PM 21
On upper stretcher bar: HAUT
On center stretcher bar:
P. MONDRIAAN – TABLEAU I

Provenance: S. B. Slijper, Laren, 1922-1971; Bequest of Slijper, 1971, Haags Gemeentemuseum (inv. no. 169-1971). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 94

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 94, "Tableau I" (Ffr. 1,000); (?) Rotterdam 1925, no. 14; (?) Amsterdam 1928a, no. 94, "Compositie," repr.; Amsterdam 1946, no. 94; The Hague 1955, no. 106; The Hague 1966, no. 101;

Paris 1969, no. 68; New York 1971, no. 88; Bern 1972, no. 83; Tokyo 1987, no. 114; New York 1988, no. 27. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 459; Blok 1974, 66, no. 275; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 331; Carmean 1979, 30; Melse 1989, 19. Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague



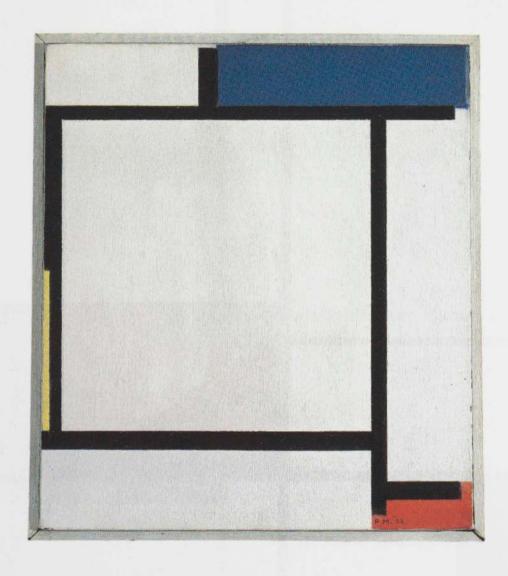
# 97 TABLEAU II; Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Light Blue 1921

Oil on canvas, 103.5 x 99.5 (40 3/4 x 39 1/8) Set-back strip frame crosscut horizontally.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 21 On stretcher: HAUT P. MONDRIAN TABLEAU II

Provenance: S. B. Slijper,
Blaricum, 1922-c. 1948; Sidney
Janis Gallery, New York, c. 1948;
Mr. and Mrs. Armand P. Bartos,
New York; Harold Diamond, New
York, (?)-1964; Galerie Beyeler,
Basel, 1964-1965; private
collection, 1965.

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1922, no. 95, "Tableau II" (Ffr. 1,000); (?) Rotterdam 1925, no. 13; New York 1963, no. 21; Basel 1964, no. 40; Toronto 1966, no. 91; The Hague 1966, no. 100; Berlin 1968, no. 46.
Literature: *De Stijl* V, 12 (December 1922), color repr. 209; Hana 1924, repr. 639; Bendien 1932, repr. 539; Bendien 1932, repr. Seuphor 1956, no. 460; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 328; Welsh 1966b, 180.
Lender: Kunsthaus Zürich on behalf of a private collector

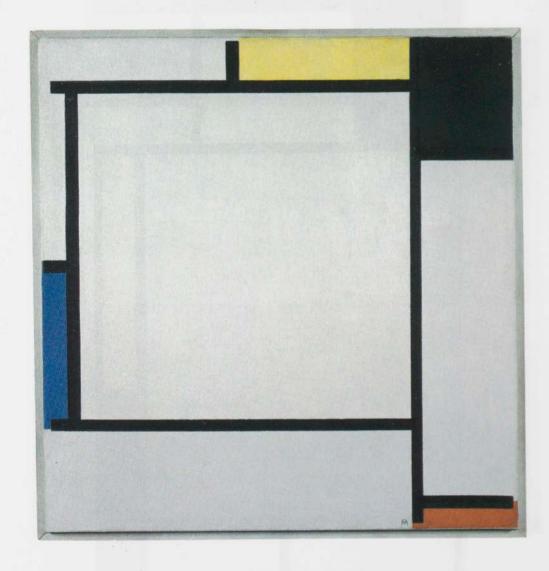


#### 98 Composition with Blue, Black, Yellow, and Red 1922

Oil on canvas,
39 x 34.7 (15 3/8 x 13 5/8)
Set-back gray-white strip frame
with miter joints.
Signed and dated lower right:
PM. '22
On stretcher: HAUT
Provenance: Gift of the artist, 1925,
to Martijn Sanders (through Paul
F. Sanders), Amsterdam.
Private collection
Literature: Henkels and Zijlmans
1986, 60.
Lender: Private collection

[Washington only]

Paul Sanders, the Dutch critic and composer, was a close friend of Mondrian. They met for the first time in the spring of 1917. In 1925 Sanders moved to Paris for a sabbatical and visited the artist frequently. During the spring, when Mondrian contracted influenza, Sanders provided care and support. He wrote to his brother Martijn, describing the artist's condition and financial problems, and asking whether he would consider purchasing a painting. Martijn sent money, which Mondrian regarded as excessively generous. He therefore insisted on giving two paintings in return, of which the present work was one.



# 99 TABLEAU 2; Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red, and Gray 1922

Oil on canvas, 55.6 x 53.4 (21 7/8 x 21) On reverse, a composition of color planes and gray lines, c. 1918.

Signed and dated lower right: PM [monogram] 22

On reverse of canvas:

TABLEAU 2 On turnover top edge of canvas: HAUT

On center bar of original stretcher (now lost):

P. MONDRIAN. PARIS. 26 rue du Départ.

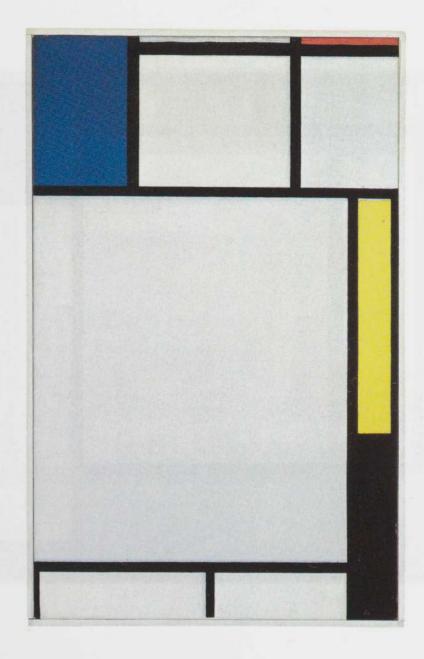
Provenance: Private collection, Germany, c. 1923; Dottke, Berlin, 1948; Heinz Trökes (Galerie Rosen), Berlin, 1948-1951; Galerie Rudolf Springer, Berlin, 1951; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and

New York, 1951; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York,1951 (inv. no. 51.1390).

Exhibitions: Berlin 1923, h.c.; Berlin 1968, no. 50; Paris 1969, no. 73; New York 1971, no. 93; Bern 1972, no.87.

Literature: Ottolenghi 1974, no. 348; Rudenstine 1976, 581-582; Champa 1985, 105; Carmean 1979, 35-36.

Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



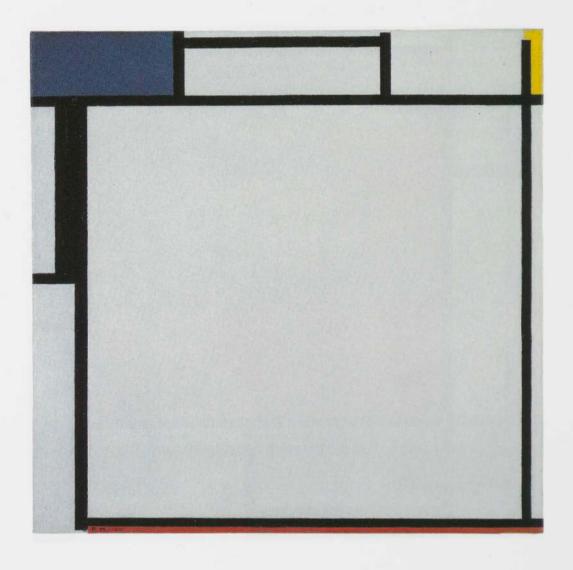
#### 100 Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black 1922

Oil on canvas, 79 x 49.5 (31 1/8 x 19 1/2) Set-back strip frame horizontally crosscut. Signed lower right: PM [monogram] Provenance: Helene Kröller-Müller, Wassenaar, 1922-1939; A. G. Kröller, Hoenderloo, 1939-1941; Heirs of A. G. Kröller; Kunsthandel K. A. Legat, The Hague; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York; Nierendorf Gallery, New York; Leo Castelli, 1949; Rose Fried Gallery, New York, 1955; Mr. and Mrs. Israel Rosen, Baltimore, 1955-1972; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1972; Galerie Tarica, Paris, 1972. Exhibitions: New York 1949, no. 20;

Toronto 1966, no. 93; The Hague 1966, no. 103. Literature: Bremmer 1925, "Compositie"; Seuphor 1956, no. 469; Welsh 1966b, 184; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 337.

Lender: Private collection

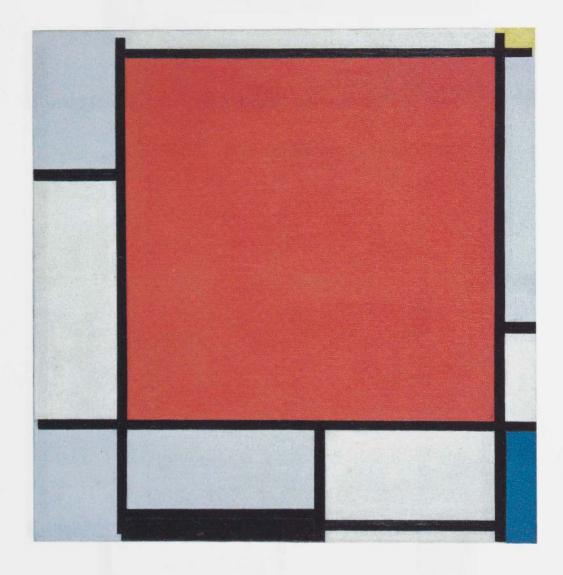
In a letter to van Doesburg of 25 May 1922, Mondrian wrote: "...Mrs. Kröller wants to buy a canvas from me for 1000 frs.!! I heard from Slijper that a daughter of Blommers [B. J. Blommers, painter, 1845-1914] who was a friend of mine in Laren during the war but of whom I never heard again, spoke with Mrs. Kröller about me and brought this about. Luckily I had a painting ready, and Jo Steijling took it with her, so I think the purchase is guaranteed. You can't believe anything until it actually happens."



# 101 Composition with Blue, Yellow, Black, and Red 1922

Oil on canvas, 53 x 54 (20 7/8 x 21 1/4) Lined; the original set-back strip frame with miter joints was lost sometime after 1946 (photographed during Amsterdam exhibition). Signed and dated lower left: PM '22 Provenance: (?)-c. 1950, Nico Eekman, Paris; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, c. 1950-c. 1959; Philippe Reichenbach, Houston, c. 1959; sold at auction, Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 22 October 1974, no. 141; Private collection, Spain; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1980 (inv. no. 3353). Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 99;

New York 1951, no. 22; New York 1953b, no. 26; New York 1957a, no. 14.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 471;
Ottolenghi 1974, no. 339; von Maur
1981, 163-164; von Maur and
Ingboden 1982, 232-234.
Lender: Staatsgalerie Stuttgart



#### 102 Composition with Large Red Plane, Gray-Blue, Yellow, Black, and Blue 1922

Oil on canvas, 54 x 53.5 (21 1/4 x 21) Signed and dated lower center: PM '22

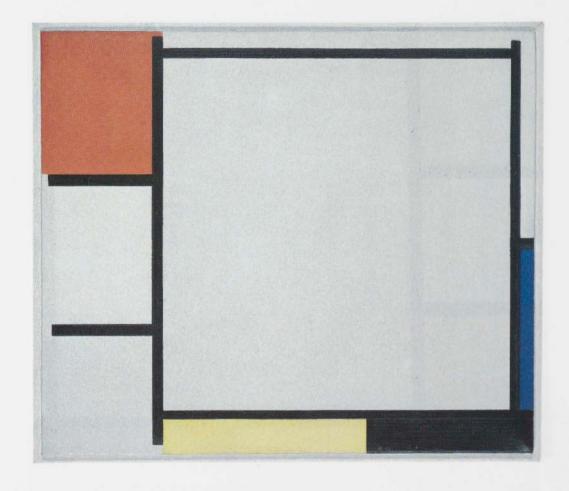
Provenance: Anthony Kok, Tilburg and Leiden, 1923-1952; Henri-Georges Doll, New York and Ridgefield, Connecticut (purchased through Nelly van Doesburg), 1952-1992; sold at auction, Christie's, New York, 12 May 1992, no. 142. (xhibitions: Houston 1957.

Exhibitions: Houston 1957. Literature: Christie's, New York, 12 May 1992, 102, color repr. 103. Lender: Private collection, Monte Carlo

This painting was one of four purchased from the artist by the poet Anthony Kok between 1921 and 1923 (including cats. 85 and 106), a time when Mondrian was suffering considerable financial difficulties and even contemplating moving to the country. Kok was one of the early contributors to *De Stijl*, and he met van Doesburg in 1914. On 5 December 1922, Mondrian wrote to Kok from Paris: "...I now have enough money from painting flowers to manage. I would much prefer

to earn money some other way, like you, with a job that has nothing to do with art, but I have never learned to do anything else. I shall try to stay here and see what happens. Life in the country doesn't appeal to me: everything moves differently, but slowly. Long live the futurists! with their drive for speed....And the whole abstract movement is stewing (only on the surface, thank goodness) in materialism and naturalism. Does [van Doesburg] is persevering steadily. I realize that he has to interpret the neo-plastic idea very broadly, because barely anyone is willing to accept the consequences. It is good that there are a few who are.

"Your second picture must sit here a while longer. In the spring probably someone will come who can bring it to you, together with the other one that *is* ready."

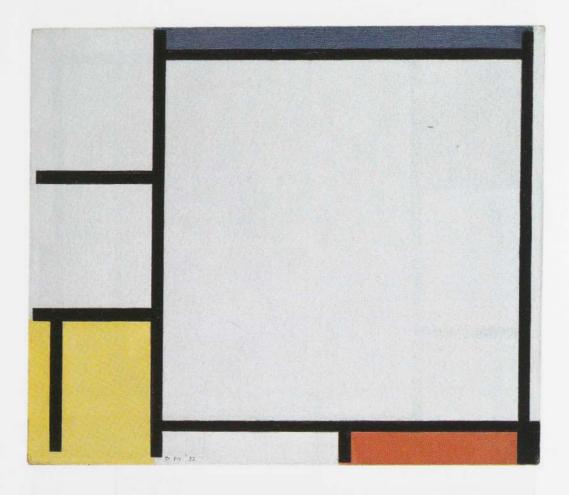


# 103 Composition with Red, Blue, Yellow, Black, and Gray 1922

Oil on canvas, 42 x 48.5 (16 1/2 x 19 1/8) Set-back gray strip frame with miter joints. Signed and dated lower right: PM [monogram] 22 Provenance: J. J. P. Oud, Rotterdam and Wassenaar, 1922-1963; Hans Oud, 1963-1978; Jon N. Streep and John & Paul Herring & Co., New York, 1978; The Toledo Museum of Art, 1978 (inv. no. 78.44). Exhibitions: The Hague 1955, no. 108. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 474;

Ottolenghi 1974, no. 341.

Lender: The Toledo Museum of Art; Purchased with funds from the Libbey Endowment, Gift of Edward Drummond Libbey



## 104 Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, and Black 1922

Oil on canvas, 42 x 49 (16 1/2 x 19 1/4) Signed and dated lower left: PM '22

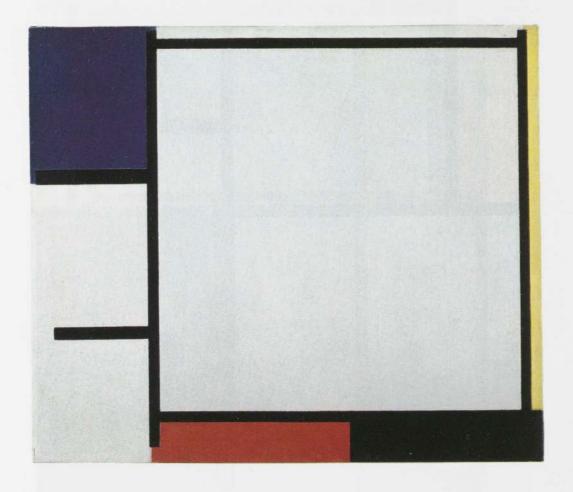
On reverse: HAUT Provenance: Til Brugman, The Hague, before 1924-after 1955;

Stiftung Scaletta, Vaduz, 1963; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1963-1965; The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 1965 (inv. no. 65.5).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1925, h.c.; Amsterdam 1946, no. 96; The Hague 1955, no. 107; Zurich 1955, no. 87; Basel 1964, no. 43; New York 1971, no. 95; Bern 1972, no. 88.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 473; Minneapolis Institute of Arts 1971, 129; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 340. Lender: The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Gift of Bruce B. Dayton

[Washington and New York only]



## 105 Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, Black, and Gray 1922

Oil on canvas, 42 x 49 (16 1/2 x 19 1/4) Set-back gray strip frame with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower right: PM [monogram] 22

Provenance: Th. K. van Lohuizen, Rotterdam and Bussum, 1922-1948; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1948 (inv. no. A 1996).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 98; Basel 1947, h.c.; Paris 1969, no. 75.

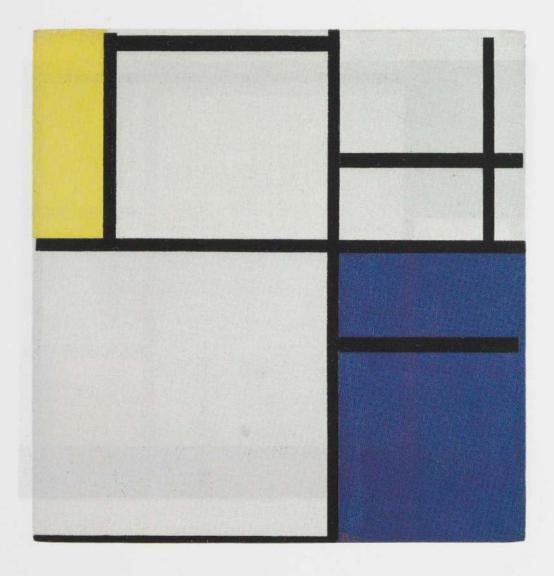
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 475; Blok 1974, 58, 59, 68, no. 276; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 342; Melse 1989, 19-22.

Lender: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

[The Hague only]

Mondrian's correspondence contains numerous references to his works in progress, often indicating technical problems that he is encountering as he reworks the surface. In this case, in a letter to Oud dated 5 May 1922, he referred to the drying properties of the paint as he applied successive layers: "Your little canvas and the one for van Lohuizen are making good progress now. The last layer still has to be applied, but each layer has to dry for a certain period of time before the next is applied in order to insure stability. It has taken a long time because of all my worries and anxieties. Will you convey that to van Lohuizen and tell him that I am almost finished?"

Th. K. van Lohuizen (d. 1956) was a colleague of Oud, and had been encouraged by him to visit Mondrian in 1921. He became very interested in the artist's recent work.



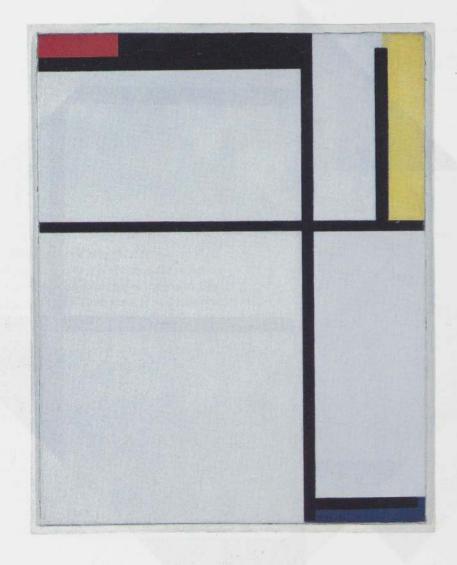
#### 106 Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Blue-White 1922

Oil on canvas, 55.3 x 53.5 (21 3/4 x 21) Signed and dated lower right: PM [monogram] 22

Provenance: Anthony Kok, Tilburg and Leiden, 1922-1951; Nelly van Doesburg, 1951-1952; Alexandre Jolas, New York, 1952; Mr. and Mrs. Jean de Menil, Houston, Texas (through Nelly van Doesburg), 1952; The Menil Collection, Houston, 1987 (inv. no. V 204).

Exhibitions: The Hague 1966, no. 105; Berlin 1968, no. 51; Paris 1969, no. 74.

Literature: Ottolenghi 1974, no.347; Menil Collection 1987, 194-195. Lender: The Menil Collection, Houston X-ray examination of this work has revealed that Mondrian made substantial changes to the initial composition. Three elements were added: the horizontal black line across the blue plane (originally cobalt blue, but subsequently reworked with ultramarine); and the two black lines forming a cross on the upper right white plane. In addition, the black vertical which forms the right boundary of the yellow plane was widened to the left, thus reducing the size of the yellow plane. Two significant color changes were made: the narrow white plane at the top of the painting was originally red; and red paint is also to be found underneath the horizontal black line at the bottom edge.



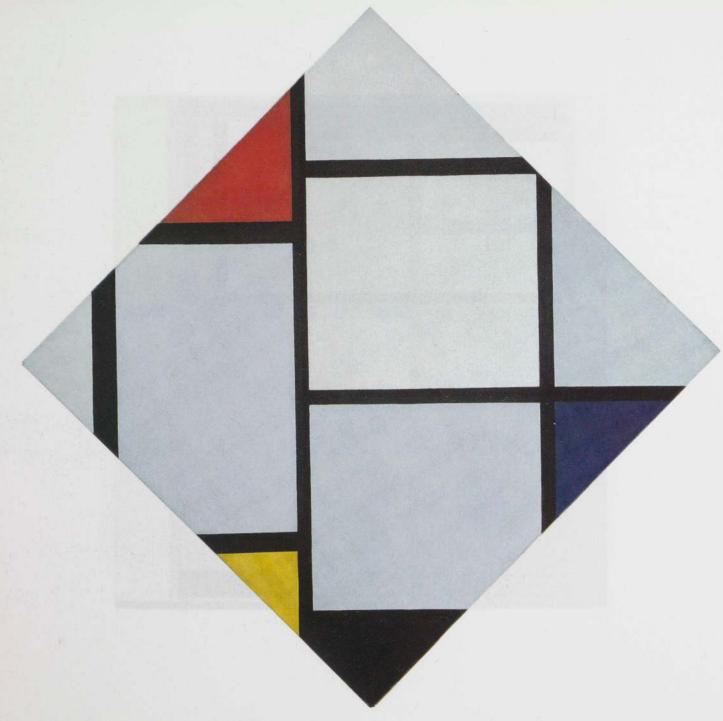
# 107 Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray 1922

Oil on canvas, 50 x 39 (19 5/8 x 15 3/8) Lined; set-back strip frame with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 22 On stretcher: HAUT

Provenance: Acquired from the artist by J. J. P. Oud, Rotterdam and Wassenaar, 1923-(?); Jon N. Streep, New York and Amsterdam; Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne, 1974; Galerie Denise René and Hans Mayer, Düsseldorf, 1985. Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 97.

Lender: Private collection



## 108 TABLEAU NO. IV; Lozenge Composition with Red, Gray, Blue, Yellow,

and Black c. 1924 [first state]; 1925 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 100.5 x 100.5 (39 1/2 x 39 1/2); axis (irregular), 142.8 - 142.3 (56 1/4 - 56) Lined; the original set-back strip frame with miter joints (first and second states) is lost. Signed lower center: PM Provenance: Consigned to Sophie Küppers, Hanover and Dresden, 1925; Friedrich Bienert, Dresden and Berlin; Galerie Springer, Berlin, c. 1950-1951; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, 1951; John L. Senior, Jr., New York, 1951-1956; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1956; Herbert and

Nannette Rothschild, New York, 1956-1971; National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C., 1971 (inv no. 1971.51.1).

Exhibitions: Dresden 1925 ("IV losangique pyramidal"; see cat. 93 for source of title); New York 1963, no. 23; Toronto 1966, no. 94; The Hague 1966, no. 104; Providence 1966, no. 112; Washington 1979, no. 6.

Literature: Kállai 1924, repr. 377,
"Bild, 1924" (first state);
Vantongerloo 1926, n.p., repr.,
"losangique" (second state);
Vantongerloo 1927, repr. 95,
"losangique" (second state); van
Loon 1927, repr. 197 (second state);
Brzekowski 1930, repr. 88 (second
state); Seuphor 1956, no. 478 (first
state), no. 485 (second state);

Welsh 1966b, 186, repr. 187 (second state); Elgar 1968, repr. 112 (first state), color repr. 130 (second state); Ottolenghi 1974, no. 358 (first state), no. 359 (second state); Carmean 1979, 32-35, 73-84, 93-94, repr. 74 (first state), repr. 75 (second state and composite X-ray), color repr. 11 (second state); Weyergraf 1979, 32 (discusses first and second state; Seuphor reference numbers inaccurate). Lender: National Gallery of Art, Washington, Gift of Herbert and Nannette Rothschild

E. A. Carmean Jr. and William R. Leisher first proposed that two previously identified separate paintings (one always presumed lost) in fact represented successive stages in the development of a single work. The first state is known only from a black-and-white photograph originally published in 1924 (fig. a). The argument of Carmean and Leisher, supported by scientific analysis, has proved convincing and is now accepted.

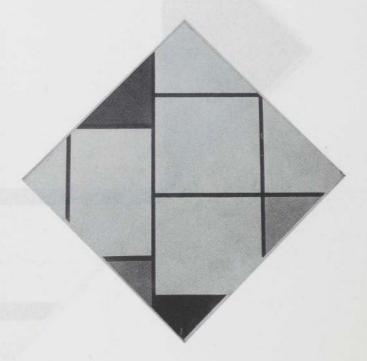
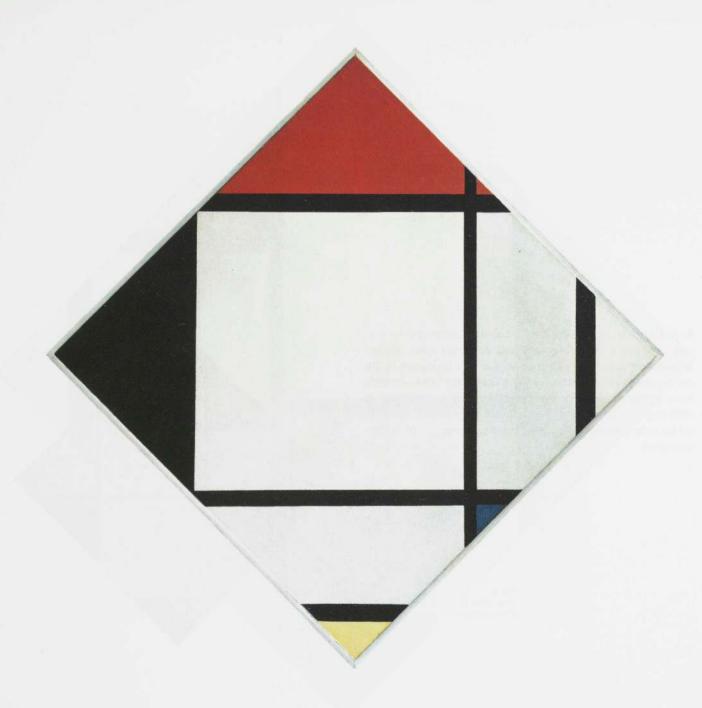


Fig. a First state (1924) of *Tableau No. IV*. Photograph from Kállai 1924, 377.



#### 109 Lozenge Composition with Red, Black, Blue, and Yellow 1925

Oil on canvas, 77 x 77 (30 3/8 x 30 3/8); vertical axis, 108 (42 1/2) Set-back strip frame with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower left: PM '25
On top corner of stretcher: HAUT
On center stretcher bar:
P. MONDRIAN PARIS

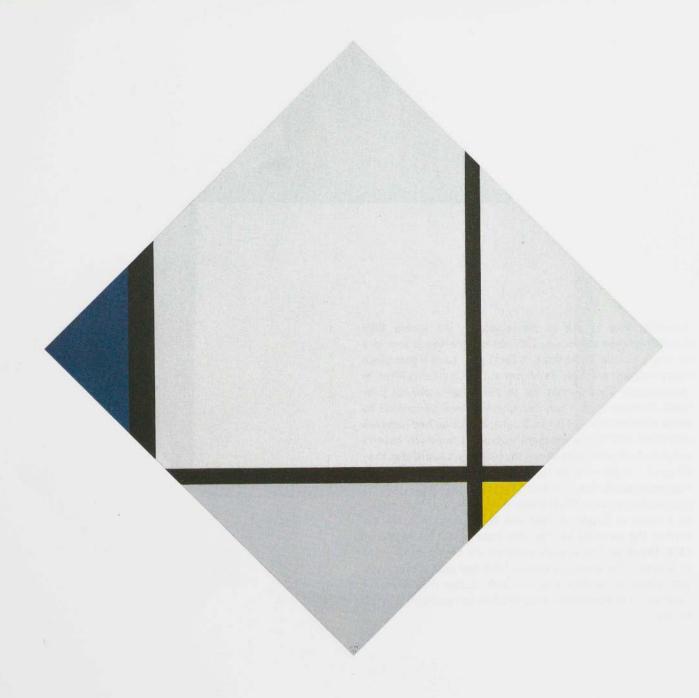
Provenance: E. H. E. L. Cabos and Mrs. M. F. Cabos-de Fries, Rotterdam and Utrecht, 1926; M. F. Wibaut-de Fries, Zeist and The Hague, until 1988; Heirs of M. F. Wibaut-de Fries; sold at auction, Christie's, New York, 15 May 1990, no. 51; Private collection.

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1925, no. 17, "Tableau No. I" (withdrawn before opening); Amsterdam 1946, no. 100a; Basel 1947, no. 17.

Literature: Vouloir 19 (March 1926), n.p., repr.; Vantongerloo 1926, n.p., repr.; Einstein 1931, repr. 516; Seuphor 1956, 152-153, no. 481; Jaffé 1970, 140; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 360; Carmean 1979, 35-37, 94; Champa 1985, 108; Christie's, New York, 15 May 1990, 146.

[Not in exhibition]

Mondrian was invited to participate in the spring 1925 Onafhankelijken exhibition. This obviously pleased him, and he wrote to Oud on 22 April 1925: "I now have a fine piece ready that will probably be shown at the Onafhankelijken in Amsterdam. They invited me to participate, without payment, together with a few Frenchmen. I will be curious to know what you think of it." By 2 June, Mondrian had received bad news, and sent a postcard to Oud: "I hope you haven't yet gone to Amsterdam to see my painting. I heard that they dropped a crate on it so that it couldn't be shown. Nothing has upset me as much as this for a very long time. I have recovered from it now. Disastrous, isn't it? My very best work." In a letter to Slijper written two days later, he again describes the painting as "my very best work." By 24 March 1926, Mondrian had entirely restored the canvas, and wrote to Slijper: "The damaged canvas from last year is now lined and repainted, so that it is now even better than before; I have sent it to Rotterdam, where Cabos can probably place it for me."



# 110 TABLEAU NO.1; Lozenge Composition with Three Lines and Blue, Gray, and Yellow 1925

Oil on canvas, 80 x 80 (31 1/2 x 31 1/2); vertical axis, 112 (44 1/8) Signed and dated lower center:

PM 25
On upper stretcher bar:
P. MONDRIAN. PARIS.

On center stretcher bar: TITRE: TABLEAU No. I

Provenance: Friedrich Bienert and Gret Palucca (through Sophie Küppers), Dresden, 1926-c. 1950; Galerie Springer, Berlin, c. 1950; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York; E.V. Thaw, New York; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1955-1956; Kunsthaus Zürich, 1956 (inv. no. 1956/11).

Exhibitions: Paris 1925, no. 149,

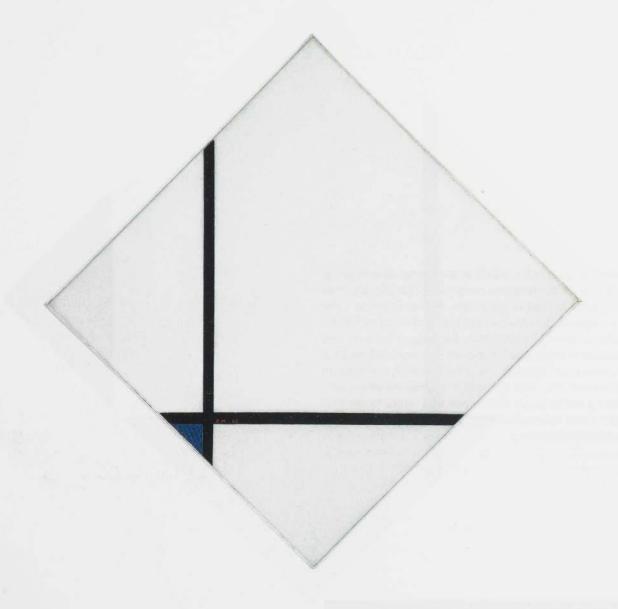
"Tableau"; Berlin 1968, no. 53; Paris 1969, no. 68; New York 1971, no. 98; Bern 1972, no. 91.

Literature: De Nieuwe Courant
(3 February 1926), unsigned review
of Paris 1925; ABC 2 (1926), repr. 5;
Vouloir 19 (March 1926), repr. n.p.;
Roëll 1926; De Stijl VII, 79-84
(1927), color repr. 37; Bill 1956, 3-7;
Seuphor 1956, no. 482; Hüttinger
1962, 329; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 357;
Carmean 1979, 42-43, 94-95; Troy
1980, 646 (installation photograph,
Gret Palucca dance studio); Bois
1983, 292; Bois 1984, 16, 25, 104-105
note 11, 106 note 17; Palucca 1987,
22-23, 58.

Lender: Kunsthaus Zürich, Vereinigung Zürcher Kunstfreunde This painting hung in the studio of the dancer Gret Palucca, wife of Friedrich Bienert, who bought it in 1926 (fig. a). In an undated letter to Oud of early 1926, Mondrian wrote, "The larger canvas which I showed here in that abstract exhibition [I'Art d'aujourd'hui], I also sent to Germany on request, and just yesterday I heard that it had been sold. I got 400 marks, a really good price because the intermediary's commission was 33 percent. The work was sold to a danseuse who apparently has a white dance studio, and they wrote to me that now my canvas is hanging there as a point of rest when the danseuse takes a break."



Fig. a
Tableau No. 1 in the dance studio
of Gret Palucca, Dresden, after
1926. Photographer unknown.



#### 111 SCHILDERIJ NO.1; Lozenge Composition with Two Lines and Blue 1926

Oil on canvas, 60 x 60.1 (23 5/8 x 23 5/8); axis (irregular), 84.9 – 85 (33 3/8 – 33 1/2) Lined; set-back strip frame with miter joints.

Signed lower left: PM 26 On stretcher: HAUT BOVEN On label for 1926 exhibition: Schilderij No. 1

Provenance: Consigned to Sophie Küppers, Hanover, 1926; confiscated by the National Socialist authorities and stored in Niederschönhausen, 1937; Karl Bucholz, Berlin, and Bucholz Gallery (Curt Valentin), New York, 1939; A. E. Gallatin, The Museum of Living Art, New York, 1939-1952; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1952 (inv. no. 52-61-87).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1926, no. 219, "Compositie No. 1"; New York 1939b; New York 1945b, no. 26; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 57; Washington 1965, no. 41; Berlin 1968, no. 54; New York 1971, no. 100; Washington 1979, no. 9.

Literature: De Groene
Amsterdammer (26 May 1926),
unsigned review of Amsterdam
1926, repr.; van Loon 1927, repr. 198;
Bendien 1932, repr.; Bendien and
Harrenstein-Schräder 1935, repr.
1; The New York Times (29
October 1939), 18; Het Vaderland
(1 November 1939), Avondblad, C1;

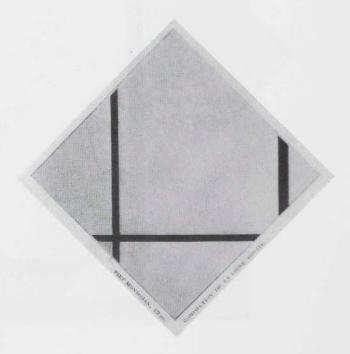
Museum of Living Art 1940, repr. 94; Museum of Living Art 1954, 46; Seuphor 1956, no. 487; Blok 1974, 66; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 365; Carmean 1979, 43-45, 84-88, 95, color repr. 12, repr. X-ray 86; Weyergraf 1979, 32; Troy 1979, 61; Henkels 1987, 210 (installation photograph, Amsterdam 1926). Lender: Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection

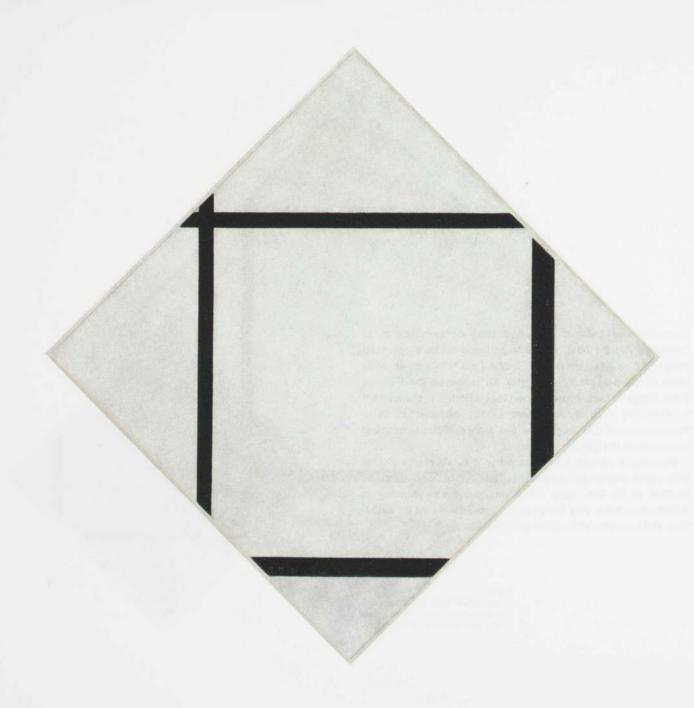
[Washington and New York only]

Carmean and Leisher proposed that a reproduction in Cahiers d'Art 6 (1931), formerly believed to be a reversed image of Composition IV; Fox Trot A (cat. 120), was an early state of the present painting (fig. a). However, the Cahiers d'Art image in fact records a now lost painting that was sent to Germany with three others in the summer of 1926. Photographs of this completed and signed 1926 painting are preserved in the Slijper archives.

Mondrian's palette, now reduced to a single primary color with black and white, is specifically referred to in his letter to Oud of 22 May 1926: "The pictures I am showing in Amsterdam have very little color: it strikes me as an evolution. But I am also still working in three colors."

Fig. a
Composition, 1926, dimensions
and location unknown. Photograph
from Cahiers d'Art 6,1 (1931), 42.





## 112 TABLEAU I; Lozenge Composition with Four Lines and Gray 1926

Oil on canvas, 80.5 x 80.5 (31 3/4 x 31 3/4); axis (irregular), 113.5 – 112 (44 5/8 – 44 1/8) Lined and stretched on core panel; set-back strip frame with miter joints. Signed and dated lower left: PM '26

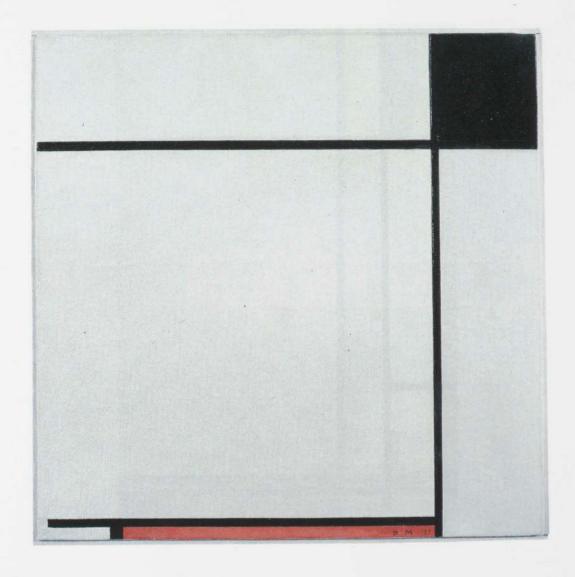
On original stretcher (now lost):
HAUT BAS
On original center stretcher bar:
TABLEAU I

Provenance: Katherine S. Dreier, New York and West Redding, Connecticut, 1926-1953; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1953 (inv. no. 179.53).

Exhibitions: Brooklyn 1926, no. 117, "Clarification I"; New York 1927, no. 69; Buffalo 1927, no. 75; New York 1936 (did not travel), no. 185, "Composition"; New York 1945b, no. 25, "Composition in Black and White"; New York 1953a; Washington 1979, no. 10. Literature: Dreier 1926, repr. 49; Dreier 1927. 4: Barr 1936, 150:

Dreier 1927, 4; Barr 1936, 150; Barr 1954, 123; Seuphor 1956, no. 486; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 364; Schapiro 1978, 235-238; Carmean 1979, 45-48, 95-96; Troy 1979, 61; Arnheim 1982, 56; Bohan 1982, 88-89, 151.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Katherine S. Dreier Bequest, 1953



# 113 Composition with Black, Red, and Gray 1927

Oil on canvas, 56 x 56 (22 x 22) Slightly set-back strip frame, horizontally crosscut.

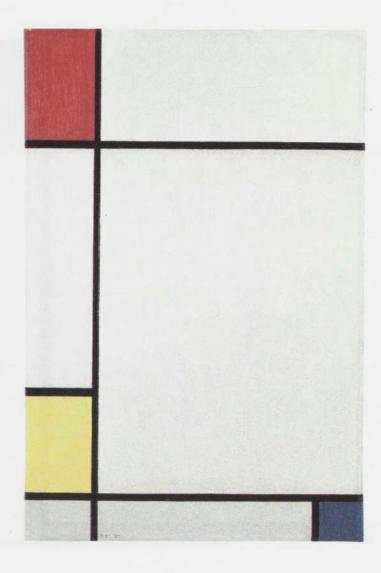
Signed and dated lower right: PM '27
On turnover of canvas, top: HAUT
On center stretcher bar:
P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Consigned to J. J. P. Oud, Rotterdam, 1927; P. E. R. Trousselot, Katwijk aan Zee, 1927-1950; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, 1950-1972; Kunsthandel J. P. Smid, Amsterdam, 1972.

Exhibitions: Toronto 1966, no. 97; The Hague 1966, no. 108; New York 1971, no. 103; Bern 1972, no. 94. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 498; Oud 1962, 68; Welsh 1966b, 191; Roth 1973, 128, 130, 149; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 369.

Lender: Brandenburg Art
Collections, Cottbus. Museum of
Contemporary Art, Photography,
Poster and Design

In a letter to Oud of 24 April 1928, Mondrian advised a method of cleaning his paintings, which he may himself have used from time to time: "Roth brought me Mr. [T]Rousselot's canvas; it could easily have been restored in Holland. A small spot on the edge and a few dirty fingerprints could have been removed with turpentine."



#### 114 COMPOSITION NO. III; Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue 1927

Oil on canvas, 60 x 40 (23 1/8 x 15 3/4) The original slightly set-back strip frame, crosscut vertically, is lost.

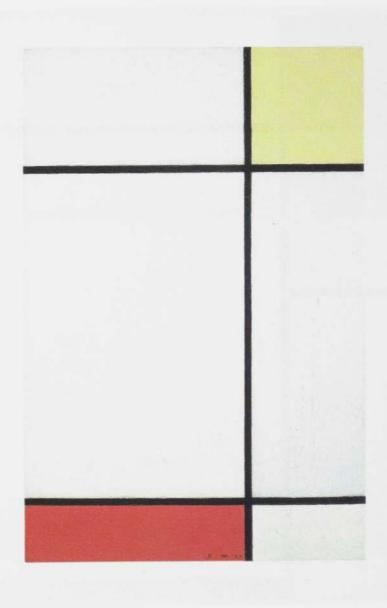
Signed and dated lower left: PM '27 On turnover of canvas, top: HAUT No. III On lower stretcher bar: P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Consigned to J. J. P. Oud, Rotterdam, 1927-1929; Charley Toorop, Amsterdam and Bergen, New Hampshire, 1929-1948; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1948 (inv. no. A 1931).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1928a, no.95, "Compositie" (Dfl. 250); Amsterdam 1928b, no. 362, "Compositie" (Dfl. 250); Amsterdam 1946, no. 103; Basel 1947, no. 16; The Hague 1955, no. 112; Rome 1956, no. 42; Paris 1969, no. 81.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 499; Blok 1974, 66, no. 278; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 372.

Lender: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam



## 115 Composition with Yellow and Red 1927

Oil on canvas, 52 x 35 (20 1/2 x 13 3/4)
Lined; original strip frame,
vertically crosscut, lost.

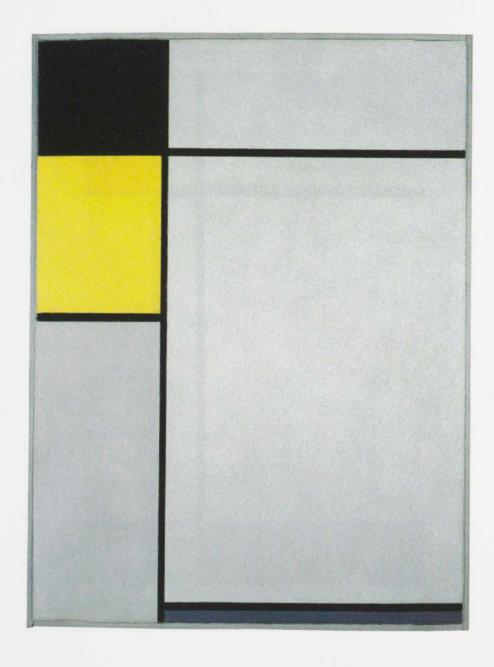
Signed and dated lower center:
PM '27
On remnant of original stretcher:
HAUT
P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Sidney Janis Gallery,
New York, c. 1959; Owing
Richards, New York; Stephen

Hahn, New York; Fujii Gallery,

Lender: Private collection

Tokyo.



## 116 COMPOSITION NO. I; Composition with Black, Yellow, and Blue 1927

Oil on canvas, 73 x 54 (28 3/4 x 21 1/4) Set-back strip frame crosscut vertically.

Signed and dated lower center: PM 27

On reverse: MONDRIAN
On turnover of canvas, top righ

On turnover of canvas, top right: No. I

On upper stretcher bar: HAUT On lower stretcher bar: P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Sigfried Giedion and Carola Giedion-Welcker, Zurich, 1928-1979; Andres Giedion, Zurich, 1979-1990; Annely Juda Fine Art, London (purchased at auction, Christie's, London, 26 June 1990, no. 46).

Exhibitions: Paris 1927; Zurich 1929,

no. 92, "Composition N I"; (?) Munich 1929; Basel 1937, no. 55; The Hague 1955, no. 113; Zurich 1955, no. 91; Berlin 1968, no. 56.

Literature: Mondriaan 1927, repr. 427, "Neo-plastisch schilderij"; Christie's, London, 26 June 1990, 115-117.

Lender: Private collection, Courtesy Annely Juda Fine Art, London By 28 September 1928, Mondrian was able to write to Oud that he had sold this painting to Giedion for 1,500 francs. On 10 November he wrote to Carola Giedion-Welcker: "...I am happy to hear that you like the picture, even in a different ambiance. Like you, I would perhaps have preferred the other painting with red, but there are so many aspects to truth and to beauty! The one you have is perhaps more spiritual."



# 117 Composition with Red, Black, Blue, Yellow, and Gray 1928

Oil on canvas, 50 x 48 (19 5/8 x 18 7/8) Set-back strip frame crosscut vertically.

Signed and dated lower right: PIET MONDRIAN '28

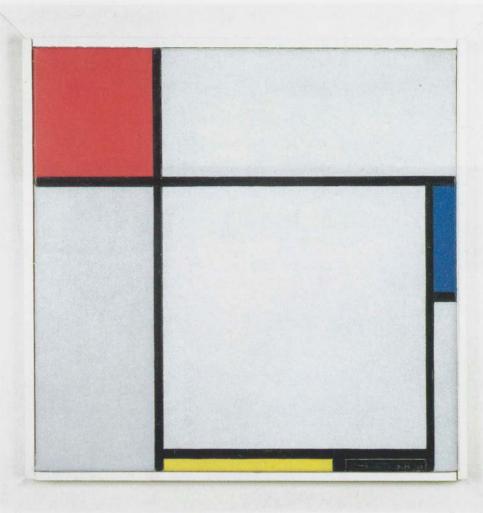
Provenance: A. O. L. Bergman, Amsterdam, 1928-after 1946; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York, 1951; Morton G. Neumann, Chicago, early 1950s-1985; Morton G. Neumann Family Collection.

Exhibitions: (?) Paris 1928; Amsterdam 1946, no. 105; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 60; Washington 1965, no. 45; Washington 1980, no. 16.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 504; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 384;

Welsh 1966b, 192; Carmean 1980, 1:34, 2:21-23.

[Not in exhibition]



#### 118 COMPOSITION; Composition with Red, Blue, Yellow, and Black 1929

Oil on canvas,

45 x 45.5 (17 3/4 x 17 7/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe with miter joints. (Mondrian first used subframes in 1928.)

Signed and dated lower right: PM 29
On center stretcher bar:
COMPOSITION
On upper subframe bar: HAUT
On lower subframe bar:
P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Katherine S. Dreier.

New York and West Redding, Connecticut, 1929-1953, gift of the artist; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1953 (inv. no. 53.1347).

Exhibitions: New York 1971, no. 105; Bern 1972, no. 96; New York 1980, no. 14.

Literature: Ottolenghi 1974, no. 392; Rudenstine 1976, 582; Troy 1979, 61. Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim

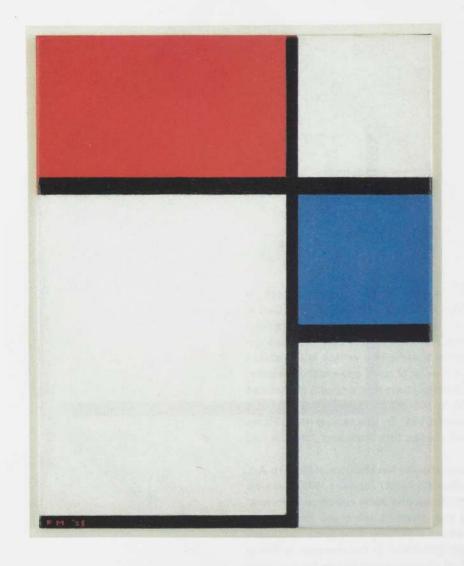
Museum, New York. Gift, Estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953

Katherine Dreier had first visited Mondrian in Paris in April 1926 (see Chronology). On 27 June 1927, in response to a letter from Dreier, he wrote: "It was a great surprise to receive the check and to learn that one of my pictures had been sold.

I thank you again for your good efforts and I hope that when you come back to Paris one day, you would be willing to accept a small painting as a token of my appreciation for the interest you have shown in my work." Mondrian had sent two paintings to Katherine Dreier in 1926 (see above, cat. 112).

The anticipated visit took place in July 1929, when Mondrian fulfilled his promise and gave her the present painting. She also purchased the 1929 *Composition* (Société Anonyme 1984, no. 505; Ott. 389).

On 9 August he wrote to her: "About 14 days ago the shipper picked up the paintings. Fortunately they were completely finished; only the frames must have a final coat. These frames should be painted completely white [after their arrival] in America. I hope that you will like these two paintings."



# 119 COMPOSITION NO. II; Composition with Blue and Red 1929

Oil on canvas, 40.5 x 32 (16 x 12 5/8) Set-back strip frame crosscut horizontally, subframe with miter joints, both lost.

Originally signed and dated lower left: PM 29 In 1942 changed to: PM '25 On center stretcher bar: P.Mondrian On top subframe bar: Composition HAUT No. II

Provenance: Philip C. Johnson, Cambridge, Mass. (purchased on his behalf by Henry Russell Hitchcock through J. J. P. Oud, Rotterdam), 1930-1941; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1941 (inv. no. 486.41). Exhibitions: Zurich 1929, no. 94 (Ffr. 1,300); Munich 1929; Hartford 1931, no. 137; Cambridge 1931, no. 36; New York 1932; Hartford 1935, no. 15; New York 1942b; New York 1945b, no. 24.

Literature: MoMA 1932, color repr., cover; Barr 1942, no. 443; Seuphor 1956, no. 480; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 354; Bois 1984, 21.

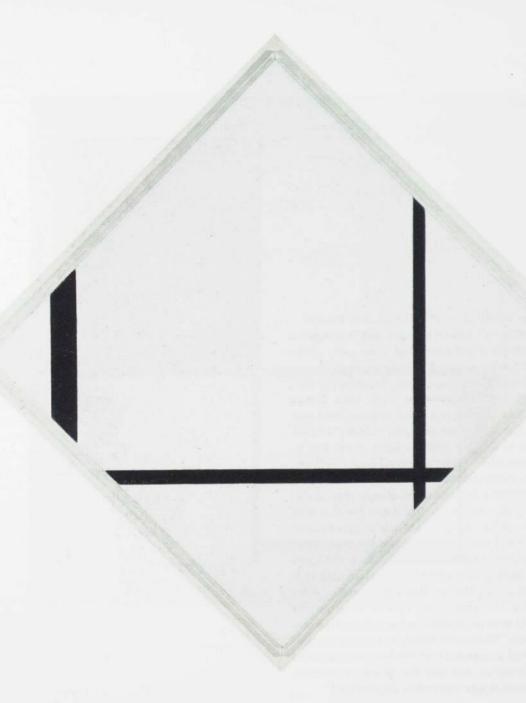
Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Philip Johnson, 1941

continued)

In the fall of 1929, Philip Johnson expressed an interest in acquiring a work by Mondrian, and the artist wrote to Oud in July 1930: "I was glad to hear from you that Mr. Johnson wants a painting by me. However, I didn't dare send one immediately because there is some real variety in my work: I have some canvases with a lot of color, some with little color, and some in black and white. I have sent a couple of sketches with prices from 200 to 400 guilders! My prices are now double what they were earlier." By September 1930, Henry Russell Hitchcock had chosen this work, and Johnson had purchased it.

Shortly after its acquisition by the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred Barr wrote to Mondrian on 17 February 1942, since the picture had apparently developed some condition problems: "When I last visited your studio, I asked you whether you would be willing to restore a painting done some ten twelve years ago and recently presented to the museum by Philip Johnson....We would, of course, expect to pay for your time and trouble. The paint was badly cracked and smudged while it was in Mr. Johnson's possession. If possible, I would like to have it ready by March 15th for an exhibition of recent acquisitions of abstract art."

By 24 March, in a letter to Charmion von Wiegand, Mondrian remarked that he had returned the picture that day to The Museum of Modern Art (the day before the opening of the exhibition *New Acquisitions and Extended Loans: Cubist and Abstract Art*). In a note preserved in the museum archive, Alfred Barr explains that it was during this restoration that Mondrian changed the painting's date to 1925. This was almost certainly inadvertent.



# 120 COMPOSITION IV; FOX TROT A; Lozenge Composition with

Three Black Lines 1929

Oil on canvas,
78.2 x 78.2 (30 3/4 x 30 3/4);
vertical axis, 110 (43 1/4)
Canvas trimmed on reverse;
original stretcher lost; set-back
strip frame with miter joints;
crosscut subframe (added in
1930).

Signed and dated lower left: PM '30

On turnover of canvas, lower center: BAS On top subframe bar,

center: TOP

accrocher lozengiquement [◇] left: FOX-TROT A-

right: P.MONDRIAN
Provenance: Consigned to

Katherine S. Dreier, Société Anonyme, New York and West Redding, Connecticut, 1930-1942; Gift of the artist to Katherine S. Dreier, 1942; Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, 1942 (inv. no. 1942-355).

Exhibitions: Zurich 1929, no. 96, "Composition IV" (Ffr. 1,400); Munich 1929; New York 1931, no. 22b, "Simplification II"; Buffalo 1931, no. 48; New York 1934, "Fox Trot" (either this or Fox Trot B [Ott. 386]); Black Mountain 1935 (either this or Fox Trot B [Ott. 386]); New York 1936 (traveling venues only); Springfield 1939, no. 44; New Haven 1942; New York 1945b,

no. 29; The Hague 1955, no. 120, "Foxtrot A"; Zurich 1955, no. 103; London 1955, no. 44; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 58; Berlin 1968, no. 64; New York 1971, no. 109; Washington 1979, no. 36.

Literature: Dreier and Duchamp 1950, 65, "Fox Trot A, 1927"; Seuphor 1956, no. 502; Roth 1973, 151-152, 157; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 393; Rosenblum 1977, 73-74; Carmean 1979, 48-50, 85, 96-97; Troy 1979, 15; Société Anonyme 1984, 481, 484-485; von Maur 1985, 18, 404.

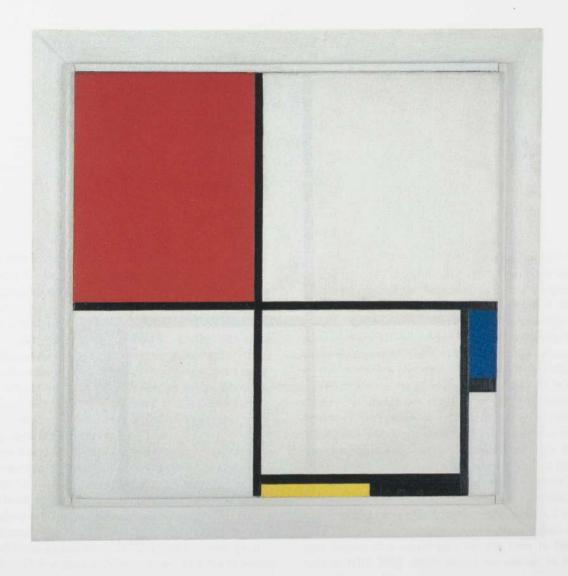
Lender: Yale University Art Gallery, Gift of the artist for the Collection Société Anonyme

continued)

Cat. 120 (continued)

The painting was exhibited in both Zurich and Munich in 1929 as "Composition IV." After it was returned to Mondrian, it seems likely that he slightly reworked some parts of the surface, redating the work to 1930. He wrote to Oud on 4 October 1930: "I have been extremely busy finishing two canvases. I received another invitation from Miss Dreier. Fortunately I had a large black and white painting and one in color [Fox Trot B, Ott. 386], which I am now sending." In a letter to Roth dated 13 October 1930, he again wrote that he had just finished two paintings for an exhibition in New York.

Troy (1984) has indicated that in the fall of 1930 Marcel Duchamp sent Katherine Dreier a list of objects that he was shipping, including Mondrian's Fox Trot A and Fox Trot B. In December, Dreier replied: "Of course Mondrian I always love – but why – Fox trot?" Henkels first pointed out that Mondrian's initial use of the title Fox Trot occurred in the 9 July 1920 issue of Het Vaderland, in which the correspondent W. F. A. Roëll reported on his visit to Mondrian's studio. After noting that Mondrian had announced "Foxtrot" to be the title of an (unidentified) work on an easel in the middle of the studio, Roëll continued: "The painter briefly and clearly explained to me how he had proceeded from the fox trot to arrive at its rendition or formation, and how the natural representation has, in a mysterious way, completely disappeared."



# 121 COMPOSITION NO. III; Composition with Red, Blue, Yellow,

and Black 1929

Oil on canvas, 50 x 50.5 (19 5/8 x 19 7/8) Set-back strip frame crosscut vertically; subframe with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 29 On center stretcher bar: P MONDRIAN

On top subframe bar: HAUT On bottom subframe bar: No.III Provenance: Michel Seuphor, Paris, gift of the artist, 1930; Alberto Sartoris; Galerie d'Art Moderne, Basel, c. 1950; Théodore Bally, Montreux, c. 1950-1975; Jacques

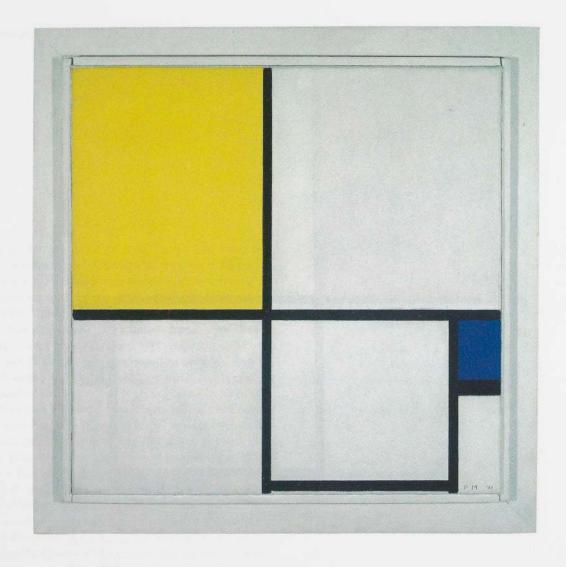
Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1929a, no. 52, "Composition III"; Amsterdam 1929b, no. 3;

Koerfer, Ascona, 1975.

The Hague 1929; Zurich 1955, no. 97.

Literature: Hammacher 1929; Abstraction-Création 1 (1932), repr. 25; Fierens 1933, repr. 51; Seuphor 1956, no. 513; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 391; Joosten 1993, 45, 47, 48.

Lender: Private collection, Switzerland



## 122 COMPOSITION NO. II; Composition with Yellow and Blue 1929

Oil on canvas, 52 x 52 (20 1/2 x 20 1/2)
Lined and placed on new
stretcher at an unknown date;
original strip frame, vertically
crosscut, now lost; original
subframe with miter joints.
Signed and dated lower right: PM '29

Signed and dated lower right: PM '29 On remnant of original stretcher: P MONDRIAN

On top subframe bar: HAUT On bottom subframe bar: No.II

Provenance: Gift of the artist's friends to Museum Boymans, Rotterdam, 1929 (inv. no. 1542).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1929a, no.51, "Composition II", repr. 7 (installation photograph); Amsterdam 1929b, no.2, "Compositie No. II"; The Hague 1955, no. 116; Zurich 1955, no. 98; London 1955, no. 43; Venice 1956, no. 18; Rome 1956, no. 45; Berlin 1968, no. 62; Paris 1969, no. 86.

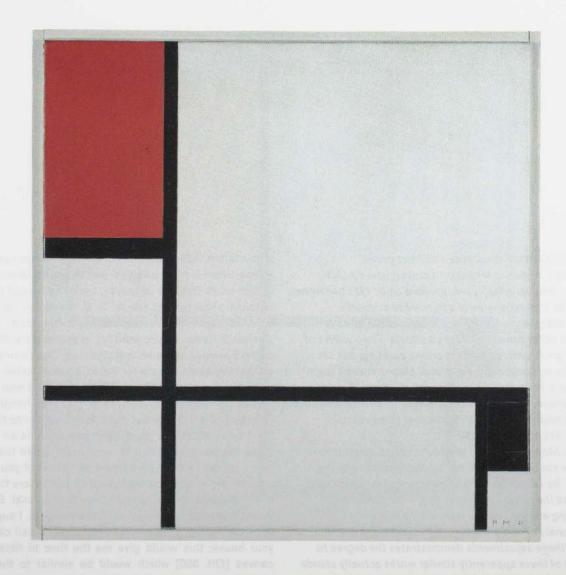
Literature: Mondrian 1931, repr. 43; Citroen 1931, repr. 71 (installation photograph, Paris studio; see Chronology, fig. 14); Museum Boymans 1937, 77; Seuphor 1956, no. 512; Kunst van de 20e eeuw 1972, 257; Roth 1973, 154; Blok 1974, no. 280; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 385; Joosten 1993, 45, 47.

Lender: Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam The years 1929 to 1932 constitute a distinct period representing the peak of Mondrian's classicism. By 1929, each of the compositional types invented since 1921 had been refined to the highest degree of balance and economy. With the present work, the artist invented a new type – the culmination of the previous decade's efforts. The outlines of this type begin to emerge in the previous painting, cat. 121, which can be considered a transitional stage between such works as cats. 117 or 118 and the present painting. Mondrian further developed this compositional type in no less than seven additional canvases during the next three years (including cats. 127, 129, 132-134).

Although Mondrian always worked in series, never before did he show such concentration and consistency within a single type: he varied the colors from one canvas to the next and adjusted the thickness of the lines, each alteration necessitating another, but he retained the same compositional scheme throughout. Paradoxically, the very subtlety of these adjustments demonstrates the degree to which each of these apparently similar works actually stands alone, while also casting light on others in the series.

In the fall of 1929, the architect Charles Karsten expressed a strong interest in buying this painting, and Mondrian wrote to him on 25 October indicating that if he bought the picture before the opening of the A. S. B. exhibition he would not have to pay a commission to the association. On 4 November, Karsten responded that, unfortunately, the director of the Boymans Museum in Rotterdam, Dirk Hannema, wanted the very same picture for the museum. Karsten very much regretted losing the painting, but understood how important it was for Mondrian to have a painting hanging in the Boymans. On 5 November 1929, Mondrian wrote to Karsten: "The news which you gave me in your letter is an honor and gives me pleasure, but it is most unfortunate that the very same canvas is involved. I find it most kind of you to ask my opinion, since - having made your choice before the opening of the exhibition - you should have first refusal. But since I would like to have the canvas in the museum, I suggest that, until the spring, you hang another of my small canvases in your house; this would give me the time to finish another canvas [Ott. 390] which would be similar to the one you chose."

In a letter to Oud of 8 December 1929, Mondrian asked him if he had been to the A. S. B. exhibition, and continued: "I had two buyers for the same canvas, unfortunately. Boymans bought it for their new gallery for 250 guilders (between you and me). I will only receive payment in installments, since they don't have the money in hand yet. The other buyer is the architect Karsten."



#### 123 COMPOSITION NO. I; Composition with Red and Black 1929

Oil on canvas, 52 x 52 (20 1/2 x 20 1/2) Set-back strip frame, crosscut vertically; subframe lost.

Signed and dated lower right: PM '29
On center stretcher bar:
P. MONDRIAN

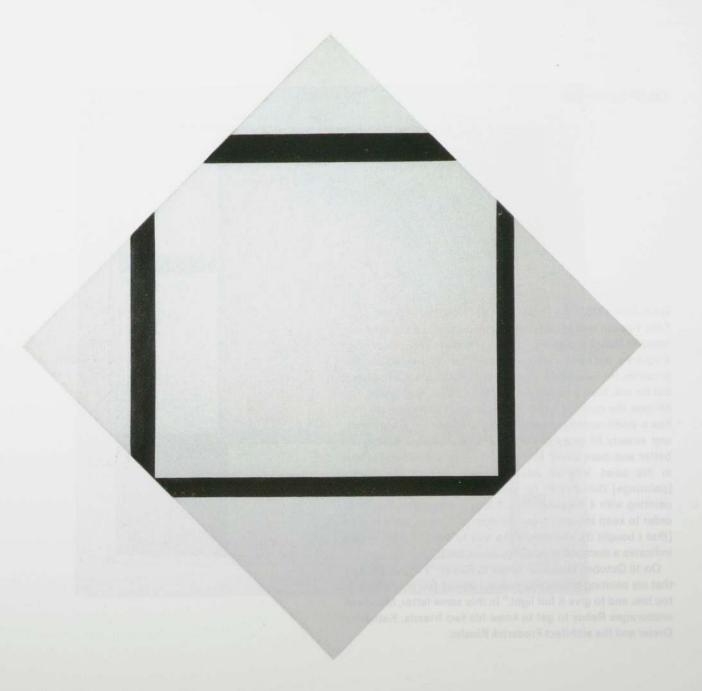
On original subframe: No. I
Provenance: Dr. R. J. Harrenstein
and An Harrenstein-Schräder,
Amsterdam, 1929 (purchased from
the artist for 300 guilders by
December); Trix Dürst-Haass,
Basel, (?)-1954; Marguerite ArpHagenbach, Neuilly-sur-Seine,
1954-1968; Kunstmuseum Basel,
1969 (inv. no. G 1968.88).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1929a, no. 50, "Composition I", repr. 7 (installation photograph); Amsterdam 1929b, no. 1, "Compositie No. I"; The Hague 1929; Zurich 1955, no. 95; Toronto 1966, no. 99; The Hague 1966, no. 110; Basel 1967, no. 228; Berlin 1968, no. 63; Paris 1969, no. 87; New York 1971, no. 107; Bern 1972, no. 98.

Literature: Mondrian 1931, repr. 43
(installation photograph, Paris studio); Citroen 1931, repr. 77
(installation photograph, Paris studio); Bendien 1932, repr.;
Bendien and Harrenstein-Schräder 1935, repr. 29; Schmidt 1956, 166; Seuphor 1956, no. 510; Welsh 1966b, 194; Jaffé 1970, 142; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 387; Joosten 1993, 45, 47.

Lender: Öffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel, Kunstmuseum. Donation Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach 1968

[New York only]



# 124 COMPOSITION NO. I; Lozenge Composition with Four Black Lines 1930

Oil on canvas, 75.2 x 75.2 (29 5/8 x 29 5/8); vertical axis, 105 (41 3/8) Lined; original strip frame replaced.

Signed and dated lower left: PM 30
On center stretcher bar:
P MONDRIAN accrocher No. I
losangiquement

Provenance: Acquired from the artist for 6,000 francs by Hilla Rebay, New York and Greens Farms, Connecticut, by October 1930; Estate of Hilla Rebay 1967-1971; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1971 (inv. no. 71.1936 R 96).

Exhibitions: Paris 1930, no. 69,

"Composition néo-plastique";
New York 1944b; Amsterdam 1946,
no. 107, "Composition I A" (title
deriving from a shipping list
prepared by the Netherlands
Information Bureau in New York;
subsequently adopted in all
publications); New York 1971,
no. 111; Bern 1972, no. 101;
Washington 1979, no. 12.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 523;
Elderfield 1970, 58 note 13;
Roth 1973, 156-157; Gledion-

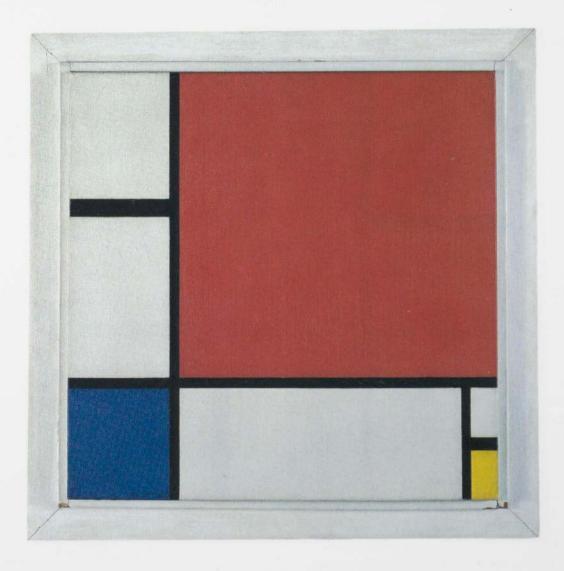
Elderfield 1970, 58 note 13; Roth 1973, 156-157; Giedion-Welcker 1973, 497; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 401; Rudenstine 1976, 584-585; Carmean 1979, 52-53, 97; Weyergraf 1979, 32; Lukach 1983, 64-66. Lender: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Hilla Rebay Collection, 1971

continued>

Cat. 124 (continued)

On 3 June 1930, Hilla Rebay visited Mondrian with the critic Félix Fénéon and Moholy-Nagy. She described the visit in a letter to Rudolf Bauer: "He hardly paints. He constructs 2 or 4 squares, but he is a wonderful man, very cultivated and impressive. He lives like a monk, everything is white and empty, but for red, blue, and yellow painted squares, that are spread all over the room of his white studio and bedroom. He also has a small record player with Negro music. He is very poor, and already 58 years old, resembles Kandinsky but is even better and more alone. Moholy loves him and venerates him in his quiet, intense way....I bought...one of Mondrian's [paintings] (for myself, for nobody will like it), a white oil painting with 4 irregular lines. I love it, but it was mainly in order to keep the wolf from the door of a great, lovable man [that I bought it], and this is the way to hang it. [Her sketch indicates a diamond shape.]" (Lukach 1983)

On 10 October, Mondrian wrote to Rebay: "I am very happy that my painting brings you peace. I advise you not to hang it too low, and to give it full light." In this same letter, Mondrian encourages Rebay to get to know his two friends, Katherine Dreier and the architect Frederick Kiesler.



# 125 COMPOSITION II; COMPOSITION I; COMPOSITION EN ROUGE, BLEU ET JAUNE (Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow) 1930

Oil on canvas, 51 x 51 (20 1/8 x 20 1/8) Set-back strip frame crosscut vertically; subframe with miter joints.

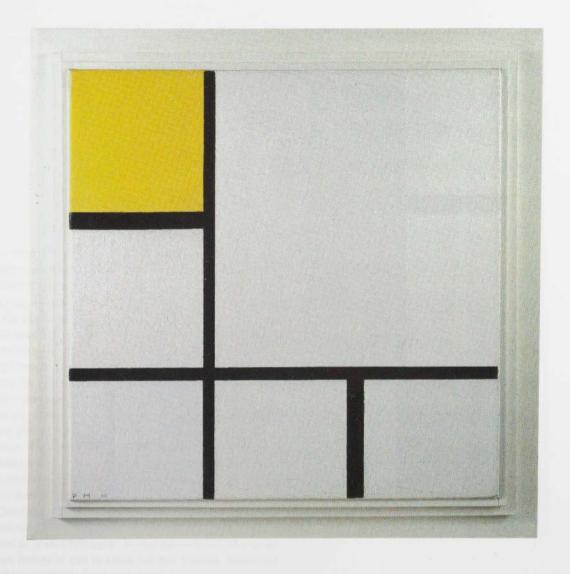
Signed and dated lower left: PM 30
On top subframe bar:
HAUT
P MONDRIAN II [crossed out]
On bottom subframe bar:

On bottom subframe bar: Composition en rouge, bleu et jaune

Provenance: Kouro, Paris, after 1937-c. 1949; Cesar Domela, Paris, c. 1949-1950; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1950; Armand P. Bartos, New York, 1950-1983; sold at auction, Christie's, London, 27 June 1983, no. 8. Exhibitions: Paris 1930, no.70, "Composition néo-plastique" (installation photograph in collection M. Seuphor); Stockholm 1930, no.59, "Composition I"; Basel 1937, no.59; Copenhagen 1937, no.65, "Composition in rouge, bleu et jaune" (Ffr. 4,000); New York 1953b, no.30; Zurich 1955, no.101; New York 1963, no.24; New York 1971, no.108.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 517; Welsh 1966b, 194; Jaffé 1970, 144; Roth 1973, 157; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 396; Reutersvärd 1980, repr. 55 (installation photograph of Stockholm 1930); Christie's, New York, 27 June 1983, 23. Lender: Collection The Fukuoka City Bank, Ltd.

[Washington only]



## 126 COMPOSITION NO. I; Composition with Yellow 1930

Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 50.5 (19 7/8 x 19 7/8) Double (stepped) set-back strip frame crosscut vertically; subframe with miter joints. Signed and dated lower left: PM '30

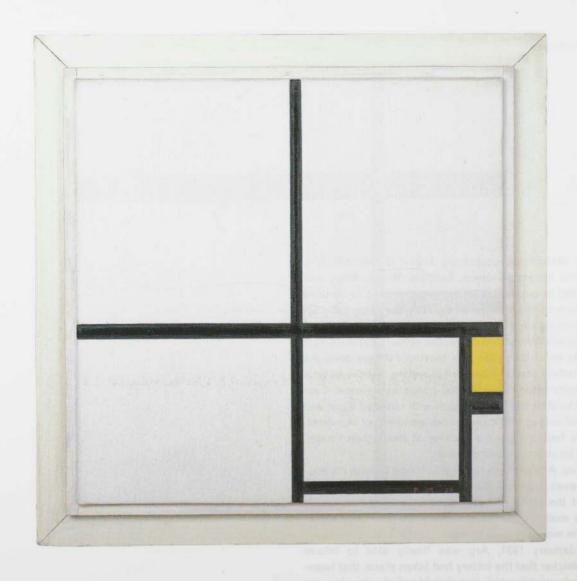
On top subframe bar: HAUT
On bottom subframe bar:
P MONDRIAN No. II
[II crossed out] I

Provenance: Emil and Clara Friedrich-Jezler, Zurich, by October 1930-1973; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 1973 (inv. no. 1199).

Exhibitions: Zurich 1930, no. 56, "Composition I"; Basel 1937, no. 57; Basel 1944, no. 171; Zurich 1955, no. 100; Zurich 1974, no. 40. Literature: Giedion 1930, repr. 605 (installation photograph); Seuphor 1956, no. 519; Giedion-Welcker 1973, 495; Roth 1973, 157, 160, 175; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 398; Winterthur 1976, no. 608; Joosten 1977, 188; Henkels 1987, repr. 217 (installation photograph, Zurich 1930).

Lender: Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Bequest of Clara and Emil Friedrich-Jezler

[The Hague and Washington only]



# 127 Composition with Yellow 1930

Oil on canvas, 46 x 46.5 (18 1/8 x 18 1/4) Set-back strip frame crosscut vertically; subframe with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 30 On top subframe bar: PIET MONDRIAN

Provenance: Jan Tschichold, Basel (acquired by lottery), 1931-1964; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1964-1965; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1965 (inv. no. 164).

Exhibitions: Basel 1937, no. 46, "Composition"; Basel 1944, no. 174; Zurich 1955, no. 99, "komposition mit gelbem fleck" (this title adopted in subsequent publications); Basel 1964, no. 48; Berlin 1968, no. 65.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 515; Schmalenbach and Büchner 1965, no. 213; Giedion-Welcker 1973, 497-498, 501; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 395; Schmalenbach 1986, 143-144, 393; Henkels 1987, 219.

Lender: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

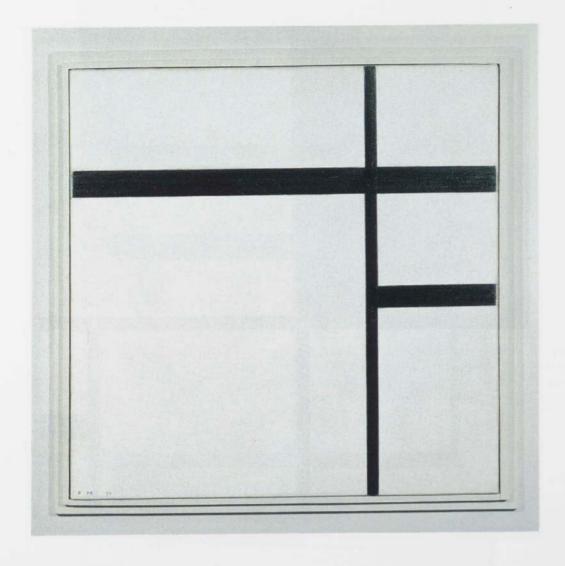
continued >

Owing to Mondrian's continuing financial difficulties, a group of his friends (Gropius, Giedion, Moholy-Nagy, and Arp) decided to organize a lottery, the proceeds to be used to purchase a painting for the winner. Arp was especially active in promoting the scheme. On 12 June 1930, in a letter to Carola Giedion-Welcker, he expressed some impatience with the pace at which this plan was moving: "Where does our Mondrian lottery stand? The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. I cannot offer Mondrian 300 francs as payment. I am now going to start beating the drum with renewed vigor, and if you would only confront one or two admirers of Mondrian, stamp your foot and point a revolver at them, then I might eventually be able to collect payment."

On 29 July, Arp wrote to her again. "I now have in my possession seven hundred francs, apart from your hundred francs and the hundred from Gropius....I have not yet received the money from Steiger and Hubacher. Only Moser has sent the money directly to me."

On 24 January 1931, Arp was finally able to inform Giedion-Welcker that the lottery had taken place, that twenty-five people participated, and that Mondrian therefore received a more or less fair price for his painting: "The lucky winner is [graphic designer] Tschichold."

Mondrian, for his part, was not only a good friend of Arp but an admirer of his work. In a letter of 10 November 1931 to Alfred Roth, he added the following note: "About Arp / I think the work (the flat reliefs) is very close to my own. True, it does go so well with the architecture, and the spirit and execution are good. I like Arp's things very much; I feel that he is the only 'pure' artist aside from the néo-plasticists." In a 1930 exhibition at the Kunstsalon Wolfsberg in Zurich, two of Mondrian's paintings, including his *Composition No. I* (cat. 126), shared a wall with three of Arp's reliefs.



### 128 COMPOSITION EN BLANC ET NOIR II

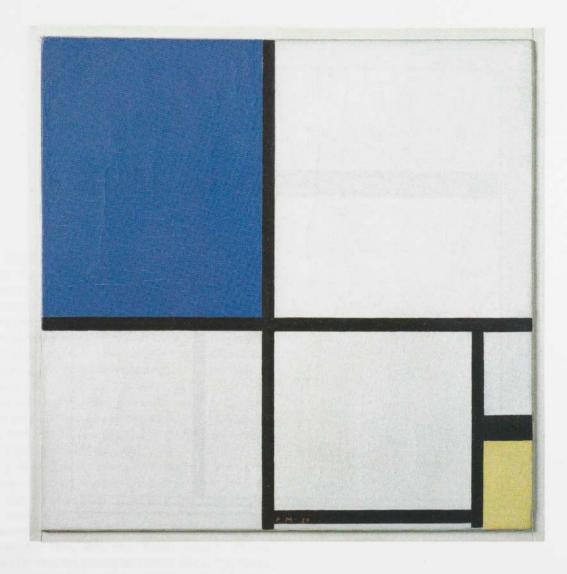
(Composition in White and Black II) 1930

Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 50.5 (19 7/8 x 19 7/8) Lined; double (stepped) set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe with miter joints.

Signed and dated lower left:
PM 30 [lower right: traces of an overpainted signature and date]
On center stretcher bar:
P MONDRIAN
On top subframe bar: HAUT
On bottom subframe bar:
Composition No. II

Provenance: A. P. van den Briel, De Meern, c. 1931-1950; Jon N. Streep, Amsterdam and New York; Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 1950 (inv. no. 343). Exhibitions: Paris 1931, no. 166,
"Composition en blanc et noir II";
Amsterdam 1946, no. 108; Basel
1947, no. 15; The Hague 1955,
no. 119; Toronto 1966, no. 100;
The Hague 1966, no. 111; New York
1971, no. 110; Bern 1972, no. 100;
Madrid 1982, no. 58.

Literature: Hedendaagsche Schilderkunst en Beeldhouwkunst 3 (March 1932), repr. 9, "Compositie II"; Seuphor 1956, no. 521; Welsh 1966b, 196; Elderfield 1970, 56; Blok 1974, 66, 68, 69, no. 281; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 400; Blans 1975, 84; Blok 1975, 84-85; Weyergraf 1979, 32; Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven 1982, 52. Lender: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven



### 129 COMPOSITION NO. II; Composition with Blue and Yellow 1930

Oil on canvas, 50.5 x 50.5 (19 7/8 x 19 7/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe horizontally crosscut.

Signed and dated lower center:
PM 30
On top subframe bar:
HAUT
Composition No. II
On bottom subframe bar:

On bottom subframe bar: P MONDRIAN Provenance: Sigfried Giedion and

Carola Giedion-Welcker, Zurich, 1931-1979. Exhibitions: Brussels 1931, no. 383, "Composition II"; Basel 1937, no. 49; Basel 1944, no. 173; The Hague 1955, no. 117; Zurich 1955, no. 96.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 514; Giedion-Welcker 1973, 495; Roth 1973, 160-161; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 394.

Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]

The Giedions expressed their intention to buy this painting by 17 May 1931, when Mondrian wrote to thank them, saying he would keep the picture until they were able to collect it. On 13 November 1931, the artist wrote to Giedion-Welcker: "I was really touched by your letter and enclosure [presumably payment]. I am very happy that you and your husband appreciate my work and that it makes you feel good. Because of what you sent me, I have been rescued from my difficulties."



## 130 COMPOSITION NO. I; Composition with Red 1931

Oil on canvas, 82.5 x 54.5 (32 1/2 x 21 1/2) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut with set-back narrow strip frame vertically crosscut.

Signed and dated lower center:
PM 31
On top subframe bar:
COMPOSITION HAUT No. I
On bottom subframe bar:
P. MONDRIAN

Provenance: Charmion von Wiegand, New York, 1941-c. 1970; Harold Diamond, New York, c. 1970; Fine Arts Mutual, New York, c. 1970-1983; E. V. Thaw, New York, 1983; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1983; Jacques Koerfer, Ascona, 1983.
Exhibitions: Brussels 1931, no. 382,
"Composition no. I"; Paris 1932a,
no. 105; Amsterdam 1932a, no. 177
(see fig. a); New York 1945b, no. 30;
New York 1963, no. 26; Basel 1964,
no. 45; New York 1971, no. 112.

Literature: Sweeney 1948, repr. cover; Seuphor 1956, no. 525; Welsh 1966b, 188-189; Giedion-Welcker 1973, 495; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 403; Bois 1984, 29; Le Pommeré 1985, repr. 24 (Paris 1932 installation photograph).

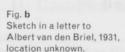
Lender: Private collection, Switzerland

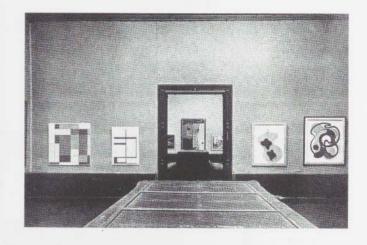
continued)

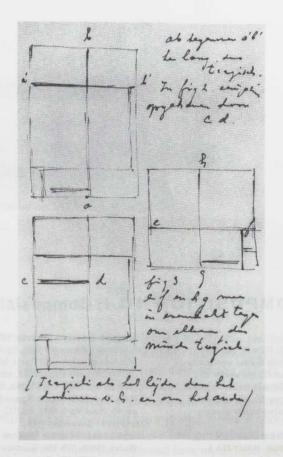
Fig. a
Installation view, Fransche
Schilderkunst, Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam, 1932, showing (left)
Composition No. VI (cat. 87) and
(right) Composition No. I
(cat. 130).

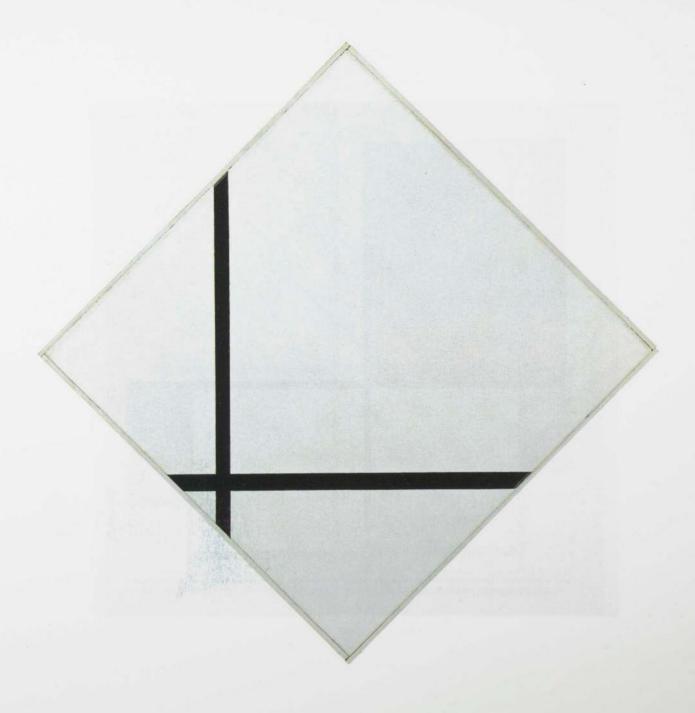
Seuphor first published a page of sketches (fig. b) that includes a schematic drawing of the 1928 Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow (Ott. 382), at upper left, and of the present painting, at lower left (Seuphor 1956, 127). As Welsh has pointed out, the Dutch inscriptions outline an essential contrast between the two compositions. The 1928 work is described in the inscription as "tragic" because of the excessive length of the vertical line ab in relation to a'b'. The short horizontal line cd introduced into the latter "diminishes" the effect. In a third composition in square format (at right), the lines ef (horizontal) and hg (vertical) are "more in balance" with each other and thus less "tragic." In brackets below, Mondrian explains the tragic concept as "suffering through the domination of the one over the other."

Welsh (1966) pointed out that, in spite of the "remedial effect" of the short horizontal line cd in *Composition No. I*, Mondrian described the painting as his "tragic" work, according to its owner, his close friend Charmion von Wiegand.









# 131 Lozenge Composition with Two Black Lines 1931

Oil on canvas, 80 x 80 (31 1/2 x 31 1/2); vertical axis, 112 (44 1/8) Lined and restretched; set-back strip frame crosscut; original second strip frame lost, probably during restretching.

Signed and dated lower left: PM '31

Provenance: Nederlandsch Kunstverbond, 1931; Gemeente Hilversum, Gift of Het Nederlandsch Kunstverbond on behalf of the Afdeeling Utrecht, 1932-1988 (on loan to the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1951-1988); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1988 (inv. no. 1988.1.16).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1946, no. 111, "'Compositie' met zwarte

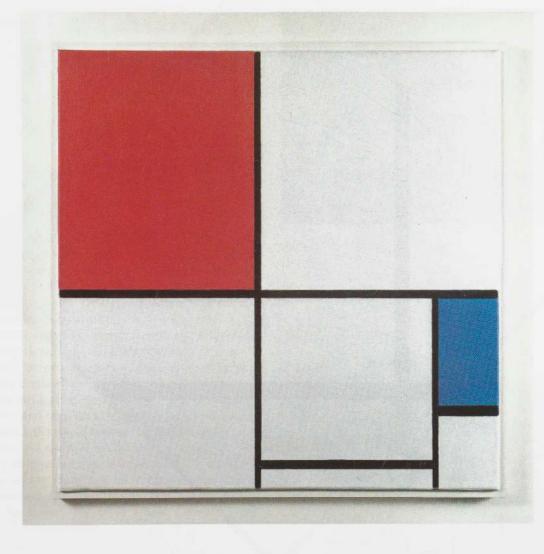
lijnen"; Paris 1969, no. 89; Washington 1979, no. 13.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 526; Seuphor 1969, 131-134; Giedion-Welcker 1973, 495; Blok 1974, 67, no. 282; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 405; Bartok 1976, 357-358; Carmean 1979, 50-52, 97-98; Saxon 1979, 44; Blotkamp 1982, 44; Bois 1984, 28, 29, 31; Henkels 1987, 219; Spork 1987, 14-15; Boll 1989, 125-135; Dippel 1989, 47-48.

Lender: Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam, acquired with the
generous support of the
Vereniging Rembrandt, aided by
the Stichting Prins Bernhard
Fonds and the Algemene Loterij
Nederland, Amsterdam

In August of 1931, the Utrecht division of the Nederlandsch Kunstverbond, a private association founded in 1922 to help artists in financial distress, selected this painting, then still unfinished, to donate to the city of Hilversum. (For details about this transaction, which was not fully executed until January 1932, see Chronology.)

In a note attached to the painting, Mondrian gave careful instructions regarding the hanging of the work: the painting had to be hung strictly parallel to the wall surface and at eye level. These instructions are consistent with strong views that he held about installation (see also cat. 138).



## 132 COMPOSITION A; Composition with Red and Blue 1932

Oil on canvas, 55 x 55 (21 5/8 x 21 5/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 32
On stretcher, a label in
Mondrian's hand for the Paris 1932
exhibition: Composition A
[followed by his address]
On reverse of canvas: stamp of
Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris

Provenance: Emil and Clara Friedrich-Jezler, Zurich, 1932-1973; Kunstmuseum Winterthur, 1973 (inv. no. 1200). Exhibitions: Paris 1932b, no. 21, "Composition"; Basel 1937, no. 48; Basel 1944, no. 175, "Composition A"; Zurich 1955, no. 104; Zurich 1974, no. 41.

Literature: Bendien 1932, repr.; Abstraction-Création 2 (1933), repr. 31; Seuphor 1956, no. 527; Roth 1973, 168; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 406; Winterthur 1976, no. 609.

Lender: Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Bequest of Clara and Emil Friedrich-Jezler

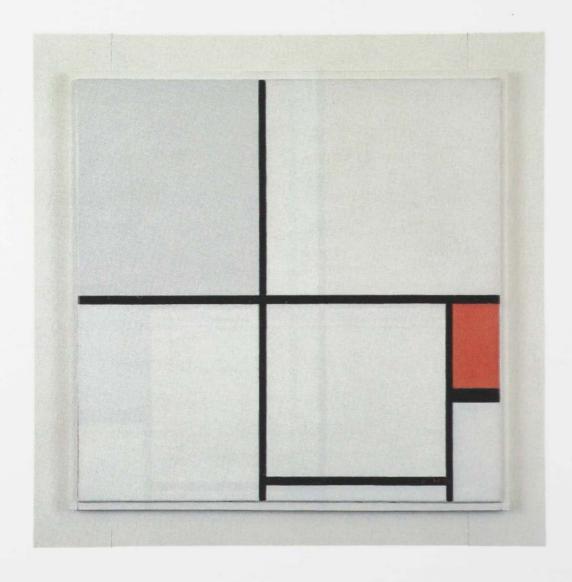
[The Hague and Washington only]

References to financial difficulties continue to occur frequently in Mondrian's correspondence. In a letter to Oud dat-

ed 12 December 1932, referring to the present picture, he noted: "I recently sold a canvas here for a normal pre-Depression price once again, and appreciation of my work does continue to grow. But times are bad, as you know!"

He expressed his pleasure about the sale in a letter to Alfred Roth of 19 December 1932: "Certainly you will have seen Madame Friedrich and heard all about her stay in Paris. I believe that she was happy, also about my picture which I was so pleased to sell to her."

A few months later, in response to a letter from Roth, he observed: "I am glad that you like the painting Madame Friedrich chose, and you are right that it is more forceful in expression than the other one owned by the Müllers [cat. 135]. But, as you say, it is good to express the various aspects of life through different compositions." (6 March 1933)



## 133 COMPOSITION C; Composition with Gray and Red 1932

Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 (19 5/8 x 19 5/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 32 On stretcher, a label in Mondrian's hand for the Paris 1932 exhibition:

Composition C [deleted in pencil and replaced by the number 2]

Provenance: Cornelis van Eesteren,
The Hague and Amsterdam, Gift
of Mr. Charles J. F. Karsten, Sr.,
1933-1984; Stichting van Eesteren,
Fluck en van Lohuizen,
The Hague, 1984-1989; sold at
auction, Christie's, London,
26 June 1989, no. 103.
Exhibitions: Paris 1932b, no. 23,

"Composition"; (?) Amsterdam 1932b, no. 29, "Composition No. 2"; Amsterdam 1946, no. 113; Amsterdam 1963.

Literature: Bendien 1932, repr.; Bendien and Harrenstein-Schräder 1935, repr. 5; Christie's, London, 26 June 1989, 103-107.

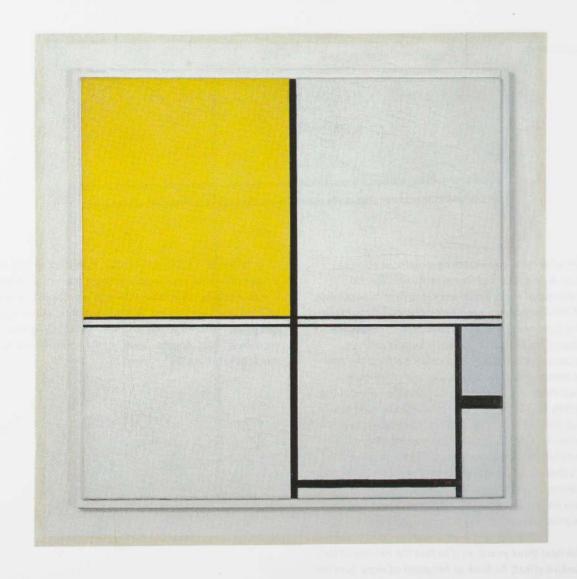
Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]



#### 134 Composition with Yellow and Blue 1932

Oil on canvas,
55.5 x 55.5 (21 7/8 x 21 7/8)
Set-back strip frame,
horizontally crosscut;
subframe vertically crosscut.
Signed and dated lower right: PM 32
Provenance: G. Wallbrink-Oud,
Haarlem, (?)-c. 1950; J. J. P. Oud,
Wassenaar, c. 1950; J. P. Smid,
Amsterdam, 1978; Ernst Beyeler,
Basel, 1978.
Exhibitions: Madrid 1989, 92.
Literature: Hohl 1989, 92.
Lender: Collection Beyeler, Basel



## 135 COMPOSITION B; Composition with Double Line and Yellow and Gray 1932

Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 (19 5/8 x 19 5/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 32
On stretcher, a label in
Mondrian's hand for the Paris 1932
exhibition: Composition B
On reverse of canvas: stamp of
Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris

Provenance: Oskar and Annie Müller-Widmann, Basel, 1932-1965. Exhibitions: Paris 1932b, no. 22; Amsterdam 1932b, no. 28; Basel 1937, no. 50; Basel 1944, no. 176, "Composition B"; Basel 1964, no. 50; New York 1971, no. 113; Bern

1972, no. 103. Literature: Bendien 1932, repr.; Abstraction-Création 2 (1933), repr. 31; Seuphor 1956, no. 530; Blok 1974, 68; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 407; Weyergraf 1979, 33; Welsh 1980, 54-55.

Lender: Private collection, Basel

[Washington and New York only]

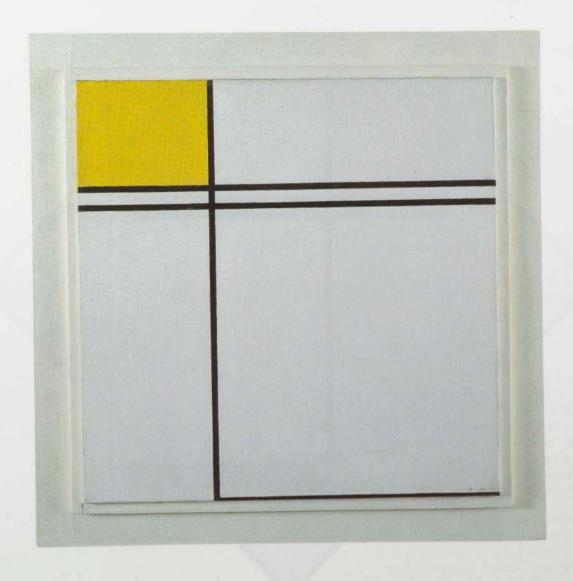
continued >

Cat. 135 (continued)

In 1932, just after he had realized masterpieces such as Composition A (cat. 132) and Composition C (cat. 133), Mondrian produced the present work, his first "double-line" painting. Although based on the same compositional type, it opened an entirely new chapter in Mondrian's development. The doubling of the line, an apparently simple gesture, created an immediate crisis in Mondrian's art: on the one hand, lines became increasingly active and prominent through their rhythmic repetition; on the other, the double line (especially as it widened) tended also to be read as a single plane, thus blurring the distinction between two essential elements of Mondrian's vocabulary. These interrelated changes were accompanied by a decisive shift in Mondrian's theory: he sought from this point on to "destroy" all static elements and to create a "dynamic equilibrium." In almost every sense, the art of his last decade was directed against the principles that had characterized the previous

During the next three years, as if to test the validity of this
new destructive effort, he took as his point of departure the
classical type first established in Composition No. II
(cat. 122), with its distinctive central crossing, producing
such wide variations as Composition with Yellow, Blue, and
Double Line (cat. 137) and Composition gris-rouge
(Composition Gray-Red) (cat. 141). Soon new types were
invented, and with them, new destabilizing devices.
In New York, Mondrian was to add bands of color to his
pictorial vocabulary. This led him, in his final canvases, to
abolish the distinction between drawing and color.

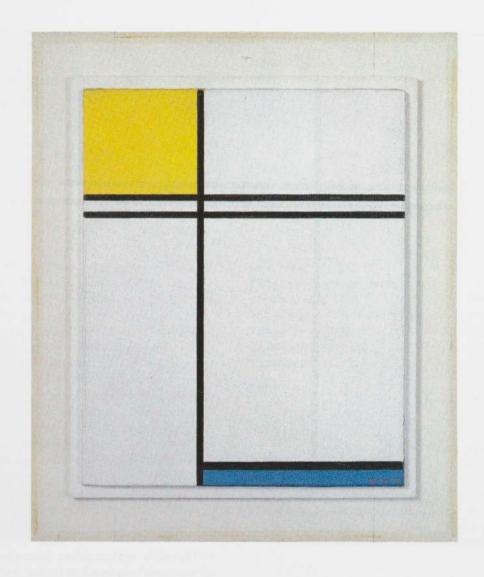
In a letter of 11 October 1932, Mondrian wrote to Müller-Widmann: "I am very happy to learn from your letter that you are pleased to have the picture in your house. I hope that it will always give you joy. A little sun thus some light." On 22 December 1932 he wrote to Oud: "...I am doing new research: canvases with double lines, which enable me to achieve much greater clarity."



# 136 Composition with Yellow and Double Line 1932

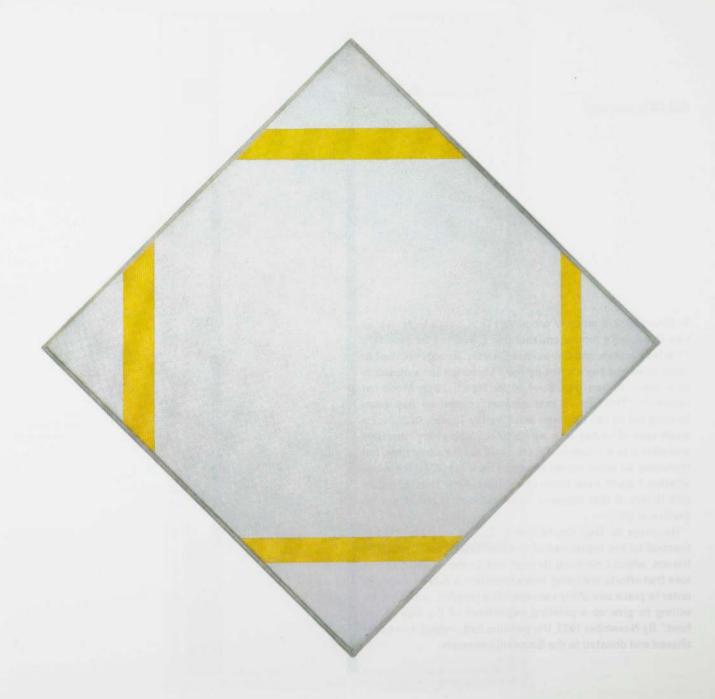
Oil on canvas, 45.3 x 45.3 (17 7/8 x 17 7/8) Strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe horizontally crosscut. Signed and dated lower right: PM 32 Provenance: Winifred Nicholson, Paris and Banks Head, Cumberland, 1935-1961; Jake Nicholson, London, 1961-1982; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 1982. Literature: Nicholson 1954, 7: Troy 1979, repr. 87 (installation photograph, boulevard Raspail studio, August 1936). Lender: The Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh

In about April 1936, it seems that the painting was damaged with ink. Winifred Nicholson wrote to Ben Nicholson: "[Mondrian] is really sad about the ink – went all pale and said that it was evil spirits fighting against the new spirit." By June, however, Winifred Nicholson received a heartening letter from Mondrian: "It will give you great pleasure to learn that I have managed to *completely* remove the ink from the painting, owing to the thick texture of the painting....I will give it a few more coats and after that the painting will look exactly as it was before the accident. It is very kind of your mother to want to send me money, but you know that even without I would have done the work....I hope that you will be able to have the [picture] back in one month to six weeks."



#### 137 Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Double Line 1933

Oil on canvas, 41 x 33.5 (16 1/8 x 13 1/4) Set-back strip frame, vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut. Signed and dated lower right: PM '33 On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris Provenance: Oskar and Annie Müller-Widmann, Basel, c. 1933-1965. Exhibitions: Basel 1937, no. 53; Basel 1944, no. 178; Basel 1947, no. 11; Zurich 1955, no. 108; Basel 1964, no. 51. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 536; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 412. Lender: Private collection, Basel [The Hague and Washington only]



## 138 Lozenge Composition with Four Yellow Lines 1933

Oil on canvas, 80 x 80 (31 1/2 x 31 1/2); vertical axis, 113 (44 1/2) Set-back strip frame crosscut; crosscut subframe.

crosscut subframe.

Signed and dated lower left: PM 33

On center stretcher bar:
PIET MONDRIAN

On subframe, top corner: TOP
In pencil on labels (in Dutch):
The painting must be hung as a
lozenge, with TOP up, P.M. /
Please do not touch the canvas;
handle the painting by the frame.
/ Please make sure that the
painting tilts neither forward nor
backward but is hung parallel to
the wall surface, in such a way
that the center is not lower than
eye level when the viewer is

standing – if possible the lower angle should be at eye level – P.M. Provenance: Haags

Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1933, Gift of the artist's friends (inv. no. 20-1933).

Exhibitions: The Hague 1955, no. 122; Zurich 1955, no. 106; London 1955, no. 45; Venice 1956, no. 21; Rome 1956, no. 21; New York 1957a; Toronto 1966, no. 101; The Hague 1966, no. 112; New York 1971, no. 114; Bern 1972, no. 104.

Literature: De 8 en Opbouw 4 (October 1933), repr. 197 (installation photograph, rue du Départ studio); van Gelder 1934, no. 116; Knuttel 1935, 177; Seuphor 1956, no. 537; Welsh 1966b, 198; Elderfield 1970, 58; Jaffé 1970, 146; Blok 1974, no. 283; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 410; Rosenblum 1977, 69; Welsh 1977b, 21-22; Schapiro 1978, 258, note 4; Carmean 1979, 53-54, 98; Blotkamp 1982, 45; Bois 1984, 31, 125-126.

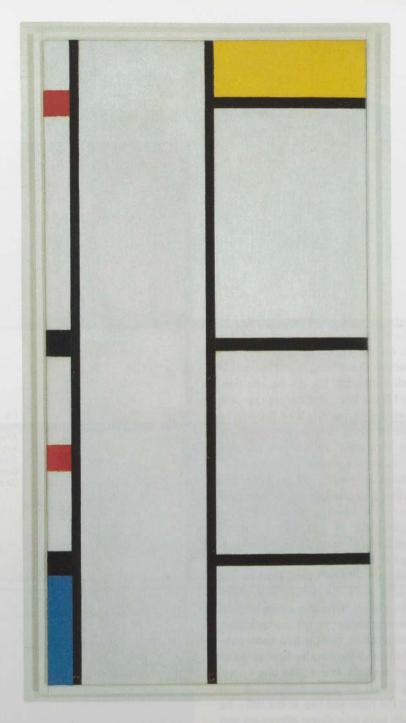
Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague

continued >

Cat. 138 (continued)

In March 1932, a group of prominent Dutch architects, led by van Doesburg's former collaborator Cornelis van Eesteren, Charles Karsten, and the painter Charley Toorop, decided to raise money to buy a painting from Mondrian for a museum. In a letter to van den Briel of 22 March 1932, Mondrian reported: "The fact is that another committee has been formed, led by van Eesteren and Charley Toorop, to collect a small sum of money with which to buy one of my canvases and offer it to a museum. This is likely to take some time, but there may be some money already. I have asked – if there is – whether I could have some of it before April 15th, when my rent is due. If that happens, I will manage; if not, it will be touch and go."

He wrote to Oud the following day: "I was particularly touched by the signatures of the best Dutch architects and friends, which I received through van Eesteren. Also by the idea that efforts are being made to collect a sum of money in order to place one of my canvases in a museum ... I would be willing to give up a painting, regardless of the size of the fund." By November 1933, the painting had, indeed, been purchased and donated to the Gemeentemuseum.



## 139 COMPOSITION NO. III BLANC-JAUNE

(Composition No. III White-Yellow) 1935 [first state]

Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue 1935-1942 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 101 x 51 (39 3/4 x 20 1/8)
Lined and restretched; set-back
strip frame horizontally crosscut
[first state], vertically crosscut
[second state]; subframe
horizontally crosscut.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 35
[first state; installation
photograph of Paris studio by
A. E. Gallatin, June 1934,
see Chronology, fig. 15]

Signed lower left:
PM [second state]
Dated lower center:
35
42 [second state]
On top subframe bar:
No. III [first state]

On bottom subframe bar: PIET MONDRIAN [first state] On a label, top subframe bar, center:

TOP [second state]

Provenance: Valentine Gallery, New York; Burton and Emily Tremaine, Meriden, Connecticut (through Valentine Dudensing), 1945-1991; appeared at auction, Christie's, New York, 5 November 1991, no. 15, unsold.

Exhibitions: Hartford 1935, no. 14, "No. III Composition blancjaune" (insurance list submitted by Mondrian) (first state); Chicago 1936, no. 13 (first state); New York 1936, no. 186 (first state); (?) New York 1942a; New York 1945b, no. 41, "Composition in White, Blue, and Yellow, 1935-1942" (second state); Hartford 1947; Zurich 1955, no. 114; Rome 1956, no. 53; New York 1971, no. 119; New York 1980, no. 18; Hartford

Literature: Barr 1936, 150 (first state); transition 25 (1936), repr. 61 (first state); Hitchcock 1948, 78, 117 (second state); Sweeney 1948, repr. 11 (second state); Architectural Forum 89 (October 1948), repr. 158 (second state); Museum of Living Art 1954, repr. 152 (first state; installation photograph, Paris studio);
Seuphor 1956, 156, no. 543 (second state); Welsh 1966b, 210 (first state); Elderfield 1970, 56 (first state); Blok 1974, 68 (first and second state); Ottolenghi 1974, no. 448 (second state); Schapiro 1978, 243 (first and second state); Rembert 1971, 307 (second state); Weyergraf 1979, 17 (first state); Christie's, New York, 5 November 1991, 52-59 (first and second state). Lender: Courtesy Christie's,

continued >

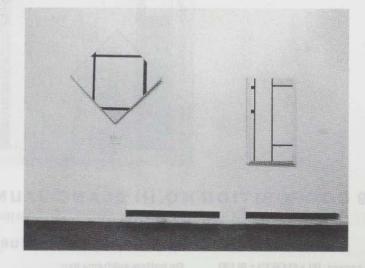
**New York** 

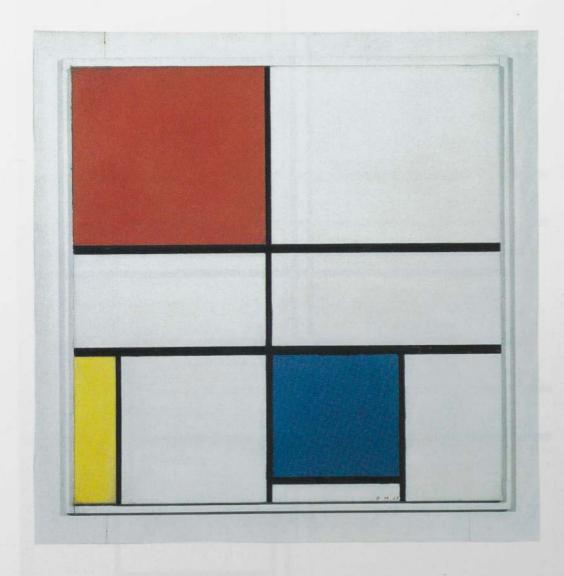
This painting belongs to the group of double-dated paintings of the mid- and late-1930s, which were extensively reworked in preparation for Valentine Dudensing's exhibition of January 1942 (which included cats. 150, 151, 159-162, and possibly the present work). In March 1941, when Mondrian was offered the opportunity to exhibit at the Valentine Gallery, he probably felt that these works would suffer by comparison with his more vibrant New York style. The impulse to alter finished works by adding "more boogie-woogie" was given expression in fifteen paintings by the time of the exhibition in January 1942. In every case, he added color and reworked the entire surface.

The first state, Composition No. III blanc-jaune (fig. a), was completed five years prior to Mondrian's arrival in New York in 1940. He clearly regarded it as finished, since he lent it to exhibitions in 1935 and 1936. At this stage, the unusual vertical format contained only one color element - a yellow rectangle at the upper right - clearly reflecting a new emphasis on line as the determining factor in the composition. When the painting was exhibited in 1942, it had been substantially altered by the addition of the blue vertical plane at the lower left, two small red squares, and a third black horizontal line to the right. As Meyer Schapiro pointed out: "In adding horizontals - one at the right and two at the left - he brought the divisions of both bays into closer alignment and introduced a more legible rhythmic order in the proportions of the white spaces on the two sides. The horizontal has been reinforced relative to the vertical....A new factor of asymmetry and contrast in the balance of the two halves of the canvas is the accenting of the rectangles in diagonally opposite corners by the addition of color."

Probably at this same time, Mondrian made subtle alterations to the frame. Photographs from the 1930s indicate that the picture had a wooden strip frame horizontally crosscut; on the second state, however, the strip frame is vertically crosscut. It is possible that Mondrian made this change in order to reemphasize the image's strong vertical structure.

Fig. a
Installation view, Cubism and
Abstract Art, Museum of Modern
Art, New York, 1936, showing (left)
Tableau I (cat. 112), and (right)
Composition No. III blanc-jaune
(first state of cat. 139).





# 140 COMPOSITION C; COMPOSITION NO. III; Composition with Red,

Yellow, and Blue 1935

Oil on canvas, 56 x 55 (22 x 21 5/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut.

Crosscut.

Signed and dated lower right: PM '35
On center stretcher bar:
Composition C
On top subframe bar: No. III
HAUT
On bottom subframe bar:
PIET MONDRIAN Paris
26 rue du Départ
On reverse of canvas: stamp of
Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris
Provenance: Nicolete Gray, Oxford,

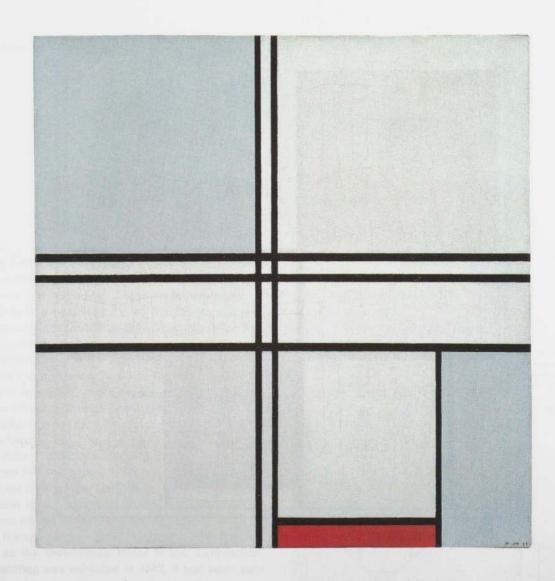
1936-1969; Camilla Prokofiev-Gray, Moscow, 1969-1971.

Exhibitions: Oxford 1936, no. 27, "Composition C" (Ffr. 4,000);

London 1936, no. 29; London 1955, no. 47, "Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow"; Rome 1956, no. 49.

Literature: Lewis 1955, repr. 83; Seuphor 1956, no. 539; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 417.

Lender: Lent from a private collection to Tate Gallery, London



# 141 COMPOSITION GRIS-ROUGE (Composition Gray-Red) 1935

Oil on canvas, 56.9 x 55 (22 3/8 x 21 5/8) Lined and restretched; original

set-back strip frame vertically crosscut, and subframe vertically crosscut, both lost; reconstructed 1994.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 35 On original stretcher:

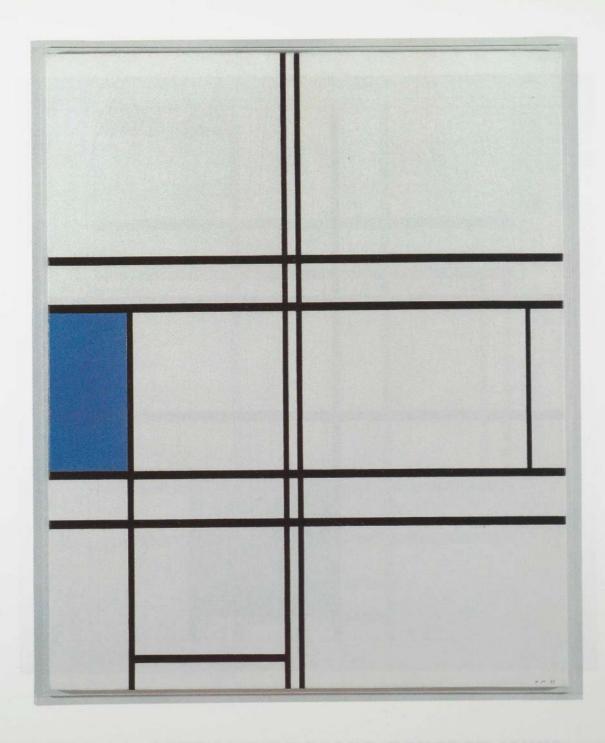
Composition gris-rouge
On reverse of original canvas:
stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet,
Paris

Provenance: Mrs. Charles B. Goodspeed (Gilbert W. Chapman), Chicago, 1936-1949; The Art Institute of Chicago, 1949 (inv. no. 49.518). Exhibitions: Hartford 1935, no. 12, "Composition in Gray and Red"; Chicago 1936, no. 11; New York 1971, no. 115.

Literature: Museum of Living Art 1954, repr. 154 (installation photograph, Paris studio; see Chronology, fig. 15); Art Institute of Chicago 1961, 317; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 424; Welsh 1977b, 26-27; Weyergraf 1979, 33.

Lender: The Art Institute of Chicago. Gift of Mrs. Gilbert W. Chapman, 1949.518

[The Hague and Washington only]



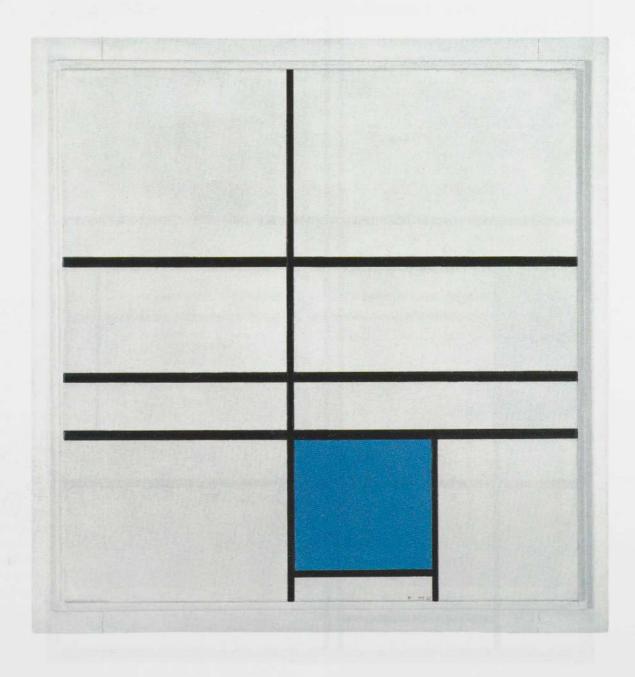
# 142 COMPOSITION BLANC-BLEU (Composition Blue-White) 1935

Oil on canvas, 104 x 96.5 (41 x 38)
Lined; set-back strip frame
horizontally crosscut; subframe
vertically crosscut.
Signed and dated lower right:
PM 35
On center stretcher bar:

Composition blanc-bleu
Provenance: Wadsworth
Atheneum, Hartford,
Connecticut, 1936, Ella Gallup
Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner
Collection (inv. no. 1936.338).

Exhibitions: Hartford 1935, no. 13; Chicago 1936, no. 12.

Literature: Hélion 1934, repr. 261; Zervos 1938, repr. 369; Seuphor 1956, no. 542; Soby 1958, 27; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 423. Lender: Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CT. The Ella Gallup Sumner and Mary Catlin Sumner Collection Fund In a letter to Mondrian dated 6 April 1936, A. Everett Austin, director of the Wadsworth Atheneum, wrote: "I am sorry that as yet I have not been able to send you the money for your beautiful picture which the museum has acquired....[B]ut within a month or so, you may expect to be paid in full." Mondrian responded on 18 April: "I was very happy to receive your letter....I do not know which of the four pictures you have honored me by buying. I hope I am not imposing too much on your kindness if I ask this. I should also be extremely happy if you could send me the money as quickly as possible. I understand that it is difficult to arrange everything, but because of my move, I am very short of money at the moment." By 11 July 1936, he had received the check for 6,000 francs.



#### 143 Composition with Blue 1935

Oil on canvas, 71 x 69 (28 x 27 1/8) Set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed and dated lower center: PM 35 On top subframe bar:

P. MONDRIAN

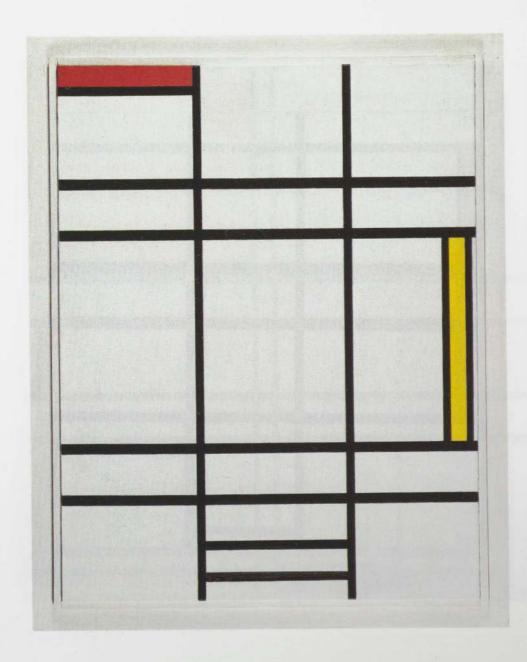
Provenance: Acquired from the artist at his studio by George L. K. Morris, New York, December 1935-1947; Rose Fried, The Pinacotheca, New York, 1947-1948; The Lydia and Harris Lewis Winston Collection, Birmingham, Michigan, and New York, 1948-1989; Ernst Beyeler, Basel, purchased at auction, Sotheby's, New York, 16 May 1990, no. 34.

Exhibitions: New York 1939b; New York 1944c, no. 24; New York 1945b, no. 34; Bloomfield Hills 1951; Berlin 1993, no. 89.

Literature: The New York Sun (11 November 1939), 9; Life 19, 1 (2 July 1945), color repr. 7; Seuphor 1956, no. 538; Neumeyer 1961, 119, 174; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 421; Sotheby's, New York, 16 May 1990, no. 34.

Lender: Collection Beyeler, Basel

Jean Hélion wrote to Gallatin on 2 January 1936: "We are very glad to see Georges [sic] Morris a month ago. I helped him to buy an excellent Mondrian and a very beautiful Miro."



# 144 COMPOSITION A; COMPOSITION BLANC, ROUGE ET JAUNE

(Composition White, Red, and Yellow) 1936

Oil on canvas,

crosscut.

80 x 62.2 (31 1/2 x 24 1/2) Set-back strip frame, vertically crosscut; subframe vertically

Originally signed and dated lower

PM 36 [changed to 38 by Mondrian after cleaning the painting in New York]

On center stretcher bar: Composition – Blanc, rouge et

jaune – On top subframe bar:

A HAUT

On bottom subframe bar: P. MONDRIAN - PARIS

On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris

Provenance: Consigned to

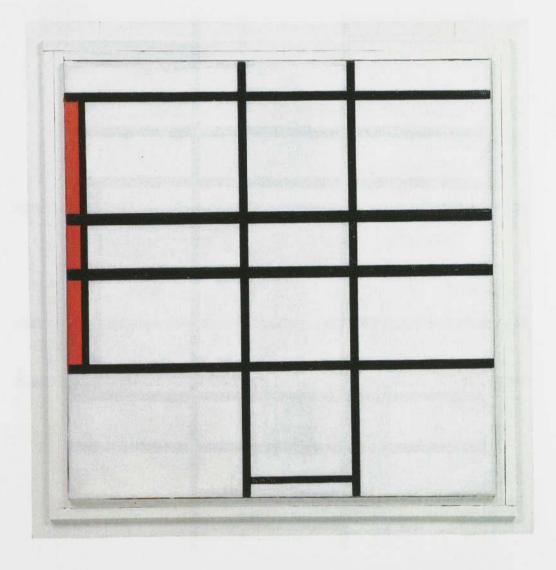
Valentine Gallery, New York, 1936; returned to the artist; Estate of the artist, 1944; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1959; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1959; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1959-1963; Harold Diamond, New York, 1963; Paul Kantor Gallery, New York and Beverly Hills, 1963; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1963 (inv. no. 63.14).

Exhibitions: New York 1945b, no. 37; New York 1946, no. 3; Amsterdam 1946, no. 115; Basel 1947, no. 8; New York 1953b, no. 35; The Hague 1955, no. 126; Zurich 1955, no. 113; London 1955, no. 51; New York 1957a, no. 22; Basel 1964, no. 57; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 67; Toronto 1966, no. 106; The Hague 1966, no. 117; New York 1971, no. 123.

Literature: Holtzman 1947, repr. 7; Seuphor 1956, no. 569; Welsh 1966b, 208; Rembert 1971, 303; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 441; Los Angeles County Museum of Art 1977, 124-125. Lender: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Mr. and Mrs. William Preston Harrison Collection

[Washington and New York only]

A photograph in the Nicholson archive documents that the painting was completed and dated 1936. Thus, unlike other works which Mondrian altered during his years in New York, it seems clear that in this case he merely cleaned the painting, possibly touching up some areas, and then inadvertently altered the date.



## 145 COMPOSITION B; COMPOSITION BLANC ET ROUGE

(Composition White and Red) 1936

Oil on canvas, 51.5 x 50.5 (20 1/4 x 19 7/8) Double set-back strip frame horizontally and vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed and dated lower center: PM 36 On center stretcher bar:

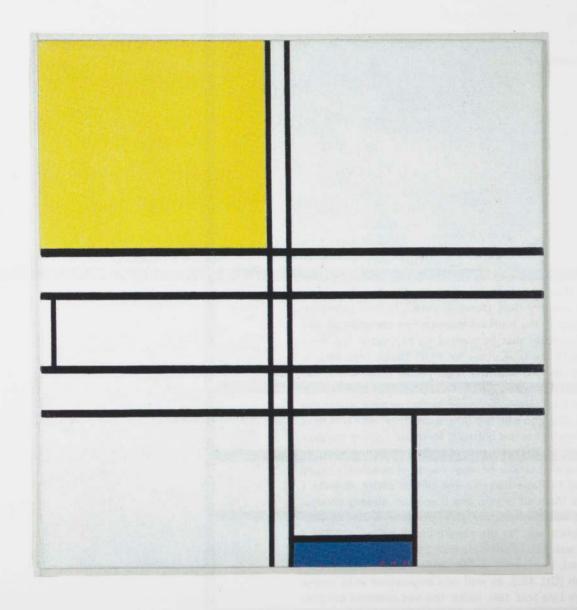
On center stretcher bar: Composition – blanc et rouge On top subframe bar: B HAUT On bottom subframe bar: P. MONDRIAN – PARIS On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris

Provenance: Consigned to Valentine Gallery, New York, 1936; A. E. Gallatin, New York, 1936-1952; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1952 (inv. no. 52-61-89).
Exhibitions: New York 1939b;
New York 1961; Toronto 1966,
no. 104; The Hague 1966, no. 115;
New York 1971, no. 118.
Literature: Museum of Living Art
1936, 93; Circle 1937, repr. 2;
Museum of Living Art 1954, 46;

Seuphor 1956, no. 558; Welsh 1966b, 204; Blok 1974, 68; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 433; Henkels 1987, 226.

Lender: Philadelphia Museum of Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection

On 4 January 1941, Mondrian indicated in a letter to Winifred Nicholson that he had restored his pictures in The Museum of Living Art. It has not been possible to document the extent of these restorations or whether they were done at Gallatin's request.



## 146 COMPOSITION C; Composition in Blue and Yellow 1936

Oil on canvas, 72 x 69 (28 3/8 x 27 1/8) Lined and restretched; set-back strip frame vertically crosscut; subframe vertically crosscut. Signed and dated lower center:

PM 36
On top subframe bar:
C HAUT
On bottom subframe bar:

P. MONDRIAN - PARIS
Provenance: Consigned to
Valentine Gallery, New York, 19361938; Mrs. George Henry Warren,
New York and Newport, 1938-1982;
Paul Herring, New York, 1982;
Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1982;
Viktor Langen, Meerbusch and

Ascona; Thomas Ammann,

Zurich.

Exhibitions: New York 1939b; New York 1945b, no. 36; Washington 1965, no. 48; New York 1971, no. 117.

Literature: *The New York Sun* (11 November 1939), 9; Holtzman 1945, repr. 24 (dated 1932-1936); Seuphor 1956, no. 550; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 432; Welsh 1980, 54-55; Nicholson 1987, 153.

Lender: Private collection, Courtesy Thomas Ammann Fine Art, Zurich

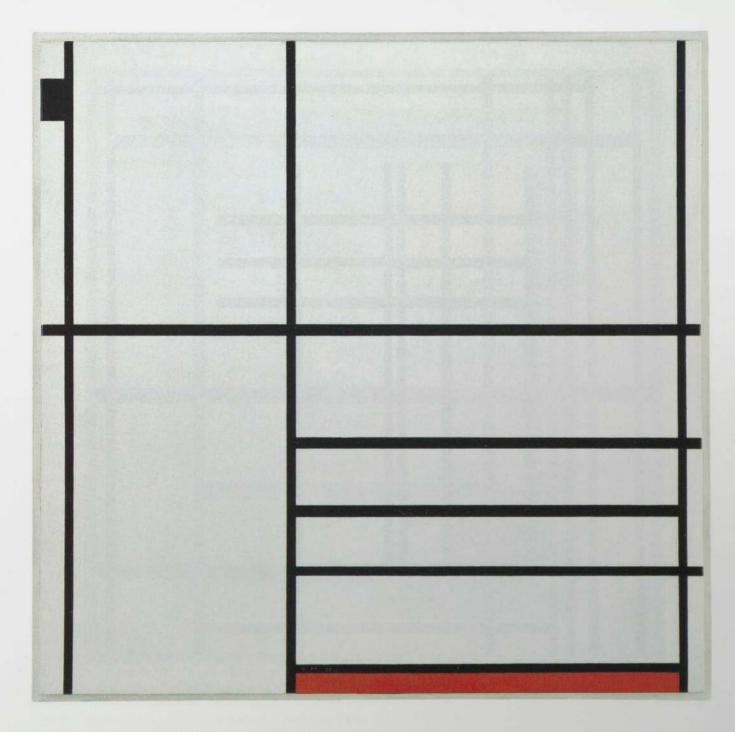
continued >

This painting is the second version of a composition completed in 1935 (Ott. 422). In a letter to Winifred Nicholson written in January 1936, Mondrian refers to both paintings: "The director of the Hartford Museum told me when he was here this summer that he wanted to buy either the large painting with the blue plane for 6,000 francs [cat. 142], or (alas!) the painting with the large yellow plane which you liked so very much (for 3,000 francs) [Ott. 422]. But this will take some time to resolve, because the pictures are at the moment in Chicago with two others, and they will come back in the spring if they are not sold. However, I am in the process of making another one [cat. 146], in the same spirit as the painting with yellow, because I was not absolutely happy with it, and I believe that this one will be better. Anyway, I shall show them all to you, and if you can already choose, that would not only give me great pleasure but would also help me financially. For the picture that is priced at 3,000, I would not want you to pay more than 2,000."

In the end, Winifred Nicholson in fact purchased the earlier version (Ott. 422), as well as *Composition with Yellow and Double Line* (cat. 136), which she had acquired the previous year.

Fig. a Mondrian applying masking ribbon to the edge of a painting, c. 1943. Photograph by Fritz Glarner.





## 147 COMPOSITION EN BLANC, NOIR ET ROUGE

(Composition in White, Black, and Red) 1936

Oil on canvas, 102 x 104 (40 1/8 x 41)
Set-back masking ribbon;
subframe vertically crosscut.
This is the first instance of
Mondrian's use of masking ribbon
in place of a strip frame (fig. a).
Only three instances of the use of
the strip frame are known in 1937,
and one in 1938 (cat. 153).

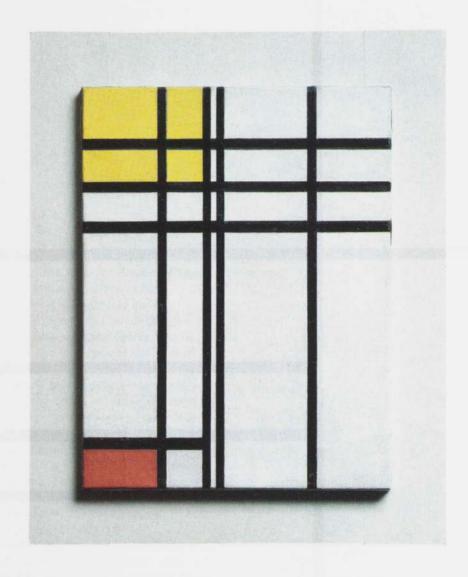
Signed and dated lower center:
PM 36
On crossbars of stretcher:
Composition en Blanc noiR et
Rouge PIET MONDRIAN
On top subframe bar:
HAUT TOP

Provenance: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, through George L. K. Morris, 1937 (inv. no. 2.37).

Exhibitions: New York 1937; New York 1939a, no. 181; Grand Rapids 1940; New York 1945b, no. 38; Zurich 1955, no. 111; Berlin 1968, no. 68; Paris 1969, no. 94.

Literature: Jewell 1937, repr. 9; Circle 1937, repr. 5; transition 26 (1937), repr. 119; Barr 1942, 63; Moholy-Nagy 1947, repr. 141; Seuphor 1956, no. 553; Jaffé 1970, 148; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 430; Joosten 1991, 39.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of the Advisory Committee, 1937 A photograph of Mondrian's boulevard Raspail studio taken by the artist's brother Carel in August 1936 includes the present painting (Collection Rijksdienst voor Beeldende Kunst, The Hague). For further information, see Chronology, June 1936, February 1937, October 1937, May 1940, and December 1941.



# 148 OPPOSITION DE LIGNES, DE ROUGE ET JAUNE, NO.1

(Opposition of Lines, of Red and Yellow, No. I) 1937

Oil on canvas, 43.5 x 33.5 (17 1/8 x 13 1/4) Set-back masking ribbon; subframe vertically crosscut. Dated lower left: 37 Signed lower right:

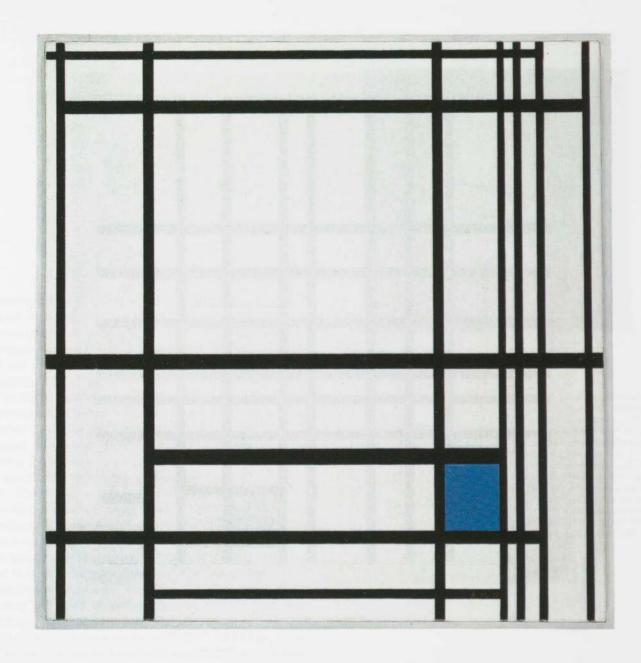
M On center stretcher bar: PIET MONDRIAN '37

P

On top subframe bar:
No.1 HAUT
On bottom subframe bar:
Opposition de lignes, de rouge et jaune

Provenance: A. E. Gallatin, New York, before 1939-1950; Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1952 (inv. no. 52-61-90). Exhibitions: New York 1939b; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 65; Washington 1965, no. 49. Literature: Museum of Living Art 1940, repr. 97; Seuphor 1956, no. 559; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 435; Beslon 1981, repr. 37 (installation photograph, boulevard Raspail studio; see cat. 152, fig. b); Joosten 1991, 37-38. Lender: Philadelphia Museum of

Art, A. E. Gallatin Collection



### 149 COMPOSITION DE LIGNES ET COULEUR, III

(Composition of Lines and Color, III); Composition with Blue 1937

Oil on canvas, 80 x 77 (31 1/2 x 30 3/8) Lined; set-back masking ribbon; subframe vertically crosscut.

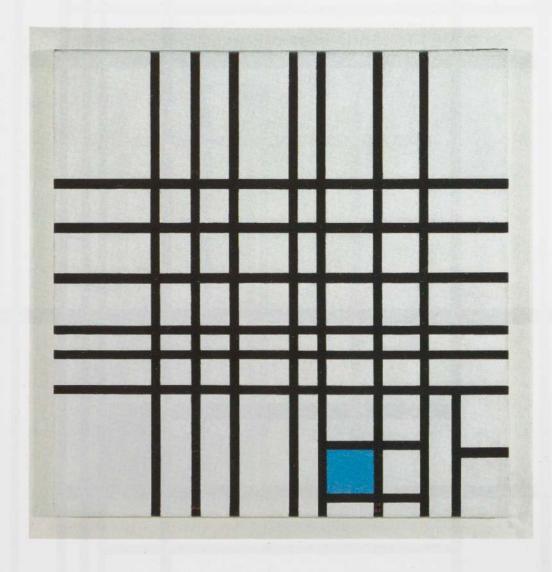
Signed and dated lower right: PM 37
On center stretcher bar:
Composition de lignes et couleur
On top subframe bar:
III HAUT PIET MONDRIAN 37

Provenance: J. R. Marcus
Brumwell, London, 1938-1965;
Marlborough Fine Art Ltd.,
London, 1965-1967; Haags
Gemeentemuseum, 1967
(inv. no. 88-1967).

Exhibitions: Amsterdam 1938, no. 51; London 1942, no. 55; The Hague 1955, no. 124; Zurich 1955, no. 112; London 1955, no. 49; Venice 1956, no. 24; Paris 1969, no. 95; New York 1971, no. 120; Bern 1972, no. 107; Tokyo 1987, no. 115.

Literature: London Bulletin 8-9 (January-February 1939), repr. 29; Seuphor 1956, no. 564; Elderfield 1970, 57; Blok 1974, 69, no. 284; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 440; Joosten 1977, 188; Welsh 1977b, 27, 31; Carmean 1979, 54; Weyergraf 1979, 17, 33.

Lender: Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, acquired with the support of the Vereniging Rembrandt An installation photograph of Mondrian's boulevard Raspail studio by Cas Oorthuys taken in the summer of 1937 includes the painting at center, on an easel (see cat. 150, fig. a). The sale to Marcus Brumwell, a friend of Ben Nicholson, is documented in several letters between 21 April and 12 June 1938, when Mondrian writes to Nicholson: "This sale is helping me to continue with my work. The last season was very bad."



# 150 COMPOSITION NO. 12; Composition with Blue 1937-1942

Oil on canvas, 62 x 60.5 (24 3/8 x 23 7/8) Lined and restretched; set-back masking ribbon; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right: 36 42

On upper left subframe: No.12 Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1957; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1957-1967; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967-1970; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, 1970 (inv. no. 159-11).

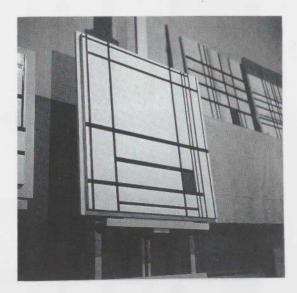
Exhibitions: New York 1942a, "Abstraction 12"; New York 1945b, no. 43; Amsterdam 1946, no. 116; Basel 1947, no. 7; New York 1949, no. 26; New York 1953b, no. 36; The Hague 1955, no. 127; Zurich 1955, no. 115; London 1955, no. 52; Venice 1956, no. 23; Rome 1956, no. 50; New York 1957a, no. 24; New York 1963, no. 32; New York 1971, no. 121.

Literature: Janis 1941, 88; Sweeney 1945, 9; Seuphor 1956, no. 555; Welsh 1966b, 202; Rubin 1972, 30, 196; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 450; Welsh 1977b, passim; Rembert 1971, 102; Janis 1988, 19.

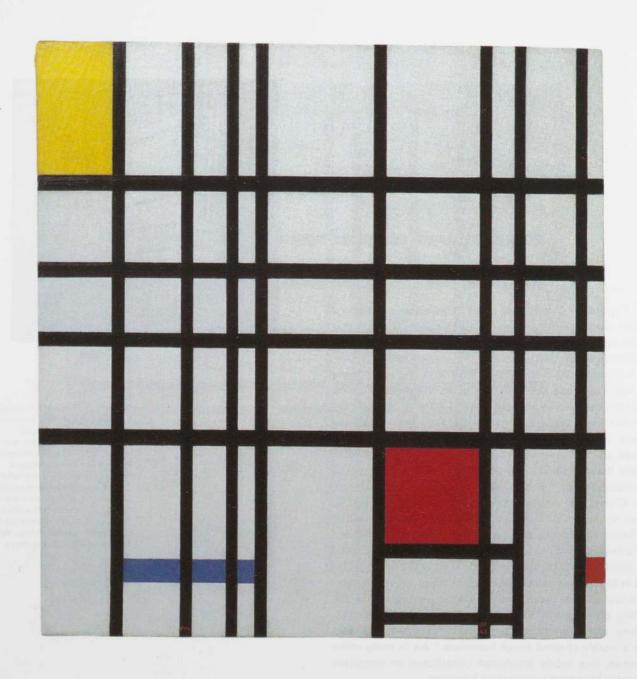
Lender: National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa A photograph by C. Oorthuys taken in Mondrian's boulevard Raspail studio in the summer of 1937 shows the painting leaning against the wall on the far right (fig. a), at that time unfinished (Welsh 1977b, 28). The picture was neither exhibited nor published until 1942 in New York, by which time Mondrian had made several changes. As Welsh has pointed out on the basis of an examination of Oorthuys' photograph, Mondrian added two additional vertical lines but no horizontal lines. Since the painting in the photograph is extensively cropped on the right-hand side, it is impossible to know whether the blue square was present by 1937, or whether that too constituted part of his continuing work on the composition. Given the artist's occasional practice of entirely reworking the surface of a canvas to which he was making significant alterations, it is conceivable that he carried out such a reworking of the present painting in New York in 1942.

In addition, Welsh draws attention to an important element in Mondrian's work – the effect of finely applied vertical or horizontal brushwork. An ultraviolet photograph of the painting published by Welsh indicates that the final overpainting of the white areas involved "renewed emphasis upon a visibly striated brush technique." As in many other instances, this subtle brushwork constituted an important element in Mondrian's expressive language.

The picture appears virtually complete in a photograph by Emery Muscetra showing Mondrian in his East 56th Street studio (published in Janis 1941; see Chronology, fig. 21). In dating the work "36 42," Mondrian apparently misremembered the moment at which he conceived the composition. From a stylistic point of view, the work belongs within his 1937 development.



Mondrian's studio at 278 boulevard Raspail, summer 1937, showing (left to right) first state of Composition in Red, Blue, and Yellow, 1937-1942, The Museum of Modern Art, The Sidney and Harriet Janis Collection, 1967; Composition de lignes et couleur, III (cat. 149); unfinished state of Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Red (cat. 151); and unfinished state of Composition No. 12 (cat. 150). Photograph by Cas Oorthuys.



## 151 Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Red 1937-1942

Oil on canvas, 72.5 x 69 (28 1/2 x 27 1/8) The original stretcher and subframe are lost.

Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right:

39

On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris

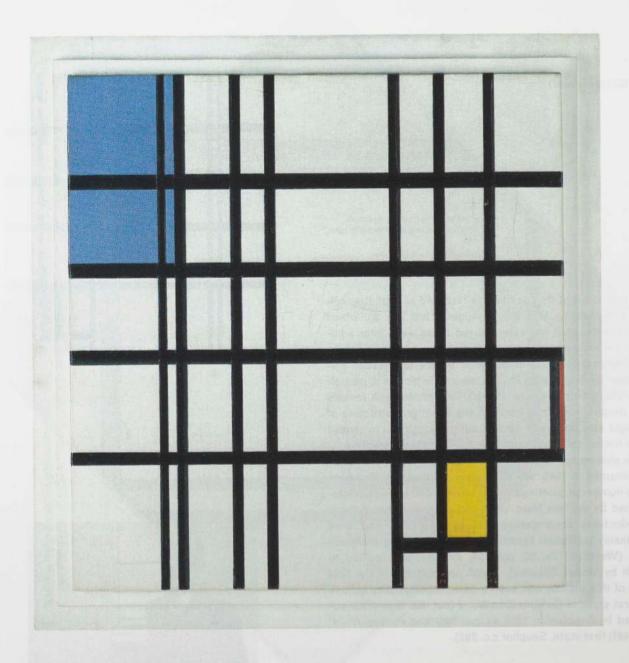
Provenance: Ella Winter (Mrs. Donald Ogden Stuart), New York and London, 1944-1964; Tate Gallery, London, 1964 (inv. no. T648).

Exhibitions: New York 1942a, no. 3 (or 6), "Abstraction 3 [or 6]"; London 1955, no. 54; New York 1957a, no. 28; Berlin 1968, no. 72; Paris 1969, no. 97; New York 1971, no. 126; Bern 1972, no. 109.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 576; Winter 1966, 24; Elderfield 1970, 57-58; Blok 1974, 68; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 453; Welsh 1977b, 27, 31; Weyergraf 1979, 18; Alley 1981, 535-536.

Lender: Tate Gallery, purchased 1964

This picture is visible in Oorthuys' photograph of summer 1937 (cat. 150, fig. a). Either in Paris, or in 1942 in New York, Mondrian added three vertical lines to the composition, leaving the horizontal lines in place. During the New York reworking, the painting "also gained colour squares, which were added to the single enclosed colour rectangle visible in the 1937 photograph....The blue unbounded bar of colour at the lower left constitutes the most radical known species of New York addition, since it intentionally fuses the elements of line, plane, and colour" (Welsh 1977b, 27). In dating the work "39 42," Mondrian apparently once again misremembered the moment at which he conceived the composition. Since it appears in an unfinished state in the Oorthuys' photograph, it was clearly well under way by the summer of 1937.



#### 152 RYTHME DE LIGNES DROITES

(Rhythm of Straight Lines) 1937 [first state] 1937-1942 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 72 x 69.5 (28 3/8 x 27 3/8) Masking ribbon; subframe vertically crosscut [first state]. Second subframe added in 1942 [second state].

[second state].

Signed and dated lower right:
 P 35
 M 42 [second state]
 Signed and dated on center stretcher bar:
 PIET MONDRIAN – '37
 [first state];
 added in a different hand:
 – 42 [second state]
 On bottom subframe bar: Rythme de lignes droites – [what follows is illegible and crossed out; first state]

Provenance: Henry Clifford, Radnor, Pennsylvania, before 1945-1965; Galerie Rosengart, Lucerne, 1965; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 1965 (inv. no. 165). Exhibitions: New York 1946, no. 42, "Rhythm of Straight Lines." Literature: Bill 1938, repr. 251, "Rhythmus von Linien und Farbe" (first state); Holtzman 1945, repr. 34 (first state); Bill 1946, color repr. 39 (first state); Seuphor 1956, 156 (first state), no.545 (second state); Ottolenghi 1974, no. 449 (second state); Schmalenbach 1975, 48 (second state); Welsh 1977b, 31, note 34 (first and second state); Beslon 1981, repr. 37

(installation photograph, boulevard Raspail studio, first state); Schmalenbach 1986, 146-147 (second state); Joosten 1991, 37-38. ender: Kunstsammlung

Lender: Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf

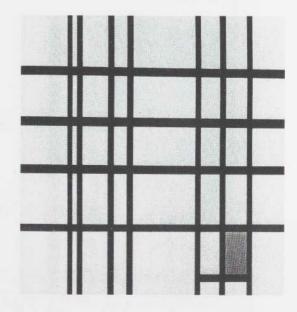
continued)

First state of *Rythme de lignes* droites. Photograph from Bill 1938,

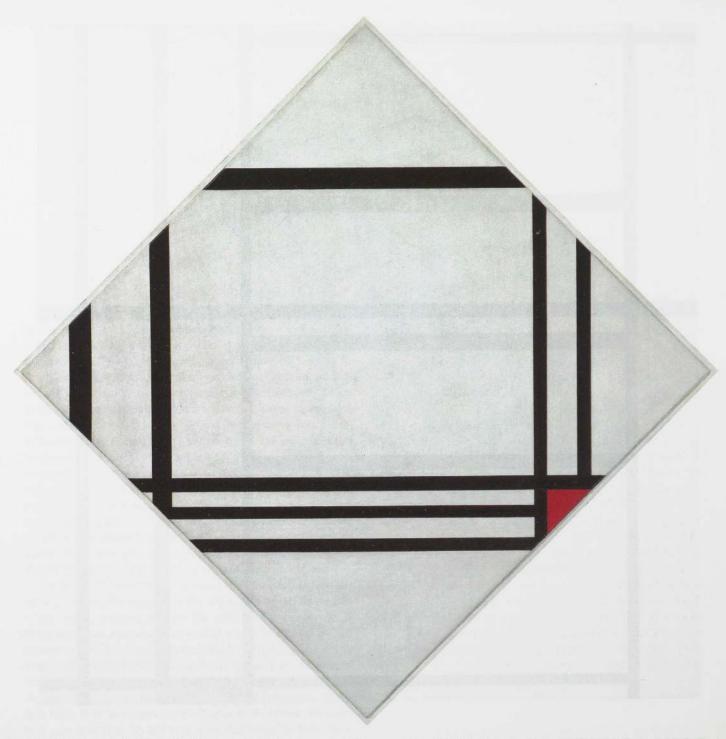
The first state of this painting is recorded in a photograph first published by Max Bill in August 1938 (fig. a), which demonstrates that the blue and red areas were later additions. An unfinished stage of the first state is shown in an installation photograph of Mondrian's boulevard Raspail studio taken by Rogi André in 1937, where the picture is partially visible at bottom center (fig. b). This photograph reveals that, despite evident pentimenti, the basic grid structure of the right side had been worked out (although the thickness of the horizontal lines would be subsequently reduced).

The photograph of the finished first state was republished by Holtzman in 1945. As Welsh has pointed out, Mondrian had a number of paintings which he executed in Paris photographed by the late Marc Vaux, and at least some of these reproductions accompanied him to New York and were mistakenly published (posthumously) as existing compositions (Welsh 1977b, 31, note 34, information supplied to Welsh by Michel Seuphor). Welsh suggested that the first state of this picture was such a case; others surely include the first state of *Composition No. 4* (cat. 155; first state published by Seuphor in 1956 as c.c. 398) and *Picture No. II* (Ott. 461; first state, Seuphor c.c. 392).

Fig. b
Mondrian's studio at 278
boulevard Raspail, 1937, showing
(from left) Composition en rouge,
bleu et blanc, 1937, Musée national
d'art moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris; unfinished state
of Rythme de lignes droites
(cat. 152); first state of
Composition in Red, Blue, and
Yellow, 1937-1942, The Museum of
Modern Art, The Sidney and
Harriet Janis Collection, 1967; and
Opposition de lignes, de rouge et
jaune, No. I (cat. 148). Photograph
by Rogi André.







# 153 PICTURE NO. III; Lozenge Composition with Eight Lines and Red 1938

Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 (39 3/8 x 39 3/8); vertical axis, 149.2 (58 3/4) Set-back strip frame, crosscut. Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right: 38 On stretcher: PICTURE No. III Piet Mondrian 1938 On reverse: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris Provenance: Gift of the artist to James Johnson Sweeney, New York, 1943-1986; Ernst Beyeler, Basel (purchased at auction, Sotheby's, New York, 18 November 1986, no. 7). Exhibitions: New York 1943b, no. 6; New York 1945b, no. 40; New York 1951, no. 29; New York 1957b; Madrid 1989; Berlin 1993, no. 90. Literature: Sweeney 1945, repr. 2 (photograph by Fritz Glarner, New York studio 1943; see Chronology, fig. 18); Seuphor 1956, no. 593; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 465; Schapiro 1978, 261; Carmean 1979, 55-56, 99, 110; Sotheby's, New York, 18 November 1986, no. 7. Lender: Collection Beyeler, Basel In a letter to Winifred Nicholson dated 19 August 1938, Mondrian wrote: "...I think that I have finally succeeded with the large lozenge. It has been difficult."



#### 154 COMPOSITION NO. I; Composition with Red 1938 [first state] 1939 [second state]

105.2 x 102.3 (41 3/8 x 40 1/4) Lined; original subframe lost; present strip frame and backboard not original.

Signed and dated lower right: PM 39 On center stretcher bar (preserved in construction of new PIET MONDRIAN

composition

Provenance: Purchased from the artist by Peggy Guggenheim, Paris (through Herbert Read, London, by winter 1939-1940 [letter from Mondrian to Winifred Nicholson, 29 March 1940]); Peggy Guggenheim, Paris, New York, and Venice, 1940-1968; Peggy

Guggenheim Foundation, Venice, 1968-1976; Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation), 1976.

Exhibitions: London 1939a, no. 29, "Composition No. I, 1938" (80 gns.) (first state); New York 1942c (second state); Venice 1948, no. 91.

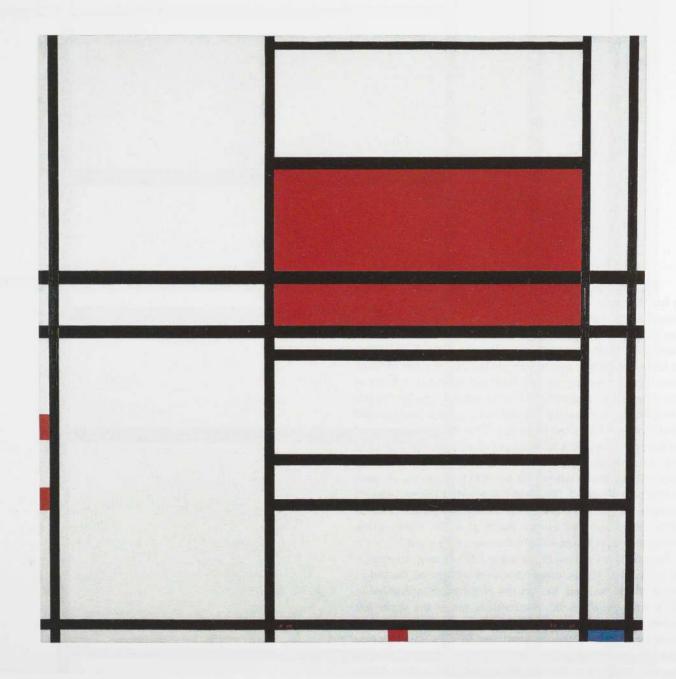
Literature: Read 1939, repr. 6 (first state); Art of This Century 1942, 54; Bill 1943, repr. 206 (first state, dated 1938); Seuphor 1956, no. 574; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 444; Rudenstine 1985, 560-565; Bowness 1990, 784-785; Joosten 1991, 38.

Lender: Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice (Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation)

In his 1943 article, Max Bill described the work in detail, although he did not have it before him at the time. He had seen the picture in Paris, before Mondrian's move to London in September 1938; it was at that stage quite unfinished; no color had been added, and the placement and number of black lines were, as he recalled, probably not identical to those of the completed composition. During the ensuing two years, while Mondrian remained in London, he periodically sent Bill photographs of finished paintings. With precision and care, he specified the colors he had used directly on the reverse of the photographs. Bill's extremely specific description of the Peggy Guggenheim painting in the 1943 text was based upon such a photograph: "... The restriction to few colors, reduced to white (the planes), black (the lines), grey (small plane at upper left), and red (small plane at lower right), gives Mondrian's work the power of a decisive, pure spirit."

The small, gray plane at the upper left has been overpainted with white, the palette of the work now being limited to white, black, and red. But on the photograph, preserved in Bill's archives, the small horizontal plane at the upper left corner is labeled in Mondrian's hand "grey"; the plane at the lower right, "red." Mondrian continued to work on the picture after the 1939 exhibition (letters to Harry Holtzman, 10 August 1939, and to Barbara Hepworth, 12 November 1939). It is likely that he suppressed the gray at that time, although it is possible that he did this after his move to New York, when he restored the work at Peggy Guggenheim's request. Peggy Guggenheim reported that Mondrian "restored" the picture in New York shortly before the opening of her gallery Art of This Century in October 1942. She was unable to recall precisely what he did, but she remembered that it came back "much cleaner."

It is impossible to establish with certainty whether Mondrian had finished reworking this painting before his departure for New York.



# 155 COMPOSITION OF RED AND WHITE, NO. I 1938 [first state] COMPOSITION NO. 4 1938-1942 [second state]

98.4 x 98.4 (38 3/4 x 38 3/4)
Lined; stretcher partially
replaced; subframe removed after
1972; set-back masking ribbon.
Signed and dated lower right: PM 38
[first state]
Signed lower center: PM
[second state]
Dated lower right: 38-42
[second state]
On remnants of stretcher:
NOM I Composition of Red and
White

Provenance: Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1951; William A. Burden, Washington, D. C., 1951-1957; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1957-1959; Arnold and Adele Maremont, Winnetka, Illinois, 1959-1972; The Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri, 1972 (inv. no. 242-1972).

Exhibitions: London 1939b, no. 32, "Composition of Red and White, 1939" (first state); Paris 1939 (first state); New York 1942a, "Abstraction 4" (second state); New York 1957a.

Literature: Janis 1941, repr. 88
(installation photograph,
boulevard Raspail studio; first
state); Kraus 1942, repr. 24 (first
state); Seuphor 1956, 156, no. 573
(first state); Ottolenghi 1974,
no. 443 (first state); Joosten 1991,
38 (first state); Meuris 1991,
repr. 191 (second state).

Lender: The Saint Louis Art Museum, Purchase: Friends' Fund The first state of this painting is recorded in an installation photograph of the exhibition Réalités Nouvelles, Paris, 1939 (van Doesburg-Von Moorsel Archives, reproduced in Joosten 1991, 38); and in installation photographs by Emery Muscetra of Mondrian's New York studio at 353 East 56th Street taken in about October 1941 (published in Janis 1941; see Chronology, fig. 21). In addition, a photograph of the first state, found in Mondrian's estate, is in the Harry Holtzman archive. This photograph was published by Seuphor in 1956 (c.c. 398) and elsewhere. For an explanation of these posthumous publications, see cat. 152.

In London during 1939 Mondrian continued to work on this picture and *Composition No. I* (cat. 154), both of which he had started in Paris (see Chronology).



### 156 PLACE DE LA CONCORDE 1938-1943

Oil on canvas, 94 x 95 (37 x 37 3/8) Lined and restretched; set-back masking ribbon; subframe horizontally crosscut, widened with extra strips of wood. A semicircular crack in the yellow plane at the top of the composition penetrates the multiple layers of yellow paint. It appears to be the result of a sharp cut rather than external pressure or internal stress within the paint film. The crack has been present since before 1964, and may even date from the artist's lifetime. The paint layers have remained entirely secure and

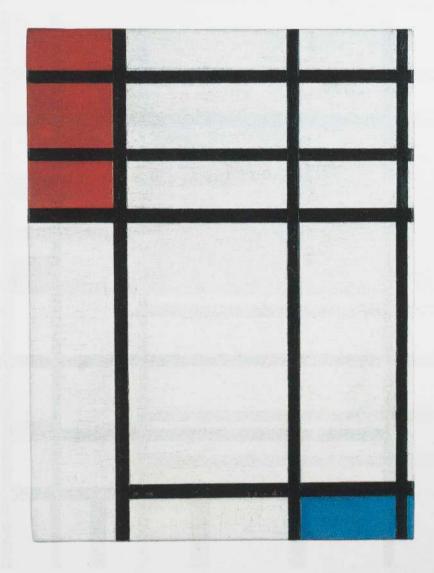
Signed lower left: PM

Dated lower right: 38 43 On remnant of original stretcher: PIET MONDRIAN '38 - 43 On top subframe bar: PLACE DE LA CONCORDE Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1950; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1950-1964; James H. and Lillian Clark, Dallas, 1964-1982; Dallas Museum of Art, 1982 (inv. no. 1982.22.FA). Exhibitions: New York 1943b, no. 2, "Place de la Concorde"; San Francisco 1945, no. 31; New York 1951, no. 32; New York 1962, no. 22; New York 1963, no. 34;

Santa Barbara 1965, no. 68.
Literature: Bradley 1944, repr. 16
(photograph, New York studio,
a few months before his death);
Seuphor 1956, 187, no. 570;
Masheck 1974, 58; Ottolenghi 1974,

no. 462; Schapiro 1978, 257.
Lender: Dallas Museum of Art,
Foundation for the Arts
Collection, gift of the James H.
and Lillian Clark Foundation

The difference between the handwriting of the "'38" and the "-43" on the stretcher suggests that Mondrian regarded the picture as complete at the time of the 1938 inscription. Since no reproductions of the 1938 state survive, it is impossible to establish all of the compositional changes the artist might have made in New York. However, he certainly added color planes and reworked the surface.



#### 157 COMPOSITION OF RED, BLUE, AND WHITE 1939 [first state] 1939-1941 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 43.5 x 33 (17 1/8 x 13) Set-back masking ribbon; vertically crosscut subframe of same dimensions as canvas (remnant of original). When the painting was shown in the 1939 Réalités Nouvelles exhibition in Paris, it had a broad subframe which is clearly visible in an installation photograph (Joosten 1991). The present subframe, which bears fragments of original labels and inscriptions, was at some point cut down from its original size, and is now no longer visible from the front. In addition, a narrow strip of wood was nailed to each of its four sides, making it exactly the

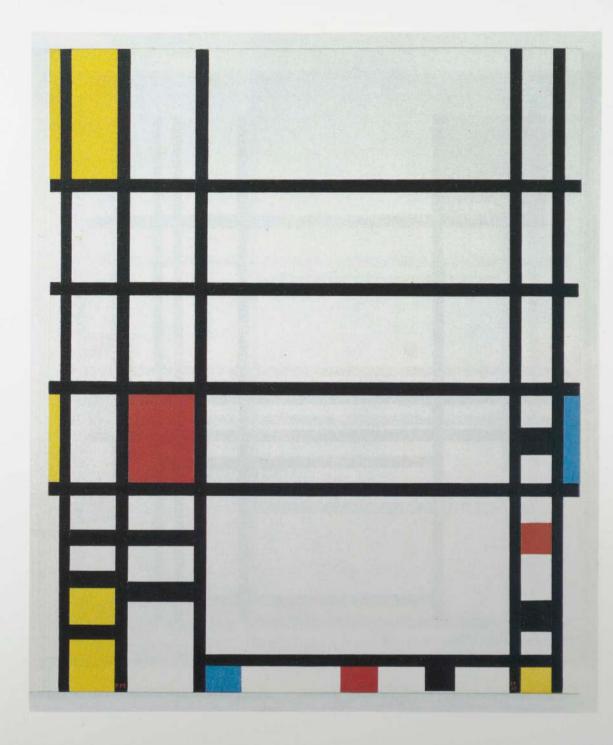
size of the stretcher. At the same time, probably when the picture was consigned to the Janis Gallery in the 1950s, the present horizontally crosscut set-back strip frame (characteristic of those used by Mondrian in the 1920s) was attached to the canvas itself. The center stretcher bar, with its partial inscription (lacking the word "composition"), may well be a remnant of the original subframe.

Signed lower left: PM
Dated lower center: 39 – 41
On center stretcher bar:
of red, blue and white
On upper subframe bar: TOP
On lower subframe bar:

PIET MONDRIAN
On reverse of canvas: stamp of
Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris
Provenance: Acquired from the
artist by Mr. and Mrs. Armand P.
Bartos, New York, 1942-1983
(consigned to Sidney Janis
Gallery, New York, c. 1951,
reg. no. 773, "Composition No. 2
Red 1939-1941"); sold at auction,
Christie's, London, 27 June 1983,
no. 12.

Exhibitions: Paris 1939 (first state); New York 1971, no. 125. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 575; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 446; Christie's, London, 27 June 1983, 29; Joosten 1991, 38, repr. (installation photograph, Paris 1939 exhibition). Lender: Private collection

It is impossible to tell from the 1939 Paris installation photograph exactly what changes Mondrian made to the painting in 1941.



#### 158 TRAFALGAR SQUARE 1939-1943

Oil on canvas, 145.5 x 120 (57 1/4 x 47 1/4) Set-back masking ribbon; subframe vertically crosscut. Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right: 39

On remnant of original stretcher:
PIET MONDRIAN '39 - '43
On lost subframe:
TRAFALCAR [sic] SQUARE
[recorded by Joosten, early 1980s]
Provenance: Estate of the artist;
Harry Holtzman, New York, 19441951; John L. Senior, Jr., New York
and Greenwich, Connecticut,
1951-1957; Sidney Janis Gallery,
New York, 1957; Mr. and Mrs.
William A. M. Burden, 1957-1964,

43

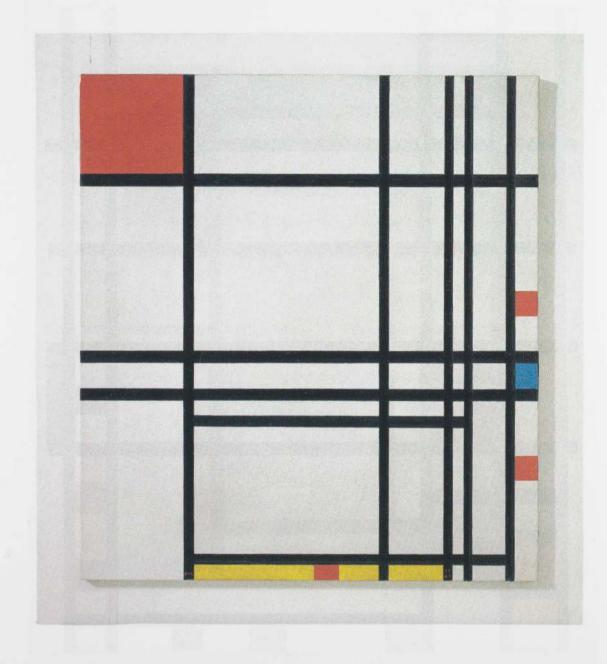
New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1964 (inv. no. 510.64).

Exhibitions: New York 1943b, no.1, "Trafalgar Square"; New York 1945b, no.50; New York 1946, no. 238; Amsterdam 1946, no.119; Basel 1947, no.4; New York 1949, no.28; New York 1951; New York 1953b, no.40.

Literature: Valentine 1943, 32, repr. 33 (\$1,500); *Art News* 44 (15 March 1945), repr. cover; Seuphor 1956, no. 579; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 463; Schapiro 1978, 257; Carmean 1979, 56.

Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. William A. M. Burden, 1964 The difference between the handwriting of the "'39" and the "-'43" on the stretcher suggests that Mondrian regarded the picture as complete at the time of the 1939 inscription. Since no reproductions of the 1939 state survive, it is impossible to establish the precise nature of the changes the artist made between 1939 and 1943.

In an undated letter to Holtzman postmarked 10 August 1939, Mondrian wrote: "...I did not send you photos because I have...made only one of that picture [which] I made in the beginning...[of my time] here and in the spring exhibited at the Guggenheims [sic] Gallery....Since [then] I am working on a very big one and [some smaller ones]....These satisfyed [sic] me much more and will be ready in the Autumn...." The first picture he refers to here must be the 1938-1939 Peggy Guggenheim picture (cat. 154), and the "very big" picture is the present work.



#### 159 COMPOSITION NO. 8 1939-1942

Oil on canvas, 75 x 68 (29 1/2 x 26 3/4) Set-back masking ribbon; vertically crosscut subframe.

Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right: 39

42

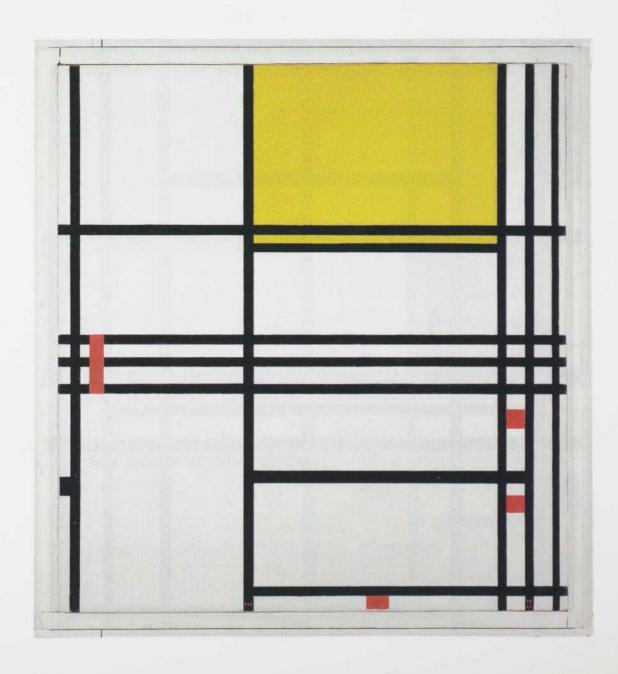
On center stretcher bar:
PIET MONDRIAN
On upper left of subframe: N:8
On upper center of subframe:

TOP
On reverse: stamp of Lucien
Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris.

Provenance: Mr. and Mrs. H. Gates Lloyd, Jr., Haverford, Pennsylvania (purchased from the Valentine Gallery, New York) 1942-1994; sold at auction, Sotheby's, New York, 11 May 1994. Exhibitions: New York 1942a, "Abstraction 8, 1930 [sic]-1942"; New York 1945b, no. 44; Washington 1965, no. 65. Literature: Morris 1943, repr. facing 65.

Lender: Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

There is no documentation of the first state of this painting, which was started in Europe. As in other instances, the small bars of color on the outer perimeter of the composition would have been added after Mondrian's arrival in New York (see cat. 139). In addition, the black lines were extensively reworked, often with the addition of varnish to the pigment.



#### 160 COMPOSITION NO. 9 1939-1942

Oil on canvas,
79.5 x 74 (31 1/4 x 29 1/8)
Lined and restretched; set-back
masking ribbon replaced;
subframe vertically crosscut.
The strip frame, which is
vertically crosscut except for a
horizontal crosscut at lower left,
was present at least as early as
March 1945 (installation
photograph, Museum of Modern
Art exhibition).

Signed lower center: PM Dated lower right:

42

On subframe, upper left: No.9 On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris Provenance: Katherine S. Dreier, New York and West Redding, purchased from the artist, 1942-1952; The Phillips Collection, Washington, D. C., 1952 (inv. no. 1374).

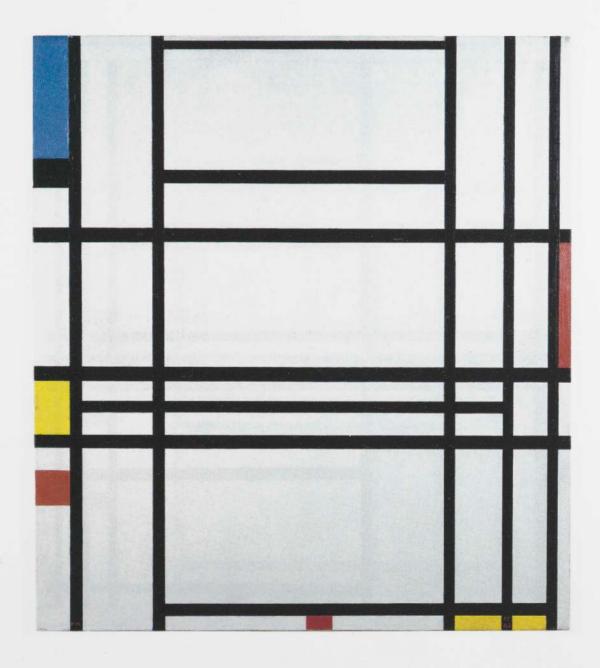
Exhibitions: New York 1942a, no. 9, "Abstraction 9"; New York 1945b, no. 45; Washington 1953; Washington 1965, no. 51; New York 1971, no. 127; Bern 1972, no. 110.

Literature: Sweeney 1948, repr. 12; Seuphor 1956, no. 578; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 454; Weyergraf 1979, 18; Troy 1979, 62; Green 1981, 168.

Lender: The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., Gift from the Estate of Katherine S. Dreier, 1953

[Washington and New York only]

There is no documentation of the first state of this painting, which was started in Europe.



#### 161 COMPOSITION NO. 10 1939-1942

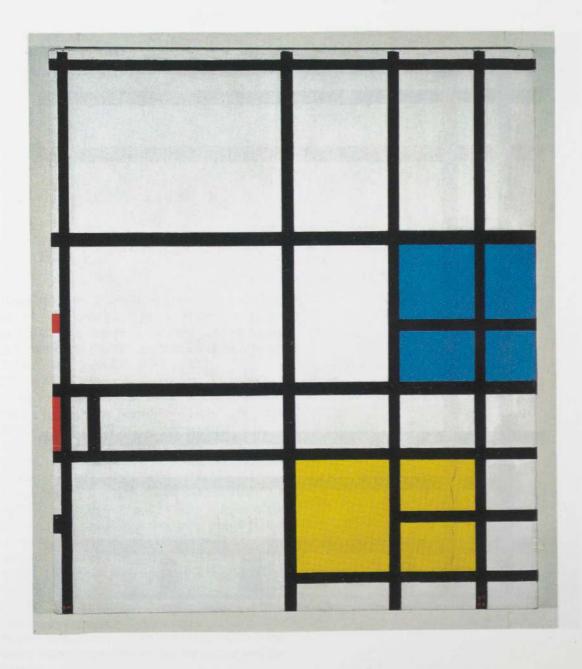
Oil on canvas, 80 x 73 (31 1/2 x 28 3/4) Set-back masking ribbon; subframe vertically crosscut.

Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right: 39 42

Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1964; Marlborough-Gerson Gallery, New York, 1964-1966; The Hunt Food and Industries Museum of Art and Norton Simon, Inc., Pasadena, California, 1966-1982; E. V. Thaw, New York, 1982.

Exhibitions: New York 1942a, "Abstraction 10"; New York 1945a, no. 103; Amsterdam 1946, no. 117; Basel 1947, no. 6; New York 1957a, no. 29.

Literature: Seuphor 1949, repr. 176; Seuphor 1956, no. 577; Holty 1957, 20; Harrison 1966, 285; Rembert 1971, 48; Steadman 1972, 132, 148-149; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 455. Lender: Private collection There is no documentation of the first state of this painting, which was started in Europe.



#### 162 COMPOSITION NO. 11; LONDON 1940-1942

Oil on canvas, 82.5 x 71 (32 1/2 x 28)
Set-back masking ribbon,
subframe vertically crosscut;
original stretcher lost.
Signed lower left: PM
Dated lower right: 40
42

On subframe, upper left: No.11
Provenance: Mrs. Harold Florsheim,
Chicago (purchased through
Valentine Dudensing, New York),
1942-1944; Theodore Schempp,
New York, 1944; The AlbrightKnox Art Gallery, Buffalo,
1944 (inv. no. RCA 44).

Exhibitions: New York 1942a,
"Abstraction 11"; New York 1945b,
no. 46, "London"; Washington
1965; Toronto 1966, no. 108; The
Hague 1966, no. 119.
Literature: Ritchie 1944, 14,
"Composition London"; Welsh

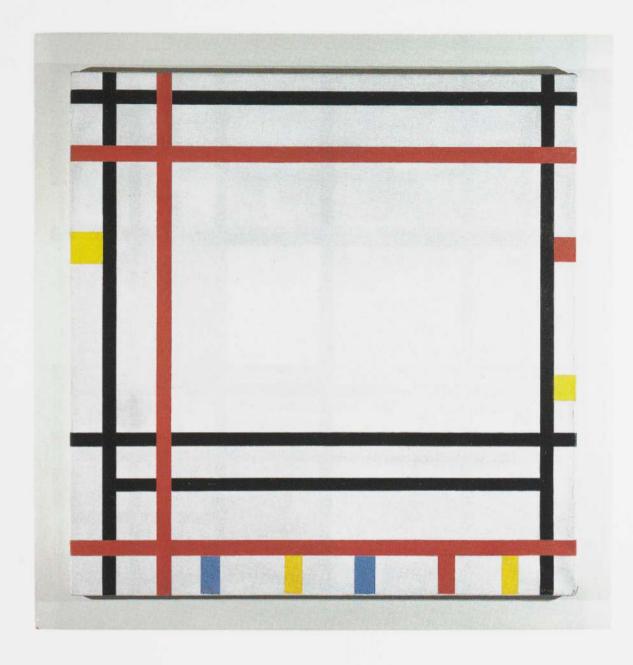
"Composition London"; Welsh 1966b, 212; Harrison 1966, 285; Albright-Knox Art Gallery 1972, 204-205; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 456; Weyergraf 1979, 18.

[Not in exhibition]

There is conflicting evidence for the authenticity of the title "London," which has been traditionally associated with the painting. On 2 February 1945, James Johnson Sweeney

wrote to Andrew C. Ritchie, director of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo: "Apparently the dealer was unaware of Mondrian's title for the picture. Mondrian claimed it was begun during the blitz in London – hence the allusion. I doubt if the dealer who sold it to you knew Mondrian. But Dudensing, who sold it to Mrs. Florsheim, is familiar with this explanation." On 14 February 1945, Ritchie responded: "I took occasion to talk to Valentine Dudensing, who originally sold the painting to Mrs. Florsheim, and told him of the new title you had given me. I should suggest your talking to him, because he feels sure that Mondrian never gave him such a title." Sweeney's close association with Mondrian and his sensitivity to issues of this kind would tend to argue for the accuracy of his recollection.

There is no documentation of the first state of this painting.



# 163 NEW YORK 1940-1941 [first state] BOOGIE WOOGIE; New York 1941-1942 [second state]

Oil on canvas, 95 x 92 (37 3/8 x 36 1/4)
Set-back masking ribbon with
original paint; one-piece
masonite subframe, repainted
(with a stamp "Vehisote").
Signed lower left: PM

[second state]
Dated lower right: 41-42
[second state]
On center stretcher bar:
NAME: TITLE
PIET MONDRIAN. 1941
"New-York" [first state]
- 42 [added to 1941;
second state]
On subframe, upper left:
N:2 [second state]
upper right: PIET MONDRIAN
[first state]

Provenance: Mary E. Johnston, Cincinnati and Glendale, Ohio, 1942-1967; John Pattison Williams, Dayton, Ohio, 1967-1970; Harold Diamond, New York, 1970-1983.

Exhibitions: New York 1941a, no. 29, "New York, 1941" (first state); New York 1942a, no. 2, "Boogie Woogie, 1941-1942" (second state); Cincinnati 1943, "Composition"; New York 1951, no. 33, "New York, 1941-42"; New York 1971, no. 128; Cologne 1981, no. 200.

Literature: Janis 1941, 90-91, repr. 88 (installation photograph by Emery Muscetra, New York studio; intermediate state); Seuphor 1956, no. 584 (second state); von Wiegand 1961, 57-58 (first state), repr. 64 (second state); Welsh 1966a, 35 (first and second state); Elderfield 1970, 58; Rembert 1971, 47-51, 102-103 (first state), 61, 80, 104-105 (second state); Masheck 1974, 58 (second state); Ottolenghi 1974, no. 457 (second state); Carmean 1979, 58 (second state); Weyergraf 1979, 19 (second state); Weyergraf 1979, 19 (second state); Hoenderdos 1981, 59 (first and second state); Henkels 1987, 227 (second state); Janis 1988, 18.

Lender: Hester Diamond

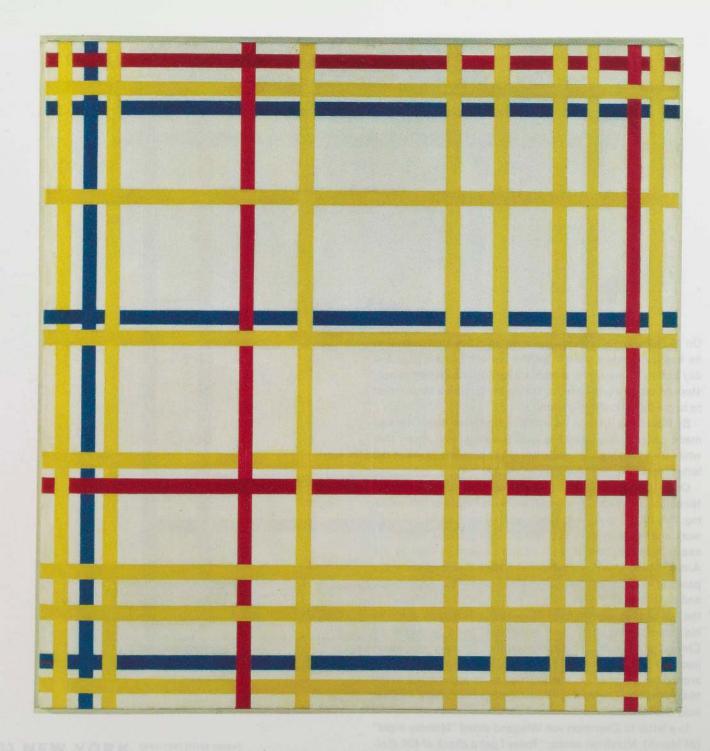
[Washington and New York only]

On 19 October 1940, Mondrian wrote to Harry Holtzman that he had just made a sketch for this picture. Surprisingly, the day before he made the sketch, he had gone to an art supply store to order the canvas for the painting, which he planned to begin the following Tuesday.

By November 4, when he wrote to Holtzman again, he had made considerable progress with the work, and noted that while it was drying, he "made two other projects." One of the latter must have been *New York City* (cat. **164**).

On 4 January 1941, Mondrian wrote a letter to Winifred Nicholson in which he referred to the first state of this painting: "My health is yet not always what it ought to be, but I can work and made already two rather large pictures which are nearly finished. One of them I hope to send in Febr. to the Amer. Abstract-Artists exhibition." He did indeed show the painting in February 1941 at the American Abstract Artists, and at that point it was painted entirely with black lines. In the fall of 1941, when Emery Muscetra took a photograph of his studio, the three red lines had been added (see Chronology, fig. 21). The completion of the painting, which involved the addition of yellow, blue, and red color bars around the periphery, is documented by its appearance in the 1942 Valentine Dudensing exhibition, but the picture was not sold until March.

In a letter to Charmion von Wiegand dated "Monday night" (24 March), Mondrian wrote: "Today I got a check of 400 d[ollars] from Dudensing; so the Boogie-Woogie was sold. I was not satisfied to get so little and speak [sic] with him this afternoon at the Max Ernst exhibition. He said he had done very much to sell it, and had not taken much from the other works sold during the exhibition. He was now busy, he said, with an other [sic] sale. It is true that my show has done very much to me, and thus it is allright [sic]. Of course I thank you for bringing the lady [Mary Johnston] to Dudensing."



### 164 NEW YORK CITY; New York City I 1941 [first state] 1941-1942 [second state]

Oil on canvas,

119 x 114 (46 7/8 x 44 7/8)

Subframe horizontally crosscut.

Signed lower left:

PM [second state]

Dated lower right:

42 [second state]

Provenance: Estate of the artist;

Harry Holtzman, New York,

1944-1958; Sidney Janis Gallery,

New York, 1958-1984; Musée

national d'art moderne, Paris,

1984 (inv. no. AM 1984,352 P).

Exhibitions: New York 1942a, no. 1,

"New York City, 1941-42" (second state); Cincinnati 1944, no. 80, "New York City, 1942"; New York 1946, no. 2; Amsterdam 1946, no. 120; Basel 1947, no. 3; New York 1953b, no. 37, repr. (Muscetra 2); The Hague 1955, no. 129; Zurich 1955, no. 117; London 1955, no. 55; Venice 1956, no. 25; Rome 1956, no. 52; New York 1957a, no. 31, repr. (Muscetra 3); New York 1962, no. 27; New York 1963, no. 35; Toronto 1966, no. 110; The Hague 1966, no. 121; New York 1971, no. 129; Bern 1972, no. 113; New York 1980, no. 23; Stuttgart 1980, no. 129; Cologne 1981, no. 202; Madrid 1982, no. 69.

Literature: Janis 1941, 90-91, repr. (Muscetra 1); Brian 1942, 26, repr., "New York" (second state); von Wiegand 1943, 70 (second state); Holtzman 1945, repr. 23 (second state); Sweeney 1946,

repr. 37 (second state); Sweeney 1948, repr. 12 (second state); Hess 1951, 54-55 (second state); Seuphor 1956, no. 587 (second state); Holty 1957, 20-21 (second state); von Wiegand 1961, 61 (second state); Welsh 1966a, 33-38 (second state); Welsh 1966b, 216, repr. 217, "New York City I" (second state); Lohse 1966, 136 (second state); Elderfield 1970, 58; Jaffé 1970, 154; Rembert 1971, 102 (first state), 61, 80, 108, 132 (second state); Blok 1974, 69 (second state); Ottolenghi 1974, no. 458 (second state); Masheck 1974, 58-64 (second state); Rosenblum 1977, 69-70 (second state); Welsh 1977b, 21-22 (second state); Schapiro 1978, 257
(second state); Carmean 1979,
58-59 (second state); Weyergraf
1979, 19-20 (second state);
Stoichita 1979, 21 (second state);
Troy 1979, 9 (second state); Welsh
1980, 57, 59-60 (second state);
Hoenderdos 1981, 59 (second
state); Champa 1985, 126-136
(second state); Musée national
d'art moderne 1986, 442 (second
state); Janis 1988, 18; Bois 1990,
passim (first and second state).
Lender: Musée national d'art
moderne, Centre Georges

moderne, Centre Georges
Pompidou, Paris, puchased with
the participation of the Scaler
Foundation (1984)

This painting is the second of the "two rather large pictures" referred to in Mondrian's letter to Winifred Nicholson of 4 January 1941 (see cat. 163). In April 1941, he wrote to Holtzman that he had reworked the painting, had removed a red plane, and added red and blue lines to the yellow lines. He added, revealingly, that he had at last found his "painting – expression" in the use of colored lines: "With black only, I never could get out of what I *not* wanted but painted." Mondrian's imperfect command of English renders this phrase elliptical, but it seems that with black lines only, he had felt trapped into painting what he had not intended to paint.

Three photographs of Mondrian's studio at 353 East 56th Street taken by Emery Muscetra in the fall of 1941 constitute the first visual documentation of this work, in its first state (referred to under Literature at left as Muscetra 1, 2, and 3; see fig. a and Chronology, fig. 21).

Fig. a
Mondrian in his 353 East 56th
Street studio, fall 1941, with
(clockwise from top right) first
state of New York City (cat. 164),
Composition of Red and White,
No. I (first state of cat. 155),
Composition No. 12 (cat. 150),
Composition No. 8 (cat. 159), and
intermediate state of Boogie
Woogie; New York (cat. 163).
Photograph by Emery Muscetra.





#### 165 BROADWAY BOOGIE WOOGIE 1942-1943

Oil on canvas, 127 x 127 (50 x 50) Lined; original set-back masking ribbon lost; subframe crosscut horizontally.

Signed lower left: PM Dated lower right: 42 43

On top subframe bar: BROADWAY BOOGIE WOOGIE

Provenance: Maria Martins, purchased through Valentine Dudensing, 1943; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1943, anonymous gift (inv. no. 73-43).

Exhibitions: New York 1943b, no. 3, "Broadway Boogie-Woogie"; New York 1943c, no. 3, "Broadway Boogie-Woogie"; New York 1945b, no. 48; Amsterdam 1946, no. 121; Basel 1947, no. 2; Zurich 1955, no. 54; Rome 1956, no. 54; New York 1957b; Toronto 1966, no. 112; New York 1971, no. 130; New York 1983.

Literature: Bowles 1943, repr. 28; von Wiegand 1943, 70; Greenberg 1943, 416, 455; Sweeney 1944, 173, 175; Motherwell 1944, 95-96; Sweeney 1945, 12; Seuphor 1956, no. 590; von Wiegand 1961, 64-65; Sylvester 1965, 97; Welsh 1966a, 33, 37; Welsh 1966b, 220; Lohse 1966, 136; Elderfield 1970, 58; Jaffé 1970, 156; Rembert 1971, 81-86, 132-137; Rowell 1971, 82-83; Blok 1974, 69-70; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 464; Masheck 1974, 63-64; Rosenblum 1977, 70-73; Schapiro 1978, 254-258; Carmean

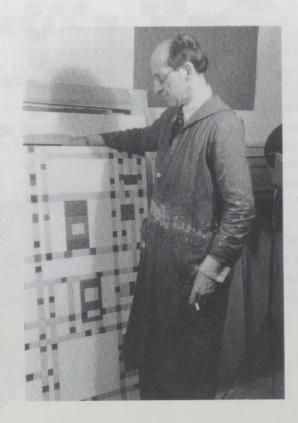
1979, 59; Weyergraf 1979, 8-20; Stoichita 1979, 21; Troy 1979, 14-15; Champa 1985, 127-138; Bois 1990, 170-171, 175-177, 181-182.

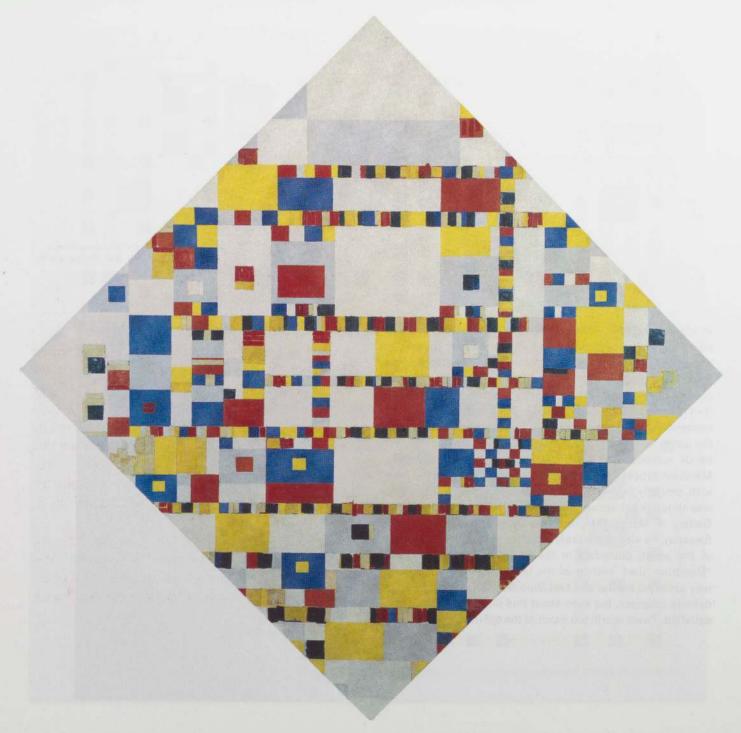
Lender: The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Given anonymously, 1943

[New York only]

Fig. a Mondrian with *Broadway Boogie Woogie*, early 1943. Photograph by Fritz Glarner.

In about June 1942, Mondrian started work on his last two paintings, the present picture and Victory Boogie Woogie. In a 26 June 1942 letter to Harry Holtzman, he indicated that the lozenge painting (cat. 166) was actually started first: "I struggled on my diagonal picture to get classic-expression out of it - I made also another square one, which pleases me for the moment." Von Wiegand noted in her diary in October that the solid lines in both pictures had given way to staccato bands composed of small blocks, both colored and gray. Mondrian proceeded to fill the white areas between the lines with similarly colored planes of various sizes. The painting was shown in his second one-man exhibition at the Valentine Gallery in March 1943, but according to James Johnson Sweeney, he was not entirely satisfied with it. In his obituary of the artist, published in the spring of 1944, he wrote: "Mondrian 'died' feeling of his last completed work: I am only satisfied insofar as I feel Broadway Boogie-Woogie is a definite progress, but even about this picture I am not quite satisfied. There is still too much of the old in it."





#### 166 VICTORY BOOGIE WOOGIE (unfinished) 1942-1944

Oil and paper on canvas, 127 x 127 (50 x 50); vertical axis, 179 (70 1/2)

Provenance: Valentine Dudensing, New York, 1944; Burton and Emily Tremaine, The Miller Company Collection of Abstract Art, Meriden, Connecticut, 1944-1988; S. I. Newhouse, New York.

Exhibitions: New York 1945b, no. 51; Amsterdam 1946, no. 122; Basel 1947, no. 1; Hartford 1947; New York 1949, no. 29; New York 1971, no. 131; Washington 1979, no. 16; New York 1983.

Literature: Sweeney 1944, 173; Janis 1945, 48-49; Sweeney 1945, 9, 12; Hitchcock 1948, 80; Seuphor 1956, 184, 187, no.592; Holty 1957, 21; von Wiegand 1961, 64-65; Welsh 1966a, 33, 37-39; Jaffé 1970, 158; Rembert 1971, 86-89, 94, 137-139; Rowell 1971, 82-86; Masheck 1974, 63-65; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 472; Rosenblum 1977, 70-76; Welsh 1977b, 21; Carmean 1979, 59-66, 99-100; Stoichita 1979, 21; Troy 1979, 15; Welsh 1980, 57-58; Hoenderdos 1981, 60; Champa 1985, 127; Bois 1990, 160, 171, 182.

Lender: Private collection

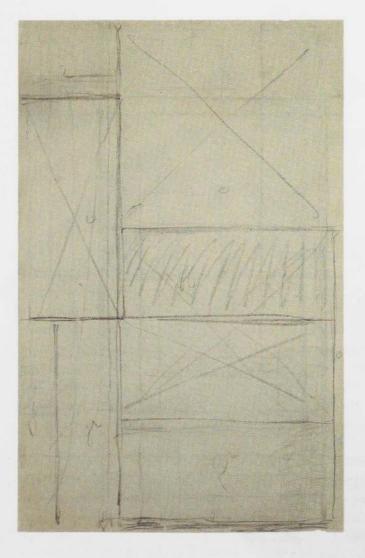
[New York only]

The painting was begun in about June 1942 and von Wiegand noted changes in October (see cat. 165). In the winter of 1942-1943, a photo taken by Fritz Glarner shows Mondrian posing as if to put a finishing brushstroke to the painting; its tapes had been translated into paint. In his obituary, James Johnson Sweeney wrote of Mondrian's final struggles with the painting: "Three days before he was taken to the hospital, he had begun a drastic revision of his latest painting, which was practically ready for exhibition, and to which he had already given more than nine months' constant work." (For a more detailed description of Mondrian's final campaign of work on the picture, see Chronology, January 1944.)

#### MONDRIAN's Working Process

From 1920 on, Mondrian had struggled to correct the misconception that his art could be characterized as geometric. He insisted again and again that he did not work according to a system, but rather that intuition served as his sole creative guide. Neither friend nor foe seemed able to accept this entirely, and countless attempts have been made to decode the supposedly fixed and mathematically proportional relationships within his work. All such efforts have been fruitless, since it is demonstrably clear that Mondrian's compositional method was anything but systematic or mathematical. The surfaces of his canvases are rich in subtle variations of texture and brushwork. Nothing was predetermined. Reworking, rethinking, and refining characterized his resolution of every problem.

Mondrian's surviving sketches and unfinished works are few in number. They are mainly concentrated in the years 1921-1925 and then again from 1936 on. But these works provide us with unparalleled access to the nature of his intuition, to the painterly aspects of his art, and to the long and complex process involved in arriving at each apparently effortless solution.



#### 167 Study for TABLEAU I 1920

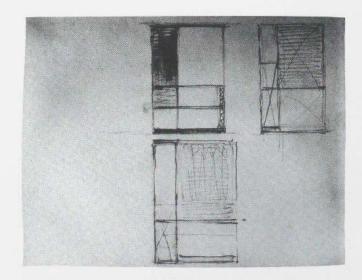
Charcoal on paper, 95.8 x 61.6 (37 3/4 x 24 1/4) Inscribed on the surface are the following color indications: r [rouge], j [jaune], bl [bleu], gr [gris], 0

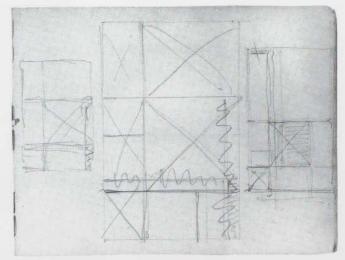
Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1970; The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970-1981; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung, 1981 (inv. no. C 81/3057).

Exhibitions: Toronto 1966, no. 92; The Hague 1966, no. 102; New York 1970, repr. 19; Stuttgart 1980, no. 105; Baltimore 1981, no. 116; Madrid 1982, no. 52. Literature: Welsh 1966b, 182; Bois 1982, 34, 36; Gauss 1984, 345-346. Lender: Graphische Sammlung der Staatsgalerie Stuttgart Drawings on this scale are extremely rare in Mondrian's work, as are preparatory drawings of any scale that can be related directly to a finished canvas. In a letter of 15 June 1920, he wrote to van Doesburg about the present work, clearly a preliminary idea for *Tableau I* (cat. 90): "I have set up a large canvas on paper so as to experiment with the effect before having the stretcher made. As far as I have got, it already looks wonderful. I shall let it rest now, and start working on smaller ones."

Precisely because it is an exceptional example, this drawing and Mondrian's description of its purpose can help to define the general function of drawing within his working process. Rather than developing a formal scheme to be fully realized on paper before being transferred to canvas, Mondrian would at most indicate an idea which he would then work out directly on the canvas. Even an apparently "preparatory" drawing could not be the deliberate, a priori solution – the cartoon, as it were – of a pictorial problem.

The free and intuitive handling of the present drawing is characteristic of this exploratory process. It is true that most of the linear indications can be associated with the final work: only two further planes were added. And yet these were critical in establishing the balance of the final composition: a small black block at middle left (the size of which is in inverse proportion to its visual importance) and a larger blue rectangle at lower right, anchoring the composition. The color indications – "r" for rouge (red), "j" for jaune (yellow), "bl" for bleu (blue), "gr" for gris (gray), and "0" for white – are a much less reliable guide to the finished work, as comparison quickly reveals. Changing the identity of any one color plane evidently entailed for Mondrian a series of further changes in color assignment and compositional structure — changes which could only be worked out on the canvas itself.





### 168 Three Rectangle Compositions (study) c. 1920

Pencil on paper (Sheet D recto of undated sketchbook), 23 x 30 (9 x 11 3/4)

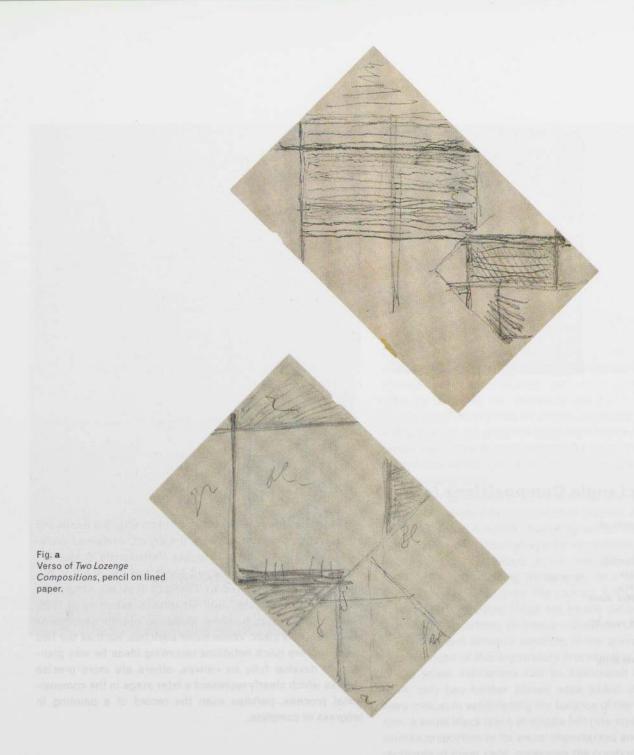
Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1970; The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970; Mr. and Mrs. Arne Glimcher, New York.

Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 30; Stuttgart 1980, no. 111. Literature: Welsh 1980, 51.

Lender: Collection Arne and Milly Glimcher A sketchbook found in the artist's studio after his death, the seven pages of which are now dispersed, contained drawings which are difficult to date (see Holtzman 1970, repr. 27-33). Some, such as the present sheet and the one that follows, seem to be related to *Tableau I* (cat. 90); others are more clearly associated with Mondrian's activities in 1925. The particular uses to which Mondrian put the sketchbook are not entirely clear. While some sketches, such as our two examples, are quick notations recording ideas he was planning to develop fully on canvas, others are more precise studies which clearly represent a later stage in the compositional process, perhaps even the record of a painting in progress or complete.

### 169 Three Rectangle Compositions (study) c. 1920

Pencil on paper (Sheet E of undated sketchbook), 23 x 29.8 (9 x 11 3/4) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1970; The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970; Sanford Besser, Little Rock, Arkansas. Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 31. Literature: Welsh 1980, 52. Lender: Stephens Inc., Little Rock, Arkansas



### 170 Two Lozenge Compositions (study) c. 1925

Pencil on lined paper, 24.1 x 16.8 (9 1/2 x 6 5/8) (fig. a: verso, two lozenge composition studies with color notes)

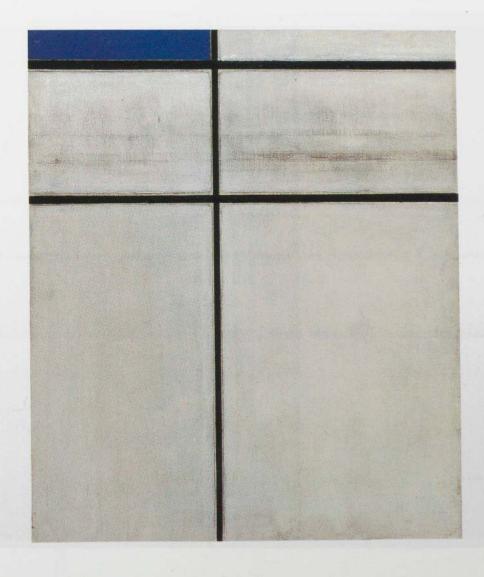
Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1970; The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970-1979;

Stanford Rothschild, Baltimore. Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 25; Bern 1972, no. 116; Washington 1979, no. 4; Stuttgart 1980, no. 106; Baltimore 1981, 117.

Baltimore 1981, 117. Literature: Carmean 1979, 40-41, 101; Welsh 1980, 52.

Lender: The Rothschild Art Foundation

[Washington and New York only]



#### 171 Composition with Blue (unfinished) c. 1934

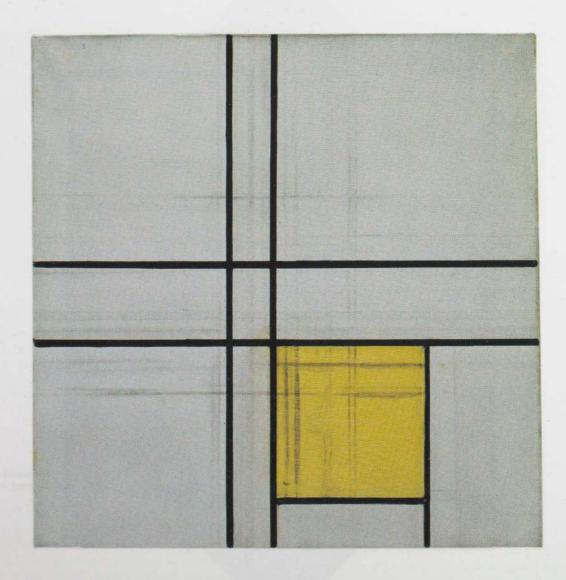
Oil on canvas, 60 x 50 (23 5/8 x 19 5/8) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-after 1946; Carel Mondriaan, Breda, after 1946-1951; G. J. Nieuwenhuizen Segaar, The Hague, 1951-1957; Galerie Europe, Brussels, 1957; Svensk Franska Konstgalleriet, Stockholm, 1961; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, 1961-1964; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1964-1965; Morris Pinto, Paris, 1965; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1966-1967; Museum Moderner Kunst/Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna, 1967. Exhibitions: New York 1946, no. 16; The Hague 1955, no. 125; Basel

1964, no. 58; Berlin 1968, no. 71;

Paris 1969, no. 96.
Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 566;
Welsh 1966b, 200; Ottolenghi 1974,
no. 419; Welsh 1980, 54.
Lender: Museum Moderner
Kunst/Museum des 20.
Jahrhunderts, Vienna

[Washington and New York only]

The areas of unpainted canvas separating the white planes from the black lines provide important insight into Mondrian's working process. In this instance, as in others, his decision regarding the precise width and density of the black lines, as well as the dimensions and painterly handling of the edges of the planes thus determined, was left until the very last moment. The present unfinished canvas, with these ultimate decisions unresolved, bears witness to the subtlety with which Mondrian approached every pictorial problem, and the extent to which every adjustment in the relationship between a given line and the contiguous planes posed questions of the greatest significance.



### 172 Composition with Yellow (unfinished) c. 1934

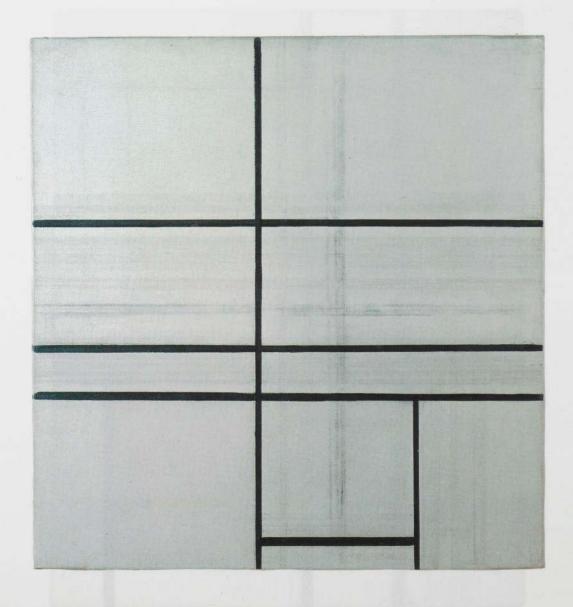
Oil and charcoal on canvas, 55.5 x 54 (21 7/8 x 21 1/4) On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1962-1970; Galerie Beyeler, Basel, 1970-1978; Galerie Gmurzynska, Cologne, 1978; Deutsche Bank AG, Frankfurt am Main. Exhibitions: New York, 1946, no. 12; New York 1962, no. 19; Bern 1972, no. 106. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 557; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 466; Welsh 1980, 54-55. Lender: Deutsche Bank AG,

Frankfurt am Main

This painting/drawing and the two that follow (cats. 173 and 174) provide further insight into Mondrian's working process, which involved a succession of tentative probings, each element being balanced and readjusted in relation to the others. Color was not added after the establishment of the basic linear composition. Rather, it was gradually introduced

during that process, the placement and thickness of each line being adjusted and readjusted as the color planes evolved and finally became defined.

These three unfinished canvases, when seen in the sequence suggested here, also cast light upon the ways in which one compositional type in Mondrian's oeuvre becomes the catalyst for another. The first two (cats. 172 and 173) are variations on the classical type established in 1929-1932 (see cat. 122), but the second of these, with its suggestion of a widened vertical double line, also forms the transition to the third work (cat. 174), in which the double lines have been so widely spaced as to suggest the beginnings of a grid. This grid structure is fully realized in such contemporary works as *Composition B* (cat. 145), and then, of course, subjected to countless variations in the works from 1937 on.



# 173 Composition (unfinished) c. 1934

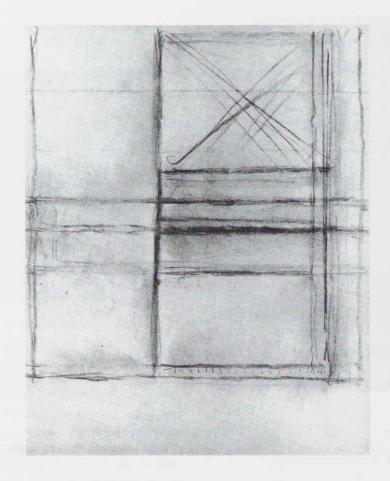
Charcoal and oil on canvas, 57 x 55 (22 1/2 x 21 5/8)
On reverse of canvas: stamp of Lucien Lefebvre-Foinet, Paris
Provenance: Estate of the artist;
Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1962-1972; Galerie Tarica, Paris, 1972.
Exhibitions: New York 1946, no. 13; New York 1962, no. 18; Basel 1964, no. 56; Stuttgart 1980, no. 122; Baltimore 1981, no. 125; Madrid 1982, no. 63.
Lender: Private collection



### 174 Composition with Red (unfinished) c. 1934

Charcoal and oil on canvas, 80 x 63 (31 1/2 x 24 3/4) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York. Exhibitions: New York 1946, no.9; New York 1962, no. 24; Santa Barbara 1965, no. 75; Washington 1965, no. 58; Stuttgart 1980, no. 123; Baltimore 1981, no. 127; Madrid 1982, no. 66. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 571; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 467; Welsh 1980, 54-55; Bois 1982, 37.

Lender: Private collection



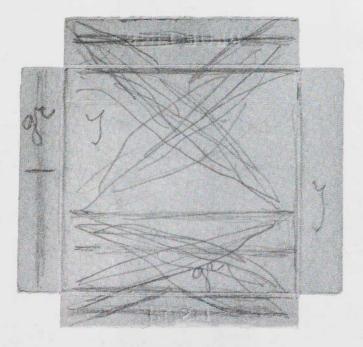
Charcoal on paper, 26.7 x 21 (10 1/2 x 8 1/4) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1987.

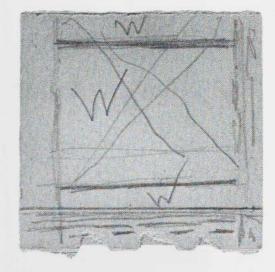
Exhibitions: New York 1974, no. 6; Stuttgart 1980, no. 124; Baltimore 1981, no. 129; New York 1983.

Lender: Mondrian Estate/Holtzman Trust

[Washington and New York only]

This sketch and the following seven works (cats. 176-182) were all probably executed during Mondrian's stay in London (September 1938-September 1940).





Pencil on paper cigarette package, 9.8 x 10 (37/8 x 37/8) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1987.

Exhibitions: New York 1974, no. 7; Stuttgart 1980, no. 117; Baltimore 1981, no. 123.

Literature: Holtzman 1970, 3; Welsh 1980, 55.

Lender: Mondrian Estate/Holtzman Trust

[Washington and New York only]

This study and the one that follows are among a group of especially revealing – if apparently inconsequential – compositional notations. Rapidly scribbled on cigarette packets or other scraps of paper, they provide the most cogent evidence for the unpremeditated and intuitive nature of Mondrian's creative process.

### 177 Composition (study) c. 1938-1940

Pencil on paper cigarette package (torn), 7.6 x 7.4 (3 x 2 7/8) On reverse (printed): Obtainable only at LEWIS tobacco shop Sole Distributors A.LEWIS & Co (Westminster) Ltd. Over 200

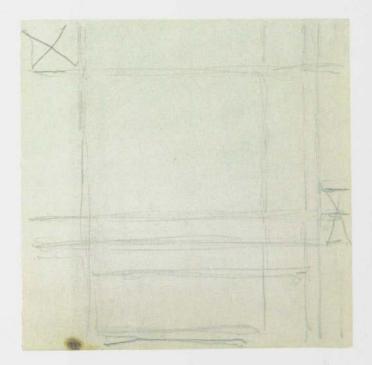
Branches Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1970; The Pace Gallery,

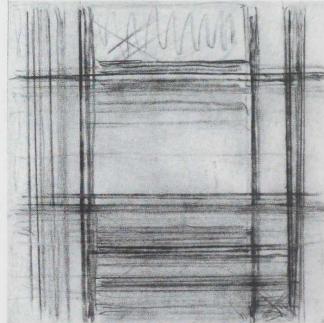
New York, 1970. Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 46; Stuttgart 1980, no. 119.

Literature: Holtzman 1970, 3; Welsh 1980, 55.

Lender: Mr. and Mrs. Edward Rosenthal

[Washington and New York only]





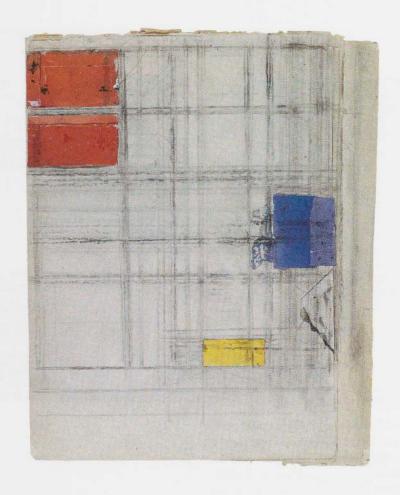
Pencil on paper,
11.4 x 11.4 (4 1/2 x 4 1/2)
On reverse: TOP
Provenance: Estate of the artist;
Harry Holtzman, New York,
1944-1970; The Pace Gallery,
New York, 1970-1981; sold at
auction, Christie's, New York,
5 November 1981, no. 373b.
Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 39;
Stuttgart 1980, no. 116.
Literature: Welsh 1980, 56;
Christie's, New York, 5 November
1981, 66.
Lender: Private collection,

[Washington and New York only]

New York

# 179 Composition (study) c. 1938-1940

Charcoal on paper,
18.1 x 17.8 (7 1/8 x 7)
Provenance: Estate of the artist;
Harry Holtzman, New York,
1944-1970; The Pace Gallery,
New York, 1970; Prestige Art,
New York.
Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 56;
Bern 1972, no. 117.
Lender: Mrs. Andrew Fuller
[Washington and New York only]



Gouache, charcoal, and colored pasted papers on paper (irregular), 33 x 27 (13 x 10 5/8). The artist has glued together three pieces of paper to form a support, to which the colored papers are glued. On the reverse are fragments of sketches for other compositions.

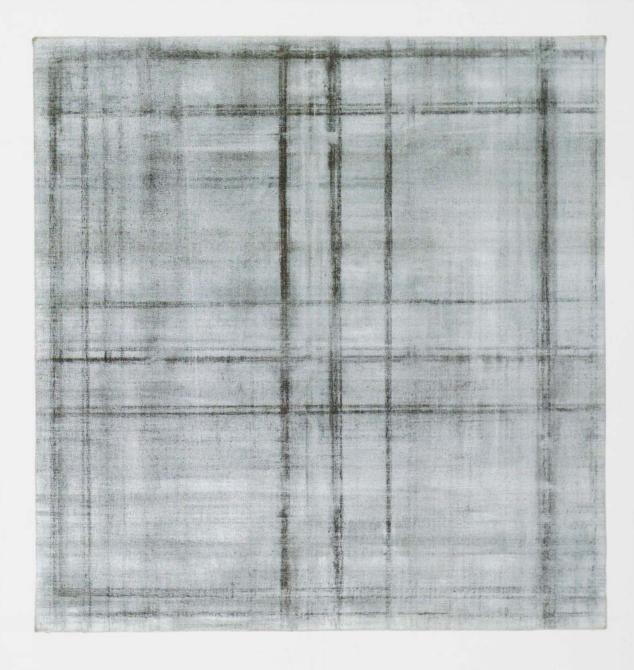
Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1964; Marlborough Fine Art, London, 1964-1978.

Exhibitions: Wellesley 1978, no. 100. Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 580; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 471; Welsh 1980, 55, 57.

Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]

This unusual collage provides a further example of the ways in which disparate materials and techniques were marshaled by Mondrian to give expression to rapidly evolving ideas. The result is a work at once frankly exploratory in its facture and powerfully balanced in its composition.

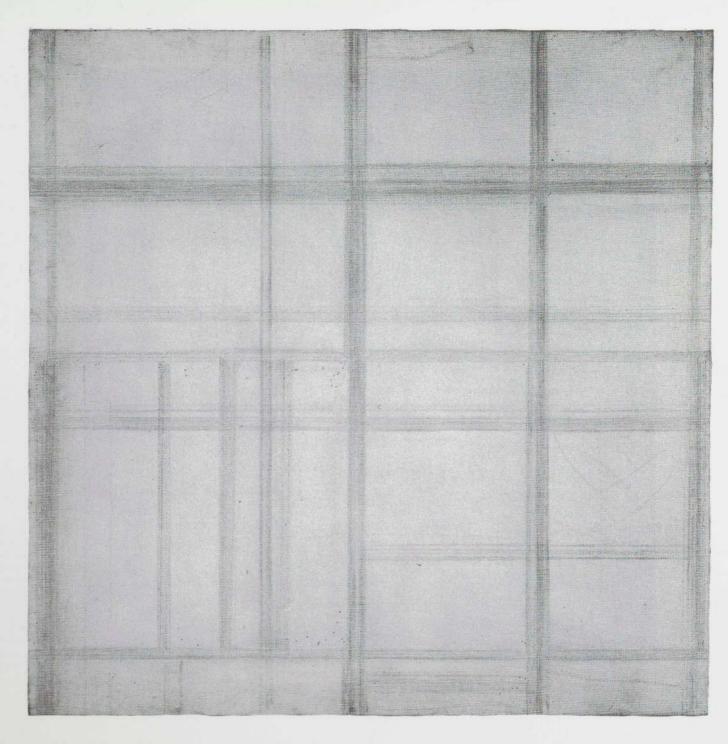


### 181 Composition (unfinished) c. 1938-1940

Charcoal on canvas, 70 x 72 (27 1/2 x 28 3/4) On stretcher: HAUT Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1958; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1958.

Exhibitions: New York 1946, no. 14, "Composition 1938"; New York 1962, no. 25; New York 1980, no. 21; Baltimore 1981, no. 126; Madrid 1982, no. 65.

Literature: Seuphor 1956, no. 572; Masheck 1974, 58; Welsh 1980, 59-60; Bois 1982, 37. Lender: Private collection The blackened surface of this canvas is unusual. It is possible that before beginning the composition Mondrian covered the entire canvas with a light layer of charcoal – as if to take possession of its full extent, its scale. Alternatively, the surface may be the result of a lengthy process of placing, erasing, and repositioning the charcoal lines – a process which is in any case evident in this unfinished work.



#### 182 Composition (unfinished) c. 1938-1940

Charcoal (?) on canvas, 115 x 115 (45 1/4 x 45 1/4) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1970; The Pace Gallery, New York, 1970. Exhibitions: Toronto 1966, no. 109, "New York City No.5"; The Hague 1966, no. 120; New York

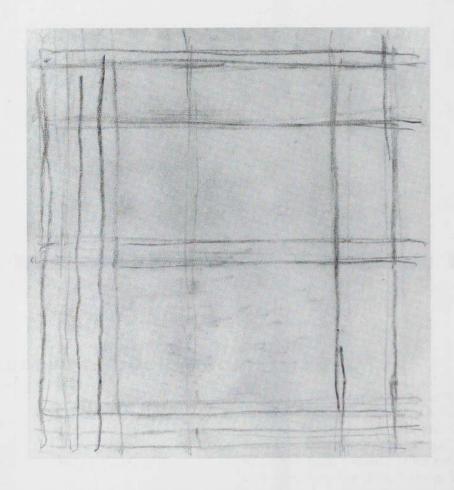
1970, repr. 59.

Literature: Welsh 1966b, 214; Masheck 1974, 61; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 458¹ (reversed); Welsh 1980, 56, 57; Bois 1982, 40. Lender: Emily Fisher Landau, New York

This work has been associated with Mondrian's New York City series. However, in a letter to Harry Holtzman written from London on 10 December 1938, Mondrian may be referring to it when he describes his current activity: "Two pictures that size (about one metre square) will be ready in Jan. or Febr. I made them in Paris but changed much ici. [cats. 154,

155] The third picture of the same size I made here and will be ready at the same time. Then I have two greater pictures size 115 square that are in the beginning and made under good impression of my new surrounding. I think they are better but they shall not be ready for the spring because I have also to finish smaller ones that I began in Paris."

The linear structure of this composition is closely identified with the development of Mondrian's work in London in the late 1930s. In addition, the reference to a work of 115 cm square, an unusually large scale for Mondrian, suggests a connection with this particular example, the only one of these precise dimensions in Mondrian's surviving oeuvre.



### 183 Study for NEW YORK CITY Series c. 1941

Charcoal on paper,
22.8 x 20.9 (9 x 8 1/4)
Provenance: Estate of the artist;
Harry Holtzman, New York,
1944-1970; The Pace Gallery,
New York, 1970-1984; Musée
national d'art moderne, Paris
(inv. no. AM 1984-271D).
Exhibitions: New York 1970, repr. 57;
Bern 1972, no. 119.
Literature: Welsh 1966b, 217; Welsh
1980, 56; Musée national d'art
moderne 1986, 242; Bois 1990, 181,
309 note 78.

Lender: Musée national d'art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

[Washington and New York only]



#### 184 New York City III (unfinished) 1941-1942

Charcoal and colored paper strips on canvas, 115 x 99 (45 1/4 x 39) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1958; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1958.

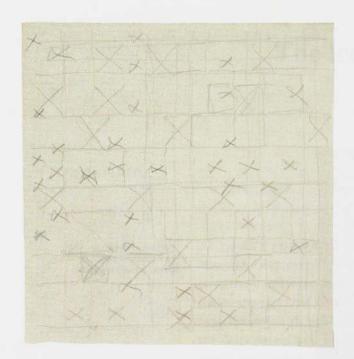
Exhibitions: New York 1946, no. 6, "New York City II, 1941-42"; New York 1962, no. 29, "New York City III"; Washington 1965, no. 57, "New York City III"; Bern 1972, no. 111, "New York City I (study for New York City I)"; New York 1980, no. 25, "New York City III"; Stuttgart 1980, no. 131; Madrid 1982, no. 70; Tokyo 1987, no. 116.

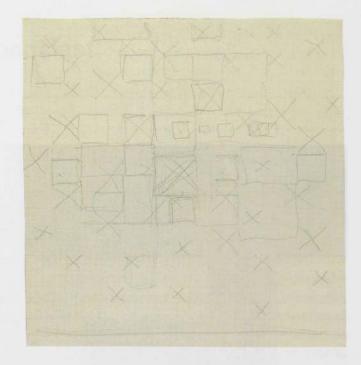
Literature: Seuphor 1956, 156, no. 585; von Wiegand 1961, 61; Welsh 1966b, 214; Rembert 1971, 80, 108; Masheck 1974, 61; Ottolenghi 1974, no. 460; Rosenblum 1977, 70; Welsh 1980, 57, 59-60; Clay 1982, n.p.; Bois 1990, 160, 181.

Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]

This canvas and its companion, *New York City II* (Ott. 459), provide invaluable insight into the process by which Mondrian arrived at the only finished work of the series, *New York City* (cat. 164). Like the final canvas, the unfinished tape "sketches" constitute elaborate weavings of a colored grid. But only in the unfinished works can one trace the innumerable changes the artist made regarding the placement of individual lines, over or under one another.





#### 185 Study for BROADWAY BOOGIE WOOGIE (?) 1 c. 1942-1943

Pencil on blue-lined paper, 21.5 x 20 (8 1/2 x 7 7/8) Provenance: Estate of the artist; Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1962.

Exhibitions: New York 1963, no. 48; Toronto 1966, no. 113a; The Hague 1966, no. 124a; New York 1983.

Literature: Welsh 1966b, 222; Bois 1982, 40.

Lender: Private collection

[Washington and New York only]

This small sketch and the one that follows (cat. 186) have been traditionally described as preparatory drawings for *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (cat. 165); they appear as "Two Studies for Broadway Boogie-Woogie? 1942-1943" in Harry Holtzman's typed inventory of his collection of Mondrian's work, compiled in the 1950s. It cannot be ruled out, however, that they followed the painting, representing afterthoughts for further development. In the second of the two, the "X" – which had been used in sketches since 1920 as the marker for a plane – no longer defines a specific area. Rather, through its multiplication across the composition, it functions as an optical flicker, hovering above the surface of the paper.

#### 186 Study for BROADWAY BOOGIE WOOGIE (?) 2 c. 1942-1943

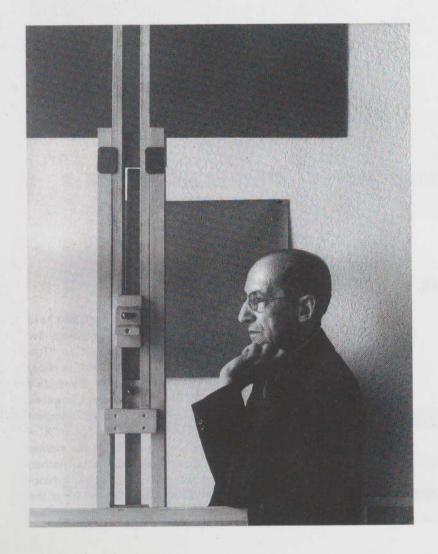
Pencil on blue-lined paper, 20.6 x 20 (8 1/8 x 77/8) Provenance: Estate of the artist;

Harry Holtzman, New York, 1944-1962; Sidney Janis Gallery, New York, 1962.

Exhibitions: New York 1963, no. 47; Toronto 1966, no. 113b; The Hague 1966, no. 124b; New York 1980,

no. 38. Literature: Welsh 1966b, 222; Carmean 1979, 103.

Lender: Private collection
[Washington and New York only]



Portrait of Mondrian, 1942, by Arnold Newman. ©1994 Arnold Newman.

### The Iconoclast

Yve-Alain Bois

#### I. FAST FORWARD

Mondrian was almost fifty years old when he attained his mature style, to which he gave the name "neo-plasticism," in 1920. He began painting in his early youth under the guidance of his father and uncle – the former was a nationalist and religious militant, the latter an influential painter of the Hague school (a belated Dutch version of the Barbizon school). He enrolled in 1892 at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam where he was a mediocre student and had to settle for night courses in drawing from 1894 to 1896. Although his landscapes of 1898-1907 attest to his growing originality – with their cropping of the visual field and their paralleling of the internal structure of the image with the sides of the painting – it would be wrong to assume that these early efforts prefigure his later, neo-plastic work.<sup>1</sup>

One early habit, however – his tendency to work in series – reveals how far Mondrian stands apart from the academic tradition, much as he may have wanted to join it. Even before he hears of Monet's series, Mondrian takes an interest in the tension at play between the recurrence of an invariant motif and the possible variations of its aspects: starting with his first series of landscapes (around the turn of the century), he persistently seeks out the type or the "universal" behind the particular and the contingent.

In 1908 Mondrian discovers van Gogh, the divisionism of Seurat, and the fauves through their Dutch followers. This abrupt confrontation with the recent past of pictorial modernity gives rise, over a period of four years, to numerous probings – to a period of "transition," constituting the true (the autodidactic) education of Mondrian. Accentuating his serial practice (by painting different versions of a single motif in different styles – the dunes of Domburg or the lighthouse of Westkapelle), Mondrian addresses the very question that would guide Kandinsky, in the face of Monet's hay-stacks, to envision the possibility of abstraction: if the motif is only a pretext for magnifying pure color, why not dispense with the motif entirely? Cannot the truth be expressed directly, shedding the useless clothing of the world?

For Mondrian in this transitional phase, it is still too early to answer these questions in the affirmative. He turns to the by-path of symbolism, and a picture becomes for him a veritable rebus, with an esoteric (theosophical) iconology. The natural geometry of an amaryllis becomes an emblem of the macrocosmic order (cat. 26); the red hair of a praying girl becomes a sign of intense devotion; the three women of the triptych *Evolution* (Ott. 245), rigid in symmetry and bombastic in symbolism, together

become a programmatic icon of human history. Yet while many things may encourage us to take this very short symbolist period in Mondrian's oeuvre as a key to the later work, this would be clearly mistaken.

In the fall of 1911, when he shows Evolution, Mondrian discovers Cézanne and the Cézannesque cubism of Braque and Picasso. The shock unleashes a process that will take him into abstraction. He finds that he cannot reach the goal he has set for himself - painting the "universal" - by personifying the idea of the absolute in an allegorical mode: personified, this idea becomes "particular," worldly, an image expressing the very opposite of what was intended. Mondrian begins to understand that he cannot attain his goal by remaining captive to traditional Western aesthetics. Why? Because this tradition, since Greek antiquity, has perpetuated the oppositions between figure and ground on the one hand, and form and meaning on the other. Only by abolishing these oppositions can we gain access to the absolute in painting: when left in place, they send every effort to paint the "universal" back into the order of what Mondrian calls the "particular" or the "tragic."2 Thereafter, Mondrian's art is entirely devoted to a kind of high-stakes redefinition; it seeks the "essence" of painting and the elimination of any "particular" perception that would hinder its apprehension. Recognition of the painting's surface as the irreducible unity of pictorial art becomes the logical starting point of Mondrian's task.

The task begins with the first protocubist canvases of late 1911-early 1912 and crystallizes after his arrival in Paris during the spring of 1912. The differences between Still Life with Ginger Pot I (cat. 29) and Still Life with Ginger Pot II (cat. 34) exemplify this development: with the first, Mondrian is Cézannian; in the second, he tries to inscribe the figures into the links of a linear grid controlling the entire surface of the painting. The individuality of each object, which Cézanne would call its "locality," is almost entirely effaced. Upon discovering the hermeticism of Braque's and Picasso's analytic cubism, Mondrian very rapidly adopts some of their aesthetic procedures without taking up their aesthetic aim. (He borrows from them, among other things, a palette of ocher and gray tones, and the oval frame.) In the decomposing of planes to which he subjects his motifs, he is seeking to unify the pictorial field of his canvas, to dehierarchize it through a linear squaring that binds the depicted surface (that of the object) to the literal surface of the picture, and precludes any optical penetration.

The two and a half years that Mondrian spends in Paris are very productive. Little by little, he again favors frontal motifs, notably architectural ones, because they simplify the task of identifying the "depicted" surface with the picture plane. The last canvases of this period, with their emphasis on the vertical/horizontal opposition and their brighter palette derived from primary colors (pink, clear blue, yellow-brown), portend the neo-plastic style (cats. 55-58).

After returning to Holland for the summer of 1914, Mondrian finds himself back in Domburg confronting three motifs that had attracted him earlier – the small church, the ocean, and the piers. He then makes two series of drawings (cats. 59-60, 69; 61-68), each of which will result in a painting, the unique pictorial production of two years crucial to his project: Compositie 10 in zwart wit (Composition 10 in Black and White), 1915 (better known as Pier and Ocean [cat.70]) and Composition 1916 (cat.71). Through

the reciprocal neutralization of verticality and horizontality (a primary characteristic of what one may call Mondrian's own dialectic), those two canvases radicalize the basis of his cubist work – namely his drive to abolish the opposition of figure and ground. With *Compositie in lijn (Composition in Line)*, 1917 (cat. 72), Mondrian enters definitively into abstraction: not only does this picture make no direct reference to any natural reality, but any perception of a figural form is rendered impossible there, for the white ground is optically coopted, activated by the diffuse geometrical relations that virtually interconnect the discrete elements of the picture.

Thereafter, things move quickly for Mondrian. In a series of paintings of the same year, each a composition with color planes, all superimposition is eliminated (cats. 74-76). In *Composition with Color Planes and Gray Lines 1*, 1918 (cat. 77), there is no longer any white ground, and the rectangles are all delimited by gray lines. At this point, Mondrian introduces the modular *all-over* grid (1918-1919), which has the advantage of diminishing, or rather equalizing, any contrast – of preventing any individualization and of abolishing the figure/ground opposition (cats. 78-84).

But when he returns to Paris in June 1919, Mondrian gradually abandons the modular grid, for it exalts repetition, thus the "natural" at a fundamental level, and the natural is what he seeks to exclude at all costs. The paintings of 1920 represent the slow work of renouncing the grid (cats. 85-87); the result of this work is the invention of neoplasticism at the end of the year (cat. 88).

The principle of neo-plasticism is a dialectic roughly reminiscent of Hegel, which Mondrian also calls the "general principle of plastic equivalence." It involves not merely the plastic arts or even the arts as such, but all human activity, all cultural production, all social existence. It is an apparent dualism meant to dissolve all particularity, all center, all hierarchy; any harmony that is not double, not constituted by an "equivalent opposition," is merely an illusion. Whatever is not "determined by its contrary" is "vaque," "individual," "tragic." A certain return to traditional principles of composition occurs. Mondrian's texts of the twenties refer to a universal "repose" and absolute balance, and dream of a perfectly equilibrated future society where every element will be "determined." Mondrian considers each of his neo-plastic canvases as the theoretical and microcosmic model of a macrocosm yet to come. Painting is reduced to a group of "universal," atomic elements: planes of primary color opposing planes of "non-color" - gray, black, white; vertical lines opposing horizontal lines while probing the various planes that they delimit on the surface of the canvas. From 1920 to 1932, these elements are indefinitely combined into independent totalities, which have become the matrix for a universe where movement is entirely banished.

In the early thirties, both the art and the theory undergo a radical change. The immobility of "repose" is displaced in favor of the concept of "dynamic equilibrium." (Thereafter, "repose" will be associated with symmetry, thus with "similitude" and repetition, thus with the natural.) This yields an immediate pictorial translation: the lines, hitherto regarded as being of secondary importance in relation to planes – functioning only to "determine" them – now become the most active element of the composition. Mondrian proceeds to give a destructive function to lines: their crossing annihilates the monumental and static identity of the planes, abolishes them as rectangles (as form).

The next stage is to abolish line itself (as form) by means of "mutual oppositions," which Mondrian explicitly attempts in his New York work. (After leaving Paris for London in September 1938, Mondrian lives in New York from October 1940 to the end of his life in February 1944.) But this last destruction only becomes possible when repetition is openly accepted; and the acceptance of this possibility – whose exclusion is the point of departure for neo-plasticism – prepares the way for another radical transformation in Mondrian's theoretical machine; he discovers a need to destroy the entity known as the "surface." But far from just returning to the optical oscillations of the modular grids of 1918-1919, which perturb our perception, Mondrian imagines another way to prevent our formal apprehension of the picture's surface: a weaving in thickness of colored strips whose complexity overwhelms us. The last New York canvases, including the unfinished *Victory Boogie Woogie* (cat. 166), whose structure he worked to complicate a week before his death, are the exploration of this last possibility, offering the spectator the vertigo of a shallow depth that is charged with the task of "liberating our vision."

"I think," he said at the end of his life, "the destructive element is too much neglected in art." Rarely is a pictorial project pursued according to such an implacable logic and with such keen awareness of the stakes. When his friend Carl Holty asked Mondrian why he struggled every morning, like Penelope, to destroy every morning what he had made the night before, Mondrian answered: "I don't want pictures. I just want to find things out."

Let us now examine the year or so leading up to the invention of neo-plasticism (part II), and review the prior development that brings Mondrian to this point (part III). Next, we will analyze the first body of neo-plastic work (1921-1922) and Mondrian's work up to the culmination of his so-called classic neo-plasticism (part IV). The last part will deal with the radical turn in 1932 and the consequences of that turn for the rest of Mondrian's career.

# II. ON THE WAY TO NEO-PLASTICISM Check

Among the most underrated of Mondrian's abstract canvases is the one that has come to be called, rather inappropriately, *Checkerboard with Dark Colors* (cat. 83). Painted in the spring of 1919, this work is of signal importance in Mondrian's development: it is by working against this piece and its various assumptions that he attains, in 1920, the neo-plasticism for which he is justly celebrated. This picture is one of the two least compositional works in Mondrian's entire output. It is ostensibly even anticompositional. The only painting to outdo it in this respect is its equally ill-named counterpart, *Checkerboard with Light Colors* (cat. 84), finished just before.

The dark "checkerboard" is the last canvas he paints in Holland. It is the last painting in which he evokes a specific natural perception; it contains the last glimmer of an idealist conception of color as "troubled light." It deploys his last modular grid (at least of the nine that survive, all dating from 1918 to 1919).

Each of Mondrian's modular grids is based on the same principle: a surface regularly divided into an 8 x 8 or a 16 x 16 pattern of squares and rectangles, the basic unit hav-

ing the same proportions as the overall picture. But the grid and its modular units are much more pronounced in the two "checkerboards" than in the seven preceding canvases. Not only is the module itself larger (incidentally, those two canvases are unusually large for abstract works by Mondrian); but, most important, the linear network of the grid is uninterrupted, unperturbed except for the subtle variations in its color, value, and thickness. Even when they form small aggregates of the same color, each of the 256 units is inscribed on the canvas as a separate entity. The module as such immediately stands out, which was not the case in the seven previous pictures.

There, the module was presented as a basis, as a unit multiplied in various ways to form rectangles or squares differing in size or color. It served as a key offered to the spectator, a trace of the process simultaneously justifying and constraining the individuality of the planes: one could retrace the genesis of the picture and, in so doing, evaluate the potential quantitative relation between the different planes.

Here, in the "checkerboards," the groupings of units of the same color often produce irregular geometrical figures (L, T, and S shapes; crosses; zigzags; and other combinations), but the larger and more irregular they are, the less perceptible they also become. When these blocks of color form rectangles, their emergence as separate entities is very volatile. Traversed by the grid, such combinations of identically colored units are considerably weakened: one perceives them only fleetingly, always returning to the regularity of the grid, which functions as a safety belt: there is no need to seek out the module; it is now omnipresent.

#### Stars

It would seem that, when he painted these canvases, Mondrian attributed a positive value to repetition or at least to "multiplicity" – something he had ceaselessly condemned since 1917 as too "natural," thus of no use to the abstract painter. In a letter to Theo van Doesburg – founder of *De Stijl* and Mondrian's follower, colleague, and eventual rival – Mondrian mentions the dark "checkerboard." A much discussed passage from this letter, dated 18 April 1919, helps us to understand the origin of this aboutface:

As to whether or not one should start from a given in nature... I agree with you in principle, there must be a destruction of the natural and its reconstruction in accordance with the spiritual; but let us interpret this rather broadly: the natural does not require a specific representation. I am now busy on a work which is the reconstruction of a starry sky, but I am doing it without a given in nature. Thus he who says one must start from the given in nature can be right at the same time as he who says one should not: I only want to emphasize how dangerous it is to adopt a system.<sup>5</sup>

This letter has occasionally been used to promote an iconological argument to the effect that, deep down, Mondrian's painting is never abstract, that it is littered with hidden natural motifs (thus reversing the painter's stated view that his art is designed to reveal the "universal," which is always "veiled" in nature). And the "reconstruction of a starry sky" has sometimes been linked to the optical illusion of scintillation produced by the afterimage of intersecting lines in Mondrian's first two diamond pictures.<sup>6</sup>

In my view, both of these interpretations are mistaken: the first turns an exception into a rule and reduces the notion of "reconstruction" to that of stylization – from 1917 on, Mondrian speaks of stylization and "abstraction from" a motif as a phase he left behind; the second interpretation is erroneous because we now know for sure that Mondrian's letter refers to Checkerboard: Composition with Dark Colors.

To understand what Mondrian means by "reconstruction of a starry sky," we need to read the third scene of a "trialogue" (to use Mondrian's neologism) entitled "Natuurlijke en Abstracte Realiteit" and published in thirteen installments, in *De Stijl*, from June 1919 to August 1920. The scene in question was written immediately after Mondrian painted the dark "checkerboard." This is a dense text in which, for the first time, Mondrian provides a glimpse of his theory of perception: living in the sensible world, the "abstract-realist" artist accumulates moments of "disinterested contemplation," moments that are subsequently synthesized and reconstructed in a "permanent vision," the least natural possible, enacted on the canvas.

Let there be no mistake: Mondrian *never* presents his work as a stylization of natural motifs. One must learn to "visualize clearly," which means to see only the relations<sup>12</sup> that link things together and to the world as a whole, so as, eventually, to "recreate" abstractly the same type of relations. Among other things, the "abstract-real" painting, as he calls his art at the time, is the result of sensory stimuli that have been stored up and encoded in the artist's memory. As Mondrian goes on to insist, the artist "ultimately no longer needs a particular starting point in nature in order to achieve an image of beauty."<sup>13</sup>

Why, then, a "starry sky"? More than any other natural scene, it gives an impression of totality: except through a telescope, stars are not observed separately; a starry sky is immediately perceived as an "individual whole," meaning, first, that it does not allow for any particular point of view,14 and second, that it demonstrates better than anything else the homology between microcosm and macrocosm;15 stars help us "to see the absolute, so to speak"; as Mondrian curiously says, "they fill the space," which no longer appears as an empty receptacle but as a field of forces; and because stars are points, not forms, they "accentuate relationship." Admittedly, there are the constellations, geometrical figures merely invented by people who do not know how to "visualize clearly": "This simply means that form is not abolished in the starry sky when we see it as it naturally appears." 16 This is why, in his "checkerboards," Mondrian sets out to visually nullify the "constellations" - the irregular geometric figures. To this end he reduces the color gaps, or, rather, he balances the differences in hue, value, and saturation; in the dark "checkerboard," for example, the blue is more saturated than the red or the orange, but not as bright (its units are also fewer); and in the bright "checkerboard," the chromatic modulation of gray planes helps prevent the formation of unified areas, which would otherwise be perceived either as figures or as a ground.<sup>17</sup>

However, the main reason for Mondrian's interest in stars at that specific point in his career comes from the fact that they define an afocal field in which it is demonstrated that the "destruction of the particular" can be accomplished by means of "multiplicity." This is the first time that the notion of "multiplicity" as such is assigned a positive connotation. Where an ocean ultimately remains "particularized" by the

presence of a horizon, the starry sky is the only natural all over scene.

#### Goethe

Mondrian's attitude toward color during what he called his "transition years" (1908-1911) will be examined later in this essay. However, a brief review of Mondrian's earlier thoughts is necessary here, since my concern is with the rapid sequence of theoretical shifts that precede, accompany, and follow the creation of the "checkerboards."

We do not really know what leads Mondrian to the exclusive use not only of pure but of primary color in a number of canvases as early as 1908-1909. At the time, as we shall see, he is clearly interested in divisionism for the way in which it emphasizes the autonomy of color as such, but he pays not the slightest attention to divisionism's central notion of complementary colors, nor to that of color contrast – which is all the more surprising when one thinks of the numerous pages he later devoted to the "real value of oppositions." Though he read Humbert de Superville's *Essai sur les signes inconditionnels dans l'art*, which develops a veritable symbolism of color, the only time he mentions the book is as grist for his mill when discussing the emotionally neutral – thus "unconditional" – character of the vertical/horizontal opposition.<sup>20</sup>

Mondrian's sudden interest in primary color may have come from Goethe by way of theosophy. Mondrian attended several lectures given by Rudolf Steiner in Amsterdam in March 1908. We may assume that in one of the lectures, entitled "Theosophy, Goethe, and Hegel," Steiner alluded to the great German poet's *Zur Farbenlehre*, of which he was the authoritative editor. Two key ideas in Goethe's theory may have struck Mondrian at the time: first, all colors can be derived from the triad blue/yellow/red; second, and more essential (an idea harking back to Aristotle), the entire world of color stems from the fundamental opposition between light and dark, of which it is the varied declension.<sup>21</sup>

Whatever its origin, Mondrian's fascination with pure primary color ends abruptly in the late summer of 1911, then resurfaces, first in his theory in 1917, then in his painting in 1920 (after, that is, the "checkerboards"). In the meantime, he has gone through a cubist phase during which his palette has been drastically reduced to ochers and grays, then through a gradual reemergence of primary (but not yet pure) colors.

It is in the third installment (January 1918) of Mondrian's first essay, "De Nieuwe Beelding in de Schilderkunst," that Mondrian returns to the topic of color. Here the debt to Goethe is explicit: "The material, the corporeal (through its surfaces) causes us to see colorless sunlight as natural color." (At this point, Mondrian refers to the poet in a note, quoting his definition of color as "troubled light." However, Mondrian immediately inflects Goethe's proposition in terms of interiority and exteriority: "Color then arises from light as well as from the surface, the material. Thus natural color is inwardness (light) in its most outward manifestation." This leads to his subsequently unshakable thesis that primary colors are the most "inward": "Reducing natural color to primary color changes the most outward manifestation of color back to the most inward." No such idea is found in Goethe; yet three cardinal propositions in "De Nieuwe Beelding" come directly from the poet, and they make it possible for us to situate the two "checkerboards" more precisely in Mondrian's evolution.

First: different colors appear to be situated at different distances on the picture plane: "depth is manifested through the different colors of the planes" (Goethe held that blue moves away while yellow moves forward). Mondrian toyed with such an optical illusion in his works of 1917 and early 1918, where the white ground is an empty space whose relative depth is marked by the punctuation of color planes that seem suspended in space (notably his *Compositie in kleur A*, *Compositie in kleur B* [Ott. 298; cat. 73] and the first three *Composition with Color Planes* of 1917 [Ott. 302; cats. 74, 75]). Such an effect is precisely what he will seek to eradicate in the modular grids that he paints a few months after the publication of this text.

Second: primary colors can be mixed with white without altering their initial characters (color gradation). After stating that "abstract-real painting must rely upon three primary colors, supplemented by white, black, and gray," Mondrian says: "Gray, too, because just as *yellow*, *blue*, *and red can be mixed with white and remain basic color*, so can black." <sup>25</sup>

Third: light is indivisible and undifferentiated, and its relative darkening gives rise to color, which is "at all times specific, characteristic, significant." It was in order to establish this ontological divorce between light and color that Goethe had established his famous polarity table of yellow (hot) and blue (cold). More light gives you yellow; less gives you blue.

The last two propositions apply both to the works of 1917-1918 and to the "checker-boards." The third connects directly with Mondrian's habit of working in pairs of light and dark pictures, as if to test the separate workings of light and color. This practice prevails in his paintings from 1917 to the "checkerboards." As such, these represent the last time that he was to be preoccupied with the representation of light in his work, for neo-plasticism emerges with a new concept, that of "non-color." 29

As outlined for the first time in 1921 in a text on music, Mondrian's concept of "non-color" allows him to eliminate from his painting the opposition of color and light (replacing it with the opposition of color and non-color). In fact, this new concept allows Mondrian, without ever completely abandoning Goethe, to eliminate from his painting not just the notion of light but also one of its corollary, space as an empty and undifferentiated void. Thanks to non-color, Mondrian believes, the ground of the picture no longer has to be conceived (or perceived) as vague and atmospheric: it is no longer empty space, but, rather, "determined" space.<sup>30</sup>

# Works of Mourning

Non-composition, the natural referent (even reconstructed), a metaphysics of light – Mondrian rejects all of this after his "checkerboards," the threshold works. And in a series of canvases culminating in the first neo-plastic painting (*Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue, and Gray*, 1920, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [cat. 88]), he mourns what he has just repudiated.<sup>31</sup>

Eight paintings of 1920 survive. It is impossible to establish a precise sequence for these works – a recurring problem. Though Mondrian explicitly conceives each of his paintings as outstripping, and in a sense destroying, its predecessor, he almost always works on several canvases at once, and some are subsequently reworked. Sometimes

Mondrian indicates the revisions, but this is not always the case.

The series as a whole can be read as a negation of the two "checkerboards." Their two main attributes – modularity and graduated color – are here gradually contested. For Mondrian, the two issues are connected: when he sees a black-and-white reproduction of his third diamond painting in the August 1919 issue of *De Stijl*, which underlines the value equivalence of the various color planes, he notices the absence of a dialectical play between repetition and color gradation in his modular grids. Instead of opposing each other, they go hand in hand and result in a lack of tension. Raising the stakes, Mondrian then clarifies the highly precarious quality of the equilibrium for which he is striving:

In the New Plastic we have equivalence of extreme opposites and therefore a distinct duality [...] Precisely because the duality is so distinct, far more effort is demanded of the Abstract-Real painter if he is to find equilibrium between the opposites. When he chooses to express the one, it is at the expense of the other, and when he succeeds in expressing the other purely, it is to the detriment of its opposite. But through the process of his work he ultimately finds a relatively satisfactory solution.<sup>33</sup>

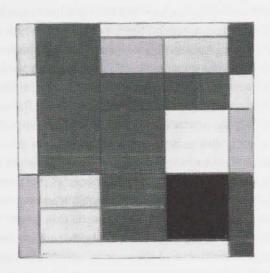
His radical move will be to throw overboard both the module and color gradation, but this intricate task is not an easy one. We need to consider each problem separately.

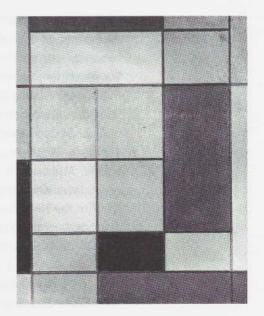
# Deflating the Module

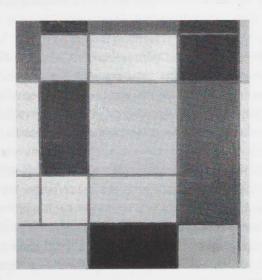
The two large canvases in the 1919-1920 series, *Composition No. VI* (Tate Gallery, London [cat. 87]) and *Composition A* (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome [cat. 85]), are finished before the smaller canvases, which are then reworked. The Tate painting may have been worked on, if not entirely finished, before *Composition A*; we know for sure that Mondrian puts the last touch on the Rome painting in early May 1920.<sup>34</sup>

Those two canvases are not at all modular. The rectangles are of the most diverse proportions – even those that initially seem of equal size prove not to be so. Although both canvases are themselves square, there is only one square in each painting, and this "ghost of a putative square module," as Ann Summerscale so eloquently puts it, is by no means highlighted. <sup>35</sup> In *Composition No. VI*, the format of the picture is even visually negated (it looks more like a vertical rectangle). In *Composition A*, it is hard to discern the symmetry of the central "column."

Turning to the smaller paintings in the series, *Composition B* (Wilhelm Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen [Ott. 319]), *Composition C* (The Museum of Modern Art, New York [cat. 86]), and *Composition III* (private collection [Ott. 320]), we see that each is indeed partly governed by a regular division, but where there was a perfect congruence between the modular grid and the format of the painting in the "checkerboards," we encounter here a disjunction: on the one hand, the module itself no longer has the same proportions as the overall picture; on the other hand, the area that the module covers is centered, surrounded by narrow bands that do not come under its jurisdiction. Those long rectangles serve as agents of deregulation, and in the very place in which the modular system previously originated (the borders of the picture, which define its format).<sup>36</sup>







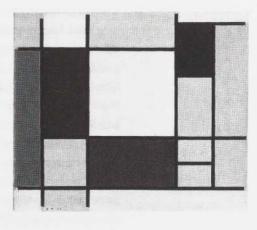


Fig. 1

Composition C, 1920
(cat. 86), oil on canvas, 60 x 61 cm,
The Museum of Modern Art,
New York.

Fig. 3

Composition III, 1920,
oil on canvas, 53 x 41 cm,
private collection.

Fig. 2

Composition B, 1920,
oil on canvas, 67 x 57 cm,
Wilhelm Hack Museum,
Ludwigshafen.

Fig. 4

Composition with Yellow,
Red, Black, Blue, and Gray, 1920
(cat. 88), oil on canvas,
51.5 x 60 cm, Stedelijk Museum,
Amsterdam.

The clearest example of this is *Composition C* (fig. 1): its central grid consists of nine large squares, all different, either in color or manner of division. In turn, this principle of variety within regularity is disrupted by the square at the top left, whose upper and lower limits are not marked. On the one hand, this gives rise to a large blue vertical plane, an anomaly highlighted by the two-thirds division of the neighboring blue rectangle; on the other hand, it engenders the disruptive effect of the red plane (upper left), a half-square that overflows its borders, extending to the upper edge of the painting.<sup>37</sup>

We find a similar procedure (positing regularity, then erasing it) in *Composition B* (fig. 2). Here, the modular grid commands a larger area spanning the picture from top to bottom (the only margins being on each of the two lateral sides), though this fact is hard for the viewer to detect.<sup>38</sup> We should note that the (unmarked) vertical symmetry axis is slightly shifted to the right, and that the vertical lines, with one exception, do not extend to the edges of the painting: a lack of congruence between the grid and the format starts to assume a determining role in Mondrian's compositional dialectic.

Composition III (fig. 3), the last work in which Mondrian relies on modular division, is negated and analyzed by the first neo-plastic painting properly speaking, Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue, and Gray (fig. 4 and cat. 88). Each of the two pictures has a large central square on the vertical axis of symmetry. In each case this central square forms the upper right quadrant of a larger, decentered square. This area is divided into four unequal segments: the above-mentioned central square, a black rectangle to its left, a horizontal rectangle below it (gray in Composition III, blue in Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue, and Gray), and a smaller square (corresponding to the module in Composition III) produced by the intersection of these two equal rectangles.

On closer examination, however, the similarity between the two paintings begins to diminish. In *Composition III*, there is a given modular order: a grid of squares, five high and three wide, regulates a zone comprising the central column and the column on its left, apart from a narrow upper margin. As in the case of *Composition B* and *Composition C*, the grid is immediately contested. But if we exclude the gray rectangle in the lower corner of the picture (whose function is similar to that of the red rectangle in the upper left of *Composition C*), this subversion is much more subtle than in the previous canvases: the vertical line that delimits the modular zone on the right (and the central "square," which thus becomes a vertical pseudo-square) is very slightly shifted to the left, but this infringement of the modular principle is immediately balanced by the exact symmetry of the two areas that remain on either side of the central column. The collision between two principles of regularity (the modular division of an area, the symmetrical division of the painting as a whole) gives rise to the irregular pseudo-square in the center.

Composition with Yellow, Red, Black, Blue, and Gray is utterly different: the central square is indeed square and it is this central square, not a module, that is now subject to disruption. On 12 June 1920, when actively working on this painting, Mondrian writes to van Doesburg, responding to van Doesburg's extraordinary Composition XVIII, consisting of three canvases arranged symmetrically around a center on the

wall: "Remember that...the center should not be moved, but eliminated, removed.... When you only put the center outside the canvas, it still remains one canvas; your canvas then becomes only a piece of a larger canvas, doesn't it?"<sup>39</sup>

Eliminating the center, the possibility and "particularity" of the center and the hierarchy that it involves – this is the task that neo-plasticism assumes. <sup>40</sup> And it is this canvas that enables Mondrian to realize that he has the means to achieve the elimination of the center without resorting to the all-over modular grid: he marks off his white square – so that, among other things, it would not be interpreted as a ground – and then uses the peripheral color planes to displace it visually. <sup>41</sup> At the same time – and here his approach strictly echoes the letter just quoted – he prevents the gaze from straying centrifugally outside the painting. Indeed, for the first time since 1917, none of the lines extends to the frame. <sup>42</sup> This diminishes the visual impact of the linear network as a surveying of the surface, precisely when this network is most pronounced – the modulation of the lines had already been abandoned in the previous canvas, but here they are much thicker, and their black is more assertive. Having found a way of visually dislodging a figure as strong as a square placed on the axis of symmetry, Mondrian has every reason to be enthusiastic. His next two years are unusually fruitful. He never has to *proclaim* the abolition of the center.

# **Egoistic Colors**

The letter to van Doesburg about the annihilation of the center is followed three days later by one in which Mondrian presents his first reflections on what he calls the "new harmony." The painting he discusses is the one he is already in the process of "destroying," namely, *Composition III*. Mondrian mentions a recent conversation with the painter Leopold Survage:

I first showed him the little square one that you and I think so good. He thought that it was not well balanced. The yellow was not harmonious against the red, etc. And the two small blues at the top had no counterpart in blue at the bottom (I tend to think that this among other things, makes it so off-centered). I then said that we were looking for another harmony...I saw that...a well-balanced proportion does not always require harmonizing colors, and have taken care to write down some things about that.<sup>43</sup>

A few months later, he adds: "I believe that equilibrium can exist with dissonants."44

When he writes these words, Mondrian is painting his first neo-plastic canvas: colors that do not match, colors that are not adjusted to each other, colors that remain prismatic, of course, since there is no alternative, but which are not employed "as they appear in the spectrum." It is a "disharmony" that contradicts everything that Mondrian previously wrote on the cardinal importance of balanced relations.

Let us review the sequence that leads to this invention of neo-plastic color.

In an installment of his "trialogue" that appears in the May 1920 issue of  $De\ Stijl$  – at the very moment when he is completing  $Composition\ A$  – Mondrian writes, almost in the manner of a neo-impressionist: "It is not enough to place side by side a red, a blue, a yellow, and a gray, because that remains merely decorative. It has to be the right red, blue, yellow, gray, etc.: each right in itself and right in relation to the others." <sup>46</sup> At this

juncture, he is obviously afraid that without the regulating crutch of a modular grid the planes might regain their individuality and leap forward, as they did in the works immediately preceding the use of a module. He therefore assigns his lines the task of "harmonizing" the adjacent color planes (hence the numerous variations in color and value of those lines),<sup>47</sup> and further attempts to "harmonize" his planes through color gradation (the yellow is almost orange in some paintings of the series, almost green in others). The idea is to subdue the individuality of the planes through modulation.

It does not work; Mondrian notices that the red planes in *Composition A* stand out dramatically if the picture is exhibited in weak light.<sup>48</sup> His correspondence with van Doesburg regarding *Composition A*, *B*, and *C* is full of mad anxiety on this question: over and over he repeats that the paintings can only be seen in strong light.<sup>49</sup>

His anguish then gives way to a veritable reversal. Why strive after a regularity of the chromatic order when regularity has been so thoroughly challenged in the linear network? Rather than keep certain planes from obtruding, let them all obtrude simultaneously, each in a different way: the only requirement is that the various obtrusions negate each other and that none of the rectangles stand out.<sup>50</sup>

The transformations in his art are instantaneous. First, he suddenly abandons the juxtaposing of color planes (they will tend to be at the periphery, and the function of non-color planes will be to separate them). Second, lines are no longer modulated – they are black. Third, colors are saturated. Fourth, in direct coordination with the last point: scale undergoes a change with the decreasing number of rectangles. Since each plane has a differential function, Mondrian can no longer allow his canvas to be overpopulated.

The new color system is at once extremely simple and totally idiosyncratic. For a concise account of it, I turn to this brief anecdote:

"You are the first person who has ever painted Yellow," I said to him once, "pure lemon yellow like the sun." He denied it, but next time I saw him, he took up the remark. "I have thought about it," he said, "and it is so, but it is merely because Cadmium yellow pigment has been invented." <sup>51</sup>

The important thing here is the painter's response: he explains the radiance of his yellow planes not in terms of their relations with other elements in the picture, but in terms of the intrinsic properties of the color as it comes out of the tube.

At the time, nobody seems to understand what Mondrian's neo-plastic triad of primary colors is all about. No one, that is, except Fernand Léger. He characterizes it as a reinvention of "local tone" in painting, a rehabilitation – against everything that modern art had declared since impressionism – of color constancy.<sup>52</sup>

This system is energetic, thus dynamic, and it will soon concern non-color and the black lines as well.<sup>53</sup> Mondrian later compares this energetic system to egoism. After explaining what he means by this term, a kind of positive egoism from which everyone would benefit, he adds: "Neo-Plastic, which expresses this equality, gives each color and non-color its maximum strength and value; and precisely in this way the other colors and non-colors achieve their own strength and value, so that the composition as a whole benefits directly from the care given to each separate plane." Mondrian has an impossible dream, a color that could almost be called *nonrelational*.

# Beelding

Neo-plasticism is an abstract principle of which neo-plastic painting is the "representation," the "image," the "formal realization." None of these words adequately translates *beelding*, which Mondrian himself translates into French as *plastique* and then into English as *plastic*.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps the most effective defense and illustration of the possibility of "representing the abstract" is found in the "trialogue," where Mondrian – no doubt under instructions from van Doesburg – makes a remarkable effort to be less abstruse than usual. To have his interlocutors understand and accept what he means by "representation of the abstract," Z, the character serving as a voice for Mondrian, uses an example taken from daily life. He recounts a film he saw at the beginning of the war.

showing a large part of the world in map form. Upon this, the invading German forces suddenly appeared as small cubes. Likewise a counterforce appeared, the Allies, also as small cubes. In this way the worldwide cataclysm was actually expressed in all its vastness, rather than in parts or details as a naturalistic portrayal would have shown it.

Of course, the other two characters are not so easily convinced, particularly the recalcitrant X ("a naturalistic painter"), who recounts a film of his own, in his opinion a much more impressive one, in which a crab is shown fighting an octopus: "Here too, one saw the clash of two forces seeking to destroy one another, but it was more realistic."

Initially, Mondrian's response is both conciliatory and ever so slightly contemptuous: "There is no argument here. How we are moved and what moves us most deeply depends on ourselves." But he quickly gathers his forces, elaborating on his example, since it is most important that his interlocutors not confuse what he is seeking to accomplish in his painting with this military-geographical diagram:

I simply wanted to point out that we can be moved by abstract representation. My example did not actually demonstrate abstract plastic, *since we already knew about the event*. The plastic expression, which consisted largely of movement and collision, was not free of the previously known idea of "combat": it nevertheless shows quite clearly that it is possible to express something by abstract means.<sup>56</sup>

The narrative form of the "abstract" documentary could only irk Mondrian. But what he finds most irksome is its symbolic mode of signification: the film is not really abstract, even if it uses "abstract" forms, because its particular meaning – the idea of combat – is known in advance. In other words, to be truly abstract, a work of art must not refer to any prior scenario. In painting, it must be thought through painterly means – wordlessly, outside all literature. This is why the neo-plastic painter "gives explanations about his work but not of it"57: his explanations can only be general, since the very meaning of his art is "the general." The opposition between the particular and the general is of capital importance for Mondrian, and it opens up an apparent paradox: all reference to particularity is "vague" or still "veiled" because it is natural; only the general, the universal, can be expressed in a "determinate" or precise fashion.

Another of his military allusions offers a more rigorously exact metaphor of his work. Mondrian was a confirmed pacifist, but his evolutionist and dialectical philoso-

phy obliged him to accept everything as having its place in the universe and its role in history (the idea that everything that exists is necessary already figures in his cubist sketchbooks, and Mondrian held to it throughout his life). <sup>58</sup> Discussing the role of science in "human progress," Mondrian envisions (around 1930) the military use of new technologies:

And if some of the things that have evolved – such as poison gas – fill us with horror and terror, human evolution will still result. As others have recently shown, such things will eventually abolish war; the very development of weapons will make it impossible. Thus through concrete achievements real equilibrium will be generated.<sup>59</sup>

Mondrian does not directly make the connection here between this conception of a strategic equilibrium in tension and his neo-plastic painting, but the whole development of the book-length essay from which these lines are taken leads us to see, in this notion of deterrence (Mutual Assured Destruction) avant la lettre, a fairly precise equivalent of what he was trying to accomplish in his painting. To begin with, the text is swarming with this kind of risky metaphor (further on, for instance, he compares his painting to the future map of the world, with no closed borders and no customs checks);<sup>60</sup> and Mondrian also returns several times to the fact that the equilibrium he is striving to attain in his art is based on the maximal intensity of the elements employed (it is shortly after this that we encounter the passage on the egoism of neo-plastic colors).

Now for an anecdote. It forms part of the Wittgenstein legend and concerns one of the central ideas in the *Tractatus Philosophicus*, namely, that a "proposition is a picture." According to Norman Malcolm, to whom the philosopher is said to have related the story,

This idea came to Wittgenstein when he was serving in the Austrian army in the First war. He saw a newspaper that described the occurrence and location of an automobile accident by means of a diagram or map. It occurred to Wittgenstein that this map was a proposition and that therein was revealed the essential nature of propositions – namely, to *picture* reality.<sup>61</sup>

The heuristic function of the diagram in Mondrian and Wittgenstein is diametrically opposed: one seeks to show that the picture has no need to describe reality in order to be a proposition (to have a meaning), while the other discovers that every proposition is a picture describing reality. Yet the contradiction is only apparent, for both invert the terms of the concrete and the abstract. All his life Mondrian insists on the fact that, because it is "abstract" and not "abstracted from reality," neo-plasticism is a realism.

#### III. RERUN

# Theosophy

As early as 1909, Mondrian explains that the main difference between his art and that of his peers is its assertive relationship with philosophy.<sup>62</sup> Mondrian was no philosopher, but he did draw on various systems of thought, the first of which (and it has been much discussed) was theosophy.

In Mondrian's artistic development, theosophy plays the role of a detonator. Had he

not come into contact with it, he may well have remained a minor-league landscape painter.

We do not know exactly when this occurs, yet I would not place it too early in his career. <sup>63</sup> Even if Mondrian hears about theosophy at the turn of the century, he does not seem to pay much attention to it until he is introduced to the novelty of neo-impressionist color and to the accompanying symbolist theory, around 1908 – for this is when he needs theosophy. <sup>64</sup>

To be sure, certain of the best works from his youth can be ascribed to a vague interest in symbolism (then very active in Holland). The planar quality of *The Weavers' House, Winterswijk* (cat. 3), the stylized lace of the branches in *Dorpskerk* (*Village Church*) (cat. 1), and the naked verticality of the tree trunks in *Beech Forest* (cat. 2), all dating from around 1898 to 1899, link his work at least on a formal level to the symbolist movement. Mondrian's evident interest in water reflections that inhibit the illusion of depth in the composition, at times transforming it into a kind of Rorschach test, also attest to a symbolist fiber running through his work prior to 1908 (see, for instance, *Evening on the Gein with Isolated Tree* [cat. 9]). Seriality, which already makes its appearance in 1901, is part of the same aesthetic (cats. 4-8). It would be a mistake to equate it with Monet's serial practice (since color variations rarely play a role in it, and Mondrian alters a large number of variables from one work to the next – medium, framing, stylistic effects); for Mondrian it is a question of establishing a chart of possibilities based on the same motif, immobilized in its frontality. The motif evaporates in this diversity; what remains is the permanence of the graphic Idea.

This symbolist mode, however, does not dominate Mondrian's production until 1908, since he also continues to paint in the Barbizon style of the Hague school. Furthermore, it is altogether unrelated to theosophy. As we shall see, a teleological principle lies at the foundation of this religious pseudo-science – the notion of a continuing improvement is essential to it. Had Mondrian believed in this teleological principle as early as 1901, he would have been displaying an exceptional capacity for duplicity, for his art remains absolutely static until 1908. No noteworthy change occurs for almost ten years; a great eclecticism, certainly, and great diversity, but no development. Some paintings appear more "modern," others are frankly academic (and clearly executed for the market): an unselective miscellany.<sup>65</sup>

In 1908, Mondrian is suddenly exposed to the art and various theories of postimpressionism: he retains from this sometimes contradictory production a common denominator. From the position of Seurat and his peers, stating that it is futile to try to "render Nature" as it is, a second thesis had emerged in the late 1880s. Touched with Neoplatonism, its clearest formulation comes from Maurice Denis: all forms of illusionism in painting must be resisted, and the domain of art and nature must not be confused.<sup>66</sup> The pronounced planar quality of postimpressionist canvases and works made by a large number of artists under the banner of symbolism derives directly from this principle.<sup>67</sup>

Mondrian was immediately seduced by the argument, and he will serve it up unmodified in his pedagogically oriented texts.<sup>68</sup> It is the materiality of painting itself that guaranteed the effectiveness of his "struggle against matter," in other words, against

the world of appearances and illusion. In "De Nieuwe Beelding," Mondrian will refine the argument in the terms of the Hegelian dialectic ("Being is manifested or known only by its opposite. This implies that the visible, the natural concrete, is not known through visible nature, but through its opposite. For modern consciousness, this means that visible reality can be expressed only by abstract-real plastic" ("Being is manifested or known through visible nature, but through its opposite. For modern consciousness, this means that visible reality can be expressed only by abstract-real plastic" ("Being is manifested or known through visible nature, but through its opposite.

However, in 1908, Mondrian does not yet have access to the subtleties of the dialectic. It is at this point that theosophy intervenes, with its contradictory mixture of dualism and monism: "art" and "nature" are both manifestations of the universal. A common principle links them to the Great Whole; they are two branches growing from the same root. Without running any risk, Mondrian could thus add that the two branches are divergent, that "the manner of art" and "the manner of nature" (expressions that often recur in "De Nieuwe Beelding") are incompatible. Art goes astray in seeking to imitate nature's "manner": art has to rely on its own means in order to open the way to the absolute.

It would be pointless here to attempt to penetrate the arcane theories of Helena P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine*, since practically nothing in this voluminous work or its companion, *Isis Unveiled*, seems directly related to Mondrian's art (except for a handful of works in 1910-1911). Reading the torrent of Blavatsky's writings, it could even be said that neo-plasticism is an indication of a profound resistance, on Mondrian's part, to theosophy and to symbolism.<sup>70</sup> Even the famous opposition between masculine-vertical and feminine-horizontal, whose origin is said to lie, for Mondrian, in his conversion to theosophy, is only mentioned once or twice by Blavatsky when discussing the symbol of the cross – a symbol that the painter will vilify.

As Carel Blotkamp rightly emphasizes, Mondrian essentially retains from theosophy the idea of evolution 71: theosophical teleology is a kind of Darwinism (crossed with a hint of Buddhism on the question of reincarnation); Mondrian views his pictorial work as oriented toward a final revelation, as a constant progress toward the pure unveiling of the "universal." The dynamic notion of orientation, of vectorization, is crucial. It implies two things. First, the artist's duty is always to go beyond what he has already accomplished; he "compares each new work with a previous one in his own production or in that of others," 72 and in this way, through ever lessening degrees of imperfection, he approaches the absolute. Second, the revelation cannot be immediate, it awaits the remote future. Each time Mondrian comes to a point where he feels that a perfect equilibrium has been reached in his art, he will conclude that he has rushed too much, attained an untimely perfection, and that he must change course.

The "doctrine of evolution," as Mondrian calls theosophy, carries with it a certain mythology of origin and end that he will cherish all his life. According to this myth, in the beginning is unity, the One or the Great Whole – other names for the "universal." This Golden Age is without history, in every sense of the term – beings live outside space and time; they are unconscious, happy, in total harmony with the universe. No art is to be found in this earthly paradise, nor is there a need to express beauty, since people live it without being aware of it. Moreover, no duality exists: the distinction between matter and spirit, exteriority and interiority, has no meaning. Sexual difference is unknown! All of a sudden (and Mondrian never explains what caused the

catastrophe, perhaps because Blavatsky is completely confused and confusing on the issue), the immutable harmony is shattered: humankind becomes conscious. "There automatically ensued a disharmony between man and nature. As this disharmony increased," Mondrian adds, this time referring to Steiner, "nature drew further and further outside of man." From this original fall comes all dualism and the history of humanity.

All hope is not lost, however, and we can aspire to recovering the initial harmony. In fact, "man's evolution is a return to this unity." By virtue of this evolution, the moment will arrive when the exteriority and interiority are reunited within us, the individual and the universal find themselves on the same level. This new unity will be on an even higher level than that of the primitive beings – reminding us of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* – for the "new man" will not have shed his consciousness: on the contrary, he will have found a way of converting what was once the worm in the fruit into what guarantees its durability.

A rediscovery of paradise will mark the end of art as a separate activity. This is one of Mondrian's lifelong leitmotifs: art and artists need no longer exist when all human activity becomes art. In the meantime, art has a role to play; it is even one of the rare things capable of hastening evolution.

The new and the modern are very positive words for Mondrian, and we are familiar with his inveterate enthusiasm for the metropolis. (He would be at his happiest in New York.) But there is more than one kind of new, and a false novelty delays "the evolution of humanity"; new art certainly anticipates the evolution, but it should not anticipate it too much or too rapidly. Art must patiently teach people to cut through all false unity (a sense of unity felt in the presence of nature, for example), so that eventually, after a long process, when the disequilibrium underlying all false unities has been rectified, humanity can accede to the untrammeled happiness of revealed truth. As Mondrian repeatedly insists, neo-plasticism is only apparently dualistic. This apparent dualism is strategic, a mode of analysis designed to destroy all the false unities that are responsible for all evils.

All this leads to a radical progressivism in Mondrian: there is no turning back (or if there is, it is to be considered a regression), but everything comes in due time. Mondrian is the fabled tortoise (van Doesburg, the hare): rushing is useless; one has to leave on time.

#### Purity of Color

"The first thing to change in my painting was the color. I forsook natural color for pure color. I had come to feel that the colors of nature cannot be reproduced on canvas. Instinctively, I felt that painting had to find a new way to express the beauty of nature." Mondrian refers in this autobiographical text of 1941 to what he himself called his transition years (1908-1911). From this statement it is clear that Mondrian initially relied on a symbolist view of the various pictorial practices called postimpressionism, and more particularly of divisionism – a view that stems in part from a friendship with the older artist Jan Toorop, developed during the summers of 1908 and 1909 spent in Domburg, a vacation spot for artists who looked upon Toorop as a kind of guru.



Fig. 5
Lighthouse at Westkapelle,
1908-1909, oil on paper glued on
canvas, 39 x 29 cm, Palazzo Reale,
Milan.

Mondrian's earliest surviving text is published in October 1909. It is a programmatic letter he sends to Israël Querido during the summer after a favorable review from the critic. Having just joined the Theosophical Society, Mondrian talks about his interest in the occult, but scrupulously dissociates his art from such concerns. Though he alludes vaguely to the eventual possibility of an occult art, it is to color alone that he accords a spiritual power of dematerialization. Of *Devotion* (Ott. 194), the mawkish painting of a young girl in profile, dressed in white, with flaming hair of pure vermilion – which Querido, ignoring the girl's raised head and open, crimson eye, took as an image of prayer – Mondrian explains: "With that work I only envisaged a girl conceived devotedly, or with great devotion, and, by giving the hair that sort of red, to tone down the material side of things, to suppress any thoughts about 'hair,' 'costume,' etc., and to stress the spiritual."

Adhering for several years to the program set out in this letter, Mondrian produces the best of his "naturalistic" works – notably, the imposing *Bos (Woods); Woods near Oele* (cat. 12), the series of Dunes and other marine landscapes (cats. 19-24, 27), and the series of the *Lighthouse at Westkapelle* (fig. 5, cats. 17-18). During this period, when we see him learn the language of modernity, painting a single motif in the manner of Seurat, Matisse, Munch, or Hodler, a heightening of color is the only constant in the varied styles that he adopts.<sup>79</sup>

Toward the autumn of 1911, he thought he was at the point where he could reach beyond the limits set forth in the letter to Querido (in which he says that his work "still remains totally outside the occult realm"). Be He is seized by a sudden urge to translate his readings of the occult directly into painting: this leads to *Evolution* (Ott. 245), the most saturated in color of all his canvases. Mondrian's friends judge the painting to be a catastrophe; to his great distress, Lodewijk Schelfhout howls with laughter at it. Be

# Cubism

Evolution marks an abrupt pause in Mondrian's use of pure (ungraduated) color, a pause that will last until 1920. 82 In October 1911, while exhibiting this very picture (and several other symbolist canvases such as Molen (Mill); Red Mill at Domburg [cat. 28]), Mondrian discovers cubism. He immediately mistakes it, as do most of his contemporaries, for a new form of Neoplatonism, thus at first sight involving no fundamental break, at least on this level, with his esotericism. Mondrian happens on cubism at a timely moment; it enables him to dissociate color from form and to set color temporarily aside.

The encounter with cubism takes place at the first exhibition of the Moderne Kunst Kring in Amsterdam, in the autumn of 1911. Its subsequent transformations in Mondrian's painting were perfectly described by Joop Joosten more than twenty years ago. 83 Nothing has emerged that would lead us to modify Joosten's analysis. I shall touch upon the question of cubism only in order to shed a certain light on the cumulative constitution of neo-plasticism.

What does one find in Mondrian's first cubist canvases, those from late 1911 to early 1912? First, a draconian reduction in his palette, all the more dramatic in that it occurs just after *Evolution*. Next, an increasing dissemination of an orthogonal linear

network across the entire surface of the picture. Canvases following the Cézannian *Still Life with Ginger Pot I* (cat. 29) show a predilection for ochers and grays, and, apart from *Gray Tree* (cat. 30), a strong tendency toward the orthogonal.<sup>84</sup> For Mondrian, as for Braque and Picasso two years earlier, the cubist problem involves an adjusting of the figures to fit a preexisting "grid." Like Picasso and Braque before him – and in his own way – Mondrian abandons this issue after *Still Life with Gingerpot II* (cat. 34), finished in August, which marks the end of his cubist apprenticeship. Over the course of 1913, he slowly eliminates the figure, leaving just a network of orthogonal lines to occupy the surface of the picture.

Mondrian arrives at this solution through a temporary and very marked return to the curved line, during his brief summer stay in Holland in July 1912. The works that signal this detour are "The Sea" (cat. 32); a large drawing that Mondrian later christened, alternatively, Nude or Dune, as if to make fun of his New York friends' obsession with the referent (Seuphor 29); and above all a drawing known as Forest (cat. 33), from which, during the fall, several paintings of trees derive, notably Bloeiende bomen (Flowering Trees) (Rothschild collection [cat. 36]) and "The Trees" (Carnegie Museum of Art [cat. 37]).

Why this unexpected return of the curve in an oeuvre from which it has all but disappeared? Before arriving in Paris, Mondrian adopts an idée reçue of cubism as striving to represent a Neoplatonic "essence of the object."85 On arriving in Paris, he gradually comes to realize two things: first, that Picasso is not concerned with any kind of essence (this is less clearly so with Braque, the two painters diverging discernibly on this issue),86 and, second, that in the work of Picasso and Braque the "grid" is totally independent of the figure; its graphic function, in fact, is to organize the fragmentation of the figure. Mondrian does not want to abandon either the "grid" (from a postimpressionist standpoint, it manifests the autonomy of the picture) or "the essence of the object," but he notices that, in establishing an orthogonal network on the canvas and filling certain blocks that emerge as the different planes of the figure, he failed to do justice either to the figure or to the grid. He was following a recipe, which kept him from communicating his attempted distillation of the sensible. Overly earnest, his cubism from early 1912 (but including Still Life with Gingerpot II) is lacking in tension. Either the figure stands out from the grid like a marionette on a stage (for example, Landscape with Trees [cat. 31]), or it merges unresistingly with it (Portrait of a Lady [Ott. 251]), yielding a "false unity," a premature unity of figure and ground.

Curves provide tension. Their sudden appearance coincides with a change in method: Mondrian no longer begins with the linear network paralleling the edges of the picture; rather, he begins with the object, irregular as it is, and he sets about demonstrating all the processes involved in "reducing" it to a "grid." He shows the branches of the tree *in the process of becoming* orthogonal – it is easier to do so with the simple horizontality of waves on the sea, which is no doubt why he starts with them. A comparison between the 1912 *Bloeiende appelboom (Flowering Appletree)* (cat. 35) and the 1911 *Gray Tree* (cat. 30), whose motif it echoes, reveals a considerable difference between mere curves and curves as potential straight lines.

From this new conception of the image in progress flows all of Mondrian's subse-



Fig. 6
Tableau No. 4, 1913 (cat. 40),
oil on canvas, 95 x 80 cm, Haags
Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

quent work. Most importantly, what emerges from it is the idea that a painting is the result of a kind of struggle, a precarious equilibrium that must remain suspended so as to sustain its intensity.

Mondrian pursues this transcoding of the natural motif into a linear network in the throes of orthogonalization until the autumn of 1913, with its beginnings clearly legible in a series of paintings that includes *Composition Trees I* at the Gemeentemuseum (cat. 38) and the Carnegie Museum of Art picture (cat. 37), both of 1912; *Composition Trees II* of 1912-1913, at Haags Gemeentemuseum (cat. 39); and "*The Tree A*" of 1913, at the Tate Gallery, London (cat. 44). The evolution continues with *Tableau No. 4* (fig. 6, cat. 40), one that marks an important moment in Mondrian's oeuvre, since a more colorful variant of it exists (*Composition No. XVI* [Ott. 259]). Here we can see how, after turning every curve into a developing vertical or horizontal, Mondrian does the same with oblique lines, a "translation" that leads him to conceive the linear network as independent of any function of contour (thus rejoining the analytic cubism of Braque and Picasso).

With the splendid *Tableau No. 2* (better known as *Composition No. VII*) of the Guggenheim Museum (cat. 48), the way in which Mondrian creates, even as we watch, the sense of a process unfolding changes radically. This painting represents the climax and the end of this micro-series; it no longer manifests the orthogonal transcoding of curves and obliques so much as the progressive resolution into a totalizing synthesis – beginning at the periphery of the picture and moving toward the center – of what had become a vertical/horizontal binarism. The preparatory drawings for this painting (cats. 46, 47) provide the clearest illustration of this process that I would call *digitalization*, but it can be seen at work in the painting itself, with its centripetal balancing of horizontal and vertical forces.

Two things should be noted in this canvas: first, the pronounced tendency toward the cruciform, and second, the blurring of the edges – a cubist practice that Mondrian had already used in his previous pictures, all the more striking here for the caesura it creates between the orthogonal center of the picture and the periphery. (This caesura becomes clear-cut in the contemporary *Tableau No. 3*, Stedelijk Museum [cat. 45].) In order to emphasize the process of production, Mondrian disconnects his linear network from the edges of the work: if the developing orthogonals were actually to touch the edges, they would automatically be seen as engendered by the limits of the picture, as a grid governing the entire surface of the painting; all other figures would disappear. Mondrian would then be back to the same premature "false unity," that, in my view, he had sought to escape after *Still Life with Gingerpot II*.

#### Schoenmaekers

It is while working on *Tableau No. 2*, I believe, that Mondrian begins to read Dr. M. H. J. Schoenmaekers, a dissident theosopher who calls himself a "christosopher."<sup>87</sup> As van Doesburg later points out, what Mondrian borrows most from Schoenmaekers is the terminology.<sup>88</sup> For example, he takes from Schoenmaekers the gendering of the opposition vertical-horizontal into the opposition male-female, a real cliché of *fin de siècle* literature. The importance of this gendering for Mondrian's work should not be over-

estimated; it disappears *entirely* from the published writings after the "trialogue," which signals, perhaps, the moment when he distances himself permanently from Schoenmaekers' theory.<sup>89</sup>

Much more importantly, Mondrian finds in Schoenmaekers a needed confirmation: he learns that all curved lines can be "tensed" into a straight line, and that all straight oblique lines can be "tensed" into a vertical or a horizontal; that the equilibrium of these two directions creates the "repose" necessary for contemplation, and, therefore, that disequilibrium engenders the "tragic." Above all, he feels confirmed in the process of digitalization: nature is everywhere the same, despite the diversity of its appearances; in order to arrive at the essence of all things, therefore, this diversity need only be reduced to the "primordial and absolute" relation (the vertical and the horizontal).

Accepting these premises, Mondrian is faced with a crisis in late 1913-early 1914, a problem not unrelated to the one he later encounters with the modular grids: how does one manage, when transcoding all visual scenes into the balancing of vertical/horizontal oppositions, not to obtain the same pictorial result each time? How does one maintain diversity without emphasizing the particularity of the motif that serves as the point of departure? After *Tableau No. 2*, Mondrian carefully avoids formats close to the square; composition, at least, is initially marked by a certain disequilibrium that is then overcome through a hard-fought struggle. He also avoids cruciformity (see, for example, *Tableau No. 1*, in the Kröller-Müller Museum [cat. 50], and *Gemälde No. I* [private collection, cat. 51], both of 1913, one vertical, the other horizontal). This same double interdiction occurs in the next series, apart from the superb *Composition No. II* (Kröller-Müller Museum [cat. 49]), which is horizontal but cruciform, and to a lesser degree the equally spectacular *Tableau No. I* (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth [cat. 52]), which is not cruciform, but whose format is less elongated than its companion pieces.

Yet it is this new series that will exacerbate the crisis. By the fall of 1913, no doubt with the support of Schoenmaekers' theory, Mondrian has elaborated a principle that he will hold throughout his life: "It is necessary that a horizontal or vertical line be constantly interrupted: for unopposed, these directions would again express something 'particular." Toward the end of 1913, this constant mutual "interruption" of verticals and horizontals creates closed rectangles in his canvases. In *Composition No. II* (cat. 49), these rectangles partially overlap, which diminishes the omnipotence of the central "cross" as an immediately perceptible form and produces a relief effect that lacks a counterbalance, since the periphery remains blurred. These superimpositions become exceptional in the canvases that follow, and the rectangles are increasingly aligned (*Tableau No. 2*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [cat. 53]; *Composition No. IV* [cat. 54], Gemeentemuseum; and *Composition No. 8*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York [Ott. 280]).

During the autumn of 1912, the grid had been eliminated as an a priori, in favor of a conception of the painting as a process in formation, of the figure as a nascent grid. By returning to the forefront, the grid now crystallizes the crisis just mentioned: it is "too absolute," too "dogmatic," as Mondrian writes van Doesburg in 1915, referring to the

closed rectangles in *Composition No. IV* (cat. 54).<sup>91</sup> Mondrian tries to solve the problem through color. Although he still sticks to a relatively restricted palette, he adds gray-blue and pink, and gives color a more active function: it acts as a dispersant, counteracting the incipient regularity. But it is not enough.

All these pictures are based on the cityscape. One motif in particular fascinates Mondrian, namely, the shared walls of Parisian buildings suddenly exposed by the demolition of the adjoining structure. As late as 1926 he will speak emotionally of the jubilation he felt at such sights, and at the sight of the advertising posters often placed on these blind walls. The painter's process of abstraction, initially the same as that governing the works of early 1913, becomes more complex when it should be simpler: though the point of departure is architectural, and hence orthogonal, the walls or roofs are larger surfaces, and hence more diversified, more "particular" than the interstices between the branches of a tree. Mondrian was momentarily tempted to inscribe this very diversity (see *Gemälde No. I* [cat. 51] or *Composition No. XV*, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [Ott. 271], both of 1913), then opted instead for a greater equalization of the rectangles by means of the grid: he thereby ran the risk of monotony, and this for him constituted the crisis in question.

However, in 1914, he begins to accept diversity, timidly at first with Tableau III, Composition in Oval (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam [Ott. 282]), then with more and more brilliance in the next four canvases, the last works he paints before leaving Paris for five years: Composition No. VI (Beyeler collection [cat. 56], better known under the title Blue Facade), Composition with Color Planes (on loan at the Kunsthaus Zürich [cat. 55]), Composition in Oval with Color Planes 1 (The Museum of Modern Art, New York [cat.57]) and 2 (Haags Gemeentemuseum [cat.58]). The assertion of color achieves a clear crescendo in these five canvases, both in degree of saturation and emancipation from the linear network: in the Museum of Modern Art picture, some of the color planes are not only not limited by the grid, but they themselves divide up the rectangles (for example, the almost square upper rectangle). What had failed in the preceding series now succeeds, for the disruption is not the work of color alone. As in 1920 (after the "checkerboards"), the grid relaxes its grip and color saturation increases with the only (essential) difference that in 1914 this is accompanied by a return to the "particularity" of the motif. An advertisement for "Kub" (a beef stock cube), recognizable in the Gemeentemuseum picture, gives us a hint of this particularity: Mondrian even allows himself the same pun on the word cubism that Picasso had used in his Landscape with Posters (1912).93 One senses a breath of liberation.

Mondrian's interest in the motif of the stripped wall derives from the fact that he finds there a very simple confirmation of Schoenmaekers' Neoplatonism: peel back the surface of the object – in this case the Haussmannian building – and you discover a planar and orthogonal composition underneath. An additional benefit is that the result is colored, through the diversity of the wall treatments in the several storys of apartment rooms that shared the common wall. Thus, all threat of monotony is averted; essence can be unveiled, appearances cast aside, without running the risk of being "too absolute." One need only undress things.

# Hegel

In late July 1914, Mondrian goes to Holland for what was meant to be a brief summer vacation. But the war breaks out, and he stays for five years.

There is thus a very clear break in Mondrian's life, with an immediate effect on his art. 94 Once again he immerses himself in the Dutch countryside, confronting his own heritage. He still requires a natural motif and, in the absence of the Parisian barestripped wall, returns to three objects that had attracted him earlier in Domburg: the small village church (which he had painted in 1910-1911 [Ott. 242]), the expanse of the sea (emphasized by a high horizon, as in *Seascape* (1909) [cat. 20]), and the piers extending into the sea, painted and drawn the same year (see *Beach at Domburg*, Janis collection). Although he spends only a few weeks in Domburg, these three motifs will occupy Mondrian exclusively for two years.

Given his recent interest in architecture, it is likely that Mondrian begins by drawing the facade of the church. In the first drawing in this series (cat. 59), the "particularity" of the motif is in fact even more noticeable than in the "Kub" picture. But this is precisely where the shoe pinches: the arches and flying buttresses of medieval architecture have nothing to do with modernity. To celebrate these emblems of a bygone age is, for the evolutionist Mondrian, to display a culpable attachment. He very rapidly abandons his latest Parisian mode and returns to the technique of 1912-1913, which I call digitalization, the progressive transformation of a motif into a network of horizontal and vertical dashes (cat. 60).

While working on the facade drawings, he turns to the second motif – the sea: as in the summer of 1912 ("The Sea" [cat. 32]), he finds it easier to digitalize a virtually undifferentiated expanse, punctuated only by the waves and the reflections of the sun. We encounter a moment of perfect serenity in this work; the drawings based on the sea remain among the summits of Mondrian's graphic art (cats. 61-63, 68). But there is a catch: because these spectacular works emphasize the horizontal, they cannot claim to reveal the essence of the natural scene, since the absolute must always be a balancing of the horizontal and the vertical. Moreover, these drawings do not show the incipient orthogonalization of this scene: starting with natural horizontality strewn with vertical reflections, Mondrian ends up with the kind of nontransformation that was possible with the Parisian architecture (since a Neoplatonic distillation is accomplished when the motif itself is being stripped bare). Here, however, he runs the real risk of lapsing into a mode of impressionism, which, for Mondrian the progressivist, would once again be nothing less than a historical regression.

Definitively abandoning the second motif, Mondrian moves on to his third: the piers extending into the sea (the vertical/horizontal opposition). A first rough sketch shows one of these piers, from a barely oblique point of view, as a double row of vertical piles traversing the surface of the page horizontally and diminishing slightly in depth (fig. 7). On this sketch, under the inscription "male and female line," he scribbles that the horizon is "at rest" while the converging lines are not, because they are "pointing the direction." This brief reflection on perspective leads Mondrian to the solution he seeks: with the vertical far from matching the weight of the horizon (the very slight vanishing obliques formed by the rows accentuate the overall horizontality), Mondrian selects a

Fig. 7

Pier, page of a sketchbook,
pencil on paper, 11.4 x 15.8 cm,
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York.



Fig. 8

Pier, page of a sketchbook,
pencil on paper, 15.8 x 11.4 cm,
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York.



point of view that puts the maximal accent on perspectival foreshortening: in several sketches in the same notebook he very clearly presents the pier frontally, vertically, like a promontory that would start at his feet and lunge out into the ocean (fig. 8). This gesture on Mondrian's part, who for ten years has done everything to avoid any illusion of depth, allows him to cross a threshold into abstraction.

With his drawings of the ocean as the basis, Mondrian introduces a vertical axis into his composition: in a formidable series of large drawings on the theme "pier and ocean" (cats. 64-67), we can watch how this initially violent intrusion becomes delocalized, disseminated across the whole surface. There is no sign of intrusion in the single canvas that results from this graphic outburst, *Compositie 10 in zwart wit*, only a generalized shimmering – a blinking effect, a movement always just about to take place and always suspended by the irregular alternation of verticals and horizontals (Kröller-Müller Museum [cat. 70]). Even the cruciform effect created by the initial opposition between the horizon and the phallic irruption of the pier seems atomized.

When this canvas is exhibited, in the fall of 1915, van Doesburg writes in a review: "This work spiritually dominates all others. It gives the impression of Repose: the stillness of the soul. Its methodical construction embodies 'becoming' rather than 'being.'" Van Doesburg puts his finger on what constitutes the strength of Mondrian's art, a feeling of promise hitherto never so well manifested as in *Tableau No. 2* of 1913, at the Guggenheim Museum (cat. 48). These brief remarks prompt Mondrian to write van Doesburg a letter, beginning a warm, decade-long friendship between the two men. Mondrian's conviction that they think alike, notwithstanding the numerous signals to the contrary, and the confidence he places in van Doesburg despite his obviously fickle character, may well be due to this review.

We may recall that the use of the vertical/horizontal opposition in the works of 1913 ended in the crisis from which Mondrian emerged by resorting to the motif of the bared wall, as "particular" a motif as one can imagine. In the absence of this motif, he now returns to a digitalizing of the sensible. But where does he gain the assurance that he can now do so without risking another lapse into "dogmatism"?

The answer lies, perhaps, with Hegel.

There would be a great deal to say about the way in which Mondrian digests Hegel's text as mediated by his Dutch popularizer G. J. P. J. Bolland, occasionally misinterpreting it, sometimes even superbly ignoring it.<sup>97</sup> The status of intuition in creative activity, the concept of internalization, the constant use of the term *opheffing* (the Dutch translation of *Aufhebung*), the suspicion of "purely abstract" thought and the insistence on the importance of materiality (color, for example) in the very struggle against matter – not to mention the eschatological theme of the end of art: all of this comes, in large part, from the study of Hegel through the work of Bolland, and Mondrian cites them both in "De Nieuwe Beelding." <sup>98</sup>

What happens when Mondrian discovers the Hegelian dialectic?

He redirects his previous readings. From theosophy Mondrian keeps teleology, and from Schoenmaekers the "primordial relation" and the notion of "repose"; but Schoenmaekers' system is a static dualism: with him, an opposition is always to be read in additive terms – horizontal plus vertical equals a cross, the point of absolute equilibrium.

Fig. 9

Church Facade, 1915,
charcoal on paper?,
dimensions and location unknown.

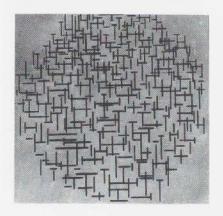


Fig. 10 First state (1916) of Compositie in Iijn, 1917 (cat. 72).

Unlike Schoenmaekers, Mondrian now articulates the opposition by way of the dialectic and its attendant dynamism: each element no longer merely neutralizes the other, but also produces it, manifests it. Vertical and horizontal are in active contestation, each emulating the other as it negates it. The cross, an apparently perfect neutralization and celebrated as such by Schoenmaekers, is therefore a total failure: it affirms neither the vertical nor the horizontal but rather the symmetrical "particularity" of their sum (symmetry "emphasizes the separateness of things").99 The affirmation of the one has to be the negation of the other, and vice versa. From their reciprocal action must emerge, not a standstill, but a new temporary unity, ceaselessly renewed. A certain initial inequality, a disequilibrium, must constantly be resolved, and this resolution must constantly be undone as we watch the mutual negation of the forces at work. As Mondrian repeats throughout his life, "each opposite" must be "transformed into the other," so that repose is never definitive, but is perceived as a tension toward the absolute. This dialectical movement is at work in Compositie 10 in zwart wit: no stasis is possible, and yet the painting achieves, as van Doesburg recognizes, a sense of repose.

On the verge of completing this canvas, Mondrian returns to the series of drawings of the church facade; but he now strives to combat the unidimensionality that struck him in his drawings of the sea: being overly vertical, these works necessarily evoke the "tragic." He first reintroduces the central double arch (cat. 69), which he had ended up eliminating, and then, in the final drawing, now lost (fig. 9), he strongly horizontalizes the arch so as to counterbalance all upward movement, just as in his previous works he had introduced a vertical pier in order to counterbalance the overly "natural" horizontality of the sea.

A few months later, when he sends a photograph of the work to H. P. Bremmer, Mondrian realizes that even this idea is still too "particular": "one particular direction, one particular 'elevation' is still too pronounced in it, in my opinion." So that Bremmer might have a clear understanding of what he means, Mondrian also includes a photograph of his latest work. There, in the first state of *Compositie in lijn*, 1917 (fig. 10), we get an indication of the distance he has covered after the lost drawing of 1915: not only has all reference seemingly been suppressed but there is no longer any need to limit an upward movement by any kind of formal emphasis.

Meanwhile, he has painted *Composition 1916* (completed in March of that year), the conclusion to the series of drawings of the church facade, which also functions as a recapitulation of his cubist output (Guggenheim Museum [cat. 71]). The double arch disappears again, and color returns (graduated primary colors, similar to those found in the last three oval-shaped compositions from 1914). We know that at some point Mondrian wanted to paint *Compositie 10 in zwart wit* in color, and the Guggenheim Museum picture may provide an idea of what this improbable work might have been <sup>101</sup>: the linear network and the scattering of the color planes cancel each other out, *all the while supporting each other*. The dialectical movement of affirmation through negation becomes a canon of three, four, five, as many as six voices (verticals, horizontals, achromatic "ground," blue, pinkish red, orange-brown), each element attracting others into its orbit and being in turn attracted by yet another element. But this perpetual

movement is in no sense agitated, nothing leads our eye beyond the picture. As an astonishingly perspicacious critic said at the time: "There is a beautiful overflow of tones in the picture, the effect of which is enhanced because the canvas is placed upon the frame rather than within it." Mondrian had already nailed a wooden strip frame, slightly recessed from the surface of the canvas, onto the edges of some of his cubist works, but here he further accentuates the relief created through this practice by mounting the whole (painting and strip frame) onto a slightly larger frame or panel: the surface of the painting forms the peak of a ziggurat seen from above. By thrusting the canvas toward the spectator, he insists more than ever before on its autonomy and its reality as an object.

When framing this canvas, Mondrian discovers that this new "realism" of the painting as an object is to be enhanced by total abstraction. As long as an opposition between figure and ground is maintained, we remain in the domain of the projective image and transcendence – the painting is always read as bearing an image projected from elsewhere onto its surface, and this imaginary projection is always illusionistic. The dualism of figure and ground is the strongest obstacle to affirming the immanence of the painting as an enactment and provisional resolution of a dialectical conflict.

In Compositive 10 in zwart wit, the ground is still neutral; more active in Composition 1916, it remains atmospheric (dominated by the other elements); in Compositive in lijn (1917), Mondrian for the first time radically questions the opposition of figure and ground by having them contaminate one another – meaning, as Joop Joosten convincingly points out, that this work can be seen as Mondrian's first abstract canvas. 103

#### Figure/Ground Flicker

From the spring of 1917 until his departure for Paris, in June 1919, Mondrian will be almost exclusively preoccupied with the "annihilation," as he says, of the figure/ground opposition. This period marks his closest association with the members of the De Stijl group; all of its painters, except for Bart van der Leck, tackle the problem. 104 (Mondrian's first gesture, in fact, will be to depart radically from van der Leck's illusionistic conception of the white ground as an empty, and thus an atmospheric, space: while the Goethean *Compositie in kleur A* and *B* still partake of such a conception, *Compositie in lijn*, as I have just noted, already begins to cancel it.)

The battle is joined, and won, in six rounds.

Round one: In the series of five works of 1917, each a Composition with Color Planes, 105 two issues are treated at once: the centrifugal character of the composition, which decreases, and the "determination" of the rectangles, which increases. Mondrian begins, in the first three works (Ott. 302, cat. 74 [Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam], and cat. 75 [Haags Gemeentemuseum]), by positing lateral extension as an antidote to the atmospheric hollowing out of the ground, but he soon discovers a defect: unconstrained lateral extension and the illusion of depth go hand in hand, since they both presuppose the figure's independence from the ground. The rectangles float and Mondrian thereupon sets out to "determine" them. In the last two canvases of the group (The Museum of Modern Art, New York [cat. 76] and fig. 11), the

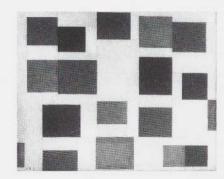


Fig. 11
Composition with Color Planes,
1917, oil on canvas,
48 x 61 cm, private collection.

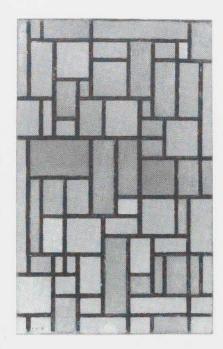


Fig. 12
Composition with Ocher and
Gray Planes, 1918, oil on canvas,
78 x 49.5 cm, Museum of Fine Arts,
Houston.

rectangles decrease in number, become more aligned, and the ground is divided into rectangles of different shades of white – their edges are not marked, line is still not yet part of the composition.

Round two: In the next micro-series, comprising three works of 1918, the surface is entirely divided by lines that delimit adjoining rectangles. In the only work surviving from this group, Composition with Color Planes and Gray Lines 1 (Max Bill collection [cat. 77]), the rectangles are far more aligned than before and most lines border more than one rectangle. In order to counteract the centrifugal reading of his composition, Mondrian has tended to grade the value of the lines from darker gray (center) to lighter gray (periphery). The ground is on the verge of disappearing (there is no fundamental difference between the white or light gray rectangles and the colored ones). However, as Mondrian said later, the rectangles still "obtrude themselves." 106

(Rounds three, four, five, and six: The sudden emergence of the modular grid, at this point, stems from the need to anchor the rectangles to the surface of the painting – remembering that the proportions of the module are set by those of the picture of which it is a miniature version. The modular grid is certainly extendible, but it cannot be extended without the surface on which it lies and which it defines.)

Round three: The unfinished vertical Composition with Ocher and Gray Planes (1918, Houston Museum of Fine Arts [fig. 12]), becomes the first modular grid: its planes are white, pale gray, and ocher, of extremely varied sizes (the smallest measuring one modular unit, the largest ten). Unlike the irregular figures in the "checkerboards," conglomerates of the same color are of unequal planes here, and they hit the viewer directly in the eye. In the larger Composition in Gray, also vertical and unfinished (Ott. 311), Mondrian has obviously attempted to even out the size of his planes: because the work is left achromatic and thinly painted, the modular template that Mondrian first traced in pencil over the entire surface reads as a secondary network complementing the black grid delimiting the rectangles.

Round four: In the first two diamond paintings (one from the end of 1918 [cat. 78], the second from the beginning of 1919 [cat. 79]), Mondrian keeps the idea of a double linear network - one regular, and acting like a basso ostinato, the other superimposed and differentiated by two orders of thickness. The second diamond canvas departs only from the first in that the differentiation in thickness of lines is more pronounced, making its (rigorously identical) planar composition more visible. The most striking feature of these two works is an optical activation of the linear network through retinal afterimages; the feature almost sadistically counteracts the regular division of the surface. Those "successive contrasts," as Chevreul called them, are a corollary to the solution (modularity) of Mondrian's problem (abolition of figure and ground), but we have two reasons to believe that he was not entirely satisfied with them: first, all afterimages are illusions, and Mondrian, faithful to his postimpressionist background, is at this point fundamentally opposed to any kind of illusionism; second, he wants to express repose, a "perfectly equilibrated movement," through an equalization and neutralization of the vertical and horizontal directions: instead, he merely achieves an optical bombardment of the beholder.107

Round five: In the next group (early 1919), Mondrian gradually abandons the optical

flicker. His third diamond painting (cat. 80), based on the same composition as the first two, begins to tone down the idea of a double network. The regular base is still visible, but underneath a mute color, one of the various shades of ocher and gray that now fill the planes. The fourth diamond canvas (cat. 82) ignores the base network altogether; compositionally independent of its predecessors, it finally admits some chromatic vivacity into the series. Between those two works is the beautiful *Composition with Grid 6* of the Basel Kunstmuseum (cat. 81), also painted in muted colors. One feature, which also characterizes the first four diamond canvases, is particularly striking in this orthogonal square painting: the four corners are handled similarly. The possibility of a "good repetition" begins to emerge.

Round six: Finally, the two "checkerboards."

We are confronted, once again, with an optical bombardment. In the bright "checkerboard," Mondrian tries to control and counteract the "capricious," natural, emergence of illusory simultaneous or successive contrasts through a chromatic modulation of his white or light gray planes. And, more important, the ground is no more: not even the white rectangles of the bright "checkerboard" take on this function; rather, they seem at times to jump in front of the colored planes: not until *Victory Boogie Woogie* will we find again such an absolute dissociation of the color white from the function of support.

But why does Mondrian renounce *this* mode of abolishing the figure/ground opposition (the *all-over* distribution) as soon as he finds it – only to return to it, differently, at the very end of his life?

Because he has just received from the "checkerboards" the confirmation that for an artist it is impossible to reject entirely the arbitrariness of composition. Composition is unavoidable, thus indispensable, to painting; it is what "leaves the artist the greatest possible freedom to be subjective – to whatever extent this is necessary." Mondrian, alone with Duchamp among his peers, has understood that whatever one does, a certain arbitrary element of choice always intervenes: such is "the tragic." Composition is tragic.

He has the courage to abandon a formidable gesture, noncompositionality, on which artist after artist would dwell after World War II. At the end of 1920, with neo-plasticism, he therefore reclaims the classical art of composition, proceeding, over the next twenty years, to destroy, on its own turf, its very foundations.

# IV. PLAYING THE NEO-PLASTIC GAME

How does a neo-plastic work by Piet Mondrian constrain our work as spectators?

Though we first examine a neo-plastic painting in and for itself, we are promptly obliged to compare it with its contemporaries and then, given the combinatory nature of the "system," to other works in the same series. And this is when complications develop. In the first place, we find the series in the strict sense of the term – variations on a compositional schema. <sup>111</sup> Then, we find the series in the broad sense, consisting of a sequence of paintings with only a small number of points in common. The result is an increasing proliferation of kindred relations between paintings: they are virtually infinite.

Counting the first neo-plastic picture (cat. 88) and the only remaining canvas of 1923 (Ott. 349), as well as the paintings that have disappeared (but of which we have some photographic record), Mondrian painted thirty-eight canvases in the space of two to three years – one-fifth of his (finished) neo-plastic output. 112 It is a superproductive phase that ends in crisis – for there is a clear caesura in mid-1923, a silence lasting nearly two years, all the more striking in that it follows a period of such rare fecundity. The works executed between late 1920 and early 1923 can thus be seen as forming part of the same set, as products of the same continuous, unbridled campaign. This allows us some easier access into the workings of Mondrian's neo-plastic "system."

According to Els Hoek, two compositional schemas compete with one another during this period. The first type, which she calls "central," is organized around intersecting lines in the central area of the painting; in the second type, which she calls "peripheral," elements are distributed around a square (or a pseudo-square) set in the center of the picture. Both types (which in my view are *simultaneously* central and peripheral) emerge, as we shall see, from a third and earlier one.

Before examining the unfolding of these three types, I would like to point to the works that antedate them (and do not fit in these categories), and then to the characteristics that are shared by all paintings at the time.

I mentioned earlier the abandonment of juxtaposed color planes in the first neoplastic painting. They are found in only four of the works listed here, which can be considered transitional, still linked to the tough battle that Mondrian had just fought against the module. The first two date from early 1921: *Composition with Large Red Square, Yellow, Black, Gray, and Blue* (from the Haags Gemeentemuseum [Ott. 326]), and *Composition with Yellow, Blue, Black, Red, and Gray* (cat. 89). 114 The other two are a pair of canvases bearing the double date 1921-1925 (Ott. 350-351). This kind of juxtaposition now disappears entirely from Mondrian's oeuvre, reappearing only in the final New York canvases.

The color planes are allowed only to skim each other at one end, not to border each other. Exit color contrast: the color planes are henceforth placed on the periphery and limited on one side by the edges of the picture. (There are two exceptions: the double-dated painting in the Phillips Collection [cat. 93] and an exceptional canvas – formerly in the collection of Anthony Kok – with an enormous red square in the center [cat. 102].) Save in a few rare cases, this feature remains constant through 1933.<sup>115</sup>

The second common feature of this core 1921-1922 group is that all the works involve three colors, and that each of the three primary colors appears only once. The first rule remains in effect until *Tableau II*, 1925 (Bern Kunstmuseum [Ott. 356]), and it is subsequently often ignored; the second rule, once again, is not contested until the New York years.

Once the question of color distribution (tricolorism, periphery) is resolved, the much more complex issue of non-color remains. Numerous critics have remarked on the abundance of slight chromatic variations in the gray planes during this period. According to Robert Welsh, they are to be read as a term-for-term adjustment between color planes and achromatic planes, where each color plane is said to have its uncolored satellite(s). To make this point in his discussion of *Tableau II* (on loan to the

Kunsthaus Zürich [cat. 97]), Welsh refers to *Composition B* (Wilhelm Hack Museum [Ott. 319]), where he suggests that each uncolored plane is tinted with a bit of pigment from the neighboring color plane. 117 While I am prepared to accept this hypothesis for the 1920 canvas, I think it becomes increasingly untenable during the course of 1921: for one thing, I find it hard to imagine Mondrian wanting to reintroduce chromatic relations (of harmonization) that he had just rejected so brutally in his first neo-plastic picture; second, he is in the process of formulating his distinction between color and non-color, which remains essential to him for more than a decade. To try to understand the function of this chromatic modulation of the non-color, we need to begin by identifying the problem that motivates it, a problem that Mondrian previously sought to resolve by trying two other solutions.

Once the modular grid and its *all-over* investment of the surface are rejected, once the colors are dispersed to the painting's periphery in order to avoid any optical "contamination," Mondrian needs to find a way of preventing the vast, achromatic central area from appearing as a uniform ground, ready to hollow itself out.

The first solution adopted is that of a "relief" effect, hence the emergence of pure white: we find it in the first neo-plastic picture (through isolation of the central square bordered with colors or black, thus accentuating the value contrast), but also in *Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray* (Haags Gemeentemuseum [Ott. 325]), which was undoubtedly completed soon after, and in which the pure white block of the central column stands out from the neighboring light grays. (This latter canvas, with its numerous divisions, also belongs to the small group of what I am calling the transitional works, although color juxtapositions had already been abandoned in it.) But Mondrian immediately realizes that by allowing an achromatic plane to have such a surplus of energy, he is undermining the basis of the color/non-color opposition that he is trying to establish: color is in the domain of substance and the variable, whereas non-color, like the vertical/horizontal opposition, is in the domain of the invariable. Colors leap forward: this is inevitable and thus welcome. Non-color must inhibit their vigor, meaning that it cannot be a passive receptacle, but it must do so *without imitating* color (otherwise the opposition between the two disappears).

The second solution adopted sidesteps the difficulty by provisionally leaving aside the question of non-color and calling on the other invariable element (the linear horizontal/vertical network). In this solution, undoubtedly derived from the patient antimodular work in 1920 (see, for example, *Composition C* from the Museum of Modern Art, New York [cat. 86]), the color plane is traversed by a black line. (This element is found in a minority of the works of 1921-1922, such as *Composition with Large Blue Plane, Red, Black, Yellow, and Gray*, Dallas Museum of Art [cat. 92] and *Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Blue-White*, The Menil Collection [cat. 106].)<sup>119</sup> If non-color is not perceived as a ground, it is because it appears to be further forward than the colors, which Mondrian pushes slightly into the "background" by superimposing black lines on them. Once again, but in an indirect way, Mondrian has lapsed back into the "relief." <sup>1120</sup>

The solution he finally adopts is a subtle modulation of the non-color planes. It is a mistake to think that, as a result, Mondrian returns to chromatic relations and rejects

the color/non-color opposition. He simply inverts the terms of the equation: the variability of color is itself manifested by an invariant – the triad of pure primary colors, unmodulated since each color appears in the painting only once and each plane is flat. Conversely, the nonsubstantial permanence of non-color is brought out by very fine variations that gradually become almost imperceptible. Mondrian's cherished dialectical principle, whereby everything must be expressed by its opposite, finds a new application here. The non-color planes are all differentiated, forming, at the most, pairs on either side of the picture, and in my view (pace Welsh), this differentiation never corresponds to a privileged relation between a color plane and a non-color plane. The goal is to prevent the constitution of the ground as a preexisting entity – an effort that would immediately be doomed to failure if the molecular concatenations of color and non-color could be fixed. In a way, we would find ourselves returning to the constellations that Mondrian had wanted to disregard in his "reconstruction of a starry sky."

This dialectical pictorial game remains a constant throughout Mondrian's entire oeuvre: it is the relative instability of non-color that guarantees its opacity – the fact that it neither forms a hollow in space nor leaps forward. Even when Mondrian definitively abandons the pigmental modulation of his achromatic planes and opts for a single, brilliant white, this differential function is taken over by variations in texture, which become more and more pronounced in the 1930s.

# Typology

I shall now move on to a brief examination of the compositional types of these years. Mondrian's starting point is a type that I propose to call "open," as it contains a large colored plane bounded on one side by the limit of the painting. It is found in five surviving works (among them Tableau I from the Museum Ludwig in Cologne [cat. 90]; Composition with Red Plane, Black, Blue, Yellow, and Gray, Rothschild collection [cat. 91]; and the painting with a large blue plane in the Dallas Museum of Art [cat. 92]). 122 It seems to begin preoccupying him in June 1920, the probable date of a rare preparatory drawing, almost a cartoon (cat. 167), for Tableau 1.123 If Tableau 1 is indeed the prototype (even if not completed until later on, as I am inclined to believe), it is surprising that the point of departure should be such a vertical composition - that is, in Mondrian's terms, so ineluctably "tragic," since it emphasizes only one of the fundamental directions. But this does provide us with a precious indication of what he is trying to accomplish: he wants to control the way in which the large color plane - occupying a considerable portion of the painting's surface - "leaps forward." He therefore opens it up, providing a lateral safety valve for its excess energy; in turn, the verticality of the picture's format balances out this potential horizontality.

Mondrian may have judged this type of composition difficult to adapt to a less elongated format; whatever the case, he fairly quickly abandons the lateral decentering of the large color rectangle: in this micro-series of five pictures, and taking the canvas from the Rothschild collection as the last of the series, the internal vertical edge moves gradually closer to the axis of symmetry. Mondrian attempts a radical transformation of this compositional schema in *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black* of 1922 (cat. 100), also decidedly elongated, where the large, open, decentered rectangle

becomes a non-color plane.<sup>124</sup> But he will not capitalize on this new pictorial invention until 1925-1927, when it will become his favorite compositional schema and the source of his most spare and successful canvases of the period (for example, *Composition with Black, Red, and Gray* of 1927 [cat. 113]).

Rather than continuing in this direction, he picks up another idea from the Rothschild painting (that of a bisecting vertical axis) to invent his central type, where the intersection at the center of the canvas clearly serves as a pivot for the entire composition, which revolves in a spiraling movement.

In the first picture of this type, *Tableau 3 with Orange Red, Yellow, Black, Blue, and Gray* (Basel Kunstmuseum [fig. 13]), the vertical axis is still symmetrical and the canvas somewhat unresolved. Symmetry is then discarded in two ways – by displacement, and by duplication of the central axis. In the 1922 *Composition with Red, Black, Yellow, Blue, and Gray* (cat. 107), perhaps the last painting in this series, the central axis is set off to one side, close to the border of the painting: this accentuates the picture's gyration, and, with its close kinship with the Cologne *Tableau I*, lets us see how various types relate to one another in Mondrian's oeuvre.

In the two major canvases of this central type, both of 1921 (*Tableau I*, Haags Gemeentemuseum [cat. 96], and *Tableau II*, on loan to the Kunsthaus Zürich [cat. 97]), Mondrian retains a vertical axis, but doubles it to lessen its preeminence: it then ceases to be a pivot and serves, on the contrary, as a stabilizer underpinning the exceptional scope of the composition. This stabilization makes all kinds of audacity possible; in the Gemeentemuseum canvas, Mondrian manages to blind us to the fact that the red "plane" is actually almost as thin as the line bordering it. Even though it is one, we do not perceive this red plane as a line: such a confusion of genres, which remains latent if not veiled here, is not openly espoused until after 1932.

The third type (the one that Hoek calls peripheral) pushes this kind of visual negation to the limit. The culmination of all the 1921 work, it is pursued into 1922 and marks the advent of neo-plastic seriality.

This type involves two subgroups. The prototype of the first is the Gemeentemuseum's *Composition with Red, Blue, Black, Yellow, and Gray* (cat. 94), which is followed by a variant (Rothschild collection [Ott. 338]), and by two works that present the "same" composition, but *upside down* (cat. 98 [private collection], and cat. 99 [Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York]).

Two concurrent strategies compete with each other. First, a strategy within each painting: a large square of non-color, central but not centered, governs the surface of the canvas (an almost-square vertical rectangle), but, as Kermit Champa rightly pointed out, "every side of the contained square acts differently." Each of the lines demarcating the square enters into a different syntactical relation with the plane(s) that it defines along the parallel edge of the picture. This sets in motion a system of weights and counterweights that prevents the constitution of the square as a stable figure.

Second, there is a strategy that operates within the series: on the one hand, the slightest change in the chromatic order alters the identity, the particularity, of the picture; on the other hand, the simple reversal of the composition proves that the pictorial field is not isotropic, that the top and the bottom, the right and the left (because we are

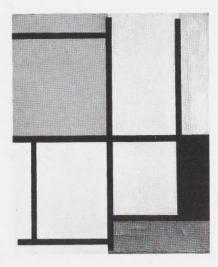


Fig. 13

Tableau 3 with Orange Red, Yellow,
Black, Blue, and Gray, 1921, oil on
canvas, 49.5 x 41.5 cm,
Kunstmuseum Basel.

human, as Mondrian would say), don't have the same value for us, and are not interchangeable.  $^{\rm 126}$ 

The second subgroup of the third type restricts itself to a transcription on the horizontal format of the double strategy that I have just described (its prototype is either *Composition with Red, Blue, Yellow, Black, and Gray*, Toledo Museum of Art [cat. 103], or a similar canvas in the Stedelijk Museum [cat. 105]). Mondrian allows himself greater variations: for example, the rod suspended in the middle of a yellow rectangle in *Composition with Blue, Yellow, Red, and Black*, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (cat. 104), or the elimination of a horizontal division (Ott. 346). But in general, this subgroup is less experimental than the preceding one.<sup>127</sup>

The painter regains all his audacity with these four works: Composition with Blue, Yellow, Black, and Red (Staatsgalerie Stuttgart [cat. 101]), Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black (private collection [cat. 100]), Composition with Large Red Plane, Gray-Blue, Yellow, Black, and Blue (formerly Kok collection [cat. 102]), and the painting from The Menil Collection (cat. 106). And none of these works (all from 1922) demonstrates the quality of equilibrium based on a resolved dissonance toward which Mondrian claimed to be heading at the time, and which he had just explored so masterfully, and in so many different ways, since the end of 1920. The first two are "top heavy"; the red square in the third work is a slap in the face; the last amounts to a collision between the three types I have examined. These four paintings suggest the final flaring up of a man at once exhausted and exuberant, a leap of originality that seems to have led Mondrian into a dry spell: he virtually stops painting for almost two years, except for commissioned watercolors of flowers that put bread on his table, a task that he pursues with ever-increasing repugnance. (These watercolors are signed "Mondriaan," with two a's, indicating that they belong to an earlier phase of his life and are not meant to be seen as part of his corpus.)

#### Expansion, Limitation

On 13 February 1919, Mondrian encourages van Doesburg to go see his contribution to the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring exhibition in Amsterdam, adding: "You must keep in mind that my things are still intended as paintings, that is: they are a representation [beelding] in and of themselves, not a part of a building." A few weeks later he repeats himself: "In relation to architecture, there might be something to be said against it, but you know that, as far as I am concerned, I am still making pictures, if I may say so (that is, things, independent from the building)." 128

These pictures, which Mondrian arms in advance against eventual criticism, are among the first four diamond pictures. A sudden anguish concerning the autonomy of the painting, an insistence on its preservation at the very moment when Mondrian is adopting a format that seems to negate closure is, at first sight, paradoxical. Indeed, most of the criticism devoted to the diamond paintings celebrates their brilliant utilization of virtual expansion. To quote just two examples: Max Bill sees them as proof that Mondrian's canvases are mere fragments of a vast grid extending to infinity and constituting their common matrix; Meyer Schapiro, starting from similar premises, compares them to Degas' violently cropped pictures, and establishes from that point a

connection between Mondrian's and the impressionist's pictorial practice. 129

Should Mondrian's paintings be considered as a series of "samplings" from a totalizing network of Cartesian coordinates?

Mondrian *never* mentions a preexisting grid, one whose mesh, invisible as such and therefore spiritual, would be there in advance, ready to be excerpted and materialized in a painting. His only works that play on the *impression* of a fragmented larger ensemble are the eight works immediately preceding the appearance of the modular grid, and they do so in a diminishing fashion; furthermore, it is just as he discovers, with the modular grid, the possibility of a perfect congruence between the surface (or field) and the inscription (or image) that Mondrian adopts the diamond format as a test for this new discovery.

The painting is thus not a fragment of the Great Whole, or if it is one, it is so in the same way that everything else is: "each thing repeats the whole on a smaller scale; the structure of the microcosm resembles that of the macrocosm." 130 The painting is an "abstract surrogate for the whole" – in other words, it is a world in its own right, "in and of itself," but – and this is the great paradox and the difficulty of the task that Mondrian sets himself – it is a world in which it must be demonstrated that things only exist through interrelations, and consequently that in fact nothing exists "in itself." 131

When, therefore, Mondrian dreams, as he will throughout his life, of a future dissolution of painting, first in architecture and then in the environment, he only seems to contradict himself because he brings to light an essential contradiction in the art of this century, underscoring and exacerbating it perhaps more keenly than any of his peers, and wanting more than anything else to resolve it. Forming the mainspring of all the utopias born of the avant-garde movements between the wars, and lying at the very core of Mondrian's teleology, this contradiction involves the antithetical conceptions of art as end and art as means. Mark Cheetham rightly situates Mondrian's preoccupation with this issue in the sphere of the Hegelian dialectic, quoting this statement in particular: "The New Plastic, although an end in itself, leads to conscious universal vision, just as naturalistic painting led to unconscious natural vision."132 (The connection with Hegel is even plainer in this general formulation of the same idea: "Art although an end in itself, like religion - is the means through which we can know the universal and contemplate it in plastic form." 133) The notion of contradiction should here be understood as a dynamic vector: Mondrian strives to go beyond the antinomy of art as end and art as means, just as the Russian constructivists are doing around the same time. Unlike them, however, Mondrian at no stage capitulates to any of the alternatives.

In 1920, while Mondrian is in the process of inventing neo-plasticism, he transforms his studio into an abstract interior.<sup>134</sup> Over the next two to three years (the most avantgarde period in Mondrian's theory, coinciding – and not by chance – with the pictorial fever that then gripped him), he reflects a great deal on architecture and the possibilities offered to it by the principle of neo-plasticism.<sup>135</sup>

He comes out of this period of intense theoretical activity adopting three positions to which he clings for the rest of his life. First, neo-plastic architecture, and a fortiori the dissolution of painting in architecture, are impossible under current economic,

technical, and ideological conditions – they are achievable only in a remote future; second, one can try for a homeopathic anticipation of this possibility by "correcting" existing architecture, but this can only be done on the basis of a limited and thus controllable corpus (namely, the interior); third, the neo-plastic interior does not take precedence over the picture – both are microcosms, self-contained totalities, and they both have a function in the dialectical movement governing the evolution of humanity.

Beginning in 1917, Mondrian declares that, since his painting is opposed to the caprices of nature and the disorder of the environment, it would "be disharmonious whenever it is not seen simply in and for itself." But he immediately adds: "But perhaps this disharmony will open people's eyes to the present environment – as it mostly is – in all its traditionalism and arbitrariness." This concept of "productive disharmony" is granted its definitive dialectical status in "Le Home – la Rue – la Cité," where it is applied directly to architecture: the "disharmonious" neo-plastic interior will eventually necessitate changing the whole house, which will then provoke the transformation of the street, and the street the city, etc. 137

As for the arrangement of the studio itself, though Mondrian certainly views it as a first bid toward a future architectural neo-plasticism, he gives it special attention mainly because it provides, as he puts it, an "ambiance" for his pictorial work. Numerous letters describing the long periods when he abstains from painting in order to devote himself entirely to the studio reveal that a dialectic is established between this "ambiance" and the pictorial work, a dialectic of the same type as the one governing the relations between painting and theory. Mondrian alters the studio whenever he makes a discovery in his painting, and he rarely begins a new series of canvases without first pausing to repaint his studio. 138

The painting is not a fragment of anything, not even of the studio, and the studio itself cannot be broken down into fragments that might be presented as separate works of art. But the picture has its place in architecture: it must irradiate the space it occupies. This notion of irradiation or expansion may inspire the misinterpretation of the neo-plastic picture as a fragment; we should therefore examine it for a moment. Tinged with theosophical vitalism, it first appears in Mondrian's texts just after he has expressed the wish that the "abstract-real" work be painted wherever it is to be hung, promptly abandoning this unrealistic idea in favor of productive "disharmony." (He has yet to paint a modular grid.) Expansion is the "exteriorization of the active primal force," Mondrian says, and is thus necessarily victorious against its "extreme opposite," namely, limitation. 139 The relation between the two terms is not yet dialectical (because Mondrian has yet to elaborate this question dialectically in his painting): it is a Manichean struggle between good and evil, and remains so until the end of "De Nieuwe Beelding." Vitalist overtones are still heard in the "trialogue," where the concept of expansion is again discussed, but here the aim is to achieve a dialectical equivalence: limitation is an evil spirit, since it is on the side of form, "particularity," and the "tragic"; but expansion as such is not much better off, since it is on the side of "undetermined" space. "If limitation were completely abolished," writes Mondrian, "the tragic would disappear, but so would all appearance that is real to us." 140 Pure expansion is imperceptible; limitation, which it combats, renders expansion visible.

# "Tableaux losangiques" 141

Between the two texts (dated 1917-1918 and 1919-1920), Mondrian paints his first four diamond pictures, and the refinements in his theory come from this pictorial invention.

Already a considerable body of literature has been devoted to the series of sixteen extant diamond canvases that span Mondrian's entire abstract career. All critics treating the series as a whole have noted an increase in diamond paintings around 1925-1926 and have related it to Mondrian's concurrent conflict with van Doesburg over the use of the oblique in painting. It is certainly true that van Doesburg's "elementarism," as he called his 45° rotation of the neo-plastic "primordial relationship," impels Mondrian to return to his diamond format, but the conjunction between the two issues has been somewhat overstated.

To begin with, the diamond series actually includes three clusters: four pictures in 1918-1919, five (plus one that has been lost) in 1925-1926, three in 1930-1931, to which must be added four isolated canvases of 1921, 1933, 1938, and 1944. The invention of the diamond format in 1918, as Blotkamp has shown, is already related to the issue of the oblique. He but this time Mondrian had to show van der Leck, not van Doesburg (who was then in perfect agreement with Mondrian), what could be a "proper" use of the oblique. Thus Mondrian's rejection of van Doesburg's "improvement" (a term that greatly irritates him) is entirely consistent with neo-plastic theory. First, the oblique, in an orthogonally positioned painting, jeopardizes the adhesion of the inscription to the surface: it strongly establishes an opposition between figure and ground. (This had been Mondrian's main unhappiness with van der Leck's work in 1918; van Doesburg, by reverting to it in 1924-1925, turns back the clock.) Second, the disequilibrium created by an oblique can only be counteracted by the disequilibrium of its perpendicular: there is no dialectical opposition here (as there would be in the counteraction of equilibrium and disequilibrium): it is purely additive, in the style of Schoenmaekers. He

But one of Mondrian's points against van Doesburg's elementarism, involving the relationship of painting and architecture, directly concerns the diamond format: where its internal (orthogonal) composition harmonizes with architecture, its (oblique) edges do not, and it is easy to imagine how Mondrian makes this opposition into a positive and pictorially productive element. He sees it as the crucial difference between his art and van Doesburg's: where the elementarist oblique simply rules out any relation with architecture, Mondrian's oblique brings architecture into crisis through a dialogue (homeopathy, productive disharmony).

In the 1943 notes to James Johnson Sweeney for his planned monograph on the painter, Mondrian adds yet another element to the argument: "The advantage is the longer lines produced this way." What he has in mind is not virtual extension but a kind of multiplication that follows from the geometric properties of the square standing on one corner. And this multiplication affects not just the length of the lines but all the other formal elements of the painting.

Mondrian becomes aware of this with his diamond picture of 1921 (Art Institute of Chicago [cat. 95]). All of its lines (excepting those that delimit the internal black rectangle) traverse the picture from edge to edge: Mondrian returns to such a practice, abandoned the year before as it did not adequately combat the prominence of the grid

as a form in an orthogonal format, because all the bisecting lines of a diamond, unless they are median or symmetrically positioned, are necessarily unequal. Certainly, Mondrian is worried that a return to bisection (even where irregular) would reinforce the idea of a preexisting grid, of a cutout section, which is why he has every line, except for the large horizontal on the right, stop short of the picture's edge.

In the next diamond paintings, he sidesteps the strange effect created by these interruptions (minuscule, "non-determined" white triangles between the ends of the lines and the edges of the picture) by having the lines extend over the edges of the canvas, often ending at the recessed framing strip: here again the aim is to emphasize the adhesion of the lines to their support. But from the work on the Chicago picture he retains the idea of a multiplication – an intrinsic amplification of the formal elements, at once more "egoistic" and more interdependent than ever – simply through the use of the diamond format.

This intrinsic multiplication can be likened to the principles of billiards or origami, the Japanese art of paper folding that can baffle anyone lacking a rudimentary knowledge of topology. As Harry Cooper has perceptively remarked, the slightest transformation, the slightest displacement of the lines, is magnified at least twofold by the format of the picture.145 For example, in the Chicago canvas the fact that the large horizontal line does not link the two lateral corners leads to the creation of two asymmetrical couples, in the right and left corners of the picture (on each side an irregular quadrilateral is coupled with a right-angled isosceles triangle). The intersection of this line with the large vertical in turn creates multiple irregularities: one quadrant is triangular (the yellow plane), two are irregular quadrilaterals (the upper right and lower left quadrants), the largest is an irregular pentagon. One could go on endlessly enumerating the play of differences and identity in this painting, or in the next diamond picture (National Gallery, Washington, cat. 108, where the displacement of the horizontal axis in relation to the median is similar, but in the opposite direction), and in all the pictures in this series (apart from the first four and the last one). But I leave it to the reader who has ventured this far to discover for himself the pleasures of deciphering the topological relations within this series. The essential point here is that, far from being a fragment, the diamond painting is a particle accelerator in which everything resonates twice over, a microcosm in which the maximum energy is concentrated.

There is no radical distinction between the diamond canvases and Mondrian's other paintings: the diamond format merely amplifies a problem (expansion/limitation) approached in other ways in orthogonal works.

One such way, which emerges in 1921 and which I have already commented upon, is the opening up of a central plane, slightly displaced laterally and delimited on one side by the edge of the picture: this is the most pronounced stylistic feature in the works between 1925 and 1927, and it even occurs as late as 1933.

Another way that Mondrian dialecticizes the opposition between expansion and limitation is in his treatment of the frame, crucially important in his view. (As is evident in the reproductions in this catalogue, a number of paintings, miraculously, remain in their original frames.) The evolution of Mondrian's frame, starting with his cubist phase, and directly linked both to the new relationship between center and

periphery and to the definition of the picture as an object, is an extraordinarily complex question, full of surprises and reversals – as engaging as Seurat's frame, with which it has much in common. I shall simply note that, as with everything else, Mondrian's frame demonstrates that the relation between expansion and limitation cannot be reduced to a simple transgression of closure.

#### Apex

In eight years of work, from 1925 to 1932, Mondrian produces eighty-two paintings, averaging ten a year. <sup>146</sup> This production is roughly continuous: there are changes in rhythm and a noticeable slowdown after the outpouring of 1927, but no prolonged gaps, no serious crises.

The years 1925 to 1927 are almost entirely devoted to squarish variations of the open type prefigured by the 1922 *Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black* (cat. 100; see, for example, cat. 113). In 1927, Mondrian returns to the compositional possibilities offered by this type when set in a vertical format (cats. 114, 115, 116).

The inscribed square of Hoek's peripheral type also reappears, first as a kind of displacement of the open rectangle toward the inside (thus becoming closed), yielding the discreet effect of a cruciform superimposition – that of a large horizontal band upon a less well-defined, vertical band. (This effect is first found in the diamond picture of 1925, formerly in the Cabos collection [cat. 109], unique at the time for its dynamic tension.) Mondrian soon abandons this superimposition effect, which will return in force with the canvases of the late 1930s.

In 1929, the open type reappears, but now radically transformed, or, rather, picking up on an idea left dormant since the Cologne *Tableau I*: the large rectangle or square forms a corner. This large plane is delimited on two sides by the edges of the painting and on the two other sides by the intersection of a vertical line and a horizontal line, both running across the picture from one side to the other. Mondrian has clearly overcome his fear of bisection, no doubt because the general decentering of the intersection of the two principal axes, echoing the opening of the corner, encroaches upon any reading of the linear network as a grid.

This new type, where horizontal and vertical registers bordering the large square or open rectangle generally fall into three zones, gives rise to numerous variations. The large quadrilateral is usually white, but occasionally colored – red in the case of the magnificent *Composition II* of 1930 (cat. 125), or blue, as in the last painting from the series, dated 1932 (Denver Art Museum, Ott. 397bis). The painting can also be entirely achromatic, as in *Composition en blanc et noir II* (Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, cat. 128); in this picture only one of the "lateral" registers is divided into three, and the lines all differ in thickness, in order to counter any suggestion of a grid, the threat of which is reinforced by the absence of color. Though this division of the registers bordering the large square or rectangle can be very irregular even when it remains tripartite – as in *Composition with Yellow, Blue, Black, and Light Blue* (1929, Yale University Art Gallery [Ott. 389]), or *Composition No. I* (1929, Kunstmuseum Basel [cat. 123]) – it can also flirt with modularity, as in *Composition No. I* (1930, Kunstmuseum Winterthur [cat. 126]), which is, to my mind, the pinnacle of the series.

In this picture, where an "almost-square" of exceptionally cold white (one of Mondrian's last achromatic modulations) is situated in the lower left corner, and where the varying thickness of the lines participate in the subtle restraint of the composition, the five rectangles surrounding the large white almost-square are themselves also almost square, almost equal. At stake in this "almost" 3 x 3 modular grid is the logic itself of "almost" – of an equilibrium attained when each element is invested with maximal intensity.

Yet it is a third type that sees the most fruitful development in Mondrian's oeuvre. He begins with the 1929 Guggenheim Museum painting (cat. 118), slightly displacing the intersection of the two bisecting axes toward the center: the result is a larger red rectangle in the upper right corner (*Composition No. III*, 1929 [cat. 121]), and a return to the combination of the three types (open, central, and peripheral), which he has explored earlier in the 1922 painting in The Menil Collection (cat. 106). <sup>147</sup> Next, he tightens up the inscribed rectangle, moving it toward the center and making it almost square: thus he finishes with the magisterial type that marks the conclusion of his classic neo-plastic style.

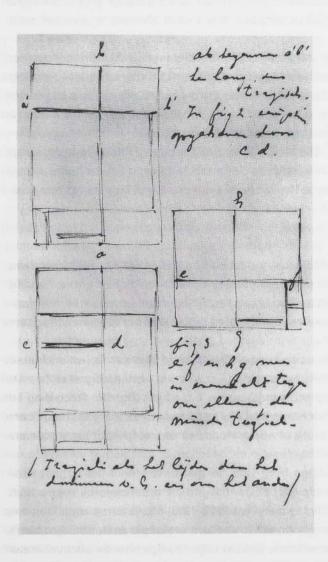
#### Poussin?

Mondrian is particularly proud of this new type. He uses it from 1929 to 1932 in no less than eight paintings, 148 and again as a springboard for his introduction of the "double line" in 1932 – an introduction that signals the beginning of an accelerated development in which the pictorial certainties accumulated since 1920 are all dismantled one by one.

A document exists that helps us to assess the place of this series, which I shall henceforth call "classical," in Mondrian's oeuvre – a group of explanatory sketches almost shocking in their simplicity and bordering on the trivial (fig. 14). According to Herbert Henkels, this sheet of sketches is part of a letter sent in January 1931 to Albert van den Briel, a friend from his youth of whom Mondrian was very fond, but whose artistic sophistication was rudimentary.<sup>149</sup>

The first work he considers dates from 1928, at that time one of the largest neoplastic paintings (fig. 15; sketch, top left). Contrary to his practice in all the vertical canvases from 1927, and for the first time since 1922-1923, Mondrian returns momentarily to the closed colored rectangle (in other words, a rectangle delimited by a black line on all four sides). The composition is divided edge to edge into six unequal areas by a vertical axis and by two horizontal lines delimiting a vast central register. The color planes are arranged in an arc on either side of the vertical axis, forming a cascade whose descent is counterbalanced by color: underneath and to the right of the open red rectangle in the upper left corner is an opposing, closed vertical plane of blue, whose darker and less saturated hue is heightened by a small closed yellow plane below and to the left. 151

With a radical change in strategy, Mondrian tackles this same type again in *Composition No. 1* of 1931 (fig. 16, cat.130; sketch, bottom left), which anticipates many characteristics of the works from the late 1930s. There is now only one color plane and an additional horizontal line on the left. Bringing dynamism to the composition are the



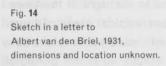
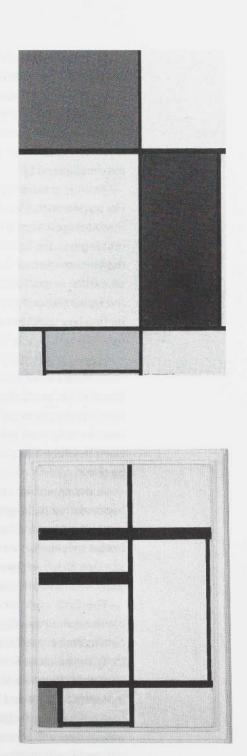


Fig. 15
Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow, 1928, oil on cardboard mounted on canvas, 122 x 79 cm, private collection.

Fig. 16
Composition No. I, 1931
(cat. 130), oil on canvas,
82.5 x 54.5 cm, private collection.



extreme variations in the thickness of the lines (two horizontal bars are twice as thick as the verticals); these variations in thickness, which are more pronounced than ever before, create an effect of superimposition reminiscent of his first two diamond paintings. He clearly resorts to it here to negate the quasi-symmetry of the central axis, a quasi-symmetry designed to eliminate more effectively the zigzagging cascade effect of the first composition. Combined with the effect of adding the extra horizontal to the left, the quasi-symmetry combats the dynamism of the cascade, just as the dynamism of the superimposition combats the quasi-symmetry. Nothing in this tense equilibrium seems to contradict Mondrian's dialectical conception of the pictorial work – nothing, that is, except for the fact that Mondrian has yet to include in his neo-plastic syntax the idea of dynamism: he therefore criticizes this composition in the sketches he sends van den Briel.

Because of the excessive difference in the length of the two principal axes, the 1928 picture is deemed "tragic"; the 1931 painting is deemed to be less so (though still a relative failure), the initial disequilibrium being "somewhat neutralized" by the presence of the horizontal on the left. Only the classical type finds favor in Mondrian's eyes (third sketch, right). Curiously, he focuses solely on the two axes dividing the picture from edge to edge, noting that they are "more in equilibrium with each other," which is not so surprising since they are equal: with the exception of the Düsseldorf canvas (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, cat. 127), all the paintings in this series are exact squares. (Apart from the diamond canvases, no other series displays such consistency: in his neo-plastic oeuvre, Mondrian usually strives to avoid the square format.) What the painter neglects to mention to his friend is the way in which he resolves the problem of balance: starting from the equal length of the two principal axes, he slightly displaces each of them in relation to the bilateral symmetry; in all the pictures of the series, the upper "half" is the larger and, in all but one, the left "half" is narrower. The only canvas divided along one of the axes of symmetry - for the first time since the modular grids of 1918-1919 - heralds the beginning of another chapter, since it is the one where Mondrian introduces the double line: as such, it no longer properly belongs to this series.

Mondrian thus starts with an asymmetrical "cross" that must be balanced while also ensuring that its cruciformity is not reinforced. The solution, deployed uniformly in all the paintings, is to weight the lower right quadrant. This quadrant includes a square bordered on the bottom by a very narrow open rectangle – a white line more than anything else – and on the right by two small, open vertical rectangles stacked on top of each other. Color then intervenes to cancel this twin disequilibrium (asymmetrical "cross," heavy bottom right quadrant). In general, as in the first work in the series, the 1929 *Composition No. II* (Museum Boymans in Rotterdam [cat. 122]), the large rectangle in the upper left corner is opposed to the small rectangle in the upper right of the lower half of the picture. But in *Composition No. II* (1930 [cat. 129]), where the colors of the Boymans picture are reversed, it is the lower of the small rectangles in the right quadrant of the lower half that is opposed to the large rectangle on the upper left. In *Composition No. I with Red and Blue* (1931, fig. 17), it is the plane on the lower left, opposed by one of the small rectangles on the right, that provides the larger chromatic

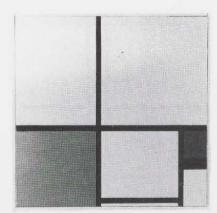


Fig. 17
Composition No. I with Red and
Blue, 1931, oil on canvas,
50 x 50 cm, Thyssen-Bornemisza
collection, Madrid.

area, and in *Composition with Yellow* (Düsseldorf, 1930 [cat. 127]), only a small rectangle is chromatic. With this compositional type, Mondrian is sufficiently comfortable to try out an entirely new idea – that of abandoning the opposition between color and non-color: in *Composition C* (cat. 133), the large "color" plane in the upper right corner is gray.

From the first picture of 1929 to the last three of the series (the work that I have just mentioned, *Composition with Yellow and Blue* in the Beyeler collection [cat. 134], and *Composition A* in the Kunstmuseum Winterthur [cat. 132], all dating from 1932), Mondrian gradually alters the proportion of his rectangles (the white almost-square and the small chromatic rectangle are larger) and makes his lines thinner. The result is the height of equilibrium, an apogee. Could he go any further in this direction?

Starting in 1930, Mondrian becomes aware of the thoroughly classical nature of this relational balancing: is he not headed once again toward something "too absolute"? He does not yet know that van Doesburg is comparing him to Poussin – he discovers this only when some of van Doesburg's diary entries are published posthumously in January 1932 – but he certainly feels him breathing down his neck. Mondrian makes a move in one of the strangest texts he ever writes, where he seems to announce a new direction in his work, while at the same time also slamming on the brakes: "This equilibrium is clearly not that of an old gentleman in an armchair or of two equal sacks of potatoes on the scales. On the contrary, equilibrium through equivalence excludes similarity and symmetry, just as it excludes repose in the sense of immobility." We note the allusion to Matisse (the armchair), but also the return to the category of "repose," which had disappeared from his vocabulary after the "trialogue." "My repose has nothing cathartic about it," Mondrian seems to be saying, and immediately thereafter the notion again disappears from his writings.

# V. DESTRUCTION

# Sabotage

A passage from the same text gives us an indication of his preoccupations at the time:

Neo-Plastic is as destructive as it is constructive. It is quite wrong to call it

"Constructivism." It is a great mistake to think that Neo-Plastic constructs
rectangular planes set side by side – like paving stones. The rectangular plane should be seen rather as the result of a plurality of straight lines in rectangular opposition.<sup>154</sup>

In the same vein and at the same time, replying to E. Tériade, who accused neo-plasticism of being at once a new academicism and a decorative by-product of cubism, Mondrian writes:

Neo-Plastic aesthetic gives all the reasons why Neo-Plastic is neither decorative nor geometric. It is sufficient to say here that this is not possible when the Neo-Plastic work is carried to its extreme, that is, when "all" is expressed in and by line and color and when all the relationships in the composition are equilibrated. Then the rectangular planes (formed by the plurality of straight lines in rectangular opposition, which are necessary in order to determine color) are dissolved by their homogeneity and rhythm alone emerges, leaving the planes as "nothing." 155

What is going on here? Theory is ahead of practice: where lines have previously been a secondary element of composition, with their role limited to "determining" the planes and linking them together, here they are set to become the active element, the main destructive agent. The identity of the planes is being destroyed by means of "plurality," a word making its first, still tentative, appearance here, but regularly invoked in the New York writings.

This reintroduction of a "good" repetition, an idea abandoned after the 1919 "checkerboards," presents numerous problems. For two more years, Mondrian refines his classical series, winning with every stroke. In the spring of 1932, and in a painting based on the same compositional type – the extraordinary *Composition B* formerly in the Müller-Widmann collection (cat. 135) – he takes the plunge with his first "double line." In this first double line the two black lines are uniquely thin, with the white gap separating them of the same thickness as the intersecting black axis. Since the white gap cannot fail to be perceived as a line, Mondrian determines that it should actually look like one. The next two paintings, *Composition with Yellow and Double Line* (1932, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh [cat. 136]), and *Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Double Line* (1933 [cat. 137], previously in the Müller-Widmann collection), both variations on the open type of 1925-1927, mark the full advent of the double line, which very rapidly "grows larger, heading toward the plane," as he writes to his friend Jean Gorin in January 1934.<sup>156</sup>

Thereafter, the ontological premises of neo-plasticism are devastated at breakneck speed. What we find is an inflexible demolition, one by one, of all the pictorial presuppositions of neo-plasticism. To *destroy* everything that he has slowly elaborated since 1920, to ruin his "system" – this is what Mondrian sets out to do with astounding energy from 1932 until his death. We are again reminded of Wittgenstein spending his last twenty years demonstrating that the *Tractatus Philosophicus*, the work that made him famous, was a mistake.

Mondrian's double line is at once line and plane. By placing, along the lower edge of his 1933 picture, a blue rectangle barely thicker than the space between the two horizontals of the double line, he promotes their ontological ambiguity. And where there is no fundamental difference between lines and planes, since the line has given up its subordinate position, why should there not be color as well? The diamond canvas from the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague (cat. 138), painted at the same time, is entirely lacking a black element – Mondrian's only work to do so prior to *New York City* of 1942.<sup>157</sup>

For two years the classical type serves as a solid platform on which Mondrian can test his sabotage; in a lost picture of 1933 (Ott. 415) and the only painting completed in 1934 he doubles *all* the lines (on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art, fig. 18). In 1935, with *Composition gris-rouge* (The Art Institute of Chicago [cat. 141]) or *Composition with Blue* (Beyeler collection [cat. 143]), he turns the double line into a triple one (with irregular intervals). In *Composition C* of 1936 (cat. 146) and a similar painting of the previous year (Hirshhorn Museum, Washington [Ott. 422]), he then quadruples it: two double lines with equal intervals are separated by a larger interval, which a very discreet intersection, to the left, prevents us from also reading as a line. In the 1935

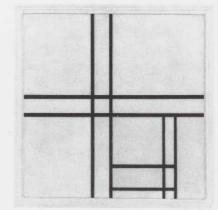


Fig. 18

Composition in Black and White with Double Lines, 1934, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 60.5 cm, on loan to the Dallas Museum of Art.

Composition C (on loan to the Tate Gallery [cat. 140]), the (considerably enlarged) double line has become a plane in its own right. In the last canvas in this series, Composition with Yellow (1936, Philadelphia Museum of Art [fig. 19]), it is no longer really a question of double lines: instead, we find a "plurality" of lines that destroys the planes.

Once Mondrian begins to accept the idea of plurality in painting, everything proceeds very rapidly. Even the cruciform structure created by enlarging the two intersecting double lines, as in Composition with Red (unfinished) of 1935 (cat. 174), completely disappears: it can still be detected in Composition A (1936, Los Angeles County Museum of Art [cat. 144]), but if the vertical register can easily be read as a band, it is very hard to determine the extent of the horizontal one. Do we count the four horizontals as two double lines? Do we interpret the interval separating them as a kind of macro double line? Or do we read the stacked-up set of these three horizontal "lines" (white intervals) as forming the horizontal arm of the "cross"? In Composition B (Philadelphia Museum of Art [cat. 145]), based on an analogous structure, this is no longer even an issue: both the double line and the "cross" have vanished. It can even be said that the lines no longer exist as forming discrete entities: they are merely an irregular pulsation scanning the surface. On the other hand, a slight effect of superimposition begins to reappear (the very one that Mondrian rejected in the 1931 composition whose diagram he had sent to van den Briel). This effect, created by the slight difference in the thickness of the lines and accentuated by a return to the optical flickering caused by multiple linear intersections - Mondrian carefully avoided them after 1919 - is explored in the subsequent canvases. To the variable thickness of the lines, to their multiplication and the retinal afterimage, Mondrian adds a partial interruption of certain lines, which thereby cease to bisect the surface; they interact to define fictive planes of a fugitive existence, forming and dissolving before our very eyes.

Only a very small number of these canvases are not reworked in New York, but three of them, completed in 1936, 1937, and 1938, respectively (Composition en blanc, noir et rouge, The Museum of Modern Art, New York [cat. 147]; Composition de lignes et couleur, III, Gemeentemuseum [cat. 149]; and Picture No. III, Beyeler collection [cat. 153]), reveal a very clear development. Each has a large central bay crossed by horizontal lines, some of which stop at the borders of the bay (I will call this type of composition "central bay"). Benefitting from the proximity of its right side to the parallel border of the canvas, this bay is strongly defined in the 1936 picture. A braiding effect is already produced by the irregular interruption of the horizontal lines, but this effect is contained both by the decentering of the bay and by the blunt assertion of the vertical column on the left. In the 1937 picture, things become more complicated: Mondrian deploys his entire arsenal (multiplication of the lines and an effect of retinal flickering, numerous variations in thickness), and there are no less than four different horizontal lengths: some of the horizontal lines bisect the surface, others are inscribed within the bay, still others stop at one or another of the numerous vertical lines in the picture. As for these verticals - their network tight in some places, loose in others - they create an effect of undulation. One ceaselessly loses sight of the central bay.

For its part, the diamond painting in the Beyeler collection is a topological brain-

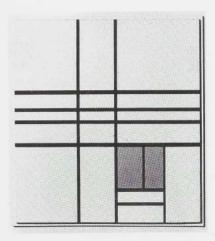


Fig. 19
Composition with Yellow, 1936, oil on canvas, 72 x 67 cm,
Philadelphia Museum of Art.

teaser, amplified by its format. At first sight, Mondrian seems to be using this format to avoid marking the end of the horizontals and thus to avoid signaling their differentiated interruption: there is only one horizontal inscribed inside the central bay, for example. It is as if, after serving as a means of disruption, the diamond format were suddenly assigned the function of shoring up our tottering perception. But a red triangle steps in to knock over the house of cards that our eye tries to construct: it not only interrupts a horizontal, it also interrupts a vertical on the far right, disengaging it from the edge of the picture. This irruption of color produces an ongoing disruption in all the formal concatenations that we try to imagine on the basis of the interwoven lines in the painting. It turns the visual braiding into a never-ending process.

The last work of this type perhaps completed in Europe is the large canvas in the Peggy Guggenheim Collection (1939 [cat. 154]). Mondrian here allows himself a much freer use of repetition (there are three horizontals inscribed inside the bay, which are thus of equal length). This new latitude with respect to pure repetition is immediately challenged by what could be called false repetition: three of the intervals separating the vertical lines are of a width that is nearly comparable, but never identical. This play on quasi-repetition, on quasi-identity (which he has already explored in his 1930 Winterthur painting), is Mondrian's major strategy during his New York years. It is foreshadowed in the stack of rectangles on the right in *Composition No. 11* (better known as *Composition London*, 1940-1942 [cat. 162]), for example, and in the intervals separating the little tongues of color in the bottom section of *Boogie Woogie; New York* (1941-1942 [cat. 163]); it is essential to his entire output between 1940 and the last painting of 1944.

# Checkmate

All of the New York canvases have two dates. Apart from *Boogie Woogie; New York* and the final three paintings (*New York City, Broadway Boogie Woogie*, and *Victory Boogie Woogie*), all were begun in Europe. The myth of Mondrian suddenly marveling (to use Saint-John Perse's metaphor) at "this drilled-out pumice-stone swarming with a thousand luminous insects" formed by the Manhattan skyline at night is greatly exaggerated. Indeed, given the way he frequently defers solutions and returns to them even ten years later, we are entitled to wonder whether the main innovation that appears in the New York paintings – the small colored line segment or small plane not bordered with black – was not preordained by the diamond painting from 1933.

On the other hand, there is no doubt that New York really hits Mondrian full in the face; after two quite frustrating years spent in London (where selling his work was no easier than in Paris), his arrival on American soil in October 1940 has the effect of a rejuvenating bath. He reworks numerous canvases of the central-bay type that were begun in Paris or London, and this helps us assess the continuity within the rupture. The first to be completed may have been *Composition No. 4* (St. Louis Museum of Art [cat. 155]): the large red rectangle was already painted in 1939, but Mondrian adds the blue accent at the lower right and the three small red dashes. Two closely related pictures make greater use of these dashes (Ott. 451 and *Composition No. 10* [cat. 161]). But it is in the next two canvases that Mondrian frees them completely: in

Composition No. 9, Phillips Collection, Washington (cat. 160), one of the red dashes passes over three black lines and fastens them together; in Composition No. 8 (Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth [cat. 159]), the dash cuts through a yellow plane. After such departures from the division of labor between color and the linear network, anything goes: in Place de la Concorde (cat. 156) and Trafalgar Square (cat. 158), black dashes are mingled with colored dashes, creating a plurivalence of functions. In Place de la Concorde, the ambiguity is accentuated because the black dashes are equal or almost equal in thickness to some of the black lines. In Boogie Woogie; New York, the colored lines make a conspicuous reappearance: the next phase is the total elimination of black in New York City (cat. 164).

This latter canvas is the last echo of a second type that I want to discuss briefly before moving to the final revolution that took place in Mondrian's last three paintings. This type comprises only four canvases, and yet it signals the total and definitive acceptance of repetition as a destructive element. In Mondrian's own words: "The plurality of varied and similar forms annihilates the existence of forms as entities. Similar forms do not show contrast but are in equivalent opposition. Therefore they annihilate themselves more completely in their plurality." <sup>158</sup>

He is led to this new advance in working on a series of canvases, all begun in 1937, whose compositional type he calls "rhythm of lines." 159 In the initial painting, itself titled Rythme de lignes droites (Rhythm of Straight Lines) (Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf [cat. 152]), the glossy lines, which are inlaid in the picture's surface but also form a round relief, scan the surface from left to right in an increasingly ample rhythmic progression. Composition No. 7 (Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute Museum of Art in Utica, New York [Ott. 452]) is a variation on this, crossed with other types, notably that of Opposition de lignes, de rouge et jaune, No. I (1937, Philadelphia Museum of Art [cat. 148]). In Composition with Yellow, Blue, and Red (Tate Gallery [cat. 151]), Mondrian abandons any notion of oriented progression: eight vertical and four horizontal bars divide the surface irregularly, punctuated by two color planes and two color dashes. The rhythm becomes all-over. The mesh effect is even more accentuated in Composition No. 12 (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa [cat. 150]). 160 Here the optical bombardment is as violent as it is in the first diamond painting of 1918.161 Six horizontal lines and seven verticals cut through this almost-square painting edge to edge, to which must be added three small horizontals and a small vertical. This network results in sixty-two rectangles, and though each of the sixty-two is different, their absolute diversity is based on the repetition of identical elements. Identity affirms difference while negating it, and vice versa.

Mondrian first destroyed the identity of the plane by means of the bisecting line, then the identity of the line by means of its repetition. Now he begins to destroy the very identity of the painting's surface through the effect of superimposition noted earlier in the canvases of the central-bay type. But this involves resorting to a spatial illusionism that the painter does not want to push too far, however radical his aggiornamento. The only basic principle that he is not prepared to renounce concerns flatness: if painting is the only art capable of being purely abstract (more so than music, which never manages to make an absolute distinction between noise and sound; more so

than literature, which is limited by the inevitability of particular meanings), it is because it is flat, thus altogether unlike the world around us. In New York, he insists more than ever on the existence of his picture as an opaque, impermeable object: it is then that he points out to Sweeney the importance of his recessed frames. This is also the moment when texture becomes most gestural, most obvious. Not much has been said about Mondrian's textures, the traces of the process (which make his unfinished works so valuable to us). Even if during a brief avant-gardist period he makes a theoretical announcement of the imminent destruction of all facture, texture always plays a very important role in his painting. 162

And in New York it also leads him to a new idea: why not materially produce the braiding effect created in the central-bay type canvases dating back to 1936? In a single stroke, illusionism and its conditions of possibility would be abolished, since, knitted together in this fashion, the surface would no longer be a surface. It would no longer have any geometrical identity and could no longer be construed as a ground opposed to any kind of figure or grid. The painting would have no ground and its play would operate on a surface that didn't exist.

Mondrian works on inventing this enigmatic object during the last two years of his life, first in the *New York City* series. In the only finished painting from this series (cat. 164), he faithfully renders, solely through texture, the over- and underbraiding that he ceaselessly wove and unwove in the unfinished versions, using the adhesive color ribbons that he was so pleased to discover in New York. 163

In this particular respect, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (cat. 165) represents a regression (and Mondrian is disappointed with the optical mixing there that destroys the materiality he was aiming for in the braiding). <sup>164</sup> But it also constitutes the veritable liberation of color and rhythm that all critics have rightly celebrated. And from this liberation comes *Victory Boogie Woogie* (cat. 166), the very aptly named key work, in which Saint George finally slays his dragon. There is no longer any stable surface: even the large central blocks of white, which could logically be seen as a ground, seem to be situated above the bordering color planes.

Earlier in this study, I noted a similar effect in the bright "checkerboard." It might seem, at first sight, that Mondrian is back to square one, or almost – but that is not at all the case. In the "checkerboard," a surface was emphatically measured by a grid, its planarity geometrically *over*defined, so to speak – yet the grid ended up negating the surface visually, to Mondrian's eventual distress. In *Victory Boogie Woogie*, we no longer confront a surface geometrically defined as a continuous plane – and it is thus impossible for us to perceive any optical negation (one cannot negate something that does not exist, visually or otherwise). It is a collage of elements woven in thickness, in a shallow cut of actual (not illusionary) space. The relative position of those elements, each with regard to the other, is in a perpetual state of shift. Nothing that we could master. What we behold is a ghost, the ghost of a ground whose only possible existence, a fleeting one, is that of appearing above the figure.

Checkerboard: Composition with Bright Colors was a premature victory, or "false unity," as the painter himself realized shortly after its completion. Mondrian was not yet prepared to abolish the pictorial surface: it could only occur in his art, at that time,

in terms of optical illusion, something his aesthetic program did not permit. In *Victory Boogie Woogie*, Mondrian finally carries out the gesture. "We automatically destroy each image of beauty *when it has matured in us,*" Mondrian wrote in 1919. He immediately intimates: *when and only when*. For him the maturation takes a quarter of a century, at the end of which he manages, if not to "destroy" painting – which Poussin saw as Caravaggio's mission – at least to destroy form, on which its very possibility has always depended.

I would like to thank Greg Sims for his translation and especially Richard Rand, associate professor of English at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, for his extraordinary work as an editor. I have also benefitted from the editorial remarks of my wife, Dominique Jaffrennou, as well as those of Harry Cooper, Angelica Rudenstine, Georges Roque, and Mary Yakush.

All quotations of Mondrian's texts (with the exception of his correspondence) are taken from the edition by Martin James and Harry Holtzman, The New Art – The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian (Boston, 1986), which will be abbreviated here as NANL. For each quotation, the title and date of the first published source are indicated. For works only published posthumously, or long after the date written, a presumed date will be indicated.

Throughout this essay, I have made use of Maria Grazia Ottolenghi's numbering for works not in the exhibition (*Tout l'oeuvre peint de Mondrian* [Paris, 1976]), as it is more accurate than that of Michel Seuphor. However, I have referred to Seuphor's "classified catalogue" for a 1912 drawing (*Piet Mondrian: Life and Work* [New York, 1956]). Also see the Note to the Reader, p. 87, for an explanation of the use of titles in this catalogue.

1. While Mondrian himself suggested such a link (in his first essay), he did so at a time when he was trying to justify the apparent aridity of his first abstract canvases; this has unfortunately led many historians and critics to read his later, neo-plastic paintings as the extreme stylization of natural motifs. Mondrian will soon abandon this type of retrospective justification. See "De Nieuwe Beelding in de Schilderkunst," *De Stijl* II, 2 (December 1918); NANL, 73. This book-length essay was published in twelve (irregular) installments between November 1917 and December 1918 (that is, *before* the advent of neo-

plasticism in 1920). As Carel Blotkamp remarks, it was not written at a single moment: some parts were finished by 1916, while the last chapter, a supplement written at the request of van Doesburg, dates from November 1918 (for a chronology, see Blotkamp, "Mondriaan en de architectuur" [1982; reprinted in *Mondriaan in detail* (Utrecht and Antwerp, 1987), 57 note 99]). We shall refer to this text throughout as "De Nieuwe Beelding."

- 2. For Mondrian, all "particularity," and hence all figures, moods, and assignable meanings (everything other than the "universal"), is based on a disequilibrium, and this disequilibrium is "tragic."
- 3. "An Interview with Mondrian" (1943); NANL, 357. Although published under this title by James Johnson Sweeney in 1946, this text consists of explanatory letters written by Mondrian to Sweeney, who then edited them. The letters are reproduced in facsimile in *Piet Mondrian: The Early Years* [exh. cat., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum] (New York, 1957).
- 4. Quoted in Carl Holty, "Mondrian in New York," Arts (September 1957), 21.
- 5. Letter quoted in NANL, 82. Mondrian's insistence that one should not be the prisoner of a system is a constant in his letters to van Doesburg during this period.
- 6. See Robert Welsh, "The Place of
  'Composition 12 with Small Blue Square' in the
  Art of Piet Mondrian," Bulletin of the National
  Gallery of Canada 29 (1977), 3-31, and E. A.
  Carmean, Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions [exh. cat., National Gallery of Art]
  (Washington, 1979), especially 23-27.
  7. This was the origin of the growing
- 7. This was the origin of the growing disagreement with Bart van der Leck, from the middle of 1917 until Mondrian's departure for Paris in 1919. For example, Mondrian (unsuccessfully) opposed the publication of van der Leck's Composition 1917, No. 5 in the first issue of De Stijl, because it was still too obviously based on a natural motif.

Van Doesburg, however, saw it as a useful pedagogical tool to identify the motif (as he did for Mondrian's facade drawings of 1914-1915 in a subsequent issue of De Stijl). The very clear distinction that Mondrian makes from 1917 on between "abstraction" and "abstraction from a motif" sets him apart from the other contributors to De Stijl. On this point, see Joop Joosten, "Le contexte d'une évolution," in Theo van Doesburg: Peinture, Architecture, Théorie, ed. Serge Lemoine (Paris, 1990), especially 76 ff., and Carel Blotkamp, "Theo van Doesburg," in De Stiil: The Formative Years, ed. Carel Blotkamp (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 16 ff. On van der Leck, see also the article by Cees Hilhorst in the latter publication (153-185).

- 8. As Blotkamp observed in 1975, the inventory that Salomon Slijper drew up of his collection of the painter's work (which now forms the core of the Gemeentemuseum's Mondrian collection) bears the inscription "sterrenhemel" (starry sky), with reference to one of the "checkerboards" (curiously, the bright one). See Carel Blotkamp, "Book Review," in Simiolus 9 (1975/1976), 103.
- 9. The third scene appears in three installments, starting in August 1919. This very important text (henceforth referred to as "trialogue"), where Mondrian tries to be pedagogical (and also Socratic), comprises seven scenes as set in various locations the last of them set in the studio of the main character, Z, an alias of Mondrian himself.
- 10. Which is not just visual this is an important point, Mondrian's art being often discussed as offering the purest example of a modernist "opticality." Mondrian stresses the point in a later scene of the "trialogue" (De Stijl III, 3 [January 1920]; NANL, 104).
- 11. Mondrian is referring explicitly to Schopenhauer here (*De Stijl* II, 10 [August 1919]; NANL. 89).
- 12. As Mondrian says in a later scene of the "trialogue": "If you practice visualizing clearly

and retain these images of beauty, then ultimately a single, constant image of beauty will remain with you permanently," and this image will, of course, be flat (*De Stijl* III, 5 [March 1920]; NANL, 106). The same idea was applied to the perception of architecture (*De Stijl* III, 7 [May 1920]; NANL, 113), eventually leading Mondrian to the absurd notion of the possibility of a "flat" architecture. For the consequences of this ludicrous idea, see my essay "Mondrian and the Theory of Architecture," *Assemblage* 1 (October 1987), 103-130.

13. "Trialogue," De Stijl III, 5 (March 1920); NANL, 108. It is because he feared that the name "abstract-real" would lead to the interpretation of his paintings as "abstracted from" nature that Mondrian soon banned it from his vocabulary, although it had nothing to do with this question. The term simply signified, on the one hand, that his pictures could no more be "purely abstract" than those of any other artist, since they were material objects: thought alone can achieve "pure abstraction." It meant, on the other hand, that his art was leaving behind the "illusion of appearances," since it was as flat as possible. After the dark "checkerboard," Mondrian does not allude to any external referent, even in private, until his New York years, when he dares again to do so, perhaps thinking (wrongly) that, after twenty-five years of practice, all risk of misunderstanding had been eradicated. Here again, however, there should be no mistake: Broadway Boogie Woogie is not a geometrical transcription of the glittering lights of New York's grand avenue, or even of the "free rhythm" of jazz, but rather, within the Mondrian "system," an homage to the "abolition of the particular" in the music that he so loved and in the immensity of the metropolis.

14. "Trialogue," De Stijl II, 10 (August 1919); NANL, 89. On the notion of totality and the abolition of a particular point of view, see the strange passage at the end of the third scene of the "trialogue" in which Mondrian picks up the cliché of the cubist painter moving around the object in order to depict its multiple facets (De Stijl II, 12 [October 1919]; NANL, 99). To my knowledge, this is the only time that Mondrian shows the slightest interest in this critical commonplace, and he does so in the most contradictory possible way, by linking the multiplying of points of view to the abolition of time, an abolition that he in turn relates, in an even more contradictory fashion, to the notion of the "fourth dimension." As the correspondence between the two men reveals, this appeal to a notion fashionable in artists' studios at the time is Mondrian's gesture to van Doesburg

(Mondrian never displays the slightest understanding of this notion, and is in fact very wary of it). Unlike Mondrian, van Doesburg realizes early on that the essential difference in their aesthetics centers on this question of the "abolition of time," time for him being the most immediately tangible aspect of the "fourth dimension."

15. "Trialogue," *De Stijl* II, 8 (June 1919); NANL, 86. The homologous relation between microcosm and macrocosm, originating in Goethe, is one of the main theses of Rudolf Steiner's "anthroposophy," one system among others from which Mondrian drew.

16. "Trialogue," De Stijl II, 10 (August 1919); NANL, 91. Carmean is mistaken in seeing the constellations as a positive element for Mondrian, as a "hidden order," the equivalent of which he supposedly wants to create in his painting (Washington 1979, 26).

17. Moreover, the values are much less varied than the colors in the bright "checkerboard" – although it is hard to perceive this when looking at the actual painting, because of the numerous chromatic modulations in the grays. In each case, a gray of identical value corresponds to the pinkish-red and to the yellow.

18. This even includes the "particularity" of the "universal plastic means" (the right angle), always in danger of being reinstated as a "symbol" if it is considered as a separate unity (see "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stiji I, 4 [February 1918]; NANL, 39). Hence Mondrian's insistence upon the necessity of "destroying" the cross in his painting (De Stiji II, 7 [May 1918]; NANL, 46; "Trialogue," De Stiji III, 2 [December 1919]; NANL, 99; "Geen axioma maar beeldend principe," De Stiji VI, 6/7 [1924]; NANL, 178; "Le Home – la Rue – la Cité," i 10 and Vouloir 25 [1927]; NANL, 210).

19. In Mondrian's early texts, it is thought of as natural, and therefore to be banished from the New Plastic ("De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl I, 1 [October 1917]; NANL, 30). Defined as a simple synonym of "duality," it makes a timid appearance in the previous scene of the "trialogue" (De Stij/ II, 8 [June 1919]; NANL, 86). 20. See "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stiil 1, 9 [July 1918]; NANL, 55 note e. On this point, see Herbert Henkels, "Mondrian in His Studio" (1980), reprinted in Mondrian: From Figuration to Abstraction [exh. cat., Seibu Museum of Art] (Tokyo, 1987), 172-173. On Humbert de Superville, see Barbara Stafford, Symbol and Myth (Cranbury, N. J., 1979). See also Georges Roque, "Les symbolistes et la couleur," for an excellent overview of this question (Revue de /'Art 96 [1992], 70-75).

21. In the "trialogue" (although it may be a retroactive interpretation on his part), Mondrian states that this fundamental opposition is precisely what he sought to transcribe chromatically in his 1911 Molen (Mill); Red Mill at Domburg (cat. 28). The picture came after Mondrian's divisionist period, but he mentions the work of "the Neo-Impressionists and the Luminists" as a point of departure (De Stijl III, 2 [December 1919]; NANL, 100). Let us note in passing that the Goethean opposition between light and dark is also found in Humbert de Superville.

22. "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 3 (January 1918); NANL, 36 note c.
23. "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 3 (January 1918); NANL, 36. For this, Mondrian appeals to Schoenmaekers who claims, in *Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld* (Bussum, 1915), 225, to have come independently to conclusions similar to Goethe's.

24. "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stij/ I, 4 (February 1918); NANL, 38.

25. "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 3 (January 1918); NANL, 36 note d.

26. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Color*, Eng. tr. Charles Lock Eastlake (1840; reprint Cambridge, Mass., 1970), para. 695, p. 276.

27. Goethe, para. 696, p. 276.

28. Joop Joosten was the first to note such a pairing in Mondrian's production of this period. See his "Painting and Sculpture in the Context of De Stijl," in De Stijl 1917-1931/Visions of Utopia, ed. Mildred Friedman [exh. cat., Walker Art Center] (Minneapolis, 1982), 64. Seventyfive years earlier, Turner also sought to verify the Farbenlehre in a pair of pictures of the same kind (one of them is entitled Light and Color [Goethe's Theory]). (On this point, see John Gage, Color and Culture [Boston and London, 1993], 204. I am grateful to Georges Roque for bringing this to my attention.) Mondrian departs somewhat from Goethe's table of polarities (paradoxically, it is the dark "checkerboard" that is "hot," and the bright one that is "cold"), but the polarization itself is Goethean.

29. At first the notion of "non-color" is defined by analogy with the musical notion of "non-sound" (noise), but this does not mean that Mondrian is suddenly interested in synesthesia: he wants to underscore the resemblance of two dialectical oppositions (the analogy concerns the binary character of the opposition, not the orders of visuality and acoustics). See "De 'Bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens' and 'Het' Nieuwe in de muziek," *De Stijl* IV, 8 and 9 (August and September 1921); NANL, 150, 153, and "Het Neo-

I disagree with Gerard Sondag, who sees in this new conceptual pair a simple continuation of Goethe's color/light opposition (see Sondag, "Couleur/Non-couleur dans la peinture de Mondrian," Critica d'Arte 41 [January-February 1976], 47-56). The non-color/color opposition might have been borrowed from Wilhelm Ostwald, though Mondrian's debt to the German theorist should not be exaggerated. We know, from Mondrian's correspondence with van Doesburg, that he does not rush to read Vilmos Huszár's essay on Ostwald published in De Stijl in 1918 (I, 10 [August 1918], 113-118). As for the short text by Ostwald published in German in De Stijl in May 1920 (III, 7, 60-62), it is almost certain that he did not read it (he complains to van Doesburg about his poor German). Huszár having told Mondrian two years earlier that he (Mondrian) was using Ostwald's system without knowing it, Mondrian asks Vantongerloo for an explanation: upon receiving it, he loses all interest in the matter (see Els Hoek, "Piet Mondrian," in Blotkamp 1982, 62-63). I cannot agree, then, with John Gage's view about the importance of Ostwald's theories for Mondrian (1993, 248-259).

- 30. "Non-color" and "empty space" are assimilated only in the domain of architecture, but we need to recall that it is precisely the spatial nature of architecture that in Mondrian's view constitutes its irremediable flaw.
- 31. I am indebted to Joop Joosten's characterization of the Stedelijk 1920 painting as the first neo-plastic picture (see Joosten, "Piet Mondrian: Compositie met rood, geel en blauw," *Op het tweede gezicht* 1 [1979-1980],
- 32. On Mondrian's disappointment with the black-and-white reproduction of his third diamond painting, see Hoek in Blotkamp 1982, 59. In a subsequent issue of *De Stijl*, Mondrian yields to van Doesburg's argument against modularity: "Equivalence does not mean uniformity or sameness, any more than it means quantitative equality. The latter could very well lead to ineffectiveness in life, and to monotony in art" (*De Stijl* II, 12 [October 1919]; NANL, 97).

  33. "Trialogue," *De Stijl* II, 12 [October 1919]; NANL, 97.
- 34. See the letters of Mondrian quoted in the catalogue entries devoted to these paintings. I have several reasons to believe that the Tate painting is the canvas Mondrian declares "finished" in December 1919, but that he reworked it later since the displacement of the

medians and the gyrating movement of the color planes recall the last paintings of the series (Composition III and the first neo-plastic painting, the 1920 canvas from the Stedelijk Museum [cat.88]). The most important point lies in the many links of the Tate canvas with the light "checkerboard": the thin lines; the modulation of the gray planes - more numerous than in the other paintings of the series producing effects of transparency and superimposition that will henceforth be avoided. 35. Ann Summerscale, "Composition and Intuition in Mondrian's Paintings from 1918 through 1920: Beyond the Modular Grid" (unpublished paper delivered in my seminar on Mondrian at Johns Hopkins University in the spring of 1987), 35. In the pages that follow, I am much indebted to this excellent essay.

- 36. Summerscale 1987, 33.
- 37. By dispersing rectangles of the same color and varying their individual sizes, Mondrian intensifies this play between regularity and exception. In so doing, he leads us to overlook an exceptional feature of this work (unique in Mondrian's entire production): the perfectly symmetrical centrality of the central blue square (on both the vertical and horizontal axes).
- 38. This is all the more paradoxical since a group of four modules (one red, one gray-white, and two yellow rectangles) is immediately perceptible, situated on either side of the picture's horizontal median.
- 39. Quoted by Blotkamp in Blotkamp 1982, 27.
- 40. As Greg Schufreider insists in
- "Overpowering the Center: Three Compositions by Mondrian" (*The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44 [Fall 1985], 13-28), where he refutes an absurd thesis proposed by Rudolf Arnheim in *The Power of the Center* (Berkeley, 1982).
- **41.** We should note the forthright reappearance of white here, which remained off-white in *Composition A*.
- 42. I have deliberately omitted two canvases of this series, for they are atypical and hard to date: Composition II, in the Fundación Juan March. Madrid, and Composition I, private collection neither of them catalogued in Ottolenghi or Seuphor; both reproduced in color in Piet Mondrian: Oleos, Acuarelas y Dibujos [exh. cat., Fundación Juan March] (Madrid, 1982), nos. 50 and 51. I doubt that Composition II was the work Mondrian intended to send to Brussels in the summer of 1920 (at an exhibition that was canceled), opting rather for the Tate painting (the title of which was also Composition II at one point). I do not believe that the Fundación Juan March painting was then finished: on the one hand, its irregularity, with its abrupt jumps

in scale, differs greatly from the mellowing modularity of the other small works in the series; its right side even recalls Composition with Blue, Red, Yellow, and Black of 1922 (cat. 100), though it is far from being as resolved. On the other hand, the interruption of the lines short of the edges of the canvas is much more pronounced than in Composition B (in this sense the painting is closer to the Stedelijk Museum canvas). As for Composition I, which also shows the latter characteristic, it is in many ways very close to Composition with Yellow, Blue, Black, Red, and Gray dating from early 1921 (cat. 89). I would thus be tempted to place these two paintings very late in the series, though before the first neo-plastic canvas (the Stedelijk painting).

- 43. Quoted by Hoek in Blotkamp 1982, 63. Hoek identifies the canvas in question as Composition II of the Fundación Juan March. which, unlike Composition III, does not correspond at all to Mondrian's description. As Hoek has shown, this scene came shortly after a very lively debate with Vantongerloo over color, where Mondrian almost broke with his new friend for using the seven colors of the spectrum ("damn it, just like the rainbow!"). We find the immediate echo of these two disputes in Le néoplasticisme – Le principe général d'équivalence plastique, written in the spring and summer of 1920. Here Mondrian discusses "disharmony" within the painting for the first time, immediately after having opposed not only the use of the colors of the prism, but also all scientific laws concerning color, which would mean reintroducing nature in a disguised form (NANL, 145).
- **44.** Undated letter quoted by Hoek (in Blotkamp 1982, 64), who dated it September 1920.
- 45. Le néo-plasticisme (1920); NANL, 145.
- **46.** "Trialogue," *De Stijl* III, 7 (May 1920); NANL,
- 47. Admittedly, when he begins work on this series, he has not yet completely abandoned the idea of modularity; partly for this reason, Mondrian holds to the idea (rejected by van Doesburg) that modulation of the lines can help to attenuate the impression of repetition.

  But this is not the only reason.
- 48. We might have assumed he was familiar with this well-known optical phenomenon (the so-called Purkinje effect), since he had celebrated it in numerous twilight landscapes during his "naturalistic" period. Furthermore, he had already fallen victim to it in another connection: in May 1917 he had been very disappointed by the change in aspect of Compositie in kleur A and B (Ott. 298 and cat. 73) when these paintings

were exhibited in a light that was different from the one in his studio, which led him to express the fantastic desire to paint his pictures wherever they were to be hung – "site specificity" avant la lettre (see the letter of 16 May 1917 to van Doesburg). Mondrian then adds to the beginning of "De Nieuwe Beelding," already written, a sentence concerning this idea of a realization in situ (De Stijl I, 3 [January 1918]; NANL, 37). At the end of his life, Mondrian will be similarly distressed by the way the yellow planes of Broadway Boogie Woogie bleed under the bright natural light of The Museum of Modern Art.

- **49.** Van Doesburg is to supervise the hanging of these three works in the various Dutch venues of the traveling exhibition of the Section d'Or (see Chronology).
- 50. The about-face can be precisely located in the summer of 1920. In the penultimate installment of the "trialogue," which appears in July, he makes an obligatory allusion to color relations, but only in order to move quickly to what we could call the particularity of color (in order to highlight how this apparently clashes with his theoretical system). One expresses "expansion" and "limitation," he writes. "through color relationships but also through color itself. Just as line must be open and straight in order to express expansion determinately, color must be open, pure, and clear. When it is, then it radiates the life force" (De Stijl III, 9 [July 1920]; NANL, 118-119). 51. Quoted in "Reminiscences of Mondrian" by Winifred Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Miriam
- Gabo, Herbert Read, Ben Nicholson, and Naum Gabo, Studio International (December 1966), 286. These lines come from Winifred Nicholson. It is more than likely that the conversation in question took place shortly after she had purchased two canvases in which a brilliant vellow dominates - one of 1932 (cat. 136), the other of 1935 (Ott. 422). Winifred Nicholson, Ben Nicholson's first wife, was also a painter and passionately interested in the question of color. Under the name Winifred Dacre, she published an article on the subject in Circle (1937), which was violently condemned by Mondrian for its adherence to the sempiternal comparison between the seven colors of the spectrum and the seven tones of the musical scale - a comparison which, like Goethe, he thought trite. 52. See Fernand Léger, "De l'art abstrait," Cahiers d'Art 6, 3 (1931), 151-152. Léger himself had made intensive use of primary colors in
- 1913-1914, making a strong impression on Mondrian.53. Over the course of several visits to the

- painter in 1938-1939, Herbert Read was struck by the fact that Mondrian ceaselessly painted and repainted the black lines on the same canvas. He asked him if the width of the lines was what mattered: "No," Mondrian replied, "it's their intensity" (quoted in Nicholson et al. 1966, 289). An identical logic underlies the geological thickness of the planes of pure white during this period.
- 54. "L'art nouveau la vie nouvelle (la culture des rapports purs)," written between 1929 and 1931 and posthumously published in Mondrian's collected essays (its title being given to the entire volume); NANL, 272. The notion of color intensity is what Mondrian, consciously or otherwise, preserves of Goethe's system. I noted earlier how Mondrian abandons the dichotomy of color and light but retains its corollary: color is a substance that materializes before our eyes through the action of an immaterial principle (for Goethe this principle was light, for Mondrian it is the "universal"). 55. Many commentators have noted the impropriety of the translation of beelden as "to represent" (and of beelding as "representation"). It has often been remarked that the German verb gestalten and the substantive Gestaltung offer a better approximation, as they imply a process of formation. But even that is not fully satisfactory, because these words always presuppose a form (Gestalt), even though it is in formation. The appearance of the term néo-plasticisme (in French) coincides with the birth of this style. It appears for the first time in Le néo-plasticisme - Le principe général d'équivalence plastique, the "brochure" Mondrian publishes in Paris at the beginning of 1921. The neologism is Mondrian's translation of Nieuwe Beelding (Nieuwe = néo; Beelding = plastique). But Mondrian will keep the French term even in the texts that he writes in Dutch, starting with his next essay, so as to mark a rupture between his pre- and post-1920 production ("De 'Bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens' en 'Het' Nieuwe in de muziek," De Stijl, IV, 8 [August 1921]), "De Nieuwe Beelding" thus becomes "Het Neo-Plasticisme." 56. "Trialogue," De Stijl II, 12 (October 1919); NANL, 98. This passage is in the third scene of the "trialogue," where the main topic of discussion is the "starry sky." The principle of the "abstract" yet documentary film described by Mondrian is not far removed from what

Lissitzky is trying to do at the same time in his

little children's book, The Story of Two Squares.

57. "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl I, 5 (March

1918); NANL, 41. Much later, in "Plastic Art and

Pure Plastic Art" (1936), Mondrian will write:

- "We repeat that the content [of a neo-plastic work] cannot be described, and that it is only through the purely plastic and through the execution of the work that it can be made apparent." In order for this statement not to be mistaken for that of a pure formalist, Mondrian adds: "Through this indeterminable content, the non-figurative work is 'fully human'" (Circle; NANI, 298).
- 58. See Robert Welsh and Joop Joosten, *Two Mondrian Sketchbooks 1912-1914* (The Hague and Amsterdam, 1969), 31, 51, 55, and, for one of Mondrian's last texts, "Liberation from Oppression in Art and Life" (1939-1940); NANL, 322-330
- **59.** "L'art nouveau la vie nouvelle" (1929-1931); NANL, 262.
- **60.** "L'art nouveau la vie nouvelle" (1929-1931); NANL, 269.
- Norman Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein:
   A Memoir, new ed. (Oxford and New York, 1984),
   7.
- Letter to Israël Querido, quoted in NANL, 13-14.
- 63. Certain commentators, basing their conclusions on the unreliable memories of Albert van den Briel, place it around the turn of the century, and a certain number of ex-libris that Mondrian did at the time undoubtedly contain symbolic figures dear to theosophers (the sempiternal lotus leaf, the Star of David); see Henkels in Tokyo 1987, 174-175, and 157. As Hoek remarks, however, these are all commissioned works, and there is no sign of this preoccupation in Mondrian's independent work (in Blotkamp 1982, 42).
- 64. It is true that Mondrian had been exposed to certain idealist philosophies prior to this point. Herbert Henkels has shown, for instance, how, during his (mediocre) studies at the Rijksacademie, Mondrian could have been taught a few rudiments of Neoplatonism (in Tokyo 1987, 174 ff.).
- 65. Hence the extreme difficulties involved in dating the works from this period: more than anything else, it is a sound knowledge of topography, botany, and Dutch vernacular architecture that has allowed Robert Welsh to put some order into the vast body (about 750 works) of the painter's precubist oeuvre, and even then, one cannot always be sure: there is not much risk in declaring that a certain drawing representing a certain farm in the Brabant dates from Mondrian's stay in that region, but there is no guarantee that a canvas based on the same motif was not done later, perhaps even several years later.
- 66. The Neoplatonist aspect of

postimpressionism is clearly decipherable in Gauguin, and Mondrian himself refers to Gauguin in connection with this issue ("De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* II, 2 [December 1918]; NANL, 73 note y).

67. For an analysis of this dialectical reversal, where an idealist position yields an emphasis on the materiality of the medium, see Jean Clay, "Gauguin, Nietzsche, Aurier: Notes sur le renversement matériel du symbolisme," in L'éclatement de l'impressionnisme, ed. Jeannine Warnod and Marie-Amélie Anquetil [exh. cat., Saint Germain en Laye] (Musée Départemental du Prieuré, 1982), 19-28, and Reinhold Heller, "Concerning Symbolism and the Structure of Surface," Art Journal 45 (Summer 1985), 146-153. One can also tackle the problem in reverse, as Rosalind Krauss does, wondering why so many painters of grids and monochromes in this century have based their practice on an idealism verging on the mystical ("Grids," reprinted in The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths [Cambridge, Mass., 1985],

- **68.** See, for example, "Trialogue," *De Stijl* II, 9 (July 1919); NANL, 87-88.
- **69.** "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 5 (March 1918); NANL, 44.

70. A critical tradition initiated by Robert Welsh has tended to overemphasize Mondrian's ties to theosophy and thus the importance of his Evolution triptych, in some cases reading it as a key to his future neo-plastic work ("Mondrian and Theosophy," in Piet Mondrian: Centennial Exhibition [exh. cat., Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum] [New York, 1971], 35-51). I, on the other hand, agree with Mark Cheetham when he says that, for Mondrian, theosophy "was important more as a point of access to and a validation of a broader philosophical heritage than as an end" (Mark Cheetham, The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting [Cambridge, 1991], 49).

Mondrian certainly refers to it in his two sketchbooks of 1912-1915, and it is indeed possible, as Welsh suggests, to consider some of these notes as the first draft of a text Mondrian sent to the journal *Theosophia* in 1914 (the text in question, now lost, was rejected by the editors as "too revolutionary"). However, in the mass of texts published or prepared for publication during Mondrian's lifetime, *only two* refer directly to theosophy, and both are critical of it. In the first instance – it is only a minor point – he says he is talking about theosophy "in its true meaning and not as it commonly appears" ("De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* 1, 5 [March 1918]; NANL, 44 note u). The suggestion here is that

theosophy as it is known is fraudulent: Mondrian will often use this stylistic device - there will be a "true socialism" in opposition to Bolshevism, a "true religion" in opposition to any organized cult, etc. The criticism becomes more acute in 1922: "Theosophy and Anthroposophy although they already knew the basic symbol of equivalence - could never achieve the experience of equivalent relationship, achieve real, fully human harmony" ("De realiseering van het Neo-Plasticisme in verre toekomst en in de huidige architectuur," De Stijl V, 3 [March 1922]; NANL, 169). Though the corrective clause may seem to "rescue" theosophy, the words "symbols." "symbolist." and "symbolism" always have a negative connotation in Mondrian's writings. From 1917, if not before, the symbol must be avoided at all cost - a trap and a lure that has no chance of ever "representing" the absolute since, as a symbol, it is particularized, it becomes a form. Theosophy is a "limited doctrine of symbols" ("L'art nouveau - la vie nouvelle [la culture des rapports purs]" [1929-1931]; NANL, 263) and this is the reason why Mondrian gradually moves away from it. From 1918, the word "theosopher" becomes virtually an insult in his correspondence with van Doesburg. This is also why he momentarily thinks of seeking comfort in Steiner's anthroposophy, which is opposed to any idea of a dictionary of symbols: in 1921, Mondrian even sends Steiner his French brochure, adding in his letter that "Neo-Plasticism seems to me to be the art of the near future for all true Anthroposophers and Theosophers," and he is furious when he does not receive a reply. On this point, see the letter published in Blotkamp 1987, 141. Welsh's idea according to which "Theosophists in general disparage the word 'symbol'" (1971, 40) applies well to Steiner, but is incomprehensible with regard to Blavatsky, whose work is little more than a disorganized

In 1923, Mondrian cuts his ties definitively:
"We no longer want to build on doctrines"
("Geen axioma maar beeldend principe,"
published only in 1924 [De Stijl VI, 6/7]; NANL,
178). In 1930, he adds that the "doctrines" are
mutually contradictory ("L'art réaliste et l'art
superréaliste [la morphoplastique et la Néoplastique]," Cercle et Carré 2 [April 1930]; NANL,
234).

71. See Blotkamp 1987, 142 ff., and Carel Blotkamp, "Annunciation of the New Mysticism: Dutch Symbolism and Early Abstraction," in *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, ed. Maurice Tuchman [exh. cat., Los Angeles County Museum of Art] (Los Angeles, 1987),

96 ff. The importance of "evolution" for Mondrian's thought is already indicated in his letter to Bremmer dated 8 April 1914: "My idea of the Evolution in art corresponds totally with the Theosophical thought." (Published by Joop Joosten, "Documentatie over Mondriaan [1]," Museumjournaal 13, 4 [1968], 212.)

72. "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl II, 2 (December 1918); NANL, 74.

73. "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 8 (June 1918); NANL, 49 note m.

74. "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* 1, 11 (September 1918), 58 note o.

**75.** "Trialogue," *De Stijl* II, 8, and II, 11 (June and September 1919); NANL, 86 and 95.

76. "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl I, 11 (September 1918); NANL, 58, and "Trialogue," De Stijl II, 12 (September 1919); NANL, 96, 112. 77. "Toward the True Vision of Reality" (1941); NANL, 338.

78. Quoted in NANL, 13. In this letter to Querido, Mondrian directly associates the glorification of pure color with divisionism (he presents it as a pictorial and technical metaphor for the "clarity" of thought). However, even at the peak of his interest in divisionism, he is never a faithful student of the method. He does not pay much attention to the optical mixing that had so preoccupied Seurat, and he only exceptionally tries to indicate the effect of sunlight on local color, as called for by the divisionist principles (one of these exceptions is Church at Zoutelande [Ott. 235], as Mondrian himself remarks at the time for the benefit of an art critic, N. H. Wolf [see Robert Welsh, Piet Mondrian (Toronto. 1966), 116]). For this aspect of the divisionist theory, see Paul Signac, D'Eugène Delacroix au néo-impressionnisme (1899; reprint Paris, 1964), 43. Mondrian only borrows from divisionism what he needs for his idealist purpose: the natural motif is "neutralized" by a "free expression of color," as he would later say of this "transitional" period ("Dialoog over de Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl II, 4 [February 1918]; NANL,

79. As Robert Welsh points out, Mondrian had no direct access at the time to the works of these artists, except perhaps for Hodler, with whom Mondrian has quite a few affinities during the "transition" years. See Welsh, Mondrian's Early Career [New York, 1977], passim.

80. Quoted in NANL, 14. Mondrian's momentary change of mind might be explained by a certain sense of elation during those "transitional" years. During that time, Mondrian's previously mediocre reputation changed very rapidly into that of a spearhead for the avant-garde in Holland: for the majority of critics favorable to

the new art, it was clear that he had outstripped his masters, at least those - such as Toorop. whom I mentioned, but also Jan Sluyters - who had introduced him to the contemporary art of other countries, and especially France. (Needless to say, the critics who hailed his work in 1908-1911 felt bitterly betrayed by his later work.) Though we often conjure up the image of a perfectly calm and collected Mondrian, he seems to have been quite fragile psychologically, prone to moments of exaltation often followed by terrible crises of discouragement: in late 1921, for example, after a particularly fruitful year, he thought of giving up painting altogether. And without overlooking the importance of numerous other factors, it is perhaps not altogether unreasonable to interpret the extreme statistical irregularity of his neoplastic output from one year to the next as a symptom of a form of manic depression. The decision to reach directly toward the occult, in 1911, might have been the result of an unprecedented "high."

- 81. He complains about this to Schelfhout as late as 12 June 1914 (letter published by Joosten, "Documentatie (1)," 1968, 215).
- 82. Mondrian has almost nothing to say about this sudden renunciation of the charms of saturated color. Our only available indication is a letter to Augusta de Meester-Obreen (from which she published some fragments in February 1915). In it Mondrian condemns the sentimentality and anthropomorphism of his 1908-1911 works. He concludes with the following words: "But the color, although pure, still expressed too much individual feeling" (quoted in NANL, 16). The sketchbook notes from 1912 to 1915 ignore the subject of color, except for a curious notation, reminiscent of van Gogh, on the contrast red/green (Welsh and Joosten 1969, 21). Between his "transitional" years and the years of neo-plasticism, color changes radically for Mondrian: at first an agent of "dematerialization," it becomes, possibly under the spell of Hegel, the "representative" of matter in the dialectic of matter and spirit.
- 83. Joop Joosten, "Mondrian: Between Cubism and Abstraction," in New York 1971, 53-66.
- 84. Though Still Life with Ginger Pot I and Gray Tree may both predate the Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition, they are inconceivable without a prior exposure to Cézanne. More than twenty works by Cézanne had been on loan to the Rijksmuseum since 1909, without attracting the slightest attention, then taken back by their owner in 1911, who wanted to sell them. The withdrawal of the loan got some attention. It is these Cézannes that the Moderne Kunst Kring managed to

borrow from their owner, and it is quite likely that Mondrian had an opportunity to examine them during the preparation of the exhibition. On these works, see Jan van Adrichem, "The Introduction of Modern Art in Holland, Picasso as pars pro toto, 1910-30," Simiolus 21 (1992), 187 ff.

- 85. Toorop had presented the new movement in this manner in the lecture he gave at the opening of the Moderne Kunst Kring exhibition.

  Moreover, this Neoplatonic reading of cubism was fostered by the fact that while Braque and Picasso were represented only by "Cézannian" works dating at the latest from 1908 (for Braque) and early 1909 (for Picasso), the works sent by Le Fauconnier (himself an ardent defender of such an interpretation), might have seemed "more modern" to a public completely ignorant of the analytic cubism that was trivialized in his canvases. On this issue see van Adrichem 1992, 167 ff.
- 86. As Christine Poggi notes, it is Braque who originated the essentialist interpretation of cubism in his statements to Gelett Burgess in 1908 ("I want to expose the Absolute, and not merely the factitious woman"). See Poggi, "Braque's Early Papiers Collés: The Certainties of Faux Bois," in Picasso and Braque: A Symposium, ed. William Rubin (New York, 1989), 129. This, and the fact that the dissociation of form and color - so interesting to Mondrian was paramount for Braque and not for Picasso, might explain why, despite Mondrian's professed admiration for Picasso and his silence on Braque, it is the latter's cubism that seems closer to his own. A lengthy comparison between the works would be required here. For lack of space, I shall refer to Braque's quasi-allover canvases from the spring of 1912, and to his first "papiers collés," of September 1912, where a network of orthogonal dashes organizes the
- 87. Until quite recently, it was thought that Mondrian did not have access to Schoenmaekers' writings until about 1915, when the two men were neighbors at Laren, often meeting in the company of the composer Jaap van Domselaer. Carel Blotkamp notes that Mondrian could have read Schoenmaekers' Christosophie as early as 1910 in the journal Eenheid, to which he subscribed; but Blotkamp accepts Welsh's assumption that Mondrian developed the ideas scribbled in the two cubist sketchbooks independently (in Los Angeles 1987, 111 note 49). However, in these notes the painter shows himself to be literally obsessed with the opposition between masculine-verticalspiritual-active and feminine-horizontal-

material-passive, which is the veritable touchstone of the "Christosopher's" writings. Even if some of these notes were not written until after Mondrian's return to Holland, his vocabulary and certain of his ideas, starting in January 1914, seem to come straight from Schoenmaekers, as can be seen by reading the famous letter to the critic and patron Bremmer, in which Mondrian discusses cubism, for example: "I am convinced that, precisely by not trying to express anything determinate, one expresses what is most determinate: truth (the all-embracing)," quoted in NANL, 14. Disappointed by Schoenmaekers the individual, who displays a total inability to comprehend his art and who publishes the first attack against De Stijl in January 1918, Mondrian is later very critical of him. For an account of their personal relationship, see M. van Domselaer-Middelkoop. "Herinnerungen aan Piet Mondriaan," Maatstaf 7, 5 (1959), 273-279.

88. On this point, see H. L. C. Jaffé, De Stijl: The Dutch Contribution to Modern Art (1956: reprint Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 55. Jaffé, however, disagrees with van Doesburg on this point. 89. To be more exact, Mondrian briefly mentions the gender opposition - in 1926 (NANL, 214) and in 1929-1931 (NANL, 254) - but these two texts were never published during his lifetime. In both cases it is not the opposition between genders that is stressed, but the orthogonal opposition marking "the need for equivalence of these two aspects in life: the equal value of the material and spiritual, the masculine and feminine, the collective and individual, etc." (p. 254). In other words, it is highly problematic to interpret Mondrian's neo-plastic work in the light of the male/female opposition, and we have to be careful not to read his theory as monolithic. This also applies to the concept of "purity," associated by Mark Cheetham with Mondrian's gender opposition: Mondrian certainly took part in the "search for purity" that Cheetham analyzes so well, but only in the early phases of his career. (After 1920, the words "pure," "purely," and "purity" almost exclusively qualify "color" or "abstract" in Mondrian's writings.) In 1926, for example, Mondrian was furious at Félix Del Marle for having substituted the title "Art/Pureté + abstraction" to Mondrian's own title ("l'art purement abstrait") to the contribution he had sent to Vouloir: "purity is for the Purists and 'abstraction' is not 'abstract art.' as I thought I had made clear in my article." Letter dated 2 April 1926, which I published in "Mondrian en France, sa collaboration à Vouloir, sa correspondance avec Del Marle," Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français.

Year 1981 (1983), 292.

90. The sentence ends with these words: "therefore human." On this score, Mondrian will radically change his mind after his confrontation with Hegel: the annihilation of the "human element" in art is impossible before the "end of time" (which will also mark the end of art): since the presence of the "human element" is inevitable in art, it must to a certain point be welcome. Letter dated 29 January 1914, quoted in NANL, 14-15.

91. Letter to van Doesburg dated 20 November 1915. The fear of an excessive "absolutism" is pervasive in "De Nieuwe Beelding" (see, for example, De Stijl 1, 10 [August 1918]; NANL, 56) and remains important in Mondrian's theory throughout his life: a perfect equilibrium is only attainable in the remote future, at the end of time. If a painting enacts such a state, it means that it is too far ahead of "the evolution," and, in being so, it is an anachronism.

92. "L'expression plastique nouvelle dans la peinture" (Cahiers d'Art [July 1926]); NANL, 203. 93. Picasso's picture is in the National Museum of Art, Osaka (see William Rubin, Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism [exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art] [New York, 1989], 235). 94. In the autumn of 1914, Mondrian returns to Domburg, the scene for several earlier important turning points in his art: it is there that he was exposed to divisionism and theosophy (in 1908-1909) and that he made an abrupt return to curved lines (in 1912); he also went to Domburg in the summer of 1913, and the notorious change in his painting in the autumn of that year may similarly be attributed to his stay there, since the first closed-rectangle picture (Composition No. II, Kröller-Müller [cat. 49]) may have been based on a windmill. On this last point, see Robert Welsh, "Piet Mondrian: The Subject Matter of Abstraction," Artforum (April 1973), 50-53.

95. Welsh and Joosten 1969, 17.

96. Quoted in Joost Baljeu, *Theo van Doesburg* (London, 1974), 105. Translation slightly altered.
97. For example, Mondrian never completely discards Schoenmaekers' use of the concept of "determination," which is rigorously antithetical to that of Hegel; instead, he combines the two, creating a conceptual hybrid. For Schoenmaekers, "determination" is the transformation of the "particular" into the "general," of the "concrete" into the "abstract"; for Hegel, "determination" is the concrete qualifying of the concept, its "materialization." Mondrian uses Schoenmaekers' version when he says that "equilibrated relationships" are "determined" (that is "absolute"), but he is

closer to Hegel when he says that vertical and horizontal lines "determine" space, that is, render it visible.

98. It is interesting to note that in the book that Mondrian quotes several times, Bolland reprinted a 1910 ironic essay attacking Blavatsky's theosophy, "De Wijsheid van Adyar (Mevrouw Blavatsky en hare 'theosophie')" (Zuivere rede en hare werkelijkheid, 3d ed. [Leiden, 1912], 801-939). I owe this reference to Verle Thielemans ("Mondrian and Hegelian Dialectics: Appropriation or Subjection?," paper delivered in my seminar on Mondrian at Johns Hopkins University in the spring of 1987). On Hegel and Mondrian, see Cheetham 1991: Annette Michelson, "De Stijl, Its Other Face: Abstraction and Cacophony, or What Was the Matter with Hegel?" October 22 (Fall 1982), 5-26; and Lucian Krukowski, "Hegel, 'Progress,' and the Avant-Garde," The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism 44 (Spring 1986), 279-290. 99. "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl I, 4 (February 1918); NANL, 40. The only time symmetry does not call attention to the "separateness of

1918); NANL, 40. The only time symmetry does not call attention to the "separateness of things" is when it is part of a modular division and thus diluted; but then the "separateness" of the whole painting is emphasized.

100. Letter to Bremmer dated 15 July 1916, published by Joosten, "Documentatie over Mondriaan (3)," *Museumjournaal* 13, 6 (1968), 322.

101. Letter of 4 October 1915, published by Joosten, "Documentatic over Mondriaan (2)," *Museumjournaal* 13, 5 (1968), 268.

102. Quoted in Angelica Rudenstine, The Guggenheim Museum Collection: Paintings 1880-1945 (New York, 1976), 2:576. See also Joop Joosten, "Abstraction and Compositional Innovation," Artforum (April 1973), 55. The original frame (recessed strips plus larger subframe) is no longer extant, but the picture bears a unique characterístic in Mondrian's oeuvre: a strip of wood added at its bottom, flush with the surface of the canvas, and painted as part of the composition (it bears the signature). The fact that this added strip is of the same size as that of the original recessed strip frame must have created some confusion between the "inside" and the "outside," similar to the effect produced by Seurat's frames and "false frames." Only one other time will Mondrian make use of this deliberately confusing device, in a 1927 canvas that has disappeared.

103. Joosten 1973, 56.

104. This issue has been well studied in the literature. See Joosten 1973, in Minneapolis 1982, and 1990. See also the essays of Hoek and Blotkamp, as well as Sjarel Ex (on Huszár) and

Cees Hilhorst (on van der Leck), in Blotkamp 1982. Finally, see Robert Welsh, "Theo van Doesburg and Geometric Abstraction," in Nijhoff, Van Ostaijen, "De Stijl": Modernism in the Netherlands and Belgium in the First Quarter of the 20th Century, ed. F. Bulhof (The Hague, 1976), 76-94.

105. Of which the first is a gouache (Ott. 302) – an unusual medium for Mondrian, which may account for its color saturation (unique between 1911 and 1920).

106. "Toward the True Vision of Reality" (1941); NANL, 339.

107. The definition of repose as balanced movement is already to be found in "De Nieuwe Beelding" (De Stijl 1, 7 [May 1918]; NANL, 46 note b), but Mondrian further elaborates the concept in the "trialogue" of 1919-1920.

108. By tinting his gray planes with the color opposite to that engendered by the simultaneous contrast, he might have tried to eliminate the optical effect of virtual colors in the gray rectangles, an effect produced by their proximity to the colored rectangles (somewhat as the curve in the Parthenon compensates for an optical effect of curving in the opposite direction). If that was his intention, he failed to obtain the desired effect, since the impression of flickering produced by this canvas remains unhampered.

109. "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 1 (October 1917); NANL, 31.

110. Without a minimum of subjectivity, there is no beauty, thus no art, thus no aesthetic, relative access to the absolute: involving a certain arbitrariness and thus what Mondrian called the "tragic," composition remains, as long as we need art, a necessary evil ("De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stijl I, 9 [July 1918]; NANL, 51-53). Without it we would be left with pure thought. philosophy; we would have traded art for the exclusive pursuit of truth - and "in our period of growth toward truth, we must keep our eyes open to the danger - in art - of trying to represent truth. The true artist will always continue to subjectivize, while the non-artist may be ahead of his time in his desire for objectivity" (51-52, note v). On Mondrian and Duchamp, see Thierry de Duve (adding Malevich in the equation), Pictorial Nominalism: On Marcel Duchamp's Passage from Painting to the Readymade (1984), Eng. trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis, 1991), 154 ff.

111. These are not necessarily synchronous – a composition invented in 1922 can reappear five years later virtually unchanged (the exception) or radically transformed (the rule).

112. Fifteen pictures dated 1921, twelve dated

1922, and one dated 1923 are extant. To these we must add two lost paintings for 1921, three for 1922, one for 1923, and four double dated, finished (but not radically transformed) in 1925. One of these is lost, another is in the Phillips Collection (cat. 93); the last two, although dated 1921-1925 (Ott. 350 and 351), are closer to the 1920 series and thus will be counted here among the "transitional" paintings. In 1924, Mondrian did not complete a single canvas, although for a while he considered the first stage of the National Gallery of Art's diamond composition (cat. 108) to be finished, since he authorized a reproduction of it in the autumn of the same year. The work was considerably transformed in 1925. 113. See Hoek in Blotkamp 1982, 64 ff.

114. This canvas is quite close to *Composition I* 

114. This canvas is quite close to Composition I of 1920, in a private collection (see supra, note 42).

115. To my knowledge, the only other exceptions are a painting of 1928 (Ott. 382) and a related canvas of 1930, formerly in the collection of Jean Arp, then in the Sidney Janis collection. On these two works, see the section entitled Poussin? in part IV of this essay.

116. The exception here, besides the four canvases that I am calling transitional, is constituted by the 1922 painting from The Menil Collection (cat. 106), but the *pentimenti* reveal that this work initially had three colors.

117. Welsh 1966, 180. One might suppose that this interpretation, often repeated, is confirmed by Mondrian's (posthumously published) 1926 reply to a questionnaire from Félix Del Marle (for his journal *Vouloir*). Mondrian writes:

"Generally, equilibrium implies a large area of noncolor or empty space opposed to a comparatively small area of color or material" (NANL, 214). However, the whole paragraph makes clear that Mondrian is referring to the relative quantity of color and non-color in the whole canvas.

118. "De 'Bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens' en 'Het' Nieuwe in de muziek," *De Stijl* IV, 8 (August 1921); NANL, 150.

119. The other works in which this occurs are a canvas in The Minneapolis Institute of Arts (cat. 104), The Museum of Modern Art (Ott. 334), and the Natasha Gelman collection (Ott. 333).

120. This device can be compared to the dialectical functioning of the *repoussoir* in Braque and Picasso's analytic cubism as it has been analyzed by Clement Greenberg ("Collage," in *Art and Culture* [Boston, 1961], 72-73).

121. That non-color is a burning issue for Mondrian while he works at this first series of canvases is underscored by the presence of certain features that will later disappear. One of them is the placement of a small closed white or gray rectangle at the very border of the painting (one of the black lines limiting them being tangent with the edge of the picture itself): it can be found in Tableau I (Cologne, cat. 90); in Composition with Gray, Yellow, and Red (Ott. 330); in the double-dated painting from the Phillips Collection (cat. 93); in a 1923 painting, destroyed by the Nazis and prominently displayed in Lissitzky's "Abstrakte Kabinet" in the Landesmuseum in Hanover; and finally, in a very subtle way, in a 1922 Composition with Blue, Red. Yellow, and Black (cat. 100). In Composition with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red, and Gray, of 1922 (Ott. 346), it is the large central square that is positioned against the bottom limit of the canvas. With the exception of a canvas of 1926. previously in the collection of Edgar Kaufmann, this feature disappears from Mondrian's oeuvre. However, Mondrian will occasionally place one of the three black lines that limits an open rectangle along the outer edge of the canvas (cats. 119, 136).

Another particular characteristic of this period is the use of a central black plane, or at least one that is not peripheral: in addition to the works I called "transitional," one can find this characteristic in a painting in a private collection (not catalogued by Ottolenghi or Seuphor), in the double-dated painting of the Phillips Collection (cat.93), and, more importantly, in the diamond of The Art Institute of Chicago (discussed below). Here again, this feature will disappear, black planes being treated more and more as color planes: placed at the periphery, and not adjoining other color planes.

122. The other pictures are Composition with Large Red Plane, Black, Blue, Yellow, and Gray in the Gelman collection (Ott. 333) and a painting in a private collection (not catalogued by Ottolenghi). The 1921 painting in the Basel Kunstmuseum (Ott. 327), as we shall see presently, already belongs to the next series.

123. On this point, see my essay "Du projet au procès," in L'Atelier de Mondrian, ed. Yve-Alain Bois (Paris, 1982), 34-35.

**124.** This opening of a white rectangle also occurs in a lost 1922 work reproduced in *De Stijl* (VI. 8 [1924], 97).

125. Kermit Champa, Mondrian Studies (Chicago, 1985), 96.

126. There is a phenomenological aspect in Mondrian's oeuvre, which has generally been overlooked: the visual field is oriented in relation to our human body, which means that it is not isotropic. This is one of the reasons why

he abandons the all-over modular grid. The main criticism he later makes of van Doesburg's use of the oblique in his elementarism (and of his enthusiasm for the "fourth dimension") precisely concerns its inhumanity: "Man's eye is not yet free from his body. Vision is inherently bound to our normal position. Only the mind can know anything of the fourth dimension and detach itself from our poor physical body! As men, we must deal with man's equilibrium; if we upset it, we create nothing!" ("Le Home – la Rue – la Cité" [1926]; NANL, 210). The elementarist oblique assumes the existence of a post-human being, Mondrian says, which doesn't mean that it is impossible in the distant future.

127. To the paintings just mentioned one must add a 1922 gouache that was commissioned (Nationalgalerie, Berlin), and a painting previously in the collection of Ida Bienert, probably destroyed by the Nazis (double-dated 1922-1925). The type reappears in 1927, in a painting in the Ladas collection (Ott. 375) and in a canvas previously in the Sidney Janis collection.

128. Letter dated 3 March 1919, quoted by Carel Blotkamp in "Mondrian's First Diamond Compositions," *Artforum* (December 1979), 37-38 (translation slightly modified).

129. Max Bill, "Composition I with Blue and Yellow, 1925, by Piet Mondrian" (1956), reprinted in New York 1971, 74-76; Meyer Schapiro, "Mondrian: Order and Randomness in Abstract Painting," in Modern Art (New York, 1978), 233-258.

130. "Trialogue," *De Stijl* II, 8 (June 1919); NANL, 86. This is strongly reminiscent of Goethe, and Mondrian is still thinking along the same lines *seventeen years later*, long after jettisoning his theosophical beliefs: "To love things in reality is to love them profoundly; it is to see them as a microcosmos in the macrocosmos" ("Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art," *Circle* [1937]; NANL, 297).

131. The expression "surrogate for the whole" appears in an interview in the Dutch daily press, "Bij Piet Mondriaan," *De Telegraaf* (12 September 1926), Engl. tr. in Tokyo 1987, 31.

**132.** "Trialogue," *De Stijl* II, 11 (September 1919); NANL, 93. See Cheetham 1991, 53.

**133.** "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 5 (March 1918); NANL, 42.

134. On this point, see the remarkable study by Nancy Troy, *The De Stijl Environment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), 64-71 and 135 ff.

135. On this issue, see Bois 1987.

**136.** "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 3 (January 1918); NANL, 37.

137. See "Le Home – la Rue – la Cité" (i 10 and Vouloir [January 1927]); NANL, 208. This

138. This type of relation emerges as soon as Mondrian starts treating the interior of his studio as an abstract work of art: he writes to van Doesburg that the transformation of his studio in the rue de Coulmiers (discussed at length in the seventh scene of the "trialogue"), was an essential factor in the genesis of the first painting of the 1919-1920 series.

**139.** "De Nieuwe Beelding," *De Stijl* I, 4 (February 1918); NANL, 38.

**140.** "Trialogue," *De Stijl* III, 9 (July 1920); NANL, 118.

141. I have chosen to use the term "diamond" here, but "lozenge" has also become standard in the literature, to designate Mondrian's square paintings standing on one corner. Obviously proposed as a translation for Mondrian's own term in French, losangique, "lozenge" is not accurate: Mondrian's canvases are not "lozenges" (and he did not use the French term "losange" but a neologism). Mondrian's decision to refer to the rhomboid shape without actually characterizing his paintings as true "lozenges" may come from his conviction that the visual field is not isotropic: a vertical line is perceived as longer than a horizontal of the same length, thus a square placed on one corner appears as an elongated "lozenge."

142. See Blotkamp 1979. Ironically enough, this contradicts Blotkamp's main thesis, to which I do not subscribe, according to which the first two diamond canvases were at first orthogonal paintings with a diagonal linear network. This is not the place to argue the case against Blotkamp's reading of the documents, which I shall reserve for another context.

143. This last argument is given in "Le Home – la Rue – la Cité" (1927); NANL, 210.

144. I am quoting here from the original notes published in facsimile in New York 1957, without pagination, rather than the version edited by Sweeney, slightly less clear in this instance (cf. NANL, 357).

145. Harry Cooper, unpublished paper on the Chicago and Washington diamond paintings, 1993.

**146.** Apart from the three paintings of 1921-1922

that were reworked in 1925 (and are thus double dated: three extant ones [Ott. 350 and 351, and cat. 93, in the Phillips Collection] and a lost one), we have eleven paintings for 1925 (of which three were lost); twelve paintings for 1926 (eight lost!); seventeen extant paintings for 1927 (most of them in poor condition) and two lost; four paintings in 1928 (one lost); ten orthogonal paintings in 1929, plus a diamond canvas begun that year but finished only in 1930 (Composition IV; Fox Trot A, Yale University Art Gallery [cat. 120]); in 1930, ten paintings (including that of Yale); four in 1931; eight in 1932. The lost diamond canvas of 1926 is numbered 9bis in Carmean's catalogue (Washington 1979), erroneously described there as the first state of the Philadelphia Museum of Art 1926 canvas

147. It is to simplify that I place this development in 1929. In fact the "hybrid" type already appears in 1928 (Ott. 381), evolving from a painting similar to that of the Guggenheim, but in mirror reversal (cat. 117). The last painting of this "hybrid" type, dating from 1932, is in the collection of Max Bill (Ott. 408).

148. Six of these canvases are in this exhibition (cats. 122, 127, 129, 132-134); another, from the Thyssen collection, is reproduced in this essay. The eighth, dated 1931, in a private collection, is Ott. 404. Its color distribution is identical to that of the Boymans 1929 and the Beyeler 1932 paintings.

149. See Herbert Henkels/Albert van den Briel, 't is alles een groote eenheid, Bert (Haarlem, 1988), 15-16.

150. Large Composition with Red, Blue, and Yellow (Ott. 382), measures 122 x 79 cm, which is big for Mondrian. Because he cannot afford to "spoil" such a "large" quantity of canvas, he paints this work on cardboard.

151. The result did not please Mondrian for long, and he went back to this same composition in 1930, reducing the blue plane by half with another horizontal division, bringing the vertical axis closer to the center and weakening the yellow plane by displacing it to the periphery – the latter now open again, situated in the lower left corner. (The work was formerly in the Jean Arp collection, then in the Sidney Janis collection.)

152. Van Doesburg, "Journal d'idées," entry dated 1 November 1930, published in the final issue of *De Stijl* (a homage to van Doesburg edited by his widow) in January 1932 (p. 28). This passage is in keeping with the logic of the last artistic movement launched by van Doesburg prior to his death, "concrete art" (advocating the preprogramming of the work of

art by mathematical calculation). Mondrian contributes a short and generous text on the importance of his acquaintance with van Doesburg, on van Doesburg's editorial activities.

153. "L'art réaliste et l'art superréaliste," *Cercle* et Carré (1930): NANL, 229.

154. "L'art réaliste et l'art superréaliste," Cercle et Carré (1930); NANL, 231. The first sentence (on destruction) was deleted (censored?) by Cercle et Carré.

155. "Le Cubisme et la Néo-plastique" (1930); NANL, 240. Excerpts from this text, written in March 1930 to answer Tériade's attack in L'intransigeant, were published by Cahiers d'Art in January 1931 after Tériade's journal refused to print it.

156. Letter to Jean Gorin, datable from 31 January 1934, published in Bois, ed., "Mondrian, Vantongerloo, Torres-García, Hélion, Bill, etc.: Lettres à Jean Gorin," Macula 2 (1977), 130. There is a myth, circulated in part by Vantongerloo's correspondence with Gorin (p. 125), to the effect that Mondrian borrowed the double line from a young English painter, Marlow Moss, who saw herself as a neoplasticist. A few months before Mondrian adopted this new element in his art, she did in fact paint (and may have exhibited) double-line pictures; but one need only glance at Moss' earlier "double-line" pictures to realize that she makes very different use of this element: her coupled lines are so unequal in thickness that they can be read neither as forming a single linear entity, nor as belonging to the same plane. See, for example, the two "double-line" compositions by Moss, dated 1931, and reproduced in the first issue of Abstraction-Création, dated 1932 (p. 26). It is only in the second issue of this journal (dated 1933) that one can see a "double line" by Moss that has something in common with those of Mondrian (p. 29); the same issue carries a reproduction of Mondrian's first "double-line" canvas (p. 31). In other words, Mondrian does not first criticize, then adopt, Moss' invention, as Vantongerloo suggests: he is at first a skeptic, then understands his lack of interest in Moss' version, then demonstrates how, and for what destructive end, the double line could be used in

157. In order to draw attention to the relation between the two procedures – the colored line and the double line – Mondrian, in a staged photograph of his studio (fig. 20), places this diamond picture above a double-line canvas of 1933 (since destroyed [Ott. 415]).

This constitutes a great deal of innovation for

one season, and Mondrian takes a break. The only two other paintings he completed in 1933 revert to the open type of the second and third double-line pictures, but minus this latter element (Ott. 411 and 413). It is conceivable that if the diamond painting had not almost immediately been bought by a group of his friends who gave it to the Gemeentemuseum. Mondrian would have reworked it, as he did in several other canvases, introducing two other radical innovations in 1934. The series of three very elongated paintings divided down the center by a kind of fault (reminiscent of Barnett Newman's zips) see the light of day that year, but one of them is reworked in 1936 (Ott. 434); the others are reworked in New York (Ott. 447 and cat. 139). He has a lot of trouble with one other series, based on an intersection of double lines that have become so large that they are difficult to perceive as such: one of these pictures is redone in 1936 (Ott. 428, unfortunately destroyed in a fire), another, perhaps the most radical, is completed in 1935 (Ott. 416), and another is abandoned (Composition with Red [unfinished], the Janis collection [cat. 174]). This unfinished canvas, as well as another painting that is also abandoned (Composition with Yellow [unfinished] [cat. 172]), shows us how Mondrian works, and how one series could give rise to another. Indeed, it is easy to discern in the unfinished painting with a vellow plane the compositional type of the classical series (the square has become chromatic and the intersection of the central axes has been doubled), and the gap between the lines needs only to be widened a little more in order to produce the unfinished Composition with Red. 158. "A New Realism" (1942-1943); NANL, 349. 159. According to Joop Joosten, the first state of these paintings dates from 1937, even though the "initial" date Mondrian inscribed on the canvases (all double dated) is a later one. On Mondrian's own opposition between two types, that of the "Rhythm of lines" and that of the "Oppositions of lines" (best represented by Opposition de lignes, de rouge et jaune, No. 1, 1937 [cat. 148], see Joop Joosten, "Piet Mondrian: Composition of Red, Blue and Yellow," in The Rita and Taft Schreiber Collection [exh. cat., Museum of Contemporary Art] (Los Angeles, 1991), without pagination. 160. This is one of two of the double-dated paintings of the thirties that lack color dashes, the other is Rythme de lignes droites (Rhythm of Straight Lines) (cat. 152).

162. To abolish texture would be like abolishing color, something he opposes from 1917 on. He rejects this possibility as "too absolute" see for example "De Nieuwe Beelding," De Stiil I. 3 (January 1918); NANL 36, note f - which casts a strange light on his few achromatic canvases. most of them in the diamond format. One may as well opt for pure thought, he writes - in other words, abandon painting before properly "destroying" it. Mondrian's claim about the possible abolition of texture is made in the "trialogue," and one can discern it in a sense of one-upmanship vis-à-vis van Doesburg (De Stijl III, 8 [June 1920]; NANL, 114-115). Curiously, Mondrian returns to this idea in 1936, while the texture becomes more and more obvious in his painting - but he immediately links it to the future dissolution of art ("Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art" [Circle]; NANL, 298): as with the abolition of color, the abolition of texture would be "too absolute." This lack of attention to Mondrian's texture goes hand in hand with two dramatic misinterpretations initiated early on: at first his canvases were taken for experimental prototypes for architects and designers, later they became the chief examples of "geometric abstraction," and to Mondrian's great distress, commentators wrote at length about the painter's "secret geometry." Those two common interpretations, popular among Mondrian's early advocates, account in part for the way many of his canvases have been poorly treated and badly restored; in both cases the importance of texture of the paintings has been implicitly denied: a geometric figure is in essence textureless and a "designed" object can be refurbished when it has been scratched. Mondrian is partly responsible for the "design" misreading of his neo-plastic painting, but he always violently opposed the geometric one.

On Mondrian's texture, see Joop Joosten, "De sporen van het penseel," Jong Holland 9 (1993), 44-49, and Bois 1983.

163. This issue is developed in my essay, "Piet Mondrian, New York City," in Painting as Model (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), 157-183.

164. Bois 1990, 175.

165. "Trialogue," De Stijl III, 5 (March 1920); NANL, 107.

psychology of perception.

**161.** Welsh 1977, 17-21. Welsh examines the flicker effect from the point of view of the

# Learning from Experience

Hans Janssen

Since 1950 the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague has had in its possession a painting known as *Checkerboard with Light Colors* (cat. 84). With its horizontal format, the work is characterized by a great many rectangular planes of various colors arranged within a regular grid. The rigid, repetitive pattern of the grid accounts for the disarming simplicity of the composition, the same simplicity that is reiterated in the bronze-colored strip of wood framing the canvas. The image is divided into planes of differing colors: a quiet blue, a soft pink, a flat but vivid yellow, white, a darker or lighter gray. These color differences are what disrupt the repetitiveness of the composition.

The brushwork is clearly visible. The hairs of the brush have left trails that are sometimes wavy but are horizontal for the most part, running parallel to the horizontal format. The colors are composite. Mondrian tempered the brightness of the blue and red, in particular, but also that of the yellow, by mixing them with white on the palette before applying them to the canvas. In some places, the sharply cut, black lines of the grid appear to have been toned down subtly with gray, especially where they are used to distinguish more lightly tinted planes from one another. Along the edge of the painting runs a narrow margin where the lines discontinue and in which the color planes become more vague and less vivid. The arrangement of colors is irregular without being chaotic. A comfortable balance can be felt.

Rectangles of the same color are concentrated together in some areas and diffused in others, and yet in general colors are evenly distributed over the entire surface. The composition has no midpoint and no center of gravity, nor does the distribution of the colors define a top or bottom in terms of dominance or weight. The blue, red, and dark gray planes are the most static in their effect, forming fixed cores. There is more movement in the yellow, white, and bright gray planes, probably because these surfaces are more lustrous; they do not absorb light, but reflect it. Blue, red, and dark gray planes divide the picture surface and serve to differentiate the image; repetition in the grid is further disrupted by the varieties of texture present in the composition. Yet not only the format of the blue, red, and dark gray planes but also their value and intensity are the same, so that the color differences are more or less imperceptible. Identity is thus defined on one level and at the same time abolished on another.

The same applies to the three brighter and more dynamic colors. The eye is also unable to define these clearly, because all differences of value and intensity are annulled. The situation becomes even more complicated by the equal intensity of the yel-

low and dark gray planes, whereby stasis and movement each infiltrate the other's region. The eye is thus compelled to concentrate on small, individual planes, and from there to carefully investigate the immediate surroundings. Yet going too far astray inevitably means starting anew and meeting with conformities of the same kind, so that the painting as a whole remains difficult to grasp; the image is elusive. In combination with the soft radiance of the bright colors, that liveliness and elusiveness makes *Checkerboard with Light Colors* an impressive and forceful presence.

Mondrian painted Composition with Grid 9; Checkerboard with Light Colors in the spring of 1919. At about the same time, he was finishing another picture of similar size and structure, Composition with Grid 8; Checkerboard with Dark Colors (cat. 83, also in the Haags Gemeentemuseum). This title suggests that it is a dark variation on the other painting, and that both works are determined by the same regular partition of the picture surface. In the darker version, however, Mondrian notably used three rather than six colors (if we count the white and the grays as colors): a saturated blue, a strong dark pink, and a dark ocher. Compared with Checkerboard with Light Colors, the colors of Checkerboard with Dark Colors, applied heavily and thickly, frequently with the palette knife, are dense and closed, even a bit clumsy. Only the saturated blue appears to have been put on in one layer, without having been mixed. The dark pink covers a layer of salmon-pink; the dark ocher one of orange-yellow and another of light yellow. The grid, laid out in gray lines, is accentuated in places with a yellowish-green, half-transparent line. The borders of the blue planes are also accented here and there with a glossy black. Here, too, the result is one of separation and fragmentation. But because all contrast is kept to a minimum and the tonalities are so similar, Checkerboard with Dark Colors is also static and inaccessible, without the lively openness that is so characteristic of its counterpart.

Between 1917 and the summer of 1919 Mondrian worked constantly in pairs. He made light and dark versions of similar compositions in a systematic attempt to achieve a special unity between the hue, value, and intensity of the color within the composition. Checkerboard with Light Colors and Checkerboard with Dark Colors were the last paintings in the series. In June 1919 the artist left for Paris, where he started making less methodical, more varied compositions.

In the extensive literature on Mondrian, the two checkerboard compositions are usually seen as transitional works, created on the threshold of the neo-plasticism that the artist brought to full development in Paris starting in 1920. They are then described as a link in the development of his oeuvre, as a particular experiment within the heated, polemical world of De Stijl. The grid has been hailed as a radical step within the development of modernism; strikingly, the checkerboard compositions are always described as a milestone because of the grid, which receives far more emphasis than Mondrian's use of color, which, in fact, is what dominates the paintings and makes them so successful. The emphasis on the grid is also suggested by the titles assigned to both works in the course of time, which associate the grid with a checkerboard and give a neutral description of the sorts of color employed.<sup>4</sup>

If we examine the period in which the two works were created, the emphasis on the regular grid as the chief characteristic of these works is understandable. Around 1919

it was in the air, certainly in the work of Mondrian. Nonetheless, this development attested to his daring and originality – even though some considered it cause for concern. Theo van Doesburg, with whom Mondrian corresponded intensively in 1919 about his progress, wrote the following about the checkerboard compositions to J. J. P. Oud on 24 June on the occasion of Mondrian's departure for Paris:

He may have needed to go to Paris in order to find new possibilities in his work. Refreshment. His most recent works have no composition. The division of the picture surface is regular. So just rectangles of the same size. [Doesburg draws a grid here.] Opposition is only achieved by means of color. I find it also somewhat at odds with his theory of abolition of position and dimension. This is uniformity of position and dimension.<sup>5</sup>

Van Doesburg was apparently under the impression that Mondrian's art had reached an impasse. This impression had been confirmed around 1919 in a much wider circle in the Netherlands. H. P. Bremmer, who with the help of Helene Kröller-Müller had supported Mondrian financially from March 1916, terminated his monthly stipend to the artist in 1920. Although a few incidental purchases in the early 1920s demonstrate Kröller-Müller's abiding support for Mondrian,<sup>6</sup> in 1925 it nonetheless became clear that his patroness, the most important collector of his work in the Netherlands, also felt that, artistically speaking, he had become bogged down. In 1925 she gave a series of talks about developments in modern painting. In her talk on "Idealism" she came to speak of Mondrian, describing *Compositie in lijn (Composition in Line)* of 1917 (cat. 72) in appreciative, even admiring terms as a "...purely symbolic complex of lines for feelings, removed from everything that signifies object, the revelation of a silent emotion through a musical framework of movement." After comparing his work with that of Bart van der Leck, however, she concluded that Mondrian, as

a sensitive man, subject to the feelings that rise out of himself...after having interpreted his emotional highpoint [with *Compositie in lijn*], was in danger of either getting bogged down or of repeating himself, since moods are simply not as varied as are expressions of reality in life, which constantly rejuvenate themselves.<sup>7</sup>

As far as Kröller-Müller was concerned, Mondrian's art had completely detached itself from visual reality, which was not his point of departure even in a transformed guise. Taking van Gogh as her normative example, Kröller-Müller firmly believed that art is a depiction of reality as seen through the temperament of the artist. Abstraction also fell within that definition as an extreme resonance of a subjective vision of the object. She was convinced that works such as *Compositie in lijn* were still based on Mondrian's emotion and temperament, but her concern was already that this pure, inner wellspring, if not continually fed by reality, would run dry.

Whereas Kröller-Müller objected to the alleged monopoly of the subjective and the individual in Mondrian's art, van Doesburg had difficulty with precisely the threat of the complete absence of the subjective and the individual. This can be deduced from the reference he made to Mondrian's theories published in *De Stijl* two years earlier in the series of articles "De Nieuwe Beelding in de Schilderkunst" ("The New Plastic in Painting"). These articles provide a number of theoretical principles, based on the ac-

knowledgment of the truly modern artist that the experience of beauty is universal and that each art has its own means of expression, which should be employed as exactly and precisely as possible.<sup>8</sup>

Taking this into account, it is nonetheless enlightening to see in what sort of context and manner the passage van Doesburg referred to appears. In the first installments Mondrian presents his "theory of abolition through contrast of position and dimension" as the determinant mechanism in the emergence of composition in the New Plastic. In the art he advocates, composition no longer has a representational function, but stands on its own:

In the new art the laws of harmony...no longer realize themselves in the manner of nature: they act more independently than they manifest themselves visually in nature. Finally, in the New Plastic, they are manifested entirely in the manner of art.<sup>9</sup>

To Mondrian's way of thinking, the perpendicular position of straight lines and flat colors is the most balanced, pure, and therefore absolute point of departure in a visual art that concentrates on its own means of expression. He sees this systematic position of lines and planes as being dictated by universal harmony, the primal relationship, in which "...the utmost one and the utmost other is expressed in perfect harmony and contains all other relationships." Art portrays this universal harmony directly, without escaping to a depiction of one aspect of reality, and without losing itself in an individual expression of a subjective, experienced feeling, as Kröller-Müller imagined it.

The subjective also plays an important and even crucial role within Mondrian's theory. In the actual materialization of the work of art and the realization of the primal relationship of position in concrete dimension and rhythm, the subjective proves to be decisive. In his introduction to "De Nieuwe Beelding in de Schilderkunst," Mondrian characterized composition as the representational means which

leaves the artist the greatest possible freedom to be subjective – to whatever extent this is necessary. *The rhythm* of the relationship between color and dimension (in determinate *proportion* and *equilibrium*) permits the absolute to appear within the relativity of time and space. Thus the new plastic is dualistic through its composition. Through its exact plastic expression of cosmic relationship it is a direct expression of the universal; through its rhythm, through its material reality, it is an expression of the subjective, of the individual.<sup>11</sup>

The subjectifying and the subjective individual Mondrian alludes to here crops up frequently in "De Nieuwe Beelding." Occasionally it refers to the indissoluble bond between the work of art and its maker, a bond that raises the strictly individual to the higher plane of the concrete-real. But it can also allude to the independence and individuality of the art work itself, to its development as a separate entity, detached from the artist and his subjectivity. The subjective appears then as characteristic and capacity of the work itself, even if that refers – in a metaphorical fashion – to something that lies outside the work, which Mondrian designates "the universal."

In almost every installment of "De Nieuwe Beelding" Mondrian juggles with these

two phases of the subjective in the hope of disentangling them and in order to define them with respect to one another. Closely linked to them are two forms of expression that seem to follow naturally from and to complement one another. Sometimes Mondrian presents them as strictly distinguished, because they stand in each other's way. He localizes the distinction usually in terms of the "vision" of which the artist is capable, thus showing that he is in fact dangerously close to Kröller-Müller's point of view. At other times he localizes the distinction in terms of the abstraction of the image, but without wanting completely to ignore the role of the artist – understandably, from his point of view as an artist.

In 1919, when he painted the checkerboard compositions, he also failed to clarify the matter on a theoretical level. But he had come so far as to regard the "subjective vision that comes from ourselves" as "very dangerous as long as it remains immature." Mondrian did not say what the danger was precisely, but judging from the context it lay in the vagueness of the boundary between expression of the subjective and internal on the one hand and expression of the objective and the universal on the other.

For now we can conclude that Mondrian hoped and foresaw that composition in the New Plastic would ultimately be stripped of all outward display, dominated by a subjectivity that would become homogeneous with the universal. Thenceforth the work of art, concerned with nothing but its own laws, would be formulated entirely and in all its purity as a manifestation of an absolute, immutable truth. In light of these theories, the regular grid of both checkerboard compositions could be regarded as a far-reaching manifestation of the universal which is characteristic of the New Plastic. It would be a logical step in the direction of a complete fusion of the individual-subjective and the universal on the level of the image. But this situation is still out of the question, despite van Doesburg's concerns.

As early as 1918 Mondrian had made paintings based on a regular grid. Wanting to be done with individual forms and planes, he used the grid to mark the plane in one go.13 He emphasized certain lines within the grid by widening them, whereby an element of variation still predominated. Van Doesburg found the regular grid much too dominant and did not hide his disapproval. Mondrian defended himself in various letters, written in the early spring of 1919; in a letter of 18 April 1919, especially, he deals with the objections at length.14 He recognizes the danger of systematizing and repeating, but also points out that much can be resolved by bringing contrasts into the execution. Furthermore, he almost excuses himself for the fact that his method did not appear out of thin air but was the unavoidable consequence of a slow, dragging development. He concludes his letter with the conciliatory observation that "...each of us [must] choose such things ourselves and [must] deal with them for ourselves; the one will achieve more with this, the other more with that. If we just hold on to the basic principles." From other letters it already appears that van Doesburg could not agree with the use of color. Color was lacking in some of Mondrian's works or, in a couple of works from the early spring of 1919, played a modest role with subtle, minimal contrasts. Mondrian toned down the color not only to accentuate the structure and geometry (as the opposite of naturalism), but also in order to achieve in a weak optical effect a sense of implosion, of inner-directedness and greater concentration or, as he himself said, in order to intensify the effect of color in the minimum of it.15 Mondrian looked for colors that defined themselves relationally with respect to one another. In and of themselves they were not to call up any associations or convey any meaning. The artist was intent upon a "visual internalization of the material" and searched for the "serene emotion of the universal." 16 Yet the results reminded van Doesburg too much of the impressionistic longing for balance and "tone" - a reference he did not like because of its conventional implications.<sup>17</sup> For Checkerboard with Dark Colors Mondrian returned to the same color values he had employed two years earlier in Compositie in kleur A (Ott. 298) and Compositie in kleur B (cat. 73), excluding the white and the gray tints that dominate the background in these works. Logically he could omit a background, because the grid had abolished any distinction between front and back. The resulting density of the composition he breaks open again in Checkerboard with Light Colors, where he returns to the color values he had used in a weak (and therefore, according to him, more intensive) form in Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge) (cat. 80), and which, in turn, can be traced to color relationships in the series Composition with Color Planes. The previously described variegations of white, gray, and dark gray are transferred to Checkerboard with Light Colors from Composition with Grid 5 (Lozenge). What sort of symbolic meaning can be assigned to the dark and light color types is difficult to determine.18

Mondrian had made dark and light versions of landscapes occasionally in the past, but they were concerned with "mood," an amalgamation of the artist's individual experience and the atmosphere and expressive power of the motif. From passages in "The New Plastic in Painting" another aim becomes apparent. Mondrian needed to make the color appear as flat and material as possible, to the exclusion of individual associations and symbolic - which, after all, are extrinsic. In the language of later modernism: as pure as possible, with the emphasis on the formal characteristics and relations. What is so striking in Mondrian's case, however, is the manifest inner-directedness of the color. Mondrian strove for this with a view to "visual internalization of the material," which would deprive the abstract color of its individual expression of emotion and uniqueness and would raise it to the - higher - plane of an expression of emotion that is entirely "dominated by the spirit," whereby "the universal [can] appear in the particular."19 That that universal validity could be misunderstood as a subjective and conventional well-trodden path was already demonstrated by van Doesburg's reaction. The result of all the searching was apparently more subjective and more symbolic than Mondrian himself intended. In his use of color during the period 1917-1919, Mondrian showed that he was tied up in and not entirely free from the heritage of

In a letter to van Doesburg of 18 April 1919, quoted earlier, Mondrian even seems to concede the criticism of Kröller-Müller in a passage in which he explains his views on the referential, mimetic aspects of the checkerboard compositions:

The same applies to the question as to whether or not nature should be taken as a point of departure. Your definition is rather narrow, it seems to me. I

agree with you on the main point, that nature should be destroyed and reconstructed according to the spirit, but let's take this very broadly. The natural doesn't have to be a particular representation, after all. At the moment I'm working on something that's a reconstruction of a starry sky, yet I'm making it without any reference to nature. So someone who says he starts with nature can be right, just as someone who says he starts with nothing! I just want to show how dangerous it is to adopt a system. In the long run I don't think you'll object to *my* method, anyway.<sup>20</sup>

In a letter of 1 August 1919 Mondrian returns to the question of whether or not one should depart from "nature." He wants a specific illustration of one of his paintings in the third installment of "Natural and Abstract Reality," the series of articles that appeared in *De Stijl* between June 1919 and August 1920. Each installment contained part of a conversation carried on between a layman, a naturalist painter, and an "abstract-realist" painter. Against a background of various stage sets they travel along a road leading into a city. The third scene, next to which Mondrian wanted to have his painting reproduced, opens against a clear, star-spangled sky over a wide sand flat on a moon-less night.

Dear Does and Lena, Finally you're getting the copy, the photograph will follow soon. You know it does strike me as suitable for this article, whether or not that last thing I showed you is reproduced in a subsequent issue, since a starry sky is just what prompted me to make it.<sup>21</sup>

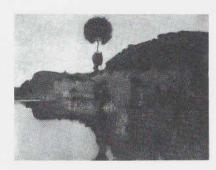
In both of these letters and in others, Els Hoek finds sufficient - and, in my opinion, convincing - evidence to support the identification of the painting in question with Checkerboard with Dark Colors. For her, therefore, the identification is reason enough to interpret the picture as representing a starry sky.22 In light of statements by Mondrian about the desirability of adapting his color choice for the time being "to the present surroundings and the world,"23 she even concludes that Checkerboard with Light Colors should be seen as a morning or an evening sky. Defending this "interpretation of nature," she points to the letter from Mondrian to Bremmer (see cat. 70) in which he agrees with his characterization of Compositie in lijn as a "Christmas mood"; she also finds support in the connection made by Herman Hana in 1923 between the "checkerboard squares" and the fleecy clouds that regularly appear in the pictures of church towers and lighthouses created between 1909 and 1910 (see cat. 83). Both checkerboard compositions can also arguably be seen as a continuation of the light and dark versions of landscapes that had long interested Mondrian. Another, formal argument is the horizontal format they share. After all, the horizontal extension of an image always calls up associations with landscape. There is more evidence. Given the text of the third scene of "Natural and Abstract Reality," Mark Cheetham is also tempted by a mimetic interpretation of Mondrian's work, even though as usual he identifies the work that Mondrian wanted to reproduce with this scene as Composition with Grid 4 (Lozenge) (cat. 79).24

The relationship between the passage from the "trialogue" and the dark checkerboard composition, especially, is also tempting. Cheetham points out that Mondrian chooses his scenes from reality, but the analysis of each scene nevertheless occurs as if, at least potentially, a painting is involved. The three protagonists stand in front of a clear, starry sky which in the eyes of Z, the abstract-realist painter, fills the space visually: "We see a single whole; and, in contrast to the mutability of human will, we now contemplate the immutable." This immutability is the universal, a "reality" that stands over and against the individual, "trivial human activity." The stars appear in enormous numbers, the quantity of which creates rhythm, "the plastic expression of life." It is this expression that was sought by the old, natural painting. The new art, according to Z, seeks to abolish this rhythm as much as possible:

In the New Plastic, rhythm, even though interiorized, continues to exist; it is, moreover, varied through the inequality of the relationship of dimension by which the relationship of position, the primordial relationship, is expressed. This permits it to remain a living reality for us humans.

Returning to the starry sky, Z observes that it shows us innumerable points "...not all equally emphasized: one star twinkles more than another. And now again these unequal light values engender forms." A direct comparison to paintings such as the checkerboard compositions is obvious, but is, even in terms of equivalence, incorrect. Mondrian has Z speak expressly about the appearance of form in a natural sense. He even has Z explicitly refer to constellations, symbols conventionally assigned to configurations of stars. In art, Z argues, that works differently. The relation of star to star must first be arranged harmoniously in order to become a pure image. X, the naturalist painter, who made a great effort in the first installment but thereafter limited his contribution to the conversation to gruff objections, asserts that the universal immutability of the starry sky, about which Z enthused at the start of the scene, must then apparently be changed to make it suitable for the visual imaging. "Nature is perfect," Z retorts, "but man does not need perfect nature in art, precisely because nature is so perfect. What he does need is a representation of the more inward."25 Here art is clearly presented as fundamentally different and separate from nature. There are indeed direct similarities, but they must be reduced to the common basis of visual reality and art in the universal. When Z observes the immutable and universal while looking at the starry sky, he then sees the starry sky as a - more or less conventional - symbol of the immutable and universal. Each interpretation of Checkerboard with Dark Colors as a representation, however abstracted, proceeds from the planes of color and grid lines as symbols of stars in the sky. In Checkerboard with Dark Colors, Mondrian was concerned with creating a work of art that expressed immutability and universality just as according to the experience of characters such as Z - a starry sky so meaningfully did.

This distinction between representation and expression is crucial. Kröller-Müller can be seen as the advocate for the interpretation of *Checkerboard with Dark Colors* as a representation of a starry sky, as seen through the artist's temperament. Van Doesburg saw Mondrian's search for the expression of the universal as a study of a clear, unadorned visual language that was as objective as possible and based on rational considerations to the exclusion of emotional, spontaneous impulse. Van Doesburg represents the modernist approach which was still taking shape; Kröller-Müller represents the symbolist, idealist approach carried over from the nineteenth into the twentieth century. These poles were indistinguishable around 1919, and the



Evening on the Gein with Isolated Tree, c. 1907-early 1908 (cat. 9), oil on canvas, 65 x 86 cm, Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague.

question is whether later on, at the height of modernism, they could be distinguished.

The discussion with van Doesburg turned on the question of where, not in a theoretical sense but on the level of the image, the individual-subjective stopped and the universal began. With his checkerboard compositions Mondrian was looking for an answer to that question as he listened to the image while actually creating it. His primary intention was to let the lines and colors speak for themselves, directly and without mediation. He wanted the arrangement of his images to guarantee an immediate expression of immutability and universality at the level of the image. This is, therefore, almost certainly the "basic principle" which, as Mondrian wrote van Doesburg, must be followed. In practical terms, this signified a destruction of the natural and a reconstruction of it according to the spirit. That method bears great similarity to the early nineteenth-century German romantics' pursuit of a symbolic language that was independent of every tradition. It is therefore in that world that Mondrian's art is rooted. About that tradition Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner write:

It was no longer enough to initiate a new tradition, which would in turn harden into an arbitrary system. What was needed was a natural symbolism, which would remain eternally new,...that is, not derived from the arbitrary conventions that were handed down by tradition. If the elements of Nature – sound, shapes, forms – had an inherent meaning,...then the traditional accretion of ascribed meanings had to be abandoned as far as possible....What they tried to destroy, in fact, were those aspects of the "language" of art that could be codified, that were susceptible to lexicography.<sup>26</sup>

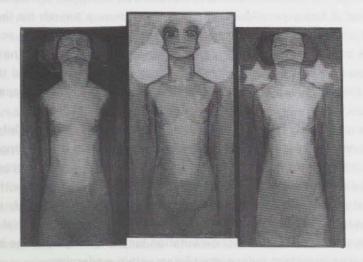
Whatever his sources, Mondrian employed that destructive method on an extensive scale throughout his career as an abstract artist. But the destructive also guided and defined his early, naturalist landscapes, such as *Evening on the Gein with Isolated Tree* (cat. 9), where the pictorial is emphasized in the wide, flat structure of static forms mirroring each other, which function primarily as contours. Making use of a figurative visual language, he even executed similar themes in very divergent styles, as in the Gein series, without it being possible to discern a direction, a search for the true style. Method was much more important than style, because expression is a sort of activity which knows no technique. The abiding concern was to find a method that could make the landscape a vehicle for a meaning that transcends the earthly and the commonplace. Style followed and adapted to that natural meaning, so that the landscape *could speak for itself*.<sup>27</sup>

The same method also applies to the checkerboard compositions. Only if these *are self-evident* can the starry sky be the "primary cause" without the painting necessarily leading to a "representation." Only in this way can Mondrian have a "reconstruction of the natural following the spirit" in mind as meaning for the work of art without wanting to depict a starry sky. The production of such a meaning is completely intrinsic and cannot precede the image but can only be extricated from the material while being made.<sup>28</sup> Here, therefore, lies a direct explanation for the autonomy of the image, which would become an important, independent axiom within modernism.

The process of creation is a matter of concretizing, of expressing meaning as significantly as possible. Mondrian indicates this with the idea of "the determinate," "determinate,"

mination." Meaning cannot be constituted indirectly from a conventional symbol because that method does not enhance the literalness and the immediate effect of the image. Immediacy can best be achieved by visualizing the meaning as a property of the image itself, or of elements of it. The grid is a good example: like all grids with no specified function, it does not refer to something outside itself. It does have properties: it is level and flat, rigid and geometrical, and has its own order and regularity. The size and shape of the modules, the smallest units in the image, are directly related to the height and width of the canvas. There is thus a causal relationship between the smallest unit of the composition and the external dimensions, the real dimensions of the work. Through that direct relationship to the external shape of the painting the real presence of the grid is emphasized. Probably for that reason Mondrian rejected the first, overlapping frame that must have surrounded *Checkerboard with Light Colors* shortly after its completion. After all, it would have presented the image to the viewer in the conventional fashion, as a depiction with a mimetic function.

With the colors of both pictures it is already more difficult. It is the artist's intention that they refer to nothing. Their visual function is to show as powerfully and concentratedly as possible certain key properties: flatness, specificity, and intensity without individuality, whereby matter is seen as internalizing. Mondrian had worked on the visualization of that experience since 1917. Even though van Doesburg still objected, we can assume that in Mondrian's eyes, the colors he found served experience in a factual, nonsymbolic manner. Probably for the same reason Mondrian introduced the three non-colors white, gray, and non-gray in *Checkerboard with Light Colors*. Especially with the contrary effect of the dark gray and the yellow, described earlier, he broke through the unapproachable structure of the dark version and disturbed the image by creating indistinguishable oppositions: both differences and similarities in contrast, movement and stasis, chaos and order, ineffability and effability. It is an achievement that is derived from the image as a property of the image itself.



Evolution, 1910-1911, oil on canvas, 183 x 87.5 cm, (central panel), 178 x 85 cm (side panels), Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague. The symbolic mode that I am trying to distinguish here is diametrically opposed to that of such works as *Devotion* (Ott. 194), *Molen (Mill); Red Mill at Domburg* (cat. 28), and especially the *Evolution* triptych (Ott. 245), where symbolic meaning is conveyed through personification, allegory, or by means of conventional symbolism. It was a symbolist method that Mondrian practiced briefly with passion and conviction, but which he resolutely rejected after *Evolution*. In the "trialogue," Mondrian has Z make the following remark about the stage scenery showing a windmill:

At that time...I was particularly struck by the cross formed by its arms. Now, however, I discern the perpendicular in everything, and the arms of the wind-mill are not more beautiful to me than anything else. Seen plastically, they actually have a disadvantage. To the shape of the cross, particularly when in the upright position, we readily attach a particular, rather literary idea. The cross form, however, is constantly destroyed in the New Plastic.<sup>29</sup>

Whenever Mondrian runs up against conventional symbolism in his texts, his condemnation is always brief and to the point: it is unusable, for it is extrinsic to the work of art and therefore always an introduction of the impure, of a "separate," "individual form" that did not grow out of the work itself. In both his figurative and his abstract work, therefore, Mondrian always adhered to the fundamental principle of the romantic school, that the meaning of an image can never exist independently of that image. Therefore, reading an esoteric code into Mondrian's work is, with the exception of a number of works produced around 1911, not only a misrepresentation but also misses the meaning of his work as a whole and the manner in which it all came about.<sup>30</sup>

In the checkerboard compositions Mondrian searched for concrete characteristics which automatically gave expression to the immutable, universal. That searching was visual and the exact opposite of conceptual. The creation, in particular the searching manner of creating, determined the experience. Moreover, concepts such as "purity" and "essence" played an instrumental, but not a decisive, role.<sup>31</sup> But despite that, or perhaps precisely because of it, he is nonetheless also unsure of his ground. On 21 August 1919 he wrote to van Doesburg, who apparently kept harping on those regular grids,

What you write about these [here Mondrian draws a grid] works: abolition of position and dimension. This is justifiable because I was working in this spirit [Here, he draws aligned and interrelated rectangles, including one upright and one square]. But it could well be that despite that, the network is too dominant. And also, as you write, it depends so much on "doing." 32

Mondrian situates the relationship between the image and the intended meaning here finally in the process of the making. Ideally the meaning would be inherent and would speak directly to the experience; the *doing* always involves loading the material with meaning, attuning it to other images and to a context. In a constructive sense meaning is always an attributed characteristic and the universal can be situated exclusively in experience. While actually painting in Paris a couple of months later, Mondrian recognized that the relationship between the visual means and the meanings attributed to the visual means is fundamentally arbitrary in the end. This recognition enabled him to switch to a brighter tone and a greater contrast between the colors, whereby the quali-

ties of color, line, and form appear to be more clear and refined. By recognizing the symbolic, the visual means automatically became more concrete, because they were formulated and defined in a conventional manner. Only on the basis of that acknowledgment could Mondrian give up the straitjacket into which he had laced the universal, take up his responsibility as a creator again, and "determine" the composition in all its aspects, hence also in form. The New Plastic is born. The definition he had wrestled with for so long has then evaporated, making room for a concentrated study of relationship and balance based on the chosen visual means, a formal point of departure that was in the service of the universal.

It is not insignificant that Mondrian - having benefitted from twenty-three years of slow and reflective evolution following his hard-won goal, namely, Checkerboard with Light Colors - ultimately emerges full circle with the making of Broadway Boogie Woogie (cat. 165). In the latter painting the serviceable rectangular position of black lines is entirely swallowed up by an eruption of "measure" in a multitude of visual impulses. The concretization of position is freed from the black and even from the line. The structure is completely borne by the intangibility of color, and especially by the dominant color yellow, which is the principal organizer of the busy visual traffic occurring amid the saturated presence of the white planes which illuminate the painting and make it glitter. In Broadway Boogie Woogie the dynamism effected by the color in Checkerboard with Light Colors has become a layered world with various accelerations. In the white fields large red and blue planes have been assembled, which represent another dynamism and rhythm and which lead the eye along the image at various speeds. Sometimes they are built up from various interconnected fields of blue, red, gray, and yellow; sometimes they are also partially covered by free-floating, not quite centered, jarring yellow or gray rectangles, which contrast violently with the color they cover. The structure marked off by the yellow and white is interrupted by quantities of small red, blue, and gray blocks scarcely differing in size. They decondition the rhythm and create a disruptive contrast between the immovable rectangularity of the blocks and the merry, stimulating restlessness of their placement. At close range the colored blocks each appear to work in their own manner. Mondrian painted every block and every fragment of a line and every plane in a different horizontal or vertical direction, whereby all the blocks and planes catch and disperse the light in their own way. The simultaneous definition and denial of correspondence and identity observed earlier in Checkerboard with Light Colors is applied simultaneously on all fronts in Broadway Boogie Woogie, Complexity and experience are thus guaranteed. The most salient point of comparison between these two paintings is found in the function of the disruptive blocks on the fragments of lines. Most of the crosses are marked with red or blue blocks. They are of the same value and stand in syncopated contrast to the bright yellow. On the other hand, the value of the gray blocks lies near the yellow. They, too, sometimes mark crosses within the linear structure, but owing to the corresponding value every gray block makes a breach in that structure and a bridge to the white of the large fields and color planes. As in Checkerboard with Light Colors the gray acts like a chameleon within the structure so as to undermine it from within. The gray is once again the destructive, lively element in the image, ensuring that *Broadway Boogie Woogie* lets itself be grasped not in the title but only in the experience of the image.

I am grateful to Michael Latcham and Hans Locher for valiant help in organizing this text and improving its content.

1. Along the painting's edges, grid lines are partially overpainted by small planes of color that overlap their outlines and by additions that seem like poorly executed repairs. In 1950, when Checkerboard with Light Colors was loaned to the Haags Gemeentemuseum by the Slijper Collection, the damage and repairs were already present. According to a condition report, the restoration work could have been carried out by Mondrian himself, in which case both the damage and the repairs must have occurred before July 1919. It was at that point that the work entered the Slijper Collection, after which, to my knowledge, Mondrian never saw it again. Material research by J. H. van der Werf, underwritten by Christie's Amsterdam B. V., has yielded evidence in support of the hypothesis that the painting initially had an overlapping frame, which left an indentation along the sides and bottom of the image. Mondrian removed the frame because he did not like it, thus exposing damage to the surface of the paint caused by the indentation, which he then retouched. The probable reason Mondrian did not like the frame is that around 1919-1920, he decided once and for all that the concrete effect of his art was really best served by having no frame whatsoever. (I am grateful to Joop J. Joosten for this information, which he culled from various letters.) The demands of the market and his own desire to protect the work forced the artist to compromise. Traces of bronze-colored paint along the side of the canvas, which was folded over the edge of the stretcher, suggest that the bronze-colored strips of wood that have surrounded the canvas since 1972 are a plausible reconstruction of the frame that Mondrian probably preferred.

2. This elusiveness has previously been noted – albeit for other reasons – by Robert Welsh, "The Place of 'Composition 12 with Small Blue

Square' in the Art of Piet Mondrian," Bulletin of the National Gallery of Canada 29 (1977), 16. The dispersion in the regular compositions is also discussed by Clara Weyergraf, Piet Mondrian und Theo van Doesburg: Deutung von Werk und Theorie (Munich, 1979), 8-20.

3. Joop M. Joosten, "Painting and Sculpture in the Context of De Stijl," in *De Stijl: 1917-1931, Visions of Utopia*, ed. Mildred Friedman (Oxford, 1982), 64.

(Oxford, 1982), 64. 4. I found the earliest reference to the paintings as "checkerboards" in Herman Hana, "Piet Mondriaan, de pionier," in Wil en Weg 2 (1923-1924), 602-608. Hana refers to fleecy clouds as "...prototypes of the master's famous 'checkerboard' blocks" (608). His reference is more of a typological nature than a specific identification or even determination. Slijper also referred to the paintings as "checkerboards." It may well be that all the work Mondrian produced in the artistic circles of Laren between 1917 and 1919 was characterized by the general typological term "checkerboard squares": see Lien Heyting, "Mondriaan in Laren," part 4 ("De Brieven"), Cultureel Supplement NRC Handelsblad (17 June 1988), 7. In the catalogue that accompanied the 1920 exhibition of the Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring, Checkerboard with Dark Colors appears under number 67 as simply Composition. Checkerboard with Light Colors was first exhibited in 1922 at the Hollandsche

5. Van Doesburg Archive, Collection Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst (RBK), The Hague; quoted by Els Hoek, "Piet Mondriaan," in *De Beginjaren van De Stijl 1917-1922* (Utrecht, 1982), 67.

Kunstenaarskring, likewise under the title

Composition.

6. Joop M. Joosten, "Documentatie over Piet Mondriaan (4)," *Museumjournaal* 18, 3/4 (1973),

7. H. Kröller-Müller, Beschouwingen over Problemen in de Ontwikkeling der Moderne Schilderkunst, gehouden in opdracht der Haagsche Volksuniversiteit door Mev. H. Kröller-Müller aan de hand van schilderijen harer verzameling (Maastricht, 1925), 231, 237.

8. Mondrian wrote the first version of "The New Plastic in Painting" in 1915-1916. It is a strictly theoretical treatment of the possibility of a new kind of art, as opposed to a practical handbook on painting. The theory of neo-plasticism, therefore, has no a priori status, but is speculative in its attempt to indicate how the future artwork should look. It contains no direct explanation for the appearance of specific paintings, certainly not paintings such as the two checkerboard compositions, which at the moment of the theory's formulation were still in the distant future.

Mondrian changed the text considerably in 1917 when, probably with the help of van der Leck and van Doesburg, he prepared various installments for the press. Cf. Carel Blotkamp, Mondriaan in Detail (Utrecht and Antwerp, 1987), 57 note 99.

9. De Stijl 1, 4 (February 1918), 45; translation from The New Art – The New Life: The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian, ed. and trans. Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James (London, 1987),

10. De Stijl I, 1 (October 1917), 4; Holtzman and James 1987, 30: "...is the most equilibrated because it expresses the relationship of extreme opposition in complete harmony and includes all other relationships."

**11.** *De Stijl* I, 1 (October 1917), 6; Holtzman and James 1987, 31.

12. De Stijl II, 10 (August 1919), 112.

13. Cf. Yve-Alain Bois, "Piet Mondrian, New York City," in Painting as Model (Cambridge, Mass., and London 1990), 106, 159.

14. Letter to van Doesburg, 18 April 1919 (inv. no. 136, letter no. 74, Van Doesburg Archive, Collection RBK, The Hague).

**15.** James Johnson Sweeney, *Piet Mondrian* [exh. cat., The Museum of Modern Art] (New York, 1948), 6. Without citing his source,

- 16. De Stijl I, 4 (January 1918), 30.
- 17. Hoek 1982, 64-65. In his letters van Doesburg refers especially to the subdued colors Mondrian used in the series *Composition with Color Planes*.
- 18. Blotkamp sees both compositions as abstractions of trees (1987, 116-117). On that basis, but also on the basis of the works installation as a triptych together with Compositie in lijn at the Hollandsche Kunstkring in 1917, in which Mondrian himself (as evidenced by a letter to van Doesburg) saw "religious" good expressed, he interprets the colors as stages of the earthly and the material. For Mondrian, however, the function of color around 1917 was much more formal, given the titles of the works and remarks he made in De Stijl (especially I, 4 [January 1918], 30), where Mondrian goes into chromatic aspects in what is for him an unusually technical fashion, but also argues that although color no longer depicts the natural, it remains realistic. In a note he added: "That is, they will not imitate astral color, for example" (Holtzman and James 1987, 36). Both the symbolist-spiritual and the natural are eliminated, and only the realistic remains: they cannot be anything other than properties of the colors themselves. For Mondrian these properties gave expression to the "religious." That does not yet make them spiritual, or depictions of stages of the earthly and the material.
- 20. Letter to van Doesburg, 18 April 1919 (inv. no. 136, letter no. 74, Van Doesburg Archive, Collection RBK, The Hague), 21. Letter to van Doesburg, 1 August 1919 (inv. no. 136, letter no. 76, Van Doesburg Archive, Collection RBK, The Hague). 22. Hoek 1982, 61, 65. Since 1982, when the original, Dutch version of her essay was published, and 1986, when the English translation appeared, there has been scarcely any reaction to the identification of the painting Mondrian was referring to as Checkerboard with Dark Colors, Most scholars, including Mark A. Cheetham (The Rhetoric of Purity: Essentialist Theory and the Advent of Abstract Painting [Cambridge, 1991]) and Herbert Henkels (1986)

19. De Stijl I, 4 (January 1918), 30 and 31.

see no reason to follow her compelling argumentation and continue to identify the painting as one of the diamond-shaped ones from 1919. Yet the correspondence with van Doesburg leaves no room for any identification other than Hoek's.

- 23. Letter to van Doesburg, 13 February 1919 (inv. no. 136, letter no. 68, Van Doesburg Archive, Collection RBK, The Hague).
- 24. Cheetham 1991, 59-60. Welsh identifies this painting as "the last thing" Mondrian refers to in his letter to van Doesburg of 1 August 1919 (1977, 30 note 25).
- **25.** De Stijl II, 10 (August 1919), 109-112; Holtzman and James 1987, 89-92.
- 26. Charles Rosen and Henri Zerner, "Caspar David Friedrich and the Language of Landscape," in *Romanticism and Realism*. The Mythology of Nineteenth Century Art (London, 1984), 57, 69.
- 27. Even in such works as Avond (Evening); Red Tree (cat. 15) and Bos (Woods); Woods near Oele (cat. 12) he did not aim to embrace expressionist tendencies; rather, he wanted to give expression to "the spiritual side," as he calls it in his letter to Israël Querido of 1909.
- 28. I concur with Hoek, who states that ultimately it was not very relevant which painting was depicted in the third scene of the "trialogue," but the reason she gives, that the connection with the world as it manifested itself to Mondrian was no longer really strong, recalls Kröller-Müller (1982, 61). It seems more correct to presume that it was irrelevant which painting served as an illustration, because in their own fashion they all expressed the immutable, universal without departing from a "nature."
  29. De Stijl III, 2 (December, 1919), 15-16;
- Holtzman and James 1987, 99. 30. The distinction that I make here between direct expression and natural symbolism, on the one hand, and representation and conventional symbolism, on the other, is too sharp to be accurate. In reality, immediacy of expression is never absolute but always relative and contextual. Sometimes it can seem as though an image can communicate its meaning more directly and more flowingly than any other. That can happen if a compact visual language refers to individual feelings on the part of the maker, or, if possible, latent meanings of colors, lines, and shapes are exploited in their mutual relationship. In both cases the form of expression fits precisely within contextual patterns of experience on the part of the spectator, who has the impression that he is communicating with the work itself, or through the work with the artist, or with an immutable,

universal Beauty. But however powerful the effect of the image is, that sense is and remains a semblance. And that semblance cannot conceal the fact that a conventional, symbolic relation is still involved here. The whole idea of a natural symbolism is a contradiction in terms. Every symbol and every symbolizing is conventional, since it is artificial and arbitrary, even though experience points in another direction. Immediacy of expression is the disguise in which conventional symbolism conceals itself in order to realize the spectator's experience optimally.

31. In my view, Cheetham puts the cart before the horse (1991). He localizes with brilliance and insight the roots of Mondrian's theories in nineteenth-century Neoplatonic ideas as they were developed in particular by the French symbolists, and analyzes relations and possible direct borrowings from Hegel and Schopenhauer. Yet his emphasis on the determination of the theoretical stratifications makes it impossible for him to understand the relationship between theory and practice, and in particular the function of theorizing by artists such as Mondrian, other than through the primacy of theory. As a philosopher Mondrian would never have achieved renown, and even as a theoretician he is not always clear. In my opinion, purity does not define the work of art, but the work of art is defined by purity. Purity is as this essay attempts to make clear - a predicate. Therefore it is incorrect to see Mondrian's art as emanations of Purity, even if Mondrian himself in his own theories occasionally makes such ideas tempting. Nor did he ever completely free himself from the body of ideas which Kröller-Müller represented. 32. Letter to van Doesburg, 21 August 1919 (inv. no. 136, letter no. 77, Van Doesburg Archive, Collection RBK, The Hague).

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# **E**xhibitions

### Amsterdam 1898

Arti et Amicitiae: Teekeningen Enz. van leden. May.

### Amsterdam 1899

Sint Lucas: 9de Jaarlijksche Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 27 May-18 June.

### Amsterdam 1909

[Schilderijen en teekeningen door C. Spoor, Piet Mondriaan en Jan Sluyters.] Stedelijk Museum,

6-31 January (no catalogue).

### Brussels 1909

Kunstkring/Cercle d'Art "Doe Stil Voort": Ille Exposition Annuelle. Musée Moderne, 10 July-1 August.

# Amsterdam 1910

Sint Lucas: 20ste Jaarlijksche Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 24 April-1 June.

# Brussels 1910

Kunstkring|Cercle d'Art "Doe Stil Voort": IVe Salon. Musée Moderne, 30 July-21 August.

# Amsterdam 1911

Moderne Kunst Kring: Internationale tentoonstelling van moderne kunst. Stedelijk Museum, 6 October-5 November.

# Amsterdam 1912

Moderne Kunst Kring: Ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, Dessin, Gravure. Stedelijk Museum, 6 October-7 November.

# Paris 1913

Société des Artistes Indépendants: 29e Salon. Baraquement Quai d'Orsay, 19 March-18 May.

Toorop, Schelfhout, und die Niederländer. Gemälde, Aquarelle, Radierungen. Salon der neuen Kunst, Hans Goltz, 16-c. 31 July (no catalogue).

# Berlin 1913

Erster Deutscher Herbstsalon. Galerie Der Sturm, 20 September-1 December.

# Amsterdam 1913

Moderne Kunst Kring: Ouvrages de Peinture, Sculpture, Dessin, Gravure. Stedelijk Museum, 7 November-8 December.

### Prague 1914

Moderní Umení, S. V. U. Manes, 25 February-29 March.

### **Paris** 1914

Société des Artistes Indépendants: 30e Salon. Baraquement Quai d'Orsay, 1 March-30 April.

# The Hague 1914

[16 composities van P. Mondriaan, Parijs.] Kunsthandel W. Walrecht, c. 15 June-31 July (no catalogue).

# Rotterdam 1915

Alma, Le Fauconnier en Mondriaan.
Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 31 January28 February; part travels to Schilderkunstig
Genootschap Pictura, Groningen, 12-25 March.

### Amsterdam 1915

Werken van Lodewijk Schelfhout, Piet Mondriaan, Jan Sluyters, Leo Gestel, Le Fauconnier & J. C. van Epen, Architect. Stedelijk Museum, 3-25 October.

# Amsterdam 1916

Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring: 2de Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 11 March-2 April.

# Amsterdam 1917

Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring: 3de Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 5-28 May.

# Amsterdam 1918

Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring: 4de Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 16 March-7 April.

# Amsterdam 1919

Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring: 5de Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 22 February-23 March.

# Amsterdam 1920a

Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring: 6de Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 21 February-21 March.

# Brighton 1920

Modern Dutch Art. Public Art Galleries, 9 June-

# Rotterdam 1920

La Section d'Or – Paris. Kubisten en Neo-Kubisten. Rotterdamsche Kunstkring, 20 June4 July; Haagsche Kunstkring, The Hague, 11 July-1 August; Vereeniging "Artibus Sacrum," Korenbeurs, Arnhem, September (travels to Amsterdam).

### Amsterdam 1920b

La Section d'Or – Paris. Kubisten en Neo-Kubisten. Stedelijk Museum, 23 October-7 November (see Rotterdam 1920).

### Paris 1921a

Oeuvres nouvelles par Braque, Csaky, Gris, Gleizes, Hayden, Herbin, Jeanneret, Lagut, J. Lambert, Laurens, Léger, Metzinger, Mondrian, Picasso, Ozenfant, Sévérini, Survage, Valmier. Galerie de "l'Effort Moderne," 5-25 May.

### Paris 1921b

Quelques Aspects Nouveaux de la Tradition:
Peintures par Derain, Gleizes, Herbin, Léger,
Metzinger, Mondrian, Picasso, Sévérini, Survage,
Utrillo, G. Valmier. Sculptures de Csaky. Galerie
de "l'Effort Moderne," 29 October-19 November
(no catalogue).

# Amsterdam 1922

Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring: Schilderijen, Beeldhouwwerken en Teekeningen. Stedelijk Museum, 4 March-2 April. Includes "Retrospective Exhibition of Works by Piet Mondrian in honor of his Fiftieth Birthday." Titles for the works in the retrospective were not supplied by Mondrian.

# Berlin 1923

Grosse Berliner Kunstausstellung. Landesausstellungsgebäude am Lehrter Bahnhof, 19 May-17 September.

# Rotterdam 1925

[Piet Mondriaan 1912-1922.] Rotterdamsche Kring, April (no catalogue).

# Amsterdam 1925

De Onafhankelijken: 26ste Tentoonstelling met werk van leden en van moderne Franschen. Stedelijk Museum, 24 May-21 June.

# Dresden 1925

[P. Mondrian – Man Ray.] Kunsthandlung Kühl und Kühn, September (no catalogue; travels to Munich).

### **Paris 1925**

L'Art d'aujourd'hui. Exposition internationale. Salles du Syndicat des Négociants en objets d'art. 1-21 December.

# Munich 1926

Lissitzky: Moskau. Mondrian: Paris. Man Ray: New York. Galerie Goltz, January-February (no catalogue; includes Dresden 1925).

### Amsterdam 1926

De Onafhankelijken: 27ste Tentoonstelling met werk van leden en Belgen. Stedelijk Museum, 22 May-20 June.

# Brooklyn 1926

International Exhibition of Modern Art. Brooklyn Museum, 19 November-9 January 1927 (travels to New York and Buffalo).

### New York 1927

International Exhibition of Modern Art. The Anderson Galleries, 25 January-5 February (see Brooklyn 1926).

### Mannheim 1927

Wege und Richtungen der Abstrakten Malerei in Europa. Städtische Kunsthalle, 30 January-27 March.

### Buffalo 1927

International Exhibition of Modern Art. Albright Art Gallery, 25 February-20 March; Toronto Art Gallery, 1-24 April (see Brooklyn 1926).

### Paris 1927

[Avondtentoonstelling.] Schildersvereniging De Klomp, 12 March.

# Amsterdam 1928a

A. S. B. Architectuur, Schilderkunst en Beeldhouwkunst. Stedelijk Museum, 4 February-1 March

# Amsterdam 1928b

De Onafhankelijken: 32ste Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 3 March-1 April.

# Venice 1928

XVIa Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia. April-October (Padiglione dell'Olanda).

# Paris 1928

Salon des Tuileries. Le Palais de Bois, 4 May-July.

# Düsseldorf 1928

Sammlung der Frau H. Kröller-Müller, Den Haag. Kunsthalle, August-September.

# Amsterdam 1929a

E. S. A. C. Expositions Sélectes d'Art Contemporain. Stedelijk Museum, 1-31 October (travels to The Hague).

# Zurich 1929

Abstrakte und Surrealistische Malerei und Plastik. Kunsthaus, 6 October-3 November (part travels to Munich).

# Amsterdam 1929b

A. S. B. Architectuur Schilderwerk Beeldhouwwerk. 2e Tentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 2 November-2 December.

### The Hague 1929

E. S. A. C. Expositions Sélectes d'Art Contemporain. Genootschap Pulchri Studio, 10 December-5 January 1930 (see Amsterdam 1929a).

### Munich 1929

Wege abstrakter Malerei. Zweiter Teil. Künstlerverband Die Juryfreien, 17 December-15 January 1930 (no catalogue; see Zurich 1929).

### **Paris** 1930

Cercle et Carré. Galerie 23, 18 April-1 May.

# Stockholm 1930

AC (Art Concret): International Utställning av post-kubistisk konst. Stockholmsutställningen Parkrestauranten, 19 August-30 September.

### Zurich 1930

Werke der Malerei und Plastik: Produktion Paris 1930. Kunstsalon Wolfsberg, 8 October-15 November.

### New York 1931

Special Exhibition arranged in honor of the Opening of the New Building of the New School for Social Research, presented by The Société Anonyme. New School for Social Research, 1 January-10 February (travels to Buffalo).

### Hartford 1931

Landscape Painting. Wadsworth Atheneum and Morgan Memorial, 20 January-9 February.

### Buffalo 1931

An International Exhibition Illustrating the Most Recent Developments in Abstract Art, presented by The Société Anonyme. The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, 18 February-8 March (see New York 1931).

# Brussels 1931

L'Art Vivant en Europe. Palais des Beaux-Arts, 25 April-24 May.

# **Paris** 1931

"1940": 1ère exposition. Galerie de la Renaissance,

# 11-30 June.

# Cambridge 1931

Abstraction. The Harvard Society for Contemporary Art, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 30 November-13 December.

# Rotterdam 1931

Kersttentoonstelling. Museum Boymans, 23 December-18 January 1932.

# Paris 1932a

"1940": 2me exposition collective. Parc des Expositions, 15 January-1 February.

# Amsterdam 1932a

Fransche Schilderkunst uit de Twintigste Eeuw: "Ecole de Paris." Stedelijk Museum, 9 April-

# Paris 1932b

Exposition d'art hollandais contemporain.

Galerie Zak, 27 May-10 June.

### New York 1932

Summer Exhibition: Painting and Sculpture.
The Museum of Modern Art,
7 June-30 October.

### Amsterdam 1932b

Werken door tijdgenooten. Kunsthandel Huinck en Scherjon, 2-30 July.

### Hartford 1935

Abstract Art (Gabo – Pevsner – Mondrian – Domela). Wadsworth Atheneum, 22 October-17 November (travels to Chicago).

### Black Mountain 1935

[Collection of The Société Anonyme.] Black Mountain College, North Carolina, 31 October-June 1936.

# Chicago 1936

Abstract Art (Gabo - Pevsner - Mondrian - Domela).

The Arts Club of Chicago, 3-25 January (see Hartford 1935).

### Oxford 1936

Abstract & Concrete: An Exhibition of Abstract Painting & Sculpture, 1934 & 1935. St. Giles, 15-22 February; School of Architecture, Liverpool, 2-14 March (travels to London and Cambridge).

## New York 1936

Cubism & Abstract Art. The Museum of Modern Art, 26 February-12 April; San Francisco Museum of Art, 27 July-4 August; Cincinnati Art Museum, 19 October-16 November; Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 29 November-27 December; Cleveland Museum of Art, 7 January-7 February 1937; Baltimore Museum of Art, 17 February-17 March 1937; Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, 24 March-21 April 1937; Grand Rapids Art Gallery, Michigan, 29 April-26 May 1937.

# London 1936

Abstract & Concrete. Alex Reid & Lefevre, Ltd., 15 April-May; Gordon Fraser's Gallery, Cambridge, 28 May-13 June (see Oxford 1936).

# Basel 1937

konstruktivisten. Kunsthalle, 16 January-14 February.

# New York 1937

New Acquisitions: Gifts of the Advisory Committee. The Museum of Modern Art, 10 February-7 March.

# Copenhagen 1937

Liniens Sammenslutning. Efter-Expressionisme, Abstrakt Kunst, Neoplasticisme, Surrealisme. "Den frie Udstillung's Bygning," 1-13 September.

# Amsterdam 1938

Abstracte Kunst. Stedelijk Museum, 2-24 April.

Living Art in England. The London Gallery Ltd., 18 January-11 February (catalogue in London Bulletin [January-February 1939], 57-58).

London 1939b

Abstract and Concrete Art. Guggenheim Jeune, 10-27 May (catalogue in London Bulletin [May 1939], 21-22).

New York 1939a

Art in Our Time: An Exhibition to Celebrate the Tenth Anniversary. The Museum of Modern Art, 11 May-1 October.

Paris 1939

Réalités Nouvelles. Renaissance Plastique. (Ire Exposition. 2me Série: Oeuvres des artistes étrangers.) Galerie Charpentier, 30 June-15 July.

Springfield 1939

Some New Forms of Beauty, 1909-1936. A
Selection of the Collection of The Société
Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art, 1920.
Anniversary Exhibition, The George Walter
Vincent Smith Art Gallery, 9 November17 December; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford,
4 January-4 February 1940.

New York 1939b

[Mondrian]. Gallery of Living Art (New York University), November-4 December (no catalogue).

Grand Rapids 1940

Masterpieces of Dutch Art. Grand Rapids Art Gallery, Michigan, 7-30 May.

New York 1941

American Abstract Artists: Fifth Annual Exhibition. Riverside Museum, 9-23 February.

New Haven 1942

Modern Art from the Collection of
The Société Anonyme: Museum of Modern Art,
1920. Yale University Art Gallery, 14 January22 February.

New York 1942a

Paintings and Drawings by Mondrian. Valentine Gallery, 19 January-7 February.

London 1942

New Movements in Art: Contemporary Work in England. London Museum, Lancaster House, 18 March-9 May.

New York 1942b

New Acquisitions and Extended Loans: Cubist and Abstract Art. The Museum of Modern Art, 25 March-3 May.

New York 1942c

[Peggy Guggenheim Collection.] Art of This Century, opens 20 October.

New York 1943a

Unity in Diversity: An Exhibition and a Contest. Nierendorf Gallery, 14 March-3 April.

Cincinnati 1943

Form and Formula. Cincinnati Art Museum,

20 March-12 April.

New York 1943b

Maria: New Sculptures, and Mondrian: New Paintings. Valentine Gallery, 22 March-30 April.

New York 1943c

New Acquisitions. The Museum of Modern Art, 28 July-26 September.

New York 1944a

School of Paris: Abstract Paintings. Valentine Gallery, 17 January-26 February.

Cincinnati 1944

Abstract and Surrealist Art in the United States.
The Cincinnati Art Museum, 8 February-3 March;
The Denver Art Museum, 26 March-23 April;
The Seattle Art Museum, 7 May-10 June;
Santa Barbara Museum of Art, June-July;
The San Francisco Museum of Art, July.

**Basel 1944** 

konkrete kunst. Kunsthalle, 18 March-16 April.

New York 1944b

Ivory Black in Modern Painting. Pierre Matisse Gallery, 21 March-15 April.

New York 1944c

American Abstract Artists: 8th Annual Exhibition.
Mortimer Brandt Gallery, 27 March-8 April.

San Francisco 1945

Art of Our Time: Dominant International Trends.
Tenth Anniversary Exhibition. The San Francisco
Museum of Art, 18 January-5 February.

New York 1945a

European Artists in America. Whitney Museum of American Art, 13 March-11 April.

New York 1945b

Piet Mondrian. The Museum of Modern Art, 21 March-13 May.

New York 1946

Mondrian. Paintings. Valentine Gallery, 4-23 March.

Amsterdam 1946

Piet Mondriaan herdenkingstentoonstelling. Stedelijk Museum, 6 November-16 December,

Basel 1947

Gedächtnis-Ausstellung Piet Mondrian. Kunsthalle, 6 February-2 March.

Hartford 1947

Painting Toward Architecture: The Miller
Company Collection of Abstract Art. DecemberMay 1948. Wadsworth Atheneum; Walker Art
Center, Minneapolis; Akron; Baltimore;
Milwaukee.

Venice 1948

La Collezione Peggy Guggenheim. XXIV Biennale di Venezia, 29 May-30 September.

New York 1949

Piet Mondrian: Paintings 1910 through 1944. Sidney Janis Gallery, 10 October-12 November.

Chicago 1949

20th Century Art from the Louise and Walter

Arensberg Collection. The Art Institute of Chicago, 20 October-18 December.

The Hague 1950

Verzameling H. P. Bremmer. Gemeentemuseum, 9 March-23 April

New York 1951

Piet Mondrian. Sidney Janis Gallery, 5 February-17 March.

Bloomfield Hills 1951

Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lewis Winston Collection.

Museum of the Cranbrook Academy of Art,

Michigan, 8-25 November.

Washington 1953

The Katherine S. Dreier Bequest.
The Phillips Collection, 8 March-2 May.

New York 1953a

The Katherine S. Dreier Bequest. The Museum of Modern Art, 23 June-4 October.

New York 1953b

50 Years of Mondrian. Sidney Janis Gallery, 2-30 November.

The Hague 1955

Mondriaan. Gemeentemuseum, 10 February-12 April (travels to Zurich and London).

Zurich 1955

piet mondrian. Kunsthaus, 22 May-July (see The Hague 1955).

London 1955

Piet Mondriaan 1872-1944. Whitechapel Art Gallery, 5 August-11 September (see The Hague 1955).

Venice 1956

Piet Mondrian. XXVIII Biennale di Venezia, 16 June-21 October (Sala LXVI).

Rome 1956

Piet Mondrian. Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna, 27 November-2 January 1957; Palazzo Reale, Milan, 15 January-17 February 1957.

Houston 1957

The Sphere of Mondrian. Contemporary Arts Museum, 27 February-24 March.

New York 1957a

Mondrian. Sidney Janis Gallery, 30 September-2 November.

New York 1957b

Piet Mondrian: The Earlier Years. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 10 December-26 January 1958; The San Francisco Museum of Art, 6-23 February 1958.

New York 1961

Paintings from the Arensberg and Gallatin Collections of The Philadelphia Museum of Art. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, February.

New York 1962

Paintings by Mondrian: Early & Late & Work in Process. Sidney Janis Gallery, 2 January-4 February.

#### Amsterdam 1963

i 10: internationale avantgarde 1927-1929. Stedelijk Museum, 18 October-18 November.

#### New York 1963

Paintings and Watercolors by Piet Mondrian. Sidney Janis Gallery, 4-30 November.

#### **Basel 1964**

Piet Mondrian. Galerie Beyeler, November-January 1965.

#### Santa Barbara 1965

Piet Mondrian. Santa Barbara Museum of Art, 9 January-21 February; Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, 17 March-18 April (travels to Washington).

## Washington 1965

Piet Mondrian. Washington Gallery of Modern Art, 8 May-20 June (see Santa Barbara 1965).

#### Toronto 1966

Piet Mondrian. The Art Gallery of Toronto, 12 February-20 March; The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 8 April-9 May (travels to The Hague).

## The Hague 1966

Piet Mondriaan. Haags Gemeentemuseum, 18 June-7 August (see Toronto 1966).

#### Providence 1966

Herbert and Nannette Rothschild Collection.
Annmary Brown Memorial, Brown University, and Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 7 October-6 November.

#### **Basel 1967**

Sammlung Marguerite Arp-Hagenbach. Kunstmuseum, 4 November-7 January 1968.

# Berlin 1968

Piet Mondrian. Nationalgalerie, 15 September-20 November.

## Paris 1969

Mondrian. Orangerie des Tuileries, 18 January-31 March.

# New York 1970

Mondrian. The Process Works. An Environment and Drawings 1921-1942. The Pace Gallery, 11 April-16 May; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 14 July-30 August; The Art Institute of Chicago, 4 October-8 November; The Columbus Gallery of Fine Art, Ohio; Galerie Denise René-Hans Mayer, Düsseldorf, October 1972; Galerie Denise René, Paris, 21 January-20 February

## New York 1971

Piet Mondrian: Centennial Exhibition.
The Solomon R. Guggenheim
Museum, 8 October-12 December.

## Bern 1972

Mondrian 1872-1944. Kunstmuseum, 9 February-9 April.

# New York 1974

Paintings, Drawings, Constructions and Documents by Mondrian. Sidney Janis Gallery, 7 February-9 March.

#### Zurich 1974

Legat C. und E. Friedrich-Jezler.
Kunstmuseum Winterthur, March-September.

#### Wellesley 1978

One Century: Wellesley Families Collect.
Wellesley College Museum, Wellesley,
Massachusetts, 15 April-30 May.

#### Washington 1979

Mondrian: The Diamond Compositions.

National Gallery of Art, 15 July-16 September.

## New York 1980

Mondrian: Paintings & Drawings: 1900-1914.
Sidney Janis Gallery, 21 February-29 March.

## Washington 1980

The Morton G. Neumann Family Collection: Selected Works. National Gallery of Art, 31 August-31 December; Art Institute of Chicago, April 1981.

#### Stuttgart 1980

Mondrian: Zeichnungen, Aquarelle, New Yorker Bilder | Teekeningen, aquarellen, New Yorkse schilderijen | Drawings, Watercolours, New York Paintings. Staatsgalerie, 6 December-15 February 1981; Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 20 March-31 May 1981 (travels to Baltimore).

#### Cologne 1981

Westkunst: Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939. Rheinhalle der Kölner Messe, 30 May-16 August.

## Baltimore 1981

Mondrian: Drawings and Watercolors.
The Baltimore Museum of Art, 12 July20 September (see Stuttgart 1980).

## Madrid 1982

Piet Mondrian: Oleos, Acuarelas y Dibujos. Fundación Juan March, 19 January-21 March.

# Paris 1983

L'Ecole de La Haye. Les Maîtres hollandais du 19ème siècle | The Hague School: Dutch Masters of the 19th Century | De Haagse School. Hollandse meesters van de 19de eeuw. Grand Palais, 14 January-28 March; Royal Academy of Arts, London, 16 April-10 July; Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 5 August-31 October.

## New York 1983

Mondrian: New York Studio Compositions. The Museum of Modern Art, 14 July-27 September.

# Hartford 1984

The Tremaine Collection: 20th Century Masters. The Spirit of Modernism. Wadsworth Atheneum, 26 February-29 April.

# Washington 1986

Duncan Phillips: Centennial Exhibition.
The Phillips Collection, 14 June-31 August.

# Tokyo 1987

Mondrian: From Figuration to Abstraction.

The Seibu Museum of Art, 25 July-31 August; The Miyagi Museum of Art, 5 September-4 October; The Museum of Modern Art, Shiga, 10 October-8 November; Fukuoka Art Museum, 14 November-20 December; Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 19 February-29 May 1988.

## The Hague 1988

Mondrian in the Sidney Janis Family Collections, New York. Haags Gemeentemuseum, 19 February-29 May.

#### Madrid 1989

Colección Beyeler. Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 24 May-24 July.

## Berlin 1993

Wege der Moderne. Die Sammlung Beyeler. Nationalgalerie, 30 April-1 August.

#### Amsterdam 1994

Mondrian aan de Amstel, 1892-1912. Gemeentearchief, 18 February-15 May.

#### **Paris** 1994

Art Pays-Bas XXe Siècle. La beauté exacte. De van Gogh à Mondrian. Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 25 March-17 July.

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## Barr 1954

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Yve-Alain Bois's major essay on the artist's career focuses especially on the invention and development of Mondrian's neoplastic style. In examining the parallel evolution of the artist's theory and his art, Bois supports the painter's own rejection of any interpretation of his abstract work as either geometric or symbolic, and demonstrates that far from constituting a formal exercise, neoplasticism offered an entirely new articulation of painting and thought. Bois pays particular attention to the late work and to the ways in which the artist conceived it as a critique of his earlier achievements.

Hans Janssen explores the relationship between theory and practice in Mondrian's neoplasticism. From the early landscapes and throughout the mature career, he sees a fundamental continuity in the role of the symbolic.

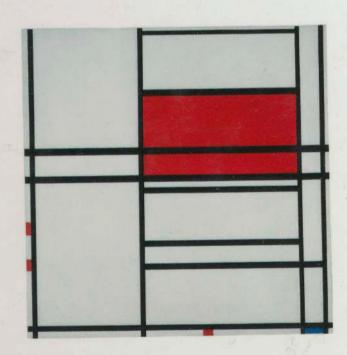
The fully illustrated Chronology of the artist's life and work and the Catalogue by Joop Joosten and Angelica Z. Rudenstine contain much new documentation, as well as extensive and largely unpublished quotations from Mondrian's correspondence with his contemporaries.

About the Authors

Yve-Alain Bois, who has written extensively on Mondrian and on many other twentieth-century artists, is Joseph Pulitzer Jr. Professor of Modern Art at Harvard University. Joop Joosten, formerly Research Curator at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, author of many articles and exhibition catalogues, has made the study of Mondrian his life's work, and is presently completing the catalogue raisonné on the artist. Angelica Zander Rudenstine, formerly Research Curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and organizer/curator of several exhibitions, is author, among other books, of award-winning catalogues of the Peggy Guggenheim and the Joseph Pulitzer Jr. Collections. Hans Janssen is Curator of the Modern Collection at the Haags Gemeentemuseum.

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